



VOLUNTEER'S GUIDE TO LESSONS

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This guide will take you through what you need to know in order to join lessons with the riders, staff, and experienced volunteers. You will learn how to best lead the horses, sidewalk/spot the riders, support the instructors, and the various vaulting positions to expect.

LEADING THE HORSES

This is key role in our lessons as you must be aware of the horse, the rider, and be ready for incoming direction from the instructor. We often stop the horse from moving during lessons for the children to practice their vaulting exercises or to reposition them. Understanding the following will make for a smooth ride for all!



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 the horse's 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
- Try to keep the circle as big as possible, but remember that there is the leader, the horse, and possibly another person spotting. Do not squish them (or the student's leg) against the fence
- You should wait until the student says or signs "walk" before you go. 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, tries to nibble, or are acts 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
- 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

SIDEWALKING/SPOTTING

As the Sidewalker AKA Spotter, you are responsible for the rider at all times to ensure they are balanced on the horse and feel safe. Depending on the rider's abilities, one or two sidewalkers may be required.

When only one sidewalker is needed per lesson/per horse, they will be on the right side of the rider while the leader walks on the left side of the horse.

When there are two sidewalkers required, you may be on either side of the horse. Your instructor will advise you where to focus.

If directed by the instructor, give support at the thigh and/or ankle. You may also need to hold the waistband of the rider's pants to stabilize them. Try not to push on the horse or put pressure on the rider's leg. The horse might think he is being signaled to go faster.

If the rider slips in one direction or another, help the rider regain position in the center of the horse. If necessary, halt, reposition and continue lesson.

As mentioned in the Intro Guide, limit conversations during class. Direct the rider's attention to the instructor. If a problem arises, tell the instructor so that they can take appropriate action.



VAULTING POSITIONS

Basic Seat

The Basic Seat can be done while sitting in any direction. It is the most standard vaulting exercise. 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.





The 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 Position

When facing the tail, it is important to make sure that the student has both legs on the pads and not in the flank (see Glossary). 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/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 foot that is standing should be forwards, often with their toes touching the surcingle (handles). The leg that is kneeling should be far enough back to give support, and is normally placed on a diagonal 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 handle



Stand/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.



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 if possible. 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

Vaulter 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.



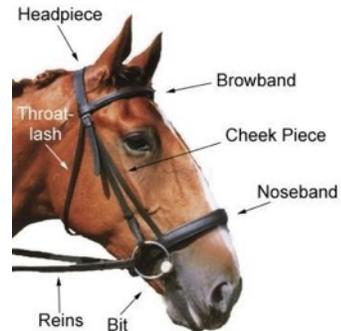
Finish

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.



GLOSSARY

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.



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.

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.)



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.

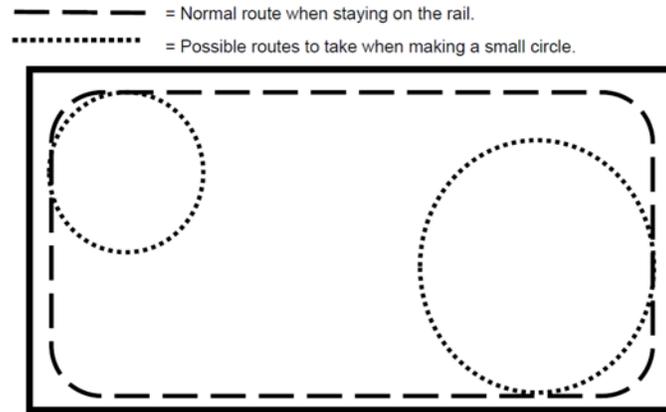


Longe line - long flat rope that attaches to the bridle to lead them during lessons. (Looks like a leash)



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.



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/sidewalker - 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



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.

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

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

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 the horse does 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.