Drill Practice Hints

**Numbers:** Any number of riders is workable. A minimum of eight (8) riders is a core, with a maximum of 16 to 20 riders, as optimal.

**Horses:** Teams may work with horses of various colors and sizes. Horses shall be cooperative, and not likely to buck, bite or kick. They should be acceptable to bumping or leaning up against each other. The goal is to combine horses of color, size, stride, disposition and ability.

**Verbal Instruction:** The SUCCESS of any team is based essentially upon the behavior of each rider and their mount. It is important to listen, be respectful, and try to work within the group structure.

**The Clock:** Almost all drill maneuvers/instructions are gauged in the arena by the time clock.
* Riders always enter the arena from 6:00
* The opposite end of the arena (from the out gate) is 12:00
* The rider’s right side of the arena is 3:00, and
* The rider’s left side of the arena is 9:00

**Whistle:** All riders need to listen for the whistle!
* One (1) blast means to proceed,
* Two (2) blasts means to STOP IMMEDIATELY (look up and around)

**Drill Etiquette/Practice Tips:**
★ Warm up your horse at home (prior to practice), and be prepared to begin riding.

★ Give full attention to drill (minimize talking/visiting)

★ Avoid criticism/critique of others (members and/or their horses)

★ Keep horse under control

★ Keep an open mind, and listening ears, for working drill maneuvers

★ Be willing to ride/drill when called upon (taking turns in positions)

★ Acclimate new/young horses into drill (to avoid being bit or kicked)

★ Nose-to-Nose horse contact should be avoided, where possible.

★ Everyone hold reins in the same manner

★ Keep horse & equipment fairly clean (per weather/arena conditions)

★ Accustom horse to Flags/Radio/Music and loud noises (as learned)

★ Avoid “showing off” (NO running or exciting other rider’s horses)

★ Remove a horse from the drill program, prior to any discipline

★ Assist other riders 1 on 1 (ONLY when asked) for Success!

Spacing: The following are working guidelines:

★ One-horse spacing = approximately 10’

★ Two-horse spacing = approximately 20’

★ Three-horse spacing = approx. 30’ and so on.

★ Nose to Knee (your horse’s nose on the rider’s knee in front of you)

★ Nose to Tail (your horse’s nose on the horse’s hip in front of you)

★ Inside/Outside Hip (your horse’s nose to the inside/outside of the horse in front of you)

Horse/Rider Alignment:

★ Saddle horn to Saddle horn (lateral alignment of riders)

★ Riders in Fours guide to outside riders, unless otherwise instructed

★ Lines of Eight (i.e. Company Front) guide to Center riders

★ Sweeps or Charges guide to designated direction (horse’s leads)

Drill Speed: There are several variations of the LOPE

★ Compulsory Speed = Equitation style lope (slow & collected/precision)

★ Moderate/Hand Gallop = Good working pace for practice sessions

★ Competition Speed = Push the window on speed, but always in Control!

Broken Gaits: Horses should avoid any “jogging” during a drill routine, unless requested as the “change of pace” maneuver.

Briskness: Is often CONFUSED with speed. Briskness is actually how team members mentally and visually communicate with each other during a drill performance. It can be a specific “look” or a subtle directive between leaders, or pairs of riders.

Equitation: A “working” equitation style shall be stressed. Reins will be held correctly according to type and style. Also, remember to ride in your own stirrups (toes in please). 😊

Flags: Shafts are perpendicular, and any flags or pennants are never to be wrapped around poles, unless taking into consideration the safety of others. Elbow close to body, bent at 90degree angle.
Stopping: **NEVER STOP** while riding in a drill program, unless

- Instructed to do so by the double-whistle
- To avoid a crash/collision, or
- You have broken tack/equipment

**Horses having difficulty** should be politely removed, or ridden to the side/corner of the arena. Other riders should proceed with the least amount of disturbance, as possible.

**Training Procedures:** At times, it may be necessary to discipline your horse, although over batting, hitting, or constant discipline of a horse shall not be tolerated.

Be **CONSIDERATE** of other horses and riders around you. Remove yourself from the situation first (prior to any corrective actions to your horse) as not to cause injury or accident to other riders near by.

**Drill Positions:** The Drill Master assigns Drill positions. Rider positions will be changed multiple times during the season to obtain the BEST working relationships for the entire riding group.

