



Maddi Burchell

PRESENTS

# ESSENTIAL SCHOOLING EXERCISES

Volume 1

**THE**DRESSAGE COACH**.COM**  
ONLINE DRESSAGE COACHING





BLACK CIRCLE MEDIA

# FOREWORD

Welcome to my first book of schooling exercises. I'm Maddi Burchell and I'm a professional dressage coach based in Kent in the United Kingdom.

This book forms part of a distance learning course on the subject of schooling exercises that covers all the exercises that you'll find here in detail.

The course is part of The Dressage Coach online coaching platform which is designed for riders looking for coaching assistance but online. For more details about The Dressage Coach, please visit the website at [thedressagecoach.com](http://thedressagecoach.com)

I hope you find this book useful and if you'd like more exercises, please look out for more as they're on the way!





# SPIRALLING OUT

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Start by establishing a good rhythm and energy within your chosen pace.
2. Next think about maintaining a consistent, elastic contact.
3. Choose where you want to ride the exercise (C/A/E/B) and ride a 20m circle.
4. Once the horse has maintained the rhythm, energy and contact, ride a 10m circle ( or 15m if 10m is too difficult for your horse at this time) on the middle of the 20m circle.
5. Work on keeping the rhythm, bend and contact on this smaller circle, but not for too long.
6. Then start to push the horse out towards the 20 m circle, making sure you are keeping the bend. Keep going until you are back on your 20m circle.
7. Repeat the exercise 2-3 times on each rein

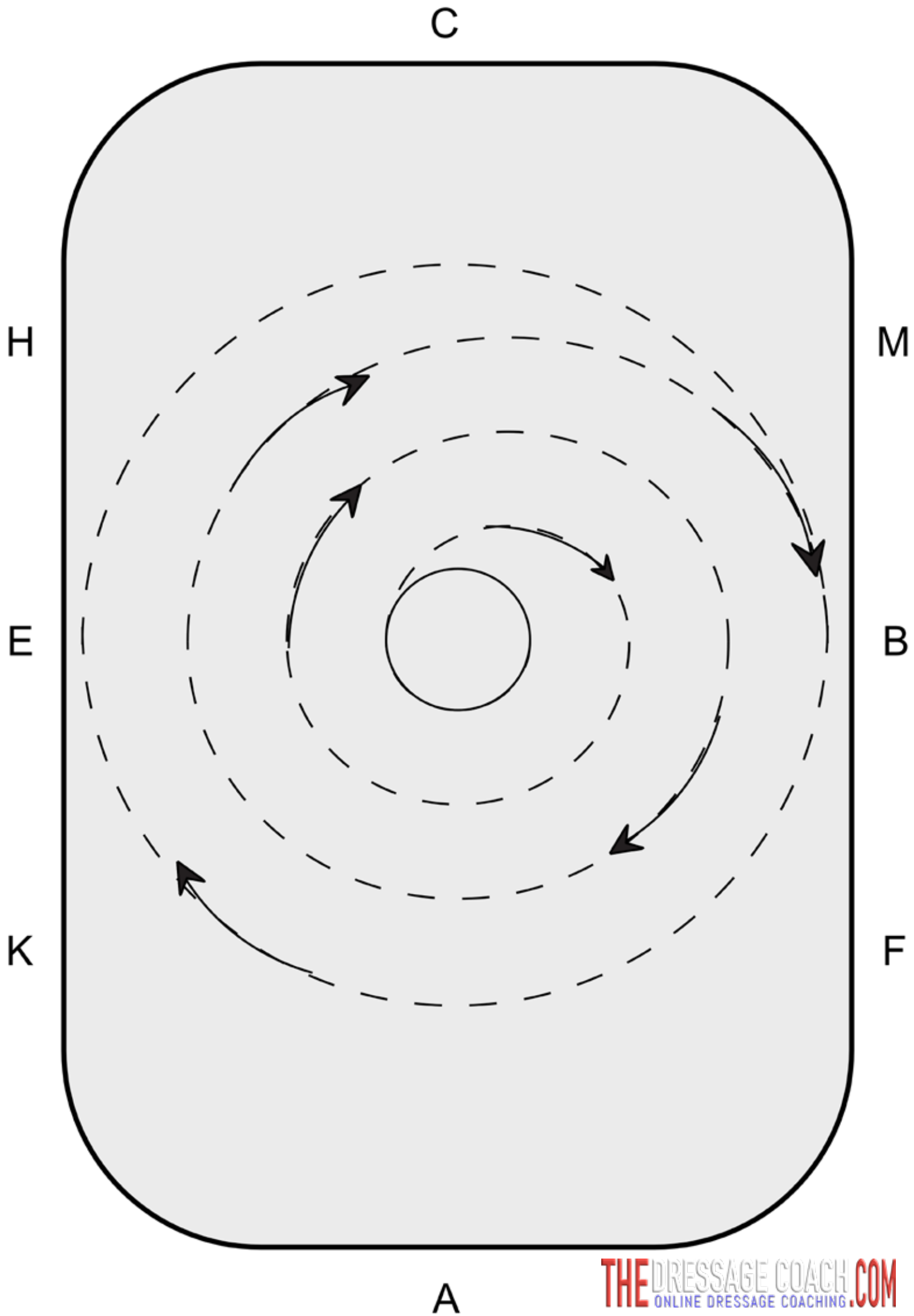
## EXERCISE TIPS

The maintaining of the bend through the horses body needs to be the priority in this exercise.

Make sure the horse doesn't fall through the outside shoulder whilst moving out.

Be patient and remember, "Quality not Quantity" - It doesn't matter how many circles it takes to get from the smaller circle to the larger one, as long as the horse is doing it correctly!

Try to keep you horse in a consistent rhythm and with good energy throughout the exercise.





## RIDER TIPS

Use subtle weight aids (through your feet) to help the horse step across and over and in the direction you want to go.

Make sure you are looking where you want to ride.

Maintain a good, consistent contact with nice elastic elbows.

