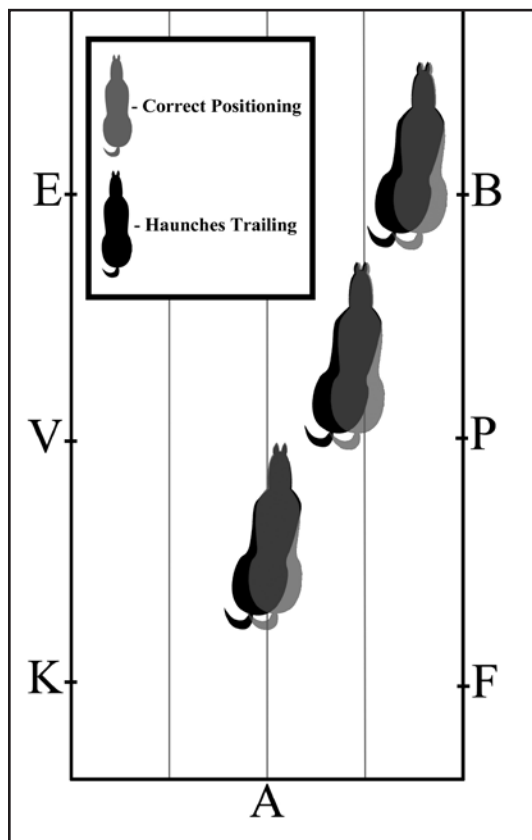


Lesson Topic: Leg-Yielding Lesson for a First Level Rider – Plan A

As you instruct your student in the warm-up, ask her to change direction several times on circles in the trot and canter. Make sure you are in the correct position, outside the circle, to observe the work. During the warm-up, find out from the rider the horse's age and experience. Assess the horse's way of going, and evaluate the student's seat and position and use of the aids. For this example, let us say that the horse has really good basic gaits and the student can get him fairly easily on the bit; however, you notice that the horse is hollow on the left side and stiff on the right. Make a mental note to ask the student if she is aware of that.

At the end of the warm-up, ask the student to let the horse chew the reins out of her hands and ask her to walk him on a long rein. During the break, ask the student more about the horse. For this example, the student tells you that the horse usually gets scores in the low 70s at Training Level but only in the low 60s at First Level. Her lowest scores are on the leg-yielding, so now you have an idea of what to work on in the lesson! You also ask the student about her horse's stiff and hollow side. After a moment of reflection, she says that the horse really takes the right rein quite strongly and bends his neck relatively easily to the left. She therefore assumes quite correctly that his stiff side is the right and the hollow side is the left. But she doesn't seem to understand the implications. She also says that the contact on the right rein is not so strong that she can't keep a "good hold" on it, but she also admits that when circling to the left she sometimes feels the horse's right shoulder is "popping out."

After explaining the aids for leg-yielding, you have the student go back to work. You ask her to go down the center line in



Haunches trailing in leg yield

trot and to leg-yield from the left leg to the rail. Make sure you position yourself somewhere near the quarterline beyond the estimated point of arrival in the track so that the whole movement is completed in front of you. In the first several steps, things go quite well. Then the horse begins to bulge through his right shoulder and his haunches start to lag. This is quite a common occurrence when the horse falls through the outside shoulder. You make your student aware that this problem is related to the horse's left side being the hollow side. Now she remembers some judges' comments about the haunches lagging when leg-yielding to the right.

You instruct the student to come down the center line and do the same movement again, this time paying more attention to the use of the diagonal aids (i.e. using a stronger inside leg and seat bone into a more half-halting outside rein.)

Now you notice that the student, in her effort to use more leg and seat-bone pressure, is pulling the knee up, climbing with her thigh, bringing the lower leg way too far back and also collapsing in the left hip. For a few steps the haunches are actually corrected, but then the horse falls through the outside shoulder worse than before, and in spite of the student giving half-halts on the outside rein the horse is speeding up.

Now is the time to take another break and discuss with the student what went wrong. She is now much more aware of what actually happened but wasn't able to prevent any of it. You need to explain to the student why her faulty aids made the problem worse. Thoroughly review and discuss with the student the aids for leg-yielding. Also point out that leg-yielding is a very rudimentary introduction for the horse to accept straightening aids, and explain how the diagonal

application of the aids can help in that regard.

Again, have the student come down the center line and do the movement in the walk. Remind her to keep her torso centered, half-halt on the outside rein and maintain correct leg position. After several steps of leg-yielding, ask her to go

straight ahead, parallel to the center line and then start leg-yielding again but only for a few strides followed by straightening her horse. Repeat until the horse reaches the rail. After another repetition of this in the walk with feedback from the instructor, it is apparent that the student is now much more successful in keeping the horse straight in the leg-yield. Now ask her to do the movement again in the trot using exactly the same method.

There is a significant improvement, but as expected in the trot, it is much harder to keep control of the outside shoulder. Instruct the student that at the same moment she feels the horse wanting to lean into the outside rein, half-halt more strongly and ride the horse straight ahead. If she misses that moment, ask her to counterflex the horse for a couple of strides and bring him to a halt. When the horse halts, ask her to straighten him. It may also be helpful to rein back and then resume the movement as planned. After a few more repetitions, you notice quite an improvement and you ask the student if she can also feel this. She says that she can and the horse is also getting much lighter in her hands. She now has good tools with which to improve her leg-yielding and is able to show reasonable success.

At this point, you conclude the lesson by taking the horse onto the right rein, and letting him chew the reins out of the riders' hands. (The reason for doing this tracking right is not to let the horse have the opportunity to fall through his right shoulder when tracking left.) During the cool down, you review the lesson with your student through questions and answers, making sure she fully understood the system and that she is confident she can use the tools you gave her when working by herself. She also says she is glad that she had the lesson videotaped so she can look at it at home.