**Rider Attitude:** Be patient, cooperative, and always respectful of everyone!

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**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**TEAM:** A group of people trained or organized to work **together**.

**DRILL:** A physical or mental exercise to perfect a skill by **regular** practice.

**HORSEMANSHIP:** Properly taught, always puts the blame or failure on the rider, never the horse, as the expert horseman can, by his skill, put the most sluggish or obstinate horse through his paces. Equitation shall be stressed, adapted for drill purposes. Riders should sit their saddles in a good, easy manner. Only one hand to be on the reins. Position in the saddle should be erect, with the seat flat in the saddle. Hitting the horses with the reins, or excessive spurring, is to be penalized.
MOUNTED TROUP ORGANIZATION: Emphasis is put on improvement, courtesy, neatness and high morale. The rider learns to think, not only of and for herself and her horse, but also of and for the other members of her unit. If the unit does not function properly, it is her who is to blame.

SPACING: Refers to the amount of space between your horse's nose and the tail of the horse in front of you. Maintaining a uniform distance between all horses throughout an entire maneuver. Distance may be varied as long as spaces are equal.

1) HEAD-TO-TAIL OR NOSE-TO-TAIL: Your horse's head is within one foot of the tail of the horse you are following.

2) ONE-HORSE: Approximately ten (10) feet between your horse's head and the tail of the horse you are following.

3) ONE-AND-ONE-HALF: Approximately fifteen (15) feet between horses (as measured above).

4) TWO-HORSE: Approximately twenty (20) feet between horses.

5) TWO-AND-ONE-HALF: Approximately twenty-five (25) feet between horses.

ALIGNMENT: Refers to when you are riding next to a partner, or group or across the arena from each other.

1) KNEE-TO-KNEE: Your knee should be directly opposite, or even with your partner's knee.
2) SADDLE HORN-TO-SADDLE HORN: Your saddle horn should be directly opposite, or even with, your partner's saddle horn.

3) SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER: Your shoulder should be directly opposite, or even with, your partner's shoulder.

**ALIGNMENT is always based on and judged in relation to the riders' bodies. The riders are to be aligned in pairs or groups regardless of the position of the horses' heads. Vertical or horizontal alignment in the maneuvers of a team. Lines should always be straight, whether in squads, columns or company front.

SINGLE-FILE: One horse following another in a straight line.

PAIRS: Groups of two (2) horses aligned side-by-side.

FOURS or QUADS: Groups of four (4) horses aligned side-by-side.

COMPANY FRONT: All riders aligned side-by-side, usually at a halt facing the audience or drill advisor.

Example: X X X X X X X X X

OUTSIDE HORSE: When in pairs, fours, or larger groups the horse nearest the wall, or rail of the arena. The outside horse "swings" the group around corners.

INSIDE OR PIVOT HORSE: When in pairs, fours, or larger groups the horse nearest the center of the arena.
**OBLIQUE:** When in a group your horse's head is aligned with your partner's knee.

Example:  

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\times \\
\times \uparrow \\
\times \\
\times \\
\end{array}
\]  
*(Direction of travel)*

**BROKEN GAITS:** Jogging during the loping phase, or loping during the jogging phase.

**FLAG & PENNANT CARRIAGE:** The shafts must be perpendicular, forearm parallel to ground, elbows should be flexed at a right angle, the emblem should be pointed forward; flag should be kept free and not allowed to wind around the pole.
Execution of the Drill: Common Faults

Irregular alignment of the maneuver in the arena:
Circles not centered in the arena:

Left circle centered—
Right circle off center—

Wedding rings not centered:

Left wedding ring centered—
Right wedding ring alignment skewed sideways

Wedding ring circles not the same size
Figure "8" circles not same size
Circle not round
New Rider Basics

1. Rating your horse - Staying in Gait
   (Going slow, speeding up, going slow again while keeping the correct spacing between horses)

2. Spacing - Keeping the space between horses consistent
   (Cones @ 10 ', then 15', then 20' when single file. Looking R & L when in Line abreast)

3. Alignment
   (Straight line single file, Pairs, threes, fours. Also applies to line abreast, keeping horses evenly space between horses on each side)

4. Picking up a Lope from a stand still
   (Important skill for pivot or post positions)

5. 45 degree turn - Constant use in ALL drills
   (then 180, 270, 360)

