

# American System of **Forward Riding®**

*Life Lessons Learned with Horses*



**Volume I**

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The overall goal of the ANRC is to promote a contemporary, systematic approach to riding, training, and teaching in the hunter/jumper discipline that is appropriate for horses and riders at various stages of learning. Emphasis is placed on developing a cooperative effort between horse and rider and ultimately achieving a quality performance.

## Our Mission

This DVD series is intended to guide riders through this system and give them a visual image of the performance they are working to achieve. Riders may use the series as a guide for "home schooling" and may submit videos to ANRC instructors for feedback and evaluation. Teachers may utilize the system as an instructional framework for teaching, and use portions of the DVD's as instructional demonstrations to complement their lessons.



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# American System of **Forward Riding®**

## Introductory and Level One Workbook

### The purpose of this workbook is:

- to provide entry-level riders with a system that will allow them to be safe and develop a good working relationship with their horse
- to provide instructors with a teaching methodology and ideas to enhance student learning
- to provide amateur riders with ways to improve their riding which will lead to an improvement in their horse's performance
- to provide anyone interested with a method that will give a horse a "good beginning". The Introductory Level and Level One are about establishing a foundation on which both the rider and the horse can build.

Riders will focus on becoming aware of and gaining control of their bodies (POSITION), since only through body language will they be able to communicate effectively with the horse. You and your horse are both athletes and when you fine-tune your body control, you enhance your communication system with your horse. Also riders will be developing muscle patterns (USING THE AIDS). Developing correct habits NOW will insure that you avoid becoming a clutching or nagging rider and will protect your "feel" for the refinement of your communication techniques with the horse. This workbook provides you with exercises and ideas to help you prepare to perform the tasks for the ANRC assessment levels.

Most importantly riders need to learn to become shapers of horses' behavior. Horses, like very small children, learn best in small chunks and through correct repetition They are creatures of habit

*If your horse doesn't enjoy your time together as much as you do, then that's a pretty strong indicator that you are going about things without thinking about them from the horse's perspective.*



and have incredible memories. Riders MUST learn to reward every effort a horse makes to give the correct response to an aid and then to be patient enough to not keep asking for more and more once a correct response is achieved. If you learn to stop with a small step in the right direction and pick up from that point the next time, your horse will learn much more rapidly without becoming confused or resistant. If your horse doesn't enjoy your time together as much as you do, then that's a pretty strong indicator that you are going about things without thinking about them from the horse's perspective.

In these levels the horse should learn to become mentally and physically relaxed and confident with the human on the ground and on his back and to understand the meaning of simple directional aids. While being ridden on loose reins the horse will learn to maintain his own balance and pace at all gaits without the need for the constant support of the rider's legs or hands. We call this "STABILIZATION". Achieving stabilization in the training of your horse will create mental calmness while retaining sensitivity for the more sophisticated demands of advanced work.

*It sounds simple, and it actually is, if the human in you will allow it to be. So let's begin.*

## Correct Design of Position

*What does this look and feel like?*



## Part One: Position Is Control

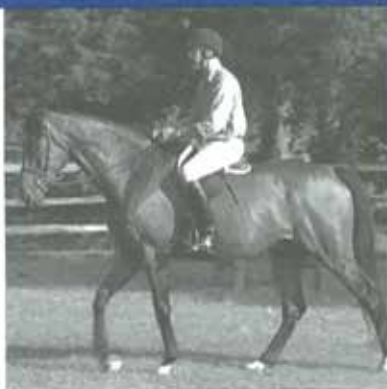


### At a standstill:

Your stirrup is parallel to the ground. You want the ball of your foot on the stirrup with the heel down, toe up. The ball of your foot is your balancing and energy point while the stirrup iron is across the knuckles of your foot. Your ankle joint and knee joint are like springs, shock absorbers—loose and flexible. The stirrup leather is perpendicular to the ground. You open your thighs to slide down and around the horse, allowing the point of your knee to push towards the ground. (If you were to drop a pebble off your knee, it would just skim past your toes.) The inside of your thigh, knee, and calf are against the horse's side. Your thighs are open; therefore you are closer to the front than to the back of the saddle. You are sitting over the horse's center of balance at the halt, just behind the withers. Your leg is resting against the horse's side, but your muscles have tone, they are not actively gripping the horse's side or applying any pressure. Any grip is "frictional" and is only the result of the contact between your leg and the horse's body. *(Your eyes are up—focused ahead. You are riding toward the front of the saddle. You should be able to put the palm of your hand flat on the saddle behind your buttocks. If you can't, you are sitting too far back or the saddle is not fitted to you properly.)*

Every beginning rider's first concern is believing that she can have control of this 1000 pound animal that she is about to sit on. Many of you were probably told that you just get on and "kick to go and pull to whoa." While that might work some of the time, it certainly isn't going to be enjoyable for the horse or produce a pleasurable, harmonious ride for the human.

In riding "LESS IS MORE". Your first responsibility is to gain control of yourself and that will ultimately give you true control of your horse. Thus we begin with Position. Every movement you make while sitting on the horse has an effect on his balance and is likely to produce some type of reaction. You want to sit as quietly and unobtrusively as possible so that when you do move your eyes, your upper body, a leg or a hand the horse will be able to interpret your meaning. We will give you the basics of position for the hunter/jumper rider and then provide you with a list of references to give you in-depth ideas for developing your rider's body. Accomplished riders work on position throughout their careers, just as concert pianists never stop playing scales. Practicing position in rhythm with your horse is developing your technique.



### At a walk:

*(Remember that you are the passenger.*

*You will help your horse in making his best efforts when you are a balanced load—staying in rhythm with your horse's feet and with his motion is the way to be sure that you maintain your balance together.)* The walk has 4 beats. The horse's feet move left hind, left front, right hind, right front. As the horse picks up the hind foot, you will feel your hip rising on the corresponding side. As he lowers that foot your hip lowers. Your hips alternate rising and lowering from side to side as the horse picks up his hind feet at the walk and lowers them in sequence. Your arms work as hinges from the elbow joint and follow the balancing gesture of the horse's head and neck at the walk. *(Remember the use of your eyes. The eyes are up, focused on where you are going. The horse follows the path of your eyes. This is a key to going where you want to go.)*

### Some ideas to focus your work on position

Your leg must be underneath you in order to support you, just as it is when you are walking, running, skiing or engaged in any other activity you do while standing. Therefore, while your heel should be slightly lower than your toe as it rests on the stirrup, your primary focus should be on developing a position that keeps your leg underneath your body. Too much emphasis on "depth in your heel" can cause you to brace your leg out in front of you, causing your shock absorbers (ankle, knee, and hip) to become stiff and lose their spring. Have a friend videotape you in profile while you ride so that you can see whether your leg stays underneath you at all gaits and in upward and downward transitions. Exercises 4 and 5 that follow in the next segment will help

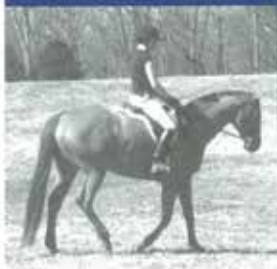
*Think about developing your position from your core muscles. Your center of gravity needs to remain over the horse's center of gravity and your center is controlled by the core muscles of your abdomen and lower back.*



you in developing the correct leg position over which your body is balanced. Riding in a bareback pad on a quiet, comfortably gaited horse will also aid you in developing a long, flexible, non-clutching leg. Combining this with the exercises using stirrups will go a long way toward helping you understand the three points of leg contact and assisting you in developing a position that is balanced over a leg with functioning shock absorbers.

Think about developing your position from your core muscles. These are the muscles from the bottom of your diaphragm and ribcage that stretch to your lower spine. Sally Swift developed this concept in her book *Centered Riding*. Many riders are finding that Pilates work is very beneficial to the development of a correct design of position because it allows you to become aware of and strengthen your core muscles. Your center of gravity needs to remain over the horse's center of gravity and your center is controlled by the core muscles of your abdomen and lower back. Your legs simply hang out of your hip socket and your weight runs down through your thighs and down the back of the calf to rest on the stirrup. Your upper body rises out of and is supported by these core muscles just as a building rises out of a firmly built foundation. You often hear riders being told to pull their shoulders back, but this generally makes the rider stiffen through the shoulders and arch and stiffen the lower back. If you think about supporting your upper body through the use of your core muscles, you are much more likely to be able to move in unity with the horse.

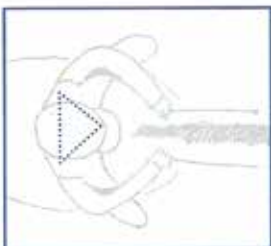
*Sitting the walk  
in full seat.*



### Three Basic Positions used in the Forward Riding System

- Full Seat
- Half seat (connected 2 point)
- Two point

**Full Seat:** You are sitting on your crotch and two seat bones. Your seat is composed of all the parts of your body that are in contact with the saddle from your knees upward. The main part of your weight is distributed over a triangle formed by your seat bones and pubic bone.



*Seen from above: the triangle of contact: the seat bones  
and pubic bone*

You are more toward the front of the saddle than the back and aware of the pressure or amount of ounces you have in your seat (three points of contact). The majority of your weight is distributed through your legs, not in your seat. It is important to sit as lightly as possible so as not to break your horse's connection in his body

from hind to front. An ultimate goal in the conditioning of a stabilized horse is for the horse to be strong enough physically to allow him to raise his withers. This can not happen if you sit too heavily in the saddle. At the walk in Full Seat you feel your seat bones rise and fall with the movement of the hind feet.

*Points of leg contact*



### Exercise 1

Either while being lunged on your horse or riding on your own in a small enclosed area just allow your horse to walk freely forward and close your eyes so you can feel the connection with his movement through your legs, hip joint, and seat bones. Can you feel the three points of leg contact—upper inner thigh, lower inner thigh and mid-calf.

*Notes*

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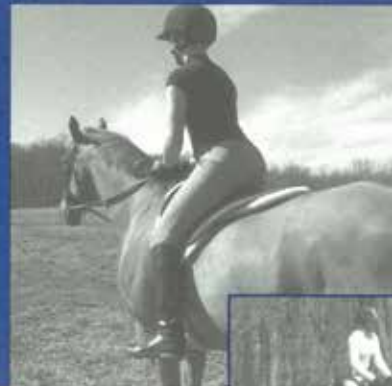
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*Rider in half seat.*

*Only your crotch and upper thighs are in contact with the saddle.*

*Rider in two-point.*

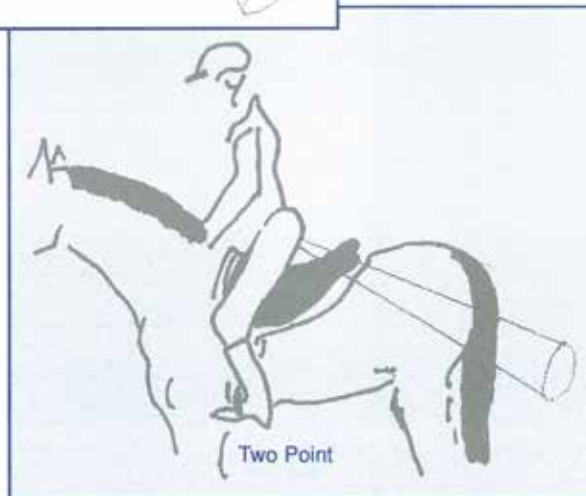
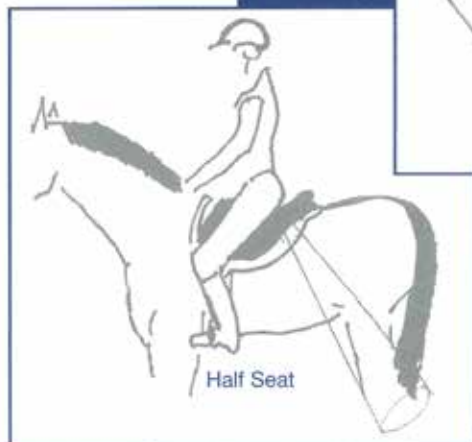


You disconnect your seat bones from the saddle by opening your knee angle and raising your upper body. This closes your hip angle slightly. Only your crotch and upper thighs are in contact with the saddle. Allow the redistribution of your weight to slide down your leg, pushing your knee towards the ground, then down the back of your calf to the ball of your foot on the stirrup, heels down, toes up.

