

## Do You Know How the Movements of Your Body Directly Correspond to Your Horse's Performance?

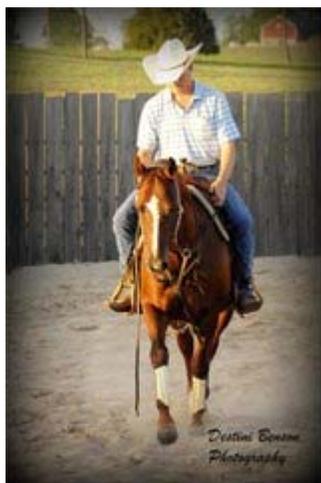


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Posted By Barbra Schulte On August 9, 2010 (10:50 am) In [Riding and Showing Elements](#)

### ***Understand This and Improve Your Horsemanship And, You Can Practice This Without Cattle***



A big challenge for many cutters is understanding the “whys” of an instruction.

This article provides an outline regarding how the parts of your body (and their movements) affect your horse.

Beyond becoming more knowledgeable about horsemanship in general, my hope is that this information will give you “reasons” for the nuances in your riding. Perhaps, as your mentors make suggestions, you will think, “Ahhh, now that makes sense!”

This article is not intended to be a complete discussion of this topic. This is your starting point to better understand basic correlations between your body movements and your horse’s performance.

Of course, our body parts do not operate in isolation. The ole, “hip bone connected to the leg bone” applies here! The good news is when you work on one aspect, you automatically improve others.

### **Your Eyes**

**Correspond to:** Your horse’s eyes. This applies to the direction of his physical focus, his mental focus, and his confidence in your communications.

**Best riding practice:** ALWAYS look in the direction of where you want to go. For cutting, keep your eyes in a choreographed place. For example, look toward the end of the flow on a cut, or to a target on a cow as you work the cow.

**Horse’s positive performance:** He stays connected to the task of the moment. He has the best chance to remain confident and relaxed.

**Poor riding practices:** You look down at your horse because you are experiencing a negative emotion. For example, perhaps you are unsure of what you are doing, or you lack confidence in your horse, or you are nervous. Perhaps your visual focus is nonspecific and wavers randomly from one moment to the next.

**Unintended consequences for your horse:** Your horse loses one, all, or any combination of the following ... his focus, his intensity, or his confidence.

### **Your Shoulders**

**Correspond to:** Your horse’s shoulders.

**Best riding practice:** Your shoulders remain squarely centered over your hips in almost all situations.

**Horse’s positive performance:** He can maintain his balance for a wide variety of maneuvers.

**Poor riding practices:** Your shoulder drops or leans into a turn prior to your horse initiating the turn. Your shoulders move forward beyond your hips prior to your horse moving forward. Your shoulders fall back behind your hips as your horse accelerates, slows down or, stops.

**Unintended consequences for your horse:** Horse leads with his shoulder in a turn, or he is out-of-balance because his weight is on his front-end (instead of on his rear-end) for any maneuver, or he is pushed forward.

## **Your Lower Back**

**Corresponds to:** Your horse's loin and his ability to round his back.

**Best riding practice:** Your lower back rounds easily and flexibly (without tension and resistance) to help your horse slow down, or stop. In all other situations, your lower back remains soft.

**Horse's positive performance:** He has the ability to slow down or stop with his loin rounded. This allows his hindquarters to engage and perform with balance, efficiency and power.

**Poor riding practice:** You get stiff or tense for any reason and arch your lower back.

**Unintended consequences for your horse:** His attempt to slow down, stop or turn is inconsistent. Your body gives him confusing signals. This inhibits his ability to do what you think you have asked him to do. He could begin to feel insecure or nervous. When you raise up, so does he.

## **Your Hips**

**Correspond to:** Your horse's hips.

**Best riding practices:** Your hip weight remains even, softly centered and flexible over your horse's back in most situations. For turns, you can shift your weight (ever so slightly ... and almost imperceptibly to the eye) to the opposite hip of the direction of the turn. A slight hip weight awareness helps your horse anchor his outside hip and corresponding rear leg for a pretty, deep, controlled pivot.

**Horse's positive performance:** He remains balanced and agile to do his job. He keeps his power anchored in his hindquarters.

**Poor riding practices:** Uneven distribution of your hip weight anytime during your riding. You shift your weight on the inside hip prior to or during a turn.

**Unintended consequences for your horse:** Lack of balance and/or power behind so regular gaits, stops or turnarounds are inconsistent. He "flips his rear" when you shift your weight incorrectly during a stop or turnaround.

## **Your Feet**

**Correspond to:** Your horse's feet.

**Best riding practices:** Think of your feet as moving your horse's feet. For example, if you want your horse to move forward, think of your feet asking his feet to move forward (or side-pass, or back-up). Use your feet to press or push instead of sharp kicks. Release your feet to stop.

**Horse's positive performance:** He responds automatically and seamlessly to your cues to accelerate, move off your feet, or stop.

**Poor riding practices:** You grip or kick unintentionally at random times. You do not use your feet to help your horse at any time. Your timing for a maneuver is out of rhythm.

**Unintended consequences for your horse:** He performs inconsistently. One of his main lines of communication from you is confusing or absent. He may develop bad habits over time that will be difficult to change.

As you review these ideas, concentrate on the  
"Best riding practices" segments. Focus on what you want.  
Enjoy your new awareness!

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