



ACTIVITY 1: ANALYZING EQUESTRIAN PERFORMANCE

Key Reference Information

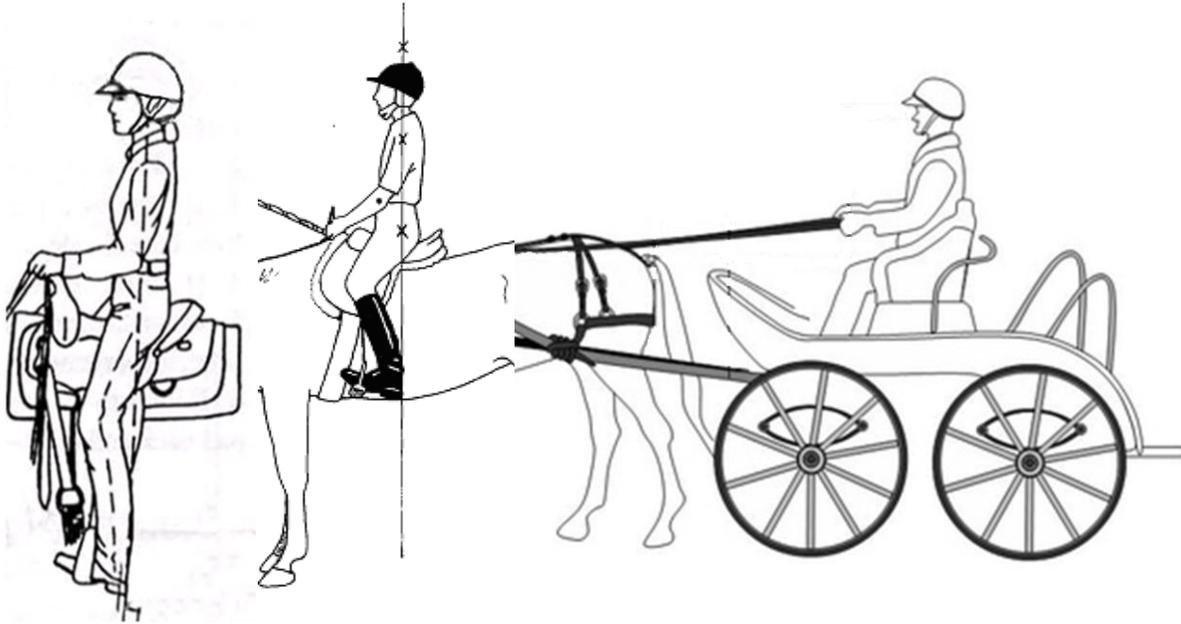
Core athletic skills as well as common positional errors are all essential concepts to consider when analyzing equestrian performance no matter the level of rider.

Core Athletic Skills for Equestrians:

- 1) Balance: Essential for maintaining stability, whether on the horse, in the carriage, or during vaulting routines.
- 2) Core Strength: Crucial for posture, absorbing movements, and executing precise commands.
- 3) Coordination: Vital for managing the interplay of hands, legs, and body in harmony with the horse.
- 4) Flexibility: Helps in adjusting to movements, maintaining comfort, and performing gymnastic maneuvers.
- 5) Body Awareness (Proprioception): Necessary for understanding body positioning relative to the horse.
- 6) Endurance: Important for sustaining energy and focus during extended periods of activity.
- 7) Reaction Time: Quick reflexes are needed to respond to the horse's movements and environmental changes.
- 8) Mental Focus and Calmness: Critical for maintaining control, especially under pressure, and ensuring the horse remains calm.



Rider Position - Western/English/Drive:



Basic Rider Position is divided into four parts:

1. The lower Leg – from knees to toes.
2. The base of support – all parts of the body in contact with the saddle including the seat.
3. The upper body – all parts of the body above the base of support including the eyes.
4. The arms and hands.



PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS & RESULTING POSITIONAL ERRORS

Physical Limitation/Weakness	Resulting Positional Error
Core Weakness	Slouching, inability to maintain a neutral spine, rounded shoulders, sitting crooked, collapsing through the midsection, unsteady upper body.
Hip Inflexibility	Difficulty maintaining a deep seat, knees pointing out, inability to open hips, pinched knee, sitting crooked, gripping with knees, bouncing seat.
Lack of Ankle Flexibility	Heels rising above toes, difficulty absorbing shock through heels, unstable lower leg, heels up, inability to keep heels down during transitions or jumps.
Shoulder Tightness/Weakness	Rounded shoulders, hands too high or low, inability to maintain a steady hand, uneven hands, locked elbows, dropping shoulders, collapsing chest.
Poor Balance/Proprioception	Inconsistent body alignment, leaning too far forward or backward, unstable seat, sitting crooked, unbalanced in turns, tipping forward, or backward.
Weak Leg Muscles (Quadriceps/Hamstrings)	Lack of stability in the lower leg, legs swinging forward or backward, inability to maintain a consistent leg position, pinched knee, toes turning out or in.
Lack of Upper Body Strength	Difficulty maintaining proper posture, collapsing chest, weak rein contact, flat hands, locked elbows, inability to maintain rein length, unsteady upper body.
Impaired Breathing/Endurance	Rapid fatigue leading to poor posture, tension in the body, uneven movements, looking down, heavy reliance on reins for balance, inconsistent cues.
Stiff Lower Back	Difficulty sitting deep, over-arching or collapsing in the lower back, stiff and rigid movements, sitting crooked, bouncing in the saddle, inability to absorb movement.