Encouraging suppleness and improving bend

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Acceptance of the riders inside leg

Encourages lateral movement

Understanding of the riders outside hand

Improving control over the horses shoulders.





**NEXT EXERCISE:  
SERPENTINES  
WITH CIRCLES**



# SERPENTINES WITH CIRCLES

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Choose the rein you want to start on. Maintain a good energy and rhythm within the pace. Now ask for a consistent contact.
2. Start your serpentine at either C or A. As you ride your first loop, rather than continuing straight to go to the other side of the school, ride a 12m circle first, before continuing on the straight part of the serpentine to the other side of the arena.
3. As you come to the second loop, again ride the 12m circle first before continuing onto the straight.
4. Repeat the same for the third and final loop of the circle.
5. Repeat the exercise on both reins.
6. If you have a 20x60 arena, you can ride a 4 loop serpentine and the circles can be 15m.

## EXERCISE TIPS

The maintaining of the rhythm and energy is key

Make sure the horse isn't falling in/out on the circles and that he isn't losing his quarters.

The circles must have bend, but the horse must be straight when you are riding across the arena between loops.

The correct size loops must be ridden in order for the exercise to work.

If you want to ride 10m circles, rather than 12m, that's fine, but remember the loop size doesn't change.



C

H

M

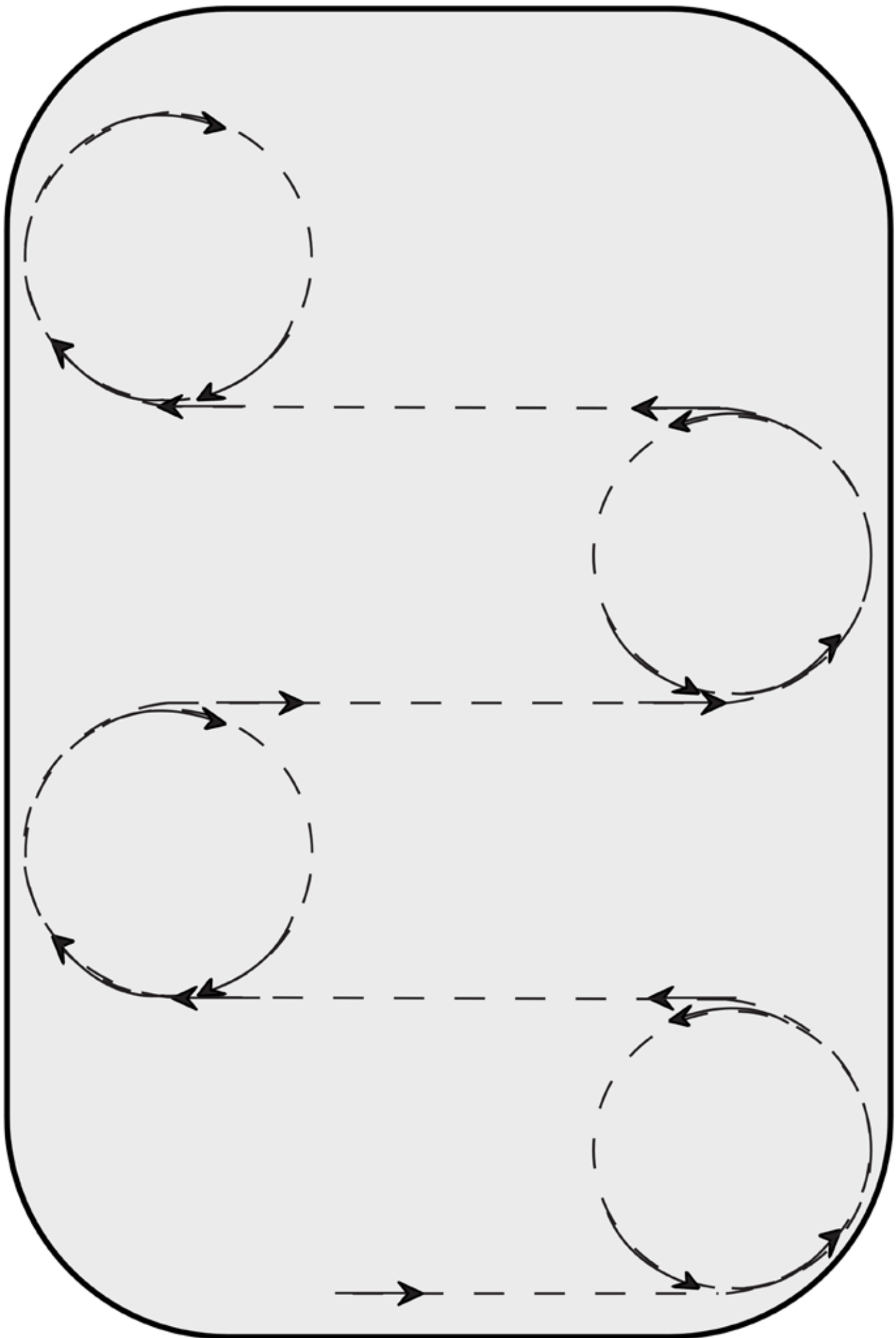
E

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K

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A





## RIDER TIPS

Looking where you want to ride and accuracy are very important for this exercise.

Correctly timed leg, weight and rein aids are key

Keeping your hands soft and your shoulders and elbows elastic will help the horse to remain fluid on the turns

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Understanding the rider's leg aids

Getting the horse from bent to straight relatively quickly

Changing bends and flexion

Controlling the quarters

Getting the horse on the aid



**NEXT EXERCISE:  
DEMI-VOLTES  
&  
CIRCLES**





# DEMI-VOLTES & CIRCLES

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Get your rhythm, energy and contact nice and consistent.
2. At H (or M/F/K) ride a half 10/15m circle returning to the track by K
3. At A ride a 10/15m circle
4. Then continue down the long side, and when you reach M, ride a half 10/15m circle returning to the track at F.
5. Then, at A ride a 10/15m circle
6. Repeat the exercise until the horse becomes more fluid.

