



## The 'S' Curve

Lynn Macyk

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Now that we are getting weary with winter upon us, it takes some ingenuity on the trainer's part to keep excitement and enthusiasm going while working within the four walls of the indoor arena.

A very useful exercise that we like to do is the dreaded "S" curve.

The exercise uses three jumps. The first is a vertical on the diagonal fairly short out of the corner. Then set an oxer on the opposite diagonal, bending in 4,5 or 6 strides from the vertical. Finally another vertical on the opposite diagonal again, set 4, 5 or 6 strides bending away from the oxer landing into a short corner. Set the distances relative to the space you have in your indoor arena, and according to the difficulty level you wish to work with.

With the exercise set, trainers can choose to focus on a number of different skills and practices. The bending lines can be ridden on stride to create rhythm, consistency and flexibility within the horse. The track and stride length can be changed to add or leave out strides, again depending on the difficulty level you are trying to achieve. As a trainer it is a very useful exercise to teach control of stride length, rhythm of the canter and to ensure the rider is using their eyes to manage the track.

An offshoot exercise is to canter a figure 8 over any of the three jumps, asking the riders to change leads over the jump and enter and exit out of the short corners smoothly. It requires the riders to use their legs to continue out of the short turns, and use the leg to support the hand going into the short turns.

Some additional modifications to the exercise include using the "S" curve as a part of a course, adding a gymnastic exercise to one side of the arena, and practicing jumping the three elements on an angle. I find this particular "S" curve to very useful during the boring winter months, providing hours of challenges and entertainment for trainer, rider, and horse. I hope you enjoy too!