

Q&amp;A

FLORA  
HARRIS

EVENT rider Flora Harris competes at four-star level and is a regular member of British Nations Cup teams. In 2015, she was shortlisted for the Blair Castle European Championships with Bayano. She runs a string of seven horses from her Marlborough base.

TRAINING  
THE STARS

ON the cross-country course, my top horse Bayano can be rather polite, so my aim in the warm-up is to get him taking me forward and reacting to my leg.

Amazing VIII, on the other hand, tends to get over-excited, so the key is not to do too much with her. I negotiate three to five jumps to try and settle her into a rhythm and reduce her freshness slightly.

IT is important to have your horse responsive to the aids and listening to you in the warm-up. Once you set off on course, you need to be able to change between your gears quickly and efficiently. I like to walk quietly to the warm-up area and then prepare for about 10 minutes.

## Consider this...

- Arrive at the warm-up with time to spare. Whatever happens, avoid becoming flustered.
- Avoid doing what many riders do, haring around the warm-up and winding up their horses. Aim to ride positively and confidently, but in a way that keeps your horse focused and in control.
- The warm-up is the place to practise things you are familiar with; it is not the time to try a new challenge.
- All horses are different, so gear your warm-up to each individual.

## How do I perfect my cross-country warm-up?

The British event rider shares her tips for achieving a successful and beneficial pre-cross-country routine

Flora Harris riding Bayano, with whom she won Bramham CC13\* in 2015



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**1** Work in trot for a couple of minutes, then, once you are in canter, lengthen and shorten your horse's stride on each rein. Ensure that he moves easily away from your leg and

ride some square turns with a little outside flexion to check you have good control of his outside shoulder. Make sure you have an effective half-halt with your upper body, too.

**2** Once you have warmed up on the flat, it's time to tackle a few fences — three to five should be plenty — beginning with a small, easy one. Approach in a positive canter, sitting up straight and in balance with your horse. You can use a variety of fences, depending on what's available, but make sure you are positive and use each jump to give you both confidence.

**3** Vary your approach — ride some in more of an open canter and others in a "coffin-type" canter.

It's also often helpful to jump a fence on an angle if this is something you have practised at home.

**4** Allow your horse to walk around and catch his breath before heading to the start box, but keep him awake and in front of your leg. **H&H**

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WEEK

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