

SOLVE 3 COMMON PROBLEMS AND PUT YOUR HORSE ON THE BIT

Does Your Horse:

- Duck behind the vertical?
- Pose prettily but is too light in the contact?
- Brace against the reins?



One of the above? All of the above?!

I'm JJ Tate, and it's been my life's work to learn how to train horses with intention and kindness, and now it's my mission to share it riders everywhere.

In this free guide, you'll learn how to:

- Encourage the horse who ducks behind the vertical to reach forward and seek the bit
- Teach the "poser" that the contact is a safe, reliable place to be
- Help the bracing horse soften, trust and accept the reins

These principles work for every horse; any breed, any age, and in any tack.

All using my easy-to-follow, step-by-step, proven classical training methods that ALWAYS put the horse first.

I hope you enjoy this free guide and that it helps your horse find honest, confident contact.

Make it a great day!

-JJ



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3 SIMPLE FIXES FOR THE HORSE THAT GOES BEHIND THE VERTICAL



I've ridden more horses than I can count - and so many of them use **ducking behind the vertical** as their evasion of choice when it comes to contact. But, **no matter what causes this evasion**, I've used these simple, straightforward exercises to help train green horses and retrain older ones, even Grand Prix horses, **to lengthen their necks and correctly reach into a soft, easy contact.**

FIX ONE - THE WARMUP

In posting trot on a circle, encourage the horse to stretch to the bit:

1. Ask him to wait (half-halt) by closing your knees, feeling your core; slow yourself down
2. Use a little **inside leg** at the girth to encourage the neck longer
3. When you feel your horse touch both sides of the bit, **give first the outside rein** for a stride, bring it back, and **then give the inside rein**. These are fluid movements.

Keep in Mind:

- a. Think that you want to almost "tease" the horse to go out to the contact
- b. You always want to feel like the reins are not constricting in any way
- c. **Remember, the reins are the last to the party and the first to leave!**
- d. Strive for the riding with just the weight of the rein in your hand, riding the rings of the bit



FIX TWO - SLOW, GIVE, DRIVE

This correction can be done in all 3 gaits.

1. **Slow down** (half-halt) for 1 or 2 strides
2. Close your knees, feel your core and **slow yourself down**
3. **When you feel the horse shift back** on his hind legs even a little, **abruptly give the reins forward**
4. **Briefly drive** with your inside leg

Keep in Mind:

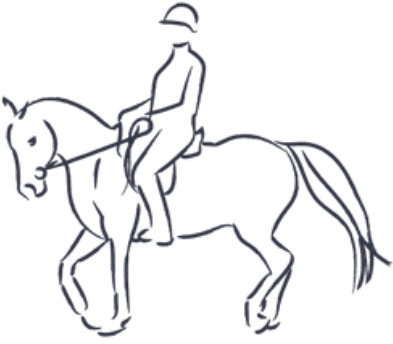
- a. This will result in your horse picking his head up and going ahead of the vertical - and that's okay!
- b. Return to your normal riding position and give your horse a chance to settle into correct contact
- c. **Repeat this sequence as necessary** - even every few strides - to teach him that you won't hold him behind the vertical and that he can't put himself there, either. He must reach toward the bit, even if it's not pretty for a little while!



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FIX THREE - THE SWIVEL SEAT



When fixing the behind the vertical as above, often the horse will brace in the base of his neck. We don't want this either, as we are teaching him to have a correct, soft, connection. At this point, we do not want to use the reins in any way that could send him right back behind the vertical, so we will use a swivel seat, which loosens the horse's midsection without you having to pressure him in the mouth.

The Swivel seat is a classical method of using your seat movement to loosen the horse's back without creating retro action on the bit. I consider the shoulders, and in fact the entire cabinetry of the rider's upper body, to be part of the seat

The Method:

- You will be **swinging your shoulders back, one at a time, for one stride of each gait.** This changes your seat bone pressure in the saddle and encourages the horse to stretch over his back

The Exercise:

- **In the trot, you will put your inside shoulder back, then outside, then inside, in timing with the steps:**
 - For example, when tracking left, as the left hind and right fore are in the air, **swivel your left shoulder back.** Then on the next stride, return the left shoulder to neutral and **swing the right shoulder back.** Repeat one more time with the left shoulder
 - **Give both reins forward** to encourage the horse to stretch toward the bit
- **In canter, swivel the inside shoulder back twice:**
 - **Give the reins a little**
 - **Drive with the inside leg**
 - In canter, your want to feel like you are sitting on his hind legs, that your shoulder blades are “riding” the hind legs, your inside leg is driving the abdominal muscles up, and the outside thigh is back while the outside rein is low and elastic

The Cool-Down:

- **This work never ends!** Even on a long rein, we should be riding the hind legs up to the poll, in a marching, forward walk
- We need the horse to be minding us; that is, with us **even on a long rein**

THINK LIKE A MASTER



This is an issue to be addressed throughout your entire ride, even during the walk breaks! It is our job to teach our horses how to carry themselves in a way that benefits them. **True, over-the-back connection to the bit will go a long way toward maintaining mental and physical soundness.**

