

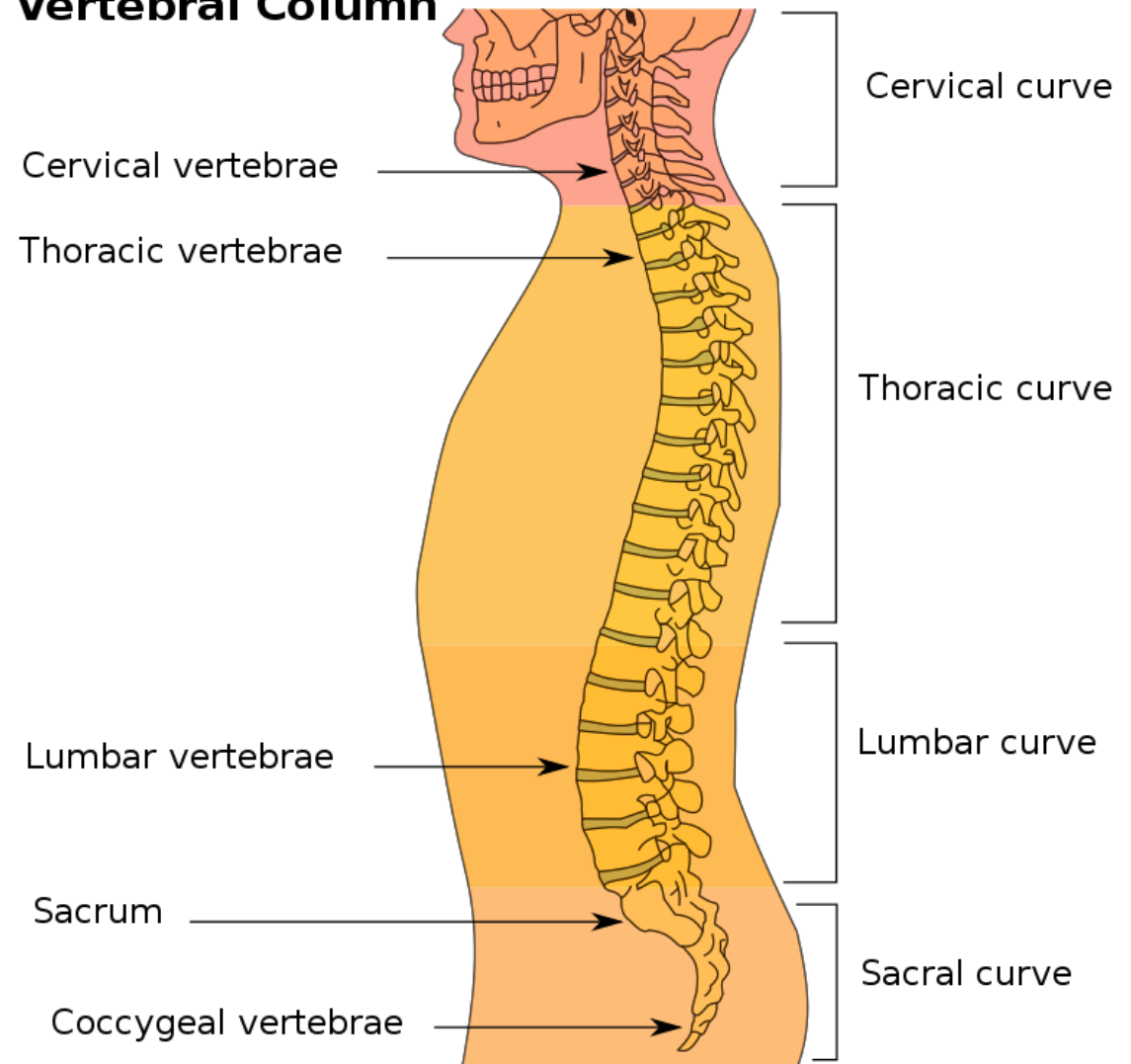
A person wearing a grey helmet and a brown t-shirt is riding a brown horse in an outdoor arena. Another person in a blue and white plaid shirt and a white cap is standing by the horse's head, possibly assisting. The background shows a dark wooden fence and a blue sky with white clouds. The text "Finding the Neutral Seat" is overlaid in white outline font.

