

## Group Riding – Fun Patterns to Help Everyone’s Horsemanship – Part 3

As I sit snuggly inside, with the wind whipping snow cruelly past my window, I am struck by just how lucky I am to have heat, a wonderful house that is a true “home”, and an INDOOR arena in which to ride in such wicked weather! Our Monday class has been applying the group riding patterns to our basic principles such as:

**RESPECT** (A mutual willingness to yield in a respectful manner) +  
**MOVEMENT** (The better they move forward, backwards, sideways, & cross their hind quarter =  
**EFFORTLESS COMMUNICATION**

### HORSEMAN’S PROTOCOL

Become Present  
Think & Picture  
Focus, which prepares your posture  
Allow - Release & Reward

Hopefully your group is discovering the tremendous values of group riding, plus enjoying the huge smiles on everyone’s face due to the fun factor! Now, as spring is approaching and you may be able to get out in the mountains, fields, and outdoor arena, don’t let your group riding patterns be forgotten. Here are three suggestions for ways and places you can keep applying group riding patterns in different environments, all aimed at building on the basic principles above, in a safe and very FUN application:

**Mountain Riding:** I know that some of you only have access to narrow trails in your mountains, but here in eastern Oregon we have many wonderful open areas connected by old logging roads. These offer a great opportunity to call out “Column of Two’s” and practice Come About, or Left Column around Right, or Chevron. This list of patterns is only limited by your imagination, and somewhat by the amount of room you may have on those mountain roads. When you reach a meadow or open area, you can ride circle patterns, or weaving games, and all the patterns that take a little more room. With the uneven ground your horse learns to know where his feet are and you learn to focus ahead. What could be better?

**BIG Field Riding:** One of my favorite activities in our clinics is going out into the field to do some BIG riding! In this environment the group riding patterns can really help a timid horse (or rider) who might be used to only working in an enclosed area. Going back to the familiar patterns with rating skills acquired from your winter group riding practice will really pay off in the big environment. I particularly like the weaving and circle around circle drills when BIG field riding!

**Parades:** Now I am not too keen on parades, but I know a number of my clients have gathered their group riding partners together to show off a little at local parades. I would be mighty impressed to see a neatly decked-out troop, coming down the street in a balanced column of two’s, then accomplishing a crisp Split the Column. Very cool!

I hope you have enjoyed this series on Group Riding. As you have probably experienced, there are many other possible patterns, which are only limited by your imagination. The benefits to you and your horse are many fold, and maybe you will even become a good dancer to boot! I look forward to practicing with you at one of my clinics in the near future.



Diane weaves around Alice in a BIG field application of the Weaving Drill, with one column at the halt.



Some of our September 2006 Hamilton Clinic participants, with Wyntr leading her column over obstacles.



The Weaving Pattern, with one column at the halt, is a great opportunity to work on simple lead changes for the moving column. Here Steve picks up a right lead around Carol in Hamilton, Mt.



Group Flank Turn.

Weaving pattern with one column stationary has many possible variations. Examples: Transitions between gates; Calling out who the moving column needs to circle and in what direction. It's all FUN for both horse & rider!

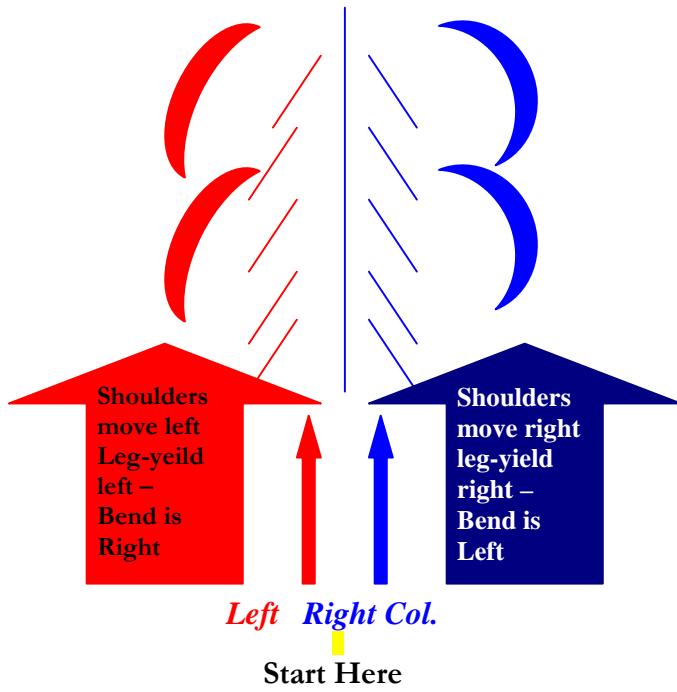
Sometimes it looks and FEELS like mass confusion. But when everything comes together, there is nothing more fun than group riding!



