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# TRAINING ACADEMY

## Month 1 Position



### OUR EXPERT

**RUSSELL GUIRE** is an expert in equine and human biomechanics. He founded Centaur Biomechanics, which specialises in horse and rider performance analysis. He runs workshops around the world, helping riders understand how their position in the saddle influences the horse. Visit [www.centaurbiomechanics.co.uk](http://www.centaurbiomechanics.co.uk)

Perfect your position in the saddle and your horse's way of going will improve too. Biomechanics expert Russell Guire shows you how

**W**e've designed this year's Training Academy to help you improve your riding and your horse's way of going.

Over the next six issues of Your Horse, our team of expert trainers and riders will help you overcome a number of key issues you've told us you want to improve.

Part one covers the importance of a correct riding position, and with the help of biomechanics expert and trainer Russell Guire, you'll learn to recognise (and be able to maintain) a good position in walk, trot and canter. He'll also highlight common problems and recommend exercises you can do to correct them.



Riding in a correct position takes work, but it's worth it as your horse's way of going will also improve

## YOUR TRAINING ACADEMY PLANNER

Here's what we'll be covering each month...

### MONTH 1 Position

Biomechanics expert **Russell Guire** helps you perfect your riding position in walk, trot and canter

### MONTH 2 Understanding aids

(On sale 30 July)  
Communicate clearly to your horse by refining your aids with the help of trainer **Caroline Moore**

### MONTH 3 On the bit

(On sale 27 August)  
Top dressage rider **Emile Faurie** explains how to correctly ride your horse on the bit

### MONTH 4 Bend and flexion

(On sale 24 September)  
If you get confused between asking for flexion or bend, trainer **Alison Short** is on hand to make it easy to understand

### MONTH 5 Improving your jumping

(On sale 22 October)  
Badminton Horse Trials 2015 winner **William Fox-Pitt** shares his advice on how to jump clear every time

### MONTH 6 Working with your horse's temperament

(On sale 19 November)  
Whether your horse is lazy or fizzy trainer **Sarah Ridd** from Weymarsh Equestrian can help you work with your horse's

## Get more from your coaches online

Enjoy audio guides - download them at [www.yourhorse.co.uk/ta](http://www.yourhorse.co.uk/ta)

Watch training videos - visit the website above when you see this icon

Access your coaches - simply email them your training questions to [getinvolved@yourhorse.co.uk](mailto:getinvolved@yourhorse.co.uk)

See Russell Guire at Your Horse Live  
14 and 15 November at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire.  
For more information visit [www.yourhorselive.co.uk](http://www.yourhorselive.co.uk)

**YOUR HORSE LIVE**  
14-15 November 2015 Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire  
EVERYTHING FOR YOU AND YOUR HORSE



When you're sitting correctly you should be able to draw a straight line from your ear, shoulder, hip and heel and from the bit to your hands



Stay relaxed in walk to allow your body to move with your horse

### Walk this way

Your knees need to remain loose and think of bringing your toes up rather than pushing weight into your heels, this will help you stay relaxed in your leg position. Any gripping with your thighs or knees will cause your lower leg to become unstable and make you feel unbalanced.

Moving onto your arms, keep your elbows soft and think about your fore arms as an extension of your reins. To help you keep your hands in the correct position and maintain that all important straight line from your elbow down the rein to the bit forget you've got wrists. Your thumbs should be on top of each rein and pointing towards your horse's ears.

### WATCH ONLINE

Russell helps you perfect your position in walk, trot and canter at [www.yourhorse.co.uk/ta](http://www.yourhorse.co.uk/ta)



## Why is a correct position so important?

**EXPERT TIP**  
Check you're riding with your stirrups at the correct length (which will help you to maintain a good position) by slipping your feet out of your stirrups - the base of your stirrup iron should touch your ankle bone.

A correct and balanced position allows your horse to move with freedom and in balance. Any deviation from this position and it can have a dramatic effect on your horse, think how his skin twitches when a fly lands on him, and now think how he must feel or how he has to alter his way of going if you're sitting badly. To help you understand just how much influence your position can affect your horse, imagine you've got someone sitting on your shoulders. If they tip their body to the left or right you'll also have to move in this direction to maintain your balance and not fall over and this is exactly the

feeling your horse will have if you're not sitting correctly. It doesn't matter whether you're new to riding or have years of experience you need to constantly monitor your position in the saddle and make corrects before they become a habit.

Before we start working on your position in walk, trot and canter, let's take a look at how you should be sitting at halt.

#### At a standstill

When you're sitting correctly you should have equal weight on each seat bone and you should be able to draw a

vertical line from your ear, shoulder, hip and heel and maintain a straight line from your elbow, down your arm, along the rein to the bit.

#### On the move

The secret to maintaining a good position in all paces is a soft and supple seat, and allowing your pelvis to follow the movement of your horse. As you're walking around the arena imagine your pelvis is a bowl full of water and your aim is to keep the water in the bowl, for this to happen your pelvis needs to move gently in time with the rhythm of the walk.



### Rise to the trot

We're often taught that rising trot is an 'up, down' motion which can be a little bit confusing. It's actually better to think of it as 'sit and forward'. It's the momentum of your horse pushing himself forward from his hindquarters that pushes your seat and hips forward and out of the saddle (as shown in pictures 1 and 2), followed by gently sitting back into the saddle (see picture 3).

