

Move it like... Flora Harris

The 27-year-old eventer on lateral work, her 'little black book' and the all-important Tesco shop

Nutrition

- Eating well – and often – has made a big difference to my energy levels and concentration.
- Before we leave for a road trip, I do a Tesco shop online and arrange for it to be delivered straight to the lorry. We're then stocked up with healthy food for the journey.

Developing core strength

- I do a lot of non-mounted fitness work, under the guidance of Jon Pitts, to develop core strength, which is valuable in all three phases.
- For one exercise I sit balanced on a Swiss ball and catch a smaller ball that Jon throws at me. This activates my pelvic core and encourages my reactive muscles to be aware and ready to look after me in the event of a difficult jump or an unexpected stride.

LATERAL work is a great way of making sure a horse is equally supple on both sides – it's really important for straightness and connection.

Travers would be my exercise of choice. It's suitable for horses at all levels, but you can be more demanding as the horse becomes more balanced and experienced. With the youngsters I start with some leg-yielding, so they learn what sideways means, before gradually building up the angle and bend. Little and often is the key.

A favourite jumping exercise is to make plenty of transitions within a course or an exercise. I jump a fence then pick a point to make a halt, sometimes reining back for a few steps. When I ride forwards, it's on my terms and only when the horse is in good balance.

This exercise really brings the hindlegs under the horse, in preparation for the halt. I often use it in a warm-up arena as I know then that I've got all my gears and that the horse is listening to me rather than feeling backwards or running away.

With a strong horse it's important not to rush it, using just the rein aid, but instead to ride forwards into the halt before patting the horse. I find that this halt and reward seems to register with a buzzy type.

You can build this into anything: schooling or cross-country, making your halt five – or even 25 – strides after the fence. When used in a positive way it develops great balance and manners.

Mental preparation

- My mental preparation for competition centres around having a clear plan for every phase.
- I take a little black book to the three-day events and make notes about each fence and how to plan for it. Writing details down, such as which tree to turn at or remembering to keep a good body position, helps imprint them in my mind. I carry the book with me and read it through before the cross-country – it's a fantastic tool for visualising what's to come.

Hacking as a fitness tool

- Schoolwork is for the school, as far as the horses are concerned. I use hacking as a fitness tool, but it's really for fun and relaxation and to let them play. This keeps a horse sweet. When we're trotting around a field at a competition, he's then really forward-thinking and willing. **H&H**

