

# SAMPLE # 1

# HorseSense Learning Levels

## FLATWORK SKILLS

YELLOW LEVEL

## PINBALL

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will gain familiarity with dressage arena and location of letters while improving accuracy and preparation of transitions.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- CONES WITH DRESSAGE LETTERS (AFMBCHEK)
- BARRELS/POLES/STANDARDS, OR CROP/DRESSAGE WHIP

### PREP

Set out dressage letters in correct order for a 20x40m dressage ring. Cones may be set on fence posts (scale your arena proportionately) or on barrels, poles etc. to raise them to rider's level.

### INTRO

As students warm up on the rail, review position of arena letters and discuss the importance of accuracy. **ASK: What skills are you testing when you ride from K to M? How do you know if you have done it well?** Emphasize that since horses don't know the goal, figures and transitions are really a test of communication. Horses love it when we communicate *clearly!*

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### LESSON AND EXERCISES

 **Review:** riding transitions between the halt, walk and trot, using dressage letters or other arena landmarks to check accuracy. **ASK: Are the upward transitions on time? Late? Early? What about downward? How can you tell the horse the transition is coming?**

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 **Review:** changes of direction using **dressage letters** to test accuracy, including long and short diagonals, half turns, and turns up the centerline. Practice each turn at the walk - including two opportunities to free walk on the diagonal - before riding at the trot.

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 **Discuss:** By now, students should be familiar with placement of letters. **ASK: What two letters mark the centerline? The middle of the long sides? What letter does K face? Can you name all the letters in order with your eyes closed?**

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 **PRACTICE:** Position all riders in the center of the arena at X, and have the rider on the far right call out the name of a letter. The rider on the far left must trot to the letter, ride a transition through the walk to the halt, and **touch the letter by hand** (if letters are reachable) or by bending down and touching with whip. (On a sunny day, letters may also be tagged with the rider's shadow.) Once the first rider touches their letter, they remain in position and call out another letter for the next rider in line to tag. The game continues until all letters have been used.

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 **PRACTICE:** Divide riders into teams, or race individually through a game of **Pinball**. Each team or rider must **tag every letter in the arena**, trotting between each cone - but may *not* tag any letter's immediate neighbor, creating a pinball pattern. (E.g., after touching E, H and K are off-limits.) The fastest team/rider to complete the course is the winner.

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### REVIEW

- ? How far before each cone should you start preparing the horse to halt?
- ? Do you find your transitions ride differently heading toward the gate or the herd? Why do you think this is?

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MIN

# SAMPLE # 1

## HorseSense Learning Levels

### PINBALL

YELLOW LEVEL

#### FUN AND GAMES

- 🐾 Award a **small prize** to the team or rider who completes the Pinball pattern in the **least amount of time**.
- 🐾 For students who need an additional challenge, the lines between letters and transitions **can be ridden in two-point position** - no sitting down until the horse has come to the halt! The game can also be played **without stirrups**, giving students plenty of action but trots of short duration.



**Rained out?** Use this game as an initial introduction to the dressage arena and terminology. Set a scaled down arena in an aisle, hallway or room with ample floor space, and have students perform ring figures and transitions on hobbyhorses, "invisible ponies" or as a human train. Play a round of Pinball and finish up by calling simple tests to be "ridden" on foot.

#### GROUP VS PRIVATE LESSONS

- 🐾 Large **groups** will need to **form teams** to play the Pinball Game, or your riders will spend an eternity waiting for their turn. Teams of 2 and 4 divide evenly; teams of 3 can take an uneven number of turns or you can use X as the final letter. When playing in teams, establish that each rider must make contact with their letter before the next can go. You can prevent horses from leaving cones too soon (technically cheating) by requiring each rider to make a second tag of their letter before trotting to the next.
- 🐾 Challenge **private** students to **ride two different pinball patterns** and improve their time on the second go. This actually gives them a chance to improve strategy as well as straightness and promptness of transitions, as some means of connecting letters are more efficient than others.



*Ask students if they have ever played Pinball - some may not know what you are talking about! You can get a plastic party favor game to use as a visual.*

#### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 Games involving transitions should always be monitored carefully for signs of rough riding, as many well-meaning riders unconsciously kick or pull when swept away by competitive spirit. Discuss importance of well-prepared, gradual transitions between the trot and the halt, allowing riders to walk as many steps as necessary as long as they have demonstrated *some* trot between letters. You may wish to **institute a time penalty and warning system for riders found guilty of poor horsemanship**, at your discretion.
- 🐾 Take your time explaining the rules to younger riders, who likely won't know the meaning of "adjacent" or immediately grasp the concept. **Refer to nearby cones as "neighbors,"** comparing next-door neighbors with those two houses down or across the street. Younger children or students who have a hard time remembering the letters may also benefit by assigning each cone a name. See **#14 A Fat Bay Mare** for ideas; the game **What's In My Zoo?** pairs particularly well!

