

schooling you can do with your own horse

An exercise with... ...Kitty Boggis

An exercise to...

...improve your horse's jumping technique

Achieve this by...

...using ground poles before and after a fence

Ground poles – also known as placing poles – are commonly used before a fence, but in this exercise, a pole is also placed after a small jump. This is handy for a number of reasons, says eventer Kitty Boggis.

"It will make the horse think about where he's putting his feet," she says. "It also gets him to 'pop' over the fence, and get up in the air. Otherwise, horses can jump long and flat, and want to shoot off after the fence.

"This exercise can also encourage the horse to jump in a rounder, bascule shape."

Setting up the exercise

Set up one small fence, at a height to suit your level. It should be a straight bar jump, with no ground line. "Having no ground line means the horse has to focus more on the top line of the jump instead of looking at its base," Kitty explains.

There should be about 9ft (three human strides) between the ground pole and the base of the jump, and the same distance again to the final ground pole. Adjust this distance according to your horse's stride.

Riding the exercise

Jump the grid in both directions, raising the height of the fence if necessary.

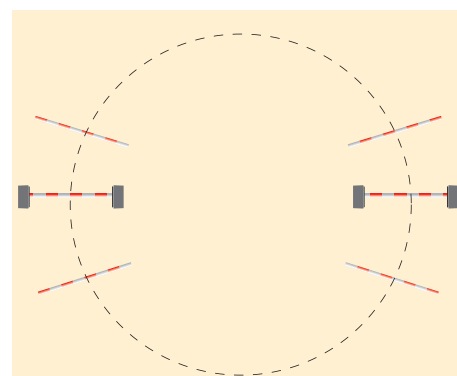
The exercise is designed to 'shorten' the horse's jump, so gradually bring the poles



Ground poles help the horse to bascule over a fence.

closer to the fence, to the point where your horse can comfortably and safely manage the poles on a 'bounce' stride.

Once you have mastered the exercise, you can set it up as a double on a curved line, or have two jumps set up on a circle (see diagram, right). Angle the poles to suit the direction of your approach and getaway.



A more advanced version of the exercise is to set up two jumps on a circle, each with a placing pole 9ft before and after the fence. Again, you can adjust the distances to suit your horse's striding, making sure you maintain enough space to negotiate the obstacles safely.

Meet the trainer

Kitty Boggis, 26, is an event rider based in Lower Stanton St Quinton, Wiltshire. She was the first eventer to represent Britain at pony, junior, young rider and senior level.

In 2005, she finished best under-25 at Badminton Horse Trials on Five Boys and competed at Blenheim as part of the European Championship squad. Her current top horse is Boondoggle, and she is shown here riding her four-year-old mare Zidante.

