

## 21     *The stand*

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Optimum mechanics for the stand is interpreted at this point as ‘to be in a balanced position’, that is, not to fall off. Therefore the basic score in terms of mechanics is a zero in case of a fall. However new rules also provide for the case where a zero can be given by way of deductions, so it does not necessarily mean ‘not performed’.

The discussion as to whether a ‘stand’, which is in fact never still, but rather a ‘walk’ on the horse’s back, can be counted as such, is ongoing. If a vaulter is continually walking (losing balance) for the prescribed four canter strides, he is, according to the rules as they stand at the moment, ‘mechanically’ standing, but with a deduction for ‘major fault’ between 2.0 and 3.0 points for each full step; this will nevertheless land him very close to a zero. It is very important that you point out to your vaulters at an early stage that taking steps during the stand is not a minor thing: it is much more than a bad habit. Therefore you must always make sure that the vaulter stands on the full surface of his feet, and no tilting to the toes or the heel should be permitted.

### *Over the kneel into the crouch*

To go into the stand, the vaulter hops into the kneel from the basic seat position via a small swing. The height of the swing should not be exaggerated, as the stand is one of the *static* exercises, and even the hop into it should possibly express that. It is wrong to jump straight away into the crouch; the buildup *must* go over a full kneel position. (One full point deduction, if

the kneel is omitted.) When swinging up into the kneel, consideration must be shown to the horse: the landing on the knees must be as soft as possible (so don't gain more height than absolutely necessary), the toes should not be dug into his kidneys, rather the flat top of the vaulter's feet should touch the horse's back first, then the ankles, then the knees. The face should be up and looking straight ahead the whole time.

### *Building up the stand*

From the kneel position (or bench position, since the hands are still on the grips) there are two permissible ways to build up the stand: experienced vaulters do a small jump (with very soft landing) into the crouch, with both feet simultaneously, which looks more fluid and elegant, but there is nothing wrong with standing up with one foot first, then the other following. Remember that the judges (and a good trainer as well) watch for the consideration shown. If you have a jittery horse it does not make sense to upset him by a hard landing or pain in the kidney area, before you expect your vaulters to stand. And younger vaulters *feel safer* putting one foot up first – and half of the standing exercise happens in the head. If the vaulter is not confident that he can do it, it will not work, and elegant posture will never be achieved. In none of the compulsory exercises does self confidence show as much as in the stand. . .

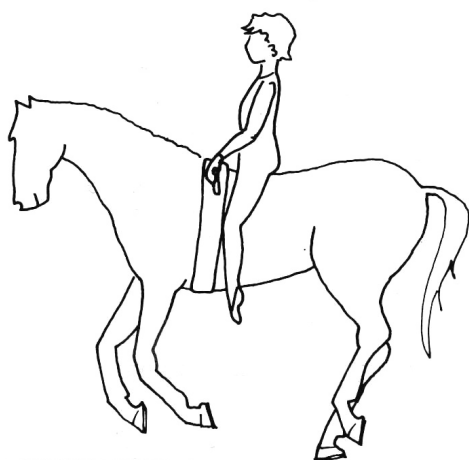
From the crouch position the vaulter raises the upper body, arms fairly straight and still pointing in the direction of the grips. Tell young vaulters to stay low *in the knees*, if they feel insecure, but they *must* come up with their shoulders. Balancing is much harder when the child stays bent down, eyes fixed on the grips (because that is how he perceives security), since it shifts his gravity point out of the vertical to the front. In this way, it will take him unnecessarily long to experience the wonderful feeling of accomplishment, when he can stand the

prescribed four strides for the first time. The gravity point must be aligned: we try for a straight line from head to shoulder to hip to ankles, just as in the seat.

