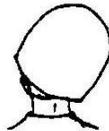


## LESSON GUIDELINES

### Fitting the Riding Helmet

All our riders **MUST** wear an ASTM/SEI approved and USPC approved, helmet. The fit of the helmet is very important as the riding helmet is useless if it is not fitted properly. An ill-fitting helmet can cause unwanted changes in posture and balance for your rider and could adversely affect the areas in which the instructor is working to remedy.



#### **A helmet does not fit the rider correctly if:**

- ♥ The helmet is sitting too far back on the rider's head;
- ♥ The helmet is twisted to one side with the brim not straight in the middle of the rider's forehead;
- ♥ The helmet is pulled down over the rider's eyes;
- ♥ The helmet is too big or too snug; or
- ♥ The rider is irritated by the chin strap.

Although it can be difficult to put a helmet on a rider's head, it is important to understand that the posture and balance of the rider will be directly affected by the fit of the helmet.

#### **To properly fit the helmet:**

1. Place the helmet on the head sliding it front to back and allowing it to rest so there are two fingers between the eyebrows and the edge of the helmet.
2. Check to make sure it is centered correctly and do up the chin strap. If there is a laced harness at the back, undo it before fitting the helmet and readjust it appropriately after the helmet is on. Look to check that it is correctly fitted and ask the rider how it feels.
3. The helmet should fit as snugly as the rider can comfortably wear it without it being uncomfortable.
4. For the rider whose head is a difficult size, try placing self-adhesive sanitary napkins inside the helmet at the troublesome spots.
5. Fit a hat on a colleague and get feedback about your technique.

### Position of the Rider

All riders strive toward the "ideal" riding position. It should be no different for riders with disabilities. Not all riders will be able to achieve the ideal positions but that does not mean they should not try. The rider's position has little to do with looking good and everything to do with being in balance and moving in harmony with the horse. The better rider's body is in alignment, the better they will receive therapeutic benefits.

The best way for the instructor to evaluate the rider's position on the horse is for one to step back and view the rider from all angles. The rider may look great from the side but could be off center when viewed from behind. The instructor will make appropriate corrections but may need the volunteers' input.

Some common problems to look for are:

1. When viewed from behind, Figure A shows how the rider should sit as straight as possible. Many riders will sit to one side and then have to make corrections in the rest of the body to maintain balance. When this happens, one foot will appear lower than the other. Figure B shows a rider with the left foot lower, the pelvis leaning to the left, and the upper body correction got the right.

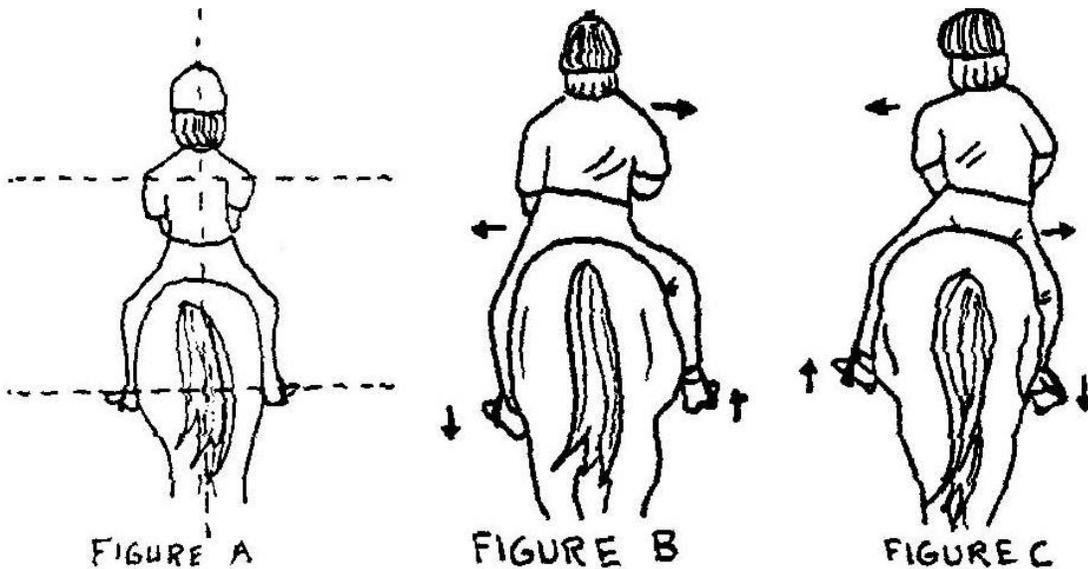
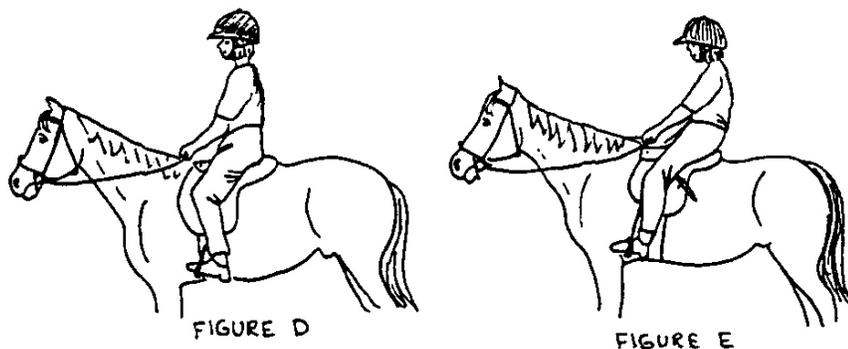


Figure C shows just the opposite – the right foot lower, the pelvis leaning to the right, and the upper body correcting to the left. This position does not help the rider strengthen muscles evenly. Correcting this position usually requires aligning the rider’s base (getting the rider’s bottom square in the saddle).

