

A woman with blonde hair in a ponytail, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and dark blue riding pants, is leading a black horse in a gravel arena. The horse has white markings on its lower legs. The background consists of a wooden fence and dense green trees. The text 'Basic Exercise #4' is in white and 'The B-Loop' is in orange, overlaid on the image.

Basic Exercise #4 The B-Loop

Manual

Foreword

This document is the result of many years of research and personal experience world-wide. I sincerely hope that it will be useful for your learning experience and contribute to your personal development. This manual is complemented with a practical demonstration video to optimize the learning process. I wish you a lot of fun and lightbulb moments diving into these materials.

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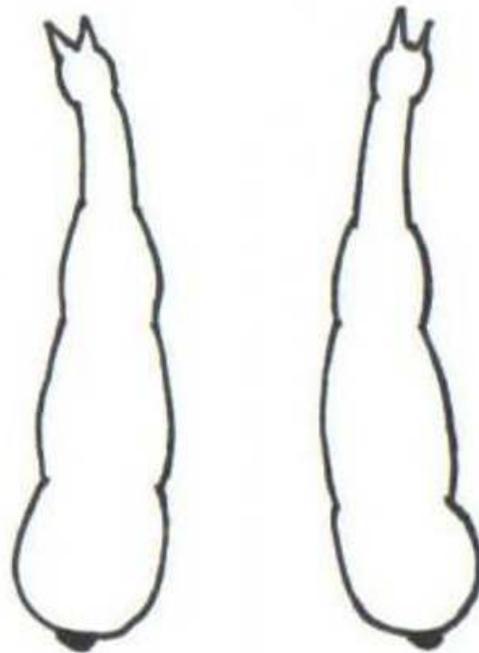
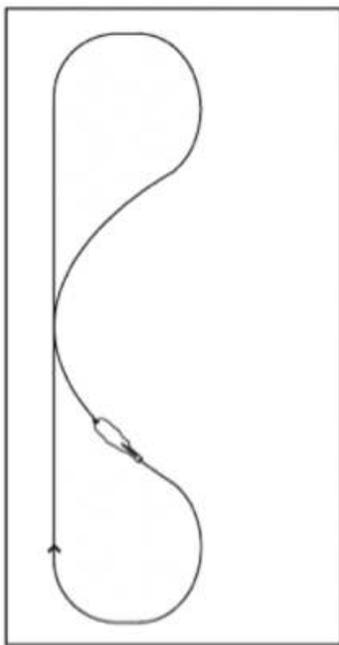
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INTRODUCTION

After establishing basic vertical balance, this exercise will focus on dynamic movement to build resiliency and lateral softness. The B-loop also provides a playful way to introduce the concept of **lateral bending**^[1] to the horse.



The B-loop is an essential basic exercise towards straightness, balance, and lightness for the trained horse.

[1] For more information about Lateral Bending please refer to the manual on Basic Exercise #5 The Circle

ESSENCE

The B-loop can be considered as a whole-body exercise. Its benefits include:

- Refining vertical balance
- Lateral Suppleness
- Improved Coordination

Thus, where former exercises were mostly targeting an isolated objective, the B-Loop joins multiple beneficial elements together. It is an exercise to be performed in fluent motion and as such enhancing resiliency in the horse.

The B-Loop can be performed in all gaits – but is mostly beneficial in the walk and trot. For the canter, it is generally recommended to only perform a single tear-drop loop and continue in counter-canter on the next long side.

Finally, it should be noted that this exercise should be applied with moderation:

- Repeating the exercise too much has the potential risk of fatiguing your horse. This in turn increases the risk of injuries and mental imbalances.

PREPARATION

Before you get started with the B-Loop, you will need to have mastered the following preparatory exercises:

- The Square / Rectangle
- Lateral Flexion of the Jaw
- ****The Circle**** (sometimes)

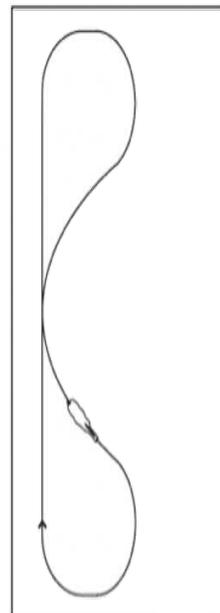
Before starting the exercise, please check the quality of the square and lateral flexion of the jaw as there are essential towards setting the horse up for success.

Whether you need to prepare the B-Loop using the circle depends on your horse's individual needs. As such, make sure to know your horse's needs to make an informed decision as how to approach the B-loop.

PRACTICAL EXECUTION

For all positions, the basic aids include:

- Inner intention
- Body posture
- Secondary rein
- Secondary whip



GROUNDWORK – ONE REIN (CAVESSON)

1. Start from the backwards groundwork position and travel along the short side of the arena.
2. When entering the long side, take a few steps straight to refine alignment. Observe your horse's tendencies and act accordingly.
3. Once the horse is aligned, invite the horse onto the quarter line in a rounded manner:
 - Imagine a truck going on a round-about: smooth curves
 - You can use a soft (energetic) whip-aid at the area of the inside leg to invite the horse towards inside concavity.
4. Once on the quarter line, change the bend to the other side and turn back to the arena wall.
5. When you're back along the wall, take a couple of straight steps. Decide whether your horse is ready for a second loop, if so repeat steps 3 and 4. A second loop should end a little before the corner of the next short side.
6. Enjoy the process and don't tire the horse too much.



