



Dressage Training Journal

WINTER 2017

FOR HARMONY BETWEEN HORSE AND RIDER



WHAT IS IT THAT
TALENTED RIDERS
REALLY DO?

Mary Wanless Explains

GROUNDWORK

The 10 Principles of Training

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR DRESSAGE SCORES

Train, Ride and Compete with Accuracy

“I DON’T LIKE
BEING WATCHED”

What Causes Riders to Feel this Way



Dressage Training.tv

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WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of *Dressage Training Journal*. This journal will take you on a progressive learning journey from groundwork to ridden training helping you to create a more harmonious partnership with your horse.

Our journal was conceived as a way to share with riders and trainers a more holistic framework of dressage training. Our articles incorporate training techniques from all of the 'toolkits' which you will learn about in this first edition.

Our articles are aimed at all levels of riders and contain techniques that can help all kinds of horses from Shetland, to Cob through to Warmbloods. Our belief is that any non-compromised horse is capable of that beautiful shape of the dressage ideal.

In these PDF journals you will learn about essential groundwork and how this relates into riding. There will be articles on giving your horse more confidence to deal with stressful situations. We'll work through the vast topic of rider-biomechanics which shows how the rider effects the horse and how the horse effects the rider. You will also learn about schooling and test riding at competitions so that you understand how to get the best marks possible for your horse.

I remember a time when riding was my only way to train the horse. I would often get stuck in tricky situations, which were difficult to resolve. Now with all of the available toolkits I no longer find myself frustrated and can approach training with a greater range of solutions tailored to each different horse. Good groundwork produces a horse which is light to the aids of stop and go, which understands how to move its forehand and quarters and can also be trained to deal with difficult situations. Rider biomechanics gives a deep and logical understanding of how the rider effects the horse, and how the horse effects the rider. This level of understanding is very powerful because it is easy to make decisions about training, and diagnose issues with the horse & rider. Finally understanding how to school a horse through the levels and learning how to squeeze marks from a dressage test gives all kinds of horses and riders a chance to compete and perform well.

If you like the articles presented in this journal and would like access to additional training material then have a look at <https://dressagetraining.tv/tv-membership> where we have lots of training courses and access to support from our coaches through the forums and video feedback.

Peter Dove,
RWYM coach & author of *Master Dressage*

THREE TOOLKITS (AND THE 4TH DIMENSION?)

MARY WANLESS BHSI BSC FRSA



Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography

To my knowledge, American trainer Charles de Kunffy first proposed the idea of the rider's first and second toolkits. The first toolkit he called 'seat and position' the second, the school movements.

As a researcher and teacher focussed primarily on the first toolkit, I have utilised his idea for many years, but consider that 'seat and position' sells the toolkit short. It really describes the physics and biomechanics of how rider and horse influence each other, be that for good or ill.

As riders we cannot not influence – the horse is continually 'reading' our body, and though he can, at least partially, 'tune us out', our way of sitting still affects him. Sadly, we riders are also often 'tuning out' the influence of our physical presence, keeping our conscious awareness elsewhere.

The moment we lower our backside into the saddle we introduce the horse to our 'bum shake' – and this gives him far more information about us than our hand shake gives another human! The horse immediately knows if his rider's body is limp, crushing, or offering a 'wholesome' hold. You might appreciate this analogy even more if you (as a woman) have ever been ballroom dancing, and experienced the holds of different partners!

The horse is also registering whether our centre of gravity is ahead of his, behind it, or over his. He knows how well we support our body weight, and how asymmetrical we are. Our asymmetry will generate a force from one side to the other, encouraging him to fall on one shoulder (but most riders will think that this is his problem, not theirs). The horse can tell if we are matching the forces of his movement and if we are adding 'white noise'. This could be derived from the looseness of our wobbles, or the 'heftiness' of our shoves.

I hope I am beginning to convince you that the horse knows far more about most riders than they know about themselves! But by learning about ourselves we discover how to make our sitting more 'horse-friendly', and to 'read' how changes in us influence him. Through this we discover the hidden rules of the rider/horse interaction: i.e. when I do 'A' the horse does 'B', when I do 'C', he does 'D' etc. (When I kneel more, putting more weight down through my thigh, his back comes up; when I bear down more, he reaches away from me more with his head and neck.)

This rider will no longer tell you that 'either I can think about me and work on my position, or I can think about him and how he's going'. Instead she 'rides on interface', and becomes able to decode the rider/horse interaction, having skills

to influence, and words to explain. She has discovered the power of the first toolkit!

In a way that mirrors 'reinventing the wheel', each rider has to find out for herself the rules that underly the rider/horse interaction. Being told about them is no substitute; but the more common problem lies at the end of the spectrum where talented riders have no words to explain those rules. They have unconsciously figured them out: their first toolkit skills form part of their 'unconscious competence', so they will tell you that they 'just made the horse do 'B'', without any 'how to' information about their 'A'. This remains mysterious, unacknowledged, and—ultimately – dismissed.

Skilled trainers are usually proponents of the second toolkit, and may ask you to practice shoulder in even if its main effect is to make you bump more and pull on the inside rein! With this minimal skill-set you will not succeed in engaging the horse's inside hind leg—and so it is with all of the movements, which only achieve their desired aim when done well. Despite this, they are generally considered to be THE training method. This puts the cart before the horse!

It is more helpful to view the second toolkit through the lenses of the other two. When viewed through the lens of the first toolkit, the aim of rider >>



Peter Dove works on groundwork with Kalligraphy, owned by Karen Nichollas

and coach is skill-building: how do you position your body to create a viable shoulder in? How are your cack-handed efforts, and/or your horse's contortions disorganising you? What changes would make you more effective, and what would be a viable next step in your learning? What might this movement (done well) achieve for you, given the specific patterns presented by your body and your horse's? Which movements are less helpful, perhaps because they legitimise the horse's desire to hold his quarters to one side of his shoulders?

We can also view the second toolkit through the lens of what I will call the Zero toolkit. This underlies toolkits 1 and 2, and again, elite riders use it so unconsciously that they have no language to describe it.

The Zero toolkit has been made explicit by Australian zoologist and event rider Dr Andrew McLean, who called it 'equine learning theory'. It is based on operant conditioning, which is essentially trial and error learning that uses pressure and its release. It begins with the handler on the ground, ideally before the horse is backed. I think of it as the 'ground zero' of training.

Rein aids, with the reins over the horse's head and the handler facing the horse, replace the rein aids when ridden, and leg aids are replaced by a whip tap. As the horse trials responses he finds the one

that, in effect, teaches the handler to release her aid. Trial and error learning works extremely well for riders too – it is how Ride With Your Mind coaches teach first toolkit skills. This means that riders are not expected to get it right first time, and are encouraged to experiment – even though traditionally, the words 'experiment' and 'riding arena' do not go together!

For both humans and horses, trial and error learning has a depth and meaning that nothing else can match—it results in you owning those skills and insights. Horses are highly motivated to repeat any response that leads to the release of pressure, and they consciously learn the meaning of the aids. (When they are less-than-ideally motivated, the positive reinforcement of clicker training can help.) Riders learning first toolkit skills are motivated by their increased body control, coupled with an immediate improvement in their horse.

In this scenario, the horse has not consciously learnt how his 'B' matches his rider's 'A' – changes like this are instinctive expressions of the laws of biomechanics. As the rider kneels more, the horse will automatically lift his back. His responses to the rider's first toolkit are a 'shaping' of those consciously learnt operant responses. But if this fails – for instance in the excitement of your first show – those well-learnt operants are the bedrock you both fall back on.

In the Zero toolkit, the trainer's main focus is on go, whoa, step your hind leg towards the midline of your body (adduct it), and step your front leg away from your midline (abduct it). Its focus and philosophy is a little different to the many schools of 'Natural Horsemanship'. One of Andrew McLean's most brilliant insights was that horses naturally tend to follow the handler's feet with their own – and we naturally encourage this. But once we are riding, there will be no feet to follow! Also, we do not want the ridden horse to anticipate our aids – which means that we must not encourage this from the ground either. We do not want him to respond to how we look at him or move towards him, as we might if we were training him for work at liberty.

The Zero toolkit, with its focus on rein and leg aids, could be considered as the rationale for the 'this hand here and that leg there' way of teaching the second toolkit movements. But this undersells both of them, and also infers that the rider does not have a body – which, as I stated earlier, cannot not influence via its asymmetry etc.

First toolkit skills are at a premium as the second toolkit stakes get higher, and there is undoubtedly more to riding than operant conditioning. Usually, those who claim there isn't are utterly oblivious of their own fantastically effective first toolkit! Meanwhile, at the other end of the >>



Heather Blitz instructing Demelza Hawes on Diva

spectrum, it really helps not to set yourself the task of attempting to ride the clueless horse with a good first toolkit but no Zero toolkit (as I did for many years).

Alison Wakelin has made the observation that an elite rider, via her first toolkit biomechanics, is such a fantastic 'dancing partner' that she can cause the horse to perform a certain movement; but she has not concurrently taught the horse to do that movement. If we operantly teach him to do it, we will get a reasonable result with less elite biomechanical skills.

However, any horse's performance will inevitably decline when he is paired with a less skilled dancing partner i.e. a rider with less good biomechanics. I have known several riders who bought very expensive, well trained horses, whose performance subsequently went down hill. 'It was worth it for the first three weeks!' they told me as I met them (in deep trouble) several years later!

A more enlightened assessment of the Zero toolkit essentially sees it as being about the horse's reactivity to the aids. It realises that in each and every moment, one party in the rider/horse combination is training the other – and the horse who is training his rider is becoming de-trained himself! The question is: can our work sessions challenge both him and us appropriately, keeping

the work productive, and asking questions that both parties have a good shot at answering well?

