

Riding

Be Courteous to Your Horse

1. Mount your horse gracefully, without hitting the horse's rump or the saddle with your right leg.
2. Keep good posture and alignment in the saddle to go with the motion of your horse.
3. Ride with a light touch on the reins. Check reins regularly and often to make sure they are even.
4. Do more walking and trotting/jogging than cantering/loping.
5. Give clear consistent cues to your horse to move, stop, back up, etc.. Use your natural aids (voice, hands, legs and weight) more than artificial aids (crop and spurs).

Warming Up and Cool Down

Horses require a period of gradual warm up for proper muscle function. Cold muscles injure easily. Therefore, you should begin by walking in both directions, advance to a trot/jog (again in both directions) before advancing to a canter/lope.

Walking your horse after a workout is essential to cool down its muscles and avoid cramps. This may be done mounted, but it is preferable for the rider to lead the horse on the ground. This also allows you to loosen the cinch so that your horse may breathe more easily. Your horse is cooled down enough when its breathing has returned to normal without nostril dilation and when its chest and neck have dried.

Mounting

Safe and proper riding begins with safe mounting. Different styles of riding have slightly different methods of mounting, but both maintain some basic principles:

- 🐾 Before mounting your horse, always lead it to an open location where you wish to mount, ensuring that you are a reasonable distance from other horses.
- 🐾 Check your equipment to ensure that it is all adjusted correctly.
- 🐾 Check the cinch/girth and if it requires adjustment, tighten it before you proceed with mounting.
- 🐾 It is important that your horse does not move while you mount. Adjust the reins evenly with enough tension to feel the bit so that you can hold your horse steady.

4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - R i d i n g

U The eyes and ears of your horse can communicate to you if the horse is going to shy or bolt when you mount. Therefore, as you mount, you should watch your horse's head for such signs.

U Short riders may need to use a mounting block to help them mount. It should be solid and safe. A mounting block may help to reduce pulling and strain on a horse's back.



If you ride **Western**, you would proceed to mount using the following steps:

1. Stand on the left side of your horse and place the reins over your horse's head.
2. Take up the reins in your left hand, tight enough to keep your horse from stepping forward. Lay the bight(loose ends) of your reins on the near side (when riding with a leverage bit), or crossed (when using a snaffle bit). For utmost safety using a leverage bite, the reins may be crossed while mounting. Then after mounting, both reins may be placed on the near side.
3. Face either the same direction as your horse, or face the side of your horse, using your peripheral vision to keep an eye on your horse's head. Be careful not to push your toe into the horse's side.
4. Place your left hand on your horse's neck in front of the withers, grasping the horse's mane or the saddle pad if necessary.
5. Hold the stirrup with your right hand and place your left foot in the stirrup. Your right hand may also be used on your left shin to help guide your foot into the stirrup. If you are tall enough, your right hand may immediately be placed on the base of the horn (never on the cantle).
6. Grasp the saddle horn with your right hand and push up off the ground with your right leg. Bouncing once or twice helps the shorter rider create energy to push themselves up rather than pulling heavily with their arms and stressing the horse's withers.
7. Lift yourself to a standing position with your weight on the left stirrup.
8. Pass your right leg over the saddle without touching your horse.
9. Sit down gently in the saddle.
10. Put your right foot into the right stirrup (without leaning over to guide your foot into the stirrup with your hand). Recenter your saddle.
11. Take up the reins and adjust them.



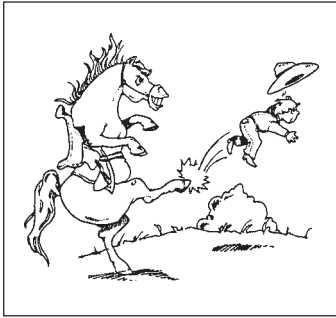
4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

If you ride English, you would proceed to mount using the following steps:



1. When leading a horse saddled with an English saddle, you should keep the stirrup irons run up (so they don't bang the horse's sides). When preparing to mount, your adjustment of equipment will include lowering the stirrup irons, and adjusting their length as well as checking the girth and tightening if necessary. As you pull the stirrup irons down, keep them away from the horse's sides so that they do not knock him. When they are fully down, place them gently back against his sides.
2. Place the reins over your horse's head.
3. Stand on the left side of your horse and take the reins in your left hand, with the reins even and short enough to hold the horse steady.
4. Facing slightly towards the forequarters, with your left hand, grasp your horse's mane at the withers (not the pommel of the saddle).
5. With your right hand turn the stirrup iron clockwise towards you.
6. Put your left foot into the stirrup, turning your toes into the girth, to avoid gouging your horse in its side.
7. Place your right hand on the offside (right) side of the saddle.
8. Turn slightly to face the side of your horse.
9. Push with your right foot to spring off the ground, then transfer your weight onto your left foot which is resting in the stirrup. You should be facing into your horse when you leave the ground.
10. Lean slightly forward, keeping your body close to the horse.
11. Bring your right foot close to your left.
12. As you pass your right leg over the saddle without touching your horse, bring your right hand to the forward arch. This will help you support and balance your upper body.
13. Sit down gently in the saddle.
14. Put your right foot into the right stirrup iron (without leaning over to grasp the stirrup with your right hand).
15. Take the reins with both hands and adjust them.

Dismounting



Before dismounting, always check to see that your landing area is safe and free of obstacles. For Western riders, the correct methods of dismounting include sliding down from the horse without using the left stirrup or leaving your foot in the left stirrup and stepping down from the horse. The method you choose will depend on your size. For smaller members, sliding down is safer.

For English riders, the correct methods of dismounting include sliding down or vaulting from the horse, without using the left stirrup. English riders **do not** dismount by stepping down from the horse.

Stepping Down, Using the Left Stirrup (Western)

1. Take both reins in your left hand and place your left hand on the horse's neck or wither for balance.
2. Reposition your left foot further out of the stirrup so there is no chance of it getting caught. Then remove the right foot from stirrup.
3. Grasp the base of the horn with your right hand.
4. Bend your upper body slightly forward.
5. Swing your right leg back and over the saddle.
6. Bring both your legs together.
7. Step down from the horse, facing into the horse with the reins still in your left hand.
8. Remove your left foot from the stirrup as your right leg touches the ground. Your feet should land facing the same direction as your horse's feet. This is less stressful on your knees and ankles in case your horse moves.
9. Loosen the cinch two holes to let the horse relax, breathe freely and to allow the heat from its body to dissipate.

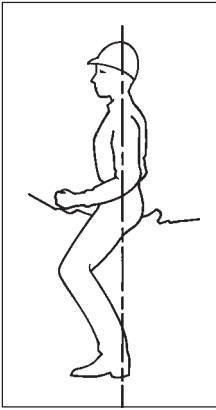
Sliding Down from the Horse

1. Take both reins in your left hand on the horse's wither.
2. Reposition your left foot further out of the stirrup so there is no chance of it getting caught. Then remove the right foot from the stirrup.
3. Grasp the base of the horn with your right hand.
4. Bend the upper body slightly forward.
5. Swing your right leg back and over the saddle.
6. Bring both your legs together.
7. Lean forward over the saddle and kick the left foot out of the stirrup. Be careful and NEVER lean forward over the right side of the saddle. If your horse jumps, you could fall off on your head. Face slightly forward and rest the outside of your right leg against the saddle. Slide down with just the right leg touching the saddle.
8. Keeping the reins in your left hand, let your feet drop to the ground together. Bend your knees to absorb the shock.
9. Take both the reins down.
10. Run the stirrups up (if riding English) and loosen the girth two holes to let the horse relax, breathe freely and to allow the heat from its body to dissipate.

Vaulting from the Horse (English)

Vaulting follows the same steps as sliding down from the horse, except the rider kicks both feet out from the stirrups and pushes from the horse. The rider lands on the ground with both feet, a short distance from the side of the horse.








Body Position

No matter what your style of riding is, having a good balanced position is important. Your body position affects how your horse moves.

In the basic seat position, you sit erect, deep in the saddle with your body balanced and relaxed. Sit “*tall in the saddle*”, don’t slump, but don’t be stiff either. If you are stiff, you can’t flow with the movement of your horse and you will always be half a beat behind. Note the line (on the graphic) from the ear to point of shoulder to the hip to heel. Your leg should maintain (resting gently on the horse’s side) light contact with the horse’s body through your inside thigh and upper half of your calf. Your foot should be at the same angle as your knee and the angle of the knee is determined by the size of the horse’s barrel. The ball of your foot should be in the stirrup and your heel should be lower than your toe to allow more flexibility in your ankle. Your hand and arms should be relaxed and supple with your elbows in close to your body. You should hold your reins just above and in front of the saddle horn or pommel.

