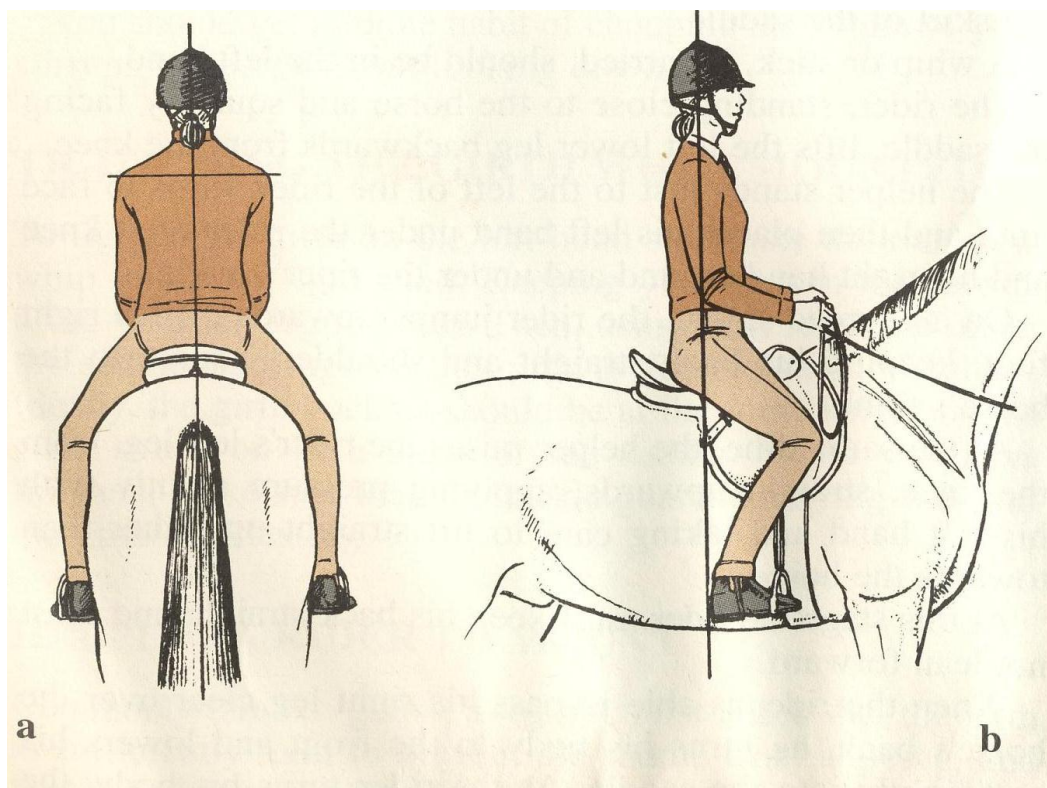




WIMBLEDON VILLAGE STABLES
— LONDON —

Rider's Position

Having mounted, you should sit in the lowest part of the saddle, your hips square with the horse's hips. You should feel the weight of your body being carried square on both seat bones. You must be straight. You should look in the direction in which you are going. Your body, while held upright, should be supple and without tension. It is particularly important for the seat, thighs and knees to lie relaxed on the saddle, as this allows the part of the leg just below the knee to rest against the horse's side.



A rider should at all times remain in balance with the movement of the horse. Suppleness at the hips, and flexibility of the spine and shoulders, will allow this. The ball of the foot should rest on the bar of the stirrup iron, exerting just enough pressure to keep the iron in place. The foot should not tilt to one side or the other. The lie of the foot from heel to toe should point almost directly forwards. The ankle should remain supple, and the heel should be slightly lower than the toe.

Seen from the side a straight line should pass from the rider's elbow through to his hand and along the rein to the horse's mouth.

The Contact

It is vitally important for you to be able to move your hands independently of your body. Your hands should move in harmony with the horse's mouth. When the horse moves his head and neck, your hands should follow that movement. The hand movement is made possible by the suppleness and mobility of your shoulders and elbows. Wrists should remain supple, but they should not bend. When you take up the reins, you should feel some weight in your hands. Ideally, you should have the same feel in your hands at all times and at all paces. *This is known as 'the contact'.* The horse should accept this contact happily and feel no pain or discomfort. He will do so only if the rider is able to 'go with' all the movements of the horse's head and neck. This will be achieved when the rider attains an independent seat (i.e. does not rely on the reins to keep his balance). The contact should give the horse a comfortably sure and confident feeling, being neither too light nor too heavy. The rider should also make alterations to the height of the hands as the horse moves his head up and down, thus maintaining the line – 'elbow, hand, horse's mouth.' Your hands and legs should always blend with the movements of the horse. Your hands should be carried with the thumbs uppermost and the back of the hands facing outwards. You should hold your wrists so that there is a straight line down the forearm and the back of the hand. You should not allow your wrists to stiffen or become tense, as this will only tend to make your elbows and shoulders tense and rigid.

