

Groundwork

Approaching a Horse




When you approach a horse, it will respond to your position, gestures and tone of voice. Therefore you should always approach a horse calmly, confidently, carefully and avoid sudden movements. Speak to the horse before approaching. Advance in an arc towards its left shoulder (never from behind as it may not see you and you may get kicked). Once you are near it, stroke its shoulder to reassure it. At first stay on the left side. A nervous handler causes a nervous unsafe horse.

Haltering a Horse

If catching a horse in a stall, close the gate behind you, but do not latch it. Leaving it unlatched means that, if something happens that you must leave the stall in a hurry, you can do so quickly and safely.

Halters should not be left on horses. Halters may catch on fences, branches or brush and the horse, unable to free itself, may panic and get injured. Hooks on halters can also get caught in a horse's eyes. If halters are left on a loose horse they must be checked daily.

Before you approach your horse to catch it, prepare the halter by:

-  unbuckling the crownpiece.
-  folding the lead rope in half and holding it over your left arm, making sure the end is not dragging where it can trip you.
-  slipping your left hand through the bottom of the noseband and resting the halter on your wrist.

Holding the halter in this manner will free your right hand for holding out to touch your horse.

1. Approach your horse towards the left (near) shoulder and talk to it.
2. Stroke your horse and approach the head. Position yourself just behind its head. You may need to hold your horse steady with your right hand under its neck.
3. Place your left hand under your horse's neck and your right hand over its neck. Reach with your right hand to grasp the lead rope you are holding over your left arm and pull the lead rope over your horse's neck. Move the lead rope to just behind the ears of your horse.



4 - H Horse Project Manual - Groundwork

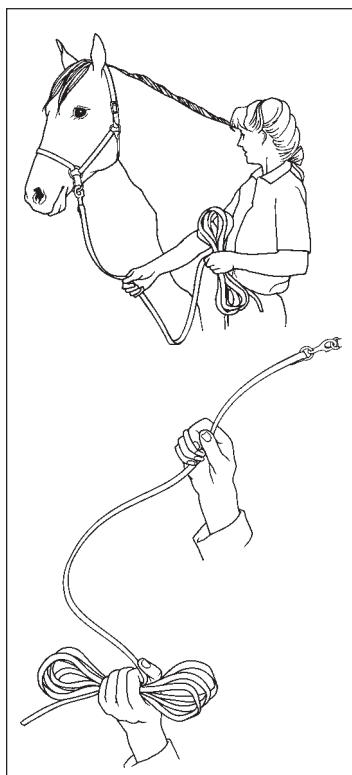
4. To hold the lead rope in place, wrap its loose end around the part of the lead rope attached to the halter.
5. Now hold the crownpiece of the halter in your left hand and reach under your horse's neck and place your right hand over its neck.
6. Grab the crownpiece with your right hand and move the left hand to the left check buckle, holding your horse steady with your right arm.
7. Slowly snag your horse's nose by using your left hand to manoeuvre the halter.
8. Pull the halter up in place and buckle the crownpiece and secure.
9. Slide the lead rope off your horse's neck.
10. Hold the lead rope with your right hand, about 12 cm (six inches) from the halter and fold any extra length into your left hand.
11. Check to see that the halter fits correctly.

Leading a Horse

Horses walking on top of the handler during leading is one of the biggest and most common problems.

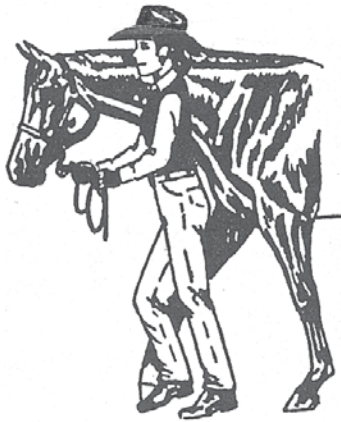
The horse should stay back. A horse should learn from the very beginning that the handler has an area of personal space in which he is never allowed to enter unless asked.

It is safest to lead a horse from the near (left) side. Always lead with a halter and shank because they provide better control. It is unsafe to lead a horse by just the halter or with just a rope around the neck.