While riding at the walk without stirrups or on a bareback pad, reach your arms forward about six inches and allow your hip angle to close slightly as your upper body follows your arms. You will feel your weight slide down through your thighs as your knees move closer toward the ground. Imagine that your seat bones are like the headlights on some cars with covers that open as they turn on and close when they are off. When you are in full seat your headlights are off, but as you disconnect your seat bones from the saddle your headlights come on low beam. (In two point they will rotate to high beams). When you are comfortable in this position at the walk, try it at a slow trot. If you have difficulty maintaining your balance, hold the mane to stabilize your position so you do not pull back on your horse's mouth. Gradually lengthen the time you can hold your position without holding the mane.



**Two-Point:** Raise your seat bones and your crotch out of the saddle by opening your knee angle and closing your hip angle a few more degrees.



Half Seat

### Exercise 3

You want to be able to differentiate the three seat positions clearly, so practice being in full seat for six trot strides,

adjusting your hip angle and arm position and shifting to half-seat for six trot strides, and then raising your seat bones slightly off the saddle (disconnecting your seat) as you hold the two-point position for six strides. Reverse the sequence going to half-seat for six strides and finally return to a full seat. Your changing of positions should be so fluid and subtle that it does not disturb the horse's balance and he maintains the same pace and rhythm of the trot throughout the exercise. Be sure you can differentiate the subtle changes that your body makes to achieve these three different positions. Make sure you can remain comfortably in balance with the horse's movement in all three positions. If you find that you tend to lose your balance forward while you are in half seat or two-point then you may be allowing your lower leg to drift behind you or be gripping the saddle with your lower thigh and inner knee. If you lose your balance by falling back, then check to see whether you have locked your ankle joint or braced your lower leg by pushing it slightly ahead of you. This causes both your ankle and your knee to lose their shock absorbing capacity. Remember to keep your arms forward with your hands in front of the line of your shoulders. Your eyes are up and focused on where you intend to go. Again, use the mane to stabilize your balance if you need to do so. Once you become proficient at this exercise at the trot, practice it at the canter.



**Exercise 4**

#### **Exercise 4**

Stand above the pommel of the saddle opening your knee and hip angles all the way. This allows you to feel the varying effects of the different positions that opening of the knee and hip angle can create. This exercise is also a good check on your balance. You should eventually be able to do it in all three gaits.

#### **Exercise 5**

Try to stand rhythmically above the pommel for four trot strides and then take two-point position for four trot strides. Going back and forth between these two positions in this rhythmic manner will help you create depth in the leg while maintaining a functional spring system.

#### *Notes*

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*To develop the ability to keep your horse on the track, you need to begin to create the mental picture of sustaining the horse's track by sending the energy created by your inside leg to your outside rein and that created by your outside leg to your inside rein.*



### **Position Exercises for Isolating Body Parts**

These exercises should help you develop your position and help you prepare to pass the assessment tasks but they aren't requirements for the assessment process. As a rider it is your responsibility to stay centered and through the use of your aids keep your horse on track. To develop the ability to do so you need to create the mental picture of sustaining the horse's track by sending the energy created by your inside leg to your outside rein and the energy created by your outside leg to your inside rein. This diagonal feeling actually creates an "X" through the rider's body. The center of the "X" is over the horse's center of balance, just behind the withers.

### **Lunging Exercises for position**

*(See page 50 for information on general lunging techniques)*

#### **Exercise 1 • Reposition**

Hold the front (pommel) of the saddle with your inside hand and the back (cantle) of the saddle with your outside hand. This position turns your shoulders and body from the waist up in the direction of the bend and aligns your shoulders with the horse's shoulders. From the waist down your hips are also parallel with the horse's hips. Your inside knee is pushed down, and your inside seat bone and inside leg are slightly forward, creating a correct holding leg that supports the bend and directs the energy created from this leg forward and over to the outside



*Once again remember the eyes...the horse follows your eyes...head up looking around your circle.*

**Exercise 2**



shoulder. The outside knee is also down to help keep your body centered in the saddle.

The outside leg is slightly back in the displacing position. It will allow you to catch the horse's haunch if it falls to the outside of the circle and guide the horse back on the track of the circle by redirecting his energy.

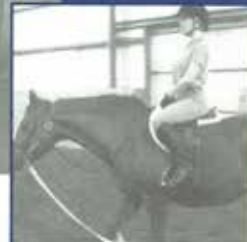
Remember the "X". You are learning to feel how your body position and different leg aids affect the horse. If the person on the ground lunging the horse has a good enough eye, she will be able to guide you in position corrections, as well as applying and timing aids to help keep the horse moving forward and straight around the circle.

- a) Once again remember your eyes—the horse follows your eyes: keep your head up, looking around your circle.
- b) Practice counting the rhythm of the hind feet. If this is difficult, keep your head up and close your eyes for a moment—just feel the push of each hind foot with your respective hip.
- c) Keep a running picture (like a video playing behind your eyes) of what you want to happen. The horse will often pick up the energy of this mental image.
- d) Vary your upward and downward transitions: halt to walk, walk to trot, trot to walk, walk to halt, etc.

**Exercise 3**



**Exercise 5**



### **Exercise 2**

As you become more secure, you can place the inside hand, on the knee, waist, behind the back or on top of the head. Gradually you will be secure enough to let go of the front of the saddle and do the arm exercises with both arms.

### **Exercise 3**

Now, add turning the upper torso, bending to touch the toe on the same side, then the opposite side, then turning to touch the horse's croup then his poll. Move only as far as you can while maintaining your position.

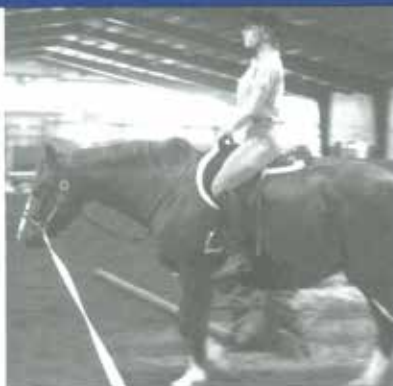
Through all the preceding, check the stability and independence of your seat and leg.

### **Exercise 4**

Practice Half Seat and Two-Point and Standing Above the Pommel. Name how the hind feet are falling while in all three positions while being aware of your "X" that is supporting the horse's straightness and forward movement.

### **Exercise 5**

Start with the walk on the lunge. Bring your knees up in front of the pommel of the saddle and see how this connects your seat bones to the saddle. Then ask the person lunging you to encourage your horse into a slow trot. As you feel your seat bones being pushed up forward and then lowering back with the two beat rhythm of the horse's hind feet, slowly push your knees down and sit lightly in the saddle, hold the



Exercise 8

pommel and keep your hip angle open and your seat bones connected to the saddle. The sitting trot has a slower cadence than the regular trot. Anytime you feel your seat begin to bounce or lose your balance or stiffen, return to the walk. Feel the horse's hind feet and relax into their rhythm. It works best to do short, correct sequences of sitting trot to help you remain relaxed and confident.

### Exercise 6

Once you are comfortable at the sitting trot on the lunge without your stirrups, then practice with your stirrups. Many riders find it more difficult to sit the trot with their stirrups than without because of tension in the ankle or a desire to brace against the stirrups. Still we must ride with our stirrups so this is an important skill to master. *(You should begin to feel that you are actually following the horse's movement forward with your seat bones.)* As your seat bone rises and comes forward with the horse's hind foot, that thigh will feel as if it stretches and the knee actually moves lower. This feeling will alternate between each seat bone, leg, and thigh as you follow the horse's hind feet forward.

### Exercise 7

When sitting the trot without stirrups becomes comfortable, then practice dropping your stirrups and picking them up without looking down or disturbing your horse. As your balance and security develop, practice this exercise at the posting trot and canter.

### Exercise 8

Now you will use the reins while being lunged at all gaits.

- Two separate hands in front of the body. Remember: a "sheet of glass". *(See page 32)*
- Elbows: oscillating, following the motion of the neck.
- Opening or leading rein, eyes looking, outside leg encouraging movement towards the leading inside rein. Remember to "give on the outside rein what you took on the inside rein." (This is the "X" again.)
- Practice looking ahead and seeing what your horse sees. Think like a horse. You can ride out of trouble by being aware and catching an incident before it happens and directing the horse's energy elsewhere.

### Notes

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*...focus on your position and  
don't worry too much about  
controls.*

Exercise 3



### Free work in a small confined area to develop position

Work in a round pen or other small fenced area of 60' to 80' diameter so you can focus on your position and not worry too much about controls. Try these exercises without your reins. Knot them so they stay within your reach on your horse's neck.

#### Exercise 1

**Transitions:** Pretend you are on an imaginary lunge circle and work on upward and downward transitions within the gaits and between the gaits, i.e., ordinary trot rising to slow trot, back to ordinary trot rising; walk to slow sitting trot back to walk; slow sitting trot to canter to ordinary trot rising, then back to sitting trot, etc.

#### Exercise 2

**Turns:** Turning off your legs and opening rein, walking patterns (crossing the center of the ring, keeping the same direction and changing direction) adding transitions to trot, trotting the pattern, transition to walk, to halt, all variations, using all the positions

#### Exercise 3

Begin to work over ground rails at the trot in half-seat, and two-point positions. Try this exercise with arms folded over your chest or hands on your hips. Add poles around your lunge circle or round pen and just "let them get in the way." How "straight" your horse is to the pole will make all the difference in how he is able to negotiate the obstacle.

#### Exercise 4

Go back and do lunging exercises 2, 4, and 8 with the poles just "getting in the way." For a detailed explanation of this type of free work in a confined area you should read the following articles on "Passenger Lessons" by Linda Parelli.  
[www.parelli.com/literature/newsletter/2003/apr-june.htm](http://www.parelli.com/literature/newsletter/2003/apr-june.htm)  
[www.parelli.com/literature/articles/fluidity.htm](http://www.parelli.com/literature/articles/fluidity.htm)  
[www.parelli.com/literature/articles/riding-naturally.htm](http://www.parelli.com/literature/articles/riding-naturally.htm)

#### Notes

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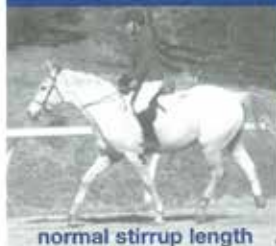
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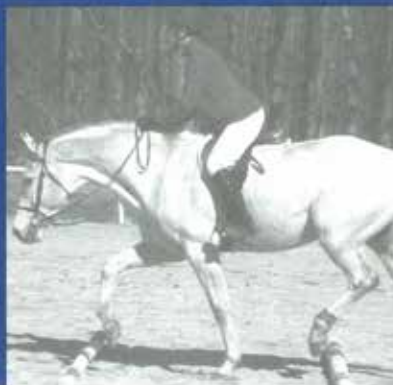
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Practicing with a very short stirrup will challenge your balance just as the "standing above the pommel" exercise did, and it will help you find the ability to balance over the stirrup without gripping through your thigh or knee.



normal stirrup length



2 holes shorter



4 holes shorter



4 holes shorter

### Riding a calm school horse

(Ride in a larger riding arena on loose reins at all gaits.)

