

Homework for the New Rider

**This packet is designed to walk the new student through the process of getting a horse ready. It will also offer a few helpful hints and tricks that other students have learned along the way. You will also find diagrams of the horse, saddle, and bridle to provide a visual aid and help with learning terms. **

Catching your horse:

- Always approach your horse slowly on his left side, and make sure they see you coming. If you approach too quickly or surprise your horse they may kick or run off. This could hurt you and make it difficult to catch your horse.
- Slowly slide the lead rope over your horse's neck and grab the end of the rope under the neck to hold them still. (This is very important. Without the lead rope your horse could wander off before you have a chance to put the halter on.)
- Your instructor will demonstrate how to lead your horse.
- Please make sure that there are no other horses blocking the gate when you bring your horse out. Even though all the school horses are friends **they can still kick each other!!** You can swing the end of your lead rope and wave your hands to ask the horse to move. If they still won't move ask someone for help. This also applies to putting your horse away.

Tying your horse:

- The reason it is so important that we tie our horses to the twine loops is that in case our horse spooks or pulls back the loop will easily break and free the horse. If the horse is tied directly to the pole and they pull back, they could seriously injure themselves or you. If a horse spooks or pulls back while attached to the twine, step back and let the horse go.
- It is also very important that we **never** tie our horses using the reins. If the horse were to pull back, the bit could cause serious damage to their mouths.
- Please be aware of how close you are tying your horse to others. To prevent kicking all horses should have at least two ties between them.
- Your instructor will show you how to tie the particular quick-release knot that we use. When tying this knot make sure the length is about the distance from your hand to your elbow (for adults) or from your hand to your armpit (for kids). This prevents the horses from wandering, eating, or tripping over the rope while we are getting them ready.

Brushing your horse:

- It is important to take your time when grooming your horse. This is a time to clean them, but also a time to check for any cuts, bumps, or abnormalities. If you notice **anything** out of the ordinary please notify the instructor.
- Grooming is also a time to get to know your horse and bond with them. Handling a horse on the ground is just as important as in the saddle.
- The three primary brushes that we use in grooming are a rubber curry comb, hard dandy brush and soft dandy brush.
- The rubber curry is the brush that we use first. This comb gets up the loose and caked on dirt so that we can then brush it away with the other two brushes. When using the rubber curry, you brush in the direction of their hair growth using a circular motion. This brush can cover every part of the horse except for the face and legs.

-Next we use the hard dandy brushes. This brush gets off the dirt that the rubber curry comb brought up. Brush the horse in the direction of their hair growth using a flicking motion with your wrist to really sweep off the dust and dirt. This brush is o.k. to use on the horse's legs.

-Finally, the soft dandy brush is used to sweep off the remaining dirt and dust and to give your horse that extra shine. This brush is used in the same way as the hard dandy brush. This brush is o.k. to use on your horse's face.

-Please make sure that dirt is removed from **all** areas of your horse (including their legs). Most importantly, make sure to clean where the saddle and saddle pad will go. If these are put on top of dirt, it can irritate the horse's skin and cause sores.

***If your horse is kind enough to carry you around on their backs, please be kind enough to groom them thoroughly and gently.**

Picking your horse's hooves:

-It is very important that we pick out our horses hooves **before and after** we ride. This removes any rocks that may hurt our horse's feet, and also prevents an infection in our horse's feet called Thrush. This is caused from the horse having moisture and mud stuck in their feet.

-Start with a front foot first (doesn't matter which). Stand next to the foot facing the rear of your horse. Slide your hand inward and down the horse's leg until your hand is cupped around your horse's hoof.

- If your horse won't lift its foot, use your body to lean into your horse's shoulder. This will shift the horse's balance; making it easier to lift. Squeezing the tendon on the back of the horse's leg will also help.

-Once your horse has lifted its foot it is important to **really** hold on. Most horses will try to set their foot down after a few moments, but keep a good grip and don't let them set it down. It will make it easier to hold the horse's foot if you let the leg rest on your thigh (especially the back feet, they can get quite heavy).

-**Do not squat down or kneel by a horse.** If the horse makes a sudden movement while we are kneeling we will not have enough time to move aside.

-**Always** keep your feet positioned to the side of the horse. It has happened more than once that a horse has set its foot down on a rider's foot. As you might have guessed, this hurts! Be aware of where your feet are.

-When picking the feet hold the pick backwards and pick away from yourself. This will help you get more leverage, and will also avoid hitting you if the pick slips.

-Don't be afraid to really dig in there! Most debris is really packed in. You will know when you've reached the bottom when you can see the 'V' shape of the horse's frog. (Your instructor will explain this)

Saddling your horse:

-After your horse has been brushed and its feet have been picked out you can get your blanket, saddle and girth from the tack room.

