



## Turn on the Forehand

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In order to examine the exercise, we will consider a horse doing a turn on the forehand from a starting point working to the right. As the left hind leg comes under the body, that limb's adductors, quads and hip flexors will grow stronger.

At this stage, the right side of the horse is in the 'stance' phase, meaning the stabilizer and core muscles are active. Then, as the left hind is placed back on the ground the body weight begins to shift and there is a change in the active muscles. The stabilizer muscles on the left start to work with the muscles that brought the leg to this new location, and they continue to work together to hold the leg there as the body shifts over and begins to take more and more of the body weight.

Now that the left side of the horse is holding the majority of the horse's weight, the right hind begins to lift and reach laterally from the midline of the body. This movement requires the strength of the abductors to reach, and the flexibility of the adductors to allow for maximum reach. There are, of course, many other things going on in this exercise (there are two other legs to move around, of course), but this simple explanation should give the general idea of the mechanics of the turn on the forehand.

The turn on the forehand is a simple enough exercise that almost all horse owners could do, at the same time it promotes strength and flexibility together. Without enough strength, the hind leg won't reach past the midline of the body, and without enough flexibility the other hind leg will be too tight to allow the moving leg to reach past the midline.

This is where the assessment part of this exercise comes in. The rider can compare the leg movement from side to side, to see how far under the body each hind leg can reach, and how much reach the horse can support. If the horse doesn't reach as far one side, there is often an imbalance in posture, strength or weakness; this information can help the rider adapt training exercise to improve the weaknesses.

The turn on the forehand should be used as a regular part of a horse health care program.

As with anything, self-assessments should be followed up by a full assessment from your veterinarian or a qualified body worker to improve your horse's health.