

Direct to
your goal.



RITTER DRESSAGE

Arena Basics And
Continuing Exercises
Arena GPS 1.2



Welcome to the Arena GPS 1.2 - Your mobile co-trainer

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.

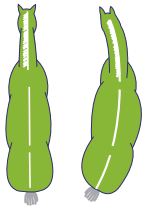
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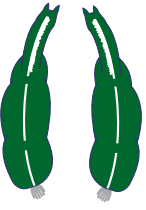
Legend



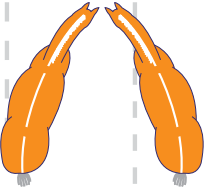
Red and blue lines:
they show the line of travel



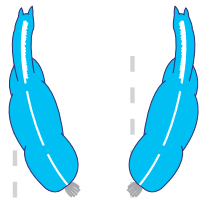
Green horse:
the green straight and bent horses show the horse going forward or backward.



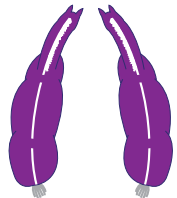
Dark green horse:
shows the horse in sidestepping exercises, turn on the forehand and turn on the haunches



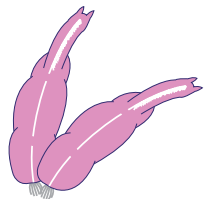
Orange horse: shows the horse in shoulder-in/ counter shoulder-in



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, passade



Yellow / Blue circles: cones



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

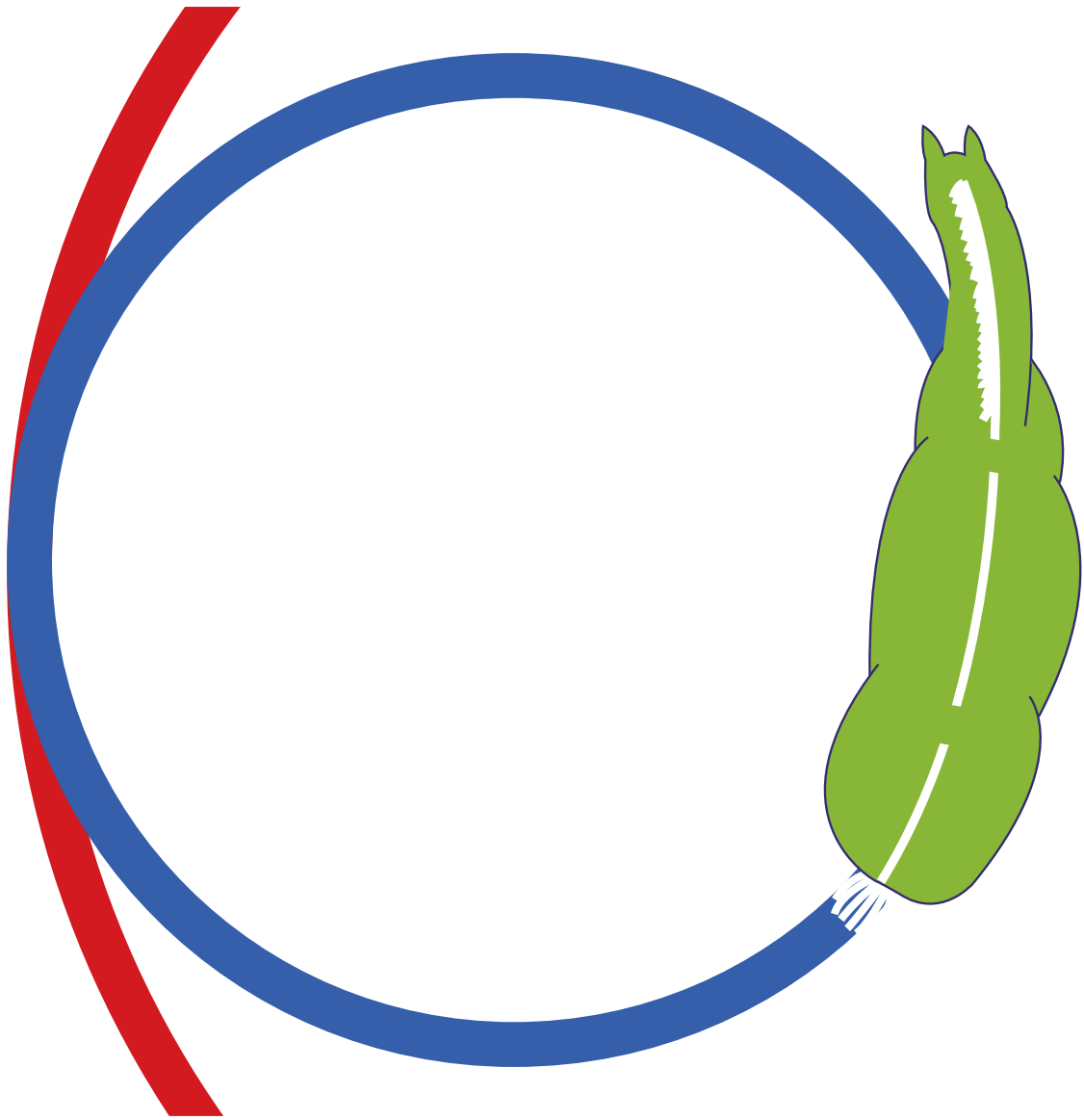


Magenta line:
shows a half-halt or rein aid.



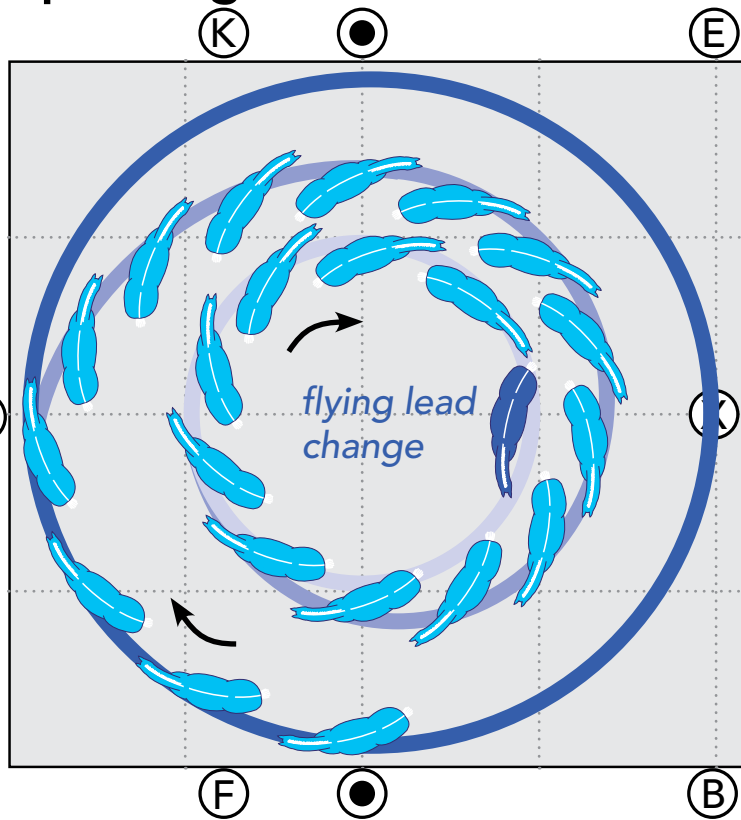
Magenta Squares:
Indicates a driving leg aid

