



LEVEL A HORSEMANSHIP | CHAPTER 01

Moving Every Part of the Horse's Body

Developing complete influence without force

A good rider should be able to move every part of the horse's body in any direction, at any speed, at any time. This is not a statement about overpowering the horse. It is a standard of education. The horse understands the aids, the rider understands the body, and both can change balance and direction without losing confidence or rhythm.

Influence is not domination

A strong rider can displace a horse with pressure. A complete rider can place the horse's feet and body with coordinated aids, then become quiet again. The second skill requires better balance, better timing, and far more knowledge.

Before you can organize the whole horse, you must recognize its major regions. You need to know whether the poll, shoulders, rib cage, or hindquarters caused the loss of balance. A general correction cannot solve a specific problem reliably.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS OF COMPLETE CONTROL

01 WHICH PART

02 WHICH DIRECTION

03 WHICH SPEED

04 WHICH MOMENT

Availability is the standard

The correct answer remains prompt, balanced, and repeatable in both directions. A forced displacement is not the same as educated control.

CONTROL AUDIT

Name one movement that tests each question: body part, direction, speed, and moment.

CONTROL THE PIECES

The Four Regions of the Horse

01 The poll and neck

Position begins at the poll, but the neck must remain connected to the body.

A slight flexion can prepare bend, alignment, or a transition. Pulling the head farther inward may bend the neck while the shoulders and rib cage continue in the opposite direction.

02 The shoulders

The shoulders determine much of the line. They can fall inward, escape outward, lead the turn, or remain centered between the reins. Your outside rein provides the boundary while the inside leg creates activity and bend. The inside rein asks for flexion but does not drag the shoulders.

03 The rib cage

The rib cage connects the front and back of the horse. Correct bend passes through the body instead of appearing only in the neck. Your inside leg asks the horse to yield through the body, while your seat and outside aids determine how much bend and sideways movement are allowed.

04 The hindquarters

The hindquarters create power and strongly affect straightness. They may swing outward, fall inward, trail behind, or carry more weight. Leg position, seat, and rein boundaries allow you to place the haunches without stopping the forward energy.

Move one part without losing the others

If the shoulders move but the rhythm disappears, or the hindquarters move while the neck braces, the answer is incomplete.

FOUR REGION AUDIT

Choose one familiar exercise and explain what the poll, shoulders, rib cage, and hindquarters should each do.

APPLY THE STANDARD

Direction, Speed, and Timing

01 Choose the direction

Control means more than turning left or right. You should be able to move the shoulders in either direction, move the hindquarters independently, displace the whole horse sideways, ride forward or backward, and reconnect every part on the intended line.

02 Choose the speed

Speed must remain adjustable without destroying the gait. A longer stride is not simply a faster stride, and a shorter stride is not a slower shuffle. Preserve the footfall sequence, activity, balance, and willingness while changing how much ground each stride covers.

03 Choose the moment

At any time does not mean surprising the horse with a harsh aid. It means the response is available when the situation requires it. Prepare through your position and a half halt, give one clear aid, recognize the answer, and release the extra pressure.

04 Prove the answer under pressure

At a show, the response must survive new footing, warmup traffic, atmosphere, tension, and your own nerves. A movement that appears only after a long correction is not truly available. Establish control in simple work, then carry it into the test or course. An escaping shoulder changes a Dressage figure, and at jumping speed it can change the turn, distance, takeoff, and landing.

Control becomes visible under pressure

The true test is not one perfect movement at home. It is whether the horse remains adjustable when the line, speed, environment, or competition question changes.

COMPETITION TEST

Describe one Dressage movement and one jumping situation that require control of more than one region at once.

RECONNECT THE BODY

From Separate Pieces to One Horse

Dressage proves control through accurate lines, transitions, lateral work, counter canter, and the ability to keep the horse balanced from movement to movement. Jumping proves the same control at greater speed. You must place the shoulders on the track, keep the hindquarters following, adjust the stride, organize the lead, and restore balance after every effort.

The final goal is not to ride the horse in separate pieces. Isolation is a training tool. Once you can influence each region, reconnect the poll, shoulders, rib cage, and hindquarters into one horse that moves forward through a clear line with rhythm, balance, and confidence.

Chapter review

1. What does it mean to move every part of the horse's body without force?
2. Why must a rider identify the exact region that caused a loss of balance?
3. How can pulling the inside rein disconnect the neck from the rest of the body?
4. Which aids help control the shoulders while preserving bend and activity?
5. What is the difference between changing speed and changing stride length?

MY NEXT RIDE

One part of the horse's body I want to place more accurately:

UDJC PRINCIPLE

Complete riding means complete availability. Place each part of the horse, choose the direction, adjust the speed, select the moment, and reconnect the whole body without force.