



HOW TO BE A TRAINER (PART 12)

# DRESSAGE FOR JUMPING (PART 2)

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GOOD RIDING COMES WITH AN ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUE. SOME READERS WILL THINK THAT THIS ARTICLE IS TOO BASIC, HOWEVER READ FIRST THEN LATER JUDGE ITS IMPORTANCE. OUR SUBJECT IS THE **RIDER'S SEAT**.

In the previous spring issue of Horse Times, we discussed the effect of the rider's position in relation to the centre of gravity of the horse; on the balance of the horse. A correct seat forms the basis for the effective application of aids. A balanced, free, and supple seat is essential for **going with** the horse's movements without

**gripping up** (stiffening).

In the "Official Book of the German National Equestrian Federation", the importance of fixing the rider's seat was very clear. In my opinion, the German way is the best basic school a rider can follow during elementary training of both horse and rider.

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#### TYPES OF SEATS:

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Not all riders are fully aware that in various branches of equitation different positions are required. In order to acquire good results in schooling horses it is important for the rider to practice and perfect these different seat positions.

Different seats are expressed as the forward seat, the parade seat, the remount seat, the deep, seat etc. To make things easier, we have three types of seats or positions: the **dressage seat** (basic), the **light seat** (jumping, cross-country/forward seat), and the **racing seat** (jockey seat). In the dressage seat, the weight is placed mainly on the horse's back, while in the light and racing seat it is taken off it. With each type of seat, the amount of weight placed in the saddle can vary depending on the situation and need.

### THE DRESSAGE SEAT:

It is the basic seat for all other types of seats. Dressage position is used for the training of horse and rider on the flat, i.e. dressage-type work. It is used with shortened stirrups in preparatory work for jumping and cross-country riding. The rider should sit upright with a straight vertical line which can be drawn through three joints: **shoulder, hip and heel**. The seat should rest in the lowest point of the saddle without tension of the seat and inside thigh muscles; otherwise the rider will be riding above the horse and not in the saddle. If the stirrups are too long, it will result in a **fork seat**, and if they are too short, it will result in a **chair seat**. Both seats will lead to bad balance and wrong application of aids.



▲ Forearm, rein and bit should always be in a straight line when seen both from above and from the sides.

### THE LIGHT SEAT:

It has a wide range of applications. It enables the rider to take the weight off the horse's back. For example, when riding over fences, in riding out, in cross-country and when riding young horses, the stirrups are considerably shorter in the light seat than in the dressage seat; the actual length varies from moderate to extreme light seats.

In moderate light seat two to three holes shorter may be enough, reaching four to five holes in cross-country.



▲ Using the light seat enables the rider to adjust particularly well to changes in balance and pace

As in the dressage seat, the rein and leg aids should be **independent** from the movements of the rider's body. A **firm knee position**, a **constant lower leg position**, and downward **flexing heels** form the basis of the light seat. The lower legs are positioned next to the girth never slipping back. Allowing the lower leg to slip back has an adverse effect on the riders balance. In jumping, this fault often results in the rider's return to the upright position too early in order not to tip forward, thus disturbing the horse in its back and hind legs' folding. The **heel** should be the lowest point of the rider's body with slightly flexed ankles to provide a steady, spring support, and also enabling the lower legs to remain steady and effective.



### THE RACING SEAT:

It is the extreme version of the light seat with two main differences: much shorter stirrups and none of the rider's weight is on the saddle. It is used by experienced riders for galloping and is only required during the steeple chase phase of a three-day event. The triad of firmly closed knees, perpendicular lower legs, and flexible heels is also important for the rider in this position to go with the horse's movements. The upper body is almost parallel to the horse's neck. The upper arms would be in front of the body with the hands positioned one on each side about 10cm below the top of the neck. The horse's head and neck movement should be followed by elastic flexion and extension of the elbow while maintaining a constant and steady contact with the horse's mouth.



Always remember that fixing the seat and position is not only important for the balance of both horse and rider but also for applying the correct aids in a simple and efficient way. 🏆

Reference: The Principles of Riding (German FN)