

DRESSAGE, EVENTING, HUNTERS, JUMPERS

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PRACTICAL HORSEMAN

EXTRA

DOUG PAYNE'S
FOOTWORK
AND ACCURACY
EXERCISE

10 Hoof
Care Tips

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Oxers and Angles

Eventer Doug Payne shares his favorite footwork and accuracy exercise.

A great mental challenge for both horses and riders, the exercise I'm describing here consists of an oxe with placing rails before and after it, followed by five strides to a vertical, then a wide turn to another oxe and a bending line to an angled in-and-out. Unless you and your horse are very experienced, introduce it one section at a time, repeating each step until it's riding well before putting all the elements together.

Who Can Do It

Horses and riders of any level, from those just learning how to canter jumps to Advanced-level eventers and grand prix jumpers.

Benefits

This exercise:

- encourages your horse to become quicker on his feet and more agile while teaching him to always be looking for the next jump.
- gives him confidence and teaches him to become more adept at getting

himself out of difficult situations.

This is the result of the low fence heights—the fences are no bigger than 18 inches (see “Setup” at right). The low fence heights also help you to not worry about finding perfect distances to them every time.

- requires that he remain well-balanced and energetic with a consistent rhythm—the result of the shorter-than-standard distances.
- helps you improve your accuracy with plenty of practice holding your line to different types of jumping questions.

Setup

At one end of a diagonal line across your arena, build an 18-inch-high, 18-inch to 2-foot-wide square oxe, with placing rails on the ground 7½ feet from its base on either side, followed by a 12-inch vertical 55 feet from the second placing rail. This vertical will also serve as the “A” element of the one-stride angled in-and-out. Offset it relative to the oxe/placing rails so that the center of the oxe lines up with the right-hand side of “A.” Build the “B” element of the in-and-out at the same height and parallel to “A,” but substantially offset as well, so the straight track going through the centers of

(continues on pg 4)

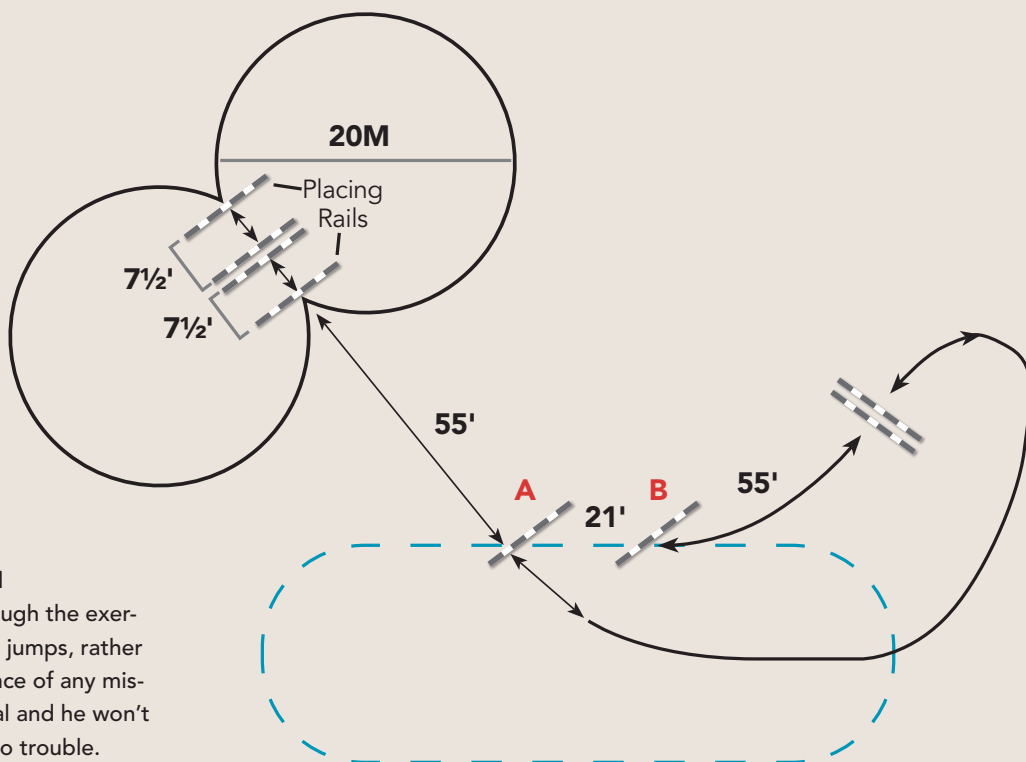
Doug Payne and Vandiver pictured at the 2018 Carolina International CCI3-star, which they won.



