



TROT
Therapeutic Riding Of Tri-Cities



VOLUNTEERS TRAINING MANUAL

MISSION

Therapeutic Riding of Tri Cities (TROT) promotes physical, psychological and social well-being of people with special needs by providing animal-assisted therapies and activities.

VISION

Enrich the well-being of people with unique and special needs in our community.

VALUES

TROT is a faith-based center that provides high quality instruction and safety. Following the standards of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) and the American Hippotherapy Association (AHA) we require training and education for our, therapists, instructors, animals and volunteers to better serve our therapeutic riding community.

BEGINNINGS

Cynthia MacFarlan, founder and Director of TROT explains, “It has long been my dream to pair my love of animals with my experience as a speech therapist. For over three decades I’ve enjoyed helping people of all ages with a variety of communication disorders. I knew the time was right in 2013 to carve that dream into a reality and TROT was born. With the support of many talented, powerful, and dynamic women, it is now a vessel for God’s love and hope to shine through to bring healing, self-fulfillment and joy to all those involved.”

OUR TEAM

- Board of Directors
- Riders/Participants
- Families
- Volunteers
- Instructors
- Therapists
- Coordinators
- Horses
- Dog

INFORMATION

Mailing Address: PO Box 5108, Pasco, WA 99302

Phone: 509-412-0112

Website: www.trot3cities.org

Email: info@trot3cities.org

Facebook: Therapeutic Riding of Tri Cities

Instagram: trot3cities

YouTube: youtu.be/T8TDjTRJX20

Thank you again for your time and dedication as a TROT volunteer.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Helen Keller

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GENERAL HORSE INFORMATION

Horse sense is the basis of horsemanship. This is the ability of a person to understand horses and even to think like a horse. **The better you understand horses, the more you will enjoy them and a better rider you will be.**

Horses are large and **powerful** animals, but they are also **timid** and **easily frightened**. Most horses are **gentle** and **obedient** if they are handled properly. If you hurt or frighten a horse you can get hurt. The first choice of a frightened horse is to run away. If he can't run away, he might kick or bite in self-defense. It's a good idea to ask permission from your instructor or the horse's owner before going near an unfamiliar horse.

The following rules will help you learn how to act safely around horses. The rules are based on the knowledge of how horses think and often react.

HORSE SENSE * RULES AND REASONS

RULE 1 Praise often, punish seldom. (Volunteers will **NOT** punish the horse)

- **Reason:** Firm, gentle treatment will gain your horse's respect.
 - Harsh or cruel treatment will make your horse fear you.

RULE 2 Stop, look and listen. Use caution when working around horses.

- **Reason:** Horses are frightened by loud noises and sudden movements.
 - They may react in an unexpected way.



RULE 3 If you stand directly behind or in front of a horse, make sure they are aware of your presence.

- **Reason:** A frightened horse may kick or run over you.

RULE 4 Horses should never be hand fed.

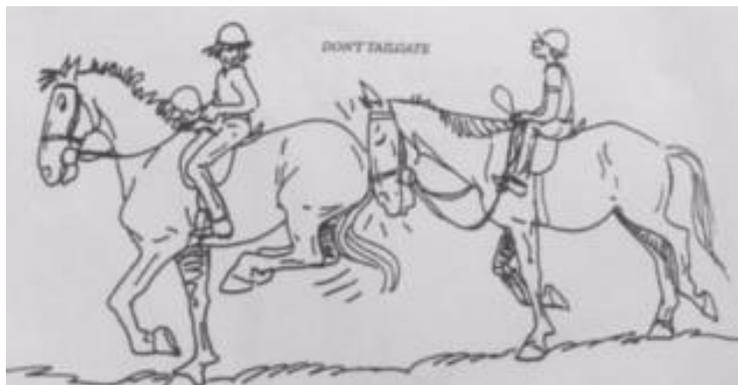
- **Reason:** Fingers may be mistaken for treats and be bitten.



**DON'T FEED HORSES BY HAND
FINGERS FEEL LIKE CARROTS**

RULE 5 Keep at least one-horse length between your horse and the horse in front of you.

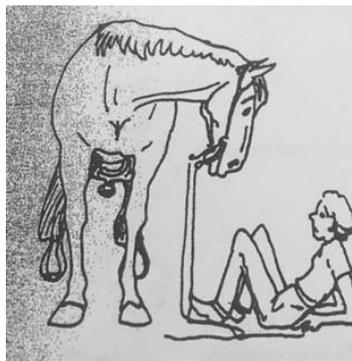
- **Reason:** Crowding a horse may cause him to kick or bite.



KEEP ALERT * MAINTAIN A SAFE DISTANCE BETWEEN HORSE

RULE 6 Check equipment for proper fit and have your instructor check it before your rider mounts.

- **Reason:** Improperly fitted equipment may cause an accident or injury to horse and rider.



**CHECK YOUR TACK BEFORE
YOU MOUNT UP**

RULE 7 Always use a halter and lead rope to tie your horse. Never tie with the reins.

- *Reason:* Injury might occur if tied by the bridle.



NEVER TIE A HORSE BY THE BRIDLE; USE A HALTER

RULE 8 Treat equipment with care and always put it away properly.

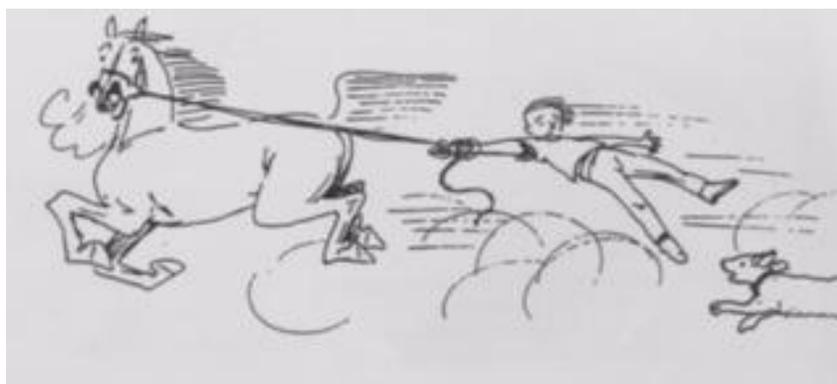
- *Reason:* Properly cared for equipment is easier to use and lasts longer.



**PUT EQUIPMENT AWAY PROPERLY
WHEN YOU ARE THROUGH WITH IT**

RULE 9 Never wrap or tie anything attached to your horse around your body in any way.

- *Reason:* Being tied may result in your being dragged by your horse.



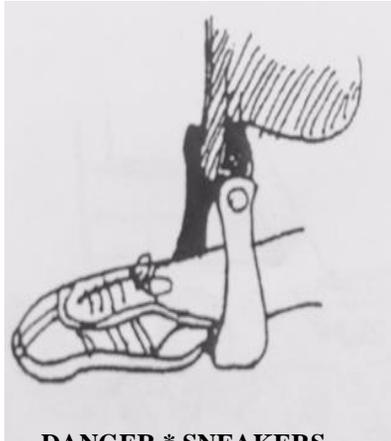
NEVER WRAP OR TIE A LEAD ROPE OR REIN AROUND YOURSELF

RULE 10 Listen and learn.

- Always listen for commands from your instructor and act promptly.
- Keep alert at all times when around horses.
- Reason: Your instructor will help to protect you from danger and insure that you enjoy your time with your horse and rider.

RULE 11 Dismount to adjust clothing or equipment.

- Reason: Your horse may spook from unusual movement on his back.



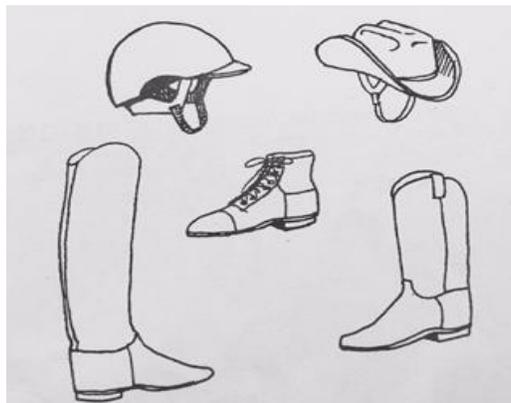
**DANGER * SNEAKERS
CAN ALLOW YOUR FOOT
TO GET CAUGHT
IN THE STIRRUP**



**BE SMART
DRESS THE PART**

RULE 12 Dress appropriately. When riding or working with horses, you should:

- Wear Long Pants
- Shoes with a Heel or Boots
- Proper Head Gear
- Reason:
 - ✓ Long pants will prevent sores on your legs.
 - ✓ Hard shoes will protect your feet.
 - ✓ The heels will prevent your feet from slipping through the stirrups.
 - ✓ Helmets protect from most head injuries.



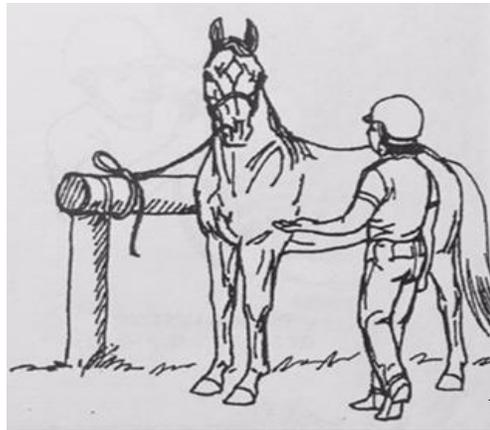
HORSE CARE AND HANDLING

APPROACH YOUR HORSE

When approaching a horse always consider the horse's limited field of vision.

A horse **cannot see directly behind or in front** without moving his head.

- Approach your horse at the shoulder or as near the neck as possible so that he can see you.
- Speak softly and call the horse's name as you approach because your horse may be asleep.
- Extend your hand and pat him on the neck or shoulder.

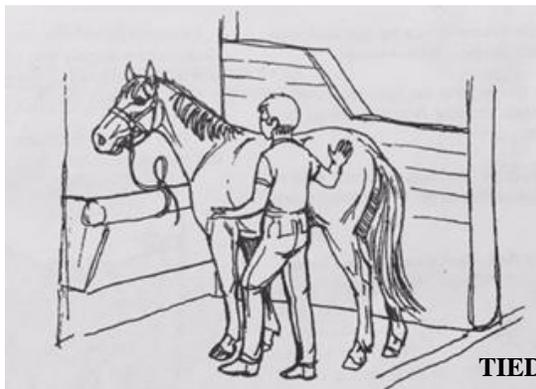


APPROACHING A HORSE

THE STALL

If your horse is in a tie stall you will have to approach the horse from the rear. Speak to him as you enter the stall.

- Place your hand on his hip.
- Be sure to make the horse move over to give you some room.
- Walk to the horse's head and pat him on the neck.



**TIED IN A STALL
APPROACH A HORSE FROM THE REAR**

HALTER YOUR HORSE

The halter and lead rope **help** you to **lead and tie** your horse. Lead ropes are attached with a clip or snap to a ring on the halter. The halter is designed to fit comfortably on the horse's head so that you can control your horse as you lead or tie him.

It is a good idea to **have the halter and lead rope ready to use when you go to catch a horse.**

Many people like to have the lead rope already attached to the halter, carrying them together as they approach the horse.

To place the halter on your horse you will need to **stand at the left side of the horse.** Most halters fasten on the left side.

- **Stand between the horse's shoulder and head.**
- Talk to your horse while stroking or patting him to let him know you are a friend.
- Slide the halter up over his muzzle on to the horse's head.
The long strap (crown piece) should come across the horse's head right behind the ears, toward you. It should now be easy to fasten.

Some people like to wrap the lead rope around the horse's neck before putting the halter on. This gets it out of the way, and lets the horse know it is caught.



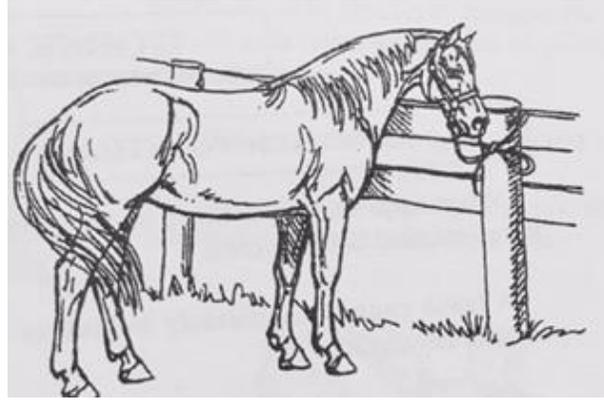
PLACING A HALTER ON YOUR HORSE'S HEAD

TIE YOUR HORSE

When it is time to groom or saddle your horse you will need a way to keep the horse standing still while you work. There are several ways to do this:

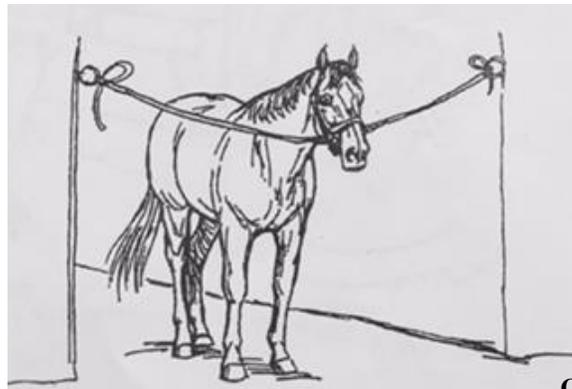
1. **Tie the lead rope to a solid object** that cannot be moved such as:
 - A wall with a ring in it
 - A strong fence post
 - A hitching rail or something similar

- Whenever you tie your horse, you will need to **use a quick release knot** (See Level 2).
Always **tie at a height level with the horse's back or higher**.
- It is important not to tie the lead rope too long.
- If the horse decides to put his head down, he could step over the rope!



TIED TO A FENCE POST

2. **Cross ties** are another common way to secure a horse. Cross ties are **usually two roped tied high up on each side of the walkway in the stable**.
 - Each rope will usually have a snap or clip to attach it to the halter.
 - They attach to the side rings on the part of the halter that goes around the horse's muzzle.



CROSS TIED

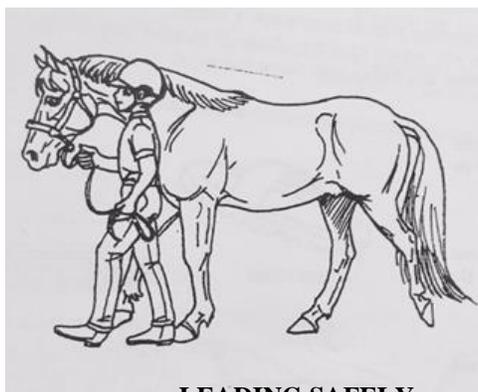
LEAD YOUR HORSE

When leading a horse with a halter and lead rope or a bridle, the procedure is the same.

You should **be on your horse's left**, leading between his head and shoulders.

1. **If single reins are used and not tied together**, be sure to remove both reins from the horse's neck.
2. **If the reins are tied or buckled**, bring them gently over the horse's head.
3. Place your **right hand about six inches from the halter or bit**, holding the lead rope or reins together.

4. **Never hold on to the halter or any part of the bridle other than the reins.** The halter and bridle do not give you control of your horse if he pulls away.
5. **Hold the excess reins or rope with the left hand.** If the reins are very long, double the excess back and forth until they are short enough to hold.
6. **Looping the excess reins or rope around your hand could be very dangerous** if the horse, for any reason, decides to jump away from you.



LEADING SAFELY

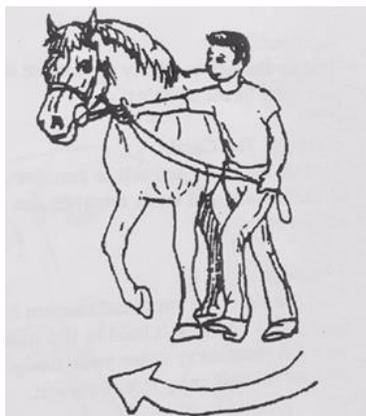
TURN YOUR HORSE

When turning the horse:

- You should **turn his head away from you** by moving your hand under his chin to the right. Continue moving around your horse as he turns to prevent the horse from stepping on your feet.

If you must turn the horse towards you:

- Place your hand on his neck as you turn him to keep him at arm's length away from you.



