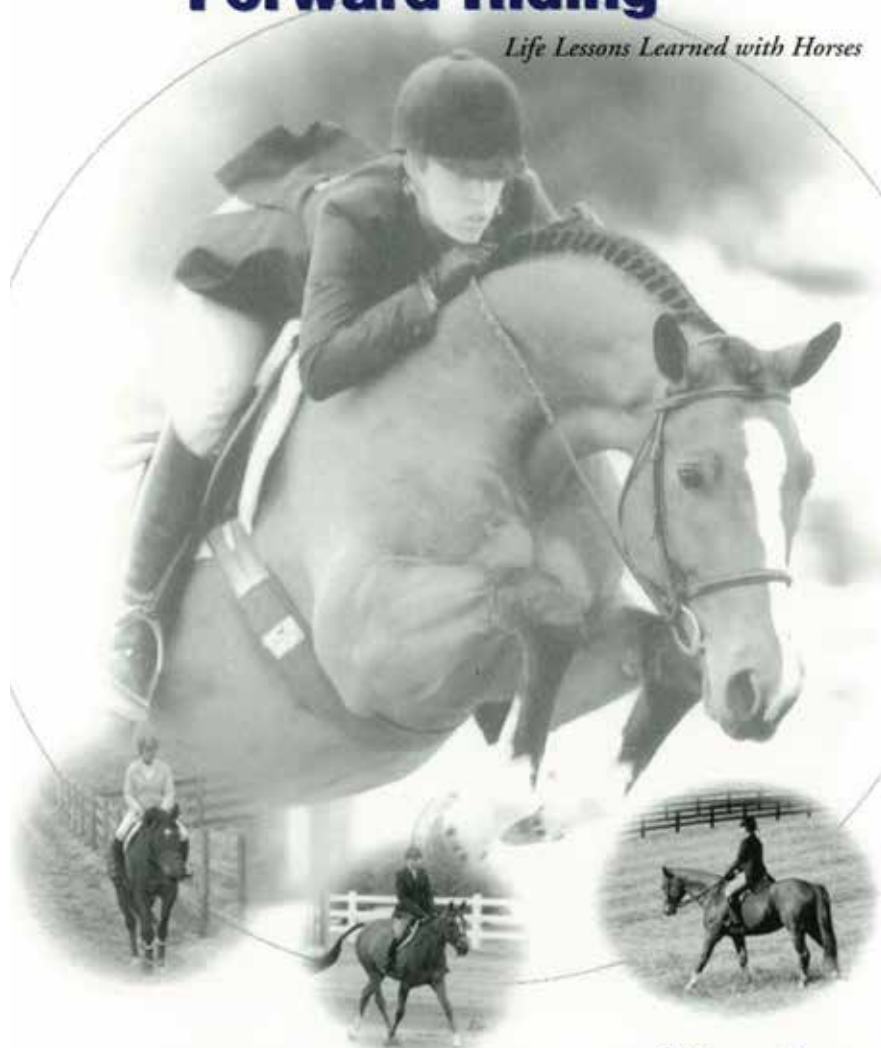


American System of **Forward Riding®**

Life Lessons Learned with Horses



Volume II

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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 to complement their lessons.



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American System of **Forward Riding**[®]

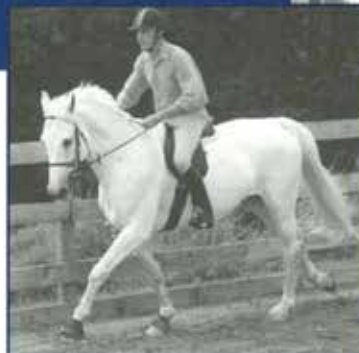
Level Two and Three Workbook

As you completed the Level One exercises contained in the first workbook, you learned how to create a partnership and a system of communication with your horse by developing a position that makes it possible for the two of you to function as a unit. Your horse learned to accept your leadership and to understand and respond to your aids while remaining mentally and physically relaxed. This is called "stabilization," and it produces the mental calmness and sensitivity that your horse needs to advance to the more sophisticated work you are about to begin. Workbook One focused on how to give any horse a "good beginning,"ⁱ a foundation on which to build. As you begin your work in Level Two and progress to Level Three, you will concentrate on improving your horse's performance and refining the way you communicate with him by putting him "in front on your leg and toward the aids."

In building your horse's foundation, you shaped his behavior and developed a clearer understanding of the psychology of horses and how they learn. Horses are creatures of habit and have incredible memories. In Level One you developed a pattern of giving clear instructions and rewarding every effort your horse makes to respond correctly. Thus, you created good habits and memories, so that your horse trusts you and enjoys your time together because he understands your expectations. You learned that by valuing small steps in the right direction you can prevent confusing your horse and making him resistant. Your horse appreciates your thinking about what you ask him to do from his perspective.

"Communication is two or more individuals sharing and understanding an idea."ⁱⁱ

"Feel gives you timing, and timing give you balance. Your body should synchronize or mesh with your horse's movements."ⁱⁱⁱ



Remember that you and your horse are athletes and that a softer and more precise performance requires both of you to fine-tune your body control. The exercises in this workbook will help you develop

your horse's body, but you must also work to improve your own balance, suppleness, and cardiovascular fitness. Check out the references in the Bibliography to find good resources for developing your athlete's body. Every movement you make while sitting on your horse has an effect on his balance and is likely to produce some type of reaction. Accomplished riders work on their positions throughout their careers. Practicing position is developing your technique.

The main measurement of success in "Forward Riding" is that your horse should understand what is being asked of him and should be happy in his work^{iv}. If you are going to ride him, at the very least he should have a good day.^v



The insights and concepts that you have gained in creating a partnership with your horse are lessons that transfer easily into other aspects of your life. Learning to value progress that happens one step at a time, rewarding all positive efforts, considering what you ask of someone else from his or her perspective, recognizing the connection between physical and mental fitness, and becoming a patient leader are all invaluable skills. What you take away from this experience can enhance your life and your relationships.

You've got your foundation skills, so let's start building on them. Remember this is more than just a "system of riding," it is Life Lessons Learned with Horses.

A Formula for Success



Every good building starts as a picture in someone's mind. Riding starts there, too. Visualizing what you are trying to accomplish is an important tool. You must have control of your own mind, body, and emotions if you ever hope to be able to control your horse's^{vi}. So begin building a relationship with horses in your head.

The first question you must answer is why you want to or already do own a horse. This is a very important and often unconsidered step to true enjoyment.

- Are you purchasing a horse for a professional to ride and show for you?
- Is your intention to improve your skills and become a successful competitor in your chosen discipline?
- Do you plan to enjoy your horse in a variety of activities and perhaps share him with a family member?
- Do you just love horses and want to learn more about them as you grow in your ability to communicate with and ride your mount effectively?



Your answers will have a tremendous impact on the type of horse you choose to own, the amount of time you will spend with him, your plans for achieving your goals, and the pleasure you will gain from your partnership with your horse. Failure to consider your primary intentions will lead to frustration and adversely affect your ability to accomplish your objective. So before you write the check or drive to the barn (if you already own a horse), be fair to both yourself and your horse and seriously think about your **INTENTIONS**. This must come first, and only then should you begin to consider the more specific aims that we have outlined below.

Notes Why do you own or want to own a horse?

You now understand why you have a horse and what you hope to accomplish together. Let's proceed to your "Formula for Success." Use this five-point checklist to guide you in the development of your relationship with your horse, and reaching your riding goals will happen naturally .

Teaching



De-Stressing



Rider preparation



1. Picture your intention (create a mental picture)

1. From a holistic perspective (Consider how to create the best quality relationship with your horse partner so both of you can reach your highest potential mentally, physically, and emotionally.)

Why are you riding today and what do you hope to accomplish?

- Do you want to relieve the stress of your everyday life?
- Are you going to teach your horse something today? (The teaching process involves working with your horse towards a potential goal, such as a canter departure or smooth downward transitions. These are done in stages by building on the horse's "TRY." When you get the "TRY," reward your horse by stopping on that positive response. Don't drill. Come back and build on it another day.)
- Are you focusing on your horse's physical conditioning?
- Are you schooling for a specific event?

What is the challenge you have set yourself and your horse?

- If you are riding to de-stress, you may need to stretch and loosen your body and mind before approaching your horse.
- If it is a physical conditioning day, do you have a plan and/or a route in mind?
- If you are teaching your horse something new, do you have a plan for your warm-up and how you are going to present the new task?

*Read his body language
as you work around him.*



Leave your worries and your ego in the parking lot!

- No matter why you are riding or what you hope to accomplish, this is an absolute MUST!

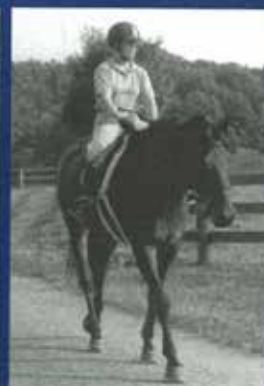
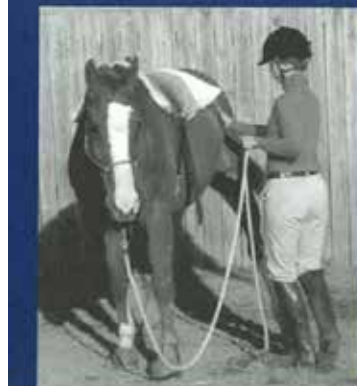
From an “in the moment” perspective *(The task at hand)*

Clarity of intention: “One pointedness” leads to successful communication.

What do you want your horse to do?

- A specific movement?
- A fluid hunter course?
- Walk, trot, and canter confidently in a new environment?
- Jump through a difficult gymnastic?
- Gallop cross country?

Focus on the mental picture of your goal until the two of you have accomplished the task at hand. If you want your horse to keep his focus you must keep yours. You must hold in your mind whatever picture you are offering to your horse, and walk into it without distraction. Ride what is happening at the moment and stay in your picture. Do not let it go. Be totally flexible on *how* you create it, but hold your focus. This is one-pointedness. Small steps lead to the accomplishment of the task at hand, and there may be many SMALL steps before you reach the end result. Remember to keep building on the “try” and to reward the horse’s efforts.



*“Forward, round
and accepting”.*



2. Connect to your horse.

(This will help make it easier for him to follow your lead.)

Read his body language as you work around him.

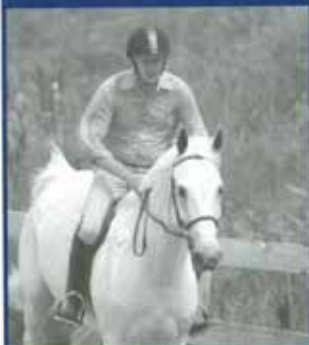
- How is he mentally: relaxed, attentive, confident, nervous?
- How is he physically: healthy, sound, well-conditioned?
- Is he connecting with you?
- What might your horse need before he is ready to share your intention?
 - Ground work
 - Lunging—Keep the lunging to a walk and trot until the horse is totally responsive to you. Remember, maintain the connection to the horse while lunging.
 - A long walk to stretch and limber

Connect to his movement. *(This will make it easier for your horse to follow your lead.)*

- Sink down and around your horse
 - Are your energy level and body position appropriate for your intention?
- Connect your legs to his hind legs.
- Follow his motion with suppleness and body control.
- Breathe in unity with your four legged partner.

3. Every intention is forward.

- Is your horse in front of your leg, forward, and accepting?
- Do you have your horse’s attention? Is he with you mentally?
- Is your horse reaching for the bit?



Can an observer see a unity of mind and purpose between you and your horse?

- Is your horse forward and round?
- Have you prepared your horse mentally and physically?
- Are you riding your horse from back to front?
- Every movement, even the halt and the back, has a "forward intention!"

4. Aids clarify your intention.

- Aids are cues or prompts to help your horse understand your intention, so be sure you listen for your horse's response and reward it.
- Are you providing confident, calm leadership?
- Be patient and give your horse time to read your intention.
- A non-disturbing, soft rider in unity with his motion is the horse's reward.
- Horses are individuals, so you need to adapt your aids to your horse's response.
- Is your horse trying to respond to your suggestions?
- Are you able to ride your horse from inside leg to outside rein using diagonal aids? (Remember the "X" page 13 Workbook One.)

5. The end result is True Partnership.

- Can an observer see a unity of mind and purpose between you and your horse?
- Does your connectedness create a sense of calmness in both of you?
- Are you so "in tune" with your horse that he can read your changes in focus and body energy level?
- Is your body balanced over your horse with functioning shock absorbers?
- Are you a team and can you help each other when needed?

Picture

Connect

Forward

Aids

=

Partnership

Keep the shortened version of these five concepts in your mind every time you are with your horse and you will be amazed at the results. When you feel a breakdown in your partnership, mentally run through the checklist to identify the reason things aren't working. This will help you know where to begin rebuilding. You may have lost your mental focus, but the problem might also be further down the chain. Perhaps you have your picture and are connected with your horse, but your body language is out of sync. Or you are focusing forward, but your hands are restricting your horse's energy and discouraging him from moving forward. Or perhaps everything is working until you consider the "aids" portion of your list and suddenly realize that your timing is off or that your horse needs you to explain things in a different way. Maybe it is just the simple fact that your body can't stay with the movement you have asked your horse to perform. Your "whole" will always suffer if one of the parts is weak and/or dysfunctional. Having a checklist will help you identify your weaknesses so that you can improve them and get back to building!

Which of the five steps in the formula for success do you feel confident about and which will you need to focus on and improve?

Notes

Creating a Mental Picture Refining your Intention



First • Leave your worries and your ego in the parking lot! Then do a quick recheck before you mount. If they have started to resurface, drop them at the mounting block! Create a "weight of the world" mental picture, and drop all of your worries in it before walking into the stable.

Second • Clarify your intention – "one pointedness" leads to successful communication. Are you clear about what you want your horse to do and how to communicate your intention to him? What is your picture? Visualize it.

Third • Have a plan: it is really hard to reach a goal or do anything productive if you don't have any idea of how to get there.

Fourth • Have confidence and trust – you cannot be a good leader for your horse unless you are confident in your abilities to help him reach the goal. Be sure that your intention is something that both you and your horse can cope with, even though it may stretch you both. Trust that you can walk into the picture or plan you are visualizing. Trust is the flipside of confidence. There is no real confidence without trust.

Do you know that you can hold up your end and stay out of your horse's way as he performs? If you catch yourself in an error, apologize. Change your energy, make the correction, reassure your partner, and go on. Your horse lives in the present moment. Trust this and go on. Do not stay stuck in trouble.



