THE 3 MAIN PATHS TO PIAFIFE

THE HORSE WILL ALWAYS SEEK OUT THE MOVEMENT PATTERN THAT REQUIRES THE LEAST AMOUNT OF EFFORT UNDER THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES.
Lead the horse on a journey of discovery that diagonalizing his steps can be more energy efficient than walking or halting. When the horse discovers for himself that half steps or piaffe steps are less tiring than walking or halting, he will be happy to piaffe, and he will remain calm in the process. Utilize the principle of the Economy of Motion: The horse will always seek out the movement pattern that requires the least amount of effort under the given circumstances.

3 Paths to the Piaffe

Path 1: Transitions
Path 2: Lateral movements at the walk
Path 3: Side to side movements
Legend

OF = Outside Front
OH = Outside Hind
IH = Inside Hind
IF = Inside Front

OF  OH  IF
IH
1st Phase: Walk - Halt Transitions

Bringing horse from walk to halt with 3 Half-halts over 3 consecutive step-downs
Using stirrup and rein pressure on the same side

1. OF - OF - Halt
2. OH - OH - Halt
3. IF - IF - Halt
4. IH - IH - Halt
2nd Phase: Slow Down

Slowing down without halting with 2 Half-halts over 2 consecutive step-downs
Using stirrup and rein pressure on the same side
Follow the "Slow Down" with a quick energizing aid

1. OF ("slow") - OF ("Down") - Forward
2. OH ("slow") - OH ("Down") - Forward
3. IF ("slow") - IF ("Down") - Forward
4. IH ("slow") - IH ("Down") - Forward
Path 1

Stop & Go

Do it slowly at first. Don’t allow the horse to evade backwards or sideways. Once this becomes easy, ask the inside hind leg to lift off again as soon as it touches down.

1. Start with a Square Halt
2. Advance Forward 1 Hoof's Breadth so each leg moves only once.
3. End with a Square Halt
Walk - halt - walk

Focus is on stopping briefly from the walk. Then moving off again. Initiate the up transition before all 4 legs have come to a halt.

1. Walk
2. Halt very briefly.
3. Walk before all 4 legs have halted.
Path 1

**TROT - HALT/WALK - TROT**

Alternate between trot and halt (or trot and walk). Half halt (e.g. with the outside rein + outside stirrup) when the outside hind leg is on the ground. The inside hind leg is in the air at the same time.

- **OH** = Outside Hind
- **IH** = Inside Hind

1. Trot
2. Walk or Halt into OH.
3. Trot forward by energizing IH.
Reinback - Forward

Alternate forward and back. Reinback with slow, short steps - not fast, long ones. Torso should shift weight back before hindlegs step back.

Quick changes of direction between a couple of steps of reinback and a few quick steps forward.

1. Reinback a few steps.
2. A few quick steps forward.
3. Repeat.
**Path 1**

**Reinback - Forward**

Alternate forward and back. Reinback with slow, short steps - not fast, long ones. Torso should shift weight back before hindlegs step back.

Quick changes of direction between a couple of steps of reinback and a few quick steps forward.

1. **Reinback a few steps.**
2. **A few quick steps forward.**
3. **Repeat.**
Path 2

SHOULDER-IN at walk on Long Side

The outside hind leg that has to support a larger share of the weight, while the inside hind leg is crossing.

OH = Outside Hind

IH = Inside Hind

1. Ride a shoulder-in at the walk. Shift your weight onto the OH.
2. Slow down the OH with your weight and your outside stirrup and rein.
3. Accelerate the inside hind leg with your inside leg or a quick vibration of the whip.
SHOULDER-IN at walk on VOLTE or CIRCLE

On a volte or circle, the hind legs move on a larger circle than the front legs and have to cover a longer distance.

1. Activate the inside hind leg as the outside front leg lifts off.
2. This enables you to synchronize the main diagonal with each other.
3. Your seat and half halt keep the outside hind leg grounded a little longer.
4. Your inside leg makes the inside hind leg lift off sooner, so that the 4 beat rhythm of the walk changes into the diagonal 2 beat rhythm of the piaffe.
Renvers at walk on Long Side

The inside hind leg that has to support a larger share of the weight, while the outside hind leg is crossing.

**OH** = Outside Hind

**IH** = Inside Hind

1. Ride a renvers at the walk.
2. Slow down the IH with your weight and your inside stirrup and rein.
3. Accelerate the outside hind leg with your outside leg or a quick vibration of the whip.
Path 2

Renvers at walk on Volte or Circle

Riding the renvers on a volte or circle intensifies the exercise and increases its effectiveness.

