

Green Level Horsemanship

A Study Guide for the Mounted Learning Levels Curriculum



HorseSense Learning Levels

Welcome to the Green Level Guide to Horsemanship!

Green Level is the third step of the Learning Levels program. It builds upon the Yellow Level Horsemanship foundation and adds exciting new skills.



This guide will take you through each of the required objectives for Green Level Horsemanship, explaining them in further detail, as well as offering helpful hints and activities for accelerating your progress.

Whether you have just taken your first lesson or have spent years around horses, we hope you find this guide to be informative and helpful as you journey towards becoming a well-rounded horseperson.

Please remember that this guide is meant to be a supplement to regular lessons, and not as a replacement. The activities mentioned in this guide should be practiced only under the supervision of an instructor or another knowledgeable adult!

Here's what you'll learn in Green Level Horsemanship:

flatwork skills

gaits and movement

ground handling

jumping skills

mounted safety

tack

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A Note About the Levels Program

The Learning Levels program is our unique method of tracking progress in students as they develop into versatile, well-rounded riders and horsemen. Students work to master specific skills in each of the levels, and receive recognition for completion when they are able to consistently demonstrate each of the skills to their instructor. In many cases, achievement of one level is a prerequisite for learning more advanced skills such as jumping.

The Levels are divided into two branches to reflect the main areas of study within our riding school:

- 🐾 The *Horsemanship Levels* concentrate on the rider's ability in the saddle, culminating in a rider who is balanced, educated and confident and can ride a schooled horse with skill and tact on the flat, over fences and in the open.
- 🐾 The *HorseSense Levels* focus on the extensive body of knowledge needed to care for and work with horses successfully, testing students on horse handling, veterinary and stable management skills.

If you are not already a participant in the Levels Program and you are interested becoming one, please ask your instructor for more information.

Nikki and Dana Surrusco
HorseSense Learning Levels, LLC
Ellijay, GA


www.HorseSenseLearningLevels.com

Visit our website to learn more about the Learning Levels program.



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Illustrations by Rhonda Hagy

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Green Horsemanship Objectives

The Green Level is a beginner level, designed to improve your basic skills on the flat while introducing two exciting new skills: cantering and jumping.

Let's take a look at the requirements of Green Level.
You can use this checklist to set goals and assess your progress.

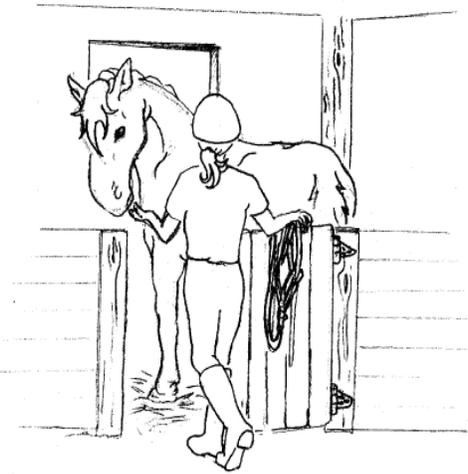
- Demonstrate ability to safely catch horse in both stall and field.
- Prepare for a lesson independently in fifteen minutes or less.
- Discuss procedure for warm up, cool down; with consideration of weather, footing, fitness level of horse.
By Green Level, you should be experienced enough to work efficiently in the barn without assistant from your instructor. You might even be able to tack up on your own and start warming your horse up prior to your lesson. This gives you extra riding time - but also makes you responsible for your horse's welfare.
- Demonstrate the following maneuvers:
 - Reinback
 - Rating speed at walk and trot
 - Large circle at canter
 - Change of direction with simple change at canter
- Ride at the canter on the rail in both directions, demonstrating both light and full seat.
- Demonstrate awareness of leads.
Now that you have developed a balanced seat, you are ready to learn how to canter. You may begin cantering on the longe line, but soon you will be cantering around the arena on your own. Although riding at this speed can be a lot of fun, your top priorities should always be balance, communication and control.
- Ride at the trot for a minimum of five minutes without stirrups, alternating posting and sitting.
- Drop stirrups and pick up again, without looking down, at the trot.
You learned how to trot without stirrups in Yellow Level. Now you will build strength by practicing for longer periods of time. Your instructor may ask you to pass this test before you begin jumping.
- Ride in two-point at the canter, on the flat and over a ground pole.
- Trot over a grid of trot poles with reins knotted and arms outstretched.
- Ride ground pole course at the trot with smooth turns, good approaches, correct diagonals.
- Jump a single crossrail, not to exceed 18".
Once you can trot and canter in a secure jumping position, on the flat and over ground poles, you are ready to learn how to jump! Before you tackle bigger fences, you should be able to consistently ride over a course of ground poles, paying attention to details such as approaches, departures, and posting diagonals.
- Ride bareback confidently at the walk and trot, balancing independently of hands.
Riding without a saddle may seem a little scary at first, but once you get the hang of it, it can be a great way to improve your seat and feel of the horse.

Catch Me If You Can

If you can safely catch, tie and prepare your horse on your own, you may be able to arrive early to tack up, and spend *all* of your lesson time in the saddle. This is especially helpful as you begin to practice more challenging skills such as cantering and jumping—but first, you need to be confident in your groundwork.

Before you begin catching your horse independently, be sure to review the Red Level Horsemanship and HorseSense study guides, particularly the sections on haltering, leading, horse safety and equine body language!

Catching a stabled horse



If your horse is in a stall when you arrive for your ride, you are in luck—as long as you approach him safely!

Stabled horses often stand with their backs turned to the door, or with their heads buried in a pile of hay. You can get his attention by talking to him or making kissing sounds. Wait until he looks at you or turns to face you before entering the stall - a startled horse may kick.

Never approach a horse that has pinned its ears, swung its hindquarters towards you and/or clamped down his tail. A horse that is behaving aggressively needs confident, experienced handling—ask for help!

- 1. Organize your halter and rope** ahead of time so you don't have to untangle it before putting it on.
- 2. Talk to your horse and let him know you are coming.** Wait for him to acknowledge you and make sure his body language is friendly before entering the stall.
- 3. Open the stall door** just enough that you can slip through. Leave it ajar so you can escape quickly if necessary.
- 4. Approach the horse at his shoulder** whenever possible. It is usually easiest to approach and halter on the left side of the horse, where the halter buckles. If your horse has his left side up against the wall, you can approach his right shoulder, slip the rope over his neck, and gently guide him toward the center of the stall before haltering.
- 5. Open the stall door as wide as possible** before leading your horse through, turning him around, and closing the door behind you. Remember that a horse's hips are wider than his shoulders - leading him through too narrow an opening can cause him to become spooked or injured.



Some barns use stall guards instead of solid doors, giving the horse extra air circulation and the ability to look around. When you unfasten a stall guard, use the top snap to secure it to an eyehook on the other side of the doorway. **Never leave a stall guard dangling on the ground where a horse's hooves can tangle in it!**

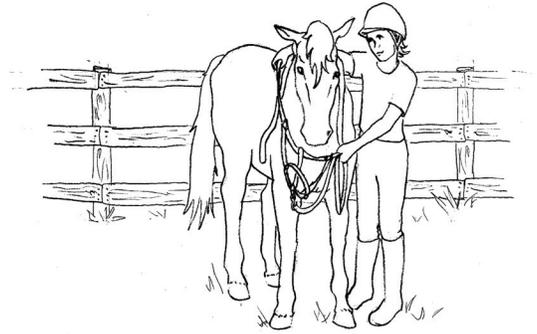
Crowd Control

If your horse lives in a paddock or field during the day, you will need to allow a bit of extra time for walking, and learn how to navigate safely through a herd.

Catching a pastured horse

Some horses are easy to catch in a pasture, and may even come up to you when called. Others may play hard to get.

If your horse is safe to hand-feed, you can **take him a treat to reward him for being caught**—but make sure it is **something small**, like a horse cookie or baby carrot, that can be hidden in your hand or kept in your pocket. If you take a bucket, bag or crinkly plastic wrapper out into the field, you will be swarmed by a herd of hungry horses.



1. **Organize your halter and rope** ahead of time so you don't have to untangle it before putting it on. When you enter the pasture, make sure to **close the gate** behind you.
2. **Talk to your horse and let him know you are coming.** Make sure he turns and at least looks at you before you approach him, and that he has given you permission with his body language. If he pins his ears, or swings away to show you his hindquarters, don't just walk up to him anyway!
3. **Walk up to his neck or point of shoulder** whenever possible. If you move too far back, the horse might feel pressured to move. Rub him to let him know you are friendly, but don't wait too long before putting the lead rope over his neck and buckling on the halter. Offer the horse your treat, if you brought one.
4. **If your horse turns and walks away, don't chase him!** Stop and wait for him to stop moving. Hold out your hand and talk to him as you approach again.
5. **Keep an eye out for other horses** as you return to the gate. **Open the gate with one hand**, just wide enough for your horse to pass through. As soon as you lead him through, ask him to yield so he faces the gate, allowing you to easily close and latch it. If there are other horses behind you, you'll have to do this **quickly!**



Some horses get pushy and like to rush through the gate. Insist that your horse waits politely so you can walk through the opening first if you choose. Otherwise, you might get knocked down and hurt.

When putting a horse back into a stall or turning him out in the pasture, **ask him to turn and face you before you take off his halter.** Stand at the gate or door, blocking the opening, with the horse's head close to you and his hindquarters turned away from you. Remove the halter and back away.

This gives you time to safely exit his enclosure while he turns around. **Never turn your back on a horse that likes to buck or bolt when turned loose!** You can read more about maneuvering safely through gates in the **Red HorseSense** study guide.



Quick Work

In **Yellow Level**, you learned the importance of **working efficiently** in the barn, and mastered tacking up and untacking your horse independently. Now you can refine your routine to maximize the time you can spend in the saddle.

Why should I practice preparing my horse efficiently?



- 🐾 If you can catch, groom and tack up a horse yourself, you may be able to come early and do this before your paid lesson time - **maximizing the time you can spend learning new skills with your instructor**. It is important to start your lesson on time!
- 🐾 If you know you can prepare a horse quickly, **you won't be as stressed if you are running a few minutes behind**.
- 🐾 If you have your own horse, you may be able to **ride more often** if you know you don't have to spend an hour on preparation and post-ride care.
- 🐾 If you plan to **compete at horse shows**, you will need to become very good at time management. Show organizers cannot wait for a late rider.

Being efficient does not mean rushing through your grooming and tacking up process.

It means developing good habits so you do a job well in a short amount of time *without* feeling rushed or frantic.

To improve your time management skills in the barn, review the sections on grooming and tacking up in the **Red** and **Yellow Horsemanship** study guides, especially the Troubleshooting pages. Then evaluate your routine, and ask yourself if you are doing things the **best** way. Do you arrive at the barn dressed and ready to ride? Do you organize your tack ahead of time, making sure you have everything you need **before** you catch your horse?

Forget me not

Remember that one of the best things you can do to become more efficient is to develop a routine. **If you do things the same way every time, you're much less likely to leave out an important step.**

Before you bring your horse in from the stall or pasture, ask yourself the following questions:

- 🐾 **Am I completely ready to ride?** If not, are my helmet/chaps/gloves/crop easily accessible, so I can put them on before my horse's bridle?
- 🐾 **Do I have everything I need to groom?** Am I using appropriate tools for the job, including a stiff brush and currycomb for mud or fly spray in summer months?
- 🐾 **Do I have all my tack?** Does this include leg protection and/or fly protection, if necessary? Is it fully assembled and adjusted correctly for my horse?
- 🐾 **Do I have a safe place to tie?** Is there anything I need to tidy up before bringing my horse inside?



