

THE ART OF CLASSICAL DRESSAGE RIDING

CANTER AND GALLOP

(PART 2)

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THE CANTER CAN BE FURTHER DIVIDED BY THE FRAME AND IMPULSION OF THE HORSE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHILE THERE IS A “COLLECTED”, “REGULAR”, “WORKING”, OR AN “EXTENDED” CANTER, THESE ARE POINTS ON A SPECTRUM, NOT ENDS IN THEMSELVES. A TRULY ADJUSTABLE TRAINED HORSE SHOULD BE ABLE TO LENGTHEN AND SHORTEN AS MUCH AS THE RIDER DESIRES.

TYPES OF CANTERS

A **Working canter** is the *natural canter* given by a horse with normal stride length. This is the working gait of hunt seat riders. It is also used by all other disciplines

A **Medium canter** is a canter between the working canter and extended canter. It is bigger and rounder than the working with great impulsion and very forward with moderate extension. The medium canter is common in dressage and show jumping.

A **Collected canter** is an extremely engaged, collected gait (collection refers to having the horse's balance shifted backward towards its hind legs, with more weight taken by the hindquarters). The strides are shorter, springier, and the horse's frame is short and compressed.

The collected canter is required in **upper-level dressage tests**. It is also very important in show jumping, as the rider often needs to shorten the horse's stride according to the distance between two fences.

An **Extended canter** is an extension of the canter, where the horse's frame lengthens and the horse takes larger strides, covering as much ground as possible without losing the 3-beat gait. It is very engaged, but **not a true gallop**. The extended canter should have great impulsion. A flat, long canter is not a true extended canter, and is incorrect for proper work.

A **Lope** is a type of slow, relaxed canter seen in Western horses, performed on a loose rein with less collection than a collected canter, but at about the same speed or slower. There is less suspension than in an English-style canter. The horse has a longer, less-rounded frame and carries its head lower, but the gait is still 3-beat and the horse must be well-engaged in the hindquarters to do a proper lope.

WHAT'S A HAND GALLOP?

In the United States, show hunters may be asked to “**hand gallop**” when shown on the flat or in certain jumping classes. The hand gallop differs from a true gallop in that the horse **should not speed up enough to lose the 3-beat rhythm of the canter**, and from the extended canter in that the horse should be allowed to lengthen its frame substantially and is not expected to engage as much as in an extended canter.

While the extended canter is intended to demonstrate and improve athleticism and responsiveness to the aids, show hunters are asked to hand gallop primarily **to illustrate the horse's manners and training**. In the hand gallop the hunter should increase its pace without becoming excited or difficult to handle and should respond immediately to the rider's request to return to the canter or perform a different maneuver.

UNDERSTANDING THE MOTION

Understanding the motion of the canter is important if a person wants to ride the horse with a balanced, secure, yet flexible seat. *To the rider, the horse's back feels as if it is moving both up and down as well as somewhat back and forth, not unlike the motion of a swing.*

When the hind legs engage (which occurs just before beat one), **the horse raises its head and neck as its hind leg steps under**. As the legs push off the ground (beats 1 and 2) the head and neck of the horse drops. When the leading leg (beat 3) touches the ground, the head and neck are as low as they will be for the stride, and then they begin to come back up as the horse places its weight on its leading leg. During the suspension phase, the head and neck continue back to the highest point as the hind legs come back under the body. ¹¹¹

Reference : Wikipedia