

## Equitation Pattern Analysis

COACH AND JUDGE, LINDSAY GRICE, TALKS YOU THROUGH AN ENGLISH EQUITATION PATTERN YOU MAY ENCOUNTER IN THE SHOW RING.

— Lindsay Grice

The warm up to any pattern, I feel, should start with the components in random order, especially the ones you may find sticky. If you practice the pattern from front to back, too many times, your horse may begin to anticipate what's next. Walking the pattern on foot helps for those who are memory challenged (like me!) and preserves the sanity of your equine partner. However, I don't drill my students on their trouble spots — we save that for at home — I want them to finish practice on the upbeat.

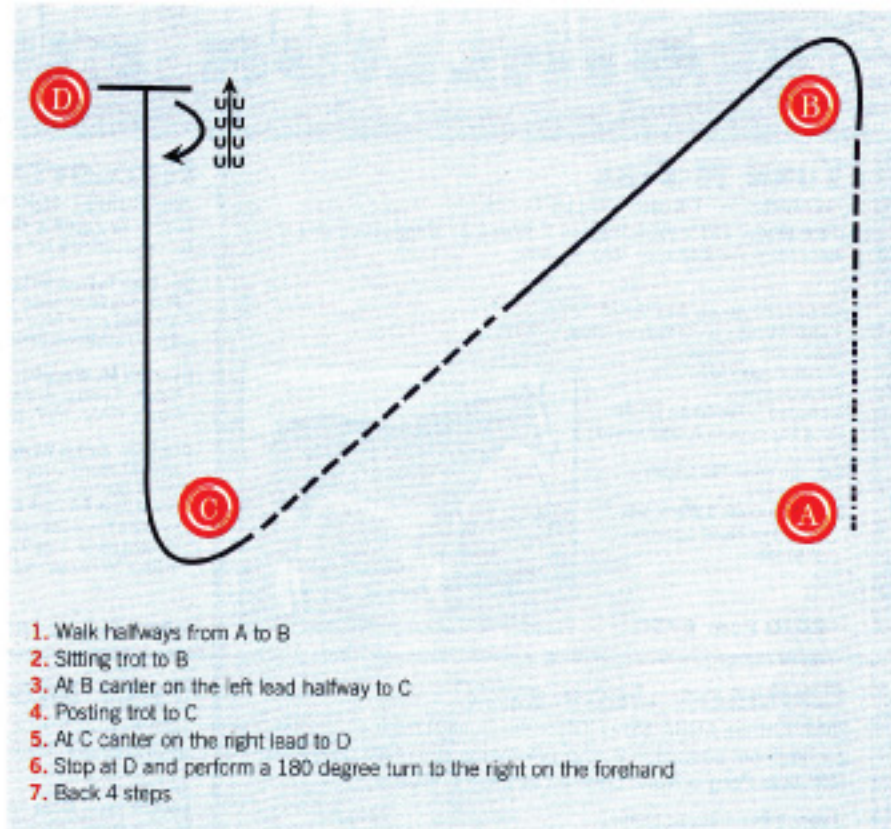
Warm up for this pattern will involve square turns, transitions between trot and canter, stops, and turns on the forehand. I always bring cones to the practice ring and spend little time on the fundamentals of identifying diagonals and work without stirrups, if called for in the pattern. This, again, is for weekly at-home sessions.

**1.** If I was coaching you at this show, I would instruct you to begin a bit closer to the cone than usual. The pattern begins at a walk, so you won't need to wait too far behind the cone to be prepared for a transition at cone A. Keep a distance of roughly 1.5 meters to the right of cones A and B as you will need this space for the upcoming square turns.

**2.** Move into a sitting trot choosing the balance between your leg and hand carefully — too much leg while failing to keep the connection with your hand will result in your horse "spilling" into the upward transition. As a judge, I'm watching for a deep, following seat at the sitting trot. It will impress me if a rider takes a risk and moves forward energetically to show their ability to follow the horse's motion with their hips and elastic arms while keeping soft rein contact. Skipping rope reins and stiff elbows don't score high!

**3.** To achieve a smooth canter transition and avoid any misunderstanding about what lead to pick up, start preparation well before cone B. Quietly slip your right leg back to shift your horse's hips ever so slightly to the left, while containing the energy with your hands. As you ask for the departure, be ready with your inside (left) leg at the girth to prevent him from drifting toward the cone. Ride straight for a stride or two before beginning your square turn.

For a sharp turn, keep your horse's body straight with your outside (right) rein. Turning with your outside leg rather than pulling your horse with your inside hand will prevent your



horse from bulging out around the cone and veering off the line to cone C.

Show off your solid position at the canter by moving forward and rhythmically, if the cones have been set with some space to do so. Hunt seat equitation riders must be secure, deep in the tack and convince the judge that they could easily ride over fences. Loping is discouraged.

**4.** Hopefully you've practiced identifying your diagonals by feel enough at home that after sitting a couple of strides following the change to a trot, you'll identify the movement of the legs and rise on the correct beat. Maintain your horse's round topline with your hands during the transition. Keep the transition and the posting trot forward and decisive.

**5.** Depart into the canter and make the right turn around cone C in the same manner as you did around cone B. Move energetically toward the stop — don't fizzle out and drag to a halt. It doesn't have to be a reining stop, but it does have to be sharp and definitive.

**6.** The cone will be on your left — this could be easily overlooked in a pattern where you have just ridden around the outside of the other cones. Don't risk disqualification — thoroughly memorize your route!

Now, your horse's adrenaline level may be raised after that last line of the pattern. Breathe out and "melt" into the tack before you quietly slide your leg back for the turn on the forehand. If you shift it too abruptly, your horse may be off into a left lead canter.

**7.** Try not to lose the momentum as you continue right into the four step back. No need to check over for the judge to dismiss

you. Simply walk away. You can then trot smartly over to wherever the ring steward has determined, if you wish, to clear the road for the next competitor. **WHR**



Coach, equine advice columnist and judge, Lindsay Grice trains horses and riders for both english and western events. In over twenty years as a professional coach, her students have won, and continue to win at AQHA shows in the United States and Canada. As a competitor, Lindsay is frequently in the winner's circle.

Lindsay's popular riding clinics take her throughout Canada and into the United States, creating thinking horsemen of her students by teaching the "hows" and "whys" of training and showing.

When asked what she loves about her job, Lindsay responds, "I love putting complex principles of riding into a language that riders can understand."

Lindsay is an Equine Canada judge and AQHA specialized judge. She is an Equine Canada certified coach and regular guest lecturer for the University of Guelph's Equine programs.