## EXERCISE TIPS

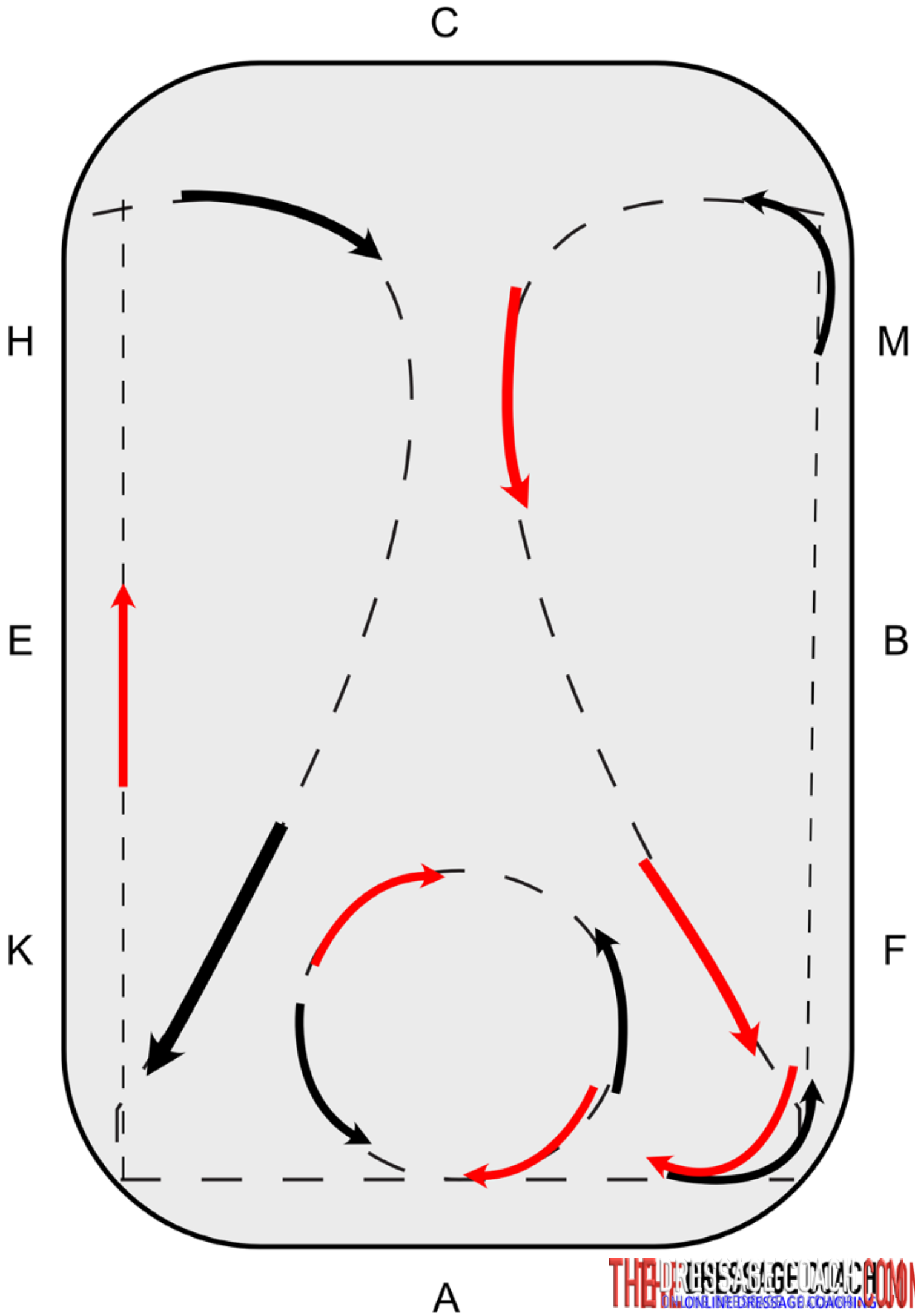
The same rhythm needs to be maintained on both the bends and straight lines in the exercise.

The straight lines ridden back to the track need to be straight and accurate.

The corners of the arena still need to be correctly ridden in this exercise.

The Half circles need to be accurate in size on both reins.

The shape and size of the circle at A is important.





## RIDER TIPS

The rider must be even through the seat and have their feet pointing straight forward for the straight lines.

Look at where you are riding throughout the whole exercise to ensure you remain fluid with your horse.

Suppleness in the rider is important for this exercise

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Helping to keep balance when constantly changing bend.

Suppleness and straightness

Keeping rhythm and fluidity throughout constant changes of bend/line.





# **NEXT EXERCISE: LEG YIELDS**



# LEG YIELDS

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Find a good rhythm, energy and consistent contact within your chosen pace.
2. Turn on to the 3/4 Line and ride straight
3. Now start to ride a diagonal line back toward the fence and once you and the horse are on your way, place your inside leg back, flex the horse's nose a little to the inside and push the horse back toward the fence.
4. Repeat on the 3/4 line until this becomes easier
5. Then turn down the centre line, start straight, start to ride a diagonal line back towards the fence and repeat the rider's aids as per the 3/4 line,
6. Repeat on the Centre Line until this becomes easier
7. Start to ride a diagonal line from one corner to the other. Once on the line, place the outside leg back, and flex the horse's nose slightly to the outside and keep pushing until you reach the other corner (You may have to build up to getting that far, but that is the end goal!)
8. Repeat until this becomes easier.

## EXERCISE TIPS

The horse's shoulders must always be leading

There should be counter flexion whilst riding the leg yield but not bend

The degree the quarters cross will depend on the fitness/suppleness of the horse, the placement of the rider's leg, and the correctness of the rider's aids

If the horse struggles with the 3/4 line exercise, then work on that for as many sessions as you need to before moving on to the Centre Line exercise, and the same for the Corner to Corner version.

Some horses find leg yielding harder than others, so if you need to start on the inside track back to the fence first, that's fine.

