

HOW TO BE A TRAINER (PART 17)

DRESSAGE FOR JUMPING (PART 7)

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SOME RIDERS WHO ARE NOT INTERESTED IN DRESSAGE DON'T KNOW THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SCHOOL A HORSE UP TO A HIGHER DEGREE OF EQUITATION UNLESS HE IS TAUGHT TO RESPOND AND DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE FORWARD AND LATERAL DRIVING LEG AIDS.



LATERAL LEG AIDS:

Teaching the horse the lateral driving leg aid should follow the **forward** one. The forward driving aid is applied straight behind the girths with equal pressure from both legs, while the **lateral** driving aid should be applied slightly further behind the girths. The aim is to request the horse to move his quarters **sideways**. At the lateral stage of training, it is used to **bend** the horse's body around the inner leg of the rider. Lateral leg aid should be done by both legs simultaneously; one leg is **active** and the other is **passive** (supporting).

As a response to the lateral leg aid the horse will engage his hind leg and bring it in front of the other

hind leg. After doing so, the horse should be ridden forward, making use of the propulsive power of **engagement**. Start teaching the horse the lateral driving leg aids by simply cutting the corner as shown in the Figure (1).

In a few weeks one can apply this aid to perform some valuable movements for show jumpers. Some of these movements are turn around the forehand, leg yielding and turn around the haunches.

Before explaining each movement we have to know about the expression "**inner** leg and **outer** leg" of both rider and horse. When the horse is moving straight on the track of the school,

the legs of rider and horse near the kicking boards are called the "outer" legs. If the horse's body is bent laterally, the legs of both riders and horse on this side are called "inner" legs. Legs on the other side are called "outer" legs.

TURN AROUND THE FOREHAND:

This turn is performed **around** and **not on** the forehand which means coming to a halt should not be done at first. This is to encourage the forward movement of a show jumping horse and his obedience to the rider's leg aids without loss of impulsion. The inner forehand should work as a pivot describing a small circle (Fig. 2) and shouldn't turn on the

spot.

If practicing this turn in an indoor school, one must stay at least two meters free from the kicking boards. The aids for a turn around the forehand (to the right for example) will include seat, leg and rein aids. Put more pressure onto the right seat bone and apply leg aids as shown in the figure depending on the degree of schooling of the horse (his readiness to bend). The active (stronger) leg is the right leg while the passive is the left one. The active leg could be supported by a dressage whip (applied just behind it). Equal tension should be applied on both reins, with the right one moved slightly sideways towards the kicking boards.

The immediate effect of engaging the inner hind leg and the freedom of the outside shoulder are great advantages that could be used to make the horse strike off in canter with very good balance and impulsion (in case of turning to the right, the canter will be left canter!) **Think how?** The answer is that, if the horse will start to canter to the left he will stand for a split second on the right hind leg (the engaged one) as the starting spring of the action. The horse also needs in such a case a free left shoulder which is achieved during this turn on the forehand to the right.

LEG YIELDING:

Leg yielding is a lateral movement on two tracks as the shoulder out but with too little lateral bending. It could be done from the centre line to the long side of the arena or after cutting the corner before the long side. It should always be performed in a forward movement with the shoulders leading the action, not the hindquarters (as some riders make this mistake).

The horse should move with good impulsion and shouldn't come too much on the bit (Fig.3). This movement is a good preparation for shoulder in.

If riding on the left rein, you can cut off the corner and start directing your horse to a right leg yielding towards the long side. The horse should look slightly to the left. The rider puts more

weight on the left seat bone. For a young horse the active leg (left) of the rider should be brought more backward (could be helped by a whip) and the rider's right leg is supporting the pressure and giving impulsion. The rider should move his left hand slightly side-ways out from the horse's neck (Fig. 3) while the right rein is supporting the horse not to fall out with his right shoulder. Both

