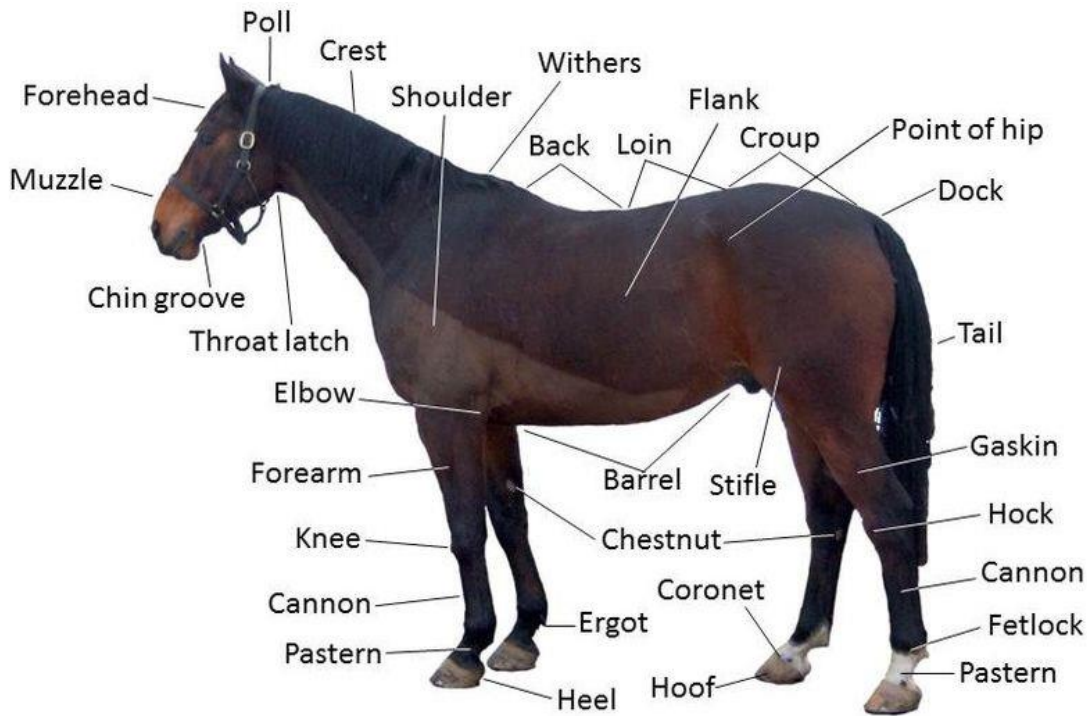


Equine Anatomy and Behavior Basics

Basic Equine Anatomy



Back: Begins at the end of the withers and is where a saddle sits on a horse.

Barrel: The middle of a horse where the ribcage is.

Cannon: The area on the horse between the hock and the fetlock, sometimes called a cannon bone since there is a type of horse bit called a cannon.

Chestnut: A small sometimes horn-like callus on the inside of a horse's legs.

Chin Groove: The part of the horse's head behind the lower lip and chin.

Heel: The middle part of the hoof is called the heel on a horse.

Hock: The joint on the hind leg of a horse that acts like a human ankle.

Hoof: The foot of the horse or the part of the foot that touches the ground.

Knee: On the front legs of a horse, the part that does the same thing as a knee on a human.

Loin: Behind where the saddle sits to where the hip of the horse begins.

Coronet: The lowest part of the pastern of a horse where it meets the hoof.

Crest: The upper part of the neck on a horse where the mane grows.

Croup: The highest part of the rump or buttocks of the horse.

Dock: The fleshy top part of the horse's tail.

Elbow: The joint on the front legs of a horse where the barrel meets the legs.

Ergot: The part on the back of the fetlock where a callous forms.

Fetlock: Sometimes called a horse's ankle, the fetlock is actually more like the ball of the foot on humans.

Forearm: The area on the front legs of a horse between the knee and the elbow.

Forehead: The part of the face above the eyes on a horse.

Gaskin: The area on the hind leg of a horse between the stifle and hock.

Muzzle: The part of the head that comes out of a horse's face including the jaw, mouth and nose.