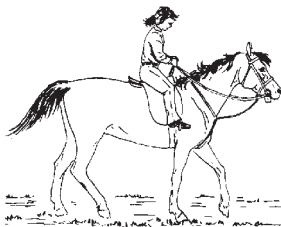
An imaginary line should run through the center of the back of your head, between your shoulder blades and down the center of your back to the horse’s spine. If you allow yourself to become uneven anywhere, the horse will be forced to become uneven to compensate for you and he will not be able to work to his best ability.

Most positional problems have their beginnings with bad habits. Develop the following good habits and you will ride with good position.

-  Sit in the saddle with equal weight on both pelvic bones, Supported by your pubic bone, the triangle is the central point for the riders balance and influence.
-  Sit on the vertical with your head directly above your spine.
-  Sit so that a perpendicular line would join the tip of your knee to the tip of your toe.



Which rider and horse looks more comfortable and desirable?



Head

You should be looking ahead and watching where you are going. Your head should be square with your shoulders and not tilted. Keep a “chin-up” position, or your entire body will tilt forward and pull the weight out of your heels. The weight of your head is noticeable to the horse and your horse will usually go in the direction you are looking. For example, you can ride in a circle with minimal leg or rein pressure, by just looking to the center of the circle. If checking diagonals and leads be careful not to lean your head as the extra weight shift may unbalance your horse.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Shoulders

As you sit in the saddle your shoulders should be level. Shoulders that are not level are a sign that you may have your weight shifted. This makes the horse lean in the same direction. Loping/cantering in small circles will cause you to want to drop one shoulder so pay careful attention to keeping them even.

Back

Your back should be straight but not rigid.

Stomach

Your stomach should be flat.

Arms

The arms should hang naturally from the shoulder with elbows at your side but not held rigidly. You must have a bend in your elbow and from the side there should be a straight line from your elbow, through the wrist and down the reins, to the bit. Your whole arm should stay soft and relaxed, right from the shoulder through the elbow to the wrist. This allows your elbow to open softly to let the hands go forward as the horse's head moves.

Hands

When riding with two hands the rider's hands should be placed slightly above either side of the wither and slightly in front of the saddle. The hands should be held at the same angle as the slope of the wither or neck. The hands should remain closed with the fingers securely on the reins but not rigid. The hands follow the movement of the head and neck. As a rider advances, rein tension is altered by the fingers.

Seat

Your hips and pelvis are your body's main shock absorbers so they must remain relaxed to follow the rhythm of your horse's gait. Sit squarely in the middle of your saddle with the same amount of weight on each seat bone. The inside of the thighs should remain in contact with the saddle without gripping. Your seat bones and pubic bones should form a triangle and be in contact with the saddle so that your body sits at a 90° angle to the saddle. Be careful that you do not sit back on your buttocks and back of your thighs and become a "dead weight" in the saddle. Sit up, take your feet out of the stirrups and turn your legs until the flat inside of your thighs are in contact with the saddle.

Legs

The most important way to communicate with your horse is through your legs and seat. The legs are used to balance the upper body in the saddle and cue the horse. Different events and disciplines use different stirrup lengths. The difference in the stirrup length depends on the type of work you and your horse will be doing. For all saddles, the stirrups need to be short enough that the legs and ankles can act as shock absorbers. To do this, the knees and ankles must have a slight, relaxed bend. Your legs should hang long and relaxed at the horse's side with no tightness in the knee joints. It will be the inside of the calves that squeeze against the horse that ask him to move.

For most Western and English riding, the stirrups should hang so that when your foot is out of the stirrup, the bottom of the stirrup touches your ankle. If you are involved in cattle work, gymkhana or jumping events you may want the stirrups slightly shorter.

The lower leg is important for leg aids. It may be used to squeeze, kick or bump the side of the horse. The lower leg needs to be kept still when you ride, or your leg aids will not be effective. This is because if the horse has been getting signals continually, he will not know which to obey. The distance between your lower leg and the side of the horse will depend on the length of your legs and how they fit against the body of the horse.

Foot

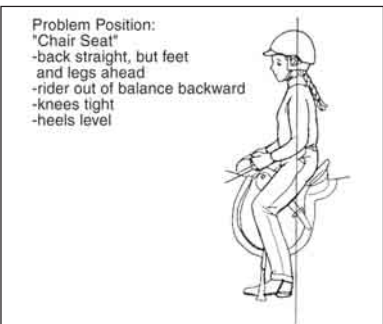
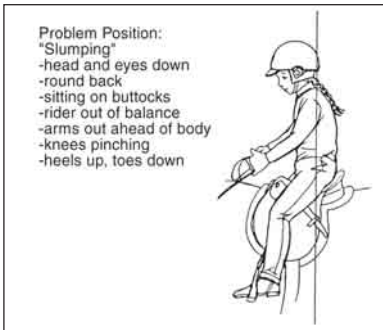
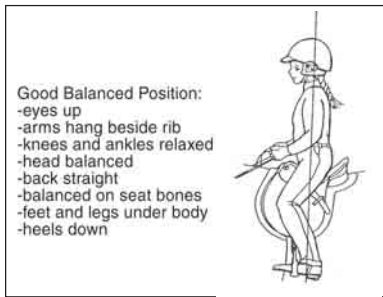
Foot position affects how you can use your legs. The ball of the foot should be resting on the stirrup with most of your weight carried down through your heel so that your heel is lower than your toe. If you place your weight on your toe, it will push you up out of the saddle. If your toes point down it is possible that your foot will slip and go through the stirrup. Putting your foot too far into the stirrup makes it hard to flex your ankle. By placing slightly more weight on the inside of your foot, your ankle will cock slightly - aligning the inside of your leg correctly with your horse's sides.

The feet of the rider should be nearly parallel to the side of the horse. Toes pointing outward can cause problems, especially if wearing spurs. You can accidentally jab the horse because of an incorrect foot position. Also, the direction of the foot will turn the whole leg. This makes it hard to get the inside of your calf, knee and thigh against the saddle.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

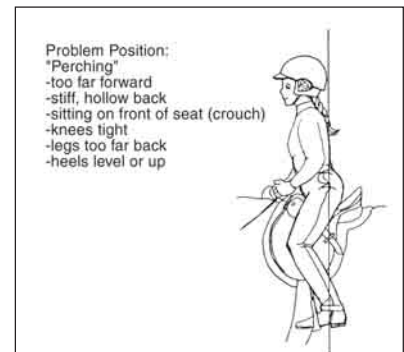
Rider Balance and Centre of Gravity

Learning to ride includes the use of your whole body. It is not enough to sit in the correct position on a standing horse. You need to practice the use of your body as the horse moves. Balance comes with experience and correct positioning on a moving horse.



When you are riding, your center of gravity is located about 10 cm below your navel. In order to maintain your horse's balance, you must align your center of gravity with that of your horse. Your position will vary depending on the work that you are asking of your horse. This is why jockeys who gallop race horses are hunched over the horse's withers (as the speed of the horse increases, the horse's center of gravity moves forward) or why dressage riders doing collected work, keep the center of gravity further back, helping to slow and collect the horse (as the movement of the horse slows, the center of gravity moves back).

If you can maintain your balance over the shifting center of gravity of your horse, your horse will stay balanced, will be more confident with your aids and will not have to work as hard. No matter what style of riding you are interested in, balance is important. The rider's position can influence the horse's way of going to a great extent. Learning to relax and allowing yourself to feel the horse's movement can greatly add to the horse's and your enjoyment.



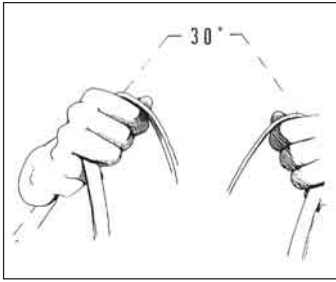
Developing a Seat

Lunging is an ideal method for a horse, rider and instructor to work together to produce a first-class seat. A beginner rider who is lunged on a reliable horse can develop a deep, balanced, and relaxed seat in the saddle. They can concentrate on their balance and correct position, while enjoying controlled forward motion.

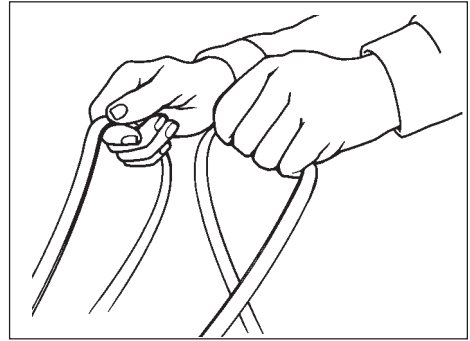
Holding the Reins

Holding the reins in two hands is important for beginner riders, to teach them balance and how the horse responds to different reining aids. You must know how to hold the reins in two hands when schooling horses. Western riders should know how to effectively use two hands before they ride with one hand. English riders always ride with two hands on the reins. It is most common for right handed people to ride with their left hand and left handed riders to ride with their right hand leaving their "best" functioning hand free to rope, open gates etc.