Always make sure your intention to the horse is clear by riding the diagonal line back to the track for a few strides before putting the leg back and ask the horse to step over

C

H

M

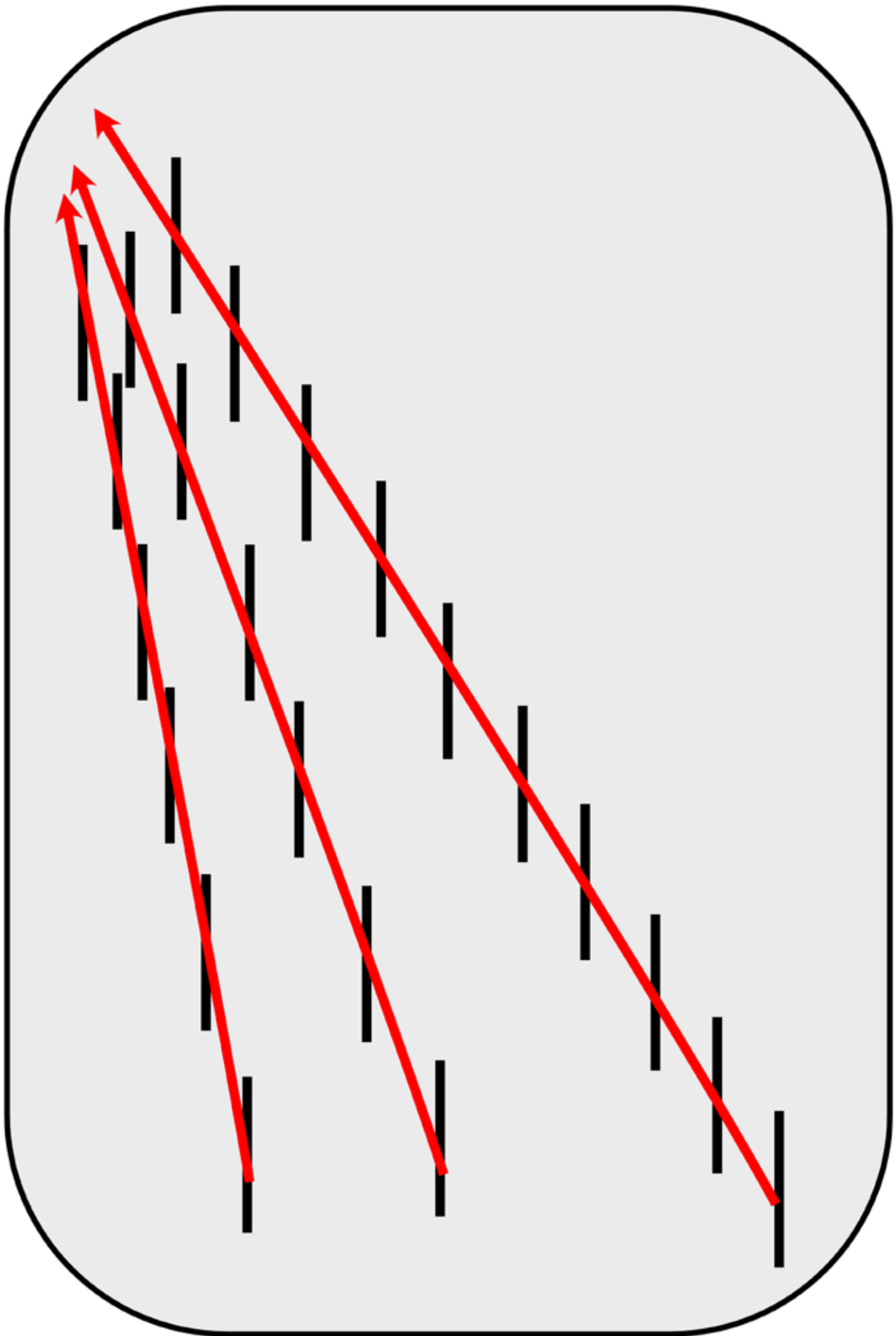
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## RIDER TIPS

Try opening the outside hand toward the fence (try to keep the elbow as near to your side as possible) to help the horse open and move his shoulders across.

Use a subtle weight aid through the outside foot to help the horse step across

Think about the rhythm!

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Starting lateral works

Balance, suppleness and control

Core strength

Understanding the aids for lateral

Opening the shoulders



# **NEXT EXERCISE: STRIDE CHALLENGE**



# STRIDE CHALLENGE

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Set yourself two markers (could be cones etc or two arena letters) on one side of the school in a straight line at a good distance apart.
2. Decide what pace you are going to try the challenge in first.
3. Ride from one marker to the other, counting the number of strides you took from the first marker, to the last one.
4. Then, re ride the line again, trying to ride less strides this time (so lengthening the horse), see how many you got in comparison to your first line.
5. Then, ride again, but this time see how many more you can get (collecting the horse this time).
6. This then become a challenge to see how you can improve at either end of the scale!
7. Try the exercise in trot and canter!
8. You could have some fun and try with some friends (if its safe to do so)

## EXERCISE TIPS

The horse must remain straight whilst doing the challenge

The horse mustn't break the pace it's in, so if you were trying to make your trot really small and the horse walks, that doesn't count as a stride.

You should be riding the longer/shorter strides from your seat and core, not your hands!

In trot, the best way to count the stride is to count every time you sit in the saddle.

Try the exercise on both reins to see if your horse differs on either side.

