



## *What is "Super-Natural Horsemanship"?*

To be a horseman or a horsewoman is more than to be a horseback rider. A horseman or horsewoman knows horses inside and out, cares about them, understands them, and respects them. Horses know, understand and respect the true horseman or horsewoman.

That's why this place is not called a "riding school." If you come here expecting to find your horse tacked up and ready to ride, and to stay in motion on his back for a whole hour, then get off, hand the reins to someone else, and leave, you will be disappointed.

Or, perhaps, you will get a happy surprise! You will get to KNOW these large animals that have served humanity for thousands of years. You'll understand why they should be cared for, ridden, and treated in certain ways, because of their very nature.

NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP has become a very popular phrase in today's horse world. For most of recorded history, humans have been using horses. And for most of recorded history, most horses were treated very roughly, almost as though they were humanity's enemies, that must be conquered and forced to be our slaves.

Thousands of years ago, a Greek philosopher named Xenophon said that people should treat their horses better than they did, back then. Not everyone heard what he had said, though, and not everyone who did, believed him.

In more recent times, there have been two main schools of horsemanship in the civilized world: English and Western. English riding has tended to be founded more upon Xenophon's ideas, and patience, where Western (derived from Spanish riding, but misinterpreted by rough, uneducated people) has tended to be harsher, with more violent and sometimes cruel shortcuts used.

NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP, a reaction to these harsh methods, teaches people to deal with horses as though they and we were fellow animals ... often encouraging people to act like a horse, and definitely to speak "their language". It teaches that horses are "prey animals", and tend to react to everything with fear, from centuries of being food for other "predator animals". This approach has its advantages.

**Your instructor has studied the classical, French/English, and Spanish/ Western methods of riding and horse training/handling, and also most of today's natural horsemanship masters.** I've tried to collect what I believe are the best methods and ideas from each of them.

We also went to the Maker of horses, to see what He says about them. We believe in a God who created the heavens and the Earth. We believe that we can read His actual words, in the Bible. We have proved it in many areas of life, and found it to be exactly what it claims to be. Talk about an ancient, inspired "horse training guide"!

When you learn SUPER-natural horsemanship, you'll learn what humans have learned about them through the centuries, PLUS what GOD says about horses and how to treat, train and ride them. You'll learn how to keep horses healthy in body, mind and spirit. And because of that, you'll have a much better experience with horses than a plain old "rider" would!

The Bible says, in the book of Job, that war horses are fearless and powerful! God Himself said these words to Job, a human being:

*"Are you the One that has given the horse strength? Did YOU clothed his neck with thunder? Can you make him afraid as a grasshopper? The glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength: he goes on to meet the armed men. He mocks at fear, and is not frightened; neither does he turn back from the sword. The quiver rattles against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swallows the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believes he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He says among the trumpets, HA, HA!; and he smells the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting."* The book of Job, chapter 39, verses 19 through 25.

In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, says this about horses: *"A whip for the horse, a bridle for the burro, and a rod for the fool's back."* (The book of Proverbs, chapter 26, verse 3.)

And the apostle James says: *" See how we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body."* (The letter of James, chapter 3, verse 3.)

The Bible mentions horses many, many times, usually as sources of power. We can learn how to direct that power for our own use and enjoyment, without cruelty.

# *Beginning Horsemanship*

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The first step must be safety.  
You can't learn horsemanship very well in a hospital bed!

## ***Even being NEAR horses is risky:***

- They're so large, powerful and FAST that they can hurt you even when they don't mean to.
- When they're surprised they sometimes move in a *sudden, extreme* manner.
- When you fall off, it's a long way down!

Learn the safety rules in this manual as soon, and as well, as you can. As the warning signs around the barn say, doing things with horses is a "high risk adventure activity." This means that it's very easy to get hurt around horses, and sometimes very badly. It's a fact of life: insurance companies don't like to pay medical bills. Years ago, this meant that fewer and fewer places offered riding or lessons. Then laws were passed protecting people who do. Your teacher has a copy of Ohio's "horse laws" for you, or the person responsible for you, to read. Just ask!

