# Horse handling and training series

## Part 2: Flexion behind the saddle – Fact sheet and questions

* Flexion of the head and neck is an important educational tool when training a horse. A horse that has been educated to use proper flexion will be softer and more responsive to ride.
* Horses that have been educated to use proper flexion will be able to carry themselves and the rider more efficiently and safely.
* Flexion helps to gain control of the horse’s head, neck, and ribcage, and transfer weight from the front end to the back end.
* Flexion aids in balance and gets the horse to follow its nose when riding and handling.
* Flexion behind the saddle is an exercise which can be used to gain control of the head, neck, and rib cage, and also transfer weight from the front end to the back end.
* The horse’s nose should not be taken past the point of the shoulder when asking for flexion. It is important to ensure the handler does not ask for too much flexion when educating the horse in the exercise.
* It is important that the horse is comfortable and balanced in the flexed position before the handler asks the horse to rotate.
* The handler may have to hold the horse’s head under the chin or pat the horse on the neck or chest to prevent it from anticipating the rotation, and also to give the horse comfort and confidence as they may find the flexed position quite unfamiliar.
* For inexperienced horses, the handler should under rotate by stepping towards the horse’s tail and making the rotation less than 360 degrees.
* Horses that are experienced in the exercise can be over rotated to further enhance their balance and transfer of weight. To over rotate, step away from the horse and towards the head to encourage the horse to complete a full 360.
* Flexion behind the saddle should be a calm and reasonably slow exercise.

### Questions

1. List 6 benefits of a horse that has been properly educated in flexion.
2. What does flexion help to gain control of on the horse?
3. Describe the weight transfer that occurs in the horse when the flexion exercise is completed.
4. When carrying out flexion behind the saddle, what point should the horse’s nose be taken to when asking for flexion while the horse is standing still?
5. If a horse has not been educated in flexion behind the saddle before, or the handler is unsure of its education, is it better to ask for more or less flexion?
6. What can the handler do to comfort the horse and prevent it from anticipating the rotation?
7. Why would the handler under rotate?
8. At what stage would a handler over rotate during the exercise?