

AHEAD With Horses Inc.

Volunteer Manual



**10157 Johanna Avenue
Shadow Hills, CA 91040**

(818) 767 – 6373 phone

(818) 767 – 6231 fax

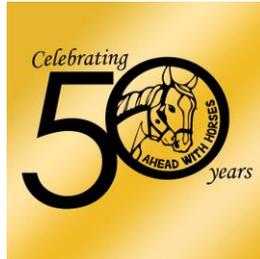
aheadwithhorses@yahoo.com

www.AWHLA.org

About AHEAD With Horses

AHEAD With Horses, Inc.

AHEAD stands for: Accelerated Habilitation Education And Development



AHEAD With Horses, founded in 1968, has over 50 years of experience providing developmental therapy, education and recreation through vaulting (gymnastics on a moving horse).

AWH's mission is to:

Maximize the potential of disabled/disadvantaged/special-needs children providing developmental therapy, education and recreation through horses and the environment, with measurable improvement physically, mentally, socially and/or emotionally resulting in increased self-sufficiency and the ability to lead better and more independent and productive lives capable of contributing to their community and society.

AWH specializes in children, normally 12 & under, with multiple and severe disabilities including:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Down syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Developmental delays
- Chromosome disorders
- Spina bifida
- Epilepsy / seizure disorders
- Hypotonia (low tone)
- Sensory Integration Disorder
- Paraplegia
- Quadriplegia
- Blind / visually impaired
- Deaf / hearing impaired
- ADHD and ADD
- Prader-Willi Syndrome
- And many other disabilities and medical conditions.

Possible Positions

Along with the horses, volunteers are the single most important part of any Therapeutic program activity. Without dedicated people to help groom, tack and lead horses, encourage and walk beside riders and do many other important tasks, AHEAD With Horses could not exist.

Necessary Skills

- Capable of performing all tasks assigned.
- Must attend Volunteer Orientation session.
- After training, able to perform tasks with minimal supervision.
- Able to accept constructive feedback and have a positive attitude.
- Horse knowledge and experience is helpful, but not necessary.
- Follows the Dress Code
- Willing to learn and follow AWH policies and procedures.

Lesson Volunteers

- Must be at least 12 years old
- Must be able to walk for several hours including frequent stopping
- Assist as a side-walker/spotter during lessons
 - Walk along side the student to assist with student positioning on the horse
 - Ensure student safety throughout the lesson and in an emergency
 - Assist with mounting and dismounting
- Help instructor as necessary with games, movements, motivation, etc.
- May be instructed to lead horses as necessary during lessons.
- Must be able to respond to Instructor's directions.

Horse Volunteers

- Must be at least 12 years old
- Must be able to walk for several hours including frequent stopping
- Previous horse experience preferred
- Lead horses during lessons
- Prepare horses for lessons (possible)
 - Groom, tack, and bring horses to and from their stalls
- Care for horses following lessons (possible)
 - Untack, groom or rinse as necessary, and return horses to their stalls
- Help instructor as necessary with games, movements, motivation, etc.
- Must be able to respond to Instructor's directions.

Assistant Instructors

- Must be at least 16 years old
- Must have a minimum of 40 hours as a lesson or horse volunteer
- Previous experience or education with children and/or disabilities is preferred
- Assist the instructor with lessons as directed, working towards the goal of being able to teach lessons independently

Instructors

- Must be at least 18 years old or older
- Must have a minimum of 80 hours as a lesson or horse volunteer or assistant instructor
- Will be responsible for his/her own students including planning and evaluating each lesson to suit individual needs
- Will incorporate basic physical, behavioral, and language therapy into lessons

Specialty Volunteers

- We're always looking for additional volunteers to help with:
 - Website development and/or maintenance
 - Office work, including: computer work, filing, and/or mailing
 - Fundraising: including new ideas, planning, and/or event help
 - Contact companies to ask for donations (monetary and in-kind)
 - Examples: items for our silent auction, trees, plants, bottled water, grooming equipment, etc.
 - Public speaking to donor clubs/organizations and volunteer/information fairs
 - Grant writing or grant research
 - Landscaping or other work around the property
 - Photographers to take pictures at our events
 - **Interns:** We can work with schools and students to create internships based on your studies and interest. Please speak with us for details.

Rules of Conduct

1. No alcohol or drugs.

AWH is a drug free workplace.

2. No smoking.

Smoking is absolutely prohibited.

