

# **How To Go From Being An Average Rider To A “Top Rider” Of Reining & Cutting Horses, Faster Than You Ever Imagined!**



Hi - I'm Larry Trocha.

Training cutting, reining and working cow horses is my specialty.

Thousands of horse owners have used my training methods to improve their riding.

Plus, teach their horses to stop, spin, change leads, work cattle and fix bad behavior problems.

As a horse trainer who deals with non-pro riders, I'm exposed to many of the problems that plague amateur horsemen. Both, in the training pen and the show arena.

Do you know what their most common complaint is?

Here it is in bold type...

## **“I Just Can’t Get My Horse To Do It”**

Professional trainers who give a lot of lessons, hear this all the time.

Most non pros will have some significant problems riding or training their horse. If you are one of them, please don't feel like you are the only one having trouble.

You're in the same boat as a lot of folks.

First, I'd like to make it clear that riding or training a horse to perform at an advanced level is no easy task.

I've had students who were geniuses. And I've had students who were superior athletes. They all felt that learning to ride and train horses was one of the most challenging things they have ever attempted.

I'll never forget this one student in particular.

This man held multiple black-belts in several different marshal arts. He even taught martial arts. And, he was also a top business executive with a major corporation.

The guy was as talented a person as I've ever seen. Yet, after a year of trying to learn how to ride performance horses, he quit.

Why?

His exact words were; "This is the hardest, most frustrating thing I ever tried to learn".

Truer words were never spoken.

Learning to ride and train horses is much like trying to master a martial art.

Like a martial art, it takes focus and concentration combined with timing and coordination. However, because there is another living being involved (the horse), it is more complex.

After reading the above paragraph, I want you to realize that if you're having any success at all with your horse, you're doing great.

Even if your progress is painfully slow, the fact that you ARE progressing should make you feel good about yourself.

## **Some Very Good News For You!**

Now, after elaborating on how complex it is to learn to ride and train horses, let me say this...

**Just about anybody... who really wants to... can learn to do it!**

That's right, experience has taught me if you can walk and chew gum at the same time, you have all the physical ability you need to be able to ride a horse well.

Even high performance horses, like reining and cutting horses.

Plus, if you have enough mental focus to be able to analyze problems and read body language, you probably also have the ability to train a horse.

Here's the point I want to make:

You do not have to be a super athlete to ride well. And you do not have to be a genius to train a horse well, either.

There are some very successful horsemen who are short and fat with no more athletic ability or brain power than the next guy.

So, what sets these "successful" horsemen apart from everybody else?

It's this: They have a strong desire to succeed and an acute awareness of what they are doing.

The big "success factor" here is the awareness of what they are doing and the ability to change when they discover they're doing something wrong.

This "awareness and ability to change" is so important it can't be stressed enough.

In this training manual, I'll reveal how YOU too can use the power of "awareness and change" to dramatically improve your riding and training.

If you are not an accomplished rider right now, you'll know how to quickly become one if you follow the instructions in this training manual.

But before we get started with the details, I feel it's important for you to know "how" I came to discover the secrets I'm about to share with you.

I believe it'll help you... and perhaps motivate you to follow through if becoming a good rider is your dream.

## **How I Learned The Secret To Riding Well. Even The Most Challenging Of Horses.**

At age 26, I wanted to become a professional horse trainer.

Problem was... I couldn't ride!

I'm not kidding!

I mean, if a horse even started to trot, I'd lose my balance and fall off.

Yes, I rode pretty well when I had horses as a kid in Nebraska but that seemed like a long time ago.

I now lived in Florida and hadn't been on a horse in over 10 years.

For some reason, my childhood experience of how to ride well was gone.

Very frustrating!

My dream was to move to California and learn to ride and train reining horses, reined cow horses and cutting horses.

Basically, the most challenging and complex western disciplines of all.

Once I got to California, I discovered there were lots of horsemen my age and younger who were already champion horse trainers with their own training business.

If I was going to compete with them, I had a lot of catching up to do.

I needed to learn and I needed to learn FAST.

