



*Rider Fitness*

“GET FIT, RIDER BETTER”





## INTRODUCTION

“Get Fit, Ride Better” that’s our mantra here at Amelia Newcomb Dressage. One of the fastest ways to improve your riding is to improve your position. And in order to improve your position, you must be fit and in control of your body!

Hi! For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Amelia Newcomb, a Grand Prix rider and trainer based in Southern California. I am passionate about sharing my knowledge about horses and riding, and helping you “learn, to love your ride.” When I started out riding at the age of 9, I was terrible. I literally fell off 11 times in the first year I was learning to ride. I was so bad that my trainer nearly told my parents I should quit! I was overweight, uncoordinated. And, if the horse I was riding did even the smallest spook, I would literally just fall off the side!

Fitness is a huge part of riding well. I ride 8-10 horses a day, but I still find it important to workout and exercise so I am fit and symmetrical in the saddle.

My goal for this PDF on Rider Fitness is to motivate you to work on your fitness and to help you design a workout routine that will directly improve your riding! When you start exercising regularly, I can guarantee that you

will start feeling more confident and secure in the saddle. As you improve your rider position and fitness, you become a better rider, and your horse will be happier.

This journey to rider fitness will have its ups and downs. To keep you on track, I would like to personally invite you to join my private Facebook Group:

### [Amelia’s Dressage Club](#)

It’s a safe space to ask questions, to celebrate wins, and to get support. Amelia’s Dressage Club is a positive and supportive community of riders, and I often offer advice in the group. I can’t wait to get to know you better!

Happy Riding!

*Amelia*





## WHY RIDER FITNESS?

*“Riding is a celebration of what your body can do!”*

-JO ELYN NEWCOMB, AMELIA’S MOM

Rider fitness is a huge part of riding. You must be fit and strong enough to control your body **before** you get in the saddle. In Dressage, we expect our horses to be straight, supple, and strong, so likewise, we must be straight, supple, and strong. It is absolutely essential that you do things out of the saddle so you can ride better!

Riding requires strength in particular parts of your body that often are not emphasized in other general fitness routines. Strengthening and stretching the muscles you use to ride with an eye for your symmetry, straightness, and flexibility will greatly improve your riding.

Plus, if your horse spooks, spins, or bucks, you **MUST** be fit and strong to stay with them and **NOT** fall off! And if, heaven forbid, you do fall off, the stronger and more fit that you are, the less likely you are to get hurt and break something. And, the quicker you will recover from your fall.

I’ve created this rider position training scale to help you visualize the importance of rider fitness. As you can see, rider fitness is the base of the training scale for rider position. That means that you have a responsibility to be

fit **before** you get in the saddle. Then, once you are in the saddle, the correct balance of aids is:

- **70%** – Seat and Core
- **20%** – Legs
- **10%** – Arms and Hands

Here’s a video that explains the Rider Position scale:

### [Ride Better: Fix Your Position](#)

Be sure to watch this video until the end to see what happens when you flop around in the saddle or stop moving with your horse. It has a huge effect on your horse!!

If you are unfit, you are a burden to your horse, and you make their job even harder. Unfit riders make horses:

- **Sore** – by sitting crooked and bouncing in the saddle.
- **Insecure** – by giving unclear aids.
- **Unbalanced** – by feeling the rider tip forward or backwards during transitions.
- **Frustrated** – by the rider having to stop and catch their breath every lap around the arena.



BALANCE

HANDS

LEG

SEAT

RIDER POSITION BASICS

RIDER FITNESS



## STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR RIDER POSITION FAULTS

What is the ONE thing that your trainer tells you over and over again about your position? When you see a photo or a video of yourself riding, what is it about your position that just makes you cringe?

Some of the most common rider position faults are listed below. Watch the videos and identify your faults.

