



Dr. Beverly Gordon

Gordon Chiropractic, P.C.
www.TheHorseInMotion.com
TheHorseInMotion@aol.com
EquineDC@aol.com

The Horse In Motion, LLC, Pres.
Oyster Bay, NY 11771
Wellington, FL, 33414
cell # (516) 606-4141

Riding Circle Points

Every good rider understands the benefit of riding correct figures. Early on in a horse's training he is introduced to the importance of traveling on straight lines, and bending around corners and on circles. Even when we follow the classic training scale to develop a young horse, we always prepare the horse by riding correct figures. Commonly, circles are not ridden well, especially by green riders and green horses. One of the differences between the educated rider and the novice is that the educated rider will play a more influential role in specifically, and continually, directing the path of travel of the horse.

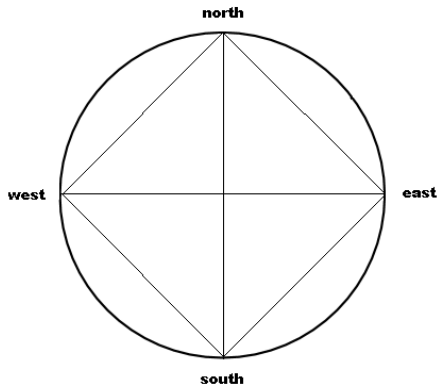
That being said, let's discuss Circle Points.

During my last clinic, I was surprised to find so many riders were not familiar with the concept of Circle Points. It is a wonderful training tool, and I have used it often as a precursor to other exercises and skills.

If you learn to ride Circle Points properly, your horse will learn to be bent correctly throughout the entire circle, and the circle will be round and the horse will be balanced. It's always important to ride on a pre-determined path. That way you can determine if your horse is on the aids. Riding Circle Points is something every rider should practice. It helps you position the horse so he will be prepared to execute a correct figure, in this case a circle.

What Are Circle Points?

Let's think of a circle as having four points: North, South, East, and West. Now, let's add straight lines to connect these 4 points. At each point of the circle you will make sure your horse is "parallel", or lined up evenly with bend of the circle. Other than that, you will ride from point to point on the lines connecting the circle points. (You must concentrate on keeping a regular rhythm throughout this exercise).



Now, here is the interesting part. You will find that by riding these lines *and* making sure your horse is "parallel" at each of the four points, that your horse will ride a round, even circle. And, you will also notice that your horse will become more consistent in achieving a correct bend for the figure you are riding, and therefore he will be straighter by definition.

Exercises

The following exercises will help you develop greater awareness and ability to ride a correct circle. Riding on a prescribed, pre-determined path helps you assess how well your horse is on the aids, and it prepares your horse to properly execute the next movement, whatever that might be. If you are traveling down a line to a jump you would consider your horse straight *only* if you have him slightly positioned right if he on a right lead canter, or left for a left lead canter. Think about this - there is a necessary slight bend in the spine by virtue of the canter. Therefore, you must be able to control the shoulders, and the haunches, and especially the bend in either direction, all of which are involved in riding Circle Points. Here are two exercises you can practice to help keep your circles round and your horse bent and positioned correctly.

- 1) Ride the Circle Points of a single circle. Start with a 20 meter circle, and decrease the size of the circle as your horse becomes more proficient at being parallel to the circle at the exact moment he passes the Circle Points. When your horse can do this exercise well at a 10 meter circle, do exercise 2.
- 2) Connect two 20 meter circles so your horse will be riding from one circle to the other, changing his bend and direction as he move from circle to circle. Ride the Circle Points for each circle and make sure the bend stays consistent with the circles. Decrease the size of the circles as your horse improves.

These exercises can be done at any gait. Exercise 2 will require a flying change between the circles if done at the canter.

A Last Word on Circle Points

I recently worked with two riders, one was a trainer and one was an amateur. Both riders had similar issues with their horses. The trainer was a hunter-jumper rider and the amateur was riding dressage. It was

interesting to note that they both had a similar training flaw with their horses even though they were at different levels in their education and riding in different disciplines.

Both riders worked on riding Circle Points. Both horses improved. The hunter-jumper rider gained better control of her young horse's bend on a circle (as well as his right or left position on straight line!). She was then able to re-create the balance and spinal bend necessary to ride her horse to the jumps without his swapping leads. The amateur dressage rider learned to constantly direct her horse's path of travel (like more experienced riders do) and quickly make adaptations to keep him balanced and bent. And, as another bonus, her previously oval circles became round which helped her in her dressage tests.

Riding correct figures on pre-determined paths is paramount when preparing the horse for success. I think you will find riding Circle Points to be a valuable training exercise for horse and rider, and the benefit of doing these exercises carries over toward improvement of the overall training of the horse. And, it's kind of fun to do.

Until next time,

Dr. Bev Gordon
