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your goal.



RITTER DRESSAGE

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Arena Basics And  
Continuing Exercises 1.0



## Welcome to the Arena GPS

So, for the first time we presenting a compilation of basic exercises with graphics and brief that you can take with you into the arena in order to get training ideas.

Periodically, I will add more exercises. Some of them will be specifically designed to prepare and improve certain movements, while others will focus on a specific gymnastic topic, or simply improve the horse's suppleness, straightness, and balance.

The old masters discovered early on that riding accurate arena patterns is the prerequisite for balance and straightness, which in turn are the prerequisites for accessing the haunches. Therefore, it has to form the beginning of any gymnastically useful work.

In combination with transitions and lateral movements, the arena patterns are one of the most important tools the rider possesses in training the horse. We use round patterns, such as circles, voltes, serpentines, and ovals, as well as angular patterns such as rectangles, squares, and triangles.

When the exercises are complicated, it is best to show the horse the pattern and the "work space" at the walk first.

Afterwards, you can enrich the basic exercise by adding specific patterns of aids, lateral movements, etc. Once the horse is able to perform the exercise well at the walk, you can try it at the trot. As soon as the horse can do it well at the trot, you ride it at the canter. Most exercises can be customized to the individual needs of each horse, by either leaving certain elements out or by adding others. This way, you can ride the same basic exercise in a simple version at the walk with a Training Level horse, and a challenging version with an FEI horse at the canter. You should look at the exercises I introduce here in the Arena GPS as suggestions and inspirations.

Ride the exercises a few times the way I describe them, but by all means, don't hesitate to develop your own alternative versions by playing with the individual components. Experimenting leads to very interesting observations that deepen our understanding for the cause and effect chains very much.

### There are different types of exercises:

- Testing for specific abilities and skills
- General suppling
- Targeted gymnastic development of individual muscle groups
- Preparing and/or improving dressage movements
- Improving the horse's balance and body awareness
- Explaining certain aids and types of movements

The exercises work as diagnostic tools as well as therapeutic tools. On the one hand, they show us where the horse's training deficits are, i.e. where a muscle is stiff or weak, or where the body awareness and coordination are lacking. On the other hand, the exercises improve precisely these deficits.

From the green horse's first day at the longe line all the way to the Olympic horse, there are only six basic demands the horse needs to be able to fulfill: **go forward, stop, bend, turn, sidestep, and reinback.**

Therefore, the exercises of the Arena GPS consist of combinations of these basic demands. Some exercises contain only two or three elementary demands. Others contain more. The number of basic building blocks is very limited, but the number of possible combinations is almost infinite.

In gymnastic training – and consequently in the Arena GPS – bending in motion plays a central role, because it produces and improves straightness, suppleness, the swinging back, as well as impulsion and collection.

The bending work in motion is divided into three phases:

1. Bending and turning (corners, voltes, circles, serpentines)
2. Sidestepping while bending against the direction of travel (turn on the forehand in motion, leg yield, shoulder-in)
3. Sidestepping while bending in the direction of travel (turn on the haunches, passade, pirouettes, haunches-in, renvers, half pass)

This sequence should be observed during the work, in terms of the horse's long term overall training, as well as during each training session. All dressage movements mobilize certain muscle groups and joints in the horse's body, which I have listed here below. When you know these correlations, you can design specific gymnastic exercises to target individual parts of the body:

- **Neck/poll:** flexions, milling
- **Shoulders:** corners, voltes, figures of eight, turn on the haunches/passade/pirouette, full pass, stirrup stepping
- **Back:** curved lines, lateral movements, stirrup stepping
- **Hips:** lateral movements, turn on the forehand in motion, stirrup stepping, reinback
- **Stifles:** lengthening the stride

## General Tips For The Application Of Exercises And Movements

If you observe a mistake during an exercise or a movement, you can interrupt it in order to ride a new exercise that teaches the horse the mobility, coordination, or understanding he needs to overcome the problems in the original exercise. No exercise or movement is so important that you couldn't interrupt it for an explanatory or corrective exercise. Afterwards, you ride the original exercise again, in order to check and see if the horse can now execute it better. If an exercise turns out to be too difficult, you can ride an easier version or replace it with an easier exercise that addresses the same issue.

If you want to work a specific hind leg, you bring it underneath the body through a lateral movement, then you load it, for instance through a narrow turn and/or through stopping into this hind leg.

