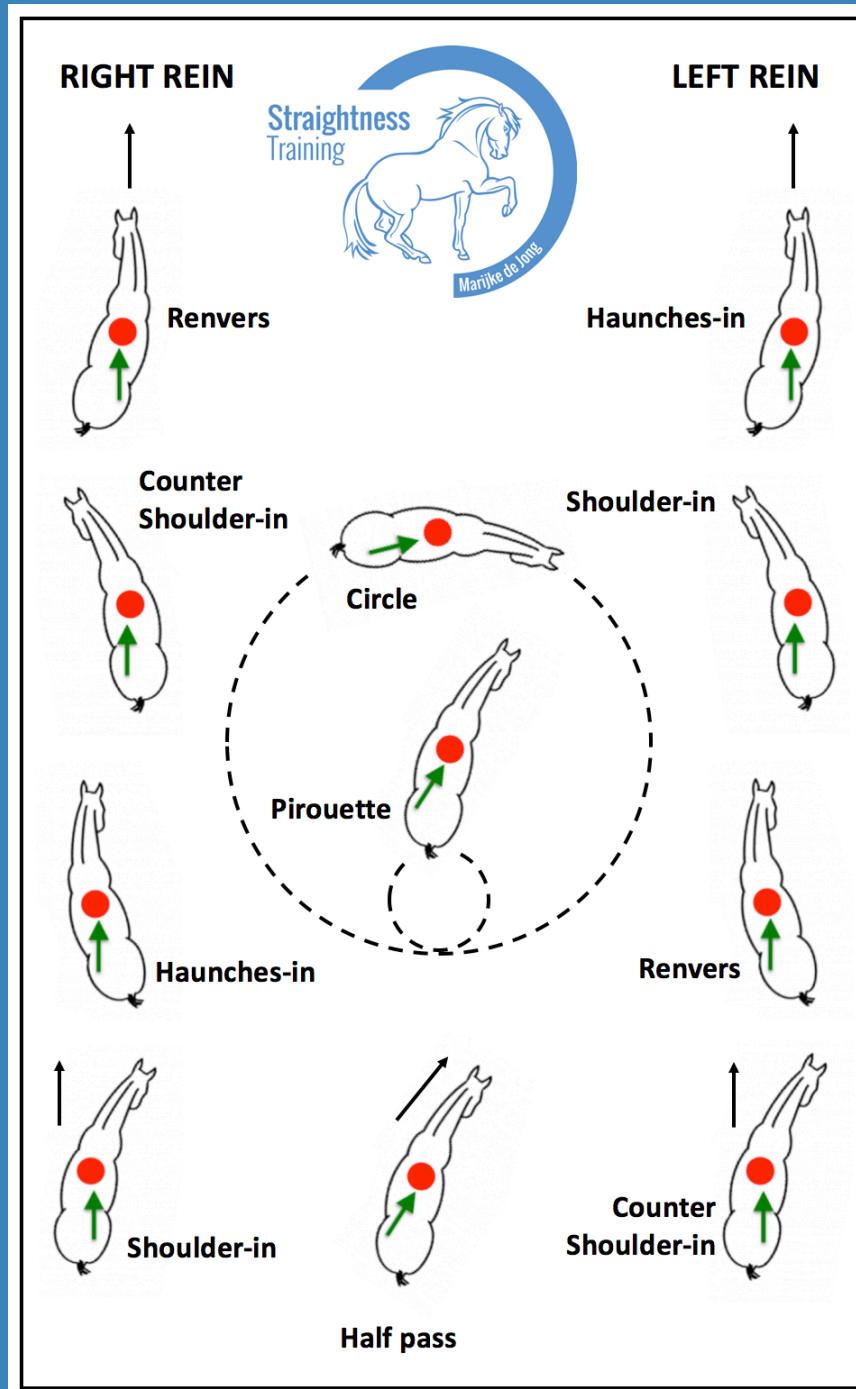


# ST EXERCISES



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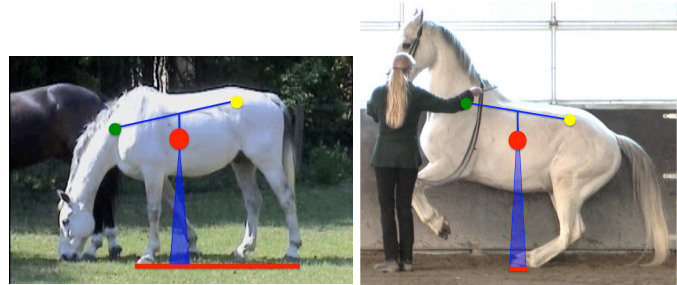
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## INTRODUCTION

The horse is not naturally built to carry additional weight. In the picture on the left you see a horse in his natural balance with the center of mass (red dot) is positioned more close to the front legs. Therefore, the fragile front legs (green dot) carries more weight than the powerful hind legs (yellow dot). Therefore, if we want to sit on it as a rider, we need to prepare the horse to carry us properly, to not overstrain the front legs.



We need a set of well thought through gymnastic exercises to be able to shift the center of mass more towards the bendable hind legs to free the fragile front legs, and this will keep the horse fit as a riding horse until old age.

This ebook will give you an overview of all ST exercises we use in the education of the horse. And the goal of using ST exercises and the gymnastic education is to reach artificial balance and harmony in body, mind, heart and soul. The horse will be trained according to his possibilities and talents, both physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.



The education of the horse starts with groundwork and longeing using a cavesson. During the education, we work towards doing all exercises in work in hand and riding all lateral movements, and if possible pirouettes and piaffe. We can also ask all exercises at liberty to refine the communication and increase the motivation of your horse. Because of the logically structured exercises, the rider trains him/herself and the horse towards a level that is comfortable for both, and along the way:

- You will learn to train within a logical system of well thought-through gymnastic exercises and you will develop yourself to become the personal fitness trainer of your horse.
- You will be able to develop your horse towards a soft, cooperative riding horse.
- You will get more insight in how riding problems are created, and learn to fix and prevent these issues. Because of the clear and structured system, you will always have a good basic work to fall back on and to help you find the solutions to whatever riding problems you might encounter.
- With the ST basics as 'physiotherapy', you can reduce and prevent back and leg problems and strain injuries in your horse.
- And from that you can take it another step forward: You can develop your horse's talents to their maximum.
- Your horse will develop physically: he will become more supple and easier to maneuver and he will become stronger and will reach more bending in its /haunches, and will be easier and lighter to collect.
- Your horse will also develop mentally, emotionally and spiritually: he will become more confident, loyal and affectionate towards you, and he will show less resistance and stress.

In the next chapters, you'll find an overview of all the different ST Exercises in the education of the horse.

## 1. FORWARD-DOWN AT STANDSTILL

The long term goal of Straightness Training is achieving flexibility, gaining strength, build muscle and improving your horse's overall health and maintaining it for a lifetime. This goal is achieved through a logical system of progressive exercises.

The very first exercise to teach the horse in Straightness Training is, to bring its head and neck forward-down. The horse stands still in this exercise.

### Goal

This is an important exercise to teach your horse the use of the cavesson and to relax the horse.



The cavesson is an important tool in the communication between horse and trainer. A horse must first learn to understand the feeling of the cavesson and the aids that can be given through it.

By nature, the horse does not know it should move away from the pressure of the cavesson. It is important to teach the horse to move away from the pressure at an early stage.

