

Want to get ahead? Get an app...

SADLY, my trainer failed to bite when I suggested a free lesson for my Christmas present. But at least this gave me the excuse to try out an iRide training download – a riding lesson from a leading rider or instructor, bought online and listened to via your phone.

I am no techie whizz, but even I found the process simple. You buy the lesson and receive an email link. It came straight to my smart phone – though you can use any MP3 player – and I downloaded it to the phone's library.

Developing Pushing Power with Amy Stovold – which appears under the novice, elementary and medium downloads on the website – sounded promising.

I'm not used to listening to music while riding and, after a few bungled attempts with headphones falling out and flapping about, I managed to anchor them.

It's not immediately clear whether the download guides you step-by-step or whether

the idea is to trundle round and listen to helpful tips. In the preamble, you're advised that iRide downloads are "mind focusing" and to remain aware of your environment and riders around you.

Four minutes in, I find out the horse is supposed to be warmed up.

I would have found it helpful to know this at the outset but, having jumped in halfway up the ladder of audio offerings, this is possibly explained in earlier downloads.

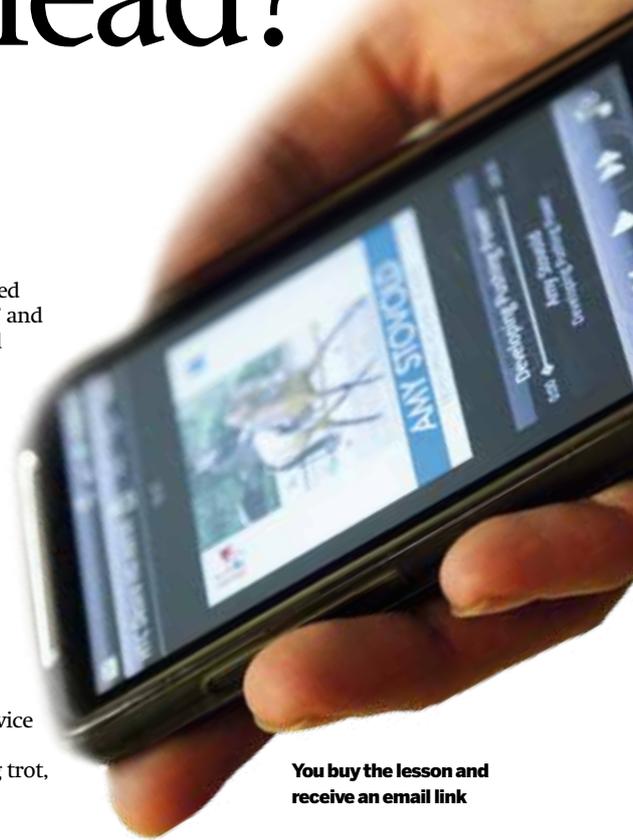
After some more faffing – my phone's touchscreen doesn't work with gloves on – and a quick warm-up, I switch Amy back on.

Better than schooling alone

HAVING recently started to compete at novice level with my four-year-old, the 26-minute £12.99 digital lesson – billed as improving trot, canter and introducing counter-canter – proved really helpful.

As a typically sensitive little mare, Fab often overreacts to my outside leg and fires into canter. Repeating trot and canter transitions on a large circle while being guided through them isn't rocket science. But it helped me ride with the self-discipline I can muster in a lesson, but which is often woefully lacking when I school alone. And this is the real benefit of these downloads.

I've been playing with the counter-canter required



You buy the lesson and receive an email link

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at novice, but the exercise suggested by Amy – picking up the counter-canter on the second half of a shallow loop – was valuable in helping Fab to understand what I wanted. I felt a genuine improvement in the quality of the canter.

Do they fulfil their promise?

DOWNLOADABLE lessons are inherently difficult to do well – they have to work for arenas and horses of all shapes and sizes and for riders of varying abilities.

These are intended as progressive lessons and thus refer back to exercises from previous downloads, but not so often to be intrusive or strip the download of its stand-alone value.

Though not a permanent substitute for knowledgeable eyes on the ground, iRide downloads do indeed do what they say on the tin – helping to “perfect the finer details”. As well as Amy Stovold, the

trainers include people like Isobel Wessels and Sarah Millis.

In fact, you're encouraged to listen to the downloads prior to riding. You are reminded that if you are not ready for any of the exercises, or “continually reach resistance and difficulties”, you should return to the iRide “knowledge centre” – the online downloads library – to address the fundamental training issues.

Taking advantage of technology to deliver affordable and accessible training must be encouraged. And if some of the niggles are ironed out, this series will be a valuable and educational training source. [H&H](#)

www.equiwebuk.com offers a variety of ridden and non-ridden downloads, from the basic principles of riding in harmony through to equine foot balance, correctly fitting tack and sports psychology.



Alice saw a genuine improvement in Fab's canterwork