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FOR THE HORSE THAT BRACES AGAINST THE BIT BECOME A HUMAN SIDE REIN

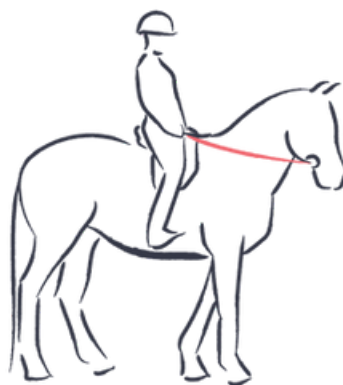
Many horses don't understand what they're supposed to do when the rider takes up the reins. Some have conformation that naturally puts them in that head up, strong lower neck position. They instinctively brace against the contact and some even try to use their necks to pull against us. I've retrained dozens of horses like this, and even a couple of Grand Prix horses came to me with this problem, but, it's totally fixable! Here's how:

THE TECHNIQUE

1. Start first in the halt.
2. **Stab a pencil in your thigh.** That is, take your inside hand and place it in the middle of your thigh.
3. Be sure to **keep your chest open**, sit deeply in the saddle and keep your inside elbow close to your body. Your outside hand is down and elastic.
4. When the horse pulls against this, just **sit quietly, do not change your position!**
5. When you feel the horse give to the bit (soften), **give with your outside hand**
6. **Resume your normal hand position.**
7. Try this again in walk, sitting trot, and canter as necessary



2. Stab pencil in thigh



3. Chest open, sit deeply



4. Give with your outside hand



THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- This is **isometric resistance**, there is **NO pulling on the rein**, even if the horse tries to pull your hand away, hold it steady and firm - think Human Side Rein
- We are not trapping or holding the horse here - we're giving **the horse stability in the rein**
- We are teaching the horse to seek the hand because it **does not pull backwards**. It is just there, like a side rein
- **Be careful not to let the hand on the thigh** move around on your leg - it is meant to be a stable place for the horse to safely give to
- Always **remain elastic and quick to give on the outside rein**
- Use your outside rein as you normally would: Give, squeeze, widen
- The horse should follow the bit
- **This technique is meant to be a stepping stone, eventually becoming a light squeeze on the rein to remind your horse to come back to the bit**



THINK LIKE A MASTER

It's important to teach the horse that **his job is to give to the bit**, but **it's our job to present a stabilized bit** without ever pulling backward.

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FOR THE HORSE WHO LIKES TO POSE:



These horses are the ones who look like they're on the bit, but they're really not through and connected. They are shy to take contact. I've had a few like this, too! It's all fixable, we just need the right techniques and a bit of time, and we can even get these horses all the way to International level classes 😊

THE TECHNIQUE

1. In walk or trot **on a circle**, give a **half halt** (ask the horse to wait, using your knees and **not your hands**)
2. Then, **slightly yield your horse sideways** from your inside leg
3. Keep your hands **wide and low**, to allow the horse to find BOTH reins
4. **Regulate the tempo with your seat, not your hands**
5. Once you feel the horse make contact, **be elastic and follow with your elbows**; allow your horse to stretch if they wish
6. You can follow the same steps in the canter if necessary



2. Slightly yield your horse sideways

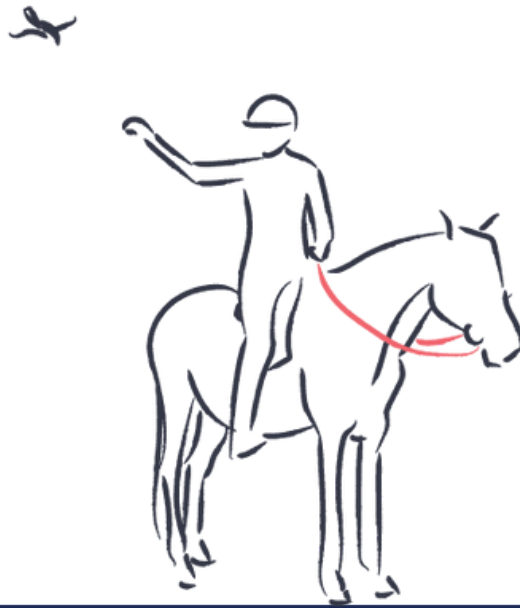


3. Hands wide and low



THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- **Think of trying to catch a bird on a stick. You wouldn't move the stick around to try to get a bird to land on it, you'd make a steady, easy target for the bird to land on**
- **The rider must create stability:** Keep your knees closer to the saddle, stay steady with your seat bones and shoulder blades, and quiet ring fingers on the reins
- It is especially important that we **remain steady when the horse moves its head around or is fussy**
- If the horse stretches down and correctly releases the base of the neck, **be careful that you are don't end up holding them behind the vertical**, but, if at first, he ducks a little behind without dropping the contact, ignore it for now



THINK LIKE A MASTER

We always want to **be a partner our horse wants to work with**. If you met a shy dog you wouldn't just grab it by the collar and drag it around, you'd give it time to come to you! This is the same for the shy to the bit horse: **Show him what you want, stay patient and let him come to you!**

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