

# “Ground Training”

## *Working In Hand -- Yielding Left*

By Lynn Palm

By teaching the horse to do certain in-hand maneuvers on the ground, he will already be familiar with them when asked to do them under saddle. This lesson will help you teach your horse “yielding to the left.”

Outfit your horse with a properly fitting halter with a longe line attached and leg protection. For this lesson, attach the longe line on the halter's side ring on the side from which you are leading. Start in a small, enclosed area. Once your horse is solid in this lesson, you will be able to execute it anywhere.

My good friend and Olympic dressage rider Jane Savoie describes yielding as a:

“...lateral movement in which the horse's inside front leg and inside hind leg pass, and cross in front of his hind legs. His spine is straight and he is slightly flexed at his poll in the opposite direction from the way he is moving.”

While the horse's body remains straight, the forehand and hindquarters work together so he can move laterally. To properly position your horse for yielding, find a section of straight fence line that ends in a left hand corner or bend. Stand so that you are leading your horse from his left side with him positioned between you and a fence. You will be “tracking” or moving to the horse's left.

Walk him straight along the fence line and turn him through the left hand corner. Continue turning away from the fence, making a half-circle to the left, until you are positioned in the middle of the paddock and facing in the opposite direction from where you started. Ask him to “whoa,” making sure he is straight and square. Change longe line or lead and your position to the horse's right side. You will be working from the right side for yielding left following a diagonal line back toward the fence. Stand close to your horse, facing him, between the middle of his neck to his shoulder. Hold the excess longe line in your left hand.

Extend your right hand to lightly grasp the halter's side ring at the horse's jaw with just enough contact to guide the head. Do not hang on the halter or steer his head from underneath it. During the maneuver, use this hand to encourage him to move forward and very slightly bend his head toward you, away from the direction he will be traveling.

Extend your left hand to apply the aid, or cue, for this maneuver to move the hindquarters laterally. The target area for this cue is the same location used in the turn on the forehand: the lower

half of the horse's barrel within a zone approximately 10 inches behind his heart girth. This is where your lower leg contacts the horse's lower barrel when your foot is in the stirrup.

Be precise where the cue is applied. If it is given too far behind the target area or too high on the flank, the horse will have the tendency to swing his hindquarters out or resist, rather than move laterally. Apply the cue using a cupped hand with a pulsating pressure, rather than poking the horse with your knuckles or fingers.

Start the maneuver by extending your right hand and giving a cluck to ask the horse to walk forward and straight. If he is a beginner at this maneuver, very slightly bend his head toward you as you apply the cue with your left hand. As he becomes more schooled in yielding, he will be able to do it with little or no bend. Use your peripheral vision to see if his right front and hind legs are crossing over the left front and hind legs while he stays straight in his topline. If he does not stay straight, bring him forward and straighten him using the right hand on his halter before asking again.

When the horse moves laterally, lighten the pressure and follow his movement as he moves diagonally toward the fence. If he does not respond, vibrate the pressure with the right hand to keep him moving forward with a slight bend, and with the left hand to ask him to move his hindquarters laterally. When he reaches the fence, finish the maneuver by asking him for a few steps forward and straight along the fence. Ask him to “whoa” and praise him.

### Key points when teaching yielding:

- Look up at the topline so you can evaluate your horse's body position and responsiveness to your cues.
- Keep the horse forward by extending your arm and moving with him. If you find that you are moving too much sideways, pick a point on the fence or put up a marker in a diagonal line from your starting point. Keep your horse moving forward and laterally as you aim for this point.
- Always face your horse and move with him. If you are asking for yielding to the left, cross your right leg over your left (and vice versa) to help you move with him.
- Watch so his hips don't swing out away from you. This is a telltale sign that you are cueing him incorrectly.

My popular “Longevity Training Visual Series, Working In Hand,” will help you advance the groundwork with your horses that will become the foundation for under-saddle success.

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