

“Building a Better Drill”

A presentation on Choreography



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Choreography

Definition:

Choreography in our case is the art of arranging how horses and riders will move to create an overall performance.

The word *choreography* literally means "dance-writing". It is the sequencing of maneuvers & transitions that makeup an interesting presentation and lends to the successful performance by a team.

It is the content of the drill, the variety, difficulty, arena use and the effective use of maneuvers all rolled into one.

Choreography

The “Choreography” category on the scoresheet accounts for only 20 points. However, as with the “Difficulty” category it can impact your scores in almost every other category.

Alignment, spacing, precision, briskness, difficulty, showmanship and overall presentation all work together and you can either accumulate points or lose points in these other categories because of the Choreography of your drill. ***It is the Foundation!***

Choreography

Give your team the advantage of starting with a well choreographed drill and they will have a leg up.

Yes, they still have to execute it well, but it will be easier to learn & execute from the beginning if it's choreographed well.

Choreography

Choreography is the artistic side of our sport. The things discussed today are merely ideas, suggestions, and **my** process to hopefully help you design a more engaging, entertaining, artistic and/or meaningful drill, there are no rules!

You will have to find the process that works best for you and your team, through some trial and error.

Choreography

You want your riders to appear to move in a natural, musical manner so that every motion moves naturally, or logically, from the previous one but is still executed with great precision, confidence and a few surprises thrown in. The art of choreography is concealing the concept of the choreography itself.

Positioning and spacing required for the following maneuver should be set up in the prior maneuver so the flow of the drill is maintained throughout.

Choreography

Choreography is not just stringing together maneuvers with transitions. Put yourself in the audiences shoes.

- What do they want to see?
- Why should they like your drill?
- What will hold their attention at each moment?

Keep your audience in mind during every step of your design.

Choreography

Many aspiring choreographers approach their choreography as simply “I love to do this maneuver!,” assuming that viewers will enjoy watching, as much as riders enjoy drilling it. Your audience may quickly lose interest unless you know how to hold ***their*** attention and make it meaningful for ***them***.

The best learning tool for this is watching performances with audience response as your primary focus. What do they respond to?

Choreography

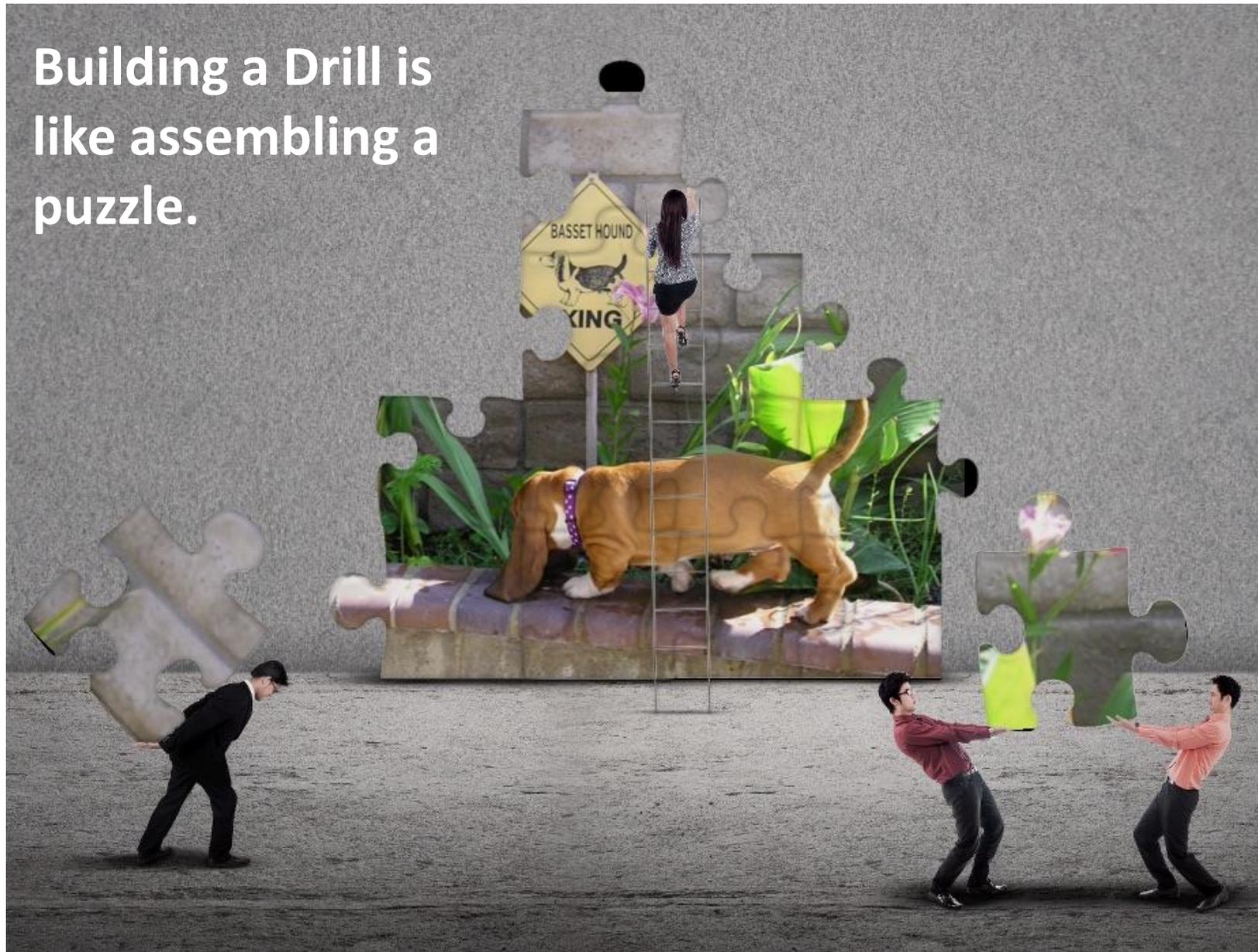
Think big. Begin your creative process with the grandest plans. You may have to settle on some compromises down the road. Even plan on revolutionizing the drill world. Make drill history with something new. If you don't succeed in revolutionizing the arena, that's fine, but your team will still be better for aiming high.

Choreography

Avoid the opposite attitude: "Yikes, we only only a month until the show! I hope I come up with something decent before then." That's an attitude of avoiding failure, which is the opposite of an optimistic attitude of making history. Either attitude will be apparent in your final work.

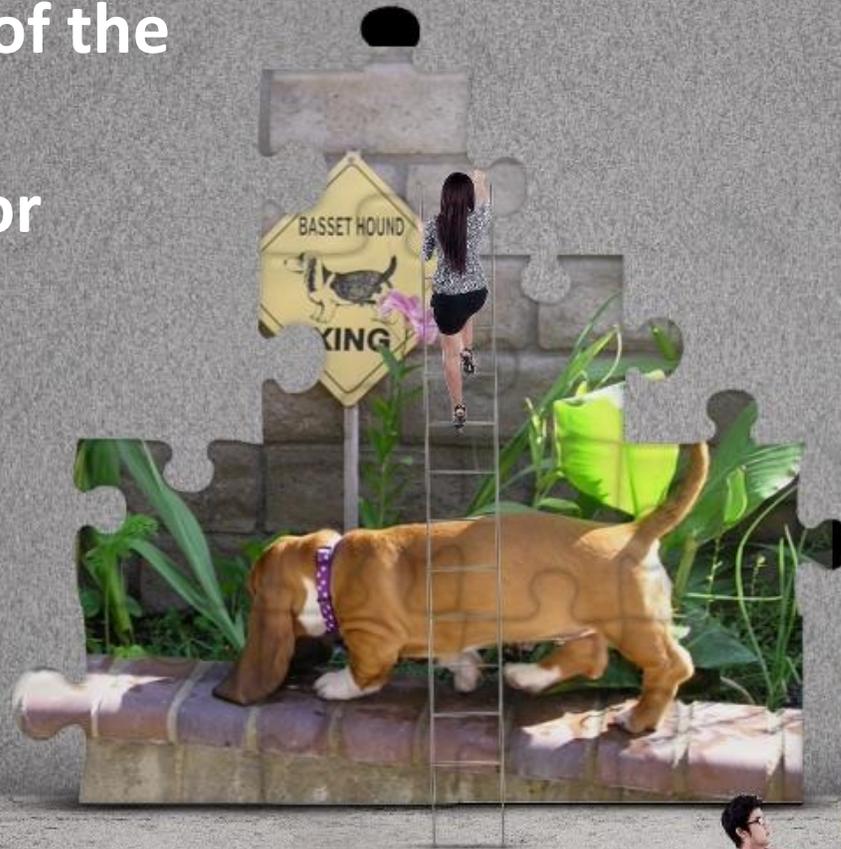
Add surprise! A maneuver that has the audience thinking you are headed to do one thing, and then surprises them with a twist, is most often very well received.

Building a Drill is
like assembling a
puzzle.



Each piece of the puzzle is a maneuver or transition.

Maneuver

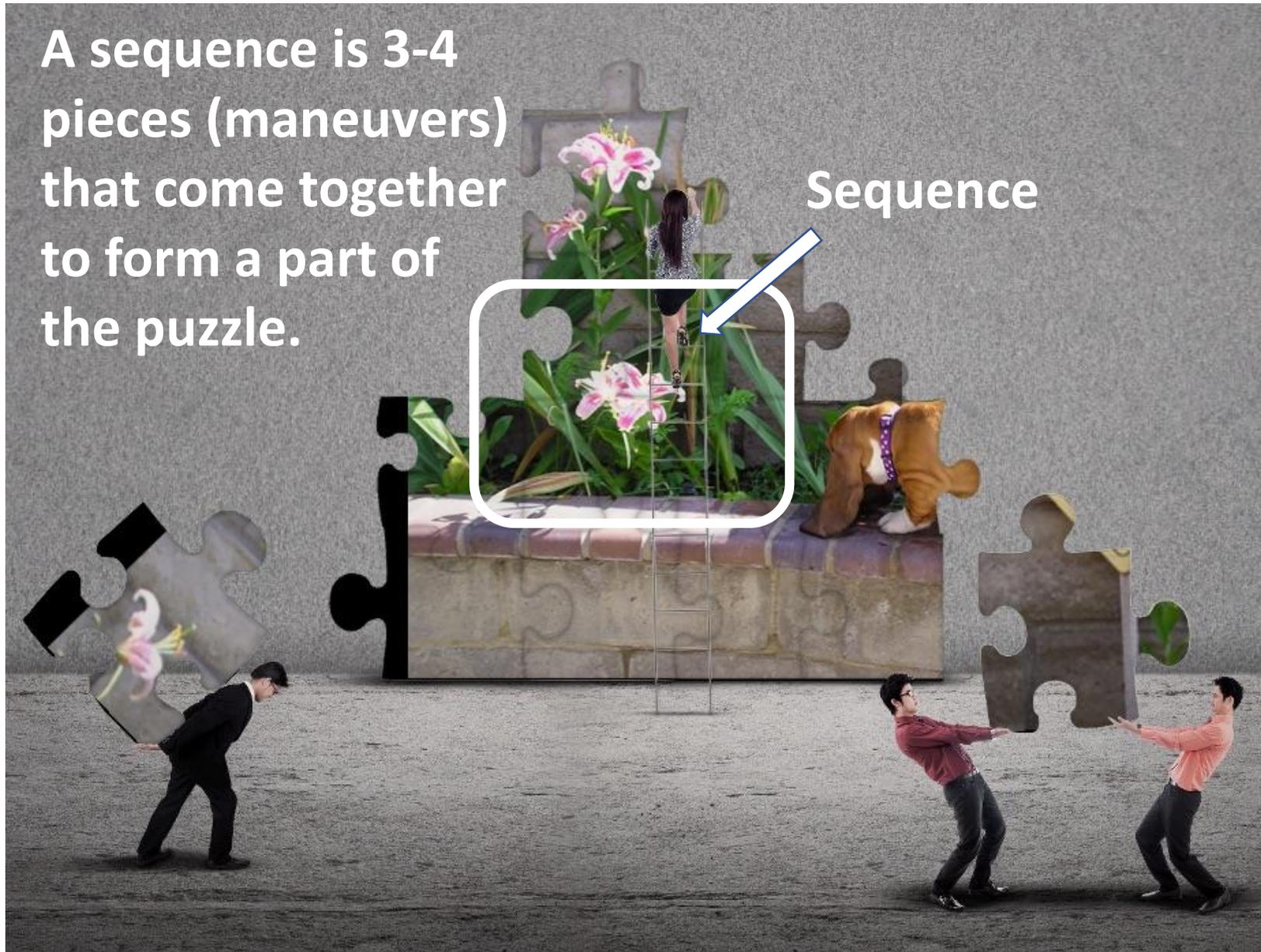


Transition



A sequence is 3-4 pieces (maneuvers) that come together to form a part of the puzzle.

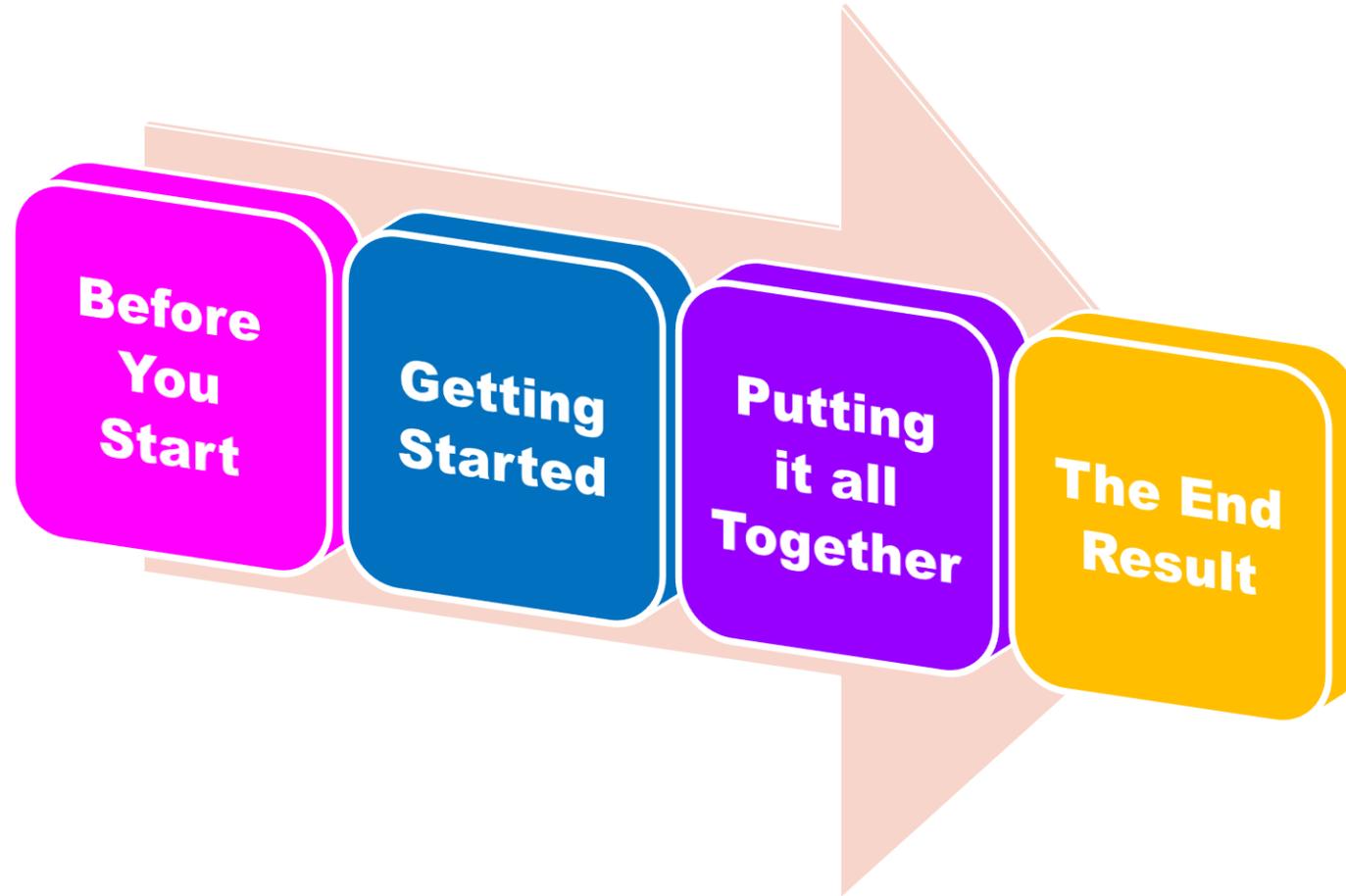
Sequence



When all of the pieces are fit together perfectly, the full picture is revealed



4 Steps to a Better Drill





Before You Start

- 1) Doing your Homework**
- 2) Inspiration**
- 3) Off-Season Development**
- 4) Mull it Over**
- 5) Recruit-Recruit-Recruit**



1) Doing Your Homework

Doing Your Homework

Perform a critical review of your past performances from an objective choreography perspective without personal attachment. You will not grow as a choreographer until you can perform a critical review from an unemotional & unbiased position.

- What worked nicely because of how it was set up or how it translated?
- What did not work because of how it was set up, or did it just not translate as anticipated?

Doing Your Homework

Watch videos of other teams performances with the same critical assessment of their choreography

- Does their choreography make their team look better than their skill level or worse?
- What worked for them and what didn't?
- You should learn something from every video you watch, if you didn't, watch it again. Some are tedious to get through but it will make you better.

Doing Your Homework

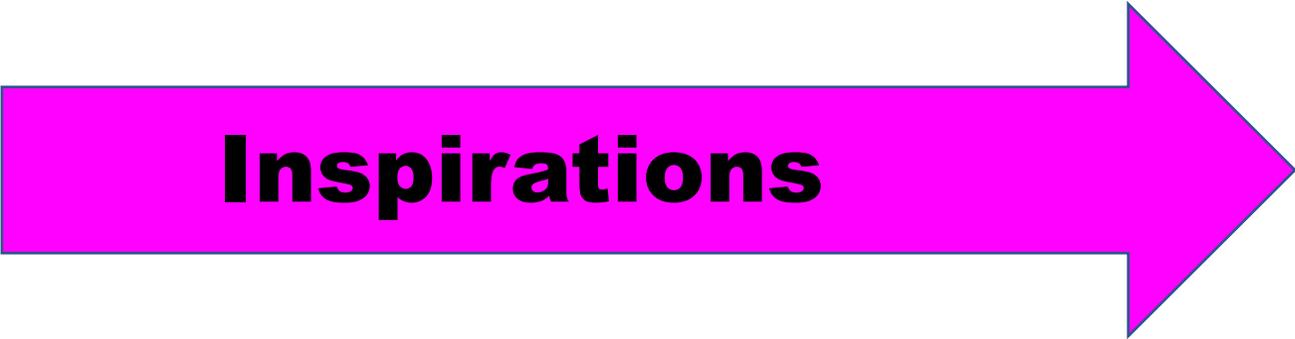
Watch videos of teams performing at non-competitive events, rodeos, horseshows, expos, etc. whenever possible.

Listen closely to the crowd response. What maneuvers are they responding to and why? Do you know what the #1 responded to maneuver is? Why is that?

Audiences that are watching drill for the first time are often the best gauge of pure appreciative response.



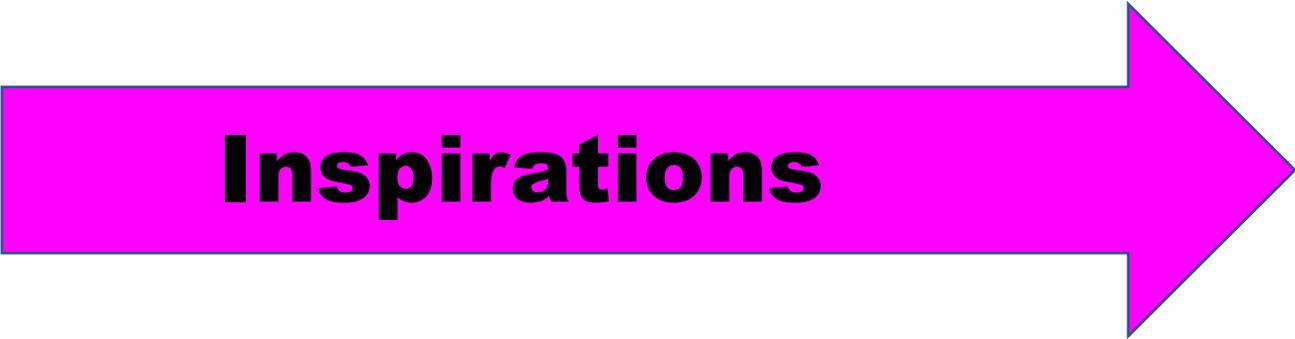
2) Inspirations



Inspirations

Inspiration for new maneuvers can come from anywhere. Always be looking around you for inspirational pieces. You will be surprised where you will see it and you will become more aware of potential inspirational designs.

We are going to look at one metal wall hanging and let's see what we can visualize in it. There will be many common maneuvers but then we need to try and look further and use our imagination to see even more.



