

THE XC ACADEMY

28 DAY

SEE-A-STRIDE

CHALLENGE

Lucinda Green



WWW.THEXCACADEMY.COM

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THE XC ACADEMY 28 DAY SEE-A-STRIDE CHALLENGE

Lucinda Green

INTRODUCTION

I'm Lucinda Green, co-founder of the XC Academy, International Event Rider and XC coach.

I was fortunate enough to win 6 Badminton on 6 different horses, World and double European Gold Medals, Olympic Team Silver Medal and 2 Burghleys during my career.

For the last half century I have coached XC around the globe to riders of all levels. My mission is to keep XC the heartbeat of the sport and the only way for this to happen is for everyone competing in our sport to understand what is required to leave the startbox with confidence. Trust between horse and rider is crucial. It develops over time when training your horse both in and out of the saddle.



The purpose of this Challenge and all the coaching that I do online and in person is to develop this trust. **I want to give your horse and you the skills and the plan so that you can gain as much joy as I have from riding XC with a horse who has learnt to love his job.**

For over 45 years I have given clinics around the world. While I was teaching over 1000's of people a year I began to realise that it was just a drop in the ocean compared to the number of people that I was not reaching.



Covid brought horrors to many people but for me it was almost a 100% bonus. For 2 years I actually had to stop going to airports on mad world teaching runs. It gives a different perspective on life when you stop running away to airports.

It also gave Rachael, the other half of the online XC Academy, time to come up with the idea. If none of us could go out and teach then why did we not start online?

She studied Digital Marketing – online – and did a course on Memberships. The first time we escaped lockdown she happened to meet me at Tweseldown, her XC practice and competition site, and suggested it.

We were then all locked up again but nonetheless we started to put something together. It seemed to be a really good fun idea but we had no inkling if we could teach XC online. We dived in without a blueprint as it had never been done before. In fact I did not even think I knew what I did teaching, or had any format or formality to it.

Rachael said we needed a routine or a program to write something down. I said that I didn't have a base, I just teach what I feel. Rachael simply said I had to. So we did sit down and we did develop a foundation and a baseline to XC training which was named the "Greenprint".

Inevitably, the more I have had to put my thoughts in order, to do the online XC Academy, the more I realised that there is a great deal of knowledge in there. I surprised myself that the knowledge does have quite a format. It is not just higgledy piggedly like it sometimes feels when thinking about it.

We set up and launched the XC Academy in September 2020 and it has been a rewarding surprise how much XC can be learnt online. The proof is in the action, because when I do clinics in different parts of the world I sometimes meet people who ride as I want them to ride – really well in my view – and as I like to find out who teaches the same way that I do, I ask who that rider learns from so that I can put their name on my mental list. Very often the answer has come back that they are in the XC Academy. It is wonderful to feel that this way of teaching really is working. The message that we are putting out there is making a difference already. However hard I work and however many clinics I give around the world, unless I go online, I could never reach enough people in different corners of the earth that love to ride XC.



It is a very exciting prospect that maybe the mission that I have pursued for some time could in fact be realised. I want to preserve XC as the heartbeat of the sport. When I look to the future I do not like what I see: an exhibition XC preceded by second rate dressage and followed by second rate show jumping.

It can only ever be second rate because most of those at Olympic level pure show jumping and dressage are light years ahead of us eventers. I see those second rate phases taking precedence over XC because of the world that we have now found ourselves living in.

WHY DID I CREATE A 28 DAY SEE-A-STRIDE CHALLENGE?

One of **THE** most asked questions from riders all over the world is:

“How can I learn to
See-a-Stride?”

And my answer is:

“You don’t need to”

Wait? Haven’t you just signed up for
the 28 day See-a-Stride Challenge?
This does not make sense.

Here is the twist....

Trying to See-a-Stride can be one of
the most dangerous things that you
can do and that is why I created this
Challenge. I want to teach everyone
what you need to do instead.

It is Eventing’s best kept secret and
something that the best in the world
do without even knowing it. When you
learn what you need to do instead of
looking for a stride you will realise that
you knew it all along. You will start to
relax and realise that riding XC can be
nothing but fun for you and your horse.



Over recent years I have watched the sport become far more technical and with that has come a focus and almost an obsession with “striding”.

“How many strides will you put in there?”

“I will make sure my horse does 3 strides in that combination”

“I am going for the 5 strides on that bending line”

Well-meaning coaches and riders are teaching this. This dominance over the horse to dictate his take-off point has ended in sadly dire consequences on many occasions.

Every time a bad accident occurs - similar thoughts reverberate around the world, “It could be me next time - I must make SURE my horse takes off from the right spot”.



Let me tell you a story...

I sat between a couple of coaches during a 3 star XC on live stream. We also had a live view of a combination - a fence a short distance from a turn to an angled one stride downhill.

We watched the first horse go through on 6 strides between the fence and the combination.