The horse must learn to trust the connection that is made with the trainer and the cavesson. This is why the first exercise is to teach the horse to bring its head and neck forward-down.

Doing this exercise puts the horse in a position that is relaxing, which helps to make the horse feel at ease.

### Definition



Go as low with the head as when the underneck softens and relaxes. Don't go lower, because this will bring the weight too much on the front legs.



The horse should lower its head as far as the point when the muscles in the underside of the neck relax and the topline stretches. It is not necessary to go lower, because that will shift the weight of the horse too much onto the front legs.

### Teaching the exercise to the horse

An important part of dealing with and training horses is the element "yielding to pressure":

1. You close your hand around and apply downwards pressure on the line connected to the cavesson.
2. The horse yields downwards at the moment you apply pressure.
3. The instant the horse yields, you should open your hand and release the pressure, and reward the horse and give him a moment of relaxation.
4. As a result, how the horse keeps searching forward down.

## 2. STELLING & BENDING AT STANDSTILL

The second exercise in the sequence of ST exercises is Stelling & Bending.

This exercise is asked while standing still and it is an amazing tool to explore your horse's natural asymmetry and to start creating balance, suppleness and focus.

### Definition



'Stelling' is the placement of the head in relation to the first neck vertebra.

'Bending' is the lateral bending in the body, concerns the whole body. It is a collective name that we use in Straightness Training for everything that happens in the horse's whole body (muscles, legs, spine, bending, rotation, flexion, etc.) to gain the ability to bend with the arc of the circle in both directions and to allow the body to do lateral movements.

This 'lateral bending' is a metaphor, a figure of speech, because a lot of factors together will create the 'illusion' of lateral bending the body.

### Goal

'Stelling & Bending' prepares your horse for groundwork and longeing, because groundwork and longeing requires the horse to be able to bend equally to both sides.

Because of the natural asymmetry horses, tend to bend more easily to one side. This exercise helps your horse to also bend to the difficult side, by stretching the short muscles.

With the cavesson you can influence the head of the horse and the stelling and bending, both to the left and to the right.

You can see that the bending horse works through its entire body, and that the hip on the concave side of the horse comes slightly forward.

It is easy to under-estimate the standstill exercises 'Forward Down' and 'Stelling & Bending', but when they are done correctly, they are essential to the training process.

### Teaching the exercise to the horse

Ask for stelling and bending little by little. To do so you apply pressure on the longe line.

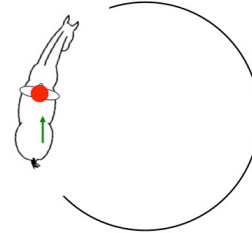
1. Close your hand around the longe line and ask for stelling and bending.
2. The horse yields at the moment you apply pressure.
3. The instant the horse yields to your request, open your hand and release the pressure, and reward the horse and give him a moment of relaxation.
4. As a result, the horse will responsibility to keep the stelling and bending.

### 3. LFS ON THE CIRCLE

The circle is the third important exercise the horse should learn in the logical system of progressive exercises. It's the first exercise in movement and we combine the first two exercises - the F(oward-down) and L(ateral bending) - with the S(tepping under of the inside hind leg).

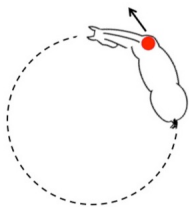
Now moving with a correct LFS in both directions is not easy, because if you have a right bent horse, it will be very difficult for him to bend to the left and vice versa.

Teaching a horse to turn is about lengthening his short side and contracting his long muscles. Only when a horse can do that, the inside hip can come forward and then the horse will be able to step under the center of mass with the inside hind leg.



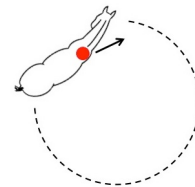
#### History

Antoine de Pluvinet (1555 - 1620) wrote in his book that the circle is the most difficult exercise for a horse. He wrote that it's not the fancy exercises that are the most difficult for a young or a crooked horse, but actually, the circle is the most difficult! If we see young horses running, we can see them perform collected gaits and high school jumps. We also see quarter or half voltes, but we never see young horses perform an entire circle.



The reason a circle is so difficult, is the natural asymmetry of the horse, that has never changed since ages.

Therefore, a left bent horse has the tendency to lean in to the circle on the right and to lean out on the circle to the left.



#### Goal

The goal of the circle is to teach the horse the first three keys of Straightness Training. On the circle a horse has to 'turn' on a circle finding his balance on the inside hind leg and he should not lean in or out on one of the shoulders.

The circle is an exercise on one track. The inner front and hind leg make a smaller circle, than the outer front and hind leg.

What we strive for on the circle is the so-called LFS:

1. **L**ateral bending of the body
2. **F**orward-down tendency of head and neck
3. **S**tepping under with the inside hind leg under the center of mass.

When the LFS is correct, the horse moves in a balanced way, without leaning in or out on the circle.

### Teaching the exercise to the horse

In Straightness Training, all exercises are first taught to the horse in hand and on the long line. This teaches the horse to move on the circle in all different gaits, and to find its balance without the additional weight of the rider.



Later on, the horse will find it easier to learn and execute the circle under the rider, first under guidance of a helper on the ground.



Also at liberty and with a cordeo a horse has to 'turn' on a circle, finding his balance on the inside hind leg, and he should not lean in or out the circle.



### Variations

- Ride big circles (20 meter) or smaller ones (10 meter)
- Increase a small circle to a big one
- Decrease a big circle to a small one
- Change the lead through the center of the circle (2 small sized half circles)
- Ride serpentine, to make the horse supple in the bendings
- Ride tempo changes on the circle
- Ride transitions on the circle

## 4. LFS ON A STRAIGHT LINE



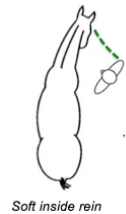
LFS on a straight line is an important exercise to reduce the thrust of the hind legs, to improve the coordination with the inside hind leg and to connect the inside hind leg to the center of mass.

When the LFS is correct, the horse moves in a balanced way on a straight line, without falling on the inside shoulder, or leaning against the wall with the outside shoulder.

### Goal

LFS on a straight line is a good exercise to prepare the horse for the exercises shoulder-fore and shoulder-in.

During shoulder-fore and shoulder-in you are working with an outside rein, but it is important to understand that you can only start to bring the shoulders in with this outside rein, once the horse is soft and supple on the inside rein.



Soft inside rein

LFS on a straight line helps the horse to find softness and suppleness on this inside rein.

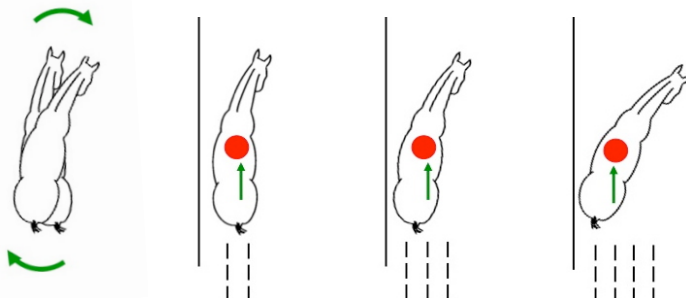
## 5. SHOULDER-FORE

Shoulder-fore can be done in work in hand with help of the outside rein. Because with this outside rein you can position the shoulders more 'fore' so that the outside front and hind leg will be aligned. That's the difference with LFS on the straight line: there the inside legs are aligned.

