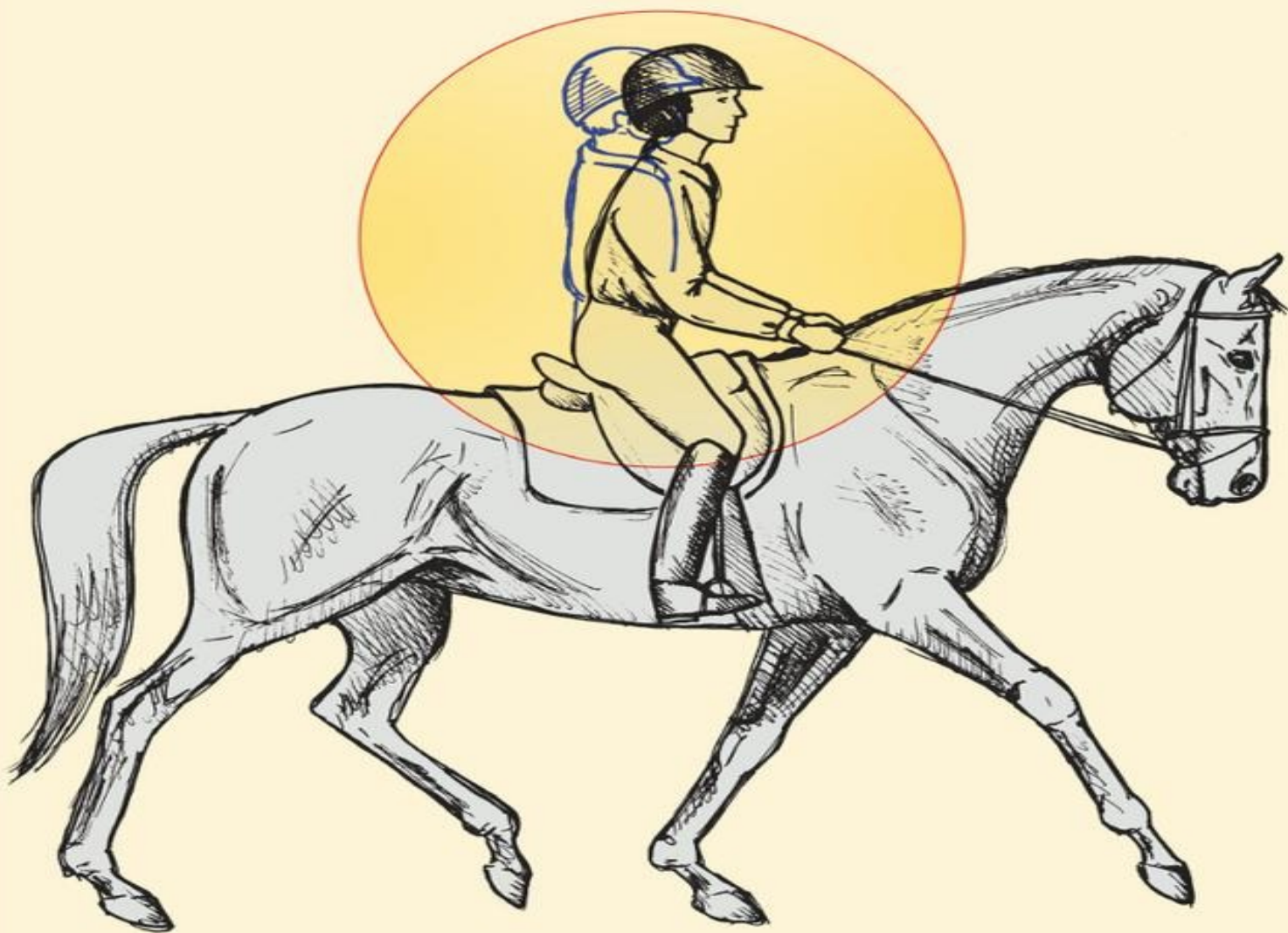


THE PRINCIPLES OF RIDING



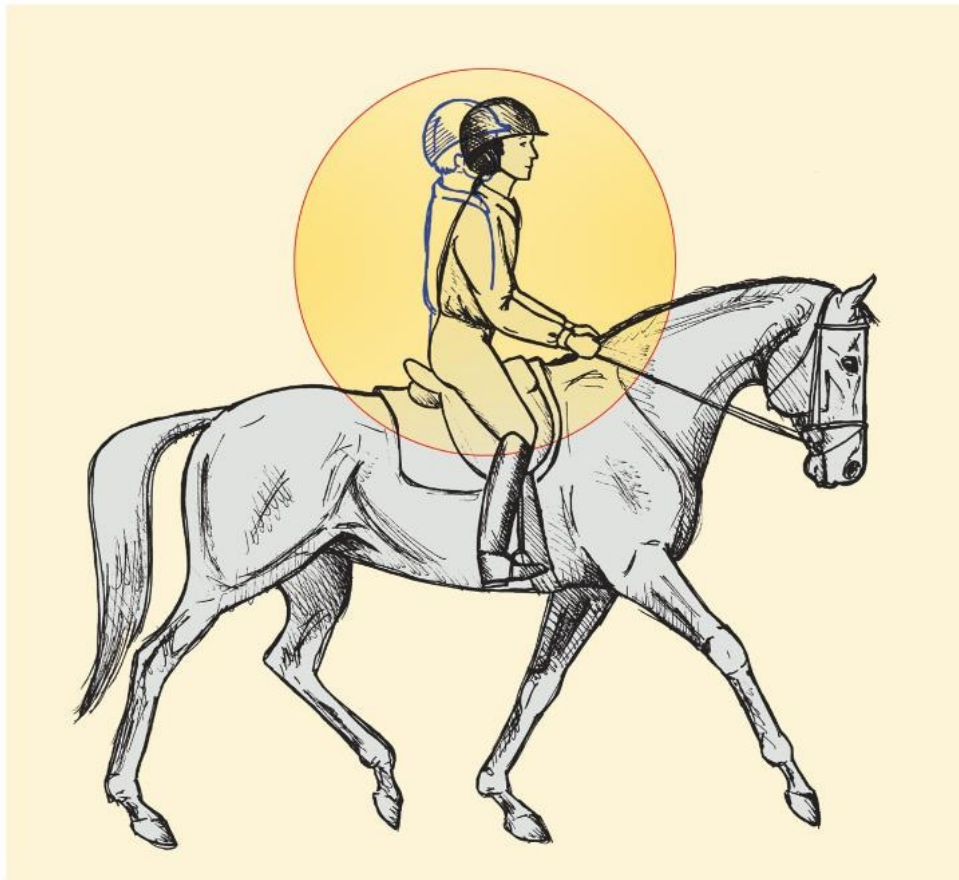
German
Equestrian
Federation

THE GERMAN EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION

The Principles of Riding

Basic Training

for Horse and Rider



Kenilworth Press

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Foreword

The Principles of Riding by the German Equestrian Federation was first published more than 50 years ago with 28 editions to date and over 400,000 sold, translated into 11 languages.

Volumes 1–6 are widely regarded as the standard reference work for the fundamental knowledge about horses and their training, as well as riding, driving, and vaulting. Furthermore, their principles are recognised by the Fédération Equestre Internationale (International Equestrian Federation, FEI).

The basic training of horses and riders has been completely revised regarding language and content in the new *Principles of Riding*, while still taking into account the well-established principles of the 'Old Masters'. In doing so, this traditional and fundamental work has undergone a comprehensive modernisation.

The horse's instincts and natural behaviour are presented in detail as the basis of communication and understanding between horse and rider. Modern scientific research relating to training theory and biomechanics has influenced the systematic training of the rider as well as that of the horse. Nevertheless, these *Principles of Riding* aim to practically assist horse lovers who want to learn, irrespective of whether they ride for leisure or competitively, are interested in hacking or hunting, or want to develop and improve their basic training for dressage, show-jumping or eventing.

More clearly than in previous editions, emphasis is put on an integral approach to the interaction between horse and rider – that all depends on harmony between horse and rider. The correct seat and the appearance of the horse under the rider are regarded as the result of correct riding.

This fundamental work provides reliable guidelines for the correct training of horse and rider for all riders and trainers, but also for competition judges and all those showing a general interest in equestrian sport.

Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung e.V. (FN)
Sports Department

29th edition, Warendorf, November 2013

Thoughts on Classical Riding

Today, as in the past, the ideas expressed in *Principles of Riding* are based on the principles of classical riding. 'Classical riding' can be defined as:

A vital and modern training system which builds on the basic principles of the 'Old Masters', supplemented by new insights which serve the welfare of the horse and are purposeful for its training.

Classical riding has developed over the centuries, with the contribution of many significant historical riding masters. What did not become established was discarded. Established knowledge was recognised, passed on and developed further. That is, regardless of the different uses of the horse, how the following essential and eternally valid criteria of classical riding according to the *Principles of Riding* of the German Equestrian Federation (FN) have evolved.

Classical riding:

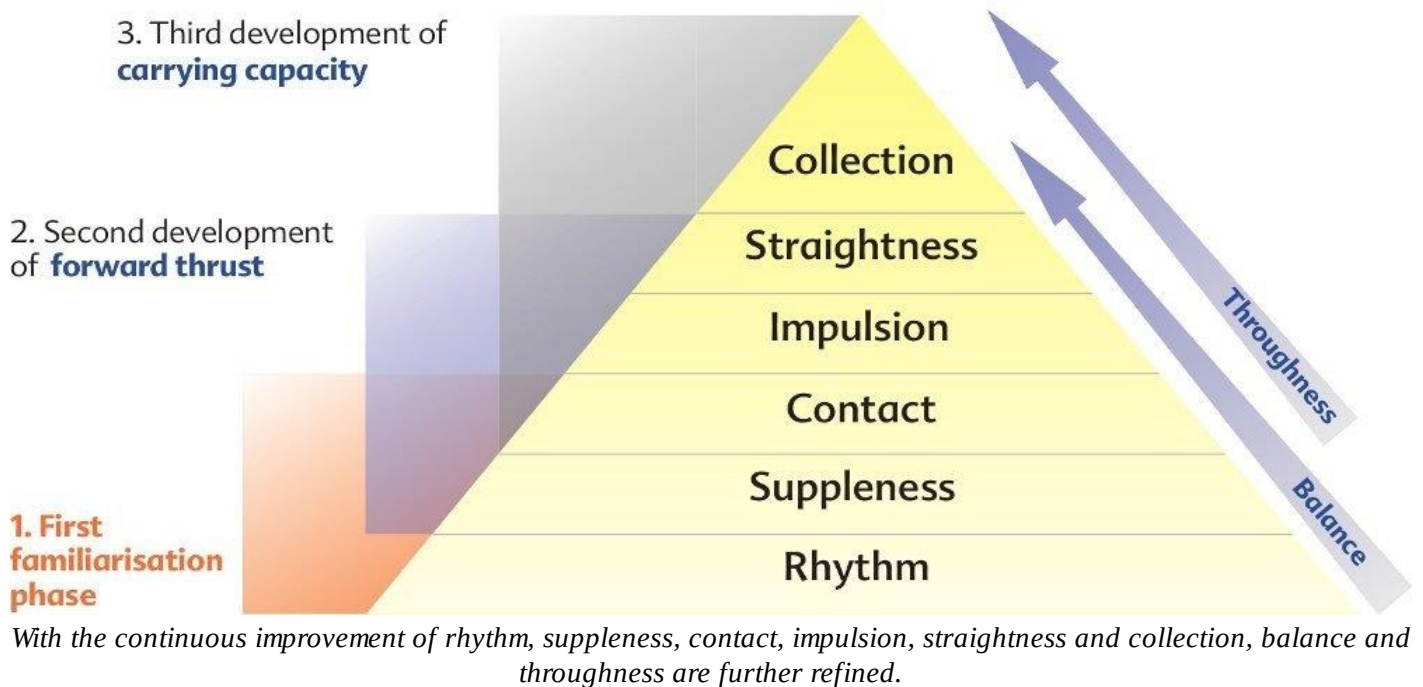
- Is orientated towards the nature of the horse – that is, the horse's needs and each horse's natural, individual abilities.
- Considers:
 - the physical precondition of the horse and
 - the natural behaviour of the horse.
- When done correctly, is species-appropriate and supports the horse's welfare.
- Is aimed towards a balanced 'gymnasticising' and strengthening of the horse.
- Is focused on the training of each individual horse, and is thus diverse and versatile.
- Develops and maintains a horse that performs willingly and confidently,
- Demands from the rider an elastic, balanced seat, a sensitive, fine use of the aids, as well as an understanding of the nature of the horse and its correlation to training, and thus leads to inner and outer balance of horse and rider.

The overall structure and content of the *Principles of Riding* is focused on this fundamental understanding. The Training Scale¹, contains the following six elements:

- RHYTHM
(regularity of all steps or strides).

- SUPPLENESS
(supple contraction and relaxation of the muscles through inner relaxation).
- CONTACT
(constant, soft connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth).
- IMPULSION
(transmission of the energetic impulse from the hindquarters over the swinging back into the overall forward movement of the horse).
- STRAIGHTNESS
(even gymnasticising of both sides of the horse's body to compensate for the horse's natural crookedness).
- COLLECTION
(light-footed balance covering less ground with energetic hind legs that are brought under the body in self-carriage).

Training System of the Horse / 'Training Scale'



This structure is defined as the centrepiece of classical riding because it gives a guideline not only for the long-term training programme of the horse, but also for every individual schooling session, regardless of the intended use of the horse. The six steps simultaneously influence each other. They lead to the horse developing an ever-improving throughness (throughness describing the condition of the horse when it fulfils all of the elements of the Training Scale at its respective level of training and responds willingly to the interplay of the rider's aids), as well as an increasingly assured balance when combined with the education and submission of the horse.

A correctly shaped horse (one with basic physical attributes that are enhanced and developed to the optimum by the application of classical principles) emerges as a result of training. Each rider should not only know these classic principles, but also consider self-critically, how they can be put into practice. Those who deal with horses must recognise the horse's basic needs, respect them and assume responsibility for them.² This should henceforth lead to efforts towards horse maintenance and management that respect the nature of the horse,³ to competent, sensitive care, as well as to riding with plenty of 'feel'.

As with people, strengths and weaknesses form part of the individual characteristics of every horse. Supporting the horse's strengths as well as recognising its weaknesses and then minimising them is the practical aim that requires the rider to have knowledge, skill, experience, understanding and patience.

The horse is gymnasticised through the Training Scale as a holistic method. This way, horse and rider will find a mutual balance, which enables them to communicate with each other, very delicately. Ideally, the movements of the horse and rider merge into one. The observer – whether non-professional or expert – will only perceive a harmonious overall picture.

Education and training according to classical riding creates a willing, cooperative horse, regardless of intended use, as long as these methods are employed correctly. Thus, riding will lead to pleasure, while at the same time ensuring the horse's health.

A balanced, independent seat is the basis for this training. Riding different, well-trained schoolmasters is an essential part of the rider's learning process as they need to adjust to riding any horse with different physical conformation, movements, and their own individual character traits. This gives the rider a greater understanding of the horse, both physically and mentally, and helps develop riding skills and, more importantly, 'feel'. The horse is always the 'mirror' of the rider's influence.

Reasons for any difficulties, setbacks or lack of success must always be searched for initially within riders themselves and not with the horse. If the rider is heading in the right direction, this will be evident to them through the behaviour and the good feeling the horse radiates when under saddle.

This willingness for self-criticism, combined with the ability to put the above fundamentals into practice, are what leads to riding correctly according to the principles of classical riding.

^{1.} Sometimes also referred to, in Germany and elsewhere, as the Scale(s) of Training.

- [2.](#) See German Animal Law §§ 1,2 and 3.
- [3.](#) See German Equestrian Federation (eds), *Principles of Riding and Driving, Volume 4: Maintenance, Feeding, Health and Breeding*, 16th edition, **FN**verlag, Warendorf 2013.

CHAPTER 1

General Basics:

Horse – Rider – Trainer – Training Area

1.1 The Horse

Knowledge about the needs and characteristics of horses is a basic requirement for their care, handling, and riding. Only if one fully understands horses as a species will one behave correctly towards them and achieve a positive understanding with them.

1.1.1 The Natural Characteristics of the Horse

Horses are living beings with instincts, a collection of previous experiences and a particularly strong memory, as well as many other particular characteristics which have developed over the course of their evolution. Although horses have been kept and used by humans for a long time for military purposes, as assistance animals and as sporting partners, their natural instincts continue to define their behaviour.

Horses are **HERD ANIMALS**. The herd offers protection and security. Therefore, horses do not like to be alone. Herds are led by an experienced **LEAD ANIMAL**, that is usually respected without any need to fight for this role.

Horses have a **STRICT HIERARCHY** within their group. Rules about how they deal with one another ensure their survival within the herd. Fights to ascertain hierarchy, which are particularly noticeable among young horses, but also when new horses are brought into a group, are part of their natural behaviour. The position of superiority will either be accepted by the subordinate animal because of the behaviour of the dominant horse, or it will be fought out between them. Commonly, just one single confrontation suffices.

Horses are **ANIMALS OF FLIGHT**. For the **HERBIVOROUS** horse, immediate flight has always been the safest means of protection from danger. One of the most elementary requirements of a horse is its own safety. For this reason, horses are naturally always on the alert for potential danger. Only when fleeing from an imminent danger is not an option does a horse kick out with its hind legs in self-

defence, attack with the forelegs and bite.

Horses are also ANIMALS THAT ORIGINATED ON THE PLAINS. Hence, they are CONSTANTLY MOVING. During their existence in the wild, starting at a certain point in the history of their evolution, they spent hours on end slowly moving in search of food, covering up to 30–40km per day. They were constantly in the open air, ideally in a wide expanse with good visibility, without seeking the protection of caves or hidden spots, so as not to minimise their potential escape routes.

Horses' SENSE OF SMELL is highly developed, as is their HEARING. Their EYESIGHT and RANGE OF VISION are far different from those of humans. The eyes on either side of the head enable an almost 360-degree range of vision. Horses have a very good eye for movement. They are particularly good at spotting moving items, even when they are a long way in the distance, to the side, or at a steep angle behind them. Their SENSE OF TOUCH and their SKIN SENSITIVITY are also very well developed.

COMMUNICATION between horses is carried out not only through audible sounds, but, more importantly, through BODY LANGUAGE. A certain body position, a certain expression or positioning of the ears, are unmistakable signs for other horses.

Horses are naturally rather good-tempered in their behaviour, even though they can often be quite physically rough to one another.

They have a particularly good MEMORY and a well-defined sense of location. Horses need routines for orientation; they are creatures of habit.

As a rule, horses – in terms of size – are largely mature at the age of five. Their overall physical development is, however, only completed around the age of seven.

Movement, light, air and contact with others of their own kind remain particularly important for horses to this day. In stable management and the daily care of horses, these criteria require particular attention. Horses need enough movement and also a variety of movement. This means, in practice, turnout in paddocks or fields.¹

1.1.2 The Relationship between Horse and Rider

Dealing with horses and riding requires a rider to constantly understand and relate to the sensitivities and reactions of the horse. That way, riders can try to judge things from a horse's perspective – whether the rider's behaviour is suitable or whether their aids are 'understandable'.

In training – particularly with young horses – the herd instinct can be used positively by having older, more experienced horses acting as lead horses, for example when

going on a hack or when attempting the first jumps. But because riding in a group is not always possible or desirable, a horse also has to get used to situations in which it is separated from other horses. This is particularly important for transport, for riding alone and for riding at competitions.

Since horses are principally good-natured, trusting and curious, an approach by a human is generally unproblematic and can take place naturally. However, the human must always be calm in every movement. Quick movements can frighten the horse and lead to defensive reactions.

How is the RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HORSE AND RIDER to be viewed, from a horse's perspective? It is rather unlikely that a horse really accepts a human as its 'leader'. However, the need for security and the build-up of trust through positive experiences can bring the relevant human into a leader-like position in the perception of the horse.

To communicate confidence and trust to the horse is, therefore, one of the most important tasks of a rider.

Mutual respect on both sides is further essential to a good relationship. This is also related to the question of HIERARCHY. The role of the highest-ranking individual in the hierarchy, which the rider has got to assume, will not be determined by fighting, but rather through self-confident, firm behaviour and actions. Many horses, often because of insecure, inconsistent or unsuitable behaviour on the part of the rider, try to clarify their own position in the hierarchy of the horse-human relationship.

Only a human who appears and acts in a calm, positive and considerate way will be accepted by the horse as a higher-ranked being.

The rider should, in all instances, be involved positively with the horse and make an effort to motivate it for the desired performance by making such a performance as comfortable as possible. Strictness or violence make the rider the 'aggressor', which the horse will either try to escape from, or defend itself against. Insecure and half-hearted behaviour on the part of the rider will also lead to insecurity in the horse.

If the horse accepts the rider trustingly as the higher-ranked individual, this will increase the horse's receptiveness to the rider's communication. Therefore, the rider's influence on the horse is positively reinforced.

Praise with the voice, stroking, scratching the withers or patting the neck at the right moment give the horse the confirmation it needs that everything is fine. Constant praise without reason, and not in response to a particular action of the

horse, loses any kind of effect. The same principle applies to the correction of problematic situations. Any reaction that would be considered as 'punishment' in human understanding is to be dismissed, because one cannot presume that a horse can think abstractly in the way that humans do. For example, a horse is certainly not capable of linking a violent reaction from the rider at the end of a jumping course to mistakes made while jumping in order to avoid them the next time. Rather, the horse is likely to remember the whole experience as a vastly unpleasant one. Only when the consequences of a particular behaviour are immediately understandable for the horse will its behaviour change. It must be the rider's goal to support the horse so positively that it simply does not 'misbehave'. Therefore, it is essential that the rider remains calm during any kind of disagreement. Emotional outbursts from the rider will only unsettle the horse.

The horse learns best from positive experiences and positive reinforcement!

Sensitive handling on the one hand, and consequent behaviour on the other, make humans 'predictable' to horses. This gives the horse security and confidence. Horse-appropriate handling, therefore, demands a high degree of attention and concentration whenever working with horses.

Riders have various aids and their voice at their disposal for COMMUNICATION with the horse. With the voice, the tone is particularly important for conveying a sense of relaxation or, conversely, demand. Another important communicative tool humans have when dealing with horses is their BODY LANGUAGE. In the same way that a horse reacts to the finest of signals from its fellow horses, it also perceives the movement and the posture of a human. Riders have to be aware of this when dealing with their horses. To implement body language in a positive way, for example when in the stable, when leading or lungeing, it is important to learn from experienced horse people.

The tendency of horses to adhere to HABITS can be used by the rider not only in daily handling, but also in training under saddle, by following the same routine in a standardised way. However, if the rider is not considerate and decisive enough in the education of a horse, undesirable and uncomfortable habits will be reinforced.

The natural FLIGHT INSTINCT of the horse has to be accepted, since it has not fundamentally changed to this day. Horses have different sensitivity thresholds, often dependent on their mood at the time. Generally speaking, visual perceptions influence the horse's behaviour more strongly than auditory ones.

If horses panic after a moment of shock, they can seemingly switch off all their senses and become a source of danger to themselves and their environment. This

applies when working with horses on the ground and in the stable, not just under saddle.

A rider will notice the flight instinct in a horse during any tendency to spook. Often, riders can feel and recognise the horse's inner tension even before there is an actual reaction by the horse. In this case, it serves no purpose and is inappropriate to 'punish' the horse for spooking. That will only strengthen its insecurity, and validate its fears. Instead, correct framing of the horse with the aids and a relaxed, patient familiarisation with as many new situations as possible, gives the horse increased confidence and trust.

Experienced riders are able to perceive every situation from the horse's point of view. They can potentially anticipate the horse's reactions by avoiding situations of danger or skilfully 'playing' around these and, by doing so, have a relaxing influence on the horse.

Unnecessary, loud noises in the yard and during training sessions should be avoided. Then again, it is also beneficial for horses to get used to changing environmental conditions around them to a certain extent.

Particularly noteworthy is the difference between the human and equine RANGE OF VISION. An object or movement which a rider may not even have noticed – for example an animal in the bushes directly behind them – could prompt a horse to spook and trigger a flight reflex. This can catch many riders off guard. If a horse sees something in the distance which it cannot fully gauge, it will suddenly lift its head and neck very high in order to get a better overview. This is a natural reaction, and the rider must first give the horse a chance to assess the situation before continuing the training.

The horse's sensitivity demands relaxed handling and sensitive riding. At the same time, this is also what allows the rider to have the desired fine influence during training.

Observing the eyes, ears, tail, nostrils and build-up of sweat can provide the rider with significant clues in assessing the psychological state of the horse.

- The EYE is the mirror of the inner characteristics and the mental state of the horse. It can express attention, trust, mistrust or fear.
- The way the EARS MOVE can also give important indications as to the emotional state of the horse. Ears pinned back onto the head always express uneasiness and readiness to defend. A lively ear movement or raised, pricked ears are signs of attention and enthusiasm.
- SNORTING, together with a LOOSELY SWINGING, RELAXED TAIL, suggest supple muscles

and relaxation. Conversely, a clenched tail can be a sign of fear or defensiveness. With a lifted tail, sometimes accompanied by loud, powerful snorting, the horse expresses tension and excitement.

- SWEAT, other than through work, can also form in situations of particular excitement. As a rule, such situations will lead to an increased heart rate, pulse and respiration.

Riders must invest enough time, patience, a gift for observation and an interest to learn in order to identify and decode the horse's behaviour. Only then can the rider earn the horse's trust, know how to differentiate between fear and resistance/disobedience and act in the right way during the horse's education and training, both on the ground and in the saddle.

The horse's evolution has allowed for the development of natural sensory perceptions and behavioural patterns, which present an important basis for classical training principles.

However, individual horses are very different in terms of inner qualities and temperament, in their preferences and dislikes, and in their potential. The rider must be prepared to devise and plan a timely and flexible training programme to do each and every individual horse justice.

Every rider's ultimate goal is to train a happy horse that is willing to perform. The requisite stable and harmonious partnership between horse and rider is supported and strengthened by equestrian expertise, patience and a constant focus on the mind of each horse.

If the rider is capable of feeling their way into the horse's character and its behaviour, they can understand how they are perceived by the horse and what methods and forms of action are required for each situation.

Riders must adapt their behaviour to the horse's nature, not vice versa.

1.2 The Rider

The correct ways of handling horses, and of riding itself, do not only require particular knowledge and skills, but also certain character traits of the rider. These are to be further developed over the course of the training journey. That is why riding is invaluable in the development of personality, particularly for children and teenagers.

Alongside a love of animals and the ability to empathise, patience, self-control, fairness and discipline are all demanded in and developed by riding.

Having an athletic figure is a big advantage, but it is not an indispensable condition for good, sensitive riding. It is also particularly advantageous for a rider to have good general fitness, meaning a certain degree of stamina and strength as well as flexibility and, above all, agility. Riding does not demand an extreme level of muscular strength; however, many muscle groups are involved in stabilising the rider's posture in movement. In addition to a good feeling for movement, an interplay of the different movements of the rider's body and good concentration are very helpful. Riding is classified as a particularly demanding sport in terms of coordination. Next to the ability to find one's own balance on a moving horse and move elastically with the movement of the horse, being able to support this actively with the various aids is also required. As long as attention is paid to certain basic requirements, equestrianism is a sport that can be practised for a lifetime, from a young age through to an advanced age, as it also supports good health and well-being of the rider.

Those who would like to participate in equestrian sport, whether as a leisure rider or a competitive athlete, have a duty to train themselves and their horses.

This is the only way to be involved in this sport with pleasure and the necessary amount of safety, without straining or even harming the horse unnecessarily. Theoretical knowledge is also essential to support the progress in learning how to ride and to ride well. Knowledge of the characteristics and behaviour of horses, their maintenance and care, as well as riding theory, and the principles of training, is essential for any interested, responsible rider.

Every rider needs – not only at the beginning, but continuously – an experienced trainer who ensures that the training develops positively.

Even very advanced riders – in fact, even riders at the top of the game – allow experienced trainers to correct them and eradicate mistakes which quite easily sneak back into the work without continuous guidance.

Regular training under competent guidance enables the rider to learn to handle a horse properly, and to attain a solid equestrian foundation.

Systematically correct training in small, individually tailored steps is an important condition for successful development and it also prevents injuries.

1.3 The Schoolmaster

A suitable schoolmaster is a definite prerequisite for the basic training of a rider. For most riders, it is important that a schoolmaster is safe and well trained, but not too sensitive to the rider's aids. Such a horse must get on with other horses and

not be spooky.

Alongside soundness and a balanced temperament, good basic training of the horse is one of the most important requirements of a schoolmaster. It has to be able to give a novice rider the feeling of correct movement. A schooled horse is the best teacher. Conversely, young horses should only be ridden by experienced riders.

A schoolmaster should allow its rider to sit well and ride with their leg aids. A horse that is well gymnasticised on both sides, and reacts to the rider's aids, offers the best basis for a successful riding education. The trainer has to know their schoolmasters very well to be able to analyse which rider harmonises best with which horse.

The size and build of the schoolmaster should be suited to the rider. Heavy riders should learn on a suitably strong horse while lighter riders, young people and children, might be more suited to small horses and ponies. The ability of a horse to carry a greater weight does not depend solely on body size, but on its entire conformation.

Advanced riders should have the opportunity to ride different horses, including more sensitive schoolmasters that react accordingly to rider mistakes or to correct riding. This way, novice riders can feel their own mistakes and eradicate them with the help of a trainer, thus refining their application of aids. Well-trained schoolmasters therefore become true 'teaching masters' to support the rider's development.

To develop a feel for riding, it is necessary to ride as many different horses as possible.

Show-jumping schoolmasters must have considerable jumping experience under different riders. What defines them is their ability to judge their own take-off and jump efficiently from experience, while always remaining calm.

Well-trained schoolmasters are also needed for riding in the countryside. On hacks, less experienced riders must sit on particularly safe, calm horses, while experienced riders can manage on more temperamental horses.

Different tasks, such as riding up and down hills of varying degrees of steepness, riding through water, negotiating small drops and steps, or jumping tree trunks, can be performed by any horse and any rider once they have been systematically made familiar with them.

Schoolmasters often handle a very large amount of work. Given the fact that they are constantly ridden by different riders, they must be treated and taken care of with attention and respect. This includes being ridden regularly by an experienced

rider to check their suppleness and throughness and, if necessary, refurbish these qualities. Through correct care and meaningful, diverse work, schoolmasters remain healthy and able to perform for a long time.

Trained schoolmasters that are in good general condition are the figurehead of any riding school.

1.4 The Trainer

Trainers fulfil key roles in Riding Clubs and yards, and are central to the development of the equestrian sport. They have a versatile and responsible role for the entire process of equestrian education.

Students and horses should be schooled and supported according to the fundamentals of classical riding, respecting their individual talents and abilities. The focal point is, above all, a solid and varied basic training.

This basic training enables various alternatives for development, it promotes the well-being and health of horse and rider and makes a very important contribution to safety.

The competence of the trainer must therefore encompass appropriate behaviour around horses, their care and maintenance, the training of the horse at different levels and disciplines, as well as a similarly diverse training of the rider. This requires:

- A comprehensive personal riding background,
- necessary, extensive knowledge on the training of horses and riders, and
- educational (social) competence.

Not everybody who rides well themselves is also able to convey their knowledge, experience and skill suitably to students in different situations. These abilities can be learnt. What is decisive is the motivation to help other people to learn how to ride, the pleasure derived from doing so and a feeling of responsibility for the welfare of horses. From this motivation there develops a willingness to acquire the necessary knowledge and to engage oneself in the teaching process.

The correct and safe handling of horses is the first step for beginner riders and cannot be learnt on the go. Teaching an understanding of how horses should be handled is a prerequisite for harmonious cooperation between horse and rider. Teaching requires that the trainer has extensive experience and ability as a rider themselves, preferably gained with as many different horses as possible and in different disciplines.

Trainers must make an effort to put themselves into the position and feelings of the rider in every situation.

This way, the trainer can correct mistakes appropriately and enable progress. Although training of horses is also one of the important tasks of a trainer, their focus during a lesson is primarily on dealing with the rider. After all, in a lesson situation, a trainer can only improve the education of the horse by taking an influence on it through the rider.

The causes for potential problems must, as a rule, be searched for within the rider.

However, it can be helpful for the trainer to ride a pupil's horse now and again, or to swap horses among a group of riders. The basic skills of the trainer (alongside the practical experience and educational suitability) are taking joy in working with people, reliability, motivation and obviously a love of horses.

For optimal results in the learning process, the trainer can, for example, influence certain conditions, such as:

- Correct choice of schoolmasters/horses.
- Suitable composition of a training/riding group.
- Suitable selection of exercises and sequences of exercises.
- Accompanying theoretical lessons (if possible, in advance of the practical riding lessons).

During a riding lesson, teaching can take place, for example, in the following ways:

- Verbal instructions, corrections, explanations, linked with and responding to feedback from the rider.
- Suitable use of the voice: positive, motivating, but clear.
- Getting the rider to explain an exercise, or the rationale for it, in their own words in advance.
- The trainer riding themselves or having another experienced rider demonstrate the exercise.
- Body language (body position and gestures).
- Immediate correction of the rider's seat and posture on the horse – assuming one has permission to touch the rider!
- Analysis and discussion using video material.

It is the responsibility of the trainer to establish a positive learning atmosphere. This significantly increases the rider's receptiveness and sensitivity.

Teaching should always be done in a way that allows the rider to recognise the

trainer's interest in their positive development. Teachers and students are well advised to agree on achievable goals for training, desires and expectations, in order to experience mutual success during the training. The trainer should also deal with any fears, worries or concerns.

Every trainer should act responsibly, aware of their position as a role model. This does not only mean in the saddle and in their handling of horses, but should also extend to the way they conduct themselves and express themselves personally.

In Germany, trainers must successfully pass a recognised trainer's examination (according to the APO rulebook of the FN). Different levels of training for different fields can also be obtained in terms of state-recognised professional training and further education (Trainer C to A, Pferdewirt and Pferdewirtschaftsmeister). All certified German equestrian trainers have the opportunity to apply for a licence from the German Olympic Sport Committee (DOSB), which can be continually extended by taking part in additional training courses. Hence, a valid licence is always proof that the trainer regularly furthers their own education and keeps it up to date.²

For the student, having a good trainer over a long period is a real benefit. Quickly and repeatedly changing trainers does not generally help the learning process. A lack of continuity might lead to insecurities.

1.5 The Training Area

Generally, the choice of a place of training depends on the training goals as well as the individual preconditions of horse and rider. Conditions that allow for a very diverse training programme are most desirable. Fresh, dust-free air, and a firm, but not too hard footing should be available, as should safe fencing and materials conforming to safety directives.

Initial riding lessons for beginners are best carried out in an indoor arena. This provides the beginner with a high degree of safety. External influences that could distract a horse – inviting responses which the rider has not yet fully mastered – are effectively eliminated. For more advanced training, an outdoor riding arena as well as hacking trails should be available and made use of. For developing the seat and balance, training outdoors is indispensable. If such facilities are not readily available in a yard, the rider and trainer should occasionally box the horse to a suitable location.

In addition to a dressage arena, a larger riding area is desirable. This allows, among other things, for the opportunity to ride on longer lines, for canter work, to practise different seat positions, as well as for jumping training with more room for different course arrangements. Enough show-jumping material should be available so that regular gymnastic grids or proper jumping courses can be built. Natural

obstacles are an ideal addition to this training environment.

A galloping track is not only an important diversion for the rider, but also for the training of the horse. It gives the horse the opportunity to move more freely.

The riding arena(s), the tack room and the horse-friendly stables, as well as the communal rooms and toilets, are the first marks of quality noticeable in a training yard. Alongside cleanliness and orderliness, the regular maintenance of all facilities, including equipment, surface of the footing and tracks, arena walls and jumps should be a matter of course.

For the theory lessons, which are an essential extension of the practical training, a suitable room should be available; that is unless the training takes place in the stables (for example, when discussing the horse's conformation, clipping or plaiting, bandaging, and tacking up), or in the actual arena. Material that can be consulted, such as standard textbooks and posters, should be available for every rider in the yard. Educational videos as well as video excerpts that have been recorded by the trainer are very insightful and useful additions.

1.6 Arena Rules

Universal arena markers and rules are in place so that misunderstandings and accidents can be avoided. Basic rules and school figures can be employed in any kind of riding arena. Precise definitions have been drawn up for the standardised dressage arena, which influences the layout of many indoor schools.

1.6.1 Arena Markers

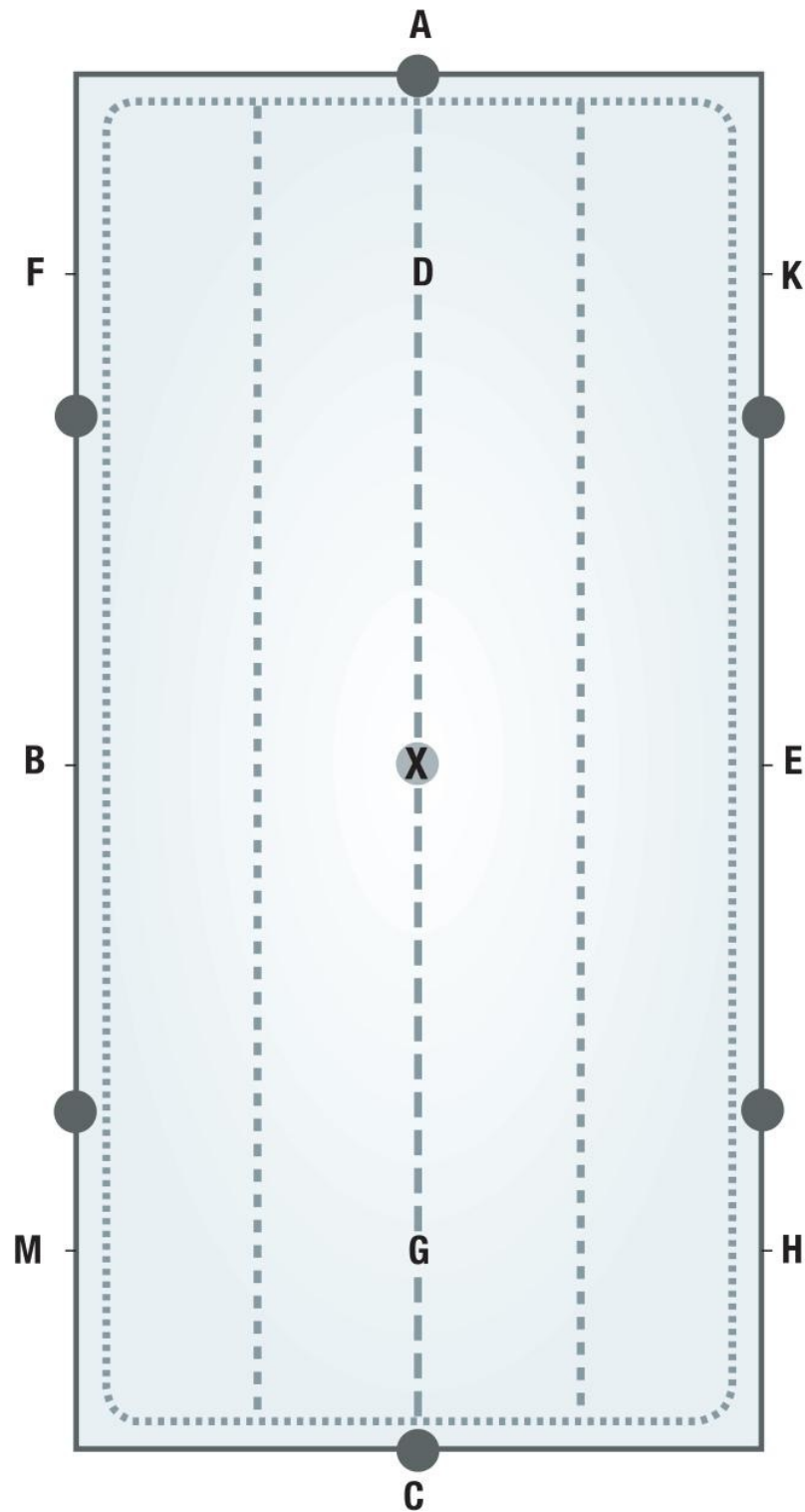
An arena for riding dressage tests can be one of two different sizes: 20 x 40m or 20 x 60m

The markers are as follows: the letters **A**, **C** respectively, mark the middle of the two short sides, **B** and **E** that of the respective long sides (being also known as 'half markers'). The remaining markers on the long side (**M**, **F**, **K**, **H**) are each 6m away from the short side. In addition, circle points are denoted by a dot.³ The centre of the arena is denoted with an invisible **X**. **X** is also the seventh circle point. **D** and **G** are located on the centre line, as centre points between the corresponding letters (**K/F** and **H/M** respectively).

Arena rules ensure that riders in arenas can train and exercise together without getting in each other's way. The basic rules do not only apply to arenas with track markers, but, rather, to riding in any arena.

Every rider must therefore be familiar with the following arena rules:

- Before entering the arena or before opening the door to an indoor arena, the person entering makes sure that the door can be opened without any danger by asking 'Door, (please)' and awaiting the reply 'Door (clear)'. The same applies when leaving the arena.



20 x 40m arena.

On the track

Quarter line

Centre line

• Circle markers

- Mounting and dismounting, as well as stopping to tighten the girth, etc. are always done off the track, in the middle of a circle or on the centre line, in order not to obstruct other riders and to avoid potentially dangerous situations. The

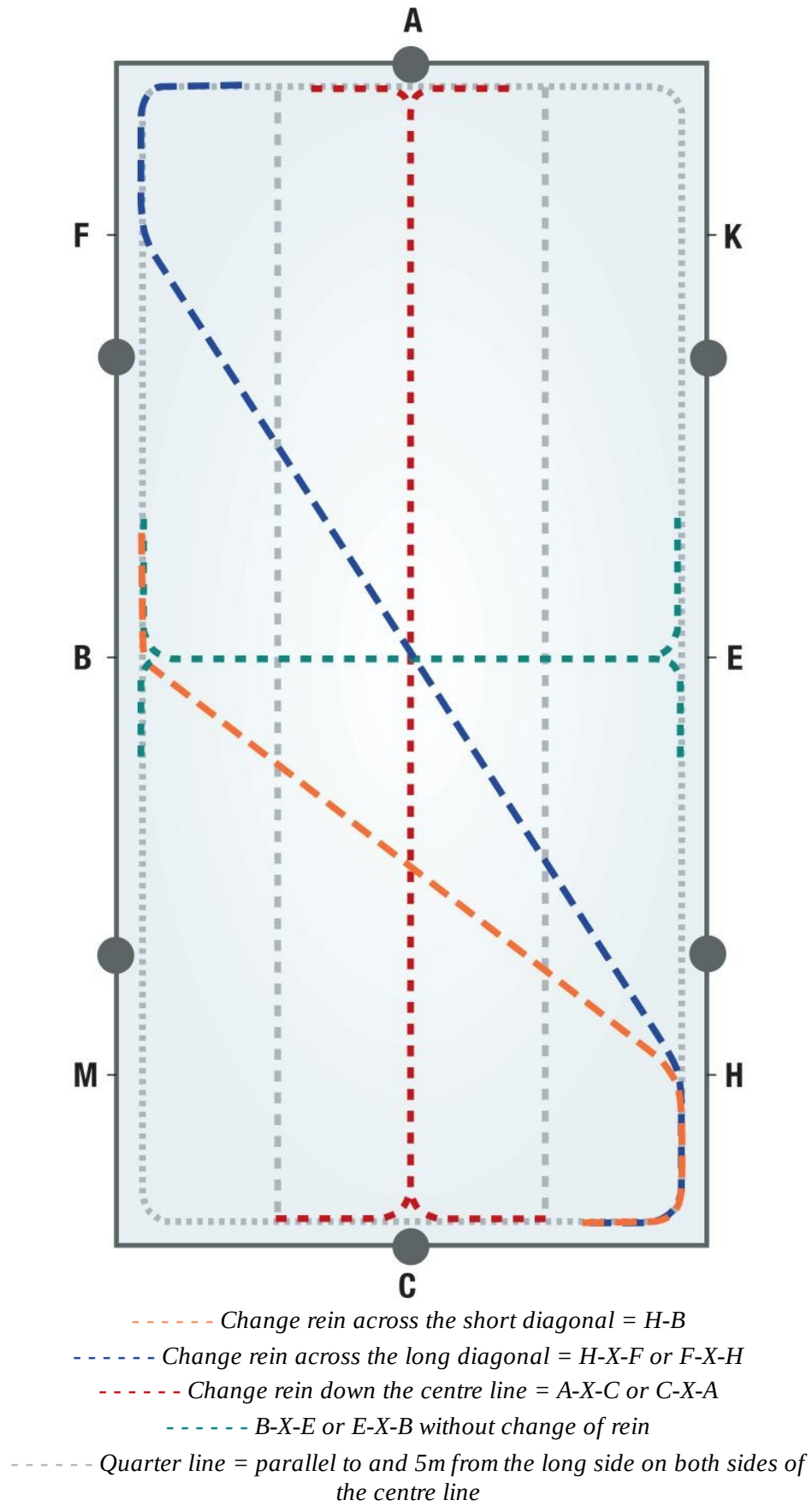
horse should be positioned parallel to the centre line. The horse must be taught to stand still when being mounted.

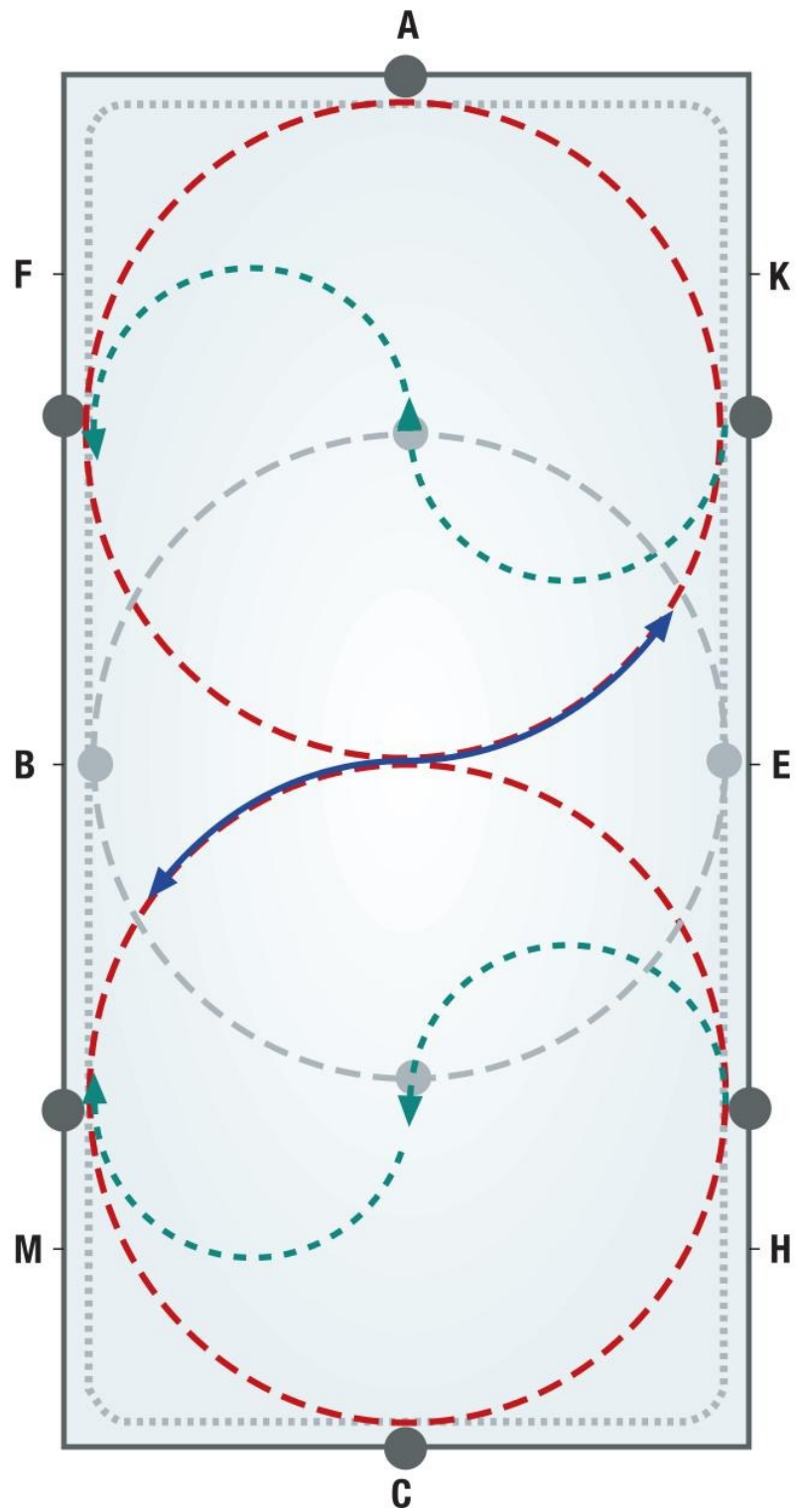
- A sufficient safety distance is to be maintained to other horses, both to the front and to the side; this should be at least one horse's length, or approximately 2.5m.
- Riders in walk or taking a break leave the track for riders in trot or in canter. Transitions down to walk or halt should be carried out off the track. In exceptional circumstances, those who need to halt on the outside track should inform the other riders present by calling: 'Track free please'.
- If people are riding on opposite reins at the same time, then the person riding on the right rein must give way; this is also known as 'passing left to left'.
- When riding on the same rein, riders going large have priority over riders riding on a circle: 'large' supersedes 'circle'.
- Lungeing in the arena is only permitted with the agreement of all riders present.

Every club/yard can add their own rules, according to their own needs and specific situation.

1.6.2 School Figures

Numerous different school figures can be seen in the following illustrations.





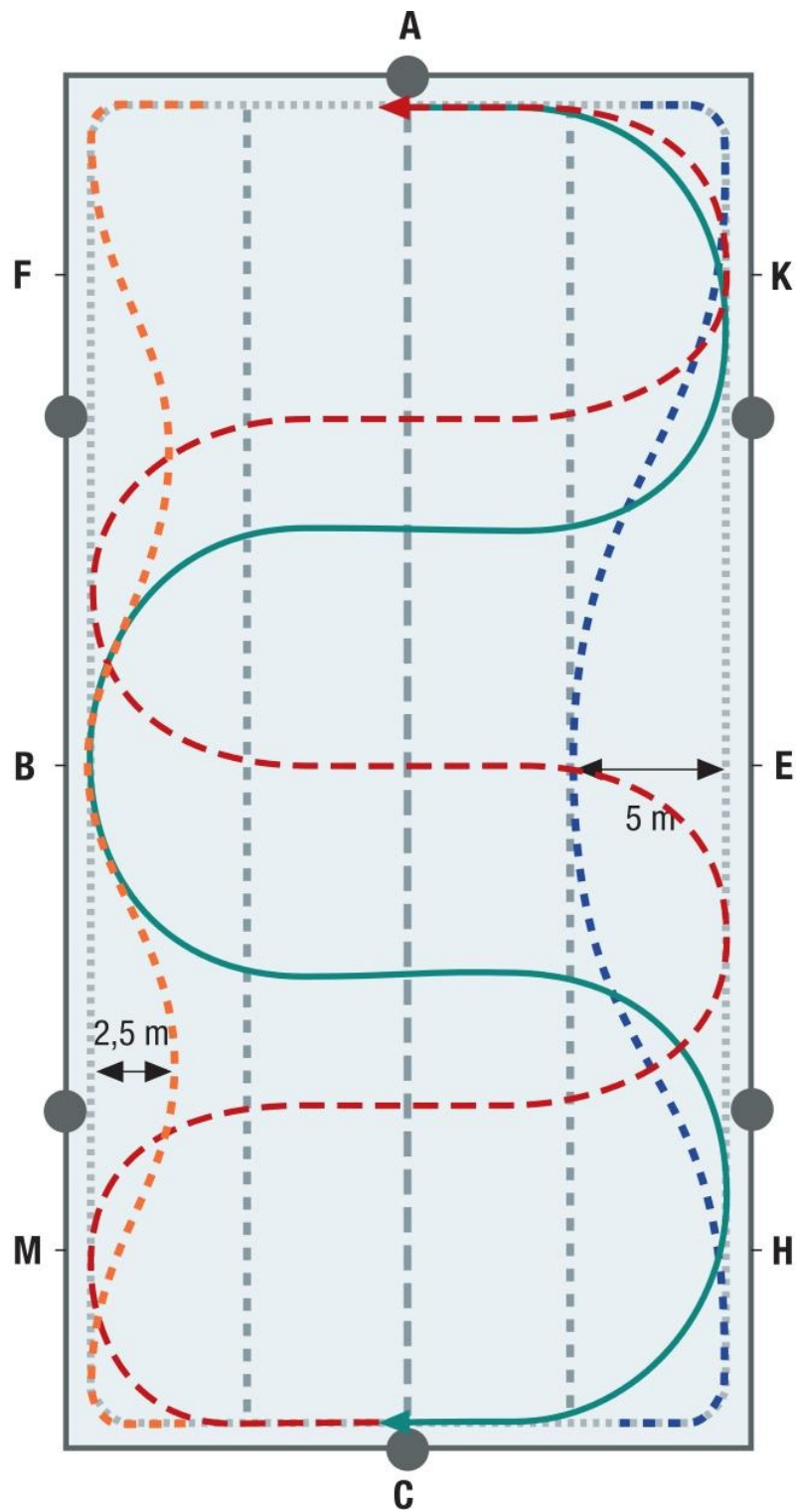
• Circle markers

--- Centre circle

--- Circle

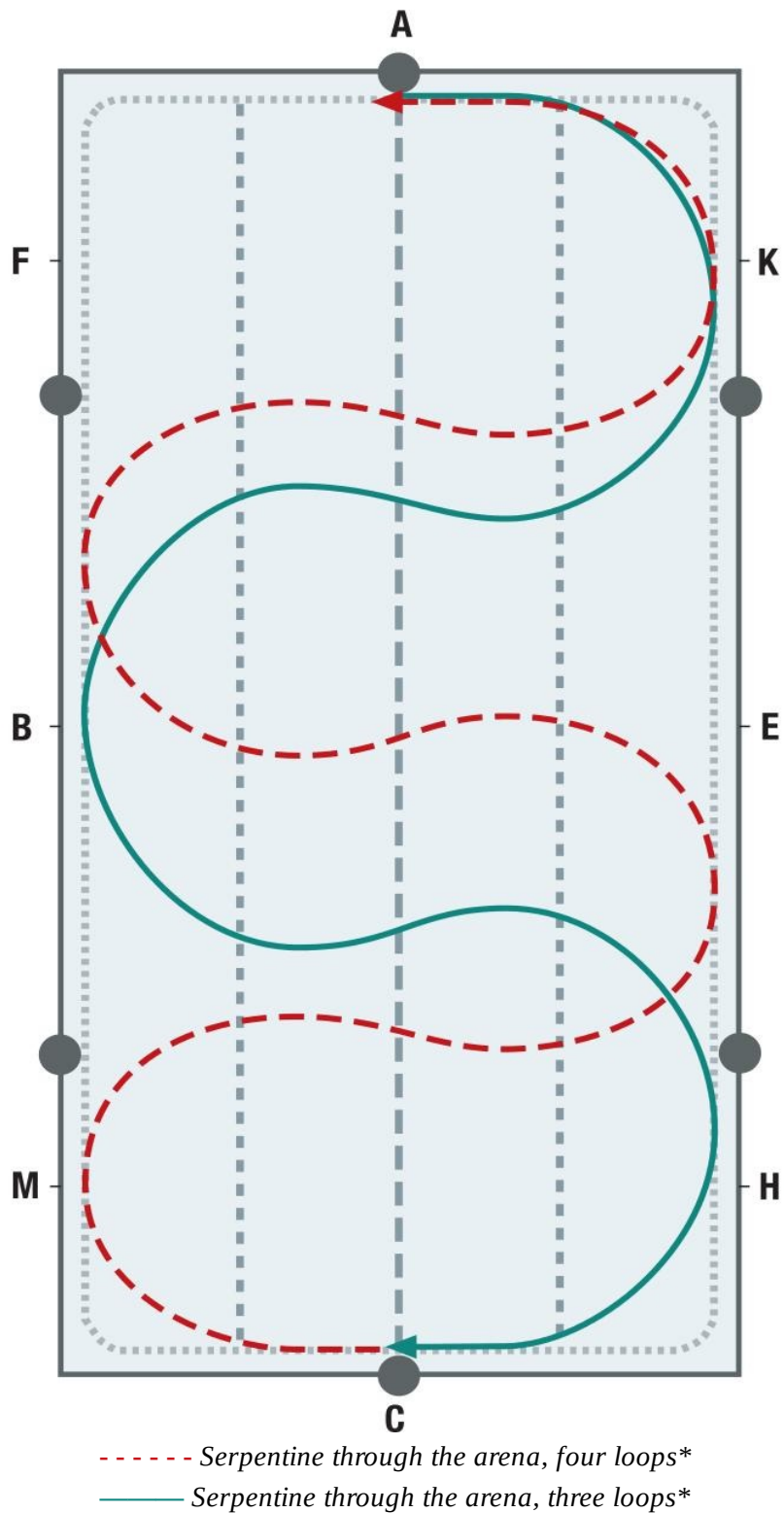
— Change rein from circle to circle

--- Change rein through the circle

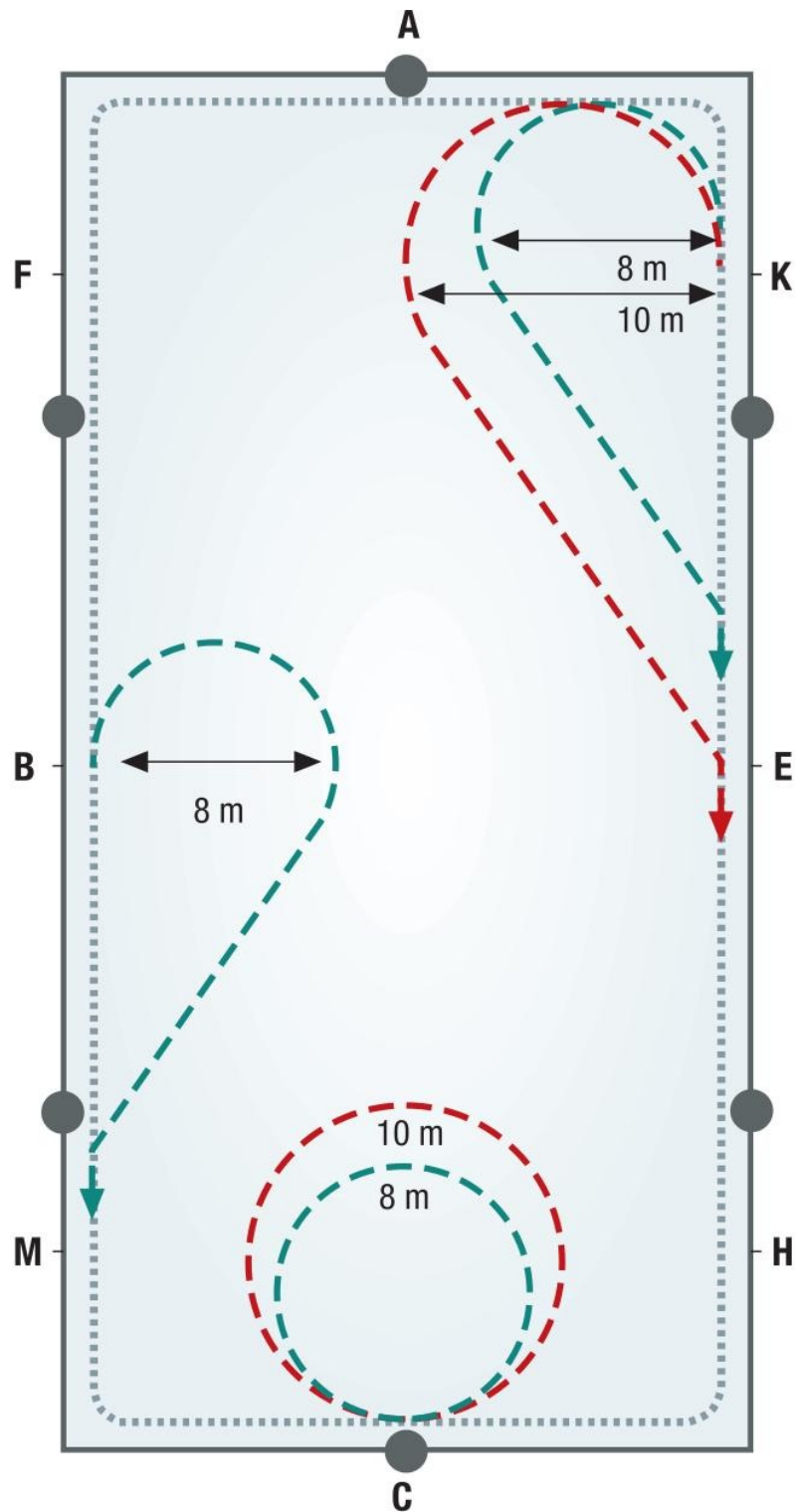


- Simple/one-loop serpentine on the long side
- Double-loop/serpentine on the long side
- Serpentine through the arena, four loops
- Serpentine through the arena, three loops

(NB the one-loop and double-loop figures shown here are called by that name, rather than 'serpentes' in UK – see page [154](#).)



**Training alternatives (can be ridden as described above in training, but not in a dressage test)*



----- Volte, and turn out of the corner with a diameter of 10m

----- Volte, half-volte and return to the track and turn out of the corner with a diameter of 8m

1.7 Hacking Out (Rules for Riding in the Countryside/on Public Roads)

Riding in the countryside should be an essential component of basic equestrian training. Prerequisites for this are an established, secure seat, and a command of

the basic rules for hacking out, including traffic rules. It must also be observed that the rider needs to behave as a guest in nature; riders should not create enemies but rather make friends so that hacks will remain possible in the future (by respecting nature and the environment, and by being respectful to others). Should a rider cause any damage when out in the countryside, this must be promptly reported to the landowner.

Before horses are taken on hacks for the first time, or after a long break, they need to be prepared. Working in an outdoor arena is the best possible preparation. Furthermore, the first hack should preferably take place after a schooling session rather than at the beginning. Initially, hacks should take place in a small group; gradually, they will then become a natural component of the training of horse and rider. Horses going on a hack with less experienced riders must already be used to traffic for safety reasons.

As with every ride in the arena, a warming-up phase is also required during a hack in order to prevent injuries. After some walk and trot sets, when the horse has begun to be supple, the first canter may take place.

SAFETY ADVICE

- **The rider must wear an approved protective helmet conforming to current safety standards, with a three- or four-point fastening, as well as secure footwear (at least up to the ankles with incorporated soles and a small heel – although long boots are preferable). Otherwise, clothing must be comfortable, functional and safe. When hacking at sunset or in darkness on public paths and roads, reflective lights to the front and the rear must be worn. In addition, reflective vests (on the rider) and reflective elements on the horse's tack are recommended for increased visibility.**
- **The condition of the saddle and bridle must be checked for safety reasons prior to every hack.**
- **Inexperienced riders should never hack alone but always be accompanied by an experienced person (a 'lead').**
- **It is advisable to carry a mobile phone, which can be used in case of emergency.**
- **Concrete or tarmac roads and paths should only be ridden on in walk to protect the horse's legs and to avoid slipping.**
- **If the rider or group of riders meet other riders, people out for relaxing walks, hunters, farmers or forestry workers, they need to make a transition down to walk or, when necessary, to halt and maintain a sufficient safety distance. A friendly greeting and a smile will help in all encounters to remove any potential prejudices towards horses and**

riders.

- A maximum of two riders should ride side by side. This is only sensible, since horses are more confident and relaxed next to each other. On roads, experienced/calmer horses should remain on the left-hand side in right-hand traffic systems to protect more fearful horses from the traffic (on the right-hand side respectively, in left-hand traffic systems). The distance from the horse in front should be a minimum of one horse's length (approx. 2.5m), but it should not become too big as that tends to cause insecurity.

To prevent possible damage to their structure, ditches, embankments, walking, hiking and cycling paths, as well as rain-sodden or frosted paths should be avoided. Note also that pedestrian walkways, dedicated footpaths and cycle tracks (for example on the inside of roadways) should not be used by riders.

Gait and speed should be adjusted according to the following criteria:

- The conditions of the footing and the clarity of the path.
- Weather conditions.
- Clarity and visibility of the countryside.
- Level of training of horse and rider.

The following should be avoided:

- Changes of speed/gait of the leading rider without giving sufficient warning to the following riders.
- Riding up too close to each other.
- Uncontrolled passing of other riders.
- Racing as a game.
- Cantering to get back to the yard sooner.
- Uncontrolled tempo and cantering on slopes.

For all of the group to communicate efficiently and understand each other while out on a hack, and to provide information and orientation to other traffic, the following hand signals are given by the lead rider. These are then passed down the line to the following riders:

- Raising an outstretched arm: Warning!
- Dropping the raised arm down to shoulder level: proceed from halt to walk.
- Repeated raising of the arm: Trot!
- Repeated swinging of the arm above the head with subsequent dropping of the

arm in the direction of travel: Canter!

- Dropping the raised arm sideways to thigh level: Slower! (Transition down to the next lower gait, or to halt.)
- Change of direction on public roads and paths: outstretched arm in the desired direction.

In addition to acting for the relaxation of the rider and the welfare of the horse, every hack should also serve to school and train the rider and the horse, Above all, the safety of all parties must be a priority.

The demands of the ride must always be aimed to suit the level of the weakest rider and the most difficult horse. Particularly out in the countryside, the guiding principle is: ‘The chain is only as strong as its weakest link.’

In Germany, knowledge of safe riding in the countryside and on roads can be furthered by taking examinations to obtain a riding licence. This licence can be taken regardless of one’s riding discipline.⁴

Each country, or even regions, will have its own very different rules and restrictions when it comes to riding in the countryside: for example, certain marked footpaths might not be open to riders at all, or only up to a certain point or width; sports and nature trails must not be ridden on; further restrictions may apply in residential areas, etc.

The laws for hacking in Germany are confusing: while all public roads are governed by a nationwide highway code (StVO), private paths adhere to county-level rules. These can differ significantly, for example for riding in the country or in the forest.

Tip:

The equestrian federation of each country can provide detailed information about the current laws and regulations for hacking in their region; some regional institutions even provide all the relevant documentation⁵.

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- ^{1.} See Federal Ministry of Nutrition, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (eds), *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Horse Maintenance and Keeping under Aspects of Animal Protection Laws* from 9th June, 2009.
 - ^{2.} In the UK, the British Horse Society (BHS) administers progressive systems of qualifications for professional instructors and coaches. For the international standardisation of professional instructors and coaches in different countries, please refer to the IGEQ (International Group for Equestrian Qualifications) rules.
 - ^{3.} These useful circle points, standard in Germany, are rarely seen in the UK. See illustration for details.
 - ^{4.} In the UK, no such licence is currently required. However, the British Horse Society (BHS) organises a Ride Safe Award which promotes safe practice when riding on roads.
 - ^{5.} A brief summary of the rules on riding out in Germany can be found on the internet at www.pferd-aktuell.de

CHAPTER 2

The Equipment of Horse and Rider

The equestrian industry provides a huge variety of clothing and equipment for both horse and rider. This chapter describes the equipment necessary for the competent, safe training of horse and rider.

2.1 The Rider's Equipment

The equestrian clothing market is overflowing with choice. One should pay particular attention to safety, functionality and comfort. A safety-approved helmet, worn at all times from the first rides on, is a must.



A riding hat conforming to current, FEI approved standards should be worn at all times when mounted.

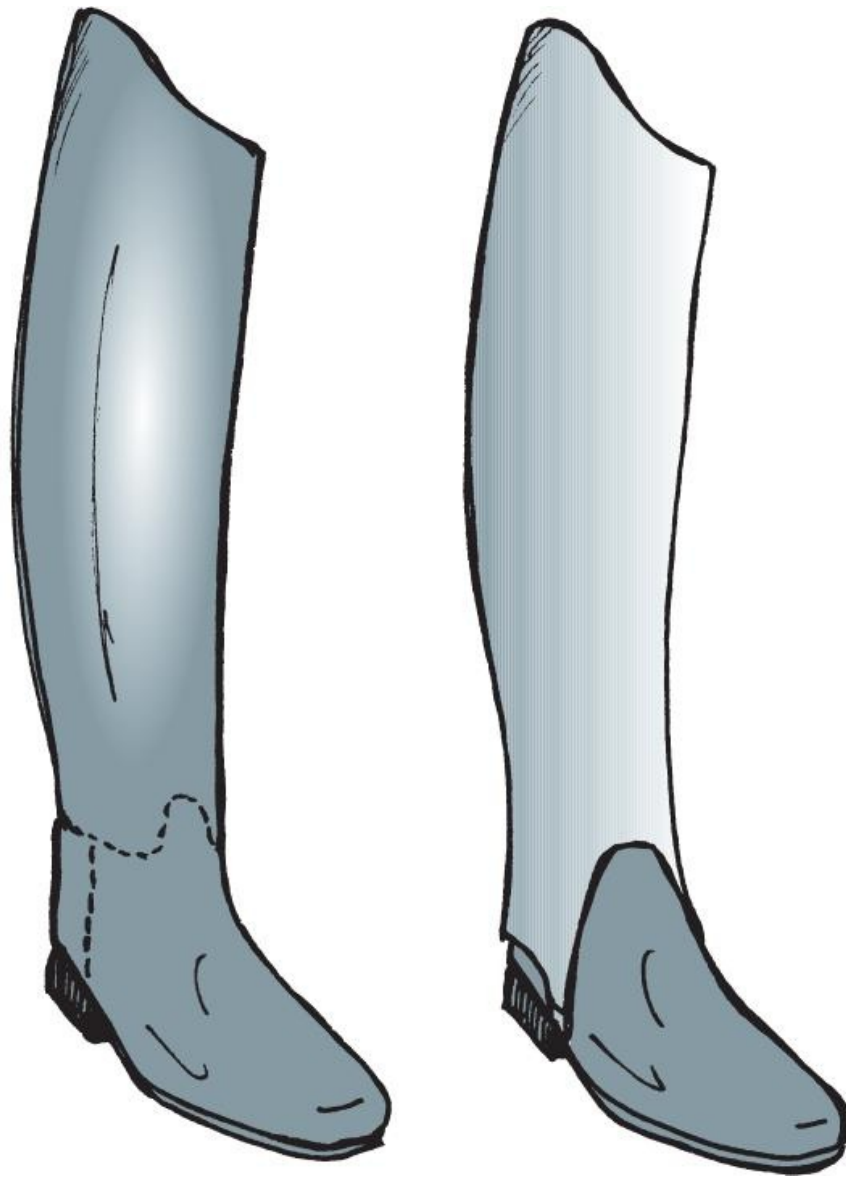
■ **HELMET**

The required safety is only offered by helmets conforming to the respective country's standards (European standard 'EN'). The solid and shatterproof helmet must be secured by a three- or four-point fastening under the chin, so that it cannot move.

Helmets should be worn for all riding activities. Every trainer needs to ensure that their students always wear correctly fitting helmets, not least for insurance purposes. Children and young riders should wear helmets as a matter of course; adults should act accordingly as role models.

■ **BREECHES**

With breeches or jodhpurs, a comfortable, correct fit is essential, to allow freedom of movement and prevent the forming of potentially painful creases.



Long boots and leather half-chaps.

■ LONG BOOTS/CHAPS

Sturdy footwear is necessary when riding or handling a horse. A low heel is important so that the foot does not slip through the stirrup and get entangled. Trainers, sneakers and similar shoes should hence never be worn for riding. The ideal footwear is still a long boot, with a long shaft. These give stability and protection to the ankle and lower leg. If the boot is too short, it might get caught under the saddle flap and impede the rider in the seat and in the use of the aids.

When wearing jodhpurs or chaps, ankle or jodhpur boots may be worn instead of riding boots. However, one needs to make sure that the boots allow the spurs, if worn, to sit horizontally. The soles of the long boots and ankle boots need to be smooth and continue to the heel, to ensure that the foot can slide out of the stirrup easily in case of a fall.

■ GLOVES

Wearing appropriate riding gloves is recommended. These need to be wide enough over the back of the hand and should not be too thick, or else they will impair the rider's feel. Reinforced material between ring finger and little finger, and thumb and forefinger, increase durability and prevent the reins from slipping through the hands.



Body protector.

■ CLOTHING

Riding wear for the upper body should be relatively snug. Tops that are too big or too long might interfere with the tack; jackets and vests should always be zipped up, as a horse might be frightened by an open jacket flapping wildly, leading to potentially dangerous situations.

■ BODY PROTECTORS

Body protectors or safety vests (which can also be combined with inflatable protectors or airbag vests) must be worn when jumping over fixed obstacles. Their shock-absorbing properties provide protection against knocks and blows, but they must, at the same time, be flexible. Body protectors need to be a good fit to ensure the highest level of safety and comfort. They should impede neither the mobility of the upper body nor the core when riding. Therefore, they should not touch the saddle or the back of the rider's neck. This way, the rider is able to get away from the horse in critical situations and, if necessary, roll off the horse. Standards conforming to European (or respective country) regulations are also applied to body protectors.

■ AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT

Auxiliary equipment supports the rider's aids. In addition to the rider's voice, whips, spurs and support reins can be used. It should be up to the trainer to decide when and how to use them ([see Chapter 4.2.2, Use of Additional Aids](#)).

Auxiliary equipment has only a supportive function. It must not play a predominant role in the giving of aids and thus in the rider's influence on the horse. Over the course of training, the rider should become increasingly independent of these auxiliary aids.

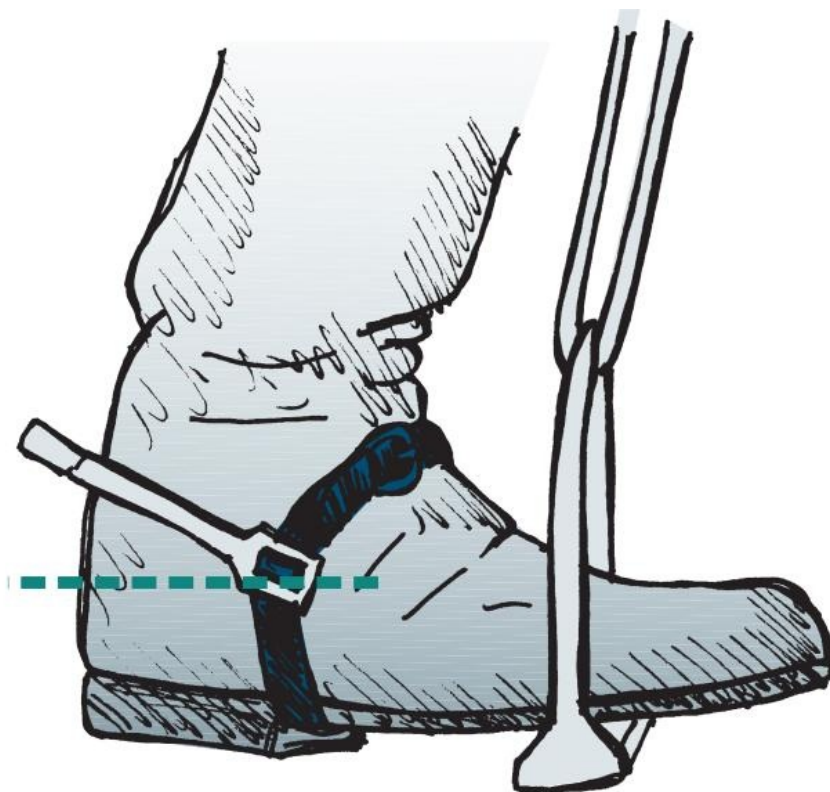
■ WHIP

A whip serves the rider as a support to the driving aids. Whips can be differentiated as:

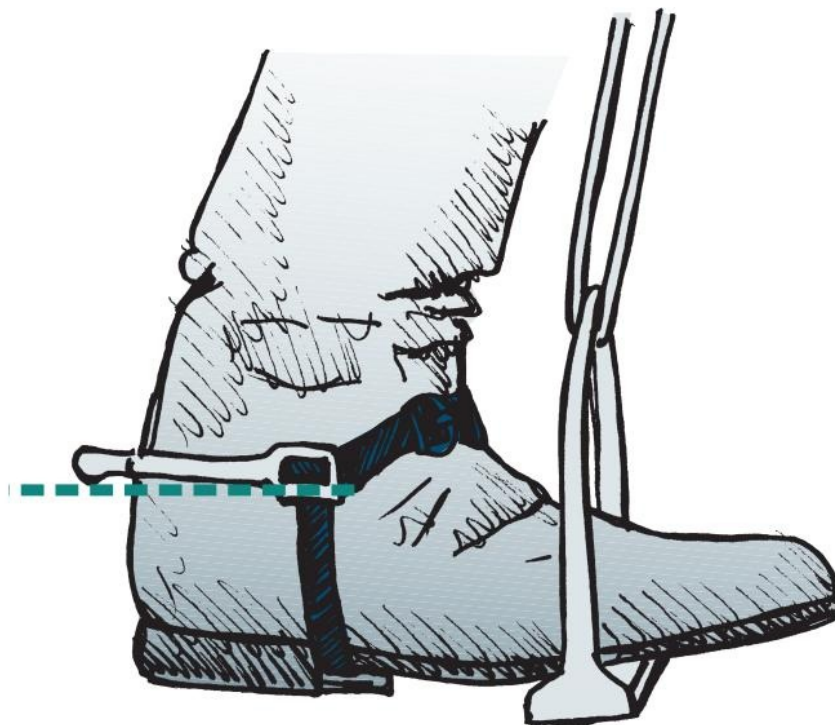
- Dressage whip, up to a maximum of 1.2m in length (including flap).
- jumping whip (crop), up to a maximum of 75cm in length (including flap).

Particularly for beginner riders, a whip that is shorter than the usual dressage length of about 1.1–1.2m can be used to support the aids which have not yet been established. The whip should only be carried when necessary, since the hand holding it is restricted in its movement. The dressage whip needs to have a certain degree of elasticity. It must not be so flexible that it is constantly moving in time with the horses' strides, and thus unintentionally touching the horse's body. On the other hand, it must be elastic enough that it can be used effectively with only the slightest hand movement. For jumping and cross-country riding, a short jumping

crop is recommended, and is used primarily on the shoulder to increase the horse's attention to the driving aids.



Incorrect attachment of the spurs

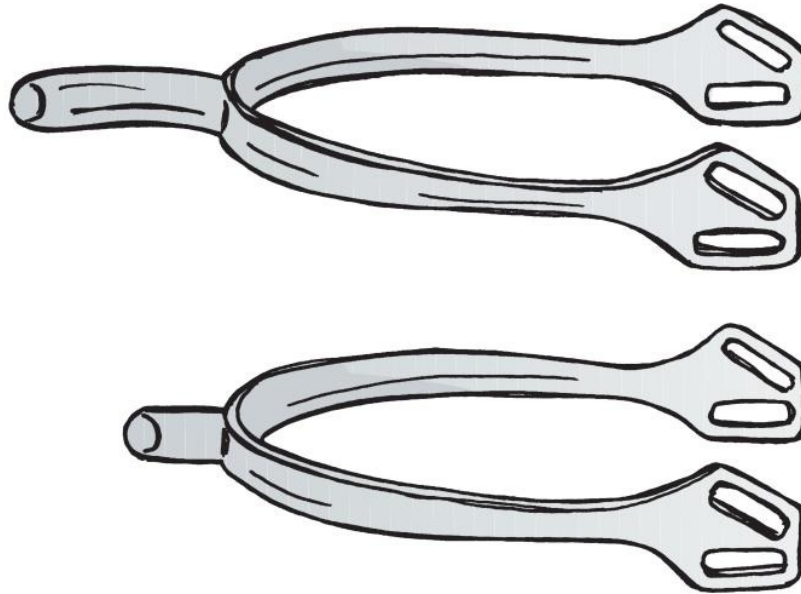


Correct position of the spurs on the long boot.

■ SPURS

Spurs support the rider's leg aids if needed. Reinforcement on the part of the boot

around the rider's heel ensures that spurs can be attached correctly and protects the rider's Achilles tendon. Spurs are worn snug, approximately four to five finger widths horizontally above the heel. The tip of the spur points backwards, either horizontally or very slightly pointing downwards. The buckle is always facing to the outside of the boot so as not to come into contact with the horse's body, which can cause injuries to the skin.



Two common spur types: slightly curved, and straight.

Spurs come in various lengths and shapes. Spurs are usually made out of stainless steel so that they do not break, split or rust. They must be made in a way that, even unintentionally, they cannot injure the horse's skin.

The choice of suitable spurs depends on the level of the rider's training, as well as the nature and sensitivity of the horse. In competitive sports, there are specific rules detailing the kind of spurs that can be used in competition.

2.2 Equipment for the Horse

A horse's equipment must be in impeccable condition. Care for the equipment must be given special attention. Only well looked-after, suitable and clean equipment will guarantee safe and suitable use while also protecting against accidents.

2.2.1 The Basic Equipment when Dealing with Horses

When dealing with horses, the following equipment is necessary:

- A suitable, robust [HEADCOLLAR¹](#) with wide bearing, cushioned surfaces and options to adjust its length.
- A ROPE used for tying the horse, including 'panic snaps', which can be released quickly, if necessary or in an emergency. The material and quality of the rope

should be such that a knot pulled tight can be easily released.

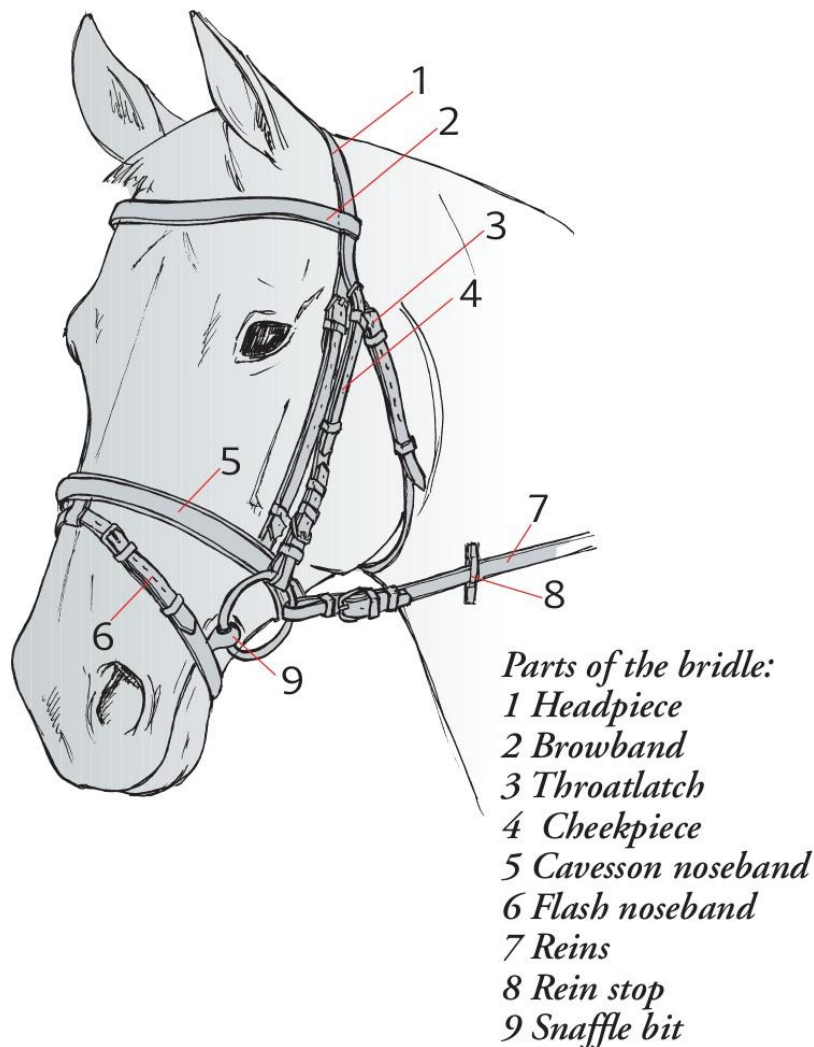
- A LEAD ROPE should not have 'panic snaps' but rather spring hooks, so that the horse is not accidentally released by the clip opening unintentionally.

2.2.2 The Basic Equipment for Riding Horses

The basic equipment for a riding horse consists of a bridle (snaffle, and later, possibly, a double bridle) and a saddle. Accessories can include – as required – polo bandages or boots.

■ BRIDLE

The snaffle is the most suitable bridle for basic training. This applies equally to dressage and gymnastic flatwork as it does to jumping and cross-country riding. A horse's bridle consists of two main components, which are combined: Two common spur types: slightly curved, and straight.



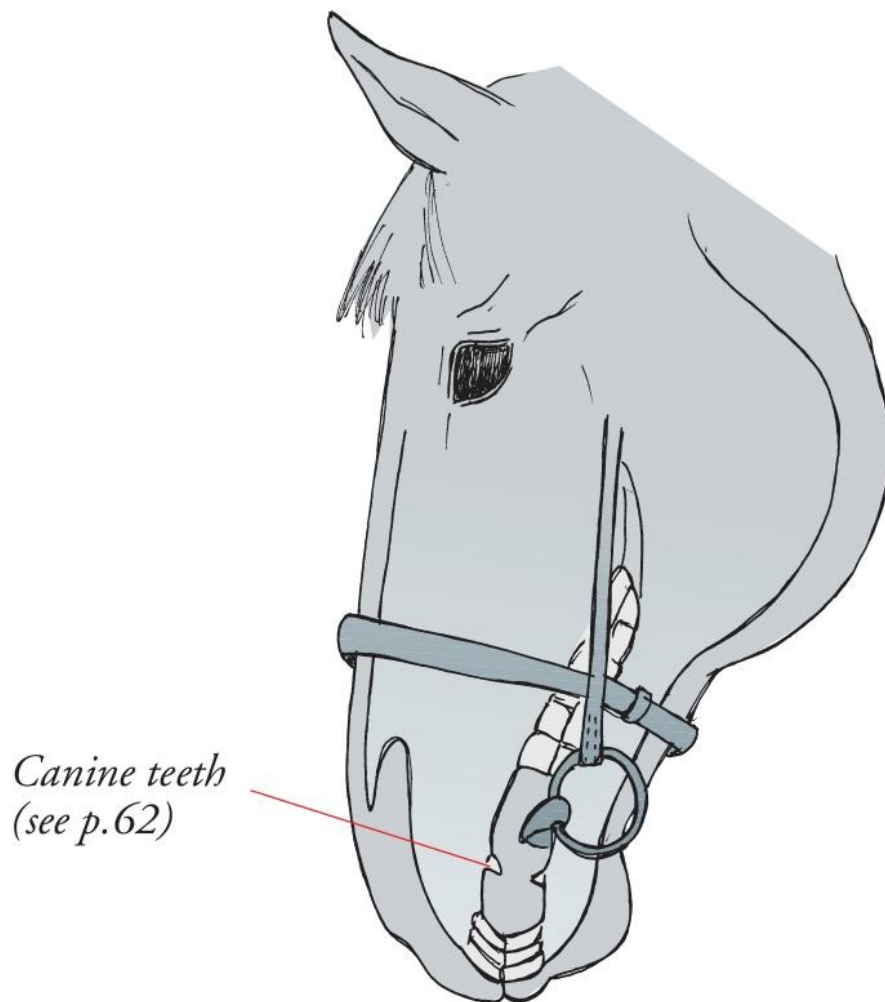
Bridle with a flash noseband.

- The bridle with the bit and reins
- The noseband

The bridle consists of a headpiece, throatlatch, cheekpieces and browband. The length of the bridle and, as a result, the position of the bit, can be adjusted through buckles on the cheekpieces.

■ SNAFFLE BITS

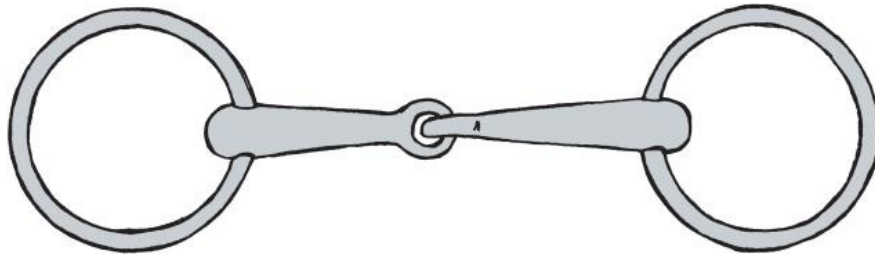
A snaffle bit establishes a connection from the rider's hands through the reins to the horse's mouth. The bit rests on the bars of the horse's mouth, in the toothless area between the incisors and molars, resting on the tongue. It also has an effect on the horse's lower jaw via the tongue. Snaffle bits are generally single-jointed or double-jointed. Since a jointed bit also allows for a one-sided rein influence, without the whole bit being tilted, it is easier to operate than an unjointed one. A snaffle bit should be at least 14mm thick (*for ponies, at least 10mm*), measured at the corners of the mouth. It should, however, not be too chunky since the space in the horse's mouth is limited. The most frequently used bit thickness is 18mm. However, the choice of bit depends on the individual anatomical peculiarities of each horse (*such as width of the mouth, shape of the mouth cavity and gums, etc.*)



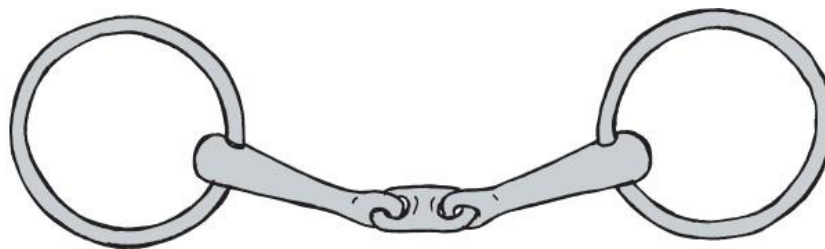
Position of the bit in the horse's mouth (profile).

The loose-ring snaffle (*whether single- or double-jointed*) is the most frequently

used bit. It is used with young horses, but also in further training, and is usually accepted without any problem by the horse. The bit rings are mobile. The mouthpiece can be hollow and light, or it can be solid and, as a result, heavier. Heavier bits have the advantage that they remain more still in the mouth and, as a result, horses do not tend to play with them as much with their tongue.



Single-jointed snaffle.



Double-jointed snaffle (French link).

As a principle, when choosing a bit, the use of a more severe bit can never compensate for a lack of thoroughness in the horse.

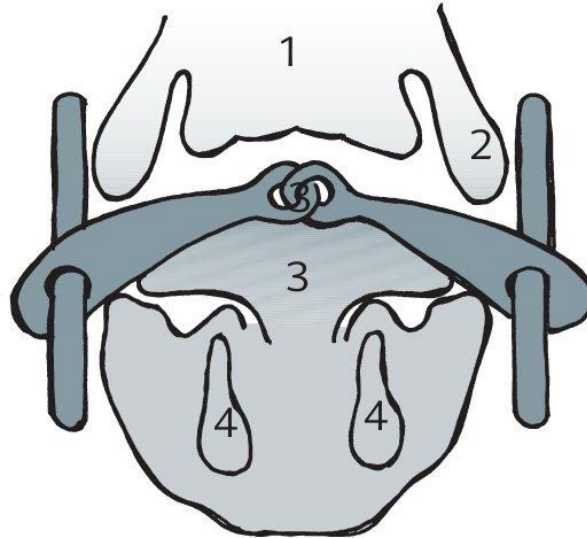
The most common lengths of bits are between 12.5cm and 14.5cm (*for ponies, they are accordingly shorter*). The length should of course correspond to the width and the corners of the horse's mouth. The bit should be chosen at a length that has the bit protruding slightly at the corners of the mouth, but not more than 0.5cm each side. A bit that is too narrow can pinch the corners of the horse's mouth. If it is too wide, it will slip around in the mouth from side to side and, as such, will be unsteady. If the mouthpiece is too long, this will result in too much pressure being placed on the edges of the lower jaw.

IMPORTANT ADVICE FOR THE PROPERTIES OF BITS:

Bits must be made of materials that can resist reasonable stress. Their shape must not in any way be altered by the horse chewing on the bit and they must not endanger the horse's health in any way.

Principally, bits should be round in section and have smooth surfaces to avoid injuries to the corners of the mouth, the bars, the gums and the horse's tongue. They must not be too worn or degraded since parts of the bit could break off, or the sharp edges could cause injury.

- 1 Gum
- 2 Upper lip
- 3 Tongue
- 4 Right and left bars



The position of a single-jointed snaffle in the horse's mouth.

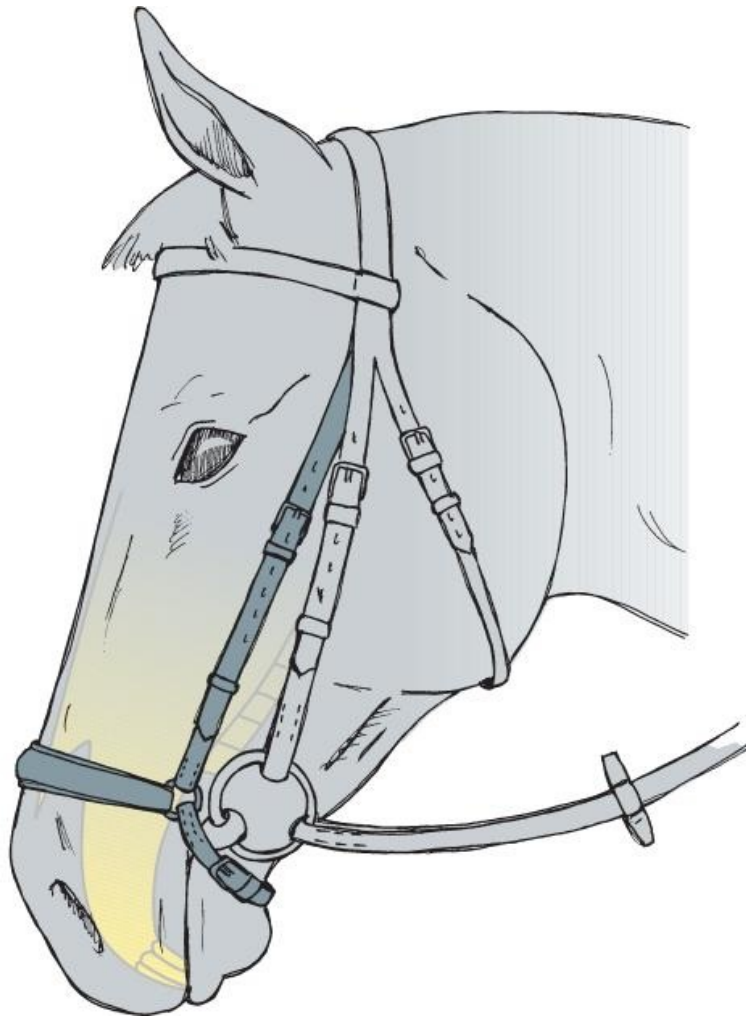
A sensitive rider's hand, however, will have the greatest influence on how comfortable a bit is for the horse!

Some horses prefer rubber or synthetic bits to metal ones. However, solid metal bits are, in general, the most frequently recommended. There are specific rules determining which bits are permitted in competitive sports and these should thus be consulted.

The reins, usually made of synthetic material or leather, are attached to the rings of the bit and buckled together at their end. They should remain securely in the rider's hand, especially in wet weather. Additional grip can be provided through leather bars or stoppers. The width of the reins (*approx. 16–20mm*) must be suited to the rider's hand. The rider must be able to close their fist in a relaxed manner. The quality of the material and the stitching are very important safety aspects.

■ NOSEBAND

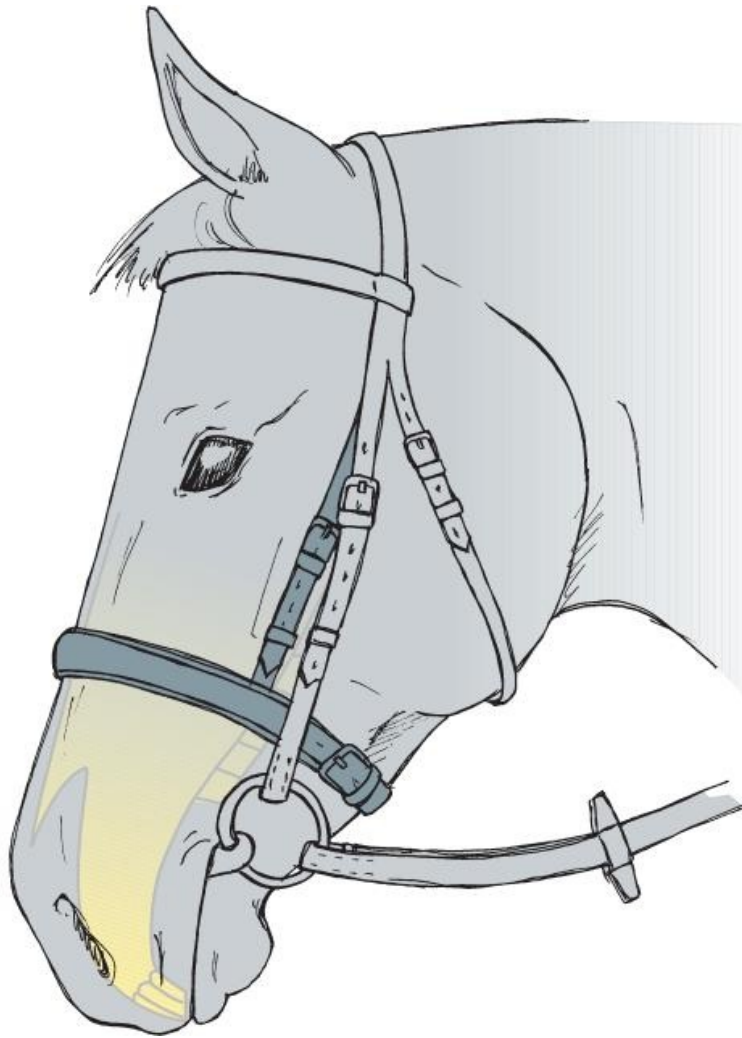
A noseband completes the bridle. It ensures a quiet position of the bit in the horse's mouth and that some of the influence of the bit is indirectly transferred onto the bridge of the nose. It must be neither too tight nor too loose. A noseband provides a degree of restriction to the mobility of the jaw, but it must never completely prevent it.



Drop noseband.

To ensure that the horse is able to chew on the bit with relaxed tongue muscles and a closed mouth, it must have enough freedom in the jaw. This is why the bridle and the noseband need to be fitted correctly; generally there should be enough room for approximately two fingers to fit between the bridge of the nose and the bridle ([see Chapter 3.4 Putting on and Taking off the Bridle](#)).

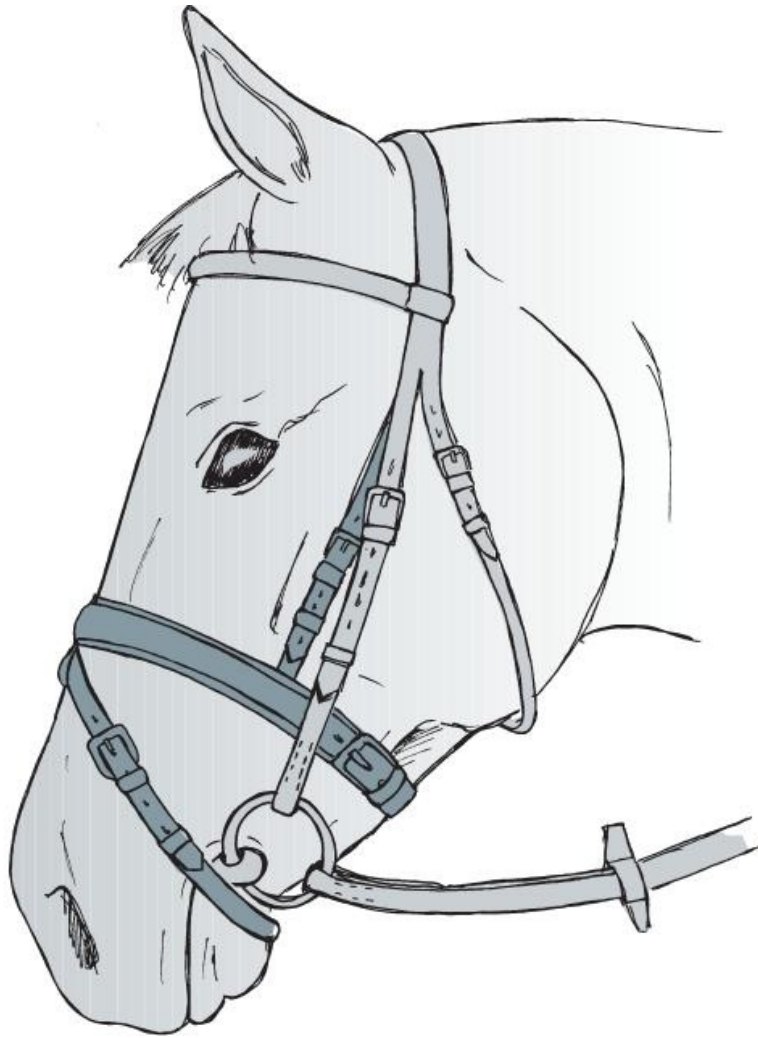
The DROP NOSEBAND consists of a strap which is slightly wider in the centre and narrows to the sides. Small rings are stitched into both ends of the noseband, to which the chinstrap and the headpiece are attached. The noseband needs to be short enough that the rings cannot press against the bit, but long enough that the jawbone is not restricted. The noseband should lie about four finger widths above the upper nostril edge on the bony part of the nose. The chinstrap must not be attached too tightly, but in a way that two fingers can still fit comfortably between the bridge of the nose and the bridle.



Cavesson noseband.

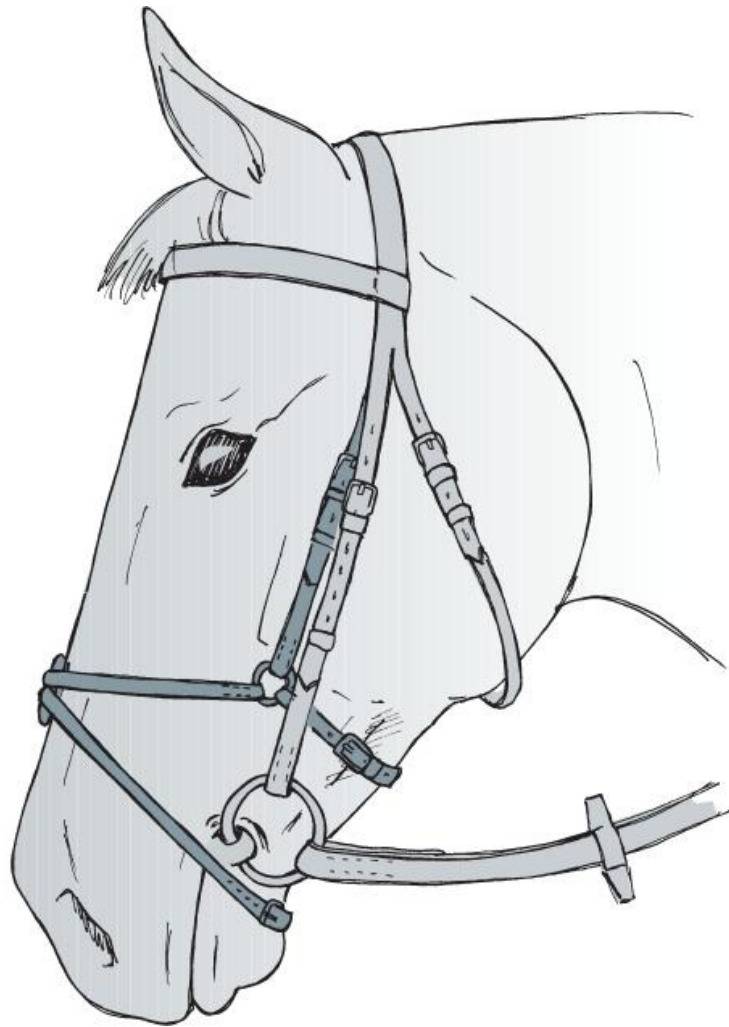
The CAVESSON NOSEBAND has a slightly wider, more substantial nosepiece and is positioned far higher than a drop (approx. 1–2cm below the horse's cheekbone). If the horse is ridden in a double bridle, only a cavesson noseband is used. Yet, riding in a snaffle is also possible with a cavesson noseband. This bridle must also not be fitted too tightly! The same two-finger rule mentioned above also applies here.

The FLASH NOSEBAND consists of a cavesson with a loop at the front, through which a thin supplementary chinstrap, called the flash, is threaded before being fastened underneath the snaffle bit. The same rules as mentioned above apply to attaching both of these straps to allow mobility of the horse's mouth. The main cavesson nosepiece is always fastened before the flash.

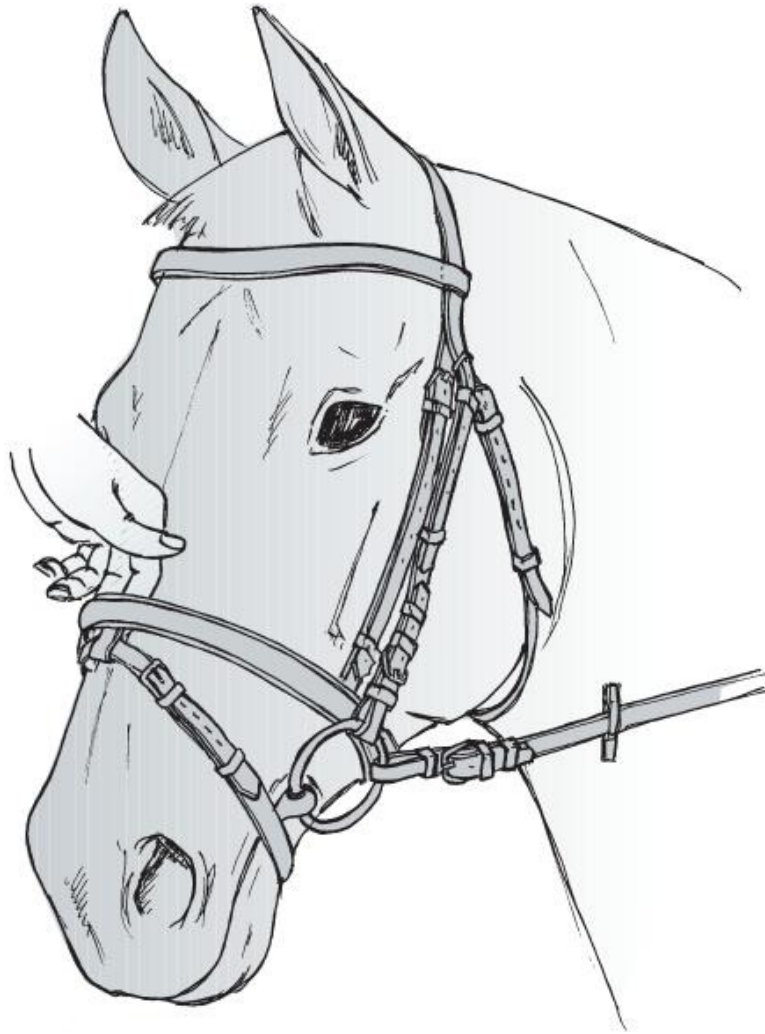


Flash noseband.

The [GRAKLE²](#) OR FIGURE-EIGHT NOSEBAND consists of two crossed straps on the bridge of the nose which are held together by a cushioned leather disc on the bridge of the nose. In its effects it is very similar to the flash noseband. The Grakle/figure-eight noseband is used predominantly on jumping and cross-country horses.



Grackle or figure-eight noseband.



There are two possible ways to attach it:

- In a similar position to the flash noseband;
- Slightly higher, so that the upper strap runs over the horse's jawbone.

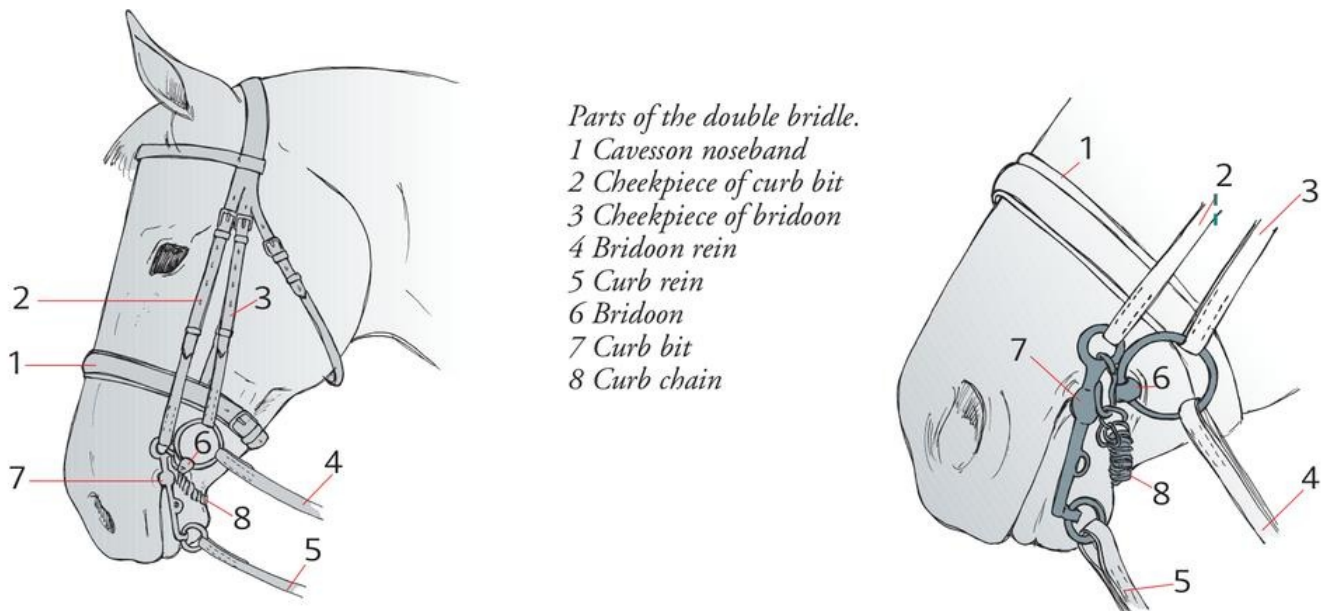
Checking whether the noseband is adjusted correctly can be done by sliding two fingers between the bridge of the horse's nose and the noseband.

The type of noseband to be used always depends on the horse and should be determined with the help of a trainer.

■ DOUBLE BRIDLE

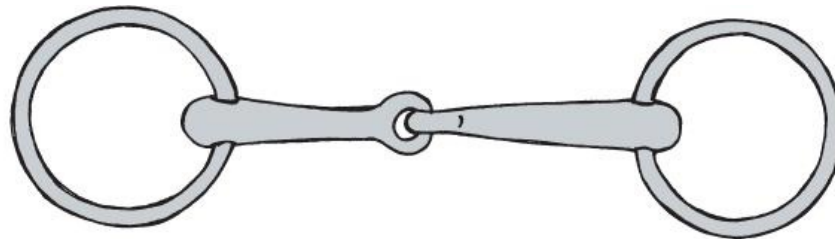
For advanced riders, the use of a double bridle on an accordingly schooled horse enables them to apply more refined aids. The double bridle still includes a snaffle-type bit (bridoon), which should exert most of the influence. Through a second set of reins, the rider can influence the curb bit, when needed. However, the rider must have initially learnt during their basic training, how to ride with a well-refined, differentiated use of the aids. A horse and a rider need to be 'READY FOR THE DOUBLE BRIDLE'. The horse needs to step trustingly into the bit without coming behind the

contact. This also shows whether the horse's hindquarters are able to take on weight and whether the horse can carry itself (self-carriage) ([see Chapter 7.6.4 Establishing Contact](#)).



Parts of the double bridle.

- 1 Cavesson noseband
- 2 Cheekpiece of curb bit
- 3 Cheekpiece of bridoon
- 4 Bridoon rein
- 5 Curb rein
- 6 Bridoon
- 7 Curb bit
- 8 Curb chain



Bridoon (the bit rings are smaller than on a snaffle).

The BRIDOOON is thinner than a normal snaffle, but it must still be at least 10mm thick and has an additional cheekpiece attachment.

The cavesson noseband is used when riding in a double bridle.

The CURB is an unjointed mouthpiece (straight bar) with lateral shanks.

Parts of a curb bit.

1 Mouthpiece

2 Port

3 Upper part of shank

4 Lower part of shank

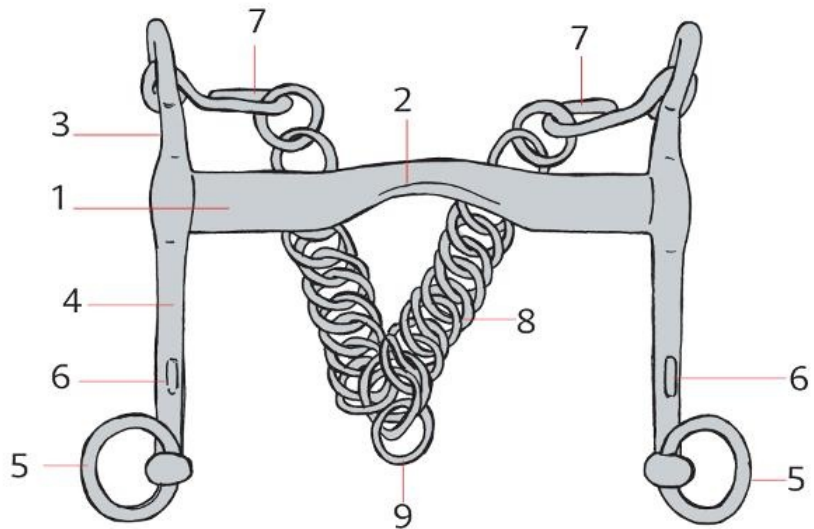
5 Rein ring

6 Lipstrap hooks

7 Curb chain hooks

8 Curb chain

9 Lipstrap ring



The double bridle is used to refine the aids and, as a result, to refine the communication with the horse.

The curb is not to be used to compensate for problems in the thoroughness of the horse. This often only leads to further problems arising in the Training Scale.

The influence of the double bridle is determined by:

- The strength and the shape of the curb.
- The 'port' ('freedom of the tongue'). The port is a more or less upward (up to 4cm) arch in the middle of the mouthpiece. The higher and thinner this arch is, the more the tongue will move in this area. As a result, the sides of the mouthpiece have more of an influence on the bars of the horse's mouth. The term 'freedom of the tongue', however, is open to misinterpretation. The arch of the mouthpiece hardly ever gives the tongue total freedom, hence, a sensitive pressure does build up on the very edges of the tongue.
- The length of the shanks, which are divided into the upper shank and lower shank, and their respective proportional length. They should have a ratio of 1:1.5 to 1:2. This ratio determines, in combination with the curb chain, to what degree the double bridle will have an effect. The longer the lower shank is in relation to the upper shank, the greater will be the leverage to the horse's mouth. Curb bits with short shanks can still have a substantial effect, depending on the relationship between the upper and lower shank,
- The attachment of the curb chain, which lies in the chin groove. This affects whether the double bridle has a stronger influence on the lower jaw or on the poll of the horse via the cheekpieces.



Curb chain.

The rider must always be aware of all of the effects of the double bridle!

The curb should be approximately 0.5cm narrower than the bridoon. A curb bit that is too long will shift around in the horse's mouth and thus does not have an even effect on the bars of the mouth. Conversely, too short a curb squeezes the lips.

The curb hooks of the bit are twisted outwards, with the opening at the front. Hooks that are twisted inwards could lead to injuries on the horse's mouth. The curb chain is hooked onto the top of the right-hand hook, made flat by twisting clockwise, taken under the horse's chin and fastened to the left-hand hook.

■ TYPES OF BIT

STRAIGHT BAR BITS (unjointed bits), provided there is an even contact on the reins, always have more influence on the horse's tongue. The influence of both hands must be well refined, particularly when riding through corners or turns. A one-sided rein aid would lead to disturbances in the connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth.

The PELHAM is a specialised bit which is mainly used for specific cases in jumping. The pelham can be jointed or have a straight bar. Through the shanks on either side, as well as its curb chain, it achieves an effect similar to that of a curb. Through a leather bridge, which connects the top and bottom rings, the effect on the horse's mouth is slightly reduced. When using this bridge, only one set of reins is necessary.

The use of bridles with lateral shanks demands a particularly balanced seat and a finely tuned use of the aids. The pelham is not combined with an additional snaffle and it therefore always has a direct, immediate and also increased impact, which can lead to unhappiness and resistance in the horse. A fine use of the rein aids is therefore particularly important.

Their use should always be well thought through and considered in advance.

BITLESS BRIDLES (of which, alongside the traditional hackamore, there are different variations with or without a lever action), can be helpful in certain situations and with certain horses. Often, their positive impact is only temporary. Bitless bridles are not principally softer and more comfortable for the horse: while they do not have any effect on the horse's mouth, they exert pressure on the bridge of the

nose, the lower jaw and, partly, the poll. In order to maintain sufficient control over the horse, a relatively thin area of contact with the bridge of the nose and a lever action create an effect which is very clearly felt by the horse.

From experience, horses are very reluctant to accept any lasting pressure on the bridge of their nose. Hence, it is generally very difficult to obtain an even connection with the reins, and the development of a positive tension from the hindquarters over the back to the mouth and the rider's hands is barely possible. Therefore, riding in a bitless bridle is slightly different from riding with the more common bridles with bits, and is done without a constant 'contact'.

■ SADDLE

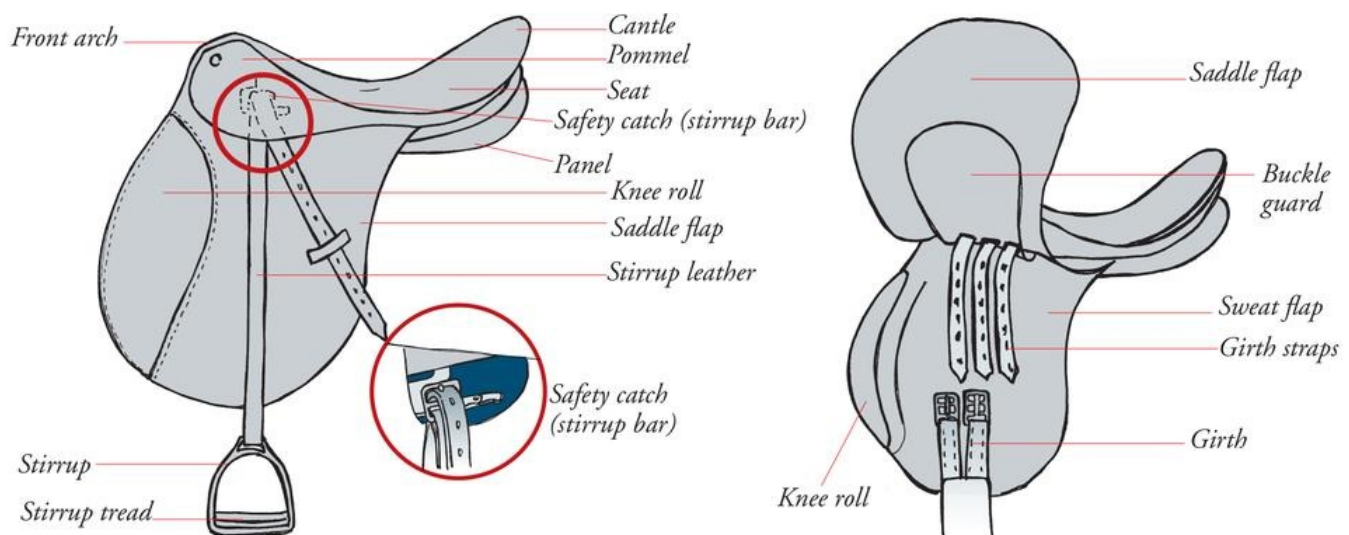
The so-called ENGLISH SADDLE, which is particularly suitable for classical riding, consists of the following essential components:

On the upper aspect:

- Seat
- Saddle tree with skirt
- Girth straps
- Large saddle flaps with knee rolls/blocks

On the lower aspect, facing the horse:

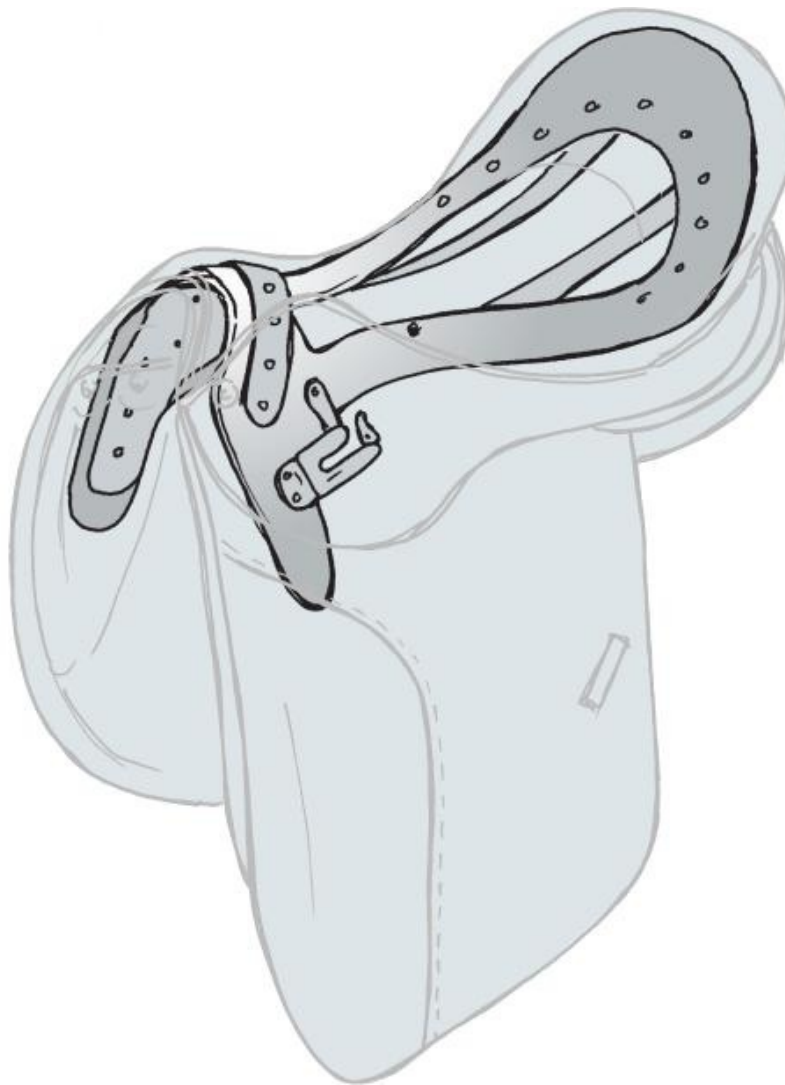
- Panel with flocking and channel
- Sweat flap with knee rolls (for knee, upper leg and sometimes calf)



Parts of the saddle

The saddle serves to make the rider's seat on the horse as comfortable and efficient as possible for both partners. The saddle has the task of arranging the

rider's weight as evenly as possible across the area where the saddle lies on the horse's back. This is done in particular by the saddle tree. In addition, the saddle must also transmit the movements and the shifts in the rider's weight well to the horse, which is why the saddle should not be overly cushioned.



