

Improve engagement

with Andrew Gould's exercise - transitions

From Prelim to Grand Prix, all horses benefit from doing lots of transitions. It may sound simple, but incorporating lots of upwards and downward changes of pace is the best way to develop engagement

Riding transitions is a simple yet effective way to improve your horse's balance and engagement



As a young rider, Andrew competed internationally on his horse Koffee Break, who he'd trained himself from a five-year-old. He was on five consecutive British European dressage teams and won team bronze in 2000. In 2005, Andrew won the Windsor Young Dressage Horse Championships, he was on the World Class Development Programme 2005-2008, and currently trains eventing gold medal winners Emily Llewellyn and Sienna Myson-Davies as well as international event riders Emily Baldwin and Gemma Tattersall

Andrew is an international dressage rider who famously trains glamour model turned dressage wannabe Katie Price. As well as his own Advanced rides, Andrew schools all of Katie's horses, who are working at various different levels. He says transitions are the key to improving the balance and engagement of all horses, no matter where they're at in their training, or what discipline you're schooling for.

"Regardless of age, walk-trot-walk transitions will help improve your horse's engagement," says Andrew. "It may seem basic, but all too often the value of riding transitions is overlooked. Once people have the basic skills they think they no longer need to ride so many transitions, but this couldn't be further from the truth. I always work lots of transitions of pace into my warm-up whatever horse I'm riding. I'll also use transitions later in my session as a correction if the horse becomes unbalanced."

Transitions are key to balance and engagement

Andrew explains that the key to riding effective transitions is keeping your horse straight. "If the horse is crooked and his quarters are falling out off the track he'll come against the rider's hand and the energy coming through from the hocks will be lost."

As you and your horse become more advanced you can make your transitions more subtle.

"Ride a half-halt and think about making a change of pace but then ride forwards again," says Andrew. "These transitions will be almost invisible to the onlooker but will still serve the same purpose for the horse."

GOOD TO KNOW
To learn how to ride the perfect half-halt, turn to page 40