#1 SERPENTINE SCURRY

OBJECTIVE: For students to plan and ride a smooth **serpentine** track without dislodging tennis balls and/or cones.

EQUIPMENT:

- ❒ 4 GROUND POLES, preferably secured with cones or jump standards so they cannot roll.
- ❒ 8 CONES to form 4 pairs of scurry cones, marking each loop of the serpentine and the turn down centerline.
- ❒ 8 tennis balls, placed on top of scurry cones.
- ❒ 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

DIRECTIONS:

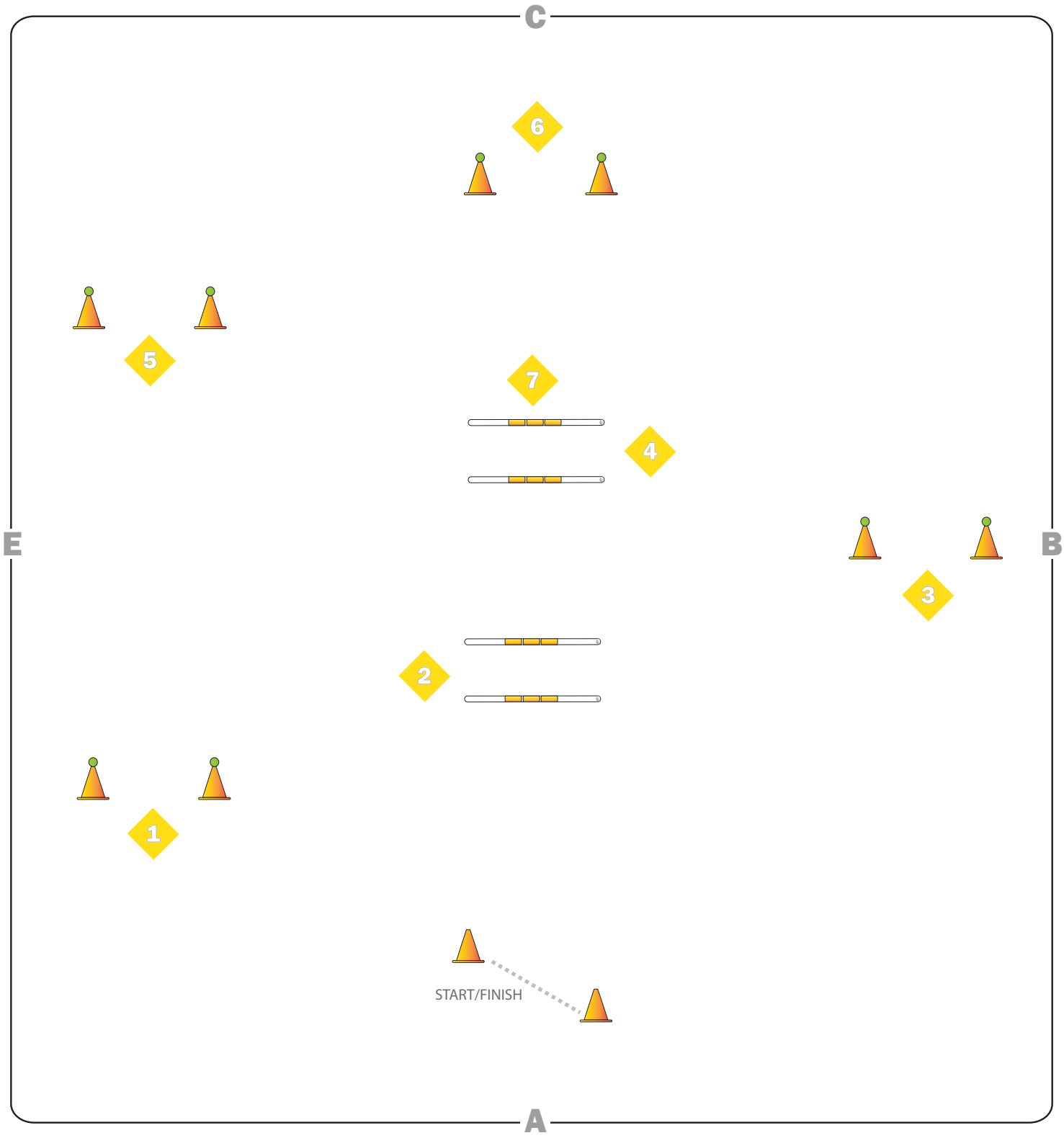
- **#1**, pass through first set of scurry cones and track right away from the rail.
- **#2,** ride through the first bridge.
- **#3,** ride through second set of scurry cones and track left away from the rail.
- **#4,** ride through the second bridge.
- **#5,** pass through third set of scurry cones and follow the rail.
- **#6,** pass through the fourth set of scurry cones and turn down centerline.
- **#7**, ride over the center all four poles before crossing the finish line.

