

The Program Lesson 1—Go, Stop, and Back.

Starting from the beginning maybe boring to many of the more advanced riders. but if you stay with me you may find that some of the holes in your performance and training are due to really basic concepts that are missing in your program. There maybe an advantage of not knowing too much for those starting from the beginning. Those people will not have to undo their old habits in order to become proficient at this program.

You must create the ride not be along for the ride. With that in mind let's start:

We are always asking for impulsion when riding and impulsion comes from your legs and hips. Set up straight roll yourself up on your pelvis, open your chest, and allow a dip in your back. With your heels down and directly under your hips in a line with your ear you have achieved the proper seat. Don't sit on your pockets and if you have ever been told to scoop with your hips please never do it again. Never hold pressure with your knees or your upper thigh and don't push yourself out of the saddle with your legs. Set down with heels down and toes pointes out. Reach around the horse as if to hug him with your legs thus pulling yourself down into the saddle. This will allow you to lower your center of balance into your hips not in your shoulders where you could become unbalanced. Think forward with your hands thus lifting them up and forward as you squeeze with your calves and your horse will walk forward. You have created the ride. Allow your body to be relaxed and flow with the horse's motion. As the saddle starts to move forward at the walk push it with your hips. Don't kick your horse just squeeze and lift your hand in a forward motion. To stop your horse keep the leg on until you are ready to stop. Horses want to stop so this part is easy. Take your legs off by pushing them forward and making your legs straight. At the same time allow your tummy to crunch and your shoulders to fall in the direction of your hips. Do not lean back and elongate your tummy, Put your legs in a brace position but do not push your self out of the saddle, Put your hand down and fight the temptation to pull on the reins. In the beginning exaggerate these cues so that your horse really feels a difference in go and stop. When stopping make it an abrupt change from go to stop. Try jerking your feet into position and dump your shoulders down while crunching your tummy. If for some reason he does not stop then after he continues going forward a few steps pull up on the reins and say whoa. Pull on him to make him back up a step or two, Try again and see what happens. Now that you are in the stop position you can back. Leave your feet in the stop position pick up on the reins. Place your hands in a line from the horse's mouth to your shoulders bending your elbows like you were lifting a weight. Stay back on your hips and apply enough pressure with your hand for the horse to try to find a way to get away from that pressure. Do not put leg on at this point just keep the pressure on his mouth and he will find a way to pick up his shoulders and back up. If he puts his head down even slightly I release and he will start seeking down as a way away from pressure. Just ask for one step at first then two steps and then more as time goes on. So far seems pretty elementary doesn't it? One very important thing for you to do not only in this lesson but in all of them is that you understand and pay attention to what happens when you apply a cue. If you are not getting what you want then maybe you are not communicating with your horse. Your horse will not disobey you but he may misunderstand what you are asking. Always be consistent and ask the same way every time and the two of you will become a team. This is a team sport you know?