3. No gum chewing, eating or drinking (except water) in front of students.

4. Conversation during lessons must be focused on the student.

Please keep personal conversations for breaks and away from students.

5. No cursing, swearing or bad language.

Remember that we are working with children and this will never be tolerated around students.

6. No running or yelling on the property.

We do not want to scare the children or the horses.

7. Be prepared for your entire shift.

Be on time or early.

Bring plenty of water.

Bring a lunch or snacks if staying all day, since there is no food or vending machines available on the property.

8. Be aware that students have individual needs.

If instructors are talking and singing and being entertaining... join in! If instructors are being quiet with a student, please ask before engaging them. We may feel less entertaining today and would love for

you to bring the energy, or the student might be easily over-stimulated and require a quieter and calmer environment.

9. Turn all phones and other devices to vibrate or silent.

We do not want loud ring tones or beeps scaring horses or students, or interrupting the lesson. You should not have your phone out to play a game, watch a video, etc. Your attention should be on the horse and/or lesson going on. Headphones must not be worn around the horses. You have to be able to hear your surroundings.

Remember, as a volunteer, you are representing AHEAD With Horses at all times.

Dress Code

- Closed-toe shoes required. Boots or tennis shoes preferred. Make sure they are comfortable because you will be doing a lot of walking.
- Long pants. Jeans recommended. (NO SHORTS)
- Shirts with sleeves. Shoulders should be covered. (No tank tops; T-shirts are fine.)
- Dress for the weather:
 - Hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen recommended in the summer.
 - Sweatshirts and jackets are recommended in the winter.
- No loose or baggy clothing that could get caught on students, tack, or horses.
- Keep jewelry to a minimum to keep it from being caught or pulled by students or horses.
- Be prepared to work in a dirty, dusty, and/or muddy outdoor environment.
- Don't tie sweatshirts, jackets, or other garments around the waist or neck
 - Instead, remove it from the lesson area.
- Leave all purses and backpacks in the car or on the lunch tables and/or benches.

Time Commitment

We prefer that volunteers maintain a consistent schedule. This allows our instructors to plan days accordingly. Students also become familiar with their volunteers, and you will become familiar with the students. Maintaining this relationship is very beneficial to their lessons. Volunteers are obviously appreciated for the entire day, but if you can only give an hour or two of your time, we are thankful for that too!

However, if you are unable to commit to a consistent schedule, know that we never turn down volunteers! Please stop by when you are available. If you need to know the daily schedule, please contact the office at (818) 767 - 6373 for a current listing of available times and days.

Please note that we are closed on most major holidays and if it is raining. The schedule does change regularly due to number of students, seasons of the year and available daylight, and the volunteer's responsibilities.

Make sure to come prepared for whatever amount of time you plan to stay. Sunscreen is recommended year round. You need to bring lots of water, especially on hot days, and make sure to take breaks for drinks. Lunch is not provided, so bring your own.

Horse Sense Information

- Horses are herd animals. If one horse gets scared and decides to run, it will often make the other horses scared and want to join them. This is one reason why we do not like people to run around the horses- they might think they are running away from something scary.
 - This is also good to know when in lessons. If there are multiple horses In the arena, if one spooks, it might cause the other horses to react as well.
- When walking up to a horse that is loose, like in their stall, make sure to
 - Speak to the horse so that they know you are there. (Especially if walking up from behind or they have their eyes closed and might be sleeping.)
 - Always try to walk towards the shoulder and head of the horse when approaching so that they can see you.
- When walking behind a horse either:
 - 1.) Keep one hand on the horse's croup/butt and stay right next to the horse the entire time.
 - 2.) Walk far around the horse so that if they were to kick, they would not reach you.
- When grooming: Curry comb first, then use a body brush to remove the loose dirt and hair. Make sure to use less pressure or a softer brush when working on the legs and face. Brushing the mane and tail is the lowest priority. Hoof picking is one of the most important. Also, make sure to groom thoroughly where any tack will go.
- How to pick a horse's hooves:
 - Ensure your horse is haltered and tied, or that an assistant is holding him. Or check with staff if that horse is good about standing still on their own while grooming and picking their feet.
 - Standing next to your horse's shoulder (for his front feet) or hip (for his hind), face toward your horse's tail. Keep your feet together and turned away from your horse to ensure your toes don't accidentally get stepped on if he puts his foot down. Reduce stress on your back by bending at the knees as you lean over to pick up his foot.
 - Run your hand down your horse's leg to signal that you want him to pick up his foot. Depending on your horse and how cooperative he is about picking his feet up, you might need to use your shoulder to lean some weight against him to encourage him to lift his foot. Just don't lean too hard!
 - Use a verbal cue, such as "foot", "lift", "hoof up" or "pick up" to ask him to lift his foot.
 - As he lifts his foot, hold his leg at the pastern or coronary band (just above the foot) or hold under the hoof itself to offer support.