NOTES:

We love to use this course when teaching our students to ride a serpentine, often a confusing ring figure for beginners. Students quickly figure out the need to ride balanced, equally-spaced loops and to straighten the horse in the change of direction.

Ride the pattern at the walk to warm-up, then challenge students to a timed event at the trot. You might run it as a **relay race** in group lessons, or award bonus points for each turn negotiated on the correct **posting diagonal**. Scurry cones can also be tightened or increased for an additional challenge.

We suggest using time penalties with group lessons or whenever working in a short time slot. Otherwise, you may want to establish a more drastic variation on the **Try, Try Again rule,** where any missed or dislodged obstacle is a **Game Over.** This means riders must go all the way back to the start line before they can resume the race!



Obstacle Course - Yellow Level #1 - Serpentine Scurry

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#2 SURVIVOR COURSE

OBJECTIVE: To test students' ability to perform **safety drills**, including a **one-rein stop, pulley rein** and **emergency dismount** as well as riding short stretches **without stirrups.**

EQUIPMENT:

- ❒ 5 POLES to form BOX and BRIDGE.
- ❒ 3 CONES.
- ❒ 1 GROUND POLE secured with 2 JUMP STANDARDS. If you have extra poles, you can build a BABY CROSSRAIL or POLE STACK to make jump appear more challenging.
- ❒ 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

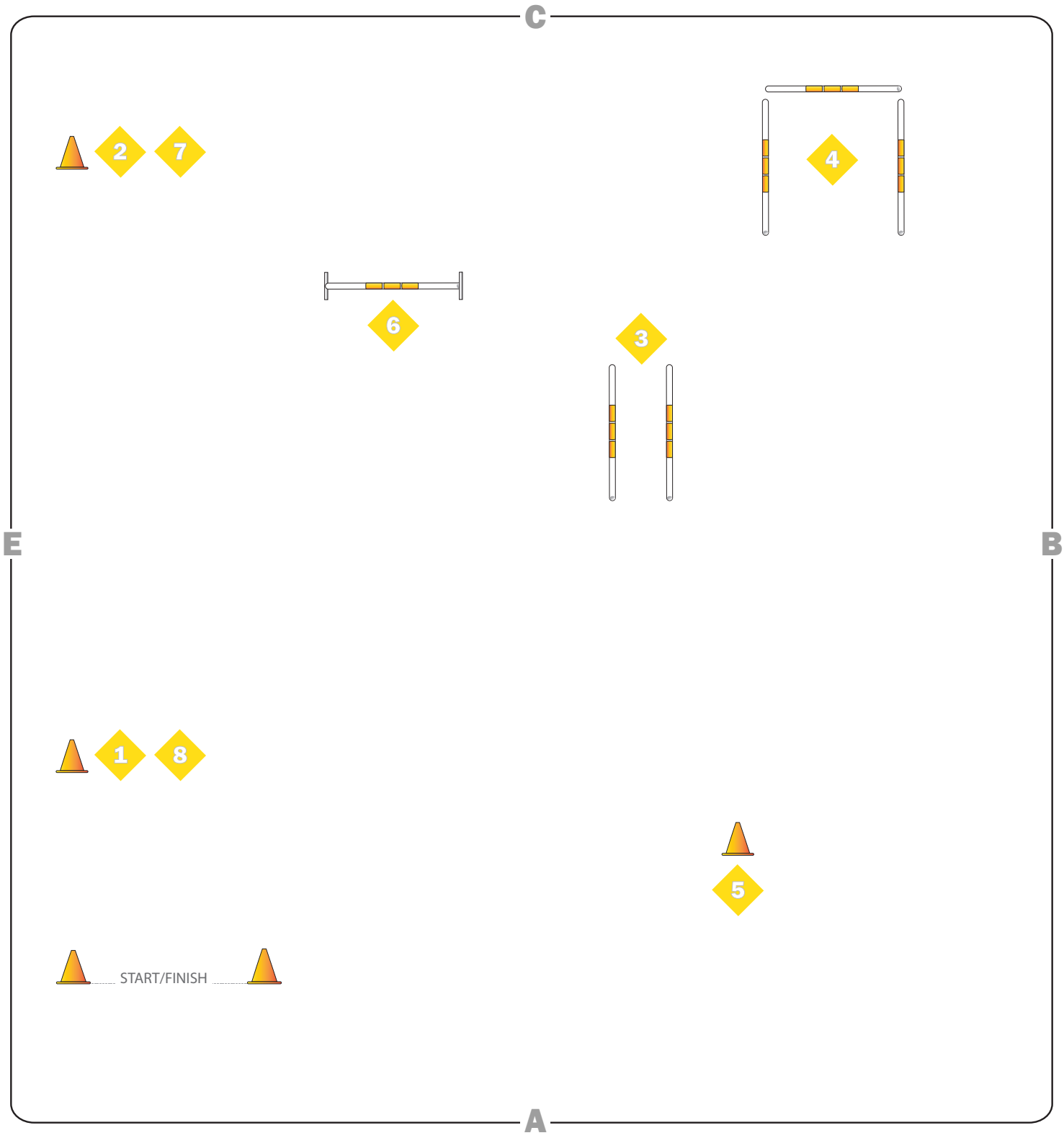
DIRECTIONS:

- **#1**, at the first cone, remove feet from stirrups.
- **#2,** at the second cone, retrieve stirrups without looking down.
- **#3**, ride into the bridge of poles and halt, using a gentle pulley rein.
- **#4,** ride around cone and into box. Stop horse using a one-rein stop without leaving box.
- **#5,** ride around cone and lengthen reins to buckle. Shorten reins to correct length.
- **#6,** ride over ground pole jump.
- **#7**, remove feet from stirrups.
- **#8**, perform an emergency dismount before leading horse across finish line.

NOTES:

We are big believers in students practicing emergency skills *before* they need them. This course provides a refresher on emergency stops and dismounts learned in Red Level and helps students perform them with speed and confidence. Pair this course with **Lesson #19 Staying Alive**, or use it as a review several weeks later. Although it can be practiced at any gait, we expect Yellow Horsemanship students to ride the entire track at the trot.

As in all your safety drills, prioritize the horse's comfort. Emphasize that riders must disengage hindquarters and use their pulley reins GENTLY, with a fraction of the intensity a real runaway might require! If the dismount occurs early enough that the horse needs to be led forward to the finish line, **reins should remain over the horse's neck**, with the rider loosely holding both reins under the horse's head. This prevents students from dropping reins out of haste and creating a dangerous tripping hazard.



Obstacle Course - Yellow Level #2 - Survivor Course

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#3 POLES FOR PRECISION

OBJECTIVE: For students to **develop ability to turn and straighten horse** by riding over and through a variety of **polework formations.**

EQUIPMENT:

- ❒ Up to 18 POLES.
- ❒ If you are short on poles, 2 lines of CONES may be used to form BRIDGES and/or LETTER L.
- ❒ 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

DIRECTIONS:

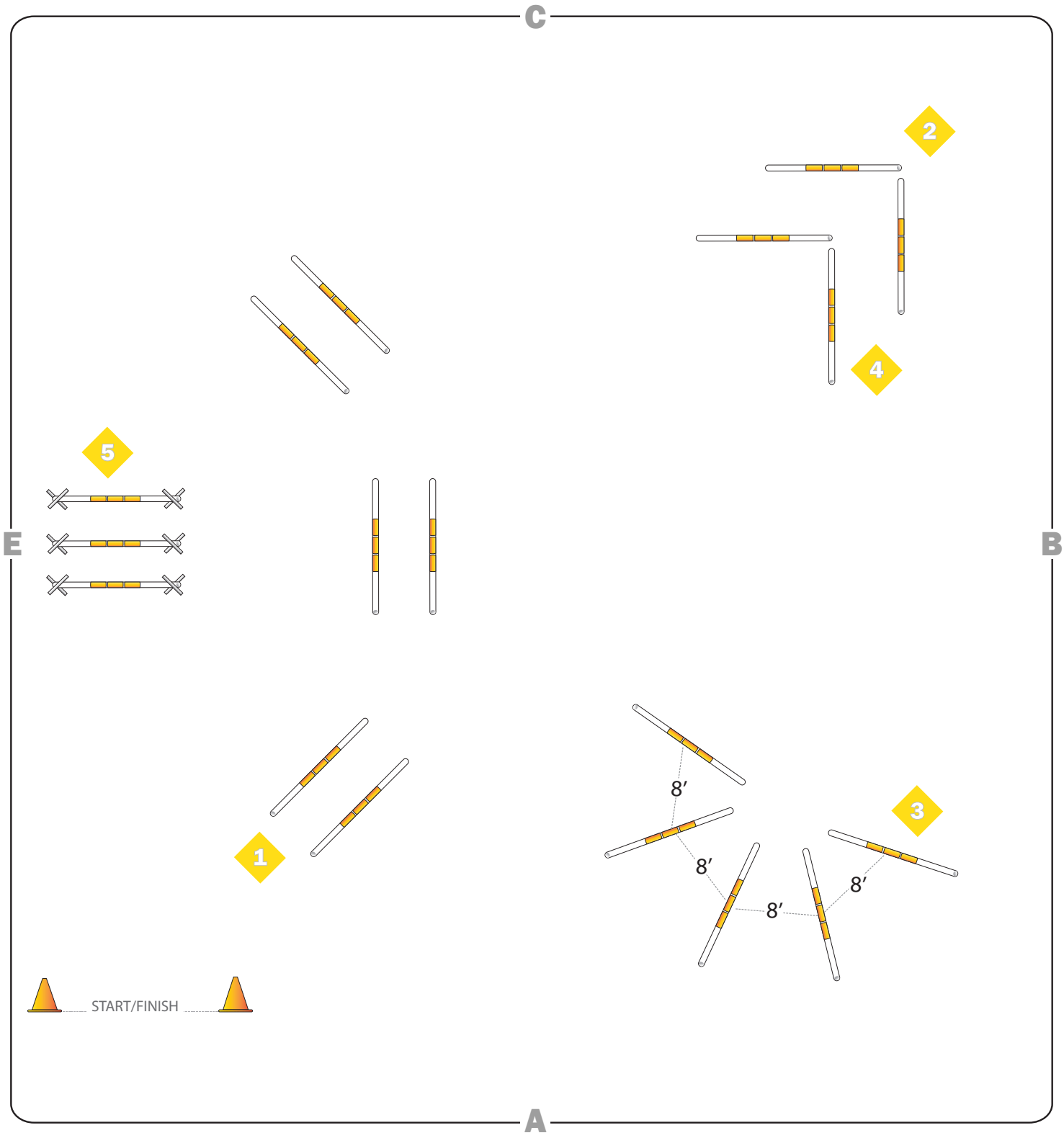
- **#1**, ride a shallow loop through the bridges.
- **#2,** ride *around* L-shaped bridge.
- **#3,** ride over all 5 poles of the fan formation.
- **#4,** ride *through* L-shaped bridge.
- **#5,** ride over trot pole grid before crossing finish line.

NOTES:

This deceptively simple polework course is easy to adapt for riders at all levels of ability. Rainbow and Red students can ride it at the walk with a quick modification of distances at **#5**, while our more advanced students add transitions between the obstacles, ride it on a loose rein, and attempt portions of the course at the canter. We particularly love how **Yellow and Green students are challenged by the precision required at the trot.** They quickly learn the importance of guiding the horse with their whole body - a pull on the inside rein isn't going to do the job! - and enjoy solving each obstacle like a puzzle before linking them together in a course.

