

Designing a Yearly Training Program

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A correctly structured yearly training plan induces physiological adaptation and allows a horse to peak for important competitions. At the same time, the proper scheduling of rest and therapeutic interventions reduces the risk of injury. Below I go through some helpful tips on creating a yearly training program so that you can maximize your horse's potential. I have included a downloadable yearly program template on the resources page at www.timwordentraining.com if you would like to build your own.

There are two main reasons for creating a yearly training program:

- 1) During the day-to-day operations of a busy stable, it is easy to get caught up on the immediate issues - forgetting the overall goals and what needs to be done to achieve them. Therefore, having a concrete plan allows for a trainer to reflect on a horse's progress, and to ensure that they have not drifted too far off course in executing that plan.
- 2) At the end of the year, it allows the trainer to reflect on what did and did not work in their program. By examining months when the horse performed well, it becomes readily apparent what combination of exercises allowed the horse to realize its' potential. Conversely, for the months the horse did poorly, results will be at least partially explained by the training during that time (assuming the poor performances were not medically related), and these training practices can be removed from future plans.

Disclaimer: *When creating your plan, the goal is not to make a rigid plan that has to be followed mindlessly through the year. Instead, it is meant to serve as a roadmap to a final destination (the goal). Roadblocks will occur along the way (e.g. minor injuries, cancelled competitions) and the best trainers are the ones who identify these roadblocks early, and select the correct detour to ensure the horse keeps progressing towards the goal.*

Step 1: Goal Setting

The first step for creating your yearly plan is to determine the goal(s) for the horse and rider. Broadly speaking, there are five goals in the sport of show jumping, which may not be mutually exclusive depending on numerous other circumstances:

- 1) **Improvement**- the primary focus of this plan is to expose the horse to the proper training stimuli and competitions to develop the horse mentally, physiologically and biomechanically for future major competitions in the years to come.
- 2) **Fun**- here the rider's desires will dictate the yearly plan. Likely the most important factor will be competing in locations that the rider enjoys and at a level that the rider can compete at with little stress.
- 3) **Money**- a balance is maintained between finding competitions that offer the best chance for winning good money while minimizing operating costs.

COMPETITION SCHEDULE																																																					
CALENDAR		JANUARY				FEBRUARY				MARCH				APRIL				MAY				JUNE				JULY				AUGUST				SEPTEMBER				OCTOBER				NOVEMBER				DECEMBER							
		4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25	2	9	16	23	6	13	20	27	4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26				
JUMP	JUMP SCHOOL	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
	GYMNASTICS	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
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FLAT	FLAT	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
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	HILLS	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
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SUPP.	WALKER	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
	TREADMILL	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
	TURNOUT	[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
IMPORTANT PERSONAL DATES		[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
REST WEEK		[Grid of training blocks]																																																			
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Figure 6

Final Comments

And there you have it, a quick blueprint for building a yearly training program. Every yearly plan needs to be customized to the horse based on age, gender, experience, goals, available facilities, and so on. This document is meant to provide a starting point for planning, such that more complex topics (e.g. transfer of training to performance results, best practices for peaking, construction of weekly and monthly training cycles) can be discussed at a later time.

References

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