More Tips for Tacking Up

Once you start preparing for lessons on your own, you may face some challenges that make it difficult for you to get to your lesson on time. Let's look at a few common scenarios and some possible solutions.

Challenge #1: The Swamp Creature

When your horse comes in from the field looking like THIS, be ready to put your grooming kit to good use! If the mud is wet, you may need to rinse the horse off with *warm* water and towel him dry. If the mud is dry, **begin with a currycomb or a rubber grooming mitt**. Use it to loosen the mud on the horse's entire body. **Put some effort into it**—most horses like the feel of the currycomb and will not mind the extra pressure.



Next, use a good **stiff dandy brush**, snapping your wrist with every stroke to lift the dirt from the horse's coat. If your horse's legs and face are very dirty, you may need to use the dandy brush here, too - just brush more gently. It's okay if the horse doesn't look beautiful. Run your hand over the horse's **face, back and girth area** to make sure they feel smooth enough to put tack on.

Challenge #2: Catch Me If You Can

Some horses like to play hard to get and run from you in the pasture. This can be particularly frustrating when you are short on time - but **getting frustrated usually only makes the problem worse**.

First, **talk to your instructor and/or barn manager** about your difficulties. You may be able to arrange for the horse to be kept in a stall or small paddock prior to your lesson, or ask for assistance in catching him.

If you have no choice but to bring the horse in yourself, make sure your halter and lead rope are organized and that you are approaching in a non-threatening manner. Carry treats if the horse is allowed to have them. **If he turns and runs from you, do not chase him**. Instead, turn your body away and wait for him to stop. Reapproach at an angle, and encourage the horse to take the last few steps to you.



Challenge #3: Cooperate Please

Your horse may give you other time-consuming difficulties, such as refusing to pick up his feet or raising his head when you lift up the bridle. Here are three important things to remember:

- 🐾 **Losing your temper always makes it worse.** Horses are quick to pick up on moods, and will be even more resistant if you act angry or impatient.
- 🐾 **Allow extra time.** When horses are difficult, you need to act like you have all the time in the world. This will be easier if you are not stressed about running late!
- 🐾 **Think like a trainer.** Ask yourself: *why* is my horse behaving in this way? Am I causing the problem? How can I motivate him to do what I want? Can I ask him in a better way?



Even if you are used to working independently, don't be afraid to ask for help!

Loosen Up

Riding horses are athletes. Just like human athletes, they need to ease into strenuous exercise, or they can be injured. This means that we must **begin every ride with a warm-up** period, allowing the horse to limber up before performing strenuous work.



What happens during a good warm-up?

- 🐾 It gets your horse's blood flowing, preparing his body to work efficiently.
- 🐾 It increases the flexibility of his muscles, tendons and ligaments. This makes him more comfortable to ride and decreases the risk of injury.
- 🐾 It helps the horse's joints produce more fluid, allowing them to move smoothly. This is important for the horse's long-term soundness.
- 🐾 It prepares you and your horse mentally as well as physically for your upcoming activity.

It can be tempting to skip or hurry through the warm-up if you are short on time. Resist this temptation - especially if you are preparing to canter or jump!

A warm-up usually lasts between ten and thirty minutes, depending on the kind of work you are preparing for and the conditions. You may need more time if it is very cold, or your horse is old or stiff.

Some tips for a winning warm-up:

- 🐾 **Work the walk.** The more time you can spend at the walk, the better. Set a timer and try to spend the first ten minutes of every ride at the walk. You can do this in the arena or on an easy trail. Ask your horse to **walk forward with energy** - a slow, toe-dragging walk will not get his joints and muscles loose!
- 🐾 **Post the trot.** Even if you are riding in a Western saddle, it is a good idea to rise to the trot while your horse is warming up. Sitting before his back is loose can make him hollow and uncomfortable.
- 🐾 **Go big.** Ride your horse forward on the rail and through **large, easy ring figures**, such as big circles and changes of direction across the diagonal. As he limbers up, you can start adding transitions and figures such as half-circles and serpentines. **Avoid tight turns** and small circles.
- 🐾 **Give him room.** Most of your warm-up should be done on a **long rein**, so that the horse can stretch his head down and forward. Many horses will blow their noses or cough to clear their lungs when they first go to work, and stretching down helps to loosen up the muscles across the top of their body.
- 🐾 **Think ahead.** If you know you will be jumping, you can walk or trot over poles on the ground and practice your two-point. If you will be practicing dressage, make sure that your horse is listening to your aids, and that you can keep him straight away from the rail.



Your girth may loosen up along with your horse.

Don't forget to check it and tighten if necessary before cantering or jumping!

Cool It

After your ride, it is equally important to **cool your horse down**. This might be as simple as walking on a long rein, but very cold or very hot weather can make cooling down an extra challenge.

Why should you cool down gradually?

- 🐾 **Muscles that have worked hard need to stretch** before they rest, or they will be stiff and sore later. What if your horse knew that every time you came to ride, his muscles were going to hurt the next day? He might not be so eager to see you, and could develop behavioral problems such as running away from you in the field or refusing to go forward.
- 🐾 **A horse can't digest food well while his body is in exercise mode.** Feeding a horse grain without cooling him out first can make him sick.
- 🐾 **In hot weather, the horse will need help recovering from his workout,** or he may get heat exhaustion.
- 🐾 **In cold weather, a sweaty horse should not be asked to stand still** until he is cool and dry, or he may get chilled and stiff.



When you finish your workout, let the horse **trot and then walk** on a **long or loose rein** (hold the reins on the buckle, so he has total freedom to stretch out his head and neck). You can help your horse cool out efficiently and make him comfortable by dismounting, loosening your girth, and walking him by hand. Don't forget to roll up your stirrups!

How long you walk will depend on how hard the horse worked and the weather conditions.

- 🐾 **In hot weather,** strip off your horse's tack, hose him down with cold water, remove excess water with a sweat scraper and resume walking. You might have to repeat this several times. Offer the horse water as soon as possible - often horses lose their desire to drink as they cool down, and a horse that has sweated heavily needs to rehydrate.

You can read more about cooling out a hot horse in the [Yellow HorseSense study guide](#).

- 🐾 **In cool or mild weather,** plan on walking until your horse's coat starts to dry and his respiration, or breathing, returns to normal. This should take five or ten minutes - if it takes much longer, the horse may have worked too hard for his current level of fitness.
- 🐾 **In cold weather,** walk until the horse's coat is mostly dry. This can take some time if the horse has a heavy winter coat. If he is cool but damp, you can cover him with a fleece cooler to keep him from getting chilled.

Remember, riders are also athletes! You won't ride well if you are stiff and tight. Take a few minutes to stretch both before and after your ride, on and off the horse. Your body will thank you for it - and your horse will, too.



Weathering the Weather

It is easy to get in a routine with your rides. Walk both ways, trot both ways, practice a few transitions and you are ready to canter and jump. But there are several factors that you need to take into consideration when planning your warm-up and daily work, including **weather, footing, and fitness level.**

Rain or shine

Although most horseback riders dream of sunny days with light breezes, the reality is that unless you have an indoor arena, you may have to ride when it is very hot, very cold, or very wet in order to keep up a regular practice. Sometimes this means **changing your plan** to keep you and your horse safe.



 **If the weather is very cold...** Allow **extra time to warm up**, with lots of brisk walking and trotting on a long rein before you go to work. Keep moving—if you take a break to watch another rider go, walk your horse on the rail or in a circle to keep him from getting cold and stiff.

Dress in many close-fitting layers, avoiding oversize or bulky jackets that can flap or interfere with your position. **Be sure to wear gloves!** You can buy pocket hand warmers, available in the camping section of most department stores, and tuck toe warmers into your boots.

 **If the weather is very hot...** drink LOTS of water in the hours leading up to your ride, and bring a water bottle to the arena so you can take sips as you go. Keep the strenuous portion of your workout, such as cantering and jumping, to a minimum, and offer your horse frequent walk breaks.

Monitor your horse carefully as you ride. If he is panting or seems fatigued, be prepared to call it a day and begin your cool-down process immediately. If possible, **ride early in the morning or in the evening**, when temperatures are cooler.

Heat exhaustion can be dangerous for both horses and humans.

See the [Yellow HorseSense](#) study guide for more information on cooling out your horse, and take it easy in hot, humid conditions!

 **If the weather is very wet...** watch out for **deep mud** and **slippery conditions**. Allow extra time to wipe down and **oil your tack** after your ride, as a soaking can dry out leather and cause it to crack.

 **If the weather is very windy...** be prepared for your horse to be spookier than usual, as wind can interfere with a horse's hearing and make them nervous. Secure any loose equipment such as barrels, chairs etc. that may blow across your arena, and work on something relaxing that helps your horse to focus, such as ring figures or transitions.



**If your horse is extremely tense due to wind or bad weather, don't just get on anyway!
Consider practicing some quiet groundwork instead.**

Footing Factors

Sometimes prolonged periods of rain, cold or dry weather can impact the footing you work on. **Good footing is important for your horse's soundness**, so make sure you pay close attention to the conditions.

Use your HorseSense

- 🐾 **If the ground is wet and muddy...** ride carefully at faster gaits, keeping all of your transitions gradual and your turns WIDE—sudden stops or sharp turns can make your horse slip and fall. If the footing feels slick, it is better to ride just at the walk and trot.
- 🐾 **If the ground is deep and heavy...** either due to soft ground or conditions such as deep sand, your horse will be working MUCH harder. Go easy on him, and warm up carefully, or he may pull a tendon. Avoid boggy deep mud if possible, especially if your horse wears shoes that may get sucked off his feet.



Consider the impact your horse makes on the footing as well.

A horse's hooves can tear up soft ground, especially if he wears shoes. For this reason, arenas or trails may be closed due to inclement weather. **If you trail ride on private property or ride in open pastures, avoid crossing fields when it is wet and muddy.**

- 🐾 **If the ground is very hard...** either from drought or a freeze, you should keep your ride to slow gaits. *Walking* on hard ground or road surfaces can be good for conditioning hooves and legs, but cantering and jumping creates too much concussion on their joints, and can cause lameness.
- 🐾 **If the ground is snowy or icy...** use your best judgment. Snow is fine to ride in if it is powdery, but slushy wet snow can be slippery. You may need to grease your horse's hooves to prevent snow from balling up in the crevices around the frog, especially if your horse wears cold metal shoes. **Never ride on slick ice!**



Snow balls can be a big problem for horse hooves!

Fitness first

Always keep in mind the fitness level of your horse, and be prepared to **adjust your plans if he seems to be struggling**. Horses must be in a regular exercise program to handle more strenuous work such as cantering, jumping, or trail riding.



If he seems winded, fatigued, or unable to recover his normal respiration and heart rate after five to ten minutes of walking, he is being pushed beyond his limits, and needs to have his work scaled back until he is fitter. **Pushing an unfit horse may result in injury to both horse AND rider**—be smart and save him for another day! You can learn more about conditioning programs in the **Green** and **Orange HorseSense Levels**.

Back It Up

The more your seat on a horse improves, the better you will be able to use your natural aids - particularly seat, leg and reins - to communicate with your horse.

