

Snippet 8: What To Do With the Reins?

Since the first known book written about riding horses was written by Xenophon in 600 BCE, it is not surprising that by now there are written descriptions of what to do with the reins to get horses to do what we want. So, here are “the rein aids” as generally agreed upon after being distilled by centuries of discussion.



Generally, the horse is wearing a bit, but a halter and two lead ropes will produce the same results. Curb bits being used one handed with a highly trained Western horse and an accomplished rider will produce the same results. English double bridles work the same way with the added results that the snaffle/bridoon, obtains lateral flexion and the curb increases direct flexion. Direct flexion means that the horses' facial plain is almost vertical to the ground.

The List:

Direct reins mean that the reins come straight back from the bit/s to the riders' hands. Ideally the reins should touch the horses' neck on both sides to provide part of the corridor of straightness in which we ride. The weight of the bit should be equally balanced from side to side by the rider's fingers and hands. This usually is maintained by a tiny but ongoing process of “balancing”.

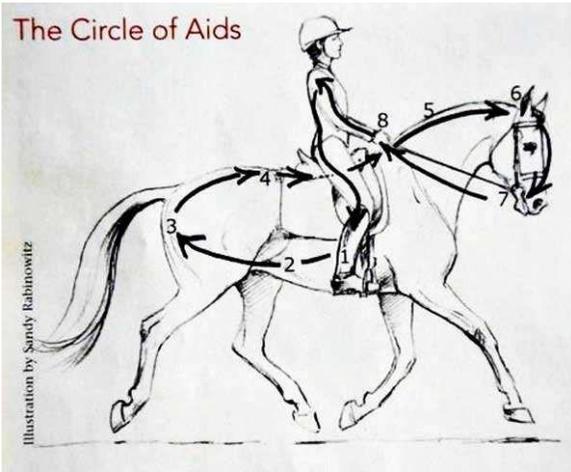
When using direct reins, the hands of the rider should be balanced so that there is room for one more fist Between her hands. This is “home base” for the hands.

The Leading Rein is used with young horses and beginning rider. The inside hand and arm move a small distance or a large distance to the right to show the horse (and rider) where the line of travel is to be. The leading rein then Always returns to the Direct Rein or “home base” position.

The Inside Indirect Rein in front of the withers. Mentally ride clockwise or to the right. The riders' inside hand comes diagonally from the bit in close to the withers without crossing over the body of the horse. This puts weight onto the horses' outside shoulder. This tends to make the horse slide out or left over that shoulder

The Inside Indirect Rein behind the withers. The riders' inside hand comes diagonally from the bit in close to the back of the withers without crossing over the body of the horse. This puts weight onto the horses' outside hip. This tends to make the horses' hindquarters slide left or out of the line of travel.

The Circle of Aids



The Outside Opening Rein. Still tracking to the right or clockwise, when the rider takes the outside rein away from the neck by moving it to the left, it provides a space into which the rider can move the horse laterally.

But again, There Is More. Rein aids are not used in isolation. For each of these rein actions, there is a supporting rein on the other side of the horse. The seat and legs of the rider also are instructing the horse to follow the rider's intent.

What a miracle that horses can understand and remember all of the various combinations of rein, leg and seat aids to understand the huge number of things we humans ask them to do.