

## **Lesson Topic: Half Pass in Trot and Canter**

The half pass is one of four movements that the USEF Rule Book defines as a “two track” movement or lateral movement. As with all lateral movements, the work on two tracks improves the obedience of the horse to the aids and improves both the lateral and longitudinal suppleness of the horse, thereby increasing the freedom of the shoulder and pushing and carrying power of the hindquarters. As with all lateral movements, the half pass is both a collected and a collecting exercise.

The half pass is a variation of travers (haunches-in) and is ridden on an oblique line instead of parallel to the long wall. Two half passes connected with a change of hand (direction) may also be ridden. This is called a counter change of hand. Half pass may be performed in collected trot, collected canter or passage, and medium or collected walk. In any case, the half pass should enhance, never deteriorate, the quality of the gaits.

### **Prerequisites**

A horse who is ready to school the half pass in trot and later in the canter should be at least developing second level collection, which will allow the rider to influence the horse through half halts and to be able to ride transitions between and within the gaits. This will allow the rider to rebalance or freshen the horse as needed during the schooling of the half pass.

For the horse to perform the half pass he must have an understanding of moving into the direction of the bend in his body, and be comfortable (not necessarily confirmed) with travers on both reins. As with travers, the horse is slightly bent around the inside leg of the rider but with a greater degree of bend than in shoulder-in. He then moves diagonally, with the outside legs passing and crossing in front of the inside legs. The approximate 35° angle relative to the line of travel should be maintained throughout the movement.

The rider is ready to school the half pass when he has theoretical understanding of the shoulder-fore and the travers and can execute the shoulder-fore and the travers on both reins competently.

### **Gymnastic Purpose**

The purpose of the half pass is the same as the travers, which is to supple the horse evenly on both sides and to increase collection.

### **The Aids**

The aids for half pass are the same as for travers. The rider’s weight is to the direction of travel and the inside seat bone is advanced, with the inside leg at the girth and the outside leg behind the girth. The inside leg is extremely important – the half pass must never become a “sideways” movement, but rather always a “forward and sideways” movement. This is not possible without proper use of the inside leg. The inside rein indicates to the horse the direction of bend while the outside rein regulates the bend. The inside rein must remain as a direct rein, never crossing the withers, but may also be used as an open or leading rein. The rider rides through the turn or corner, rides the half halt in shoulder-fore, and brings the forehand on to the line of travel for the half pass, with the inside leg maintaining the bend. Then the lower outside leg directs the haunches from the turn and onto the diagonal line. Knowing the line of travel will allow the rider to direct the horse, with the forehand slightly in advance, in half pass.

At this point in a discussion of half pass with a student, it is important to know that the rider understands and can visualize the line of travel, whether it is the whole diagonal, the diagonal to X, or from the centerline to the track. If this concept is unclear to the rider, riding travers on a diagonal line may become confusing. Allowing the rider to perform the half pass in the walk will allow him to focus on the aids and the positioning on the diagonal line.

### **Common Faults**

The haunches leading in the half pass is probably the most common mistake, and can happen when the horse loses impulsion and begins to go too sideways.

The rider allowing the horse to come onto the line of travel without the straightness created by shoulder-fore can also cause the haunches to lead. To correct the haunches, the inside leg should be applied and the rider must bring the forehand more in the direction of the movement.

The position of the outside lower leg should be reviewed also, to insure it is not being carried too far behind the girth, which can push the haunches ahead of the forehand. If the rider is causing the issue, have him turn onto the diagonal in shoulder fore and maintain it for the first half of the line, then develop the half pass.

As with travers, sometimes the rider creates too much bend in the horse's neck, without the relative bend throughout. In this situation the rider should be encouraged to ease the inside rein and activate the inside leg.

In the other extreme, riding the half pass with insufficient bend creates a leg yield, with too much crossing of the legs. In this situation the movement becomes too parallel to the long side, and the visual emphasis is sideways rather than diagonal. At this point the rider must reestablish the bend by riding a volte and returning to the half pass.