“I’ve told my riders to do 5 strides ” said one coach, “me too” responded the other and then they both high fived across my front as the next horse came through on 5 strides.

Walking on, I met another celebrated Eventing coach.

“Do you think it’s 5 or 6 in there ?” He asked - I explained that I felt it depended on the type of horse and the approach - he nodded.

That is a small snapshot of 3 world class, modern day coaches who concern themselves with stride domination rather than the development of feel and initiative.

If we don’t look for Strides, what do we do?

With the correct power and balance in his canter and encouraged to look for his fence, a horse will make his own decision where to take off. If he is properly prepared on the approach, he will jump

well and develop a greater confidence in both himself and his rider and therefore a greater safety.

How many riders fully understand how to focus their horses? All too often riders, even some at a high level, are not understanding focusing their horses.



So many horses are put under pressure just to JUMP – without that split second time of assessment.

Always they must be coming forwards, even in the slowest gear, but always they must have time to read, judge and make their decision.

A horse does not want to fall and has an extraordinarily strong instinct of self preservation. This must be allowed to develop – or a horse becomes so conditioned by dictation that his mind is dulled from the brilliant sharp reactions that most horses naturally possess.

A horse does not reason, he associates ideas. If allowed and encouraged, he quickly develops his thinking and enhances his instinct of self preservation – his natural ability to look after himself.

Equally and conversely – the horse fundamentally being a ‘giver’ and therefore trainable (what other animal, worldwide, can perform so many skills for Man?) can quickly learn to adapt to being reliant on the rider for brain-washing instruction. That is when our safety belt, the horse’s sharp initiative that should underpin all his moves, is compromised.

From the get-go the horse must learn this paradox: to think for himself and to listen to his rider – both in equal measure.

If riders believe that their horses lack intelligence they will train them without daring to give them a chance to develop their own initiative.

This development of both horse and rider initiative and feel is sometimes stunted by stride-dominant coaches, the world over.

With this paradox in place throughout his training – a horse can maximise his talent and simultaneously be safe.



When I started Eventing in the 70s, the balance of that paradox was weighted more towards the horse thinking for himself.

The 80s were Eventing's golden era when I believe the paradox levelled up. Then in the 90's it began to tip in the opposite direction. Dressage became more demanding and was executed by many who understood little about the classical art, finding the only option open to them was to dominate their horse as they 'trained on the flat'.

In 1999/2000, ten event riders died across the world within 12 months. Since then that total has risen eightfold – Before 1991, there was I believe no rider fatalities since the sport's inception.

When things go wrong it is rarely caused by one major factor – there are generally several contributing reasons: If Eventing's fatalities had only one cause it would have been found and eradicated.

The construction of XC fences has altered exponentially in the last 2 decades, to avert the damaging rotational fall. Before the automatic post hole digger started participating in building XC courses in the late 80's, most fences' uprights were hand-dug in, resulting in less deep, less secure uprights, affording the fence some natural frangibility, preventing falls that rotated.

An object will spin in rotation around a rail that is static – but that object cannot rotate around a rail that has 'give' in it – it can only fall to the side.

TRL (Transport Research Laboratory) developed the experiments that led to the 'frangible pin'.

TRL discovered that if a fence moved 2" (or was it 2cms ? Nowhere can I track down which) it prevented a complete rotation – the horse still fell but fell to the side as opposed to the often deadly rotation.

The Frangible pin (often very successfully) treats the symptom but not the cause. There has been a lowering of the XC difficulty across the highest echelons of the sport – Olympics, World and European Championships– and a development of roughly 5 different characters of 'safe' fence-types – used repeatedly all around the world. It is no longer XC jumping from field to field with all sorts of oddities to challenge, fathom and take on – over which there were many falls but no fatalities, and riders learnt to ride. I was around in an era when the USA was the 'Germany' of Eventing. In the 70s and into the 80s under French Team rider, Jack LeGoff, the USA were indomitable.

During that time I won 6 Badmintons on 6 different horses and have since taught XC all over the world. For nearly half a century I have studied and taught upwards of 1000 horses and riders a year.

With all that behind me and still deeply involved, I feel I have something to offer. It is a difficult situation because I feel I am in charge of a very simple secret that I cannot put fully out there – I cannot find a way of making the difference that needs to be made – that I know could be made – but it is a fundamental difference not a gloss coat. It is understanding horses and respecting them as well as developing their brains and instincts which will render them potentially able and safe. It is not blaming the calibre of the horse, when it is so often the calibre of the training and riding that is at fault.

It is understanding that Michael Jung achieved such incredible records because he trained 2 ordinary horses (ordinary in their movement and Rocana also in her scope) to use the best of their ability – which proved time and again to be good enough.

