

Posting the Trot

Posting has many advantages, even on a western horse.

EGLISH and western riders alike will, at times, find it necessary to "take the bounce" out of the trot/jog and make it less jarring. On a horse with a lateral gait (both left legs work in unison as do the right pair), or a slow, smooth jog, sitting to it all day is no problem. But on a horse with big,

forward strides or who pounds the ground, a solution is to simply *post* or *rise* to the trot.

Some riders assume a "half seat" or gallop position, with deep heels, seat up off the saddle and weight slightly forward to avoid the bounce. It works, but it is tiring after any length of time.

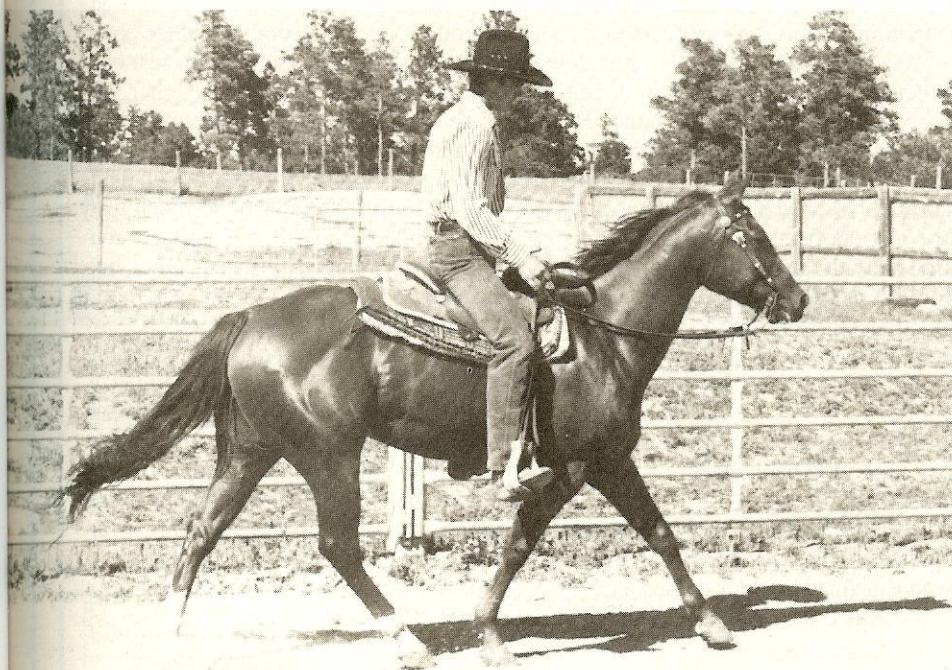
Posting will allow you to move in rhythm with your horse's trot for long periods of time and actually rests the horse's back. It also helps you to avoid fatigue.

Posting is simply moving your body from sitting to a position above the saddle with each stride. You put weight into your heels to secure your lower leg, and push the knees down (rather than gripping with them, which would push you up away from the horse). You let the motion of the trot push you slightly forward out of the saddle, then you settle (not plop) back into the saddle and repeat. Your hands remain steady, and you do *not* pull yourself out of the saddle with the reins.

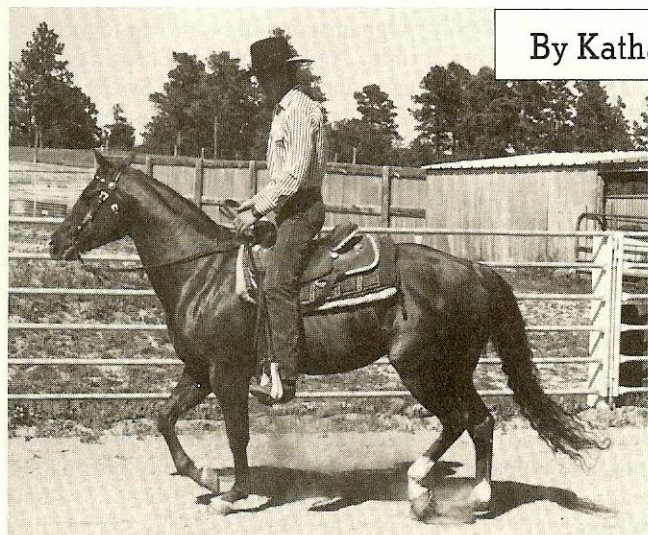
When you rise out of the saddle, you roll up onto your knees with the hips swinging forward. When you sit, you gently touch the seat of your saddle before the next stride sends you up/forward again.