I managed to get a job as a stall cleaner with a really good reined cow horse trainer in northern California.

The only reason he hired me was because I'd work dirt cheap.

However, as part of our deal, he agreed to give me lessons and teach me to ride.

I held up my part of the bargain and the trainer TRIED to do his part too.

He gave me one, sometimes two lessons a week.

Big problem though... he wasn't a good TEACHER!

He would watch me ride while I made my mistakes.

Unfortunately, he couldn't put into WORDS the things that would help me improve.

I would lose my balance or fall forward and the trainer would say, "Don't fall forward".

My question was, "HOW"?

What I needed to hear was WHAT TO DO.

Not... what NOT to do.

I needed to know WHY I was losing my balance.

Why the horses wouldn't stop well or spin for me.

I needed to hear HOW to fix it.

After being there for six months with very little progress, I left.

I managed to land another job with a big ranch.

At that ranch, I got to ride more frequently... which helped a lot.

And the ranch had a couple of trainers working there who also tried to help me.

Unfortunately, I ran into the same problem.

Even though their intentions were good, neither of those trainers were much help.

They too were not good teachers.

They couldn't put into words what I needed to do to improve.

After a year of working there, I left.

I worked for several more outfits before I came to accept reality.

**The reality:**

**The vast majority of really good horsemen, don't know how to teach.**

**They can't put what they do or what needs to be done, into words.**

As a matter of fact, few are even AWARE of what they are doing when they ride.

In most cases, the trainers got good at their craft because it just came naturally to them.

Or they picked it up simply through osmosis. (Their parents were trainers)

They didn't even have to think about it. They just did it.

At that time, in the mid 70's, there were very few training videos available. And the ones that were available, weren't very good.

There were books.

But unless the author is a brilliant writer, there is only so much a person can learn from a horse training book.

The illustrations are static. You can't see the "action" in motion.

At this point in time, I fully understood, if I was to succeed, I could NOT rely on finding a good teacher.

I was going to have to teach myself.

It became vividly apparent to me, I was going to have to learn strictly from OBSERVING top trainers.

I needed to study successful trainers intensely. Analyze everything they did much more closely and try to emulate what I learned with much more focus and awareness.

In a way, that's what I'd been doing all along.  
That's how I got to this point (by now I could ride halfway decent).

I had gotten fairly proficient at starting colts.

Not great but good enough to get the colts ridable.

However, I wasn't capable of doing any of the advanced things a performance horse rider needed to do.

It seemed the learning curve was too steep.  
Time was flying by and I needed to radically speed up my education.

I was lucky enough to land a job with a top cutting horse trainer in Arizona.

The trainer's name was Gene Suiter.

This man was the real deal... an NCHA Hall of Famer!

A top trainer/showman... a winner at the highest levels of competition.

Gene was a top hand on a cutting horse.  
However, he didn't know much about reining or reined cow horses.

He wanted to learn it though... because he wanted to compete at the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity. (it paid \$100,000 to win it).

Gene would invite some of the best reining and reined cow horsemen in the nation to come stay at his place for a week and ride (he did this to exchange training information with them)... and many of them did come.

As a result, I was exposed to some of the best horsemen in the West. This gave me the opportunity to learn faster than ever.

## **My Breakthrough That Changed Everything**

Once I kind of had an idea of what I was doing, Gene started letting me ride some of the more talented (advanced) horses that were there in training.

One of them was a horse named "Eagle Raider".

When Eagle Raider was working a cow, he was really difficult to ride.

An extremely violent mover is the best way to describe Eagle Raider.

Picture a horse stopping so hard and abruptly, his hind legs dig deep trenches in the dirt... hooves plowing through the ground sounding like rumbling thunder.

Then picture him turning so hard and fast, it feels like you're riding a jet rocket with the throttle stuck wide open. (it would definitely get your heart pumping)

That gives you an idea of what it was like when riding Eagle Raider working a cow.

His stops and turns were so hard and physical, the rider would fall off if he didn't stay completely relaxed and "in time" with the horse.

