

Cindy Ishoy Dressage Clinic

Cindy Ishoy is a Canadian dressage rider, a long-time member of the Canadian Equestrian Team, who placed 4th in the 1988 Olympics on her horse Dynasty. She was married to the late Neil Ishoy, a member of the Canadian Eventing team.

Dressage comes from the French verb *dresser* (to train). ***Dressage is a systematic, gymnastic method of training horses.*** It involves six steps, which must be achieved in order (the Training Scale):

1. rhythm
2. suppleness
3. contact
4. straightness
5. impulsion
6. collection

No steps should ever be sacrificed.

Cindy explained how to do a warm-up, step-by-step. This warm up can be used for any level horse. Greener horses would not progress as far into the warm up as a more advanced horse.

Warm up: begin with a progressive warm up which addresses the first 3-4 steps in order. This is a warm up that can be used from any horse, from green to Grand Prix.

In warm up, always use working gaits.

Address rider position in warm up.

First start with a 20 m. circle at the end of the ring at trot. All figures need to be ridden correctly and accurately: if we always rode our circles correctly, then there would be little need for all the other suppling exercises we have to do. Always be very accurate in your every day riding.

Go large, do a 20 m. circle at the other end of the ring. When going large, a well ridden corner is a suppling exercise in itself.

Change rein, repeat. All exercises must be repeated on both sides so the horse develops symmetrically.

3 loop serpentine, twice. Change rein, repeat.

20 m. circle at sitting trot, go large, change rein, repeat.

Between E & B, 20 m. circle, canter. Go large, circle 20 m. Horse's hind quarters are wider than the front. On the long side, always keep a slight shoulder in.

Canter to trot transition: always drive the horse forward to a resisting (not pulling) hand, and then immediately soften once the horse trots.

Change rein, go onto a 20 m. circle. Transition to canter. Go large, 20 m. circle at E/B. Work on trot/canter transitions on 20 m. circle; these are straightening and suppling exercises. Change rein, repeat. Make sure all transitions go from a rhythmic canter to a rhythmic trot. Use shoulder in through canter/trot transitions.

During walk breaks: always keep walk forward and rhythmic. Most of coefficients are at walk; *walk is very important*.

By the end of this approximately 15 minute warm up, horse will have worked through the first 3-4 steps and will be ready for more work in the areas of straightening, impulsion and collection.

Go large, do 10 m. circles on each corner of the long wall plus E/B (3 on each long wall). Keep a nice clean rhythm, otherwise you will lose the gymnastic value of the exercise. Both hands need to carry the horse around the circle.

Suppling exercise before ½ pass: 10 m. circle to shoulder in, 10 m. circle at E/B, travers to end of ring, finish with 10 m. circle. Go immediately only 10 m ½ circle, to ½ pass (diagonally to rail). Repeat same exercise on other rein.

Don't micro-manage your horse; make it his job to balance himself.

Go onto 20 m. circle, canter/walk transitions. *Horses are strongest when they're straight*. Do slight shoulder in through all up and down transitions. Set the horse up, then let him do his job. Coming into the walk, don't forget to soften hand once horse has achieved transition.

It is more gymnastically correct to jog than it is to stop abruptly.

Keep quality of canter – more 'jump' in canter. Slow is not collected. Collected is less ground covering, but with more energy.

Always ride with your whip on the inside.

Walk pirouette: if there is too much hind-end, the inside leg drives forward.

Go straight down next long wall, do three 10 m. circles. Change rein, walk in corner. Shoulder in right through transitions. Canter and repeat circles.

Quality of gait is very important.

Do three loop serpentine with simple changes through walk. Repeat on other rein.
Progress to flying change in serpentine loops.

Medium canter on long wall, collect 10 m circle in corner – let the corner back your horse off, not your hand. Repeat. 1/2 circle (slight shoulder in throughout) to 1/2 pass. Counter canter through both corners, bend in new direction to flying change. Always ride forward to flying changes. Repeat on other rein.

Let horse balance himself, let horse make his own mistakes. Mistakes are not a bad thing: that's how we learn.