1. Hold the lead rope with your right hand, approximately 12 cm (six inches) from the halter. Do not hold the chain if there is one on the shank.
2. The remaining length of the lead is folded and held neatly and safely in the left hand. Make sure there is not a sagging loop in the leadshank that hangs below your knees. Never coil excess leadshank around your hands.
3. Lead the horse from its left side, positioning yourself between its head and shoulders. Move with the horse, do not drag it. The ears and eyes of your horse tell you what it may be thinking, so it is important to watch the head as you lead a horse.

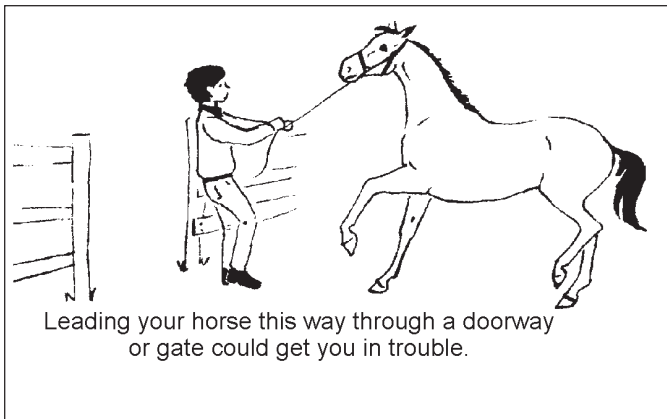
4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - G r o u n d w o r k



DO

4. To move a horse forward, you may give the verbal command “walk”. Give the horse a moment to understand the command, then walk forward yourself. Don’t look at the horse as you move it forward, as this will often cause it to resist moving.
5. If the horse won’t move, then try pushing it one step sideways before moving forward.
6. Don’t lead the horse from behind the shoulder as you will have less control and could possibly be kicked.
7. To halt your horse, give a verbal command “whoa” and apply pressure on the halter back towards the horse’s chest. If it fails to stop, give a stronger hand aid.
8. To back a horse, face the direction that you want the horse to move. Never stand directly in front of it as you could get injured. Don’t change hands on the shank. Give a verbal command to “back” and apply slight pressure on the halter, on a give and take basis, towards the horse’s chest. Walk with the horse as it backs.

9. To turn a horse to the right, push the horse’s head to the right so that the horse is forced to turn on its haunches. For safety reasons, horses should always be turned to the right (away from you). This will prevent you from being stepped on or bumped by your horse if it is frightened while turning.



Leading your horse this way through a doorway or gate could get you in trouble.

DON'T

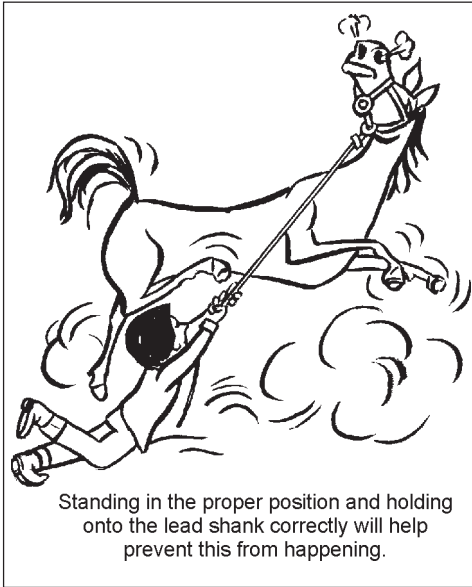


DON'T

10. In some circumstances it may be necessary to turn your horse to the left. To do this safely, take the lead shank in your left hand. Place your right hand on the ribs of your horse and, as you turn the horse’s head towards you, apply pressure on the ribs to push his ribs and hind quarter away and keep your horse from stepping on you. Correctly turning to the left is an acceptable way to regain control of a horse that is excited or upset.



4 - H Horse Project Manual - Groundwork



When leading a horse through a doorway, make sure the door is open and will not close as you move through it. Slow down to a walk and move forward from your horse, but still to the side of its line of travel. Proceed calmly through the door then resume your position at the horse's shoulder.

