# Horse handling and training series

## Part 4: Riding exercises – Summary

Once a certain level of education is reached between a horse and rider combination, the rider can introduce more advanced exercises that incorporate some of the fundamental exercises previously learnt. All of the lunging exercises can be transferred to similar riding exercises. For example, lunging forward and around on the circle is similar to riding forward and around on the circle.

Once a horse has established one rein flexion and flexion in the 1-5 positions at a standstill, flexion can be incorporated into riding on a circle.

### Forward and around

This exercise combines lunging exercises and the flexion from 1-5 to improve the rider’s coordination of their hands and feet and also to enhance the horse’s balance, responsiveness to aids, and transfer of weight from the front to the back. This exercise will equip the horse and rider with the skills to start more challenging exercises.

The first step is to find the horse’s sweet spot for their head and neck position. The sweet spot is the position where the horse’s head and neck is at a degree of flexion where the horse is most comfortable and soft. Put the horse in the sweet spot position using lateral and vertical flexion. This can be any position from 1-5. Apply the inside leg to soften the horse and then apply outside leg to push the horse forward onto the circle. The horse stays in a shape, using the inside leg to round as the outside leg continues to push the horse forward.

To change direction, stop and hold the shape of the horse’s head and neck. Maintain the leg pressure to stop the horse from falling in or falling out. Take the direction rein straight out from the crucifix towards the inside, hold the brake rein at the outside hip, and push the horse towards the inside of the circle, bringing the front end all the way around until the horse is facing the opposite direction using the outside leg at the girth. Then shape the horse again into the horse’s sweet spot position, soften with the inside leg, and push with the outside leg to move the horse around on the circle. The exercise should be repeated numerous times to help improve the rider’s hands and feet as well as the horse’s softness, responsiveness to the aids, and balance. Try to maintain a symmetrical circle around the marker.

### Trot large circles with intermittent small circles

This is an exercise that challenges and enhances the horse’s balance, suppleness, and responsiveness, as well as the rider’s coordination of their hands and feet.

The aim of this exercise is to ride the horse on intermittent small circles around cones on a large circle, ensuring the horse travels halfway between the outside cone that the rider is going around and the next cone. When completing the circles, the aim is to maintain the horse in a shape in the individual horse’s sweet spot.

First, put the horse in its sweet spot position, and use the inside leg to round and the outside leg to move forward off onto the intermittent circles. Use the break rein and the inside leg to help guide the horse at the correct intervals around the circle. The aim is to flow smoothly around the cones, making even circles around each cone. If the horse feels out of shape or balance, the rider can stay on the same cone/circle until the horse regains balance or the rider organises their hands and feet better.

When the horse is working nicely and softly, stop in a shape and put the horse in a 3 and a half position, which is to the outside. Then back the horse to take the weight off the front end, and move the horse around to the outside by holding onto the brake rein and taking the direction rein straight out from the crucifix towards the outside of the circle you have just completed. Use the outside leg to push the horse around towards the outside in a 180 until it is facing the opposite direction. Stop, shape into the horse’s sweet spot, and continue around the intermittent circles going the opposite direction.

If the horse is stiff on one particular direction, more flexion can be used to encourage the horse to soften.