Eventing badly needs good XC riders and not just at the top but all the way through, to stem the downward spiral of XC as the principal challenge of our sport. The XC is the reason we event – if it isn't the driving force – that's fine and there are excellent options to go show jumping or to do dressage as independent sports.

With the downgrading of championship XC from 5 star to 4 star, give it 10 years and the winners will be excellent dressage and show jumping combinations who perform an 'exhibition' XC....

**WE ALL CAN HELP AVERT SUCH A DISAPPOINTING FUTURE AND
MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF EVENTING. ENJOY AND LEARN FROM THIS
28 DAY CHALLENGE AND YOU ARE ALREADY WEIGHING IN TO HELP
YOURSELF AND OUR SPORT.**

MY STORY

I could never see a stride and my coach, Pat Burgess, who helped me from the age of 14 at Pony Club recognised that quickly. She told me that it didn't matter so long as I was able to produce a medium length canter stride which was how she described what we now refer to as quality of canter. She would make sure that I also understood the balance that my body should be in and how to keep my horse on a good line and not let him wander - he would then work out where he took off. She was very, very strong in teaching me this.

She would call the necessity of sitting up before a fence, "plugging in" - two seat bones plugged into the saddle so that you were in a position, in front of the fence, over it and on the landing which I now call the 'Ready 4 Trouble', defensive seat.

The security of your lower leg gave your arms, hands and fingers the chance to allow the horse whatever stretch he needed.



This early teaching and understanding was a big part of how I managed to win Badminton six times on six different horses.

Many reasons were behind my incredible Good Fortune to win that many Badmintons. One of them I owe to my pony Jupiter who was a not very agile or enthusiastic, New Forest bred pony whom I was given as my eighth birthday present. He did not much love jumping, so I had to learn how to kick and I had to learn the timing of drawing my stick in encouragement, because very often he did not take off. If I pulled him in the mouth over a fence, he would flatly refuse to jump the next one.

As I was having to try so hard to persuade him to take off I was very often left behind the movement and a little out of balance so it was easy to make that crucial mistake.

I learned the two most valuable lessons of my life aged eight:

The timing of using my bat and the importance of having fingers that could open and allow the rein through, whenever the horse asks for it no matter how far 'left behind' I had become .

Much later I found myself with two wonderful children that needed educating and as I didn't have much other skill apart from horses I started to teach cross country because that was the thing I loved. I could never really do Dressage or Show Jump. So I started to teach XC clinics around the globe, always trying to impart as much information as I could. I have developed ever more passion for wanting to keep XC as the main artery of Eventing.

XC is the reason why we all event and for it to maintain, even re-develop, its crucial rôle and not gradually melt away, is something I task myself with.

I found myself over 45 years, teaching a great deal of people to understand why XC could and should be such fun if certain principals were understood. This would enable a rider to feel safe and give their horse the confidence and trust to go - and therefore both could love doing it.

I think I can safely say that I learned more in those years of teaching than I had ever learned in my years of riding and competing. I find that fascinating and I still wonder how I managed to do what I did without the knowledge that I then gathered from teaching.



I have probably helped over the years many thousands of riders and the common query has been "How do I see a stride?". I never was able to see one myself in the early days - I guess an eye develops over time as more experience is gained. I learned that you did need to create a certain balance and engine power from your horse and sit in a certain balance yourself to give him every opportunity to jump from wherever he may decide. I learned to trust that my horse had a better eye than I did, provided I had done my job of preparing him for the fence, he was then able to select his own take off spot.

I teach this in my clinics by putting out an array of small fences on no predetermined distance, off angles and turns and on all sorts of difficult lines. Few ever ask how many strides between X and Y, they just go out and ride the lines and ride their horse's balance connecting their engine.

Time after time these riders found natural feel to ride to a fence and the next day of the clinic they go out onto the cross country course set by a course designer and they take these fences on one after the other without fussing about seeing a stride. Instead, concentrating to make sure their horse has seen the fence, is in a good balance and desires the fence. If your horse is taking you to a fence and desiring it then his engine is operating.



Caveat here: If the horse is taking you in too fast or rushing in, that isn't going to help him have time to size up the fence and work out what to do. Taking you to a fence means you are feeling his mental desire more than feeling him actually increase his tempo/miles per hour.

It is my deep desire to keep cross-country king of eventing. I want others to experience the thrill of XC, underpinned by the unique, I believe, connection with your horse's mind and body. It's a different language that you speak with your horse XC.

It is a different dimension.



Yes, it is based on good jumping training and good training on the flat, but it's an enhancement that goes much further in different directions than simply good training. If you train him well from the beginning, usually he will learn to love XC as much as you do.

You gain this extraordinary reliance on your horse and he a similar reliance on you. It's like a really good marriage and it takes you over those fences that people who do not ride, or have never experienced this connection with a horse, cannot believe you have enough guts to canter down to.

This type of courage is based largely on trust. Trust is the culmination of this extraordinary relationship that you have built up with your horse over many years.