#### Exercise 1

Work particularly on developing all three seats at each gait.  
(Remember, the canter comes when the rider is proficient at the trot.)

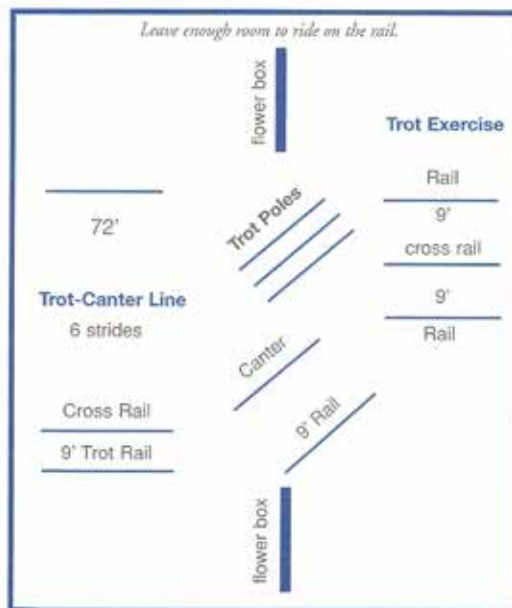
#### Exercise 2

Scatter poles around your arena and practice turning to the poles and being "straight." There are three parts to a turn. The first part of the turn asks your horse to keep his weight on his outside shoulder and bend slightly around your inside leg—the second part you ride straight and forward for a moment and breathe—the third part of the turn you ask your horse to come off your outside leg, then catch him with your inside leg when he is "straight" to the pole. Use your legs around the horse's barrel as if you are passing a beach ball back and forth between them. This is a chance to practice isolating your body parts and learning to use each aid independently.

#### Exercise 3

Work over ground poles with a variety of stirrup lengths so you can see how stirrup length affects your security and spring system. Try a stirrup length two holes longer than normal, and you will notice that while you may feel more secure with a longer leg around the horse, your spring system is not as effective. Next try a stirrup length that is two holes shorter than normal, and then four holes shorter than

normal. This will increase your springs but decrease your security. Practicing with a very short stirrup will challenge your balance just as the "standing above the pommel" (page 12) exercise did, and it will help you find the ability to balance over the stirrup without gripping through your thigh or knee.



Exercises that can be done using ground nails—straight lines, bending lines, poles on the end of the ring, across the center at angles. Any combination that you would find in a course can be set using just poles, making it easy for you to learn how to steer and at the same time saving the jumps in the horse. Try setting up your work area with a variety of exercises such as those in the diagram.



*Riding bareback will help you develop balance not grip or strength.*



#### Exercise 4

Double posting is a great balance and rhythm exercise. Instead of posting "up, down," "up, down" as we traditionally do, vary the posting rhythm. First try the waltz tempo of "up, up, down" and see whether you can maintain your balance over your stirrup on the second up beat. When you are stable over your leg, try other variations, such as "up, up, down, down", or "up, up, up, down". Any and all of these challenge your body control. *See DVDII: Position Exercises*

#### Exercise 5

On a calm horse in the company of one or two other riders, go trail riding. Work at the walk and the posting trot, taking two-point when going uphill. Downhill open your hip angle and push your knees down as you step into the stirrups using the ball of your foot as your ground. It is wonderful to be able to follow and observe and imitate the path of an advanced rider who is proficient at turns and straightness. Stay several horses lengths back from your leader. Work on your downward and upward transitions to keep the desired distance.

#### Exercise 6

Ride bareback using a bareback pad. Start in a small enclosed area and graduate to larger areas if the horse is calm and quiet and as you develop balance and suppleness. Work at the halt, walk, and trot until you feel balanced and secure and then begin to add the canter. When you are comfortable riding in the bareback pad in all gaits, work to perfect Exercises 1 through 4 listed under "Free work in a small confined area." Riding bareback will help you develop balance, not grip or strength. We highly recommend that you try riding in a bareback pad like those developed by Pat Parelli (available through [www.parellicollection.com](http://www.parellicollection.com)). They are expensive, but they are durable and will provide you with a secure seat that will help your bareback riding progress rapidly.

#### Notes

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*Jumping in a bareback pad over a 2' jump.*

*Though the horse is a bit flat and reachy in his style, note how the rider is with the motion.*

*Teaching the horse to give to pressure!*



## Part Two "Go and Whoa"

### Suggested References

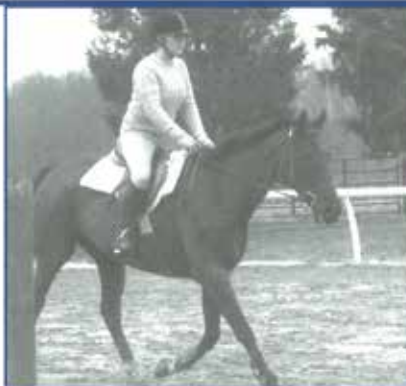
These books will assist you in your development of a quality working position.

- *Centered Riding* by Sally Swift
- *Fitness, Performance and the Female Equestrian* by Mary D. Midkiff
- *Ride with your Mind Essentials* by Mary Wanless
- *Passenger Lesson* by Linda Parelli (see p. 19)
- *Yoga for the Equestrian* by Linda Benedik and Veronica Wirth
- *Schooling and Riding the Sport Horse, A Modern American Hunter/Jumper System*, by Paul D. Cronin
- *Horse and Rider, From Basics to Show Competition*, by Judy Richter

"Go" is first because on horseback (just as when riding a bike) "Forward is your friend." Think about how difficult it is to steer a bike just as you are starting off and have almost no forward motion. How do you encourage forward? With your legs. Your legs energize and activate the horse's hind end – his drive train (the horse's engine is in the hind end). Your legs are the key to controlling not only the pace but the direction of the horse's movement. How do you make your legs effective?

A horse's natural instinct is to resist pressure. If you pull on a horse's tail it is unlikely that he is going to back up, and the first time you push against the sides of an uneducated horse with your leg he is likely to resist the pressure. The harder you press, the harder he resists. It is the release of pressure that a horse is seeking, and you must learn to use this to your advantage by releasing the pressure as soon as you feel the horse shift away from the pressure. This is especially important while the horse is learning new responses. Horses aren't like cars. Your horse shouldn't need your continuously active leg aid to sustain his forward movement. If you have to keep an active leg (your foot on the accelerator) all the time, you aren't developing a sensitive feel on a horse or a sensitive horse. If you are a beginning rider, the best way to learn is on a well-schooled horse who will give you the correct response when you ask correctly. Learning to ride on a "school master" is similar to having training wheels on your first bike.

Therefore, as you learn to use your leg, we encourage you to begin to use it with a rhythmic tapping motion that asks with pressure and follows the "ask" with the release of pressure. Your tap might need to be quite firm and energetic to get a response on some horses and may



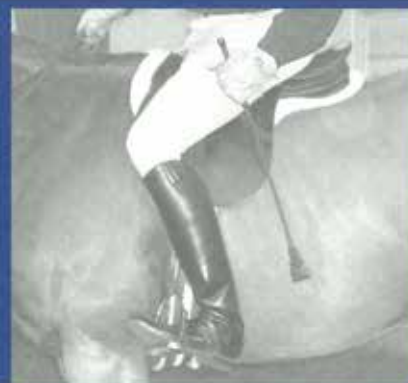
*"Absolute request and get an absolute response" (Lendon Gray) which you immediately reward. It is your responsibility to be with your horse. Responsibility means the "ability" to respond.*

even require re-enforcement with a crop. Other horses will naturally respond to very light pressure. Your goal is to educate every horse you ride to respond to a light pressure. As you learn the various leg aids that you will use to send your horse where you want him to go, you avoid developing a gripping, nagging leg through the use of a rhythmic tapping leg. A tapping leg teaches you to apply and then release pressure, a habit that will be refined later to an imperceptible squeeze followed by a release of pressure. Remember at this level of riding you are trying to develop the correct muscle memories and patterns of behavior in your own riding to create clear communication with your horse.

Before we discuss the specific aids, let's remember that when working with your horse you must always make an "absolute request and get an absolute response" (Lendon Gray),<sup>2</sup> which you immediately reward. It is your responsibility to stay in unity with your horse as he responds. Responsibility means the "ability" to respond. This is imperative! The horse must understand what you are asking—and it is your job to make that clear—and you must reward the horse's slightest effort to do what you have asked.

For example, if your leg "asks" the horse to move forward and he does, then reward him by releasing the leg pressure. If he doesn't move forward with enough energy, then you "ask again." But if your horse should disregard your request, you MUST be prepared to "tell" him to move forward by reinforcing your leg aid immediately with your stick. "Ask, ask again, then tell" – Remember an absolute request must get an absolute response! You must be ready and able to cope with the response and go with it. Follow your horse forward! Don't punish his forward response with a restrictive hand or your seat.

*A strongly used aid is meant to clarify the expectations, not to punish the horse or allow you to vent your frustration.*



Lendon Gray also recommends you keep the following thought in your mind while riding.

*"The duller the horse the less leg you should use and the hotter the horse the more leg."<sup>3</sup>*

What she means is that you will never teach the dull horse to be responsive to a light aid if you are constantly grinding your leg into his side and getting little or no response. This type of riding will create a horse that is even duller and more disrespectful to the rider's aids. You must discipline yourself to do what is necessary to get the "absolute response to your absolute request" promptly. This may require a very short, sharp, forceful use of an aid for a time or two, but this is much fairer to your horse than constant nagging aids that never reward through a release of pressure. Absolute requests leave no doubt about what you are asking the horse to do and allow him an opportunity to show his understanding and respond because the aid is used and then REMOVED. This will save him from the confusion and frustration of constantly applied aids. The hot horse needs more leg only because he needs to become comfortable with and accept your leg resting on his side before he will be mentally calm enough to interpret the increases and decreases of pressure of a leg aid. To a certain degree you are trying to desensitize this type of horse to the presence of the leg, or as Pat Parelli would suggest, you are playing the "Friendly Game".<sup>4</sup> A horse cannot respond to subtle leg cues if he is in a panic at the leg's mere presence against his side.



*The holding leg and urging leg look identical. They are both used at or very slightly behind the girth.*

*Holding Leg*



*Displacing Leg*

## The Leg Aids – Creating Energy

### Urging Leg = GO

The 'Urging Leg' is used in unison with the horse's hind feet. As the name indicates, it is used to ask the horse to move forward and to continue moving forward. At the walk, if you stay with your horse's movement as your hip rises and falls, your leg automatically is placed against the horse's side at the proper time for use. The amount of leg varies from horse to horse. One horse may need nine ounces, another four ounces and another just the thought of a leg being applied in the proper rhythm creates a response. Each animal is a unique individual. *(Remember: A horse is a horse—the mechanics are mostly consistent from animal to animal—but the "amount" varies from individual to individual.)* Again, depending on the individual you may need to use four ounces of pressure, barely feel the horse's side, or give it just a thought. By being aware of your horse's behavior and response to your application of the aids, you will be able to feel what is needed and how much.

