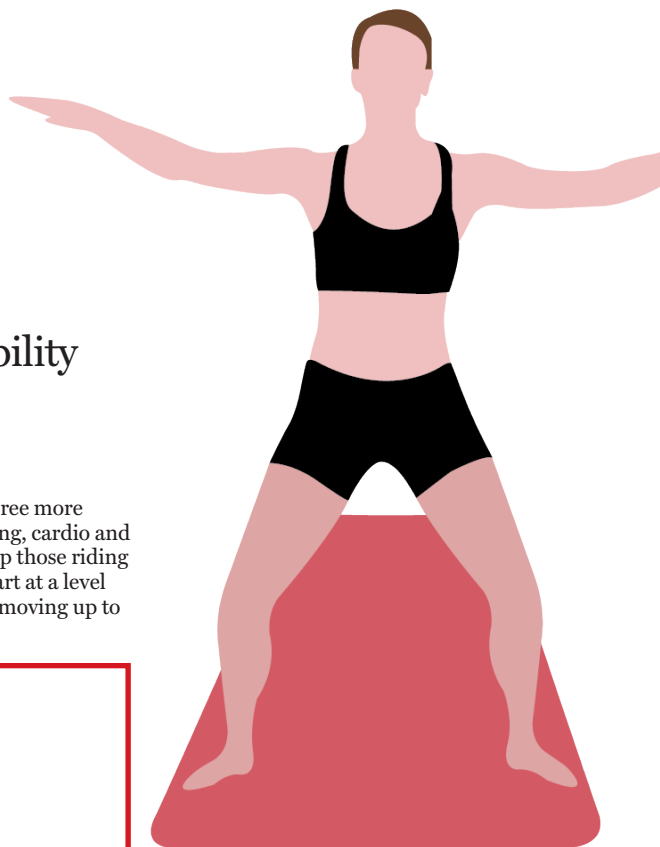


Jump to it

In the second of this five-part fitness series, chartered physio *Sarah Claridge* targets flexibility to help you bend with your horse on a circle, and build control of your hips and pelvis

MOST of us had great intentions to boost our fitness levels at the start of the shut-down, but chances are our motivation is now waning. In the second of this five-part series

on “lockdown fitness”, here are three more rider-focused exercises – stretching, cardio and strength/endurance – to help keep those riding muscles in gear. Remember to start at a level you feel comfortable with before moving up to more advanced techniques.



Stretching



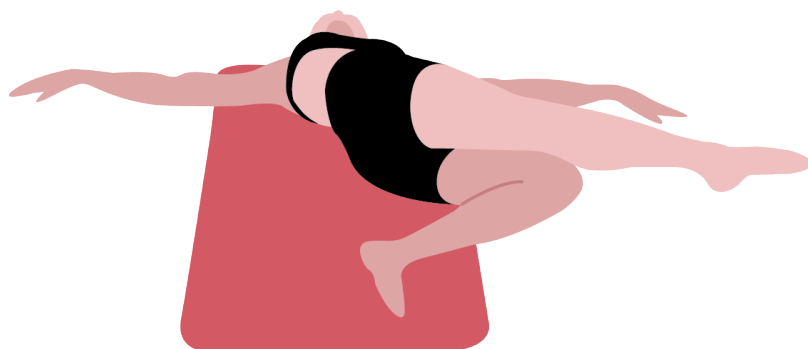
ARM OPENERS

10 secs, 6 reps 3 sets

Lie on your side with your head supported on a pillow and your knees bent at a 90-degree angle. Reach your arms out in front of you, with your hands together.

Rotate the upper arm upwards and outwards from your trunk. Try to rotate as far as you can, without forcing the shoulder.

Hold in the maximum position. You can adjust the level at which you rotate by adjusting the angle of your knees.



TRUNK ROTATION IN CROOK, UPPER-LEG EXTENSION

10 secs, 6 reps, 3 sets

Lie on your back with your legs bent and feet flat on the floor. Rest your arms gently out to the side.

Drop both of your knees over to one side, aiming to keep your shoulders on the floor. When your legs are as far as they can go, straighten the knee on your top leg to increase the stretch in your back.

Hold this position, ensuring you breathe steadily throughout.

SARAH SAYS: “These stretches encourage rotational flexibility through your shoulder, ribcage and back. It should help your ability to isolate different parts of your body while riding, such as on a serpentine or circle. Being flexible through your body will help you absorb your horse’s movements and energy so you can move more in sync.

“Try to breathe out as you stretch, relaxing into the length of your back.

“You can always hold this for longer than 30-40 seconds, which is nice to do at the end of the day.”

Cardio

JUMPING JACKS

30 reps, 3 sets

Stand upright with your feet together.

Jump upwards and open your legs outwards and at the same time bring your arms upwards so you are making a star pattern.

Land gently using your knees and hips to cushion the landing and then immediately spring back to the start position, and bring your arms down by your sides.

Continue this movement in a fluid and controlled manner.

To make this lower-impact, step from side to side instead of jumping, still lift and lower your arms with each step.

To make this harder, your arms can be raised above your head to clap your hands instead of stopping at shoulder height.

Start with six sets of 10 reps and build up to three sets of 30 seconds with a 20-second rest between sets.

Move on to 40 seconds with a 20-second rest break between each of the three sets.

SARAH SAYS: “This helps build our cardiovascular fitness, which is key if you are riding multiple horses per day or competing.

ABOUT SARAH

Chartered physiotherapist Sarah Claridge runs Meadow Physio & Pilates, specialising in rider strength and fitness.

Visit meadowphysioandpilates.com for online classes and one-to-one sessions to help improve your body’s optimal performance.