CORRECT
PUSH HIM AWAY FROM YOU
TO TURN YOUR FEET



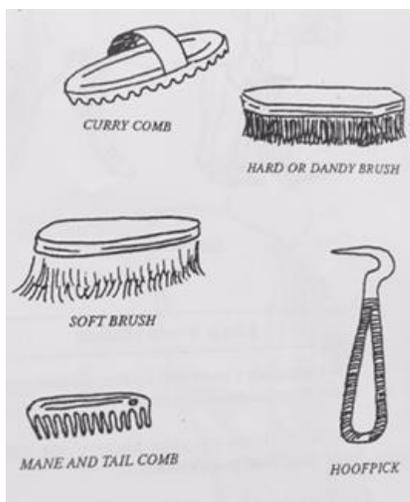
WRONG
DON'T PULL THE HORSE TOWARDS

GROOMING

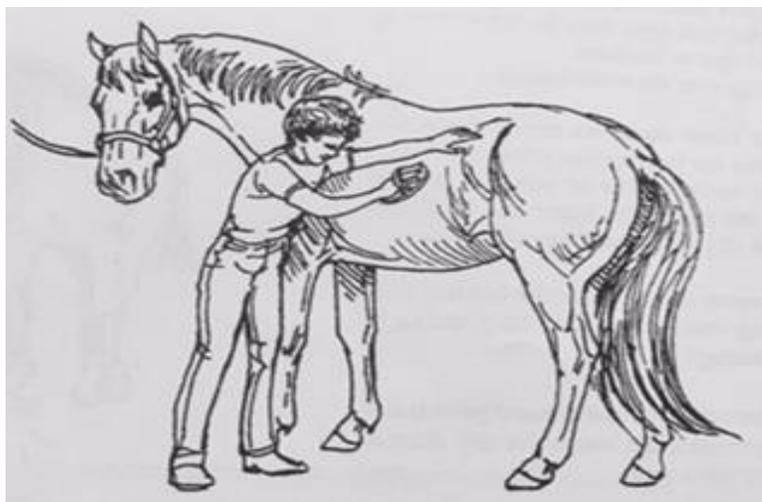
Grooming is a very important part of your horse's health.

A good work over with a curry comb and brush will remove unsightly dandruff and dirt which causes saddle sores. Grooming also gives your horse's **coat a shine**, and makes your horse **feel good**.

- **Curry Comb:** Used on horse's body in a **circular motion** to bring the dirt to the surface. Curry comb should not be used on the face, legs, or any bony area on the horse.
- **Hard Brush or Dandy Brush:** Used in the direction of hair growth to remove the dirt. Brush in firm strokes to remove deep down dirt. Be careful on the face with this brush.
- **Soft Brush:** Used on the face and body to remove surface dirt and put a shine on the horse's coat.
- **Mane and Tail Comb:** Used on the mane and tail to remove tangles. **Start at the bottom and work towards the top**, removing tangles as you go.
- **Hoofpick:** Used to remove dirt, rocks and manure from the horse's hooves. The hoofpick is **held in the palm of the hand with the point away from your body**. Always clean the hoof working away from yourself.



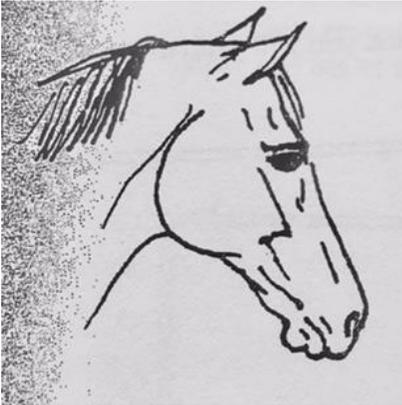
GROOMING TOOLS



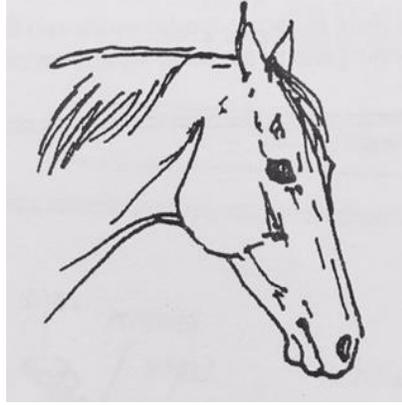
WHILE GROOMING KEEP ONE HAND ON THE HORSE

READING HIS EARS

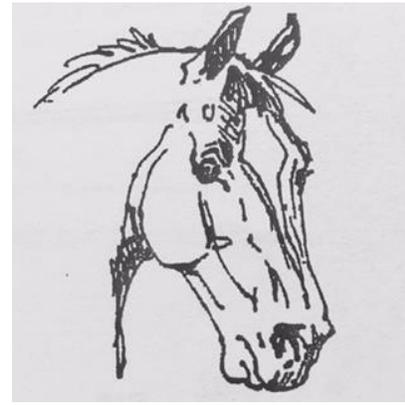
The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. Following are some tips to his emotions:



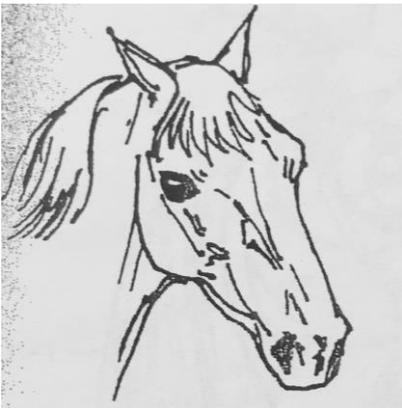
FORWARD BUT RELAXED
Interested in what's in front of him.



TURNED BACK BUT RELAXED
Listening to his rider or what's behind him.



POINTED STIFFLY TOWARD
Alarmed or nervous about what's ahead.



EARS POINTED LEFT & RIGHT
Relaxed, paying attention to the scenery on both sides.



EARS STIFFLY BACK
Annoyed or worried about what's behind him; might kick if annoyed.



DROOPY EARS
Calm and resting, on horse may be dozing.



EARS FLATTENED AGAINST NECK
Violently angry, in a fighting mood.
May fight, bite or kick

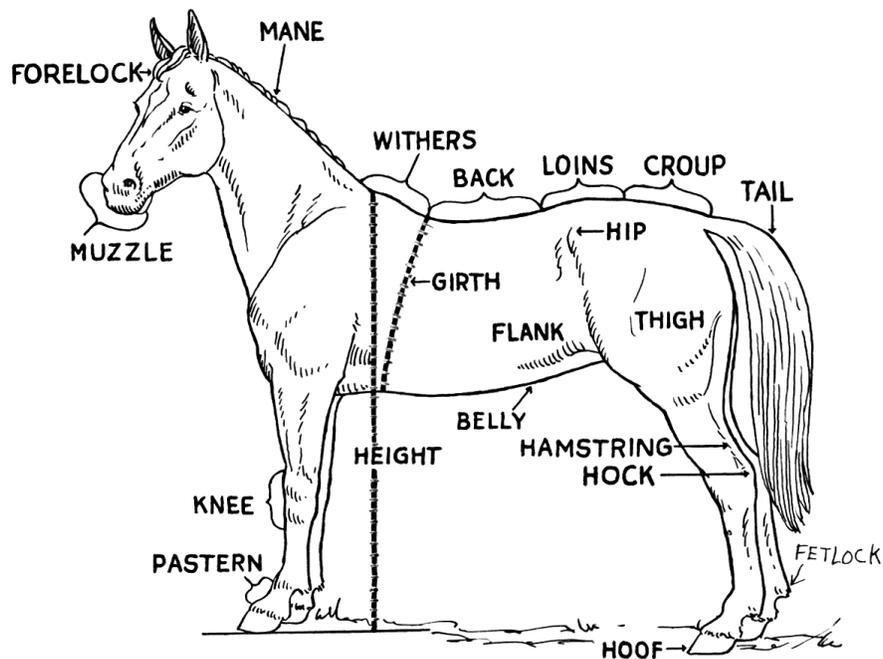
Other signs to pay attention:

- **Tucking the tail down tightly.**
 - Danger to the rear.
 - Horse may bolt, buck or kick.
 - Watch out if ears are flattened, too!
- **Switching the tail.**
 - Annoyance and irritation:
 - At biting flies, stinging insects or tickling bothersome actions of a rider or another horse.
- **Droopy ears and resting one hind leg on toe.**
 - Calm and resting, horse may be dozing.
 - Don't wake him up by startling him!
- **Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head.**
 - Threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse.
 - Watch out for biting or kicking.

PARTS OF THE HORSE AND TACK

PARTS OF THE HORSE

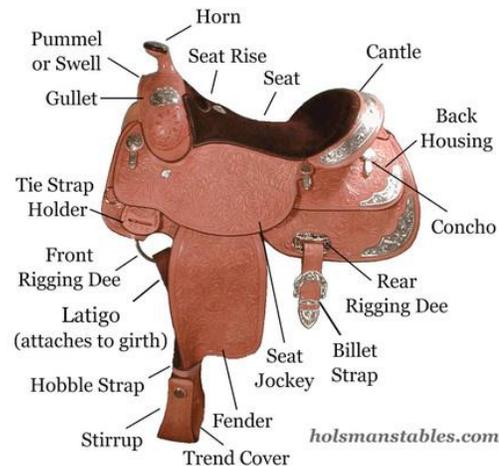
When working around horses there are some special words and terms that you will need to know. Some parts of the horse are shown below:



PARTS OF THE TACK

Your **tack** (*the equipment you use for riding*) should be fitted to you and to your horse. It need not be fancy expensive but **should be safe and well cared for**. The way you take care of your equipment, your ability to talk about it and use it properly, will show if you are a horseman or not. Tack comes in a variety of forms. Be familiar with the names and use of the kind you have.

