

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

“How can you make the most of your jumping lesson?”



Jay Duke, photo © Forever Photography

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COURSE WORK: BREAK IT UP
Difficulty: Intermediate

JAY DUKE Equestrian
Clinics & Course Design

Key Points:
- Transitions
- Course Work

Rider:
- Focus
- Mental acuity
- Clear work
- Straight and bending lines
- Single jump

LESSONS
Jump height - variable
This course covers the basics of a show jumping track. It is designed to be a warm-up for the grand jumper, or for the rider who is looking to improve their skills. The course is designed to be suitable for hunters, as an intermediate level course that is suitable for hunters, and equitation of an intermediate level.

When preparing to ride a course, the rider needs to prepare and plan for each individual test that the course designer has prepared.

“Riding is 90% mental, which means attitude is everything. Any rider with a positive attitude and a desire to learn can be assured a successful lesson before they even walk into the arena. Once these elements are in place, a well-educated instructor has the opportunity to produce significant improvements in both horse and rider.

In 2014, I hung up my show coat for good and retired from competition and training to shift my focus to teaching and training. It was a lifestyle change that revitalized my passion for training. Visiting the barns of young professionals or individual riders to help them grow their business and educate both their riders and themselves is something I love.

I approach each lesson with the goal to see change – whether finite or substantial. Whether a rider competes over 1.0m or at the grand prix level, or only hopes to trail ride with their horse, the lessons are not so different. It's the expectations and technicality that vary. When I teach a clinic, I ask every rider two questions: “What's your biggest struggle?” and “What's your biggest strength?” From there, I try to get the most from that horse and rider, and produce a positive result so that both did something they didn't think they were capable of doing.

After establishing each rider's goals, I remind them never to underestimate the importance of the warm-up. Walk, walk, walk! Starting slow is an important warm-up for both horse and rider and can even include the course or exercise built with ground poles instead of jumps.

Second to an effective and deliberate warm-up, jumping should begin in stages without mentally rushing through an exercise. The focus of every lesson is to ride each individual part of the course or exercise well before putting the pieces together with attention to three details: pace, line (approach), and position (for both horse and rider). Never move on until the previous fence or lines are perfected. The end result will continually be a successful course or exercise, and improvement on the part of horse and rider.

For me, it's important to stay inspired when training at home. As a result, I wanted to bring the horse sport industry together with the development of Jay Duke Equestrian's Virtual Lesson program. It is a subscription-based service that offers my extensive library of flat and jumping exercises, tips, and a few tricks that I have picked up over the years. Subscriptions vary from à la carte, to monthly and yearly options, with mobile-friendly lesson plans delivered weekly via e-mail. They are ready to go straight to the ring with you!

When the show jumping community operates as a whole rather than a group of individuals, magic happens. This reality led me to the development of virtual lesson program. My hope is that it will benefit trainers, competitive riders, and even those going it alone at home.”

— JAY DUKE

Canadian Equestrian Team veteran, senior course designer with Equestrian Canada, and mastermind behind the Jay Duke Equestrian Virtual Lesson Subscription program

Each issue, a new question is answered by an industry professional. Have a question you want answered? Send it to sarah@horseandstylemag.com