If you find that you need to use more than four ounces of pressure to get a response then you are probably riding a "dull" horse. If it takes 9 ounces of pressure to get the response you want, then make sure to apply those nine ounces quickly and sharply and immediately release the pressure when your horse responds. You want every horse you ride to respond to four ounces of pressure or less, and only you can create this type of responsiveness.

Always offer the horse your respect, and expect an equal amount of respect back from him. You cannot be fair to your horse if you are

reacting out of anger or frustration. A strongly used aid is meant to clarify expectations, not to punish the horse or allow you to vent your frustration. When you have lost your patience or your temper, it is time to get off and put your horse away before you destroy the trust and respect that you have already achieved.

### Holding Leg = HOLD A SHAPE

The 'Holding Leg' is still. It forms a wall. It does not move with the motion. It is used to block (hold) a space. It shows the horse the limits of where you would like his feet to move or not move. Riding through a corner an inside holding leg would help the horse stay upright by preventing him from falling to the inside of the turn. When applying a holding leg, you push your knee down towards the ground and allow your weight to drop down the back of your calf with the ball of your foot settling into your stirrups as if you were standing on the ground. This blocked energy needs a place to go, and that is to your outside rein. *(Remember the "X", page 13.)*

### Displacing Leg = MOVE SIDEWAYS OR MOVE AWAY

The "Displacing Leg" is used to ask the horse to move off his natural path. When moving straight forward, a horse's hind foot follows the path of the front foot, creating two rows of footprints. With the use a displacing leg, you can ask your mount to move his feet to the side away from the pressure. A key to this leg aid being effective is being sure you have cleared a space for the horse to move into. You do so by releasing several ounces of pressure on the opposite side (opposite leg). This indicates the direction of the desired movement by opening a "door" for the horse to move into.



*If you have to stop your horse with the reins, then just use one rein to turn the horse sharply and cause his hind legs to step across each other.*

*Open your hip angle and use your upper body as the "sail" to bring your "boat" back to you.*



### **The Rein Aids=Whoa? Not Really!**

Your horse really is like your car in one way. Your hands on the steering wheel make sure your car goes in the direction you want to travel, just as your hands on the reins shape the path your horse travels. But you don't pull back on the steering wheel to stop your car, and ideally you shouldn't have to pull on the reins to stop your horse. A jockey who wants his horse to really dig in and give more power and speed – PULLS ON BOTH REINS – to increase the power as in a more tightly coiled spring. Pulling steadily on both reins allows the horse to engage both hind legs with more energy and create more forward thrust. If you have to stop your horse quickly using the reins, then just use one rein to turn the horse sharply and cause his hind legs to step across each other. This will successfully break the drive train.<sup>5</sup> This technique is just to get the job done – it is not the ideal of communicating effectively with your horse.

To stop your horse, you should stop your own body by allowing your energy to sink down and around the horse through to the stirrup. Think of your upper body as a sail that when full of wind carries the boat. Open your hip angle and use your upper body as the "sail" to bring your "boat" back to you. This is the feel you are striving for. The reins channel your horse's energy the way banks of a stream direct the flow of the water.

We are asking you to begin riding on a loose rein for two reasons. First, your horse can develop his ability to find his own balance within each gait without relying on your hands. Second so that you can develop your position and body control without accidentally balancing on the horse's mouth. Even though you will have loose reins you will still want to focus on following the gesture of the horse's head and neck with your arms. The trot doesn't have a balancing gesture but the walk and canter require the horse to use his head and neck to maintain his balance just as you swing your arms while walking. It is important to develop the feel of following while riding on loose reins. Because your hands will not be in direct contact with the horse's mouth at all times, you will have the opportunity to develop a hand that asks by applying pressure and then rewards by releasing pressure just as you are learning to do with your leg. We call this motion a check-release. Because you are on loose reins you will have to move your hand in order to make a momentary connection with the horse's mouth. Move your hand slightly to the outside and ask the horse to give his head and neck in that direction for a moment, then follow this by immediately returning your hand to a neutral position. This is the check-release or the "ask and reward". You are asking your horse to slow by using the outside rein and causing him to slightly disengage his hind legs. (He will bring one hind leg across in front of the other, stopping his forward motion). Later when you ride on contact, the outside rein will be your primary connection to the horse's energy. You are developing that muscle pattern now.



*Remember:  
two separate  
hands—a left side  
and a right side,  
separated by a  
sheet of glass.*



*Neutral hands*

*Opening rein*



### **Neutral Hands=NON-DISTURBING**

You have a left hand and a right hand. The left hand stays on the left side of the horse's neck. The right hand stays on the right side of the horse's neck. Pretend there is a sheet of glass that runs along the horse's mane separating the two sides. Your hands are quiet, steady, and considerate, and they work independently of your body.

The bit lies still in the horse's mouth. When applying a rein aid, try to feel the corners of the horse's mouth. The corners of the horse's mouth are where the horse is most sensitive and responsive. Rein length: Your hands should be in front of the withers with your elbows at the point of your hip. *Remember: two separate hands—a left side and a right side, separated by a sheet of glass.*

The arms are relaxed, elastic. There is a straight line from bit to elbow when seen from the side and from above. The elbows oscillate with the movement of the horse's neck. *(Remember: from the waist up your body and shoulders mirror the movement of the horse's shoulders.)*

### **Opening Rein or Leading Rein = COME THIS WAY**

The opening rein is used to lead the horse in a specific direction or into a specific space. It indicates to the horse that you want to turn but does not inhibit the forward motion in any way. It is primarily used to ask for large, slow, sweeping turns and as a signal showing the desired path. You move your hand/arm a couple of inches in the direction of the desired movement and then return to the neutral position. Remember: If you take (move) 2" on the left side you must give (move) 2" on the right side—this allows the horse to move his neck freely. The "inactive" hand is following the shape of the neck and allowing the turn as you

ask the horse to move in a new direction. *(You'll know this feeling well if you ever drive with both hands on the steering wheel of your car or a bike's handlebars. When one hand initiates the turn of the steering wheel the other hand attached to the wheel must follow along.)* This action is not very obvious when you are riding on loose reins, but you need to be aware of it now. Develop the habit, and it will carry over when you begin to work on contact.

### **Two Direct Reins = STAY HERE PLEASE**

Two direct reins used together set the limits of the path you are traveling. Remember that two direct reins also keep the horse on the track by indicating the path of travel that the energy of your legs created. "Leg to hand"—remember the "X"! When riding on loose reins, bring both hands straight back until you make a connection with the horse's mouth. (It may be necessary to adjust your rein length slightly to accomplish this. Be sure it feels like you are pushing a wheelbarrow. Remember, the horse's mouth and his neck carriage are not disturbed in any way as you adjust the reins. This awareness from the beginning is most important so as not to have to break bad habits later. (See "Addressing the reins" in DVD II, Leg and Rein Aids). Then you immediately return your hands to a neutral position. You may have to do this more than once as the horse is decreasing his speed or coming to a halt, but the duration of the connection should be no longer than you would keep your finger on a hot skillet. Remember — ask and reward. If you don't release the pressure immediately, you aren't allowing the horse to respond and show that he understands.



*Be a good parent.  
Set the boundaries  
and expect respect,  
and you will get it.*

*One Direct Rein*



*Downward Transitions  
Sit in the Saddle,  
Voice, Leg Support,  
and Check Release  
with the hand only if  
needed.*

### **One direct Rein=SHORTEN AND TURN**

One direct rein is used at the foundation level to encourage the horse to shorten his stride and to make a tighter turn. This is the rein aid you will use when riding into a corner. The active rein hand moves directly back toward your hip. Remember: If you take (move) 2" back on the left side you must give (move) 2" forward on the right side. This allows the horse to move his neck freely. The "inactive" hand is following the shape of the neck and allowing the turn as you ask the horse to turn in a new direction. Again, this action is not very obvious when you are riding on loose reins, but you need to be aware of it now, so that you develop the habit of following the shape you are creating. It will be crucial to successful riding on contact. (Remember the steering wheel.)

### **The Sequence of the Aids**

Before we give you exercises to practice using the aids, you must understand clearly the sequence of their application in upward and in downward transitions. Remember that the correct habits you establish at this level will become instinctive. The process may seem mechanical, but learning a new skill means breaking it down and doing it step by step. This is part of learning any motor skill.

### **Upward Transitions**

#### **Voice, Leg, Reinforce if Necessary**

In an "upward transition" the use of voice command comes first. This is the "preparatory aid," and if you have taught your horse the voice commands while lunging him, he will grasp what you expect. "Ask" the horse to walk by saying the word 'walk' with energy in your voice. Be sure to be consistent and use the word for the gait you want just as you do while lunging—"Trot" for trot and "Canter" for canter. This will be important in both upward and downward transitions. The tone and energy in your voice allows the horse to know whether he is being asked to go forward or to come back. Then add your urging leg aid. If the horse fails to respond, check yourself and ask again. If there is still no response, then "tell" your horse by supporting your leg aid with a smack from a stick directly behind your leg. Remember the mantra: "Absolute request and absolute response followed by reward." Using the stick once effectively is much fairer to your horse than a clutching leg that nags at his side constantly.

### **Downward Transitions**

Open your thigh and your hip angle and slide down around your horse as you think about your weight dropping to the ground. Sit lightly in the saddle, use voice, leg support, and check release with the hand if your horse hasn't responded with the transition. Relax your energy and breathe with the horse. Use your voice in a soothing singsong manner. Again check your energy and breathing to make sure that you are relaying the proper message. Actually, using the voice almost

guarantees that you aren't holding your breath and stiffening your body. We are always working toward riding inside leg to outside rein, so start to establish that mental image now. Horses naturally tend to fall inward off the track in downward transitions, so begin to build the habit to ride from your inside leg to your outside rein that you will need as your riding progresses in sophistication.

If your horse has not responded to your sinking into the tack and using of the voice, then follow up with the check-release. Just as in upward transitions you must be prepared to "tell" your horse if you aren't getting the desired response. This may mean that your check-release is quite strong for a moment. You absolutely must be prepared to do what is necessary to be effective even if it seems momentarily rough. Be a good parent. Set the boundaries. Expect respect, and you will get it.

### Exercises to develop the correct use of the aids.

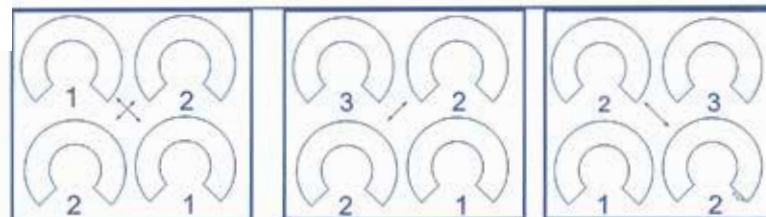
Urging Leg(s): Upward transitions – halt to walk, walk to trot, trot to canter. Don't forget to use the correct sequence of the aids! The urging leg aids are generally used simultaneously at or very slightly behind the girth.

#### Exercise 1

Halt to walk – use the voice command or cluck and then allow your hands to move forward slightly so that the horse has a comfortable place to go. Remember that the leg is tapping and the hands allow by following the head and neck gestures – an increase and then immediate decrease of pressure – no vise grips here!