Notes



Developing Connection

Let's assume you have a clear mental picture of what you want to do in this ride or at a particular moment in your ride. How do you connect with your horse?

Read his body language as you work around him. Review Workbook One, pages 47-55. This will remind you how to assess your horse's mental outlook as you lead, groom, and prepare him for mounted work.

Connect to his movement.

1. Sink down and around your horse. Don't forget that you will concentrate on this your entire riding career. Always go back to Workbook One when you need to review position work. Pages 3 through 24 offer many exercises to help you refine your ability to sink down and around your horse.
2. Are your energy level and body position appropriate for your intention?
 - Can your body absorb the concussion of your horse's movement in a non-disturbing fashion?
 - Have you relaxed your energy level if you are asking for a downward transition? Have you increased it for an upward transition?
 - Can you successfully decrease your energy, change your breathing, and allow your body to drop lightly and softly down and around your horse as you open your upper body and draw him back to you by asking and allowing him to sit on his hocks and raise his withers? (Remember the idea of using your upper body as a sail—see Workbook One, page 31.) Be sure you sink around your horse. Do not sit heavily on his back, splitting him in two so that he cannot raise his withers. This will disrupt his energy flow,

cause him to hollow his back, and prevent his staying connected from hind to front. Can you boldly and deliberately and with total concentration visualize the picture of what you want your horse to do and where you want his attention? Can you throw your energy out in front of you to help draw your horse forward into the picture?

3. Connect your legs to his hind legs. Ask the question: How are his feet moving?
4. Follow his motion with suppleness and body control. Are you in harmony enough to perform the exercises you executed on the lunge line?
5. Breathe and unite with your partner. Can you breathe in rhythm with your horse? Working through the lunging exercises on pages 13-17 in Workbook One will really help you develop this ability.

Notes



A horse with a natural forward inclination

Good engagement of the hind leg at the trot



Developing Forward Here's that GO Again

A horse that moves forward freely has impulsion. Impulsion derives from the word impulse meaning an urge or inclination. The thesaurus suggests "momentum", "thrust", "drive" and "forward motion" as synonyms for impulsion. It follows then that it is much easier to get a horse with an urge to move forward in front of your leg and connected than one who doesn't have this natural inclination. Of course you don't want your horse so impulsive (impetuous, reckless, or hasty to react) that you cannot direct his energy.

The opposite of impulsion is inertia: sluggishness, disinterest, and apathy are not desirable traits in an equine partner. You want your horse to have an urge to forward motion that is balanced by his attentiveness to you. You want your "Go and Whoa" to be equal.^{vii}

Remember, there are different horses for different purposes. For example, a "kick along" quiet horse is much more suitable for beginning riders than a sensitive horse. A green rider and a green horse are not a good combination, and often such a horse and rider take steps backward.

Put the horse in front of your leg.

A horse that is in front of your leg is connected from hind to front. You can feel his hind feet under your seat bones. The hocks are bent and flexible and engaged under the horse's body and do not trail out behind the hind end. In creating a connected, stabilized horse, you must develop the motor—the hind end. This means you must first ride forward and work constantly on straightness. Remember the analogy we used in the first workbook about how wobbly and unsteady a bike's first pedal strokes are before you develop forward motion.



Good engagement at the walk

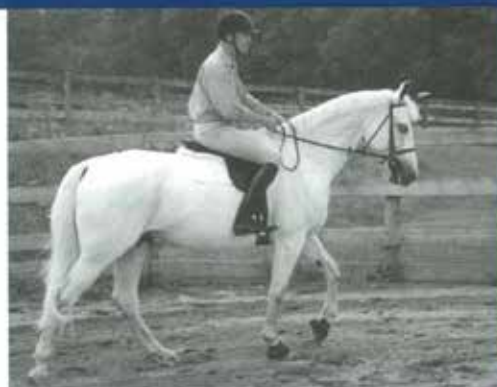


Hocks that are not engaged

Straightness is tied to forwardness.

As the horse gets stronger (physically and mentally) you gradually focus his energy on an increasingly straighter path by limiting his boundaries (funneling his energy from back to front). As you close the limits, stay aware of your horse's mental state and connected to how your equine partner feels. To create quality, the horse must be relaxed. He must not sense that he is being put in a vise or be intimidated by your asking him to be a little bit straighter and more upright day by day. In time horses will look for this space themselves. As your horse learns to work through his body, the connection you are encouraging will begin to feel natural to him. He will learn to carry himself with your weight on his back just as athletically as he moves without you. (Your horse's tail carriage will let you know how relaxed he is. Watch for his tail to swing back and forth loosely in rhythm with his footfalls. His neck posture is also a good indicator. Is his neck long?)

What should this look like? Many people lean toward the popular "picture" of the horse flexed at the poll and crammed into the bridle. At this stage of riding, we strongly discourage the use of draw reins and gadgets. In the wrong hands, they are harmful and can create a horse that is "behind the bit". First and foremost, the "forward way" is the best way. In time, as the horse becomes straighter and can maintain his balance, he will naturally flex at the poll as he sits on his hocks, raises his withers, and softly places his head in hands he has learned to trust.



Power walk

Do you understand the concept of putting your horse in front of your leg? Can you feel your horse there?

Notes



Relaxed together

Power walk to establish a work ethic in both of you.^{viii}

The moment you settle onto your horse's back (he has stood still while you mounted) and ask him to strike off at the walk, you are setting the tone for your ride. Watching riders and their horses in the initial moments of their ride opens a window into their thoughts and how they interact as partners. "This is the first place and gait where we can see if the rider knows the meaning of keeping a horse 'in front of the leg.'"^{ix} If your intent is to just have a pleasurable cross-country hack, then your body language and that of your horse will be quite different than if you plan to prepare for a hunter or an equitation class. An observer should be able to tell the difference. (Even if you are going out for a relaxing stroll, you should still be riding "towards the aids." If you are consistent, your horse will be consistent and he'll learn to trust you. He begins to know where you will be and often starts looking for you there.)

If your ride has a purpose beyond a relaxing time together, then ask yourself these questions as you begin.

1. Does my horse move forward purposefully?

Is he relaxed but attentive? (*If you don't have your horse's attention, then he won't be responsive, and you can't channel his energy with your aids.*) Attention is essential to leadership. Just as a horse is always aware of his leader in a group of horses, so is he aware of the leader/follower role with his rider. Create this relationship with confidence and the basics. The horse needs to trust his leader implicitly. Therefore being able to read your horse's body language is extremely important.



What are you looking for?

- A horse that is with you will have a relaxed neck carriage, he will give you his eyes when you are on the ground, and his ears will flick back and forth to you when you are riding.
- A horse that is wide-eyed, head in the air, neck stiff, tail up, and snorting is definitely not with you mentally. If you are already riding, these might be indicators that you should dismount, depending on your level of physical skill and mental calmness in riding out a storm. If you haven't already mounted, then you need to do some more work on the ground with your horse before getting on. Consider letting your horse graze for a moment, then start with walking ground work, followed by lunging or round pen work. Establish connection before you mount.

2. Do you feel he has reserves of energy that are there for you to call on?

- If you want an upward transition, will a suggestion get the response or will it take an order?

Your answer will tell you about your horse's mindset and about his level of respect for your leadership. "Remember, your horse will feel your state of being, and no matter how forgiving, he will enjoy it more if you're on the same frequency. The next minutes (after mounting) will, I hope, be at the walk. Learn to enjoy it, improve it, and learn from it. It is the beginning."^x

Always ride forward with the picture of your inside leg to your outside rein creating a connection with your horse. Alternating leg aids allow you to shorten and lengthen the walk. You must know how your horse's feet are moving to apply the alternating leg aid in correct sequence to get the response you desire. Adjust the ounces you apply as you lengthen the stride. The feeling is that you are "swinging" your horse up in front of your leg. In the power walk you can feel the swing from side to side as each hind leg engages under your seat bones. Follow with your hips. Be sure not to allow your horse to fall forward onto his front end. This is easy to feel because you will no longer feel his hind feet up under you or his back rising. The horse will be "in parts", split at the withers, with his hind end trailing out rather than reaching energetically underneath him.

Notes

Refining the Aids



The western term "cue" is perhaps a more accurate term than aids, since when we use the aids, we are actually providing a cue, prompt, or signal to elicit a particular response from the horse. Ideally, the cue is merely a suggestion. If your horse doesn't respond to the suggestion, you may need to make it an order. Always suggest first and give your horse a moment to respond before prompting him again or giving him an order. Be sure to remember this as you work to refine your aids/cues to improve your communication with your horse. To aid means to assist. You want your horse to perceive your aids in this way.

Once your horse has learned to understand and respond to your leg aids, you must develop the consistent, soft connection with his mouth called "passive contact." Contact allows a clearer more precise communication than you can achieve when riding on loose reins. But as you take up contact, remember that your rein aids should assist, not inhibit, your horse's response to your legs. *For example:* When you achieve the response to the aid you are using to speak to the horse, soften the aid, support the response, and follow the motion forward. This is the "release" and reward to the horse. You are refining your tools at all times. Be patient and give your horse time to read your intention.

"The difference between a green and a made horse is the time of response."^{xi}

- Don't hurry your horse; give him time to respond.
- A horse that is just learning something may need longer to respond.

- If you don't get a response, ask again. (Be sure that you have given your horse the correct aids for the response you want. For instance, are you saying please go forward but forgetting to soften your hands?) Check yourself first; then tell your horse what you want.

As you are developing your ability to ride on passive contact, you must develop your horse physically so that he has greater body control and can respond with greater athleticism. *The most important guideline in creating contact is feeling the push from the horse's hind end. It's the engine.* In this section you will be working on your ability to ride on contact. Your horse should be in a physical conditioning program that will enable him to progress with you.

Conditioning is the key to stabilization and soundness. Horses that are physically fit to do their jobs will stay sound in body, mind, and spirit for a lifetime. A physically conditioned horse has the **proper muscles** to do his job without strain; a mentally conditioned horse is **confident** that he can do the task at hand. A spiritually conditioned horse enjoys and even looks forward to the work he's asked to perform. Spiritual is about **attitude**. Work should be synonymous with play. Have you ever watched a horse choose to jump or "play with the cows" just for the fun of it? Have you ever witnessed an older horse that's being left at home beg to come with you as the trailer leaves for a trail ride or show? Thinking about your horse on all these levels will lead to the basic soundness upon which everything else depends.



The Driving rein: use to develop following arms.

"Piano hands": this limits your ability to follow.

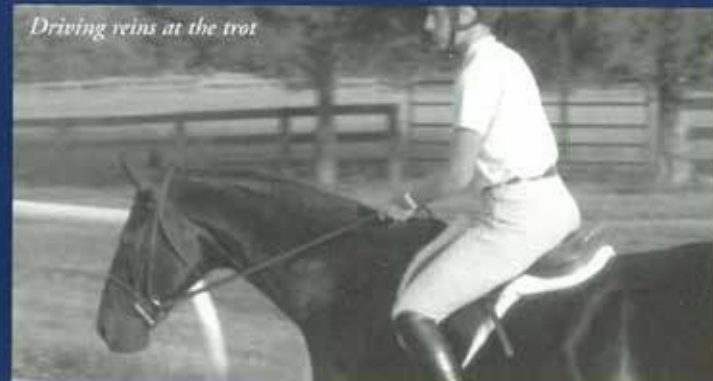


Developing Contact – Teaching your horse to reach for the bit!

Passive contact is the first step. Your horse just accepts the connection to your quiet, steady hand. *The key to passive contact is to keep the reins and the bit STILL.* Learning to ride on passive contact allows you to use the reins effectively and non-abusively to shape your horse. To create a horse that is "on the aids" you must develop hands that your horse can trust. The exercises that follow will help you develop good, trustworthy hands assuming you have also done your homework and achieved a position that maintains unity with the horse's motion.

Using a Driving Rein

The driving rein is an excellent tool to help you keep the bit still in the horse's mouth as you develop the soft connection of passive contact. "Still" does not mean "frozen," but that you are able not to disturb his mouth, to keep the reins quiet, and your arms following but not limiting the natural movement of the horse's head and neck. The reason driving reins work so well is that when you hold a driving rein, the position of your hand and forearm automatically keeps the hinge of your elbow in an open position, allowing your arms to follow the motion of the horse's head and neck easily. The concept of the following hand is that it moves out and down as an extension of the horse's head and neck. Your arms become extensions of the reins. Having your elbow hinge in an open position allows your arm to move with the horse without jarring your upper body. Try rotating your hands so that your knuckles are on top, as if you were playing the piano, and then move them forward and back and feel how that motion actually jars your shoulders. A properly working elbow is essential to the development of hands that function



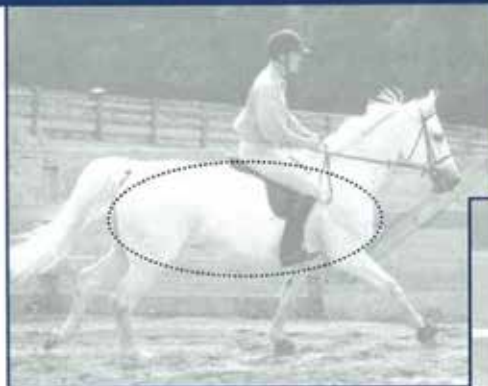
Driving reins at the trot

independently of your seat and legs. All three are working parts of you as a whole, but each must be able to work separately because they have different jobs to accomplish.

Exercise 1

Begin with trot work using the driving rein. Since a horse at the trot has very little head and neck gesture, it is the easy for the rider to begin to develop a steady, even connection to the horse's mouth. Do transitions from ordinary trot rising to a slower trot sitting and back again. In the transitions focus on keeping your elbow soft, open, and in front of your ribcage to maintain a consistent, soft feel of your horse's mouth. Concentrate on how still you can keep the bit. The corners of the horse's mouth are the point of connection.

1. Do you tend to lose the connection (contact) as you return to the rising trot, or get caught behind your horse's forward motion for a few beats as he returns to the ordinary trot? Think about your hip angle to correct either of these faults.
2. Can you keep the bit still in his mouth and the reins quietly steady? Are you connected to the corners of his mouth?



