

Q: Show me how to switch the whip the right way?

It ought to be simple, painless, and elegant, but much of the time getting your whip switched from one side of your horse to the other is none of those things. So to avoid you impersonating the fourth Musketeer or a high school baton twirler, I offer these suggestions.

Number 1: Don't switch it like this. Pulling the whip through from the opposite side with your hand waving through the air can be done discreetly with a short jumping bat but not with a dressage whip. There is a much better way to switch it.

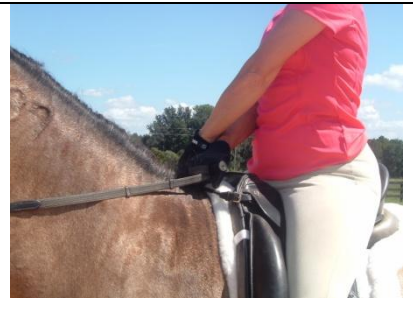


Number 2: If you have discovered that experienced riders keep their hands low and bring the lash-end of the whip slowly and quietly past their own foreheads, you're on the right track. However, don't make the mistake pictured here by twisting your wrist of the hand that's holding the whip. That "donor hand's" only job is to manage the rein contact with the horse, not to distract him in any way with a pull on his mouth.



The right hand simply keeps riding the horse.

In a few, easy steps, Here's the RIGHT way.



This photo simply shows your starting position: both hands on the reins and, in this case, the whip in the off side (or right) hand.

Here both reins have been transferred to the right hand. The left is free to extract the whip and move it across to the new side.

The "receptor hand" reaches over the whip and rein-holding right hand with the palm forward, thumb down.



Seen from the opposite side, the receptor hand grasps the whip between the fingers in a way that, when it is brought back over the withers, it automatically falls into place.



The whip is drawn across in a “stately” way. The hand stays low, the whip moves quietly past the rider’s nose like a windshield wiper, not out over the horse’s ears.



As it comes into place, the left hand takes the left rein into the normal position, and you are ready to rumble.

Special thanks to Michele Russell for her help in creating these photos. And to Urussui for consenting to remain vertical throughout the shoot.