

The Progression of the Rider

Welcome to the check list of all check lists, this is the basic guidelines that I have developed over years and years of experience for riders to be able to achieve before they move onto the next step, if you are learning to ride, teaching someone to ride or if you are struggling with confidence this is the check list for you. If you are learning to ride, this is your framework to build your own body and skills in the correct way. If you lack confidence this is your checklist to see which fundamental foundation/s you are missing and where your lack of confidence may be stemming from. By going back and making sure you can tick all of the steps before the one you are struggling with you will feel so much more confident and have much better skills to work on what you are working on.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECK LIST

This is not about just doing something once, ticking the box and moving on. To really achieve a mastery of riding and confidence you need to be able to do each step feeling confident, calm and with a deep understanding of how to achieve it. Only when you can do it whilst breathing, have a clear and calm mind and have a full ability to explain what you are doing can you tick the box to say you are trained in this step.

Can I miss steps?

Of course you can. BUT beware as in my experience, when we miss these steps we struggle later on, by taking the time to master each step proficiently you will truly have a solid foundation of the riding basics.

Children? All children can do all of the below, your skill is to make the below fun, and not to rush them on to quickly because you can't make it fun.

MOUNTING UP

- Can you lead your horse to the mounting block
- Can you mount - from a block and from a leg up
- Can you adjust your own stirrups to the right length, on the ground and whilst mounted
- Can you do your own girth up or show how you would do it if it's a small child and can't quite do it themselves
- Can you hold the reins correctly
- Do you understand what the correct length reins is

Walking

Start with either being led or on the lunge, adults prefer lunging, children can be either

- Can you sit into the correct position

- Can you stay balanced and relaxed without holding on, letting your arms hang loose by your side
- Can you do exercises in the walk, circling arms, twisting the upper body, reaching forwards, reaching backwards, touch your toes
- Can you stay in a balanced position with arms by your side when you halt and walk on
- Can you feel each of your horses legs move, and be able to name them
- In a halt can you feel where the legs are placed underneath you
- Can you use your seat to ask for a halt
- Can you maintain balance when you walk a bit faster and slower
- Can you set your horse up to walk at a balanced pace
- Can you hold half seat in walk with a stable lower leg without falling or collapsing into the saddle for a while circle on each rein
- Can you circle your arms in half seat
- Can you walk with no stirrups
- Can you ride a halt transition with no stirrups and stay balanced
- Can you use your leg aid without tensing in the hips or moving your hands
- Can you use different strengths of leg aid without tightening or moving your hands

You are now ready to take the reins and start to control your horse, to stay safe start by doing these exercises with a walker next to you, then once control is established repeat these exercises on your own

WITH A WALKER

- Can you halt accurately and get a walk transition without losing balance or steering
- Can you speed your walk up and slow your walk down
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, around the track
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, bending posts
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, all changes of rein
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, 20m circles (accurately) a, c, e & b

WITHOUT A HELPER

- Can you halt accurately and get a walk transition without losing balance or steering
- Can you speed your walk up and slow your walk down
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, around the track
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, bending posts
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, all changes of rein
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, 20m circles (accurately) A, C, E & B
- Can you steer your horse and maintain a good tempo, on a 15m circle accurately at A, C, E & B
- Can you maintain correct bend for the rein that you are on
- Can you ride and change the bend when needed a; Figure of 8
- Can you ride and change the bend when needed a; 3 loop serpentine on both reins
- Can you ride and change the bend when needed a; 5m & 10m loop on both reins
- Can you leg yield left and right
- Can you ride a turn on the forehand left and right
- Can you walk the inside track with your horse falling in or falling out (do you understand these terms and know how to correct them?)

Walk Poles

- Can you walk accurately over 1 pole on the ground in a balanced position
- Can you walk over a pole in half seat
- Can you do the above over 3 poles without losing tempo
- Can you halt over a pole (front legs one side back legs the other) and walk on
- Can halt in a box of poles and walk out
- Can you walk between poles accurately

YOU ARE NOW READY TO TROT

Trotting

Working along the list below, once you can do this in your own arena, can you do this with others riding with you and feel comfortable with it, can you do these exercises in arena hire and feel comfortable with it

Can you...