#### Exercise 2

Walk to trot – increase your own energy level, and with a brisk tone of voice and urging legs, ask the horse to step forward into the trot. Remember that your hands must create a space for moving forward. Follow forward! Hands shouldn't inhibit or restrict the forward motion in any way.



*Trot*

*Left lead canter*

*Right lead canter*

### Exercise 3

Trot to canter – go from rising trot to sitting trot to reconnect and rebalance. To create a canter departure on a desired lead you must first prepare. The preparation begins with closing your inside leg to send the horse's weight and energy toward the outside rein so that he will be free to step off into the inside canter lead. Once you have completed and are maintaining the preparation, then draw your outside leg back to give the cue for the canter departure. Remember the canter has three beats. For the left lead the right hind initiates the gait, followed by the diagonal pair, and then the left leading leg. This reverses for the right lead, which begins with the left hind leg, followed by the diagonal pair, and lastly the right leading leg. Be sure you follow the horse's head and neck gestures at the very first canter stride. Your arms follow the forward energy you are creating with your legs. You don't want to ask the horse to go forward and then confuse him with hands that restrict his response. Follow the balancing gesture of the head and neck.

### Evaluation Questions

Use questions like these to evaluate your horse's response:

1. How quickly did he move forward? A count of one or a count of five?
2. How little leg pressure did it require? A thought, four ounces, or the use of the stick?
3. With how much energy did your horse respond? Too little, enough, or too much?
4. How long did your horse maintain the correct energy level at the gait before you had to use the urging leg aid again? Two strides, twenty strides, or a full lap of your work area?

*Notes*



### Holding Leg(s)

To hold the shape of the track you are riding, legs are normally used one at a time at or slightly behind the girth. Do all exercises first at the walk and trot. Add the canter when you are confident at the trot.

#### Exercise 1

Walk along a fence on a straight line and see whether you can keep your horse's body as straight as an arrow on the track with an inside holding leg.

#### Exercise 2

Now go outside of your ring and walk along a railing that is now on the inside of your track. We don't often do this, so you might find it more difficult for both you and your horse.

#### Exercise 3

Walk over striped rails and see if you can place your horse straight across any stripe you choose. You will use your holding leg(s) to make corrections in your horse's straightness. Imagine that you are passing a large ball back and forth between your legs.

#### Exercise 4

Set two parallel rails six feet apart and walk the horse through the chute you have created. Slowly narrow your chute to a two-foot width and continue to guide your horse straight through by primarily using your legs. Remember to insure good communication with your horse; stay focused on your intention. Keep your eyes on your focal point. Offer your horse a space to move into by softening your opposite leg.

### Evaluation Questions

1. How straight did your horse stay? Was it easier to stay straight going one direction on the fence?
2. To which holding leg was your horse more responsive?
3. How often did you have to use your holding leg when you had the fence as a support for straightness? Was it better when the rail was on the outside or on the inside of your track?
4. How much more or less often did you have to use your holding leg when working on the exercises on the fence than between the poles?

### Notes

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*One-quarter turn  
on the forehand.  
Keep eyes up!*



## Displacing Leg

This leg aid asks the haunches to move or stay in place. The active leg is positioned four to six inches behind the girth.

### Exercise 1

Start with a 1/4 turn on the forehand. Remember you are suddenly asking your horse to grasp a new meaning for the use of your leg. Rather than moving forward away from the pressure, you now want him to step sideways away from the leg. Begin by facing your horse at a wall to inhibit his ability to move forward and limit the amount that you will need to use your hands to correct any forward movement. Draw your displacing leg behind the girth, and with a tapping motion ask your horse to move his hindquarters away from the leg while his front feet stay almost in place. (*Imagine a small circle on the ground. The horse's front feet stay inside of it.*) Your non-active leg must relax and clear a space for your horse to move into. It should take about two steps for your horse to complete the turn and be parallel to the wall. Practice this first using the leg to which you feel your horse is most responsive. Practice in only one direction for a few sessions until you are sure your horse understands. Then introduce the turn off the other leg.

### Exercise 2

When you have perfected the 1/4 turn then try a half turn of 180° by starting and ending parallel to the fence or wall. These turns allow your horse to understand this new meaning of the leg aid in a quiet, controlled exercise. If the horse does walk off, ride out of trouble, guide the energy to the outside rein and close the outside fingers, while using an inside leading rein to contain the motion. This opening of the inside hand will set the limits for the horse.

## Evaluation Questions

1. Does my horse need more practice off one leg than the other?
2. Are his steps rhythmic and long, and does he step one hind leg across the other? (These are the qualities of a good turn.)
3. Do his front feet stay within a circle the size of a hoola hoop? (Walking forward 1/2 step is OK, but backing up should be avoided. If your horse backs up, be sure you aren't using your reins too strongly. This is a turn off the leg, the hands shouldn't be involved unless the horse tries to walk off.)

## Notes

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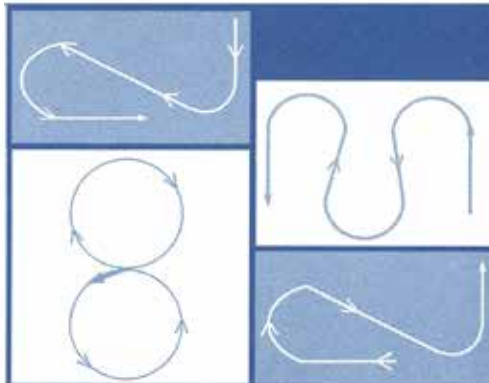
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*Circles, half circles, half circles in reverse, figure eights and serpentine*

## Opening/Leading Rein

In large sweeping turns, the active hand moves outward and slightly forward and stays level, with the other rein hand not dropping downward at all. The following exercises are demonstrated in the Task Demonstration sections of the DVDs. See page 65 for more detailed explanations of these ring figures.

### Exercise 1

First try circles and figure eights that are two circles touching on a centerline. Remember to open the rein for a moment and then return the hand to a neutral position. You may have to use the aid more than once to achieve the desired result, but always return to neutral between "asks". Important: Your focus (eyes) must be the first indicator of the turn prior to using the reins, and you should maintain your focus throughout the turn. Be sure your shoulders follow the horse's shoulders.

### Exercise 2

Half circles and half circles in reverse allow you to combine straight lines with sweeping turns. Use the rail to help you establish your horse's straightness, which should help to keep your horse on the track of the half circle because he is already attentive to your holding leg aids. Remember to follow your horse's shoulders with your own.

### Exercise 3

Three loop, S-shaped serpentine are great exercises for practicing the use of the opening rein combined with a holding leg.

## Evaluation Questions

1. Did my horse turn his head and neck slightly in the direction of my opening rein?
2. How little pressure did my horse respond to?
3. Did I need to use the rein aid more than once?
4. Did my horse continue to follow my focus after the initial "ask" with the opening rein? Was my horse able to maintain the rhythm and pace of the gait while making the turns?

## Notes

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## Two Direct Reins

Transitions within a gait (such as ordinary trot to slow trot) as well as downward transitions between gaits will allow you to set the limits of the path you are traveling and contain the energy you have created with your urging legs. Downward transitions between the gaits: trot, walk; walk, halt; canter, trot, slow trot, walk, halt; etc., require you to concentrate on the sequence with which you use your aids so that you develop the correct habits and muscle memory. Remember which rein is designated as the outside rein. There is always an outside rein. This is the wheelbarrow effect. You have two direct reins, so you also have a inside rein and an outside rein. You are always riding the "X". Don't give up on it. This way your horse will always have an idea about direction. Both reins keep the bit still in the horse's mouth.

### Exercise 1

Rising trot to slow sitting trot – use your voice in a calm fashion, (sink into the saddle) open your hip angle, and create the "sail" (see page 31) with your upper body that will help draw your horse back to you. The two direct reins will help limit the amount of forward motion if needed.

### Exercise 2

Slow sitting trot to walk – Just as in Exercise #1 use a calm voice, open your hip angle, and with your upper body, create the sail that will help draw your horse back to you. The two direct reins will again limit forward motion if needed.

### Exercise 3

Walk to halt and later slow sitting trot into the halt, without going through the walk. The aids and mental images are the same as those for Exercises #1 and #2 above. See page 63 for more exercises.

## Evaluation Questions

1. Which transitions are easiest for my horse?
2. In which transitions does my horse respond before I even use the two direct reins?
3. Is there a particular transition that requires me to use my rein aids strongly?
4. Do I remember to release immediately every time if I have had to check? How prompt is my horse to respond?
5. Which transitions do I need to prepare for earlier and do more gradually? (Your horse may have to go through the posting trot, sitting trot, and walk to get to the halt.)

## Notes

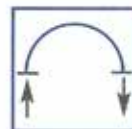
## One Direct Rein

### Exercise 1

Riding a rectangle along a wall you will use one direct rein at a time to help straighten your horse and then an inside direct rein to help shorten his stride slightly in preparation for the sharper turn of the corners. Remember that the outside rein needs to allow the horse's head and neck to bend to the inside by following the bend.

### Exercise 2

Use ground poles and set them as if you are trotting or cantering a jump into one corner and then out of the next corner.



## Evaluation Questions

1. Does my horse stay straight on the wall through his head and neck with little or no correction? (Remember you use a holding leg first and then support it with the direct rein)
2. When I use the one direct rein, does my horse respond by shortening his stride slightly and turning his head and neck slightly toward my active rein hand?
3. Into which direction does my horse naturally look more comfortably?
4. Do I have to correct his straightness more to the left or the right?

5. Do I remember to follow the bend in my horse's head and neck by allowing my outside rein hand to move slightly forward (so I don't inhibit his ability to respond to the inside direct rein)?
6. How much pressure does it take for my horse to respond? How many strides does he maintain the bend in his body before I have to remind him again?

Notes

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These are a few exercises you can use to develop your ability to use the aids to communicate with your horse effectively and to educate him to the meaning of the aids. You will find that using the evaluation questions regularly will help you become a "conscious" rider. A good rule of thumb is that if you use an aid and don't get the response you want, then continuing to do that same thing longer and harder is not likely to get the result either. Stop ASKING!!!!!! Take a breath, TELL your horse what is expected, and immediately reward the response. You don't want to become white noise that your horse just tunes out **NOR** do you want to be a perpetual nag who drives the horse crazy. Sometimes you must be forceful enough to get the correct response even if you are momentarily rough. You may have to use your crop or a very strong check-release. This should never be done in frustration or anger. You must calmly but clearly tell the horse what is expected. You should treat your horse with the same empathy you would give a three-year old child but with the same expectation of respect for rules and boundaries that effective parents demand of even the youngest of children.

## Part Three

### Stabilization of the Horse



#### What is Stabilization?

A stabilized horse can maintain his own balance and the speed set by his rider at any gait on all terrains and in many situations. With a non-interfering rider, a stabilized horse is able to work through his body as efficiently as if he were running free because he is mentally and physically relaxed. This attitude makes for sound, sane, confident horses that willingly work in partnership with their riders. It **FEELS GOOD** to them when they are asked to work through their bodies. Stabilization is a natural base for all mounted disciplines. Stabilization is a foundation concept in forward riding. For more information on stabilization you should read Paul D. Cronin's book "Schooling and Riding the Sport Horse, A Modern American Hunter/Jumper System."