Now a very common question is what the difference is between LFS on a straight line, shoulder-fore, shoulder-in on 3 tracks and shoulder-in on four tracks.

1. In LFS on a straight line we strive to have the horse step with the inside hind leg at least into the track of the inside front leg. So both inside legs are aligned. We also call this 'bended straight'.
2. In shoulder-fore we strive to have the horse step with the inside hind leg in between the tracks of the two front legs. Here both outside legs are aligned.
3. In shoulder-in we strive to have the horse step with the inside hind leg into the track of the outside front leg - on three tracks
4. Depending on the extent of the bend you can also do shoulder-in on four tracks.

From left to right: bended straight, shoulder-fore, shoulder-in on three tracks, shoulder-in on four tracks:



The green arrows display the 'versal aids' also called the 'shoulder-in' aids, and these aids influence the outside shoulder and the inside hind leg. By positioning the shoulders in front of the direction of the inside hind leg, this hind leg will be able to take weight.



### Never lose sight of the essence

Now in ST variations can also be done on 2,5 or 3,5 or 3,67 or 3,999 tracks. Because in ST the amount doesn't matter. What matters is that you choose the amount where your horse can support his body and center of mass best with the hindquarters. And that depends on the conformation of your horse, if he has a long back or a shorter one, if he has long legs, or shorter ones, if he has a long neck or a shorter one. Just do the amount where he can move in optimal balance.

So in ST it's always the essence that counts, not the 'names' nor the 'tracks', nor the amount of stelling and bending. It's never 'absolute', always relative, because it depends on the individual horse.

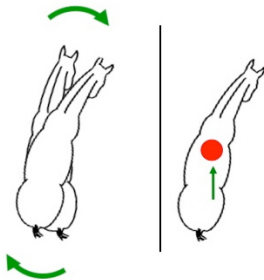
### Stepping under vs Taking weight

Stepping under the center of mass doesn't automatically mean the horse will take weight on that leg. It depends on the 'lever' in front: The more forward down, the less weight on the hind leg, the more forward upward and the more collection the more weight in behind.

So the shoulder-in can be performed with and without taking weight on the inside hind leg.

However, the true purpose of shoulder-in is to free the outside shoulder, so once the horse understands the exercises, it's best to shift the weight direction inside hind leg to free the front, so you can get to the real essence of the exercise.

## 6. SHOULDER-IN



In ST the horse is strengthened through logical gymnastic exercises and in this set of exercises, the shoulder-in is an important 'cornerstone' the horse should learn.

### Definition

In shoulder-in, the horse walks in a forward-sideward movement, in which the body is bended laterally. Shoulder-in is a lateral movement on three or four tracks.

### History

Shoulder-in was invented by the Duke of Newcastle (1658) and was in those days done on the circle. The grand master Robichon de la Guérinière (1733) performed the exercise ("L'Epaule en dedans" in French) on the straight line. Other masters in history named the exercise the "cornerstone" of dressage, "pillar" of classical riding, "mother" of all exercises and even the "aspirin" of riding, because the exercise was supposed to solve all riding problems.

### Goal



The goal of shoulder-in is to teach the horse to step under the center of mass with its inside hind leg. The benefit of the exercise lies in the increased bending of the inside hind leg and the increase of shoulder freedom in the outside shoulder, because the outside shoulder is supported by the inside hind leg. By stretching the outer back muscles it increases the will to accept and soften in the outer rein. The shoulder-in has great value because it counters the natural crookedness and makes the horses equally supple to the left and right.

## Teaching the exercise to the horse



In Straightness Training, all lateral movements are first taught to the horse in hand. This teaches the horse to move in lateral movements and find its balance without the additional weight of the rider. Later on, the horse will find it easier to learn and execute the same exercise under the rider. At first, a few steps are enough. When the horse gradually becomes stronger a whole long side of the riding arena can be done in shoulder-in.

### Variations

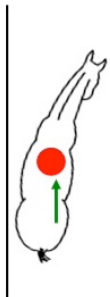
- Shoulder-in can be ridden on the straight line along the wall of the arena, but also in a circle.
- To test whether the horse is properly responding to the outside rein and is not falling on the inside shoulder, halfway through the long side a little circle can be added to the exercise.
- By making a shoulder-in in every corner of the arena, the horse is prevented from “cutting the corners”.
- The exercise can be done in walk, trot and finally also in canter. Especially when doing straightness training in canter, the shoulder-in is extremely valuable.
- To prepare for the shoulder-in, the horse can be ridden in a small circle or through a corner. This will help get the proper lateral bending for the exercise.
- The exercise can be ended by making a circle or by placing the shoulders back in front of the hips.

## 7. HAUNCHES-IN

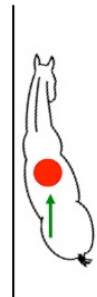
The exercise haunches-in, also called travers, is the second most important cornerstone in ST.

### Definition

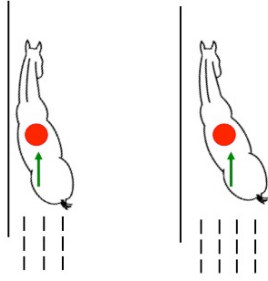
The shoulders follow the track along the wall and the hindquarter is bended inwards. In this exercise, the horse is bended laterally. The outside hind leg is stepping under the center of mass. Shoulder-in and haunches-in are closely related exercises that complement each other very well:



- In shoulder-in, the inside hind leg steps under the center of mass. In haunches-in, it is the outside hind leg stepping under the center of mass.
- In shoulder-in, the shoulders are turned inwards, in the haunches-in, the hindquarter is bended inwards.
- In shoulder-in, the inside hind legs step in front of the outside legs. In haunches-in, the outside legs (front and hind) step in front of the inside legs.
- In haunches-in, the horse is looking in the direction it is going. In shoulder-in, the horse looks inwards while moving straight forward.



Haunches-in can be done on 3 and 4 tracks (and on 2,5 or 3,5 or 3,67 or 3,999 tracks).



The amount doesn't matter. What matters is that you choose the amount where your horse can support his body and center of mass best with both hind legs. And that depends on the conformation of your horse, if he has a long back or a shorter one, if he has long legs, or shorter ones. Just do the amount where he can move in optimal balance.

### Goal



The goal of haunches-in is to teach the horse to step with his outside hind leg under the center of mass. The benefit is that this hind leg is required to bend more.

Haunches-in encourages the outside hind leg to carry and makes the inside shoulder more light. The exercise increases the lateral bending and improves coordination of the limbs.



Haunches-in is a good preparation for pirouette, half-pass and canter changes:

- When the haunches-in is carried out on a smaller circle a pirouette is the end result.
- When the haunches-in is carried out on a diagonal line, this is called the half-pass.
- When the horse in canter changes from renvers to the left to haunches-in to the right, this is a canter change.

### Teaching the exercise to the horse



Haunches-in can only arise from a perfect shoulder-in. This last exercise should therefore first be comfortable to the horse, before teaching the haunches-in. Haunches-in is first trained in hand before riding. As preparation, a small circle can be done to get the required lateral bending. In first instance, a few steps should be enough and when the horse gets stronger this can be built up towards an entire long side of the arena.