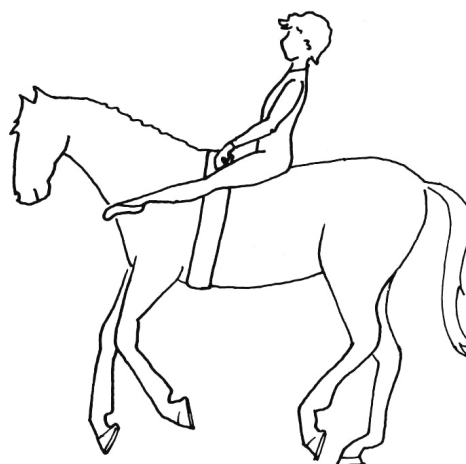
### *Before we actually go into our stand, a word about beginners*

The stand is what every beginner wants to be able to do. The scissors are much harder, but the glory is in the stand! If you want your children to stick with vaulting, you must satisfy them in this. Start them with the stand early: first in walk of course, and holding their hand (don't hold on to their legs). Always let them jump off out of the standing position in the beginning, the little ones to the inside holding your hand, the bigger ones to the outside by themselves. (Pre-exercises are jumps with soft landings from a chair as mentioned in the warm-up.) Never let a beginner sit down again, because if you do, it will take him forever to lose the reflex of bending down to the grips. Security in the stand, which is so important later for an 'underman', comes — if not from the soft knees and balance alone — from the feeling of being able to *separate* from the horse at any time in a controlled manner, of landing softly and on your feet always, and of not perceiving the given height as a threat.

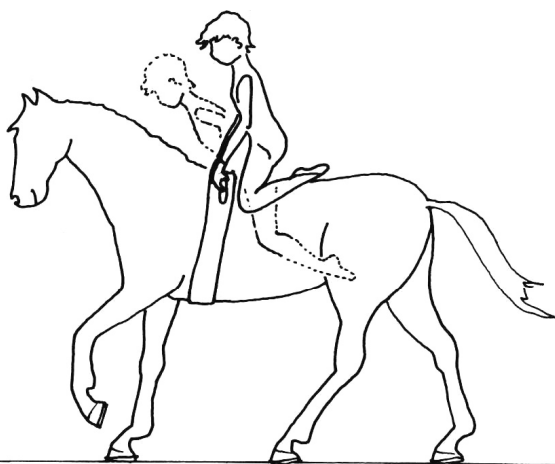
It usually takes my beginners not longer than two months to jump off out of a crouch in canter. I ask them for the jump off (first in walk, of course) much earlier than for a stand. As soon as they feel that they can jump off and run safely from that height and speed, they can *all* stand. Their eyes are up (looking for the landing spot after the jump rather than looking at the surcingle) and their posture is more or less erect. Offer a sitting partner (in front of the surcingle) for added security — and your beginners have reached their glory very soon!

**The stand: correct build-up**

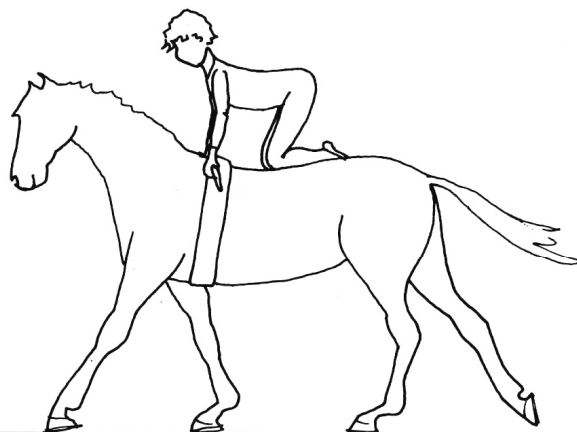
From the correct basic seat...



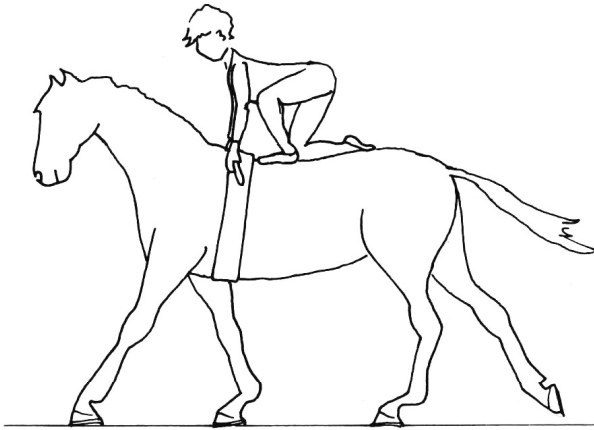
...the vaulter takes a moderate swing to elevate the legs into...



