

RIDING YOUR HORSE



TEAM TATE
ACADEMY

Sound



DEMYSTIFYING “ON THE BIT”



In the words of Charles de Kunffy, “there is no neutrality in riding. You are either building the horse up or breaking him down.” That is why we need to get the horse on the bit properly.

Putting your horse on the bit will create a pain free life, where he will be able to carry you and himself in a way that does not cause damage.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN PUTTING THE HORSE “ON THE BIT”?

Three Principles Regarding Contact:

1. The rider presents a motionless bit.
2. Horse makes contact with the bit, not the rider.
3. The rider should seek only the weight of the reins, and allow the bit hang in the horse’s mouth.

Consider:

- On the bit is off your hand. The weight you feel in your hand is the weight that is not in the hind legs.
- Being on the bit starts with engagement of the inside hock.
- Behind the bit!?! What to do? Control the hind legs one at a time, educate the horse that the bit is a friendly place, and ride the torso.
- All first energies go towards going on the bit.
- There is a difference between light and empty.
- Develop the three bascules (From the Principles of Developing a Horse: Strength & Skill Monthly Zoom Meeting, 7/8/20)
 - The hocks to the sacroiliac.
 - Sacroiliac to the withers.
 - Withers to the bit.
- The horse should feel the rider’s seat bones in his mouth, not just your hands.

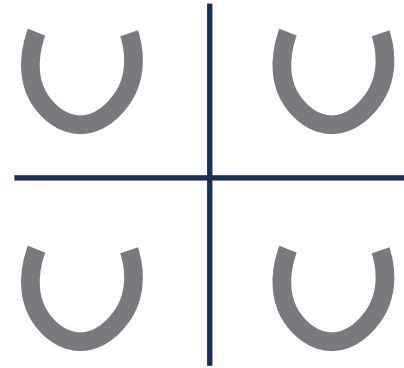


THE BALANCED HORSE & RIDER

Balance is a huge priority in riding, and honestly, in life in general.

Stack The Horse Up on All Four Corners

When we talk about soundness, the idea of the horse being really balanced on all four feet is incredibly important. As the trainer (and as the rider, you ARE the trainer) you're also the caretaker of that horse.



Identify:

Where is your horse's weak corner? What hind leg does he not really want to work? Where does he brace or counter-brace from the weakness in a hind leg? How does that transfer into his neck/mouth?

Determine:

“Why” -Why is the horse braced on that right rein? Why does he push into my right calf so much? Why does he not want to take contact on the left rein? What hind leg is that coming from? Reduce all of those questions down to the least common denominator of where the problem begin.



Balance is ever changing:

With every new moment you have to find the next best balance. We balance the horse on all four corners by assessing the three categories of balance.

THE BALANCED HORSE & RIDER

Lateral Balance- Left vs. Right

- How is the horse landing on his right hoof versus his left hoof?
- Is the torso tilting/leaning to the inside or the outside?
- Does he swing out or in with his hind legs in turns or corners?
- Does he always tend to land heavy on the inside shoulder, or fall out the outside shoulder?



Horizontal Balance- Front vs. Hind

The rider sits in the middle of the horse, like the balance point of a teeter totter. From this point, the goal is to horizontally balance the horse towards his haunches. Is he tipping down on the front legs like a wheelbarrow? Or are we able to work into that levade-like idea, that the horse is really rocked back into his hips, onto his hocks, and stabilizing himself on his two hind feet, through the strength of his lumbar back.

Diagonal Balance:

Lack of diagonal balance is so often where a brace shows up. For example, when a horse is really strong in the right rein, many times that comes from the left hind leg. This diagonal weakness will then show up on a strong front corner brace.

Part of what we do with our exercises is to identify where the weak corner is. We build up the horse so that he does not overtax one leg over the other. This occurs because we have identified where the weak corner lies. Stacking the horse up on all four feet, up into both hips, up into both shoulders, evenly loading both hind legs to step into both reins equally, is essential and leads to wonderful self-carriage and soundness.



THE BALANCED HORSE & RIDER

“The horse shall keep the gait until further notice. If you wanted to canter to town, you shall just canter until you tell the horse to stop cantering.”

