

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Ride Your Horse!



"Let the warmth of a horse carry you to your dreams"

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Welcome to Ride Your Horse! Therapeutic Riding Program

Welcome to the Ride Your Horse! TRP volunteer program. This handbook is designed to educate, inspire and explain your role as a volunteer with Ride Your Horse! Therapeutic Riding Program. Thank you for becoming part of our inspiration!!!

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History of Therapeutic Riding

Therapeutic Horseback Riding

Liz Hartel of Denmark won a Silver medal in the Olympic Games in Helsinki in 1952. Her remarkable feat was even more notable since she had polio. She was an accomplished rider before she contracted the disease, but her disability left her unable to use her legs. Through riding, she was able to gain enough strength to leave her wheelchair and compete again. Her success was the inspiration for the first therapeutic riding centers. The first centers were in England; then they slowly crossed the ocean to the United States. Whether it's a five-year-old with Down Syndrome, or a 45-year-old recovering from a spinal cord injury, horseback riding provides challenges as well as rewards for many. Research shows that individuals of all ages who participate in therapeutic riding can experience physical, emotional, and mental rewards. Because horseback riding rhythmically moves the rider's body in a manner similar to a human gait, riders with physical disabilities often show improvement in flexibility, balance, and muscle strength. For individuals with mental and emotional disabilities, the unique relationship formed with the horse can lead to increased confidence, patience, and self-esteem. The sense of independence found on horseback benefits all who ride.

NARHA (North American Riding for the Handicap Association)

NARHA's mission is to promote and support therapeutic horseback riding programs throughout the United States and Canada. NARHA is comprised of more than 3,000 individual members and more than 500 riding centers. These centers range from small, one-person riding programs to large operations with several instructors and therapists. In addition to therapeutic riding, a center may offer any number of equine activities such as driving, vaulting, trail riding, competition or stable management. To help ensure safe instruction, NARHA administers a certification program for riding instructors. Riding programs also have the chance to demonstrate their excellence in providing therapeutically valid services through NARHA's operating center accreditation program. Through a wide variety of educational resources, the association helps individuals start and maintain successful riding programs. NARHA's standards for operating centers provide a basis for maintaining a safe therapeutic riding environment. The association also provides guidelines for selecting riders who are suitable and appropriate for therapeutic riding activities. Other educational resources include regional workshops, an annual conference, and state/regional networks.

For More Information

To learn more about adult independent riding or therapeutic riding, visit NARHA's website at www.NARHA.org, or call them at (800) 369-RIDE (7433).

Volunteer Job Description

POSITION: Horse Leader, Sidewalker, or Spotter

SUPERVISORS: Instructors, Asst. Instructors, Volunteer Coaches and the Volunteer Coordinators

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Dependable and able to make the commitment
2. Has a reliable means of transportation
3. Enjoys working with people with disabilities
4. Works cooperatively with all personality types
5. Accepts full responsibility for any task undertaken and follows it through to its conclusion
6. Able to work around horses
7. In good health
8. Able to follow instructions and help students relate to directions

TRAINING:

1. Volunteer orientations/training
2. On-the-job training
3. Policies, Procedures and Barn Rule Handbook
3. Volunteer Handbook

SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Sign in and out for your volunteer hours
2. Check daily schedule
3. Assist in grooming and tacking horses before classes and untack and groom horses after the classes have been completed
4. Help students prepare for class
5. Serve as sidewalker, spotter or horse leader during classes as needed
6. Assist with setting up arena and cleaning the arena after the lessons have ended
7. HAVE FUN AND ENJOY YOUR TIME WITH US!

REMINDER TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS:

Remember, you will be outside for several hours and you want to be comfortable.

What to Wear:

- Comfortable walking or jogging shoes. Tennis shoes, running shoes, and hiking or paddock boots are preferred. NO OPEN-TOE SHOES OR SANDALS.
- Weather-appropriate clothing: Layers are best T-shirt, sweatshirt, or jacket for late afternoon.

What to Bring:

- Although water is usually provided, you may want to bring your own water bottle, especially on a hot day.
- Sunscreen w/ bug repellent (Flies can be pesky around the barn)
- Sunglasses and Hat (Hot days)

** Please see the Policies, Procedures and Barn Rule Handbook for complete description of Dress Code**

Definitions of Volunteer Duties

LEADER:

A Leader is a person with past horsemanship experience and who is responsible for the horse during lessons. The Leader walks at the horse's shoulder holding the lead rope. Fold the lead rope back and forth in your hand; NEVER WRAP THE LEAD ROPE AROUND YOUR HAND. Leaders need to stand directly in front of the horse when halted. This is especially important during the mount and dismount. Use your voice in a firm tone if the horse will not stand still. Treat our horses gently; if a horse misbehaves, tell the instructor. Retraining and reprimands are generally done during schooling, not during class. However, each situation is different and the instructor will help you deal with it. Most of all remember that these are not pony rides: wait for the student to give the commands to the horse. NEVER PICK UP ANY OBJECT OR HELP THE RIDER WHEN IN THE LEADER POSITION. The leaders' responsibility is only with the horse. If assistance is needed ask the instructor or relay the information to the sidewalkers to help the rider.

SIDEWALKER:

A sidewalker walks along side the horse to offer the rider support as needed but does not hold them on. Being a sidewalker is extremely important. This means that the instructor does not have to act as the sidewalker and is able to work with each rider's position and goal's at hand. Depending upon the disability, the instructor will tell you which "hand hold" method to use. Your first priority should always be the rider. Conversations should be kept to a minimum and always for the benefit of the rider. You can encourage them to follow directions, but avoid aimless conversation with the other volunteers, the rider or instructor during the lesson. NEVER PICK UP ANY OBJECT THAT HAS FALLEN. It is safer to leave an object on the ground. It is OK for riders to miss or make a mistake. Trying is how we become successful! Tell the instructor and the object will be set up for another try or will be left alone as is.