After the horse has successfully executed an exercise, you can change direction, gait, location, topic, or take a break, or even finish the workout as a reward. You should not, however, leave the location until the horse has shown some cooperation. Otherwise, the horse could draw the wrong conclusions and become disobedient.

Every exercise serves as a preparation for the following ones, similar to the rungs on a ladder. It makes sense, therefore, to prepare for difficult transitions or movements.

The skillful selection of exercises brings the horse into the best balance for the envisioned movement. Every exercise has a certain effect on the horse's gait and posture. This effect has an "expiration date". You must not, therefore, allow too much time to pass between the individual elements of an exercise sequence. Otherwise the beneficial effect of the previous part of the exercise is gone and you have to start over. You also have to start over if a mistake happens during a sequence of exercises, because we want to take advantage of the cumulative effect of the individual parts of the exercise.

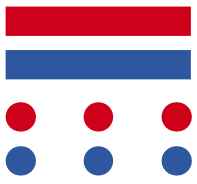
After an exercise you always have to evaluate in which direction it was more difficult and in which direction it led to the greater improvement.

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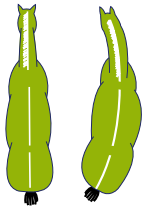
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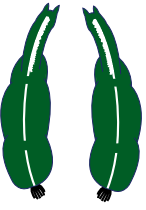
# Legend



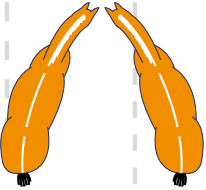
**Red and blue lines:**  
they show the line of travel



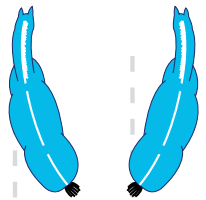
**Green horse:**  
the green straight and bent horses show the horse going forward or backward.



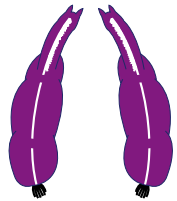
**Dark green horse:**  
shows the horse in sidestepping exercises



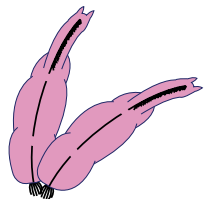
**Orange horse:** shows the horse in shoulder-in/  
counter shoulder-in



**Light blue horse:**  
shows the horse in haunches-in (travers)/renvers



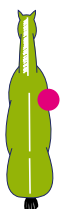
**Purple horse:**  
shows the horse in the half pass



