

*Q: Because of the work at the canter, I'm having a terrible time with lengthened trot. I've tried sitting trot on a 10-meter circle, then lengthening in posting trot as well as shoulder-in in sitting trot to lengthening in posting trot. The best I can do is to use my voice, shove the reins at him and exaggerate my post. This gives him the idea of lengthening, except with some serious, ugly on-the-forehand-ness. Help!*

**BILL:** Lengthenings are complicated because how to produce them varies a lot from horse to horse. There are some horses that have a natural programmed-in rhythm and cadence. They have no inkling of the notion of rushing, so all you have to do is add more leg and you get longer, not quicker, steps. That's a characteristic you'll find in some but certainly not all warmbloods.

With lots of other horses, you have to take a much more active role in explaining the concept to them—sometimes with a lot of trial and error—until they stumble across the idea and the light goes on.

Not only is there no single correct technique, but often you need to combine various approaches with the same horse. Some examples:

Have the horse as round, accepting, and quick to the leg as you can. Push out for several bigger strides, using a rhythmical driving leg, your voice (also in rhythm) and also posting higher. Do only a few steps and try to come back before you get a hurrying response. Repeat often—even multiple times on a single long side or circle.

Alternatively, sometimes just to get an acknowledgment of your leg aids and the horse opening up the shoulders and trying to push off stronger, you can take a little quickening. Get the bigger steps; then go back and fix the tempo.

Sometimes having the horse extra deep and gathered is a way to a lengthening. As you drive, you allow the neck to come slightly out and up while you maintain the connection.

Or try “long and low” in the stretching frame. Here you DO want to avoid any tendency to let them quicken.

Alternatively, while the horse is supposed to use his back, there are times you just have to ignore the idea, get his head up like a trotting horse, hold him and just push like crazy.

Having suggested lots of little short segments in the first example above, there've been times I've taken a horse on an old railroad bed or onto the beach and just sent them forward for half a mile at a time until something useful started to happen.

As for exercises, maybe small circles, but I don't find they always do what they're supposed to. I like the "staircase" where you leg yield, then go straight and lengthen, then gather and leg yield some more, then lengthen again. Sometimes renvers on a 20 meter circle to load up the back end, then send them forward into lengthening on a straight line.

Then there's the "How much in front of the leg are they?" matter. Occasionally, it's necessary to push them until they break to canter and then just keep pushing and send them *very* forward. The transition back to trot is gradual without a blocking, scolding hand, and then you send them again having established a greater respect for your leg.

(Follow up)

*Kayla: I'll try the "staircase" exercise tonight. That seems like an exercise to engage his mind as well as his hind end. I'd try the beach idea, but I'm afraid we'd slip down in the oil. One point of clarification: doesn't the whole frame lengthen and not just the steps? Is that the difference between lengthened trot and extended trot?*

**BILL:** In both lengthenings and extensions the frame gets somewhat longer along with the stride. But not a lot and not by getting flat. Think of the distance from the withers to the poll growing slightly and perhaps the nose comes a little more in front of the vertical. The difference between lengthening and extension is a matter of degree with the expectation that the balance and cadence of a real extension don't develop until further along in the horse's training.

Note that at Second Level the requirement becomes Medium Trot instead of lengthening. Medium is just a lengthening on steroids. From Third Level on up, however, you show both Medium and Extended, and then as soon as possible, it's not just a matter of differing volume. Extended is maximum length of stride. Medium is as energetic but some of the energy is directed more upward -- relative to the Extended, the Medium is shown higher and rounder and the stride not covering quite as much ground.