***Be sure you have a properly signed waiver on file before approaching the horses or entering the barn area.***



*Have it your way!*

You can be an **average riding student**, and go home and forget half of what you learned during your lesson, and then you'll have to learn those things all over again next time before you can move on; or...

You can be a **great riding student**, and come back for your next lesson even BETTER than you leave, each time, ready to go on to the next level !

To be an **average riding student** –

just leave here and forget all about horsemanship until your next lesson.

To be a **great riding student** –

after your lesson, talk to your family and others about what you've learned each day, and spend some time thinking about what you've learned each day; and **DO YOUR ASSIGNMENTS!**



# Study these Safety Rules:



1. ***Never surprise a horse!*** Don't touch one suddenly or without warning; don't make sudden noises, movements, or throw or flap things around. Always let the horse know where you are and what you're doing. Let the horse see you as much as possible. Approach a horse at an angle, so that you are not in a "blind spot" directly behind or in front.

2. ***Always know where each part of the horse's body is, and what it's doing. Know where the horse's feet are, and where they're going to put them next.***

Everyone gets stepped on sometimes. It doesn't have to be a catastrophe. When your foot is stepped on, don't pull it right out from under the horse's hoof; this causes worse damage. Instead, push the horse's weight off of your foot first. Ask for help if you can't get the horse to move.



3. ***Know the horse's warning signs.***

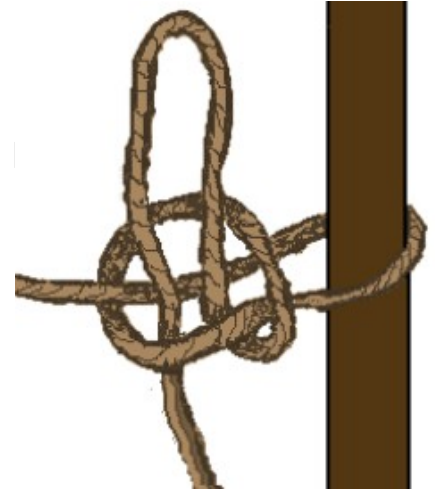
- Wide open eyes and sharply forward ears, curved (arched) neck and snorts are signs of fear.
- Flat back ears, narrow (or sometimes wide open) eyes, tight or curled lips, and a snaking motion of the head are signs of anger.

***Ears pointed toward you***, wherever you are (on the ground, or on the horse's back), calmly, means the horse is paying attention to you. This is exactly what we want.