# SAMPLE #2

# HorseSense Learning Levels

## FLATWORK SKILLS

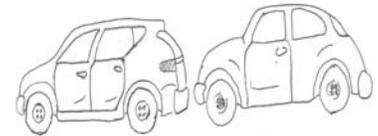
YELLOW LEVEL

## BUMPER CARS

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will develop ability to ride the trot effectively in all three positions, with and without stirrups.

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- OPTIONAL POLES OR CONES TO CREATE TRACK AROUND RAIL



### PREP

Set poles or cones, if used, near corners and long sides to test rider's ability to remain on the rail. Ensure rail is clear all the way around the arena.

### INTRO

"We've already learned that the trot can be ridden in several different ways: posting, sitting, or in two-point position. No matter which seat we choose, we still need to be able to communicate clearly with our horses about steering and pace. **Can you think of a situation where you would need to ride accurately in two-point? Without stirrups?"**

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### LESSON AND EXERCISES

- Review:** Transitions between two-point and full seat at the walk, both with and without stirrups. (Keep the stretches of no-stirrup two-point very short!) At the trot, have riders practice **switching between two-point and rising trot** for the first several laps, adding in short sitting trots as horses become warm and loose.

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**Emphasize:** To change smoothly between seats, students need to have a secure lower leg and soft joints (hip, knee, ankle). Bracing against the stirrups or jamming the heel down and forward will make the two-point difficult and sitting impossible!

- Review:** One at a time, ask students to trot down one long side in **sitting trot without stirrups**, walk, and touch the fence in the corner to **prove the horse is still on the track**. Repeat on the second side but in posting trot without stirrups, if able.

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- Discuss:** Line riders up single file along rail, with center rider over E or B. Discuss how horses perform differently heading away and toward the group. **ASK: What should you do if your horse gets strong heading toward the herd? What if you aren't able to circle?**

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- PRACTICE:** Tell students that their lineup represents a line of cars in gridlocked traffic. The first rider will break free from the line, trot a full lap of the arena in posting trot, and come to a walk before rejoining the group and halting at the rear of the line. Every horse that rejoins the line "bumps" the next horse into motion, so each rider must **call out "BUMP!" once their horse comes fully to a halt**. Riders must keep their horses on the rail or they have **gone off the road!** Once all students have gone, repeat with the whole lap ridden in two-point position. If time allows, subsequent rounds can be ridden in sitting trot with or without stirrups, posting trot without stirrups, or with one hand behind the rider's back.

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### REVIEW

- ? Can you still use your seat as an aid when riding in two-point position? How?
- ? Is it easier to ride without stirrups on the straightaways or turns? Why do you think this is?

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# LESSON #2

## BUMPER CARS

YELLOW LEVEL

### FUN AND GAMES

The **Bumper Car** game is extremely flexible, as you can add or subtract rounds as needed depending on your class size, lesson time and the ability level of the students. Use this one any time you need to manage a group safely, without worrying about spacing in the trot or canter! Basic rounds can include:

- 🐾 **Two-point at trot.** No sitting down!
- 🐾 **Sitting trot.** Watch out for bumpy or fast trots - if students still bounce, ride short sets of 5-10 strides interspersed with posting trot.
- 🐾 **Posting or sitting trot without stirrups.** If time is tight or riders aren't yet able to post for long, the two can be combined.
- 🐾 **Riding with one hand** can be combined with any exercise above - a great way to get students using aids *other* than their reins to steer!
- 🐾 **Transitions** can be included in a round by instructing riders to "Walk four times" or "Halt three times."
- 🐾 **Obstacles** such as ground poles ("**speed bumps**") and cones to weave ("**curves ahead**") can be built onto your road. The road can even go **under construction**, with a traffic conductor calling for unpredictable halts or diverting riders onto a temporarily lane.

If students are imaginative, you can also play **Follow the Leader**, letting each student take a turn designating the challenge everyone must complete on each successive round. If a rider fails to keep their horse on the road or perform the exercise, they can repeat a round; you can award a prize to students who complete them all.



### GROUP VS PRIVATE LESSONS

- 🐾 Ensure that **group** lessons are taught with consideration for the weakest rider in the class. Not every rider will be equally successful at sitting the trot, or equally capable of posting without stirrups. Rounds should be **challenging but NOT impossible for ALL members of the group**. If the class is particularly unbalanced, consider modifications to each round that will allow weaker riders to participate.
- 🐾 Since **private** students cannot be "bumped" forward by other riders, the game will need to be played differently. If you have the boundaries of the track clearly marked, you can call it a "**Road Trip**," with each circuit of the "road" containing a different challenge. Children also enjoy imagining the rail as a "**racetrack**" and their horse a fit young Thoroughbred. Give their horse a silly racehorse name and emphasize that the race can only be won if they can ride around the track in all 3 seats.

### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 Watch **spacing in the lineup** carefully! While most school horses are happy to stand and power nap while waiting their turn to go, fidgety horses can quickly invade another horse's space bubble and start a fight. If teaching this game during the summer months, make sure that horses are thoroughly fly sprayed, as required by your climate, so their time spent waiting on the rail is not a torment.