Inspirations

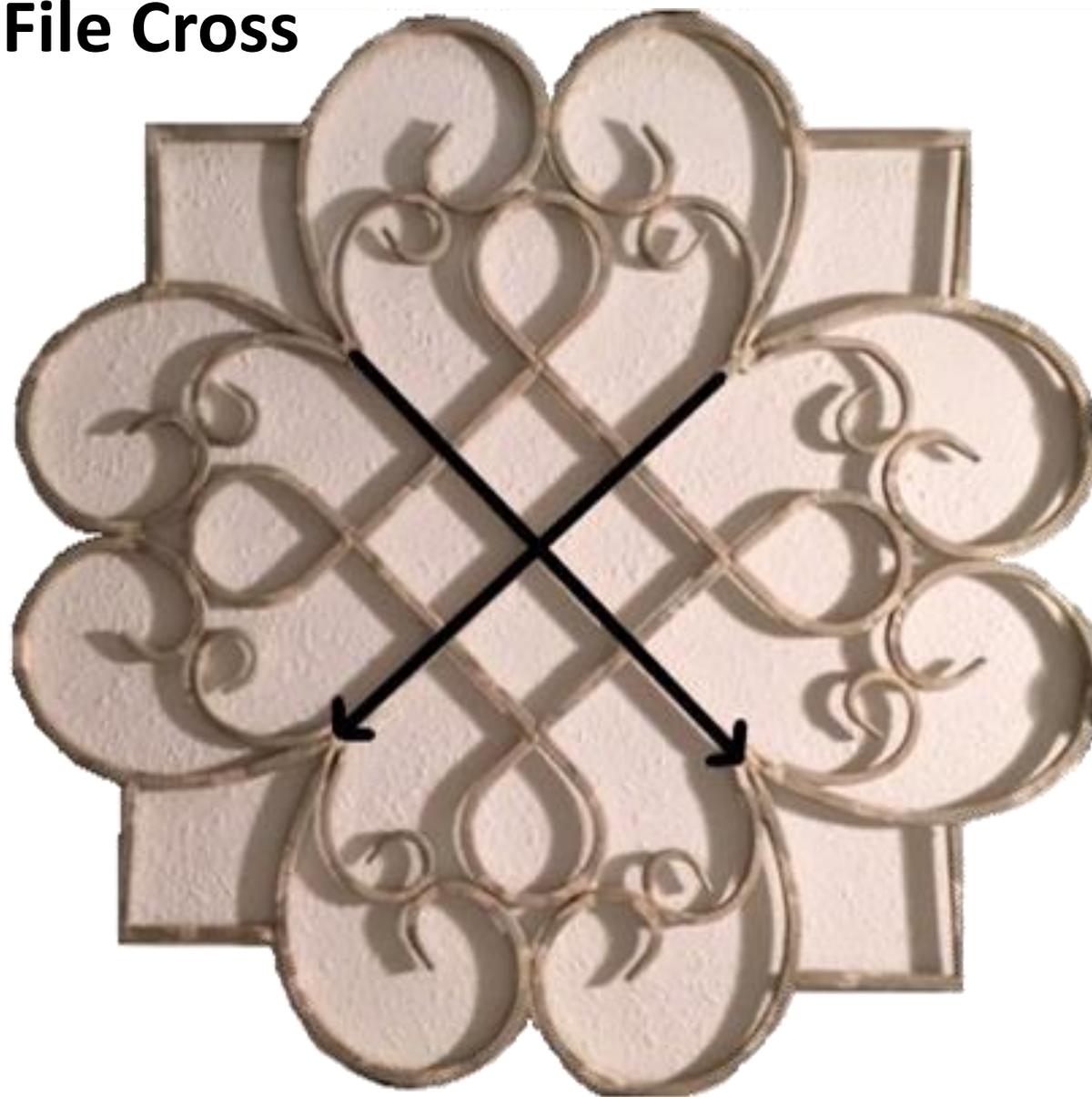
It takes practice to learn to visualize potential. Looking at one thing and seeing another is a skill that evolves with repetition.

Envisioning how to manipulate or reconstruct something from watching a drill, or looking at an inanimate object, will both increase your creativity in writing a drill.

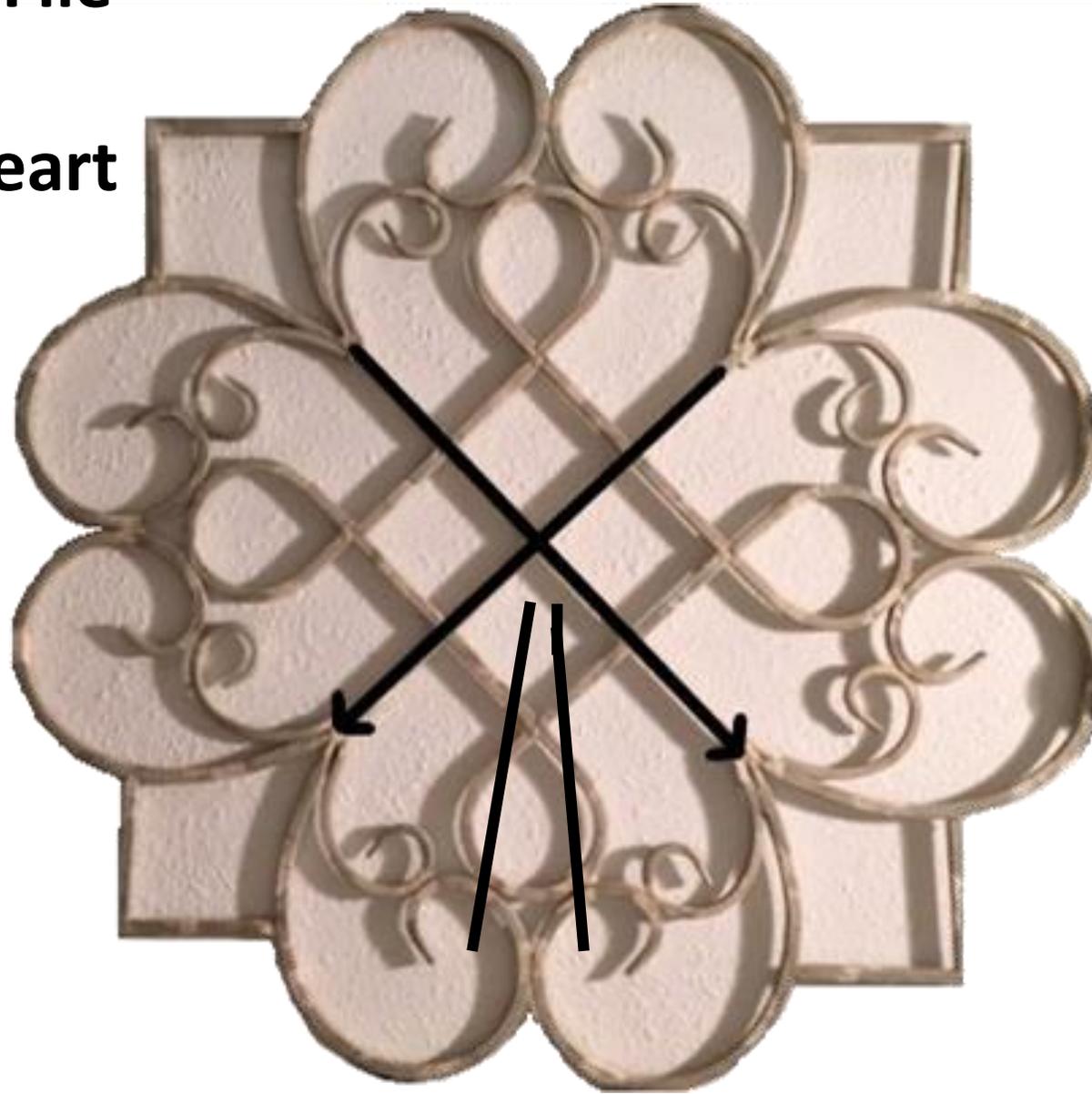
**INSPIRATION:
What Drills
Do You
See?**



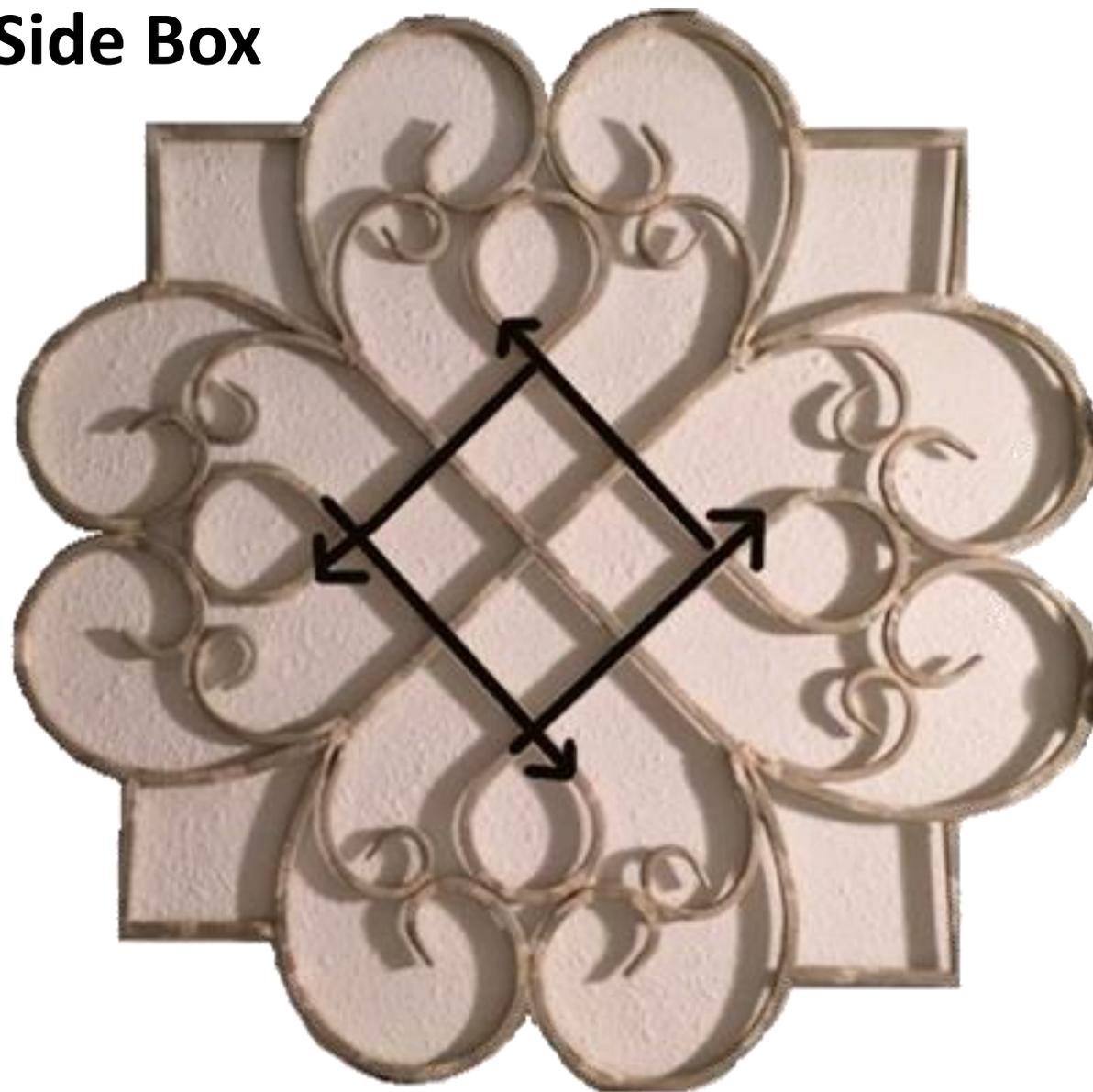
Single File Cross



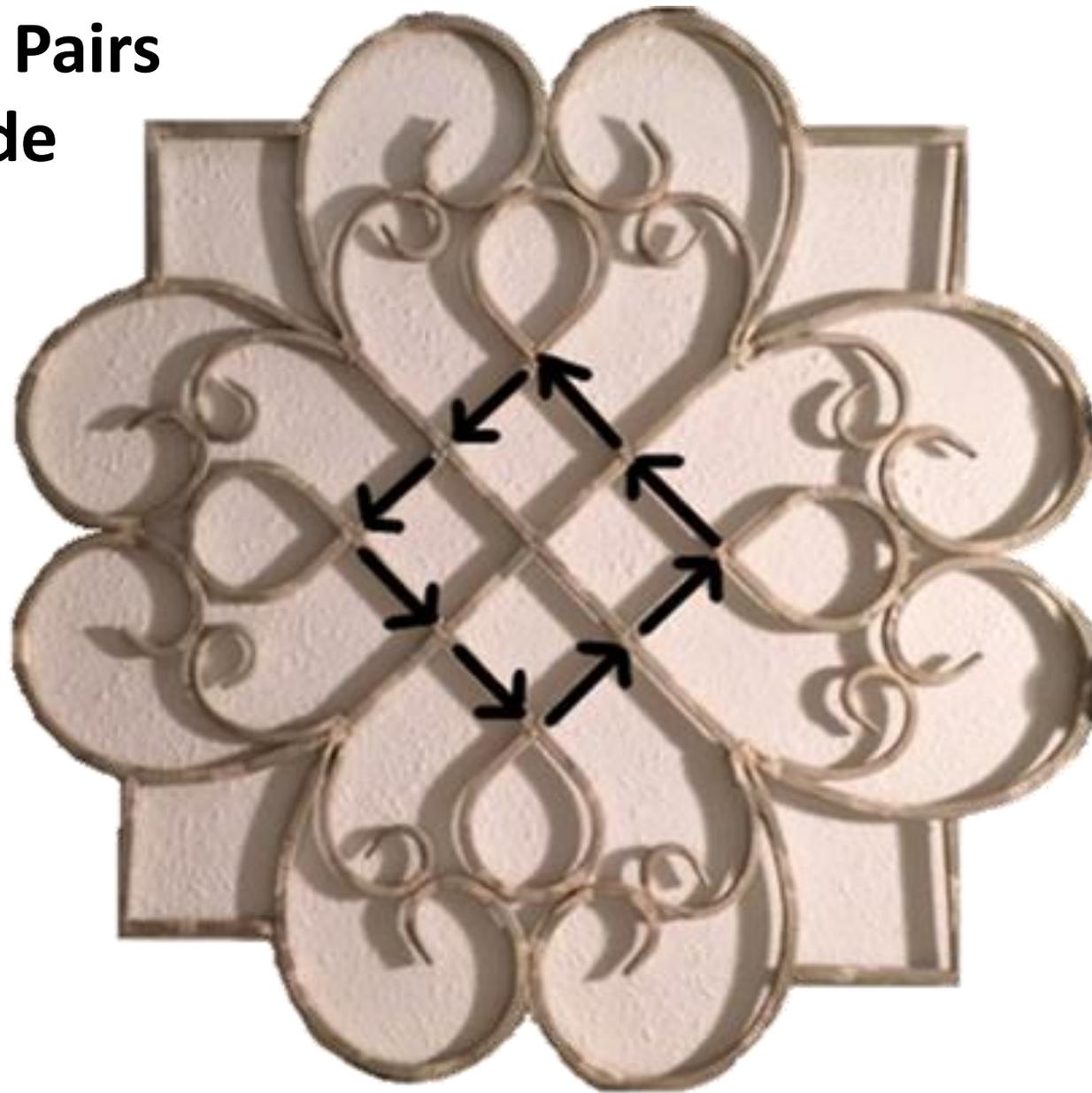
**Single File
Cross
Into Heart**



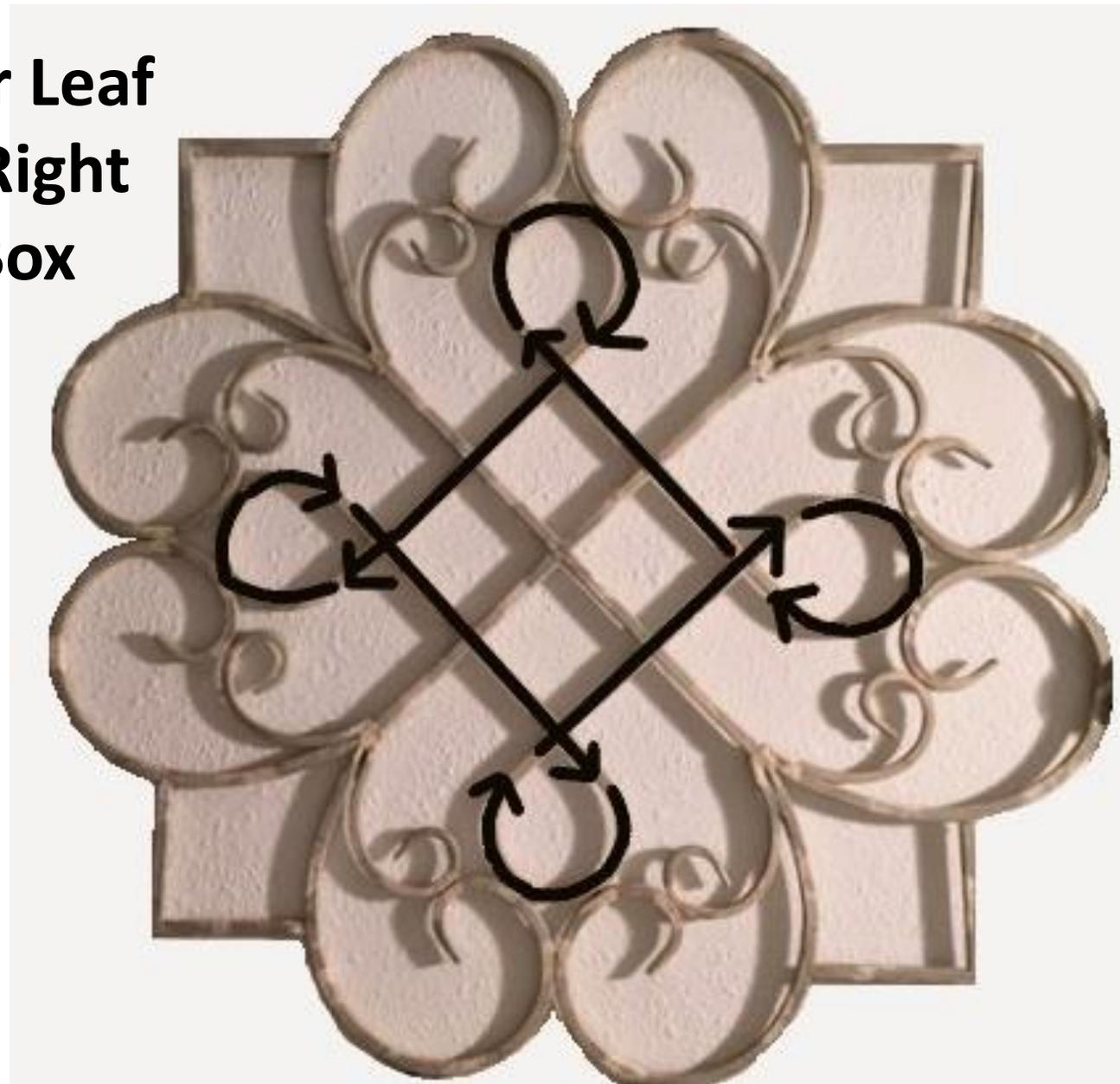
Right Side Box



Tandem Pairs
Right Side
Box



**Clover Leaf
with Right
Side Box**



Tandem Pairs

Right Side

Box, 1st

riders

Loop to

Right into

Box, 2nd

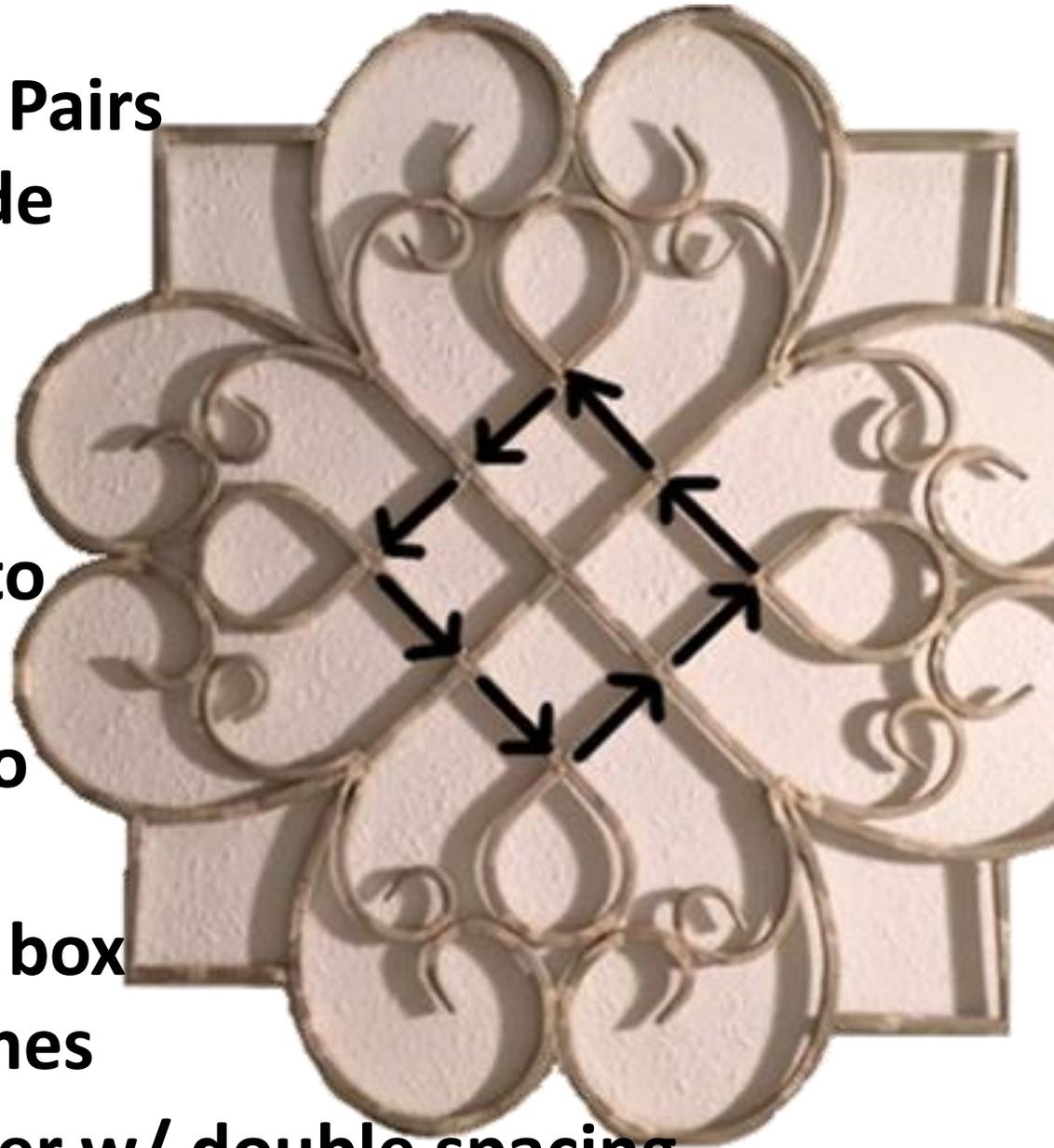
Riders go

straight

through box

& becomes

lead rider w/ double spacing



Always search for ways to increase or decrease spacing during maneuvers so when you need it you know it!