- Using a hoof pick, start cleaning out any rocks, dirt, or other debris from around the frog (the fleshy "triangle" on the bottom of his foot). This "V" can be deep and make sure you get all of the dirt, mud, and debris out. If your horse is wearing shoes, trace around the inside of the shoe to check for and remove any pebbles. For a barefoot horse, clean around the area where the hoof sole (bottom of the hoof) meets the hoof wall (the outer hoof capsule).
- If the debris in the horse's foot is black and/or really stinky, please let one of the staff members

know, as the horse might need to have medicine put on to get rid of any thrush.

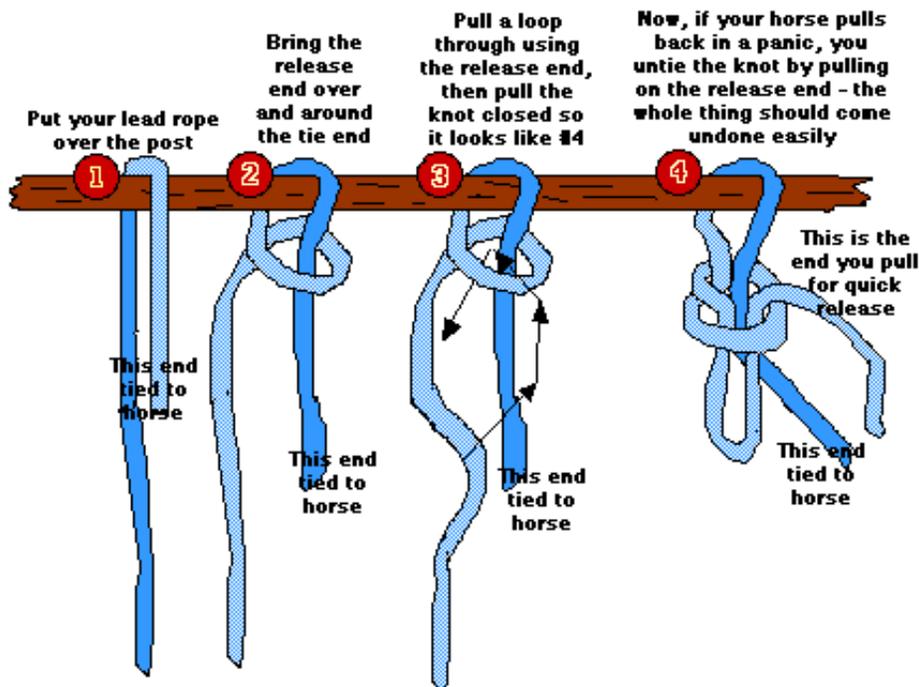
- Once the foot is clean gently set your horse's hoof down on the ground. Resist letting him do it himself—patience on his part might save your toes from getting squished! Instead, guide his foot to the floor. Use special care when lowering older, arthritic horses' hooves, as dropping a geriatric's foot could cause pain or cause him to lose his balance.
- Repeat on the remaining three hooves.
- Never stay standing directly behind the horse. When grooming their tail, stand by the leg and bring the tail to you.



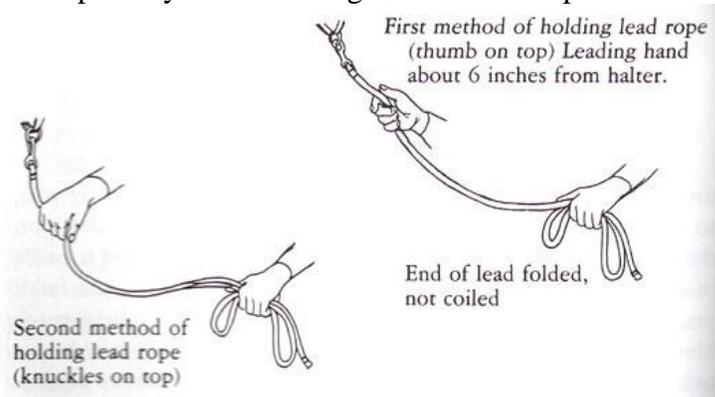
- Never tie a horse and leave them alone.
- Never leave a rope or lead dangling from the horse to the ground. Make sure to remove it before leaving the horse.
- Never tie a horse with their bridle and a longe line. Only tie a horse using a halter and lead rope. (Tying them up with a bit in their mouth can cause a lot of damage and be painful if the horse tries to pull away.)
- Only tie a horse with a quick release knot. Here is an example of how to tie one:

Tying the Quick Release Knot

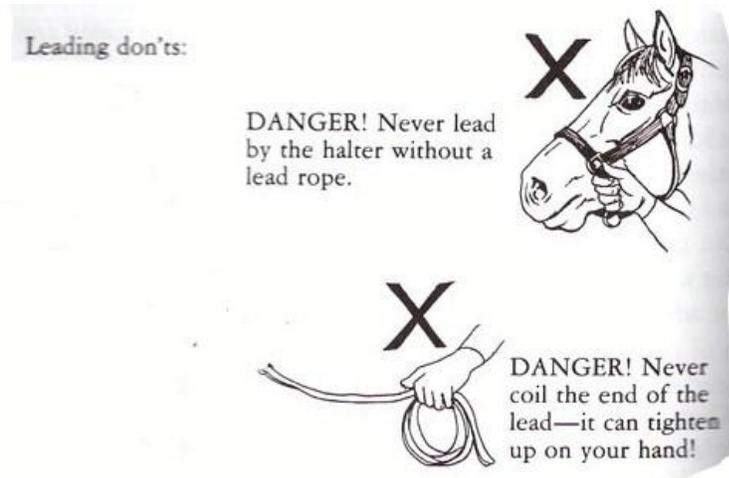
Practice tying this knot without your horse until you can do it correctly and release it just by pulling on the free end. This is the ONLY knot you should use to tie horses.



- Never leave tools (including brooms, rakes, wheelbarrows, etc.) or grooming supplies inside a stall when you leave that space. Make sure everything is outside the stall (and out of reach), so that the horses will not accidentally hurt themselves.
- Horses know if you are nervous and will either take advantage of you or become nervous as well. If you act confident and like you know what you are doing, they will trust you and follow your instructions.
- Proper way to hold a longe line or lead rope:



- Never wrap the lead line around your hand. If a horse pulls, your hand could get caught or crushed.



- **When you are leading a horse:**
 - Always hold the lead line or rope in 2 hands. The left hand should have all the additional rope and the right hand should be close to their head so you have control. If a horse pulls, or spooks, even if you lose the rope in one hand, you will still be holding it in the other.
 - You should always lead with the horse on your right side (you on the horse's left).
 - You should be walking by their head. If you walk too far behind, such as by the horse's shoulder, you might get in the way of the instructor and have your heels stepped on.
 - Always make sure to leave at least a horse length between you and another horse. Not all of them know each other or get along.
 - If a horse does not want to walk, you should first start walking in the direction you want to go and pull on the lead for them to follow. Do not stop and look back at the horse. Since horses are herd animals, you have to look in the direction you want them to go. If you are looking at them, they do not understand that you want them to go forwards.
 - If they still do not start walking after you have tried to walk on your own, one trick is to pull the horse's head all the way to the side. (From looking straight ahead to a 90 degree angle in either direction.) This forces the horse to be off balance and take a step. Once they take one step,

they will continue and you can walk in the direction you had wanted them to go.

○ The closer your hand is to their mouth (and the bit and bridle), the more control you have over a horse. If the horse is relaxed and listening, you can give them about a foot of line. This allows them to move freely without you inadvertently pulling on them with each step. Do not let the line get really long (over 2 feet), as this means you will not be able to control them if you need them to do something (such as stop) or will start to lead you where they want to go, or start eating from the ground.

○ If the horse is not listening, are known to be somewhat bitey, or are acting more nervous or excited than normal, you should hold closer to the bit. This is also true when a person is getting on the horse and you need to keep it from moving



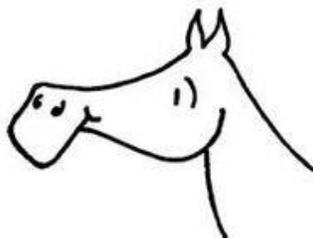
Example of how to hold the lead line so that the horse cannot bite you. This will give you the most control. Remember: Do NOT hold onto the bit (the metal part that goes into their mouth), only keep your hand right next to it.

○ If you are holding right next to the bit, you cannot get bitten if a horse is not happy with something that is going on. (Such as if a knee or elbow digs into a horse while the rider is mounting.)