We recommend spacing your poles using a **4'** trot stride - a typical length of stride for beginner-friendly trots. Adjust as necessary depending on the size of your horses and ponies. Be sure to explain that riding toward the center of the fan **= smaller strides** and riding the outside of the fan **= longer strides**.

Don't forget to **establish penalties** for stepping outside the bridges/labyrinth or missing a pole!



Obstacle Course - Yellow Level #3 - Poles for Precision

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#4 GET YOUR GAME ON

OBJECTIVE: For students to **practice basic mounted games skills,** individually or in a relay.

EQUIPMENT:

- ❒ 6 BENDING POLES. Place 4 CARTONS on top of each of the bending poles in the line.
- ❒ 1 empty 5-GALLON BUCKET.
- ❒ 2 BARRELS or overturned TRASH BIN.
- ❒ 1 BOTTLE, placed on top of the first barrel.
- ❒ 1 FLAG CONE with 1 FLAG.
- ❒ 5 CONES to form KEYHOLE.
- ❒ 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.

DIRECTIONS:

- **#1**, collect carton from bending poles and dunk in bucket.
- **#2,** pick up flag and carry it through keyhole. Return flag to cone.
- **#3,** pick up bottle. Carry bottle to second barrel and place on top.
- **#4,** turn around first bending pole and ride toward second. Before passing second bending pole, remove feet from stirrups and dismount.
- **#5,** lead horse around bending pole and run home, leading horse across finish line.

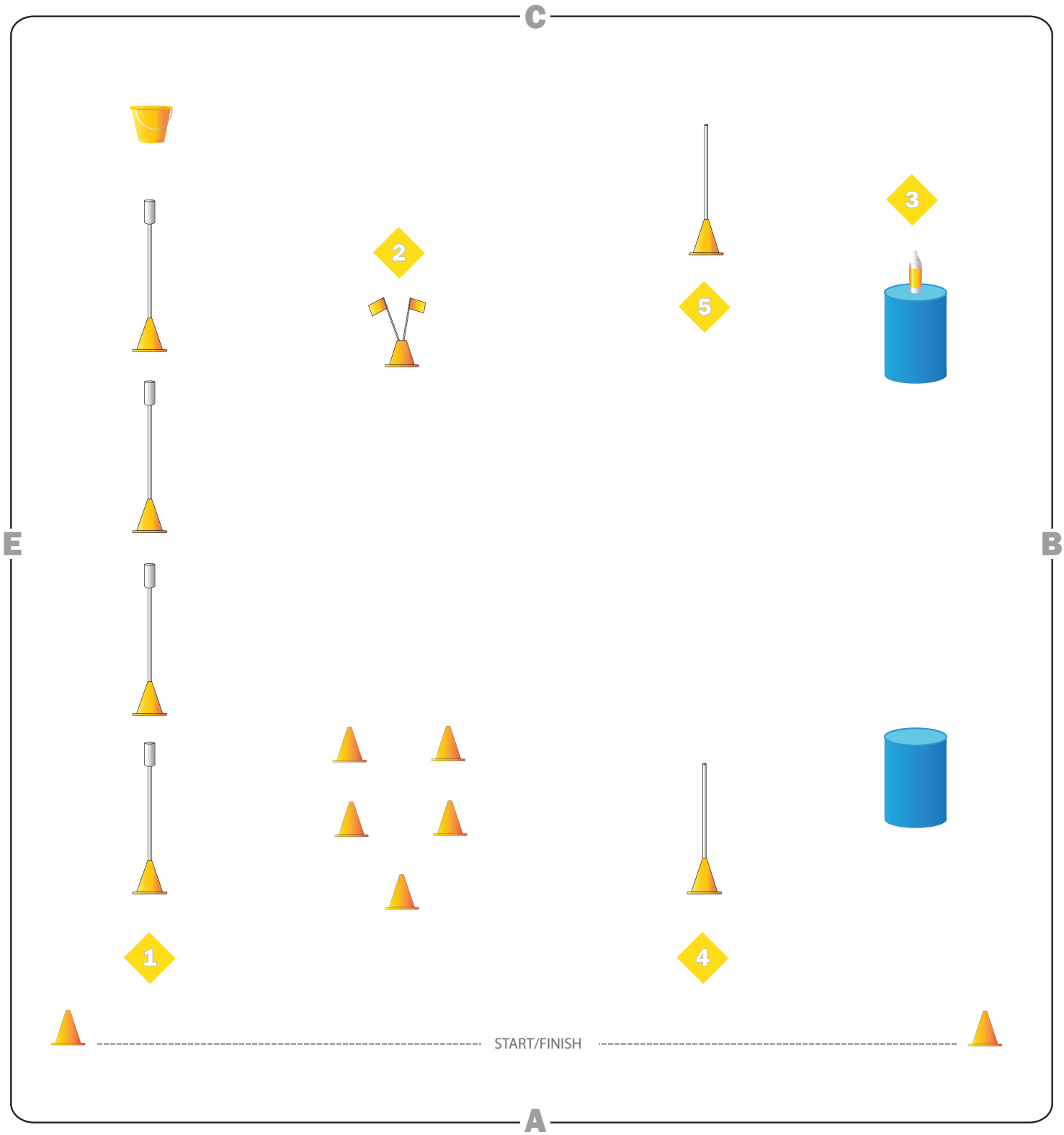
NOTES:

This fast and fun mounted games course improves balance, coordinated use of the aids, and planning ability. We like to use this with students who have recently learned to perform an emergency dismount at the trot, which allows them to complete the Run and Ride section of the course with speed and excitement.

Before playing, review aids for successful turns, correct leading in hand, and safe removal of feet from stirrups before dismounting. **Establish rules for corrections**: do you want riders to dismount and correct mistakes such as a dropped carton? Do you have a volunteer Ground Buddy who can hand the rider dropped equipment? Or do you want students to ride on and take a time penalty?

It is helpful to have a Ground Buddy to reposition the bottle after each round. This allows everyone to memorize and ride the same course.

Games skills included: turns, dunking, flags, bottle, dismount, jogging in hand.



Obstacle Course - Yellow Level #4 - Get Your Game On

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#5 CHALLENGE BOX

OBJECTIVE: For students to **demonstrate Yellow Level skills at the halt**, with successful completion of each task determining how they finish the course.

EQUIPMENT:

- ❒ 3 CONES or single poles to mark serpentine loops.
- ❒ 4 CONES used to mark corners of a 12' x 12 BOX. The box can also be formed using 4 POLES.
- ❒ 1 GROUND POLE secured with 2 JUMP STANDARDS. If you have extra poles, you can build a BABY CROSSRAIL or POLE STACK to make jump appear more challenging, or set a grid.
- ❒ 2 CONES to mark start/finish line.
- ❒ 1 SET of Yellow Level CHALLENGE BOX CARDS.