-Start with the blanket. From the left side, slowly and gently place the blanket on your horse. If it is one of the newer blankets with the patches of black vinyl, the front of your blanket is the side with the black patch (this side goes toward the horse's withers). Make sure your pad is even on both sides, and as a rule of thumb, the front of the blanket should be in line with the center of the horse's shoulder.

- Next, gently place the saddle on top of the pad. It's good to make sure that the pad sticks out at least six inches in front of the saddle so that it doesn't slide back during the ride. I also like to wiggle the pad up into the pommel of the saddle (that's the front part of the saddle that is shaped like a hump). This also helps to hold the pad in place and provides the horse with an air pocket.
- Finding a girth that fits your horse can be tricky. Ideally, you should find your girth in its designated section (small, medium, or large), but with so many students, the girths often get mixed together. You may need to check all of the sections.
- The leather girths have the size (in inches) marked near the buckle. 52" is the longest that we have, and should fit the largest horses.
- All of our girths, aside from the string ones, have one side with elastic bands. This side should attach to your saddle on the horse's left side. This makes it easier to tighten when you are preparing to mount. When attaching your girth, attach the non-elastic side first to the right side of the saddle.
- The girth should generally be buckled to the outside two billets of the saddle, unless there are only two billets.
- We generally like to leave the girth loose as the horse walks to the arena. This gives the horse a chance to relax their belly and breathe. **Always check that your girth is tight before mounting!!!**

Bridling your horse:

- This can be the toughest part of getting your horse ready when you are first learning, but the more practice you have the easier it gets.
- It is a good idea, the first few times, to have your instructor assist you with this part.
- First, unbuckle the halter and without letting go of it, rebuckle it around your horse's neck.
- Next, hold the top of your bridle in your right hand, facing it forwards as it would go on your horse.
- Then place the reins over your horse's head. This keeps them out of the way and prevents your horse from tripping on them.
- It is important to hold your horse's head as you guide the bit into its mouth. There are two ways to do this; between the ears or over the nose. Your instructor will demonstrate these both for you.
- As you are holding the bridle and steadying your horse's head with your right hand, your left hand is free to help guide the bit in.
- Your horse has an area in the corner of their mouth where they have no teeth. Sliding your right thumb into this area and pressing down on your horse's bottom gums will ask the horse to open its mouth.
- Using the fingers of your left hand, position the bit between your horse's lips. As the horse opens its mouth gently push the bit between his teeth. Congratulations! The hardest part is over.
- Next, grab the base of each ear and pull it forward through the top of the bridle. When you are finished, the very top of the bridle should be behind the horse's ears and the brow band should be in front of their ears (pull the forelock over the brow band).
- We are now ready to buckle the noseband and the throat latch.
- The noseband is the bottom piece of the bridle. Before buckling, slide it under the cheekpieces of the bridle on both sides. The noseband is buckled fairly tight. You should be able to fit about two fingers underneath.
- The throatlatch is the piece of the bridle that buckles under the horse's jaw. It also comes across the area where the horse breaths, so it is important that this one is **loose**, otherwise it will affect our horse's breathing. Make sure you can fit your whole hand sideways under the throat latch.

After you have finished riding, it is now time to untack your horse. **Your horse cannot go back home until it has been untacked!**

Untacking your horse:

-After you have exited the arena, walk your horse back to the rail where you had him tied while you were tacking. Take your halter and buckle it around your horse's neck (like you did when you were bridling).

-Once your horse is secure, unbuckle your throat latch and nose band (only unbuckle what you buckled), and then gently slide the bridle back over the ears and off the horse's head and let the bit drop out of the horse's mouth. After you have taken the bridle off, make sure that you **put the halter back on the horse's head.**

-Next, before you take off the saddle, make sure to put your stirrups up. To do so, grab the stirrup iron and slid it up the back of the stirrup leather, then tuck the stirrup leather behind the iron.

-Now you can undo the girth. Undo the left side first and then the right. Once the girth is off you can take off your saddle and blanket.

-After your horse is untacked, take all of your tack back to the shed. After your tack is put away, go back and brush your horse and pick out its feet. If your horse worked up a sweat, chances are there will be sweat marks where the saddle was and on the horses neck and chest. Make sure you brush out the sweat marks. Also, make sure your horse is dry before you put him/her away!

-Once all that is done, you can untie your horse and take him/her back to the pasture or stall where the horse came from. Always make sure you close the gate behind you when you enter or exit the paddock, this is so the other horses do not get out. Finally, make sure you lock the gate before you leave.

For the parents:

-It is important that you are around to help out your child, but make sure you let your child do as much as possible; after all it is they who are taking the lesson and need to know what is taught to them.

-We know that most of our students don't have the strength to lift the saddle and hold the horse's feet; this is why we appreciate your help when we can't be around

Be safe and have fun!!!