

Exercises: Groundwork – Half Circle

The Half Circle exercise is a continuation of the Full Circle. It is strongly recommended to blend both exercises as soon as you master them both. Actually, it is only one exercise cut in two parts so we can learn it – horses do not need this to understand and perform.

The purpose of this exercise is to improve the mobility of the horse, its capacity to move the hindend from the frontend separately.



Q&A

Please, review the Q&A of the Full Circle exercise, as questions are quite similar.

What if my horse walks behind me instead of changing direction?
That means you should work a little more the Full Circle to get used to the moves and have more fluid and clear cues. Anyway, be consistent, do not give up and keep putting pressure with the flag until your horse finally changes direction.

What if my horse does not cross correctly its hind legs?
In that case, forget about the change of direction and insist on the crossing its hind legs. Once you are satisfied, do not change the direction, keep on a full circle for a couple of circles and get back to your straight line.

Position

First, take the same position as in the Full Circle exercise. Start by pointing a direction to the horse and let it walk a couple of circles. Change direction as you pick a straight line in the pen or the arena and keep walking ALL the time.

Security

You should follow the same security advice as in the Full Circle exercise.
Be cautious as you will work with your horse on the move, things can go pretty fast and you do not want lose rythm. At the beginning, some horses will tend to trot or lope around you as they need time to figure out what you want. In such a case, you have to be careful to keep that bubble around you, use your flag to push your horse away from you every time it gets too close and make sure you always keep the bending in its body, to avoid its hind legs to come too close to your face!
One last advice: if you lose the rhythm or if you think it goes too fast, go back to something both your horse and you know better, such as lunging for instance.

Process

Once you have started your horse on a walk around you, aim a point down an imaginary straight line and walk toward it. As you walk down this line, you should change the direction every half circle – hence the name!

As you practiced in the Lunging and Full Circle exercises, you should turn toward your horse's hindend and make it yield the hindquarters by crossing its legs, pivoting on its forequarters. Once the horse pivoted a quarter of a circle, point the other direction and push your horse gently with your flag until it moves the front legs through, pivoting on its hindquarters. From here, send your horse walking on a circle until it completes again half a circle.

Repeat the process until the horse gets relaxed, walks peacefully and pivot on its hindend first, then on its forend.