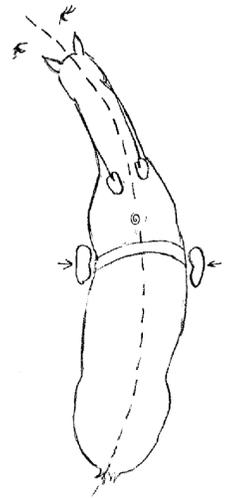
Even basic maneuvers such as stopping or turning require you to use several aids at one time.

In Green Level, you will practice this by learning more challenging skills, such as asking your horse to step backwards, or to change speed without changing gaits.

First, a quick review

If your horse doesn't do what you want, you might be using your aids incorrectly. Make sure you understand how each of your body parts influences the horse before attempting complicated maneuvers:

- 🐾 **Your eyes** communicate your **intention** and show the horse where to go.
- 🐾 **Your seat** influences the horse's back through weight shifts and turns. Your seat is closely connected to your **core muscles** and inner thigh.
- 🐾 **Your lower leg** asks the horse to move forward or sideways. **Both legs at the girth** asks the horse to go forward. **One leg at the girth** asks the horse to bend through his body. **One leg behind the girth** asks the horse's hindquarters to step sideways.
- 🐾 **Your upper leg** should normally remain soft to allow your horse to move freely. Pressure from your knee and thigh on both sides may encourage your horse to stop. Pressure on one side helps turn his shoulder.
- 🐾 **Your hands on the reins** can guide the horse through turns, straighten him, and slow or stop him. Rein pressure should be applied in short squeezes, never a constant pull.



Back it up

Backing up is sometimes called a **reinback**. In a true reinback, the horse steps back with energy, legs moving in diagonal pairs, while remaining relaxed and steady in the bridle.

Backing up can be hard for the horse. For now, just try to get a few straight steps back.



1. **Sink your weight into your heels**, so that your seat is light on the horse's back. **Shorten your reins** until you can just feel the horse's mouth at the other end.
2. **Squeeze both legs** at or *just* behind the girth while **gently resisting with your hands at the same time**. If your horse swings his hindquarters to the side when he backs, slide the leg on that side a few inches behind the girth to help correct him.
3. **Release the pressure** the instant your horse backs up.

**Never force a horse to step backwards by pulling roughly on the reins.
This hurts his mouth and may teach him to rear!**

Changing Speeds

By now, you have spent a lot of time practicing smooth **transitions**, or changes between one gait and another. Now you can learn to ride a different kind of transition by **rating** your horse's speed, or asking him to go faster or slower without changing gait.

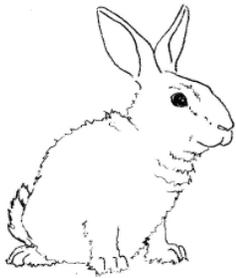
Why practice rating speed?

- 🐾 **Not all horses walk and trot at an ideal working pace.** Your horse may be naturally speedy or slow, which means you'll have to help him find a gear that is appropriate and comfortable to ride.
- 🐾 **Not all horses maintain a consistent rhythm.** There are many situations where a horse is tempted to speed up or slow down, such as heading back to the herd or turning away from the barn.
- 🐾 **If you are riding with a group,** you may need to adjust speed to maintain your spacing or pass safely.



You'll need to find the perfect gear in your trot or walk to ask your horse to canter!

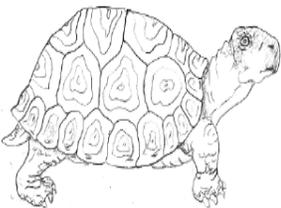
Let's go



To send your horse forward into a faster walk, **sit tall**, close your lower legs against his sides and **squeeze gently** in rhythm with his stride. As the horse's walk grows livelier, the movement in his back will increase; allow your seat to swing with him. In the trot, **post with more energy** and squeeze just as you sit in the saddle.

Keep a light and steady contact with both reins, so that your horse knows he is going to work. You can also encourage the horse to pick up the pace by making an **audible sound such as a cluck or a kiss**, but be careful you don't use this too much, or the horse will tune it out.

Let's whoa



To slow down, **breathe deeply** and think about sitting **quiet and still** in your saddle. If you are posting, slow your rhythm. You may feel as though you are tightening your tummy muscles, similar to when you ride a halt. **Gently and briefly squeeze the reins**, as though squeezing water out of a sponge. Never continually pull back - this will teach the horse to lean against you and return the favor!

It is very important to **keep your legs against the horse's side** so he continues moving forward. Slowing the horse's stride without breaking gait requires a careful balance of **driving aids** (your leg) and **restraining aids** (your seat and rein). Don't get frustrated if you break gait a few times while you are figuring it out!

Rating the horse's speed is not quite the same as lengthening and shortening stride. Rating changes the rhythm and speed of your gait, not necessarily the length of the stride.

You will learn more about lengthening and shortening in Purple and Teal Level!

Ready, Steady, Go

As you practice using your aids together to influence your horse, you may hear your instructor use the phrase “**half halt.**” What is a half halt, and how can you use it to help your horse?

A half-halt is an important riding skill that can take months—if not years— to master.

At its most basic level, it involves using your seat, leg and hand together in a brief moment that asks your horse to rebalance himself.



A half-halt is useful for getting a horse’s attention and preparing him for transitions. Think of it as a signal that tells the horse, “*Listen up, get ready, get set...*” before you ask him to “*Go!*” or “*Whoa!*” This signal makes the transition easier for the horse and allows you to use lighter aids.

The half-halt is a VERY important tool when riding a hot or quick horse, or one that likes to get strong and lean on the reins!

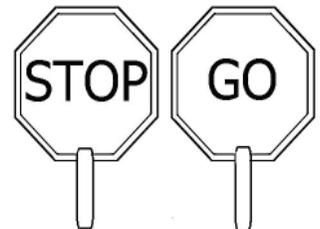
How do I ride a half-halt?

If you have practiced rating your horse’s speed, you have probably been using some small half halts without even realizing it. **A half halt tells your horse to go and whoa at the same time - but only for a second.**

1. **Sit up tall.** Imagine a string pulling your head to the sky and your knees to the ground, so you feel like you’ve grown taller AND you are sitting deeper in the saddle.
2. **Squeeze your lower legs** against the horse.
3. **At the same time, briefly resist with your hands** by closing your fingers and/or increasing the bend in your elbows.
4. **Immediately release the leg and rein pressure**—the resistance should last about as long as a heartbeat. Think about squeezing and releasing in rhythm with the words “half-halt.” You may need to use several half-halts, or repeat every few strides, before you feel your horse’s balance change.

Find the balance

If you are using your half-halts to prepare for an upwards transition, or to **energize** a lazy horse, your pressure will be much stronger in your legs than your hands. If you are **slowing down** or preparing for a downward transition, the leg pressure should be just strong enough to keep the horse moving forward. It may take a few tries before you find the formula of leg versus hand that works best for your horse.



Remember to always release the pressure right away, so you are not hanging on the reins.

This is called a “give” - and in a good half halt, the give is just as important as the take!

Think Ahead

Riding well involves good communication and intention. Very often, when a horse doesn't do what we want him to do, it is because we haven't explained things clearly enough. Here are a few ways you can ride with more intention and make your horse's job easier.

Keep your eyes on the target

Looking down is a common riding habit. Unfortunately, this affects you negatively in two ways:

- 🐾 It throws your weight forward, unbalancing your body and the horse's body.
- 🐾 It signals a lack of intention to your horse, making him unsure of where you really want to go.



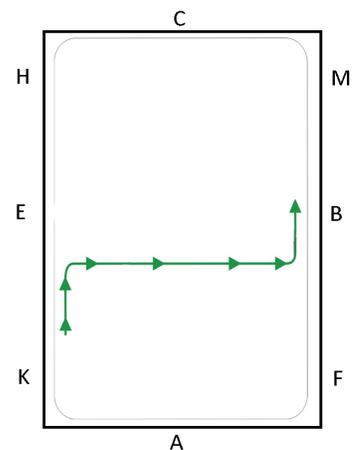
Just like you are driving a car, you should **look through the horse's ears to where you want to be, not where you are**. Many riders look ahead until their horse spooks or goes off course. Remember that if your horse wants to go right and you want to go left, but you look to the right to see where he is headed, in his mind you are confirming his decision!

No surprises

Half halts are one way you can let your horse know that something is coming. You can also **give him clues** by riding careful, thoughtful turns.

Imagine you are a horse and your rider steers you to the middle of the ring. As soon as you make the turn, your rider stops communicating. Do you know what will happen next?

Now imagine that as soon as you reach the center, your rider **sits a beat**, changing to the other posting diagonal, and looks in the opposite direction. Can you guess the intention now? Will it feel comfortable and easy to turn in the direction your rider wants?



You gotta believe

One of the most important riding skills to master is a mental skill. You'll need to learn to ride your horse with **positive intention**. This means that **not only do you have an idea of what you want to achieve, you believe that you will do it**.

Remember that a horse's primary language is body language. He can detect your energy and intention from tiny, almost invisible changes in your posture and breathing. If you are frightened or unsure, he will know. He may become frightened or unsure himself, or decide to take over as leader.

When things go wrong in the saddle, keep thinking about what you **want** to happen. You will need a powerful positive intention when you learn to jump!



Strong Without Stirrups

Of course, one of the best ways you can help your horse is by developing a balanced, secure seat in the saddle. A good seat is also a must when learning to canter and jump. As you learned in **Yellow Level**, one of the most effective things we can do to get a great seat is to practice riding without stirrups.

Let's review: four great reasons to ride without stirrups

- 🐾 **It will make your body much stronger** and your **leg position secure**. This makes you much less likely to fall off. It also allows you to use your aids more precisely, improving your communication.
- 🐾 **It teaches your hips to follow the movement** of your horse's gaits. Your horse will appreciate this - he does not enjoy bouncing!
- 🐾 **It improves your balance and your confidence**. You won't panic if you accidentally lose a stirrup, because you'll know that you are capable of riding effectively without them.
- 🐾 **It prepares you for riding your horse bareback**. Remember that to complete **Green Level**, you'll need to get comfortable walking and trotting without a saddle!



Pick them up

Even a few minutes of no-stirrup work in every ride will improve your strength and balance. One way you can sneak in some no-stirrup practice is by practicing **dropping and picking up your stirrups** smoothly - an invaluable skill that you may need if you accidentally lose a stirrup.

You have already practiced this skill at the halt and a walk, but **check that you are doing it correctly before attempting it at the trot**. Can you consistently retrieve both stirrups just by lifting your toes, with eyes up and both hands on the reins? Can you move your foot in and out of the stirrup without twisting the leather or bumping your horse with your leg?

When you are ready to try it at the trot, ask your horse for a steady and comfortable working gait. Drop your stirrups, ride a few strides without, then try to **pick them back up without changing gait or speed**. Most riders find sitting trot easier, but you should practice in both sitting and posting trot until you can maintain your rhythm either way. Make sure that you are picking up your stirrups by lifting and turning in your toe, with your leg quiet against the horse's side... and don't forget to keep steering!



What problems do you spot in this photo?

What can this rider do to retrieve his peacock stirrup correctly?



Having trouble? Longe lessons can be a great way to practice dropping and retrieving your stirrups safely. You can also practice riding without reins, so you are sure that you are balancing with your seat and not your hands.

Build It Up

You should already be comfortable riding without your stirrups for a lap around the arena, in both the sitting and posting trot. Now you can gradually begin to increase the amount of time you spend in the trot. To complete **Green Level**, you'll need to be able to **trot without stirrups for five minutes**.

Why five minutes?!