The reason posting rests the horse is because your weight does not push down constantly on his back. Some of it is supported in your ankles and feet, which spreads it over a larger part of his body. When you sit a trot, your tilted pelvis, stretched legs, and weight slightly back increases the pressure on your mount's back.

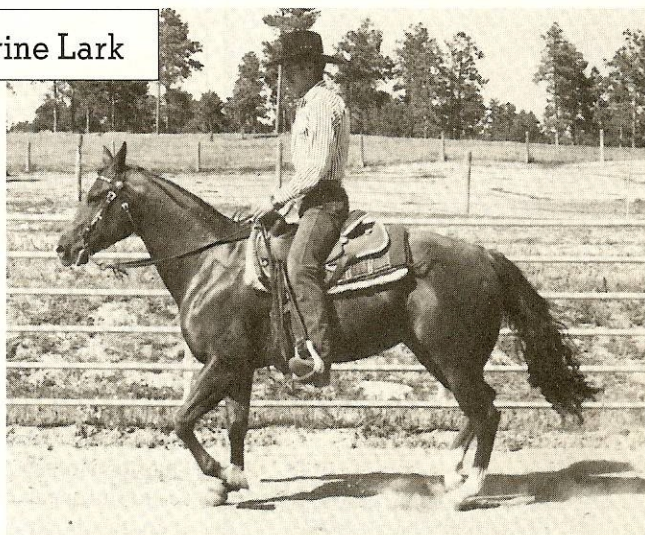
Posting becomes effortless after practice makes it second nature. Using



To change diagonals, sit one extra beat. Here, Shane Brown had been posting to the left diagonal. By staying down in the saddle as the left front leg moves forward, and rising when the right front leg moves forward, he switches to the right diagonal.



By Katharine Lark



Because this horse is traveling to the left, the rider is posting to the right diagonal. Meaning . . . as the horse's right front leg moves forward, the rider rises out of the saddle (left photo). As that leg moves back to the ground, the rider momentarily sits in the saddle before rising again (right photo). The rider is Shane Brown, 17, of Black Forest, Colorado.

it whenever you trot or jog for long periods of time will make you and your horse happier.

Your horse is already creating a lot of motion at the trot, so use it to rise out of the saddle. Don't *work* at posting, let it flow. Try to rise up out of the saddle as little as possible—a couple of inches will do.

When you post the trot, you will be working with a pair of the horse's legs. The trot is a diagonal gait; the left hind leg moves with the right fore, and the right hind moves with the left fore. The trot has two beats. Since the horse's pillar of balance and support when turning is his inside hind leg, you work with his inside hind leg whenever you turn or bend him.

You should have your weight down when that foot is on the ground, and up when that foot is off the ground. However, it is more difficult for the average rider to tell where a hind foot is than a front foot. So it's easier to work with the outside front foot, which works in unison with the inside hind foot.

With practice, it's easy to *feel* when the outside front foot is down. You can help determine this by watching the horse's outside shoulder. When it moves forward, the leg is coming off the ground; when it's moving back, the leg is coming back and the foot hits the ground again.

You should rise in your posting as the outside leg moves forward, and drop down as that shoulder comes back.

What is the outside? When a horse is

traveling in a left-hand circle, his right side is the outside. Consequently, his outside shoulder and leg are the right shoulder and leg. Vice-versa when going to the right.

To change the diagonal you are posting on, you simply sit *one* extra beat of the trot and come up on the other diagonal. If you sit two extra beats, you will not have changed the diagonal.

Just as horses can be more balanced on one canter lead than the other, or turn one way easier than the other, they can be smoother to post on one diagonal than on the other. This only means that you should post to *both* diagonals often to develop both sides of him.

When trotting long periods of time on a straight line, it's good to change posting diagonals now and then to rest one side of the horse and work the other.

You may find, on a horse with a less than ideally comfortable trot to sit, that posting relaxes him, frees him up a bit and can improve his trot so much that he becomes smooth over time. You won't be bracing against each other, but instead, be moving together rhythmically. It can make a big difference.

So, posting the trot can improve your horse. It can ease a long ride and make you *both* more comfortable. You can even use posting to slow a fast trot by simply posting slightly slower, then slower still. You'll find that your horse adjusts his gait to your rhythm, over time.

Posting is a tool you can use any time you need it. 🐾