(continues from pg 3)

both verticals requires you to jump them at an angle and so that it's easy to approach one side of "A" on a perpendicular track without having to swerve around the jump standard of "B." Make the one-stride distance between the verticals 21 feet center to center. Finally, build another 18-inch square oxer 55 feet from "B" on a bending line to the left.

Make sure that all the fences can be safely jumped in both directions (either with ground lines on both sides or no ground lines at all). For the first run through the exercise, err on the side of too-small jumps, rather than too-high, so the consequence of any mistake your horse makes is minimal and he won't lose his confidence if he gets into trouble.



How to Ride the Exercise

Plan to approach each element of the exercise in a collected canter with very light, even contact and your hands close together to support and guide your horse on the correct line.

Ideally, ride the entire exercise in a light, two-point position, especially if your horse is hot or sensitive. If he tends to be spooky, don't hesitate to drop some weight into the saddle and bring your shoulders back. Start with a leg aid at an intensity of 3 or 4 on a scale of zero to 10. That way, you will always have another 60 or 70 percent of intensity left if your horse drops behind your leg. If you typically need more than a 3 or 4, use your whip or crop to remind him to be more responsive to your leg aid.

Meanwhile, use your eyes throughout the exercise. As soon as the top rail of the jump in front of you disappears between your horse's ears, look to the next jump. Make your lines to the jumps your top priority and staying in the gait secondary. If your horse breaks to trot or even walk, instead of rushing immediately back to canter, give him time to think his way through the question. Then pick up the canter again when he feels ready. Knowing that he will never be rushed or pushed out of balance will help him gain confidence.

1 Warm up over the oxer and placing rails, starting with one circle (in whichever direction you prefer) about 20 meters (65–66 feet) in diameter.

Instead of straightening in front of the oxer, continue bending around the circle as if there were no jump there. If your horse lands on the wrong lead (for example, lands on the left lead when you're on the circle to the right), continue circling in that direction until he changes leads, trying not to let him break to trot. If he does not yet have his flying changes confirmed, use the jump on the next revolution to get the lead. If he worries and begins to rush, slow things down by stepping back into the trot.

When he gets the hang of the circle in this direction, introduce the circle in the other direction. Once that's established, begin alternating them in a figure-eight pattern. Focus on maintaining the rhythm and balance

Variations

- For beginner horses and riders, change the in-and-out verticals to ground poles and make the oxers about 6 inches high and 6 inches wide (low enough for your horse to walk over, if necessary). Roll the ground lines out several inches from the bases of the jumps and set the placing rails 8 feet from the oxer. Start with 30-meter (98-foot) circles in the figure eight. To make the straight line from the oxer/placing rails to “A” easier, initially approach it at a slow trot or even walk. Be sure you’re laser-accurate before, during and after each jump before progressing to cantering the exercise.
- For advanced horses and riders, tighten the placing-rail distances to 6 feet, raise the oxers with caution and gradually shrink the figure-eight circles to as small as 8 meters (26 feet) in diameter. Increase the difficulty of the in-and-out by setting the verticals on a more severe angle or raising them (to no higher than about 3-foot-3, even for four-star horses) commensurate with that angle—never increasing the height and angle severity at the same time. Whatever level you and your horse are, any question you tackle should be either mentally or physically challenging—but never both at the same time.

while gradually bringing the circles smaller—to whatever size circle your horse can comfortably maintain.

2 Once that feels good, ride the straight, steady five-stride line from the oxer/placing rails to the first element of the in-

aspect of this portion of the exercise. Keep your eye on that line and light contact on both reins as you approach “A” at the correct angle, being aware that your horse may try to straighten in the air and run past the right jump standard of “B.”

“Hold his hand” as little as possible at home so that your support will have the most impact when you really need it in competition.

and-out, following a perpendicular track to the right side of “A.”

3 Next, introduce the angled in-and-out. Starting on either your right or left lead, plan a track that will take you straight through the centers of “A” and “B,” jumping them both on an angle. This is the most critical

It’s very important to teach event horses that runouts are never acceptable. Your job is to make the only option be to finish on the other side of the jump without ever overfacing your horse with a question too challenging for his level of training. If he runs out at the second element, quickly stop him, push him laterally away from the direction of the

runout, then turn back to face “B” and ask him to hop over it. Once you get the hang of this, try the in-and-out in the other direction (“B” to “A”), finding the same straight line through the centers of both verticals.

4 When that’s going well, jump the in-and-out in the original direction (“A” to “B”) and canter the left-hand bending line to the second oxer in five steady strides. Then try the bending line in the other direction (oxer to in-and-out).

