



**1. Could you explain why the parallel legs are so important? When the horse trots at a regular rhythm the diagonal hoofs hit the ground at the same time.**

Both diagonal legs beat the time. This means that when the legs are in an elevated position the movement must also be the same. If when the hooves are on the ground as well as when they are lifted, the canon bones are parallel it is evident that the horse trots harmoniously and at a regular rhythm. If however the front legs, as we see nowadays very often, move with effusiveness/ show flipping movements, the angles are no longer the same, we don't get the parallelogram. In other words, the parallelogram is proof or evidence of good rhythm.

**2. Could you explain why you say there is good lateral protection with the curb bit.**

The curb bit gives much better lateral protection than the snaffle bit, which you can pull out of the mouth on one side. The reason is the following:

a) The curb bit is a plain mouthpiece, unjointed. Therefore the distance between the shanks is fixed and is precisely adapted to the width of the horse's mouth. The lateral shanks make sure that the mouthpiece doesn't move out of place to one side. The curb chain also helps to assure that the bit keeps its central position and prevents the lateral shift.

b) We have to assume that the angle of the snaffle bit in the mouth differs depending on the way the reins are held - with more or less weight. And for this reason also, the distance between the snaffle rings differs. The smaller the angle of the joint, the greater the distance between the snaffle rings. The greatest distance is reached when the bit is straight (see **photo 1**). Therefore the snaffle rings cannot assure a lateral protection of the bit and with each one-sided aid there is the risk that the bit will leave the central position.

Proof: You can often observe horses with the bit coming out at one side of the mouth. This is then the hand of the rider which is more rude/coarse. Another fault which should not exist: we see riders pulling alternately the reins which has the effect of someone playing the violin!

### **3. Could you explain why you say that you shouldn't use the bit until the horse has understood first using the schooling bridle?**

As long as the horse doesn't understand the bit it doesn't make sense to use it. The horse would fight against it/defend itself/ and by this hurt itself.

I prefer to first explain the horse what we want it to do by using the softly padded schooling bridle. This HSH schooling bridle doesn't hurt and at the same time allows to have a clear effect. The horse will understand immediately. The schooling bridle basically is nothing more than a halter made more comfortable, with which you lead the horse on the ground. Once the horse has been made confident with the most important movements and you want to exercise them more profoundly then you might use the bit. Today we can say that the secret of the successful horses which have been trained according to the HSH-method is the smoothly padded HSH schooling bridle. It is a mean to guarantee that the horse understands very quickly the basics of education.

### **4. You state you don't use the halt in the work in hand. Could you explain why you think this is important?**

This question might arise from some kind of misunderstanding? The very first lesson of the HSH-teaching program is that you give with your voice the aid to halt and ask the horse to stand correctly with its hind legs. Only if we can be sure that according to our aid the horse will halt at any time we can start with teaching exercises when the horse moves.

### **5. One of the nice things that we can see in this video is that the neck is often quite long compared to what we might see sometimes. How important do you think this is?**

The neck should either be long or describe a curve with the poll as highest point, but never be short. A contracted neck is offending against aesthetics. The elevated neck which goes with advanced collection may not be asked for continuously from the horse for more than a few minutes.

The young horse still needs a support when keeping the neck like this and for this purpose the HSH-schooling bridle is ideal. When it gets tired the horse should never be forced to support itself on the bit, and in particular not when work in hand is done with fixed reins. After each strenuous movement/exercise there must be a break and walk with long neck and low frame. At trot and canter the long neck is not advisable because there is too much weight on the forelegs. Riding a horse at trot or canter with a long deep neck - as we see riders quite often - is bad for the forelegs. The walk, the gait with less impact for the forelegs is the gait for recovering.

### **6. How important is it to watch the horse moving outside in freedom?**

The adequate training of a horse implies that it can be outside in the paddock at least 2 hours per day - preferably much longer. To observe a horse again and again in freedom helps to understand it better. At the fence of the paddock you have the best chance to recognize for which movement your horse has a special gift.

**7. In the shortened steps trot - one horse moves his hindquarters more and raises his hind legs more than the front legs. Is this a concern? Why or why not?**

Quite often the movement of the hind legs is not immediately transmitted to the forelegs. The movement doesn't go through the horse's body. It is then necessary to activate the forelegs systematically. We know by experience that the Spanish walk and trot is very valuable in this respect. In former days training parts of the body separately was considered belonging to the circus. Those who thought like this were not right! The best proof for this is our fitness center nowadays. There we train each part of the body separately, one after the other. The aim remains of course that force and movement of all parts of the body come together in harmony. There is no difference in the training of human beings or horses.