The saddle tree, although not externally visible, forms the base of any saddle and acts to transfer the rider's weight optimally on to the horse's back.

It must be fitted well to the anatomy of the horse:

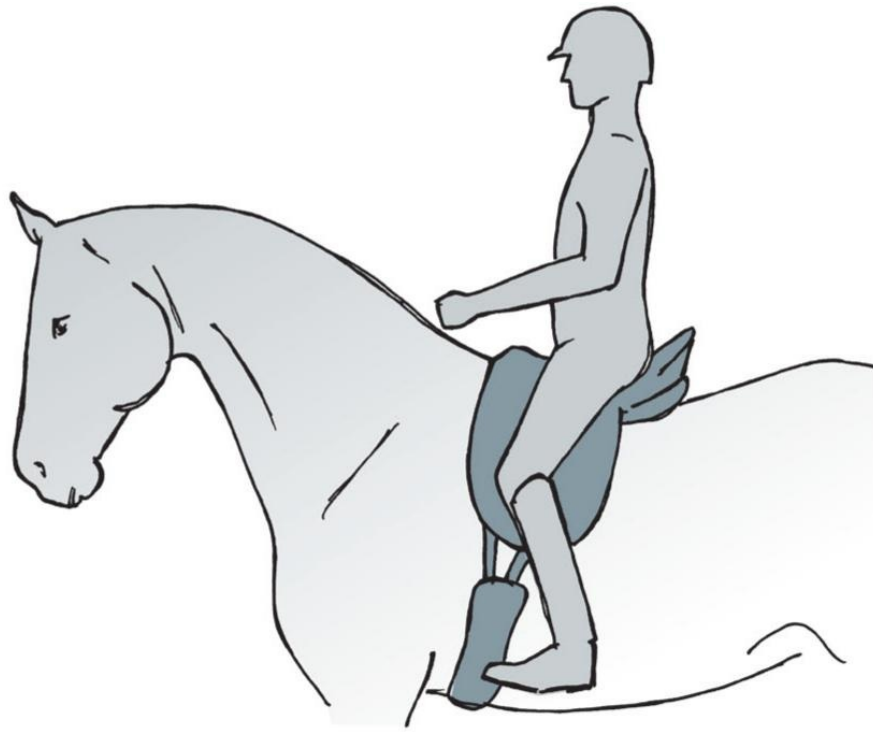
- Including a full-length, sufficiently wide channel in the centre.
- Without placing any pressure on the horse's spine, and particularly not the withers.
- Without reducing the mobility of the horse's shoulder.
- With a large enough area of panel coverage.

The upper part of the saddle must also provide each rider and their individual size/conformation with the best possible conditions to be able to sit comfortably and balanced. The following criteria must be considered:

- Suitable contours and size of the seat.
- The balance and the deepest point of the saddle.
- The length, width and position of the saddle flaps.
- Shape and position of the knee rolls.

To fulfil all of these requirements of the horse and the rider, every kind of saddle has its own saddle tree. The saddle tree provides the framework for the form and stability of the saddle. It can be made out of steel, leather, wood, plastic or a combination of these materials. The front part, curved slightly upwards and sometimes even backward-sloping, steadied by the gullet plate, is the pommel. It must be high enough to ensure that, when pressure is placed on the saddle, none of this pressure is exerted on the spinous processes of the thoracic spine, forming the withers.

This front arch, forming the POMMEL, must be the right size to fit the withers. The width of the pommel is determined by the width of the gullet plate. The length of the seat determines the standardised sizes of the saddle. These sizes are expressed in inches (for example 16.5; 17; 17.5; 18). The seat, as well as the shape of the saddle flaps and their length, should reflect the rider's bottom and length of the legs, in particular the length of the thighs. Particularly with riders who are small and/or are built narrower in the pelvic region, the seat must be accordingly smaller to ensure that the rider is still able to rest their thighs evenly on the side of the horse's body. Since the shape and the width of the saddle are also dependent on the anatomical peculiarities of the horse, heavier horses can have problems with this shape of saddle. However, in case of a compromise, the welfare and health of the horse must always be the priority. The cantle forms the rear part of the saddle.



The PANEL FILLING ('flocking'), which generally consists of natural or synthetic wool, sits between the saddle tree and the horse's back. The channel between the two panels (cushions) must be wide enough to provide the spine with sufficient room.

Care must be taken (particularly with short-backed horses) that the saddle does not dig into the back where it could exert pressure on the horse's lumbar region.

The SADDLE FLAPS form the side parts of the saddle. Their shape is determined by the use of the saddle, whether for dressage, eventing or show-jumping. The material (generally leather) of the saddle flaps must be very 'resistant' and therefore of the best quality.

ROLLS or BLOCKS are usually attached beneath the saddle flaps on the sweat flaps. They are either upper leg rolls, at the front, above the knee, or behind the lower leg. The rolls must not restrict the rider in the movement of their upper or lower legs. The more smoothly prepared indentions for the position of the rider's knees are usually referred to as knee rolls.

Direct contact with the knee, or complete limitation of the rider's mobility caused by leg rolls will prohibit a balanced and relaxed seat and, as a result, any positive influence!

The GIRTH STRAPS OR BILLETS serve to attach the saddle girth. For safety reasons, they should be hand-sewn and made of tough, resilient leather (chrome leather).

SADDLE GIRTHS come in short or long shapes made from various materials: cord, leather or synthetic. Since the girth ensures that the saddle is attached to the horse's body, it should be made of supple, hard-wearing material of high quality. The girth must be wide enough to provide a large enough area of contact with the horse's body without squeezing, ensuring as such that the horse's movement is not in any way impeded. Between the horse's elbows and the girth should be enough room to lay one hand. With short girths in particular the position of the buckles must be clearly above elbow level.

STIRRUP LEATHERS should be made of supple, durable leather. The buckles are sewn on by hand and the stitching must be checked regularly. Oval holes facilitate adjusting the stirrups.

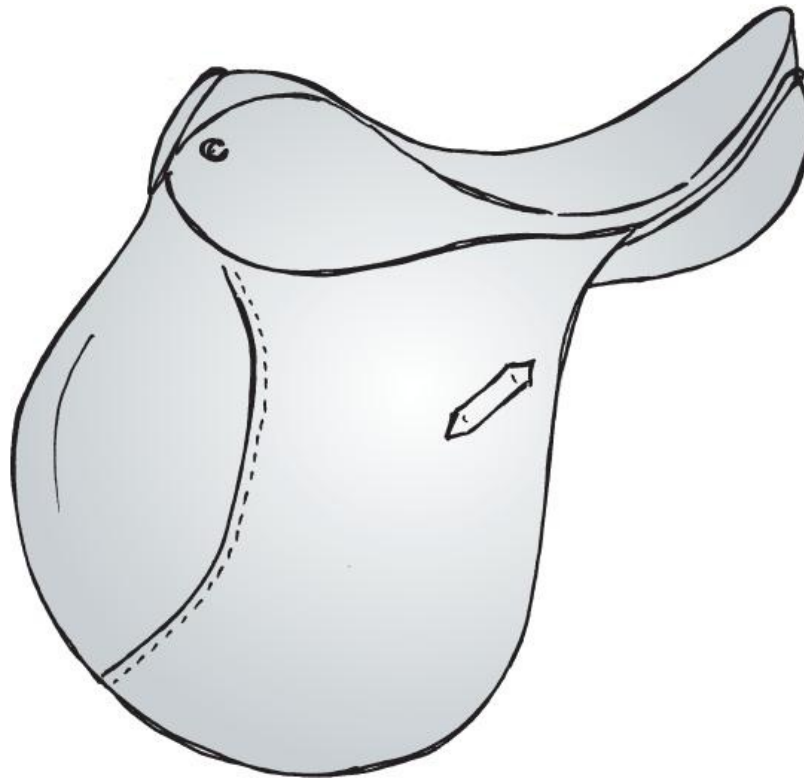
The stirrup leathers are attached to the STIRRUP-BARS. If these are equipped with a safety catch or 'thumb piece', this must be in working order. If a rider gets their feet stuck in the stirrups in the event of a fall, then the stirrup leathers should detach from the saddle. Different kinds of so-called 'safety stirrups' are also available for the same reason.

The STIRRUPS must be wide and heavy enough so that the rider's feet can pick them up and release them again quickly. Rubber treads provide better grip for the feet. Angled treads or similar are not recommended because the foot is thence forced into an unnatural position. The mobility of the ankle joint is thus restricted, which can lead to cramps affecting the rider.

The SADDLE CLOTH³ serves the purpose of keeping the horse's sweat off the cushion of the saddle. Saddle cloths come in different materials (cotton, synthetic fibre, sheepskin, etc.). What is most important is that they are breathable materials so that the heat does not get trapped. Furthermore, they must be kept clean and dry and put on the horse without any creases. Other types of pads, tailored to the shape of the horse's back, are recommended to keep pressure off the withers. Additional pads should only be used in case of a specific problem, since they keep the rider even further from the horse.

■ SADDLE TYPES AND SHAPES

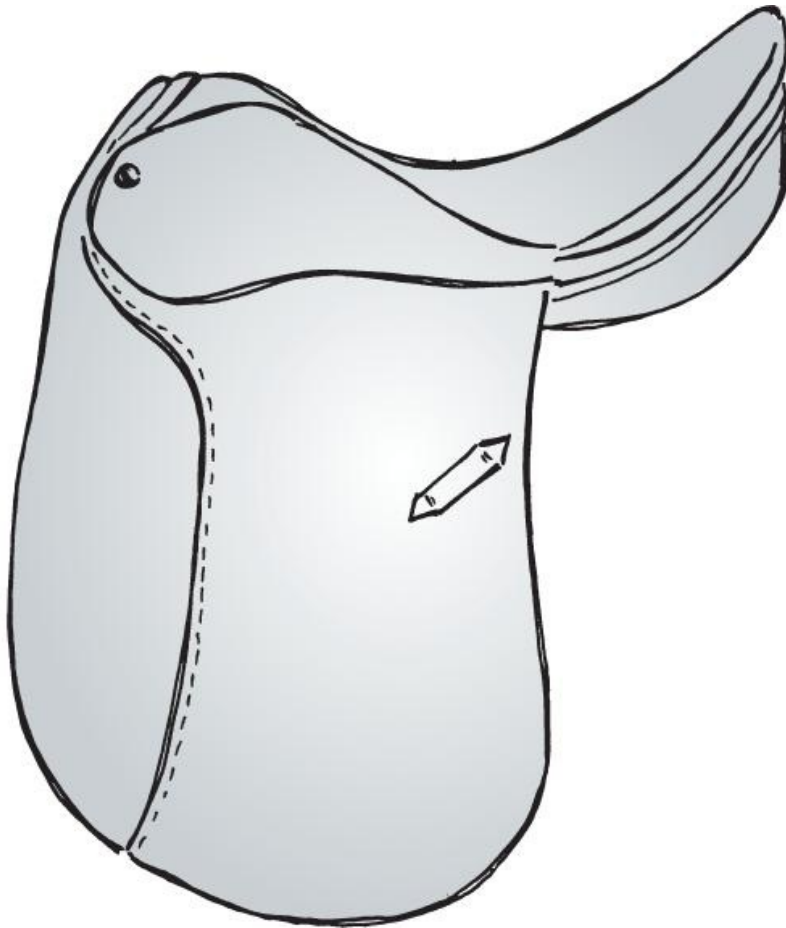
There are different saddles for the different equestrian disciplines. Depending on the function, they are differentiated as follows:



All-purpose/eventing saddle.

EVENTING SADDLE/ALL-PURPOSE SADDLE

The eventing saddle, with its shape between a dressage and a jumping saddle, is the all-rounder among saddles. It serves all basic demands of dressage and jumping as well as cross-country riding, which makes it particularly suitable for the basic training of horse and rider with its frequent changes in the rider's seat and the demands placed on the horse. Its shape allows for a deep dressage seat while it also permits a light seat with shorter stirrup leathers. The saddle flaps and the leg rolls should be shaped and attached in such a way that the rider is not impeded in their mobility, irrespective of whether the stirrups are adjusted short or long.

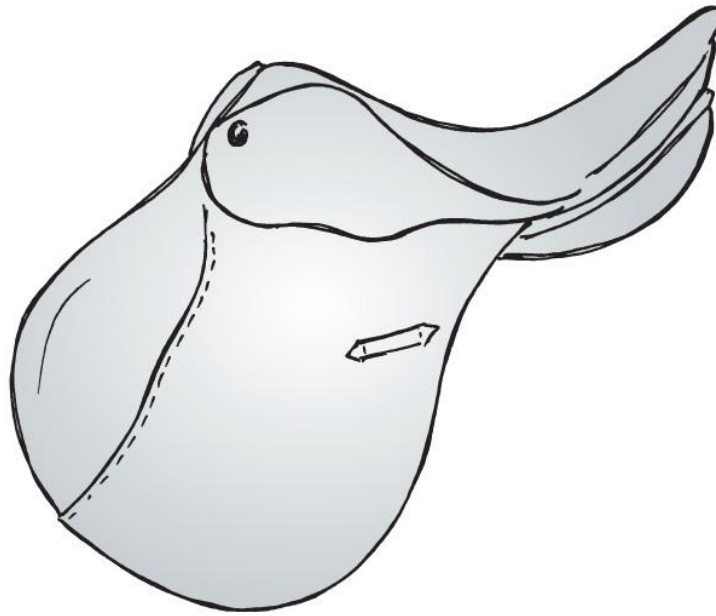


Dressage saddle.

DRESSAGE SADDLE

The dressage saddle has longer saddle flaps. A sufficient, but not too marked depth to the seat, enables the rider to sit deep, yet supple, and to finely vary their aids (seat aids in particular). A relatively straight, but not quite vertical, saddle flap enables the rider to sit with long stirrup leathers, still retaining mobility in clearly-angled knees.

An extremely deep seat combined with large knee rolls which fix the position of the rider's upper legs is wrong. These saddles are often sought-after by riders because they feel safer in them, but the opposite is actually the case. Mobility and suppleness, as well as the rider's aids, are strongly compromised.



Jumping saddle.

JUMPING SADDLE

The jumping saddle, which is not only used for jumping, but often also for cross-country riding, has a flat seat and short, more forwardly attached saddle flaps than the dressage saddle. This facilitates various forms of the light seat and the smooth harmonising of the rider's seat and position with the horse's movement when jumping. Leg rolls can lie in front of the upper legs (not in front of the knees) to provide the rider with a little more grip after landing. Calf rolls prevent the lower legs from slipping back too much.

In terms of the leg rolls on a jumping saddle, enough mobility must remain in the rider's upper legs, knees and lower legs for the rider to balance themselves well.

Since the horse changes shape over the course of training, the position and the fit of the saddle must be checked regularly. If necessary, it will need to be refitted or reflocked from time to time.

A saddle that does not fit correctly can seriously detract from the welfare of the horse and lead to health problems.

2.2.3 Auxiliary Reins, Attachment and Use

To support the training process of horse and rider, particular phases or situations might arise where it would be advisable to use auxiliary reins. Auxiliary reins serve to show the way to a correct contact. Their use depends on the aims, and hence on what the rider or the trainer would like to achieve by using them. The following are all potential uses of auxiliary reins:

- To support the training of the horse.

- Lungeing young horses in the familiarisation phase.
- Lungeing experienced horses, for example to improve suppleness and an even contact.
- Supporting an even and relaxed contact or head-neck carriage of the horse when riding.
- Working with incorrectly ridden horses and horses with conformation problems.
- To support the training of the rider.
 - Seat-schooling of beginner riders.
 - Specific seat exercises even for advanced riders.
 - As support to learning how aids should be given during beginner's riding lessons.

Since the handling and use of auxiliary reins requires a certain amount of experience, young and inexperienced riders should seek help and advice before and during their use. Negative side-effects will otherwise outweigh any positive effects!

Auxiliary reins are used particularly during the training of beginner riders to compensate for the lack of aids given to influence the horse and to make the rider understand their aids. This way, the rider can focus more on their seat and the aids and learn and develop a feel for a correct, elastic seat. Until the rider has learnt to ride the horse from behind into the hand with leg, seat (weight) and rein aids all working in collaboration, and without disturbing the horse, it is more comfortable for the horse to find an even contact with auxiliary reins. With correctly fastened auxiliary reins, the horse is brought into the right carriage, enabling it to relax its back. In turn, the rider will find it easier to sit.

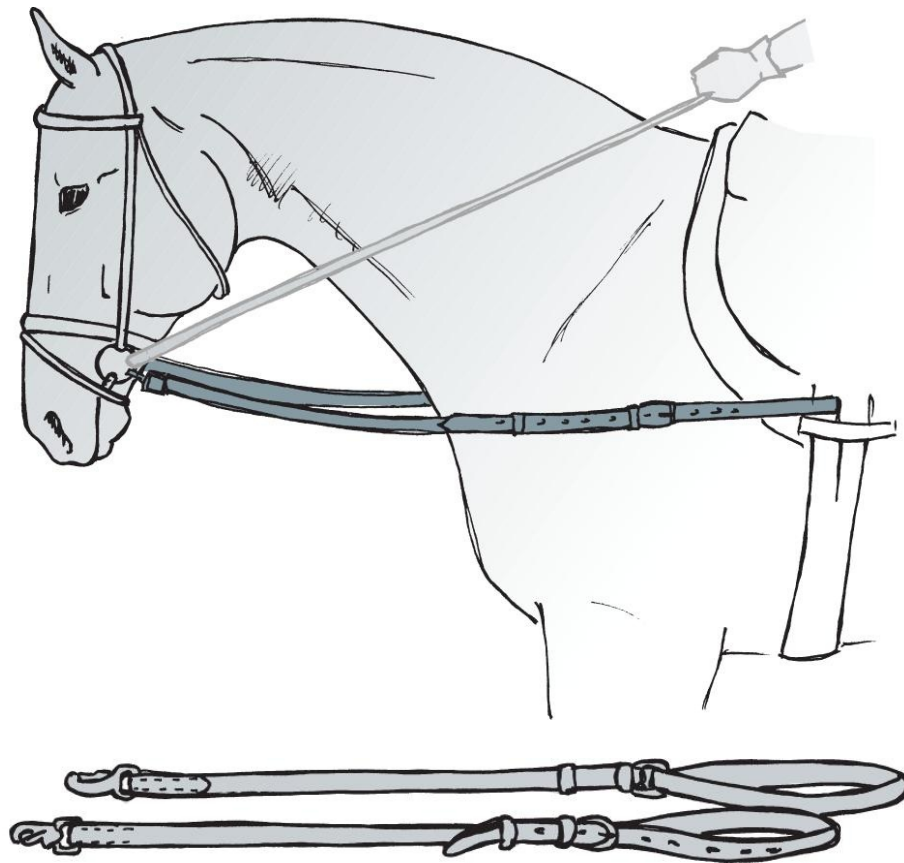
Auxiliary reins should represent a kind of substitute for the desired connection to the rider's hand. They must never restrict the horse's movement.

The auxiliary reins must always be fastened in a way that enables the horse to remain on or in front of the vertical with its head-nose line. Fastening the auxiliary reins incorrectly or without the necessary experience, can lead to tension, straining, injuries and accidents.

Side reins, triangular reins and running reins have proved to be the most practical.

SIDE REINS are two simple, thin straps made out of leather or synthetic material. The buckles or spring clips at one end are attached to the rings of the bit (beneath the reins) while the other ends are attached to the girth or surcingle at a suitable length for each individual horse. The side reins are attached to the girth at the level of the shoulder in a way such that they cannot slide upwards or slip down towards the elbows.

Side reins give the horse the opportunity to find an even, secure connection while maintaining an even carriage. They are therefore particularly suitable to work on the lunge.



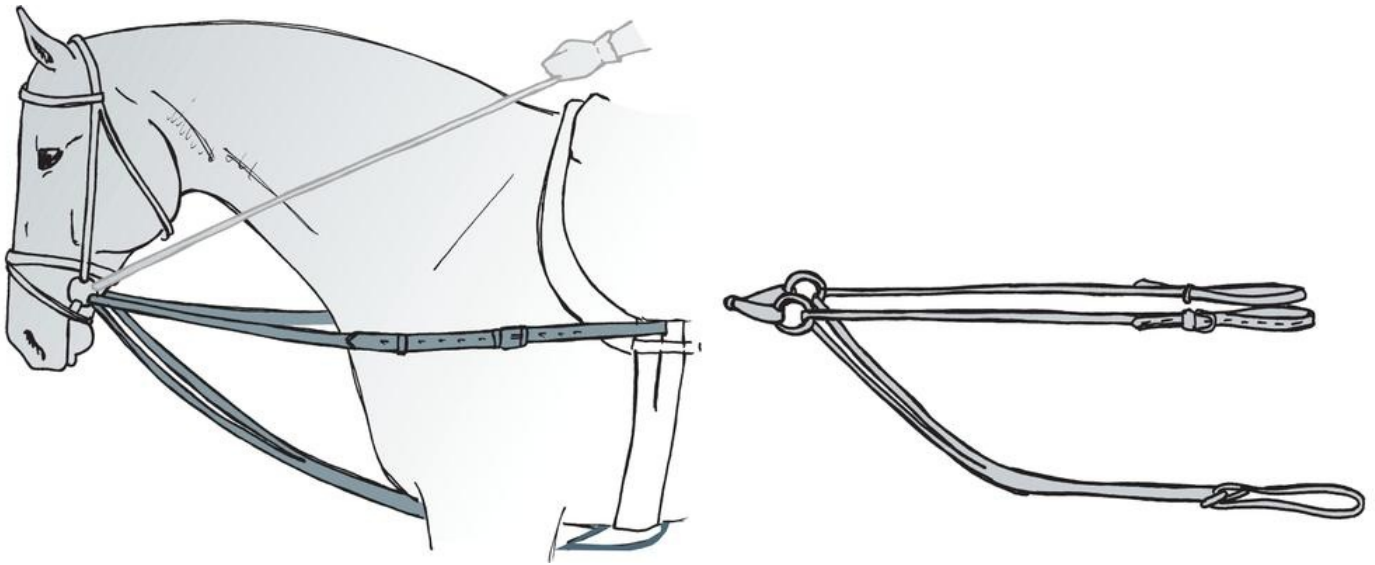
Simple side reins.

The TRIANGULAR REINS consist of a 2.5–2.75m long rein which divides into two parts; at the two ends adjustable buckle loops can be attached to the girth. The single, large loop is attached to the girth between the forelegs, while the two divided ends both run through the bit rings (from underneath and from the inside out), going back to the girth at the sides of the horse. They should never slide down behind the elbows. Triangular reins have less of a stabilising effect on the horse's head-neck carriage compared to regular side reins. They offer the horse more flexibility and, as a result, allow for more forward-downward stretching.

When they are at the right length, they will allow the horse to stretch and nod its head during walk breaks.

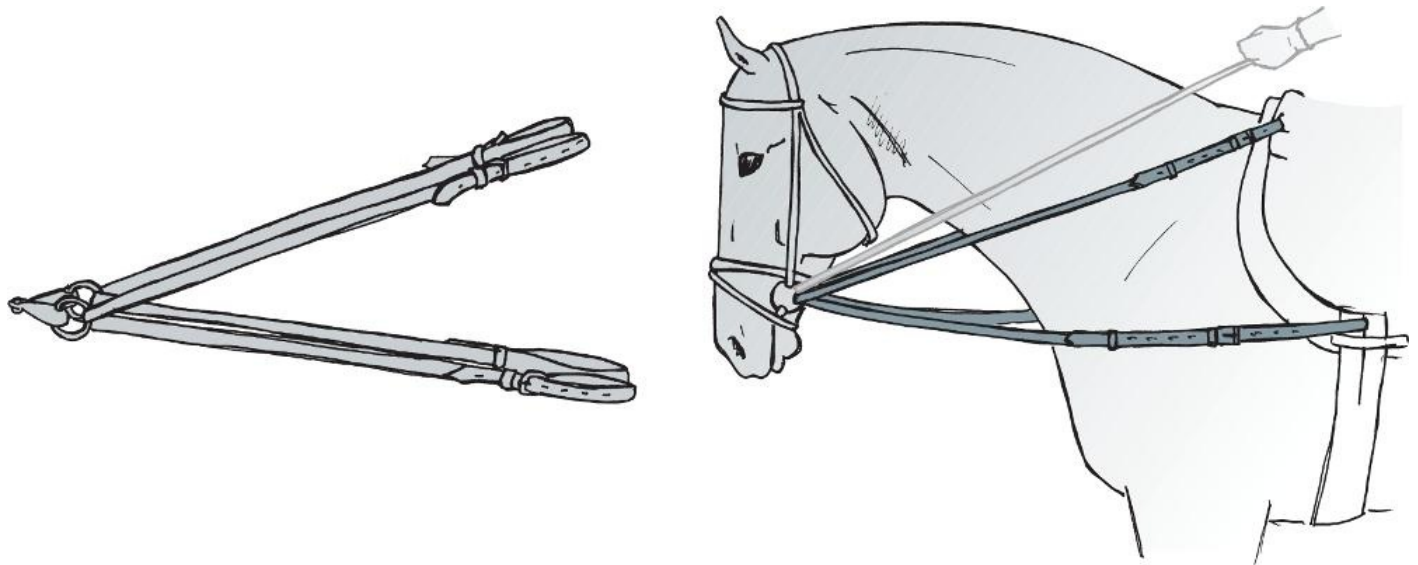
The triangular reins can also be very helpful to the more experienced rider when working with horses which need correcting. The horse is encouraged to stretch forwards-downwards into the rein, improving its willingness to stretch.

A positive effect of auxiliary reins can only benefit the subsequent riding when the rider maintains a similar even contact with soft hands.



Triangular reins.

RUNNING REINS (also known as double side reins) consist of two approximately 2.25m long reins which can be attached to the sides of the horse in different positions. These reins are best attached to a surcingle with different rings to offer attachment in different ways. Running reins have the advantage of being flexible in their use: they can be attached lower, like a regular side rein, with which most horses remain in an even head-neck position. They can also be attached with a greater angle, similar to triangular reins, or higher overall, if the horse is already able to carry itself well. From their position on the side of the girth, running reins run through the bit rings from the inside out and attach to the rings located higher up on the saddle or a surcingle.



Running reins.

EXAMPLES OF THE APPLICATION OF THE RUNNING REINS

- To supple the horse, the reins are attached in a low triangle.

- For further work, the reins are attached in a higher triangle.

ADVANTAGES

- The horse can go into a forward-downward head-neck position without the head-nose line coming behind the vertical.
- It gives the horse stability and guidance laterally.
- The horse can become light in the hand.

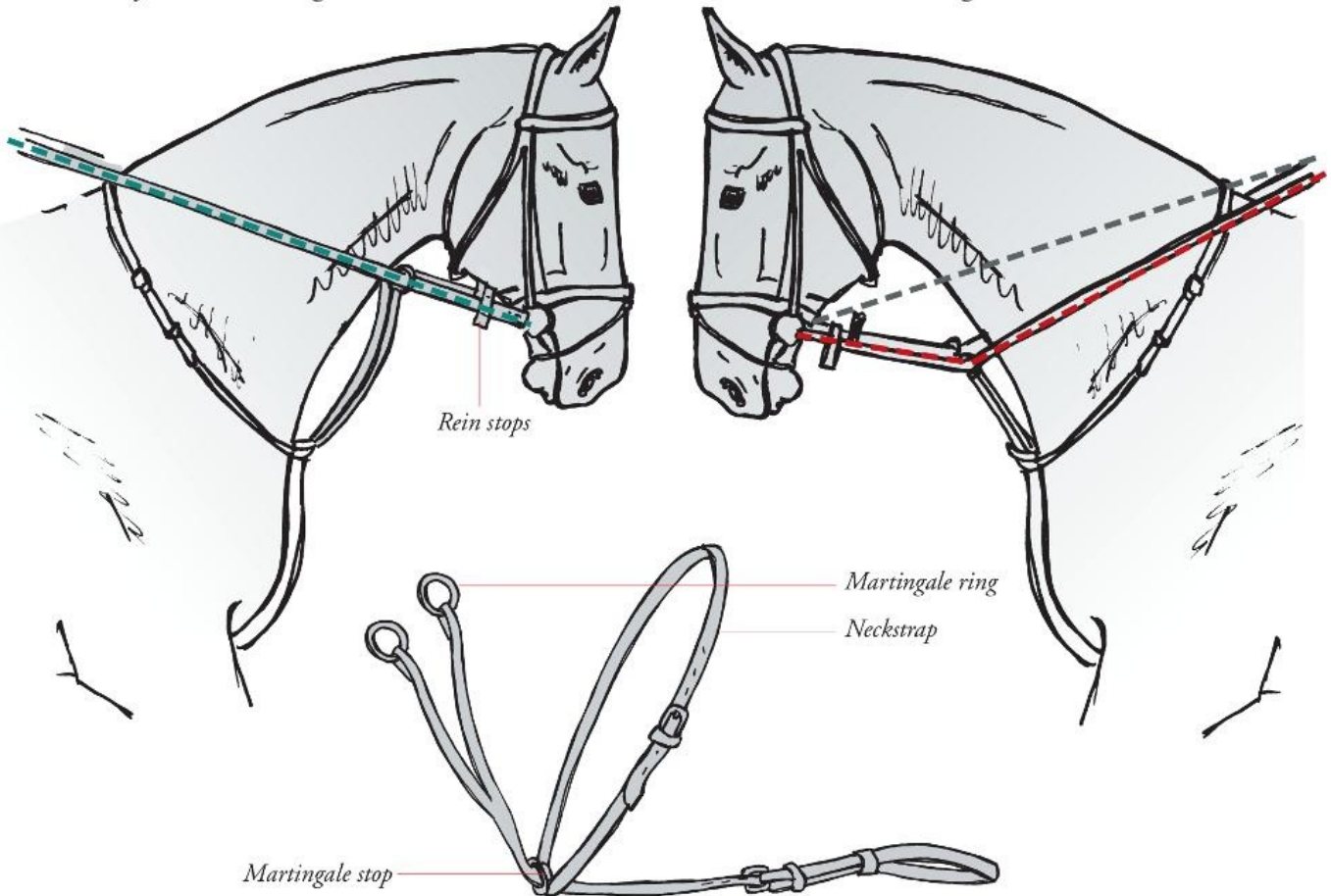
Side reins, triangular reins and running reins, are only used for flatwork and when lungeing, but never when jumping or when riding in the countryside!

In such situations, these auxiliary reins would keep the horse from balancing itself freely when necessary.

The MARTINGALE has a slightly different function. It does not have the purpose of offering the horse a secure contact and it does not have a direct influence on the horse's mouth. It only has an effect when the horse lifts its head strongly. The martingale is hence used mainly for jumping and cross-country riding. It is made up of a strap with a loop at its end which passes between the horse's forelegs and is attached to the girth; the upper part (the breast strap) is forked, with the ends each equipped with a ring. The reins are fed through these rings from the bit to the rider's hands. The secure position of the martingale is ensured by a neckstrap and a rubber stop at its end. This must sit tightly on the breast strap and ensures that the horse cannot get its forelegs caught in the breast strap when jumping. So-called rein stops are attached to the reins. These prevent the rings of the martingale from getting hooked onto the buckles of the reins at the bit. The forked part of the martingale assembly can also be attached to a breastplate with the same effect. The martingale needs to be adjusted to a length that ensures that, when the horse retains a normal head-carriage, the rein line from rider's hand to the bit runs unbroken.

Correctly attached martingale.

Martingale attached too short.



■ COMMENTS ON SELECTED OTHER AUXILIARY REINS

Variations of side reins made of elastic (rubber) parts can be useful for sensitive horses, albeit only temporarily, since they generally lead to most horses leaning too heavily on the reins. The elastic effect also creates a 'counter-pull', through which the desired effect is not obtained. As a result, 'incorrect', undesired muscle groups (the lower neck) are strengthened.

The GERMAN STANDING MARTINGALE⁴ is a single rein which passes through the horse's forelegs from the girth; its upper part is forked and each end is clipped into the rings of the bit. This only has an effect from below and is hence far different from the actual effect of the rider's hand. This makes the transition to riding without auxiliary reins rather complicated. The fact that, if the horse spooks or trips, any upward movement of its head will not be permitted, is also to be critically taken into consideration.

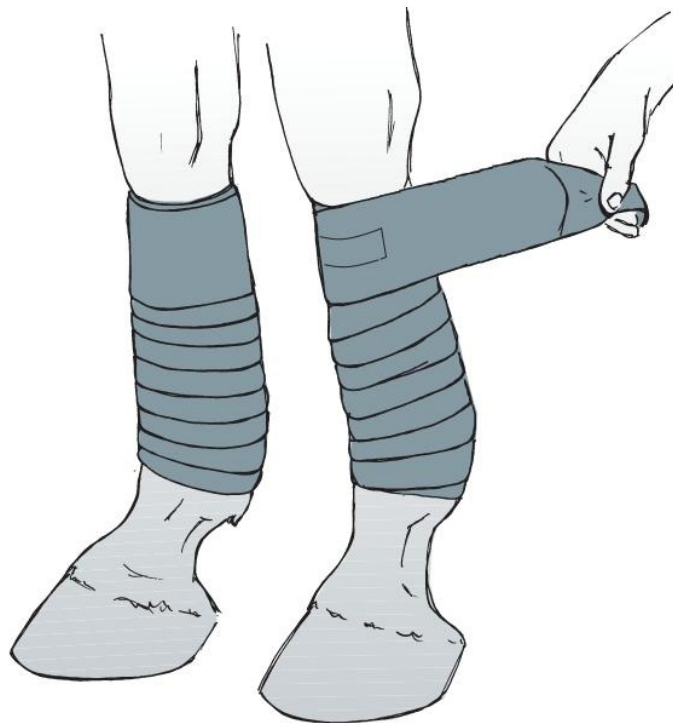
The aim of using auxiliary reins when riding is to make these superfluous as the training proceeds!

2.2.4 Equipment

(Polo) bandages and boots protect the horse's legs against external injuries, for

example caused by the horse 'brushing' itself or hitting fences. They do not have any supportive or relieving function.

(POLO) BANDAGES can be made of various different materials (cotton, wool, fleece or elastic). Bandaging must be done correctly to avoid pressure injuries, restricting the blood supply or restricting the movement. Bandages should neither be too tight nor too loose, and should not have any folds or creases in them either. Grains of sand that might find their way between the leg and the polo bandage during riding could aggravate the skin. Using pads underneath the bandages may prevent this problem.



Correctly applied polo bandages.

To bandage a horse, the best way is to start with a tightly rolled up bandage. The Velcro is always on the inside when the bandages are rolled up. When putting on the bandage, the horse must have its foot set straight down on the ground (not resting). The end of the bandage is placed at the top of the cannon bone and unwrapped downwards to the fetlock at a slight angle and then back up before being secured with the Velcro. Attachments other than Velcro (for example fabric lacing) must never be tied tighter than the bandage itself. The bend of the pastern must remain free. The Velcro needs to be checked from time to time to ensure it is still in good working condition. It should also always face outwards (towards the outside of the horse) to prevent the horse's opposite leg from rubbing against it and having it to come undone, potentially causing an accident.

BOOTS, both for the fore and hind legs, are usually made from synthetic, neoprene

or leather materials and appropriately fitted with a foam or sponge rubber insert. Boot fasteners must be closed on the outside of the legs from front to back. The precise size and shape must be suited to each individual horse.

FETLOCK OR 'BRUSHING' BOOTS are mostly used on jumping and cross-country horses. They protect the hind fetlocks and are attached rather loosely to the cannon bone of the hind legs and slid down to the fetlocks, where they grip in place. They are especially useful if the horse moves its hind legs too close to one another and, as a result, risks injuring itself. They are mainly made from neoprene and other synthetic materials.

With the help of OVERREACH BOOTS, also known as BELL BOOTS, the bulbs of the heel and the coronets of the forefeet are protected against the hind feet reaching too far forwards.

STUDS, which are screwed into the horse's shoes, offer the horse more grip on grass and also offer more safety – comparable to the sports shoes worn in athletics (spikes) and in soccer (studded shoes). Studs must, however, never remain in the shoes when the horse is in the stables or being transported since it could seriously injure itself.

A BREASTPLATE can be used in situations when a correctly fitted and positioned saddle risks slipping backwards (for example, when riding at high speed or over undulating terrain) to secure the position of the saddle. It needs to be attached correctly to obtain an optimal fit.



Breastplate.

On horses with unfavourable conformation upon which to position the saddle (low/withers, shoulder) – primarily rotund ponies – a CRUPPER can prevent the saddle from slipping forwards. When being fitted, particular care should be taken with the extremely sensitive underside of the dock, where the skin is particularly thin. Some horses/ponies may react sensitively to cruppers. Therefore, cruppers should only be used after consulting with an expert and after the saddle has been examined properly.

The use of a FOREGIRTH, which is also meant to prevent a saddle slipping forwards on horses with backs not very well defined, or with low withers, is not advisable. There is danger that this will restrict the movement of the shoulder, the functionality of the shoulder muscles and the aperture between elbow and chest.

The problem of the saddle slipping forwards can also be a result of the horse's nutritional condition. Generally, before using a foregirth, it is advisable to seek expert advice and have the saddle thoroughly checked.

2.3 Care of the Equipment

Good-quality items of equipment also carry a high price tag. However, in addition to an important contribution to safety, they will also be long-lasting if they are taken care of correctly and regularly, and stored suitably.

Care for the equipment:

- Prevents sore spots and rubbing caused by the build-up of dirt.
- Means checking the stitching and material damage to prevent accidents.
- Extends the life of the materials.
- Improves the overall impression.

The care of equipment involves:

- Cleaning after every use.
- Treatment and preservation with specific leather care products, particularly around the stitching, every 8–14 days, depending on use.
- Ensuring regular checks for damage to all supply parts and stitching.

A frequent check of the material and the stitching of equipment makes a considerable contribution towards the prevention of accidents!

-
1. *This piece of equipment is described thus throughout the text. In the USA, it is called a halter; in the UK 'halter' refers to a more basic device, typically made of rope and webbing.*
 2. *Named Grakle after a Grand National winner, it is commonly called 'figure-eight' after its design, and 'Mexican' in Germany.*
 3. *Called a saddle pad in the USA. In the UK, 'pad' refers to the sort of device so-described later in this paragraph.*
 4. *The English form of standing martingale, in which the upper attachment is to a cavesson noseband, is not used in Germany.*

CHAPTER 3

Preparation for Riding

A significant foundation for good communication between horse and rider starts with their prior interaction in the stable.

3.1 Approaching the Horse, Putting on the Headcollar, Leading and Tying

A horse constantly observes what is happening in its vicinity, and notices any approach. In a split second, it decides whether to wait calmly or whether there is any reason to get worried, maybe even to seek flight. Anything that moves in a surprising, unpredictable manner can unsettle horses. Therefore, one always talks to the horse quietly before starting to approach it calmly and, if possible, diagonally from the front.

To put on the headcollar, the horse is first spoken to and made aware of the rider's presence by physical contact. The horse should turn to the rider as a reaction. The headcollar can then be put on and the horse is patted on the neck.

■ PUTTING ON THE HEADCOLLAR

To put on the headcollar, the rider stands to the left of the horse. The headcollar is slipped on from beneath the nose, up and over the ears; or, with an open design, the open end of the strap is placed over the neck and buckled up. It is adjusted and attached at the throatlatch so that it is not too tight and does not put any pressure on the head while, at the same time, it is not too loose so that it can slide off the horse's head.

■ LEADING IN A HEADCOLLAR

The lead rope is attached to the centre ring at the bottom of the headcollar. If the horse (for example when groomed) is to be tied up, using a rope with a so-called quick-release clip or panic clip is recommended. These clips, as opposed to traditional snap hooks, also open up if a horse, be it out of fear or panic, pulls away forcefully. The disadvantage of the quick-release clip is that it can open up unintentionally just by being touched or by a quick movement of the horse.

For secure leading of a horse, a lead rope with a snap hook is recommended.

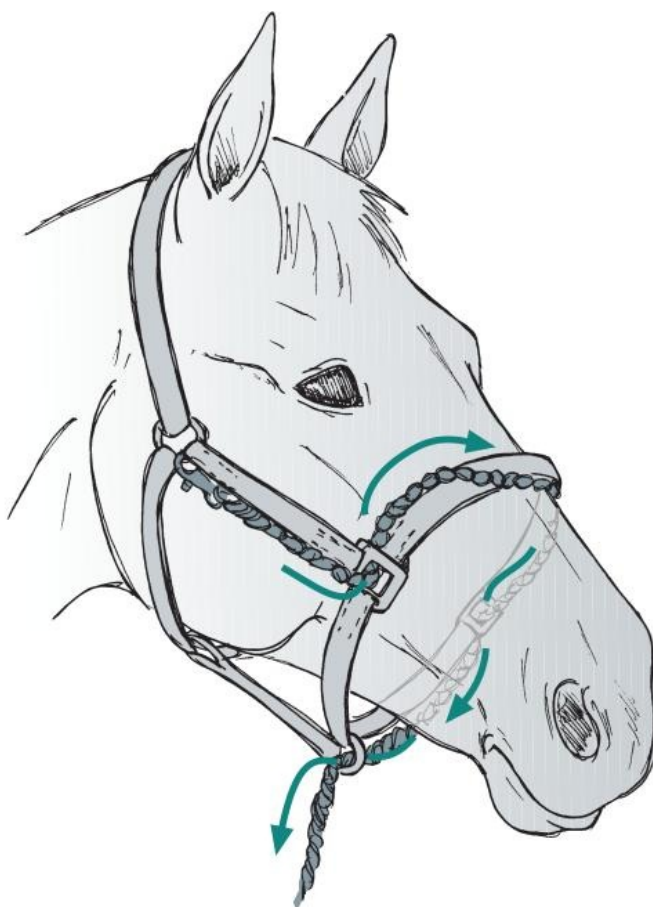
When leading a horse on a headcollar, the right hand holds the rope around 50cm beneath the headcollar so that the thumb is the highest point of an enclosed fist. The leader should be parallel to the horse's left shoulder and walk at a lively speed. If the horse rushes ahead, more control can be exerted through short tugs on the rope and by lifting the left hand up to the horse's eye level. While leading, the person doing so should pay attention that the horse is focused on them.

SAFETY ADVICE

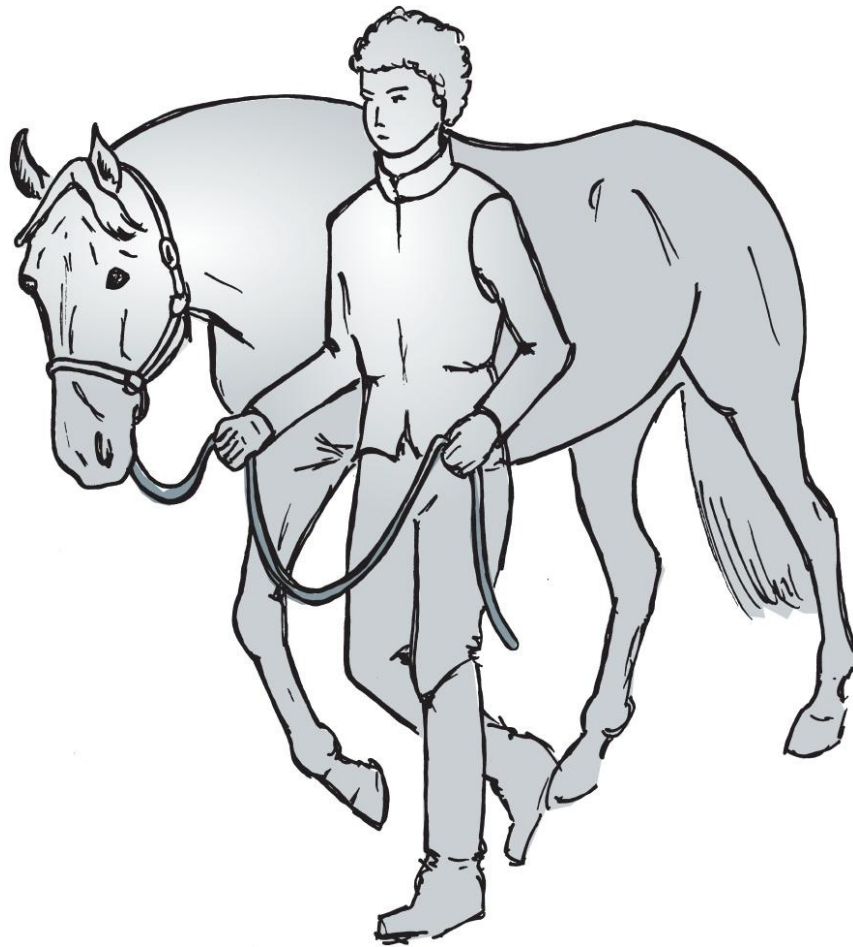
The rope must never be wrapped around the hand since it might tighten in critical situations and the leader could be dragged along.

RECOMMENDATION: The person leading should wear gloves where possible.

Leading from the right side of the horse is, of course, also possible: this is especially natural for left-handed people. Regular alternation, from leading from the left to leading from the right, also improves the dexterity of the person leading and helps focus the horse's attention on the person. For horses that cannot be easily controlled when led, using a chain lead rope might help. This usually consists of a (leather) strap attached to a metal chain.



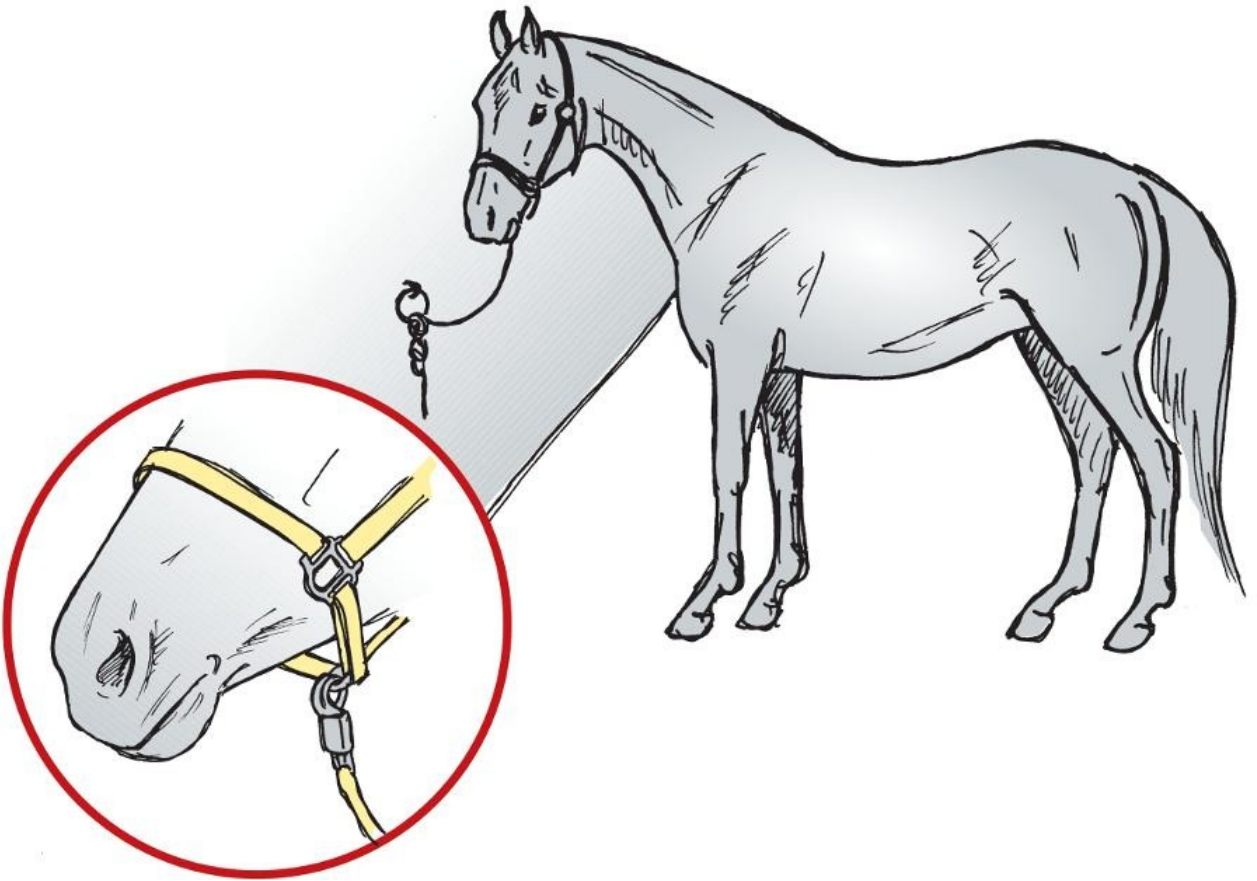
Lead chain, which runs over the bridge of the horse's nose.



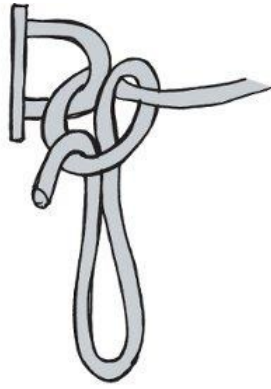
Leading the horse in a headcollar.

The chain is attached so that it passes over the bridge of the horse's nose. Attention must be paid that the chain always runs atop the noseband of the headcollar (see *illustration*). A short tug on the rope can exert controlled pressure on the bridge of the nose. The aim of this educational or corrective measure is to be able to lead with just a lead rope in the future. The chain should only be a temporary solution, or used in special, individual cases.

The lead chain should never pass through the horse's mouth!

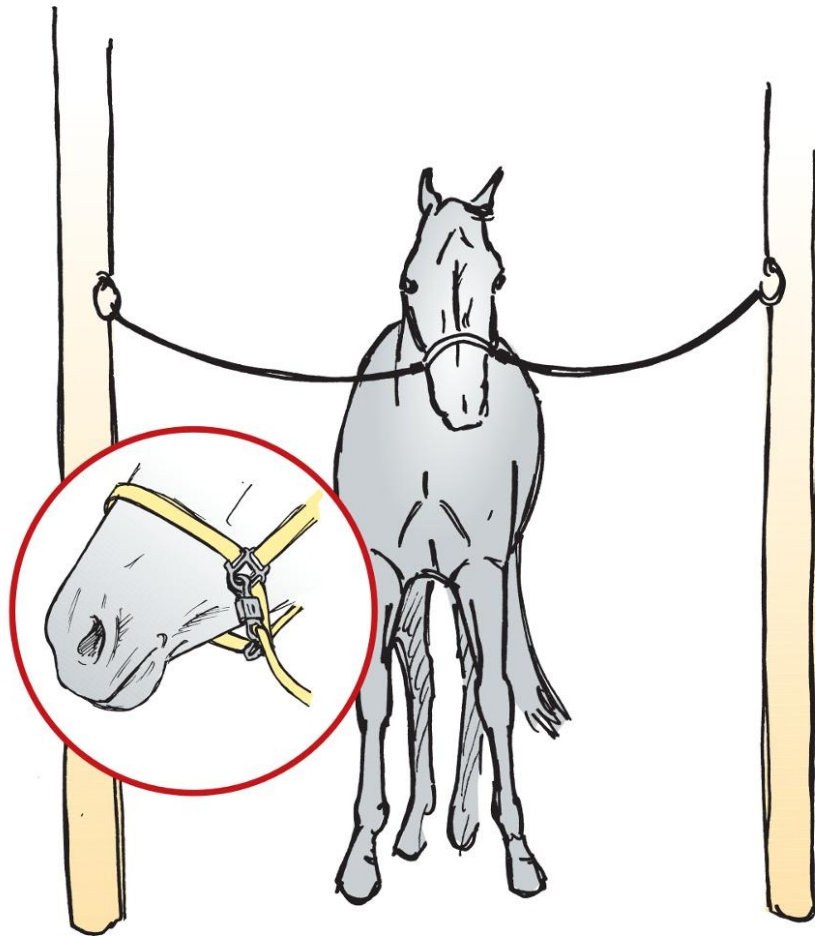


Tied with a single rope.



Knots.

The horse is tied in a normal head-neck position at shoulder level, short enough (approx. 60–80cm) that it has relatively little room for manoeuvre. If the horse is tied too long and too high, it might get its head underneath the rope. If the horse is tied too long and too low, it might stand on the rope. In both instances (and also with a horse that is tied too short), there is the risk that the horse might panic.



On the cross-ties.

Horses generally stand more relaxed in the stable aisle when using cross-ties with panic hooks. Cross-tying a horse on the headcollar prevents it from playing mischievously or developing bad habits. Cross-ties are usually ropes or chains covered by a plastic tube, easy to attach to and release from the retaining rings and the headcollar. The use of metal rings or chain links, which snap open under high pulling pressure, are further recommended to avoid injuries or damage to equipment since some horses can panic when they are tied up.

SAFETY ADVICE

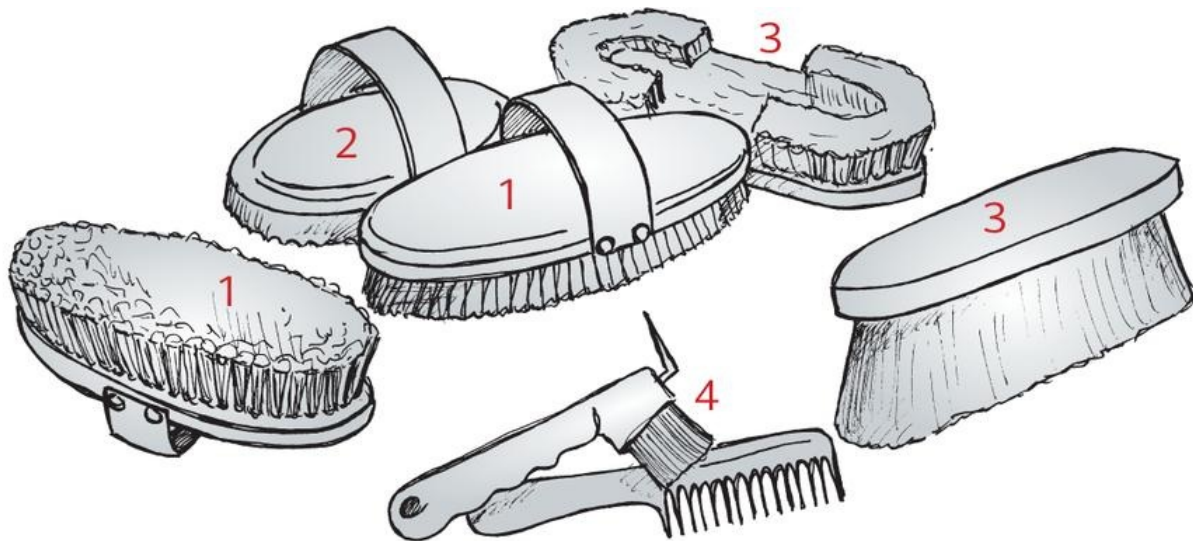
For safety reasons, the rope must never be attached to moveable objects (such as stable doors). If a horse panics it could pull the door off its hinges. All objects that could lead to injuries (forks, wheelbarrows, etc.) must be removed from the immediate area where a horse is tied up. Horses must never be tied on the bit of their bridle.

3.2 Horse Care

Stabling, feeding and management significantly influence the performance ability and the welfare of the horse. Every rider must learn the fundamental basics of this.

The book *Horse Management: The Official Instruction Handbook of the German National Equestrian Federation, Volume 4*, provides more information on this.

The purpose of daily grooming is to clean the coat of dust, dirt and other skin secretions such as dandruff or sweat. Proper grooming also serves as a massage; it improves the blood flow to the skin and subcutaneous tissue, and helps the skin to breathe. Grooming is therefore not only a cleaning process but also a health measure which plays a meaningful role for the welfare, performance ability and resistance to infection of the horse. In nature, horses groom themselves by rolling, or engage in mutual grooming by gently nibbling one another. If a horse is mostly stabled, it is the human's duty to take on this role. Grooming should be carried out in a grooming area, in the stable aisle or outdoors, but preferably not in the horse's individual stable.



The grooming kit consists of:

1 Body brush

2 Curry comb

3 Dandy brush

4 Mane comb and hoofpick

Wool or linen cloths and sponges are also part of the kit.

Grooming provides the best opportunity for establishing a personal contact between human and horse. Daily horse care enables one to keep a close eye on the health, condition and behaviour of a horse, allowing anomalies to be recognised, and signs of potential illness (injury, swellings, skin alterations) to be detected early on.

Grooming the coat and removing large build-ups of dirt is done by circular movements of a rubber curry comb, avoiding the parts of the body with no significant flesh or muscle, such as the head, the joints, the hip bones and the withers. These are then groomed with a dandy brush, or, for particularly delicate

areas such as the head, with a body brush.

After thoroughly grooming the horse with these items, a body brush is used, starting from the head and following in the direction of the hair's growth, to clean the coat. Each stroke of the brush on the horse's body is followed by the brush being stroked across the curry comb, away from the body, to remove the accumulated dirt. From time to time, the curry comb is tapped clean on the floor or the wall to remove the accumulated dust. A cloth can then be wiped over the coat to remove any remaining superficial dust.

The corners of the eyes, nostrils and mouth as well as the underside of the dock (base of the tail), sheath (geldings and stallions), nipples (mares) and anus should, when required, be cleaned with different sponges. These sponges must be rinsed well with hot water, cleaned with boiling water, or replaced after use.

Washing the saddle area with a moist cloth after work increases the horse's well-being and makes grooming easier.

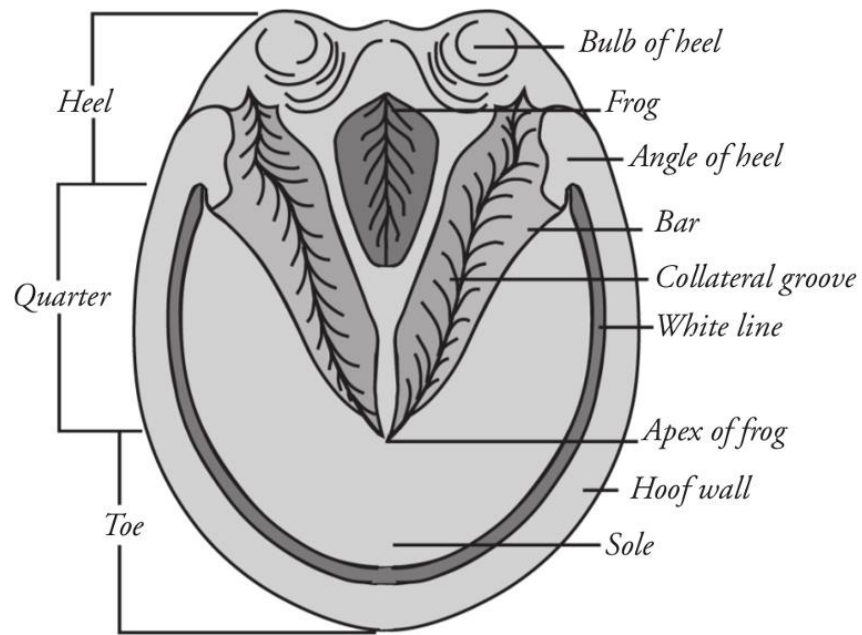
When the weather is warm enough, horses can be completely hosed down from time to time, (after sweating a lot or when extremely dirty), and then a sweat scraper is used to remove the excess water. However, hosing the horse down too frequently is to be avoided. Daily grooming of a horse kept out in the field or in an open-stable arrangement can even be damaging since the build-up of grime and dirt protects a horse from the elements.

■ CARE OF MANE AND TAIL

Only fingers are used to untangle the horse's tail and remove pieces of dirt or shavings. If required, the tail can be washed with warm water and, optionally, a mild shampoo. Combs or brushes should never be used in taking care of the tail, as they would pull out too many hairs. For the mane, a soft grooming brush can be used. A mane comb may be used when the mane needs pulling.

■ HOOF CARE

The hoofpick removes large clumps of dirt from the hoof and the frog, working towards the toe. The frog is to be cleaned carefully since horses can be sensitive there. Therefore, final cleaning (particularly of the frog) with a brush is recommended. The surface of the horn must never be damaged. Should the hoof need oiling, any remaining dirt on the walls is brushed away, or the hoof is washed to retain the moisture. Only the walls of the hoof are oiled, if required, but not the sole.



Correctly shaped fore hoof.



Correctly shaped hind hoof.¹

SAFETY ADVICE

When cleaning the hooves, never kneel or sit down – it is important to be able to

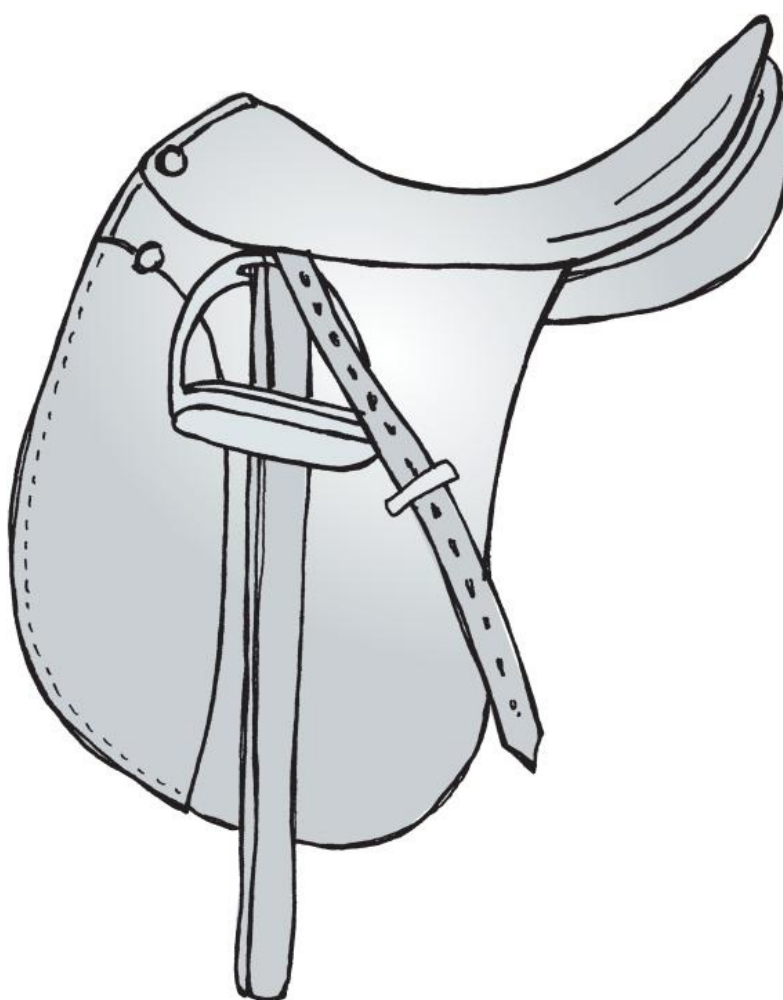
move away fast enough should any unexpected movements of the horse occur.

■ RUGGING A HORSE

Horses that sweat a lot during work can benefit from being clipped and rugged in the colder seasons of the year.

3.3 Putting on the Saddle

When the horse is tied up in the stable aisle, the saddle should be put on before the bridle. Before the saddle is placed on the horse's back, the stirrups should be secured under their leathers, and the girth, attached on the right side, should lie over the top of the saddle.



Saddle with stirrups run up.

- The saddle is placed at around the height of the withers, from where it is pushed back into the correct position, following the direction of the horse's coat.
- Particular care must be taken when placing the saddle cloth. No creases should form underneath the saddle. The saddle cloth must be lifted up into the gullet. This is essential to ensure that it will not slide back down onto the horse's withers

and exert pressure after the girth has been tightened.

- After putting on the saddle, the rider changes to the right-hand side of the horse to take down the girth and make sure it is straight and untwisted.
- The girth – with the rider now back on the left-hand side of the horse – is then brought under the horse's body and attached loosely. Tightening the girth too soon or too quickly can prompt a defensive reaction or even lead to a panic reaction in the horse.
- When the saddle is placed correctly, the girth is positioned approximately one hand's width behind the elbow of the horse.
- Only when the saddle has been fairly loosely fastened on the horse's back, and the horse has been led in walk, is the girth gradually tightened further.

The saddle is generally placed correctly when:

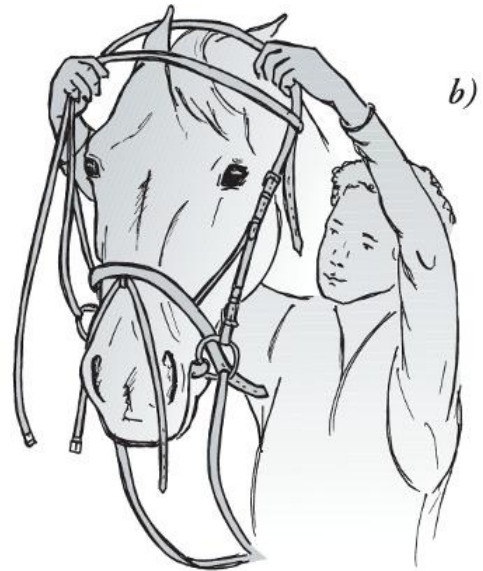
- Its contact areas with the horse's back are evenly distributed.
- The mobility of the shoulders is not restricted.
- The freedom of the elbows is not disturbed.
- The freedom of the withers and the spine is maintained.
- The lumbar vertebrae remain protected.
- The saddle cloth and girth are of a correct size and do not have any folds or creases.

When the saddle is balanced and fits correctly, the deepest point should be in the very centre of the saddle.

If a horse shows discomfort when being saddled, or when the girth is being attached or tightened, for example by putting its ears back or shaking its head, the cause of this discomfort must be investigated and eradicated.

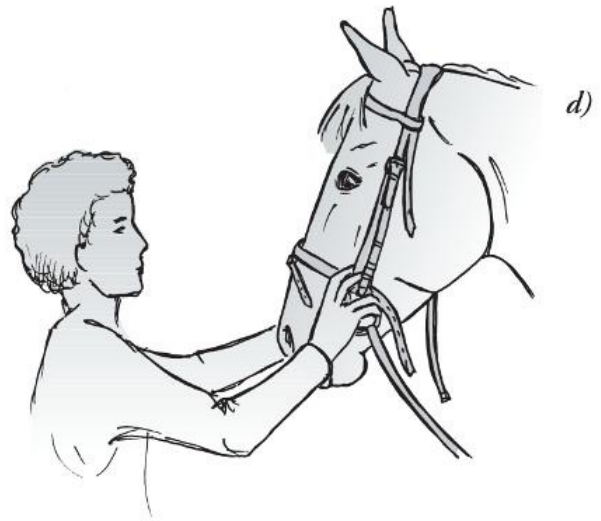
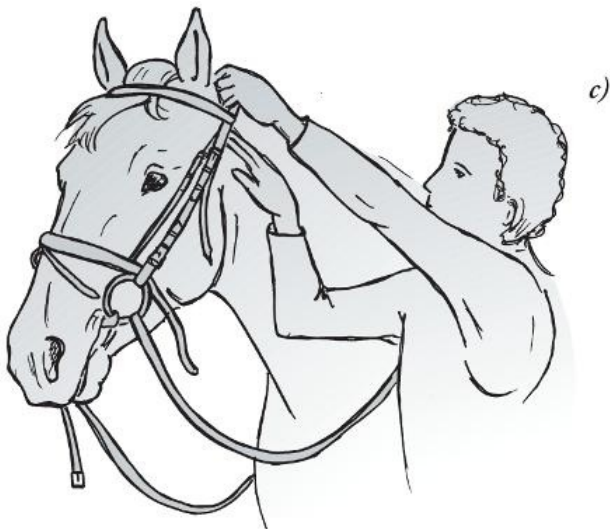
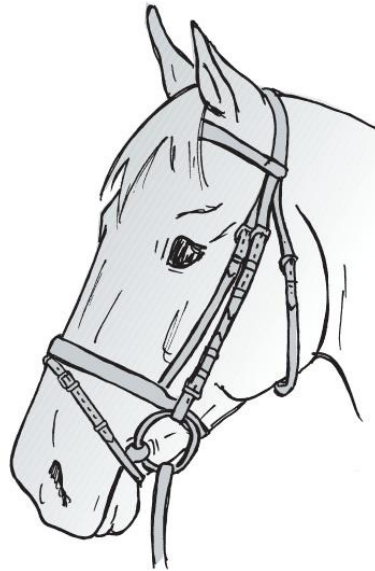
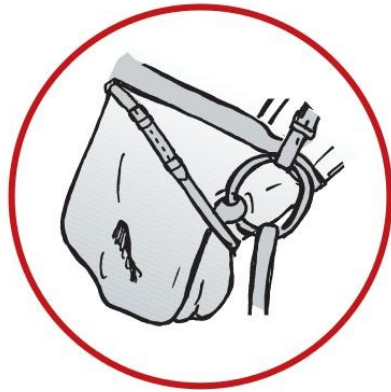
3.4 Putting on and Taking off the Bridle

When putting on the bridle, it should hang neatly with the reins over the left forearm (browband facing the elbow, reins close to the wrist).



Putting on the bridle.

- The rider approaches the horse from the left.
- The rider releases the rope from the horse, that is still tied up.
- The rider then lifts the reins over the horse's neck and places them right behind the ears (the reins should be positioned on the top part of the neck to have more influence on the horse if it tries to run away).
- The rider takes the headcollar off the horse's head and either rests it on the lower right arm or lays it down at a safe distance, out of the horse's reach, so that neither horse nor rider can step in it.
- The right forearm wraps around the horse's head.
- The right hand lies on the bridge of the horse's nose and then takes the bridle out of the left hand by the cheekpieces.
- The bit is led towards the horse's mouth with the left hand, so that it does not hit against the teeth.
- The left thumb opens the mouth with a gentle pressure on the horse's lips (*illustration a*).
- Then, the bridle is raised carefully with the right hand so that the bit can slowly glide into the mouth.
- The right hand then lifts the headpiece, if necessary with the aid of the now free left hand, first over the right and then over the left ear of the horse (*illustration b*).
- After the browband is in place (*illustration c*), the forelock is then placed over the browband and the mane is tidied behind the poll.
- A check is made to ensure that the bit is positioned correctly in the mouth and the noseband is horizontal (*illustration d*).
- Finally, the throatlatch and the noseband are fastened as explained below.



The bridle is fitted correctly when the bit lies closely up against the corners of the mouth and one or two wrinkles in the skin at the corners of the mouth are visible. This ensures a stable position of the bit in the horse's mouth. The headpiece sits closely behind the ears, without rubbing on them. The browband needs to be long enough, although it should not be so long as to sway with the movement of the horse.

The throatlatch should prevent the bridle from sliding off the horse's head. It should never be too tight; a hand's width (four fingers wide) should easily fit between the horse's throat and the throatlatch.

The **DROP NOSEBAND** is positioned approximately four fingers' width above the top rim of the nostrils and is tightened only so much that the horse can still chew comfortably on the bit, but without being able to open its mouth widely. The small

rings between nosepiece and chinstrap need to lie in front of the bit, otherwise the nosepiece is too long. The fastening of the chinstrap in the chin groove should leave space for about two fingers between the bridge of the nose and the nosepiece. The buckle of the bridle's nosepiece, fastened in the chin groove, is situated to the side of the lower jawbone and must not exert any pressure on this.

The upper edge of the nosebands of the CAVESSON OR FLASH BRIDLES are roughly 1–2cm below the jawbone. There should be room for two fingers between the bridge of the nose and the noseband (see *illustration on page 39*). With flash nosebands, the cavesson noseband must always be fastened first, followed by the flash. The flash must not be any tighter than the noseband. The position of the bit should remain unaltered when the straps are fastened.

Problems with contact or with the thoroughness of the horse cannot be compensated for by tightening the noseband excessively!

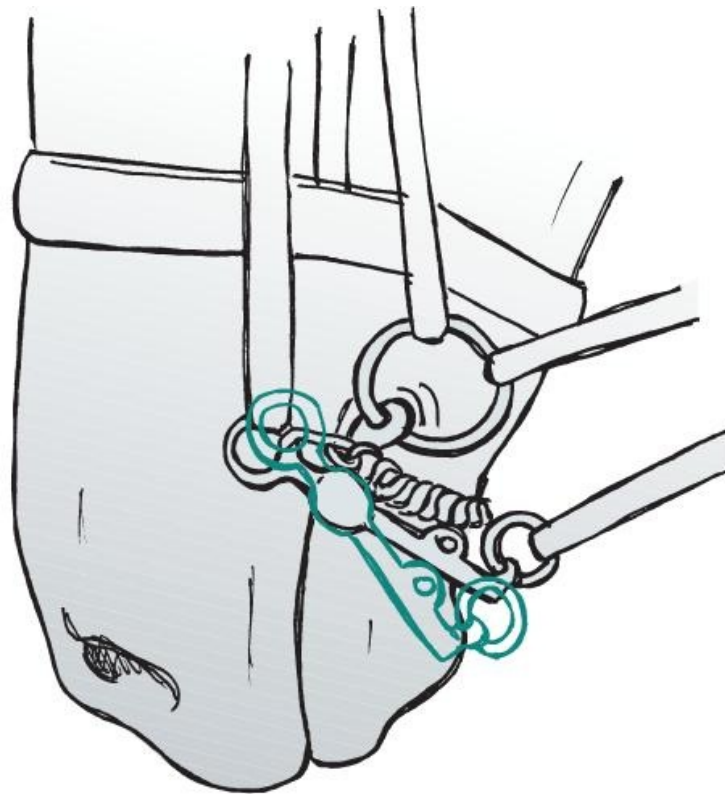
When PUTTING ON A DOUBLE BRIDLE the same method is used as with a normal snaffle.

- Because of the unjointed nature of the curb bit, particular care must be taken when putting it into the mouth.
- The bridoon is attached at the same height as a normal snaffle.
- The curb bit is situated right under the bridoon and it must in no way be attached so low that it touches the canine teeth of stallions or geldings (see *illustration on page 36*).

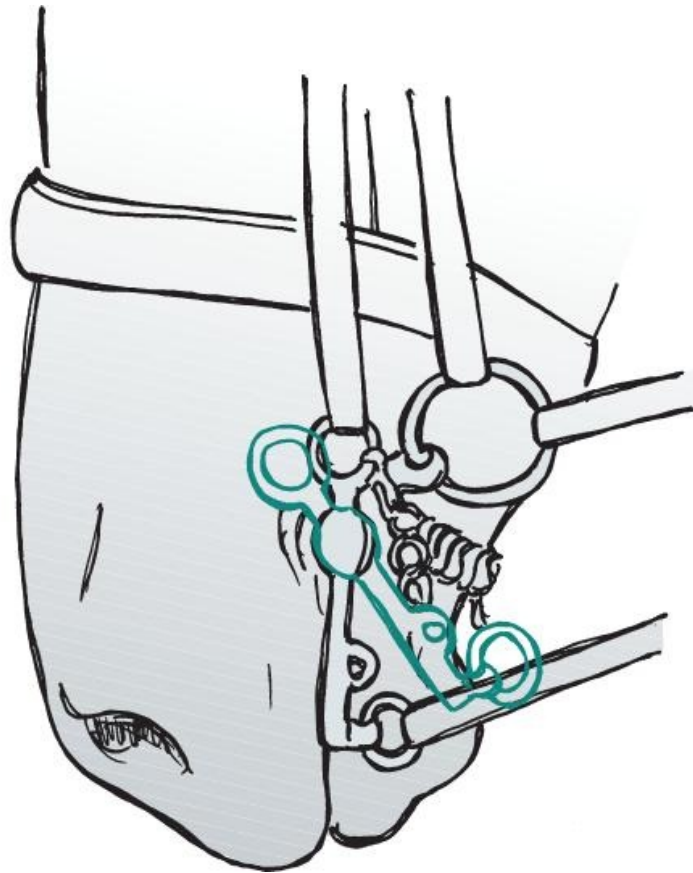
The curb chain is fitted in such a way that, when the curb rein is taken up and the chain touches the chin, a 45-degree angle is formed by the shank and the mouth. If the shanks do not go as far back as this angle, but rather remain closer to the mouth, the chain is too tight and the double bridle is said to be 'binding'.



Correctly adjusted curb chain – with a correct contact, an angle of approximately 45° is visible.



Curb chain too long, cheeks 'bottom out'.



Curb chain too short, cheeks 'bind'.

If the chain is too long, the double bridle is said to 'bottom out'. Both attachments of the curb chain are incorrect. With sensitive horses, a soft pad between the curb chain and the chin groove, made of rubber or leather, is recommended.

■ REMOVING THE BRIDLE

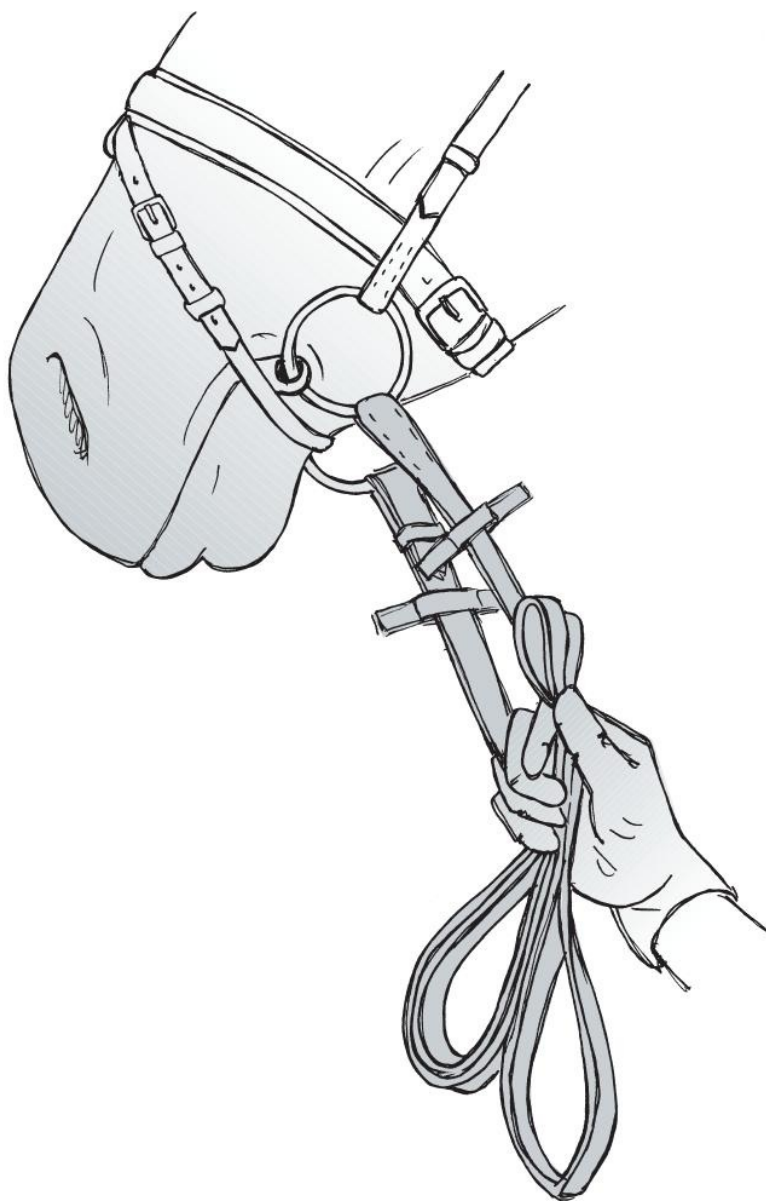
Before removing the bridle, the horse must first stand still. The headcollar and rope must be ready within easy reach. The opposite sequence to bridling up is followed:

- Flash, noseband and then throatlatch are undone, and the headpiece is lifted forwards over the ears.
- When removing the bridle (whether snaffle or double), care needs to be taken that the horse has the time to 'spit out' the bit. The bit should not in any way be dragged out between clenched teeth. This can lead to injuries and frighten the horse.
- The reins should still remain around the neck until the headcollar has been put on. This ensures that a degree of control is maintained over the horse.
- Subsequently, the reins are removed from over the horse's neck.

Finally, the bit(s) should be washed off immediately and any dirt should be cleaned off the bridle ([see Chapter 2.3 Care of the Equipment](#)).

3.5 Leading a Tacked-Up Horse

When leading a tacked-up horse, the stirrups are run up and secured. The stirrup leathers are fed through the stirrups to ensure they do not slip down. Stirrups that hang down could otherwise hit the horse's elbows or get caught on doors.



Holding the reins when leading the horse on the bridle.

A horse is traditionally led from the left-hand side. The reins are taken down from the neck and the right hand separates the reins between the index and the middle finger. The ends of the reins are doubled up and held entirely in the right hand, firmly with the thumb.

Should the horse be ridden in side reins, these are only attached inside the riding arena. When using martingales, the reins are not fed through the rings until the horse is ready to be mounted.

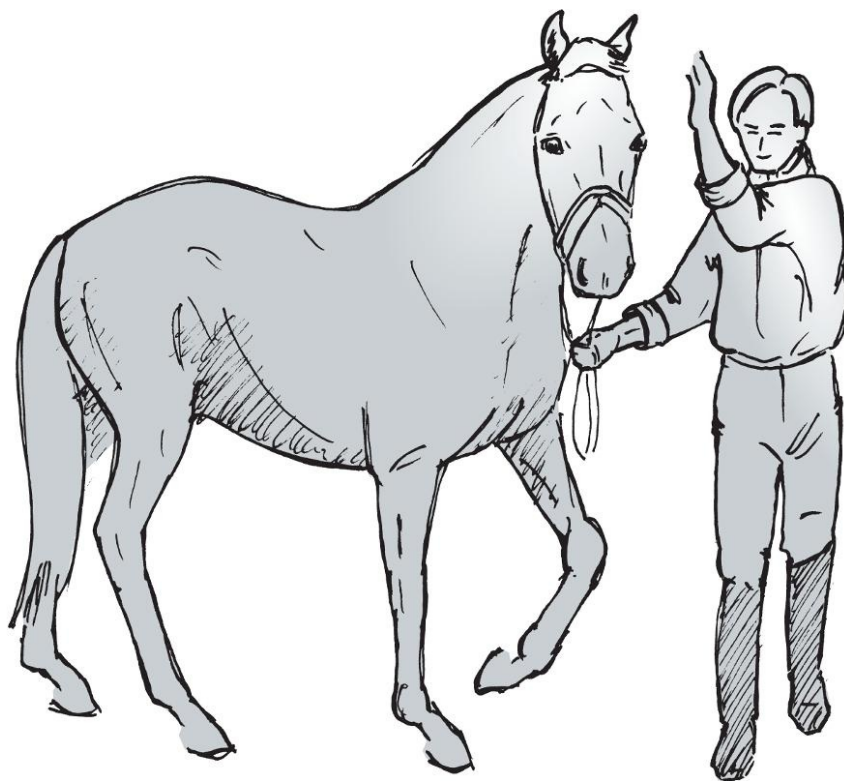
If horses are led one after the other, a safety distance of about two horse lengths (5–6m) should be maintained.

If the horse is in a double bridle, the snaffle reins are taken down from the neck while the curb reins remain around the neck. Any adjustable loop on the curb reins is pushed as far forward as possible on the rein so that it does not hang down too far on one side.

When leading horses – and this also applies when showing horses in hand (where the horse is always led from the left) – turns are always carried out to the right, away from the person leading the horse. This reduces the danger of the horse overtaking the person leading and, in the event of spooking, running into or treading on them. In order to turn, the horse is led into the turn using the right hand. If necessary, the left hand may be raised to the horse's eye level in support. With a spooking horse, the leader should not let the reins glide through their hands, but rather keep a relaxed voice and raise the left hand to regain the horse's concentration and calm it down.

SAFETY ADVICE

Ropes, reins and lead chains must never be wrapped around the hand. Gloves are recommended for leading to keep a good grip in case of any jerky movements on the part of the horse, and to prevent injuries.



Turning a horse.

3.6 Mounting and Dismounting

To mount and dismount in the arena, every rider should make it a habit to position the horse straight on the centre line or in the centre of a circle, facing the long side.

The rider must ensure that the horse remains standing still until it has been mounted, is ready to be ridden forwards and the aid to move off is given! This is also part of the horse's education, which represents a fundamental principle for clear communication between horse and rider.

The reins, attached to each other at their ends, rest on the right-hand side of the horse's neck. During all of the activities performed before mounting, such as pulling down the stirrups, adjusting their length or tightening the girth, the rider always keeps one arm looped through the reins. For safety reasons, a horse may never be allowed to stand loose. Any horse can spook, run away and then cause damage to themselves or others.

The stirrups must be adjusted to the correct length before mounting. As a general guideline, it is one arm's length. The rider touches the top end of the stirrup leather, where it attaches to the saddle, and holds the stirrup underneath the outstretched arm. If the stirrup touches the armpit when pulled tightly, then the length is about right.

To MOUNT, the rider positions themselves on the left-hand side of the horse, their back facing the horse's head.

- The left hand holds both reins over the crest so that the left rein lies between the small and the ring finger and the right rein is in the palm of the hand. Both reins are slightly taut; the right one even more so with unsettled horses. The horse's neck should, however, remain as straight as possible.
- The rider steps far enough back so that they can lift the left foot into the stirrup.
- The left hand, holding the reins, reaches into the mane while the right hand turns the stirrup lateral to the horse.
- The left foot is placed securely in the stirrup. The left knee rests against the saddle so that the toe does not touch the horse.
- The rider holds onto the horse securely at the mane and, with the right hand, reaches for the opposite side of the saddle (if possible, not the cantle so that the saddle is not pulled askew). Then, with a powerful swing, the rider uses the right foot to launch themselves over the horse, with the upper body leaning forwards.
- The right hand is used as a support on the pommel while the right leg swings slowly over the croup without touching it, and the bottom is carefully placed in the saddle.

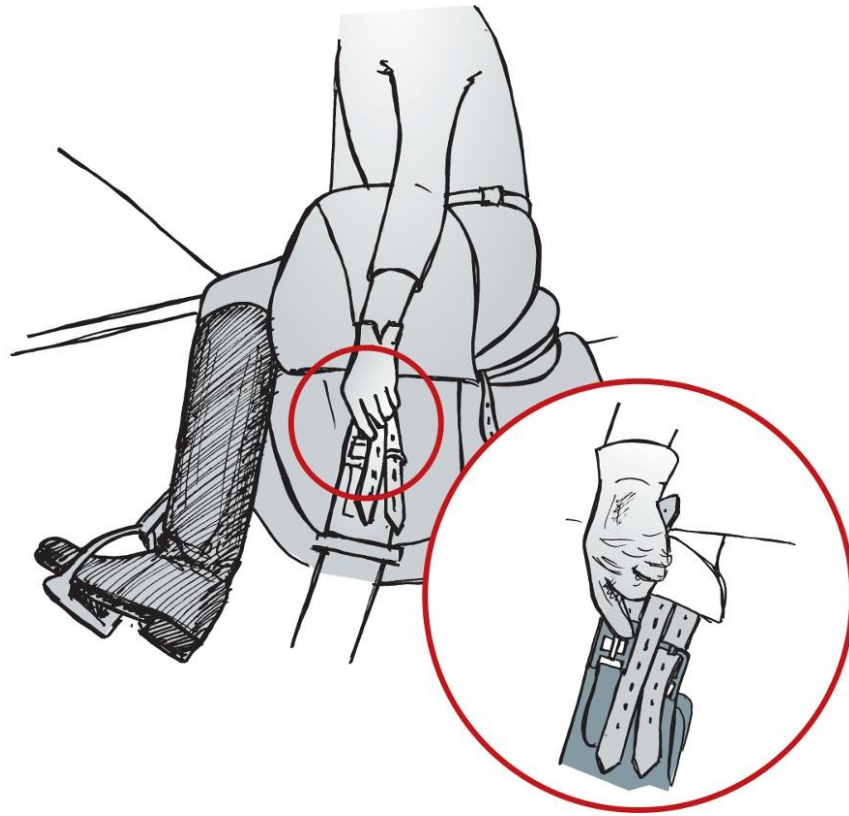
- The right foot is placed in the stirrup and the reins are arranged correctly.

Mounting should be carried out from a stable mounting block whenever possible (for example, a wooden block or a stool). This is especially important for protecting the horse's back, and also prevents any torsion or stretching of the saddle and, hence, an uneven, one-sided strain. Therefore, using such an aid for mounting is advisable for all riders. Nevertheless, one should also practise mounting from the ground.

Before the rider asks the horse to walk off, the reins should be held in both hands, keeping the horse standing still for a while.

TIGHTENING THE GIRTH should only be done after a period of walk (if a long girth is used) as the horse tends to tense less that way and potential wrinkles in the horse's skin can be avoided. To do this, the rider takes the reins in one hand and lifts the leg on the side where the girth is to be tightened up above the knee roll. The foot remains in the stirrup and, with the free hand, the girth is tightened one hole at a time.

Beginners should always tighten the girth at the halt. Tightening the girth on a saddle with a short girth should – particularly with young horses – only ever be done with the help of a person on the ground. Otherwise, the rider would have to lean their upper body far down in order to reach the girth. At this, the saddle could slip, the horse spook and the rider could lose their balance.

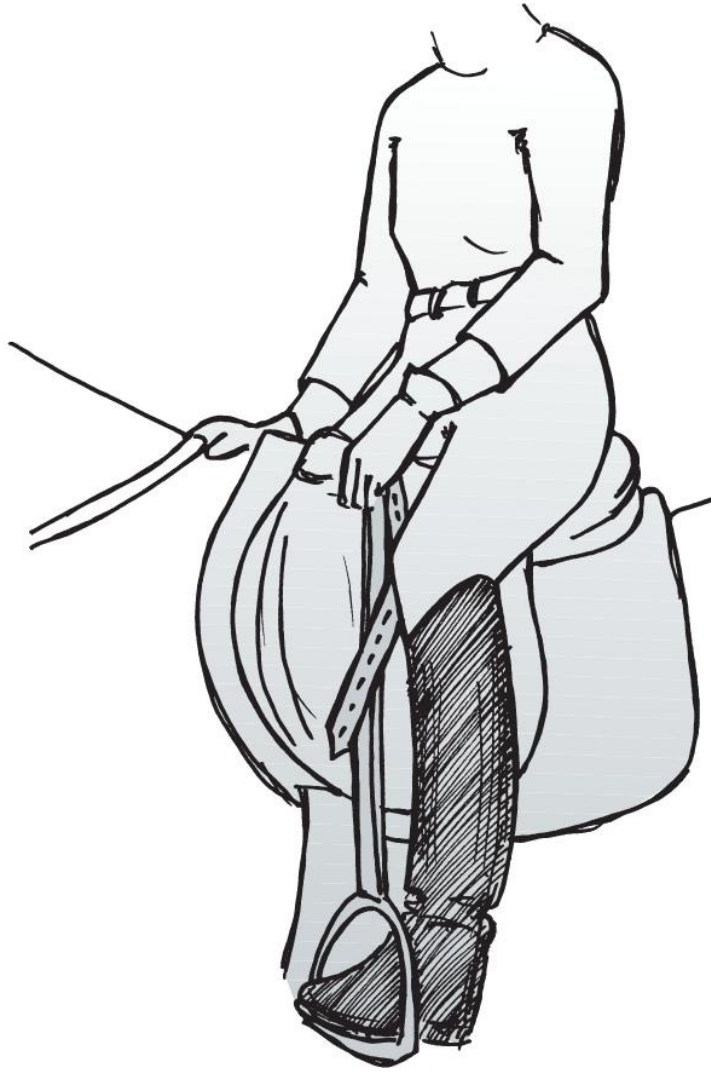


Tightening the girth.

If the stirrup leather length is altered from the saddle, the foot remains in the stirrup. The knee is taken away from the saddle, the upper thigh is pulled down and out slightly so that the rider can reach and pull out the buckle and adjust the stirrup leathers accordingly with the same side hand.

For safety reasons, the foot always remains in the stirrup. Should the horse run off, the thumb or index finger can always close the pin of the buckle immediately. The stirrups give the rider the foothold to remain securely in the saddle.

Once the length of the stirrup leather has been adjusted correctly, the buckle of the stirrup leather is pulled up again against the stirrup bar. The end of the stirrup leather is, where present, tucked in the small loop on the saddle flap. The other hand holds the reins taut while the stirrups are adjusted.



Adjusting the stirrups from the saddle.

When DISMOUNTING, the rider should also position the horse correctly.

- The rider supports themselves, with the left hand holding the reins and resting on the horse's crest, as well as with the right hand on the pommel.
- Both feet are taken out of the stirrups. The right leg swings over the croup and then the rider slides smoothly to the ground.
- Both stirrups are run up one after the other and the girth is loosened by two or three holes. Even during and after dismounting, the rider must never let go of the horse, but must keep one arm looped through the reins to prevent any accidents through spooking or the horse running away.

3.7 Taking Care of the Horse after Riding

Grooming the horse after riding is just as important as cleaning it before riding. The horse should return to the stable, paddock or field as dry and happy as possible.

The horse's coat needs care, particularly if it has been sweating. Therefore, the

horse should be given the opportunity to roll. This helps with the overall welfare of the horse and with mental relaxation. Afterwards, the horse is cleaned extensively or, at the very least, brushed down well.

Depending on the weather conditions, it can be necessary to walk a clipped horse with a cooler. This rug absorbs the sweat from the horse, transporting it to the outside of the rug. If necessary, moist areas may be rubbed down with straw to help dry them. Finally, the horse is brushed and any areas of sweat on the head or in the saddle area are sponged down or cleaned with a cloth.

The horse's body, as well as the limbs, are checked for injuries while the feet are checked for stones or any other foreign objects.

^{1.} Illustration taken from Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung (eds), *Guidelines for Riding and Driving, Volume 4: Maintenance, Feeding, Health and Breeding*. 16th edition, FNverlag, Warendorf 2013.

CHAPTER 4

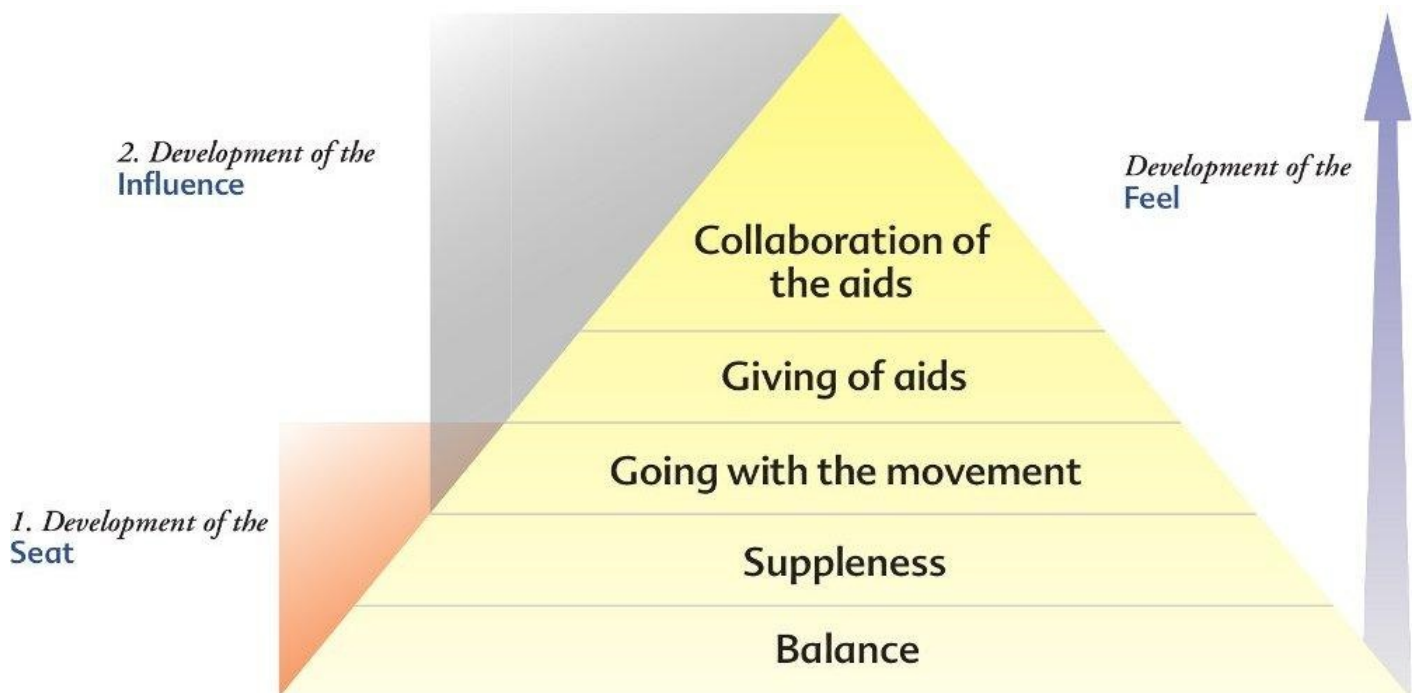
Seat and Influence of the Rider

The correct seat is the basis for every rider's influence. With a supple, elastic seat, the rider 'swings' harmoniously with the horse's movement. Seat and influence cannot be seen separately in practical riding. On the one hand, a secure, balanced seat is a precondition for good influence while, on the other hand, the right influence, combined with a correct understanding of riding, contributes in a significant way to the correct seat.

Riding is about disturbing the horse as little as possible in its movement and balance through a good balance on the part of the rider and through sensitive influence, while at the same time guiding and supporting the horse.

■ DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEAT AND AIDS

Training of the Rider



During the course of their equestrian education, any rider should learn to develop a balanced and supple seat, which will enable them to go elastically with the movement of the horse. The rider's influence will develop gradually through

learning, refining and, later, fine-tuning the interaction of leg, weight and rein aids. A good feeling for one's own body and movements is beneficial to any rider. With an understanding of riding theory and the necessary experience, an increasingly sensitive riding style will develop.

In order to develop a supple dressage seat, or a safely balanced light seat, both swinging elastically with the horse, it is necessary to lay the 'foundation' for this in the very first phase of the rider's training. Establishing this basis, as well as the knowledge of the horse and a confident, secure approach to and handling of the horse, is part of the very beginning of a rider's training to start their equestrian education with a feeling of confidence.

4.1 Development of the Seat

Every beginner would like to sit on the horse as soon as possible and ride independently. However, the first attempts usually make it clear that it will take some time before the handling of a horse is marked by mutual trust, and before the rider feels safe enough on the horse to be able to give intentional aids, and not to disturb the horse through undesired movements. Therefore, intensive support is particularly important, especially at the beginning.

Sitting on a horse for the first time can initially be simulated with an artificial horse. However, only some of the basic techniques, such as taking the reins, the stirrups, etc. can be taught and basic forms of the seat can be shown – the correct feeling for the movement of the horse cannot be transmitted in such a way.

The first riding experiences take place on a horse led from the ground. It is important that plenty of confidence is transmitted to the rider through relaxed, routine leading of the horse. Any triggering of fear should be avoided as it will make a successful learning process more difficult. During seat exercises, the rider should focus mainly on what they feel, and familiarise themselves with the movements of the horse. Particularly when children learn to ride on ponies, it is a good idea to ride without a saddle from time to time so that they can feel the movements even better.

Vaulting is also still an excellent opportunity to develop a feel for the movement of the horse and to improve balance. An experienced trainer can also decide to place a beginner on a horse and ride themselves on another horse, leading the student's horse on a long enough rope or lunge line.

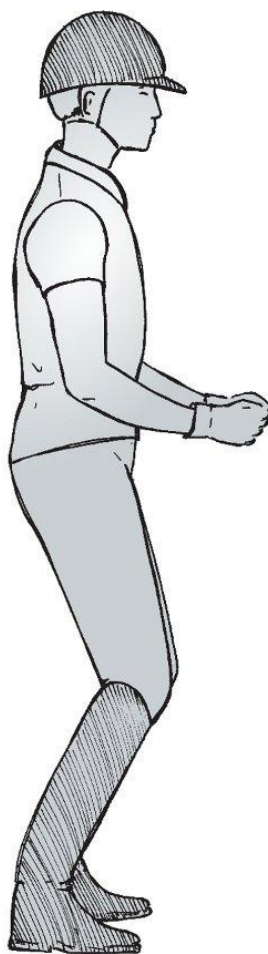
Before group or individual lessons are taken, another essential step is the development of the seat by riding on the lunge. The trainer lunges the schoolmaster while teaching the student to balance and relax with the movements of the horse. In

doing so, the trainer should pay attention that the direction is changed frequently. On the one hand, this contributes to ensuring that the horse is worked evenly on both reins while, on the other hand, it also ensures the rider is trained evenly. The trainer should continue to pay attention to the circle being sufficiently large. Walking in a straight line, on the lunge, and changing the position of the circle should also be done frequently so that the beginner can get used to riding on a straight line as well as riding turns. Useful exercises for training the seat on the lunge are changing from rising to sitting trot and also practising the light seat with shortened stirrup leathers.

4.1.1 Balance and Suppleness

Every standing or moving person is constantly, but unconsciously, busy keeping their balance and adjusting any balance deviations. A further step is balancing on a moving surface, such as on a bike or on a skateboard.

Specific to riding is that the horse moves independently under the rider and the rider cannot predict or completely control every movement.



A balanced rider in a straight posture.

Therefore, a rider is inevitably confronted with the, as yet, unusual situation of having to find their balance on the back of a horse, or in the saddle. When riding off

from a halt, in transitions from one gait to another, when halting, when jumping and in turns, the rider must be able to adjust to the different movements of the horse with an appropriate posture.

The rider always re-establishes their balance without holding on tightly, or gripping with the legs.

The less the rider is tensed up, the more successful the result will be. With increased experience and confidence, the constant balancing in the movement will develop into an automatic procedure. For balance, it is not only the relevant organ in the inner ear that plays a role, but also the eye and a variety of so-called receptors on the skin and in the joints that can react to stimuli. Exercises for improving suppleness and balance even without a horse are very helpful. Those who can easily find their balance on the floor and on moving objects will quickly obtain a balanced seat on a horse. Abilities will be acquired which can be transferred over to riding.

For the development of seat and balance, riding on the lead rope, and especially in the countryside, is recommended, because the rider always has to readjust their balance, especially when riding up or downhill. The rider can regain balance through slight adjustments of leg, bottom, or upper body position. What is decisive is that the rider finds stability with the stirrups vertically underneath the body's centre of gravity.

The rider's ideal position on the horse would allow them to stand on the floor in balance, with angled hip and knee joints if the horse were to be suddenly taken away from beneath them. The rider should work out this posture on the ground and on a horse that is standing still, so that later, when the horse is moving, it can be practised.

Managing frequently changing situations benefits the ability of riders to balance themselves on the one hand and, on the other hand, to work towards achieving fine-tuned coordination and control of their movements. Whether the horse feels happy under a rider, or is disturbed by them, depends on the quality of this ability. In this way, the rider will learn to initiate the horse's movement in any transition by using their own posture (for example riding off from a halt or trotting from walk, and lengthening). Imagining 'sitting in the movement', as if one wanted to guide the horse into a direction of movement with one's own posture, can help with this. When lengthening the steps or strides, the upper body is inclined slightly forwards. Conversely, every time the horse is shortened (for example in downward transitions from trot to walk or to a halt), the rider must sit more erect in order not to come 'in front of the movement'. A rider may and should move flexibly under instruction in

any exercise aimed at improving the seat, which means they must be able to alter the position of the pelvis, the upper body, and also the legs to find out, in every single position, how they can find the right balance and relaxation.

The saddle must allow for this flexibility, hence, any knee rolls – or the depth of the seat itself – should never restrict the rider's mobility.

As body control increases, the necessary movements of the rider in the saddle will gradually become less and less visible. The rider refines their movements in such a way that they become able to compensate for any disturbances in the balance in a practically invisible way. The more balanced the seat is, the more relaxed it will appear. Balancing oneself when riding (that is, during movement), means constantly being at one with the movement of the horse.

A supple rider finds their balance more easily, and a balanced rider, in turn, finds it easier to be relaxed.

A primary goal in training the rider, as it is with the horse, is achieving suppleness. Suppleness refers to the condition wherein the muscles are able to contract and relax evenly without force. As in any sport, no muscle should be constantly under pressure, in order to prevent tension or cramping.

To obtain a physical, muscular suppleness, mental relaxation is also always required.

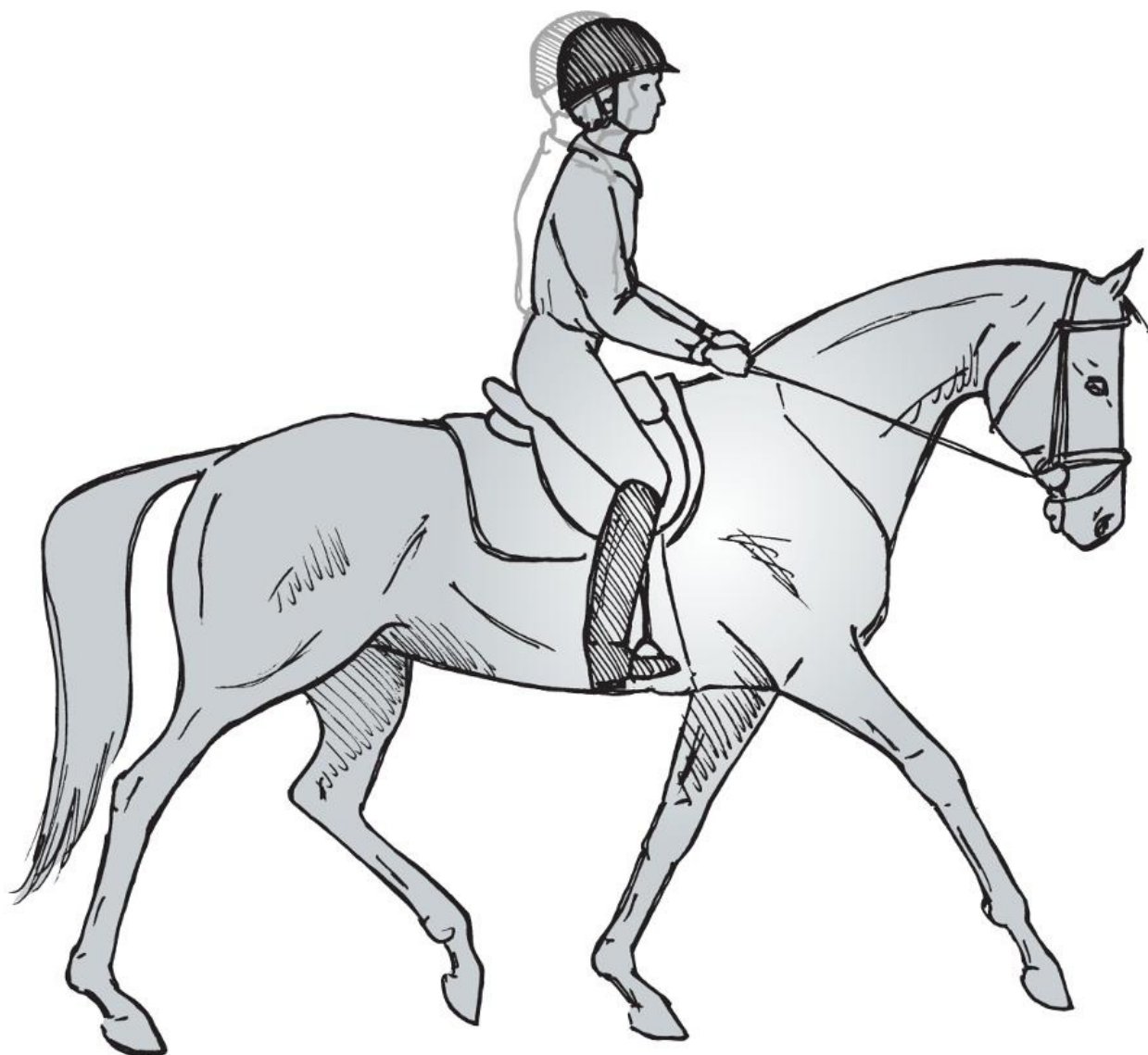
An even breathing will arise from a mental and physical suppleness without the rider having to concentrate on this too much. The mental relaxation can, among other things, be obtained by changing from active phases (trot, canter) to relaxation phases (riding in walk on a long rein).

Inner calm is also dependent on fearlessness. Therefore, the rider's trust in their horse has a particular psychological meaning. It is conducive to the rider's suppleness. The same applies to the trust in one's trainer. Essentially, a positive training atmosphere contributes to improving relaxation. This training atmosphere is best achieved when combinations have realistic aims, are working on tasks that have been expertly set out, and corrections are carried out in a positive way. Challenges can motivate, but placing excessive demands on horse or rider should be avoided at all costs.

The rider's suppleness is also not insignificantly dependent on their overall fitness, including mobility. Participating in other sports in addition to riding, as well as warming up and stretching before and after riding are, therefore, highly recommended.

4.1.2 The Foundation of the Seat

Different types of seat can only be developed from a secure, basic seat.



Secure seat foundation with flexible posture.

The rider sits – with weight distributed evenly on both seatbones – in the deepest point of the saddle, with their stability enhanced by the balls of the feet on both stirrups. The stirrup leathers must therefore be adjusted at a short enough length to enable the rider to swing in a supple way with the horse. The stirrup leathers are adjusted in such a way that the knee joints are clearly angled, rendering the transition between sitting in the saddle and sitting more lightly unproblematical. This must also be permitted by the cut and the (knee) rolls of the saddle.

In order to feel what a deep seat accompanied by some pressure on the stirrups feels like, the seat and the body posture should remain variable. That means that the rider sits lightly on the horse's back at times, with the upper body inclined slightly forwards and transferring the weight more into the stirrups before

straightening up again in order to sit deeper in the saddle.

The rider should change frequently between a slightly lighter seat and a deeper seat.

Through regular exercises, the rider is soon capable of adjusting to every situation, changing between different varieties of body posture. This furthers balance and establishes the seat basics, contributing essentially to the rider's safety.

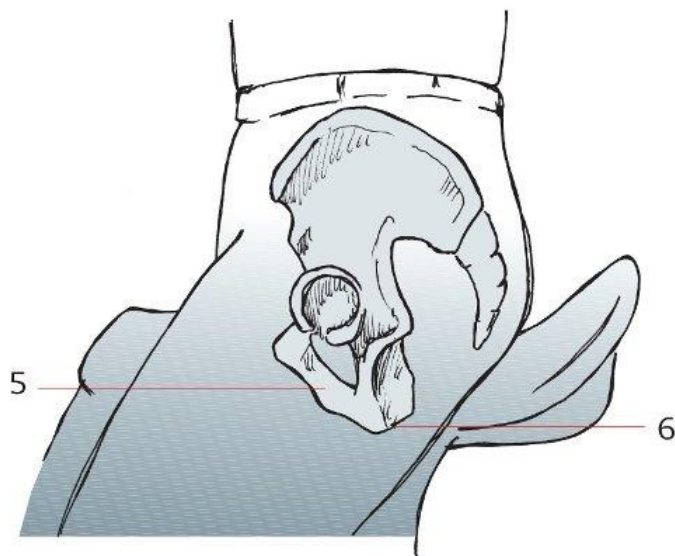
Upper legs, knees and lower legs lie as flat as possible against the saddle, or the horse's body, without gripping. The legs, with slightly angled knees, will hang in a way that allows the stirrup leathers to be vertical.

The upper body is erect and relaxed and, depending on the situation, close to the vertical, but never behind it.

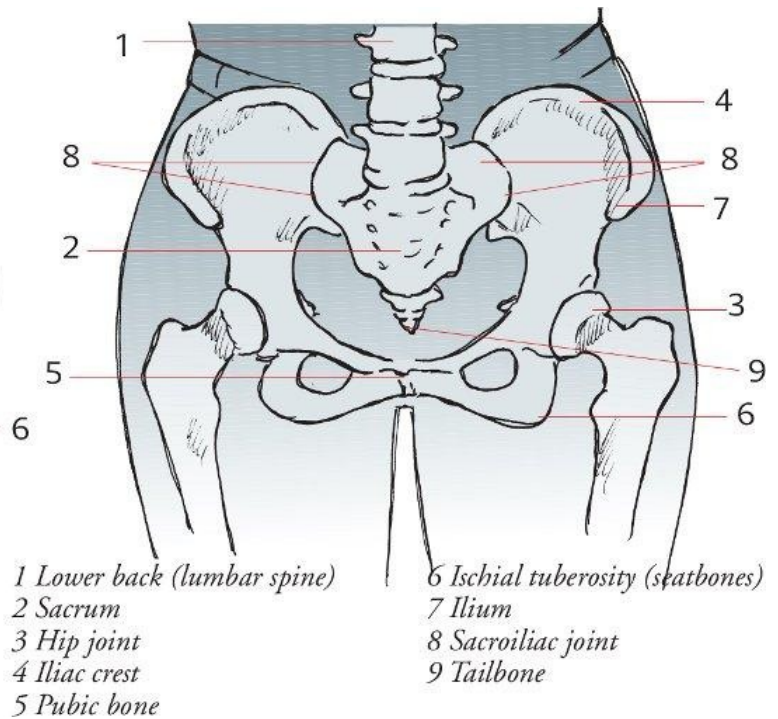
The rider's weight is distributed anatomically in a way similar to a triangle, created by the two seatbones and the pubic bone. Depending on weight shifts, the rider sits more on the seatbones or on the pubic branches. When the pelvis tips backwards, the rider puts more weight on the seatbones. By rolling or tipping the pelvis forwards, the forward-tapered pubic branches will carry more weight. This gives the rider a degree of lateral or diagonal mobility¹. A portion of the rider's weight should always also be absorbed by the stirrups.

The PELVIS is the centre of the human body's movement and is therefore pivotal to the effective influence of the rider. Through the connection of the pelvis with the spine, pelvic movements are transferred through the entire spine to the head and to the feet.

The respective position of the pelvis determines the posture and the mobility of the rider's seat.



Rider's pelvis with hips and lower back seen from the side and from the front.

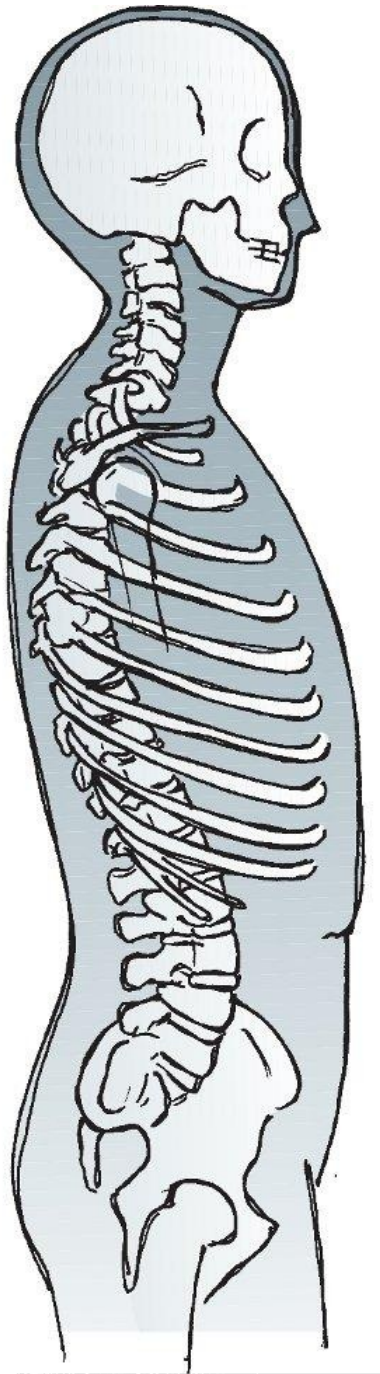


1 Lower back (lumbar spine)
2 Sacrum
3 Hip joint
4 Iliac crest
5 Pubic bone
6 Ischial tuberosity (seatbones)
7 Ilium
8 Sacroiliac joint
9 Tailbone

Together with the various muscles groups, which are moving and stabilising the pelvis, this area is referred to as the **CORE** of the rider. To be able to sit in a supple way, all muscle groups involved must be balanced in terms of strength and contraction, which means that there must be no undue tension in the core if the rider is to absorb the movements of the horse and adapt to them.

When riding on straight lines, the rider should sit with their pelvis parallel to that of the horse, and with the shoulders parallel to the shoulders of the horse since, this way, it is easier to adapt to the movements of the horse. On curved lines, these alignments should be retained as nearly as the geometry of the figure allows.

Hence, on curved lines, the rider's inside hip and outside shoulder are facing slightly forwards (hence the expression 'revolving seat').



'S'-shape structure of the lumbar spine, thoracic spine and cervical spine.

The SPINE must compensate for a variety of weight, vibration and shock loads. The doubly curved S-shape – supported by the shock-absorbing system of the discs – can absorb and cushion the movements of the horse. The back muscles ensure, together with their antagonists (the abdominal muscles) a correct posture of the spine. The position of the pelvis influences the sufficient degree of straightness and, with it, the adequate transference of the movement of the pelvis via the spine right through to the head. If the movements flow smoothly through the body, the rider is then able to carry their head without undue movement.

The HEAD is carried freely, facing forwards or in the direction of movement. The

posture of the entire body is determined decisively by the position of the head. It should neither be carried too high nor look down. The recommendation that the rider should look through the horse's ears is very helpful in order to obtain a relaxed posture. The rider matches their head as well as the entire body permanently with the movement of the horse (for example, in turns) and by doing this, achieves a sort of dynamic balance.

The UPPER ARMS hang relaxed from the shoulders downwards; the forearms are slightly angled. Forearms and hands ensure, through their relaxed, slightly angled carriage, that the fists holding the reins are quiet, albeit with the wrists remaining mobile. A straight line should be visible from the forearms along the reins to the horse's mouth.

A secure LEG POSITION with relaxed, deep knees can only be obtained if the thigh muscles are supple. From the knees resting flatly against the saddle emerges a natural foot position, with the feet parallel to the horse. The widest point of the ball of the foot is firmly secured in the stirrup. The heels should flex downwards from relaxed ankle joints to ensure and maintain a deep knee position. The lower leg muscles can, therefore, be used as a more suppled and functional leg aid on the horse.

The outside appearance of the seat emerges from the rider's balance and their individual physical conditions (figure, size, height and body proportions). Whether a rider is sitting correctly and comfortably should not only be judged by the trainer, but also by the rider's own feeling.

The rider must have the feeling that, without having to hold on and without any effort, they can maintain their balance and go with the movement of the horse well.

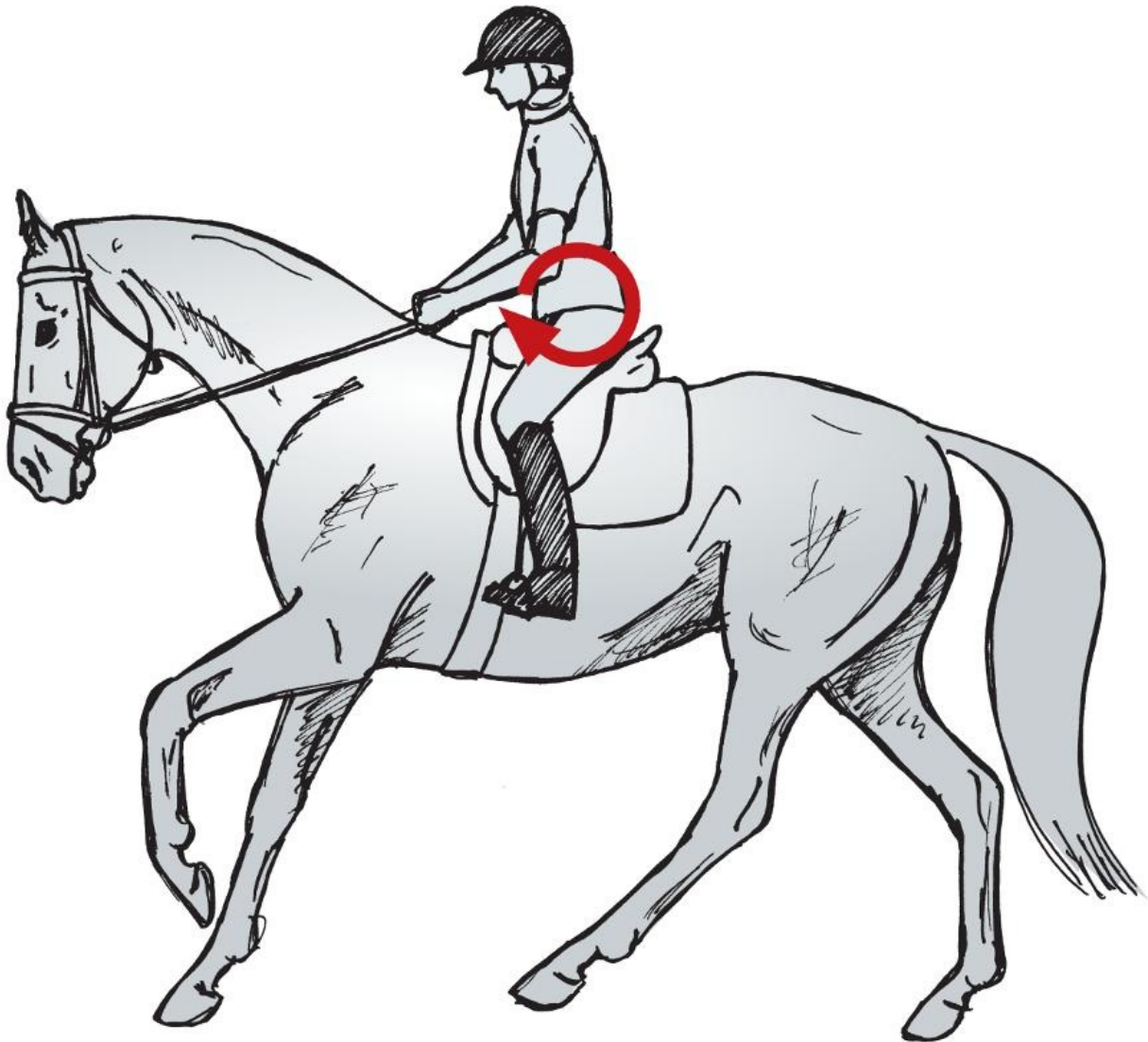
4.1.3 Going with the Movement

Going with the movement of the horse means to be able to get involved with it. Requirements for going with the movement of the horse are:

- Suppleness and balance.
- Awareness of one's own body posture.
- Awareness of the individual movements of the body.
- A feeling for the movements of the horse.
- Being able to go with the movements of the horse.