5 When all these elements are riding well individually, put everything together. Ride the figure eight over the oxer/placing rails, then go straight over the right side of “A,” continue straight for a few strides before making a wide left turn to jump over the second oxer, heading back toward the other jumps. Finish by riding the steady five-stride, right-hand bending line to the in-and-out, “B” to “A,” center to center on the same angled line you practiced before.

As your horse gains confidence, try to use less and less rein contact to maintain straightness. “Hold his hand” as little as possible at home so that your support will have the most impact when you really need it in competition. He’ll start to look for the next fence and react much more quickly to changing conditions. These skills will pay off in competition, where you’ll seldom see questions of this difficulty—even at the upper levels! 🐾

Five-star eventer Doug Payne was the highest placed American on the U.S. Eventing Team at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games aboard Vandiver, who has since retired in good health. He also competes in grand prix show jumping, upper-level dressage and is a USEF-licensed eventing judge and technical delegate. Doug lives in Rougemont, N.C., with his wife and fellow five-star rider, Jessica, their son, Hudson, and daughter, Abigail.

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10 Hoof-Care TIPS

Farrier Chris Volk explains strategies that promote hoof health—and help you avoid emergency calls—if you make them part of your routine care.

Healthy hooves are literally the foundation for everything you want to enjoy with your horse. Getting his hooves into top shape and keeping them that way isn't time-consuming. It's just a matter of building healthy-hoof practices, like the 10 I'm about to describe, into your daily management routine.

1. Pick out your horse's feet.

This may sound pretty basic, but it's the single most important thing you can do for his hooves—and I encounter a surprising number of owners who think picking out the feet is the farrier's job. Your horse gets a head start on healthy hooves, and you get a chance to take early action on many common hoof problems, if you pick out

his feet ...

- before each ride to remove any stones or small objects lodged in his feet before you add your weight to the situation and to check on the condition of his shoes.
- after you untack him in case debris has gotten stuck in his feet during the ride.
- when you bring him in from the pasture at night to check for objects in his feet or for turnout injuries.



- before turnout the next morning to check for heat and pulse (see below), remove manure and check for signs of thrush (more details on that below).

Each time you clean your horse's hooves, take an extra couple of minutes after you've pried out any packed debris to gently clear the crevice of the frog and scrape any remaining bits of matter off the sole with the tip of the pick. You want to be able to see the sole's entire surface to spot thrush or puncture wounds so finish the job with a stiff brush. Some hoof picks come with brush attached, or you can buy a brush separately and inexpensively.

from the cleft of the frog. Later, the frog becomes cheesy in texture.

Although thrush can eventually cause lameness and significant hoof damage, its early stage is simple to treat. Use an over-the-counter remedy recommended by your farrier or veterinarian—follow directions carefully—and make sure your horse's stall is clean and dry. If you normally bed with straw, consider a change to more absorbent shavings. Some horses—especially those with upright, narrow feet with deep clefts that tend to trap more dirt, debris and manure—are predisposed to thrush even when well cared for. If you



DAILY CLEANING

1. Picking out your horse's feet at least twice daily is a big step toward healthy hooves. Working from the heel toward the toe, use the hoof pick's point to remove debris packed against the sole.

2. Next, clean the crevice on each side of the frog and (gently) the cleft of the frog.

3. Scrub away smaller particles with a stiff brush.

4. A clear view of the sole and frog is your opportunity to spot such problems as thrush or puncture wounds.

2. Establish what's "normal."

While handling your horse's feet to pick them out, notice their temperature. When everything's OK, they'll feel very slightly warm. Take a moment to locate the digital pulse with two fingers pressed against the back of his pastern. You're interested not in the rate of the pulse but in its strength under normal conditions. Check the frog, which has about the texture and firmness of a new rubber eraser when it's healthy.

Don't be alarmed, though, if everything else looks OK but the frog appears to be peeling off—most horses shed the frog at least twice a year, sometimes more often. Your farrier's regular trimming of the frog may have prevented you from noticing this natural process before.

3. When picking out the feet, look for signs of ...

- **thrush.** The first clue to this bacterial condition is a foul smell and dark ooze

think your horse has an early case, ask your farrier to check.

