

LEVEL E CHALLENGE**01 THE RHYTHM DIAL****FEELING AND INFLUENCING RHYTHM**

Teach the rider to recognize a steady beat and make small changes without confusing forward with faster or organization with slowing down.

WHY TEACH THIS

Rhythm is one of the first qualities a rider must learn to protect. When a child can feel the horse speeding up, slowing down, or losing the beat, they can begin making useful corrections instead of waiting for the trainer to call every change.

A FOUNDATION

Establish a steady working trot. Ride about 10 normal strides, then 6 slightly more forward strides, then return to the original trot. Repeat until the change is clear without rushing. When safe, close the eyes for a few strides and feel the beat.

B CORE

Alternate between normal working trot and a slightly more forward trot while keeping the rhythm recognizable. Add short, safely supervised eyes-closed sections and ask the rider to describe what changed.

C CHALLENGE

Repeat in trot and canter. Make subtle changes while keeping the gait, steering, and balance. Include short eyes-closed sections where appropriate and ask whether the horse became quicker, slower, longer, or more organized.

TRAINER FOCUS

- Forward must not become running.
- The rider should influence with leg, seat, and quiet hands instead of pulling.
- Use eyes-closed work only on a suitable horse in a controlled situation.

LESSON USE

Use this for five to ten minutes in a warm-up, before polework, or whenever the whole group needs a common focus on feel and tempo.

IMPORTANT:

The rhythm and tempo should ideally remain consistent. The “beats per minute” in the piaffe are the same as in the extended trot. The earlier a student understands this concept, the better.