



DRESSAGE MASTERY ACADEMY

COURSE ONE: MASTERY OF

DRESSAGE BASICS

PART 1: RHYTHM & SEAT





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COURSE 1: MASTERY OF DRESSAGE BASICS

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Welcome to Dressage Mastery Academy!

I am so excited that you have decided to come on this magical, magnificent amazing journey that we call dressage.

I really acknowledge you - a big pat on the back - dressage isn't easy. There is lots to learn, lots to master - I find it a very humbling intriguing way to spend my time!

I am a definitely a different person today than I was 10 years ago because of what dressage has taught me, but also the person I had to become - I learnt patience, sacrifice and hard work from mastering dressage.

I know when I was learning how to ride and deciding to become a dressage rider, it wasn't easy, and at most times it was very frustrating, very isolating - I felt very alone, confused pretty much all of the time. I didn't know what I was doing and how to do it - I didn't want to ride unless my coach was there telling me I wasn't stuffing up the horse... there was so much uncertainty around everything in my riding!

So what I decided after this journey, was that I really want to record a step by step easy to follow, system that could help riders who are in the same situation as I was when I started out. To help them on their dressage journey, and short circuit some of the steps to learning dressage, and not make all the mistakes that I did.

I wanted to create a program that is designed to give you everything in easy to understand steps so that you know what you should be doing and when you should be doing it. To give you that trust and certainty in yourself. That you might not have all the answers, but you might not know exactly how to do it - but that's ok and to trust in yourself and have fun while you are doing it.

I could have had a whole lot more fun than what I did because I was so serious and concentrating so much all the time on getting it right! Now I LOVE riding, I LOVE dressage and I LOVE training my horses - it's a lot more light and a lot more fun! I want to give you that gift straight away on your dressage journey.

This program is everything I have learnt, everything I have mastered in the last 20 years, packaged in one easy to use system that you can start from the very basics of dressage all the way to Grand Prix.

You can pause this program at any time - perhaps you are going away, your horse gets injured, or you need a bit more time to catch up on everything that you have received so far - it is a very flexible program that takes you at your own pace.

This journey will take you from Basics - Preliminary (Training Level) - Novice (Level 1) - Elementary (Level 2) - Medium (Level 3) - Advanced (Level 4) - Prix St Georges - Intermediate I - Intermediate II - Grand Prix... right to the top!

That's where we are heading, that's what this journey is all about!! I always follow the principle that you start with the end in mind... so you now have a clear path and you know what the end goal is that we are looking to achieve.

The German Training Scale is what the program is based on. If you don't know what the German Training Scale is - this is a very famous system that they use to train dressage horses in Europe.

This scale is intertwined with the Rider's Success Scale that I have developed, based on what I believe riders need to learn, develop and master for them to be the riders that they need to be to be able to train the horse in the German Training System.

On the following pages I will give you a brief outline of the two different scales and how they relate and intertwine with each other.

**GERMAN
TRAINING SCALE**

RHYTHM

LOSSELASSENHEIT

CONTACT

IMPULSION

STRAIGHTNESS

COLLECTION

**RIDER SUCCESS
SCALE**

SEAT

MINDSET

CONTACT

TRANSITIONS

YIELDING

HALF HALT

In the **German Training Scale**, the first two levels are Rhythm and Losgellassenheit.

1. RHYTHM

2. LOSGELASSENHEIT - this is roughly translated to relaxation.

These two steps are the first things that we work on when we first get on a horse. These are the first two steps we need in order to make everything else work, and the things that we go back to if something is not working well with the horse.

The horse needs to be in a nice forward rhythm and it needs to be relaxed!

You need to make sure when you are training the higher movements that you are not training these movements by sacrificing Rhythm and Losgelassenheit - because they are really important!

When we are looking at comparing these first two steps of the German Training Scale to the **Rider Success Scale**, the two things we need are:

1. SEAT

2. MINDSET

We simply must have an independent SEAT. We must be able to sit on the horse and move with the horse independently of what is going on. If we are not in balance, then how can we expect the horse to be balanced? We need to develop balance, and we need to learn how to go with the horse.