**Pink horse:**  
shows the horse in a pirouette



**Yellow circles:** cones

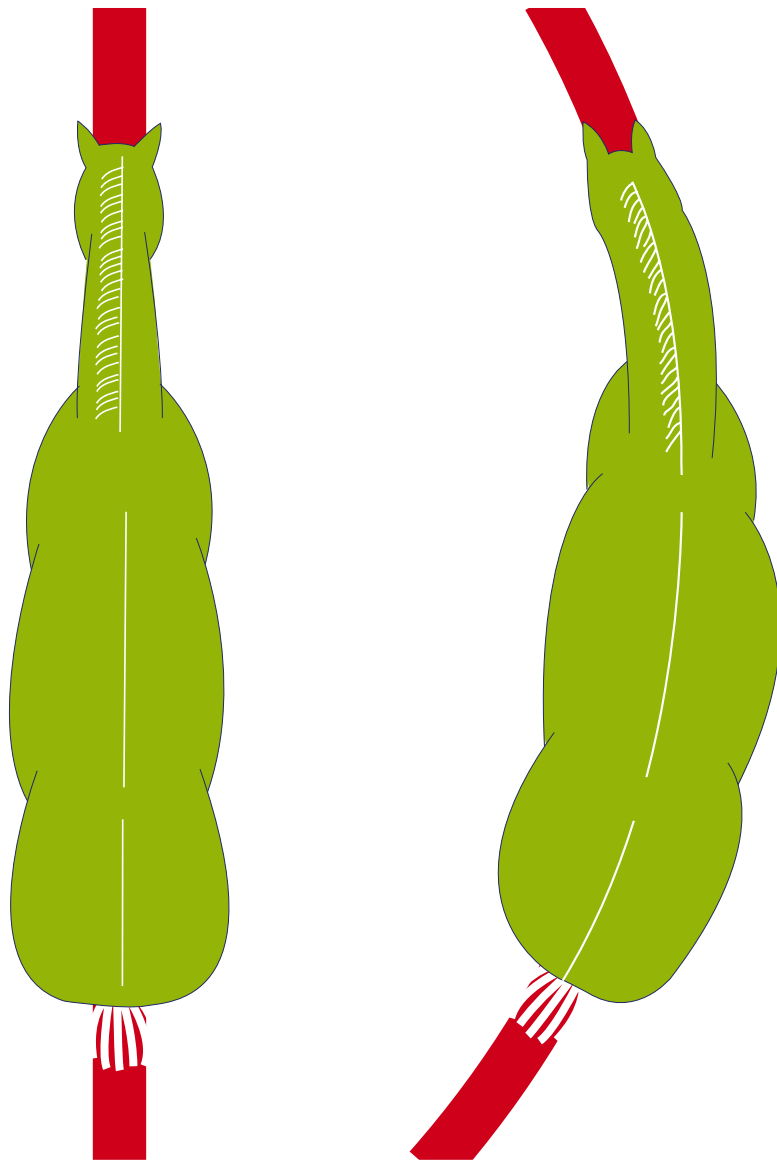


**Magenta dot:**  
shows a stirrup step when the corresponding leg is on the ground.

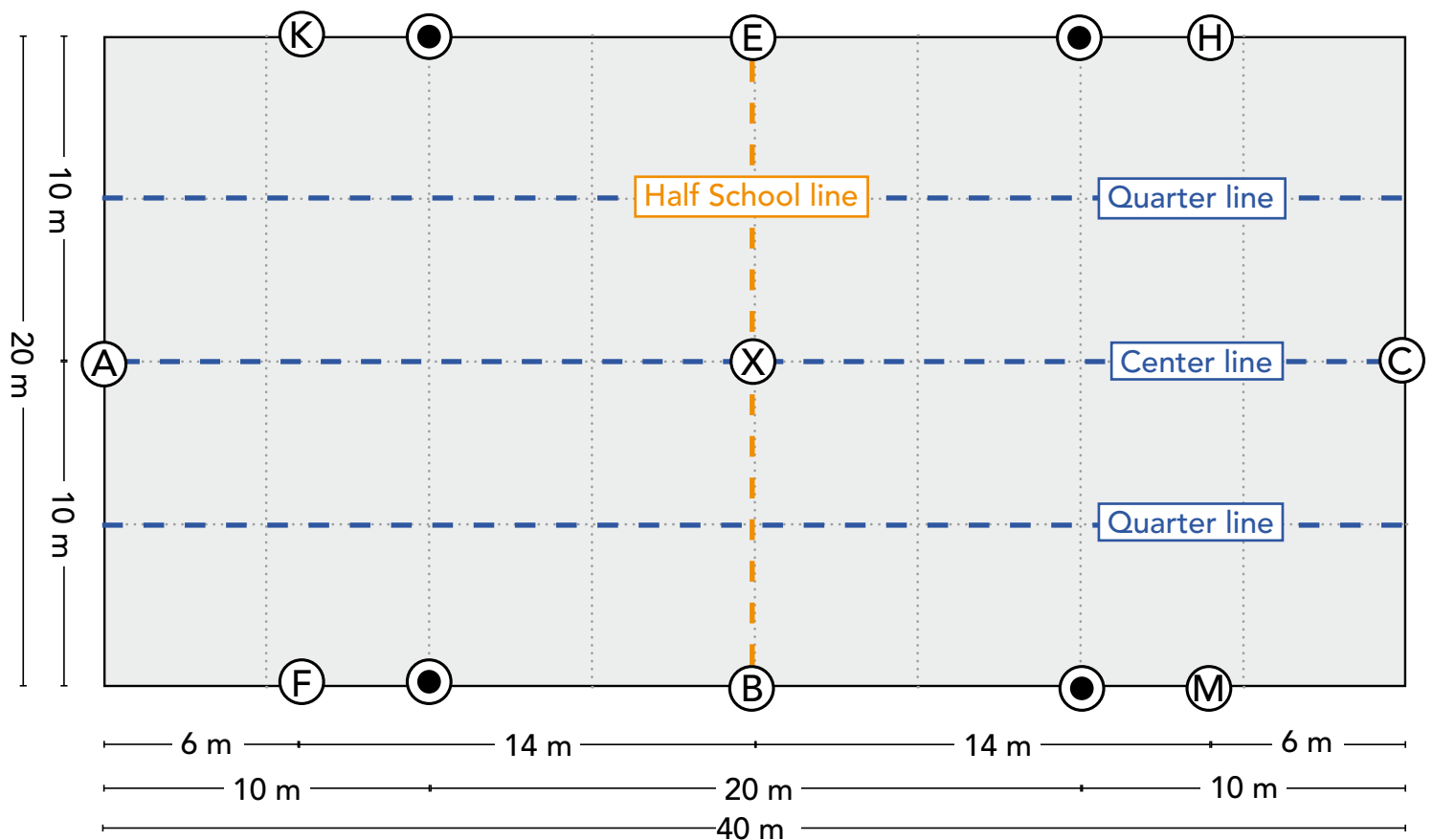


**Magenta line:**  
shows a half-halt or rein aid, either with one rein or with both.

