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How
Do You
ACHIEVE

an

EXTENDED TROT?

You can't ask a Novice horse to do an extended trot, other than if you have a horse that has been born with an amazing trot; even then you are not likely to get a huge trot every time unless you are really lucky. It doesn't happen very often, most of us have to work to make an extended trot.

You develop an extended trot from the engagement and the balance of the horse, that's how the horse lengthens the trot.

You still see riders who think they are going to get an extended trot by whirling around on the circle, flat out. That is never going to work!

I know it's boring, and I know I keep saying it over and over again, but if you want to work on developing engagement, cadence and balance, you have to ride more and more transitions.

Transitions seem to be the answer to most of our questions.

You can never do enough transitions - walk to trot, half halt within the trot, a sort of half transition, all the time you are



trying to engage the horse, to teach the horse to carry more behind, that is what most of our training is about. We are trying to gradually put all the weight on the hind end of the horse. Lots of horses like to drag their back end along from their front - what we are trying to teach them is to carry the weight on the rear end, and to push off the hind legs. When you achieve that, you have the look of the horse trotting uphill.

Trot to walk transitions - but as soon as you get the walk, trot again, once the horse is responding to the trot, walk, trot on, then we might apply the half transition in trot. You are trotting, you think 'walk' and the horse comes back to you nicely, and stays in balance and feels like he is sitting, then you allow him to trot on again, that is a half transition, or a half halt.

Once you are going well with this half transition in trot, you might try a transition from trot to halt. We want the horse to trot into the half, coming from behind - so the sequence goes half halt, half halt, full halt. The halt must come from behind and you must end up with a horse balanced over the four legs like four pegs.

As soon as you feel that the horse is about to lean on the bridle and clunk down on his front legs, then don't halt - trot off again.

Obviously the horse is not ready for the halt transition yet, you must ride more transitions within the pace to help his balance.

In the early stages of a horse's training, I'd probably let him walk out of the halt for one or two strides before I asked for a trot out of halt.

With Novice horses, I like to be training a little higher than the level I'm competing them at, so I start them on a little lateral work even at that stage. At home you are riding for 100% but usually you don't get that in the ring - but you must demand 100% at home. If you ride a bad transition, then you must ride another four good ones... As we move up through the grades and start to ask for a medium trot, that is where the shoulder-in is so useful to teach the horse to engage the inside hind leg.

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Sometimes I will ride shoulder-in into medium trot, or 'over collect' the trot a little on the short side, ride forward on the long side for half the length of the arena, bring the horse back - as soon as you feel you are losing the balance or the rhythm, bring the horse back, if you feel that you have re-balanced the horse, then go again - teach the horse to respond, forward and back, balance and lengthen. Once again, we don't go careering around the arena, ask for a few steps at a time. Training

at home, I would establish a nice working trot rising, then lengthen the trot on the long side for half the length of the side - if you are lucky they might keep balance and rhythm for longer than that - but usually you will feel the horse lose balance - fall on the forehand, get heavy in front and the rhythm is lost - bring the horse back, re-gain the rhythm and try again. The most important thing in the training is the rhythm.

Main-tain-rhy-thm... like a metronome.

The basic transition exercises must be ridden every day - even with a Grand Prix horse. With Gullit, I ride trot/walk, trot/halt, trot/on, shoulder-in, travers, medium trot, and I don't ask for medium for sixty metres or across the diagonal even, they must go forward, then come back. You don't train a horse to perform and extended trot by practising the extended trot, in fact, it is quite the reverse.

