



Balanced Riders = Balanced Horses



Photo credits: Maria Marriott Photography

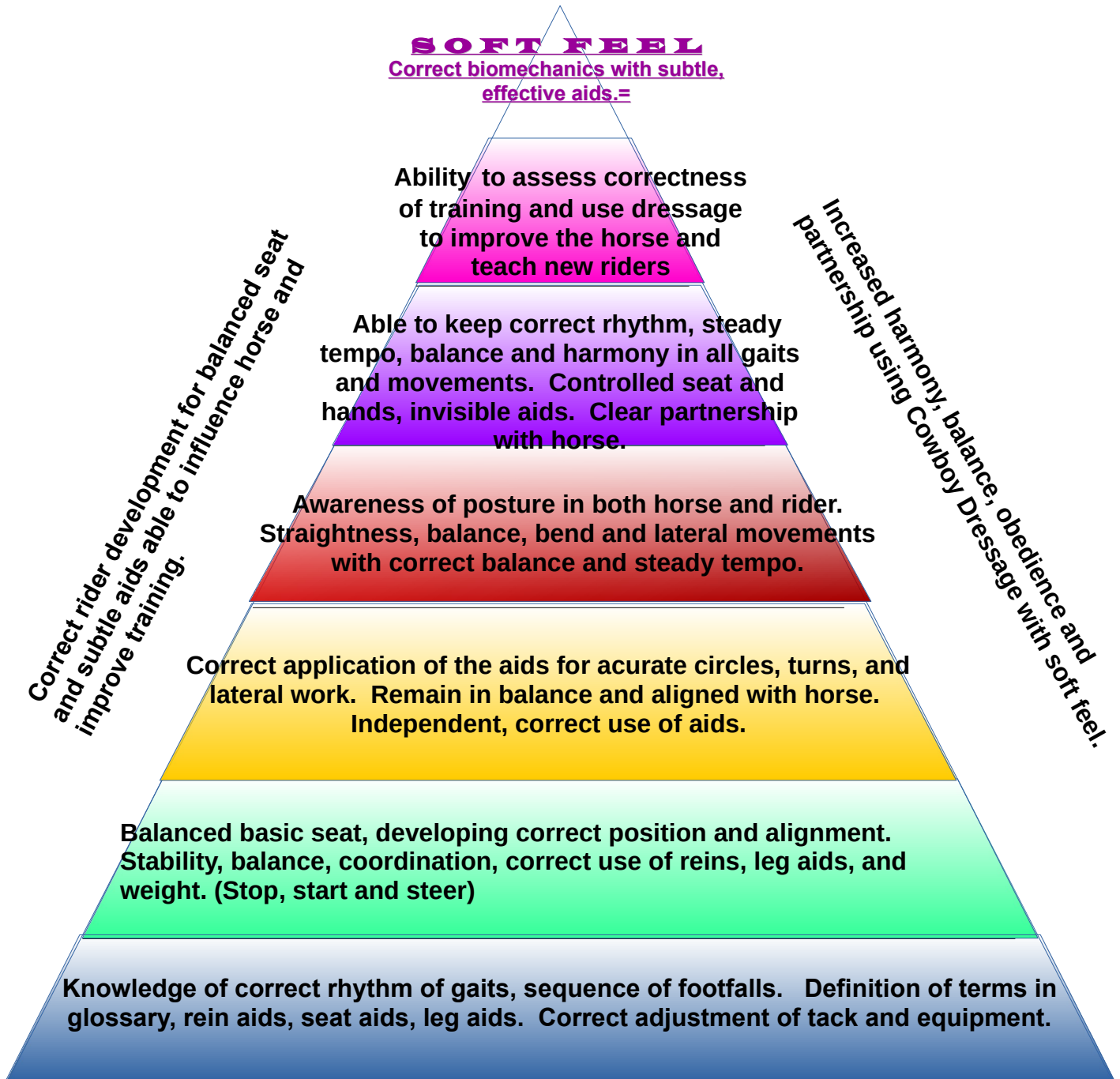
Lynn McEnespy: Cowboy Dressage World Recommend Senior Judge and Level 3 Clinician, USEF "R" Dressage judge, USDF Bronze and Silver Medalist (shown with Santina and Waterford).

Cowboy Dressage

Rider Pyramid of Training

The Rider Pyramid of Training provides detailed steps needed to ride, train and teach Cowboy Dressage. The correct training of the rider is the basis of all horsemanship and effective communication with the horse.

“Improving the rider automatically improves the horse”.



Rider Seat and Position

Without the correct, balanced, effective seat and position, it is impossible to communicate with the horse.

How to Learn: Four stages of learning new methods and correcting bad habits.

Everyone who undertakes the process to learn or improve athletic skills goes thru the following process, even people with Olympic potential! Learning is a defined process and we can use it to improve. Riding takes a lot of concentration and control! Before we undertake new things be it training, riding more advanced movements, or improving the basics, it is helpful to know HOW that process happens. Riding around in an arena listening to an instructor repeat the same thing is seldom helpful or productive.