**8. You mentioned that it is only in the second half of the pirouette that we can see if the horse is stepping correctly. Could you explain why this is so and the impact this has when in competition only half walk pirouettes are requested.**

That in competition only half walk pirouettes are requested is due to the fact that already before World War I a German officer forbade the entire walk pirouette. He thought it didn't make sense, as horse and rider move afterwards in the same direction as before.

In reality the total or even the multiple walk pirouette is a very helpful exercise when training a horse. It is time to get rid of this ridiculous proscription from the barracks.

It is easy for the horse to cheat in the half walk pirouette without anybody noticing it. It moves its inner hind leg aside instead of underneath its body and by doing this refuses to carry power as asked. The correct steps of a pirouette are helpful to improve collection.

The hind leg which doesn't step correctly can be recognized much more easily in the full pirouette than in the half pirouette, especially as the fault is coming up mostly after the second or the third step.

**9. Twice you mention that it is the first stride of the canter pirouette is the most important could you please explain why?**

The first stride of the canter pirouette is the most difficult for the young horse; it is anxious, doesn't dare to go into the pirouette. The collection necessary for this movement cannot be developed slowly. It must be a spontaneous collection and then, at walk all of a sudden the horse makes the correct stride into the pirouette. Once the first stride is done correctly, when we ask for it the five strides following these can be added without a problem. For the first stride more energy is requested than for the following ones.

It is the same with the normal transition from walk to canter, there again the first stride needs more power than the following. (Think for instance of a car standing at a traffic light. More gas is needed for the first half meter... ).

**10. Why is it important that the first canter stride in canter pirouette comes from the horse?**

It is an advantage to have a horse that starts into the canter pirouette voluntarily and of itself. That's the way it learns consciously and becomes cooperative. If we have to set off/trigger the first stride as a reflex action, it won't be transmitted and stamped into consciousness.

**11. Explain how piaffe is the basis for all other movements.**

It is one of my favourite questions because the answer aims at the center of all riding ideals.

Already the great French masters, such as de la Guerinière and Pluvinel, considered the piaffe as a basic movement, indispensable for any high school lesson. The piaffe the horse learns with its trainer epitomizes/is the perfect example of collection which needs little physical strength. Collection in this case means more than weight-bearing capacity by the hind legs and lightening of the forehand. Even more important is the total concentration on the rider. The horse waits for the aids and by this for the movement that will follow because the piaffe is the preparation of this movement. Piaffe is considered by horse and rider as the preparation for and concentration on something special. It is the prelude of passage and the airs above the ground.

As far as our dressage competitions are concerned the prelude has become something independent. The dressage riders of high level nowadays, without giving it a single thought, abstain from these consecutive airs above the ground.

If we imagine Pluvinel as one of the spectators, in the middle of a dressage test he would impatiently ask when the presentation would start.

To answer your question of the beginning why the piaffe is so important for the education of the horse, I want to say the following: The behaviour of a horse in freedom is purely instinctive. There has to be a reason that triggers the instinct. In the dressage arena there is no such reason and therefore the horse not yet trained will not start the piaffe by itself. The corresponding command which is necessary is lacking.

The art of schooling for this reason consists in making conscious to the horse step by step the sequence of movements of the piaffe. It is not before the horse has acquired consciousness of its body and through the linking up of nerves so a second center of control – the consciousness – has been created, that the horse can offer us what we want him to do. As soon as we have overcome this problem, which is the most difficult one, we have completed basic schooling: there won't be comparable hurdles to clear, the road to all sides, to all other movements of advanced education, seems almost free. And this is true even if the piaffe is far from being perfect and is still executed while the horse is slightly moving forward.

The example of the piaffe is especially convincing if one wants to make clear the sense of dressage. It is visible for everyone that the movement of the piaffe increases the beauty of a horse. The piaffe which the horse executes in freedom happens in a moment of tension, the piaffe in the dressage arena, the result of training without force, is characterized by suppleness and lightness. If you make yourself aware of this you will realize that it is true for any of the movements of higher dressage level.

In freedom the horse makes such movements without poll flexion caused by the rider, it is dominated by the prevailing situation. In the dressage arena the poll flexion is the proof that the rider dominates the horse.

**12. I noticed that you are one of the few instructors advocating three in one for a rein combination. Could you explain the problems with riding 2 and 2.**

A rider with an ideal position of hands doesn't exist. There is always relative movement between the right and the left hand. This is the reason why the curb bit – which has no joint – is constantly turning over or tilting. With each turning movement the tongue at one side is relieved from strain and the other side is squeezed. The edge of the tongue gets caught between bar and teeth.

With one-sided strong contact with the rein the weight on the edge of the horse's tongue amounts up to at least 5 kilos. See chart 2 which shows the result of practical measurements confirmed by mathematical calculations!

