

## # 1 BARRELS OF FUN

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**OBJECTIVE:** For students to ride **precise, efficient turns** while negotiating a gymkhana pattern weaving around barrels.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 4 CONES to form lane down centerline.
- 6 BARRELS.
- 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

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**DIRECTIONS:**

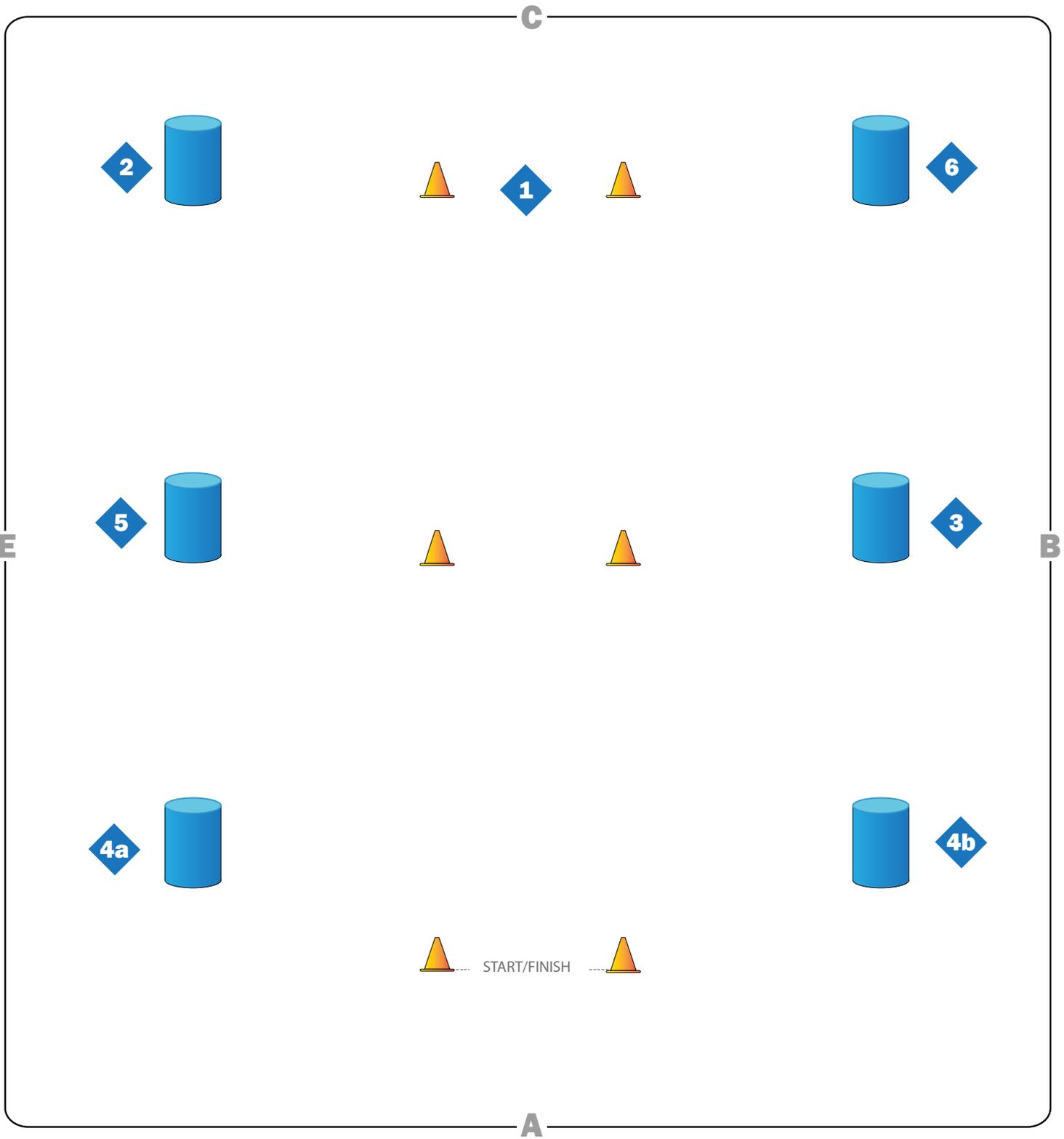
-  **#1**, ride down centerline through cones.
-  **#2**, turn left around top left barrel.
-  **#3**, turn right around middle right barrel.
-  **#4**, turn left around bottom left barrel and bottom right barrel.
-  **#5**, turn right around middle left barrel.
-  **#6**, turn left around top right barrel and return to finish through centerline cones.

