

## Vaulting Lessons

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I've decided to embark on a new journey in my equestrian life: taking vaulting lessons. If you're not quite sure what vaulting is, it's basically performing gymnastic maneuvers on the back of a cantering horse (eek!). I'm hoping that the seven years of ballet I took when I was younger will help.

My first session consisted of watching an educational DVD and practicing some of the compulsory exercises on a stationary barrel raised to the height of a small horse. These included the basic seat, the flag, the flank, the scissors, the stand and the mill (aka around the world). Mounting and the scissors were the hardest exercises for me. It's a little scary to think that 16.3-hand horses are generally used for this sport. That's a pretty tall horse to jump onto from the ground!

One of the most important aspects of vaulting is upper-body strength, which I don't really have. I've been doing pushups to help, so my arms have been quite sore lately. You also have to remain relaxed and move with the motion of the horse, so balance is also necessary. Since I've been riding horses for a while, I think I am good with that.

Once I had tried all of the exercises on the barrel, we moved on to the Equicizer, which is a mechanical "horse" that is used to improve riders' skills ([www.equicizer.com](http://www.equicizer.com)). I was surprised, and proud of, how well I was able to balance and stay with the motion of the Equicizer.

I am a little nervous about this new sport, but I'm also very excited. I will bring you updates on my progress. Wish me luck!

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