

## Google Earth for Dummies? Or Maybe Breadcrumbs

With hardly any effort I can be preachy, didactic, and incredulous/sarcastic all at once. So here goes.

A lot of stuff we ask of dressage students is darn hard for them to do: to find the timing of the aids to make true collection and self carriage, to unlock their hips or their wrists or their shoulders to feel the horse and go with him, even (at some stage in their riding) to feel what lead or which diagonal they're on.

But a pretty simple question that draws a blank stare and a shrug much more often than it should is "How many meters is M from the corner of the ring?" or "How far is letter L (*There's an L?* someone replies) from X?"

I have already explained why, for reasons other than my raging OCD, the precision of arena figures matter. If you don't know where a circle should go, you can't judge when your horse is deviating from it. Such deviations aren't usually just bad behavior. They stem from the horse's lateral imbalance. These have to be corrected *in real time*—instantaneously—to do you any good, and obviously a deviation which goes unrecognized is sure to go uncorrected.

So even for the directionally challenged who can't find their own way home with a six pack from the Kwik Mart, not bothering to learn the ring's dimensions and how to fit standard figures into it is beyond lazy. It's a passive aggressive way to ensure their own failure.

6—12—12—12—12—6 ought to be burned into every rider's reptilian brainstem. And where the Quarter Line is (NOT a few feet inside the track!) And where your horse should cross the centerline on a 20-meter circle that begins at B. And so on till every pattern that your instructor might request is equally available in your mental rolodex to be ridden flawlessly.

I'm completely sympathetic to not being able to get your horse there. Not knowing where "there" is leaves me with a gnawing ache in my soul.