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**NOTES:** **Blue Level students are fine-tuning control at the walk, trot and canter.** Their knowledge of posting diagonals, canter leads, and basic bending skills help them learn to ride turns with balance and accuracy - making this the level where gymkhana patterns become *really* fun.

This variation on a **bootlace pattern** can be ridden at the walk and trot with attention to bend, precision, and use of the outside aids to turn. More advanced students can tackle it at the canter, riding simple changes where needed. For an additional challenge, you can add a full circle around each barrel, or require transitions between barrels or on the centerline. With a little imagination you can use this set-up for several weeks without your students getting bored!

**Establish penalties for knocking over a barrel, and test emergency brakes** to ensure students can maintain control on the exhilarating run home on the centerline. Short on barrels? Use overturned trash bins, buckets or cones.



# Obstacle Course - Blue Level #1- Barrels of Fun

## #2 BIG WHOA SURVIVOR COURSE

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**OBJECTIVE:** To test students' ability to perform emergency halts, including a **one-rein stop** and **pulley rein** at the canter.

- EQUIPMENT:**
- 2 BARRELS.
  - 4 CONES to form large BOX.
  - 6 POLES to form long BRIDGE.
  - 2 GROUND POLES secured so they cannot roll.
  - 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
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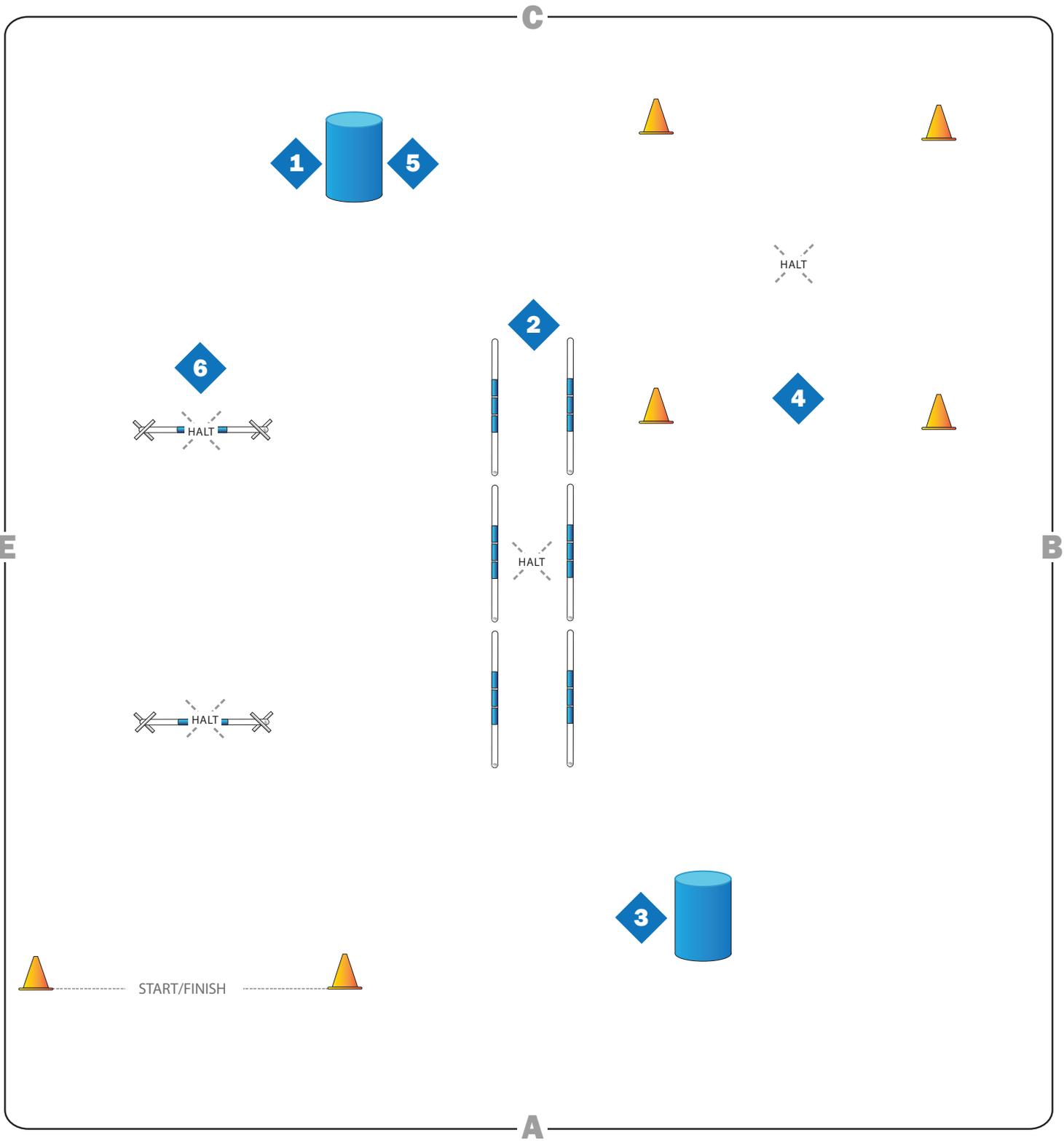
- DIRECTIONS:**
-  **#1**, ride along rail, developing right lead canter. Turn right around first barrel.
  -  **#2**, stop horse on bridge, using a mild pulley rein as required.
  -  **#3**, exit bridge and develop left lead canter. Turn left around second barrel.
  -  **#4**, ride into box and spiral horse down to a halt, using a one-rein stop.
  -  **#5**, exit box at trot. Turn left around first barrel.
  -  **#6**, halt horse over first ground pole, with hooves straddling the pole. Repeat at second pole before crossing the finish line.
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**NOTES:**