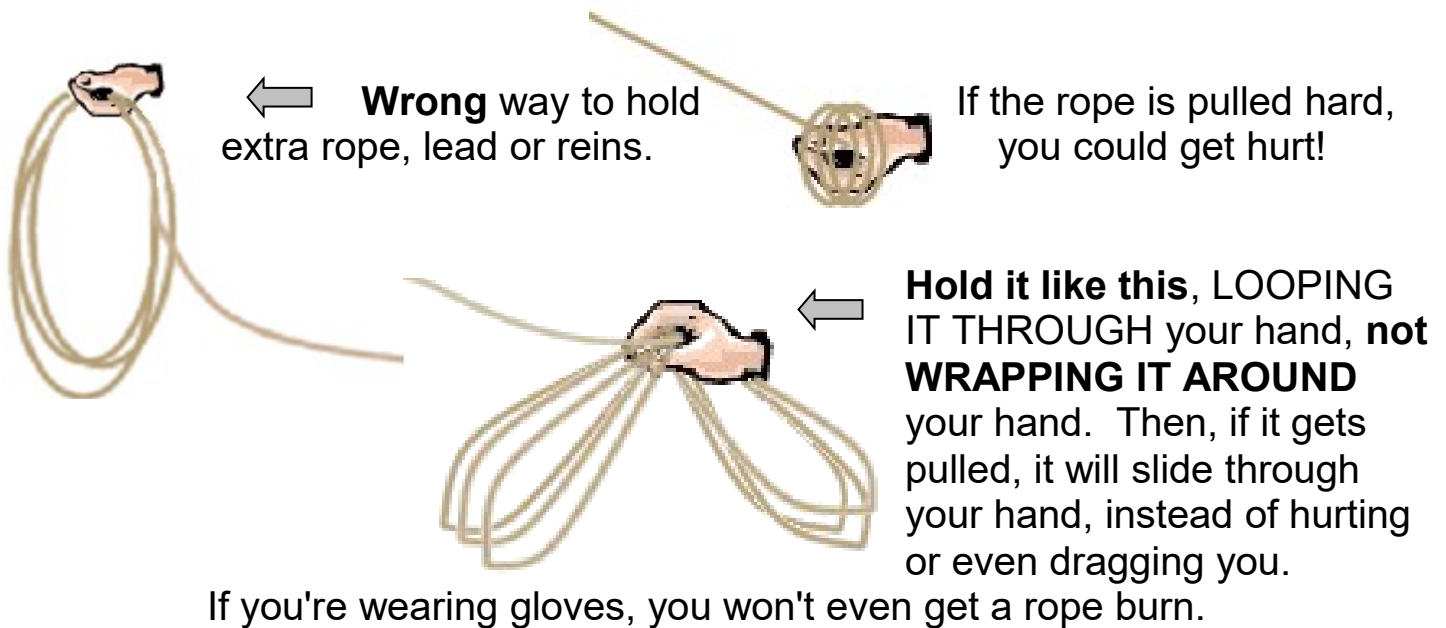
4. ***Wear an SEI approved safety helmet, fitted and adjusted correctly***, or one fall could end your riding, or even your life. Helmets need to be **SNUG** around your head, and then the straps must also be fitted snugly. The helmet should not tilt backward, but be level. The "V" shaped straps on the sides should meet just below your ears. (See helmet fitting page.)



5. **Always tie anything around horses with a quick-release knot** in case of emergency. Learn how to tie a quick-release knot. Practice it! It could save you or your horse from serious injury.



6. **Never wrap or loop anything around your hand**, or any other part of your body. Learn how to gather up the long parts of ropes, leads, and reins SAFELY.



7. **Do a "pre-flight check"** before mounting. Check the horse's feet for stones, and that your tack is all in good shape and securely fastened, especially the cinch or girth! At the **bottom** of the horse's belly, insert two fingers on top of each other at the **front** of the girth or cinch. They should fit **snugly**. If they don't fit, the strap is too tight. Be sure your helmet is on, and properly fitted and adjusted (see provided guide.)
8. **When you turn a horse loose, be sure its head is facing you**, and you have room to move away, in case it spins around and runs off with a playful kick. When you leave, **back away, keeping an eye on the horse**.

**"Never say goodbye to the back end of a horse."**

## ***What you should wear:***

- Wear very **long**, comfortable **pants**, to move and look your best in the saddle, and to protect your legs and ankles.
- Wear **thick, high socks** to keep the boots and tack from rubbing sores on your feet, ankles and lower legs.



- Wear **sturdy shoes or boots with a heel**. They will protect your feet, toes and ankles, and help you ride better, more comfortably and safely. *Keep leather boots softened* with proper care to make them last, to help your foot position, and for comfort.

