

Strong Strides

# 21 Day Conditioning Plan to Building A Fit, Willing Horse



(created for a horse with basic training under saddle)

Begin with the Ultimate P.R.E.P. following the "The Extraordinary Horsemanship Circle of Confidence..."

(take as many days as this takes-until you have connection & relaxation & willingness)



The following assumes your horse is trained-just out of shape & not used to being worked. This is a fitness plan not a training plan. But you can not ride and not be training, so, I have included a few training tips. Use this plan as a guideline- not a rulebook, adjust it to fit your horse.

**Note:** If you need to stop and sit to allow your horse to settle this is crucial.

Place this as being more important than building fitness these first few weeks.

Remember to inspire your horse to want to be with you...practicing connected leadership, you are the teacher and the guide- encouraging your horse to go back to work like a child going back to school after summer break, kindness mixed with firmness.

This might feel sloppy at first. But if you will focus on relaxation and connection... accepting the slightest try as you also creating boundaries, success will build on success.

Also, your transitions are key to setting you up for success. Don't just kick your trained horse up to the next gait. Look for lessons on "Transitions" coming soon in the member's area.

## **Week 1:**

### Day 1:

- Warm up following your P.R.E.P. (see P.R.E.P. Barn Guide)- create willingness on the ground.
- Walk 15 minutes, focusing on relaxation and stretching, walking with purpose, and decisiveness (meaning walking directly to a point). You can use cones if you'd like to give you both something to focus on.
- Cool down with a 10-minute walk on a droopy rein (if possible). Keep your horse's ear on you and keep guiding (don't let them just go wherever they want)

### Day 2-6 Relaxed Exercise to Build Acceptance

- Warm up following your P.R.E.P. (see P.R.E.P. Barn Guide)
- Walk 10 minutes, focusing on relaxation and stretching, walking with purpose, and decisiveness (meaning walking directly to a point- not meandering)
- Walk 15 minutes and mix in 3-5 minutes of trotting, large serpentines & circles, remember straight lines create speed. Keep your horse relaxed.

Add a minute each day until you are up to 20 minutes walking & trotting, remember you are riding serpentines and large circles.

Focus on counting your rhythm and creating consistency.

Add in soft stops, backing, and turns as you create more willingness.

- Cool down with a 10-minute walk on a droopy rein (if possible). Keep your horse's ear on you and keep guiding (don't let them just go wherever they want)

Day 7: Rest

## **Week 2:**

Day 8-13 Transitioning to Work (Build on Week 1)

This week start to add in riding in the pasture (if you can safely do this!) on uneven ground & slight inclines. If you have a spooky horse, or you don't feel confident riding outside of the ring, stay out of the saddle and walk it out until you are both confident.

- Warm up following your P.R.E.P. (see P.R.E.P. Barn Guide)- create willingness on the ground.
- Walk 10 minutes, focusing on relaxation and stretching, walking with purpose, and decisiveness (meaning walking directly to a point- not meandering) You can use cones if you'd like to give you both something to focus on.
- Walk & Trot 20 minutes and mixing in some extended trotting, large serpentines & circles, remember straight lines create speed. Keep your horse relaxed.
- Add some poles to add variety.

If you have a finished horse you will want to add in a lope down a line here and transition to trot for short periods at a time plus short distances of lateral work.

Start to add into your 20 minutes of work time longer periods of a collected "working trot" to build stamina.

You can build your time a few minutes each day if you have the room in your schedule for more ride time and depending on your horse's current level of fitness. Anytime they are breathing hard stop and let them catch their breath.

Again, focus on counting your rhythm and creating consistency.

Add in soft stops, backing, and turns as you create more willingness.

- Cool down with a 5-10-minute walk on a droopy rein (if possible). Keep your horse's ear on you and keep guiding (don't let them just go wherever they want)

Day 14: Rest

### **Week 3:**

Day: 15-20 Layering in the Fundamentals of Extraordinary Horsemanship

(Build on Week 1 & 3)

This week continue to add in riding in the pasture (if you can safely do this!) on uneven ground & slight inclines. If your horse is still not ready to do this under saddle continue to walk on the ground until you are both confident.

- Warm up following your P.R.E.P. (see P.R.E.P. Barn Guide)- create willingness on the ground. Your P.R.E.P. should be taking less time!
- Walk 10 minutes, focusing on relaxation and stretching, walking with purpose, and decisiveness (meaning walking directly to a point- not meandering). You can use cones if you'd like to give you both something to focus on.

This week you should be able to ask for more bending and be able to better "rate" your speed from fast to slow

Walk & Trot 20 minutes and mixing in some extended trotting, and loping, with lots of transitions, riding large serpentines & circles, remember straight lines create speed. Keep your horse relaxed. Stopping and standing to create patience.

Start to add in during your 20 minutes work time longer period of a collected "working trot" & lope to build stamina.

Again, focus on counting your rhythm and creating consistency.

Add in soft stops, backing, and turns as you create more willingness.

- Add some poles and cones to add variety, And more lateral work.
- Cool down with a 10-minute walk on a droopy rein (if possible). But keep your horse's ear on you.

Day 21: Rest

Congratulations! You're now ready to take your riding skills to the next level.  
Keep going!