

*Q: How are we supposed to ride that stupid loop in Training Test 4?*

**BILL:** The one word answer is WELL. You're supposed to ride it well. The question is HOW. What do we see as judges that usually goes wrong?

The exercise is mainly about suppleness and bending and showing that the bend can be changed smoothly and without resistance. Riders very often dig themselves into a hole right from the start by riding the figure itself incorrectly and giving themselves no opportunity to show those bend changes. Typically what we see is a figure that looks a lot like the walk pattern in Training Test 2: The rider goes from the corner letter on a diagonal, "changes her mind" at X, and goes back to the corner letter on the same side on another straight line.

What we *want* to see is a figure of continuous curves--no straight lines at all. Think of a "bell curve." After a normal corner between C and M, peel your horse gradually off the track aiming not at X but almost towards E. You should cross the quarter-line right opposite R, and *that's* the point where the bend should change. Then you ride a "fat dome" whose point furthest from the track is at X. The second half of the dome as you return to the rail, should match the first half. Don't aim back at F; think of a sharper curve almost as though you are going to P. Then DO change your mind and the bend as you cross the quarter-line in line with P, and ooze gracefully back onto the track approaching F as gradually as you see the space shuttle touch down at Kennedy.

When the movement was new, a diagram on the front of the test sheet explained how it should look. I wish the Test Writers would restore that picture. It would make it a lot simpler for the riders, and I wouldn't need to order a rubber stamp which explains to the people I judge what they keep doing wrong!