

Alice Trindle Presents:

Developing a Willing Partnership

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Alice Trindle was born on a ranch in eastern Oregon, the only daughter in a family of five brothers. She learned to ride behind the back of the saddle holding on to her brother's belt loops. In the past 15 years Alice has continued her relationship with horses, and had the opportunity to study with several true horsemen such as Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt, Dennis Reis, and Bettina Drummond. She conducts clinics in Oregon, Washington, California, and Idaho, and offers multi-day horsemanship retreats at her ranch in eastern Oregon.

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Half-Pass Postures

Clinic #10 in a series of ten

Author's Note: *Can you believe that we have studied together for the past ten months? This journey with the Northwest Horse Source magazine has been so rewarding for me personally, and I'd like to thank the staff at the publication for being so supportive this past year. For each of you, the aspiring horseman readership, I hope you have found a little something to apply from each of the articles. If we only had video tapes of you nine months ago practicing important ground maneuvers and now advancing to an understanding of the illusive half-pass postures, I know we would be witnessing huge success! Congratulations and "Thanks" for hanging with me during these ten – Clinics in a Magazine – series. May you continue to develop the art of horsemanship and experience the depth of the journey.*

*Respectfully,
Alice Trindle*

Half-Pass Postures... Necessities for Every Discipline

In Clinic #9 we talked about the importance of lateral movements to help cement in the basics and ultimately in creating effortless communication. In specific, we established the difference between types of "sideways" movements, and the importance of developing "shoulder-in" postures with your horse. The shoulder-in will continue to be the foundation for your lateral movements. However, in order to achieve the correct balance, rhythm, and freedom of movement necessary for maneuvers such as lead changes, tempi changes, canter pirouette, or even turn-on-the haunches, we must be able to control, move, and position the hip. This is where "haunches-in" and "half-pass" postures are critical for all types of riding disciplines.

Up until this point, most of the lateral movements we have been practicing are in a "leg yield" posture. To help you visualize leg yield posture, think of a banana traveling on a circle to the left. The banana is arched or slightly bent to the left, and if it had an eye, it would be looking inward. Now think about how you might "leg yield" the banana away from the center of the circle. Try pushing or driving the energy from the inside rear of the banana to the outside arch. The horse (or banana!) moves AWAY from the inside of the bend, AWAY from his inside eye, and the circle gets bigger. The balance of the movement pushes from the inside leg, and is caught on the outside shoulder and rein. There is very little bend, and in the saddle, your body should stay pretty square to the mane line, with your outside shoulder slightly leading – ahead of the movement. If you lean to the inside, you will find yourself behind the movement, sitting on the incorrect seat bone, and inhibiting the ability of the horse to move his inside hind foot under his belly towards the outside shoulder.

So let's change the balance of the movement, so that the outside hind foot moves or is DRAWN towards the inside shoulder. (i.e. Half-Pass postures) Go back to your banana on a circle. Still looking to the inside, put some pressure on the outside hind foot or outside arc of the banana, and push inward. Notice the circle gets smaller, and the banana is moving INTO the inside of the bend, TOWARDS the inside eye & center of the circle. You have just ridden that banana in a half-pass posture...He has moved INTO the bend – INTO the suggestion of your inside aids.

Next, hop on your two-legged horse and try these exercises to FEEL the balance

of movement differences between “leg yield” and “half pass” postures. Find a wall, and stand parallel to it with your back to the wall. Look slightly to the left, put your left hand on your waist for a slight bend left in your rib cage. Now move sideways, left foot over right, moving AWAY from your left hand, down the wall to the right. That’s a “leg yield”...Away from your left bend. FREEZE YOUR POSITION – While still looking and bent slightly to the left, bring your right hand and place it on your right hip. Don’t change the bend. Move sideways to the left, with the right leg passing over left, INTO the left bend. The energy is coming from the right hip to your left shoulder, while you are still bent left and moving left. Kinda Hard?

This is “Half-Pass” posture... moving INTO the bend. Now try this same exercise as you move forward on circle, or on a diagonal line. Get handy in your body with changing your aids from the energy coming from the inside hind to the outside fore (i.e. leg yield) or outside hind to inside fore (i.e. half-pass posture).

OK... Now that we understand the balance of the movement, and can feel it on our two-leg horse, let’s apply it to our work-in-hand skills. (Review the positioning and rein preparation from Work-in-Hand - Clinic # 5 of Northwest Horse Source.)

1) Find yourself on the wall, with your horse’s shoulders closer to the wall, and the haunches slightly in towards the center of the arena. You should be facing your horse, your bellybutton pointing at the inside hind foot, perpendicular to the wall.

2) We want to create a search in your horse that allows you to DRAW the outside hind foot under his belly, towards the center of the arena. Place your dressage whip on his side, near the flank. Tap, not spank, with the whip until your horse tries to move his outside hind foot. Reward that try by discontinuing the tap of your whip. At this point, don’t allow forward movement, and try to keep the slight inside lateral bend. Set it up again...tap until you see the foot starting to move and quit. Now he has the idea which foot you are requesting. He may struggle a bit, but hang in there, and you’ll be amazed at how fast they figure things out.