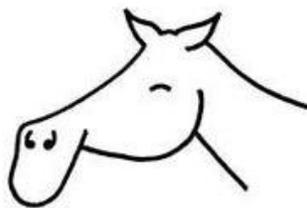
○ If you need to stop the horse, the first thing you should do is stop walking. If the horse does not stop when you do, then you should give a small tug on the rope. If they continue to walk, give additional half halts (tug and release), until they pay attention and stop. Make sure to release in between tugs. Do NOT just keep pulling on their face. Once they have stopped walking, you should stand in front of the horse and face them so that they know that they are not supposed to be going anywhere.

○ If a horse is leaning on you and making the circle small, use the hand that is closest to their face and push them out so that they go the way you want them to.

- What ear positions and body language means:



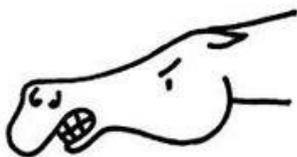
Interested



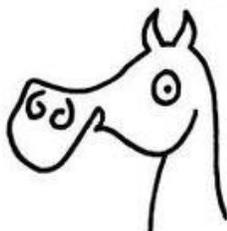
Contented



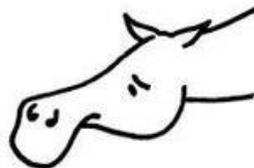
Submissive



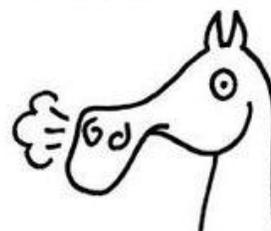
Aggressive, Angry



Excited



Ill or Depressed



Fearful

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



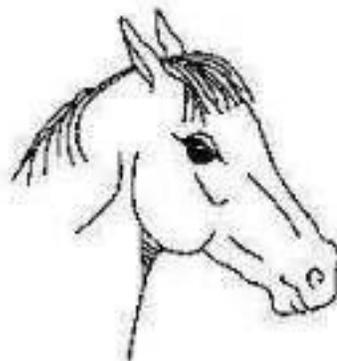
Ears turned back but relaxed
listening to his rider
or what's behind him



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



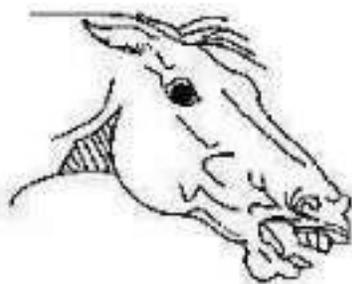
Ears pointed left and right
relaxed, paying attention
to the scenery on both sides.



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



Droopy ears
calm and resting,
horse may be dozing.