If you tightened up or braced your body (even a little bit), there was a good chance you'd come off and hit the ground.

**Note:** For most people, myself included, riding a horse that makes quick, radical moves, causes the rider to stiffen up and brace with his body.

It's an instinctive, involuntary reaction.

Similar to the reaction you have just before you crash in a car wreck. When you see the wreck coming, you can't help but brace for it.

Unfortunately, I'd experience that same "bracing reaction" when riding Eagle Raider.

Anticipating his big, hard moves, I'd tighten up, causing my body to be stiff, lose my balance and almost fall off.

I was supposed to be "helping" this horse progress.  
Actually, because of my tightness, I was "hindering" his progress.

This went on for weeks with no improvement.

Desperate for a solution, I formulated a plan to overcome my stiffness and learn how to stay relaxed on this horse... no matter what he did or how violently he moved.

The "plan of action" I used, worked like a charm. (I'll talk more about it later).

Within a couple weeks, I was able to train my body to ride Eagle Raider totally relaxed and in perfect balance.

Even when he was making the most violent stops and turns.

**All of a sudden, riding ANY horse doing any kind of maneuver became easy.**

Being able to keep my body totally relaxed allowed my "timing" and "feel" to be better than it had ever been.

When I first started that job, all I could do was start a colt.

I couldn't sit a horse working a cow without losing my balance.

I couldn't sit a big sliding stop or even get a horse to stop half-way decent.

I couldn't spin and I couldn't change leads either.

Eight months later... I could do all those things.

Now, getting a horse to **slide, spin and change leads** was no longer a problem.

Because I was now able to "RIDE" the horse correctly, it was easy for the horse to "PERFORM" correctly.

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**Side Note:** While working for Gene, he instructed me to get two horses trained and ready to compete at the NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity.

The two horses names were Doc N Missy and Dry Sherry.

Doc N Missy ended up being shown by Bobby Ingersoll and won the Championship at the 1978 Snaffle Bit Futurity.

Dry Sherry was shown by Gene Suiter and won Reserve Champion at the 1978 Snaffle Bit Futurity.

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Let me share with you a KEY PRINCIPLE that made these accomplishments possible.

**The #1 Principle:** Riding with any kind of "stiffness" in your body, destroys timing, balance, feel and performance.

Riding with your body totally "relaxed" allows everything else to fall into place.

With my new found ability to stay relaxed in the saddle, I got better and better.

Two years later, I opened my own training stable.



My first year in business, I finished the year as the AQHA Reserve World Champion in cutting.

I also made the finals at two big west coast Futurities that year.

This early success brought me lots of business.

Lots of people came to me wanting lessons to learn how to ride reining and cutting horses.

**Giving a lot of lessons, I discovered just about ALL non-pro riders share the same problems with their riding that I initially did.**

They ride tightened up or ride stiff. Most don't even realize they are doing it.

They don't realize it's the main reason they have problems riding and training a performance horse.

After I taught them the secrets of how to ride relaxed and in balance, many of those students went on to win "Year-End" Championships.

I'm going to share with you some of those secrets below... right here in this manual.

Be aware, there isn't enough time here to cover each and every concept but you'll learn enough to make huge improvements in your riding.

Okay, lets get started!

## **The Hidden “Secret Element” To Successful Riding And Training Of Performance Horses**

I know people who study every training technique known to mankind. They have attended many horsemanship clinics and watched many different trainer's videos.

They know quite a few training methods by heart.

But surprisingly, none of the training methods they have learned seem to work for them. When they try them out on their horse, the horse doesn't respond right.

Why do you suppose this is?

Why doesn't their horse respond to them the same way the horses respond to the pro trainers in the videos?

Well, its because there is a very good chance the non pros aren't DUPLICATING the method exactly the way they've seen the trainer do it.

In other words, they are NOT using their HANDS, LEGS and BODY the way they THINK they're using them.

Because of this, they practice the training techniques over and over but no improvement is made.

Undoubtedly, you have heard the old saying that "Practice Makes Perfect".

Well, no it doesn't... Only "PERFECT practice makes perfect".

