# Top Grooming Tips from a True Legend: Jackie Potts Shares Her Secrets

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If you want to be the best groom in the business, there’s no one better to learn from! We caught up with the incredible Jackie Potts, grooming royalty with more than 30 years of hands-on experience caring for elite equine athletes all over the world. She's best known as Granny, William Fox-Pitt’s right hand lady and has packed her brushes and Adidas kit for no less than six Olympic Games (yes, really!).

Whether you’re just starting out or looking to level up, Jackie shares golden advice for grooms at every stage. Here's what she had to say...



## Jackie’s Grooming Journey (A Quick Gallop Through Her Career)

Jackie didn’t start out mucking out five-star stables. She began working full-time with horses at age 25, earned valuable knowledge completing her AI (Assistant Instructor) qualification, and went freelance. She spent time with Chris Bartle, Haddon Stud, Di Lampard, groomed at BUNA camps in the USA, and when she was sent to work for William Fox-Pitt for a week she never left!

Being entirely devoted to the horses and other menagerie of animals they’ve collected was her secret to longevity in a tough job involving long hours through all seasons. “It’s because the animals were always so well loved and that fitted perfectly with me,” she says.

## Jackie’s Top Tips for Grooms

### 1. Do the Graft — Don’t Just Expect to Ride

“Work every day. Do apprenticeships. Spend time at riding schools. Learn from different people. The more yards you work in, the more you’ll know.” Want to ride? Great. But learn the ropes first.”

### 2. Stay Curious

“Don’t know something? Look it up. Ask. Learn.

Every horse teaches you something. Hold the horse for the vet, farrier, or physio — and *listen*. Ask questions. Be nosey!”

### 3. Grooming Bag Must-Haves

Jackie swears by a ready-for-anything grooming kit - Make up mini bottles of everything, use sterile bottles for cleanser, witch hazel, etc. Include a tiny first-aid kit. “You need way more than just hoof oil and plaiting bands! That way, you're always ready — no sprinting back to the lorry!”

### 4. Prep Like a Pro Before Your First Three-Day

“Talk to someone who's done it before. Ask us oldies questions if you see us at one days — there’s no shame in it!” Make big lists. Even Jackie double-checks her lorry before every trip. Her team pre-bags feeds before they travel so they can feed the horses instantly on arrival. Smart, right?”

### 5. Horse holidays

“After the last event we let the horses just be horses, shoes come off, they holiday in pairs to socialise, and we don’t rush them back or over work them in winter.”

### 6. Plan To Succeed

“Winter’s the perfect time to organise, clean and mend tack and equipment so it’s ready for the next season. Sit down and plan the season ahead.

Think backwards from the big goal. If Badminton is the aim, plan farrier visits, gallop days, and other events backwards from that date. This leaves less room for error around timing for the big event. It may be 4 or 5 months away but that’s only 3 shoeing’s - you don’t want worn out shoes for Badminton or to have to squeeze in an extra visit because you didn’t plan ahead!”

## Build Relationships

“Keep good vibes with your farrier, vet, physio and nutritionist. Don’t waste their time, and

always be prepared. Give notice with how many horses need shoeing, so they know how long they'll be with you and have the horses ready. If it's not urgent, don't call in between appointments, e.g. if the companion pony has lost a shoe, wait until the next regular visit."

## Jackie's Highs & Lows:

### Biggest Challenge?

"Missing family events. Weddings, birthdays... shows clash with everything and that can be tough. Don't complain about working long hours - *expect* them – that's the deal when it comes to working with animals."

### Career Highlight?

"Not the Olympics. Not Burghley. It was Moon Man winning a 2* at Loughanmore. He really came of age that day. We were so proud because at the end of the day, it's not always about the big events — it's about the joy of working with each horse each day."

## Final Words of Wisdom

Grooming is more than just mucking out and plaiting manes — it's a craft, a lifestyle, and a love affair with horses. Jackie's advice? "**Work hard, enjoy the horses, and never stop learning**."

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