

## **“My horse is crooked and I don’t know why! Any ideas?”**

There’s nothing worse than riding on your own and knowing that something isn’t quite right but not knowing what! Straightness – or lack of it - is a common problem and it’s so often blamed on backs and saddles. Before you pick up your phone take a look at your own body.

Your hands control your horse's shoulders. If you can keep the contact the same in both reins and your hands together you’ll be able to turn your horse onto any line you want. Your legs will push his quarters along behind them and he’ll stay straight.

If your horse is crooked the first thing you need to do is get off the track. There’s nothing like it to show up your faults as well as your horse's. It’s easy to grab at the inside rein when you feel your horse drifting to the outside but really you need to get more weight into the outside rein and push forward.

A really common cause of crookedness is not straightening up completely after a turn. As you come off a circle or a corner make sure everything straightens up. Your horse should be looking straight down the track. Your shoulders, hips and seat should all square up to the front. Your hands should be the same height and level – when you’re trying to even out pressure in your contact it’s easy to draw one hand back to do it but shorten the rein. If your hands are unlevel your horse's shoulders will do the same.

Try riding between the 3/4 lines in any pace. (If your horse is young ride between inside tracks or inside track and 3/4 line.) Initially ride straight down both sides. When

your horse feels straight start to ride circles as you cross the E/B line. Focus on keeping the pressure the same in both reins and driving your horse forward from both legs. It's the change from circle to straight line that's the hardest to do but if your contact is even and both legs are in their usual place (not back) driving your horse forward you'll find it makes a huge difference.

Ride transitions on the centre line too. Any transition will do. This highlights what you're not doing. You may use one leg harder than the other, use one further back than the other or pull back on one rein with out thinking about it. Bear in mind that if your horse's shoulders are crooked it's usually a fault from you above the waist. If it's his quarters then it's below your waist! Circles to and from the centre line are great to make you use your legs and hands evenly too.

Often all you need to do is check your body alignment. I have a really irritating habit of tuning my hips to the left – on both reins. It means I have to focus hard when I'm on the right rein to turn to the inside or straighten up otherwise everything I ride is crooked. I even sit that way in a chair so I make myself sit the other way now! There's more on it here - <http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/2011/11/19/do-you-swing-both-ways/>

Here are some other straightness related posts you might find useful -

<http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/2012/02/18/dont-fall-out-get-even/>

<http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/2011/02/26/its-in-your-hands/>

<http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/2012/07/07/body-talk/>

<http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/2011/04/16/get-straight-to-the-point/>

And this one is brilliant for getting you sitting in a much more effective position. It's easy to 'settle' down into a slumped position. Pull up through your body and nine times out of ten you'll straighten out any crookedness too -

<http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/2011/10/29/pull-up-to-ride-forward/>

Good luck! ☺ Lorraine

*If you have a problem with your horse don't hesitate get in touch at*

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*For a more detailed look at your riding position – or for interesting ways to tackle other schooling problems - check out the School Your Horse schooling guides. At 99p they're affordable and instantly downloadable*

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