

Somerset came home. He was struggling where he was & needs the structured environment Coventry offers. He is for lease if someone is interested!

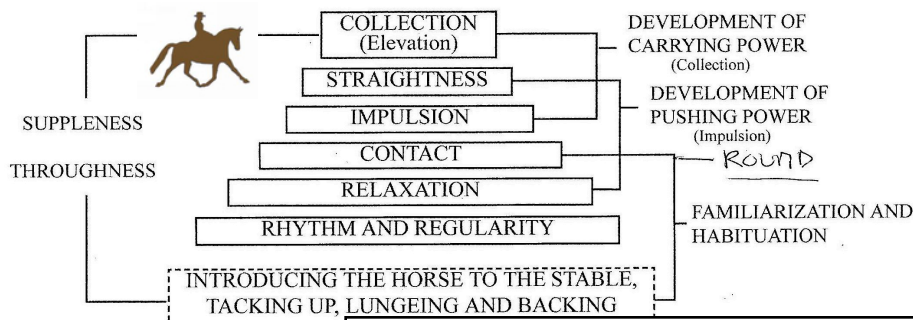
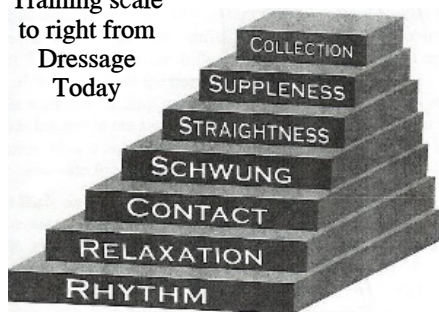
### The Training Scale

We talk a lot about the training scale at Coventry. And it seems every time a magazine writes about the training scale it is different. Below are three examples. Knowing the training scale is a great way to simply the training of a horse, but as we know there are so many variables. I have simplified the training scale for my purposes and many of my students have got it down, talking about the Three R's - Relaxed Rhythmic and Round. The horse has to be first relaxed in order to train, then second have rhythm in order to pursue more training and also to then third put round, or have contact. Simple, lol! The best training scale I have seen so far was published in Andalusian magazine. They said it is from 1912 and is the training scale used by the German Army's Riding Instructors.

### Andalusian training scale

Rhythm  
Relaxation/  
suppleness  
Flexibility  
Permeability  
Rein contact  
Balance (self carriage)  
Impulsion (schwung)  
Straightness  
Collection

Training scale  
to right from  
Dressage  
Today



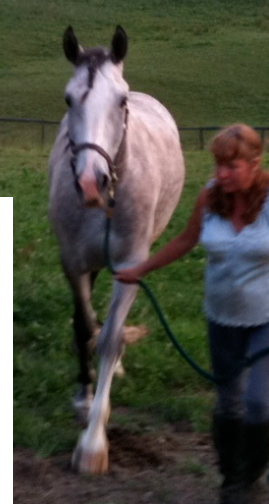
The training scale or "pyramid of training"

*Quiet hands that feel  
and listen, and/or  
elastic elbows?*

(Or, how about both ☺)

Riding instructors are always talking about the rider's hands, but more should be said about that important joint called the elbow! Yes the hands are one third of the rider's three natural aids but the elbow is what has to be elastic and follow the motion of the horse's longitudinal movement of the neck and head moving forward and back. The hands don't actually follow it is the elbow, the hands just happen to hold the reins that connect the elbow to the bit. It is the elbow joint that opens and closes to move forward and back, not the hands. The hands and fingers stay holding the rein and listen to horse's mouth. The hands are signaling to the rider's brain, "Is the horse's poll soft," "is the horse against me," or, "is the horse giving to bit..." If your hands are busy "talking" to the horse, asking it to give or soften, then likely they can't be listening too! Sometimes the hands talk to the horse to ask it to soften, but mostly they need to listen! Did you know your hands could listen? It is called kinesthetics, or learning by feeling. Which is what riding is all about, we feel what the horse is doing with our aids then we respond with the correct timing of the aids. And, just to confuse you, an Alexander teacher (a person who studies the biomechanics of human bodies) will tell you that the scapula actually moves the elbow forward and back. Therefore, if you hold tension in your neck and shoulders this will prevent the scapula from moving the elbow so it maintains an elastic contact that follows the horse's head and neck. In the photo below the rider has the hands pressed down, great for setting a head, but with the hands pressed down the elbows loose the ability to follow the longitudinal motion because the joint can't work because it has been straightened! Obviously keeping a straight line elbow to bit follow the longitudinal motion at the trot and canter is jeopardized let alone maintaining a horse on the bit.

Zibby new  
Spanish Nor-  
man at Coven-  
try. He looks  
small in this  
photo but he is  
a giant &  
growing. He is  
only four!



One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. "Which road do I take?" she asked. "Where do you want to go?" was the cat's response. "I don't know," Alice answered. "Then," said the cat, "it doesn't matter". - Lewis Carroll