**1. Looking Down** – not only does this put your horse on the forehand, but it also strains your neck and back. Here's a video that will help you:

[How to Look Up while Riding!](#)



**2. Tipping Forward** – this common fault makes you unstable and ineffective in the saddle - plus it puts your horse on the forehand! Here are 3 videos to help you sit back:

[How to Use Your Seat During Transitions](#)

[Alignment: Your KEY to Stability and Security in the Saddle!](#)

[Sit Back and Find Your Confidence](#)





## STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR RIDER POSITION FAULTS (Cont.)

**3. Sitting Crooked** – all riders and all horses are crooked! Here's a great video to help you identify and correct your crookedness:

### [Rider Symmetry and Straightness](#)

Want to learn more about symmetry and straightness? Watch an interview that I did with Dr. Russell Mackecknie Guire of Centaur Biomechanics:

### [Rider Position Straightness Interview](#)



**Incorrect position.** Many riders sit to the left of center and collapse their right side. Your spine should align straight above the horse's spine.

**4. Bouncing in the Saddle** – your seat should move with and absorb the motion of your horse. You must be both flexible and strong to do this!

### [How to Sit the Trot](#)



**Correct position.** The rider's spine should align straight above the horse's spine.



## STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR RIDING MUSCLES

### What muscles do you use for riding?

Think about that for a minute. Do you need to be a body builder with huge biceps and six pack abs to ride well? The answer is no. When we ride, we need to engage and use specific – often smaller – muscle groups. To ride well, you must be strong, flexible, and coordinated! Here are the most important muscles that you need for riding: The seat muscles!

### The seat muscles

Arguably the most important muscles to help you stay stable and upright in the saddle are your Gluteus Medius and your Transverse Abdominals. The Gluteus Medius muscle is what you use to put your leg on your horse and it also helps you to stay stable

in the saddle! The Transverse Abdominals, part of your core, helps you to stay stable in the saddle and to control and absorb the motion of your horse while you sit the trot and canter.

Here is a video that gives a wonderful illustration of these muscles and how they are used in the saddle:

### [Which Muscles Should you use for Riding?](#)

Your pelvis and the way that you sit in the saddle defines how you interact with and communicate with your horse. This video explains how your pelvis is stabilized and connected in the saddle:

### [Pelvis Anatomy: Do You Know What Muscles You Use to Ride?](#)





## STEP 3: START A FITNESS ROUTINE

It is incredibly important that you move your body.

### **Riding cannot be your only form of exercise.**

Even for me, riding 8-10 horses a day, I still workout and exercise 3-4 times a week! When I exercise, I visualize my rider position issues. For example, I really try to look up when I'm working out to fix my bad habit of looking down when I ride! I also really focus on my left shoulder which gets tight and twisted forward from an old injury.

### **What I recommend for fitness**

Move your body every day! Even if it is just for 20 minutes. Set a timer and dance around your house, run in place, go for a brisk walk, do some jumping jacks, and stretch a little.

### **Cardio**

You are supposed to do 90-120 min. a week of cardio. That is about 30 minutes 3-4 times per week. Moderate cardio includes riding, brisk walking, intense gardening, chores, etc. You should be moving enough to raise your heart rate and break a little sweat. You should be able to talk, but have trouble singing the words to your favorite song.

### **Stretching**

You should stretch every day preferably before you ride. It is important to note while stretching you need to think about your straightness. Be mindful that your muscles must be balanced in your body. So you may need to spend more time stretching your tight side. Do not over stretch your muscles - find a good stretch and stay in the stretch for 30 seconds. Here is

a hamstring stretch that would be good to do before you ride:

### [Hamstring Stretch for Riders](#)

### **Riding Muscle Activation Exercises**

To ride well, you do not need huge muscles like a body builder. Rather, 3-4 days a week, you need to find ways to activate your specific riding muscles before you get in the saddle so that they are "awake," and you can call them up when you need them to work for you.

### **Pilates**

Pilates is for riders what Dressage is for horses. Pilates focuses on symmetry and precision to activate your smaller, stabilizing muscles. This is a great workout for riders. I have created a course specifically to give you access to pilates exercises designed specifically for riders:

### [Rider Position Masterclass](#)

### **Focus on your core and on your legs**

We now know that when we ride, about 70% of your energy should go to your core and seat, and 20% to your legs, and only 10% to your hands and arms. Therefore, I recommend that the majority of your workout is focused on your seat and legs!