6. Pivot when in a turning line abreast - Can only go as fast as the outside rider
   (Make a small circle - always moving forward, look both R & L. Look across the BACK of the other line)

7. Oblique/Slant
   (Staying at designated position n/k, n/h etc. Keep even spacing between horses)

8. Circles - Watching opposite
   (Use of the clock - Entry gate is always 6 o'clock)

9. Crosses - Single File, Pairs, threes, fours
   (Always aim for the tail of the horse you are crossing behind)

10. Riding with one hand on the reins - left hand if carrying flags
THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF ANY GOOD DRILL TEAM ARE

CORRECT SPACING AND ALIGNMENT - Correct spacing and alignment lead to good timing. Judges look for correct spacing and alignment more than anything else.

SPACING - Single File

Establish horse length(s) - have riders line up nose-to-tail, have alternate riders side pass out of line. Explain what to look for in front of your horse (hocks, tail, feet, etc.) Do the same for two-horse spacing. Have riders move around the arena at walk and trot until they feel fairly comfortable at one-horse spacing. Practice at a lope. It is harder and adjustments are more difficult. First rider in line MUST keep a steady pace. Move the riders often into the line so they practice being behind different horses, and/or are not always in the front or back.

LINES - Straight - Single File

Establish what to look at/for. The first rider in line focuses on wall directly in front (post, banner, window, etc.), following riders focus on rider directly in front of them (hat, shoulder blades, etc.) Have every rider practice in every position because they are all different.
CORNERS (90 DEGREE TURNS)

Ninety (90) degree turns (square corners) are an important part of most drills, especially when coming off the wall and going toward the center of the arena, or vice-versa. When done correctly they make the side-by-side spacing correct. Learn to do these turns at a walk and trot. Encourage riders to practice every time they are in the arena during warm up time. Teach a half-halt/check (allows horses to gather their feet under them) turn on the rear (use leg at shoulder to turn front end around) and push off in a straight line. When at a walk or trot ALWAYS make turns square or ninety degrees.

How to corner when in pairs, fours, etc. - Rider on wall speeds up BEFORE the corner, rider on inside (away from wall) hesitates BEFORE the corner then speeds up to keep the group even.

SPACING - Line Abreast - Pairs, Fours, etc.

How to establish a line, what/who to guide from, where to look – each group may do this differently. Our club tries to keep the riders shoulder-to-shoulder. Horses are different lengths, judges focus on riders. The center rider(s) establish the speed, with outside riders going slower or faster as appropriate. Move riders in each pair or line
so everyone experiences each position.

**DIAGONAL LINES - Single File & Pairs**

Once again - lead riders focus on corner or center marking on wall, following riders focus on rider directly in front. AT CORNER be sure riders following do not turn early, make sure they go to the wall before they turn to follow the leader.

**SINGLE THREAD/CROSS - DIAMOND THREAD/CROSS**

Center the cross in the arena - use a markers if necessary. Keep SPACING constant - extremely important - without even spacing the TIMING will be off which can lead to collisions. Start with two horse lengths then begin to shorten to one horse-space as riders become more experienced or familiar.

Where to aim during the cross - focus on crossing directly BEHIND the rear of the horse in the other line - NOT hitting the space. Move riders to the front of the line so everyone has that experience.

**CIRCLES - Individual**

How to keep circle round - from single file line have riders begin individual circles - when going in arc look at the first rider in the line; at the peak of the arc change focus - look at last rider in line. This
way everyone ends up back in line at the same time.

**CIRCLES** - Begin with four riders

How to keep round and centered - watch opposite rider (1-3, 2-4)

Use clock numbers, when 1 is at 12 - 3 should be at 6, etc. Glance at the rider in front of you to make sure the space is correct. The rider may be directly across from their opposite, however that does not mean they are at the correct spacing from the rider in front of them.

In order to keep the circle round, keep your inside leg against the horse, tip horse’s nose slightly toward the outside hip of the horse in front of you. Try to keep in the same “track” as the horse in front of you.

Expand to larger number of riders - add by fours, or even numbers. Riders continue to look at opposite rider and check spacing with the rider in front.