## Let's Do Some Riding!

### Chevron – Nose to Nose

Please Note: The Chevron drills require that you have accomplished your LATERAL homework! Nose to Nose is a “Shoulder-in” down the centerline. Review past articles in Alice’s “Horsemanship Principles” Workbook by visiting: [www.tnhorsemanship.com](http://www.tnhorsemanship.com) to find good suggestions on building your “Lateral” skills.



### Chevron – Nose to Nose

This is a really fun drill that can be added into many applications. The diagram illustrates performing the Chevron down centerline, but your group could look at other places within the school and in combination with other maneuvers.

Essentially both partners are accomplishing a “Shoulder-in” with one partner bent slightly to the left and one bending slightly right – nose to nose. It is a leg-yield posture because both partners are moving AWAY from the bend. Make sure the shoulder are leading, and the movement is in balance moving from the inside hind quarter to the outside (outside of the bend) shoulder and rein. Check your seat bones (balance) to make sure you are seating the direction of travel – not pushing your horse sideways, but rather, flowing WITH the movement in balance.

Key Skills Accomplished: Balanced lateral movement in a 3-track; Suppleness & strengthening

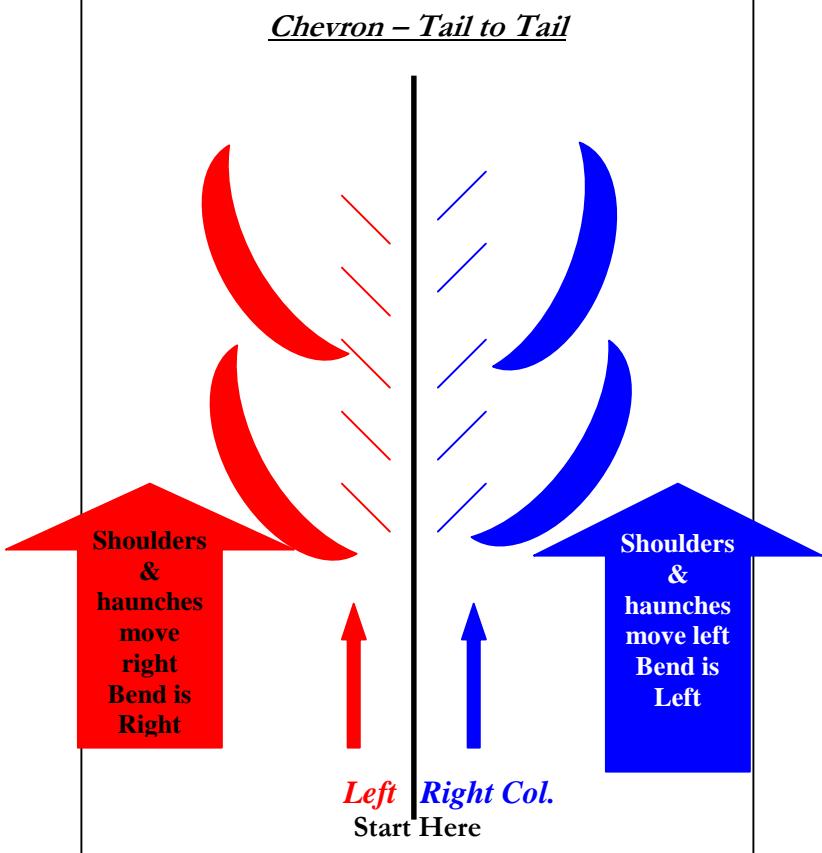
### Chevron – Tail to Tail

Of the two Chevron patterns, the Tail to Tail is by far more difficult. Again, before trying this pattern I highly recommend that you have accomplished some schooling in your lateral movements, so that both you and your horse can effortlessly move from a leg-yield posture to a half-pass posture. In particular for this pattern, practice Haunches-in or Travers and Haunches-out or Renvers. Your balance, focus, and proper use of aids are critical to the success of a beautifully executed Chevron – Tail to Tail!

Essentially both partners are accomplishing a Haunches-in with the centerline between them. This is a half-pass posture because both partners are moving INTO the bend. Make sure that the shoulders are still leading and the energy is flowing in a balanced manner from the outside hind quarter to the inside shoulder or rein. Check your seat bones (balance) to make sure you are seating the direction of travel – not pushing your horse sideways, but rather, flowing WITH the movement in balance.

