



# HorseSense Learning Levels

## HORSEMANSHIP LESSON PLANS



### SET #1: Barn Basics

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# RAINBOW # 1

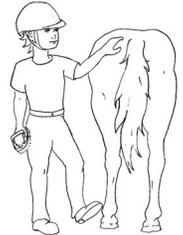
# HorseSense Learning Levels

## UNMOUNTED SAFETY

RAINBOW LEVEL

## THINK LIKE A HORSE

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn safe barn behavior, including the correct way to approach a horse and importance of observing equine body language.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- QUIET HORSE, SAFELY TIED OR CROSS-TIED
- DUCT TAPE, SEVERAL DIFFERENT COLORS
- SIDEWALK CHALK OR FLOUR
- OPTIONAL HORSE TREATS

### PREP

If possible, arrange for an assistant to tie horse while you begin lesson. Otherwise, secure horse in a safe place under supervision. Outline one side of horse with duct tape as shown on next page. Draw circle around horse two lengths in diameter, using chalk or flour.

### INTRO

Gather students in tack room, office or at end of barn aisle, as far from horse as possible. Call on each student by name and ask them to show you **two feet with safe barn shoes** and **one head inside a helmet**. Adjust fit of helmets if needed.

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Discuss:** Horses are special animals and can be our partners and friends. But they are prey animals, which means they are giant chickens inside! **ASK: Does anyone know the difference between a prey animal and a predator? Are YOU a prey animal like a deer or a predator like a mountain lion?**

5  
MIN

**Emphasize:** Horses rarely hurt us on purpose. But working around prey animals can be very dangerous unless we learn to follow the barn rules.

-  **Discuss:** Horses have big bodies and big space bubbles. Inside these bubbles, students must follow the rules or they will be asked to leave.

-  **PRACTICE:** Use chalk or flour to draw a circle around each student. **ASK: How can you ask someone to leave your bubble if you can't talk?** Encourage students to act out equine body language, such as ear pinning, kicking and spooking. Help them find their own **blind spot** and ask them place a hand over their nose to simulate a horse's vision.

10  
MIN

-  **Discuss:** "When we enter the horse's circle, we must walk the **Horse Walk**: quiet, friendly, absolutely no running! What else do you think we shouldn't do in the circle?"

5  
MIN

-  **PRACTICE:** Once students are walking the Horse Walk - and have **left the loud behind** - bring the group to meet the demonstration horse. Point out the zones marked by different colors. **ASK: Where are the blind spots? Where are the toe squishers? What color would you touch first?** One at a time, escort students into the bubble to practice touching the horse and moving from side to side safely. If time remains *and* the horse is suitable, finish by demonstrating and practicing **how to feed a treat safely**.

10  
MIN

### REVIEW

- ? Can you think of three things that might frighten a horse enough for him to run over you?
- ? Should we EVER stand behind a horse? In front of him? Crawl under his belly?!

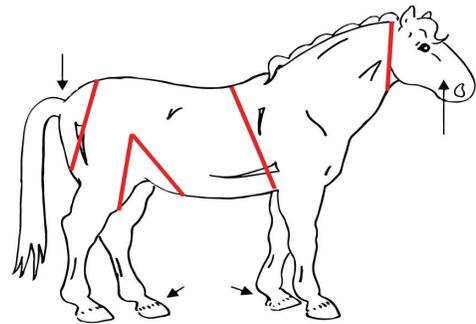
# RAINBOW # 1

## THINK LIKE A HORSE

RAINBOW LEVEL

### FUN AND GAMES

- 🐾 Have extra time, or the horse isn't feeling cooperative? Play **Pony Charades**. Give each student a card containing a word such as "Hungry," "Angry," or "Scared," or if students aren't reading yet, whisper in their ear. Ask each student to act out the prompt as though they were a horse - no speaking allowed - and challenge the rest of the group to guess what is happening.
- 🐾 Students can earn a prize or badge for completing the following tasks correctly:
  - Approaching horse and making contact
  - Passing safely in front and behind horse
  - Holding hand flat for treat
  - Naming three barn rules



*No duct tape? You can use nontoxic finger paint to mark your horse instead.*

### GROUND BUDDIES

Ground Buddies can help prep and tie the horse and assist with crowd control. They can also perform demonstrations, showing students how to approach, move around and/or safely deliver a treat. Make sure your Ground Buddies are outfitted in safe barn shoes (helmets are a plus!) and that they demonstrate exemplary barn behavior for the duration of the lesson.



**On a rainy day...** host a horse safety **Scavenger Hunt**. Divide students into teams and assign lists of simple prompts, with Ground Buddies or older students reading out loud as necessary. Ask students to locate items - or demonstrate behavior - within a time limit, and award prizes as you see fit. You can download our **Rainbow Level Safety Hunt** at:

<https://horsesenselearninglevels.com/resource-center/resources-by-level/rainbow-level-resources/>

### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 Even when children are positioned outside the horse's space bubble, practice **CONSTANT VIGILANCE**. Enforce a **zero-tolerance policy** for unsafe behavior. You may find it helpful to have a designated bench or chair for students who are required to exit the horse's space.
- 🐾 **Some children are genuinely frightened** to walk up to and make contact with a horse, especially when they see the size difference up close. You may wish to walk hand in hand with these students as they make their initial approach. Allow each student the time and space they need - pressuring them to advance can increase their fear. It's okay if it takes them a couple of weeks to get comfortable!

### PONY MAKEOVER

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn to name and use basic grooming tools while reviewing horse safety techniques practiced in previous lesson.*



#### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- QUIET HORSE, TIED OR CROSSTIED
- FULLY STOCKED GROOMING KIT
- LABELS FOR GROOMING TOOLS

#### PREP

Inventory grooming kit and make sure all bottles (fly spray, hoof dressing, etc.) have lids screwed on tight. Print or hand write labels to stick on grooming tools.

