

Guidelines for Creating a Conditioning Schedule

Pre Conditioning

Horse will be in good health and prepared to go to work. Preparation will include attention to weight, pre-existing problems or lameness, foot care, teeth, vaccinations, de-worming, hair coat (to clip or not) proper fit of tack, and any other issues.

Horse must be able to do 30-45 min of light work on the flat, hacking and jumping before starting the conditioning schedule. This may take as little as two weeks or as long as several months.

Three examples of a 7-day (1 week) schedule

Day 1 Flat	1 Flat	1 REST
2 Jump	2 Jump	2 Flat
3 Hack/Work	3 Hack/Work	3 Jump
4 Flat	4 REST	4 Hack/Work
5 Jump	5 Flat	5 Flat
6 Hack/Work	6 Jump	6 Jump
7 REST	7 Hack/Work	7 Hack/Work

Definitions:

REST: A day of no work with turn-out if possible, otherwise hand walking or light hack. Rider should pick their busiest day at school or work as rest day. A weekend day is often not a good rest day because you compete, go to lessons etc.

FLAT: Training to improve horse/rider communication, horse's physical balance and strength, all non-jumping flat work, dressage tests movements and your horse's ability to go across the country with manners and "ridability."

Work should be progressive so that the horse and rider may attain complete understanding. Please utilize the Standards of Proficiency D-A, and the Flow Chart as well as other references to help you understand your goals at each level.

Many horses enjoy and benefit from a stretching walk or light hack before and /or after flat work.

JUMP: Continuing to build the bonds of flat work while including poles, cavaletti, gymnastic exercises and grids, single fence exercises and course work.

Utilize hacking and flat work when needed.

Use Standards as well as other references for appropriate heights and difficulty of exercises.

HACK: Hacking is calmly riding outside of the ring in all gaits, using terrain when possible to strengthen your horse's muscles and tendons and increase wind capacity. You may use 6-3-1 (6min walk, 3min trot, 1 min canter) as an exercise when hacking.

WORK: Working the horse is using a specific program (many use interval training) with specific speeds and amounts of time worked, to evaluate your horse's fitness or lack of fitness by calculating their recovery with TPR (temperature, pulse and respiration)

Notes: Some horses may only be able to do 30 min of 6-3-1 or less in the beginning. Be sure to monitor their energy level and recovery rate of respiration and pulse. Recovery rate is the key to helping you know whether your horse is fit at this level, ready to move on to the next level, or needs to repeat the first level because he is still not fit enough to move on. Guideline: Horse should recover pulse and respiration by 50% in 5 min after work. EXAMPLE: Pulse 100bpm, resp 85 bpm immediately after work. 5 min later: pulse 50bpm, respiration 42 bpm. If pulse and respiration are "inverted" ie: resp is higher than pulse, your horse is extremely unfit and needs to return to less strenuous work. He may also need veterinary attention.

DAILY LOG: This is the record you keep of your actual activities. Example: your horse might have a shoe off when you come to the barn to get ready for a Jump Day. So you might get the shoe put back on, skip a Work Day the next day of your schedule, replace it with a Jump because your horse is pretty fit and needs the jump practice more. Your Conditioning Schedule helps you set goals and have a systematic way of achieving them, your Daily Log records what REALLY happens in your schedule. Remember, those TPR's (temperature, pulse and respirations) are important to record regularly.

FINAL NOTE: These are Guidelines for beginning to understand conditioning your horse and the many ways it can benefit you. There are many resources for much more in-depth application of these skills. Please feel free to utilize them.