There is a LOT of helpful information in the Cowboy Dressage tests (online at CowboyDressageWorld.com). If you ride a test, read the comments and/or talk to the judge.

1. **Unconscious incompetence:** Not knowing what is supposed to be accomplished or how to do it. Shoulder-in? What's that? How do I do it?
2. **Conscious incompetence:** You know something is wrong but don't know how to correct it. OK, I read the book, listened to the instructor and know what shoulder-in is but can't get my horse to do it!
3. **Conscious competence:** You know what to do and how to do it but requires active thought process and body control. Oh yeah, I need to prepare my horse to get his attention, spiral my body to the inside and not fall to the outside or collapse inside at the waist, and use my legs to control the horse's body to stay on a curve, AND stay balanced, active, and steady. (GOOD GRIEF!!)
4. **Unconscious competence:** YEAH!!!! This is the enviable stage we see on really good riders where they are apparently telepathic with their horse and the communication is effortless. Shoulder-in, no problem.

What all riders want to achieve: Invisible aids and seemingly telepathic communication to perform at the highest levels or



Without thinking or analyzing, we all want to have:

- Correct position of hands, seat and legs. Vertical and horizontal alignment at all times.
- Balanced seat with body (core) control – not collapsing to one side or sitting to one side, or falling behind the horse.
- Riders spine aligns with horses with special attention on circles and turns.
- Correct aids for all movements (from the Cowboy Dressage Tests) including turns, circles at walk and jog, turns on the forehand and haunches.
- Correct aids to influence shoulders and haunches, backing. Balanced and prepared transitions up and down.
- Ability to keep straight on straight lines such as center line, quarter lines, or along the long wall.



Find Out What We Are Missing!

Awareness is the first requirement to learning new skills or correcting old, bad habits. There are exercises that you can try and assess issues and/or problems. Once strengths and weakness are revealed, it is possible to construct a program to improve.

- **Correct spinal posture. Dont look down**, look up and watch where you are going. Your head is heavy! Even though we see very good riders doing this, don't imitate it. It will damage your cervical spine and tip you forward! If you have problems looking up and keeping your head aligned with your spine, try pulling your chin in and stretching the back of your neck up. (If you have a ground person, you can get a very good reference point by putting a whip or dowel along the spine and press your sacrum, thoracic spine and back of your head to the whip.) This improves balance both longitudinally and laterally. It puts your eyes on the line that you are trying to ride be it straight or curved. It is impossible to ride accurate figures or movements staring at your horses neck. Remember, If you stretch your neck up and tuck your chin – you dont have wrinkles!!!



A few points of reference to try:

- Stand with your feet about hip width apart. Extend your arms at a comfortable level (it is ok to bend your elbows), grip a whip or dowel with both hands like you want to pull it apart. With the whip or dowel PARALLEL TO THE GROUND, rotate your torso right and then left. Observe (or have someone look for you) to see if you can keep it parallel or if one side or both dips down. Can you keep your weight even on both feet or do you shift to one side? Try do this until you are aware of where your HANDS are and if they are level, and where your WEIGHT is. This can also be done on a horse. If you can do this seated, try it at the walk, jog and lope. This will make you aware of the correct “spiral” action needed in the torso to correctly turn the horse.
- Can you stand on one foot for 10 seconds? If you can, can you do it with your eyes closed? Can you raise your heel and balance while standing on one foot? (Holding or touching something is sometimes necessary for balance.)
- On the ground, can you squat (ideally to the ground) with your arms extended, feet forward and then get up? Are you balanced on both feet?
- Mounted can you stand in your stirrups and stay balanced evenly on both feet? If so, can you stay balanced with the horse in motion without knees pinching, legs swinging, falling back or forward? Can you add stretching your arms to the side then forward? If you can do this at the walk, try the jog then the lope.
- If you have a place to get down on all fours (quadruped), can you extend your right arm and left leg at the same time and stay balanced? Then switch to left arm and right leg?
- With a partner on the ground, each hold reins as if you were riding (with two hands) and take up slight but even contact. Take turns pulling and letting go of the reins to see if you can maintain the even rein contact with a loose, relaxed arm and shoulder. The arms and shoulders should be elastic and able to keep the steady contact like stretching a rubber band regardless of what the partner does.
- Stability in the saddle comes from positive tension especially in the abdomen and core muscles to keep the rider stable in the saddle. It also puts us in the correct posture to independently use the aids and not let the horse pull us out of the saddle by pulling on the reins.
- Turning takes balance from horse and rider, however, the horse doesn't care if the 10 meter circle is balance, round, etc.! A “spiral” action of the torso is required to turn and NOT collapse in the waist, drop the inside shoulder or sit to the outside.

