

How TO LOOK

The direction and the way the rider looks has mainly an impact on the balance of his trunk especially at a light canter rather than at a sitting canter.

Unfortunately, it is important first to eliminate the bad habits as was suggested for sensitivity.

The most common attitude of beginners is to focus on the ears of their horse to grasp their intentions. Then, whatever action they perform, they start gazing at the nape of their horse as if it was its face, to verify the effect of their actions.

In human relationships, it is typical and natural to look at the face of the person whom one is talking to. In equestrian sports, riders should realize that their horse is the subject they are talking to. However their horse is showing its nape and not its face. That is the reason why they should “talk” with their touch to communicate and interact with their horse.

It will suffice to look at any competition for young riders to understand how deeply rooted this habit is.

When they have to adopt more incisive corrective actions, many of them tend to stare at the nape of their horse for a longer period of time, in order to “grasp” its expression to see whether it is responding to their action or not.

Action after action, some young riders seem to keep their eyes absolutely fixed on the nape of their horse and they are no longer able to follow any planned work line.

Naturally, staring leads the rider to shift his balance. He is not aware of it, but his horse does perceive this change. Moreover, he loses sight of the course examined before the beginning of the competition. Therefore, many times the obstacle to jump is already behind his back.

This happens not only to young riders. In international competitions, riders are able to adequately mask this attitude. Some of them have not been able to completely eliminate this bad habit.

Most riders who know how to use their eyes, not the majority unfortunately, instinctively choose a light, quality canter.

Instead the riders, who have not refined this skill yet, are obliged to have a more collapsed seat, because the balance of their trunk is more stable at a sitting canter.

‘??

My experience with young riders has led me to believe that learning where to look can be even more important than learning where to position heels, hands, shoulders or hips.

Essentially there are two ways of looking: the *panoramic* and the *focalized* mode.

If the rider looks at the trajectory, well over the fence and is patient enough to wait for the obstacle to enter his visual field without focusing on it and without looking downwards, he is using the *panoramic* mode:

If, instead, as the fence approaches, he keeps his eyes focused on the obstacle, he is using the *focalised* mode:

The difference is:

- in the *focalised* mode, as the fence approaches, the quality, light canter starts deteriorating. The balance of the rider markedly shifts forward together with that of the horse; moreover, the mid-air phase, the landing and the following strides are not planned in time; the rider's main concern is related to the distance to the fence.; the horse loses his regular stride, especially because the rider is *focused* on the right take-off; as a result, he slows down to have more time and calm and then pushes abruptly as soon as he *sees*, that is almost always late; the change of pace becomes a further problem for the horse. All the things this rider is doing are wrong!
- In the *panoramic* mode, the balance of the rider and consequently that of the horse are not at all affected; the rider is perfectly able to act on the horse's strides that precede the take-off, without focusing his eyes neither on the fence nor on the area adjacent to it; he looks forward along the trajectory and is already preparing for the landing, the following strides and the change in direction, if necessary; in addition his attention remains primarily concentrated on the light, quality canter and on the pace and the regularity of the stride.