As you've already learned, **equestrians are athletes**. It is important to take your fitness seriously, both for your own safety and your horse's comfort. This means continuing to work to improve your strength and endurance. **You probably won't be able to trot this long on the first try - and that's okay!** Simply make note of how long you *can* ride effectively, and try to add a few seconds every time you ride.

Trotting for a longer period of time also helps your body learn to ride **efficiently**, without wasted motion. Many riders experience a breakthrough during the process of building up to a five minute trot, where the posting suddenly starts to feel easy. This in turn makes it easier for the horse to carry you.



Don't forget to cross your stirrups whenever trotting for long periods of time. This will keep the stirrups from banging against your ankles and the horse's sides.

Begin by pulling the buckles down as though you were going to adjust your stirrup length - far enough that the **stirrup leathers lie flat when crossed** over the horse's withers. You may need to lift the skirt of the saddle and smooth out any twists in the leathers, which can pinch the inside of your leg. Make sure that your reins are not caught under the stirrup irons!

As you build up your endurance at the trot, you'll want to keep things interesting for both you and your horse. A few ways you can make the time fly by:

- 🐾 **Change direction frequently.** Not only will this keep your horse fresh, but it will allow you to practice equally on your harder side.
- 🐾 **Alternate between posting and sitting.** You can post until you get tired and then sit for a while to work different muscle groups. Or you could post the long sides of the arena and sit the short sides. Experiment and find a flow that feels good to you!
- 🐾 **Add a few transitions between the trot and the walk** - but only stay in the walk for a few strides.



Wear a watch to easily
- and safely - track time
while you ride.

**Yes, riding without stirrups will make your legs sore,
but be careful that you are not taking the "No pain, no gain" philosophy to an extreme!**

Come back to the walk as soon as you feel that your legs are too tired to maintain a correct position, with knees bent, toes up and lower leg at the girth. If you **practice to the point of exhaustion, you may bounce or grip - poor horse! - and you are much more likely to fall off.**

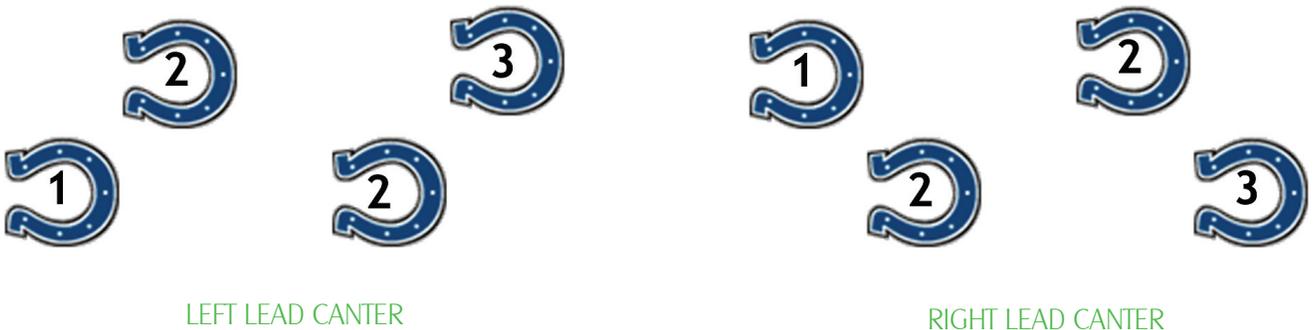
Ready to Canter

After many weeks spent practicing the walk and the trot, the big day has finally arrived - your instructor says you are ready to learn to **canter**! The canter can be a little tricky to learn, but if you are well-prepared, you may soon discover that you have a new favorite gait.

What happens in the canter?

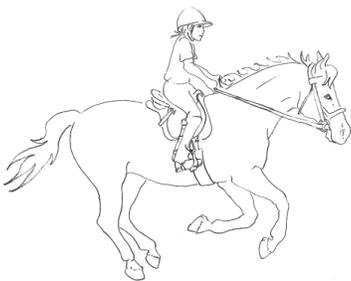
The canter is a **three-beat gait**, with the horse traveling at a speed anywhere from 8-15 miles per hour. The horse's legs move similarly to the footfall pattern of the **gallop**, but at a much slower pace!

The canter is different from the walk and the trot in that the horse finishes each stride with one leg farther forward than the others. This is called the **leading leg**. When the horse begins cantering, he places one hind foot on the ground, followed by the other hind foot and the opposite front hoof. The remaining foreleg is the **last** leg to hit the ground, and is referred to as the **lead**.



This footfall pattern creates a slight tilt in the horse's body, especially when traveling through turns. Instead of swaying from side to side (as in the walk) or bouncing up and down (like when you trot), **the horse's back swings forward and backward in the canter**, like a teeter-totter. This means that it is very important for you to sit in the middle of the horse, with correct alignment.

You might be ready to canter if...



-  You can trot your horse with balance and confidence **without stirrups**, steering independently without hanging on the reins.
-  You can maintain a secure **two-point position** at the walk and trot, with your weight in your heels, even with your arms outstretched.
-  You can demonstrate **good control** by riding your horse accurately through ring figures and transitions.

Most instructors have their own requirements for making sure you are prepared to canter. Don't be discouraged if it takes a while before yours says you are ready.

The time you spend practicing at the trot will pay off as you learn how to canter with balance, control and confidence!

Your First Canter

Depending on how your horse naturally canters, the size and surface of your arena, and whether you take private or group lessons, your instructor may teach you to canter on the **longe line** first *or* by cantering short stretches **on the rail**. You might start with **sitting canter** or in a **light seat**. There are advantages and disadvantages to each method - the only right way is the one that keeps you safe and comfortable!

What should I expect when I canter for the first time?

When the horse first begins to canter, you will feel the front end of his body lift up, and his back will begin to swing up and down and front to back. This feels a little bit like riding a rocking horse, or a boat moving over waves.

The canter will probably seem big and powerful compared to the walk and the trot. Don't panic! You are not moving quite as fast as you think, and the more you **relax and breathe**, the easier the canter will be to ride.

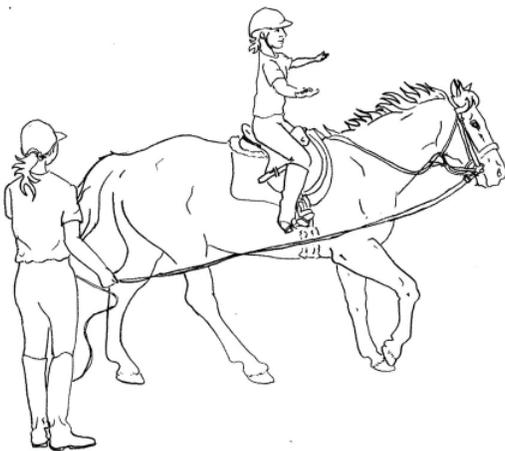


If you canter **on the rail**, you will begin by learning how to ask the horse for canter. You might cue for the **canter transition** in the sitting trot or the walk, depending on your horse's gaits and level of training.

In the beginning, your canters should be quite short - cantering down just one side of an arena is a great way to start. The canter is often easier to ride along a straightaway. You can also practice short canters safely in a group setting - as long as you keep your hands steady on the reins, and you stay calm and in control.

Keep steering, no matter what!

Most of the time, maintaining control and riding your horse in the correct direction is more important than staying in the canter.



You will be able to canter without your hands once you find your balance!

If you learn to canter on the **longe line**, you will not have to worry about controlling your horse, and will be free to focus on your own position. This is particularly helpful when you are learning to sit the canter, or if you need to hold mane or pommel to help keep your balance.

With practice, you can work up to cantering with both arms outstretched. If you can do this easily, you are ready to practice holding the reins and controlling the canter on your own.

However, **you must have a steady, fit and well-trained horse to canter safely on the longe line**. Some horses need to be warmed up on the longe line without a rider first, especially if they have not cantered in a while.

Sitting the Canter

Just like the trot, the canter can be ridden in **three different seats**. Your instructor may have a preference for which you learn first, and you may find one method much easier than the other, but it is helpful to learn to canter all three ways—you will use them later if you learn to jump and ride cross-country!

Sit and stay



Sitting the canter means that you sit deep in the saddle, following the movement of the horse with your hips just as you do in the sitting trot. (This is also called a **full seat** or **three-point seat**.)

Because the horse swings from front to back in the canter, your **hip angle** must slightly open and close to keep your upper body straight. It can take some practice to learn to follow the canter without bouncing or losing your stirrups, but once you get the hang of it, the canter should feel smooth and harmonious - as though you and your horse are waltzing together.

Sitting the canter allows you to use your seat and leg more effectively, giving you maximum control.
It is often the safest seat at the canter, especially if your horse gets strong or likes to buck!

If you find the canter's rolling motion difficult to sit at first, don't worry - you are not alone. Here are **some tips for mastering sitting canter**:

- 🐾 You need to be **relaxed in your hips and lower back** in order to swing with the horse's stride. If you tend to be tight in these areas, spend plenty of time your warm-up time **stretching** - both on and off the horse!
- 🐾 Just like in the sitting trot, your **knees and ankles also need to be relaxed and springy**. Think about dropping your heels down and back - toward the horse's hind legs - in rhythm with the third beat of the canter.
- 🐾 **Imagine you are on a swing**. In order to get the swing to move, you have to push your hips forward and back. This is a similar sensation to riding the canter.
- 🐾 If you are able to practice on the longe line, **hold the pommel of the saddle with your outside hand and place your inside hand on the cantle**. This pulls you into the center of the saddle and keeps your shoulders from tipping forward. After you have cantered this way long enough to get the feel for moving with the horse's back, remove your inside hand from the cantle and see how long you can keep the same motion in your seat.
- 🐾 You can also try **raising your inside hand over your head**, as though you are trying to touch a cloud. This lowers your center of gravity and helps keep you from bouncing.
- 🐾 If all else fails, you can try **riding the canter without stirrups**. This is an excellent way to develop a deep, following seat, as you are unable to brace against the stirrups - but you should only practice on a quiet, steady horse that can perform smooth transitions, preferably on the longe line.



Lighten Up

Although sitting the canter is an important skill to learn, there are many situations where it is better to ride the canter with your weight off the horse's back. You can do this two different ways: riding in **two-point position** or **galloping position**, and **cantering in a light seat**.

What's the difference?

In **two-point position**, your seat is totally above the horse's back.
In **light seat**, your weight is in your heels, but your seat stays close to the horse, just brushing the saddle with every stride.

Gearing up to gallop

Riding in two-point position at the canter is a great balancing and strengthening exercise, and can help the horse warm up his back at the canter. It is used for cross-country riding and occasionally jumping courses.

You will need a strong two-point position to learn to gallop!

Just like in the trot, the secret to success is a strong lower leg that remains anchored at the girth. Your joints act as shock absorbers so that your upper body can remain quiet. Keep your knees soft so that your weight can sink into your heels, letting them with the down beat of every stride.

Lift your shoulders up, over your knees, and rise enough out of the saddle that it does not touch. **You should feel like a hovercraft**, with the horse's back rocking just under you.



Keep things light

The light seat is a modified two-point position. It is usually used in jumping and **hunt seat equitation**, where the emphasis is on keeping weight off the horse's back and riding him forward, but it can also be useful on horses with sensitive backs.

It is an excellent **exercise for teaching your weight to stay in your heels during the canter**, so even after you have learned to sit, you can practice changing between seats to test your balance and leg control.

