

POSITION = CONTROL™



1 Pole exercise

Today we look at a pole exercise that can be easily set up anywhere.

- Objective:** Specifically works on position, control and longitudinal flexibility...ie the ability to have a smooth forward transition and a downward transition / ride to a plan and a destination / work on independent use of leg and hand aids / work on correct and exact placement of horse over an object / can be done at all 3 gaits
- How to set up exercise:** 1 x 12 foot pole / place it in the middle of a clear, straight pathway—ideally the long side of the arena or paddock. "Right angle" to fence.
- How to ride the exercise:** (At the walk) Start walking straight down the line to the pole and over the pole. Going straight on "landing." Go to the end of the arena and do a half circle in reverse, and come back down the long straight line and over the pole again. Do this several times. Then start halting in front of the pole; as close to the pole as you can. Then walk forward over the pole and so forth. Be sure to NOT look down at the pole. Keep your eyes focused on your turn at the end of the arena and on your pathway. Use your seat and legs and voice to execute the halt, then your hands. Squeeze your mount's sides with your legs to engage his hind legs into a square halt and stop the forward momentum with your hands. Remember to allow your elbows to follow the head motion whilst under gait...ie don't stop the front end too soon—as horse's head will come up and his back will hollow. You want your horse to soften his back, drop his head into your hand and bring his hind legs under you to square up. You will be able to feel this happening with practise. Then execute the halt immediately after the pole. Halt for 5 seconds (5 Mississippis!). Do this several times. Lastly, and most challengingly, halt over the pole ie front legs on one side of the pole and hind legs on the other. *some mounts may get a fright doing this as by nature horses do not want to touch something hard with their hooves that moves (pole could roll). If your horse does not want to do this immediately, and after you have done the building steps—hop off and do it on the ground a few times and then come back to it another day. Accentuate the positive, always. * My suggestion is to put bell boots on front (and hind too if you want) for this exercise as some times a horse may step short and knock themselves. "Precaution is better than cure."
- Builds on this exercise:** Do it at 3 speeds of gait (short / normal / long) / go over left hand side of both poles > then right hand side of both poles
- Applications:** You can't ask your horse to slow down and speed up properly unless you school him for it on the flat. / Also use this exercise to have controlled, well timed and accurate halts. / Will help with balance, rhythm, cadence, following directions, having a plan and sticking to it, placement over jumps / Will help to execute square halts which are from leg to hand—helps rider know exactly how his aids are affecting the horse.