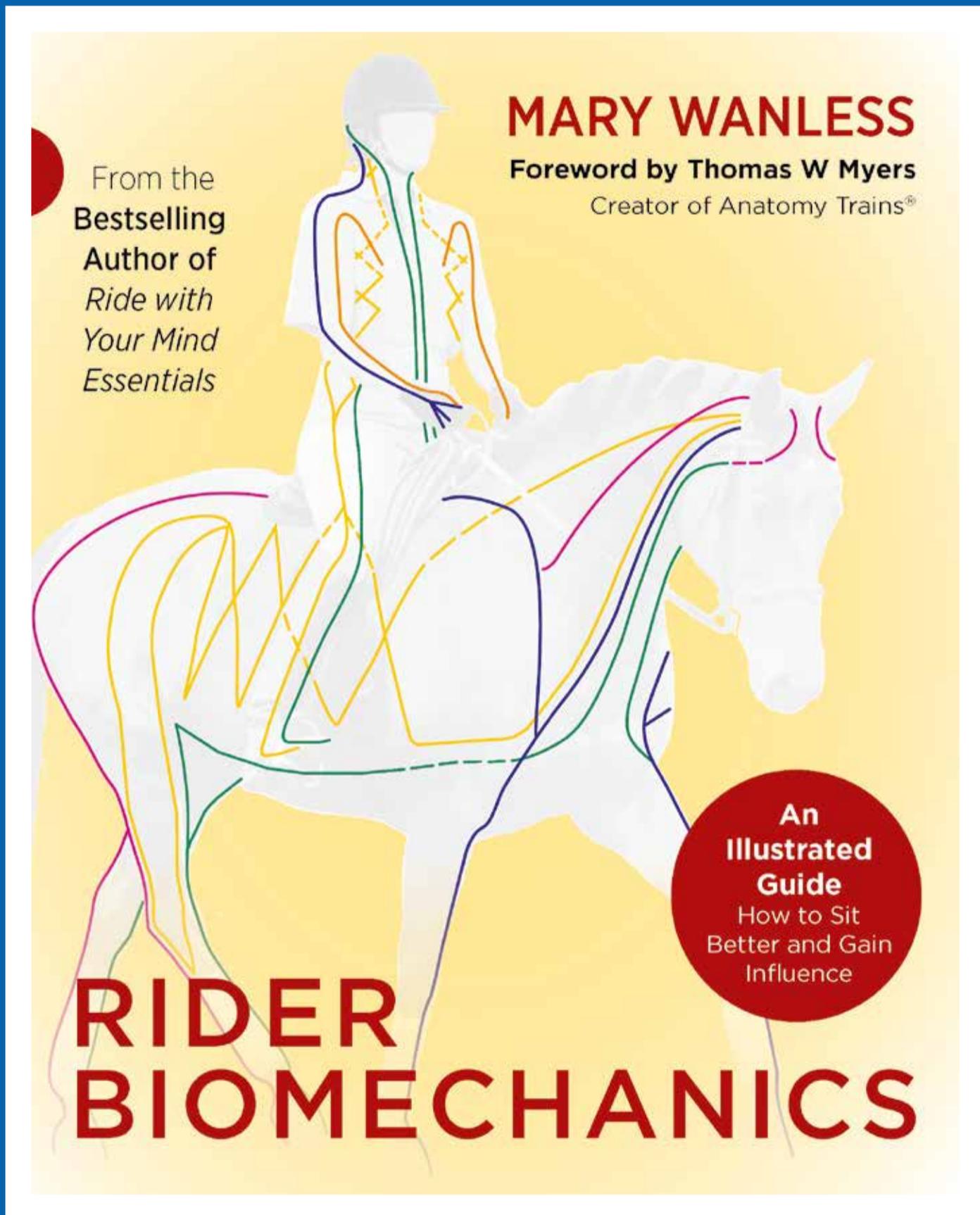
Even when more advanced movements are viable, the bottom line still lies with those early operants. How light and responsive is the horse to 'go' and 'whoa'? Do we riders 'fill in' for his non-response by contorting ourselves (compromising our first toolkit), or do we hold him accountable – perhaps reminding him of his responsibilities? Many people would rather just nag than do this, eroding their power-base. This makes them victims of their own lack of authority, as well as their horse's non-response. It is where many riders hit an internal brick wall.

The fourth dimension describes our willingness to hold ourselves accountable, and at times to be brave. We all get to decide if riding is just light-hearted fun, or if we will challenge ourselves enough to make it a source of life-long learning. If so, it has critical moments, where rider and/or horse suddenly think 'Whoa, I thought I was up for it, but now you want THIS?...' We hit what dressage rider Kyra Kyrklund calls their 'private space'. When you quietly and courageously find your way through one of those moments, you and your horse grow in presence, and power, building bonds and skills that are life-enhancing for both of you. 🐾



Demelza and Fry at the RWYM Demo Day, Addington 2017
Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography

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10

PRINCIPLES OF EQUINE LEARNING THEORY



The system of groundwork that we teach at [Dressage Training TV](#) is based on the work of Dr Andrew McLean. Dr Andrew McLean, when developing his system of groundwork, created a series of training principles. These principles will guide your application of this system and can help you assess other systems of groundwork too.

1 TRAIN ACCORDING TO THE HORSE'S ETHOLOGY AND COGNITION

This means that you need to understand why a horse behaves as it does. There are lots of ways a horse can react to different situations and many reasons for their behaviour. It is also very important we don't assign 'human' thinking patterns to horses. It is very easy to think that the horse might be being awkward or difficult 'on purpose' or have some motive for its behaviour other than just being a horse.

By spending time studying horse behaviour we can better understand what makes a horse frightened, how we can make them feel more comfortable and secure, how fast we can progress our training.

2 USE LEARNING THEORY CORRECTLY

This means that you must understand and use ideas such as habituation, sensitisation, shaping, positive and negative reinforcement (operant conditioning) and classical conditioning. Using these methods correctly allows the horse to learn with the least stress. Whip habituation is one of the first things we do with the horse and a powerful tool in gaining trust and relaxation in groundwork training.



3 ALWAYS TRAIN WITH EASY AND CLEAR SIGNALS

The signals you use to train the horse must be easily understood and be sufficiently different from each other so that the horse will not become confused. Signals which are insufficiently distinct can easily lead to stress, unwanted behaviour and lack of control.

4 YOU MUST SHAPE THE RESPONSE THAT THE HORSE GIVES YOU

When first asking for a response, we are happy to accept a very basic response as 'correct' from the horse. However, over time, we shape the response to be smoother, lighter and ask the horse to respond in a more balanced manner.

An example of shaping the response in 'Go' would be to make sure the horse steps off with more purpose, that he does so without falling onto the forehand, and that the horse's head carriage does not significantly change. >>

5 ALWAYS KEEP THE RESPONSES SEPARATE

It is important that you do not apply two signals at the same time. For instance asking the horse to go and stop at the same time creates confusion, stress and will lead to a degeneration of the horse's responses and confidence. This level of confusion can also result in displays of conflict behaviour such as shying, bucking and rearing.

6 ONLY ONE RESPONSE PER SIGNAL

Every signal you use must only have a singular response. For instance, your stop signal must only ever mean stop. Using the same signal for different responses based on spurious caveats will give sporadic results and confuse the horse.

7 BE CONSISTENT

If you are consistent in your signals and the responses you expect, you will get consistent results. It is important to remember that groundwork is not just for working in your arena or pen. The same principles must be applied when you are getting the horse from the stable, when leading it to and from the field and when getting it ready for mounted work. It makes no sense to train a response in the groundwork training session and then to let it be muddled in day to day handling.

8 TRAIN SELF-CARRIAGE

A horse should keep doing what you last asked it to do. After a period of training the horse should be able to keep itself in shape, in rhythm with consistent energy without intervention and constant signalling from the trainer.

9 AVOID FLIGHT RESPONSES

When a horse is in flight response it is panicking and fearful. The horse cannot learn in this state, and will not develop the confidence within itself to deal with unfamiliar situations.



10 KEEP THE HORSE'S AROUSAL LEVELS LOW

The horse needs to be calm and relaxed when working and training. High levels of alertness and tension can cause unwanted behaviours and create dangerous situations for handlers. This does not mean the horse should be dull and lifeless to the aids. Horses which are dull to the aids display this by requiring a lot of pressure to cause a response, or from light pressure with a sluggish response.

The groundwork system that we teach at Dressage Training TV has been broken down into three levels. The Groundwork Certification Programme will take you right from the beginning of the system through to lateral work both on the ground and ridden. You will learn how to habituate your horse to more difficult environments such as competition, and how to use the system to help tackle typical ridden problems. The videos for this system are short and designed for people with busy schedules.

The biggest bonus of this system of groundwork is that it uses signals which very closely match the aids given by a rider. The horse is taught not to follow the feet of the rider but listen intently to the aids given via the rein and whip. This makes parking (halting for longer periods) easy because the horse doesn't try to follow the handler. Other benefits of this system are that it produces horses which are relaxed, easier to handle, easier to calm in stressful situations and which respond lightly to ridden aids.

THE WELL TRAINED HORSE

The Well Trained Horse is a three video series which takes you through the basics of the groundwork system we teach at Dressage Training TV with three accompanying videos demonstrating techniques.

Become a Dressage Training TV member to watch this recorded series, join the groundwork certification programme, and many more recorded and live webinars.



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INTRODUCTION TO FELDENKRAIS

WITH KARIN MAJOR

The organisation of your body is a factor in all three Toolkits, as is your ability to learn and make changes. The Feldenkrais Method™ (FM) is a way of exploring your body, your way of thinking, your way of noticing, that in turn will make it easier for you to learn and make changes in your riding. It will also make it easier for you to start noticing things about your horse, his way of going, his patterns, his responses, to develop 'feel'. FM is a way to learn how to learn, to notice when you are using effort, to explore alternative ways to find relaxation within stability and mobility.

In her book *Rider Biomechanics*, Mary Wanless describes the fascial lines which run through our bodies. Each of us holds these lines in a particular pattern unique to us. Some lines we hold taut, others slack. We do what we've always done, and frequently we are not aware of what we are doing. Many people go through their days with varying levels of pain or discomfort. They think that that is just how things are and they live with it. Others are not aware of the stresses and strains within their bodies, until they stop to observe it. It need not be that way.

So, where do we start? The best place to start is by getting to know your own body. Babies lie in their cots exploring their bodies, they do not worry about right and wrong. They look for pleasure, comfort, for the ability to roll, to see the world around them. This is how we initially learn to move.

Try the following... sit down at the front of your chair away from the back with your feet on the floor. Notice;

HOW ARE YOU SITTING?

- Can you feel both seat-bones?
- Do you have the same amount of weight on each?
- Do they contact the chair in the same way?
- Does one feel more forward on the chair than the other?
- Does one feel bigger or smaller than the other?
- How much of each thigh contacts the chair in front of your seat-bones?



