

# STRAIGHTNESS ON BENT TRACKS THE BROHOLM EXERCISE

DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE AIDS FOR COLLECTION AND SELF-CARRIAGE

*For the horse to be balanced and engaged in his hindquarters he must be absolutely straight. To help the horse develop straightness, the rider must learn how to use the outside aids, and avoid making the common mistake of pulling on the inside rein. Using a resisting inside rein in this case leads to further problems, such as the nose coming behind the vertical and shortening of the front end, causing the horse to fall on the forehand.*

The following exercise, named the Broholm Exercise after the castle where I first tested this combination, can be used to learn how to ride your horse using the outside aids. To truly understand the concept, it is important that you read the instructions carefully and ride them through in your mind before trying it on your horse. If you try this exercise for the first time on your own, have someone help you by reading the steps out loud for you while you practice them.

The Broholm Exercise will:

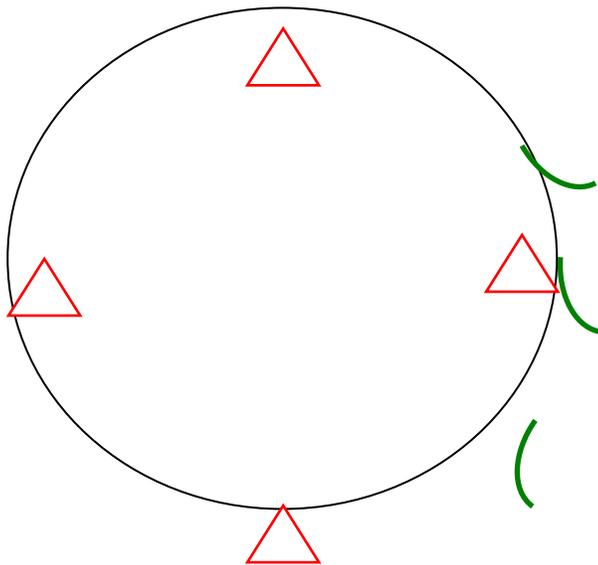
- supple the outside of the horse while at the same time encourage him to answer the outside aids
- use the outside aids to straighten the horse
- develop engagement and collection
- get the horse to respond to the inside leg, which drives him forward and out to the outside rein
- teach the horse how to lengthen and shorten his body between withers and tail
- teach the horse to bend around the rider's inside leg
- teach the rider how to use the outside aids to regulate the stride length and thereby the pace

This exercise is not for beginners. ***Before trying it, make sure you understand how to sit straight over the horse's center of gravity, and that you and your horse are working in total harmony.*** You should also be able to ride with a balanced seat and use your driving aids

correctly. The horse must understand how to answer the driving aids as well as how to respond to resisting seat aids. This exercise is not recommended for horses under 5 years old or horses that are not supple. You can ride this exercise in all three gaits.

Once your horse is warmed up and supple you are ready to begin.

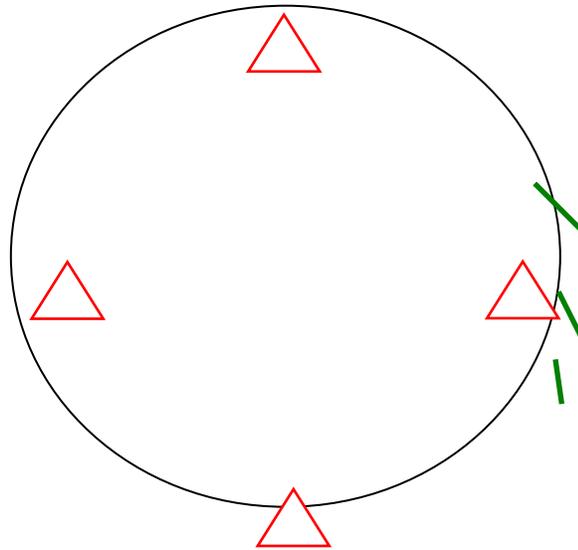
- Start in walk on the right rein in a circle at least 15m. (49.5ft) in diameter. If you can, use 4 cones to delineate the circle.
- Ride forward until you feel your horse's back is "swinging," your driving aids are coming through, and the horse is stretching his neck out to the bit.
- Staying on the circle, ride counter shoulder-in, until the horse has released all tension in his muscles on the left side and feels completely supple. If he has a tendency to tense against the aids on the left side he will be unable to respond correctly to the work that follows. The counter shoulder-in is not used in this exercise to collect the horse, but exclusively to encourage the horse to give on the left side. It is important that the horse moves his inside hind leg in under his body and that the inside front leg lands in front of the center of his chest (the inside is the left side in this case).
- When the horse gives in his left side and is responding to the rider's driving left leg, the left side of the horse becomes shorter than his right side, and it is time to move on to the next part of the exercise. During the next steps, it is important to use only one aid at a time.



*Riding a counter shoulder-in while tracking right on a circle*

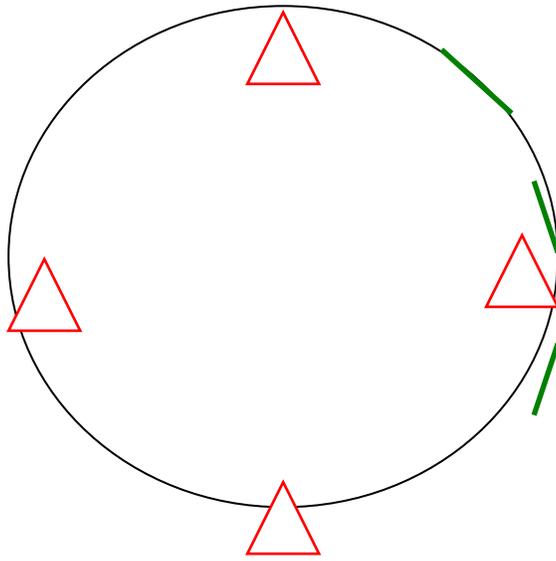
1. Move your left hand close to the withers and use it as a gentle resisting aid.

