

Danee's Horsemanship



Hints...



A Secure Seat

Who wouldn't want a deep connected secure seat while riding? But a deep secure seat is elusive for most riders. To be in proper alignment we should have a vertical line that passes through our ear, shoulder, hip, and heel. But most people have a heel that wanders too far forward putting us on our butt cheeks. This makes us feel heavy to our horse as we cannot be responsible for our own weight in this position. Many riders try desperately to get their leg back underneath their own weight and onto the perfect vertical line, but to do so they hollow their lower back, pitching forward onto their crotch and ending up in a fork seat. This tense position makes it impossible for the rider's pelvis to move and swing with the horse. I have two favorite exercises that help correct each of these problems.

- 1.) The Deep Seat. For this exercise sit way back on your butt cheeks. Allow your pelvis to really swing with your horse. For this exercise, it is okay if your legs creep forwards or if your shoulders are behind your hips. The idea is simply to maximize the range of motion in your hips as you swing with the horse. Ride this way in all three gaits. Feel how deep and connected you can get your seat bones. Feel how your pelvis and lower back moves with the horse in each gait. When you return to a more upright position, try to maintain this level of connection and fluid movement.
- 2.) Up, Up, Downs. In a posting trot, post "up, up, down, up, up, down" instead of "up, down, up, down". It will feel like you are changing diagonals in the air every time you stand. During the 'down' or sit phase, do not suddenly drop your weight onto the horse's back, but rather lightly touch down before going up again. It takes most people awhile to sort out the rhythm. If you feel it is impossible to stay up for two beats, it is because your leg is too far in front of you and not under your weight. Get your leg back and try again. Doing this exercise well proves that you are in proper alignment and in control of your own weight. If you cannot hold the up portion for two beats it proves your leg needs to come back under you and that you need to use more core strength while riding.

For most riders one of these exercises will be easy and the other terribly difficult. If you can go seamlessly from one exercise to the other, you know you are well on your way towards having a deep secure seat.

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