Going with the movement commences with the passive process of simply letting oneself be taken along by the horse. In further training, a conscious 'going-with-the-movement' will develop. A condition for influence is that the rider feels what is

happening under them (feeling the movement) in order to learn to recognise the decisive moments in which the horse can be influenced through the rider's aids. Thus, a certain degree of positive body tension is also required.



Going with the movement in working canter.

With systematic training, the rider will feel for themselves how they can, by only slightly altering their posture and swinging from the pelvis, adjust to and influence the movements of the horse. The rider will learn what movements in walk, trot and canter feel like.

In walk, with its rhythmic action, the rider can easily feel how the horse's back moves in the different phases. To go with the movement of the horse in trot, there are two possibilities: sitting or rising.

■ SITTING TROT

Sitting trot is mainly used in the work phase of the training. When sitting to the trot, the rider accompanies – quietly and smoothly seated in the saddle – the

movements of the horse. A positive body tension keeps the upper body in balance. The bottom is positioned in the deepest point of the saddle.

In addition to the pelvis, the core consists of the respective abdominal and lower back muscles, which all interact with each other. The core remains so supple that the rider does not only go with the movements of the horse's back, but can also positively influence the way the horse moves.

In sitting trot, the rider also moves barely visibly with their pelvis. The rider's abdominal and lower back muscles contract and relax regularly, but rather unconsciously. For that it is important that the rider is upright in the upper body, but not 'overstretched'. The rider finds it easier to swing, the more supple the horse is and the better the horse responds to the rider's aids.

If the rider is able to contract and release their muscles easily, the potential to sit deeply and smoothly 'in' the horse is established and, by doing so, an independent seat can be achieved. Quiet hands are the result of this independent seat, so that the horse can build up trust in the rider's hands. The horse will allow the rider to sit into the movement better, because it will move with a supple, swinging back. How well the horse will let the rider sit, of course, also depends on the individual characteristics of each horse.

■ RISING TROT

Rising trot should 'facilitate' the trot work for horse and rider. It is less tiring than sitting trot and it enables even the lesser-trained rider to go with the movement of the horse without causing more disturbance than necessary. Rising trot is more comfortable for riders because they do not sit every single trot step, but rise to every second step. Furthermore, through rising trot, the rider learns to feel the two-beat rhythm of the trot. In rising trot, the rider does not have to take up and balance the impulsion of the horse with their body as much, but transforms this active oscillation energy through rising and sitting again into their own motion energy, without using much effort. The horse generally also finds this more comfortable because the rider adjusts to the movement of the horse better.

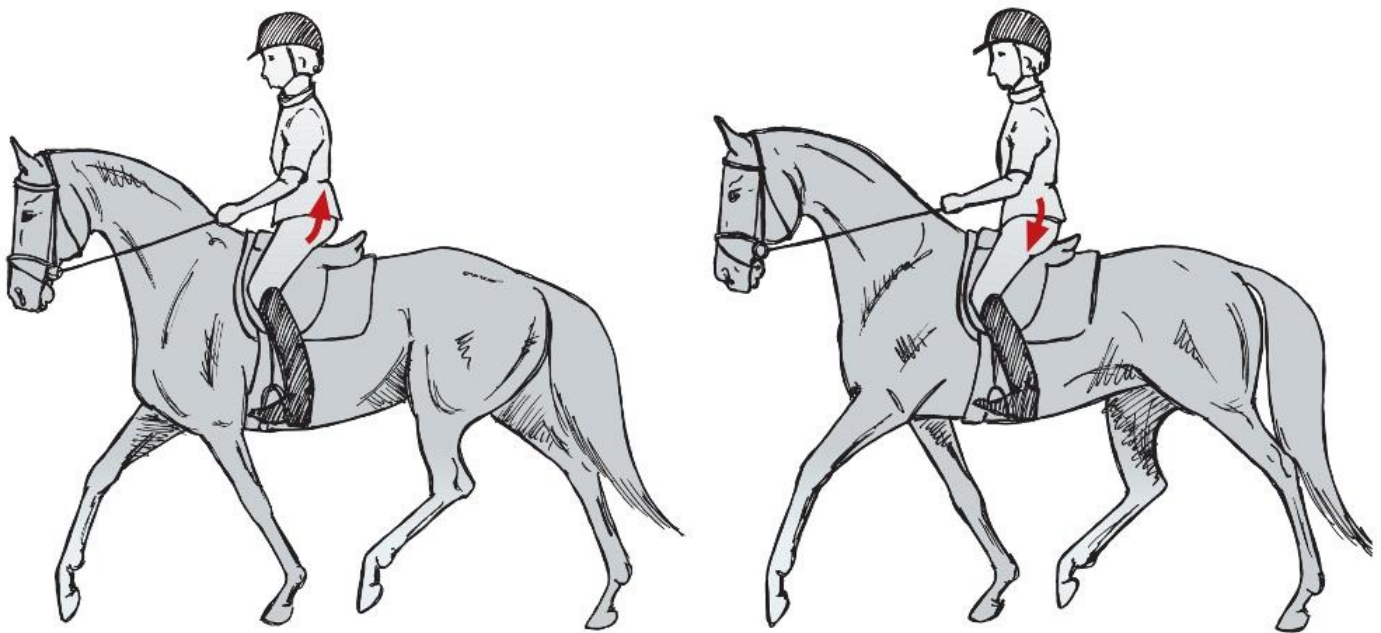
Rising trot is used in the following situations:

- In the warming-up phase.
- In the relaxation phase during the work phase.
- In the cooling down/stretching phase at the end of a riding session.
- When riding on a hack.
- When riding young or less trained horses.
- On horses with back or suppleness problems.

- When the horse does not yet allow its rider to sit to the movement.
- When the rider wants to or has to relieve their own back.

Rising trot is one of the first basic exercises in the training of the rider and it is initially learnt through seat exercises on the lunge.

In rising trot, the movement of one trot step is absorbed by flexible ankles, while the bottom comes out of the saddle slightly. The following step of trot is then sat to, while the next step sees the bottom raised off the saddle slightly once again. That means that the rider rises as one diagonal pair of legs move forwards (for example the right hind leg and the left foreleg), and then sits back down again smoothly in the saddle when the other diagonal pair move forwards. The rider's centre of gravity should change as little as possible, which means that the rider keeps their posture mostly steady, inclining the upper body forwards just a touch. They should also ensure that they come to sit in the same position in the saddle each time. If the rider has developed a feeling for the right rhythm, rising trot can be performed with hardly any effort because the impulsion of the horse gives the rider the momentum to rise.



Rising trot.

Correct rising trot in the arena is also characterised by the rider trotting on the 'correct diagonal'. This means that the rider rises when the inside hind leg moves forward together with the outside foreleg, and sits down when this pair of legs is set down again after the moment of suspension. When riding in an arena, the rider orientates themselves on the horse's outside shoulder; when the shoulder moves forwards, the rider rises. When the shoulder moves back, then the rider sits back down in the saddle. In turns, the inside hind leg can thus be especially supported

with the driving leg aid. The rider is only able to use their leg in a driving manner in the moment of sitting down.

Naturally, each change of rein will imply 'changing the diagonal' in rising trot to work evenly on both sides. If the rider trots on the 'wrong diagonal', hence, the opposite pair of legs, they need to return to the 'correct diagonal' by sitting for one extra step, precisely as when changing rein. When doing rising trot for a long time on a hack, the rider should change diagonals regularly to prevent the horse from carrying more weight on one side only.

Rising trot should not be a strenuous effort for the rider. All that is required is to use the natural impulsion of the horse to rise, exploiting the momentum coming from the horse's back.

Rising and sitting should be performed fluently and smoothly. The rider goes with the movements of the horse, hardly becoming active themselves.

The stirrup is taken up with the widest part of the ball of the foot, so that the heel can retain the rhythm of the movement and direct it downwards. This secures the flexibility of the ankle joint. The lower leg maintains a slight contact with the horse's body, without gripping.

The stirrup leathers should be of a length that enables the rider to keep a low heel and relaxed ankle joint, even when rising.

Otherwise, a smooth rising trot with a deep knee position and a downward absorbing heel will not be possible.

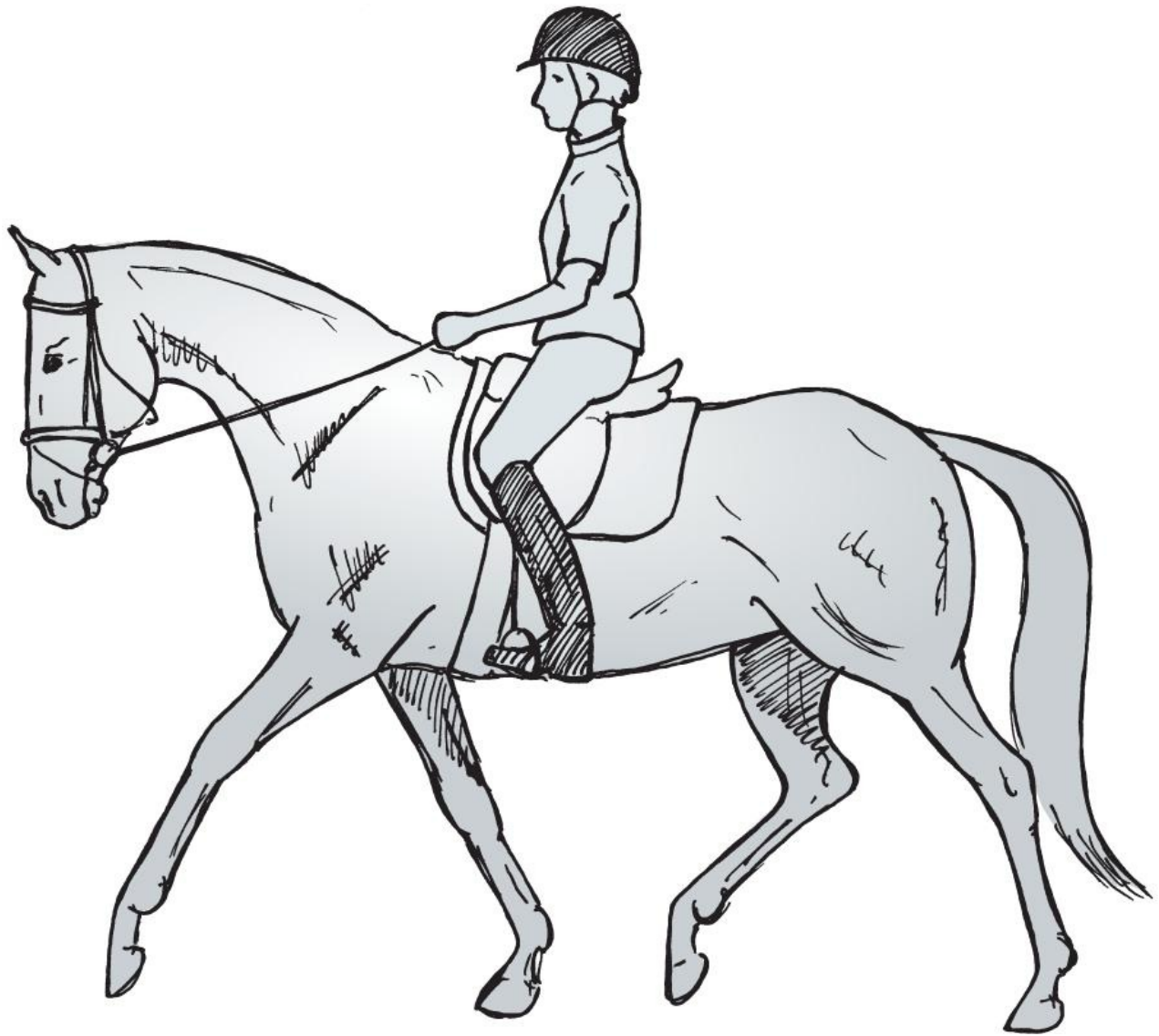
The upper body inclines minimally forwards from the hips as this results in a better accordance with the movement of the horse. The rider maintains, with unchanged, quiet hands, an elastic but steady connection with the horse's mouth. This is, however, only possible when the elbow and hand joints remain mobile.

Generally, it makes sense to gradually move from rising trot at the start of a training session to sitting trot. Yet, it can also be worthwhile, depending on the degree of suppleness of horse and rider, to change frequently between rising trot and sitting trot during a schooling session. That way, a greater mobility of the rider is obtained and tension can be avoided.

Before every transition into a different gait (so before making a transition down to walk or before moving up to canter, a few steps can be ridden in sitting trot, in order to get closer to the horse. The rider must, however, continue to go with the movement of the horse smoothly so that the rhythm and fluency of the movement

are maintained.

Even in canter, going with the movement can be trained and practised through frequently changing between sitting deep and sitting lighter, using the light seat respectively. The rider should, when first attempting to canter at the beginning of their equestrian education, pay attention that their upper body goes sufficiently with the movement. This prevents the rider from coming 'behind the movement' during the transition into canter and, in doing so, disturbing the horse.



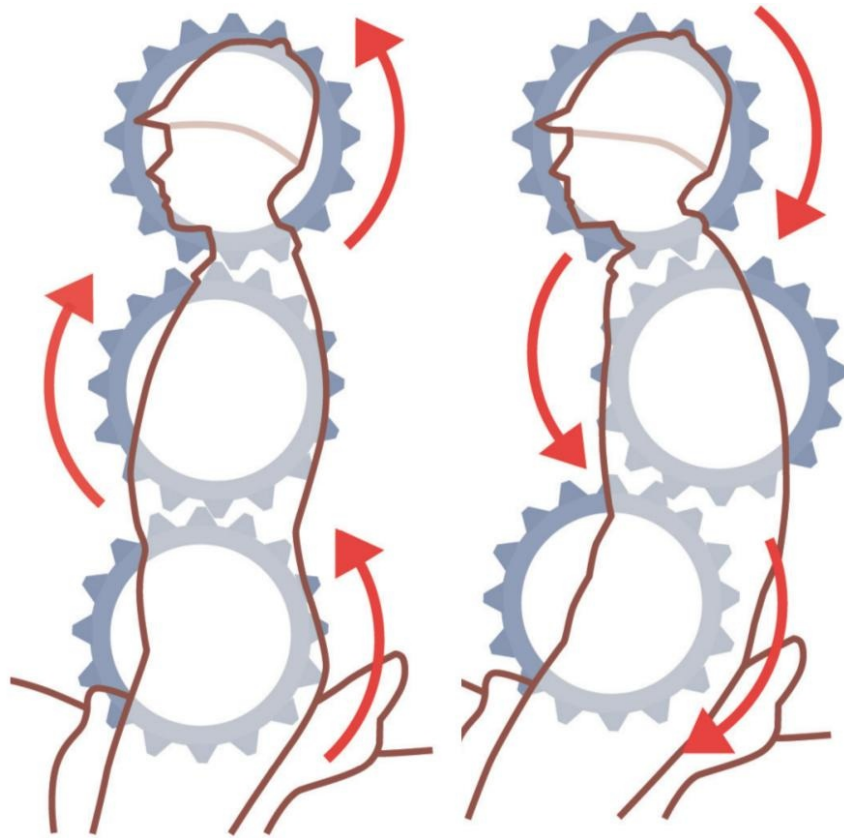
Dressage seat.

4.1.4 The Dressage Seat

The dressage seat is developed from a secure seat foundation.

The dressage seat should be both elastic and mobile, with the difference between sitting deeper or lighter becoming finer and, for the observer, hardly visible. The movement variations of the horse on the flat are minor, yet they are still present. A

deep, elastic dressage seat is the best basis for 'closing the horse up' as well as possible between the rider's aids.



Effectively straightening the body starts from the pelvis (left). When the pelvis is tilted too far backwards, this tends to lead to a rounded back and a head position leaning forwards (right).²

In the dressage seat, the rider sits upright but unconstrained, so that an imaginary plummet would fall straight from the ear over the shoulder and hip joint down to the ankle (in short: a vertical ear-shoulder-hip-heel line). This plummet is independent of the rider's physical proportions. The angles of the individual joints differ from rider to rider. To find out their correct length of stirrup leathers, the rider should be able to take their feet out of the stirrups and leave them hanging freely; with the knees then slightly bent, the stirrup treads should be around the height of the ankles.

Even in the dressage seat, the rider constantly adjusts their posture according to the movements of the horse.

A relatively straight and long-cut dressage or general-purpose saddle flap ensures a deep seat with a deep knee position. The thighs only stretch as far as necessary in a balanced and supple seat. The knee joints remain bent in such a way that the rider still clearly feels the pressure in the stirrups with the balls of their feet and can elastically flex their heels downwards. Any thigh rolls on the saddle should run parallel to the thighs and detachable ones should never be situated incorrectly in

front of the rider's knees.

Every saddle – even a dressage saddle – must allow for a variation of the length of stirrup leathers, allowing flexibility in the rider's seat!

The bottom rests with relaxed muscles in the deepest part of the saddle. The weight of the body is distributed on both seatbones and the pubic arch. Straightness of the upper body always starts from the pelvis according to the gear wheel model (see *illustration on page 79*). When the pelvis is rotated slightly forwards, and thus brought into an upright position, the rider's sternum also rises and opens at the same time. The upper body and the head gain a natural upright position.

The shoulders are moved backwards as naturally and effortlessly as possible so that the chest opens by raising the rider's sternum minimally.

The interplay between the abdominal and back muscles ensures that, on the one hand, the posture is securely maintained while, on the other hand, an elastic swinging in harmony with the movement of the horse is possible (positive body tension). This way, the rider's pelvis (and core) is able to balance the movement of the horse.

4.1.5 The Light Seat

Training in the light seat has a particularly positive effect for the general training of the seat. Feeling for the body and its movement are furthered, as is the rider's balance. In a light seat, the rider can adjust themselves better to the changing movements of the horse, for example when riding on a hack or when jumping. The rider takes the weight out of the actual seat of the saddle and retains it with their feet in a significantly shorter stirrup leather position. The horse's back can then swing more freely and will round more easily. Although the rider's upper body is lower and in front of the vertical, the rider must ensure that balance is maintained. To do so, their bottom is pushed a little further back.



One variation of the light seat – relieving, but close to the saddle. The deep position of the knee, the lower leg resting quietly at the girth, and the secure foot in the stirrup with an elastic ankle form the foundation for riding in a light seat.

The light seat can be used in a vast range of situations and in different forms; for example when cantering in the warming-up phase, particularly with young horses, and with seat and balance exercises.

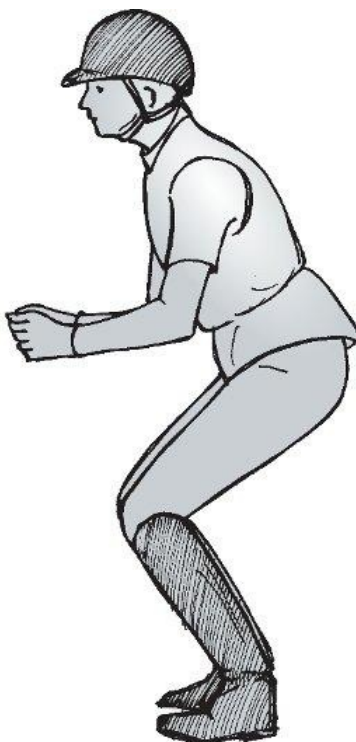
The tasks and peculiarities of show-jumping and cross-country riding make a more detailed explanation of each type of seat necessary:

- Rider's seat in show-jumping, or a 'jumping seat' ([see Chapter 4.1.5.1](#)).
- Rider's seat in cross-country, or a 'cross-country seat' ([see Chapter 4.1.5.2](#)).

By shortening the stirrup leathers in a light seat, there is a greater angle to the hip,

knee and foot joints. The length of stirrup leathers (shorter by three to six holes compared to the dressage seat, depending on the length of the rider's legs) is dictated by the purpose of the light seat and hence its variation: the shorter the stirrup leathers are, the more pronounced the light seat will be. The light seat is generally ridden in a jumping or cross-country saddle; its shape and rolls ([see Chapter 2.2.2 The Basic Equipment for Riding Horses](#)) enable the necessary leg position of the rider with a markedly angled knee.

In the light seat, the rider principally accompanies the movements of the horse in the same way as in the dressage seat. The rider does, however, take more of a squatting position. When riding in a more deeply seated dressage seat, any movement is absorbed through and retained in the bottom (pelvis and core). In a light seat, the same movement is transferred via the hips, knees and ankles into the stirrups. The saddle tree, to which the stirrups are attached, then distributes the rider's weight onto the entire saddle. The rider, therefore, influences the way the horse moves with their weight, as well as with the shifting of the weight, even in a light seat ([see Chapter 4.2 Development of Influence](#)).



The rider maintains the same balance in the stirrups, as they would if assuming this position while standing on the ground – relieving, but balanced.

The rider's upper body is to a greater or lesser extent in front of the vertical. The upper body position can range from inclining forwards only slightly, right through to being almost parallel with the horse's neck.

In a light seat, the bottom remains always close to the saddle. Even when riding at

a higher speed and when jumping, this should remain the case.

By absorbing movement with the knee, foot and hip joints, the rider can feel their way into the movement of the horse elastically and will be taken along by it. The stirrups are taken up with the broadest part of the feet, the balls of the feet, and weighted down so that the heels can flex elastically. This way, the rider feels pressure in the stirrups. The downward-flexing heels give the light seat stability and elasticity at the same time. Pushing out the bottom ensures that the rider's centre of gravity is above the stirrups and that the rider keeps their balance. This leads to stability and flexibility for the rider, even in constantly changing situations.

When riding in a light seat The head is carried upright, looking ahead through the horse's ears in a straight line, or in the direction of a turn to be ridden. Because of the different posture, the reins need to be shortened when riding in a light seat.

The posture of the rider in a light seat adjusts to the movement of the horse and to the desired influence. To ride forwards or in turns, the upper body moves more clearly in the direction of movement; conversely, to reduce the tempo, the rider becomes more upright. The position of the legs should always remain stable, at the girth.

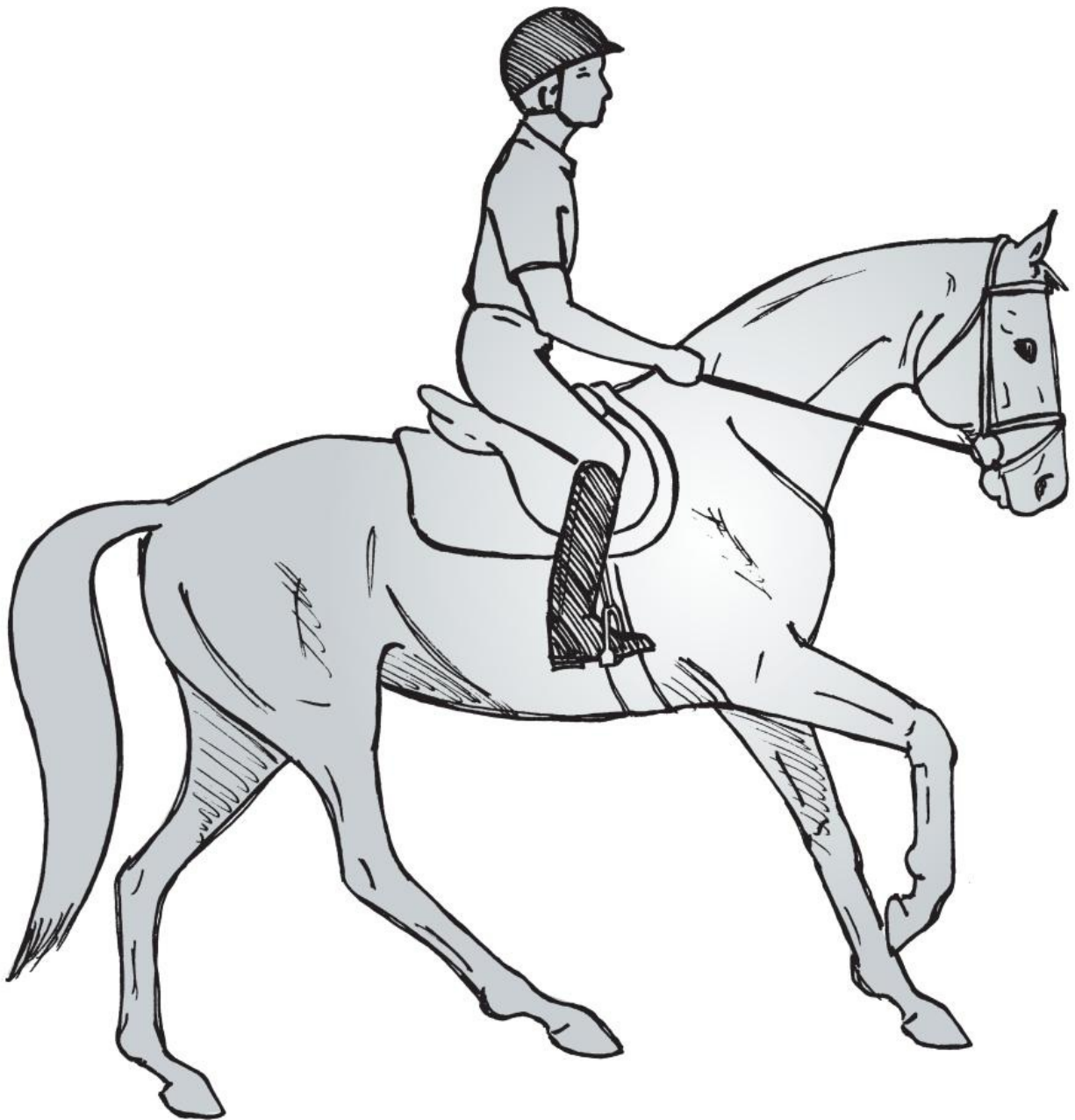
The deep knees, the lower legs placed quietly at the girth, and the solid position of the feet in the stirrups, with elastic foot joints, is the foundation for riding in a light seat.

Only once balance has been obtained in a light seat is the rider able to influence and support the horse. Only when the seat is balanced can the aids be used independently of one another.

The light seat must be trained equally as carefully and intensively as the dressage seat. Even in the suppling work of a dressage horse, it can be useful and relaxing to take up the light seat, or to alternate between the light seat and the dressage seat.

4.1.5.1 The Rider's Seat in Show-Jumping ('Jumping Seat')

Many different seat positions are employed in show-jumping. The rider constantly adjusts themselves to the different situations when approaching a fence, during take-off, over a fence, when landing and when proceeding after the fence.

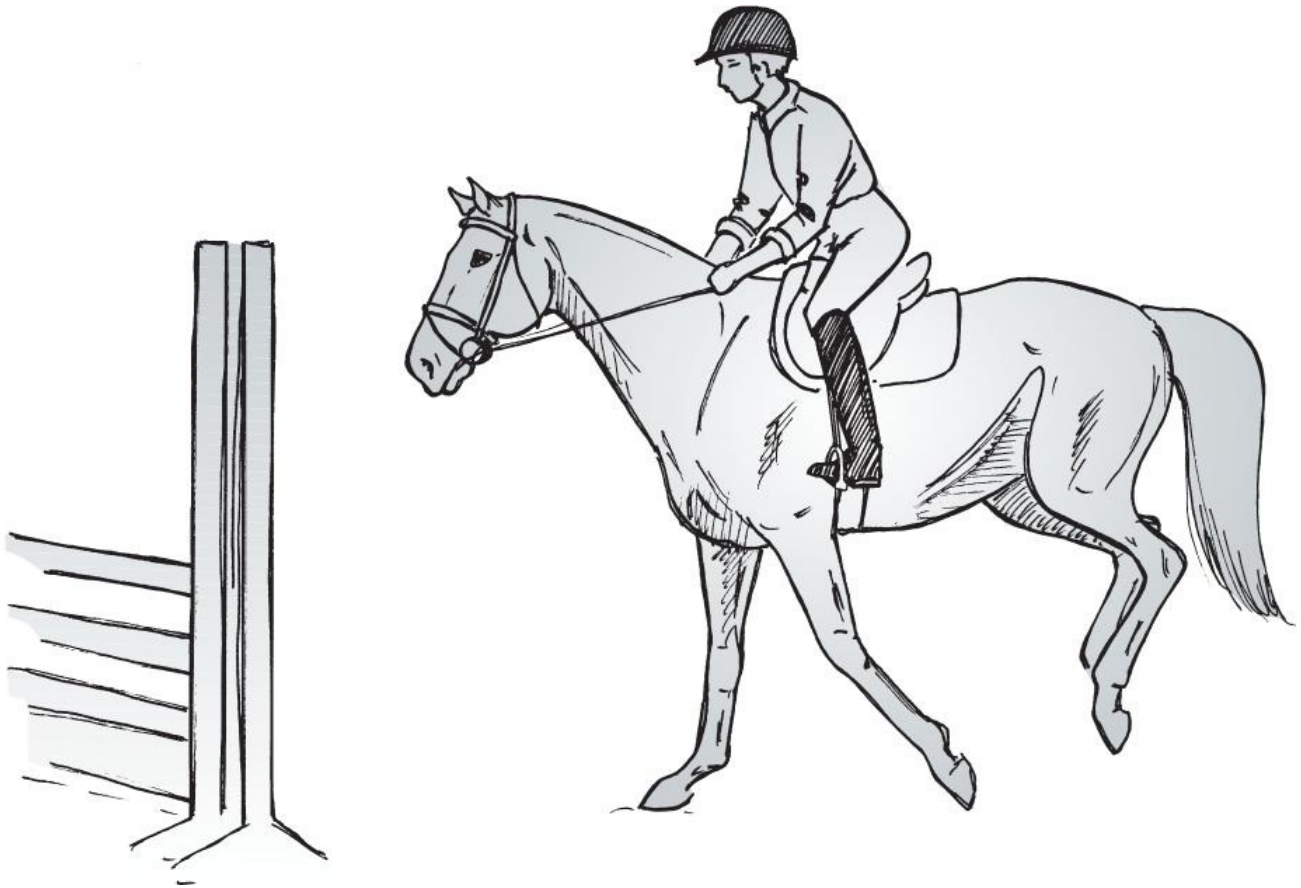


Basic position of the 'jumping seat', as a variation on the light seat, in which the rider's bottom touches the saddle without putting the rider's entire weight in it.

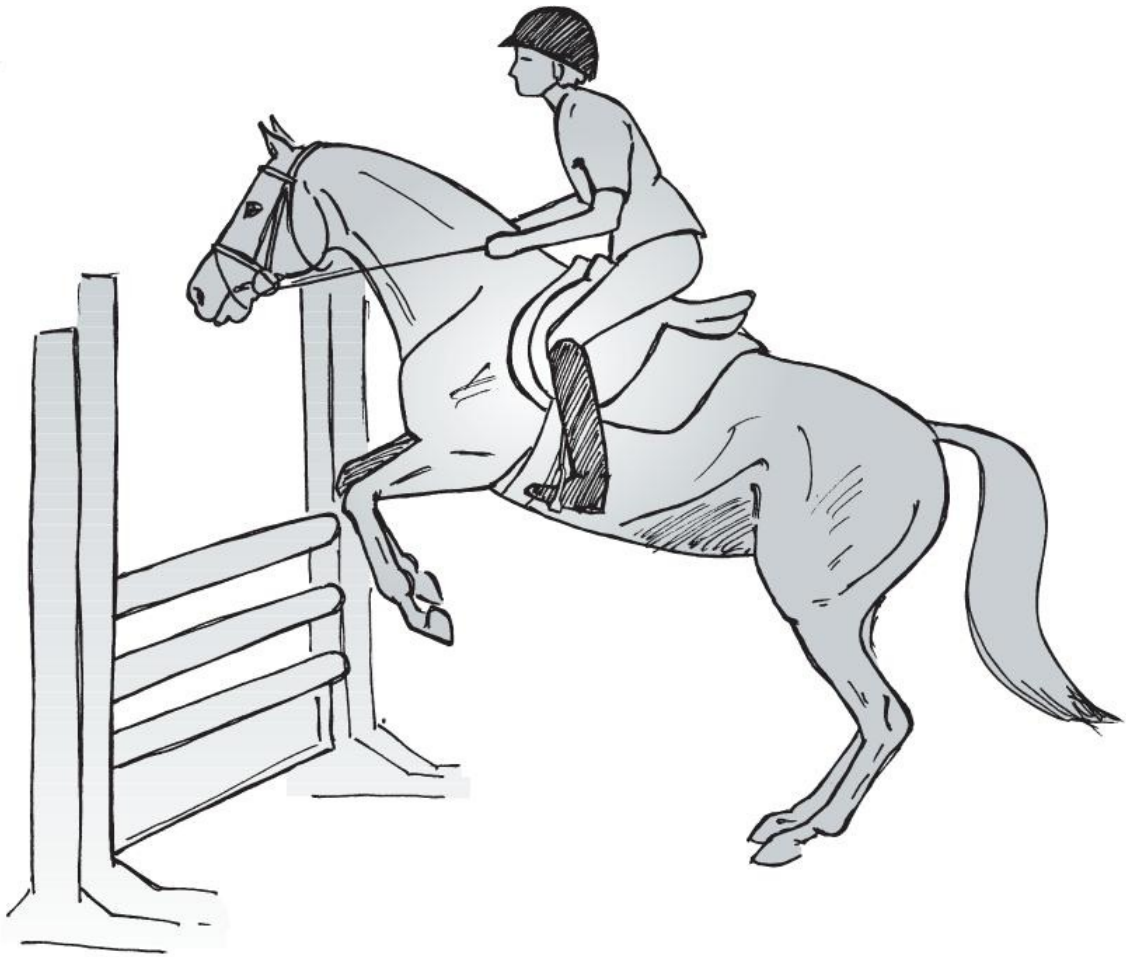
In the BASIC POSITION OF A 'SHOW-JUMPING SEAT', the rider retains contact between their bottom and the saddle. The stirrup leathers are adjusted in a way that, with downward-flexing heels, allows for a secure foothold and for the majority of the weight to be thus absorbed. This enables the rider, on the one hand, to remain close to the horse while, on the other hand, also remaining mobile and adaptable. The lower leg lies securely at the girth. The rider, with a slightly forwards-leaning upper body, goes with the forward movement of the horse. Yet, the rider always has the horse 'in front' of them, and remains constantly balanced.

From this basic position, the rider's seat is varied before, over, after and between fences. When approaching a fence and during turns, the rider more or less remains

in this basic position. Between fences, the rider may sit more lightly, dependent on the demands of the course and of the horse, up to the highest possible variation of the light seat, for example during a jump.

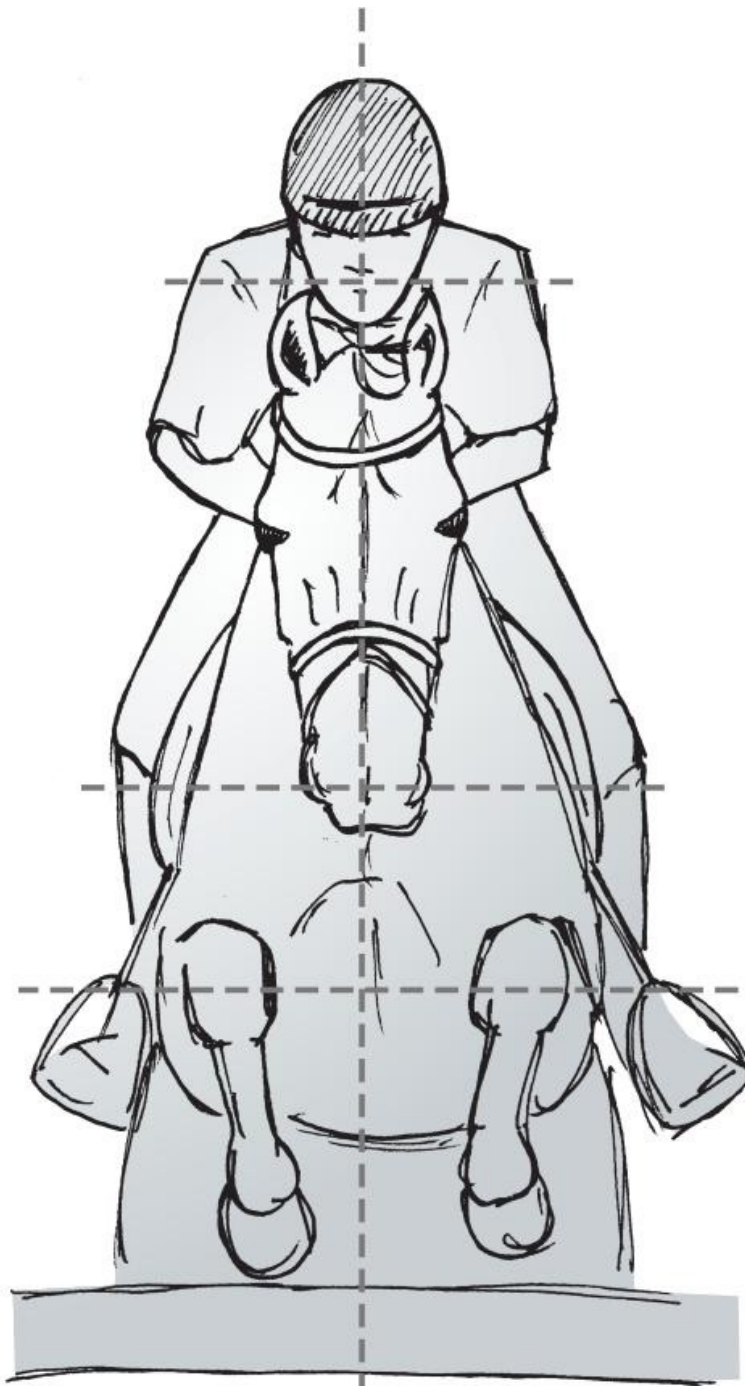


With a deeper hand going with the horse's movement, the rider allows the horse to stretch his neck sufficiently before the jump, without losing the connection.



The rider's lower leg is in a driving position at the girth in the moment of take-off.

The rider's seat when riding over fences ('jumping seat') is thus very flexible and can take on different shapes depending on the specific situation.



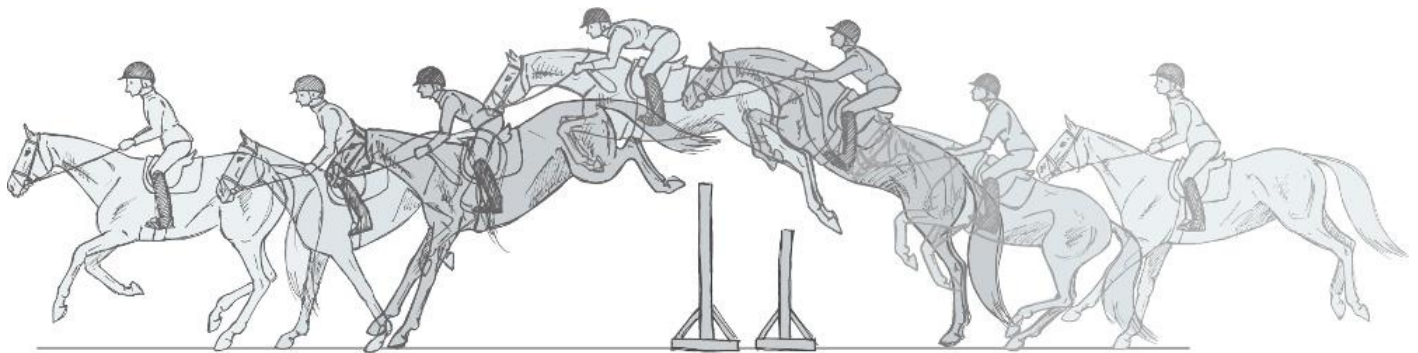
Looking straight ahead helps the rider to sit 'in the centre' of the horse and thus prevents the rider from looking down to the side of the horse and consequentially collapsing in the hip.

When riding over single fences, or when riding an entire course, the upper body remains, despite the different variations of the seat, always in a forward tendency, meaning in front of the vertical. The rider must always try to find their balance – which applies to every seat position.

When approaching fences, the upper body is inclined slightly forward, so that the rider hardly has to adjust when taking off; rather, the horse comes closer to the rider through raising its withers and crest. The constant connection between the

rider's hand and the horse's mouth can thus be more easily obtained. This is an important condition for controlled riding over fences and sequences of fences.

The rider waits for the moment of take-off and then smoothly responds to the movement of the horse from the hips. The upper body goes forward and the bottom inevitably comes a little further out of the saddle. The rider should always have the feeling that the horse is taking them along and into its movement at all times. The hand follows the jumping effort in the direction of the horse's mouth to facilitate stretching, without losing the connection. In the landing phase, the upper body is adjusted to a shift in the centre of gravity. The upper body straightens to keep the horse 'ahead of' the rider and on the rider's driving aids so that the next fence can be approached in a controlled, rhythmic manner. As the saying goes: 'After the jump is before the jump!'



The seat before, over and after the jump.

If the horse lifts its neck and head during the approach in order to improve its view of the fence, the rider will try to keep an unbroken line between the forearms and the reins by following the horse's mouth. This also means that the hands are sometimes carried lower and sometimes higher to keep the connection soft and elastic at all times.

4.1.5.2 The Rider's Seat when Riding Cross-Country ('Cross-Country Seat')

When riding in the countryside, and in particular when jumping cross-country fences, a secure, balanced seat is particularly important. The rider remains as close as possible to the saddle, but with the upper body always in a forward inclination. Given the higher speed, the different characteristics of the terrain and the need for greater balance variations, the seat must be even more adaptable than when show-jumping. The stirrup leathers are shortened even more than for show-jumping. While the lower leg remains vertical, the rider's bottom shifts backwards a little.

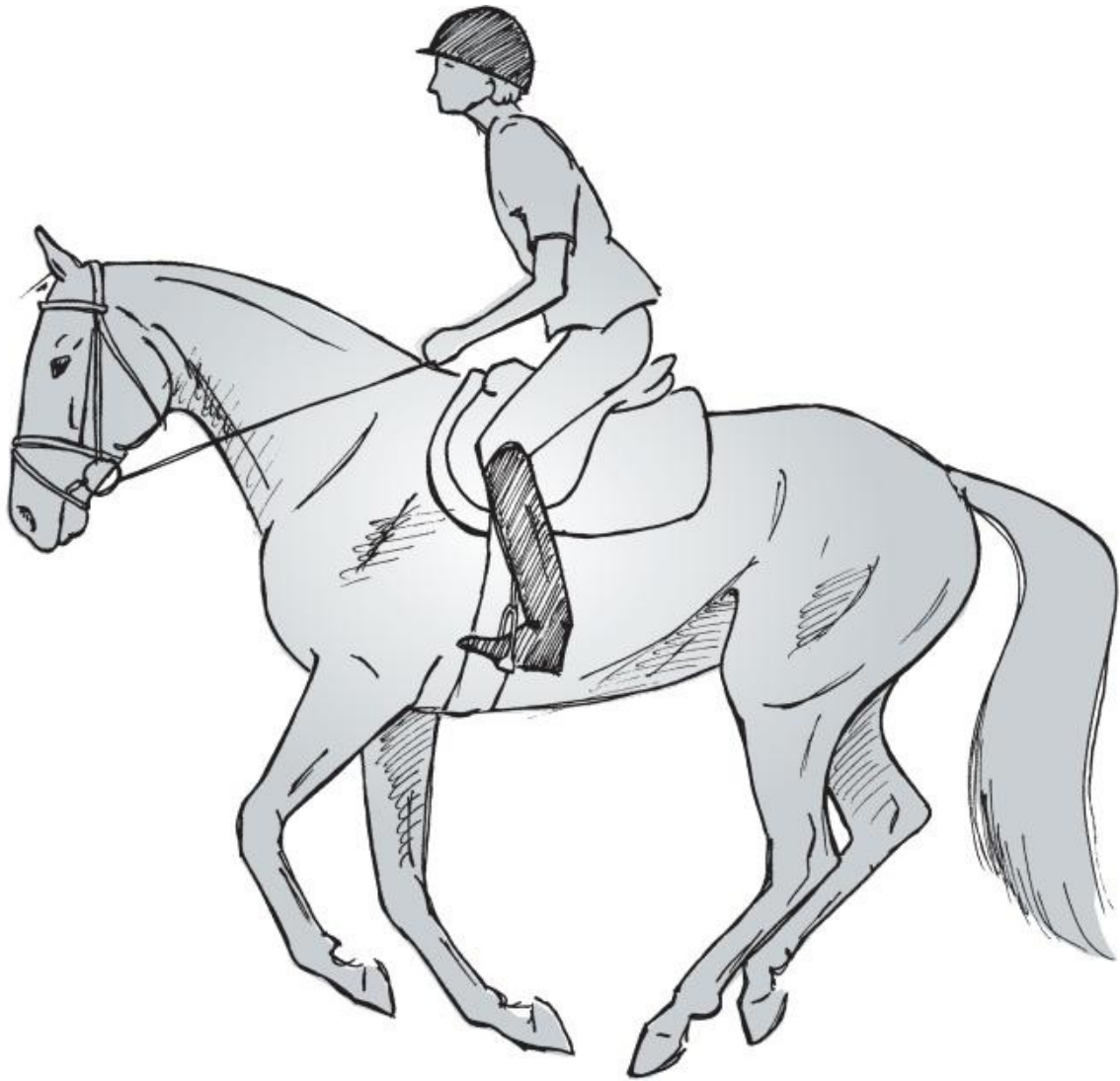
Pushing the stirrups out in a forwards-downwards direction is important to give the cross-country seat even more stability.



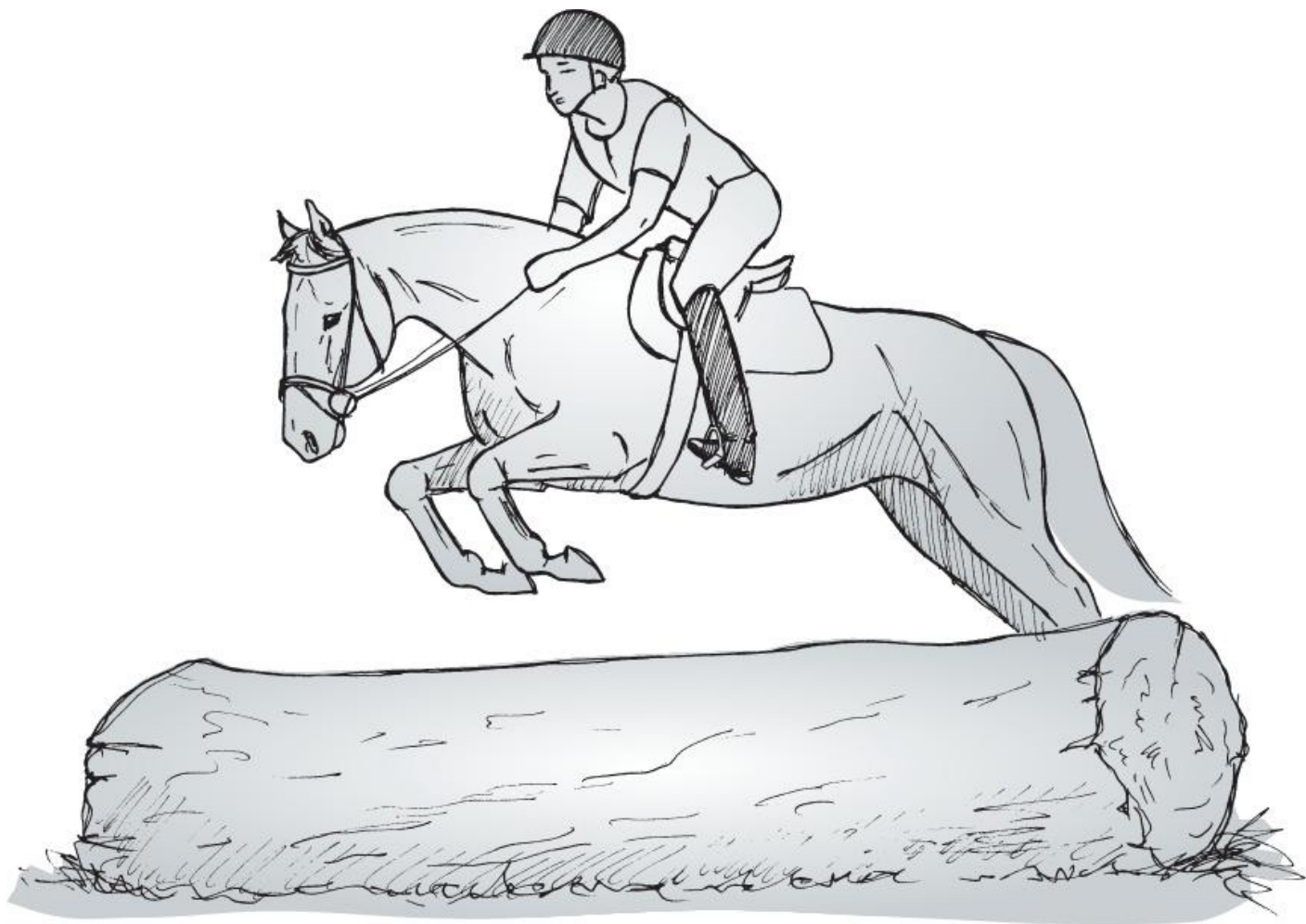
A balanced seat with vertical lower legs. The rider has the horse 'in front' of them.

The 'CROSS-COUNTRY SEAT' is an adaptation of the light seat and it brings the rider into a position in which they are better prepared for the demands of different terrain. On long canter stretches during cross-country riding, the bottom is taken further out of the saddle so that the horse can canter as freely as possible.

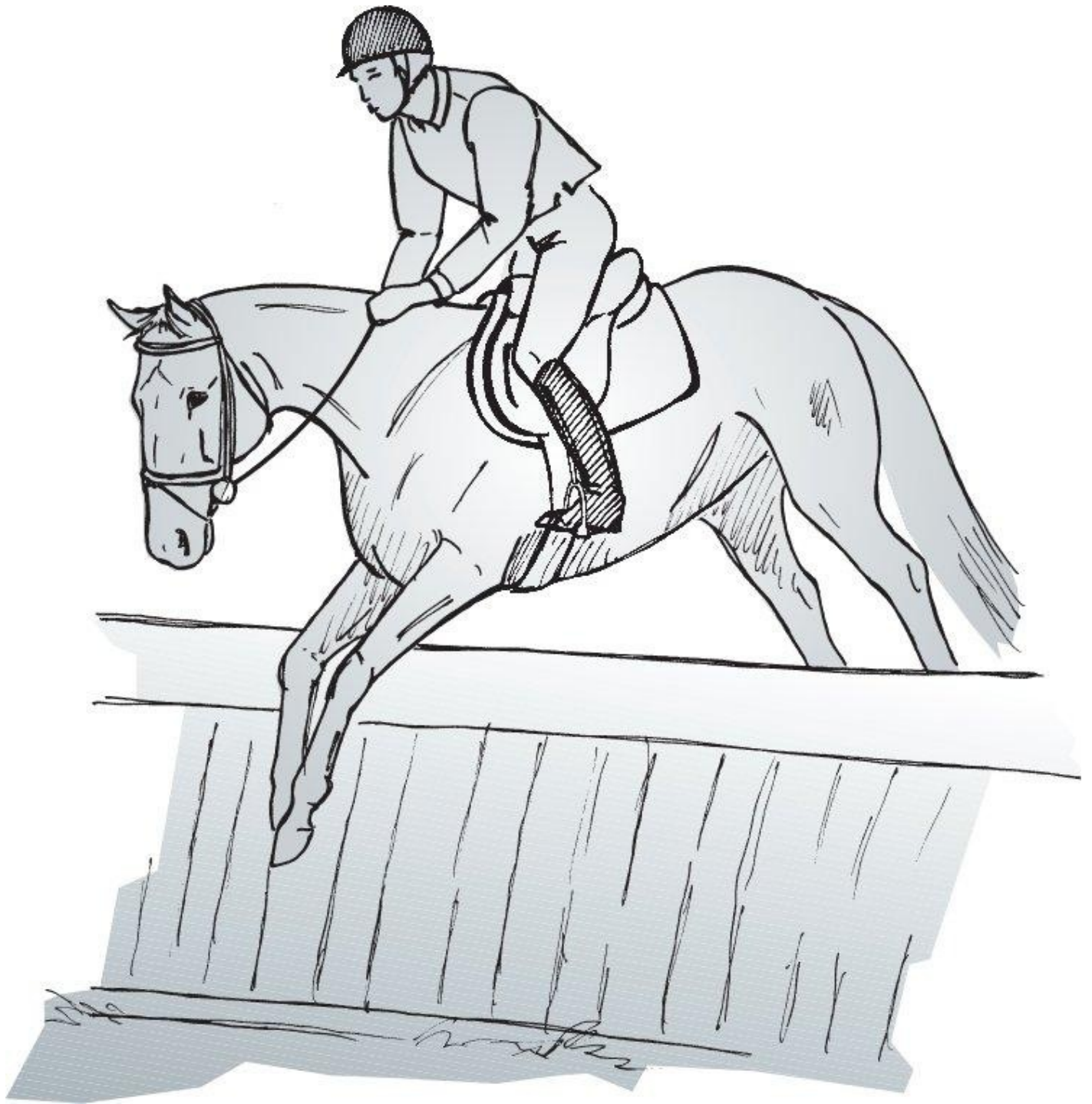
A truly secure lower leg position is particularly important because the rider, when riding cross-country, must cope with a higher speed over different terrain, requiring far more stability and balance.



If the tempo needs to be reduced when approaching a cross-country fence, the rider sits up more, as in show-jumping, without placing their entire weight in the saddle. The rider brings their backside closer to the horse and keeps the horse 'in front' of them.



Over the obstacle, the rider must not come 'behind' or 'in front of the movement'. Pushing the stirrups down, with elastic heels, provides the necessary support for the correct seat foundation.



When jumping downhill or jumping into water, it is reasonable for the rider to position the lower legs further forwards in order to find the right balance in the stirrups when landing. The upper body remains leaning slightly forwards while the backside is pushed slightly back towards the cantle of the saddle.

Particularly in the landing phase after drops or jumps into water, the rider absorbs the movement in the stirrups, which must always remain under the body's centre of gravity. This necessary requirement is maintained by the position of the legs. The lower leg must be directly at the girth.

4.2 Development of Influence

The rider can influence the horse with their seat (weight), their legs and their reins. These seat, leg and rein 'aids', form the basis for the rider's communication with the horse. The coordination (collaboration) of the rider's aids is then known as 'influence'.

The rider's influence results from many different factors:

- Seat (balance, suppleness, going with the movement).
- Giving of aids (knowledge and realisation).
- Coordinated collaboration of the aids.
- Feeling.
- Correct timing, that is, employing the required aids and then ceasing them at the right moment.
- Suitable strength ('dosing of the aids').
- Understanding the relationship between riding theory and practice.

4.2.1 Giving of Aids

The rider must know precisely the effect of the individual aids and their collaboration to be able to use them purposefully and in the right strength.

4.2.1.1 Seat (*Weight*) Aids

Seat or weight aids are mostly given through minimal shifting of the rider's weight, hence by altering the centre of gravity. Swinging in harmony with the horse's movement is an important prerequisite for the weight aids, which are obtained through a finely tuned change in posture. The more balanced and elastic the rider's seat, the better the horse reacts to the finely tuned weight aids.

The rider can place their weight in the following ways:

- On both seatbones.
- On only one seatbone.
- Ride in a light seat.

■ WEIGHT AIDS ON BOTH SEATBONES

The rider's weight has an impact on the horse, depending on their posture, and on whether they swing passively or consciously with the movement of the horse.

When the rider sits relaxed and balanced on the horse, it is more comfortable for the horse to carry them, but this does not necessarily create influence.

Weight aids placed on both seatbones can, for example, be employed in transitions from one gait to another, or when coming to a halt. However, this aiding also has a significance in all situations in which the rider would like to frame their horse more

with the aids.

When the rider tips their pelvis slightly backwards and therefore puts a little more pressure on the seatbones, the horse will notice the weight aid on both sides. What is important is that the pelvis never remains in a final position, but that the rider keeps returning to the middle position of the pelvis. Only on a moving horse will it become obvious that the aid of placing weight on both seatbones is essentially an increase in the rhythmical movement of the pelvis. In order to develop a consciously supporting pelvic movement out of a passively swinging one, the rider must support it with a certain body tension and with the abdominal and lower back muscles.

The rider is going with the forward movement more with their upper body when lengthening in trot or canter, and by doing so slightly releases weight on the horse's back, but will become more upright when shortening the horse again. The even weight distribution and the shift in the centre of gravity support the horse in finding its balance in these transitions and enable, with the help of more driving leg aids, an increased activity of the hind legs stepping further underneath the horse's body.

Even if nothing changes in terms of the rider's actual weight, the rider is able to use this weight purposefully to make the horse feel supported. Depending on the desired effect, the aids can be applied briefly, or in an accentuated, accompanying, or repetitive way.

It is important that, when the weight aids are placed on both seatbones, the rider only takes their upper body back to the vertical position at the most and continues to move elastically with the horse. This way, the horse's back is positively supported and not disturbed in its mobility. A rider should learn over the course of their training to be able to change fluently between quietly going with the movement and an actively driving leg support, without the change being obvious to an onlooker.

■ WEIGHT AIDS ON ONE SEATBONE

Placing weight on one seatbone acts as an important support of leg and rein aids in all movements in which the horse is flexed and bent. The rider virtually leads the horse with the amended centre of gravity.

The weight aid on one seatbone can thus be used subtly for riding into turns. Minimal changes of the rider's posture already influence the direction the horse moves in. In a way similar to how cyclists, snowboarders or skateboarders turn their equipment, a rider can also influence the movement of the horse with their posture and pelvic position alone. The horse will react ever more positively, the more finely it is ridden with sensitively coordinated aids. This idea emphasises that placing more weight on one seatbone always involves the rider's whole posture.

With this weight aid, the rider shifts their weight more onto the inside seatbone. This is best achieved when the pelvis is tilted slightly forwards and inwards. Through this, the inside hip is brought forwards a little and the inside knee is placed into a lower position. The outside leg moves slightly back from the hip at the same time. Furthermore, moving the outside shoulder forwards into the turn supports this minimal shift in weight. Through this weight aid, a well-ridden horse is prompted to step in the right direction under the rider's seat.

■ RELIEVING WEIGHT AID

The relieving weight aid is used when the weight distribution on the horse's back needs to be altered. From the basic upright seat, the rider inclines their upper body slightly forwards, for example when riding off from a halt or when extending the steps in trot or the strides in canter. The rider can actually shift their weight but not completely remove it from the horse's back. They can go with the forward movement of the horse more, or rather induce this through body posture and by bringing the weight more into the stirrups. This also has an impact on the horse's back via the saddle. The centre of gravity is therefore shifted slightly forwards. This increases the mobility of the horse's back. The relieving should be so minimal that it is barely noticed by an observer.

The relieving weight aid is used, for example:

- To support the forward movement.
- To release a weight aid on both seatbones.
- For gymnastic work.
- For relaxation after intensive work in positive tension.
- During suppling work.
- When starting young horses.
- When first practising rein-back.

■ AIDS IN ALIGHT SEAT

In a light seat, the rider transfers their weight into the stirrups. The different weight aids can still be applied in the light seat and can also be finely differentiated through a change in posture, just as when sitting upright. Through the stirrups, the weight is transferred onto the saddle tree and, as a result, onto the horse's back. That way, seat aids become possible.

Through inclining their upper body slightly forwards-downwards the rider is able to take weight off the horse's back; through sitting tall, they can put weight on both seatbones, and through leaning the upper body slightly sideways, combined with markedly pushing down on the inside stirrup, they can put more weight on the inner seatbone. In show-jumping or cross-country riding, the rider changes between an

upright seat with the bottom in the saddle, a lower position of the upper body with the bottom on the saddle (basic position of a show-jumping seat) and a light seat with stronger definition. This enables the rider to adjust their centre of gravity in any situation and give the desired aids accordingly.

4.2.1.2 Leg Aids

Leg aids induce the horse to move more forwards and/or laterally. They are fundamentally driving aids.

The effect of the various leg aids on the horse must always be considered in combination with the seat and rein aids.

Leg aids are generally given with a leg that is resting quietly against the horse's side. Leg aids can be employed in the following ways:

- Forward-driving.
- Forward-lateral driving.
- Guarding.

■ FORWARD-DRIVING LEG AIDS

With lower legs lying smoothly against the horse's body, a gentle influence already emerges from the fact that the horse's body moves rhythmically, alternating from left to right, as part of the motion sequence. Without the rider actively applying driving aids, the horse, by itself, 'picks up' an aid from the rider's leg with every step and stride. This requires a rider who adjusts sensitively to the movement of the horse to establish and maintain the horse's sensitivity. A well-trained horse should like to go forwards, rendering an active driving leg aid to maintain impulsion and tempo unnecessary.

The forward-driving leg lies at or right behind the girth line. The lower legs should lie on both sides of the horse's body and, when required, give a brief, light impulse. If a stronger driving impulse is required, after it is given, the leg muscles must be relaxed again so that there is no gripping effect. Through a brief contraction of the rear thigh muscle, the calf is brought closer to the horse's body. In order to intentionally obtain a clear driving impulse from the lower leg, the rider can slightly turn the toes and the knee outwards. With shorter stirrup leathers, it is generally easier for the rider to reach the horse's torso with the lower leg. With flexing heels in the stirrups, the calf muscles find the necessary extension and stability to have a good forward-driving effect on the horse's body. The calf muscles do not have to, and must not be, intentionally contracted.

With less sensitive horses, it can be helpful to use the driving leg intermittently now

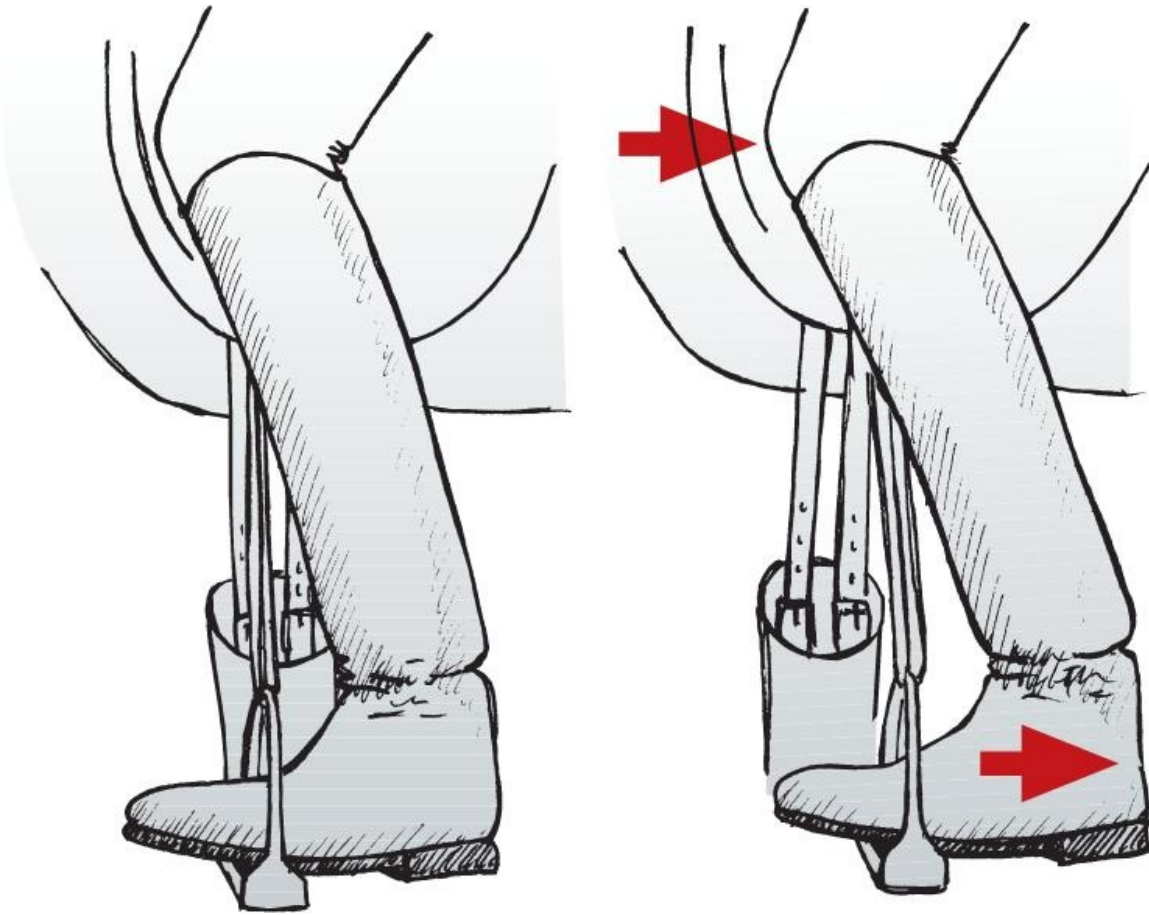
and again, without ever becoming rough.

The rider must learn, in their basic training, to use precise, yet consistent, leg aids so that the horse reacts immediately and positively.

■ FORWARD-LATERAL DRIVING LEG AIDS

The forward-lateral driving leg ensures that the horse steps forwards and laterally, in particular with the inside hind leg, for example in a leg-yield. The horse is flexed to the side of the forward-lateral driving leg so that this is always referred to as the inside leg. Compared to the forward-driving leg aid, the leg is placed minimally further back so that its forward-driving function is not lost. The forward-lateral driving leg differs from the forward-driving leg in that it only takes on a unilateral forward-driving function as the inside leg. The rider's other, outside leg, has less of a driving function compared to the inside leg.

The forward-lateral driving leg can also be used at the same time to establish the bend of the horse. If, for example, a horse is supported more with the inside leg, then to ride correctly through the corners of the arena, the inside leg is not only responsible for the forward-lateral driving aid, but also for supporting the bend of the horse. The horse should be bent slightly around the inside leg on a curved line. The position of the leg must remain close to the girth. Here, the horse's muscles that are responsible for the activity of the inside hind leg can be best stimulated.



Position of the forwards-driving leg (left) and position of the guarding leg (right).

■ GUARDING LEG AIDS

The guarding leg is always the outside leg. It lies a little further back than the forward-lateral driving leg. This position is not only achieved by sliding the leg backwards; the hip and pelvis position also changes. This way, the thigh and the knee are positioned a little further back (see *illustration opposite*). Thus, when riding turns, the guarding (outside) leg acts as the antagonist of the forward-driving (inside) leg. An outside leg positioned slightly further back follows from the required forward movement of the inside hip. In the moment in which the inside hip moves forwards, the outside hip moves slightly backwards.

The purpose of the guarding leg lies, above all, in preventing the hindquarters from swaying, for example when riding on a curved line (corners, voltes, circles). It enables the fore and hind legs of each side to remain on the same track, and the horse to step forwards into both reins evenly.

The guarding leg is essentially also responsible for the forward movement. This means that it is not only passive but takes on an active driving function, when required. It supports the activity of the outside hind leg.

If the inside leg acts in a forward-lateral driving manner, then the outside leg must

primarily assume a guarding function. Even in a leg-yield, the stepping of the inside over the outside hind leg will only succeed when the outside guarding leg is actively felt by the horse. The interplay between the rider's inside and the outside leg must always be attuned. On a curved line, the so-called diagonal aids (inside, forward-driving or forward-lateral driving leg, outside regulating rein and outside guarding leg) form the basis for bending the horse ([see Chapter 5.2 The Work Phase](#)).

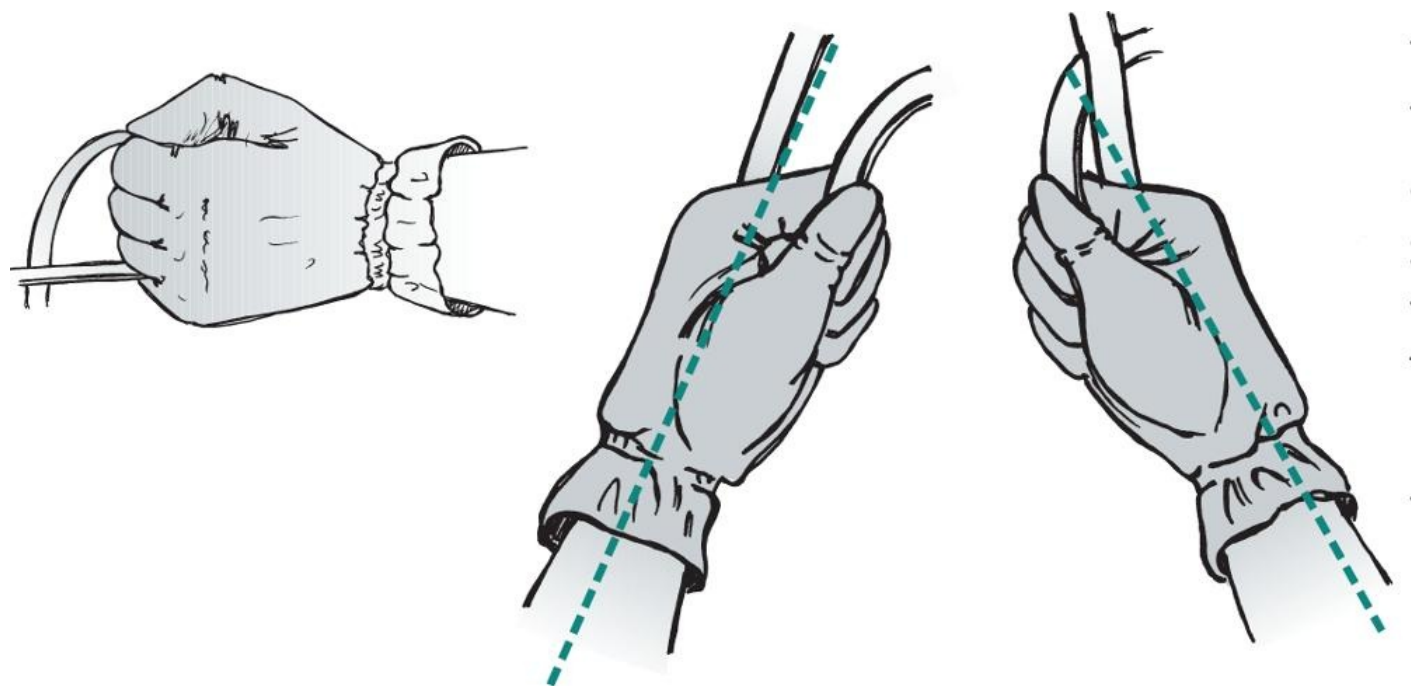
In the light seat, the leg aids are used principally in the same manner, albeit with shorter stirrup leathers.

4.2.1.3 Rein Aids

Rein aids are to be regarded as supplementary to seat and leg aids.

They are always used in combination with seat and leg aids.

This is a requirement which demands a great deal of body control on the part of the rider. A condition for the sensitive influence on the horse is, alongside a balanced and supple seat, the manner of holding the reins.



Holding the reins correctly.

■ HOLDING THE REINS

When using a snaffle bridle, the reins must be untwisted and of the same length on both sides, held between the little and the ring finger. They pass through the hand and over the index finger, where they are held down in place by the roof-like angled thumb. The two ends of the reins, attached to each other, loop down to the right, under the right rein. The hands are relaxed, but closed. The angled thumbs keep a light pressure on the reins on the index fingers and prevent them from sliding

through. The hands are carried upright, forming a straight line from forearm, through the rein, to the horse's mouth. They are held approximately one hand's width above the withers on the right- and left-hand side of the crest. The reins should frame the horse's neck but never be carried from one side of the neck over to the other side.

CORRECTING THE LENGTH OF THE REINS

Shortening the reins is managed by shortening them in the hand. The hand on the side which needs shortening passes the reins to the other hand. The fist which is now free opens the fingers and follows along the rein as far forward as necessary. Often only a minor shortening is required to maintain an even length and contact on both reins. It is wrong to shorten the reins by simply reaching forwards without passing the rein into the other hand: this can have a disturbing effect on the horse's mouth, threatens the elastic contact and prevents a secure control of the rein length.

In order to lengthen the rein, the rider lets the rein slide through the hand to the desired length and then limits this by closing the fist with the help of the thumb placed, slightly angled, on top of the rein.

REIN LENGTH

The so-called rein length is the respective length of the reins according to each riding situation and the individual arm length of the rider. The rein length is dependent on the required tempo, the horse's carriage, and the movement/exercise. The rein length is essentially correct when the horse moves with the desired carriage and the rider's hand position is naturally relaxed, with the elbows slightly angled relative to the rider's body. The position of the hands is adjusted so that the lower arms and reins form an unbroken line.

■ DIFFERENT REIN AIDS

To be able to give sensible rein aids, the rider first needs a light, elastic connection to the horse's mouth. This means that a certain accompanying rein effect is always more or less present, particularly when the horse stretches confidently into the rider's hand. Only from this situation is it possible to understand the different rein aids and integrate them correctly. This elastic, positive connection is also a prerequisite for the rein aids to be given with 'feel' and with a minimum of effort in collaboration with the seat and leg aids.

Rein aids can be transmitted from the rider to the horse in different ways. Even a minor adjustment in body tension or posture has an effect over the arms, the hands and the reins and, consequently, on the horse's mouth.

With a well-trained horse, rein aids are, to a certain extent, the result of weight and leg aids because the horse can be ridden forwards more into the connection with the rider's hand when necessary.

The rein aids are divided into:

- Giving/yielding.
- Asking.
- Retaining/sustaining.
- Guarding/regulating.
- Sideways-acting or opening rein.

Giving, asking and retaining rein aids are always used in combination with the respective seat and leg aids, for example:

- With all half-halts, and thus, for example, for transitions within a gait and for preparing movements from one gait to another.
- To improve the self-carriage and contact or in full halts, hence for transitions down to halt.

Fundamentally, giving and asking should be so nuanced that it is hardly perceivable to the observer.

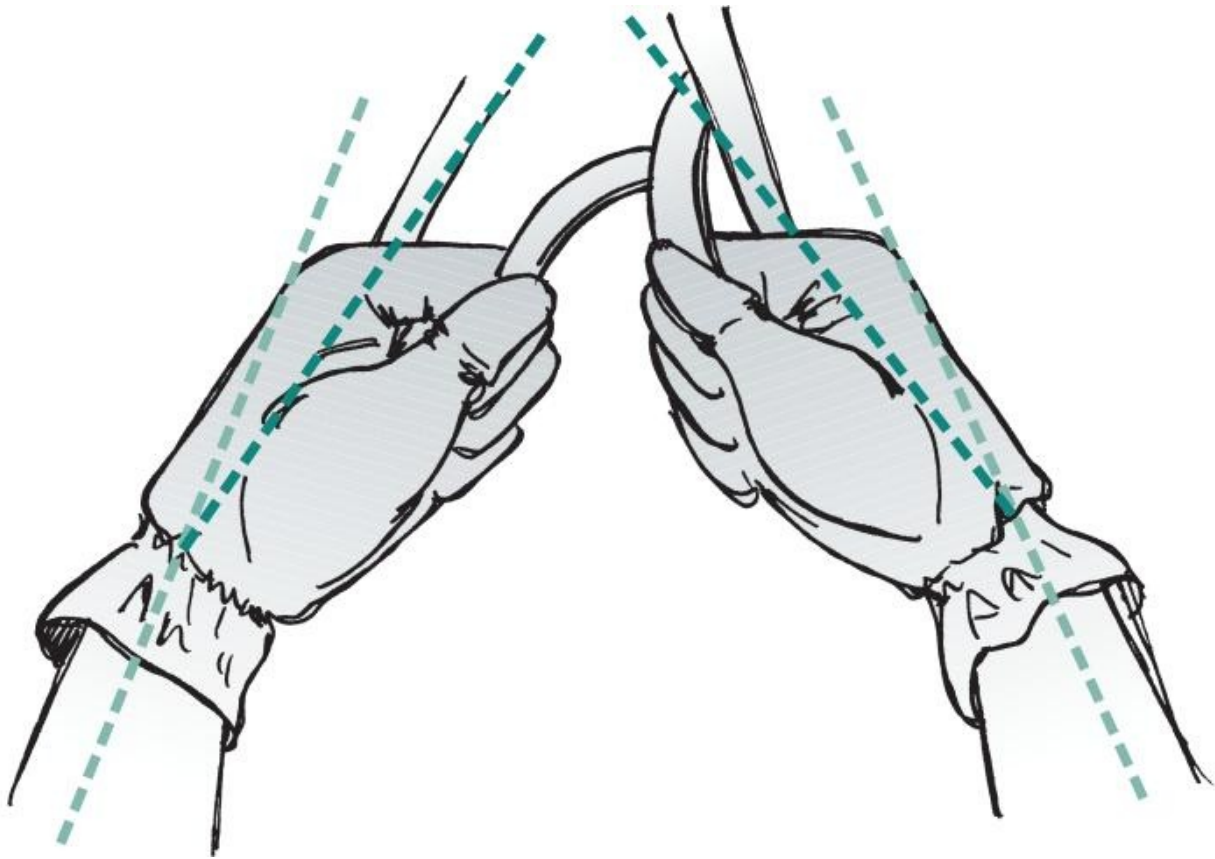
THE GIVING REIN AID

The giving rein aid serves to create a lighter contact, to give up the reins momentarily or allow the horse's nose to move forwards or forwards-downwards. It is carried out by opening up the slightly turned fist from the wrist or by moving the arms slightly forwards. The giving rein aid must necessarily follow any either asking or retaining rein aid. However, giving the rein should never be done in a jerky or sudden motion, so that the rein does not 'flap'.

The rein connection must, in normal situations, be maintained even when the rider is 'light' with the hands. However, there are exceptional circumstances when the rider can give up the steady connection between hands and the horse's mouth completely. Such a circumstance would be the specific movement **GIVE AND RETAKE THE REINS** (required in some dressage tests) where the hands are moved noticeably along the horse's neck in order to test and support the self-carriage and balance of the horse. When **LETTING THE HORSE CHEW THE REINS OUT OF THE HAND**, the reins are gradually extended in a forwards-downwards direction up to a stretched position of the horse's neck, without the connection with the horse's mouth ever being lost ([see Chapter 5, Systematic Structure of Lessons](#)).

THE ASKING REIN AID

With asking rein aids the hand should either be closed, or the fist should be turned slightly inwards from a relaxed wrist. For example, in a half-halt, the asking rein aids, combined with seat and leg aids, are applied to reduce the tempo. The half-halt is then concluded with a giving rein aid.



'Asking' rein aid.

The asking rein aid always has a restrictive impact on the movement and mobility of the horse. Therefore, it must be carried out sensitively, it must only be performed briefly and it must always be followed by a giving rein aid. Giving and asking rein aids must always be seen as collaborative. Depending on how well the asking aid is accepted by the horse, this can be followed immediately by a giving aid. Even if the desired reaction of the horse does not occur, a giving rein aid must nevertheless still be given before another asking rein aid can be applied.

For the asking rein aid, it is advisable not to 'get stuck' when asking – that means never remaining in the asking or retaining aid position. If the horse does not react immediately, asking and giving reins must be repeated again in combination ([see Chapter 6.2.3 Half-Halts, Transitions and Halts](#)). The arm must not be taken backwards when using the asking rein aid so as not to have a backwards effect.

THE RETAINING REIN AID

The retaining rein aid (also known as non-yielding or sustaining rein aid) serves to

frame the horse more with the aids, especially between weight and leg aids. With this rein aid, the rider momentarily limits the forward movement of the horse.

The retaining rein aid is given by riding the horse more forwards to the hand from behind. The hands, remaining in the same place, are closed more for a moment so that THE HORSE BECOMES LIGHT IN THE HAND. The pressure on the horse's mouth may only be such that no resistance on the part of the horse arises.

Even with retaining rein aids, the rider is responsible for maintaining an elastic connection with the horse's mouth and not letting this connection become rigid.

A retaining rein aid must therefore be followed by a giving rein aid. This is particularly important on curved lines and in turns, especially for the inside hand.

The retaining rein aid is always used in combination with seat and leg aids, for example to introduce the transition into a lower gait, to reduce the tempo within a gait and also for rein-back. Its use must never be prolonged unnecessarily.

If the horse does not react positively to the aids, it is helpful if the rider first gives with the reins and then rides the horse from behind to the contact once again ([see Chapter 6.2.3, Half-Halts, Transitions and Halts](#)).

THE REGULATING OR GUARDING REIN AID

This aid, (always the outside rein) supplements the inside rein for any kind of flexion or bend. When using a guarding aid, the rider gives almost as much with the outside hand as they take with the inside rein to flex the horse ([see Chapter 6.2.5.1 Flexing and Bending](#)). The bit must remain in the same position in the horse's mouth as when the horse is ridden on a straight line. If this measured giving does not take place, the outside rein gets blocked. However, this guarding function of the outside rein is important, so that the horse does not fall out over the outside shoulder. If the horse does not respect the guarding rein aid enough, it can become necessary as a correction to briefly ask with this rein slightly and then give again.

THE SIDEWAYS-ACTING REIN AID

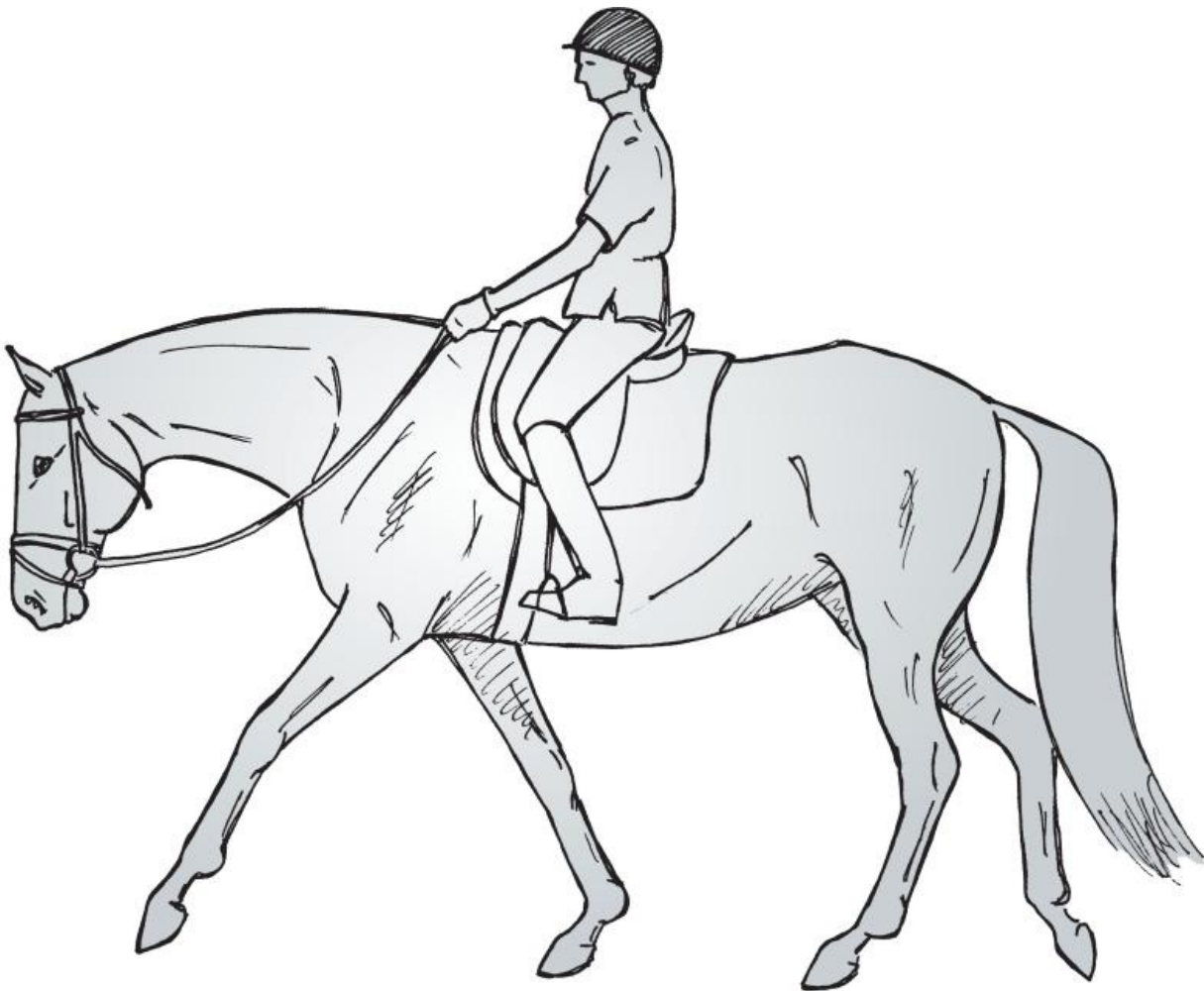
The sideways-acting rein aid leads the horse into the turn. This aid is particularly useful with young horses and through tight turns. It is also helpful in introducing the letting the horse chew the reins out of the hands exercise, and in further training for a turn on the haunches or walk pirouettes.

Generally, the horse is also flexed when the opening rein aid is applied, since the flexion in the poll and neck is also part of the horse's bend. This is why it is given with the inside hand. In a turn, the rider takes the hand a few centimetres away from the neck. The opening rein is always also combined with a minor shift in the

rider's weight. The open rein is ended by the hand returning to the crest. In general, the aim of this is for the inside rein to be the 'lighter' rein. With the outside 'leading' rein, the rider always maintains a soft connection.

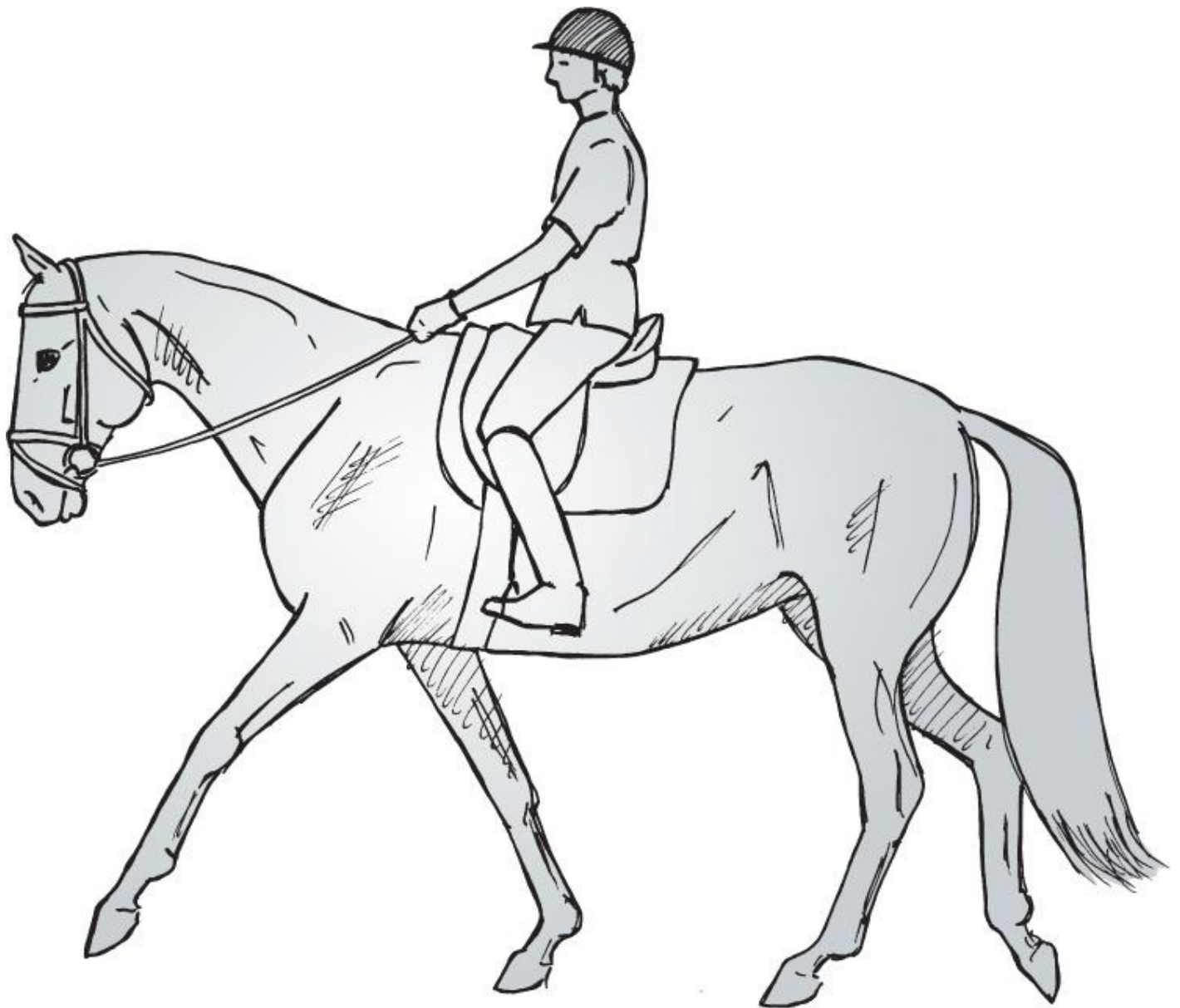
For the employment of the rein aids in combination with seat and leg aids, a correct understanding of the theory of the correlation of aids is important.

The rider accompanies the movement of the horse with the help of the reins, but they are only one of many possible means of influence open to the rider. The rider can, for example, indicate the direction of movement to the horse by the direction in which they are looking and with their overall posture.



Horse going on a loose rein and lowering his neck.

The hands determine, together with the driving aids, the frame in which the horse is to move. A horse that gives the rider the feeling, be it when standing still or when moving forwards, that there is a constant soft connection between the hand and the horse's mouth, in a secure carriage, is said to be 'ON THE BIT'.



Horse going on a long rein with a secure connection.

A horse is 'ON A LOOSE REIN' when there is no more connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth. The horse should thereby stretch clearly in a forward-downward direction without rushing. The reins are held on the buckle.

A horse is 'ON A LONG REIN' when it carries its neck naturally and a connection is maintained between the mouth and the rider's hand. This enables an influence via the rein aids whereby the horse always remains in front of the vertical with its forehead-nose line.

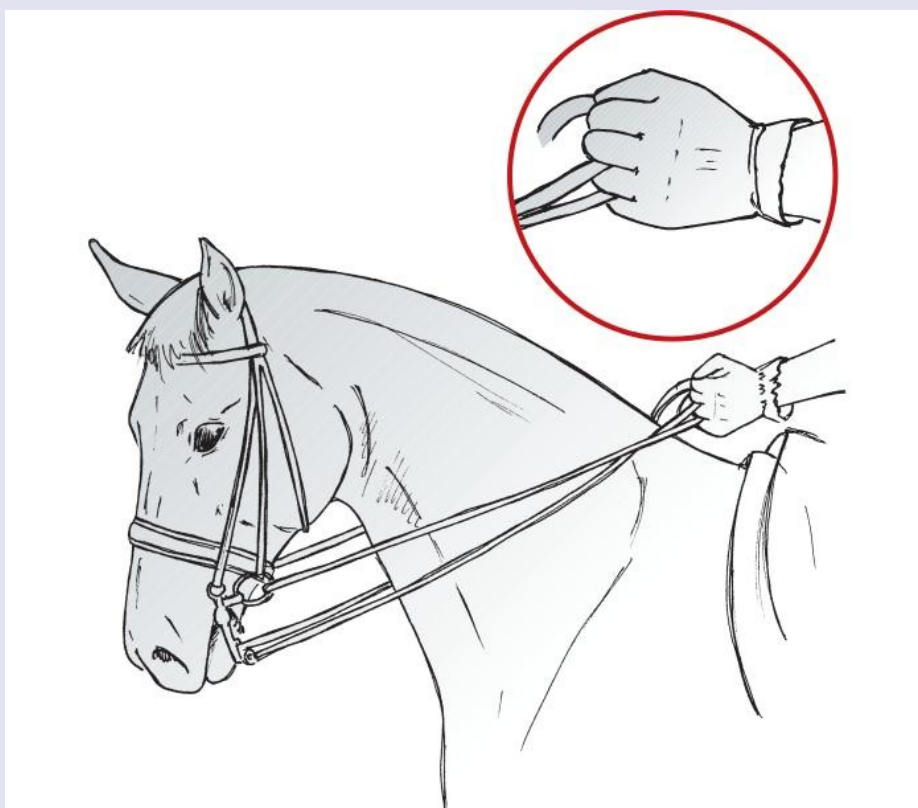
■ HANDLING THE DIFFERENT REIN LENGTHS

During the course of a schooling session, ideally the rider will work their way from a loose rein over a long rein to a shorter rein. To finish off the schooling session, the rider should ride again on a long rein during the cooling-down phase and then, at the end, once again on a loose rein – held at the buckle. When the horse is on the

bit, the reins should be of such length that they can be held above the horse's withers. The hands are carried independently so that the reins and the forearms form a straight line. When the horse goes in a forward-downward stretching position, the rider extends the length of the reins and the hands are carried a little lower so that the reins and the forearms continue to form a straight line. In the light seat, the upper body and the hands move slightly forwards. The rein length is shortened accordingly.

How to Hold the Reins of a Double Bridle

The following principles apply for holding the reins when riding in a double bridle: the horse must maintain a secure contact, carry itself and let the rider's aids 'through' at all times. Only then can the more refined rein aids of the double bridle fulfil their purpose. All movements must first be practised and mastered in a snaffle before they can be ridden in a double bridle. First of all, the rider must sit independently of the reins and develop a feel for the fine influence of the reins before riding a horse in a double bridle.



Holding the reins in a double bridle.

Both horse and rider need to 'be ready for the double bridle', and this stage of training must be reached before a rider is permitted to ride in a double bridle.

With the double bridle, the bridoon rein is held, as usual, between the ring finger and the little finger. The curb rein is taken up between the ring and the middle finger, but can also be held in just one hand (3 to 1 method).

The rein aids are applied in the same manner as when riding in a snaffle, but the necessary elasticity of shoulders, elbows and wrists cannot be underestimated, as the effects of the inflexible curb bit with shanks will lead to a far stronger influence on the horse's mouth. The rider must constantly guard against inadvertent overuse of the curb. When riding turns, it is especially important to be mindful of the steady connection with the inside as well as the outside rein, to prevent problems in the contact, and tilting of the poll respectively.

The most important condition for riding in a double bridle is a correct, balanced and supple seat, which makes rein aids truly independent from the seat possible.

4.2.2 Use of Additional Aids

To improve the communication with the horse or to support and refine the giving of aids, the voice, whip and spurs can also be used selectively. However, they are no substitute for the rider's main aids.

■ VOICE

The voice can be an important aid, especially in the training and communication with a young, insecure or nervous horse. In stressful situations, a calming voice, combined with consequent, but quiet aids, gives the horse security. However, this presupposes that the horse has become familiar with the voice previously as a trustworthy form of support. When using voice, the correct tone is particularly important. A quiet, calm and deep voice has a reassuring effect on the horse, while a short, clicking noise with the tongue, used at the right time, or a short word, can have an 'asking' effect. The latter can increase the horse's attention, support the driving aids and direct the horse's focus to the rider, but it can also distract the horse from the actual task.

Too intensive or too regular use of the voice will gradually have less of an impact and might even unsettle the horse.

If other horses are nearby, the voice aid should be used respectfully. The aim of training is to reach a fine-tuned communication with the horse without the need for the voice, because riding in company would otherwise hardly be possible.³

■ WHIP

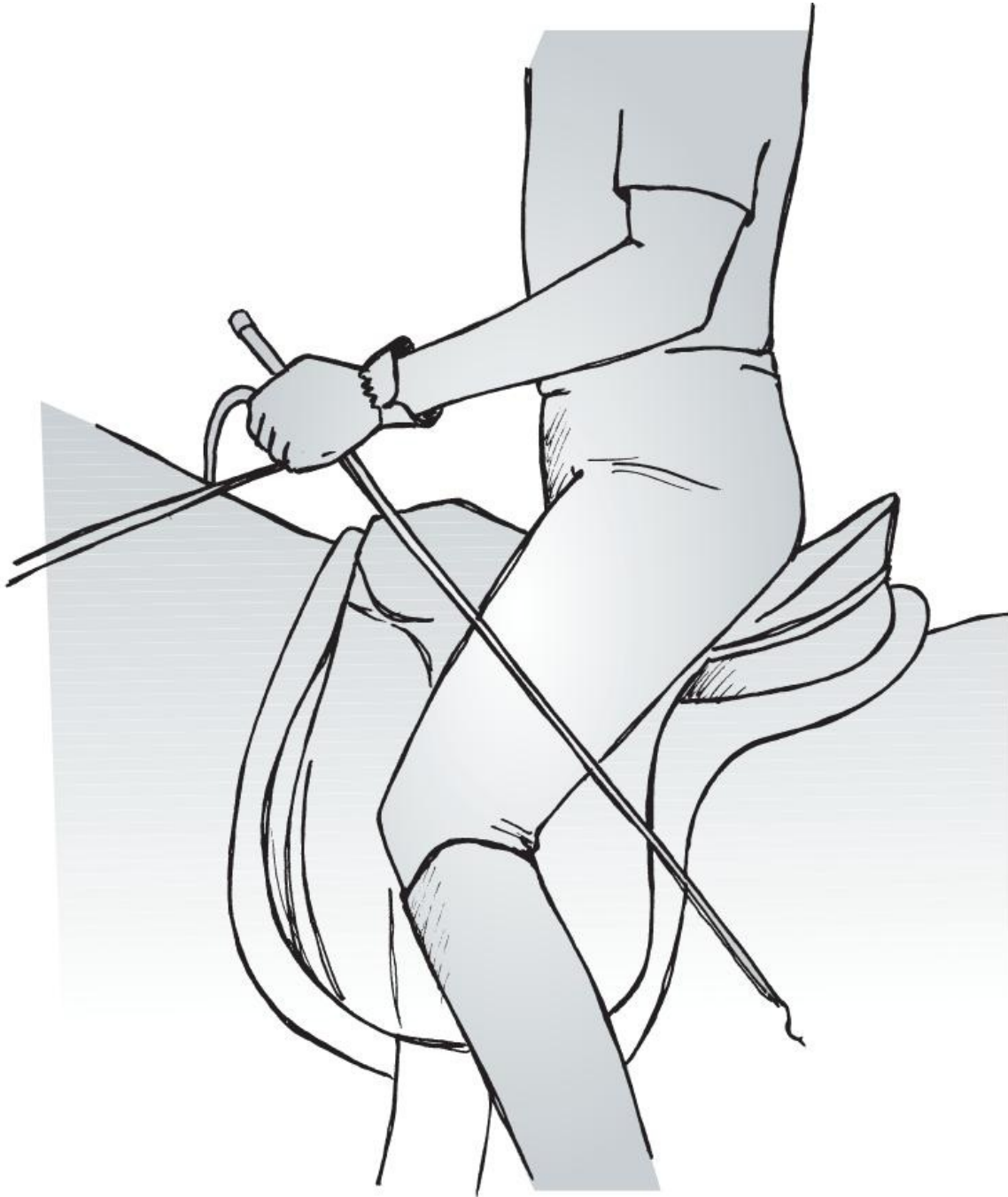
The whip is used to increase the attention and sensitivity of the horse. When used against the horse's shoulder, it increases general attention; when used behind the rider's leg, it increases the sensitivity to the rider's leg aids.

The purpose of the whip aid is to support the driving aids when needed. It is ideally used right behind the rider's leg. Therefore, a dressage whip should be approximately 1.1–1.2m long.

The horse should only be motivated with the whip, never hit! Thus, a short, precise prompt is often more meaningful than a constant and ultimately deadening tapping of the horse with the whip.

The measured and suitable use of the whip requires very good intuition on the part of the rider or, in the case of less-experienced riders, suitable instructions from the

trainer. The thumb is wrapped around the whip and placed, slightly bent on the rein, but not on the whip. This ensures that the wrist remains mobile and the thumb continues to be fixed on the rein. The remaining four fingers of the hand surround the whip. The top end of the whip emerges slightly from the hand. That way, the whip is better balanced in the hand and can be used from the wrist without having a shortening impact on the reins. The whip thus does not influence the way the reins are held.



The rider should learn to carry the whip equally well in both hands so that they can support both the left and the right leg equally, depending on the specific situation and the movement.

When changing the whip from one hand to the other, the hand that will be taking the whip should first pass the rein into the other hand (the hand currently holding the whip). The hand that is thus free to take the whip pulls it upwards out of the hand it is being held in and then also takes back the rein from this hand.

In show-jumping and cross-country riding, a jumping crop is used. It is a maximum of 75cm long and is commonly used on the horse's shoulder. Here, it has an asking effect, but can also be used to support the guarding outside rein and prevent the horse from falling out over the outside shoulder during a turn or at an obstacle.

If the crop is used correctively, when, for instance the horse does not respond to the rider's driving aids, the rider temporarily takes the reins in one hand and uses the whip once or twice behind the leg.

The horse should respond to the whip respectfully, but without fear. Never should the rider use the whip out of impatience or anger. The horse cannot comprehend the use of the whip in terms of 'punishment' ([see Chapter 1.1.2 The Relationship between Horse and Rider](#)).

When mounting or dismounting while holding the whip, it is carried in the rider's left hand for safety reasons. However, it makes more sense to leave the whip in a position where it can be reached from the saddle if needed, and subsequently be put back again. The ultimate aim is to be able to ride as much as possible without a whip.

■ SPURS

A condition for wearing spurs is that the rider is able to keep their legs quietly on the horse and apply leg aids conscientiously and independently of the seat (*attaching the spurs*, [see Chapter 2.1 The Rider's Equipment](#)). First and foremost, the spurs enable finer, more precise leg aids. Only secondly are they used to increase the effectiveness of leg aids when required.

With spurs, as with all other aids, a brief, precise use is more meaningful. A constant and ultimately deadening use is incorrect. The spurs should not dominate in the driving aids. The rider rides with the calves, not with the spurs.

The aim is a sensitive, immediate reaction of the horse to the rider's leg aids.

Praise

Praising is particularly important in the education and training of a horse. That way, the horse receives an answer (feedback) that it has fulfilled the task correctly, or that everything is okay.

The horse's confidence will be augmented through praise. To give praise, the reins are taken in one hand in order to maintain the connection to the horse's mouth. With the free hand, the horse is stroked or patted on

the neck or behind the saddle, sometimes even with the support of the voice. Even letting the the horse chew the reins out of the hand, or simply a 'giving' rein aid can be considered as positive reward for the horse.

Praise should be given immediately so that it is still connected to the reaction of the horse. Inappropriate or constant praise is incomprehensible to the horse and therefore it does not have any positive effect ([see Chapter 1 General Basics](#)).

4.2.3 Collaboration of the Aids and the Development of Feel

The rider's aids can only work sensibly and well together when the weight and leg aids as well as the rein aids are all coordinated. This 'concert' of aids must be comprehensible in its entirety to the horse; that means that the different aids supplement one another. For this to work, a thorough understanding of the nature of the horse and its connection to riding theory is necessary. A developed sense of the rider for their own body and movement is particularly advantageous. On the one hand, they must feel the position they are in, and be aware of the action of their body and all of the limbs at any given moment. On the other hand, they should, over time, develop a feel for the use of the individual aids independently of each other. That also means being able to control and guide the intensity and the timing of the individual aids. The driving aids should always have priority over the regulating aids. Only through the collaboration of the aids, and their fine-tuning with one another, can the harmonious movement of the horse be achieved – a situation in which both the horse and the rider 'feel good'. This level of collaboration is more than just the sum of all the different aids.

The rider also influences the movement of the horse with their posture and changes to their entire body.

When, for example, a rider leads into a turn on a show-jumping course with their posture, the inside, sideways-acting rein, together with the outside, guarding rein, logically follows. The leg aids (inner driving, outer guarding) provide support during the turn.

The intensity of the aids and the question of which one has priority over the others is determined by the level of training and potentially also the individual characteristics of each horse and each situation. Since this can change constantly, it is necessary for a rider to learn, as soon as possible, to feel for themselves how the horse responds to the aids. The horse's reaction indicates to the rider what to do next. The coordination of the aids is therefore a process that is always of great importance to horse and rider.

A rider who sits elastically and goes with the horse in a forward movement finds it easier to give precise but subtle rein aids with only a light rein connection than a

rider who is strong and inelastic in their seat, or even comes behind the vertical with their upper body. These latter riders fall 'behind' the horse's movement, or rather sit against the horse's movement.

Sensitively coordinated aids, independent of each other, can therefore only be expected from a rider who has a well-balanced, supple seat.

With a horse that has achieved throughness and is working over the back, the driving aids generate a flow of movement that starts off in the horse's hindquarters and passes over the back, through to the mouth and then continues on elastically to the rider through the reins and back to the hindquarters.

The advice RIDE YOUR HORSE FROM BACK TO FRONT IN BALANCE gives the rider fundamental information for the collaboration of the aids. This notion assumes an effective driving influence, going harmoniously with the horse's movement, with a rein aid that gives the rider control without impeding the horse's mobility or disturbing its balance. As a result, THE RIDER HAS THE HORSE 'IN FRONT' OF THEM, OR RATHER ON THEIR DRIVING AIDS. This is as equally important for dressage as it is for show-jumping and cross-country riding.

The refined coordination and feel will generally develop with experience, when the rider learns to listen to the feedback from the horse. Regular supervision and, where necessary, corrections on the part of a trainer are important so that the rider can be sure that their feel for the aids on each horse is also suitable in the eyes of an outside perspective.

Collaboration of the aids does not necessarily mean that they are all used at the same time; rather, it is better to describe them as waiting, intertwining and following on from one another. Riding forwards into the connection, retaining or giving, are partly dependent on each other and tend to occur after one another rather than at the same time.

The right moment – the right 'timing' – is therefore another important step on the way to a refined giving of aids. For movements, exercises or jumps to be carried out successfully, the feel for the right timing (to apply the aids) is crucial. That is how, for example, making a transition down from canter only becomes unproblematic when the rider has already prepared their horse so well through several half-halts that the actual aid for the downward transition comes through very softly. The sensitive and experienced rider feels when it is the right moment for an aid to be given and also, in what intensity it should be given. When the individual rider's aids are hardly visible to observers, then the correct definition of 'giving subtle aids' has been reached. If a well-trained horse delays the response or completely ignores a rider's aids, then, first of all, the rider must look for the cause of this within themselves. Only if rider mistakes in the giving of aids can be

completely ruled out, should a trainer help to work on the suppleness and throughness of the horse.

■ FEEL FOR MOVEMENT

Riding with feeling demands a very developed feel for movement. This is primarily the ability to sophisticatedly perceive one's own movements and thus to be able to feel them. It involves spatial perception (for example, the position of the leg), time (for example, feel for rhythm, the correct timing of the aids) and enough feeling to understanding the degrees of muscle tension (for example, body tension, leg pressure). For the rider, not only their own movement, but also the horse's movement needs to be felt and, thus, brought into harmony with their own body.

The feel for movement will develop more, the more suppleness, confidence, effortlessness and precision there is in the movements. In any case, a variety of movement and riding experiences on different horses in different situations is very helpful. Slightly different from this, but equally important, is the empathy towards the horse, or the ability to listen to the horse and put oneself in the horse's position. The latter is very difficult for humans. But, those who were fortunate enough to gain a lot of experience with horses and who have attentively observed their behaviour, have an idea of how horses react in certain situations and can react accordingly. In the best instance, the rider can anticipate the horse's reaction. This empathy is therefore pertinent as it allows the rider to acquire a more individual, situation-specific application of the aids. The appropriate measure and intensity of the different aids is extremely important for a harmonious communication between horse and rider.

The ability to balance is also part of the rider's feel for movement, and this ability becomes easier, the more varied the experience of different movements is ([see Chapter 4.1.1 Balance and Suppleness](#)). The ability to feel rhythm and the feeling for the tempo are also particularly positive factors for sensitive riding. As a condition, the rider needs to adapt to the individual horse and its individual capabilities for movement ([see Chapter 4.1.2 The Foundation of the Seat](#)). Only when a good feel for tempo and rhythm has been achieved can harmonious transitions and changes within a gait be ridden and, for example, when riding up to a fence, a good feel for distance can also be developed.

The better defined the rider's ability to balance, to feel the rhythm and to ride 'with' the movement of the horse are, the better the aids and, therefore, their influence on the horse will be.

In a way similar to how the feel for the ball differs among people when playing ball sports, so the all-important feel for movement in riding can vary. An individual's own

predisposition and any experience with movement since childhood play a role in this. Through practice and experience, feel can, however, be increased to a considerable degree.

Therefore, it is essential, in a rider's education, to have access to varied training, which is not focused primarily on teaching technical abilities, but rather on developing a feeling for movement.

Only through a sensitive collaboration of the different aids will the desired gait, tempo or speed, carriage and the general control of the horse emerge, and with it the desired influence. The influence must be unmistakable in all forms of the seat, meaning that the horse must be able to rely on receiving clear aids from the rider. Only then will the rider receive the expected response from the horse. This is how a harmonious communication between horse and rider can evolve.

4.3 Problems in the Seat and Influence – Causes and Corrections

Riding places great demands on the rider's coordination – the finely coordinated control of the entire body movements, and thus also the riding aids. A certain condition (mobility, strength, stamina and speed of reaction) forms the basis for this. Frequently, deficiencies in these departments can cause problems in seat and influence.

Whenever rider problems, disturbances in the harmony between horse and rider or even resistances from the horse arise, the rider should always look within themselves for the cause.

Sitting correctly and giving sensitive aids go hand-in-hand with an intensive learning and training process. During a rider's training, problems are normal occurrences, more or less marked, depending on the rider. The earlier these deficiencies are recognised, and then systematically corrected, the quicker the rider will find their way back onto the right track. Ingrained seat problems, which the rider often does not even notice any more, are hard to eradicate through riding lessons only. It is often necessary to observe more closely the way the rider holds their body and, if necessary, work on specific exercises for general posture and body perception.

It can often happen that a rider, who has corrected a mistake in posture under the guidance of their trainer, does not yet feel very comfortable in this new position. Time is needed until the newly corrected posture starts to feel normal and correct again.

The right image of how a rider and a horse find their mutual balance, and an understanding of a sensitive influence, are particularly important conditions in being be

able to correct mistakes in the long term.

Therefore, knowing the causes and the effects of seat errors is particularly helpful. For example, problems deriving from a lack of suppleness have an immediate impact on the rider's application of the aids.

Fundamental problems in the rider's seat always have an impact on the influence as well.

For the general DEVELOPMENT OF BALANCE AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF SUPPLENESS, exercises such as the following can be easily performed (with suitable guidance) on the horse, for example during walk breaks.

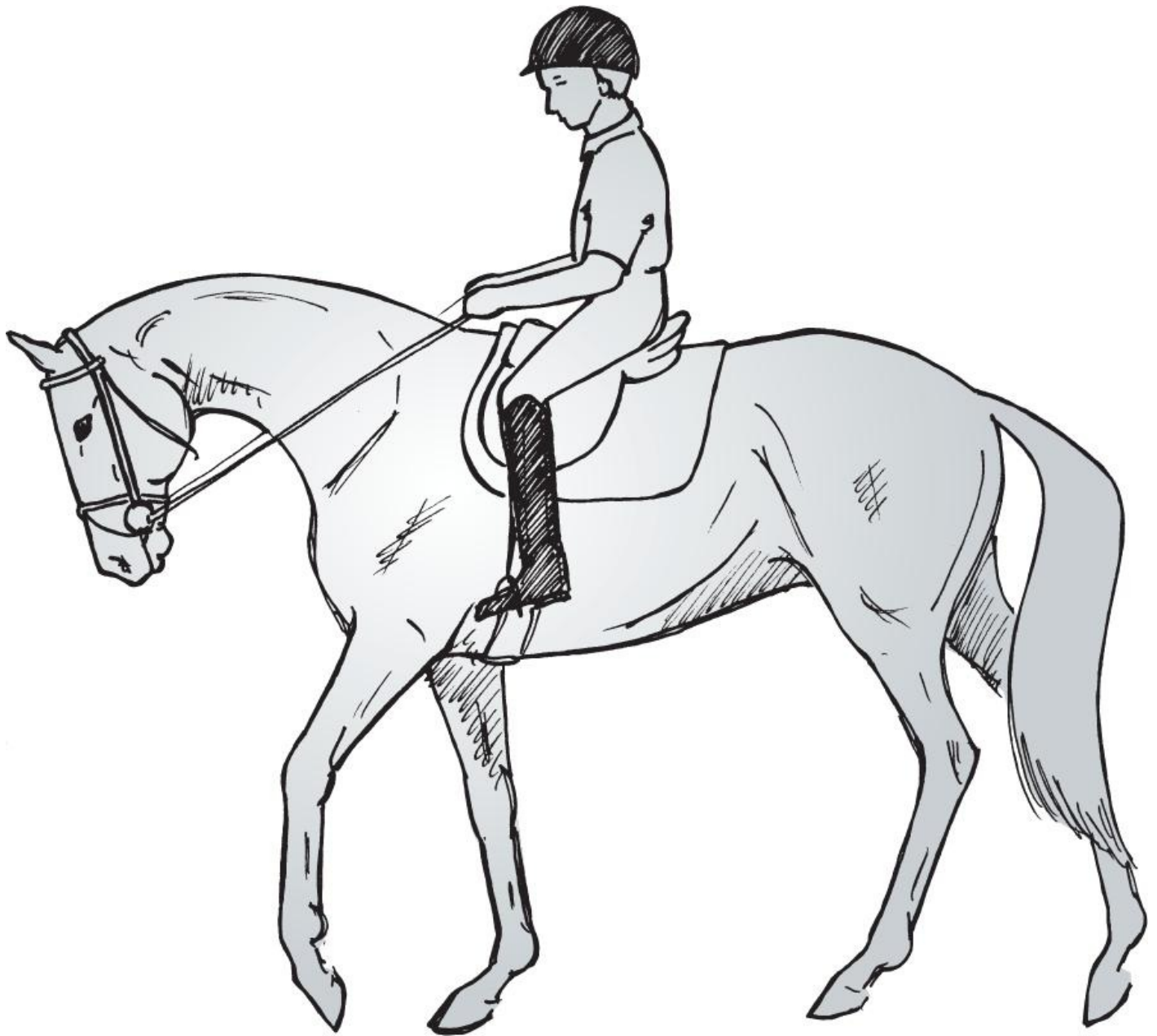
- Leaning the upper body forwards and backwards (hugging the horse's neck).
- Leaning the upper body down to one side.
- Sliding the bottom over from the right to the left of the saddle.
- Drawing the knee up and forwards.
- Stretching the thighs by bending the knees and lifting the feet up.
- Moving the right/left hand in the direction of the left/right foot.
- Drawing circles with the arms.
- Turning the upper body to the right and to the left.
- Carefully turning the head to the right and to the left.

4.3.1 Chair and Fork Seat

The two extreme versions of seat problems, the chair and the fork seat, explain the relationship between seat mistakes and the effects they can have on the rider's influence particularly well. In practice, these seat mistakes only occur very rarely in the pure form described here. However, often a tendency to ride in a chair or fork seat can be observed, which should be countered as soon as possible. It should be considered that an unsuitable, ill-fitting or incorrectly positioned saddle can also be the cause of a seat problem, or at least it can considerably exacerbate the learning process.

■ CHAIR SEAT

In a CHAIR SEAT, the bottom is pushed backwards out of the deepest point of the saddle, towards the cantle. In doing so, the upper body can come behind the vertical and the reins become too long. Thighs and knees are drawn up and the lower legs slide forwards. Since the pelvis is tilted constantly backwards, the rider's ability to move with the horse is significantly limited. Often, the rider's back is also rounded, the head and the neck lean forwards. Such massive seat problems have a negative effect on all aids and, thus, also on the rider's influence on the horse.



Chair seat.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

- The rider is not yet balanced enough and therefore grips too tightly with their thighs and knees.
- Incorrect perception of the process of 'driving' (the driving aids) – the pelvis is tilted backwards.
- Incorrect position or shape of the saddle (deepest point is too far back).
- Far too short stirrup leathers.
- Lack of mobility on the part of the rider.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

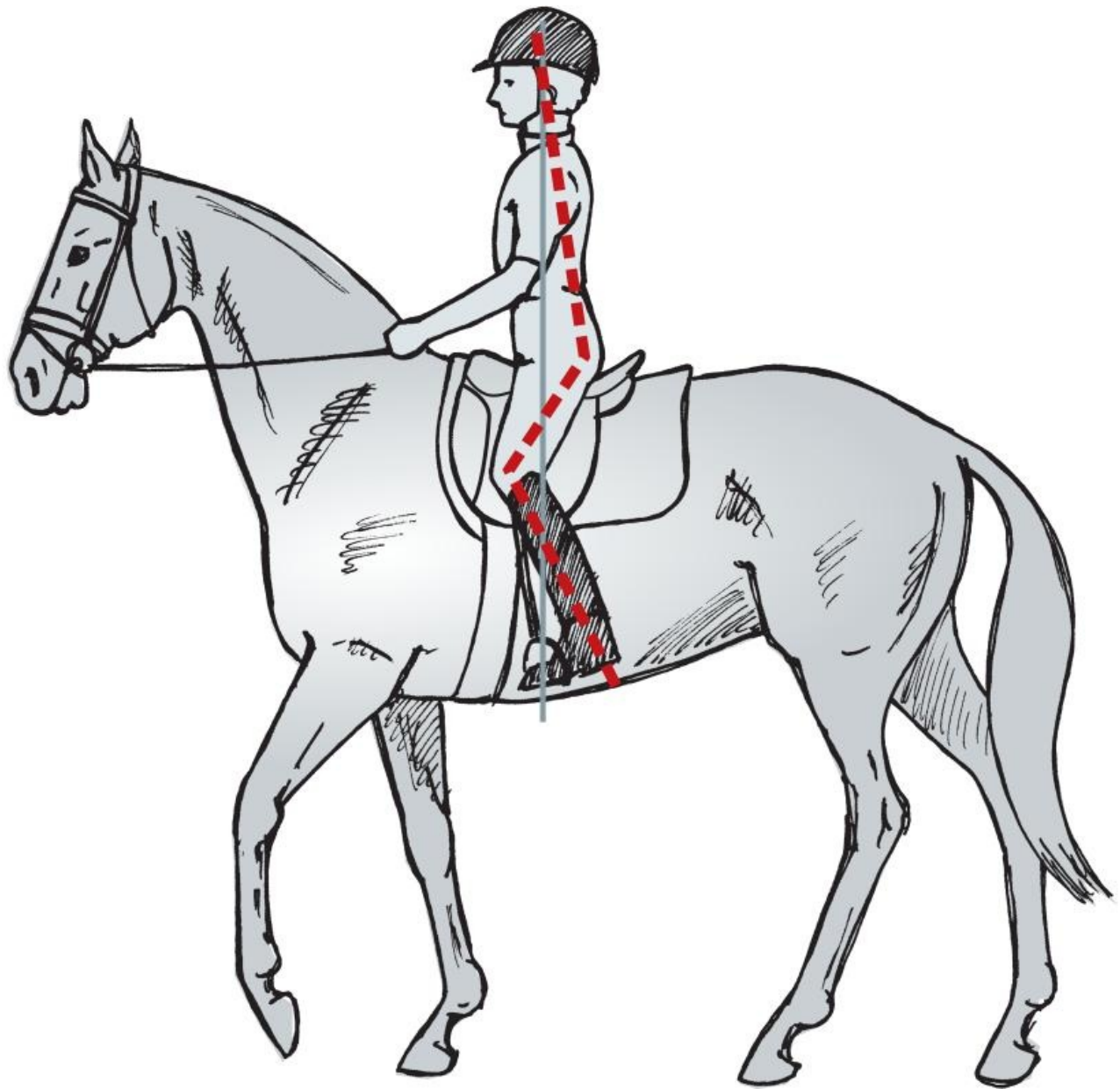
- The pelvis has little possibility of going with the movement of the horse, which will impair moving in unison with the horse's movement.
- The use of suitable seat aids is not possible.

- The rider falls 'behind the movement' of the horse and thus impedes the activity of the horse's back, and forward movement.
- The rider cannot give any precise leg aids.
- The hand, head and leg position of the rider are no longer still.
- The independence of the rider's hands as a basis for sensitive rein aids is lost.
- The reins become too long.
- A fine collaboration of the aids becomes impossible.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

Once any deficiencies of the saddle have been ruled out, the rider's mobility must be examined. Possibly, suitable exercises can be performed to obtain improvements.

Fundamentally, the rider needs to learn to place their bottom further forwards, in the deepest point of the saddle. The heels must comfortably absorb the movement downward, which leads to a deeper position of the knees. Occasionally riding without stirrups can help to bring the rider into a deeper seat. If they grip too tightly with their knees, however, this exercise is not helpful. Training the seat on the lunge on horses that allow their riders to sit well can prove invaluable in this case. By freeing themselves from undue tension, allowing their posture to become deeper and more upright, the rider will balance better and move harmoniously with the horse.



Fork seat.

■ **FORK SEAT**

The **FORK SEAT** is at the opposite extreme from the chair seat. In a fork seat, the rider's entire body is tilted forwards. The rider grips with the upper legs, which are too far back, as are the lower legs. Too much weight is placed on the thighs and the rider does not absorb the movement downwards in the stirrups. No weight is placed on the seatbones. The seat is altogether unstable, and as a consequence the rider cannot relax. For this reason, this faulty seat is rarely seen in its purest form.