YOUR FEET...

- What about your feet, are they flat on the floor?
- Is one more on the outside edge than the other?
- Notice the right foot. Do your toes curl under your foot or curl up from the floor?
- Is it the same or different on your left foot?
- Push more into one foot. Which foot do you choose?

YOUR RIBS...

- What about your ribs, is the length from your right hip to your right armpit the same as the length from your left hip to your left armpit?
- Let one side shorten and then notice which side you choose
- Repeat the shortening several times on that same side.

- Notice: does that change the weight in your feet or in your seat-bones? What happens?

- What happens in the ribs on the other side?

- What happens in your spine?

- Continue to do the same shortening. Is it an active movement or a passive 'collapse'?

- What do you do with your head as you shorten that side?

- Explore the ribs again shortening the other side. Does this feel the same or different?

Explore these questions at various times, notice what you notice. Familiarise yourself with the questions. Then ask yourself the same questions when you are in the saddle, with your feet in the stirrups, initially at halt, then walk, trot, canter, going straight, then if appropriate, laterally.

Notice, this lesson is about noticing, it is not about changing anything, it is about being aware of what you are doing right now.

There are over 1,000 Feldenkrais Awareness Through Movement lessons (ATM), where you get to notice what you do as you explore an extensive variety of movement patterns. There are a few of these lessons on [Dressage Training TV](#) members area. You can also work with a Feldenkrais Teacher in a private lesson (Functional Integration (FI)) to explore specific movements, where the teacher guides you with their hands to bring attention to certain details of the movement and support your nervous system in making adjustments. 🌱





FELDENKRAIS
MOVE TO IMPROVE

Watch the entire series with Karin Major here

Here Karin Major works with Claire, exploring being aware of her seat bones, her ribs and her breathing.



Karin encourages Claire to become aware of her seat bones...



...then to round her back and be aware of them...



...then to hollow her back and be aware of them...



...and to find 'neutral'...



...and to find 'neutral' again...



...and to repeat, noticing what her ribs are doing at the same time...

“WHAT I'M AFTER ISN'T FLEXIBLE BODIES BUT FLEXIBLE BRAINS. WHAT I'M AFTER IS TO RESTORE EACH PERSON TO THEIR HUMAN DIGNITY.”

—MOSHE FELDENKRAIS

“IF YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING, YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU WANT”

— MOSHE FELDENKRAIS



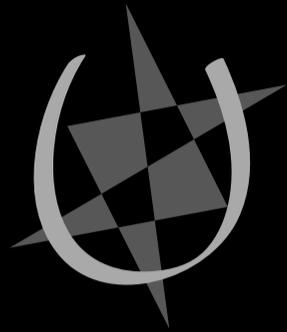
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HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR DRESSAGE SCORES

ACCURACY

An excerpt from the book *Master Dressage 2nd Edition* by Peter Dove

Accuracy is probably the quickest way to pick up – or at least not throw away – marks in a dressage test. However, it is not simply the act of being accurate which brings in the extra marks – the mere fact of learning to be more accurate allows your horse to become more balanced and have the greatest chance of performing well in the test. It is thus the benefits of being accurate which increase your marks too.

Comments from the judge such as ‘needs more suppleness’ or ‘needs better balance’ may stem from the fact that the movements were performed in a manner which made both requirements difficult for the horse to fulfil. In this chapter I will cover the typical movements required in a dressage test and the best way to approach learning them, performing them and developing accuracy, which will get the extra marks in your test.

In the following pages you will see movements from different angles including a bird’s eye view of the arena with real horses performing the movement. I am using a mixture of photos and diagrams to make riding test movements as clear as possible.

Let’s first consider the arena itself and for most of this chapter I will talk about the 20 x 40m arena, although I will also discuss the 20 x 60m arena and some of the additional letters and measurements there. Most of the advice I give for the 20 x 40m will also work well in the 20 x 60m version.

Take a look at diagram 1, of a 20 x 40m arena. Let’s talk about some of the more salient points of this arena size and the letters around it:

- The line A to C splits the arena in half down the length.
- The line E to B splits the arena in half along the width.
- The centre of the arena is marked by the letter X.
- Lines between the other markers, HM and KF, connect as shown in the
- diagram, to produce some further letters on the centre line: G and D.
- H, M, K and F are all 6m in from the ends of the arena.

These are really important points to note, especially the fact that H, M, K, F are 6m in from the ends of the arena. Often when riding circles riders will leave the track at these markers to begin their circles at C or A, perhaps mistakenly believing that these markers are valid points on the circle.

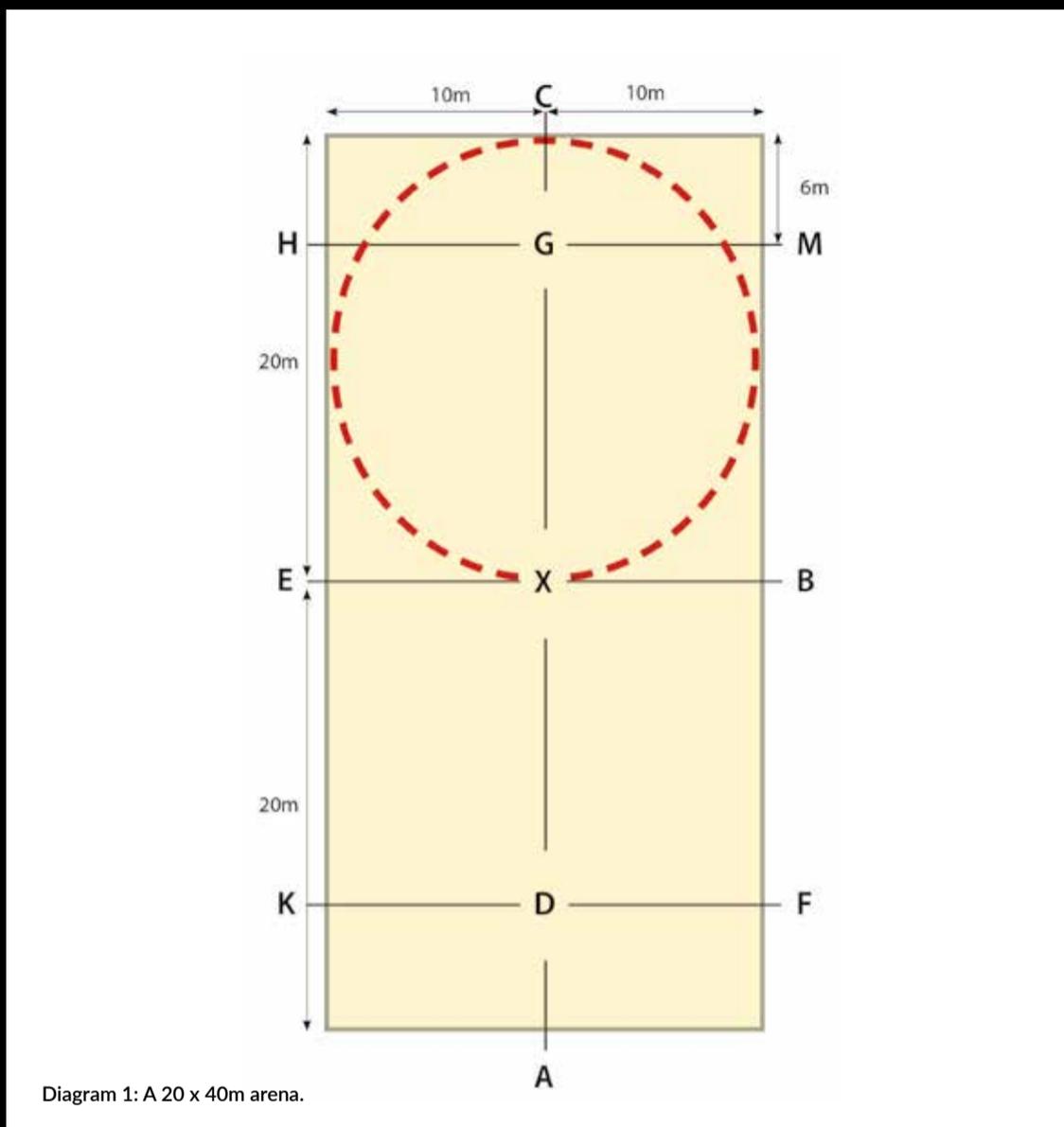


Diagram 1: A 20 x 40m arena.

As we progress through this chapter I will add in some additional lines to these arena diagrams to help illustrate different points.

- [How to ride corners.](#)
- [Riding the centre line.](#)
- [How to approach turns.](#)
- [Changing the rein across the diagonal.](#)
- [Riding 15m circles at different markers.](#)
- [Riding serpentines.](#)
- [Loops 5m and 10m in from the track.](#)
- [10m circles and related figures.](#)
- [20 x 60m arena: differences in layout and the arena letters.](#)
- [Transitions.](#)
- [The role of rhythm in balance and accuracy.](#)

At the end of the chapter, there is also some advice about how to draw shapes on the arena floor, to assist in practising accurately.

ACCURATE 20M CIRCLES

20M CIRCLES AT A AND C

I thought we would start with 20m circles as the basic unit of a dressage test. Especially since, over all the time I have been judging, this is the thing I see done most incorrectly by the majority of people. In diagram 2, I have placed two 20m circles, one at C and one at A.

The 20m circle at C is obviously the correct version of the circle. Let’s have a look at the characteristics of the circle within the arena.

- It touches the track in only three places.
- It goes through X.
- It does not go into any of the corners!

There are a couple of things we can think about which will help us perform a good circle. >>

First, if we start the circle at C, we are stepping off the track at C. We do not continue along the wall and we do not go anywhere near the corners. In fact, we only touch the track again on the long sides halfway between the C end and the EXB line. I have marked these points with small dotted circles.

Some of the typical errors in riding 20m circles at A and C are shown in the 'circle' drawn at A. Riders tend to continue on the track past the A marker, instead of stepping off at that point. Riders then do a version of riding into the corner, then along the long side, before realising they should be turning. After that point it's usually a drift across the school.