### Variations

- Haunches-in can be ridden on the straight line along the wall, through curves, and also in a circle
- The exercise can be done in walk, trot and finally also canter.
- When riding in a circle, the collection of the horse can be improved through this exercise, because the hind legs take shorter steps and take more weight.
- Fluent transitions from shoulder-in to haunches-in improve coordination and suppleness of the horse and the response to the aids.

## History

In man-to-man fights the haunches-in was used during the approach of each other.

Both hind legs followed the weapon line and because they did, the power of the hind legs was added to the weapon. This essence should always be kept in mind while doing the exercise!

Another benefit is that in this exercise the head of the horse was not in the way of the weapon.



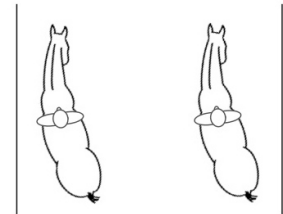
Haunches-in is already mentioned by Salomon de la Broue (1600) and François Robichon de la Guérinière (1733). Both gentlemen had some doubts about this exercise. Guérinière states that the horse, with its head next to the wall, will move more automatically forward-sideward than move between the riders' aids. When the wall is then removed, the horse will not respond as well because the horse is used to support the wall provided. De la Broue has the same opinion and recommends the haunches-in only for horses that are heavy in the hand, but in a way that there is always 1.5 meter between the horse and the wall. Both gentlemen recommended the renvers rather than haunches-in. More on this exercise in the next chapter.

## 8. RENVERS

Renvers is in fact the mirror-exercise of the haunches-in and has the exact same gymnastic effect.

### Goal

In haunches-in (left), in which the head of the horse is moving along the wall, the horse can walk forward-sideward automatically instead of following the rider's aids. In renvers (right), the horse is not supported by the wall and has to follow the rider's aids in order to carry out this exercise on its own legs.

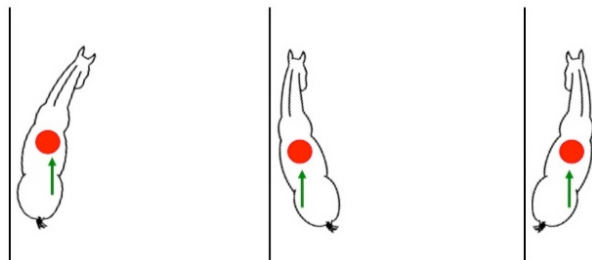


### Definition



Renvers is a lateral movement on three or four tracks in which the horse looks where it is going. In this exercise, the horse is also bended laterally in his body. The outside hind leg is stepping under the weight. The hindquarter walks on the track along the wall, the shoulders on the inside track. This is in contrast to the haunches-in where the shoulders follow the wall and the hindquarter walks on the inside track.

### Connection shoulder-in, haunches-in and renvers



Shoulder-in

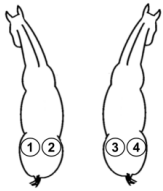
Haunches-in

Renvers

In shoulder-in, the inside hind leg steps under the center of mass. In haunches-in and renvers, it is the outside hind leg that steps under the center of mass. By changing the bending from back to front from the shoulder-in, the horse is bended into the renvers. By changing the bending from front to back in haunches-in, the horse is bended into renvers.

## Four hind legs

By riding shoulder-in to the left and to the right, the horse is asked to step with the inside hind leg under the center of mass. By riding haunches-in and renvers to the left and right, the horse is asked to step under with the outside hind leg. That means that the horse actually has four functions in his hind legs that are trained by these exercises:



- 1 Left hind leg as inside hind leg
- 2 Right hind leg as outside hind leg
- 3 Left hind leg as outside hind leg
- 4 Right hind leg as inside hind leg

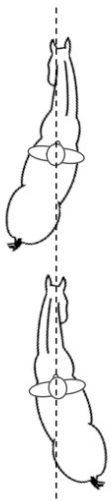
## Teaching the exercise to the horse



The renvers is first taught in-hand, then riding. As a preparation to this exercise, the rider should ask shoulder-in. Then the rider asks the horse to change the bending and this leads to the renvers. At the beginning, a few steps should be enough and when the horse gets stronger this can be built up towards an entire long side of the arena.

## Variations

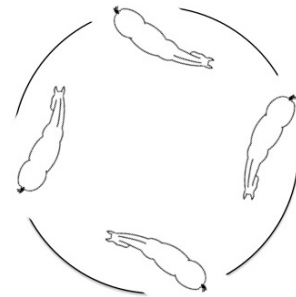
The exercise can be done in walk, trot and finally also in canter.



Transitions from haunches-in to renvers in walk and trot prepare the horse for the canter change.



Fluent transitions from shoulder-in to renvers improve balance, coordination and suppleness as well as the reaction of the horse to the aids.

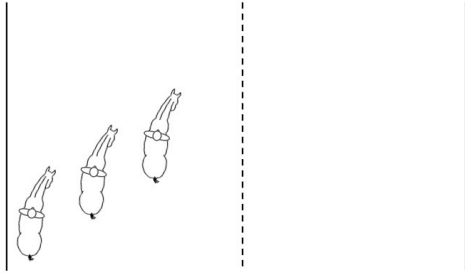


Renvers can be ridden on the straight line along the wall, through curves and in a circle.

The old grandmasters used to ride renvers on a circle and gradually decrease the size of that circle until a turn around the shoulders was done. This way they managed to ride canter pirouettes in renvers.

## 9. HALF PASS

### Definition



When doing a half pass, the horse moves diagonally in a lateral bending, in a forward-sideward manner and looks in the direction it is going. During the half-pass, the horse steps under with its inside and outside hind legs alternated. The outside legs step in front and over the inside legs.

The horse in both carrying moments:

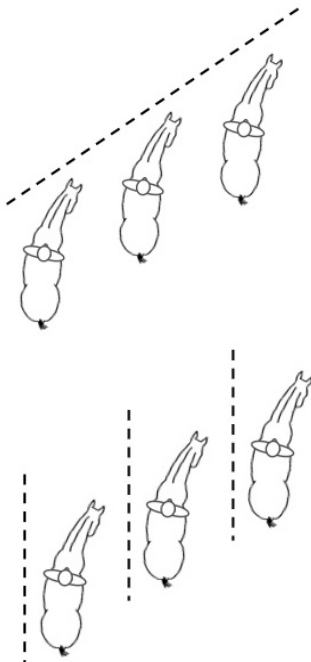


1. The outside hind leg steps under the center of mass.



2. The inside hind leg steps under the center of mass.

### Connection shoulder-in, haunches-in and half-pass



Doing a half pass is the same as haunches-in, except that the exercise is not done along the wall but on the diagonal. This requires that the horse carries itself as the wall no longer supports the horse. Imagine that the wall is on the diagonal and ride haunches-in along that imaginary wall. This will result in the half-pass.

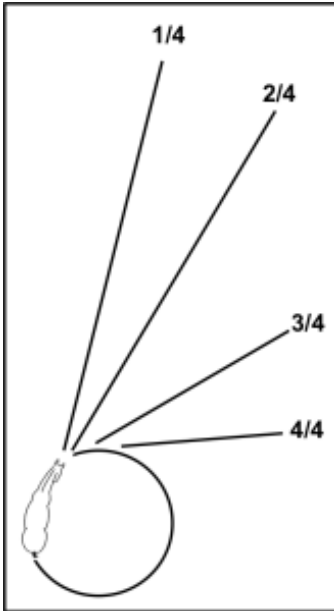
In the half-pass the shoulders should always lead, meaning they are always in front of the hindquarter. During every moment of the half-pass, the horse should be able to continue in a straight line in shoulder-in. Then you are sure the horse has had the right shape during the half-pass. For horses that still lack some strength and lose their balance quickly, it is recommended to alternate half-pass with shoulder-in on a straight line.



