



Are you ready to move up a division?

Holly Grayton with Jenn Serek

[Back to Articles...](#)

With the 2018 show season already upon us, you have likely been setting goals for the year and making preparations to reach them. Among those goals might be to move up a division from where you finished off last season. But are you ready? How do you know? We caught up with long-time top Alberta rider and trainer, Jenn Serek, to get her thoughts on the subject.

According to Jenn, one of the most important things to consider before moving up is whether you have mastered the level you find yourself in currently. She says this doesn't mean you have to be winning every class, but you should be able to have consistent rounds with confidence – this means, no winning today and stopping out or falling off tomorrow!

Next, you should have a realistic assessment of your horse's abilities – can they move up and jump bigger too? If your horse has already competed at a higher level, then he is likely qualified for the job. However, if it's the first time for you and your horse both to be moving up, Jenn suggests having a professional rider give your horse some experience at the higher height so that your horse gains some experience and knowledge to share with you when you do it together.

Sometimes different divisions come with different scoring, point systems, equipment restrictions, and so on, that are important to read up on before heading to the show. Moving from hunters to equitation to jumpers, or even within jumper divisions and to FEI classes all involve pretty important changes. Jenn suggests that you should read the applicable rules (whether in the show prize lists, or EC rulebooks, or FEI regulations) and ask your trainer to help guide you through the process so there are no surprises at the show!

Are you willing to move up and down as you get used to this new challenge? Jenn points out that you often see professionals doing this with young horses to keep their confidence up, and also with Grand Prix horses so that the horses don't feel maxed out every time they go in the ring. This is an important part of moving up in divisions. Just because you move up and jump a bigger class, it doesn't mean that you can't jump smaller every now and then to practice certain things or regain confidence. It's not a knock on anyone's abilities or ego to move up and down through the transition – it's just sensible training

It's a hard thing to measure, but you must be sure it's the right decision for you and your horse to move up, and the move isn't motivated by your peers and their own advancement through the levels. As Jenn says, it can be tough to watch your friends moving up ahead of you, but that doesn't mean you won't get there too! Your trainer will play an important role here to help you through the decision and preparation to move up, and ultimately you should trust their knowledge that they'll know when it's the right time for you.

Moving up means working harder. There really isn't a way around it. Jenn explains that you can't move up without putting in more effort and dedication – it's a new challenge, so it requires learning new things and practicing them. Things like extra lessons, more dedicated riding time, work with out stirrups and even an increase in fitness and strength, those things don't happen on their own. If you want more out of the sport



Are you ready to move up a division?

Holly Grayton with Jenn Serek

[Back to Articles...](#)

you'll have to be willing to put more into your own riding and dedication.

Jenn has helped numerous riders over the course of her training career, and has obviously herself experienced the moves between divisions when she was younger. She has found the aforementioned self-reflection questions and steps to be a roadmap for her, her horses and her students to grow in the sport all the way to the top. So make some goals and work at it to find out how to achieve them using all of your support system and tools at your disposal. Good luck!