

# Group task suggestions for coaches

Below are some suggestions for group tasks, discussions and friendly debates that you can incorporate into your sessions. We have listed them by topic.

## About the Horse

### Handling your horse

Bronze group tack cleaning: Strip clean tack, discuss with each other the condition of the leather, is it safe?, quiz each other on the names of the parts of the bridle. Help each other to put the tack back together. Can they pick out the correct parts from a pile of tack?

Silver group discussion – accident / incident scenarios: Investigate running a first aid course at your yard. Accident report sample sheet can be downloaded for the group to complete

Silver pairs task: Turn out or bring in a horse. Help each other with gates

Gold group task: Think of an activity on the yard (grooming a horse, tacking up, catching a horse) and discuss the risks and what you can do to minimise these. Risk assessment sample sheet can be downloaded for the group to complete

Gold group task: Safety checks on a trailer or lorry before loading. Split the tasks between the group ie one group check the flooring and ramp, one look at fixtures and fittings, one check electrics etc. Discuss within the group what they looked for and conclusions

Platinum group discussion: Gather a range of bits (or photos of bits) and as a group discuss and work out what action they may have. Discuss what they think about this and if they feel it is appropriate to use this type of bit, and for what activity or type of horse. Print the bridle/bit/tack extracts from rule books of various disciplines and discuss their views.

Platinum group discussion: Compare the range of leg support/protection available on the market (bandaging/brushing boots/tendon boots/sports wraps etc), does the level of protection/support vary between design? What other factors should be considered when choosing boots vs wraps vs bandages (fleece vs stretch, Gamgee vs no gamgee) vs none ie, length of time on horse, leg temperature, type of work, weather (hot/cold, wet/dry), ground conditions. See if there are any research articles that initiate a discussion to support for or against each argument, for example [Dr David Marlin](#)

### Knowing your horse

Bronze pairs or small group task: One person describe a horse on the yard using colour and markings. The others guess which horse on the yard it is (works if the learners are all familiar with the horse's names). Could also use pictures of famous horses.

Silver pairs or small group task: Measure the height of each other, try to convert this to hands / inches. Work out the height difference between the tallest and shortest horses/ponies on the yard.

Silver group task: feed the horses on the yard. Help prepare feeds, give to horses, clean buckets after, sweep yard

Gold group discussion: possible causes of colic; can you do anything to reduce the risk of colic in your horse? REACT pack, go through the pack with your coach.

Platinum pairs task: If available, age a number of different horses and compare with other pairs – were the guesses close to each other? Coach to reveal actual age of horses after task is complete

Platinum group discussion: Consider a horse that is susceptible to colic or laminitis. How would you manage this horse? Discuss feed, turnout, weight, workload, management, routine etc

Platinum pairs or group task: Work out a basic ration calculation for a horse. Weigh the horse (weigh bridge or weigh tape), and body score horse. Use this to work out the amount of feed he will require (2% of bodyweight). Consider other factors (age, management, work) and estimate a feed calculation for the horse.

### **Caring for your horse**

Bronze group task: Field care group clean up. Poo pick / litter pick / repair fencing / remove ragwort. As a group tidy up a field with tasks shared across the group

Bronze group discussion: 1. what you might do if it was windy and you had to change a rug outside? 2. What to do if you're half way through putting on or taking a rug off and it slips off/down your horse with some straps still done up?

Silver pairs task: Muck out including, fresh water, hay, tidy muck heap. Set a time limit.

Silver: discussion/debate: pros and cons of rugs/rugging a horse

Silver group task: On a nice day thoroughly groom horses, wash/trim the tails of a group of horses. Sponge the body of the horse to remove dust, possibly add quarter marks if you have stencils? Who is the best turned out/biggest transformation?

Gold group discussion: How does the 'normal behaviour' of horses vary within the yard?

Gold discussion / debate: How has domesticating the horse gone against their natural/wild lifestyle? Is there an ideal method we should adopt when keeping a horse (ie, stable vs turnout), does one method fit all? What factors should be considered when deciding on a routine for a horse?

Gold group task: bath a group of horses (on a nice day!), hand graze them to dry (PPE)

Gold discussion: pros/cons of clipping, if possible watch a horse being clipped and have a go. Lots of people clip designs into their horses coat – search the internet for the wackiest design or have the group create their own designs.

Platinum group task: Make your own stable treat. You will need a range of carrots, apples, swede, and other suitable treats to thread through rope.

Platinum group task: On a nice day thoroughly groom horses, wash/trim the tails of a group of horses, trim legs and mane. Sponge the body of the horse to remove dust, possibly add quarter marks if you have stencils? Who is the best turned out/biggest transformation?

### **Lungeing your horse**

Bronze: In pairs or small groups practice coiling the line, feeding it out and rolling it up

Silver group task: prepare an area for lungeing

Silver: give each other feedback on lungeing

Gold discussion: What are the risks of lunging? What could go wrong? How can these risks be minimised? What to do if something does go wrong

Platinum pairs or group: Watch a coach, or each other, lunge and give feedback on how you think the horse is working, are they active? Is the horse better on one rein than the other? Is he tracking up, travelling straight and balanced?

Platinum discussion: Go through all you have learnt so far with lungeing. Has anyone come across any difficulties/problems? Discuss these and troubleshoot suggestions for future improvements. If group cannot come up with any 'issues' coach could think of some scenarios to discuss.