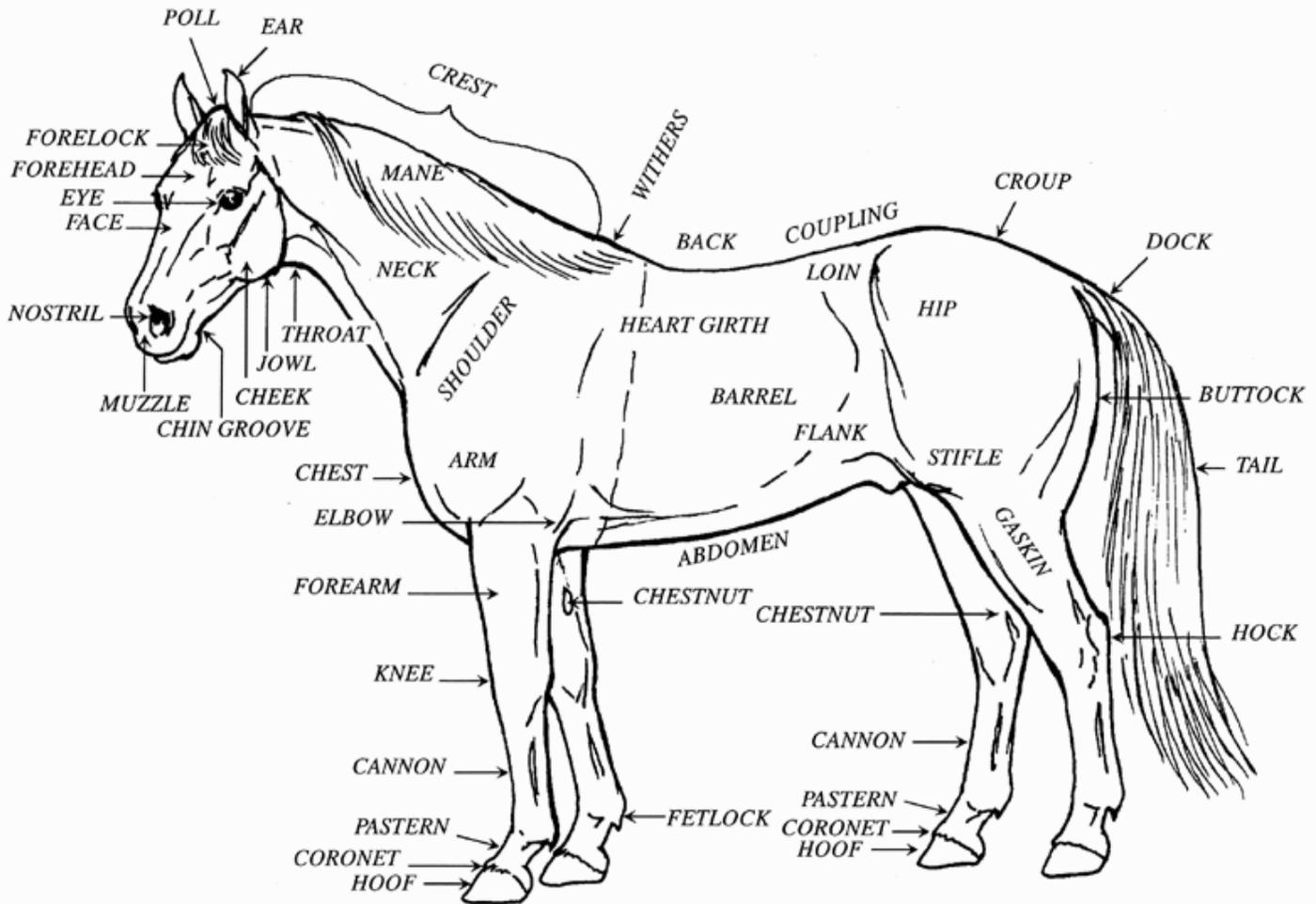


Ears flattened against neck
violently angry, in a fighting mood.
May fight, bite or kick.

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.

PARTS OF THE HORSE



Definition of Common Terms

Activity Board - A game we play using the big white board with colorful shapes. The spotter is asked to go behind the board to get the balls for the student to use. The leader must take the horse right next to the rail to get close enough to play. Spotter should not stay between the horse and rail. The student then takes the balls and places them in the different holes.

Base lesson - When the instructor is riding on the horse with the student. Can have spotter on both sides.



Belly foam - the long skinny foam that goes underneath the surcingles when the horse is tacked up.

Body Brush - brush used on the body of the horse. Can be stiff to soft bristles. Softer should be used on face and legs.



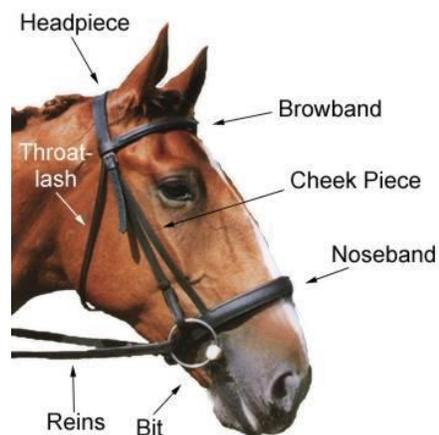
Bridle - The leather pieces that go on a horse's head to control them while riding or in lessons. The metal part that goes in their mouth is called a bit.



← bridle



← bit



Colic - one of the most common ailments of horses. It can refer to many different types of abdominal pain. Can be caused by gas, a stone in the intestines, sand in the stomach, impaction, twisting of the intestines, etc. Can be very serious and/or fatal.

Common Signs of Colic: pawing, biting or looking at the stomach, standing stretched out (while not peeing), laying down and getting up repeatedly. If you see a horse not acting normally, please tell a staff member immediately.

Curry comb - type of brush used to get the loose hair and dirt off of a horse. Should be used before a body brush.

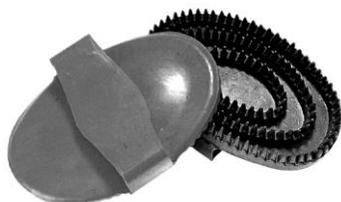


Figure 8 - When you walk the horse in a figure 8 around the arena. Normally done by circling around two poles in the middle of the arena. Make sure to leave enough room that the pole is not knocked down by the horse, instructor or spotter.