Have a look at the photo (below right). This shows a 20m circle performed at A in a 20 x 60m arena. Notice how far the circle lines are from the corners. Many riders are surprised at this when I first teach them how to ride a circle as they are so used to going into the corners. This photo also shows how little time is spent on the track in a well-executed 20m circle.

Drifting on circles is a really common error, even if a rider manages to understand that they must not go into the corners and that the circle has only three points that touch the track. Often it's the final part of the circle which goes through X where riders lose accuracy. It helps to think that X is the high point of the curve and that the moment you are stepping on X, you must be turning away from it.

It's important to think of a circle as a continuous turn and, at no point on the circle, should you be on autopilot drifting around. Mary Wanless describes it this way:

"Imagine you are trotting on top of a gymnastic balance beam, raised off the floor, which is just wide enough for your horse. This balance beam is bent into the perfect 20m circle shape. Your job is to make sure your horse trots on top of the balance beam and does not fall off."

If you were indeed trotting along the top of this balance beam, you would be very sure that you kept turning and didn't drift off one side or the other.

You can also use this imagery to ask yourself 'Which side of the balance beam would I fall off – would it be to the inside or to the outside? By frequently asking yourself this question, you will become a lot more accurate and a lot more aware of the deviations your horse may be making. 🐾

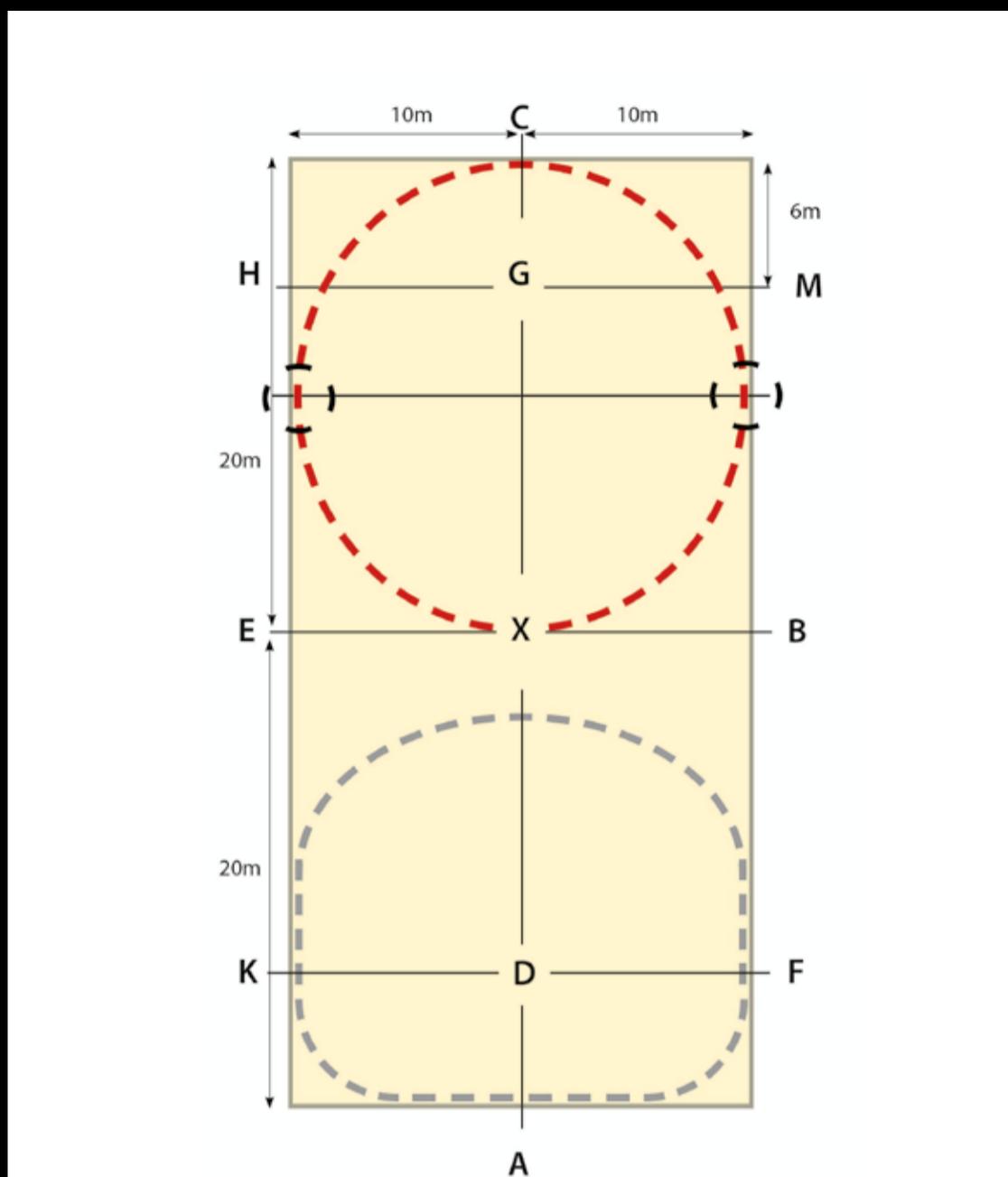


Diagram 2: 20m circles at C and A.



IMPROVE YOUR DRESSAGE SCORES

If you're interested in discovering more about Accuracy and other ways to get better scores, why not take a look at the Improve Your Dressage Scores course on Dressage Training TV.

I don't like being *watched!*

BY JO COOPER

Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography

Over the years that I've been working with riders with confidence issues and performance stress, I've often heard the comment 'I don't like being watched'. This is usually an aside, rarely the main reason people come to me, and yet is something that can have a significant effect. When people don't like riding in front of others it can affect not only competitions, but lessons, clinics, in fact any riding where there are people around who might watch.

The fear can be solely of being watched – but is often more complex. It often includes a fear of being judged or criticised. It can be a fear of being talked about and can be related to specific individuals or groups of people. It seems to me that riding in front of an audience has similarities with public speaking and it is often said that a fear of public speaking is one of the most common fears the world over – and is considered by some people to be more scary even than death!

The fear of being watched and criticised can be a bigger problem for dressage riders than for some other disciplines. In dressage the attention of any audience is focused entirely on the horse and rider and on every step, whereas in other disciplines the focus is often less intense. In show jumping, for example, anyone watching is often less concerned with the smallest detail of what the rider is doing than on whether or not they successfully get over the fences.

Riders who lack confidence often think that almost every other rider is confident and they are surprised to hear that they are not alone. Similarly, people who are anxious about being watched rarely share their feelings with others as they can feel that this would make them even more vulnerable. They can then begin to feel isolated. It is often helpful to ask other people how they feel about being watched – you might be surprised by how many of them share some of your concerns. Finding a sympathetic person

**WHEN YOU ARE MAKING
JUDGEMENTS ABOUT
YOUR OWN RIDING
IT IS IMPORTANT TO
APPRECIATE THE SKILLS
YOU HAVE ALREADY...**

to talk with can make a huge difference and help to build your confidence.

A useful step in dealing with a concern about being watched is to work out the extent of the problem and what or who is involved. Sometimes the realisation of exactly what is happening can make things easier to deal with, and can even solve the problem. When you think 'I don't like being watched' you can ask yourself some simple questions to help you to be more specific.

Firstly, is your concern connected only with riding or is it a more general issue that affects other areas of your life? Can you think of any situations in the past that might have contributed to the problem? It can be useful to cast your mind back to any time when you might have been asked to 'perform' and been upset by people's reactions. This could have been when riding or in other contexts, for example, at school – anyone who has been the focus of

bullying behaviour at school or work, as well as whilst riding, can often trace their feelings back to this. If it becomes clear that the root of the problem is in the past it can help to think about all the ways in which what happened is different from any issues being faced in the present. It can also be useful to remind yourself that you have changed and would now react differently to the past situation. It is easy to be thrown back, without realising, into the feelings you had many years ago and not to appreciate how much you have changed too and that you are now capable of dealing with whatever happened.

Does it make a difference who is watching? Are you more concerned about people you know, acquaintances you have met briefly or people who are strangers to you? Does it make a difference if they are older or younger, or more or less experienced than you? How do you feel about other riders who are in the same situation – other riders at a clinic, for example, who may watch your lesson whilst waiting for their turn? Do you feel as badly about random passers-by? With each of these imagine yourself in their position and notice what they are feeling. You might find yourself surprised by how often people who watch are wanting you to do well. They can also be watching to learn for themselves – and remember that even if they are talking to each other it may be about something completely different and nothing to do with you at all. >>

The horse world can be amazing and people in the horse world can be kind, helpful and supportive. There are also people you may find difficult and some who can be critical and judgemental. It's important to recognise this and not to assume that any comments are personal – they rarely are and usually say far more about the person commenting than anyone else.

The people who are most vulnerable to thinking that other people are being critical or judging them are the riders who don't have confidence in their own ability and are equally self-critical. When you are making judgements about your own riding it is important to appreciate the skills you have already, the new skills you are working on and those you have yet to learn. When you are making judgements about your own riding make sure that you are looking back to where you started and to recognise how much you have already learned and the skills you have developed. Set yourself achievable goals in the short term, as well as for the future and remember to congratulate yourself every step of the way. 🐾



Jo Cooper is a qualified and experienced practitioner who specialises in working with equestrians and other sports people to enhance their performance. She has worked with hundreds of riders and her clients include every level of rider from experienced riders looking for competitive edge to beginners who need to boost their confidence.

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YOGA WITH DEMELZA HAWES

From the earliest memories of childhood my only recollections are of ponies, riding and mum taking me and my sister to competitions. My background then was in the world of showing and we were a successful amateur family team producing our own ponies from scratch. My mother had a great eye for a horse but their temperament was often hotter than needed!! We certainly had some challenges, and with only the fields to train in, we had to learn the right way! At this young age, my learning was often very organic and natural, figuring things out for myself. My keenness to ride each day was immense, simply to figure out how I could improve on feelings from the ride the day before.

Winning the championship at the Royal International Horse Show at the age of eight laid the foundation stone for a competition career which later progressed from showing to dressage, having tried my hand at side saddle, team chasing, race riding and regularly doing breaking. In the early days I was largely inspired by the Irish Grand Prix rider Alison Davies. Her patience and attention to detail were a huge influence and set me on a path of Classical training. Briefly, for me the term Classical with reference to dressage training infers first and foremost the utmost respect for the horse. This influences all my work with horses. A horse should be trained at a pace dictated by his mental and physical abilities, his own conformation, biomechanics and natural way of going.... all of which can be improved by specific and appropriate exercises. Progressively readying the horse for more challenges from a firm foundation is key. No gadgets or force should be used. It is my long held belief that with these principles in mind it is not only possible

to progressively build a trusting and fulfilling partnership with your horse but also minimize the risk of injury to the horse.