#### How does a stabilized horse look and feel?

When you sit on a stabilized horse, you will have the feeling that there is more of him in front of your leg than behind it. However, we all know this is not an ideal world and all horses cannot be ridden on loose reins. These horses usually want to know where the rider is and willingly take a feel of the bit. In such cases, it therefore becomes the riders' responsibility to be sure that there is more horse in front of their leg than behind it. Otherwise, the horse will not be able to work through its body correctly. Straightness is a priority—the horse must be able to move its neck freely, and its front end must not be held still or frozen in one frame. You must always follow the balancing gesture of the horse's head and neck with your arms. In a stabilized horse, all the energy comes from the hind end. You can feel the forward motion activated by your urging legs and guided forward by the chute of the hands and legs. Straight forward motion without hurrying comes first in creating a stabilized horse.



*It is important to "join up" as taught in natural horsemanship, for the horse to come to you and follow...this demonstrates connection.*



### **Leading, Grooming and Tacking Up**

This is the first connection with your horse, your opportunity to check where your four-legged partner is both physically and mentally. When you lead a horse, you want to be connected, so he is always aware of where you are. If your horse maintains eye and ear contact with you, you can be sure you're in sync. If this isn't the case, then ask the horse to "come around" you by stepping back to the hindquarters and using your leading hand to show him the way back so you are shoulder to shoulder. When you are leading your horse, be sure to begin to use the voice and establish his understanding of "walk", "trot" and "whoa".

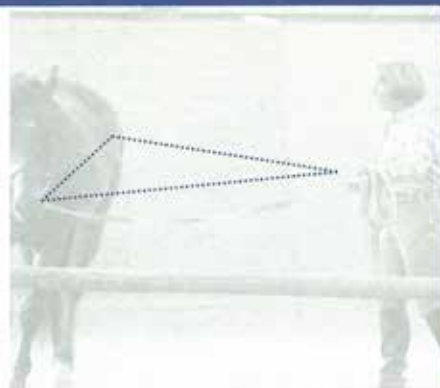
Check your horse out physically—legs for swelling, bumps, or cuts, anything abnormal. Then evaluate his mental outlook—what mood is he in today? Grooming should feel good to your horse, like having a massage, so treat it like that. How does your horse respond as you clean and loosen his tight muscles? Be sensitive to your horse's body language for telltale signs of discomfort or agitation. When you tack up, be sure that everything fits well, and be considerate by tightening the girth gradually. There should be no pinching from any of the tack you use.

### **Ground work and Round Pen Work**

This, too, involves connection with your horse partner, showing the way to achieve the quality movement that feels good to him. Remember that connecting with human beings doesn't come naturally to horses. It's our responsibility to invite the horse to connect with us. Horses "read" our body language, which means we must be consciously aware of what our bodies say to them. For example, stepping in front of a horse's

shoulder during lunging or working in a round pen, means to slow down. Stepping toward the middle of the body signals the horse to maintain movement; stepping toward the hindquarters indicates that he should move on.

Work in a round pen is a wonderful way to create connection. It also allows you to observe how your horse moves naturally without the weight of the rider. Does he lean to the left or to the right? Most horses are left handed or right handed just like people. Use your body just as you do when leading a horse—to ask for a turn around, step in front of the horse and allow space. It is important to "join up" as taught in natural horsemanship, for the horse to come to you and follow, which demonstrates connection. The round pen can also be used to "free lunge" on voice command. This practices constant connection and allows the horse, with the ground person's correct body usage, to find how to keep his body upright and straight. At this point the horse will be able to stretch his neck and "grow" upwards from his withers which feels good to him. Often horses experiment with this good feeling when loose in the round pen, which can be transferred into good flat work to begin to create desirable habits and strong muscles. You want your horse to be physically sound. When mounted, all you need to do is suggest to the horse the same thing that worked on the ground. Often you will find that the horse chooses the option that worked and was comfortable to him in the ground work. All you have to do is praise and use positive reinforcement. Then you must condition him to build the muscles necessary for carrying the rider's weight and maintaining



*Lunging triangle*

quality movement. Free lunging exercises have the same benefits as exercises with a lunge line. Be patient and go slowly.

### **Lunging Exercises**

Having already established voice commands—walk, trot, whoa—while leading, you are now ready to lengthen the lunge line to create a "triangle." The triangle is formed by the horse's body, head to tail as the base and the trainer as the apex. The lunge line and the lunge whip form the sides of the triangle. Always move with your horse. Do not stand still. The intent is that the horse follows your body language. Lunging equipment varies according to the preference of both the horse and trainer and the goal at hand. Often the ring on the nose of the lunging cavesson works best when using lunging to teach beginners and to rehab horses because it creates a gentle leading effect. Lunging in a small enclosed area is ideal. If you are lunging in an open area, as you might do at a horse show, you will probably want to lunge your horse with a leather halter over the bridle to maintain the good habits you have created. If he becomes excited go back to a small walking circle and reconnect with your horse.

Remember the goal is connection, quality, and a good experience for all involved. Lunging is a wonderful training aid if not abused. It is not meant to exhaust your horse. A horse that is calm, relaxed, and attentive on the lunge is set up for a good ride. For more detailed information on teaching the horse to lunge you should read "Schooling and Riding the Sport Horse, A Modern American Hunter/Jumper System" by Paul D. Cronin.



### **Exercise 1**

Lunging at the walk and trot in a confined area teaches voice commands and develops the transitions between ordinary and slow trot. Use your body to show your horse what you want to happen. Leading the horse has already taught him that if

you move forward towards the shoulder, he should slow down. Repeat this position to slow the trot on the lunge. Always walk with your horse, follow the motion so you can be one step ahead.

### **Exercise 2**

If you lunge in a large area with a variety of obstacles, the obstacles just become a part of the flat work. Walk in the center of the circle and let the horse move freely around you to explore the area and become acclimated to a variety of sights and sounds. Lunge over poles on the ground in your confined area, with the poles next to the rail or wall of your work area. Graduate to lunging over flower boxes and/or low jumps.

### **Exercise 3**

If your horse is comfortable and well behaved while being lunged, then progress to an area that will allow you to lunge him on a slight incline or slightly uneven terrain. This will help develop his balance and control his momentum. Use your body to help the horse understand the changes in terrain that are coming up. Going downhill, move to the shoulder to ask him to slow down. When going uphill, step towards the



hindquarters to encourage him to reach forward from the motor, the hind end. Soon the horse will start to see what you see, and he will do it on his own.

#### **Exercise 4**

Begin to add lunging work at the canter on a large circle of approximately 50' in diameter. Canter work on the lunge takes better muscle and body conditioning than trot work. Physical damage can be done at the canter if the horse is not physically strong enough. Be smart here. In the beginning as you start asking for canter on the lunge, ask the horse to slow trot and pick the canter up from this shortened stride. Avoid having your horse run into the canter by lengthening the trot. If the horse picks up the canter promptly, be happy with 5 or 6 strides. If he breaks back to the trot ask for the slower speed, then begin again. It is better to create good quality habits one at a time, thus never rush this part of training and communication. Transitions keep the horse tuned to the trainer and preserve the horse's legs. This kind of lunging is a fabulous tool. Be sure to work your horse equally in both directions. Very little hand is required in lunging. Creating the trust that is necessary depends on the trainer's promise that the horse's mouth will be protected and that the neck can be long, free and relaxed. Quality movement is possible only when the horse trusts that he will not have to freeze his neck in anticipation of inconsiderate hands.

As your horse becomes fitter and more comfortable on the lunge line at all gaits, you can ask more from him. If your horse is sluggish, be sure that the upward transitions are prompt. Expect the horse to maintain the

gait for 2-4 laps without too many corrections before allowing a downward transition. If your horse is overly energetic insist he relaxes into a steady and stabilized canter before allowing a downward transition to the trot. Downward transitions should be achieved using the voice and by sending a ripple of pressure down the lunge line for reinforcement. Work your horse equally in both directions or perhaps slightly longer in his more difficult direction. Be sure the lunging is a fun game and the connection is always there. You are creating good habits.

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#### 4) Long Lining (Driving)

This is an excellent exercise for teaching horses how to steer, learn the aids, work through their bodies and build muscles without the rider's weight on their backs. Working with the horse from behind gives you a better understanding of how the horse works through himself. You can use two lunge lines, one on each side, that are connected to the lunging cavesson, or a plain snaffle. With a lunging surcingle, run the lines through the rings on each side of the withers. If you don't have a lunging surcingle, then use your saddle and run the lunge lines through run-up and secured stirrups. Start by walking behind your horse, slowly. Then trot and finally canter slowly. You will be amazed how this connects you and the horse and helps you develop "good hands" that can keep the bit steady in the horse's mouth. When using a surcingle the reins can be placed in the side rings for a feeling that more closely resembles riding. Through the stirrup irons as shown above gives the effect of inside and outside rein.

#### 5) Riding Exercises

When you begin mounted work, all your preparation on the ground will pay off. The horse understands the signals and trusts you. Now it is time to do the conditioning at the walk and trot that will make it possible for the horse to sit on his hocks, round his back, raise his withers, swing his shoulders, and move freely through his head and neck. Slowly work up and down hills, if available, as this is the most efficient way to develop muscular structure. If there are no hills available, more transitions and more work over poles and cavalletti with time will create a horse engaged enough behind to raise his withers.

*If you have the opportunity to follow another calm horse on a trail this would be a particularly wonderful exercise for the unambitious horse. Varying the terrain and keeping the horse interested in his surrounding and in you is very important...*



#### Initial Riding Work

Simultaneously with the first four lunging exercises, you should ride the horse at the walk and the trot. Repeating the same exercises on the horse's back that you used on the ground creates consistency for both horse and rider. Again, upward and downward transitions are the key to quality and connection. It's best not to go round and round in circles or to repeat the same path over and over. Instead make staying connected with you a game for your horse by constantly varying the pattern. Then the horse will not go into auto pilot out of boredom, but will stay attentive to the rider and wait to know what the path will be. If your horse is overly impulsive, ride him primarily on large circles, serpentines, and half circles but vary the pattern. You will find that this type of lateral work is the best way to help an impulsive horse find his balance and cadence. If your horse is sluggish, however, focus on riding lots of straight lines. If you build a connection in your ground work with an impulsive horse, you can often transfer this to your riding. Do a lot of walking exercises and wait for the trot until your horse accepts your legs being on and is in front of them. Bill Steinkraus in *Reflections on Riding and Jumping* said that he was able to warm-up for a Grand Prix at the walk

If you have an opportunity to follow a calm horse on a trail, you will find this activity a particularly wonderful exercise for an unambitious horse. Varying the terrain and keeping the horse interested in his surroundings and in you is very important for the horse that doesn't have a strong "play" drive.<sup>6</sup> Riding outside on trails or lanes with another calm, experienced horse will help you develop your horse's walk. Encourage



your horse to have a forward moving, freely swinging walk. Begin walking and trotting up and down slight inclines giving your horse complete freedom to use his head and neck for balance. Use your body to suggest what is coming next. For example, if you are going uphill, close your hip angle and step into two-point so that your horse can use his back more freely. If you are approaching a downhill area, open your upper body to signal your horse. If your horse loses his balance while going downhill, turn across the hill to give him an opportunity to catch his balance on more level ground. Be sure you begin with short distances spent going downhill and build the distance as your horse becomes better able to handle the challenge of the terrain.