At corner, do a 10 m, circle. Go across diagonal and do 4 tempo changes. Finish with 10 m. circle in corner. Keep a long line, don't let horse drift to wall after last change.

Finish with trot on long rein.

Session two

Cindy explained her system and the steps.

The pirouette aids are the same as the aids for the 20 m. circle; with the pirouette, you have achieved all 6 steps.

Warm up: in rising trot, working.

Working trot = when the hind foot reaches into the footprint of the forefoot.

Impulsion exercise – extended trot/piaffe/extended trot (this is not part of the warm up)

Circle, go large, circle. Concentrate on rider position; keep the outside (balancing) hand down (by withers/top of shoulder blade).

Circle, go large, change rein – work horses symmetrically so what you do to the left you also do to the right. Develop horses evenly on both sides.

Keep the rhythm – you don't want him faster, just showing more energy.

Keep even contact when you go straight.

Serpentine of three loops wall to wall – take 2-3 steps to get the new bend so the horse isn't thrown from side to side.

Change rein. Three loop serpentine.

Pull your hand directly/straight back toward the thigh; if your hand crossed the wither, the horse will tip its head.

20 m. circle, sitting trot to canter: go large, circle. Etc.

To straighten horse on long wall, you need to do a slight shoulder in at canter.

Transition: use a resisting hand, not a pulling hand.

To walk, long rein: that is the warm up (about 15 min.)

By this point, you should have rhythm, suppleness, contact, and a degree of straightness.

Pick up contact and go to sitting trot.

Every corner is a suppling exercise.

The serpentine of three loops, trot with walk: change bend in the middle. Important to go from a rhythmic trot to a rhythmic walk. Repeat on other rein.

Don't be afraid to bend the horse more – *take the horse out of its comfort zone*. You need to **ride to win**. You lose 25% of your performance between the warm up arena and the show ring.

10 m. circle: do three on long wall.

Take both hands to the outside to bring the shoulder around.

Keep the outside hand down; don't curl the wrist – that causes stiff hands.

Change rein, repeat.

Go down the centre line; track left at end.

Keep the hands forward so the horse carries itself.

10 m. circle in the corner to shoulder in. Shoulder in is done with both hands to the inside. Sit on inside seatbone slightly; finish with 10 m. circle.

Travers (haunches in): 10 m. circle; shoulder in; 10 m. circle; travers; 10 m. circle.

Change rein, repeat.

Shoulder in; straighten; travers; ½ circle; ½ pass.

Circle (E/B), canter/ trot transitions: don't micromanage horse. Let him find his own balance. He should not be running, but carrying himself. Do a slight shoulder in through the downward transition to trot; canter.

Go large, 10 m. circle every corner and at E/B.

Change rein, trot at X, 20 m. circle at A, canter three 10 m. circles on long wall.

The outside rein controls how high or low the head is. It balances the horse.

On 20 m. circle, try canter/walk transitions. From slight shoulder in, collect to walk.

10 m. ½ circle at canter, ½ pass to rail. Counter canter. Shoulder in, canter, repeat.

Serpentine with 3 loops a canter with simple change through walk.

Do a serpentine of three loops with flying change.

½ circle to ½ pass with a change at the rail. 10 m. circle. Repeat.

Every transition counts in training.

10 m. circle – slight shoulder in to get collection at canter.

Go forward to medium canter on long side. Use 10 m. circle at end to set him back so you don't have to use strength.

Change rein with flying change, on to 20 m. circle at A.

Don't be afraid of mistakes. That's how we learn.

Free walk change rein, trot to medium trot on long wall, back to working for corner, change rein, 10 m. circle in the corner.

Try medium trot at E, collect, shoulder in approximately 5 strides to medium trot.

Push horse out of his comfort zone (which you have to do to win). *If he loses balance, it is a **strength** issue.*

When doing lateral work, shift slightly to the inside. The inside leg drives forward while the outside leg drives sideways (?).

If you drive with no leg (just seat), then the horse goes hollow.

If a horse is late with the flying change, do a 20 m. circle, 2-3 strides left, followed by 2-3 strides right, repeat on the 10 m. circle. Travers, travers, 10 m. circle.

Don't punish: repeat, repeat.