**Chart 2**

When controlling the reins of the double bridle with one hand there are no incorrect relative

movements, nor the turning over caused by them. The bridoon reins may be held in two hands because the joint prevents the tilting movement. Due to the joint it is permissible to act on the bridoon on one side only, and it is therefore ideal if you want to assure lateral bending. The double bridle however is much better for creating the desired frame of the horse. Therefore the combination of both bits is a very adequate solution, but it only functions well if both bits can be handled separately from each other. Controlling the reins three to one is the method which guarantees this best. It is not difficult to learn and this little effort is worthwhile for horse and rider.

**13. Would you advise a left handed person to reverse the 3 in 1 combination and to hold the three reins in the right hand?**

A right-handed person uses the left hand for holding, a left-hander on the contrary the right hand. In my experience a left-hander will never become a perfect right-hander. For this reason I would advise a left-handed person to control the reins of the curb bit with the right hand, which by nature is his holding hand. I've tried to let right-handers control the reins with the right hand. The hands were okay, but not the shoulders, they were always tense. I fear that the same will happen if a left-handed rider forces himself to control the reins with the left hand. Therefore I think we should not ask for this and to ignore the rules going back to the time of the army.

Caution: The holding hand is always weaker than the working hand. Atrocities have been committed by men using their right hand. It makes sense to control the reins of the double bridle with the hand which is weaker, that is also the caressing hand

**14. Why would you not ask for a low frame in trot and canter?**

In trot and canter the legs of the horse are much more used than in walk. With the long deep neck – which is fine for the back – for geometric reasons the forelegs have to carry additional weight. In walk it is not very important, in trot and canter however much more! It is not very useful in my view to save the back when it is detrimental to the forelegs – for a short moment it is surely nothing to be alarmed by. I would especially advise the heavyweight rider not to ride the horse miles and miles in a low frame in trot and canter. This bad habit, which we see very often, is the reason for the dreaded navicular syndrom (“Hufrolle”). At least during cross country riding the horse should be allowed to lift the head so that the hind legs may bear more weight. This is difficult when the neck is deep – by the way the same is true when the neck is contracted, in the case of the so called “Rollkur”. Many photos demonstrate that those who defend the Rollkur and pretend the contrary are not right!

One additional remark in this context: Nowadays a lot of dressage horses are saddled too much in the front of their back. A simple calculation shows that this contributes as well to overburdening of the forelegs.

For example: A rider together with the saddle weighs 80 kg. If the saddle is laying 5 cm too much in the front he will give work to the veterinarian: 1 cm means an overcharge of the hoof joints of 7,1 kg in the case of a horse of medium size. The forelegs therefore have to bear an overcharge of  $5 \times 7,1 = 35,5$  kg.

The bad habit of saddling too much in the front is one of the reasons why we have to expect from our dressage horses on average only 7 years of “service”!

**15. Could you please explain why you ask the rider to open up her hand that is not holding the reins.**

From time to time it is useful to control the reins with one hand. It is good possibility to see whether the horse is fine and in harmony with the rider. It is not before you can ride a movement controlling the reins with one hand that you can be sure that you master this exercise. Several times during a riding lesson I ask my students to take the reins in one hand. It has a calming effect on the horse and the rider has no chance to use the reins to

dominate the horse. In the video it is visible that the rider isn't yet quite sure in what she is doing, the right hand which is free is under tension. I told her therefore to open the hand having in mind that by doing this the rider would come to relax. Sometimes curing the symptoms may help as well! I should have said better "Calm down, relax, don't worry, the stallion is fine, he doesn't think of making any trouble.

The horse immediately feels the slightest tension and insecurity of the rider and in turn becomes insecure itself. Horse and rider influence each other. On the other hand a relaxed seat will calm the horse down. The horse realizes: "If the one up there isn't afraid, I don't have to worry either". Whether a rider is really relaxed you can see in his face and especially in his hands. A right hand closed means that the rider as a preventive measure is also pressing the legs.

**16. If there was one thing that you hope that riders get out of watching your videos what would that be?**

With the videos I want to show that work in hand is the best way to gain the confidence and the voluntary cooperation of the horse. Furthermore they should make clear that it is astonishing to see how much the very young horse is prepared to learn under the condition that the rider doesn't put weight on its back at too early a stage and that instead of a snaffle he uses a smoothly padded schooling bridle.

Mataré stallion, Hannoveraner, father Metternich (angloarabian Macho XX)  
Manfred gelding, thoroughbred,  
William gelding, Hannoveraner, father Wolkenstein

please look at the website [www.hsh-fritz-stahlecker.de](http://www.hsh-fritz-stahlecker.de)

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