OH = Outside Hind
IH = Inside Hind

Optional: Try this Renvers Combo with Walk Pirouette / Passade:
1. Ride a shoulder-in first to engage the inside hind leg more underneath the body.
2. Shift the weight onto this hind leg by riding a 180 degree walk pirouette or passade.
3. Finish with a renvers in the opposite direction.
Haunches-in at the Walk on a Small Volte

The small circle in combination with the haunches-in position channels the energy of the movement in a vertical direction.

1. Slow down the inside hind leg with your weight.
2. Activate the outside hind leg.
3. Some horses will offer diagonal steps.
4. You can develop the small haunches-in volte by spiralling in from a larger circle.
Spiralling in from a larger circle

You can develop the small haunches-in volte by spiralling in from a larger circle.

1. Take the horse in with your weight, 1 horse's width per quarter circle.
2. Send the horse forward with your inside leg so that the angle of the horse's body doesn't get too steep.
3. Turn the shoulder with your outside rein.
4. Bring the haunches slightly to the inside with your seat and outside leg.
Path 3

Side to side movements

90 degree turn on the forehand in motion left and right (pillars work)

1. Begin asking for 3 strides of a turn on the forehand in each direction that covers 90 degrees.
2. After the 3 sideways steps, stop, shift the weight in the other direction. When the horse is ready, take 3 steps in the opposite direction.
3. Repeat a few times. Before the horse feels overwhelmed, ride forward, change the subject.
4. When the horse steps sideways calmly and comfortably, eliminate the halt so that you sidestep left - 2 - 3 - right - 2 - 3.
5. Then when the horse is comfortable and relaxed with this, diminish the distance covered by the sidesteps. Gradually accelerate the tempo so that the diagonal steps resemble piaffe steps more and more.
Path 3

FULL PASS RIGHT AND LEFT

Go back and forth in the same footprints.

1. HALT ALONG THE LONG SIDE.
2. ASK FOR 2-3 STEPS OF FULL PASS AWAY FROM THE WALL BENDING THE HORSE AGAINST THE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL.
3. STOP BRIEFLY AND SHIFT THE WEIGHT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.
4. THEN FULL PASS BACK TO THE WALL.
5. THEN WHEN THE HORSE IS COMFORTABLE AND RELAXED WITH THIS, DIMINISH THE DISTANCE COVERED BY THE SIDESTEPS. GRADUALLY ACCELERATE THE TEMPO SO THAT THE DIAGONAL STEPS RESEMBLE PIAFFE STEPS MORE AND MORE.
6. WHEN THE HORSE IS ABLE TO MOVE BACK AND FORTH COMFORTABLY WITH THE HALT, TRY TO MOVE BACK AND FORTH WITHOUT STOPPING.
7. WHEN THE HORSE IS ABLE TO MOVE BACK AND FORTH WITHOUT STOPPING, SPEED UP THE TEMPO GRADUALLY.
**Full pass right and left, Variation 1**

Full Pass alternated with advancing forward.

1. HALT ALONG THE LONG SIDE.
2. FULL PASS IN 2 STEPS.
3. ADVANCE FORWARD 2 STEPS PARALLEL TO THE LONG SIDE.
4. FULL PASS OUT 2 STEPS.
5. ADVANCE 2 STEPS ALONG THE WALL.
6. WHEN THE HORSE IS ABLE TO MOVE BACK AND FORTH COMFORTABLY WITH THE HALT, TRY TO MOVE BACK AND FORTH WITHOUT STOPPING.
7. WHEN THE HORSE IS ABLE TO MOVE BACK AND FORTH WITHOUT STOPPING, SPEED UP THE TEMPO GRADUALLY.
**Path 3**

**Turn on the Haunches/Passeade Left and Right**

This is the counter exercise to the pillars exercise. Instead of doing turns on the forehand in motion, you ride turns on the haunches or passeades to the left and right.

1. **Start out by asking for 3 steps of passeade in one direction.**
2. **Stop, wait for the horse’s balance to catch up if he lost it.**
3. **Then ask for 3 steps of passeade in the opposite direction.**
4. **And stop.**
5. **The next phase of the exercise is to move back and forth without stopping.**
6. **When that succeeds easily, you can speed up the tempo and reduce the distance that you move back and forth.**