

Visual Points of the Correctly and Incorrectly Moving Dressage Horse

A correctly moving finished horse, balanced, on the bit and engaged.

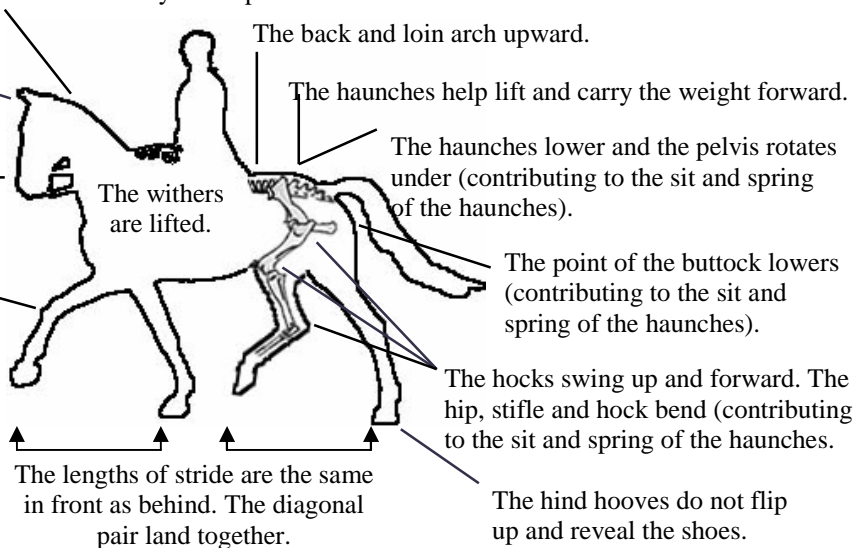
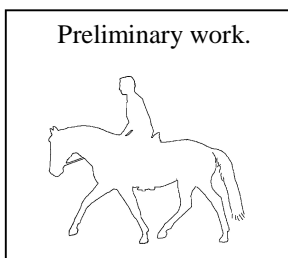
The horse is arched upward from his hind leg, *through* his topline to the poll. The observer gets the impression that two thirds of the horse is in front of the rider and one third behind. The gaits are pure.

The unconstrained neck arches smoothly to the poll.

The poll is the highest skeletal point and the nose is in front of the vertical.

The horse reaches for contact with the bit.

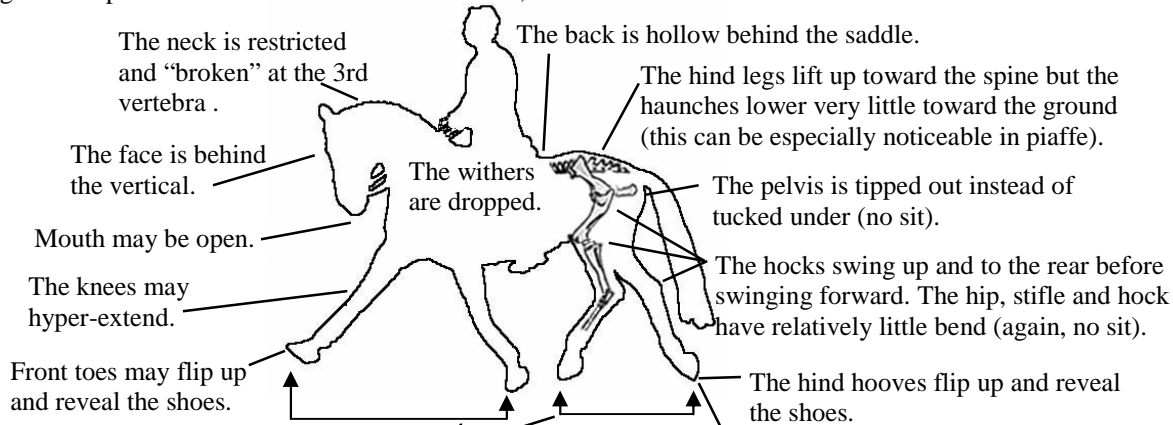
The knee does not hyper-extend. The steps are deliberate.



There is more to correct movement than the horse's outward appearance. The horse is also mentally at ease and actually contributes to the work willingly.

An incorrectly moving horse. Behind the vertical

The horse's neck is 'round' but his back is hollow and his haunches are out behind. The thrust does not go *through* the horse's spine. The gaits are distorted. Because the neck is shortened, the observer gets the impression that only one third of the horse is in front of the rider and two thirds are behind. The observer may also get the impression that if the reins were to be cut, the rider would fall backward.



Because the neck is shortened the hind legs have no room to step, making the strides are shorter behind than in front. The gaits become impure.

The hind hoof has lifted off the ground before the fore hoof, leaving the forehand to lift itself (this is a common byproduct of "diagonal dissociation").