- Down transitions require a balanced, supple seat that can adjust the horse's stride to prepare for the transition and not just fall on the forehand. Lowering of the heels and softly sinking in the saddle without pulling on the reins is the key.
- If possible, have someone watch you ride in walk and jog (or take videos). Are you balanced with correctly aligned seat and position???? Can you tell when your balance is not correct? Can you make corrections if suggested???
 - No falling forward, back or to the side in any gait on straight lines or circles.
 - Balanced posting jog on the correct diagonal. There should not be a "double bounce" in the saddle.
 - Consistent, correct hand position on reins. No open fingers or straight, braced arms. Able to keep a light, elastic connection with the reins and correctly follow the horse's head motion at the walk and lope.
 - Does the saddle and rider's spine stay centered on the horse's back on turns?
- Do you have correct alignment, core control and balance?
 - Can you spiral your upper body to turn your horse? (the parallel hands exercise).
 - There shouldn't be any falling to one side and collapsing in the ribs resulting in pulling the horse's neck in and the shoulder falling to the outside, or sitting to the inside with the horse counter-flexed and falling on the inside shoulder.
 - Weight should be even in the stirrups and not pressing down on one side.
 - The rider's spine should always align with the horse's. Easily visible when observed from behind. (The saddle should always be in the center of the horse's back, not off to the side.)
 - To turn correctly, the body **spirals** onto the curved line of travel with the eyes looking where the horse needs to go and shoulders parallel to the ground. Looking at the horse's neck means you won't be able to smoothly and correctly guide the horse. The same as gripping with the heels and/or knees, the rider who stares at the horse's neck is doomed to unbalancing her horse.
 - With correct head, neck and shoulder alignment (NOT looking down), you can more effectively use your seat to create a balanced frame for the horse. When the balance is controlled, it is possible to use very subtle aids to influence the horse to come into a more uphill posture with increased self carriage.
- Are your legs still and in steady contact with the horse's sides?
 - The leg must be stretched against the horse's side and not loose, with the toes down, clamped or pinching with the knees (especially when posting the trot). If the leg is braced and/or locked, it will be very unsteady and swing back and forth also causing an unstable seat and loss of balance. Steady leg contact allows the horse to hear light aids and not just tune out. Some horses also get quite nervous if they think they are going to be kicked. A steady leg against them is reassuring.
 - Heels should go down because the leg is toned and stretched against the horse's sides. Pushing the heels down creates tension, swings the stirrup front of the seat, causing a loss of balance and falling behind. It also makes correct leg aids impossible, and removes the shock absorption function of the ankles and knees.
- Steady hands mean steady reins: ride with champagne glasses in each hand! Can you keep steady, light contact on the reins regardless of what the horse does?
- Can you post the trot without doing a double bounce coming down in the saddle? Posting is not really up and down (and falling behind), but forward-up and back-down. As you rise in the post, the hips swing forward with a kneeling type action of the knees (without pinching!), the calf and upper leg are steady and stretched down to allow even pressure on the stirrups. On the way down, swing back to lightly touch the saddle very slightly in front of the seat bones.

Balanced Riding = Balanced Horses

When aids are conflicting or confusing, the horse will never understand what we are asking for. If our aids are not totally independent and the seat balanced, we will always give conflicting aids. Independent aids start with stable balance with the seat and torso. The aids are the language of touch we develop to communicate with the horse.

When the riders seat and position are balanced, stable, centered, aligned with the horse and the aids are effective, more advanced movements from the higher tests can be performed with a greater degree of precision and skill. The rider can also improve the horses level of training much easier. Discovering what we need to improve is the first step to the top of the Rider Training Pyramid.

Mastering the basic balanced position has a HUGE impact on the horse. The Cowboy Dressage tests are an excellent way of determining the education and hopefully, improvement of both horse and rider. (The tests are available on-line at www.CowboyDressageWorld.com). Tests in both the Challenge and Open courts vary in difficulty with the most difficult being Test 7 in the open court. Riding all or parts of the test will reveal areas of strength and weakness such as:

- Are the aids to control haunches and shoulders correct and effective.
- Lateral movements are done with balance, suppleness and energy.
- The correct concept of lateral suppleness, flexion and bend on circles and lateral movements can be shown. Evidence of balanced seat and effective aids.
- Difference between working and free walk and jog can be clearly and quickly shown.
- Prepared and balanced transitions up and down in all gaits without allowing the horse to fall on the forehand or being abrupt.
- Does the rider have the correct concept and can execute a counter-lope?
- Are figure 8's in jog done with accuracy and fluid change of bend
- Are simple changes clear with correct lope, walk, lope and with balanced, prepared transitions
- Is it possible to show all lateral movements including: Shoulder-in, Shoulder-fore, Leg yield, Traver, Renver, and Half-Pass. (Required reading for more advanced riders!)
- Are the flying changes balanced and clean.
- Can the horse show free walk and jog with increased lengthening of stride and stretch over the topline and then show a clear, fluid transition back to working gaits.



By riding in a balanced, effective way we not only protect our own bodies but our horses too. Correct balance prevents damage from twisting and shock thus making our equine partners last longer. These pictures are of the 23 year old stallion, Waterford, healthy and sound in a clinic at a show and being spoiled!