Since dressage seems to take on cultural differences in Europe I set off on a discovery tour. I worked and trained in Germany for a year. A valuable experience indeed, there I was looking after 22 horses at the age of 23, and training the livery riders!

My next European trip some years later was to France. I was accepted to undertake an internationally recognised teaching/training certificate at the prestigious Cadre Noir in Saumur, France, which I completed successfully. This proved to be a most interesting and beneficial experience. I rode a great variety of horses and had training sessions four times a day minimum, also training with French Olympic eventing champions (Athens gold medalists). I took my horse Fabrizio (Fry) with me and was lucky to have a dressage trainer with extensive knowledge of the history of equitation, learning groundwork techniques and a clear logical training regime from young horse upwards. Fry, who I have had since he was a foal, is now working at GP level at home. Apart from horsemanship I had to learn French – all the teaching, veterinary terminology and exams were in French.

During my stay there I made friends and contacts which I continue to teach at occasional clinics.

Before and between my European visits much of my time was spent working with youngsters and difficult rehab horses. Time and time again these horses proved to me how correct Classical

principles in training work so well, as well as allowing time and consistency to do its thing.

I have consistently and progressively trained my two horses Diva and Fry who are working at inter 1 and GP respectively. Fry is 17.2 and little Diva only 15 hands and I have had both of them from the time they were born.

I hugely enjoy training and coaching riders, assessing the individual needs of both horse and rider always with a view to the rider's ambitions, be they wishing to be safe happy hackers or wanting to compete. A riders "light bulb" moment is music to my ears!

I believe that to influence the horse the importance of a rider's use of his/her body cannot be underestimated. Following the principles of RWYM (Ride With Your Mind – rider biomechanics studied and taught by Mary Wanless) is invaluable so I am currently training to be a coach in this system of applied rider biomechanics. Riders need to have body awareness coupled with strength and suppleness and to this end I have found Yoga to be effective. Earlier this year I spent some time in Nicaragua where I successfully acquired my international Yoga training certificate. In this field I am now furthering my training towards Sports Specific Yoga.

My work with both Peter Dove and Mary Wanless has made an inestimable difference to me as a rider and to the help I can offer riders to have correct alignment, effective use of their bodies and a secure seat resulting in much improved communication with the horse. So, happy horse – happy rider. >>

BRIDGE POSE

WHAT IS BRIDGE POSE?

The modified bridge begins with your feet placed near your buttocks when lying supine, i.e., on your back with knees bent. The final pose is with your shoulders and head on the floor, your back arched with hips high and nearly level with knees, feet pressing into the ground and with your arms parallel alongside your body, or if more advanced raised overhead in line with ears.

WHY BRIDGE POSE?

Specifically good for riders who “wobble” too much around their waist, or are too stiff, or have problems maintaining leg position. Other benefits are:

- Builds awareness and strength around the pelvis which riders desperately need
- Strengthens thighs
- Stabilizes the spine and hips
- Opens the chest facilitating full use of lung capacity
- Strengthens and mobilizes shoulders
- Activates core and importantly triggers eccentric muscle contraction which enables riders to control better, their horse's forward push
- Can be used to restore and energise a tired feeling body.

HOW?

WARM-UP

Lying on the back, widen shoulders away from ears, knees bent up towards ceiling, feet hip width apart, pressing into the ground, navel into spine so back of the waist is into the mat. Aim to feel as much of your spine down to the mat. This is NEUTRAL SPINE.

1. Exhale, gently turn head to the left, inhale to neutral, then exhale to the right, inhale back to neutral. **Repeat x 3 very slowly.**
2. Inhale arms up and over head, extending arms past the ears. Exhale slowly bringing arms alongside body to floor. Focus on feel in shoulders, keeping the blades towards the mat. **Repeat x 5 very slowly.**
3. Place hands to each shoulder, elbows pointing upwards, touching if possible. Slowly circle elbows, starting small and gradually increasing, keeping control. Maintain awareness in shoulders, notice differences, accept them, allow your body to adapt. A few crackles are ok to hear – this is just tension which is calcification within the fibres. We ALL have tension in the western world!
4. Hug knees to chest, holding onto knees, allow hips and knees to widen, so knees are going towards sides of torso. Slowly rock side to side with control, turning head to opposite direction. Feel the twist, notice the massage in the lumbar area.
5. From hugged in knees, inhale keep navel to spine and extend arms and legs away from main body, pushing heels away and opening hands to extending fingers (body in full tension), inhale pull navel to spine and slowly scrunch body small hugging knees in (releasing tension). **Repeat x 5.**

THE POSE



- From your supine position, press feet firm into ground, navel to spine, place a block or thick book between thigh/knee area – squeeze it tight engaging core and upper legs
- Very slowly start to tilt the pelvis, first lifting tailbone up (towards knees), then slowly lowering and pressing it to the floor, so lifting hips slightly upwards. These are small internal movements under your control. Repeat x 5
- Next time you lift the tail bone, continue lifting all the spine one vertebrae at a time, slowly lifting the hips as high as you can with strength not force. The key is to very slowly lift through lumbar spine, thoracic (chest) spine and finally finishing at the cervical (neck) spine. Once up to the neck, the shoulders need to squeeze towards each other so actually supporting the neck avoiding pressure on spine. This is Bridge pose!
- Hips high
- Squeeze block
- Press feet hard into floor
- Shoulders squeezed behind you
- 3 breaths into the belly before rolling down
- Keep eyes towards ceiling, DO NOT turn neck
- If you wish to be dynamic, with each inhale raise arms overhead, in line with ears, and exhale back alongside body
- Now, very slowly with navel to spine, separate shoulders, roll down one vertebrae at a time, maximizing control of all those small stabiliser muscles and tendons and ligaments. 🙏



SARAH SHEPHERD & PABLO

Sarah and Pablo have been stars of the first in our Retraining the Horse & Rider series, you can follow their training journey with Mary Wanless, Ali Wakelin and Peter Dove now on [Dressage Training TV](#).

Name: Sarah Shepherd

Age: Over 21

Where are you based? Near Stonehenge, Wiltshire

Why did you start riding? To get away from my brothers.

How long have you been riding? Really only started riding as an adult.

What/who was your first horse? Chilly Day, an ex racehorse who was given to me by a friend who was a permit holder (trained her own horses). When living in London I used to ride the Household Cavalry horses in Hyde Park and they were always beautifully groomed, tacked up and ready for me at the appointed hour. When I moved to Wiltshire and was given my first horse, I had to do all the hard work myself. I did write to the HHC grooms to say that all the brushing, mucking out etc had come as a bit of a shock!

Which was your favourite horse? All of them.

Who is your current horse? Pablo.

How long have you been riding/training this (these) horse? Pabs has been with me just over three years.

Who most influenced you from a training perspective? Mary Wanless. I bought her videos (still got them) but it took me quite some time to fully understand them.

What is your usual routine at your yard? I am lucky enough to keep the horses at home so I try and ride out in the morning depending on weather!

Who is your favourite horse to compete? Pabs.

Best horse you've ever ridden? Pabs.

Do you have sponsors? Unfortunately not.

Who is your key support person & what they do that helps you? My husband does encourage me to enter competitions and annoyingly does give me a few tips whilst out hacking.

What is the most vital bit of kit in...

Your yard: Hot water.

Your grooming kit: Stain remover.

Your lorry/trailer: A huge thermos with tea for me and warm water to wash Pabs down with rather than get my hands cold (especially important in the winter).

Your training 'toolkit': My lovely whip purchased through [Dressagetraining.tv/shop](#) – despite the fact that almost every time someone borrows it I then end up buying one for them so I get my own whip back.

What couldn't you live without? Hot water and gallons of shampoo.

Most interesting/tricky equine situation you've been in? I fell off my first horse, Chilly Day, landed badly and broke my back. My friend who was with me asked where we were (middle of Salisbury Plain), I gave her some pretty useless info so she went off to get help. Luckily my husband didn't find me first as he would have bundled me into the back of a Landrover but another friend found me, called the air ambulance so I mended well. >>



PABLO

Horse's Name: Pablo.

Owner: Sarah Shepherd.

Breed: Cob / part bred Andalucian.

What's Pablo's favourite treat? Any, the more the better!

How long has he been with you? Three years

What is the horse like to handle/ride? Lovely, easy going chap, doesn't get stressed, keen XC but fairly awful out hunting.

What's your training routine? I tend to take him out hacking on Salisbury Plain and do schooling during the hack as there's so much space.

What do you feed? Pasture mix, but he is on a strict diet.

What's he like to handle, clip, shoe? Perfect.

What did the horse do before it came to you? Pabs spent some time at Sparsholt college training students to ride before moving to his previous home.

Extra curricular activities? Swimming! Early one morning (about 5am) just over three years ago, I was woken up by a strange noise outside. Went outside, checked around, looked in the stables and saw that Pablo's door was open. Looked round the field, feed room (one huge bag of carrots eaten) and the garden. He was in the swimming pool waiting for help to get out. We got him down to the shallow end and he used the steps to jump out. (It was a hot summer that year and by the time we sorted the insurance and repaired the pool the weather had changed!) We also changed the bolt on his stable. 🐾



RETRAINING THE
HORSE & RIDER

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WHAT IS IT THAT TALENTED RIDERS REALLY DO?

Photo: Lottje Elizabeth Photography

MARY WANLESS BHSI BSc FRSA

What is it that talented riders really do? This is what international coach Mary Wanless set out to discover in the late 1970s and early 80s. She continues to find ways to communicate technique to less skilled riders today.

What she discovered was that the key pieces that make talented riders so able, tended to be things they were not consciously aware of, or couldn't explain. It is now understood in sports coaching that the more naturally able the athlete/performer, the less likely they are to know HOW they do what they do so well. A huge amount of what makes them so good is unconscious. (They don't even have to think about it, leaving them "brainspace" for refining their skills).