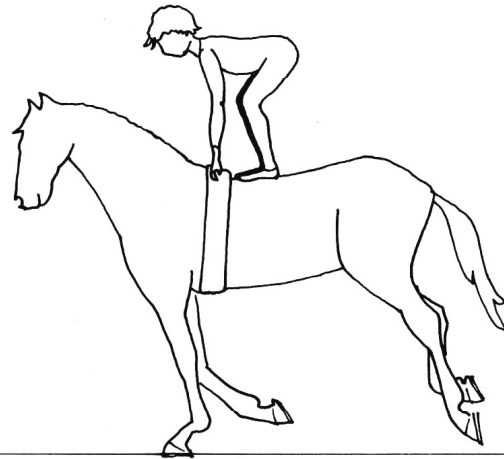
...the kneel. The gravity point must be over the hands to ensure soft landing. Both legs must kneel before the stand



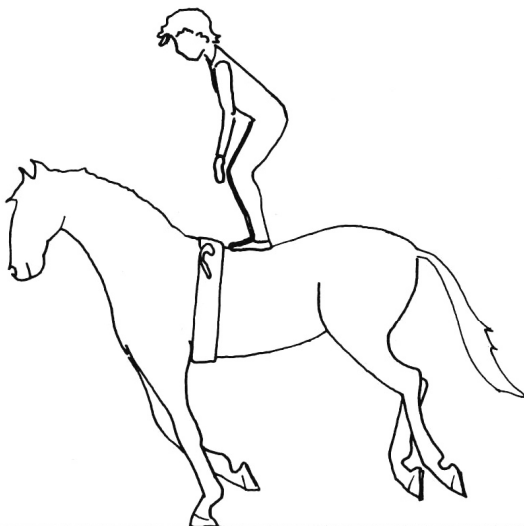
From a balanced bench position the vaulter stands up



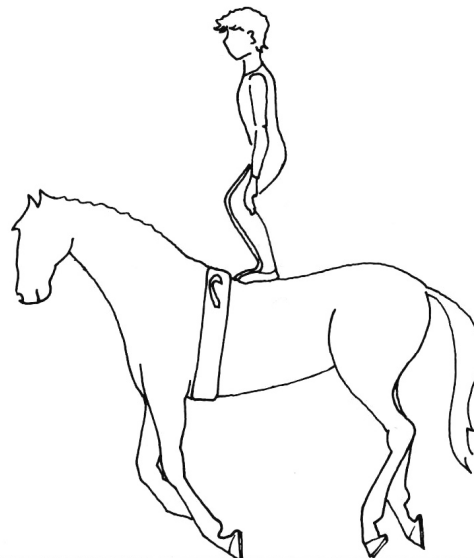
Beginners should stand up on one foot first to ensure avoiding discomfort to the horse



More advanced vaulters jump directly into the crouch with strong arm support for gentle landing



The vaulter brings the upper body up, establishing his balance. His back stays straight



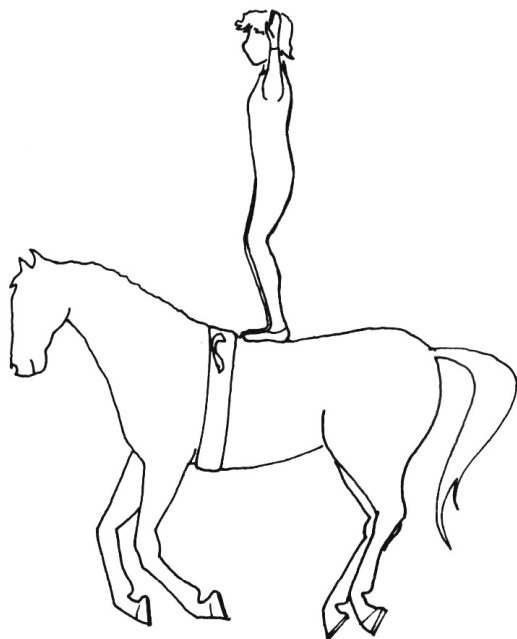
With beginners the knees may stay bent low, but the back must be straight and torso must be brought to near vertical position for good balance