Western Tack



Saddling Western

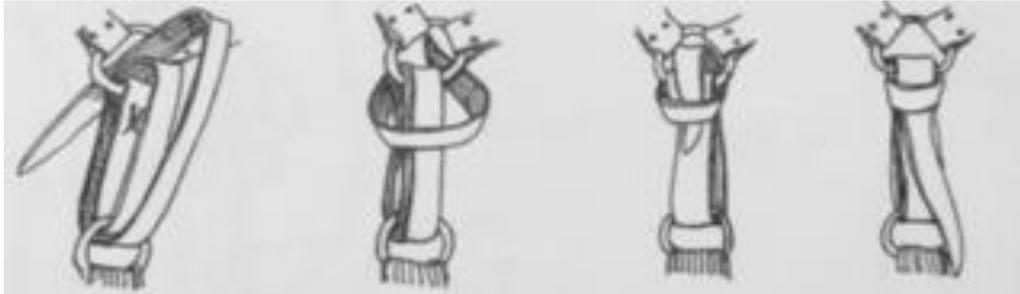
When saddling a horse with a Western Saddle:

- **Place the pad or blanket high on the withers**, then slide it backward onto the withers and back. If a blanket is used, always place the **folded edge toward the horse's withers**.
- Pick up the saddle and **bring the right stirrup and cinch over the seat**.
 - Holding the gullet in your left hand and the cantle in your right hand, **gently place** the saddle on the horse's back.
- The **front edge of the pad** should be **in line with the center of the shoulder**. The saddle should be **centered** and placed **about three inches behind the front edge of the pad**.
 - Place your hand under the blanket, pulling the blanket into the gullet of the saddle so it does not wear on the withers and back.
- Go to the **right (off side)** of the horse and gently lift the stirrup and cinch down. Check the saddle and pad to be sure the pad is smooth and the cinch is not twisted.
- Then from the **left (near side)**, hook the stirrup over the horn and pull the cinch under the horse. The cinch is tied with a special knot (latigo knot).



FOLD THE STIRRUP UP OVER THE SEAT, THE BLANKET COMES TO THE CENTER OF THE SHOULDER, SET THE SADDLE GENTLY IN PLACE

THE LATIGO KNOT



THE LONG LATIGO GOES AROUND THE CINCH RING AND THE SADDLE RING TWICE

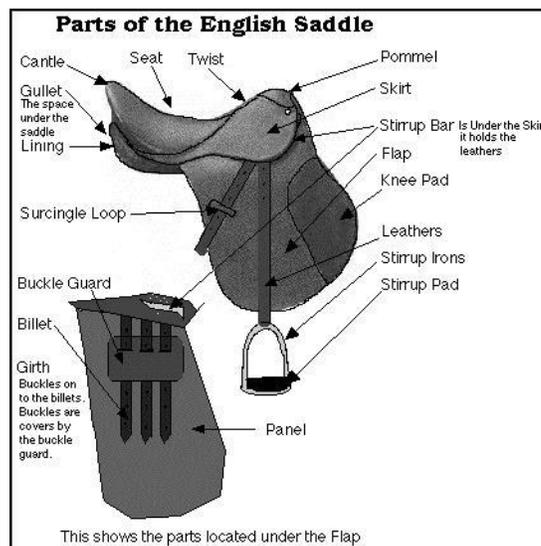
WRAP THE LATIGO AROUND ITSELF MAKING A LOOP THROUGH THE LOOP

THROUGH THE BACK OF THE SADDLE RING PULL THE END (TONGUE)

TIGHTEN BY PULLING THE END OR TONGUE DOWN

Before mounting, a final check of the cinch should be made by your instructor.

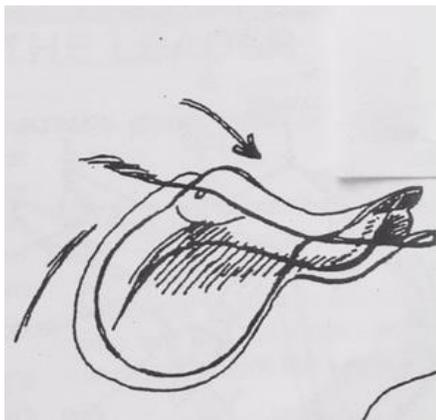
English Tack



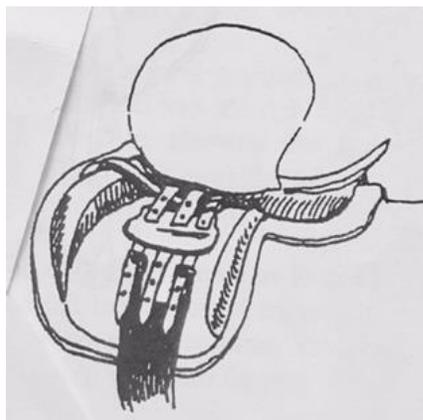
Saddling English

When saddling a horse with an English saddle:

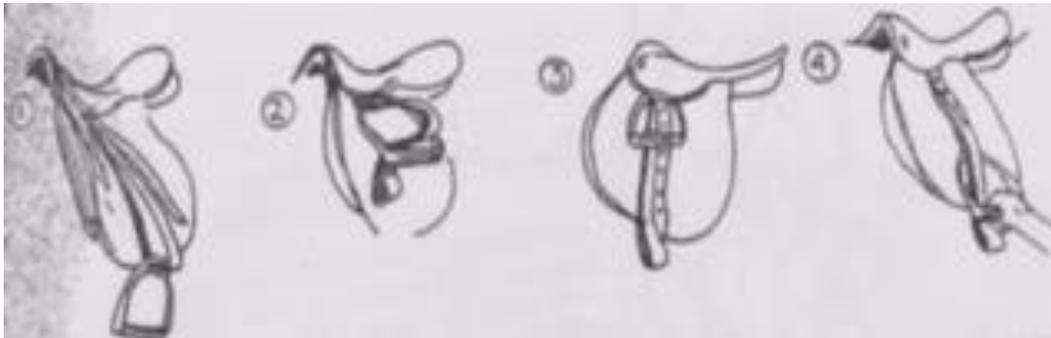
- **Place the saddle pad high on the withers**, then **slide** it backward onto the back to smooth the horse's hair.
- Pick up the saddle, making sure the **stirrups are run up** or the stirrups have been laid across the seat.
 - Lay the **girth across the saddle**.
 - Holding the pommel with the left hand and the cantle with the right, **gently place the saddle on the middle of the pad**.
 - **Pull the pad up into the gullet** to allow the air to circulate between the horse's back and the pad.
- As a general guideline, the front edge of the saddle will often just touch an imaginary line down the center of the shoulder. (This will depend on the type of saddle and the shape of the individual horse).
- From the **right** (off side), take the girth off the saddle and check to be sure the pad is smooth.
 - **Attach the girth to the right side** of the saddle. (The folded edge of a leather girth should be to the front).
- From the **left** (near side), **pull the girth under** the horse and buckle the girth.



PLACE THE SADDLE AND PAD FORWARD ON THE NECK THEN SLIDE BACK INTO PLACE.



**THE ENGLISH GIRTH BUCKLES ON THE FIRST AND THIRD BILLET STRAPS.
THE SADDLE PAD LOOP ATTACHES TO THE BILLET STRAPS.**



THE STIRRUP IRON IS SLID UP UNDER THE SKIRT ON THE UNDERNEATH PART OF THE STIRRUP LEATHER

THE STIRRUP LEATHERS ARE THEN PULLED THROUGH THE IRON

BE SURE THAT THE STIRRUP IRON IS RUN UP SO THAT IT IS SNUG UNDER THE SKIRT AND WILL NOT COME DOWN

STIRRUPS IRONS ARE PULLED DOWN FOR RIDING

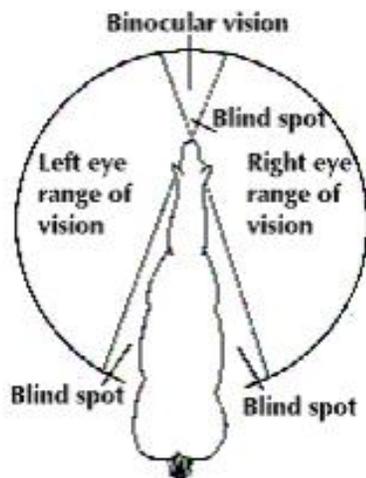
Before mounting, a final check of the girth should be made by your instructor.

