

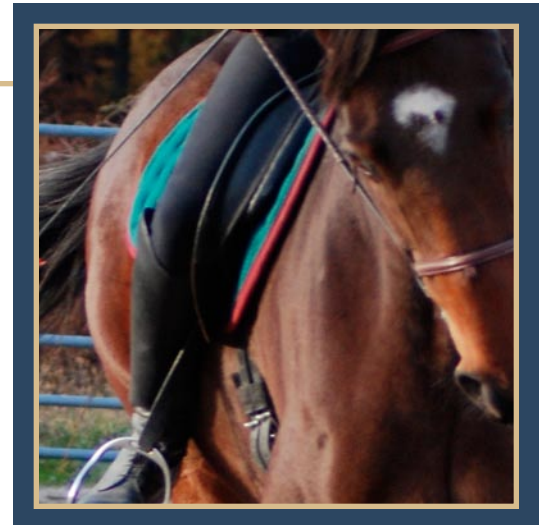


## Tim Lewthwaite Riding Instruction: Lesson #2

### LEG YIELDING

#### IMPROVING BALANCE, SUPPLENESS AND CONTROL

Leg yielding is a balancing and suppling exercise that once mastered will give you more control over your horse, and will also reinforce your horse's understanding of the lessons initially learned in the turn on the forehand - engaging his hind legs under his body. By doing so, your horse will be able to better balance himself around turns and on straight lines. As his/her balance improves, he will become more fluid and relaxed through his body. With the relaxation, the horse will be able to submit through his top-line and move in increased harmony with the rider.



#### WHAT THE HORSE DOES

The horse's body remains straight with a slight flexion at the poll in the opposite direction than he is moving in (i.e.: if you are leg yielding the horse to the right, he is flexed left). As the horse is asked to leg yield, he crosses his inside legs (those on the side to which he is flexed) in front of and across his outside legs. He moves on a diagonal line while maintaining the straightness in his body. There is both a forward and a lateral element to his movement.

#### WHAT THE RIDER DOES

1. Sit with more weight in the outside seat bone (the side of the saddle in which direction you will move the horse). The seat bone should stay near to horse's spine - don't let it slide to the side of the saddle. Your seat should also stay quiet and still - do not try and push the horse over by moving the seat.
2. With your inside hand, flex the horse away from the direction of movement.
3. Turn your head and look at the point that you want to leg yield to.
4. Inside leg at the girth or slightly behind the girth asks the horse to move sideways.
5. Outside hand gives half-halts in case the horse just goes forwards. You may also slightly open the outside rein to encourage the horse to move into the space you create with the opening rein.

When introducing the horse to any new exercise, make it as simple as possible. Start at the walk and when the horse understands what you are asking of him, proceed to the trot.

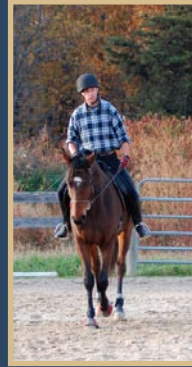
## HOW TO RIDE THE LEG YIELD

As you ride around the short side of the ring, turn in a stride or two prior to the corner leading to the long side. Once you have made the turn, ride a few strides making sure that you are parallel to the side of the ring. Riding parallel to the long side of the ring will give you a reference point to help you keep the horse straight. As you leg yield the horse, he should remain parallel to the side of the ring.

Leg yield over to the side of the ring. At first only do a stride or two. As the horse starts to understand, increase the number of steps of leg yield. Start at the walk and then move onto trot when the horse understands the aids.

## SOME COMMON FAULTS

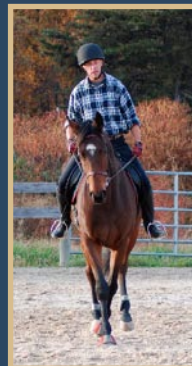
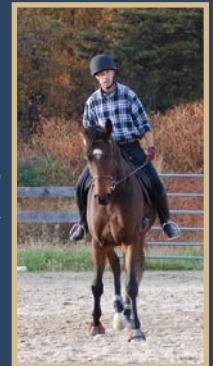
1. Horse (or rider) over bends the neck to the inside. This allows the horse to escape through the outside shoulder and walk over to side of the ring without crossing his legs. The correction is to halt the horse, straighten his neck, do a turn-on-the-forehand (see turn on the forehand lesson) to get him parallel to the side of the ring again, walk straight for a stride or two, and then re-apply the leg yield aids making sure not to over bend the horse's neck.
2. The horse just goes in a straight line - a common misunderstanding on a young horse's part. Use a strong half halt(s) on the outside rein to let the horse know that this is not about just going forward. If needed reinforce the lateral leg aid with the dressage whip.
3. If the horse gets stuck and loses his forward impulsion, apply both legs and allow him to walk forward for a stride or two before re-applying leg yield the aids.



### STEP ONE:

*Straighten your horse and walk a stride or two in a straight line. Look towards the point you want to leg yield to.*

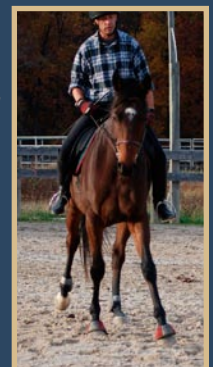
**STEP TWO:**  
*Apply the inside leg at the girth. Note that Ears is starting to step over with his right hind leg. I've also opened my left hand a bit to give him some space to move into.*



### STEP THREE:

*You will also want him to step in front and across with his inside foreleg. Note that Ears stays flexed away from the direction in which he is moving.*

**STEP FOUR:**  
*He will reach out and forwards with his outside legs as well as cross over with his inside legs in order to create the lateral movement. Once the horse understands in walk, move into trot.*





## REWARD YOUR HORSE FOR A JOB WELL DONE

When you work your horse, be sure to reward him at regular intervals during your training sessions. No, I don't mean that you have to dismount and offer him a carrot every five minutes. Rewarding the horse doesn't necessarily mean giving him treats, it can mean breaking up your work sessions with several walk breaks where you give the horse a chance to relax.

One of my favorite rewards is to allow the horse to stretch along his top-line in the walk and trot. Think how good this feels to a horse that has been working hard with all his muscles. As you are walking or trotting, feed the horse the reins - but don't throw them away - and keep your leg on him as he reaches down for the bit. Flex him to the right and then the left and be sure to do it on both reins. This is a very good way to end a work session.

Notice in the photo that I keep my upper body back and my leg on as I encourage Ears to stretch down with his head and neck while still in the trot. I want to be careful that I don't just drop him onto his forehead as I encourage him to stretch through his top-line. Note the engagement of the inside hind leg and soft and even contact on the reins.



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