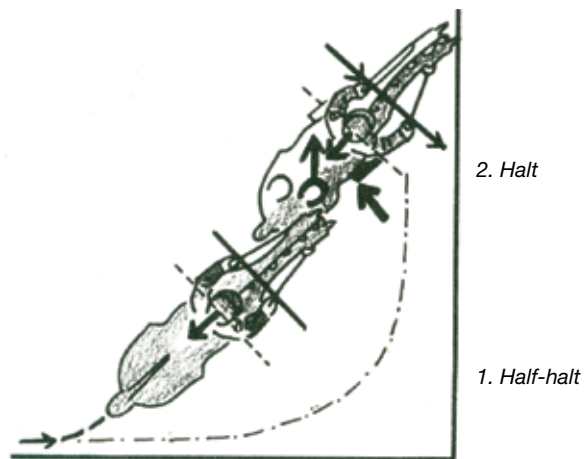


Fig. 1: Start teaching lateral leg aids by simply cutting the corner

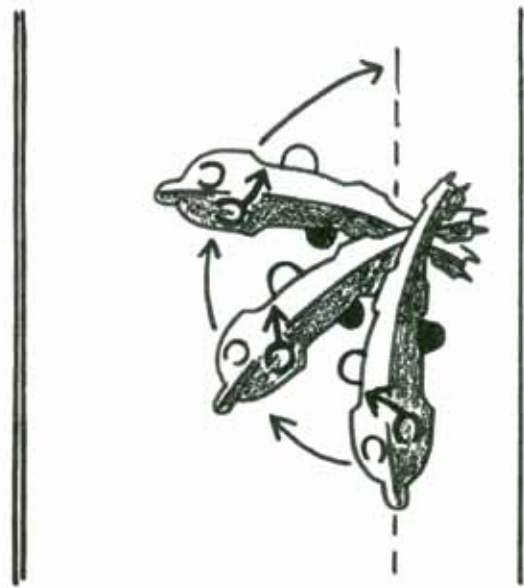


Fig. 2: Turn around the forehand with lateral bend

reins should be kept **equal** in tension.

After reaching the track, straighten on the horse and ride him forward. Never do the mistake of meeting the track with the hindquarters before the forehand (this indicates lack of impulsion).

TURN ON THE HAUNCHES:

The main purpose of this movement is to reach a good degree of **collection** and **flexibility**. It also improves the **shoulder freedom** of the horse. The forehand performs a quarter or a half circle around the hindquarters without coming to a stop first (Fig. 4). Never forget the value of this movement in a jump off, **saving time**, when used correctly.


Prepare the horse with a half-halt (Fig. 4) and count the sequence of the forelegs on the ground; left, right... etc. This is important because the key for a good start is when the horse's **near** forefoot touches the ground. At this moment the outside one is free to cross in the correct direction. The action should be forward and never **backwards**, with more weight from the rider on his inside seat bone and with some tilting of the pelvis. For a left turn, pressure from the left leg of the rider prevents the horse from moving backwards. The rider's right leg then urges the horse to make the turn.

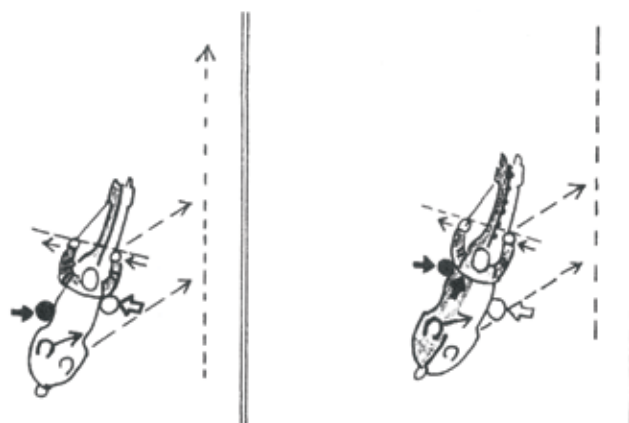
Equal tension with both reins is applied while the rider's left hand moves slightly sideways away from the neck. The right rein is supporting the action by pushing against the neck.

The advantage of engaging the inner hind leg of the horse

and giving freedom to the right shoulder (in case of turn to the left) will have a great effect on the correct canter to the right after turn on the haunches to the left. **Try it** and feel how good it is on the horse's balance and impulsion.

The three simple actions

explained in this article are mandatory for you (coach or rider) if you want to improve your horse's performance on the flat. Although being simple, these dressage movements add a lot of **suppleness, engagement, impulsion** and **collection** to show jumping horses. 



Preparatory leg aids for a young horse

Normal leg aids for a schooled horse

Fig. 3: Leg yielding

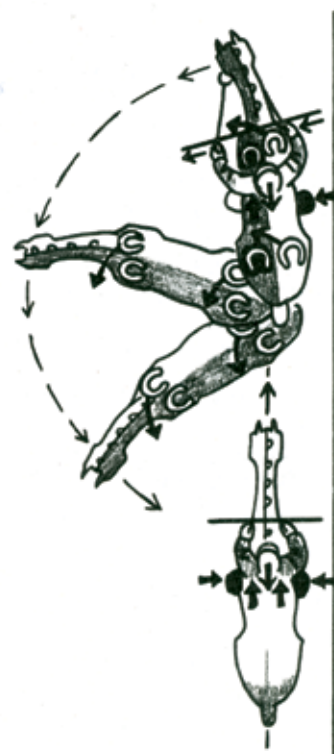


Fig. 4: Turn in on the haunches