If you have a mature horse that does not want to lead, be sure that you walk beside it. Walking in front of it and looking at the horse while leading it may make the horse more resistant to moving forward and can be dangerous. Have someone assist you by standing to the side of the horse and encouraging it to walk forward with a long whip, if necessary.

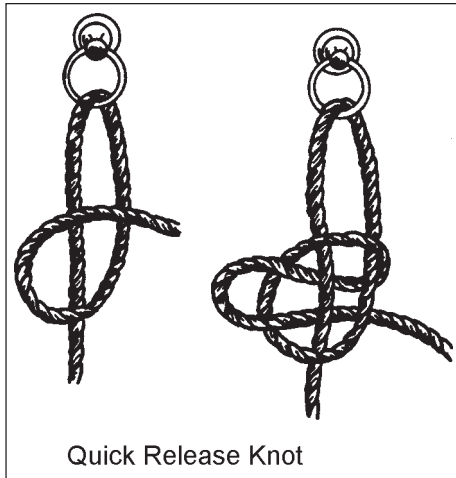
If your horse rears while it is being led, don't stand directly in front of it. Hold the rope firmly and release the tension as soon as the horse's feet hit the ground. Release your hand nearest to the halter so you won't be lifted off the ground. Stand to the side, look ahead and walk forward. The shank should be quite long (longer than normal) in case the horse rears up and drags the shank out of the handler's hands. A knot in the end of the lead shank will help prevent the shank from slipping through your hands.

How do I prevent my horse from running out of its stall while being led?

This is a rather annoying and dangerous habit which should be stopped as early as possible. Consider this problem from the perspective of the horse; why is the horse doing this? The horse may have been injured in the past as a result of going through a doorway. Be sure to keep the doorway as wide as possible, making sure that the door does not slide closed while you are leading the horse through it. Most horses are widest at the hips and if the doorway is tight at the shoulder, most horses will panic. To help train the horse that the doorway is not a threat, stand it in the doorway while you feed it some grain and groom it.

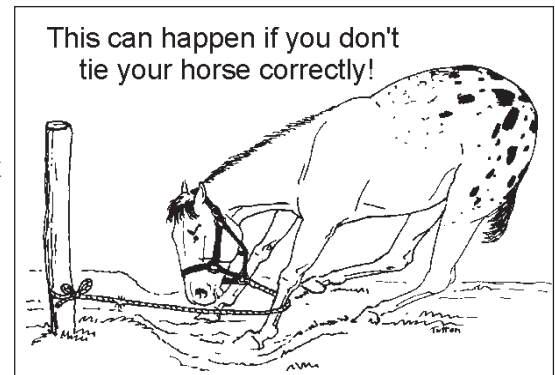
Tying a Horse

You should tie a horse only with a halter; never with a bridle or bit.



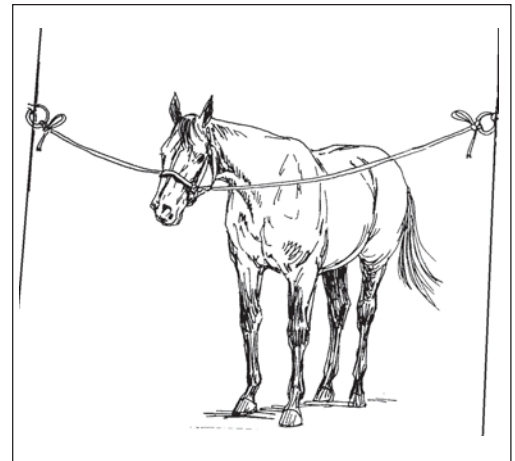
Make sure that the lead shank is correctly fastened to the centre bottom ring of the halter noseband. Find a strong and secure object (post) to tie your horse to. Never tie your horse to a wire, loose pole, plank, gate, end gate or anything that moves. Tie at about the height of the withers of the horse or higher. Wrap the lead rope around the post, then tie it with a quick release knot. This is a safe knot because it can be easily and quickly untied if necessary. Never tie a horse too short (it may panic and pull) nor too long (it could turn around or catch its leg in the rope and injure itself). A length of about two feet between the post and the halter is

considered safe under most circumstances.



