

HALF PASS, TRAVERS AND RENVERS

The purpose of half pass, as well as travers (haunches-in) and renvers (haunches-out), is to supple the horse, increase collection and self-carriage, and make the horse more responsive to the rider's aids. Half pass, travers and renvers are invaluable and effective tools for teaching the horse to lower his hind quarters, and therefore create collection. However, these exercises should not be attempted until the horse is ready.

In all three of these lateral movements, the horse moves the outside pair of legs forward and across in front of the inside legs. The inside pair of legs does not move sideways quite as much as the outside pair does, but rather more forward and in the direction the horse is traveling.

As with all other movements it is the preparation that is most important. To start with, there must be enough collection for the horse to be physically able to do the movement. Next, the horse must be correctly bent. Then the rider must decide where to start and finish the movement. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, the weight of horse and rider must be placed in the direction of travel - in the direction that the horse is supposed to move. Before starting the movement, the rider should be able to say, "I am feeling at this moment, exactly what I want to feel in the half pass (travers or renvers)".

HALF PASS

Half pass is a collected movement - a movement that requires a certain degree of collection in order for the horse to be physically able to execute it correctly. The horse moves sideways, almost parallel to the track, and is bent in the direction of movement. The forehand should be in the lead and will show the horse which direction to go. It could be said that the rider steers the forehand almost as he would steer the front wheels of a car. The horse should be bent a little more through his ribcage than in shoulder-in.

THE AIDS

The movement starts by the rider making a half-halt, which creates the necessary collection. The horse is ridden out to the outside rein and is bent around the rider's inside leg, which is placed snugly by the girth. The rider's inside hip moves forward – this is one of the most important aids. The forehand is turned so that the shoulders are headed in the direction the horse should move. A slightly resisting outside rein, together with the rider's outside leg placed a little further back

than normal, ask the horse to move the haunches over.

To begin a half pass, imagine a line in the footing that leads diagonally across the arena, from the letter where you will start to the letter where you want to finish. Look up and forward in the direction you want to go. Start by steering the horse's shoulders in the direction of movement to follow this line by placing the front legs slightly on the outside of the imaginary line. This is to position the horse between the inside leg and outside rein and prevent him from falling on his forehand. When you have full control of the horse's shoulders as well as the direction of movement, you can move the haunches over. Think of it as moving the haunches over to the inside of the line. When the horse is positioned correctly in the half pass, the rider should be sitting exactly over the line. Always keep in mind that it is very important to begin a half pass by moving the shoulders in the direction of movement, since moving the haunches in first will cause the horse to become croup high.

It is a good idea to start the half pass from shoulder-in or from a small circle. This is primarily to create the correct bend but also to position the forehand in the direction of movement.

It can be helpful in the beginning, when the horse has not developed enough strength to maintain self-carriage for any length of time, to alternate between half pass and shoulder-in. This helps the horse understand that he should stay between the rider's inside leg and outside rein. If the horse falls in over his inside shoulder or drops his weight onto his forehand, return to the shoulder-in.

If the horse does not cross over enough, and as a result, finishes the movement later than expected, he is not disobedient. The horse moves in the direction his weight is placed, so when he is unable to finish the half pass at the point you have chosen, the forehand should be turned more into the direction of movement.

If it is difficult to bend the horse to the inside, it is probably because he has placed too much weight on his forehand. In this case it can help to move the forehand a little opposite of the direction of movement, while at the same time using the outside leg to move the haunches more into the direction of movement. Think of it as pivoting the horse around a point under the rider. This encourages the horse to move out into the outside rein, as well as step further under his body with the outside hind leg.

See common mistakes at the end of this chapter.

TRAVERS (HAUNCHES-IN)

The aids for travers are the same as for half pass. In travers, the haunches are placed inside the track while the forehand remains on the track. As with the half pass, it is important to ride as

correctly as possible through the preceding corner. Remember, everything will be easier for both you and the horse if the horse is well prepared.

When teaching the travers, keep the horse's shoulders as close to the wall as possible, with the shoulders pointed straight ahead, defining the direction of travel. Once you can successfully ride travers on the wall, you can ride travers on bent tracks and circles, which can be very helpful to develop the muscles of the topline. Be careful not to allow too much angle (and as a consequence, too much crossing over of the hind legs) as this will make the horse croup high.

THE AIDS

The inside rein acts to position the horse and help bend his neck, and as needed, to lead the horse's shoulders in the correct direction. The rider's inside leg drives the horse forward and ensures that the horse stays between the rider's inside leg and outside rein. The horse should bend around the inside leg. The outside rein acts, as necessary, as a resisting aid and adjusts the bend, as well as supports the rider's outside leg. The rider's outside leg moves the haunches in, and at the same time activates the horse's outside hind leg. The rider's inside knee and heel are lowered, and his inside hip is pushed forward. The rider sits deeper on the inside seat bone with his weight positioned in the direction of movement.