#### INTRO

Gather students in tack room, office or at end of aisle. "Before we can put on a horse's saddle and bridle, we need to groom, or clean his hooves and body. Why do you think this is? **Would you like to go exercise with a rock in your shoe, or hay in your pants?!**"

#### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Review:** Before students can practice grooming, they'll need to demonstrate some horse safety. Ask them to show you two booted feet and one helmeted head. **ASK: Who can name some of the horse safety rules we learned in our last lesson? What are some reasons you might have to step outside the horse's bubble?** 5 MIN
-  **Demonstrate:** One at a time, pull grooming tools out of the kit. Name each tool and pantomime using it before passing it on to students. 5 MIN

**PRACTICE:** Divide students into pairs and have them gently "groom" each other with each tool. Position them facing the "tail" while they pick hooves and have them practice keeping contact with the "horse" as they pass from side to side. Lay tools in a visible row when finished, preferably in order of use. 5 MIN
-  **Review:** Hand out stickers and ask students to label the grooming tools. Have an answer key or hint at the ready. 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Return labeled tools to the grooming box and move to the horse. Assign each student a job, dividing tools and tasks as evenly and fairly as possible. Explain that only two grooms at a time are allowed in the bubble. **ASK: How do you feel when a lot of people crowd inside your bubble?** Allow students to work as independently as possible, but be prepared to help - you will have to brush areas students can't reach, such as the topline and behind the ears, and you will almost certainly have to lift and hold hooves. 10 MIN
-  **Emphasize:** Grooming should be effective but pleasant for the horse. You may need to physically help small hands curry and brush until they get a feel for the right amount of pressure. For now, students should avoid **danger zones** such as the flank!

#### REVIEW

- ? Do you think this horse looks better now? Do you think he feels more comfortable?
- ? Would you let me brush your face with a body brush? What about a dandy brush? Why?

# RAINBOW #2

# HorseSense Learning Levels

## PONY MAKEOVER

RAINBOW LEVEL

### FUN AND GAMES

- Combine your grooming lesson with some arts and crafts and you have the perfect activity for a Rainbow Level clinic or camp. Provide **cheap dandy brushes along with nontoxic, child-safe paint** and brushes, stamps, and/or glitter. Tell students the brush they decorate will be their very own for use in future lessons. Your mileage may vary on how well the paint sticks to the brushes, so you might want to prime the brushes or test your supplies ahead of time! Set finished brushes aside and seal, promising students they'll be ready to use by the next day.
- Award prizes** for successful "makeovers," especially if the horse is really dirty. We love these **Clean Pony ribbons** from **Hodges Badge Company**, and our Rainbow Level students do, too.



### GROUND BUDDIES

Ground Buddies can assist with **crowd control**, lift and **hold hooves**, and **demonstrate grooming techniques**. If you have only one horse available, you can ask a Ground Buddy to groom one side of the horse, leaving the other for students to collaborate on. If you have multiple child-safe horses, divide students and pair them with their own Buddy to work together on their own pony makeover project.

**The naming of things is a difficult matter**, for most Rainbow Level students, anyway. Call each tool by name as many times as possible, and ask students to repeat it back to you. Point out the grooming pages in the **Rainbow Level coloring book** and ask them how many tools are named. Invite parents to join the **Quizlet classroom** for HorseSense Learning Levels and help their child play matching games with the Grooming Tool study sets:

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

### FINAL NOTES

- Children can practice an efficient **pre-ride grooming** or a **thorough grooming** that includes mane and tail, face, dock, etc., depending on the supplies and time you have allowed. Be sure to explain the difference!
- Make sure students remember the **size of the horse's space bubble** and treat it with respect. You may want to draw it out in chalk or flour again. You can also count paces away from the horse and place a soccer cone or similar marker on the boundary.
- Keep a watchful eye on students at all times**, whether they are interacting with the horse directly or not. If you have a large group, there may be several fidgety children outside the bubble waiting their turn to groom. Speed the process along by allowing each student to groom only part of the horse, or recruit assistants and divide the group into smaller teams.

# FOLLOW THE LEADER

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn qualities of effective leadership as they practice leading horse from the ground.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- QUIET HORSE(S), OUTFITTED IN BRIDLE OR HALTER/ROPE
- 6 CONES
- EXTRA HALTER, LEAD ROPE AND BRIDLE

### PREP

Set cones in Zipper formation shown on next page. Ensure arena and gateways are otherwise clear of equipment or obstructions.

### INTRO

"Before we can ride a horse, we need to be able to lead it from the pasture to the barn to the arena. This means we have to learn how to be **good leaders**. What do you think makes a good leader?"

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

 **Review:** Ask students if they remember the difference between a prey animal and a predator. **ASK: If you are a prey animal, wouldn't you like to have someone looking out for you? What do you think makes prey animals feel safe?**

5  
MIN

**Emphasize:** Horses like and trust leaders who are Friendly, Firm and Fair. They do not like it if you are an Angry Bossypants *or* a Cowardly Lion!

 **Demonstrate:** How to hold a lead rope and bridle reins. Show students how to check for **finger-eating coils** and refold rope without dropping it under their feet.

10  
MIN

 **PRACTICE:** Divide students up into pairs. Designate one student as the "horse" and the other as the leader. Leaders must guide "horses" through the **Zipper cones**, performing two halt/walk transitions on the way home. You may wish to walk in front of students to help them understand and learn the pattern. Remind students that **horses can't talk**, even if they are confused. Switch places and repeat if time allows.

 **Discuss:** If you are a horse, how did you know where to go? If you are a leader, what happens if your horse walks in front of you or drags behind you? How could you solve this problem with a great big HORSE?

5  
MIN

 **Demonstrate:** Bring an actual horse into the arena and lead through the pattern. Make sure to **explain every step** of maneuvering through the gate, turns and transitions.