### Teaching the exercise to the horse

One can only start with half-pass when the exercises shoulder-in and haunches-in are properly taught to the horse. It is first taught in hand, and then in riding. At the beginning, a few steps should be enough. When the horse gets stronger, this can be built up towards an entire diagonal. The exercise can be done in walk, trot and finally also in collected canter.

### Variations



- The  $\frac{1}{4}$  half-pass leads to the middle of the short side and the horse is less bended in this exercise. The horse goes more forwards than sideward.
- In the  $\frac{1}{2}$  half-pass the horse has a similar bending as on a 10 meter circle. The horse goes as much forward as it goes sideward, thus having equal pushing and carrying capacity in his hind legs.
- In the  $\frac{3}{4}$  half-pass the horse is more bended and moves to the centre of the long side. The horse goes more sideward than forwards.
- In a complete half-pass the horse has maximum bending and steps sideward. A little bit of forwards should be maintained so that the outer legs can continue to step in front of the inside legs.
- It is recommended to practice all variations and not to limit yourself to just one variation.

Most of the time you will start half pass:

- out of the haunches-in circle in groundwork,
- out of shoulder-in in riding
- out of shoulder-in work in hand.

But in groundwork or riding you can start both from shoulder-in, and from the haunches-in circle/pirouette and in both cases you must make sure the shoulders are leading.

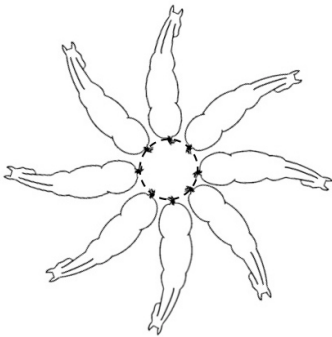
In work in hand you need to rebend the horse first to the outside, and then when the horses shoulders are leading, you can continue on the diagonal with the half pass. In work in hand you can also make a small circle right before the end of the short side, than stop the horse when the horse reaches the diagonal, move over to the other side (convex side) yourself, and continue in half pass on the diagonal.

In work in hand you can also make a normal big circle first and on X you can rebend the horse and change to a renvers circle or pirouette and out of this reversal exercise you can continue with half pass on a diagonal.



## 10. PIROUETTE

### Definition



The pirouette could be viewed as doing the smallest possible circle in haunches-in.

The hind legs stay in the center of the circle and the shoulders make a larger circle. This way the pirouette is a turn around the hindquarter.

The canter pirouette is done in two, three, four or eight canter jumps. The pirouette in Straightness Training is done in eight jumps that correspond to the eight geometrical directions of the arena.



The horse remains equally bended through the body during this exercise. The bending is in the direction of the movement.

The hind legs move over a smaller surface than the front legs. This makes the hind legs bend more and enables the horse to collect. The pirouette can be ridden in walk, trot, canter, piaffe and in terre à terre. There are  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and complete pirouettes.

### History

The pirouette was used in the times of man-to-man fights to make the horse turn on the place. This way, the rider could prevent being attacked from behind by staying face-to-face with his opponent. Mastering pirouettes was therefore important to survive in battle. In the baroque period, riding became an art and the skills of horse and rider were demonstrated in the pirouette.

### Developing the canter pirouette

#### 1. Make a circle smaller in haunches-in



Ride haunches-in on a circle and make this circle smaller. In this exercise, it will become very clear when the strength and the mental limits of the horse are reached.

The circle should not be made smaller than the horse can do. When the horse can canter controlled and collected it can be asked to make the circle smaller in haunches-in.

At first just ask a few steps, reward the horse and make the circle bigger again.



2. Carré in haunches-in with ¼ pirouettes

A carré is a square circle on two tracks. The rider rides haunches-in and in every corner of the square he makes ¼ pirouette (90° turn). In total, the rider rides 4 time ¼ pirouettes, making a full pirouette in 4 phases. First practice in walk and then in collected canter.

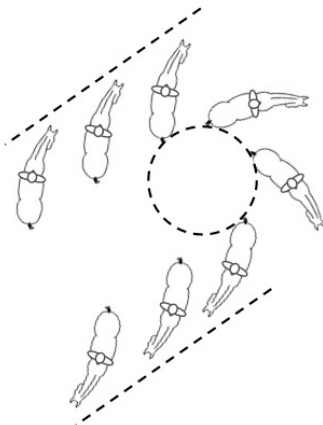


3. Turn in walk



A turn is a 180° turn around the haunches-in walk along the wall and is also called a half walk pirouette. It is important that the rider decides the number of steps and not the horse. It is also important to keep the lateral bending.

4. Half-pass with half a pirouette



When the horse has learned to do the half-pass in canter on both leads correctly, then the strength in his hindquarter will be developed enough and the horse will be capable to do ½ pirouettes during the half-pass.

5. Full pirouette

When the horse is able to do ¼ and ½ pirouettes properly, the pirouette can be expanded to ¾ pirouettes and finally the horse will both physically and mentally be able to do a full 360° turn.

## 11. FLYING CHANGE

By nature, the canter is the gait in which the horse runs away from danger. In dressage, the canter is used to show controlled exercises such as the canter change. Canter is a three beat gait but it also has a moment in which all 4 legs of the horse are in the air. There is a left- and a right-canter. In the right canter, the right pair of legs comes further forward while in the left canter, the left pair of legs comes more forward.

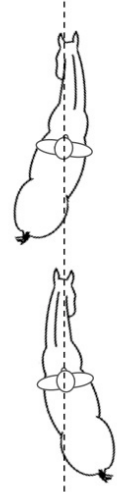


In the left canter the legs are lifted and put down in the following order:

- Right hind leg
- The diagonal pair: left hind leg + right front leg at the same time
- Left front leg
- All legs in the air (moment of suspension)

In a flying canter change the horse changes the canter from right to left or vice versa in the moment when all legs are in the air. This moment of suspension is the best moment for the horse to change the canter. In the exact moment you ask the other hind leg to land, so the horse continues with:

- Left hind leg
- The diagonal pair: right hind leg + left front leg at the same time
- Right front leg
- All legs in the air (moment of suspension)



### Preparation

If you have never ridden a canter change before, make sure you find an experienced horse to learn it on. The canter change is a normal canter jump and feels so, if done right. After mastering this feeling, you can teach it to your own horse. Your horse is ready to learn the canter change when it is trained into straightness and can bend equally on both sides. It is important for the rider to place the position of the shoulders and hips precisely in canter. Therefore, the exercises shoulder-in and haunches-in have to be understood very well by the horse before the canter change can be practiced. The following exercises can be used to prepare:

#### 1. Canter from walk

When the horse can jump into canter easily from trot, the horse can be taught to jump into canter from walk.

#### 2. Transition canter to walk

The transition from canter to walk increases the ability to collect. It is therefore important in this exercise to keep the energy going up-hill.

#### 3. Tempo changes in canter

It is important for the rider to carry a precise tempo in canter. Ride the horse in a circle, collect the horse on the outside hind leg (haunches-in style) and make the steps longer by riding the inside hind leg forward under the center of mass.