## About the Rider

### Riding flat

Bronze group exercise: Think of a group warm up to loosen up and stretch your muscles before riding. Repeat this once you have got off and untacked for a group cool down! Discuss: benefits of a warm up/cool down not just for the horse but rider too. What muscles do you think you need to stretch?

Bronze pairs task: footfalls. Requires canes or lungeing whips (use a bit of tape to stick the lash to the handle so it's not loose) etc. In pairs (one behind the other), holding a cane in each hand, practice the footfalls of horses. One person will be the front legs, the other the back legs. Work together to recreate a realistic beat. Task is done well on a hard surface so you can hear when the cane is put to the floor

Silver: Improving balance – mounted games/pony club races/gymkhana games

Great for doing something different and improving co-ordination and teamwork. Things like moving flags from one flag pot to another, moving mugs from one pole to another with require the rider to engage their core whilst they lean to one side and pick up equipment with one hand. A team game can be achieved by a relay race with the rider passing a piece of equipment to the next rider so they can then complete the race (if you're not sure how the horses will react to the rider's riding up to each closely, do this bit in walk). Get the riders to encourage each other and talk to each other as they complete the race. If you have a big group you could split them into teams/pairs and either race against each other (if space/equipment allows) or time them and see who completes in the quickest time. Complete the Mounted Games challenge award – coming soon!

Gold group task: Get together and visit the regional or national dressage championships in your area. Watch riders at all levels – can you see the progression? What movements do you recognise?

All levels: hold a mini informal competition at your yard (dressage/show jumping). The group can pick the tests/design the course/arrange prizes. Can include an in hand show for best turned out, cleanest tack. Or enter an online dressage test

Platinum group task: You Tube videos of Olympic dressage tests, discuss the moves and how the rider is balanced. Charlotte Dujardin London 2012 test is always a great conversation piece!

### Riding jump

Bronze task: Practice jumping position/light seat balanced on a step – who can keep their balance the longest?

Silver task: Practice jumping position/light seat balanced on a round pole – who can keep their balance the longest?

Silver task: Walk/measure distances for placing poles, measure your stride length

Gold task: Help to build a course of jumps and practice walking the lines you are going to take.

Gold task: have a day trip out to an affiliated show jumping competition/BE event or get together to watch a top level competition on the tv (Olympia/Badminton).

All levels – hold a mini informal competition at your yard (dressage/show jumping). The group can pick the tests/design the course/arrange prizes. Can include an in hand show for best turned out, cleanest tack

Platinum task: individually, measure the distance between a double or related distance. Are there any variations within the group? Discuss why this may be.

Platinum task: Watch rounds of high level showjumping competitions (Olympia, Horse of the Year Show on You Tube) or go to a top level comp if there is one regionally. Discuss the technical components of the course and how you would ride it. Did the competitor ride it how you thought?

## Riding out safely

All levels: Arrange a picnic hack or a pub ride!

## Riding fit

Bronze group task: Meet up outside of the yard and go for a group walk

Bronze task: Make some flavoured water or smoothies, have a taste test and come up with ways to increase your hydration and water intake throughout the day

Bronze discussion: Encourage a group chat about mental health and well-being with open-ness and no judgement. How can you support each other

Silver group task: Home Challenge suggestion on page 15 of information booklet

Silver group discussion: Read the report 'The effects of rider weight on horse performance' described on page 17 of information booklet. Discuss as a group how they feel about the topic.

Silver group task: discuss as a group positive thoughts you can think or say out loud as you ride; put these into practice in your next group lesson – did it have a positive effect?

Silver group discussion: Each group member suggest the little things that bring them joy to their day (could be walking the dog, being helpful to someone, being at the yard), it may give ideas to other members of the group things they can do to have a positive impact on their day and bring a bit of joy.

Silver group task: Think of a charity you would like to volunteer for, make a commitment to volunteer some time (pair up if need a bit of support) and then discuss each other's experience. Or you could work as a team to volunteer to clear a bridleway, rubbish pick a stretch of beach or plant some trees. There will be different charities in your local area that will benefit from a group effort – research and make a pledge with the group to offer to help.

Gold group task: Think of ways to increase your fitness/cardio. Challenge each other to commit to some sort of activity.

Gold group task: Think of a group warm up to loosen up and stretch your muscles before riding. Repeat this once you have got off and untacked for a group cool down! Discuss: benefits of a warm up/cool down not just for the horse but rider too. What muscles do you think you need to stretch?

Gold group discussion: Go through the suggested stretching exercises in the information booklet. Are there any alternatives or additions you can think of?

Gold group discussion: Go through your goals and aspirations for your riding, or for outside of riding. How can you help them to visualize their goals and how can they support each other to achieve them? Can any of the goals be broken down to smaller, short term goals?

Gold group task: Arrange a social event with the group. This could be something simple as a drink at a pub, a dog walk or bowling.

Platinum group task: Arrange an equi-pilates or rider biomechanics session

Platinum group task: Go and try an exercise class you haven't done before; Zumba, Clubbercise or Bodypump perhaps? Trying something new is always easier when you have friends to support you and you're all in the same boat together!

Platinum task: Measure your heart rate before, during and after a riding lesson

If you have any further suggestions, share them on the [APC facebook page](#) – we'd love to hear them!