10  
MIN

 **PRACTICE:** Depending on age, experience and confidence levels, students may take turns leading single horse through the pattern with your help, OR lead their own horse through one at a time. **Boots and fastened helmets are mandatory!**

### REVIEW

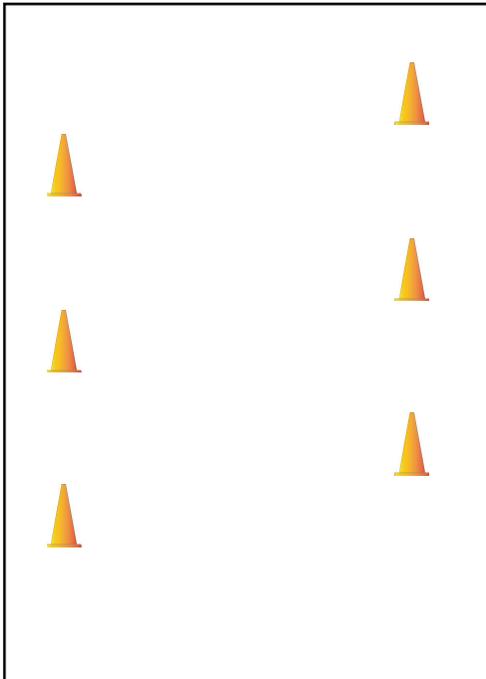
- ? Can you show me how to safely hold a lead rope? Bridle reins?
- ? Why do you think it is important to always look where you want your horse to go?

# RAINBOW #3

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

# HorseSense Learning Levels

RAINBOW LEVEL



*The Zipper pattern.  
Students weave around the cones, alternating  
between the left and right side of the arena,  
before returning on centerline.*

## FUN AND GAMES

- 🐾 If you have a safe space to do so, take your horseless leading exercises to another level by **blindfolding the "horses."** They will likely have a lot to say about what makes good leadership afterward!
- 🐾 Follow up this lesson later on with a **Lead and Ride** course. Students must complete the course twice, once on the ground and once on horseback. (This is great as a warm-up on a cold winter day!) Add ground poles to step over, barrels to turn around, and poles to weave, and **award prizes** to students who successfully pilot their horses through the course.
- 🐾 Any groundwork masters in your barn? Local trainers with liberty or trick horses? Many children are unaware that anything besides riding can take place in an arena. **Arrange a demonstration or show a video**, asking students what they find inspirational and what kind of skills they think are involved.

For more ideas on teaching ground handling skills, check out the **Teaching Guides for Red HorseSense Level:**

<https://horsesenselearninglevels.com/resource-center/resources-by-level/red-level-resources/>

## FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 **Make absolutely sure that your school horses are qualified** before putting them in the hands of a small child. We have met a couple of horses who would go anywhere with a large child or an adult, but show a tendency to nip and "herd" little people. Other horses will mercilessly take advantage of a timid handler.
- 🐾 **Even if the horse is quiet, don't be afraid to intervene.** Walk on the off side of the horse where you can easily take control of the halter and lead rope, or ask a Ground Buddy to act as training wheels. It's okay if the horse is really just following you - your students are still building good habits they can later use to control the horse independently.
- 🐾 If you suspect a horse might even think of **grass diving**, and there is a blade of grass anywhere near your arena, he needs to have a belly full of grass or hay going into this lesson!

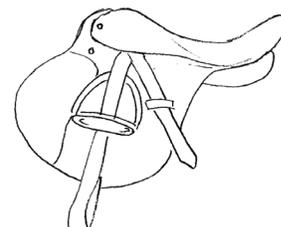


*Only patient, child-safe ponies  
need apply!*



## TACK ROOM TOUR

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will gain familiarity with basic pieces of tack used to ride and be able to assist with tacking up.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- QUIET HORSE, GROOMED AND TIED OR CROSS-TIED
- PROTECTIVE BOOTS, IF USED
- SADDLE, BRIDLE, PAD(S), GIRTH
- OPTIONAL PRIZES

### PREP

Ensure arena is set with a clear area several horse lengths wide, preferably down the middle. Set cones at either end to mark a start and finish line.

### INTRO

"When we lead and tie our horses, we usually use a halter and lead rope. What kind of equipment do we need to ride them?"

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

 **Review:** Horseback riders need to wear special gear to be safe in the saddle. Ask students to show you two feet in boots and one helmeted head. **Take helmets off and practice putting them on**, showing students how to check and adjust fit.

5  
MIN

 **Discuss:** Explain that the word "tack" refers to the riding gear worn by the horse, and that tack is stored in the **tack room**.

**Emphasize:** Many riders may keep their tack in this room. It is important that students only touch designated lesson equipment, and leave everything the way they found it!

 **Discuss:** Tack needed to prepare a horse for a ride. **ASK: What is the purpose of the saddle pad? The reins? How would you like to have a bit placed in your tongue?!**

5  
MIN

 **PRACTICE:** Ask students to assemble everything they need to tack up for a ride. Show students how to balance a saddle on their hip - they will struggle with the weight! - and keep a bridle's reins from dragging in the dirt.

 **Demonstrate:** Tacking up a horse. Tack up efficiently, before the attention span of students is lost, but **discuss every step** - including all the little things you take for granted, like setting the saddle down gently and keeping reins off the ground.

10  
MIN

 **PRACTICE:** Remove tack and tell students they must **work together to tack up on their own**. (If teaching a private student, encourage the student to do as much as possible, or create a team with a Ground Buddy.) You can provide assistance by lifting the saddle, holding the crownpiece of the bridle, and helping with any other hard-to-reach tasks.

10  
MIN

**Emphasize:** Horse safety rules must be observed at all times!

### REVIEW

- ? Great job tacking up! Who can name all the pieces of tack we used today?
- ? Do you think tack needs to be the right size for you? The horse?

# RAINBOW #4

# HorseSense Learning Levels

## TACK ROOM TOUR

### RAINBOW LEVEL

### FUN AND GAMES

-  **Award prizes** for successfully tacking up horse.
-  If you have extra time, finish the lesson by handing out **Tack-y Stickers**. You can create your own or download our template for Avery labels in the Resource Center of the HorseSense Learning Levels website. Have a **Red Level** study guide and/or **Saddle and Bridle Parts Worksheet** available for students to use as an answer key. Remember that you may need to read out terms to students or help them find the answer! Have students work together to place stickers, awarding prizes once all the stickers are in the correct location.
-  Challenge students to a **tack-themed Scavenger Hunt**, including grooming tools and simple items such as saddle pad, bit, halter, stirrup iron, etc. This is a great way to practice putting tack away properly and keeping the tack room tidy!
-  Send students home with a **Saddle and Bridle Parts Worksheet**. Encourage parents to puzzle through the worksheet along with students, especially if students need help with the reading. Challenge groups to a future **Saddle Battle**, where students name tack parts in rounds and the last one to correctly name a piece is the winner.



