

Centered Riding and Eventing

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Eventing is often called the "triathlon" for horses because it involves three phases, dressage, cross-country jumping, and stadium jumping. A horse that excels in all three phases is a very special athlete.

Each phase presents its own challenges. The dressage phase shows the attributes of the training scale (rhythm, regularity, tempo, etc.) plus obedience. The cross-country phase shows boldness, bravery, confidence, ability to balance over varied terrain. Stadium jumping shows the ability to be balance, obedient and clean over jumps that come down. Believe me, they know the difference!!

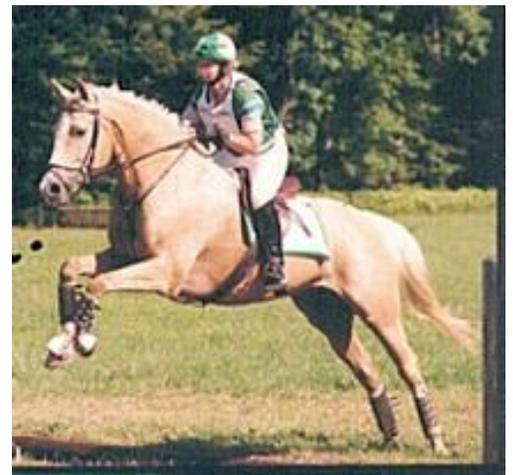
The rider needs to have the ability to effectively use themselves in all phases, and be balanced in three different saddles. The dressage saddle places the rider in an upright position, stirrup bars under the thigh. Cross-country is ridden in a saddle with the stirrup bars more ahead of the thigh and rider in short stirrups for galloping. Stadium is similar; however, stirrups bars are slightly farther back for a leg that is more under to rider.

So, that said, let's talk about how Centered Riding is involved. In all three phases the feet (grounding) must stay under the center. Since the main focus of Eventing is the cross-country phase, let's address that.

Cross-country is done over varied terrain and involves obstacles such as jumping fences on an uphill or downhill, on the side of a hill, jumping down and up drops, over ditches, jumping into and out of water. Most cross-country fences are also solid. Now there is a push for frangible pins that will break if hit hard enough in order to save both horse and rider. Still the jumps LOOK solid.

SOOO, if you would like to stay on your horse, you need to be breathing, have soft eyes and your building blocks/center over your grounding at all times.

Going down hills or drops your feet need to be perpendicular to the ground which says they need to be slight in front. If you are not grounded going down a drop and pinch with your knees you will be thrown forward when the horse lands. You must absorb the shock with all of your leg joints. Going up hills or up banks your feet need to be slightly behind. Your center needs to remain in the middle of the saddle.



Jumping into water presents a different problem. When you hit the water, the horse's forward movement is slowed and there is a moment on the landing where it is important that the rider has stayed grounded and up in the body in order to absorb the shock with all of the leg joints. Just picture a rider leaning forward pinching with the knees. That is a formula for BATH time!!

Ditches need soft eyes!! Jumping over a ditch is similar to a big gallop stride if taken correctly. What happens if you stare **into** the ditch? Important to look **over** the ditch so you do not land **IN** the ditch!! Again staying grounded and centered in the middle of the saddle, open in the upper body. This is necessary just in case the horse hesitates or hesitates and then leaps!

One of the good things about cross-country is that the jumps are farther apart and you have time to plan how you need to approach the next fence. You should have walked the course at least 2 times because the first time you are usually in a panic and the second time everything looks smaller and less intimidating.

This has been a **brief** description of the uses of Centered Riding in cross-country riding. The same could be applied to stadium jumping. In Eventing, often the stadium course is not on level ground so the balance still comes into play.