SPOTTER:

The spotter stands on the opposite side of the horse from the instructor when mounting and dismounting occasionally just for safety, but often to assist by moving legs, feet, support, etc. Spotters need to listen and follow exact directions. When a rider becomes more independent, leader and sidewalker jobs are sometimes combined into the spotter position. The spotter walks on the inside (between the horse and the center of the arena, not between the horse and the fence) to be able to give the sidewalker assistance if necessary. For all positions it is important to remember to allow the students to do as much as possible on his own. Give the student plenty of time to perform independently. Be sure that the student understands the instructor. Be aware of the student and the horse and how they are responding. If you are uncomfortable for any reason with your student or horse, tell the instructor immediately. You are the first person to become aware of a potential problem.

Follow the Leader

By Susan F. Tucker, NARHA Accreditation Committee

As a volunteer, one of the most challenging duties you could be assigned is the position of handler. A handler's first responsibility is to the horse but you must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in or around the arena. In addition, you must also consider the sidewalkers, making sure there is enough room along the fence, and around obstacles for them to pass.

An effective handler pays close attention to the rider's needs as well

You must get the horse to cooperate. Walk alongside the horse, about even with his eyes. This helps keep him in the proper frame, which is more beneficial for everyone.

Talk to the horse; most of them know "whoa", "walk", and "trot", or can learn the words. Watch where you're going and what's happening around you. Do not walk backward to look at the riders. It's dangerous for everyone and the horse isn't eager to follow someone who can't see where they are going.

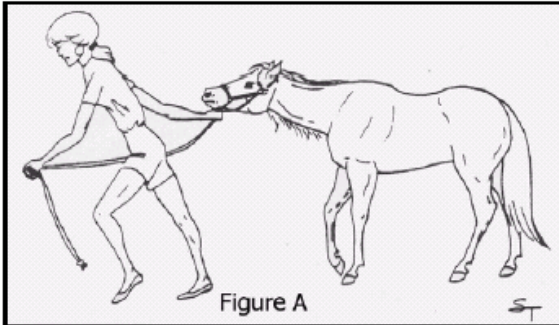
Figure B shows the correct position for handlers. The lead rope is held with the right hand 6-12 inches from the snap, allowing free motion of the horse's head. This is

steady pull to keep a lazy horse moving. The horse can set himself up against a steady pull, but tugs keep him awake. Move out, about 1,000 steps per 15 minutes, to provide the most therapeutic benefit.

When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on the halter's cheek pieces (if the horse permits) or loosely hold the lead or reins. Standing in front is a psychological barrier to the horse and he will stand more quietly than if he has an easy chance to move out. If you like your thumbs, don't put them through the snaffle or halter rings.

If the worst happens and there is an accident, stay with the horse. There are other people to care for a fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses running around the arena. Move your horse as far from the fallen student as possible and keep calm. Listen for the instructor's directions.

These suggestions can help you control the horse, be a good aide to a rider and be a valuable assistant to an instructor. We will provide real therapeutic input to your rider, as well as make it safe for them to have fun riding. In short, if you lead, we'll be happy to follow.



as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. However, you should not execute an instruction for the rider before he has time to process the information and make an effort to comply. Sometimes it may be appropriate to walk into a corner and stand until the student figures out what to do.

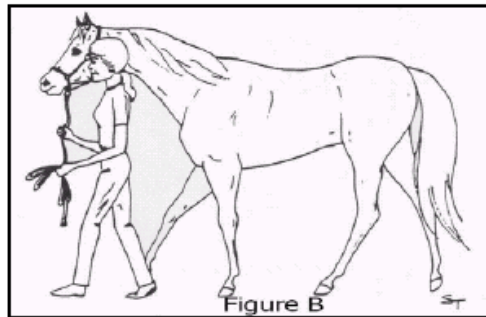
Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider and/or sidewalkers. A rider may get confused by too much input and not know who's in charge. (Instructors often make terrible handlers because they can't keep their mouths shut!)

Figure A depicts a few faults common among handlers. Here is a handler grimly marching along - head down, one hand on the lead snap, the other hand coiled in the rope - dragging a strung-out horse. In a battle with a horse, you lose.

more therapeutic for the rider and less irritating to the horse.

The tail end of the lead should be looped in a figure eight in the left hand to avoid tripping on it. Never coil the rope around your hand. That could end in a close relationship with your fingers!

Use short tugs rather than a



Effective Sidewalking

By Susan Tucker and Molly Lingua R.P.T.

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 that already have perceptual problems, it can be overwhelming. If you 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 towards 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.

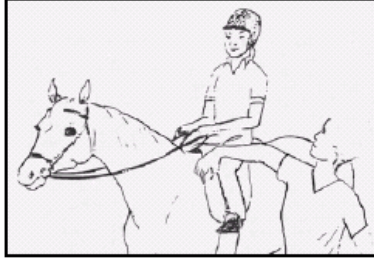
It's very important to maintain a position by the rider's knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.

There are two ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most commonly used is the "arm-over-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 does not 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 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 an 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 on 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 a position to assist the rider if needed, but you will neither give him unneeded support nor pull

him off balance. When you are ready for relief for your arm, ask the handler 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 supposed 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 possibly 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.

Safety First

Basic Hints for Volunteers

1. Familiarize yourself with the location of the nearest telephone, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, bathroom, and emergency phone numbers.
2. Read your volunteer handbook & policies, procedures & barn rule handbook.
3. Familiarize yourself with the daily schedule posted on the board. Ask any questions about the schedule prior to the lesson.
4. Before the student is mounted, recheck the girth, helmet, and stirrup lengths.
5. Understand what to do in an emergency situation. You are responsible for your horse or rider, depending on your duty. If another rider has a problem or a fall, don't rush to assist. Stay with your student or your horse. They are your first responsibility.
6. Students are mounted and dismounted under the direction of the instructor.
7. If you are not comfortable with a situation for any reason, tell the instructor immediately. You may be aware of a problem the instructor needs to know about.
8. If you are leading, walk at the horse's shoulder (or slightly before, if there is a sidewalker behind you). Avoid sharp turns or stops, and wait for the student to give the commands to the horse. ALWAYS let the student do as much as they can independently.
9. Sidewalkers should do the minimum to help students in a safe manner. Don't hold on unless necessary, and always follow the instructor's directions.
10. Remember the rules of the ring, especially about turning and spacing.
11. If a rider needs to stop during the class lessons, come off the rail to the center of the arena unless the instructor directs otherwise.
12. We treat our horses GENTLY. If a horse misbehaves tell the instructor. Retraining and reprimands are generally done during schooling, not during lessons.
13. Please don't chat with other volunteers or students during lessons.