**On a rainy day...** pass out equine catalogs (we know you have a lot!) and provide students with a checklist of tack essentials and an imaginary budget. We like to use Monopoly money, which is a lot more “real” for young children than numbers on a page. Tell them that you are giving them their favorite pony. What will they have to buy just to be able to ride? How much will it cost? You will need to help with the math every step of the way, but students will still enjoy the shopping spree!

### GROUND BUDDIES

Ground Buddies can be a huge help with this lesson, especially if you are teaching a large group. They can **groom** and **tie** the horse, perform the tacking up **demonstration**, **untack** and put the horse away after, and **assist with tacking up and/or crowd control** - particularly important if you have multiple students working to tack up the horse at one time.

If you have enough Ground Buddies, each child can practice tacking up their own horse or pony, gaining familiarity with the tack they will be using on a regular basis.



### FINAL NOTES

-  Emphasize that tacking up should be performed with consideration for the horse. Encourage empathy by asking students, **“How would you like it if...”**
-  **Make your demonstration as interactive as possible**, asking frequently questions and asking students to pass you pieces of tack. Nothing loses a Rainbow Level student’s attention as quickly as a prolonged lecture!
-  **Keep a watchful eye on students at all times**, especially when they are interacting with horse and tack. They will likely be concentrating on the challenge at hand and not paying attention to equine body language or shifting hooves.

# RAINBOW #5

# HorseSense Learning Levels

## MOUNTED SAFETY

RAINBOW LEVEL

## SAFE TO RIDE

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will learn how to perform a pre-ride safety check, with an emphasis on safe attire.



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- BASKET OF GOOD AND BAD ATTIRE
- ASSISTANT WEARING INCORRECT ATTIRE
- QUIET HORSE, TACKED DELIBERATELY WITH MISTAKES

### PREP

Groom and tack up horse, or provide Ground Buddy with list of mistakes to include. Stock basket or large bag with schooling and show attire as well as obviously wrong items of apparel.

### INTRO

Gather students in tack room or office, well away from horses. Explain that now that they've learned to tack up, they'll need to learn how to perform a **pre-ride safety check**. Riding a horse without a safety check could cause them to fall or get hurt!

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Review:** Put helmets on. **ASK: How do you know if your helmet is sitting in the right place? Can you feel your eyebrows wiggle? What can happen if the chin strap is too loose?** 5 MIN
  -  **Discuss:** Other items of riding attire, including smooth-soled boots, appropriate pants, and things that students should *definitely not* wear. Provide examples. 5 MIN
  -  **PRACTICE:** Give students the apparel basket. Ask them to pull everything out and sort it into three categories: **1)** attire for riding at home, **2)** attire for shows, and **3)** unsafe attire. 5 MIN
  -  **PRACTICE:** Present students an assistant dressed as "Messy Molly" (or "Max") who has just arrived for a riding lesson. Challenge students to find everything wrong with Molly's preparation, and to point out what she should be wearing instead. 5 MIN
  -  **Review:** Tack and equipment used for riding. **ASK: What mistakes could you make tacking up that could be a BIG PROBLEM during the ride?** Provide examples of unsafe tack, such as a stirrup leather with rotten stitching. Tell your own stories of unfortunate experiences, or read a few relevant **Stuff Happens** cards. 5 MIN
  -  **PRACTICE:** Take students to meet "Molly," who has gotten her horse ready to ride. Challenge them to find everything wrong with the horse's tack and presentation, allowing students to help fix mistakes wherever possible. 10 MIN
- Emphasize:** Students may be eager to point out everything that is wrong, but they are still in the barn and interacting with a horse - so they need to leave the loud behind!

### REVIEW

- ? Who can name three things we should check before every ride?
- ? What could happen to Messy Molly if she rode her horse without a safety check?

# RAINBOW #5

SAFE TO RIDE



## STUFF HAPPENS

Our **favorite anecdote** about the importance of girth checks involves horse manure, naturally. An adult member of our drill team had to run up to the house during a mid-lesson break. She passed her horse's reins to a volunteer bystander, who thoughtfully loosened the horse's girth... but forgot to say anything about it. When the rider returned, she remounted hastily, not wanting to be late for the lesson. Unfortunately, the lesson came to a halt anyway when she picked up the trot, rounded a corner, and **fell sideways with her saddle**... face first into a pile of poop!



**Stories like this are important for Rainbow Level students**, who don't always wrap their heads around the risk involved in equine activities. We want them to respect the rules and develop safe practices without scaring them off, which is where light-hearted cautionary tales are valuable.

If your students have eager imaginations, you can have them create their own scenarios by using **Stuff Happens cards**. Each card presents a situation with a dual challenge: can students spot the disaster about to happen? Can they figure out what could be done to solve the problem or prevent it from happening in the first place?

You can download Stuff Happens cards written just for Rainbow Level students at:  
<https://horsesenselearninglevels.com/resource-center/challenges/stuff-happens/>

## MAKE A MESS



You may have plenty of ideas for how to present rider and horse for a doomed-to-fail safety check, but if not, here are **a few ideas to get you started**:

- Helmet pushed up high on forehead, chin strap dangling or over chin
- Dangling jewelry, scarves, baggy open jacket, loose hair
- Open-toed shoes, tennis shoes, or hiking boots with blocky "waffle" treads
- Chewing gum or candy in mouth
- Girth obviously loose, buckled unevenly, one buckle partially unfastened
- Saddle pad backwards, off to one side, tabs unfastened and caught under panels
- Saddle too far back, missing a stirrup, stirrups missing peacock bands or rubber pads
- Bridle straps out of keepers, noseband over cheekpieces, crooked browband
- Protective boots loose, upside down, above knee or around pastern
- Obvious mud or shavings on horse's coat near tack

## FINAL NOTE

**Don't have an assistant?** You may be able to play the part of "Messy Molly" yourself, with some careful preparation and a few lightning-quick costume changes. Throw on some flip-flops and danglingly jewelry, loosen a helmet, and unwrap some gum while your students work to sort the basket of attire. Make sure your horse is ready to go and comfortably tied with a halter over the bridle. Offer him hay so he won't be crabby by the time your students surround him!

