

REAL RIDER
TOP
TRAINER

William Fox-Pitt

Schooling can go a long way towards improving your horse's jump and when it comes to jumping itself, keeping it simple is the key, explains William

In this feature

William helps you to...

- School to strengthen your horse's back
- Create a strong, more balanced canter
- Leave the take-off for a jump to your horse
- Help your horse on his 'difficult' rein while jumping a course

Our trainer

William Fox-Pitt is one of Britain's most successful three-day eventers and was the first British rider to become eventing's World No. 1. Since then, he has been World No. 1 a further two times, winning numerous other medals along the way, and has been British No. 1 an impressive eight times. Many thanks to William's sponsors, ActivoMed, who arranged our rider's lesson with William.

Our models

Julie Rooney is riding her 16.2hh, seven-year-old Irish TB, Walter. She has owned him for a year now, but it has taken her a while to get used to him as he can be a bit quirky! She would like to event him and has been told that he has a lot of potential.

Not all horses are blessed with perfect conformation, but that doesn't make them any less good at their job. And as William suggests for Walter here, talking your schooling will help build up those areas that aren't so strong.

"Walter has good paces and a lovely outlook, and he'd do a great dressage test," says William. "But he's built a bit upside down (the underside of the neck is overdeveloped and the topline is underdeveloped), which will make canter and jumping more difficult for him. To help him, work on strengthening his back while you're schooling him."



Although he's a nice horse, Walter is built a little upside down

"Strengthen your horse's back by working on stretching his neck down during every schooling session"

Working on the walk

Walter has a great big walk, which is fantastic, but William suggests teaching him to shorten it, too. "Let him walk on a bit of his usual pace, then collect him," William tells Julie. "If he's finding it difficult, try introducing a little bit of legyield to the exercise to keep him supple."

"When he shortens the walk well, let him walk forward again to show him that you appreciate it and so he doesn't get tense. Remember, though, that when you're asking your horse to show, your body must ask him to wait for you, not your hand."



Walter has a nice, big walk...

...but he would be lame at Jerome's, see



When asking Walter to shorten, Julie uses all her body, not her hands