### 4. Renvers-canter (counter canter)

Renvers canter improves the straightness and the balance of the horse. Ride the horse slightly into a renvers in walk and jump into renvers canter.

### 5. Transition from renvers to haunches-in in walk

Make transitions in walk on a straight line, from haunches-in to renvers. This trains the horse to keep placing the other outside hind leg under the center of mass.

### 6. Simple change

Make a transition from canter to walk. Change the bending in three to five steps and jump into the other canter. The number of steps in walk can be reduced in time to one step. Make whole transitions and halts shorter and shorter. Finally, the horse will already change the canter at a half halt (actually, this is disobedience from the horse since it does not wait for the riders aids, but in first instance it should be rewarded. Later on, the horse should learn to distinguish between a canter-halt transition and a canter-halt- canter change transition).

By bending the horse from a slight renvers to slight haunches-in in the flight moment, the flying change is done.

### **Teaching the exercise to the horse**

It is recommended to practice the change in the same place of the arena, until the change is confirmed. This fixed place should be on a straight line and not in a corner of the arena. Afterwards, you can practice the change in other places in the arena.

### **Series**

When the horse is taught to change on the riders' aids and responds with 100% accuracy, you can start teaching changes every six, four, three or two steps. The question is "whether the changes every other step are a classic exercise or not?" The exercise is from origin a circus exercise and was invented in the 19th century by Mr. Baucher. No matter what, it is very difficult and therefore impressive when a rider and horse can do this exercise effortless.

12. PIAFFE

**Definition**

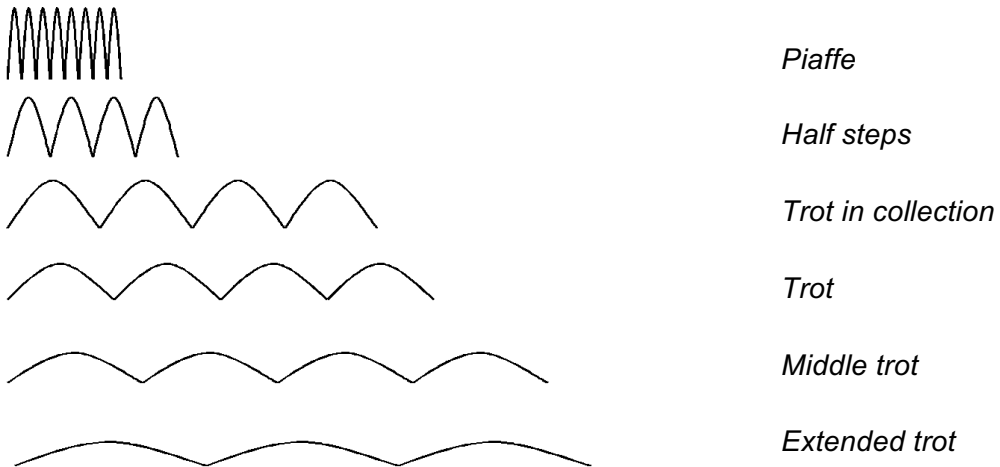


Piaffe arises by collecting in trot. Piaffe is like a trot in place, with only one hoof print forward in every step. The horse is bending in its haunches, the hind legs step under the point weight and the horse's surface support becomes smaller. The pelvis is tilted, the back arches and the horse lifts its front.

Trot has two extremes: collection and extension. The highest collection is found in piaffe, the biggest extension is found in extended trot.



The extended trot is the trot with the longest strides. The more the rider goes towards piaffe, the more active, shorter and higher the steps.



*Piaffe*

*Half steps*

*Trot in collection*

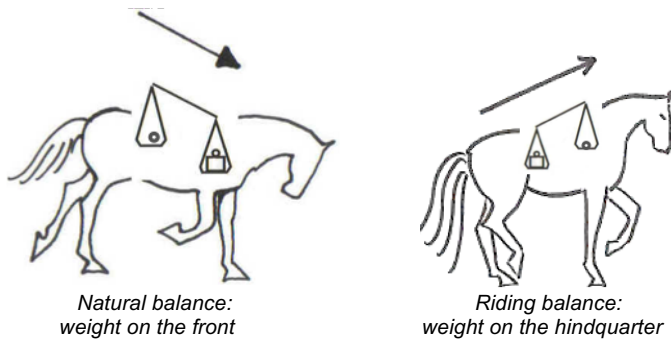
*Trot*

*Middle trot*

*Extended trot*

**Goal**

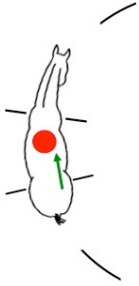
The goal of the art of riding is to develop the riding balance of a horse. Piaffe shifts the point of mass from the front legs to the hind legs. Therefore the shoulders become free.



## Bending body & limbs

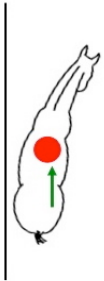
To collect a horse he has to be able to bend his body and his limbs:

### Step 1: Bending the body



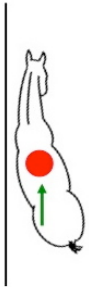
On the circle the horse learns to bend his body.

### Step 2: Bending inside hind leg



By using shoulder-in, the inside hind leg steps under the center of mass and gets more weight to carry. Because of the extra weight, it has to bend more.

### Step 3: Bending outside hind leg



With the exercise haunches-in, the horse learns to make his outside hind leg step under the center of mass, to bend and to carry.

### Step 4: Bending both hind legs



Piaffe makes both hind legs carry and bend.

### Teaching the exercise to the horse



In Straightness Training, the piaffe is usually first taught to the horse in hand, starting with half-steps. You can achieve these “half steps” by collecting the horse more and more in trot. By halving these steps, the piaffe is then created.

When the horse shows a few proper steps during the first attempt, stop and release, reward and relax the horse extensively.

After this, the piaffe can be developed under the rider.

The rider collects the horse in trot and when the rider feels that the horse has reached its limits, the rider should ride forward again.

It will take some years before the horse is capable of doing a perfect piaffe, but the way towards it already makes the horse stronger, more supple and better maneuverable.



### Variations

- In Straightness Training, the piaffe is often done with a bending to the inside. The piaffe is right bended on the right lead, and left bended when going to the left. The straight piaffe is done on the center line.
- Shoulder-in and haunches-in in piaffe improve the bending in both hind legs separately.
- Transitions in tempo are valuable gymnastics.
- Transitions to- and from walk, trot and canter in piaffe improve all gaits. The piaffe makes the horse more bended in its hindquarter and provides more carrying in the gaits. And the gaits improve the piaffe:
  - Walks brings calmness into the piaffe.
  - Trot improves the correct placement of the diagonal legs into the piaffe.
  - Canter brings more uphill into the piaffe.
- The piaffe-pirouette is an exercise the horse can start to do when it can produce a long series of equal steps in piaffe.
- The piaffe can also be practiced on the longe and at liberty to give the horse more responsibility to keep the balance, suppleness, shape, tempo and rhythm:



## 13. PASSAGE

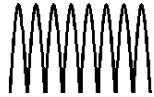
### Definition

Passage is a collected and rising trot movement with only a little forward and a long flight moment. The energy is directed upwards instead of forwards.

When done correctly, the upper legs of the horse are lifted horizontally. The carrying hind legs are taking a lot of weight and step and bend powerful forwards-upwards.