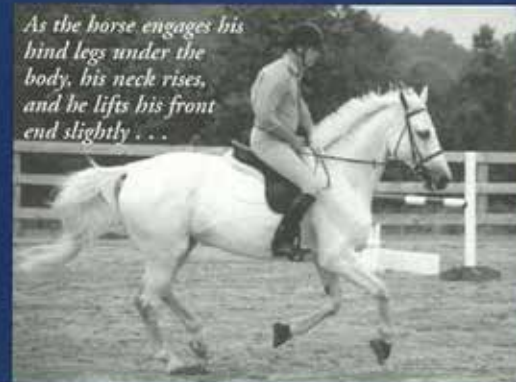
Exercise 3

Follow the motion of the head and neck at the canter with a driving rein. The movement of the head and neck at the canter is somewhat like an ellipse. As the horse engages his hind legs under the body, his neck rises, and he lifts his front end slightly and then lowers it as his neck descends and stretches forward. The leading leg extends in preparation for the moment of suspension before the opposite hind leg reaches under his body to lift again. The longer and flatter the canter stride—in a gallop for instance—the more elliptical the shape. As a horse shortens his stride and becomes more collected, the shape of the movement becomes more like a circle. In learning to follow the canter gesture, think of making a very small version of its shape with your arms. This will help you to feel the horse strike off into the canter. This is the moment when most riders lose unity with the horse's motion and thus cannot follow the head and neck gesture.

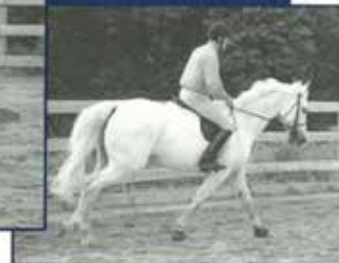
You don't want to actually make circles with your hands, but visualizing and feeling the circle of energy will help keep you in sync with the lift and forward motion of the horse's neck in the canter departure. You will feel the need to follow more forward when your horse is on a longer, flatter stride than when he is rounder and more collected.

Establishing consciousness of and synchronization with your horse's head and neck is extremely important, so take the time to develop this skill now. Later, when you apply a half-halt at the canter, you will be better able to synchronize it with your horse's motion. The time to apply a half-halt is when the horse's head is up. If you apply the aids when his head is down, you go against the motion. You should also soften and

As the horse engages his hind legs under the body, his neck rises, and he lifts his front end slightly . . .



. . . and then lowers it as his neck descends and stretches forward.



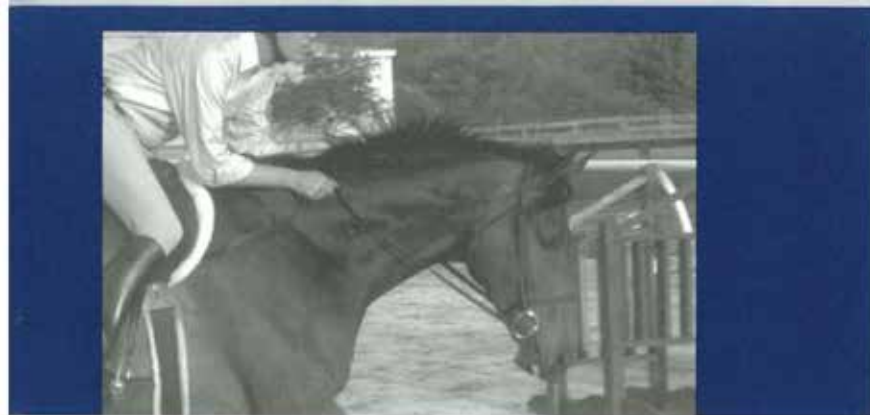
follow the natural forward movement of the head reaching out and down in the step after the half-halt. This allows the horse to raise his withers and bring his hind legs up under his body to allow the collection signaled for by the half-halt can happen.

The flying change of lead at the canter occurs naturally at the moment of suspension when your horse's head is raised. At this point in the stride, it is easy for him to switch hind feet because both are off the ground. If you have developed the ability to feel this moment of the canter stride, then it will be easy for you to master the correct timing to ask for the flying change of lead.

1. Can you feel the change in your horse's use of his head and neck as he begins the canter and are you able to follow it up, forward, out, and down? (It is easier to learn this by beginning the canter from the sitting trot. Only try walk-to-canter transitions after you are sure you can follow the trot-to-canter transition.)
2. Can you keep a steady, soft contact with the corners of the horse's mouth at the canter?
3. Are you following as the horse's neck and leading leg reach forward or are you falling back against his motion?



Notes

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Exercise 4

Please note: you should not attempt this exercise until you have completed Level Two and are working at Level Three. Begin jumping low combinations using a driving rein and working to maintain contact over the jump. The **top priority** is to not disturb your horse's mouth; hitting him in the mouth is the quickest way to lose his trust and will encourage him to freeze his neck to avoid having his mouth abused. Quality is not possible if this happens often. In using the driving rein your release should be slightly off the sides of the neck about two to four inches below the crest. Try to maintain a straight line from your elbow to the horse's mouth without using the neck for balance. **Never be too proud to take the mane if you begin to lose your balance.** In the beginning there may be a slight loop in the rein. As you advance and your position is secure, you will easily be able to follow the horse's neck movement through the air and "jump out of hand," maintaining contact with his mouth.

Evaluate your balance as you use the driving rein over low jumps.

1. Do you lose your balance forward, do you tend to fall back as the horse lands, or do you lose your balance to one side or the other? Check your position to correct these faults.
2. Are your angles at the hip, knee, and ankle loose and flexible? Do they open and close at will? Is your weight equally distributed in both stirrups?
3. Do you feel that you are synchronized with the horse's jumping effort?



4. Can you communicate more effectively with your horse as he lands because you have successfully retained a non-disturbing connection with his mouth as he jumps?

Notes



Riding with a short bat between your hands

This wonderful exercise helps you keep one hand on each side of your horse's neck. It also teaches you that your hands must work together to communicate effectively and clearly with your horse. *When you are holding a crop between your hands, it becomes perfectly clear that if you take an inch with the left hand, you must give an inch on the right. This is an excellent exercise for showing the benefits of—and practicing—keeping your hands at least as wide as your horse's shoulders.*

Exercise 1

Do a large sweeping circle at the trot using a leading rein. Where does your outside hand need to move in order for you to apply an inside leading rein and not put your horse in a vise? Does your outside rein almost act as a bearing rein in this situation?

Exercise 2

Use a direct rein and ride a corner. Be aware that you are really following your horse's shoulders with your upper body. It is imperative that your hands and shoulders mirror the position of the horse's shoulders if you want to be with, not against, the motion of your horse.

1. Do you feel that your outside hand must move forward as the inside hand moves slightly back? If so, you are following the motion of the horse's neck.
2. Can you maintain the contact on the outside rein as you ask your horse to bend around your inside leg? This is very

Using a bridge.



important, because the outside rein is the primary rein that supports your horse. The inside rein is merely directional. If we photographed you from above, would we see two straight lines from bit to elbow?

Practice shortening the reins.

It is important that you can keep the bit still and the contact constant and steady as you shorten the reins.

Exercise 1

Place both reins in one hand. The "bridge" is where the reins cross and where you hold them with one hand. Hold the bridge and move your free hand forward to shorten the rein. Then hold this new bridge and shorten the other rein. Be careful to maintain the same feel with the horse's mouth as you make these adjustments. Keep the bit still and steady so that your horse will trust your hands. Once the reins have been shortened, let go of the bridge. Remember, it's not about shimmying up the reins or grabbing at them. Do this slowly, and deliberately, inch-by-inch, so the reins end up the same length and the contact with the horse's mouth stays the same.

Exercise 2

A second way to shorten your reins is to move your thumbs forward simultaneously and deliberately, inch-by-inch. Be sure the reins remain still and maintain the same contact through the shortening. Do not change the feel, only the rein length. Your horse should not feel any change.



1. Does your horse's neck stay long and keep the normal up and down swing as you shorten the reins using the bridge? And when you are using the thumb method?
2. As you shorten the reins are you able to keep the same four ounces of pressure that you had on both reins before you began to change the length?
3. Is your horse aware or unaware of any change?

Notes

Developing Fitness – Stages of Conditioning

A physically fit horse has both long and short muscles. The long muscles are developed before the short muscles. This means that you deliberately use exercises that ask your horse to reach and stretch before you ask for collection, which involves short muscles. It is impossible for a horse to collect properly or naturally if he lacks the physical strength to raise his withers and engage his hindquarters with the weight of a rider on his back. He can do this only if his long muscles have been strengthened first. There are stages of training of which you should be aware as you begin to look at conditioning your horse.

Stage One

Your horse is just starting or is coming back from total let-down.

Lesson: In Front of the Leg

Your horse has no muscular fitness. At this stage you will teach voice commands through groundwork, round pen work, and lunge work. You will teach diagonal aids (the "X", Workbook One, page 13), first from the ground, using long lines, and then applying the same aids while mounted. Executing forehand turns on the ground and then mounted will help your equine partner understand a leg aid that asks for lateral movement. You may also introduce your horse to poles on the ground, leading in the round pen, on the lunge, and mounted. Just let the poles be in the way so they are no big deal.

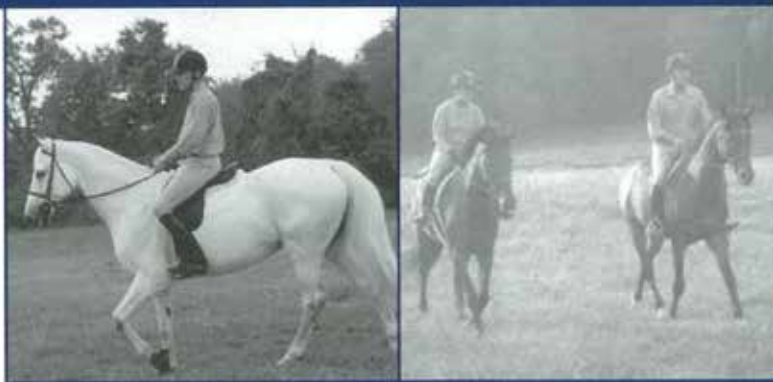


The "X"

If you are lunging, be sure you *walk with* your horse. Lunge only at the walk and trot at this stage, with many, many transitions. Watch for your horse to reach and stretch with his head and neck to the ground. You can introduce moving to the outside rein on the ground, using long lines. First, walk toward your horse's haunch and then forward toward his shoulder (forward and over) as your outside line softens. Your hand can even let out line to give him space to move into. When you mount, you will have developed a signal he can understand.

Once mounted your job is to consistently ask the horse to stay in front of your leg. This is the top priority for the first stage. No quality of movement is possible without your horse being in front of your leg. Stay aware of your position, how you are asking, and what your horse is saying back to you. Teach the signals now (the idea of the "X"), and be sure voice commands are a habit. You want to establish connection and control before the muscles are built. Ride wide, smooth turns. A horse with little muscular development most likely will have the tendency to fall in on the corners. Do not hold him up with your hand. Instead ride straight forward and allow him to move toward the outside rein. (Ride the "X".) Be sure you have allowed a place for him to move into by softening your outside leg.

Avoid trouble by only riding patterns that your horse can negotiate upright. This is the beginning of the stabilization process. Create confidence by doing everything slowly and deliberately.



- Walk, walk, and walk some more. If you cannot walk with your horse in front of your leg, you can not achieve a quality trot.
- Trotting work begins now. As long as your horse is in front of your leg allow him to reach and stretch his head and neck to the ground. If the horse reaches and stretches to the ground but sneaks out behind your leg, walk, reestablish "in front of the leg" and then ask for the trot again. Do this until your horse understands what you want. It does not matter how many times you have to repeat; this is **the** lesson in the first stage.
- At this stage, the horse will often raise his head when trotting simply because he is not strong enough to carry your weight. You need to be a balanced, considerate, non-interfering load. You are putting in hours to create muscles. Once you have established your connection at the trot and on the circle, rest for half of the circle and then ask again. This is an exercise that must be repeated to build strength and muscle tone. When you begin again, ask with the same aids, and once you have achieved putting the horse in front of the leg, remember to relax your aids and support the horse softly to reaffirm the reward.
- Alternate where you ride and what you do everyday so that you and your horse do not become bored. Lunge one day focusing on your connection while using voice commands at the walk and trot. Ride in a field or paddock another day, and on the next ride try a trail or do poles, round pen, and ground work. Groom and graze a fourth day.

Notes



Stage Two

Preventing a tendency to run onto the front end

Lesson: "Sit on Hocks"

As your horse's hind end gets stronger, he may tend to fall forward onto his front end. If so, he needs to learn to "drop back" and redistribute his weight from his front to his hind end—in other words to "sit on his hocks." This is **the priority** for the second stage. The one quarter turn on the haunches off the outside leg will let you know that the horse is strong enough to stay on the outside rein. Let's review the aids for the one quarter turn on the haunches:

- Ride forward at the walk and think pause.
- As you feel your horse engage his hind end, soften your inside leg creating a space to move into.
- Use a slightly leading inside hand and a rhythmic urging outside leg. A direct outside rein may act as a bearing rein if necessary.
- If the horse is in front of your leg, he will cross his outside front leg over his inside front leg. Do not rush through the movement. Deliberately take one step at a time.
- As you establish the habit, just the thought of a haunch turn will make your horse sit on his hocks in order to perform the anticipated movement. This is the tool you want to develop at this stage of training.

Since the beginning you have been riding the "X". Your horse is now at least able to think about the beginning of a haunch turn. If he has gotten strong enough to maintain a slight natural bend around the



smooth, large, round turns, then it is time to introduce the halt thought on the outside rein. *(It is imperative that you have cleared a space for your horse to move into by softening your outside leg as he performs these large, sweeping turns.)* To create the "halt thought" on the outside rein, close your inside leg to a steady outside rein. Change your breathing and become a sail. Stop the following movement of the outside hand for a stride but be ready to catch up and balance the "X" with outside leg to inside hand. Practice this at the walk before trying it at the trot.

You are still mostly walking but adding more and more trotting and many, many transitions. Your horse is now able to reach and stretch to the ground at the walk and trot while not speeding up or having quick feet. His feet will move more slowly if you are patient. Slow feet are the key, because the quality of the gait depends on the engagement of the stride and its rhythm. Maintain the rhythm; do not hurry your horse forward. If your horse is on his hocks, this is what is important; even though it feels and is slow, that's ok. As your horse gets stronger, he will be able to carry more pace. Encouraging him to lift his back is what counts. The slow pace allows a weak horse time to learn to raise his back. *In front of your leg with his back up is Stage Two. This is the forward way of riding.* Again, you are putting in the miles of walking and trotting to create the desired level of physical fitness. You should also be trotting poles, piles of poles, and raised caveletti, singly and in long lines. Remember to alternate the exercises and where you ride. Some days go for a walk, on others walk and trot and do poles. The next day lunge at the walk and trot while focusing on the connection to your horse.