# RAINBOW #6

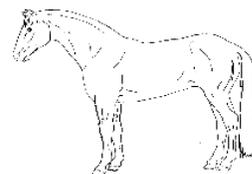
# HorseSense Learning Levels

## PONY PARTS AND ANATOMY

RAINBOW LEVEL

## RAINBOW PONY PARTS

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn basic parts of the horse by playing a colorful variation on the game "Hot and Cold."*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- NONTOXIC, WASHABLE FINGER PAINT
- DAMP RAGS OR BABY WIPES
- WASH BUCKET WITH SPONGE OR DANDY BRUSH
- OPTIONAL RUBBER GLOVES

### PREP

Tie or crosstie your most quiet, tolerant pony in an area where children can maneuver around both sides of pony safely. Groom thoroughly. Assemble bottle(s) of paint and cleaning supplies.

### INTRO

Gather students well outside the pony's space bubble. Explain that today, they will be learning to name some of a horse's different body parts, and decorating the volunteer pony in the process.

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

 **Review:** Horse safety rules, including appropriate behavior, approaching the horse and moving around horse correctly.

5  
MIN

**Emphasize:** Anyone who breaks a horse safety rule **will be asked to leave the pony's bubble** and can only reenter when they explain why their infraction is dangerous!

 **Discuss:** Learning parts of the horse will help students follow directions, describe their horses accurately, and understand why horses move the way they do. **ASK: How many of your own body parts can you name? Where is your shoulder? Hip? Knee? Do you think horses have shoulders, hips and knees as well?**

5  
MIN

 **Demonstrate:** While students remain outside the space bubble, **name and locate common pony parts** on the volunteer pony. Include 5-10 parts they can locate on their own bodies as well as 5-10 new terms such as **hock, flank, and poll**. **ASK: Where would you have a forelock? Can your leg bend the same way the horse's hind leg can?**

 **Discuss:** Rules for **Hot & Cold**. Explain that each student is going to have the chance to locate and paint three different parts of the pony, but they must use their HorseSense and enter the space bubble only when asked! Establish an **order of go**.

5  
MIN

 **PRACTICE:** Apply paint to the first student's fingers/palm. Name a pony part as they approach the pony at the shoulder. Let student move their hand - hovering above horse's skin - in what they think is the correct direction. If they are right, tell them they are getting **"Warm, warmer, hot"** until they arrive at the right place. If they move in the wrong direction, they get **"cool, colder, BRRRR."** Once the pony part is successfully located, they can **paint a handprint, heart or other symbol** before leaving the space bubble and letting the next student take their turn. Wipe hands between each round!

15  
MIN

### REVIEW

? Look at our beautiful rainbow pony! Who can name the part decorated by a star? How many pony parts do you think you can name now? Who wants to help clean this pony up?!

# RAINBOW #6

## HorseSense Learning Levels

### RAINBOW PONY PARTS

RAINBOW LEVEL

#### THE ART OF PONY PAINTING

We love **paint as a learning tool** for our younger students because it makes them interact with the horse's body in a tactile, memorable way. Kids usually LOVE things that are colorful and messy and finger-painting ticks both those boxes. Besides, there is something about art and horses that seems to universally appeal... we've seen pony painting used in women's retreats and equine-assisted therapy sessions as well.

##### A few tips for using paint effectively:

- 🐾 **Shop carefully.** The paint must be nontoxic, water-based and easy to remove from both horsehair and human skin. Look for finger paints marketed specifically for young children, which is designed to be safe even during the inevitable accidental face-painting.
- 🐾 We like having a **wide variety of colors** available. Allow students to choose colors, but emphasize that everyone gets the same options, or you may have fights break out over the pink.
- 🐾 Make sure that **you control the bottles.** Allowing a young student access to a squeeze bottle full of paint is inviting disaster!



*Some pony parts are trickier to paint than others. We recommend outlining sensitive areas such as the flank, and allow equine face painting only with assistance!*



#### HELP THE LESSON STICK

If your pony is very clean and dry, print **pony part stickers** and use them as a warm-up game or follow-up lesson. Divide stickers as equally as possible and distribute to students. Challenge them to apply the stickers from memory or with the help of an answer key.

At Rainbow Level, we've found this works best with children reading independently. Even then, you may need to help them **sound out words** - especially those with tricky pronunciation, such as "poll" and "croup."

For more ideas on teaching pony parts, be sure to check out the resources for **Red HorseSense Level**. You can download Pony Part Worksheets, get templates for Pony Part Stickers, and find more child-friendly lesson ideas in the **Teaching Guide for Red HorseSense: Pony Parts**

<https://horsesenselearninglevels.com/resource-center/resources-by-level/red-level-resources/>

#### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 Although the paint is washable, **warn parents ahead of time** that the lesson will be artsy and **messy**. Encourage them to bring a change of clothes if they are going someplace right afterward!
- 🐾 **Establish strict rules with students about where paint is and is not allowed to go.** Make it clear that you will not tolerate paint fights, and that anyone who deliberately applies paint to something OTHER than the designated pony part will forfeit their next turn.

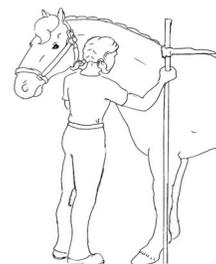
HORSE ID



RAINBOW LEVEL

## HOW BIG IS MY PONY?

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn how horses are measured, and discover and record the height of their lesson horse with assistance.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- MEASURING STICK AND/OR WEIGHT TAPE
- "MY PONY" WORKSHEETS AND PENCILS
- DRY ERASE BOARD AND MARKERS
- QUIET HORSES, TIED OR STALLED

### PREP

Ensure lesson horses are readily available and reasonably clean. Write each student's name at the top of the dry erase board.