Cross-tying

Cross ties are another common way to secure a horse. Cross ties are usually two ropes tied high up on each side of the walkway in the stable. Each rope usually has a snap or clip to attach to the halter. The snaps attach to the side rings on the nose band of the halter.



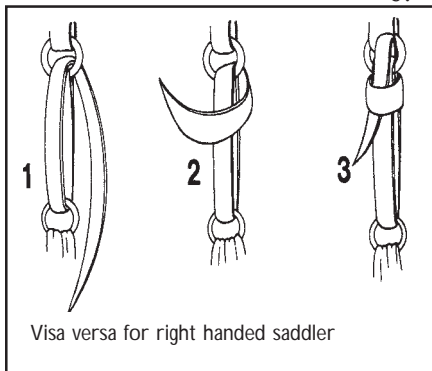
Saddling

Tie your horse securely with a halter. Never tie a horse with the bridle reins. Groom your horse well to remove all straw or other bedding from its hair. Always be sure to brush the back, withers and area where the girth will be fastened. Shake out the saddle blanket or pad before you place it on your horse to be sure that there are no straw or twigs on it.

4 - H Horse Project Manual - Groundwork

Western Saddling

1. Set the blanket on your horse, ahead of where you want it and then pull it back into place, smoothing out the hair underneath. If using two blankets, place the top blanket back about 2.5 centimetres (one inch) from the front of the bottom blanket. This will help to hold the blankets in place.
2. On the saddle, lift the right stirrup and cinch out of the way so that you don't have to lift the saddle as high and they won't get caught under the saddle. Hook the right stirrup on the horn of the saddle.
3. Lift the saddle by grasping the gullet and centre of the back of the saddle. Lift it high and set the saddle gently on your horse's back. Settle it into place by rocking it back and forth. Lift the blanket up under the gullet of the saddle to improve the ventilation under the blanket and check to see that the saddle blanket is even on both sides and has at least four to eight centimetres (two to four inches) in front of the saddle.
4. Go to the right side of your horse and set down the stirrup and cinch, ensuring that the cinch is not twisted. Be careful that the cinch doesn't fall down and bang your horse's leg.



5. Go back to the left side and lift the stirrup out of your way. Standing near the left shoulder of your horse, reach under the girth of your horse to pull the cinch towards you. Make two wraps with the latigo and tie (as illustrated) or buckle the cinch. If using the tongue in the cinch ring, be sure to lock it by pulling down on the top wrap of the latigo. Tighten it so you can fit three fingers (inserted flat) between the cinch and your horse's belly. If you are tightening a cinch on a strange horse watch for signs of uneasiness. A "cinchy" horse can be very dangerous (they will often throw themselves over backwards or sink to the ground in a panic attack).
6. If you have a back cinch, always do it up last, fastened so two to three fingers will fit (inserted sideways) between the cinch and your horse's belly. Check to ensure that a hobble strap is attached tying the back cinch to the front cinch. This keeps the back cinch from flapping back into the flank areas of your horse.
7. If you have a breast collar, attach it and tighten it so that a fist can fit between the breast collar and the point of shoulder.
8. Walk your horse and recheck the tightness of the cinch before mounting.

4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - G r o u n d w o r k

English Saddling

1. Make sure that the stirrup irons are pushed up and that the girth is undone on both sides of the saddle and is lying on the seat of the saddle, dirty side up, with buckles pushed through the stirrups.
2. Hold the saddle on your left arm with the pommel facing towards your elbow.
3. Stand at your horse's left shoulder and with your right hand, lay the saddle pad on the horse's withers, making sure that it is flat and that the straps are on top.
4. Slide the saddle pad into place by pulling it slightly towards the rear in the direction of the horse's hair. The saddle pad should be the right size for the saddle being used.
5. Grasp the saddle with your right hand on the cantle and your left hand on the pommel and place it on the saddle pad which is sitting on your horse.
6. Attach the straps of the saddle pad to the girth straps on both sides of the saddle and check that the knee rolls and saddle flaps on both sides are flat.
7. Slide the saddle and adjust the pad so that there is no friction nor pressure on the withers, lifting the pad into the gullet of the saddle for ventilation.
8. Walk around the horse to its far side and fasten the end of the girth to the girth straps on the right side of the saddle. There are normally three billet straps on an english saddle. It is common to fasten the buckles to the two outside straps, leaving the center one undone. If a horse is built in such a way as that the saddles slides forward, it is recommended to fasten the girth buckles to the front two girth straps on the saddle.
9. Return to the near side and stand at your horse's left shoulder. Face the rear of your horse and bend over to grasp the loose end of the girth with your left hand.
10. Pull the girth through the loop of your martingale or breastplate (if you are using one). Any such loops should be positioned at the center of the girth.
11. Bring the girth up, well back of your horse's elbow, buckle it in the same manner as the off side, tightening it slightly. You will need to tighten it more before mounting.