Ill-fitting saddles, or knee rolls which do not leave the rider's thighs enough room can often lead to a fork seat.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

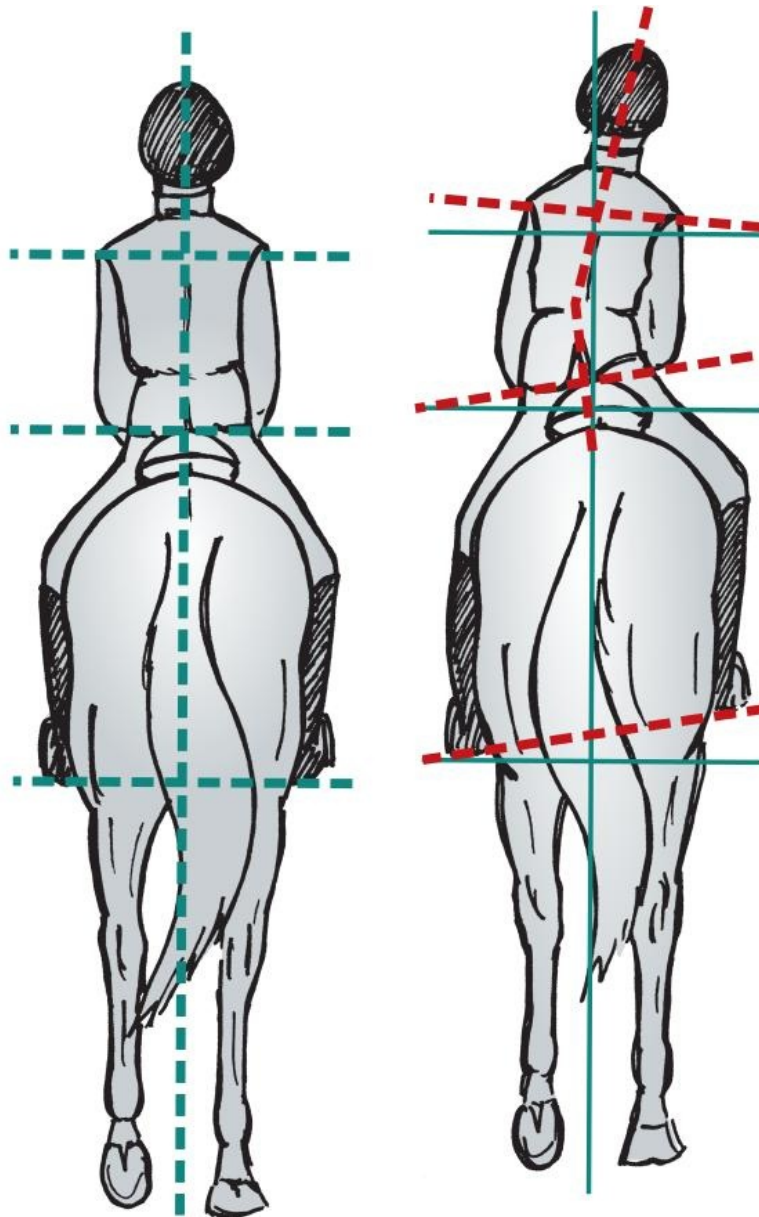
- The stirrup leathers are too long owing to the desire for a particularly elongated leg position.
- Ill-positioned saddle or incorrect shape of the saddle; deepest point too far forwards (possibly caused by placing the saddle too far back on the horse's back).
- Ill-fitting saddle (too steep a cut of the saddle flap, too big or incorrectly designed rolls and blocks).
- Misconception of what 'driving aids' mean (too much upper body, not enough lower leg).

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

- Owing to an unstable seat, the rider starts to grip with the upper legs. The core does not remain supple, the pelvis cannot move with the horse and the seat, therefore, becomes stiff. The rider cannot sit in a deep, elastic way. This makes it hard for the horse to swing through the back and the rider's weight and leg aids cannot be used effectively. The rider has very little driving influence and does not get the horse 'in front' of them. This lack of elasticity further means that the independence of the hand is lost and finely nuanced rein aids can no longer be given.
- In weakened form, the above consequences can also be observed in any rider with a slight tendency towards a fork seat. Therefore, this tendency must be eradicated as early as possible.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

- First, any problems with the saddle need to be eliminated.
- The aim must then be for the rider, in the basic seat, to place weight on their seatbones again and, by doing so, release the inner thigh muscles. Seat exercises in walk or on the lunge are absolutely necessary. Seat exercises, such as visible shifts of the centre of gravity by moving the upper body in different directions, can help the rider to find their core again in order to bring the whole seat back to the vertical (that is, back to balance). Riding with shorter stirrup leathers, combined with heels consciously absorbing the movement, can also help to bring more stability to the seat without having to use too much muscular strength. This brings the rider back to sitting in 'the deepest point of the saddle'. Alternating between different types of seats supports this process of finding balance.
- If a mismatched rider-horse combination has led to the problems, a temporary change of horse, or getting somebody else to ride the horse, could be helpful. On a horse that accepts the driving and regulating aids willingly, the rider will revert back to a correct seat more quickly.



Crooked seat/Collapsing in the hip.

4.3.2 Crooked Seat ('Collapsed Hip')

Another problem in the rider's seat is a crooked seat, which often sets in unbeknown to the rider. When viewed from the front or the back, the rider does not sit in the centre of the saddle. Their pelvis is shifted to the right or to the left, and the hip or waist 'collapses'. This leads to an uneven, incorrect and constantly one-sided placement of the rider's weight. The crooked seat cannot easily be corrected by the rider themselves because this position is often not even noticed by the rider. Here a trainer's help is needed to recognise the seat mistake and, if possible, the causes for it.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

- Incorrect understanding of the use of the seat and sideways-driving aids (collapsed hip/waist).

- Crookedness of the horse, uneven acceptance of the leg aids.
- Incorrect position or shape of the saddle.
- Uneven length of stirrup leathers.
- Physical deformity of the rider's pelvis or spine (in this case, a medical practitioner should be consulted regarding the cause and the consequences for riding).

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

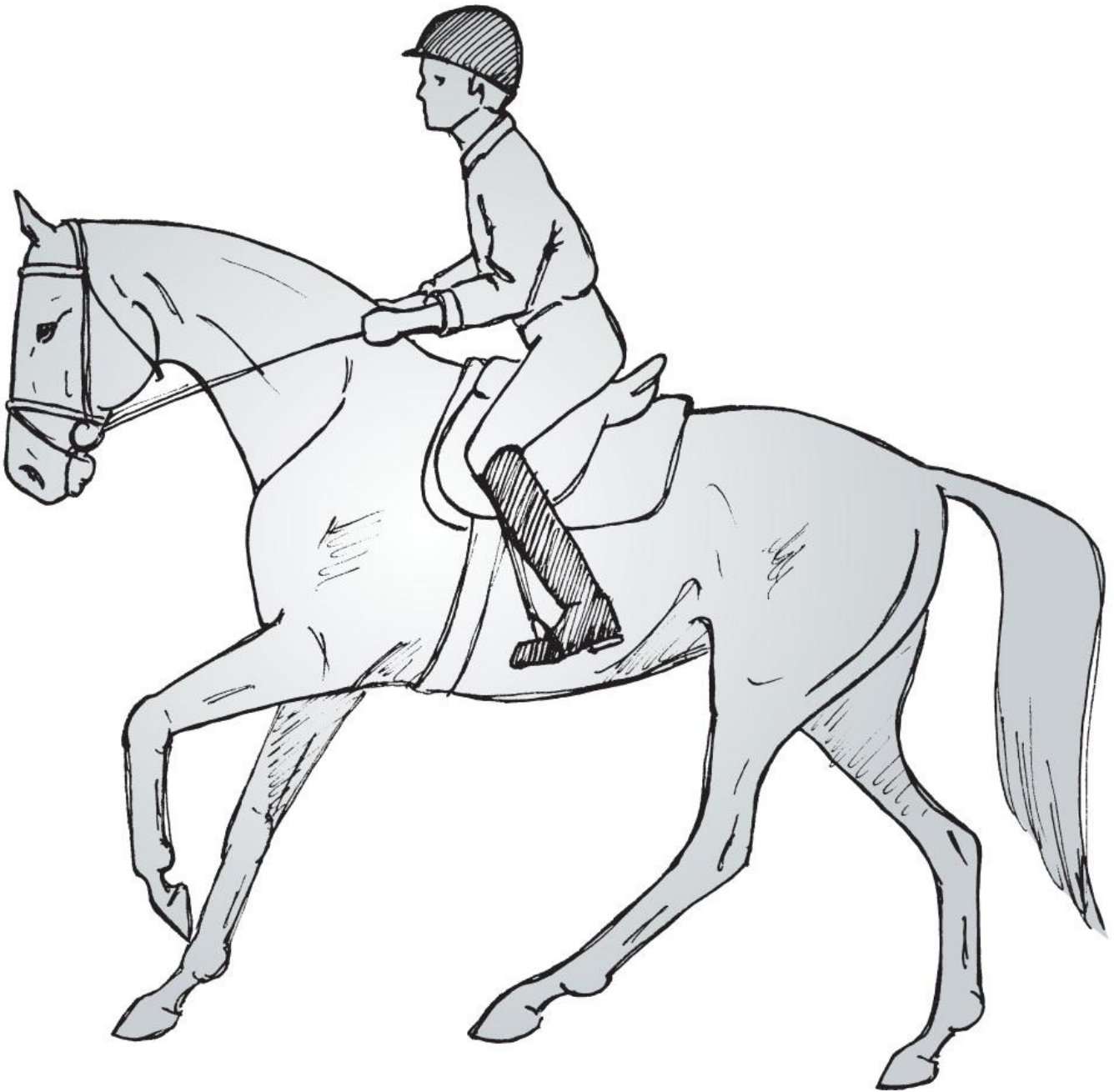
- The one-sided weight aids cannot be used appropriately, which also leads to the leg aids not having the desired impact. Often, the rider tries to compensate for these deficits with the use of the reins (for example, pushing the inside hand over the horse's withers), which only serves to further increase the crookedness in the posture.
- Uneven weight is constantly applied to the horse's back. This can lead to consequences ranging from an incorrect muscle development to potentially painful muscle tension in the horse's back.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

Particularly for this type of seat problem, gymnastic programmes, possibly also with physiotherapeutic support, can be helpful and, at times, necessary. Generally, comprehensive and consistent work on the seat problem should be undertaken to correct the crookedness.

According to the systematic training of the rider, and after medical conditions have been ruled out, work should be done on fundamental shortcomings (for example, balance and suppleness) before specific mistakes can be addressed. The rider needs to make an effort to become and want to become 'taller' from the toes to the head without 'overstretching', which can also lead to tension.

Receiving correct support from a trainer regarding one's seat is particularly important when riding turns (see [Chapter 4.2.1 Giving of Aids](#)).



Problems in the balance of a light seat. The rider is 'in front of the movement' here and has lost the secure basis (knee – lower leg – heel, see [Chapter 4.1.5 The Light Seat](#)).

4.3.3 Problems in the Light Seat

When riding in a light seat, balance problems can also arise. If the rider's upper body is inclined too far forwards, without the bottom being brought backwards at the same time and when, in addition, the lower legs slide back, the seat loses all of its stability. The rider starts to grip too tightly with the legs, or tries to find support with the hands so as not to fall completely forwards.

If the rider thus shifts their weight too far forwards, they will easily come 'IN FRONT' OF THE HORSE'S MOVEMENT – that is to say they no longer have the feeling of having the horse 'in front' of them. They cannot manage to ride the horse into the hand from behind.

If the rider only finds support in the saddle with the help of excessively big knee rolls, this incorrect, unbalanced seat will be reinforced. Balancing is therefore made more difficult, and sometimes even hindered.

The opposite phenomenon occurs if the rider cannot yet manage to go sufficiently with the forward movement of the horse in a light seat. In this case, the light seat cannot yet be maintained securely by the rider, but the rider needs to always sit back down entirely in the saddle. This instability in the seat greatly impedes the activity of the horse's back. The rider also does not get properly into the movement of the horse, but comes 'BEHIND THE MOVEMENT' and can hardly create a soft and steady connection on the reins.

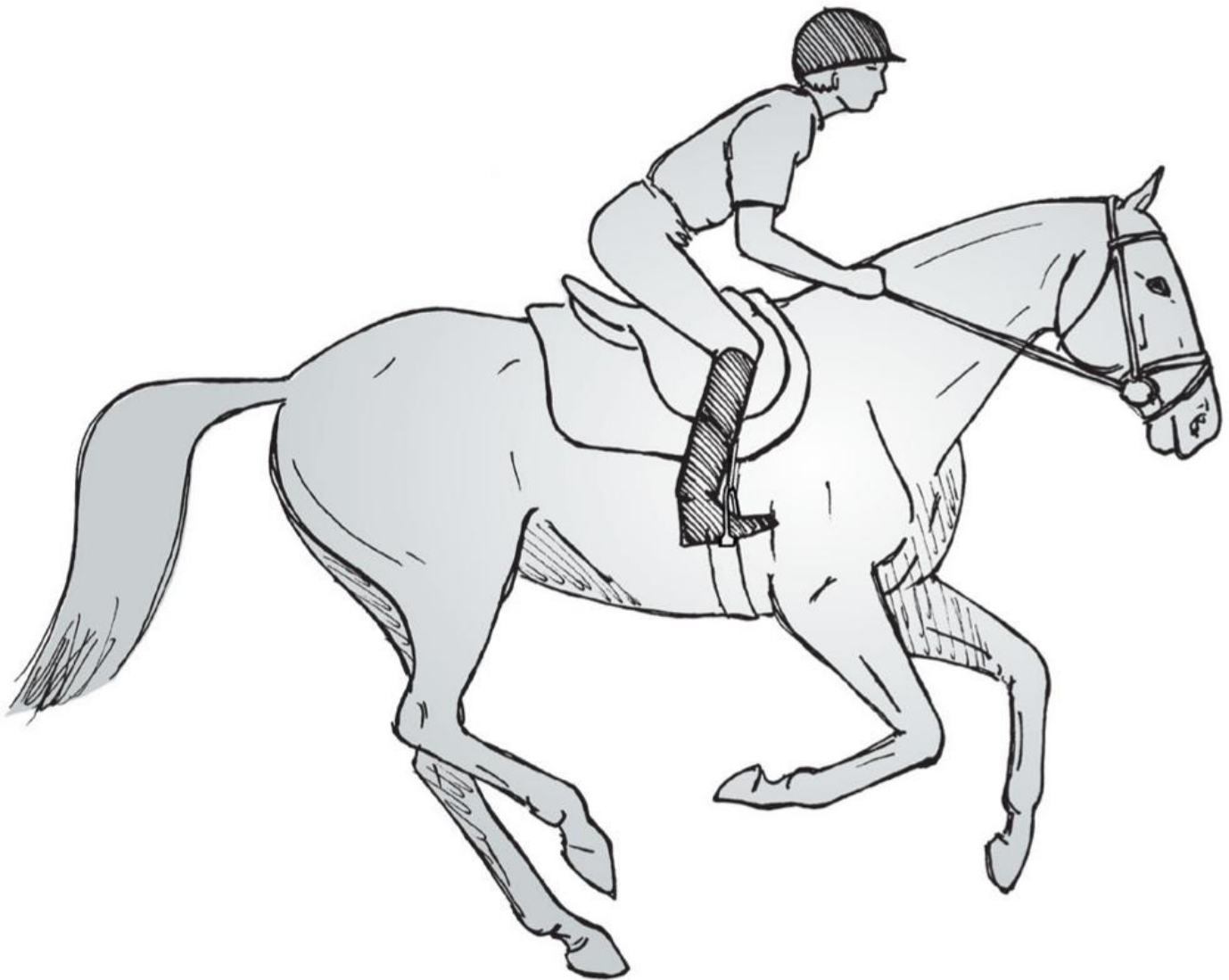
In general, the following exercises can be used to improve a rider's light seat:

- Frequently changing between the different seat forms.
- Frequently riding in the countryside, if possible also jumping small natural obstacles.
- Riding on uneven terrain.
- Riding uphill and downhill.
- Riding over small grids to improve the seat.

A proven method of improving balance for the seat is training in a jockey or racing seat.

■ JOCKEY SEAT FOR THE TRAINING OF BALANCE

In a JOCKEY SEAT the stirrup leathers are shortened by a few holes compared to the light seat so that the bottom can be lifted even further out of the saddle. A balanced seat with a deep upper body, the bottom pushed out backwards and vertical lower legs will sooner or later become natural. The rider's weight is absorbed more and more by the knees and the heels. A secure but not tightly gripping knee position and a lower leg at the girth ensure stability. To begin with, bridging the reins (see *illustration on page [115](#)*) can be used as support.

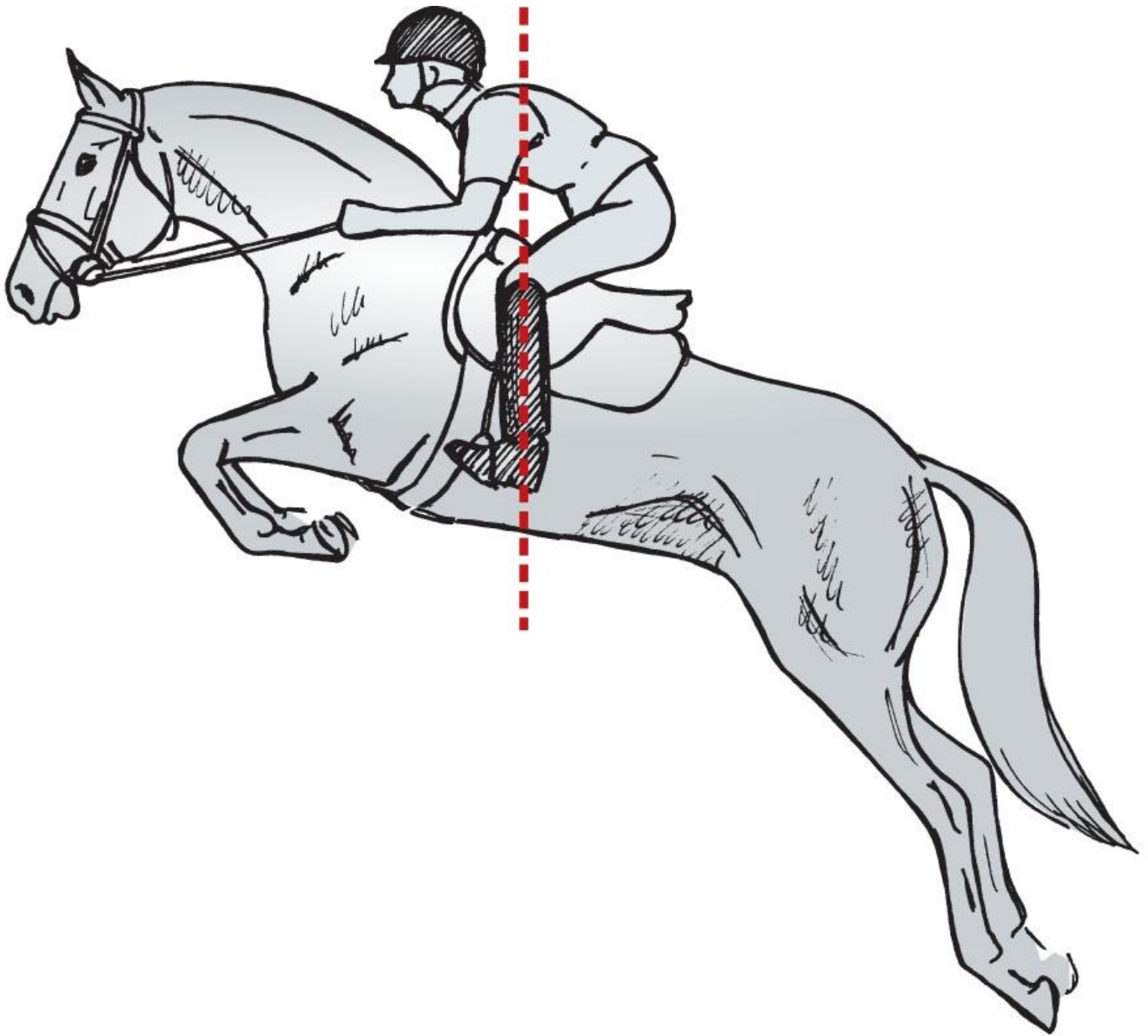


Racing seat.

4.3.3.1 Seat Problems when Jumping

The aforementioned SEAT PROBLEMS become increasingly more significant when RIDING OVER JUMPS.

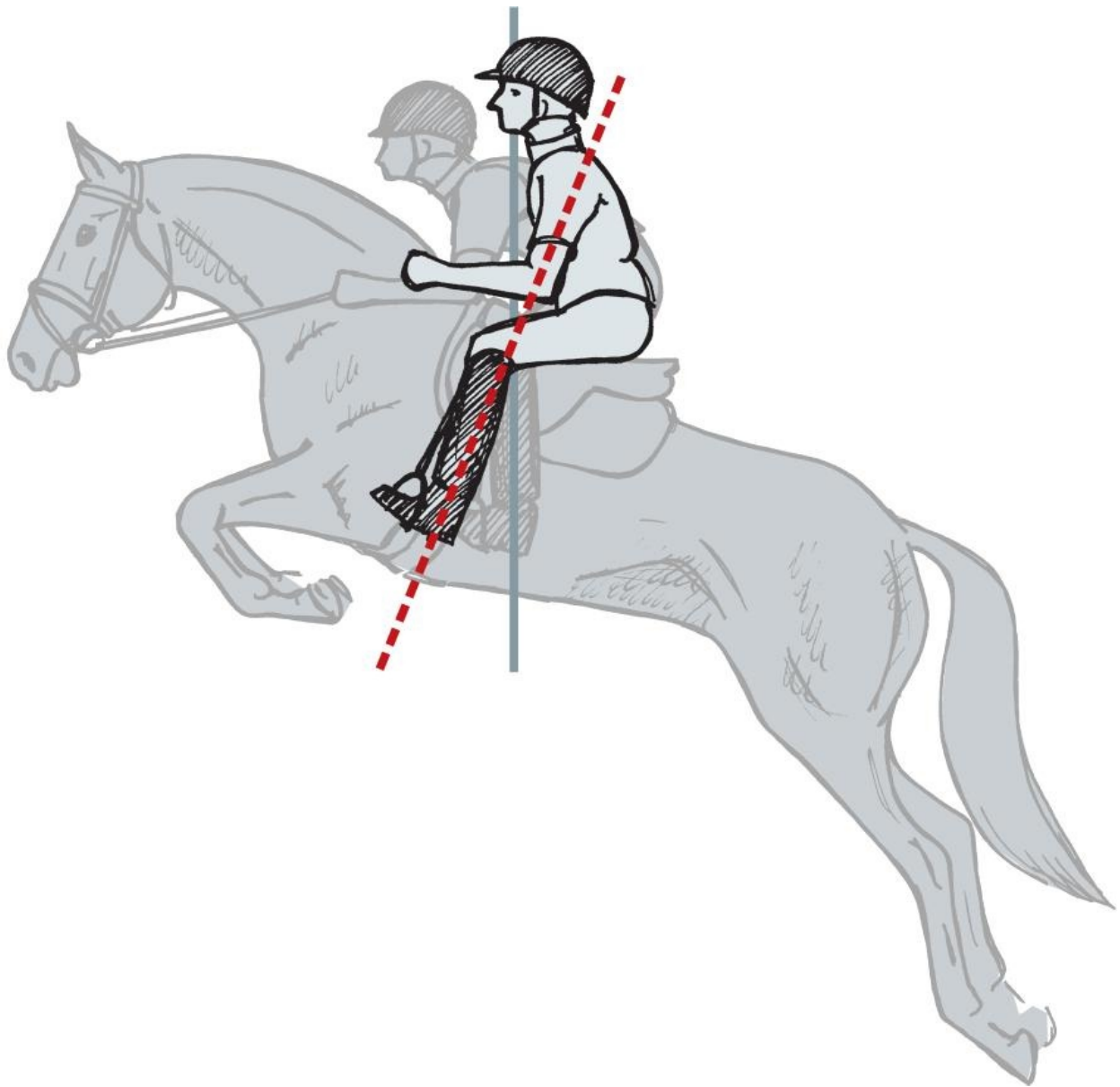
The most frequent causes are insufficient suppleness and an errant posture or shift in the centre of gravity. When jumping – and thus before, over and after the obstacle – the above problems tend to intensify.



Correct seat over a jump.

■ **'BEHIND THE MOVEMENT'**

The rider is unable to go with the horse's movement appropriately from a smooth, elastic foundation of a light seat with the upper body forwards and the hands deep. When riding over fences, the rider cannot suitably go with the forward movement of the horse (which is generally larger right at the moment of jumping than it is between fences) with their upper body.



'behind the movement'.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

- General reduced mobility of the rider.
- Not yet enough balance and properly established light seat or jumping seat.
- Non-rhythmical approach to fences.
- Sitting too heavily before the moment of the jump (owing to a misperception of the driving aids).
- Too long stirrup leathers, which do not allow for the required angle between the hips, knees and foot joints.
- Lack of practice.
- Lack of a feel for movement.
- Lack of fitness.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

If the suitable posture of the upper body to go with the horse's movement is

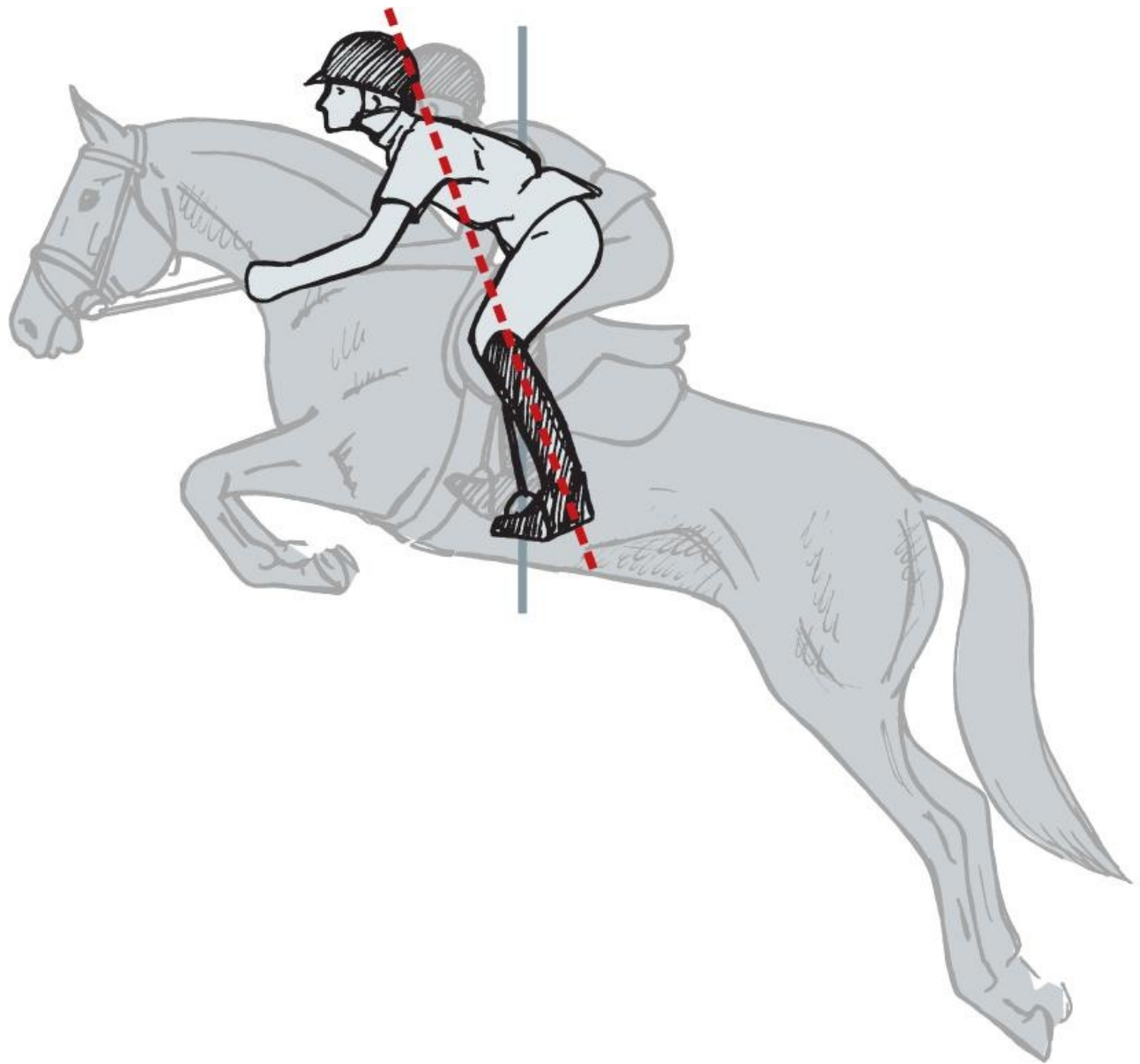
missing, and the rider does not have the required balance or coordination in a light seat, the rider will lose most of their influence on the horse. The horse is disturbed in its motions and a fluent, harmonious jump is rendered more difficult. This can also lead to the horse losing trust in the rider.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

- It may be wise for the rider to learn to keep the upper body forwards on the approach to a fence rather than just sitting erect and heavy in the saddle ([see Chapter 4.1.5.1 The Rider's Seat in Show-Jumping](#)).
- Changes of tempo in canter can be a good preparatory exercise:
 - Upper body forwards when increasing the tempo.
 - Upper body erect when reducing the tempo.
- Before jumping individual fences in canter (while still displaying a certain insecurity at the approach) is attempted, the rhythmical jumping of a grid can be a suitable introduction.
- Through riding over small hills, the procedure can be simulated more slowly, and the rider can learn and understand how they need to adjust and balance in the light seat.
- Jumping small cross-country obstacles is usually achieved more fluently and harmoniously than show-jumping fences. Therefore, these can be used to improve the seat.

■ 'IN FRONT OF THE MOVEMENT'

If the rider finds themselves 'in front of the movement', the upper body is taken too far forwards. The rider stands up before the horse has actually taken off. Many, sometimes even experienced riders, stand up too early and too far in order not to fall 'behind the movement' of the horse. The bottom does not remain close to the saddle, but rather detaches itself significantly from the horse.



Jumping seat 'in front of the movement'.

This seat mistake is often connected to a sideways collapsing in the hip and a concurrent downward-sideways glance by the rider, because they get very close to the crest of the horse with their face. In doing so, the rein connection is often let go of completely over the fence. As a result, the rider sits 'in front' of the horse, with their centre of gravity shifted too far forward. Thus, the rider puts increasing pressure on the horse's forehand and does not get the horse 'in front' of them. In many cases, this behaviour results from a seat that is too upright during the approach. In order not to come 'behind the movement' when taking off, the rider exaggeratedly rushes their upper body forwards.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

- Non-rhythmical approach to the fence.
- Exaggerated use of the driving aids when approaching the fence ('overriding').
- Reduced flexion in knees and ankles and thus lack of absorption of the horse's

- movement (knees not positioned deep enough).
- Sliding back of the lower legs.
- Unsuitable (too long) stirrup leathers.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

- The rider has no effective driving influence when coming 'in front of the movement'. They no longer have the horse 'in front' of them and, by diving down with the upper body and head, can therefore also lose overview and control.
- The horse loses balance and comes too close to the fence, that is to say too much of a forward-driving influence emerges. The horse cannot develop enough scope; the bascule is significantly compromised.
- The horse loses trust in the rider.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION (SEE ALSO CORRECTION FOR 'BEHIND THE MOVEMENT')

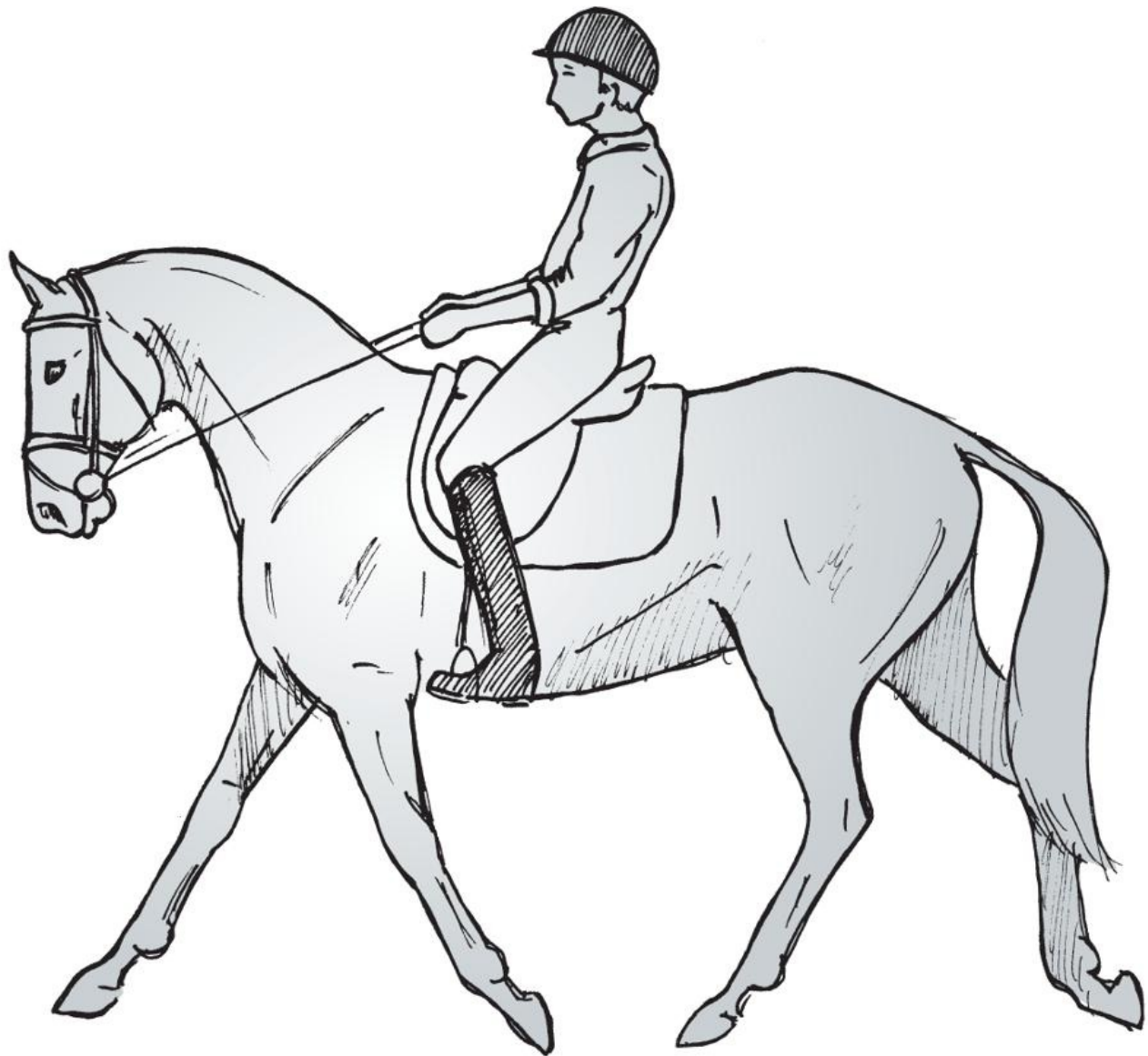
- Frequently changing between seat forms.
- Frequently riding in the countryside.
- Changing tempo in canter, and in doing so stabilising the seat.
- When jumping grids and individual fences, the rider should wait to be 'taken along' by the horse. The rider should not want to jump before the horse and should ride more with the lower legs rather than the upper body.

4.3.4 Further Mistakes Regarding Influence

Mistakes regarding influence do not only emerge in combination with seat mistakes. Fundamentally, the correct understanding of the aids and their interaction is lacking. All of the following mistakes more or less lead to a disturbance of the harmony of movement between horse and rider.

■ INCORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE DRIVING AIDS

An incorrect understanding of classical riding is often visible when a rider rides their horse 'from front to back' rather than 'from back to front' ([see Chapter 4.3 Problems in the Seat and Influence – Causes and Corrections](#)). The rider is mainly concerned with getting the horse 'on the bit' and rounding the neck to achieve a certain head-neck position. The restraining, 'backward-working' hand of the rider works in opposition to the forward movement and the horse's willingness to go. To make the horse go forwards despite this, the rider makes excessive use of their seat. Potentially, they even sit against the movement of the horse because they do not find a harmonious rhythm with the swinging movement of the horse's back.



Sitting heavily.

■ **'SITTING HEAVY'**

Often also 'LEANING BACKWARDS WITH THE UPPER BODY BEHIND THE VERTICAL', does not lead to an improved driving effect of the rider's aids, but rather the opposite. The horse receives too much pressure on the back (and also this pressure is applied too far back). The back thus becomes tense, swings less and the horse loses its keenness to go forward.

■ **STIFFNESS OR HOLDING ON IN THE CORE**

This error, frequently combined with 'sitting too heavy', can occur through the misleading image of wanting to 'THRUST THE HORSE FORWARDS'. In doing so, certain abdominal and back muscles tense up and can no longer relax. The rider can no longer move elastically with the horse's movement. This has a negative impact on the activity of the horse's back and, therefore, does not achieve the desired effect of forward movement. Holding on in the core often also has as its cause a too strong and continuous gripping of the upper legs and knees. In particular, the inner

thigh muscles must be allowed to relax at regular intervals so that the rider can sit deep and elastically.

■ EXAGGERATED MOVEMENT OF THE CORE

Exaggerated movement of the core, particularly in cases of a lack of basic body tension, is no longer harmonious with the movement of the horse. Whenever this is the case, the probability of the rider having a positive influence with their weight aids is reduced significantly. It can even lead to a negative, deadening effect.

■ EXAGGERATED LEG USE

Exaggerated leg use (also possibly at the wrong moment) leads to a defensive reaction by the horse, rather than motivation. Inappropriate, repeated use of the spurs can further increase the problem and also desensitise the horse, leading to the horse to become 'dead' to the finer aids.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

- Above all, the incorrect understanding of the driving aids!
- Lack of suppleness of the horse.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

- Regular riding lessons, in which seat and aids are competently taught, can be complemented with theoretical sessions to improve the understanding necessary for an appropriate and horse-friendly use of the aids.
- If necessary, the trainer may assist with the sensitisation of the horse to once more teach the rider the feel for fine aids.
- If necessary, change horses now and again to develop a new feel for the seat.
- Horses of riders with these problems should be frequently ridden by experienced, sensitive riders, who can then discuss the appropriate giving of aids for that specific horse.

SEAT AND AID MISTAKES CAN ALSO HAVE FURTHER CAUSES:

- Too little body tension combined with too little body awareness.
- A lack of fitness (particularly stamina, strength, mobility).
- A lack of coordination (feel for movement, balance and rhythm).
- A saddle that is unsuitable for the rider or badly fitting for the horse.

A seat mistake or a mistake in influence rarely arises all by itself. Mostly one error causes another one and also leads to negative effects and interactions respectively.

4.3.5 Behaviour Patterns That Negatively Affect the Suppleness of the Rider

- If seat and thigh muscles are excessively tensed, the rider will push themselves out of the deepest point of the saddle. By doing so, they no longer sit 'in the horse' but rather 'above the horse', and accordingly can no longer influence the

horse as required. Furthermore, they are no longer able to move elastically in the core.

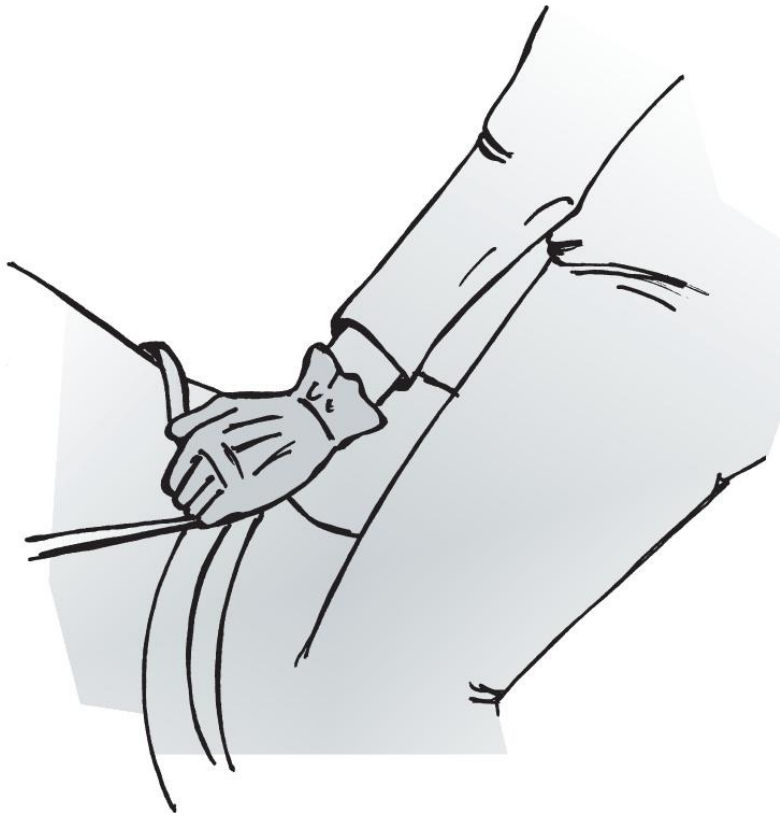
- Drawn up knees, as well as thighs placed too far back and overstretched, impede the mobility of the pelvis. The centre of the rider's movement is thus blocked.
- A chin that is thrust out or tucked in tightly impedes the elasticity of the upper body (thoracic spine) and thus also the necessary movement of the core.
- Tucking the elbows into the body leads to a lifting of the shoulders, as well as a stiff hand posture and, therefore, to an inelastic holding of the reins. It is generally important not to seek consciously to keep the hands quiet and 'in position', but rather to remain mobile in the elbows and wrists to create an elastic connection with the horse's mouth.
- Toes forcefully turned inward or excessively turned outward prevent the pelvis from swinging harmoniously with the horse.
- Taking up the stirrups under the tips of the toes (they should be under the balls of the feet instead), or extremely deep heels, both block the ankle joints. This will have an extremely negative effect on the elasticity of the entire seat.
- In principle, none of the rider's joints should ever be in an extreme position (bent to the maximum or stretched to the maximum). From a middle position, a joint can move in any possible direction, but when it is in an extremity of its movement range, it becomes immobile.
- Pressure to perform, excitement and fear increase the breathing (and heart frequency) and can lead to holding the breath or exhaling on exertion. Wrong breathing leads to muscular cramps. This tension will then be transferred over to the horse. A sensitive approach from the trainer, parents and others, as well as an appropriate setting of goals, all contribute to relaxation.

4.3.6 Problems with the Hand Position and Holding of the Reins

Positioning the hands or holding the reins in a way that deviates from the desired form may not necessarily imply poor rein aids, but it definitely makes riding with sensitive hands more difficult.

■ HANDS PUSHED DOWN WITH REINS TOO SHORT

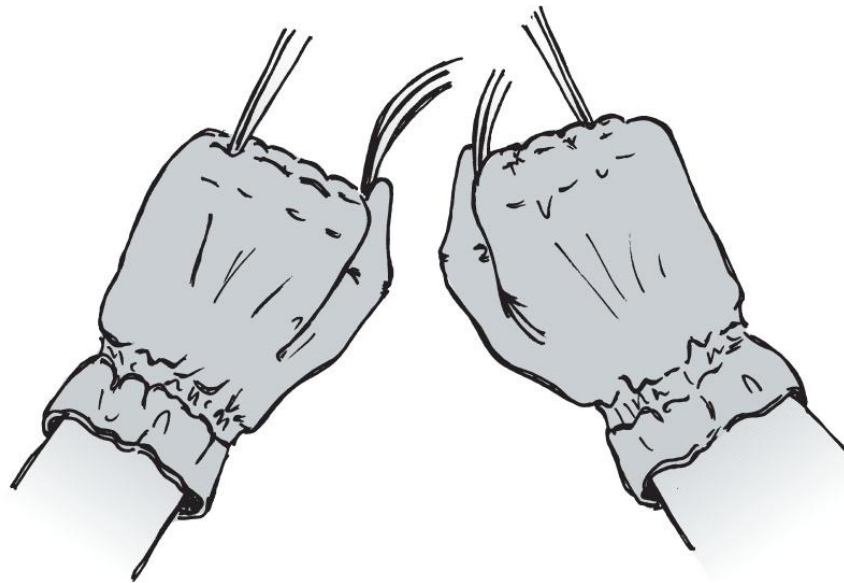
If the reins are clearly too short, the rider can impede the horse in its movement. The rider is not able to sit and ride forwards correctly, because they cannot find balance with their upper body. This is particularly problematical with a PUSHED DOWN HAND – a serious and widespread problem. Through this, the rider shifts their weight even more forward, and finds it difficult to get the horse 'in front' of them. The rein-hand-elbow line is also clearly broken, rendering the impact of the bit on the horse's mouth less elastic. The rider's hands block the forward movement of the horse and the balance of the seat is lost.



Hand pushed down.

■ REINS TOO LONG

The consequences of having the REINS TOO LONG are even more serious. Often, this means that the rider's upper body remains too far backward. The rider no longer moves harmoniously with the horse. The energy and power from the horse's hindquarters cannot be transformed into harmonious forward movement. This leads to further difficulties in the establishment of a soft, elastic connection between the rider's hands and the horse's mouth ('flapping rein'). If the rider's elbows come too far back (possibly even behind the upper body), this is a certain sign that the reins are too long.



Fists facing downwards and stiff wrists.

■ STIFF WRISTS

A STIFF WRIST severely impedes the even, elastic connection to the horse's mouth, as the mobility of the wrists is key to the connection remaining elastic.

■ FISTS FACING DOWNWARDS

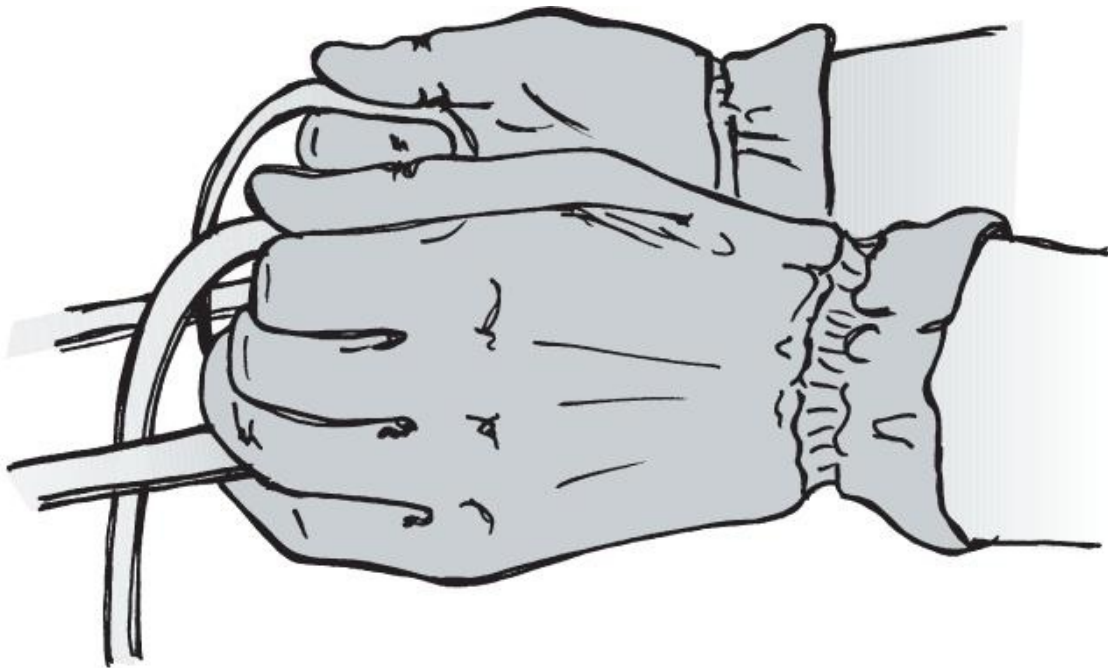
FISTS FACING DOWNWARDS (not held upright) are a common cause of immobile wrists. The rider is then forced to give 'asking' rein aids using the whole arm. Employing finely measured giving, retaining and 'asking' rein aids is hardly possible. This very often also has an impact on the entire posture. The rider does not sit in a naturally erect position, but rather with rounded shoulders.

■ INCORRECT THUMB POSITION

If the thumbs are not SLIGHTLY ANGLED (ROOF-LIKE) on top of the fists holding the reins, but rather flat against the hand, this limits the mobility of the wrists significantly.

■ DISTURBING WHIP

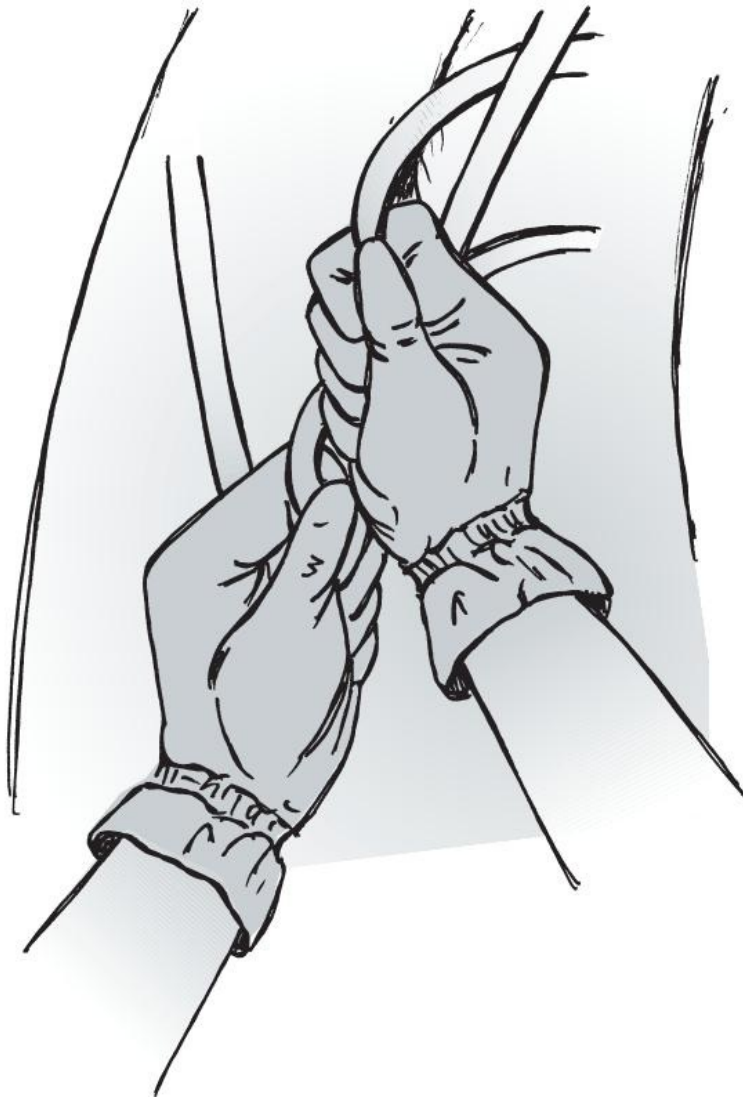
The WHIP CAN BECOME A DISTURBING FACTOR for the hand position; in particular, when the way the whip is held is incorrect (if, for example it runs almost horizontally to the horse's croup). This way of holding the whip stiffens the wrist because the hand is pushed down. Using the whip on the horse's flank or croup also has an irritating effect and can lead to negative reactions. With the correct hand position, the whip is used directly behind the rider's leg. To maintain the flexibility of the hand position, the rider should carry the whip only temporarily and selectively, and change it from one hand to the other ([see Chapter 4.2.2 Use of Additional Aids](#)).



Open fists.

■ OPEN FISTS

An OPEN FIST, in which the fist does not close properly around the reins, leads to the reins being constantly extended, the rider always having to take the hands further back and thus frequently having to shorten the reins.



Inner hand crossing over the crest.

■ CROSSING THE WITHERS WITH THE HAND

CROSSING THE WITHERS WITH THE HAND leads to a changed and incorrect position of the bit in the horse's mouth. Through this mistake, the horse inevitably becomes 'short' in the neck and a tilting of the poll can be the consequence. An unconscious shift in the rider's weight might be another incorrect consequence with a negative impact; many riders find it difficult to keep using the inside leg as a driving aid.

■ RESTLESS HANDS

RESTLESS HANDS WORKING AGAINST THE HORSE or even the so-called CHAINED HANDS (permanently and exaggeratedly pulling the horse's head from side to side) completely contradict the fundamentals of classical riding.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

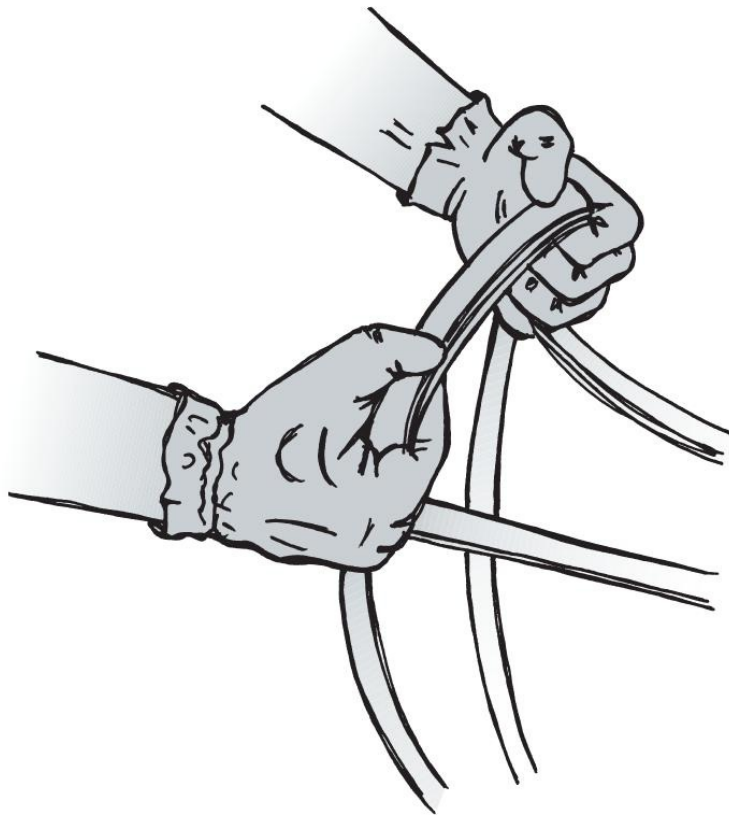
The reasons for these behaviours must be discussed with the rider and then be fully analysed. If necessary, side reins can be used temporarily; alternatively, the horse can be ridden by a professional. Regular practical and theoretical classes

may also rectify the problem.

■ BRIDGING THE REINS TO IMPROVE HOLDING THE REINS

To improve the way the reins are held, and in situations including, for example, riding downhill or in a light seat for long periods, the rider can bridge the reins for assistance as this supports the maintenance of their balance.

To do this, the end of the rein that comes out of the left hand is fed downwards between the thumb and the index finger through the entire right fist so that a 15–20cm long section remains between the left and the right hands of the rider. This section is placed in front of the withers over the horse's neck and is held securely with both thumbs to the sides of the crest. With the help of this bridge, the rider can maintain an even contact with the horse's mouth since the range of movement of the hands is significantly reduced. When practising the light seat, it can also be used as a support for the rider to temporarily rest their hands on the crest.



Bridging the reins.

Generally, mistakes in the way the hands are carried or the reins are held are not simply resolved by a correction from a trainer.

A hand position which a rider has adopted in daily riding can only be changed if the rider re-establishes their entire seat and feel for the hand/arm positions. That way, they will have the opportunity to gain a new feel for the seat and body position, and a changed hand position or rein carriage will be more easily achieved.

Exercises for establishing an independent, balanced seat – if necessary also on the lunge – are often the key to a successful training.

1. The shape of a male pelvis is much different from a female one, and this can have an impact on what saddle the rider feels more comfortable in. The male pelvis is narrower than the female one, placing the male ischial tuberosities closer together than the female ones.
2. Illustration by Jeanne Kloepper, taken from von Dietze, Susanne and Isabelle von Neumann-Cosel, *Rücksicht auf den Reiterrücken*, **FN**verlag, Warendorf 2009. (English edition entitled *Rider & Horse Back to Back: Establishing a Mobile, Stable Core in the Saddle*, Trafalgar Square Books, North Pomfret, Vernon, 2011.)
3. In competitive dressage tests, the audible use of the voice is not permitted.

CHAPTER 5

Systematic Structure of Lessons

A lesson or training session in riding should, just as in all other types of sport, have a reasonable, well-planned, and logical structure. This is not only important for health reasons for both horse and rider, but also to ensure successful learning and training outcomes.

Every training session should be divided into three sections:

- 1. the warming-up/loosening phase**
- 2. the work phase**
- 3. the relaxation phase**

This structure applies to every training session, regardless of the purpose for which the horse is being ridden.

It is also to be regarded independently of the desired objectives. The structure must, however, be orientated towards the training fundamentals of the rider ([see Chapter 4 Seat and Influence of the Rider](#)) and those of the horse ([see Chapter 7.4 Basic Training of the Young Horses under the Rider](#)).

5.1 The Warming-Up/Loosening Phase

Integral to this phase is riding at a walk for at least 15 minutes! If a horse is brought directly from the stable to the arena and has not been in the paddock or field beforehand, it is particularly important that the fluids in the joints are distributed evenly and that they can develop their natural gliding and lubricating capacity. The joints only reach their maximum elasticity after some period of movement, through which the cartilage has taken on more joint fluids. It is best to ride in walk on a loose or long rein. The muscles must also be warmed up gradually.

By adhering to this first part of the warming-up phase, an important contribution is made to avoiding injuries and tension. Warming up is equally important when lungeing, loose-jumping or when letting the horse run loose!

The loosening phase is also significant for the horse's mind. The horse can adapt to

the rider, perceive its surroundings without excitement and get used to them.

Only a horse that is relatively relaxed mentally and physically can reach optimum motivation and perform to its full ability. Therefore, achieving suppleness and relaxation are the fundamental goals of the loosening phase.

The suppling work also serves to similarly benefit the rider, particularly after an exhausting work day, or after having been sitting down for a long time. The rider should already have warmed themselves up before mounting by doing some warm-up or gymnastic exercises. They can also – if the horse is used to it – integrate some gymnastic exercises on horseback into the loosening phase when riding in walk. That way, the rider's mobility, balance and coordination are improved. By riding in walk in this phase, the rider can gradually feel their way into the horse's movement. Prior to this, the rider must have given their full, undivided attention to the horse throughout grooming and preparation. This helps to get attuned to the schooling session and is necessary for a harmonious collaboration between horse and rider. It helps the horse and the rider to find an inner relaxation.

After riding in walk, the subsequent suppling work commences. There are many different suppling exercises. With more and more experience, the rider can employ these in different ways and in a different order with each individual horse. To begin with, however, it is important to understand the systematic structure of lessons.

■ SUPPLING WORK AND SUPPLING EXERCISES

While riding in walk, the first exercises can be carried out, depending on the level of training of the horse and the rider. For example:

- Leg-yielding (initially only for a few steps each time).
- Making a transition down to halt and proceeding in a walk again.

It is important that the horse remains calm and relaxed during these exercises.

After that, the suppling trot work begins with rising trot. The horse should move actively forward, without rushing. With a tempo suited to the individual (in which the individual horse feels at ease), an even breathing will develop more easily and relaxation is achieved sooner. To help feel the right tempo, it is a good idea to vary the tempo slightly now and again. Yet, the even two-beat rhythm of the trot must be maintained at all times.

The horse should work with a long enough outline of the neck, an even connection from the rider's hand to the horse's mouth (contact), and should trot rhythmically on long lines (circles, long side, large serpentines) to achieve suppleness. Any loss of rhythm, for example by giving rein aids which have a 'backward' effect, should be

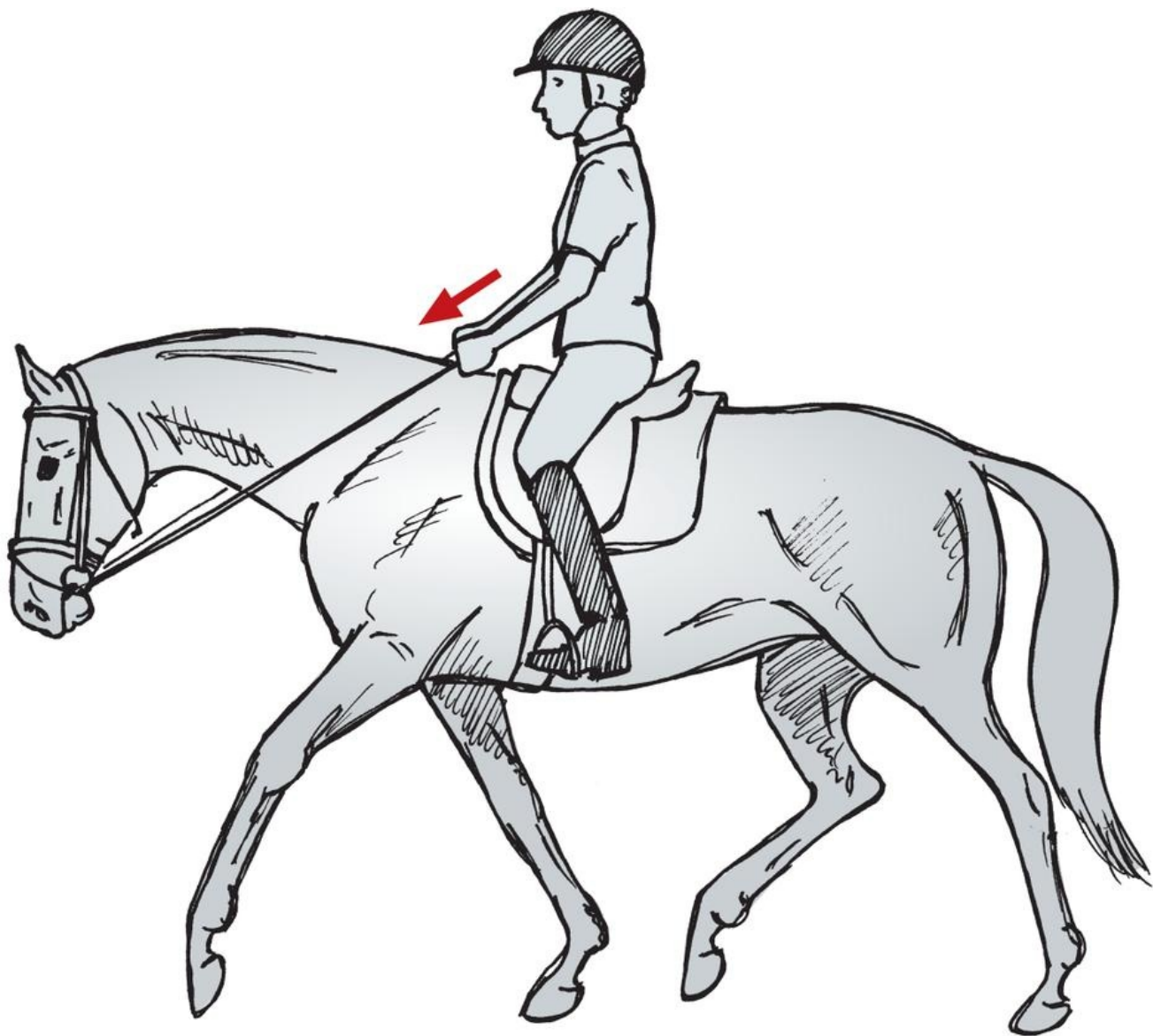
avoided.

The head-neck position of the horse is the result of a correct and sensitive process of coordination between the driving and regulating aids of the rider. This should be gradually developed over the course of the loosening phase.

A frequent change of rein supports the gymnastic effect on both sides of the body on both reins. With some horses, it can prove useful at this point to include some walk-trot transitions in the suppling trot work. Making a transition down to walk ensures calmness and control. Moving off in trot again encourages the engagement of the horse and the reaction to the driving aids of the rider. Other horses relax better in the canter, sometimes even on a relaxing hack out in the countryside. Frequently changing between trot and canter relaxes the horse's back particularly well. That way, the rider will be better able to feel their way into the horse's movement. The horse, in turn, will react more sensitively and alertly to the rider's aids.

Depending on the level of training of the rider and the horse, the following exercises lend themselves to the loosening phase ([see Chapter 6 Basic Exercises](#)):

- Trot work on long, curved lines in rising trot.
- Canter work on large, curved lines, potentially in a light seat.
- Simple transitions/frequent changes of gait:
 - Transitions walk-trot, trot-walk.
 - Transitions trot-canter, canter-trot.
- Leg-yielding, turn on the forehand.
- Changing rein from circle to circle.
- One-loop serpentine¹ on the long sides and three- or four-loop serpentine through the arena.
- Gradually lengthening and then again shortening trot steps and canter strides.



Letting the reins be chewed out of the hand. The horse stretches confidently forwards-downwards into the rider's hand. The stretching should at least extend to the horse's mouth being around the level of the point of the shoulder.

LETTING THE HORSE CHEW THE REINS OUT OF THE HAND is often performed between different exercises during the loosening phase. This constantly examines and improves the activity of the horse's back and its willingness to stretch forwards and down. Particularly at the end of the warm-up, this exercise can be used to assess whether the horse has reached sufficient readiness to stretch in all three gaits. If the horse stretches trustfully forwards-downwards towards the rider's hand, without rushing, the rider can then presume that the horse is heading in the right direction in terms of suppleness ([see Chapter 6.2.4 Letting the Horse Chew the Reins out of the Hand/Giving and Retaking the Reins](#)).

The duration of the loosening phase depends on each individual horse and the skill of the rider. As a general rule, a horse should require around 30 minutes to reach suppleness, including the 15 minutes of walk. Other possibilities, for example lungeing or suppling work in the countryside, can be used as part of the loosening

phase. At the end of this phase, cavalletti and small gymnastic jumps can also be included to perfect suppleness. This is a particularly good way of stimulating the activity of the horse's back.

Through a well-devised loosening phase, nervous horses will generally become calmer, while horses with less forward drive become more active.

The loosening phase must never lead to the horse tiring. Correct, systematically performed suppling exercises increase the motivation, performance ability and mental happiness of the horse. Horses that are still in poor condition will be suited by a less intensive warming-up phase, including more walk sets. The more efficiently the horse's suppleness is obtained in the loosening phase, the more time, stamina and energy remain for the work phase of the schooling session. Experience and instructions from a trainer are required to determine how the three phases can be suitably divided.

5.2 The Work Phase

In the work phase, further goals of training can be worked on, including:

- Repeating familiar exercises and movements.
- Improving the execution of these exercises and movements.
- Refining the aids necessary for this execution, and their acceptance.
- Preparing for or introducing new exercises and movements.
- Systematically set up series of exercises: all exercises and movements must be prepared and developed step by step.

EXAMPLE:

Leg-yielding from the track to the quarter line and back to the track is initially introduced and practised by leg-yielding along the wall with a very minor degree of flexion. Afterwards, leg-yielding from the centre or quarter² line towards the track is added. Subsequently, the leg-yielding is practised from the inside track to the quarter or centre line. To begin with, only a few steps are asked for, mainly forwards and only slightly sideways, with the fore and hind legs crossing very little. If this can be carried out successfully, the leg-yielding from the track to the inside is followed by riding one horse's length straight before proceeding to leg-yield back to the track.

- Examining the performance level, for example by riding a dressage test, a jumping course or by cross-country exercises.

The following methodical procedures must always be regarded as principles:

- **'From easy to difficult'**

- **'From familiar to unfamiliar'**
- **'From simple to complex'**
- **'From slow and quiet to lively and energetic'**

With young horses, or possibly with horses in need of correction, the work phase will be very short and similar to the loosening phase, predominantly including suppling exercises.

A constant level of intensive work cannot be kept up throughout the entire work phase. A responsible rider and trainer will regularly include suppling exercises throughout the work phase to allow any possibly appearing tension to be removed again. Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand is a good exercise for this.

To preserve the energy and the concentration levels of both horse and rider, short BREAKS FOR RELAXATION must always be included.

During the entire schooling session, walk must be ridden repeatedly to reward the horse for the previous work phase and build up the concentration for the next one. The walk should be ridden on a long or, when possible, loose rein. The rider needs to pay attention that the horse is walking in a secure rhythm so that it can relax mentally again.

When the reins are picked up again after the walk break, this must be done carefully to ensure that the horse's rhythm is maintained.

5.3 The Relaxation Phase

Every schooling session ends with an active recovery and relaxation phase. During this, a positive finish to the schooling session must be achieved.

The next schooling session will start as well as the previous session has ended.

This active relaxation phase is characterised by the horse remaining in movement during this phase. Only at the very end is the horse ridden in walk. At first, the horse continues to be worked in trot and canter. It is recommended to ride on large lines with frequent changes of rein, or to ride in the countryside; however demanding exercises are no longer asked of the horse. Rising trot or canter in a light seat are also recommended.

Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand in all three gaits will show whether the horse is suppled, or if tension has built up during the work phase.

At the end of the session, the horse should make a lively transition to a relaxed,

ground-covering medium walk. Happiness and relaxation should be recognisable according to the known characteristics of suppleness ([see Chapter 7.6.3 Significance of Suppleness](#)), such as snorting.

The horse should be physically, but also mentally, completely relaxed before being taken back to the stable.

This helps to prevent the horse from sweating further after the training.

The rider can increase the value of the schooling session for themselves by going through the session in their mind afterwards and writing down any realisations or points for improvement. This is also a good basis for a feedback discussion with a trainer.

A good and conscientious follow-up is the first step towards a systematically correct preparation for the next schooling session!

A training journal can help to reconstruct the individual training steps over a long period and to systematically plan further training. Theoretical foundations are thus expanded and consolidated.

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- [1.](#) In the UK, the figures referred to here would be termed 'shallow loops'. See page [154](#), Chapter 6 for a further footnote explaining different terminology relating to these figures.
 - [2.](#) Quarter line: line between the track and the centre line (5m away from each of those).

CHAPTER 6

Basic Exercises

A wide variety of basic exercises are at the rider's disposal for riding and gymnasticising the horse in flatwork/dressage, in group riding as well as in jumping and on hacks. These will be learnt step by step over the course of the rider's equestrian training.

6.1 Riding the Gaits

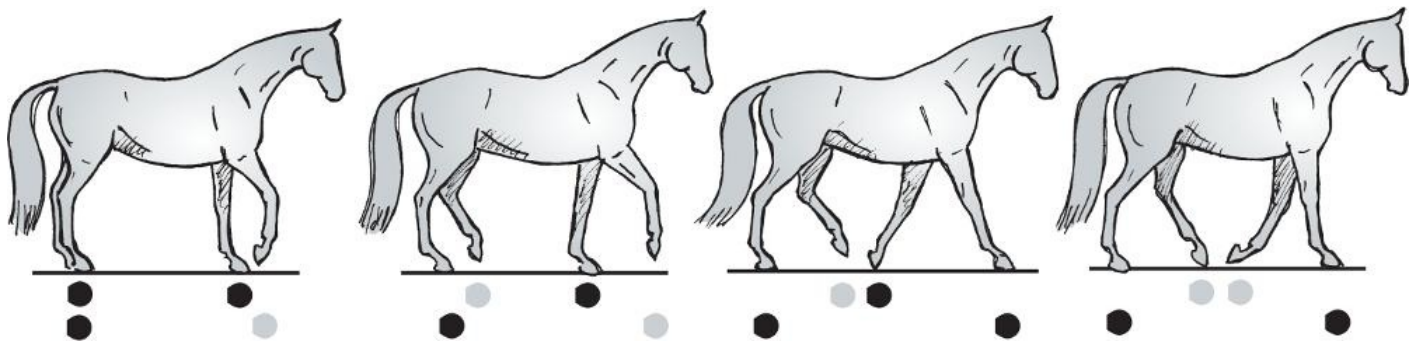
The precise sequence of footfalls of the horse in all three gaits is something that every rider and trainer should know. Only with this knowledge, will they be able to have any influence on the horse's movements when needed.

6.1.1 The Basic Gaits of the Horse

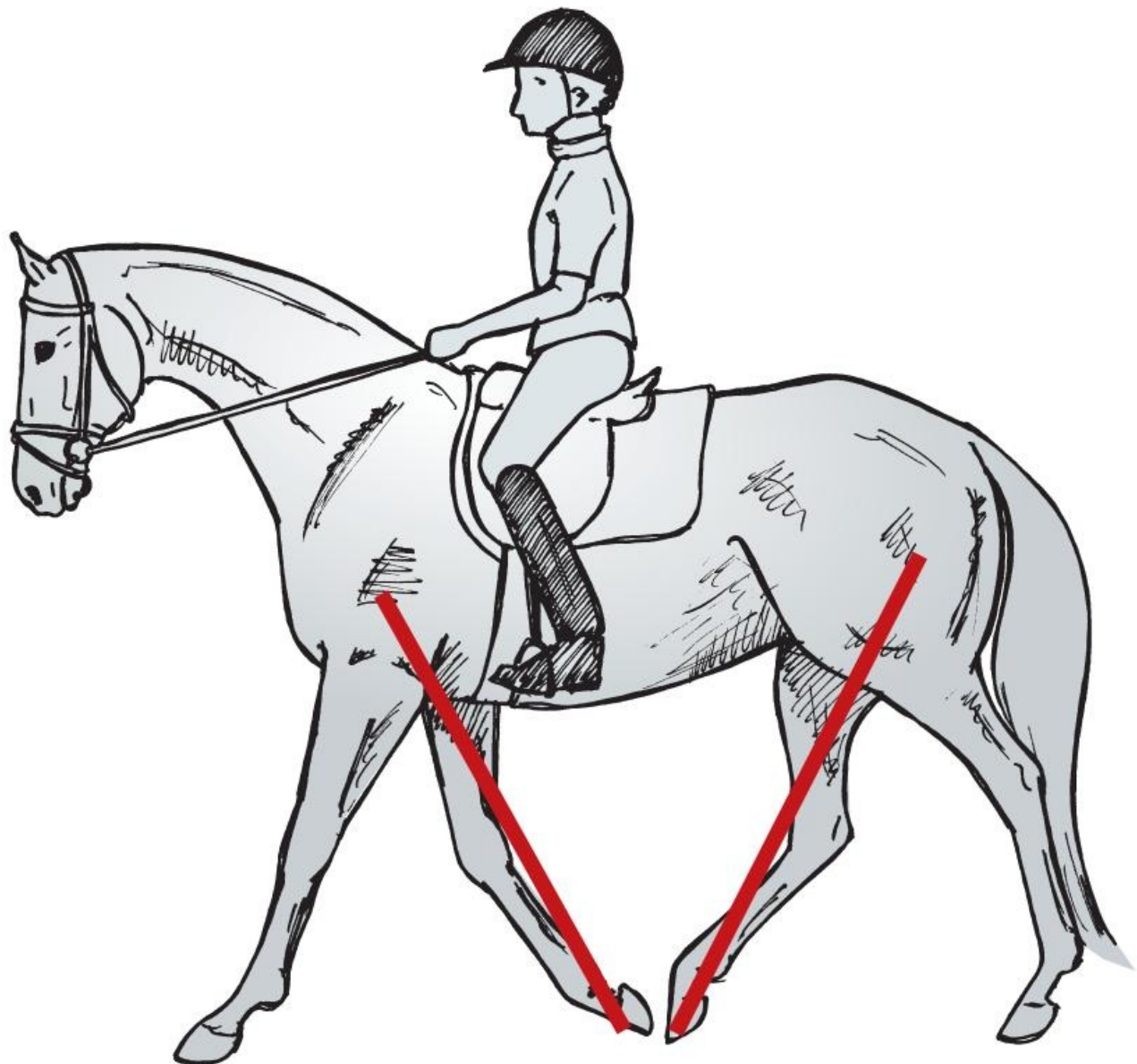
The basic gaits of a horse are walk, trot and canter¹. These three gaits are known as the BASIC GAITS as they are the ones with which nature endowed the horse. They each have a clearly distinctive sequence of footfalls.

Furthermore, there are different variations within each of the horse's basic gaits. These are differentiated by the degree of impulsion, the activity, as well as the ground cover and collection (collection being the increased capacity for the horse to take weight on the hindquarters, with the hind legs coming increasingly under the horse's centre of gravity, and to balance). This determines the length of the steps or strides of the horse.

A fundamental goal of correct training of the horse is maintaining and supporting the natural movement. Therefore, the rhythm and the regularity of the three gaits must be given particular value. Each step and stride should be of equal length and equal duration.



Footfalls in walk.



Regular walk with a clearly visible 'V' in this phase.

6.1.1.1 Walk

The walk is a marching movement in a four-beat rhythm. It consists of a sequence of steps one after the other. The forward movement takes place in eight different phases, in which a three-leg support (when only one leg is off the ground) alternates with a two-leg support (two legs are off the ground). The sequence of

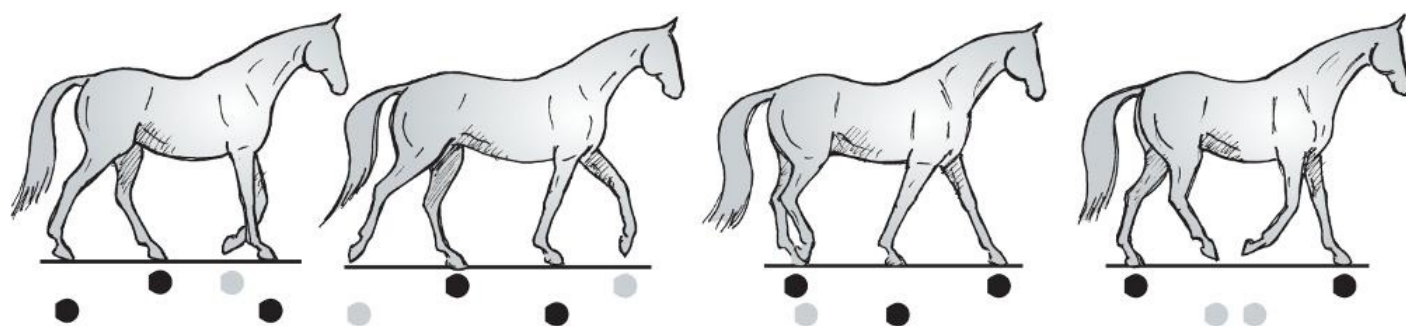
footfalls alternates between a diagonal and then an (equi-)lateral sequence; this means, for example that the right fore is followed diagonally by the left hind, followed by the (same side) left fore, followed diagonally by the right hind. Since at least two legs are always on the ground, there is no moment of suspension as in trot and canter.

The easiest way to check an even four-beat rhythm is on a hard surface, where it is clearly audible. An optical aid can be to look at the foreleg and hind leg on the same side, which should on no account look parallel, but form a 'V' shape for a brief moment. That means that the hind foot almost touches the forefoot on the same side when moving forward.

Basic criterion for all walk variants is, alongside a clear four-beat rhythm, a relaxed marching movement (the movement runs through the entire body – a forwards-downwards 'nodding' movement of the head). At the same time, the activity is to be maintained. In addition, the free movement of the shoulders and the ground cover with the hind legs setting down ahead of the tracks left by the forelegs (overtracking), dependent on the variation within the gait, are important.

■ GAIT VARIANTS² IN WALK

These are medium, extended and collected walk. Only medium walk is ridden in basic training. The extended and, in particular, the collected walk belong to the more difficult exercises that are required only in advanced dressage training (see *Advanced Techniques of Dressage* by the German Equestrian Federation).



MEDIUM WALK

The medium walk is the horses' natural walk. The hind feet reach in front of the prints left by the forefeet. When the horse walks energetically forwards, a natural nodding motion of the neck will emerge.

EXTENDED WALK

The steps in an extended walk are even longer and cover more ground than in medium walk. The possible length of the steps is, however, dependent on the horse's natural predisposition and conformation. An even greater overtrack should

be clearly recognisable in the extended walk, as well as an increased forward swinging of the forelegs out of the shoulders.

COLLECTED WALK

The hind feet do not reach over the prints left by the forefeet. In a way similar to the extended walk, the ground cover depends on the horse's natural predisposition and conformation. In accordance with an increased degree of collection ([see Chapter 7.6.7 Development of Collection](#)), the horse is more raised in front, the head and neck are elevated more and the nodding movement is no longer recognisable. The activity is maintained.

POSSIBLE MISTAKES

- *Disturbances – temporal (equal duration of steps)*

If the legs on the same side are moved forwards and set down at the same time (or close to the same time), this will lead to a faulty gait, the so-called pace (or amble); the horse is 'pacing'. Causes for pacing are, alongside a lack of suppleness in the horse, rider mistakes in the seat and influence. Frequently, these problems occur together with a tense back and a 'shortened' neck in the horse. These problems can be difficult to correct, particularly with horses with very 'big' walks but a lack of activity. These horses have a certain tendency towards these kinds of problems.

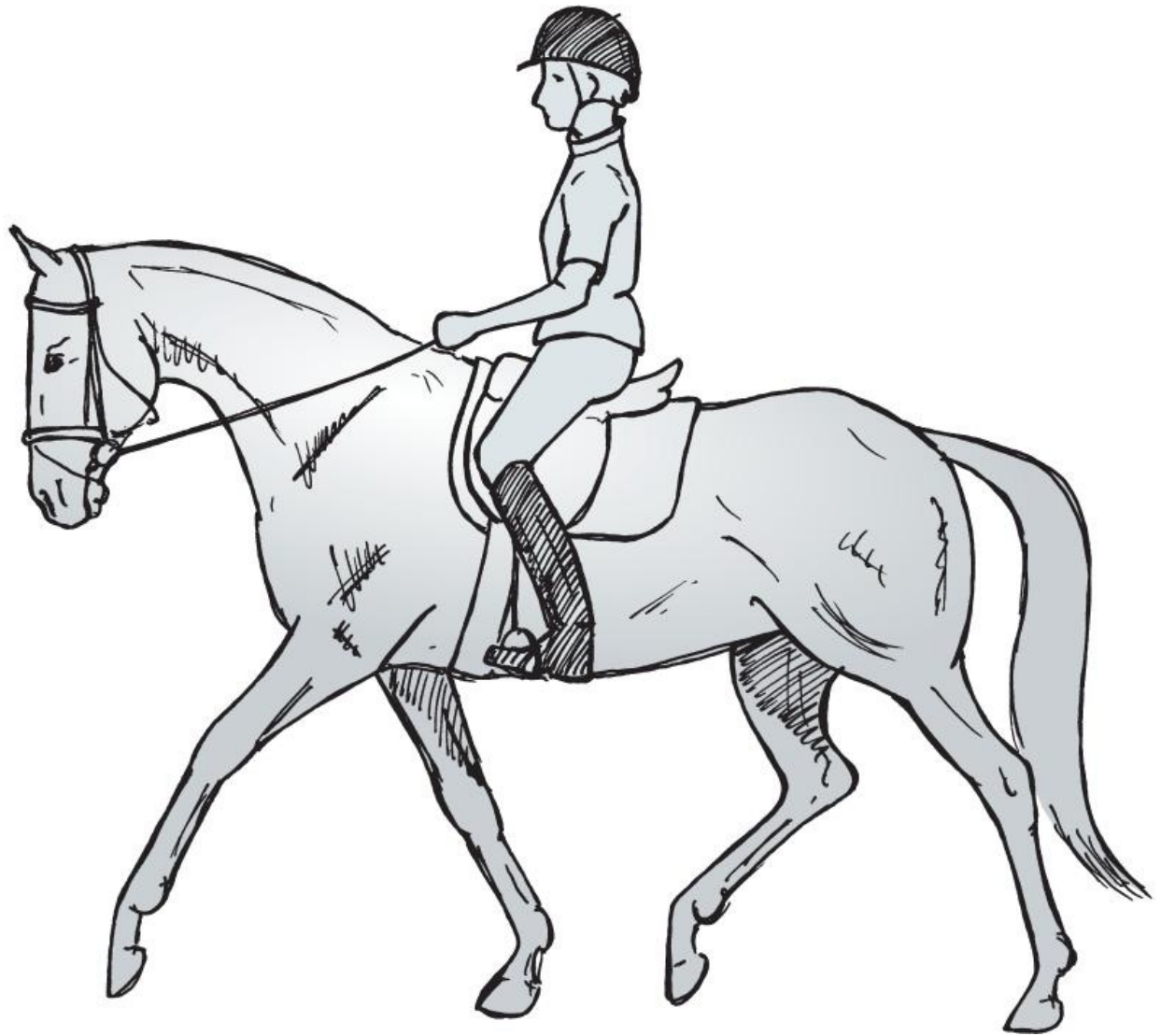
- *Disturbances – spatial (equal length of steps)*

The horse steps further forward or higher with its feet on one side than it does on the other (short-long). Causes are, most frequently, rider faults, but they can also arise from excitement or muscular tension as well as a crookedness of the horse.

It is important to rule out the possibility of health-related disturbances to rhythm in all gaits.

6.1.1.2 Trot

Trot is an active gait in a two-beat rhythm with four phases and a moment of suspension. It consists of a sequence of steps one after the other. Each diagonal pair of legs is moved forwards and set down at the same time.



Trot, with a secure rhythm and diagonal sequence of footfalls.

The four phases are:

- 1. left fore and right hind**
- 2. moment of suspension**
- 3. right fore and left hind**
- 4. moment of suspension**

The moment of suspension results from the pair of legs that are lifting off, leaving the ground before the pair of legs that are swinging forwards has been set down. The more powerfully and elastically the horse is trotting, the more defined the moment of suspension becomes, the more active the horse becomes in its movements.

■ **GAIT VARIANTS IN TROT**

The fundamental criterion for all trot variants is, alongside a clear two-beat rhythm, an active and energetic lifting and forward swinging of the legs – particularly the hind legs – with a corresponding ground cover.

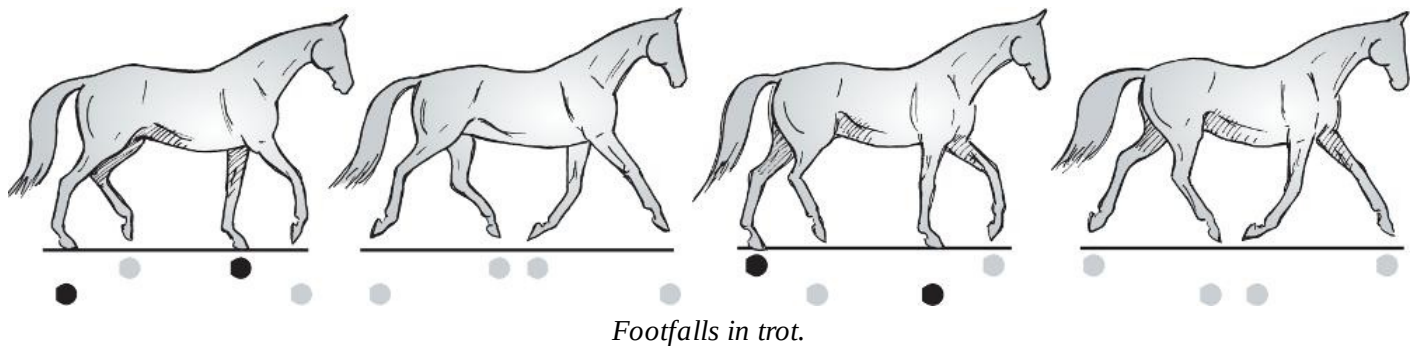
The horse should move with a swinging back, and the movement should flow through the whole of the horse's body.

In trot, a distinction is made between working trot, medium trot, collected trot and extended trot. In basic training, working trot is used initially; lengthening the trot will gradually lead to medium trot. Ultimately a collected trot will also be developed.

WORKING TROT

Working trot is the gait used most frequently in the basic training of horse and rider. The horse moves actively, albeit without rushing. The hind legs therefore step at least up to the tracks left by the forefeet on either side, or very slightly ahead of them. A supple horse takes rhythmic, active and ground-covering steps, powered by a good activity in the hindquarters and a swinging back.

'LENGTHENING OF STEPS'. Gradually lengthening the steps of the working trot is to be regarded as the precursor to medium trot (see overleaf).



MEDIUM TROT

In medium trot, the ground cover is increased without the steps becoming quicker. The hind feet are set down ahead of the prints left by the forefeet. Through a powerful thrust of the hindquarters, and an improved balance, the forefeet can be raised and carried more lightly and freely. A lengthening of the horse's frame through the stretching of the neck and a wider angle in the throat region should be noticeable. The forehead-nose line comes clearly in front of the vertical.

COLLECTED TROT

In collected trot, the steps are shorter, but no less energetic. The major joints of the hind legs are more flexed. Because of this, the steps – while maintaining the activity and impulsion – become more elevated and cadenced, and the ground cover is reduced. The hind feet are set down no further than the prints left by the forefeet.

EXTENDED TROT

The extended trot is the highest degree of forward movement in trot and, with a

consequential lengthening of the frame, it shows the greatest possible amount of impulsion and ground cover. The hind feet are set down considerably further in front of the prints left by the forefeet than is the case in medium trot. To be able to balance when performing extended trot, and without coming onto the forehand, the horse must have a good self-carriage and the ability to collect.

POSSIBLE MISTAKES/PROBLEMS IN TROT WORK

Mistakes in the rhythm are always combined with problems in suppleness.

- *Rushed movement*

The moment of suspension is shortened by a quicker, unnatural footfall. Therefore, the horse finds it difficult to be supple in trot because it no longer follows the natural footfall. The breathing is no longer in harmony with the movement and the horse's back hardly swings.

CAUSES: The trot movement can become rushed when the horse is not yet correctly balanced. In certain instances, the basic tempo chosen by the rider may be too high.

- *'Sluggish', insufficient activity in the movement*

If the trot is ridden too quietly or if the horse does not lift its hind legs actively and carry them forward, the trot movement becomes sluggish. The hind legs are not lifted off high and far enough forwards and no momentum is developed to make the horse's back swing. The rider is no longer 'taken along' with the movement.

CAUSES: First of all, a lack of willingness to go forward on the horse's part can be cited, often caused or increased by the manner of riding ([see Chapter 4.2.1 Giving of Aids](#)). De-motivation of the horse and monotonous, unvaried work can also be reasons, as can a lack of suppleness.

- *Passage-like steps*

A particularly incorrect form of a slowed-down motion sequence in trot can be seen in the so-called passage-like steps. These slowed-down steps with a tensed back can naturally occur when the horse is excited. They can also be brought about artificially by a misunderstanding of the driving and regulating aids. Some horses may tend to withhold themselves naturally during the moment of suspension and thus do not swing through in a supple manner. If the rider accepts this without counteracting it by fresh, forward riding, it will become a habit. It will then become increasingly difficult to get the horse to move actively from the hind legs.

- *Uneven strides (irregularity)*

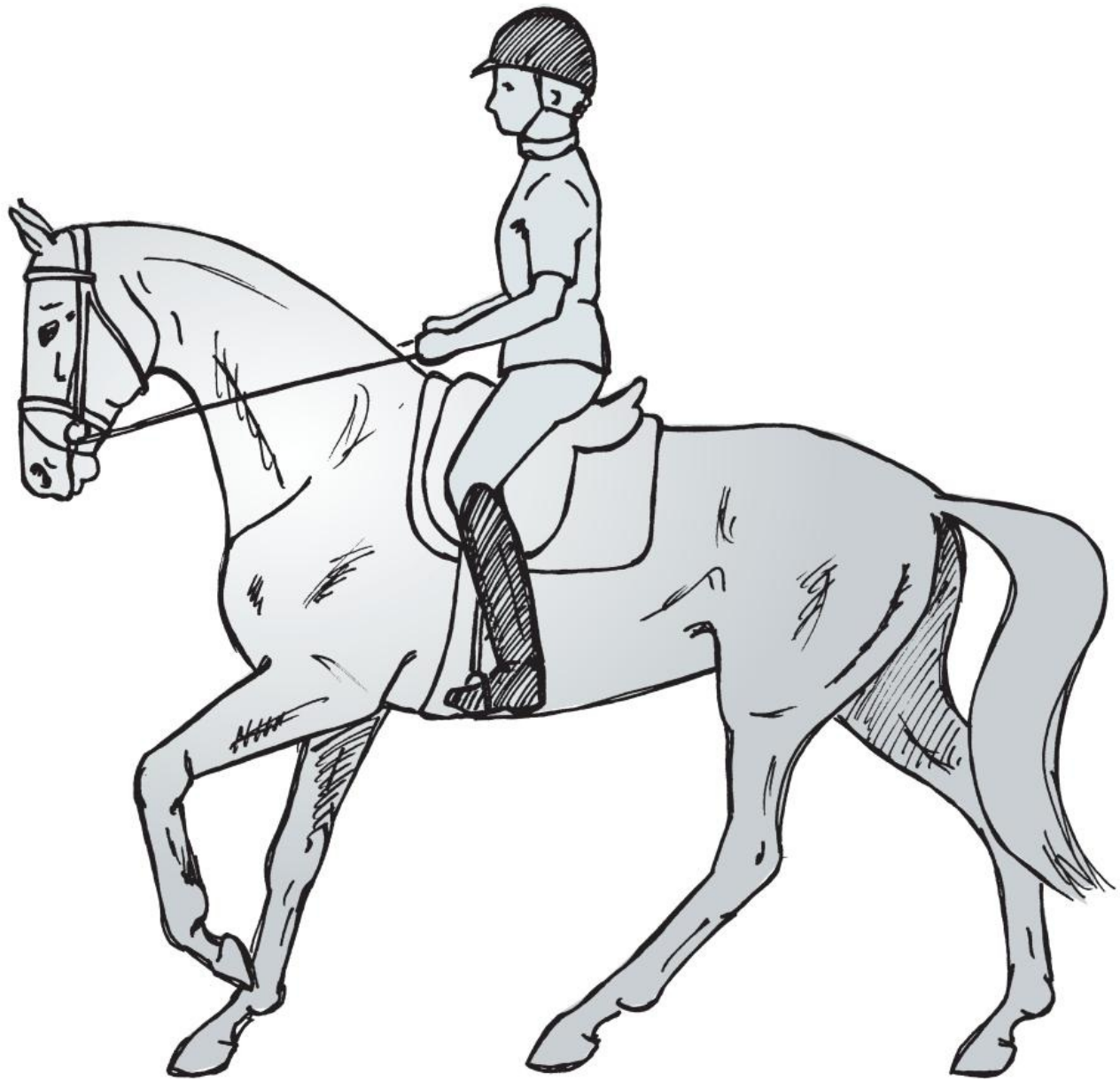
If the diagonal pairs do not swing forwards evenly on both sides, or if they lift off unevenly, this results in an irregular or uneven motion sequence ([see Chapter 7.6.2 Significance of Rhythm](#)). The regular two-beat rhythm of the trot and the equal movement of both of the diagonal pairs of legs is temporarily or persistently disturbed.

CAUSES: Loss of rhythm or irregularity in trot, which only lasts for a few steps, is a sign of a lack of balance in the horse. Often, this occurs in turns. Generally, this is caused by a lack of rider's skill when riding turns and having to interactively apply the inside and outside aids. With such very clear, persistent disturbances of the rhythm, the term 'bridle lameness' is used. This is very different from a loss of rhythm caused by ill health or actual lameness of the horse, which must first be investigated and treated as appropriate by a vet in case of doubt. However, persisting bridle lameness can also lead to permanent damage. Therefore, this problem is to be corrected as soon as possible.

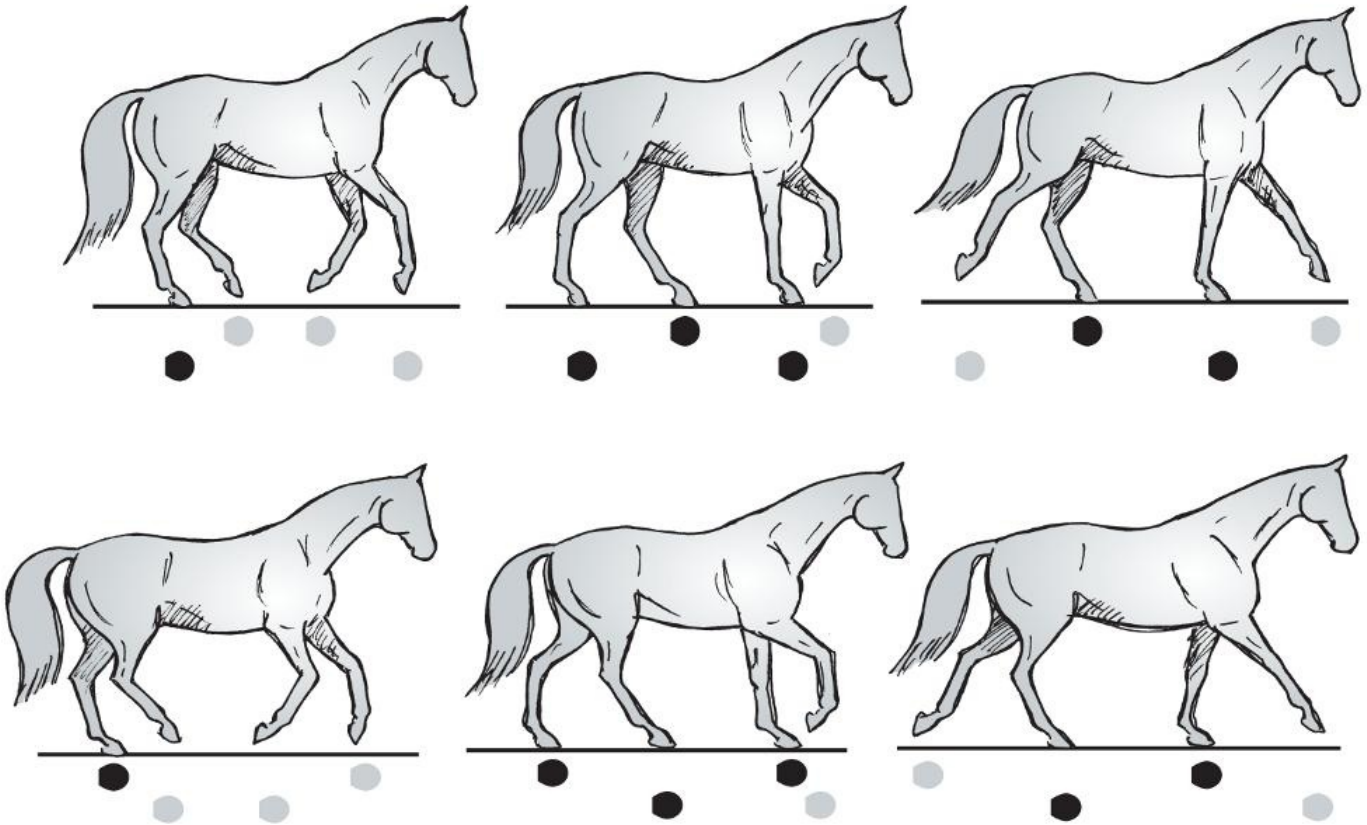
6.1.1.3 Canter

Canter is a gait consisting of a series of jump-like movements (strides), with a moment of suspension in between. Therefore, canter is a gait with impulsion.

Depending on which lateral pair of legs are stepping further forwards, the terms 'left-' or 'right-lead' canter are used. If the inside pair is reaching further forward, this is denoted as cantering on the correct lead.



Three legs on the ground in canter.



Six phases in left-lead canter (above) and in right-lead canter (below).

Canter is a movement in a three-beat rhythm with six phases. The sequence of footfall, for example in left canter, is as follows:

- After the moment of suspension, the horse sets down the right hind leg first (first audible beat).
- Subsequently, the diagonal leg pair of left hind and right fore are set down at the same time (second audible beat).
- Then, the right hind lifts up before the left fore touches down (third audible beat).
- Finally, the diagonal pair of left hind and right fore lifts off again – only the left fore now touches the ground – before it then lifts into the next moment of suspension.

A rhythmical stride in a clear three-beat rhythm is desirable, with energetic (active) lifting of the hind legs and a clear moment of suspension. As a result of the hind legs engaging far underneath the horse towards the centre of gravity, a good ground cover is developed. Combined with the hindquarters coming underneath the horse's body, this action results in the back being rounded so that the movement can flow through the horse's entire body.

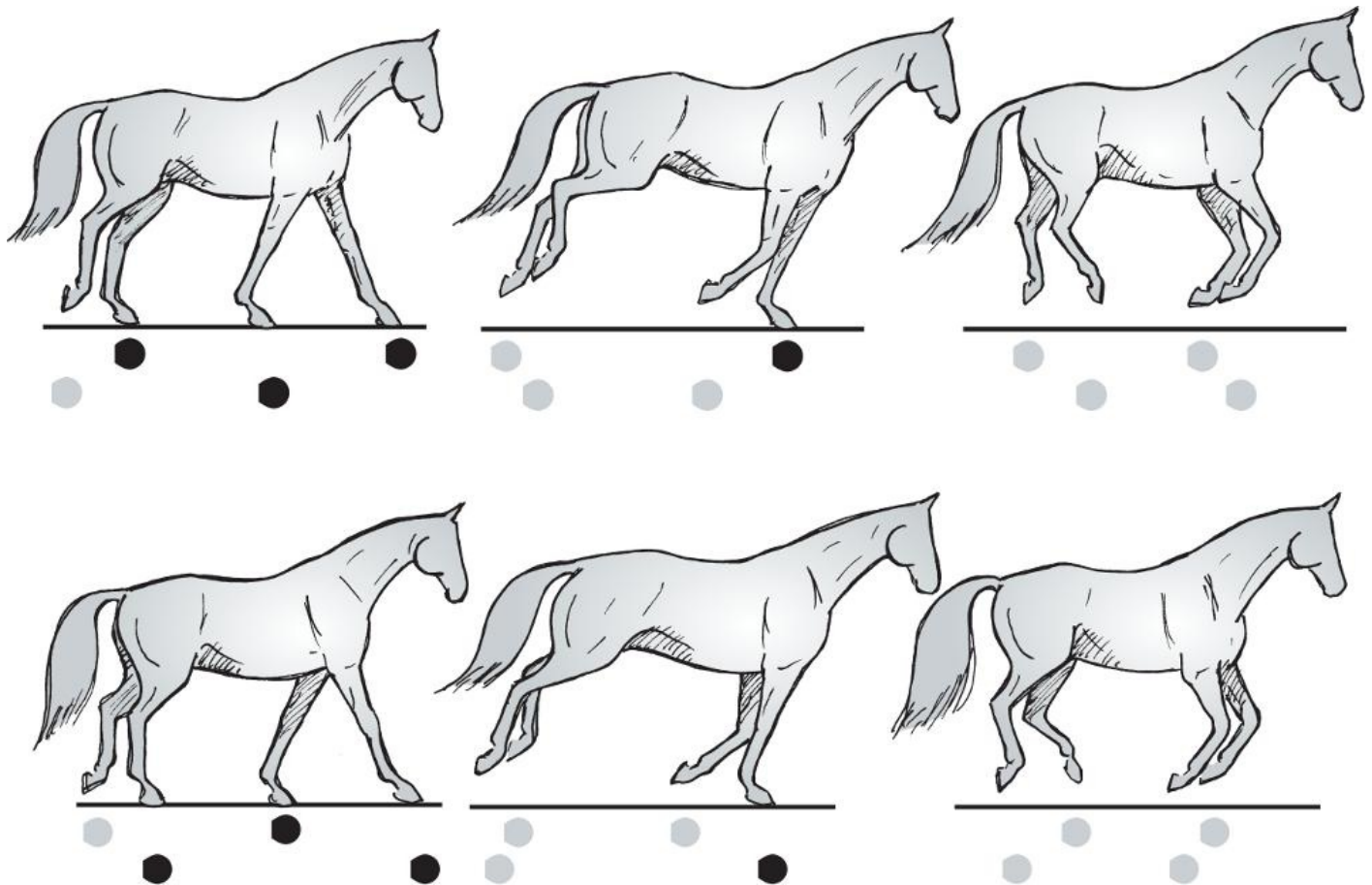
■ GAIT VARIANTS IN CANTER

The gait variants are: working canter, medium canter, collected canter and

extended canter. In basic training, working canter, lengthening the strides in canter and, subsequently, medium canter are ridden initially.

WORKING CANTER

In working canter, the horse should 'jump' with regular strides in a clearly recognisable three-beat rhythm, actively and full of impulsion. The ground cover is roughly one horse's length (approx. 2.5–3m).



'LENGTHENING STRIDES' is a preliminary exercise on the way to medium canter. The ground cover of the canter stride is gradually increased from working canter to medium canter.

MEDIUM CANTER

In medium canter, the canter strides are longer and cover more ground than in working canter, with a secure balance and accordingly lengthened frame.

COLLECTED CANTER

In collected canter, the hindquarters engage further underneath the horse's body in the direction of the centre of gravity. The canter strides are shorter, the ground cover is reduced, but the strides remain active and full of impulsion. The individual strides become more elevated and are clearly 'uphill'.

EXTENDED CANTER

In extended canter, the horse covers as much ground as possible, with an accordingly lengthened frame. The canter strides are longer than in medium canter, although the action does not become hurried. Collection is a precondition for extended canter so that the horse is also able to maintain its balance and three-beat rhythm through the extension.

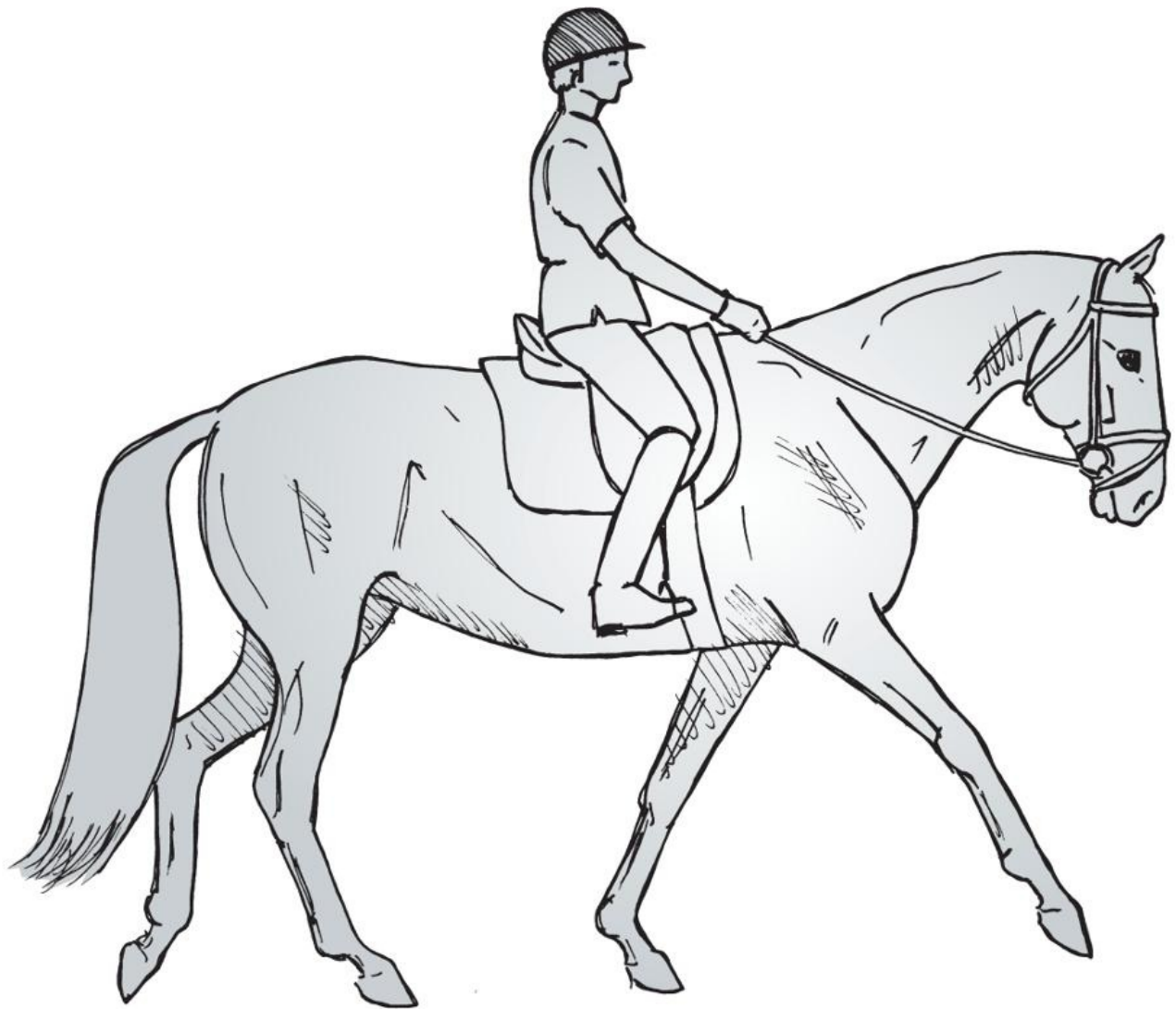
POSSIBLE MISTAKES/PROBLEMS IN CANTER

- A rushed or, conversely, sluggish, slowed-down motion sequence arising from tension in the horse's back or problems in contact or balance, can result in *disturbances of the rhythm*.
- A rushed motion sequence, instead of a clear three-beat rhythm of the canter, can lead to a *four-beat canter*. In this case, the diagonal pair of legs no longer sets down at the same time, but one after the other. The 'fourth beat' can then actually be heard.
- *Disunited canter* is a clearly recognisable and, for the rider, easily felt mistake in the motion sequence of the canter. The horse canters as if on the left lead with the forelegs, and on the right lead with the hind legs, or vice versa. This can occur, for example, when the horse does not yet have an assured balance, when the rider does not have the horse enough 'in front' of them, or it can be a result of tension. When horses change from a normal canter to a disunited canter – generally they change at the back – they normally try to restore the correct canter as quickly as possible because disunited canter is an uncoordinated and inharmonious motion. If the horse does not return to the correct lead by itself, the canter is corrected by making a transition down to trot first.

6.1.2 Riding the Basic Gaits

6.1.2.1 Riding in Walk

The rider keeps a regular, active and ground-covering walk by going with the movement of the horse from an elastic core, and with the legs maintaining a soft feeling on the horse's body. An exaggerated independent movement of the rider's body must be avoided. When necessary, the horse is encouraged to step more actively with a driving leg aid. The slight nodding motion of the horse from the shoulders to the neck and head is permitted and accompanied by the rider's hands out of relaxed shoulders and elastic elbow joints.



Walk on a long rein.

Walk is regarded as the most difficult gait because loss of, or irregularities in, rhythm in walk are particularly difficult to correct. Therefore, walk should be ridden on a long rein so that the horse can march with a neck stretching forwards and downwards. The length of the reins allows for a constant, but elastic, connection to the horse's mouth to be maintained at all times. Despite the longer rein, the horse should still step trustingly into the bit. If possible, the walk should be ridden frequently on a loose rein. That means that the rider keeps hold of the reins on the buckle, but without any connection with the horse's mouth. The horse is allowed to perceive its surroundings and should march in a relaxed manner with a stretched neck.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

The most frequently observed mistake is the *backwards-acting hand or rein influence* of the rider. This can result from:

- An incorrectly understood attempt to improve the response of the horse to the

rein aids by using a backward-acting rein aid.

- An attempt to force the horse into a particular head-neck position with the hand.
- Exaggerated flexion of the horse in the poll and neck.
- Constantly and alternately flexing the horse to the right and the left.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

Any backwards-acting influence of the rider's hand will lead to a naturally defensive reaction from the horse. The horse will go 'against the rein' and problems in the contact will emerge as a result of marred trust. Almost always, further consequences such as loss of rhythm, reduced ground cover, uneven forward movement of the hind legs or a stiff movement of the shoulders ('tied walk') can be observed.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

First of all, an attempt must be made to explain to the rider what they are doing (perhaps unconsciously) and what effect this is having on the horse. The underlying causes for the rider's incorrect actions must be explored and corrected systematically to bring the rider back onto the right path.

The rider should grant the horse an elastic connection, whereby the horse will then step into the hand, having no reason to avoid it. In walk, it is particularly important that the connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth remains elastic at all times.

The rider must pay attention that their arms and wrists remain relaxed out of the shoulders and through the elbows and that they only move with the horse as much as absolutely necessary, so that the steady connection to the horse's mouth can be kept.

Another mistake when riding in walk is an *exaggerated, constantly applied driving aid*, which may take the following forms:

- 'Thrusting' from the hips.
- Strong pressing (gripping) with the lower legs.
- Constant use of the spurs.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

The horse tenses, reacts with a loss of rhythm (such as pacing), the natural activity is lost and the horse 'deadens', which only increases the problem.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

If the driving aid in walk is combined with a great physical effort from the rider, the aids are not attuned finely enough. The trainer showing and explaining the finely measured driving aids, and supporting the rider in sensitising the horse to these

aids, is required here. The driving aids should be applied sensitively and, at the same time, consistently! If the horse shows the desired reaction, it is praised immediately. If the reaction is absent or delayed, the rider may have to repeat the aid more clearly. For monitoring purposes, a correct application of the aids should be given immediately afterwards to ensure the positive learning effect.

A restless seat and non-rhythmical application of the aids can also lead to a loss of rhythm: for example, the horse becoming too rushed ('jogging') or going into trot unintentionally.



The rider leans slightly into the turn, without collapsing in the hip.

6.1.2.2 Riding in Trot

In trot, the rider must go with the movement of the horse's back particularly well from their core. The rider's abdominal and lower back muscles are contracted and released, in time with the rhythm of the horse's movement. If the horse goes forward well by itself, the rider will just swing rather passively with the movements. If the rider is able to sit into and ride the horse forwards, they will swing, from the pelvis, more actively forwards, supported by the driving legs.

In turns in trot, slight centrifugal forces come into effect, and in changes within the

gait there are acceleration forces. The rider must adapt elastically to these forces with a suitable body posture.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

It frequently happens in trot that some riders *tighten up in the core* and therefore cannot swing smoothly from the pelvis, with the entire seat becoming unsettled. No harmony is established with the horse's movement.

POSSIBLE CAUSES

This is often caused by the rider gripping too tightly to the saddle with the thighs and/or misunderstanding the concept of 'driving aids' by using far too much effort to apply them. If the respective muscle groups tense, the mobility of the pelvis will be considerably reduced. As a result, the swinging movement of the horse's back cannot be taken up by the rider, or be compensated for. A saddle or knee rolls limiting the rider's mobility can also be a cause.

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

One consequence can be an unsettled seat which is more 'above the horse' rather than 'in the horse'. For the horse, the rider then becomes an uncomfortable 'load' and it will be harder for the horse to remain supple. In turn, this reaction of the horse makes it harder for the rider to sit.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

Temporarily rising in the trot or frequently changing between sitting and rising trot can be of help.

If a rider has continuous difficulty in sitting to the trot, correction must start with systematic training of the seat, if necessary also on the lunge ([see Chapter 4 Seat and Influence of the Rider](#)).

Deficiencies in the coordination of the aids frequently occur in trot since balancing, swinging and the measured coordination of the aids are very complex procedures.

6.1.2.3 Riding in Canter

The canter movement of the horse is generally more comfortable for the rider than the movement in trot. The movement sequences of the horse's back, to which the rider must adapt their body, are softer and slower in canter and, therefore, seem more harmonious, although the actual speed of the gait is higher. To support canter on a given lead, the rider sits upright, but with their body slightly turned. To canter on the left lead, for example, the rider shifts the inside (left) hip a little further forward than the right one. That way, the left leg falls into the correct driving position at the girth. The right leg lies a little further back, in the guarding position. The outside shoulder is turned slightly facing forwards, so that the rider does not

twist outwards with their upper body when pushing the inside hip forwards. The rider goes with the movement of the horse's back rhythmically with their core. That way, they are able to adapt to the horse's movement with as quiet an upper body as possible.

In canter, the horse's poll and neck are flexed to the inside, however, only so far that the rider can just glimpse the horse's inside eye.

Once a novice rider has got used to the action and the speed of the canter, they usually notice quickly that finding their balance and going with the movement of the canter is easier than it is in trot.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- The *desire to want more control over the horse than necessary* can be observed in some riders because of the higher speed of the canter. Forced control with predominantly backward-working rein aids prevents the horse from finding its balance. An unsettled, too tight head and neck position, an open or inactive mouth, showing the tongue, and a stiff back can be the consequences.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

The effort to yield with the reins time and again tends to lead to the rider sitting in a more balanced fashion, and independently of the reins and the connection to the horse's mouth. The rider will feel that it is more important and more efficient to guide the horse with the seat than it is to want to control it with the hand.

- A rider's *unsettled body posture*, which becomes evident in an unquiet upper body, unsteady hands and lower legs, is also a frequent occurrence when the seat is not quite balanced and supplied yet.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

Seat exercises must be used to achieve an independent seat, with an elastic core. This enables the rider to go with the movement of the horse and nevertheless maintain a quiet body posture.

- *Exaggerated and excessively applied driving aids* are a frequent mistake, even in canter.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

It is again essential for the rider to learn to use the driving aids in a nuanced way, but consistently, to keep the horse sensitive to the aids and encourage willing collaboration.

6.2 Basic Exercises in Dressage Riding

6.2.1 Coordination of the Aids

A horse is on the rider's aids when it trustingly accepts them. 'Coordination of the aids' means that, by using weight and leg aids, the horse is ridden onto the bit/into the rider's hand respectively, from behind, so that there is always a constant, elastic connection (contact) between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth, in halts and in movement. The horse is 'framed' between the driving aids on the one hand and the regulating aids on the other. However, that does not mean that the horse is forced into that frame. Rather, it is important that the rider is successful in applying both their forwards-lateral and their guarding leg aids (in a way appropriate to the individual horse) in walk, before working their way up to trot and canter. The rider must also be able to feel how the horse reacts to the weight aids.

The connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth is fundamental for this communication. The rider seeks a light contact with the horse's mouth when taking up the reins, without wanting to determine the horse's head-neck position right from the start. This position will develop gradually from the well-coordinated interplay of driving and regulating aids.

As soon as the horse is 'forced' into a head-neck position against its will, resistance is unavoidable and a trusting connection can no longer be preserved.

In order to always give the horse the opportunity to balance, the head-neck position must never become too shortened.

A well-ridden horse that trusts the rider's hand will accept the contact of the reins and step forward to this connection. Since the rider supports this process sensitively with their driving aids, the horse continues to move forwards willingly. It begins to become increasingly light in the rider's hand, which means it does not push down against the reins, but rather accepts this boundary of the rider's retaining aid with an elastic poll and by chewing on the bit. When riding into turns, the rider always starts to bring the inward-flexed horse onto the outside aids with a more active inside leg. The guarding aids (outside leg and outside rein) ensure that the horse does not drift with the hindquarters or fall out over the shoulder. That way, it is easier to remain light with the inside rein.



The reins are gradually and carefully shortened from a loose or long rein so that no resistance from the horse to the reins arises.

Through the collaboration of the driving leg and weight aids, together with the regulating and giving rein aids, the rider can control the intensity of the connection between their hand and the horse's mouth.

The desired head-neck position of the horse is such that the line formed by the forehead and the nose is slightly in front of, or on, the vertical. This is regardless of whether the horse 'already carries itself' and the poll is the highest point, or whether it lowers the neck a little more and, by doing so, works in a lower position. Over the course of a schooling session, during which the horse is gymnasticised, the horse's carriage will also change constantly.

A horse is only really on the rider's aids when it accepts the weight, leg and rein aids readily and allows itself to be framed between them without any force.

Riders who do not yet have the necessary experience in bringing a horse onto the

aids sensitively are well advised to ride on a long rein when in doubt, or initially to use support reins such as side reins, running reins, triangular reins ([see Chapter 2.2.3 Auxiliary Reins, Attachment and Use](#)). Thus, the process of taking up the reins and establishing a soft contact can be initially avoided, while the rider is still able to feel their way into the horse's movements. The horse thus finds a kind of a contact in the support reins. Over the course of the training, the support reins can be gradually lengthened until the rider has developed enough feeling for the aids to render them superfluous.

Every horse reacts individually to the different aids, a fact to which the rider needs to adapt with consideration. Therefore, sufficient time should always be given for the process of 'fine-tuning the aids'. For example, some horses react very lightly to the rein aids and must be ridden into the hand from behind very sensitively. Other horses, for example, 'lean on the hand', which means they push down on the reins in a forward-downward direction. Hence, the key to establishing a better and lighter carriage of the horse lies in the harmonious collaboration of the aids – with the driving aids always prevailing – and a varied sequence of exercises with many transitions between the different gaits to activate the hindquarters accordingly.

Numerous exercises and movements can only really work harmoniously when the rider has the horse securely on all aids.

A particular head-neck position of the horse is not the priority, but rather the result of correct riding!

TYPICAL AID MISTAKES

- *Demanding a particular head-neck position too soon*

If the connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth has not yet been confidently established and the rider tries too soon to bring the horse's head and neck into a certain position, the horse will react with resistance and go 'against the hand'. If the rider then responds with a strong 'holding' hand or an 'asking rein', a 'vicious circle' has set in: horse and rider work against each other! Even if the horse does not resist, a good basis for a trustful contact is not established.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

The rider must learn to accompany the horse's mouth sensitively with their hand. The interplay of the driving and regulating aids, as well as the preparedness of the rider to always become light in the hand, lead to the horse going willingly into the desired head-neck position. The horse is more likely to 'lower the neck' when the rider gives with the hand, than it is if the rider works against the horse's mouth with the reins.

- *Lack of collaboration between the driving and the regulating aids*
Uncoordinated rein aids dominate the weight and leg aids, for example. The rider cannot ride their horse from back to front into the hand and they do not get the horse 'in front' of them.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

Riding under instruction, preferably on a well-trained horse.

- *Stiff wrist and clenched fists*
Trying to keep the hands as still as possible can lead to the rider losing the required suppleness in going with the horse's movements. In walk, the nodding motion of the horse's head and neck is natural. A stiff holding of the rider's hands would not permit a soft, elastic connection to the horse's mouth. Thus, the horse cannot find a position in which it can move in a supple way.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

([see Chapter 4.3 Problems in the Seat and Influence – Causes and Corrections](#)).

6.2.2 Moving Off, Starting Trot, Starting Canter

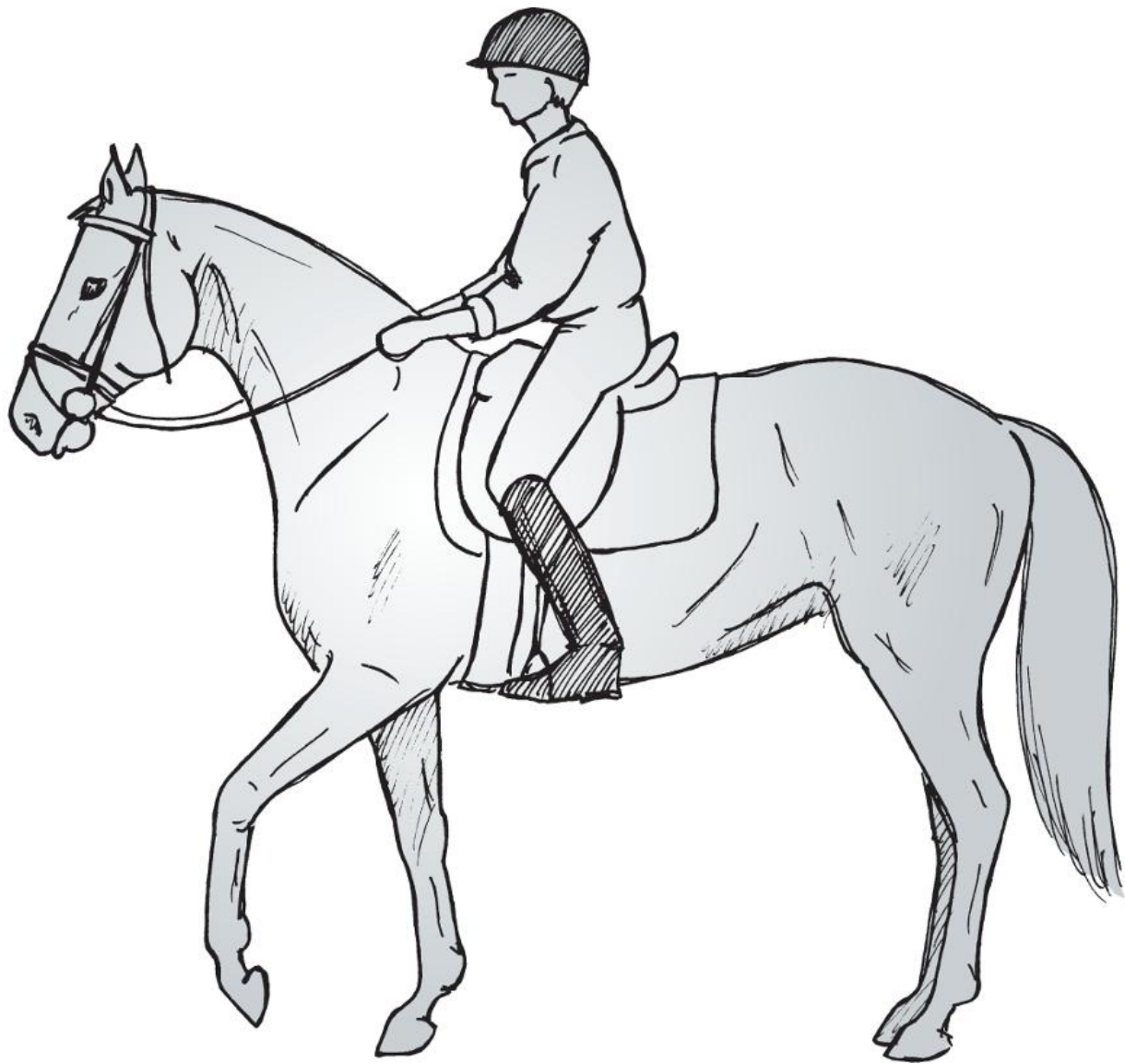
■ RIDING OFF IN WALK (FROM HALT)

To ride off in walk from a halt, the rider frames the horse between their aids for a brief moment. The driving leg aid of the rider is especially prominent in asking the horse to step forward. As soon as the horse responds to the aids and sets off, wanting to walk, the rider allows the forward movement immediately with a giving rein aid, without giving up the connection with the horse's mouth. The rider then goes with the horse's movement by smoothly adapting to the forward motion.