To ride in light seat, sink your weight into your heels and anchor your lower leg at the girth, just as though you are preparing to ride in two-point position. Keep your hips *slightly* bent, so that your seat remains close to the saddle.

As you rock with the motion of the canter, you will very lightly touch the saddle. **This is not the same as bouncing**—a good light seat will feel smooth, effortless and in sync with the horse's back.



Can you post to the canter? Yes, but it is a little different than posting to the trot.

You rise for one full stride - three beats - and sit for one full stride. This is usually used as a balance exercise. Some riders use it to help their horses develop a rhythm, especially when riding quick or excitable horses over fences or cross-country.

Time for Transitions

If you learn to canter on the longe line, your instructor will likely cue the horse for the **transitions** at first. But you will need to practice asking the horse for the canter yourself in preparation for cantering on your own. Riding smooth canter transitions can be challenging, so don't get frustrated if it takes lots of practice.

Canter, please!

A horse can transition to canter from the walk or trot. It is customary to learn trot-canter transitions first, but this will depend on your instructor's preference and how your horse was trained.

1. Make sure your horse is well-prepared by giving him a couple of "wake-up" squeezes or **half-halts**. He should be moving with **energy, not speed**—you should feel like the horse is a coiled spring. Check your rein length and shorten if necessary.

2. Stretch tall and begin to **sit to the trot**. If you keep posting, your horse will only trot faster.

3. Squeeze your **inside leg at the girth** and slide your **outside leg back** just a couple of inches. Some horses respond better to the inside leg than the outside leg, or vice versa, so you may need to experiment until you find the right amount of pressure. Start with a light leg aid and increase only as necessary—you don't want your horse to gallop or buck! If your horse is lazy, you can reinforce your leg aid with a big "cluck" or kissing sound.

4. Keep your **elbows relaxed and your hands quiet**. The horse's head swings up and down at the canter, so you'll need to follow the motion of his mouth with your hands. If you find it difficult to keep your hands in the correct position during the transition, you can train them by temporarily letting your knuckles rest against the horse's withers. In an emergency, you can grab a bit of mane, but try to use this only as a last resort, and avoid holding onto the saddle. Holding on be a difficult habit to break, and your horse will quickly realize that you are not in control.

5. If your horse does not canter right away, slow down, reorganize, and try again. Running your horse into the canter will put you both off balance, and it is very difficult to sit harmoniously to a fast trot.



Leaning forward like this makes it difficult for your horse to canter!

Transition tips

- 🐾 Remember that your **inside** leg is usually the one closest to the **center** of the arena, and the **outside** is closest to the **rail**.
- 🐾 Ask your horse to canter as you ride into a corner, preferably heading into the short side of your arena. This helps the horse to canter on the correct **lead**, with his inside foreleg in front.
- 🐾 Although it is tempting to lean forward to urge your horse into the canter - especially if he is lazy - you should **sit up straight and push your hips forward** instead. Ducking close to the horse's neck actually makes it **harder** for him to lift into the canter.

Slow Things Down

Most horses are happy to transition from a canter back to a slower gait. Some need extra encouragement. If you have a little braking trouble in the canter, don't panic - you have the skills to solve this problem!

Whoa, please

It is easiest for a horse to do a downward transition from canter to trot. Transitioning to the walk or halt is possible, but requires horse and rider to be extremely balanced and is considered a more advanced skill.



1. **Sit deep in your saddle**, with shoulders back. You may feel that your chest lifts and your hips move forward towards your hands.
2. **Sink your weight down into your heels, knees and thighs.** Your lower leg should stay quietly against the horse at the girth - gripping with your calf or heels will only make your horse go faster! Keep a soft bend in your knees so you don't brace against your stirrups.
3. **Exhale.** You can also say "Whoa" or "Trot" in a quiet, soothing voice.
4. **Squeeze your fingers on the reins** and/or deepen the bend in your elbow so that your hand resists the horse's forward moment instead of following it. If your reins are too long, the horse will not feel this cue, so shorten them if necessary before you ask. Remember to apply rein pressure rhythmically as though you are squeezing water out of a sponge. If you pull straight back, the horse can brace against you.
5. As soon as the horse starts to trot, **release** the pressure, begin **posting**, and **praise** him.

What if he won't whoa?

It can be a scary feeling when a horse canters off with you, particularly if you have only cantered a few times. The most important thing to remember is to **stay calm**. If you panic, shout or flail, the horse will panic along with you - and a panicked horse actually is unsafe to ride!

If you've followed the steps above and your horse keeps cantering, you can use this **three-step method** to regain control:

1. **First, make sure the problem isn't you.** Failed downward transitions often occur because of faults in the rider's position or the use of the aids. Are your heels lowered, or are they digging into the horse's side? Are you relaxed and following the movement of the canter, or are you tense and bouncing? Are your reins sufficiently short, or do you have to bring your hands back to your lap to apply pressure?
2. **Next, look for a place to circle.** It is best to start on a large circle and decrease the size gradually until the horse returns to trot. If the arena is crowded with jumps or other riders, or you have no experience cantering through turns, you may want to skip straight to Step 3.
3. **If all else fails, use a gentle pulley rein to regain control.** Get into a secure **safety seat** position and lift your outside rein up and back for a single moment, keeping your inside hand and reins planted against the horse's withers. Immediately release the pressure and repeat as necessary.



Learning Leads

Once you have become comfortable riding the canter, you will have an additional responsibility: learning to canter on the **correct lead**.

What are canter leads?

Remember that there are **three beats** or steps to the canter: hind leg, diagonal pair, remaining foreleg. This sequence makes the horse reach farther forward with one side of his body, just like when you skip with one foot always in front. The horse can choose to start cantering with either hind leg, which means that either his left or right foreleg can make the final leading step.

The horse's **left lead canter** often feels different than the **right lead canter**. You'll want to practice cantering equally on both sides. You may find that one canter lead is faster, slower, or more comfortable for you to sit.

Horses can also prefer cantering on one lead more than the other. However, if you are cantering around a circle or turn, **it is best to canter with the inside foreleg leading**. This is known as being on the correct lead.



A left lead canter.

Cantering on the correct lead helps your horse stay balanced as he turns.
This makes cantering smoother, easier, and safer!

You can get a feel for how leads work by "cantering" around on your own two feet, skipping with your left foot in front. (Remember, your leading leg is the last one that hits the ground, not the first!)



Try turning a circle in both directions without changing the rhythm of your footsteps. **You'll notice that it is easy to turn to the left, toward your leading leg, but much harder to turn away from it.** The right turn will feel awkward and uncomfortable - you might even feel like you are going to tip over!

Now try making these turns with a heavy backpack on your shoulders. Shift the backpack off center to simulate the weight of an inexperienced rider. You will appreciate how important it is to help your horse stay balanced, and how uncomfortable cantering on the wrong lead can be for horse *and* rider.

Does it *always* matter what lead the horse is on?

Just like posting diagonals, **leads are usually only important during turns**. If you were cantering your horse on a long, straight track, you could canter on the right or left lead, and neither would be incorrect.

In an arena, however, you are constantly riding through corners. This means that you'll need to learn how to **check your lead** every time you canter.



Left or Right?

There are several different methods you can use to figure out which lead your horse is cantering on. With practice, you should be able to identify it within the first few strides of each canter - just like checking posting diagonals when you begin to rise to the trot.

Look and learn

A great way to get started learning leads is to **watch other horses and riders in the canter**. (Slow-motion video is especially helpful!) This familiarizes you with the canter's motion and makes it easier to identify that important third beat. See if you can identify which foreleg is leading - is it the inside or the outside?



The bay horse on the left is circling right on the correct lead, with his right foreleg in front. The black pony is also traveling to the right, but is on the incorrect lead, with her left foreleg in front.

Of course, the view from your saddle will look a bit different. When you can identify another rider's lead easily, it's time to start practicing on your own horse.

With experience, you'll be able to **feel** what lead your horse is on from the moment he transitions into canter. This is ideal as it allows you to correct a wrong lead instantly, without taking your eyes off your destination. In the beginning, however, you may need **a three step-process to identifying your lead:**

- 1. Ask yourself: What do I feel happening in the horse's body?** Which way does the horse's body tilt or lean as his head and neck swing down? Is the canter smooth and balanced, or rough and choppy? Do you feel like you could easily turn in a circle to the inside?
- 2. Ask yourself: What do I feel happening in my body?** Your hips will mirror the positioning of the horse's body when riding in balance at the canter. If the horse's left foreleg is leading, your left hip and leg will also be farther forward than the right.
- 3. Ask yourself: Which shoulder do I see moving farther forward?** You should see one of the horse's shoulders reach ahead the other, in the final beat of the canter stride. Just take a quick peek - leaning over to look at the horse's legs can throw you both off balance!



Which lead do you think this horse is cantering on?

Time for a Change

You've noticed that your horse is cantering on the incorrect lead, with his outside foreleg in front. Now what do you do? There are a couple of different ways to help a horse change from one lead to the other, but for now, you will use a method called a **simple change**.

If at first you miss your lead, trot and try again

To ride a simple change, you ask your horse to **perform a downward transition, rebalance him, and ask for the canter again** in as few strides as possible. A simple change can be ridden through the trot, walk, or halt, but for now, you will probably just be returning to the trot between canters.



A small amount of bend can help your horse canter on the correct lead.

A horse might canter on the wrong lead for a number of reasons, including a **lack of balance, unclear aids from the rider, or stiffness or soreness**. Some horses are extremely one-sided and struggle to pick up the correct lead on their more difficult side.

No matter what, you'll need to be clear in your communication and make it as easy as possible for your horse to canter on the correct lead. Don't assume that just because you have trotted a few steps, he will figure the rest out on his own!

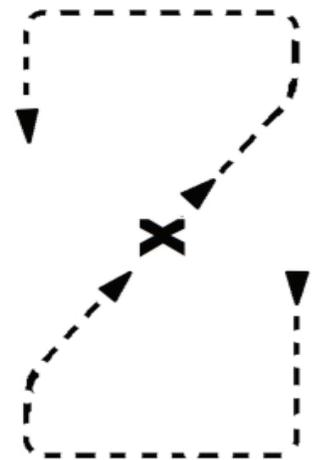
Try asking for the canter in a **corner** or on the **short side** of the arena, where the horse is aware of the turn. You may also have more luck cantering on a **large circle**, but use caution - overbending the horse or pulling him into a tight turn can make the transition even harder.

Change things up

If you can maintain a steady canter along the rail and get your horse to canter on the correct lead, you are ready to try a simple **change of direction** in the canter. Most riders find it easiest to change direction across the diagonal to start. As you prepare to turn in the new direction, you will need to ride a **simple change of lead** before you turn in the new direction - just like you would change your posting diagonal at the trot.

All of the ring figure basics you practiced at the walk and trot are especially important at the canter. **Ride deep into your corners** and straight across your lines. **Look ahead and plan** your turns carefully, especially if there are jumps or other arena equipment to steer around. Remember that your horse's canter stride is twice as long as his trot stride - so he needs lots of room to maneuver!

When you ask your horse to trot, **make sure the trot is slow and balanced** before you ask for the new canter. After he begins cantering, check your lead to make sure that your simple change was successful.



