

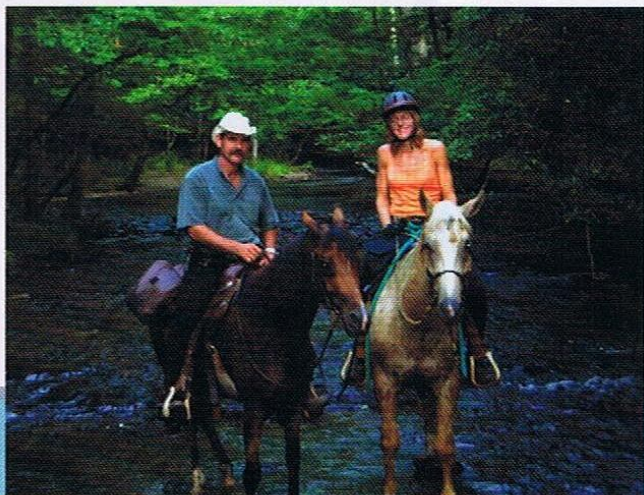
# COOL, CALM & COLLECTED, PART 2

by Walter Mantler

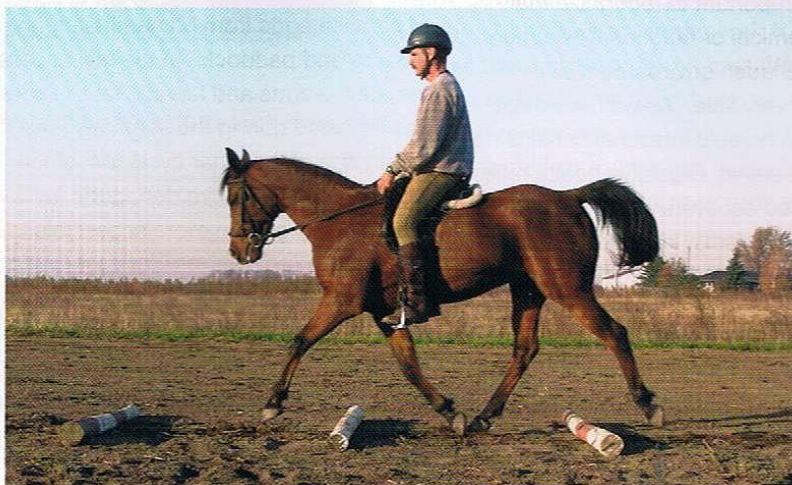
In this article, the second in our series, we will be introducing suppling exercises. These exercises are designed to help the horse become accepting and responsive to our leg, seat and rein aids. They will also be used to warm up, relax and build the muscle necessary for collected work down the road. Proper communication and execution of the suppling exercises will produce a calm mind, resulting in a calm body and, therefore, a willing horse, ready to work.

## PROGRESSIVE TRAINING

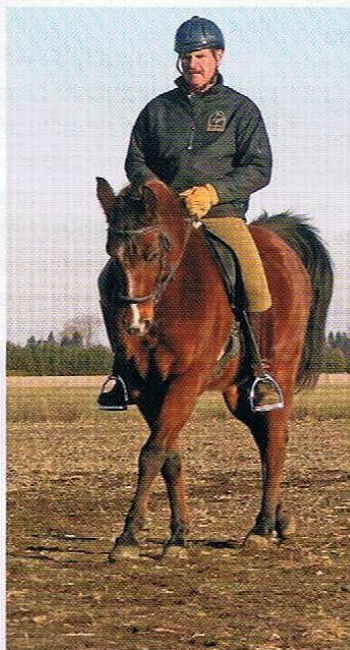
Before we can take horses into the show ring or even school them for a specific discipline, they must be trained to quietly accept our seat, leg and rein aids. When they are willing to accept our aids quietly and when they are able to transition nicely through the various gaits then they will be ready to be schooled for their intended discipline. We need to first build a firm foundation.



Walter & Gisela Mantler own and operate Symphony Stables, a training facility in south western Ontario. They have apprenticed directly under Chris Irwin for years and are recognized among his top trainers. They breed, start, train and



**GROUND POLES** – Use pole work to warm up, stretch, relax, control length of stride, control rhythm and build muscle. When introducing pole work, start with one pole. When comfortable walking and trotting over one pole, add a second pole and then when comfortable with two poles, add a third. For Gem, our 15.2 H Arabian we have the poles spaced 4 ft apart. Make sure that your seat is soft and supple and that your rein contact is soft and consistent with a giving hand. In order to lengthen the horse's stride, drive forward with your seat and legs. In order to shorten the horse's stride, hold/resist forward motion slightly with your seat. The goal is for your horse's feet to land half-way between the poles.



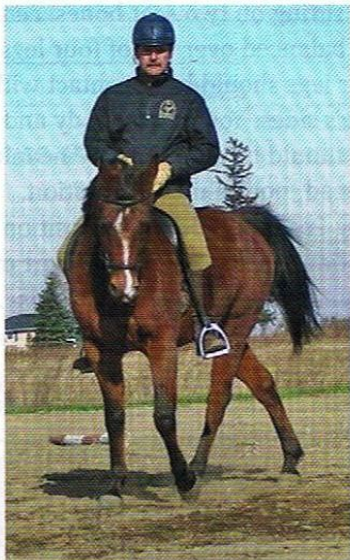
**LEG YIELD** – This exercise is a valuable tool in developing rider skills and, as well, is the foundation for all lateral work. In this exercise the horse should be moving forward and kept straight in the body and neck. There should only be a slight flexion in the pole with the nose tipping in the direction that you are moving away from.