Amelia and our resident Physical Therapist Stephanie have discussed rider fitness and what types of exercise are best for riders. Here's their best advice:

### [Amelia and Stephanie on Rider Fitness](#)

*"Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."* -JIM RYUN



## STEP 4: WORKOUT TO RIDE BETTER

One thing that really motivates me to exercise is that I want to ride better. So, identify some issues that you're having in your riding - do you lean forward? Look down? Sit crooked? Do your legs swing around? Do you slouch? Then, when you exercise you are going to visualize fixing these issues in your rider position!

### Here's what I mean

Many riders struggle with their posture and with maintaining a steady contact. Their shoulders hunch forward from too much sitting at a desk or computer and their core isn't strong enough so their hands end up bouncing around all over the place.

Here are several exercises that you can do out of the saddle to improve your contact and connection when you are in the saddle:

### Contact and Connection – Fitness Exercises



### Get started today

I can promise you, if you make a commitment and start working out and exercising consistently you WILL see a difference in your riding! You must wake up your muscles and use them so that they can do their job in the saddle! Set a goal and write it down.

What are you going to do this week??

It takes 21 days to develop a habit and between 2-4 weeks to see a visible change in your flexibility and muscles.

Do one thing every day to improve your position. Even if you only have 20 minutes: set the timer and move your body. It will make a huge difference in your riding! I guarantee it!



## GET FIT, RIDE BETTER.



### Join the Dressage Rider Position Masterclass

If you're serious about your riding and about your fitness, learn more about [The Rider Position Masterclass](#). In just 6 weeks, you will get fit and transform your position. This FREE PDF is just a start. The Rider Position Masterclass will give you the exact exercises on and off the horse that you need to actually see a big difference in your riding!!

Transform your rider position with this in-depth 6-week program. You can expect to learn exactly how to use your seat, legs, and hands both on the horse and off of your horse. This unique course includes both mounted and unmounted exercises to transform your body and riding position!

You will get instruction to fix rider faults, theory of the biomechanics of both you and your horse, specific unmounted exercises designed by our resident physical therapist to strengthen and activate the muscles that are needed for riding, and work through the material with the support of your great instructors.

This is your chance! I believe in you! And I know

how much you want to improve your riding. Invest in yourself and in your education and trust my team to help you become the rider you've always dreamed of being! We're here to help you feel confident, balanced, and effective in the saddle so that you can stay glued in when your horse gets excited!

Taught by Amelia Newcomb, this course is also co-taught by Stephanie Seheult, DPT, who is part of an elite group of physical therapists recognized by the USEF to treat equestrian athletes.

This is a 6-week course and each week you get new videos, worksheets, and exercises released to you.

Week 1: Riding Position Basics

Week 2: The Seat

Week 3: The Legs

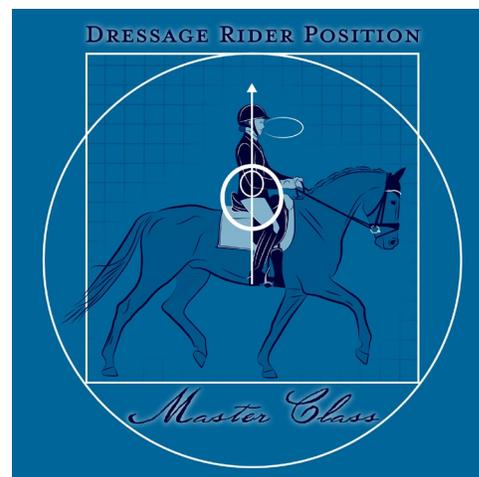
Week 4: The Hands, Arms, and Shoulders

Week 5: Circles, Turns, and Lateral Work

Week 6: Asymmetric Riders and Final Wrap Up

I will help you "get fit, ride better!" Enroll today:

### [The Rider Position Masterclass](#)





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Our mission at Amelia Newcomb Dressage is to help you

**LEARN, TO *love* YOUR RIDE**

We have a ton of FREE resources, click below to be directed to the links.

[Amelia's Dressage Club – Private Facebook Group](#)

[Amelia Newcomb Dressage on Facebook](#)

[Amelia's YouTube Channel](#)

[The Dressage with Amelia Podcast](#)

[FREE Rider Assessment Quiz](#)

[Amelia's Website](#)

[FREE PDF: Canter with Confidence](#)