### INTRO

"Do you know how tall you are? How much do you weigh? How tall do you think you will be when you grow up? We also use height when describing horses, but **horses are measured a little differently** than people!"

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Discuss:** There are a lot of different words and phrases we need to learn to talk about horses like a pro. **ASK: Do you know what the difference is between a mare and a gelding? What about a horse and a pony?** 5 MIN
-  **Demonstrate:** Show students the measuring stick or tape, explaining that horses are measured in hands. Let them place their hands against the ruler to see how closely their hands match the four inch measurement (probably not very!). 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Ask students how high they think *they* are in hands. **ASK: Do you think you are a horse or a pony?** Use stick/tape to measure each student to the top of their head and write their height out on the board, explaining how to write the extra inches and the meaning of "hh." 5 MIN
-  **Demonstrate:** Move to stall or tie area and ask students to estimate height and weight of horse. (Weight will be a big surprise!) Show them how to make both measurements on a horse. **ASK: Who remembers where the withers are? Why do you think we measure horses to their withers instead of their poll?** 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Write the name of each student's lesson horse on the dry erase board, under their own name and measurement. Visit each horse, holding or tying haltered horse and assisting students in taking and recording height and weight. **ASK: Is your mount a horse or a pony? A mare or a gelding?** After the last horse is put away, hand out **My Pony worksheets** and allow students to copy the height from the dry erase board. Tell them they will be learning about breeds in the next lesson, but they can take the worksheets home to color if they *promise* to bring them back. 15 MIN

### REVIEW

- ? Who remembers how many inches there are in a hand? How many hands high is your horse?
- ? Does **pony** mean baby horse or small horse? How big is a pony allowed to be?

# RAINBOW #7

## HorseSense Learning Levels

### HOW BIG IS MY PONY?

RAINBOW LEVEL

#### FUN AND GAMES

- Write down your student's estimates for each horse's height and weight and **award points or small prizes (such as a mini-candy) to the student who comes closest.** Small children can take this game quite seriously, so have a consolation prize ready for unlucky guessers!
- Teaching this lesson as part of a camp curriculum? **Give each student their own measuring tape,** inviting them to take it home and measure absolutely *everything.* Tapes can be purchased online for as little as \$4 each, making them a cheap, easy and educational camp souvenir.
- The tallest horse in history was thought to stand 21.2hh. **Place a strip of tape on the wall to show students how big this really is** - reminding them that the measurement is to the withers, not head! Look up photos of the **tallest living horse** (currently Big Jake, a 20hh Belgian) and **smallest living horse** (Thumbelina, a dwarf miniature) to share with students.



#### GROUND BUDDIES

Although this lesson can be taught without assistance, Ground Buddies can be a huge help in keeping it moving along efficiently, especially if you are working within a strict half-hour time frame. They can **halter horses and bring them to students,** eliminating the time it takes to go stall to stall and secure horse safely.

Your students might also enjoy **measuring their favorite Buddies** to see how high they stand in hands! Are any of your Ground Buddies horses instead of ponies?



**On a rainy day...** Provide students with crayons and the How High? page from the Rainbow Level coloring book. Allow them to color in both pages, with a brief conversation on identifying their horse's color and markings. If you have a full hour to fill, combine this lesson with **#8 Name That Pony** and use the coloring pages to unwind at the end.

#### FINAL NOTES

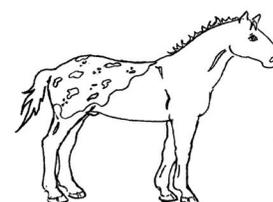
- Horse safety rules must be observed at all times.** Students should wear boots and helmets, and step outside the horse's bubble as soon as they are done with the measurements. You or a Ground Buddy must keep full control of the horse during measurements. Be ready to reposition the horse or ask the student to step outside the bubble if necessary.
- At some point, if you are talking about mares and geldings, **a curious child is going to ask you about equine baby-making.** Keep in mind that at this age, there is no telling what the children know and don't know about the facts of life - and their parents may not appreciate you enlightening them. **Tell them the truth without telling very much truth,** and steer the conversation in a new direction before it turns into a group discussion. Otherwise, you will have to field ten minutes of questions about which horses have had babies and which haven't!

HORSE ID



## NAME THAT PONY

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn the difference between breeds, colors and markings, gaining familiarity with common horse terms.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- 6-10 MODEL HORSES, ALL DIFFERENT COLORS
- "MY PONY" WORKSHEETS AND CRAYONS
- OPTIONAL PRIZES
- POSTERBOARD "BARN" - SEE DIAGRAM ON NEXT PAGE

### PREP

Set table or clean floor with My Pony worksheets, crayons/markers (make sure there are plenty of horse-colored shades!), and model horses. Place posterboard barn face down.

### INTRO

"Imagine I asked you to go catch a horse for me in the field. **I tell you to bring back the brown one. Which horse am I talking about?** There are many brown horses, aren't there? This is why we practice describing our horses in many different ways, including their breed, color and markings."

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Review:** One way we can describe a horse is their size. **ASK: What measurement do we use to measure horses? Who rides a horse? Who rides a pony? Anyone remember their horse's height in hands?**

5 MIN
-  **Discuss:** Just like other animals, horses can come in many breeds. **ASK: Can you name some different dog breeds? Different breeds are different sizes and shapes and are good at different things.**
-  **PRACTICE:** Briefly name and describe a couple of common breeds and ask students to pick them out from the assortment of model horses.

5 MIN
-  **Discuss:** Another way we describe horses is by their color and markings. Horse colors all have special names we have to learn to describe them accurately.
-  **Demonstrate:** Hold up each model horse and point out color, leg markings and face markings. **ASK: Who rides a horse this color? Who rides a horse with a face marking?**

10 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Flip posterboard barn over and ask students to work together to place each horse in the correct stall.