- When viewed from the side, the rider should sit as straight as possible (Figure D). Often riders sit in the “sofa seat” or C Curve (Figure E), especially riders who are used to sitting in wheelchairs. Yet, the rider will often be able to sit up if asked or reminded. Sometimes the position will reflect the rider’s position off the horse and elongation of the leg will usually improve the posture. To achieve a better position, it may be necessary to evaluate the type of saddle being used. Is the saddle level on the horse so that it will encourage a good position? Just placing a bump pad or lollipop under the saddle does not insure a level saddle. Often the weight of the rider compresses the pad completely, resulting in a saddle sloping backward. It is literally impossible to keep the leg positioned under the rider’s pelvis in these circumstances. Use of a denser foam pad will help. Ideally, the saddle should be fitted correctly to the individual horse and rider.

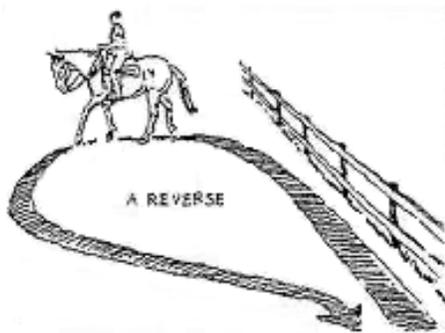
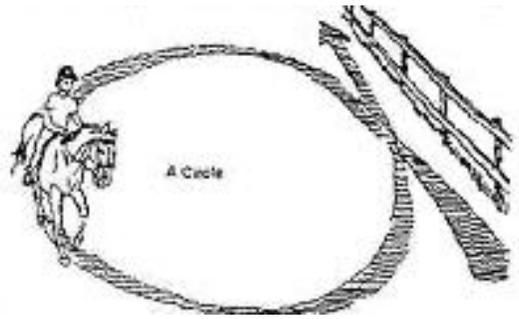


- A rider who sits with a toe down and the leg pinched up could indicate a rider with tight adductor muscles, an extreme forward-seat saddle or stirrups that are too short. The rider should be encouraged to lengthen his/her leg. This could be achieved by riding without stirrups or by trying a different style of a saddle.

## Basic Schooling Figures in the Ring

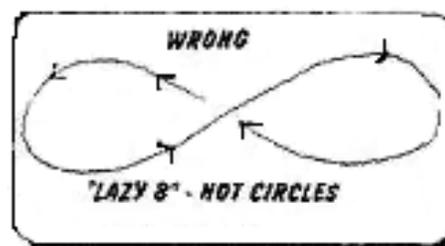
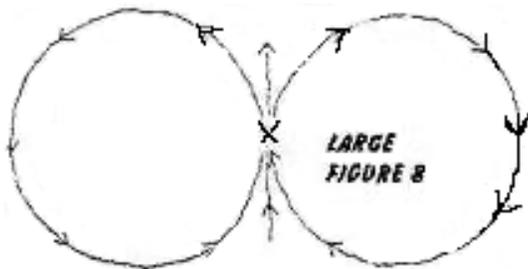
There are basic schooling figures that all volunteers should be familiar with to ensure everyone involved in the lessons are consistent from one class to another.

1. **Circles:** Circles should be round, not oval or pear-shaped. To make a good circle, pick out a starting and finishing point, a quarter point, a half-way point, and a three-quarter point. Look about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the way ahead as the rider turns through the circle. The goal is to hit each of the points and be sure that the circle is finished by returning to the start/finish point. Ideally, the horse will bend evenly around the circle at an even speed. The rider should not be asked to do too small a circle or he/she will have to lean which may be very awkward.



2. **Half Circle:** The half circle is similar to the reverse. To ride a half circle, begin a medium-sized circle along the rail of the ring. When you are halfway through the circle you will be near the center of the ring. Instead of completing your circle, aim your horse back toward the rail on a short diagonal line. When he returns to the rail, you will have turned around and changed your direction. Don't make your half circle too small for your horse to bend comfortably.

3. **Figure 8:** A figure 8 is made with two large circles touching, instead of a "lazy 8" which looks like two teardrops touching. Start by riding straight to the center of the ring and pick a center point for your start/finish point. Make a circle to the left that takes up half of the ring; then return to the center point. Now go straight for a couple of strides, and then make a matching circle to the right, returning to the center point to finish. If the ring is big enough, you can make the figure 8 by starting down the center line; if the ring is small, the figure will have to start by crossing the ring in the center.



4. **Change of Direction on the Diagonal:** Sometimes this is also called "changing the rein" or "changing hands." To change direction on the diagonal, it is helpful if your ring has letters or markers as in the ring test. Ride through the short end of the ring (for example, tracking to the left). Just after you turn the corner, continue your turn and aim your horse diagonally toward the opposite corner of the ring. You should ride straight on the diagonal line until you reach the opposite rail of the ring, just before the corner. At the corner, you will simply turn right and follow the rail around in the new direction. This way of reversing directions lets you keep going at a faster gait or lets a class "follow the leader" while changing directions. Do not let your horse cut the corners or he will spoil your change of direction on the diagonal.

