



Rider Exercises and Resources

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Below are exercises to help improve your riding. Please consult your physician before starting any new exercise plans and make sure that your body does not have any ailments or restrictions. All exercises are done at your own risk, with variations and modifications available for all. Start light with any weights and adjust reps and sets as needed and increase as you get stronger! Some require machines, weights, or just body weight. Again, modifications can be made!

If you do not know an exercise, YouTube is an amazing resource! Many videos can be found with different variations.

Core: Core is more than just your abs, it is also your lower back and psoas muscles. Keep all this strong to support your horse. It is important to do both dynamic and static core exercises.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flutter kicks 3x30 secs 6-inch hold 3x30 secs Russian twists 3x30 secs Plank- many variations 3x30 secs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ab roller 3x10 Canter crunch 3x20 Mountain climbers 3x20 |
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Back: If our horses need to engage their backs (aka topline) shouldn't we do it too!? A supportive back allows the hands and arms to stay soft to supple our horses, while the back (and core) are engaged. Especially with our latissimus and deltoid muscles, when those are strong, supportive and engaged, we are able to halt through those muscles instead of our hands, allowing again for our hands to stay soft and free.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lat pull downs 3x12 Seated row 3x12 Dumbbell row 3x8 Sumo deadlift high row (with kettle bell) 3x10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pull ups (with band if needed) 3xMax Supermans 3x20 Band pull aparts (with supine hand position) 3x12 |
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Chest/Arms: When we think of our horses' chests, we want them to lift, carry, and engage to create an uphill balance. We must also be able to do this in ourselves and carry our chests upright and tall. Arms are also included in this section because many exercises incorporate more than one part of our body. With our arms, we want to focus on every muscle, but I have found the triceps to be extra important. Our triceps help to support our horses and are a part of our "top line" muscles. Activated triceps allow us to keep our lower arms and hands soft, while the triceps can make the bigger adjustments. When working triceps, start very light! You do not need much to get these muscles working!

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dumbbell bench press 3x8 Dumbbell shoulder press 3x8 Push-ups (modify as needed) 4x10 Chest flys 3x12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tricep bench dips 3x12 Tricep extensions 3x12 Tricep kickbacks 3x12 Dumbbell curls (each arm) 3x10 |
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Legs: As riders, we are often over developed on our inner thigh muscles, and under developed on our hamstrings and gluteal muscles. These exercises will help to even that out. Strong hamstring and gluteal muscles help to support riders while jumping, posting the trot, and sitting any gaits.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calf extensions 3x8 • Hamstring curl 3x12 • Squats of many different variations • Sumo squats 3x12 • Butterfly hip thrust 3x12 • Resistance band hip thrust 3x12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lunges 4x20 • Air squat with ball/chair 3x20 • Box step up (varying heights) 3x10 each leg • Kettlebell swings 3x15 • Donkey kicks 3x20 • Bulgarian split squat 4x10 each leg |
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Cardio: Depending on what stage of riding we are in, and how our horse is acting, riding is both aerobic and anaerobic when we consider our heart rate and cardio fitness. It is important to work both of these, especially if your goals are to jump longer courses, gallop distances, or just want to keep your breathing in sync and not feel winded after trotting or cantering. These exercises can all be done to your version of “pushing” your heart rate. Many people have smart watches or other heart rate monitors right on their wrists, use it!

The difference in aerobic and anaerobic exercises is simple. Aerobic utilizes oxygen you breathe in, instead of needing the energy stored within your body. During anaerobic exercises, oxygen consumption is not sufficient to supply the energy demands being placed on your muscles. This causes your muscles to break down sugars, which results in higher lactic acid production that will need to be stretched out later.

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| <p>Aerobic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long and slow cardio exercises where your heart rate stays low. • Helps to create endurance and cardiac health • Brisk walks • Long and slow hikes • Casual bike rides | <p>Anaerobic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High heart rate to burn fat and gain lean muscle mass • 400m running sprints • Running/Cycling in a high heart rate • Swimming sprints • HIIT training |
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Other cardio exercises with tons of value that will get your heart rate going! Pick 2 or 3 and see how many you can do in 10-15 minutes. This is called an AMRAP, “as many reps as possible.” Do the circuit as many times as possible!

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burpees • Air squats • High knees • Jump rope • Push ups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squat thrusters • Box step ups • Push press • Mountain climbers • Wall balls |
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Stretches: We ALL need to be stretching more! Adding anything into your daily activity is beneficial. Here you can really cater to what your body needs each day. Below is just a small list of examples, the possibilities are endless

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shake out• Toe touches (many variations)• Butterfly• Pigeon• Reclining angle bound pose | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Runner's lunge• Standing hamstring stretch• Child's pose• Any yoga• TRE (Trauma and Stress Relief Exercises) |
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What I have learned for my horses being an athlete: There's nothing easy about wanting to change a body, whether its your own or your horses. Throughout this journey I have been on, I have learned more than I can put down here. A few points have stood out:

- **Muscles under tension:** When we engage a muscle, and keep it engaged, that is a muscle under tension. We do it in our own bodies and feel it through the stress it puts our body under. When our horses engage and keep engaging, we can often get excited, and feel the positives rather than the stresses that the horse is feeling. When a horse gives us a big push or power moment, enjoy it, build it, but do not take advantage of it. Imagine a strength trainer that wants you to hold a weight and keep holding it, and then keep holding it more, all because your form is good or you look good. At some point, form will go away and you will fall apart. It just happens. That is the same with our horses until strength is built. Put muscles under tension, be happy for the effort, and then reward with a break. This will keep your horse mentally positive and happy to play your game.
- **Keep everything fun and a game:** When we have fun, we stay motivated. For us, that may be playing soccer with a bunch of friends, joining a local run club, or doing group exercise classes. For our horses, its variety. The same work in the indoor may come alive outside. Many of the things you ask your horse to do in an arena can be done on the trails or a field.
- **Variety:** When we do the same thing over and over again, our muscles are not able to recover. Each day choose a different muscle group for yourself. With our horses, that can be done in many different ways. Maybe one day a week is jumping/raised poles, another day is lots of high-quality walk and trot, with a bigger canter day on a different day, and then at least one or two days for stretching. I vary my training throughout the week to allow my body to recover and give the best efforts possible. Same with my training horses.

Resources: Below is a list of resources I personally use and have been using for years. It is most important that you find someone that is educated and hears your goals, and then help you to achieve them.

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| <p>Massage Therapy for riders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie Bacon: 215-850-5844 • Inga Mitchell-Dimicco: 215-578-9508 | <p>Chiropractic for riders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jennifer Fisher: 609-915-4994 • Dr. Mike Burak: 215-938-6040 |
| <p>TRE practitioner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danielle Ivins-Fishman: 267-779-6341 | <p>Athletic Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cornerstone Fitness Clubs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peter Rekowski ○ Gina Ranelli • P3 Fitness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nick Farr: 609-915-9373 |
| <p>Saddle Fit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skyland's Saddlery: 908-782-1944 | <p>Equine Massage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Swann: 908-797-5580 |
| <p>Equine Chiropractic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jennifer Fisher: 609-915-4994 • Dr. Kathy Lackey: 732-598-0284 | <p>Equine Nutrition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Geoff Tucker, The Equine Practice |