

Exercises to Provide Balanced Equitation, Resulting in Proper Motion of the Horse

Hand Softeners:

(Hand Position) Put hands in neutral position spacing about hip length apart, slightly tipping your thumbs towards each other.

(Exercise) Point knuckles towards each other and hold for the count of 15. Do not move your forearms, only move your wrists.

(Hand Position) Put hands at neutral position, spacing about hip length apart with palms facing down towards your legs. Maintain straight line from your wrists to your forearms to your elbow.

(Exercise) Stretch fingers out straight and pretend that you are going to play the piano. Repeat 5 times.

(Purpose) Both of these exercises teach the rider to be soft with their hands. Hands that are soft are quieter while riding and less harsh on the horse's mouth. These also teach the rider the meaning of neutral hand position and that they can perform wrist motions without the extra movement of their body, keeping body position at all times.

Neck:

(Position) Drop stirrups, maintain heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head to the elbow, hip, to the back of the heel should all be a straight line.

(Exercise) Tighten neck muscles looking forward. Try and move to the right, the left.

(Purpose) This teaches the rider that when their neck is tight it is very hard to turn resulting in other parts of your body to give to allow the turn. This is the same thought of the horse when we the rider are being to hard on their mouth, they are unable to turn when they are clasp their jaws.

Arm Hold:

(Position) Drop stirrups, maintain heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head to the elbow, hip, to the back of the heel should all be a straight line.

(Exercise) Tighten arm along side of your body pushing all your strengths in a downward position. Try and move your arm up, to the right, to the left.

(Purpose) Teaches the rider that if their arms are tight and not relaxed then they are unable to lift their shoulders as needed. This is also a thought that happens to your horse

when they are not able to freely move their shoulders due to unbalance of us the rider when we fall forward onto their shoulder and ask them to turn.

Shoulder Stretch:

(Position) Drop stirrups, maintain heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head to the elbow, hip, to the back of the heel should all be a straight line.

(Exercise) Clasp hands to belly with elbows out and pull for about 15 seconds. Move to your neck level just under your chin and pull for about 15 seconds. Move above your head and pull for about 15 seconds. Finally, raise your arms directly above your shoulders and stretch for about 15 seconds with your palms sticking outward.

(Purpose) Release shoulders that are harsh and too stiff; this causes the rider to be heavy with their arms and hands resulting in roughness of the horse's mouth and an unpleasant ride. Also teaches the rider that they can move their arm-shoulder combination without moving any other part of their bodies, maintaining that correct equitation line.

Shoulder Position:

(Position) Place feet in stirrups, heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head to the elbow, hip to the back of the heel should all be in a straight line.

(Exercise) Pretend that you have a nerf ball between your shoulder blades. If you lose your shoulder position then the ball drops. This is to be completed at all gaits of the horse (walk, trot and canter).

(Purpose) Makes the rider maintain shoulders back allowing for proper frame of the head, the shoulders and the hands.

Stirrup Stand:

(Position) Place feet in stirrups, heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head to the elbow, hip to the back of the heel should all be in a straight line.

(Exercise) Stand in the stirrups after you have asked your horse to walk. Your legs will be directly underneath you and your eyes should be forward. If you are not in the correct position, you will either fall forward if your legs are behind your hip or you will fall backwards if your legs are in front of your hip.

(Purpose) Teaches the rider to keep their body weight directly underneath them as well as a strength builder for your legs helping you squeeze to control leg swing while riding.

Pendulum Leg Swing:

(Position) Drop stirrups, maintain heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head to the elbow, hip, to the back of the heel should all be a straight line.

(Exercise) Swing lower leg forward keeping your thigh relaxed as possible, hold for 15 seconds; Bend knee and bring your heel back, hold for 15 seconds; Bend knee completely placing your heel directly under your hip, hold for 15 seconds.

(Purpose) This exercise is strength building for your legs, but most importantly it provides the rider to move their lower leg without moving any other part of their body causing them to lose their equitation line.

Flexation of the Horse:

(Position) Hands should be in a neutral position about hip length apart, maintaining heels down toes up, chin up with eyes looking in a forward motion; shoulders should maintain back and the line from the back of the head, to the elbow, to the hip to the back of the heel should all be in a straight line.

(Exercise) Bending the horse's nose to the rider's foot. If a left bend is asked, the rider should put their left heel into the horse and put left rein pressure backwards and up to bend his nose to your foot. Repeat for opposite direction but using different heel pressure and rein.

(Purpose) Teaches flexation of your horse while maintaining proper equitation and balance. This is also used to ask the horse for a headset position and to make the horse's shoulders looser by maintaining movement from the rear end of the horse through his mouth. Movement should flow from the hind to the front.