

and when the left rein touches her left shoulder, it tells her that both of her shoulders should go right.

In dressage and all other styles of English riding, we steer with a direct rein. That means when we want the horse to turn to the right, we use the right rein. Not only do we want the horse looking right, both of his shoulders must follow the directional hand. Additionally, by default, we use the outside rein at the same time to define the perimeter (the geometric arc of the turn). In a perfect world of direct reining, there wouldn't be any counter flexion in the turn or circle as the horse maintains contact with the outside rein.

My guess is that your mare is just misunderstanding your aids and intentions. She is probably used to the left

rein telling her shoulders to move right instead of merely following your (inside) right rein. It's as if you and your horse are speaking two different languages. You cannot communicate with each other until you teach her to be bilingual.

Going large in the arena (full school) is the easiest because it defines her direction and perimeter. As soon as you try to direct a figure (circle, diagonal, etc.), you are using the direct-rein principle for steering, but your mare flies through her outside shoulder, getting twisted and contorted. Essentially, instead of following the direction of your inside rein, she's going totally opposite "out" the outside shoulder until the arena fence stops her. Instead of going right to turn right, she drifts left until

the arena fence forces her to eventually turn right. Technically, she's going left to turn right.

Assuming your mare is good-natured, but confused, you can teach her this new direct-rein (turning) language by introducing it in small doses. You rely on her obedience of her Western training and use the outside rein to initiate the command while, at the same time, maintaining contact with the inside rein, which will then give her confidence to follow the direction of that rein. Essentially, you are guiding her around slightly counter-flexed (which is normal to her Western training) while adding the contact, with equal pressure, of the now-guiding inside rein. If the coordination of this activity seems too awkward, or if your

mare is simply playing on your inexperience, you must find a local trainer to help you. A trainer can solve this very quickly if it is just honest confusion on your horse's part. If the situation is a deeper, darker scenario, which can lead eventually to more serious disobedience, then you absolutely need to have a trainer handle it.

Note that if the steering problem has festered into a disobedience problem, it can take more time for a professional to fix. In the long run, though, money spent for a trainer's expertise in fixing a discipline problem is money wisely spent. Your safety alone hinges on that.

The bottom line for reschooling is to try the direct-rein approach with some counter flexion to teach her to follow your boundaries.