Your horse develops trust in you, he then trusts himself and that enables you to trust him.

Extraordinary stories do exist: one of the world's greatest horsemen, Mark Todd, hopped on Horton point on Tuesday (his rider broke her collarbone) and won Badminton on Sunday.



That is a wonderful example of sheer genius horsemanship. Mark Todd put confidence into that horse, which enabled him to go faster, safely, than he had ever been before, and still came out and jumped clear on the third day. They won Badminton, after only five days together.

I never quite managed that. I did a very unusual thing for me in the Melbourne Three Day Event. I was shipped out to Australia to ride 2 unknown horses in the Intermediate and Advanced. I could not believe it but I won both classes which was an extraordinary thing to find I could do. I had always believed that I would never be able to create a partnership with a horse in a short amount of time and be able to win. It was however not in the league of Mark Todd but it was good to know that I could at least do it at a lesser Three Day Event – run around the perimeter of Melbourne airport.

It is the love of the partnership that has always spurred me on. I love the feeling of developing that trust. It is about the journey towards the ultimate goal. Often that goal is never reached, something goes wrong on the way, or the horse isn't quite the one for the bigger fences or courses. The journey up to wherever you arrive, for me, is the most wonderful part of existing in the world of horses.

28 DAYS TO A SAFE OUTCOME

This 28 day programme is designed to fill you with enough confidence that you can come down to a fence and feel safe about the outcome.

By the time you have adventured to the end of these 28 days you will have a full understanding of what you need to have in the form of Engine, Line and Balance in order to approach the fence safely.

You will realise that if you have set up the quality of canter well enough, you have made sure that your horse sees the fence and the line you want and that your sitting in that 'Ready 4 Trouble', balance you will find that there is no need to tell your horse when to take off, he will be able to do that himself. The quality of canter will enable him either to put in a short one if he has not arrived on the right spot or come off a long one; his decision.

I think that the best way to describe how to ride into a fence once you have managed to complete your understanding of Engine, Line and Balance is to reiterate the words of the great Ginny Elliott (Leng/Holgate) who said:

"If you see a lovely stride ride to it – if you see nothing – sit up and keep your leg on".

That simplicity is really what it is all about. We are often guilty of making things more complicated than they need be. Some of us have not understood that a horse has a perfectly good eye and can judge his own distance, he does not need us to tell him where to take off.

WHAT IS IN STORE FOR YOU OVER THE NEXT 28 DAYS?

My aim for the next 28 days, while I have your attention, is to furnish anyone who rides and jumps with the skills required to train your horse and yourself to ride down to any fence safe in the knowledge that you are going to leave it excited for the next jump. These skills are the tools that enable your horse to think for himself while listening to you. They will allow him to use his initiative and keep you both safe while having the best fun.

If practised regularly they will become instinctive, you will not need to think, they will just happen. Skills like allowing the reins to slip through your fingers down a drop and still navigate your way to the narrowest of skinnies. Skills like putting your horse in 'The Tube' so he holds his line into a right angled corner.

Acquiring skills is not instant. You still need to do the "work". Although to me, this part is not work. This is where the magic happens and you learn about one another. This is where you make the mistakes and learn from them. You develop a trust with your horse so deep that he will do anything for you.

Ros Canter's win at Badminton in 2023 was done in a way that made the huge course out of wet, holding ground look easy. She demonstrated in front of the whole world, the result of years of training at home.



That time was spent developing the Trust that enabled her and Lordships Graffalo to make the most difficult course in the world look easy.

I am not promising that after the next 28 days you will be ready to compete at Badminton. However, I can confidently tell you that, if you follow the plan and do the work you will master the most important skills that will fastrack your XC riding – arriving at the fence in the right gear, in balance and on the correct line. With those three things in place your horse can take care of the final piece of the puzzle and do what he does best – jump the jump.

I have divided the next 28 days into 4 weeks:

- **Week 1 – Balance**
- **Week 2 – Engine**
- **Week 3 – Line**
- **Week 4 – Putting it all together**

Each week I will present a Masterclass where I will set out what, why, where and how you will complete the mini challenges that I have set inside your Program PDF (which you can download to your mobile/cell).

You will have access to the video and the written explanation of what you need to practise that week. I will also be live on Zoom once a week to answer your questions for the 28 days.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday, Aug 7th	Balance Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group - 1pm EST 6pm BST
Thursday, Aug 10th	Live Q&A with Lucinda - On Zoom - 3pm EST 8pm BST
Monday, Aug 14th	Engine Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group - 1pm EST 6pm BST
Thursday, Aug 17th	Live Q&A with Lucinda - On Zoom - 15:00, EST 20:00, BST
Monday, Aug 21st	Line Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group - 1pm EST 6pm BST
Thursday, August 24th	Live Q&A with Lucinda - On Zoom - 3pm EST 8pm BST
Monday, August 28th	Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group - 1pm EST 6pm BST
Thursday, August 31st	Live Q&A with Lucinda - On Zoom - 3pm EST 8pm BST

All Zoom invites will be emailed the day before and 1 hour before. If you miss the Live Q&A it will be available to watch on the replay in the **Private FB Group**.

BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE PREPARING TO FAIL

Please read this PDF in its entirety a couple of times. I have included a massive amount of information in this programme so that you can learn the process instead of just going through the motions. You may have questions, but they will be answered within these pages. If they are not answered within these pages, the Private Facebook Group will help you. I strongly recommend not printing this program right away. We can make updates within the first couple of weeks, based on members' feedback.

The 28 Day See-a-Stride Challenge Starts NOW

A person in equestrian attire, including a helmet and jacket, is leading a horse. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and horses in an outdoor setting.

HOW TO USE THE 28 DAY PROGRAM

What do I need to complete the Program?

- A horse
- A saddle (optional)
- A bridle
- A few jumps and an area to ride in
- An imagination

Over the next 28 days through a series of Masterclasses, Live Q&A's and Instructional videos you will be guided step by step towards the end goal of riding confidently down to any XC fence with the right Engine, Line and Balance. And yes, you heard it right -

NOT LOOKING FOR A STRIDE.

There are 3 places where you will receive the Challenge content:

- The 28 Day See-a-Stride PDF (you are reading this now)
- **The XC Academy 28 Day See-a-Stride Challenge FB Group** (private)
- Zoom - you will be emailed your personal invite to the LIVE Q&A's

Below you will see 4 tables. 1 for each of the first 3 weeks plus the XC Rider Toolkit. In each table there are links to videos which you can access from your phone any time anywhere along with a description and the length of each video.

“The XC Rider Toolkit” – Brand new and the secret sauce to your success.

“The XC Rider Toolkit” is all of my fundamentals in one easy to access place. This is your go to for all the skills you need throughout the 28 days and on into the future as you progress.

It is full of golden nuggets that until now only the lucky few who came to my clinics had access to. The Toolkit is a resource that you will use throughout the Challenge and does not need to be completed prior to the challenge (unless you want to).

The skills in the Toolkit are used throughout all of my teachings and are part of my “Greenprint” to XC.

I found myself talking about them in clinics and riders would pick them up as they went along. Since starting the XC Academy, Rachael noticed these nuggets everytime I taught. She put them all together and called it “The XC Rider Toolkit”. Some of the skills are things you do on your horse and others are understandings. All are equally important and should be practised whenever you ride whether it is XC, in the school or out hacking.



Throughout the 28 days I will refer to the different skills during the video lessons. They will be available as a collective in “The XC Rider Toolkit” and also incorporated into the weekly sessions.

You will have easy access to them when you are in the yard/barn. Simply download the PDF to your phone.

Each skill has a video and a short explanation. The video is short and to the point and will be accessed throughout the 4 weeks along with the lessons. I am not going to tell you what to do each day and how long to do it. These lessons in the challenge will fit into and enhance your existing training program.

This table is an overview and these skills will be incorporated into the program. You can watch them one by one OR as prescribed each week.

THE XC RIDER TOOLKIT



[Click here](#) to access a playlist of all these videos

Skill	Minutes	What	Why
The Tube	3:16	Cuddling the horse with the whole of the inside of your legs into the contact.	Keep your horse focused and straight.
Irish Rein	1:13	Riding on long reins plus the ability to gather up your reins once loosened.	Allows your horse to use his 5th leg and you to sit in your R4T Position.
Concrete to Feathers	1:40	Firm contact to light contact.	Allows the horse to use his head and neck but does NOT allow him to run out.
The Stop/Go Button	4:06	Using your body, voice and aids to go and whoa..	Your horse must go when you ask and stop when you ask.
Moving the Bit	2:30	A jiggle or movement of the bit. Not a punishment, more of a zap to get the horse's attention.	Breaks the block, if the horse is leaning or tucking his head.
Straight Line Halt	2:41	Some distance after the fence, often ask your horse to halt while staying straight	Straightness is crucial to the horse learning to engage his engine when he slows down
3rd Eye	1:35	Glancing where you are going without moving your head.	To be used when your focus is on the fence in front of you and another fence is coming up.
Steering/neck reining	3:32	Using your weight, head, hands and legs to turn.	Clear communication between you and your horse.
7 Things	1:25	You have 7 things you must use to explain to your horse where to go.	Directly linked to steering and focus.
Vision	3:10	Understanding how horses see will develop your understanding of what the horse needs as he approaches the fence.	How can we be sure the horse has seen the fence?
The Paradox		Train your horse to think for himself whilst listening to you.	The main fundamental by which Lucinda trains horses and riders XC.
Eye for Intention	0:51		
Framework of Discipline	2:05		
The Triangle of Trust	1:25		
What3Words Clear, Fair, Consistent	0:25	Lucinda's 3 words that are always in her head when she is with her horse.	To create trust

ELBOW

Before we start I want to introduce you to an acronym that is the foundation of this whole 28 Day See-a-Stride Challenge:

Engine

Line

Balance

OW – if you forget any of the above

As I said earlier, telling your horse where to take off can be a dangerous thing. This Challenge is actually the “Engine, Line Balance Challenge”.