**When a horse runs away with us, it is rarely at a calm and controlled trot.** Now that your students have command over the canter, it's time to kick your safety drills up a notch to prepare them for the adrenaline-rush reality of an actual bolt.

As in all drills involving emergency stopping techniques, **carefully balance the need to build muscle memory with the need to protect your horse's mouths** (or facial nerves, if you use bitless bridles). Emphasize the weight and seat aids used to bring the horse to a quick halt. Ask students to use correct rein techniques but keep the movements small.

If possible, have them **review the pulley rein and one-rein stop without using actual horses first**. This makes a great rainy day lesson, with group lessons pairing up and taking turns playing "horse."



## Obstacle Course - Blue Level #2- Big Whoa Survivor Course

## #3 THREE-SPEED POLES

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**OBJECTIVE:** For students to demonstrate **smooth transitions** between gaits while negotiating pole formations designed to be ridden at the **walk, trot and canter**.

- EQUIPMENT:**
- 12 POLES.
  - CAVALETTI may be used for any portion of the course, on lowest setting.
  - 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
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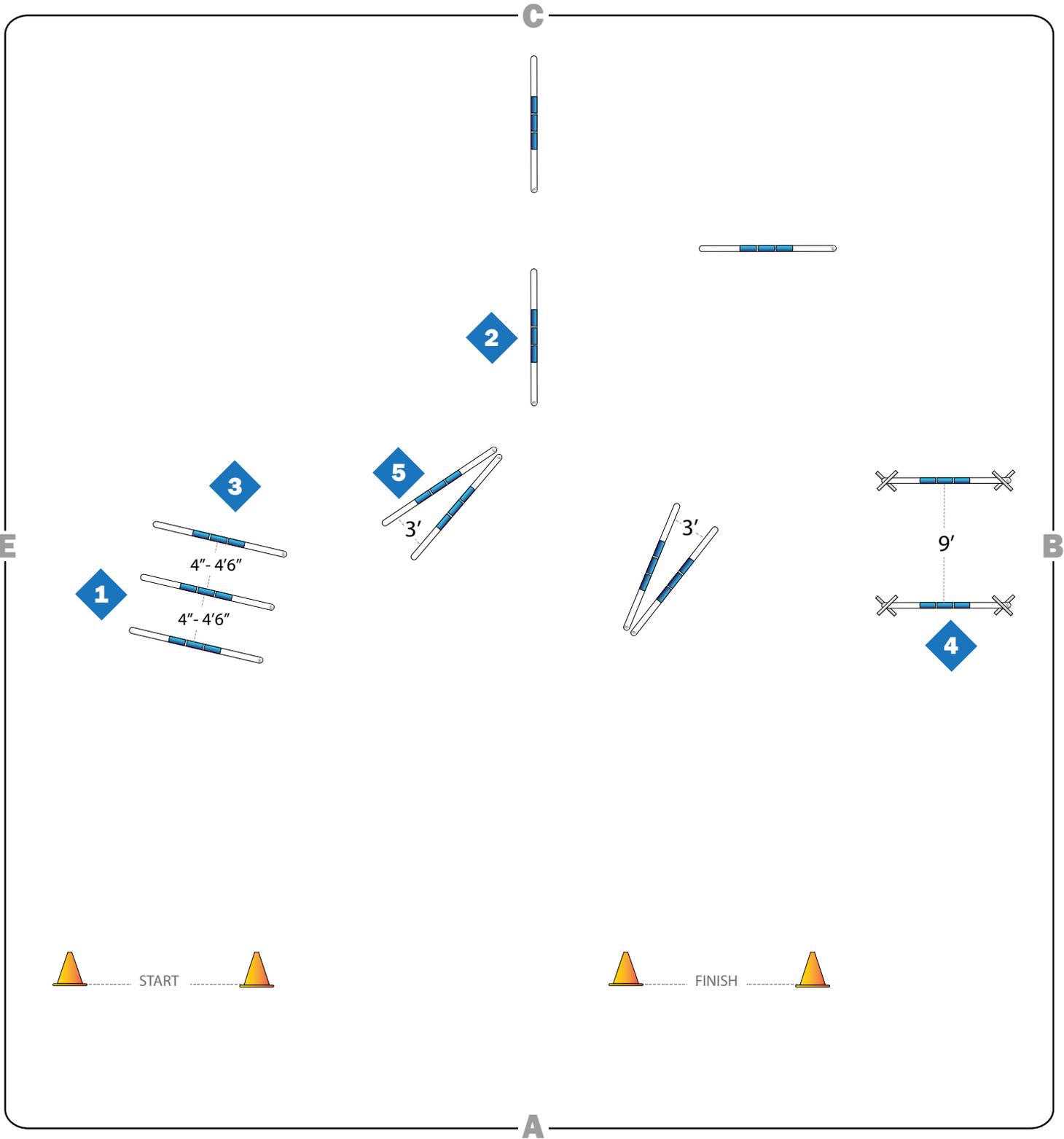
- DIRECTIONS:**
-  **#1**, walk to grid and weave horse in serpentine through the three poles.
  -  **#2**, transition to trot. Ride over the three poles on a half-circle.
  -  **#3**, trot over grid.
  -  **#4**, transition to canter. Ride over baby bounce grid.
  -  **#5**, return to walk. Ride over snake poles, bending left then right, before returning to finish line at gait of choice.
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**NOTES:** **Polework is beneficial at all three gaits**, and we love to get our Blue Level students comfortable riding over poles at the canter, in preparation for future jumping and obstacle work. This bendy course lets them have fun “bouncing” through canter poles but emphasizes a return to a controlled pace afterward - **perfect for horses or riders who get a little carried away in the excitement of cantering or jumping**.