**COMPANY FRONT/LINE ABERAST**

Riders in the line must work at keeping even spacing between their horse and the horses on each side. They must also work at keeping even alignment (shoulder-to-shoulder) with riders on each side. Because horses are different lengths, the riders' shoulder-to-shoulder position works better, as the judges will look at the riders. If there is a
problem with a horse backing out of the line, have that rider push the horse so its nose is just in front of neighbor about 3 – 4 inches. This seems to help and after the horse becomes more comfortable it will not be necessary. Start with pairs, then fours, then six or eight, etc.

PINWHEELS

PIVOT Position – Establish comfortable distance between pivot riders (usually 4 feet or more) When a pivot rider looks down the other line, they should see the back of the opposite pivot rider (if they see the front, the lines will not be even). Pivot horses should ALWAYS move forward in a small circle, they should NEVER back up, turning on the forehand will happen if the pivot circle is very small. Pivot riders need to look both ways down both lines and make sure they do not move too quickly for the other riders in their lines.

The outside or end rider in each line abreast is the “motor” and establishes the speed. The rider MUST look and watch both lines and stay even with the outside rider of the other line.

Begin learning this movement by going 1/2 around and stop so outside riders can see that the groups are even.
Move riders in each line so everyone experiences pivot and outside positions, as well as all positions inside the line. Riders must stay shoulder-to-shoulder, looking both right and left, telling their neighbor when they are “drifting” away too far, making large uneven spaces in the line.

CRACKS/LIBERTY GATE, ETC.
Same as above. Outside riders need to watch each other so they both “arrive” back at center at the same time.

PASS BY
Usually a single file maneuver. Establish right-to-right or left-to-left. Riders should always pass their opposite rider at the center. Keep enough space between the lines to comfortably pass without hitting stirrups, etc.

SUICIDE CHARGE
Side-by-side spacing – come off the wall evenly spaced (good 90 degree turns) – maintain by focusing on a spot on the opposite wall.

Side-by-side alignment – shoulder-to-shoulder – line moves forward guided by lead rider at one end of the line.

Establish right-to-right or left-to-left. Aiming for the SPACE
between horses in the opposite line. Begin at a slow rate of speed, as the horses need to get use to going almost head-to-head with another horse.

**OBLIQUES**

Begin with four riders

Determine placing side-by-side (Nose/Knee, Nose/Shoulder, Nose/Hip)

Establish spacing between horses (1, 2, or 3 feet), gradually decrease spacing as everyone becomes more comfortable.

**Corners** - Outside goes faster then slows, inside goes slower then speeds up.

**SWEEP**

Same as above. Expand Oblique to 6, 8, 12

The most common problem is riders on the inside falling back making the line into a “U” shape, or allowing horses to back out of line. This often happens at the short side of the arenas. To avoid this the riders forming the inside half of the line need to elongate their spacing from nose/shoulder to nose/hip and slow down in preparation for the corners.
BOX - Single file

Center of arena - mark with cone

Where to aim - always for the rear of the horse coming toward you on the right.

Spacing - MUST be maintained for maneuver to work correctly

Expand to pairs, threes, fours - abreast & tandem

ROLL BACK, TURNS and REVERSES

Explain rollbacks and 45, 90, 180, 270, 360 degree turns and the difference from individual circle.

Reverse, Do-Si-Do, Posse Roll, and Touch 'n Go will use these turns.

SOME PRACTICE EXERCISES

REEL TO REEL

Pairs @ 2 horse spacing. On short wall inside riders rolls out single file to back of line. Riders on wall turn on the diagonal. At center of Short wall first group of riders roll out single file and make pairs with the 2nd group of riders. Repeat. OBJECT: Riders learn how to pair up - have them aim their horse's head toward the horse they are pairing up with, also works on spacing.

SINGLE FILE TO PAIRS TO FOURS

Have lines of riders go both ways around the arena at 1 horse spacing. After a couple of laps in both directions when riders keep spacing well, move them into pairs. Do the laps around the arena in both directions. They should keep 3 horse spacing as pairs. Move them to one horse spacing, then move pairs up (inside) to form 4's. Have fours in line abreast going in both directions. Work on horse on the rail going faster around the corners, inside horse going slow aroun the corner then speeding up on the long wall, while horse on wall slows down. Go back to pairs, then back to fours with different riders on outside, go both directions around the arena. OBJECT: All riders get to experience all positions. They work on keeping a straight line side-by-side, and keep spacing between groups. Do same exercise at oblique (Nose-to-knee)

WHEELS BY FOURS
Post 4 cones (barrels, posts) about 20 feet off wall near the corners of the arena. Have groups of four - line abreast - go around the cone (post) in a right hand wheel, then a left hand wheel, the right & then left. Change positions of the riders from inside to outside and do again. OBJECT: get them to work together to keep a straight line from pivot to outside rider.

