

# Pole work to develop straightness and focus, with Caroline Moore FBHS

Written by Kathy Carter



Caroline Moore with Gillian Higgins and guinea pigs Ros Canter and Constance Copestake. Photo courtesy of [www.HelenRichmond.co.uk](http://www.HelenRichmond.co.uk)

Caroline Moore FBHS joined the recent two-day Horses Inside Out Conference in the UK to give two coaching demonstrations to the attended crowd of horse owners, practitioners and therapists. With all of the speakers and coaches present focusing on asymmetry in the horse and ways to help improve knowledge, equine performance and health, Caroline began by talking about the importance of schooling exercises that help engage the horse's brain.

“The key factors for a balanced jump, whether across country or when showjumping, are obedience and power and softness; the latter two go hand in hand, as power can create tension, and the rider must then soften. I always tell students that it is the rider's responsibility to look after the pace, balance, energy and stride requirements of the fence they're tackling, followed by rhythm and their line to the fence,” Caroline explained. “Gymnastic exercises are a great way to identify crookedness issues in the horse.”

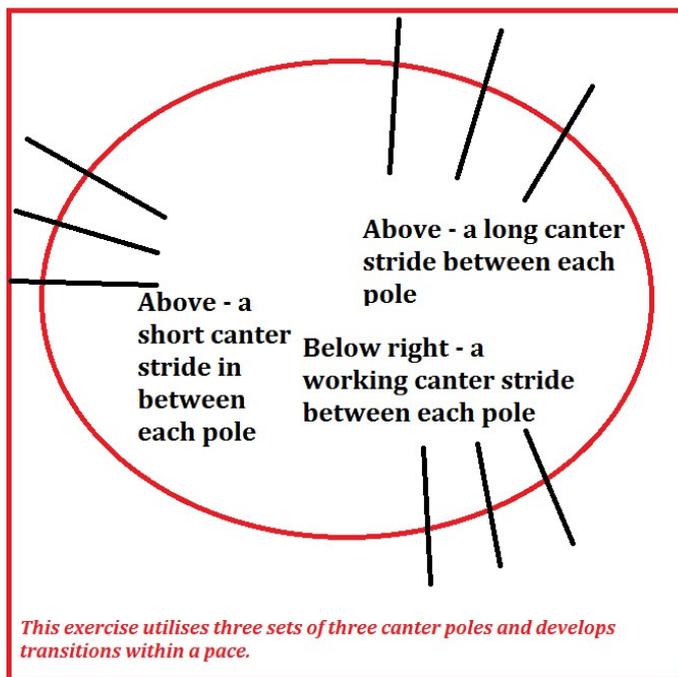


“I'd never actually choose round poles for schooling exercises if I was purchasing them – I prefer hexagonal or square poles, but often use dressage boards in a line, as they bend if kicked, so are quite safe to use,” she explained. “They get the horses' hocks and hips to work, and as the boards aren't very tall, it makes the horses think about where to put their feet, and also assess the distance. Once the horse trots down a line of dressage boards – effectively raised poles - you can shorten the distance to really help lift the animal's shoulders and shorten the stride.”

## Polework to develop transitions within a pace

Caroline asked the two demonstration riders to warm up over a set of three trotting poles on a curve. The riders trotted on both reins to establish rhythm and balance. "Your warm up aims to achieve three things – one, improved blood circulation through cardio work, two, suppleness through using a range of movements, and three, connectivity by riding leg to hand."

Caroline next set up a second exercise aiming to identify crookedness issues, and help develop rhythm and adaptability of pace.



She used three sets of three canter poles in the arena, in an circular area of approximately 20 metres by 40 metres – one set at a standard (or working) canter stride in between each pole; one set at a short canter stride, and the last set at a lengthened stride.

The riders first trotted through the sets of poles – as one canter stride's distance gives two trot strides in the same area. "You can also use this exercise solely in trot, using working, collected and medium trot respectively through the three sets," Caroline explained.

The riders then moved up into canter, the three sets of three poles helping to develop transitions within a pace in between working canter, then collected canter, and then medium canter, and back to working again.

"You can also go on to focus on a particular area of the poles – e.g. a coloured section on one side of the poles - to develop accuracy." Caroline said.

"This is a very ambitious exercise and one that's very useful for eventers," Caroline said.

*Caroline Moore FBHS has produced and ridden horses up to 4\* level, competing at events including Badminton, Burghley, Bramham and Blenheim.*

Visit <http://www.horsesinsideout.com> for information on equine locomotion, training and management from an anatomical perspective.

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