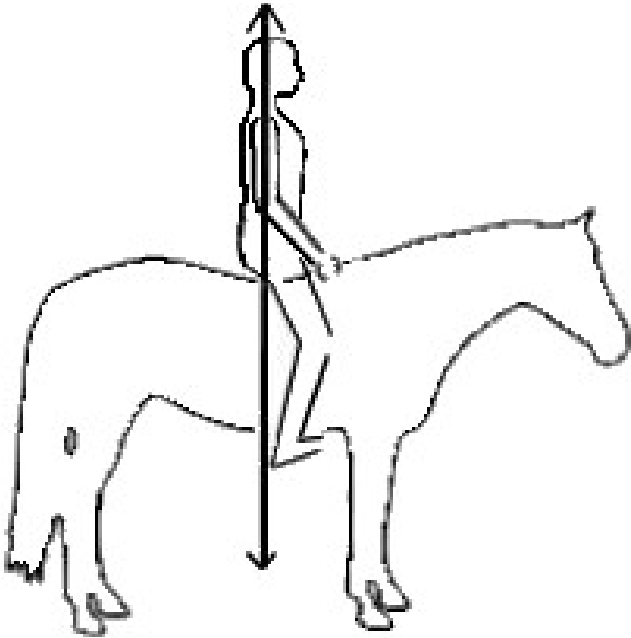


- **Gloves** are a good addition, if you want to add them. Be sure they're thin enough to allow you to use your fingers well, and are *not slippery*. Good gloves will give you a better grip without tension, and also protect your skin. Leather is ideal, especially on the palms and between the fingers.
- If you buy your own **helmet**, you will always have one that fits you, is in good shape, and is not soiled by others' hair and scalp. Buy only SEI certified, equestrian helmets. **We provide those here**, and rinse them out regularly. A bike or other helmet will not protect you properly from a horse accident, and is not covered by our insurance, and so may not be worn here while riding. Be sure your helmet has never been hit hard; if you have an accident and your helmet is hit, get a new one. They're not reliable or certified once they've been damaged. You only have one head, and it has to last you a long time. 😊

**Be safe, do your best,  
and *HAVE FUN!***

.....  
*Happy Trails.*

# How To Sit On A Horse



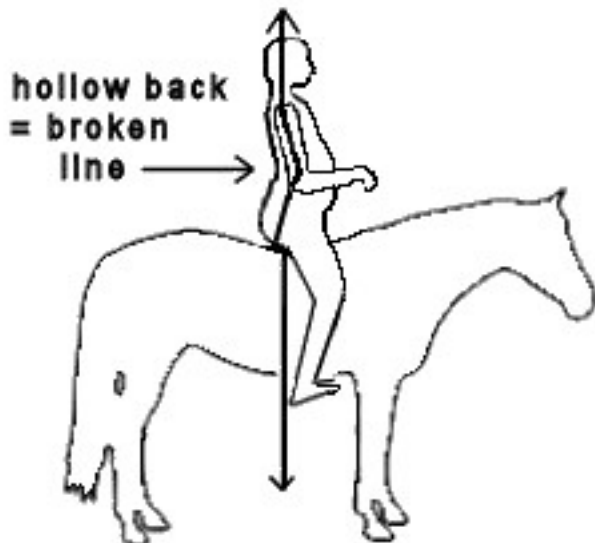
## **CORRECT: STUDY THIS DRAWING.**

Thousands of years ago, the Greek horsemaster Xenophon said that one's position on a horse should be more like standing on the ground than sitting on a chair. Now, after many styles have come and gone, his words have proved to be the best advice for most horseback activities.

This position is called the **"balanced seat"**, because the rider is balanced over her heels, from the top of her head down. Her heels are down and her knees are a little bent, to provide balance, support & suspension. Her arms hang straight down at her side to the elbow, from where they form a straight line to the horse's mouth.

This is the best position to first learn to ride, because it can be used for Western, Hunt Seat (English), and Dressage, and even adapted for Saddle Seat. I've left the tack (saddle, bridle, reins, etc.) out of these drawings to simply show only the relationship between the horse's body and the rider's body.