- **puncture.** If a nail or other object pierces your horse's sole and then falls out, the entry wound will probably be invisible by the time you pick his feet and you'll be unaware of it until it causes an abscess. But in some cases, the object remains in place to be discovered when you brush the last bits of dirt from the sole. **DON'T PULL IT OUT.** Put your horse in his stall (protect the punctured foot and help the foreign object stay put with wrapping and duct tape or with a slip-on medication boot), and call your veterinarian right away. An X-ray of the foot can show how far the object has penetrated and which structures are involved. (If you pick your horse's feet out regularly, you'll find the problem within a few hours of its occurrence.) Then your veterinarian can remove the object and advise a course of treatment.
- **cracks.** Some cracks are superficial, others can worsen, involving sensitive hoof

structures, without appropriate shoeing. One cause of a crack is a hoof abscess, which breaks out through the coronet band at the top of the hoof, creating a weak spot in the hoof wall that must be attended to as it grows out. If you notice a crack, call your farrier and describe its location and size so he can decide whether it needs attention now or can wait until the next regular shoeing.

- **abscess.** If your horse's digital pulse feels stronger than usual and/or his foot is warmer than normal to the touch, the cause could be an abscess inside the hoof from a badly placed shoeing nail, a bruise or an overlooked sole puncture. Your routine check can alert you to the problem and get your veterinarian or farrier involved before your horse—probably at least slightly lame already on the abscessed foot, which throbs from the pressure of increased blood flow to the infected area—is in even greater pain. (If you find increased heat and a stronger-than-usual digital pulse in both front feet, and if he's shifting uncomfortably from foot to foot, call your veterinarian immediately. These are signs of laminitis, an inflammatory condition that can cause severe hoof damage—and, if not treated promptly, can even be fatal.)

4. Schedule regular farrier visits according to your horse's individual needs.

Although six to eight weeks is the average, there's really no standard interval for trimming and shoeing. If your farrier is correcting for a problem such as underrun heels, a club foot or flare in the hoof wall, your horse may benefit from a shorter interval. If everything looks fine, but you notice that he begins forging—striking the back of a front hoof with the toe of a back hoof (you'll hear a metallic sound)—in the last few days before his next shoeing, ask your farrier whether a shorter schedule might avoid the problem—possibly four to five weeks in the summer, slightly longer in the winter.

5. If your horse is shod, check his shoes each time you pick out his feet. Look for:

- **risen clinches**—the ends of the nails your farrier trimmed and clinched (bent flush with the outer hoof wall) at his last shoeing are now sticking out from the hoof. This is a sign the shoe is loosening, probably because it's been in place for several weeks. He can injure himself if the risen clinches on one foot brush the inside of the other leg.
- **a sprung or shifted shoe.** When instead of sitting flat on your horse's hoof, the shoe is pulled away and perhaps even bent, it's sprung. If it's moved to one side or the other, it's shifted. In either case, the nails in the problem shoe can press on sensitive hoof structures when he places weight on the foot.

6. Learn how to remove a shoe—yes, you!

Many farriers are glad to teach clients how to do this (and may even have used tools you can buy inexpensively). If you can remove a sprung or shifted shoe, you may save your horse unnecessary pain and hoof damage and make life easier for your farrier or veterinarian.

7. Help your horse grow the best possible hooves.

Some horses naturally have better hooves than others. Your horse may already be producing the best hoof he's capable of, or the following steps may enable him to do better.

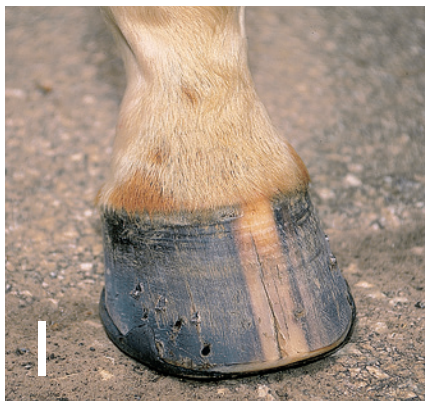
- **Fine-tune his diet.** Ask your veterinarian whether your feeding program is appropriate for your horse's needs.
- **Add a biotin supplement to his ration.** (Ask your farrier for a recommendation). Some hooves benefit from these supplements, others show little change. Plan to use the supplement for six months to a year. That's how long it takes any benefits to show up in new hoof growth.
- **Give him consistent exercise.** Work



DAILY HOOF CHECK

1. Feel the hoof for heat, an early sign of an abscess or, if it's in more than one foot, founder.

2. Check the digital pulse: A stronger-than-usual digital pulse signals inflammation in the foot, possibly from a misplaced shoeing nail, stone bruise, abscess or founder.



REGULAR MONITORING

1. Risen (or popped) clinches are a signal to call your farrier, if he's not already scheduled to come soon. This hoof also has a superficial crack running down the front. The farrier will check to make sure it's growing out properly.