Two Handed Position

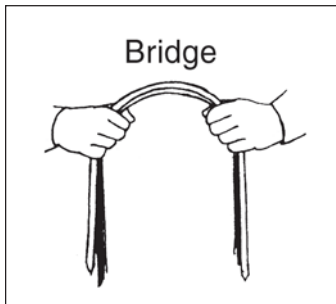


(This is an accepted method for English & Western riding). The reins are held in the palm of the hand by closing the thumb and index finger, not gripping with the other fingers. The hands should be slightly inclined (30°) with thumbs up and the ends of the reins passing up through the hands to the thumbs. The reins may be held under the little finger or pass between it and the ring finger.

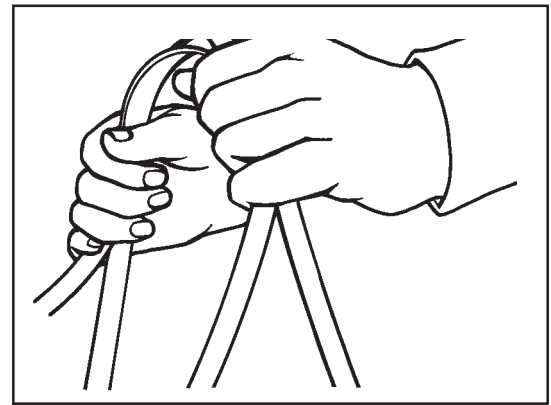


The loose ends of the reins should hang over the horse's neck on the right side, although for safety, the loose ends of the reins can be crossed over the horse's neck in case one rein is dropped. To adjust the length of the reins, the left hand should grasp the right rein and the right hand grasp the left rein until the desired length is achieved. This allows you to always have a light contact with the horse's mouth.

Bridge Position

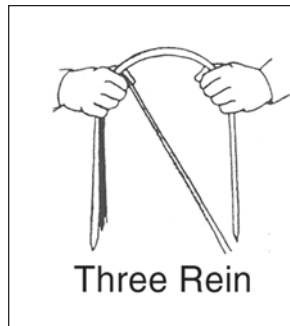


This position is used with split reins. Cross the reins over the neck of your horse so that the loose ends of the reins hang on each side of your horse's neck. Pick up the reins, as though they were one, joined rein. You will now be holding both reins with each hand. As above, the reins may be held under the little finger or pass through the hands up to the thumbs. To adjust the length of the reins in this position, you can slide each hand along the reins, by holding the reins steady with your other hand.

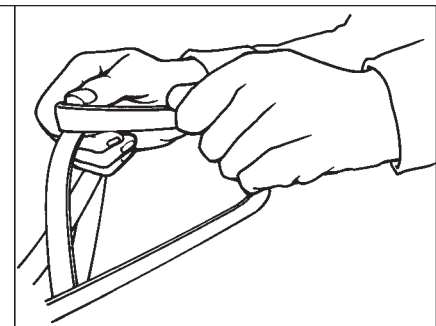


Three Rein Position

The three-rein position is similar to the Bridge position. The difference is that one hand will hold the rein from its side and the other will hold its rein as well as the



bight of the opposite rein. The single rein is held on the inside or active rein and switches as the active rein switches. Usually this rein is shortened on the active side.



4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

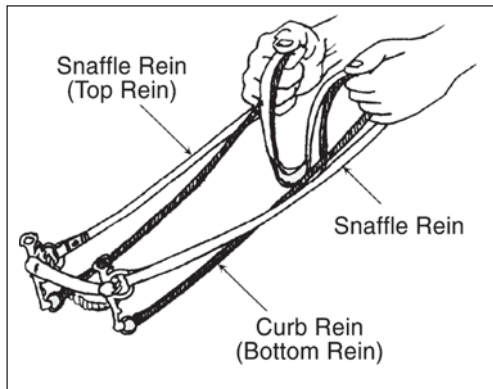
With Western riding, as horses and riders mature, they will advance on to use a leverage bit held with one hand. They may ride with either hand, with the ends of the reins hanging down the same side as the hand holding the reins.

Split Rein One method of holding split reins is to have no fingers between the reins. Another method of holding split reins is to have the pointer finger between the reins with the palm down. In both cases, the hand is held at a 45° angle.

Romal Rein When using romal reins, no fingers can go through the reins. The reins run up through the bottom of the hand and out through the top. The extension of the romal is held with the free hand at least 40 cm from the rein hand.



Four Reins With English riding, as horses and riders mature, they may advance to use a leverage type bit, such as a pelham or double bridle but will continue to use two hands on the four reins. The snaffle rein is normally carried outside and underneath the little finger, the curb rein is carried inside the snaffle rein and is carried between the little and ring finger. This allows you to ask with the snaffle rein before demanding with the curb rein.



Rein Effects

The reins are an important part of the rider's equipment. They can be used in a variety of ways. The rider's hands control what happens to the reins, which are attached to the bit in the horse's mouth, therefore it is important that the rider develop "good hands". You can very quickly ruin a horse by using the reins in a harsh manner and destroy this means of communication to your horse.

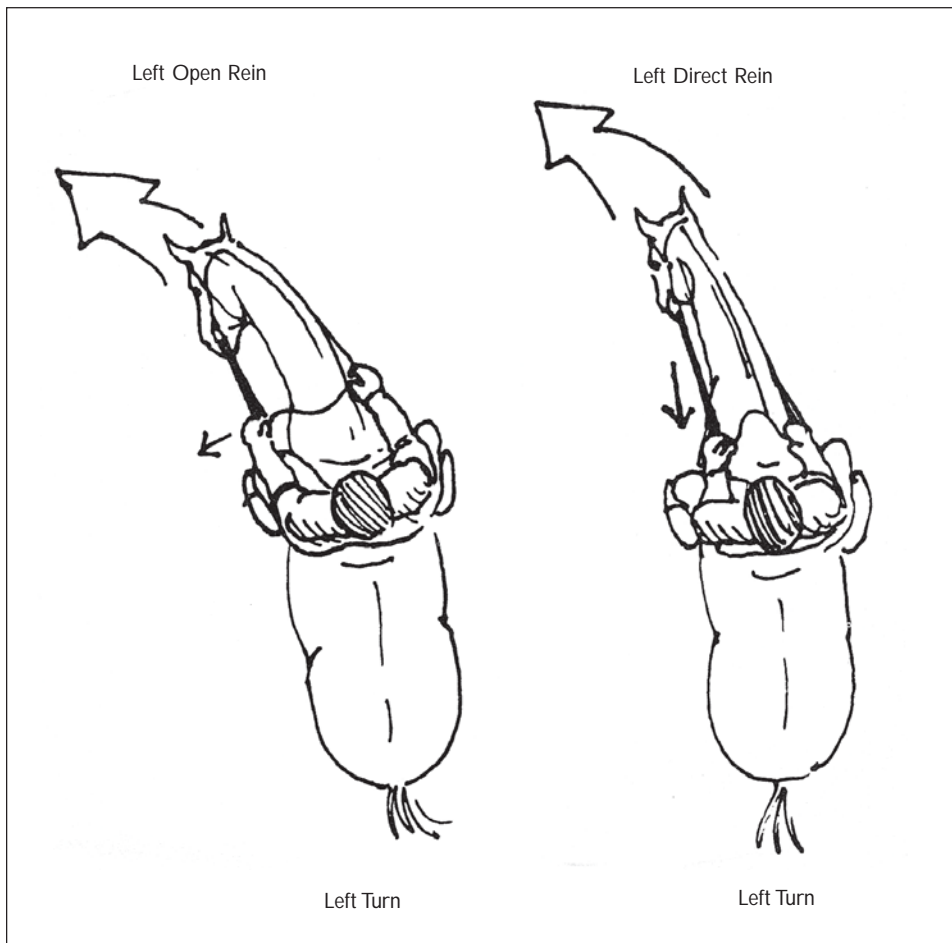
The **open** and **direct** rein are mainly used for forward turns and putting a horse on a circle with an inside bend. Positioning the horse's head often occurs with the use of an open or direct rein as well.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Open Rein Open Rein - is often used on young horses where the rider “opens” the hand away from the neck (never back), on same side they wish the horse to turn into. This “leads” the horse into the turn. This rein is just a directional aid and has nothing to do with bending. It directs and encourages the horse instead of forcing him. One of the most important uses of an open rein is in the case of a runaway or any out of control horse. An open rein is applied as strongly as necessary until the horse circles down and control is regained. It is important to have either a chin strap (Western) or cavesson or full cheek snaffle (English) to prevent the bit ring from being pulled into the horse’s mouth.

