

Why not try . . . ?

The Discipline
of the Month



No 7.

Pole Work

AKA grid work

Five reasons why your club should use pole work

1.

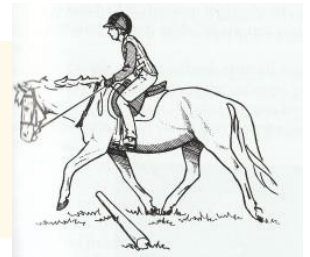
Pole work can be great fun for horses and riders

2.

Pole work helps improve riders' balance, accuracy, security and control

3.

This activity allows coaches to introduce jumping in a variety of ways



4

Pole work is good for teaching a horse to become adaptable and think for themselves.

5.

The equipment you need can be used in so many patterns and combinations, it's like a new lesson each time.

First things first - position

As with dressage/flat riding, position comes first.

Many riders, especially when learning to jump, ride with the shoulders too forward, loading the front end of their horse or pony.

Ideally there should be a straight line from shoulder, though knee to toe is best. As people we are all different shapes and sizes so this may not be exact for all riders. Neck straps are a big help and stop riders using the reins to balance on which is not fair to the horse.....ouch!

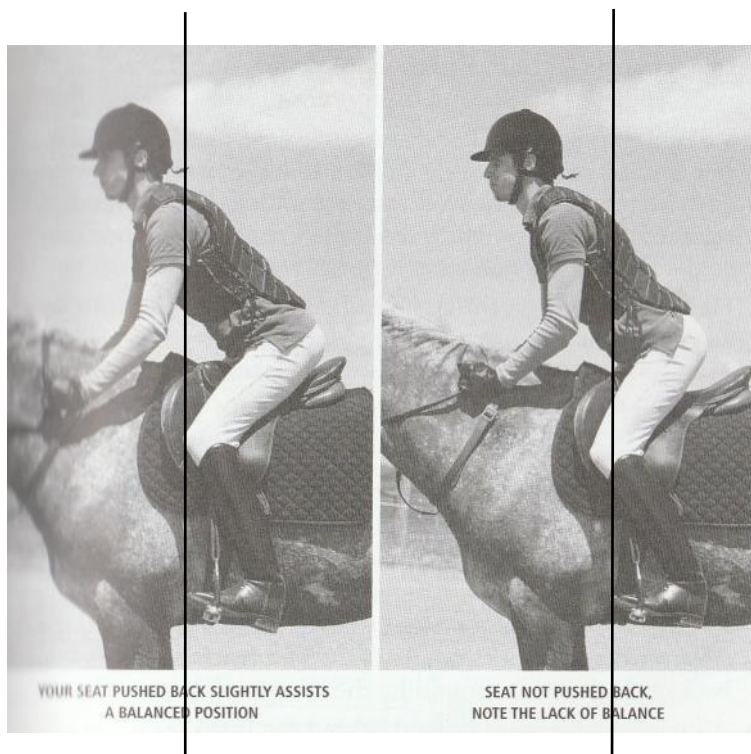
We call this position 'two point'...some may use the expressions 'forward leaning' or 'jumping position'.

Why is it called two point?

There are two points of contact - the rider's two legs. In dressage there are three points as we include the seat. This rider's heels look a bit 'deep' at halt but check other photos to see the difference when moving.