In the balanced seat, shown above, left, the line with the arrows at top and bottom is perfectly straight, and is perpendicular to the ground. From this position, a rider can move in any direction, while remaining balanced over her center of gravity. The riders' center of gravity should go on down through her heels and into the ground ... from which position she is free to cue the horse in any way, or react to anything that might happen. *There is no "gripping" needed, either by the legs or by the hands. The position is relaxed and completely natural.*

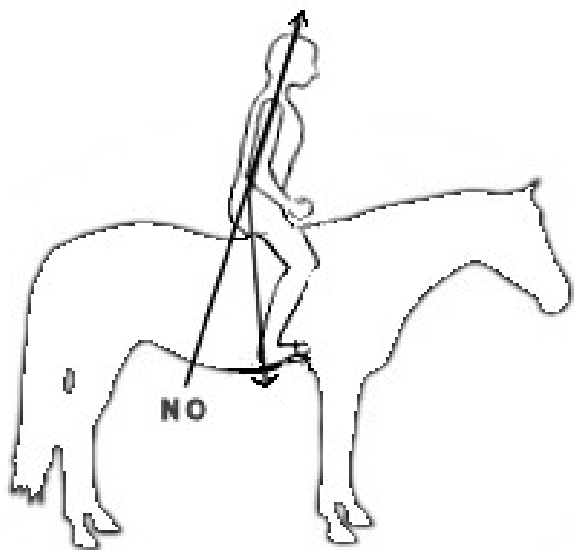


## **WRONG : Trying too hard, or weak back or stomach muscles –** at left is a common mistake riders make when trying to "sit up straight".

Compare this position to the one above. Notice how the back is caved in, causing the rider's abdomen (stomach) to stick out. See how the line is not straight from the top of the head to the heel. Also, the hands are far too high, and bent down instead of straight. Riders should sit on the two seat bones, not forward on the pubic bone, like in this picture, and not back on the tail bone (see the following "wrong" examples).

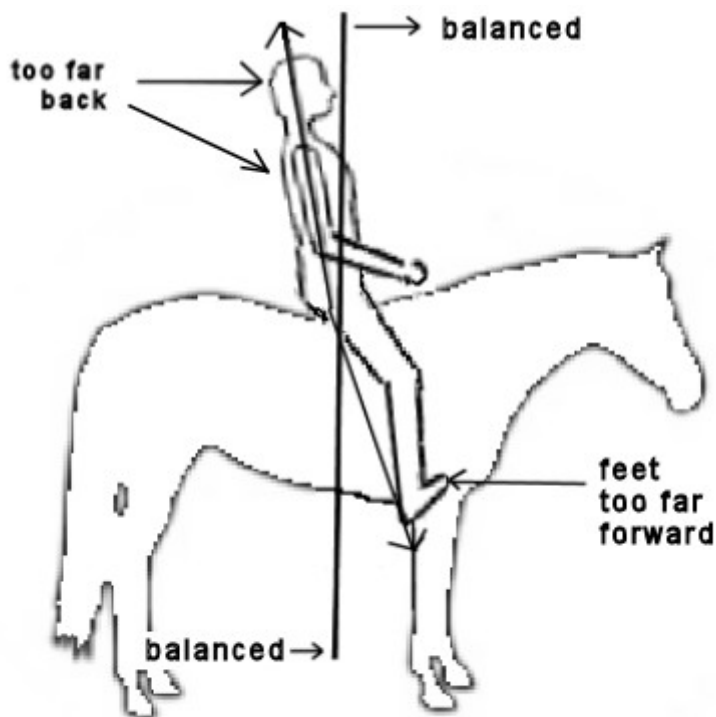


If you've had some riding lessons already, you may have *more trouble learning to sit correctly* than if you had never had a riding lesson. This is because some instructors still teach the **"forward seat"**, and **"gripping with the knees"** – both of which destroy the rider's balanced, independent seat – to English students, and some teach the **"chair seat"** (see last two examples) to Western students. That also leaves balance behind. Let's see how each of these differs from the **"balanced seat"**.