## **Let Me Illustrate A Common Scenario**

Some time ago, a man came to me for lessons. He was having trouble getting his horse to turn on the hocks.

The reason he was having trouble is because he was taking the direct rein way out to the side, causing the horse to walk a circle instead of doing a turn on the hindquarters.

During the lesson, I told the man to bring his hand in close to his hip, about the same height as his belt loops.

I explained to him that using his hand at this angle will bring the horse back on his hocks as he turns.

Then, I demonstrated the proper hand movement 3 or 4 times so he could see it. I then told him to repeat the maneuver and do it correctly. And what did he do?

He did it wrong again!

In fact, he used his hand exactly the same way he did before. And it's not because he wasn't trying.

Is this guy an idiot? Absolutely not. This man's reaction to my instruction is the same reaction that 85% of the people have.

So why do people react this way? Why couldn't this guy use his hand the way I showed him?

The answer is "**MUSCLE MEMORY**".

We get in the HABIT of using our arms and legs a certain way. And this "way of moving" is etched into our brain like a deep neurological rut. It can be very difficult to overcome.

So how do you overcome it?

Well, there are several different ways. In the case of the man who was taking the lesson, I had to physically take him by the arm and move it for him.

I literally guided his hand forward and back causing it to go the way it needed to go in order to turn the horse correctly. He practiced moving his hand this way for about three minutes (just sitting on his horse).

I then asked him to try the maneuver again. He picked up the reins and turned his horse over the hock beautifully. A new neurological rut, though shallow, had been etched.

A good way to overcome undesirable muscle memory, is to have a friend video tape you riding your horse. Study the video closely and see if you're using your hands, legs and body correctly.

If you aren't doing it right, sit on your horse, concentrate and go through the motions correctly. Do this over and over until you get the feel of it. Then pick up the reins and try it for real.

After you've practiced, have your friend video you again.

There is something about seeing yourself making the mistakes that helps your mind make the corrections. If you'll actually do this, in a short time you'll be doing it perfectly.

# **Some Common Muscle Memory Problems**

Let me give you a few real-life examples of undesirable muscle memory.

Here is the #1 problem I see non pros make when trying to school their horse.

They ride with too long of a rein or they carry their hands in the wrong position.

They have their reins so long that when they need to make contact with the horse's mouth, they can't. They end up bending their wrist and contorting their arm trying to get it done.

Of course when they use their hands like this, they won't have any luck stopping or turning a horse correctly. They won't have any luck with collection either.

They need to ride carrying their hands out in front of the swells of the saddle.

The reins need to be short enough so that when they move their elbows back, they can easily make contact with the horse's mouth.

Pay attention to how professional trainers use their hands. They ALL ride carrying their hands out in front of the saddle. They do this for a very good reason.

When they stop or turn a horse, they do not bend their wrists. They do not contort their arm and bring it behind their body.

**Trainers simply move their elbows back!**

Please read the above sentence again. It's a major key.

I also see lot's of folks riding with their stirrups adjusted too long.

Riding a long stirrup is fine for trail riding but when it comes to reining maneuvers or working cattle... you need a shorter stirrup to help your balance.

## **Here Is Another VERY Common Problem**

No matter what purpose you use your horse for, the most important thing a horse can do is a good, strong stop on the hindquarters.

However, you can take the best trained stopping horse in the world and put the average rider on his back and that horse won't stop worth a damn.

Why?

Because the average rider doesn't sit the stop correctly.

You see, to get a good stop, it's imperative that the rider sits relaxed in the saddle.

He needs to sit on the cheeks of his butt (jean pockets) with his lower back rounded and shoulders relaxed. His legs need to be relaxed too.

The average rider does just the opposite. He is stiff.

His back is arched and rigid. He sits on his thighs instead of the cheeks of his butt. His shoulders are tight and his legs are usually stiff too. Ride like this and no horse will stop right.

Now, even if the rider is aware of all this...

Even if he is instructed to sit the stop correctly, what do you think his chances are that he can change and do everything right within a few lessons?

I'll tell you... slim to none.