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#### **Work over obstacles at the walk and trot and just let the obstacles get in the way of the flat work.**

(see page 21 for ideas)

- While riding be sure to walk your horse over rails on the ground and/or small flower boxes. You want your horse to approach and leave the obstacle at the same pace and gait in order to develop his confidence.
- Work at the posting trot and in two-point over rails on the ground. Start with single rails spaced randomly around the work area. Then put two rails in a straight line at least 24 feet apart and gradually move them inward till the horse is comfortable trotting over two rails spaced approximately 4'6" apart. Add more rails to the line and begin to vary the distances to help the horse develop a shorter, slower stride (4' apart) or stretch and extend for a longer, more ground covering stride. (5' apart)
- Substitute colored rails and then flower boxes for your ground rails and repeat all of the exercises.
- When your horse is comfortable working over rails on the ground, consider using raised cavaletti as part of his athletic training. Cavaletti may be set at various heights and your horse should become comfortable dealing with them at the walk and trot.
- Courses over poles and raised cavaletti are an excellent training tool that saves jumps for the show ring. Start with straight lines on each side and across the diagonals of the arena. Gradually get creative with bending, S lines, and different angles.



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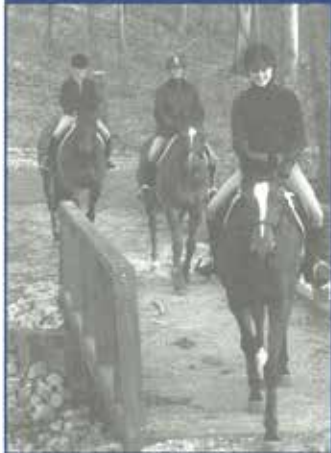
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### Work at the Canter

As you begin to work your horse at the canter remember to use longer periods of straight lines for the sluggish horse and medium sized circles for the energetic animal. Remember how important transitions are. If a sluggish horse breaks, reorganize and ask again. Often horses find it easier just to keep going rather than constantly doing transitions. Make the connection real for the horse and you through clear aids and transitions. Listen to your horse. He may be telling you that he is not physically strong enough to keep going. Conditioning, which provides the strength to round the back and stay straight, takes time and miles of trotting. Transitions are the key to the energetic horse, who sometimes just needs to take a deep breath and relax.

- When cantering, straightness is essential. Always ride ahead to a point at eye level, whether it is five strides ahead or at the end of the line of jumps, poles, or cavaletti. Lack of straightness makes a sluggish horse fall on its front end and break back to the trot. Straightness helps keep an energetic horse connected. Remember to straighten from the leg first. Is your horse leaning left with his head turned to the right? If so, soften your right leg and in rhythm with the horse's movement, use your left leg to ask the horse to move forward and over toward the right.
- Once your horse becomes stable at the ordinary canter, begin to canter over single rails on the ground. *Again, just let the rails get in the way of the flat work, remembering that straightness is the rider's responsibility. You create the track.*
- Set two cones 70 to 80 feet apart or use two ring letters such as M and F or paint two fence posts to serve as your markers. Then count how many canter strides your horse puts between them. Canter around your work area and come by your markers a second, third, and fourth time, trying to put the same number of strides between them each time.
- Next ask your horse to canter over two ground rails set 66' apart. Most horses will be able to fit five comfortable strides between the two rails. Help your horse by treating the poles just like they're another canter stride. Try cantering the poles several times in succession without breaking gait in order to establish a



consistent rhythm and pace. However, if you jump in long, and the distance is coming up tight, open your body. If

you jump in too easy, allow the stride to open up on the first stride after the pole. Always work on straightness—without it there is no quality. You are trying to create quality as *the* habit. Try to help make the distances work for your horse. You might turn a different direction after the line, come back to the trot and change leads, or come gradually to a halt and try again. Always have the horse land after the poles and look to you for direction, not do the same thing all the time. Repeating an exercise does not mean repetition to boredom. Having a horse on auto-pilot will not create connection or quality.

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#### Adding Variety

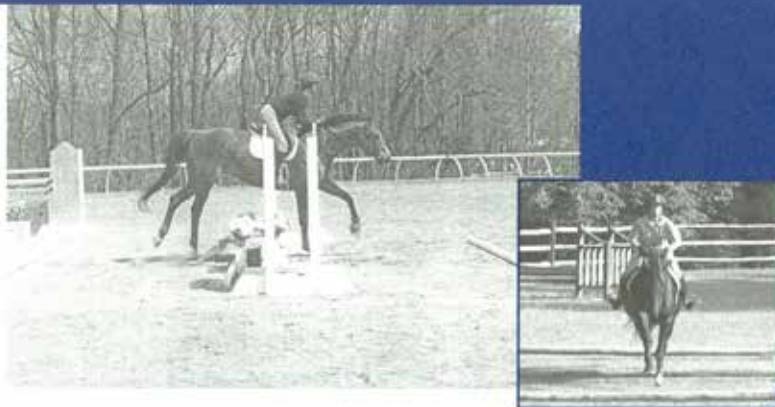
Trail ride as often as possible with one or two quiet horses and begin to accustom your horse to being passed and going in a different place in the group order. Increase the variety of the settings in which you ride your horse as often as possible, and ride in groups whenever you can. Take your horse to a horse show or other organized event and just ride around the grounds so your horse can adjust to the sights and sounds and increased activity. Ride with friends in the ring and practice passing each other coming head to head and having someone approach your horse from behind at a trot or canter. This will help your horse prepare for the schooling ring if you intend to show him.

#### Longitudinal Agility

This term refers to your horse's ability to lengthen and shorten his stride and to perform smooth upward and downward transitions. It also includes his ability to go forward and come back while maintaining his own balance and the cadence of his gaits.

- Gradual transitions between the gaits
  - Canter to trot to walk into halt
  - Trot to canter, rather than walk to canter
  - Two speeds at the walk
    - Your horse is most likely to do the ordinary walk while working in the ring.
    - Follow country lanes or trails to encourage your horse to develop a longer- strided, free walk.





Poles on either side of a small X help the horse find the right distance and keep his attention in the air and on the landing side. A good distance is 9' from pole to X, and the same on the landing side. Remember to use ground rails for the X. Vary the distance according to stride length and what you are trying to accomplish with the horse i.e., easy or move up. With a medium pony, the distance is around 6', and 7' for a large pony.

Set a variety of trotting-in combinations that are appropriate for helping a green horse develop regularity of take-off and tempo.

Canter imaginary courses practicing simple lead changes in the turns. Trot into and canter out the lines of a variety of courses. Jump low safe natural obstacles when you encounter them on the trails.

Set low combinations on a slight incline to help your horse develop better balance and athleticism as he jumps up and down hill. Help the horse by signaling with your body what is coming next. The book *101 Jumping Exercises for Horse and Rider* by Linda L. Allen with Dianna R. Dennis offers numerous creative ideas for adding precision and variety to your work.

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### Lateral Agility

We use this term to describe your horse's ability to move along a curved track with his hind feet following in the track of the front feet while maintaining his balance and pace throughout the turn. It also refers to your horse's ability to move sideways. As you progress through the Levels, you will add more sideways movements to your work. But first you want to be sure your horse can maintain his balance and the cadence and quality of his gaits

### Ring Figures

You should make it a habit to visualize the figures before you attempt to ride them. (See page 42)

- 1) **Circles** • Be sure the horse is not leaning to the inside. Even when riding on loose reins you are trying to develop the habit of riding from your inside leg to your outside rein.
- 2) **Half-circles** • Ride the half circle with your horse shaped around your inside holding leg. As you finish, straighten your horse for several strides; then "change rein" (switch directions), and begin to ride with the new "inside" holding leg and new outside rein when riding on contact. To switch to the other outside rein, stop riding inside leg to outside rein; ride straight for a stride or two; switch legs and ride new inside leg to new outside rein.
- 3) **Half-circles in reverse** • Ride the half circle backwards. Think of the teardrop figure, leaving plenty of room when you ride out before going back to the rail.
- 4) **Serpentines** • Visualize the pattern you are going to ride. The horse is shaped around your inside holding leg on the turns. On the lines joining the half circles straighten for several strides and switch to the new inside holding leg for the new turn and direction that are coming up.

The inside holding leg cues the horse about what is coming next, and a rider is being a good partner when she gives the horse ample warning of what to expect. Horses begin to wait for the rider and listen for the next direction. This creates a good solid base of communication between horse and rider.

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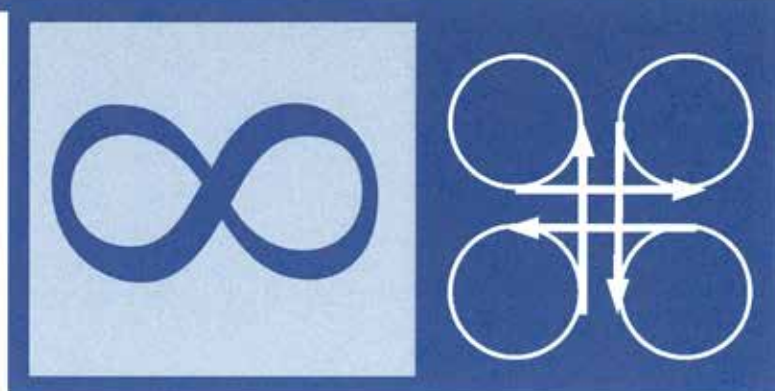
### **Patterns**

The key here is for the horse to understand what is being asked and for you to develop habits for using the aids that will always allow you to ride the horse from “leg to hand.”

**Following the rail** • Put your horse on the rail at the trot and see if he will continue to trot along the rail without any corrections from your rein or leg aids.<sup>7</sup> Your outside rein is on the rail, and your inside holding leg is on the inside of the track. This is important to be aware of as you develop the body habit of riding from your inside leg toward your outside rein. Keep count of how many times you must remind your horse to stay on the rail each lap. Make a game of it to see how few reminders you have to give him to stay on the rail or to stay at the same pace in the trot. Once you have achieved this at the trot in one direction, try the same thing in the other direction. Don’t move to the canter until your horse has mastered this exercise in both directions at the trot. This is a great exercise for a sluggish horse, especially if you are in a large ring so that you can remain on straight lines for a considerable distance before turning.

### **Figure-Eights**

Begin with figure-eights like those you did earlier—two circles joined at a center line. First visualize two circles connected in the middle. Ride a full circle. As you approach the middle, straighten and change the bend, switching inside leg and thinking about riding leg-to-hand. (See diagram on page 42). You will work at this exercise at the trot but later when you want to canter you can do variations of the figure-eight. You might begin your canter work with three circles to the right and then a simple change of lead through the center of the eight followed by three circles to the left. You can change the size and number of circles to suit your horse’s level of education. You may have a horse that is ready to do a series of figure-eights with simple changes. An even more sophisticated use of this exercise at the canter is to stay on the same lead through the whole figure-eight so that you are practicing the counter canter on



one of the circles. Be sure your circles are very large (90' minimum) if you are going to maintain a counter canter. You can also use the figure eight illustrated above that uses diagonal lines to join the circles of the figure-eight.

### Cloverleaf

This series of four circles are all performed in the same direction. It is a great exercise for the horse's balance and lateral agility. You can make it more challenging by doing it on a slight incline in a field. Again, start practicing the pattern at the trot before trying it at the canter. For a horse that is impulsive, the short straight lines keep him turning for the majority of the exercise. The emphasis is on maintaining the bend and positioning the horse's weight so that he knows and is set up to do what will be asked.<sup>8</sup>

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## Affiliated National Riding Commission

### Introductory Level Tasks

*These tasks may be self-assessed or you may be assessed in person or via videotape. All Level One candidates should be able to successfully perform the Introductory Level Tasks. Riders who want to be assessed may begin their official assessment at Level One if they feel confident that they have mastered the tasks required at the Introductory Level.*

### Position Phase

- Demonstrate a correct, functional position at the walk, posting trot, and canter while riding on loose reins or passive contact.
- Trot over cavaletti poles to a small crossrail followed by a low vertical (2' – 2'6" maximum) demonstrating the ability to maintain a correct position with security, while taking an early release and holding the mane.

