

# SAMPLE # 1

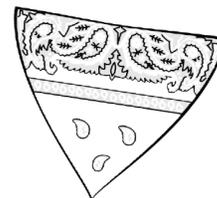
## HorseSense Learning Levels

### FLATWORK SKILLS

ORANGE LEVEL

## BANDANA GAME

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will develop the deep seat required for sitting trot and trot/canter transitions through a Ride-a-Buck variation using cloth bandanas.



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- ☐ 1 CLOTH BANDANA PER RIDER
- ☐ 4 CONES

### PREP

Ensure that rail and inside track of arena are clear and free from obstacles such as jumps or barrels. Set cones to mark each end of a long side; dressage letters M/F/H/K can also be used.

### INTRO

As students warm up at the walk, discuss importance of a deep, following seat. **ASK: What gait do you find the hardest to sit? What transition?**

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### LESSON AND EXERCISES

 **Review:** Seat-building exercises at the walk without stirrups, including hip openers to lengthen leg.

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 **Review:** Appropriate warm-up for the horse's back, including rising trot on a long rein and two-point or light seat at trot and canter.

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**Emphasize:** If the horse is hollow and tight through his topline, sitting trot can be difficult at best and detrimental to the horse at worse. Warm-up time should be used to help the horse move freely forward with a relaxed, swinging back.

 **PRACTICE:** Begin sitting work by asking students to establish a slow sitting trot and **drop stirrups** at the first cone or corner letter. Have each student **regain stirrups** at the second cone and rise to the trot, trotting a large circle at A and C to adjust spacing and open horse's stride. Repeat several times, dropping stirrups for a long side of sitting trot and regaining at the end of the arena.

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 **Discuss:** Sitting gaits are often easier without stirrups. **ASK: Why do you think this is?** Fold each bandana once to form a triangle. Ask students to stand in stirrups so you can **place each bandana across the seat of their saddle**, with the point of the triangle facing the pommel. Explain that like in the classic game **Ride-a-Buck**, their goal is to be the last one left with a bandana, and that they cannot adjust it or touch it by hand.

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 **PRACTICE:** Send each student out to rail to ride from cone to cone, first in **sitting trot without stirrups**, then in **sitting trot with stirrups**, and finally in **canter on the left and right lead**. If their bandana falls, they must return to you for a reset before attempting the exercise again.

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### REVIEW

- ? Do you find it easier to sit the upward or downward transition from canter? Why?
- ? What is your body's worst habit in sitting trot? What could you practice to correct this?

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# SAMPLE # 1

## BANDANA GAME

ORANGE LEVEL

### TEACHING FOR THE FUTURE

This simple lesson is one of our favorites for students Orange Level and up. There is a *lot* going on here: students are motivated to find the “magic glue” that helps them follow the horse’s gaits, yes, but they’re also practicing a **focused warm-up** with consideration for the horse. They’re **dropping stirrups** and **picking them up** at the trot, riding **accurate transitions**, and probably riding a lot of **half-halts** in their quest to find a comfortable gait they can sit.

You also have a great opportunity to practice riding with **impulsion**, not speed. In order to sit the transitions in and out of the canter, students are going to have to find the perfect trot, slow but powerful. They might even start to experiment with **direct transitions** such as walk to canter or canter to halt. Emphasize the role of their position and clear use of aids in making this happen, including **intention**, the most powerful aid of all.

### FUN AND GAMES

- 🐾 Play the last round of the lesson as an **elimination game**. Keep all riders moving and put them through their paces, riding multiple transitions between gaits, changes of direction and ring figures. The last one to avoid dropping their bandana wins a prize.
- 🐾 Every time a student successfully completes a set of transitions, **fold the bandana again**, making it smaller and smaller with each round.
- 🐾 Double your bandanna stash and **use the exercise to improve jumping or galloping position**, placing a bandana between the inside of the rider’s calf and the saddle. Students can practice keeping their bandanas in place on the flat, through a grid, or around a course of small fences.



*Tie-dye bandanas as a camp craft and let each student keep their own.*



**Use the bandana when teaching longe lessons focused on sitting gaits.** This is useful when teaching private lessons, and recommended for students who have not yet developed a secure enough seat to maintain control and manage the reins humanely. Protect your horse’s mouths as well as their backs, and keep trots short and slow until the rider develops a more independent seat.

### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 **Not all trots are created equal.** If you have a mix of silky smooth and jackhammer trots in your group lesson, you’ll need to devise a handicap system to play elimination games fairly.
- 🐾 Whether you include a competitive round or not, **encourage students to measure their own progress rather than comparing their ability to others.** Not all bodies are created equal, either. For many riders, developing a consistent sitting trot can be a long and challenging quest!

# SAMPLE #2

# HorseSense Learning Levels

## JUMPING SKILLS

ORANGE LEVEL

## RHYTHM POLES

**OBJECTIVE:** For students to practice maintaining a quality jumping canter over a series of canter poles, using vocal techniques to improve rhythm.