Common Beginner Rider Errors & Corrections:

Common Errors	Results of the Error	Possible Causes of the Error	Corrections
Looking down	Disturbs the balance of horse and rider. Takes away the horse's confidence. May run into objects/horses	Round shoulders. Weak abdominal muscles. Lack of confidence. Poor balance	Concentrate on looking through the horse's ears in the direction of the track you wish to follow. Feel the nape of the neck against the shirt collar. Lift chin.



Round shoulders	Impedes the establishment of a correct seat and puts the horse's weight on the forehead.	Weakness or conformation in the muscles of the upper back and/or neck. Weak abdominal muscles. Eyes down.	Backward arm/shoulder rotations. Puff out chest, look ahead, correct breathing. Improve posture off the horse. Stretch up and lift chin.
Stiff shoulders/arms	Affects the suppleness of the rider's arms, hands and the horse's jaw	Stiff hips and lack of balance. Tension.	Rotation of the shoulders and arms, move the shoulders in a lot of different directions on/off the horse. Deep correct breathing and exercises encouraging relaxation.
Locked elbows	Impedes soft hands and causes the horse's jaw to set.	Lack of understanding of the function of the joint. Stiffness.	Put both index fingers on the withers and post the trot not allowing the fingers to rise from the withers. Post the trot unmounted with the rider keeping hands on a table, allowing the elbows to bend without lifting the hands. Instructor/coach can stand at the horse's head facing the rider and take the reins. Encourage the rider to follow the contact with the elbows.
Elbows too far ahead of the body	Rider will never be able to influence or "frame" the impulsive energy of the horse	Rider conformation: Short arms. Horse conformation: Long neck. Reins too short.	Keep elbows slightly in front of the hips allowing the elbow to bend. Practice elbow bending exercises when mounted. Riders with shorter arms may need to carry their hands higher in order to ride with the reins long enough.
Collapsed chest/hunched back	Affects balance. Seat is often too close to the cantle.	Weak abdominal muscles and or back. Eyes down.	Roll shoulders back, puff out chest, keeps hips forward, relax abdominal muscles; sit as close to the pommel as possible. Lift chin.



Hollow back	Creates a stiff position	Rider conformation: long back. Saddle construction. Chin too high. Stiff lower back.	Sit deeper in the saddle, put more weight on the seat bones, deep breathing and relax. Lots of slow sitting trot.
Upper body too far ahead of the vertical	May put the horse on the forehand. Rider unbalanced.	Rider has not yet found correct balance, Eyes down. Two-point position misunderstood or overused.	Post trot with one hand on the small of the back. Put more weight in heels and imagine growing taller. Lift chin.
Uneven hands	Crookedness in the horse/rider. Reins may be uneven.	Crookedness in the horse/rider. Uneven reins. Overuse of the indirect rein.	Carry stick between thumb and rein. Keep thumbs pressed together. Ensure reins are even.
Flat hands	Ineffective arms, elbows out	Elbows out. Rider trying to keep hands "soft".	Keep thumbs pointing to the horse's ears. Keep stick resting on the middle of the thigh. Introduce key word to cue the rider.
Stiff wrists	Ineffective hands/arms, horse sets the jaw	Rider unaware of the importance / function of the wrists	Do wrist mobility exercises. Introduce key words to cue the rider.
Broken wrists	Stiffness	Rider unaware of the importance / function of the wrists. Rider not using elbows to maintain contact.	Point thumbs towards the ears. Loosen elbows to follow movement of the horse.
Gripping with thighs	Seat and lower leg ineffective	Rider insecure/tense. Lacks balance.	Put more weight on the seat without stirrups at the walk; let legs be long and relaxed, point toes towards the ground concentrating on lengthening the leg. Ensure the rider stretches before mounting.