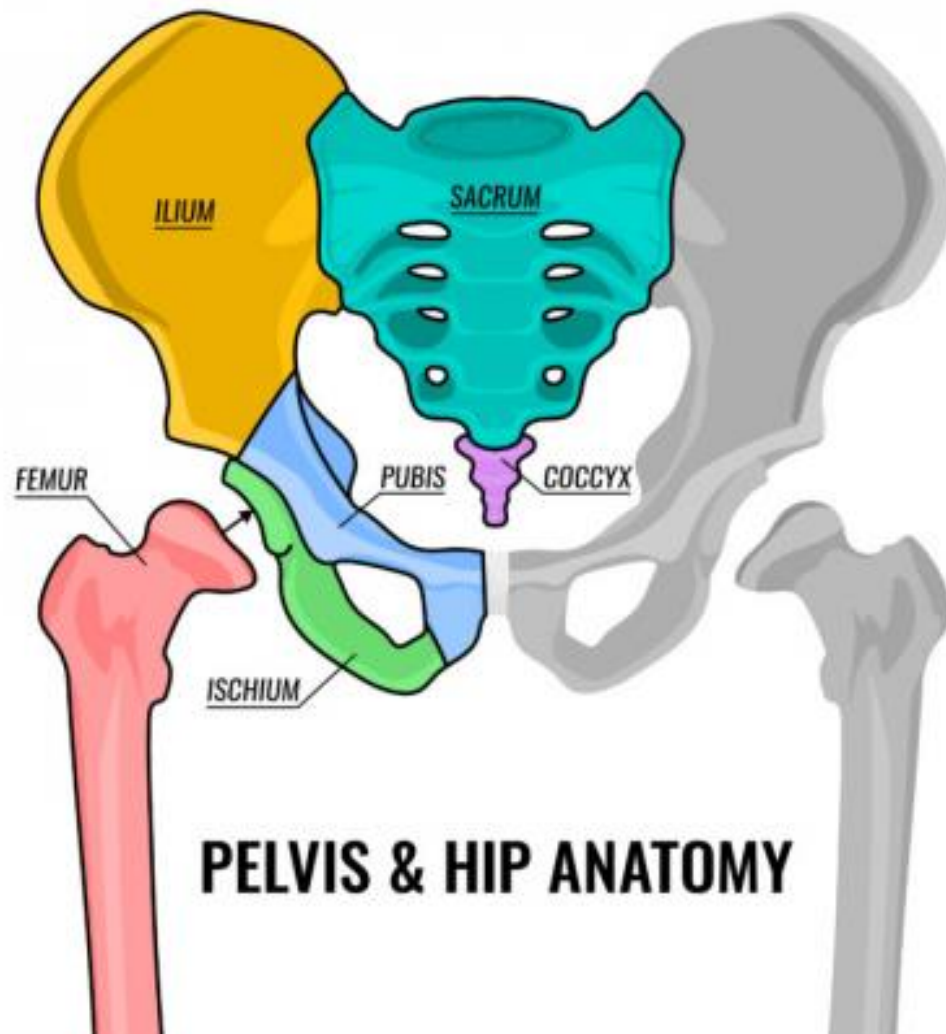
Finding the Neutral Seat

A Never-Ending Challenge

Normal Spinal Curvature

Vertebral Column





PELVIS & HIP ANATOMY

Anterior

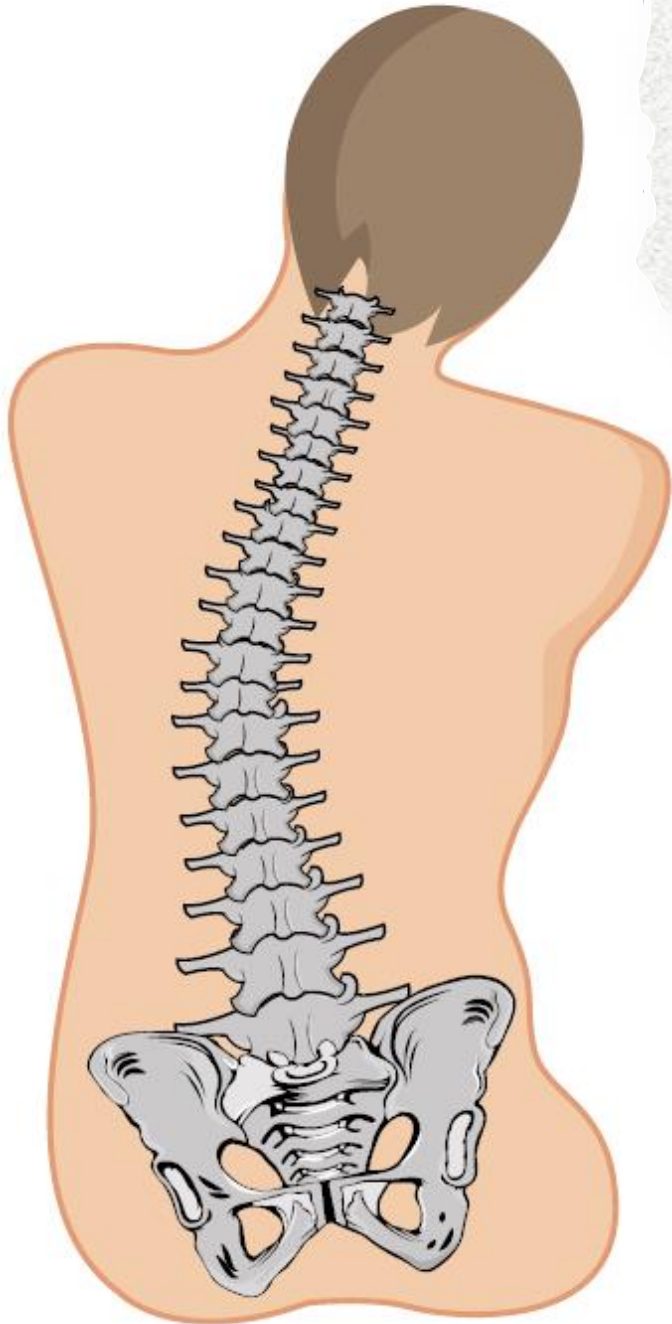


Neutral



Posterior





Asymmetrical Pelvis

Can refer to:

- Lateral Pelvic Tilt
- Pelvic Axial Rotation

May be seen in riders with:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Stroke
- Scoliosis

Rider With Asymmetrical Pelvis



Effects of Horse Size/Conformation/Movement

Too wide

- May cause posterior pelvic tilt
- May increase challenges of asymmetrical pelvis

Too narrow

- May cause anterior pelvic tilt
- May cause balance challenges

Too much movement

- May cause anterior pelvic tilt

Too little movement

- May cause posterior pelvic tilt

Effects of Saddle/Tack Choices

- Bareback pad
 - A good starting point when appropriate – helps instructor see rider's natural balance, tendencies towards anterior/posterior/asymmetric or neutral
 - Note: Wide-based, flat-backed horses are wider when bareback (tree of saddle is narrower at pommel)
- Saddle too large
 - Rider leans back into cantle causing posterior tilt
 - Rider sits closer to pommel tipping into anterior tilt
- Saddle too small
 - Cantle pushes rider into anterior tilt
 - Rider protects himself by sitting with posterior pelvic tilt

Effects of Saddle Choice (cont.)

Dressage Saddles

- Large knee rolls may hold rider's legs too far back for their range of motion causing anterior tilt OR may help rider maintain correct alignment and more neutral seat

Close Contact Saddles

- Less support may encourage forward seat position OR rider who needs sense of security may pull knees up and round back

Western Saddles

- Fenders/Stirrups may hang forward of seat – this may help some riders find neutral, others may be put into posterior pelvic position
- High swell can roll rider into more posterior position
- High cantle may encourage the rider to lean back into the support OR tip forward away from it

Effects of Stirrup Length

Stirrups too short

- Rider may tip forward with heel behind hip causing anterior pelvic tilt
- Rider may lean back and push feet forward causing posterior pelvic tilt

Stirrups too long

- May cause anterior tilt due to rider “reaching” for stirrups with toes down

Rider with Non-Physical Diagnosis



- Decreased body awareness, proprioception
- Habitual poor posture
- Initially needed physical prompts, demonstrations and verbal cues to correct position
- Now responds to verbal cues alone
- Horse provides “cause and effect” learning by refusing to walk on until rider is in upright position