When moving off, the rider should 'embrace' the horse with the lower legs, positioned low and close to the girth. The rider feels this best when absorbing the movement downwards with the heels into the stirrups, with relaxed ankle joints. The horse's sensitivity is a prerequisite for the rider's fine aids being accepted; if necessary, these may have to be restored by another, more experienced rider.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- If the rider *falls forwards with the upper body* and, as a result, is unable to maintain a connection with the horse's mouth, they are consequently unable to keep the horse on the aids. The rider must therefore always ensure and feel that the horse is 'in front' of them. They should go with the horse's movement, but not get ahead of it.



It is a mistake if the rider leans forwards with the upper body while the lower leg slides backwards. The rider loses the connection with the horse's mouth. The horse cannot move off securely into walk. The horse can no longer find a secure contact.

- If the rider is not yet capable of adjusting to the horse, they can come '*behind the movement*' and potentially disturb the forward flow with the hand. The horse hesitates in the transition; the contact and the regular sequence of movement are disturbed.
- If the rider misunderstands the driving aid and, as a consequence, *draws up the heels and the knees*, the driving aids will not have the desired effect on the horse. (Often, a lack of sensitive response by the horse to the rider's driving aids can also happen.) In this case, it can be helpful to make the horse aware of the leg aids before asking it to move off, if necessary by using the spurs briefly as support. In many cases, it is enough to briefly apply more pressure with the leg.

■ BEGINNING THE TROT FROM WALK

To begin trotting from walk, the rider briefly brings the horse more onto the leg,

weight and rein aids to get its attention. For actually starting to trot, all that is needed are light driving leg and weight aids so that the horse makes the transition from the motion sequence of the walk into an energetic trot. In the moment in which the horse starts to push forwards from the hind legs, the rider gives a little with the hand to allow the forward movement to develop. The rider goes slightly with the forward movement with their body posture without, however, getting ahead of the movement, so that the horse remains 'in front' of them and on the aids. The horse should react sufficiently well to the rider's driving aids to be seeking the rider's hand, which can then allow a controlled trot movement to develop.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

Here, basically, the same applies as when moving off from a walk. The demands on the rider's ability to adapt to the acceleration of the transition to trot are just increased accordingly and, because of this, the effects of mistakes can be greater.

- The rider falls '*behind the movement*' of the horse when, in the moment of the transition to trot, they do not go with the forward movement of the horse sufficiently enough with their upper body.
- The rider gets '*ahead of the movement*' of the horse if their upper body leans forward too much and the seatbones lose contact with the saddle.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

Frequent transitions from walk to trot will lead to more harmony between horse and rider and a significantly increased learning progress than riding in one gait only for a prolonged time.

■ BEGINNING THE CANTER FROM TROT

To make a transition into canter, for example on the right lead, the rider gives the following aids:

- The horse is brought more onto the aids to prepare for the transition and is shortened more to facilitate the transition into canter. If necessary, the trot is shortened, but the impulsion and activity are maintained.
- The inside (right) hip is pushed forwards slightly and more pressure is thus placed on the inner (right) seatbone. In order to obtain this correctly, the pelvis is moved, or rather tilted, forwards and inwards.
- The right leg is placed in a forward-driving position right at the girth.
- The right rein ensures that the horse is correctly flexed to the right in the poll and the neck while preparing the transition into canter.
- The left rein, as the outside guarding rein, permits this flexion up to a certain point and prevents the horse from falling out over the left shoulder.
- In preparation for the transition to canter, the rider's left (outside) leg is placed

back from the hip about a hand's width behind the girth in a guarding position.

- The impulse to make the transition into canter is set off with the rider's inside leg, combined with the inside hip being pushed forwards (with some experience, the rider will find that the horse can respond to this aid without any delay when it is applied precisely at the moment when the inside hind leg is lifting off the ground).
- As soon as the horse starts to canter, the rider lets the canter stride develop by giving lightly with the inside hand.

Maintaining the aids ensures a fluid continuation of the canter. Each canter stride should be ridden almost as if asking the horse to make a transition into canter anew.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- The *transition into canter is not prepared well enough*; the horse is almost 'attacked by the canter aid'. It thus delays moving into canter and loses balance. It canters 'croup-high', falls onto the forehand and does not canter with a secure rhythm. It may not even canter at all to begin with, but rather continue in a rushed trot.
- The rider '*stands up for the transition into canter*', bringing the upper body too far forwards and no longer keeping the horse 'in front' of them. The consequence can, likewise, be a loss in balance as well as rhythm.
- The *collaboration of the rider's aids cannot yet be managed*. Getting the horse onto the diagonal aids, including the development of flexion, cannot be performed suitably by the rider. As a consequence, the horse may take off incorrectly into a counter-canter.
- The *inside rein 'blocks' the transition*. The canter is not enabled by the inside hand when the horse begins the transition. The rider disturbs the action, particularly of the actively forward-moving inside hind leg, with a backward-acting hand. The flow of movement is disturbed. This mistake also emerges from an exaggerated flexion of the horse.
- If the rider falls '*behind the movement*', there are fundamental deficiencies in the seat basics, particularly in finding balance, and these must be eradicated with basic training of the seat ([see Chapter 4.3 Problems in the Seat and Influence – Causes and Corrections](#)).
- *Prevailing pressure of the outside, guarding leg* leads the horse to veer to the inside with the hindquarters or delay the transition into canter with a high croup. The decisive impulse from the inside leg is lacking here!

6.2.3 Half-Halts, Transitions and Halts

■ HALF-HALTS

A half-halt is understood as a brief moment in which the horse is brought onto the weight, leg and rein aids of the rider³. Half-halts are a fundamental part of the communication between horse and rider and they are therefore used very frequently during a schooling session. They serve to constantly improve the fine-tuning of the rider's aids to the horse's reaction and thus improve a precise communication. Depending on the purpose, they can be used in varying degrees of intensity and frequency.

Half-halts serve to:

- Prepare for all exercises/movements.
- Gain the horse's attention ahead of a new exercise.
- Ride transitions from one gait into another.
- Ride transitions within a gait.
- Adjust the horse's speed and carriage.
- Maintain and improve the contact.
- Improve or maintain collection and self-carriage.

For a brief moment, the horse is ridden more into the rider's hand with driving leg and weight aids and increased retaining or carefully asking rein aids (for example, by closing the fist). The desired reaction is for the horse to respond in such a way to the driving aids that it steps more actively under the centre of gravity with the hind legs. However, through the collaboration of the aids, this activity will be transformed less into forward movement. Immediately afterwards, this is followed by a giving rein aid without losing the connection. It is important that, while riding a half-halt, the flow of movement, the suppleness and the activity of the horse's back are maintained. If the rider reacts immediately with a giving rein aid and possibly also gives further half-halts, a very nuanced influence can be had on the tempo, on the way the horse is moving, the carriage and the balance of the horse. The half-halt is not a one-time process, but it is repeated as often as required to serve its purpose. With continued experience, the rider must develop a feel that will allow the driving aids to always prevail.

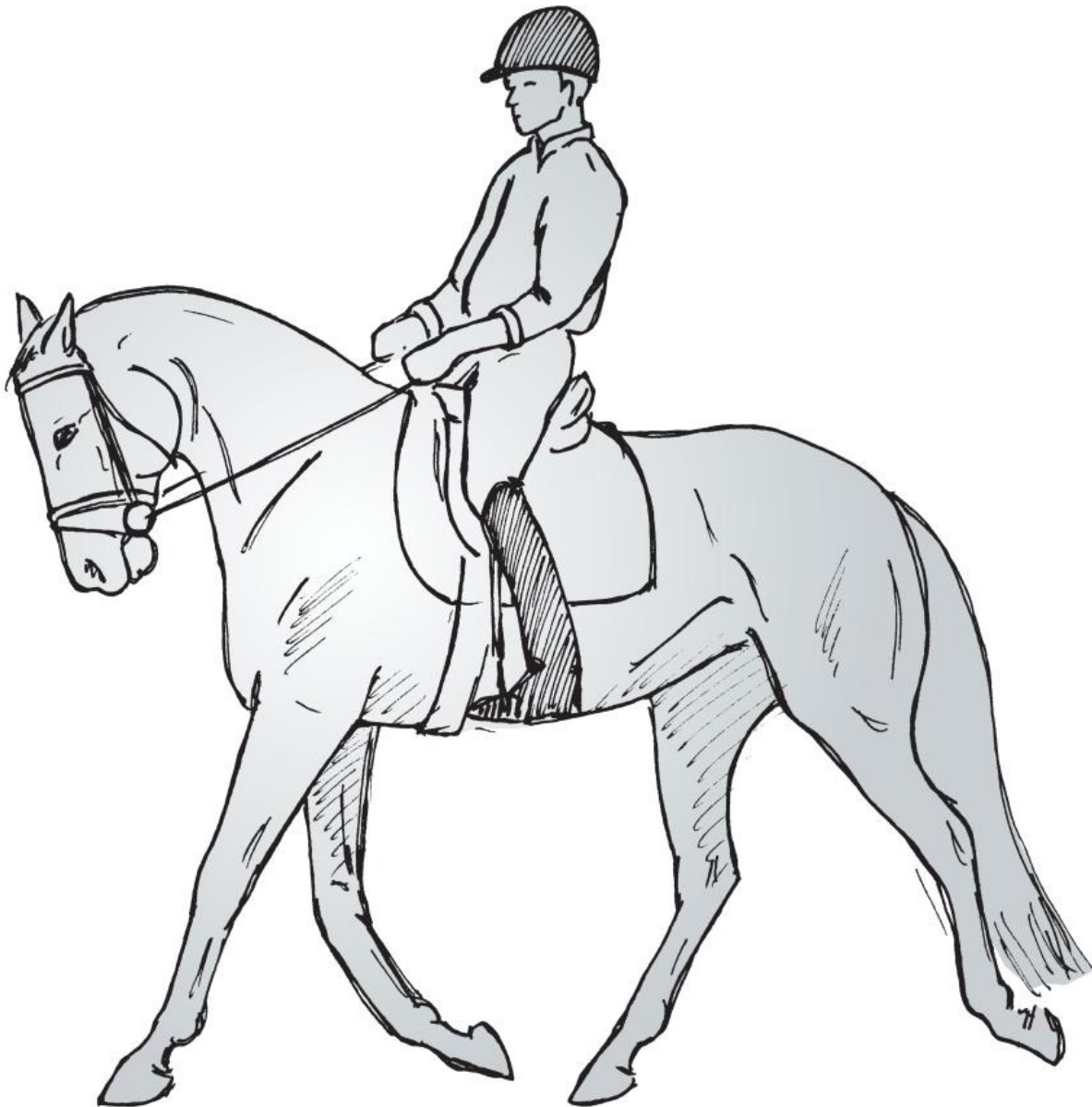
Half-halts will be successful when the rider finds the right timing. The exact moment for a half-halt depends on the movement of the horse. The rider needs to develop a good feel for this moment during their training.

On curved lines, the rider rides more with their inside leg onto the outside rein and outside leg (diagonal aids). If more contact is felt on the outside rein as a result, the inside hand sustains this quietly and ensures that the bit remains in its correct

position and is not pulled through the mouth.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- The rider *uses exaggerated rein aids* and thus achieves a backward-acting effect. In doing so, some riders also lean too far backwards with their upper body. The horse's flow of movement is thus disturbed (back and hind legs); it often also becomes 'short' in the neck and therefore does not accept the rider's hand.



The rider uses too much hand and sits against the horse's movement. The rider does not sit independently of the hand.

- The rider *does not ride the horse enough* from behind into the elastic hand. This can lead to the flow of movement being blocked and the horse comes onto the forehand or leans, increasingly, on the rider's hand.
- The rider *misses the right moment* (incorrect timing). As an example, the rider

does not 'give' again after a preceding half-halt. The horse cannot react as desired and is possibly disturbed in its rhythm, contact and balance.

ADVICE FOR CORRECTION

The advice given for correction must be approached systematically. Rider and trainer must not become impatient, since the riding of correct half-halts is very demanding. A good mobility, ability to react and a good feeling for the individual aids and their collaboration need to be developed systematically.

The correct implementation of half-halts is the key ability that enables 'good riding'!

■ RIDING TRANSITIONS

Correct classical riding 'from back to front in balance' is really only obtainable through the interplay of driving and regulating aids. A particularly good exercise for this is riding transitions. These can be transitions from one gait to another, or transitions (gait variants) within a gait. Transitions are prepared, carried out and accompanied with a succession of half-halts.

TRANSITIONS FROM ONE GAIT TO ANOTHER

Trotting off from walk and then making a transition down from trot to walk are movements that can be repeated any number of times. They are as important for the training of the rider's influence (coordination of the aids) as they are for the thoroughness of the horse, since as fine a harmony of the aids as possible can be established.

In transitions from canter to trot, or from trot to walk, the rider should imagine the movement as the beginning of a new gait – not quitting the one currently being ridden.

With this attitude, it becomes easier for the rider to ride into a new gait, which means that the transition is carried out fluently and harmoniously.

In preparing for a downward transition, the rider gives half-halts. In the moment in which the rider feels that the horse accepts the last half-halt as a signal to make a transition down, they are already riding forwards again into the new gait.

The transition between working trot and working canter is particularly valuable for the suppling work and the gymnasticising process of the horse. The horse must 'reorganise' its sequence of footfalls from the two-beat rhythm of the trot to the three-beat rhythm of the canter and change the activity of the back. Therefore, it is important for the rider to learn to ride harmonious transitions. The downward transition – here from canter into trot – is prepared sufficiently well by several half-halts so that just one final, light, half-halt leads to the actual transition to trot. The rider's hand becomes soft again after every half-halt, and allows the new

movement to develop. If necessary, the rider gives one or two more half-halts after the transition to trot – for example if the horse is not able to balance immediately in the trot, and starts to rush away. When the rider has their horse well ‘in front’ of them and on the aids in trot, they prepare to canter once again with yet another half-halt, so that this transition can be carried out easily, with the canter as ‘uphill’ as possible.

Half-halts only have a positive effect if the driving aids prevail.

TRANSITIONS WITHIN A GAIT

Within the gaits of trot and canter, some lengthening and shortening can be done quite early on in the training. How clearly the variations can be ridden depends on the horse’s and rider’s level of training. Transitions within gaits do not only have a suppling effect – they can also improve the motion sequence of the trot and the canter over time by stabilising the balance. With this improved balance, the horse can move in a more light-footed, improved carriage, without disturbing the smooth flow of the movement by passage-like steps in trot.

Before LENGTHENING the steps or strides, one or two half-halts can be used. By bringing the hind legs more under, the rider creates a minimal, positive tension in the horse, which can then be ‘released forwards’. The connection to the horse’s mouth remains intact throughout. It is important that only so much lengthening is asked that the horse remains balanced – that is to say that it continues to carry itself and does not move off a straight line or become crooked. It is also necessary that the rider maintains a balanced seat and that the driving aids do not have to be applied too strongly. The rider needs to listen to their horse and assess how much they can demand without disturbing the rhythm. If the rider can still keep sitting when riding forwards in trot and canter they have the horse correctly on the aids and are able to return smoothly to the working gait again.

When SHORTENING, or ‘PICKING UP’ the horse, it is important that the rider does not impede the horse’s action, which might result in it falling onto the forehand. The rider should ask, with many consecutive half-halts, aiming to keep the steps or strides as active as possible, including a swinging back, while shortening the steps at the same time. Throughout, the rider must remain soft with the hands, otherwise passage-like steps can arise in the trot.

When shortening the strides or steps, the rider must continue to ride forwards as much as when lengthening, because the hind legs need to remain active throughout this shortening.

In summary, it can be seen that different types of transitions in different situations

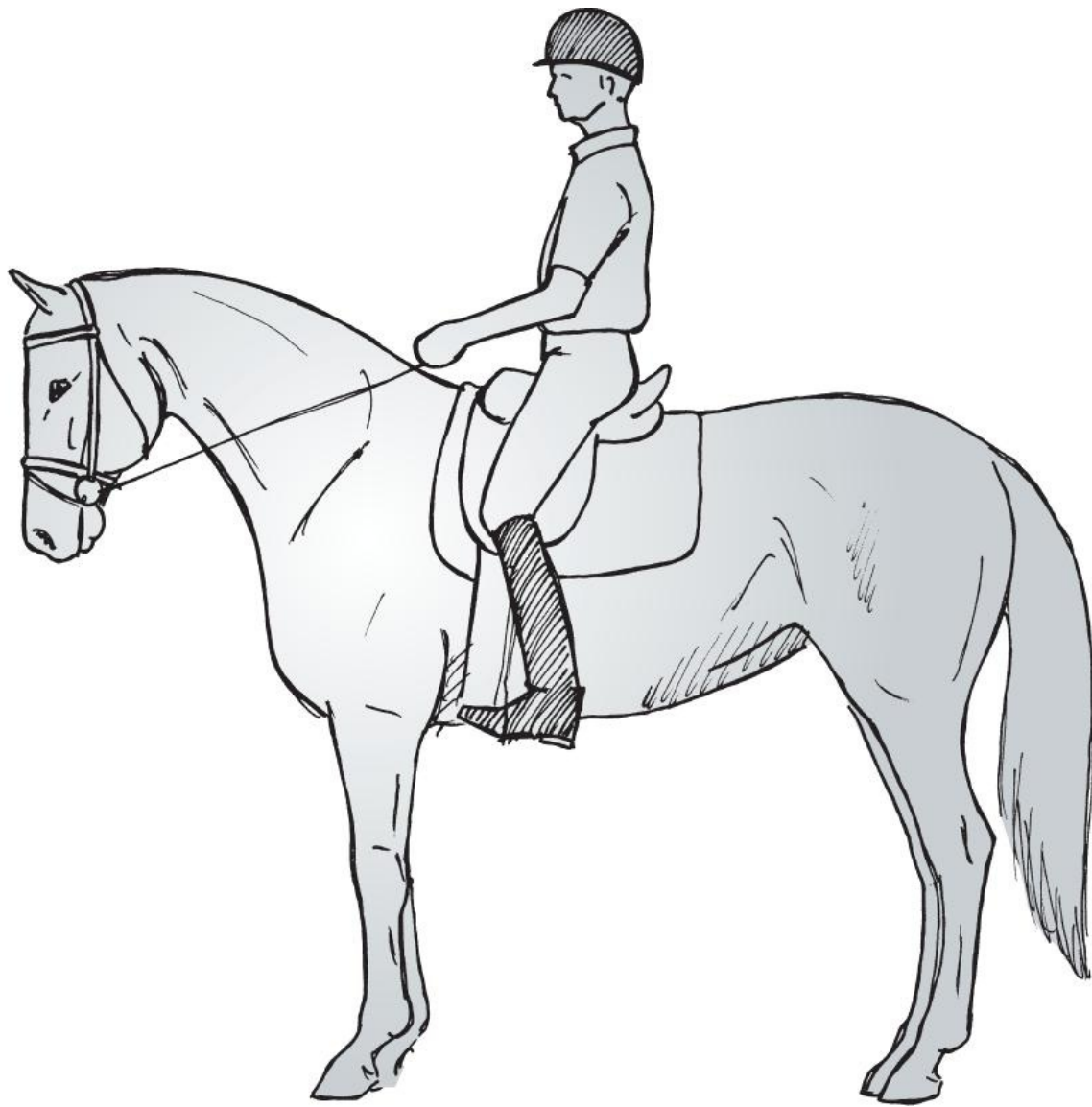
in daily work can be useful and can foster improvement, be it on a hack, where the rider can improve balance and control by riding transitions, or in the jumping arena, where the rider can help the horse to take off at a fence properly, with improved balance.

■ FULL HALT

A full halt can be carried out from any gait and always leads to the horse standing completely still. It is the result of a sequence of half-halts (see [page 140](#) '*Half-Halts*'): the actual halt is prepared and introduced by a series of half-halts. The final half-halt leads to the halt. Through this sequence of several half-halts, the rider ensures that the full halt can be performed softly and without any resistance from the horse. How soon the full halt can be introduced by the half-halt depends on the horse's level of training and the level of cooperation between horse and rider. It can, if prepared well, be ridden with the finest possible of aids.

When halting, the horse stands square on all four legs with as good a self-carriage as possible. It is important that giving with the hand occurs at the moment of the transition, and not only when the horse is already standing still. That way, the horse is able to keep its balance throughout the entire full halt and when standing still.

When the halt is ridden on a straight line, it is easier for the horse to remain in its natural balance and to stand 'square'.



Square halt, with the horse on the rider's aids.

The rider must keep the horse 'in front' of them and on the aids, even in halt. This way, the horse remains focused and ready to move off at any time in a 'forward' manner.

Halts should be practised time and again so that the horse learns to stand still and wait for the rider's aids. Mistakes in halt (not square, one hind leg stepping out) should only be corrected in a forward movement and never backwards. When in doubt, it is more effective to repeat the entire full halt again.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

The typical mistakes are usually the same as those described for half-halts.

- It is a particular mistake of the full halt when it is not prepared for sufficiently and the preceding half-halt, which is supposed to lead to the halt, is given with too much effort. As a result, this might lead to problems with the horse's balance, as well as resistance – the horse usually takes a step backwards during the halt. If

the rider *falls behind the vertical with their upper body*, this is a sign that the concept of weight aids has been misunderstood. The horse receives too much pressure on its back as a result of the rider's faulty posture and is not able to swing in a supple manner through to the last step.

6.2.4 Letting the Horse Chew the Reins out of the Hand/Giving and Retaking the Reins

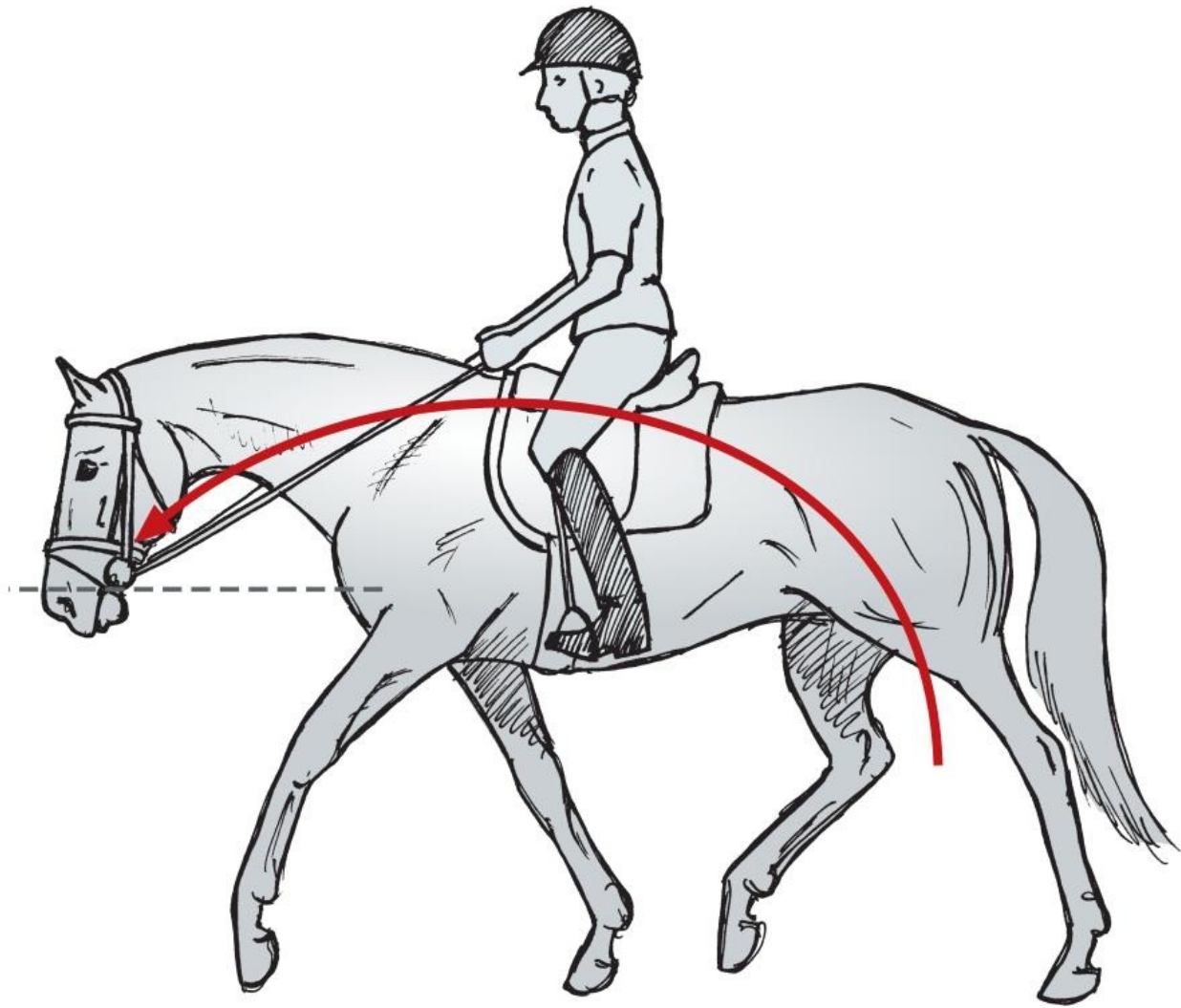
■ LETTING THE HORSE CHEW THE REINS OUT OF THE HAND

This is an important exercise for checking and improving the horse's readiness to stretch. The rider offers the horse the reins with increased driving aids and, by opening up the fists, allowing it to stretch forwards-downwards. Thus, the secure rhythm, suppleness, and the horse's trust in the rider's hand is tested and improved. This readiness to stretch is a particularly important foundation for contact. At the same time, letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand helps to school balance, particularly with young horses.

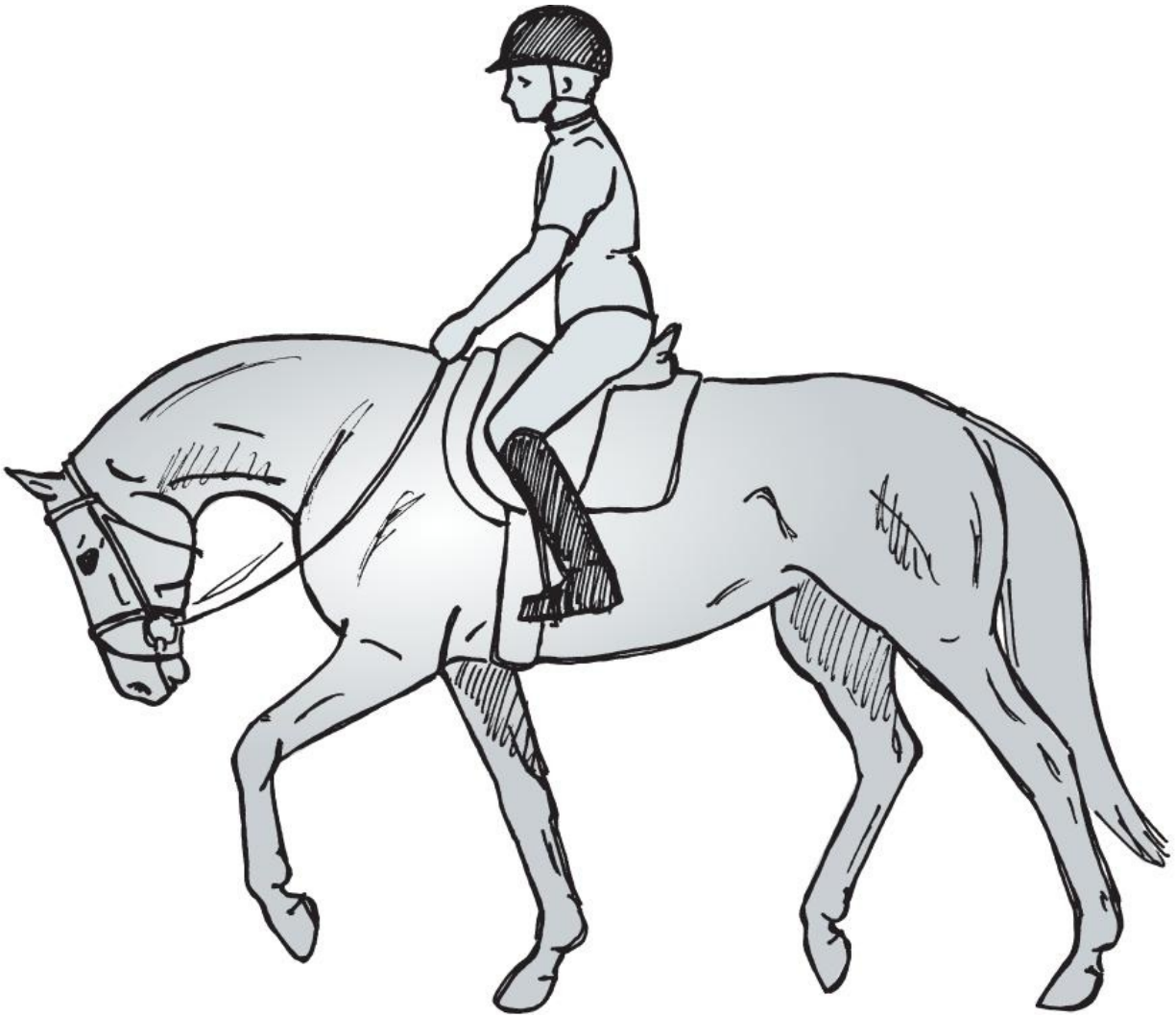
Initially, the rider prepares the movement with half-halts. They ride into the sustaining hand and, by doing so, generate more readiness to stretch from the horse. In the process, the horse should seek the forwards-downwards contact with the bit. The rider allows the horse to stretch as far as it is prepared to go by opening up the fingers slightly and thus lengthening the reins – but no more than the length of a 'long rein'. The constant connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth remains intact throughout. The rein should not be so loose as to make it appear slack because then the horse cannot stretch to the rider's hand.

The stretching should go at least so far that the horse's mouth is at the height of the point of the shoulder. The neck may, however, only stretch as far as the horse's balance will permit. It is a positive sign when the rhythm and the speed remain unaltered. The head-nose line remains slightly in front of the vertical.

When the horse is stretching, the entire upper muscles of the body are also increasingly stretched. The rider must continue to apply their driving aids when lengthening the reins so that the hind legs can lift energetically forwards and the horse does not lose balance. In working trot, the hind feet should continue to step at least into the tracks left by the forefeet.



Correct forwards-downwards stretching. The horse stretches confidently forwards and downwards into the rider's hand. The positive arc of tension is maintained.



Wrong: incorrect forwards-downwards stretching! The rider does not have the horse 'in front' of their driving aids and stretching forward into the contact. The horse 'tilts' downwards with the neck from the third vertebra onwards. The positive arc of tension is lost.

Experience suggests that letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand should be most successful when riding on a circle, in any gait. For this, it can be helpful to bring the horse further onto the outside rein, with the rider's inside leg close to the girth. This enables the rider to give more readily with the inside rein – at times employed in a slightly sideways-acting manner – in order to subsequently give on both reins. The horse thus assumes a stretched neck position more easily. Some horses relax the back muscles better when less weight is placed on the seatbones. Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand frequently over short stretches and for short periods, is more valuable for the suppling and strengthening of the muscles than long-term riding in an unchanged stretching position. In this latter way, the horse may 'fall onto the forehand'.

Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand, and thus a forward-downward position, is concluded by closing the fingers and by riding into a shorter retaining rein contact. By picking up the reins again, the exercise is brought to an end. It can

also lead into walking on a loose rein.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AIDS MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

- The rider *lengthens the reins too much or too quickly* without the horse seeking to stretch towards them. As a result, the horse can lose balance and the contact is also lost.
- The rider does not allow enough stretching. This way, the exercise does not have the desired effect of improving the horse's readiness to stretch.
- The rider tries to bring the horse '*actively*' deeper with the hands. This way, the horse will no longer stretch forwards-downwards, but rather become 'short' in the neck. The forehead-nose line comes behind the vertical.
- The rider *does not apply sufficient driving aids*. The secure contact and the flow of movement can in some cases be lost. The horse does not remain in balance, but 'falls onto the forehand'.

■ GIVING AND RETAKING THE REINS

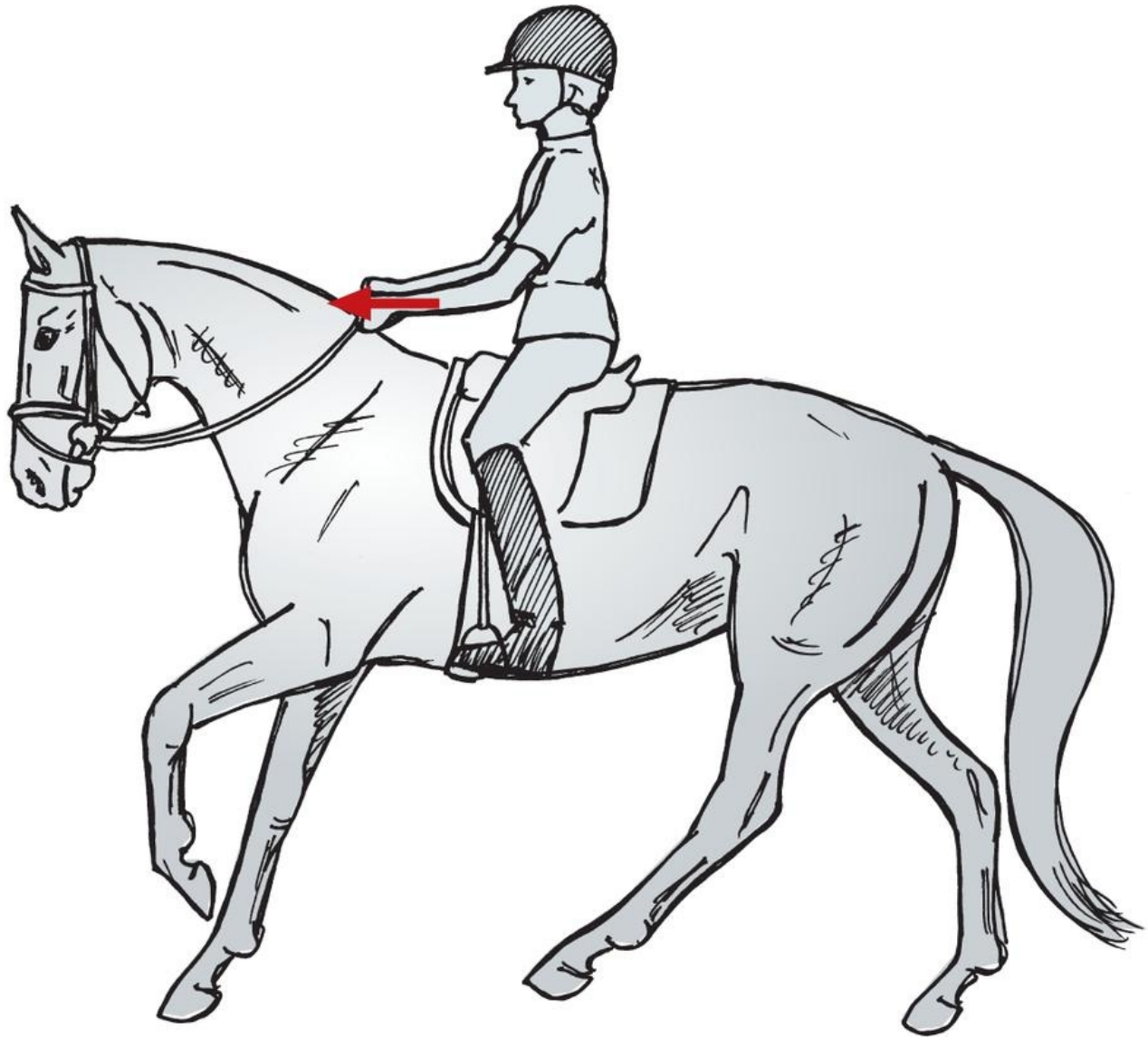
'Giving and retaking the reins' serves above all to verify the horse's self-carriage. Thereby, it also tests the horse's balance, as well as the balanced seat of the rider. It ought to show whether the horse is securely on the rider's weight and leg aids and is fully balanced, without leaning on the rider's hand. Only then will the horse carry itself.

To give and retake the reins, the rider, for a brief moment, and for a maximum of two to three horse's lengths, slides both hands forwards along the horse's crest. The fists move about one to two hand's widths forwards. The contact is given up intentionally for a short time. Subsequently, the hands are taken back to their original position. The position of the rider's seat remains unchanged throughout the giving and retaking of the reins.

The horse's forehead-nose line may come slightly in front of the vertical during this exercise. Nevertheless, the horse should not change its posture or release itself from the aids. The tempo remains unchanged.

Giving and retaking the reins is generally carried out with both of the rider's hands. The hands move forwards from the elbow without the rider losing stability in the seat. The rider continues to keep the horse on their driving aids. Giving and retaking the reins can also be done with just one hand (generally the inside one). The correct flexion of the horse, with a soft inside rein on a curved line, can also be tested this way. Only if the horse is on the inside leg and outside rein, will the position be maintained when the inside rein yields forwards ([see Chapter 4.2.1 Giving of Aids](#)).

If the level of training and the balance which have been reached are not yet far enough advanced, it can also be sufficient to show only a brief intention of giving and retaking the reins and to repeat this after further half-halts or transitions.



Giving and retaking the reins.

Giving and retaking the reins or simply ‘intending’ to do so can be very helpful for finding a light contact.

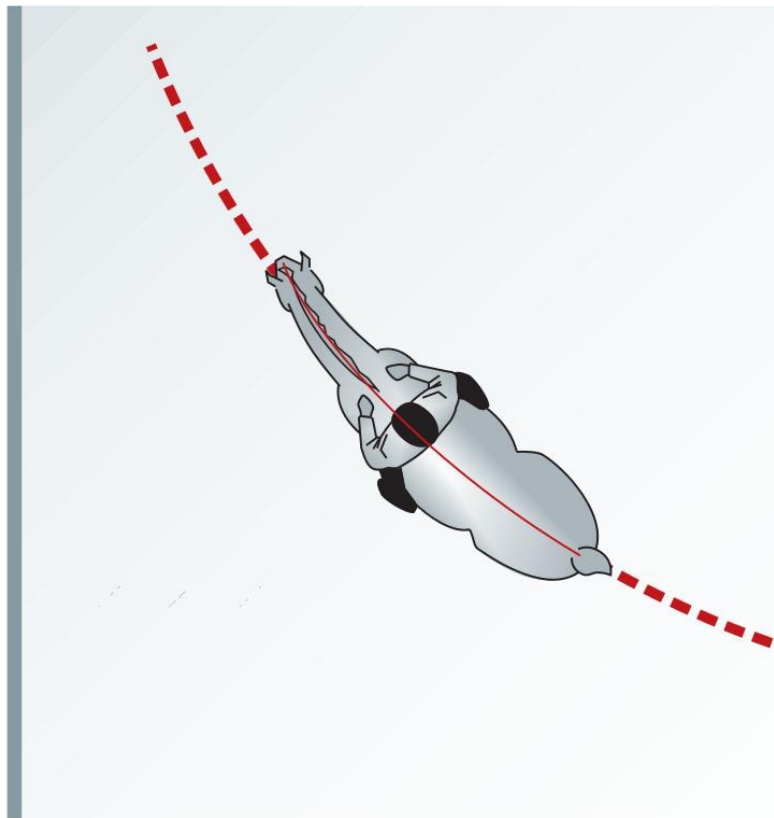
TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- *Giving up a balanced seat* by leaning the upper body too far forwards. By doing so, the rider throws the horse off balance, which frequently also results in a loss of rhythm. The self-carriage, which should essentially be tested, is lost instead and the horse ‘falls onto the forehand’, or is not sufficiently supported by the aids. Testing and improving the balance will only succeed if the rider also remains in a balanced seat when giving the reins.

- When giving and retaking with the inside hand, the rider *twists their upper body*; the outside shoulder is incorrectly taken back and the outside rein is shortened. The horse is thus briefly flexed to the outside.

6.2.5 Riding Turns and on Curved Lines

When riding on a curved line, the horse should adapt the axis of its body to its own track. That means that it is bent on a circle or when being ridden through a corner. It does not mean that just the horse's body – as far as anatomically possible – is bent, but that also the neck is slightly bent. The poll is flexed (but not tilted) in the required direction.



Flexion and slight bend on the circle.

6.2.5.1 Flexing and Bending

■ FLEXING

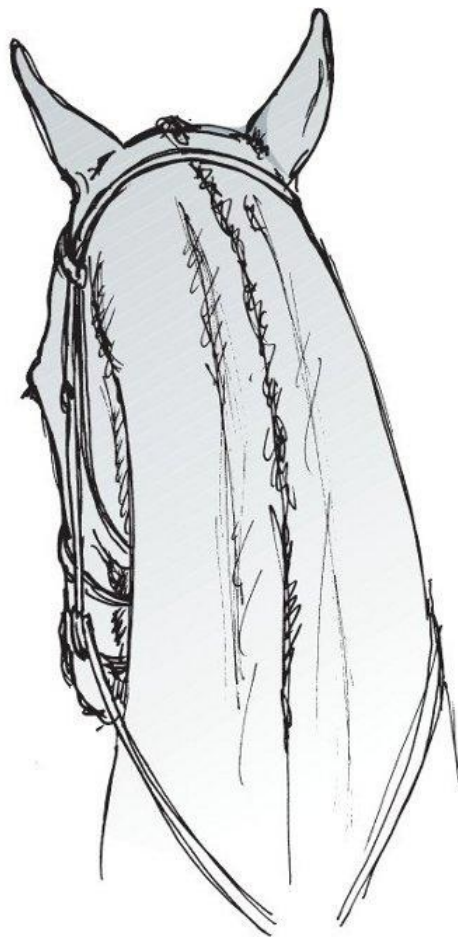
Flexion means that the horse turns its head and neck ever so slightly to the side so that the rider is just able to see the inside eye and the rim of the inside nostril. Flexion is achieved by flexing the joint between the head and the neck, the poll, minimally to the side. As a consequence, the neck, starting at the throat area, is slightly bent. The rider must always pay attention that the horse does not become tight in the angle between the neck and mandible⁴ as a problem-free flexion is otherwise impossible. Both of the horse's ears must remain at the same height! To aid correct understanding and the right application of the aids, it is helpful to think of wanting to stretch the far side of the horse rather than shortening the inside.

Regardless of which rein the rider is on, the side to which the horse is flexed is known as the 'inside' with the other side is referred to as the 'outside'.

To develop the flexion of the horse, all of the rider's aids (weight, leg and rein aids) are involved. Flexion is achieved by the rider sitting evenly on both seatbones.

With the inside leg at the girth, the rider brings the horse more onto the outside rein. The outside rein is lengthened as much as the inside rein is shortened. The outside rein thus determines the degree of flexion, with the rider only being able to catch a glimpse of the horse's inside eye and the rim of the inside nostril. The bit must remain in the centre of the horse's mouth. The rider's inside leg also ensures that the inward-flexed horse does not turn further inside than desired. The rider feels a lighter connection on the inside rein than on the outside one.

Correct left flexion (*see illustration on the right*). The rider can glimpse the inside eye and the inside nostril.



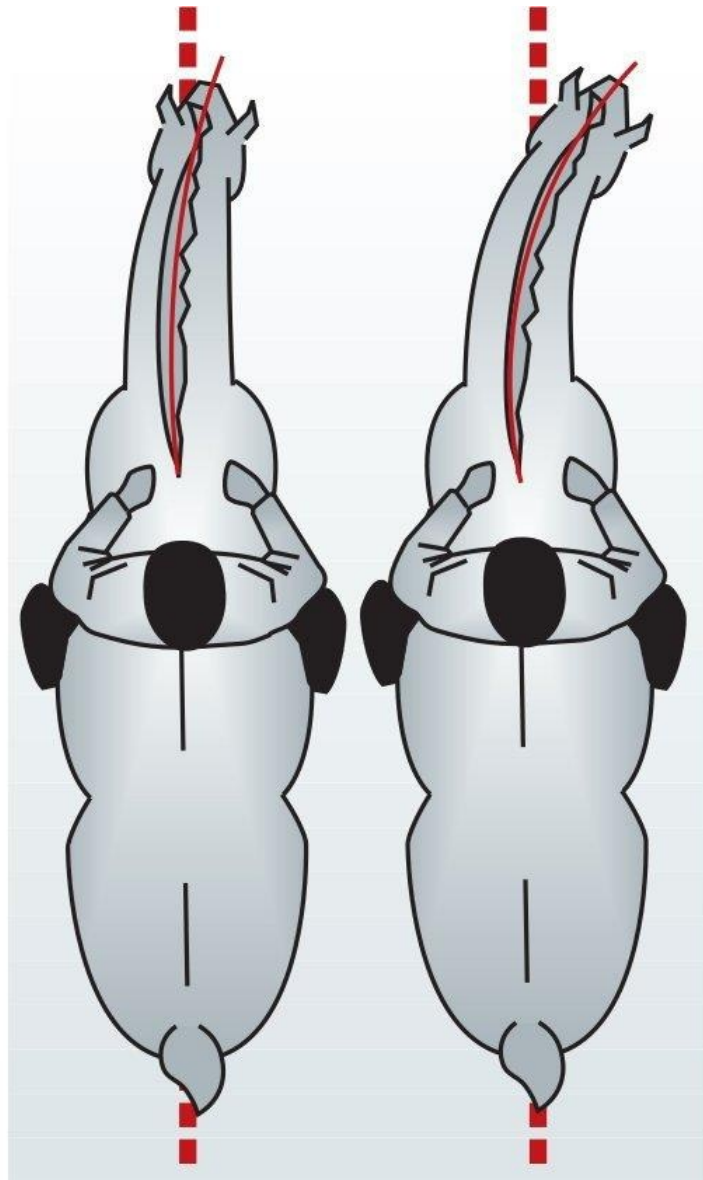
With a supple horse, the crest tips slightly to the side towards which the horse is flexed. At the same time, the rider will see on the opposite side of the neck (outside) more strongly defined upper neck muscles.

When changing the flexion from one side to the other (for example changing from circle to circle), the rider must flex the horse smoothly into the new direction while maintaining the driving aids. Thereby, the horse is straight for a brief moment.

With simple suppling exercises, such as leg-yielding or turns on the forehand, the horse is only flexed and not bent. Flexing is also an element of canter work. In canter on the left rein, the horse is flexed to the left, while on the right rein, it is flexed to the right.⁵ Therefore, establishing the flexion is part of the preparation for starting the canter.

The horse should be flexed and bent on any curved line. On a large curved line, for example when riding on a large circle, this bend is only very minor.

The flexion is to be kept as steady as possible so that the horse can find its balance and a certain degree of ease as well as a secure contact within the system of the rider's diagonal aids.



*Correct flexion to the right.
Incorrect – too much flexion.*

TYPICAL AID MISTAKES

'Too much' flexion often leads to:

- The horse falling out over the outside shoulder and, as a possible result of this;
- a disturbance of rhythm, but almost always;
- to resistance from the horse towards the inside rein and as a result of this, in turn to
- a blockage of the inside hind leg, and
- tilting of the poll.

In order to prevent this, it is, on the one hand, necessary to develop the flexion carefully and to ensure that the rider can only glimpse the horse's inside eye and rim of the nostril. Furthermore, the rider needs to pay attention to the fact that the horse's neck remains 'long' enough.

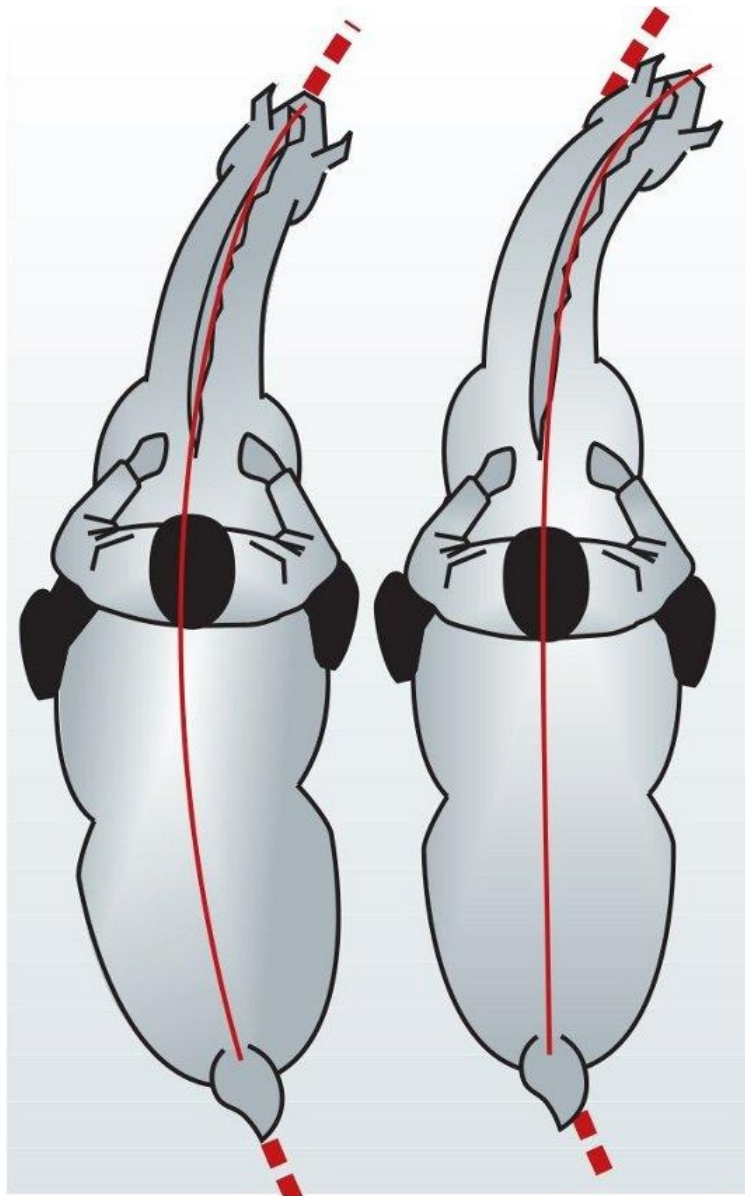
A horse that is '*short in the neck*' and tight in the neck-mandible angle cannot correctly assume the desired flexion since it is anatomically impossible for it to do so!

To be able to flex a horse, the rider must allow for and maintain a reliable elastic contact throughout.

A further consequence of too marked a flexion, potentially combined with a tight neck-mandible angle, is the so-called *tilting of the poll*, with the inside rein becoming too dominant. The horse can no longer give in the neck-mandible angle and therefore avoids the flexion by turning its head. The ears are no longer at the same height. This can become a habit that is very difficult to correct.

Tilting of the poll can also be caused by the rider pushing the *inside rein over the crest* of the horse. The inside rein thus becomes the dominant one. The horse is unable to accept the outside rein and the rider almost inevitably applies the weight aids incorrectly.

It is also a mistake when the rider '*changes the flexion*' constantly, or repeatedly flexes the horse and immediately straightens it again ('flexing and releasing'). If the flexion is not an honest result of a collaboration of all the aids, neither a constant contact nor a harmonious cooperation of horse and rider can be achieved. The horse is then unable to understand the rider's aids correctly and respond to them.



Bend to the right: left = correct; right = incorrect. The exaggerated flexion prevents an even bend along the horse's longitudinal axis.

■ BENDING

Bending means a bend along the longitudinal axis of the horse's body. As a theoretical idea, the horse's body should, as far as anatomically possible, be evenly bent. However, the spine has different degrees of mobility from the head down to the tail. In the area of the thoracic vertebrae, where the rider sits, the horse can only bend to a very minor extent. Here, it is not only the structure of the vertebral bodies, but also the ribs, which restrict the degree of bend. While the cervical spine has the greatest degree of mobility, and while there is also a degree of mobility in the lumbar vertebrae, the sacrum, where the vertebrae are fused together, is practically immobile. Therefore, in reality, the aim is that the bend should be harmonious and as even as possible and it should be adapted to the flexibility of the thoracic vertebrae. In order to achieve a bend without any tension, the rider may only flex the horse to the extent which the bending along the longitudinal axis

permits. Since the muscles on the outside of the horse are stretched when the horse is bent, the so-called bending work of the horse is an intensive gymnasticising process. It should be carried out evenly on both sides (of the body) and will have to be established over a long period of time.

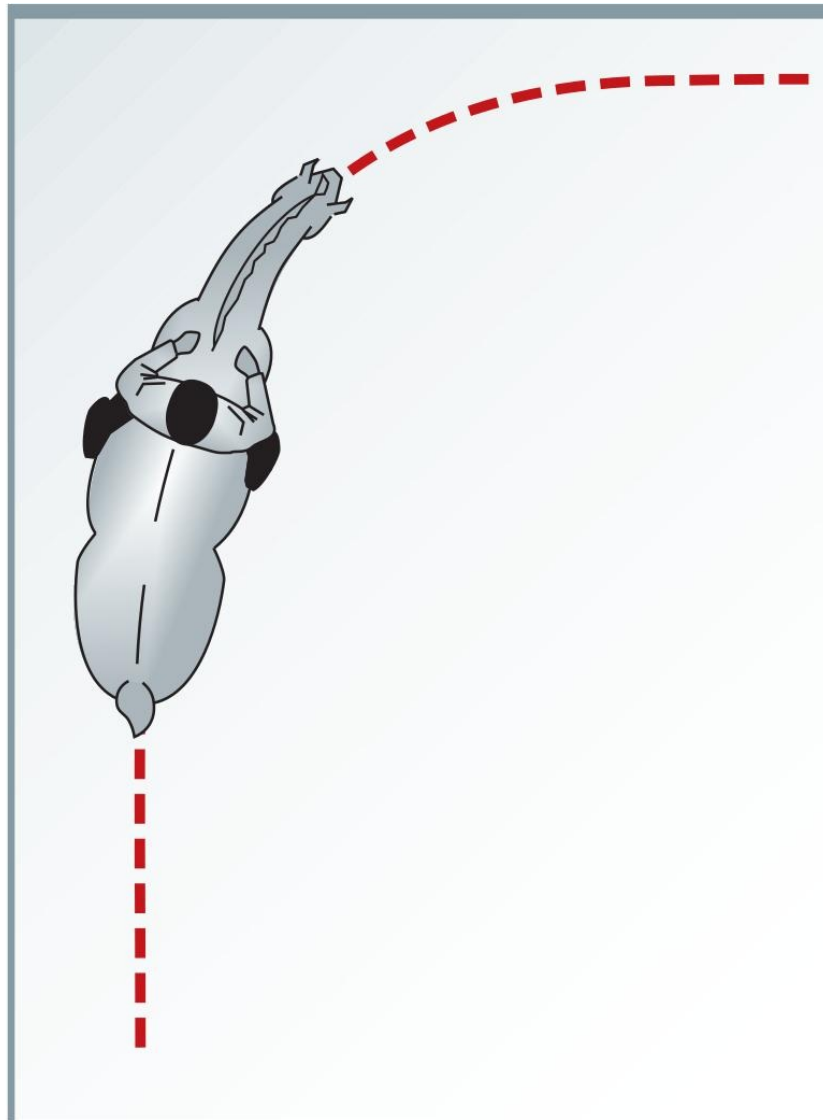
Bending the horse is a precondition for it to be able to move in a regular rhythm and in balance on a curved line. Furthermore, the ability and the willingness to bend are important conditions for straightening and collecting work ([see Chapter 7.6.6 Straightness](#)).

The bend is achieved by a thorough, strict collaboration of the 'diagonal aids':

- More weight is placed on the inside seatbone.
- The inside leg activates the hind foot on the same side and brings the horse onto the outside rein and leg aids. The horse is bent around the inside leg.
- The guarding outside leg lies one hand's width behind the girth and ensures that the forehand and hindquarters remain on the same track.
- The inside rein provides slight flexion and takes – if required – the horse into the turn.
- The outside rein gives as much as the flexion or the bend of the horse to the inside demands, prevents an exaggerated, incorrect flexion and guards the shoulder. It also ensures that the bit remains in the centre of the mouth.

Only good collaboration between the inside and the outside aids enables a harmonious flexion and bending of the horse.

Riding with flexion and bend means that the horse is securely on the diagonal aids; it accepts the outside rein at all times and the rider can yield with the inside hand. Bending is achieved through consistent, careful collaboration of all these aids.



Riding through a corner.

6.2.5.2 Riding through a Corner

The correct riding through corners tests the precision of the rider's influence and improves the throughness of the horse at the same time. Just before reaching the corner, the rider gives a half-halt, which means they 'frame' the horse briefly with their aids and give it the required flexion. The rider then starts to ride through the corner with the correct bend, by employing the inside leg more at the girth. The outside leg is in a guarding position. The inside hip is brought slightly forward while the rider's shoulders turn in a way that mirrors those of the horse.

The inside rein ensures the necessary flexion while the outside rein allows this flexion, at the same time keeping the connection. After the corner, the horse is ridden straight again.

Riding through corners is the same as riding a quarter-volte. It is helpful initially to practise riding corners at a walk to coordinate the aids required for the turn in the slower speed of this gait.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- If the rider has not sufficiently mastered their diagonal aids and, in particular, the use of the inside leg, it can easily happen that the horse cuts the corners. If the rider tries to compensate for this only through weight and rein aids, consequential mistakes will arise: with an incorrect weight aid, the rider slides too far to the outside with their weight, they may collapse in the hips and the inside hand pushes outwards over the crest. As a result, the rider no longer sits in balance and the flexion and bend of the horse are lost. Riding through a corner thus loses all of its gymnasticising value.

Riding through a corner is a precondition for being able to ride on a curved line and through turns in the correct manner. When leaving the corner, the horse must be ridden straight again.

■ CHANGE THE REIN ACROSS THE LONG/SHORT DIAGONAL

Changing rein across the long or short diagonal is always connected to riding a turn to the left or the right. The rider must first pass through the second corner of the short side. After riding through this corner, the horse is straightened. Before the marker where changing rein is to commence, the horse must be prepared through half-halts. Shortly before the horse's outside shoulder reaches this marker, the rider leads the horse into the turn. From this turn onwards, as when riding through a corner, the horse is intentionally straightened again. On the diagonal, the horse must remain on the driving aids; it must be straight and step forwards into both reins evenly. The rider should focus their eyes on the opposite marker where the horse is intended to arrive with the 'new' outside shoulder on the track.

6.2.5.3 Riding on a Circle

When riding on a circle, a slight, steady bend of the horse is necessary, with which it moves evenly on a circular line. As described with the giving of aids for flexion and bend, the inside driving leg, lying at the girth, activates the inside hind leg, maintains the bend and prevents the horse from cutting into the circle. The outside leg lies in a guarding position, if necessary also driving behind the girth, ensuring that the outside hind leg steps forward evenly while keeping the hindquarters on the same track as the forehand. The guarding outside rein limits the flexion. The circle is ridden as an even circular arc; corners are not ridden. They are rounded off so that the rider is on a curved, circular line from one marker of the circle to the next (for example A–X–A, C–X–C for circles starting from A or C).

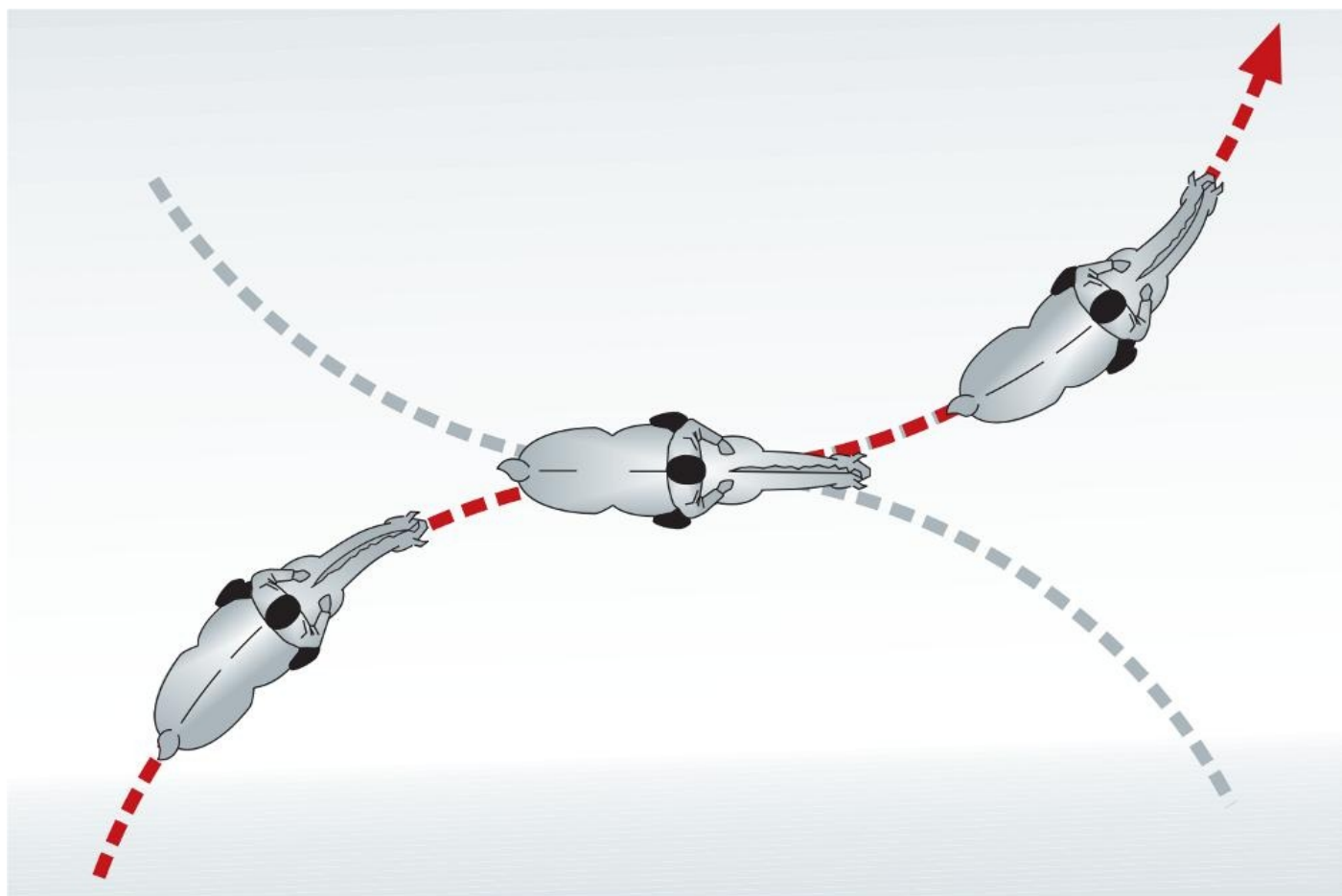
TYPICAL AID MISTAKES

- In addition to the above-mentioned problems of flexion, bend and riding turns, problems frequently arise when the rider does not ride the circle as one large, continuous turn, but always gives up flexion and bend, only to have to re-

establish them again. This does not create a steady, finely tuned system between the horse and rider, through which both can achieve suppleness.

■ CHANGE OF REIN FROM 20M CIRCLE TO CIRCLE

When the rider changes directly from one circle line on one rein to the other on the other rein, they are said to be 'changing rein from circle to circle'. In a 20 x 40m arena, the first circle begins at A or C and the change, which takes place at the centre of the arena (at X), is fluent and smooth. Parallel to the short side, the horse is ridden straight for one horse's length and then flexed and bent into the direction of the new circle. For the rider, this is the moment in which to adjust their seat sensitively and change diagonal if in rising trot. The rider must adjust their weight aids suitably, change their leg position and the rein length accordingly, which means that the new inside rein is shortened and the new outside rein slightly lengthened. What was the outside seatbone, leg and rein beforehand now become the new inside seatbone, leg and rein, and vice versa. During this repositioning, the rider must deliberately employ the diagonal aids by riding the horse more into the new outside rein with the new inside leg. The outside leg will thereby be in a guarding position behind the girth, containing the horse.



Changing rein from circle to circle.

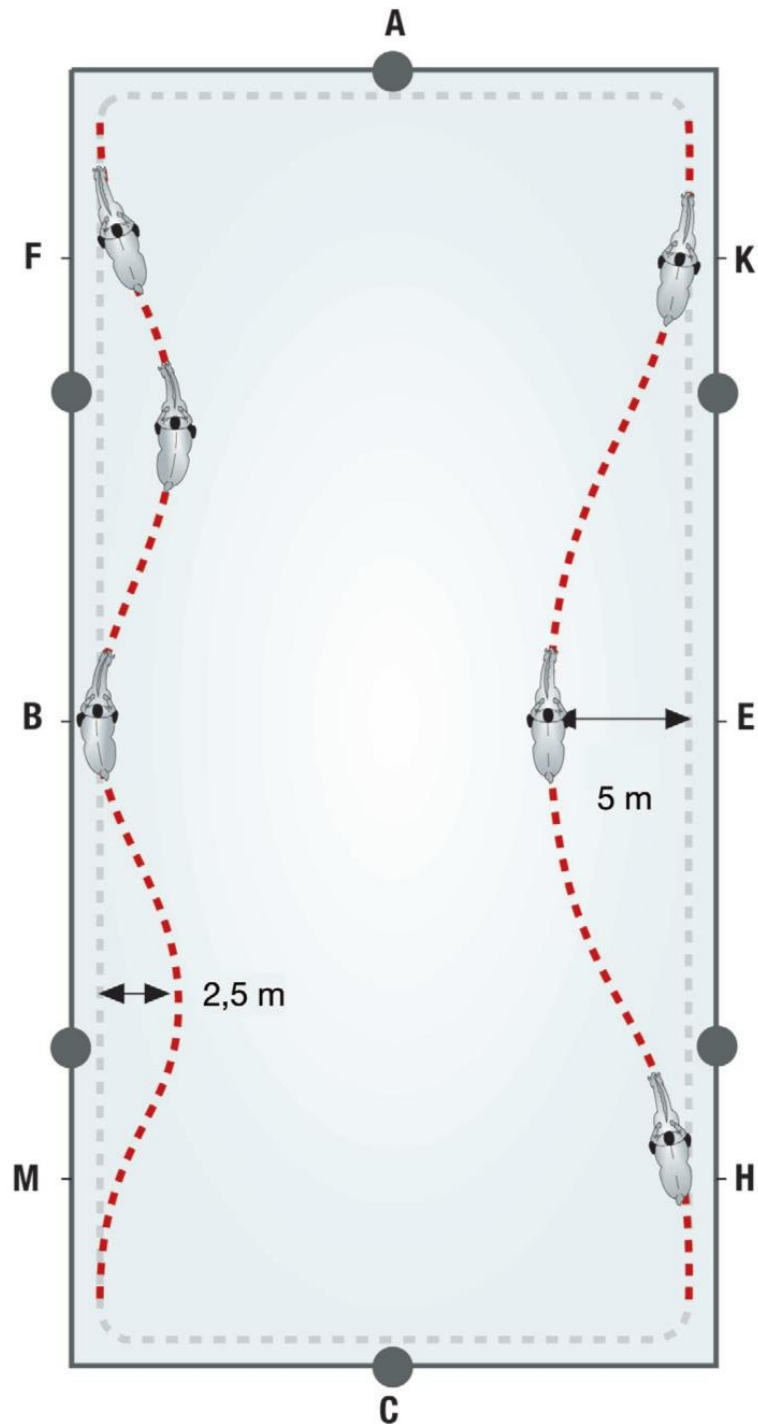
- *Changing flexion too quickly*, without riding the horse briefly on a straight line beforehand, can lead to balance problems combined with problems in rhythm and contact. The horse must be given enough time to, physically and mentally, respond to the changed rider's aids.

■ **REDUCING THE SIZE OF THE CIRCLE – INCREASING THE SIZE OF THE CIRCLE**

In this exercise, the horse is gradually ridden 'into' the circle, reducing the diameter of the circle on a spiral line (down to a circle of approximately 10m in diameter). This exercise is useful for improving the bend and the activity of the hindquarters because the horse must take more weight onto the hindquarters in tight turns.

When increasing the size of the circle again, the horse is ridden out of the circle onto the original line. During both the riding in and riding out of the circle, the horse must be 'straightened' (that is, the forehand and the hindquarters remain moving on one track). The exercise is mostly ridden in trot or in canter, but it can also be ridden in walk, although particular attention must be paid, in this case, to maintaining the purity of the rhythm. How far the horse is to be ridden into the circle depends on the level of training and the balance of horse and rider. The more advanced the level of training, the more the circle can be reduced in size and, as a result, a stronger collecting and gymnasticising effect can be obtained.

The diagonal aids frame the horse and support it in tracking true. The coordination of these aids is thereby particularly enhanced. With advanced horses, lateral driving aids are increasingly employed when reducing and increasing the size of the circle. In doing so, a greater gymnasticising effect is obtained.



Simple serpentine on the long side (right) Two-loop serpentine on the long side (left)

TYPICAL AID MISTAKE

- *Too much sideways*

The horse should not reduce the size of the circle in a travers-like movement and should not leg-yield when increasing the size of the circle. Loss of rhythm, resistance by the horse and 'falling out through the shoulder' can be the consequences if the horse and rider are not far enough advanced in their training.

6.2.5.4 Serpentine

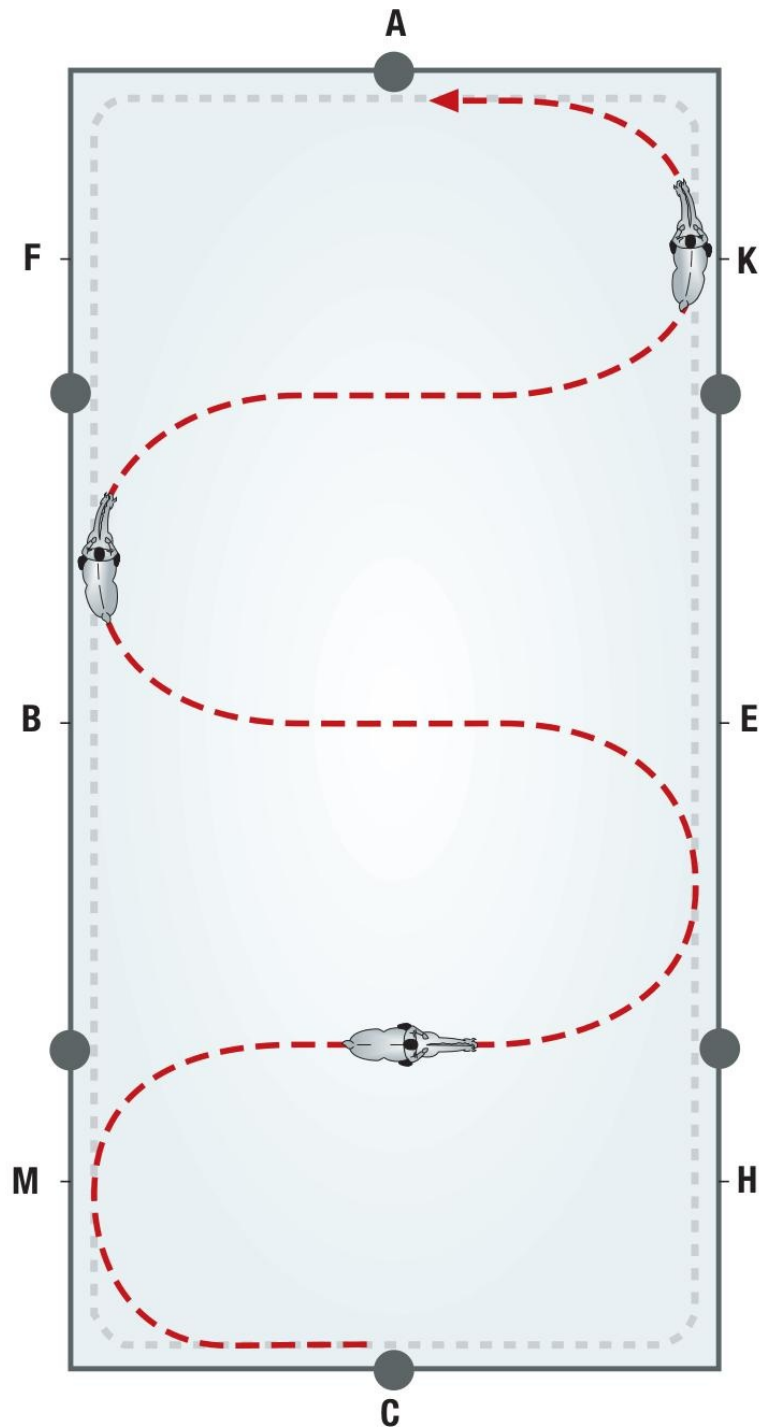
These are figures ridden in the arena in the snake-like shapes. They can be ridden along the long side (one-loop/simple or double serpentine)⁶, around the centre line or through the whole arena.

The SIMPLE SERPENTINE leads from the first corner on the long side towards the centre of the arena and back to the second corner on the long side in a curved line. The apex (the greatest distance from the track) is 5m from the track, level with the centre of the opposite long side. The simple serpentine on the left rein is a line, to be ridden harmoniously, in which, starting in the corner, the left flexion and bend are gradually changed to right flexion and bend in order to re-establish a left flexion and bend going into the next corner. The length of the reins must be adjusted accordingly. A simple serpentine is a suppling exercise.

A DOUBLE SERPENTINE leads from the corner back towards the middle of the long side, and from there back towards the centre of the arena and then back to the corner again. It has two apexes, both 2.5m from the track, approximately halfway between the markers and the middle of the long side, level with the circle markers. This exercise requires considerably more skill and experience of the rider because the sequence of the changes of flexion and bend occurs significantly faster. The double serpentine is part of the collecting exercises and demands a higher level of throughness of the horse.

As an advanced exercise, these figures can also be ridden around the centre line.

SERPENTINES THROUGH THE WHOLE ARENA commence and end in the middle of the short side (the corners are rounded off). The number of loops ridden depends on the size of the arena and the training level of the rider and the horse. In a 20 x 40m arena, generally three to four loops are ridden, while in a 60m arena more loops can be added accordingly.

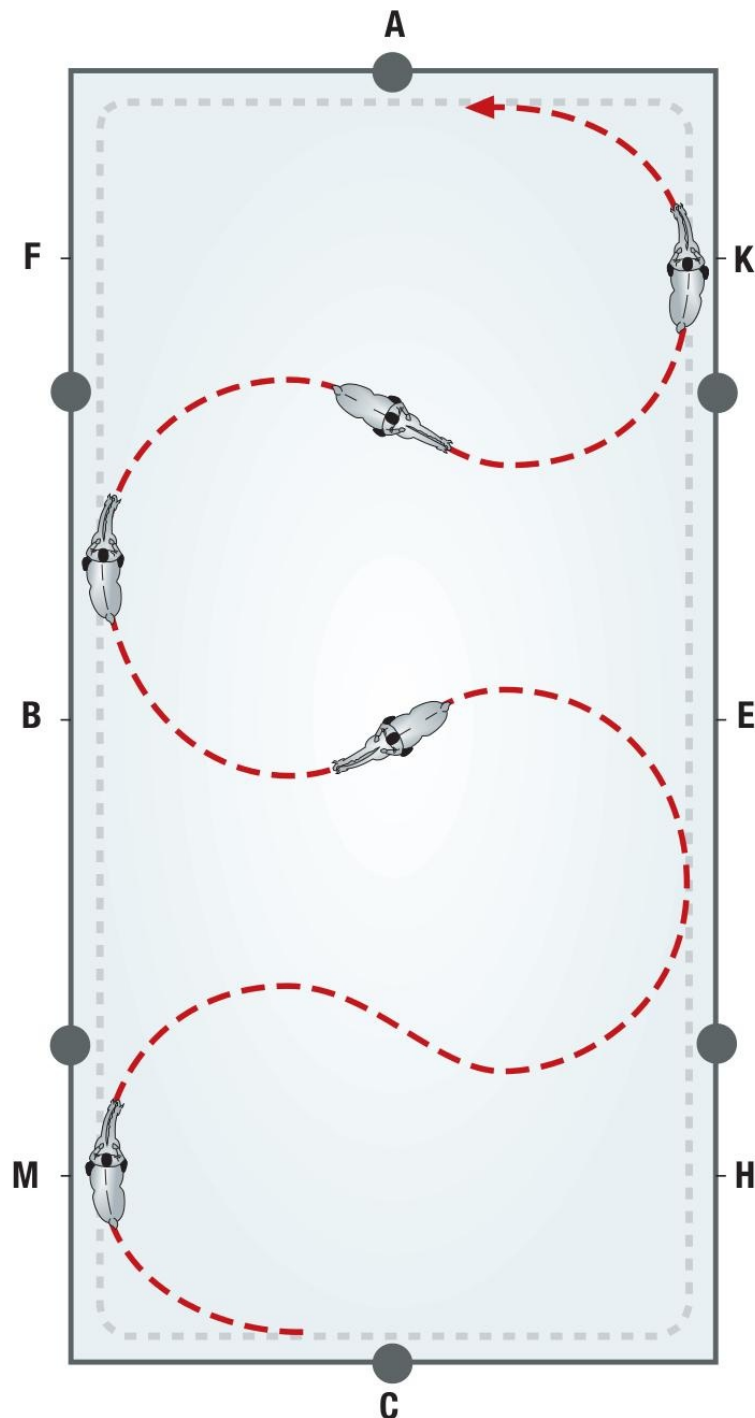


Four-loop serpentine through the whole arena.

In dressage tests at competitions, the exercise 'serpentine through the whole arena' consists of several loops distributed evenly throughout the arena. Between these loops are straight sections which cross the centre line at a right angle. When carrying out this exercise, the horse is ridden on a straight line at the end of each loop. An even number of loops leads to a change of rein at the end. With an odd number of loops, this is not the case. Changing the diagonal when in rising trot, or a change of lead in canter is always carried out when crossing the centre line. This exercise should test and enhance the ability to ride straight between each loop while ensuring the straightness in potential transitions (trot-walk), simple change of

lead in canter or, during flying changes later on in the training.

An additional type of serpentine through the whole arena, which is not a movement of the competitive sport, is a form of loops which start to 'go back on themselves' and have no straight lines between them (see *illustration overleaf*). With this form, the centre line is always crossed diagonally so that the shape of each loop resembles a pear. The flexion and bend of the horse are changed smoothly when crossing the centre line.



For gymnastic training, this kind of serpentine can be used.

This type of serpentine is of great value for the training of horse and rider. It furthers the skill of the rider in coordinating the aids as well as the elasticity and throughness of the horse. Therefore, this type of serpentine should not be absent from the daily schooling.

Each serpentine is introduced, as is every other exercise, by a half-halt to gain the horse's attention and frame it between leg and hand. Depending on the direction of the movement, the rein length is adjusted accordingly, the horse is flexed and bent suitably for that line (more use of the inside leg at the girth, the outside leg in a guarding position), with increased weight on the inside seatbone. In rising trot, the rider changes the diagonal with every change of direction.

6.2.5.5 Riding Voltes

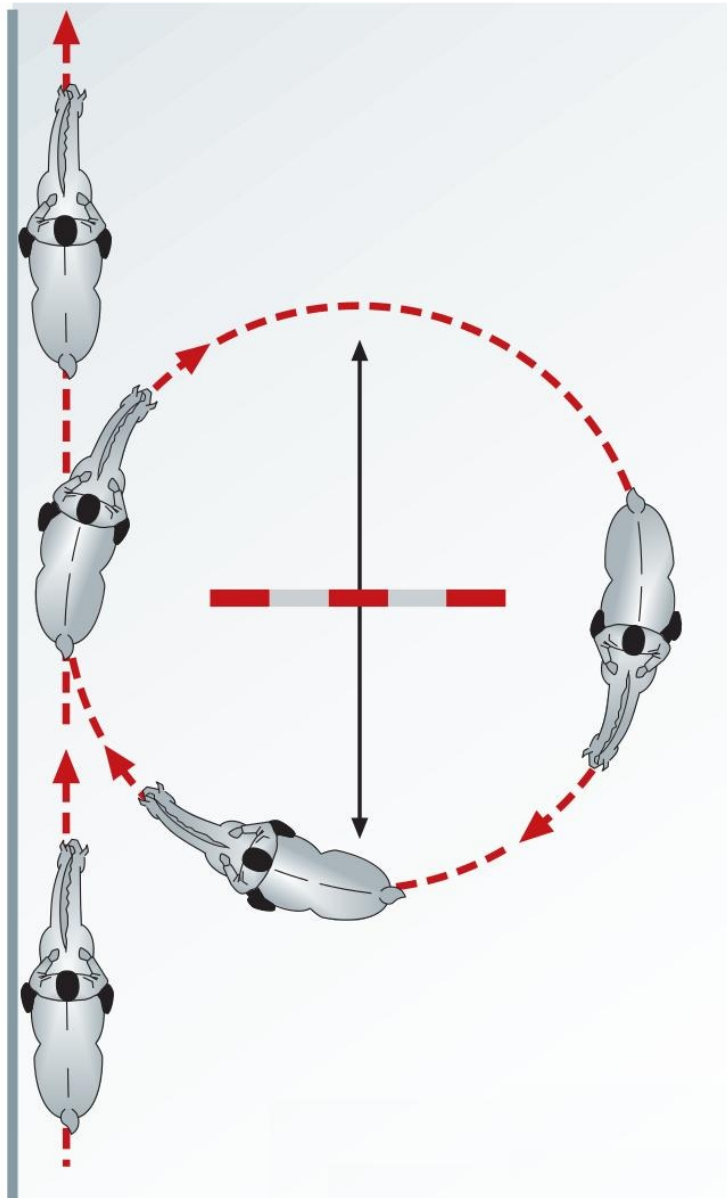
Depending on the size, the volte demands a more marked bend of the horse than is required on large curved lines. The smaller the turn or volte, the more 'closed from behind' and balanced the horse has to be. Only then can the horse's rhythm and self-carriage be maintained when riding voltes. The rider must therefore prepare their horse in advance of the volte with half-halts. The forehand and hindquarters should move on the same track, thus the curved line will only show one track. Voltes can be ridden anywhere in the arena. In basic training, they are ridden with a diameter of 10m⁷ in walk or in working trot. The first voltes are easier when starting in the corners. Thus, the bend of the horse can be established more easily and be taken into the volte, since corners are already ridden as quarter voltes. Riding voltes is also facilitated when the rider turns to look at the midpoint (for example the centre line, if riding a 10m volte from the long side) when turning off the track, and then back to the starting point from the midpoint. The line of vision controls the rider's body position and, as a result, also their aids.

Using poles or cones can be an aid of orientation for riding regular-shaped voltes.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

- The rider *does not prepare for the volte sufficiently*. Thus, it becomes difficult to ride the planned line without any disturbance. The horse, therefore, is not able to keep its balance in the tight turns, which leads to irregularities in the rhythm.
- The rider '*exaggerates*' the flexion, perhaps remaining too stiff with the inside hand. A loss of rhythm or impulsion, tilting of the poll, falling out over the shoulders, or evasive hindquarters can be the consequences.
- If the rider does not maintain enough contact with the outside rein, the horse falls out over the shoulder. This most notably occurs on the rein where the horse has its hollow side ([see Chapter 7.6.6 Straightness](#)).

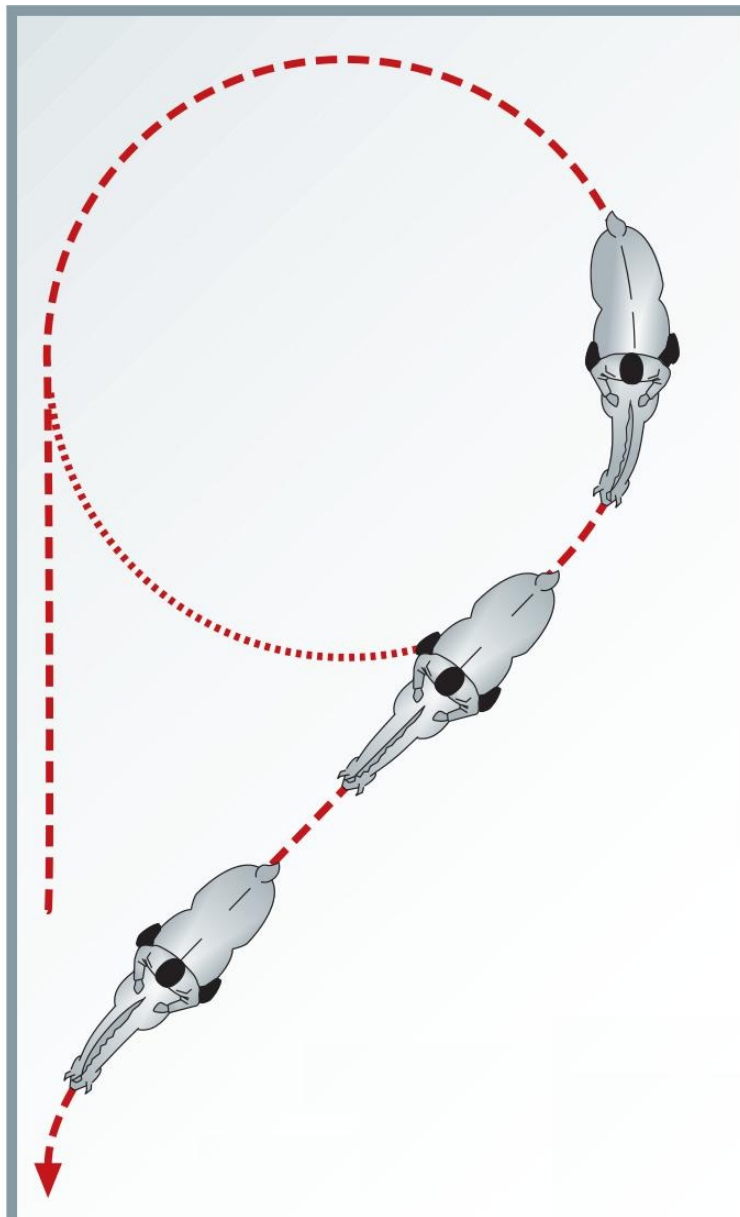
- The *outside guarding leg of the rider is not securely applied and in the correct position*. Particularly on the horse's stiff side, there is a risk that the horse might drift with the hindquarters.



Volte around a pole – two sections of equal size!

■ HALF-CIRCLE AND RETURN TO THE TRACK

The half-circle and return to the track is the same as the 'turn out of the corner' movement (starting in the second corner on the long side) and is to be ridden like a volte in its first part. From the point of the curve which is furthest away from the track, the rider leads the horse diagonally but on a straight line back to the track. A change of rein has thus occurred. The point where the track is reached determines how much gymnastic value is to be achieved with this exercise. In dressage tests, the diameter of the turn is specified in the rules; during training, the size of the turn can be adjusted according to the level of horse and rider.



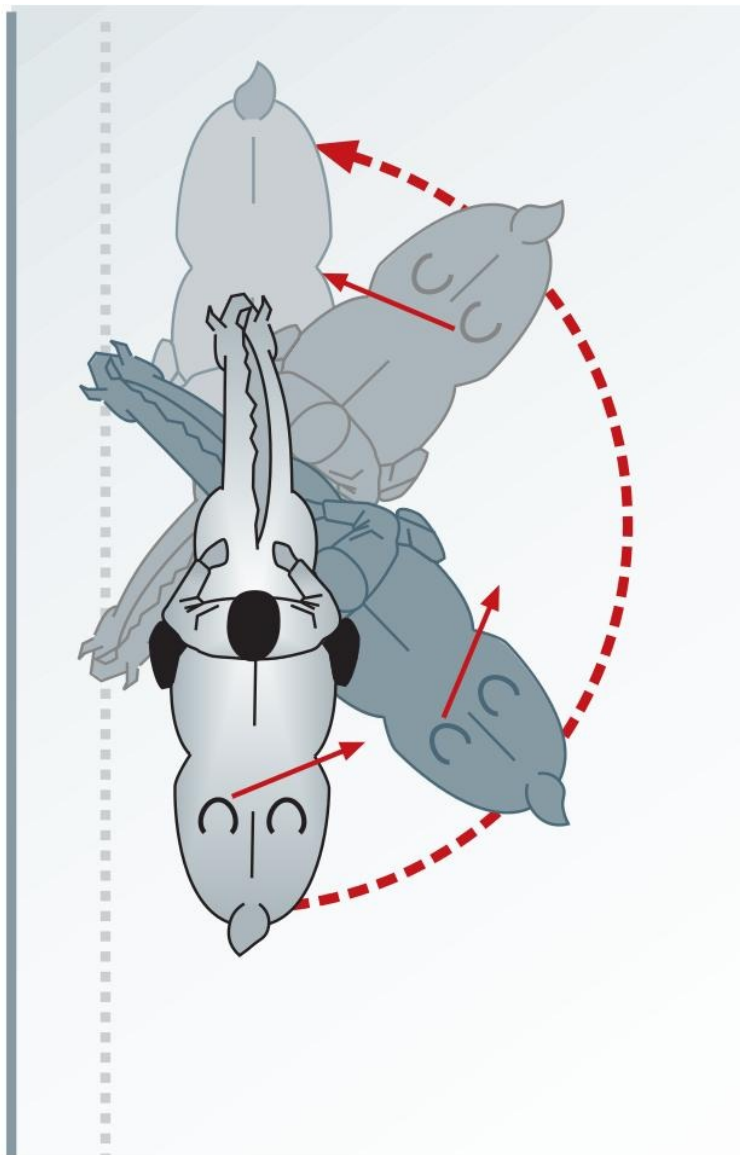
Half-volte and return to the track.

■ CHANGE OF REIN THROUGH THE CIRCLE

'Changing rein through the circle' is an exercise well suited for gymnastic purposes. When based on 20m circles (see *illustration overleaf*) a 10m half-circle is ridden from one of the circle markers towards the centre of the circle. When passing the centre line, the horse is flexed and bent into the new direction. The figure is completed by a 10m half-circle on the new rein, arriving at the track again at the opposite circle marker.

outside one. The outside foreleg steps in a small half-circle around the inside foreleg, which does not only turn, but also describes a minimal circle.

After the completion of a 180-degree turn, the horse stands straight again.



The individual phases of the turn on the forehand.

The aids for the turn on the forehand on the right rein are given as follows:

- From a secure halt on the inside track, and on the rider's aids, the horse is flexed. The inside (left) rein, combined with the inside leg, provides the flexion, the outside guarding (right) rein permits the flexion, while at the same time preventing an excessive flexion in the neck and, potentially resulting from this, an escaping over the shoulder.
- The rider sits with more weight on the inside (left) seatbone.
- With the inside forwards-lateral driving leg, the rider activates the horse's hindquarters in rhythm with the footfall of the horse, step by step laterally around

the forehand.

- The outside (right) guarding leg prevents, however, too strong a lateral movement of the outside hind foot, or a rushing around of the hindquarters respectively. It will also 'catch' the hindquarters as soon as the movement has been completed.
- Backward steps are prevented by the rider's driving aids. Moving slightly forwards (mostly at the beginning or towards the end of the exercise) is countered by half-halts.

The turn on the forehand has a calm motion sequence in a clear four-beat rhythm, which can also be carried out in sections. That way, the rider can learn and practise the coordination of the aids. During the entire turn, the rider must keep the horse 'in front' of them with both legs and with their weight. Only then can they ensure that the horse does not step backwards to avoid the aids. A minor step backwards, on the other hand, is not as big a mistake as a step forwards.

TYPICAL SEAT AN AID MISTAKE/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

- *The rider leans their upper body sideways*, and collapses in the inside hip when the horse does not react as desired to the lateral driving leg. Because the rider shifts their weight incorrectly, the one-sided weight aid cannot be applied effectively. As a result, the horse does not step laterally, or does so with hesitation. The most serious consequence for the rider is that they cannot learn the correct one-sided weight aid.

6.2.7 Leg-Yielding Away from and Back to the Track

LEG-YIELDING is a suppling exercise and is initially ridden in walk. It enhances, as does the turn on the forehand, the sensitivity of the horse to the forwards-lateral driving leg aids. Leg-yielding is an important exercise that every horse should master. The reaction of the horse to the leg aids and, as a result, often the contact, are improved through this exercise. For a novice rider, it is an excellent exercise to assist in becoming more accustomed to the coordination of all the aids. In the basic form of leg-yielding, the horse moves with a slight flexion at a 45-degree angle along the track in a forwards-sideways movement on a maximum of two tracks. The horse's inside legs move forward and step over the outside ones evenly. The flexion always takes place to the side of the forwards-lateral leg, which therefore becomes the inside leg.

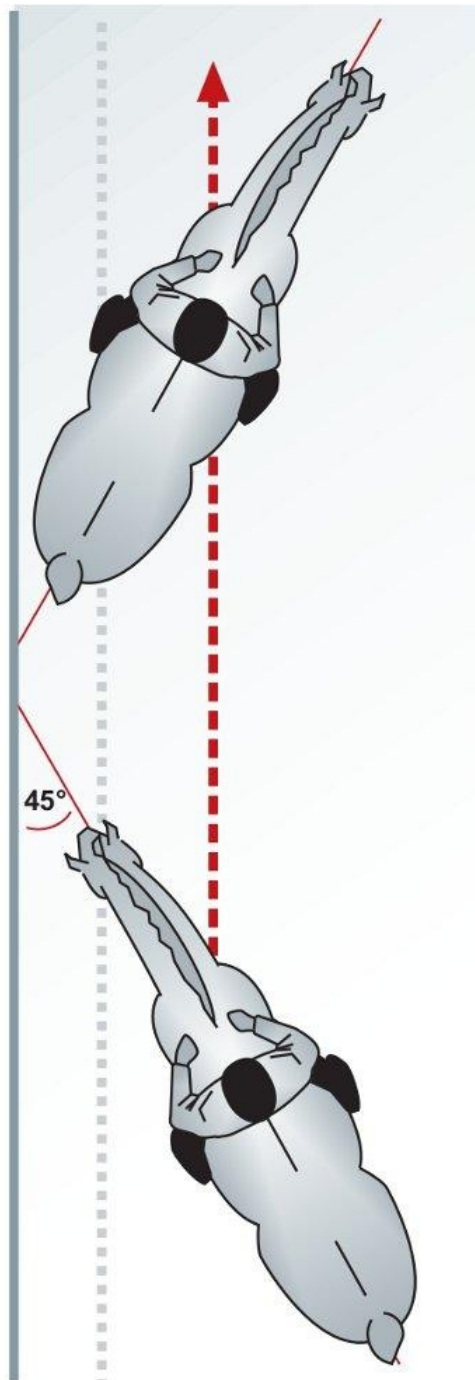
In leg-yielding, a 'forward' tendency, the fluency of the movement and maintenance of the rhythm must always be the priority.

More advanced riders can also ride a leg-yield without the 'support' of the wall. To do so, the forehand is led towards the inside of the arena, while the hindquarters

leg-yield along the wall.

Leg-yielding is ridden with flexion, but without bend. This is what differentiates leg-yielding from lateral movements in which the horse is bent along the longitudinal axis ([see Chapter 6.3.6 Shoulder-Fore, Shoulder-In](#)).

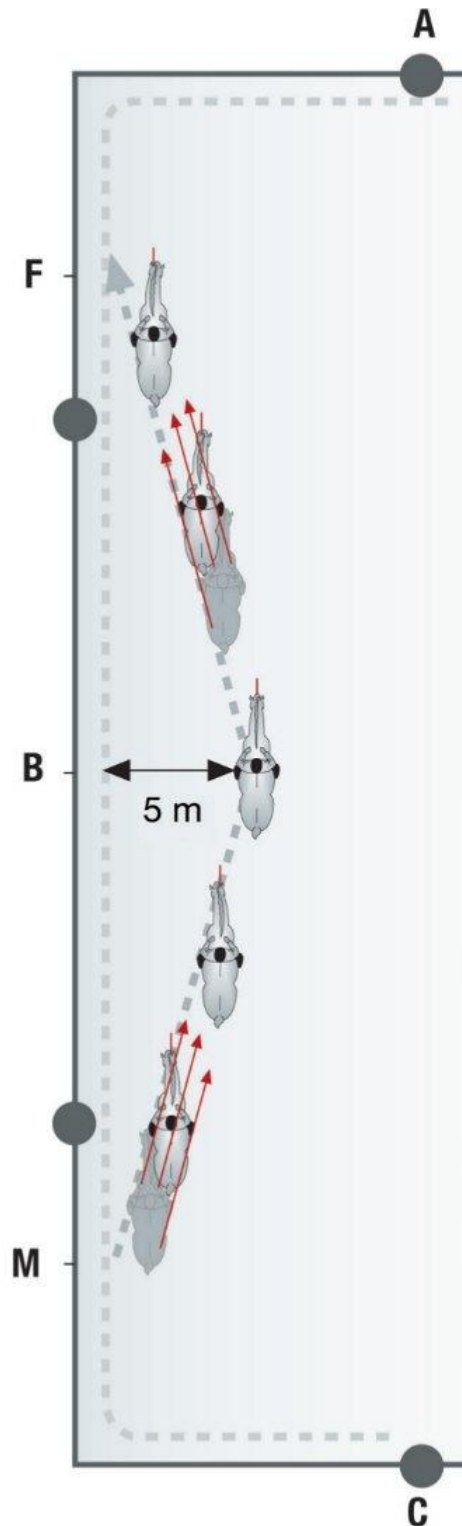
The rider starts the leg-yield after riding through the first corner on the long side. The horse is flexed in the poll towards the wall and the rider moves their pelvis forwards to the inside (to the side in which the horse is flexed, not in this case to the 'inside' of the arena) in order to place more weight on the inside seatbone. In doing so, the rider must have the feeling that their inside leg is getting a good contact with the inside of the horse. The rider's inside leg lies just behind the girth in a forwards-lateral driving function, applied in the rhythm of the hind leg as it leaves the ground. The outside leg lies in a guarding position behind the girth and thus prevents the horse from drifting too much sideways with the outside hind leg or rushing around with the hindquarters. The guarding outside rein permits the flexion, preventing, however, too strong a flexion in the neck, as well as the shoulder falling out as a result.



Above: leg-yield off the right leg (with head to the inside of the arena). Below: leg-yield off the left leg (with head towards the wall).

It may be easier at first to leg-yield off the rider's leg closest to the wall. The limitation provided by the wall makes it possible for the rider to initially focus more on the forwards-sideways driving aids. Leg-yielding 'with the head to the wall' is concluded by giving up the flexion and riding the horse straight on the track. It is more valuable to leg-yield off the leg which is facing towards the inside of the arena. Leg-yielding 'with the head to the inside' is concluded by bringing the forehand back in line with the hindquarters. Since the perimeter walls can no longer be of help here, the rider must apply more half-halts to transfer the forward movement into lateral movement. A greater angle than 45 degrees should be

avoided as it would disturb the horse's action both in terms of rhythm and activity.



Leg-yielding away from and back to the track.

LEG-YIELDING AWAY FROM AND BACK TO THE TRACK is a leg-yield along an imaginary line from the first marker on the long side (M in the illustration) towards the inside of the arena (5m in from the long side at the middle of the long side) and from there back onto the track at the final marker on the long side (F in the illustration). This same exercise of 'lateral movement in walk' can also be ridden on any open surface, in a

jumping arena or on a hack. Thereby, greater demands in terms of throughness and precision, as well as the coordination of the aids, are asked of the horse and rider. This exercise presumes that leg-yielding along the wall has already been mastered. As in leg-yielding along the long side, the horse moves on a maximum of two tracks, flexed accordingly. In addition to being carried out in walk, it can be ridden in working trot with more advanced riders.

Starting at the first marker of the long side, after riding through the corner, the rider changes the flexion of the horse. The rider has about one horse's length to change the flexion and will give the aid for leg-yielding along the imaginary line so that the horse, whose body remains almost parallel to the track, moves in a forwards-sideways direction towards the quarter line (5m line). The forehand will precede ('lead') the hindquarters only minimally. When reaching the quarter line (thus at a distance of 5m from the track) and approximately 2m before the midway point of the long side (E or B), the horse is straightened in the neck and ridden straight for one horse's length. Then, the rider changes the flexion and leads the horse back onto the track, along on the imaginary line, yielding off the other leg until reaching the track again.

When learning this exercise, it is recommended that the rider begins with leg-yielding away from the quarter line, and thus only riding towards the outside track. To do so, the rider turns the horse onto the quarter line and leads into the exercise from there. If this is successful, leg-yielding from the track to the quarter line can follow. Leg-yielding towards the wall is generally easier than leg-yielding away from the wall. Only once this has been mastered, can the complete movement be ridden successfully.

The rider must pay attention to ensure that the horse willingly accepts the aids, but does not get ahead of them.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- In principle, the same aid mistakes arise as in leg-yielding, such as the incorrect placing of the weight on the part of the rider, collapsing in the hip, exaggerated flexion, falling out over the shoulder, leading with the hindquarters. Since a leg-yield away from and back to the track, thereby is more complex and demanding, the above-mentioned mistakes will arise even sooner. They should, therefore, be corrected again without haste in regular leg-yielding.

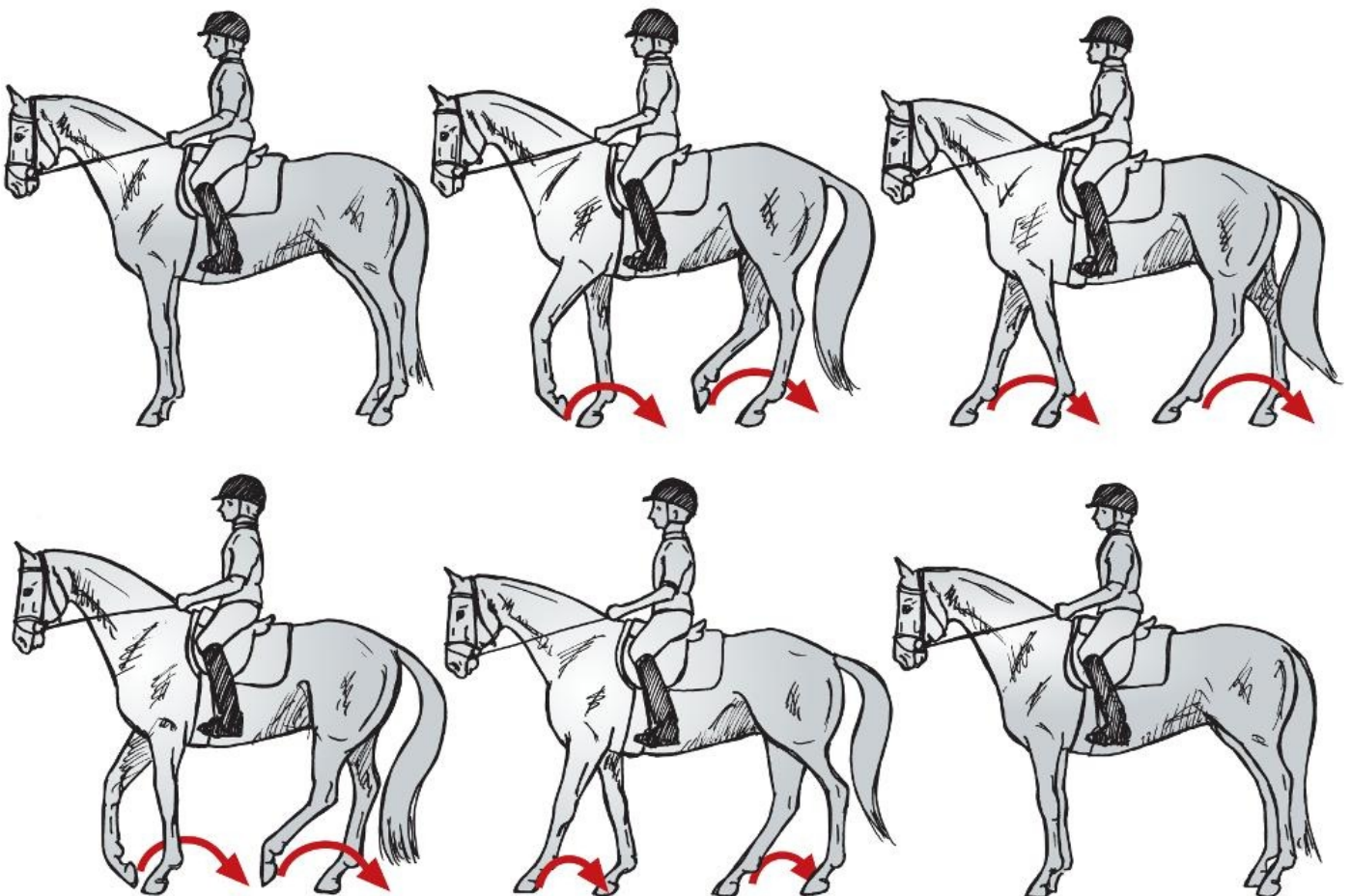
6.2.8 Rein-Back

Rein-back benefits and examines the throughness, the obedience and, in further training, the collection of the horse. Stepping backwards may be a natural movement for a horse; however, it only occurs very rarely in nature. Therefore, a

sensitive collaboration of the rider's aids is particularly important to get the horse to perform a rein-back.

Rein-back will become easier for the horse under the rider, the more supple the movement over its back in walk, trot and canter becomes, and the better it accepts half- and full halts. It is particularly important that the full halt is performed harmoniously and that the horse stands trustingly, relaxed and securely on the rider's aids before the rein-back.

When performing rein-back, the horse moves backwards with each diagonal pair of legs in unison. The diagonal steps are in the same sequence of leg as in trot, but without the moment of suspension. Therefore, as with trot, the footfall of rein-back is referred to as steps. The horse should step back willingly, markedly and on a straight line, with even steps. The horse's feet should be lifted actively off the ground and set down backwards. This can only be achieved when the rider manages to have a controlled driving influence, even when going backwards. The rider's aids are comparable to riding half-halts, which means that the horse is ridden into the sustaining or lightly asking hand, from back to front, with weight and leg aids. This is then followed by a giving rein aid.



Rein-back.

Specifically, rein-back is ridden with the following aids, with the precondition that the horse is in a square halt on a straight line.

- The rider needs to have their horse on their driving aids so that they would be able to ride off at any time without any delay.
- By tilting the pelvis backward, a weight aid on both sides carefully gives a forward impulse without placing any more weight on the horse's back (the upper body remains erect).
- The rider's lower legs both provide a forward-driving impulse to enable an active lifting and, subsequently, stepping back of the horse's legs.
- Both reins work briefly in a retaining or slightly asking manner and then immediately yield again. The diagonal pair of feet lifted off the ground through the driving aids steps back; the movement impulse being diverted in a backward direction.
- This giving of aids as an interplay of driving, regulating and then once again giving aids is continued step by step until the horse is brought to a halt by the last half-halt.
- Any sideways stepping of the horse is countered by the rider bringing the forehand onto the same track as the hindquarters, but not by pushing over the hindquarters.
- Rein-back is completed when the rider rides the horse clearly forwards using the leg and weight aids and gives with the hands without giving up the connection.

Advanced riders should make an effort to use only retaining rein aids and no asking ones when performing rein-back with a trained horse. If the horse accepts rein-back easily, it has a collecting effect and is a collecting exercise that improves the throughness of the horse at the same time.

In basic training, rein-back is demanded over a particular distance (one horse's length equates to about three or four steps). Only in further training will a precise number of steps be demanded. If a halt is required after the rein-back, the final step is only a half step – only then can the horse stand square. However, this will be counted as a full step in terms of the number of steps.

ADVICE FOR SUPPORT OR TRAINING OF A HORSE

With young horses that find rein-back still difficult, releasing the pressure can be sensible. Leaning forwards too much with the upper body should, however, be avoided. Only with an erect upper body is a rider able to bring the rein-back to a conclusion, or resist a too hasty rein-back, by tensing the abdominal and lower back muscles, by using their driving leg aids and by 'becoming light' in the hand. At the beginning of training, the rider should be satisfied with getting only a very few

steps (one or two). It can also be helpful, where necessary, to place the legs in a guarding position to prevent a crooked rein-back.

If there is some resistance in the rein-back, the horse cannot be corrected through the rein-back itself!

Once mistakes in the rider's application of the aids have been ruled out, the thoroughness of the horse must first be improved or re-established in movement, through half-halts and full halts.

Rein-back can also be prepared from the ground, or supported by an assistant on the ground. The assistant (trainer) can stand to the side of the horse and, with a hand on the horse's chest or the bottom of the neck, encourage the horse to step backwards. Some horses might also respond to careful touching with a whip on the foreleg or on the chest. In line with this support, the rider can refine their aids. This can only be successful when the assistant on the ground does not take on a dominant role and the horse has already been carefully made aware of the aids in advance.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

- *If the rider uses the rein aids in a dominant or exaggerated way*, they make it very difficult for the horse to step backwards. If the contact becomes tight and stiff, or if the neck is too 'short', and the support from the driving aids is lacking, the horse will not go backwards with clear two-beat steps. The feet are instead dragged backwards (for example, dragging forehand). If resistance also emerges, the horse will tense up in the back. The horse is then no longer able to step backwards with a pure rhythm.
- *If the rider reacts incorrectly* to the horse escaping sideways, owing to natural crookedness, for example by positioning a leg slightly too far back or by a rein that is directing minimally sideways, the horse might step backwards in an entirely crooked way. However, crooked steps can also be caused by an uneven use of leg and rein aids.
- If the rider leans their *upper body forwards* and at the same time, places the *lower leg too far back*, they no longer have the horse 'in front' of them ([see Chapter 4.3.1 Chair and Fork Seat](#)). The aids are then reduced to the rein aids only. In this case, horses frequently tend to drag their feet backwards in an irregular sequence, or they become too rushed.
- *Excessive forward-driving* aids cannot be understood by the horse if it is meant to step backwards. In this instance the rider works against the forward tendency with distinct rein aids. The horse will react with resistance.

6.2.9 Simple Change in Canter

With this movement, the canter lead is changed – from the left rein to the right rein, for example – through a short sequence of walk (three to five clear steps).

The simple change in canter consists of two transitions, from canter to walk and from walk to canter on the new rein. The transition from canter to walk is a particularly demanding exercise, which requires that the horse already has the ability to carry more weight on the hindquarters (and thus a certain degree of collection) in the moment of the transition. The simple change can therefore be prepared by riding canter voltes, reducing or increasing the size of the circle, as well as frequent transitions between trot and canter.

In a simple change, the transition from canter to walk should be secure, and thus immediate, smooth and ‘through’ rather than being phased out over several steps of trot. Making a transition back up to canter should also be immediate and with a good ‘uphill’ tendency.

The aids for a simple change in canter are quite complex since it consists of many individual tasks: canter, the transition down to walk, the walk itself and then the transition back up to canter. Before both transitions, the rider must prepare the horse accordingly through half-halts and have the horse ‘in front’ of them, with the hind legs stepping actively underneath the body. The transition to walk is prepared as well as possible with several half-halts so that the actual transition can be performed softly with the last half-halt, without the horse coming onto the forehand. The rider should pay attention to maintaining more connection on the outside rather than on the inside rein when applying a slightly asking or retaining rein aid. In the moment in which the horse accepts the half-halt down to walk, the rider must give with the hand and ride forwards to allow a regulated, active and ‘large’ walk with a good willingness to stretch. The horse will be flexed smoothly into the other direction without the rhythm in walk being disturbed. The outside, hitherto guarding leg, thus glides back into position as a driving leg at the girth. At the same time, the rider moves or rolls the new inside of their pelvis forwards. The new outside leg moves into the guarding position. The walk to canter transition is preceded by another half-halt. The impulse for the canter is given from the rider’s pelvis combined with the inside driving leg. The rider’s hands, particularly the inside one, allow the movement of the canter stride to develop.

Typical mistakes are once again those which were mentioned with the half-halts. If problems arise, they are almost always a consequence of lack of careful preparation of the simple change ([see Chapter 6.2.3 Half-Halts, Transitions and Halts](#)).

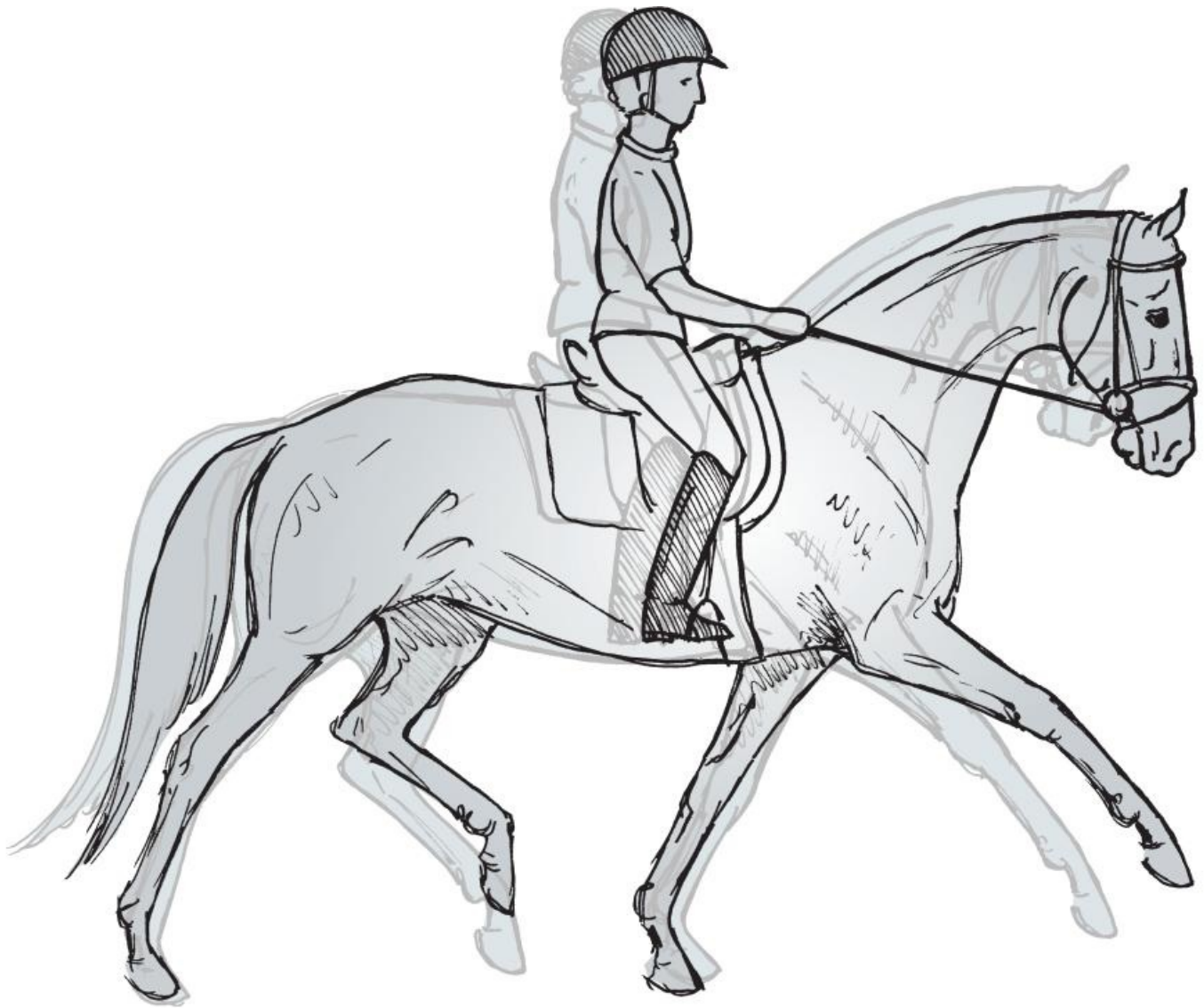
6.3 Further Progress and Advanced Exercises in Dressage Riding

The rider should learn and master the exercises described thus far over the course of the basic training in order to better understand the importance of coherence between the rider's aids. **This is, in the first instance, the basis for being able to ride and work a horse considerably regardless of the purpose.** With further aspirations, such as to gymnasticise the horse for dressage, support it when jumping or to be able to ride in a balanced and controlled manner on a hack, the demands on the rider's training also grow. The tasks become more complex and varied when a higher degree of throughness and collection are to be obtained. Therefore, the rider should learn the following, additional exercises.

6.3.1 Transitions for Improving Collection and Impulsion

Riding transitions is not only helpful for the improvement of suppleness and throughness, but is also particularly well suited to work on collection and extensions in further training. Within the basic gaits, the rider establishes (at first only for brief moments) the collected trot and trot extensions, as well as collected canter and extended canter, by lengthening the steps and strides and then shortening them again. These transitions demand an advanced feeling for movement on the part of the rider and a consistent giving of aids. Riding transitions has a very strong gymnasticising and strengthening effect on the horse. It prepares for, as well as improves, collection. This improved collection leads to an improvement in the quality of the extended gaits. An energetic lifting of the feet in the collected gaits makes it easier for the horse to expand the impulsion into the extension, without the rider having to use much forward-driving effort. If the activity of the hindquarters during the lengthening or the extension respectively, can be transferred back into an active carrying capacity ([see Chapter 7.6.7 Development of Collection](#)) after the extension, these transitions will lead to a light-footed movement of the horse. This is as suited to a show-jumping or cross-country horse as it is to a dressage horse.

In order to 'close' a horse from behind when shortening the gait after the extension, the rider rides more to a softly sustaining hand. If the horse has enough trust in this hand and, is supple, the hind legs will engage more under the horse's body. The less the rider 'shortens' the horse in the neck, the better the horse can respond to the rider's aids. The activity of the horse's hindquarters develops more forward thrust, followed again by more carrying power. As this is relatively strenuous for the horse, this work requires regular breaks.



Lengthening the frame.

When extending the gaits to medium trot or medium canter, the movements cover more ground and become more expansive. If the horse accepts the aids to lengthen, the rider then allows the horse to extend more in the neck by bringing the hands slowly and lightly forwards, thus allowing the horse to move the nose forward and open up the neck-mandible angle further. This way, the rider allows the development of 'bigger movement'. This important condition for developing impulsion without tension is referred to as 'lengthening the frame'. The poll remains the highest point and the forehead-nose line comes clearly in front of the vertical. The steps and strides cover more ground, yet they do not become hasty.

When extending the gaits, the rider sits 'into the movement', which means that they bring their upper body slightly more in front of, rather than behind, the vertical. The rider should allow themselves to be 'taken along' more by the movement of the horse during the lengthening.

In the development of extensions, it is helpful after a few strides to reduce and then increase the length of the steps and strides once again. This can always be refined until the differences within the extension are hardly visible to the observer. Through doing this, the rider is better able to keep the horse 'ahead of them' in the extension.

Shortening the strides is achieved by half-halts, in which the driving weight and leg aids must, as always, have priority. This way, the activity of the hind legs is maintained during the shortening and the horse is 'closed from behind' more, but without becoming 'shorter' in the neck as a result. Therefore, the giving rein aid is particularly important. The horse engages its hind legs towards the centre of gravity and takes the activity of the hindquarters from the extension into the shortened movement. If, during this moment, the rider manages to keep the horse's movement flowing through the body, the horse will flex the joints of the hindquarters more, carry more weight on them, and remain in an 'uphill' tendency.

Therefore, it is particularly important that the rider's seat is always supple and, as a result, continues to swing elastically.

Extensions in trot and canter are less an end in themselves than a touchstone of training. The thoroughness, the sensitive reaction to the driving and regulating aids and the balance in the extension, and also when returning to the shortened gait, give a good indication as to the level of the training. The success of extensions is also a test of collection.

