



NAME: ALEX FLEMING
ROLE: FOUNDER OF COACHING FOR CONFIDENCE

Alex Fleming, the founder of Coaching for Confidence, thinks that it's important to have realistic expectations about what can be achieved in the warm-up.

"I would always advise riders that the warm-up isn't the place for improvement. Instead, it's about knowing what routine is best for you and your horse; it's about getting you in the zone and then going through the motions of that."

Alex points out that the energy required in the warm-up depends on rider and horse, and that every combination is different.

"For a rider who needs to relax more, I suggest that they begin with a body scan, running through their entire position, checking for areas of tension, and consciously letting go of this while they're carrying out the walk work," she says.

"For a rider who needs to bring their gritty game face, on the other hand, I may suggest a power posture and some star jumps in the back of the trailer before they even get on."

Alex draws a helpful distinction between 'process' and 'outcome' goals.

"I would advise all riders to focus on having process goals over outcome

goals. You can control process goals. If you focus on what's within your control, you will instantly feel calmer."

To work out a process goal, Alex explains that riders need to work backwards from their outcome goal, which might be wanting to achieve a 70% score in a dressage test, for example.

"Ask yourself, how do I need to ride to achieve this? This might be, 'I need to use the corners and ride my test accurately'. Then go one step further and ask how you ride when you're riding accurately. The answer is often something simple like 'taking my time and looking where I'm going'. That is your process goal. If you can manage to take your time and look where you're going, you've won today."

Alex points out that riding the best warm-up is like any other skill — a constant progression.

"Make some notes every time you go out about what you did in the week leading up to the show and what happened on the day and what you think could be better. Then tweak and tweak safe in the knowledge that this is only going to get easier and better as you learn what works best for you both."



NAME: ALEX BRAGG
ROLE: INTERNATIONAL EVENT RIDER



Practise accurate riding, such as turning to a fence, at home so that it's easier in a busy ring

"I think it's common for some riders to feel intimidated in the warm-up. They don't want people in their space, they won't go into other people's space, and therefore they end up too scared to move," notes event rider Alex Bragg.

To help with this, he recommends practising accuracy and discipline in the school at home.

"You should be able to turn your horse exactly when you want to; start and finish a circle exactly when you want to; and be able to move up and down the gears when you want to."

He recommends thinking of the warm-up like driving in traffic.

"You look ahead, in the same way that you would when driving a car, and prepare for the next turn, knowing that the person now in the way will have gone when you get there. Knowing you can do that will give you more confidence and make your warm-up more fluid."

Showjumping warm-up areas can be particularly small and in these situations straightness to a fence is crucial.