*Remember to alternate
the exercises you do
and where you ride.
Some days go for a
walk, on others walk
and trot and do poles.*

Keep your lunge work to a minimum and look for the horse's response as you try to stay connected on the lunge circle.

Field work and riding up and down hills several times a week is another valuable tool for conditioning. Always consider your timeframe in relation to what you are doing. For example, a walk may last for up to an hour, but trot poles for only twenty minutes. It does not matter how long it takes. Your horse should be solid in stage one before moving to stage two, and then solid in stage two before progressing to stage three. If you hurry the process both you and your horse will become frustrated or anxious, and your horse might become lame if he is pushed beyond his point of conditioning.

Notes

Stage Three

Once forward is a habit, straightness becomes the priority.

Lesson: Straightness

When your horse is able to stay in front of your leg, on his hocks, and stretch, straightness becomes the priority. Protect the "X". Show him how to stay upright by consistently using the "X" to help him. If your horse bulges inside, ride inside leg forward toward your outside rein. If he pops his outside shoulder, ride outside leg to inside rein. You will learn to feel it coming and be there to stop it before it happens. The stronger and more upright your horse, the tighter the zone of straightness. As the limits of the zone are closed, a horse that is in front of your leg and on his hocks will begin to raise his withers and round his top line. His neck will be longer and longer, and he will not have to raise his head to carry your weight. Having achieved straightness, you can begin to add precision.

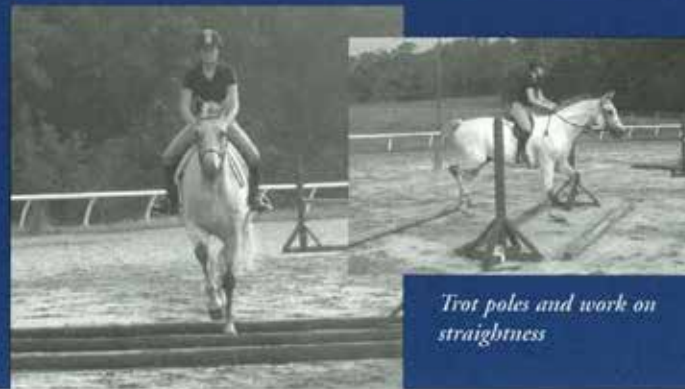
At this point your horse should be stronger and more responsive. Concentrate on being with him at every step, always helping straightness and weight distribution towards the hindquarters. You can direct his energy so he forms the proper habits and learns to ride to the aids. However, if you flop the reins, your horse may run onto his front end and become anxious. Until he is able to balance himself consistently on his hocks, he needs you to help him avoid loss of balance. Passive contact is the tool for this stage of training. Review the definition of Passive Contact (page 23) Remember: no floppy reins.



You are establishing habits that will be the base of your partnership. Just like dance partners, you are working on being in sync with each other.

Do many, many transitions, upwards and downwards, with fewer and fewer strides in between. Start on the lunge at the walk and trot to establish the exercise with your horse. You are still mostly walking and trotting, but you can start to ask for canter on the lunge, walking with your horse in wide circles. Then mount and ask for a canter departure from the sitting trot off a voice command. Be happy with whatever number of quality strides your horse is able to give at this stage, lunging or mounted. If he breaks, reestablish a good stabilized trot and ask again for the canter. If he gets in a hurry and runs on his front end, come back to the trot and reestablish a good stabilized pace before asking again. Whatever the scenario, do not push your horse to keep going in the canter. More than likely he is not yet physically strong enough to keep a balanced canter. Be a patient, considerate partner. It is easier to keep cantering than to do transitions. Your horse will figure this out on his own, if you give him time. No matter what, do not ride your horse up into your hands and carry him around to keep him going. That will undo all the good walk and trot work you have already accomplished.

As your horse becomes strong enough to work on straightness and maintain a stabilized canter:



Trot poles and work on straightness

- Trot lines of poles and work on protecting straightness. You can start to canter away after trotting the first pole and canter the second pole in the line.
- Trot a cross rail with 9 foot ground poles on both sides and canter away. Start on calisthenics. Gradually add another obstacle. Remove the ground pole on the backside and put a small vertical and later a small oxer 18 feet from the cross rail. These distances are starting points and guidelines. You want to make the horse comfortable, so vary the distances accordingly. Having a ground person with an educated eye is invaluable when working through gymnastic jumping exercises.
- Trot low single jumps with long straight approaches and landings. Think about a quality downward transition after you canter away. Then trot another jump. Work at the trot is good practice for both horse and rider. Transitions are a vital tool and help avoid creating horses that go on auto-pilot.
- You can start thinking about asking your horse to land on a particular lead simply by putting a few more ounces of weight on the stirrup in the direction you will be going with the thought of an outside leg. There is no hand involved.
- Trot in and canter out of lines of low jumps. Ride to your midpoint and then focus on riding out the line to make it work for your horse.



As the horse becomes stronger and able to keep going at the canter:

- Canter lines of poles (42, 54, 32, or 18 feet apart for a horse with a natural 12 foot stride. Adjust to your horse and keep him comfortable and confident while he is learning and building muscles. The challenges can come later. Confidence is crucial. Do simple changes to change directions.
- By now your horse is starting to think about where he is going next and may start landing on leads as you signal. The lead changes will begin to happen as your horse counter canters. You will be able to counter canter away from the jump and ask for the change (to switch hind feet) at the moment of suspension between canter strides.

Notes

A stabilized horse



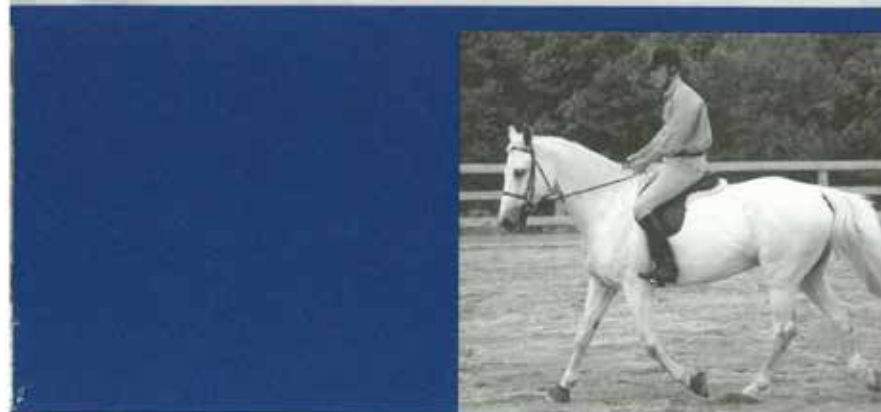
Stage 4

Your horse is stabilized.

Lesson: Maintaining your Goal.

Having reached your goal, you must now maintain the muscles your horse needs to stay underneath himself and use his hocks to facilitate engagement. You want the horse to stay straight on light aids. Once you have used the aids to put your horse in front of your leg, you can relax and let the movement happen and the fences come to you. There is no hurry. You have plenty of reserve power in the correct muscles you have helped your horse develop. Once a horse is fit, it takes about 6 weeks off to lose condition. If your horse has a significant period of time off, start over with walking, then add trot work, and when he is able to carry himself again, add the canter.

This is the base to which you can add whatever level of collection your horse is capable of, given his conformation. As you have developed the long muscles that position him in front of your leg, onto his hocks, and finally straight, the use of transitions have begun to strengthen his short muscles. With the formation of short muscles, your horse may begin to flex at the poll naturally. Practice exercises to develop both long and short muscles, and you will have a sane, sound, happy horse. Remember: a good test is to be able to drop the inside rein at any moment and have your horse continue to carry himself.

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Exercises for Energy Shaping

Understanding impulsion taught you to maintain a passive contact with your horse's mouth and to have a horse physically fit for the challenges you want to undertake together. As you work through these exercises, focus on keeping a consistent passive contact with a following arm. Use the rein aids at the absolute minimum required to achieve the desired result. Keep your horse in front of your legs. Always ride your horse forward, over to the outside rein and as straight as possible. Ride the "X"

Exercise 1

Ride two speeds of the trot: ordinary to slow and back to ordinary. All horses should learn to lengthen and shorten stride first in the trot.

Transitions are the key to connection.

At the ordinary trot rising, ride forward and over from your inside leg to your outside hand, creating a feeling of connection and riding to the aids. (Ride the "X" consistently.) Use your body language, your legs, and your energy to shorten and lengthen the trot. To shorten the stride, let your energy deplete, open your hip angle, and relax your legs. Sit gently in the saddle. Your horse must raise his withers to make the downward transition properly. If you cave in his back when you sit, a quality transition will not be possible. After you have ridden twenty to sixty quality strides at a shortened trot, increase your energy and think forward. Soften your hand and invite your horse to move forward. Mirroring his hind leg movement, use your independently operating urging legs to move him forward again into the ordinary trot rising.



Lengthening uphill



Shortening downhill

Be sure you lighten your seat as you soften your hand and send your energy and focus out in front of you. The horse will follow your intention. Remember: intention is a thought and a clear picture. Concentrate on your picture and what you are feeling.

Exercise 2

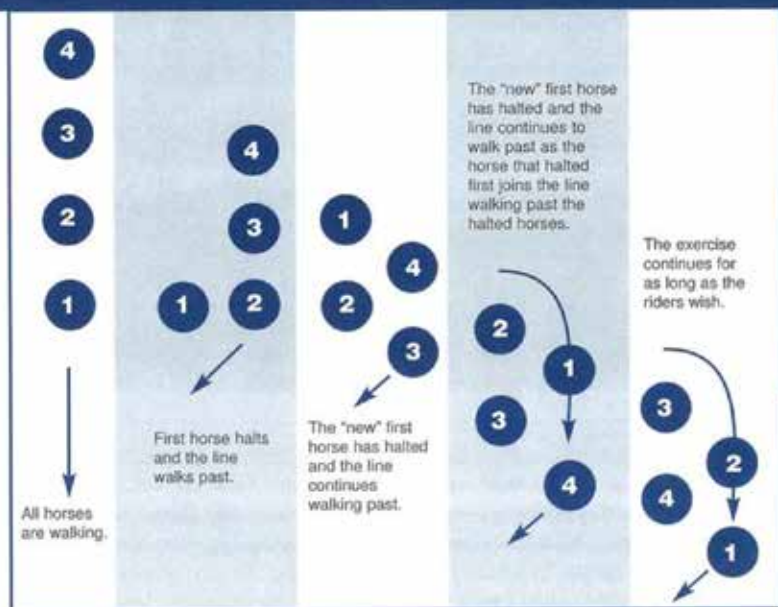
Work on varied terrain to encourage your horse to lengthen uphill and shorten downhill. Start on a gentle slope and allow the terrain to teach him. Use your upper body and energy to alert your horse to changes in the terrain. Eventually he will learn to look ahead on his own. *Use the walk extensively before adding the trot, and you will achieve maximum benefits from conditioning and balancing.* Practice quality transitions and different speeds of walk and trot while keeping your steady communication with your horse.

Exercise 3

Ride two speeds of the walk: the free walk on a long rein and the ordinary working walk on contact. A quality walk has FOUR beats, and when the horse is in front of your leg, the hind foot over tracks the print of the front foot. Start with a good free walk in which your horse stretches out into a relaxed loose rein, swings the hind leg under his body, oversteps, and moves forward with interest. When you achieve this walk, shorten your reins. Keep the bit still in your horse's mouth as you take up passive contact. Your arms **MUST** follow your horse's head and neck gesture even when you ride on a long rein and as you bridge your reins to take up the contact. If your arms do not allow the horse to move forward freely, you will never establish a trusting connection to his mouth. Your legs are there to support your forward intention. If your

horse misinterprets the passive following contact of the reins and begins to slow down, your legs can encourage him forward. What you actually want is for the horse to continue forward with the same degree of engagement. As you encourage him to swing his hind leg more forward, he should begin to lift his withers and back. As you make contact with his mouth, this swing forward will actually increase his connection from hind end to front end. This is a purposeful and active working walk with you following the horse's head and neck gesture at all times.

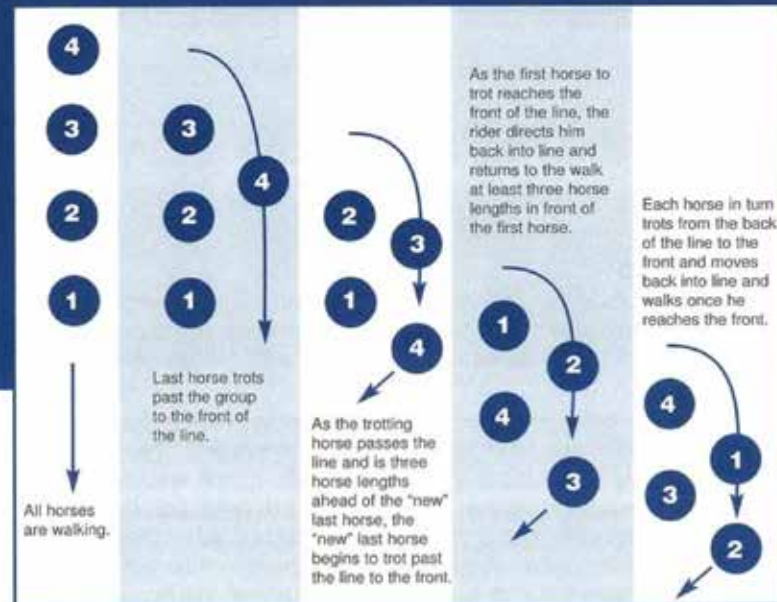
Notes



Exercise 4

Hunter Exercises help you practice the skills of good group riding, so that you can enjoy a pleasant and safe experience when riding with others. If you plan to show your horse, these exercises will also help your horse become comfortable in that situation. In addition, you will learn spacing and planning skills that will allow you to show your horse to greatest advantage in an under saddle class. Carefully planned Hunter Exercises teach horses to be comfortable being passed and to maintain their pace and position within the group. If you have the opportunity to practice these exercises in a large, open field, you and your horse will learn to cope with the demands of changes in terrain as you also practice safe group riding.