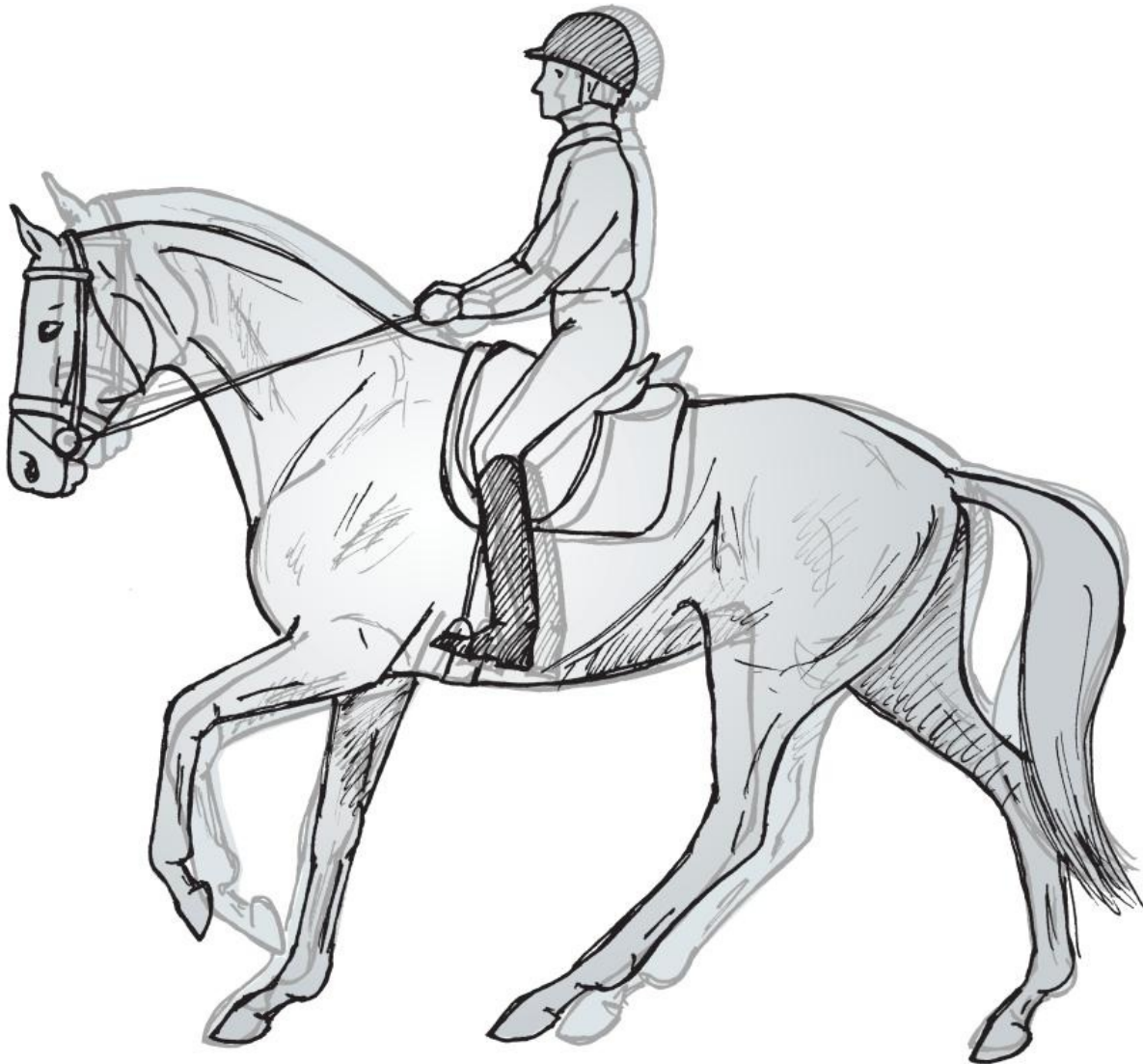
TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES WHEN LENGTHENING

- The rider does not prepare properly for the lengthening with half-halts. Therefore, the horse does not move forward of its own accord, comes onto the forehand and, in certain instances, becomes rushed in its action.
- The hand does not 'give' to allow the frame to lengthen. The horse becomes 'short' in the neck and tense steps/strides arise.
- The rider gives up the connection when lengthening. Through this, the horse might lose balance and rhythm and 'fall apart'.
- The rider exaggerates riding forwards and asks too much of the horse. Thus, the fundamental basics of rhythm and suppleness are lost, often with the contact being affected as well.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES WHEN SHORTENING

- Too much regulating and too little driving influence by the rider, frequently combined with a lack of suppleness and elasticity from the rider. Problems in contact and a stiff back in the horse are often the consequences. Because of this, the hind legs cannot step forwards and under correctly, and the fluency is

disturbed.



Even in the extension, developed at the canter in this illustration, it is important that the horse is ridden from behind and into the hand while the rider still allows the horse to lengthen his frame.

6.3.2 Collection in Trot

Collected trot demands an advanced dressage training of the rider and the horse. In order to reach collection, or to increase it, the horse is encouraged with half-halts to step more under the relocated centre of gravity from an actively ridden working trot. The ground coverage of the steps is shorter, and they become more elevated, while maintaining the same level of impulsion. As a result, the horse's forehand appears to be raised. The rider feels that the horse is more 'in front' of them, and 'uphill'. Since the horse carries itself more and is better balanced, the contact should become lighter. Exercises in collected trot should only be asked for briefly when first working on collection and should alternate with transitions back to a working gait or medium trot. This is particularly important so that the horse maintains its keenness to go forwards, even during collecting work.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- The rider reduces the tempo, and just rides 'slowly'. The horse's action becomes languid and the hindquarters are less active.
- The rider blocks with the hand, or with their entire seat, and does not employ sufficient forward-driving aids ([see Chapter 6.2.3](#), *Half-Halts, Transitions and Halts*).
- The rider is unable to maintain the effortlessness of the movement, and they start to use excessive forward-driving aids.

6.3.3 Collection in Canter

To develop collection in canter, the canter strides need to be shortened gradually from a good, active, working canter through half-halts. These ensure that the hindquarters, encouraged by the driving aids, remain active, are engaged more and thus take on more weight.

Collecting the horse is achieved gradually from stride to stride. The powerful, lively pushing-off the ground of the hind legs is felt by the rider. The rein aids are such that the horse retains sufficient length in the neck and remains supple in the back. This means that the rider must, now and again, 'let go' and give a little with the reins. This particularly applies to the inside hand, so that the horse's inside hind leg can move forward actively.

Walk-canter-walk transitions, simple changes in canter, 10m canter circles or serpentines through the arena in canter with simple changes at every change of direction, help the rider to refine the feel for beginning collection in canter.

The clear three-beat rhythm of the canter is best maintained when the activity of the hind legs, stepping under the centre of gravity and taking more weight, along with a supple back, can be secured by a momentary and repeated lengthening and forward riding ([see Chapter 6.2.3](#) *Half-Halts, Transitions and Halts*).

Furthermore, the collecting work must always be interspersed by short, regular periods of relaxation.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

These are fundamentally comparable to those described above regarding collection in trot.

- If the rider asks for too much collection, or if the coordination of the driving aids with a sensitive hand is not yet refined enough, the horse might lose the clear three-beat rhythm of the canter or might no longer keep up the canter and thus begin to trot. Another consequence might be that the horse is no longer prepared to cooperate willingly and, instead, resists.

6.3.4 Counter-Canter

Counter-canter refers to a canter which, for example, is ridden on the left lead when on the right rein, and on the right lead when riding on the left rein. To establish counter-canter, a certain degree of collection is necessary. It is ridden in a collected tempo and, when performed correctly, it has an effect which furthers collection. The aids are the same as those for cantering in collection. The horse is flexed according to the pair of lateral legs striding forwards – thus in cantering on the right lead on the left rein, is flexed to the right, and in cantering on the left lead on the right rein, is flexed to the left. The horse must stride securely forwards into the outside (the side facing the *inside* of the arena) rein. With the inside rein, the one giving the flexion, which is now facing the perimeter walls, the rider must, now and then, become light. That way, the inside hind leg is able to be engaged more under the horse's body. The corners of the arena may be rounded slightly in counter-canter. Counter-canter has value as a straightening exercise, however, if the horse remains on one track with the forehand and hindquarters, this means that the horse's straightness is already quite advanced.

ADVICE

The term 'inside' rein, or 'inside' hind leg always refers to the flexion. When, for example, riding counter-canter on the left rein, which means the horse is effectively in a right-lead canter, the right rein is the inside one.



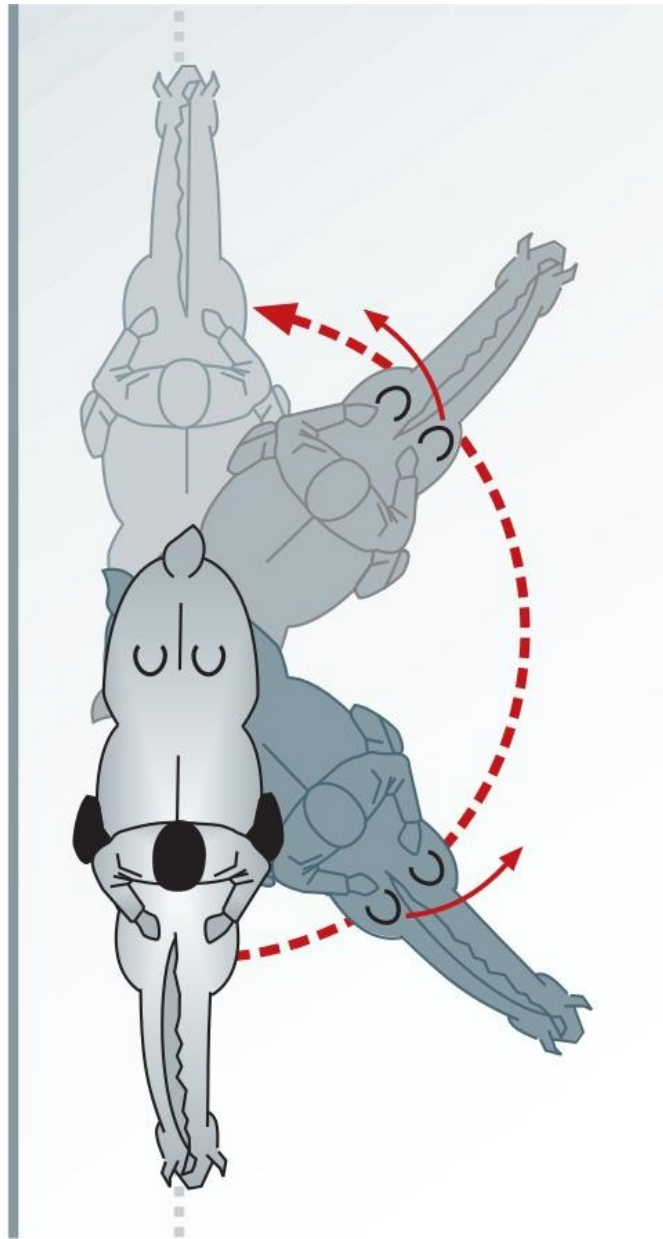
In counter-canter, the rider has their horse securely on the 'diagonal aids' without flexing him too much.

The horse needs to be able to canter from trot and walk with light aids either on the right or on the left lead, at any given point. Transitions within a gait, therefore the lengthening and shortening via the 'shortened working gait' up to a collected canter, should be carried out straight, active and without any resistance. For preparation, riding on, for example, the quarter line can be of use. Before the rider starts counter-canter, they should have already mastered a refined giving of aids. That means: the inside, driving leg must be the one predominantly asking for the canter. The outside, guarding leg is only used exceptionally in a forward-driving manner.

When working correctly in counter-canter, the horse's ability to balance itself and carry more weight with the hindquarters will improve and, at the same time, be tested. Furthermore, alternating between canter on the correct lead and counter-canter is suitable for improving the straightness of the canter.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

- Alongside the mistakes which have already been described with collecting work and the transitions leading up to collection, some riders tend to 'collapse in the hip' more visibly in counter-canter than when cantering on the correct lead. The bottom slides too far to the outside of the saddle and neither weight nor leg aids can provide the necessary supportive influence. The rider needs to pay attention that they sit in the centre of the saddle with the pelvis moving, or tilting forwards-inwards.
- To prevent the horse from changing lead, some riders tend to ride with too much flexion, and thus with an inside, blocking rein. This, however, makes it particularly difficult for the horse to maintain balance, rhythm and the activity of the hind legs.
- For the same reason, an attempt is made to canter with an outside leg that is positioned further backwards and used as an active forward-driving aid. In this case, the horse generally becomes crooked and canters on two tracks.
- Those who try to ride counter-canter with too much speed, without collection, bring their horse into a particularly difficult situation. The horse is likely to change lead or even go in a disunited canter, or become so tense that the exercise does not have any value.



The individual phases of a turn on the haunches.

6.3.5 Walk Pirouettes and Turn on the Haunches

Walk pirouettes and turns on the haunches are collecting exercises which present complex demands for horse and rider. The motion sequence and the giving of aids are principally the same for both exercises. The only difference is that the walk pirouette is performed from medium walk or trot. The turn on the haunches is always only carried out from halt. In both turns, the forehand should draw a half-circle around the hindquarters. The rider keeps the horse flexed inwards, with a slight bend and a secure contact. The outside hind leg describes a small half-circle around the inside hind leg, although the two legs must never cross. The turning point should lie as close as possible to the inside hind leg, which should be lifted and set down rhythmically.

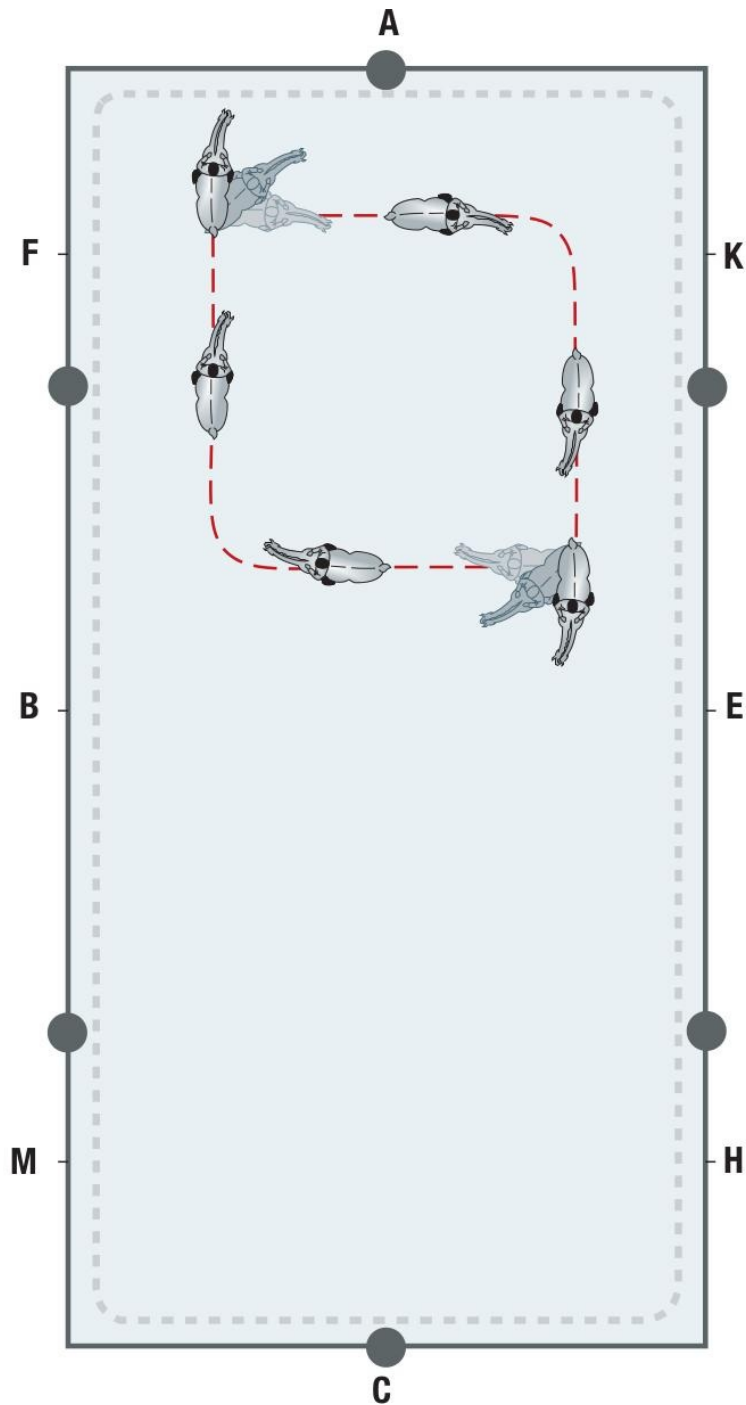
The forelegs step forwards-sideways, and cross. During the whole turn the four-

beat rhythm of the walk is maintained. Stepping backwards or being 'glued to the ground' are both incorrect. If this occurs, the horse is not securely enough on the driving aids.

A TURN ON THE HAUNCHES, ridden from a halt, commences with a forward step, but it concludes once again in halt. Since the horse leaves the initial track to a small degree during the turn on the haunches, it must finally be led back onto the track with a forwards-sideways directing step. Only during this final step may the outside hind leg cross in a forwards-sideways direction over the inside one.

With a WALK PIROUETTE from trot, the rider performs a transition down to walk just before giving the aids as with a turn on the haunches, then gives further aids to lead off in trot once again after the movement has been completed. The aids for the walk pirouette are as follows:

- Introduction through a half-halt; the horse is already flexed in the direction of movement.
- The rider places more weight on the inside seatbone.
- The inside rein, which may act forwards-sideways, leads into the turn by guiding the horse into it with a slight bend.
- At the same time, the inside leg is in a driving position at the girth. It has the task, together with the outside leg, which is in a guarding position, of bending the horse. This aiding encourages the hind legs to step up and down rhythmically. The hind legs are thereby encouraged to step slightly forwards in the direction under the centre of gravity. The rider's inside leg also prevents a sideways drifting of the inside hind leg towards the inside.
- The rider's outside leg lies in a guarding position. It must never act in a sideways-driving manner. As a result of that, the hind legs would cross, or the horse would swerve sideways with the inside hind foot. The rider's outside leg is, however, also jointly responsible for the action of the horse's hind legs.
- The outside rein limits the bend, but yields enough so that the horse can move unimpeded in the direction of the turn.



'Exercise square' for the development of walk pirouettes.

For the beginner rider, it is recommended to allow the horse to take one or two steps forwards before starting the turn from a forward movement. As in shoulder-fore ([see Chapter 6.3.6. Shoulder-Fore, Shoulder-In](#)), flexion and bend can be prepared before the movement begins. This also has the advantage that the hindquarters do not escape to the inside during the first phase of the exercise.

Walk pirouettes and turns on the haunches can initially be practised in sections, that is, in 45-degree or 90-degree turns. This way, the rider gets an idea of the movement and has enough time to develop the feel for the collaboration of all the

different aids. In training, the rider can make a transition to halt at any time, or ride out of the movement by riding forwards. Repeating the exercise frequently with just one to three steps and then riding straight ahead helps the rider and the horse to learn the collaboration of the aids and to maintain the sensitivity to the individual aids. Only then is the 180-degree turn from the forward movement introduced.

A good exercise to help learn the walk pirouette is riding in an imaginary small arena (see *illustration* on the right). In walk, the two opposite corners are used to ride a 90-degree walk pirouette. Along the sides, the rider has the horse flexed appropriately and slightly bent. In the intervening corners, a quarter-volte is ridden. In further practice of this exercise, a walk pirouette can be ridden in each corner.

It is a good idea, when schooling, to grant the walk pirouette priority over the turn on the haunches because it is initially easier for the horse and the rider to learn the turn when starting from a forward movement.

A slight stepping forward during the turn on the haunches is only a minor mistake. Stepping backwards, on the other hand, is the more serious one.

Weight, leg and rein aids together ensure that the necessary bend along the longitudinal axis is present. Therefore, the inside leg is of primary importance.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS FROM THE HORSE

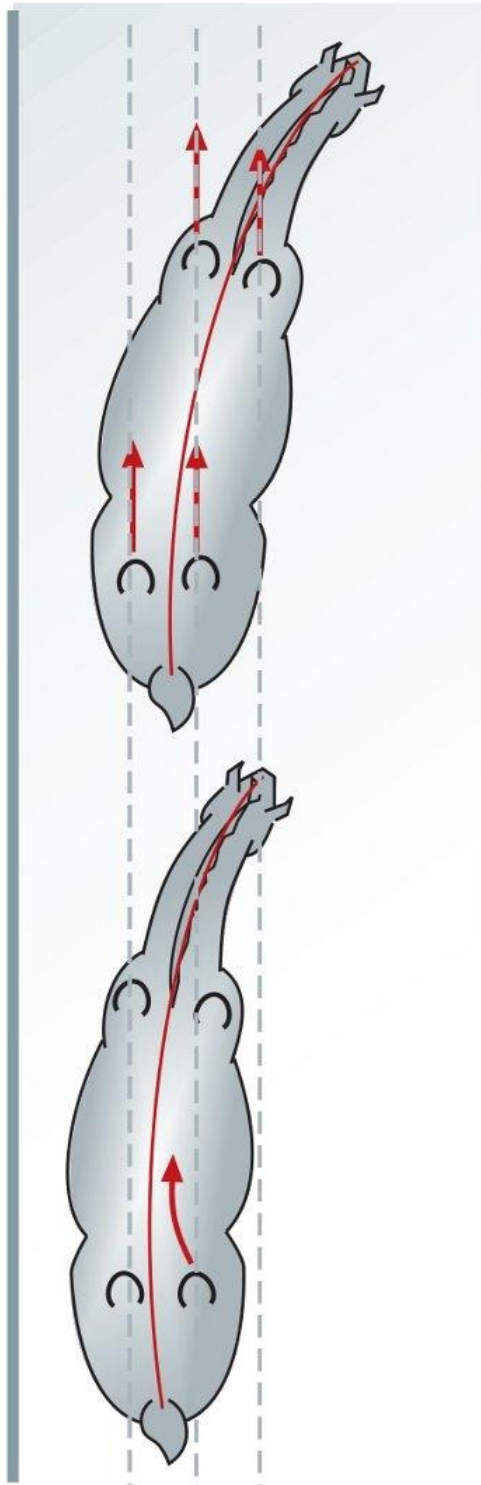
- Exaggerated influence with the hands and too little forward-driving aids lead to a serious mistake in the walk pirouette or the turn on the haunches. This mistake is stepping back. In its weakened form, the hind legs become 'stuck' and lack activity during the exercise. The respective aids must be given all the way to the very last step.
- A lack of use of the diagonal aids often leads to the horse not maintaining the bend, or stepping sideways.
- Incorrect use of the rider's outside leg can lead to an undesirable crossing of the hind legs.
- A lack of harmony of the aids can also lead to the horse throwing its body around in the turn.
- Imprecise leg aids: stepping sideways with the inside or outside hind leg.

6.3.6 Shoulder-Fore, Shoulder-In

Shoulder-in, with the preliminary exercise shoulder-fore, belongs to the lateral movements. A lateral movement denotes a forwards-sideways movement with an even bend, ridden in collection, according to the level of the horse's training. Rhythm, tempo and fluency of the movement should remain constant. Such movements demand a sound understanding of the diagonal aids ([see Chapter 4.2.1](#)

Giving of Aids and [4.2.3 Collaboration of the Aids and Development of Feel](#)), but they are also particularly suitable for improving the rider's feel for the collaboration of the aids.

Lateral movements are: shoulder-in, travers, renvers and half-pass (see *Advanced Techniques of Dressage* by the German Equestrian Federation). The foundation for riding lateral movements is the correct bend of the longitudinal axis of the horse. The horse must be able to bend around the rider's inside leg, step forward to the outside rein and accept half-halts willingly. The rider needs to have the horse securely 'in front' of them. Furthermore, a certain degree of collection is necessary. In order to perform shoulder-in correctly, the preliminary exercise shoulder-fore is generally ridden.



Above: Shoulder-in. Below: Shoulder-fore.

■ SHOULDER-FORE

In SHOULDER-FORE the horse steps between the two tracks left by the forelegs with the inside hind leg. The outside hind leg should step into the same track as the foreleg on the same side. The horse is asked to step slightly narrower with the hind legs. Owing to this alignment of the forehand and the hindquarters, a bend in the horse's body is developed through the support of the predominantly forward-driving inside leg into the outside aids. This is always accompanied by the relevant degree

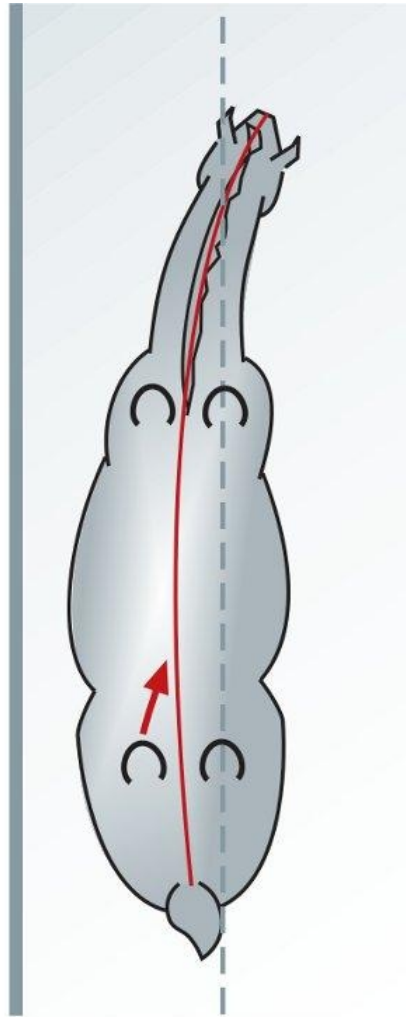
of flexion. The rider, sitting balanced in the centre of the saddle, can then glimpse the horse's inside eye and the rim of the inside nostril.

GIVING OF AIDS

- The rider prepares the exercise with half-halts.
- More weight is placed on the inside seatbone.
- The inside leg, lying at the girth, rides the horse into the outside rein (diagonal aids), ensures a bend in the ribs and encourages the inside hind foot to step forwards in the direction of the tracks left by the forefeet.
- The rider's outside leg lies in a guarding position and prevents the horse from swerving with the hindquarters. It is also used in a driving function and is thus partly responsible for the forward movement.
- The inside rein ensures the flexion with a soft contact.
- The outside, guarding, rein allows the flexion, while, at the same time, limiting this flexion and preventing the outside shoulder from falling out.

The rider should develop a mental image of wanting to ride on a straight line but with full-length bend.

Initially, shoulder-fore is ridden in walk and only for brief periods during the training (learning phase), and later in a suitable collected trot on the long side. The bend is either brought into the exercise from the previous corner or prepared for with a volte. This exercise is not to be carried out for a long time, particularly in the learning phase. The rider should remember that a few good steps are more valuable than riding more steps, which might lead to mistakes in rhythm, tension or contact problems. If the rhythm or the impulsion are lost, the exercise must be discontinued immediately and only be repeated once the rhythm, suppleness, contact and impulsion have been re-established. Shoulder-fore as a preliminary to shoulder-in is an exercise that enhances early development of collection.



When riding in flexion, the horse is flexed inwards without the forehand leaving the track. The hind legs are asked to step narrower and the outside hind leg steps between the tracks left by the forelegs. The horse is also slightly bent in this exercise.

■ RIDING IN FLEXION

When RIDING IN FLEXION the horse is also encouraged to step narrower with the hind legs. The outside hind leg steps in the direction between the tracks left by the forefeet. Riding in flexion is another preliminary exercise for the riding of travers, renvers and half-pass. It is explained in more depth in the *Advanced Techniques of Dressage* by the German Equestrian Federation.

■ SHOULDER-IN

SHOULDER-IN, which should be ridden in a collected trot, is a movement in which the horse's forehand is led into the arena as much as is necessary for the horse's outside shoulder to be brought into alignment in front of its inside hip. The hindquarters remain on the track and move virtually straight. The inside hind foot steps into the direction of the outside forefoot, hence, the horse moves on three tracks. The horse is bent evenly around the inside leg: the hind legs do not cross.

In shoulder-in, the inside hind leg is activated to step further under the centre of

gravity. Hip and stifle joints have to flex more.

This movement is suitable for improving:

- Obedience to the rider's leg,
- bend and straightness,
- carrying capacity in the hindquarters and, as a result, collection, and
- freedom of the shoulder movement.

The aids for shoulder-in are fundamentally the same as for shoulder-fore. However, when beginning the exercise, the inside rein leads the forehand further to the inside, and, together with the inside leg, is responsible for ensuring considerably more bend. The outside, guarding rein yields a little in order to allow the horse's outside shoulder to be brought forwards and to the inside. At the same time, it limits the flexion of the horse. It is particularly important that the rider sits in balance and continues to look straight ahead through the horse's ears in the direction in which the horse is flexed. If the rider looks in the direction of the track, the consequence may be an incorrect shifting of the weight.

Shoulder-in is introduced with young horses, or during training, starting after the first corner on the long side or after a volte. In so doing, the rider is able to take the bend, which has already been developed in the turn, with them into the shoulder-in. If the shoulder-in is to be ridden from the first marker of the long side, the rider can carry the bend from the corner, even before the actual movement begins. This does not apply during the correct execution of a test, when the exercise must commence only at the marker.

The shoulder-in is concluded with the rider's inside leg, the outside rein, and the weight aids aligning the forehand with the hindquarters on the track. The horse initially remains bent, and is only straightened when the forehand reaches the track again, before being bent again when riding through the next corner.

To maintain or renew the bend, it can make sense, after a few steps of shoulder-in, to ride a volte and go back into shoulder-in once the volte has been completed.

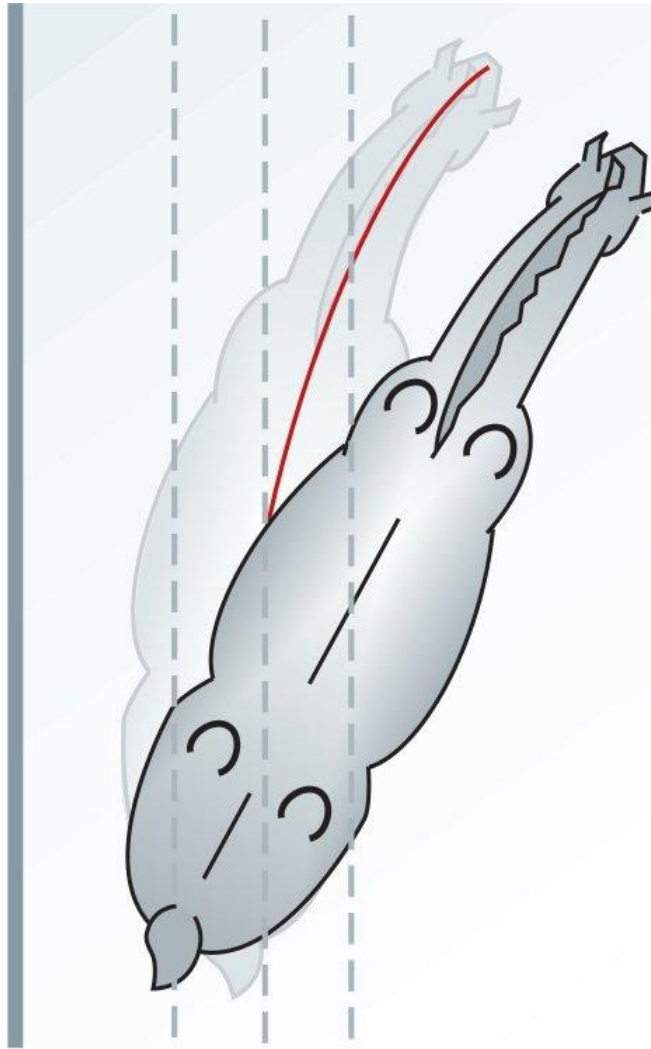
If the impulsion gets lost, a few steps of shoulder-in should be followed by a few steps of lengthening.

When riding shoulder-in without the barrier provided by the wall as, for example on the centre line, the quarter line or on the inside track, it becomes clear whether the rider is using the diagonal aids correctly, or whether the horse is moving more 'with the hindquarters out' rather than, as required, 'with the 'forehand in'.

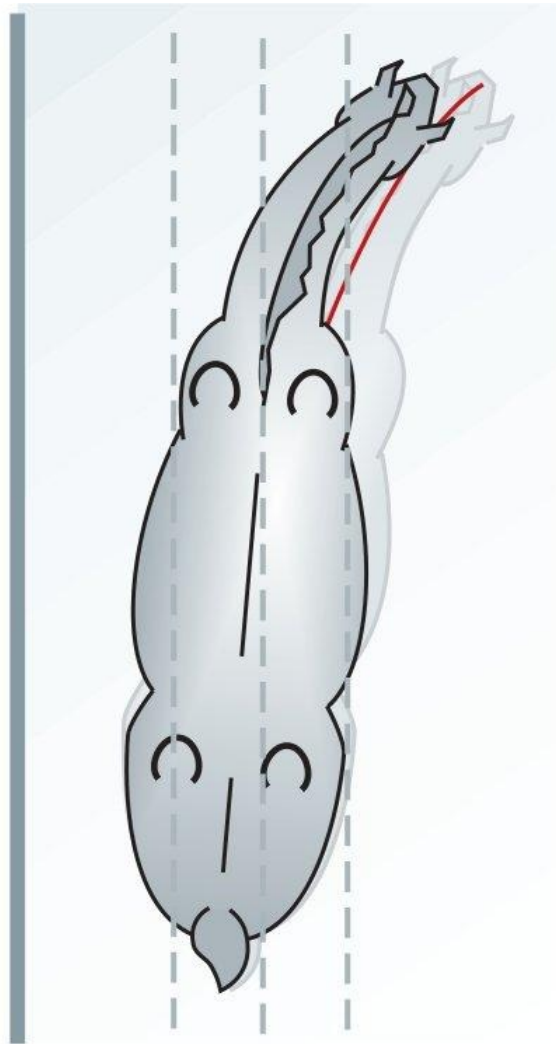
Shoulder-in is characterised by the forehand leaving the track towards the inside. Therefore, shoulder-fore and shoulder-in are particularly important exercises for straightening work, according to the level of training. In order to counteract the horse's natural crookedness, the forehand is always brought ahead of the hindquarters, from where forward thrust is developed.

TYPICAL AID MISTAKES IN SHOULDER-FORE AND SHOULDER-IN

- Exaggerated flexion and too little contact on the outside rein can easily lead to the horse escaping (falling out) over the outside shoulder. Even bend is thus not possible.
- If the driving aids do not remain dominant and the rein aids prevail instead, balance and rhythm problems can arise easily, and a loss of impulsion may occur.
- Collapsing of the rider in the hip and twisting of the upper body lead to incorrect weight aids. Correctly balanced weight aids are particularly important for these exercises. The weight is otherwise shifted onto the wrong side, leading to the exercise failing.
- Too much flexion, which means that the forehand comes too far inside the arena, leads to the horse having to move too much laterally. This results in a loss of rhythm and fluency as well as bend.
- Riding in a rushed tempo, because the requirements for a correct shoulder-in have not yet been achieved, does not allow the horse to move in a balanced forwards-sideways movement.



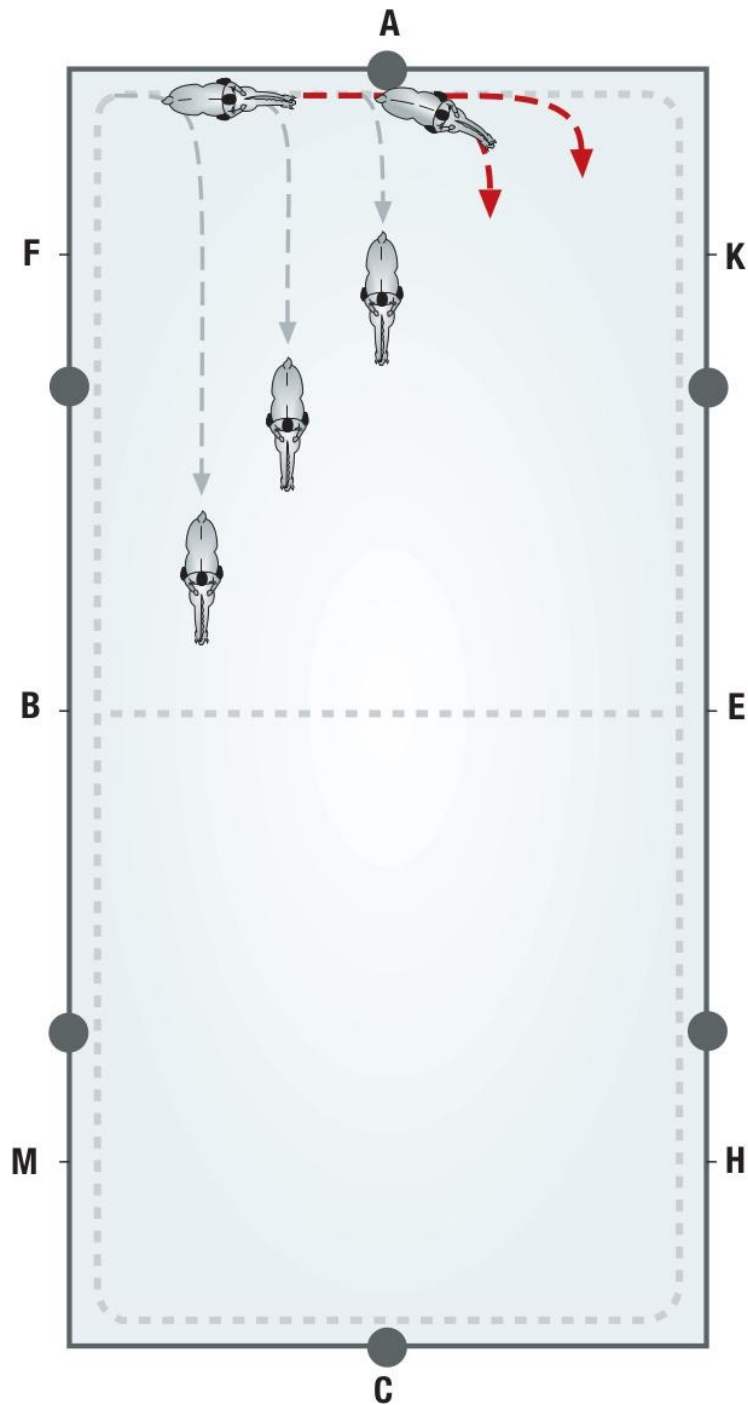
Mistake in shoulder-in – too much flexion and no bend.



Mistake in shoulder-in – exaggerated flexion, little bend.

6.3.7 Compilation of Exercises for Dressage Riding ([see Chapter 1.6.2 School Figures](#))

- Suppling work in all gaits.
- Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand.
- Turns on the forehand.
- Leg-yielding, including away from and back to the track.
- Riding through the corners correctly.
- Changing rein across the long or the short diagonal.
- Riding on a circle, change of rein from circle to circle, change of rein through the circle.
- Reducing or increasing the size of the circle.
- Giving and retaking the reins.
- Riding of serpentines (including one or two loops on the long side; serpentines across the arena with different number of loops).
- Riding voltes and turns.
- Rein-back.
- Collected work in trot and canter.
- Riding transitions between the gaits.
- Walk pirouette/turn on the haunches.
- Simple canter changes.
- Counter-canter.
- Shoulder-fore/shoulder-in/riding in flexion.



Forming a ride: 'Leading file, turn right across the school – the others line up on the left.'

6.4 Working as a Ride/Riding Quadrilles

Working as a ride (including riding quadrilles) is riding dressage in company, following precise rules. The riders follow a lead rider (Tête rider) and generally keep a prescribed distance from the rider in front of approximately one horse's length (approx. 2.5m). To maintain this distance, it is usually said that a rider can determine a horse's length by looking ahead through the ears of their own horse and just being able to see the hocks of the horse in front. The riders execute school figures and movements according to the trainer's instructions.

Riding as a group has numerous benefits. It serves to examine the training of both the rider and the horse. In a group, it can be seen whether the rider can control their horse and whether they can, for example, regulate the distance, gait and speed on command.

Regular participation in group rides serves:

- As an exercise and test for the rider to check whether they can present their horse as suppled and obedient when riding in a group.
- To examine the rideability and obedience of the horse. (Especially for young horses, the first preparatory exercises for riding as a group in due course are developed by riding in single file. No precisely defined distances between the horses is yet prescribed. Generous 'gaps' can therefore introduce horses to riding in a group).
- To prepare for competitive team riding.
- To prepare for riding quadrilles.
- To enrich the variety of training.
- As a way of organisation when riding to music.

Specific command language is required for riding as a group. Knowing the commands and carrying them out is indispensable for the execution of team tasks and for quadrille riding. Differences are made between 'preparatory commands' and 'execution commands'. Between these commands, the person giving the commands will pause for a moment to give the riders enough time to prepare. The preparatory command needs to be given in good time so that the riders have sufficient time to react and prepare their horses for the movement accordingly. The execution commands, such as 'march' or 'working trot' are only given after the preparatory command, for example, 'ride prepare to trot', when all riders in the group have enough room and are at a spot in the arena from which it is practical to carry out the desired movement.

Keeping an EVEN SPACE (when riding side by side, when lining up respectively) and DISTANCES (when riding single file) is a condition for riding safely as a group.

6.4.1 The Commands

Command	Execution
Forming a ride	
'All riders on my command', on the right (left) rein in medium walk (or, for example, working trot) on the first track, form a ride behind XX (name of the lead rider).	The ride is formed single file with the lead rider riding on the outside track in the desired gait (mostly walk). The lead rider raises their right hand and calls out: 'front of the ride!' The other riders fall in behind the lead rider independently but in a pre-determined order (in the gait as instructed, mostly walk). Alternatively, files can be ordered upon the call of the trainer or according to the request for 'any order' in which the riders take

	position on their own initiative, one behind the other.
Gaits and variations/Transitions	
'Ride prepare to go forward to walk – Ride, walk march.'	All riders moving off at a walk from a halt at the same time.
'Ride prepare to go forward to working trot – Ride, trot.'	Transition to working trot from another gait or from a halt.
'Ride prepare to go forward to working canter – Ride, canter.'	Transition from walk or trot into working canter.
'Ride prepare to go forward to medium trot (or medium canter) – Ride, medium trot/ canter.'	From a working gait, possibly for a prescribed section (for example one long side) or until the command is given to make a transition down: 'in working gait'.
'Ride, prepare to go forward to medium walk – Ride, walk (or working trot).'	All riders carry out the transition at the same time from canter to trot or walk, or from trot to walk.
Movements/Exercises	
'Ride, prepare to go forward to halt – Ride, halt.'	A transition to halt is always carried out on a straight line and is possible from all gaits, however, it is mostly from medium walk or working trot.
'Ride, prepare to rein-back (indicate number of steps or metres) – Ride, rein-back.'	Rein-back (three to four steps = one horse's length) from a halt with subsequent halt.
'Leading file, turn right across the school – the others line up on the left – Leading file right turn – halt.' (Three steps = 2.5m = one horse's length between each horse.)	Example: The ride is on the right rein. On the command 'turn', the first rider turns from the long (or short) side through a quarter-volte onto a right angle into the arena and rides straight on towards the opposite side. The following rider rides one horse's length beyond the point where the previous rider has turned and then turns also. On the command 'halt', the first rider makes a transition down to halt. The other riders also halt with three steps between them when their horse's head is at the same height as the head of the previous horse.
'Ride, forward to the track and right turn – March.'	Example: The ride is lined up with the horses' heads facing the long (or short) side. The first rider to the right rides straight ahead in walk, the second rider also rides straight ahead as soon as the first horse's croup is about a length ahead of their own horse's head. The third (and fourth etc.) rider follows suit. Before reaching the track, each rider turns onto the right rein with a quarter-volte. If the movement is carried out correctly, the riders will find themselves as a ride on the outside track on the right rein with a distance of one horse's length between them. This also applies to riding off in trot.
'Ride, prepare to turn left (or right) – Left/right turn.'	Example: The ride is on the left (or right) rein. After the preparatory command, all riders turn on the execution command simultaneously into a quarter-volte to the left (right) and ride, all at the same level, towards the opposite side.
'Whole ride volte – Now.'	After the preparatory command 'ride volte', all riders turn on the execution command 'now' individually, but simultaneously, off the track and onto the volte, returning to the track at the same point that they left it. The volte is carried out on the long side when all riders in the group have enough room to execute it correctly.
'Whole ride, half-volte/circle – Now.'	All riders turn off the track individually, but at the same time, onto a half-volte and ride from there back onto the track. In the case of a 10m figure, for example, they return to the track 15m behind the turning point. In doing so, a change of rein occurs, and the last rider now becomes the lead rider.

'In single file, in the corner, half-volte.'	The group remains in single file and carries out a half-turn to change the rein in the first corner of the short side (half-volte). Example: With a 10m turn, the ride will reach the track 15m after the turning point.
'In single file, serpentine through the arena' (indicate number of loops, for example four loops).	The command is given before the start of the short side in timely manner. The serpentines start in the middle of the short side and end in the middle of the short side at the opposite end.
'In single file, double loop on the long side.'	The first rider begins the figure after the first corner on the long side. All riders remain in single file.
'Leading file, turn right (or left) – March.'	After the preparatory command, the first rider turns on the execution command 'march' on a quarter-turn to the right (or left). All riders remain in single file, riding towards the opposite side.
'Whole ride, right (left) quarter-turn (half-turn) on the forehand – Ride, turn.'	Simultaneous turn on the forehand (always from a halt) where a quarter turn equals 90 degrees, and a half-turn equals 180 degrees. Remark: In an enclosed arena, the half-turn of 180 degrees must be performed on the inside track (one step next to the outside track). The command given is 'ride onto the inside track'. The 90-degree turn must be carried out even further into the arena, at least on the quarter line.
Further school figures	
'Change rein across the diagonal/short diagonal.'	Command is given just when the first rider reaches the middle of the short side.
'Change rein down the centre line.'	Command is given when the first rider approaches the second corner of the long side.
'Half the arena – go large – circle.'	Execution of the respective school figures by all riders in the group.
'On two circles.'	The first rider turns onto the circle at the next circle point; the remaining riders follow at the same point. The first rider of the second circle and the following riders move to the second circle and in the opposite direction. The two lead rider should be exactly opposite each other on their respective circles (for example, one is on the short side at C, the other at A, or one is one long side at B, the other at E, etc.) Remark: The first rider for the second circle needs to be designated in advance.
'Change rein out of the circle(s).'	When riding on two circles on the right rein, the riders pass left shoulder to left shoulder. Exception: when riding on the left rein, the riders will also yield to the left.
'Change rein through the circle(s).'	At the circle point before the open side of the circle, the lead rider turns into the circle and then rides in an S-shaped loop through the middle of the circle. The track is then reached again on the opposite circle point before the open side.
'Whole ride, right (left) quarter-turn (half-turn) on the haunches – Ride, turn.'	Simultaneous turn on the haunches (from halt), 90 degrees or 180 degrees.
'Whole ride, walk pirouette – Ride, about turn.'	Simultaneous turn on the haunches out of walk or trot.
'On (for example) the next long side, right (left) leg-yield for half of the long side.'	Each rider begins the leg-yield at the same point as the first rider, and also ends it at the same point as the first rider.
'Leg-yield away from and back to the track.'	Single file, on the same track.

6.5 Basic Exercises in Riding over Fences (Jumping)

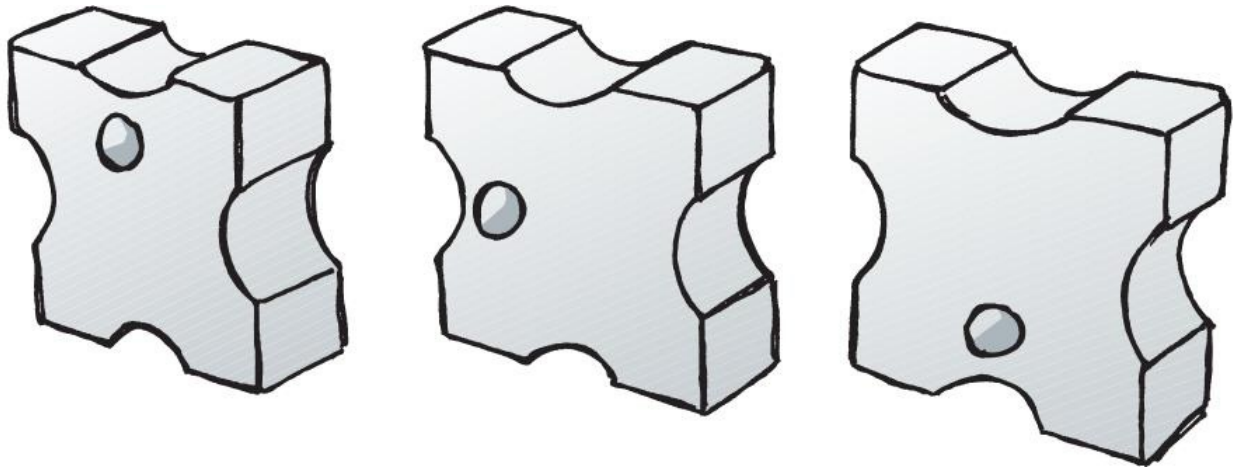
Riding over fences is an important component of a varied training programme. The early schooling of different degrees of the light seat and the basic position of the jumping seat ([see Chapter 4.1.5 The Light Seat](#)) as well as jumping simple obstacles is a fundamental condition for the optimisation of the rider's feel for balance. Learning how to jump also helps to improve safe riding, builds (self-) confidence, increases mobility, improves balance and 'stickability'. Therefore, jumping training or its preparatory exercises should be started as early as possible, at the same time as the schooling in dressage riding. The rider's dressage and jumping training should always complement each other, even at a more advanced level of training. An added benefit of this parallel training, is that this is also an excellent opportunity to diversely gymnasticise the horse.

Requirements for the training in jumping are:

- A trainer who has an understanding of the system of jumping training. The trainer must be able to assess demands and goals, depending on the individual training level of each rider. This presumes expert understanding of the setting up of fences, the choice of suitable lines between individual fences, and the evaluation of suitable distances between them.
- A suitable schoolmaster.
- A suitable practice area which, particularly in the training of beginners, must be fenced (or enclosed).
- Suitable, safe building materials/obstacles.
- The rider's equipment must be in accordance with the regulations (including a helmet with a three/four-point fastening).
- Suitable equipment for the horse (jumping or eventing saddle – for training novice riders, maybe a neckstrap).
- A balanced, light seat in its different manifestations, up to the basic jumping seat position, as well as the ability to change between the different kinds of seats in all gaits.
- The rider should have mastered the fundamentals of influence in the dressage seat, the jumping seat and the light seat (for example changes of speed and gait); riding lines that are not common school figures).

6.5.1 Riding over Cavalletti

Cavalletti play a particular role in the training of riders and in the gymnasticising work of the horse. All criteria of riding over fences can be learnt and practised when riding over cavalletti. A cavalletto⁸ is a 3– 3.5m long pole which, given the way it is constructed, can be adjusted in height. Depending on how it is turned, it can be 15cm, 25cm, or approx. 35–40cm high.



Cavalletti side supports.

The use of poles lying on the ground should be avoided, since they can roll away and cause injuries if stepped on by the horse. Poles that are cut in half lengthwise (so that they are half-round in section), or low-height cavalletti can be used as alternatives.

In the beginning, cavalletti work is carried out over a single cavalletto in walk, then trot and, later, canter. Several individual cavalletti can then be distributed around the arena and ridden on different lines. Later, three to four cavalletti are placed one after the other. They are placed in such a way that the distance between them is adapted to the individual movement and ground cover of each horse in the basic gaits. In walk, the distances between the poles are around 80–90cm, in trot 1.2m–1.4m, and in canter around 3m. The distances for ponies need to be adjusted by about 10–20cm depending on size and quality of movement.

Low cavalletti can always be a component of a dressage-related lesson, but also be used as preparatory work for a jumping session. This ensures diversity and that jumping becomes natural for horse and rider. Before riding over cavalletti, the horse must already be warmed up. Cavalletti can, however, be incorporated in the suppling work because they have a suppling, rhythm-defining effect.

Low cavalletti can be ridden either in a light or a jumping seat. Changing from one seat to the other is also useful as long as the rider remains in balance, since then the horse's balance also remains undisturbed.

The following criteria should always be maintained:

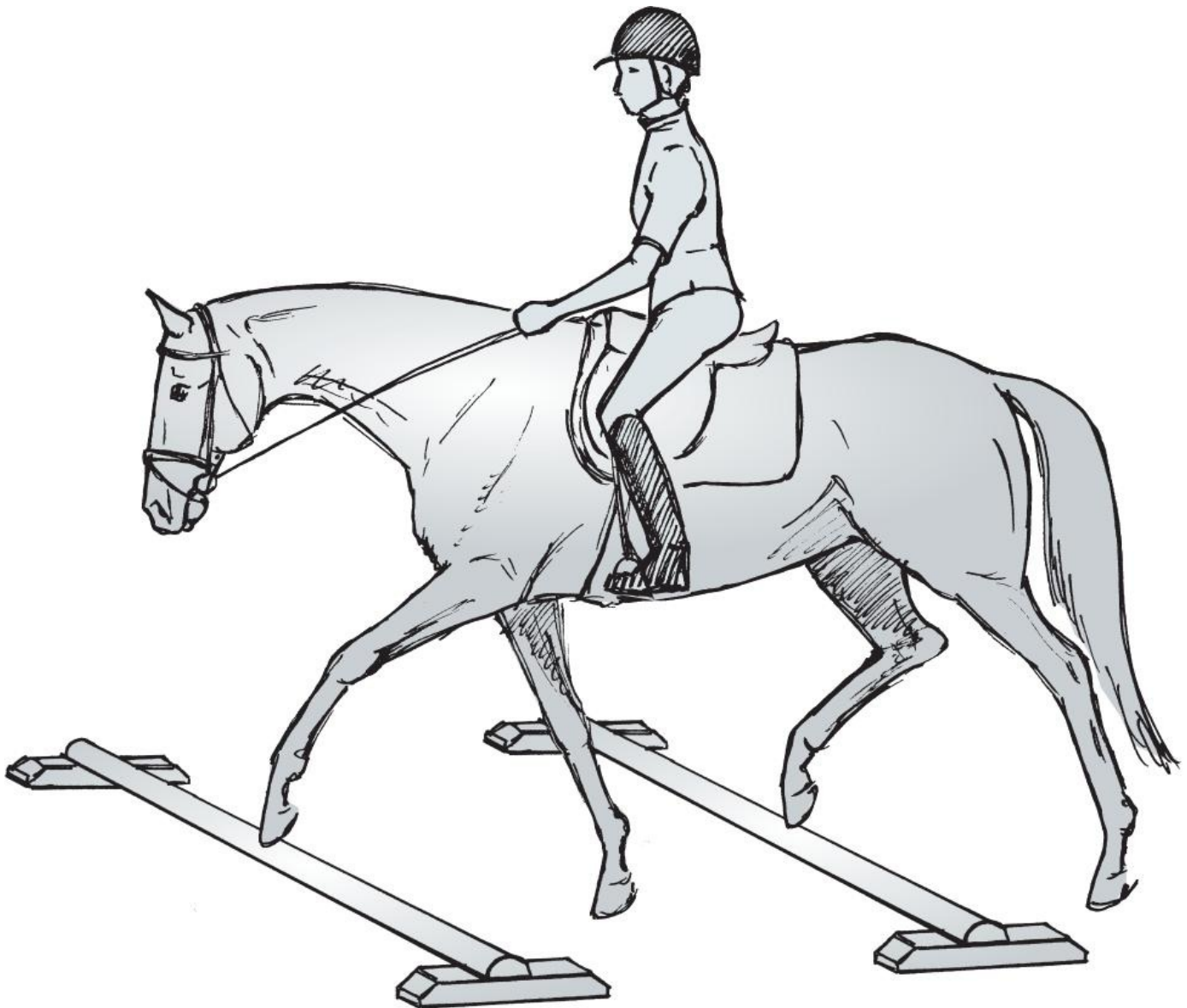
- The cavalletti are always approached in the middle.
- Basic speed and rhythm are maintained before, over and after the cavalletti.
- When riding over the cavalletti, the hands move slightly in the direction of the horse's mouth so that a forwards-downwards stretching of the horse's neck is

possible (without losing the contact).

- The rider looks forward in the direction the horse is going.
- The stronger movement of the horse over the cavalletti is absorbed by the rider with flexible ankle, knee and hip joints.

In the preparatory work for jumping training of the rider, the cavalletti are generally placed at their lowest height and ridden over in walk or trot (see *illustration*). When riding in canter, depending on the level of training, they can also be set higher, for example in preparation to jumping over fences.

Cavalletti exercises as part of basic training should, where possible, be integrated frequently into a schooling session so that they become increasingly natural to both horse and rider.



When riding over cavalletti, the rider looks straight ahead and sits into the forward movement without giving up the connection with the horse's mouth and without losing balance.

Subsequent pole and cavalletti work, leading to show-jumping, should be performed in a basic jumping seat. This jumping seat, in which the rider is very close to the horse and, at the same time, sits into the forward movement, is taken three or four horse's lengths before the cavalletti at the latest.

Once confidence is increased, it is recommended that several cavalletti are placed on long straight or curved lines. This will prepare the rider for riding lines in proper jumping courses.

Riding over ground-poles (of suitable type, as previously described) remains a fundamental element in the further jumping training of the rider. Hence, cavalletti can be used in later training to school:

- The suitable basic speed;
- the feeling for the right rhythm;
- canter strides and their timing between individual fences and sequences of fences, and
- the rider's eye to determine the right distance for take-off.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- The rider does not influence their horse as usual. The rider concentrates so much on the approach to the cavalletti that they lose the suppleness and no longer give the aids naturally. This immediately carries over to the horse. In this case, the horse will link poles or fences with a particular amount of tension, or even excitement. Therefore, it is important to start with very simple tasks, and that the rider hardly alters their seat and aids.

It can be helpful for the rider not to think about jumping, but rather about riding these cavalletti in a dressage-like manner.

Too great a change in speed also disturbs cavalletti work.

Sensitively ridden transitions within the gaits, with an unaltered rhythm, are a fundamental basis for harmonious jumping.

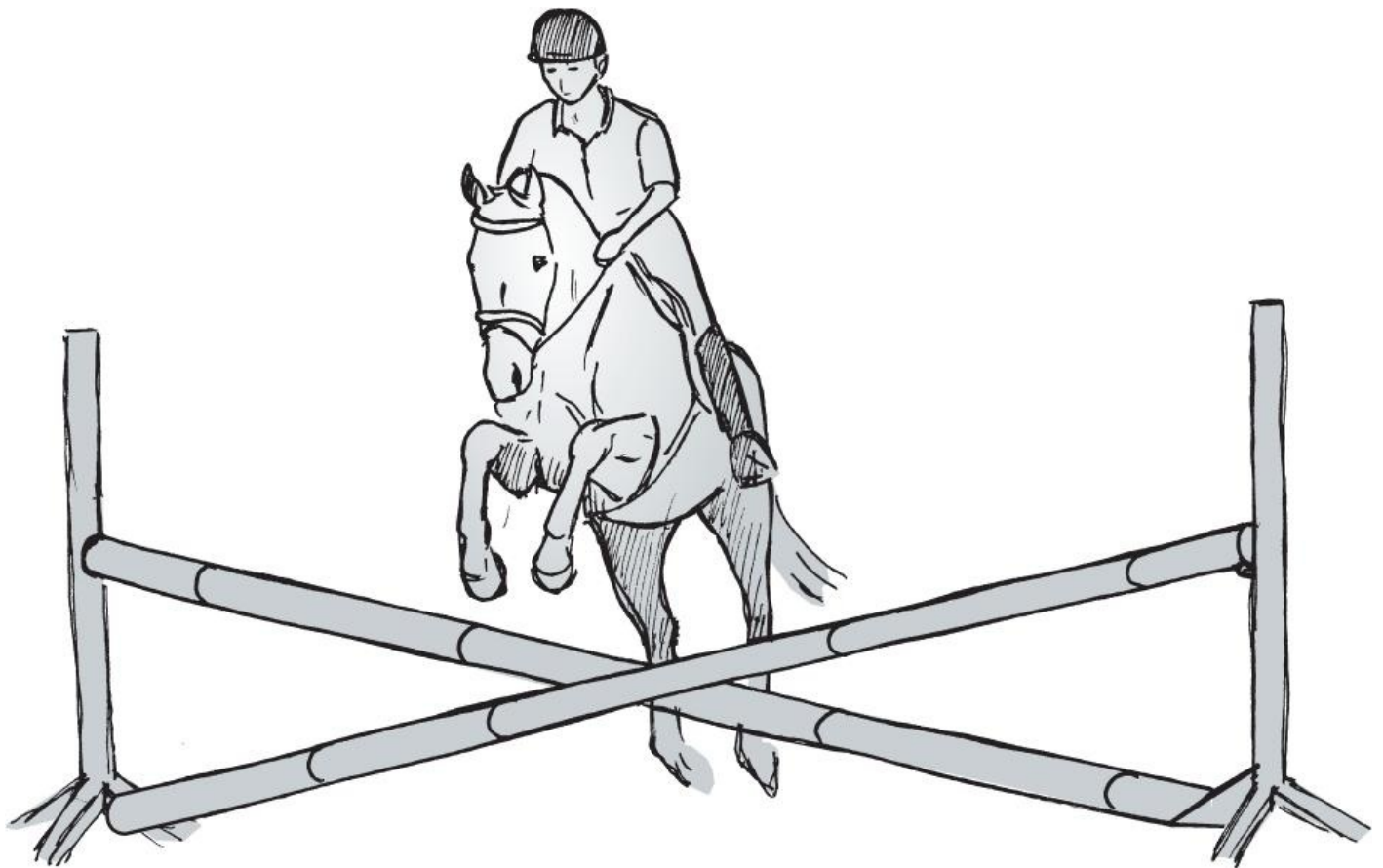
6.5.2 Riding Over Single Fences

In the further jumping training, the rider is introduced to jumping single fences. To do so, the following criteria apply:

- The fence is approached and taken in the middle.
- The basic position of the jumping seat is maintained right up to the take-off. When jumping from trot, the rider generally changes from rising trot to sitting trot three or four horse's lengths before the jump.

- When jumping, the rider goes with the movement of the horse with their upper body and from their hips. Over the fence, the rider takes their bottom clearly out of the saddle, without, however, getting 'ahead' of the movement.
- The rider's hand follows in the direction of the horse's mouth (as far as necessary for the bascule of the horse) without giving up the connection with the horse's mouth.
- In the landing phase, the rider sits up again, absorbs this landing with their ankle and knee joints in the stirrups and then returns to the saddle.
- Before and after the jump, a suitable speed, an even rhythm and full control over the desired line should be secured and maintained through the necessary aids.

The first practice jumps should be built in a friendly way, adapted to the natural trajectory of the horse. A well-marked ground-line makes it easier for the horse to find a rhythmical take-off, even if the rider does not yet have a secure feeling for the take-off distance. Wings at the sides help lead the horse to the fence and facilitate jumping. This makes it easier for the horse to know its task and for the rider to approach the middle of the fence.



A small cross-pole is a suitable exercise jump.

To establish a relaxed, focused jump, initially a 'trotting pole' can be used, possibly in the form of a flat cavalletto. It is placed approx. 2.20m ahead of a small fence, a cross-pole, for example. For the same exercise to be carried out in canter, a

ground-pole is placed approximately 3m before the fence. This facilitates a rhythmical take-off by the horse and helps the rider to go with the horse's movement. Usually, inexperienced riders will need to practise several of these approaches before they get used to these new sequences of movement.

An important foundation for the learning progress in jumping is that the trainer teaches the rider to pay attention to every little detail when jumping. A lot of attention must be paid to a balanced seat, adapted suitably to each movement, as well as a good use of the aids in every phase of the jump (approach, take-off, suspension and landing phase as well as the get-away). This also includes working on a 'sensitive hand maintaining contact' which, however, gives as much during the jump as the horse requires to balance in its neck.

The long-term goal of the rider is to develop a distinct feel for:

- The line of approach,
- the basic tempo,
- the rhythm, as well as
- the rider's own balance and that of the horse, during the preparation and approach phase.

The rider must always have the horse 'in front' of them. This means that the horse reacts lightly to the rider's driving aids at all times, without rushing!

With increased routine and confidence, the rider will learn to see a SUITABLE TAKE-OFF DISTANCE.

To be able to concentrate on the approach, it is important that the rider knows in advance which direction to choose, how to ride the turns, and how to proceed after the jump.

The tempo must be chosen according to the task and the level of training. Novice riders, but also some experienced riders, need repeated support with this and also some feedback from a trainer before a safe feeling for a suitable tempo sets in. Finding the right balance between a sufficiently high basic tempo, while at the same time maintaining the throughness and control over the horse is a demanding task.

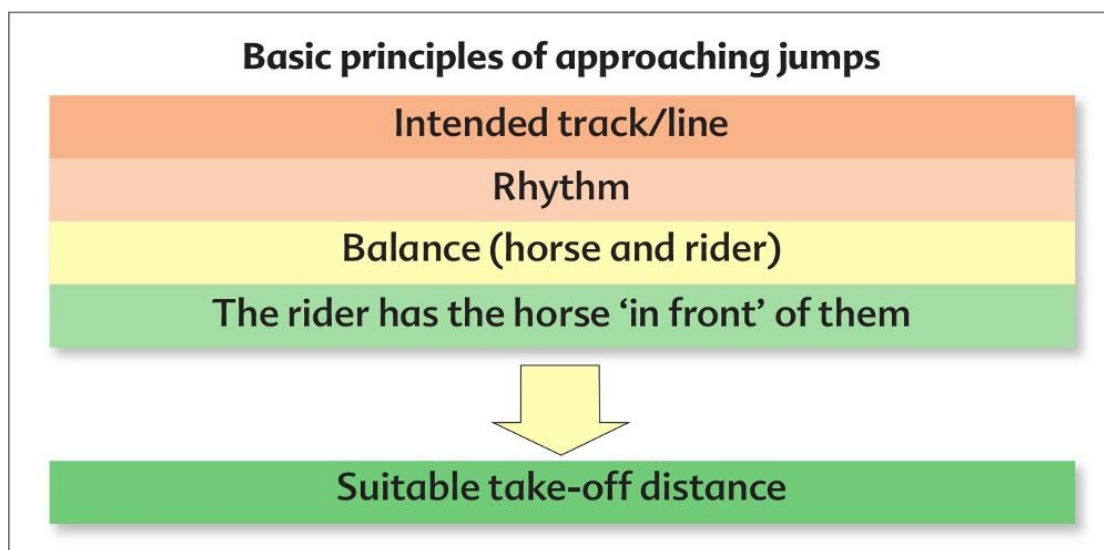
An even rhythm of the canter strides is of paramount importance. Since this rhythm is linked to the rhythm of the horse's breathing, any loss of it has consequences on the horse's ability to perform physically, as well as its ability to concentrate. The better the rider manages to maintain an even rhythm, the more the horse is able to assume its 'responsibility at the jump', hence, jumping with the necessary concentration.

Another indispensable aspect is a balanced rider's seat, which must be constantly adapted from the basic jumping seat to the movements of the horse. Aside from the seat, the rider's aids must also be in accordance with the movement of the horse so as not to disturb its balance.

When the rider is able to bring their horse into balance, riding forwards from back to front and into the hand with their driving aids (particularly with the driving leg aids), they have the horse 'in front' of them. Horses with consequential confidence in jumping should thus develop a controlled forward drive towards the obstacles, which leads to a positive basic tension as an ideal starting point for jumping.

The ideal take-off distance is then of less importance in the basic training. Under the conditions described, the horse is able to compensate without any problems for a take-off distance that is not quite ideal. Depending on the talent of the rider, this eye for distances will become more and more established. It will develop even quicker, the better the other basic principles of approaching fences have been established. However, the more difficult the challenges become, the more important is the ability of the rider to get their horse into the desired take-off situation at different obstacles.

In the following overview, the basic principles are illustrated in graphic form:



In the approach to every single fence, attention must always be paid to the fact that the basic prerequisites of both horse and rider are suited to the level of training being undertaken.

These criteria are always to be re-established anew after every fence and before any following fence. This will prevent negative experiences. During the landing, it is important that the rider absorbs the momentum in the stirrups and balances with

their body. They should also make it possible for the horse to find its balance again in the first canter stride after landing, before being put back onto the aids again completely.

As a preliminary exercise to the approach of single fences, it is helpful to place a low cavalletto around 3m (bounce) or around 6m (with one canter stride before the jump) in front of the fence. The rhythmical and correct approach can thus be supported by the horse being brought to a suitable take-off distance with the last canter stride. The rider should continue to concentrate on the approach to the fence and not try to judge the take-off for the cavalletto.

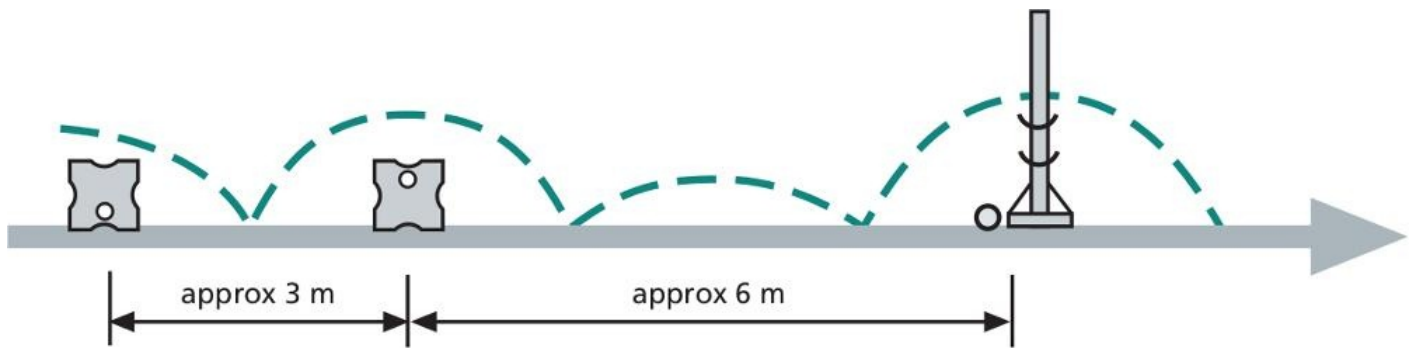
TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- The rider is not yet sitting securely balanced. Thus, they are not able to have the horse 'in front' of them when approaching the fence. It becomes difficult to have control over the tempo as well as the correct approach line.
- Fundamental problems of the seat and the aids are described in greater depth elsewhere ([see Chapter 4.3 Problems in the Seat and Influence – Causes and Corrections](#)).
- By focusing only on the correct take-off distance, the seat and the aids can be influenced negatively.

When jumping, the physical and mental challenges for rider and horse need to be given particular attention, in order to avoid excessive demands and so that the safety of the horse and rider is never put in danger.

6.5.3 Riding Grids

After several lessons on single fences, these can gradually be built up into a series of jumps. In doing so, the obstacles are built at suitable distances, which is particularly important when first starting the jumping training of horse and rider. Setting up fences in the form of a grid will pre-set the line, speed, gait and rhythm. The rider can thus concentrate more on going with the movement between the jumps and in the suspension phases. In particular, when horses tend to rush, trotting poles or cavalletti, ridden in trot, can be used to lead into the grid. For many riders, however, it is easier to go with the movement when jumping from a quiet canter. For this purpose, the following set-up, for example, can be used:

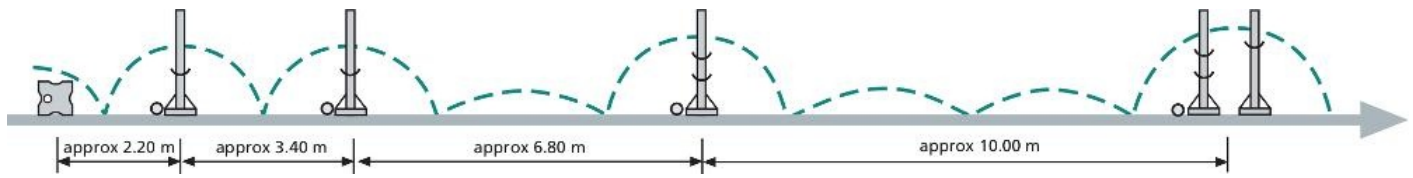


The grid is approached in canter: the first cavalletto is very low to the ground, followed by a slightly higher one after approximately 3m, followed by a small obstacle after another 6m. This exercise is suitable for training rhythm, as a calm and consistent speed must be adhered to before, during and after the series. Riding over cavalletti is an introduction to riding over grids. The rider initially focuses on riding in the middle of the grid and maintaining their aids, without increasing the speed. It is all about developing a feel of being taken into the horse's movement without assuming an active role oneself.

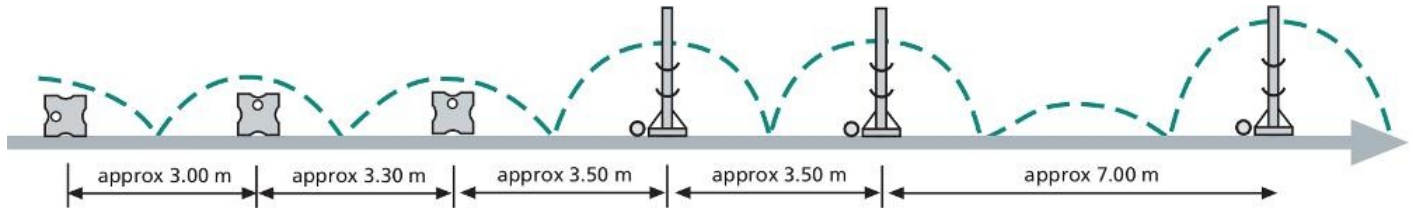
From a balanced seat, going with the forward movement (basic position), the rider can best accompany the horse at the obstacles and, if necessary, support it with their aids ([see Chapter 4.1.5.1 Rider's Seat in Show-Jumping](#)).

The adaptation required of the body posture from the basic position of the jumping seat with a light contact with the saddle before the jump, to relieving the horse's back by taking the bottom more clearly out of the saddle during the jump, and then returning close to the saddle between and after the obstacles, particularly benefits the feeling for movement, balance, flexibility and agility, as well as the safety of the rider. At no time should the rider 'sit heavy', and hence, upright and deep in the saddle. The upper body always remains more or less in the forward movement depending on the situation. In order to improve flexibility, grids should be built in varied and diverse ways.

The riding of bounces is also part of this. A bounce is a sequence of two fences that are set at a distance of 3–4m from one another, depending on their height. Therefore, the horse does not place a canter stride between the jumping efforts. It jumps into the series and immediately bounces back out. The ability to adapt and the quick responsiveness of horse and rider are thus improved. Therefore, bounces are frequently used in grids.



This grid is approached in trot and includes, after the cavalletto, a bounce and then an oxer to conclude. Many skills of the horse and the rider can be developed over this grid alone.



Through its subsequent bounces and concluding with a vertical, this grid focuses more on the speed of reaction and mobility of the horse as well as that of the rider. It is ridden from canter.

Grids are also particularly suitable for introducing riders to jumping oxers, to get them used to jumping higher fences, to improve their balance, to establish confidence in their own abilities, as well as to train a feel for rhythm, speed and distance (feel for the correct take-off area for the horse).

To maintain the attention span of horse and rider, grids should not be jumped repeatedly too often without any changes.

New, varied challenges increase the concentration!

It should also not be underestimated that the completion of grids is strenuous. Therefore, breaks need to be included.

6.5.4 Jumping a Series of Individual Fences

In further training, riding over a series of individual fences in canter is practised. In the process, the rider learns to stay on the proper line to and away from the fences (the so-called course line), to develop the suitable basic speed and to remain in an even rhythm.

As the level of training progresses, the rider should also become able to maintain their horse's balance before and after each fence. Only a horse that maintains good balance will be able to jump safely. One condition for this is that the rider is well balanced themselves and that they have their horse 'in front' of them and on the aids. Particularly in the approach and take-off phase, it is important to give the horse the chance to balance itself with a sufficiently long neck to achieve a round, harmonious bascule.

A horse should always be ridden to a fence with a steady connection between the rider's hands and the horse's mouth (contact), with the poll as the highest point and the

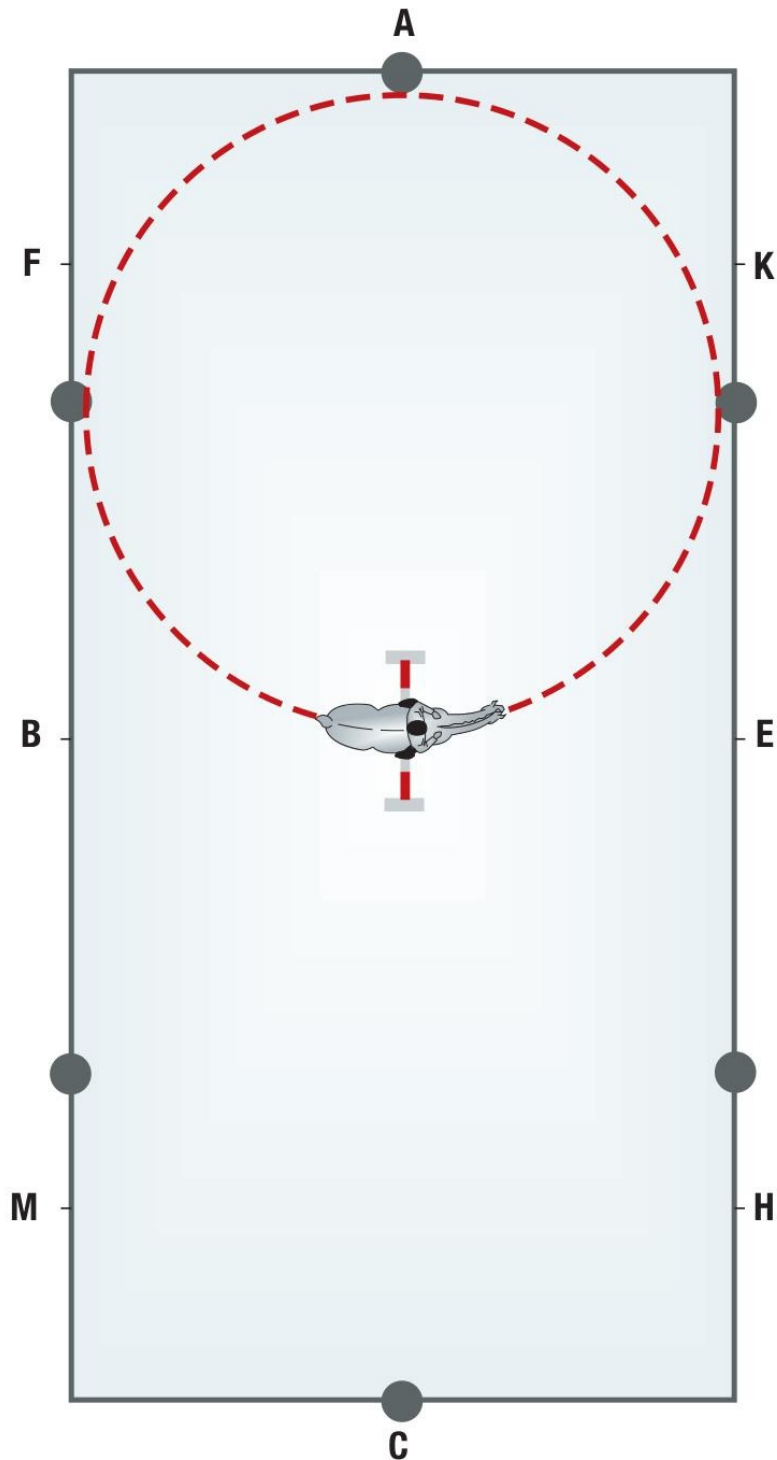
forehead-nose line clearly in front of the vertical.

The approach to each fence follows the basic principles of show-jumping. After taking a fence, the balance must be restored again immediately and the line to the next fence needs to be paid attention to.

The diagonal aids have a particular importance for riding turns, because only through them can the rider influence the precise line the horse should follow to the next fence.

Speed and rhythm must be secured again to prepare the horse for the approach to the next fence in good time. In every phase of riding between and over fences, the rider should have the horse securely on the aids, 'in front' of them and, as a result, in balance.

To begin with, small verticals and later small oxers, which not too wide, are practised. Between the fences, the rider should have enough time to set the horse up for the next one.



'Jumping' over small cavalletti on a circle is part of the basic work before moving on to actual jumping.

Riding transitions and turns correctly is essential for riding a series of fences or entire courses. Therefore, these elements are to be practised systematically in combination with small fences. Many exercises, which can also be individually modified, can be found in the so-called 'Caprilli Tests'.⁹ These highlight the connection between more dressage-like exercises and riding over small fences.

Jumping on curved lines should first be developed on a circle by riding over

cavalletti. For this type of work, knowledge of the diagonal aids is already required but, in turn, this work serves to develop these aids further. Through this work, the rider can learn to transfer systematic dressage work, observing flexion, bend and an energetic canter over the back, to pole work and, later, to the jumping of individual fences.

If this is carried out successfully on both reins, it will soon be possible to change rein and canter lead over a jump or a cavalletto. If the horse does not canter on the correct lead, the rider needs to correct this counter-or disunited canter well in advance of a turn.

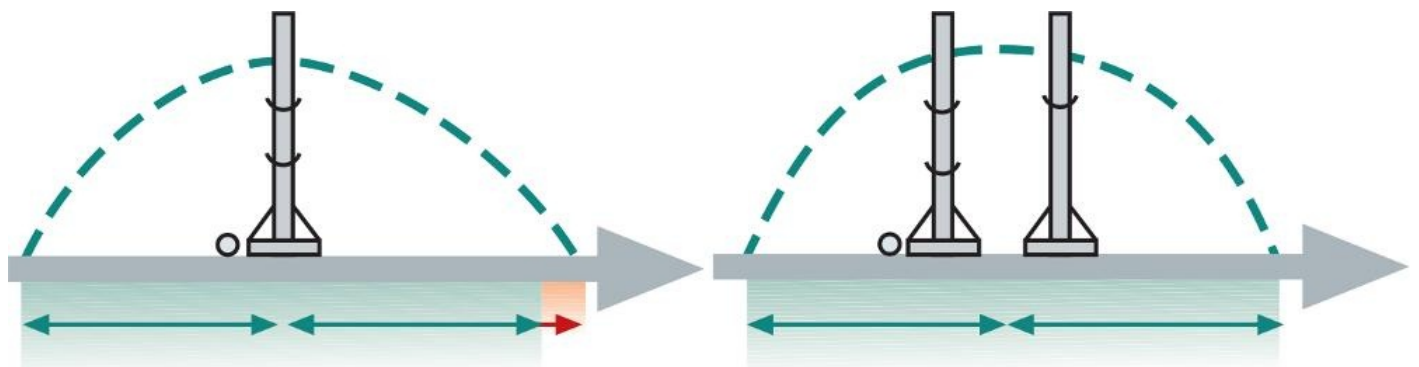
During all exercises, attention must be paid by the rider to keeping the horse ‘in front’ of them and to continue riding along the desired line after the jump.

It is not the number and certainly not the height of the fences that determines whether a training session has been successful. What is far more important in order to achieve good jumps is the correct preparation, the fact that the set tasks were well-considered, the maintenance of the horse’s suppleness, and the precise execution.

The schooling must be structured in a way that ensures that pleasure and safety are always the priority and that the communication between the horse and rider is constantly refined.

6.5.5 Combinations

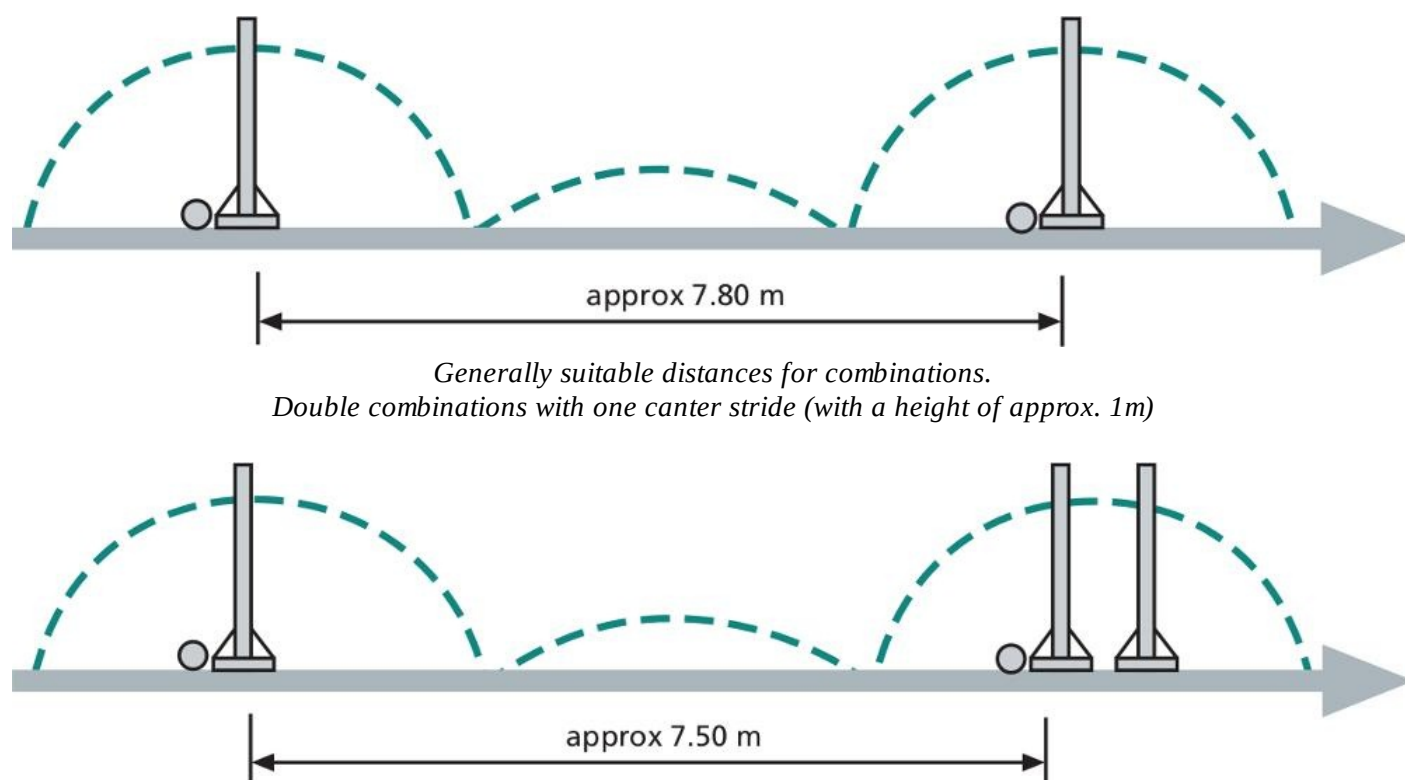
In basic training, the riding of combinations can be developed from riding grids. This is a further step in the jumping training. A combination refers to two or three fences between which the horse takes one or two canter strides. For setting up and riding combinations, it is important to know the different effects of certain types of fences on the trajectory (take-off and landing spot) and, as a result, the correct distances between the fences in combinations.



*Take-off and landing spots depend on the height and type or profile (for examples vertical or oxer) of the fences.
With a vertical, the landing point will be slightly further away than with an oxer.*

Take-off and landing spots depend on the height and the type or profile (for example, vertical or oxer) of the obstacles. Different types of obstacles lead to different trajectories. With a vertical, the highest point of the flight curve is perpendicularly above the fence and thus, with a vertical, the ideal take-off point is generally a little further away from the fence than is the case with an oxer. This is because the width of an oxer means that the highest point of the flight curve is further back (ideally halfway between the front and back poles) than is the case for a vertical. Therefore, the take-off point for an oxer should be closer than for a vertical. It thus follows that a horse should arrive at an oxer closer than it would at a vertical. For the same reason, the landing point after a vertical is generally a little further away than it is after an oxer.

Suitable distances for combinations in 'normal cases'.



Depending on the types of fences, the distances in combinations will also differ, as the illustration below shows. The indicated distances apply to combinations in a course. If individual combinations are practised in a calm manner during schooling, the distances might be reduced accordingly. With lower fences the distances should also be reduced since the flight curve will be smaller. For ponies, the distances are also reduced by approximately 0.5m.

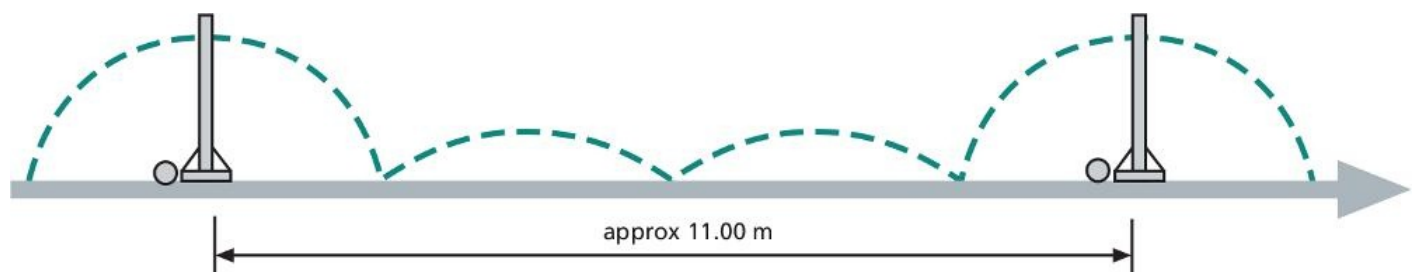
The distance between fences in a combination is always measured along the ground from the base after the first one to the base of the following one. The correct distance should be measured with a tape measure. 'Walking' the distances

on foot in metre-long (or feet-long) strides needs to be practised, so that the rider gains increased assurance in the estimation of distances.

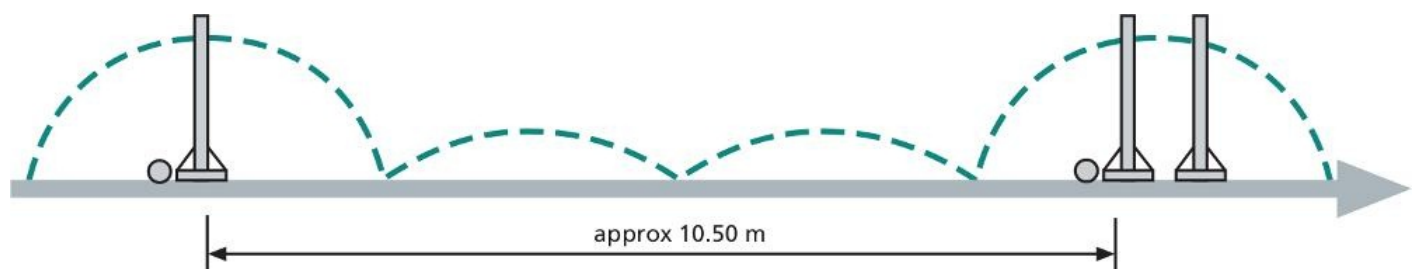
In training, the distances should be chosen in a way that ensures the rhythmical and harmonious jumping of combinations. The choice of the distances depends on the aim of the training and the rider's ability to control the speed, as well as on the behaviour and scope of the horse. For horses that tend to be cautious or hesitant, it can initially be helpful to shorten the distances so as not to unsettle the horse or the rider.

Particularly in the basic training of horse and rider, it is recommended that fences are given a so-called ground-line. This is a pole that is placed directly at the foot of the fence, on the ground just ahead of the lowest pole of the fence itself. This makes it easier for the horse to estimate the fence better and assess the take-off distance.

When approaching combinations, the speed and take-off must be chosen so that a suitable distance to the second and the third fences can be ensured. However, the rider needs to know that some factors might make combinations (and also series of fences) appear tighter or wider.



*Generally suitable distances for combinations.
Double combinations with two canter strides (with a height of approx. 1m)*

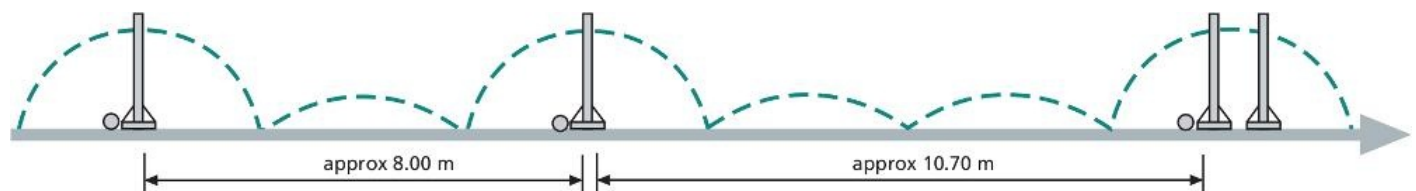


For example:

- In an outdoor arena, horses tend to canter more eagerly and with more ground cover than they do indoors.
- When jumping in the direction of the exit or the stables ('towards home'), most horses canter more eagerly.

- On firm, elastic footing, horses cover more ground in canter; on deep footing, particularly in loose sand, the canter strides cover less ground.
- In an outdoor arena, the terrain is quite likely to have an incline. Horses do not cover as much ground when cantering uphill as they do when cantering downhill. In contrast, they tend to rush more downhill and come more onto the forehand, if the rider does not keep their horse 'together', on the aids and 'in front' of them.

A treble combination is only part of competitive sport requirements from German L level (height approx. 1.15m) onwards. Therefore, trebles should only be practised once the riding of double combinations can be performed in all of its variations and without any problems. The following illustration shows an example of a treble combination as a suitable introduction to this task, since it can be ridden without problems in a forward tendency in a good basic canter.



Generally, it is easier for the novice rider to ride into a combination when the first fence is a vertical. If the first element of a combination is an oxer, this must not be too wide. If the first jump is not carried out very harmoniously, it is generally better to carry on and ride the horse actively forwards so that the second element can nevertheless be mastered without any problems by the horse. If the impulsion is lost, it is self-evident that the rider should ride forwards. However, if the horse has jumped 'big' into the combination from a longer take-off distance, it is also important that the rider continues to ride forwards while trying to bring the horse more 'together'.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES/POSSIBLE REACTIONS OF THE HORSE

- The rider forces the speed too much before a combination because the take-off distance becomes too long.
 - Either the horse jumps with a lot of trust over the first fence, but then has to pick itself up strongly in order not to come too close to the second jump,
 - or, having had similar experiences before, the horse tries to put in another small canter stride before the take-off into the combination, which, at this point, leads to a loss of rhythm and impulsion.

It would be more correct for the rider not to force the speed, but rather to support the horse during the take-off with a driving leg aid, so that the horse jumps into the combination in the right speed and balance, even if the take-off distance is slightly long.

- The rider reduces the speed ahead of a combination so much that the necessary impulsion to ride over the last element is no longer present. On the one hand, the rider must learn the right basic speed; on the other hand, despite the low basic speed, it might still be helpful to advise the rider to actively continue their driving aids. Despite the incorrect approach, the horse may still be able to jump through the combination if given sufficient encouragement to do so.
- The rider tries either to hold the horse back too strongly or force it to go too much forwards. Both of these mean a distinct loss in rhythm, concentration and balance for the horse. The rider is always well advised to support their horse with driving aids and keep it 'closed from behind' at the same time, but never to influence it too strongly.

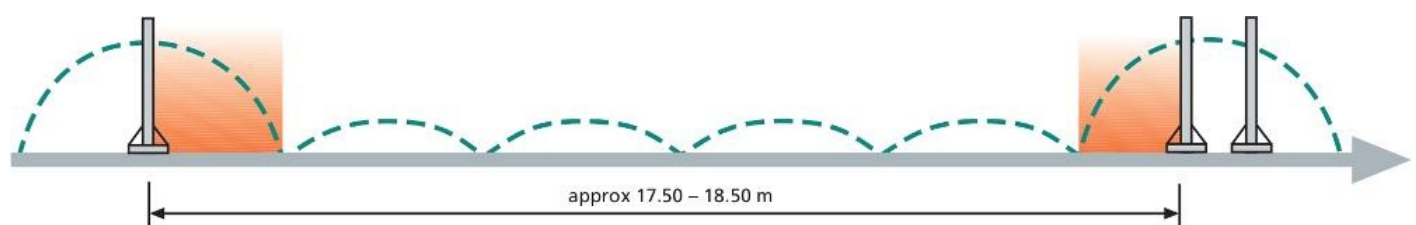
6.5.6 Related Distances/Series of Fences

Related distances refer to two fences between which the horse needs three, four, five or six canter strides. The gap between the fences is the so-called related distance. Fences with a distance of more than six canter strides between them are treated as individual jumping efforts.

The following distances are calculated (for a height of 1m) for:

- Three canter strides: approx. 14m.
- Four canter strides: approx. 17.5–18.5m.
- Five canter strides: approx. 21–22m.
- Six canter strides: approx. 24.5–25.5m.

(For ponies 0.5m–1m less)



Measurement of a 'regular' related distance with four canter strides. The landing after the vertical is slightly further away than the take-off point ahead of the oxer

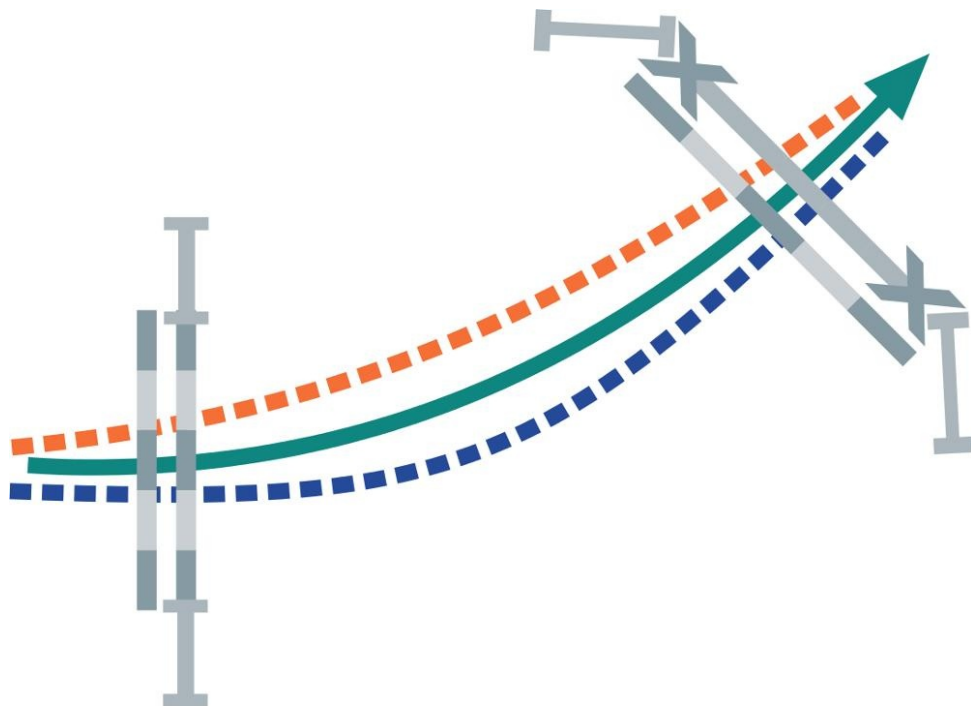
A series of fences should be ridden in a steady basic tempo. The rider must learn to extend the canter strides in long distances and, conversely, to shorten them in shorter distances, without disturbing the harmony, rhythm and motion pattern of the horse. Of course the rider must keep the horse 'in front' of them and on the driving aids. This ability can be honed particularly well in practice by using cavalletti that are placed at varying distances, since the rider will then focus more on the actual 'riding' rather than on the jumps.

A series of fences can be built on a straight or on a slightly curved line. For the less experienced rider, it is easier to ride a straight line. For the more experienced rider, the curved line has the advantage that the rider can choose the longer or shorter route, depending on the situation, or the horse.

Varying the number of canter strides or the precise distance between related fences can be an excellent exercise for horse and rider, assuming that the rider can ride the length of the canter strides with good control and that the horse remains on the aids.

The following variations can be practised, for example:

- Riding an additional canter stride (for example 18m with five canter strides) by 'picking up' the horse more after the first fence.
- Riding one stride less by riding more forwards after the first fence.
- Riding a wider turn on a curved line, hence increasing the number of canter strides while maintaining an even speed and stride length.
- Riding a tighter turn on a curved line, hence, reducing the number of canter strides while maintaining an even speed and stride length.



Related distances on curved lines can be ridden on the shortest way (inside track) or with a longer curve depending on the different ground cover of each individual horse.

The preparation before the first fence is particularly decisive. The way the following related distance will ride depends on whether it is ridden in a slightly calmer (collected) or more ongoing way.

Counting the number of canter strides between jumping efforts is a helpful exercise to practise maintaining the rhythm of the canter. Hence, adhering to the prescribed number of canter strides in series of fences becomes easier. Counting develops more awareness of the number of strides to be ridden, while in turn the feel for rhythm is also enhanced. Now and again, it is also helpful to place cavalletti at suitable intervals between fences. This will pre-determine the rhythm and the length of the canter strides.

Riding distances with a different number of canter strides requires a constant control of the striding and good throughness of the horse. In a series of fences on a curved line, the number of canter strides can be adapted by changing the line. In this instance, it is important that the aids are given early enough – ‘after the jump is before the jump’.

If the action of riding distances is carried out successfully over two fences, an additional fence can be added (or a combination). By riding a series of fences, the coordination of the aids and the rider’s capacity for reaction are enhanced. The feel for the rhythm and tempo of the canter is also improved. This way, the rider learns to ride precise lines (whether curved or straight) with a certain number of canter strides. Alongside the feel and the capacity for reaction, the rider’s eye for the right take-off point is also trained!

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- Less experienced riders tend to ‘forget to ride’, both when jumping and between the fences. This means that they are no longer able to support their horse by bringing it into a balance from back to front with all their aids during the canter.
- An uncontrolled approach to the first fence of a related distance inevitably leads to an uncontrolled riding of the distance, and at times also to jumping faults or even to a total loss of control.
- After landing, the rider cannot regain their balance quickly enough. Because of this, the rider is left with very little time (a few canter strides) to prepare for the next fence.
- The rider tries to ‘pick up’ the horse during the first jump or immediately after landing with backward-acting hands. This can lead to the horse being disturbed in its jumping effort. The horse must be able to move freely and develop the act of jumping without any disturbance over the fence or when landing. The key here is the right preparation before the jump. In the first canter stride after landing, a giving hand is necessary to allow the horse to regain balance, before then bringing it onto the aids again. Otherwise, the horse would go ‘against the rider’s hand’ and not allow itself to be collected.

6.5.7 Jumping a Course

Once the rider has achieved stability in their jumping seat and their light seat through the necessary seat training, a systematic approach to the jumping of single fences and sequences of fences, and has learnt how to ride a rhythmical and controlled approach, then the training can continue with the next step of riding a course.

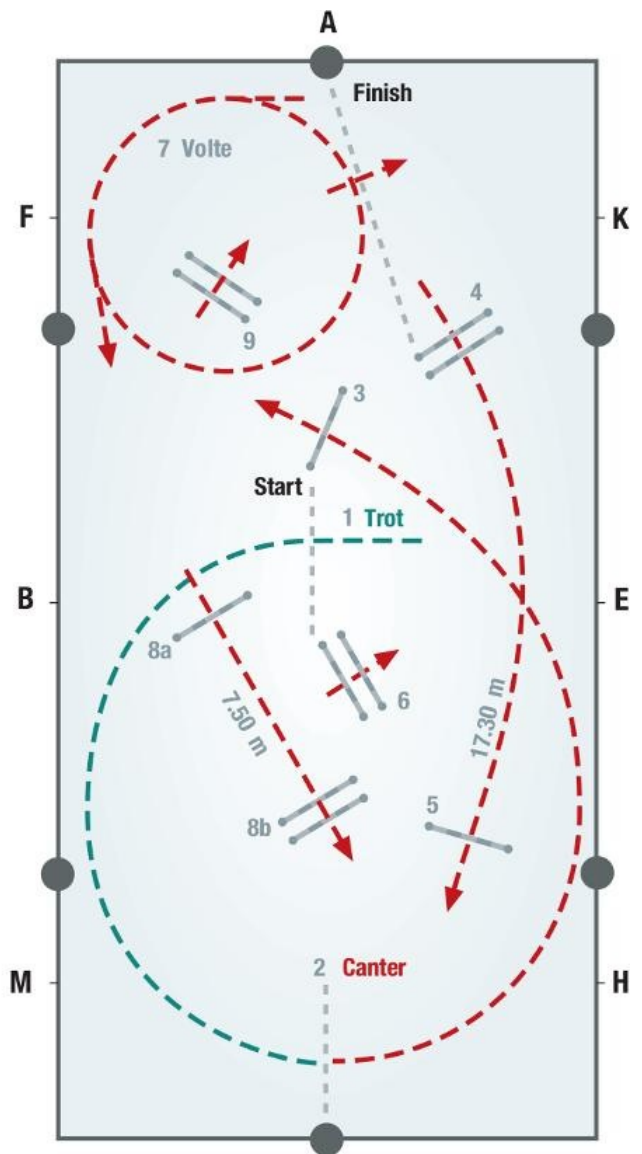
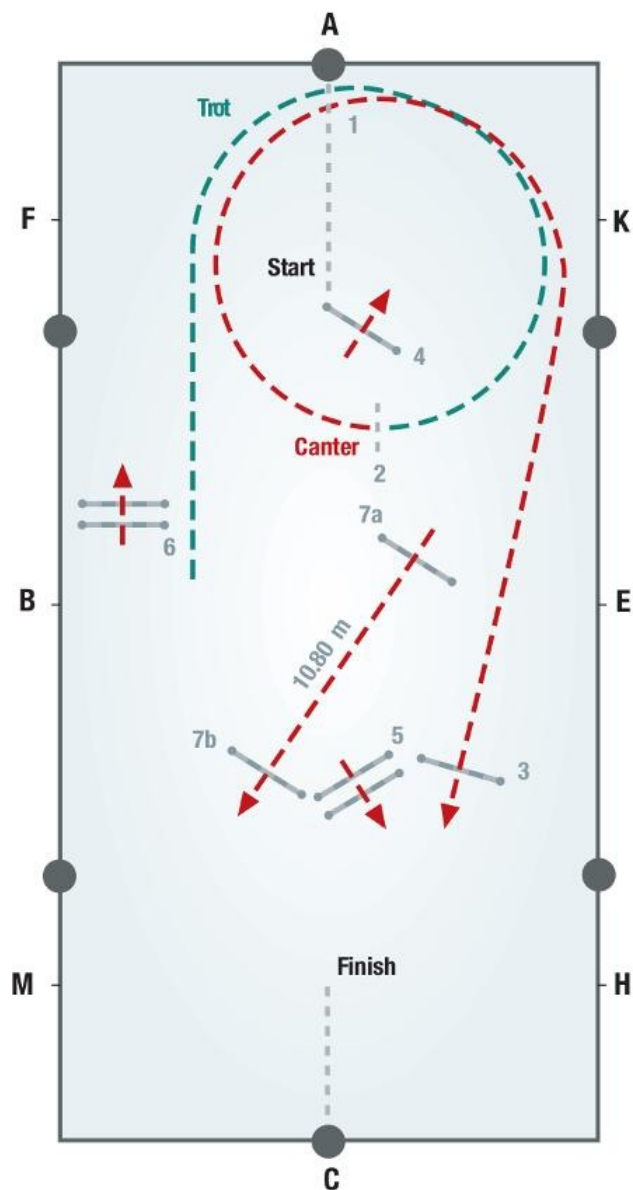
Before the rider attempts their first course, it is sensible to let them practise individual segments of the planned course first.

Including cavalletti or individual fences to be ridden in trot in the course helps to bring calmness and security to riding the whole course. The rider learns to employ their aids with measure and sensitively, and also improves the coordination of the aids.

In general, the following criteria apply to riding a course:

- Correct WAY or suitable LINES (turns are ridden in canter on the correct lead; if the horse does not canter on the correct lead, this must be corrected with a flying change or a transition down to trot followed by a return to canter).
- Even RHYTHM in a speed suited to the situation.
- Even basic TEMPO.
- BALANCED, FLEXIBLE SEAT GOING WITH THE MOVEMENT, AND SENSITIVE AIDS SUITED TO THE SITUATION.

EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE COURSES¹⁰



The illustrated examples contain harmonious course layouts with integrated basic flatwork exercises such as transitions between gaits, circles and voltes.

If the horse has mastered the flying change, the rider will quickly learn that the relevant aid will invite the horse to change into the new canter lead willingly. If the flying change causes problems for the rider and also the horse, the change should at first be performed through a transition to trot. In basic training, a change carried out through trot, but 'through', is more correct than a forced flying change, which only leads to tension and a loss of rhythm in the horse.

Only once an entire show-jumping course can be completed securely in training should the rider consider competing in show-jumping classes.

6.5.8 Compilation of Exercises in Show-Jumping

- Suppling work in trot and canter, with frequent changes between the basic position of the jumping seat and the light seat in different variations on straight

and curved lines ([see Chapter 4.1.5 The Light Seat](#)).

- Riding transitions, changes in speed, gait variations, rein and direction.
- Cavalletti work in all gaits.
- Riding individual fences from trot.
- Developing a series of fences.
- Approaching individual fences on straight and curved lines in canter.
- Riding combinations.
- Riding distances on straight and curved lines.
- Riding course sections.
- Riding complete courses.

6.6 First Basic Exercises in 'Cross-Country' Riding

Riding in open country is a fundamental part of the basic training. Since nature itself places a variety of demands on the horse and rider, the balance, elasticity and skill of the rider are particularly improved when riding in the countryside. Their suppleness is also improved naturally. Riding over different types of terrain enhances the feeling for movement and lets the rider experience different kinds of movement which are not offered by doing flatwork in the indoor or outdoor arena. Therefore, a comprehensive training outside is important for every rider. The rider will also gain further knowledge about the behaviour and reactions of the horse. A horse that is ridden in the countryside frequently will become more relaxed and calm; a phlegmatic horse will develop more freshness – thereby, the rider can also sense mental changes in their horse when riding in the country. Therefore, riders can use the many advantages of riding in the open for the general gymnasticising of their horse.

Riding in nature is a welcome diversion, which gives horse and rider motivation for further training and, at the same time, presents a significant expansion of the rider's equestrian potential.

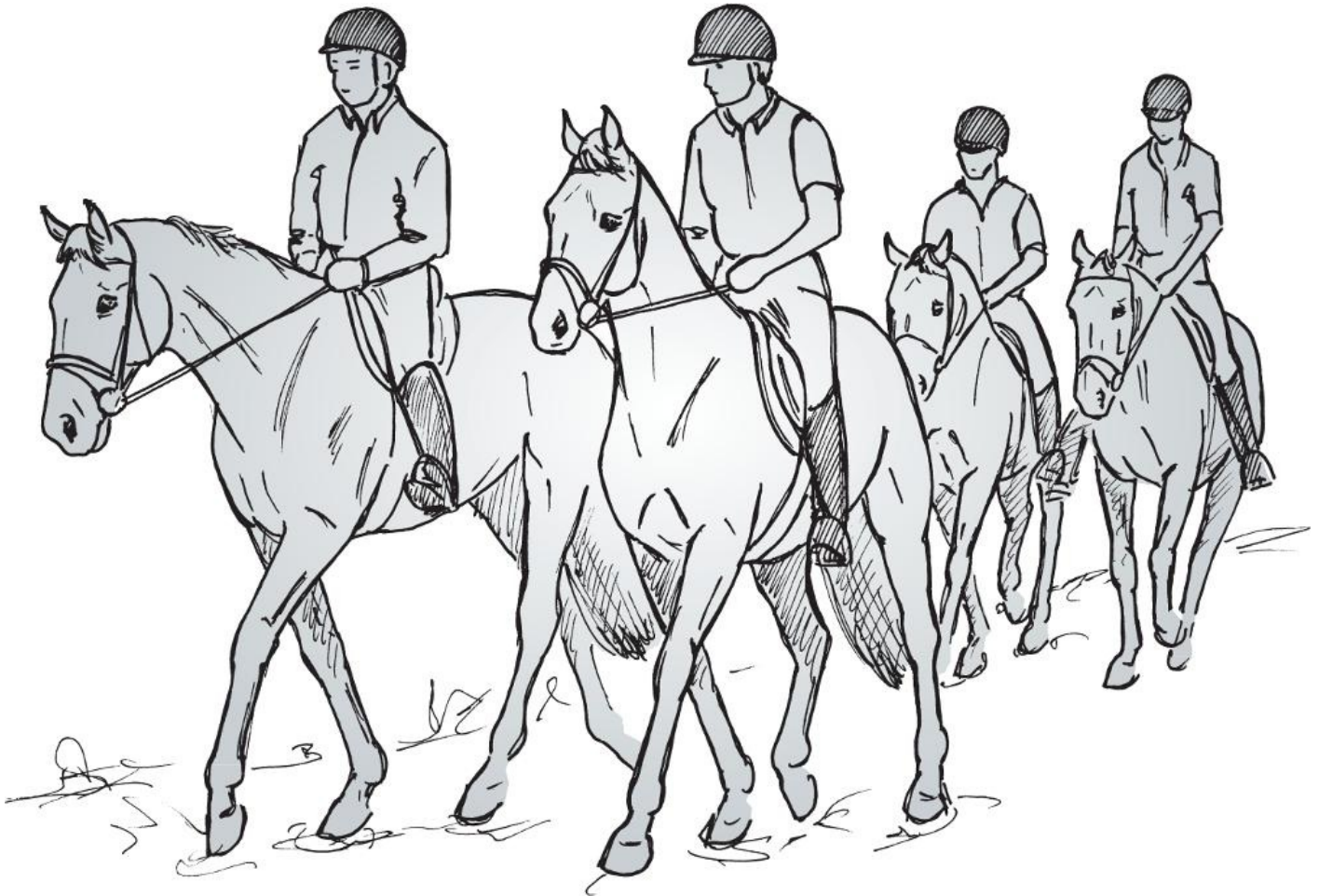
Systematic riding in open country also serves as a foundation for taking part in trekking rides, hunts, horse trials and other cross-country events.

Preconditions for training in open country are:

- The rider's ability to remain securely in the saddle in unpredictable situations with as solid a basic seat as possible, also in a light seat.
- Being accompanied on the ride by an experienced rider or a trainer with expertise in cross-country training.
- A suitable training area, for example a cross-country riding area with differing terrain and conditions, slopes and hills and, if possible, with jumping obstacles

suited to the level of training.

- Suitable equipment ([see Chapter 2 The Equipment of Horse and Rider](#)). of the horse:
 - all-purpose or show-jumping saddle, leg protection (brushing, fetlock, overreach boots), if necessary a martingale, possibly studs so that the horse does not become insecure by slipping, for example, on the grass.of the rider:
 - helmet and body protector (particularly when jumping cross-country).
- A schoolmaster, safe in traffic and in open country.
- With inexperienced horses, having a lead horse is absolutely necessary.



Calmness and relaxation are also key elements of hacking out. When doing so in a group, it should be ensured that horses that are keen to go are at the front.

Riding in the open countryside should be started as early as possible so that it becomes natural for the horse from the very beginning. Preparatory exercises can be performed on foot with the horse, on a lead rein or by riding an experienced horse in walk or a quiet trot and leading the youngster alongside. Depending on the local conditions, it may be worthwhile initially preparing for such further training in a fenced outdoor arena. This allows the rider to examine to what extent their horse is safely on the aids. This is an important precondition to ensure that the horse should remain under control in the open countryside, can be ridden safely, and will move

sure-footedly and in balance.

When riding outside, balance is the priority. Therefore, maintaining a soft, but steady, contact with the horse's neck being sufficiently 'long' is particularly important. The horse must be able to use its neck as a balancing pole at all times.

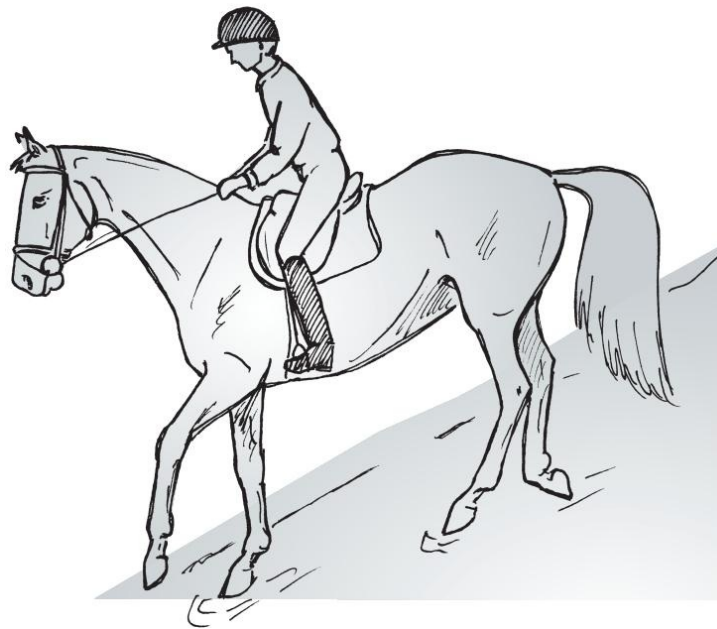
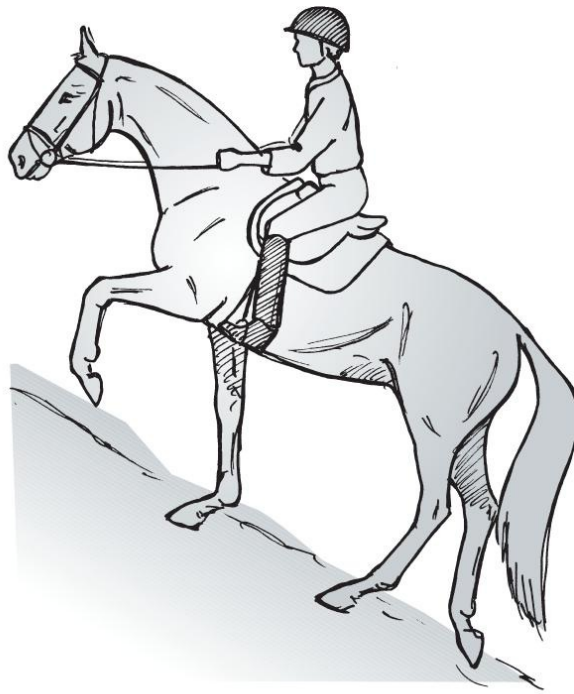
The entire influence of the rider should always be employed in such a way that the mutual balance is stabilised and not disturbed.

The stable, balanced seat is not only a requisite for efficient cross-country training, but also the result thereof. For this, the length of the stirrup leathers should be adjusted so that the rider can easily change between sitting 'into' the horse and the different degrees of the light seat ([see Chapter 4.1.5 The Light Seat](#)). The rider must be able to adapt flexibly to the changes in the position of the horse's centre of gravity. This is one of the most important qualities of cross-country riding.

6.6.1 Riding on Different Surface Conditions and Terrains

When riding on different surfaces, the rider must be aware of certain safety measures and codes of behaviour.

- Hard road surfaces are always ridden in walk. Only experienced riders who have their horses securely on the aids should trot on the road.
- On slippery or icy ground, the rider must dismount and lead the horse.
- On deep ground, the rider should lean further forwards with their upper body, relieve the horse's back and enable it to stretch more in the neck by lengthening the reins. On extremely deep ground, where the horse might sink in, the rider must dismount and lead the horse.



When riding uphill and downhill, a secure foothold in the stirrups, combined with an almost vertical lower leg, are particularly important.

■ UPHILL AND DOWNHILL

Riding on uneven ground, slight hills or slopes should be included in the training as soon as possible. The rider must learn to always adapt their body posture to the gradients of the slopes. Here, a secure basic seat foundation (knee, lower leg and heel) is particularly important. This challenge is also good practice for the development and refining of balance in the light seat.

When riding uphill, the rider leans further forwards with their upper body to remain on or slightly in front of the vertical, while the stirrups are pushed down vertically, with deep knees. When riding downhill, the rider becomes more erect, shifting their

bottom further back but still keeping their weight off the horse's back (see *illustrations*). It is important that the rider finds a secure foothold with the balls of their feet in the stirrups. The stirrup leathers will then, following the rules of gravity, always move towards the vertical.

Both with uphill and downhill riding, the connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth must remain consistent. The reins might be lengthened since the horse is particularly reliant on the neck as a balancing pole on uneven ground. For novice riders, a neckstrap or rein bridge ([see Chapter 4.3.6 Problems with the Hand Position and Holding of the Reins](#)) can help with remaining with the movement. Even grabbing the horse's mane will give the rider added support.

At a more advanced stage of training, steeper hills can be introduced to the training as an interesting exercise. Using a neckstrap can be particularly helpful for this.

Steep hills are always ridden straight down – in line with the slope of the hill – and never obliquely to the slope. Otherwise, the horse might slip down to the side. When riding uphill, it might sometimes become necessary to give up the connection with the horse's mouth completely to facilitate the climbing process for the horse. Here, again, grabbing the neckstrap or the horse's mane can prove helpful. Steep slopes are only ridden in walk.

Riding uphill and downhill is initially done in walk, then later in trot, and then in a quiet canter, if the incline is not too steep. The rider must have sufficient influence on the horse to be able to control the rhythm and speed and ask for specific transitions at all times, such as increasing the speed when going uphill and slowing the horse down when riding downhill, for example.

■ RIDING THROUGH WATER

Riding through water is first performed at walk in a place where the water is shallow and the underfoot conditions are sound. The first exercises through water should be performed behind an experienced rider on a lead horse, so that the novice rider gains enough confidence in this new task. The rider needs to learn to keep the horse on the aids when riding through water. Especially in shallow water, the rider should not let their horse stand still, for long, but must always be careful that the horse does not roll. Sweaty horses that are used to water like to lie down, and will announce this by pawing away at the water with their forelegs. The rider must immediately shorten the reins and, if necessary, ride the horse on energetically.



Cantering through water.

Later, water can be ridden through in trot and in canter. In doing so, the rider must have the horse well 'in front' of them and maintain an even, quiet speed in the chosen gait.

When cantering into water, the rider should (depending on the water level) always be prepared for the movement of the horse being slowed down. It is therefore important to maintain balance in this slowing down and to avoid their upper body falling forwards. At the same time, they must ensure that the balls of their feet are placed securely and that elastic ankles absorb the movement downwards in the stirrups. The lower leg will thus be placed in a vertical position, close to the girth. If there is a steep bank leading in and out of the water, the rider needs to first learn to sit and use the aids on a downward slope, or when climbing. With less experienced horses, or water that the horse is not yet familiar with, the horse might hesitate at first but then enter the water with a little jump. The rider needs to be

ready for these different reactions of individual horses.

6.6.2 Developing a Feel for Rhythm and Speed

When riding outside, a feel for rhythm and speed can be learnt and developed simultaneously, which is also a necessary part of the basic training. This is as important for hacks and trekking rides as it is for competitions in show-jumping and eventing. It will also prevent the rider from pushing the horse too hard through ignorance.

For specific conditioning training of horses, it is absolutely necessary that the speed set out in the training plan is assessed and maintained.

Every horse has its own ‘striding’ and its own individual movement mechanics, with the corresponding ground cover. The rider must adapt their feel for the speed anew with each individual horse.

In equestrian sports, the speed is generally indicated in metres per minute (m/min.). Horses generally cover the following distances in a minute:

- In medium walk approx. 100–125m/min.
- In working trot approx. 200–250m/min.
- In working canter approx. 300–350 m/min.

(For 1km, a horse in medium walk needs 8–10 minutes; in working trot approx. 4–5 minutes; in working canter approx. 3 minutes).



When working on the different speeds, a balanced light seat with shortened stirrup leathers can also be practised to good effect.

■ PRACTICALITIES OF DEVELOPING FEEL FOR RHYTHM AND SPEED

In order to do this, a precisely measured track, including distance markers every 100 or 200 metres, is necessary. With a stopwatch, the rider or an assistant can then determine the speed being ridden in each gait. To do so, the rider is required to ride in a steady rhythm and speed throughout.

Along with the development of a general feel for speed in the basic gaits, this ability is particularly relevant for preparation and participation in certain competitions. The competitive rider should refer to the prescribed speed in the German Performance Regulations (LPO) for show-jumping courses (depending on the entry requirements generally 300–350 m/min.) as well as the speeds for cross-country courses (depending on the type of competition generally 400–570 m/min).^{[11](#)}

On a racetrack or galloping track, or during specific conditioning work, the horse will be worked at higher speeds – which still need to be controlled and maintained. In order not to take any risk of injury, this should also be built up and increased systematically with training.

