



Horse Leader

Presentation



# The Lesson Team

## TEAM LEADER

Tenured volunteer-responsible for supervising/coaching other volunteers during grooming, tacking, and in lessons

## Instructor

Responsible for teaching riders and supervising volunteers in the arena and barn

## HORSE LEADER

Responsible for grooming and tacking the horse before the lesson as well as leading and communicating with the horse before, during, and after the lesson, and then returning the horse to their stall at the end

## SIDEWALKERS

Responsible for the rider during the lesson



HORSE  
&  
RIDER

## SIDEWALKERS

Responsible for acting as coach and support for rider

# EMERGENCY INFORMATION

## *Spooked Horse*

Should a horse become frightened, sidewalkers should stay with their riders and apply the arm over thigh support hold. The horse leader will attempt to halt and calm the horse and try to stay with it. The sidewalkers should remain with their rider and maintain a supportive hold. Listen for, and follow all directions from the Instructor.

## *Loose Horse*

If a horse should become loose in the barn or the ring - **DO NOT** chase after the horse. If they feel you are a threat, they will keep running. Keep calm. The horse will eventually stop. The Instructor will give directions on who is to approach and catch the horse. If you are in a lesson with another team, as a sidewalker, calm your rider. If a horse becomes loose in the barn - do not chase - but warn others by announcing "**loose horse**". Get to a safe area out of the horse's path until the horse stops.

# HORSE LEADERS

Horse Leaders are responsible for controlling the horse before, during, and after the lesson, and returning them to their stall at the end.

Horse leaders should have the ability to:

1. Control a large animal (horse, pony, draft, or miniature)
2. Demonstrate a calm and gentle nature with animals
3. Show knowledge of the proper leading position
4. Walk for a minimum of fifty minutes and jog for short distances.

The proper position for the leader is to walk beside the horse or pony's head. DO NOT GET IN FRONT or TOO FAR BEHIND. You should never use the lead line to drag the horse forward. Take care to ensure the horse's head is not merely pushed up in the air since that may throw the rider off-balance. Also, do not let the horse's head get too low to the ground as this may pull the rider forward. Keep your hands away from the horse's mouth. Hold the lead line 12-18" away from the ring or buckle at the walk (keep a "smile" in your line). Hold the extra length of the lead in your opposite hand, but **NEVER wrap it around your hand, even in a big loop**. We do switch the side on which we lead the horses occasionally to accommodate their comfort.



# THE LEADER'S POSITION

Remember, just as the size of horses varies, so do their steps. With some horses, you will be able to walk faster than with others. Adjust your step to that of the horse so that you are not pulling him forward or holding him back.

No matter how slow the pony or horse you are leading is, the leader should not try and take the rider's place either by pulling the mount forward or turning or stopping the horse. It is the rider's responsibility to do as much as they can. The Instructor will point out to you when the rider needs assistance, and as you work with riders, you will start to get a feel of when to step in and help.

The rider should have complete freedom to use the reins correctly, be careful to ensure that the lead line does not run over the rider's reins; it must hang between the rider's reins.



# MOUNTING BLOCK AND RAMP

If you are going to lead a rider that has to mount from the ramp, pay close attention to the Instructor because they will tell you where to position the horse in the mounting area. **You will want to place the horse as close as possible to the side of the ramp on which the rider will be mounting.** Riders generally mount and dismount on the left side of the horse. It is your responsibility to keep the horse as quiet as possible while the rider mounts.



Stand slightly to the side but turn your body towards the horse's head, facing it with your right hand on the lead and your left hand on or near the horse's right shoulder (be aware of where your feet are near the horse's hooves). The instructor will inform you if you need to hold the halter during the mounting process. Use care and be alert to each mounting situation.

After your rider has mounted and before the stirrups are adjusted, the Instructor will ask you to move your horse forward a few steps to clear the mounting block, stop when told by the Instructor. They will adjust the girth and the rider's feet in the stirrups. At this time, you should face forward and assume your position at the head of the horse, then, the Instructor will let you know where to stand, or to walk around while the rest of the class is mounting.



# IN THE RING

Once the rider has mounted, the Instructor will tell you where to stand with the horse. Be sure to stay a **safe distance from the horse in front of you** (two horse lengths between you and the team/horse in front of you is a good gauge). As the class begins, instructions will be given to the student by name. Please wear your nametag at all times to allow them to learn your name.

It is tempting to turn around to talk with or assist your rider, but your responsibility is to pay attention to the horse and where you are going. Listen to the rider and sidewalkers for instructions or whether or not you need to assist with a specific maneuver.

## AT THE HALT

We ask you to stand at the side with your shoulders square and forward at the halt as this will keep the horse from moving forward, which is especially important while the riders are doing their exercises. Do not turn your body to face the horse. If you must look back, please turn your head and keep your body squarely facing forward. We use the halt as a “breather” for the horses; you should not hold their heads too tight (**do not “choke up” on the lead rope**). Allow the horse freedom to move its head around. Please do not rub and scratch the horse, as this may be a distraction to them during the lesson. Occasionally, the horse will need to walk around, but the Instructor will alert you to those situations.