Analyze Performance Problem Solving Model (APPSM):

1. Detectable Sign – What do you see?
2. Is the outcome achieved?
3. Analyze Potential Causes:
 - Equipment
 - Environment
 - Mental
 - Cognitive
 - Physical/Motor
 - Technical

COMPREHENSIVE EQUESTRIAN ATHLETE LIMITATIONS AND RESULTING POSITIONAL/PERFORMANCE ERRORS

Factor	Specific Limitation/Weakness	Resulting Positional/Performance Error
Physical	Lack of Balance	Instability in the saddle, difficulty controlling the horse, imprecise movements.
	Weak Core Strength	Poor posture, inability to absorb the horse's movements, early fatigue, loss of control.
	Poor Coordination	Unclear signals to the horse, causing confusion and ineffective performance.
	Limited Flexibility	Inability to maintain the correct riding position, reduced effectiveness and control.
	Poor Body Awareness	Ineffective posture and movement patterns, poor communication with the horse.
	Inadequate Endurance	Early fatigue, diminished performance, slower reaction times, increased risk of errors.
Mental	Lack of Mental Focus	Mistakes, missed cues, overall decline in performance during critical moments.
	Poor Stress Management	Anxiety, tension, overthinking, inability to perform calmly and effectively.
	Lack of Confidence	Hesitation, indecision, ineffective riding.
	Mental Fatigue	Reduced ability to make quick decisions, stay focused, maintain a positive mindset.
Tactical	Poor Decision-Making	Missed opportunities, incorrect strategies, lower overall performance.
	Ineffective Course Management	Mistakes in navigating a course, such as taking inefficient lines or misjudging distances.
	Inadequate Preparation	Disadvantage in understanding the competition environment, leading to errors.
Technical	Inconsistent Aid Application	Confusion for the horse, inconsistent performance.
	Poor Riding Technique	Incorrect posture, improper use of reins, imbalanced seat, ineffective communication with the horse.
	Lack of Discipline-Specific Skills	Limited ability to compete effectively due to inadequate proficiency in required maneuvers or movements.
Environmental	Inconsistent Training Conditions	Performance inconsistency due to variability in training environments.
	Horse-Related Issues	Poor performance stemming from the horse's health, fitness, or temperament issues such as lameness, discomfort, or lack of responsiveness.
	Equipment Problems	Discomfort for horse or rider due to ill-fitting or inappropriate tack and equipment, leading to suboptimal performance.
External	Competition Pressure	Increased anxiety and pressure, negatively affecting mental and physical performance.
	Inadequate Rest or Recovery	Fatigue, decreased performance, and increased risk of injury due to lack of rest, poor nutrition, or insufficient recovery time.
	Weather and Environmental Conditions	Suboptimal performance due to harsh weather conditions, unfamiliar environments, or distractions affecting both horse and rider.

Learning Objectives

- Review the core athletic skills and discuss their impact on rider abilities.
- Utilize the APPSM (Analyze Performance Problem Solving Model) to assess rider errors.
- Apply the WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT? model to further identify and correct rider errors.
- Identify strategies to strengthen athlete abilities.



Step-by-Step Activity Plan

Step 1 – Introduction (10 minutes)

- Facilitator introduces both frameworks:
 - APPSM (Analyze Performance Problem Solving Model) – for diagnosing performance errors.
 - What? So What? Now What? – for structured reflection and coaching intervention planning.
- Reviews basic position – divide the riders into 4 parts and assess position.
- Reviews common positional errors and review their impact on the athletes.

Step 2 – Live Rider Observation (20 minutes)

Rider Task:

- Perform an assigned flat pattern.

Observer Tasks:

- Select one rider to observe.
- Apply APPSM and What? So What? Now What? frameworks.
- Record observations in the provided worksheet.

Step 3 – Group Debrief (20 minutes)

Discuss within groups:

- What did you observe?
- What was the impact?
- What would you have the athlete do differently?
- Explore causes: Equipment, environmental, affect, mental/cognitive, physical/motor, and technical.

Step 4 – Correction Strategy Planning (15–20 minutes)

Each group develops a correction strategy for one error observed.

Include:

- Use of the APPSM in your assessment – is it equipment, environment, mental, cognitive, physical/Motor, or technical.
- Utilize rider cues or feedback
- Corrective measures to include: Teaching interventions or Modify/Adjust Activity.



Observation & Reflection Chart

Rider Task	WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?	APPSM Category
20m Circle Right at trot/jog	Rider is leaning in, reins uneven, pony drifting	Circle is oval, rider off balance, pony loses rhythm	Add cones, use "shoulder to the rail" cue, demo rein length	Environment, Technical
20 m circle left at trot/jog				
Serpentine of 3 loops at rising trot (changes of posting diagonal)				
20 m Canter/lope circle to the right.				
20 m Canter/lope circle to the left.				
Simple change of lead through trot.				