



DRESSAGE MASTERY ACADEMY

COURSE 1: MASTERY OF DRESSAGE BASICS

TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

Rhythm

Walk

We all know challenges can come up when we train so here are some common problems and how to fix them:

| Common Problem | How to Fix it: |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Horse dawdling and not marching | Make sure the horse respects and moves off the leg and goes forward. (We will cover this more in the transitions month of this module) |
| Horse rushing and jogging | Make sure the horse respects and responds to the half halt. (We will cover this more in the transitions and half halt month of this module) |
| Horse walking lateral | Too much hand blocking the horse - ride forward with no hand. |
| Horse has a short-long walk | Uneven contact - taking more contact on one rein, causing one side to take a shorter step and the other side to take a longer step. (We will cover this more in the contact month of this module). To fix make the contact more even on both sides. |

Trot

We all know challenges can come up when we train so here are some common problems and how to fix them:

| Problem | How to Fix it? |
|--|--|
| Horse not forward enough | Make sure the respects and moves off the leg and goes forward. (We will cover this more in the transitions month of this module) |
| Horse rushing | Make sure the horse respects and responds to the half halt. (We will cover this more in the transitions and half halt month of this module) |
| Horse changing rhythm when change directions | Keep doing the changes! Ride the horse either forward or half halting, teaching the horse to stay in the same rhythm and keep doing a lot of different changes of directions so the horse gets used to it. |
| Horse not maintaining the rhythm | This is normal! The horse isn't born with an inbuilt metronome, the same as we walk and run at different speeds - so does the horse. The horse needs to be trained to stay in rhythm which is all about staying in balance. Sometimes the horse runs on the forehand because he isn't strong or used to carrying himself. So every time the horse falls out of balance, correct him with leg or half halt, but MOST IMPORTANTLY DON'T HOLD THE HORSE - correct, then let him go so he can go alone - even if this means you are correcting every 2nd stride :) |
| Horse nodding its head - bridle lame | The contact is uneven, or too strong. GIVE the hands and allow the horse to find the contact by going forward. |

Canter

We all know challenges can come up when we train so here are some common problems and how to fix them:

| Problem | How to Fix it? |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Horse running in the canter | Make sure the horse respects and responds to the half halt. (We will cover this more in the transitions and half halt month of this module) |
| Horse falling out of canter | FORWARD!!! The horse must stay in the gait you have set forever until you give him another aid. Don't use your legs while he is cantering and if he falls out of canter come with a big kick and whip if you need to say 'hey' you NEVER stop using your legs and just stop! |
| Horse tending four beat in the canter | Horse too collected! Ride forward, the best exercise is ride forward, ride a few strides back, then ride forward again. |

Seat

Balance

We all know challenges can come up when we train so here are some common problems and how to fix them:

| Problem | How to Fix it? |
|--|---|
| Trying to hard and gripping with muscles too much | Riding isn't force. Riding is never about using all your strength. Find balance from sitting deeper which is actually letting go, opening your thigh and sitting longer and deeper. If you tense your knees or thighs you will sit up and out of the saddle - you want to sit down. |
| Hands are being relied on for balance and can't be independent | Keep putting yourself in the situation where you need to find balance without your hands, lift them up so you aren't resting on them and force your body to find balance - using your stomach. |
| You feel like you can't find the centre or sit deep in the saddle | Let go with your knee and thigh muscles and find the tiny muscles in your groin to keep you in the saddle. (We do more on this in the half halt month of this module) |
| You don't feel strong - that you could fall off the side or the front or the back at any time if the horse shied or stopped suddenly | You need more stomach engagement. Not that it is tensed at 100% but my stomach is always engaged so if the horse stopped or shied my stomach keeps me with the horse - practice no stirrups so your body starts to work out which tiny muscles it needs to use to keep you in balance all the time. |

Relaxation

We all know challenges can come up when we train so here are some common problems and how to fix them:

| Problem | How to Fix it? |
|--|---|
| Riding too strong with too much muscle. | Stop trying so hard. I know it is hard to find something when you don't know what the answer is. Just trust me the answer is not in using more muscle. Keep thinking of the glass analogy where you use just the right amount of muscle tension to hold the glass - any more and the glass will break, any less and the glass will drop. Ride with no stirrups so you can't ride strong and have to find the strength in your little muscles. |
| Feeling worried mentally something might happen so being in a defensive position not relaxed | We will cover mindset next month, but for now make sure your body is open and flowing, ready to let the horses movement go through you. |
| Being too relaxed and flopping everywhere | If you take your stirrups away this will help you find the positive tension you need to stay in the saddle. |

Going with the horse

We all know challenges can come up when we train so here are some common problems and how to fix them:

| Problem | How to Fix it? |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Not balanced enough | This is the first step. You cannot go with the horse if you haven't found your balance and are going to fall off the side. You need to keep doing your no stirrup work until you can flow and go with the horse in harmony wherever he goes, without getting tight or losing your balance. |
| Too relaxed or not relaxed enough | If you are tight, if you are forcing, if you are trying too much you won't have the energy to keep riding and most importantly you can't flow if you are forcing. You need to be like water. Water has power because of its flow. Work on your mindset - letting go and keep the no stirrup work up so you can find that nice positive tension to keep yourself in the saddle. |
| Still need to master bracing the back | This is the key to going with the horse. Being able to tighten and brace that back a little or a lot and in essence connect your back to the horses back is everything when it comes to going with the horse. Keep practicing the exercises off the horse and on the horse to build your skills in this. |

| Problem | How to Fix it? |
|---|---|
| Not leading the horse with your seat and your mindset | You have to know where you are going and you have to be the horses leader to really go with the horse. You will cover mindset next month, but make sure when your back is connected to the horse you influence the horses back and take the horse where <i>you</i> want to go rather than wait for him to make the decisions. |

Remember an effective seat takes time, patience and commitment and control of self. It is such a rewarding thing to master though and is vital to effective dressage riding and mastering of movements including the essential half halt which we learn all about in a later month of this module.