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- ☐ UP TO 6 GROUND POLES OR CAVALETTI
- ☐ 2 CONES

### PREP

Set a single pole or cavaletti on inside track at B or E, placing additional poles off to side for easy access. If using a round pole, secure ends so it cannot roll. Set cones to mark approach and departure.

### INTRO

"When we train a horse, one of the very first qualities we try to achieve is rhythm. Rhythm is also the secret to smooth, effortless jumps." **ASK: How does maintaining a steady rhythm make it easier for you to ride? How do you think it helps your horse?"**

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### LESSON AND EXERCISES

 **Review:** Transitions between free walk and medium walk, counting along with the beats to see if the horse maintains a forward, marching rhythm.

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 **Review:** Using posting to speed up, slow down and maintain rhythm at the trot, along the rail as well as through large circles and changes of direction. Once students have established a good working trot, ask them to ride over the pole in posting trot. **ASK: Did your trot rhythm change over the pole? If so, why do you think this happened?**

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**Emphasize:** Each horse has a sweet spot where they can maintain a relaxed working gait. Once students find it, ask them to count out loud along with their horse's trot, as though their voice is a metronome setting the pace.

 **Discuss:** Counting or chanting in time with the horse's gaits can help riders keep a consistent rhythm and a regular breathing pattern. Although there are three beats to the canter, a two-syllable chant can be easier to synchronize. **ASK: Can you think of a food you like with two syllables in its name?**

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 **PRACTICE:** Ask students to develop a steady working canter along the rail, using the two-syllable chant of their choice in time with the horse's rhythm. One at a time, send them over the pole in the canter. **ASK: Did your rhythm change? If so, what happened?**

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 **PRACTICE:** Once students can maintain a consistent canter and count over a single pole, start adding poles one at a time to **create a line of canter poles or tiny bounces.** Encourage students to begin their chant at the approach cone and keep it to the final cone, in time with the horse's canter.

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### REVIEW

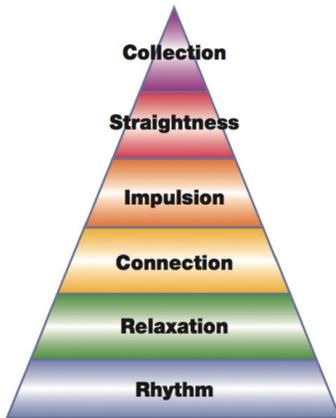
- ? Does your horse get faster or slower over the poles? Why do you think this happens?
- ? Can you think of a song with a beat that matches your horse's canter?

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# SAMPLE #2

## RHYTHM POLES

ORANGE LEVEL



### BUILD IT UP

Your students have already been practicing rhythm whether they realize it or not, learning to post to the trot, sit the canter, and negotiate lines and gymnastic grids. Hopefully, they'll never stop - **rhythm is the foundation of all good flatwork, jumping, and riding cross-country.**

Once your students can consistently count strides and keep time with their horse's canter, build your canter poles into a **progressive gymnastic grid**. A series of small bounces, designed to establish an impulsive, rhythmic canter, can be a great way to set students up to successfully jump new heights. You can also challenge your students to chant their way through **complex polework setups** and **full courses** - a bit of multitasking that is harder than it sounds.

### FUN AND GAMES

- 🐾 **Play music** with a strong trot tempo throughout the warm-up, encouraging students to try to match the beat. If the music has lyrics, make sure they are family-friendly!
- 🐾 Teach this exercise as part of a camp session and ask students to ride to the chant of "Pizza, pizza." **After the lesson, reward them with a pizza party**, and make horse-safe "pizzas" out of graham crackers, applesauce and shredded carrot or alfalfa. (Unless your horses are strictly sugar-free, of course.)

**If your students are shy and reserved, or rhythmically-challenged, you may need to count along with them.**

Counting strides and maintaining a consistent canter can both be challenging or frustrating at first, so encourage students to relax and embrace the "silly" by choosing words that sound out of place in the jumper ring. Our students like to shout "PIZ-ZA" and "TA-CO", undoubtedly confusing anyone passing by! Try singing "Jump, jump, jump your horse," to the tune of "Row Your Boat" or create a similarly rhythmic recitation.



### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 **Correct distances between poles are essential** for horses to maintain their jumping canter. In general, 9'-10' is comfortable spacing for most horses - but ponies may need poles set 7' to 8' apart, while 11' to 12' is needed to accommodate long-striding Thoroughbreds and warmbloods. **Working with a mixed group? Build two pole grids side by side**, clearly marking "lanes" with cones so students can keep the horse and pony grids straight.
- 🐾 **Watch spacing carefully**, and establish rules for circling and passing in group lessons. In general, students should allow the rider in front to clear the canter poles before starting their approach.