Effects of Fearfulness/Anxiety



Teaching Techniques

Use Visualization

Adapt Verbal Cues

Use External Cueing

Incorporate Rider's Interests

Ask Rider to Describe, Create Name for the Position

Encourage Self-Correction

Utilize Volunteers for Prompts, Effective Support

Use Approximation

Use Exercises

Rider With Posterior Pelvic Tilt



Correcting Posterior Pelvic Tilt: Using External Cueing To Help Rider Lift Chest



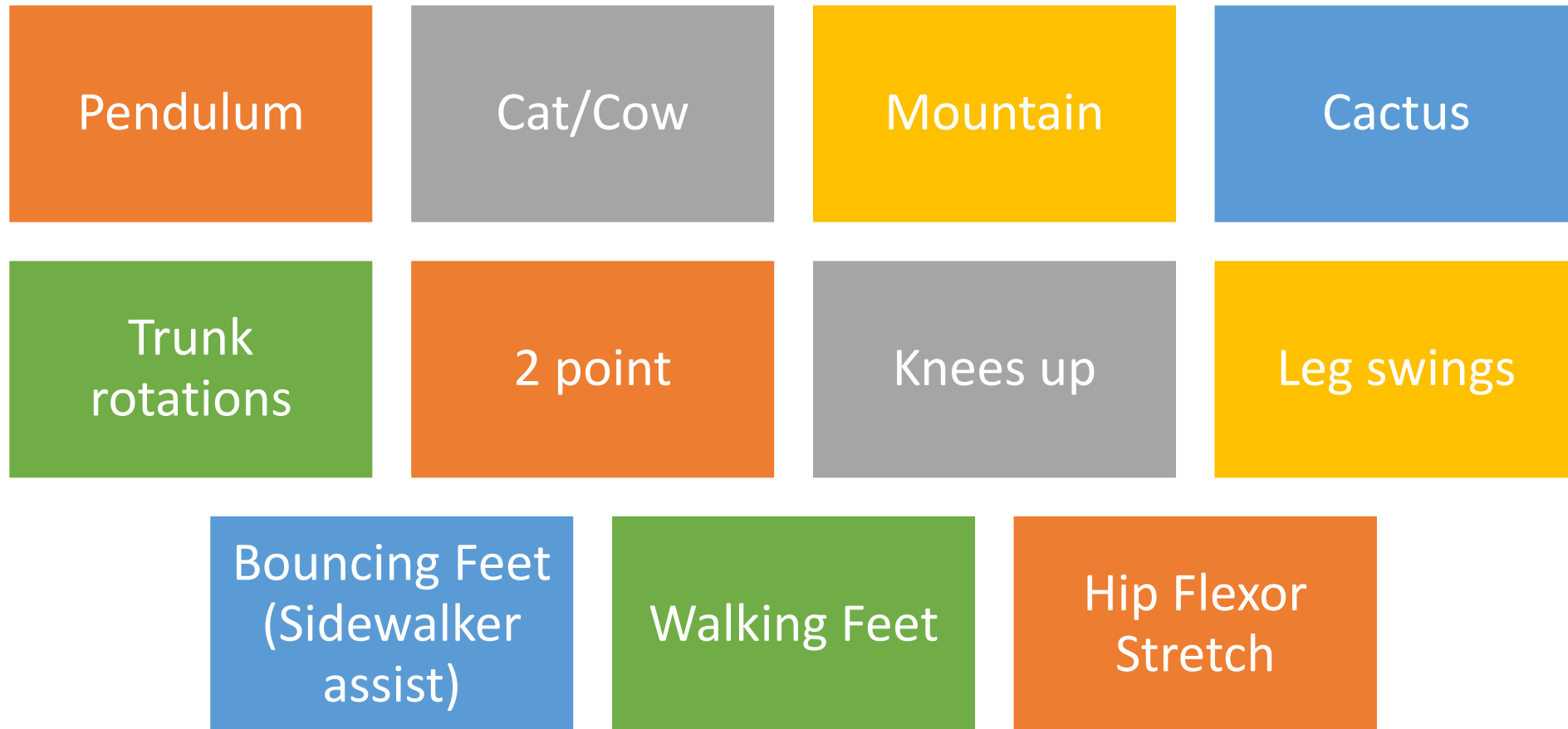


What Worked?

- External cueing using rider's interest in movies
- Sidewalker continues to prompt using the external cue



Exercises



2 Point Position



Knees Up

- Helps correct anterior pelvic tilt
- Focus on feel of seat in saddle
- Place hand on back to feel fullness of lower back
- Adapt to each rider's needs, comfort level





Leg Swings



Bouncing Feet:
If the pelvis is unrestricted (in neutral), the joints will feel springy.

Walking Feet



- Begin at halt with feet out of stirrups.
- Progress to doing at walk with feet in stirrups, gradually making the movement smaller and smaller.

Hip Flexor Stretch



Why is it so important?

- Benefits of riding with a neutral pelvis/seat
 - Improves balance and balancing reactions
 - Rider feels more confident
 - Allows rider's body to follow the horse's movement
 - Creates more effective and lighter use of leg and rein aids
 - Enables the horse to move freely



References

- Centered Riding, Sally Swift
- Connected Riding, Peggy Cummings