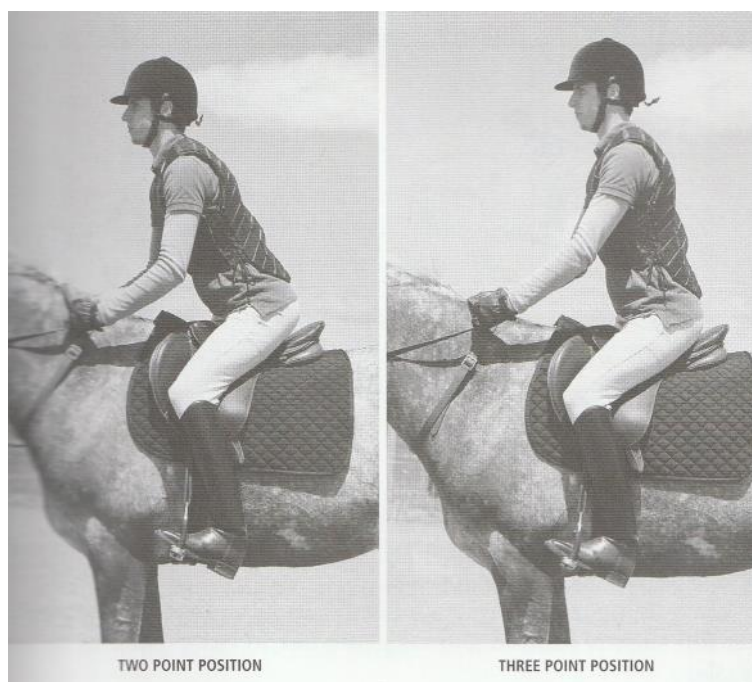


ABOVE: Carol Hobson teaching at Birrallee and District Pony Club, Tasmania. Rider in two point position lining up shoulder, knee and toe.



YOUR SEAT PUSHED BACK SLIGHTLY ASSISTS A BALANCED POSITION

SEAT NOT PUSHED BACK, NOTE THE LACK OF BALANCE



TWO POINT POSITION

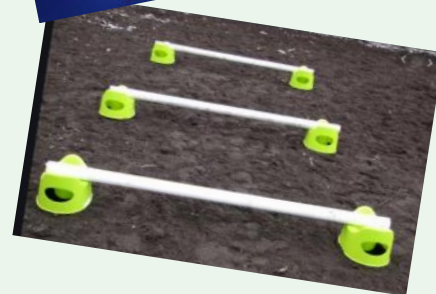
THREE POINT POSITION

Did you know?

The word cavaletti comes from the Italian meaning 'little horse'. The singular of cavaletti is cavaletto but it is rarely used - you have probably never heard it mentioned and we hadn't either.

The design of the ends has changed over the years. Once, you could not use a cavaletti (cavaletto!) pole for any other use as it was attached to the end.

Now, potties are proving popular as the rail sits snugly in the middle, but will fall if the horse hits them hard. There are less height options (but you can have one end up, one down).



Distances for Pole Work

Horses and ponies have a different length of stride. A stride means all four legs and a step is one leg at a time. After placing a pole or two randomly around your working area with your horse being comfortable to work over these it is time to start some fun exercises.

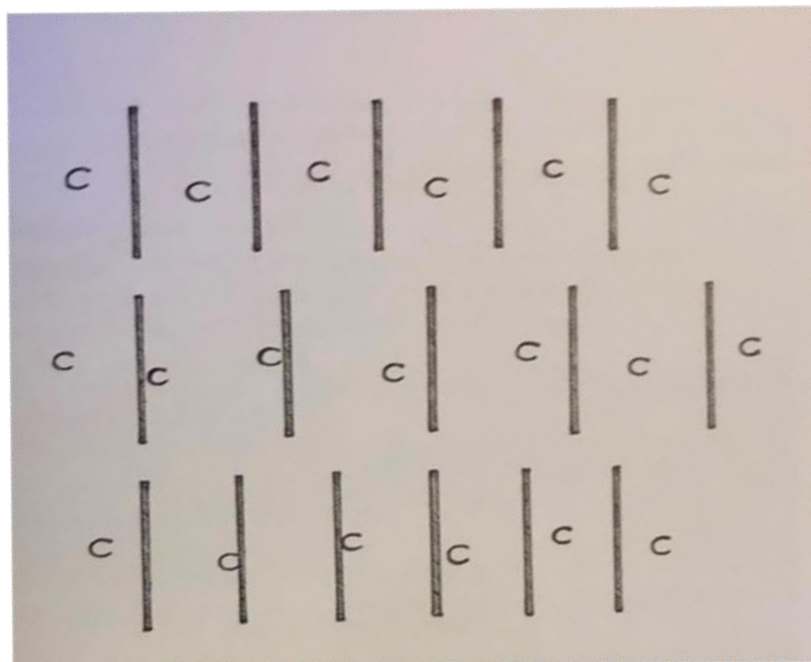
It is important to use a tape to set up poles. Generally the average length for a trot stride for a horse starts at 1.37m but can be longer.



