

# Danee's Horsemanship



## Hints...

### **In Front of the Leg**

Getting your horse “in front of your leg” means that you no longer have to squeeze every third stride to keep him going. He shouldn't be running away with you, but he shouldn't feel like you are pedaling a bicycle uphill either. To get your horse in front of your leg you must teach him that go means GO! At a walk imagine a forward snappy trot. Engage your seat (don't pump, rock, or lean forward, but imagine your body is a hollow shell filled with sand- push some of that imaginary sand forward against the front half of your shell), and use a very light leg- just barely close your calf on the horse, but do not use your heels. If your horse does not jump into the snappy trot within two seconds, start kicking until he does. If he is particularly lazy and you need a whip to back up the request from your leg, by all means, use one. Sit tall in case your horse gives a kick out the back in response to your leg, but as long as you are still centered, keep kicking until he is in the snappy forward trot. Once he is briskly trotting relax your leg and pet him. Go a few strides before bringing him back to the walk. Then retest the light aid- imagine a good trot, engage your seat, and barely close your calf. Count to two. If by two he is in the nice trot, pet, but if not, kick until he is. Make it very clear that he should have responded when you offered him the ‘good deal’!

Once your horse is light and responsive from walk to trot, you will do the same exercise from a modest jog to a HUGE trot. Start in a jog or lazier trot. Imagine the fastest trot your horse can do, engage your seat, and close your calf. If he immediately jumps into a big trot, great! Reward him. If not, kick until he does. You want the feel that the horse is committed to moving forward- that he is looking out ahead of him and will not slow the second you remove your leg. Then allow him to simmer back down to the lazy jog for a few steps before testing the transition again. It is okay if the horse breaks into a canter as long as he is thinking forwards. Some horses will canter slowly to avoid trotting big. If this is the case, try to bend the horse to the inside enough to discourage him from cantering. If you have fears about cantering you can use this exercise to trot really really big and eventually step into the canter. This way the canter will be no faster than the trot, and you can get accustomed to the speed in a gait you are more comfortable with.

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