The Volunteer Safety Checklist

Your job as a volunteer is crucial for ensuring the safety of the Ride Your Horse! TRP. It is important for you to keep the program safe, which in turn keeps it enjoyable for everyone. Provided is a safety checklist. The instructor will double check your knowledge of this list and it is strongly recommended to always refer back to this list for continual education on **safety**.

Comment [dh1]:

1. Be aware of the weather conditions.
 - Are you prepared?
2. In the arena:
 - Are the gates securely closed during the lesson?
 - Does the footing look safe?
 - Are the obstacles and toys placed safely? Are they broken?
 - Is the arena free of debris, branches, and manure?
 - Are the sprinklers turned off all the way?
3. General Environment:
 - Are spectators, dogs, and other nearby activities under control?
 - Are other riders or vehicles a potential hazard?
 - Is there a clear path from the barn to the arena?
4. How does the horse look?
 - Know what the "normal" horse is supposed to look like (in time)
 - While you are grooming do you notice anything unusual?
 - Shoes loose or missing?
 - Cuts, ticks, runny eyes, bumps, thrush, etc.?
 - Learn the signs of colic.
 - How is the horse behaving? A lot of this depends on how you are treating the horse. Remember: You are #1 in the herd.
5. How does the tack look?
 - Does the saddle fit correctly? Clears withers by 2-3 fingers, no pinching at shoulder, balanced correctly?
 - Is the girth in the right place? Not too tight or too loose? Twisted?
 - Are the safety stirrups on correctly (elastic towards the front of the horse); are the rubber bands in good shape?
 - Is all the leather smooth and supple, the stitching secure, the buckles in working order, and the tree sound, are the flaps tucked under?
 - Is the saddle pad smooth, pulled up into the pommel, and correctly secured?
 - Is the bridle properly fitted? The bit? Throatlatch? Halter?
6. How does the rider look?
 - Helmet on correctly (see "Fitting the Riding Helmet")
 - Is the rider dressed for riding – long pants, tie-on shoes with a heel?
 - No gum, candy, or toys (unless the toy is used in the lesson).
 - How is the rider feeling? Are they prepared? Do they need the bathroom? Are they scared?
 - Is the rider getting ready before mounting? Checking the stirrups and girth?

Volunteer Checklist

Name: _____ Date Started Volunteering: _____

The purpose of this checklist is to help you learn the specific jobs of this volunteer position. It is used to help you and the Ride Your Horse! staff assesses your knowledge and skills. This is necessary for your own learning and growth and for the program to run safely. Everyone is here to learn and help each other. Please don't be afraid to ask questions to your Volunteer Captains, or the Instructor. The Captains or the Instructor will initial and date when completed.

* You won't necessarily have everything checked.

Identify:

Sign In Sheet _____ First Aid Kit _____ Daily Schedule _____
Fire Extinguisher _____ Cell Phones _____ Emergency Information (2) _____
Bathroom _____ Captains/Coord. _____

Be Familiar with the Volunteer Safety Checklist.
Verbally list the six main areas to be aware _____

Know emergency procedures in Volunteer Handbook.
Verbally explain the basic procedures _____

Grooming: Describe where and how to use:
Curry Comb _____ Hard Brush _____ Soft Brush _____ Hoof Pick _____
Mane & Tail Brush _____ Fly Spray _____ Face Sponge & Bucket _____
Hoof Treatment (Thrush)* _____ Wound Ointment _____

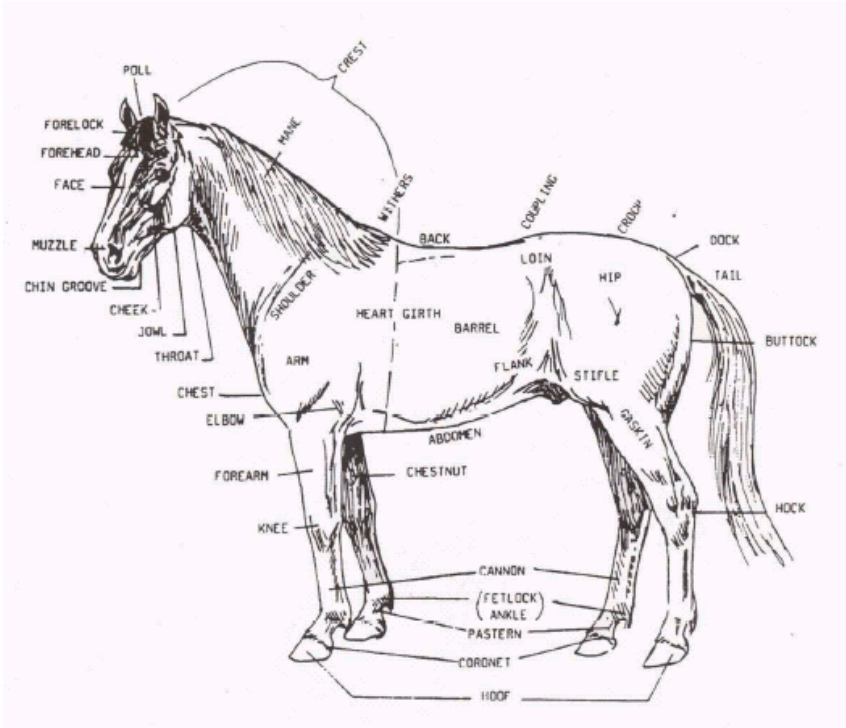
Basic Handling: Demonstrate how to:
Approach a horse _____ Catch a horse _____ Tie a quick release knot _____
Position when halted _____

