DRESSAGE RIDER FITNESS 101

Build a solid foundation for success
“The healthier you are the more you are able to enjoy riding”

Nicola Smith
Thanks for downloading this dressage rider training fitness 101 program.

This will give you the tools to build a solid foundation of strength and balance so you can become a better rider. This will benefit not only you but your horse as well.

Dressage is about making things look effortless. To ride effortlessly requires strength, balance and control. To control our horses’ movement we need the ability to move our body correctly and effectively from our pelvis. We also need the suppleness to move with our horses movement.

The more stable and balanced you are the less you will interfere with your horses’ balance and stability. Becoming an athletic combination in sync is the ultimate goal.
To on-lookers, dressage riders look like they are simply sitting on the horse and no real effort is required. But we know better! Fellow riders understand how much strength, balance and suppleness it takes to make it look effortless.

So many of us spend countless hours schooling our horses and fixing their imbalances, but we don’t look at ourselves in the same light. You and your horse are a combination. In order for the two of you to shine you need to start taking care of your own health and fitness as well, finding ways you can improve your own performance off the horse.

When training off the horse, you need to look at your body as a whole. It’s not just about fitness or strength exercises, its also about breath, body control and how mobile you are in the right areas.
Where your body is unbalanced will affect your horses body and movement.

The key is to look now at why your body may be unbalanced. What lifestyle factors could be causing you to be tight on one side versus the other? What are you doing throughout your day that could be causing your hip flexors to be tight and stiff?

Problems often surface in our bodies due to the way we move and the lifestyles we lead. The more sedentary your lifestyle, the greater stiffness, tight muscles and blockages you will experience. Different areas in your spine and nervous system can be affected due to sitting for long periods of time. In fact negative affects from sitting begin to show after just 90 minutes. The key is to break your day up. Move more. Many riders believe that fitness work off the horse is unnecessary, however these same people are completely unaware of what their body is doing. They don’t realize that their tight hips and weak stabilizer muscles are in fact affecting the way the horse is moving when in the saddle.
I get it. I don’t have extra time either. I make time....

How many times have you started a new regime or plan and failed? How many times have you started something and not finished it? It is ok to admit this is what you may have done in the past. I have done this plenty of times, and so have most others who are honest with themselves.

It’s about having goals. Goals are what make successful people successful. They don’t use time as an excuse. So what are your goals with your riding?

*You have the power to make yourself better.....*
**How even is your body?**
Try these examples as a simple test......

**STEP ONE**

1. Sit on a chair & lift one leg off the ground. Now stand up using one leg. Make sure your hips don’t swing to the side and your knees stay tracking over toes. Switch sides and compare.

2. Lift one foot off the ground and allow that leg to swing back as you bend over and touch your toes. Switch sides and compare.

3. How tight are your hips and achilles? Can you do a deep hindu squat?

These are a small selection of tests you can do to see what is going on in your body. The more you know about yourself the more you can do to improve it.

It’s important to recognize your imbalances and put the effort into reprogramming the neurological pathways to create a more effective and balanced body. How you move affects how your horse will move. Any tight niggly areas will limit your horse.
STEP TWO

It’s time to move more & EXERCISE
Stand up as much as possible. If you have a desk job, start standing more. Take breaks in your day every hour and spend time at a desk at standing height. Work up to standing for longer periods of time. Sitting down affects a huge array of metabolic processes in your body. It also affects your hip and ankle range of motion. Tight, stiff and imbalanced hips are going to affect how you sit on your horse and how you move on your horses back.

So start to look at how you spend your day. Are you hindering your progress with dressage by spending much of your day sitting? One of the best ways to improve your riding off your horse is to simply walk more. Get moving. Aim to walk a minimum of 10,000 steps per day off your horses back. This will help loosen up any tight spots and begin to restore your natural biomechanics of your body.
Include yoga and mobility into your week. Fitness is not just about sweating it out. The truth is horse riding is a great form of exercise. The key is to find the balance in and around your riding that is going to enhance that time you spend on the horses back.

After you have built a great layer of movement and are walking every day around your riding, a great next step is to include yoga, stretching and mobility into your weeks. This will help improve your posture, balance, and loosen up tight areas that need more mobility and range of motion.
Full Range Hindu Squat
This is about ankle range of motion as much as it is about proper hip range of motion. The goal is to have your feet flat on the ground, knees behind the lines of your toes and your feet parallel to each other but a little wider than your shoulders. It is in this stretch that you may notice one side is tighter than the other.

It is this stretch where we notice our ankle range of motion and how much our hips flexors have actually shortened up.

Aim to do this stretch at least twice daily and hold for 3-5 minutes initially, then up to 10 minutes if you can.
Lunging Internal Hip Stretch
Set up in a kneeling lunge with your front foot pointing straight ahead. Keeping your foot on the ground, push your knee out to the side. You will feel this inside the inner hip. This is fantastic for improving your hip range of motion and your squatting ability. This in turn improves your running ability and prevention of injury.

Foam Rolling Adductors - Mobility
You use your adductor muscles extensively when riding, holding you in the saddle. Constantly contracting them makes them ever tighter.