If I had called it that I doubt you would have signed up and I would never have had a chance to help you.

Thank you for supporting my mission and joining this Challenge. Together we will retain XC as the heart of eventing and share the thrill of XC on a horse that loves it too.

WELCOME TO WEEK 1 - BALANCE

Congratulations, you are one of the few riders who are serious about XC training. Balance is something that we all want to achieve in life and it is equally as important with your horse.

This week please watch the Masterclass in the FB Group and all of the videos in the table below. During the Masterclass I will set out your week for you and give you some more guidance as to how to use the videos. When I go Live with you on Zoom I will answer any questions you may have. If you cannot make it please email any questions ahead of the live and you can catch the replay and hear my answer.

I am not going to tell you when to do the exercises as I want them to fit around your time schedule. You will see that some of the things I want you to practise are slightly unorthodox. I do not always subscribe to the methods of many trainers. I want this to be as much fun as it is helpful. Please share your ups, downs and questions in the FB group.

- Monday, Aug 7th - **Balance Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group**
1pm EST | 6pm BST
- Thursday, Aug 10th Live Q&A with Lucinda - On Zoom
3pm EST | 8pm BST

Horse Balance

Developing balance is important. It is also based on strength, the young horse will not be able to hold himself in as good a balance as the horse that is more trained and stronger.

Many horses struggle with their balance at 5,6 and even 7 years old. Give them time and take them onto rough ground, stumble over tree roots, play on hills and undulations, in long grass, in mud and water and use all 3 paces as you feel befits the ground and the horse's stage. Most RGT (Rough Ground Training) is done in walk on a loose rein and I will search out rough ground in woods/tyre tracks/awkward verges etc. and, provided there are no holes, glass or wire etc, his balance will develop correspondingly to his strength.

Ambition - to develop such good self carriage that your horse can canter down a steep hill, carrying himself, on a light rein... but that is some years away for the young horse.

Rider Balance

The Rider will help put the horse in balance if he looks after certain aspects:

Feel that three-quarters of the horse is in front of you approaching a fence, over it and landing from it.

Always allow the horse the freedom to use his head and neck either to look or to balance himself.... pulling a horse in the mouth unbalances him ... and you.

In the galloping position the rider must be able to sit still keeping the weight in the heels. Allowing the horse a framework of consistency around him, created by your legs, arms, core and head.

This same framework melts into the R4T (Ready 4 Trouble) position in which you approach a fence, once you have left the galloping position.

“Brain-to-brain communication between horses and riders is an intricate neural dance. These two species, one prey and one predator, are living temporarily in each other’s brains, sharing neural information back and forth in real time without linguistic or mechanical mediation. It is a partnership like no other. Together, a horse-and-human team experiences a richer perceptual and attentional understanding of the world than either member can achieve alone. And, ironically, this extended interspecies mind operates well, not because the two brains are similar to each other, but because they are so different” Janet Jones

Week 1 Challenges

[Click here](#) to access a playlist of all these videos



Exercise	Minutes	What	Why
Introduction to Balance	5:50	<p>Lucinda explains the many different facets to BALANCE including the all important Ready 4 Trouble Position.</p> <p>Secure lower leg, three quarters of the horse in front of you, plugged in seat.</p>	Understanding what the R4T seat is. You will practise it in all the videos.
Look No Hands	5:51	<p>Standing in your stirrups with your back vertical, drop the reins and find your balance in walk. If this goes well do the same in trot. Health Warning – if your horse spooks you may fall off.</p>	You will start to develop muscle memory to be balanced and regain it when you lose it.
Quit & Cross the Irons	1:00	Ride without stirrups.	Useful exercise if you find yourself jumping ahead of the movement. Helps your strength and balance.
Practise Being Left Behind	9:34	Jumping out of walk.	A way to become comfortable being uncomfortable. Concrete to feathers fingers is crucial here.
Horse and Rider Balance Practice	2:48	Using hills and terrain to stay balanced. Find undulating terrain and walk trot and canter over it. For walking, the rougher the ground the better for your horse's hand eye coordination.	The undulations will throw you both a bit off balance and give you a chance to "practise failing" as your muscle memory kicks in.
Floppy Canter	5:11	Jumping plenty of small fences in a slow canter in your galloping position without changing your balance (unless absolutely necessary)	Practice letting your horse choose the take off point without you interfering.