## *Building up the exercise*

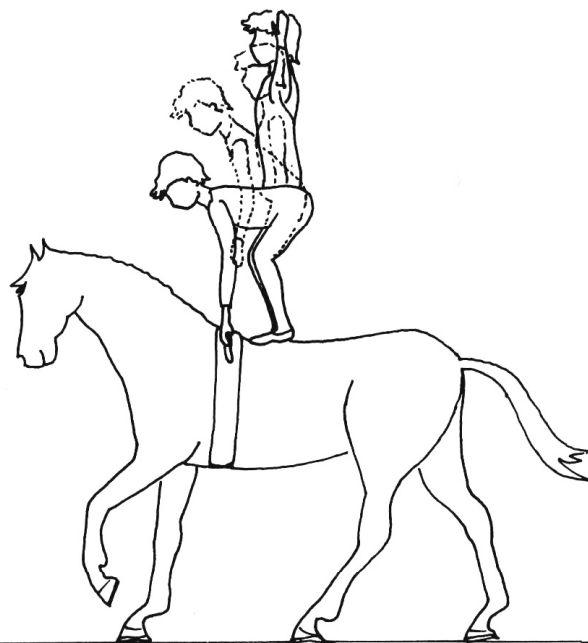
Coming up from the crouch, and having established his balance, the vaulter then extends his arms into the same position as in the basic seat, hands flat and palms down, ideally the finger tips at eye level. The movement into the stand should be smooth and fluid, without any disturbance of the harmony of movement with the horse. The stand must be held for four canter strides, *after it is fully built up*; that is, with arms fully extended and hands in the prescribed position and elevation.

## *Keeping balance in the stand*

The stand really happens in the knees. All the movement, which arrives at the vaulter's feet from below, should be caught in his knees. In *actively* soft knees, I tell my vaulters, meaning that in

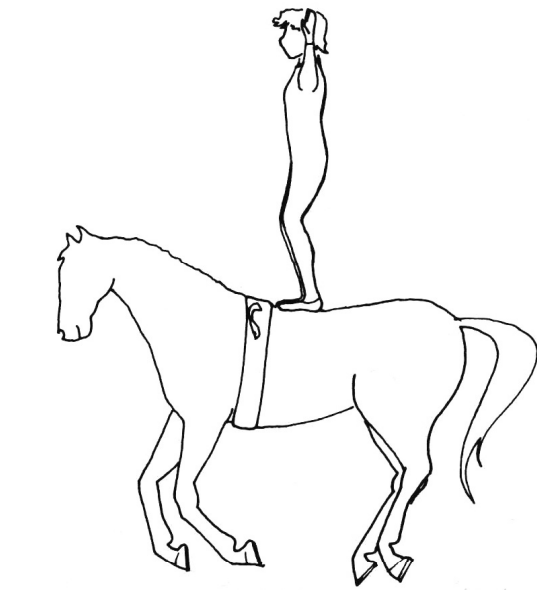


When this position is fully built up, the arms are extended. The correct arm position is the same as in the basic seat

