

Snippet 11: Intro to the 4 Kinds of Half-Halts

Several recent Snippets have covered the rider biomechanics of the “Code Word” Half Halts. Remember that means to close your thighs, quiet your seat bone movements with your internal pelvic muscles, and stretch your

entire front line up and a bit forward from public arch to your collar bones. This invites the horse to do the same and produces what we call “engagement” of the hindquarters.

The elbows, wrists, and hands receive this increased thrust and ask the front limbs to wait thus improving the posture or frame of the horse and starts or improves collection.

But there is more! We teach, and horses learn, combinations of pressures and releases from the rider’s aids to achieve a lot of different body usages. There are only so many ways the two of us can move, so here are the four coordinations we can use to steer, bend, and position our horses for the movements. The following coordination’s of half halts also list their uses.

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1. Uni-Lateral Half Halts (aka One Sided Half Halts)

The calf muscle, the seat bone muscle and the hand on one side of the rider contract in unison as that seat bone moves from the back of the saddle towards the front of the saddle. The function is to help straighten the horse. Repeat as needed always applying this half halt in the horses’ rhythm.

2. Alternating Half Halts

Expand the uni-lateral half halts so now they are applied on each side of the horse separately but alternating as in right/left. The functions are to help straighten the horse, to steady the tempo for both horse and rider, and to remind the horse that the aids still are there. Use as needed.

3. Diagonal Half Halts

The inside calf, thigh and seat bone muscles contract, and are directed diagonally across the horse. That energy is received by the closing outside hand. The function is to bend the horse by shifting its rib cage to the outside thus putting its weight onto its outside two legs. This half halt is applied from the inside leg and seat just as the barrel of the horse swings to the outside. It is caught and released by the outside hand. The rider checks the result. Continuing application in the horses’ rhythm may be needed.

4. The Simultaneous Half Halts

Both legs, with emphasis on the thigh muscles, contract and the hands close simultaneously as the pelvis comes forward. The pelvis rolls under some and then the core muscles become firm by expanding upward and outward as both hands close. These muscle contractions are quick, brief and are applied in a

series if needed. The functions are to improve collection, to rebalance the horse, to produce a downward transition, or to halt. Collecting half halts are produced in a series until the desired result is achieved. The rider's body, seat and legs influence the hindquarters. The rein aids influence the front limbs and shoulders.