Begin by making sure that each horse is comfortable being passed while he is standing still. The first horse in the line halts, and the line of horses walks past him. As the first horse passes the stopped horse, the passing horse becomes the leader of the line, moves over in front of the stopped horse and halts. The other riders continue on, and as each new "leader of the line" gets to the front, that rider and horse move back over to the line and halt. (See diagram.) As in all hunter exercises, the continuous flow allows each horse to practice the



exercises multiple times. The riders should stay two or three horses' lengths (18 to 27 feet) apart while they are moving or halted, and pass at least one horse's length (9 feet) to the side of the other horses. Once the horses seem comfortable being passed, the group moves forward at the walk. Now the last horse may trot to the front of the line, pull over into the line, and return to the walk. As the last horse moves two horses' lengths in front of the horse just ahead of it, that horse becomes the last horse in the line and begins to trot to the front. (See diagram.) The horses thus trot in small groups over short distances. Because they are trotting past the group, it will be much easier to slow them back to the walk when they are at the front of the line. They will not want to leave their friends. Watch the demonstration of this exercise on DVD III. When all the horses are comfortable at the walk and trot, the group can begin to trot as a line. Then, let the last horse canter to the front. Once he reaches the front, he comes back into line and returns to the trot. To vary the exercise have the first horse in the line canter to the back and return to the trot as he catches up with the horses at end of the line. These exercises are the initial building blocks for group riding experiences that are safe and fun. They also allow you to practice shaping your horse's energy with clear intentions and an organized plan in somewhat challenging circumstances.

Exercise 5

Prompt transitions: walk to trot, walk to halt, walk to canter, canter to trot, etc. To quote Lendon Gray, "Make an absolute request and expect an absolute response and then follow up with a thank you by releasing the aid." Be deliberate with the pictures and tone you send your horse, stay consciously aware of what your horse is thinking. Stay tuned in and connected as you feel where your horse is and how much and how quickly he is able to give you a quality mental response. Do not sacrifice the quality of connection for a quick response. Can you become one with your horse and think and feel as he does at the moment? Remember that the quality of any transition will be destroyed if the rider's hands and legs are not in sync with the horse's movement.

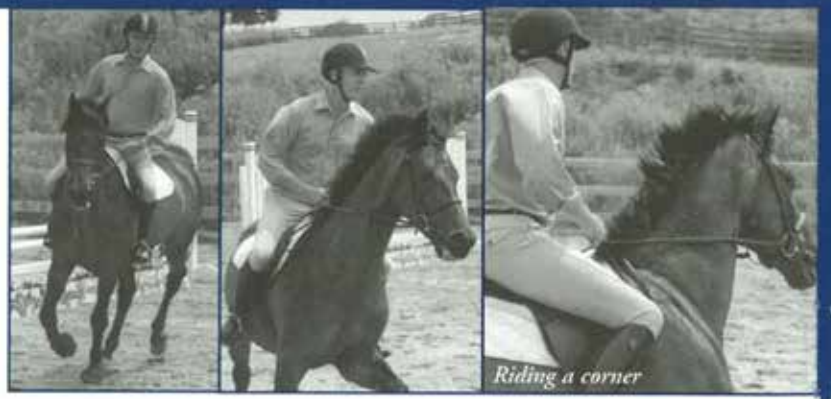
"The duller the horse, the less constant leg pressure you should use; a hot horse must learn to be comfortable with your leg on."^{xii} Your holding leg aid directs your horse's energy and shapes his path of travel. Two soft, steady holding legs help maintain this zone or chute for horses "with a lot of go." On an exuberant horse, it often works well not to pick up the trot until you are able to put your legs on at the walk and create a soft zone the horse stays in comfortably. Do lots of patterns—circles, half circles, serpentines using different speeds at the walk—until your horse connects and allows you to put your legs on. Then you'll have control of the engine.

A lazy horse requires that you educate him to respond promptly to the **urging leg** that keeps him up in front of your leg. The **holding leg** directs your path, but the urging leg is your gas pedal. If you don't feel you are getting a response to your leg aids and have let your legs become a vise around your horse's barrel, then you have created a problem. *Remember that the horse is always seeking the release of pressure. That release is the relaxation of the aids when the horse has achieved the response you want.* If you never release or at least "decrease" the pressure of your leg aids, the lazy horse will learn to ignore you in self-defense. As the warmblood breeds become increasingly popular in the hunter and jumper world,

riders must learn to communicate effectively with horses that are more "at ease" by nature than our thoroughbreds. Being conscious of each leg working separately and the ounces of pressure used by each leg is the key to controlling the engine—the hind end. Not having enough leg to keep the horse in up in front causes a great deal of trouble. "Enough leg" does NOT mean that your legs are strong and muscle-bound so they move your horse forward through brute strength. Rather "enough leg" means that you have taught your horse to respond to your urging leg by releasing pressure when you get a response. If you do not get a response, reinforce the leg aid *immediately*, and then release the pressure.

In quality transitions, your horse will not only respond promptly but will also remain straight. Alternate between the use of the holding and urging leg aids as required by your horse. A direct passive outside rein and an inside, slightly leading primary rein may help retain straightness, but the legs are always the primary aids.

Notes



Exercise 6

Ride corners in your flatwork to develop straightness and the beginning concept of the half-halt. In riding a smooth corner, start tracking on the long side of the ring. Riding left inside leg to right outside rein with the horse in front of your leg. As you approach the corner prepare for the first part of the turn by opening your hip angle so that your horse follows your body language and backs up onto his hocks. If you need more room, move further out on the first part of the turn. Look around the turn with your eyes and shoulders, and your horse will follow your change in focus and body position. As your inside left shoulder comes back around the inside of the turn toward your horse's left hip, soften your outside leg and hand. This gives your horse a space to move into, so he can lengthen his neck to reach for your softened hand. This is the way you let the turn happen. The second part of the turn is the mid-point which lasts for only a few strides. The horse should feel straight and be in front of your leg with impulsion. The third part of the turn begins as you come out of the corner. Ride straight, square your shoulders, steady the outside rein, and catch your horse with the outside leg to the inside rein if needed for straightness. The third part of the corner directs and leads your horse onto the desired track. Choose a focal point, lead with your eyes, and direct with your leg to hand connection. This type of turn encourages the horse to maintain the pace, to "stay here."

Follow these three steps to all turns whether tight or wide. Even a small "try" from the horse and rider is a building block to the forward way of riding. Remember that the inside leg is at the girth shaping the turn, and the outside leg is slightly behind the girth, urging the horse out of the corner. This type of turn encourages the horse to maintain the desired pace.

Exercise 7

Turns to an obstacle. In riding a turn to an obstacle, you initiate the turn just as you do in your flatwork. However, the third part of the turn will be slightly different. It will require a softened inside leg and a softened outside rein as the outside leg takes over and sends the horse to the inside rein, as in a haunch turn. Once again, the aids of a haunch turn while trotting or cantering are:

1. Ride forward.
2. As you feel your horse engage his hind end, soften your inside leg, and create a space he can move into.
3. Use a slightly leading inside hand and a rhythmic urging outside leg. A direct outside rein may act as a bearing rein if necessary.
4. If the horse is in front of your leg, he will cross his outside front leg over his inside front leg. Do not rush through the movement. Deliberately take one step at a time.

As you complete the third part of the turn, catch the straightness and move forward by riding inside leg back to the outside rein, constantly riding the "X". With the haunch turn as the third part of the turn, your



horse moves forward off the corner toward the obstacle, and you catch the straightness on the inside. Think and ride the straight line while supporting your horse to keep him in front of your leg. The forward momentum from the haunch turn allows for greater variety and smoother distance options at the obstacle. Because you are continuing your forward motion towards the obstacle, it is easier to keep going. You can use your breathing to soften and settle the pace if needed.

Turning to an obstacle/jump without a haunch turn creates the necessity of having to straighten after the corner. As a result you will often have to make a visible move to the jump or, if all you see is an easy distance, you may have to add a step out of the corner. This last option can force you to hurry your horse to the second obstacle in a line of jumps. Such errors in distance can be avoided by making a haunch turn the third part of the turn. Using the haunch turn will insure that you get your horse to the obstacle balanced and on his hocks so he can cope with any distance and jump in the best form possible.

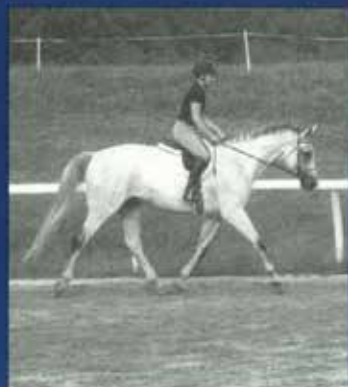
Even an eager horse will take a breath and back up to jump around the obstacle as long as he has been allowed to move forward. The engine is always engaged in this scenario. Straightness at the jump can be precise because of the forward impulsion. Horses tend to jump **up** rather than **at** the fences, because their hocks are engaged in the forward motion of the haunch turn. Riding a turn to an obstacle in this way says, "Let's go forward! See, there is a jump." You can create a situation where the horse is deliberately being asked to help, and his body and mind have been positioned to do so. You are asking that he participate more fully and he will often help you with the

distance if you are willing to listen. The worst that happens after using a haunch turn is that the horse pats the ground, still jumping off his hocks if distance is less than optimal. This is safe! With a horse that is balanced in front of your leg, you can ride out the line smoothly by softening your hand and sending your energy forward. If the distance in a line is tight, the impulsion from the haunch turn keeps your horse properly balanced on his hocks, and you can adjust his stride as needed. The forward ride of the haunch turn always provides enough impulsion and balance to get over the obstacle comfortably. *Ride his hocks to the base of the jump.*

Notes

Advanced Contact

Putting the horse on the aids



Because you have been consistently considerate of his mouth, your horse will reach forward and put his head in your hands when he is physically strong enough to do so. Concentrate on keeping the bit and reins still, and this will happen in its own time. You cannot make it happen. Using force means no quality.

The Bearing and Indirect Rein Aids and the Half-Halt

In Level One you learned the three primary rein aids: the leading rein, two direct reins, and one direct rein. These will always be the basic tools that you use to direct your horse. As your riding grows more sophisticated you need more advanced rein aids to make minor adjustments in your horse's balance and shape. You **must** ride your horse from your legs. This concept is the foundation upon which everything else is based. Nothing will work unless you start with your legs! In the beginning, the rein aids allowed you to reinforce the directional cues you gave your horse by focusing and changing energy levels. Now you will use the reins to refine your horse's shape and the quality of his transitions and movement. REMEMBER that there is always an inside and outside rein, and as you learned in the preceding exercises, they must each be used independently but in a complementary way. Any rein aid loses effectiveness and becomes abusive unless you apply it in unison with the movement of the horse's feet and neck. Always return the reins to a NEUTRAL position when the horse responds. The best riders carry their hands in a neutral position the majority of the time because their horses are so responsive to their changes in focus, energy level, and leg aids.



Bearing rein

The Bearing Rein

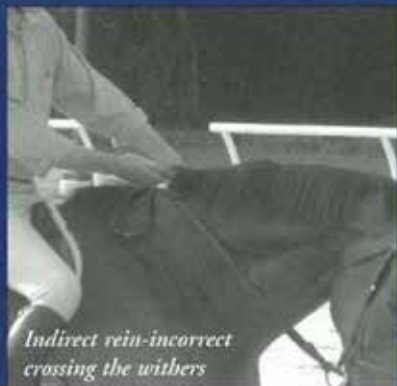
A bearing rein is similar to the western neck rein. It is a supporting rein aid. The direct rein, used as a bearing rein when the horse pops a shoulder to the outside of a turn, supports the light inside leading rein. This combination won't make your horse feel he has been put in a vise when you ask him to correct his track. The horse moves away from the pressure of the rein against the neck. This supports the action of the inside leading rein, and directs the horse's motion. Remember to soften slightly, so that he continues going forward. The leg aids are the most energetic aids; the hands help maintain the chute of straightness and offer direction.

You'll find the bearing rein, in combination with a slightly leading inside rein, a slightly softened inside leg, and an outside urging leg, has exactly this effect in the haunch turn. This is the third part of the turn for an approach to a jump. The inside rein is the dominant rein, because you don't want to turn the horse's head in the direction opposite of his turn—that happens when the bearing rein dominates. Using the leg on the same side of the horse supports the bearing rein. Remember to focus on keeping your shoulders square when you use the bearing rein. The most common mistakes are made and the wrong messages sent by allowing the bearing rein to cross the neck and stop the forward way of riding.

If at any point your horse pops a shoulder on a turn, correct him by using an outside direct rein as a bearing rein, but be aware of straightness. This is the point at which you must stop pressing and encourage the horse straight forward to preserve the connection from



*Indirect rein-correct
in front of the withers*



*Indirect rein-incorrect
crossing the withers*

hind to front. The horse's neck should remain long, and the bit should stay in his mouth. To soften a space for the horse to move into, use a slight inside opening rein and a softened inside leg. AND REMEMBER, SQUARE SHOULDERS!

The Indirect Rein in Front of the Withers

This aid shifts the horse's weight toward the shoulder opposite the active rein hand. The rein moves toward the rider's opposite hip, stays in front of the line of the withers, and NEVER crosses the withers.

Remember the pane of glass! The opposite rein follows the shape of the neck that your indirect rein asks your horse to create. If this opposite rein does not move in coordination with the active rein, then you put your horse in a vise that prevents him from giving you the correct response. Imagine how frustrating and confusing this is to your horse! Never ask with one hand what you will not allow to happen with the other.

If your horse tends to fall onto his inside shoulder during a turn you might use this rein for a stride. First try an outside leg to an inside neutral hand to see whether completing the second part of the "X" lets your horse right himself. Often a lack of energy from behind causes the shoulder to drop in. By using your leg first, you address the cause, not just the immediate problem. Use your legs, not your hands. A hand is the very last resort, but the indirect rein in front of the withers will remind the horse to stay upright in the turn. This is perhaps the most abused of all of the rein aids, because the rider often never returns her hand to a neutral position to reward the response. Once the horse

*Left indirect rein behind
the withers.*



responds to the indirect rein ahead of the withers and begins to turn, **remember to soften your hand** in support of the turn or circle. We see this rein aid overused in turns, circles and in the one-half turn on the forehand. From the horse's perspective, any aid you overuse becomes abusive and ineffective. The horse builds resistance to constant pressure that never rewards his response with a release. Ultimately you will destroy a horse's quality of movement and, most importantly, his trust, if you overuse any aid, particularly the rein aids.