WITH A LEADER OR ON THE LUNGE

- Rise Trot whilst holding the neck strap or saddle strap
- Sit Trot whilst holding the neck strap or saddle strap
- Half seat whilst holding the neck strap or saddle strap
- Rise Trot with a stable lower leg whilst letting one arm hang loose by your side, alternate your arms and on both reins
- Sit trot with a stable lower leg whilst letting one hand hang loose by your side, alternate arms and on both reins
- Half seat with a stable lower leg whilst letting one hand hang loose by your side, alternate arms and on both reins
- Rise trot without holding on with a stable lower leg and both arms hanging loose by your sides
- Sitting trot without holding on with a stable lower leg and both arms hanging loose by your sides
- Half seat without holding on
- Sitting trot without stirrups whilst holding on to neck strap
- Sitting trot without stirrups with only holding the neck strap with one hand
- Sitting trot without stirrups and not holding on with a relaxed arm
- Stay balanced without holding on and without stirrups through a walk > Trot transition and from a trot > walk transition
- Be able to go from sitting to rising and back to sitting with stirrups and without losing balance or needing to hold on

YOU ARE NOW READY TO JUST HAVE A HELPER

- Ride upwards transitions to trot completely generated by you and maintain balance and steering
- Ride downwards transitions from trot to walk and maintain steering and balance
- Steer in trot round on the track keeping the horse on the correct line and not cutting corners
- Steer in trot through bending poles
- Steer in trot on 20 m circles

YOU ARE NOW READY TO COME COMPLETELY AWAY FROM THE HELPER AND TROT ON YOUR OWN

- *Maintain an energetic trot without stirrups a regular tempo on turns, circles & straights
- *Ride an upwards transition without losing balance and with correct amount of aids
- *Ride a downwards transition without losing balance and with the correct amount of aids
- *Trot through bending poles
- Trot into the corners
- *Ride trot - walk - trot transitions
- *Trot in half seat for a full lap of the arena and include a 20m circle without losing balance
- *Do you understand the trot diagonals
- *Can you pick the correct diagonal
- Can you maintain the correct bend in trot for the rein you are on
- *Can you change your crop over hands in trot without losing balance or control
- Can you ride all the changes of rein in trot
- Can you ride all 20m circles in trot
- Can you ride a figure of 8 with the correct bend and changes of diagonal
- Can you serpentine in trot with correct bend and diagonals
- Can you ride 5m loops with the correct bend
- *Can you trot as a ride, lead file and following another horse and maintain the correct distance and stay relaxed
- *Can you trot away from other horses
- *Can you trot back to other horses
- *Can you leave your position in the ride and trot past the other horses to return to your position without your horse napping to the others?
- *Can you over take the ride on an inside track without your horse slowing down or losing steering

TROT POLES

Start over a single pole, then 3 poles, then 5 poles, then 7 poles with all of the exercises below, make sure you can achieve them all before adding more poles

- *Can you go over trot poles without grabbing the mouth or dropping the contact
- *Be able to use your leg regularly
- *Balance your seat
- Can you go over them in 1/2 seat balanced with correct contact and good tempo throughout
- Can you go over them on the lunge with no reins in trot
- Can you steer accurately and away accurately towards the poles without the use of cones to guide you
- Can you ride a linked set of trot poles i.e a set of poles across the diagonal and one on the long side with accurate steering and balanced turns with correct tempo

- Can you ride a course of trot poles

Hacking

Make sure you've covered everything in the walk section and the above **stared * trot work** before going on a hack (even if you don't plan to trot) BUT Before you go on a hack...

- Can you mount from both sides?
- Can you ride past a scary object in the arena and know how to help your horse feel confident
- Can you ride between scary objects
- Do you know what to do if a car comes?
- Can you dismount quickly and control your horse from the ground around scary or loud objects
- Can you mount back up from different objects in an emergency?
- Can you open and close gates either mounted or if you have to dismount be able to remount
- Do you understand how to manage traffic, signal at junctions and the rules of riding on the roads
- Do you understand what to do if a rider falls off?

