

# SAMPLE #1

## FLATWORK SKILLS

PURPLE LEVEL

### BLIND CIRCLES

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will develop feel for bend and accuracy by riding 20m, 15m and/or 10m circles with eyes closed.



#### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- 8 CONES

<b>PREP</b>	Measure a 20m circle and create track by placing pairs of cones at each quarter point, leaving approximately 6' between cones for horse to pass through. It is helpful but not necessary to set the circle within the boundary of a regulation dressage arena (20m x 40m, or 20m x 60x).	5 MIN
<b>INTRO</b>	As students warm up at the walk, discuss importance of riding accurate figures - a task that is much harder than it looks. <b>ASK: Why do you think accuracy matters in the dressage ring? On a show jumping course? A barrel race?</b>	5 MIN
<b>LESSON AND EXERCISES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☛ <b>Review:</b> Riding 20m circles at the walk and trot on both reins, with and without cones. <b>ASK: How does your left circle feel different than your right? How could you improve your horse's bend and balance?</b></li><li>☛ <b>Review:</b> 10m half circles at the trot. 20m half circles in preparation for upward transition to canter and full 20m circles in canter.</li><li>☛ <b>Emphasize:</b> Rider position is key to maintaining consistent bend and balance through circles and half-circles. <b>A horse's spine will mirror the rider's spine.</b> Check that inside shoulders and outside legs are back, and that the inside leg - not rein - is the primary bending aid.</li><li>☛ <b>Discuss:</b> Riding accurate turns depends as much on feel and muscle memory as it does visualization. With practice, students should be able to ride each circle with eyes closed!</li><li>☛ <b>PRACTICE:</b> Send students onto track of 20m circle one at a time; spread out remaining horses to avoid herd-bound behavior. Ask each rider to circle in working trot until passing smoothly through all cones, then close eyes for a quarter of the circle, opening when prompted. <b>ASK: Did you make it through the next set of cones?</b> Once student is successful, try for a little longer, working toward a whole trot circle with eyes closed.</li><li>☛ <b>PRACTICE:</b> Take frequent turns, allowing each student to practice "riding blind" on the left and right rein. If time allows, move the cones in to create a 15m circle and repeat the exercise. Set cones at 10m for the final set of circles.</li></ul>	10 MIN
<b>REVIEW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>☛ Is it easier to maintain the bend circling left or right? Why do you think this is?</li><li>☛ Can you feel the moment <i>before</i> your horse drifts out or falls in?</li></ul>	5 MIN

# SAMPLE #1

## BLIND CIRCLES

PURPLE LEVEL

### BUILD IT UP

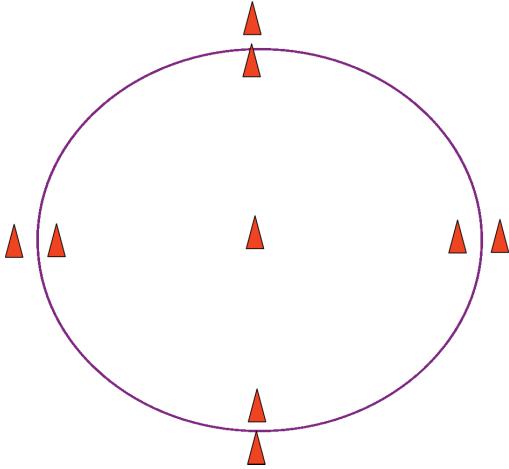
Although this lesson is particularly useful for **Purple Level** students working to polish their accurate ring figures, we find **it adapts well for students at all levels of ability**. **Red** and **Yellow** riders can enjoy the challenge and thrill of riding portions of a large circle with eyes closed at the walk - and since horses tend to wander more easily at the walk, it may take them a couple of lessons to conquer the exercise. **Blue Level** students are usually balanced enough to ride 20m circles at the trot with eyes closed, and more daring students can attempt a portion of the circle at the canter.

**How quickly you advance through the exercise** will depend on the skill of your riders, the size of your group, and the honesty of your horses.

We expect **Purple Level** students to eventually be able to ride consistent full circles with their eyes closed, in both directions and at all three sizes - but it may take you more than one lesson to get there.

### FUN AND GAMES

- ☛ **Award a prize** to each student who successfully completes a full circle with eyes closed, or to students who ride a full circle at all three sizes.
- ☛ Challenge students to a contest: **who can circle the longest** without opening their eyes?
- ☛ Start with cones set a generous distance apart - we recommend 8' for the first round - and **gradually shrink the gap** until only 3' to 4' remains.
- ☛ Highly-skilled students can attempt the ULTIMATE blind circling challenge: **riding a figure-eight** of two identical circles.



*Be sure to stand at the center of the circle - well away from cones!*

### FINAL NOTES

- ☛ This game depends on **clear verbal communication** between you and the student. Explain that you will tell students when to close their eyes and when to open them, reassuring them that **you will not let them ride into a bad situation**. Students will be prompted to open their eyes once the goal is achieved **or** they have ridden past the point of reasonable correction.

It can be helpful to **provide constant feedback** as each student trots along. Your dialogue might go something like this: "Eyes closed now. You're on the path, keep this feeling. You're through the first set of cones. Your circle's getting small, spiral out. You're through the second set of cones. Contain the outside shoulder. You rode just outside the third set of cones. Outside leg and rein - now open, you've drifted too far out."