Pastern: The part of a horse between a fetlock and a hoof.

Point of Hip: The area below where the loin and croup meet – the hip of the horse.

Poll: The back part of a horse's head.

Shoulder: The area on a horse that is close to where the human shoulder would be.

Stifle: The spot on a horse where the human knee would be.

Tail: The long hairs that grow from the dock on a horse.

Throat Latch: Where a horse's throat meets the chin, its where the bridle goes on a horse.

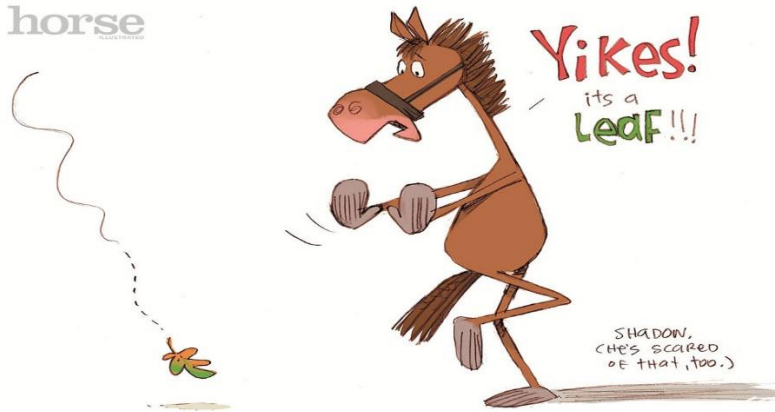
Withers: The highest part of a back of a horse, behind the neck and between the shoulders.

Understanding Equine Body Language: How To Safely Handle A Horse

Horses use their body to communicate with us and with their herd. It is important to understand their body language to maintain a good relationship with our equine friends. Horses will sometimes communicate verbally; however, the majority of their “speech” can be seen through various stances, expressions, behaviors, and positions. The basics of body language involve knowing and understanding body signals. It is also important to understand how horses respond to their surroundings so that you can safely handle the horse under any circumstance.

Horses have a keen perception of sights, sounds, movements, smells, and touch. These perceptions are utilized when it comes to their “Flight or Fight Response”. The horse perceives danger as something that is fearful or something that is new and not understood. The horse will react to danger by trying to flee the area or will attempt to fight the threat. In most situations the horse will flee danger and it is important for you to know how to handle a startled horse.

horse



Equine Communication Basic Body Language

EARS



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



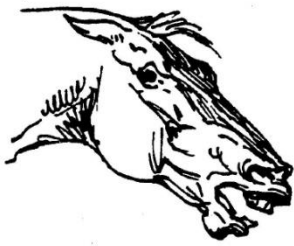
Ears turned back but relaxed
listening to his rider
or what's behind him.



Ears pointed left and right
relaxed, paying attention
to the scenery on both sides.



Droopy ears
calm and resting,
horse may be dozing.



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



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



Ears stiffly back
annoyed or worried about what's
behind him; might kick if annoyed.

EYES

- *Whites visible (except in appaloosas)- Anxious, angry.
- *Half closed - Tired, relaxed, sleeping.
- *Wrinkled - Worried.
- *Blinking - Processing information, thinking.
- *Soft eye - Gentle, relaxed, learning mode.
- *Hard eye - Tense, resistant.



CALM/RELAXED

SCARED OR FRIGHTENED

WORRIED

MUZZLE & NOSE

- *Tight/hard lips - Anxious, tense.
- *Wrinkled muzzle - Nervous, worried.
- *Swishing/Mobile Muzzle - Curious, extroverted.
- *Flared nostrils - Nervous, excited, alert, working.
- *Relaxed nostrils, soft muzzle - Neutral, relaxed.



PINCHED NOSE—ANGRY

PINCHED NOSE

RELAXED

LIPS

*Licking/Chewing - Stress release, digesting ideas, and acknowledgement.

*Drooping lip - Relaxed, bored.

*Flapping lower lip - Unfocused, sensitive, and nervous.

*Open mouth, mouthing - Often seen in foals. "I'm a baby- don't hurt me".



