

TRAINING EXERCISES



with **DAVID STUART**

David has more than 25 years of experience all around the world, from starting young horses and dealing with behavioral issues, to teaching people the foundations of horsemanship. His coaching enables people to become safer and more competent around horses, giving them a solid foundation to build on. Website: www.davidstuart.com.au

EXERCISE: SHORT SERPENTINE

THE AIM:

The short serpentine exercise was an exercise that I learnt from Buck Brannaman, it has really been helpful with many horses and situations. I ride this exercise a lot with young horses and older horses that come through my young horse and foundation horse programs.

The aim is to loosen or unstick the hindquarters and improve your latitudinal flexion and getting your horse to feeling down to the feet, while getting the inside hind stepping forward and through. In time you will start to feel your horse lifting through the wither.

This exercise is very helpful for horses that are tight through the back and are braced through the hindquarters, not forward going, or taking over.

HOW DO YOU SET IT UP?

As a guide or visual for riders in the beginning, it helps to put cones or markers on the ground, approximately one metre apart in a straight line. I will keep riding my short serpentine around them until I feel a change for the better within my horse.

HOW DO YOU RIDE IT?

- 1 The exercise is ridden primarily by using your inside leg and inside rein. With a forward moving walk, take the inside rein to your inside hip to begin forming the required bend.
- 2 Often I will tip a little forward in my riding posture to get off the horse's back.
- 3 Ask the horse to step through and under with their inside hind by using the inside leg. This encourages a complete body bend and an engaged hind.
- 4 As you have done a half circle around the first cone, prepare your horse to change the bend, by activating your new inside leg and changing the body bend with the new inside rein.
- 5 These steps are repeated through the cones with an emphasis on creating smooth lines with seamless transitions from left to right and right to left bend.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

I am looking to feel the horse bending around and going forward off my inside leg, loosening the hindquarters and eventually lifting through the wither.

Some riders will feel their horses running out through the outside shoulder and the temptation for many will be to block with an outside rein or leg, this will block the forward movement. What is happening is that your horse's inside hind leg is not coming forward and through, it is starting to step laterally. Often the rider needs to use more leg or adjust their leg position further back.

Other challenges the rider may encounter, is taking their inside hand too low and this may cause your horse to fall on the inside shoulder.

When you change direction it is important to make sure that you do not 'trip' the horse and instead have a flowing change of bend.

Like all exercises this one does take practice and time to understand and ride well. It is important to stay safe and ride within your abilities.



In this image you can see the horse stepping back to the left with the left front foot. This front foot movement is going to help your horse's latitudinal balance. This horse is also correctly reaching through with the inside hind.