Even if a rider does not wish to compete in eventing, experiencing higher speeds can increase the feeling of safety and confidence.

Thus, fears, which may exist (consciously or unconsciously) among many riders, can be eliminated.

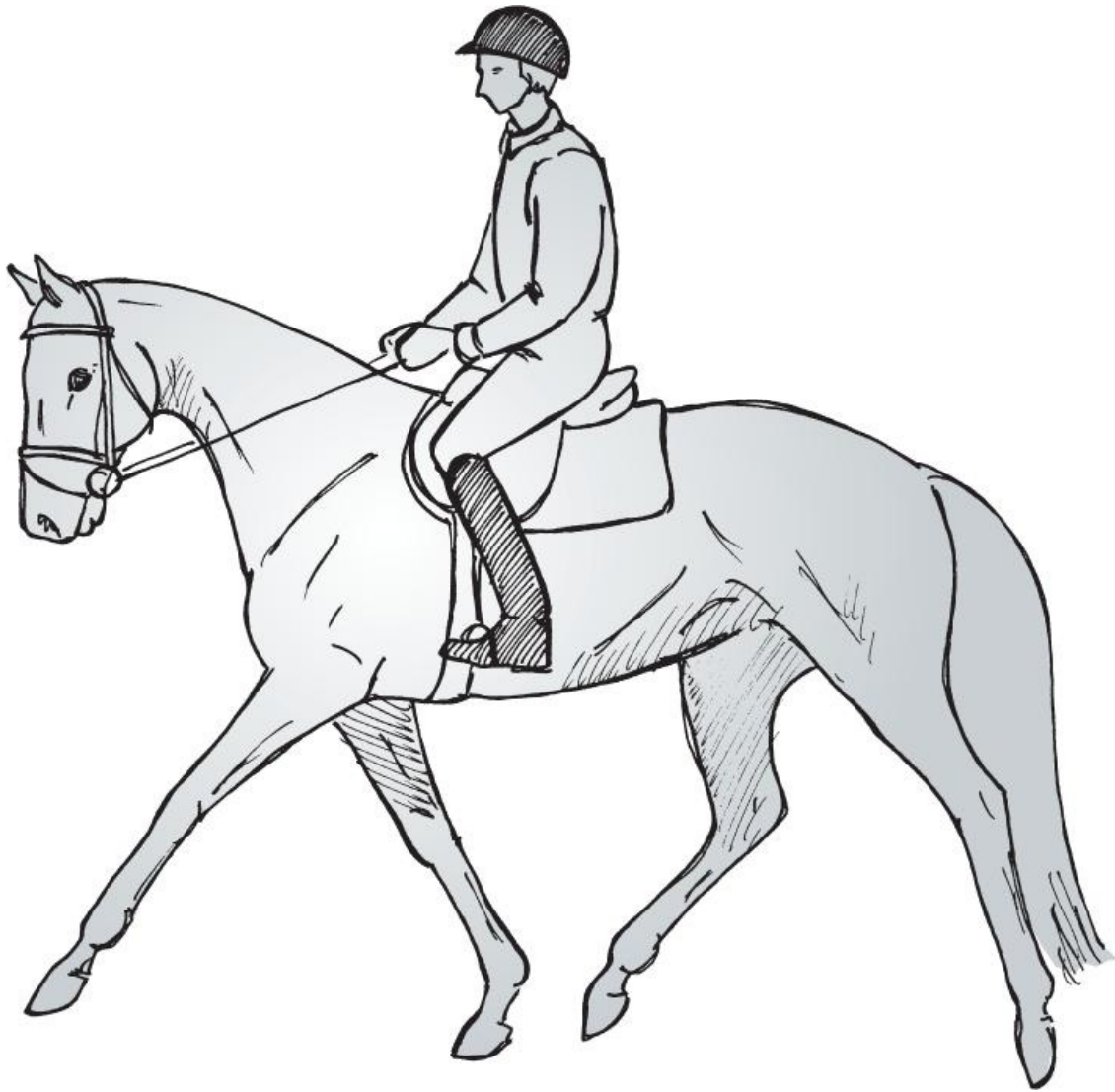
At a high speed, horses have a rather flat action. If they are not yet well balanced, some tend to lean on the rider's hand 'for support'.

Only when the rider has learnt to keep their horse on the aids, even at a higher speed, should they start to jump at that speed.

6.6.3 Jumping Cross-Country

Pre-conditions for jumping cross-country obstacles are:

- A suitable, cross-country experienced schoolmaster, to give the rider confidence and security.
- Cross-country obstacles with a degree of difficulty that suits the level of training of horse and rider.
- Suitable equipment for the horse (cross-country, show-jumping or all-purpose saddle, neckstrap) and rider (body protector, helmet) ([see Chapter 2 Equipment of Horse and Rider](#)).



Flatwork with shortened stirrup leathers as a basis for cross-country schooling.

PREPARATION

As with every training session, tackling cross-country obstacles is prepared for with a relaxed, systematic warming-up phase. The same system, in terms of the Training Scale, which is applied to gymnasticising dressage and show-jumping work, is to be observed.

Before the first obstacles are taken, the rider should attune their horse to their aids. By lengthening and shortening the trot and canter, it can be seen whether the horse accepts the driving aids, and whether it can also be controlled at a higher speed and in longer stride patterns and then shortened up again.

The rider should always have the horse ‘in front’ of them, meaning that the horse should move forwards willingly, without rushing.

Establishing this condition is an important focus of cross-country training ([see Chapter 4.1.5.2 The Rider’s Seat when Riding Cross-Country](#)).

■ SCHOOLING OVER CROSS-COUNTRY OBSTACLES

Logs lying on the ground are a good starting obstacle for cross-country jumping. Even when they are small, they appear solid and imposing enough and are therefore well respected by the horse. Hence, they can also be used over and over again for schooling more advanced horse/rider combinations. The principle of training, to move from easier questions to more difficult ones, is to be considered even more important when it comes to cross-country jumping. Only then can the trust of horse and rider be maintained and, in fact, increased.

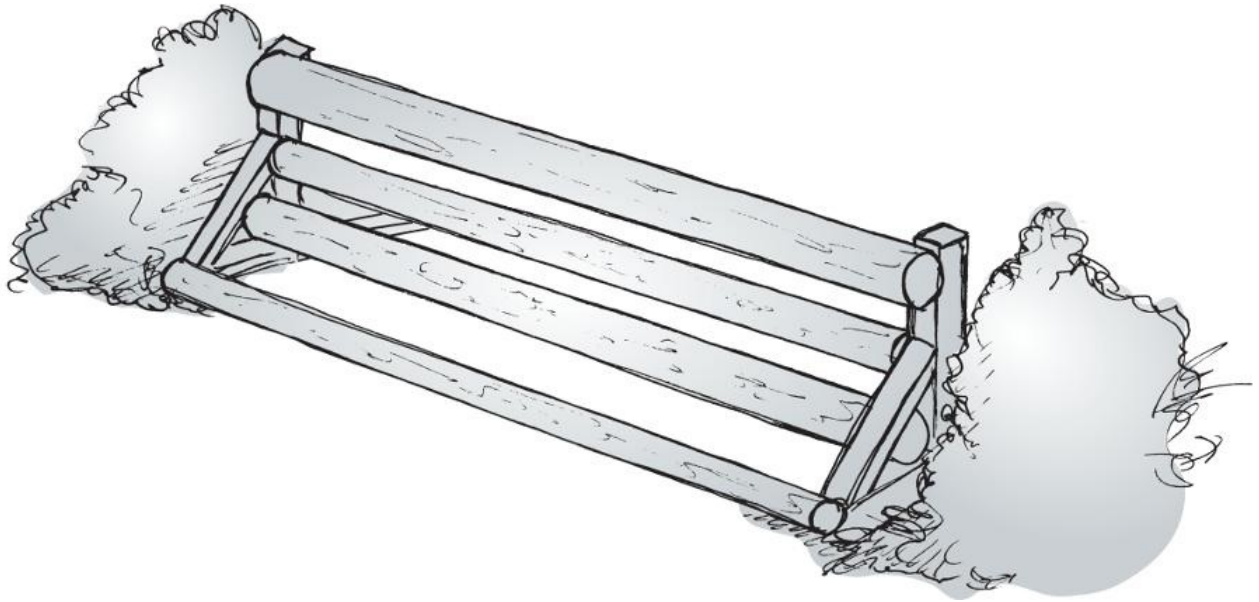
Many small logs, scattered around in different places, are more valuable for basic training than challenging, elaborately built cross-country obstacles.

The first exercise obstacles should have a 'friendly' outline that is suited to the natural flight curve of the horse. A marked ground-line to facilitate a correct take-off, as well as wings to lead the horse 'into' the jump, also ease the jumping process. The more compact and more solid the obstacle is, the more 'inviting' it appears to the horse, which, in turn, also facilitates the approach.

The cross-country trainer needs to have sufficient experience in assessing the level of difficulty of cross-country obstacles and the ground conditions in order not to push horse and rider too hard and thus take undue risks.

That means that the trainer's own riding experience is particularly important here.

In training practice, different types of portable cross-country obstacles have also proved effective. They can be set up in different places on a course. Many Riding Clubs and yards also use these during the winter months in indoor schools to make the training as diverse as possible.



Portable cross-country obstacles can always be placed in different locations and can thus lead to new learning experiences.

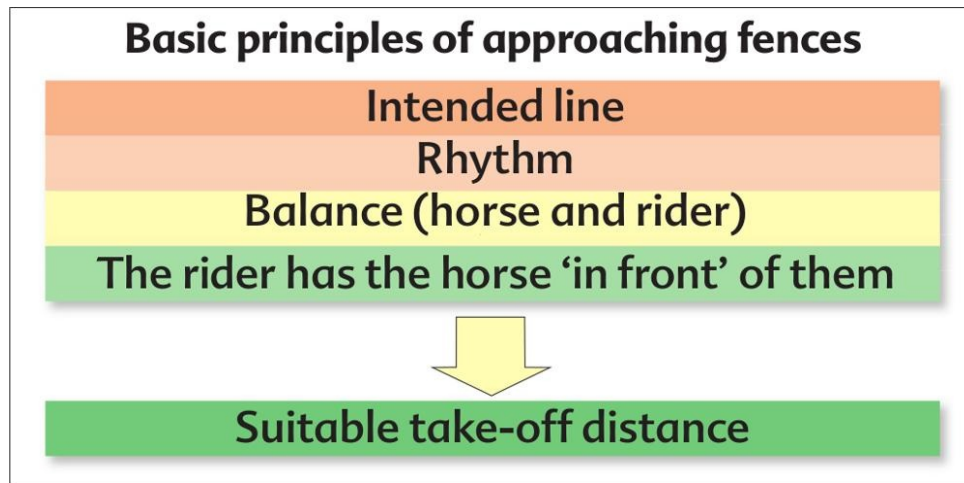
SAFETY ADVICE

When using portable natural obstacles, much care and attention must be given to their secure and stable construction.¹²

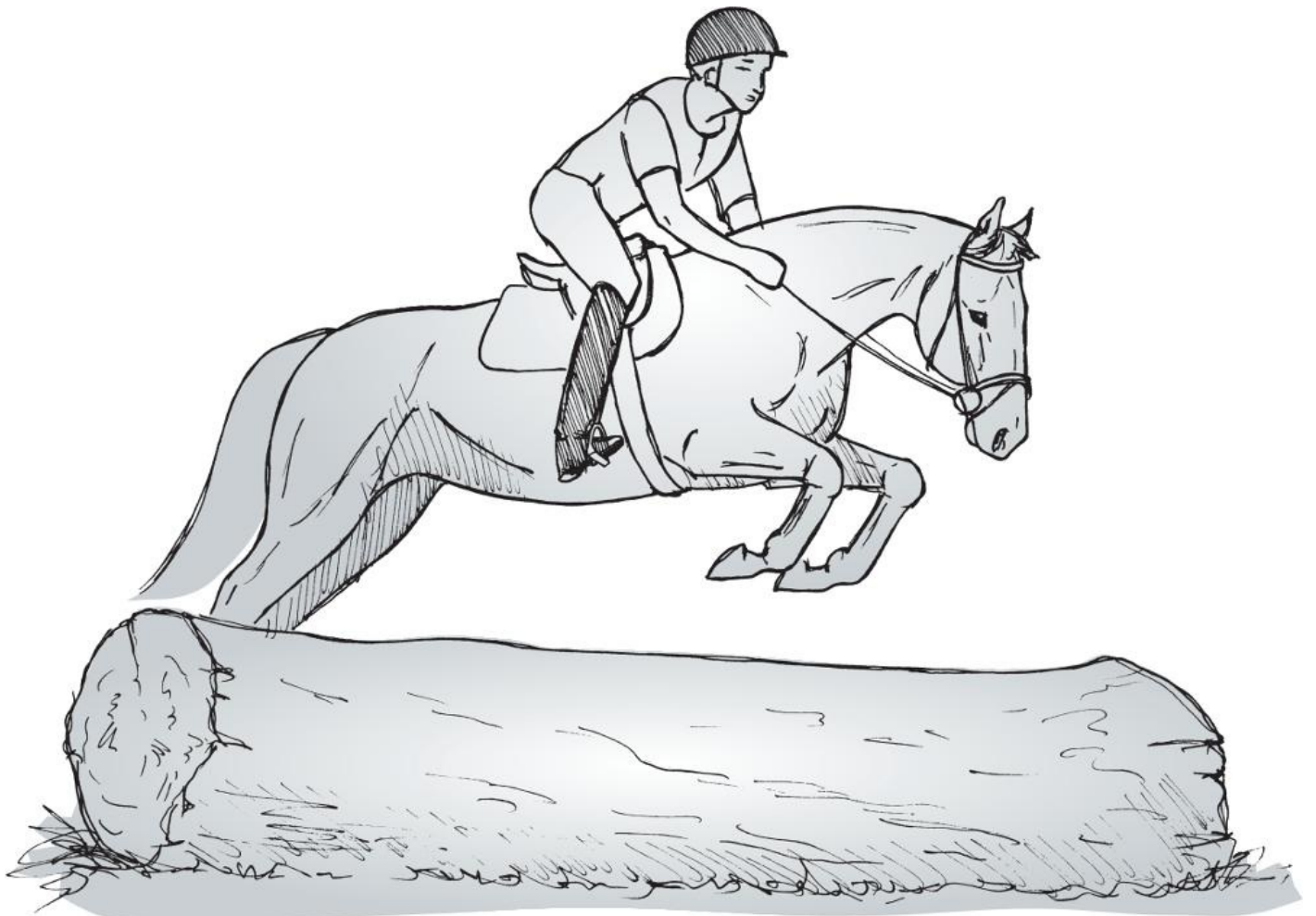
The first cross-country obstacles are taken on even ground. Later, obstacles on a slope, as well as banks, steps and drops, will also be practised.

To start with, small logs or other small obstacles can be jumped from trot to transfer the mental calm and relaxation of the suppling work into the actual cross-country work. Unnecessary excitement on the part of the horse and the rider should be avoided.

The system described for show-jumping also applies to the approach to cross-country obstacles ([see Chapter 6.5 Basic Exercises in Riding over Fences](#) even if the circumstances are different.



Because the demands of cross-country vary (uphill, downhill, uneven terrain, speed), it is not practical for the rider to focus too much on the correct take-off distance ahead of cross-country obstacles. The rider should instead be far more concerned with ensuring that the overall circumstances on the approach are as good as possible for the horse. The horse's task is to focus on the obstacle and jump it successfully.



A balanced seat (which should not come 'behind' or 'in front' of the movement), combined with the secure position of the driving leg aids at the girth, forms the basis for effective support of the horse in cross-country riding.

The rider focuses on adhering to their chosen line of approach. The horse must be able to find a safe take-off point from a suitable, steady, basic speed and canter rhythm. The rider needs to always have the horse 'in front' of them and on their driving aids. In an ideal scenario, the rider has the feeling that the horse is 'going for the jump' by itself. Before the obstacle, on the approach, the rider's influence is restricted to 'framing' the horse between leg and rein aids and supporting it by riding forwards with a quiet body posture. Generally, the rider's weight and leg aids have a 'steering', 'guiding' function, while the rein aids have more of a 'leading', 'framing' function.

The rider must learn to leave the horse sufficiently long in the neck so that the horse can balance itself at any time. The experienced rider gives their horse confidence by supporting it with their aids, without disturbing it.

Even the simplest of cross-country obstacles is never to be approached casually, but rather with as much concentration as possible, so that the horse is suitably prepared. The rider must be absolutely convinced about wanting to land on the other side. If any doubts arise, then these must first be eliminated by performing simpler exercises, since any insecurity is transmitted straight over to the horse.

A positive, optimistic attitude in jumping cross-country obstacles is just as necessary as a particularly safe seat.

Experienced, confident eventing horses have learnt to judge cross-country fences by themselves to a large extent and to help themselves out when needed. Thus, they remain assured and skilful in difficult take-off situations. This, in turn, gives the novice rider security and confidence. The feeling for the right take-off distance when riding cross-country obstacles develops, in a way similar to show-jumping, with experience.

Regardless of whether the take-off distance is correct, a little too wide, or a bit too close to the obstacle, the connection with the reins from the rider's hands to the horse's mouth must remain intact. The rider should sit close to or in the saddle, although the upper body should be slightly forwards. In the moment of take-off, the rider inclines as far forward with their upper body and reaches forwards with their hands as much as the extension of the horse's neck requires, without, however, letting go of the connection between their hand and the horse's mouth. When landing, the rider becomes more erect again, absorbs the momentum of the landing with elastic ankles and knees in order to bring their bottom close to the saddle again and, as soon as possible, uses their forward-driving legs to encourage the horse to engage its hindquarters more. This way, the rider has the horse 'in front' of them again and is prepared for the next task.

■ JUMPING AT A HIGHER SPEED

Cantering forwards at a high speed should initially be practised independently of jumping. The horse is intentionally, and in a controlled manner, ridden forwards 'into the hand'. This ensures that the horse will go forwards of its own account and will develop the particularly important forward tendency, slightly taking the contact on the way to the obstacle. To explain this feeling to inexperienced cross-country riders is an important and, at the same time, difficult part of training. It is especially difficult to put into practice in situations in which the horse hesitates in the approach towards an unfamiliar obstacle. Initially, it might seem counterintuitive to the rider not only to keep riding it forward towards the obstacle, but also to ensure it is framed between the aids, which also means establishing more connection with the horse's mouth while still maintaining the forward tendency.

FREQUENT MISTAKES

- Erroneous use of rider's aids (exaggerated, laborious use of the driving aids or sudden reduction of the suitable speed, etc.) before the obstacle, or exaggerated changes in the seat, for example sitting heavy, disturbing the balance and the attention of the horse on the approach. This can cause the horse problems upon take-off and when actually jumping, and the horse might lose confidence.
- Riding with uneven reins makes it harder to straighten the horse and often leads to the horse becoming insecure, particularly when approaching an obstacle.

6.7 Advanced Cross-Country Training

Once the basics have been established, horse and rider are introduced to additional questions, which are required to complete cross-country courses.

6.7.1 Jumping on Uneven Ground

As opposed to jumping on an even surface in the arena, very often the take-off and landing spots in cross-country jumping are not on the same level. Therefore, cross-country obstacles on a slope, or steps and drops, are an important element of cross-country training. A precondition for this is a certain degree of firm balance when riding on uneven ground, slopes or when climbing.

Every rider or trainer must have examined the 'rideability' of every obstacle – including the take-off and landing spot – before attempts are made to jump them, to rule out any potential dangers.

■ STEPS/JUMPS ON A SLOPE

Usually, steps up are practised first because the rider generally finds these more trustworthy than drops. The horse is also able to balance more easily uphill than downhill.

When jumping on a slope or jumping up steps, the horse must be particularly securely on the aids during the approach, and 'in front' of the rider so that the impulsion and the uphill movement impulse are not lost. Despite all the forward tendency, the rider must still keep the horse 'together' with active hindquarters in a safe balance. The rider's upper body leans forward from the hip joints with the very same degree as if the rider wanted to jump the uphill obstacle on foot, without the horse. This means that the rider tries to balance naturally and go with the movement of the horse. The lower legs remain securely at the girth even when jumping uphill, with a solid foothold with the balls of the feet in the stirrups, and heels which absorb the movement downwards.

■ DROPS/JUMPING DOWN A SLOPE

Jumping a small drop is practised in trot and, if necessary, also in walk. If other types of obstacles (for example, logs) are jumped downhill, this must be done in trot or canter so that the horse takes off properly.

Shortly before jumping down, the rider should carefully push the stirrups forwards-downwards, combined with a secure positioning of the driving lower leg at the girth. This ensures sufficient stability, particularly in the landing phase. The rider's fists are opened slightly and the reins should glide a little through the fingers to enable the horse to stretch its neck and find its balance during the jump. The hands remain close to and in front of the withers. The rider looks forwards (not downwards) and the bottom is close to (but not in) the saddle. The upper body only moves as far forwards from the hips as is necessary to maintain the balance.

For the correct upper body posture during drops, the same thoughts on balance apply as when jumping up steps, which means that, with a jump downhill, the upper body should be more erect. After landing, the reins are quickly gathered again. The rider must make an effort to get the horse back on the aids and 'in front' of them as quickly as possible.

Once the rider has gained confidence jumping drops in trot, then drops and downhill fences in canter can be included in the training. For this, the speed generally has to be reduced and the horse is 'brought together' more with half-halts.

These exercises place increased demands on the way the rider moves with the horse. From experience, it is easier for the rider to manage an uphill jump first, which is then followed either by a drop or a second uphill one (for example bank, stairs or steps uphill); jumping downhill first and then uphill (for example a sunken road) is more difficult. Combinations of drops are the most challenging and necessitate a particularly established, balanced seat.

TYPICAL SEAT AND AID MISTAKES

- Gripping with the knees and not putting enough pressure in the stirrups. The desired stability of the rider's seat is only obtained through the firm foundation of the light seat. Too much concentration on gripping tightly with the knees tends to distract from finding the right foothold with the balls of the feet in the stirrups.
- Sitting too upright or leaning backwards with the upper body leads to the rider sitting 'behind the movement' of the horse. The rider thus has a disturbing influence on the horse's back.



6.7.2 Water Jumps

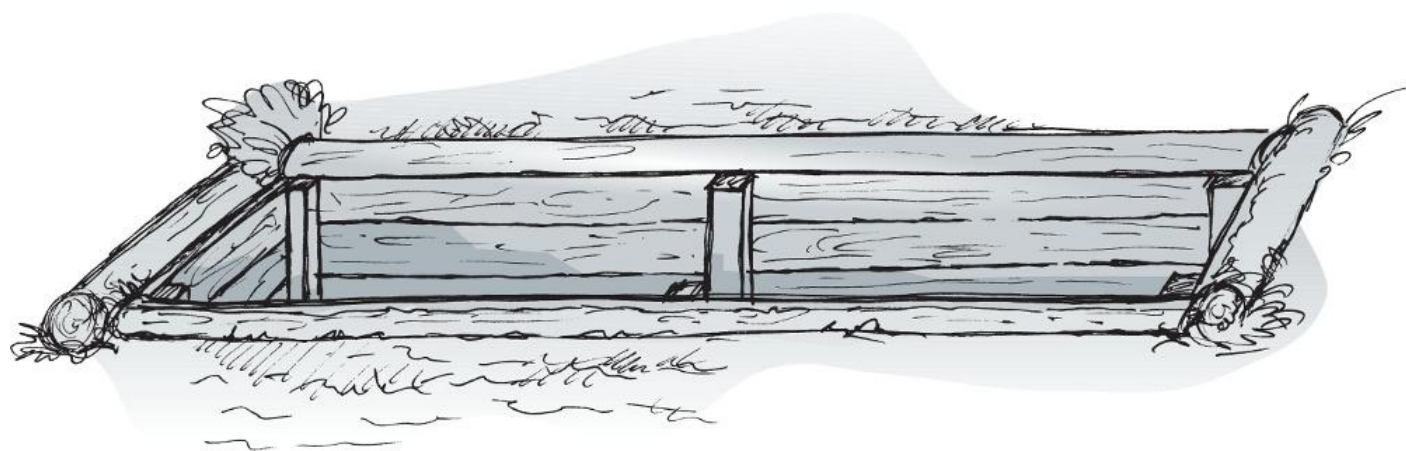
For jumping in and out of water, the same criteria of the rider's seat and aids apply as when jumping down or uphill. Initially, the rider learns how to jump out of the water. Just as in jumping uphill, the forward impulsion is maintained and the horse is, at the same time, kept 'together'. When jumping into the water, the rider must

additionally be prepared for the fact that the landing level is likely to be lower than the take-off point and that, upon landing, the water slows down the momentum and forward tendency of the horse. The rider must allow the horse to stretch its neck sufficiently (by lengthening the reins). The upper body is brought forward but does not get ahead of the movement. The stability is secured during landing by keeping weight in the stirrups, with the ankles absorbing the movement.

6.7.3 Ditches

Some of the most typical obstacles in cross-country are ditches, which can appear in different forms and shapes, either as open or Trakehner (see *illustration*) ditches. Ditches with water are generally jumped in cross-country as Trakehner ditches. This will make clearer to the horse the need to jump over, rather than into, the water.

To start with, narrow, dry ditches are practised, and these should be approached in trot and be of a size that, even if the horse hesitates a little, it will still be able to jump safely. Only later can simple open and Trakehner ditches be jumped in canter. When learning the approach and jumping of ditches, particular attention must be paid to the rider maintaining a suitable basic speed right up to the moment of take-off. The horse should remain 'together' and under control, cantering into the rider's hand to remain in balance.



So to give the horse enough time and an overview of the ditch in order to estimate its shape and dimensions and judge the right take-off, the speed should not be increased during the approach. The horse is allowed to, and should, canter relatively close to the front edge of a ditch as it is regarded as a 'long jump'. Furthermore, the rider must be prepared for the horse to hesitate ahead of the ditch and almost jump it from a standstill. This often makes the jump very difficult for the rider to sit, and this can only be accommodated through a firm seat. The rider gives the horse (and themselves) confidence by framing the horse well within the aids and keeping straight. The hand only goes forwards in the direction of the

horse's mouth when the horse has taken off.

6.7.4 Steeplechase Fences

Steeplechase fences are particularly well-suited to practising jumping cross-country obstacles at a very high speed. A steeplechase fence always has the profile of a triple bar with a hedge behind it, rising above the solid part of the fence by around 30–40cm. The horse should jump fluently and possibly brush through the hedge slightly with its hind legs. A suitable steeplechase fence has a clearly marked ground-line at the front, is typically about 5m–6m wide and is also equipped with wings, or similar. It must be in a position that enables a long approach and get-away at a high canter speed. The height of a steeplechase fence, to be used for practice purposes, should not be more than 1.2m.

The steeplechase fence should be ridden fluently by the rider, although it should not be approached at too high a speed to begin with. Owing to the inviting form of the obstacle it is not necessary to bring the horse into any particular take-off distance. Steeplechase fences are ridden in a light seat with short stirrup leathers or, after some practice, also in a racing seat (see [JOCKEY SEAT FOR THE TRAINING OF BALANCE](#) page [107](#)). The rider must keep a constant, secure and even connection on both reins to the horse's mouth without the horse becoming 'short' in the neck. They should feel the horse taking the contact in their (well-closed) fists, and a sensation that the horse 'goes for' the fence. In this way, the rhythm and straightness can best be maintained in the approach phase.

Practising steeplechase fences is an important step in training, and contributes to the safe and fluent jumping of other cross-country obstacles.¹³

'Determining' a precise take-off point at a steeplechase fence is a mistake because it can lead to a loss of the canter rhythm. The rider should enable the horse to judge the appropriate take-off point from a steady approach for itself. A secure contact must also be maintained over the fence, and the rider should have the feeling that they are 'taken along' by the horse at and over the fence. The higher the speed, the closer the rider should come to the horse with their centre of gravity (and core), in order to be able to go with the forward movement well. Stirrups that are pushed forwards-downwards, ensure a secure foothold and a stable balance. In further schooling, the basic speed is increased to the extent that the rider will be able to take steeplechase fences safely, rhythmically and in balance at a proper gallop (approximately 600–700 m/min.).

6.7.5 Compilation of Exercises in Cross-Country Training

- Suppling work in all gaits in a light seat and on even terrain.
- Riding turns, changes between straight and curved lines in a light seat.

- Riding changes in gaits, different speeds (light seat, racing seat).
- Riding on different terrains and slopes.
- Riding on hills and hilly countryside.
- Climbing.
- Riding courses/distances to develop a feel for speed.
- Jumping cross-country obstacles on an even terrain.
- Practising series of fences.
- Jumping uphill.
- Jumping downhill.
- Cross-country obstacles combined with water.
- Jumping ditches.
- Riding over steeplechase obstacles.
- Riding cross-country courses.
- Practising and establishing the above in unfamiliar environments.
- Relaxation phases in trot (rising trot/light seat) and walk on a long or loose rein.

-
1. Special gaits such as 'tölt' or pace can generally only be found with specially bred, gaited horses.
 2. *Gait variants is the term used in English to refer to the changes within a gait defined as 'collected', 'working' (not used for walk), 'medium' and 'extended'. Changes from one form to another are described as 'transitions within a gait'. The term 'gait variant' does not cover faulty gaits, such as pacing in walk, or disunited canter, nor does it cover counter-canter.*
 3. The expression 'half-halt on the left (or on the right) rein' should not be used since it could be misunderstood to mean that the half-halt only relies on one rein aid!
 4. *This neck-mandible angle is actually referred to in German as the 'throatlatch'.*
 5. When cantering on a straight line, for instance in cross-country or on hacks, the horse is not flexed.
 6. *When ridden along the long side as described, these figures are referred to as (single or double) shallow loops in UK.*
 7. *In the UK, the term 'volte' is often applied to circles of 8m or less. However, in other countries, including Germany, it is also used for 10m figures.*
 8. *Although rarely seen in English-language books, cavalletto is the correct singular form of cavalletti.*
 9. See Caprilli Test factsheet from the Deutschen Reiterlichen Vereinigung (German Equestrian Federation). *(These tests, which are basically tests of fairly novice riders' ability, were called Prix Caprilli in the UK and were popular some years ago, but are rarely seen in present times.)*
 10. See German Equestrian Federation (eds), *Test Booklet Riding (National Tests) – 'Standard Show-Jumping Courses for Horses and Ponies'*, FNverlag, Warendorf 2012.
 11. See German Equestrian Federation (eds) current German Performance Regulations (LPO), FNverlag, Warendorf. *(Similar information may be available from the organising bodies in other countries – in UK, British Showjumping and British Eventing.)*
 12. See FN-Factsheet 'Building Cross-Country Fences – Notes on Conception, Build-up and Approval of Cross-Country Courses for Eventing' (www.pferd-aktuell.de).
 13. The technique for riding other typical cross-country tasks (such as related fences on curved lines, combinations) is described in the *Guidelines for Riding and Driving, Volume 2: Advanced training*, FNverlag Warendorf.

CHAPTER 7

The Basic Training of the Horse

For horse-appropriate and constructive, successful training, the following PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING must always be observed.

Training Principles

Training must:

- Be STRUCTURED and PLANNED, meaning that every single training session, but also the overall, long-term schooling processes, must be progressively structured.
- Be built up SYSTEMATICALLY from easy to difficult, which means that the rider initially asks only for simple and familiar tasks before moving on to the next, more difficult step.
- Be METHODICALLY CORRECT – that is to say the rider and trainer must know valuable, methodical sets of exercises, and apply them correctly to be able to reach a training goal with their horse, step by step.
- Show CONTINUITY, which means a horse must be exercised and worked regularly, thus being schooled continually. Generally, frequent changes of rider or trainer, or changes of the training system, are not very beneficial.
- Be DIVERSE and MULTI-FACETED, so that the horse is equally challenged physically and mentally. This does not only foster motivation but also benefits a consistent, integral physical development of the horse. This contributes considerably to keeping the horse sound and HEALTHY.
- Consider the ALTERNATION BETWEEN WORK AND RELAXATION in order to give the cardiovascular system as well as muscles, ligaments and tendons sufficient time to relax after long or intensive schooling sessions. This establishes the conditions for an ideal adjustment process of the muscles and the related structures. Inner relaxation and thus protection from mentally overworking the horse must also be given due consideration.
- Be defined by COMPREHENSIBILITY AND CONSISTENCY. In order for the horse to correctly understand the rider's aids, sensitivity, and the precise giving of the aids are mandatory. Consistency on the ground and when riding is a necessary part of this.
- Avoid UNCONTROLLED EMOTIONS, so that the horse is never confronted with the

- rider's emotional outbreaks, which it would be unable to understand.
- Consider the INDIVIDUALITY of a horse, and thus plan the different steps in training as well as the methods in a way that are best suited to each individual horse's strengths and weaknesses.
 - LEAD TOWARDS THE INNER AND OUTER BALANCE OF THE HORSE AND RIDER. Hence, the rider needs, primarily, to allow the horse to balance with their posture and use of the aids. The goal, however, is always mutual balance. If misunderstandings or confrontations should arise in the short term, every schooling session must find its way back to harmony.

These principles guarantee a schooling process suitable for every horse at any level of training or of any age, according to the horse's nature. Therefore, they are the foundation of classical training. Classical training is a schooling and training concept focused on the natural physical and mental preconditions of the horse.

It should be self-evident to every rider that it is necessary to teach and train their horse in a gentle manner, so that it can understand and manage the tasks being asked of it. By gymnasticising the whole body of the horse in the schooling and training process, its conditional and muscular development will also be advanced. Thus, the horse remains healthy and, given regular training, is prepared suitably for its different possible uses.

7.1 Familiarisation, Ground Work and Lungeing Young Horses

In order to put training under saddle on a foundation of trust, considerate preparation of the young horse is particularly important.

7.1.1 Familiarisation

The first phase of training a young horse includes getting it acquainted with the equipment (bridle, saddle, lungeing equipment) as well as getting it used to carrying a rider on its back. In most cases, this phase also implies a change of environment, stable and feed. These are radical changes, which must be carried out gently and need to be given due consideration in the training process. The phases of initial familiarisation and starting a 'green' horse usually last only a few weeks. If, during this period, the peculiarities of the individual horse are considered, it will pay off in the long term. Additional turnout increases the mental well-being and welfare of the horse, and can prevent tension.

Horses are generally started when they are three years old, thus, at a time when their physical development is not yet complete, but already advanced enough to be able to carry the weight of a rider (for a maximum of 30 minutes) well. Depending on the horse's level of maturity, it has proved to be beneficial to start the horse

over the winter, and then allow it to spend the summer out in the field without being ridden at all, before further training is started again in the autumn. Another beneficial approach is not to ride the young horse on a daily basis, but to give it days off without any work under saddle, while providing sufficient opportunity for movement. This way, the horse's muscles, which, in the beginning, are not quite used to being worked, have time to recover and develop gradually and positively.

In the familiarisation phase, every step of training should be repeated as often as is required until the horse has accepted it with confidence and without tension. Only then should the next step be introduced.

For familiarisation with a surcingle and, later, a saddle, a fenced or indoor round pen are particularly suitable. At this stage, if not before, an assistant should be present to help with the familiarisation process by holding the horse on a lead rope attached to a ring of the snaffle bit while the surcingle is being attached. Furthermore, the assistant can lead the horse in the round pen if necessary, or lead it in a circle in case it becomes tense in response to the unusual sensation of the surcingle/girth.

The young horse must never be overworked. Any familiarisation to new things should always lead to a positive experience for the horse, because horses have a very good memory.

Bad experiences, especially in this phase of their training, can have far-reaching negative consequences for further training as riding horses. Therefore, when putting the surcingle on, and later the saddle, one must exercise particular caution. If the girth is tightened too much or too quickly, or if the saddle slides off the horse's back to the ground as a result of a nervous horse fidgeting, this can spook the horse and unsettle it, as well as possibly lead to future problems when putting on the saddle.

7.1.2 Ground Work¹

Ground work lays the foundations for the communication between the human and the young horse. The horse should develop trust in the rider, or rather deepen this trust, and learn to understand the aids – driving and regulating – that the human is giving, in order to complete the required tasks free of stress and in a relaxed manner (for the contentment of all involved).

For this, the steps described in *Chapter 3 Preparation for Riding* are necessary in order to deal safely with the horse:

- Putting on the headcollar/bridle.

- Leading – stopping – standing still.
- Tying up.
- Touching the entire body.
- Familiarisation with objects of the environment.

Certain lessons should be taught while the horse is still a foal. Foals do, however, have a stronger natural instinct than older horses, that have already developed a certain social independence, so that one must be particularly careful at this stage in order not to develop any negative characteristics.

For a three-year-old, ground work before starting under saddle should be standard protocol. It considerably facilitates the communication between human and horse. Humans can thus better predict the horse's behaviour and the horse can understand in small steps that nothing is going to happen that could cause any fear.

■ PUTTING ON THE HEADCOLLAR/BRIDLE

To begin with, the priority is to be able to put on a headcollar and a well-fitting bridle without a noseband. The horse will learn to move into the headcollar without lifting its head. Furthermore, it will become increasingly used to being touched on and around the mouth so that it will later accept the bit without any resistance ([see Chapter 3.4 Putting on and Taking off the Bridle](#)).

■ LEADING – HALTING – STANDING STILL OBEDIENTLY

The next step is learning to be led willingly. The horse must learn to walk alongside the person leading in a trusting but also respectful manner; which means that it must not run away, run over the person leading or step on their feet; however, neither should it lag behind unwillingly. The person leading the horse should walk at the base of the horse's neck or just in front of the horse's left shoulder. Thus, they have the horse within their range of vision and can detect and interpret the horse's expressions.

The horse should react to slight signals or body language of the human, stop and stand still until the command to proceed is given.

When led, the horse should be relaxed and obedient, but should also remain interested and alert.

Once the horse has learnt to stand patiently in different places, remaining calm when tied for grooming and hoof care should no longer be a problem.

How often standing still, leading off and stopping again need to be practised depends on the character of each individual horse. Initially, these exercises should take place in calm surroundings so that the horse can focus on the person leading

it.

■ TOUCH

Body contact might lead to a defensive reaction in some horses, such as aversion, stomping or even kicking out. This can lead to dangerous situations which must be avoided. In modern horse breeding, there are generally no ill-natured horses, but there are fearful, spooky and very sensitive horses.

A lot of experience is needed to judge the different characters of horses. Thus, an experienced trainer should always assist, particularly with these first steps of dealing with young horses.

The first touches should preferably be done with a soft brush or a soft cloth on the horse's neck, shoulders and withers. They are carried out with a slight degree of pressure, yet sensitively. The remaining parts of the body will be included as soon as the horse no longer shows any signs of distress. Based on this, the horse can be familiarised with other items of equipment such as the surcingle and the saddle.

■ FAMILIARISATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

As soon as the horse can be touched, a headcollar or bridle can be put on without any problems, and the horse can be led around in familiar surroundings, further exercises can be worked on:

- Leading the horse along different paths or in different arenas.
- Leading the horse past flower arrangements, bushes, cars, agricultural machinery, tarpaulins, water, tape, garbage bins, etc.
- Changing rein.
- Leading from both sides.
- Performing rein-back.
- Instructing the horse to step sideways.
- Later on, leading through a corridor of poles on the ground.

The person leading must always convey trust by keeping a positive, relaxed body language, and have a calm but firm approach to any nervous or fearful reactions on the horse's part.

A horse that, in hand has learnt to follow a human with trust and to manage different situations, will also react more trustingly when being ridden.

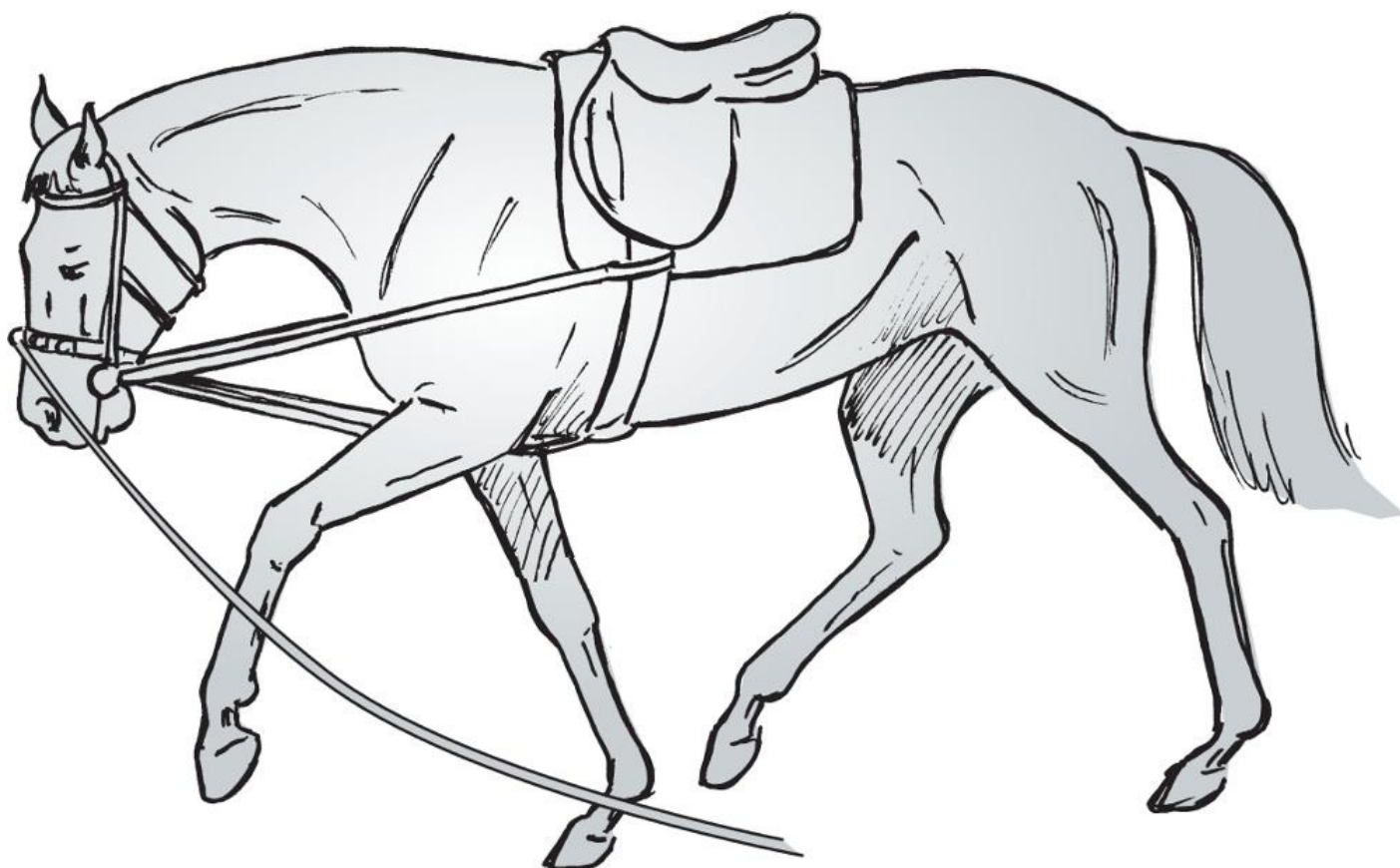
7.1.3 Lungeing²

It is useful to have an assistant when familiarising the horse with lungeing. The assistant first leads the horse onto the circle, while the person doing the lungeing

stands in the middle and holds the lunge line. Lungeing is useful in the preparation for training as the horse becomes used to working, to the aids and to being obedient. In addition, it instils rhythmical and supple movement. The purpose of lungeing is also to get the horse used to the voice aids in order to work on transitions between the basic gaits.

Over the course of the further training, work on the lunge can be used again and again with increased success should irregularities and problems in movement or carriage develop as a result of incorrect work under saddle, but it can also be used to vary the horse's work, offer a quiet alternative and establish a mental balance.

During the familiarisation phase of lungeing, the use of a cavesson is recommended because, with this method, the lunge line does not have to be attached directly to the bit. Nevertheless, the use of a bit (snaffle) is recommended since, on the one hand, it allows the horse to get used to it, while on the other hand, the side reins can be attached to it later. If a cavesson is not available, the lunge line can, for once, be attached to the side of a stable headcollar, placed over the bridle, or, if necessary, it can be attached to the bit ring and the headcollar at the same time. Attention must be paid that the headcollar is securely attached and that it cannot come undone.



When lungeing with a saddle, care must be taken to ensure that the stirrups cannot hit the elbows or the body of the horse.

For the actual lungeing, a round pen with a fence is highly desirable, since this gives the horse a kind of outside boundary and facilitates the work with a young horse. It is important that this work is carried out in a calm, firm and confident manner. The horse will then very soon respond trustfully to the aids of the lunge line, the lungeing whip and the voice.

No side reins are used with young horses in the beginning of the familiarisation with the lunge work. Over the course of the training, the horse will gradually be introduced to long, and later, shorter side reins until a steady contact is established ([see Chapter 2.2.3 Auxiliary Reins, Attachment and Use](#)). Once the horse starts to become supple and lowers its neck, it should find a contact with the side reins as a preliminary stage of the subsequent connection (contact) between its mouth and the rider's hand.

Side reins are attached at the same length on both sides. Flexion does not yet play a role in this stage of training as it obstructs the horse from finding its balance. The head-nose line must always be slightly in front of, or on the vertical, in a naturally carried neck position.

The lungeing session must not be too long, especially with untrained horses, while walk breaks and frequent changes of rein must also be carried out. It is advisable to lengthen the side reins during the walk breaks, or to detach them completely.

7.2 Starting

The first preparation for familiarising the horse with a rider mounting and dismounting can be started in the horse's own stable. During the daily grooming, the rider or groom can stroke the horse's back with their hand, pat it and reach over it with their shoulder and arms. The familiarisation with the saddle and the girth (described earlier), which should also take place in familiar surroundings, is the next step. Lungeing with the saddle without stirrups (and, if possible, with the saddle flaps fastened, for example through a strap over the top of the saddle), is the subsequent step of familiarisation. As an additional step, the rider/handler can repeatedly touch the saddle from both sides, move it carefully and lean very carefully on the saddle so that the horse becomes accustomed to the unusual pressure on its back and girth area. The first mounting must be carried out with extreme calmness and repose by an experienced rider and assistants. Inner tension and anxiety have an unsettling effect on the horse. An older horse can be brought into the arena as a companion in order to have a relaxing influence on the young horse. The rider should be able to sit balanced, have experience and the necessary skill, and be neither fearful nor too heavy. For the horse, these early experiences will define the remainder of its entire further training.

A fundamental goal of this early training is to let the horse develop trust and learn to move in balance with a rider on its back.

The first time of giving the rider a leg-up should take place on the lunge in a fenced area or in an indoor school. An assistant holds the horse on the lunge line attached to the cavesson (or also to a headcollar) in order to give the rider and the horse additional confidence and to be able to lead the horse for a circuit or two. The horse's mouth should be protected at all times so as not to adversely influence the horse's trust in the bit. A second assistant carefully lifts the rider into the saddle. Initially, the rider should lie over the saddle so that they can easily slide down again if the horse becomes nervous. This procedure is repeated several times.

While the rider is lying across the saddle, the horse is led and stopped numerous times, because taking steps with the weight of a rider on its back is always a new and special experience for the horse. Only when this can be carried out successfully, without any tension, should the rider be helped to sit completely in the saddle. Attention must be paid here not to unintentionally touch the horse's croup. The peculiarity of this moment is that the horse will notice, for the first time, in its vision, a rider rising above it on its back, which could cause it to spook. It is for this reason that the rider should not sit erect in the saddle immediately, but should incline forwards with their upper body and come closer to the horse. This also gets the horse's back used to the rider's weight in a gentler way. The stirrup leathers are adjusted a little shorter than normal. To ensure stability in the event of any possible uncontrolled movement of the horse, the rider can grab the neckstrap or hold on to the mane, but never the reins.

The person holding the lunge line leads the horse carefully and tries to have a calming influence with their voice. Once the horse starts walking, the rider goes with the movements smoothly while remaining completely passive. Repeatedly stopping and praising the horse will have a calming effect. These few steps can be more than educational and are sufficient for the first time.

Mounting and dismounting the horse (that must remain obedient and stand still), should be practised repeatedly. If the horse shows tension when being mounted, it may be advisable to allow it to move off immediately the first few times in order not to create any more tension. This is to be repeated as often as necessary until the young horse accepts being mounted without any tension. At the end of the schooling session, obedient standing still during mounting and dismounting should be practised again so that this gradually becomes natural.

In the next few sessions, when the horse has already obtained a certain degree of confidence and ease, the assistant or the person holding the lunge line will lengthen

the lunge line more and allow the horse to go onto the already familiar circle. In order not to strain the young horse in tight turns, it is also recommended that the horse is sometimes allowed to go straight on the lunge line. The horse learns to balance itself with the rider's weight, first in walk, and later also in trot. However, it should not spend too much unnecessary time on the circle. With the support of a lead horse, the use of a lunge line generally becomes superfluous very soon. The rider then keeps a soft contact with the horse through the reins, albeit without influencing the horse's head-neck position. With a horse that is still not very well balanced, the rider tends to indicate the direction by using their weight, shifted sensitively when required. Changes in gait can also be practised particularly well with the support of a lead horse.

The rider should ride without spurs, but in most cases with a short jumping crop. An understanding of the driving leg aids needs to be developed gradually with the support of the voice and by lightly tapping the horse with the whip. The reaction to the legs can be completely different from horse to horse – from sensitive to completely ignorant, or even defensive.

As soon as the horse is able to balance itself well and moves with a secure rhythm, it is ridden forwards, albeit never rushed.

The first schooling sessions under a rider should be short and must never lead to exhaustion. During these sessions, work is only carried out for short periods. Frequent breaks are taken in walk on a long rein. The horse's muscles, especially those that are used to carry the rider, can tire out very quickly during this first phase of training.

If the young horse shows signs of unhappiness, this is almost always a sure sign that certain muscular groups are exhausted. The rider should then dismount and end the schooling session immediately.

If the horse offers to canter, and hence starts to canter by itself, the rider should accept this and continue to canter. In doing so, the rider sits 'lighter', allowing the horse to canter without any pressure. After a few strides of canter, the horse is brought down to trot carefully. Lengthy canter periods, particularly through turns, are to be avoided as they demand a lot of stamina and energy in order to maintain balance.

7.3 Loose-Jumping

After the first familiarisation phase, the training under saddle can also be complemented by loose-jumping. This provides some variety to the horse, encourages overall agility and elasticity and facilitates future show-jumping training.

Loose-jumping should be performed regularly (for example, once a week) so that a familiarising process sets in and trust is developed. Certain precautions should be taken in order to eliminate the risk of injury and loss of trust:

- The horse should wear either a headcollar or a bridle with the reins removed.
- Loose-jumping should generally take place only in an indoor arena. Outdoor arenas are not usually fenced securely enough or high enough.
- In the indoor arena, doors should be high enough and closed; mirrors must be covered by a curtain or similar.
- Fences must be designed so that the horse cannot injure itself when jumping.
- With the aid of wings, or other suitable fence-building material, a corridor of fences is built along a long side of the arena.
- The fences must always be inviting, and have a clearly recognisable ground-line. With oxers, the back rail must always be higher than the front one.
- The distances between the fences must be measured suitably, and thus consider the speed with which the horse comes into the corridor.
- Even in small indoor arenas, a gymnastic line must leave sufficient room for the horse to proceed after the last fence.

A trainer and at least two assistants are required to support the horse calmly and considerately. A positive experience of loose-jumping is particularly important for the horse, but this is very much dependent on the correct behaviour of the trainer and the assistants. It is imperative that there is a calm atmosphere during the loose-jumping, even if – and especially, when – not everything goes according to plan. A horse should never jump out of fear of a lungeing whip, but should rather discover for itself the pleasure in the exercise. That means that:

The task and the demands must always be in accordance with the confidence and experience of the individual horse.

After the horse has initially been walked in hand for 10 minutes, it is either lunged or allowed to move freely in the indoor arena to loosen up and get used to the environment and the fences. Trust can be encouraged by initially setting up just the wings of the jumping corridor and leading the horse through it, then letting it move freely through the corridor, without the fences at first.

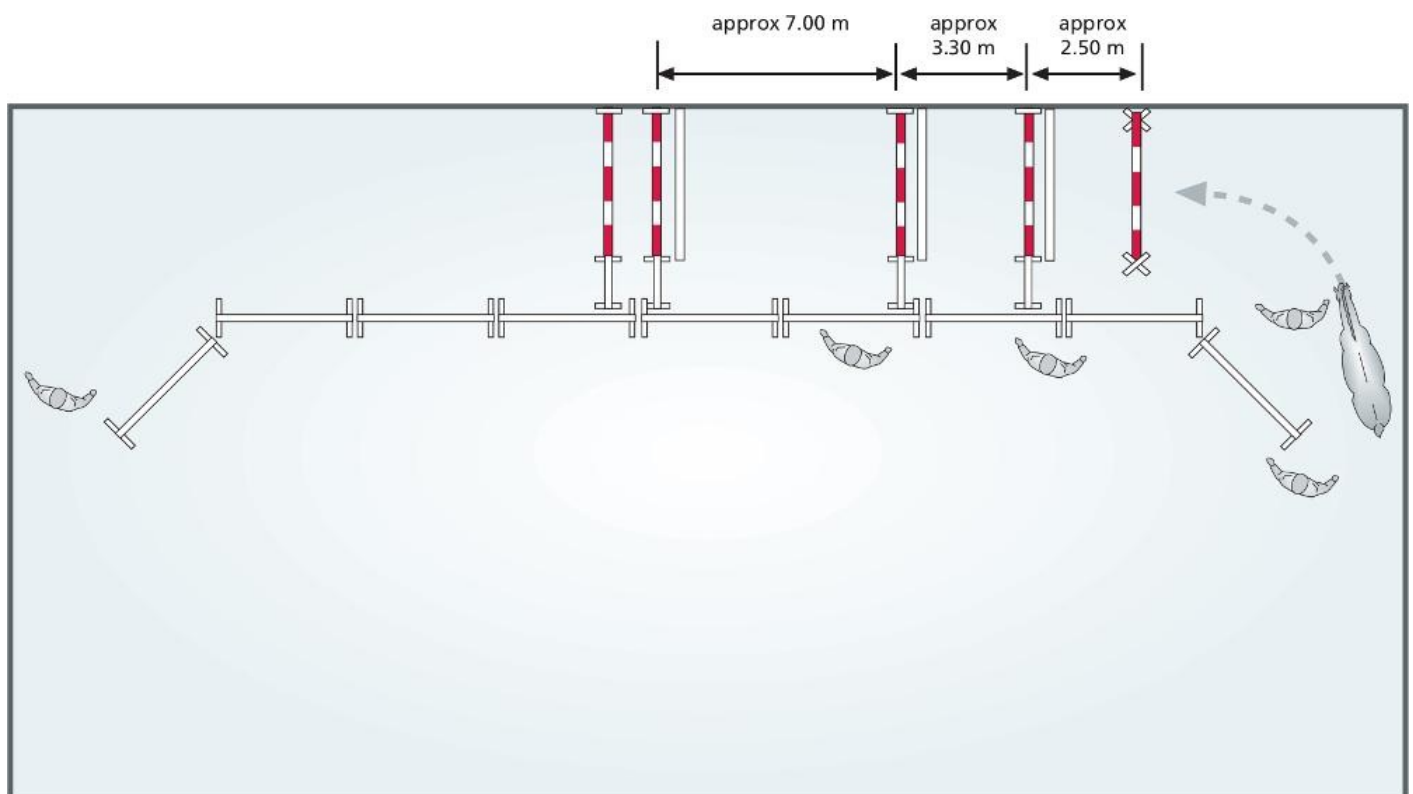
When loose-jumping for the first time, only a cavalletto (perhaps with wings added) should be used. After this will be added an individual fence of a height of 20–30cm, with a clearly marked ground-line

An assistant now leads the horse with a lead rope towards the fence in walk so that it can take a look at the task at hand. Afterwards, the horse is led in trot up to

the cavalletto and is then carefully released. A thin rope, which can be looped through the bit ring without a snap fastening, and which glides through the ring, is particularly suitable. During this process, the trainer encourages the horse, where necessary, with voice and light whip aids so that the horse makes the jump and carries on in canter. A second assistant stands on the short side, praises the horse and gives it a treat as a reward. After a few jumps, the horse will have understood the new task. Generally, horses remain calmer and more focused when they are led into the jumping corridor each time by an assistant in trot. (In small indoor arenas, the leading into the corridor can be omitted with more experienced and quiet horses.)

When loose-jumping for the first time, it is advisable to stop once the horse has successfully jumped a few times with plenty of trust. In the following session, everything should be done as the first time before gradually increasing the height and the number of fences.

It is particularly important to be happy with small, successful steps in training and thus prevent the horse from becoming insecure by overworking it.



Corridor for loose-jumping.

In due course, a cavalletto can be positioned around 2.5–3m ahead of the first small fence. The fence can become a bounce (a second small fence at a distance of 3–3.5m after the first one) or be expanded into a combination (with one canter stride approx. 7m, with two strides approx. 10–10.5m). Once this has been

successful, an additional fence (for example an oxer which is not too wide) can follow.

The suggested distances are to be reduced if the horse hesitates a little in the beginning, while longer distances will be required if the horse has a 'bigger' canter and jumps more generously.

The horse's jumping potential is defined differently in terms of its jumping ability, its manner and skill. To assess these elements requires experience and needs to be considered when setting up the fences. Therefore, an experienced, qualified trainer should be present during a horse's first loose-jumping sessions.

During basic training, variety, a gymnastic effect and trust are the priorities – jumping high does not play a role at all!

7.4 Basic Training of the Young Horse under the Rider

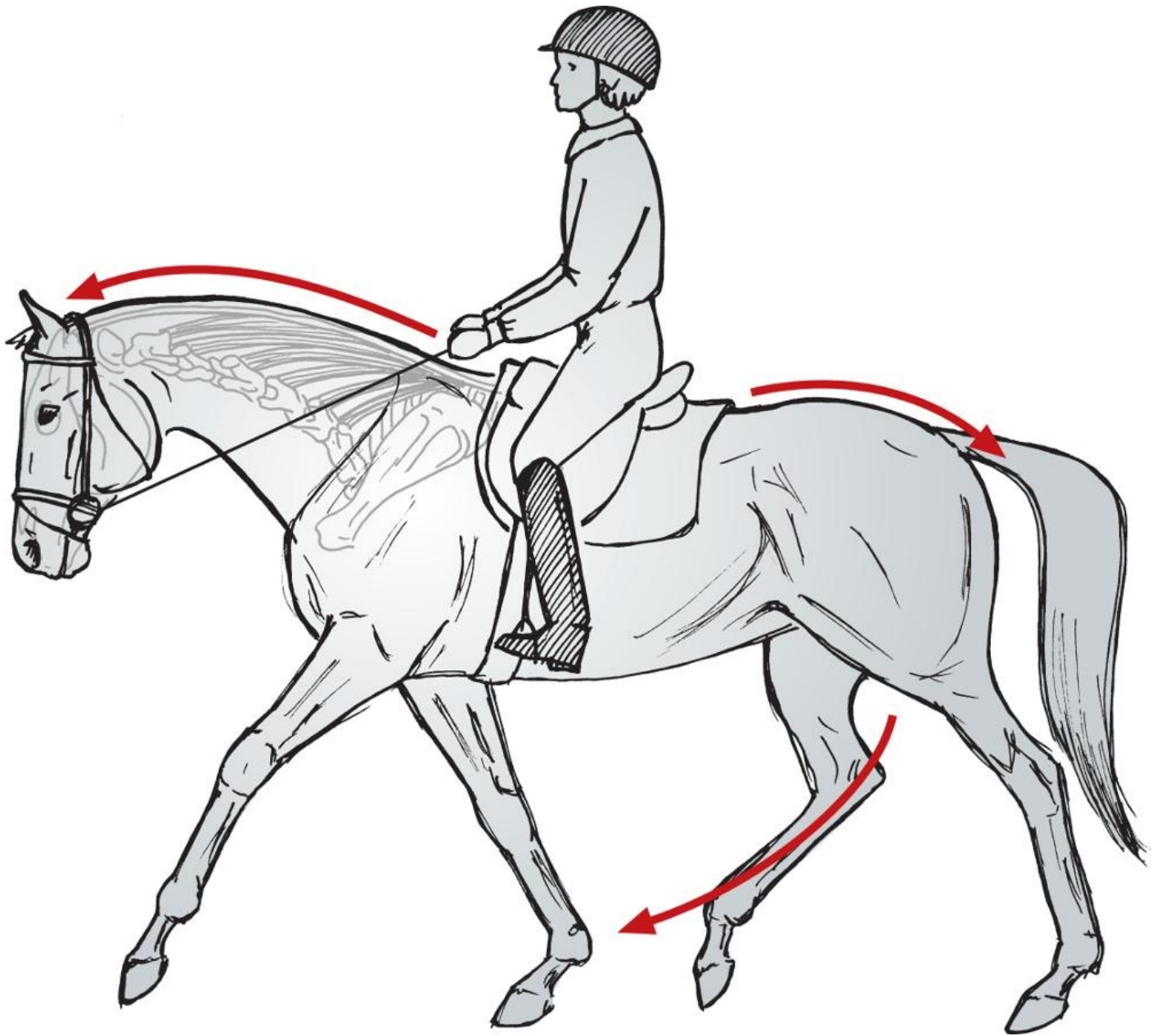
A harmonious and promising education of a young horse is only successful when the horse is physically well gymnasticised and educated carefully. A certain degree of performance ability, a positive learning process and, at the same time, a certain level of obedience are required for every sporting activity of a horse. The fundamental steps in the training of a young horse, which are developed partly simultaneously to each other, are as follows.

■ FINDING BALANCE

As soon as the horse has accepted the unusual situation of having a rider on its back without displaying any tension, the first aim of training, which is of continual importance, is to find the BALANCE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE RIDER. That is what the rider, with their aids and basic dressage training, should be guided by.

It is a completely new experience for the young horse to not only have to balance its own body, but also the additional weight and movements of the rider. It depends on the skill of the rider how easy this is made for the horse. At the beginning, no particular muscles of the horse are developed for riding. For the horse to be able to carry the rider well, the neck, back and abdominal muscles must be built up incrementally. The young ('green') horse should therefore be ridden for only short periods and with a sufficiently 'long' and stretched neck. That way, it is best able to carry and balance the rider's weight with the upper structure of muscles, tendons and ligaments ('upper construction').

Swaying and, potentially resulting from this, disturbances of the rhythm, are potential side-effects of the freshly started horse, that should be observed closely.



The horse carries the rider with the help of the 'upper construction'. This refers to the structures that create a positive tension from the neck, over the withers and the back, through to the hind legs stepping forwards and under.

The rider must support the horse in finding its balance by going smoothly with the horse's movement and supporting it with sensitive aids.

■ RHYTHM

Once the rider starts to gently get the horse used to the aids to lead it into the desired direction, they must pay particular attention to MAINTAINING THE RHYTHM, which means keeping the movements regular and hence the steps of equal length and duration in the basic gaits of walk, trot and canter.

Since horses have a naturally pure rhythm without the rider, maintaining the regularity of the gaits under the rider is a requirement that must be adhered to at all times.

The rider keeps their horse in the natural carriage, which it assumes by itself, and initially rides in the tempo the horse offers. From this basis, a rhythmical working tempo is developed.

This way, the horse finds it easier to balance under the rider's weight and will therefore maintain the correct rhythm more easily. Once it starts to move in a more relaxed way in this new, unusual situation, it will start to become supple. A regular gait is an important condition for this.

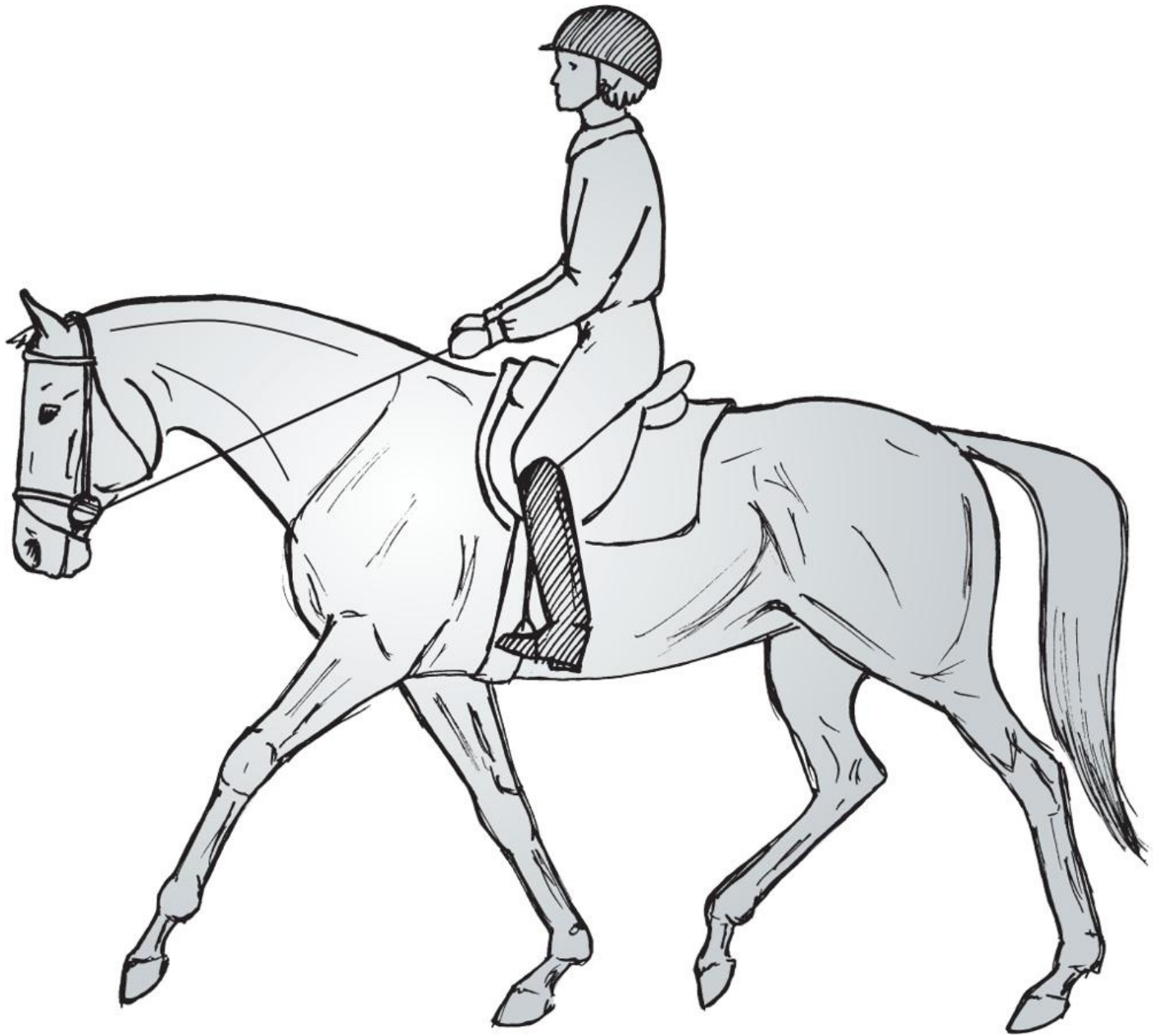
■ SUPPLENESS

SUPPLENESS describes the situation when a horse relaxes mentally and moves in an unconstrained, relaxed way, without undue tension while using all of its muscles. Only then is the horse really able to move forward in all three gaits while maintaining a pure and even rhythm with good ground coverage, without becoming rushed in its action. The rider feels the suppleness when the movement flows through the horse's body over the horse's swinging back. The rider is able to sit in the saddle and ride forwards. The horse develops an increased willingness to stretch forwards-downwards to the rider's hands, as far as the rider sensitively permits. This readiness to stretch is the basis for a trusting connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth.

■ CONTACT

The first of the rider's aids, which the horse must obey, are the forward-driving ones. If the horse accepts these aids obediently, it will move forwards willingly. The horse thus steps into the bit and accepts the reins. A soft, but steady connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth, known as CONTACT, is then possible.

The rider therefore rides the horse from back to front, into the hand! The horse looks for contact; the rider offers it.



The young horse can best find his natural balance in an outline with a secure contact and a sufficiently long neck.

The first phase, in which rhythm, suppleness and contact are emphasised, is known as the familiarisation phase.

■ IMPULSION

Once a secure contact has been established, the horse's natural gaits can be further encouraged. The movement should be elastic, powerful and active, but without effort and never forced or tense. The **ENERGETIC MOVEMENT** of the horse is felt by the rider when the activity of the hind legs is transformed into an expansive forward movement, and passed on to the rider's hands through the contact. The rider supports the development of pushing power with their seat going elastically with the movement, and a quiet driving leg.

The interplay between the driving and regulating aids, as well as the willingness of

the horse to accept them, determines the quality of the contact. It should be even and steady, yet light and elastic. A steady and elastic contact is always the result of correct riding.

■ STRAIGHTNESS

Most young horses are naturally more or less crooked. Drifting with the hindquarters, away from the track left by the forehand, and an uneven connection with the reins, are the consequences. The rider tries to ride the horse more into the rein that it naturally accepts less. The activity and energy in the hindquarters can thus be transformed better into a harmonious forward movement through the horse's back. When this has been successfully accomplished, this phase of training is termed DEVELOPMENT OF FORWARD THRUST OR PUSHING POWER. This is how the following traditional message is to be understood:

'Ride your horse forwards and straighten it'³

This primarily means that the activity and pushing power of the horse's hind legs must be maintained in all exercises, as well as aligning the forehand with the track to be ridden on. That way the hind legs will follow in the same direction as the forelegs. This requirement can only be put correctly into practice when the criteria of rhythm, suppleness and contact, as well as balance, are maintained.

■ DEVELOPMENT OF CARRYING CAPACITY AND COLLECTION

After this first phase of training, which generally lasts at least a year, a general strengthening of the muscles and the relevant pushing power will have been obtained, as will have been a degree of throughness according to the level of training, which enables the horse's hindquarters to be engaged more. The horse accepts the rider's aids in a way that allows for a good coordination of the driving and regulating aids. The horse will be increasingly able to move in a more light-footed way with shorter, more cadenced, but equally active steps (in trot), or strides in canter. The activity of the hindquarters is now no longer aimed only at forward thrust, but also, in part, at a forward-upward carrying capacity.

This process, for which the horse develops more and more strength over a period of several years, is known as collection.

With improved activity in the hindquarters, and with the optimisation of the ability to balance, a far better throughness will be achieved, with more light-footedness in the movement as well as a rider's hand that is always ready to give. With young horses, collection, to the full extent of the meaning, should not yet play a role. The way to get there, however, is prepared for systematically from the very beginning, by continually improving the horse's ability to balance, and also, by gymnasticising

the horse appropriately, enhancing its throughness.

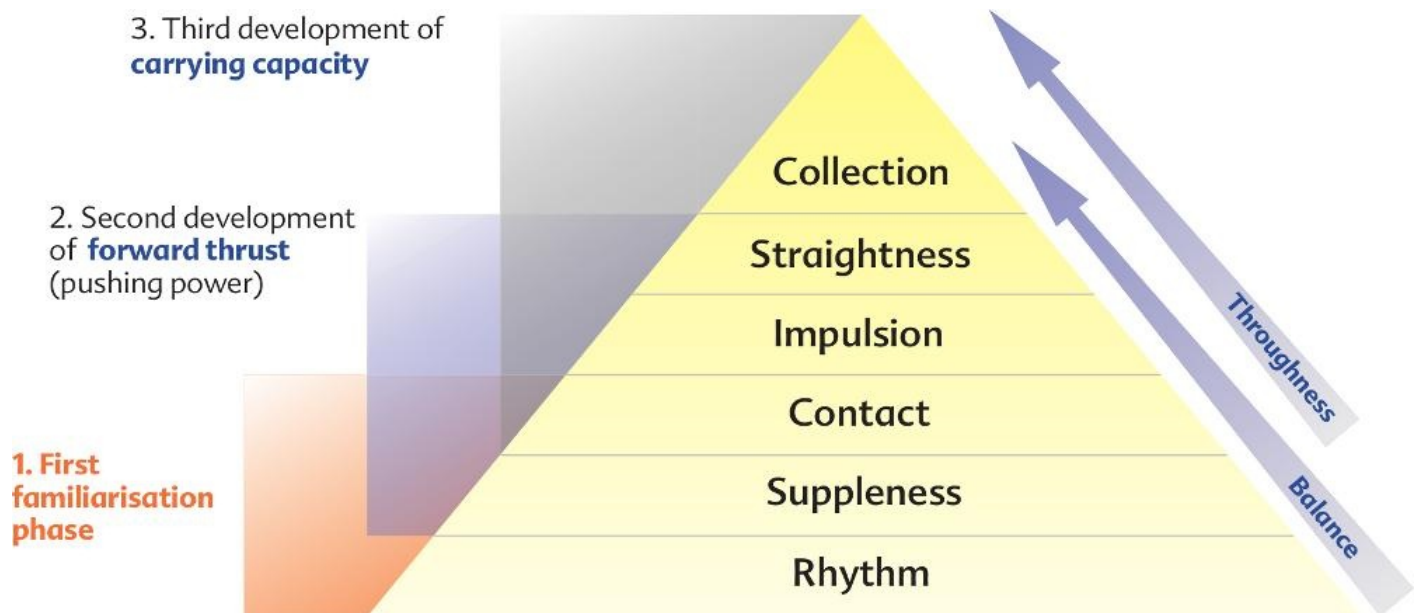
■ THROUGHNESS

A certain degree of obedience and throughness are required in young horses from an early stage. With increased straightness and improved reactions of the horse to the rider's aids, throughness is further improved. The pushing power from the hindquarters will be felt ever more evenly in the rider's hands. The horse, free from tension, moves readily forwards, starts to chew on the bit and becomes lighter at the poll. This must be supported by the rider through fine coordination of the driving and regulating aids, and through a constant preparedness to become light with the hand. Thus, the horse attains a posture in which it carries itself, and the head-nose line can approach the vertical. Early straightening work and an even contact on both reins stabilise the neck in the area of the withers. Therefore, a steady alignment of the forehand with the hindquarters becomes possible. Decisive, but not exaggerated, forward riding from behind, into the contact, supports this process. The quality of the throughness improves over the course of training.

The more the individual steps of the Training Scale are developed, and the better the horse accepts the different aids willingly, the higher the level of throughness will be. As a result of this, a refined throughness will, in turn, improve all of these other aspects at the same time.

Depending on the horse's balance, it will be less or more easily able to respond to the aids of the rider. Therefore, an improvement of the throughness cannot be achieved purely by focusing on throughness in particular, but rather by improving each of the individual aspects of the Training Scale.

Training System of the Horse | 'Training Scale'



With the continuous improvement of rhythm, suppleness, contact, impulsion, straightness and collection, balance and throughness are further refined.

7.5 Training Basics and Training Principles

As with every sport, in equestrianism, proven and recognised training principles are to be observed. The rider who would like to demand an athletic performance from their horse must always bear in mind the constitution and the condition of their horse.

The CONSTITUTION of the horse is dependent upon:

- His conformation, the anatomy of each individual horse, as well as the physical and mechanical strength,
- the physiological ability to cope with strain (cardiovascular, metabolic), but also
- the psychological, mental state of the horse.

The term CONDITION describes the horse's physical state, and thus its physical performance potential. It is the basis for every athletic performance. This includes:

- ENDURANCE as resistance of the organism to exhaustion and/or the ability to recover after effort,
- POWER, both in terms of muscular strength for dynamic locomotion and static strain,
- the SPEED as the ability to reach higher speeds and perform sequences of motion more quickly,
- the MOBILITY in terms of the flexibility and elasticity of the muscles, tendons and ligaments.

Condition-related qualities, which also have an impact on the horse's constitution in the

long term, cannot be presumed to be the same with every horse, because, alongside genetic predisposition, they are the result of long-term structured training.

For optimal chances of success, training includes, alongside the:

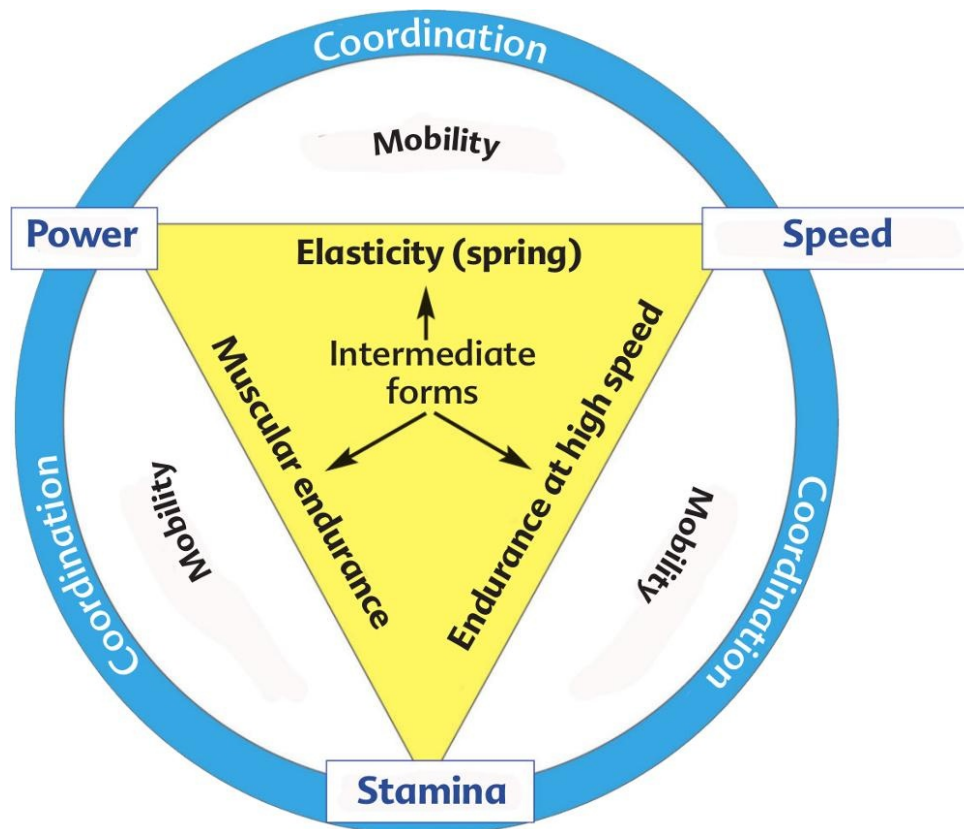
- STRUCTURED BUILDING OF CONDITIONAL ABILITIES, also the
- IMPROVEMENT OF COORDINATION AND TECHNIQUE (SKILL) as well as the
- STRENGTHENING OF THE HORSE'S MIND (PSYCHE).

The horse's PSYCHE, initially dependent on the horse's character and temperament, is strengthened through positive experiences as well as trust-building and motivational training. Learning ability and willingness to perform are the results of this.

COORDINATION includes movement skills and motion control. For the execution of dressage movements, negotiating show-jumping courses, but also for jumping cross-country fences, coordination is particularly significant. Therefore, a lot of emphasis in equestrianism is traditionally placed on the technically correct and finely coordinated execution of exercises, and the respective training to do so. It is to be remembered, however, that the coordination ability is immediately affected when particular groups of muscles tire.

The system embedded in the Training Scale does not only provide guidelines for the training of a horse. Its structure also includes a training programme that is gradually intensified in accord with the level of training.

The following conditional abilities are improved through systematic training:



Conditional abilities, their intermediate forms and their coordination

ENDURANCE/STAMINA is not only fundamental for eventing horses. It is one of the foundations for all sport horses, essential for intense schooling sessions and competitive appearances, but also for long hacks or hunts, without any health problems arising as a consequence. In terms of POWER, both ELASTICITY and muscular endurance play a role. The desired elasticity is expressed in the active, energetic hindquarters in dressage and the quick take-off reaction when tackling a show-jumping or cross-country course. MUSCULAR ENDURANCE is the ability to perform exhausting movements or jumps repeatedly without tiring. Through this, a consistent quality of movement can be assured even during repetitions. This is an important factor of success, which must be explicitly considered in the training of sport horses. HIGH-SPEED ENDURANCE is the core ability that must be developed with eventing horses to enable them to cover relatively long cross-country courses at a high speed without any signs of exhaustion, and in good health. An eventer must also be able to jump technically demanding cross-country fences, placing high demands on its coordination, as well as its physical condition.

MOBILITY, which is usually strengthened through gymnastic exercises, is as important for all athletic performances as COORDINATION. Only a horse in good general condition is able to show good coordination when under pressure, for example when jumping fences and on landing. Coordinative abilities important to the equestrian sports include balance, rhythm, differentiation ability and orientation skills.

Good condition is therefore always an important factor for the safety and health of horse and rider.

In order for suitable training to take place, and to maintain the horse's health, knowledge of ADJUSTMENT PROCESSES is very important. The CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM responds quickly to stimuli in training. It only takes from a few days up to a few weeks before advances in training can be noticed. However, visible alteration of the muscles is only evident after several intensive weeks or months of training, and TENDONS, LIGAMENTS AND BONES OR JOINTS need many months or even years before they get used to the strains of training and can adjust accordingly. The consequence of this is:

A horse that appears 'fit' and well-muscled is not necessarily able to cope well with intensive strain.

The necessary prerequisites for the intensive training and intensive athletic use of sport horses must first be established through a long-term, systematically structured training process.

A training process generally lasts over several years, depending on the particular aims, and is divided into different training phases during each competitive season. This is often referred to as a training cycle since the horse, as an 'athlete', cannot be maintained at the very highest level of condition for an entire year. Fundamentally, training can be divided into

- BASIC TRAINING (FUNDAMENTAL AND CONDITIONAL TRAINING).
- PERFORMANCE TRAINING (STRUCTURED TRAINING AIMED AT COMPETING).

In the BASIC TRAINING, the general advancement in condition and, in particular, endurance and mobility, are the priorities. During this time, which lasts several weeks, the horse should get used to different terrain on hacks in walk, trot and a relaxed canter, in addition to the usual schooling sessions. Thus, sure-footedness as well as agility are reinforced. The PERFORMANCE TRAINING PHASE serves the specific training in the final few weeks before a competition. In this phase, the work is gradually aimed at the specific demands of the competition. In the final few days before the actual competition, the demands are once again reduced.

Another particularly important principle of training is the constant INTERPLAY BETWEEN TENSION AND RELAXATION, BETWEEN WORK AND RECOVERY. Physical adaptation processes and improvements in the energy effect after a training load are only effective if the organism is given the chance to recover and adapt. After a particularly demanding training day, one or more days of less intense work should therefore follow. In

terms of understanding riding theory, it is equally important to consider the fact that a muscle, after a moment of tension, must always be allowed to relax. Only then can the metabolism of the muscles be maintained optimally and muscle stiffness be prevented. As a result, neither the horse nor the rider should remain in an unaltered body posture for a long time. Riding should always be understood as a gymnasticising process.

The INTENSITY OF THE SCHOOLING SESSIONS OR THE TRAINING STIMULI must, in turn, be viewed in relation to the horse's condition. Depending on the objectives, they must be of an intensity that will stimulate the muscles and the cardiovascular system to begin positive adaptation processes. However, they must never lead to excessive demands or exhaustion.

7.6 Schooling and Training System of the Horse

With systematic work during the early basic training, the foundation is laid for the horse's further schooling and training processes. This continues to be carried out according to the fundamentals of classical riding. The fundamentals of classical riding also desire a horse that:

- Moves in all gaits rhythmically, in a regulated and balanced way.
- Is unforced, focused and works willingly.
- Confidently seeks a connection with the rider's hand while moving actively,
- Moves elastically and straight on both sides, as well as light-footedly.

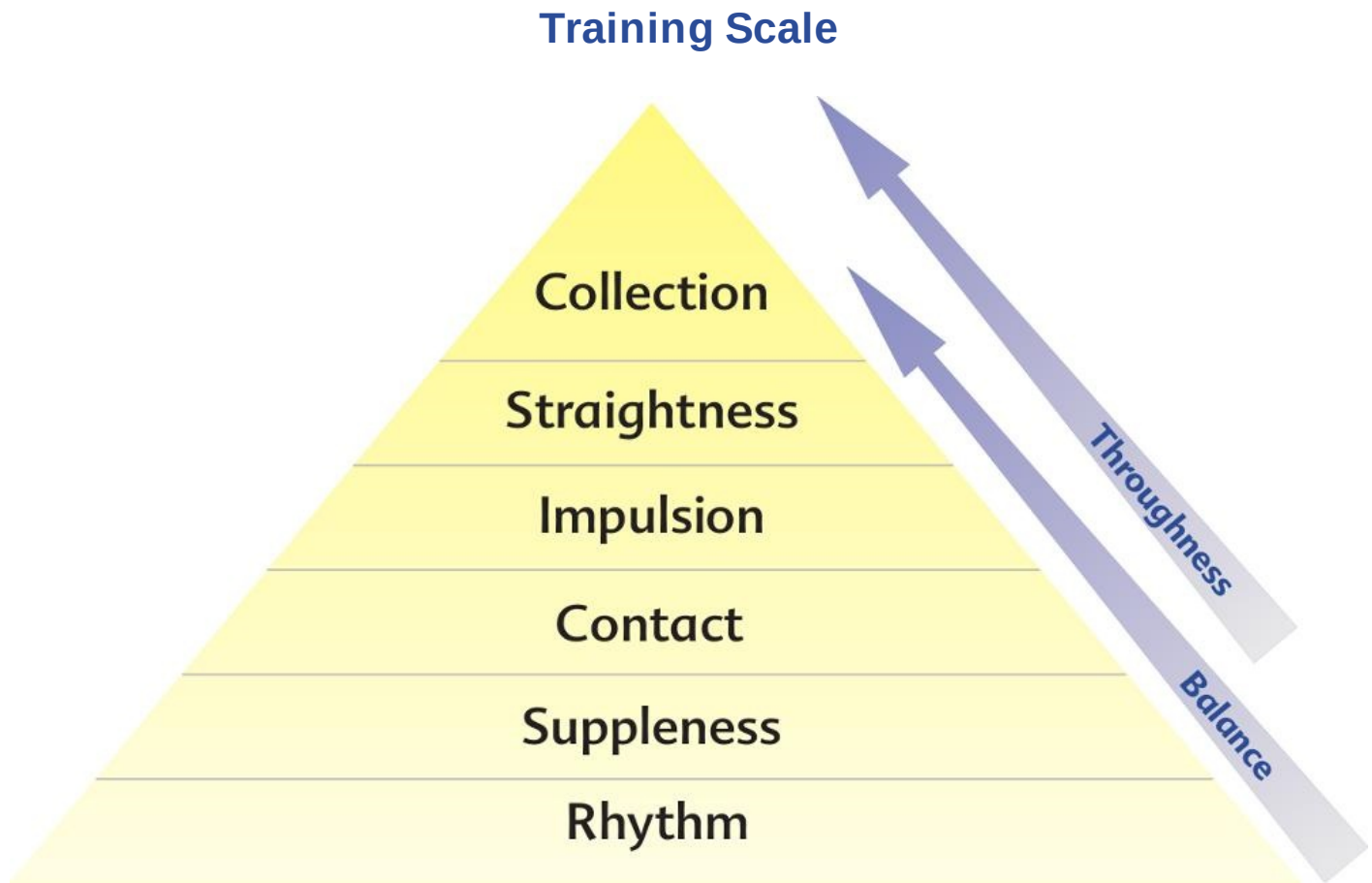
A horse should allow the rider to increase and reduce the stride length without effort, while maintaining an even rhythm. When lengthening, the movements become more powerful and expansive; when shortening they must remain active and become more elevated. The horse should allow itself to be turned at any time and remain in balance at every change of rein or direction. This level of training is only achieved through a carefully and systematically developed training and schooling process.

The fundamentals for the training of young horses illustrated in Chapter 7.4 accompany the horse throughout its entire education! Even if the focus of training might change in the different training phases, the foundation, with all of its components, remains important at all times. They influence each other, as they are interconnected and, to a certain extent, partly dependent on one another.

The six steps of RHYTHM, SUPPLENESS, CONTACT, IMPULSION, STRAIGHTNESS and COLLECTION form the TRAINING SCALE. When adhering to the Training Scale, BALANCE and THROUGHNESS will also be increasingly improved.

The rider must inevitably focus on balance in all phases of training. Throughness is the basic aim of training, which will be developed further and further when the horse is being worked correctly.

This can only succeed on the basis of a very secure foundation: rhythm and suppleness are, on the one hand, requirements without which appropriate training of horses is not possible. Indeed, they are the benchmarks that show whether the horse's training is (still) heading in the right direction. All further principles or aims are built upon this and are, again, dependent on each other.



The training system described here is the foundation for the training of every riding or sport horse.

This system is not only the guideline for a long-term training programme, but also for every individual schooling session. Therefore, it also serves as assessment criteria when judging competitive tests.

Those who have fully internalised the Training Scale will realise that a global understanding of the training system is invaluable from the very beginning; that is to say that the individual aspects are not just worked on one after the other, in isolation, but rather that they play an overlapping, interactive role. This will become clear when watching experienced riders as they always keep all of the training principles in mind. However, they focus on individual aspects in relation to certain

situations. These aspects, given their close connection, always automatically imply consideration of the other aspects.

If difficulties arise, fundamentally, this system of training is also very helpful for solving any problems, always bearing in mind the horse's age and the combination's level of training.

Generally, it is necessary to re-establish the basics of rhythm, suppleness, contact and impulsion and, as a result, balance, whenever problems occur at any level in a horse's training.

A diverse basic training, set up using the expert knowledge and sensitive judgement of a trainer, is the best guarantee for maintaining the horse's soundness and welfare.

7.6.1 Significance of Balance

In the beginning, on the way to, and right up to the pinnacle of training of horse and rider, balance plays a very decisive role. The horse must learn to balance itself in all situations with its rider. The rider must therefore make it possible for the horse to find this balance.

For a harmonious, successful training process to succeed, the rider's vision that they want to support the horse in finding its balance is very helpful.

This also means that the rider should interfere through their own body posture and their aids as little as possible. The process of balancing is carried out laterally (right-left) as well as in the direction of movement (from front to back). For purposes of compensation, upward and downward movements also play a role (for example, in the posture of the rider or the head-neck position of the horse).

The horse follows a change of its centre of gravity (caused by imbalance) by changing its movement. In doing so, it may move off a straight line and swerve from one side to the other, or become more rushed, or alternatively more hesitant. Flexibility in the neck is essential for the horse to continuously re-establish its balance.

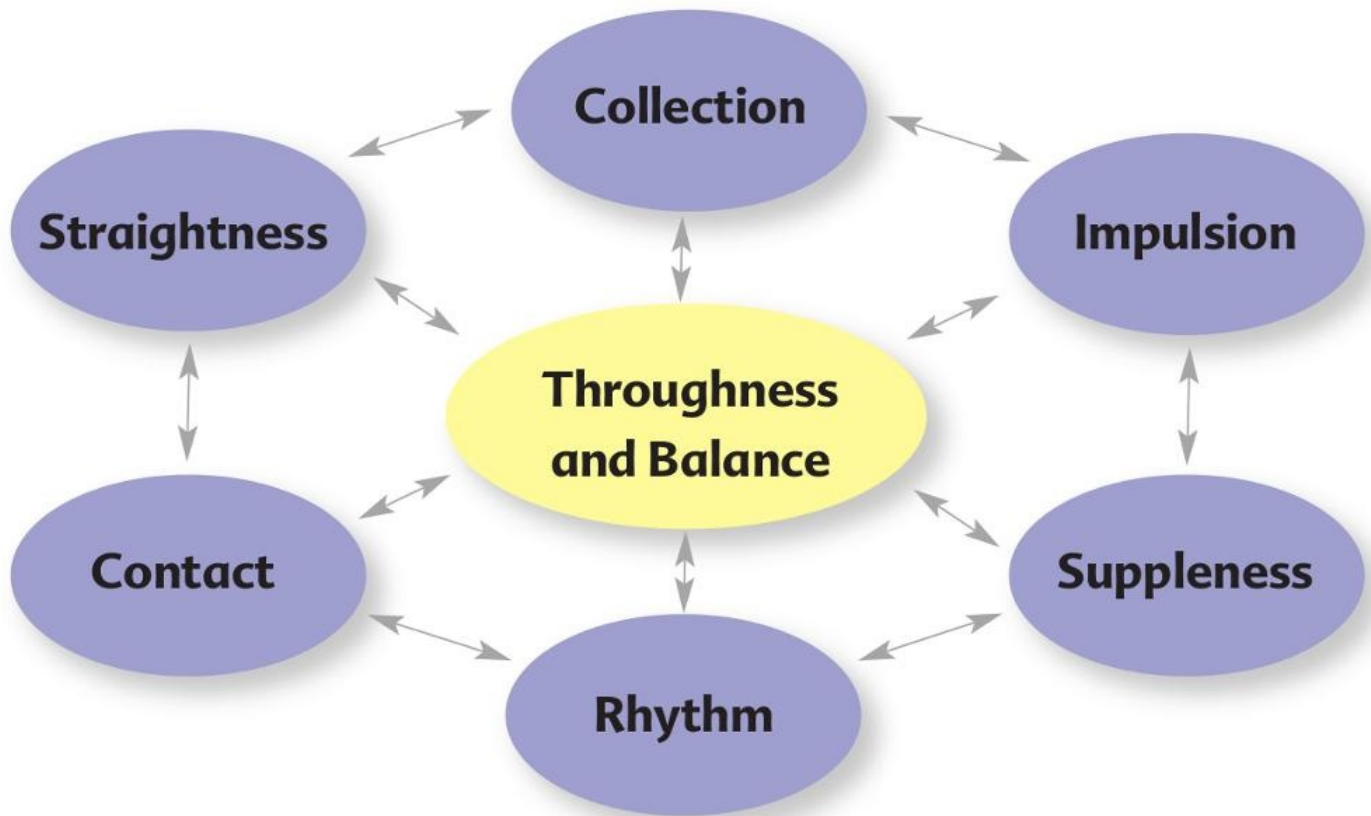
The rider is not only responsible for their own balanced seat, but also allows the horse to find its balance by being accommodating with their hands.

Once the horse has learnt to carry the rider, the rider should become a 'calming influence'. The rider supports the horse most by adapting well to the horse's movement.

Balance and rhythm are directly related: a well-balanced horse is able to move in a

secure rhythm – problems in balance lead almost inevitably to problems in the rhythm.

Interrelationships of the Focal Points of Training



Each individual aspect affects all of the others.

The relationship between balance and suppleness is similar. The more supple the horse's movement, the easier it is for it to find its balance.

Through the interaction between driving and regulating aids, the rider can help their horse to find its balance. With correct gymnastic work, the horse will step narrower with its feet (straightness) and the hind legs will become increasingly engaged (collection). The more advanced the training process is, the more secure the dynamic, mutual balance of the horse and rider should become.

7.6.2 Significance of Rhythm

RHYTHM describes the REGULARITY of all steps and strides of the horse.

Rhythm in this sense refers to evenness and regularity of gait. Healthy horses naturally move rhythmically with all four legs, and are therefore in rhythm. The horse's natural action and the rhythm in each gait must be maintained. The regularity of the gaits is seen when the steps and strides not only cover equal

distances, but also are of equal duration; that is, the frequency in which the feet touch the ground is always the same. Thus, each leg or each pair of legs on both sides move in a regular sequence ([see Chapter 6.1 Riding the Gaits](#)).

Rhythm and tempo must also remain unaltered when varying the form of the gait (lengthening or shortening), or when changing rein.

The choice of the appropriate tempo is particularly significant for finding and maintaining the rhythm.

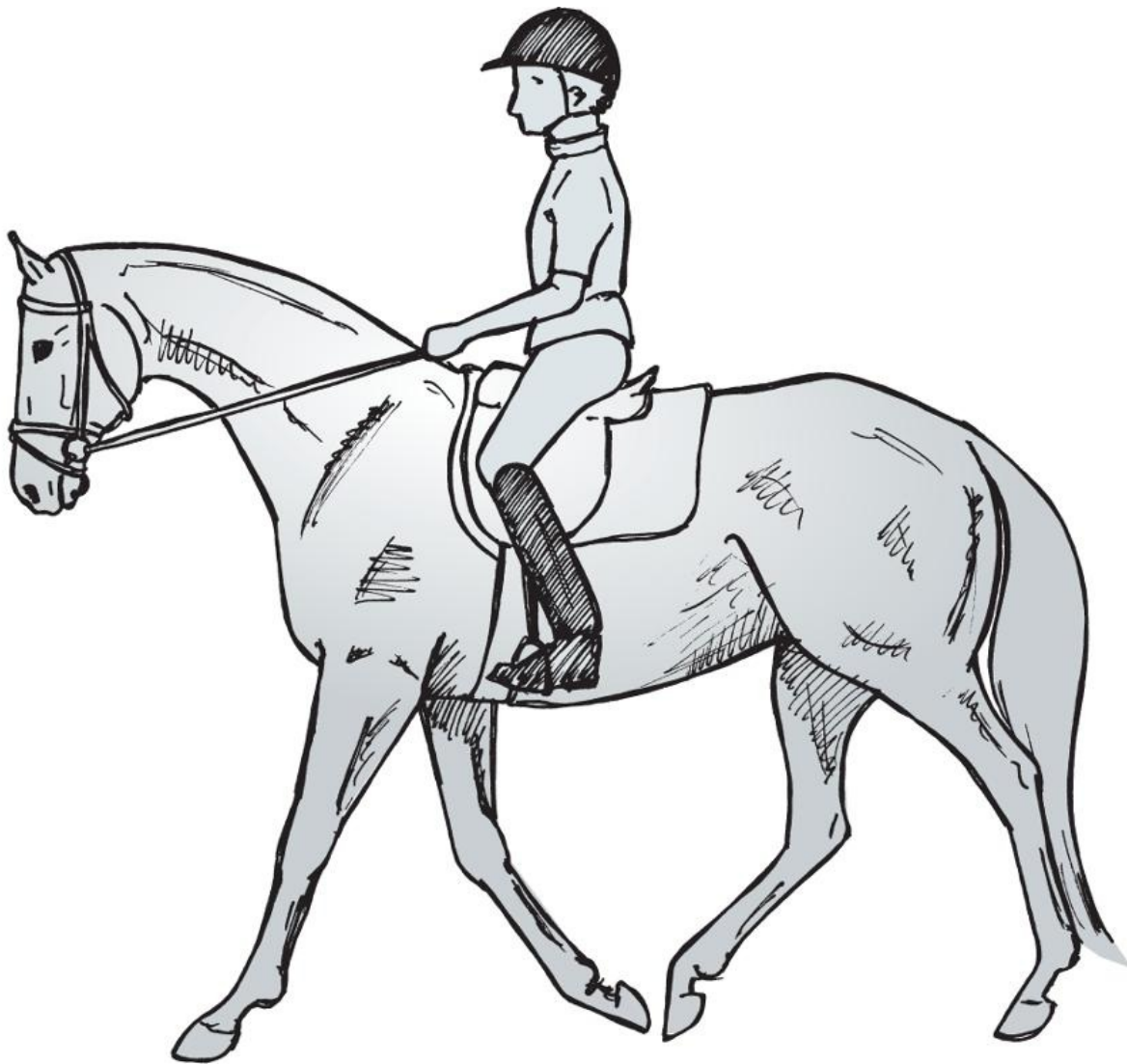
A horse that is ridden in an unsuitable tempo will always have difficulty in finding its balance in movement, and, as a result, a secure rhythm. At the start of a schooling session, the rider selects the tempo which is most suitable to the individual horse. Every horse has its own tempo, in which it is best able to find and maintain balance. In this tempo, the horse's back will swing best and the muscles will contract and relax rhythmically, the movements being in harmony with the breathing.

Thus, the rider does justice to the welfare and natural needs and behaviour of their horse. This is a fundamental reason why rhythm is to be regarded as a basis for all future training objectives.

Secure rhythm – on straight and curved lines, in transitions and in movements – is to be given the highest priority. Only a horse that moves in its natural rhythm is able to become supple. Apparent and lasting disturbances in rhythm and motion are the decisive signs of fundamental deficiencies in the basic training (assuming that health problems are not the cause). It should therefore go without saying that any trainer and rider need to learn thoroughly and know about the sequence of footfalls of the horse in all three basic gaits. Only then can they influence the movement positively or recognise mistakes ([see Chapter 6.1 Riding the Gaits](#) for a detailed explanation).

■ IN WALK

In walk, the horse moves in a regular four-beat rhythm. The movement flows harmoniously through the body. The rider needs to go with this movement sensitively so that the rhythm remains undisturbed at all times. An essential criterion for the medium walk is a stretched and relaxed neck with a forwards-downwards nodding motion. This nodding motion in walk is also a condition for achieving and maintaining suppleness. The rider goes with this fluent movement of the horse's back with a smooth seat, but rather passively, while making an effort to maintain a light but constant connection with the horse's mouth by letting the hands move flexibly forwards from mobile elbow joints.



Regular walk.

Particular attention must be paid in walk because rider mistakes can very quickly lead to disturbances in the horse's rhythm ([see Chapter 6.1.1.1 Walk](#)), which are often difficult to correct.

■ IN TROT

In trot the horse alternates between setting the diagonal pairs of legs down and lifting them off in a two-beat rhythm. In between, there is a moment of suspension. The long back muscles of the horse, which run along the spine on both sides, contract and release alternately. The hind legs should step under the body as required by the form of the gait, both legs taking steps of equal length and duration. By going with the horse's movement elastically, the rider can create the conditions for success.

For most riders, it is initially easier to adapt to the horse's movement in rising trot rather than in sitting trot, especially if the horse is not yet completely supple.

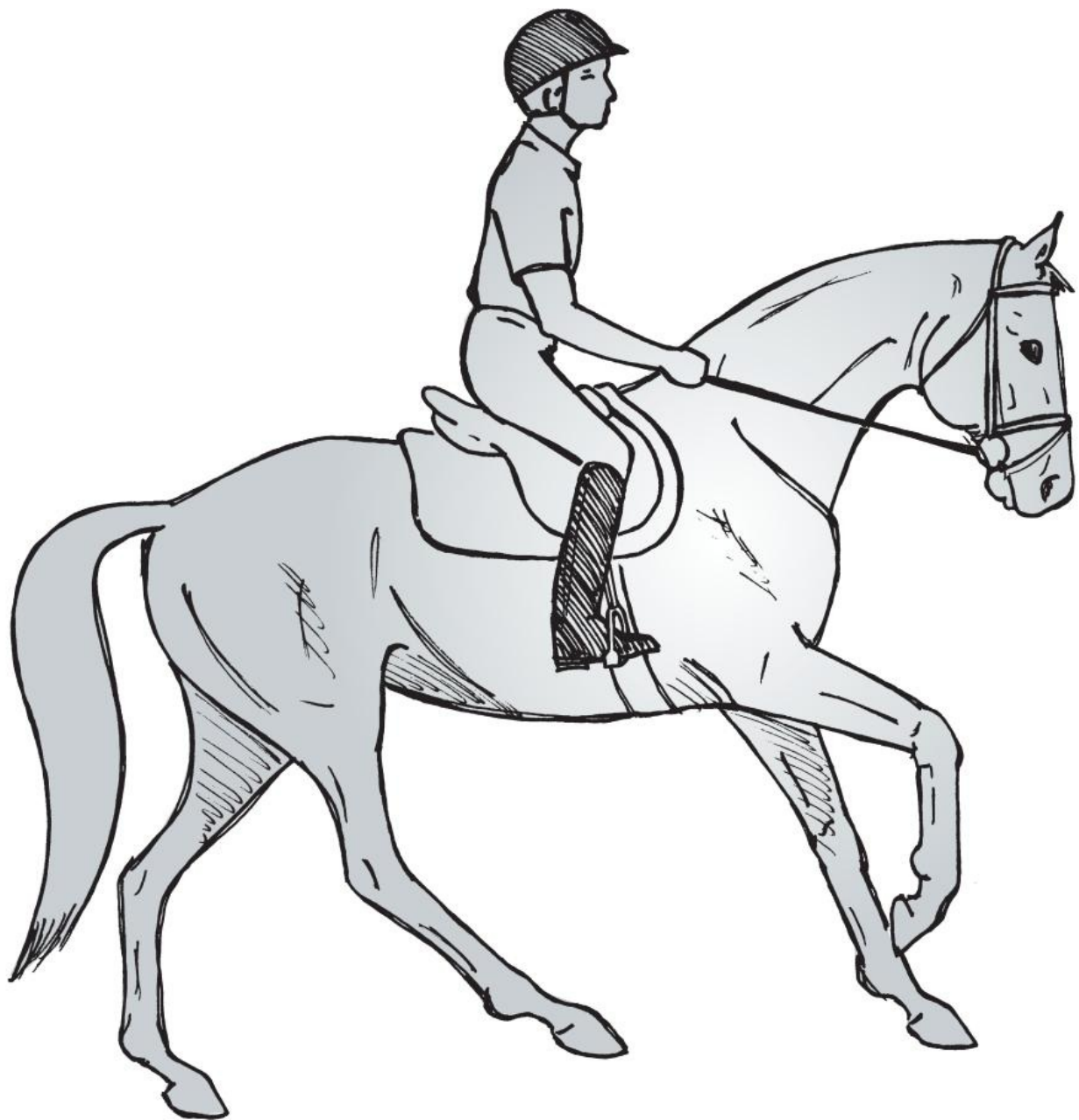
The better the rider moves in rhythm with the horse, the more able they are to vary between shortening and lengthening the steps while maintaining a secure rhythm. Transitions are particularly prone to mistakes or irregularities in the rhythm if they are not prepared for well and in timely fashion through half-halts. When riding turns in trot, disturbances in the rhythm can also arise if the horse is not yet able to balance very well and does not accept the rider's diagonal aids very securely.

■ IN CANTER

Canter is a movement which consists of a sequence of strides ('jumps'), with a moment of suspension in between the strides. The sequence of the footfalls leads to a three-beat rhythm, with the moment of suspension following each stride. The regularity of the sequence of several strides in canter is known as the canter rhythm. It is always to be maintained, even in the transitions within the gait. Lengthening the canter strides should be performed with an even, clear, three-beat rhythm, which should be retained when the strides are shortened again.

Since the motion sequence in canter is directly linked to the horse's breathing, the development of a finely defined feel of rhythm in the rider is particularly significant for the training of the horse. Every disturbance in the rhythm has a negative effect on the concentration, the breathing and, as a result, also on the suppleness of the horse.

In a clear three-beat rhythm, the horse remains supple in every stride of the canter and swings energetically over the back, bringing the hind legs actively towards the body's centre of gravity. The horse is said to 'come more from behind' in the moment of suspension, when the hind legs engage far under the body, with a supple back. At this moment, when the horse raises its back, the rider needs to allow for this movement with a supple, elastic seat and with sensitive rein aids, thus accommodating the movement.



An energetic canter, from behind, with an 'uphill' tendency and with the rider in harmony with the movement.

■ IN REIN-BACK

In rein-back the horse steps in a way similar to trot, with the each diagonal pair of legs leaving the ground and touching down again in unison. It thus moves in a two-beat rhythm, without, however, a moment of suspension. The sensitive collaboration between the driving and the regulating aids of the rider, in particular, assists a regular, diagonal rein-back ([see Chapter 6.2.8 Rein-Back](#)). A backward-acting hand, however, leads to a tensed back and, as a result, to a hesitant, dragging, and no longer diagonal rein-back.

With rein-back, the regulated, diagonal stepping of the horse must always be a primary concern.

Maintaining the rhythm in all basic gaits and in rein-back remains an elementary demand in the overall training of a horse. The natural action must always be maintained in all work with the horse. For this reason, rhythm is a priority, because it has such a close correlation to suppleness and contact.

This correlation also applies to show-jumping and cross-country. The harmonious completion of a show-jumping or cross-country course in an even rhythm is one of the most important criteria (*see Chapters 6.5 Basic Exercises in Riding over Fences and 6.6 First Exercises in Cross-Country Riding*).

Lasting disturbances in the rhythm are generally a result of incorrect riding and thus always have a negative influence on the horse's welfare. They are an expression of disharmony. Therefore, the rhythm must be given priority in the schooling and training process from starting young horses right through to the training of horses for the top level performance sport.

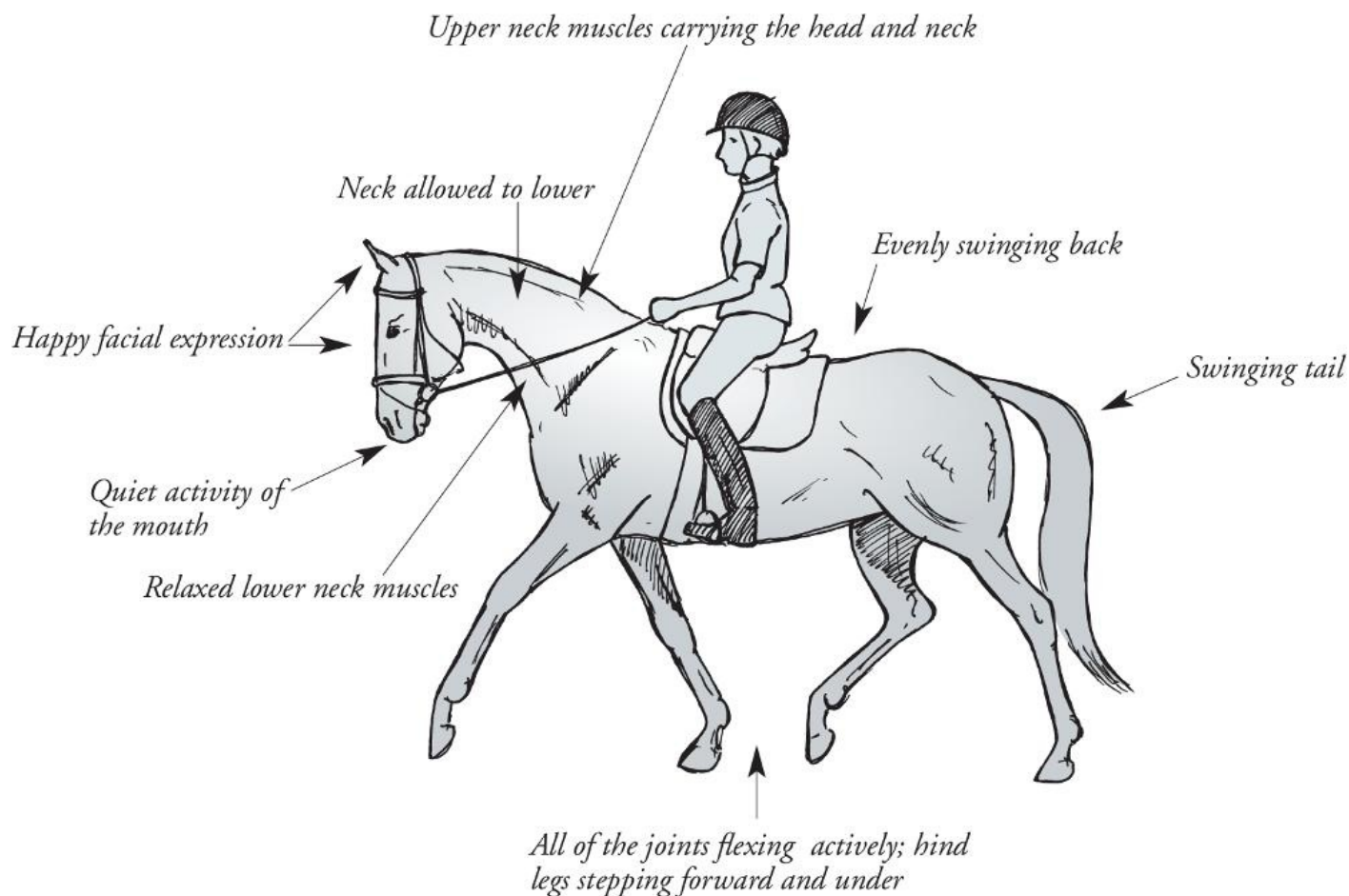
7.6.3 Significance of Suppleness

SUPPLENESS is characterised by a regular contraction and relaxation of the muscles, without restraint, and also includes inner serenity.

Suppleness is a condition that is not only to be achieved during the warming-up phase, but which is to be maintained continuously throughout intensive work and sports performance as well. Here, focused, positive tension does not contradict suppleness. On the contrary, it is the requirement for all athletic performance.

Whether this suppleness is obtained depends on both the physical and the psychological condition of the horse. All muscle groups, after a period of contraction, are released again. Suppleness is a requirement for every individual training session as it is crucial for the horse's motivation to learn and to perform, as well as to optimising performance ability. It is therefore a particularly important aim of the warming-up phase, and of the entire training of the horse.

VISIBLE SIGNS OF A SUPPLE HORSE



Suppleness is characterised by the following signs:

- Happy facial expression (eyes, ears, lips).
- Smoothly swinging back.
- A well-carried tail, swinging with the movement.
- Visible movement of the neck muscles.
- Even, relaxed breathing.
- Relaxed activity of the mouth, with slight jaw movements and closed lips (because of the chewing on the bit, there is generally a slight build-up of foam).
- Quiet snorting.
- Lowering the neck from the withers, and a willingness to stretch.
- Focused cooperation and acceptance of the rider's aids.

Suppleness can only be achieved through positive cooperation and never through force. Any forceful actions on the part of the rider generally lead to defensive reactions from the horse.

Establishing and constantly securing suppleness is fundamental in the daily work with every horse, regardless of the level of training. This must be constantly attained and re-examined over and over again in every schooling and training session, as well as at shows and competitions.

An optimal delivery of performance with positive tension is successful – as with every athlete – only when inner serenity, naturalness and confidence are present.

This is obtained through gentle, but firm, handling and comprehensive, sensitive aids from the rider.

A variety of SUPPLING EXERCISES for an efficient warming-up phase or to achieve suppleness, are available ([see Chapter 6.2 Basic Exercises in Dressage Riding](#)). Sensible series of exercises can be developed from these.

There is no panacea to suit all horses. The way to suppleness differs from horse to horse. In many cases, a suppling hack before the actual schooling session can be of help. The more diverse the daily structure of a training session is, according to a holistic general schooling, the more likely it is that the horse will be able to achieve suppleness in unfamiliar or new situations, such as at competitions.

Suppling has a warming-up as well as a gymnasticising effect; however, it should not lead to exhaustion.

Suppleness must also, and especially, be maintained during high-concentration, intensive or high-speed work. The horse's movements must also remain rhythmical and fluent even in the transitions between and within the gaits to maintain the harmony of movement of horse and rider.

The more blood that flows through them, the better the horse's muscles will develop. This is only possible through a regular alternation between unforced contraction and relaxation of the different muscle groups. The muscles of a supple horse are able to stretch more and can thus perform better; the joints are able to bend more and the horse is better able to move actively from behind in trot and canter.

Tensed muscles do not function optimally; the blood supply is not sufficient, and because of a lack of a sufficient metabolism, the muscles will degenerate. The 'forming' of a horse (training of the desired muscles) is thus only possible with a truly supple horse.

From a rider's perspective, a horse is supple when it works willingly and in a focused way, and allows the rider to sit and to ride forwards, which means that the horse accepts the driving aids.

PRINCIPLE

Horses that tend to anticipate the rider's aids will become more relaxed once suppleness has been achieved. Conversely, horses that are not as sensitive will become more 'forward' once they have

been supplied.

With a smooth seat and appropriate aids on the part of the rider, the horse's back will swing elastically in rhythm with the movement. The horse lowers its neck and is ready to stretch forward into the rider's hand, trustingly, at any time. This willingness to stretch should be apparent and noticeable in all three gaits. It shows that the work done so far has been correct and it lays a foundation for the work to come, as well as for a soft but steady contact. Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand therefore serves to check the suppleness and is the basis for a contact defined by trust ([see Chapter 6.2.4 Letting the Horse Chew the Reins out of the Hand/Giving and Retaking the Reins](#)).

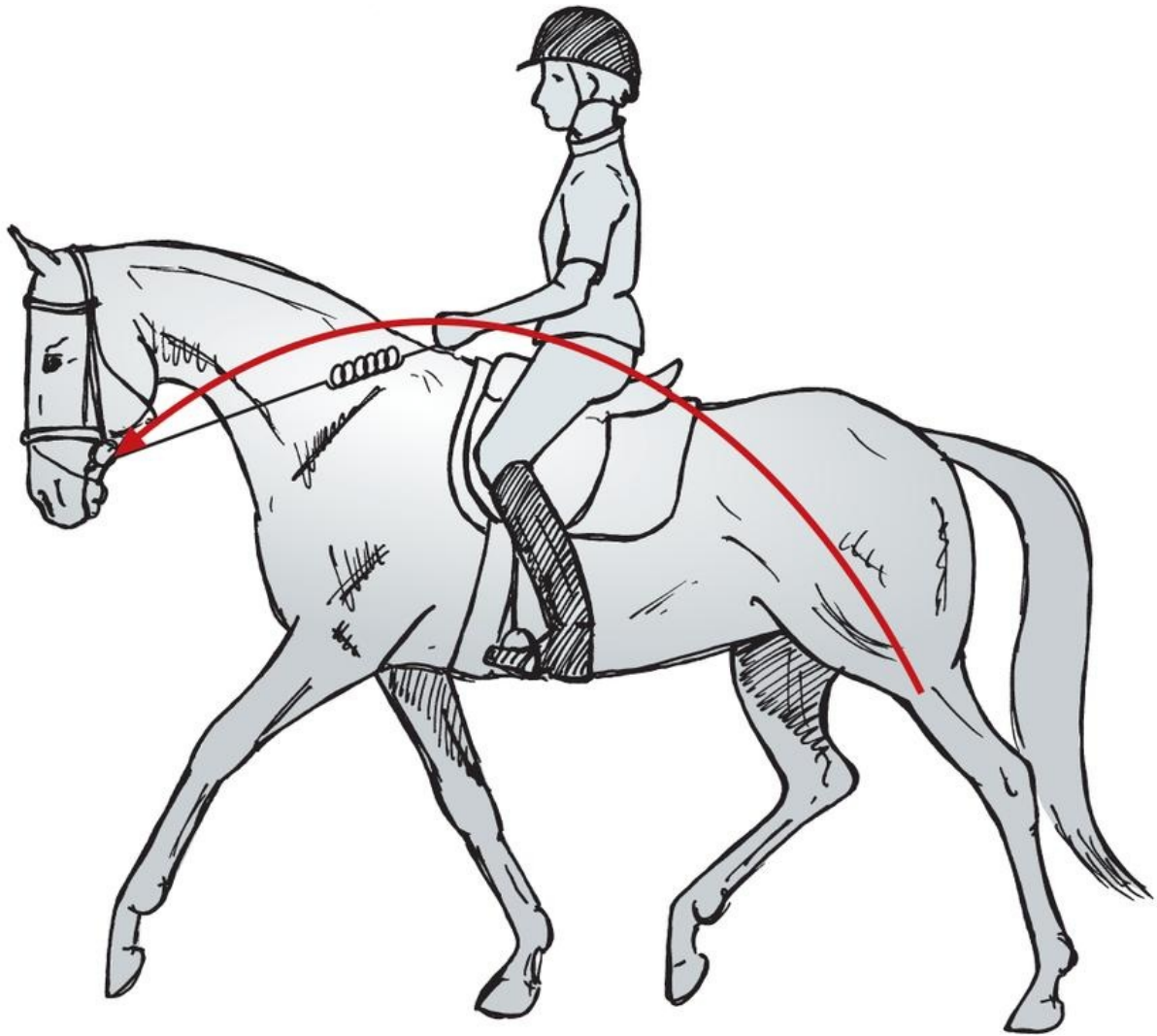
7.6.4 Establishing Contact

CONTACT is defined as the steady, soft, and elastic connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth.

Essential for this is a supple, balanced and smooth seat of the rider, which allows for a sensitive connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth. The rider frames their horse from their seat – with their seat and legs – and through the reins, without ever wedging the horse between the aids.

The contact is dynamic; it will sometimes be stronger and then become lighter again. The rider has the responsibility for keeping it as steady and as light as possible.

The connection supports the process of finding a mutual balance. The rider does not only sit on the horse with their legs touching the horse's body, but they also have a connection to the horse's mouth with their upper body through their hands. Thus, the movements of the horse and those of the rider can become one harmonious, mutual movement.



With suitable driving aids and by going with the movement, the rider ensures that the horse steps into the soft and elastic connection with active hindquarters.

On a curved line, the rider must bring the horse more onto the outside aids – particularly the outside rein – with their inside leg (DIAGONAL AIDS). The secure connection on the outside rein ensures a restriction throughout the turn and allows the rider to become light with the inside rein and to let the forward movement out. The use of the outside rein must, however, remain so flexible that the flexion of the horse is permitted ([see Chapter 6.2.5 Riding Turns and on Curved Lines](#)). Its restraining function is maintained in combination with the outside leg. Since a horse is always flexed in canter, the above-mentioned connection is applied particularly during all canter work, even on a straight line, on the flat as well as when jumping or riding cross-country. As a general rule, the connection should remain even on both reins. The horse's natural crookedness often makes this more difficult, which is why gymnastic work with frequent changes of rein gradually helps to improve the contact.

The horse develops a willingness to stretch to the sensitive rider's hand through a rhythmical, supple, forward movement towards the bit.

This willingness to stretch leads to the rider feeling a steady connection with the horse's mouth. The rider rides the horse from back to front and into the hand in order to achieve a secure contact and to keep it steady. This is, therefore, another decisive criterion in the horse's further training!

The quality of the contact depends, among other things, very closely on suppleness. Both aspects influence and depend on each other and, at the same time, have an influence on the rhythm.

Only a supple horse will stretch forwards-downwards to the rider's hand, and a soft, elastic contact allows the horse to attain suppleness. Problems with any of these aspects will always also have a negative effect on each of the others.

Rhythm, which is to be regarded as a condition for suppleness, will also be lastingly disturbed through a lack of suppleness and problems in the contact.

The willingness and the ability to stretch, as well as the quality of the contact, are also always dependent on the horse's willingness to move forwards, and the energy of the movement!

The horse's sensitivity in responding to even the lightest of the rider's aids must constantly be re-established. This is important because the horse can only develop this willingness to stretch into the rider's hand when it has accepted the driving aids. The steady, elastic contact can thus be regarded as a basic condition for the development of forward thrust (or pushing power), which is the transformation of the power from the hindquarters into the forward movement of the horse. Therefore, the development of impulsion and contact are dependent on each other to a certain degree.

‘Riding with a suitably high amount of impulsion supports the contact!’