LICKING/CHEWING
SMELLING



DROOPING LIP



YAWNING



UPPER LIP CURLED

HEAD & NECK

*Low -Accepting, relaxed.

*Level - Neutral, Focused.

*High - Fear, anxiety, defiance.



LOW/LEVEL



CURLED/HIGH



HIGH



HIGH



TURNED/EARS PINNED



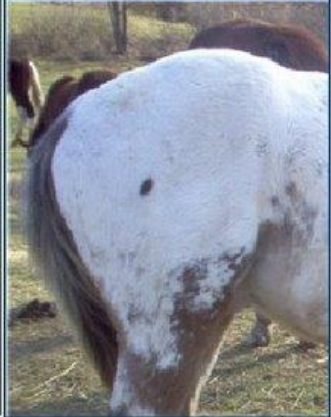
CURLED/EARS PINNED

TAIL

- *Swishing - Annoyed, irritated, flies
- *Flagged - Excited, happy, playful, alarmed (often seen in Arabians and foals)
- *High/Raised - Attentive, excited, happy
- *Low - Submissive
- *Neutral/level - Focused, normal
- *Clamped down - Fearful



NEUTRAL/LEVEL



CLAMPED



SWISHING

LEGS

- *Hind hoof resting - Relaxed.
- *Standing square – Attentive.
- *Pawing – Frustrated, playing
- *Hind leg lifted - Warning, defensive.
- *Stamping- Flies, mild irritation.
- *Striking - Angry, threatening, fighting.
- *Dancing around - Nervous, excited, frightened.



HIND HOOF RESTING



STANDING SQUARE



PAWING



KICKING

SAYING HELLO & INTRODUCING YOURSELF TO YOUR HORSE

Now that you know how to read your horse's body language, you can look for what they are telling you as you introduce yourself. It is important to say hello and ask your horse's permission to touch them.

How Do Horse's Say Hello To Each Other?



HORSE'S GREETING EACH OTHER

HORSE'S GROOMING

How Do People Say Hello To A Horse?

Stand off to the side of your horse. Make a fist and allow your horse to smell your fist. Your fist is like a nose of another horse.



HORSE SOUNDS

Neigh or Whinny

A neigh or whinny is a loud sound the horse makes when he is looking for another horse.

Nicker

When a horse nickers quietly, and moves toward a horse or person, he is saying "hello".

Blow

A horse makes a blow sound through its nose, keeping its mouth shut. A horse blows when it's curious, or when greeting another horse.

When horses meet nose to nose and blow on each other, they are greeting each other.

- If the horses continue blowing gently followed by other actions such as nuzzling, they are friends.
- If one or both of the horses nip at the other, stomp their front feet, strike out, or squeal, it means they are enemies.

Snort: A horse snorts through its nose. When a horse snorts and stares at an object it is checking for danger.

Squeal: A horse squeals with its mouth shut. A horse is saying “NO” when it squeals.

Scream: A horse screams when it is scared or frightened.

HORSES' SENSES

Horses have **highly developed senses** that enable them to **detect changes** in their surroundings. They affect how the horse will think and act. Horse trainers and riders need to be aware of horses' senses and how horses feel and respond. Many riders do not realize how finely developed a horse's senses are and how sensitive he can be.

TOUCH

Horses use touch to **examine strange objects**.

They will **look, sniff and then feel** the object with their muzzle and lips. The horse's **sense of touch is very sensitive**. He can feel a fly land on his skin and is able to detect a very light touch or pressure.

We depend on his sense of touch in most riding and training. Horses are trained by applying and removing pressure, sometimes gentle pressure and sometimes painful pressure.

The tongue, lips, and bars of the mouth are especially sensitive places where we apply pressure with the bit.

- If too much pressure is used, the horse may become **dead to pressure** (this is called a hard mouth). This doesn't mean that he no longer feels it, but that he has learned to ignore all but the most severe pressure.

- A **dead sided** horse or a **hard mouthed** horse still has his sense of touch, but his reactions have been spoiled by insensitive riders.