**Emphasize:** Just like real horses, model horses can be injured from rough handling!
-  **PRACTICE:** Give students **My Pony worksheets** to color in. You may need to take students to visit their regular lesson horse so they can see the color and markings; have photos ready if the horse is not available. As students color, describe each of their horses and ask students to guess which horse you are talking about.

10 MIN

### REVIEW

- ? There are sure a lot of horse colors, aren't there?! Can you name three? Is bay a breed or a color?
- ? Who rides a horse with a sock? Who rides a [breed name]?

# RAINBOW #8

## NAME THAT PONY

RAINBOW LEVEL

### FUN AND GAMES

- 🐾 If time allows, once students have successfully matched model horses with their stalls, turn the game into a competitive event. Divide students into two teams and **time each team** to see how fast they can place horses in the correct spots. The clock keeps running until all horses are in the correct stalls.
- 🐾 Increase the difficulty by assigning one brave student to be the designated model horse handler. **This student must be blindfolded.** Other students are allowed to verbally assist by describing the model and coaching the horse handler toward the right stall, using the **Hot and Cold** game practiced during **#6 Rainbow Pony Parts**. This game can get loud and exuberant, so play this well away from real horses, and allow time for students to regain their barn manners afterward!
- 🐾 Prizes can be awarded to students for successfully filling the barn or for naming the horse described at the end of the lesson. If you have time to fill, combine this lesson with **#10 Horse Talk** and play **Barn Bingo**.



### BARN DESIGN

Our Rainbow Level students love to play with model horses, and we love the posterboard barn because of its simplicity. All you need is a large sheet of heavy-duty posterboard and a permanent marker.

Draw **one square per model horse**. We recommend address-sized labels to mark each stall, which can be removed or covered up for later games or a different assortment of plastic ponies. You can label the stalls with color only, or add several tiers of information: color, markings, breed, size, sex. This can be a particularly good idea if you have several model horses of the same color that require further description to identify.

Choose small model horses that will endure multiple lessons. **Breyer Stablemates** are the perfect size, but a little fragile. **Mini Whinnies** and **Schleich** are durable options.

### FINAL NOTES

- 🐾 **Learning the names for different breeds, colors and markings can be overwhelming** for an adult, much less a small child. Colors and markings are usually easier for Rainbow Level students to see and differentiate, so we typically only touch on breeds and breed types. Keep your expectations low, and work these new terms into conversation as often as possible.
- 🐾 **Make extra copies of the My Pony Worksheets** - this can prevent tears if a child "messes up." Students often want to invent their own horse colors. Explain that to earn their Rainbow Level checkmark, the official sheet must represent the horse they usually ride in lessons, but hand out extra copies and encourage them to color a second worksheet that looks like their "dream horse."
- 🐾 Have an explanation ready as to why the **students can't keep the model horses**. Eventually, one of them will ask!

## PONY FOR A DAY

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will learn importance of daily stable management as they assist with routine barn chores, including stall mucking, feeding and watering.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- CHILD-FRIENDLY MANURE FORKS & WHEELBARROW
- STALL OR SMALL PADDOCK
- HAY BALE

### PREP

Move horse out of stall or paddock - tie with hay if necessary. Assemble cleaning equipment and make sure feed charts are up to date.

### INTRO

"Who thinks they would like a horse of their own someday? **Imagine I gave you your favorite lesson horse.** What kind of chores would you need to do to keep your new horse happy and healthy?"

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Discuss:** Routine stable management chores, including feeding, watering, mucking out, and cleaning buckets or troughs. **ASK: How often do you think your horse needs his stall cleaned? Would you want to sleep on a POOP PILLOW?!** 5 MIN
-  **Demonstrate:** How to muck and rebed a stall (or muck out a paddock). Point out **manure piles, pee spots,** and **"buried treasure,"** demonstrating how to sift through bedding to minimize waste. Depending on the age and size of your group, you may wish to clean most of the stall, leaving just a few forkfuls for students. 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Have students work together to clean remainder of stall, sharing manure forks if necessary. 5 MIN

**Emphasize:** There is no magic poop fairy that will come and take away missed manure. The stall should be clean enough that students would willingly lie down in it!
-  **Discuss:** What horses eat, how much they eat and drink, and the importance of a consistent feeding routine. **ASK: Would you like it if you got dinner three hours late, or someone forgot to give it to you? Would you like to drink out of a slimy bucket?** 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Have students assist in cleaning and filling buckets/trough, portioning out hay, and preparing any grain or supplements the horse might eat. Show them how to perform a **sniff test** on hay, and how to dispose of **Horse-Killing Hay Strings.** Show them the feed chart and discuss basic feeding rules and dangers of colic. Finish by bringing horse back in and delivering feed. 10 MIN

**Emphasize:** Horses can be hungry monsters at dinner time! Students must stay out of the horse's bubble at all times unless you give them permission to enter.

### REVIEW

- ?** Great job taking care of your horse! What chore did you think was the hardest? What did you like the best? Can you name three rules for feeding a horse safely?

# RAINBOW #9

## HorseSense Learning Levels

### PONY FOR A DAY

RAINBOW LEVEL

#### START SMALL

Stuck inside on a rainy day? No dirty stalls to be found? Instead of arming students with manure forks and asking them to move real horse poop, you can **simulate mucking out by using a model horse barn**. As you may have already learned, small children LOVE playing with toy horses - and having a customizable barn gives you a world of lesson options!

##### Poop Scoop

Fill the stalls of the barn with sawdust and create "pee spots" using a small amount of **apple juice**. **Chocolate chips** make great manure balls, depending on how you feel about students wanting to eat them! Tiny pitchforks can be found in any model horse stable set (ask your students) or dollhouse store. In a pinch, use plastic forks.

As students "muck" the stall, discuss: *Should they clean a stall with a horse in it? Why or why not? Where does the manure go after cleaning? Do pastures need to be mucked out? What is the purpose of the bedding? Where should manure forks and wheelbarrows be kept when they are not in use?*



##### Danger in the Barn

Safely **stage a disaster area** by setting it up with model horses instead of the real thing. Challenge students to find everything wrong with your "barn" or "arena." Leave equipment in the aisle, tie horses with bridle reins, have a helmetless rider climb on her horse. Stall doors can be unlatched, feed bins left open, and horses led inattentively, with no danger to your actual horses or students.

