

Horse Gaits

Level 2



What is a Horse's Gait?

- **Gait is the pattern of movement of an animal or human in motion.**
- **Gaits change with speed.**
- **Speed changes the pattern of where each foot falls.**
- **We can talk about each gait by the number of beats, and where each hoof falls.**
- **Different animal species may use different gaits due to differences in anatomy that prevent use of certain gaits, or simply due to evolved innate preferences as a result of habitat differences.**

Walk and Trot

Walk

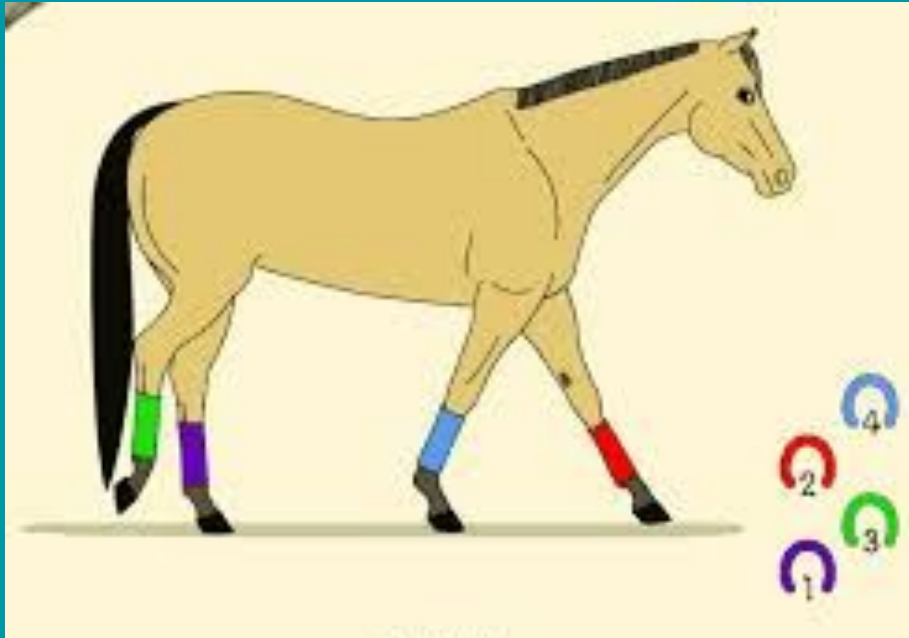


Trot



The Walk

The walk gait for a horse is 4 beats....



The walk pattern is: left hind leg, left front leg, right hind leg, right front leg, in a regular 1-2-3-4 beat.



At the walk, the horse will alternate between having three or two feet on the ground.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VgBvWR1_YB8

The Trot



The trot is a two-beat gait.



It has a wide variation in possible speeds, but averages about 8.1 mph. A very slow trot is sometimes referred to as a jog.



In this gait, the horse moves its legs in unison in diagonal pairs.



From the standpoint of the balance of the horse, this is a very stable gait, and the horse need not make major balancing motions with its head and neck.



Depending on the horse and its speed, a trot can be difficult for a rider to sit because the body of the horse drops a bit between beats and bounces up again when the next set of legs strike the ground. Each time another diagonal pair of legs hits the ground, the rider can be jolted upwards out of the saddle and meet the horse with some force on the way back down.