THEY HAVE A
KEEN SENSE OF SMELL

SMELL AND TASTE

These senses are related quite closely. Horses have a **keen sense of smell** and can detect odors that humans cannot. Horses may **recognize** familiar horses or people **by their familiar scent**. Horses can **detect** substances with a **slightly different taste**.

Some horses are very clever about sniffing out and refusing to eat medicine in their feed.

- Horses may refuse to drink water that tastes or smells different from that which they are used to.
- Some of the horse's homing instinct may be his ability to smell the familiar scent of home, even at a great distance.

HEARING

A horse's **hearing is very acute**.

His **ears can swivel** like radar screens to seek out sounds in any direction.

He can **hear very soft sounds**, like a rustle in the bushes which might conceal a predator.

Since their hearing is very acute, it is not necessary to shout voice commands at horses to make them hear. They can hear you just as well if you talk quietly to them. Horses understand the tone of your voice. They know if you are angry or pleased with them.

EARS CAN SWIVEL
TO SEEK OUT SOUNDS



HEARING IS VERY ACUTE
HE CAN HEAR VERY SOFT SOUNDS



SIGHT

Horses' eyesight is geared to finding danger.

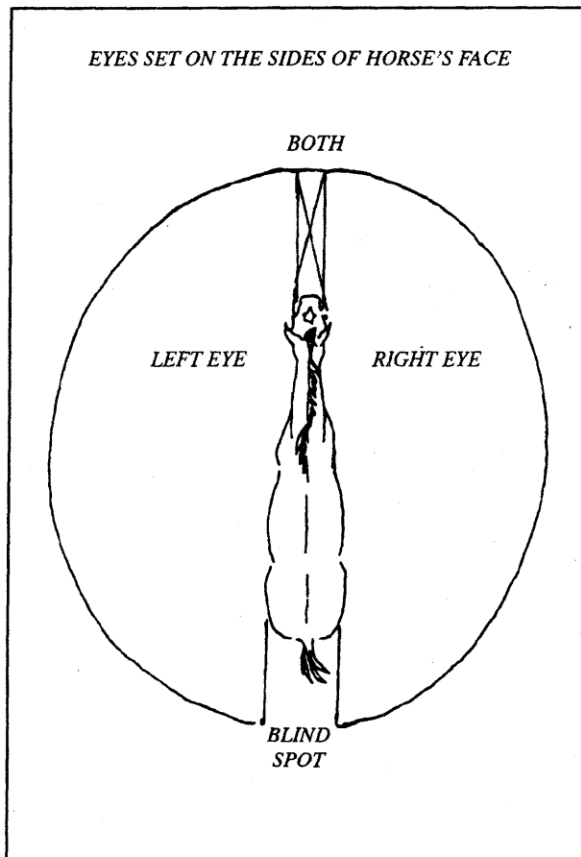
They **don't** have very accurate vision close up, but they can **detect** even a tiny movement at a **distance**.

- It might be a predator sneaking up on them.

Horses' eyes are unique in a way which affects the way they behave.

- A horse's eyes are **set** on the **sides** of his **face**.
- He can see a **different picture** out of **each eye** and can see **back** almost to his **tail**.
- He **cannot see** directly **behind** him or **right under** his **nose**.

Horses also become alarmed if something suddenly appears above or behind their heads where they cannot see it. They instinctively fear anything attacking them from above, because they are helpless when attacked from above.



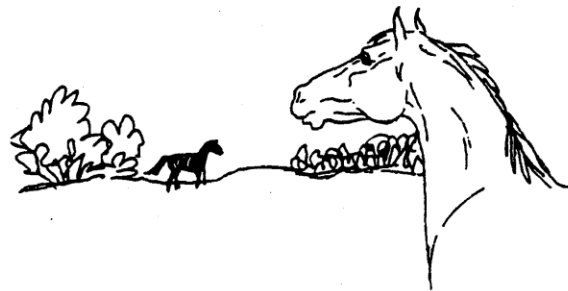
FOCUS

The lens of the horse's eye doesn't change shape as ours does.