### Control Phase

- Demonstrate the use of alternating leg aids at the walk and the ability to follow the head and neck gesture with your arms.
- Trot over a course of cavaletti poles or small crossrails, demonstrating good steering, at least one change of direction, posting between the obstacles, and correct two point position over the poles or crossrails.
- Perform secure, prompt, and non-abusive trot/canter/trot transitions using elementary control techniques.
- Using an opening rein, demonstrate the ability to canter large, round circles on both leads while sitting the canter and following with your arms.

### Schooling Phase

- Show the proper use of a crop with each hand.
- Demonstrate lateral agility by performing a circle and a half circle at the trot while maintaining a consistent rhythm and a correct track.

### Theoretical/Horse Care Phase

*(Please submit your explanations in writing to your chosen assessor.)*

- Explain how the horse's instinctive behavioral responses affect the safety of the riding setting.
- Explain the aims of the elementary level of riding.
- Know the four natural aids available to the rider and the sequence of their use in upward and downward transitions at the elementary level.
- Explain how to evaluate the fit of a horse's bridle and bit.
- Explain how to tell whether your horse's saddle fits properly.
- Explain how to properly care for and inspect tack for safety.

## Affiliated National Riding Commission

### Level One Tasks

*Riders who are currently Cx Pony Clubbers, hilltopping with a recognized hunt, eventing at the Novice Level, or showing hunters successfully at 2'6" or 2'9" should be ready to become a candidate for Level One. All Level One candidates are expected to be able to successfully perform the Introductory Level Tasks.*

**Level One** is the foundation level of the Forward Riding system. Throughout all the tasks of this level the horse should demonstrate stabilization and the rider the ability to ride on the elementary level of control with consistency and confidence.

### Position Phase

- Demonstrate a generally secure position at the walk, trot, and canter while riding on loose reins with the rider's hands being independent from the rest of her body while the horse is in motion and following the balancing gesture of the horse's head and neck.
- Demonstrate a sitting trot with and without stirrups while riding on loose reins on a comfortable, quiet horse.
- Demonstrate a united and non-abusive position and a secure release while using elementary control techniques over combinations that are 2'6" in height, include at least one oxer, and have at least three elements.

### Control Phase

*(all tasks should be ridden demonstrating elementary control techniques)*

- Demonstrate the correct use of elementary aids for trot-canter-trot and walk-canter-trot-walk transitions.
- Demonstrate the leading rein, one direct rein of opposition, and two direct reins of opposition.
- Demonstrate the three leg aids, each in an appropriate situation or movement for its use.
- Demonstrate the correct method for addressing the reins. Bridge the reins to shorten. Know how to move the hands forward and shorten the reins without interfering and so the bit remains still and then release the bridge immediately.

- Demonstrate picking up the right and left leads from the trot on the center line of the ring and a following arm in the transitions.
- Perform a three loop serpentine at the trot maintaining the correct track and showing a consistent rhythm throughout the movement.
- Demonstrate a strong trot rising across the diagonal or down the long side of your work space.
- Demonstrate early two point while holding mane on approach and throughout a three element combination with jumps 2'6"

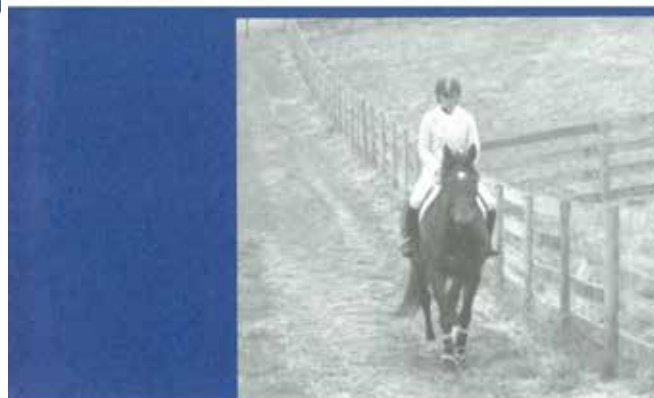
### Schooling Phase

- Execute a 1/4 turn on the forehand off both the right and left displacing leg aids.
- Trot in and canter out of the lines of a simple course of fences at 2'3"-2'6" using elementary control techniques.
- Demonstrate the correct aids and a good backup of two or three steps.

### Theoretical/Horse Care Phase

*(Please submit your explanations in writing to your chosen assessor.)*

- Clearly explain the aims of the elementary level of riding and the techniques for the use of the rider's natural aids at that level of riding.
- Explain the effect of the following rein aids and when each should be used: leading rein, one direct rein of opposition, and two direct reins of opposition.
- Explain how the urging leg, holding leg, and displacing leg affect the horse.
- Describe a good performance of a 1/4 turn on the forehand and the purpose for teaching the horse the movement.
- Describe a good backing performance.
- Explain the importance of a non-abusive rider position. How can this make both the horse and rider's job more efficient on the flat and over fences?



We have given you a great deal of information and many ideas to process. Watch the DVDs several times with the workbook out. Use your DVD's slow motion and close-up functions so that you can clearly see and understand the demonstrations provided. Then take the workbook to the stables to use as a reference when you are working with your horse. It will help you stay on track and stimulate you to be creative in the work you do with your horse. We have left you places throughout the workbook to take notes about things that were difficult for you or your horse, "ah ha!" moments that you will have, questions that you might want to email to an ANRC instructor for clarification or suggestions, and your thoughts about what is and is not working for you and why, etc. Making notes will help you remember and process what you are experiencing. It will facilitate the learning process.

## Glossary for Workbook

**Abuse** is the unintentional mistreatment of the horse due to uneducated riding.

Example: If your hands bounce up and down with your posting motion, the horse's mouth is abused by your uneducated hand. The rider is not intentionally hurting the horse.<sup>9</sup>

**Advanced Control** aims at the highest quality of a horse's performance in schooling, hunting, or showing that an able horse can produce. This would require a mentally relaxed and a physically alert and responsive athletic and educated horse.<sup>10</sup>

### Advanced Level Jumping

Horse: contact is maintained throughout turns, approaches, and the jump itself (although there is some lessening of tension between bit and hands while on the approach).

Rider: may use two-point position and/or full seat to fit the needs of the course

Purpose: quality performance of horse and rider

**Connection** – horse moves in one piece / united

**Contact** is created through a definite coordination and cooperation between the rider's hands and legs and the horse's efforts and reactions. It is the feeling of the horse's reserve energy in the rider's hands. The urging leg creates this energy or impulse. The feeling in the rider's hand is elastic and alive. The horse's head and neck should be extended and he should be connected. Quality contact is created when the horse is muscled properly, strong enough to raise the withers and put his mouth in the rider's hands giving the rider minute control over details. This is very light and subtle. The rider must always follow the horse's head and neck gesture.

**Elementary Control** aims at establishing authority with your horse through definite and quick control. This level of control is especially useful starting young horses. It often takes an advanced rider to achieve a good performance with a young elementary horse on this level of schooling.<sup>11</sup>

**Elementary control techniques** utilize the four natural aids with emphasis on voice, loose rein, check release, and tapping leg in the three leg aid positions.<sup>12</sup>

### Elementary Level Jumping

Horse: approaches on loose rein and maintains a consistent pace to the obstacle

Rider: in two-point position, takes a hold of the mane before take-off  
Purpose:

- 1) advanced rider schooling horse
- 2) beginning rider on made horse learning to jump
- 3) upper level rider correcting a position fault, etc.

**Engagement** is the movement of a hind leg well forward under the horse's belly and the hoof connects with the ground well forward.

**Forward Riding** is a modern system of riding for hunters, jumpers, and cross-country horses consisting of three major parts: Position, Control, and Schooling.<sup>13</sup>

### Four fundamentals of a good position<sup>14</sup>

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Unity of horse and rider | c) Non-abuse             |
| b) Security                 | d) Efficient use of aids |

**Intermediate Control** aims at soft and precise control with a soft but definite cooperation of rider's hands and legs with horse's efforts and reactions. Contact helps achieve better control (soft/precise) and better movement (connected) and efficient, long, low, ground covering strides.<sup>15</sup>

### Intermediate Level Jumping

Horse: approaches on contact that is gradually and rhythmically lightened to loose rein, so that jump itself is on a looped rein

Rider: in two-point position, rests hands on sides of the horse's crest over top of fence (crest release)

Purpose: allows softness, precision, subtle rating of stride between jumps on contact and full use of the horse's balancing gesture over the jumps. Also, it is non-abusive.

**Natural aids:** 1) seat/weight; 2) voice; 3) hand; 4) leg

**On the line** refers to the horse's head and neck being bent in the direction of travel and the hind foot stepping into or beyond the track of the front foot.

**Passive Contact** is the beginning level of contact. The rider shortens her reins sufficiently so that she has a soft, consistent connection with the horse's mouth. The horse accepts this feeling without resistance keeping his mouth closed and head and neck extended. The rider follows the balancing gesture of the horse's head and neck with her arms.

**Punishment** is the intentional use of a strong aid to correct or discourage inappropriate behaviors.  
Example: spanking with a crop and saying "no!" when a horse balks.

**Sequence of Aids for Downward Transition using Elementary Controls are:**

- 1) sink into the tack and sit
- 2) voice (say "the name of the gait you are asking for")
- 3) hand-check-release
- 4) urging leg to ask horse to continue forward in one piece.

**Sequence of the Aids for Upward Transitions using Elementary Controls are:**

- 1) Rider's body prepared for forward movement
- 2) Voice (say "the name of the gait you are asking for in a sharp tone of voice")
- 3) Urging/tapping leg aid
- 4) Reinforce leg with a stick or spur if you do not get the desired response

**Stabilization** is a concept in schooling. A stabilized horse will maintain the gait and speed asked, obeying elementary control techniques alone, in company, on the flat, uneven terrain, and over jumps.  
To begin stabilization, you will normally not begin on loose reins.<sup>16</sup>

**Stages of the jump include:** approach, takeoff, flight, and landing.

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## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Pam Baker, Virginia professional horsewoman who studied with Vladimir Littauer and has used his ideas in training her students and their horses to the top levels of USEF competition.
- <sup>2-3</sup> Lendon Gray, three time U.S. Olympian in dressage and one of the foremost educators in the dressage world today.
- <sup>4-8</sup> Pat Parelli is a leader in making the philosophy of Natural Horsemanship accessible to all horse enthusiasts. He is the author of "Parelli: Natural-Horse-Man-Ship".
- <sup>9-16</sup> Vladimir, Littauer, author of "Commonsense Horsemanship" and one of the developers of the American System of Forward Riding.

Remember that you can videotape yourself performing the Introductory and Level One Tasks which are listed on the preceeding pages and send them to an ANRC instructor for feedback and assessment. This is a great way to work through the levels and get an objective evaluation of the progress that you and your horse are making. Contact an ANRC Instructor/Judge of your choice and make arrangements with him or her to review your tapes and oversee your progress through the ANRC Riding Levels.

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