-Charles de Kunffy on Self-Carriage

A Horse Out Of Balance, Will Be Insecure

Riding must first be UNDERSTOOD before it can be PRACTICED SUCCESSFULLY.

MAIN GOAL - Perfect Balance Between Horse and Rider.

We must put the horse on the bit, and ride him in balance, so that we create a confident partner. This honors the horse's very deep instinctual need to stay in balance.

Our Weight In The Saddle:

In every new moment you have to find the next best balance. It is very similar to yoga. When we think about our bodies on a mat doing yoga, nothing is moving except the earth on its axis, and we are still wobbling and not able to find our stability and balance. Then we put ourselves up on this horse that is actually moving...

We have to make sure the horse feels balanced with the foreign weight of the rider in the saddle. We have to understand that it is deeply rooted in the horse's DNA to really be scared when not balanced, because if he falls, he will be the first one to be eaten.



Balance Before Collection

It is important to understand that balance comes before collection. In the beginning, we balance the horse on all four corners, with the eventual goal of weight loading the hind legs and bringing the horse off the forehand.

THE BALANCED HORSE & RIDER

How do I know my horse is balanced?

Checklist:

- It feels good
- Calm, square, halt
- Even loading of the hind legs
- Equal connection and contact in both reins
- Half-halts are going through
- Even tempo
- Lightness in the reins
- Steady, calm breathing



Things to be balanced

- 4 corners, equal hind legs, soft connection.
- Trot vs. Canter
- Collection vs Forward
- Pressure vs Release
- Teaching vs Practicing
- Long muscles vs short muscles
- Up in contact vs Stretching down
- Riders seat
- Rider's leg pressure
- Rider's aids

Balanced Rider

Rider's position, Imagination vs Reality, Fitness vs Strength, Ambition vs Patience, Contact vs lightness, Variety in workout for horse and rider

Knowing vs Questioning

Horses don't understand your lack of commitment, so when you ask questions they see/feel that as "weakness/lack of leadership." Aiding from a place of conviction is more clear than being tentative.

CORRECTION (Consequence for a negative behavior) VS CAJOLING (Positive feedback)

"Iron Fist"

"Cheerleader"

Horses need to feel accepted, honored, and respected.

Even if you don't love what they are doing, you still love and accept them.

Correction should come from a place of love and not a place of impatience, annoyance, and sharpness. Correction should never be excessive.

Cajoling is being adamant but good spirited about getting a desired result and rewarding the correct answer through positive feedback.

BECOMING YOUR HORSE'S PHYSICAL THERAPIST

YOU CAN COMPLETELY TRANSFORM YOUR HORSE BY CREATING THE RIGHT PROGRAM FOR THEM.

Diagnose the Problem: Road Map

By understanding what the purpose of each exercise is and how it benefits, you can diagnose your horse's weaknesses. By knowing what the issue is, you can prescribe the right exercises.

Understand the Exercises and Problem Solve. Balance, Strength, & Suppleness should be developed daily to help the horse move more beautifully.

Lateral work = Foundation

The means to develop this balance, strength, & suppleness.

Important Points:

Proper daily workout/program:

Warm-up - walking, stretching, circulation
Work phase - build strength and teach skills
Cool down - stretching, relaxing, mental release

Aiding system:

Always sit on the seat bone towards which you want the bend.
Blend the lower leg, upper leg, seat bone, weight, and reins.

The horse must be round and on the bit or the exercises lose their effectiveness. Always take care of the spinal alignment so that the horse isn't just bending his neck.

The Exercises:

Turn on the Forehand, Leg Yield, Shoulder In, Haunches In, Half-pass, Renvers.

Our job is to mix them all together creating ribbon exercises.



BECOMING YOUR HORSE'S PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Turn on the Forehand

-Yielding Exercise

- Foundation for being on the bit
- Inside hind leg crosses over outside hind
- Ribcage rotates
- Stretching of the outside of the body
- Contracting the inside of the body
- Improves longitudinal flexion
- Helps the horse pay attention & breath
- Foundation of all bending
- Right Calf controls Right Hind
- Left Calf controls Left Hind

Leg Yield

-Obedience Exercise not Strengthening

- Improves obedience to the inside leg
- Improves suppleness but does not add any strengthening properties
- Forward-sideways movement
- Slight positioning away from direction of travel
- The inside hind leg travels towards the midline of the horse, sending his whole body sideways.

