# Basic Dressage Schooling Exercises

by Emily Heggan

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Did you know that every time you flat your horse, you are doing basic dressage work?  Yes, doing a lot of flat work may seem boring and dull, but it is one of the most important types of schooling for your horse. Flat work is essential for getting your horse to be well balanced, supple and fit. Your horse should be well schooled on the flat before you jump into the jumper ring or run barrels.

Flat work not only gets your horse balanced and fit, but it also teaches him to listen to your commands and aids. You might not want to go to a dressage show or start riding dressage every day, but some movements you see in the lower level tests are movements you can do during your schooling sessions. Doing these exercises will help you prepare your horse for whatever discipline you plan on competing in. Letâ€™s look at a few exercises you can do with your horse.

Circles

Circles are one of the best exercises you can do with your horse. Circles help you to learn how to control your horse, as well as making him stay balanced and become more flexible. When you are schooling your horse, try and incorporate a lot of circles into your routine. Most circles are 20-meters, about 66 feet across. You can do circles in every corner of your arena in both directions. You can also do smaller circles when your horse becomes more balanced with the larger circles.

Transitions

Transitions are another great way to make your horse listen to your commands. Practicing transitions will also help to build your horses hind end, making him more fit and balanced. Here are a few that you can work on with your horse.

Walk to halt; halt to walk

Trot to halt; halt to trot

Trot to walk; walk to trot

Canter to trot; trot to canter

Canter to walk; walk to canter

Serpentines

Serpentines are another great way to help your horse become more balanced and supple. They also help you to learn how to keep your horse straight. The main serpentine that riders use is called the 3 loop serpentine. Think of it as a big letter S with one more loop. You are pretty much cutting your ring into thirds and changing rein at each third.

Figure 8â€™s

Figure 8â€™s are exactly what it sounds like. You are making two circles and changing direction in the middle. Figure 8â€™s are a great way to practice circles but changing rein each time. Figure 8â€™s can b ridden at a walk, trot or canter, but it is best to ride them at the trot. Your figure 8 can be as big or as small as you want. Donâ€™t let your horse cut the center of the 8 and make it a diagonal ride each circle

fully and go straight up the center.

These are just a few basic exercises that you should incorporate into your flat work sessions. Practicing these exercises will make your horse more balanced, fit and you will have a horse that is more responsive to your commands and aids.

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Emily Heggan - About Author:
Emily Heggan is a senior at Rowan University majoring in journalism. She currently competes in the 3' hunters with her horse, General, and enjoys writing about topics like a horse supplies.

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