

## Setting your horse up for success with

# Harry Meade



We have teamed up with Dodson & Horrell and their new ambassador, Harry Meade, to share with you his top training exercises that he uses regularly with his horses. Known for his quiet and sympathetic style of riding, Harry gives us an insight into setting your horse up for success, from the arena to the cross country field.



**Exercise focus:** Getting a strong horse to focus.

**Horse:** Tenareze (Taz) eight year old competing at 2\* level.

**The exercise:** Jump around the clock. Position four poles on a 20-25m circle at what would be three, six, nine and twelve o'clock. To ensure the distance between the fences are the same, have a block in the centre and stride out from there when positioning each pole (10m / 11 yards is a good distance).

Make sure you are in the centre of each pole and take time to establish a comfortable rhythm by counting the strides in between each pole. Gradually put up one fence at a time whilst you continue to ride around the circle.

For a more gradual progression you can just raise the outside edge of the

pole so that it is on a slant and ride it through before putting it as an upright.

### Harry explains how to ride it:

"The idea when riding the exercise with the poles on the floor, is that it is a very easy and small exercise that can be developed as part of the horse's flatwork initially and then developed into a show jumping exercise when the poles are raised. However, make sure your stirrups are jumping length from the start.

"You start with the four poles on the ground and there is no real given distance between each pole, so just jump through in a balanced canter to establish your stride. Make sure you jump each pole where you intend to (over the centre stripe), this prevents you from falling in or cutting out on the turns and gets you used to aiming for a specific part of the jump.



*Concentrate on being in the centre of each pole*

"You will find a comfortable distance throughout depending on the size of the circle and how well it fits to the horse's stride. It is normally 3-4 strides for a 20-25m circle, however, it doesn't



*Keep your body central and look for the next fence so the horse knows where to go on landing*

Photos by Nick Perry

Watch Harry demonstrate this exercise by watching the video on our YouTube channel: Redpin Publishing



really matter how many providing you maintain a canter where the poles become almost irrelevant and it feels as though you are simply cantering a 20m circle. You can turn out of the circle at any point by jumping over the pole and turning the opposite way on landing. The horse should just naturally land on the correct lead for the change in direction and pick up a circle the other way and then you can continue the exercise on the new rein.

“Once you are happy with that, you can put the outside end of the poles up and the horse should find it exactly the same, on the same stride and the same rhythm. This is particularly good for a horse that can get a bit strong because on the turn the horse cannot tow you like they do on a straight line. It keeps them thinking and maintains the effect of what is now a small fence still seeming like a canter pole. Don't push the horse out of their natural rhythm.

“To progress further you can then put the inside end of the pole up too so it is now a small upright and you can ride through with the same relaxation and as little pressure as

you have previously. In effect, you are now jumping through what is now a straightforward jumping exercise but hopefully as it has been built up slowly, the horse understands what is being asked and is able to maintain the same rhythm, relaxation and softness that they would have just jumping the canter poles on their own.

“The rider should maintain a light seat throughout the exercise and be sure not to twist their body or shift their weight to the inside when going over the jump. Controlling the shoulders on the turn is important, so the rider must make sure they are supporting the horse through the outside aids and keep their inside hand light and lifted so that they are not jack-knifing the horse's head and neck as this will cause the shoulders to fall out on the turn. Make sure you look for your next fence on take-off to the previous jump, so that on landing your horse understands where he is going.”

If your horse is struggling to maintain the canter rhythm and balance on the turn then try just linking two fences together to begin with and



Control the outside shoulders on the turn so the horse doesn't drift out

then ride a straight line out of the circle. The next step would be to link three jumps and then when they feel better balanced, you can attempt all four.

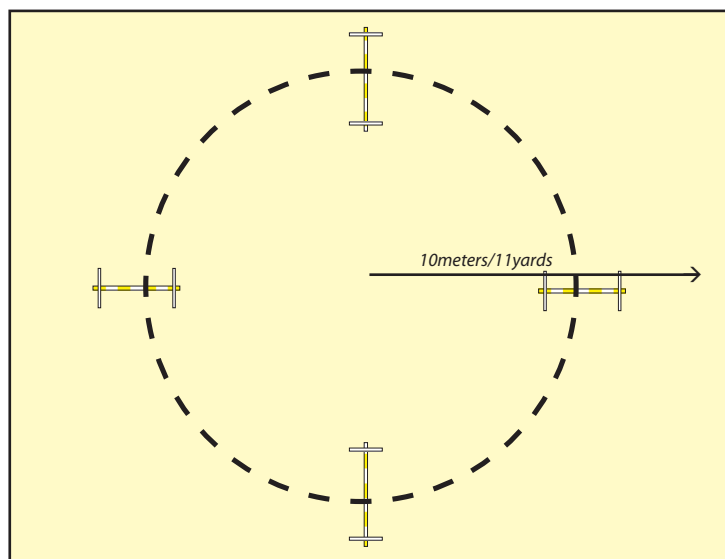
If ridden correctly, this exercise will improve agility, the quality of the canter and overall control of the pace, the striding and the horse's positioning.



You can turn out of the circle at any point by turning the opposite way on landing

*Harry is one of Britain's leading event riders. He finished third at Badminton last year and was a member of the silver medal winning team at the World Championships. He was also voted the 2014 Rider of the Year.*

*Harry is always looking for new rides at all levels. For more information visit [harrymeade.com](http://harrymeade.com)*



Position four poles on a 20-25m circle at what would be three, six, nine and twelve o'clock.

## Feeding for energy and focus

By Dodson & Horrell Vet, Chloe Bristow MRCVS

We all know that our horses have their own individual quirks and temperaments. Taking these into account when choosing a feed, will help to prevent instances of too much or too little energy when it comes to training and competing.

Some horses are naturally 'in front of the leg' and can be fizzy or excitable. The key with these horses is to provide slow releasing energy. What this means is providing calories from fibre and oil, which give sustained stamina, without the 'sugar-rush' associated with feeding a large amount of cereals. This will help minimise any excitable behaviour while giving your horse the energy to work. Cutting out any treats from their diet and using a non-molassed chaff will also remove any excuses for fizziness and promote calmness while training.

On the other hand, horses that are 'behind the leg' or that can be lazy, may benefit from fast-releasing energy. The sugars released when cooked cereals are digested in the small intestine will boost energy levels in the bloodstream and give extra 'oomph' and drive. These are often combined with oil and

fibre to give a blend of fast and slow-release energy, providing sparkle and stamina. The time of feeding is also important if you have a particularly lazy horse or good-doer. For these horses we may not want to provide lots of extra calories, so using a small amount of a cooked cereal feed two hours before exercise will ensure energy levels are at their peak when working, without encouraging weight gain.

As each horse is an individual, it's always worth getting expert advice. The nutritional team at Dodson & Horrell are highly skilled at advising on diets for horses in work and performance horses and will recommend an energy source to keep you and your horse focused and working as a team.

Dodson & Horrell Staypower Cubes are ideal for excitable horses or those that need additional stamina, while Competition Mix provides fast-releasing energy for added 'oomph'; both are designed to keep your horse performing at the top of their game.

For more information, call the Dodson & Horrell nutrition advice line on 01832 737 300.

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