##### Barn Builders

Give your students a bare bones "barn" (this can be as simple as a cardboard box) and supplies to **outfit their farm** with fencing, water troughs, feed stations, etc. We have used old model horse accessories, popsicle stick fencing, and green felt to represent pastures. If you don't have props, give them a giant sheet of paper and a handful of markers and ask them to **draw out horse property** for their model horses.

Discuss how their design meets their horse's needs: *Where will the horse get shelter? Will he live outside, inside, or both? Can he live alone? Can he eat dinner without his herd mates stealing it all?*

This activity can eat up a lot of time and is great for an unexpectedly rainy camp day!



#### FINAL NOTES

-  **Horse safety rules are particularly important at feeding time.** It is usually easiest and safest if you do all of the direct horse handling yourself in this lesson.
-  **Group lessons can easily dissolve into squabbles** over who gets to do what chore. Give each student a special job, and divide the work as fairly as possible - you don't want to have one child stuck on poop scoop duty while the others get the glamorous job of preparing feed!
-  **Most manure forks are too large for a Rainbow Level student** to handle easily. If you don't have any child-size equipment, be prepared to help lift full forks and push heavy wheelbarrows.

## HORSE TALK

**OBJECTIVE:** *Students will reinforce knowledge of basic terminology by playing a series of matching games.*



### EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- BINGO CARDS AND PENCILS
- DRY ERASE BOARD AND MARKERS
- OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL TABLES
- PRIZES

### PREP

Customize and print bingo cards - download from <https://HorseSenseLearningLevels.com> or make your own. Set up additional activity tables as space and materials permit.

### INTRO

"By now, you've probably learned that horse people use a lot of special words to describe their horses and equipment. Let's see how much you've learned about horse talk over the past few weeks!"

### LESSON AND EXERCISES

-  **Review:** Briefly go over all of the equipment students have used in their lessons, **including halter/lead rope, grooming tools, tack and apparel.** Call out the name of each item and ask students to identify each piece and call the name back to you. 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Gather students around dry erase board for a round of **Pony Pictionary.** Divide students into teams if you want to play competitively; otherwise, the whole group works together to guess the **grooming tool, piece of tack, or pony part** you are drawing on the board. 5 MIN
-  **PRACTICE:** Rotate students through **1 to 3 stations or tables** (see next page). Read any written instructions or labels out loud, and allow questions or hints. If you do not have the space or time to set up stations beforehand, substitute another game such as **Pony Charades** (see **#1 Think Like a Horse**) or bring out the **Pony Parts stickers** (see **#6 Rainbow Pony Parts**). 10 MIN

**Emphasize:** Even if you are running the lesson as a mini-competition, encourage students to work together and share knowledge to complete each puzzle.
-  **PRACTICE:** Hand out **Bingo cards** individually or to teams and **explain the rules of Bingo.** Call out terms and have students hunt for and mark the matching picture on their cards. (If using **Level Up Bingo Cards**, you may wish to practice with **Level Up Flash Cards** first, or give each student a set of cards to study on their own.) Alternatively, group children together and assign Ground Buddies to help supervise a five-minute search through the barn, using real horses and equipment to fill squares on Bingo cards. **Review barn safety rules, especially NO RUNNING and NO YELLING.** 10 MIN
-  **Review:** Go over Bingo cards and award prizes.

### REVIEW

- ?** Everyone has learned a lot about horses over the past few weeks! Do you think you could teach your Mom/Dad/sibling to name some pony parts? To describe your lesson horse?



### TABLETOP TERMINOLOGY

Most children learn best when their hands are busy, and they are most engaged when challenged by the rules of an exciting game. We've found that tabletop games are the easiest, most space-efficient way to test unmounted knowledge and equine terminology. If you keep materials on hand, they are a **great activity for a rainy day**. They can be set with minimal equipment and as little as ten minutes of prep.... and your long-suffering school horses aren't required to play!

Folding card table or picnic tables make the games easy to set. If you don't have table space, however, you can easily set most of these on a clean floor or outside in the grass. A few of our favorite tables include:

#### Pony Safety Prompts

Post a short list of essential barn rules, written in as simple language as possible. Number the rules and set out a corresponding number of safety prompts in a random order. Read the list of rules out loud and ask students to identify the prompt representing each rule, placing the prompts in order.

Prompts may include a candy wrapper, plastic bullhorn, flip flop, glass bottle, hay string, etc. For a full list of safety prompts we've used, check out the [Teaching Guide for Red HorseSense: Horse Safety](#).

#### Challenge Boards

Place a full-size piece of posterboard on the table with clear, easy-to-read labels. Scatter items across the table to be placed next to the corresponding label on the board. You can make Challenge Boards for tack pieces, grooming tools, or breeds/colors using model horses or photos of horses.

#### What's Wrong with This Picture?

Lay out items of riding attire as though dressing a life-sized paper doll. Make deliberate mistakes: include scarves or jewelry, leave helmet unfastened, leave one boot untied and place a tennis shoe on the other foot. Provide a basket of alternative apparel so students can make corrections. If you have access to model horse accessories and rider dolls, you can also do this on a small scale and include tack mistakes such as a backward saddle pad or loose girth.

#### What's for Dinner?

Place samples of foods that are safe for horses to eat - different grains, supplements and hays - along with a few items that are definitely not safe, such as moldy hay, plastic candy wrappers, chocolate bars and peach pits. Ask students to sort items into two piles.



**Teaching Barn Basics and riding skills at the same time? Combine this lesson with a graduation ceremony and award Rainbow Level ribbons.** Set this activity up after all other requirements in the Rainbow Level booklets have been met, or place it at the end of a camp or course. Since the indoor format of the lesson can be taught anywhere, you might make it a year-end finale and schedule it on the same day as a winter holiday party. Call it the Rainbow Quiz Challenge and invite parents to come listen in.