Why? Because muscle memory will override his efforts.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** At the very end of this training manual, I'm going to expand on one of the most critical elements to "Riding In Balance" and "Sitting The Stop". Without this one element, you will NEVER be able to ride well.

## Here Is Another Example

When it comes to undesirable muscle memory, cutting horse riders suffer the most.

The big moves, speed and quickness of the cutting horse makes it difficult for the rider to change bad riding habits. Everything is happening so fast.

If a person sits stiff on a cutting or cow horse, all kinds of bad things happen.

Falling off the horse is only ONE of the undesirable results that can happen.

When the horse stops hard with the cow, the rider loses his balance, falls forward and accidentally spurs the horse in the flanks. Of course, this ruins the horse's stop.

If the rider is stiff when the horse is turning with the cow, it really messes up the turn and causes the horse to make a multitude of mistakes. Including ruining the horse's form, style and correctness.

Too many rides like this will cause even the best horses to come untrained.

Unfortunately, time doesn't fix this problem.

The rider is in the HABIT of riding that way. His muscles are actually conditioned to tighten up when the action starts.

Unless he makes a concentrated effort to change, he'll ride like this always. For years and years.

Okay, now you understand the problem.

## **Let's Talk About A Solution**

You know, we all learn differently. And what works well for one person, may not work for another.

So, I'm going to tell you how I resolve my problems with muscle memory and you can modify it to better suit your needs.

First, I ANALYZE the situation and try to figure out what is causing the problem.

I become AWARE of how I'm riding and using my body. I try to FEEL how I'm riding. (Some will need to see a video of themselves)

If I find that I'm using my body in a way that is a problem, I CONCENTRATE on CHANGING how I use my body, changing my muscle memory.

I would practice to fix these problems.

**However, I'd concentrate on fixing only ONE problem at a time.**

You see, our minds can only think about one thing at a time.

It's impossible to concentrate on more than one. Try thinking about two things at the same time.

You can't do it.

I would work on fixing the first problem until doing it correctly became a habit. Once it becomes a habit, I won't have to think about it anymore. It'll become an automatic response.

Then I'd move on to the next problem.

Let's continue with the example about "riding the stop" that I talked about earlier.

I would ask the horse to stop several times and I would pay very close attention to what my body is doing during those stops.

Let's say I found that I was arching my back and that my back muscles were tight.

And, I discovered I was sitting on my thighs instead of the cheeks of my butt and my legs were stiff too.

First thing I'd do is just sit on the horse while he's standing still and try to assume the correct posture for the stop. I would concentrate mostly on relaxing, rounding my lower back and sitting on my butt.

The idea is to just sit there completely relaxed and MELT down into the saddle to lower your center of gravity.

Let all your weight shift onto the cheeks of your butt. Your shoulders relaxed and positioned directly over your hips.

The feeling is one of sinking down into the saddle, kind of like a sack of potatoes.

Once I have it at the stand still, I would ask the horse to stop from just a walk.

I would stop from the walk until I could do it and keep my back relaxed every single time. It may take 30 or 40 stops over several days before I can do it consistently.

Once I have mastered my body while stopping from the walk, I would work on the stop from a trot. Again, I would work on it until I had it down cold. Because you already mastered it at the walk, it won't take nearly as long to master it at the trot.

Next, practice keeping your back relaxed when stopping from the lope. If at any time you find yourself stiffening up during the stop, go back and practice at a slower speed.

Once you have completely mastered keeping your back relaxed during the stop and it has become a habit, you can next work on getting your legs to relax during the stop.

Just follow the same procedure you used to get your back to relax.

I know this sounds like a long, drawn out process but in reality it really won't take more than a few weeks to master.

And once you have mastered it, you'll seldom have to think of it again, as it will then be part of your NEW muscle memory.

## **Let's Help The Cutting/Cow Horse Rider**

Here's the procedure I used to train my body to stay relaxed when riding Eagle Raider. It literally improved my riding by leaps and bounds.

It's the same procedure I use to teach my non pro riders to sit relaxed and in balance on a cutting or cow horse.