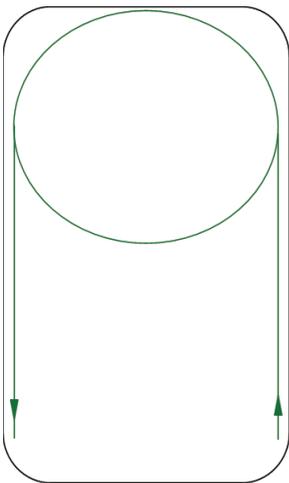
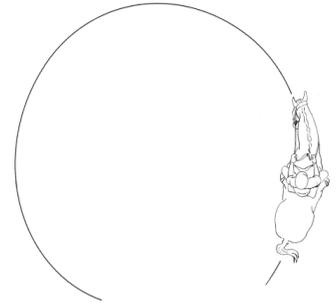
Ask your horse to trot as you ride over the centerline.

Canter Circles

Another good way to test your steering and planning at the canter is to ride big circles. Circling can be a little more challenging at the canter than at the walk and trot!

Some tips for riding a successful canter circle:

- 🐾 **Plan it out.** Figure out ahead of time where you want to ride your circle. It is best if you choose a specific point on the rail, such as a post, speaker or cone, where you want your circle to begin and end. If there are jumps or barrels in the arena, you might need to canter around some of the equipment. Remember, a round circle does not have corners - avoid tight turns and look for a place you can ride a smooth curve!
- 🐾 **Mark it off.** You can set four cones, or four pairs of cones, approximately 20m apart, and practice cantering around the outside of them. This is especially helpful if your horse likes to lean in and make his circle too small.
- 🐾 **Look ahead.** Everything comes up faster at the canter. Imagine that you are riding your horse around a clock face and look ahead a few hours. Give your horse cues well before you arrive at your markers, so that he has time to adjust his direction or gait.
- 🐾 **Ride both sides.** Many horses fall to the outside of their circle, especially when you canter past other horses or the gate. Make sure to keep your reins short and use both sides of your body to ask your horse to turn. Your **knee, thigh** and steady **outside rein** control the horse's shoulder, and your **outside leg** keeps his hindquarters from swinging out. Your **inside leg** should remain at the girth and can be used to ask the horse for more power if you feel him slowing down.
- 🐾 **Leads matter.** Make sure your horse is on the correct lead before you attempt to canter him around the circle. The wrong lead will make his canter off-balance and bumpy, and he may break to the trot. It is unfair to urge your horse on if he is on the wrong lead and slowing down out of self-preservation!



An easy pattern with a canter circle.
Try riding it in both directions!

- 🐾 **Go big.** For now, all of your canter circles should be **20m or larger** in diameter. It is okay to fill up entire upper half or upper third of the arena if you need the extra space. Making circles that are too small is a common beginner mistake, and the most likely reason horses break to trot on a circle.
- 🐾 **Power up.** Circling, especially at the canter, is hard work for your horse, so make sure that he is cantering with **impulsion**, or energy in his hindquarters. (Remember, this is not the same thing as speed.) If your horse persists in breaking to the trot, and you are sure that your circle is big enough, check that you are not using too much rein pressure to ask him to turn. Make sure that your horse can continue cantering on the rail without constant urging from you - this is sometimes referred to as the horse being **"in front of your leg."**

Horse On Course

For many riders, learning to jump is an exciting milestone. Learning to canter with confidence and balance helps prepare you for that moment, as does riding in two-point position and practicing coursework over ground poles.

Conquering courses

Riding around a course teaches you to plan ahead, connect smooth turns with straight lines, and ride at a rhythmic pace. These are all essential skills whether you intend to jump or not!

Practicing with ground poles or empty standards allows you to focus on riding flowing turns, approaches and departures - all critical to successful jumping. **A jump course may contain anywhere from three to fourteen obstacles, but you'll ride dozens of strides between fences.** Those strides often determine how you and your horse clear the obstacle.



Coursework checklist

Before you start hopping over real jumps, you should be able to consistently ride around a ground pole course at the trot. Use this checklist of coursework skills to guide your practice:

- Does your course begin with a smooth opening circle?** Is your circle big enough to allow your horse to find a balanced and rhythmic trot? Does it set you up easily for the first fence?
- Does your course end with a smooth closing circle?** Can you use this circle to gradually bring your horse back to a walk?
- Can you ride a straight approach and departure** to every jump on course?
- Do you ride wide, flowing turns between jumps,** using all the space you have in your arena?
- Can you maintain a steady, rhythmic trot** from your opening circle to your closing circle?
- Are you posting on the correct diagonal** through all of your turns? Do you remember to check your diagonal after your horse hops over a ground pole?
- Can you fold into a secure two-point position** over each pole, without losing your balance or rhythm?



Over the next few pages, you'll be learning about each of these skills in more detail. Once you can confidently answer "Yes!" to each question above, you are ready to start practicing over single small jumps!

Haven't practiced over ground poles in a while? Start by reviewing the information on jumping position and coursework in the [Red Horsemanship](#) and [Yellow Horsemanship](#) study guides.

Find Your Flow

Riding a smooth course is all about connecting lines that allow your horse to see the obstacle and jump out of a balanced stride. **Good jumping is really just good flatwork** - so if your horse leans in, drifts out, or wiggles when you ride him away from the rail, you may need to practice ring figures on the flat first!

A good start

A well-planned **opening circle** is an important part of each course. The circle gives you a straight approach to the first fence, and helps establish the speed and rhythm of your trot or canter. It gives you a chance to motivate a lazy horse or relax a nervous horse before you begin jumping. Think of it as the “on ramp” that sets you up for your course, just like we use ramps to get cars moving at the correct speed before they merge onto a busy highway.

When preparing to ride a course, **work out where to ride your opening circle before you begin**. Make sure you circle in the correct direction—you should not have to change direction in order to line up for your first fence. In a small arena, you may need to ride around a jump or two in order to make a circle that allows your horse to find his jumping rhythm. Spinning your horse in a tight circle is not a smart way to prepare for your first jump!



Which direction would you circle to approach this fence?

The End

The **closing circle** at the end of a course functions as an “off-ramp,” allowing you to gradually - and safely - decrease your horse’s speed. It asks him to rebalance and listen to you after the excitement of jumping, and prevents bad habits such as running to the gate. Just like your opening circle, the closing circle should be large and round. It should **position your horse away from the gate when you ride your downward transition**.

You can also test your horse’s obedience by riding a **straight-line halt** after the final fence. Allow your horse to trot or canter away from the fence for a few strides before asking him to halt. You may find this more difficult than halting on the flat! Sink deep into your saddle, without bracing on the reins.

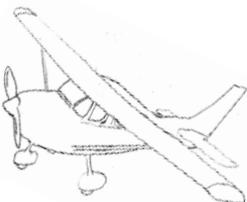


A straight-line halt

Set the speed

A horse needs to move forward with plenty of **impulsion**, or power, to trot smoothly over poles. **This pace is even more important over jumps**. As you practice your courses, make sure your horse is moving briskly forward in a steady rhythm. You should feel his hind legs pushing strongly with each step, as though he is getting ready to step into the canter.

Keeping your reins short can help you manage your pace. If they get too long, shorten them well before your final approach, as fidgety hands may distract your horse or slow him down before the jump.



Your horse should feel ready for take-off!

Check and Change

Another detail to consider when you are trotting around a course is your **posting diagonals**. Posting on the correct diagonal helps your horse maintain a strong, rhythmic pace and balance in the turns. It also helps you communicate which way you plan to turn at the end of each line.

Every time you get into two-point position, your diagonal has the potential to change. This means you will need to check your diagonal before every major turn on your course.

To make things even more challenging, most courses change directions at least once, so you'll need to **keep track of which shoulder is on the outside of your turn**.

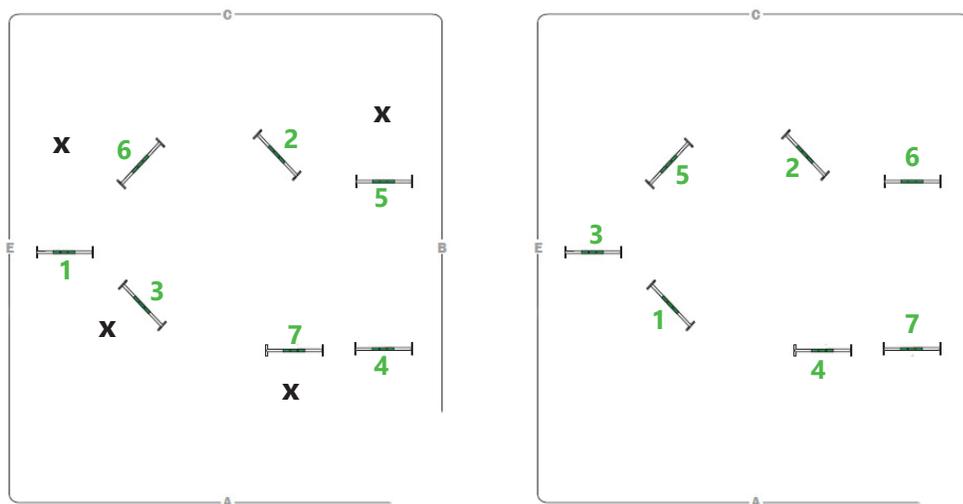
Remember that if you are turning to the *right*, you should be posting in sync with the *left* shoulder, and if you are turning *left*, you rise when the *right* shoulder moves forward. If posting diagonals are difficult for you, you may need to review the **Yellow Horsemanship** study guide. Practice trotting through changes of direction and courses of empty standards before adding the ground poles.



It can be easy to forget about diagonals once you start jumping, so **take a moment to plan** before you begin your opening circle. Pick landmarks to remind you to check your diagonals (for example, "At the tall cone" or "Before the gate"). Don't forget to check as you begin posting on your opening and closing circles!

It is less important to be on a specific diagonal in between two fences in a straight line, so for now, you should concentrate on riding straight down the line, and wait to check after the second jump.

The Xs on the first map show places you should check your diagonal. Where would you do it on course #2?

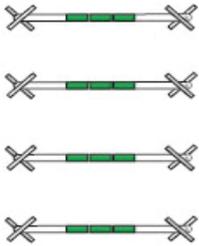


Don't look down or change your diagonal or lead right before a jump—this will disrupt your horse's rhythm and may cause him to duck out or stop.

If you arrive at a pole on the wrong diagonal or lead, focus on riding over the pole smoothly. Check your diagonal again after the *landing*, before riding into the next turn.

The Power of Poles

In Yellow Level, you learned how to ride over a **grid** of **trot poles** in two-point position. The closely-spaced poles create extra spring in your horse's trot, making them a great way to test your balance before jumping.



Start by reviewing the information in the [Yellow Horsemanship](#) study guide, especially the safety tips for working over trot poles.

Remember that the distance between poles must be suitable for your horse, and should be set and checked by an experienced horseperson!

Once you are warmed up and comfortably trotting over grids of 2 to 5 poles, try riding over the grid with your **reins in one hand**. It is important to line your horse up straight for the grid and keep your eyes on a target - you won't be able to steer with your reins and trot smoothly through the grid!

You can also practice riding trot poles **without using your hands for balance**. Guide your horse into the grid and set down the reins before the first pole. Fold into two-point with your arms outstretched, and pick up your reins after the final pole.

If your two-point position is correct, you should be able to maintain it all the way through the grid, with your bendy joints (hips, knees and ankles) absorbing the bounce of the poles. If you tip forward or fall back into the saddle, you'll need to practice more before you try a real jump.



Try trotting over the poles with...