MINDSET is also incredibly important when we are riding and training dressage horses. Who do we need to be as a rider to be able to deliver and train a horse effectively in dressage?

Then we can move into the next two levels of the **German Training Scale**:

3. CONTACT

4. IMPULSION

Contact is really important - we have to be able to maintain a contact with the horses mouth.

On the **Rider Success Scale**, contact is also very important.

3. CONTACT

We must be able to keep contact and not drop our hands, drop our contact, or if we are still using our hands for balance and jerking the horse every stride, then how can the horse keep a steady contact if we can't keep a steady contact.

This is where the German Training Scale and the Rider Success Scale really intertwine and work hand in hand. The horse can't be in a nice contact if we as riders can't first maintain a contact.

Impulsion is also really important in the German Training Scale. But what is impulsion and how is that created?

If you look at the **Rider Success Scale** for the answer, we come to transitions.

4. TRANSITIONS

Impulsion is created through transitions between the gaits (eg. trot-canter) and within the gaits (eg. collected canter-medium canter). All these things will start to create the horse moving onto a horizontal plane - from traveling on the forehand to getting those hindlegs a bit more active and start to carry the horse a bit more.

The last two steps are really about getting the horse to sit on the hindlegs.

So on the **German Training Scale** we have:

5. STRAIGHTNESS

6. COLLECTION

Straightness is hugely important - horses are not born straight - they have a preference to which side they prefer. We also ride with a preference to one side or the other that we also always need to work on.

We want to make the horse more supple and more soft on both sides so they can be absolutely straight.

When you look at the **Rider Success Scale**, this is the ability to move the horse.

5. YIELDING

This is the ability to put the horses hindleg, or the horses shoulder - every part of the horse - front or back legs, you want to be able to move in any way to create straightness. Eg. if the horse is carrying hindlegs to the inside, you are going to want to move the shoulders back over to create straightness.

6. HALF HALT

This is the last part of the Rider Success Scale, and creates collection in the German Training Scale. Collection is really the horse sitting on its hind legs - the peak of collection is piaffe when the horse is trotting on the spot, as well as the canter pirouette.

To create this you need to be able to half halt effectively to have collection and create the horse you want to have.

What is a half halt? How do you do them? How often do you have to do them? How do you do them effectively? How strong do they have to be?

This is an outline of what we are going to base our training on. The first 6 month module, before we get into Preliminary (Training) level dressage, is called “Mastery of Dressage Basics”. This module goes through each of the steps of the German Training Scale as well as the 6 steps of the Rider Success Scale, and how these fit together and can be utilised to create the dressage horse you want to have and show you the framework that you need to use.

The horse is always a reflection of you - the horse will get better when you get better. So what can you do to get better so that you get a change and better results in your horse?

This is where we are headed - to master the German Training Scale and the Rider Success Scale. We can master each of these scales whether we are at basic level or Grand Prix level dressage. Be patient with where you are in your journey - you won't have the seat of Isabel Werth, who has been a Grand Prix dressage rider for 20 years, if you have only just started riding - but it is something that you can work towards!

Let's make a commitment now to improving throughout your journey and mastering the German Training and Rider Success scales at each level. The scales will mean different things at different points in the journey - collection will mean a different thing in Preliminary (Training) level dressage than it will in Grand Prix level dressage.

I can't wait to make this journey with you, get to know you and see how you progress as you learn and grow!

To Your Success,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Natasha Althoff". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Natasha Althoff

Section 1: German Training Scale - Rhythm

Information on Rhythm

Rhythm makes sure you have a consistent base to work from. The horse needs to go alone and stay forward in a steady rhythm.

A young horse needs to learn this, so when the movements get harder and we add shoulder in, half pass or collection for example - the horse knows to use his back and stay forward and steady, rather than sucking back and disengaging his back.

For a horse to be a true dressage horse, they keep rhythm like a metronome which adds to the look and the ride-ability of the horse.

We all want to be on a horse that is moving forward at a consistent pace, taking us where we want to go enthusiastically.

That is achieved when we have the horse in rhythm.