Again, it's important to keep your knees relaxed, your shoulders should stay level, and from behind you should be sitting evenly on both seat bones. Your horse's tail should also dissect you into two equal halves.

Imagine you're gently polishing the seat of the saddle to crack sitting trot



### Remain seated in trot

Many riders struggle with rising trot, the main issue is tension, which causes you to bounce in the saddle. As this happens most riders will slow the trot down to make it more comfortable to sit to. The key to perfecting your sitting trot comes back to your pelvis. It needs to move softly forwards and back in time to the trot while you maintain a secure yet supple core (you don't want to become stiff and rigid in your position). You also need to stay relaxed in your knees, any gripping in your legs will only make you bounce even more. To help you get the right feeling think of gently polishing the seat of your saddle with your seat bones.

## Moving to canter

As we up the pace to canter, you need to maintain a secure, yet soft upright upper body position by using your core, while remaining relaxed in your lower back so your body can follow the three beat movement of your horse's canter.

Your elbows need to stay relaxed so your arms move in time with your horse's head and neck. Think about maintaining a neutral position with you pelvis with the water gently sloshing around inside the bowl.

Again, any tension in your body will make it difficult for you to maintain your position, so try to keep your breathing even and keep your head looking up and ahead.



Focus on your breathing to rid your body of any tension when you're cantering



Learn even more online! Visit [www.yourhorse.co.uk/ta](http://www.yourhorse.co.uk/ta) for Russell's advice on improving your jumping position.

## Common problems

Sometimes your position will be compromised but being able to recognise that will mean you can quickly put it right. Here Russell flags up a few common problems and offers visual examples showing how you to correct them:

**PROBLEM:** Dropping your shoulder to the inside so you collapse through the inside of your body and push your hips to the outside.

**▼ SOLUTION:** Ride with your inside arm straight up above your head or rotate it backwards to help lift and correct your inside shoulder position.



**PROBLEM:** Pushing your inside shoulder forwards causing you to collapse through your hips to the inside.

**▲ SOLUTION:** Ride with your inside arm behind your back to encourage your inside shoulder to come back into the correct place.

**PROBLEM:** Collapsing your chest forwards.

**▼ SOLUTION:** Imagine there's a wire from the top of your riding hat gently pulling you upwards. Also, lift your chin up and keep it in line with your horse's mane.



**PROBLEM:** Gripping with your knees causes your lower leg to become insecure. You'll tend to ride with your heels up and your lower leg will slip back.

**▲ SOLUTION:** As you ride round in trot and canter, spend some time standing in your stirrups. Feel your lower leg stretching down into your heels. This also a great exercise to improve your balance. Check you're not using the reins to keep your balance - you can test yourself by pushing your reins forward and see what happens to your position.

# Essential skills to work on this month

Keep your position and training on track with the four simple homework exercises created by Russell and the team of the experts at Albion Saddlemakers

### 1 Get eyes on the ground

Ask a friend to video you so you can check that your position is correct, identify any problem areas and start to put them right.

### 2 Work without stirrups

Make time (in a safe environment) to ride without stirrups each time you ride, it's so valuable and you'll soon feel an improvement in your balance and position at all paces. If you've not done any work without stirrup, build up gradually with a

few minutes at a time. As you start to do some trot work, slow this pace down a little, this is rider exercise and isn't to improve your horse's way of going so it's ok to slow the speed a little.

### 3 Improve your feel

Try this exercise to improve your feel in the saddle and to relax your knees. In halt, and one at a time, lift your knee up and out. As you do this exercise, note which side is easier and which one you find harder, this indicates the side that you probably grip with.



### 4 Take advice from Albion

A correctly balanced saddle is important for your horse and will help you maintain a good position, as well as providing comfort and security, as you ride. For that reason, having your saddle correctly fitted and regularly checked by an expert will ensure it's in balance as fitter to the stars, Sherry Belton, explains. "Young horses, or those with changing fitness levels throughout the season, need continuous monitoring to ensure they remain comfortable under saddle and their performance isn't limited." And of course, any imbalance can cause discomfort.

"A saddle that's low in front may cause pressure and bruising to the thoracic vertebrae while a saddle that's low behind can affect your horse's movement by making it difficult for him to engage his hind legs - it may even cause bruising to his back. For advice, contact your local qualified saddle fitter."



## WIN! The Albion 30th birthday bumper prize draw!

To celebrate 30 years of outstanding saddle mastery, Albion is launching an exceptional giveaway, exclusively for Your Horse readers. As a result, over the next few months, Albion will be inviting you to take part in an exciting free prize draw with an amazing 30 equestrian prizes on offer! Prepare to be wowed by the superb array of first-class goodies Albion's has put together to help make this a birthday to remember!

The glorious gifts up for grabs include a stunning Albion Platinum Royale saddle, an iconic Albion K2 Jump Ultima saddle, a comfort fit Albion bridle, a sleek Albion leather headcollar, an Albion Revelation Dressage Girth or Albion Legend Girth to name but a few. And that's not all, Albion is also providing the opportunity to have a one to one lesson with one of Albion's elite team of sponsored riders.

**● To enter, simply fill in your details here [www.albion saddlemakers.co.uk/prizedraw](http://www.albion saddlemakers.co.uk/prizedraw)**

