



## GIVE to the BIT 2

### SHOULDER CONTROL

This lesson continues on from the Bridling and Give to the Bit DVD and gives you complete shoulder control. Your horse will be light in the bridle, in frame, listening and moving his shoulders with little or no rein pressure by the completion of this exercise.

#### WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Snaffle bit (full cheek preferred)

Dressage whip

Well-fitted saddle for ridden work

Safe working area

#### PREREQUISITES FOR THE HORSE

***“Private Lesson Series”* Bridling and Give to the Bit DVD.**

This lesson can be done on an unbroken horse on the ground or, if your horse is already under saddle, you can start it on the ground and finish the lesson from the saddle as show on this DVD.

WHAT – one front foot

WHERE – left and right

WHY – rein pressure (and body language from the ground)

HOW – release of pressure and praise

#### STEP 1

Have the horse in a snaffle bridle in a safe working area. Place the reins over the horse’s head and stand on his left hand side. Carry the dressage whip in your right hand.

## STEP 2

Review the 'Give to the Bit' Lesson that your horse has already done. Do this on both sides with your horse standing still.

## STEP 3

Ask the horse to walk around you and give to the bit, break at the poll and stay in frame – just as you did in Lesson 1. Do this on both sides of the horse.

## STEP 4

Once your horse is soft and paying attention you can start teaching the new lesson.

**Remember** the clock shown in the DVD below the horse's chest? Think of his left front foot as a puppet on a string. The string is your rein and when you open it away from his neck the foot should go with it.

As soon as the left front foot takes a step towards you, i.e. anywhere between 10 and 12 o'clock, release the rein and praise the horse. You do not need to stop the horse – keep moving and ask again.

**Be careful** that the horse does not step on you. Try to stay walking forward next to the horse's shoulder.

## STEP 5

Don't expect too much too soon and always release and praise the horse when he 'tries' even if it is not a great step.

Change sides often and remember to start from the same place on the other side so that you don't miss any steps – don't expect the horse to be able to transfer any information from one side to the other. He may transfer some but think of that as a bonus and know that the more you do the more solid the lesson will be.

## STEP 6

When the horse is moving around you in frame and paying attention, it is time to start the reverse arc.

Ask the horse to walk forward – it is **important** to get the horse forward before asking for the reverse arc.

Turn your body slightly so that you are facing the horse's neck. Place the rein on the neck about half way up and ask the horse to step away from you. Release the rein as soon as the horse steps away.

## STEP 7

If the horse has been walking around you doing 'same-rein-same-foot' (following his nose) then he will have been stepping to 10 or 11 o'clock. When you begin asking for reverse arc the horse should step to 12 o'clock and you then release and praise the horse as this is an improvement on 11 o'clock.

## STEP 8

If you find your horse does not really understand the step away cue try putting him on the fence (as shown in the DVD with Floss, the chestnut mare). This will encourage him to move away from you and you can start working further from the fence when he gets the idea.

## STEP 9

Work the horse around you using both 'same-rein-same-foot' and 'reverse arc'. Always start the horse moving forward in frame and then ask the shoulders to move.

**Remember** you are making a mental connection for the horse between the rein and the foot. If you have to exaggerate the movement of the rein to make it clear to the horse, that is fine. It will become more refined as the lesson progresses.

## STEP 10

Change sides often and practise 'stopping' on cue when you do.

- 1) Ask the horse to stop (verbal cue)
- 2) You stop moving
- 3) Pick up pressure on the rein
- 4) Release the pressure when the feet stop moving

Initially the horse will disengage his hindquarters a lot however when he starts to understand he will do this less and less until eventually he goes from walking to halt. **Remember** – release the rein when the feet stop moving.

## STEP 11

When you feel that you can move the shoulders anywhere you like on the ground using the rein and the horse is not requiring any rein pressure (except for a correction or reminder) then it is time to start the exercise under saddle (assuming your horse is going under saddle).

## STEP 12

Ask the horse to walk a small circle to the left staying in frame and light in the bridle. Place the rein on his neck and ask him to step right a little with his left front foot. As soon as the horse does, even a small step to the right (12 o'clock), release the rein and praise the horse.

**Remember** that the horse must re-learn the lesson to a certain extent as you no longer have your body language to help him out. He will start to look for answers when the pressure does not go away so just be patient but try not to release the pressure until he takes a step in the direction that you asked.

**The horse learns from the release** so whenever you release the rein you are telling him he did the right thing. The better your release, the faster he learns. If, for example, you release before the horse makes the step then you are 'un-training' the horse.

### STEP 13

Now that the horse is starting to get the idea you can begin asking him for bigger steps.

**Remember** – the horse should remain bent, flexed and soft in the bridle. If you are on the right rein, for example, the horse should be bent right, giving to the bit and broken at the poll when stepping the right front right and moving the right front left in front of the left front leg.

### STEP 14

#### Exercise 1:

Pick up one rein and move the shoulders left and right. Go all around the arena concentrating on moving the shoulders off one rein. Do the same on the other side.

#### Exercise 2:

Ride a 20 metre circle and then start making the circle bigger and smaller simply using the inside rein to move the shoulders in and out. Do the same thing on the other side.

#### Exercise 3:

Ride serpentines up and down the arena using same-rein-same-foot (follow your nose). Keep changing direction. The horse may initially throw his head up between the changes of direction. Continue until he stays soft and flexed during the change of direction.

#### Exercise 4:

Reverse arc serpentines. This final exercise is the most difficult and you will not be able to do it initially. This is one to keep for when the horse is very confident with the lesson. It is however a very useful exercise and a good indication that you are ready to teach your horse hindquarter control (see HIPS DVD).