Direct Rein Direct Rein - a more subtle rein that produces the same action as the open rein, however you do not bring your rein away from the horse’s neck, you simply apply a bit of pressure on the bit by bringing your rein hand back towards your hip. There should be a straight line from your elbow to the horse’s mouth. For example, if the horse is turning to the left you use the left rein to create the turn. You may apply a one-handed direct rein aid to turn but usually you do not want this much lateral bend in the neck. If riding with two hands and two direct rein aids are given at the same time, the horse

should flex, slow, stop or back. The direct rein is used more often as the horse advances in its training. It is also used to collect the horse or decrease speed.



4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Indirect Rein **Indirect Rein** - a rein effect in which pressure is put on one side of the horse's neck with the rein and the horse moves away from that pressure. The rider should keep his reining hand inside his shoulders. If crossed too far over the neck, the rein pressure will increase on the mouth so the horse will turn one way but his head will go the other, making the horse very unbalanced.

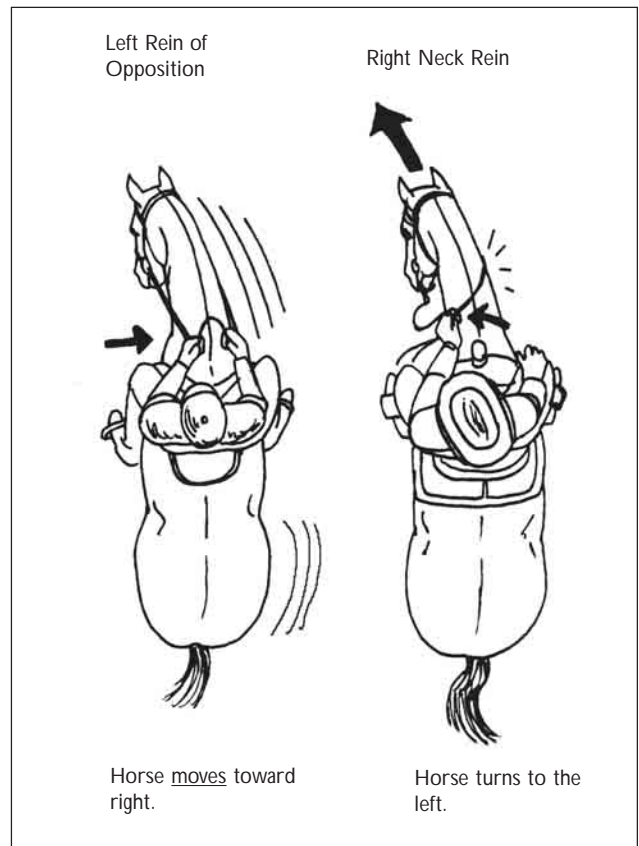
An indirect rein is assisted by a direct rein in the learning stages. The Aids would be indirect rein and leg aid on the same side. If the horse does not turn away from neck pressure, a direct rein assists in getting the horse to look where he is going.

The indirect rein is a lead up to the neck rein and is called a neck rein when the rider advances to one hand. If a neck rein is used properly, the pressure is mainly on the neck, not the mouth. When the horse turns away from a neck rein, the rider will see part of the horse's opposite eye (inside). It is often used in Western to demand a prompt turn of the horse's shoulders.

Rein of Opposition

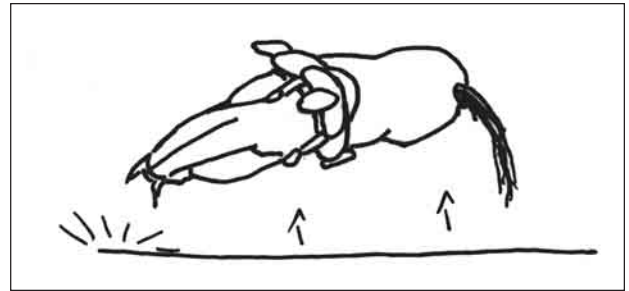
- Once a rider is past the beginning stages of riding it is important to learn how to correctly use a rein of opposition.

A rein of opposition is a rein used to either correct or supple the horse's shoulders. Therefore it is a great tool to use if the horse is shying, falling in or falling out of a circle. When using the rein of opposition, pressure is put on the bit and neck on one side of the horse in order to move his shoulders sideways

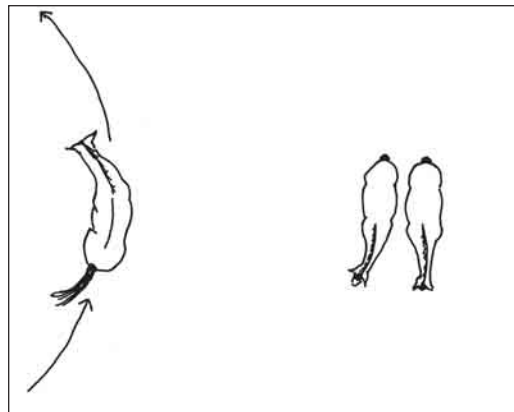


4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

in the opposite direction. To do this, the rider moves the rein toward their opposite shoulder but keeps it short enough to not cross the neck line. This rein effect requires the other rein to be used as a support rein so the horse does not over bend in response to the rein of opposition. The support rein also helps the rein of opposition reduce forward motion so the shoulders can be moved laterally. In almost all cases the rider assists the rein of opposition with a leg aid on the same side. The other leg is open to allow the shoulders to move. A weight aid may also be used on the same side as the rein of opposition.



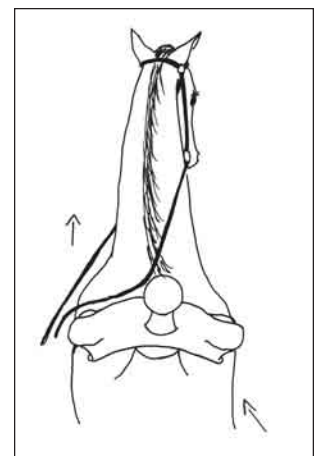
Example: Horse falling out of circle to go back to friends at other end of arena.



Problem: Shoulder to the outside of track, head to inside.

Correction: Right rein of opposition, right leg, right seat bone, left support rein, left leg open.

If the rider is using a right rein of opposition, he should be able to see the horse's right eye and the horse's shoulders moving left. There will usually be forward movement as well.



Supporting Rein - A supporting rein is used to hold or steady the horse from turning. It is most often used as a direct rein but is not directly turning the horse, but rather holding it steady.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

The Aids

The aids (cues) are the way a rider communicates with their horse so that the horse understands and can be directed by the rider. You use aids or a combination of aids to tell your horse what to do. With proper consistent training your horse will learn to obey these aids.

The goal of training is to get the horse to respond to as light an aid as possible. A light aid is like a whisper, a strong aid is like a shout. The natural aids are your legs, hands, weight and voice. Artificial aids are tools that reinforce natural aids such as spurs and whips.

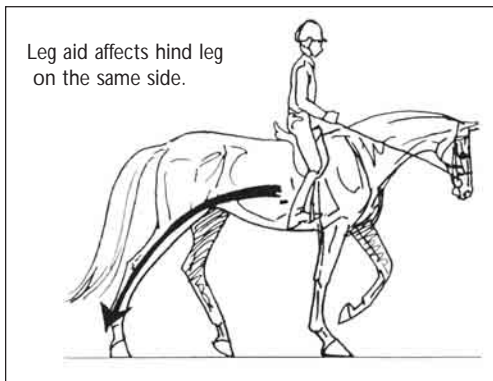
Natural Aids

Voice – Your voice is a valuable form of communication with your horse. He will know from the tone of your voice whether you are pleased with him or not. Commands should be kept clear and simple. Often a stern “No” is all it takes to stop bad behavior. “Good Boy” is a good way to let him know things are going well.

Leg Aids

It is the legs that are used first and most importantly to instruct the horse to do something. Leg aids are used to ask for movement, increase impulsion and control direction of the hindquarters. They are also used to bend the barrel of the horse and move the horse sideways. The legs create the power, while the hands gently guide the horse in the right direction.

Trot - Squeeze with both legs.



Canter/Lope - The inside leg gives the aid gently on the girth, the outside leg gives the aid firmly behind the girth.

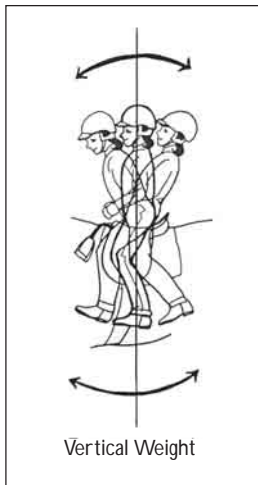
Back - Squeeze with the legs to cue for movement, then movement is directed backward with pressure of the hand aids.

