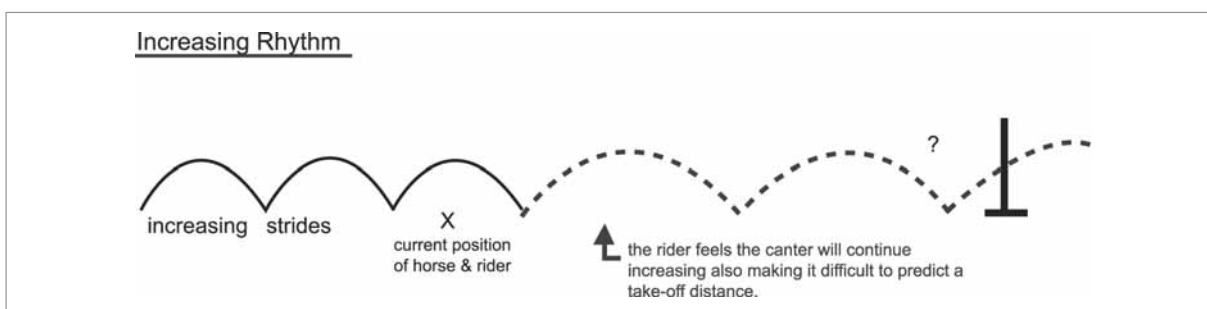
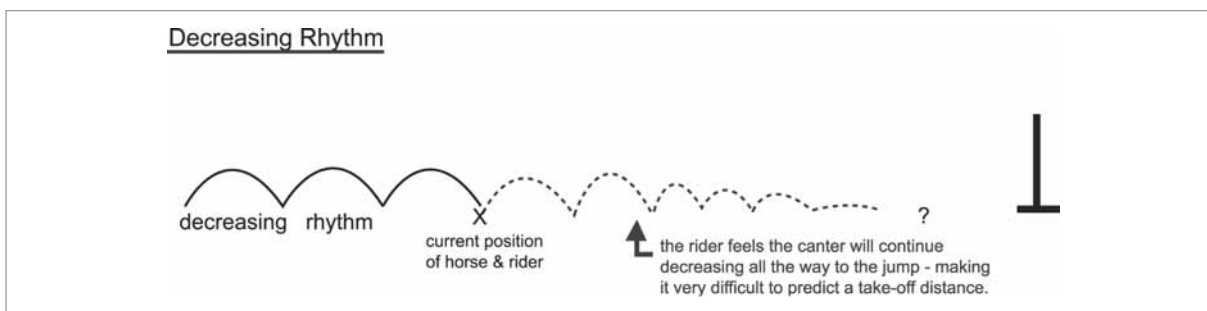


training tips



Okay, the pressure is on... will you see it long short or natural? Will you be able to get your horse to the right distance? If you miss, you must start over again from the beginning. If you are successful, you can continue around for your third and final attempt. At this point, the pressure is really on, since if you miss you must start over from the beginning. On your approach, you will likely feel a little anxious. If you don't control your nerves and clear your mind, your ability to sense the distance will be impaired. The next section will discuss some tips that will help you work through this problem I apply this "three in-a-row" technique to many different exercises as it places the same kind of pressure on your riding skills as horse shows do. Remember we are preparing you for the ring.

Tips for helping your eye Look early

I compare the part of your brain that processes take off-distances to a computer. When you begin to look for a distance, think it as turning the computer on. You must give the computer time to boot up and get its operating system running before it is capable of processing information. Let's call the time between turning the computer on

and processing information lag time. We experience this same lag time when we approach our next fence or ground rail as soon as we look at it. Our brain needs a few canter strides to warm-up and get ready to see a distance. If we start looking for our distance too late, we haven't given our brain enough time to actually process a take-off distance. I have my students begin to look for distances unreasonable early, sometimes 15 strides away. I know that it will take them four to five strides before their brains are ready to process a take-off distance, which leaves them about 10 full strides before a jump to sense the distance. This also requires discipline as most riders know that they never actually see distances 15 strides away, so why bother. If you want to see distances early, you must account for the mental lag time and start looking early.

Breath

Many riders who get anxious about finding a distance hold their breath. Your brain needs oxygen to function correctly. When you hold your breath, you are letting your tension get the better of you and your judgment will become clouded and your ability to sense distances will suffer. During the

mental lag period when you are on your way to a jump or ground rail, try taking a deep breath. Make this a habit every time you look toward a jump immediately take a breath. Not only will this feed your brain the oxygen it needs, it will relax your mind. A relaxed mind is a clear mind and your accuracy will improve significantly.

Practice

The only way to develop your eye is through practice... lot's and lot's of practice. Your eye will improve in proportion to the amount of obstacles you jump. Just as golf players practice their golf swing every day, whether on the course or on the driving range, riders should practice jumping something every day. Since it not realistic to jump your horse over heights every day, as it can be hard on them, all you need is to jump over ground rails. This is a great solution since the optimal take-off distance to a ground rail is essentially the same as it is to any moderately sized jump. Jumping poles on a daily basis is perhaps the most important tool for developing your eye, because it is something you can do to challenge your eye every day. 