If necessary, the exercise can be brought back to the long wall and the travers can be reviewed and used to improve the bend and balance before returning to the half pass.

If the lack of bend is causing the haunches to trail, the outside lower leg should be increased to help bring the haunches along and increase the bend.

The rider must be certain, during the riding of the half pass, to keep his weight to the inside and not slip to the outside of the saddle. It is also important that he be reminded of the forward aspect of the half pass, and not be allowed to think and ride "sideways." Insisting that the rider prepare the half pass with shoulder-fore will encourage a straighter rider and a straighter horse.

## Exercises for Half Pass

Because the half pass is typically the last of the lateral movements to be taught to the horse and the rider, there are more options for combinations of exercises to improve the half pass. These two are more introductory, for the horse and rider learning the half pass.

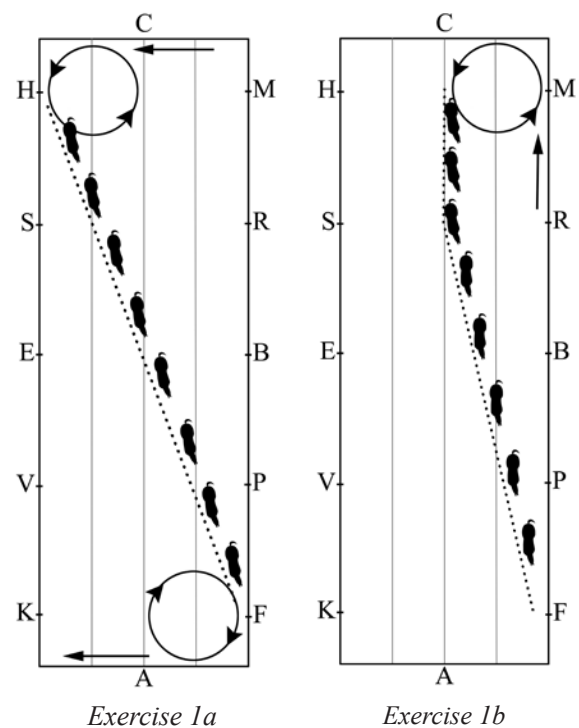
(Note: All of these exercises can be ridden in the walk to reinforce the aids and proper bend and positioning, before practicing in the trot and canter.)

### Exercise 1a

Ride collected trot on the left rein. Volte 10m in the corner at H. When the bend and balance are correct, guide the forehand onto the HXF diagonal. The line of the diagonal will be the "wall" on the rider's outside, and the rider should then apply the aids for the half pass (this is the same as travers), riding along the HXF line as if it is the long side. At the track at F the rider should straighten the horse and bend to the new direction, riding through the corner. Repeat the exercise on the right rein.

Should the horse lose impulsion at any time on the diagonal, the rider has the option to use both legs briskly to freshen the horse, and if necessary, ride toward the short side in shoulder-fore while encouraging more power in the trot.

If the horse is losing bend while on the diagonal, riding a series of half halts will help to reestablish the bend. Riding out of the half pass into a volte, then returning to the half pass will also improve the bend.



## Exercise 1b

As a variation to this exercise, ride collected trot on the left rein. Volte 10m in the corner near M. When the bend and balance are correct, turn onto the centerline at C, maintaining left shoulder-fore on the centerline. From G to I ride shoulder-in left, then from I to F, half pass. At F, change the bend and ride a volte to the right in the corner. Repeat the exercise, turning onto the centerline at A, riding right shoulder-fore, then right shoulder-in from D to L, and half pass right L to M.

## Exercise 2

Because the shoulder-fore is essential for a quality collected canter, and is the preparatory position for half pass, it follows that it is extremely important in riding the canter half pass. This exercise focuses on the shoulder-fore preparation for the half pass.