4 - H Horse Project Manual - Groundwork

Smoothing Out the Wrinkles

After saddling, you should pull the horse's forelegs forward from the knee to smooth out and bring forward the skin underneath the cinch. This will help to prevent pinching and galling. Bend the leg forward at the knee by clasping your hands behind the knee and lifting the leg one at a time. You can also achieve the same result by leading your horse in a tight circle in both directions.

Unsaddling

The steps for taking any saddle off a horse are the same as for saddling, only done in reverse order. Some important points to remember:

For Western Saddles:

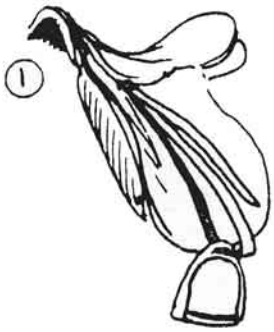
- 🐾 First undo any auxiliary equipment that attaches to the saddle (martingale, breast collar).
- 🐾 If you have a back cinch, be sure to undo it first, before the front cinch.
- 🐾 Once you have undone any cinches, tie them up on the far side so they will not drag in the dirt.
- 🐾 Do not pull the saddle over the wither without lifting the saddle as you remove it as this would cause discomfort for your horse.

For English Saddles:

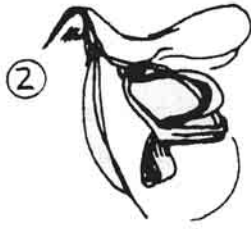
- 🐾 Push up both stirrup irons as high as possible on the stirrup leathers and pull the stirrup leathers through the stirrup irons.
- 🐾 Unbuckle the girth on both sides, lay it over the saddle, dirty side up, and pass the ends through the irons on each side.

For both Western and English saddles, remove the saddle and saddle blanket (or pad) together. Store your saddle in a natural position with the blanket (or pad) on top, lying with its dirty side up so that it has a chance to dry for its next use. Wash the pad often.

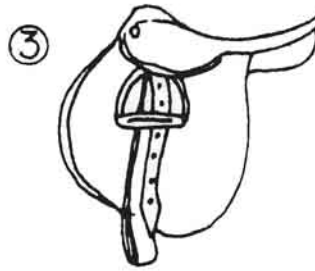
HOW TO RUN UP ENGLISH STIRRUPS



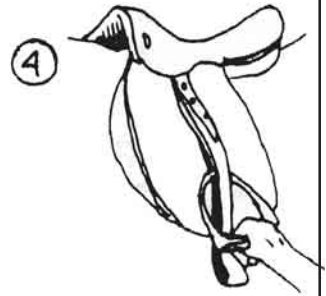
1 The stirrup iron is slid up under the skirt on the underneath part of the stirrup leather.