**SINGLE FILE CROSS**
Single file line down center @ 1 horse space, 1 rider right & next riders left - alternating every rider. First riders turn on the diagonal, 2nd rider crosses behind 1st rider AT center. Riders are to aim for the tail of the horse they are crossing behind, NOT the hole between horses. OBJECT: Straight lines, correct spacing, timing and coordination

**CIRCLES**
Pairs on center line @ 1 horse space. Individual 20 ' 360 degree circles right & left then back into pairs column on the center line. OBJECT: Learning to make circles the same size and everyone returning to the center line at the same time. Learning to watch each other up & down the line.

**MORE CIRCLES**
Use an even number of riders, have them look across the circle to the opposite rider. Use the clock positions, so opposite riders are even in the circle when they are at 6 & 12, or 3 & 9. They need to watch the spacing in front to the next horse, and across on both sides of their opposite - it should ALWAYS be the same.

**TURNS**
When at a TROT at a corner, or going across the arena, have them do 90 degree turns. They need to learn to turn & go off the hind quarters of their horses. A sharp, crisp 90 degree turn is a very important part of drill, it allows riders to form an even line across the arena with good spacing between riders.
THE BASICS OF DRAWING DRILLS

GETTING STARTED

Equipment and supplies:

Graph paper
Variety of drafting aids-for drawing circles and lines
Pencils, sharpener & erasers
An open mind

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS

Truths:

You will ONLY get what you are willing to GIVE
It is definitely going to take longer than 30 minutes
The greater a perfectionist you are, the longer it will take
Requires anal retentive, obsessive compulsive personality
If you have not lost your mind, you are not done.

Helpful Hints:

Familiarize yourself with drill maneuvers
Use all resources available:
   WLRCA Handbook
   Watch drill team videos until you go blind
   Attend Drill Competitions-watch, learn & take notes

Don't look at it as a start to finish process
   It is a creative evolution to create a final product
   Program vision often occurs in spurts and squirts
   Always keep paper and pencil at the ready
   Focus on creating segments or a series of maneuvers

Practice your ideas before incorporating them into a program
   Do they ride as good as they looked on paper?
   How are the transitions from maneuver to maneuver?
   Avoid editing your final routine !!

"As Long As You Are Going To Think Anyway, Think Big!"

Additional Factors to Consider

Number of available riders:
Major factor in maneuver selection
Allow for rider attrition, horse lameness, competition date conflicts
Use of flag positions for team membership fluctuations

Rider Experience:
- Identify and quantify the abilities of your horses and riders
- Position placement by skill set and ability
- Program difficulty level determined team skill level

Competitive level:
- What does the team want to do? Competitive or exhibition
- Evaluate the competitive level within the team.
- Exponential increase of work for success

Maneuver selection:
- Use maneuvers that compliment the number of riders
- The larger the number of riders, the more complicated the maneuvers

Maneuver mix:
- Incorporate a large variety of maneuvers types. Ride using 2's, 3's, 4's, inline, crossing, circles, oblique, abreast, corner to corner, diagonal, and edge.

Viewer appreciation:
- How are the maneuvers presented? What does the audience see?
- Arena size versus number of riders & visual effect

Transitions:
- Definition: The time and space between maneuvers
- Why are they so important?
  a. Improve routine flow
  b. Remove steps
  c. Increase difficulty level
  d. Audience appreciation

Music:
- Select music that enhances the program
- Music choreography helps control and maintain pace during the program.
- What type of experience are you trying to convey?
- Music selection- Make or Break a program.
  - Video tape the program, replay and match music.
  - It is not what you like, but what works with the program!!

"We are going to relentlessly chase perfection, knowing full well we will not catch it, because nothing is perfect. But we are going to relentlessly chase it, because in the process we will catch excellence. I am not remotely interested in just being good."