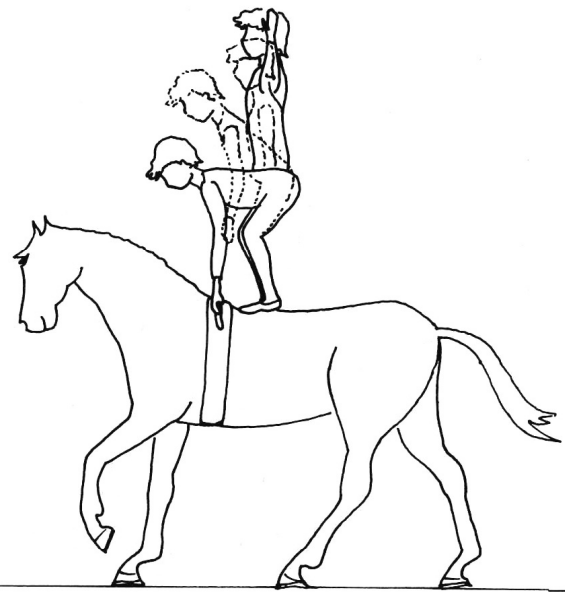


The weight must be on the full flat soles of both feet throughout. The stand is taken down slowly and with a slight hop...

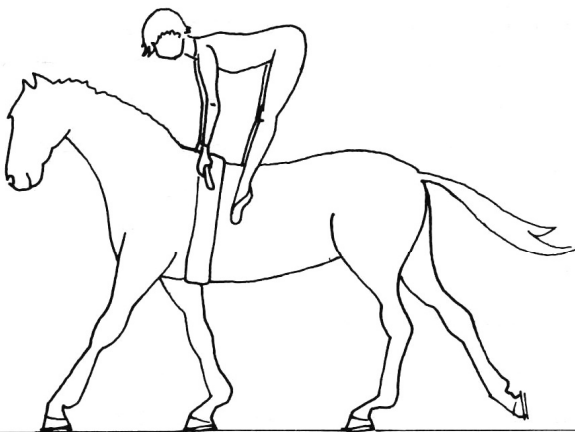




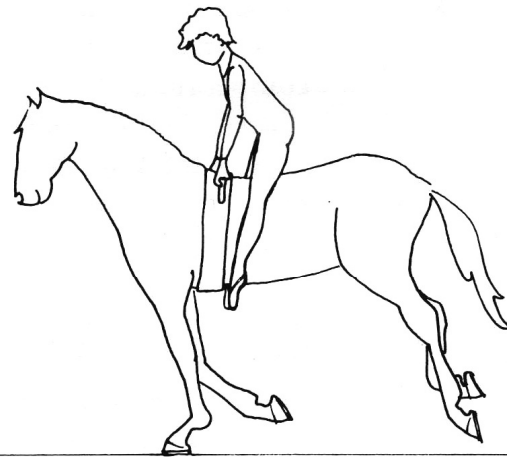
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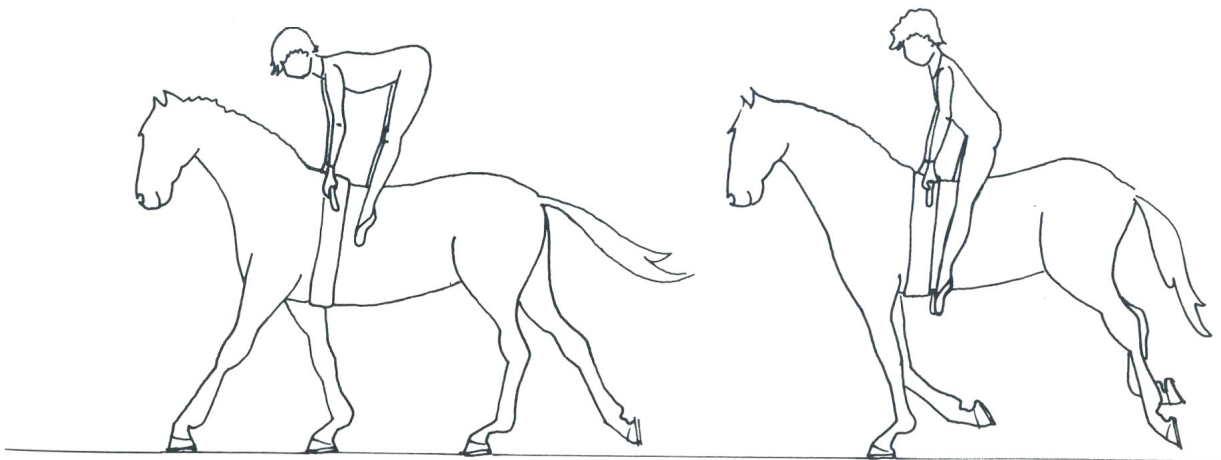
...the weight is shifted onto the arms and the vaulter slides with stretched and straddled legs back into the seat