HORSE BEHAVIOR

While people rely heavily on spoken language to communicate, horses use energy and body language to communicate. Lack of respect or understanding of horse's language can lead to frustrations for both human and horse. People are natural born predators; our eyes and minds can focus on a task or object with great intensity without being aware of everything in our surroundings. This has enabled humans to hunt down prey since prehistoric times and we use this ability to focus while we work and play. The horse is naturally born as a prey animal; because of this, horses have a heightened sense of awareness to their surroundings. They have the ability to see far more than we could even imagine. Their vision field is much greater than ours and their awareness of their environment is far beyond our capabilities. So how do we work with horses who are hyper aware of everything around them when we tend to focus in on one or two things at a time? When we go into the horse's world, and communicate with their body language, we will gain respect first and trust will follow. This seems very unnatural for us as predators, at first, but with practice we will overcome the language barrier. We need to understand that horses have evolved a language and a hierarchy within the herd. Humans naturally want to pull horses along and dominate over them as if they were dogs (another predator). While that works with dogs it erodes respect and trust with horses. The horse is a prey animal, they communicate to each other with body language and energy.

Note: The pictures in the manual were taken in the same 30-minute session with the same horse leader and horse. The only difference was the horse leader's use of her body language to communicate.

In this first picture the horse leader is looking back, twisting her core (belly button) toward the horse's face and dragging the horse along with the lead rope. When a horse leader pulls on the lead rope they are acting like a predator and the horse doesn't see them as a leader of their herd. There is absolutely no chance for the horse leader to gain respect and trust; consequently it actually erodes trust and respect immediately. To compound the situation, the leader is also putting all her core energy and intense eye energy right at the horse's face. As prey animals, horses instinctually know that predators concentrate on their faces and this will further restrict their forward movement. Notice the horse's shoulders, neck and barrel are stiff. This picture does not induce a feeling of harmony between horse leader and horse; what are your thoughts?



This picture shows the horse leader at the head of the horse, looking ahead, stepping and keeping her core out of the horse's face. The lead rope is held in the right hand between 4-12" from the halter snap. There should be no tension in the lead rope, so the horse's head moves freely. The leader's right hand holds the remaining part of the lead rope, being careful not to coil the lead rope around the hand.

The horse leader has a shorter hold on the lead rope which increases connection to the horse. Holding the lead rope short enables you to block the horse from looking away from you or turning into you. Take a look at the horse's body language in this photo. The horse's head is level, her shoulder is soft and her tail is relaxed not tucked close to the rump. All of these signs indicate that the horse leader is communicating effectively with the horse. The horse looks relaxed and willingly following the horse leader's directions as the horse leader is turning the horse to the right. If you add all this up you could safely conclude, the horse respects and trusts its leader.



Now that we know about horse behavior, let's look at "TROT's Way" with horses.

'The TROT Way'

Let's break down horse language and see what we are unintentionally saying to our horses. Then we will learn how to be intentional with our body language. As mentioned previously, horse language is based on prey behavior which includes pushes and blocks.

Let's begin with the halt...



In Example 1, notice how the horse's front legs are staggered, (the left is behind the right). The horse is telling us that it plans on standing for a very short time and will soon try to walk off.



In Example 2 the horse has its front feet squared up, (side by side), the horse is now telling us that it plans on standing for a long time and will be less likely to walk off. Example 2 is the correct "Halt Position" for stopping in class. The horses absolutely need to be in this "Halt Position" while mounting and dismounting.

Let's now look at the "Back Up" from the correct "Halt Position." Remember pulling on the horse stiffens the body and erodes respect and trust. So we need to use our core energy and a block to correctly "Back Up" the horse.

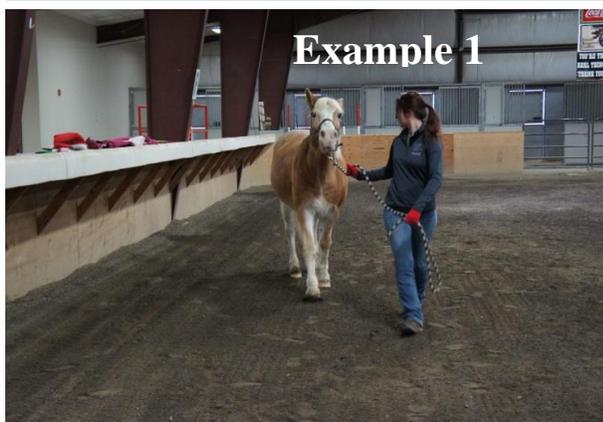


In Example 1 the horse leader is pulling on the lead rope to back the horse. The horse is stiff and is bracing against the horse leader. The horse leader is also not using her core to ask the horse to back up.



Example 2 shows the horse leader holding the lead rope taut, (not pulling), to block the horse from moving forward and then using her right hand to create a push that is moving the horse backwards. Also her core energy is pointing at the horse's chest and shoulder which communicates to the horse, "I want you to back." Notice the horse's body language; the head is level, body is soft (including its tail), and feet are moving backwards.

Next we will learn how to move forward or “Walk On.” The most important thing to remember when asking for forward motion from your horse is **Do Not Pull** on the lead rope.



In Example 1 the horse leader is pulling the horse and looking over her right shoulder. The eye energy of the horse leader is directed at the horse’s face and the horse leader’s core is twisted towards the horse’s face creating a block. The horse leader is pulling to move forward while blocking the forward energy with her



In example 2 the horse leader is holding the rope forward but not pulling (very important difference), looking over her left shoulder and reaching back with her left hand to ask the horse to move forward. Position yourself between the ear and the shoulder area of the horse. The energy of the horse leader’s left hand and swinging the tail of the rope towards the girth area asks the horse “Walk On” from their haunches. Notice the horse leader’s hips are facing forward and moving in the desired direction of travel, thus encouraging the horse to move off straight. The horse must walk at the pace directed by the leader. The horse’s body language is soft and relaxed.

Turning into the horse:

Now that we can “Halt,” “Back Up,” and “Walk On” let us learn to turn the horse. There are two ways to change direction gradually. The first is to turn into the horse and the second is to turn away from the horse. Again we must not pull when we want to turn. Instead hold the lead rope taut and use the lead rope to tell the horse where not to go or i.e. “block the horse.”



Example 1 shows the horse leader pulling the halter and lead rope to the right while her body language (hips, core & shoulders) is directed away from the horse, which tells the horse to come towards her not away from her. Can you see why this would confuse the horse?



In Example 2, the horse leader is using the lead rope to block the horse from touching her. The Horse leader's hips are slightly turned into the direction she is traveling. Look carefully at the legs of the horse leader and the horse. Notice that they have their weight planted on their left leg and both are prepared to pick up the right leg. They are in rhythm together. The horse's facial expression is soft, and the body is bending.

Turning away from the horse:



In Example 1, the Horse leader is pulling the lead rope while bracing her body against the horse's head to increase the pull. The Horse leader is looking at the horse's face, increasing the eye energy that predators use, and her whole body is stiff. A stiff body to a horse means there is something to worry about, something to fight or flee from. The horse is extending its neck to an uncomfortable point because the horse leader is pulling on the lead rope. So instead of moving forward by engaging from the haunches the horse is being dragged and is falling on its forehead, (leaning too much on its front feet,) which inhibits movement and may cause the horse to stumble.



In Example 2, the horse leader is relaxed. She is holding her lead rope, to "block" the horse from going the wrong way, but not pulling on it. The horse and the leader are in rhythm with each other's front feet stepping forward together. The horse leader is pointing her core where she wants to go and has her head turned to keep her horse in her peripheral vision to make sure the horse is following her. The horse's tail and ears are relaxed, the body is bent and the facial expression is soft. Overall this picture tells us that the horse is happy with the leader.

Maintaining space at the halt:



In Example 1, the horse leader is using a loose rope to show us how to ask a horse to turn away from us. Notice the horse leader's hip is pushed forward into the horse and the horse leader is looking at the horse. However, the horse leader's core is still facing forward. To turn the core into the horse's face would be disrespectful. And the horse simply looks away from the horse leader.



When the horse leader tips her hip back the horse instantly turns into her and shows interest in approaching her. The horse leader could enhance her technique by pulling her belly button in, rounding her back and the horse would feel even more welcomed in.

These tips are important so that we don't accidentally welcome the horses in to our space where they can rub, nip or push us around. If we invite them in and then pull or jerk on the lead rope to move them out of our space we are sending mixed signals. *Remember*, this erodes respect and trust and may initiate a horse's need to take leadership, by pushing us around. Do you feel like a team when the horse is pushing you around?