2. Stretch up and gently close your legs, moving your seat bones slightly in under you.
3. With a gently resisting left rein, and while the horse continues to move from your left leg, begin to carefully straighten the horse's neck by gently taking and giving with the right rein. The horse is now more or less leg-yielding on the circle, is completely straight and feels more collected. Concentrate on keeping the left hind leg and the right shoulder in place.



*Riding a leg-yielding while tracking right on a circle*

1. Once the horse feels completely vertical (not tilting in any direction) and in balance, use your outside aids together with your weight aids to move his forehead onto the same circle track as his hind legs.
2. If the horse is completely straight on the outside with his front legs placed exactly on the circle-track, and his hind legs are stepping straight in under his body, he will now be considerably more collected. Sit evenly in the saddle and try to avoid using the inside rein in a resisting manner. If you resist with the inside rein, the horse's nose will come behind the vertical and he will lose his self-carriage. If he starts to move onto two tracks, he won't be able to move his hind legs forward in under his center of gravity, and consequently he will be unable to carry enough weight on his hind quarters. You may use your inside (right) leg to prevent the horse from falling in on the circle with his hind end, but be careful not to push the hind quarters out. Imagine that the horse is completely vertical (not tilting sideways) and there is a 6-foot, straight section of fence on the outside, directing the horse around the circle. You are now riding a completely straight horse on a bent track (the 15m. circle described by the cones) which results in a strong collecting effect.



*Riding a straight horse on a circle to the right*

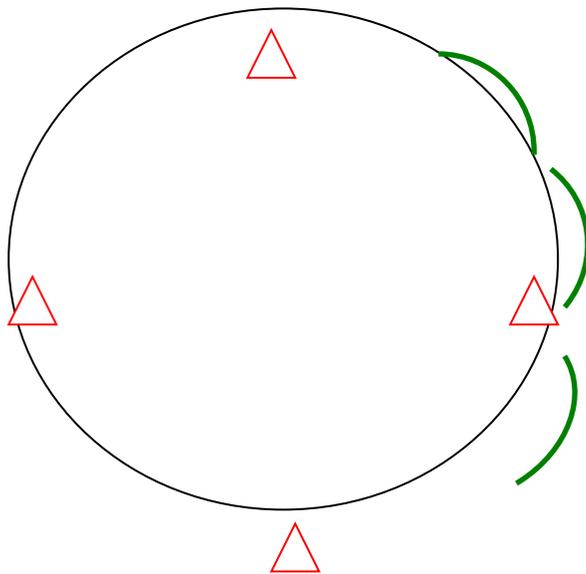
3. By stretching up a little more and using a slightly resisting outside rein and leg, while at the same time moving the horse one stride inward on the circle, you will increase the collection. If you move your horse back out on the circle you will lose the collection.

How much you will be able to collect your horse depends on the degree to which your seat aids and seat-bones together with your outside leg aids act in a resisting fashion. The goal is for the horse to learn to carry more of his weight on his hind quarters and that you, the rider, learn to regulate the degree of collection by using your seat and outside aids. You will have achieved this when the horse feels more vertical, lighter in the forehand, straight, rhythmic, supple over the top line, equally light in both reins and completely relaxed. That means the horse is now so well balanced that he does not need to tense to carry himself.

When the horse has taken some strides in this collected frame, it is time to ride him in a frame where he can stretch his topline. We want him to stretch over his vertebrae from his poll to his tail, in a way similar to a fan that is opening (spreading apart). At the same time ask him to bend around your inside leg. This is how you do it:

1. Exhale and relax while at the same time driving the horse forward from the inside leg to the outside rein.
2. Move your hands forward towards the horse's mouth and allow him to stretch his topline. If you have collected him correctly with the previous work, he will feel a quite natural need to stretch forward and down all by himself.

3. When the horse reaches forward and down, it is time to give him a light signal to bend by slightly turning your inside wrist. Your inside leg should be by the girth, driving the horse forward and out to the outside rein.
4. The horse should now be bending around the rider's inside leg while at the same time seeking a light contact with the outside rein. This bending should primarily be the result of him seeking a light contact with the outside rein, not because the rider is pulling on the inside rein.
5. It is important that you drive the horse more forward when you invite him to stretch his topline, so that he increases his stride length. This prevents him from falling on his forehead.



*Riding a stretching horse, bent around the rider's inside leg while tracking right on a circle*

You should now practice the same exercise in the other direction. Once you have practiced this exercise a number of times it will no longer be necessary to start with counter shoulder-in, and you should be able to begin directly by using the outside aids to collect the horse. If the horse does not respond sufficiently to the outside aids alone, ask him carefully to leg-yield from the outside leg.

When your horse can execute this exercise correctly, you can begin to alternate between riding him in a collected frame and a frame where he seeks to reach forward and down to stretch his topline. You can do this quite easily by first driving him forward using inside leg to outside rein, so that the horse is reaching forward and down while at the same time bending around the inside leg. Then when you want the horse to collect again, stretch up, close your legs and straighten him

by using the outside rein and leg. In the beginning it is helpful to leg-yield from the outside leg, one stride toward the middle of the circle, when asking him to collect.

Once your horse has learned to respond correctly to these signals on a circle, you should also be able to collect and stretch him, or in other words alternate his length of stride, on a straight line.