# Arena Patterns



Simple Arena Patterns,  
Circles, Voltes,  
Serpentines, Diagonals



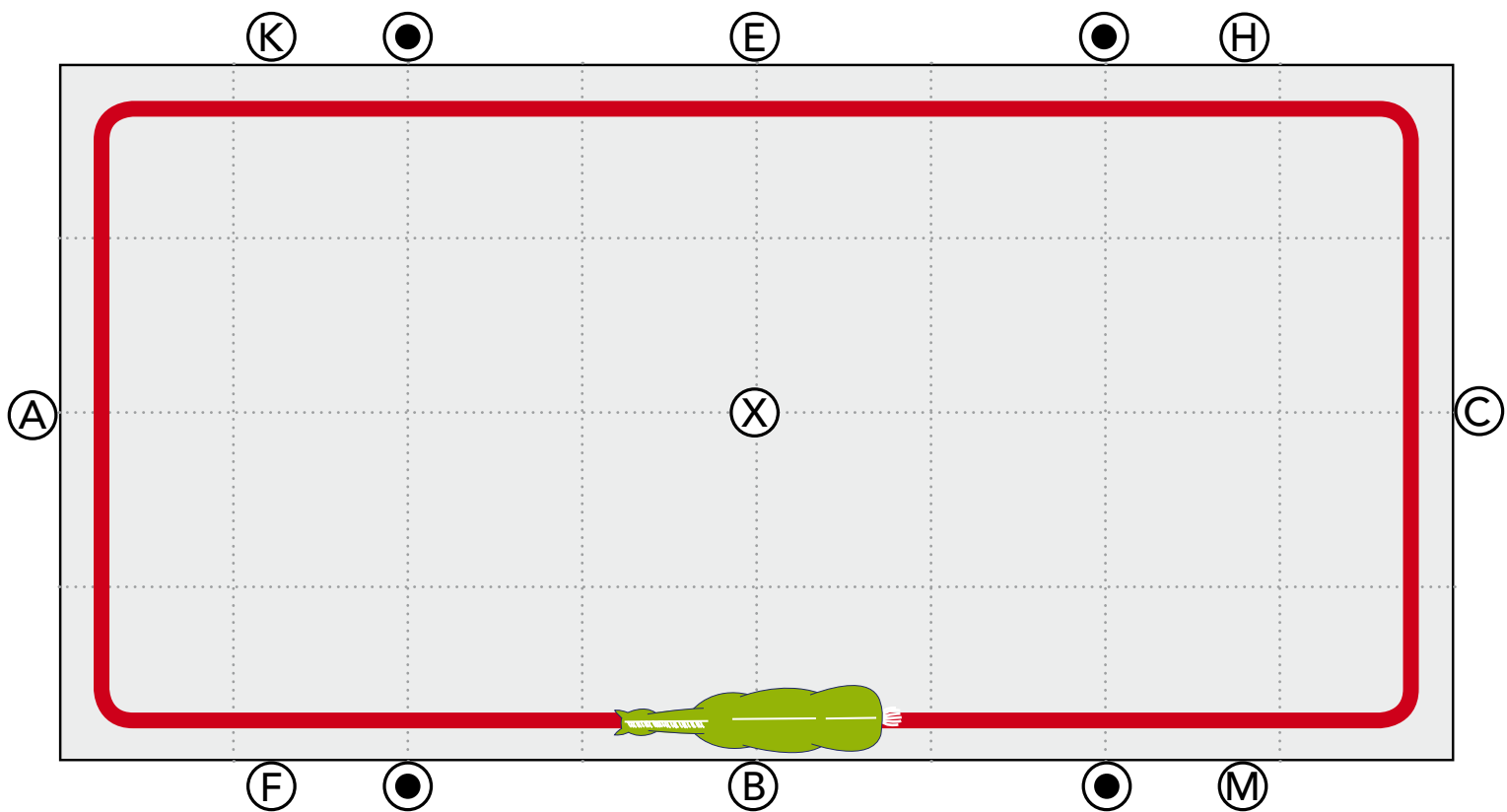
**Center Line: A-C** it divides the arena lengthwise into two 10 m x 40 m rectangles, i.e. it runs parallel to the long side at a distance of 10 m.

**Half School Line: E-B** it divides the arena into two 20 m x 20 m squares and runs parallel to the short side.

**Quarter Lines:** they run parallel to the long side at a distance of 5 m to the long side and the center line. In most riding arenas, the quarter lines are not marked. It is useful, however, to put a marker on the short side 5 m in from the corner.

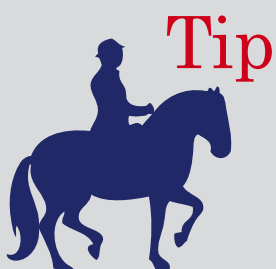
**Circle points:** they are marked as large black dots along the long side in many arenas. They are 10 m away from the corner and indicate the point where the 20 m circle at A or C touches the long side.

**Middle circle:** it touches the long sides at E and B and is centered around X.

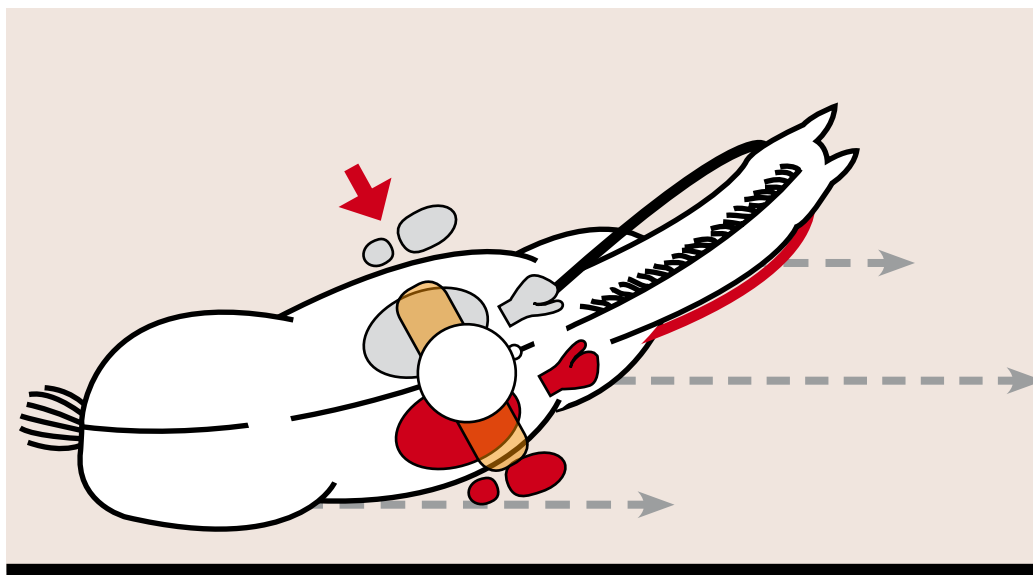


## The Outside Track

The red line shows the so-called outside track. You ride either clockwise which is called riding on the right rein or counter clockwise, which is called riding on the left rein.



*Since the horse's shoulders are narrower than its hips, the rider has to try to keep the outside shoulder a little farther away from the wall than the outside hip, since the horse would otherwise get crooked. The horse's spine should run parallel to the wall. The corners should be ridden in 3 strides of the inside hind leg.*