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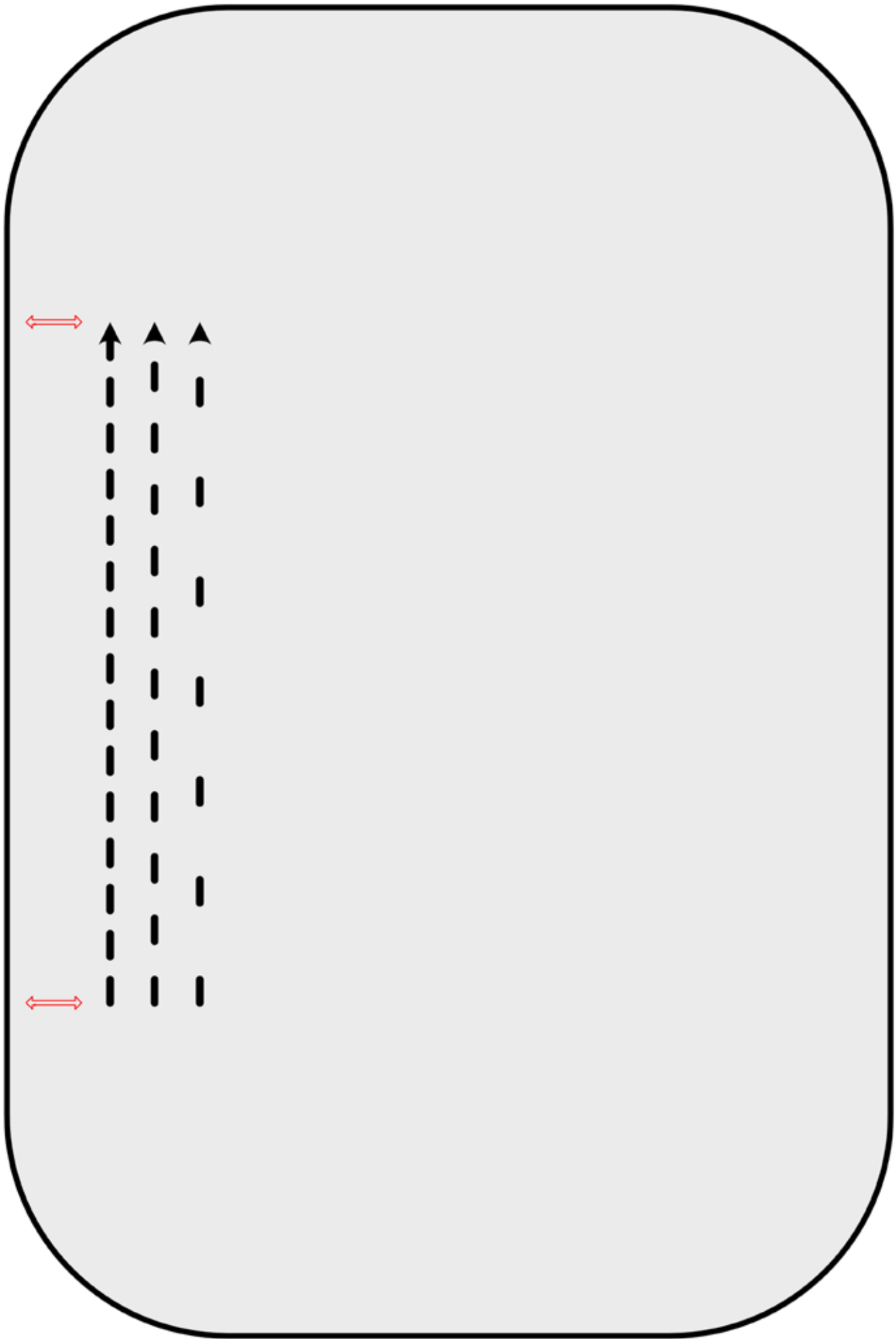
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## RIDER TIPS

The size of your rise will affect the size of your stride in trot

The amount of neck nod allowed by your elbows/shoulders will affect the size of the stride in walk and canter.

Try to sit as stable as possible so that you aren't interfering with the horses balance.

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Encouraging the horse to lengthen and shorten its frame.

Encouraging elasticity

Encouraging balance and suppleness.

A way of monitoring your horses ability and improvement in collecting and lengthening



# **NEXT EXERCISE: RIDING SQUARES**



# RIDING SQUARES

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Pick where you want to ride your square (ideally off of the track).
2. Start by riding a straight line, then, when you want to turn, look at where you want to turn to, take both hands, as a pair, and bring them across the horse's neck in the direction you want to turn.
3. At the same time you are looking and moving the hands, place your outside leg slightly further back and gently push with the leg.
4. When you've made the turn, go back to riding a straight line.
5. Repeat the exercise again.
6. When you have completed a box, change the rein and ride the same on the other rein.

## EXERCISE TIPS

You need to make sure that the horse has enough energy to make the turn. Too much energy and the horse will lose control. Too little energy and the horse will run out of "go"!

Ride this exercise in walk only until the horse does this with ease.

The rider needs to make sure the horse is turning the front end before the back end steps round.

Make sure you stop the turning aids at the correct time, otherwise you will not be able to go straight at the correct place.

