



Canter Test 3: Shoulder-In, Travers, Rein-Back, Walk-Canter.

1.	A	Enter at trot and proceed down the centre line.	Straightness of rider			
			Rhythm and tempo			
2.	C HE	Track left. Shoulder-in left, in trot.	Straightness of rider			
			Shoulder-in			
3.	E EK	10m circle left. Travers, in trot.	Aids			
			Travers			
4.	A	Trot-halt, immobility 3-5 seconds	Trot-halt transition			
5.	A	Rein back 3-5 steps then walk forward.	Rein-back			
			Aids			
			Contact			
6.	A A	Walk-canter transition Canter a 20m circle.	Walk-canter transition			
			Rhythm and tempo			
			Position (X2)			
7.	A	Canter - walk (can go through a few steps of trot)	Aids			
8.	FXH H	Change the rein, free walk on a long rein. Medium walk	Relaxation of horse			
			Stretching down			
			Rhythm and tempo			
9.	C MB	Trot Shoulder-in right	Shoulder-in			
			Aids			
10.	B BF	10m circle Travers, in trot.	Travers			
			Straightness of rider			
11.	A	Trot-halt, immobility 3-5 seconds	Trot-halt transition			
12.	A	Rein back 3 steps then walk forward.	Rein-back			
			Relaxation of horse			
			Rhythm and tempo			
13.	A A	Walk-canter transition Canter a 20m circle	Walk-canter transition			
			Accuracy of circle			
			Synchronisation (X2)			
14.	A	Transition to trot, go large.	Canter-trot transition			
15.	E	Half 10m circle with incline to the track at K	Accuracy			
16.	A X	Turn down the centreline. Halt, salute.	Accuracy			
			Halt transition			
Total						Maximum 102



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This test is for horses who are just beginning canter work in the arena. We introduce canter work fairly late in the horse's training. Only once he has built his strength and balance through lateral work in walk and trot, is he ready to begin canter in the arena. The horse is used to cantering in straight lines, in open spaces, and is now established and balanced in rising and sitting trot. He should easily be able to maintain balance in direct and indirect transitions between halt, walk and trot and throughout lateral work in walk and trot. We introduce walk-canter transitions almost immediately once canter work has begun, because it is easier for the horse and rider to maintain balance in the direct transition. A balanced transition is the key to a good canter. We do not expect the horse to maintain the canter for very long, because at first it is hard for him to maintain the quality of the gait for more than a few strides. Quality is more important than quantity. In this way, we are setting the horse up to remain balanced throughout the canter, and produce a balanced downward transition as well.

The trot work can be in sitting or rising trot, and as always the trot should have a slow and calm tempo. The trot should be fairly collected so that lateral work can be carried out in balance. In the sitting trot, the movement is absorbed by the rider's seatbones, moving alternately in time with the two halves of the horse's back. If both seatbones move together instead of separately, the rider is not correctly synchronised, and can result in too much movement of the rider's body, hands, legs and head.

This test incorporates a small amount of shoulder-in and travers, in trot, as well as a rein-back just before the canter transition. Straightness of the rider are vitally important in these exercises, along with correct body alignment and correct timing of the leg aids. For shoulder-in, the rider's shoulders turn to the inside, and the inside leg is used in a forward position. For travers, the rider's body faces towards the outside of the arena, parallel with the horse's quarters, with the inside hip inclined slightly forward, the same positioning as for a turn. The rider looks in the direction of movement, and the outside leg is used in time with the horse's outside hind. The horse should be bent in the direction of movement (down the track). The inside leg maintains the bend, and must be forward. The rider must take great care not to sit to the outside, or weight the outside seatbone.

The rein-back helps the horse to engage the hindquarters. This is excellent preparation for a balanced canter transition. The movement should be unhurried, with even steps taken. The contact must remain light, and the body is inclined slightly forward with the legs slightly back. The horse must remain relaxed throughout the movement.

In the canter, the rider's hips move in a circle –forward, up, back, down. The “up” part of the movement synchronises with the moment of suspension, and helps keep the horse off his forehead. Too much forward and back, or “polishing of the saddle” blocks the movement. The rider should emphasise the “up” phase of the circle, and in reality moves very little in the saddle.

This test introduces canter to walk transitions. A few steps of trot are permissible, the priority being a smooth and soft transition. The transition should not be abrupt or forced.