The Indirect Rein behind the Withers

This aid shifts the horse's weight to the haunch opposite the active rein hand. The rein moves toward the rider's opposite hip, behind the line of the withers but NEVER crossing the withers. As always use this rein in partnership with the other rein hand. You might use the indirect rein behind the withers if your horse's haunches tend to fall to the outside of the track you are riding. This rein aid is also used in the conventional one-half turn on the haunch at the walk, but it must not be the dominant rein in this movement because you want the horse to look in the direction he is turning. This rein is very similar in action and position to the direct rein used as a bearing rein.

When you ride a stabilized horse at the trot or canter, explain the haunch turn as the third part of the turn to the jump by using an outside bearing rein and inside slightly leading rein aid, rather than an indirect rein behind the withers. Do not use the indirect rein behind the withers while jumping—the stabilized horse will feel this as too much of a vise. This is a common mistake. Always try leg before hand. For instance, be

sure to soften the ounces of inside leg to give your horse a space to move into before going to stronger leg and/or rein aids.

If you think of the indirect reins as corrective aids to make minor adjustments in your horse's balance, straightness, and carriage, you will not overuse them. For instance, if the horse's hind end is lagging in a leg yield try a stronger displacing leg in combination with an indirect rein behind the withers for a few strides in rhythm with the horse's movement. This will encourage him to shift his weight from one haunch to the other. *First attempt the correction by lightening the outside hand and softening the inside leg, then catch up the second part of the "X", outside leg to inside hand. This keeps everything very simple. Make your corrections by riding the "X" first. If the horse does not feel in a vise, the problem will usually resolve itself without the use of stronger aids.*

Notes

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The half-halt



Resuming forward motion



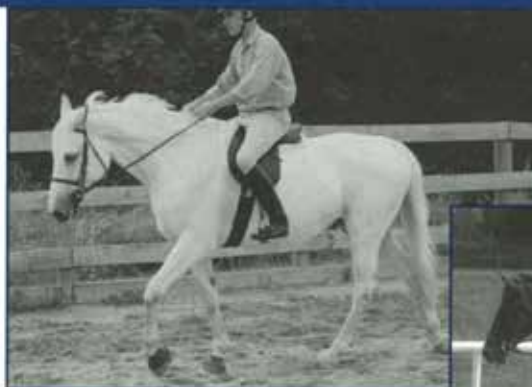
What is a half-halt?

A half-halt is a half stop, a pause in the rhythm for a stride or two...a preparation, a signal to the horse that something different is coming next...that he should pay attention...and listen up, please.

How does a half-halt feel?

A half-halt begins with inside leg to outside rein. Remember your energy and your breath. Open your hip angle, push your knees down, close both legs, and allow your weight to drop down your leg through your calf into the ball of your foot. **Simultaneously** close your fingers on the outside rein, stopping the forward momentum for an instant. The inside rein is passive. It's job is to keep the bit still and the horse's head straight in front of you. If necessary, squeeze the inside rein like a sponge to help with straightness and direction. Remember the ultimate test of stabilization and self-carriage is to drop your inside rein at any time and have your horse remain straight on your track. If the horse bulges a shoulder, use a bearing rein along with a leg on the same side to direct the energy across the X to the other rein. *Always soften the opposite leg to create a space for the horse to move into.* In the half-halt you will feel a gathering for a stride or two. Always know how your horse's hind feet are moving as you apply these aids. *When you feel your horse gather, think of and picture resuming the forward motion.* Just as a quality halt ends with the horse stepping forward and squaring up, a quality half-halt concludes with the horse resuming forward motion, straight and square.

Notes



Exercise 2

Releasing the inside rein for a stride.

Exaggerated release of the inside rein.



Refining Your Controls

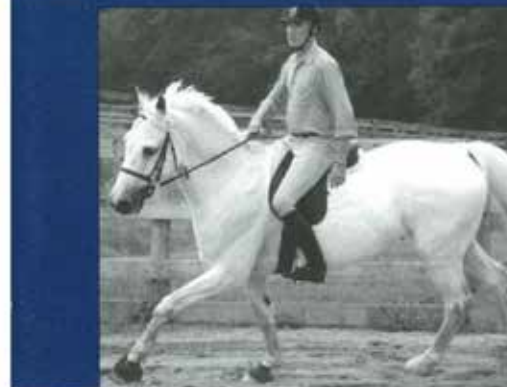
The following exercises will empower the rider.

Exercise 1

On a large circle ride inside leg to outside rein at the trot. Push your inside knee down towards the ground, and place the inside calf of the leg **at the girth**, with your weight on the ball of the foot. Direct energy from this leg across the "X" to the outside rein. How does this feel? Hold the inside rein like a sponge, and allow it to follow the natural shape that the inside leg to outside rein has created. The inside hand follows the turning of the horse's shoulders. You might soften your outside leg an ounce or two to allow the natural bend around the inside leg, but your outside leg must never be so soft that it does not simultaneously encourage forward motion. Your shoulders follow the horse's shoulders.

Exercise 2

To see whether your horse is really shaped around your inside leg and you are passive with the inside rein, slide the inside hand forward, loosen the rein for two beats, and notice if your horse's shape and direction remain unchanged. This is the test for stabilization or self-carriage. Following hands follow the head and neck, match the shoulder position, and are *always able* to release the inside rein for a few strides.



Exercise 3

Ride at the walk, trot, and canter with the reins bridged in the outside hand. Begin on the long side of your arena and stay on the track. When you are comfortable, add circles and half-circles of various sizes. Ask the following questions:

- Am I straight?
- Can I ride all the patterns and figures using my legs, body, and seat and my outside rein only if needed?

Be sure that you follow the horse's head and neck gesture. **REMEMBER SQUARE SHOULDERS!** This should become a habit with you at this point in your riding, but always check to be certain that you retain the good habits you have worked so hard to establish. If you change directions, switch outside hands.

Also remember: If your horse pops a shoulder, even though your reins are bridged, allow the outside rein to become a bearing rein for a moment to close the zone. You will use a holding leg on the same side as the popped shoulder, directing energy across the "X" to the opposite shoulder. By softening a leg on the opposite side of the bulge, you have offered your horse a space to move into. *Even though your reins are bridged, use each rein separately.* When you use the bearing rein to correct a bulge, you may need to vibrate the inside rein, which is the primary rein. You do not want your horse to feel he should turn his head to the outside. (*Remember: squeeze the reins like a sponge.*)



*Counter-bending left
Note that the rider's eyes
are still focused on the
track of the circle.*

Counter-bending right



Notes

Exercise 4

Bending and counter bending. Straight strides must alternate with the bending and the counter bending. Do this consciously: stay aware of your horse and be sure he understands and is prepared for what is coming next. It is best to learn this exercise at the trot, because you can focus on the coordination of your aids without the need to focus on following the horse's head and neck gesture. On the circle go to the right (right hand inside) and ride your right inside leg, pushing your right knee down and standing on the ball of your foot on your right stirrup. The energy created from this inside right leg flows to the left

outside rein. To change the bend, ride straight on the circle using just enough left outside leg to right inside rein to reposition the horse's weight equally on **both shoulders**. Ride a few strides straight until the horse is comfortable with the weight shift. Then ask him to move his weight to the right shoulder by using the left leg and pushing your left knee down to stand on the left stirrup. Direct this energy to the right rein, and allow the horse's weight to move to the right shoulder. Your right leg must be on enough to keep the horse moving forward and to stop any tendency he has to fall to the inside of the circle. *(If the horse is not in front of your leg, none of this will work!)*

Use a slight leading rein to help your horse understand the idea of bending around the inside leg. You want to be able to see the corner of his eye in the direction of the bend. The direct rein will help create the bend as your horse gains conditioning. When he is strong enough physically that the rein aid does not stop the forward motion the direct rein can be used. The inside leg to the outside rein is the primary aid and sets the limit that prevents the horse from falling inward and is achieved either with a slight leading rein or a direct rein, depending on the condition of the horse.

When you can perform this exercise proficiently at the trot, then practice bending and counter-bending at the walk, but don't inhibit the swing of the horse's neck as you ask for the changes in bend. You are ready to try the exercise at the canter as soon as you can use the aids and follow the head and neck confidently and completely at the walk.

Exercise 5

Spiraling in and out on a circle at the trot. On the circle ride *inside* leg to outside rein in rhythm with the horse's feet. To spiral in on the circle, begin using your *outside leg* rhythmically behind the girth (displacing leg), as you push your inside knee down and soften the inside leg to create a space for the horse to step into. Add the idea of a gentle leading inside rein as your horse spirals in and his weight distribution becomes equal on both shoulders. As the circle decreases in size, use your upper body to show the horse the degree of collection needed. When you reach the center, gradually switch your aids and ride straight for a couple of strides. Be sure to switch your leg positions! The inside becomes the displacing leg and the outside leg softens to create a space for your horse to move back out. Keep the horse in front of your leg. You can use a cone, barrel, jump or a pole as your center to spiral in, out, and around.

Notes



Hand-gallop

Exercise 6

There are three speeds of the canter: ordinary, hand-gallop and slow. Use your legs, energy, and upper body to signal increases and decreases of pace. Begin with ordinary to hand-gallop—this will be an easier transition for your horse. To increase, lighten your seat, soften the sail of your body by inclining your hip angle slightly forward, follow more forward with your hands, and use urging legs if necessary. If your horse responds to your forward intention, he should promptly and easily open up his stride to a “hand-gallop” as you lighten your seat to a two-point position and support with your leg. Begin by practicing the hand-gallop on long straight lines, and then ask your horse to carry the longer stride through gentle turns and tighter corners. To return to the ordinary canter, open your hip angle, fill your sail, and reconnect your seat with your horse's back. Support with the inside leg to a steady outside rein; this combination of aids asks your horse to decrease his stride length. Once your horse performs the transitions from canter to hand-gallop and back to canter consistently, you can begin to ask him for a slower, more collected canter. Because the slower canter is more physically demanding for your horse, he may initially require more support from your leg to sustain it. Practice it only for short periods until your horse's physical conditioning improves. It is best to ask your horse for this shorter stride while riding a circle. To decrease, open your hip angle, wrap around your horse, sitting softly, and become a sail. Support your intention by riding inside leg to a steady outside rein. If necessary, close your fingers around the outside rein, and keep the horse's head straight with a soft slightly leading inside hand to balance



Collected canter

the outside squeeze, always following the horse's neck movement. Remember: ask for a downward transition at the canter when the horse's head is up. Be aware of how the horse's feet are moving and what stage of the stride you are in. Then you know when the horse's head is up and when you can ask for the decrease. This is important—it avoids trouble. Physically it is impossible for your horse to decrease at the stage of the canter when he is reaching down and forward, because his hind end is not engaged. More than likely he will hit your hand and drag you because he couldn't balance with his head. You may have to use an urging leg to encourage your horse to maintain a true canter rhythm as he raises his withers and shifts his weight back slightly to shorten his stride. Canter twice around a circle of about 50 feet in diameter, and then carry the shortened stride onto a straightaway before lightening the deepness of your seat and following more forward to return your horse to the ordinary canter. See page 43 in Susan Harris' *Horse Gaits, Balance and Movement* for a clear visual picture of the canter footfalls along with neck position.

Notes

Exercise 7

Counter-canter: When you establish a stabilized counter-canter with your equine partner, you have attained a high quality of movement, a very good physical condition, and a strong mental connection. The counter-canter is a wonderful exercise for developing your horse's responsiveness to your aids. He learns to wait for direction rather than to assume what is expected. It is also a great way to develop your horse's balance and lateral agility. Initially practice the counter-canter



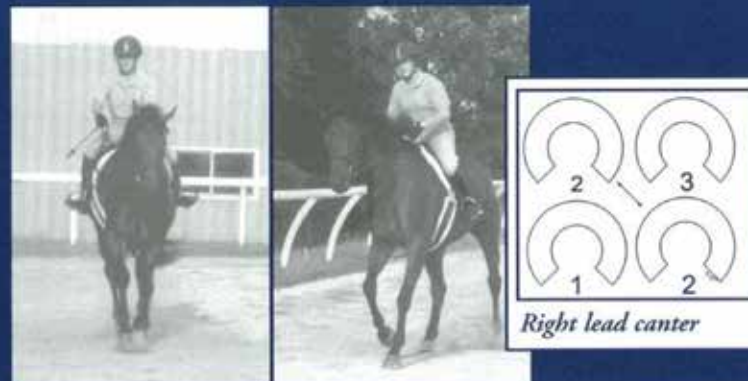
Counter canter

with the horse looking in the direction of the lead, rather than in the direction of travel. Practicing the counter-canter on a long rein, once you are confident your horse understands the aids, will help him to become more supple and flexible. If your horse favors one lead when landing from the jumps or if the flying change is easier in one direction than the other, you will find that the counter-canter will probably be more difficult for your horse to sustain on the lead he doesn't favor. Practicing the counter-canter on the more difficult lead without forcing or upsetting your horse will help improve the quality of that lead. Focus on maintaining the three beats of the canter. *Allowing the canter to degenerate into four beats reduces the athletic development potential of this exercise and increases the chance that the horse will swap to the true lead through a break down in the canter rhythm. Ultimately, this will have a negative effect on the quality of your flying lead changes.*

The simplest way to begin work at the counter-canter is to change direction with a half-circle and maintain the lead after you have changed direction. The more open your work area, the easier this will be. Many hunter/jumper show horses associate fence lines with lead changes because this is what they have been taught. Try to stay out of the corners and off the fence line as you are teaching your horse the counter-canter. It will help if you focus on your direction of travel and look to the inside of the turns well ahead of time. Be careful not to turn your shoulders in the direction you are traveling—just **use your eyes**. At this point you are asking your horse to stay bent in the direction of the lead, not in the direction he is traveling. If you change your shoulder

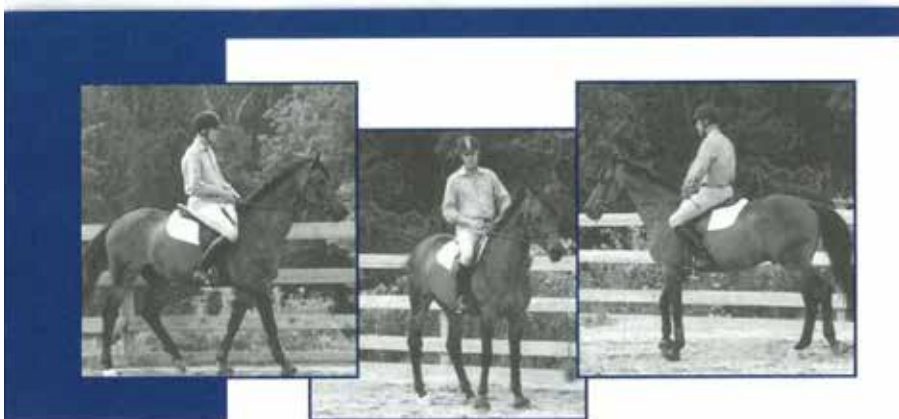
position in anticipation of the turn, a sensitive horse will probably read this as a signal to change his lead. Indicate direction with your eyes. Concentrate on following the horse's head and neck gesture as you canter, and maintain a slight bend toward the leading leg. As you approach a turn, look, breathe, and follow to help your horse sustain the counter lead. If you stiffen and grab in expectation of the turn, your horse will almost always change leads because he feels your stiffness and your arms disrupt his balance. When you and your horse are confident in the counter-canter on both leads, then it is time to try striking off on the counter lead.