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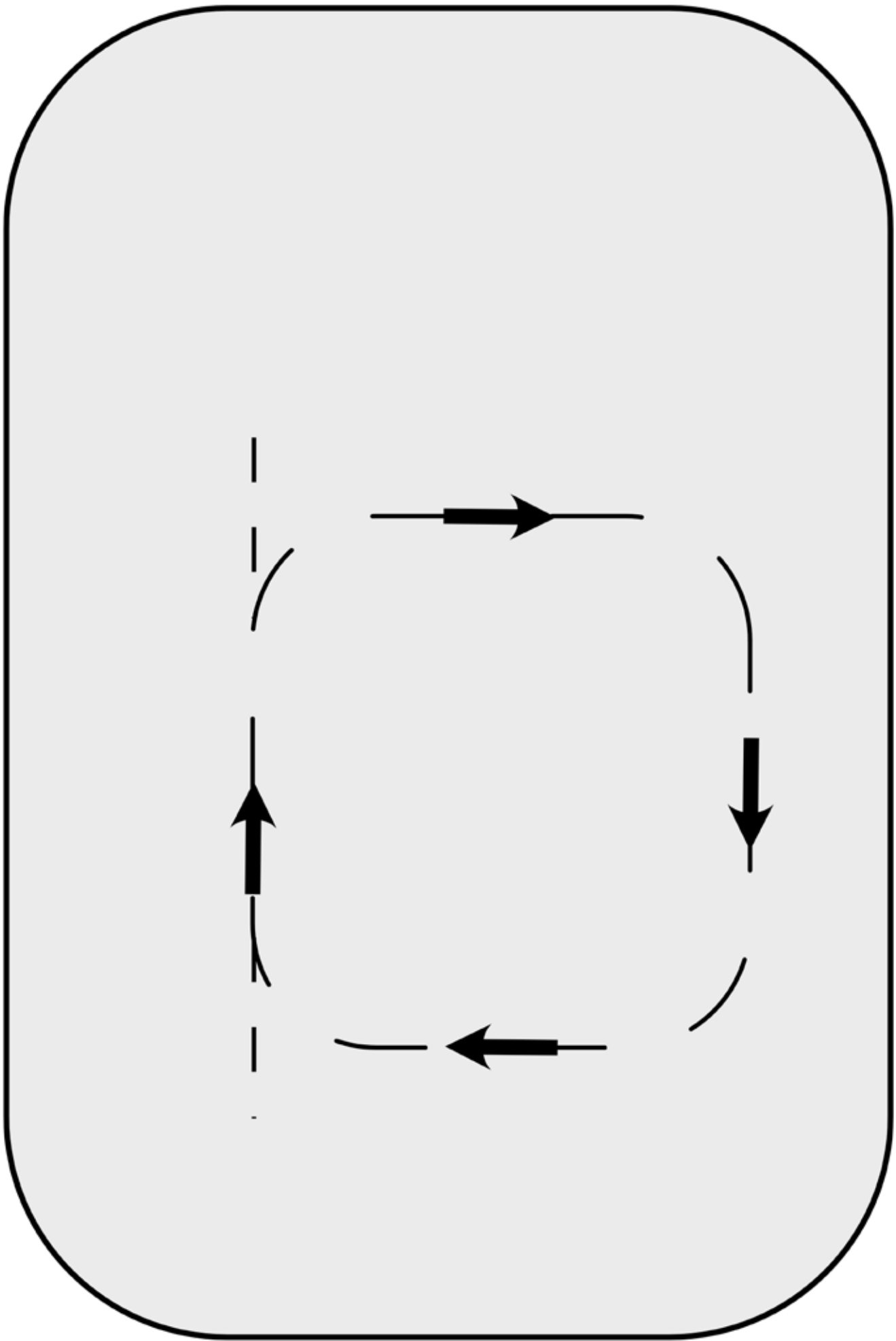
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## RIDER TIPS

Use weight aids to help the horse step around you in the turn.

Sit nice and evenly, with feet pointing forwards for the straight lines

Try to remain, strong, stable and supple in your body throughout this exercise

A soft, consistent contact is key

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

The horse learns to take more weight on the hind legs.

This helps with rider accuracy with the aids

The horse learns to step his front legs around the rider

Energy and pace control



# **NEXT EXERCISE: LOOPS ON THE EDGE**





# LOOPS ON THE EDGE

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Choose your pace, then find, your energy, rhythm and consistent contact
2. Starting at a marker on the long side (ie H), start to ride away from the track-toward the 3/4 line on a curved line.
3. You want to have reached the 3/4 line by the time you are level with X.
4. Then start to ride your curved line back toward the track aiming to return at the marker the other end of the long side (ie K).
5. Change the rein and repeat the exercise. This is a 5m loop on the edge
6. Then repeat the exercise on both reins again, but this time, you want your curved line to get all the way to the centre line (so X is the mid point of the curved line). This is a 10m loop on the edge.

## EXERCISE TIPS

The rhythm needs to be maintained throughout this exercise.

The horses balance is key to this exercise.

There must be a curve on the line, the exercise shouldn't be ridden like a "V" with two straight lines.

The rider needs to know the line they want to ride, before they ride it to be able to keep the fluency.

A consistent flexion and bend needs to be present in the horse in order for the line to be ridden correctly.

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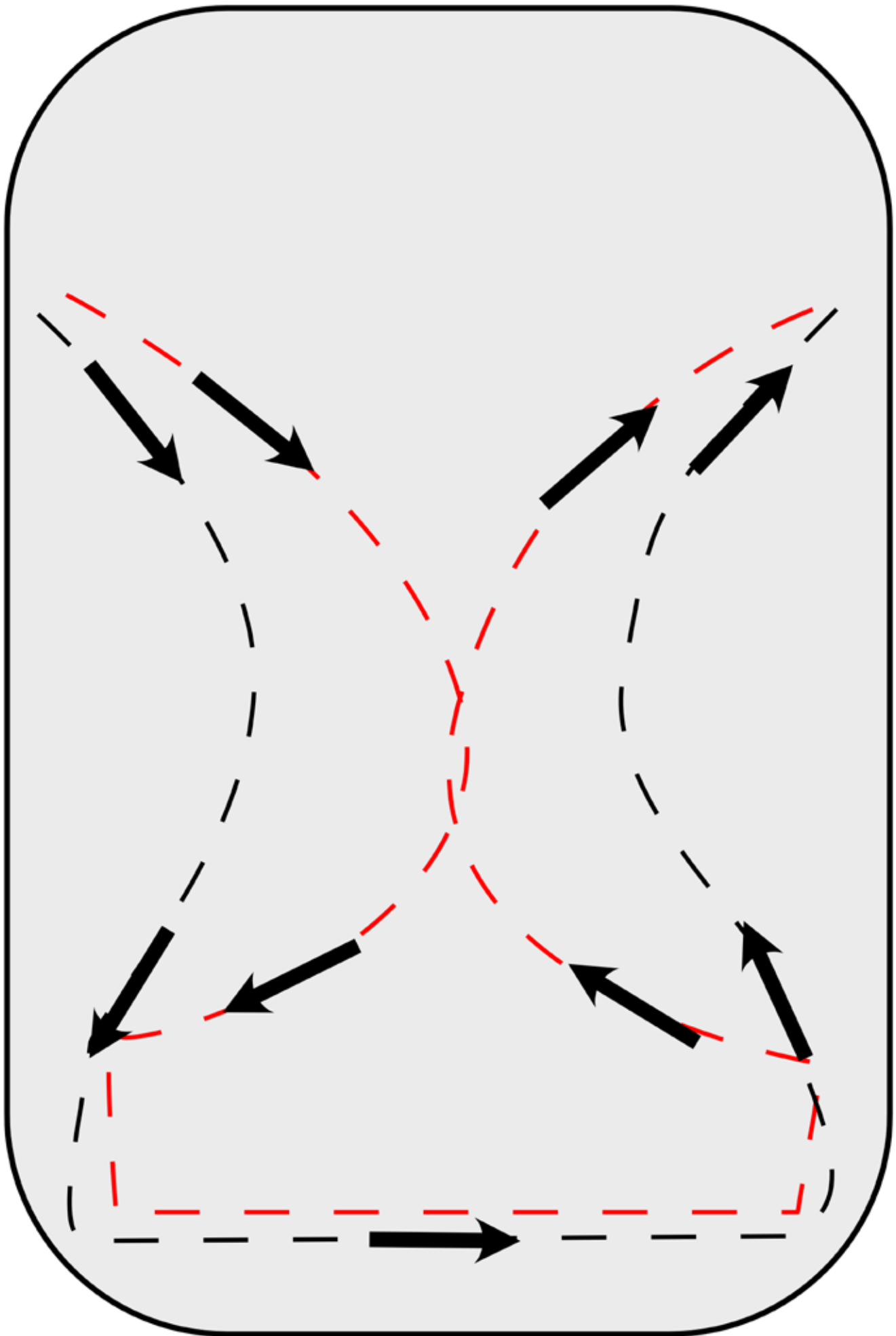
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## RIDER TIPS