The course is extremely customizable, and the obstacles can be ridden in any direction or order of your choosing. You might even wish to **add a whoa pole** for students to halt over - we recommend using the middle pole on the half circle

If trotting over the snake poles, expand the distance between the center of the poles to 4', encouraging riders on long-strided horses to ride just outside of center. If a 9' distance is used for the canter poles, they can be ridden at walk, trot or canter with no need to reset.

Don't forget to **establish penalties** for missing a pole!



# Obstacle Course - Blue Level #3 - Three-Speed Poles

## #4 GAME ON

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**OBJECTIVE:** For students to combine fast-paced **mounted games skills**, individually or in a relay.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 2 BENDING POLES set with SWORD RINGS.
  - 2 BENDING POLES. Place MUG on the pole closest to C.
  - 2 BARRELS with FLAG CONES set on top. Place SWORD in cone closest to A.
  - 1 5-GALLON BUCKET.
  - OLD SOCKS or TENNIS BALLS, 1 per rider.
  - 2 18" CONES. Place 1 TENNIS BALL on cone closest to A.
  - 1 SACK (50lb. burlap sack or large pillowcase).
  - 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
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**DIRECTIONS:**

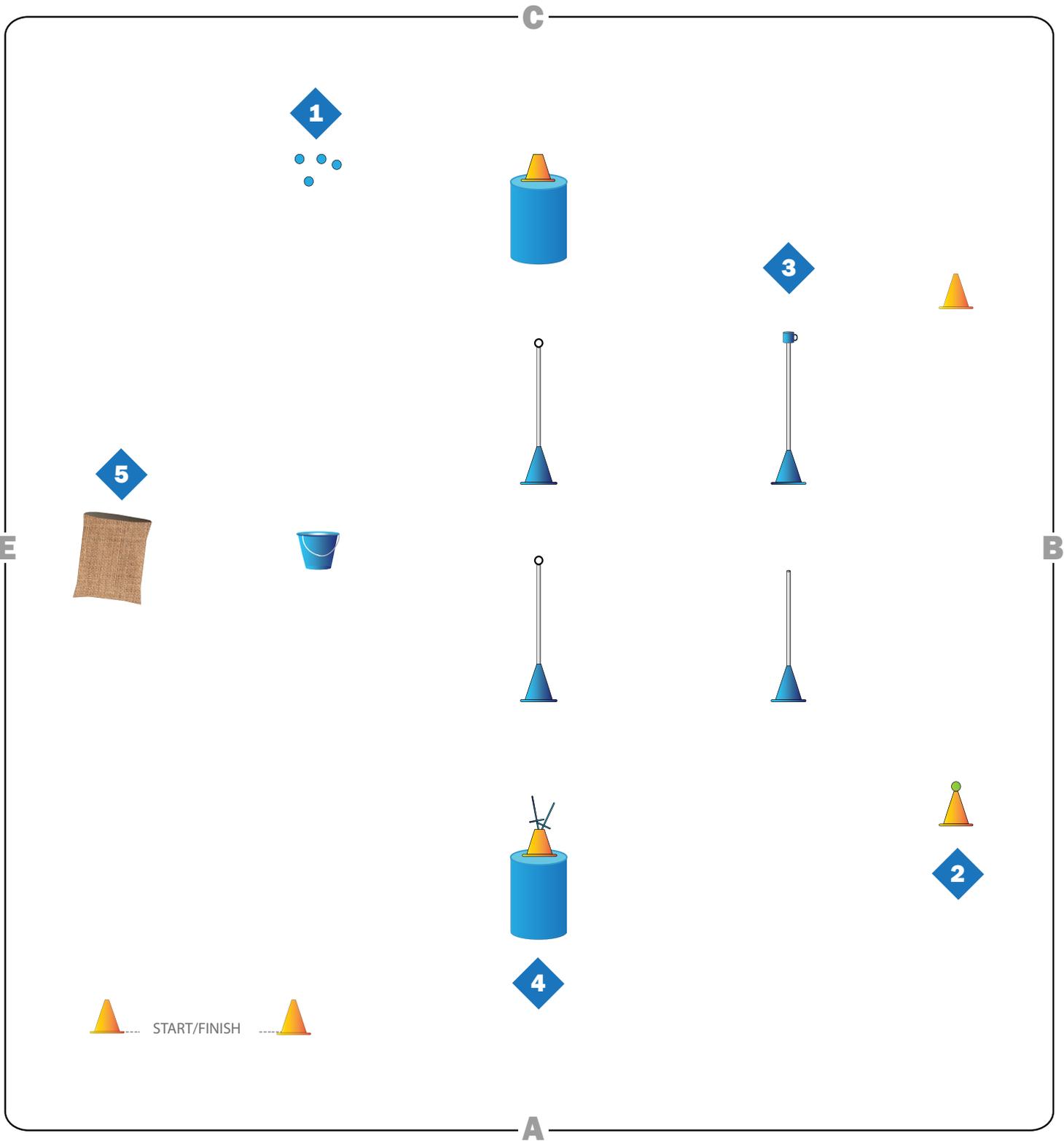
-  **#1**, ride to old socks, dismount, retrieve a sock, remount. Dunk in bucket.
  -  **#2**, move tennis ball from first cone to second.
  -  **#3**, shuffle mug from first pole to second.
  -  **#4**, retrieve sword from cone on barrel. Spear two rings and carefully place sword and rings in cone on second barrel.
  -  **#5**, dismount at sack. Place feet inside and hop or shuffle to finish line, holding sack above knees with one hand and leading horse by reins with the other.
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**NOTES:**