Tacking: Demonstrate how to and tack up using:
Setting out Tack _____ Saddle (English) _____ Saddle (Western) _____
Bridle _____ Reins (Halter/Bit) _____ (WB) Bareback Pad _____ Surcingle _____

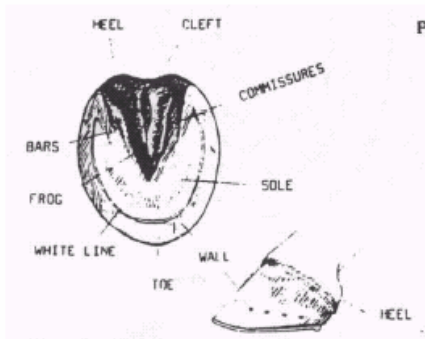
Side Walker: Demonstrate:
"Arm Over Thigh" Position _____ Ankle Hold Position _____ Spotting Position _____ Prompting
(Hands) _____ Prompting (Legs) _____ Prompting (Feet) _____
Verbally Prompting _____ Offside (left) Mounting _____ Offside (left) Dismounting _____
Helping Student Before Mounting _____

Leader/Spotter: Demonstrate:
Leader Position _____ How to Hold Lead Rope (Off Lead) _____

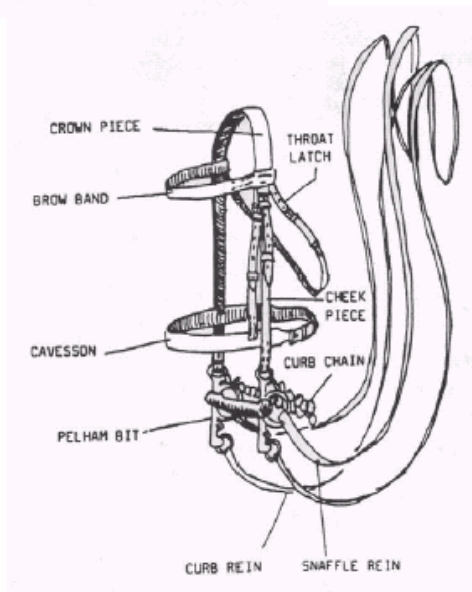
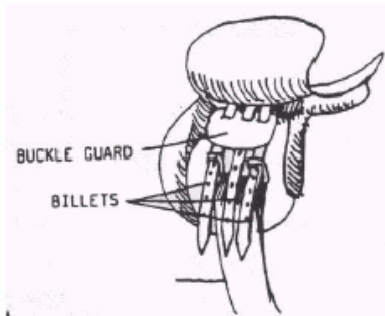
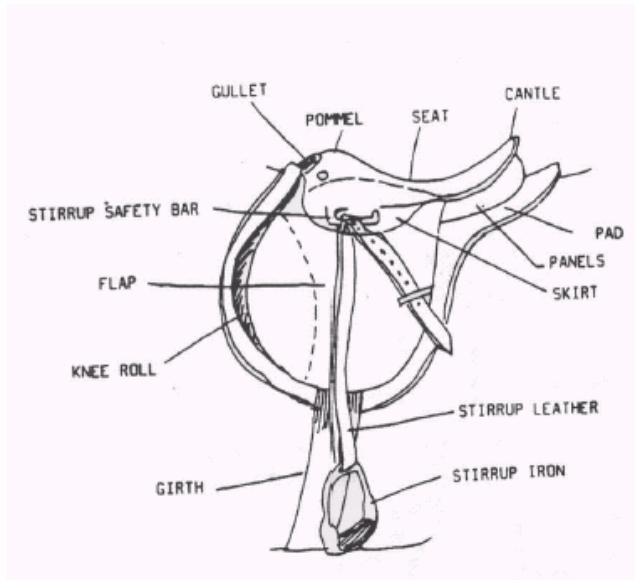
Parts of the Horse



Parts of the Hoof



English Tack

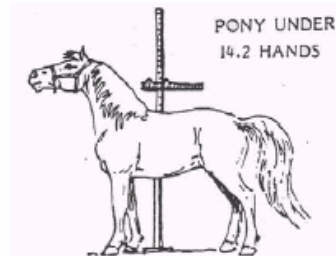


Horseman's Talk

If you want to talk with the horse people, you should know the words they use to describe horses and horse terms. Here are some of the most common terms:

- Stallion:** A mature male horse that can be used for breeding.
- Mare:** A mature female horse over four years of age.
- Foal:** A young horse of either sex still with it's mother.
- Colt:** A young male horse under four years of age.
- Weanling:** A young horse of either sex that has just been taken from its mother. It is usually between 6 months and 1 year of age.
- Yearling:** A horse that is officially 1 year old. Some horses have an "official" birthday on January 1st of the next year after their birth, regardless of their actually birthday.
- Gelding:** A male horse that has been castrated or altered. Most male riding horses are geldings.

- Pony:** A mature equine of either sex that is under 14.2 hands high (58 inches). Do not confuse ponies with foals that will grow larger than 14.2 when they mature.



- Mule:** A cross between a horse and a donkey.
- Tack:** Bridles, saddles, and other equipment worn by the horse.
- Green:** An untrained or inexperienced horse.
- Off-Side:** The right side of the horse.
- On-Side:** The left side of the horse. Also called the "near" side.
- Hands:** The method of measurement. One hand equals four inches. The horse is measured from the ground to the withers, the highest part of his backbone just behind the neck.

Grooming

Remember when you are grooming to look for any problems on the horse, i.e.: cuts, scrapes, a runny nose/eye, bumps, swellings, heat in the hooves, etc. Notify the Volunteer Captain or the instructor of any problems you notice. When grooming, start at the front of the horse and work your way back with each tool.

