

SPACING

Spacing refers both to the vertical spacing between riders in a column, one unit behind another, and also to the spacing between riders horizontally. Distances may be varied in succeeding maneuvers and or transitions. Distances should be in line with the requirements of the maneuvers being performed. Spacing at any given time should be consistent among all riders.

Vertical Spacing:

Vertical spacing or distance is perhaps the single most important skill in drilling. It is also one of the hardest things to master. Begin by having everyone line up single file along a fence. Have even number riders move out to be in a separate line 2-3 feet out, but within the space that they left. Each person now has a one-horse distance. Have the line walk around so everyone gets accustom to what this distance looks like. This configuration provides the drillmaster with an excellent view of what riders are doing. You should see tail, nose, tail, nose, if you see tail, space, nose there is too much space, if you see flank, nose, they are too close. Walk, jog, lope practicing this alignment. Do similar exercises using 2 and 3 horse spacing, the most commonly used distances in drill. For 2 horse spacing return to your single file line and have riders 2 & 3 move up on rider 1 without rider 4 moving up. Notice when one unit has to make a correction every unit behind them also has to make the same correction. This is where you will tend to get an accordion or bungee thing going on which is not good. The key to maintaining spacing during gait changes is everyone picking up the new gait at the same time. When picking up a new gait use a whistle or a definitive voice command so everyone knows to change gait at the exact same time. You cannot wait for the person in front of you to make the adjustment and have it trickle all the way down the line. Everyone must move together. This takes real teamwork to master.

Horizontal Spacing:

The usual distance between riders in units of greater than one is, knee-to-knee, legs lightly touching. Some maneuvers like suicide charges, fans, etc. demand riders separate. You may also choose to ride spread out to make a small team appear larger by using more of the arena space. To teach this side-to-side spacing, have a column of pairs then have them separate out the desired distance you want to practice. Give everyone a chance in front as the people in back simple track in the footsteps of the front horses. Move up to 4's this is where it get trickier. The space between two riders must be the same as between every two riders. You also need to remain in horizontal alignment with your unit. Consistency in spacing is one of the primary challenges when riding apart; the other is maintaining horizontal alignment, which we will discuss in a minute. Practice spacing repeatedly using different spacing and all unit sizes 2's, 3's, 4's, half and full team.