Turning - The inside leg at the girth creates bend which initiates the turn, the outside leg determines the amount or quickness of the turn (by the amount of pressure applied) and controls the hindquarters.

Weight

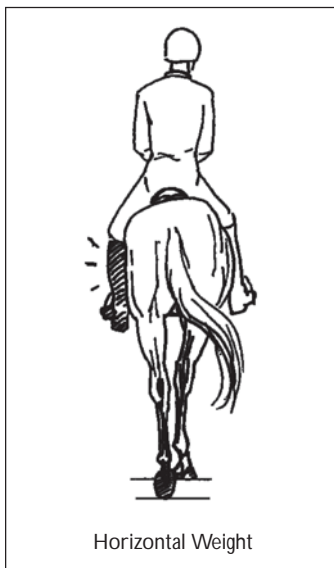
The way you carry your weight on your horse is important to you and your horse. The rider can shift the weight in the saddle to help cue for a change of gait or direction. Weight cannot be used alone. It is most effective when used with hand and leg aids. You can use your weight to help balance your horse as it works.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding



Vertical Weight - To use your weight vertically over the horse you need equal weight in both stirrups and with your center of gravity balanced over the midline of the horse's back. If you shift your weight in any direction the horse will notice. Use your vertical weight to affect the speed and rhythm of your horse. Leaning forward or back in the saddle will affect the speed of the horse by putting you ahead or behind the center of gravity. In order to use the position successfully, you must keep your body in a vertical line from the shoulders down to the saddle.

Posting to ride a brisk trot is an example of a vertical movement. The height and speed that you post will affect how fast your horse moves and its length of stride. The longer you sit in the saddle, the slower your horse will go. Vertical weight is also used in a downward transition (slowing down from one gait to the next). Imagine that you have become so heavy that you are being pulled down through the saddle. The horse will slow down. What happens is that your pelvic bone tilts back slightly and your weight shifts back.



Horizontal Weight - Using your horizontal weight, means shifting your weight from one seat bone to the other while keeping your body straight up and down. This weight shift can be used in preparation and during lead departures, turns, sideways movement and circles. Riding without stirrups is a good way to get a strong feeling for weight distribution.

Hands

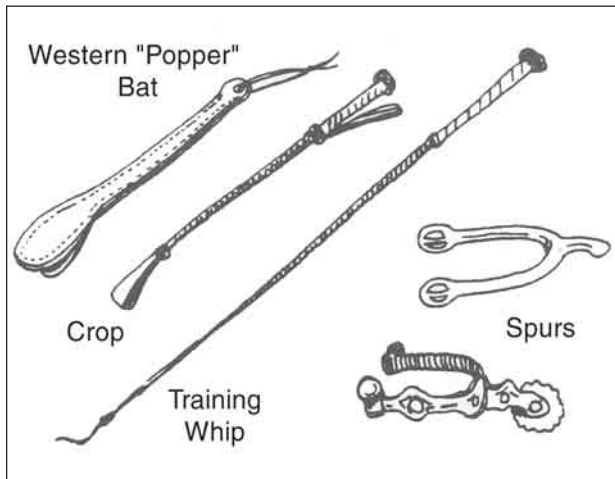
Your hands are used to guide and help your horse. Use them lightly, so that your horse will keep a responsive mouth. Never pull steadily with all your strength as this will ruin the mouth and encourage your horse to pull against your hand aids. Never jerk your horse's mouth. Good hands come from having a good seat.

Equipment is just a tool that we use to communicate with the horse, but you first have to be able to use your hands correctly with any equipment.

Your hands control the energy created by the legs (decreasing speed or allowing speed to increase). They control the forehand of the horse and actions such as bending the horse and controlling direction. Signal your horse by using light pulls and slacking ("*give and take*") of the reins with your fingers.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Artificial Aids Artificial aids are those that reinforce the natural aids, which are the legs, hands, weight and voice. They are sometimes used for correcting bad habits.



- U **Artificial aids must be used with self control, judgement and purpose,** never with temper
- U Usually one or two taps will be sufficient. Repeated hitting will only make a horse angry or frantic.
- U Artificial aids must never be used on or near the horse's head.

Changing Direction When changing direction you must use seat, hands and legs together to aid the horse for a balanced turn.

Hint:
Look up and where you want to go. Your body naturally follows as will the horse.

To turn to the right;

- U place more weight in inside (right) stirrup but do not lean
- U ask lightly and open, or draw back the inside rein (if two handed) otherwise lay neck rein against neck
- U when riding with two hands, turn your head, then your shoulders, then your hips in direction of turn (this allows the outside rein to soften as horse's head moves in direction of turn)
- U if neck reining, the rider's slight weight shift to the inside when the rider looks in that direction will aid the horse in turning. Remember the rider should be able to see some of the horse's eye on the side he is turning to as the neck rein is applied
- U as horse steps around, lightly bump at the girth with your outside leg if you want the horse to turn around more tightly on the forehand
- U inside leg controls amount of impulsion (go) a horse has and the bend of his ribcage

For left turn apply opposite aids. Use pressure and release with all aids to reward horse for correct response.

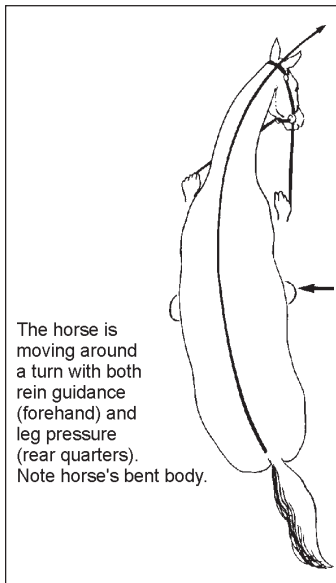
Which Rein Are You On?

Riders being instructed, will usually be riding in a circle around an instructor. The hand and leg on the inside of the circle (nearest the instructor), are referred to as the inside hand and leg. The hand and leg on the outside of the circle are known as the outside hand and leg. When the inside hand is your left hand (you are going anti-clockwise), you are on the left rein. If you are told to change the rein, this means you turn the horse and circle in the opposite direction. The inside hand is now your right hand, which means you are now riding on the right rein.

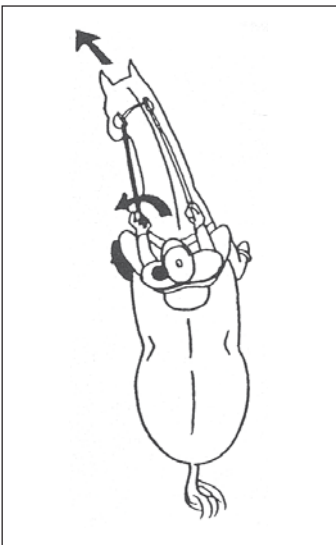
Riding A Circle

A circle is a continuous bend around at least four points. A circle begins and ends at the same point and the rider should see the same amount of the horse's inside eye all the way around the circle.

Circle to the Right



Circle to the Left



1. As you start to move around the arc of the circle, you want your horse to follow his nose and look where he is going.
2. Ride with a rein in each hand and using your inside rein, slightly tip his nose into the arc of the circle, so that you just see the corner of his inside eye and his head and neck match the arc of the circle. You want to move your inside hand a few inches away from the withers (opening the door). This is using an open rein.
3. The rider's inside leg is used on the girth to keep the horse moving forward; the outside leg is used behind the girth to stop his hindquarters swinging too far to the outside of the circle.
4. Now apply inside leg pressure to arc his spine and rib cage in the same arc as the circle. You want to slightly push his rib cage to the outside of the circle while keeping his head and neck matching the arc of the circle. The arc of his entire body should match the arc of the circle.
5. If he doesn't respond to light inside leg pressure, bump him lightly with your inside leg at the girth until he moves his rib cage to the outside of the circle; then stop bumping with your inside leg as a reward.
6. Remember to keep your horse's shoulder up. You want your horse to stay upright so he learns to move balanced and collected. To keep his inside shoulder up, lift your inside rein slightly above his mane.
7. The rider's focus should be 1/4 of circle ahead of where they are.