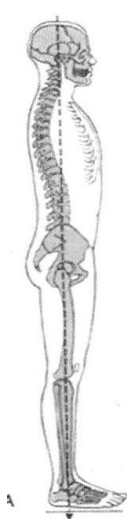
BASIC PILATES PROGRAM FOR RIDERS

This simple program will provide increased ability to recognize limitations and also a way to help improve. It does require diligence and dedication but the results are more than worth it. It is particularly beneficial for those of us who are “mature” and generally not in the best condition.

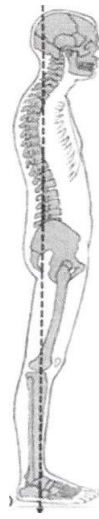
Ideal posture standing is the same as ideal posture riding. With correct posture comes balance and control for better riding. By using a basic Pilates program (or other fitness program) we can continue being effective riders and learning more as we get older. There have been several Olympic riders in their 60's and even 70's.



Most people have some form of spinal deviation that can cause serious pain and limitation as we get older. A lot of these can be corrected with proper training and re-education to have correct motor control of the muscles that protect the spine. We all go thru the same process to learn how to correct issues that affect us on and off a horse. A healthy back is critical to ride well. Learning to correctly using the core, mostly the abdominal muscles and pelvic floor provides the stability, balance and alignment critical to riding well.



Normal



Sway



Flat



Kyphosis/Lordosis

Learning New Muscle Control or Correcting Bad Habits

“Use it or loose it “– but if you don’t use it properly – you will loose it anyway

We have to first recognize and understand what we need to do to correct or improve our riding. This learning process has been well documented and everyone who endeavors to learn or improve athletic skills has to go thru the same process, even people with Olympic potential! By knowing HOW we learn, we can accomplish a huge amount much quicker! Riders will take lessons forever and not really accomplish what they want to learn or really improve how they ride because the learning process is not understood.

1. **Unconscious incompetence:** Not knowing what is supposed to be accomplished or how do do it. Shoulder-in? What’s that? How do I do it?

2. **Conscious incompetence:** You know something is wrong but dont know how to correct it. OK, I read the book, listened to the instructor and know what shoulder-in is but can’t get my horse to do it!

3. **Conscious competence:** You know what to do and how to do it but requires active thought process and body control. Oh yeah, I need to prepare my horse to get his attention, spiral my body to the inside and not fall to the outside or collapse inside at the waist, and use my legs to control the horses body to stay on a curve, AND stay balanced, active, and steady. (GOOD GRIEF!!)

4. **Unconscious competence:** YEAH!!!! This is the enviable stage we see on really good riders where they are apparently telepathic with their horse and the communication is effortless. Shoulder-in, no problem.

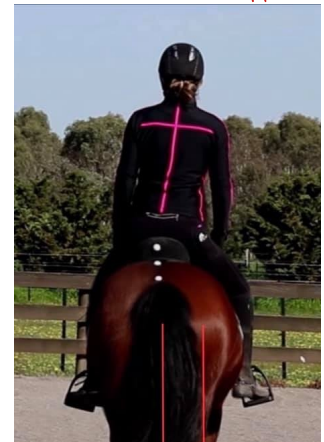
Basic Principles

“Core control”, balance, stability, independence of the aids, uniform flexibility and development, strength, posture, etc. are all desired and required for good riding. “Core control” emanates not just from abdominal muscles (the 6 pack) but also the pelvic floor which has a HUGE influence on the stability of the upper body. The image shown is of the muscles that basically hold our guts in. These muscles are really important and work in coordination with the abdominal muscles to achieve the stable core we all want. (Thank you Kathy Hobbs, MPT and Certified Pilates Instructor/Teacher). As we get older, these muscles loose the reflex action to pull in when we exert muscular effort. This results in the collapsing of the upper body, over-flexing the lumbar and cervical spine making backs and necks sore and a loss of balance sitting on the horse.

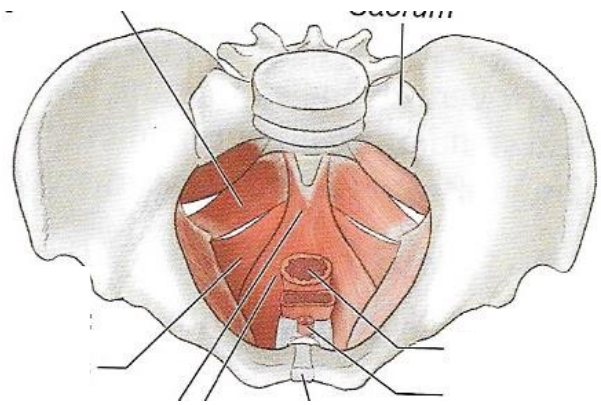
Most people try improve “core” fitness with crunches, sit-ups, gym machines, etc. however it is almost always true that these methods are seriously damaging in that they almost always result in people pushing out with the stomach and down on the pelvic floor muscles. It is actually possible to push so hard that internal organs are damaged or prolapsed!. The good news, they can be re-trained! As mentioned above, the brain needs to restore the connection to this reflex action for a stable upper body. If you want to sit the trot, do smooth transitions, adjust your horses stride and/or balance these are the muscles that work in conjunction with the other core muscles.



Any stiffness or unbalance in the rider's seat or body will show up in the horse. If the riders hip is stiff, the horse's hip will become stiff.