Use weight aids to help position the horse correctly on the “line”

Keep the horse around the inside leg to help keep the consistent bend.

Use the outside hand to help keep the shoulders in the correct position and leading the curve.

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Improves suppleness through the whole horse.

Improves the horses balance

Getting the horse around the inside leg

Understanding different degrees of bend and curve.



# **NEXT EXERCISE: CIRCLE TO LEG YIELD**



# CIRCLE TO LEG YIELD

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Start by riding your horse in your chosen pace in a regular rhythm and a consistent contact.
2. Choose where you will ride your 15m circle, either A or C.
3. Ride the 15m circle at the marker and when you have completed the circle, continue around it again for another 1/4.
4. Once you have reached this point (you will be approx 2.5m away from the track), keep the bend through your horse but place your inside leg slightly further back and start pushing your horse back toward the fence in a leg yield.
5. Change the rein and repeat the exercise.
6. The exercise can then be repeated again, but this time with a 10m circle at C or A, and then the leg yield from there.

## EXERCISE TIPS

The rhythm and energy must be kept consistent throughout the circle and the leg yield.

The horse needs to remain fluid through its body from the circle to the leg yield

The rider must keep control of the shoulders

The hindquarters must not drift

You must ask for the leg yield at the appropriate time on the circle, otherwise the position of the horse's body will interfere with the horse's ability to go shoulder first.

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M

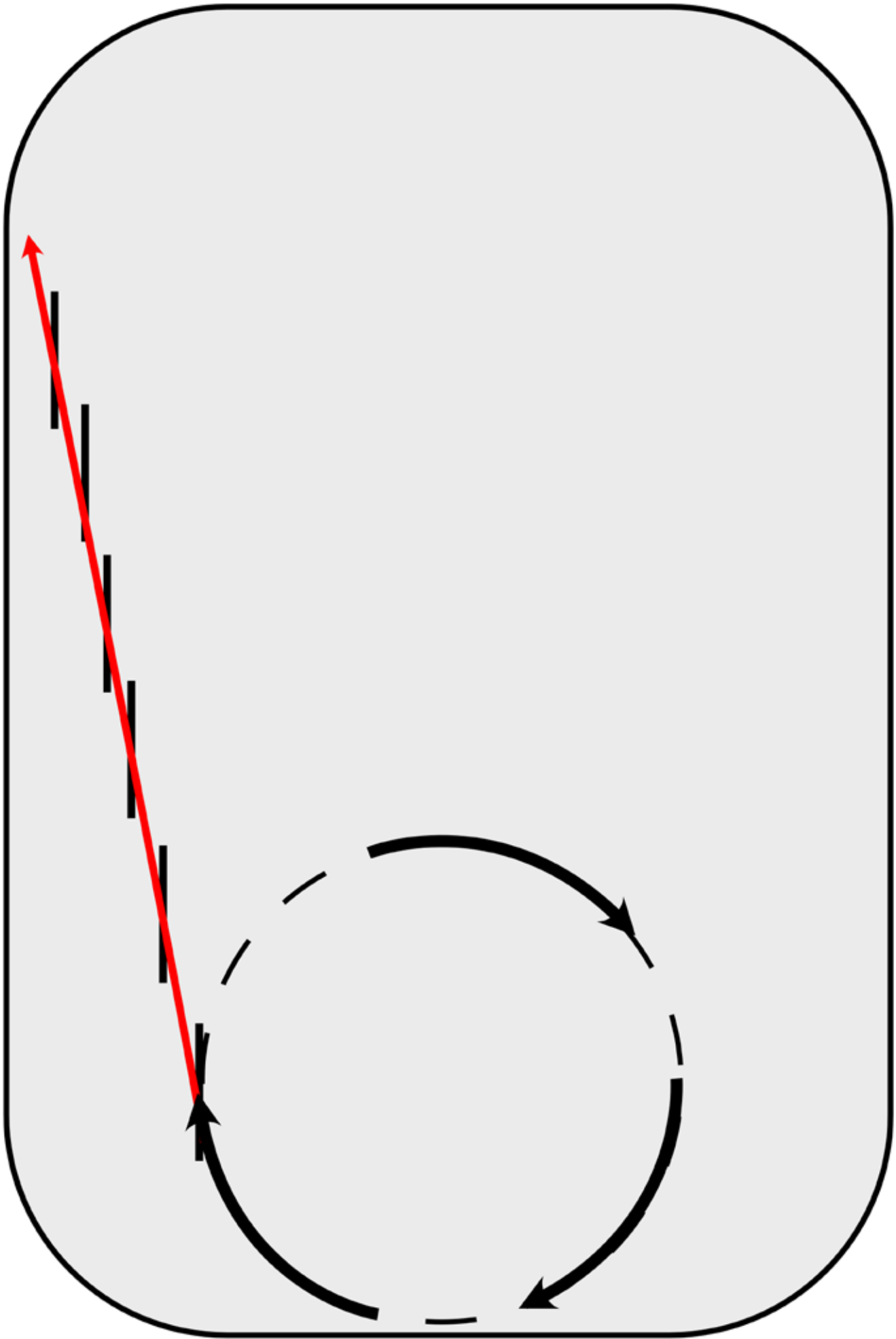
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## RIDER TIPS

Having a clear plan of where you are going to make the transition from circle to leg yield is key

Using weight aids to ride the circle and then gently changing them to go to leg yield will be very effective.