**To play mounted games at speed, students must master the art of the quick mount and dismount.** We like to tune up mounting technique in Blue Level, ensuring students are capable of mounting from the ground with consideration for the horse's back. This challenging course puts the skill to the test.

Don't forget to **establish rules for corrections**: do you want riders to dismount and correct mistakes such as a dropped ring? Do you have a volunteer Ground Buddy who can hand the rider dropped equipment? If you are short on equipment, recruit a Ground Buddy to help reset mug, tennis ball and sword rings between each round.

**Games skills included:** dunking, mounts and dismounts, mugs, sword, ball and cone.



## Obstacle Course - Blue Level #4- Game On

## #5 JUMP FOR JOY

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**OBJECTIVE:** For students to demonstrate **precise lines and transitions** between small obstacles, including **skinny ground poles** and a two-way **gymnastic grid**.

**EQUIPMENT:**

- 6-12 POLES used to make 3 small CROSSRAILS. Set ground lines if you have enough poles.
  - 2 POLES set as PLACING POLES on either side of the 1-STRIDE GRID.
  - 2 SKINNY POLES and PAIRS OF STANDARDS to form skinny "jumps."
  - 4 CONES used to form BOX.
  - 2 BENDING POLES. Place MUG on top of pole closest to A.
  - 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
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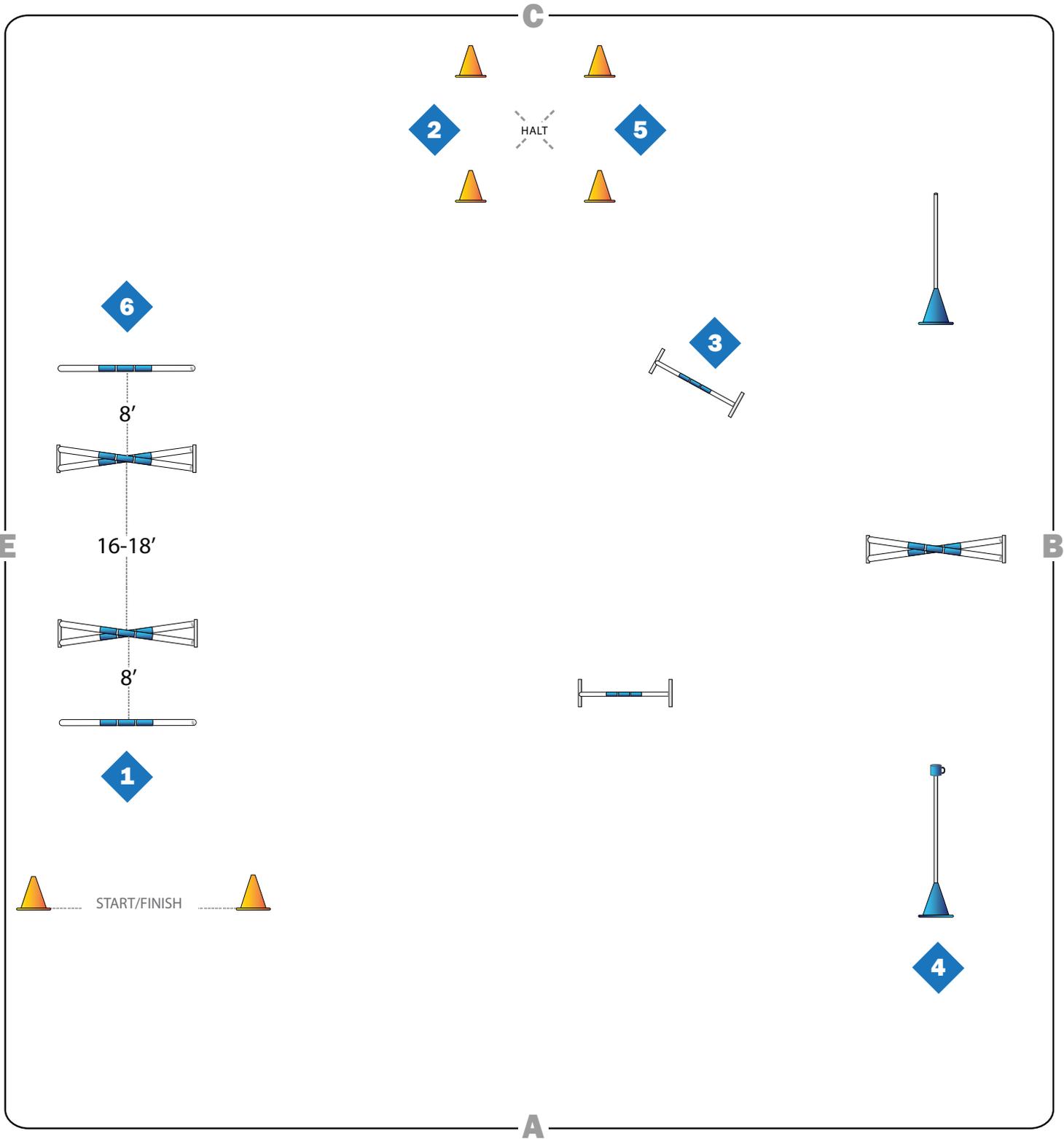
**DIRECTIONS:**

-  **#1**, trot into one-stride gymnastic grid.
  -  **#2**, halt inside box. Stand 3 seconds before continuing.
  -  **#3**, ride bending line of skinny ground pole jumps.
  -  **#4**, pick up mug from first pole. Carry mug while jumping small crossrail, placing mug on top of second pole after landing.
  -  **#5**, halt inside box. Stand 3 seconds before continuing.
  -  **#6**, trot into one-stride gymnastic grid and cross finish line after landing.
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**NOTES:**

**Most Blue Level students LOVE their newfound ability to jump** - and for those that don't, this course can easily be set with ground poles, pole stacks or similar inviting obstacles. At this Level, **jumps should not exceed 18" in height**, making them achievable even at slow paces or in a Western saddle. You can always raise them to reuse the course with more advanced students.

**The distance between the two fences in the grid** should be set at a comfortable one-stride distance for the majority of the horses in your group. If working with a mix of long-strided horses and ponies, be prepared to move the second fence between rounds, or set designated horse and pony grids side by side. When working with long-strided horses or students riding into the grid at the canter, we recommend setting the placing pole distance at 9' to 10', or removing them entirely to ensure safe landings.



# Obstacle Course - Blue Level #5 - Jump for Joy