Questions to Consolidate Learning on Rhythm

Why is Rhythm Important?

What do I do when my horse is out of rhythm?

When I ride the **walk** how do I make sure my horse stays in Rhythm?

When I ride the **trot** how do I make sure my horse stays in Rhythm?

When I ride the **canter** how do I make sure my horse stays in Rhythm?

Checklist for Rhythm

How do I know my horse is in ‘rhythm’?

Checklist	Done
My horse is traveling in an even rhythm - I don't need to keep half halting or kicking to keep the horse going.	
My horse doesn't change rhythm when something else changes, eg. in changes of directions or transitions my horse doesn't speed up or slow down he just keeps going as is.	
My horse is forward and thinking forward all the time.	
My horse is not running away and using speed as an evasion.	
My horse is forward but not fast or running.	
My walk is clear 4 beat with each step being even.	
My trot is clear 2 beat staying forward and willing to take me forward without slowing down or rushing.	
My canter is 3 beat with a clear jump and staying forward. Again the horse doesn't rush forward or suck back and become 4-beat-like.	
I am always using more leg than hand and the horse takes my hand forward rather than me pulling back.	

Troubleshooting Guides for 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.

Answer Sheet for Rhythm - how did you go?

Why is Rhythm Important?

Rhythm makes sure you have a consistent base to work from. The horse needs to go alone and stay forward.

A young horse needs to learn this so when the movements get harder and we add shoulder in half pass collection - the horse knows to use his back and stay forward rather than sucking back and disengaging his back.

For a horse to be a true dressage horse they keep rhythm like a metronome which adds to the look and the ride-ability of the horse. We all want to be on a horse that is moving forward at a consistent pace, taking us where we want to go enthusiastically. That is achieved when we have the horse in rhythm.

What do I do when my horse is out of rhythm?

If the horse is too slow...

RIDE FORWARD!!!!

Ride with more leg than hand. Even give the hand and ride forward enthusiastically

It is your leg that fixes rhythm and not your hand.

If the horse is too fast...

He needs to accept the leg, so still ride the horse forward even if this means you canter first - canter and get your horse to accept the light leg, then get a response to half halts but DON'T hold him back.

IF you hold him back he will expect you to always hold him... so make sure you give - even if this means the horse jumps forward again, half halt and soften, keep training it until when you give the horse doesn't run off - the horse stays in rhythm.

When I ride the walk how do I make sure my horse stays in Rhythm?

Make sure you allow the horse to walk alone. Don't use your hand, unless your horse is wanting to trot, if your horse is running away do all your work and finish with walk at the end and train him to wait for you.

The horse has to learn not to fear the walk. So do lots of walk on a loose rein and either use your legs to make sure the horse is marching, or half halt - soften!

If the horse gets too fast, remember to always soften and give your hands and don't use your legs every stride in the walk - use your legs every 3rd stride as that won't make a certain step always bigger.

When I ride the trot how do I make sure my horse stays in Rhythm?

You must think forward especially in trot. Trot is the easiest gait to get the horse into the contact.

Rider mindset, which we cover next month is important here as you must be the leader and be crystal clear on the rhythm you want and get the horse to come to your rhythm rather than accept the rhythm the horse offers you.

When I ride the canter how do I make sure my horse stays in Rhythm?

Again you must be very clear on the canter you want.

It must have jump - like you are going over cavalettis and be going forward without kicking every stride. Make sure the horse keeps the enthusiasm.

Some horses are weak in the canter when they are young and if that is the case do half a circle canter, back to trot, then repeat.

Section 2: Riders Success Scale – Seat

Information on Seat

What do we mean by seat?

I define it as being able to go with the horse and influence their gaits as your back is connected to their back. When the seat is independent you can sit relaxed and still without any tension in any muscles and you are completely balanced and centered in the saddle, and not relying on anything to keep you balanced besides your core.

This means you don't use your hands to balance, you don't move when the horse moves unexpectedly underneath you, you are centered and balanced at all times *and* you can move EVERY single part of your body independently of each other part - i.e.: Move a hand - the arm and upper body doesn't need to follow.

