

THE CANTER

To canter on the right rein, and this is the rein you must work on for some time before attempting the left rein, you give a slight indication to the horse on the right rein, and sit down in anticipation of the canter stride. Simultaneously touch the horse with your left leg, the only available leg you have, and the horse should strike off correctly. We have already seen that in the trot one must sit close to the horse, never leaving the saddle. At canter one is very conscious of the rhythm of the horse's stride and the slightest transference of weight is instantly communicated to the horse. Therefore, when we want to canter on the left rein the aids are just as simple as on the right. Without any noticeable shifting of weight, the same procedure is carried out with the weight being carried a little to the nearside on the bend and the rein applied in the same fashion. When cantering on the left rein extra concentration is needed to keep your right shoulder back, otherwise your body does a kind of windmill action, with your left elbow paddling you along.

At the canter it is important to remain glued to your saddle and on no account to rock with the horse's stride. Sit straight and erect, and let the horse float under you while the position of your hands remains unchanged.

I have tried to explain how to ride side-saddle by the 'do-it-yourself' method hoping this will, in some measure, increase the comfort and pleasure of both horse and rider. I am bound to say at this stage that only the vigilant eye of a good instructor can give you that elusive quality called 'style.' Side-saddle riding executed with style captivates one with its grace and ease, and adds beyond measure to the total effect in the show ring. I doubt if this can ever be achieved unaided.

(Showing Side-Saddle, Part 2. A series by Rosamund Owen, February 1974, RIDING)