The aids for the counter-canter are identical for those of any canter departure, so before you begin this exercise be sure that you can consistently pick up either lead on a straight line in the open. Because it is the opposite of normal practice, picking up the counter-canter along a fence line is often mentally challenging for both the rider and the horse. To make it easier for both of you, it is helpful to begin the exercise by leading the horse off the track to the inside for a few strides at the trot, to create a space for him to step into as he picks up the counter-canter. Ride a small "V" as you lead the horse off the rail and then back to the rail slightly as you ask for the canter. This is a stepping-stone to help you both understand the mechanics of the aids. Often it is just the proximity to the wall that makes the movement difficult. As your horse understands the aids more clearly, he will be able to read your intention without worrying about the wall or fence line. As Pat Parelli says,



"Horses are born claustrophobics." This is an important concept to keep in mind when asking the horse to go deep into a corner, load into a horse trailer, or pick up the counter-canter against the arena wall.

As you and your horse progress, you will be able to achieve a straight, round, quality counter-canter with his head straight in front of you, rather than bent in the direction of the leading leg. If you are on the right lead counter canter, soften your right outside leg enough to create a space, and encourage your horse to keep moving over to the outside with a rhythmic, gentle inside urging leg. Your horse will learn the signals and not switch leads until you soften the inside leg and close your outside leg. To avoid an unwanted swap of leads as you approach a corner, soften your outside right leg on the right counter canter to create enough room for your horse to move his hind end into the cleared space and keep moving forward. This allows a comfortable round corner. You can straighten his head and allow the outside leading leg to follow a more comfortable path, making it easier for the horse to keep the lead and not feel cramped. This is a wonderful exercise for building long, loose, flexible shoulders and great practice for riding the hind end first. If you have a horse that is crooked to the left, you might warm up with right lead counter-canter, thus freeing his right shoulder in the above fashion.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be a standard notebook page.

Half-turn on the haunches at the walk. This wonderful exercise is the backbone of Forward Riding. You know your horse is on his hocks when he does a good clean haunch turn. (1) Ride forward at the walk and think "halt." (2) As you feel your horse engage his hind end, soften your inside leg to create a space for him to move into. (3) Use a slightly leading inside hand and a rhythmic, urging outside leg. A direct outside rein may act as a bearing rein if necessary.

Haunch turn aids can be used in motion as the third part of a turn to a jump, making smoothness and the option of distances much greater. (See page 55 for a description of this type of haunch turn.) Asking your horse to think of a haunch turn is a good way to see whether you really have an outside rein. If you do not get a response from your outside aids, then you have not established an outside rein.

True Partnership: Improving Your Feel

Your ultimate goal is to develop a true partnership with your horse, to synchronize your intentions, to develop that intangible *“feel”*. To be in harmony with or match your intentions to those of another sentient being requires empathy, patience, and creativity. You have been studying a system that will work for every horse and every rider AS LONG AS you consider the needs of each horse and rider and use them creatively to serve those needs.

Having a system provides you with a philosophical core (value system) that gives you the freedom to explore new ideas and techniques while having a yardstick against which to measure them. When things aren't going as you had hoped in your work with a particular rider or horse, this system provides a home base to fall back on. Think of it as skeleton that supports your growth and development as a horseman or horsewoman—a framework that allows you to tie together the lessons your horses teach you and the ideas you pick-up from reading, taking clinics, and working with other riders and instructors.

Having a system DOES NOT mean that you have all the answers or that you shouldn't be open to new ways of looking at things. Instead, having a system provides you with the security to be creative and try new things. You will never develop **feel** if you are afraid to step outside your comfort zone. If comfort is your goal, don't plan to learn anything new or to grow in your horsemanship skills. Learning requires us to be uncomfortable, to take some chances, and not to be afraid to look awkward, different, or foolish. Sometimes learning needs a structured approach, and sometimes it occurs through a flash of insight, an “aha” moment. Any good system recognizes and allows for both kinds of learning.

Picture

Connect

Forward

Aids

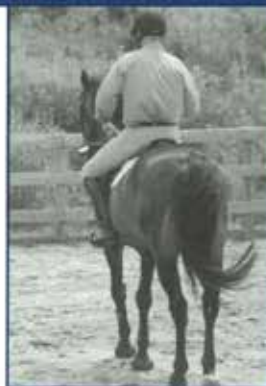
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Partnership

The American System of Forward Riding is neither static or unchanging nor is it an end in itself. It is a foundation to build on and can give you and your horses a framework for growth and development. Just as a “rose is a rose”, so a “horse is a horse,” but you must still treat each one as an individual. Each horse is unique in temperament, athletic ability, and experiences. Treat each horse or person that you interact with as an individual with value, and then use what you know and have learned to help them become the best they can be. Look at every horse or person as a winner or a potential winner. You will be astounded how this attitude will empower them to become just that.

As you work through the exercises in this workbook, remember that they are ideas to help you achieve your goals and to stimulate your own creativity. To reach your goal with your horse you must first “imagine” yourself doing it. Be sure to do yourself the same kindness that you offer your horse. Look on yourself as a winner or at least a potential winner. Imagining is the first step! Picture your intentions. You want to become “one” with your horse, not just sit on top of him. This creates the partnership. Always work from the horse's perspective. You will have your own agenda, but so will your horse. We are always working to create a relationship where the horse and rider can “fill in” for each other.

The goals in the following exercises are small steps that make up part of the process and will help you reach a place of confidence in each stride and moment. Be patient and always follow up with a reward. Then you will always be “okay” and able to handle whatever comes your way.



Leg Yield

Flatwork

Exercise 1

Learn to feel the horse's feet in all three gaits. We have talked about the importance of knowing where the horse's feet are since the beginning. If this is not second nature, back track and practice until it is. Quality and connection won't happen unless you are in rhythm with the hind feet, feel how the neck is moving, and use your aids in unison with the movement of the hind end. Count the rhythm.

Exercise 2

Leg yielding asks your horse to yield sideways from your leg. Just like the turn on the forehand, the best way to teach your horse to step sideways from your leg is to face him toward a solid barrier that prevents him from going forward. This allows you to use your hands only to maintain straightness. Beginning in this way will help your horse to understand the difference between a leg that asks him to move forward and a leg that asks him to move over and cross his legs. Using a displacing leg, ask for a step or two of yield in one direction, and reward the slightest "try." Your reins should be short enough to keep your horse facing the wall. Use them as little as possible. If your horse has really tried and given you even a very small yield, stop. Come back to this exercise the next time you ride, and you will probably receive a better response. Do not look for perfection at this point. Look for an understanding of the cue.

Once your horse understands the basic cue for sideways movement, ask him to step sideways while walking. Start by walking along the rail. Relax your inside leg to clear a space for him to step into. Draw your outside leg back 4 to 6 inches, to become a displacing leg. Use a slight inside leading rein in conjunction with the outside displacing leg. You are still riding the "X". The leading rein encourages the inside foreleg to step sideways, as the displacing leg asks the outside hind leg to cross in front of the inside hind. Your horse is moving forward and sideways simultaneously. The outside rein acts as a bearing rein to support the outside displacing leg.

Ideally your horse's head and neck should remain straight in front of you. As you are teaching this movement, it is fine if your horse bends slightly away from the direction in which his body is moving. This is easier for the horse in the learning phase. When your horse makes an effort to step across and over, reward him by walking straight forward. You should only expect a step or two of sideways yield at this point. After walking forward and straight for several steps, change the inside leg position to a displacing leg. Allow the outside leg to relax to create a space. The outside hand uses a slight opening rein, and the inside hand becomes a bearing rein as you ask for a few steps forward and sideways back to the rail.

If you go slowly in the beginning and reward every effort your horse makes to give the desired response, he will remain confident, and his learning will progress more rapidly. While practicing at the walk, really

focus on coordinating the opening rein with the motion of the inside foreleg and following with the displacing leg to catch the outside hind as it moves forward to engage. The walk is slow enough for you to feel each footfall, so you can begin to time your aids to make it easier for your horse to respond correctly. When you and your horse are confident with this movement at the walk, you can begin to experiment at the trot. Always remember the "X," and strive for lightness in your horse's response. Timing your aids with his feet is essential for achieving lightness.

Notes

The moment just before suspension. Prepare to ask for the change and note that the head and neck are up.



Exercise 3

Creating a stride of straightness in the flying change of lead is the primary goal of this exercise. Switch outside reins and counter canter for a moment without losing forward impulsion. The horse's head and neck will come up in the moment of suspension, and at that instant ask for the change with the new outside leg. Riding across the diagonal of a large work area is a good place to start. If you have practiced simple changes of leads, your horse will know the signals. Now your job is to keep enough forward impulsion so that your horse can switch feet behind. Be sure to concentrate on straightness, keeping your horse upright so he can produce a clean change. Follow the head and neck gesture, and ask for the change when the head and neck are in the "up" position to allow him to complete the change from hind to front.

Cantering over a pole on the ground increases the moment of suspension and lets you feel the moment more clearly and time your aids correctly. The increased suspension also makes it physically easier for your horse to change his lead. Make sure his shoulders stay square as you ask for the flying change, but practice this without drilling the horse. Remember, it's better to get a "TRY" than to demand perfection and cause a problem. Even if the horse is a stride or two late, it's okay. Try again later, rather than repeating this exercise many times.

As your horse begins to understand what is expected of him, vary the situations in which you ask for the flying change. Practice the change using a half-circle in reverse as demonstrated on DVD IV. Counter-canter a large circle, and ask your horse for the change of lead at a specific point on the circle. Be careful that he doesn't learn to associate the corner or the ring fence with the lead change, so that he doesn't anticipate or worry about the change as he approaches a corner or fence. Remember not to drill this or any other exercise. If your horse shows you he understands by giving you a "try," then reward him and move on to other things.

Notes



Feel that your horse is sitting back on his hocks, jumping up and then around the jump.

Jumping Work

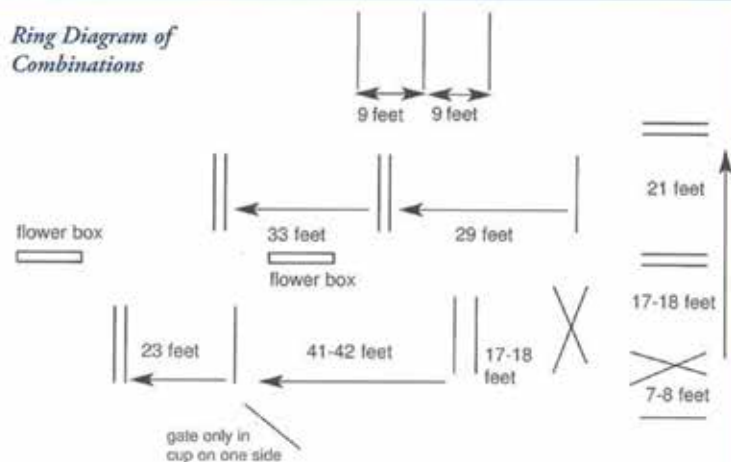
Exercise 1

Basic work over poles, cavaletti, half-raised planks and various combinations are exercises that allow you to practice relaxing your hands and using your legs to ask the horse to leave the ground. This is the place to focus on your horse jumping up to you, rather than letting your upper body crowd his front end. Feel that your horse is sitting back on his hocks and jumping up and then around the obstacle. Always remember to ride across the back rail of oxers and to focus on a point in front of you.

Begin by setting:

- Poles 7 to 9 feet apart to canter over
- Cavaletti as bounces 8 to 9 feet apart, depending on your horse; keep the distance comfortable for his canter stride.
- A plank, gate, or pole set in a jump cup at only one end. Practice three different approaches: a short roll back while sitting the saddle, a medium approach using half-seat, and a long approach using two-point position. Be creative.
- A basic combination: a trot rail, then 7 feet to an X with ground rails, then 17 feet to an oxer at 2'6" to 3 feet.

Ring Diagram of Combinations



Be sure you set distances that encourage the horse to jump up and around the fence. If the distances between the bounces or other combination elements are too long, your horse will have to stretch and reach with a flat arc across the obstacle. Linda Allen's book, *101 Jumping Exercises for Horse and Rider*, is a wonderful resource. Our suggestions for gymnastic work with your horse will keep you focused on your position as he develops a more consistent take-off and jumping style. The distances we have suggested are a starting point for the average horse. It will be very helpful if you can have a ground person with you as you use the various combinations. He or she can make any necessary adjustments to the distances, so they are comfortable for your horse and encourage him to jump off his hocks.

Exercise 2

Trotting in and cantering out of lines is an exercise which when performed correctly, makes a huge difference in creating quality jumping efforts. To trot in and canter out of lines set on the average 12 foot stride, you add one stride to the normal canter. If the line is set at 72 feet, which is five cantering strides, you should trot in and canter out in six strides. This exercise slows everything down a notch so that the horse and the rider have more time to attend to the details. In the beginning use of ground poles 9 feet in front and 9 feet behind the first



Trot in . . .



Canter out



obstacle will help the horse learn to judge the distance and pay attention to landing. As you canter forward to your midpoint (3 strides) from the trot fence, you know that there are 3 more strides left. This is a great place to train your eye. Is the second jump coming up as a tight, medium, or long distance?