Shoulder In

- "Aspirin for horses"

A forward angled movement done on a 33° angle in which the horse engages the inside hind leg and lowers the hip, thus moving the inside hind leg under the midline of the body. We create bend by positioning the shoulders in front of the inside stifle.

One of the most important strengthening, straightening, and suppling exercises. Can be done on a line or on a circle. Improves suppleness of the body and targets the inside hock in both directions.

Horse's haunches remain on the track while the shoulders are brought in, so the horse will continue traveling on the path of travel, on three tracks.

"Sister to the Canter" -

The body functions in a very similar way therefore shoulder in can improve the canter because of the bending properties.



BECOMING YOUR HORSE'S PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Haunches In

- A forward sideways movement in which the horse is now looking in the direction he is traveling.

- Strengthens the Stifles
- On a line or circle
- 3 or 4 Tracks
- The horse's shoulders stay on the track while the rider's outside leg brings the haunches to the inside track.

Half Pass

-A forward sideways movement that the horse is looking and moving in the same direction.

ADVANCED MOVEMENT

- Elements of the shoulder in and haunches in are in essence mixed together for the half pass
- Benefits the Hips
- Can be thought of as a haunches in on a diagonal line.



Renvers

It is a counter movement where the horse is bent to the outside and putting the haunches out.

VERY ADVANCED

- High collection movement
- Huge benefit for the lumbar back, pelvis, and hips
- Increases engagement and lowering of the croup
- Basically haunches out.

NEXT STEPS

School Trot

- Once you have learned to create the lateral movement, change the stride length within the exercise.
- Continue creating ribbon exercises to mix these concepts together.

WELL ROUNDED THROUGH CROSS TRAINING

The goal is always, happy, healthy athletes!

Variety is the center of all training!
Cross training is not only for the body
but for the mind - even in dressage
work, use variety!



LUNGING

A good skill to teach every horse, as a controlled structured exercise.

- Can aid in safety.
- Good for accessing balance, soundness, and movement patterns.
- Can provide a well deserved break from the saddle by using a surcingle.
- Side Reins - for horses that need to be going round, can be adjusted for different neck positions.
- Surcingle - to attach side reins.
- Warmup - a good long warmup in walk is still essential before lunging.
- Duration - any time spent lunging counts towards total work time.

GROUND POLES / CAVALETTI

- Proper warmup
- Modify number of poles & configuration to suit your horse's needs.
- Pick a location so they can be approached from either direction.
- Graduate to raised poles
- Canter cavalettis depend on the horse
- Proper measurement based on your horse's stride, strength and desired effect
- Blocks & Risers help stabilize and increase difficulty/strengthening effect



WELL ROUNDED THROUGH CROSS TRAINING

RIDING OUT

- Uneven Terrain or hill work is great
- Varied footing & surfaces benefit the legs
- Benefits mind & body for most horses

LONG LINING

- Riding from the ground
- Help with alignment & self-carriage
- Create structure & improve throughness
- Should always be taught to the horse by a skilled professional first

IN HAND / GROUNDWORK

- Skill Building
- Teach leg lifts to deepen engagement and prepare for piaffe
- Fosters obedience & facilitates understanding
- Builds mental and emotional connection



“Connection isn’t just about your hands on the reins, or your bum in the saddle. It’s about a spiritual connection.”

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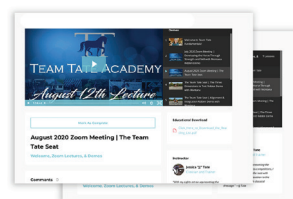
PLUS



+ **Weekly Instructional Videos** in our USDF accredited **Lesson Library** featuring short, easy to understand videos that are targeted to help you and your horse reach your full potential. JJ demonstrates **what exercises and movements should look like** in real-time, explains **what you should feel**, and how you can **correct** common mistakes. Join now and get access to existing content plus new videos are released every Monday!



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