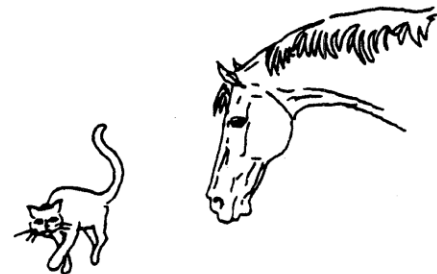
Instead, the horse **changes** his **head position** to **change his focus** from close to far away.

Holding his **head high** lets him **focus on distant objects** and **lowering his head** lets him examine something **close**.

HORSES CHANGE THEIR HEAD POSITION



*RAISING THE HEAD HIGH
LETS HIM FOCUS ON DISTANT OBJECTS*



*LOWERING THE HEAD
LETS HIM EXAMINE SOMETHING CLOSE*

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 the 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 a strange horse.

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

HORSE SENSE • RULES AND REASONS

Rule 1. Praise often, punish seldom.

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.



*DON'T RUN OR YELL
YOU MIGHT STARTLE A HORSE*

RULES AND REASONS CONTINUED . . .

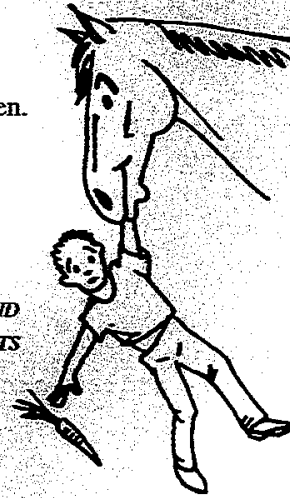
Rule 3. Never stand directly behind or in front of a horse.

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.

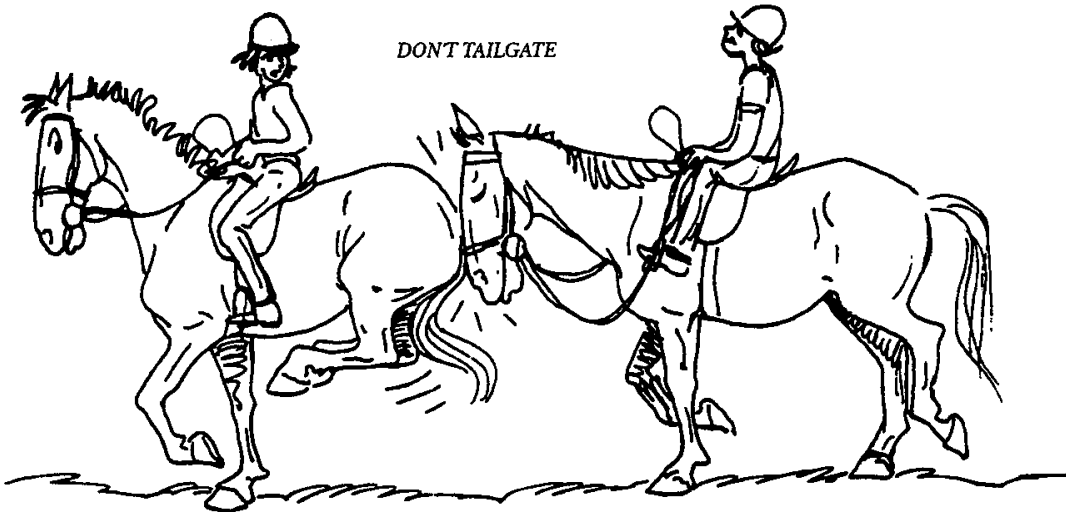
*DON'T FEED HORSES BY HAND
FINGERS FEEL LIKE CARROTS*



**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.

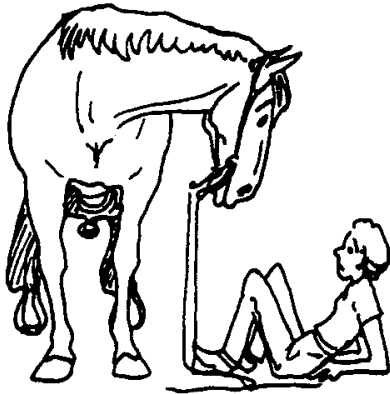
DONT TAILGATE



KEEP ALERT • MAINTAIN A SAFE DISTANCE BETWEEN HORSES

Rule 6. Check equipment for proper fit and have your instructor check it before you mount.

