

Make schooling, more fun and improve your horse or pony's way of going by incorporating a grid

Great gridwork - get creative

By Sue Mart UKCC level 3 coach, APEC coach, Photos by Bennington Carriages

Sue Mart from Bennington helps you develop your training with a fun grid that can be adapted to all levels. Not only will it help to improve your horse or pony's way of going, but you'll both have a lot of fun trying the grid exercises, too. See how you get on.

The benefits of using the grid:

- It is the ideal training exercise if you have limited space.
- Tests straightness and suppleness, and assesses the rhythm and balance.
- You can build it into your weekly training schedule, for a fun session.
- This exercise is also a good way to start the communication with your back stepper too!
- It can help you recognise the horse's strengths and weaknesses – is the horse stiffer or smoother turning one way or the other, for example?

38 inharness Issue 64 | August/September 2019



The exercise is a good way to start the communication with your backstepper

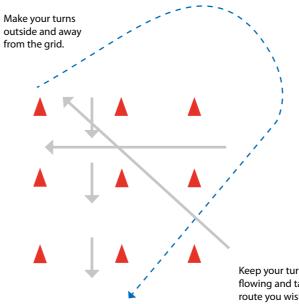
• It makes you think about the manoeuvrability of different types of vehicle. Do you need to use a different approach with a four-wheeler than with a two-wheeler?

You will need:

Nine cones (set 7m/22ft apart) but play around with the distances, depending of the horse's ability and where you are at with your training. If you don't have cones, use barrels, plastic training domes, shavings or even marker spray paint!

The grid in this feature is made up of a square of evenly spaced markers or cones, the most simple being four cones marking the corners of a square.

The route through a four marker cone can be top to bottom, side to side or diagonally. The nine-cone grid gives



Keep your turns large and flowing and take whatever route you wish to through the cones.

you more possibilities and you can just about fit it into a 20m X 40m arena.

You can make the grid bigger if you want, with the next size up being 12 cones, making it an oblong shape. However, this can get confusing, so start simple and use what works best. Driving through the grid is all about seeing straight lines and curves, and it requires quick reactions and good preparation to drive your chosen routes. You will need to look up and think ahead, without overthinking the use of the hand and rein. If you do less you are likely to achieve more.



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Make the grid as big or as small as you like

Sue's top tips

- Always drive to your outside cone, to give you space to turn as wide and flowing as possible.
- Start wide, to make it easier for both of you at first.
- Outside of the circle or turn, the outside rein supports and

controls the amount of turn, and inside the circle or turn, the inside rein indicates the direction of the turn and flexion.

• Warm your horse up first, using transitions, first between gaits then within the pace. Cool the horse down afterwards, too.