

Renvers and Travers Circles

Improve your horse's strength and straightness with this exercise from Gerhard Politz.

Exercise: Ride a renvers in counter canter on a 20-meter circle in the center of the arena. At the centerline, at I or L, ride a change of rein and do a 10-meter volte in haunches-in (travers).

Level: Third and Fourth Levels. The horse has to be well schooled in counter canter. It is also helpful to have introduced him to several strides of very collected canter on straight lines.

Benefits

- Strengthens the horse's hindquarters, particularly the outside hind leg.
- Improves the horse's ability to carry his weight while he is turning.
- Prepares the horse for canter pirouettes in a most natural and effective manner.

Exercise Prerequisites

1. Before beginning this exercise, make sure your horse is really straight when you ride the counter canter and that he is secure about bringing his haunches and his forehead in. To do this, track right, using the whole arena, and establish the counter canter on the left lead. Ride very slightly in shoulder-fore to the leading (left) leg. Take care that your horse's left fore is slightly closer to the rail than his left hind so you fulfill the requirements of shoulder-fore. This movement is sometimes referred to as counter shoulder-fore.

2. When you've established a balanced, controlled counter shoulder-fore going large, try it on a 20-meter circle, making sure to maintain the shoulder-fore position. Schooling your horse to do this movement and acquiring feel for the correct way of going is important as you may need to use it as a straightening device at some point during the exercise. When you've mastered this technique, you can work on the actual exercise.

How to Do It

1. Tracking right, pass A in counter canter on the left lead and bring your horse's shoulders about one foot off the rail as you come out of the corner at K and keep his

haunches on the rail. When you're able to ride a balanced, secure renvers on a straight line—the horse isn't overbent, isn't falling through the outside shoulder—ride renvers on a 20-meter circle at E.

2. After riding a full circle, change direction the next time you cross the centerline, and ride a 15-meter circle, maintaining the bend as in renvers. Your horse now will be going haunches-in left—this fact explains why renvers is called the counter movement to haunches-in.

3. When reaching the letter I again, return to the 20-meter circle in renvers. Repeat the travers volte at L.

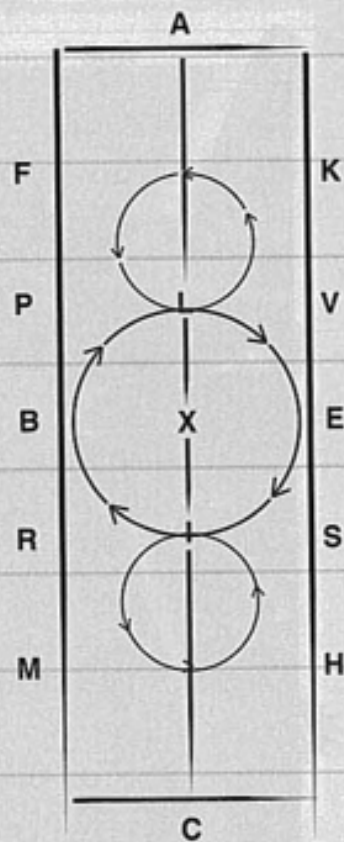
4. When your horse is balanced enough, reduce the 15-meter circle with haunches-in to a 10-meter volte.

Tips for Success

1. Make sure you don't have too much angle when riding lateral movements in canter because this makes collection impossible and causes the horse to fall onto his shoulders. A few signs of this problem are loss of impulsion and regularity of the gait. If possible, have an educated eye on the ground to help you get the feel for the correct angle and bend.

2. Take care that you don't bend your horse's neck too much in renvers causing him to fall through his outside (right) shoulder.

3. When riding the renvers, don't just push



Tracking right, ride a counter canter in renvers; at E, continue on a 20-meter circle; on the centerline, change rein, and ride a 10-meter volte in travers.

the horse's haunches to the rail with your outside (right) leg. It only makes your horse crooked. Rather, bring his shoulders to the inside, away from the rail. This is an important distinction and, if not observed, will cause serious problems in the horse's balance when you ride him on the 20-meter circle because his haunches will fall out.


4. When you turn your horse on to the 20-meter circle at E in renvers, take care that the angle and bend do not suddenly increase and that you control your horse's outside (right) shoulder at all times. It may be helpful to ride the center circle a few times before changing rein to establish good balance and to allow your horse to become comfortable with renvers on a curvature.

5. Don't attempt the 10-meter volte without having done the 15-meter circle before or you might lose the horse through the outside shoulder or your angle might be too severe.

6. Developing the appropriate discretion to challenge the horse just enough to make him stronger but not so much that his canter becomes too labored is important.

Realize that in renvers on a circle, the horse's hind legs take a somewhat longer path than his shoulders. This increases the workload and the degree of difficulty quite a bit compared to working on a straight line.

Variations

When your horse has acquired very good balance and dexterity in this difficult exercise, attempt to bring his shoulders around a little more each time in the travers volte. This movement is almost like a passade and can eventually be made smaller so that it becomes a working pirouette.—with *Reina Abelshauser*. 

A Fédération Equestre Internationale-level competitor and trainer, Gerhard Politz emigrated to the United States from Germany in 1987. He is a Reitlehrer FN, a British Horse Society Instructor and a U.S. Dressage Federation gold medalist. In Germany, he studied with masters such as Egon von Neindorff and Willi Schultheis as well as the Spanish Riding School's Gen. Kurt Albrecht. In 1992, Politz joined the editorial board of the USDF Instructor's Manual.