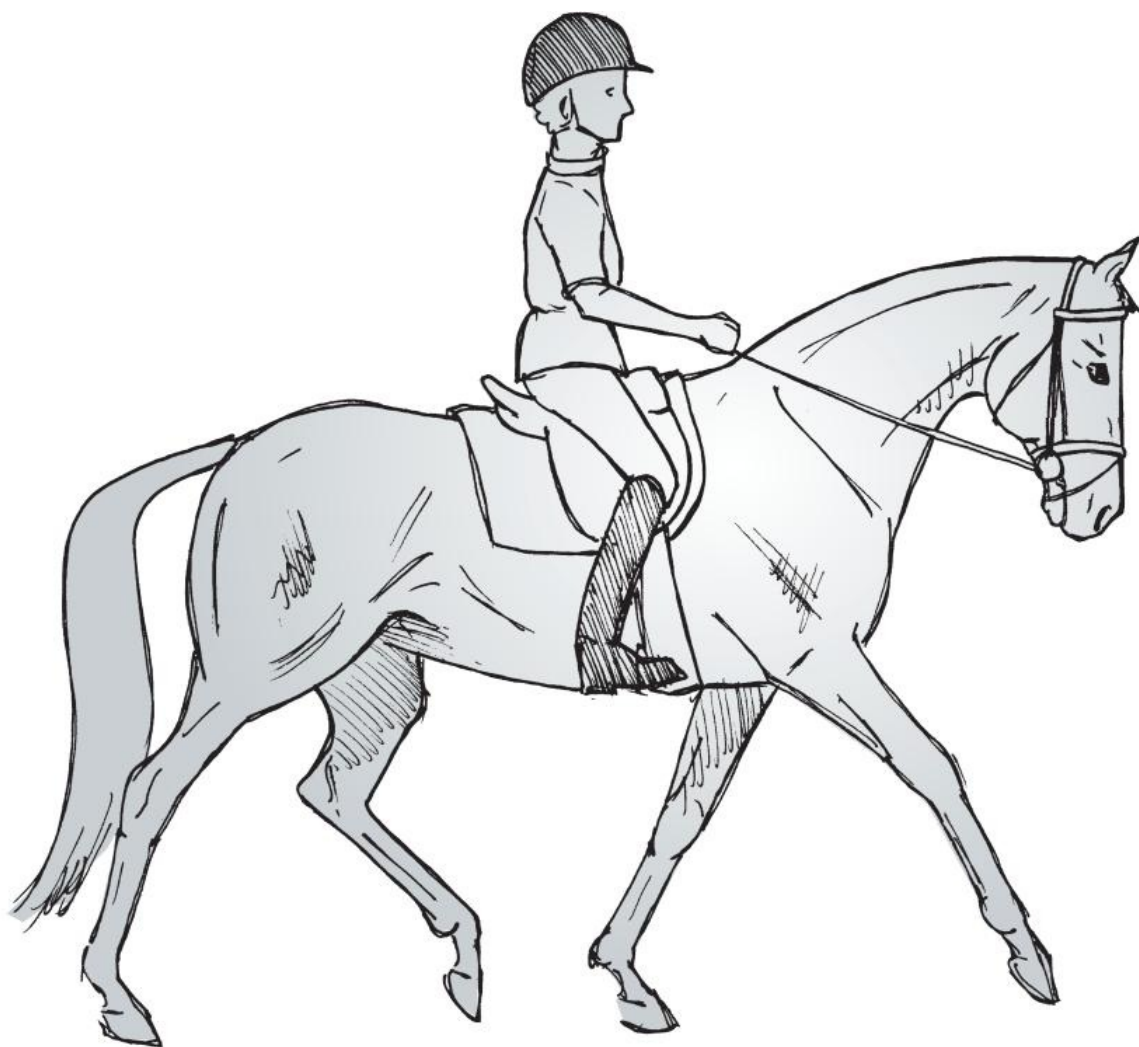
Through a good collaboration of the driving and regulating aids, the horse's carriage will improve according to its level of training.

■ THE STEPS TO A CORRECT CARRIAGE OF THE HORSE

The achievement of a soft, elastic CONTACT, as described in this chapter, is a fundamental requirement for influencing the horse's carriage. In every change of the horse's carriage, the highest degree of attention must be given to this trusting connection.

CARRIAGE

Through a coordinated interaction between the driving and the regulating aids, the rider brings their horse into a certain head-neck position, which also always corresponds to the movement and the particular positive muscular tension that is necessary in the horse. The neck must always be sufficiently 'long' to enable the horse to balance. The lower neck muscles are relaxed; the upper neck muscles are noticeably active and 'carry' the neck. The poll is relaxed and the horse carries the neck so that the poll is the highest point. A horse that is well balanced, with active hind legs so that it carries itself and is very light in the rider's hand, is moving in the desired SELF-CARRIAGE and is therefore in BALANCE. The rider will feel this through a light connection with the horse's mouth. This is the result of correct and sensitive riding.



The horse is in balance, the head-nose line is slightly in front of the vertical, the poll is the highest point.

The horse's head-neck carriage can certainly vary during gymnastic work – whether in a stretched outline with a forward-downward tendency, or in a higher frame. MORE DECISIVE THAN THIS, HOWEVER, IS THE QUALITY OF THE SOFT, ELASTIC CONTACT, WHICH IS DEFINED BY THE TRUST THE HORSE HAS IN THE RIDER'S HAND. In any case, the neck-mandible angle should not be tight.

ON THE BIT

A well-ridden horse has trust in the rider's hand, accepts the contact through the reins and steps forward into this connection. If the rider accompanies their horse patiently with the hand, the horse will start to chew on the bit, which leads to relaxation of the jaw, the tongue and the poll. Since the rider supports this process sensitively with their driving aids (leg and seat aids), the horse will continue to move forwards happily and start to become 'light in the rider's hand'. It accepts the minor resistance of the rider's hand with an elastic poll in order to then seek the contact once again. With a horse that initially moved with an elongated neck and the nose clearly ahead of the vertical, the head-nose line now comes closer to the vertical. The poll is the highest point. The horse stands still or moves forward into the rein with contact. The horse is now said to be 'on the bit'.

ELEVATION (RAISING OF THE FOREHAND)

The so-called elevation or raising of the horse's forehand must always follow the level of the horse's training. It emerges from the overall body posture and the balance of the horse. Therefore, a horse's forehand should be RELATIVELY RAISED (described in depth later in this chapter). This correct form of elevation is always the result of the horse's degree of collection. In an advanced stage of training, it corresponds to GOOD SELF-CARRIAGE IN COLLECTION. A horse that can bend lower in the hindquarters, with well-angled joints, appears more 'uphill' and is better able to carry itself in an elevated manner.

7.6.4.1 Mistakes in Contact and in Getting the Horse on the Bit

Mistakes in contact and in getting the horse on the bit result in most cases from seat and aid mistakes of the rider, described above ([see Chapter 4.3 Problems in the Seat and Influence – Causes and Corrections](#)). A rider who cannot go with the horse's movement elastically is hardly able to establish a steady connection with the horse's mouth. This is further reinforced when the rider's hand position and their holding of the reins is not elastic. An incorrect conception of the way contact and getting the horse on the bit are achieved, will also result in different problems.

■ 'AGAINST THE HAND' OR 'ABOVE THE BIT'

A horse that refuses to accept the rider's rein aids and does not give in the poll, is said to go 'against the hand' or 'above the bit'. The horse stiffens and hollows its back and the hindquarters can no longer come under the horse's body correctly. The lower neck muscles are tense and dominant and the upper neck muscles no longer assume their usual carrying function and, therefore, do not develop positively.

The cause nearly always lies in the rider working impatiently and/or with a lack of feeling in their hand against the horse. If this problem has been in existence for a

long time, then the lower neck muscles will have developed more than the upper neck muscles. Since, in this errant posture, the rider's weight cannot be carried in any way other than through stiffening the back muscles, lungeing with correctly attached side reins, combined with intensive schooling for the rider, can be helpful. On the one hand, the horse will again learn to trust the steady connection, while, on the other hand, it will learn to become light, and will find this light connection comfortable. The upper neck muscles will start to regain their carrying functions and the lower neck muscles will start to relax. Through this, the neck muscles will slowly re-form. The horse's back will also regain the necessary freedom to be able to swing.

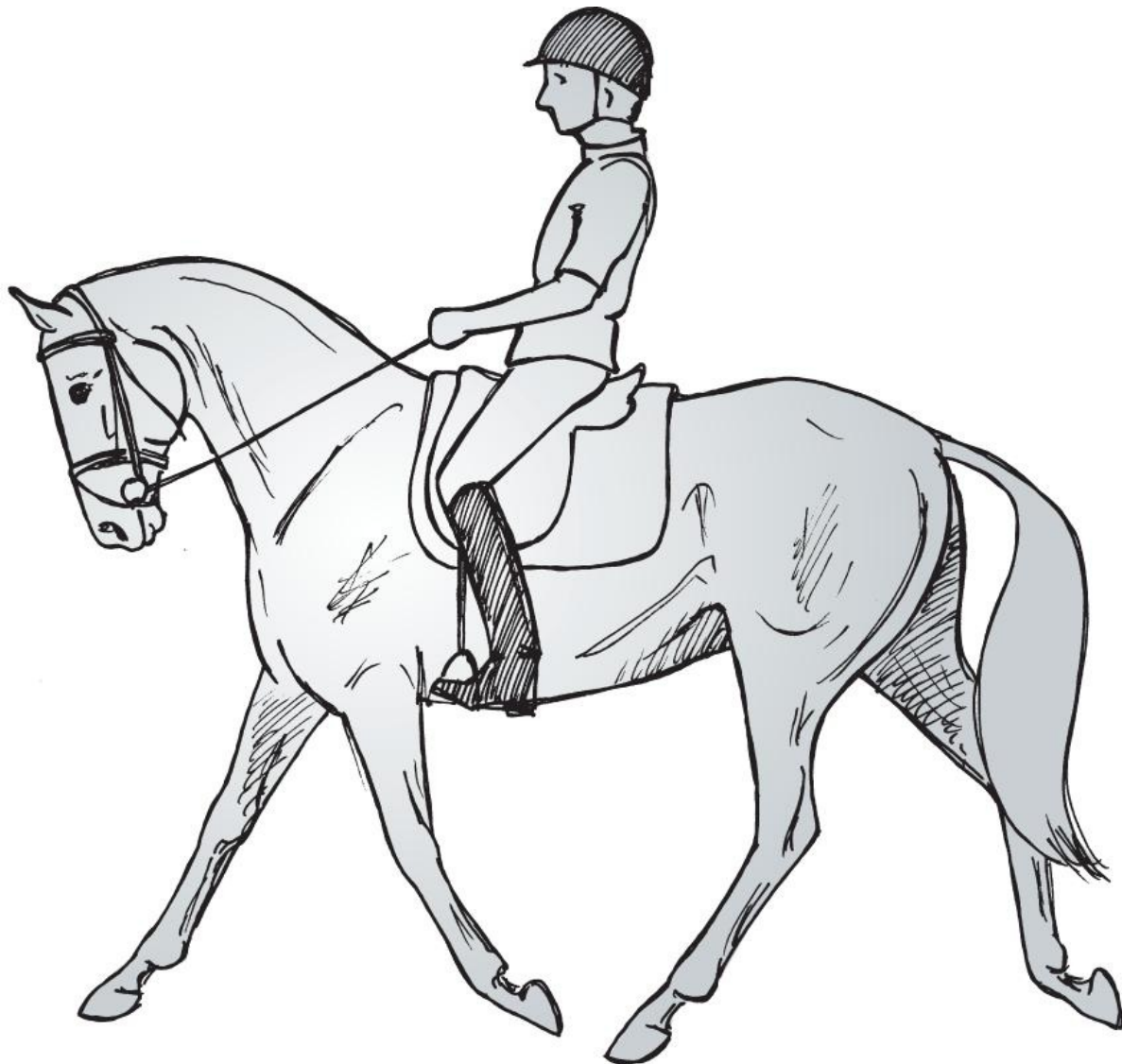
When correcting this mistake under the rider, they should initially establish and maintain a trustful connection with the horse's mouth. Only once these foundations have been re-established, can the horse be ridden from behind into the rider's hand in order to become light in the hand with the help of transitions and half-halts.

TIP:

Regularly letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand and picking them up again benefits the horse's trust and the skill of the rider.

■ **'BEHIND THE VERTICAL'**

Horses generally avoid a backward-acting rein by giving in the poll. The head-nose line therefore comes considerably behind the vertical, impeding the suppleness, the activity of the back and the impulsion or the forward thrust as a result. If the rider does not give, the horse will become continuously 'short' in the neck. This in turn will make it increasingly difficult for the horse to balance and carry the rider's weight. This problem can also arise when the horse does not respond correctly to half-halts and the rider does not carry these out and repeat them consistently enough. However, even more frequently, the problem lies in the rider not riding the half-halt correctly from back to front with dominant driving aids.



Behind the vertical and tight in the neck. The rider sits against the horse's movement.

■ 'SHORT IN THE NECK AND DEEP'

Going behind the vertical is frequently associated with the problem of the horse becoming clearly 'short' in the neck, or when it is intentionally ridden 'short and deep'.

This is always the consequence of incorrectly understood riding making the above-mentioned consequences even worse. The horse thus has no chance of finding its balance!

Half-halts and many transitions, which give the rider the chance to give with the reins and to ride forwards, can help here. Giving and retaking the reins occasionally, as well as frequently letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand and picking them up again are also necessary here.

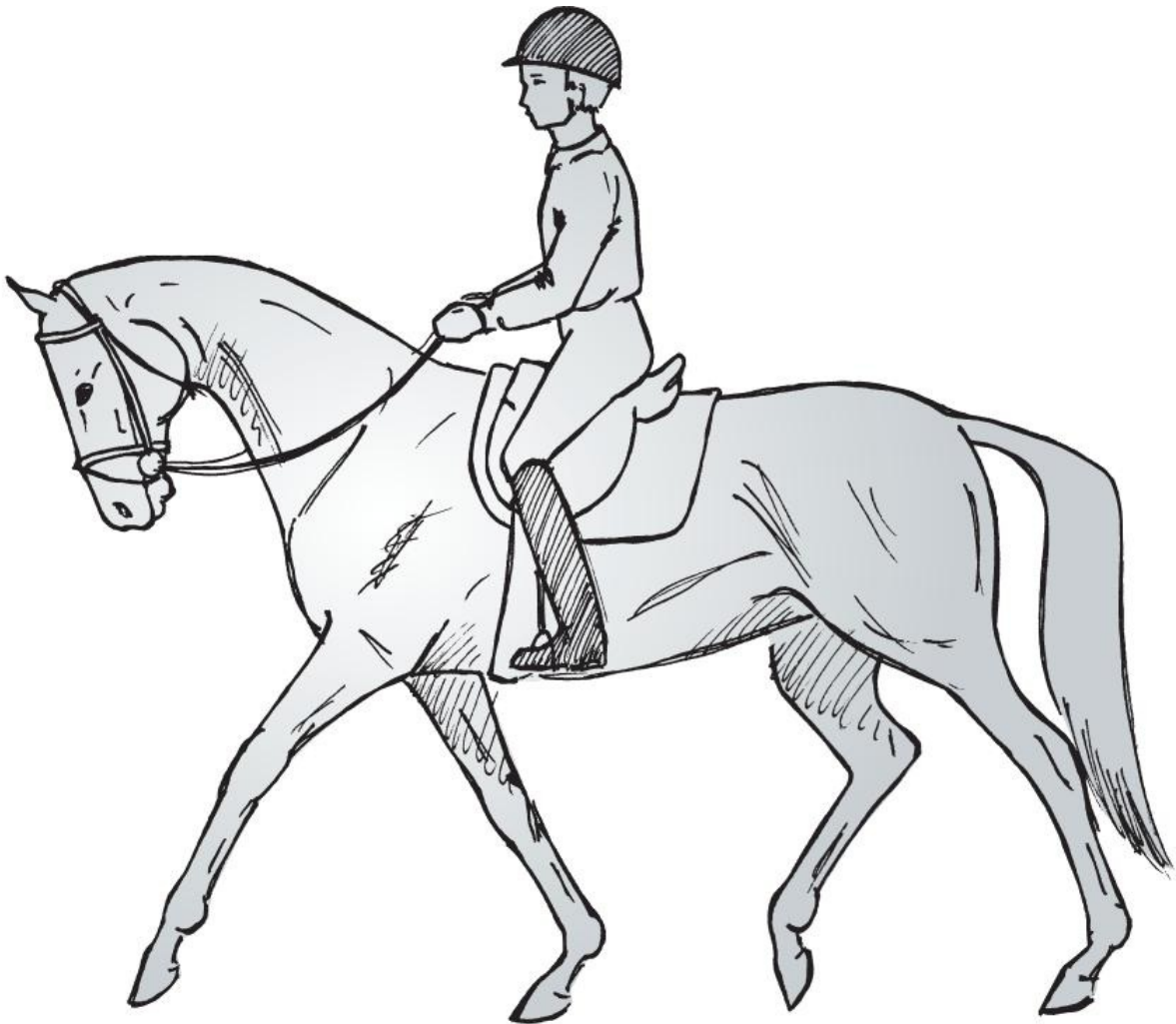
■ 'BEHIND THE BIT'

A horse is 'behind the bit' when it does not step forwards to the bit or the rider's

hand. The contact is, as a result, no longer even and steady. The reasons for this can be diverse. Frequently, the problem lies with the rider, in the lack of harmony between driving and regulating aids. Owing to a lack of trust in the rider's hand, the horse will become 'short' in the neck and/or will remain behind the vertical with its head-nose line. Since the horse avoids the rein aids by backing away from the contact, the rider's hands no longer have a steady connection with the horse's mouth via the reins.

The lack of activity in the hindquarters, which is mostly responsible for this, and the lack of activity in the back, can be traced to too little or incorrectly understood driving aids and/or insensitive rein aids. Often, an inconsistent use of the reins might also be the cause. Because of this mistake, the rider has lost one of the fundamental components for harmonious communication with the horse. The horse simply has no chance of establishing a connection with the rider's hand. Horses that have difficulties stepping into this connection must be ridden forwards from behind and into the sensitive rider's hand. Horses that are very light in the poll are especially prone to this fault in contact. The most fundamental causes are, indeed, the lack of suppleness and willingness to stretch, combined with a lack of pushing power from the hindquarters. This must then be developed. Transitions between trot and canter, alongside cavalletti work and hacking out, are particularly suitable for this.

To resolve this often persistent problem, letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand is also an exercise that is highly recommended.



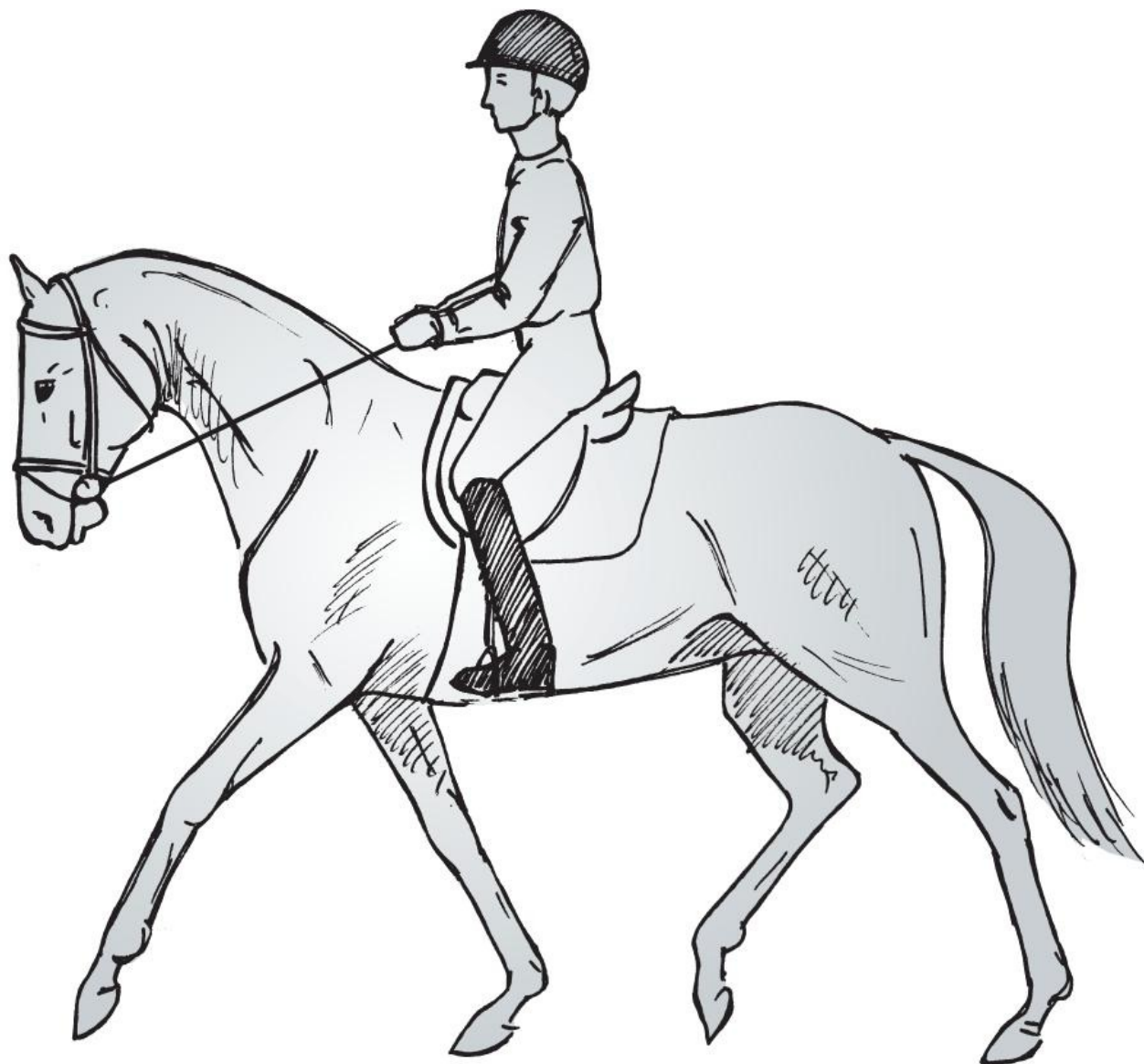
The horse is behind the bit and does not step sufficiently forwards from back to front towards the hand.

In this context, riding with the reins in just one hand is particularly recommended to improve the rider's aids, as the rider is induced to maintain an even connection with both reins. Only a fine feeling for the collaboration of the driving and the regulating aids will enable the rider to restore the horse's trust in their hand. In doing so, the correct position of the hands is fundamental, with a straight line from the elbow to the hand and the rein. Only with a soft, elastic and low hand will the horse then seek the connection with the hand. Frequent, sensitively ridden transitions can help in establishing a stable, more confident contact.

■ **'FALSE BEND/BROKEN AT THE THIRD VERTEBRA'**

Often, going 'behind the bit', 'behind the vertical', or being 'short' in the neck can lead, in the long term, to a 'false bend' (or the horse's neck being 'broken at the third vertebra'). This is the unnatural curving of the neck which arises if a horse, despite a tensed poll, gives to the rein in the region of the second and third cervical vertebrae. The poll is no longer the highest point, and establishing a steady contact is even more difficult. This serious mistake can only be eradicated through long-term and consistent gymnastic training with a sufficiently long neck, in order to help

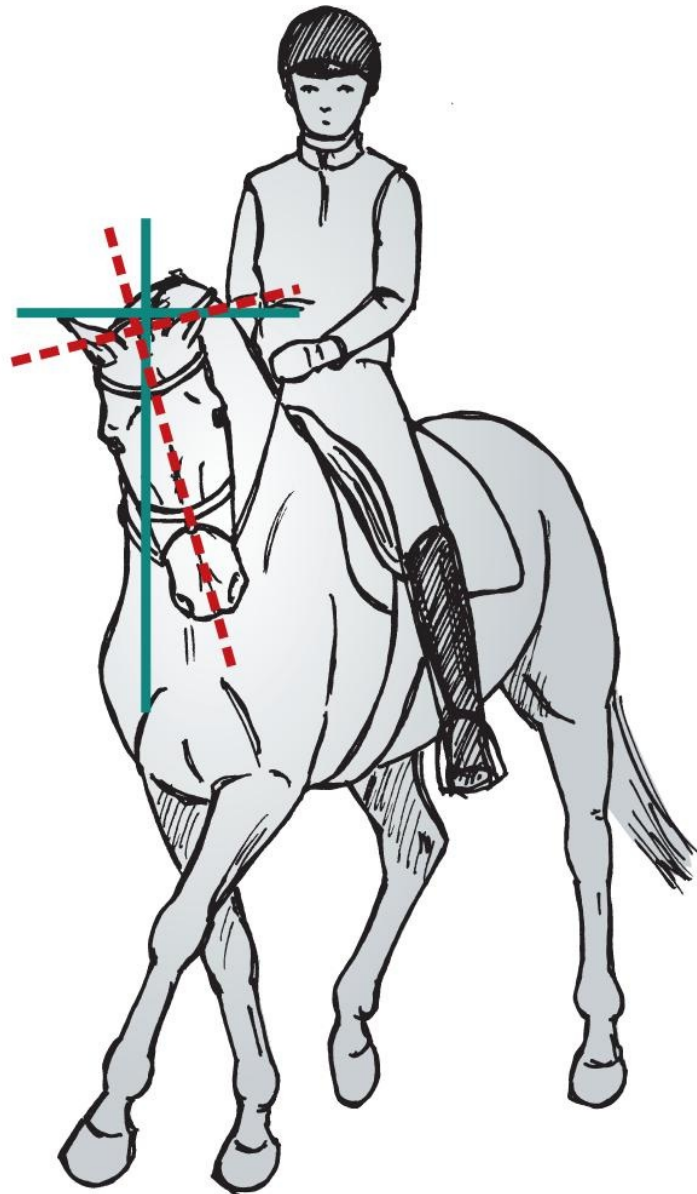
the upper neck muscles to re-form. Letting the horse chew the reins out of the hand is again particularly helpful here.



A neck 'broken' at the third vertebra (the flexion is from a point behind the poll) – can be the result of incorrect training.

■ **ABSOLUTELY RAISED**

Riding with the forehand 'absolutely raised' describes the situation wherein the horse's neck is raised actively higher by the rider's hand; too high in relation to the level of collection. With an unsuitably high elevation, the horse is no longer able to move in a supple way with a swinging back. This errant carriage is therefore contradictory to a positive development and to obtaining a correct, relative raising of the forehand. If the horse assumes this position by itself, a longer outline needs to be established again.



Clear tilting of the poll to the left.

■ TILTING IN THE POLL

The 'tilting' in the poll is generally connected to a lack of straightness of the horse, or to exaggerated efforts to obtain flexion. The horse holds its head crooked; the ears are no longer on the same level. This becomes even more visible the 'shorter' the neck is made by the rider's hand. Since the bony structures in the area of the poll are very tight, the horse avoids the flexion with a minor turning movement behind the poll (the joint between the atlas and the axis). This can only be corrected by re-establishing a secure, light contact with an open neck-mandible angle as well as self-carriage, and through a systematic straightening.

This problem can also arise or be made worse through rider problems in the straightening work, or lack of feeling for an even contact. Even a minor tilt in the poll needs to be taken seriously. A rider who sits crookedly can also be partly responsible. Attempts to correct this tilting through reins aids alone rather tends to

lead to the problem becoming worse.

■ 'LEANING ON THE BIT'

Horses that develop too little activity from the hind legs and/or are not very well balanced tend to 'lean on the hand' or 'on the bit'. The horse's centre of gravity shifts further towards the forehand; the horse uses the bit for support, searching for the so-called 'fifth leg', and does not engage the hind legs properly from behind.

Correction of this mistake requires a rider with well-attuned driving and regulating aids. They must be able, when riding a half-halt, to give again as soon as they have the horse on the aids. Through half-halts and, in particular, through transitions between and within gaits, they help the horse to find a better balance. In so doing, the rider invites the horse to become light in the hand. Thus, the horse will gradually find a secure self-carriage. This self-carriage is recognised, among other things, when the horse is able to move in a balanced way and 'carry' its neck and head.

In order to improve and examine the self-carriage and the balance of horse and rider, it is useful to soften the hand now and again and give and retake the reins.

■ 'UNHAPPY MOUTH'/TONGUE PROBLEMS

An 'unhappy mouth' or a tongue sticking out, or going over the bit, are generally symptoms to be considered in relation to the above-mentioned problems in contact and in getting the horse on the bit. Grinding of the teeth can also be a first sign of unhappiness. It is thus necessary to work on the cause, which is frequently found in the rider's hand. Sensitive riding involving smooth transitions and half-halts, with a rider's hand that is always ready to give, usually leads to resolving this problem. Tightening the noseband or flash too much is only a meaningless attempt to fight the symptoms without really resolving the cause. In fact, such measures contradict the meaning of systematic training.

Correct riding will lead to a soft, elastic contact as well as to an outline and carriage appropriate for the horse's level of training.

7.6.5 Development of Impulsion

IMPULSION is the transmission of the energetic impulse from the hindquarters over the swinging back to the overall forward movement of the horse.

Impulsion characterises trot and canter as these gaits have a moment of suspension. The walk has no moment of suspension and therefore cannot be regarded as having impulsion. Nevertheless, a horse should still walk with lively, expansive steps, and all of the joints should still be brought forward smoothly.

A horse is moving actively, with a lot of impulsion, in trot and canter, when it lifts off energetically and, in the moment of suspension, brings its hind legs forwards under its body. Furthermore, it moves, according to its anatomical capabilities, with the forelegs moving freely out from the shoulders. Impulsion is also evident in a well-defined moment of suspension. The development of forward thrust, therefore, emerges from the horse's entire body. This applies to all the variants of trot and canter, from working to collected. Impulsion reaches its highest degree in the extensions.

Systematically, correctly developed impulsion is always expressed in the willingness of the horse to go forwards. The rider has the feeling of being 'taken along' smoothly by their horse in the forward movement.

To be able to trot and canter with impulsion, the horse must be supple and move with a swinging back, accompanied by a soft, secure contact.

If the horse is sensitive to the rider's aids, and the rider has their horse 'in front' of them, the rider is able, at any time, to effortlessly lengthen the steps or strides without rushing, or to shorten them, without delaying the rhythm of the movement. Not only must the horse remain visibly supple, but this must also be felt by the rider.

Fluent transitions from and into trot and canter, in which the rider always has their horse 'in front' of them, are the key to the development of forward thrust.

Correctly developed impulsion can be recognised by the hocks moving forwards-upwards when pushing off the ground and not only upwards, or, worse, figuratively speaking, backwards. The dynamic of impulsion is developed from all MAJOR JOINTS IN THE HINDQUARTERS (hips, stifles and hocks) referred to as the haunches. They become more mobile and flex more through powerful engagement of the hindquarters.

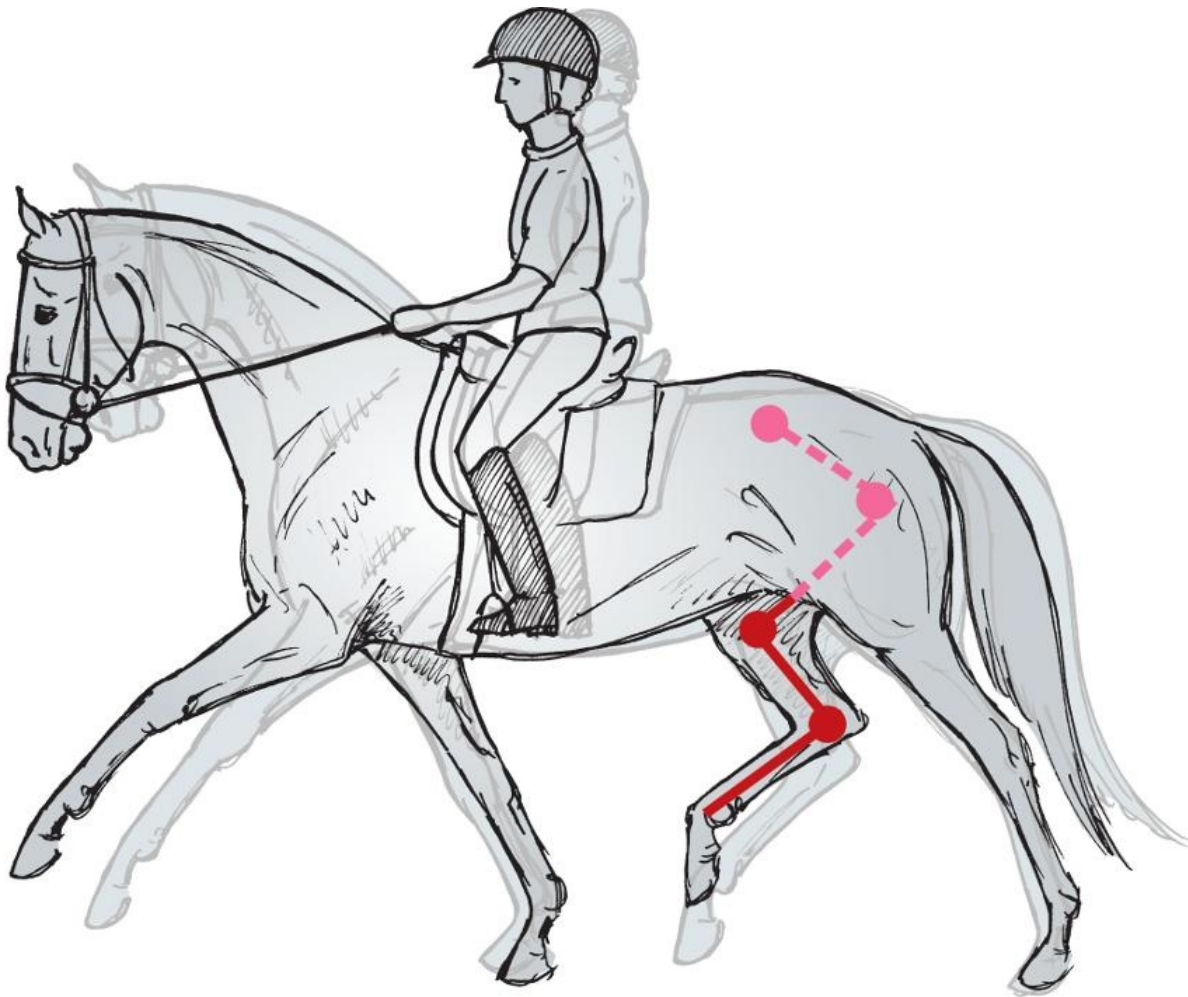
To achieve this, the horse must learn to react sensitively to the rider's driving aids, so that the rider has the feeling of sitting 'in' the horse and being taken along by it. This is also dependent on suppleness. The rider then has the horse 'in front' of them and on their driving aids.

7.6.5.1 The Systematic Development of Forward Thrust

Maintaining or recovering the horse's natural movement when under the rider is paramount. The horse should move actively, as it can best become supple over a swinging back and, by doing so, will be prompted to step forwards to the hand. If the horse moves in a substantially balanced, rhythmical and supple way under the rider, with a swinging back and active hind legs, in a secure contact, the next step,

namely the development of forward thrust, will be further enhanced.

To improve impulsion, transitions between trot and canter, as well as within these gaits, are particularly beneficial. Improving the impulsion is carried out from the working form, characterised by a secure rhythm, in both gaits. The steps and strides are rhythmically lengthened and, subsequently, shortened again sensitively ([see Chapter 6.3 Further Progress and Advanced Exercises in Dressage Riding](#)). When lengthening, the horse's hind legs must step far underneath the horse's body, without the motion pattern becoming quicker. More ground cover will be obtained as a result of the longer steps. A light, gradual advancing of the head-nose line in relation to the extension of the neck in a secure self-carriage enables the horse to develop full freedom of movement in the shoulders and to engage the hindquarters more. This leads to the so-called LENGTHENING OF THE FRAME.



When lengthening the steps or strides, the horse's frame should also lengthen, with the rider going with the forward movement while keeping the horse 'in front' of them.

Lengthening of the steps and strides must be prepared for, as any other exercise. It is introduced by half-halts. When the rider has the horse truly 'in front' of them, they should not need to ride actively forwards when lengthening the gait. The correctly prepared horse will develop a desire to go forwards by itself.

The lengthening of the steps and strides is developed gradually and from a supple seat, going with the movement. In the beginning, just a few steps and strides are sufficient.

Lengthening the steps and strides usually causes fewer problems than shortening them to return to a working gait. This is achieved through a series of several, finely tuned half-halts. Here, the regulating aids must be finely tuned and the driving aids must prevail. Frequently changing between lengthening and shortening the steps and strides will enhance the strength and the mobility of the horse. As a side-effect, the horse will become significantly more sensitive and attuned to the rider's aids. The better the horse is able to be shortened, the easier it is for it to then lengthen the strides again. The rider should visualise that they are riding *into* the shorter strides rather than stopping riding the longer strides. (This applies to the same extent for the transition downward to a lower gait. For example, when making a transition from canter to trot, the rider should not feel that they are 'ending' the canter, but rather 'starting' the trot.)

For the young horse to be able to maintain rhythm and balance when lengthening, the first lengthened steps in trot should be developed on a straight line. In canter, lengthening the strides on large, curved lines (circles) is more effective because the inside hind leg will be encouraged to engage more under the horse. The demands are therefore to be increased carefully and slowly, in order to take the following principle into account:

'Less is more!' Anything that is 'too much' compromises the basics of training, namely rhythm, suppleness and contact.

In further training, transitions within the gaits can also be ridden on curved lines, where they have great gymnastic value. The hindquarters, particularly the inside hind leg, will be prompted to lift more actively – however, this is only the case when the horse accepts the rider's diagonal aids securely ([see Chapter 4.2 Development of Influence](#)), without becoming too rushed in its action as a result.

The lengthening should always be in relation to the horse's degree of suppleness and balance.

Therefore, the young horse will be initially ridden in working trot and working canter, and the steps and strides will only be lengthened now and again. Only once the straightness and the pushing power have improved, and the beginnings of collection are present, can medium trot and medium canter be developed. For extended trot and extended canter, advanced levels of straightness and collection are prerequisites.

With many horses, the development of impulsion can be supported and improved by cavalletti work and riding outside ([see Chapter 6.6 First Basic Exercises in Cross-Country Riding](#)). The natural willingness of the horse to go forwards can be taken advantage of and, by riding uphill, the correct muscles are specifically strengthened.

7.6.6 Straightness

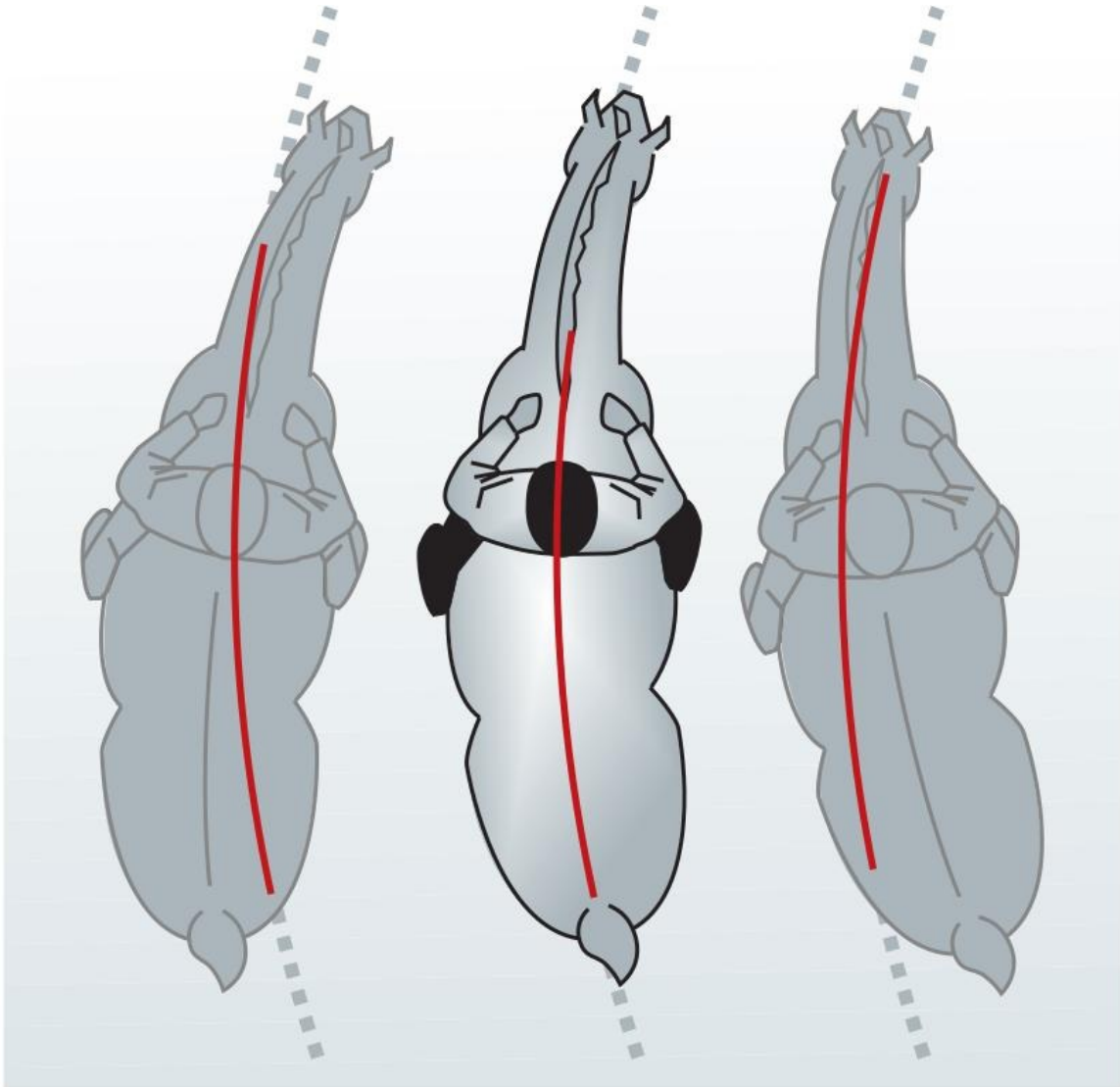
STRAIGHTNESS is defined as the process which is aimed at aligning the longitudinal axis of the horse with the straight or curved track it is following and thus aligning the forefeet with the hind feet. This process leads to the development of even musculature on both sides of the horse.

From birth, no horse is exactly symmetrical, although the degree of this 'natural crookedness' is different from horse to horse. The aim of the training under a rider is to straighten the horse through gymnastic work. The straighter the horse is made, the more able it is to move with its hindquarters and its forehand aligned on one track and in balance, be it on a straight or on a curved line. The horse is 'straight', in equestrian terminology, when it is 'tracking true' and thus covering its own tracks.

The aim of straightening work is to balance the horse's natural crookedness and to develop both sides of the horse's body evenly and smoothly.

The straight horse is able to perform all exercises and movements on both reins to the same quality in all three gaits. It can be equally bent to both sides, and steps evenly into both reins. A straight horse has the same toned musculature on both sides of the body. This also means that the rider can perform turns and approach fences in cross-country or show-jumping courses equally well on both reins. Since this condition is hard to obtain completely for many horses, the process of straightening work accompanies the entire training of the horse.

The 'natural crookedness' of the horse is comparable to a human being right- or left-handed. Most horses are crooked to the right.



The straight horse can align himself with the track along his longitudinal axis. On the left, the hindquarters are swaying; on the right the hindquarters are stepping to the inside of the tracks left by the forehand.

This means that they naturally step further to the right with their right hind leg than with their right foreleg. Therefore, they are initially less able to produce pushing power with the right hind leg. As a result, the left hind leg contributes more in terms of pushing power. More strain is thus placed on the left front of the horse.

The rider feels more pressure on the left rein while the horse does not fully accept the connection on the right rein. If the latter rein is the outside one, the outside aids cannot correctly frame the horse. The horse therefore has its so-called 'hollow side' (concave side) on the right. Horses that are crooked to the right have less flexible muscles down the right-hand side of their body. The left side, conversely, is known as the 'stiff side' (convex side). Through gymnastic work, the right hind foot must be encouraged to move forwards, but straight, under the horse's weight; as a consequence, the horse will also have to step more into the right rein. Once this point has been reached, the problems with the stiff and hollow sides will gradually disappear by themselves. (With horses that are crooked to the left, this

phenomenon is essentially identical, but in reverse.)

A significant aspect of straightening is that it contributes to keeping the horse sound. The horse should be able to distribute weight evenly on all of its four legs so that it remains sound in the long term. Any imbalance will only be further emphasised by the rider's weight. Muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints will inevitably be under more strain on one side.

A horse must be straight in order to:

- Achieve an equal distribution of weight and prevent premature wearing of the limbs.
- Optimise the pushing power.
- Be secure on the aids and be more through.
- Be able to step forwards into both reins evenly.
- Be able to attain collection.

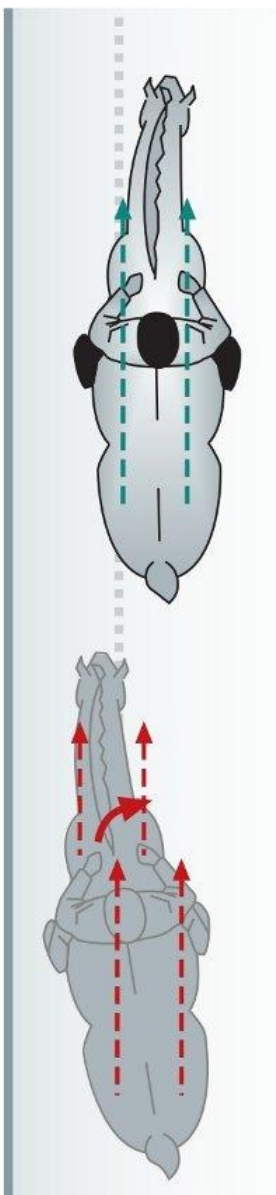
A straight horse directs the pushing power from its hindquarters fully in the direction of its centre of gravity. The regulating aids of the rider can only be applied successfully through the horse's mouth, poll, neck and back all the way to the hindquarters, and have an even influence on both of the hind legs, if the horse is straight.

Thoughts of straightening work should already be incorporated into the work with young horses when they are just started. This can, for example, take the form of large and, later, smaller curved lines on both reins with frequent changes of rein. When rhythm, suppleness, contact and impulsion have been sufficiently established, straightening work can be continued with so-called 'STRAIGHTENING BENDING WORK'. For this, the horse must be prepared to accept willingly all of the rider's aids: it must accept seat, leg and rein aids, and react to them without delay. Through the implementation of the 'DIAGONAL AIDS', the horse will no longer evade the weight with its hind leg on the 'hollow' side. In order to support this carrying of the weight further, large circles, half-voltes and returning to the track out of a corner, but also turns riding into the corner are suitable exercises, as is riding different kinds of serpentines.

If the horse tends to drift to the inside with the hindquarters when on a straight line, THE RIDER ALIGNS THE FOREHAND WITH THE HINDQUARTERS. The rider thus tries to guide the shoulder slightly to the inside. The key exercise for this is shoulder-fore, out of which the shoulder-in can be developed at a more advanced level of training ([see Chapter 6.3.6 Shoulder-Fore, Shoulder-In](#)). Through this work, the inside hind leg is encouraged to step more between the tracks of the forefeet. In the progressive training context, riding in flexion serves to encourage the outside hind leg to step on

a narrower track (see *Advanced Techniques of Dressage; Chapter 1.3.4 Lateral Movements/Riding in Flexion*). Occasional riding off the outside track is also a good preliminary exercise to heighten the rider's perception of their horse's crookedness.

In straightening work, active forward riding must never be neglected!



The horse is straight (above); the horse tends to push into the arena with the hindquarters and the rider needs to align the forehand with the hindquarters (below).

One problem to be especially considered is the transmission of the horse's crookedness to the rider's seat. A horse that has not yet been straightened leads to the rider sitting crooked to a certain extent, and the straightening work thus becomes more difficult for the rider. In training the rider, seat problems are to be resolved and particular attention must be paid to body control. With some practice, the rider should be able to shift the horse's forehand, as it were, and bring it in front

of the hindquarters.

Gymnastic work on curved lines and cautious straightening will counteract natural crookedness, but it will not eliminate it entirely. A beneficial exercise is a correctly ridden counter-canter, for which a certain degree of collection on the part of the horse is a pre-condition.

With a horse that is balanced and moves with rhythm, suppleness and contact, impulsion and straightness are the basis for the development of the horse's pushing power (forward thrust). Impulsion, straightness and collection are emphasised when the carrying capacity is to be developed.

7.6.7 Development of Collection

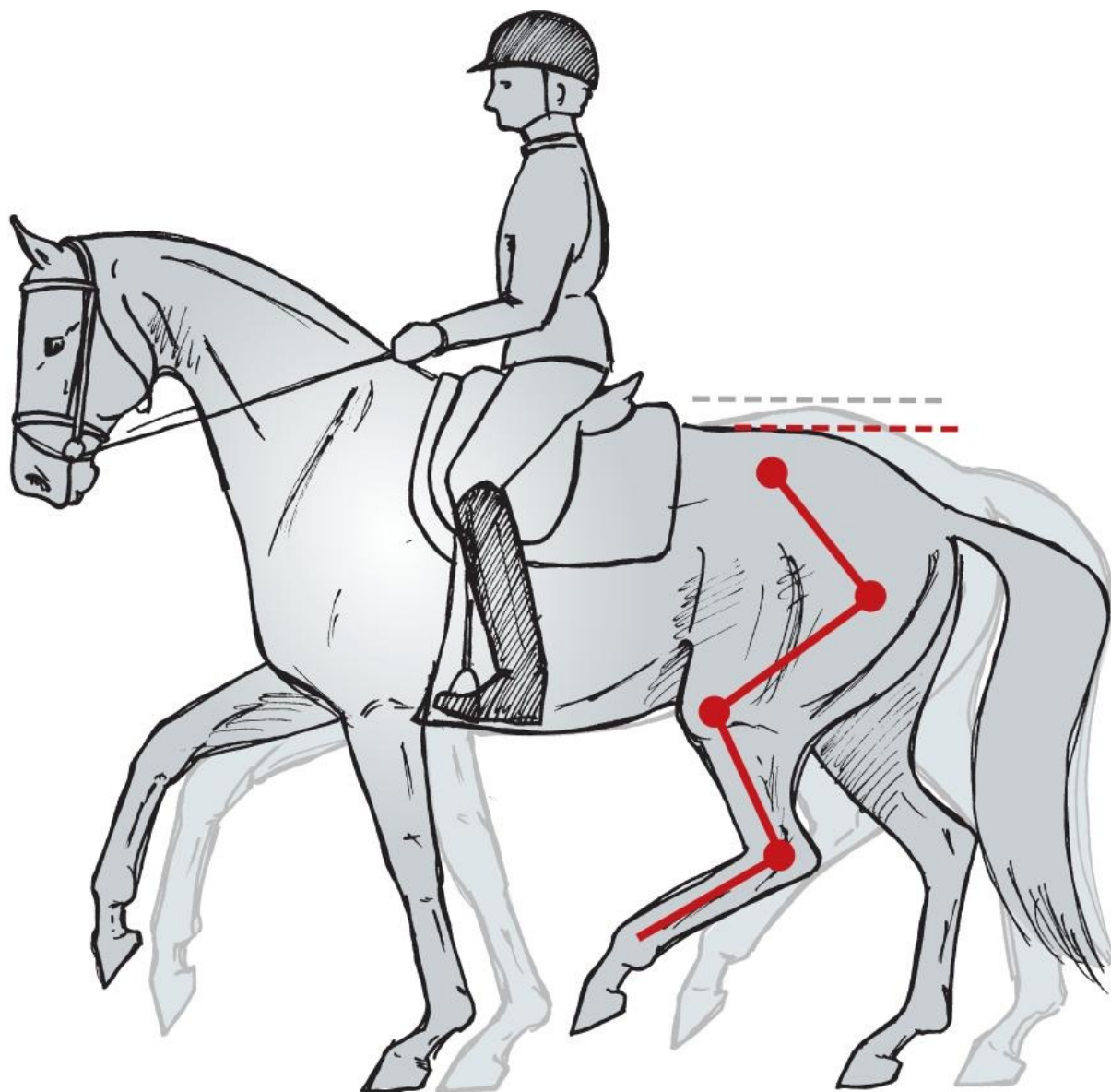
COLLECTION is the term used when a horse is able to balance well with increasingly flexed joints of the hind legs and with the hindquarters lowering and engaging, and when it moves light-footedly and energetically and, in result, carries itself in a more elevated fashion in self-carriage.

As a result of this, dressage horses, and also show-jumpers and eventers, have better mobility, responsiveness, and power development and, therefore, a better ability to perform. The dynamic forward movement is transmitted into shorter, but more active, 'uphill' steps. Through half-halts and collecting exercises, steps and strides are, accordingly, shortened from the active and energetic impulse of the hindquarters, while maintaining its suppleness ([see Chapter 6.3 Further Progress and Advanced Exercises in Dressage Riding](#)).

When the horse is shortened in the process of collection, the impulsion is retained and the horse moves in a more cadenced and elevated manner. CADENCE emerges from a combination of impulsion and collection and means that the horse maintains a longer moment of suspension. **The hind legs must continue to engage forwards, under the horse's body. In this positive arc of tension, activity and impulsion must always be maintained, along with suppleness.** If the moment of suspension is not accompanied by active hind legs, incorrect passage-like steps with a tensed back are the result.

A rider who understands collection well will ensure, sensitively and with all their aids, that the unconstrained self-carriage of the horse is maintained and, furthermore, that the movement appears even more 'uphill'. Even in the work leading to collection, as well as the collected work, the feeling that the horse still wants to move forwards at all times must remain a priority.

Through the process of collection, pushing power is transformed into carrying capacity. The movements become more elastic and the horse appears more 'uphill'. The contact develops a better quality and therefore becomes lighter; the horse becomes more comfortable to sit on and can be turned more easily on the smallest of circles through its elastic movements. From this, results a feeling of lightness in the movements. Once this feeling is lost, then the impulsion and willingness to go forwards must first of all be re-established.



The more pronounced bend in the horse's hindquarters leads to the horse being 'relatively raised'.

A collected horse is characterised by the increased flexion in the haunches – the flexion of the major joints of the hindquarters (hips, stifles, hocks = haunches) – through which the horse lowers the hindquarters. Without the head-neck carriage of the horse actively changing, a relative raising of the forehand can now be noticed. By taking a closer look, one can recognise that the pelvis, depending on the level of collection, also shows a slight tilting. Through this, the croup lowers even further

and it becomes easier for the horse to engage its hind legs. It appears more light-footed and has an increased freedom of the shoulders. This is very significant both for dressage riding and for show-jumping and cross-country.

Collection is a physically demanding process for the horse, and must be established over a period of time and must then be developed carefully and systematically through training.

That is because collection is not just a process, but also a condition, which the horse must maintain in movement with more strongly flexed joints⁴. As a consequence, the overall movement mechanism of the horse changes because the body's centre of gravity shifts slightly backwards and is thus carried more by the hindquarters. Therefore, a certain degree of collection can be advantageous for any kind of equestrian purpose.

While the dressage horse should move with more elevation and cadence, the show-jumping horse needs to be able to turn easily, with the hind legs taking on more weight, and let itself be shortened in a related distance.

With a degree of collection, the actual jump of a show-jumping horse becomes more powerful, more focused and can develop more upward and less forward.



When cantering cross-country, as in other circumstances, an 'uphill' tendency is desired.

An improved take-off power ensures easier jumping over all types of fences. The changes in speed and riding uphill and downhill in cross-country are more economically achieved, and with a better balance. Riding downhill in particular, owing to the increased flexion of the joints and the carrying of weight by the hindquarters, improves the horse's carrying capacity. The riding of technically complex cross-country exercises will also become more secure and precise.

The KEY TO COLLECTION is the correctly understood half-halt, ridden from back to front. HALF-HALTS embody the perfect interaction of seat, leg and rein aids during the horse's training ([see Chapter 6.2 Basic Exercises in Dressage Riding](#)). They are the door opener for all valuable training and collection work. In particular, through riding transitions, the rider can ensure that the activity of the horse's hindquarters is maintained in collection. In these moments, the rider is able to ride the horse more into the sensitive hand with their driving aids and to bring the increasingly flexed hind legs more under the horse's centre of gravity from behind. The hind legs are thus best placed to provide greater lift with more energy. To release the motion

energy, a hand that is always ready to give is important and this is what makes a half-halt valuable.

In the beginning of collecting work, the horse can only maintain these moments of collection for short periods, since they are very exhausting.

In general, collection work should only be carried out in short reprises. Regular breaks need to be implemented, even in more advanced training. For this reason, the horse should also always be ridden actively forwards before the next collected movement or exercise is attempted.

The rider will only acquire the necessary feeling for this when they are given the opportunity to feel the right moment and the right intensity on an already trained horse (schoolmaster). Furthermore, an experienced trainer should guide the rider through the collecting work.

The basis for an increased flexibility of the haunches is created by the forward thrust, developed previously. If the schooling has been consolidated up to the stage of straightness, the interaction between lengthening and shortening – with the use of half-halts – will transform this forward thrust more into carrying capacity. In this phase, the correct understanding of the effects of each movement or exercise has particular significance. The interaction between forward thrust and suitable collecting exercises and movements will lead to success here.

Incorrectly understood shortening of the movements leads to a step back in the training process. The collecting work should, altogether, be understood as a gymnasticising process in which tension and relaxation must alternate constantly.

All aspects of the Training Scale must continue to be observed and examined.

Riding turns and, with them, correct riding through corners, 'belongs' to the collected movements. A horse that is 'straight' will flex the inside hind leg more in every turn. In training, it is more effective to activate the inside leg more each time by changing rein frequently, and by so doing, bringing both hind legs further underneath the horse's body in the long term.

Every turn, therefore, has this gymnasticising value, when performed correctly. The effectiveness of this movement is determined by the suitable radius of the circle on which the turn is based. With increased precision and smaller turns, the effect of collection is increased. This, however, only applies when the activity, the lightness and the fluency of the movement are maintained. If tight turns are ridden without the required preparation, the horse will lose balance and negative consequences, such as irregularities in the rhythm, a loss of suppleness or evasive hindquarters,

are the result.

Correct riding through corners and the riding of turns is advantageous for every horse – whether for pleasure riding, or for competitive sport, be it dressage, show-jumping or cross-country riding.

Further collecting exercises include, for example, a correctly performed rein-back, reducing and increasing the size of the circle, turn on the haunches and shoulder-in.

Collecting exercises only serve their purpose – just as any other exercise – when they are carried out correctly. Systematic training should be adhered to regardless of the individual quality of movement of a horse. It is far more important to regard the training as a gymnasticising process which leads to different degrees of success in training, according to the individual ability of the horse.

7.6.8 Refining the Thoroughness

THOROUGHNESS describes the condition in which the horse, according to its level of training, complies with all the aspects of the Training Scale and complies with the rider's aids.

The horse that is through therefore moves rhythmically, in a supple way, with a secure contact, with impulsion; it is straight and has sufficient balance for the tasks asked of it. Even a young horse can thus have a certain degree of thoroughness. Thoroughness also always includes obedience and it develops according to the potential and the level of training of the horse. Over the course of the training, all the aspects merge, interlock and lead to a horse defined by complete thoroughness. A horse that has achieved thoroughness makes it possible to ride even more harmoniously and with finer aids.

Thoroughness in perfection is achieved when:

- The horse moves in a secure rhythm, is balanced and supplied.
- The rider is able to sit smoothly and in balance, and to influence the horse sensitively and, therefore, horse and rider become one moving unit.
- All movements 'flow' without disturbance through the body of the horse and the rider, and are allowed to do so.
- The horse accepts the forward- and lateral-driving aids without delay and reacts to the slightest of changes in the rider's body posture.
- The rein connection between the horse's mouth and the rider's hand is so secure that a constant, positive contact, characterised by trust, is established.
- The contact is so light and elastic that the horse reacts sensitively to the finest of

rein aids.

- The impulsion of the movement and the willingness of the horse to go forwards are always maintained by only a very light driving support.
- The horse accepts the rider's diagonal aids in a way that it allows it to be straightened on both reins and in all gaits, transitions and movements.
- Extensions can be developed easily and harmoniously in all gaits, with a great degree of willingness to move forwards.
- Shortening the movements in the advanced training, right through to collection, can be carried out successfully while maintaining the fluency of the movement, the effortlessness and the harmony.

Therefore, the aim of throughness is significant from the very first moment and it will be constantly refined over the course of the horse's training.

If problems with the horse's throughness arise, all aspects of the Training Scale have to be assessed and analysed and the horse's balance has to be re-established.

The cause can always be found in deficits in one or more of the training basics. If a problem with one of these aspects becomes obvious, the cause is often to be found in the aspects which form the foundation of a systematically correct training. For example, a horse that is tense in the back and therefore does not move in a supple way can hardly accept transitions and half-halts softly and let them through its body. Therefore, the rider should not look for a solution to the problem in improving a particular exercise, but rather give the suppleness more attention. In doing so, it is imperative to examine the rhythm and the contact as well as the rider's aids. This example explains the following clearly:

The implementation and examination of the training system as described by the Training Scale will always lead the rider and trainer back onto the right track!

Every horse, regardless of intended use, profits from a systematic training. It will not only become more capable of performing, but will also feel more comfortable to the rider. This classic training is particularly beneficial to the welfare of every single horse.

A 'through' horse complies with the rider's sensitive aids and is, thus, obedient.

7.6.9 Basics for Show-Jumping and Cross-Country Training

Balance and throughness, which, in turn, result from the aspects of rhythm, suppleness, contact, impulsion, straightness and collection, are not only particularly significant for the flatwork of a show-jumper or an eventer, but they are also important for riding over fences.

The horse is only able to jump steadily, optimally and without mistakes when it is in balance upon the approach to each fence and when, from this, it can develop a rational, yet harmonious and round jump.

RHYTHM is of equal significance for show-jumping and cross-country riding. The most important gait here is the canter. Alongside the maintenance of a clear three-beat rhythm, and a canter stride coming through from behind with active hindquarters, particular attention must also be paid to the REGULARITY of the canter. Regularity, meaning that all canter strides should be of equal *duration*, even when lengthening or shortening them, as well as when approaching jumps, must always be maintained. Only then can the horse continue to focus on the fence, keep an even breathing and, as a result, maintain suppleness. Optimal performance can only be obtained when the rhythm, as well as the regularity, are ensured at all times.

For the daily dressage-related work, it is equally important to take the maintenance of the rhythm in walk and trot very seriously to ensure the horse's overall welfare in the first place.

Only if the horse canters rhythmically between fences can it be supple when actually jumping. The more successful this aim is, the more attentive, coordinated and effortless the horse will be during the act of jumping. The SUPPLENESS is equally decisive for ensuring that the entire musculature of the horse works actively and thus contributes to an optimal jumping sequence, a harmonious bascule, and an elastic landing. Through this, the chances are maximised that the horse can be engaged in show-jumping or cross-country riding for the long term without any damage.

The soft and secure CONTACT should also be maintained, not only when cantering between fences, but directly before, during and after each jump. The rider gives with their hands during the jump as far as the horse needs to stretch its neck according to its bascule. At this point, it is worth remembering the actual definition of contact: 'a soft, elastic connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth'. A show-jumping or cross-country horse can thus go in a more open head-neck carriage now and again in front of a fence. The rider's reaction to this is to follow the horse's mouth with the hand without giving up the connection. The unbroken line of the lower arm to the rein is thus kept. In all disciplines it is of equal importance that the horse and rider find a MUTUAL BALANCE. Here, the correct contact, combined with a balanced seat of the rider, play a central role. Maintaining the contact when lengthening, as when sensitively reducing the strides, without the rider's hand disturbing the horse, combined with driving legs and a stable, but flexible body posture, are factors to be given particular attention here. The same

correlations apply as they do when riding transitions and half-halts ([see Chapter 6.2 Basic Exercises in Dressage Riding](#)).

Impulsion, straightness and collection play an equally major role in show-jumping and cross-country riding as they do in dressage.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF IMPULSION are fundamental for jumping, since it provides the necessary positive body tension as well as a 'forward' tendency. This positive basic tension can only be established in combination with a steady contact. Maintaining impulsion does not, in any way, mean always wanting to ride at a greater speed. Rather, it is the transitions within the gait, particularly in canter, that time and again ensure the impulsion and therefore keep a positive arc of tension. This must be especially considered when riding between the fences and in turns. Immediately before a fence, *too much* 'forwardness' either leads to a flat bascule or to tension in the horse's back.

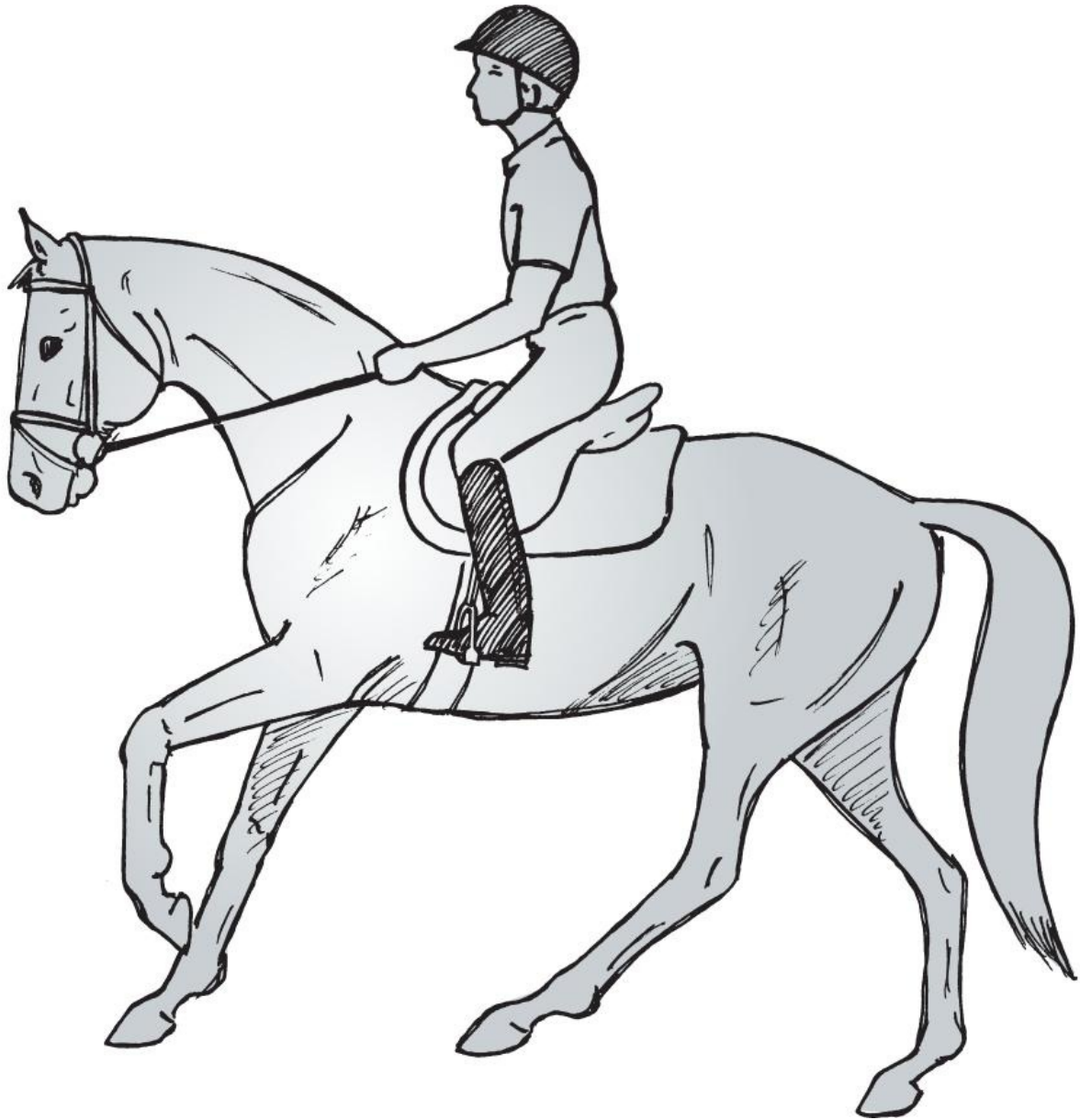
STRAIGHTNESS is important for flawless and precise jumping, and it is also necessary to avoid the use of undesirable amounts of effort on the rider's part in order to keep the horse on a straight line, and to balance any lateral deviation. A straight horse allows itself to be ridden on the ideal line, even in turns. Straightening work requires a steady contact and the horse to be securely on the aids. When jumping cross-country fences in particular, it is also necessary, for safety reasons, to keep the horse straight. An angled approach to a cross-country obstacle, or during a jump-off in a show-jumping class is only possible with a straight horse.

A certain degree of COLLECTION is also essential for the optimal jumping force to evolve. Both the shortening of the canter strides and the spontaneous lengthening of the strides with active hind legs, are important. This becomes particularly clear in tight turns in a jump-off. The forwards-upwards tendency, needed by a show-jumper and eventer in order to jump safely in a balanced way, demands an appropriate degree of relative elevation, meaning that collection is required. This is not achieved through a backward-acting rider's hand, but only through systematic training: 'FROM BACK TO FRONT TO BALANCE'.

Again, the INTERACTIONS of all of the aspects of the Training Scale must be considered. Impulsion is fundamental to the development of collection and, as the quality of collection improves, it allows for and utilises a greater degree of impulsion. This interaction is further enhanced the more the horse is straightened, since energy is not dissipated laterally if the horse is straight.

In order to give the horse confidence, it is important that a clear system of communication is adhered to with regard to the rider's aids. The aids must always

be given in a way that the horse is able to relate to and understand, whether in dressage, show-jumping or cross-country. Therefore, once again, the giving of the aids in a seat with shorter stirrup leathers is reiterated here.



The rider has the horse 'in front' of them and on the driving aids.

The aids in the light seat, or in a show-jumping or cross-country seat, follow the same principles as those in the dressage seat. Despite a shift in the rider's weight out of the saddle and into the stirrups, the same influences can still be had. The rider needs to ensure that the horse remains 'in front' of them and on the driving aids.

In order to SHORTEN the horse, for example between fences, the rider uses HALF-HALTS and shifts their centre of gravity backwards and closer to the saddle by sitting slightly more upright. The driving leg aids, which are resting against the horse's

body, will encourage the horse to engage the hindquarters further and to carry more weight. This is particularly important in turns and, where necessary, before jumping efforts, to ensure that the horse can retain balance at any time.

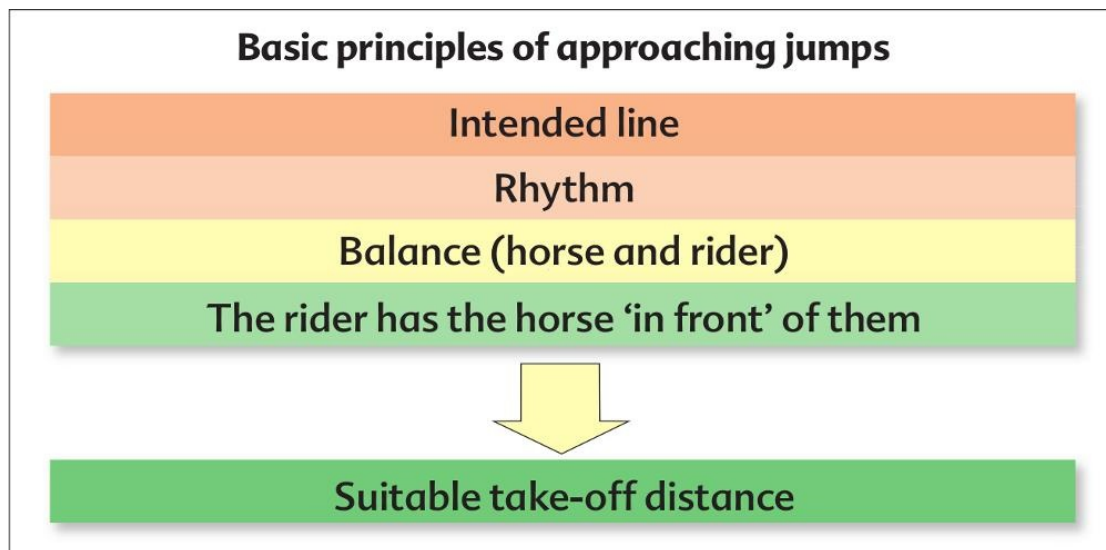
When LENGTHENING, the leg aids have a driving effect and, as a result, they increase the activity and the forward thrust of the hind legs. The horse must be kept sensitive to these driving aids throughout so that the rider keeps the horse 'in front' of them when lengthening the strides. The greater the speed, the more the rider will incline their upper body forwards in order to go with the movement and relieve the horse's back accordingly. Often, the rider sits heavily in the saddle when increasing the speed, but this is incorrect. This additional 'sitting deep' is not recommended, since it can lead to the horse tensing in the back. This will then inhibit the canter rather than encouraging it.

In TURNS, alongside the inside driving leg, the outside guarding leg and the outside rein are especially important. Particularly at a higher speed, horses tend to fall out over the outside shoulder or swerve with the hindquarters.

REIN AIDS must be given independently of the rider's body posture. The connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth should be steady and elastic. The different degrees of the light seat and thus the different degrees in the incline of the upper body necessitate correcting the length of the reins intermittently.

When approaching fences, the horse is ridden with a STEADY, SOFT CONNECTION (contact). However, how much the horse is on the bit depends on the situation and on the individual horse. A horse that is cantering forwards and carries the rider in a light seat, with a shifted centre of gravity, needs a longer neck as a balancing pole. If the horse is not allowed to adopt this posture, this will have a negative impact not only on the balance, but also on the range of vision.

The principles for approaching fences, described at length in *Chapter 6.5 Basic Exercises in Riding over Fences*, do not only apply as guidelines for the show-jumping training of the rider. These basic principles are equally valid for the systematic show-jumping training of the horse.



7.6.10 Basic Training for Jumping

Jumping is a fundamental component of the versatile gymnastic work of every young horse. The later specialisation of the horse for a particular discipline is to be regarded as absolutely independent upon this. A certain suitability is important, but the fundamental key to success is the systematic training.

Familiarising the horse with different environments, obstacles and different forms of terrain is just as much part of the basic training of a horse as is basic flatwork. On the one hand, the horse's obedience in every kind of situation is improved, while, on the other hand, gymnastic jumping exercises as well as training outside contribute substantially to the skill, suppleness and balance of the horse. This corresponds to the principle of a versatile training in which the gymnasticising elements of jumping and cross-country riding are used.

The different phases of the jumping training of a young horse should only be carried out by a sensitive rider, used to dealing with young horses. This ensures that any insecurities that may arise from a lack of experience on the rider's part, which can lead to a loss of confidence of the horse, can be avoided.

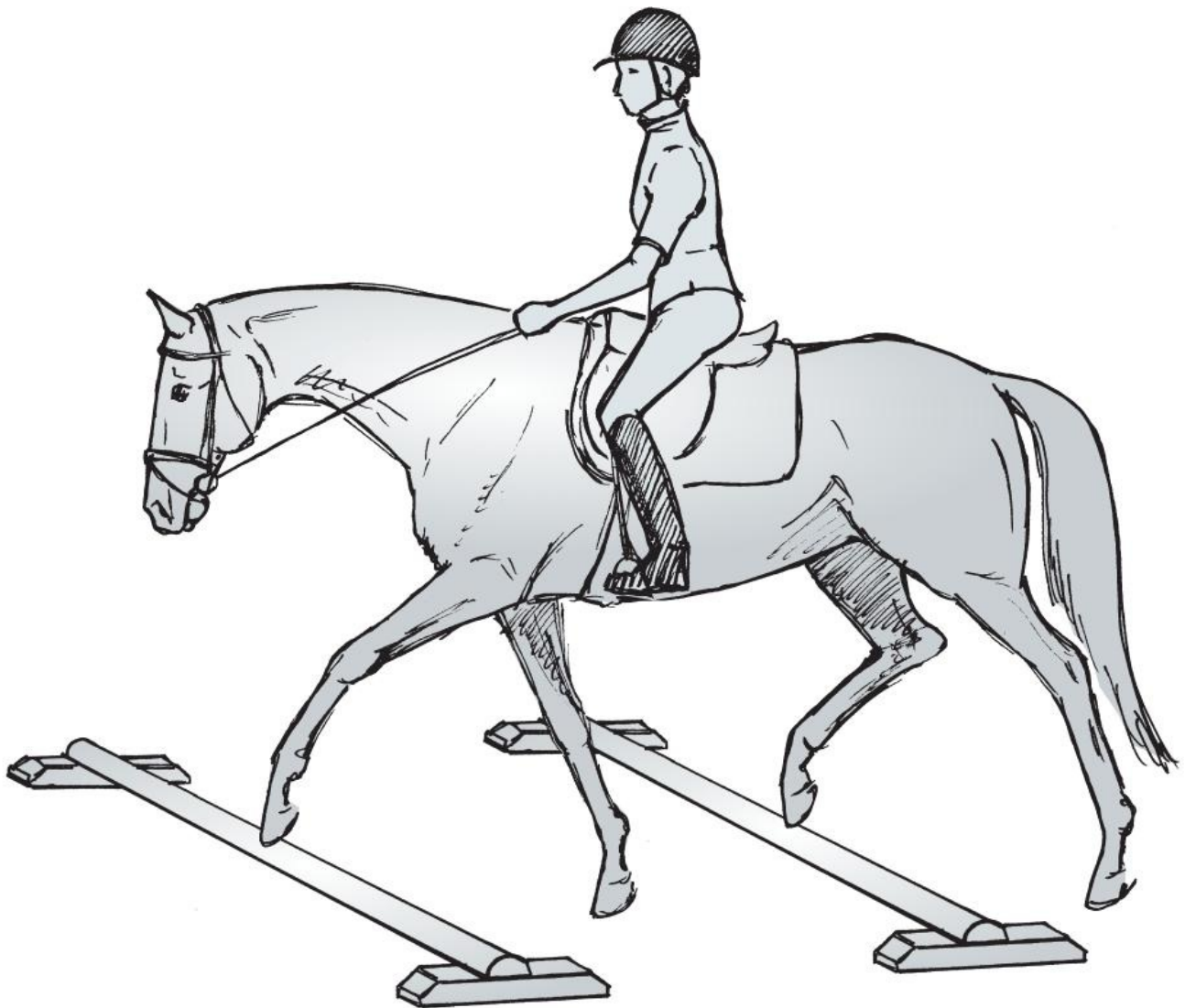
After the first weeks of having been started and doing basic flatwork, the first cavalletti can be introduced to the training. In so doing, the horse will be ridden in walk and trot over low cavalletti. Frequently praising the horse is the best way of instilling the required trust. Once the horse steps calmly over the poles in a forward-downward outline, the work can gradually be expanded to using several poles lying one after the other. This improves the horse's attention and the naturalness of work over obstacles.

Better than the widely used practice of doing jumping training only on a particular day of the week, a controlled integration of this gymnastic training into several schooling

sessions throughout the week is preferable.

Cavalletti can be set up either in a straight line, or star-shaped. The latter has proved particularly useful if several horses with different ground cover are worked at the same time. The distances between the poles vary because of the star shape, and riders can therefore choose their approach in a way that results in a distance between poles which best suits their horse. With advanced horses, the distances can also be changed carefully to possibly improve ground cover and flexibility.

Several single cavalletti in an arena, set slightly higher, can be jumped from a relaxed canter. A particularly helpful exercise for horses with various problems is the jumping of such obstacles on a circle. When doing this, it is not only the introduction to poles that is a priority, but also the DRESSAGE-RELATED GYMNASTIC WORK OVER CAVALLETTI. This important step forward improves the thoroughness when jumping. A steady rhythm and a canter on the correct lead must be maintained. A reasonable reaction from the horse to the rider's 'diagonal aids' is particularly important. This work lays the first basic foundations for any show-jumping training.



Cavalletti work in trot, where the horse learns to concentrate on how to move all four legs in coordination.

Cavalletti are excellent tools for gymnastic work, not only of the young horse, but also for the older, more experienced show-jumper, and this work is something that can be performed practically every day without overworking the horse, when it is integrated correctly. The experienced rider must choose the set-up, the distances, the height and the variation of the cavalletti in a way that will improve their horse's development. The rider or trainer must decide when the horse has gained in suppleness and elasticity and when the right moment has come to bring the schooling session to an end on a good note, to ensure the progression and avoid backward steps.

Cavalletti should never be placed on top of one another, since they then present a risk of accident. In order to increase the height of the obstacles gradually, to serve the intended purpose, proper jump stands with poles should be used, and raised correctly.

After four to six months, in which, alongside basic flatwork, the first exercises over

cavalletti outside, as well as free-jumping indoors, have been carried out with only minor demands, work can commence with the actual gymnastic jumping training.

GYMNASTIC SHOW-JUMPING WORK involves the training of the motor abilities of the horse for jumping, without expecting too much of the horse in terms of energy.

Initially, the horse is ridden over individual, small fences with, or even without, a ground-pole. A cross-pole is most suitable for this so that the horse is encouraged from the very beginning to jump in the middle of the fence. The use of wings, both with individual fences and as part of a grid, has proved useful in basic training. They can prevent the horse from 'escaping' sideways, and the horse's decisiveness on the approach to the fence is facilitated.

The rider should make an effort to maintain a steady speed and rhythm after the jump, and to remain on their intended line. If necessary, they can intervene with half-halts to make corrections, and make a transition down to trot, or even walk. Thus, the thoroughness of the horse is improved and further advances in the show-jumping training are facilitated.

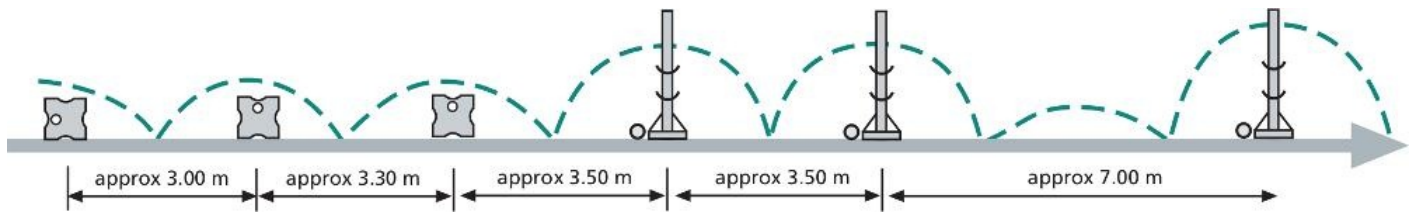
It is consistent consideration of these elementary aspects that often provides the foundation for successful training.

Once the horse jumps over individual fences in a relaxed manner and at a steady speed, the training can be extended to the jumping of grids.

For this purpose, GRIDS ([see Chapter 6.5.3 Riding Grids](#)) are set up with suitable distances and low, inviting fences. To start with, only two or three elements, to be ridden in trot, are sufficient, with a low cavalletto at a distance of about 2.2m placed ahead of the first fence. The rider must go with the horse's movement smoothly when riding through the grids and sit as lightly as possible. Exaggerated body movements make it difficult for the horse to find and maintain balance.

The development of the horse's pleasure in jumping is particularly important during this stage of the training and must never be jeopardised by overdoing the exercise.

Trust in the rider, and the variety of the exercises, encourage the young horse's learning and enhance its performance ability, as well as furthering its mental calm.



A grid to be approached in canter as an example of how to train elasticity and attentiveness.

The SET-UP of grids is guided by the desired goals of the training:

- The SUPPLENESS OF THE BACK AND THE HORSE'S OTHER MUSCULATURE is improved when jumping. Fences should be set up in a friendly, inviting manner at suitable distances to match the particular canter stride of the horse. In no way should they be placed too far from one another. A harmonious jump, with the neck stretched from the withers and 'opened' hind legs, known as the bascule, is encouraged by a pre-set harmonious and round flight curve. In the bascule, the joints of the hind legs should not be too flexed during the jump, to enable a harmonious flight curve.
- The development and improvement of the JUMPING TECHNIQUE, the SMOOTHNESS and the SKILL are perfected by setting up grids with a lot of variety:
 - Slightly tighter distances and verticals can improve the technique of the forelegs. Frequently, however, the optical aid of a ground-line in front of a fence is decisive for the horse.
 - According to the level of training, jumping oxers in a calm and balanced manner can improve activity of the back, and hind leg technique. Bounces have a similar effect.
- Improving the ALERTNESS and the RESPONSIVENESS of the horse is achieved through variety:
 - Different materials being used to build the fences,
 - continually setting new challenges, as well as
 - occasional training in different arenas with new fences, to avoid monotony and any possible laxity resulting from it.
- Training the ABILITY TO JUDGE THE TAKE-OFF is also achieved through regular, diverse jumping training.
 - It is important that the rider does not influence the take-off distance more than necessary. They should 'accompany' the horse with a suitable body posture and driving aids at all times, but not disturb, and possibly divert, its concentration on the task with exaggerated aids.
 - Frequently changing the distances between the fences, as well as changing the ground-line of the individual fences, can also improve the ability to judge the take-

off.

- The development of JUMPING POWER AND ELASTICITY is best achieved when riding small fences in a calm manner.
 - Fences with a ground-line and ridden from trot, help the horse to take off quickly, powerfully and decisively without, however, rushing. The jumping force and elasticity are not obtained through increasing the speed, but by taking off powerfully from a calm approach.
 - Jumping bounces is also be helpful here.
 - A further variation is grids with several small oxers back to back – with relatively tight distances between them – so that they can be jumped in a calm, balanced manner.
- The particularly important SELF-CONFIDENCE of the horse in its own ability and elasticity, as well as a confident bascule and the feeling that the horse ‘opens up’ during the jump, are achieved through the following measures:
 - Making the distances between the fences a little bit shorter than normal. Then gradually increasing the distances between the fences, as well as the widening of low oxers, will give the horse the required confidence through a systematic schooling.
 - Fences with an ‘inviting’ profile make the task easier.
 - With related distances, the distance must be chosen so that the rider can ride the horse forwards. Only when the rider has their horse rhythmically ‘in front’ of them, in a steady basic speed, and on the driving aids, will it jump with confidence.

Often, difficulties arise with the setting-up of new or unfamiliar fences and with altered distances. Horses should be introduced to different kinds of fences during the early gymnastic jumping work. The rider must gradually acquaint their horse with NEW FENCES, particularly those that are of a solid construction (such as post and rail, gate, wall). Using a lead horse is recommended in the beginning.

If the horse refuses, this is often because of a systemic mistake in how the training has been set up, which means that the task has not been prepared sufficiently well. In this case, trust and confidence must first of all be restored by taking on less demanding tasks in a calm manner. Sometimes, it may be necessary to improve the harmony between the regulating and the forward-driving aids.

‘Disciplining’ the horse never improves trust, but rather leads to even greater insecurity. Only positive experiences encourage the horse’s confidence and joy in jumping.

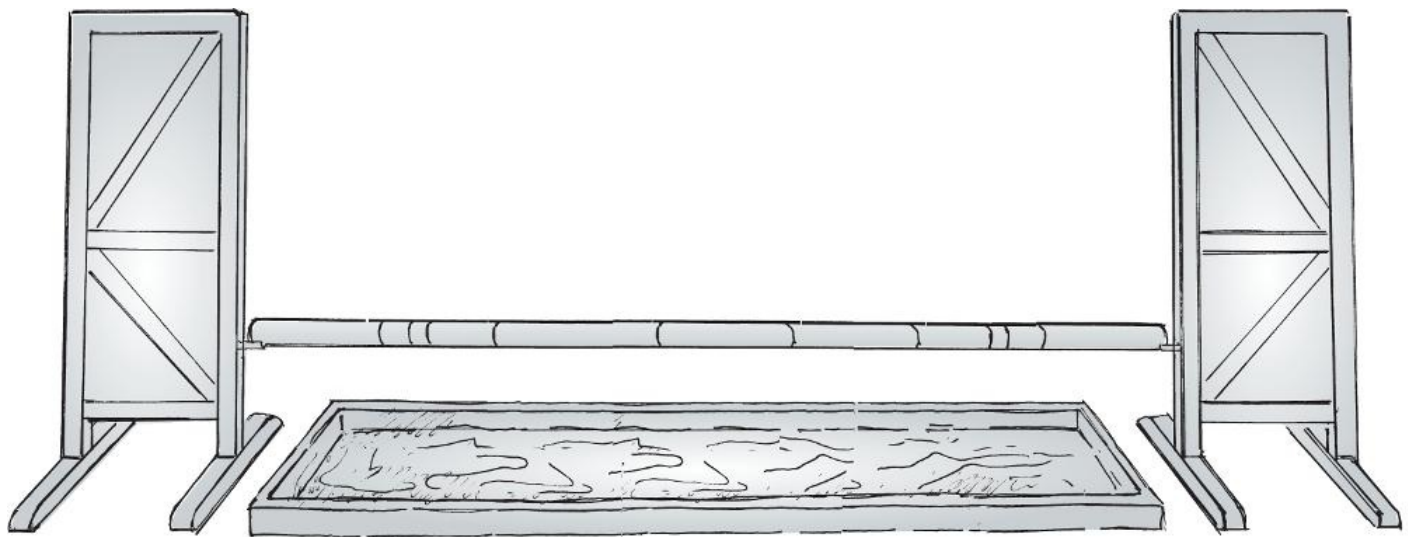
With the horse's advancing skill in jumping grids, SINGLE FENCES without a cavalletto before them are approached, first in trot, and then in a relaxed canter. Setting up RELATED DISTANCES, both on a straight and on a curved line, further enhances the smoothness, the obedience and the throughness of the horse. In this stage of the training, it is particularly important that the rider has enough experience to be able to assess the fences early on, and to be able to support their horse, where necessary, with a rhythmic increase or reduction of the stride length. A young horse that is repeatedly brought into a completely unreasonable take-off position, or is disturbed by exaggerated, unsuitable aids, will lose all trust and confidence when jumping.

In further training, jumping BANKS and DITCHES is practised. Banks, steps and drops are best introduced during cross-country riding ([see Chapter 7.6.11 Basic Cross-Country Training](#)).

Horses must also be prepared carefully for jumping ditches. Again, having an experienced horse to lead the way may be useful.

Jumping ditches is learnt just as systematically, and is not particularly difficult since it is really only an extended canter stride.

However, colours and the reflection of the water on the surface of a ditch are unusual for a young horse and this work must thus be approached prudently in order not to cause any sort of long-lasting timidity or resistance. The obstacles must be constructed in an inviting manner and have wings. In the beginning, jumping very small, narrow and, where necessary, DITCHES WITH A RAIL PLACED OVER THEM, is practised. For this purpose, the ditch has a pole placed approx. 50cm above it so that the horse jumps high enough and is initially more focused on the pole rather than on the ditch beneath. Using a tarpaulin can serve as a substitute and also has the advantage that it can be folded and thus made smaller. Gradually increasing the size of the tarpaulin, and pouring WATER on it, are the subsequent steps.



A water jump with a pole over it.

The demands of practising over ditches, and actually jumping them, can only be increased once this kind of obstacle has become completely natural to the horse.

In the approach to a ditch, it is important that the rider supports their horse with the driving aids and that they frame it between the aids, having a connection with the horse's mouth through the reins at all times. At the same time, they must give the horse enough time and serenity to take in the new situation. Therefore, small ditches, once they have been 'shown' to the horse, are ridden first in trot, and then in a fluent, basic canter, without pushing the horse too much during the last canter strides.

RIDEABILITY TASKS, as required in equitation jumping tests,⁵ are particularly useful for the training of the horse. Here, transitions, cavalletti, turns and also halts and rein-backs between the fences, among other activities, are practised to improve the horse's throughness and smoothness.

Through the jumping of individual, slightly higher jumps, and through systematic gymnastic exercises, the jumping technique on a COURSE will develop relatively quickly. The main aims in this stage of the training are:

- To canter rhythmically in a steady basic speed.
- To improve the horse's stamina to be able to jump a series of fences, sections of a course, or a complete course in a steady, but not laboured, basic speed.
- To be able to take fences of different colours and shapes confidently, harmoniously and possibly without mistakes.
- To be able to ride different lines, changes (either flying, or through trot) while maintaining throughness, without any resistance.

The rider should always try to approach the fence on a course on the correct lead in canter. With a young horse, CHANGING REIN can at first be performed through trot to change the canter lead. Some horses, however, might automatically offer a flying change when changing direction to better adjust their balance.

To familiarise the horses with jumping a course, small sections of courses are practised before a complete course can be tackled. In the beginning, the height of the fences remains relatively low. Above all, the rider must ensure that the horse can canter and jump in a steady tempo over longer stretches. Fine and sensitive aids must be given in order to keep up the required basic tempo for the respective horse. Only gradually should the transition be made to jumping at a higher speed. And, only once the young horse can complete a course confidently in training, should any thought be given to competing.

Any problems can very often be solved over small fences or through cavalletti work. Generally, a certain fence is not the cause of the problem, but fundamental training mistakes must rather be corrected.

7.6.11 Basic Cross-Country Training

Every young horse is to be familiarised with riding in the countryside from an early stage of training onwards. During the first months, regular, relaxed hacks with only a few simple demands either in a group or with an experienced lead horse are sufficient.

Hacks serve to create a psychological balance and are an excellent option to add variety to the training, and to be used as a warming-up or cooling-down phase before and after a schooling session in an indoor or outdoor arena. Walking on a long rein and, if possible, even a loose rein is particularly important. It is a common mistake to ride rather nervous horses too much on the bit. This then does not support suppleness, but rather increases tension and nervousness.

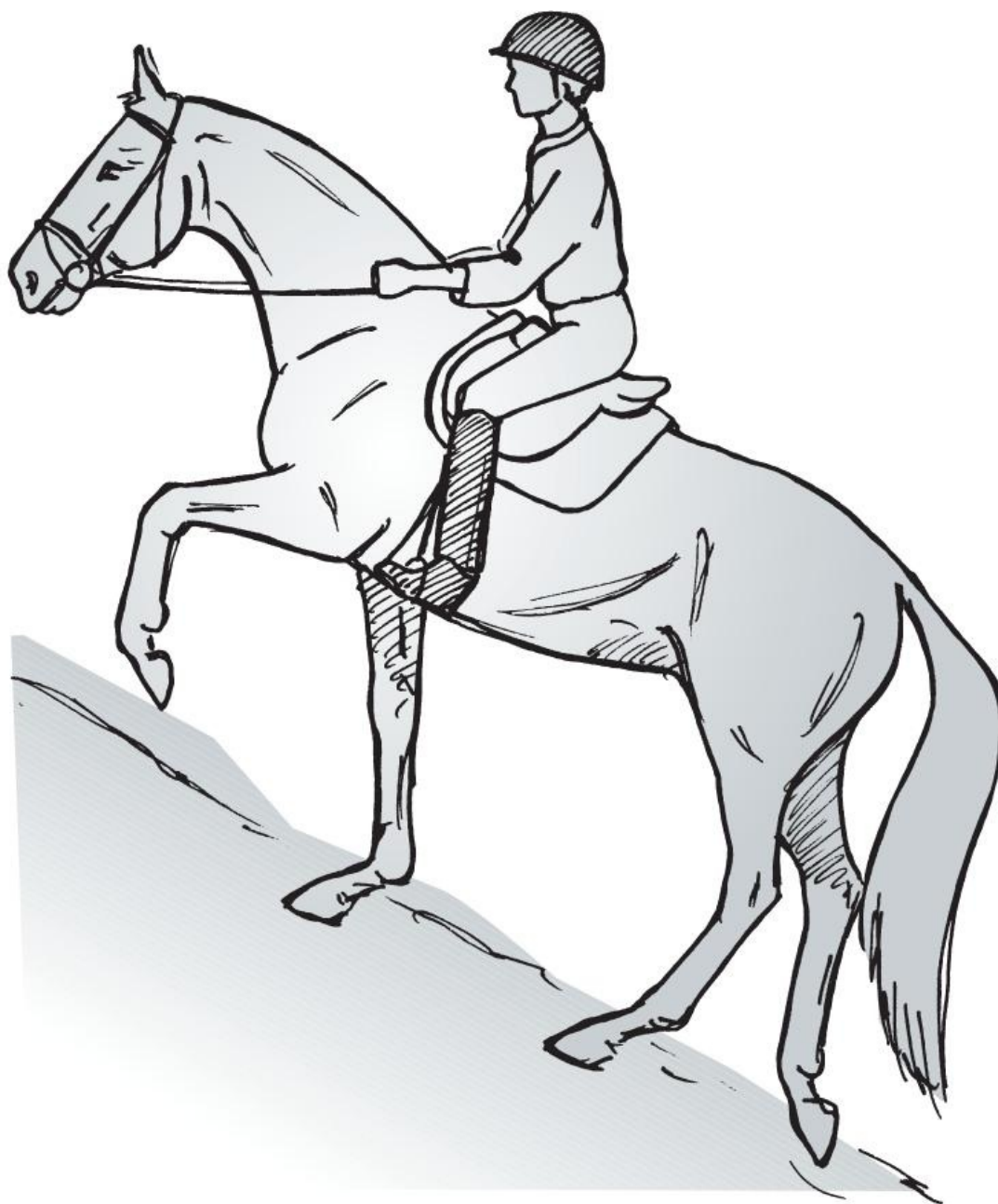
Regardless of the future intended use of the horse, riding outside in the open frequently improves the horse's alertness and composure. Concurrently, balance, coordination of the movements and, as a result, sure-footedness and agility are improved.

In systematic cross-country training, and always depending on the conditions, work over UNDULATING TERRAIN in walk, trot and, later, also canter can be commenced. However, extremely steep or sloping hills should be avoided with a young horse, since it will not yet be able to balance sufficiently.

The horse must learn to keep a steady speed over undulating terrain as well as on

slight hills. Through smooth riding, the horse's hindquarters and back muscles are strengthened, which is useful for the general gymnastic work of the horse and, thus, for mobility. Riding UPHILL AND DOWNHILL, and later tackling steeper gradients, should be planned well and only integrated into the training with gradually increasing demands.

Since these exercises are demanding, the horse must not be tired out. Attention must always be paid to riding steeper hills perpendicularly to the line of the slope to ensure that weight is distributed evenly on both hind legs to counter any danger of slipping.



By riding uphill (see illustration) and downhill, the horse is prepared to canter over undulating terrain, as well jump on a slope without difficulty.

With suitable ground conditions, various dressage movements can also be practised outside. Variations within the gaits, transitions, riding turns and curved lines, lateral movements such as leg-yielding, and letting the reins be chewed out of the hands all increase the alertness and the thoroughness of the horse on a hack. With horses that have little inclination to go forwards, this basic work outside can have a favourable effect.

Alongside the show-jumping training over cavalletti, grids and lower fences, first cross-country obstacles can be practised. These should be carefully selected, be of a low height, inviting and offer a safe take-off and landing. Showing the horse the obstacles beforehand can help eradicate any potential insecurities. As in practising for show-jumping, the obstacles are first approached in trot. With increased confidence, they can also be approached in a quiet canter. ([see also Chapter 6.7 Advanced Cross-Country Training](#)).

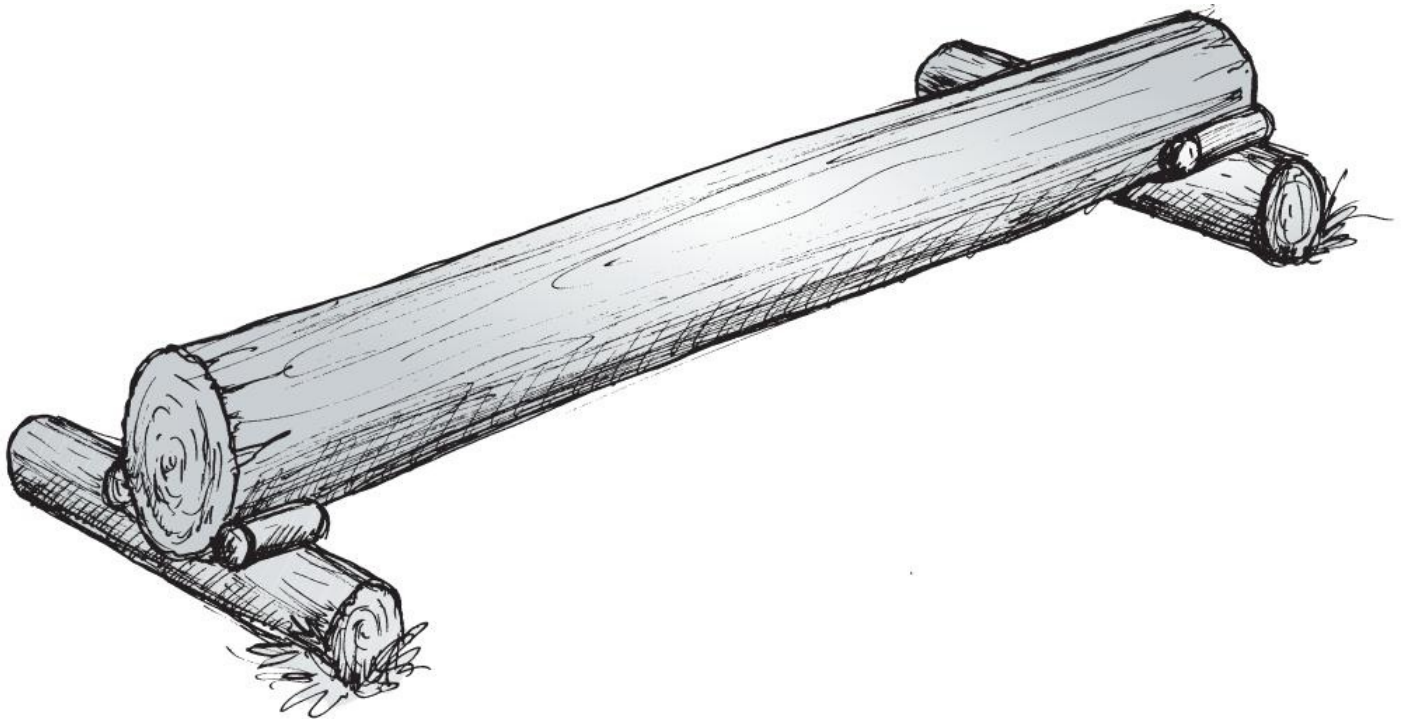
Using a lead horse with unfamiliar obstacles is the best and safest procedure for horse and rider. The pleasure a young horse takes in jumping will be particularly enhanced, and the introduction to new obstacles will be facilitated.

For the first exercises, low tree trunks, which have some kind of lateral boundary, are particularly suitable. A few selected cross-country fences should suffice in the first weeks to give the horse confidence.

Increasing the demands in as small steps as possible ensures progress without any refusals or negative experiences.

The attempt to ride young horses too much forwards in cross-country training, and to want to force them over the fences, will just lead to mistrust and insecurities. Particularly in cross-country riding, the connection and the relationship of trust between human and horse are decisive for the well-being of both parties, for the reduction of risks, and for the harmonious accomplishment of the natural tasks at hand.

PORTABLE CROSS-COUNTRY FENCES can be used as a preliminary exercise. They are built with an inviting profile and maximum stability in a location the horse is familiar with.

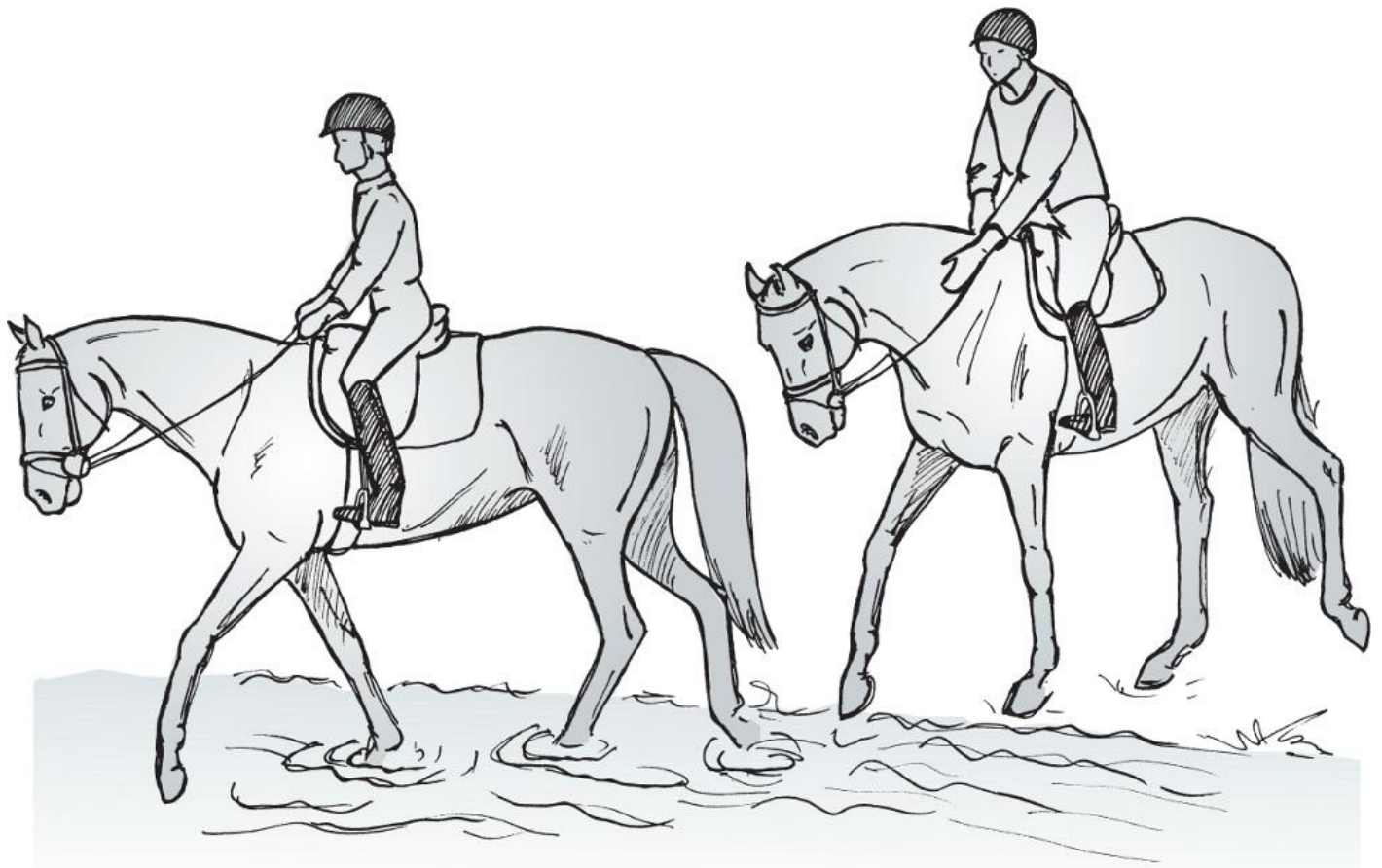


Portable tree trunk.

Once the portable fences have been taken confidently, they can be set up in an unfamiliar environment. The same fence, which now might seem different to the horse, is first shown again to the horse in walk. However, in doing so, the horse is not be permitted to jump to the side or step backwards. If this 'inspection' is carried out calmly and with patience, then taking the fence first in trot, and then, later, also in canter, should not present any problems.

Once the young horse has been properly familiarised with a large number of new tasks, it will also learn to jump new obstacles confidently without any previous inspection of them.

Riding through SHALLOW WATER is part of the basic training and, where necessary, can also be practised with the aid of a lead horse. The shallower the water and the lower its banks, the more willing the young horse will be to follow the horse ahead. As a result of this confidence-building work, combined with frequent praise, the horse, after a few attempts, will willingly and calmly enter the water or walk through puddles.



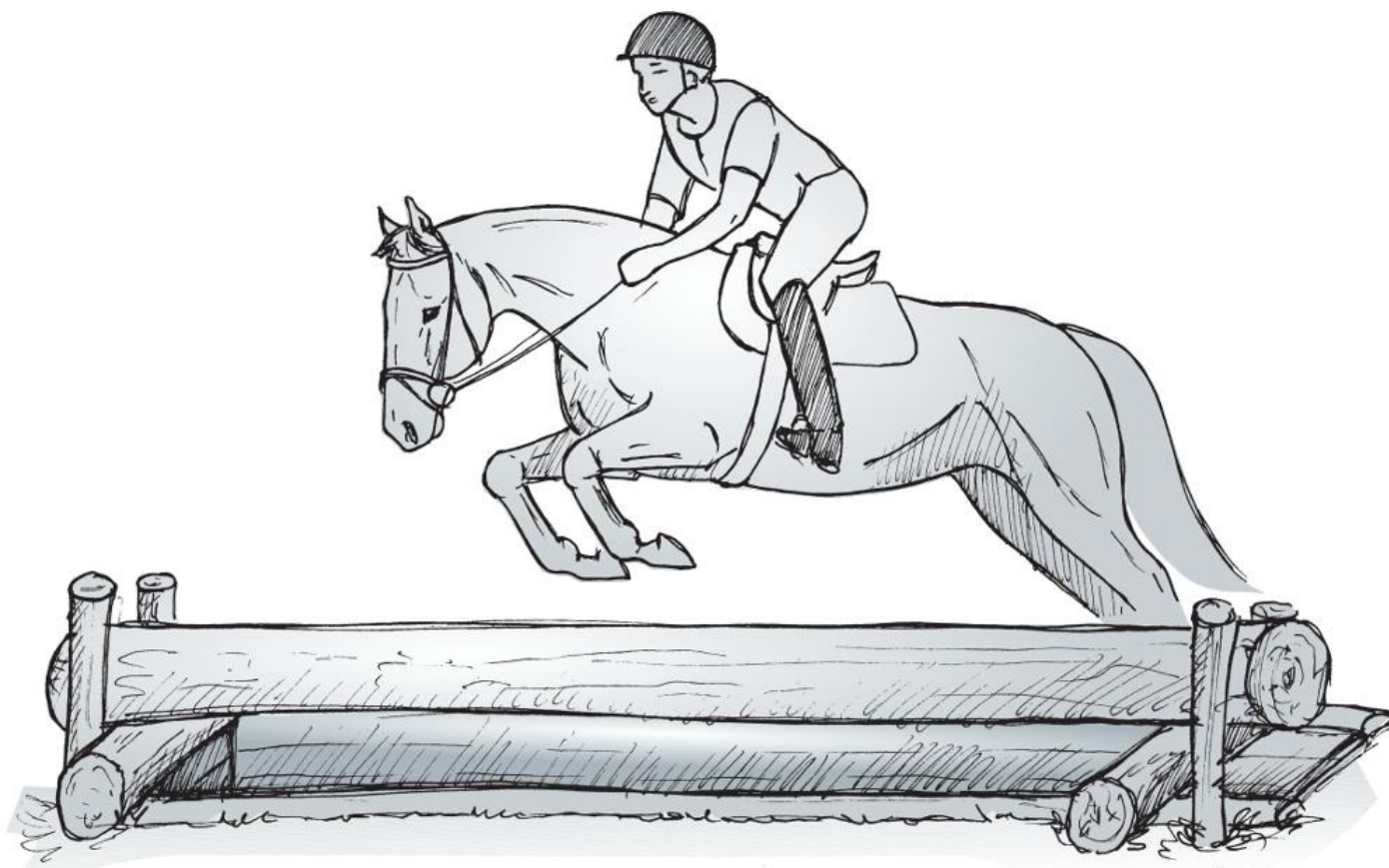
A lead horse makes it easier for the younger horse to develop confidence in going into the water.

With insecure, hesitant horses, only patience and calmness, while following through with the exercise at the same time, will help. Increased pressure with the spurs and the whip will just strengthen the horse's resistance and this is detrimental to the learning process.

The rider must only pick bodies of water familiar to them and with a sufficiently solid footing. Suddenly sinking into muddy ground might cause the horse to panic and will lastingly reduce the horse's trust in water. After the initial introduction to water, suitable bodies of water are ridden through in trot and canter. After the horse has been made sufficiently familiar with this, jumping out of the water, over a tree trunk on the bank, is initially practised. After that, it is no longer particularly difficult for the horse to jump over the very same trunk into the water again. When practising jumps into water, experienced riders and trainers know that the jump into the water slows down the horse's momentum considerably. Therefore, jumps into water are only approached in a quiet (yet positive) manner to avoid any risk of falling. The demands of the task must be suitably low in order to reassure a young horse.

The introduction to DITCHES is also a systematic process. Small exercises over dry

ditches are again carried out with the aid of a lead horse. Just as in the introduction to new fences, the horse will first be shown the ditch in walk. If the horse is frightened during the first attempts, patience, persistence, but never force, are the correct aids of training.



A 'friendly' Trakehner-ditch (open ditch with a log on top) which can also be jumped from trot.

Experience has shown that, particularly with ditches, overcoming even the smallest of challenges can strengthen the horse's trust, while overdoing this exercise always leads to tension, fear and resistance.

Once enough confidence in jumping cross-country obstacles and riding over undulating terrain and slight hills has been established, work can then be started on practising STEPS AND DROPS. To start with, natural slopes in the terrain, without an obstacle involved, and which the horse can easily get over in walk or trot, are selected. With increased confidence, low obstacles are combined with these natural steps. Obstacles faced up the slope are approached with a slightly higher speed, with the horse always remaining securely on the rider's aids. Drops and downhill jumps are taken in a quieter manner.

Cross-country training is most effective when it goes hand-in-hand with the basic dressage and show-jumping training. A diverse training programme protects against one-sided physical strain and reduced attention.

In preparation for eventing competitions, hunts, trekking rides or longer hacks, horses must have undergone suitable conditioning training. Cross-country riding can be relaxing, but also strenuous, depending on its intensity. It goes against equestrian principles and jeopardises the horse's health if horses with little stamina are suddenly ridden intensively without proper preparation. A responsible rider will structure the training demands conscientiously, and will be able to feel when their horse has reached its performance limit. The horse's pulse and breathing can be indicators here.

The GENERAL STAMINA (CONDITION) OF A HORSE is improved when riding in a quiet tempo over long distances in all three basic gaits. This is followed by a gradual increase of trot sets and then, later, canter sets, with time for a 'breather' in between. In CANTER TRAINING, a quiet canter tempo (approx. 350–400 m/min.) is ridden at first. The division into intervals is recommended in order to maintain an even workload on both reins and ensure better balance as well as getting the horse's legs accustomed to the strain as carefully as possible. Tendons, ligaments and joints require time to adapt to the increased workload of training.

INCREASING THE SPEED (approx. 450–600 m/min.) can be done incrementally, extending from about half a minute to a maximum of a full minute before going back to a more relaxed canter. These intensive canter sets, with changes in speed, should not exceed a duration of three minutes and should only be performed on suitable, ideally level, ground.

RIDING ON A RACETRACK is an important part of a diverse training for the horse because it improves the health, the sure-footedness, the resilience, the willingness to go forwards and the mental balance. Practising steeplechase fences is also a necessary training for fluent cross-country rides – even if the steeplechase hardly plays a role in eventing anymore. A hedge, on a suitable track and with a clearly marked take-off ahead of it, is most suitable for practising. This is an example of an obstacle for which the horse still has respect, even at a high speed, but which can be jumped well out of every take-off situation. After slowly warming up in canter, the rider will initially show the horse the hedge. At a below maximum speed of around 500 m/min., the first practice jumps can be ridden, with the rider disturbing the horse as little as possible. Over the course of the training, the speed can be increased up to a racing speed (approx. 600 m/min.). The horse should 'go for the fence' with a rhythmical, steady forward drive, and 'open up' ('fly') over it. The rider gives their horse the most confidence when they frame it well within the aids in a fluent tempo, keeping this flow with driving lower leg aids, albeit without forcing the tempo too much forwards.

EVENTING as an equestrian discipline, in which a solid education and long-term

training in dressage, show-jumping as well as cross-country are imperative, is regarded as the 'crown of equestrianism'. In addition to a talented horse, it requires a sensitive, patient and composed rider who can cope with the three disciplines intensively and conscientiously.

However, every horse should benefit from versatile training, not just the eventing horse!

7.6.12 Particular Aspects of Training a Hunter

Hunting, as a traditional form of cross-country riding, is a particular kind of equestrian pleasure. Drag hunts with a pack are an organised form of riding in a natural environment, involving riders, horses and hounds. The hounds, which follow an artificial scent, set the pace. An alternative to this kind of hunt is the so-called hunt ride without the pack of hounds. In this case, the gait and the speed can be chosen freely.

Taking part in a hunt is all about the pleasure of riding together through the countryside. Requirements include a good rapport between horse and rider, riding forwards confidently in unknown terrain, and also endurance and boldness. Horses and riders must be prepared systematically for participating in a hunt.

As a basis, the following apply:

- The principles for the training of the rider, in particular the schooling of different versions of the light seat up to the cross-country seat ([see Chapter 4.1.5.2 The Rider's Seat when Riding Cross-Country](#)).
- The basic exercises in cross-country riding ([see Chapter 6.6 First Exercises in Cross-Country Riding](#)).
- The basic cross-country training of the horse ([see Chapter 7.6.11 Basic Cross-Country Training](#)).

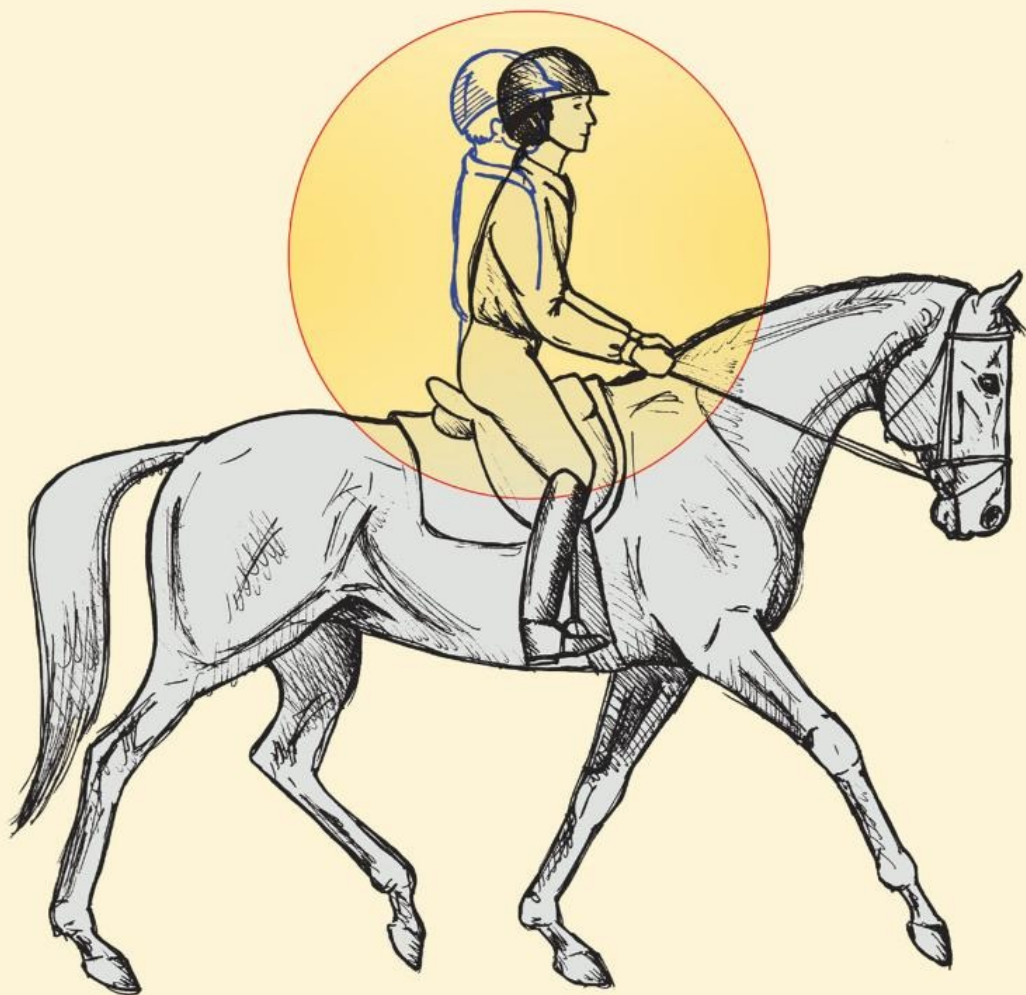
To account for the specific characteristics of riding in hunts, the following aspects need to be considered:

- Before the hunt, the inexperienced rider must make themselves aware of the hunt rules, obtainable from the Master of Hounds or the Hunt Secretary.
- Prior to the hunt, the rider must make sure that their horse is in a flawless condition of health, and also check the hooves and shoeing.
- The equipment of the hunt rider consists of, in addition to the traditional hunt clothing, the same equipment worn by a cross-country rider, with a helmet and, for the less experienced rider, also a body protector. A whip can be helpful as support in certain situations, but spurs are not usually necessary.

- In addition to the usual equipment of the horse for cross-country riding, a neckstrap, integrated into the breastplate or martingale, is very helpful so that, in difficult situations, when the rider might come 'behind' the movement, they can grab onto it and thus avoid holding tightly onto the reins.
- According to the pace set by the hounds, the canter is ridden in a light seat and, with increasing natural demands, in a cross-country seat.
- Riders, riding in the first, or so-called jumping field, must adapt to the movement flow of the whole group when approaching the fences so as not to disturb the rhythm of their own horse or impede any of the other riders. It is best to ride with 'gaps' so that the vision is not obstructed.
- On the approach to a fence, one must never pass another horse or cross its path, for obvious safety reasons.
- The Field Master may never be passed, in particular for the safety of the hounds.
- A hunt rider must learn to hand over some of the responsibility to their horse. Direction, tempo and rhythm are determined by the rider, but the actual take-off is ultimately determined by the horse.
- Hunt horses must LEARN TO JUDGE THE TAKE-OFF themselves, as it is often very difficult to see, or may be visible only at the last moment, particularly when the rider in front is obstructing the vision.
- SYSTEMATIC CONDITIONING IN THE FORM OF A KIND OF ENDURANCE TRAINING in canter must take place with a hunting horse as it does with a cross-country horse. A hunt may be up to 25km long (or further), with long stretches ridden in a lively canter or gallop. Canter in a group must also be practised.
- At the end, taking care of the horse thoroughly is an essential duty of the hunt rider.

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1. German Equestrian Federation e.V. (FN), *Understanding Horses – Handling and Ground Work*, 1st edition, **FNverlag**, Warendorf, 2014.
 2. See also German Equestrian Federation (eds), *Guidelines for Riding and Driving, Volume 6: Lungeing*, 7th edition, **FNverlag**, Warendorf 1999.
 3. Steinbrecht, Gustav (1808–1885), *Gymnasium des Pferdes (Gymnasium of the Horse)*, **FNverlag**, Warendorf 2004.
 4. See Bürger, U., and Zietzschmann, O., *Der Reiter formt das Pferd (The Rider Forms The Horse)*, **FNverlag**, Warendorf 2007, Reprint of edition from 1939.
 5. Tests called by this name were used at club level in the UK some years ago, although they were more like basic show-jumping courses marked on rider style than those described above.

Considering these guidelines for horse and rider will lead to every rider taking even more pleasure in dealing with the horses, regardless of what discipline they perform in, or however they would like to spend their leisure time with their horses. The horses will certainly thank them for it.



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