It works like a charm.

I tell my students to make sure their muscles are relaxed and loose BEFORE they ride to the herd.

If they are not, I'll have them shake their shoulders back and forth and wiggle their fingers and toes until their body is totally relaxed.

The terminology I use to describe this exercise is, "**shake yourself loose**".

I then have them ride into the herd and cut a cow.

Anytime during the run, if they start to tighten up, I have them immediately stop and “shake themselves loose”. Once they are relaxed again, I have them continue working the cow.

This stopping and relaxing the muscles every time the rider stiffens up, is crucial.

Even if the rider needs to stop every 10 seconds, that is what he should do. We are trying to train the rider’s muscles to stay relaxed... under all circumstances.

It’s impossible to build the habit of relaxation if the rider continues to work the cow while his muscles are stiff and tight.

At first, the stopping to “shake yourself loose” will be frequent. But in a matter of a few weeks the rider will have muscle memory conquered and will find the need to stop and “shake himself loose” happening less and less.

Eventually, riding a cutting horse doing the most violent moves will be easy for the rider because his body is trained to stay relaxed.

And staying relaxed is the key to maintaining good balance and timing.

## A Critical Element To Riding In Balance And Sitting the Stop

If you want to ride well, it’s absolutely CRITICAL you are riding a saddle that is designed right... a saddle designed to allow you to ride in balance and sit the stop. The vast majority of people are riding a saddle which HINDERS their riding instead of helping.



In fact, I’d estimate probably 97% of non-professional riders are riding a saddle which isn’t designed right. Few people realize that just because a manufacturer labels their saddles a “reining or cutting” saddle, doesn’t mean it was designed right for those events.

Keep in mind, most saddle makers are “craftsmen” not “horsemen”. They have no idea of the design elements necessary to ride a performance horse well.

A big mistake many riders make is riding a saddle with too small of a seat. If the seat is too small, you won’t be able to ride in balance and sit the stop.

Maintaining balance in a hard stop, requires the rider to sit on the cheeks of his butt (jean pockets). If the seat is too small, you won’t be able to sit. Generally, there needs to be 1 or 2 inches of space between your thighs and the swells (with the stirrups adjusted correctly).

The vast majority of riders are riding too small of a seat and their stirrups are adjusted too long for good balance. Better to error on the side of too large a seat rather than too small. Experimenting with a shorter stirrup can also help.

For some good information about choosing a well-designed saddle, go here:  
<https://info.horsetrainingvideos.com/saddle-video-registration/>

**In closing, I’d like to leave you with this thought:**

Learning to ride and use your body correctly is MORE IMPORTANT than the methods used to train the horse.

In many instances, just RIDING the horse correctly is enough to get the horse to PERFORM correctly.

I hope this information helps you become the rider you've always wanted to be.

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**Note:** If you found this instruction valuable, instead of passing on the PDF, would you be so kind as to send your trusted friends over to  
<http://www.HorseTrainingVideos.com/training-manual.htm>  
to get their own copy. Much appreciated.

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## Here's What To Do Next

After reading this training manual, if you'd like to see video examples of this instruction or more in-depth training, there are several ways I can help you.

You can get my free horse training videos and instruction here:

<http://www.HorseTrainingVideos.com/free-horse-training.htm>

You can get my horse training DVDs and online streaming videos here:  
<http://www.HorseTrainingVideos.com/dvds-online-videos.htm>

If you'd like me to train your horse or you want personal lessons or want to attend a clinic, contact me here:

<http://www.HorseTrainingVideos.com/contact.htm>

Okay, that's all for now.

Good luck to you.

Larry Trocha

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## About horse trainer, Larry Trocha



Reining & cutting horse trainer, Larry Trocha.

Training horses professionally since 1980, Larry Trocha lives in Galt, California where he trains and shows horses for the public.

Larry also offers instruction to riders who want to learn reining, cutting or reined cow horse.

Larry is a long-standing member of the NCHA (membership #518) and the AQHA (membership #1187036).

You can contact Larry or order his horse training videos or tack via his website:  
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