Grooming sequence:

1. Pick out all four hooves using a hoof pick. Dirt and rocks can be trapped in the hollow grooves on the underside of the hoof, causing problems such as lameness. To get the horse to pick up their hoof, start at the top of the leg and while running your hand down their leg, says "Hoof" or "Up". To pick out the hoof, run the hoof pick from heel to toe, beside the frog, getting any dirt or rocks out. Be careful not to dig the pick into the frog.
2. Using a circular motion, use a curry comb over the neck, barrel, and rump. Do not use the curry comb on the legs or face.
3. Brush the entire body except for the face with a stiff/dandy brush. Use short, flicking strokes, following the direction of the coat. Be sure to brush the belly as well, especially where the girth will touch.
4. Next use a soft brush over the entire body, including the face. Use long, sweeping strokes going with the direction of the coat, to clean sensitive areas and to polish the whole coat.
5. To brush out the mane and tail, use a mane/tail brush. If there are a lot of tangles, use a mane and tail conditioner and then brush with a dandy brush so that you do not break or pull out the hairs. Start at the bottom and work your way up, always brushing in a downward motion. For any serious, lingering stains that won't come off with brushing, get a bucket of water and a rag and wipe off the spot. Be sure not to make any area wet that will be covered by tack.

Remember: While the horses do not need to be groomed so that they are "Show Quality" clean for lessons, it is important to make sure that any and all areas that will be covered by tack (the saddle, bridle, leg wraps/boots, etc.) are clean.

Tacking Tips:

Basic safety rules:

1. The order of tacking is: saddle first, bridle second.
2. When tying up a horse always use the quick release knot.
3. Reins should be put on last just before being lead to mounting block.
4. Make sure the stirrups are run up and not dangling.
5. Always hang the bridle from something; never drop it on the ground.
6. Don't let the horses or ponies eat with their bridles on. It teaches them bad manners, it makes the bit dirty, unhealthy and increases the chance of choking.

Saddling:

Place the saddle pad high on the withers, then slide it down onto the horse's back to smooth out the hairs. If a lift pad will also be used, place this on next, on top of the saddle pad. Then pick up the saddle, making sure the stirrups are run up or laid across the seat of the saddle so that they are not hanging (and as a result, will hit the horse when the saddle is put on). Lay the girth across the seat of the saddle. Holding the pommel with the left hand and the cantle in the right hand, place the saddle gently on the horse, in the center of the pad. Pull the saddle pad up into the gullet of the saddle to allow air to circulate between the horse's withers and the pad, and to prevent rubbing. When positioning the saddle, the front edge should be lined up with the center of the horse's shoulder. Always make sure the pad is smooth, and there are no wrinkles under the saddle that could cause sores. From the right side, take the girth off the saddle and attach the non-elastic side of the girth to right side of the saddle, using the first and third billets. Then go to the left side and attach the elastic side of the girth to the left side of the saddle, using the first and third billets.

Bridling:

1. Stand on the left side of the horse's head.
2. Hold the crown piece in the right hand and the bit in the left hand.
3. Place the bit into the horse's lips, and bring the crown piece to the horse's ears. If the horse fails to open his mouth and accept the bit, put your thumb into the side of the horse's mouth and press down on the bar (the area where the bit lies, where there are no teeth). Raise the crown piece and insert the bit.
4. Slip the crown piece gently over the ears, one at a time, pushing them flat first (so they aren't folded). Straighten the brow band and pull the forelock out so that it is over, not under the brow band.
5. Buckle the throatlatch loosely enough so that a hand can be inserted breadth-wise between the throatlatch and the throat.

Benefits of Equine Activities

MUSCULAR STRENGTH

Participants develop and strengthen muscles by performing physical tasks with the horse. The horse stimulates the rider's pelvis and trunk in a manner that closely resembles the normal gait (walk) of an individual, working specific muscle groups.

MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Participants have an opportunity to explore movement patterns and develop skills. The quality and quantity of movement experiences relates to the development of movement patterns such as walking, running, and jumping.

BALANCE AND RHYTHM

Participants develop the ability to maintain gross (large) and fine (small) motor balance and to move rhythmically with the horse. Participants become involved in interpreting and reacting to the horse's movements.

DIRECTION

Participants learn and practice responding to the right, left, up, down, forward, and backwards. Activities focusing on directing the horse in a specific direction are used to aid the student in developing sensitivity to directionally of his/her body and space.

BODY LOCALIZATION

Participants are provided with an opportunity to learn and locate parts of the horse's body. This activity aids in developing awareness and understanding of one's own body by making comparisons.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Participants can learn, practice, and develop an understanding of the principles for health and hygiene. In caring for horses (i.e. grooming) participants are led to understand and utilize good habits.

TIME ORIENTATION

Participants develop an increased awareness of time concepts, by involving him/her in determining feeding time, exercise time, and resting time for the horse; participants develop an awareness of the effect of weather and seasonal changes on riding activities. Individuals learn to anticipate riding activities based on weather conditions.

COMPREHENSION

Participants develop the ability to use judgment and reasoning in riding and working with the horse. This enhances his/her ability to use judgment and reasoning when dealing/interacting with situations and changes in the environment.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Participants have an opportunity to learn and practice the process of problem solving. Problem solving occurs when the participant is working to accomplish a specific goal or skill.

PERCEPTION

Participants interact with their environment through feeling, hearing, seeing, smelling, and tasting. The barn is a unique environment with a variety of shapes, objects, noises, and smells.

Disabilities

AMPUTATION: The absence of limb(s) due to congenital condition, injury, or disease. Some individuals use prostheses (artificial limbs) as a substitute. Usually an amputee enjoys the same level of health as a noninvolved person.

APHASIA: A difficulty in speaking, often found in stroke victims. This is a language disorder in which the processing of words is interrupted, resulting in confusion and misunderstandings. To the untrained person, this behavior can be mistaken for not following directions or inattention. Patience is most important here. Encourage the students to think of the specific words they want, then use those words several times to facilitate retention.