# IN THE RING CONTINUED

## AT THE WALK

Many leaders forget that the riders may also have sidewalkers. Be aware not to get too close to the side of the ring, jumps, or other obstacles or you will not have room to fit through safely.

Though none of our animals are known to be kickers, all horses can kick if they feel pressured by a horse following too closely behind them. If your rider cannot maintain a safe distance, it is your job to do so. **If you have to make a turn suddenly for safety reasons – verbalize your intentions to your team** (the sidewalkers and rider) as a sudden turn can throw off a rider's balance, and sidewalkers need to be well aware of the imminent risk.

Do not assist in making turns unless directed by the Instructor, but if you see that your rider is getting into trouble and unable to follow directions given by the Instructor, it is your job to help. The sidewalker(s) should be prompting students to stay “tuned in” to their Instructor's directions.





# IN THE RING CONTINUED

## AT THE TROT

Often during a lesson, the students will be asked to trot. Since trotting is faster than walking, the leader must be more alert to the horse, rider, and surroundings. The Instructor will come over, if necessary, to give specific instructions to the student and you. Before starting the trot, be sure the rider and sidewalkers are ready.

The proper way to trot your horse is to start at a walk, ask your horse to walk on to gradually walk faster, then say TROT and begin to jog. Your horse will join you. If a horse is reluctant to trot, then, if you need to, use your lead rope to encourage them to trot, a gentle pull forward may help. Most of our horses are good at voice commands; however, some horses will need a little help. Do not look at the horse, but instead look where you are going. **DO NOT YANK ON THE LEAD OR APPLY CONSTANT PRESSURE.** If you are having trouble, your Instructor will assist. **DO NOT SMOOCH/make kissing sounds, this means CANTER.**



# IN THE RING CONTINUED

To transition your horse back down to a walk, tell your horse to walk, slow your pace, and your horse will join you. If they do not, then you can give a gentle pull back on your lead rope. Do not yank on the lead or apply constant pressure. Do not use your body to try and slow or stop your horse as it can lead to injury. You must do maneuvers in a straight line not to unseat the rider, transition smoothly, with no sudden stops or starts, and make sure the team is ready.



# IN THE RING CONTINUED

## DURING THE GAMES

Games are an integral part of every lesson, and the leader is an essential part of all games. The Instructor will give the riders and volunteers the rules of the games. The sidewalkers will need to watch the rider to see if they understand the directions. If there are no sidewalkers, the instructor will talk to the rider and get them ready for the game. Remember, it is the rider playing, allow the student to do as much as possible by themselves. We want everyone to enjoy the game but remember to not lose focus on safety. Make sure the horses remain at a safe distance apart from each other.

## DISMOUNTING

Unless otherwise specified, the Instructor will dismount the student. You will receive specific instructions on bringing your horse to the ramp, block, or remaining in the center of the ring. Once again, keep your mount quiet by standing slightly to the front and “turned in” towards the horse’s head while your rider dismounts.



# EMERGENCY SCENARIOS

## FALLS DO HAPPEN

Though falls are very rare, they can and do happen. If your rider falls, your only concern is the horse you are leading. The Instructor will take care of the student. If another rider falls and the horse gets loose, then **STOP IMMEDIATELY** and stand beside your horse. **NEVER LET GO OF YOUR HORSE** if possible. Do not panic if there is a fall. Your job is to stop and hold your horse. If the rider falls close to the horse and the horse stops, walk the horse a safe distance away from the rider to allow someone to attend to the rider.

## LOOSE HORSE

If a horse gets loose, **DO NOT CHASE THE HORSE**. A chased horse may run faster. They are prey animals, and they use flight as a defense. **All other leaders need to stop their horses** and remain still. When horses are scared, they will seek comfort and may go to another horse. Wait for further instructions from the Instructor.

# LEADING REMINDERS

## General Reminders

- Keep your attention on the horse.
- Follow the Instructor's directions; listen to sidewalkers/riders if assistance is needed.
- Improper leading can change the horse's movement, affecting their physical health and affecting what the rider is feeling.
- Horses have two blind spots, directly in front of and directly behind the body.
- Horses are protective of their personal space, do not lead too close behind or beside another horse.
- Horses can sense what you are feeling, so it is essential to stay calm.
- The rider should be doing the steering during lessons; however, you can support and help as needed.