Every exercise must be initiated by pulling up the **muscles of the pelvic floor** and drawing the lower belly muscles in. This is sustained until the movement is finished. Breathing is done by expanding the chest wall to the side and toward the back instead of “belly breathing” with the lower abdominals.

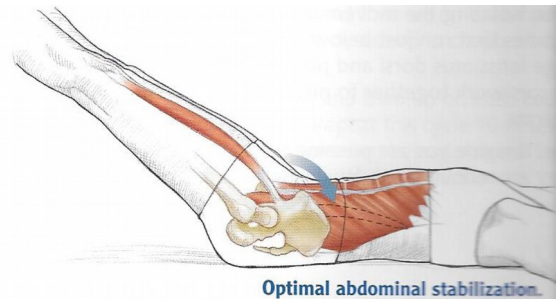
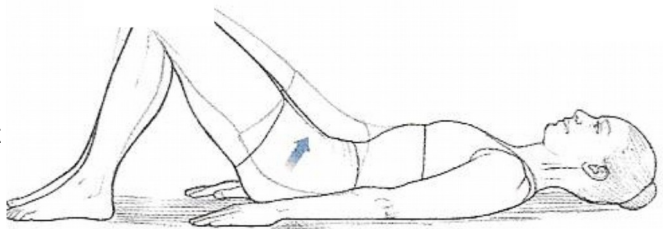


BASIC EXERCISES FOR RIDERS

1. Pelvic tilt and rotation

This is a very basic but effective exercise to teach correct use of the “core” muscles and also teach correct spinal alignment.

CRITICAL POINT: The sacrum is the “flat spot” you rest on. Tilting the pelvis is done **ONLY** with the abdominal muscles and not by squeezing the gluteus muscles or pushing with the feet. Correct action is to exhale and pull the lower belly in (a lot), and the pelvis will roll toward your belly. **DONT push your stomach out!** Your lower back will flatten during the effort, then return to a neutral position with a slight arch in the lower back and resting flat on the sacrum.



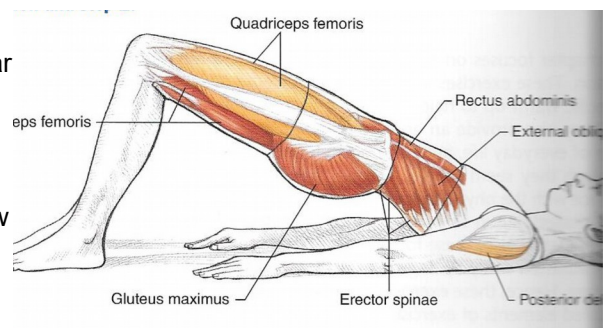
This very simple action can make a huge difference in the tone of the core muscles when done correctly. As shown, the abdominal muscles must be very actively pulled in to keep the back in correct position and not push the belly out.

Variations: The pelvis can be rocked from side to side by slightly stretching a knee slightly forward then changing to the other leg. Rotate the pelvis around like circling the perimeter of the sacrum.



2. “Bridging”

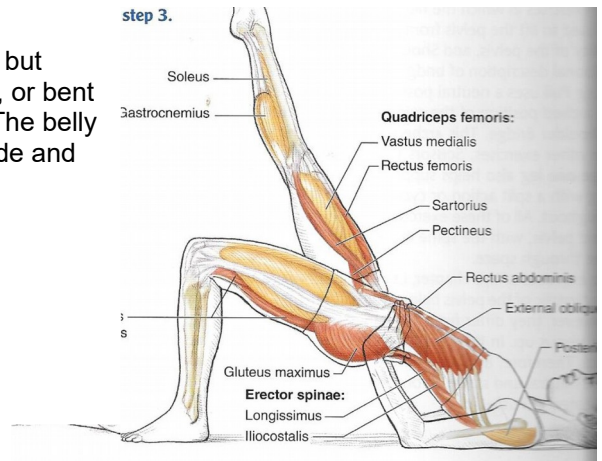
From the neutral spine (flat on sacrum with slight curve in lumbar spine), pull the belly in to stabilize (don’t push out!), then lift up keeping the spine strait. Breathe by expanding the side of the rib cage. Return to start position, then relax and make sure you return to the neutral position with the slight curve in the lumbar spine and on the flat sacrum. Rest a second then repeat it a few times. **Dont try to raise the hips too high and create a bend in the lumbar spine – keep it strait!**



Version two is to start the same (initiate with low belly muscles pulling in and holding) and articulating up by rolling the spine up one vertebrae at a time (slowly) then rolling down. Again, don't go so high you over flex the lumbar spine.

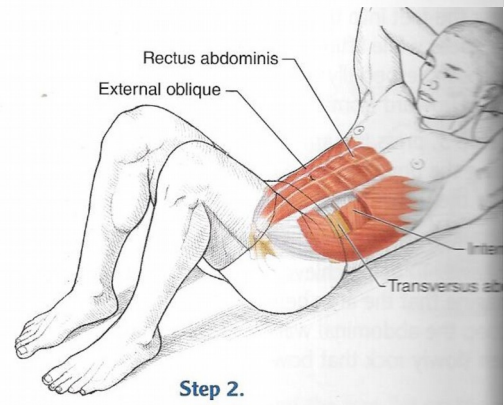
Variation: The more challenging version is to do this on one leg but without losing pelvic stability. The leg can be straight as shown, or bent at the knee. The hips must stay even and parallel with the floor. The belly muscles must stay engaged and pulled in, breath by using the side and back of the rib cage.

step 3.



3. Chest Lift

Another very simple appearing but very effective exercise when done correctly. **It is again critical to NOT push out with the abdomen!!!** To prepare this correctly, inhale and expand the ribs out while pulling the lower belly in and keeping that tone. Exhale and use the muscles just under the ribs to slightly flex the upper body without releasing the lower belly. Hands support the head and neck. Do not pull forward with the neck muscles, use the abdominals. Only go as far as you can, and not pull your neck forward. (Note: these are not the gym type crunches.) The chin should be pulled slightly back to keep the spine in correct alignment with the slight curve in the lumbar spine and the thoracic spine should not curve excessively.

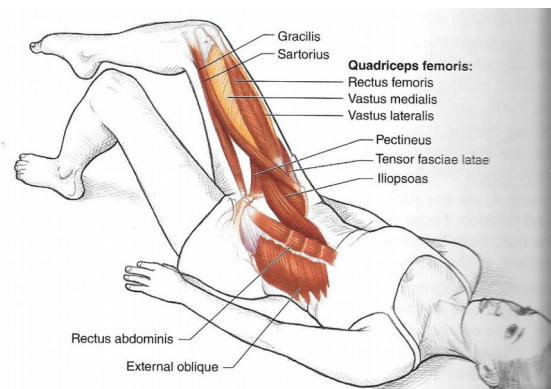


Step 2.

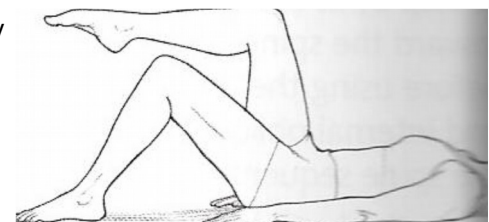
Variation: From the lifted position, "criss – cross" bringing the elbow to the opposite knee (the knee can be brought toward the elbow simultaneously). Then rotate to the other side. Make sure the chest doesn't collapse and keep the lower abdominals in, breathing into the lateral and back part of the rib cage. Keep the head aligned and not pulled forward.

4. Femur Arcs

This exercise emphasizes the ability to control separate parts of the body while keeping the rest of the body stable. **This is critical for riding for an independent seat, balance and aids.** From the basic position with the feet on the ground, raise one leg to the "table top" position as shown. **The spine is kept in neutral position, not pressed flat or the belly pushed out.** This requires a lot of concentration, control and effort! Slowly, lower the leg without changing the angle until the toe taps the floor. Raise the leg and then do the other side. Be aware that your pelvis doesn't change by rocking to one side or your stomach pushes out instead of the belly pulling in.



Variations: If strength and core control allow, raise and lower both legs. The spine must remain in the neutral position and belly really pulled in to the navel.



5. Arm Arcs

For head, neck and shoulder stability and control. (sorry no picture). This emphasizes head, neck and shoulder alignment and control on each side. This is critical for the subtle rein and weight aids we all want. With the knees bent and feet on the ground, arms stretch down to hips. Initiate by pulling the belly in, spine MUST be kept in neutral position with the slight arch in the lumbar spine. Stretch the arms back as far as the spine alignment will allow – don't hyper-extend the lumbar spine or allow the ribs to pop up and pushing the belly out! Gradually, raise the arms and then lower beside the hips. Is your spine STABLE???? Is your low belly pulled in and not pushing out?

Variations: "table top" position (knees up and legs parallel to the ground) with the same arm motion. Take the arms out to a "T" position then raise and lower keeping the torso stable, circle arms slowly, reach opposite arm and leg while keeping the belly pulled in and the lower back in neutral position and stable on the sacrum.

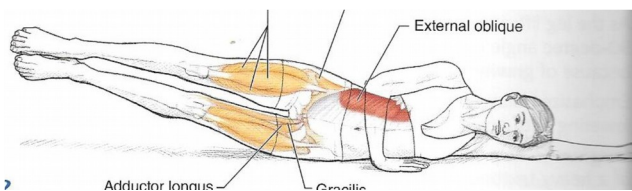
6. "Quadruped"

The quadruped position is on hands and knees with correct spine alignment – meaning don't drop your guts down, the head, neck and shoulder alignment must be correct with the chin drawn slightly back to keep the neck from being stressed. A pole put on the sacrum, thoracic spine, and head should all touch the pole equally. A lot to think about!!! This is all about balance! From the position on all 4's, reach one arm forward without losing the correct spine alignment, no swaying of the hips or flexing sideways, solid core. Second, reach one leg behind straight out with the same core control. If possible, reach one arm and the opposite diagonal leg out simultaneously and hold for a second, then change sides. This will improve with practice and the focusing on the core muscles to stabilize your core. Independent balance of all leg and hand aids!