2 The stirrup leathers are then pulled through the iron.



3 Be sure that the stirrup iron is run up so that it is snug under the skirt and will not come down.



4 Stirrup leathers are pulled down for riding.

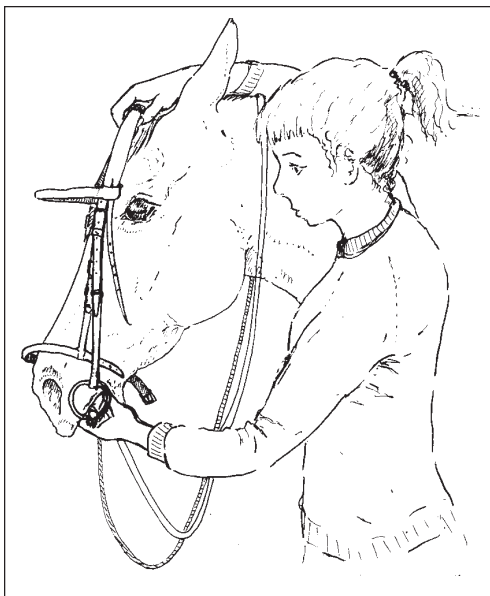
Bridling

If your horse will not open its mouth, don't ram the bit against the incisor teeth. Rather, run your left thumb up and down the bars until it opens its mouth. Pressing on the side of the bar with your thumb may also help.

There are two accepted methods of bridling a horse. Some horses may respond better to one method than the other.

Method One

1. Untie your horse.
2. Undo the halter buckle and slip the halter off your horse's nose and rebuckle it around your horse's neck.
3. Hold your bridle with your left hand, laying the reins over your left arm or shoulder so they won't get in the way or place the reins over the horse's head around the neck to keep them from falling on the ground.
4. Place your right hand over the poll of your horse between his ears, and grasp the crownpiece of the bridle.
5. With your left hand, spread the bit between your thumb and second finger. Push your thumb inside his mouth to encourage the horse to open it. While pulling the bridle up with your right hand, gently place the bit in the horse's mouth. Open the mouth by inserting your thumb in the interdental space (where the lips end). Pull up on the bridle until the bit rests on the bars of your horse's mouth.
6. Change hands and hold the crownpiece up and in front of your horse's ears with your left hand. Gently pull the headstall over the ears, one ear at a time, guiding the ears forward under the crownpiece with your right hand. Folding the ears forward, when placing equipment over them, is more gentle on their ears.



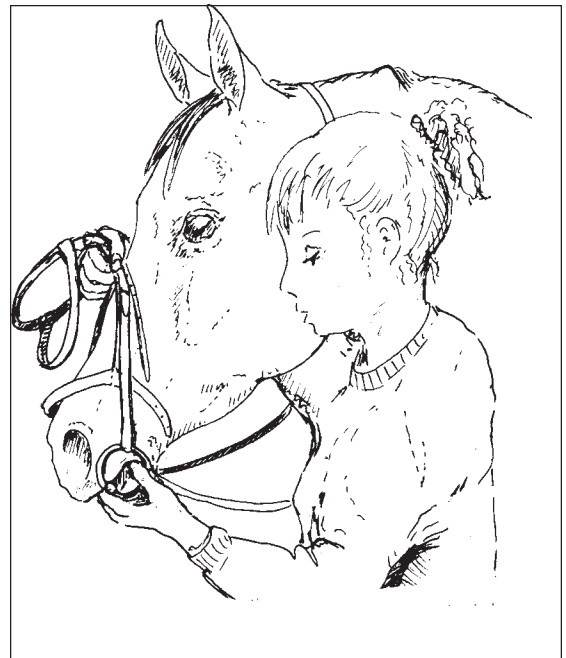
4 - H Horse Project Manual - Groundwork

7. Adjust the browband so that it is straight and buckle up the throatlatch (if you have either of these). Between the throatlatch and your horse's throat, you should be able to fit three to four fingers (or a fist sideways).
8. Fasten the cavesson or noseband on an English bridle so that one or two fingers can be inserted between the cavesson and the nose, with cavesson inside the bridle cheek pieces.
9. If using a curb chain or strap, adjust it so that it is not twisted and so that two fingers can be inserted between the strap and the horse's jaw.
10. Undo the halter and place it in a safe place.

Method Two

This method is often used by shorter riders with tall horses OR for harder to bridle horses (to allow more head control)

1. Same as method one, except place your right arm under your horse's jaw, around its nose and grasp the cheekpieces of the bridle (Step 4). Remember to pull up with your right hand.



4 - H H o r s e P r o j e c t M a n u a l - G r o u n d w o r k

Unbridling

Improper bridling and unbridling can cause head shyness.