Tandem Pairs

Right Side

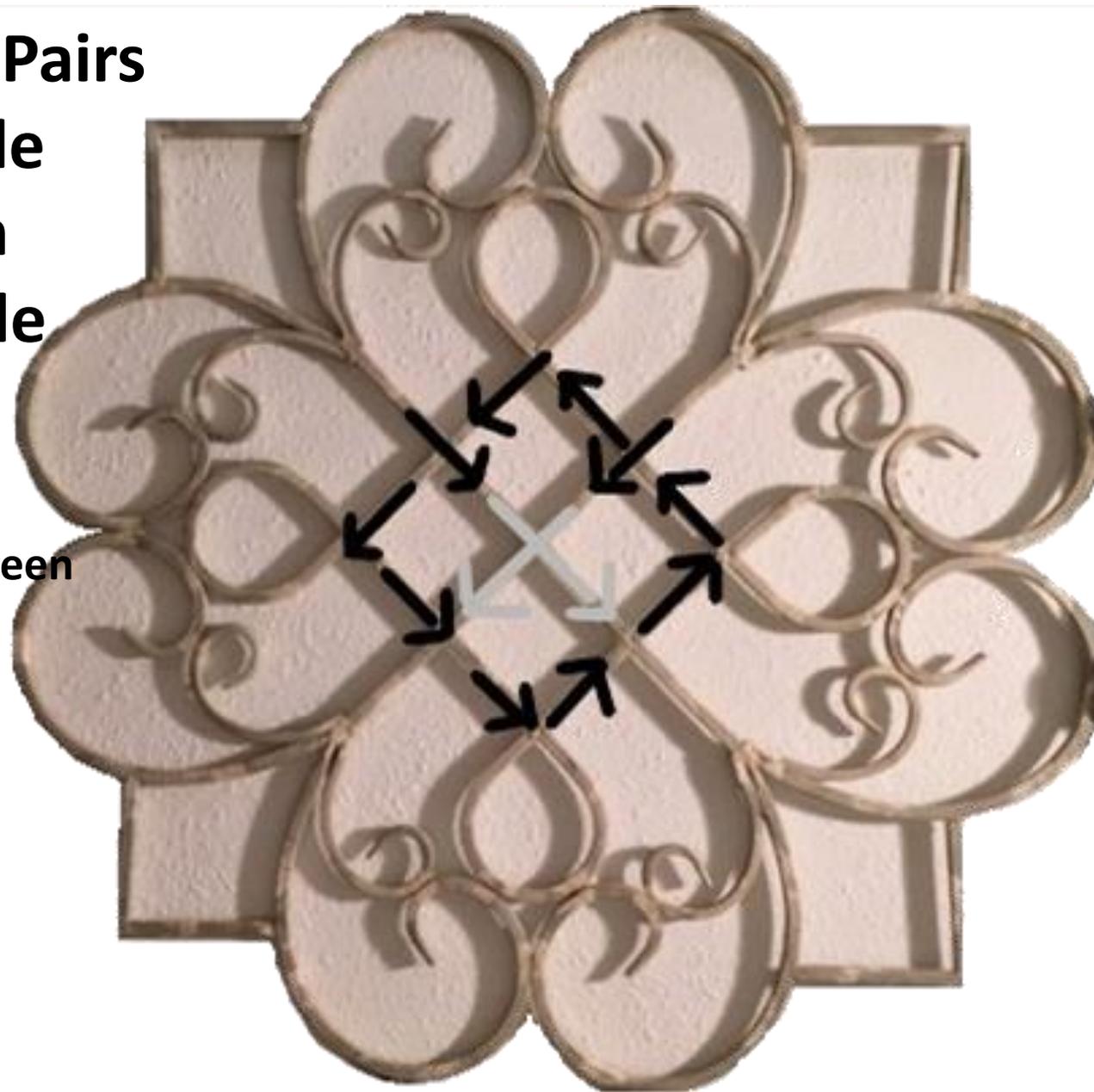
Box with

Single File

Cross

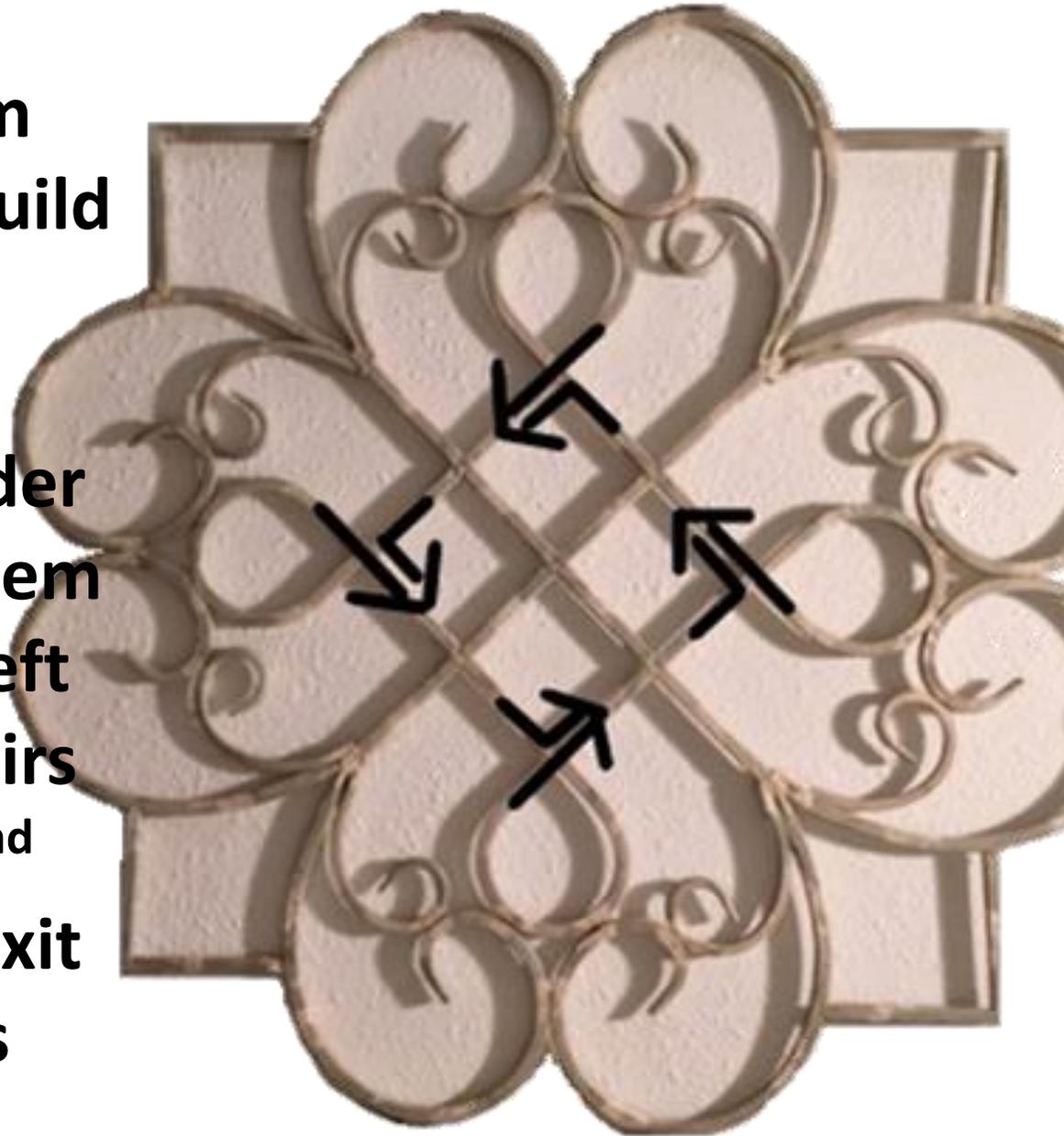
Inside

(enters between
the riders
and exits
Behind 2nd
rider)



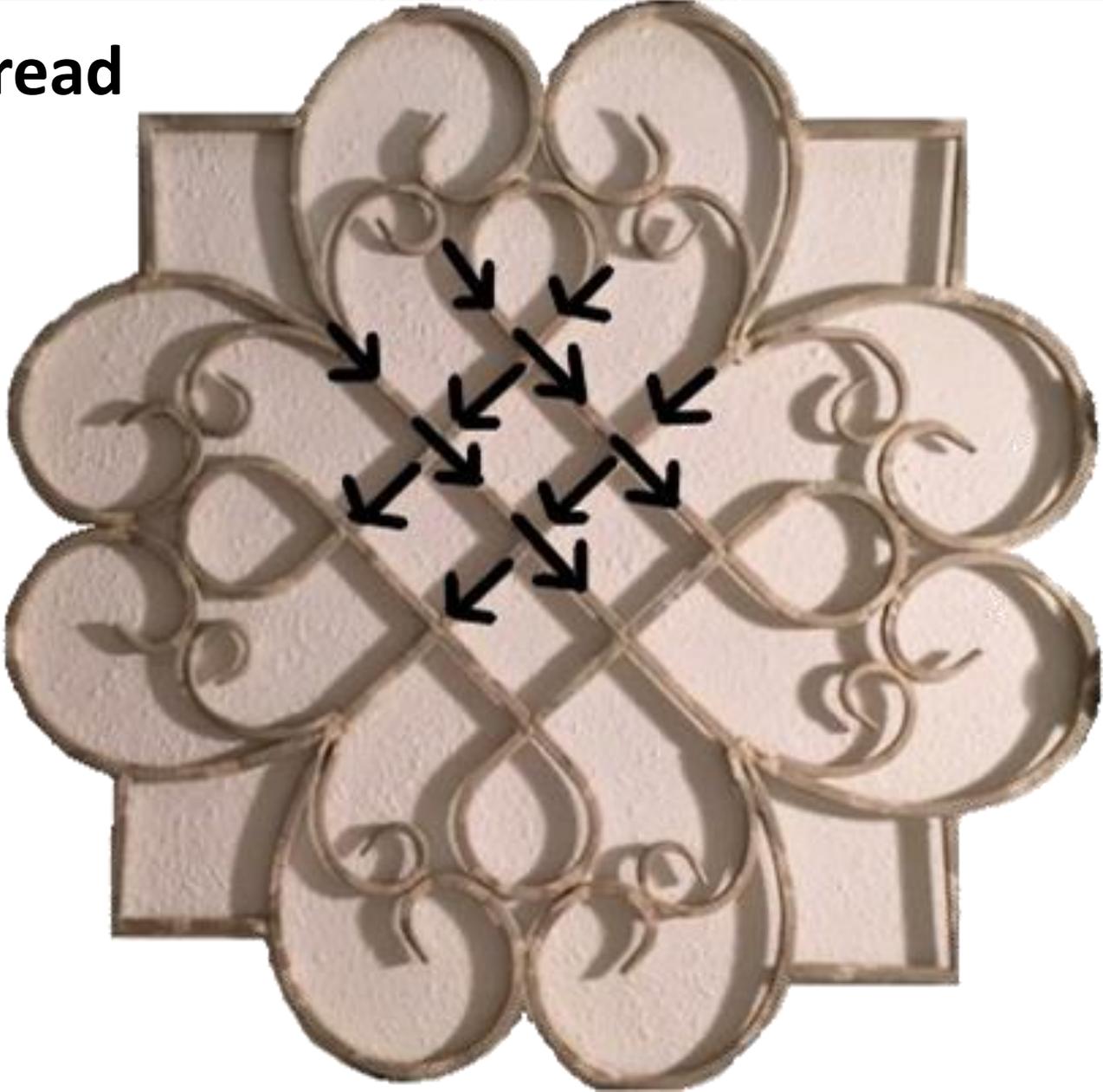
Tandem Pairs Build a Box

First rider
in tandem
turns left
into pairs
with 2nd
rider, exit
in pairs



We did this
in pairs in a
tandem 4's
during the
American
Ride at Coto
but this
would look
nice from
tandem
pairs

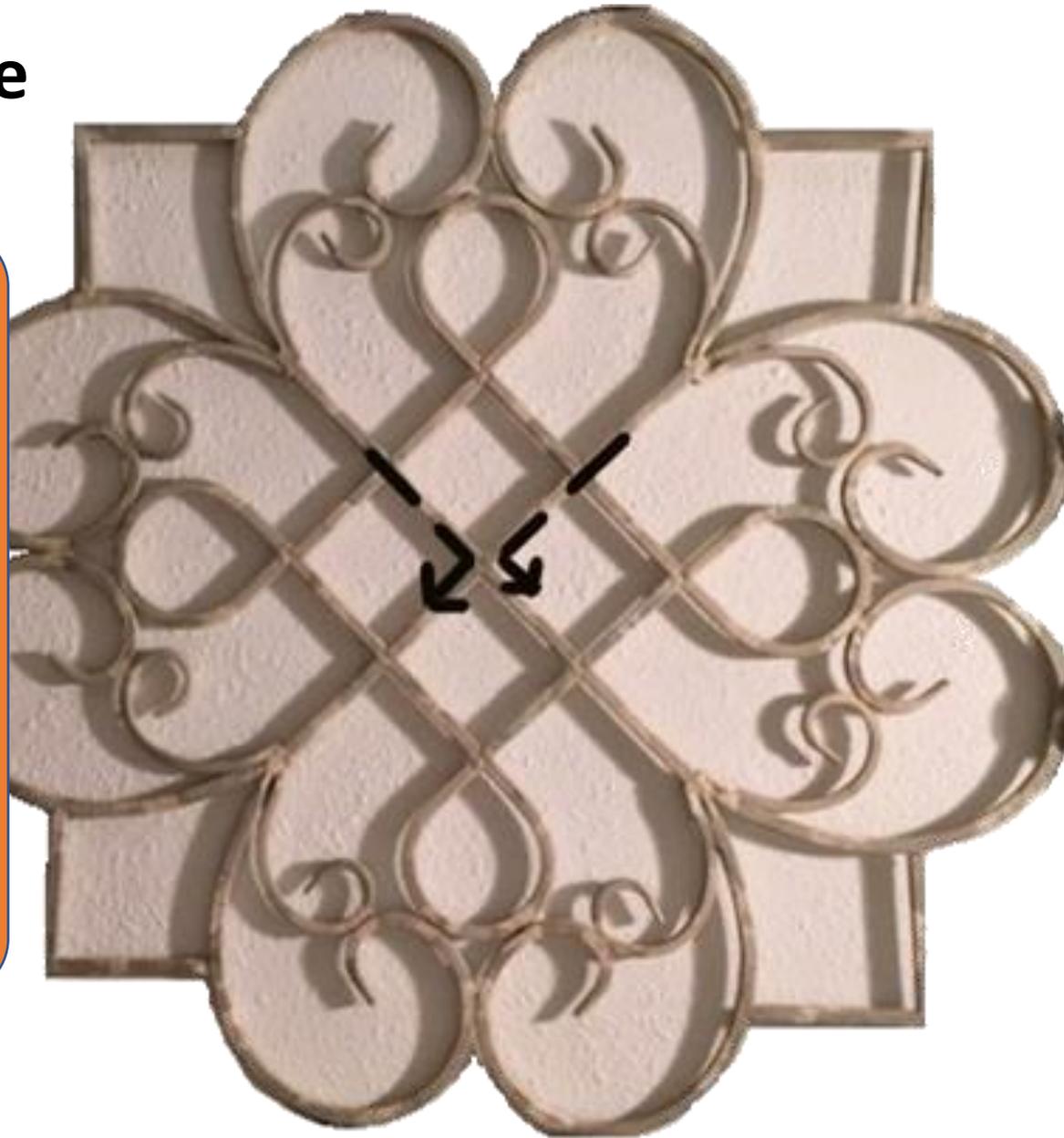
Pairs Thread



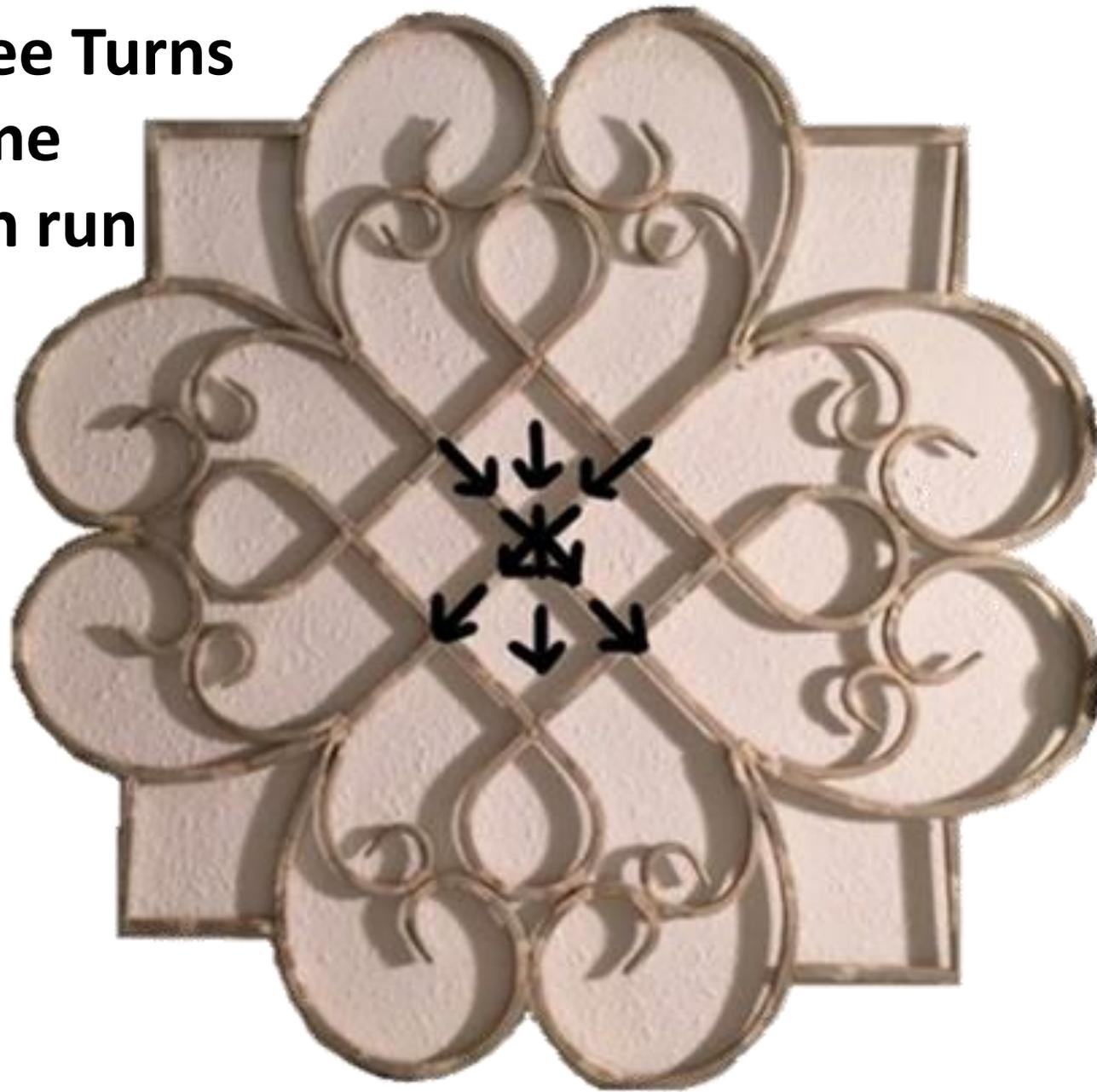
90 Degree Turns

Don't overlook the effectiveness of simplicity

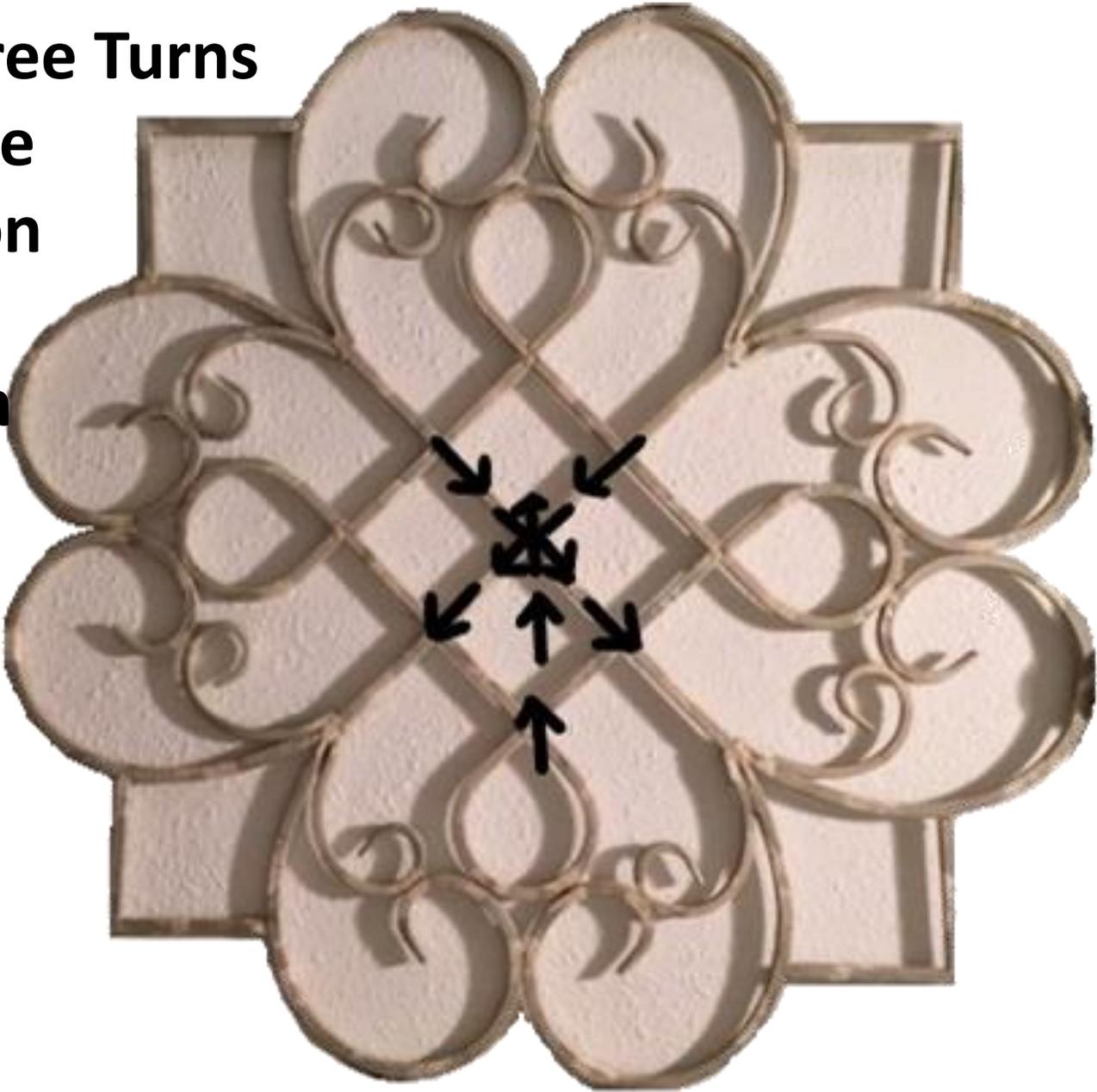
Small teams can do half a shoot the moon very nicely