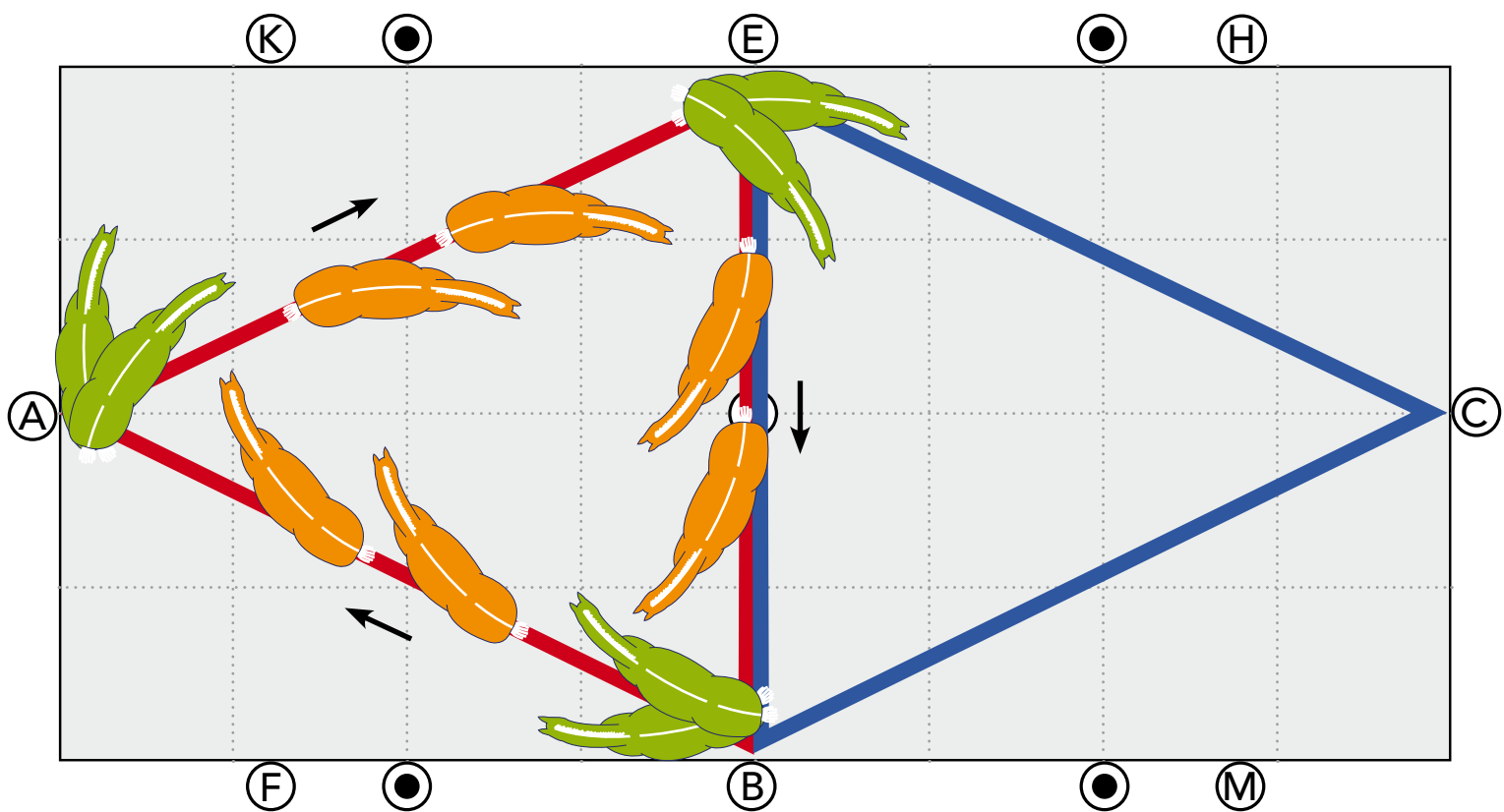
**Weight:** The weight aids should always be adjusted to the individual horse and the individual situation in a dynamic and flexible fashion. During the early stages of training, the weight should be applied in the direction of travel, so that the inside hind leg can cross better, and the horse is taken along on the line of travel by the rider's weight. As soon as the inside hind leg steps far enough underneath the center of gravity, the weight can be shifted onto it.

**Seat:** During a shoulder-in left, the belly button is turned towards 10 or 11 o'clock. In a shoulder-in right towards 1 or 2 o'clock.



**Tip**

*The degree of the angle between the horse and the line of travel must match the current degree of collection. That's why you ride the lateral movements initially with a smaller angle. If the angle exceeds the collection, the horse gets crooked, and the outside hind leg escapes to the outside in the shoulder-in. The outside calf has to guard the outside hind leg well.*



Triangles can very well be ridden in the shoulder-in, which brings the inside hind leg more underneath the center of the body on the sides of the triangle. In the turns, it is then flexed more by the body mass.



**Tip**

*The rider has to make sure that the haunches do not swing towards the outside in the turns, since the corners of the triangle should not be executed as turns on the forehand.*

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Authors: Dr. Thomas Ritter and Alexandra Gaugl

Idea & Development: Alexandra Gaugl

Graphics, Design, and Layout: Alexandra Gaugl

Logo: Alexandra Gaugl

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