The Toolkit skills you will need

Exercise	Minutes	What	Why
Irish Rein	1:13	Riding on a long rein plus the ability to gather up your reins once loosened.	Allows your horse to use his 5th leg and you to sit in your R4T Position.
Tube	3:16	Cuddling the horse with the whole of the inside of your legs into the contact.	Keep your horse focused and straight.
Concrete to Feathers	1:40	Firm contact to light contact.	Allows the horse to use his head and neck but does not allow him to run out.
Straight Line Halt (SLH)	2:41	Some distance after the fence, often ask your horse to halt while staying straight.	<p>Staying straight on landing is vital to be able to execute the increasingly difficult lines.</p> <p>Straightness is crucial to the horse learning to engage his engine when he slows down.</p>
7 Things	1:25	You have 7 things you must use to explain where the horse is to go.	Directly linked to Steering.

WELCOME TO WEEK 2 - ENGINE

You are still with us...fantastic. So many people have good intentions but cannot find the time/motivation/determination to see things through. It is good that you are not that person. Your horse will thank you.

This week we are practising our gears.

Imagine yourself driving at 100mph into a blind bend. It is not going to end well, especially if there is something on the other side of that bend. You need to select the correct gear before the bend/fence and then drive positively out of the bend towards the fence. Let me help you select the right gear even on a young horse.

Panicking in front of the fence and the Oh S**t moment will be a thing of the past when you practise 'Canter, Canter, Canter' and 'Looking Beyond'. These are 2 great exercises to stop you fixating on the fence and focus back on what's important – ELB and OW if you forget one of them.

This week please watch the Masterclass in the FB Group and all of the videos in the table below. During the Masterclass I will set out your week for you and give you some more guidance as to how to use the videos. When I go Live with you on Zoom I will answer any questions you may have. If you cannot make it please email any questions ahead of the live and you can catch the replay and hear my answer.

- Monday, Aug 14th – **Engine Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group**
1pm EST | 6pm BST
- Thursday, Aug 17th, Live Q&A with Lucinda – On Zoom – 3pm, EST | 8pm, BST

Engine

This refers to the over-all connected power produced by your horse and held together in an uncomplicated balance by your weight, legs, body and hands.

It takes time to develop his strength for the horse to be able to access all the gears that he has stored.

The feeling of a horse using his engine at a slow pace is the hind legs bounding up under him, ideally carrying enough of his weight, to render him good and not heavy in the hand. Much of a horse's engine depends on how naturally well balanced he is. A well connected engine is also a responsive one, he should feel ready to go more forwards at an instant suggestion.

When you watch a horse canter, he will generally prove easier to ride if his hind legs hit the ground at a point under his tummy rather than hitting the ground under his tail or just behind it.

Hillwork in all 3 paces will help him develop his engine strength. He must sit as best he can downhill and not fall onto his front end.

Switching canter pace with a few strides faster, then a few slower and repeating this change several times will help the young horse strengthen and engage but ensure that he is responsive to both the Go and the Woah aids.

Ambition - to develop 4 different canter engines:

1. Coffin canter
2. Show Jumping canter
3. Run and Jump canter
4. Steeplechase gallop

Week 2 Challenges

[Click here](#) to access a playlist of all these videos



Exercise	Minutes	What	Why
Introduction to Engine	3:20	Lucinda sets out the importance of ENGINE	You won't get over the fences without one.
Gear Changes	3:30	Developing gear changes. This can be done in all paces.	We often feel like we are changing gear but we are actually not. This video will highlight this problem and give you a plan to address it.
Run and Jump	2:30	Riding down to a fence on its own still requires ELBow.	The fine line between saving time and not ending up on the floor.
Canter, Canter, Canter	1:40	A simple practice that helps the rider maintain the rhythm and the engine all the way into the fence.	If the rider keeps to the plan and does not make last minute changes the horse will find it easy to do his job.
Looking Beyond	2:08	Another simple and effective practice that keeps the rider focused forward and beyond the jump.	The horse will find it easy to do his job if the rider is not distracting him with last second instructions.

The skills you will need;

Exercise	Minutes	What	Why
Stop/Go	3:50	Using your body, voice and aids to go and woah.	Your horse must go when you ask and stop when you ask.
Moving the Bit	2:30	A jiggle or movement of the bit. Not a punishment, more of a zap to get the horse's attention.	Breaks the block, if the horse is leaning, tucking his head.
What3Words	0:25	Lucinda's 3 words that are always in her head when she is with her horse.	To create trust.
The Tube	3:16	Cuddling the horse with the whole of the inside of your legs into the contact.	Keep your horse focused and straight.

WELCOME TO WEEK 3 - LINE

This week is all about playing and having fun. I have put together some videos of exactly this. I want you to put out in a field or the school if no field is available, a selection of fences that allow you to string a number of them together. Your job is to approach each fence on the correct line, in the right gear and in balance. The more advanced the horse the more technical lines you can try. Don't be tempted to jump big fences when playing.

