



Teaching the Posting Trot

By Heidi J. Potter

Teaching or learning to post the trot can be a challenge for both riders and instructors. I teach this skill on the ground before having my students try it in the saddle. I then start them out with practice on the lunge line, requesting that they place their hands down on the horse for stability at first.

It is important to discuss the 1-2 rhythm of the trot and have the student practice developing the feel of the horse's movement. To confirm the student has the timing correct you can have them ride the sitting trot and say "now" when the horse's movement lifts them forward out of the saddle.

The common mistake is that people think posting is an up and down motion. It is actually a forward and back motion, which comes from opening and closing the hip joint. Another common mistake is pushing in the stirrups to rise, which throws the leg out of balance and often the rider as well. Here are the steps I use for teaching how to post the trot:

- On the ground you will first demonstrate the incorrect movement of simply going up and down by straightening the knees. Have the student try this movement as well. After a few repetitions you both will undoubtedly feel that your knees begin to fatigue. This exercise demonstrates what not to do and how it shouldn't feel.
- Explain that in posting the horse provides the impulsion for you to rise and it should feel almost effortless to the rider.



- You will need a solid structure as high as your knees and at least 12" wide. A 3-step mounting block or chair often works well. (See photo)
 - Place your toes and knees against the side of the mounting block. Separate your feet hip-width apart or as wide as the structure you are using will allow. Demonstrate the proper position and movement and then have the student try it. You might choose to each use a side so you can demonstrate and coach at the same time.
 - Hold hands out in rein position with elbows bent and hands about 5" apart.
- Now open and close your hip joint which allows you to bring your hips towards your hands.
 - The knees should not move off the structure. They are anchored still which leaves the lower leg solid and quiet. Your feet remain flat on the ground offering you a solid base on which to ride.
 - The hands should be quiet and not moving.



- Have the student place their hand on the front of their hip joint and feel it open and close. The hand will lie on a flat surface when the hip is open and get squeezed when the hip closes. Their head and shoulders should not be rising up and down very much with this motion.

- I encourage that the student practice at home on the edge of a sofa, chair or any solid object that is about knee high until they have it down.

- Once the student has built some muscle memory they are ready to try it on the horse.



Open hip joint



Closed hip joint