

THE RIDER FIRST ANALOGY GUIDE

*The mental pictures I use to make riding
finally make sense.*



By: Erin Crain



Welcome

One of the comments I receive most often is:
"That makes so much sense."

That's exactly my goal.

Our brains remember pictures far better than they remember instructions.

These are the analogies I use every day to help riders understand the conversation they're having with their horse.

Not because riding is complicated...
But because the right picture changes everything.

I. DON'T BECOME PART OF THE TOILET BOWL

Used for: Riding circles

Most riders lean with the horse through the turn.

Imagine the water swirling around the inside of a toilet bowl.

Your horse is the water.

You are not.

Stay tall.

Stay balanced.

Let your horse travel around you instead of pulling you into the turn.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

**THE HORSE BENDS.
YOU PROVIDE THE BALANCE.**

2. THE MULLET

Used for: Dressage

Think:

Business in the front.

Party in the back.

The top half of your body stays organized (ribcage & up).

The ribcage down stays soft enough to follow the motion, staying connected and moving WITH your horse.

Structured on top.

Flowy underneath.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

**STRUCTURE CREATES STABILITY.
SOFTNESS ALLOWS MOVEMENT.**

3. RIDE THE WAVE—DON'T CREATE IT

Used for: Jumping

Don't throw yourself at the jump.

Create a quality canter.

Then allow the jump to lift you.

The horse creates the effort.

You simply follow it.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

CREATE THE QUALITY OF THE CANTER.
THE JUMP WILL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

4. THE ACCORDION

Used for: Collection and lengthening

Your horse should be able to compress...

and expand...

without losing rhythm.

The music never stops.

Collection isn't slower.

It's simply shorter.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

COLLECTION ISN'T SLOWER.
IT'S CARRYING MORE.

5. DRESSAGE IS LIKE BUILDING A HOUSE

Most riders want to build the roof first.

They want:

- ✓ Passage
- ✓ Piaffe
- ✓ Pirouettes
- ✓ Collection

Those are the shingles.

But before you can ever put shingles on a house...

You need a foundation. (then walls, roof, etc)

Your foundation is:

- Relaxation
- Suppleness
- Forward thinking
- Riding into a soft, longer connection

If the foundation isn't solid...

The roof won't last.

The same is true in dressage.

You don't create collection by skipping the basics.

You earn it by building a horse that's balanced, supple, and confidently pushing from behind first.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

FANCY MOVEMENTS AREN'T THE FOUNDATION.
THEY'RE WHAT'S BUILT ON TOP OF IT.

6. THE SHOPPING CART

Used for: Heavy horses

If your shopping cart gets heavy...
you don't yank the handle.

You push to get the forward back and get the wheels back underneath it.

The same is true with your horse.

Instead of pulling...
rebalance.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

**DON'T PULL HARDER.
HELP THE HORSE REBALANCE.**

7. THE BEACH BALL

Used for: Jumping and balance

Imagine there's a beach ball underneath your horse's chest.

Your job isn't to squash it.

Your job is to help your horse lift over it.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

LIFT THE SHOULDERS.
DON'T SQUASH THE BALANCE.

8. YOUR BODY IS THE BRAKE. YOUR HANDS ARE THE BRAKE LIGHTS.

Used for: Downward transitions

Your body creates the transition.

Your hands simply communicate it.

If the horse only notices your hands...

they've missed the first part of the conversation.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

YOUR BODY CREATES THE TRANSITION.
YOUR HANDS SIMPLY CONFIRM IT.

9. RIDE THE HIND LEGS INTO THE TRANSITION

Used for: Upward transitions

Don't throw yourself forward.

Think about asking the hind legs to step underneath.

The front end follows.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

FORWARD COMES FROM BEHIND.
NOT FROM LEANING AHEAD.

10. KNEECAPS DOWN

Used for: Chair seat

Don't think about pulling your heel back.

Think about pointing your kneecaps toward the ground.

Sit low in the saddle flap.

A long femur naturally allows the lower leg to fall underneath you.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

ORGANIZE THE LEG.
THE FOOT WILL FOLLOW.

II. SOFTNESS IS TAUGHT IN THE RELEASE

Used for: Connection

Pressure tells the horse to search.

Release tells them they found the answer.

If the release never comes...
the horse eventually stops searching.

Reward the thought—not just perfection.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

PRESSURE ASKS THE QUESTION.
RELEASE TELLS THE HORSE THEY
FOUND THE ANSWER.

12. TUG OF WAR

Used for: Connection • Contact • Softness

Think about a game of tug of war.

When someone pulls on the rope...

What's your instinct?

To pull back.

Horses are no different.

When we drop our hands and try to pull their head down into a frame, it's natural for them to respond by lifting their head, bracing their neck, and pulling against us.

Instead of thinking about pulling the head down, think about carrying your hands.

Create a steady place for your horse to reach toward.

Invite them to stretch down and out into the contact rather than forcing them there.

When the contact feels like an invitation instead of a tug of war, the horse is much more likely to soften, relax through the topline, and seek the bit willingly.

RIDER FIRST TAKEAWAY

IF YOU PULL, THEY'LL PULL.
IF YOU CARRY, THEY'LL REACH.

The Rider First Philosophy

Everything in this guide comes back to one simple belief:
The horse is constantly responding to the rider.

That's why I coach the rider first.

When the rider changes...
the horse usually does too.

That's the foundation of every Rider First Ride Analysis.

I don't just tell you what to do.

I help you understand why.

Because once riding makes sense...
Everything changes.

— Erin

If these analogies changed the way you think...

Imagine what happens when we apply them directly to your ride.

Through a Rider First Ride Analysis we'll:

- ✓ Analyze your riding video
- ✓ Identify the root cause
- ✓ Meet virtually
- ✓ Build your personalized plan

Book Here:

