

Hip Fold Exercise

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There are many great exercises for riders. There are actually no bad exercises, only good exercises done poorly. I am often asked, “Are squats good” and my reply is always, “Only if they are done correctly”. I say that because they are one of the most poorly done exercises of all time! Squats should target the gluteal or ‘butt’ muscles primarily. If they are felt to stress mostly the front of the thigh, or quadriceps muscle, they are being done incorrectly.

The first thing that a rider needs to be able to do in order to do a good squat is fold the hip, or make the hip crease deeper. Many riders roll too far back on their back pockets (see picture 1), which is not healthy for their back or the horse’s. These riders are often referred to as having a ‘hot seat’ and tend to jump ahead of the horse or open too early in the air because their hip angle doesn’t close easily (see picture 2). This problem is usually due to tight hips and/or weak gluteal muscles.

To ensure that the hips are mobile enough, stand facing a counter with arms outstretched in front (picture 3). Allow the knees to softly bend while the sit bones push **as far back as possible** and the tailbone lifts. The lower back should be flat or even slightly arched. Feel the stretch in the back of the inner thigh or around the sit bones. Hold for 10 breaths and repeat 3 times. If the hips or legs are tight, this should be repeated 4-5 times per day, as well as before and after every ride. Once the hips are more mobile, doing squats correctly will be much easier. For good squat exercises stay tuned for the September edition!