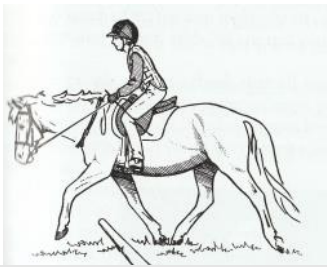
The footfalls of a step (one hoof print) a stride (four hoof prints) and the gait (trot)

Q: Look at the three lines at right. How do you tell which is the correct striding?

A: The horse or pony should step in the middle, so the top one is correct.

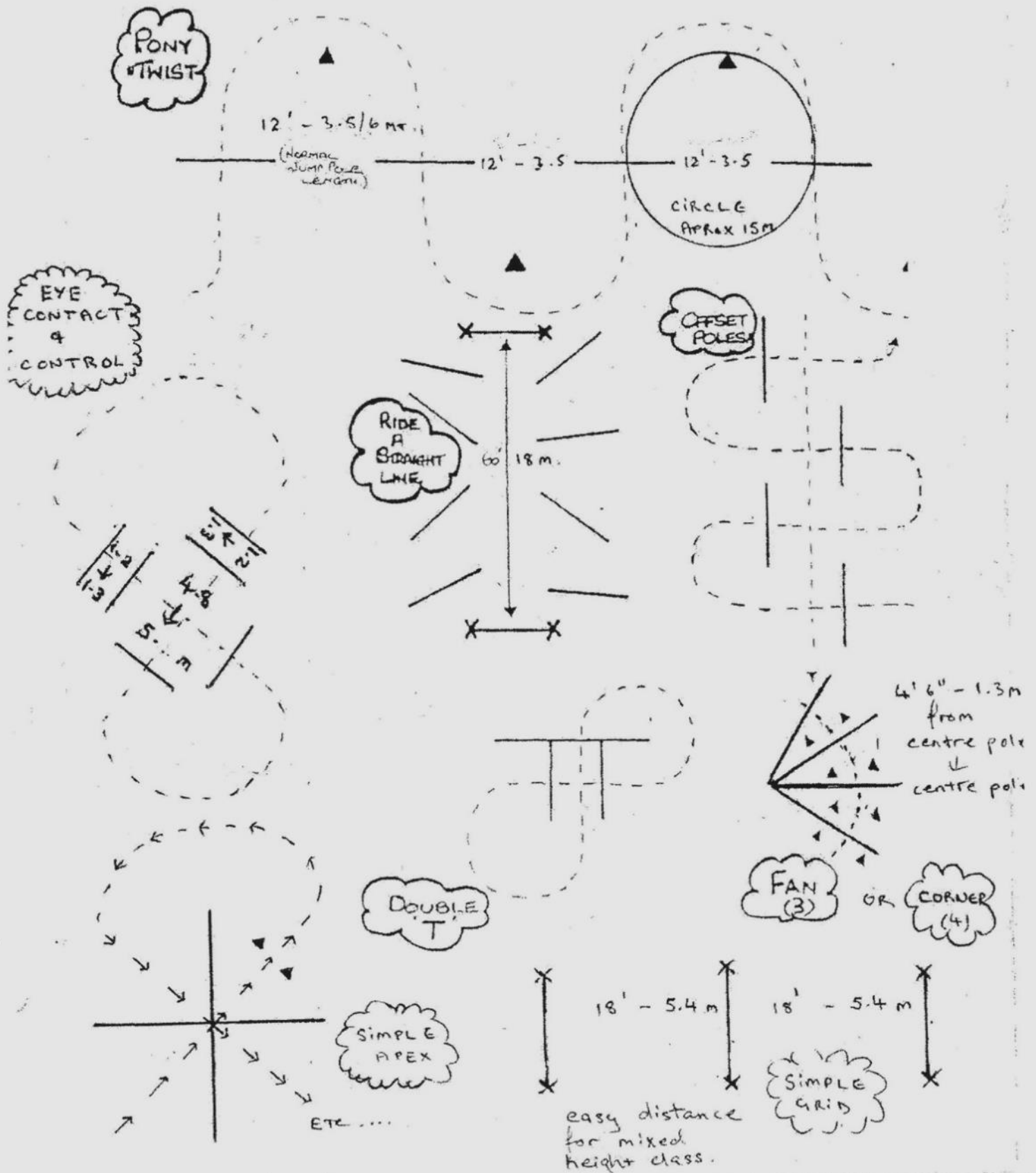


Above: Carol Hobson (PCT coach, judge and assessor, on right) and Alana Blackman measuring pole distances. Alana is a Level 1 coach and also PCT Northern Zone president. Right: Correct seat (two-point) through poles. It is easier for the horse if you don't rise.