### Connection piaffe and passage

Piaffe:

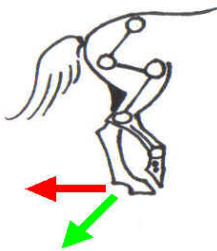


Passage:



In piaffe, it is only the carrying that is activated in the hindquarter. The horse moves almost in place. In passage, both the carrying and pushing are present in the hindquarter. The horse moves itself forward-upwards.

### Carry and push



In piaffe, the horse brings its hind legs under his center of mass with bended, flexible and supple joints. The addition of some push leads to a transition into passage or extended trot. In passage, the push is aimed in a forward-upward direction (green arrow). In extended trot, the push is directed more backwards (red arrow).

### Goal

In the old times, the passage was a king's exercise to carry the king gracefully and royally past his subjects. The horse has a proud and fierce expression in passage. Therefore, this gait was also used by officers to ride during inspections and parades.



In Straightness Training, the passage is not an absolute goal. It provides the means to develop the horse and has some benefits for the education:

- The muscles of the back and hindquarter are made stronger and suppler.
- The shoulders are placed correctly in front of the hips.
- The focus and obedience of the horse to the aids increases.

The passage is seen in nature when stallions try to impress others. Straightness Training wants to develop the natural movement and talent of the horse to as high a level as possible under the rider.

### Elements of passage



In passage, a sixth element will be added and integrated to the fundamentals of ST:

1. Balance
2. Suppleness
3. Shape
4. Tempo
5. Rhythm
6. Swing

A horse that is in balance and has become supple in his muscles through straightness training can take the proper soft and giving and forward-upwards posture. The horse bends in its haunches and pushes in a way that it can find the right tempo and can move with a regular rhythm. And the horse shows the looseness and movement in his swinging back.

### Teaching the exercise to the horse

If you have never ridden a passage before, make sure you find an experienced horse to learn it on. After mastering this forward-upwards feeling, you can teach it to your own horse. As a preparation, the rider can first ride transitions from piaffe into a forward going trot. Then the rider asks to go forward from piaffe in a more upward manner. This is how the passage should be developed. In time, the movements will become more perfect and more beautiful.

During the passage, the seat of the rider follows the swinging in the horse's back and the back of the horse forms around the soft seat of the rider. Imagine your seat is a hand and the back of the horse is a ball:

- You can bounce the ball onto the same place: this is comparable to piaffe.
- You can bounce the ball forward with power into a strong trot.
- You can also bounce forward slowly with more swinging in which the ball bounces higher. This is passage.

With an inner metronome the rider maintains regularity and rhythm. In the beginning, the rider can help the horse by clacking his tongue.

### Variations

The passage can be improved with the following variations:

- Transitions piaffe – passage. This increases the control over carrying and pushing.
- Transitions passage – extended trot. This increases the forward movement and the flight moment.
- Turns and serpentines in passage. This enhances a more round movement and bending in the front legs.
- All lateral movements in passage. This also enhances a more round movement and bending in the front legs. It also stimulates the proper activity in the hind legs.



## 14. LEVADE



The piaffe, passage en pirouette are famous exercises from the High School. These exercises are part of the schools on the ground.

Courbette, croupade, ballotade and capriole are part of the schools above the ground and are also called school jumps.

The levade is the connection between the exercises on the ground and the exercises above the ground.

### History

The schools above the ground were already used in ancient Greece to show the skills of horse and rider and in times of war, and the exercises were used as offense and defense. In the 17th and 18th century, the exercises were further developed as an art form.

At the end of the 18th century, the armies of Napoleon made the baroque glory come to an end. For a long time, the high school jumps were only performed in the two big riding schools in Vienna and Saumur. Later on, they were also performed in the younger (20th century) schools in Portugal and Spain.

### Definition

In the levade, the horse carries 100% of its weight on the hindquarter, in which it bends its hind legs equally in the same moment. The back makes an angle of about 35 degrees and the wither remains at the same height as when standing with a maximum of a hand width higher or lower.

The horse folds its front legs under its body and remains in this position for 2 or 3 seconds. The hind legs are not supposed to be placed wide and/or uneven (one hind leg further forward than the other).



Because of the greater bending, the levade is more difficult than the pesade. The pesade is an exercise in which the horse has an angle of 45 degrees or more. In pesade, the horse raises itself, while in the levade the horse bends through its haunches and “sits down”. In the mezzair, the front legs are folded less under the body.

### Goal

The levade is the starting position for the school jumps and shows whether the piaffe was taught to the horse correctly. The levade contributes to making the hindquarter more powerful and bendable. Also, levade is the perfect check whether the horse is trained straight. A crooked horse can do the levade to the left, for example, but not to the right.

So in Straightness Training we use the Levade as a touchstone to check the end result of proper Straightness Training. In ST the levade expresses the end result of a perfectly straightened horse, because only a straightened horse can bend both hind legs equally and is strong, fit and healthy enough to carry all the weight, so the front legs are completely free of load.



## Teaching the levade to the horse



First, the levade is taught to the horse in hand.

First on the track (left picture), to the left and to the right.

Later also on the center line (right picture), with no help of the wall.



Then under saddle the rider asks a piaffe in place.

Then the horse is asked to put more and more weight on the hind legs, so that first one front leg is lifted (left picture).

When the horse feels balanced, strong and comfortable, the other front leg is also lifted (right picture).



When the horse responds by accident the first time and lifts himself a little bit, make sure to release, to reward with the jackpot, and the exercise should be stopped for that day.

In the beginning, the horse only needs to stay in this positing for a short time. The stronger the horse becomes, the more it will bend its hind legs and the more it will “sit down” and fold its front legs under its body.