But it's just those fundamental bits that most ordinary riders lack. Think of it like this. If good riding is like baking a cake, talented riders already have the cake and can work on icing it, but most riders don't need icing instructions (yet), they need the basic recipe for making the cake... how much flour? Do they need eggs? etc.

The result of Mary's research is RIDE WITH YOUR MIND, a constantly evolving way of coaching riders the key pieces that underpin riding, and coaching them in bite-sized chunks that riders can assimilate.

On RWYM clinics riders learn that how they organise their body is the primary way in which they can influence the horse.

Nearly all instructors agree about the importance of having a good position, but many aren't consciously aware of how critically this influences the horse, or of how to convey the complex ingredients that go together to make up that "position".

“...HOW THEY ORGANISE THEIR BODY IS THE PRIMARY WAY IN WHICH THEY CAN INFLUENCE THE HORSE.”

A RWYM coach will help you to organise your body in a very precise, conscious way (hence Ride With Your MIND). Piece by piece, the coach will help you to use your primary communication toolkit (that's your body) to enable you to influence your horse's carriage in an apparently talented way.

Each rider has their own body disorganisation to deal with, which unbalances the horse and sends him conflicting signals, making the rider part of the problem, rather than part of the solution. But as the rider learns to maintain the correct mechanics, the effect on the horse is to

have him lift his back and reach into the rein, in classically correct carriage. (As opposed to the horrible experience, of creating a hollow-backed horse with his head pulled in. Without correct mechanics riders and horses are doomed to this, and never get to experience the magic of being so in place that the horse chooses to carry himself with freedom and lightness) Much of the traditional riding lore, presupposes that you as a rider already have your basic pieces in place, and that you are already able to organise your body in the right ways, so you can go on to organise and school the horse.

If you are taught by an instructor who is a talented rider, (and many of them are), they may struggle to convey to you HOW to do it, because in their body a lot of what makes it work just happens. If they got on and did what they were telling you to do it would work. But, and it is a huge but, most riders' body organisation skills are nothing like their instructors – yet. RWYM sets out to fill this gap. Imagine that good riding is a wonderful place, a place people want to get to, like Paris in France. The directions they will require to get there will depend upon where they start from. It is no good giving someone from Jo'burg the same directions as someone from London or Tokyo. >>



Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography



Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography

Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography



“GOOD RIDING IS ATTAINABLE IF THEY PRACTICE.”

Conventional instruction tends to assume that because everybody is aiming for the same place, they need the same instructions. RWYM coaches help riders to map the territory that THEY need to cross to get to good riding wherever their start point is.

Of course some riders start much closer to the goal, and that's wonderful, but RWYM doesn't believe that starting from a long way away should mean that you can't make the trip.

RWYM coaches will also respect you enough not to lie to you about the distance you need to travel!

People who come on RWYM clinics do ridden work, dismounted workshops, and watch video feedback. They say that the degree to which they need to be able to control their own bodies in order to ride is far more precise than they ever realised. They will also tell you just how weird it feels to organise themselves in the right way when that wasn't their usual body pattern. They rave about the way they have been coached and shown how to achieve a result, rather than just being told to do a particular action. They also rave about the amazing difference they can make in a horse when they get themselves in place.

More advanced riders are equally amazed that with even better body organisation they can

overcome persistent training problems, and develop the quality of their horse's work.

Riders come out of clinics with an awareness of what an organisational challenge it is to ride well, and the pieces that they need to begin the journey towards good riding – should they choose to accept that challenge. They are often realising for the first time the gap between their “toolkit” and what is required of them by a horse if he is to perform well.

However, they are usually very excited that they can close that gap, and that good riding is attainable if they practice and build on the pieces they have learned. Many feel that they are no longer doomed to the scrapheap of seemingly untalented riders, or to unhappily pulling a horse's head in, in an attempt to get it on the bit.

Moreover, given time to get their body organisation established, they report that they are far more able to do what their instructor/trainer wants, and to have the effect on the horse that their teacher so wanted for them all along. 🐾

CLINICS
 Ride With Your Mind have accredited coaches around the world (see page 40) as well as running courses in the UK at Overdale, Gloucestershire



Photo: Lottie Elizabeth Photography

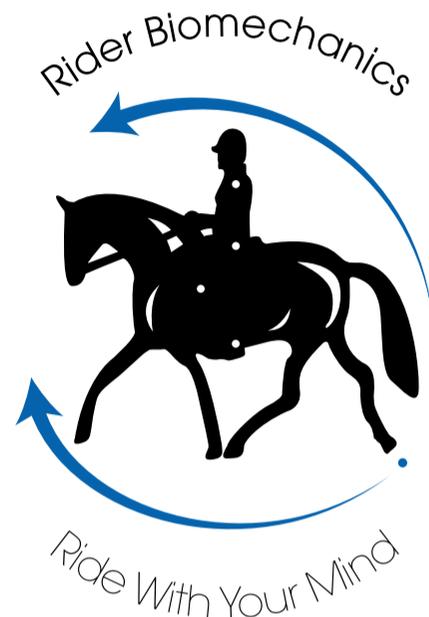
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RIDE WITH YOUR MIND DEMO DAY REVIEW

EAST SOLEY EC2000 • 13TH OCTOBER 2017

Following the success of the Demo Day in April a more intimate day was held in October for only 80 people as well as an online audience. The small audience at the venue meant that people were able to ask questions as the demonstrations were happening, have an up close view of the painted horses, and hear the rider's responses first hand.



The demonstration day featured Mary Wanless, Ali Wakelin, and Danish Veterinarian Rikke Schultz, whose practice mostly uses equine osteopathy and acupuncture. Rikke acted as an advisor on Mary's most recent book *Rider Biomechanics*, which describes how both human and equine bodies are sculpted by fascia.

This term may be unfamiliar, but we have all seen fascia: it is the white filmy skin which surrounds the muscles of a chicken leg. In general, fascia is to muscles what sausage skins are to sausages, connecting muscles into long strings. Rikke was part of a research team who dissected out the fascial lines in the horse, discovering that they mirror the lines in the human.

The day began with Mary outlining the rider's three toolkits (see page 6). Then Rikke and Mary described fascia, explaining how the lines act like guy ropes, stabilising the bones of the skeleton. They showed how the relative lengths of the lines of the front and back of the body give rider

and/or horse a hollow or round back. A painted pony and a human costume illustrated the lines.

Ali Wakelin then explained Equine Learning Theory. Its main aim is to teach the horse the meaning of the leg and rein aids as preparation for riding, but as Mary demonstrated with Tinker, it can also address the postural issues presented by uneven lines.

The next section featured two riders with no previous experience of the RWYM method. Emma O'Grady riding Jenny and Caroline Peyton on Rollo rode walk and rising trot in each direction as Mary asked the audience some key questions, and explained the significance of what they were seeing. Karin Major and Ali Wakelin then did some hands-on work to reorganise the riders, as Mary led the audience through similar exercises. Both riders made highly significant changes, which demonstrated how evening out the front and back fascial lines of the rider influences those same lines in the horse, dramatically changing his carriage and movement.

In the afternoon, Mary and Rikke introduced the Lateral lines that run down the sides of rider and horse, and showed how their inequality leads to problems with steering. Chantal Cornelius on Mia, and Milly Dove on Ella, ably demonstrated more honed RWYM skills, including their ability ride accurate circles.

Demelza Hawes and Karen Whiston then showed some more advanced movements with their horses, Diva and Winston. Rikke and Mary introduced the fascial line that forms the rider's and horse's core, explaining how it includes the internal organs. Rikke also showed the audience how some asymmetries in Winston's fascial lines were affecting him, and suggested how she would approach these as a veterinarian using complimentary techniques.

The day had a broad sweep, with some uniting themes, and offered ideas and skills for riders at every level. 🐾

[Click the advert below to book your ticket for the next RWYM demo day.](#)

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"So much useful information. Clear and entertaining. Want to keep learning more. Thank you so much"

"Wonderful. Very informative and fun - plenty to work on"



DEMO DAY

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JO SHELTON & SONIC

Sonic was my daughter's and husband's driving pony. He had competed successfully in various driving trials competitions over a five year period, and won the driving challenge at Equifest a couple of years ago. As is often the case my daughter left home to go to university and my husband, busy at work, was not able to exercise him enough. As I do not drive I decided to ride him. I very quickly realised that this was going to be a difficult ask. Sonic was used to working between shafts and responded to different driving aids. The first few months were a disaster as I tried to make him understand what I wanted. Steering was our biggest issue. He would fall in and out on corners, speeding up and slowing down at will. I have lost count of the amount of times that I got off him frustrated and vowing never to ride him again. After one particularly bad session I desperately started to search the internet for help and ideas. That is when I stumbled upon the Mary Wanless website and through this, [Dressage Training TV](#) website. I immediately bought Mary's books and subscribed to [Dressage Training TV](#). I started at Chapter One and worked slowly from there using both the books and lessons on [Dressage Training TV](#) together.

My first challenge was to get my shoulder, hip, heel alignment correct and keep it correct! I found the 'Retraining the Horse & Rider' (Sarah and Pablo/Sarah and Gwar) sessions invaluable. I worked very slowly and took time to understand each chapter in Mary's books and related these to the videos and webinars. I am still only about half way through! Re-learning how to ride cannot be rushed and it is extremely hard work and things definitely get worse before they get better. I have learned that it is important for the rider to be fit and to work on core strength, and to this end, I have enjoyed the [Dressage Training TV yoga](#) webinars. This really encouraged me to exercise more and become stronger — I also lost a stone in weight!

After eight or nine months of working alone with Sonic I decided that I was ready to seek some professional one to one help. I contacted Ali Wakelin with a view to having a lesson and was thrilled to learn that she taught in Norfolk once a month. I hoped that Ali could further help with my steering issues and other problem areas that I have encountered along the way. Ali was very patient and I really got the way that she explained things to me. I have been practising for a month or so now and my steering has improved hugely. We can even do a 20m circle without falling in! We have a long way to go but I now feel that I am riding Sonic opposed to Sonic dictating the riding. Progress is slow but we are progressing and I am starting to gain more confidence and enjoy the journey. I am very grateful to Mary Wanless, [Dressage Training TV](#), and Ali Wakelin. Without them think I would have given up riding Sonic and that would have been a real shame.



Name: Jo Shelton.