2. A sprung shoe like this one, which is already pulled away from the hoof wall, needs replacing before it loosens or the nails re-enter the hoof wall and hit a sensitive area.

3. An injury to the left bulb of this horse's heel eventually grew out into a healthy hoof. Frequent monitoring ensured that the vulnerable area was always supported by appropriate shoeing.

on good surfaces, especially at walk and trot, increases circulation to your horse's hooves and promotes growth.

8. Avoid the "summer cycle" of alternate soaking and drying of hooves.

Your horse's hooves can adapt well over time to conditions that are consistently dry or consistently damp, but hooves suffer when the environment fluctuates between wet and dry. Unfortunately, this is often the situation during the very months when you want to use him the most: late spring, summer and early fall. Evening turnout—a summer strategy to avoid biting insects—puts hooves in prolonged contact with dew-soaked grass. They swell and soften with moisture, much as your fingernails soften after hours in water. Back in a dry, hot environment during the day, the hooves dry and contract. With repetition of this cycle, horseshoe nails loosen as their holes through the hoof wall enlarge slightly. Such summer activities as work, stomping flies or (if your horse is restless) walking the fence accelerate the loosening. Pretty soon you're asking your farrier, "Why can't my horse keep his shoes on?"

There are a couple of things you can do to minimize this pattern:

- **Cut back on summer turnout time.** Try to reduce by a few hours the time your horse spends standing in a dewy nighttime paddock or stomping flies outside during the day.
- **Reduce moisture absorption** by applying a hoof conditioner and toughener to the lower two-thirds of his hooves before evening turnout. (But pass up conditioners that leave the hoof feeling oily. They can actually soften hoof wall if used frequently.)
- **Avoid unnecessary baths.** Sponging the sweat off your horse after schooling works just as well without causing him

to stand in a puddle for half an hour or more. Save the full-scale bath for just before the show.

- **Shorten his summer shoeing schedule.** A lost shoe often means hoof damage, which escalates the cycle of summer shoeing problems. Spacing your farrier's regular visits a week or so closer may prevent emergency calls.
- **Toughen his soles** with a daily application of a sole toughener or hardener.

9. Try not to turn out in deep, muddy footing.

Hours of standing in mud may encourage thrush or scratches (a skin infection in the fetlock area). Mud is hard on shoes, too: The suction of deep mud can drag off a shoe already loosened by alternating wet and dry conditions. Mud also makes picking up his feet a harder job. If your horse is slow about getting his front feet out of the way, he may end up pulling off the heels of his front shoes because he's stepping on them with his back toes.

10. Protect your horse's hooves during hauling.

Without covering for his heels, he can easily step on the edge of a shoe and pull it partially loose—then spend the remainder of the journey standing on the nails of the sprung or shifted shoe. Another vulnerable area is the coronet band: the rim of tissue at the top of each hoof that generates new hoof-wall growth. Injury to this area (for instance, if he steps on himself while struggling to keep his balance in a moving trailer) can interrupt hoof growth in the area below the affected spot. The solution: Either old-fashioned shipping bandages and bell boots (large enough to cover the bulbs of your horse's heels and the backs of his shoes) or good quality, full-coverage shipping boots reduce the likelihood of these problems. 🐾

*Based in Washington, Virginia, AFA Certified Journeyman Farrier **Chris Volk** cares for performance horses—hunters, jumpers, dressage horses and eventers—from Olympic to local levels. He was a team farrier for the Canadian Equestrian Team and traveled with the team to the 2006 World Equestrian Games in Aachen, Germany and the 2007 Pan-American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.*



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Throughout the weekend, guests will be able to enjoy great food, drinks and entertainment, explore unique retail vendors, interact with famous horses and so much more! For those 21 years and older, guests are invited to experience the [Beer, Wine & Spirits Showcase](#), back for another year. Hungry? Check out our selection of delicious food trucks or the [Fresh Food Festival](#), featuring fresh, locally sourced food.

For kids, we're excited to introduce our brand new [Kids' Zone](#) packed with fun and engaging activities from partners Milburn Orchard, Great Wolf Lodge, the Maryland Horse Industry Board, Fluffy Eventer and more. Kids of all ages are welcome to join us in the infield to find their way through the hay maze, meet and learn about some famous horses at the [Hall of Champions](#), take part in a Work to Ride polo demonstration and most importantly, have fun!

There's even something for your furry companions—the [Maryland Corgi Cup](#) and the [Rescue Dog Parade](#) are back and better than ever this year. Whether you're a dedicated Eventing fan, or you're just looking to enjoy a great time with friends and family, this weekend will surely be one for the books!



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