



Florida Sport Horse Club: Build Your Own Obstacle Course

Use your imagination to create new challenges and obstacles for your horse. The Dollar Store can be a great source of items you can use, as can common items around the barn or house. When working your horse, it's best to show your horse the obstacles from the ground first before working him through it from the saddle. Remember that you cannot, nor should you try, to force your horse through. Use your horse's trust in you, along with persuasion and rewards, to accept new experiences.

- Swim noodles: Using baling twine, hang several in a row from a rafter or tree limb for your horse to walk through. Or tie them horizontally on either side of a gate so the horse has to walk through them.
- "Floating" plastic bags or balloons. Blow plastic bags up and tie them tightly. Let them blow around the arena as you work your horse.
- Water pit: Use at least 4 fence posts to form a square. Lay a plastic tarp over it, and fill it with water. Teach your horse to walk through it.
- Rain slickers/noisy jackets: Hang rain slickers, jackets, and other clothing on the fence. Starting from the ground, bring your horse up to the item, pick it up and rub it along your horse's body. When he is accustomed to that, flap it and wave it around him. Repeat from the saddle.
- Crinkly water bottles: Many horses are spooked when riders crinkle water bottles as they are riding. Accustom your horse to the sound when you are in the saddle. You can also collect a bunch of plastic water bottles, flatten them and place them on the ground where the horse has to step on them.
- Garbage cans: Tie a rope to the lid and run the rope over a tree limb or rafter. Drape the loose end of the rope where you can reach it from the saddle, so that when you pull on the rope the lid will rise up. For added effect, hang a bag of cans or stuffed animals on the underside of the lid so it will appear when you lift.
- People wearing different hats, carrying backpacks, fishing poles, etc.: Anything that changes the outline of the human can startle a horse, especially if the person does not talk. Have friends swap hats, costumes, etc. as you walk past with your horse.
- Dogs: If you have an audio recording of barking dogs or have dogs somebody can hold as you walk your horse past, try it!
- Have your horse walk over different types of footing: tarps laid on the ground, paving stones, feed bags that have been scattered around.
- Play "musical chairs" using paper plates on the ground: see if you can get your horse to stop with his feet on the plate.
- Drag things behind you: load a garbage bag with cans and tie it closed with a long rope. Leave the rope where you can pick up the loose end from the saddle. When you pick up the rope and attached bag, rattle the bag. Drag the bag behind you. Do the same thing with a tree limb.

- Teach your horse to step over logs or other natural objects. Sidepass or back over the same objects.
- While you should not use your cell phone while riding (takes hands off the reins and attention off the horse & surroundings), you should carry your cell on the trail. Accustom your horse to a variety of electronic ring tones and noises from the saddle.
- Hang ribbons or surveyor's tape (available from Home Depot, 600 yards for about \$5) into a curtain for your horse to walk through.
- Tie ribbons to a fan; turn the fan on so the ribbons blow. Walk your horse past.
- Have somebody start up a lawn mower or other loud motor as you ride.
- Blow up a bunch of beach balls and make a "corral" for them. Ride your horse through where he has to kick them aside.
- Hang a hula hoop on a post. Ride up to the post, pick it up, sweep it around your horse. Hang it over the horse's head before placing it back on the post.
- Make a box using fence posts. Walk your horse into the box, stop him, then have him pivot while remaining in the box. Use the same fence posts to lay out a maze to step through.
- Make a "tunnel" or narrow space walkway using lattice, barrels, hay bales, even cloth or plastic. Walk your horse through (horses don't like tight spaces).
- Cut palm or palmetto fronds. Lay them on the ground or hang them on the sides for your horse to walk over or through.
- Find garden ornaments and/or pinwheels that spin. Plant them along your course for your horse to walk past.
- Place a mail box on top of a post. Walk your horse up so that you can open the box, take something out, and replace the item back in the box.
- Teach your horse to allow you to open/close a gate from the saddle.
- Walk your horse through a water mister or sprinkler.