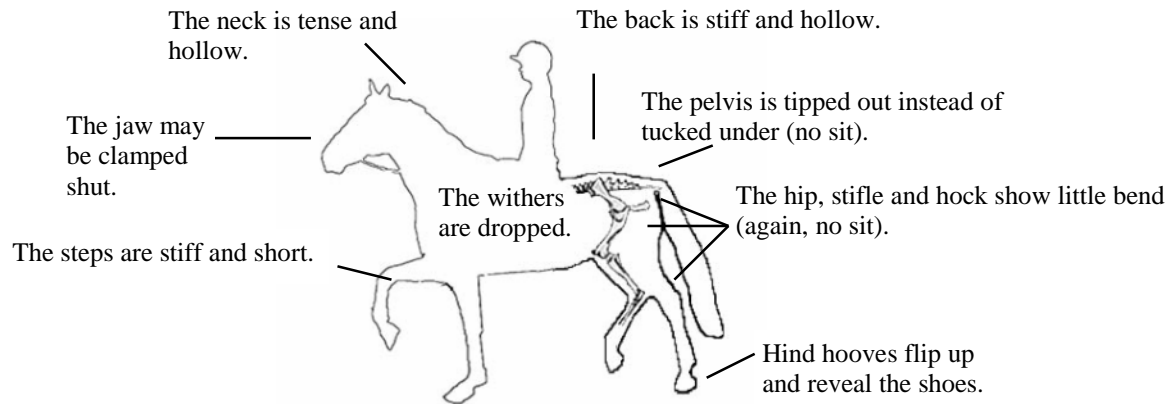
The artificial head position throws the horse out of balance and distorts the gaits. This makes the horse tense because he can't use himself naturally. The haunches can not engage therefore, they can not help lift and carry the horse forward; they can only push the horse forward.

This is a page from www.ridingart.com. Copyright © 2005 by Tonja Dausend All Rights Reserved

Visual Points of the Correctly and Incorrectly Moving Dressage Horse (continued)

A Hollow Horse.

The horse's neck is arched but his back is hollow and his haunches are out behind. The thrust does not go *through* the horse's spine. The gaits are distorted.

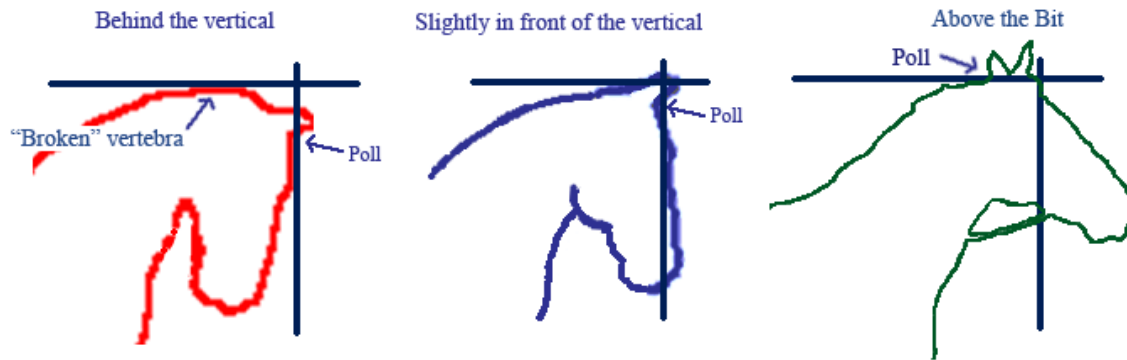


The gaits are jarring. The strides are shorter behind than in front.

This is a page from www.ridingart.com. Copyright © 2005 by Tonja Dausend All Rights Reserved

Scroll down to read more...

Behind the Vertical - *So What's the Big Deal?*



The poll should be the highest skeletal point with the nose at or slightly in front of the vertical.

While riding the horse behind the vertical has become widely accepted, there are some important points that riders should keep in mind:

- ◆ The horse's natural head and neck position reflects the horse's balance, imbalance or discomfort. Riding the horse in a forced frame takes away the horse's voice.
- ◆ Either the horse must use incorrect neck muscles in order to hold its face behind the vertical or the rider must actively hold the horse behind the vertical. Either way creates undue tension.
- ◆ Riding the horse behind the vertical restricts the horse's movements, distorts its gaits and is in direct conflict with its nature.
- ◆ Riding the horse behind the vertical makes it impossible for the horse to use its haunches correctly and find the relaxation that enables the horse to enjoy its freedom of movement and independent balance.
- ◆ When the horse's face is behind the vertical, the thrusting energy of the hind legs does not travel through to the poll. The energy only makes it to the area in the neck where the vertebra are 'broken', at which point the energy is stifled by the head and remaining neck that are hanging downward heavily off the front end of the horse. The weight of the already overburdened forehead is increased.

So, riding the horse behind the vertical puts more weight on the forehead, distorts the gaits, creates tension, deadens the contact and creates imbalance which inhibits engagement. In essence, it produces the opposite effect of what the Equestrian Art sets out to accomplish.

The purpose of the Equestrian Art is to improve the rhythm of the gait to the point where the horse relaxes and naturally reaches forward with its whole spine to offer the rider a soft elastic contact with the bit, thereby enabling the rider to refine the horse's balance to collection. Improving the horse's balance not only makes the horse more enjoyable to ride, it helps extend its useful and pain free life.

The classical principles were not arrived at as a matter of personal taste. They were derived from the laws of balance, with a clear objective in mind.

These points apply to all degrees of riding behind the vertical, including "hyperflexion" (also known as 'rollkur').