AUTISM: A neurological disorder, which produces the following characteristics:

- Preoccupation with self: may not relate to people.
- Avoids eye contact, has delayed or no social smile.
- Communication dysfunction: lack of speech or unusual speech patterns.
- Normal physical development.
- Preservation: tends to get “stuck” in an action, becomes obsessed with something such as a possession, rocking, spinning an object, etc.
- Echolalia: repeating words or phrases with have just been heard.
- Can be very adept at specific skills.
- Function can vary from hour to hour
- Can exist in conjunction with other problems created by organic brain disorders.
- Therapeutic Riding Considerations: Behaviorally structured, functional, individualized programs. Increase interpersonal relationships and social interaction. Encourage confidence and communication with horse and volunteers. Teach by repetition and bodily guidance. It helps to have the same horse and volunteer. Prepare for wearing a helmet. Use continuity. Once on the horse, start walking for stimulation.

BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED: Blindness may be due to disease, injury, or be congenital in origin. Blind people may have intensified senses of hearing, touch, taste, or smell. You need to know exactly how much your student can see.

CEREBRAL PALSY: A non-progressive disorder of movement or posture, due to a malfunction or damage to the brain, usually resulting from problems during pregnancy or at time of birth. Improvement of muscle movement helps prevent wasting away of muscle tissue. There are several types of “CP”:

- Spasticity: Limb muscle is tight; with sudden movement or stretching the muscle contracts strongly.
- Athetosis: Limbs have involuntary purposeless movements.
- Rigidity: Appears to be a severe form of spasticity, which the increased stretch reflexes are dampened.
- Ataxia: There is a lack of balance sensation, a lack of position sense in space, and uncoordinated movement.
- Tremor: Shakiness of the limb involved.

DEAF and HEARING IMPAIRED: The result of birth defects, injury, or disease. Communication occurs through signing, lip reading, or partial hearing. You need to know how to best communicate with each individual.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED: A disability that is attributed to mental retardation, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, and other conditions similar to mental retardation that require treatment similar to that required by mental retardation. The disability originates before age 18 and is likely to continue indefinitely.

EPILEPSY: Seizures can occur because of a brain injury or disease. The two most common forms are the Grand Mal and Petit Mal:

- Grand Mal: The student may have warnings prior to an attack. Once in seizure, the person may exhibit exaggerated limb movements, emit frightening crying sounds, lose bowel/bladder control, froth at the mouth, and/or turn blue. In most instances, the seizures last less than one minute.
- Petit Mal: These seizures usually only last a few seconds, and can frequently be overlooked initially; you may think the student is daydreaming. The eyes may stare, and a slight twitching of the face may be noticed.

DOWN SYNDROME: A birth defect which can manifest in soft and floppy muscles, loose joints, unusually formed hips, small hands and fingers, poor balance and below normal intelligence.

HEMIPLEGIA: Paralysis of the limbs on one side of the body.

LEARNING DISORDERS: Dysfunction of the brain caused by interference with the normal process of storing, processing, and producing information.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS: Progressive disease of the nervous system. Parts of the nerve tissue in the brain and spinal cord degenerate, with resulting spasticity of the legs and arms; the speech may become slurred, and vision may be impaired.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY: A genetic disease marked by progressive weakening of the muscles. Intelligence is in the normal range.

STROKE (CVA): A cerebrovascular accident is caused by an interruption of the brain blood supply, generally effecting one side of the brain, which causes impairment to the opposite side of the body.

Always give your student the benefit of treating him/her as you would like to be treated. If you have questions or want more information about a specific condition please ask the instructor.

Emergency Procedures

Before and emergency occurs:

1. Go through the safety checklist. The instructor keeps written documentation. Report any unsafe conditions to the Volunteer Captains or Instructor(s).
2. Identify the location of the following items:
 - a. Telephones: Instructor or Captain's Cell Phones
 - b. Emergency Information: By sign in sheet & next to First Aid Kit
 - c. Fire Extinguisher: Exterior of tack room
 - d. Fire and Disaster Plan: posted by fire extinguisher in tack room
 - e. Human and Equine First Aid Kits: in tack room
 - f. Emergency Supply Box, contents Listed On Box: in tack room
 - g. Blankets in tack trunk used for those injured or in shock
3. Practice emergency procedures (fire drills, etc.).
4. Become CPR and First Aid certified if possible

Specific Emergency Procedures:

1. When a student falls off
 - Remain calm. Usually the class will need to halt.
 - Stay with your designated duty. Don't rush to help a fallen student if you need to be handling a horse, or you are sidewalking with another student.
 - The instructor will help the fallen student and delegate jobs for volunteers. i.e. "Susan, please call 911" or "Bob, please bring the blankets"
 - If the student seems injured the instructor will treat as needed and keep the rider still and as comfortable as possible.
 - If the rider appears uninjured, the instructor will allow time to regain composure, and watch for a delayed reaction.
 - Sometimes the other riders will be frightened and the class will need to process the event as a group
2. When an independent rider loses control.
 - If the horse has stopped, let the student do as much as possible on their own. Give simple instructions (use your legs, crop, one rein). If needed, help the student by reinforcing the pull. Use one rein or halter and lead.
 - If the horse is running away (this rarely happens), the class will all halt and the instructor will assist the rider.
3. When a horse is injured or sick.
 - This probably won't happen with a rider, but if so, the rider should dismount.
 - An injured horse needs space to stay calm, don't crowd the horse, only those who are needed to treat the horse should be nearby.
 - Stay with your job unless the instructor delegates a special job for you.
 - If you are assigned to call the vet, remain calm on the phone and try to relate as much information between the instructor and the vet. Write information down.
4. When a student "bails off".
 - Try to keep this kind of student busy and engaged in the activity to prevent this.
 - Alert the instructor of the student's behavior change.
 - If the student is going to bail and you're the sidewalker, alert the leader and together say whoa.
 - If the student is not responding to the sidewalker to instructions to: sit up, stay on, hold on, etc. If possible, dismount the proper way (either right or left side).
 - If the dismount is necessary sidewalkers are to make it quick. Remain a firm hold on the student and escort them out of the arena.
 - If the student is uncooperative notify the parents that their assistance is necessary.
 - All other riders/horses must come to a halt.
 - The instructor should be able to assist with all of above but if he/she is unavailable then all action is to be provided only by the student's sidewalkers and the student's parents.
5. When there is a disaster (fire, earthquake, etc.).
 - Stay calm, breathe.
 - Follow procedures familiar to you from the fire drills and the directions posted in the tack room. (Listen for the instructor's whistle).
 - Stay with your designated job unless otherwise instructed.
 - Someone will be directed to call 911. Make sure that you relate all the information clearly. Don't hang up until they have all the needed information.
 - Halt the horses. Depending on the situation, the students should dismount.
 - Gather in front of the tack store parking lot to be accounted for.
 - Keep the driveway clear for emergency vehicles.
 - Depending on the situation, in case of fire, you may need to use hoses, buckets, or the extinguisher. Don't put yourself in danger.

