

## Tips to Help You Feel Your Horse's Hind Legs

Can you feel when your horse's hind legs are on the ground? This is an important skill to develop because you want to time your leg aids so that you give them when your horse's hind leg is on the ground ...specifically just as it's getting ready to push off. That's the only time you can influence a hind leg.

I feel where the hind feet are by feeling my horse's hips. When a particular hind foot is on the ground, my horse's hip is higher. It feels like my corresponding seatbone is being pushed forward.

Here are some tips to help you learn to feel when a hind leg is on the ground:

1. As you walk, close your eyes. Focus, let's say, on your inside seatbone. Some people describe the feeling as their seatbone being "higher". Others describe it as feeling like it's being "pushed forward". Each time you feel your seatbone being pushed forward or higher, say the words. "Now, Now, Now". That way you can get into the timing of when that hind leg is on the ground.
2. Ask a friend to call out "Now" each time a certain hind foot is on the ground. Coordinate what your friend says with the feeling under your seat.
3. If you're working alone, sneak a peek at your horse's shadow or a mirror if you have one. Check that you're feeling the right thing by calling out the footfall and then looking at the shadow or mirror to see if you're right.
4. Watch other horses and riders and notice where both the horse's hip and the rider's hip are when a particular hind leg is on the ground.
5. Teach yourself how to feel when the inside hind leg is on the ground in the canter by watching your horse's mane. It flips up during the second beat of the canter when the inside hind leg is on the ground. Say "Now" each time you see it flip up. Then you can coordinate what you're seeing and the word "Now" with what you're feeling under your seat.

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