



Horse Handler

Consistency is vital for the emotional well-being of our horses.



Mounting Ramp

1. Wait with your horse in the grooming area until the instructor or team leader let you know your horse is next.
2. Once you are instructed to move into the mounting area, lead the horse and wait opposite the ramp until the student tells the horse “walk on.” (Always relay the student’s voice command to the horse.)
3. Walk forward until you get to the ramp, then turn to face the horse and back-in until the horse is even with the instructor and student.
 - Remember to give your horse clear signals that a “whoa” is about to happen by giving half halts.
 - Your horse should be standing square and balanced before the rider gets on.
 - Be alert for nipping when the rider is mounting. Do NOT crowd your horse.
 - Make sure you keep your horse’s head up and facing forward.
4. When your rider tells the horse “walk on”, repeat the command to your horse and start backing up, hugging the ramp until you are clear of it.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Each time your horse is in the “whoa” position, no matter how briefly, stand facing the horse in front of it, taking a half-step to one side. This will block any unwanted forward movement but still allow him to see you fully.

Leading Horses in Lessons

Walking

1. Lead staying even with the horse’s ears so that you can keep an eye on the horse’s face and ears to make sure he’s happy. Remember that you are leading the horse not the other way around!
2. Know where you are going.
3. Hold the lead rope 12-18 inches from the snap to allow your horse free head movement – as long as he is behaving and maintaining the pace you want.
4. Hold the excess rope in the opposite hand with the lead in a “figure eight” with your hand holding the middle of the “eight”.
5. Ask your horse for a “working walk” unless otherwise instructed.
 - If your horse is too slow, the student will not get the full benefit of the horse’s movement.
 - Do not make sharp turns unless the instructor specifically asks you to.
 - Slow, wide turns are best.
 - Always turn or circle toward the inside of the arena, never toward the rail.
 - Watch your feet. Healing with Horses Ranch horses will not try to step on you, but they might by accident.



6. Relay the rider's commands to the horse in a calm and pleasant yet assertive voice and give the horse plenty of pats and praise during the lesson. A little praise helps everybody maintain a good attitude.

Trotting:

If you're called upon to trot the horse, hold the lead rope 12-18 inches from the snap to allow your horse free head movement – as long as he is behaving and maintaining the pace you want.

1. Hold the excess rope in the opposite hand with the lead in a "figure eight" with your hand holding the middle of the "eight".
2. Give 2 firm squeezes forward to let your horse know that a change is going to happen.
3. Ask your horse to "trot!" in an assertive voice and increase your energy and pace.
4. Do not look at your horse.
5. Stay next to its head and don't get out in front of him. When he begins to trot pick up a jog.
6. Be prepared to "half-halt" to control its pace. You want an easy jog.
7. To slow down, give a "half halt and tell your horse "walk" in a soothing tone.

Half-halts:

A half-halt is a pullback (like a gentle but firm handshake) and immediate release and is much more effective than a steady pull. You might be asked to do a series of half-halts as part of an exercise for the student's balance. The object is to interrupt the horse's forward movement briefly without fully stopping so that the student has to check their balance.

"Potty Breaks":

- If your horse needs to, allow it to stop for "potty breaks" during the lesson.
- If your horse stretches out to urinate, make sure the instructor has the student get up off the horses' back as much as possible to relieve pressure on the horse's lower back and kidneys. Once the horse's hind feet are back under it, the rider can gently sit back down.
- If YOU need a potty break, tell the Instructor! 😊

Arena Traffic Rules

Pass left shoulder to left shoulder (like cars), unless you need to be on the inside track for circling or other exercises. To avoid startling other horses in the arena, call out "Inside" or "Outside" to let the other Horse Handler know which track you intend to take.

Always maintain a distance of two horse lengths (or a large elephant) between your horse and other horses. If you are behind a slower horse, you can circle or cross the arena to find more space. It's better not to stop if at all possible.

If you need to stop for any reason, such as changing positions or making tack adjustments, pull in toward the center of the arena so you don't block any other horses working on the rail.



Group Lessons, Semi-Independent and Independent Riders

Semi-Independent Riders:

To allow a semi-independent rider to practice reining (at the instructor's request), give the horse a long lead line and walk next to the student's leg. Be ready to take control if safety becomes an issue.

Independent Riders:

If you are working with an independent rider, you'll stay attached to the horse while the rider warms up. Once the instructor decides the rider is ready for you to unhook the lead rope, stay close enough to take control if necessary but far enough away that the horse is obeying the student's commands. The instructor will let you know where he or she wants you to be.

Zone Defense:

In independent group lessons, Horse Handlers may practice "zone defense," in which you are stationed in a certain section of the arena and are responsible for any horse and rider that comes into your "zone."

Always be aware of where your horse is and what he's doing.

If a rider appears to be out of control, never reach for the horse's bridle to get him under control. Simply step closer to the fence to "shut the gate". Your body language is telling the horse to slow down.

Trail Rides

1. **NEVER** open a gate yourself while a student is mounted on your horse.
2. Make sure that you are paying attention to your surroundings and your horse's behaviors as horses will have more things to spook at out on the trail.

After the Lesson

The Dismount

1. Wait for the instructor to dismount the student.
2. As soon as you can after the rider dismounts, help the student or mentor SW to help the student run up the stirrups.
3. Mentor the student to remove tack and groom the horse after the lesson.

Un-tacking the Horse and Returning it to its Paddock

1. Mentor clients while removing all tack before putting a horse back in its paddock.
2. When taking a horse back to the paddock from the grooming area, you and the horse should face the gate before entering.



3. Open the gate and enter the paddock first followed by the horse. Make sure to not let any other horses out.
4. Close the gate
5. Remove the horse's halter and lead rope.
6. Exit paddock and close and latch the gate.
7. Hang the halter and lead rope on the gate.
8. Put all tack away in its correct location.

Things to Remember

Never leave your horse unattended.

If your horse is being particularly unpleasant, let an instructor or team leader know immediately.

If you get injured, report to a Healing with Horses Ranch staff member and fill out an "Incidence Report". These forms can be found in the main office.

If you are uncertain about anything, please ask.

Make sure you sign out in the front office before you leave - and feel really good about the work you have just done!