Remember being effective is much more important than just looking 'good'. Don't just focus on looking good as that might mean you tense up and lock your muscles so you are sitting still – you look like you are not moving on your horse, but your back is tight, so the horses back is tight, and you are unable to move with the horse.

Locking, stiffening or using too much 'muscle' is the **WRONG** way to go about getting an independent seat, so keep the focus on three key factors listed below:

The three keys to the 'perfect' seat are:

- Balance
- Relaxation
- Going with the horses' movement

Remember everyone will sit a little bit differently as we are all shaped and conformed differently. What you need to ask yourself is *not* "am I sitting right?" or "do I look good?" but ask yourself "am I balanced, am I relaxed and am I going with the horse?"

There are many types of seat

- Chair
- Fork
- Crooked
- Stiff
- Normal

The main thing is to determine which one you have a tendency for and work on improving it.

looking at the three keys:

1. Balance

Balance was always described to me as if the horse comes out from underneath you, how do you land on the ground, i.e. if you are a chair you will land on your bottom, if you are a fork you would land on your face.

The first thing to know... the number one secret is that balance is ONLY created from your two seat bones and your fork.

ARMS AND LEGS play NO part in balance!!!

If a rider with a correct seat had no arms and legs they would still be able to ride perfectly balanced on the seat. Think of riding a bicycle and riders can take the hands off the handle bars and stick their legs out the sides. It's the same with the horse.

This balance takes time to teach your muscles how to engage and support you, but it is that use of the muscles not a tight gripping muscle that we want.

A way to improve balance on your horse is to ride without stirrups. (I did this once – 4 horses a day for 6 months) I had to get the groom to take the stirrups off and hide them as otherwise I would put them back! It was so challenging to begin with! Every time the horse changed direction or across a diagonal I would feel myself slip to the side and my muscles grip to keep me on!

But with time I learnt.

The test is if you can do a 6 loop serpentine without any gripping of the legs or arms not hanging on, can look around you easily without changing your position and can chat about something else while you do it!

Well you have definitely moved into unconscious competence!!! :)

I still do this even now especially in my Grand Prix work - I expect my horse to be in perfect balance! How can he be if I am not? Remember however much we expect from our horses we must expect double from ourselves.

2. Relaxation

So this is when all the muscles and joints in your body are fluid and relaxed without any stiffness or tightening.

However this does not mean so relaxed you are slouching and have no muscle usage at all (relaxation to me is lying on a deck chair on an island with a cold drink in my hand!! :)

It's this old paradox of relaxation with tension! Obviously the muscle needs to be engaged but not tensed so tightly they will fatigue and give out.

Relaxation is also part of the mind here that we will talk about in the mindset month of this module.

If you are worried, upset or tense about anything this will come through in your body. You must trust that you can go with the horse.

Obviously if you are worried something may happen or you could fall your body and muscles will be tense and tight and be unable to create the relaxation needed for a correct seat.

If you also feel uncomfortable in the saddle, tight thighs, sore buttocks... anything sore and tight will also affect your relaxation - therefore stretching should be a part of every rider's plan.

This especially should include stretches to stretch the inner thigh muscles and stretch the fork as well as the hips to lengthen the leg.

I remember there was a time with my riding when I would constantly have a sore upper back and neck. If you have soreness after you ride then you are tensing and overusing those muscles and you need to notice it and make a conscious effort to constantly relax them and use other muscles instead.

When you ride with your body and with a correct seat, you should feel no pain.

Remember any time you are told something i.e. sit up, shoulders back, heels down, you will use muscles to do it - you must remember after every time you do this to relax into it, i.e. shoulders relaxed back and down rather than pulled back with extreme muscle force. If you **force** your body into the 'correct' position you will never have the relaxation needed for the correct seat to go with your horse. So always remember *softening* and relaxing into the position rather than forcing it.

3. Going with the horse

This is done by the development of the back muscles of the rider.

Think of a swing, when you first get into it, it doesn't move, you must use your back to start the swing in motion. That is the same when you ask your horse to walk from a halt.