The gravity point must be over the hands to ensure a soft settling down onto the horse's back

the beginning phases I let them *move* their knees *actively* themselves with every step the horse takes. This makes for an exaggerated motion, but it gets grease into those knees, stiff with concentration or apprehension! Of course the ankles catch some movement too, but it is not important to mention this, because the ankles are not usually held as cramped up. Better vaulters, who are already able to stand in canter, should look at a line on the wall to determine how much their upper body moves: it should ideally not move at all. The head (as well as hips) travels on a very quiet orbit around the riding ring...with the proverbial glass of water on top!

In training, especially in trot, we try to get the vaulter to make his stand independent of having his eyes glued to the grips... when they are secure enough, and if your horse is safe enough, make the vaulters count the cars that go by...or the clouds in



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the sky. My better vaulters close their eyes to concentrate on their balance. The intent is to train their instinctive response to any interruption or disturbance in the regular canter movement: with slight disturbance the reaction should be to 'give' even more in the knees and 'shock absorb' even better. In case of major interruption (spooking etc.) the instinctive reaction should be to separate from the horse in a controlled manner, self-determining the direction of the fall, which will be more of a jump in that case, with a planned landing spot. The correct response would not be to get the hands back onto the grips: retaking the grips in competition costs too many points (full 2.0 the first time, and score of zero if retaken twice) – and in team exercises it can cost a 'flyer' partner an accident!

To get a little vaulter used to the correct body alignment right away, bring up their upper body into the vertical for correct balance and train them with an assistant sitting backwards on the neck. This person can hold the beginner around the hips, and the vaulter can rest his hands on the assistant's shoulders and feel safe without keeping his eyes glued to the surcingle.

Slight loss of balance may occur due to an inconsistency in the horse's gait, and this is often corrected by the vaulter by taking a little step on the horse's back to regain control. In case of competition, this is better than a fall or re-taking the grips of course, but do not let it become a habit with your vaulters during training. Teach them to be ready for slight changes in speed and make up for it with their shock-absorber knees – not through walking around.

### *Coming down from the stand*

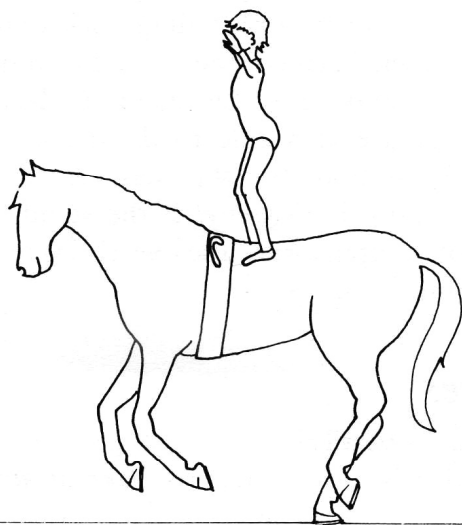
The torso is then bent down, the hands retake the grips, and the vaulter slides smoothly and softly back onto seat astride, after putting his weight on his arms and lifting it off the feet with a little hop. Feet are then pointed and legs fully stretched. The whole length of the legs should break the movement of sliding

down, the motion must be fluid and elegant.