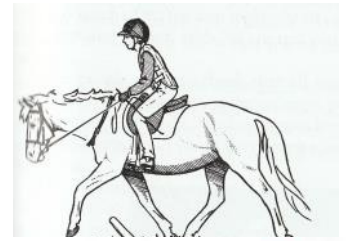


Pole Exercises

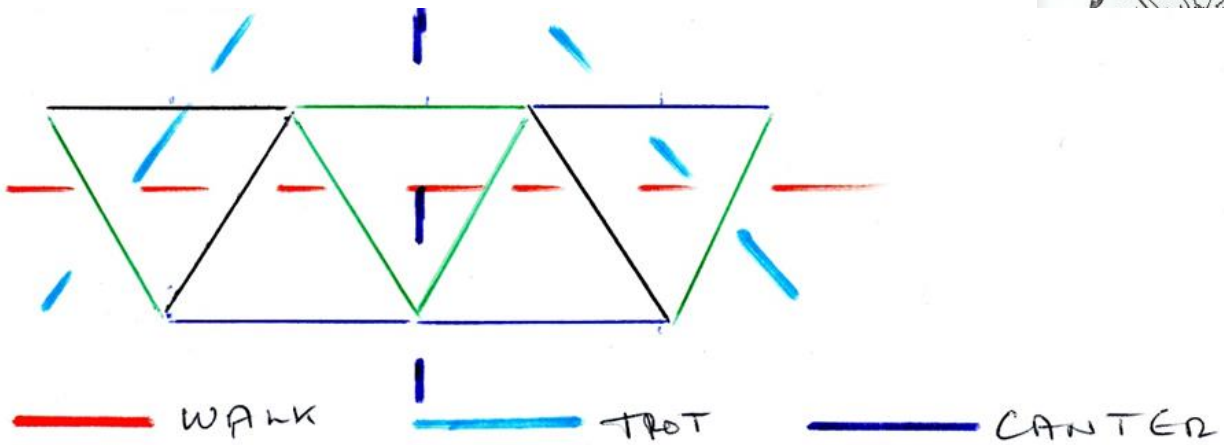
There are many different ways to set up poles for your exercises, here are some simple examples. Make use of witches hats (cones) and poles (tram tracks) to help with guidance where needed.



More Complicated Tracks



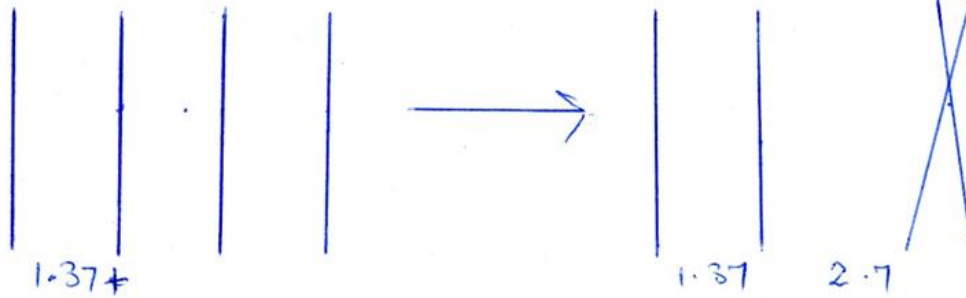
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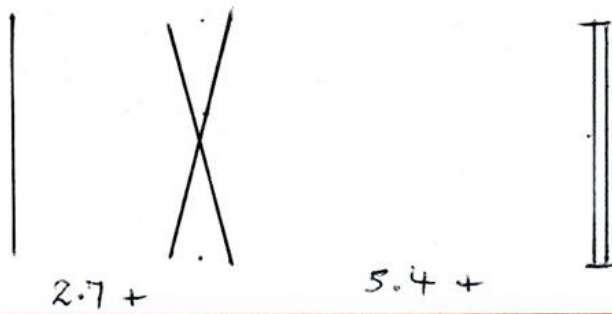
STEP 1

STEP 2

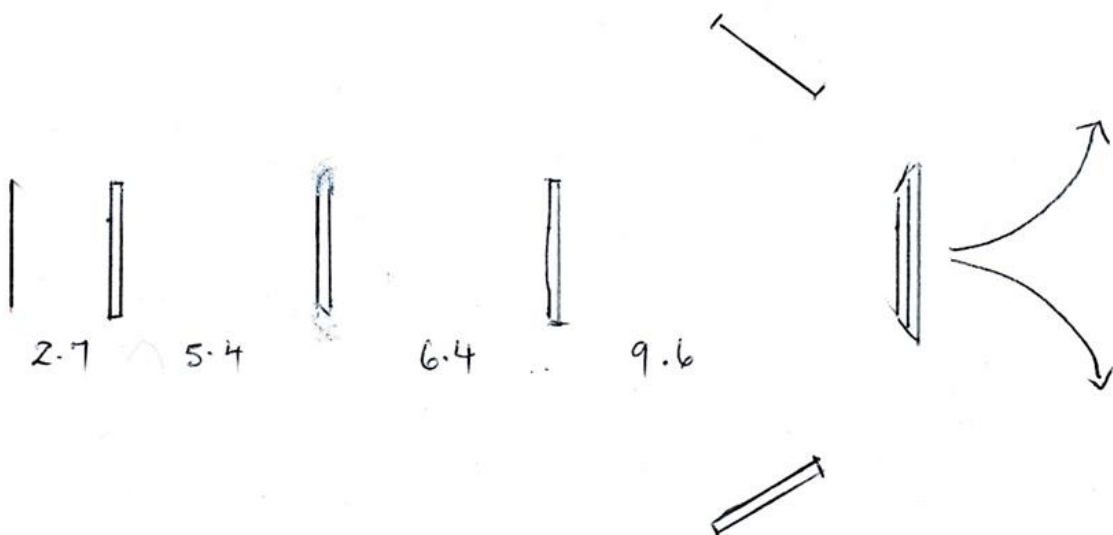
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Notes to Remember . . .