The Trot



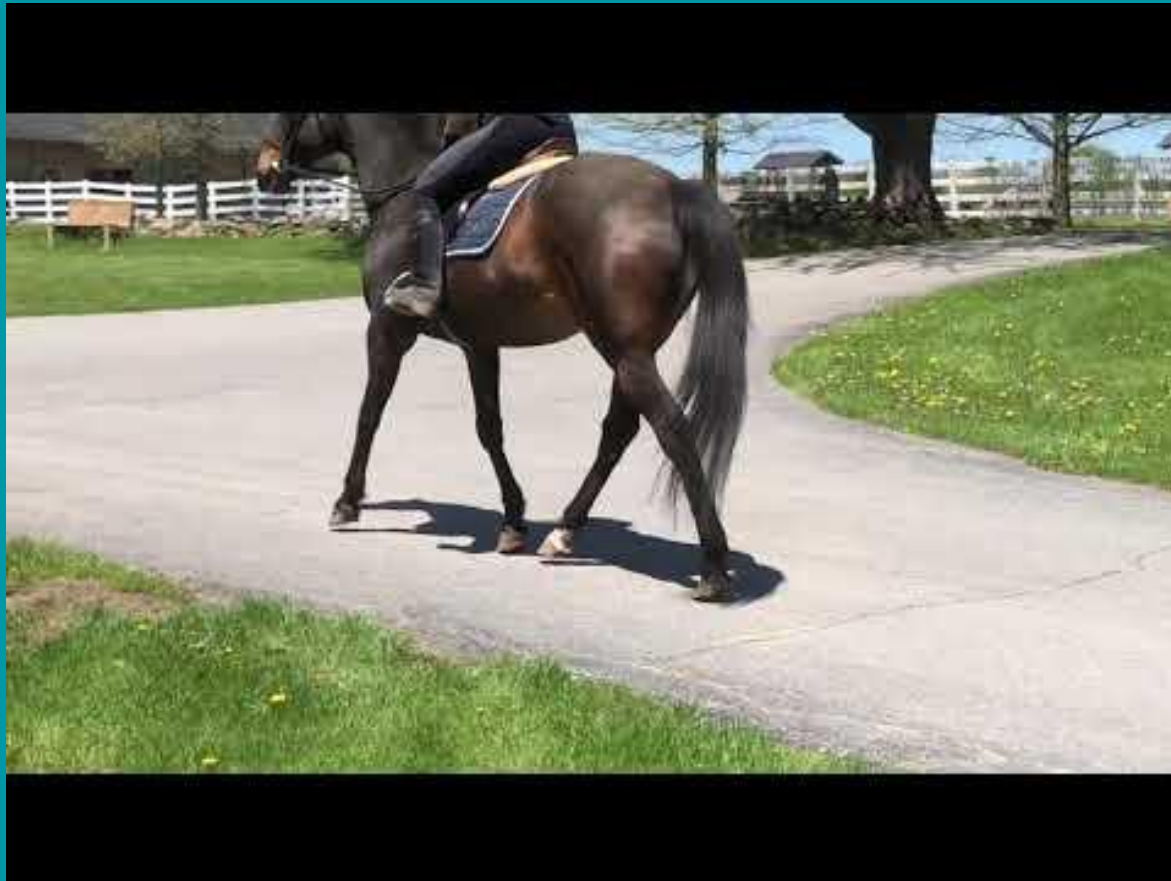
Notice the white diagonal legs moving together.



The Trot is the main way horses travel quickly from one place to another.



The trot is considered a working gait for horses. Fit horses can maintain the trot for a long period of time.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6WqIYH22uA>

The Canter



The canter is a controlled, three-beat gait that is usually a bit faster than the average trot, but slower than the gallop.



The average speed of a canter is 10–17 mph depending on the length of the stride of the horse.



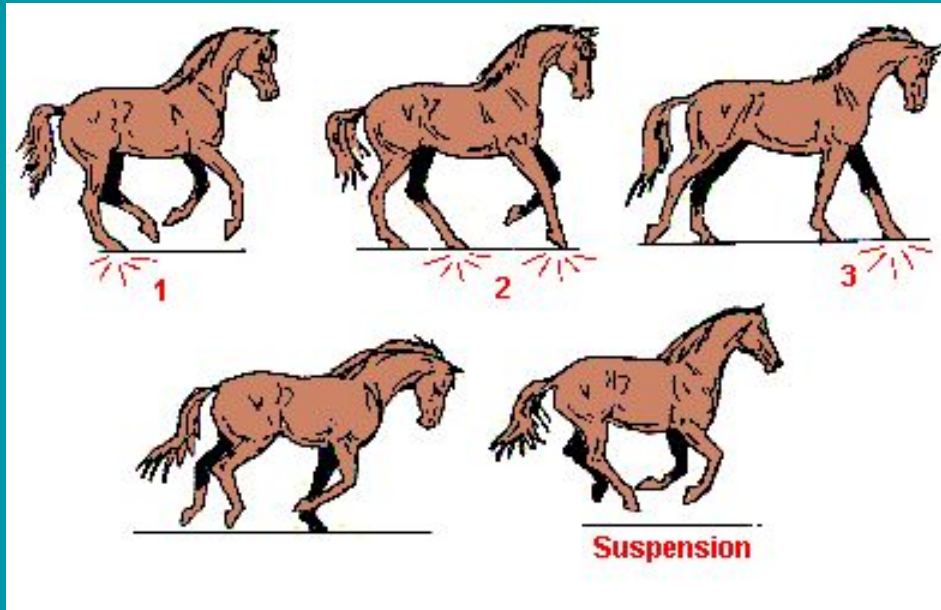
Listening to a horse canter, one can usually hear the three beats as though a drum had been struck three times in succession. Then there is a rest, and immediately afterwards the three-beat occurs again. The faster the horse is moving, the longer the suspension time between the three beats.

The Canter



In the canter, one of the horse's rear legs – the right rear leg, for example – propels the horse forward. During this beat, the horse is supported only on that single leg while the remaining three legs are moving forward. On the next beat the horse catches itself on the left rear and right front legs while the other hind leg is still momentarily on the ground. On the third beat, the horse catches itself on the left front leg while the diagonal pair is momentarily still in contact with the ground.

The Canter



The Canter



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3Bmw76rlfo>