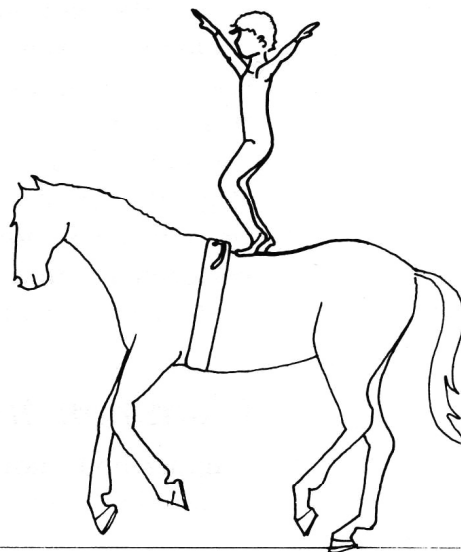
Don't let even beginners get away with falling back onto the horse! As long as they lose their balance, they should jump off. When they are able to come down out of the stand in a balanced and controlled manner, they are also able to do it softly and elegantly. Instil in them the notion that the stand is not over *before they are back down* – and this *elegantly*! If the stand is not performed within a block of compulsories, the exercise is terminated by a vault-off dismount.

## *Common mistakes*

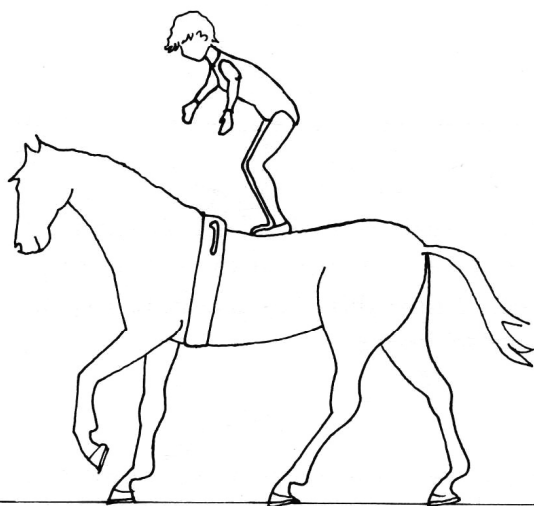
- upper body not brought to vertical
- 'walking' on the horse, that is moving feet to make up for loss of balance
- stiff or arched back (which I call 'duckie bum')
- standing on toes, rather than whole foot
- feet too wide apart, knees too low, or knees bent outward
- faults in alignment: vaulter twists his body sideways or has arms at uneven height etc.
- vaulter holds himself off centre
- feet too far back behind surcingle
- head too low, not looking straight to the front
- building up the stand over one foot from the kneel (for competition only, for training this is ok)
- going into the stand via direct hop into the crouch (omitting the kneel)

**Common mistakes in the stand**

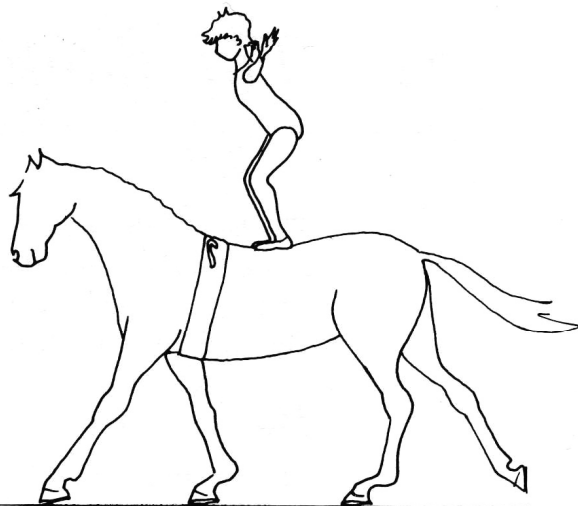
Wrong: 'Duckie bum'! Overarched back, arms too far to the front, feet too widely apart