Age: 48

Where are you based? Norfolk.

Why did you start riding? Childhood dream to learn to ride.

How long have you been riding? Since childhood with some very long gaps along the way when I haven't ridden at all.

Who was your first horse? Breeze (Connemara Cross)

Which was your favourite horse? Little Joe (My daughter's first Shetland pony who had bags of character).

Who is your current horse? Sonic.

How long have you been training this horse? Ridden training has been around 15 months.

What's your horse's favourite treat? He likes a small carton of apple juice squeezed into his mouth!

Who most influenced you from a training perspective? Mary Wanless without a doubt.

Routine at yard? Our ponies live out all year with a shelter. We check on them twice a day to feed and poo pick.

Favourite horse to compete? Sonic competes successfully at Horse Driving Trials but has yet to compete ridden.

Best horse you have ever ridden? Maverick (a Welsh Sec D we had a few years ago).

Do you have any sponsors? No.

Who is the key support person and what do they do that helps you? My husband is very supportive and tries to be around when I ride Sonic so that he can call out to me if he spots an issue.

He has driven Sonic for many years and understands his idiosyncrasies. He has watched all of the Dressage Training TV videos and webinars and for a non-rider he has learnt enough about rider biomechanics to be very useful.

Vital bit of kit?

Yard: Salt in the spring and summer to kill the dreaded ragwort.

Grooming kit: fly spray as Sonic and his friend Marty are prima donnas when it comes to being bothered by flies.

Lorry: it has to be a kettle to make that much needed cuppa when we are out and about.

Toolkit: not really a tool but bale twine has come in very handy on a few occasions!

What couldn't you live without? Sonic has such thick fur that grows in all directions, so I really need my clippers.

Most tricky situation you have been in? I have been in a few situations that have dented my confidence over the years but the worse was probably when Breeze (my first horse) had a major tantrum and took off over a field towards the road. I only escaped unharmed because I was able to momentarily slow her down enough for me to jump off. Luckily, she came to a halt at the edge of the field. >>



SONIC

Breed? Welsh Sec C/D cross.

How long has he been with you? Eight years.

Horse's character to ride and handle? He is a real gentleman to handle. He can be very lazy when ridden and quite stubborn at times.

What is his training routine? We like to vary his training by doing lots of different things. We mix ridden flatwork with hacking out in Thetford Forest, a session of driving to keep him progressing and if possible some work on the lunge.

What do you feed? Thunderbrook base mix.

What is he like to clip and shoe? Sonic is fantastic shoe and clip. In fact his favourite thing is to be clipped. He chills out and almost falls asleep.

What did the horse do before he came to you? As far as we know Sonic had only done a little bit of driving.



ALI'S FEEDBACK...

When I first visited Jo to coach her I was really impressed by the amount of positional corrections she had made from reading Mary's books and watching the webinars on [Dressage Training TV](#).

Normally when I visit a new client the first few lessons will be spent correcting basic alignment and working on tone and use of the core but Jo had already achieved this on her own. This meant that in her first lesson we were able to work on straightness and steering issues. Jo has saved a lot of time and money by using [Dressage Training TV](#) as a resource between lessons and is progressing far more quickly than my usual expectation of a client. 🐾

RIDER ANALYSIS

In this issue of Dressage Training Journal RWYM coach Peter Dove looks at a Dressage Training TV member and their horse, and gives some helpful analysis of their position and their horse's way of going. This time it is Linda Morton from Australia, who has been a Dressage Training TV member for some time, and has watched many of the online webinar series.

LINDA MORTON & RED OCTOBER

I am fairly new to riding, I am 62 years young and have been taking dressage lessons from Jennifer Ault at Zeta Show Stable for a year and a half. I fell in love with the beauty of dressage and the complete trust and bond the rider and the horse have with one another. When I was younger I could not afford a horse or lesson so I decided to go back to college at 60 to take a semester to get a better job to be able to afford a horse and lessons, I did it and here I am competing at Novice A level and have done two shows this season, which I placed first.

I have a 21 year Oldenburg Warmblood, named Red October who has been trained to level three. I have had Red for a little over a year and we have a wonderful bond. I love to walk into the stable and he pops his head up from his stall with a sparkle in his eyes, he is my everything.

I found Mary online and was amazed at her way of training and understanding of biomechanics. I have read her book Ride with Your Mind and am now reading her new book; Rider Biomechanics. I have watched so many of Peter and Mary's videos on Dressage Training TV, 'The How of Riding', 'Rider Biomechanics' and 'Improve Your Dressage Scores' have all be so very helpful to me. The website is great with so many videos to watch and learn from. I love to watch live so I can ask questions. My membership to Dressage Training TV is worth every penny! >>



Click the links to see more about the courses, and online membership...



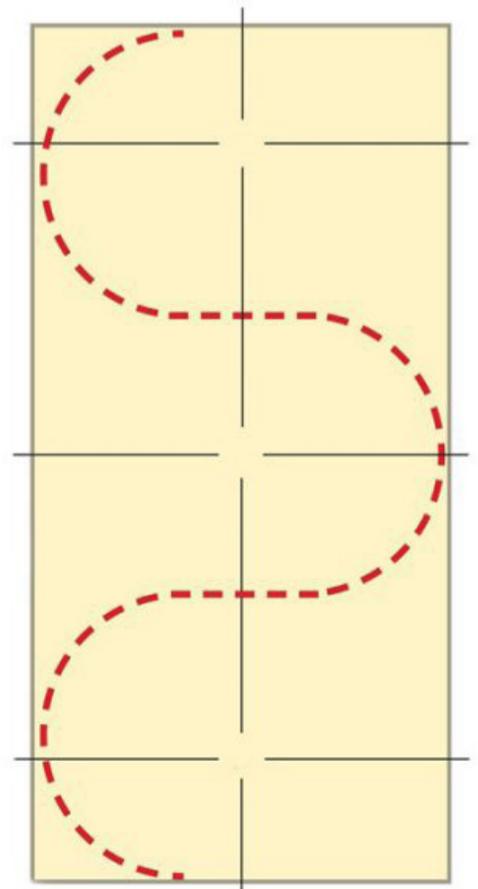
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COACH ANALYSIS

AT THE WALK

I love the walk picture (previous page), Red is nicely out on the end of the rein, relaxed and listening.

In terms of Linda's biomechanics I have added a couple of lines to help the reader see angles and position more clearly.

One of the simplest questions we can ask for an initial assessment is "If I were to make this horse disappear from under the rider, as if by magic, would the rider land on their feet, fall forwards or fall backwards". In this case I think we would agree that the rider would fall backwards. Translating this into acceleration we would see the rider struggle to stay up with the horse.

If we look at the Linda's thigh angle we can see that it is more horizontal than it is vertical. Ideally the thigh should be at a 45% angle, perfectly between horizontal and vertical. As the rider becomes more stable, more toned and able to control the leg it can go a little longer than that. Often riders make the mistake of lengthening their stirrups far too early. A longer leg is an end goal not a starting point. In the case of Linda I would re-align her lower leg and then assess whether the stirrups were too short. My guess here is that once her lower leg is more underneath her she would be able to point the knee more down making the thigh slightly more vertical.

Linda is doing a great job with her hands. Her elbow is slightly ahead of her midline and there is a straight line from her elbow through her forearm to the bit.

To correct some of Linda's issues we would bring her to halt, do a full realignment making sure she has neutral spine, that she is sitting in the correct part of the saddle and that her thigh and lower leg are in the correct place. Potentially this realignment could see her sitting very slightly further forward in the saddle and with her lower leg more underneath her body.

RISING/POSTING TROT

Here in rising trot (above right) Linda still has a pretty good hand position with the same



straight line. There looks to be a very slight backward hold of the rein but overall a good picture for the hands, forearm and elbow.

It is interesting to note here that Linda now has her lower leg much more underneath her and that the thigh is less horizontal than before. There does look to be a small issue with the stirrup iron being too far back towards the heel and that her foot may be twisted out.

Rotation out of the foot can sometimes be caused by the thigh rolling outwards. It can also be caused by giving leg aids from the heel or by drawing the leg backwards and in. To help get the thigh flatter against the saddle the rider can grab hold of the back of the thigh and lift it out away from the saddle at the same time as rotating the thigh in a little.

Linda's upper body is slightly inclined forwards as is correct at this phase of the rising trot. It is difficult to tell from the photograph but she may be very slightly hollow in her lower back. It also looks like she could land a little further forwards in the saddle.

Red looks as though he isn't tracking up in his trot and needs a little more energy. Linda

will need to check that she is getting to the top of rise with enough thrust and that she lands light enough in the saddle for the horse to lift his back more. It may also be an issue of responsiveness to the leg and that Red could go more forwards.

There are lots of things going right here for Linda, I really like how she keeps her hands out in front of her and how she works hard keeping her torso nicely stacked up.

Our new Winter Schooling Series and Groundwork Certification Programme have now started and we have our member's online forums manned which allows members to submit videos and photos for assessment throughout the programme. I'll look forward to seeing posts from Linda and we can help her become more effective, more stable and to smooth out some of the small issues we have seen.

Mary Wanless is always saying a rosebud is no worse than a rose. We are all at the stage we are at in our learning. Our aim is to move the rider along the path recognizing that A comes before B, B comes before C and that while we are all aiming for perfection no person can jump from A to Z in the skill alphabet. 🌹

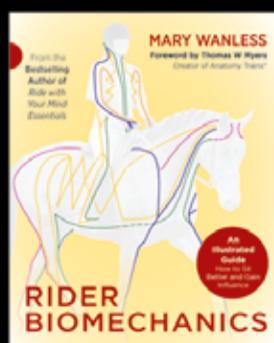


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Q&A

STAR LETTER

GROUNDWORK

Q When I tap the horse's shoulder, say his left shoulder, he crosses his left leg over his right front leg. How do I teach him to just move the opposite leg, in this case his right leg, without crossing?

A: A lot of horses do this on one side when you first train the shoulder steps. It is a coordination/wiring issue and will correct itself as long as you keep tapping the shoulder until the correct leg moves. So with your horse you need to keep tapping until he moves his right leg.



Q I have a young horse (just turning four) that I am starting groundwork with. I've done a lot of different styles of groundwork with different horses and find some horses especially geldings get nippy in the beginning of teaching. My young horse is quite nippy and it escalates when something is more difficult for him (i.e., moving the shoulder that is harder for him). How do you address this while teaching the groundwork? I do other manners work with him (and liberty), but he will still get nippy at times with the proximity of groundwork.

A: Nipping is a fairly common behaviour exhibited by horses during groundwork and is a sign that they are stressed. The stress may be caused by the horse being asked to learn new responses and the nipping then goes away once the response is learnt. Sometimes the stress is caused by the environment as the horse doesn't feel safe. Once the horse has relaxed in the new environment then the nipping will cease. It is very important that the horse does not get rewarded when he nips but we often do this without realising it. When a horse goes to nip you mustn't move your arm away from the horse and instead move your arm towards him and if needed make contact with your horse's muzzle. This teaches the horse that if he nips your arm then your arm will react in a negative way (rather like electric fencing) and he will learn not to nip.

Q How do I prepare my horse for a show? He does fine at the farm; however, he loses his marbles when we go anywhere or when there is a show on the farm. For example, today he was rearing and bucking while we were trying to lunge/walk around and, under saddle, he did a lot of aerial stunts. He really is normally pretty laid back...so we are surprised at the rudeness.

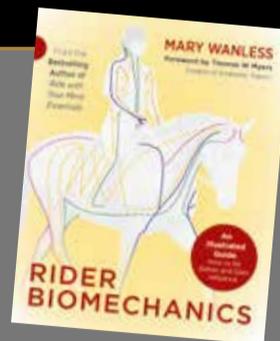
A: Your horse's behaviour is stress. He is worried by the changes in environment and increase in horse numbers when he is in a show environment. He needs to learn that these changes are okay but it needs to be done gradually to avoid him become so stressed that he ends

Q Ali, I have a large draft and I'm trying to get him more forward. I've tried many combinations with limited success. When I apply leg he goes, same if I use crop or spurs. His go doesn't last, need suggestions!!

A: It sounds like you have trained the go response well in your horse but now she needs to learn to maintain it. Start on the ground by asking for go, then notice the speed of her legs carefully. The moment one leg starts to slow you need to sharply whip tap her until she speeds up (don't use the rein first) you may need to repeat this a few times until she learns. Then under saddle do the same (don't use your leg if she slows, just sharply whip tap). Timing is crucial in this training as if she gets to slow her legs even for a stride then she is getting reward.



THE STAR LETTER EACH ISSUE WINS A SIGNED COPY OF THE NEW BOOK BY MARY WANLESS; RIDER BIOMECHANICS



up in a panic. Start by doing groundwork in your arena alone then introduce other horses into the arena. Notice his reactions as you do this. The first signs of stress will be that his responses to stop, go, head-lower etc will become heavy. When that happens you need to stop introducing more horses and continue groundwork until the responses become light. Then you can introduce more horses again. Repeat this both in the arena and around the farm and at different venues until his responses are light everywhere. Then you can try him in an actual show environment but you need to carefully watch for the first signs of his responses becoming heavy as that is telling you he is getting stressed again.



Q In the equitation science book it says a help for 'Jibbing' is teaching the horse to take longer walk strides and faster ones. I really struggle with this in hand and would love help. And I wouldn't know how to start with moving this forward to riding longer walk strides.

A: Jibbing (UK: napping) is a failure of the 'go' response and sometimes also the 'turn' response. The first thing to check/train is that the horse has a light 'go' response which means he must move off a light ask into an active walk. Once this is trained then short/quick and long steps can be trained. Start with short steps which will also begin to move the horse's weight back towards the hindquarters. Once short steps are trained then ask the horse for a bigger go and you will get longer steps. This will only happen once the horse has learnt to shift its weight back as this lightens the forehand allowing the shoulders to move more freely. There will be videos of this appearing on the website as part of the groundwork certification programme over the next couple of months. >>

Q&A

Q Are there groundwork solutions for a horse that is very anxious going into trot? Steering disappears, legs speed up, head goes up, brakes become dull. If trotting in hand the horse bites at your lead hand while looking extremely worried and tense. I've been working on stop, back, park and turn forelegs in walk (all helped a lot under saddle in walk) but not sure what to do about trot... except avoiding it! This isn't my horse but a horse I'm riding for someone else. Horse has a history of previous owner riding very roughly and at speed (poor boy).

A: Horses are by nature flight animals, so they release adrenalin when their legs go faster (i.e. Going from walk – trot). When training we need to teach horses to speed up their legs calmly but it sounds like your horse has had previous training where he has learnt to associate faster legs with flight/adrenaline release. It sounds like you have done a really good job training him in walk to be calm and relaxed. You need to teach him to head lower in halt and walk as that will help lower his adrenaline levels. Then once this is trained you can start training the trot. You need to lower his neck when you ask him to trot and this will teach him to stay calmer. You may have to do this many times to layer over his old training. Once this is trained from the ground you can do the same under saddle.

Q Back in April after my horse bucked me off, we discovered that he had the start of arthritis which we are managing, but now I have it in the back of my mind that he is going to buck me off—everything else has all been checked—eg teeth, saddle etc. Is there anything I can teach on the ground that I can then use when riding to prevent bucking? We also have a problem when he is in the float he likes to kick the back door. It doesn't matter what speed we go, if we turn a corner, if we are going away or to home, and it makes no difference if we have another horse with him. It wasn't something that he did when I first purchased him.

A: If your horses bucking was caused by pain then, now that you have alleviated it, there is no reason that it should happen again as the behaviour doesn't sound like it was a training issue. Try to start riding him again slowly so that you can gradually build your confidence that he isn't going to buck. The kicking whilst travelling could also have been pain related as travelling is hard work on a horses limbs. It will be interesting to see if he is now calmer travelling. 🐾



Do you have a question you would like answered by Mary Wanless, Ali Wakelin, Peter Dove, or one of the extended team members? Please email support@dressagetraining.tv using the subject header 'DTJ Question' with your question and photographs or video link to help the team see the issue.



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HERTS

Hannah Griffiths

RWYM Level 1 Mastery

07824 825909

Club and competitive riders

KENT

Suzanne Marshall

RWYM Level 1 Mastery

07767 755524

BHSAI
Intelligent Horsemanship
Recommended Associate

KENT

Nikki Thomsit

RWYM Level 1 Mastery |
Level 2 Competence

07921 921100

LANCS

Helen Wain

RWYM Level 1 Mastery |
Level 2 Competence

01524 736606

BHSAI
Club and competitive riders

LEICS

Vivienne Isaac

RWYM Level 1 Competence

01509 880652

Equine and human Shiatsu, Club and competitive riders, nervous riders

NORFOLK

Heather Cook

RWYM Level 1 Mastery

01493 369383

BHSAI
Riding school, club and competitive riders

NORFOLK

Katherine Walter

RWYM Level 1 Competence

01508 521800 / 07961 377 422

BA(Hons), BHSA, BHS ITT, UKCC3,
NLP Practitioner
Club and competitive riders

NORFOLK

Nicky Donaghue

RWYM Level 1 Competence

01328 856866

Club and competitive riders

NORTH YORKS

Helen Lucraft

RWYM Level 1 Mastery

07867 804879

BHSAI
Club and competitive riders

OXON

Olivia Pollard

RWYM Level 1 Competence

07776 236524

Club and competitive riders

OXON/BERKS

Elaine Butler

RWYM Level 1 Mastery

07979 592 970

BHSAI
Club and competitive riders

SOMERSET

Dorothy Marks

RWYM Level 1 Mastery

01373 834103

Training with Phillipe Karl. Equine
Chiropractor, Saddle Fitter

SOMERSET

Karen Whiston

RWYM Level 1 Competence

01934 822914

BHSAI
Affiliated eventing

SOMERSET

Sharon Dickinson

RWYM Level 1 Competence

07771 628744

BHSAI
Teenagers + club and competitive riders

SURREY

Sarah Overington

RWYM Level 1 Competence

01483 272049

BHSAI
Affiliated show jumping + club and competitive riders

www.ethicalhorseandridertraining.co.uk

SURREY

Sally Ede

RWYM Level 1 Mastery | Level 2 Competence

01403 824107

BHSAI
Club and competitive riders,
show jumping, equine healing

SURREY/HANTS

Jo Strange

RWYM Level 1 Competence

07885 865091

Side Saddle instructor + club
and competitive riders

SUSSEX

Amelia Wilbourne

RWYM Level 1 Mastery |
Level 2 Mastery

01892 652653

BHSII
College lecturer + club and
competitive riders



RWYM COACHES IN EUROPE

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tery | Level 3 Competence

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Aachen
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POLAND

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CLINICS

Elaine Butler

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Guernsey, Poland, Norway, Sweden,
Switzerland

CLINICS

Ashleigh Sanderson

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Spain, Luxembourg, Germany

CLINICS

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RWYM COACHES IN USA & CANADA

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GEORGIA

Stephanie Moseley

RWYM Level 2 Mastery

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MARYLAND

Emily Osborne

RWYM Level 1 Competence

HeartOfRiding@gmail.com



RWYM COACHES SOUTH AFRICA

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Competence

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JOHANNESBURG

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RWYM Level 1 Mastery

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PERTH

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RWYM Level 1 Mastery |
Level 2 Competence

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ADELAIDE

Mardi Jennings

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RWYM COACHES NEW ZEALAND

CENTRAL DIST / RANGITIKEI

Cathy Douglas

RWYM Level 1 Competence

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TAURANGA BAY OF PLENTY

Linda Brown

RWYM Level 1 Competence

+64 7 5431917

NORTH & WEST AUCKLAND

Sue Pennington

RWYM Level 1 Competence

+64 21 0227 4708



THINKING ABOUT HOSTING A RIDE WITH YOUR MIND CLINIC AT YOUR YARD?

Simply contact the Ride With Your Mind coach closest to you from the Accredited list with location, the number of riders, and rough idea of what you'd wish to receive from the session i.e. Groundwork, ridden basics or particular school movements, and discuss potential dates.

NEXT TIME IN

 Dressage Training
Journal



- Dressage for Kids
- Realignment and Core Strength
- Bringing Your Horse Back in to Work
- Yoga
- Groundwork — Training Stop & Go
- Focus on Competing at Advanced Medium Level
- How to Ride Corners Correctly
- The Mind and Body as One System
- Rider Analysis