When your horse is correctly bent and traversing nicely around the circle, lighten your pressure to reward him and see if he will hold the arc of the circle. Correct him as needed. As the western horse and rider progress, the slightly open inside rein will become more direct and the bend will be maintained with minimal inside leg aid.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

- Troubleshooting
1. If your horse begins to drift in to the center of the circle, use more inside leg pressure to send him back out.
 2. If it feels as if your horse is falling into the circle, dropping his inside shoulder, lift your inside rein to lift his inside shoulder. You might also have to apply inside leg pressure to send him out.
 3. If your horse turns into the center of the circle, lighten your rein pressure. Use only a small amount of inside rein pressure and increase it as needed to match your horse's head to the arc of the circle. Apply inside leg pressure to bend his body around your inside leg.
 4. If your horse drifts to the outside of the circle, keep the slight bend in his head and neck with your inside rein and use a light outside neck rein and strong outside leg pressure to send him back into the circle.

Absorbing the Horse's Motion

Four joints are important in absorbing the horse's motion when riding - the ankle, the knee, the hips and the elbow. The upper body should remain as still as possible but not stiff during the gaits. Moving the hips independently allows this to happen.

Correct Position and Aids for Various Gaits

The Walk

The walk is a four beat gait and is a pace that the horse naturally offers the rider. The horse takes long, relaxed steps of equal length and usually overtracks, which means the horse's hind feet step further forward than the hoof prints left by the front feet.

Aids for the Walk: From the halt, the rider asks for the walk by gently squeezing both legs against the horse's side and by following the movement of the horse's head and neck with his hands and arms.

The Jog/Trot

The jog/trot has two beats to a stride, so it is a two beat gait. The jog/trot can be ridden either sitting or posting.

Aids for the Trot: From the halt or walk, the rider asks for the trot by squeezing with both legs at the same time. The hands give slightly on the reins and the seat encourages forward motion. Clucking is a voice aid or say "Trot".

4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - R i d i n g

Rider Position

In a sitting trot, you should remain sitting deep in the saddle, maintaining the same position as when stationary or at a walk. The movement of the horse's body at the trot will cause your hips to make a slight side-to-side motion. This occurs because as the horse is stepping forward with his hind leg his hip drops; thus a following rider will allow his hip to drop at the same time. Allow this motion in your hips but keep your upper body as tall and still as possible.

The rising trot is an easy movement for the rider. When the horse trots, he is springing from one diagonal pair of legs to the other. Let the spring from one pair of legs going forward lift your seat out of the saddle. Your seat returns to the saddle as the other pair spring forward. So as your horse moves each pair of legs in a one-two, one-two beat, you are sitting and rising to the same up-down, up-down beat. Your seat should be raised by the movement of the horse, returning quietly to the saddle without any loss of balance. With each stride of the trot - the horse "bumps" the rider out of the saddle (and slightly forward), followed immediately by the rider returning to the saddle. This "rise and fall" motion should not be forced but look natural for the amount of energy that the horse is using to trot. Do not actively try to push the body up and down, or it will make your shoulders and arms appear to be bobbing. To rise, use the muscles in your abdomen, buttocks and thighs rather than pushing in the stirrups. The shoulders stay upright and do not tip forward any farther than a 20° incline at the waist. The hips move forward.

The weight on the stirrup irons should not vary. The contact of the lower legs should not vary. Elbow and shoulder joints should be supple, allowing the hand to maintain the correct position. As you rise, the angle of your elbow joint will open, closing again as you return to the saddle. Your hand should maintain the same contact at all times.

Riding Diagonals

The trot is a two beat gait which allows the rider to post. To ride the correct diagonal the rider will rise and fall in the same motion as the outside front leg and inside hindleg of the horse. For example, if you were riding to the left, you would rise when the horse's outside (right) front leg and inside (left) hindleg are off the ground, and sit when these legs are on the ground. To check to see if you are on the correct diagonal - you may glance at the movement of the horse's shoulders to determine the position of the legs.

Hint:
Rise and Fall With The Leg On
The Wall



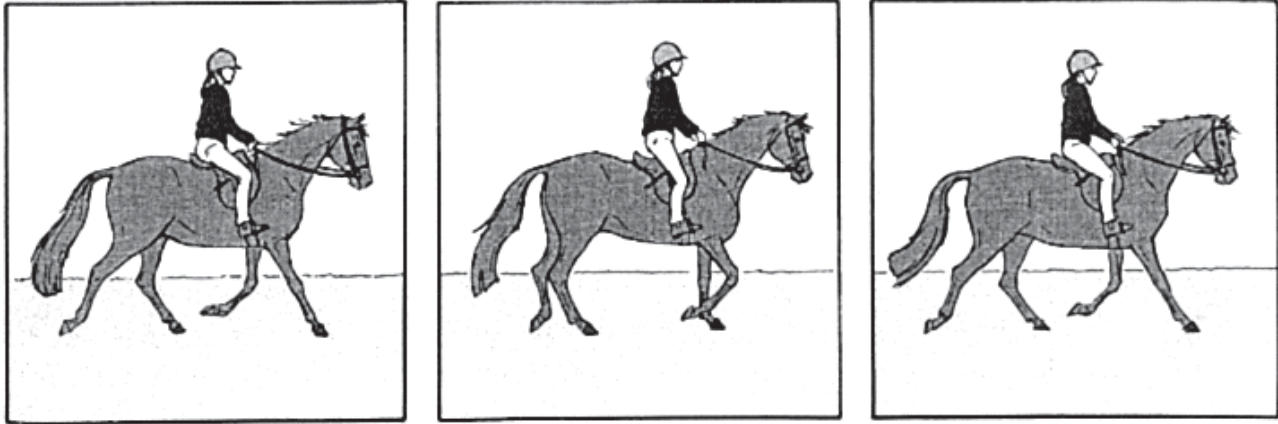
4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Riding Diagonals

(continued)

The reason for being on the correct diagonal is that your horse's inside hind leg is in the best position to bear the full strain of your weight. When riding in a circle, the horse will find it easier to balance, if the rider is IN the saddle when the inside hindleg and the outside foreleg are ON the ground. Because the horse uses his legs in diagonal pairs, RISE as the outside shoulder goes forward and SIT as it comes back.

Posting on the Right Diagonal



When doing a rising trot in a straight line, a rider may use either diagonal pair to post. However, if you are going to ride in a straight line for a long time; it is advisable to change diagonals quite often so your horse remains balanced (about every 1/3 kilometer).

To change diagonals is very simple. All you do is sit two bumps of the trot and rise again. So instead of sit-rise, sit-rise, you would sit-sit-rise and this would change you to the correct diagonal.

The Canter/Lope

There are three beats to the canter/lope stride, so it is a three beat gait.

Aids to the Canter/Lope: Before asking for a canter/lope prepare the horse for the upward transition by momentarily half-halting to encourage collection. Apply your outside leg behind the girth to cue for the correct lead. Your inside leg remains at the girth and is used at the same time as the outside leg, but not as firmly.

Aids for the Western Lope:

1. **Signal** – slight hand motion to forewarn the horse.
2. Slight inside rein pressure to elevate the shoulder and to slightly direct the horse to the inside.
3. Outside leg pressure and kiss (vocal aid).

4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - R i d i n g



As the horse and rider advance; more outside seat aid will be given to start the lope from the outside hind leg of the horse and the rider's power source will be used.

Riding a horse at a canter/lope is different than riding at a walk or trot. The front end and hindquarters rise and fall alternately. This affects how you ride the movement. As the front end comes off the ground, you should move your hips forward. As the front end comes down, your hips should follow the movement. This will allow you to follow the motion of the canter/lope. With practice, riders will feel the three beats of the lope and should allow their hips to move in a forward, up, and down triangular pattern.



The movement of the horse is absorbed by your hips. When you start to canter/lope you may catch yourself "pumping" (your shoulders move in rhythm to the horse). Your shoulders should stay still. A problem beginners may have is losing the correct lower leg position. Once your seat improves you will be able to maintain proper leg position.

At the canter/lope, a horse will travel on one lead or the other. This is important for smooth turns and balance for the horse. In order to determine which lead you are on, you should glance down at the horse's shoulders (without bending over) to see which shoulder is reaching more forward. This will indicate the horse's left or right lead. The rider's hips and legs will also take up the same 'lead' position as the horse. If you are sensitive to this 'feel' you can also determine the lead using your body.

Gallop

A gallop has four beats, and like a canter/lope, has a leading leg. At a gallop, the horse is at full stretch - it lengthens out its body and neck, and each leg is fully extended as it powers forward over the ground. When riding the gallop, lean forward, lighten your seat slightly out of the saddle and extend your arms as your horse stretches its neck forward with each stride. It helps to ride with shorter stirrups when galloping, as this makes it easier for your weight to be lifted out of the saddle.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Halt At the halt, the horse must stand still and straight, its weight distributed equally over all four legs. This is termed 'standing square'. The English horse should remain "on the bit" (with light contact through the reins to the hands). The Western horse should stand relaxed on a somewhat loose rein when halted.

The Aids to Halt: Ask your horse to halt by giving him cues from your seat and voice, then hands. Sit deep and squeeze lightly with your upper legs. At the same time, say whoa (if not being judged) and increase pressure on the mouth with your hands on the reins, which will block the forward movement. As soon as the horse halts, soften your hands and relax your legs.

The Western rider sits deep and extends weight down the back of their legs into their heels. The verbal command "whoa" is given and reins are applied only if the horse does not stop. If the rein aid is used, two direct reins are applied with increasing pressure until the horse does stop, then they are immediately released.

The Rein Back or Backing

The rein back (back up) is carried out from the halt. It is a two beat diagonal gait and should be fluid in motion. The steps should be straight, active and unhurried, but of good length. The feet must be picked up and put down cleanly, with the horse maintaining its correct outline and remaining on the bit. The horse should not raise its head or hollow its back, and should back straight.

The Aids to Perform the Rein Back: The horse should be calm and relaxed at the halt. Squeeze both legs against the horse's sides, as you lean forward slightly and apply equal pressure with both hands on the reins. Leg pressure tells the horse he has to move somewhere. Because forward motion is blocked by the hands maintaining contact on the reins, the horse moves backward. The moment the horse responds by stepping backward you should release the rein pressure then 'ask' again if needed.

Western Rein Back: It is not necessary to lean forward or use legs to back up the western horse. The legs are used if the horse is resisting, to elevate the horse's back and to loosen its shoulders.

4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - R i d i n g

Transitions

Three P's of
Transitions

1. Preparation
2. Positioning
3. Patience

A transition refers to a change in gait(s) either upward or downward. The ideal is to execute in a clean, balanced manner. When you ask for a transition, the key is to make it happen like clockwork.

Preparation for the transition is more important than the transition itself and is of utmost importance to success. Do not rush into a transition. Do not 'surprise' your horse by suddenly stopping or turning it without 'half halting' to warn it that you are about to make a change.

UPWARD TRANSITIONS	DOWNWARD TRANSITIONS
Halt to Walk	Walk to Halt
Walk to Trot/Jog	Trot/Jog to Walk
Trot/Jog to Canter/Lope	Canter/Lope to Trot/Jog
Transitions can increase or decrease through more than one gait (example: walk to canter)	

The Half Halt

The half halt is a brief almost invisible signal to the horse to re-balance its weight on the hindquarters and therefore become lighter in the rider's hand. It is achieved by resisting the forward motion by using the hand and seat aids. The rider closes his legs on the horse's sides and pushes him up into the rider's hands, which just for a second blocks the horse's forward movement. This is followed immediately with rewarding the horse by the rider relaxing the leg and softening the hand again.

The half halt can be used to:

- 1) rebalance the horse in any gait.
- 2) warn the horse that the rider is about to ask him to do something such as change direction.
- 3) build impulsion within each stride which can be stored to produce collected work or released to produce extended work.

The half halt is probably one of the most difficult things to learn or explain and takes time and practise to perfect for both horse and rider. Your hands, seat and leg aids should be used in combination to cue the horse for changes of gait.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

General Aids for Upward Transitions The rider's legs apply pressure on the horse's sides to increase the forward movement. At the same time the hands give slightly and the rider's seat follows the movement of the new gait. The rider's upper body should remain tall and still so as not to unbalance the horse as it moves upward. As soon as the horse is in the desired gait, the pressure from the legs should be released. The rider will maintain the gait through the combination of aids.

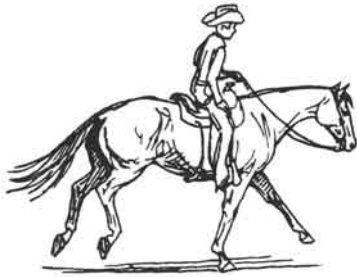
General Aids for Downward Transitions The rider's upper legs apply pressure while the hand(s) and seat block forward movement. The pressure on the reins, along with downward pressure in the saddle will discourage the forward motion as the horse moves into the lower gait. As soon as the horse becomes balanced into the new gait, the backward/downward pressures are released and the gait is maintained by the rider's correct use of the aids.

General Aids for Western Downward Transitions Relax, breathe out and quit following the rhythm of the gait with your hips. Only apply rein pressure if the horse does not respond.

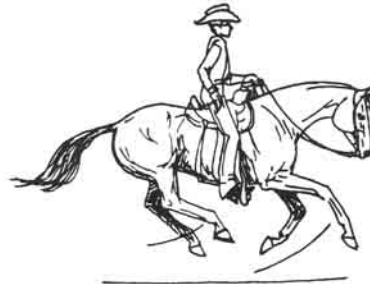
Simple Lead Changes A simple lead change allows you to slow to a trot/jog before cuing your horse to change from one canter/lope lead to the other. Simple lead changes are easier for a rider to understand the combination of aids and the cues needed to make lead changes.

The Flying Lead Change The flying lead change occurs when the horse switches leads in the air without changing gait. Horses often do flying changes naturally while exercising in the pasture. The rider must learn how to prepare and properly cue the horse to pick up the new lead. The moment to cue the new lead is when the horse is balanced (straight) and during the period of suspension that follows each canter/lope stride. It is only at this point that the horse will be able to perform a flying change. Some horses tend to become excitable or nervous when they are introduced to this movement, so be sure to teach the horse carefully and patiently. Some examples of when you would use the flying lead change are in competition over fences, equitation patterns, western riding class, reining, barrel racing and pole bending.

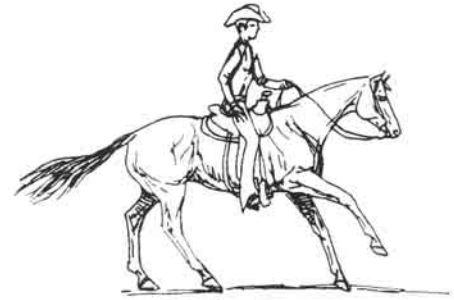




Left Lead



Front and hind legs switch in air.
(Flying lead change)

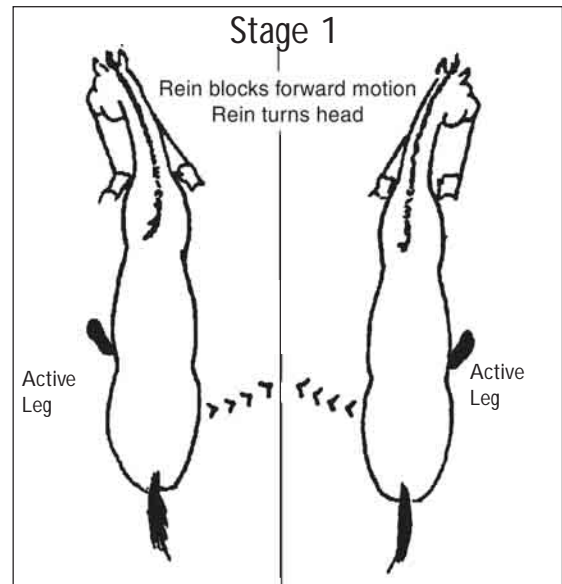


Right Lead Lope

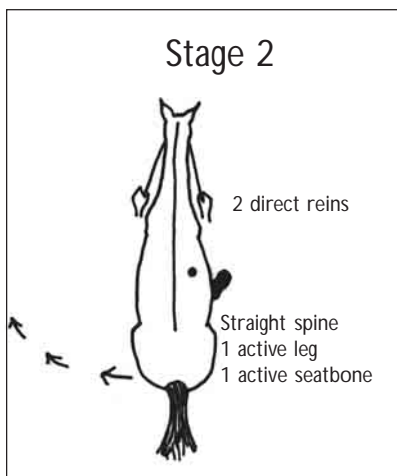
Movements

Turn on the Forehand

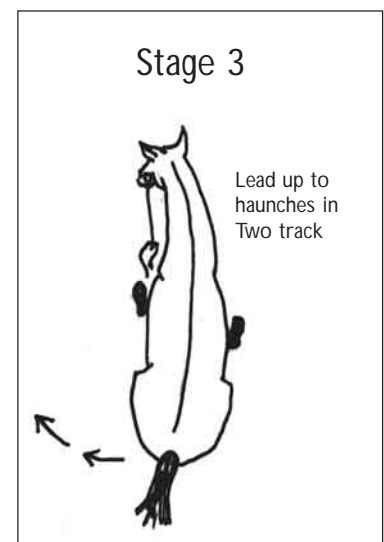
A turn on the forehand is executed from a halt and the horse moves its hindquarters around its forelegs in a circle. The inner foreleg acts as a pivot and the outer foreleg describes a very small circle. It can be done through 90, 180 and 360 degrees. The outer hind leg crosses over in front of the inner hind leg to show a tendency for forward motion.