Variation: Lower and lift diagonal arm and leg together, swing leg and arm out to side.

7. Side Leg

Strengthen and stabilize our legs!!! Improve the flexibility and rotation of the hip in the socket. Done with the top leg or both legs as strength allows. Hand can cradle the head and neck. Pay attention to head and neck – chin should be pulled slightly in



Variation 1: Lying on your side, arrow straight and your pelvis perpendicular to the floor, pull your knees up to about a 90 degree angle. From there open and close your top knee and keeping the feet together without changing your pelvic position.

Variation 2: Raise and lower the entire leg without rolling the pelvis back, if strength and stability allows, raise and lower both legs.

Variation 3: Reach both legs straight down and then lower and lift the top leg, swing the leg back and forth and do circles in both directions.

8. "Book Opening"

This improves the flexibility of our thoracic spine, shoulders and, very importantly, our ability breathe into the side of the rib cage and not "belly breathe". Expanding our lungs means more stamina. Lying on the side with knees pulled up to about 90 degrees. Place the hands behind head. Slowly rotate and stretch to opposite side without pulling on the neck. Breathe deeply into the top lung (yes, it is possible), and then try stretch a bit more across your ribs and side. With repetition, the rib excursion increases as well as the ability to rotate the upper thoracic spine. Make sure your knees are together and don't come apart.

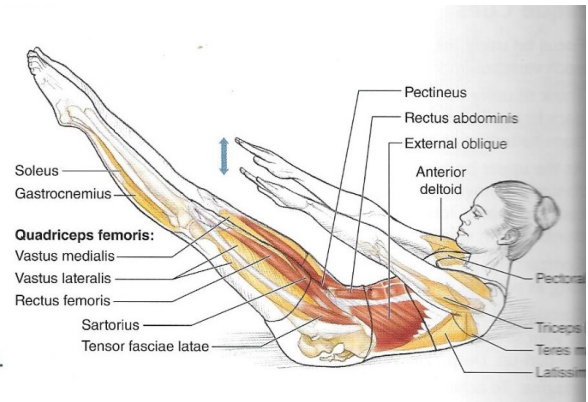
9. "100"

This is a signature move in Pilates and is developed in steps. The advanced version requires a significant degree of core control and breathing. The picture illustrates the most advanced. (The chest lift is a good precursor). Make sure the belly is pulled in and breathing is laterally in the ribs as well as in the back of the ribs.

Variation 1: Feet on ground, knees up, lying in neutral spine position reach the hands forward to the hips and either keep the head down or lift the head, neck and chest. Make sure the neck isn't stressed by pulling forward. Pump the straight arms up and down for a count of 100 or as many as you can keep the correct position.

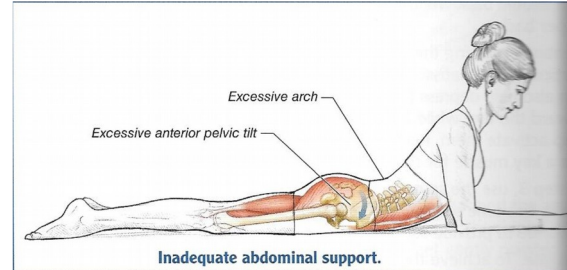
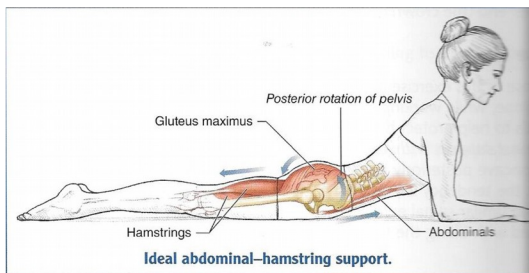
Variation 2: Lift the knees to the table top position, lift the head, neck and shoulders if possible, and pump the arms. Keep the belly pulled in and breath out the side of the ribs.

Variation 3: The advanced version is as shown with the legs straight at a 45 degree angle and the head, neck and shoulders lifted with correct alignment. Pump the arms to a count of 100. If at any time you loose the lower abdomen contraction and start to push out with the stomach muscles, REST!