When removed too quickly the bit can catch on the horse's teeth. Consequently, he throws his head up and pulls away, temporarily avoiding the unpleasantness.

1. Buckle a halter around your horse's neck, just behind its ears, so that you have control if it tries to move away.
2. Place the leadshank and reins over your left arm, being careful not to have them dragging on the ground.
3. Unbuckle the throatlatch and noseband (if you have one).
4. Hold the crownpiece of the bridle in your hand. Remove it, one ear at a time, by gently pulling the crownpiece; first over one ear, then over the other.
5. Once the ears are released from the crownpiece, continue holding tension on the bridle with your hand to hold the bit in your horse's mouth.
6. Slowly release the tension on the bridle and allow the bit to slip gently out of your horse's mouth. Be careful that the bit does not bang any teeth.
7. Once the bit is out of the mouth, hold the bridle in your left hand and continue to halter your horse.

Lunging

Lunging is a common way to both train a green horse or to exercise a schooled horse. When training a green horse, lunging allows the handler to introduce many new things to the horse without having to be on its back. You would start out with little or no equipment on except for the halter or lunging cavesson and splint boots or leg wraps. Then you progress to where the horse would be lunged with the saddle, bridle, leg protectors and possibly side reins. The goal of lunging should be to move the horse forward into the bridle or halter with upward and downward transitions in all three gaits, with the horse responding in a relaxed manner to the voice and body aids. Lunging improves a horse's balance in both directions and teaches contact with the bit or halter. Lunging can also be a safe way to exercise an injured horse that needs to move. It is also a safe way to remove excess energy before riding. **When learning to lunge, always get the assistance of an experienced horseperson.**

Lunge in an area with soft, even footing where your horse will not be at risk for injury. Avoid heavy, deep or uneven footing. Do not lunge on too small a circle. A small circle makes it hard for your horse to stay balanced, making him much more likely to stress his lower legs.

Never lunge on a circle that is small enough to put you in kicking range.



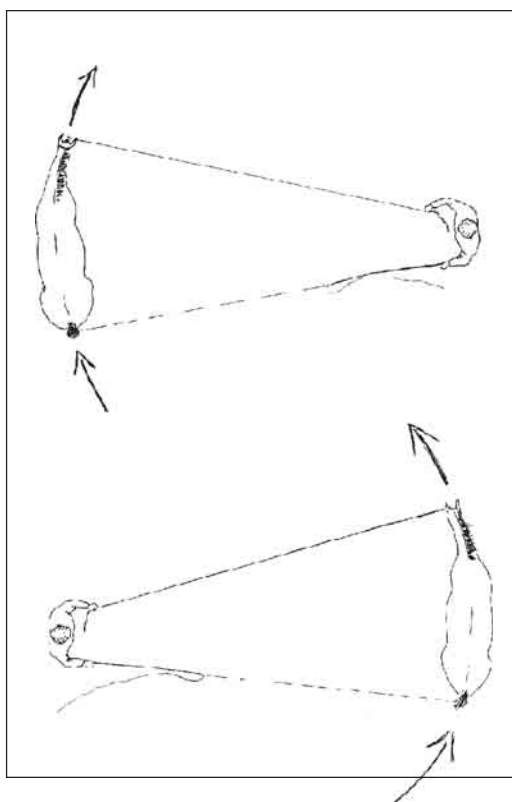
4 - H Horse Project Manual - Groundwork

Equipment

- 🐾 A well fitted halter or lunging cavesson.
- 🐾 Lunge line or rope (at least 15 - 20 feet in length)
- 🐾 Lunge whip (total length including lash should be at least 12 feet long).
- 🐾 Gloves
- 🐾 Splint boots or wraps

Teaching a Horse to Lunge

There are many ways to teach your horse to lunge. The following is one method.