In collected canter right lead, ride shoulder-fore around the whole arena. The rider should test the canter quality by riding several canter-walk transitions, and *uberstreichen*, being sure the shoulder-fore is maintained. When the canter is correct, come onto the centerline at A, again maintaining the shoulder-fore. Ride the full centerline. Ride the long side in collected canter, repeating the centerline only if the shoulder-fore or the centerline itself are not correct. When it is correct, turn on the  $\frac{1}{4}$  line past A and ride shoulder-fore to the P-V line, then right half pass to the centerline, then shoulder-fore to C, tracking right again. Refresh the horse with medium canter on the long side, then repeat the exercise. After two or three repetitions, allow a walk break and then repeat on the other rein. As the shoulder-fore to half pass becomes easier, ride fewer strides of each, so that the transition from one to the other becomes seamless. If the horse and rider are skilled in the flying change, the exercise may be ridden on one rein and then the other, riding a flying change before A or C, then proceeding to the new direction.

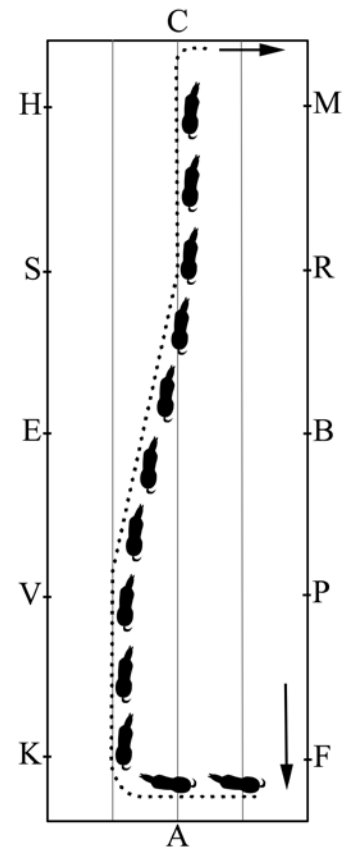
## The Counter Change of Hand

Being able to execute smooth transitions from shoulder-fore to half pass will allow both horse and rider to learn the counter change of hand more easily.

In the counter change of hand, the horse begins with half pass to one direction, followed by a change of bend and direction and immediately half pass to the new direction. The schooled horse can perform this change fluidly, with no change of rhythm or tempo, and equal bend to either direction. In the learning stages, however, the steps to a good counter change should be broken down so that both the horse and rider learn correctly.

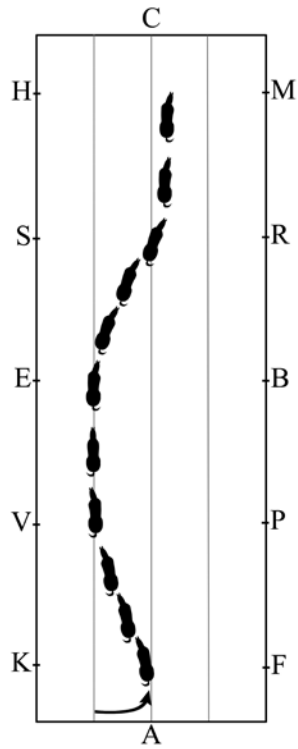
## The Exercise

Ride half pass left from the centerline at C. Ride only enough strides to establish a correct half pass, then go to left shoulder-fore (as in the above exercise). Change from shoulder-fore left to shoulder-fore right, half halt, then ride half pass right. In the beginning, allow the rider to take as many strides as necessary to ensure that each step of the sequence is correct, then gradually shorten the amount of time at each step. Eventually the shoulder-fore to shoulder-fore happens through the half halt and the counter change becomes seamless.



*Exercise 2*

If at any time the correctness of the half passes in the counter change of hand loses quality, go back to more basic exercises.



Should the shoulder-fore to the new shoulder-fore cause difficulty, have the rider ride the centerline, practicing only this part of the exercise until it is easier, and then put everything together again.

*Counter Change in Half Pass*