Grooming kit - bucket that has all of the necessary items to groom (or clean) a horse

"Group halt" - If yelled in the arena, everyone must stop. Might be due to a loose horse, action or thing that potentially can spook the horses, medical emergency, etc.

Half Halt - The half halt is used to get the attention of the horse or slow them down (without stopping or completing a full halt). Give a small tug on the lead and release. You might need to give a few tugs and releases in succession to get their attention.

Halter - The item that goes on a horse's head to lead them around or tie them up. Normally made of nylon. There is no portion that goes in the mouth. (Bridles are normally leather and do have the bit.)



Flank: This is a sensitive spot on the horse that you want to make sure the children do not kick or squeeze or lean on.

Hoof pick - used to clean the bottom of the horse's feet.



Longe line - long flat rope that attaches to the bridle to lead them during lessons. (Looks like a leash)



Lead rope - Rope that attaches to the halter to lead the horse with. (Most of ours are red to match the halter, but come in any color.) They attach to the halter at the bottom / under their head.



Mane & tail brush - Used to brush the main and tail. Looks like a person's hair brush.



Manure rake - Used to pick up horse poop. Can also be called an "apple picker" or pooper scooper.



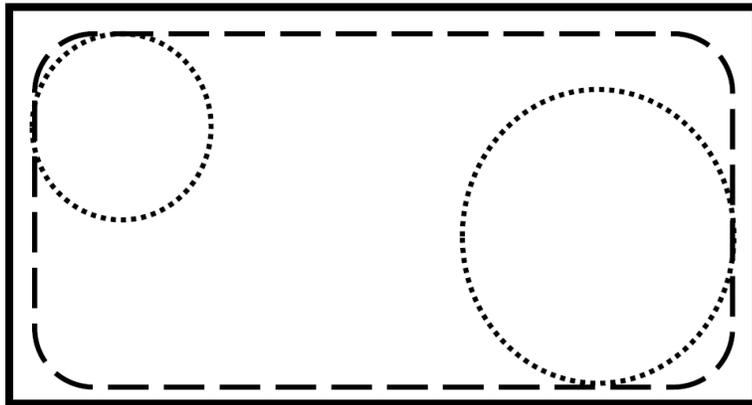
Pads - The pads that are used on the back of the horse where the student sits while riding. We use a set of 4 pads that contains 2 foam pads with a red wool pad on top and bottom.

Poop Patrol - When we need someone to clean up a pile of poop that a horse left in the arena.

Rail ("stay on the rail" or "go to the rail") - The rail is what we call the fence in the arena. If we say "stay on the rail" it means to stay along the fence. (Make sure not to squish the spotter if you have one.) If we say "go to the rail" it is likely after we have been spending time in the center of the arena.

Small Circle - When leading the horse, take the horse off the rail and make the horse move in a circle that is smaller than the entire arena. Sometimes this is done using half the arena or just a small section of it. Normally done to create more space between 2 horses.

- — — — — = Normal route when staying on the rail.
- = Possible routes to take when making a small circle.



Ring & pole - a game that we play with the students that has them work on their fine motor skills, listening skills, reaching off the midline, names of colors, etc. There is a wooden pole that the children are asked to put colorful rings onto.



Spotter - Person walking along the side of the horse, staying near the handles, and helping the student and instructor with whatever they need help with to ensure the child's safety and help when changing vaulting positions as necessary.

Surcingle - The large leather handles that go around the horse and keep the pads in place. We use this instead of a normal saddle.



Sweat scraper - Used to remove excess water off a horse after being hosed down.



Tack - The items that are put on a horse. This includes: pads, bridles, surcingle, saddle, etc.

Tacked Up - The horse has all of the tack on it that is necessary to ride.

Untack - Remove all of the pads, surcingle, bridle, etc. after they are finished for the day.

Tack room - Where all of the bridles, longe lines, pads, surcingles, grooming kits, soaps, etc. are kept.

Tighten the Girth - The girth is the part of the surcingle (or saddle) that goes all the way around the horse's stomach. There are buckles and holes, just like a belt would have, to tighten the girth. The instructor will normally check the girth to make sure it is tight before putting the student on. It can be checked periodically to make sure that it has not become loose. When loose, the tack is able to slide and can make riding much more difficult. If you are holding a horse when this is done, be careful, as some horses do not like it when the girth is tightened and might take it out on whoever is closest.

