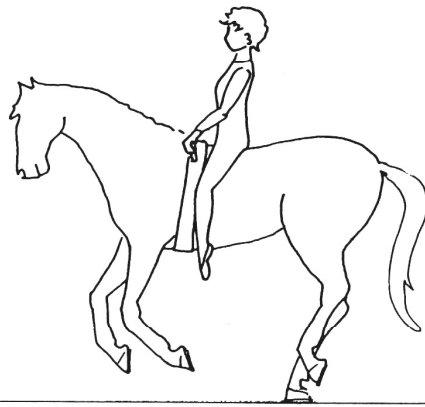


17 *The basic dismount and the vault-off*

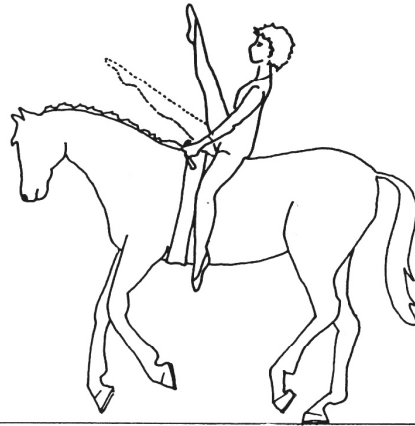
The basic dismount

Before starting the dismount, the vaulter sits in the correct seat position, back straight and head up. The right leg is then carried over the neck of the horse in a wide and high arc, fully extended and foot and toes pointed, to the inside. Greatest scope is desirable, but extra height should not be gained by making up for lacking flexibility through curving the back or excessive leaning. The leg should be lifted from the stomach muscles and pass by the vaulter's face (as close as possible) with a quick release and retake of the grips, as the leg passes the hands. The leg movement should be fully controlled and balance maintained. The upper body may lean a bit (as little as possible), but the back must stay straight. The left leg must stay long and stretched and not change out of the 'basic seat' position, and the weight must rest on both buttocks.

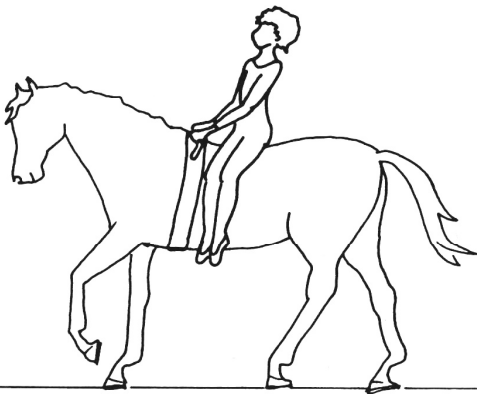
Other than in the mill, in the basic dismount the eyes and the shoulders of the vaulter remain pointed into the direction of travel! The legs are then brought together and both stretched (pointing slightly to the front, to where the leading foreleg of the horse touches the ground) and in a fluid continuation of the movement, the vaulter pushes away and slightly back from the horse (without curving the spine into a hollow back!), while dropping his legs to the ground. The movement should *not* come to a dead stop here, but the vaulter should absorb the impact elastically in his knees and continue to run in the same direction as the horse to let the momentum of the motion peter out.

Correct basic dismount

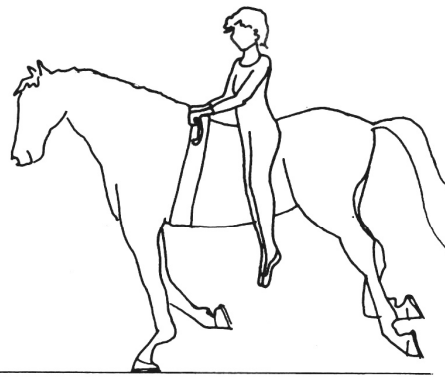
From correct basic seat (erect posture, back must stay straight throughout)...



...the vaulter passes the outside leg over the horse's neck, releasing and retaking the grips as the leg passes by

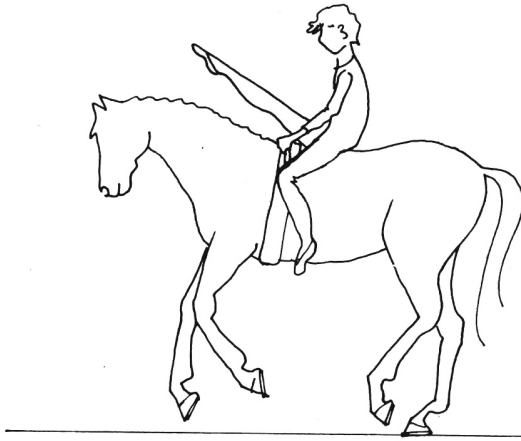


In the side seat the vaulter faces the front with head and shoulders...

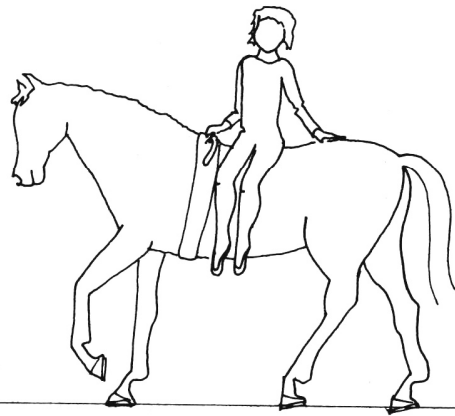


...then pushes off and away from the horse (slightly to the back), lands softly and continues running in the direction of travel of the horse

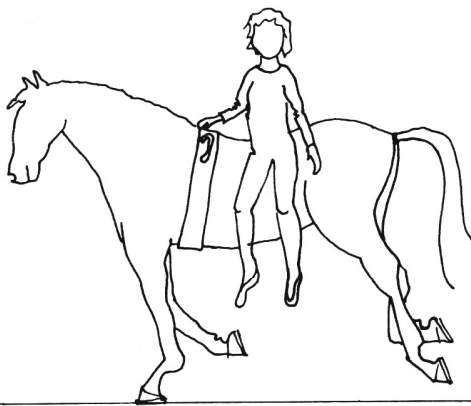
Basic dismount mistakes



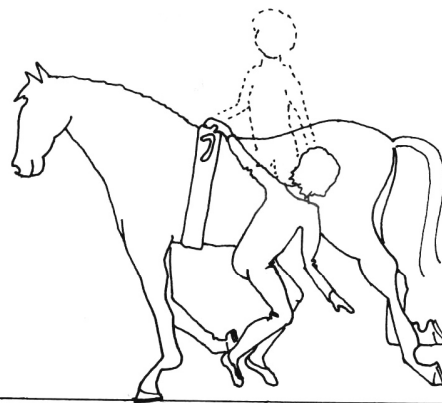
Wrong: curved back, clinging inner leg, insufficient height with other leg, head too low



Wrong: touching the horse's back with the hand, turning to the inside, legs apart



Wrong and dangerous: dismounting sideways! The horse's movement creates a turning momentum...



...which may lead to twisting, and in combination with getting dragged (if the grip is released too late) results in sliding to under the horse

Common mistakes

- rounded back to make up for lacking height and flexibility
- gliding down the side of the horse without push-away
- hanging on to the grips too long and getting dragged (this is often a sign of feeling insecure; explain that getting dragged is always more dangerous than pushing away!)
- turning shoulders and/or head toward the lunger
- dropping head to look for landing spot on the ground
- twisting either way and not landing in direction of the travel (correct this immediately, it is dangerous! If a vaulter twists and therefore stumbles upon landing, he can end up under the horse)

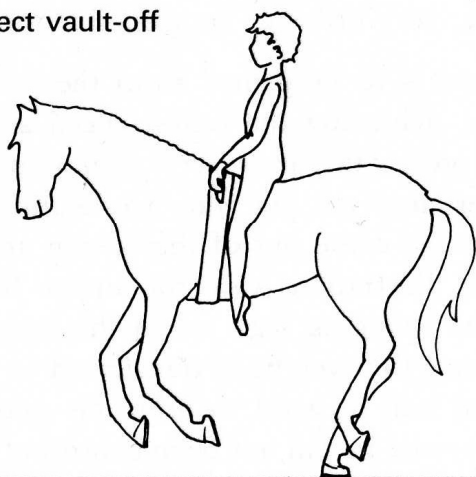
The vault-off

When compulsories are not performed in blocks, the scissors and the stand are followed by a vault-off. In the compulsories the vault-off is always executed to the inside of the circle. In team kur exercises one often prefers it to happen to the outside, so the dismounting vaulter is immediately out of the way of the other mounting team mates. The technique of inside and outside vault-off is basically the same.

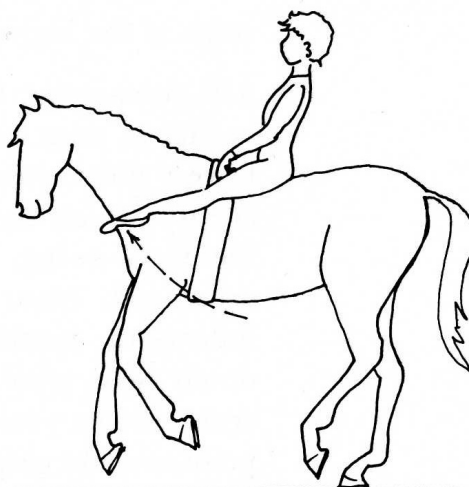
- *The 'pre-swing'*: The vault-off is a symmetrical exercise. Both legs and arms perform in the same manner. It begins with an up-swing of both legs, which should be carried to the maximum possible extension for the vaulter, while remaining balanced on his buttocks. To achieve this, the upper body leans back slightly, but with straight back, and the grip of the hands becomes lighter. The motion does not stop at the highest point, but reverts into the down-swing at once and in one fluid motion. This motion has to be quick enough to fit on the canter stride. No energy can be gained for the swing if the up-swing goes against the horse's canter stride. If the up-swing is limp, no energy can be gained from it at all. If it

stops at the highest point, very little can be gained from it.

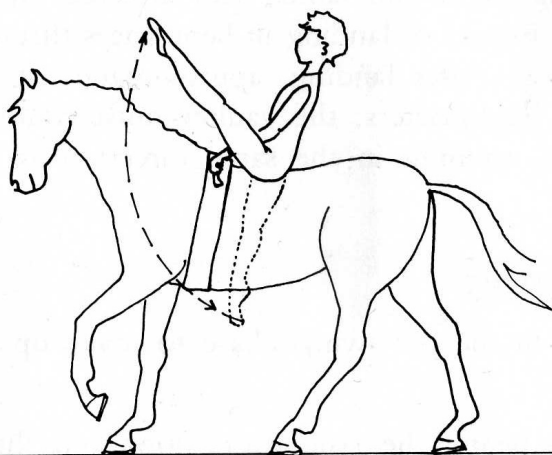
- *The down-swing:* If any use is to be gained from the down-swing, it must accelerate, achieving the fastest speed at the lowest point, just like a golf club. It is very clear that the energy which the vaulter does *not* put into acceleration of the down-swing, can also *not* come out of that swing at the other end. Note on the illustration how the upper body follows the motion of the swinging legs: when the legs are down again after the swing the weight is transferred to the arms, so the vaulter must lean forward to bring his gravity point over the grips. Otherwise he can not be in control of the movement and stay with the horse.
- *The through-swing:* After the down-swing (to the lowest point) follows the through-swing, during which the vaulter must already have his gravity point over his hands. Here the arm action must kick in with a strong push. This is about the point indicated on the drawings on the hindquarters of the horse. Up to this point the swinging curve is basically a circle with the same radius around the hand-hip-point.
- *The up-swing:* But now, as the arm push kicks in, and the up-swing starts, the curve gets flatter, with a larger radius, the more the arms extend. Straight body line must be preserved – the legs may not gain additional height from a curved back. The legs can only come up to best height, if the shoulders go down. For training purposes I consider it better if the vaulter first collapses on the neck of the horse, rather than cheating his way around the push! The highest extension possible is the handstand position, but even if this can be reached, the motion should *not* stop here. Remember: there should be *no stops* in dynamic exercises.
- *The push-off, flight phase and landing:* As the apex of the swing is reached, the vaulter releases the grips with an energetic push and starts the third curve pattern. There must be a definite flight phase within the vault-off. The vaulter keeps his

Correct vault-off

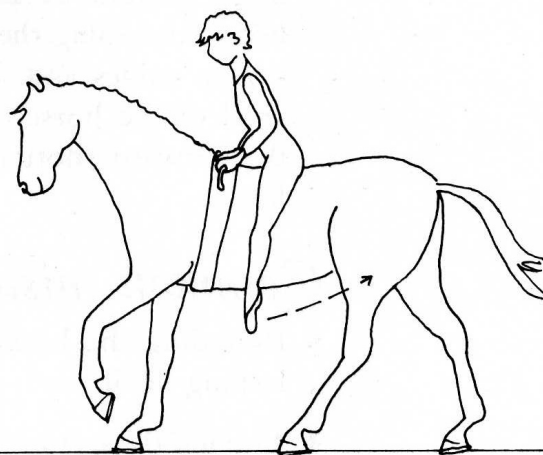
From the correct basic seat position...



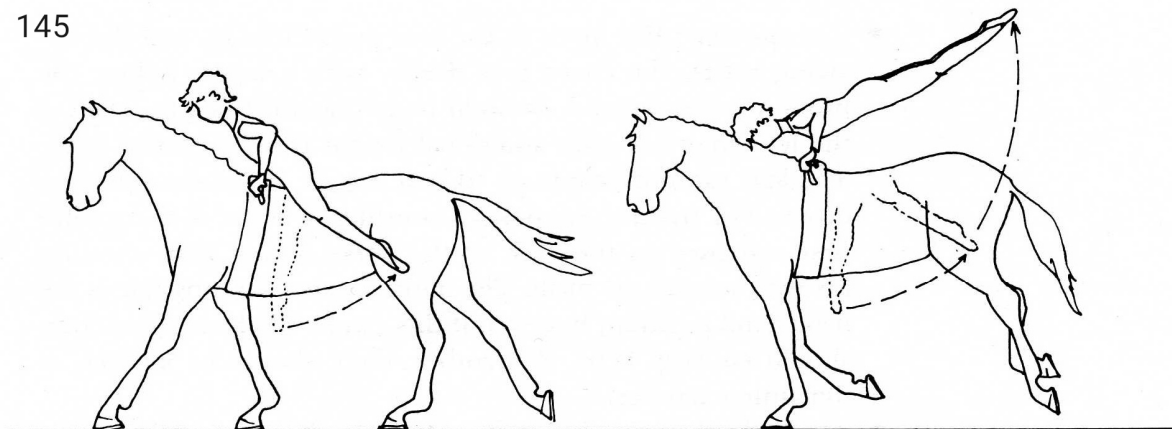
...the vaulter goes into the up-swing.
Bodyline stays straight, back may lean slightly



In the down-swing the legs accelerate

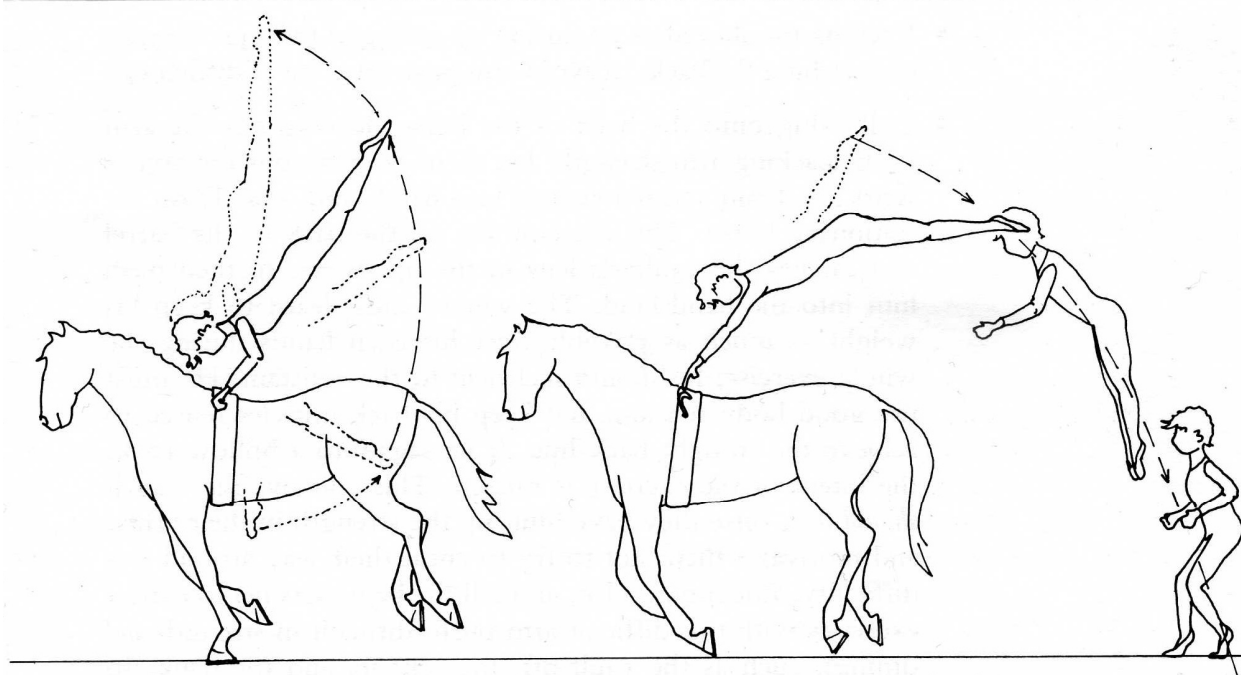


The vaulter must have his gravity point over his
hands for an effective arm push



The vaulter keeps his weight over his hands while pushing, also retains straight bodyline from head over spine to toes

As the momentum of the horse's canter stride is used for added height...



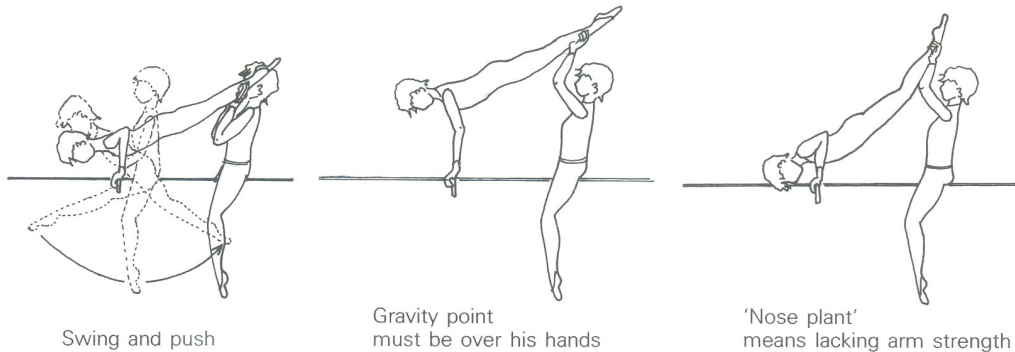
...the vaulter may gain handstand elevation. But the movement must not stop...

...as the vaulter pushes himself away from the grips energetically to achieve the prescribed flight phase. He then lands softly on both feet and continues in running motion in the direction of the travel of the horse

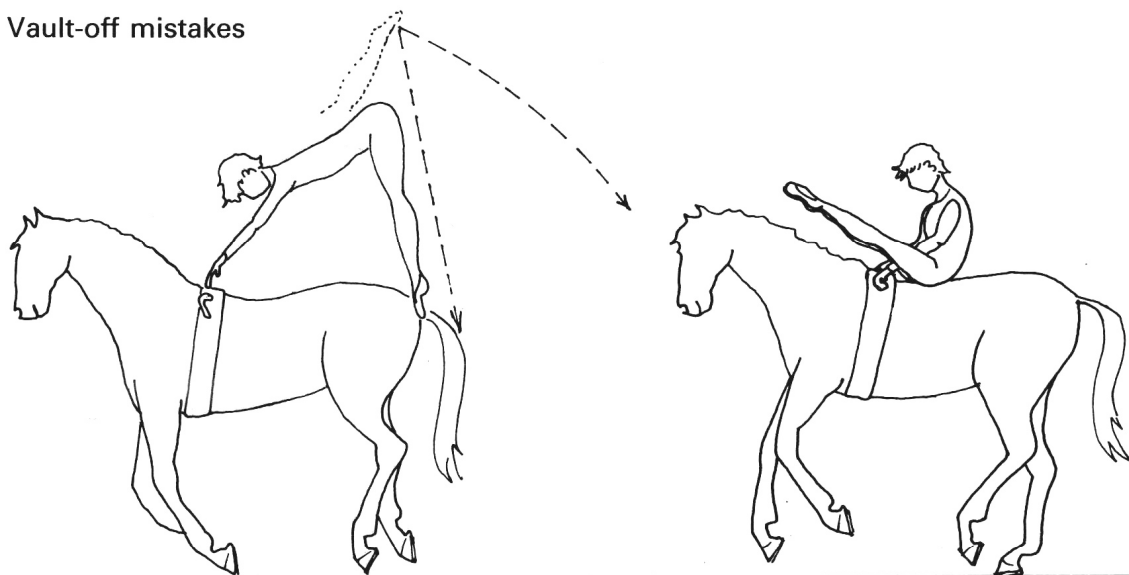
body straight during flight and lands with an erect upper body, absorbing the impact of landing in bent knees through supple ankles and feet. After landing, approximately at the level of the horse's hindquarters, the vaulter must continue the forward motion, running in the same direction as the horse.

Common mistakes

- Rounding the back in the pre-swing phase to make up for lacking flexibility.
- Moving the seat back behind the basic seat position to facilitate the pre-swing (all exercises should be started out of the correct basic seat position).
- Keeping the shoulders up during up-swing of the legs, thereby overarching the back, to avoid arm push (evasion of difficulty).
- Collapsing onto the neck of the horse, leaving out the arm push. Lacking arm strength! Let them do push-ups for homework... Train assisted swings into handstand, mainly on the stationary horse. The assistant sits on the back of the barrel and catches the vaulter's legs in the up-swing, to then push him into the handstand. The vaulter must learn to keep his weight as much as possible over his own hands during the whole exercise; he should feel *light* to the assistant! He must use good body tension, and keep his back muscles tensed to achieve the straight back line. If he sags into a hollow back, the intent of the exercise is missed. This conveys the way it *should* feel, once they have built up the strength in their arms, and motivates them not to try to cheat their way around this difficulty. Encourage a lot, and tell the beginners *not* to expect exercises with this difficult arm push (difficult in strength *and* timing), such as the vault-off, the scissors and the flank, to work well in a matter of weeks. It took us all longer to learn...

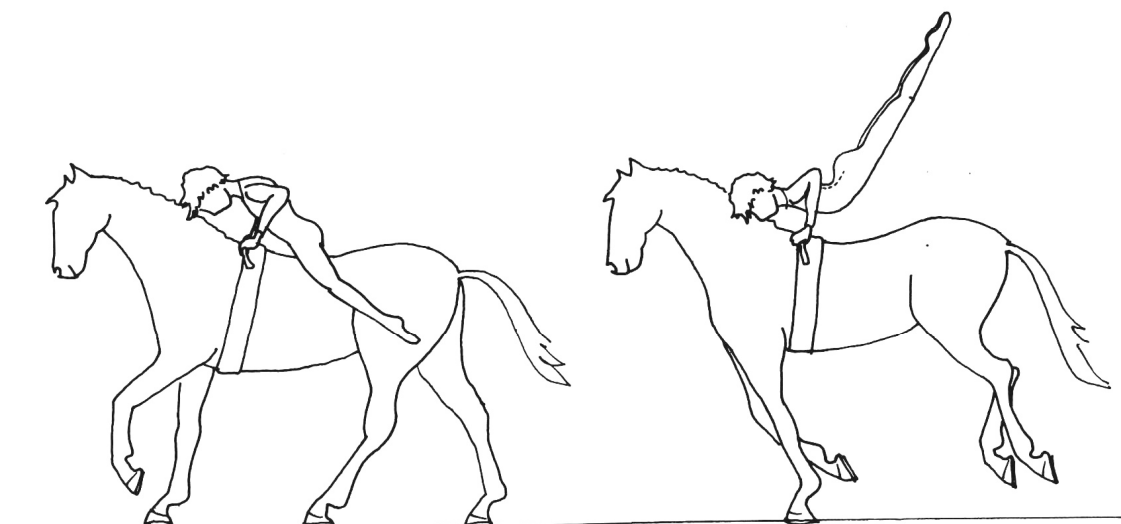


- Leaving the left leg down and swishing the right one around to join the other one: this is the worst mistake, and you should never let it pass! *Both* legs must swing up symmetrically, join in the air, and come down together and closed.
- Clinging to the grips, omitting the push-off at the apex of the movement. Small vaulters in particular will make this mistake, because they fear the landing from high points. Train soft landings, vault-offs in walk and on the stationary horse, and lots of jump-offs from standing position (first in walk, later canter) to get them used to height.
- Twisting the body (usually because the inner grip is not released) and coming down sideways. *Any* landings, in which the vaulter does not face the direction of the movement, are potentially very dangerous. Vaulters can not continue the running motion when facing sideways or backwards, they then stumble and sprain their ankles or might get dragged under the horse: as I tell my kids: *the number ONE place where you DON'T want to be as a vaulter! Never let this pass in training!* Facing the front after landing out of any position must become second nature. (There are very few exceptions, like the sideways roll-off dismount, but these are performed much later, when the vaulter has already very good spatial orientation and can twist into the right position quickly during the landing phase.)

Vault-off mistakes

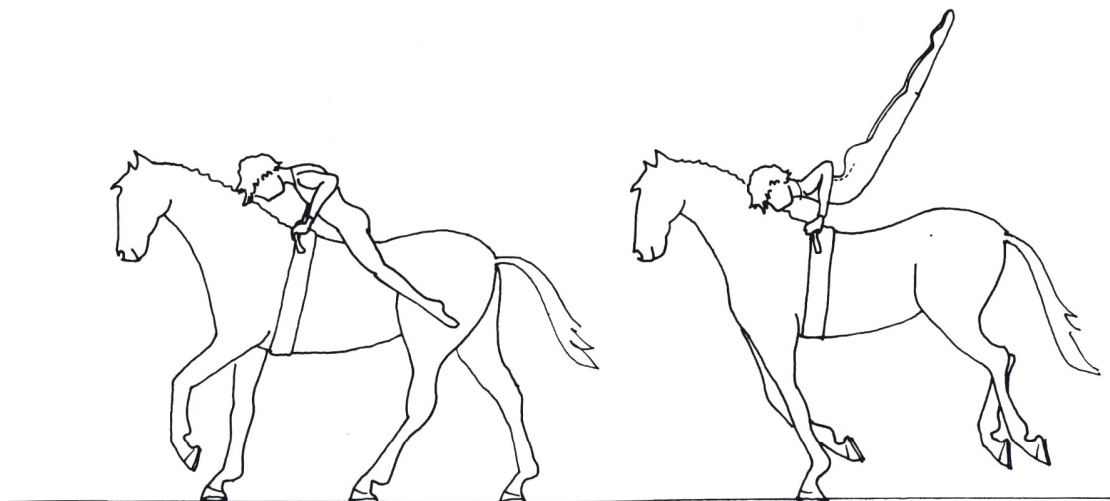
Excessive piking: although good height is achieved and the vaulter pushes off, the flight curve is interrupted and the flight phase shortened

Wrong: curved back to achieve greater swing with legs



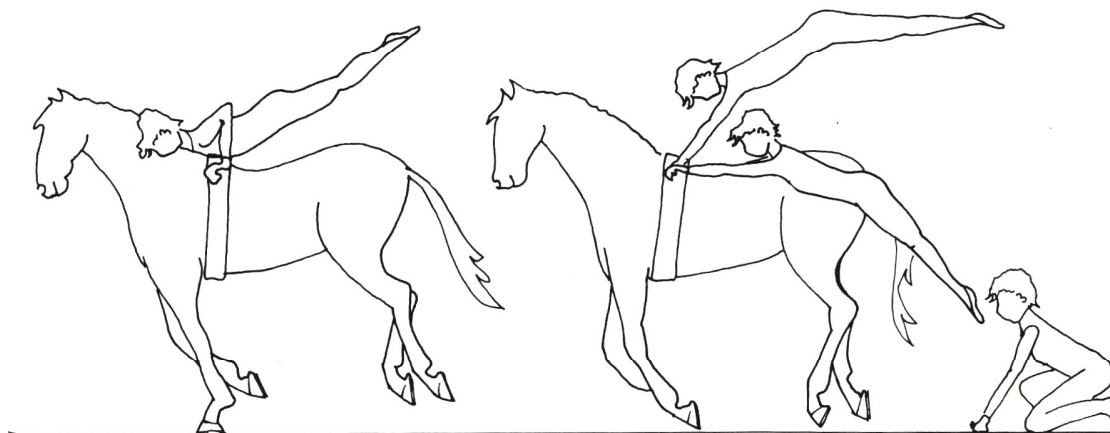
Wrong: head down during swing and push phase

Wrong: overarched back to achieve greater height with feet: interruption of straight body line



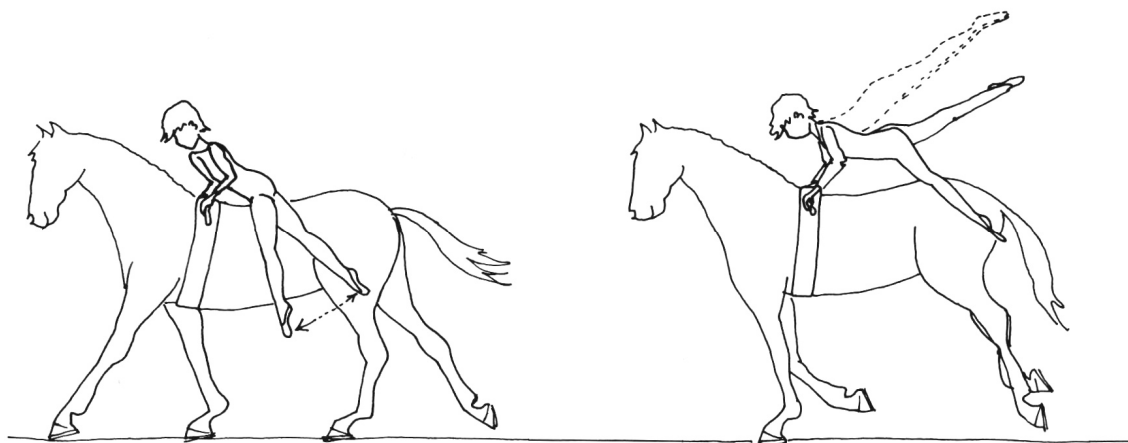
Wrong: head down during swing and push phase

Wrong: overarched back to achieve greater height with feet: interruption of straight body line

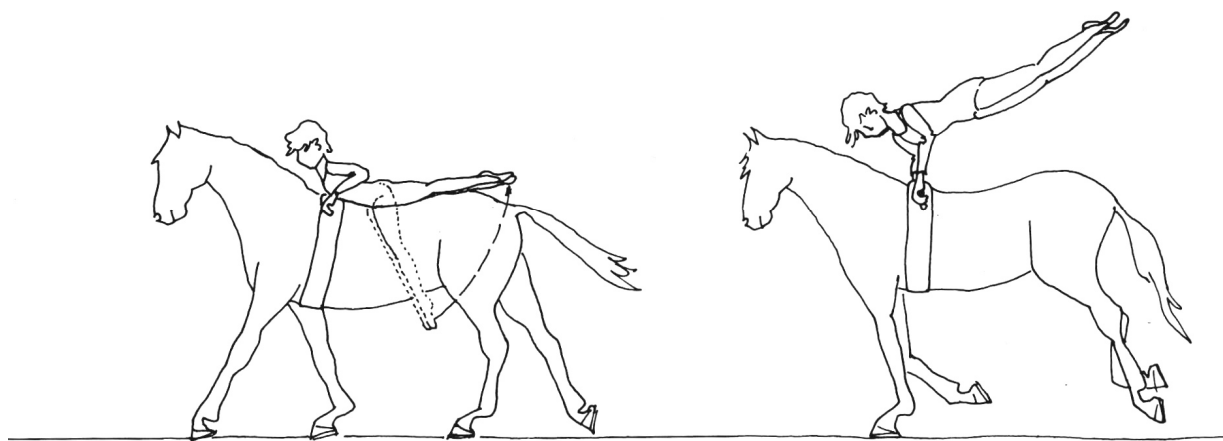


Wrong: collapse of supporting arms

Wrong: no push off: clinging to grips, vaulter gets dragged along. This often results in a fall (touching the ground with hands or knees counts as a fall in competition)

*The basic dismount and the vault-off*

151



Wrong: collapse of the supporting arms so vaulter does not clear the horse, no flight phase

Wrong: vaulter twists during flight phase