YOU ARE NOW READY TO GO ON A WALK HACK

When introducing trotting on a hack, build the following practices up

- Can you trot whilst keeping yourself relaxed on a hack
- Can you maintain an even tempo
- Can you change your horses bend whilst trotting in a straight line
- Can you change your diagonal every 10 strides
- Can you ride in sitting and rising trot comfortably and relaxed
- Can you trot behind another horse and maintain the correct distance
- Can you trot in front of another horse

Canter

ON THE LUNGE

Sit to the canter and move your body to the horses movement, do each part until you no longer bounce in the saddle...

- Whilst holding a neck strap
- With one hand hanging loosely by your side
- With the other hand hanging kissing by your side
- Whilst circling one arm (make sure you can do this individually with both arms)
- With both hands off the saddle hanging loosely by your side (no tension in fingers or shoulders)
- Without holding on can you ride the canter transition upwards with relaxed arms and hands hanging loosely by your side

- Without holding on can you ride the downwards transition with relaxed arms hanging loosely by your side
- Can you do all of the above in the above order without stirrups
- Can you use your leg in the canter with your arms hanging loosely by your side and not losing balance
- Do you understand the canter transition aids
- Can you ask the horse yourself on the lunge to canter without holding on with and without stirrups
- Can you canter in half seat without holding on

MOVING OFF THE LUNGE

Once you can do all of the above you are ready to start cantering off the lunge

- Can you start by asking your horse to canter in the first corner of the short side and canter 5 strides then trot
- Can you do this without speeding the trot up or losing balance in the trot afterwards
- Can you get the correct lead leg each time
- Do you know if it is the correct lead leg through feel?
- Can you canter on the short side and long side riding into the corners for your canter and maintaining the same tempo throughout
- Can you canter a 20m circle accurately
- Can you do this all with and without stirrups
- Can you ask for canter over X on a 20m circle and not lose accuracy
- Can you ride a figure of 8 in canter with 5 trot strides across X and pick up the correct lead leg each time not losing your steering with accurate shape
- Can you ask for canter at B & E and get the correct lead leg
- Can you canter a 15m circle anywhere in the arena but accurately
- Can you canter a 3 loop serpentine with 3 trot strides over the centre line to change the leg
- Can you adjust from half seat to full seat in canter without horse or you losing balance
- Can you canter leg yield
- Can you canter in ½ seat and maintain an even tempo, and steering i.e a 20m circle

RIDE WORK

- Can you canter as a ride in lead file
- Can you canter as a ride whilst following someone, maintaining a safe distance
- Can you canter in half seat as a ride and maintain a safe distance, even tempo and good steering
- Can you maintain a steady trot whilst the ride canters away from you in an arena
- Can you pick up canter whilst others are at distance and not let the horse speed up to catch up

CANTER POLES

- Can you canter over a pole on the ground
- Can you canter in 1/2 seat over a pole on the ground
- Can you canter over 3 poles set at canter strides (9-12ft apart)
- With two poles set approximately 4 canter strides apart can you canter over them and get 4 canter strides
- Can you get 3 canter strides over the same poles and still be balanced and ride an accurate turn at

the end

- Can you get 5 canter strides over the same poles and still leave balanced and ride an accurate turn at the end
- Can you do all of this in full seat and ½ seat

CANTERING IN OPEN SPACES

Once you can do all of the above you are ready to canter in open spaces

Begin with short bursts and build time in canter as you gain more confidence, either on your own or with a steady horse whose rider has full control and can keep the pace slow. Before you build up speed, for long distances make sure you can achieve the following exercises

- Can you pick a certain lead leg
- Can you keep a regular tempo and sit into the canter
- Can you keep the same tempo and hold half seat
- Can you come back to trot and pick up canter again
- Can you adjust your speed and maintain balance and control
- Once you can do this build the time up on canter and play in different spaces

Jumping

Once you have completed everything above you are ready to start jumping

Lateral Work

Once you have done all of the above you are ready to start building on your basics with more advanced lateral work