Then as the swing is swinging, if you do nothing with your muscles the swing will get slower and slower and eventually stop, whereas if you continue to swing it with your back muscles it will continue to swing as high as you choose to go.

So how specifically do you get the swing in motion and keep it going? We call it bracing the back and it is essential to a good seat and to give any effective aid IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO LEARN AND MASTER!

Remember the above two points - you must be *balanced* in the saddle and not gripping with anything to stay on the horse and you must be *relaxed* - this is not about stiffening the back or making it rigid.

Even if you want to sing a song while you practice or say again and again like a mantra "I am relaxed and soft, I am relaxed and soft" while you practice.

If you place your hands on your two seat bones and feel them now I want you to hollow out your back and feel the two bones go backwards. This is wrong and hence why we never want to hollow our back while riding.

Feel your spine at rest and feel there is a gentle curve, now flatten out that curve to make your spine dead straight you will notice to do this you move the front of your pelvis up and the rear of the pelvis down and this makes the two seat bones come forward.

We can also do this on just one side, so that either one seat bone or the other is being pushed forward individually.

Bracing the back pushes the seat forward which is what is required for riding.

That is why a hollow back on a rider is so disastrous as it pushes the seat to the back.

Exercises for bracing the back:

Swing: brace to swing forward relax to swing back.

Book on a table

Lying on floor raise the buttocks

Stool swinging

Also practice doing one side, and then the other, as canter transitions and turning all require this skill. Keep repeatedly practicing until you can do it the same way all the time.

Exercises:

Twisting a swing: On the floor raise one seat bone then the other.

When these exercises are mastered you can move to practicing them on a horse. Remember keep the relaxation and play with it.

The level of how much you brace your back is always changing - sometimes it is relaxed sometimes it is braced to the max - i.e. halt transition sometimes only half, play with the influence you have over the horse with your seat.

Once you have mastered the bracing of the back, you will then need to develop moving with the horse.

When you ride you have a COG – Centre Of Gravity – when this centre of gravity is supported, the body is said to be in equilibrium. Your body is supported by your two seat bones and your fork.

When the horse moves forward and you wish to keep your equilibrium, you too must move your centre of gravity forward in front of the horse – this is called going with the horse.

If you fail to do this you will get behind the horse and then start gripping and tightening with your legs to stay on the horse.

When you are in front of the horse and keeping him forward – leading with your seat – you are in fact ‘locked’ in to the saddle.

I call my back my seatbelt and I’m locked in and ready to go! When you feel this you are in close contact with your horse and you are in front of the movement so can’t be bounced out.

By sitting securely on your three anchor points you are locked in whether your horse shies, stops or runs and can therefore control what is happening underneath you.

Questions to Consolidate Learning on Seat

How to do it:

Who do you need to be? Eg. Patient...

What should I focus on?

Do the hours! There are 10,000 hours of practice needed to claim mastery of something!

When I ride how do I know I am in **balance**?

When I ride how do I know I am **relaxed**?

When I ride how do I know I am **going with the horse**?

Checklist for Seat – I know I have an effective seat when:

Checklist	Done
I feel in complete balance - wherever my horse's body goes my body follows without me thinking about it.	
I am relaxed in thinking and in my body with positive tension keeping me still and supple.	
I am moving with the horse in harmony, his back is my back.	
I have no pain or stiffness when or after I ride.	
Riding feels more comfortable than walking.	
Every single bit of my body can be isolated - relaxed or tensed at will without affecting another body part.	

Troubleshooting Guides for 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.

Answer Sheet for Seat – How Did You Go?

When I ride how do I know I am in balance?

I feel if the horse was taken out from underneath me I would land on my feet. I feel like no matter what the horse does or goes I can go with it. I have a deep sense of connection with my back to the horses back.

When I ride how do I know I am relaxed?

A great way is when you get off the horse at the end of the ride and you feel great - not tight or stiff anywhere.

Remember anything you are trying to do with your seat - look up, legs long, toes up and in, upper thighs keeping you in the saddle... do it without going 100% straight away the first time you try, so you don't get too tired. You wouldn't go to the gym and bench press 100kg if you have never done it before so give our muscles time to grow in your riding.