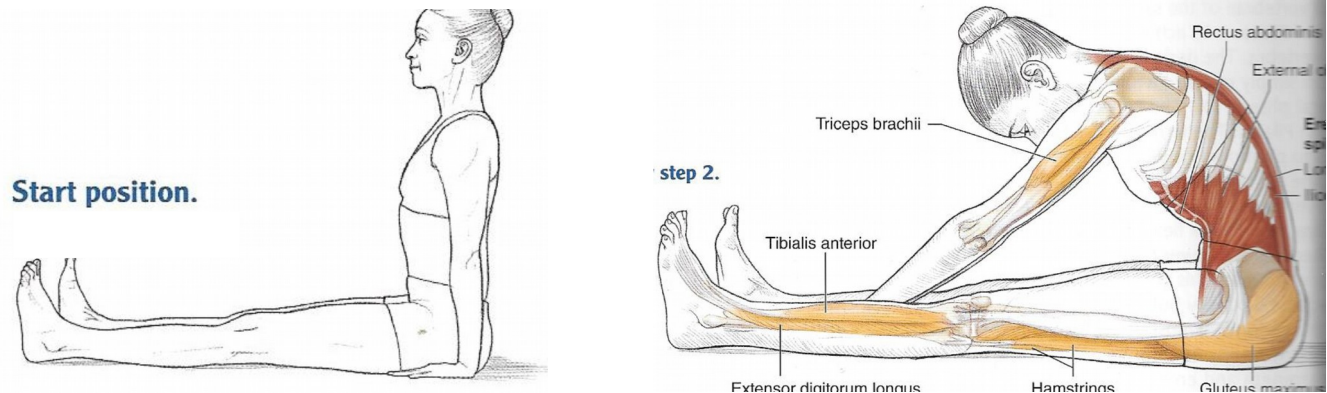


10. Thoracic Spine Stretch

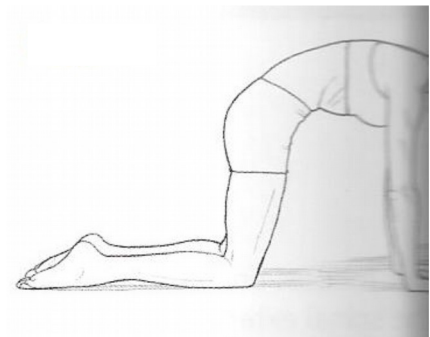
This basic stretch of the upper spine keeps the back mobile and allows us to effectively use the muscles of the shoulders correctly for elastic, effective rein aids as well as keeping the upper body stable. This is ONLY done in the upper part of the back, the thoracic spine and NOT in the lumbar spine. To prevent arching the lumbar spine, the abdominal muscles must engage and pull in to rotate the pelvis and tail bone to the front. The head and neck must stay straight and aligned and not bend back. (Think of drawing the chin in and stretching the head and neck up.)



11. Spine Flexion (Note: do NOT do this if you have any kind of bone issues such as osteopenia or osteoporosis.) Pull the navel in and breathe by pushing your ribs out to the side and back, gradually roll the spine over but don't force the stretch. Optimum is a uniform curve in the spine. It helps to have someone observe and give feedback. Gradually return the spine to the neutral position (don't lose the belly!) with the head and neck aligned over the spine.



Variation: This can be done on the knees for a stretch through the entire spine. Try to have a uniform curve from tail bone to ears. (Helps if someone watches.)



12: Heel Lift: This series greatly improves balance, strength and stability of our feet and legs. It may be necessary to hold on to something or just touch something for balance. To begin, try stand on one foot for 10 seconds, then the other one. Raise the heels and stand on the balls of the feet for 10 seconds. Fully extend the feet and control the lowering down. Repeating this several times will improve strength, balance and stability. If possible stand on one foot and lower and lift the heel then repeat on the other foot. If you are really well balanced, try do this with your eyes closed!

Balance can be improved with practice. Like standing in the stirrups, it takes practice and concentration.

13. Lunge: The basic lunge is to stand with hips square and one leg forward and one back separated about 3 feet with feet pointed directly forward and not to the side. Reach hands forward or place on hips. With torso vertical or very slightly forward, lower the back knee then return to standing. This is a balance and strength challenge. Ideally, the back knee touches the floor but may not be possible if there are knee, hip or feet issues. Repeat on the other side. If you have a pole available, try this with the pole held against your spine and the back of your head to correctly align your head and neck. Usually the chin needs to be pulled back a bit and the neck and head stretched up.

14. Squat: This exercise combines shoulder, hip and ankle mobility, thoracic extension, torso stability and balance. With feet hip width apart and pointing straight ahead, reach arms up to about the ears. Slowly lower down into a squat while keeping the knees and feet pointing straight ahead. Stretch the upper body up as you lower down. If possible, lower to the floor then stand up slowly.

15. The best part! Stretching! There are several stretches that help improve flexibility and mobility. The most important part with stretching – don't overdo it! Stretched muscles should not hurt.

"Figure 4": Lying on your back with knees up, place one ankle across the opposite knee (making a "4"). This is excellent for tight hips. To increase the stretch, you can press down on the knee that is up. This can be done seated also.

"Standing Roll Down": Standing with attention paid to correct head, neck, shoulder alignment (chin in and shoulders wide), stretch arms up to the ears then GRADUALLY fold over at the waist without moving anything else and particularly keeping the head in the same position, reach with the arms as far as you can without forcing it. Return to standing. Version two (only done if you don't have any bone issues) is to start in the same position but GRADUALLY roll the spine down articulating the vertebrae one at a time starting with a slight head nod. Reach as far as possible then GRADUALLY articulate each joint back up to standing straight. Be careful to keep the belly pulled in and not flex in the lumbar spine.

Thank you Saralyn Austin – B and S Show Productions!! Organizing Cowboy Dressage World shows, clinics and equestrian events.