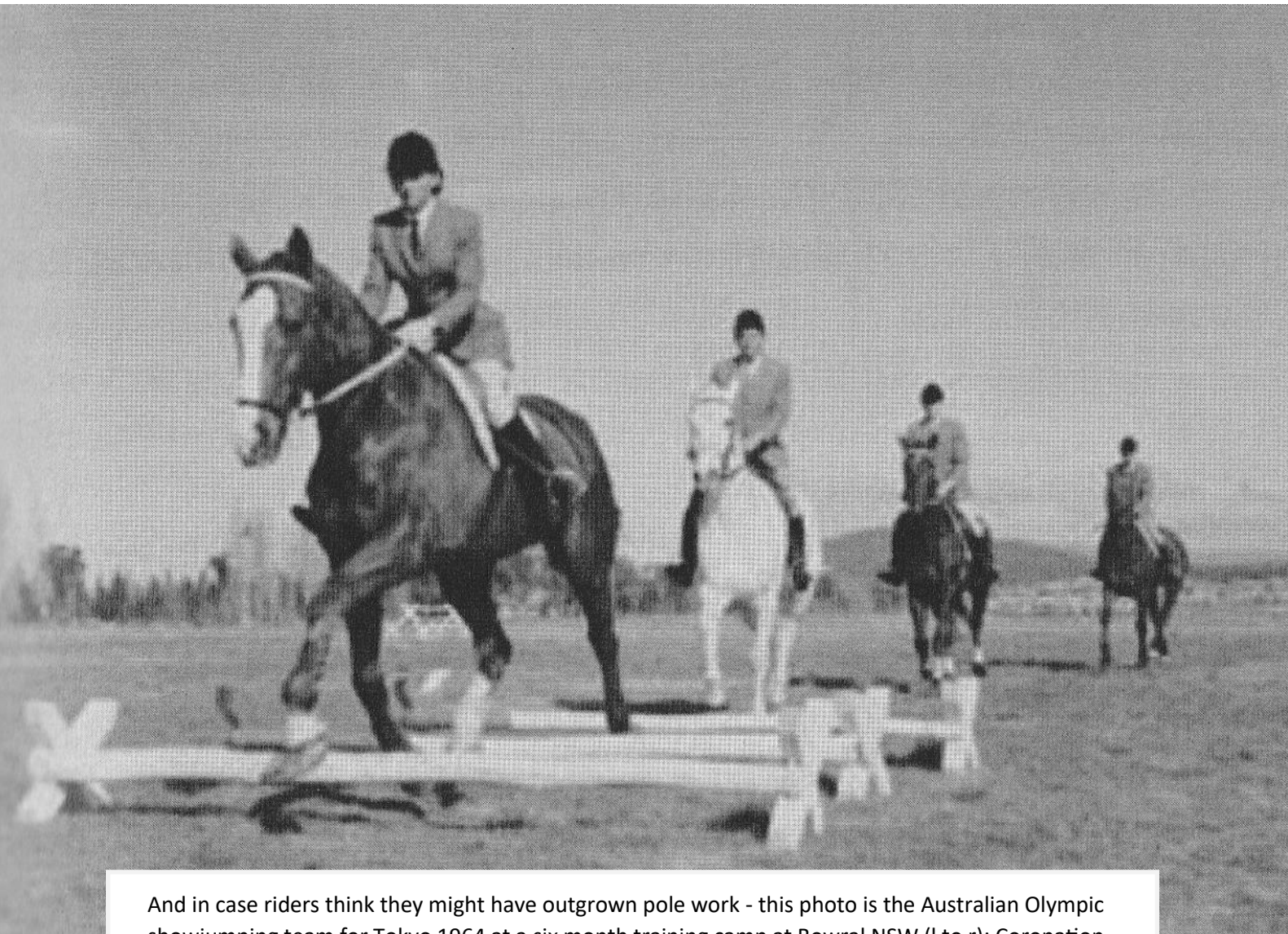
[Watch a 'Flying Angel' exercise here](#)

- Most people use jumping poles to set up grids.
- Jump poles for outside arenas are generally 12 ft, or 3.6m long.
- This is also the length of a canter stride
- A great way to teach riders to walk a stride is to practise walking along a SJ pole.
- If your approach is in trot, the first couple of canter strides may be under 3.6m.
- Many young riders like to trot into fences at first. Make sure it is forward enough otherwise the horse may 'cat leap', frightening both horse and rider.
- If you have enough equipment, an enclosed grid is very safe and can be used for 'flying angels' (see below) and you can see Carol doing this exercise using the link at left.



Right:
Another
useful
pole work
exercise

A Little Bit of History . . .



And in case riders think they might have outgrown pole work - this photo is the Australian Olympic showjumping team for Tokyo 1964 at a six month training camp at Bowral NSW (l to r): Coronation and Bridget 'Bud' Hyem (who went on to breed and own dual gold medal eventers Kibah Tic Toc and Kibah Sandstone), Kevin Bacon and Ocean Foam, Barry Roycroft and Genoe and John Fahey and Bonvale, training over cavaletti for legendary coach Franz Mairinger.

It was our first ever Olympic Showjumping team and they came 7th, with John Fahey 4th individually after a jump off for the bronze against Peter Robeson (UK).



Extreme pole work!

Aussie Richard Bruggeman on Valli competing in a six bar event.

A six bar is six fences in ascending size two strides apart, and whether it's 60cm high or 1.6m, it can all just flow on a good day. Run as a knockout event, only clears go on to the next (and higher) round. But imagine what the horse sees on the approach! It's a good example of training and trust.

[Here's a video of a junior six bar event \(2014 Sydney Royal - narrated by Graeme Barker.](#)

Don't forget to share, and also send us, your pole work photos or videos so we can see and share them in our newsletters and on Facebook too!

Each month in 2020 we are bringing you a 'Discipline of the Month' - it is up to you when you try it out

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