



The Rider's Guide to Real Collection: Achieve Willingness, Balance and the Perfect Frame with Performance Horses

Stacy Pigott, Lynn Palm

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Written for riders who wish to extend their horses' athletic lives and make them better, happier performers, this guide defines the practice of collection and explains how to train horses in it. Collection, or self-carriage, involves a horse carrying more weight on its hind legs than its front legs, allowing it to move more easily and perform more beautifully—but it can be difficult to achieve. Exercises for varying skill levels, riding styles, and horses help riders learn what qualifies as collection and how to attain it. Tips on how to avoid the most common bad habits and mistakes are also included in this manual that is beneficial to riders and horses everywhere.

Collection is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Western and English riding. Everyone wants it, but few people know how to get it. World-class rider, trainer, and clinician Lynn Palm now offers the one and only book that explains away the mysteries of collection while telling you exactly how to attain it. With 30 years experience riding and training champion all-around performance horses, and a background in dressage, Lynn has perfected an easy-to-use system of exercises that gradually collect any type of horse, regardless of his build, and that are of particular value to stock horse breeds such as Quarter Horses, Paints, and Appaloosas.

Lynn assures us that every horse can achieve and move in a collected frame with time and patience, and learning how to bring him into true collection helps you improve his performance; create a more willing equine partner; extend his physical and mental longevity; and enjoy riding him even more than you already do. Real collection proves elusive because—until now—the instructions for achieving it have been complex, incomplete, or even incorrect. The result (false collection) is often based on a forced headset and little else. This is uncomfortable and unhealthy for the horse, and can lead to behavioral problems and physical breakdown.

Real collection is actually a complete tail-to-nose package of supple muscle and hind-end-generated impulsion: the hind legs step further under the body, the horse's back rounds, he flexes at the poll, and the rider's seat, legs, and hands connect it all. It is with this "frame," as it has come to be called, that the horse becomes more athletic—his forehead lightens, enabling him to maneuver his front end more quickly, his steps become cadenced, and his movement free-flowing.

To achieve this desirable "fluidity," Lynn begins on the ground with in-hand exercises—free lungeing, ground-driving, and lungeing-and-biting—to gain the horse's trust and improve his responses to cues and commands. She then explains how you start in the saddle with simple transitions—such as halt-walk-halt—and gradually progress through stages that include more difficult transitions between gaits and markers; lengthening and shortening of stride; yielding on diagonal, straight, and curving lines; turns on the forehand and haunches; shoulder-in and shoulder-fore; haunches-in and haunches-out; half-pass; and simple and flying lead changes.

As the horse gains conditioning and increases his strength over time, long-and-low work and stretching down encourage him to "give" to the bit and flex at the poll. This, in coordination with Lynn's progressive exercises and training figures such as loops, figure eights, and serpentine, eventually leads to the beautiful, balanced frame of the responsive, collected horse that every rider dreams of: happy, healthy, willing, and

ready to be competitive in the show pen or just simply a great pleasure to ride.

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