- 🐾 The reins in one hand and the other arm **outstretched like an airplane wing**.
- 🐾 The reins in one hand and the other hand **resting on your head, hip, or behind your back**.
- 🐾 The reins in one hand and the other **moving in big, slow circles**.
- 🐾 **Both arms outstretched**, with your knotted reins resting on the withers.
- 🐾 **Eyes closed**.



Whenever you practice riding without holding onto the reins, the reins should be knotted for safety. This keeps the reins from sliding dangerously to one side, where your horse could step through them.

Tie a knot a few inches from the buckle of your reins. They should be long enough that you still can ride two-handed, but short enough that they will rest on the horse's neck right above the withers when you drop them. Long reins that create a large loop when knotted should be unbuckled to prevent you from getting a hand or foot caught in a fall.

Ready to Jump

After lots of practice riding in two-point position and over poles, you are ready to try a real jump at last! It's normal to be a little nervous, but if you've done your homework on the flat, it won't take you long to get the hang of jumping small obstacles, often referred to as **fences**.

Start small

Before you start riding over crossrails, your instructor may have you practice cantering over a single pole on the ground. **Cantering over ground poles often feels similar to riding over a jump.** Many horses will give the pole a small hop. A few like to dramatically leap, so make sure your horse is quiet over poles before you give it a try.

Approach the pole in a steady and rhythmic canter. Keep your weight in your heels and approach the pole in a secure light seat or two-point position. This will keep you from getting left behind if your horse takes a bigger stride than you expect. Don't forget to look up and breathe!



When the poles get raised to actual jumps, it is best for you to approach at a trot.

This will help your horse take off in the right place, creating a comfortable jump.



At first, you will only jump simple jumps, such as a single **crossrail** about 18" high. Your first jump may be higher or lower depending on your horse —sometimes 6" is enough to get a real jump if the horse is eager! Your instructor might set trot poles or a **placing pole** before the fence to help you arrive in the right rhythm and balance.

Steps to a successful jump:

- 1. Ride an opening circle, or develop your trot on the rail** before approaching the jump. Make sure your horse is moving forward in a brisk working trot, that your reins are short and even, and that your position is secure.
- 2. Line up with the center of the jump** at least five full strides away. Make sure your approach is straight!
- 3. Look at the middle of the jump** when you begin your initial approach, and as the jump gets closer, **shift your focus to a target on the other side.** Keep your eyes on your destination, even if you feel your horse getting wiggly or slow!
- In the final stride before the jump, **sink your weight into your heels and gently squeeze your lower legs at the horse's girth.** This helps keep your position secure and encourages the horse to jump.

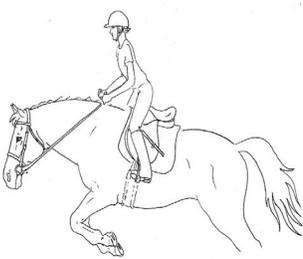
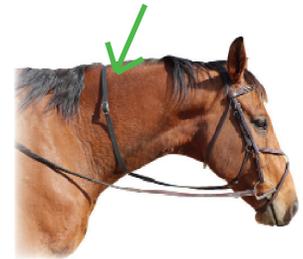


- As the horse takes off, **reach forward and grab some mane**, pressing your knuckles into the horse's neck. You'll feel the front end of his body lift - as it drops, his hindquarters will push strongly up into the air.
- Your knees and ankles act as shock absorbers when your horse lands. Keep your eyes up and your heels down as your horse jumps. Once your horse's back feet touch down, **sit up and return to a posting trot.**

Jumping Tips

With practice, you'll be able to trot around small courses of single jumps, using all the basics you learned over ground poles. Here are a few final tips for jumping Green Level fences joyfully:

- 🐾 **Shorten your stirrups 1 to 2 holes** from your normal flatwork length. The bottom of the stirrup iron should just touch the top of your ankle bone. This increases the angle of your joints and the contact between your lower leg and the horse's barrel, making your jumping position more secure.
- 🐾 **Keep your eyes on your target.** You might be tempted to glance down as your horse takes off, especially if he hesitates, but this is one of the worst things you can do while jumping! Looking down pulls your weight forward and may cause your horse to stop. Looking up, on the other hand, helps you keep your balance and communicates to your horse that he needs to get to the other side.
- 🐾 **Keep your knuckles firmly pressed down** against your horse's crest in a **long release**. If you are riding over a grid of trot poles to a crossrail, release at the first pole and hold it all the way over the jump. Otherwise, move your hands forward at the takeoff. **Do not throw your hands forward abruptly in the final strides before the fence** - this is called **dropping your horse** and can make him lose confidence right before the jump. If you find releasing difficult, practice with a **neckstrap**, or a stirrup leather buckled around your horse's neck.
- 🐾 **Don't be surprised if your horse lands in the canter after a jump.** For many horses, this is natural and a sign that he has jumped well. Sit up tall and allow your horse to canter for just a few strides before asking for a downward transition to trot.



Jumping ahead makes you more likely to fall!

What about two-point position?

You may have noticed that none of our instructions for jumping include standing up in your stirrups or getting into two-point position. This is because two-point should now be part of your muscle memory. If you concentrate on keeping your leg on, eyes up, hands forward, and weight in your heels, **your hips will fold naturally into jumping position** as the horse takes off.

Riders who try to deliberately rise out of the saddle over fences often end up doing too much, throwing their weight forward and making it more difficult for the horse to jump. This is known as **jumping ahead**.

When jumps go wrong

When all of the ingredients come together, jumping is smooth and fun! But sometimes we make mistakes, or something happens that causes your horse to lose his confidence. When this happens, the horse might **refuse** (stop in front of the fence) or **run out** (swerve around the fence) instead of jumping.

You will learn more about handling these common jumping problems in **Blue Level**. In the meantime, **stay calm!** Listen to your instructor's action plan, and praise your horse generously when you clear the jump.

Remember, you've got to believe!

Riding positively to every jump will give your horse confidence in YOU.

No Saddle, No Problem

If you can walk, trot, canter, jump, and/or ride for several minutes without stirrups, you can easily learn to ride **bareback**, or without any saddle at all. Riding bareback can be a lot of fun, and is a great way to develop a secure seat!



Why ride bareback?

- 🐾 It **improves your balance and security**, which will help **prevent falls**.
- 🐾 It **teaches you to relax** and go with the movement of the horse's back.
- 🐾 It helps you **develop an independent seat**. Having an independent seat means you can remain balanced without gripping or relying on your hands, allowing you to communicate clearly and effectively with your horse.
- 🐾 It gives you a chance to really **feel your horse's movement**.
- 🐾 It can be **enjoyable for both you and the horse!**

It is best to practice on a laid-back horse, preferably one with smooth gaits and without prominent withers. If your horse's back is very bony, you may want to ride with a **bareback pad**. Avoid pads with stirrups - since there is no tree holding the pad in place, it is very easy for it to slip if you get off balance!



Getting started

Be prepared to spend a lot of time riding bareback at the walk before you move up to faster gaits. When you ride bareback, sit up straight and tall, and **let your legs hang relaxed** around the horse's belly. If you pinch with your knee, the horse will be uncomfortable and may stop. If you grip with your lower leg, your horse will go faster—not helpful when you are trying to find your balance!

Breathe deeply and keep your eyes up. Let your body swing naturally along with the motion of the horse's walk. If you feel nervous or have trouble finding your balance, **you may want to have your instructor or another experienced horseperson walk with you**. They can help you control the horse until you feel secure enough to do it on your own.



It's a good idea to **practice a few emergency dismounts** when you first start to ride bareback. It is easier to slip sideways and fall without a saddle - but it can also be easier to swing off and land safely on your feet, if necessary. Practice until you are comfortable dismounting on both the near and off sides, at a walk and trot.

If you need to use your hands to steady yourself temporarily, you can grab a bit of mane. You can also fasten a breakable leather belt or stirrup leather around your horse's neck to use as a **neckstrap**. **Be careful not to use your reins to balance, as this will hurt your horse's mouth.**

Bareback Fun

At first, you may find riding bareback quite challenging. But with lots of slow, patient practice, you will gain the ability to ride all three gaits with balance, control and confidence. You may even be able to jump your horse bareback someday!

Trying out the trot

Once you are comfortable in the walk and can ride with good control, you can try trotting. **Most riders find it more comfortable to sit to the trot bareback, but you can also post** by swinging your hips forward, just as you do when trotting without stirrups. Breathe deeply and keep your shoulders back. You might find it helpful to think about pushing your belly button towards the horse's ears.

Only trot for short periods of time until you get used to it. It is usually easier to trot on the rail, or down the centerline, as it can be a bit tricky to stay centered while the horse turns. Gradually increase the length of each trot as your balance and confidence improves, adding in ring figures and transitions to test your control. **Don't be surprised if you are quite sore afterward** - riding bareback is a major workout for the inner thighs!



Some other fun things you can try without your saddle:

- 🐾 All of the **warm-up exercises** you learned in Red Level can be done without a saddle. Start with easy stretches such as arm circles and ankle circles, and work up to toe touches. Reaching to touch your opposite toe can be challenging! Use your other hand to hold onto mane or your neckstrap along with the reins.
- 🐾 If you have someone to hold your horse still, try going **Around the World**. Turn slowly and carefully, especially if your horse is narrow or slippery!
- 🐾 Try **feeling when your horse steps with each leg**. The hind legs of the horse are the most important to feel, since they propel the horse forward. As your horse steps forward with his left hind foot, you should feel his barrel swing to the right; his left shoulder will also swing back towards your leg.
- 🐾 **Play a game of Ride-a-Buck with friends or classmates**. Each rider brings a dollar bill and positions it under their leg. You can experiment with different positions, but mid-thigh is best, since this is the part of your seat that should make constant contact with the horse. Start with simple exercises such as stretches and transitions, and work up to trot or canter. If you lose your dollar or touch it with your hand, you are out of the game - **the last rider left with a dollar** wins them all.



While most horses enjoy working without a saddle, some horses can be reactive to the different sensation, especially if you wobble or bounce.

For now, only practice riding bareback on a well-trained, experienced mount!

Strong and Safe

As you've already learned, riding is a sport, and you need to **treat yourself like an athlete** in order to be able to ride safely and well. This is especially true when you start riding at the canter and jumping. Soon, you may want to learn how to gallop or jump your horse cross-country - but you'll have to put fitness first!



Working on YOU makes your horse's life better!

Why is fitness so important for equestrians?

Riding at speed and over fences is considered a **high-risk activity**. This means that even if you have done your homework and developed a solid base of skill at the walk and trot, you may need to step up the fitness game to keep from getting hurt.

A toned, supple body also makes it easier to ride well.

You'll be able to sit the horse's gaits and use your aids clearly and correctly. You'll become more secure in the saddle, allowing you to ride with increased confidence. You may feel like you progress faster - and **your horse will be thrilled** with the improvement.

If you haven't thought about your fitness in a while, start by reviewing the exercises in **Red** and **Yellow Horsemanship**, and ask your instructor for personalized suggestions. **Remember, if you have any health problems or physical issues, be sure to consult a professional before beginning any exercise program!**

Are you an equestrian athlete?

Horseback riding requires **flexibility, stamina**, and a moderate amount of **strength**, especially in the core and legs. There are many activities you can do that will help improve your fitness for riding. Here are a few suggestions - how many of these boxes can you check?

- Do you regularly stretch?** Practicing yoga, barre or similar exercises a few days a week will improve your ability to follow your horse's movement, and helps keep you from getting injured if you fall. Stretch before and after your ride to minimize muscle soreness.
- Do you participate in aerobic activity?** Sometimes referred to as cardio, this sustained activity strengthens your heart and lungs and improves your stamina, so you won't be wheezing after posting the trot! You can get aerobic exercise by walking, running, biking, dancing, swimming, practicing exercises such as jumping jacks, or playing another organized sport.
- Do you do any kind of strength training?** You can do at-home exercises such as squats and crunches, practice Pilates, or work out at a gym. Many yoga poses also help you improve your strength.
- Do you practice riding without stirrups and in two-point position?** Practicing both for just a few minutes in every ride will make a big difference in your balance and fitness.
- Are you eating a diet designed to nourish your body and give your energy?** Sugar and highly-processed foods can drain you, leaving you weak and ineffective in the saddle.
- Are you drinking lots of water?** Skip the soda and stay hydrated, especially when riding in hot weather!



The Real Rider's Club

At some point in your riding career, you will have your first fall. While it may have happened to you already, many riders experience their first fall while learning to canter, jump, or ride bareback.

While no one really enjoys falling, it is an unavoidable part of riding.

In fact, there is a horseman's saying that you are not a *real rider* until you have hit the dirt and gotten back on!

Most falls happen so quickly that you don't have much time to think, but if you find yourself parting company with your horse, you can minimize your risk by pulling your arms and legs close to your body. **Let go of the reins** so you are not dragged! Roll away from the horse, and exhale as you land to prevent the wind from getting knocked out of you.



Even if you think you are fine, **lie still for a moment** before you try to move.



It is important to be honest with your instructor about any pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, or other symptoms you may experience after a fall. Many people with concussions do not immediately realize that they have one, so if you hit your head, or experience pain in your head/neck, you should get checked out by a doctor immediately! Your **helmet may need to be replaced**, even if it looks okay.

If you are not hurt, it is best to get back on the horse right away. It is perfectly normal to be nervous when you first get back on, and it may take you several rides to regain your confidence. Your instructor will be able to help you work through your fear, so don't be afraid to let her know when you are frightened. If your horse is still tense after the fall, your instructor may need to ride and school him first before you get back on.

Although many people refer to falling as "getting thrown off," it is rare that a horse will deliberately unload his rider.

Horses that spook, buck or bolt are often frightened, in pain, or full of excess energy. As your seat improves, you will be less likely to fall in these instances. Keep in mind that many horses are as unnerved as their riders when a fall occurs. Punishing your horse or losing your temper will only make him more fearful and likely to spook.



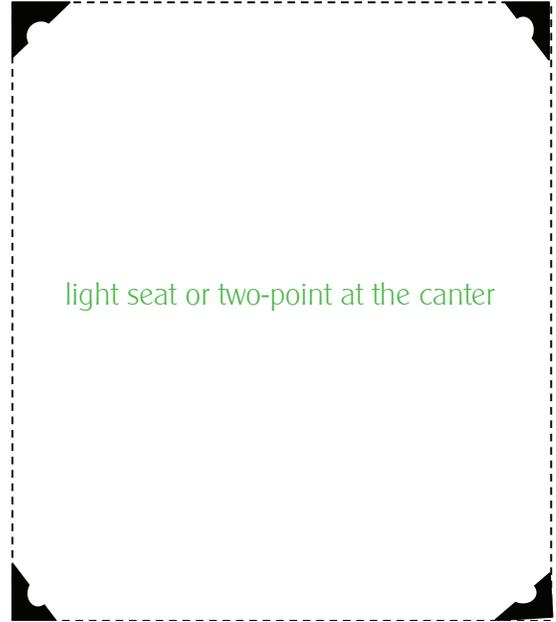
It is normal to fall occasionally, especially if your horse does something unexpected. But if it happens frequently, you may need to **take a careful look at your fitness program**, or **go back to practicing more simple skills** until your strength and balance improve.

Picture Perfect

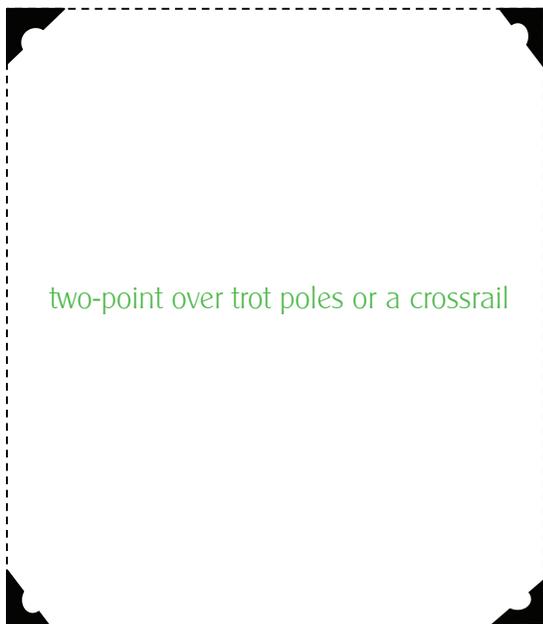
One of the best ways you can work on riding outside of lessons is by regularly reviewing **photos and video of yourself in the saddle**. It can also be fun to look back at these photos months later to see your progress. Use this page to paste in your favorite action shots. **What are you doing well? What can you improve?**



Date: _____



Date: _____



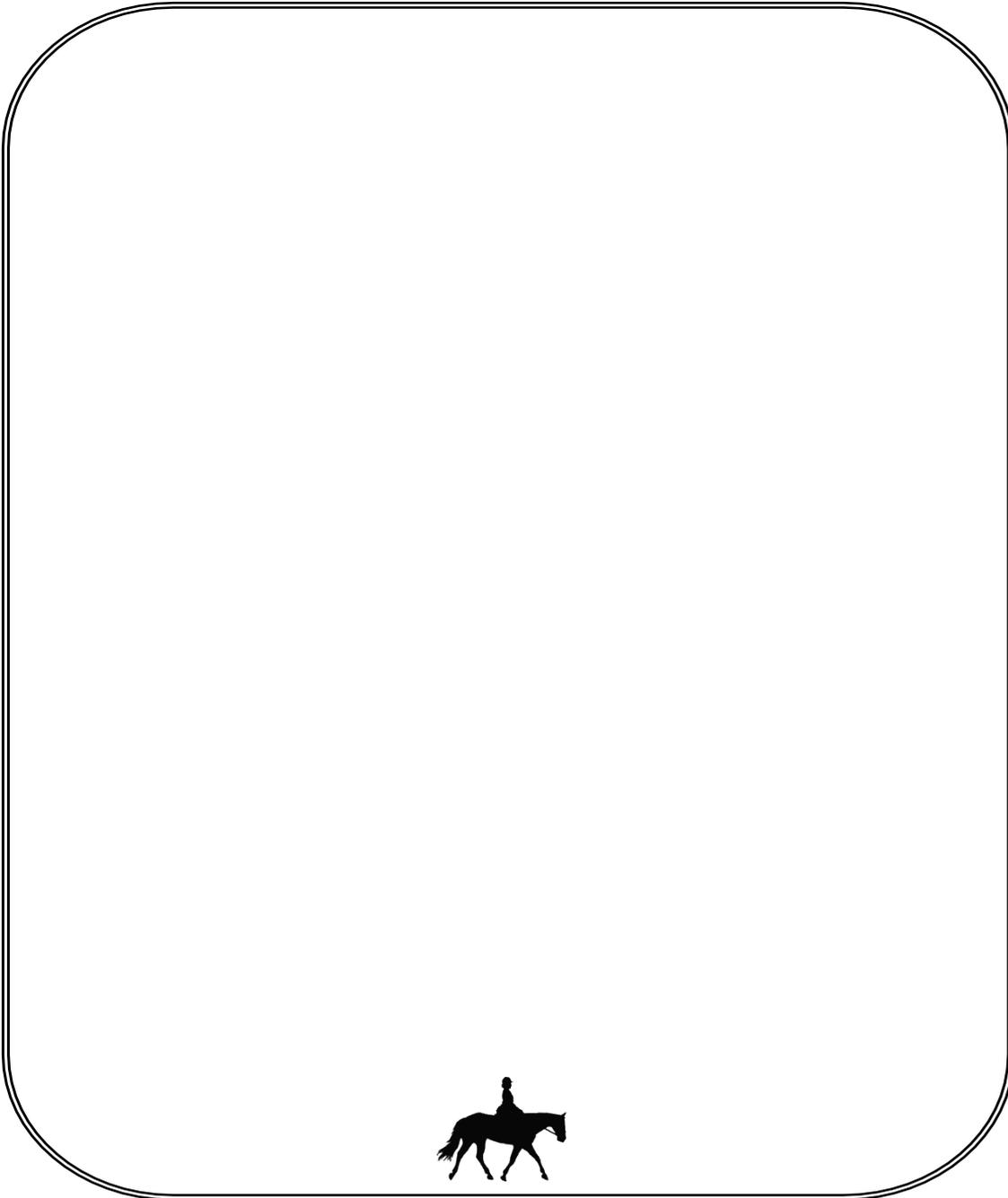
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BALANCED POSITION CHECKLIST:

- If I'm **sitting**, can I drop a **straight line** from the **center of my head through my shoulders and hips to my heel?**
- If I'm in **two-point**, can I draw a line from my **head through my shoulders and knees to the tips of my toes?**
- Are my **heels lower than my toes?**
- Is my **stirrup leather straight up and down**, perpendicular to the ground?
- Is there a **straight line** from my **elbow** through my hands **to the horse's bit?**
- Are my **eyes and thumbs up?**

Practice Arena

Here is a **practice arena** that you can use to draw **changes of direction, circles,** and the other **patterns that you ride in your lessons.** Try drawing each figure in a different color, or taking small toy horses and letting them go for a ride.



If you want to reuse this arena, be sure to draw lightly in pencil!

For Further Study

We hope this guide has served as a helpful companion to your Green Level education. If you are interested in learning more, look for the following resources:



Download the **full HorseSense curriculum** and get updates on **online courses**:

<https://horsesenseridingacademy.com>

Harris, Susan, 2012. **The USPC Manual of Horsemanship - D Level - 2nd ed.** One of the best how-to books of horse care and riding ever written for beginners, with simple and clear explanations and illustrations. Strong emphasis on safety, with special sections for parents.

Henderson Pinch, Dorothy, 1998. **Happy Horsemanship.** How-to riding manual full of whimsy and great drawings.



McNeil, Hollie. 2011. **40 Fundamentals of English Riding.** A thorough overview of English riding basics, including balanced position, use of aids, and riding correct ring figures.

Ward, Lesley. 2007. **Jumping for Kids.** An introduction to safe and joyful jumping, full of photographs and diagrams. Great for adult beginners, too!



We have a playlist of recommended videos for Green Horsemanship saved on the official **HorseSense YouTube channel** - with a library of Learning Levels videos coming soon! Search for "HorseSense Learning Levels" and go to the Playlist tab.



Follow HorseSense Learning Levels on Pinterest and browse Pins for every Level.

<https://pinterest.com/horsesenselevels/boards/>



Join our Quizlet classroom and test your horsey knowledge!

<https://quizlet.com/join/r2Vq9vMms>

Equine magazines:

Expand your horsey knowledge by subscribing to an equine periodical. Here are a few of our favorites:

www.practicalhorsemanmag.com

www.equusmagazine.com

www.horseillustrated.com

www.youngrider.com

Are you an **instructor** interested in **lesson plans, patterns, courses, challenges** and **incentives** that can help you teach Green Level? Visit:

<https://horsesenselearninglevels.com>

