
TODAY'S NEWS

Understanding Canter with a Secure Riding Seat

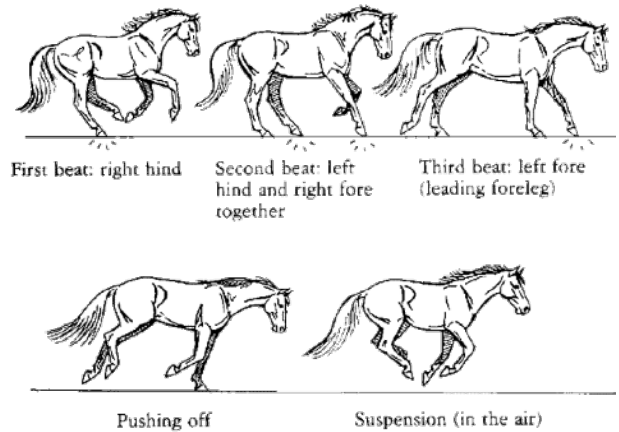


What is the canter? How many beats is it? How does my seat flow with the canter? Sometimes I'm worried if my departs will be bad? I'm scared to canter?

Three things you need to remember before you start cantering:

1. Know **exactly** what kind of canter you want
2. **Allow** the horse to canter with out getting into their way.
3. Put the picture in your mind what **you** are going to do and how it will look and feel.

So let's start easy with the facts, what kind of canter **exactly** do you want? Well the canter is a three-beat gait followed by a moment of suspension, jump or the launch. If you are on the left lead, the first beat will be the horse's right hind leg pushing off into the lope. All other legs are in the air. Next the left hind and right front (diagonal pair) will strike the ground simultaneously and last the left front (leading leg) will hit the ground. The canter has a moment of suspension/launch where all 4 legs are in the air. The more we collect the canter into a lope the more the airtime is reduced. A correct lope still has a 3 beat rhythm.



All of this being said it is very important that you are not mis-guided, un-expecting or apprehensive of the launch, suspension, jump or the lift off of the canter. Often this element can unseat you, make you feel unsteady or apprehensive to **allow** the horse to do so! Many things can happen, let's talk about it.

What if they bolt? Buck? Go to fast?

- Try an exercise: trot to canter 1 stride canter back to trot, trot to canter 2 strides canter then to trot, the trot to canter three strides to trot by telling and cueing your horse to do so. Build confidence you are in control.
- Practice building confidence cantering on a school horse. If you are bouncing there is too much tension or bracing somewhere. Breathe. Talk with your trainer or instructor.
- Truly understand balance first before rushing it, what a canter is and find your seat bones understand the rhythm. Watch the foot falls. Find a workout that will help you know about your pelvis and core. You will need strong core muscles to lift, slide or tip your hips. If your core muscles are weak, moving your hips in rhythm with the horse's canter footfalls will be difficult. Do not confuse this: stiff or tense muscles are not the same as strong muscles. Strength is the ability to use a muscle without tension. Strong core muscles can hold your upper body in the neutral position while letting the muscles moving your hip to remain relaxed and flexible so they can include your horse's movements. When your core muscles are weak, you compensate by tensing other muscles and locking other joints in an attempt to feel secure in the saddle. This type of tension makes your seat more insecure because it locks your hips and makes the necessary movement impossible.
- Sit on your saddle and find your seat bones softly lift your legs away from your horse's sides balancing on your seat bones without moving, then try it moving. Think this is your suspension move, or launch and I can balance. Feel the almost air like momentum and know that you can stay balanced. This will unlock your hips free your seat to go with your horse's rhythm and good practice not to lose the connection or clamp down into your saddle.

The third and almost the most important thing to remember is what do you **picture** doing? How do you see you and your horse cantering together. Not how your trainer or idol can do it... but be you cantering your horse and do it in your head. Really learn to literally roll with it, do it confident and balanced. This is really the best start to a good canter. You are thinking easier said than done right!? I say let's take the challenge admit that it's challenging and work at it. Starting small and building confidence is fun. If you picture a bad canter erase that get positive and picture a good one. Be the artist to your illustration get your tools and use them. Let's get to work and saddle up.

