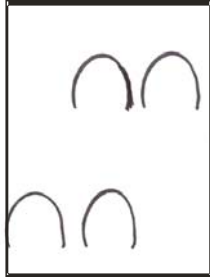
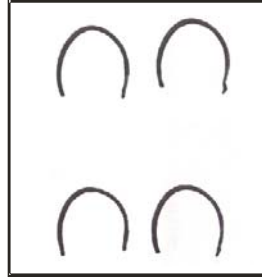


## THE SHOULDERS AND SQUARE-NESS

It's important to understand how the shoulders work, and how it affects square-ness of the horse's legs. The shoulders can make it so that the power from the hind end cannot squarely go into the front end. If the horse is not on the road to square-ness, the order of the Training Scale will not work. Collection will not be possible because both sides of the horse's body will not have had equal strength building.



Working walk,  
trot, or canter  
(gait) traveling  
crooked



Working gait, straight



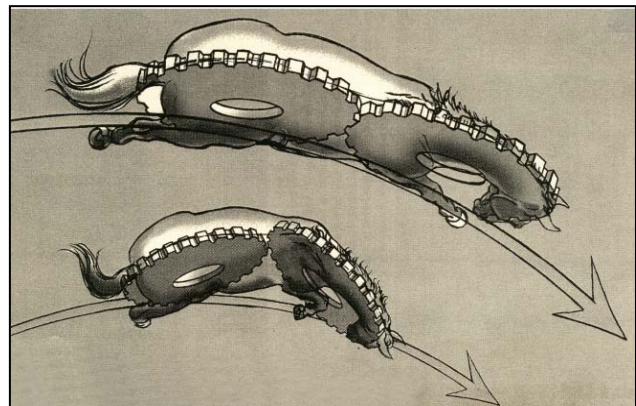
Collected gait  
with square  
moving horse

Our goal as riders is to create a way for the horse's hind hooves to follow into the front hooves. If the horse begins to be able to hold himself in balance with the square-ness, he is able to build strength on his own and we have done a great job. In order to get there, we cannot tightly hold the horse at any time in his training. Through looseness, and gentle shiftings of the horse's body through his own momentum, we as riders allow the horse the strength he needs to carry himself. In his own time he moves his hind closer to his front hooves as he gets stronger on his own.

The indirect rein is a controversial subject, which is great! It's good that we all grapple over these things. The horse has enormous shoulders. The rider's leg should be enough but is not always powerful enough on all horses to keep the shoulder aligned. Sometimes, or most of the time, the rider needs a tiny amount of indirect rein with a back up of leg in order to keep that pesky shoulder aligned.

Can you see in the horse illustration that the second horse's hind legs are not traveling straight into the front leg hoof prints? The rider must continually remind the horse to stay aligned through the swing of the motion. There aren't any horses I know that stay aligned on their own. It's the responsibility of the rider to make it better throughout the partnership.

With the shoulders always popping out, can you see how the horse would not be climbing the latter to collection? It's important to shift the horse and let him carry himself in balance, even if it's 100 times during a ride. We're trying to balance the horse on his own, by shifting him back to his square balance all the time.



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Written by Betsy LaBelle

With the idea of helping Pony Clubbers understand the biomechanics of horse and rider better.  
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