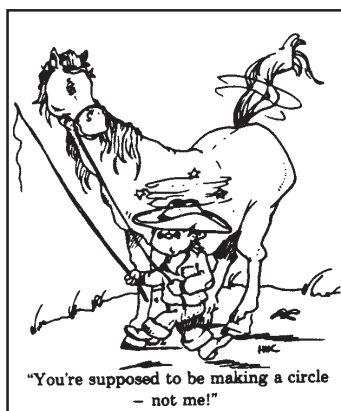


When you are teaching your horse to lunge make sure the footing is suitable. Use a corral or small area where the horse cannot run away. If this is not possible use bales or heavy poles to mark your circle. The first thing to teach your horse is to go around you. To lunge a horse to the left (counter-clockwise), hold the shank in your left hand. Hold it in your right hand when the horse is going to the right (clockwise). Hold the whip in the other hand. Excess coils may be held in the same hand as the whip to avoid getting them tangled in your feet.

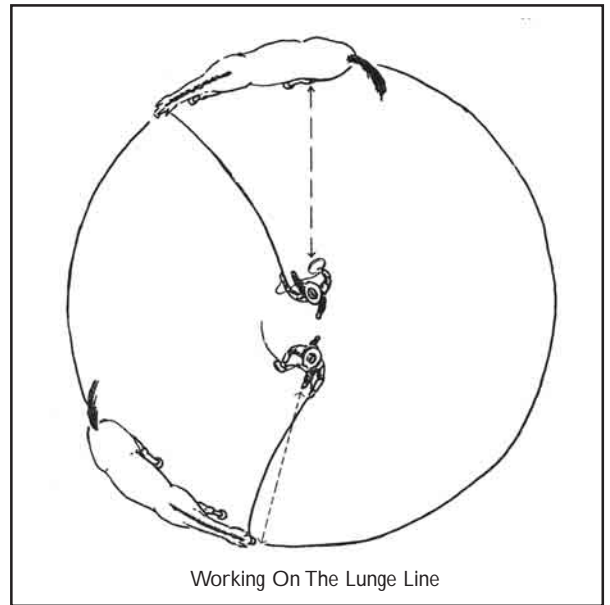
To teach your horse to move around you, hold the shank in one hand and the whip in the other. Move back from the shoulder of the horse to its flank. Tap the horse on the hindquarters with the butt end of the whip. Tell the horse to walk making sure that you stay opposite the flank of the horse or it may stop and face you. Keep doing this until the horse moves around you on at least 15 feet of line, without stopping. After the horse has gone around several times let it stop, saying "whoa". Praise the horse for obeying and change directions. When reversing, either walk out to the horse and reverse him or do it

on the end of the line. Do not pull him in to the center. Do this every day until the horse easily walks around you.

To teach the horse to trot, tap the horse with the end of the whip and say "trot". For canter or lope, do the same while saying "canter" or "lope". Because both lope and whoa are one syllable "o" sounding words, western riders often use the aid "lope on" so as not to confuse the horse. Another method is to "cluck" for a trot and "kiss" for a lope.



Horses understand the tone of your voice, not the words, so changing the tone of your voice when asking for a gait helps the horse understand. Speak loudly, clearly and firmly and use the whip and lunge line to reinforce the change of gait you want.



Restraints

An important requirement of anyone in charge of a horse is the ability to restrain, ie, to hold it in a controlled manner under various conditions. The degree and type of restraint varies with the horse's level of training, maturity, temperament and the situation.

Horses do not quietly accept everything we ask. It is sometimes necessary to physically control a horse before any work can be done. This can be done for veterinary work, training and farrier work. Any method of controlling the physical movement of the horse is called restraining. It ranges from tying the horse to physically laying the horse on the ground. By controlling the physical movement of the horse, you reduce the chance of injury to the horse and the people around it.

The form of restraint that is used will depend on the situation and the temperament of the horse. Often a nervous horse will stand more quietly in a strange situation than a normally quiet horse.

Always begin with minimal restraint and, if the horse does not respond, progress from there. Keep in mind that some horses with severe restraint will become uncontrollable to the point where sedation by a vet will be necessary.

Twitches

Nose twitches are used to distract the horse while other work is being done. It can be used to reduce the risk of injury to the horse or handler, to administer medicine and for safety and control. Not all horses respond to a twitch, therefore twitches should be used by a skilled horse person when all other methods are not successful.

Hobbles

Hobbles are another method of restricting the horse's movement. Make sure you get the assistance of an experienced horse person, to help you teach your horse to hobble if he is not "*hobble-broke*".