**90 Degree Turns
with same
direction run
through**

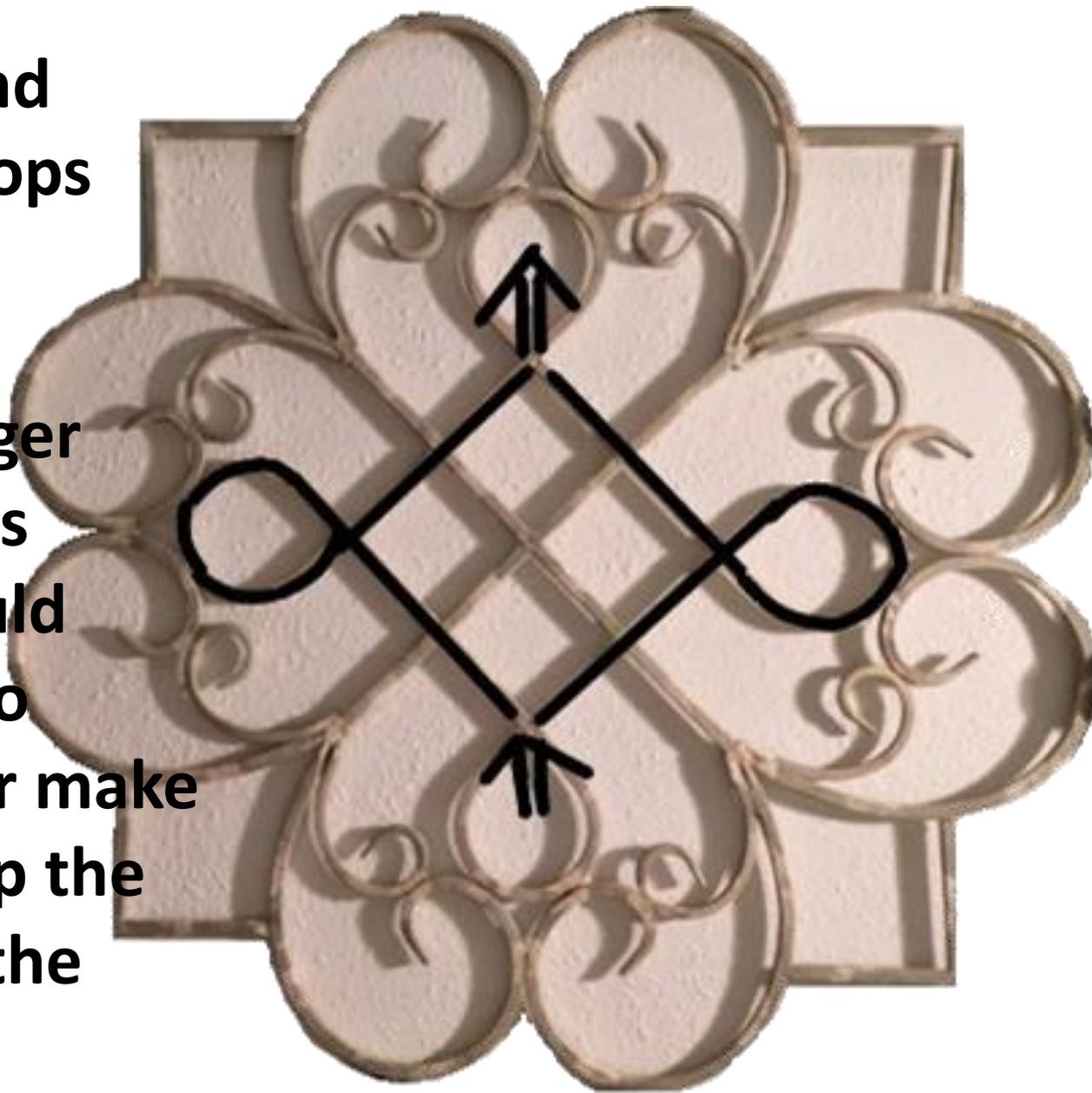


**90 Degree Turns
opposite
direction
run
through**



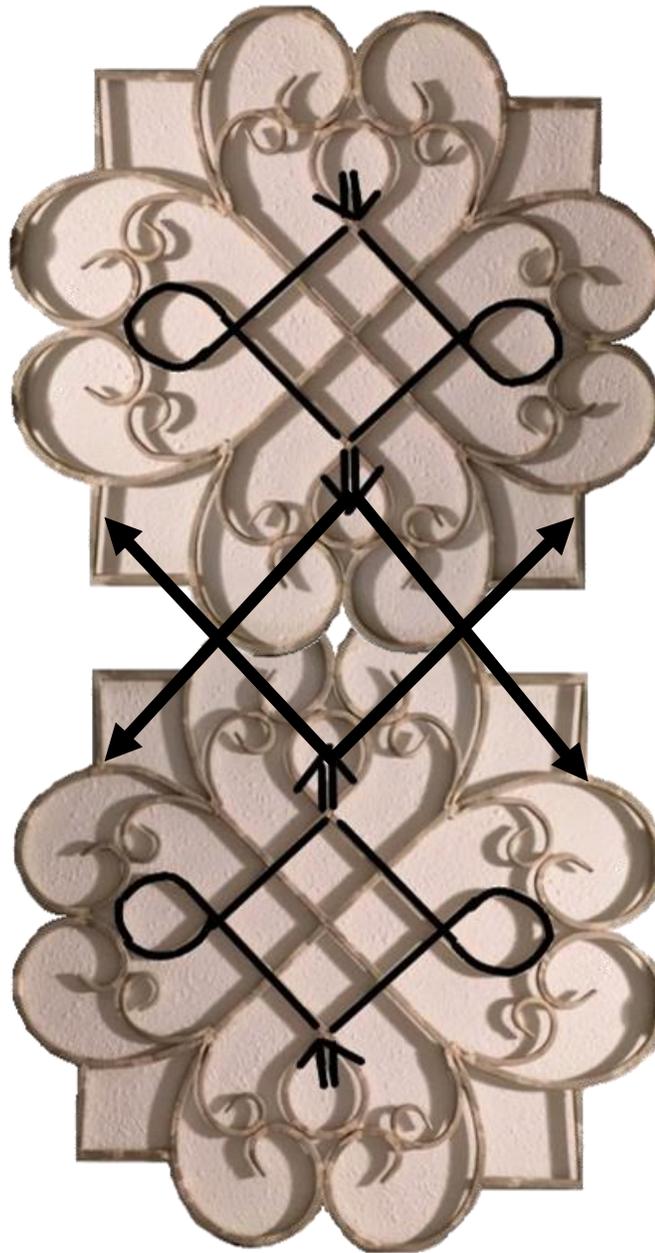
**Diamond
with loops**

**If these
are longer
columns
You could
chose to
Cross or make
the loop the
size of the
column**

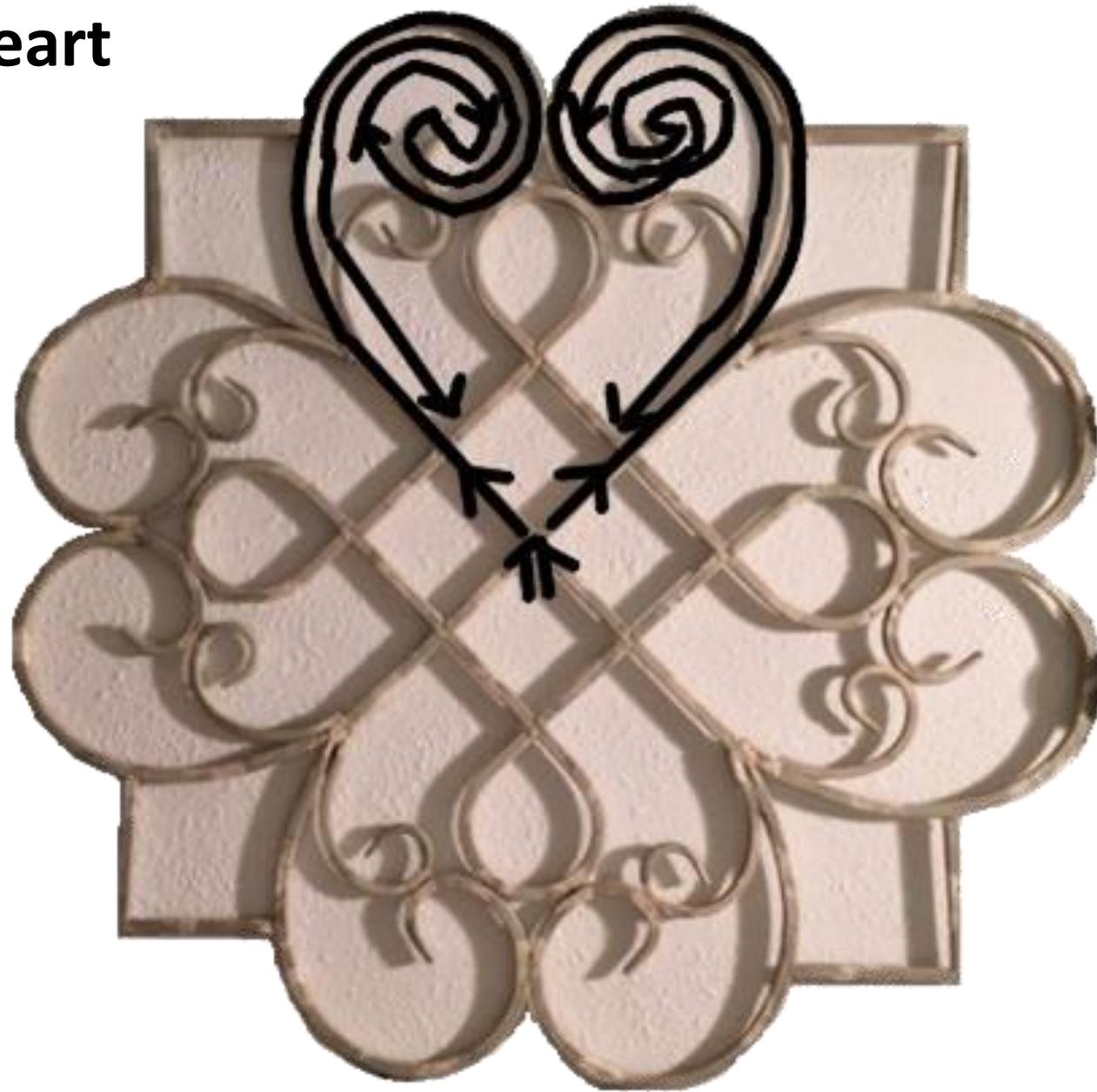


**Diamond
with loops**

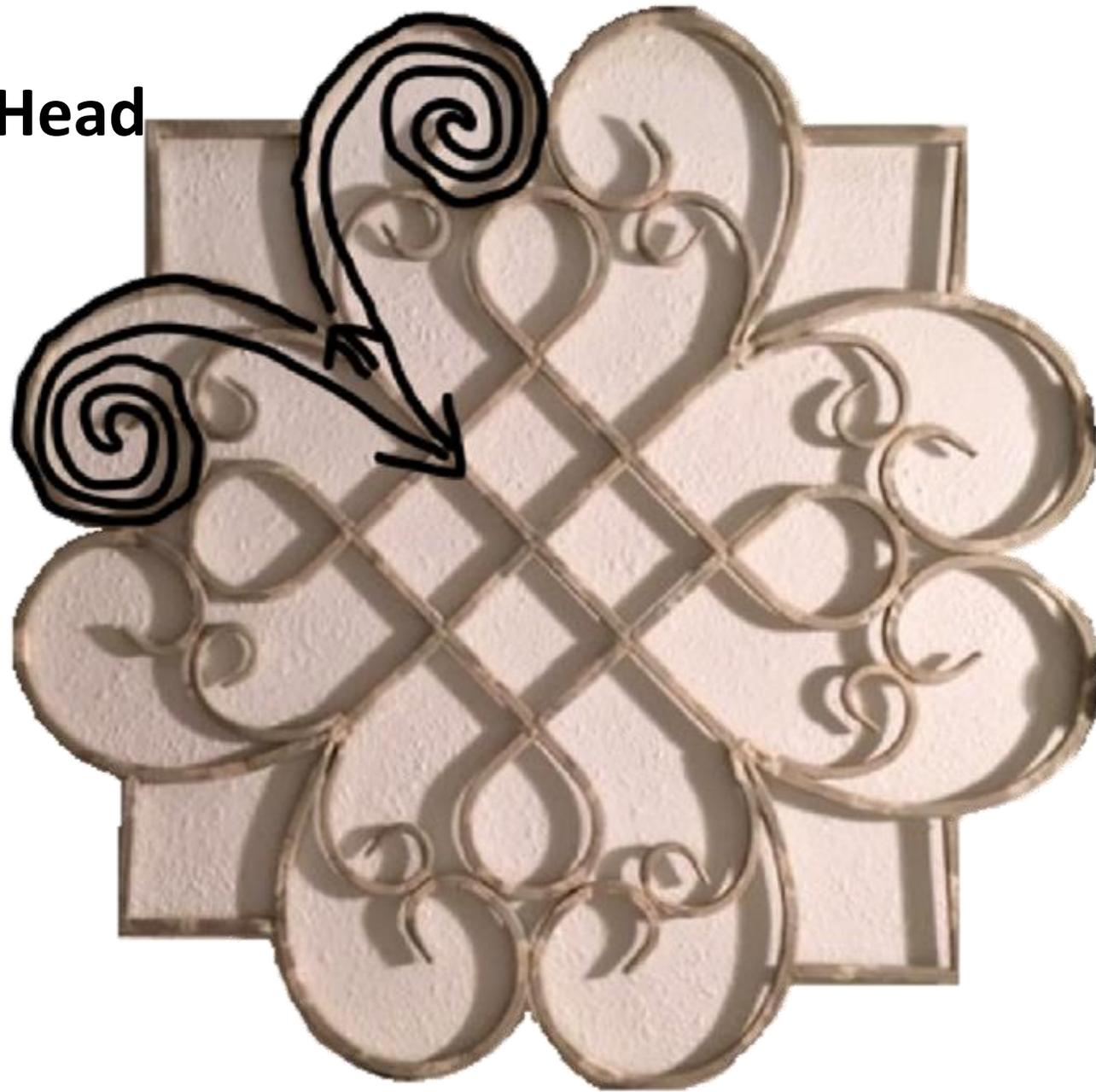
**Opposite
ends of arena
followed by
Crosses in the
center. Great
use of entire
arena!**



Spiral Heart



Rams Head



**Do you
look at this
differently
now?**

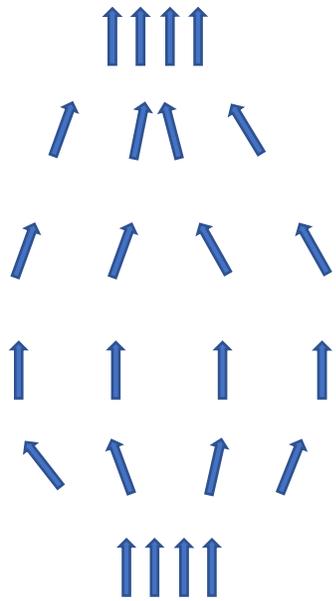


**Null & Void
Diamond**

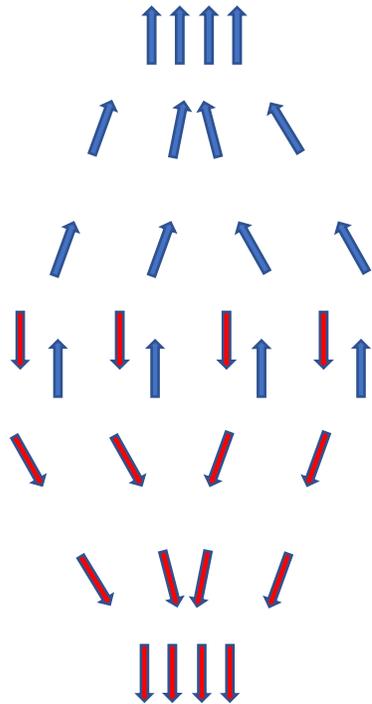
**Wrought Iron
Staircase or fence**



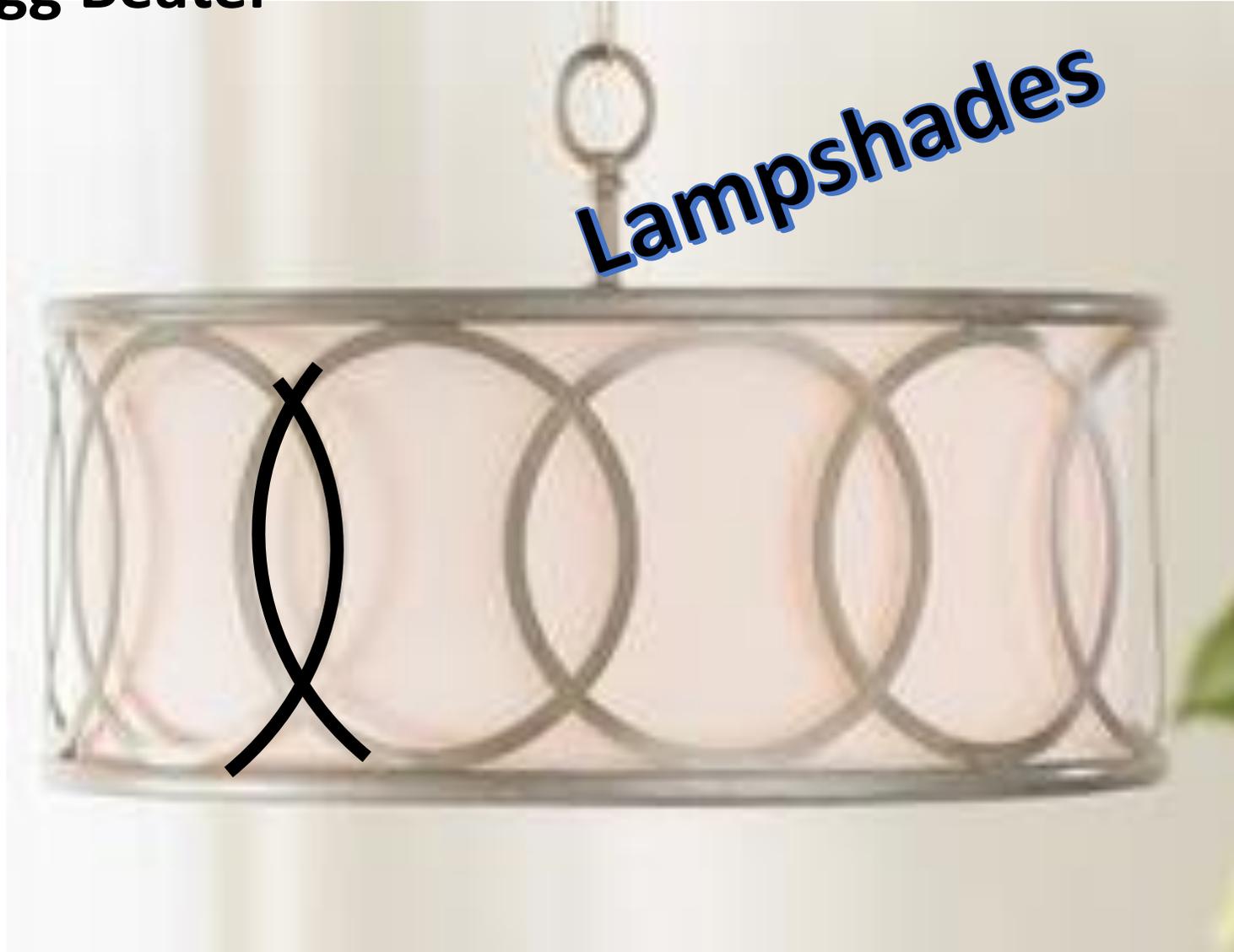
4's or 6's
Balloon
out and
back in.



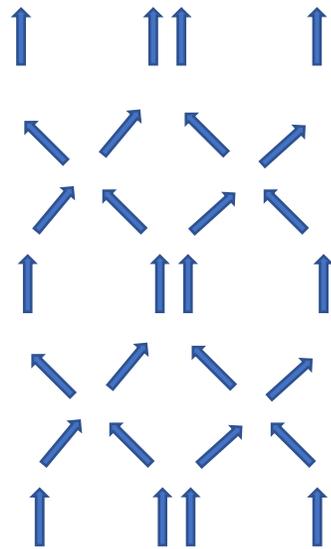
Could also be done
in opposite
directions with
suicide charge.