In the videos I have used fillers. You can use show jumps, cavaletti, barrels even buckets (best without handles) – anything so long as it is safe and the horse will not hurt himself. The narrower the fence the bigger the challenge. We are practising Line so a skinny will highlight any deviation from your Line more than a wider fence. This is why I like to keep the fences small so you can negotiate them no matter what.

Remember – it is not an option for you horse to stop or run out.

I have used white posts as guide markers but you can use any landmark such as trees, fence posts, traffic cones etc. You can practise your lines out hacking without fences. You don't have to have a full set of fences to "Play". Use your imagination and most importantly, have fun.

Final thoughts:

Keep the fences small

Ensure your horse sees the fence in time

A young horse will need longer to focus than an experienced horse

- Monday, Aug 21st – **Line Masterclass Streamed in the Private FB Group**
1pm EST | 6pm BST
- Thursday, August 24th, Live Q&A with Lucinda – On Zoom – 3pm EST | 8pm BST

Line

Line is great fun because you can practise it anywhere any time. Simply pick an object and ride towards it in a variety of paces. Sometimes pick 2 or 3, 5 or 6 consecutive objects that you ride towards. It is easy to see how straight you stay if you can look back at your line in the dew, the frost or even the snow.

Always ride a line through a fence by picking two points – one on the fence and one beyond it.

NB. Ensure you do not pick, as your second point, either anything that can move or is low down and could be obscured by something else.

Practice in both trot and canter, jumping a mark or a stripe on the fence aiming at different pre-designated points, giving your horse a variety from straight lines to angles of varying degrees.

Week 3 Challenges

[Click here](#) to access a playlist of all these videos



Exercise	Minutes	What	Why
Line Introduction	1:37	Top tips from Lucinda on how to achieve the perfect line and also a warning of how it can go wrong.	Practice manoeuvrability and focus.
Using points to make a turn	7:51	Lucinda teaches you the way to use markers.	This technique ensures you are on the correct line - but it takes practice.
Playground - Take 1	8:32	Exactly what the name implies - this is fun. Small fences on different, awkward lines that you can change during the session.	Gives you endless possibilities to practise your line while having fun with your horse.
Playground - Take 2	12:35	A few examples of when it goes wrong and how Lucinda helps Angus deal with it.	Its going to go wrong, that's part of training.
Bending Poles	5:05	Old school Pony Club Fun.	Allow you to see the influence your weight has on a turn.

The Skills you will need;

Exercise	Minutes	What	Why
Vision	3:10	Focus, has the horse seen the fence.	Understanding how horses see will develop your understanding of what the horse needs as he approaches the fence.
Steering/neck reining	3:32	Using your weight, head, hands and legs to turn.	Clear communication between you and your horse.
Concrete to Feathers	1:40	Firm contact to light contact.	Allows the horse to use his head and neck but does NOT allow him to run out.
3rd Eye	1:35	Glancing where you are going without moving your head.	To be used when your focus is on the fence in front of you and another fence is coming up.
The Tube	3:16	Cuddling the horse with the whole of the inside of your legs into the contact.	Keep your horse focused and straight.

WELCOME TO WEEK 4 - PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

By now you should have a solid understanding of ELBOW – Engine Line Balance – OW if you forget one of them. You should be concentrating on your preparation tasks rather than where your horse is going to take off. Each time you approach a fence I want you to ask yourself:

- Has my horse seen the fence?
- Is he taking me to the fence?
- Am I Ready 4 Trouble?

Now is the time to put it all together. I want you to get in your trailer or horsebox and find a XC course or a field with jumps where you can string together several fences. Put all three weeks of games into action.

My Masterclass will give you the pointers you need to bring all of your new tools together into riding down to your fences with complete confidence that you will be galloping away smiling. In the meantime click the link below to watch my final video of



this Challenge.

[**CLICK HERE TO WATCH**](#)

- Monday, Aug 28th – **Final Week Masterclass Streamed in the FB Group**
1pm EST | 6pm BST
- Thursday, August 31st, Live Q&A with Lucinda – On Zoom – 3pm EST | 8pm BST

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations on making it this far and helping me achieve my Mission to keep XC the heartbeat of Eventing.

What to do now?

My On-line XC Academy Membership opens only twice a year. Once you have finished this Challenge why not keep going. Join this amazing supportive XC Community and carry on developing these crucial skills. While we have covered a huge amount in this 28 Day Challenge there is so much more to experience.

My Membership delivers the 6 Stages to Success:

1. The "Greenprint"
2. Foundation Obstacles
3. RGT & R4T
4. Technical Obstacles
5. Speed
6. Compete

Find out more: <https://thexcacademy.com/academy/>

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THE XC ACADEMY

28  DAY

SEE-A-STRIDE

CHALLENGE

Lucinda Green