- ☛ Most horses actually go quite well through this exercise, thanks to their rider's improved feel and subtle use of aids. **Horses who suddenly veer toward the gate or herd, however, are not a good choice for this lesson.**

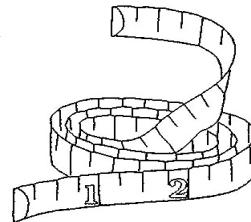
# SAMPLE #2

## JUMPING SKILLS

PURPLE LEVEL

### GROW YOUR OWN GRID

**OBJECTIVE:** *For students to learn how to set and walk distances for gymnastic jumping, designing their own progressive grid.*



#### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- MINIMUM OF 4 JUMP STANDARDS WITH CUPS;  
5 OR 6 IS PREFERABLE
- MINIMUM OF 8 POLES
- MEASURING TAPE

#### PREP

Place jump standards, poles, cups and measuring tape in center of arena, but do not construct grid. Make sure arena is clear to allow an easy approach and departure off centerline, in both directions.

#### INTRO

"Who is excited to do some gymnastic jumping? You've already learned that grids must be measured carefully to make them a safe, confidence-building experience. Today we'll *all* be building a grid from the ground up... so be thinking about what you'd like to jump!"

5  
MIN

#### LESSON

#### AND EXERCISES

- ☛ **Review:** Effective warm-up routine for jumping, to include work in two-point position and transitions within as well as between gaits.

15  
MIN

**Emphasize:** Riding entirely on the rail can make the horse use the fence for steering and support - which will not help when jumping through a grid! Encourage students to ride as much as possible on the inside track, quarterlines, and diagonal lines.

- ☛ **Discuss:** Average stride length in the trot. **ASK: Do you think all of these horses have the same size stride?**

10  
MIN

- ☛ **PRACTICE:** Once a workable distance has been determined, ask a volunteer to dismount and walk off four trot poles, using the measuring tape to check their work. After they remount, the group rides in generously-spaced single file over the poles, alternating between left and right turns on the departure.

10  
MIN

- ☛ **PRACTICE:** Ask a new volunteer to build the first crossrail. **ASK: How far from the last trot pole should the first jump be placed? Why?** Repeat the pattern over the grid until all riders are smoothly negotiating poles and crossrail and landing in canter.

- ☛ **Discuss:** Length of canter and distances used in gymnastic jumping. **ASK: Is the canter stride ALL that takes place between each jump? What about takeoff and landing?**

15  
MIN

- ☛ **PRACTICE:** Ask for volunteers to build out the rest of the grid, using the distances of their choice and setting ground poles along with standards. Students then remount and ride over poles before you build up the grid one element at a time.

#### REVIEW

- ? What would you do if you had a 16.2hh horse and a 12.2hh pony in the same group?
- ? This grid is designed to be approached in trot. Will the distances work if you canter?

5  
MIN

# SAMPLE #2

## GROW YOUR OWN GRID

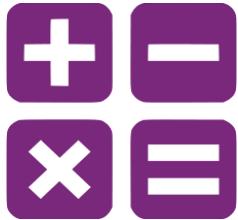
PURPLE LEVEL

### GROUP VS PRIVATE LESSONS

- 🐴 **Large groups can team-build the whole gymnastic** at the beginning of the lesson, prior to warming up. If possible, have the group assemble before tacking up horses, or you will have a lot of horses to hold while they move jumps!
- 🐴 **Private students can also build the whole grid at once** to minimize mounting and dismounting.
- 🐴 As always, **be careful with spacing when jumping as a group.** Instruct students to watch for a clear centerline and circle as needed before making their approach. If working with a large group or a small arena, ask students to walk or halt on the rail after each trip through the grid, so they can safely wait for their next turn.



### MENTAL MATH



**It's a strange but sadly frequent occurrence:** a child who can bravely leap a 3' oxer and bounce back into the saddle after falling off, reduced to tears because she "**can't do math.**"

Some of us are perfectly comfortable doing a little mental math, painlessly working through multiplication tables and simple addition and subtraction. Some of us never get there. We've learned to recognize the glazed, deer-in-headlights expression of a student's brain stuck in an endless loop - and we've seen this phenomenon in straight-A, honors-level algebra students, so age or academic record don't seem to be of help!

Unfortunately, there's no way around it. **Riders who want to jump are going to have to perform some basic calculations,** and they're not going to be able to whip out a calculator every time they move a pole. Long before your aspiring jumpers start building grids and courses, start checking in with the numbers in their heads. Do they know their multiplication tables for 3s, 4s, 9s, and 12s? Can you give them a number and have them figure out the closest multiple of 3? If you ask them what 1/2 plus 1/2 equals, will they confidently tell you the answer is 1?

**Keep your tone light and positive whenever talking numbers.** Avoid putting students in a position where they MUST KNOW and are a FAILURE for not being able to produce the answer. If you sense that calculations are not their thing, explain why they'll need it to jump and help them figure out a strategy for boosting their mental math skills.

### FINAL NOTES

- 🐴 Grids can include a mix of bounces, one-strides, and/or oxers, depending on the equipment allowed and the length of your arena. All students should have previous experience over these elements. **Remember that you have the final say** - be ready to suggest modifications to make a grid appropriate for the whole group.
- 🐴 If you are teaching a group of mixed horses and ponies and their stride lengths cannot comfortably compromise, you may need to **divide your group and adjust distances between each round.** Other alternatives include building side-by-side grids - assuming you have lots of poles! - or allowing pony riders to approach in the canter.