WORK IN HAND – TWO REINS (CAVESSON OR BRIDLE)

1. The process is the same as described under the groundwork section, apart from that you now have a direct outside rein to control the outside shoulder when needed:
- It is essential to understand that with two reins, the function of your reins changes when changing the bend of your horse. Your inside rein becomes your outside rein, and your outside rein becomes your inside rein^[2].

[2] For more information on the Work in Hand Position please refer to Module 5. Training - Positions

- Due to the change in bend, you will end up both on the inside shoulder – guiding the horse towards you – as well as on the outside shoulder – guiding the horse away from you.
2. Once again, enjoy the process and don't tire the horse too much.



RIDING – TWO REINS & SEAT (CAVESSON OR BRIDLE)

When ridden the aids of the seat are added to those of intention, body posture and reins.

1. Remain in a neutral soft seat to stay vertical over your seat bones and guide your pelvis in the direction of travel you want the horse to go. Reduce your range of motion to match that of the horse.

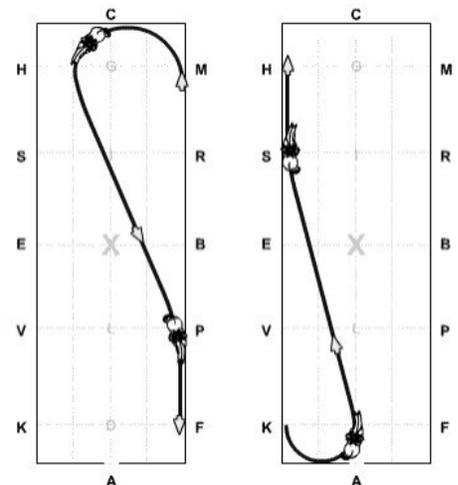
2. Use the reins the same way according to the descriptions in work in hand.
To give the proper action on the reins, turn your shoulders where you want the horse's to be without tilting in your waist.
3. You can assist with your seat using thigh and lower leg aids when needed.
Encourage lateral bending with a soft inside lower leg aid while keeping your outside leg on guard to make sure the outside hind limb doesn't swing out.
4. Again, enjoy the process and make sure not to tire your horse out.

VARIATIONS

If you have mastered the B-Loop, you can consider the following variation to enhance a dynamic approach to your training:

- The Teardrop

Start parallel along the wall, either on the outer track or the inner track. On the quarter line of the short side, you turn inwards and continue on a diagonal, until you hit the wall again.



Using both variations will create most benefit for the horse.

CHALLENGES & TROUBLESHOOTING

1. The horse overbends the head and neck

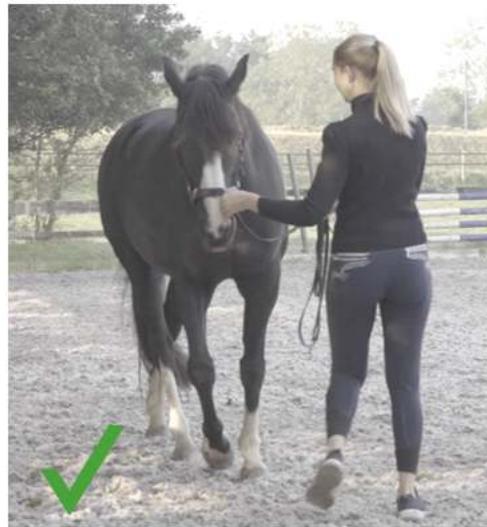
In this case, the shoulders will stay a little bit behind, and the horse does not bend through the ribcage but will only bring in the neck and head instead.

To solve this problem, try the following:

- Check your own posture and aids (not too much rein pressure) and see whether you need to adjust anything so that you're communicating properly.
- You can try to apply a direct whip aid on the shoulder or the ribcage to help direct the body on the proper line towards you.
- If this is not of sufficient help, you can try a different position all together. For example, if the one rein position is not working out, give the two reins position a try as this gives you more direct control over the outside shoulder.
- If you keep losing control over the outside shoulder, reconsider going back to the former preparatory exercises.

2. The horse is not turning fluent but instead moves sideways

Check your own posture and aids. This challenge usually arises due to improper coordination and communication. Make sure you really have a strong inner picture about lateral softness and take time to explain this properly to the horse.



3. The horse loses impulsion

When learning something new, it is okay that both you and the horse slows down a little. However, fluidity is a big component of this exercise and thus it is key to keep the exercise in a dynamic forward flow. If the horse loses too much impulsion you can try the following:

- Less mechanical aids. Focus on rhythm and breathing. Take big steps yourself.
- Start with one loop first and gradually build up to two loops.

WHAT'S NEXT

Once you and the horse get the hang of the B-Loop you can continue with the following exercise:

- The Rein Change
- Shoulder-In
- The Circle

Basic Exercise #4
GOOD LUCK!