When I ride how do I know I am going with the horse?

This is when riding really is effortless.

You know when you going with the horse because you truly are going with the horse.

You are leading, he is following, you are in complete balance and harmony, supple and easily going with the horse and your back is connected to his, influencing his steps and doing effortless transitions. This is the goal.

Section 3: Training Plans

Why is this important?

Without a training plan:

1. You don't know what you should be working on or looking to achieve.
2. You can't measure progress. You can't see how far you have come.
3. You can't tell if you are moving backwards, forwards or sideways.
4. Your ride can be boring and unfulfilling as no goals have been achieved.
5. You are wasting time working on things that don't matter.
6. You are not using the time to work on what you should be working on that makes the most difference to your scores and your progress through the grades.

What is a training plan?

A document - online, written, verbal or in your head - of a list of exercises and tests you are doing on a particular day to make progress and measure that progress towards your goals.

How do you create a training plan?

The first thing you need to know is - what is your goal?

What do you want to achieve from your training plan?

If this training plan was to guarantee you would get results - what results would they be?

So for Basics/Preliminary Month 1 our goal is:

1. To have the horse moving in a forwards, consistent rhythm without help from the rider
AND
2. To learn and develop the 'independent' seat and be able to go with the horse and connect your seat bones to the horses back.

GOALS for the MONTH

CURRENT GOAL: Consolidate Basics on Riding and Training

Monthly Goal for German Training Scale - Rhythm:

Have the horse moving in a good Rhythm.

Week	Goal
1	Do one lap around the whole arena and check how many times you have to adjust the rhythm. I.e. Half halt or adjust your legs. The AIM is to not have to adjust even once!
2	Count how many steps of trot and canter you do on a long side. You want to be able to adjust the strides 1st round - do normal - might be 23 strides of canter 2nd round - make your strides longer (eg. 20 strides for the long side) 3rd round - make your strides shorter (eg. 26 strides for the long side)
3	Get someone to watch you or record you and do one lap in normal rhythm and then ride more forward - not faster just more energy and impulsion and forward thinking and see what looks better :)
4	Have a lesson or go to a competition and get direct feedback on your rhythm. Is it good or is it inconsistent - goes too fast and then too slow. Do a practice test at home and just in relation to rhythm, see what you need to work on - you might realise when you get into pressure at comp you forget about fundamentals and basic of rhythm which will lose you marks as well as affect you moving up the German Training Scale - contact, straightness transitions etc...

Monthly Goal for Rider Success Scale - Seat:

Start to connect my back to the horses back and learn to influence the horse with my seat and develop an independent seat

Week	Goal
1	Do a ride with no stirrups if possible in walk - put your hands under your seat bones.
2	Connect your seat bones into the horses back and pedal and feel yourself being lifted up left right left right.
3	Stamp down with your heel on the 1 in canter and hold your abs in
4	Look up! And shoulders back

TRAINING PLAN - WEEK 1

Remember:

The four stages of a riding day plan:

- 1 - Warm up
- 2 - Basics
- 3 - Fun/test work
- 4 - Cool down

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.02	Warm Up	Change rein on loose rein	-
0.03	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.05	Warm Up	Start trotting, encouraging horse to stretch and lower and chew the contact down	-
0.07	Warm Up	Circle right in trot	1-2
0.07	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.08	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.08	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal	-
0.09	Warm Up	Circle left in trot	1-2
0.09	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.10	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.10	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal and canter	-
0.11	Warm Up	Circle right in canter	1-2
0.11	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.11	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.12	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal, canter	-
0.12	Warm Up	Circle left in canter	1-2
0.13	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.13	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	-
0.14	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - Do one lap around the whole arena and check how many times you have to adjust the rhythm (once done walk for a lap as below)	3
	Basic	Walk - reflect on learnings and how you can make it better (then back to Rhythm exercise)	3
0.20	Basic	Change rein	-
0.21	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - Do one lap around the whole arena and check how many times you have to adjust the rhythm (once done walk for a lap as below)	3
	Basic	Walk - reflect on learnings and how you can make it better (then back to Rhythm exercise)	3
0.27	Basic	Start Seat Exercise - Do a ride with no stirrups if possible in walk - put your hands under your seat bones (once done walk for a lap as below)	3