3) Now lets allow some forward movement in the horse, and draw that hind foot under his belly, forward & towards the center of the arena. Set it up again in a slightly haunches-in position, place your whip, tap, and as soon as you feel that outside foot searching forward, DRAW the whip away from his side, and you step backwards, DRAWING the energy of the hips in, towards the center of the arena. You may only get one step of the haunches-in posture, before the horse falls back to

Develop the “FEEL”

Try riding with your two-legged horse on the following pattern: Walk straight on the quarter-line for five counts, then leg-yield forward and on the diagonal with a slight left bend, left foot crossing over right. Next go straight on the center-line for five counts and then half-pass back to the first quarter-line, crossing your right foot forward and on the diagonal over your left, while keeping the left bend.

the leg-yield posture, and moves his hips into the wall, AWAY from your whip. Simply start again. Pretty soon, with a little rhythm and timing added in with your whip and your backing-up, you will find that your horse has discerned the difference between moving AWAY from your whip (leg-yield) and drawing him INTO your whip (half-pass/haunches-in) postures.



Note the positioning for developing the haunches-in from the Work-in-Hand

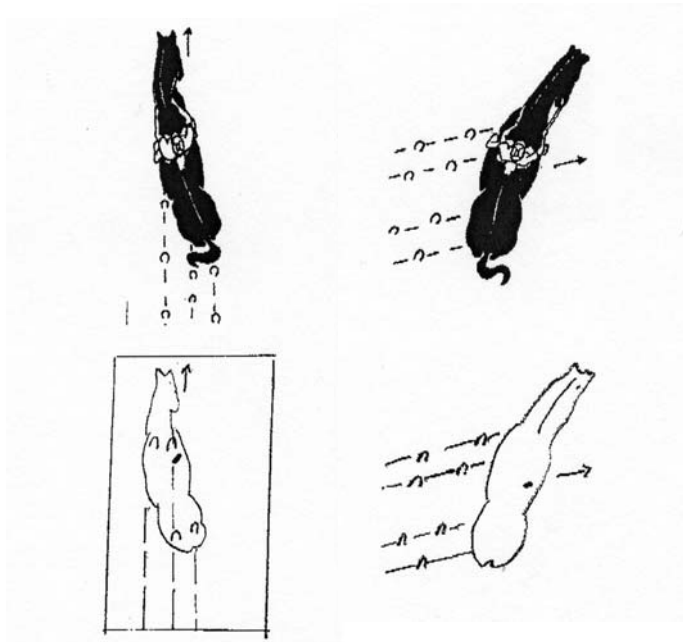
Now you’re ready to try this new skill up on board! DON’T PANIC! It will feel strange, but you can no longer procrastinate on enjoying this great maneuver with your horse. Set it up just as you practiced on the Work-in-Hand drill.

1) On the wall, start with you and your horse’s shoulders turned slightly towards the wall, and haunches towards the center. Tracking right, and your horse looking slightly right, place your left leg behind the girth, right leg on the right rib cage, and your seat and shoulder weight slightly to the RIGHT. With your dressage whip in the right hand, place the whip on his side, as you did from the ground. Tap to cause that same search. Encourage the left hip to move under, forward, and inward with your left leg. But remember, it is the DRAW of the inside leg, aided at this stage with the dressage whip, which invites the movement. If you think of pushing too much with your left leg, you’ll start to sit on that hip, and it simply can not move.

2) Reward the slightest try, and set it up again. The horse will probably get the movement faster than you! Give yourself time to become accustomed to this new feeling of moving INTO pressure... DRAWING the suggested movement. Remember that the horse looks in the direction of travel...in this case to the RIGHT. Have a “feel” in your right rein, and give room for his neck to bend slightly in your left rein.

3) As the two of you understand the movement, start combining several steps with rhythm and timing, then ride off, relax the brain, and set it up again. Soon you will begin to combine movements to ultimately prepare for half-pass work. I like to flow from shoulder-in postures to haunches-in. Try setting up a few steps of shoulder-in on the long side of the

arena, then straight, and as you approach the corner prepare your haunches-in. Then ride a few steps of haunches-in along the short side of the arena, straighten, and prepare a shoulder-in out of the next corner.



Line drawing of haunches-in
Tracking right

Line drawing of half-pass tracking right



Foremost is performing a “renvers” or haunches-out. Note how his right hind is moving towards his left fore, while he is moving into the bend & direction of travel. TNT

Developing the Half-Pass

It may seem logical that you would attempt the half-pass (i.e. forward, on the diagonal, moving INTO the bend) from a haunches-in posture. Don't fall into this trap. You want your horse's hip to be free, but ultimately the shoulders lead slightly in the half-pass work. Therefore, it is critical that your horse understands both shoulder-in and haunches-in postures, before attempting the half-pass. Here is how I like to set it up:

First, tracking right, prepare a shoulder-in as you approach the long side corner. As the shoulders depart the track, apply the same aids you used for your haunches-in. (i.e. Right leg at the girth, left leg behind the girth, and your weight on the RIGHT seat bone and a little weight in the right stirrup.) Picture a magnet on the far side of the arena, drawing your horse forward and on the diagonal, shoulders leading slightly, INTO the bend. (See diagram of Half-Pass above.) After a few successful steps, reward your horse by going forward on a straight line.

Eventually, as you begin to apply these shoulder-in and half-pass postures you will find a flow, a balance, and a rhythm that is unlike anything you have felt before! The rewards to both you and the horse will be tremendous, and the application of these postures will truly enhance all the jobs you have together.

Don't put it off any longer... Enjoy the feeling of a truly free hip and half-pass balance & self-carriage!