Circles & Voltes

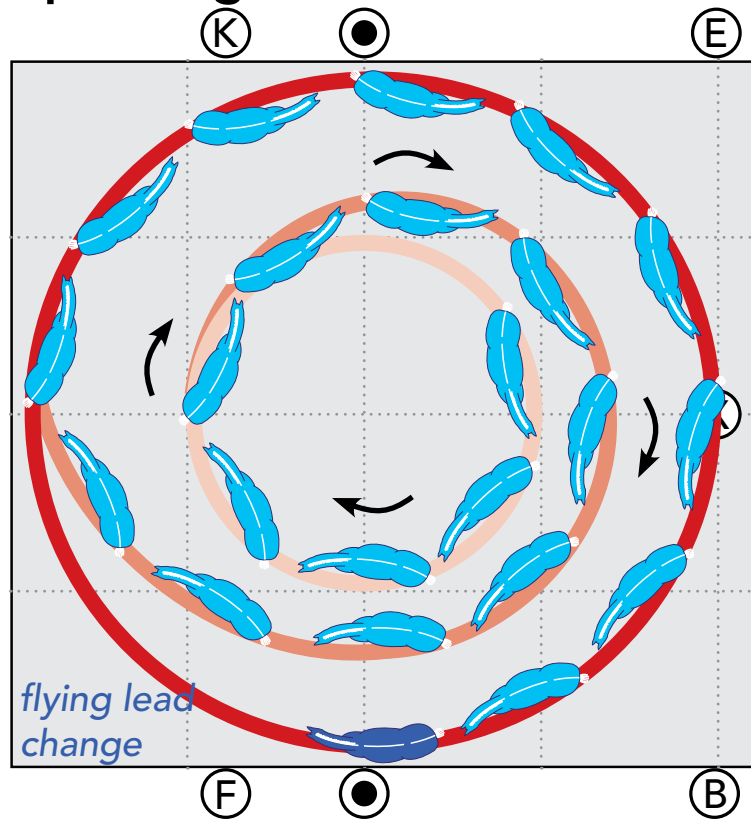


Variations On Circles And Voltes
With And Without
Lateral Movements

Spiralling in



Spiralling out



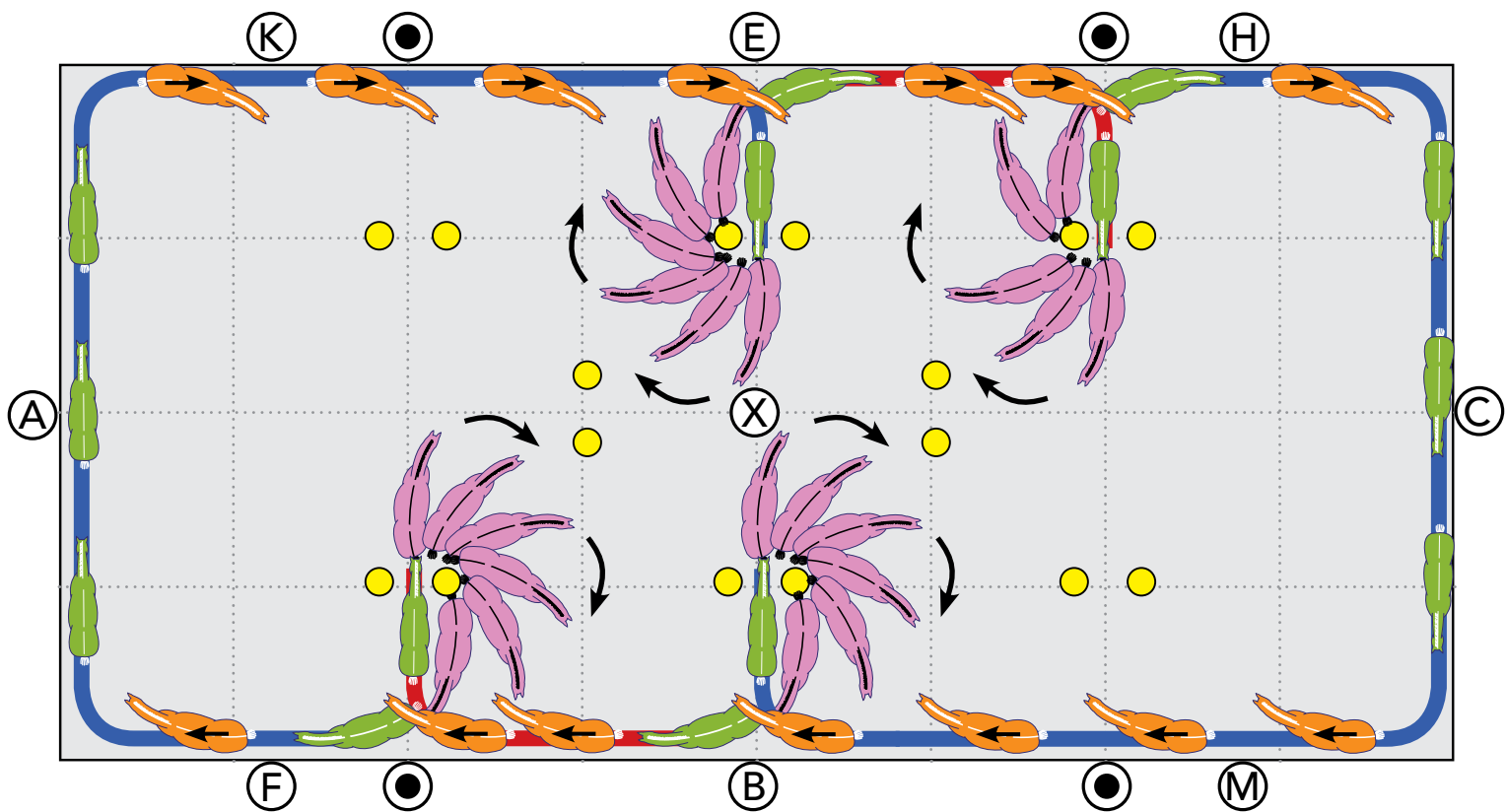
For this variation of spiralling in and out, you spiral in in haunches-in, and spiral out in renvers.

This exercise is especially interesting at the canter, because after diminishing the diameter of the circle to the size of a volte you ride a flying lead change to counter canter. Then you enlarge the circle in the counter canter in renvers. When you have reached the 1st track, ask for a flying change to the true lead and repeat the exercise.



Tip

Visualize half passes on curved lines when you are spiralling in and out. The croup must not evade sideways, because otherwise the exercises will not fulfil its gymnastic purpose.



For this exercise, you can set up cone pairs as gates on the quarter lines. The gates should be 10 m apart, i.e. at the circle points, and at E and B. Each cone gate should be wide enough for one horse to pass through.

Start, for instance, by riding a shoulder-in on the right rein, and turn right at E. As soon as the horse has passed through the cone gate, ride a 180 degree passade to the right around the right cone. Afterwards return to the same long side and continue the shoulder-in on the right rein. At the circle point, turn right, pass through the cone gate, and ride a 180 degree passade around the right cone.

You can easily change direction by tracking left after one of the passades. ➤

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