## Leading "Do's":

- Use voice commands
- Walk beside the horse (about an arm's length away) at the head, squarely facing forward
- Look up and where you are going at all times
- Allow the horse to have free head and neck movement
- Maintain two horse-length's distance between other horses in the lesson
- Tune in to the horse's body language so you are able to know when something is going wrong

# LEADING REMINDERS CONTINUED

## Leading “Don’ts”

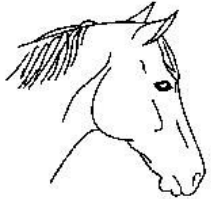
- Walk in front of and drag the horse to move faster (even at the trot)
- Turn suddenly or sharply; it will knock horse and rider off balance
- Assume that the rider is unable to control the horse; many of them can
- Look down at the ground, stare at the horse, or let your eyes wander in a "daydream"
- Wrap the lead line around your hand or let it hang past your knees/low to the ground
- Use your body to force the horse to move; instead use your shoulders to help steer the horse.



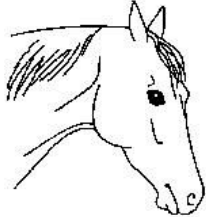
# HORSE BODY LANGUAGE

## Reading a Horse's Ears

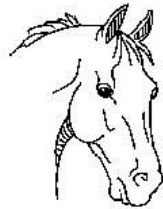
The horse's ears and actions are the key to his emotions. He can tell you what he is paying attention to and how he feels by the way he uses his ears and the way he acts. Following are some tips to his emotions.



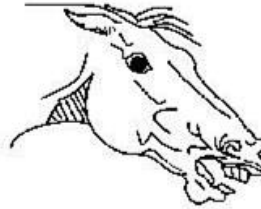
**Ears forward but relaxed**  
interested in what's in front of him



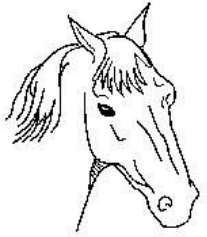
**Ears turned back but relaxed**  
listening to his rider or what's behind him



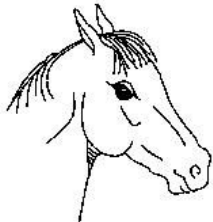
**Ears pointed stiffly forward**  
alarmed or nervous about what's ahead. Looking out for danger



**Ears flattened against neck**  
violently angry, in a fighting mood.  
May fight, bite or kick.



**Ears pointed left and 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, horse may be dozing.

## OTHER SIGNS YOU SHOULD NOTICE ARE:

- **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.

# HORSE TERMS YOU MAY HEAR

**Bedding (Shavings)** – Wood shavings used as a soft padding in the horse’s stall.

**Bell boots** (over reach boots) – Rubber bell shaped boots worn over the coronet and hoof to protect the horse’s front feet from overstepping (hitting) with the hind feet.

**Bit** – A piece of metal, rubber or plastic that goes into the horse’s mouth and attaches to the reins and the headstall.

**Bit Rings** – The rings on each side of the bit where the bit lead or reins attach.

**Bolting**- The horse makes a sudden move to run away.

**Bute** – A common medicine given to animals for pain and as an anti-inflammatory drug.

**Canter** – Three-beat gait, the second to fastest gait of a horse.

**Cavaletti** – Poles suspended on two crossbars or blocks. A very small jump.

**Change of Rein** (Change of hand) – change direction.

**Chewing on the Bit** – Can be viewed two ways: a good sign of relaxation and acceptance of the bit or a nervous habit.

**Colic** – Mild to severe pain in the digestive system of the horse.

**Contact** – The amount of “feel” in the reins linking the hands to the bit.

**Cribbing** – the horse anchors his teeth into a horizontal, fixed surface, arches neck, and inhales air. A bad habit due to boredom.

**Downward Transition** – Changing to a slower gait when riding.

# HORSE TERMS YOU MAY HEAR CONTINUED

**Farrier** – Cares for the horse's hooves (trimming and shoeing).

**Girth** – A strap that secures the saddle.

**Halter** – Used to lead a horse without a bit.

**Haunches** – The hindquarters of the horse.

**Lame** – The horse moves unevenly or limps.

**Lead Line** – A rope with which to lead a horse.

**Mounted** – Sitting on a horse.

**Near Side** – The left side of the horse.

**Off Side** – The right side of the horse.

**Over-Reach** – The horse's hind legs strike the forelegs while moving.

**Paddock** – A small enclosure near the stable.

**Pace** – Two beats to each stride with both legs on one side moving together.

**Posting** (Rising Trot) – The rising and descending of the rider with the rhythm of the trot.

**Schooling** – Training a horse for what he is intended to do.

**Seat** – The position a rider takes on a horse.



**Sitting Trot** – The rider sits deep in the saddle and maintains contact with the saddle while trotting.

**Tacking Up** – To put tack on a horse.

**Transition** – To change from one gait to another.

**Upward Transition** – Changing to a faster gait.

**Walk** – A four-beat gait.



Thank you for viewing the Horse  
Leader Training presentation! We  
are so excited that you are  
interested in joining our Horse  
Leader team!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to  
contact our volunteer department.

[volunteer@equikids.org](mailto:volunteer@equikids.org) | (757) 721-7350 | [www.equikids.org](http://www.equikids.org)