

# SHOULDER-IN AND SHOULDER-FORE

## THE SHOULDER-IN

Shoulder-in is a lateral movement that can be ridden in all three gaits, anywhere in the arena. It is also a collected movement - a movement that requires collection in order to execute correctly.

In shoulder-in, the horse moves laterally and on three tracks. The horse is moving on three tracks when the horse's inside hind leg follows the same path as the outside front leg. The horse is bent around the rider's inside leg, away from the direction of movement.



The purpose of the shoulder-in is to help the horse develop more collection. But it can also be used as a suppling exercise, and can improve straightness, balance and self-carriage, as well as correct the position of the shoulders when the horse is falling out over his outside shoulder.

It is not as easy as it looks to ride a correct shoulder-in. The rider needs to understand how to ride this movement, and why. In the eyes of an inexperienced rider it looks as if the horse is only moving sideways a little, while bent to the inside. It might look quite easy.

## **THE AIDS**

The inside leg is placed by the girth and the horse should bend around it. The inside leg activates the horse's inside hind leg and drives him forward and out into the outside rein.

The inside rein helps to position and bend the horse. If necessary, it can also be used as a leading rein.

The rider's outside leg should be placed slightly back from its normal position. Together with the outside rein it should contain the energy and keep the hind quarters in place. The outside rein is the resisting rein, which also determines the bend.

The rider moves his inside hip forward, placing his weight on his inside seat bone. This is to encourage the horse to step further under his body with his inside hind leg, and as a result carry more weight on it.

One of the most important aids is for the rider to stretch up tall. This is necessary to help the horse to balance himself in the shoulder-in.

## **RIDING THE SHOULDER-IN CORRECTLY**

Let us start by looking at shoulder-in through the eyes of a horse that was not well prepared for the movement by his rider, who has little experience with this exercise. The rider wants to execute a shoulder-in on the long side and probably does not prepare the horse well in the preceding corner. As a result, the horse comes out of the corner on his forehand. The rider then pulls on the inside rein, as he knows the front end of the horse is supposed to be inside the track. The horse thinks, "Aha! We are probably going to turn onto the diagonal or make a circle" so he leaves the track. "No!" the rider thinks, and now pulls on the outside rein. "We are going sideways down the long side." The horse now needs to find a quick solution and the only viable solution for him to survive the situation is to throw his weight over his outside shoulder. The rider is happy, because due to the strong bend in the horse's neck, from the rider's point of view it looks as if the horse is moving sideways down the long side.

So the horse is now moving along the track. He is over-bent, has all four feet on the track and perhaps even has his haunches inside the track. The hind legs are out behind, the back has dropped and the self-carriage is lost. But everyone is happy. The horse survived, and the rider thinks he rode a shoulder-in.

It is not easy for someone on foot to see if a shoulder-in is correct. If we were to listen to all the critiques from judges at competitions, we would not learn to ride shoulder-in correctly. Shoulder-in does not receive a good score very often, and with good reason. The judge always talks about too much or too little bend, or too much or too little angle. If there are several judges they often

disagree. Mistakes in the amount of bend and angle are often symptomatic. They are the result of a lack of collection and self-carriage. Collection and self-carriage are the secrets behind a correct shoulder-in.

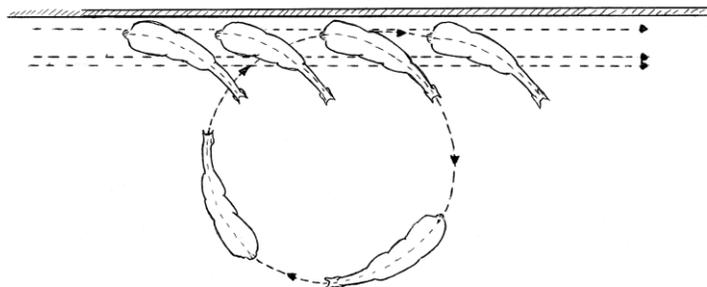
## HOW TO TEACH THE HORSE SHOULDER-IN

Before teaching the horse a shoulder-in, he must first be able to organize his body so that he is in harmony with the rider. He must know about moving from the rider's inside leg into the outside rein on a bent track, and be able to bend around the rider's inside leg. He must also know how to correctly answer a half-halt.

I start in walk and ride through the corner with no bend. From the corner, I move the horse very slightly sideways with the hind feet on the track and the front feet slightly inside. The wall serves as a guide and support.

At first the horse thinks that we are going to turn on the diagonal, but a resisting aid from me tells him to stay on the track. The outside rein and inside leg tell him that we are going to move sideways, down the long side. The horse usually understands this, and goes along, but he often feels that he needs to fall out over his outside shoulder a little so he can move his weight in the direction of travel. But my outside aids say, "No. That is not allowed." "Well then," thinks the horse, "there is only one solution and that is to move my hind legs further in under my body, so that I can take so much weight off my forehead that I can move sideways without falling out over my outside shoulder." "Right!" I say, and praise the horse. The reason I keep the horse straight when I start teaching the shoulder-in is to avoid any invitation for him to fall out over the outside shoulder.

I continue this way down the long side for a short distance, then I make a small circle, after which I continue for a few more strides in shoulder-in. Once the horse understands, I begin riding the shoulder-in with a very small bend, until the horse can execute the movement correctly without losing his self-carriage. I never ask the horse to stay in shoulder-in for the entire long side until he feels ready for it. That would only put him on the defensive and teach him to tense and fall on his forehead.



It is very important that the horse maintains self-carriage, tempo and impulsion in the shoulder-in. Otherwise the movement cannot be correctly executed. The horse should clearly feel more up-hill than when just moving straight ahead.

Many riders find it difficult to sit correctly in shoulder-in. Some sit as they do in leg-yield, which prevents the inside hip from moving forward. But the rider's inside hip *should* be forward to create the bend and to limit the amount of crossing over of the hind legs. We should sit *almost* the same as when riding straight ahead, only with the inside hip slightly forward.

If the shoulder-in is ridden with too much angle, the horse will become croup high which then moves his weight onto the forehand. Consequently it is better to have too little angle than too much.

### THE SHOULDER-FORE

Shoulder-fore is essentially the same as shoulder-in, but with less bend and angle. In shoulder-fore the horse should move on four tracks as opposed to three tracks in shoulder-in. When working in shoulder-fore, the inside hind leg should track between the front legs.

We teach the horse this movement as preparation for shoulder-in. Shoulder-fore is also a very good exercise in its own right, ridden with the same goals as shoulder-in, and we often prefer to work in shoulder-fore. For example, it is advantageous to practice transitions between walk and trot, walk and canter, and trot and canter in shoulder-fore. At times it is also helpful to practice halts in shoulder-fore.

Shoulder-fore can be ridden in all three gaits.

### MOST COMMON MISTAKES

- Too little or too much bend.
- Too little or too much angle.
- The horse loses his tempo, impulsion or self-carriage.
- The horse tilts his head.
- The nose comes behind the vertical.
- The horse does not stay on the line.
- The rider uses too much inside rein.

- The rider collapses his inside hip.
- The rider does not follow the horse in the direction of travel.
- The rider pulls up his inside heel and knee.
- The rider tenses his inside thigh.
- The rider looks at the horse's neck instead of into the direction of travel.
- The rider sits as if he is riding leg-yielding.