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 and never tie with the reins.

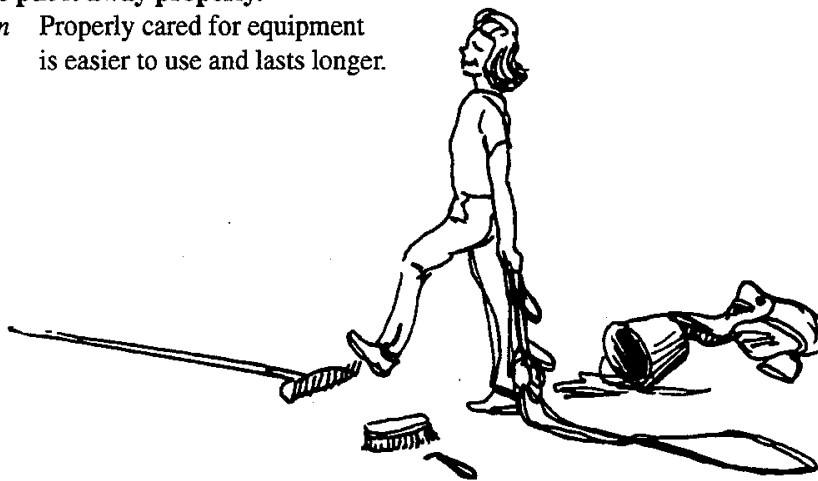
Reason Reins may be broken or the horse's mouth injured if tied by the bridle.



*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.

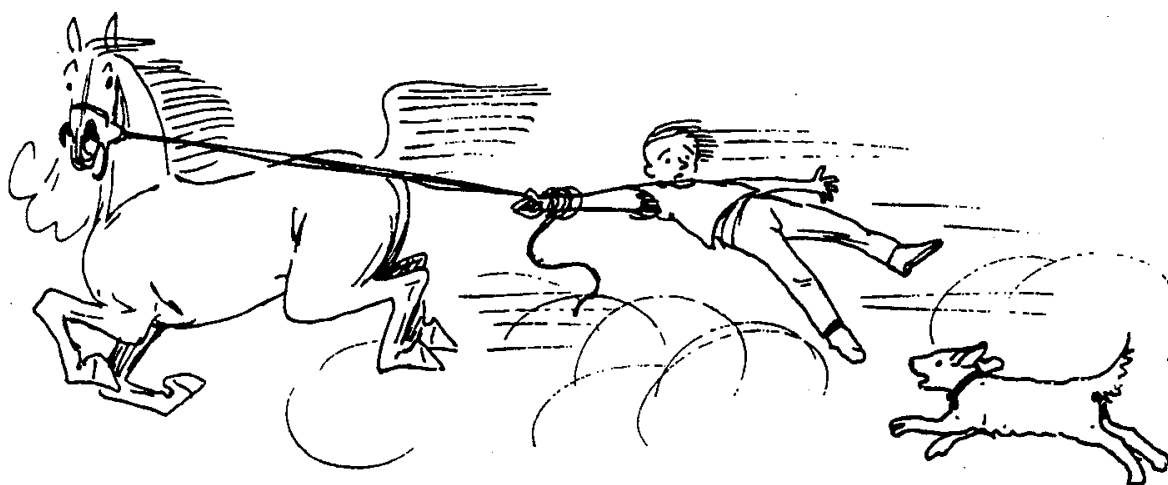


PUT EQUIPMENT AWAY PROPERLY WHEN YOU ARE THROUGH WITH IT

MORE RULES AND REASONS ...

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.

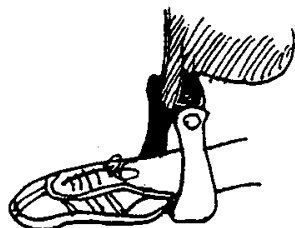
Keep alert at all times when around horses.

Reason Your instructor will help to protect you from danger and insure that you enjoy your time with your horse.

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, 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.