6. If the student becomes ill (heat exhaustion, allergic reaction, seizure).
 - Know if the student you are working with is prone to any conditions. See posted information (know where to find everything in the first aid kit).
 - Look for signs and symptoms (discomfort, red face, glazed eyes, convulsions).
 - Sidewalker, communicate with the leader if the horse needs to halt.
 - In most situations the student would end the lesson and go back to the barn to dismount. Always alert the instructor.
 - If the student needs to dismount right away, get extra help if needed and be sure to dismount as smoothly as possible.
 - Give the student space and move the horse away. In the case of a seizure, let the student sit or lie down. Protect the student's head from injury (use a sweatshirt as a pillow, or rest his head in your hands). Time the seizure if possible. The instructor will delegate.
 - Keep the student quiet and comfortable (in shade if overheated). Reassure.
 - If severe, someone will be delegated to notify 911 and the parents.
 - Do not medicate anyone, unless instructed, i.e. bee sting medicine.

7. If you or another volunteer becomes ill.
 - Alert a Volunteer Captain or Instructor. Someone can take your place so you can rest.
 - As with the above situation it will be assessed depending on how severe.
 - Make your medical conditions known to the instructor prior to volunteering. There is a place on the volunteer forms.

8. With every incident a report is made.
 - If you are involved in an incident you may need to fill out an incident report.
 - Record the facts, witnesses, date, time, and location. There is a blue form in the file box.
 - Don't assign blame, just the facts. Usually the instructor fills out reports.

10. Most important! Each incident is case by case.
 - As each situation differs with each student, we need to remember that our program caters to the individual. What may happen with one person may be different for the other. However, as a general rule, these procedures should help you to be prepared in the case of an emergency.

Remember the cliché: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" And Be Proactive!!

Terms Heard in the Arena

"Across the Arena": Ride from one long side to the other, through the center.

Circle: Each rider makes a big circle off the rail, without changing gait or tempo, and continues in the same direction.

Collection: The ultimate goal is to have your horse moving from his hindquarters, with his neck slightly arched, and his body bent gently in the direction of travel. Collection does not mean cranking the horse's nose down without impulsion from the hindquarters. Bending your horse involves an even, slight bend from nose to tail in the direction he is moving. Hands and legs work together to achieve this.

Come Down the Center Line": Track straight down the center of the arena, from one short side to the other.

Diagonal: From one corner of the arena to the other, sometimes called a "change of rein". Diagonal also refers to the horse's footfalls at the trot when posting, such as "change your diagonal".

Ground Poles/Cavaletti: Heavy poles placed on the ground for students to ride over. They are usually expected to go right down the center of the poles. Ground poles are often ridden in "two point" position.

Lounge: The horse is attached to a long line and made to go in a circle around a person standing in the middle of the arena. This is used in riding (Private lessons)

Near Side: Left side of the horse.

Off Side: The right side of the horse

“Line Up in the Center”: All riders line up facing the same direction, leaving plenty of space between each horse.

“Passing the Horse in Front of You”: Student should pass with a minimum space of three (3) horse widths, tracking in from the rail early and back to the rail when well by the other horse. Safety is a must!

Reining: We use the squeeze and release procedure when reining...the students learns to pull gently and give back until a turn is made.

Reverse: At the rail, each rider turns to the inside, therefore; changing direction. This creates a teardrop shaped figure.

“Shorten/Lengthen Your Reins”: We usually want our rider’s hands in contact with the bit. We will show you the proper way to help your student.

Spacing: We want a minimum of three (3) horse lengths between riders. The ideal situation is to have your riders “spaced” evenly around the arena during a lesson. There are several ways to achieve proper spacing:

- Stop and wait for the horse in front of you to move on.
- Make a big circle on the rail, first looking carefully behind.
- Cut across the arena to an empty space on the rail.
- Pass the horse in front of you.

Each of these spacing techniques depends on the ability of the rider. The instructor will direct a rider on how to accomplish proper spacing.

Standing Poles/Pylons: Poles which stand upright and are arranged for reigning exercises such as “weaving the poles”, where a rider begins on the outside of the first pole and weaves left and right through the line.

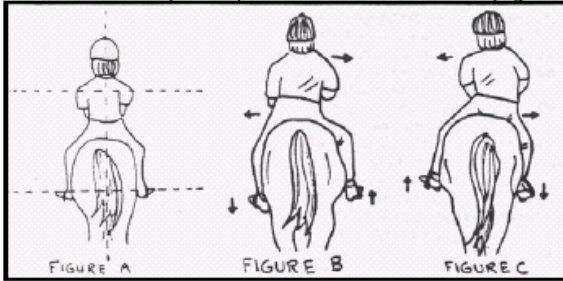
Two Point: The rider gets into a “pre-jump” position, with buttocks off the saddle, and balances between feet and hands.