Try to maintain your balance as much as you can

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Timing of aids

Switching of balance

Switching of body position

Using weight aids to change direction

Changing from exercise to exercise relatively quickly



# **NEXT EXERCISE: TRANSITIONS ON A CIRCLE**



# TRANSITIONS ON A CIRCLE

## HOW TO RIDE

1. Choose where you want to ride your circle
2. In the pace you have chosen to start with, maintain rhythm, energy and a consistent contact on that circle
3. Now decide if you want to ride an upwards or a downwards transition.
4. Ride the transition, but make sure you have maintained the bend through the horse throughout the transition.
5. Repeat as many times as you like, changing the transition types and paces and directions.

## EXERCISE TIPS

The rider must maintain the correct amount of bend at all times.

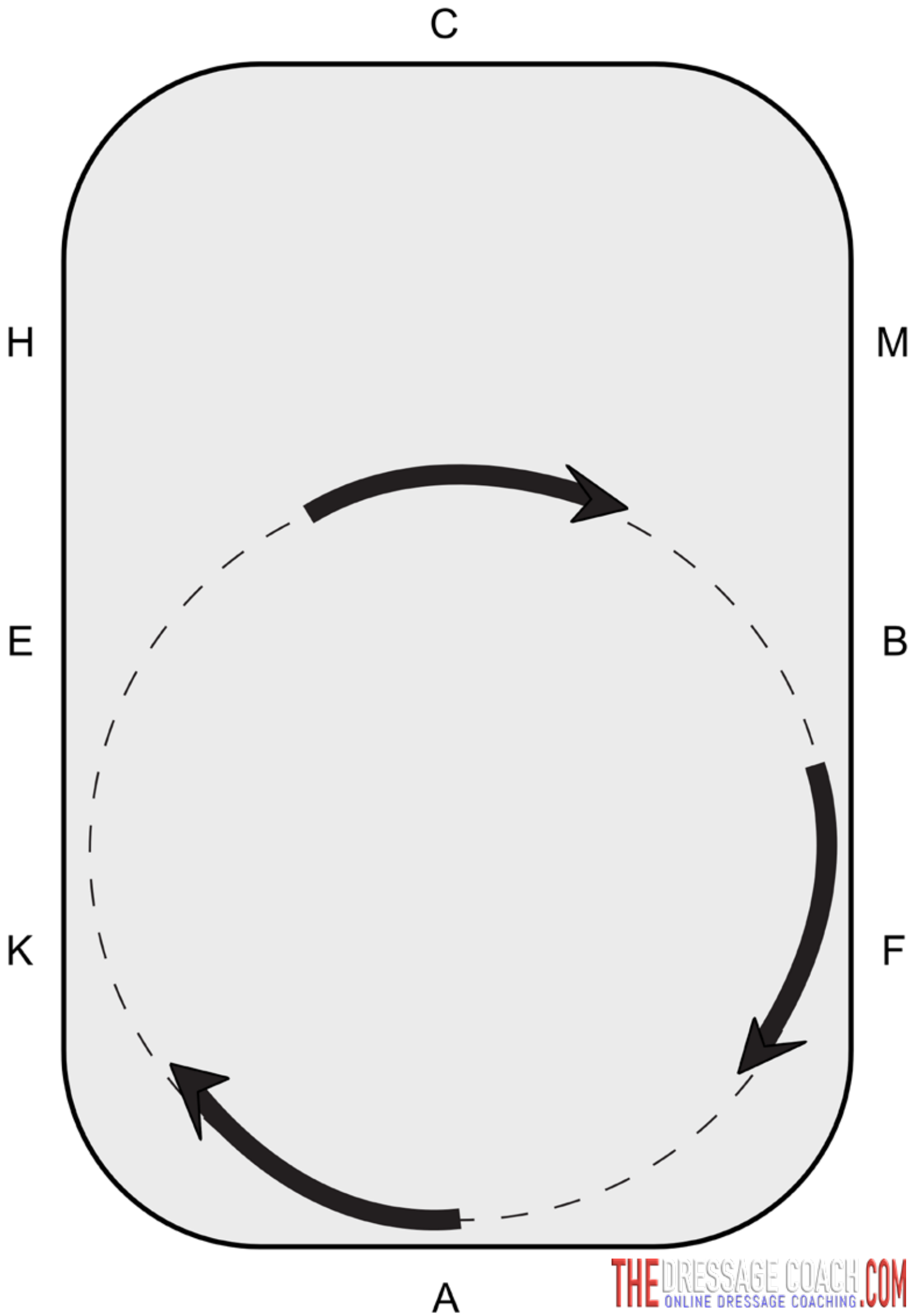
There must not be more or less bend in the transition.

The horse must stay soft and rhythmical

The rider must not let the horse fall in or out on the circle.

The horse's shoulders and hindquarters must be kept under control at all times

The transition must be clear with well-timed and correct aids





## RIDER TIPS

Use weight aids to help maintain the bend and the shape of the circle.

Use your seat to effectively ride the transitions

Be aware of straightness on the circle to ensure that the transitions are direct and thorough

## EXERCISE BENEFITS

Suppleness of the legs and body

Engagement of the hind quarter

Bending through the whole of the horse

Balance

Core strength improvement



**READY TO MOVE ON?  
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SCHOOLING EXERCISES!**





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