



## Mid Season What to Work On Holly Grayton

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### MID-SEASON EXERCISES:

It's the middle of show season, and we have been jumping a lot! So what can be done to keep your horse limber and responsive to your aids without pounding away?

Personally I have been doing a lot of walk work lately. Being in the middle of show season, we don't really want to tax the horse's bodies as they recover in between shows, but we need to do enough to practice the things we need for the next show.

When I start my ride I drop my stirrups to lengthen my leg and go to work on some great walk exercises. I do a turn on the forehand and a turn on the haunches to warm up and get my horse moving off my leg. I do a couple of leg yields and walk-halt and halt-walk transitions to get him relaxed through his back. I even do a couple rein backs to open up his hips and work the stifles.

Once I have completed these walk exercises, he is normally warm enough and agreeable so I go to the trot work. At the trot I work in some leg yields together with circles and other lateral work.

After a short walk break we move on to the canter. I always work a 'medium' canter - one that can both be extended and collected - which is the canter I like for heading to the fences on course. I make a point of working the collected and extended canter in a variety of places - not always working the collected and then running down the long side! The canter should always be ready to go either way at any time.

I take many walk breaks in a workout, but during my ride I do try to stay focused on my riding and not get caught up talking with a friend or use my phone. This is both annoying to the other riders in the ring if you aren't aware of what's going on around you, but it also takes away from your focus. If we expect our horses to be focused, we should give them the same dedication!

I like to work my horse through all his exercises every day, even if only for a short time, just to be sure he is moving off both legs. Mandy Porter, top American Grand Prix rider, once told me the horses don't have to do an entire long side of shoulder-in (or any other lateral movement), he must simply move off the leg when it is applied.

During the show season I often prefer to change directions and leads in my flatwork with simple changes, as there are always many flying changes to do on course; this also helps me keep my horse listening to my cues, instead of having him always anticipating and being one step ahead of me.

Transitions, transitions, and more transitions! Transitions are your friend; to be honest, that's what course work is really all about. Moving forward and back, without losing rhythm. It's a skill that needs practice!



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Normally a daily workout can last between 20 and 45 minutes, depending on the situation. If I am doing a short flat ride in the morning before a class, I might just do enough to get moving. I might do more if it's a non-show day depending on my horse's energy level.