Whoa: Your rider will be shown how to ask for whoa (or “ho”) with voice and hands, and how to immediately release the hands when the horse responds.

Position of the Rider

By Lorrie Renker and Martha Biery

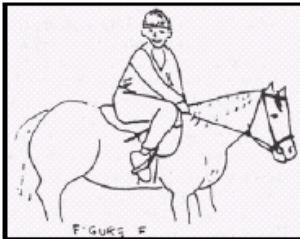
All riders strive for the "ideal" riding position. It should be no different for riders with disabilities. Instructors often appear afraid to make position corrections. Not all of your riders will be able to achieve the ideal position, but that doesn't mean



you shouldn't try. The rider's position has little to do with looking good and everything to do with being in balance and moving in harmony with the horse. The better the body alignment, the better the therapeutic benefits.

The best way to evaluate the rider's position on the horse is to step back and view the rider from all angles. The rider may look great from the side but could be off center when viewed from behind. Don't be afraid to make corrections. Video tapes often show a rider in a poor position for the entire lesson with no attempt made to improve the position. Here are some common problems to look for:

1. When viewed from behind, the rider should sit as straight as possible (Figure A). Many riders will sit to one side and then to have make corrections in the rest of the body to maintain balance. When this happens, one foot will appear lower than the other. Figure B shows a rider with the left foot lower, the pelvis leaning to the left, and the upper body correcting to the right. Figure C shows just the opposite – the right foot lower, the pelvis leaning to the right, and the upper body correcting to the left. This position does not help the rider strengthen muscles evenly. Correcting this position usually requires aligning the rider's base

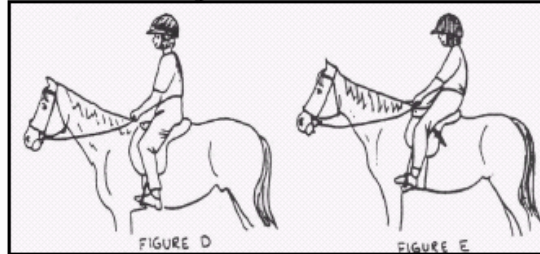


(getting the butt square in the saddle).

2. When viewed from the side, the rider should sit as straight as possible (Figure D). Video tapes often show riders in the "sofa seat" or C curve (Figure E). Often the rider will sit up if asked.

Sometimes the position will reflect the rider's posture off the horse. Encouraging elongation of the leg usually improves the posture. To achieve a better position, it may be necessary to evaluate the type of saddle being used. Is the saddle level on the horse so that it will encourage a good position? Just placing a bounce pad or lollipop under the saddle does not ensure a level saddle. Often the weight of the rider compresses the pad completely, resulting in a saddle sloping backward. It is literally impossible to keep the leg positioned under the rider's pelvis in those circumstances. Use of a denser foam pad will help. Ideally, the saddle should be fitted correctly to the horse and the rider.

3. Figure F shows a rider with a toe down and



the leg pinched up. This could indicate a rider with tight adductor muscles, an extreme forward-seat saddle, or stirrups that are too short. The rider should be encouraged to lengthen his leg.

This could be achieved by riding without stirrups or by trying a different style of saddle.

The important thing to remember is to constantly evaluate the rider's position. Consider all factors, such as disability limitations, posture off the horse and equipment used. Then work toward improving the rider's position.

Fitting the Riding Helmet

By Jean M. Tebay, MS
Drawings by Sue Tucker

With all of the confusion about which helmet is the correct one for your rider to wear, (it is ASTM/SEI approved, USPC approved), the issue of correct fit may have become momentarily obscured. But FIT is important. An incorrectly fitting helmet can cause unwanted changes in posture and balance for your rider, adversely affecting those areas which you as a therapeutic riding instructor are working to remedy. Let's consider...



- What is the helmet is sitting too far back on the rider's head?



- What if

the helmet is twisted to one side with the brim not straight in the middle of the rider's forehead?



- What if the helmet is pulled down over the rider's eyes?



- What if the helmet is too big, or too small?
- Or what about the rider who is irritated by the chinstrap?

Each of you, as a therapeutic riding instructor, has observed a rider in one or more of these situations. Each of you may have, at one time or another, been confronted with the problem of how to fit the existing helmet to a difficultly shaped head. But is important to understand that the posture and balance of your student will be directly affected by the fit of the helmet.

Now try these:

- Put a helmet on, sliding it into position from back to front, so that it is sitting back on your head. Proceed, first at a walk and then a sitting trot around the ring. How do you feel?
- Now pull your helmet too far forward, so the front of the helmet is resting on your eyebrows. Again, walk and trot. How does that feel?

- Now try tipping your helmet to the left or right and walk and trot. Notice what happens to your seat bones in the saddle. Is your weight evenly distributed there? Do you feel in good balance?
- Now hold the brim of your helmet in one hand and twist the whole hat so that it is off center. What does that do to your feeling of good body alignment?
- Next, try all of the above with a helmet that is too small and that you have had to squeeze onto your head. Comfortable? How about your balance and posture now?
- And the too large helmet? How does that feel to you, especially at the sitting trot?

Finally, review all the above blindfolded (with a leader). The blindfold will allow you to concentrate even more.

Now do these:

1. Place the helmet on the head sliding it front to back and allowing it to rest so there are two fingers between the eyebrows and the edge of the helmet.
2. Check to make sure it is centered correctly and do up the chinstrap. If there is a laced harness at the back, undo it before fitting the helmet and readjust is appropriately after the helmet is on. Look to check that it is correctly fitted and ask the rider how it feels.
3. The helmet should fit as snugly as the rider can comfortably wear it.
4. For the rider whose head is a difficult size, try placing self-adhesive sanitary napkins inside the helmet at the troublesome spots.
5. Fit a hat on a colleague and get feedback about your technique.
6. Above all, remember that no matter what type of helmet you choose for your rider, a properly fitting and comfortable one provides the ultimate in safety and gives your rider a "head start" on his lesson!