In this photo, Gem is being leg yielded to his right, away from my left seat bone and leg. His left front foot crosses over in front of his right front and his left rear crosses over in front of his right rear while moving forward. My right leg is in place and making constant adjustments to keep Gem's hip straight and in line with his shoulders. My right rein/outside rein supports Gem in keeping his neck and body straight. This is a great exercise for connecting the inside leg to the outside rein.

Start this exercise at a walk. Proceed to the trot when perfected at the walk. Take it slow. Rushing this exercise will only cause your horse to lose his cool.

finish horses for both Western and English disciplines and run a series of horsemanship and personal development clinics throughout the year. To learn more about their techniques and services, visit [www.symphonystables.com](http://www.symphonystables.com)





**TURN ON THE FOREHAND** - This exercise is used to improve coordination/timing between leg, seat and rein aids. It also helps to supple the hind quarters and improve the horse's balance.

Start out by walking a circle to the left. Continue walking and reducing the size of your circle as small as possible being very careful to maintain true bend. While walking on this small circle slide your left leg back. At the very moment that your horse lifts his left hind leg apply some pressure with your left leg. This will cause the horse to cross over his hind legs. See photo on the left.

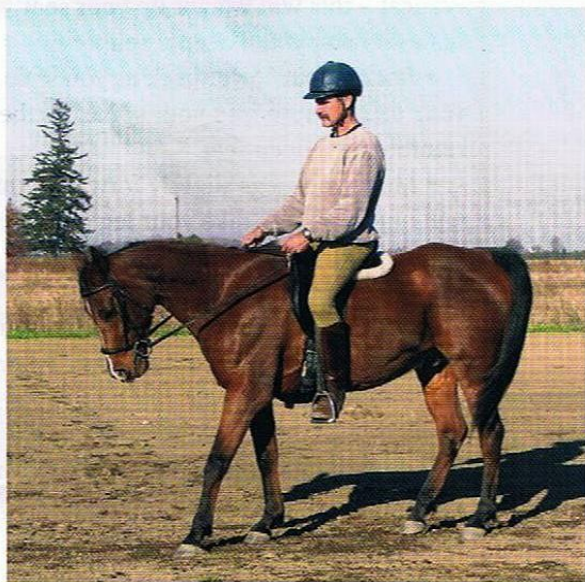
We can only affect the footfalls of our horse while their feet are in the air. The proper use of timing is not only effective; it is also comfortable and easy for the horse to understand.



**TURN ON THE HAUNCHES** - As with the turn on the forehand, this exercise is also used to improve coordination/timing between leg, seat and rein aids.

As in the previous exercise we will walk a tight circle to the left, again being very careful to maintain true bend. Sit tall and straight, make certain that you are not leaning into the direction of the turn. Ensure that you have even contact in the saddle with both seat bones and that your hips are horizontal to the ground. Make sure that both your legs are resting comfortably on the horse. Now I want you to pay close attention to your horse's front feet. As your horse raises his right front foot off the ground I want you to turn your navel/seat to the left. When turning your navel to the left be careful not to bring your shoulders along. Keep your right shoulder back. You will need to move your waist independently of your shoulders; very similar to the popular dance; "The Twist". When done correctly, your horse's right front foot will cross over his left front foot (see photo above).

As mentioned earlier. We can only affect the footfalls of our horses while their feet are in the air. With proper timing and technique this move becomes effortless.




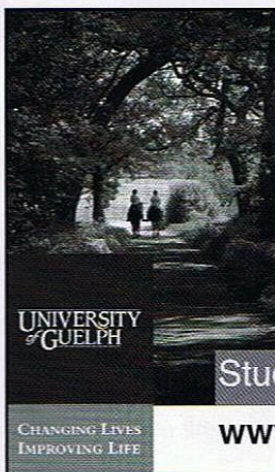
**REIN BACK** - This exercise will help soften your horse in the bridle. It will help create round transitions, improve your halts and will also aid in the collection process.

Sit tall in the saddle with your legs on the horse behind the girth. Pick up the contact in your reins. Drive the horse forward as if you were asking him to move forward. The moment the horse engages his hind end to move forward you should provide a half halt by opening up your chest and increasing the forward block as appropriate. As the horse picks up his hind leg it will be directed back. This will result in a soft stepping rein back. When done correctly the horse's legs move in diagonal pairs as demonstrated in the photo.

Be very careful not to pull back or initiate the rein back with your hands. Doing so will result in the rein back being very stiff and, if you are not careful, you may end up teaching your horse how to rear.

### TAKE THE TIME IT TAKES

Be prepared to take the time it is going to take to teach your horse and yourself these exercises. These exercises may not be mastered in a day, week, month or even a year. Be patient with your horse and yourself as you work your way quietly through these exercises. 



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