Riding the travers in a deeper frame, as necessary, is helpful with a horse that tends to become tense. This also encourages the horse to improve the use of his back.

See common mistakes at the end of this chapter.

RENVERS (HAUNCHES OUT)

Renvers can be ridden anywhere in the arena, on straight lines as well as curved tracks. This movement is very much in the same family as half pass and travers, and is the same as travers except that the horse is bent to the outside of the circle. It is a collected movement, requiring a sufficient degree of collection in order for the horse to carry himself and execute the movement correctly. It can be ridden in both walk and trot, and an experience rider can, under certain circumstances, use renvers to improve self-carriage in canter.

There are many benefits to the Renvers. It is a tool that can be used to improve collection and self-carriage as well as to bring the horse more under the aids. Renvers has a suppling effect. It can also be used to improve straightness when the horse tends to lean over the outside shoulder and travel with the haunches inside the track. In this case a few strides of renvers can help to straighten the horse again by helping the rider to control the horse's outside shoulder and inside hind leg.

For a horse to be able to respond to a resisting aid from the outside rein, he must not be leaning against the outside aids. If that is the case, it can help to alternate between renvers and leg yielding. Start out with a few strides in renvers. Then go straight for a few strides, and move into a leg yielding off your outside leg. Leg yield a few strides, go straight again and return to renvers. Continue this exercise until the horse no longer leans on the outside rein.

When the horse has the least tendency to be crooked and move on two tracks, if the rider just thinks a little in the direction of renvers (even in canter) it will help to bring the inside hind leg back under the horse and the outside shoulder in place.

THE AIDS

The movement begins with the rider stretching upward to balance the horse. Remember that, since the bend of this movement is to the outside of the circle, the rider's inside and outside aids will be reversed from those of travers. The inside leg and hip is moved forward, while at the same time the outside rein, together with the inside leg brings the forehand slightly inside the track. Inside rein and leg bend the horse in the direction of movement. The outside leg is a little further back than normal to keep the hind quarters in place. The rider's outside shoulder is moved slightly forward. The outside rein adjusts the bend. The rider's shoulders should be parallel with the horse's shoulders and his hips parallel to the horse's hips. He weights his inside seat bone while at the same time lowering his inside heel and knee. It is important that the rider places his weight in the direction of movement. He should feel as if he is continually one step ahead of the horse.

As with all other movements it is crucial to maintain impulsion and a steady tempo.

I suggest you also read the information on travers, above, since much of it also applies to renvers.

IMPROVING THE HALF PASS, TRAVERS AND RENVERS

The aids for the half pass, travers and renvers, as described above, are how we use the aids when everything works as expected, but is this always the case? Is the horse equally strong and flexible on both sides and does he always use both hind legs equally? No. If we rode every horse exactly by the book there would not be many of them in the upper levels. When working with any of these lateral movements, some extra help may be necessary. But I want to emphasize the importance of making the horse so supple and straight on both sides that he will be able to do the movements as prescribed.

When you start these lateral movements don't expect your horse to be able to do them correctly

right away. It takes time for him to become strong and experienced enough to do them well.

If the horse leans against the inside rein it may be that the outside hind leg is not carrying enough weight. Sitting more deeply on the outside seat bone can help, but should only be done until the problem is solved. For some horses it helps their balance to support them a little with the inside rein while keeping a softer, more giving outside rein. Sometimes we have to try different things to see what works best.

If you want to make your horse more responsive to the driving and resisting aids, and consequently the half-halts, transitions between walk and trot within these movements are very helpful. Do this without changing direction or leaving the movement.

To get really good results it is a good idea to ride the movements at varying speeds. A slower speed helps steady the tempo and a higher speed creates more energy and mobility.

MOST COMMON MISTAKES OF HALF PASS, TRAVERS AND RENVERS

- The horse has insufficient self-carriage.
- There is too much or too little angle.
- The horse has too little or too much bend.
- The horse tilts his head.
- The horse drops his inside shoulder causing him to put too much weight on his inside front leg.
- The outside hind leg does not step forward and under enough.
- The horse steps too much sideways with the inside hind leg instead of forward.
- The horse finds it difficult to keep a steady rhythm and tempo.
- There is a lack of energy.
- The rider collapses his inside hip.
- The rider forgets to lower his inside knee and heel.
- The rider uses too much inside rein.
- The rider crosses the inside hand over the withers.
- The rider places his weight incorrectly.

- The rider does not look in the direction of travel.
- The rider tilts forward, resulting in the hind legs falling out.

Remember, it is important to develop and maintain the quality of the horse's gaits while riding half-pass, to ride the horse forward and with the appropriate angle for the education of the horse. Remember that a collected gait does not mean a short stride, but rather an elevated stride with energy and swung. If, at any point you feel you are losing the quality of the gaits, ride your horse forward.