If the distance seems tight as you land off the first jump, exhale and say a long, slow whoa. (This is breathing your horse down.) Open your hip angle and create the sail, so your horse will drop back to you. Give him the freedom he needs in his head and neck to raise his withers, drop on his hocks, and rock back for the jump. There is plenty of time to work on straightness when the distance comes up easy. Do not get caught over steadying. Keep looking ahead to your midpoint, and soften your hands when you know you have made the adjustment that was necessary to make the line work for your horse. Use only a half-ounce of pressure to let your horse know he can use his head and neck without restriction. This is enough to catch drifts, keep forming the track, and keep him on his hocks. Every line has a midpoint. Make any necessary stride adjustments as you ride to the midpoint to allow your horse to move forward in balance and get his hocks to the base of the jump in the second half of the line. Remember to relax the feel of your hands, and ask him to leave the ground with your legs. Practice waiting for your horse to jump up to you, and ride across the jump in mid-air.

If the distance looks medium, keep cantering and support straightness. Don't allow your upper body to lead you ahead of your horse's motion. Look for the moment when you might lighten your hands. You must



relax your feel by the base of the jump, if not before. As you lighten your hand, remember to ask your horse to leave the ground. Sometimes this may just take a thought; it depends on the horse. Remember that you are riding to a focal point at the end of the line. In time, you will be able to see the line with matching strides from the very beginning as you trot over the first jump. Picture the line exactly as you want it to ride. Create a visual of being "at ease" while jumping these exercises.

If the distance feels long, canter forward to the midpoint. Concentrate on getting there in three strides with your horse balanced on his hocks and straight. As you move up to the midpoint, your horse will know when he has moved up enough. **Listen** and allow him to raise his withers, drop on his hocks, and rock back for the jump. This is why you rode forward to the midpoint. When you feel your horse settle back on his hocks, do not push the horse forward thinking he is backing out of the jump. Allow the back up and support the new rhythm. Use your upper body to help—open your hip angle. Protect the straightness off the ground.

Trotting in and cantering out of lines gives you time to practice riding to the midpoint. Create and re-establish the pace as you land off the first jump. Once you reach the midpoint, you will see and feel any minor adjustments you need to make. You will see the ride you are seeking in your mind. Focusing on flatwork as you ride to the midpoint will often relax you and make it easier for you to let the jump come to you. Just keep forming the track, like a chute between your hands and legs. Relax, wait, and maintain. These are the final steps in riding to the base of the jump.

Notes

Exercise 3

To add and leave out the stride over poles and boxes, set your poles or boxes 66 feet apart as we demonstrated on DVD III. There are so many ways to be creative with this exercise. For example:

Create pace in the medium canter while in half-seat, and simply canter the poles or boxes using the 66' line. When practicing this way, you will immediately know how much stride your horse has. Remember to establish pace, ride out the line, and relax. Wait with your horse while riding him up in front of your legs. Keep the connection from the inside leg to the outside rein, and maintain a



smooth, forward pace. Focus on establishing a rhythmic canter. At this point, don't worry too much about how you meet the poles or the striding between them.

Once you can comfortably canter the poles and keep your horse in front of your leg and straight, vary the strides between the poles. Every horse will have a different stride length in the ordinary canter. Begin with six easy strides, then open up your horse's stride, and canter between the poles in five strides. Finally, settle the canter, and ride seven strides between the poles or boxes. Mix it up without drilling. Practice the three seats as you vary the striding. Use two-point position to ride five strides. To ask for six strides, drop to a half-seat, and when you want seven strides practice full-seat using your upper body as a sail and allowing your weight to drop down and around your horse into your legs and stirrups. Practice stepping down into the balls of your feet, and imagine a decrease from your horse's hind end as he elevates slightly to lighten his front end. Try the exercise a few times, take a walking break, and then try again.

Exercise 4

There are three approaches to a jump: short, medium and long. Establishing the pace needed for the jump is crucial. Once you accept this as the first step of EVERY jump or line of jumps, you become a leader committed to her horse and his stride length. Also, you must always practice the steps of a turn, even when they happen quickly in the short approach to a jump.

Short Approach: A rollback to a jump off a short turn or a tight turn to a jump with four or less straight strides to the take-off are considered short



approaches. Ride this approach using a full-seat connected to the saddle, and focus on staying in the center of the horse and riding with the motion. To continue forward on the short approach, keep your shoulders square as you open your hip angle and create a tall upper body in the center of the horse's motion. Riding a straight line with your focus, relax your feel, and as you ask your horse to leave the ground with your legs, wait for him to close your hip angle and jump up to you. As you land, re-establish your pace, and reconnect to the rhythm to ride out the line.

Medium Approach: Ride in half-seat, and review the steps to a turn. The beginning of the turn creates the connection of inside leg to outside rein. Shape the turn with the inside leg and an inside indirect rein in front of the withers so that you can see the inside corner of your horse's eye as you focus your eyes forward. In the second part of the turn be sure the horse is in front of your leg, preparing for the third part of the turn. In the third part, the haunch turn finishes the turn and comes straight on the line of the medium approach to the jump. Always follow forward. As you come out of the turn, straighten the horse by riding outside leg to inside rein. Line up. Relax, wait, and maintain your pace until you are ready to relax your hands—ask your horse to jump and wait for him to jump up to you.

Long Approach: Take a two-point position with your seat out of the saddle, but remember that your leg connects to the saddle all the way past your knee to your mid-thigh. This is crucial to maintaining the connection between horse and rider. Often the long approach will

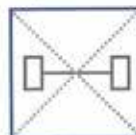
appear as a slightly long distance. When this happens, stay open, continue forward and wait the jump out. With practice you will find the base of the jump with the same pace. Always ride the three steps to the turn, and then relax, wait, and maintain the same pace. Even on long approaches, it is important to finish the turn with the outside leg and outside bearing rein while continuing forward. At the take-off point, relax your feel, use your legs to ask the horse to jump, and wait for him to jump up to you. Remember to ride across the jump, and be ready to re-establish your pace and reconnect to the rhythm as your horse lands.

Whatever your approach, always set the **pace** you need before you make the final approach, so that your horse will "see" which distance will work best for him. This is the glory of a stabilized horse—they help.

Notes

Exercise 5

The key to riding jumps on the angle is using a focal point to create a visual line for the approach, jump, and landing. Jump the middle of the jump and then ride out the line you have created. Watch the explanation for jumping an angled fence on DVD III.



Begin with a pole on the ground and imagine an X with lines that cross directly over the center of the pole. Ride the lines of the X in a comfortable medium canter. Practice both lines.

Once you are comfortable over the pole, proceed to a flower box or small wall. When you can jump those confidently, keeping your horse in the medium canter and straight on your lines of focus, move on to small jumps.

When you really feel comfortable jumping this particular angle, begin to practice jumping precise lines on more severe or challenging angles. Use the same steps to ride all angled jumps. However, it is important to remember the inside leg to the outside rein and to focus on the track your aids are describing to your horse. Visualize the image of a chute between your hands and legs, and you will keep your horse straight, even when jumping on a very steep angle to a fence. Always remember to relax your feel at the base, close your leg to ask your horse to jump, and wait for him to jump up to you.

Notes

Mental Work

Train yourself mentally using mental strength training.

Exercise 1

Exhale! Rather than always focusing on the intake of the breath, focus on exhaling. This reinforces the "letting go" process. Many top riders have found that this works wonders right before they go into competition. The horses feel the "letting go."^{xiii}

Exercise 2

Re-connect. Put yourself on the lunge line for this exercise. If you feel disconnected from your horse, begin at the walk. Close your eyes for three or four strides and focus on the rhythm and relax into it. Then open your eyes for the remainder of the lunge circle. Do this several times at the walk, and then practice it at both the sitting and rising trot. In time you will reconnect with your horse and become part of him.^{xiv}

Notes

It is our hope that you feel empowered by the ideas and concepts we have presented in the DVD series and this workbook. The DVD's provide you with the visual images, and the workbooks lead you through the process and describe how things should feel. We have left places throughout the workbook for you to take notes. Making notes will help you remember and understand what you are experiencing and facilitate your learning.

Think of the *process* as your goal, and practice reaching your goal using small steps. Be patient; reward and appreciate each small success. You will develop achievable short-term goals as the process unfolds. You are seeking a true partnership with your horse, a partnership that allows you to fill-in for each other when needed. Strive for this type of relationship with every horse you ride, but remember building relationships takes time. Using this system helps you reach a place that allows you to know in each moment and stride that you will be OK. You now have the tools and the understanding to handle anything that comes your way with your horse, so you can focus on your relationship and how you communicate with each other. This is the real Life Lesson Learned with Horses.

Affiliated National Riding Commission

Level Two Tasks

Riders who are currently C3 Pony Clubbers, hunting with a recognized hunt, successfully eventing at the Novice Level, or showing hunters successfully at 2'9" should be ready for Level Two. All Level Two candidates must have successfully completed the Level One Tasks.

Position Phase

- Demonstrate a secure working position at the walk, trot, sitting trot, and canter. (The rider's hands must function independently of the body, and the rider should generally be in unity with the horse within all gaits and in transitions.)
- Demonstrate a secure working position while riding without stirrups on a comfortable horse at the walk, trot and canter.
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain a secure jumping position and a correct crest release through a combination containing at least three elements and two oxers set at 2'9" or higher.
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain a secure working position and a secure crest release while trotting in and cantering out of two lines of jumps. (The trot jump at the beginning of the lines should be 2'6" and the out of the lines set at 2'9".)

Control Phase

- Demonstrate a good performance of your choice of three movements that are used to develop the horse's longitudinal agility and three for his lateral agility.
- Demonstrate simple lead changes through the trot on the centerline of the ring.
- Ride the Level Two Program Ride using a good quality passive contact throughout. (This can be found at www.anrc.org)
- Demonstrate good passive contact and intermediate level control in hunter exercises at the walk, trot, and canter performed in a large ring or enclosed field with at least two other horses.
- Produce an organized performance over a course of jumps at 2'9", demonstrating a secure non-abusive working position. (Simple or flying changes of lead are equally acceptable)

Footnotes

- i Joe Fargis
- ii Parelli, Pat, Natural Horse-man-ship, Western Horseman Inc., Colorado Springs, CO 1993
- iii Parelli, Pat, Natural Horse-man-ship, Western Horseman Inc., Colorado Springs, CO 1993
- iv Pam Baker
- v Joe Fargis
- vi Pat Parelli
- vii Pat Parelli
- viii Lendon Gray
- ix Victor Hugo-Vidal
- x Victor Hugo-Vidal
- xi Karen O'Connor
- xii Francie Steinwedell-Carvin
- xiii Lendon Gray
- xiii Francie Steinwedell-Carvin
- xiv Francie Steinwedell-Carvin

Schooling Phase

- Demonstrate an organized procedure (10–20 minutes) for warming up a horse for work and submit a written outline of your plan with an explanation of why you included the various components.
- Clearly demonstrate the aids for a short turn at the walk and a correct performance of this beginning schooling movement to teach the horse the half turn on the haunch.
- While riding on passive contact demonstrate a strong trot rising, work toward the development of a lengthening of the trot, and return to an ordinary trot.
- Pick up a counter canter and maintain it through at least one turn.

Theoretical/Horse Care Phase

- Explain the various reasons for lunging a horse.
- Define the difference between a blemish and an unsoundness.
- Describe a good performance of three movements that are used to develop the horse's longitudinal agility and three for lateral agility.
- Understand and be able to explain the aims, aids, and techniques of the intermediate level of riding.
- Know how work affects a horse's vital signs.
- Be able to describe three types of snaffle bits and a Pelham.
- Know the parts of the horse's foot, both internal and external

Affiliated National Riding Commission

Level Three Tasks

Riders who are currently B Pony Clubbers, hunting 2nd flight with a recognized hunt, eventing at the Training Level, or showing hunters successfully at 3' in recognized shows should be ready for Level Three. All Level Three candidates are expected to have successfully performed the Level Two Tasks.

Position Phase

- Ride the Level Three Position Program Ride (available at www.anrc.org) without stirrups or bareback, demonstrating mastery of a good working position.
- Critique your own position in relation to your understanding of the four fundamentals of a good working position and the seven physical qualities that contribute to the establishment of the fundamentals.
- Ride a simple course of 3' jumps, demonstrating a quality performance while maintaining a secure, non-abusive position that is in unity with the horse's efforts. Demonstrate a correctly used medium crest release.

Control Phase

- Demonstrate a three loop serpentine at the canter with prompt simple changes through the trot.
- Demonstrate a well-executed turn on the haunch at the walk to the right and to the left.
- Demonstrate the ability to canter between two rails on the ground set 66' apart in five cantering strides, then in six cantering strides, and again in five cantering strides with no interruption of the canter. *(If the horse is small or short strided, the rider can change the exercise to six and seven cantering strides to accommodate the horse.)*
- Ride a course of 3' jumps in the ring that includes at least one combination and two changes of direction, demonstrating good turns, flying changes of lead on a straight line, consistent pace, and good approaches. (A minimum score of 75 meets the standard).

- Jump an outside hunter course of at least six fences set at 2'9" to 3', demonstrating a quality canter for outside jumping, contact between fences, and an appropriate crest release.
- Demonstrate an accurately performed Level Three Program Ride. (available at www.anrc.org) maintaining a good working position and a consistent soft contact.

Schooling Phase

- After walking for 10 minutes, ride your horse in a prepared 5-minute warm-up at the elementary level of control, and then establish contact at the trot
- Set three different combinations, each containing three or more jumps and set to trot in. Ride your horse through each of them. Please include the distances you used between the jumps for each combination on your task sheet.
- Ride a large 1/2 circle in reverse, demonstrating a flying change of lead. Do this in both directions.
- Ride a circle at the trot showing correct bending and counter bending (position right and position left).
- Ride a leg yield at the walk in both directions.

Theoretical/Horse Care Phase

- Discuss the qualities of a good working position with reference to those qualities that you need to improve in your own riding.
- Know the footfall patterns of the horse's gaits.
- Know the mechanics of the jump.
- Know the distances commonly used to set lines of jumps for a 3' hunter course.
- Understand and be able to define the terminology used in the system of forward riding.
- Be able to explain the use of the indirect reins and how they are used in combination with the other rein aids.
- Identify good and bad points of basic leg conformation.

Note: You may download the tasks and assessment criteria for all levels at www.anrc.org



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Visit www.anrc.org for up-to-date information on the Riding Levels, Clinics, and assessment.

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