● Follow on Instagram and Facebook @ [Meadowphysioandpilates](https://www.instagram.com/meadowphysioandpilates)



Strength and endurance

HIP SKATES LEVEL 1

20 reps, 3 sets

Easy version: stand on one leg as you slide the other foot along the floor, back and up. Hold onto something if required for light support and balance. Make sure your knee on the supporting leg does not bend beyond your toes. Aim to keep the kneecap over the middle two toes.

HIP SKATES LEVEL 2

20 reps, 3 sets

Moderate version: stand on one leg, lift and lower one knee, skating the leg out to the side and back.

Stay on one leg until you start to feel the muscles in the thigh and bottom/hip on the leg you are standing on – this may take 10 to 30 repetitions. Then change legs/sides.

HIP SKATES LEVEL 3

20 reps, 3 sets

Hard version: add arms into the exercise by raising them as you slide the foot outwards and lower as you bring the leg back in again.

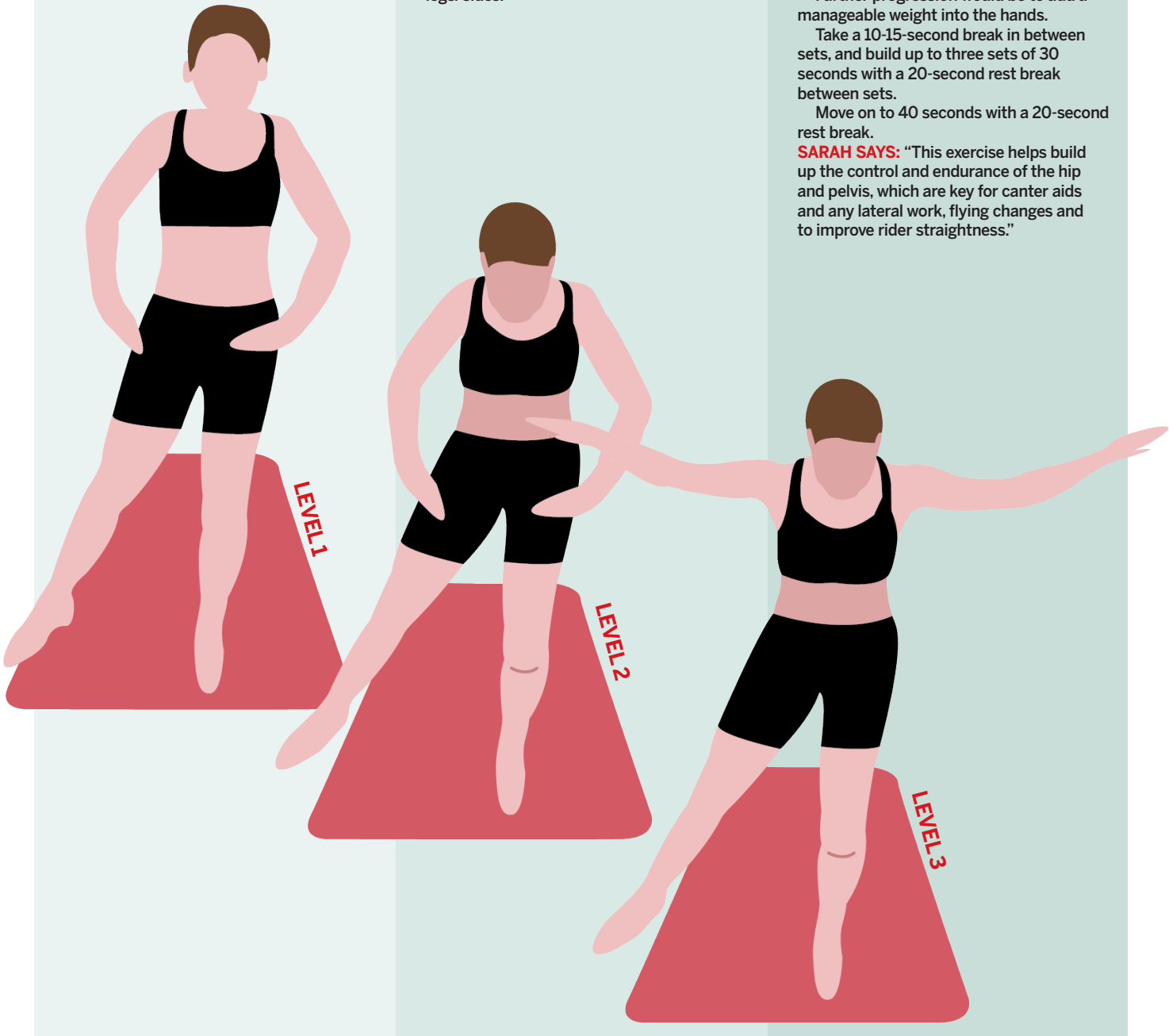
Add a little single-leg squat on the stance leg as you skate the other leg out for increased difficulty. Then swap legs.

Further progression would be to add a manageable weight into the hands.

Take a 10-15-second break in between sets, and build up to three sets of 30 seconds with a 20-second rest break between sets.

Move on to 40 seconds with a 20-second rest break.

SARAH SAYS: "This exercise helps build up the control and endurance of the hip and pelvis, which are key for canter aids and any lateral work, flying changes and to improve rider straightness."



TAKE CARE: With any new form of exercise, your body needs to build up gradually to avoid strain. Please seek the advice of a chartered physiotherapist if you are unsure about whether you should do any exercises due to underlying health conditions. Particular caution should be

taken if you have any cartilage (meniscal tears) injuries in your knees or joint replacements in your hips or knees; avoid the cardiovascular exercises if you have any unstable cardiac health problems, acute disc bulges/prolapses or referred leg pain, pins and needles, numbness,

rheumatoid arthritis or osteoporosis – or if you are undergoing cancer treatment. **H&H**

NEXT WEEK x x x x x x x x x x
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