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
	Basic	Walk and think about it for a minute, think about what you felt, think about how your seat bones feel differently and how they connect with the horse (then back to Seat exercise)	3
0.28	Basic	Change rein	-
0.29	Basic	Start Seat Exercise - Do a ride with no stirrups if possible in walk - put your hands under your seat bones (once done walk for a lap as below)	3
	Basic	Walk and think about it for a minute, think about what you felt, think about how your seat bones feel differently and how they connect with the horse (then back to Seat exercise)	3
0.35	Cool Down	Back to walk	-
0.35	Cool Down	Walk and allow the horse to stretch and cool down on both reins	-
0.40	Finish	Finish	-

There is no fun/test work in this training plan as the basics are not established therefore the basics are part of the fun/test work.

TRAINING PLAN - WEEK 2

Remember:

The four stages of a riding day plan:

- 1 - Warm up
- 2 - Basics
- 3 - Fun/test work
- 4 - Cool down

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.02	Warm Up	Change rein on loose rein	-
0.03	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.05	Warm Up	Start trotting, encouraging horse to stretch and lower and chew the contact down	-
0.07	Warm Up	Circle right in trot	1-2
0.07	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.08	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.08	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal	-
0.09	Warm Up	Circle left in trot	1-2
0.09	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.10	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.10	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal and canter	-
0.11	Warm Up	Circle right in canter	1-2
0.11	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.11	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.12	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal, canter	-
0.12	Warm Up	Circle left in canter	1-2
0.13	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.13	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	-
0.14	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - 1st round - Go down the long side, count how many strides you do in trot (just do this normally, then walk and reflect) 2nd round - Go down the long side, increase your stride length and count how many strides in trot this time (then walk and reflect) 3rd round - Go down the long side, decrease your stride length and count how many strides in trot this time (then walk and reflect)	3
	Basic	Walk - reflect on learnings and how you can make it better (then back to Rhythm exercise)	3
0.20	Basic	Change rein	-

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.21	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - 1st round - Go down the long side, count how many strides you do in trot (just do this normally, then walk and reflect) 2nd round - Go down the long side, increase your stride length and count how many strides in trot this time (then walk and reflect) 3rd round - Go down the long side, decrease your stride length and count how many strides in trot this time (then walk and reflect)	3
	Basic	Walk - reflect on learnings and how you can make it better (then back to Rhythm exercise)	3
0.27	Basic	Start Seat Exercise - Walk with your hands under your seat bones - put your hands under your seat bones (once done trot for a lap as below)	3
	Basic	Trot for a lap, think about how your seat bones feel differently and how they connect with the horse (then back to Seat exercise)	3
0.28	Basic	Change rein	-
0.29	Basic	Start Seat Exercise - Walk with your hands under your seat bones - put your hands under your seat bones (once done trot for a lap as below)	3

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Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
	Basic	Trot for a lap, think about how your seat bones feel differently and how they connect with the horse (then back to Seat exercise)	3
0.35	Cool Down	Back to walk	-
0.35	Cool Down	Walk and allow the horse to stretch and cool down on both reins	-
0.40	Finish	Finish	-

There is no fun/test work in this training plan as the basics are not established therefore the basics are part of the fun/test work.

TRAINING PLAN - WEEK 3

Remember:

The four stages of a riding day plan:

- 1 - Warm up
- 2 - Basics
- 3 - Fun/test work
- 4 - Cool down

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.02	Warm Up	Change rein on loose rein	-
0.03	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.05	Warm Up	Start trotting, encouraging horse to stretch and lower and chew the contact down	-
0.07	Warm Up	Circle right in trot	1-2
0.07	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.08	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.08	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal	-
0.09	Warm Up	Circle left in trot	1-2
0.09	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.10	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.10	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal and canter	-
0.11	Warm Up	Circle right in canter	1-2
0.11	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.11	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.12	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal, canter	-
0.12	Warm Up	Circle left in canter	1-2
0.13	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.13	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	-
0.14	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise IN WALK Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in normal rhythm in walk.	3
0.15	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - IN WALK Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in with more energy and impulsion but not faster rhythm.	3
0.16	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise IN TROT Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in normal rhythm in trot.	3
0.17	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - IN TROT Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in with more energy and impulsion but not faster rhythm.	3
0.18	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise IN CANTER Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in normal rhythm in canter.	3

