



The Four C's Self-Check

Know When to Move Forward—and When to Step Back

Why This Matters

Most training setbacks do not come from doing too little. They come from moving forward before the horse is ready. In the Shooting Horse discipline, pressure does not hide weakness. It reveals it.

The Four C's—Cadence, Confidence, Collection, and Control—give you a practical way to evaluate readiness. They help you decide whether to keep progressing or step back and rebuild.

Cadence

Cadence is rhythm and consistency. It tells you whether the horse is relaxed, understanding, and mentally connected.

You Have It If:

- ✓ Your horse maintains the same rhythm without constant correction
- ✓ Transitions stay smooth and predictable
- ✓ Speed changes do not create tension

You Don't Have It If:

- ✗ The horse rushes, slows unpredictably, or braces
- ✗ You are constantly adjusting speed to hold things together

If cadence is not present, nothing else will stay stable.

Confidence

Confidence is the horse's mental steadiness when something changes. A confident horse stays with the rider. An unsure horse reacts to the environment.

You Have It If:

- ✓ Your horse remains calm when something changes
- ✓ Mistakes do not escalate into bigger reactions
- ✓ The horse stays mentally present

You Don't Have It If:

- ✗ The horse disconnects, overreacts, or becomes anxious
- ✗ Small changes create a large response

Confidence is built through clarity and repetition, not by pushing through fear.

Collection

Collection is balance and body control. It allows the horse to stay organized, carry itself, and respond precisely.

You Have It If:

- ✓ The horse stays balanced through turns and transitions
- ✓ Movement feels controlled instead of hurried
- ✓ The horse is not leaning heavily on the forehand

You Don't Have It If:

- ✗ The horse becomes heavy, falls through turns, or loses shape easily
- ✗ Speed replaces structure

Collection is not about slowing down. It is about control within movement.

Control

Control is the result of clear communication. It is not force. It is the horse understanding and responding lightly.

You Have It If:

- ✓ The horse responds to light cues
- ✓ You can redirect without resistance
- ✓ Speed and direction stay adjustable

You Don't Have It If:

- ✗ You need force to get a response
- ✗ Redirection becomes a fight or the horse ignores the cue

If control is not light, it is not truly established yet.

Final Check

If any one of the Four C's is inconsistent, do not move forward yet. Identify what is breaking down, simplify the work, and rebuild from there.

You do not build forward. You build correctly.