Stage 1 - In the early stages of training the horse and rider, the horse's neck is bent with an open or direct rein toward the rider's active leg. This makes it easier for the rider to move the hindquarters.



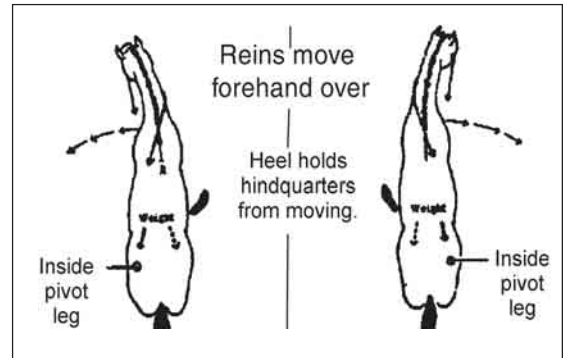
Stage 2 - As both horse and rider become more competent the aids will change to two direct reins with only enough pressure to prevent forward movement. The horse's neck will straighten. The hindquarters will be moved with one active leg while the other leg will be neutral, allowing the horse's hips to move. The rider can also add slightly more weight to the seat bone on the same side as the active leg. Be careful and strive for correct movement, not speed.



4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

Turn on the Haunches

In the turn on the haunches, the forehand moves around the hindquarters. The inside hind leg acts as a pivot. The horse must keep the hindquarter in one place as the rider cues the horse to move the forehand around step by step. It can be done through 90, 180 and 360 degrees. The outside foreleg should cross over in front of the other as it steps around the hindquarter.



The turn on the haunches is more difficult than the turn on the forehand because the horse must transfer some weight to the hindquarters in order to do it. It may be done from a halt or from a small walking circle.

Aids: inside rein open, outside rein indirect

inside leg open, outside leg active

Care must be taken that the rider does not try to pull the horse round with the indirect rein or the horse's shoulders, neck and head will all be out of position to turn properly. The spine can be straight or looking slightly in the direction the horse is moving. It is a good exercise to do to get the horse's weight on the hindquarters. Turning on the haunches is used in reining, gymkhana events and leads up to rollbacks for cattle work and reverse in the western pleasure class.

Leg Yield

Any time the horse moves sideways or forward and sideways in response to a leg aid, he is performing a leg yield. As riders advance and they want the horse to reach up further with his hind legs and elevate his back, this exercise will help.

To teach the leg yield begin at the walk. These are the cues for a leg yield to the left, reverse them for a leg yield to the right. Use light, two-handed rein contact on half circle to the right (clockwise). Use the following cues to arc the horse's body on the half circle's track.

- 1) Light right rein contact to tip his head to the right (until you can just see the corner of his eye).
- 2) Right leg pressure at the cinch to bend his ribcage to the left.
- 3) Light left rein contact to prevent his head and shoulders from falling to the right.

4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - R i d i n g

Leg Yield (continued)

- 4) Keep your outside (left) leg in a neutral position, applying pressure only if needed to block a leftward swing of your horse's hindquarters, or to add impulsion if he loses his "forward" motion.

Western Aids:

- 1) Two direct reins: one active tipping nose slightly towards rider's active leg. Other rein supporting so horse does not overbend and to convert some forward motion to lateral.
- 2) Second leg inactive unless more forward motion is necessary.
- 3) Rider may use seat aid on same side as active leg.

As you exit the half circle, increase your right leg pressure in rhythm with your horse's walk stride. Sit balanced and centered above him as you send him diagonally on the left leg yield. You should feel him start the maneuver by stepping left with his left front, then crossing over with his right hind, following with his left hind, then right front leg. Ask only for a step or two at first, gradually adding steps as your horse understands the maneuver. Practice in both directions. When your horse will arc his body away from your inside leg the instant he feels pressure on it, graduate to the jog.



1. Leg Yield (easiest)

- 🐾 horse moving forward and sideways diagonally
- 🐾 horse's head tipped toward rider's active leg
- 🐾 Horse's body arced around rider's active leg
- **Rein aids:** active rein of opposition, second rein supporting

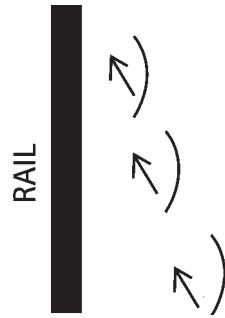


2. Two Track

- 🐾 horse moving forward and sideways diagonally
- 🐾 horse's spine is straight
- 🐾 shoulders and hips of horse are an equal distance from the rail
- 🐾 **Rein aids:** two direct reins
- 🐾 one active leg to move horse laterally
- 🐾 second leg maintains forward motion

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Riding

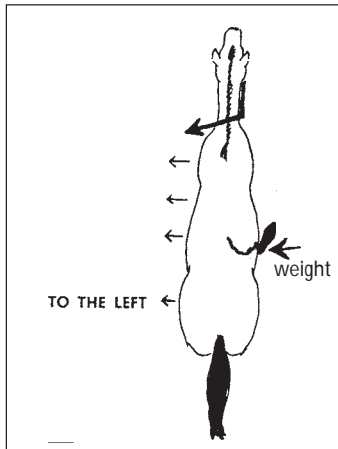
Leg Yield (continued)



3. Two Track (advanced)

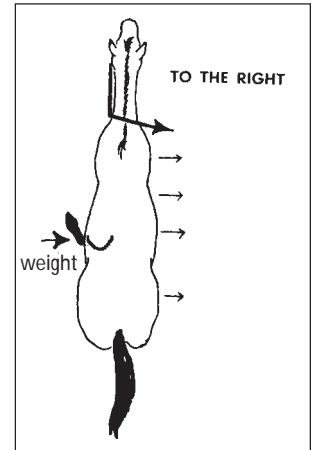
- ☞ horse moving forward and sideways diagonally
- ☞ horse is bent around rider's less active leg and head is tipped to look in direction of travel.
- ☞ outside leg is further back moving horse laterally, outside seat bone may assist lesser inside leg by creating bend and maintaining forward motion
- ☞ inside direct rein to tip nose, outside rein supports.

The Sidepass



Progression of Lateral Skills

In the sidepass your horse moves sideways, stepping to the side with both the forehand and hindquarters moving together evenly. The cues required for a smooth sidepass involve control of the forehand with the reins and hindquarter with the rider's legs. A sidepass performed correctly to the left should result in the right legs crossing over in front of the (left) supporting legs (and vice-versa when sidepassing to the right).



Aids: Active rein may be indirect, direct or rein of opposition (whatever is needed to keep the horse from leading with shoulders).

- ☞ active leg on same side as active rein.
- ☞ second rein supporting (doing what it has to do to make the active rein work).
- ☞ second leg open and inactive unless horse is crossing behind, then it will create forward motion.
- ☞ seat aid may be active on side of active leg. If the horse's shoulders get ahead of his hips, use a rein of opposition to slow the shoulders and let the hips catch up.

Two Track The two-track is the movement in which your horse moves forward and sideways in a diagonal direction making two sets of parallel tracks. It is an excellent activity for developing muscle, coordination and a supple, athletic body on your horse. Some horses will begin a two-track more easily at a trot/jog because they have more forward motion to help them move. The two-track is a great exercise for horses. It encourages them to round their back, lift their shoulders and move their weight onto their hindquarters.

Cuing for the two-track is the same as cuing for a sidepass, except that your rein tension will be lighter and your opposing leg pressure more so that your horse will continue to move forward. A correct two-track requires that the horse remain straight in its body as it moves along the diagonal or slightly bent in the direction of travel. Leading with either the forehand or the haunches is incorrect. The two-track is also referred to as a leg yield.

The Rollback

Example: lope in on left lead, halt, sweep 180 degrees to right, lope away on right lead.

The rollback is a change of direction at the canter/lope, combining the stop and turn into one motion. Your horse should bend into the turn, turning on its hocks and using the inside hind foot as a pivot, with its front legs close to the ground to maintain momentum. A rollback to the left will come out on the left lead (and vice versa).

The rollback is more animated than a turn on the haunches. It is a lope in one lead, stop, sweep 180 degrees over the hocks away from the lead leg and immediately exit on opposite lead.

Extended Stride

An extended (lengthened) stride means the horse steps 'longer' (not faster) in whichever gait it is in.

The Counter Canter

The counter canter demonstrates the horse's suppleness, coordination, balance and obedience. A counter canter is a movement in which the horse lopes/canters on the outside lead. It involves the horse cantering with the left leg leading, while being worked on the right rein, and vice versa.

The counter canter must only be attempted when a horse can pick up and hold correct leads constantly. The horse must keep its head and neck bent over its leading foreleg, so that it is, in fact, bent in the opposite direction to that in which it is moving.

* There are more of the English movements described in the Dressage and Jumping Manuals.

