

ROOKIE EXERCISES

WHERE TO START WHEN YOU'RE STARTING OUT

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Transitions help your horse use his hind end, "check the brakes," and sharpen your horse's response to the aids. This exercise can be done between gaits (e.g. walk, halt, walk) and within gaits (e.g. medium trot, collected trot, medium trot).

HOW IT'S DONE:

Walking your horse around the arena with straightness, and rhythm.

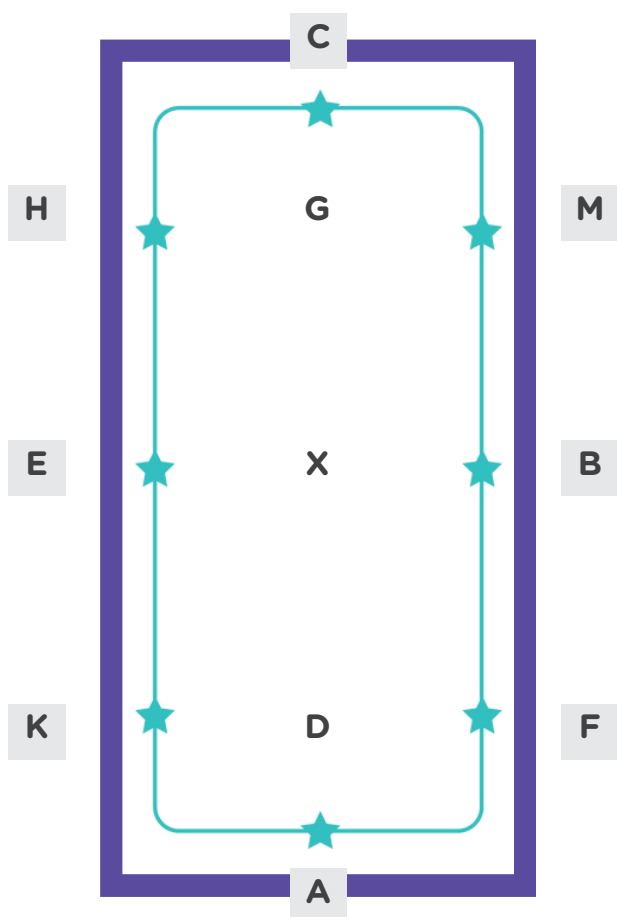
Whenever you get to the stars, ask for a crisp halt.

Pause for 3-5 seconds.

Cue for the walk, and be sure your horse responds promptly to your leg aids.

Repeat in both directions.

Challenge: Try trot-walk, then canter-trot transitions.



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OWL EYES

This exercise lets you practice both circles and straight lines. You can add transitions within the gaits for added difficulty (e.g. collect the trot on the circles, lengthen the trot on the straight lines).

HOW IT'S DONE:

Walk or trot your horse around the arena with straightness, and rhythm.

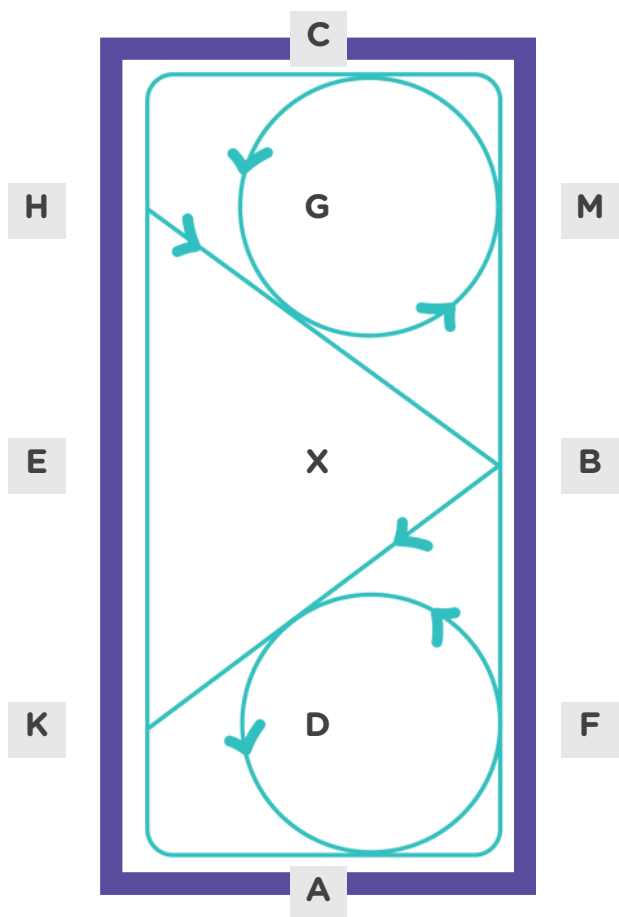
Before "C," make a medium sized circle.

Return to the rail and travel to "H," where you leave the rail in a straight line to "B."

Make another straight line from "B" to "K," then return to the rail.

After "A," do another circle.

Then try it all in reverse!



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YIN AND YANG

This exercise incorporates direction changes, bending lines, and accurate circles. It can be performed at the walk or trot. Pay special attention to the "S" shape during your changes of direction to ensure you hit cross through "X."

