

7 Bonus Balance Tips to Make You a Better Rider

We spend a lot of time teaching our horses to be straight and go straight.

One of the best things we can do to improve them is to train ourselves to be straight too.

If we are not evenly balanced on top of them,

They have no choice but to compensate for us.

1. Stand on one foot while you brush your teeth. Practice more on your less stable side. If that's too easy, close your eyes like in the test. This will activate your core muscles and train your body to adjust to what it's feeling.
2. Notice how you clean the stall, sweep, maybe even carry your saddle. We tend to use one side of our body more than the other. We can not ride evenly if we aren't evenly muscled. Notice all the different things you do in the day that require more strength or coordination on one side. Riding is not one of them. It requires even aids and coordination so why not practice when you're not on your horse.
3. Be aware of how you sit. Do you lean, or maybe you slouch or combine the two? What ever your preference, we tend to favor leaning the same way. We like to sit at the same end of the couch or same side of our chair. Practice sitting up straight, no arm rests. Sitting on an exercise ball is really good. Even in our sleep we have a preferred side so while you're awake lay on the other one, or try sleeping on the other side of the bed and see if that changes it.
4. Do you lean forward when you walk? Our habits on the ground become our habits in the saddle. Check yourself when you pass a window or mirror. Make yourself a little sandbag from a ziplock bag and sand and wear it on your head as you do your chores.

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Can you keep your back straight and not drop your sand? Do you end up holding your head funny because your body is not straight?

5. When you're working on your computer do you keep your ears level? I use the mouse in my right hand and tip my head to the left. I also lean left if there's arm rests. Practice using your mouse in the other hand or put that sandbag on your head. As you sit, so shall you ride.
6. Chances are good if you drive an automatic and do brake and gas with the same foot, you'll ride with that heel lower than the other foot. Every time you pull toes up on one foot to change pedals, pull the toes up on the other foot just to keep yourself even.
If you tend to brake with the opposite foot, or drive a standard that will tend to be your lower heel. Watch for opportunities to raise the toes on the opposite foot. Perhaps while slowing down or stopping. Just to keep yourself even. While we're discussing heels, the toes of both feet can be pulled up while you're working on your computer or watching TV.
7. I find I sit a lot during the day, either on a horse or at my computer. This shortens the muscles down the front of my thighs (quads) and my hip flexors which contributes to me leaning forward. You can stretch when you get off your horse but you should not stretch cold muscles so if you've been sitting at your desk you can have a brisk walk around, or up and down the stairs and then do your stretches.