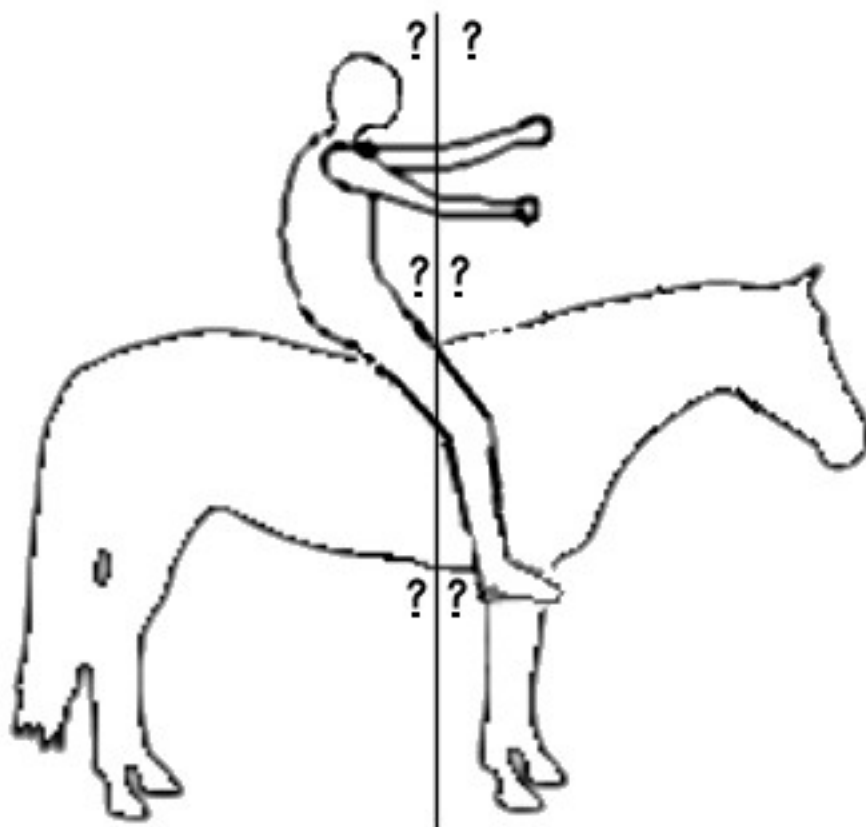


**WRONG:** This drawing, at left, shows an exaggerated **"forward seat"**. The line through the body is broken at an angle, as the rider tries to keep her weight over the horse's shoulders. This was a logical attempt within the English riding and jumping disciplines to interfere less with the horse's movements, but has been proven less stable than the balanced seat, and also actually hurts the ability of the horse to carry the rider's weight evenly on all four legs. The forward seat position may still be used at high speeds, or when preparing to jump. You may need to lean forward a little when posting the trot.

By the way, these drawings are not meant to be exact or perfect depictions of any of the riding positions they represent, but only to convey the concepts behind them.



**WRONG:** This next drawing, to the left of this paragraph, shows the angles of the body in what is commonly called the **"chair seat"**. It's common in Western riding, but it's believed by the best Western riders that it's not the most effective position for most Western purposes. With the legs and feet stuck out in front, the riders' weight is pushed back into their tailbones. This limits the riders' options in the saddle. The upper body is behind the center of gravity, making it difficult to use their weight, seat bones, hands, and arms freely. It also tempts riders to use the reins for balance. (See below.)



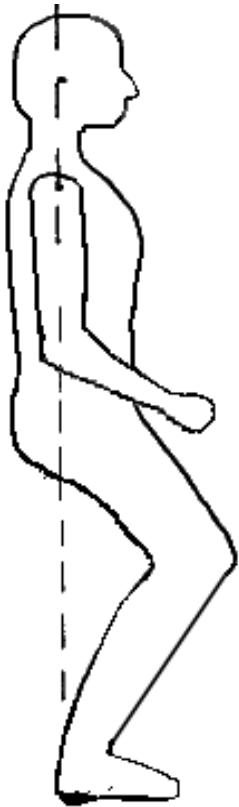
**VERY WRONG:** The worst kind of "chair seat" is shown here. I call it "**water skiing**". This is when a chair seat is combined with poor use of the hands, arms, and reins, plus a complete lack of balance.