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.19	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - IN CANTER Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in with more energy and impulsion but not faster rhythm.	3
0.20	Basic	Walk - reflect on learnings and how you can make it better (then back to Rhythm exercise)	3
0.21	Basic	Change rein	-
0.22	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise IN WALK Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in normal rhythm in walk.	3
0.23	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - IN WALK Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in with more energy and impulsion but not faster rhythm.	3
0.24	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise IN TROT Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in normal rhythm in trot.	3
0.25	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - IN TROT Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in with more energy and impulsion but not faster rhythm.	3
0.26	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise IN CANTER Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in normal rhythm in canter.	3

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.27	Basic	Start Rhythm Exercise - IN CANTER Do one lap around the whole arena either filming or having someone watch you in with more energy and impulsion but not faster rhythm.	3
0.28	Basic	Walk - reflect on learnings and how you can make it better (then back to Rhythm exercise)	3
0.27	Basic	Start Seat Exercise - 1 m minute canter - focusing on stamping down with your heel on the 1 in canter and hold your abs in	3
	Basic	Walk and think about it for a minute, think about what you felt, reflect (then back to Seat exercise)	3
0.28	Basic	Change rein	-
0.29	Basic	Start Seat Exercise - 1 m minute canter - focusing on stamping down with your heel on the 1 in canter and hold your abs in	3
	Basic	Walk and think about it for a minute, think about what you felt, reflect (then back to Seat exercise)	3
0.35	Cool Down	Back to walk	-
0.35	Cool Down	Walk and allow the horse to stretch and cool down on both reins	-
0.40	Finish	Finish	-

There is no fun/test work in this training plan as the basics are not established therefore the basics are part of the fun/test work.

TRAINING PLAN - WEEK 4

Remember:

The four stages of a riding day plan:

- 1 - Warm up
- 2 - Basics
- 3 - Fun/test work
- 4 - Cool down

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.02	Warm Up	Change rein on loose rein	-
0.03	Warm Up	Walk on loose rein	-
0.05	Warm Up	Start trotting, encouraging horse to stretch and lower and chew the contact down	-
0.07	Warm Up	Circle right in trot	1-2
0.07	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.08	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.08	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal	-
0.09	Warm Up	Circle left in trot	1-2
0.09	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.10	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.10	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal and canter	-
0.11	Warm Up	Circle right in canter	1-2
0.11	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-

Time	Phase	Exercise	Reps
0.11	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	1-2
0.12	Warm Up	Change rein across the diagonal, canter	-
0.12	Warm Up	Circle left in canter	1-2
0.13	Warm Up	3/4 of the line up the long side	-
0.13	Warm Up	Circle up the top (or as many as you need to get back connection)	-
0.14	Basic	Practice test focusing on rhythm and seat specifically shoulders back, look up.	1
0.19	Basic	Walk for a lap thinking about learnings - Is it good or is it inconsistent - goes too fast and then too slow?	-
0.20	Basic	Practice test focusing on rhythm and seat specifically shoulders back, look up.	1
0.25	Basic	Walk for a lap thinking about learnings - Is it good or is it inconsistent - goes too fast and then too slow?	-
0.26	Cool Down	Back to walk	-
0.26	Cool Down	Walk and allow the horse to stretch and cool down on both reins	-
0.30	Finish	Finish	-

There is no fun/test work in this training plan as the basics are not established therefore the basics are part of the fun/test work.

CONGRATULATIONS!!!! You have completed Month 1 and are on your journey to mastery of rhythm and seat in your dressage training! I am so excited to see how you progress this month and sharing with you some really cool stuff next month all about Losgelassenheit and Rider Mindset, in regards to training and leadership.