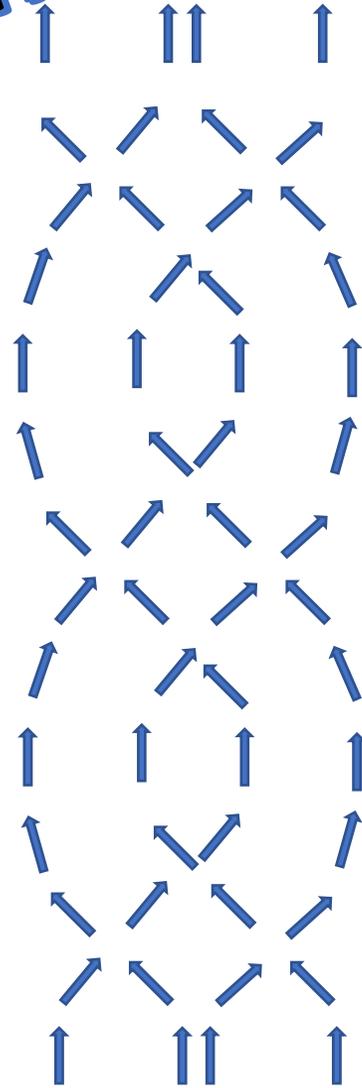
**Wedding Rings
or Egg Beater
Fish**



Double Weave with or without loop in center

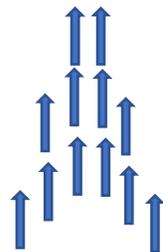
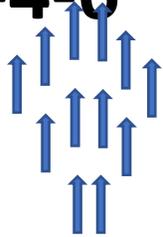


Curtains



Stacked
Chevron
s

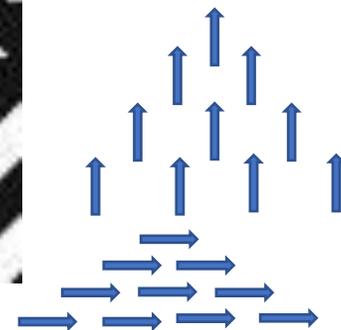
6-4-2 or
2-4-6



Zig Zag
obliques



Stacked
Pyramid



225

Degree

Turns from

Chevron

with

Crosses

Or 270

degree

turns with

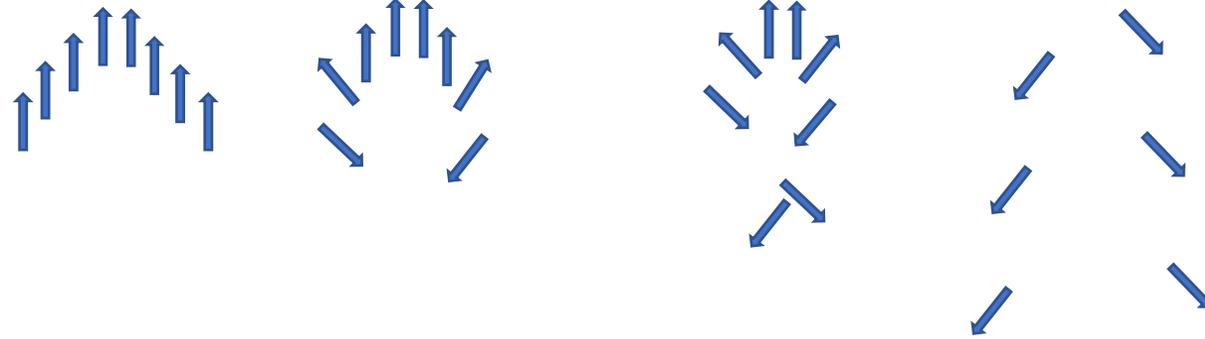
suicide



225

Degree

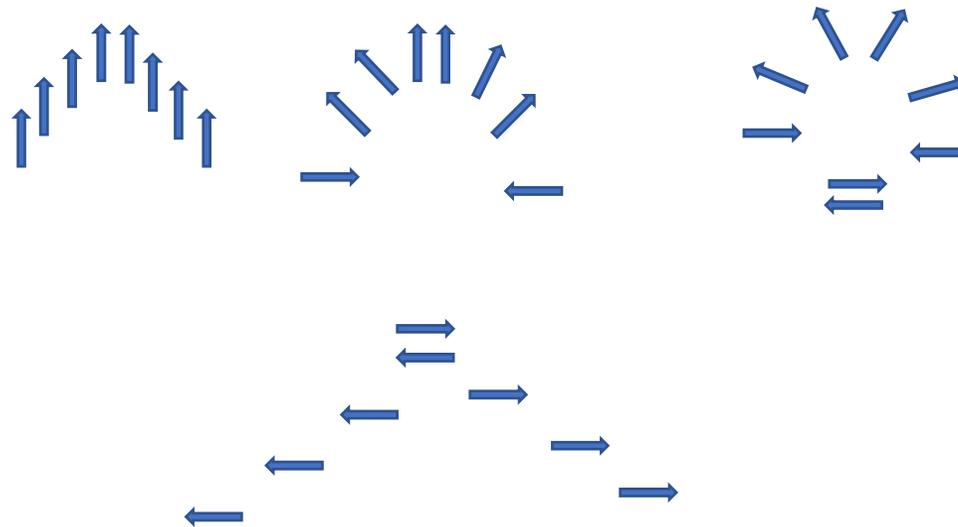
Turns from
Chevron
with
Crosses



Or 270

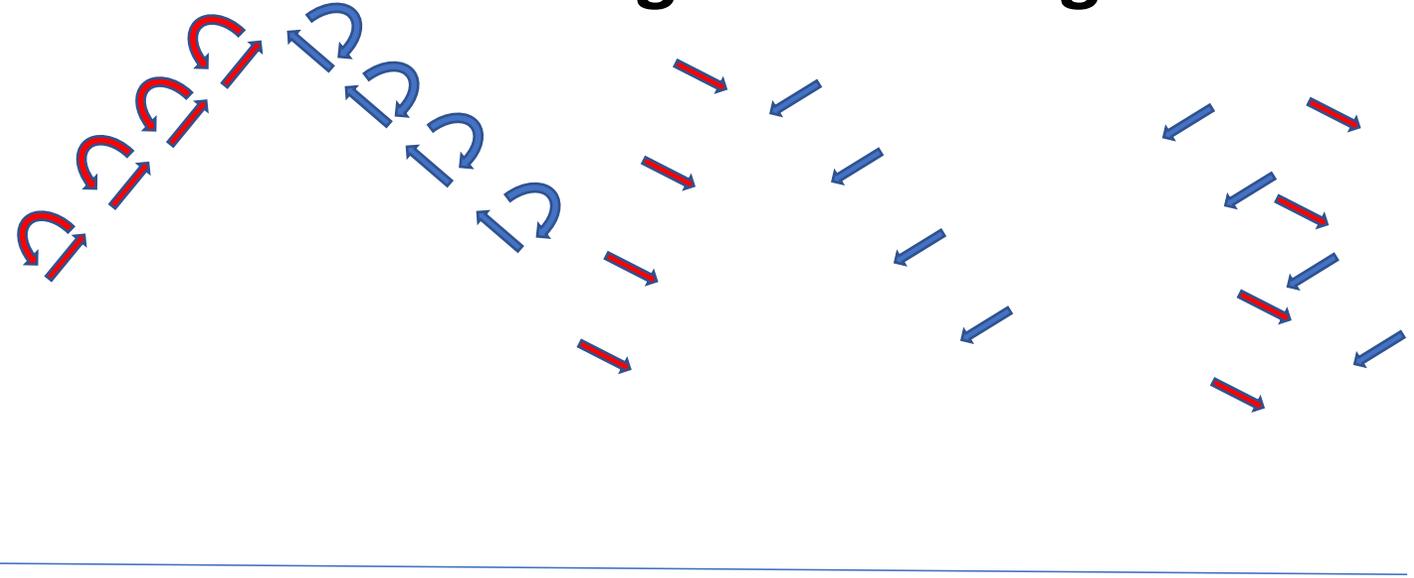
degree

turns with
suicide

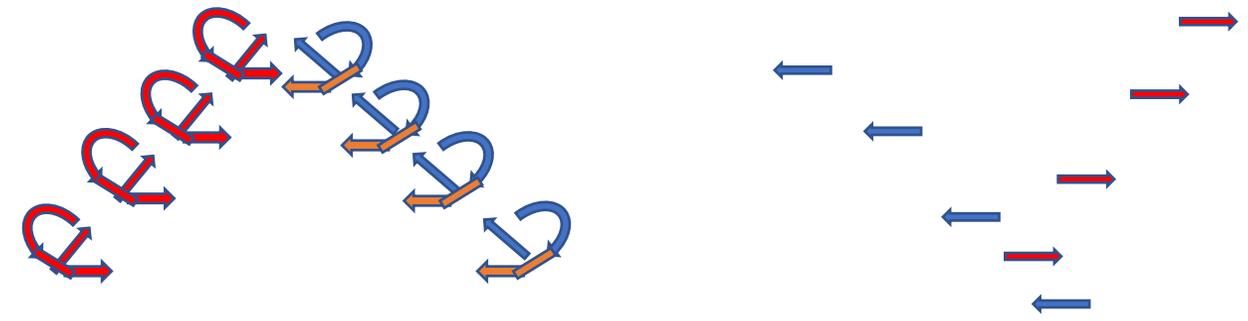


Not in Chevron but heading in at 45 degrees

180
Degree
Turns
with
Crosses



Or 225
degree
turns
into
suicide

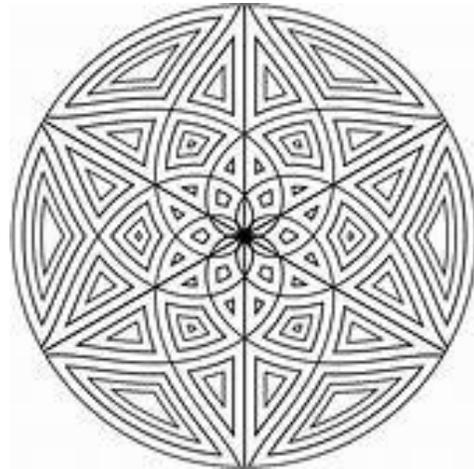


Intersections



Interchanges

Inspirations are Everywhere





3) Off-Season Development

Off-Season Development

Now that you have found what inspires you to think outside of the box! It's time to start putting it to paper. Sit down and diagram out some designs you've come up with. Have fun, get crazy, you never know what will really work.

Maybe 1 in 8 ideas will work out in the beginning, but down the line you will get better and better and maybe 1 in 4 will work. Don't get discouraged because you will learn from every one that doesn't work, and you will be that much closer to finding the one that will be a success.

Off-Season Development

Schedule a Practice

Now that you have diagramed potential maneuvers, schedule an off-season practice dedicated solely to trying out your new designs.

Since you will walk and jog mostly, this is a perfect time to invite potential members with no drill experience to come and have fun with no pressure.

Also invite team members to bring *their* creative design ideas to try. You will quickly find out who your creative members are.

Off-Season Development

Select the Best

Some designs will work, others won't. Some may work with some tweaks to it. Don't be adverse to changing it up if needed. You may have also inspired someone else's imagination and their suggestion may even improve the original design.

Think of drill maneuvers more as designs. When I started, drilling was like getting to play with a giant Etch-a-Sketch.





4) Mull it Over



Mull it Over

Fit the Pieces Together

Now that you have some potential new maneuvers in your head, on paper, & tested, mull them over. Contemplate and ponder the potential of every maneuver within a drill. What variations can be done for spacing options.

Start figuring out how your puzzle pieces fit together.

I have built drills from the middle out, from the end backwards, and even from starting at the beginning!

Mull it Over

If you have come up with 4 or 5 key new sequences you will want to space them out in your drill. I always like a “Judge Catcher” up front at the beginning of the drill. This is a unique new design to make a judge really take notice of your team.

Try and wrap up your drill with your second best sequence, a “Remember Us!” move at the end.

Sprinkle the others throughout the drill so as they are still marveling at your last feat you are getting ready to spring the next one on them.



Mull it Over

Mull it over in your head or have your diagrams drawn out on separate pieces of paper and then figure out what fits where, just like our puzzle.

Be prepared to make necessary adjustments to your sequences entrances and exits to make the pieces fit together seamlessly.



5) Recruit-Recruit-Recruit

Recruit-Recruit-Recruit

Never stop recruiting, ever! The more riders the more potential design options there will be.

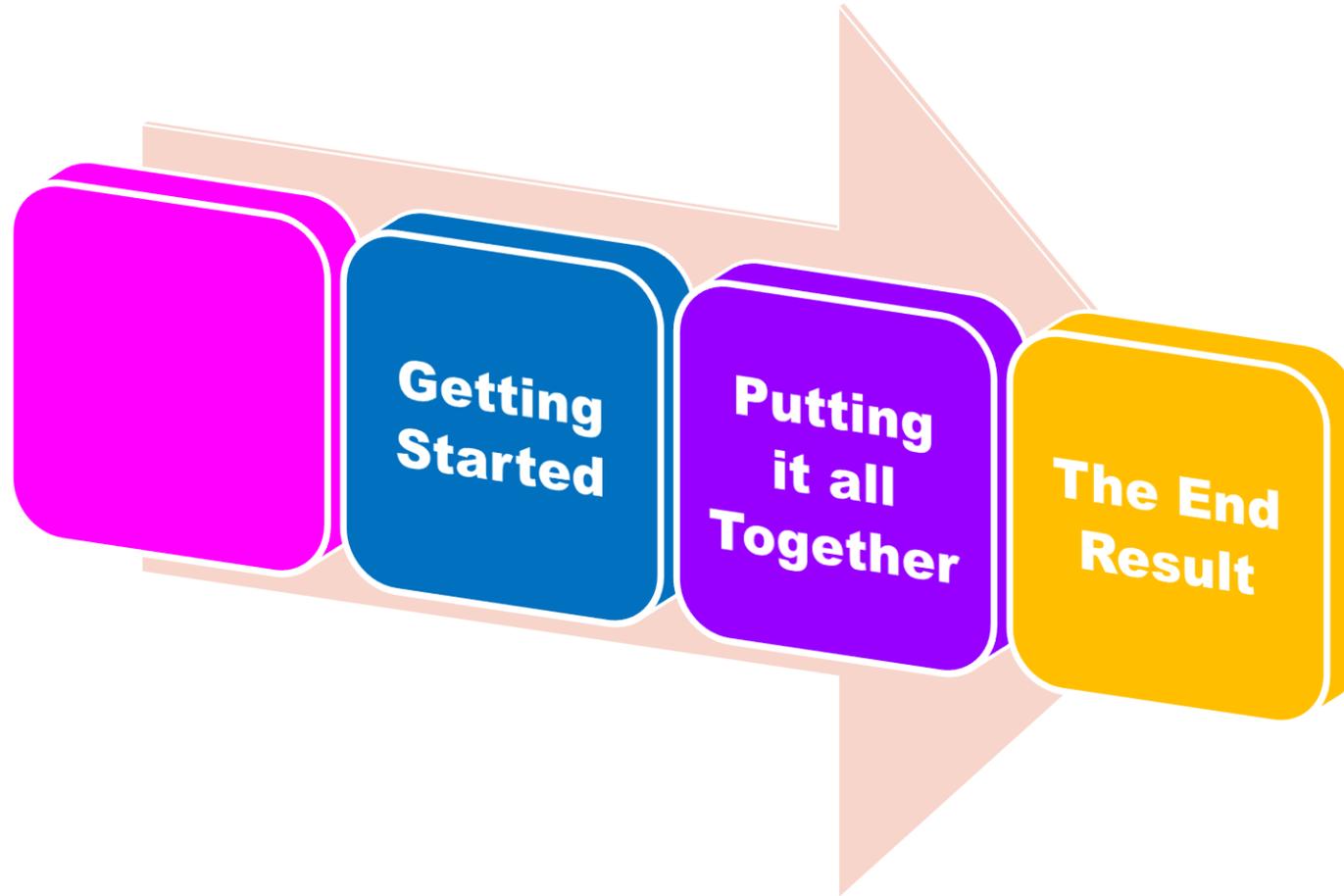
Use those “Maneuver Development” practices to your advantage. Ask people you know that ride that have never considered drill before to come “help you out” while developing new drills. Stress that they don’t need experience that you will be explaining drills and walking and jogging through them. No one else will know what they are doing either because everyone is learning it together.

Recruit-Recruit-Recruit

Increasing your numbers will pay off:

- Increases **Difficulty** exponentially
- Potential Increases in **Showmanship** points
- Potential overall **Presentation** points
- ***Expanded Opportunity for Choreography***

4 Steps to a Better Drill



Getting Started

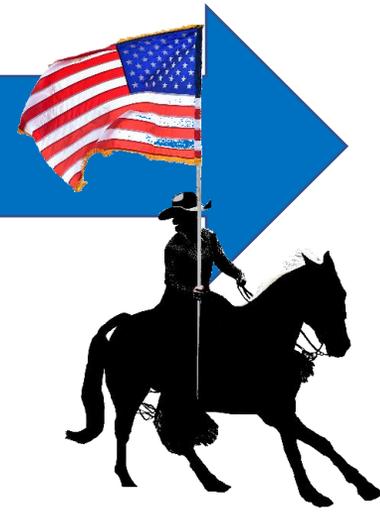


- 1) Flag Protocol**
- 2) Who is the Choreographer?**
- 3) How & Where**
- 4) Design a drill that can grow**
- 5) Small Team – Design Big**
- 6) Big Team – Design Small**
- 7) Design Tools**



1) Flag Protocol

Flag Protocol



A drill using flag protocol is the most restricting and difficult drill to design.

CSHA wants to encourage teams to preserve this art of honoring our flag. Sadly some associations have moved away from it entirely. Historically we've seen our junior and novice teams use setups with flag protocol when perhaps all of the riders or horses are not yet ready to carry flags.

Practice, practice, practice is the name of the game when it comes to designing with flag protocol.

Flag Protocol



We're not going to spend much time on this because we could spend several hours on this alone, and only a few teams dare to venture into it.

Just a couple key points:

- When you design with flags you must always make sure there is no one in front of them.
- Look to the right of any American flag as there can never be a non-American flag over there.

Flag Protocol

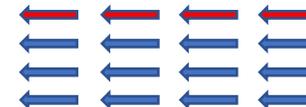
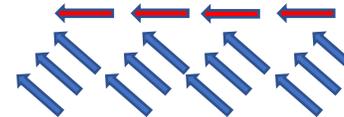
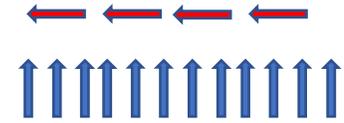
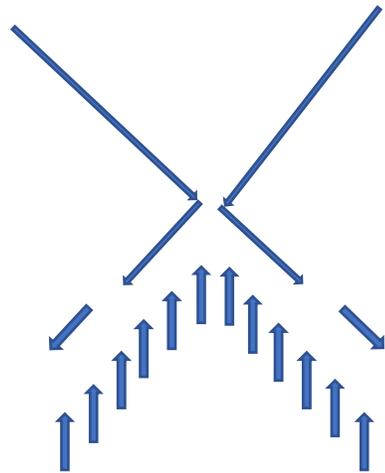


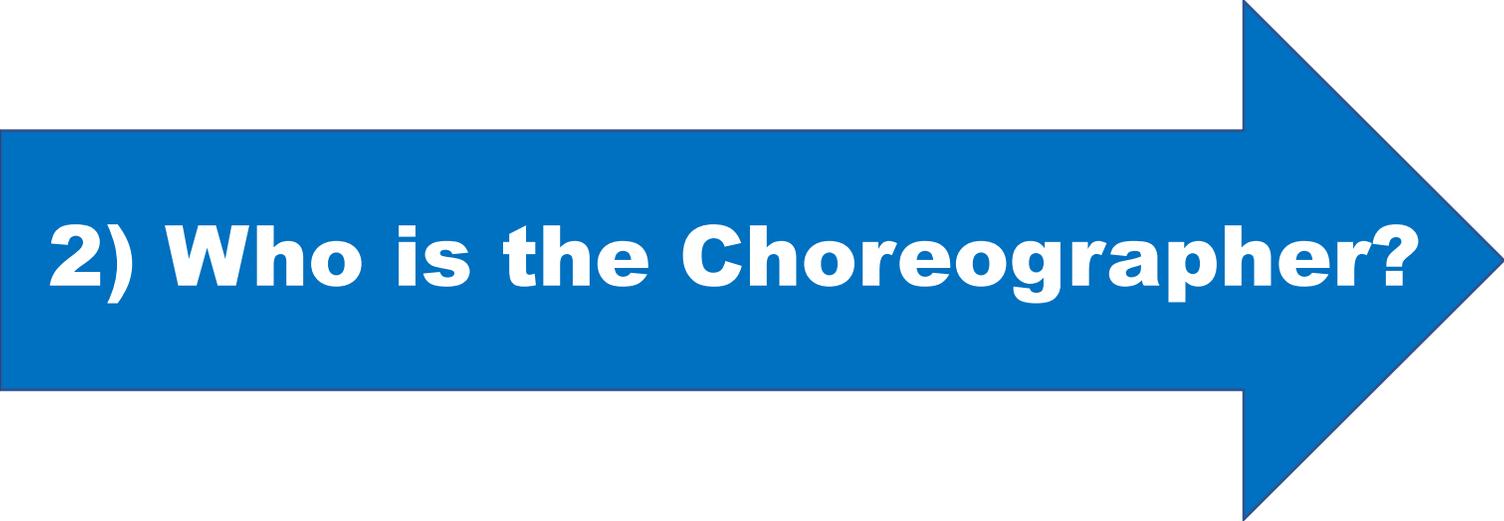
- Try separating flags out from the rest of the team and use them in interesting ways to enhance your designs, not just as the lead or to the right.

Bringing your flags in and out of the rest of the team can bring another level of interest and surprise to your drill.

Flag Protocol

Have them run down the sides in the opposite direction of a chevron or in front of a line abreast as the abreast team folds 90 degrees into a column.





2) Who is the Choreographer?

Who is the Choreographer?

So who will design the drill?

- A coach should work on learning the skill if they are not already experienced at it.
 - A coach needs to recognize if a drill is working or not, and what changes need to be made if it's not.
 - A coach will be hard pressed to help a team if they do not understand the mechanics behind what makes choreography work.

If it is not going to be the coach, some teams have both a coach and a drill master. The drill master assumes responsibilities over the drill, but the coach retains overall team authority.

Who is the Choreographer?

So if not the coach or drill master then who?

- Find your most creative person on the team that loves to choreograph. Some people just “get it” on a different level.
 - I started at a young age on a team with others that had the same experience but I developed a keen interest in “making a better drill” when others didn’t. I am not sure why. Fortunately, I had a leader that was not intimidated, and worked beside me to encourage me and allowed me to write a competition drill for our team starting at age 11.
- Find that person on your team and encourage them regardless of age.

Who is the Choreographer?

Multiple designers?

- You can sit down with 2 or 3 experienced riders and work on a drill together. It can be dangerous territory.
 - Set ground rules first – no making fun of an idea, no personal attacks, hear everyone's ideas, be ready to compromise, etc.
 - Walk away at the end still friends! In the end, it's not really the drill that matters, it is the relationships we **build** through drill.

Who is the Choreographer?

Drill.com anyone?

- It is possible to buy a drill from an outside person. Be cautious.
 - You do not always know who else they are writing a drill for. Your drill may end up looking very similar to someone else's drill.
 - There is also issues of them not knowing your horses and riders abilities well enough. If you do go this route this make sure they include options for growth.
 - If you do not have them onsite to make adjustments on the fly, it will be difficult.



3) How & Where

How & Where



Do you design a drill in your head, in the arena, or on paper? It's up to you.

Designing in the arena with a team can take up a lot of valuable arena time and can lead to too many cooks in the kitchen. Riders get bored sitting around or disgruntled if they don't get a say. Allowing everyone to have input when actually designing a drill is a recipe for disaster.

That doesn't mean that there isn't a way to allow them to present ideas in the appropriate format.

How & Where



For me the process has always been, design the drill, diagram it out, print and distribute it, walk it & discuss the details, ride it, make adjustments.

People tend to learn best in one three ways:

1. See it
2. Hear it
3. Do it

So when you are teaching a drill for the first time to multiple people you should incorporate all three. Show them, tell them & have them do it.



4) Design a Drill that can Grow

Design a Drill that can Grow

Design a drill that can grow with your team. It's not necessary, or even advised, to create a entire new drill every year.

If you start with a solid base you can make adjustments and tweak things as you go. In my experience it takes a good three years for a team to really start learning how to perform the details of a drill well.

Design a Drill that can Grow

Consistency is what earns you championships. You get consistency through learning every nuance on how to perform a drill, and nail every maneuver & transition every time through.

A judge will only see your drill once or twice in a year. If they see it the next year & it was a great drill they will appreciate seeing it again.

Design a Drill that can Grow

A well choreographed drill is a pleasure to watch repeatedly. When your team is consistent & starts to get bored it is time to ramp it up. Decrease spacing somewhere, increase pace somewhere else, spice up a maneuver with a tweak of difficulty.

If you feel the need, change up your music, and that can add a different flavor to your drill.

Design a Drill that can Grow

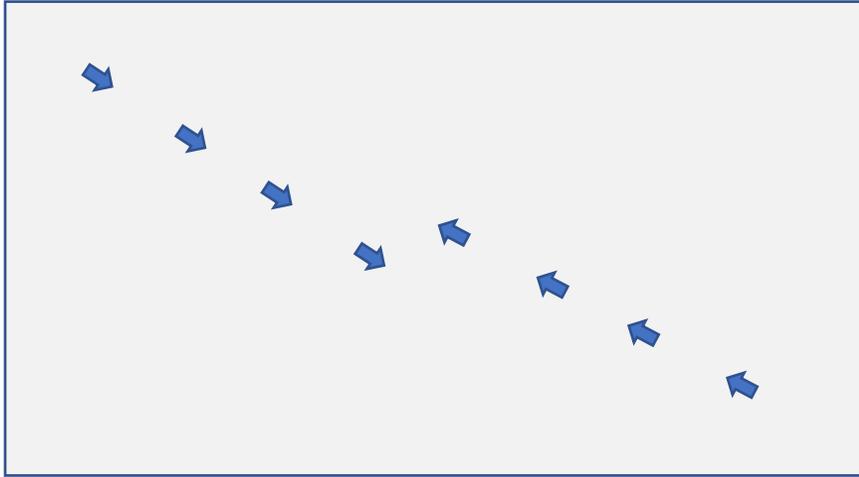
After your drill is designed it is time to figure out the details. The initial spacing should already have been figured in the original design. Next you need to figure out what pace you will start with for each sequence. Another thing that is critical is to decide where **every** rider needs to be looking. It is not always at the lead rider or the flags. This is learned at the beginning on the walk through.

Every rider needs to know who and where they are looking throughout every step of the drill.

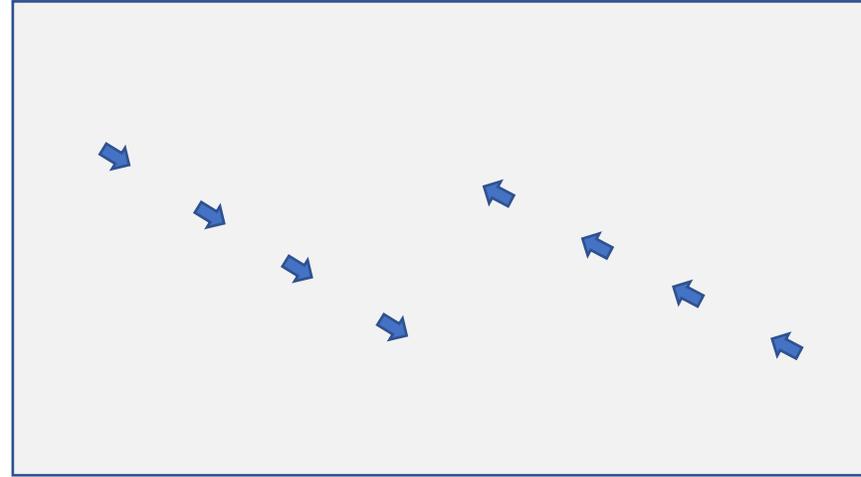
Design a Drill that can Grow

Be careful of tight turns with beginning teams. This last year I was seeing way too many tight turns that are not only hard to master and look good but can be potentially dangerous. Make sure they know their leads and when to change them. If they are not at that level, slow the turns or widen them out until they are more advanced. Even the most advanced teams have trouble with synchronized tight turns.

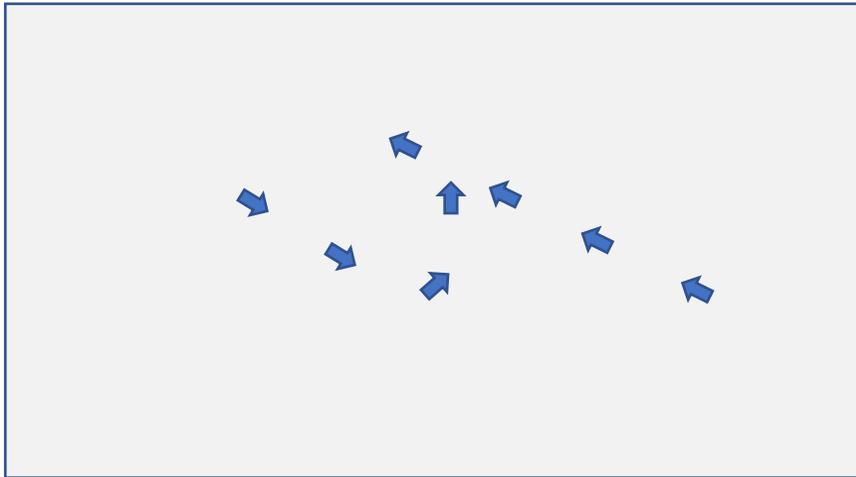
Let's look at an example of where to start with a maneuver then how to advance it with different options.



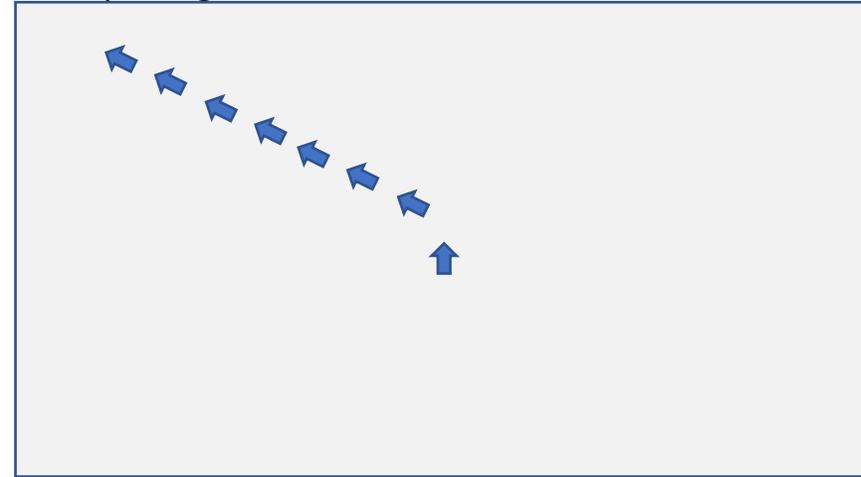
Object – 1 line simultaneously 180 degrees meshing into oncoming line



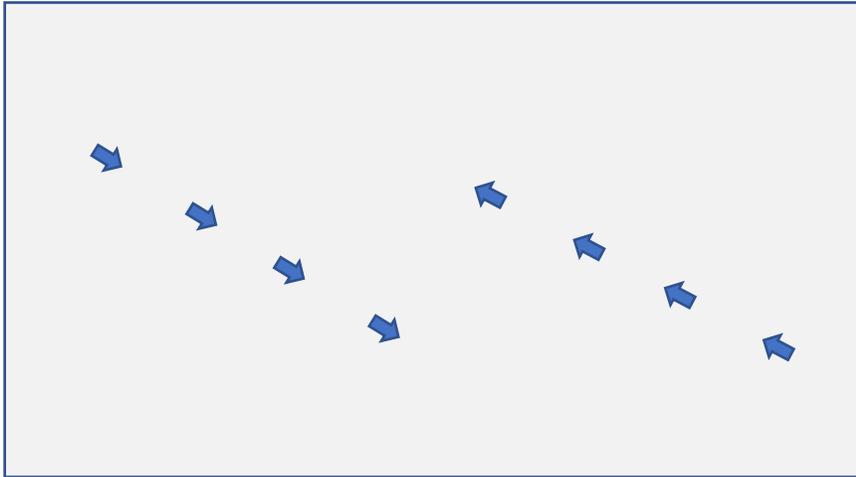
Skill Level 1 – Widen space between lines, spacing in both lines must be the same.



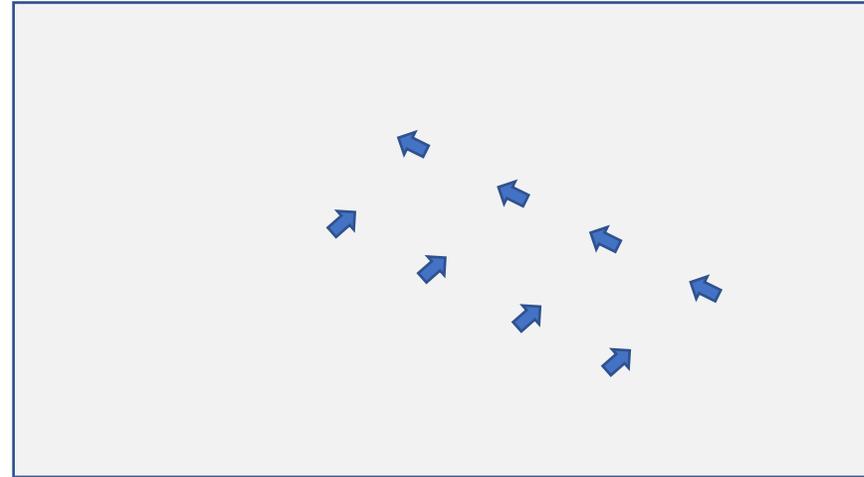
Skill Level 1 – Column turn into places



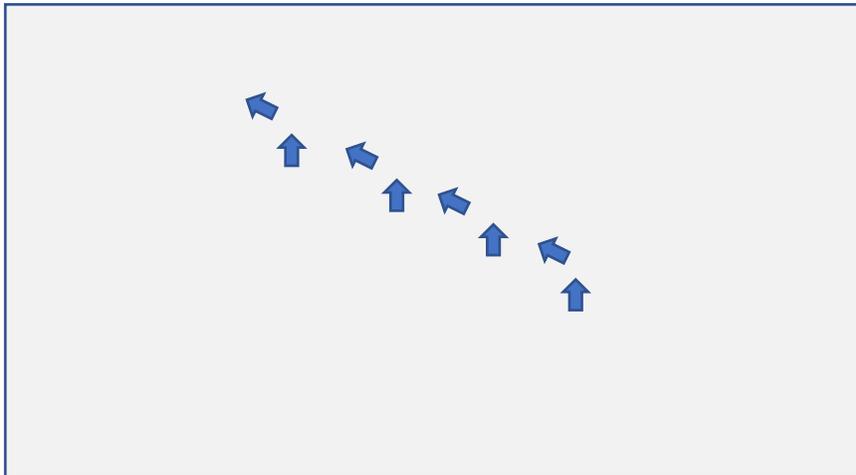
Skill Level 2 – Column turn w/ column closer together



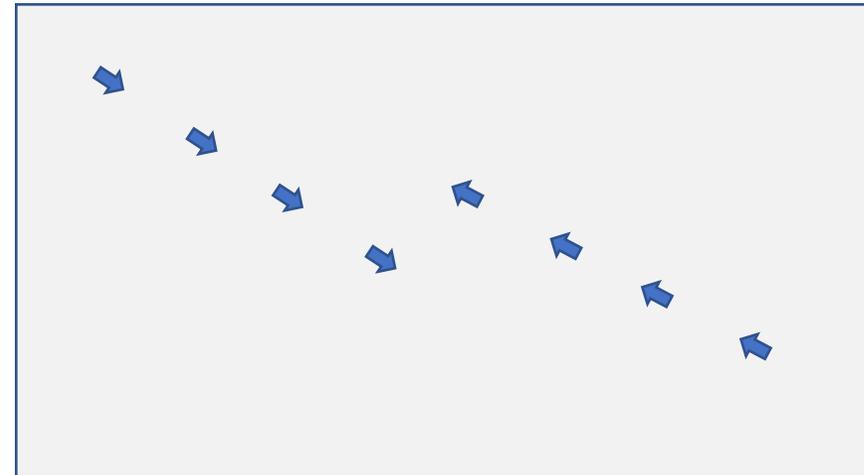
Skill Level 3 – Widen space between lines & you can also increase vertical space.



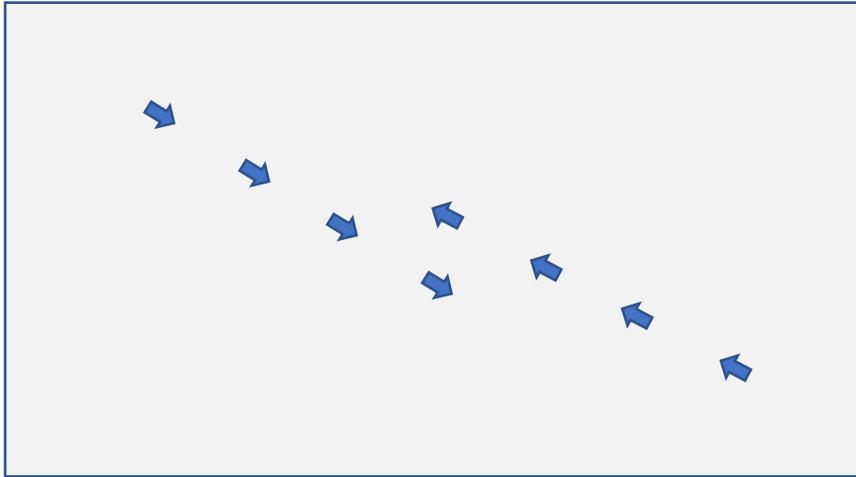
Skill Level 3 – individual turns into places, start earlier and widen turns



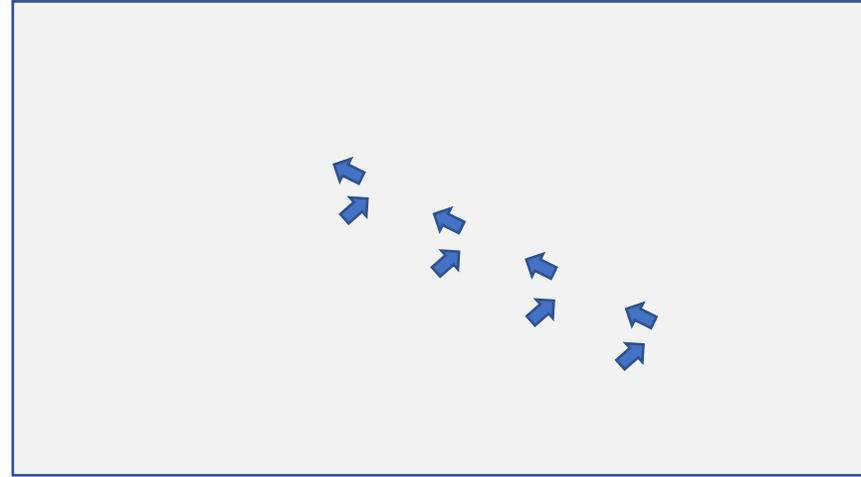
Skill Level 3 – widening the turns gives you time to make adjustments & is forgiving of wrong leads



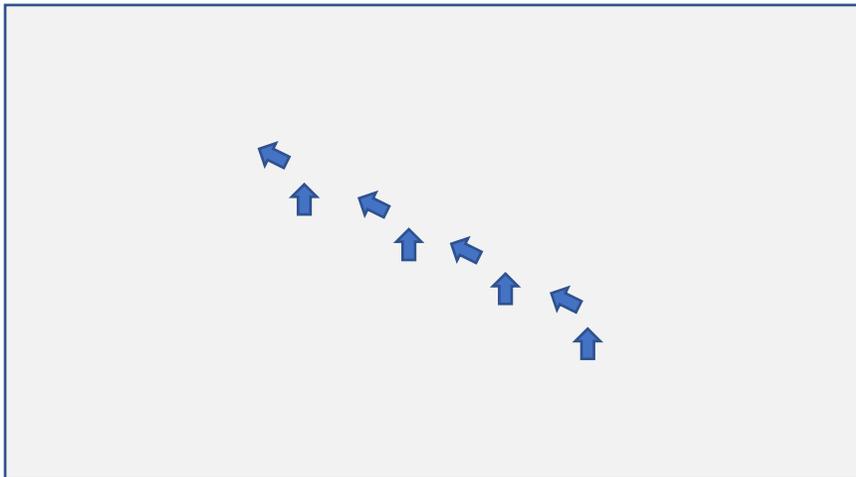
Skill Level 3.5 – this should not go from wide to narrow space between lines this is gradual shifting in as you perfect it.



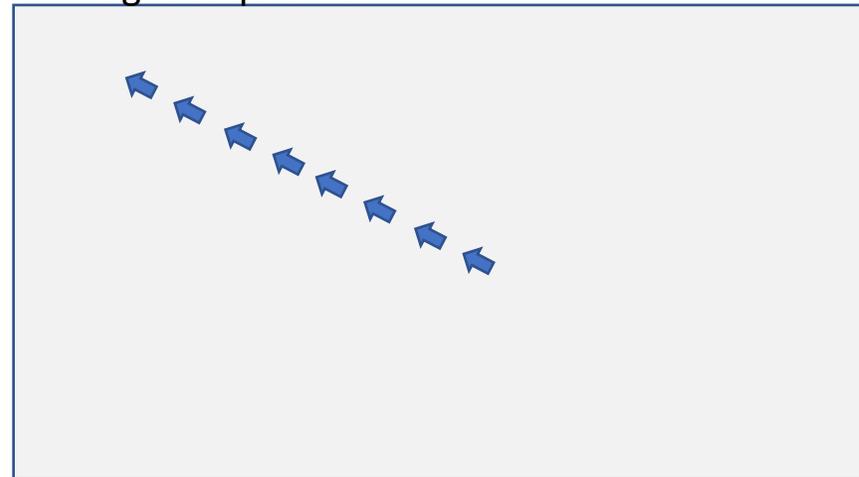
Skill Level 4 – tighter space between lines



Skill Level 4 – individual turns into places, tight & quick turn



Skill Level 4 – spacing & timing must be perfect to execute well.



Stay at level 1 until you can execute perfect every time, then move to next level of difficulty

Design a Drill that can Grow

Using the original drill as a base you can make adjustments during the year through the use of choreographic tools such as: changing the speed, spacing, unit size, direction, or arena use. This is an effective tool in increasing the difficulty of your choreography to match the increasing skill of your team throughout the season.



5) Small Team – Design Big

Small Team – Design Big

When designing a drill for a team of 8 you will use greater spacing horizontally to fill the arena. But maneuvers done with tight vertical spacing is necessary for a cohesiveness feel. Expansion and contraction of maneuvers will add to your design. Cavallo Cowgirls did a nice job of this at Coto Cup.

Consider using maneuvers that keep the team together (a fan wheel, crack the whip, line abreast, sweeps, etc.). When you do maneuvers dividing the team in half or quarters you make the team appear smaller. Do maneuvers that divide you but bring the team back together between every split maneuver.



6) Big Team – Design Small

Big Team – Design Small

When designing a drill for a team of 16 or more you will incorporate maneuvers with less spacing, both vertically & horizontally. With a large team you can fill an arena even riding tight. Riding tight always makes a team appear solid and cohesive.

Yes, you can do more maneuvers dividing the team in half or quarters to showcase your larger team but don't get caught in the mistake of being split too much.

Big Team – Design Small

Show the strength of a large team by using your numbers to make large designs with long defined columns but do not neglect those full team maneuvers that audiences so appreciate. 16 or more riders in a perfect wheel, 16 riders or more in a full team sweep shows you recognize the strength of your numbers and have the skill to prove it.

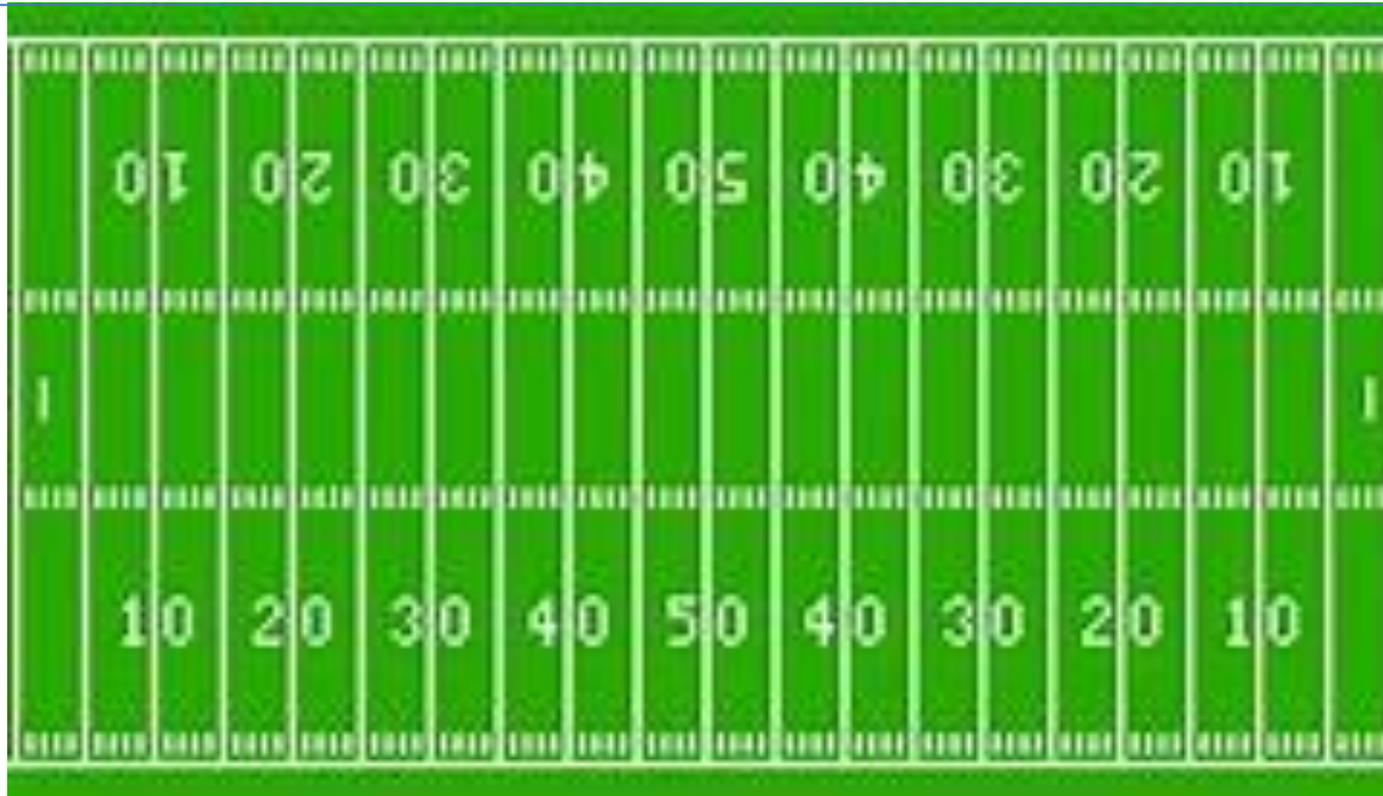
Full team maneuvers with large teams is difficult and it is why some teams tend to stay split more than they should perhaps. So judges please take note to be aware of that.



7) Design Tools

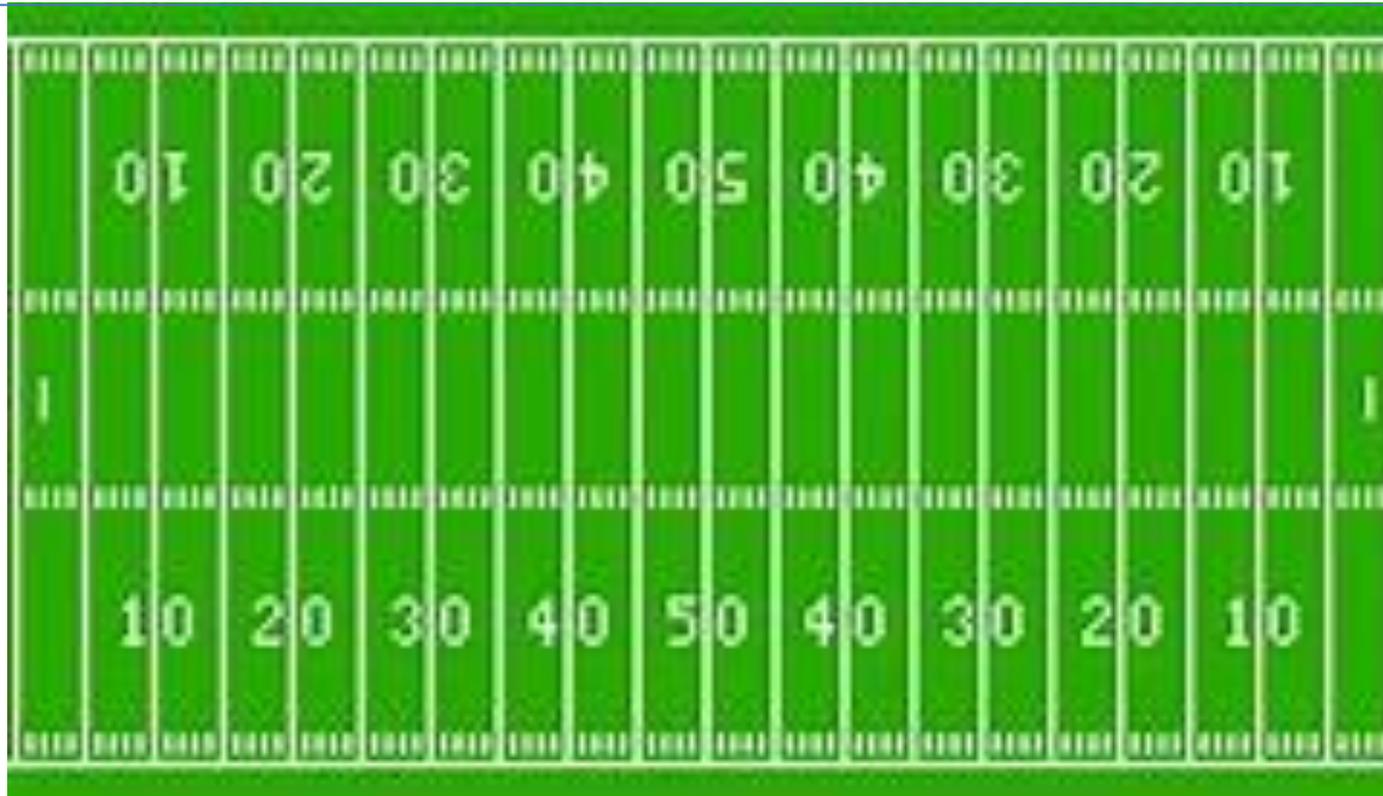
Design Tools

A football field, without end zones, is 100 yards or 300' by 53 1/3 yards or 160'. This is slightly wider than a full size rodeo arena or a polo arena of 300'x150'.



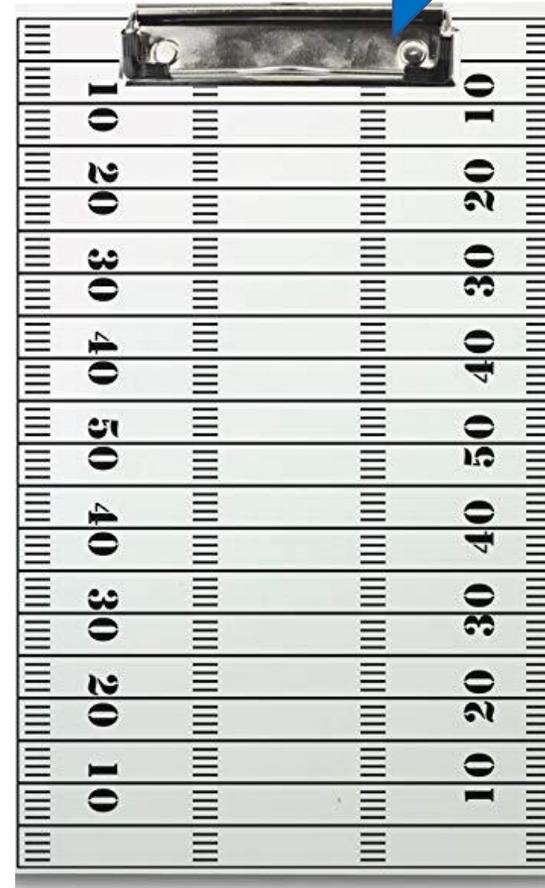
Design Tools

I use 3 hash marks for the length of a horse (3 yards or 9'). Average length of a horse is about 8 ½' so it gives a little safety margin to work with.



Design Tools

You can also use good old paper and pencil. I have included a football field worksheet that I use when choreographing the compulsory drills. I need to know the drill will work without ever having a chance to try them in the arena first.



Football Field Dry Erase Boards – Great for Diagramming and Explaining
This one is by ChalkTalk Sports (watch out some are not the entire field)

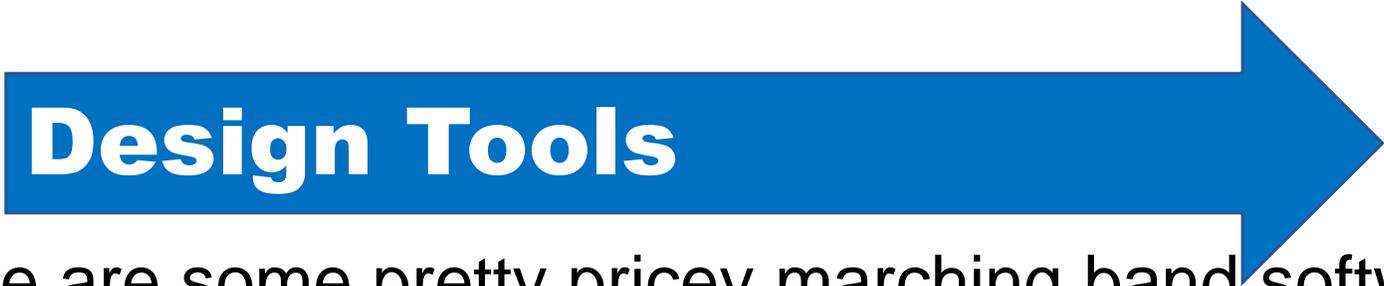
Design Tools



There are many software programs that you can use for diagramming drills. Multi functional programs like Microsoft Publisher or PowerPoint are fairly easy to use but it can be tedious.

I like to draw it out on paper then put it in PowerPoint. With PowerPoint you can create a slide show easily and advance the slides quickly and see the drill move forward.

Design Tools



There are some pretty pricey marching band software programs that are very sophisticated that could be used for drill diagraming.

Field Artist is one that could be adapted for equine drill but it is challenging to learn, and it is supposed to be one of the easier ones. I have played around with it and never quite gotten the hang of it well enough to use but it can do awesome things and even run a virtual show in 3D with music. If I ever get the hang of it I will contact the company and see if they can put in a horse figure and add a stride length equal to that of a horse.

Design Tools

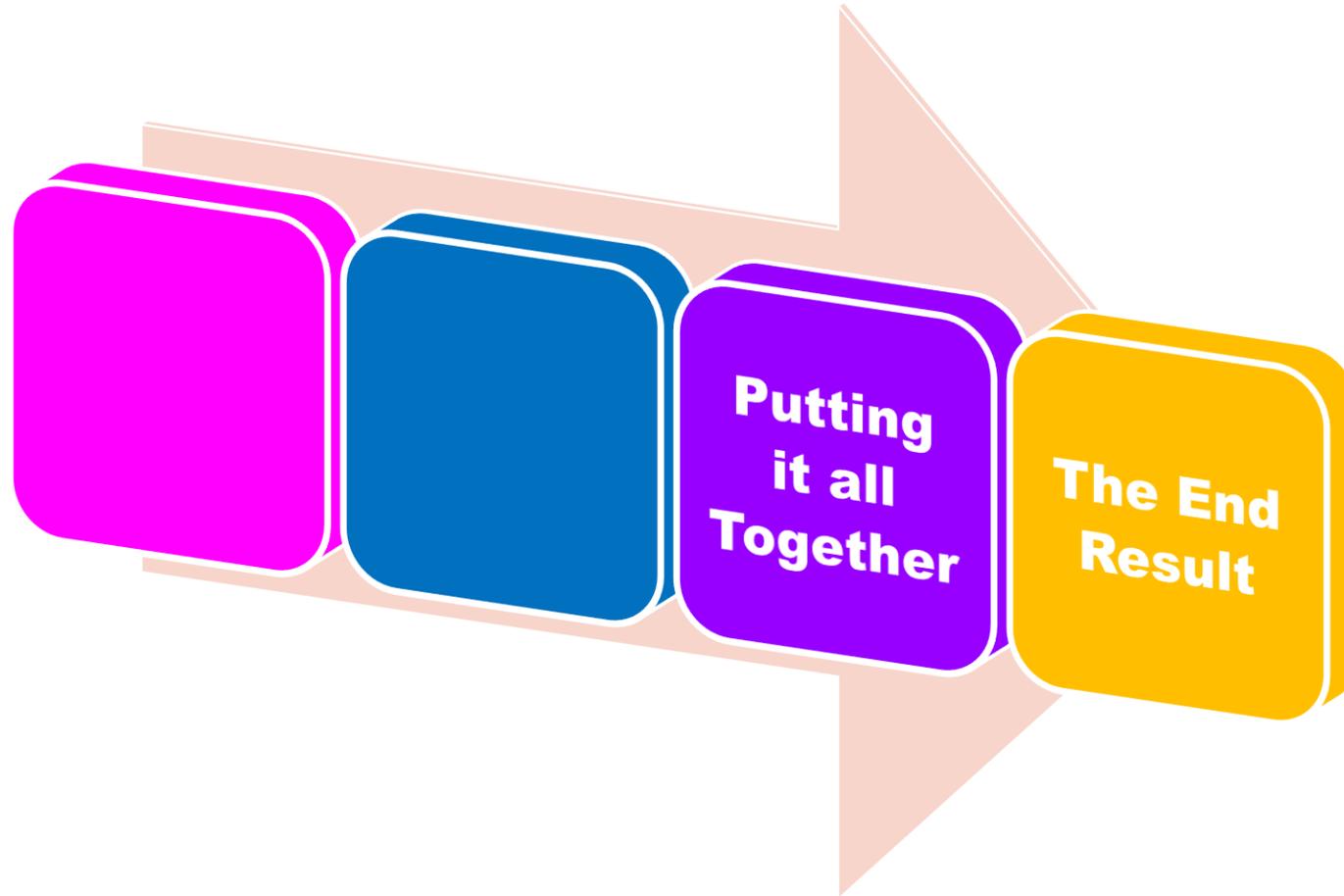


You can use magnets on a magnetic board. You can use popsicle sticks on a table or a sophisticated software program. Find whatever works for you.

For me ultimately, it is designing it in my head first (often while looking at a football field during halftime). Football season amazingly coordinates with drill off-season. Then I put it down on paper and make adjustments as needed.

I go through several “generations” of changes before settling on a “finished product” that will still get changed and updated.

4 Steps to a Better Drill





Putting it All Together

1) Unity

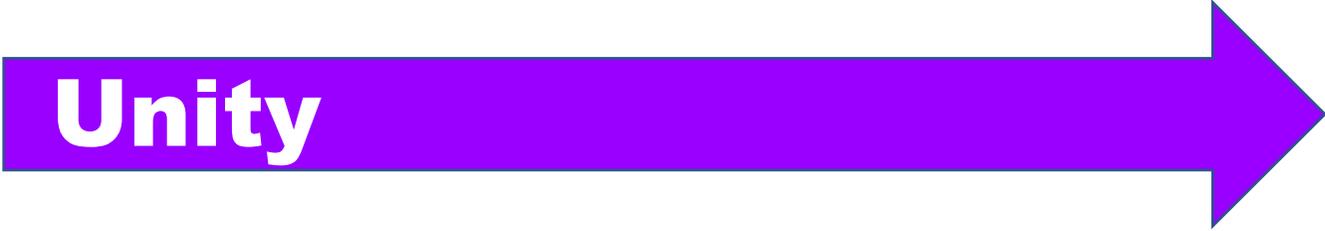
2) Continuity/Transitions

3) Variety/Contrast



Unity

Unity

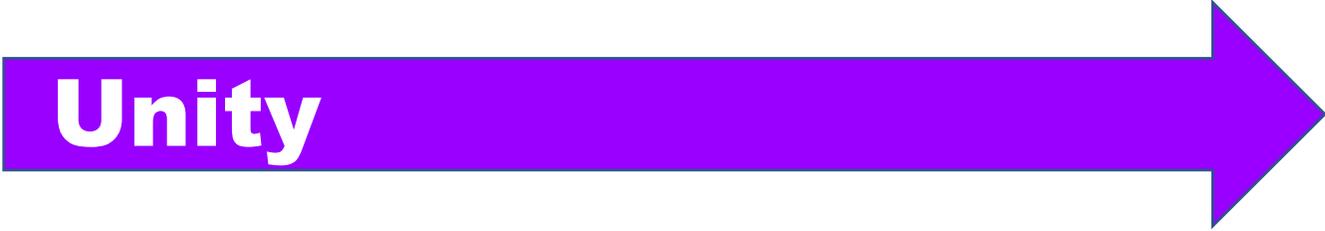


A drill must have **unity** established through the piece to develop a cohesiveness to the drill. The separate maneuvers & sequences in the choreography must flow together, and each must contribute to the whole.

Have you ever watched a drill that looks more like a bunch of pieces strung together?

It is easier for observers to absorb and get involved in a drill that maintains unity because it has the capacity to attract and hold the audience's attention.

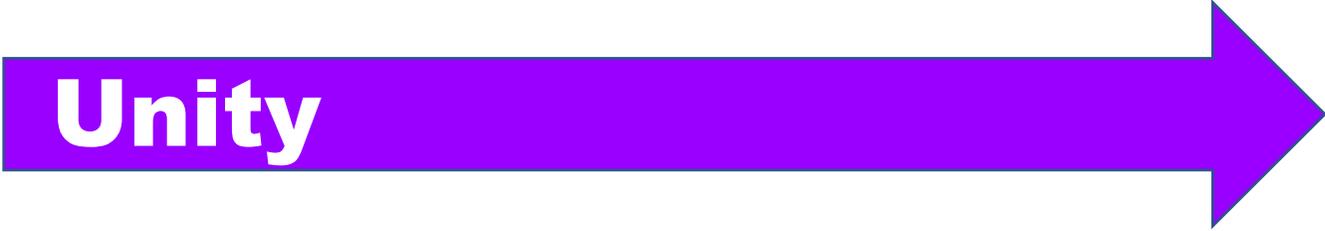
Unity



This is not to discourage contrast and variety which is necessary and different. Contrast & variety in the drill actually bind it together and holds the attention of the observer by daring them to look away and chance missing something.

I find that unity for me comes from designing a drill start to finish as one distinct drill. I will use what I call “Plug & Play” sequences from past experience, but only as they fit.

Unity

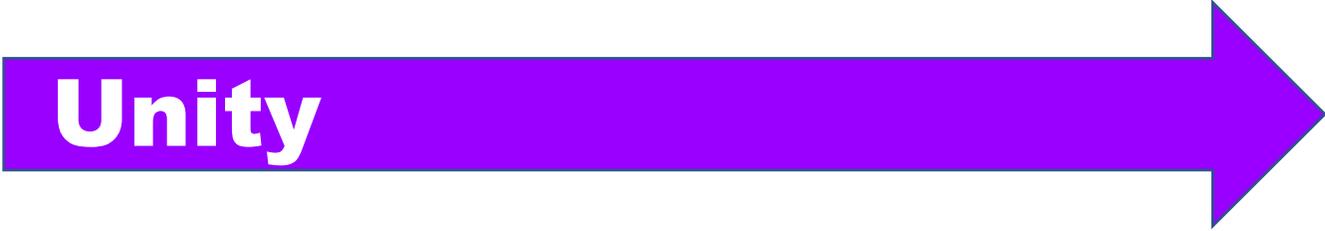


A divergence from unity may occur when a team tries to piece together drills designed at different times by different people.

If you use your short drill in your long drill make sure the rest of the long drill flows together with it.

If you use half a drill from one year and add a new back half make sure the flow remains the same.

Unity

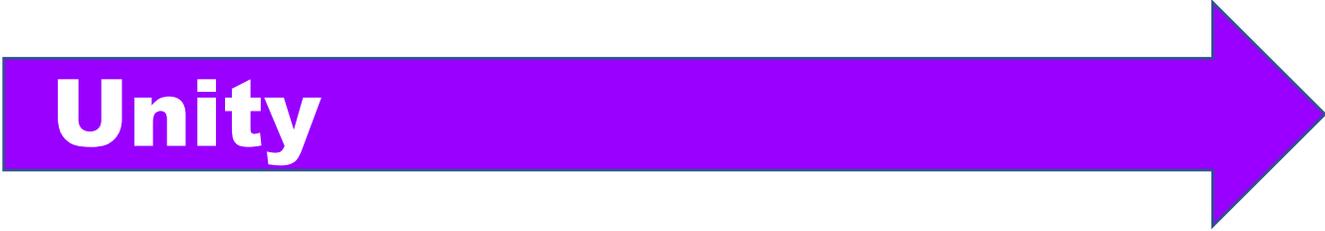


Trying to force in a new sequence to replace an old one can cause a disjointedness.

“Borrowing” sequences from another team? Make sure they flow with the rest of your drill.

Sometimes you may have to leave out a favorite sequence because it just doesn't fit. Don't force something, it will show.

Unity



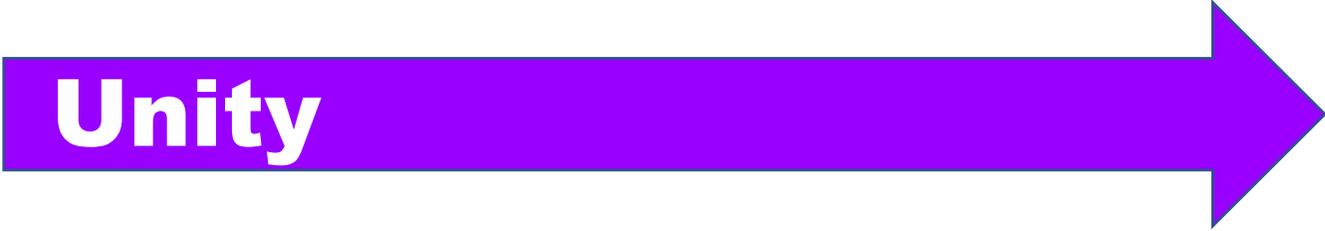
Other parts of the country have different styles of drill. One not better or worse than another, but they look different with a different flow. I have encouraged having teams from Washington come compete with us to expose everyone to another style and I have seen teams picking up pieces of the Pacific North West style.

If you use sequences from teams from another state make sure they fit within the rest of your drill and don't break the flow.

Unity

Think of your drill as that jigsaw puzzle again. Each maneuver, a piece of a sequence. Each sequence, a part of the puzzle that must fit the full picture. But it is not until you see the whole thing in its finished state that you realize the beautiful complete picture it created. Make sure all the pieces fit into your final picture.





Unity

**What is the single most important item in
bring unity to a drill?**

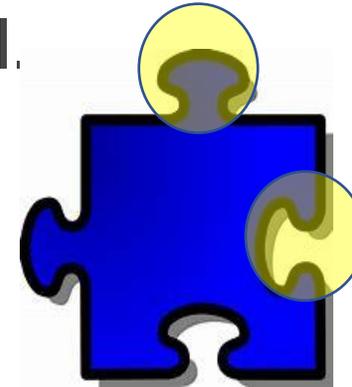
Transitions!



Continuity/Transitions

Continuity/Transitions

Transitions are the essential compositional element that connects all the parts to create a drill. Transitional movements are the bumps and curves of the puzzle piece that snap and bind the pieces together.



Transitions from one maneuver to the next are necessary because each is a part of the choreography and contributes to the unity of the drill, but we don't want to notice transitions once snapped together. If the observer finds progression from one maneuver to another noticeable, the transitions probably need work.

Continuity/Transitions

Poor transitions are distracting to the audience because they interfere with **involvement** in the performance of the drill and draw attention to the structure and design of the choreography rather than allowing the audience to focus on the overall feeling or form of the work.

Stop thinking of transitions as just a way to get from point A to point B, but as a contribution to the drill or as a maneuver in itself. Using creativity in your transitions might well lead to a new maneuver.

Continuity/Transitions



I once had a judge mention on audio comments that he “didn’t know what the team had just done, he didn’t know what to call it because he had never seen it done, but he really liked that *maneuver*”.

That was a great compliment because that was a transition I had to add between two maneuvers after I had to change out a maneuver that wasn’t working.

Continuity/Transitions

Transitions Are Beautiful Too! Some of the most stunning movements I have witnessed are actually transitions done perfectly.

Recently at Coto Cup Buckshot Beauties were performing a well done wedding rings but what struck me was the transition exit out of it. It went from rings to tightly spaced lines curving outwards seamlessly into a single line abreast.