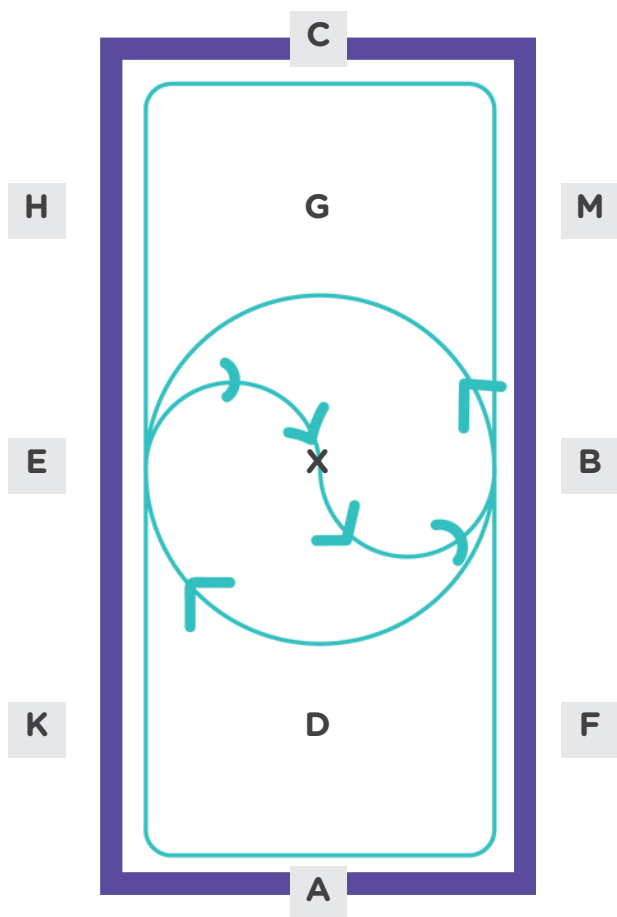
HOW IT'S DONE:

Walk or trot your horse around the arena to the right until you reach "E." Do a 20-meter circle.

Once you return to "E," execute an "S" shape—crossing through "X"—to change direction.

Ride a 20-meter circle left, then return to the rail.

Challenge: Add transitions within the gait (e.g. medium walk or trot on the 20-meter circle and collected walk or trot on the "S" shape).



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SQUARE SERPENTINE

This exercise strengthens your horse's hind end, helps you practice accurate turns, and trains your eyes to look where you're going. Practice at the walk and sitting (collected) trot in both directions. You can do as many loops as you like.

HOW IT'S DONE:

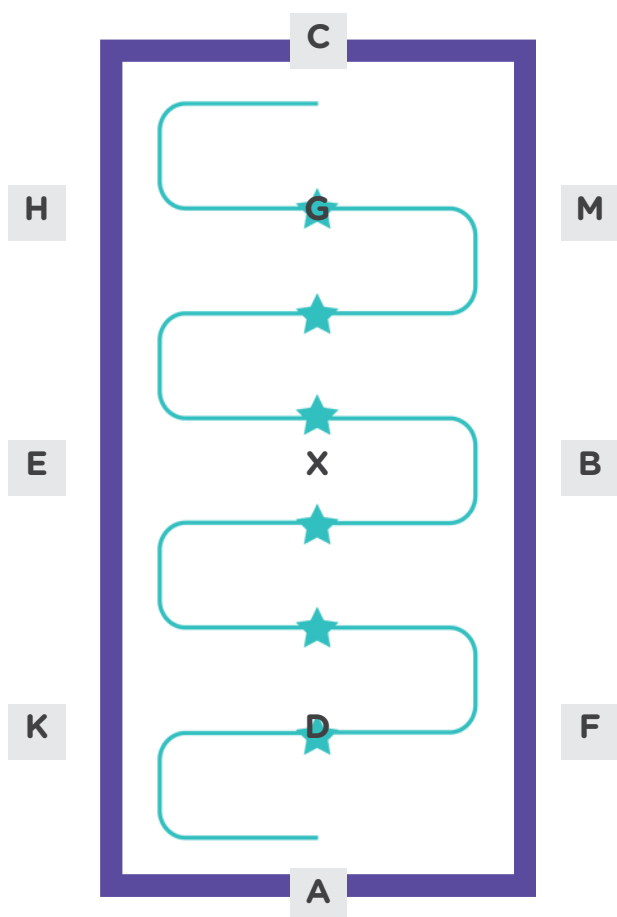
Walk around the rail, then start your serpentine at "A."

Execute 3-5 loops based on available space using square turns at the ends.

Focus on looking up and planning where each loop will go in your arena.

Reverse and repeat before trying it at the sitting trot.

Challenge: Add halt transitions every time you cross the centerline (show with stars).



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CREATE YOUR OWN TEST!

Let your imagination run wild. Create your own dressage test by piecing together 5-15 different movements. Make sure you write it down and get specific about the size and location of each movement. Here is an example test.

- Enter sitting trot at "A."
- "X" halt, salute.
- Proceed sitting trot, and track left at "C."
- "E" circle left 20 meters.
- "A" walk.
- "F-X-H" free walk to change direction.
- "C" sitting trot.
- "M-X-K" lengthen trot to change direction.
- "A" left lead canter.
- "B" 20-meter circle.
- "M" sitting trot.
- "H-X-F" lengthen trot to change direction.
- "A" right lead canter.
- "E" 20-meter circle.
- "M-X-F" zig-zag.
- "A" down centerline.
- "X" halt, salute.

