

# Upper Body Posture

## *Stability Ball and Mirror*

Find a stability or Swiss ball that's small enough for you to sit on top of while resting your feet comfortably on the ground. Sit on it in front of a large mirror so you can view your position from the side. Imagining that you're sitting on your horse, play with your hip angle.

To make this exercise more effective, hold a pair of reins or some sort of strap or band (like baling twine or the highest resistance level of Thera-band, used for physical therapy and fitness training) and ask a friend to hold the other end or attach them to a fixed object at about the height your horse's mouth would be if you were mounted. Vary the pressure on the reins to practice holding different types of contact (heavier/lighter), all the while maintaining the position that keeps you properly balanced on top of the ball.

**1a. CORRECT ANGLES:** This rider is able to stay in the center of the ball by maintaining an upright pelvis as she holds steady rein contact. Ideally, the other end of the reins should be positioned lower to simulate a more typical head carriage for her "horse."

### Correct Position



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When your hip angle is incorrect, other components of your position fall out of place.

**1b. TIPPED FORWARD:** When Katerina tips the top of her pelvis forward, that overarches her back, bringing her elbows behind her body. This creates tension in her position, which she could correct by softening the hollow in the middle of her back. If she rocked the top of her pelvis forward far enough, the ball would scoot out behind her.

She continues to tip forward, back and side to side until she finds the position she can most comfortably maintain without getting stiff or collapsing her upper body.

## Incorrect Position –Tipped Forward with arching back



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**1c. TIPPED BACKWARD:** Katerina tips the top of her pelvis backward and rounds her back, something riders do mistakenly to absorb the bounce in the sitting trot or to attempt to stay with the canter motion. With her back rounded into a fetal position, she loses control of her valuable core (stomach and back) muscles. If she were riding, her legs would slip forward and upward—destroying her secure base—in turn causing her to fall behind the horse's motion, grip with the back of her seat and pull on the reins for balance. Her locked hips wouldn't be able to follow his motion, so her waist would have to move excessively to absorb it. This is common on really bouncy horses.

## Incorrect Position –Tipped Backward with rounded back



Once you have achieved the correct position on the stability ball, ingrain the image in your mind, then compare it to your actual position on your horse.