How to tell if your horse is trying to block you and how to quickly establish communication with your horse:



10-15 minutes before your rider mounts, go into the arena to establish communication with your horse by practicing; first get your horse to “Walk On”, stop and see if the horse tries to cross its face, neck or shoulder in front of you, if the horse does try to cross in front of you, they intend to block you from moving forward. In essence they are asking if you are a leader. If you then pull the lead rope to move them away from you, you have told the horse your leadership is not to be trusted.

Instead, turn your core away from the horse (without moving your feet) so they cannot block your belly button. Then “Walk On” and stop again and repeat until your horse is not confused by your body language. They block your core and you move your core so they cannot block. In this picture the horse is unable to block the horse leader’s core.



In this picture, the horse leader has established leadership and the horse stopped directly next to the horse leader. The horse is standing square and is relaxed and waiting for further directions. The horse leader is very neutral with her body language so that the horse does not turn its head away or into the leader.



MOUNTING & DISMOUNTING PROCEDURES

MOUNTING

At the Block – Leaders

- Leaders wait until the instructor asks you to bring the horse toward the mounting area.
- Before bringing the horse into the block, stop, get into the halt position, and wait for the instructor to check the equipment and tighten the girth – **step back from the horse for this.**
- After the equipment is checked, remain in the halt position and walk carefully backwards, slowly guiding the horse between the mounting ramp and the block.
- Your hand position on the lead rope changes as you bring the horse into the mounting area. When you are in front of and facing the horse, your thumb/first finger will point up to the horse, excess rope comes out the little finger side. Give the horse some space and expect them to respect your space.
- Keep an eye on your horse's shoulders and the stirrups to make sure nothing gets caught on the block.
- Keep the horse as quiet as possible. Stand directly in front of the horse and be alert at all times; do not allow anyone to distract you from the horse during this time.
- Do not hold the bit or the halter! This could cause the horse to pull back or throw his head. Make the horse responsible for standing politely. If need be, put gentle pressure on a lead/rein to remind them of their job.
- To ensure the rider is safely on and ready - wait for rider and/or instructor command - before moving forward in the arena.
- Stop and allow instructor another tack check after rider is on.

At the Block – Side Walkers

- If the rider is not stepping into the stirrup on the near side, the side walker may need to assist in bringing the rider's right leg over the horse so the rider doesn't bump the horse.
- If the rider is stepping into the stirrup on the near side, then side walkers can assist on the off side by pressing down on the stirrup (equal downward pressure on off side stirrup equal to near side pressure on stirrup) while the rider mounts, and guiding the rider's foot into the stirrup.
- As the rider settles into the saddle, check to make sure that the rider's pant leg is in place and give it a gentle tug into place.

After leaving the mounting area, the leader will stop the horse in the center of the arena so that adjustments to the stirrups can be made, and the instructor can tell the side walkers the best way to support the rider.

DISMOUNTING

In the Arena

- The horses will line up in the center of the arena. Be sure to watch your **safety pacing!** (Two horse lengths apart).
- The instructor will dismount the riders one by one.
- The riders then exit the arena with at least one side walker, one at a time.
- **Do not lead the horses from the arena until all riders have dismounted and the instructor excuses the class.**
- The horse is taken back to the stall, untacked, and groomed. (First check the Rider List to see if horse is used in next class.)

At the Block

- Some riders dismount back to the mounting block or ramp.
- The horse is brought back into the mounting area – the same as if the rider were getting on.

AFTER CLASSES

- The rider will dismount with the help of the instructor.
- The leaders and side walkers will take the horse back to the stall. Check to see if the horse is used in the next class. If not, you can remove and put away the tack and equipment.
- Volunteers clean the horse's feet and groom him. Blanket the horse if necessary (be sure horse isn't needed in the next class).
- Lead horse into turnout and have him face you as you remove the horse's halter. Hang up lead ropes and halters on stall door.
- Make sure the stall door is shut and pinned and/or the gates are securely closed.
- If appropriate, have the rider help put away tack and equipment.
- An extra step that is very helpful is to wipe down all the equipment – the saddle, the leather of the bridle and rinse the bit.

CHECKLIST

MOUNTING

- Bend your knees, not your back
- Have a wide stance (at least if not greater than hip width apart) with one leg a little in front of the other to provide a stable base of support
- Keep hand placement in appropriate locations, be careful where your hands are to support the rider (no hands-on butts or in between thighs or wrapped around under a rider's armpits)
- Allow for as much independence as possible, the riders may be able to help you get them down
- Use gravity as your friend and use the horse's body to help you
- Stay close to your rider
- Move slowly and stay in control
- Stay relaxed and ask for help if you are not sure
- Walk through the mount/dismount verbally with rider and volunteers before performing so everyone does their part correctly (the rider can play a part in telling the volunteers what they need as well)
- Keep in mind the dignity and personal space of the rider, put yourself in their shoes with each mount/dismount you do

Block Mount

- Rider stands on ground, leader brings horse into mount area
- Once horse is halted, standing square, and the leader is standing in the halt position, instructor brings rider up onto block
- Rider uncrosses stirrups (may need instructor or offside volunteer help)
- Rider holds both reins in left hand, left hand on the pommel, right on the cantle or pommel
- Rider (with instructor assistance if necessary) brings left foot up to rest in stirrup in correct position, stirrup on ball of foot
- Offside volunteer should place some weight downwards as rider mounts pulling on the stirrup leather, not the stirrup, to help keep saddle centered as rider mounts
- Instructor uses left hand to stabilize rider body and uses the right hand to help guide the rider's right leg over the horse's back
- Rider steps up into left stirrup, swinging right leg over the horse's back (careful not to drag right foot on the horse's rump)
- Offside volunteer should help guide the rider's right foot over the back and into right stirrup
- Rider organizes reins in both hands

- Rider has both feet evenly in or out of the stirrups (if one foot in and one foot out rider will be off balance making horse uncomfortable and rider vulnerable)
- Instructor or rider checks with volunteers and rider to make sure that everyone is ready to move forward
- Rider asks horse to walk on, leader steps into the leading position, offside volunteer and instructor walk next to rider doing a thigh or ankle hold if necessary.

Ramp Mount

- Instructor brings rider up the ramp, waits at the back of the ramp until horse has come in to the Ramp
- Only people assisting with the mount and trained to do so should be on the mounting ramp
- Offside volunteer stands on the offside block
- Once horse is halted in the ramp, standing square, and the leader is standing in the halt position, the instructor can guide the rider up to the edge of the ramp
- Rider uncrosses stirrups (may need instructor or offside volunteer help)
- Rider bends at the waist and places both hands on the pommel of the saddle
- Instructor uses left hand to stabilize rider's body and uses the right hand to guide the right leg over the horse's back
- Rider does not use stirrup at the ramp unless stirrup is at least 6 inches above the ramp surface
- Rider then swings right leg over the horse's back (careful not to drag right foot on the horse's rump)
- Offside volunteer takes rider's leg once in the air and helps guide it to the other side of the horse
- Rider sits down slowly and gently onto the saddle
- Instructor bends the rider's left leg, making sure that it does not get caught between the horse and the ramp or drags on the ramp, right leg may do the same to help keep the rider balanced
- Rider organizes reins (many need instructor or volunteer help and some riders may not hold reins at all)
- Instructor checks with volunteers and rider to make sure that everyone is ready to move forward
- Rider asks horse to walk on, leader backs out of the ramp for 3-4 steps until instructor is off the ramp steps then move into the leading position, offside volunteer walks next to rider doing either a thigh or ankle hold
- Instructor straightens the rider's leg while walking down the steps or after halting to adjust and settles into either a thigh or ankle hold until halted to adjust stirrups

DISMOUNTING

Traditional

- Leader stands in the halt position in front of the horse
- Rider places reins up on horse's neck
- Rider rests both hands on horse's neck
- Rider takes both feet out of the stirrups
- Instructor uses left hand to stabilize rider's body, uses the right hand to help guide the leg over the horse's back (careful not to drag right foot on the horse's rump), offside volunteer may also help guide the rider's leg over the horse's back
- Rider leans forward over horse's neck, turning his or her head to the right, swinging the right leg over the horse's back
- Instructor keeps the left hand on the rider's waist and catches the front of the rider's right knee, slowly bending to help guide the rider to the ground
- Rider stands and can take a step back from the horse

Leg Over Crest

- Leader stands in the halt position in front of the horse
- Rider places reins down on horse's neck and they must be moved up the neck to right behind the horse's ears, ensuring they do not get caught on the rider's foot as it comes over the neck
- Rider takes both feet out of the stirrups
- Instructor bends the left leg up a bit, then places the right hand on the rider's waist
- Offside volunteer helps bring the riders leg up over the crest of the horse's mane (note: another volunteer may be needed to help support the rider's back)
- Instructor will take over guiding the leg once on the left side of the horse's mane
- Once the rider is sitting on the saddle with both legs on the left side, the offside volunteer supports the rider's hips to keep them from going backwards
- At the same time, the instructor guides the rider's body as it twists around so that the chest slides over the saddle
- Rider lands on the ground facing the horse

HORSE LEADER TRAINING

Becoming a horse leader is a fun part of volunteering at TROT. If you are interested in becoming a horse leader:

1. You must show commitment by having volunteered as a side walker for a minimum of one session unless given special permission from Equine Director.
2. Read over this manual thoroughly and then attend the next Horse Leader Training.
3. First responsibility is the horse, but a Leader must also be constantly aware of the rider's needs, the Instructor's directions and any potential hazards in or around the arena.