Key Skills Accomplished: Balanced lateral movement in a 3-track; Suppleness & strengthening

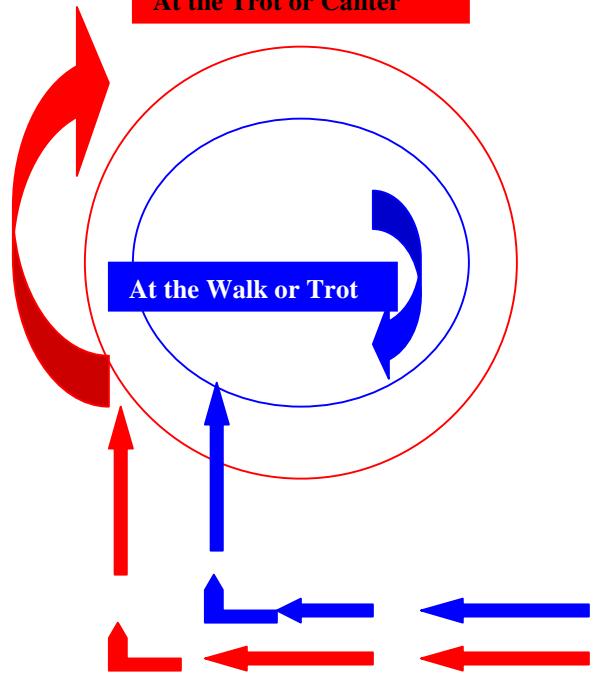
### Chevron – Tail to Tail



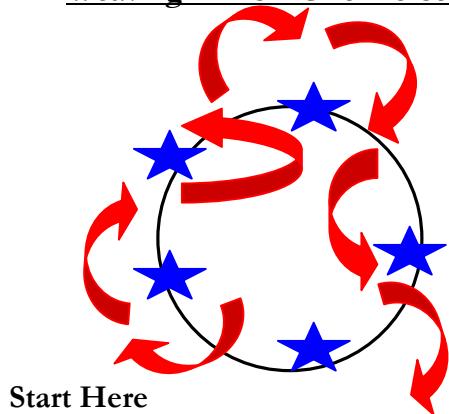
### Column of Two's Circle

Please Note: Outside column rides a gait faster than the inside column on the circle.

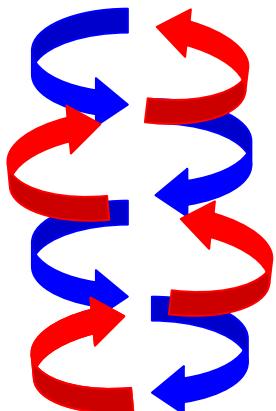
#### **At the Trot or Canter**



### Weaving Drills – One Horse Moving



### Weaving Drills – Both Horses Moving



### Column of Two's Circle

This pattern is very fun and quite impressive when accomplished with rhythm and timing. Lead your column of two's down the quarter line. Call out, "Prepare to Circle". The outside column (in this example the left) rides a bit ahead on a straight line, and inside column rates back. Once the entire troop is on a circle, give the command for the "Outside column to the trot". The inside column will remain at the walk, nearly nose to tail with their inside column horses. The outside column, being on a larger circle, will still remain stirrup to stirrup with their inside partner, but at a gait faster. You can go around as many times as you want, but be sure to have an exit strategy! It will work best if you bring everyone back to the same gait, with their partners, then have the leaders depart the circle on a straight line to a specific point.

There are lots of variations to this pattern. My favorite is to set it up as a Figure 8 – or circle on top of circle. At the point where the two circles touch, the leaders change direction, and instantly you have a new inside column at the walk (or trot), and a new outside column at the trot (or canter).

Key Accomplishments: Rating, socializing, responsiveness to aids, positioning, balance – particularly of the shoulders (No leaning in or bulging out!)

### Weaving Drills – One Horse Moving

There are so many various on this pattern, that I can't even begin to count! Position one column, equally spaced around a large circle, with all noses facing inward. Start the second column weaving in & out, in & out, around the stationary riders. It is important that the moving column think of going around the stationary horse/rider as if they were the center of a small circle. In essence you are riding a half-circle, then changing the bend, and another half-circle, etc..

Key Accomplishments: Rating, balance-particularly in the shoulders, half-halts as you change the bend = responsiveness to transitions

### Weaving Drills – Both Horses Moving

This is a deceptively simple pattern. I recall riding in the Tom Dorrance Benefit in Texas, and seeing some of the best clinicians in the world having trouble with this simple pattern...It's just not easy! Here's some clues:

- Start by having the outside column tracking left and the inside column tracking right; Start at the halt, standing next to your partner
- Both partners will be left shoulder to left shoulder
- As you move forward at the walk, the next person will be right shoulder to right shoulder, and the next...left to left, etc.
- As you pass one another, look at each other's eyes and call out whether you are left to left, or right to right
- Think back to your One Horse Moving weaving drill, and how you shaped your horse *around* the stationary horse, as if on a half-circle & keep that same shaping as you perform both horses moving
- Go SLOW! Give each other room and HAVE PATIENCE!