Vaulting - gymnastics on a moving horse.

Walk - The Instructor will ask the student to tell their horse to walk. If you are leading, you should wait until the student says or signs walk before you go.

Weaving around the poles - When leading the horse, the instructor will sometimes ask you to weave through the poles. This means turning right and left as you go around them in a zig zag fashion.

"Whoa" or "Ho" - Horse term for **STOP**. In order to ask for the horse to stop, many will hear the word and stop on their own. If they do not, stop walking. If they do not stop walking when you stop, give a quick tug on the lead. (Or more as necessary. Remember to release in between tugs.) Once they have stopped, you should stand in front of the horse and face them so that they know not to continue forwards.

Vaulting Positions

Basic seat - Basic seat can be done while sitting in any direction. It is the most basic of the vaulting exercises. The participant counts to 3 with their arms down, then puts their arms out and counts to 4. Both arms should extend outward in a straight line, fingers together, palm down, with the fingertips held level with the vaulter's eyes.



Mill - The mill is a 4 part exercise. It is when the student sits in each direction and completes a circle on the horse. The student starts out sitting forwards, then brings their leg over to sit **sideways**. They then bring their leg over again to sit **backwards**. They bring their leg over again to sit sideways in the direction they had not yet been sitting and then finish by sitting forwards again. This exercise can be done all at once, or in pieces. It can also be done while walking or at a halt. It is normally done counter-clockwise (starting to the left), but can be done in the other directions as well. When working on good form, the leg should be kept straight with a pointed toe.



Forwards



Sideways (to the inside of the circle)



Backwards



Sideways (to the outside of the circle)

Backwards – When facing the tail, it is important to make sure that the student has both legs on the pads and not in the flank. It is a bigger stretch to sit backwards, rather than forwards. Some students might not be able to do this position. When sitting backwards, the hands should be on the handles for most abled body students and their knuckles should also be facing the tail. Some students who are working on their balance or have short arms, will keep their hands on the horse in front of them.



Table - The student starts by facing backwards and placing both feet flat on the croup, while still holding both handles. They then raise their bottom off the horse and should be putting equal weight in both arms and feet. Hands should be as they normally are when sitting backwards, with the knuckles facing the tail.

Knees (or quad)-

A quad, or as we more commonly call it knees, is when the student is on the horse on all four hands and knees. Normally both hands should be holding onto the handles. The knees should be far enough back so that they are able to put equal weight in both hands and knees and should not be sitting on their heels. Their bottom should be up in the air. A **free kneel** is when the student stands on their knees and puts both hands out like in the basic seat. Knees can also be done while facing backwards, or when on the neck.



Quad or Knees



Free Kneel



Free Kneel backwards

Prince - The prince is when you are in the quad and then stand on one foot. The knee should be in between the two arms. The leg that is kneeling should be far enough back to give support, and the leg that is lying on the horse is normally at an angle to give better balance. When the arms are raised in a prince position it is called a **Free Prince**.



Prince



Free Prince

Stoop - When the student is standing on two feet on the back of the horse while holding the handles.



Stand (or Free Stand) - When the vaulter is standing on both feet on the back of the horse and puts their arms out. They should keep a slight bend in the knees to be used as shock absorbers.



Flag - Vaulter is up on their hands and knees. A half flag means that one leg is out straight behind them. In a full flag the opposite arm is also stretched forwards. It should be a straight line from the tip of the fingers to the tip of their opposite toes.



Flag



Half-flag

Lay back - When the student lies backwards on the horse. Hands should hold onto the pads at their sides.



Candle - The vaulter lays back on the horse and puts both legs vertical and together, with toes pointed. Student should be holding on to the pads with their hands.



Neck - When sitting on the pads in front of the handles. (You can also do a mill when on the neck, or go up on your knees backwards.) Depending on the size of the student and the horse, this is not always a possible position.



Cossack Hang - Vaulters sits sideways and then lays back over the horse. Instructor (or spotter) should hold the participants leg to ensure safety. If doing a full hang, then both arms should be above the head (reaching towards the ground) and one leg might be pointed up. Often, we only perform a partial cossack hang and keep both feet down. Some students need to work up to letting go with the hands as well.



Finish- When the lesson is over, each student is supposed to complete a finish. They are to stand with feet together, count to 3 with arms down, then hold their arms out for a count of 4 (just like when doing a basic seat). Fingers should be together and palms down. They should step far enough away from the horse so that if it should take a step, it would not step on the students' feet.