Rolling these with a foam roller helps to release the tension, improving your biomechanics and suppleness.
Foam Rolling ITB - Mobility

Your ITB is a thick tendon that runs from the top of your hip down the side of your leg to your knee. Sitting for long periods can make this as tight as a banjo string. Foam rolling this tendon helps loosen it off and give you relief from the ache it sometimes gives.
Deep Hip Flexor Stretch

This is about getting right into your joint capsule and all the ligaments that surround it. This stretch is hugely beneficial and probably the most transformative for my knee issues.

Slide your knee in as close to the wall as possible and rest your hands on the ground for support to begin with. Then lift your upper body up. Brace your core and don’t arch through your back, ensuring you are squeezing your bottom. Feel that magic happen through your hips. Word of warning, this isn’t a pleasant stretch. In fact, the more unpleasant it is the more you need to do it.

I try and do this stretch 2 times per day. Once after my morning walk when my body is nice and warm and then again when I’m chilling out after dinner in the evening.
STEP THREE

It’s time to move more & improve FITNESS
Now that you have this foundation of movement happening each day and you are spending less time sitting, you will begin to notice how much better you are feeling. When you combine this with stretching and mobility work, you will now have a great foundation to build fitness from.

If you didn’t start with the foundation and you headed straight out running, those imbalances and tight hip flexors would quickly turn into injuries once you started pounded the pavements. Suddenly you wouldn’t be able to ride because you are nursing a new injury due to your lack of mobility and range of motion.

Running is an excellent way to get aerobically fitter if you enjoy it...

However I have a far faster way to get yourself fit, and you only need around 12 minutes a day!

This will not only improve your anaerobic fitness but also your aerobic fitness. Plus it’s incredible at boosting your metabolism and helping you burn body fat. You can do it in your living room in your jodphurs without the need for flash gym gear!
Here is a great example of how you can structure your week to build your fitness in and around your riding. Everyone is different and it is hard for me to suggest a perfect training program as this depends on how many horses you are riding and how active your day is.

However to begin with I am basing this program for someone who has just one horse they are riding throughout their week and they want to improve their overall fitness, balance and stability with the goal of improving their riding in the process.

Remember it’s important to have that solid foundation first, so every day walking for a minimum of 10,000 steps and ensuring you are spending 50% of your day standing or moving. Then include these workouts in and around your riding. Please note none are longer than 20 minutes and you can do these in your living room before or after you ride each day.

**CORE: 2 x per week**  
**Mobility & stretching: 2 x per week**  
**HIIT/LITE workout: 1 x per week**
GET THE VIDEO WORKOUTS

All of these workouts are available with the Dressage Rider Training program. You get access to dressage specific exercises and stretches, along with Yoga and mobility work to help you improve your riding.

Not only that also get access to dressage tips, demos and so much more.

www.dressageridertraining.com/register
Here are your key rules for success:

- **Move more!** Become a more active person. Include more activity into your day as much as possible.

- **Aim to spend 50% of your day moving or standing.**

- **Walking is AMAZING!** Aim to get **30 minutes each day**, this will help with your biomechanics & your fitness.
LET’S SUMMARIZE

_include Yoga and mobility into your week to help improve overall mobility, balance and flexibility_

_INCLUDE core specific workouts into your week to improve your balance and control of your body when in the saddle_

_INCLUDE either HIITs or LITEs into your week. This is high intensity interval training. If you are a beginner fitness level then start with the LITEs. If you want more of a challenge then do the HIITs. These are short for a reason and intense for a reason. They are about boosting your metabolic rate and shifting your body into fat burning mode. You want to work hard in these workouts and feel the burn._
Dressage is about becoming a balanced and strong combination. Both horse and rider’s fitness needs to be addressed so that one is not holding the other back, but both are progressing forward.

Helping you become the best rider you can be.
My name is Nicola Smith. I am a personal trainer & wellness coach who also happens to LOVE dressage. I’ve applied my knowledge in biomechanics & scientific core training to help fix the specific issues that dressage riders face.

My passion for dressage is what led me to create the Dressage Rider Training guide & website, applying what I know about human health and wellbeing to the dressage athlete. As a rider myself, I understand your needs as a dressage athlete.

We spend so much time training our horse that often we forget about ourselves. YOU are just as much a part of the team as your horse, so you want to make yourself strong, supple & engaged.

“Dressage Rider Training is my way of sharing what I can with you. I want you to thrive and and be the best dressage rider you can be”

SEND ME AN EMAIL
Let me help you on your wellness journey. If you have any questions or concerns, I would love to help if I can.

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BPHED, University of Otago (Double major exercise prescription and sport science)

Chek Holistic Nutrition And Lifestyle Coach 2

Functional Diagnostic Nutrition Practitioner
READY TO TAKE YOUR RIDER FITNESS TO A NEW LEVEL?

The dressage rider training program has everything you need to take action for your health & wellness and improve your riding in the process. Get inspiration and encouragement from a community of like-minded members. Some will be in the exact same position as you with similar goals and aspirations.

Learn more at
www.dressageridertraining.com/register

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