## Optimizing phase

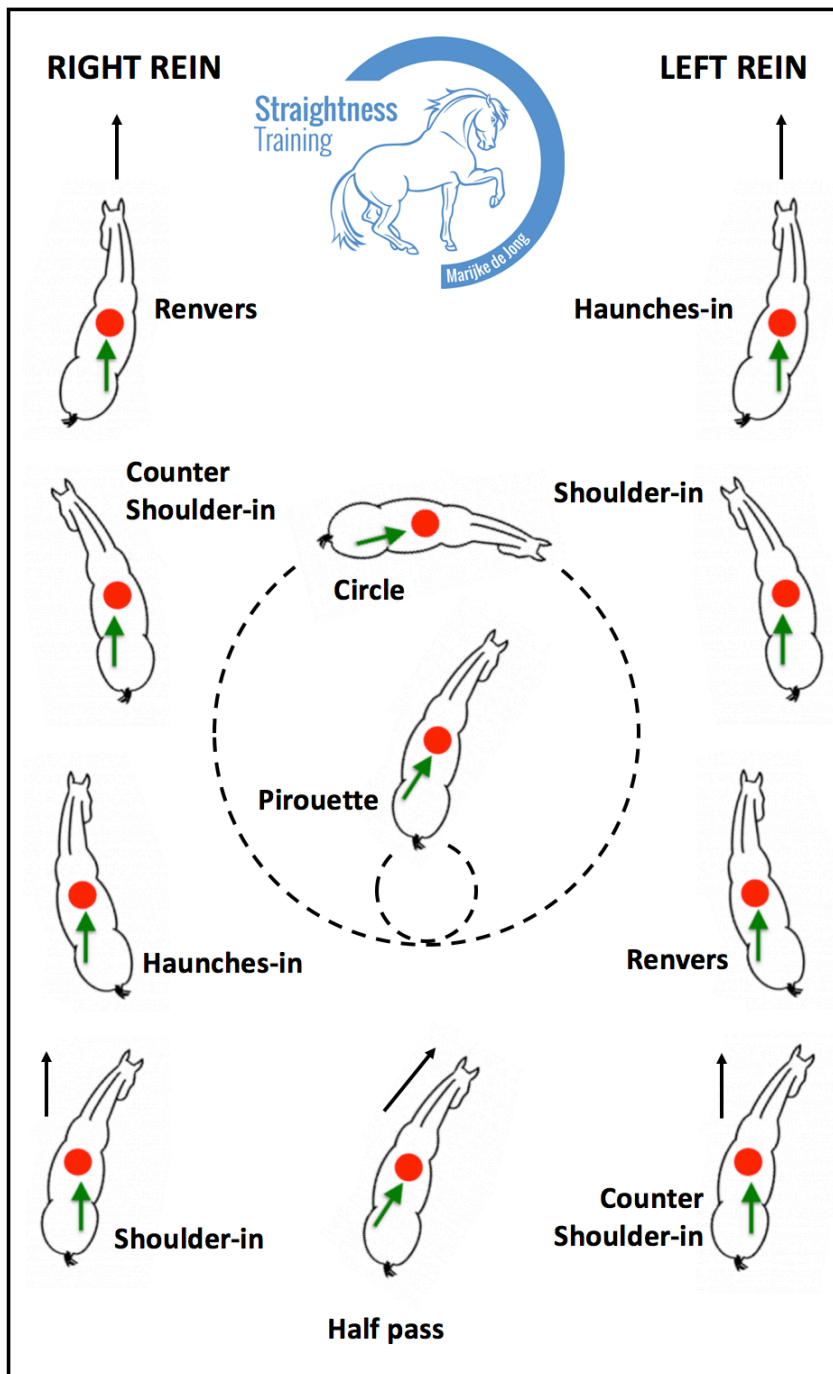
Teaching the levade might go quite fast when the horse is ready for the exercise, but optimizing the quality will take a lifetime.



The picture on the left shows a better forward-down tendency, but in the picture to the right the hind legs are more equal and more narrow and he sits a bit deeper. So also on this high level of ST you need to keep straightening your horse, you need to keep searching for the best possible quality in the balance, suppleness and shape in the same moment.

## OVERVIEW

Here's an overview of the all the ST exercises to develop the horse equally in body and limbs:



All these exercises will improve the symmetry in body and limbs and they will develop and improve the balance, suppleness, shape, tempo and rhythm in any kind of gate a horse has to perform - from walk, trot, canter to pace, tölt or any other gait.

## THE ST ACADEMY



We believe, that the world needs riders who have an amazing relationship and magnificent life with their horses.

A world without unnecessary suffering for horses and riders, because life's too short to suffer.

The online Straightness Training (ST) Academy is designed to support riders and their horses - wherever they are in the world.

In the ST Academy, you'll learn about the concepts, tactics, and strategies that helped riders across the world to overcome struggles, plateaus, setbacks, and challenges with their horse.

Because we deeply believe that you too can turn things around and make a positive difference for your horse!

Or, in case you're not struggling:

For sure, you can get to the next levels of you and your horse's abilities, while having a fun and fulfilling life with your horse along the way!

### **And the ST Academy will help you with that!**

The ST Academy aims to form a world-wide group of horse trainers:

- ✓ Who can at all times avoid unnecessary suffering, by addressing the natural asymmetry in the body of their horse.
- ✓ Who can take care of the mental, emotional and spiritual needs of their horse.
- ✓ Trainers who are able to create an amazing relationship with their horse.
- ✓ Who can lead a magnificent life together with their horses!



Now to make this dream come true, we use the concept of:

## Each One, Teach One

'Each one' who enters the ST Academy starts to 'teach one' horse.

And of course:

- By using the well thought-through step-by-step approach of the ST Mastery Program - to know where to start and what to do next.
- Under supervision of my team of ST instructors and I in the ST Evaluation Program - to avoid getting off track.



Now 'each one, teach one' means, that every time we can make a difference in a rider's life, and really get them to use Straightness Training where they OWN it...

That means, where they don't just make the change in their horse, but understand HOW they did it and WHY they did it...

Then that person is able to really make a positive difference for his or her horse!

That person can have an impact, whatever their level of skill:

- From novice to advanced rider
- From leisure rider to professional horse trainer

And no matter what age!

- You can join as a teenager
- And our oldest Academy member is 84 y/o!

Wherever you are in the world:

- From Canada to Vietnam...
- On the Isle of Man or the Faroe Islands...
- From Belarus to India...

And then you get this GIGANTIC multiplied effect!

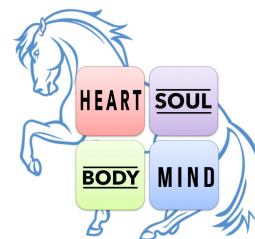
With the 'each one, teach one' principle we are changing the world one owner and one horse at a time.

And to make a life-changing impact, we are doing everything we can to empower you to:

### Optimize Your Skills & Actualize Your Horse's Potential

In the ST Academy, we help you to optimize your knowledge and skills.

And as a result, you can actualize your horse's potential in body, mind, heart and soul.



And to fast-track this process, we use the concept of:

## Together Is Better

A lot of riders are 'the only one' doing Straightness Training in the riding arena...

Or at the barn...

Or in their home-town...

Or even in the country!

And that's the wonderful thing about the ST Academy:

You'll reach ST experts and like-minded Mastery students all across the world, but you never have to leave home!

Now there's an African Proverb that says:

*If you go fast, go alone.*

*If you go far, go together.*



So we believe in 'together is better'!

And thanks to the internet we can do great things together, and get far!

We can build a world in which the vast majority of riders go home every day feeling fulfilled by training their horse!

We believe in a bright future and our ability to build it together.

And we'd love to have you join us!



Now about the Mastery, Evaluation and Instructor program:

The Straightness Training Academy consists of these three programs:

- The **ST Mastery Program** offers you a rich and rewarding and balanced exercise program to get your horse fit and strong, no matter what breed or age.

This program aims to transform riders into Straightness Training experts and experienced horse trainers.

- The structured **ST Evaluation program** is designed to evaluate and measure the level of skill of rider and horse.

Through videos rider and horse can demonstrate their ability to perform the ST exercises that are outlined in ST Mastery.

Through valuable evaluation forms with tips and advice the rider is able to set the next on his or her personal path to Mastery, wherever he's based in the world.

- When students have passed a certain set of evaluations in the Training Pillars groundwork, longeing, work in hand, riding and liberty, they can enroll in the international **ST Instructor Program**.

Now, if you haven't decided yet, I really want to talk to you because, as great as this Academy is...

I understand it's absolutely not for everybody!

So I really want you to be sure this is right for you, once you enroll in the ST Academy.

That's why I've created the ST Mini Mastery Course, so you have an idea what we're about to do together in the ST Academy:

So if you would like to prepare for the ST Academy, then start with the free ST Mini Mastery Course:

[www.StraightnessTraining.com/Mastery](http://www.StraightnessTraining.com/Mastery)

And if you liked this mini-course, you'll love the full Mastery Program!

You'll be able to sign up for the St Academy at the end of the ST Mini Mastery Course!

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