Be mindful that Horse Leader training is intended to give everyone a chance to further their horsemanship skills.

Horse leaders are expected to come to the barn approximately 20-30 minutes before the lesson starts to get the horse ready. It is a good idea to plan to come and work the different horse independently of the classes to get to know them and practice the techniques outlined below.

Horse Leader Rules

"We are here for our riders, but we must do no harm to our horses."

Please remember, regardless of your experience with horses, it is imperative to adhere to the "TROT's way" of handling our therapy horses, for consistency and safety, which may differ greatly from the way you handle your own horses.

1. Check the daily schedule **before** you begin. This will tell you which horses to prepare, what equipment to use, and if there is any rider change.
2. Groom and tack the horse; some riders may assist when appropriate. (See tack list or ask instructor).
3. Keep noise and tension levels to a minimum in the barn aisle and arena. No yelling, running, or sudden movements around the horses or mounting area. No obscene or discriminatory language.
4. Backpacks, purses, or other personal items should be left in your vehicle. TROT will not be held responsible for loss of personal belongings. Help keep areas clear to avoid tripping or blocking safe passage at all times. Keep aisle-way and tack room clear of unnecessary items.
5. **No cell phones while horse leading!** Leave them in your car or in the barn office with the ringer off. This is imperative to keep a safe class environment.

6. **No dogs are allowed on the property.** Not even in your car; please leave your beloved pets at home. They may scare a horse and cause injury to a rider, volunteer, staff or horse.
7. Gather needed tack and supplies **before** removing a horse from their stall and taking them into the tie block area. Never tie to the fence, use the tie blockers. If tacking up in the stall use proper tie.
8. Be alert and attentive to the horse you are working with and the other horses around you. Watch their body language for any signs of discomfort or distress.
9. If you stand directly behind or in front of a horse, make sure they are aware of your presence. Please do not go under (neck or belly) the horse at any time.
10. **Absolutely NO HITTING or abusive actions towards the horses shall be permitted. The person seen/reported abusing the horse will be immediately pulled from their position and could be terminated from the program. If anyone is seen hitting a horse in the HEAD, the horse has to be immediately pulled from the program for a minimum of one week for a mental evaluation and the abuser will immediately be dismissed.**
11. Always use a lead rope attached to the halter when leading the horses. Never lead them by the halter even for short distances.
12. Always use a bit clip to attach the lead rope to the bit. Never attach the lead rope directly to a bit.
13. Mounting & Dismounting:
 - a. Mounting
 - i. **In the Arena/At the Block**
 - DO NOT EVER ATTEMPT TO MOUNT OR TO DISMOUNT THE RIDER BY YOURSELF, always listen for instructor direction for each rider during mount/dismount.
 - The Instructor will always initiate each rider's mount/dismount.
 - Position yourself in the halt position; in front of the horse and slightly to one side, and keep the horse steady while the rider mounts.
 - When cued by instructor, proceed out of mounting area, through the gate to the arena and wait for tack check and instructions for warm up.
 - ii. **At the Ramp**
 - Lead the horse around the arena to warm up until called to ramp by instructor.
 - Wait for Instructor to perform a final and third tack check.

- Do not load the horse in the Ramp until you have been asked to by the Instructor.
- When loading the horse stand 45 degrees off the front of the horse and walk backwards and ask the horse to walk 1 step at a time into the ramp, looking at their ride side girth area.
- Stand 45 degrees in front of the horse while rider is mounting and walk backwards one step at a time when exiting the ramp until volunteers are safely off of the ramp 2-3 strides away from rail towards middle of arena then halt for tack check.
- Follow instructors' directions for class.

b. Dismounting

i. **In the Arena**

- The horses will line up in the middle of the arena. Be sure to watch your safety spacing (at least 1 horse length 360°).
- **The Instructor will provide direction for dismounting each rider.** When appropriate, the rider will help put their stirrups up and lead their horse back to tie block area.
- The horse is taken back to the tie area, un-tacked, groomed and returned to the stall.

ii. **At the Ramp**

- Some riders dismount back at the mounting ramp.
- The horse is brought back up to the ramp– the same as if the rider were getting on.

14. Use the correct “Safety Spacing” of at least one horse length (360°) whenever you are leading a horse whether you have a rider mounted or not.

15. Do not allow horses to go nose-to-nose no matter what the situation is!

16. Consider the placement of the sidewalkers to make sure there is enough room along the rail and around obstacles for them to pass safely.

17. Do not execute an instruction for the rider before he/she has had time to process the information and try to comply – think 3-5 seconds.

18. When saddling the horses, slowly tighten the cinch, just enough so the saddle won't fall off. Do not over tighten the cinch, the instructor will check and tighten the cinch before & after mounting.

19. Loose Horse: If a horse gets loose in the arena or in the pasture, please stay calm and do the following:
 - a. Halt!
 - b. Do not leave your horse to catch loose horse.
 - c. Listen to the Instructor for further guidance for the specific situation.

20. Seizures
 - a. Halt!
 - b. Horse Leader's priority is to focus on the horse and use all the techniques in this manual and the training to keep the horse calm and relaxed.

21. In the Event Rider Falls off Horse
 - a. Yell "Instructor".
 - b. Horse leader leads horse far away from rider.
 - c. Other horse leaders shall lead horses and riders away and perform halts.
 - d. Instructor will assess the fallen rider and may have side walkers assist.

22. Fire, Earth Quake, severe Thunder Storm
 - a. Focus on your horse and keep your horse as calm as you can.
 - b. Listen for instructor prompts for emergency dismount.
 - c. Do your best to move horse away from the rider(s).
 - d. After people have exited the arena proceed to the designated meeting area.

These rules are set in place to physically and emotionally protect our horses well-being and to optimize their involvement in our program. Our horses are vital to the success of our clients. These rules are set in place to create a safe environment for everyone involved, and to ensure our horses physical, mental and emotional health as a part of our team, as well as insure the safety of our riders and volunteers, including you.

SIDEWALKER RESPONSIBILITIES

You are directly responsible for the rider!

- Your instructor will tell you the best place to be to support your rider. Side walkers are extremely valuable and you may be moved to a rider who needs your help.
- Until your rider is ready to mount, you will wait outside the arena. When using the mounting area, you may be asked to stand on the off side block as the rider mounts, then you will walk with them as they leave the mounting area.
- Important! Stay within arm's reach of your rider at all times. **Do not leave your rider at any time unless instructed by the instructor.** If you become tired, or if you must stop, ask the leader to bring the horse into the center of the arena so that you can safely stop and get assistance from the instructor. One person must secure the rider.
- Keep your hands and arms free at all times. Do not walk with your hands in your pockets or arms crossed.
- The instructor will tell you how to support your rider (i.e. thigh hold, ankle hold, or none). Try to avoid wrapping your arm around the rider's waist; this could throw off their balance.
- Establish one person to communicate with the rider. Learn how your rider best communicates (information about each rider is in the office). Talking to the rider must be kept to a bare minimum; however you may need to repeat the directions of the instructor.
- If the equipment needs to be adjusted (i.e. saddle, stirrups, etc.) let the instructor know, and she will take care of it. **Do not remove the rider from the horse.** Go into the center of the arena for any adjustments, questions or problems.
- If the rider is showing signs of wanting to get off the horse and is determined to do so, get help from the instructor. Whatever you are doing, keep doing it until the instructor says otherwise.
- **Be careful not to lean or rest your elbow on the horses back as that area is very sensitive.**
- Listen for directions from the instructor.
- You have the right to let the rider know when he/she is being inappropriate (i.e. pulling hair, kicking, using inappropriate language, etc.). Use the word **"NO"** and ask him/her not to repeat the inappropriate action. Let the instructor know immediately.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask. We are here to help you help our riders.