Watching videos look for the beautiful transitions. Often it is the perfect synchronization that makes it striking. Sometimes outshining the maneuver itself.

Continuity/Transitions



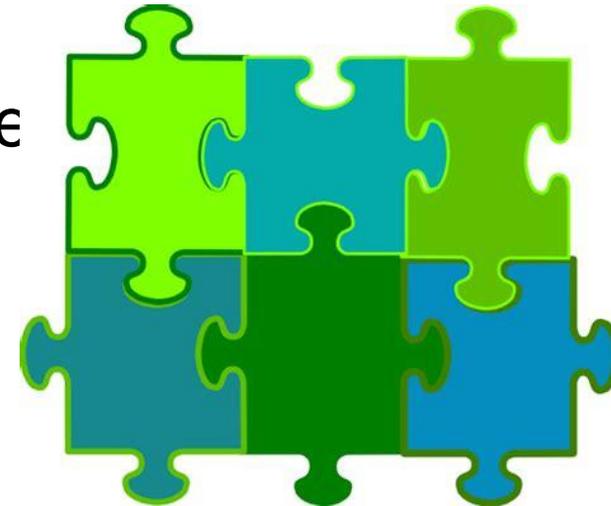
Plug 'n Play

Plug 'n play is a term I use for sequences I have built over the years. I have a catalog of sequences that worked really well. Not a single maneuver but a sequence of maneuvers that worked seamlessly together. I will reuse those sequences in various drills because I know they work, I know how they flow, I know how they translate, and if I am using it on a team that has ridden together for awhile, chances are they know how to ride it well, shortening the learning curve.

Continuity/Transitions

Plug 'n Play

I include this under continuity & transitions because if you have a repertoire of these as you are building a drill you can draw on plug 'n play pieces to fit sequences together that flow easily. You do not have to re-invent the wheel every year with a whole new drill & if you do design a new drill, you do not have to re-invent the entire wheel. Use your experience effectively.



Continuity/Transitions

- Sequence development cuts down on transitions.
- Fewer transitions makes a drill ride smoother.
- Sequence development also ensures that a drill will translate well in the arena.
- Sequence development shortens the learning curve for your team. A smooth drill is easier to learn.



Variety/Contrast

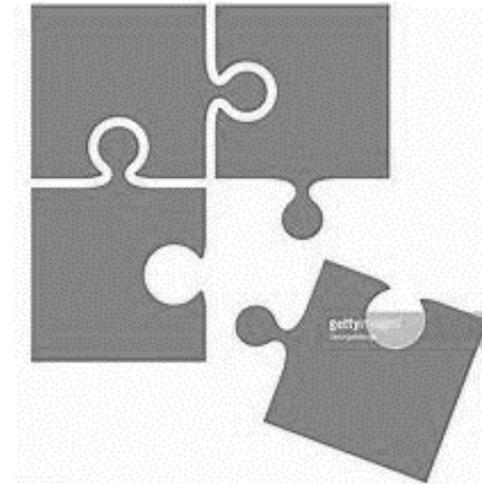
Variety/Contrast

Contrast

In your puzzle, if all of the pieces were the same size, the same color, and the same shape, it would be a very boring puzzle, right? You need to develop contrast within your drill.

Contrasting elements include angular vs. curvilinear, gentle vs. strong, slow vs. fast, & spaced vs tight.

It takes a variety of pieces to make your picture interesting.



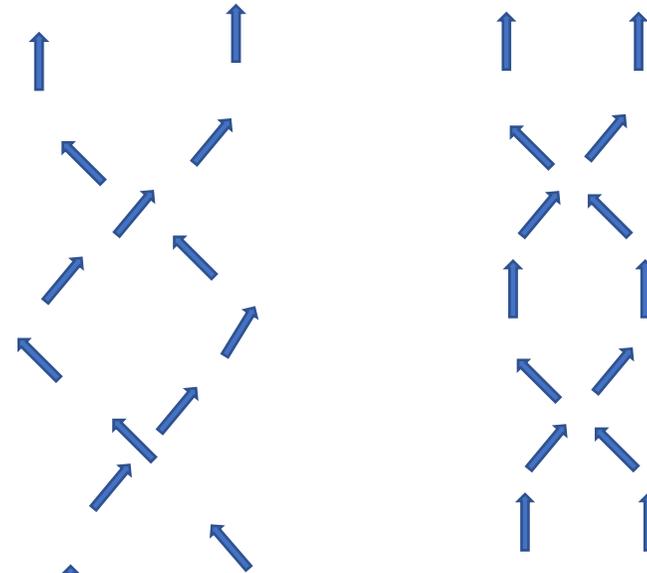
Variety/Contrast

Angular vs. Curvilinear

Some maneuvers can be done either with angles or curves.

A diamond is angular if done with sharp 90 degree turns, it becomes a weave when softened to be curvilinear.

In general I tend to plan sharp maneuvers slower & softer moves faster paced.



Variety/Contrast



Variety includes the following:

1. Maneuvers
2. Spacing
3. Pace
4. Arena use
5. Unit size

Variety/Contrast



1) Maneuver Variety

Think Outside the Box! We said that before and it's worth saying again.

Variety in maneuvers is making sure you represent all of the categories of established maneuvers. Lines, wheels, circles, crosses, obliques, weaves, etc. while being careful to not overdo anyone category. No one wants to watch circle after circle and then another circle.

It is also alternating soft sequences and angular ones to create contrast & interest.

Variety/Contrast



Developing new maneuvers is variety on steroids. Putting together or watching the same puzzle done over and over gets boring. To keep interest for those watching and those riding, work hard on pushing the envelope to create variety with new, fresh maneuvers.

That off-season creative time is key in developing new maneuvers and those new maneuvers are what is really going to catch the attention of judges.

Variety/Contrast



Even though variety is important, it is important to note that some repetition, can be important to a program.

Repetition emphasizes maneuvers that are important to the drill. A choreographer must maintain a delicate balance between variety, or **contrast**, and repetition.

When watching drill videos of other teams how many times did you replay something to see what they actually did?

Variety/Contrast



Having several units perform a cross maneuver, one after the other in repetition while in a column, can be more effective than having them cross all at once which may be more difficult but may not translate as well. It's all a balancing act.

The audience eye is trained usually only on one set at a time, they can feel cheated if everyone was doing something at once, and they only saw one set and did not see the rest perform it. They are left thinking wait do that again!

Variety/Contrast



Seeing a maneuver, especially a complex maneuver, performed repeatedly allows the eye to appreciate it fully.

If you are showing a new maneuver for the first time will an observer know what just happened seeing it in real time, one time only, particularly if it was done at high speed?

Consider possibly repeating the maneuver. If it is a maneuver done in repetition in a column fashion you do not need to repeat it.

Variety/Contrast



Don't neglect the less interesting passages of a drill. Simple sequences between complex or dramatic maneuvers provide a useful contrast. Choreographers often make the mistake of editing out the slow parts of a drill until all they have left is the frantic. Some styles seem a bit frantic to me sometimes because they excel at eliminating almost all of the transitions. Again everything is a balance.

The pacing of the drill should breathe...don't forget to inhale before shouting.

Variety/Contrast



2) Spacing

Spacing, both vertical and horizontal should vary within your drill.

Make the changes happen naturally through the design of your drill.

Riding with tight spacing shows a team trust and skilled precision while riding on top of one another. Riding with wider horizontal spacing demonstrates skills in alignment and team awareness. Use both effectively to properly show all of your team skills.

Variety/Contrast



3) Pace

Consider performing a new or intricate maneuver at a slower pace so people can absorb it. This is a good way to incorporate variety in your pace.

Slowly perform a new maneuver then speed up for a more familiar one. Even consider doing a spectacular new maneuver at a slow pace then circle around and perform it faster a second time through like we discussed about repetition.

Variety/Contrast



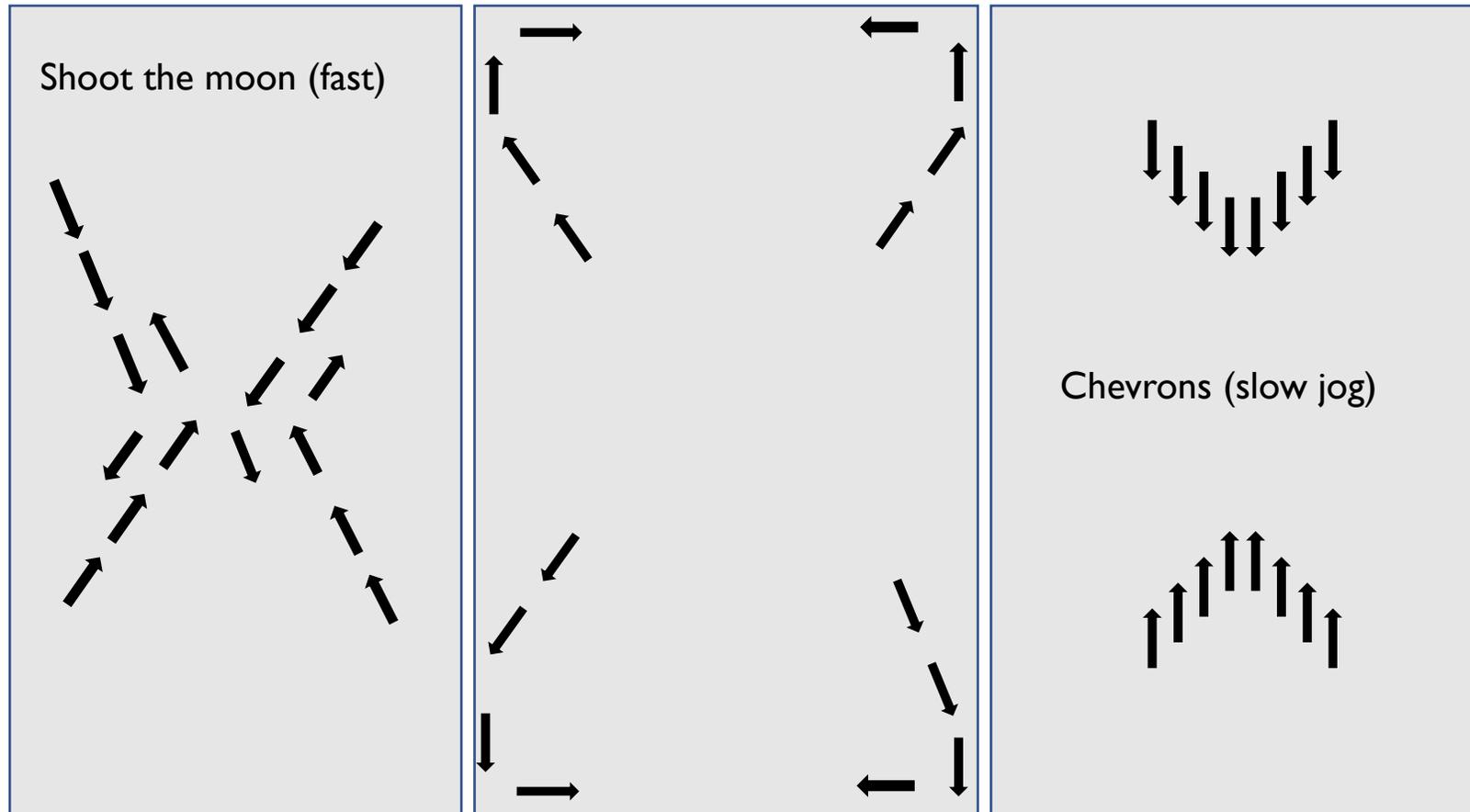
While a drill done at one constant slow lope can appear lyrical & methodical, it can also lull you right into a catnap, especially one done smoothly.

Conversely a drill done all at a fast pace with no break can cause the audience to lose track of the speed. You can use speed variance to emphasis, highlight, or shade a maneuver or sequence.

Change of pace is a good thing!

Avoid a mind-numbing drill! Variety of speed in your drill creates visual interest, use it smartly & effectively. Change it up!

Example:



Variety/Contrast



Judges please take note of back riders in columns, are they breaking their gait to maintain spacing?

Some lead riders are unaware of what is going on in the back. It is part of the choreography for the lead riders to know where they must adjust speed up or down. Too often it is left up to the back riders to adjust their speed or break their gait.

If back riders are breaking gaits it is the choreography or the lead riders not knowing the choreography well enough that is to blame, not the riders in the back.

Variety/Contrast



4) Arena Use

Simple, use it all! Not everything needs to be done in the center of the arena. Feature some maneuvers at the ends.

Also alternate using the width, length and diagonals of the arena consistently throughout your drill. Lengthwise gets used the most, but be aware of doing 2 or more maneuvers lengthwise in a row.

Variety/Contrast



Not every transition needs to go to the end of the arena either. Sometimes that is dead air that stinks of a transition.

If you are going to avoid using one part of the arena on purpose you should inform your judges at the pre-competition meeting. At Coto Cup we had some teams not use the end of the arena past the gate. As a judge I would have marked each of those teams down for not working in a usable part of the arena and not centering maneuvers properly.

Variety/Contrast



5) Unit Size

If you are writing a drill for 12 riders you should be using maneuvers as individuals, pairs, 3's, 4's, 6's and full team and possible a mix of those at the same time. Vary it up maneuver to maneuver. It is easy to want to do all of your full team work at one time, but it will be a much more interesting drill if you work in a small unit, then go to a large one, back to a smaller, one etc.

Don't forget about tandems, pairs, 3's or 4's as well.

Variety/Contrast



Work Sheet

I have included a Variety Checklist worksheet in your packet. You may find it useful when putting together a drill or evaluating drills you are watching.

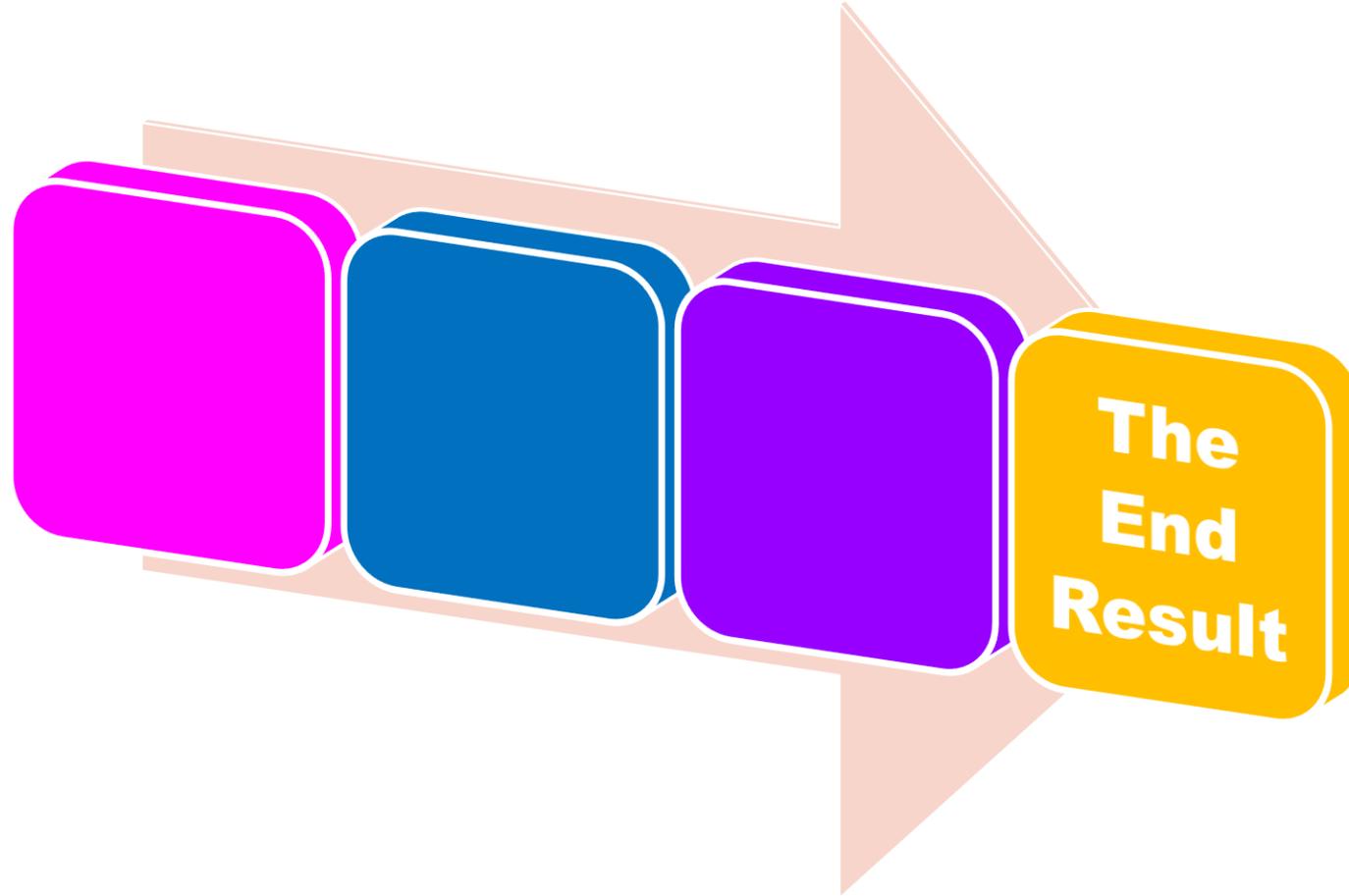
Be conscious when writing a drill that you are alternating your variety items constantly. Don't do 3 maneuvers in a row in pairs. Don't keep doing maneuvers lengthwise one after another, don't do three cross maneuvers in a row...

VARIETY CHECKLIST

<u>ARENA USE</u>		<u>MANEUVERS</u>	
Length		Circles	
Width		Cross /Box	
Diagonal		Suicide Charge	
Good Alternating Use		Abreast	
<u>GAITS</u>		Oblique	
Walk/or Stop		Crack the Whip	
Jog		Sweep	
Extended Jog		Rollback/Posse Roll	
Lope		Weave	
Extended Lope		Wheel	
<u>UNIT SIZE</u>		Fan/Spider	
Single		Chevron	
Pairs		Angular	
3's		Curvilinear	
4's		Something New	
6's		Good Alternating Use	
8's			
Full Team			
Tandem Units			
Good Alternating Use			



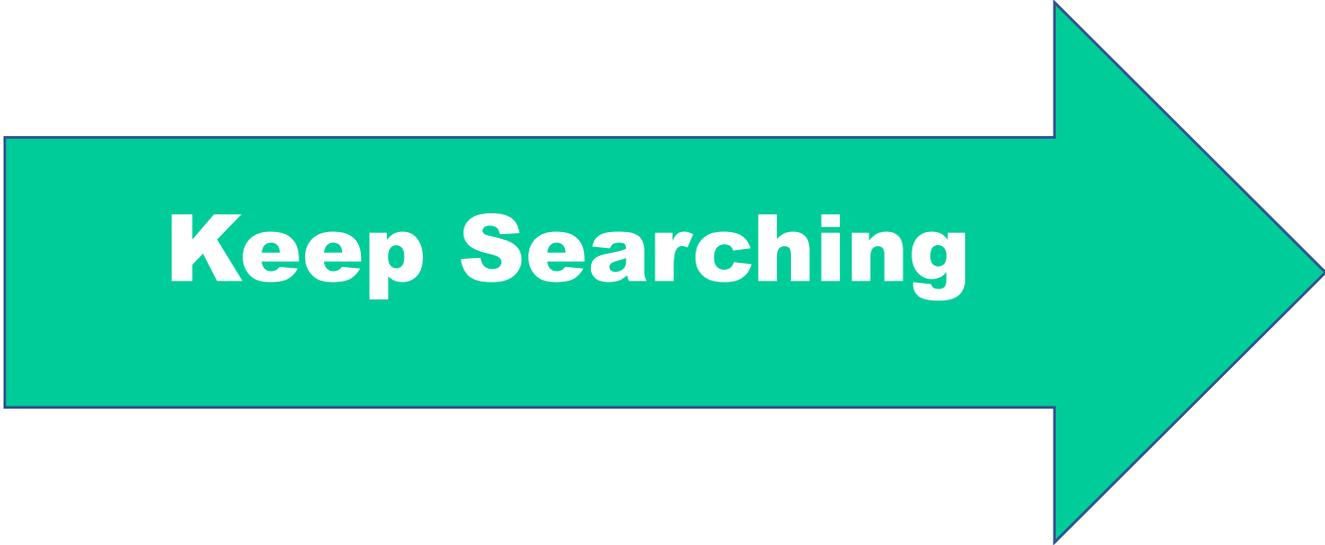
4 Steps to a Better Drill



The End Result



- 1) Keep Searching**
- 2) Keep Learning**
- 3) It Never Ends**



Keep Searching

Keep Searching



Choreograph for the moments you want — search for a few startling, strong or memorable moments. Work hard to make those focused moments spectacular, even if they're difficult and take a lot of time to perfect.

Spend more of your time on the most memorable moments. Then surround them with pieces to highlight those key sequences, using contrast and continuity, pacing, etc.

Keep Searching



Search for the mix that works for your team. If something isn't working, change it up.

Waiting and hoping it will fix itself usually does not work out. You still end up having to modify it and now you will have lost that time.

Never stop searching for better maneuvers, better sequences. I venture to say there has never been a perfect drill written yet. Keep searching, Keep learning.



Keep Learning

Keep Learning



Learn to highlight those significant moments, placing them where they can be clearly seen, not obscured in a flurry of busy movement. Learn that the rest of the sequences can be used wisely to set up these key sequences you want to really shine.

Although there is no single approach to creating a drill that has a clear sense of development, certain characteristics are common to effective pieces of choreography. Those qualities are **unity, continuity/transition & variety/contrast**

Keep Learning



Choreography doesn't end with writing the drill. Making sure riders *understanding* the choreography is as much a part of it as diagraming it.

Taking complex choreography and make it look effortless is both art and technique. It is truly a skill to ride a complex, difficult drill and have the illusion of simplicity. The trained eyes of judges should know the difference. At the end of the day though, everyone wants to see a visually pleasing program.

Keep Learning



WHAT JUDGES SHOULD LOOK FOR IN THIS CATEGORY:

- Contrast throughout the drill as a whole
- Maneuver variation
- Variation of pace
- Breaking of gaits
- Use of entire arena
- Unit size variation
- New or unique choreography
- Do transitions add or detract from the drill?
- Does the choreography fit their skill level?
- Does the drill present as one cohesive picture?
- Was the drill visually pleasing to watch?



It Never Ends

It Never Ends

Just as you think you are putting in the last piece of the puzzle your mind will start saying “Wait, what if we do this?” If you have the time to make the adjustment, do it. I have made changes to a drill during the final practice before a competition. They never mess up *that* part.

