

WARM-UP and WARM DOWN
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Client Information Sheet Hand out

Important part of every exercise session or performance!

- Gradually increase the horse's body to adjusting from rest to exercise
- Enhances performance and reducing the risk of injury
- Start of communication between horse and rider.

Immediate objective is establishing a state of physical and mental relaxation.

- Excessive tension in the muscle groups is energetically inefficient.
- A good warm-up delays the onset of fatigue due to lactate accumulation.
- During the warm-up the temperature of the muscles rises by about 1 degree. The muscles can contract more powerfully and which reduces the risk of injury.

Free Walk 10-25 minutes: Warm-up begins slowly with the horse walking on a long rein encouraging the poll to drop below the wither.

- The duration of walk period depends on the individual horse and recent activity. A horse moving in a pasture, a couple of minutes is sufficient. A horse standing in a stall during horse show or winter time they will benefit a longer walk. Younger (less than age 6) or older horse (older than 16) require a longer slower warm-up
- Must be forward, consistent rhythm and on a loose rein
- Consistent inside leg to outside rein communication at this stage leads to better balance, connection and control later when schooling or performing.

First 5-10 minutes: Goal - Increase circulation and warm up big muscle groups.

- Move the horse into a forward, active trot or canter.
- Active is key, increase blood circulation to the big skeletal muscles.
- The choice of trot or canter depends on the horse. Pick one that the horse is best balanced and relaxed.
- Continued consistent expectation of obedience to rider's leg for forward.
- Large accurate patterns, changes of direction, continuing consistent expectation of schooling inside leg to outside rein.

Second 5-10 minutes: Supplying exercises.

- As this warm-up progress the supplying can become more demanding: turns, circles, serpentines and leg yielding
- Accuracy of patterns leads to consistent obedience to the rider's leg

Third 15-30 minutes: Introduce the specific planned schooling session

- Progress to a shorter rein length increasing hindquarter engagement.
- If horse is to jump, introduce low jumps to progressively increase size to allow gradual stretching of the tendons and ligaments. If speed is required gradual increase speed.

Fourth: Specific schooling session or preparing for performance begins!

Warm Down 5-10 minutes: Reverse the warm-up, transition from exercise to rest

- A warm down should include low intensity exercise (trot or canter) for 5-10 minutes. Gradual redistribution of the blood flow enhances lactate removal from the muscles.
- Supplying exercises are performed throughout the warm down to release tension and reduce post- exercise soreness

- Ends with a period of walking on a long rein. Horse finish the day's work relaxed in mind and body 😊

References: Conditioning Sport Horses, by Dr Hilary Clayton,
Equine Canada English Rider Handbooks Level 3-4-5 & Level 6-7-8, 3rd, edition 2012