EFFECTIVE SIDEWALKING

Sidewalkers are the ones who normally get the most hands-on duties in therapeutic riding. They are directly responsible for the rider. As such, they have the capability to either enhance or detract from the lesson.

In the arena, the sidewalker should help the student focus his/her attention on the instructor. Try to avoid unnecessary talking with either the rider or other volunteers. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone, and to riders who already have perceptual problems it can be overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one student, one should be the “designated talker” to avoid this situation.

When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process it. If the instructor says “Turn to the right toward me”, and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say “Right” to reinforce the command. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they’re just not paying attention.

It’s important to maintain a position by the rider’s knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy. There are two ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most commonly used is the “arm-over-the-thigh” hold. The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle (flap or pommel depending on the horse’s size) with the hand closest to the rider. Then the fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider’s thigh. Be careful that the elbow doesn’t accidentally dig into the rider’s leg.

Sometimes pressure on the thigh can increase and/or cause muscle spasticity, especially with the cerebral palsy population. In this case, the “therapeutic hold” may be used. Here, the leg is held at the joints, usually the knee and/or ankle. Check with the instructor/therapist for the best way to assist. In the (unlikely) event of an emergency, the arm-over-thigh hold is the most secure.

Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider’s waist. It is tempting, especially when walking beside a pony with a young or small rider, but it can offer too much and uneven support. At times, it can even pull the rider off balance and make riding more difficult. Encourage your students to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities.

If the instructor chooses to use a safety belt on your rider, be very careful not to pull down or push up on it. As your arm tires it’s hard to avoid this, so rather than gripping the handle firmly, just touch your thumb and finger together around it. This way you are in position to assist the rider if needed, but you will neither give unneeded support nor pull him off balance. When you are ready for relief for your arm, ask the leader to move into the center to stop and trade sides, one at a time, with the other sidewalker. (Instructors: if your rider has serious enough balance problems to warrant a safety belt, you should probably be using two sidewalkers.)

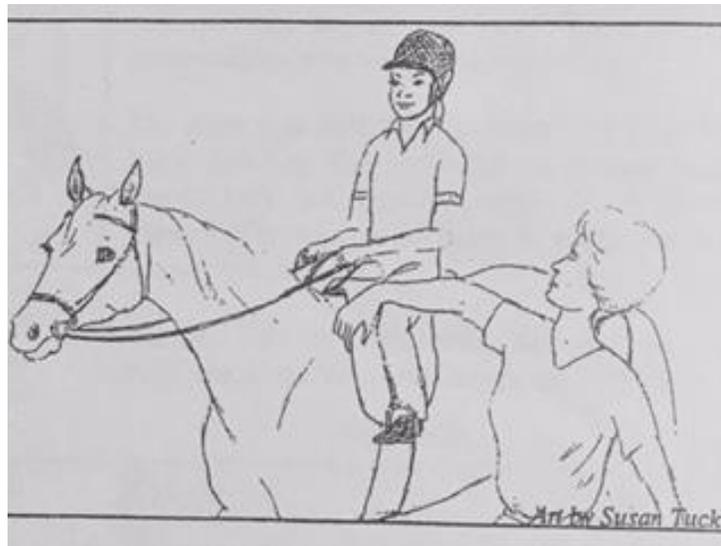
During exercises, pay attention to your student. Sometimes volunteers forget that the riders are to do the exercises and the sidewalkers are to reinforce and assist. The same applies to games. Don’t get so competitive that your rider doesn’t get to use his skills because you do it for him in an all-out effort to win. The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as

normal as he can possible be. You are right at his side, so help the instructor to challenge him to the best of his ability.

Without you, these programs couldn't exist. We thank you for all you give and challenge you to be the best you can be.

SIDEWALKING POINTERS

- Maintain your position by the rider's knee. If you are too far forward or backward, you won't be in position to assist in an emergency.
- When using the arm-over-the-thigh hold (see illustration), grip the front of the saddle (flap or pommel) with the hand closest to the rider. Gently rest your forearm on the rider's thigh.
- If the arm-over-the-thigh hold is too uncomfortable for the rider (be sure you don't dig into the rider's thigh with your elbow), try the therapeutic hold. Simply hold the leg at the joint, usually the knee or ankle. Check with your instructor or therapist on which position is best.
- Don't engage in unnecessary talk with either the rider or other volunteers.
- Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider waist. This can offer either too much or uneven support. You may even pull the rider off balance.



GLOSSARY OF MEDICAL CONDITIONS

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter in a therapeutic riding setting. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability. Rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how therapeutic riding can be beneficial.

Arthritis

Is described as an inflammatory disease of the joints.

Types: Osteo, rheumatoid and juvenile rheumatoid.

Characteristics: Pain, lack of mobility, deformity and loss of strength.

Benefits (of therapeutic riding): Gentle rhythmic movement to promote joint mobility and relieve pain.

Autism

A developmental neurological condition varying in severity, characterized by a difficulty in social communication and interaction.

Characteristics: Could include unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactive; passive; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking or mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmentally delayed; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal and resistance to change.

Asperger's

A high functioning form of autism, usually with difficulty in social interactions.

Benefits: Interactions in a group setting stimulates interest away from self and toward others and the horses. Postural and verbal stimulation.

Cerebral Palsy

A broad term that describes a group of neurological disorders. It is a lifelong condition that affects the communication between the brain and the muscles. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic: Hyper tonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid: Extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

Ataxic: Poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements and are often described as having a "rag doll" appearance.

Benefits: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems: Seizures, hearing defects, visual defects, general sensory impairment, perceptual problems, communication problems, mental retardation, emotional disturbance and learning disabilities.

Cerebral Vascular Accident (CVA or Stroke)

Hemorrhage in brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and left on same side of body. May cause mental impairment, impair speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Development Disabilities (DD)

A general term applied to children functioning two or more years below grade level.

Characteristics: Varied, but can include slow physical, motor and social development.

Benefits: Provides arena for success, opportunity for sport and recreation and stimulates body awareness.

Down Syndrome

A genetic condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, possibly resulting in mental retardation and/or developmental delay.

Characteristics: Usually hypotonic, have hyper mobile joints and can be prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, muscle tone and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia and schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness and provides appropriate social outlet.

Epilepsy

Abnormal electrical activity of the brain marked by seizures with altered consciousness.

Types and Characteristics: Absent seizure and stops talking.

Petit Mal: Brief loss of consciousness with loss of postural tone. May have jerky movements and blank expression.

Grand Mal: Loss of consciousness, postural control and usually proceeded by an aura. (Note: an active seizure disorder is a contraindication for horseback riding.)

Hearing Impairment

Congenital or acquired hearing loss varying from mild to profound.

Characteristics: Communication difficulties – may use lip reading, finger spelling or sign language. Often phase out and have attention deficits.

Benefits: Stimulates self-confidence, balance, posture and coordination. It also provides appropriate social outlets and interactions.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise typical or average intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated and immature.

Benefits: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

Mental Retardation (MD)

Lack of or decreases ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.

Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas and short attention span.

Benefits: Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40-year-old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Fatigues easily. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Associated Problems: Visual impairment, emotional lability and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Muscular Dystrophy (MD)

Deficiency in muscle nutrition with degeneration of skeletal muscle. Hereditary disease that mainly affects males.

Characteristics: Progressive muscular weakness fatigues easily and sensitive to temperature extremes.

Benefits: Provides opportunity for group activity, may slow progressive loss of strength, stimulates postural and trunk alignment and allows movement free of assistive devices.

Associated Problems: Lordosis and respiratory infection.

Polio

Infectious viral disease.

Characteristics: Flaccid paralysis, atrophy of skeletal muscle and often with deformity.

Benefits: Strengthens non-paralyzed muscles and stimulates posture.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry and strengthens trunk muscles.

(Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding.)

Spina Bifida

A congenital failure of vertebral arch closure with resultant damage to the spinal cord.

Characteristics: Varying degrees of paralysis of the lower limbs coupled with sensory loss.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, improves muscle strength and self-image.

Associated Problems: Hydrocephalus, incontinence, urinary tract infection, lordosis, scoliosis and hip dislocations.

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury – can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intra-cranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

Visual Impairment

Moderate to total loss of sight.

Characteristics: Insecure posture, lack of visual memory, anterior center of gravity, fearfulness and developmental delay.

Benefits: Stimulates spatial awareness, proprioception, posture and coordination. Provides social outlet, structured risk taking and freedom of movement.

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