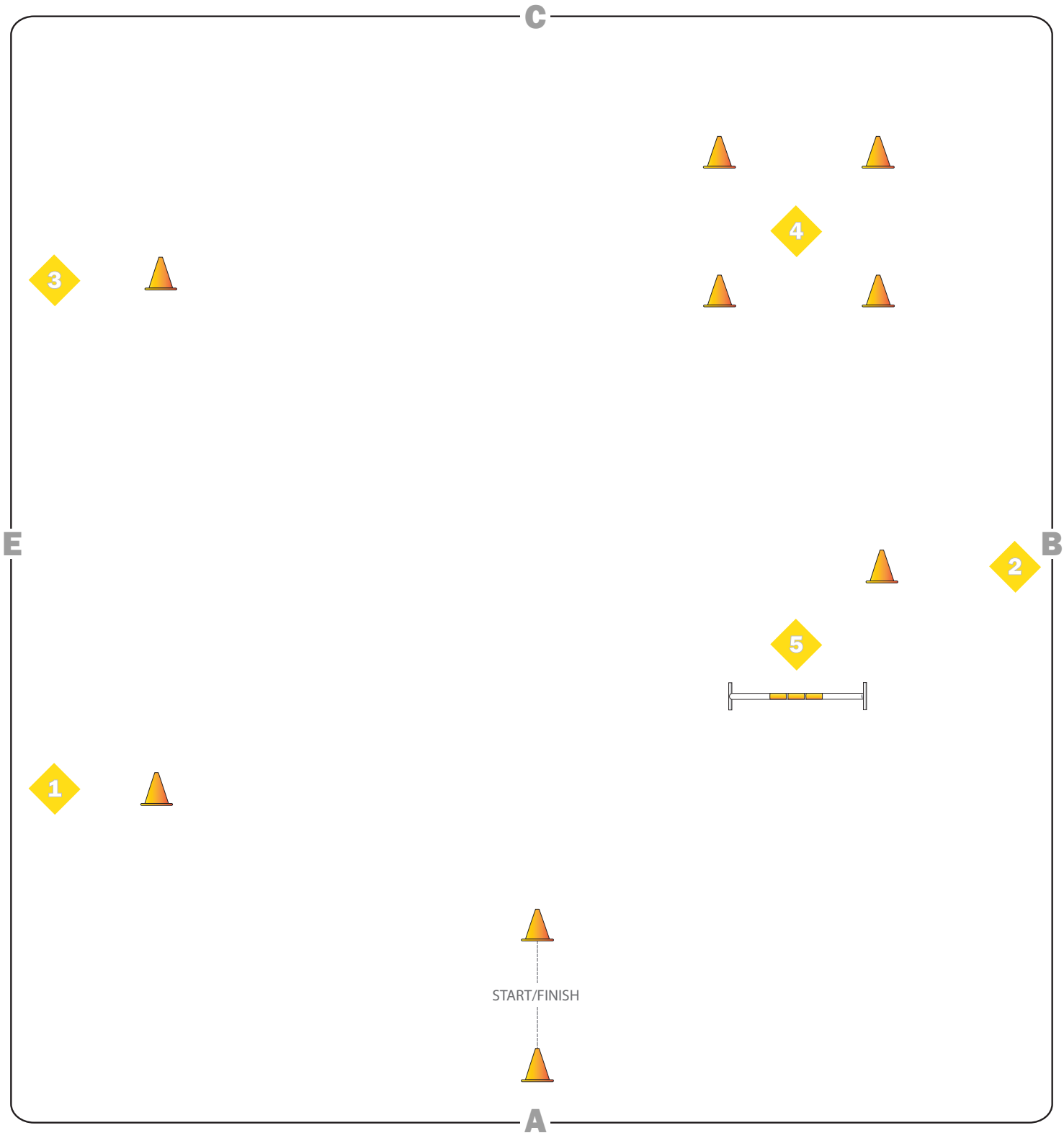
DIRECTIONS:

- **#1**, ride first serpentine loop around cone.
- **#2,** ride second serpentine loop around cone.
- **#3,** ride third serpentine loop around cone.
- **#4,** enter **Challenge Box** and halt. Draw one **Challenge Card** and follow the printed instructions while remaining inside the box.
- **IF** the Challenge Card task is completed successfully, leave box and proceed to **#5,** the jump. Ride over pole and across finish line.
- If Challenge Card task is ***not*** performed correctly, retrace route through all three serpentine loops and return to start line.

NOTES:

This reprise of the Red Level course is a great way to **review and test** survival skills, along with skills that are easily glossed over such as adjusting stirrups and tightening the girth. You might even substitute the mounted Challenge Box cards with unmounted HorseSense challenges such as naming markings or pony parts. Tally points and **award a prize** to everyone who makes it over the "jump" three times.

In our experience, it's a rare student that isn't motivated by the opportunity to "jump." However, if you have a student that can't or won't ride over the ground pole, **make the return route the rider's choice**. The course is designed to be ridden at the trot, but you can use this exercise with groups of mixed levels of ability by allowing the final "jump" to be ridden at the walk or the canter.



Obstacle Course - Yellow Level #5 - Challenge Box

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