

EMA

Equine Massage Academy Ltd

Therapy Education Research

How to Do a Correct Movement Check on Your Horse



Damaging Movement



Most horse owners rely on how their horse feels under saddle. But what if you could see what's really going on—before issues become serious? A simple movement check can give you valuable insight into your horse's comfort, symmetry, and way of going.

And the best part? You don't need any special equipment.

Step 1: Observe Your Horse Standing

Before your horse even moves, you can learn a lot.

Look for:

- Even weight through all four legs
- A level topline (not standing hollow or braced)
- Standing square—or consistently resting one leg

👉 A horse that avoids loading a limb may be compensating.

Step 2: Walk Away and Back (Straight Lines)

Ask someone to walk your horse away from you, then back towards you.

Watch for:

- Evenness in steps
- Swing through the body

- Straightness
- Head carried straight and forward
- Tail carried centrally

Key things to notice:

- Do the hocks lift evenly?
- Do the hips move evenly?
- Listen to the hoof sounds—are they equal or is one loading lighter or heavier than another?

Step 3: Observe From the Side (Walk & Trot)

This is where stride and flow become clearer.

Look for:

- Stride length
- Rhythm and regularity
- Willingness to move forward
- Tracking up

Ask yourself:

- Does the movement look fluid or restricted?
- Is there a difference between front and hind movement?
- Is the tail clamped?

Step 4: Compare Left vs Right

Many issues only show on one side.

Watch your horse on both reins and notice:

- Which side feels easier
- Which side looks more restricted
- Differences in bend or step length

👉 Asymmetry is one of the biggest clues to underlying issues.

Step 5: Look for Subtle Clues

These are often the most important:

- Head nodding or lifting
- Tail swishing or clamping
- Tension through the back (hollowing)
- Reluctance to move forward
- Short, choppy stride

👉 These signs may be small—but they matter.

Step 6: Lunge on Both Reins (Walk & Trot)

This is where issues often become more obvious.

Lunge your horse on a circle on both reins and observe:

- Rhythm and consistency of the gait
- Willingness to move forward on each rein
- Differences in balance or bend
- Inside hind engagement
- Any stiffness, drifting, or resistance

Ask yourself:

- Does one rein look noticeably harder than the other?
- Is there a difference in stride length or rhythm?
- Does your horse struggle to maintain the circle evenly?

👉 Circles place more demand on the body—so weaknesses and discomfort often show up more clearly here. Remember when on a circle the inside leg takes most of the weight!

Why This Matters?

If you start to notice small changes—especially if they come and go—it's often an early warning sign.

And the reality is:

👉 What looks “mild” can escalate quickly if missed.

Understanding what's normal for your horse—and recognising when something isn't—is one of the most important skills any owner can have and can save thousands of £'s in the long run from downtime, vet bills and a rehabilitation programme.

Want a More In-Depth System?

The simple check list above is a great starting point—but it's just scratching the surface.

Inside our bite size, no work courses we teach you a full, structured approach to:

- Assessing your horse's movement in detail
- Identifying restrictions and imbalances
- Improving movement, comfort, performance, and longevity

Because when you can see what your horse is telling you... you can truly help them.

A little investment can save you thousands of £'s in the long run - in vet bills, downtime and potentially a rehabilitation programme to help put your horse right.

First choice courses:

- The Full Extent of Equine Lameness [LINK](#)

- Equine Conformation, Biomechanics and Beyond [LINK](#)
- Equine Massage for Horse Owners (here we teach you how to assess your horses' muscles as well as help them) [LINK](#)
- Equine Rehabilitation – A Guide to Injury, Recovery and Performance [LINK](#)

Follow up courses:

- Equine Musculoskeletal Health, Training and Rehabilitation: A Comprehensive Guide for Professional Riding Coaches – but this is a great course for anyone not just riding coaches and you WILL learn a lot [LINK](#)

Keep Your Horse Moving Well, Happy and Injury Free!

Our courses are approved by:

