



## How Much Pressure Should I Use? by Lara Neighbour, National Instructor

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“How much pressure should I use in the “bump?” is a very common question on Equine Touch courses. As a practitioner or student how do you decide how much pressure to use? Do you vary the pressure depending on the body you’re working on? Or have you developed your own ‘signature’ pressure?

“Pain is such an uncomfortable feeling that even a tiny amount of it is enough to ruin every enjoyment”  
Will Rogers (1879-1935) American actor.

*Too deep for the horse.* If a horse puts its ears back, bares its teeth, swishes a tail, threatens a kick, moves away we tend to get the idea that either a) we’ve found a sore spot b) we’ve applied too much pressure or c) a combination of both. So, hopefully, we accept this communication, lighten up with our pressure, and keep the horse’s trust.

*Too deep for the human.* If a human on your couch winces, cries out, tenses, tries to move away, tells you it hurts I’d hope that you respect their response, lighten the pressure and have a conversation with your client, discussing where the pain is and how you might help – rather than following the “no pain, no gain” school of thought. I have had many VHT sessions over the years and have experienced those where the pressure has been perfect for my particular set of aches and pains, and those that have, for my tastes, been too light or too deep. And I’ve avoided sessions from those who feel that unless their client is jumping like a landed fish they’ve failed!

*By definition.* The definition of the Equine Touch (and similarly Canine Touch and VHT) includes the words ‘gentle’ and non-invasive’ – when we are not being gentle and when we are invasive with our pressure we are not doing the Equine Touch, Canine Touch or VHT. We will not inspire relaxation and bring a body into balance: we will be adding tension and stress. The practitioner/student should be applying the pressure that the individual’s body requires rather than their own pressure that they instinctively work at; and this is a skill that practicing on different bodies will help you acquire.

“Those who do not feel pain seldom think that it is felt.”  
Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)  
English author.

So, back to the original question, “How much pressure should I use in the bump?” If we look at why we should apply the pressure and what we’re trying to achieve – this will help us decide how much pressure is necessary for the bump to achieve its purpose.

Why do we apply pressure in the bump part of the move?

- to hold the skin slack that has been taken up in the slide
- to achieve ischemic compression
- to achieve body awareness i.e. time for the client to register where the move is taking place on the body
- to 'energise' the muscles under the move
- to reach deeper fascia and muscle that will be vibrated in the glide part of the move

How should we apply the bump? Reminding ourselves of how to apply the bump will help us take the time to apply pressure correctly and enable us to know when enough is enough.

- Synchronised with our exhalation so as to let your body weight aid applying the pressure rather than application with finger tips only, which can be inclined to give a pokey move. Keeping your shoulders relaxed and tension out of your body will make this easier.
- Slowly! A slow application of pressure means you will have time to receive the responses from the client (verbal response, body language response or muscular response i.e. feeling the point of resistance in the muscles) and stop at the level of pressure they are comfortable with.
- Ninety degrees to the skin surface so this will ensure that the application of pressure is only during the 'bump' rather than losing the pressure or piling on more during the 'glide' part of the move.
- Maintain the same pressure during the glide.

"Pain is inevitable.  
Suffering is optional"  
Anonymous

*Seeking a result.* When initially learning the move we don't know what is the correct feeling and result we're trying to achieve. How did we know it was right and how did we know if it was wrong? More often than not the moves where we felt a large 'explosive' muscle recoil were the first moves we felt we'd achieved something right. Sometime we can, erroneously, think that unless we get that large muscle recoil and/or dramatic response we haven't done the move right. This isn't the case: some muscles and moves are more prone to recoil whereas others aren't, but this does not mean that the moves are any less effective – nor require you applying more pressure to make them feel more effective.

Ask yourself if you've found a pain response or caused a pain response as your clients will have their own preferences for pressure in bodywork and their own pain thresholds which may differ vary to yours. With the correct touch for your client you can have truly amazing results.