

# Warm up your Winter Riding

## Your Training Questions Answered

**Q:** Is there an easy way to practice my speed over a cross country course?

**Event rider and trainer, Bill Levett replies**

The two most common mistakes I see people make when riding cross country are:

1. Going too fast, galloping in what appears to be a full tilt canter/gallop with little control and little rebalancing before fences and relying on the horse to sort itself out
2. Crawling along too slowly and not staying positive enough when riding in to and away from fences.

The two things you need to keep in mind in order to avoid the problems I'm describing above are that cross country riding is meant to be forward and positive but that you need to maintain balance and control and take time out to organise yourself at your fences.

The speeds for cross country at affiliated events are all set out in the British Eventing rule book.

There is no need to go to the trouble and expense of hiring a gallop. Find a stretch of grass on a bridleway or in a field that you have permission to use. You will also need a stopwatch but you may even have one on your phone. Mark out the distance you require, for instance if you are looking

to ride at say, 550 metres per minute, mark out 550 metres from your start point. However if you are aiming to be competitive and the speed required for the course is at say 550m per minute, you will need to be a little faster on the flat to give you time to negotiate the jumps. In this case, at this speed example, you should train at about 570m per minute to absorb the jumping time.

Canter your horse along your marked route a few times to get a feel for his pace then get someone to time how long you take between your markers. If you are under a minute you will need to slow your pace and if you take longer than a minute you need to push your horse on accordingly. Try again until you get it right.

You are aiming to be able to feel when you are at the right speed. It will probably take a while to get the pace into your head so practice and retime it until you are confident. Once you have the feel of the pace you should be able to gauge the correct speed over an unmarked distance and differing terrain.

When competing keep a sense of the speed in your mind.



Photo by Fiona Scott Maxwell

If you change horses, don't forget each horse has a different stride pattern. For instance a horse with a shorter stride will feel faster than one with a long stride. It is therefore, important to repeat the exercise when you ride different horses to get a feel for each individual's pace.

**Bill can be contacted at [www.billlevett.com](http://www.billlevett.com) or on 07703 439 427**



## Health, Fitness and Nutrition for Equestrian Pursuits

Motus Training formed in 2007 and opened their private Personal Training Studio on Alscot Estate near Stratford-upon-Avon in January 2011. Founder Darren Putt and the team at the Motus Training studio are dedicated to offering the best possible Personal Training and Nutrition services to help you transform your body, fitness levels and health.

Darren and the Motus Team work with many clients involved in various forms of horse riding and consistently produce amazing results for both the individual and in terms of improvements to their riding.

The Motus Training team would like to invite you to get in touch with to arrange a free consultation to discuss your needs, please call 01789 450 141 or email [darren@motustraining.co.uk](mailto:darren@motustraining.co.uk), [www.motustraining.co.uk](http://www.motustraining.co.uk)

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