

Forward Position

The first exercise every good rider must master is the forward position. In the forward position a rider stands with their seat raised out of the saddle keeping a bend in their hips, knees and ankles. The forward position allows the rider to maintain perfect balance with their entire weight over their heels. This is the position from which a rider would jump a log on the trail or chase a calf while swinging a rope. It is also the best position to test, strengthen and develop fundamental form.

□ Forward Position

In the forward position, the rider's weight is balanced over the heels. Hip, knees and ankles are all flexed with closed angles. Rider's seat is 3-4 inches out of the saddle. Leg is back under the seat not forward or ahead. Press heel down and back, towards the horse's hind feet.



Photo credit Rachel Reilly

1. With reins in one hand, hold the saddle horn and pull your seat out of the saddle.
2. Once standing, try not to hold yourself up by hanging onto the horn. Use it to steady or stretch only.
3. Sink your weight down into your heels. This allows your ankles to flex as if you were standing on a stair where the stirrup acts like a step.
4. Your ankles should remain flexed breaking in toward the horse's side – the sole of the boots exposed to the outside – as if showing the bottoms of your feet to an observer.
5. While you do not want to bounce, your ankle should flex. The foot springing up and down allows your leg to guide your horse as it would if seated.
6. Find the place where you can balance without holding the horn. This is the proper position.
7. The most common mistake is not closing your hip, knee or ankle joints. Keep a bend in these joints and lower your seat closer to the saddle. Do not stand up straight as if standing on the ground.

Ride in the forward position often. Start at the walk making sure you can hold the position without using your hand on the horn to keep your seat off the saddle before moving onto the jog and lope. Eventually you will be able to hold the forward position without your feet in the stirrups. Standing in the saddle should be relatively easy with or without stirrups. When you can maintain balance without the aid of a stirrup or a saddle horn, you are in the right position.

Find more exercises like this in Horsemanship 101 + Horsemanship Homework available at www.TheGoodRider.com