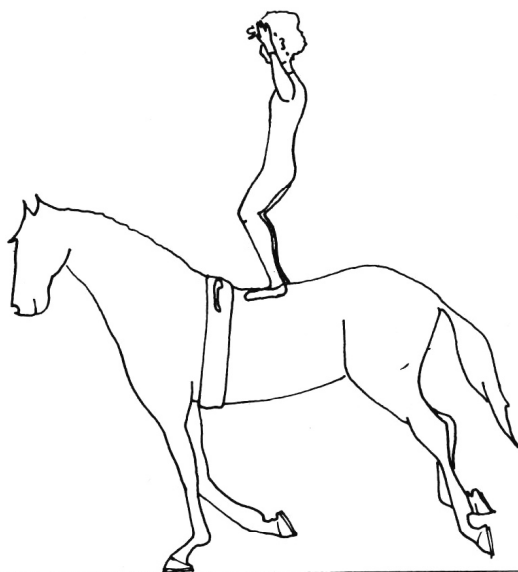
Wrong: weight is not on whole foot, the vaulter walks around to keep the balance, arms are uneven



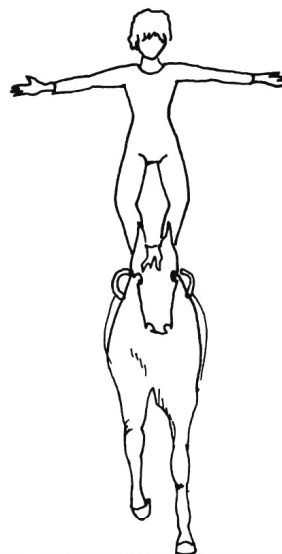
Wrong: feet are too far back. The insecure vaulter tries to stay close to the grips: the torso does not come to the vertical. Arms don't come up, head is low



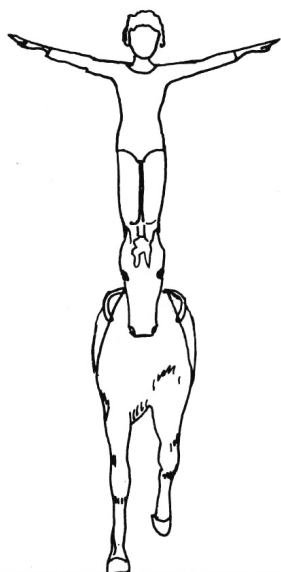
Wrong: feet are too far back. Loss of balance to the front is counteracted by extending arms too far back



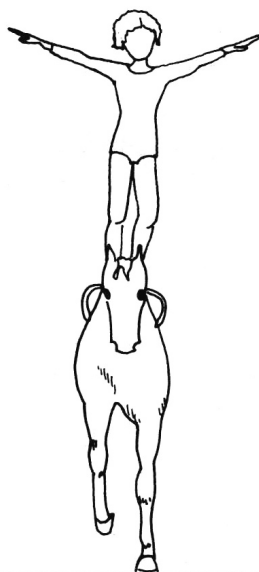
Wrong: the pelvis is tilted too far to the front. The back is rounded (poor posture) arms too far to the front and head low. The torso is behind the vertical, which will result in loss of balance and walking, or a fall



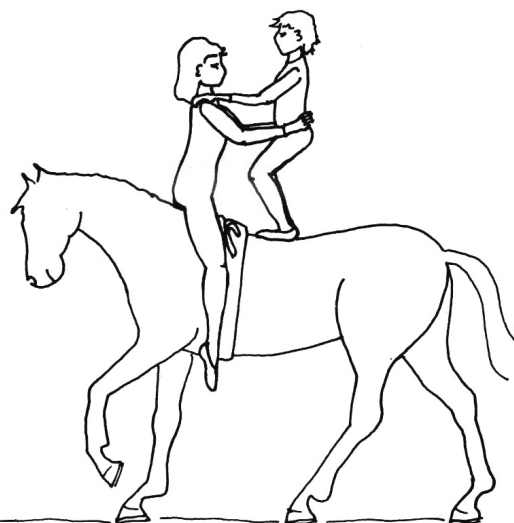
Wrong: the arms are too low, head down, palms showing to the front. The legs are too far apart



Correct stand: seen from the front. Hands are at eye level, knees close together, good posture



Wrong: unbalanced stand. The vaulter leans to inside, kink in the hip to make up for uneven legs. Thumbs are not to the hands



Beginners should be assisted to get used to correct posture from the start, i.e. straight back close to the vertical, eye up. Security given by a partner makes it possible to concentrate on softly absorbing knees