This poor horse is ridden with the rider hanging onto the reins like a trapeze, with much of the rider's body weight pulling on the bit. People who ride like this are using the reins as a **handle** to keep from falling back any farther, or falling completely off, because they are not secure or balanced in their seat. (And sometimes they're even drunk!) They often don't know much about riding, so they usually ride with a severe bit, which means ***the poor horse's head would not be in this calm position.*** Its nose would be way up in the air, trying to get away from the painful pulling of the bit -- unless, poor horse, the rider also used a "tie down" -- which this kind of rider usually does!

**Remember: NO "jockey position"** (unless you're galloping or jumping), **NO "chair seat"**, and **NO "water skiing"** .

# HOME EXERCISES

Do all of your home exercises three times a week, but only on days you do not have a lesson.



**1. KNEE BENDS:** Make sure your head, shoulders, hips and heels are all lined up straight, proud, and relaxed. Hold your hands as shown, relaxed, elbows at sides, and hands down and close together. **Place your feet apart, as though a horse is between them.** Bend your knees up and down without leaning forward or backward until those muscles are strong and used to being used that way. Practice bending your knees as deeply as you can without allowing your buttocks to protrude, and then rise -- but never straighten your legs completely. Practice this for about FIVE MINUTES on days you don't have a lesson.



**2. ANKLE FLEXES:** To make it easier to ride properly, with your toes up and your heels down, stand with the balls of your feet (widest part, behind your toes) on a board or step, as at left. Again, allow space between your feet "for the horse". Let your **heels stretch down** as far as they can without hurting. You can straighten your legs as you stretch. **NEVER HURT YOURSELF EXERCISING!** Then **raise back up** on to your toes. Practice this about FIVE MINUTES on days you don't have a lesson.

**3. RIDE IN YOUR MIND!** Don't you love to picture yourself riding the most beautiful, or fastest, horse in the world, across open fields, with the wind whistling in your ears! You can even get ahead of people who ride every day, by **practicing riding in your mind**. When you get back on a "real" horse, the things you have been imagining will be much more familiar. So, when you practice both of the exercises I have described above, **picture yourself on a living, breathing, moving horse while you do them!** **How to do it:**

***Remember how it feels to sit on the horse while it walks, then trots, then canters.*** Imagine your hands not bouncing at all, but holding the reins with the lightest touch, as if they are strands of spider web, and all you need to do is move a finger to control your horse (which is true!)

- **remember sitting on a horse while it walks.** Feel the horse's body movements, the 1-2-3-4 rolling motion as each foot touches the ground and is lifted back up.
- **remember sitting on a horse while it trots.** Feel the horse's body movements, the 1-2 up and down motion as his feet touch the ground and are lifted back up, two at a time. Imagine moving with him, not bouncing. Also imagine posting, in rhythm and low.
- **remember sitting on a horse while it canters.** Feel the horse's body movements, the 1-2-3 rocking forward motion as his feet touch the ground and are lifted back up; first a hind one, then two diagonal feet, then at last the other front foot, the "lead".

#### **4. NECK, BACK & SHOULDERS :**

- Lie on your stomach on a clean, firm surface, and turn your head to one side. Switch sides; repeat it.
- Rest your arms alongside your body.
- Lift your head, shoulders and arms as far as you can without moving the rest of your body or hurting anywhere.
- The first 3 days you do this, hold it for a slow count of five. Then relax slowly back onto the floor. Repeat X 3
- Each week, add one count and one repetition until you are holding it for a count of 20, and doing it 10 X .

#### **5. BELLY (Abdominal) MUSCLES:**

- Lie on your back on a clean, firm surface and cross your arms in an "X" over your chest.
- Lift your head and shoulders off the floor, tightening the muscles in your belly. Hold and repeat it the same way as the back exercises.

#### **6. ARMS & NECK**

- A few times a week, while standing straight, make large slow circles with your arms, one at a time, in one direction at a time, in all directions. Stretch your arm as long as it will go while circling it.
- A few times a week, while sitting or standing straight, make slow circles with your head, as far as you can, comfortably. Also tilt it forward and backward, and side to side, slowly, as far as you can. Then turn it left and right, slowly, as far as you can without pain.