



HorseSense Learning Levels

LEVEL UP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Green Horsemanship

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS for each page in the STUDY GUIDE

Page 1 - Ground Handling

- You need to tack up your horse for a lesson - but when you approach his stall he turns his hindquarters toward you and pins his ears. What should you do?**
Ask for help from an experienced horseperson.
- What safety precautions should you take when removing a horse from his stall?**
Organize halter/lead; talk to get his attention; open stall door just enough to slip through; approach his shoulder; open door all the way before leading him out; secure stall guard safely before leading him out.
- Should you leave the stall door open or close it when you enter to halter your horse? Why?**
Open the stall door just enough that you can slip through; if you leave it ajar you can escape quickly if necessary.

Page 2 - Ground Handling

- What safety precautions should you take when retrieving a horse from the pasture?**
Organize halter/lead; talk to get his attention; approach his shoulder; don't chase him - stop and wait for him to stop moving; keep an eye out for other horses. If you use a treat, keep it hidden until you give it to him.
- How should you safely lead a pastured horse through a gate?**
Be aware of other horses. Open gate with one hand, just wide enough for horse to pass through. Ask him to yield so he faces gate, then close and latch gate quickly.
- When turning a horse loose in a stall or pasture, what could happen if you don't turn him to face you before removing the halter?**
He might buck or bolt when turned loose, and could unintentionally kick or run over you.

Page 3 - Ground Handling

- What is the best way to become more efficient when preparing your horse for a ride?**
Use a mental checklist of items to prepare BEFORE bringing in your horse, then establish a routine of doing things the same way every time.

Page 4 - Ground Handling

- Your horse comes in from the pasture covered in mud - how can you best prepare him for a ride?**
Rinse off wet mud with warm water and towel dry; for dry mud, use currycomb and dandy brush thoroughly until coat is smooth enough for tack.
- Your horse tends to be uncooperative when you are tacking up - especially when you are running late and stressed. How can you fix this problem?**
Stay calm and patient; allow extra time so your stress doesn't affect your horse; ask yourself WHY he misbehaves, and how you could motivate him to cooperate.

Page 5 - Mounted Safety

- Why is a good warm-up important for you and your horse?**
Increases horse's circulation, flexibility, and joint fluid, making him more comfortable, less prone to injury and unsoundness. Prepares you mentally and physically for upcoming activity.
- You are very late for your riding lesson. Is it okay to cut your warm-up time short so you can join the group activity?**
No - your horse needs an adequate warm-up to prevent injury - particularly if you are cantering or jumping.
- How long should a typical warm-up ride last? When should your warm-up take more time?**
Warm-ups usually take 10-30 minutes, depending upon the kind of work you will be doing. Warming up in cold weather will require more time. An older, stiff horse will also need more time to warm and loosen his muscles and joints.
- During the warm-up, how long should you spend at the walk? Why is it important to use a watch or a timer to measure this time?**
The first 10 minutes should be at the walk - long enough to get his joints and muscles loose. Check the time on a watch or clock to make sure you give him adequate time.
- Describe the process of a good warm-up.**
Walk forward with energy; post to the trot; ride large, easy ring figures - no tight turns or small circles; ride on a long rein so he can stretch his head down and forward; plan your warm-up to fit your riding activity; check your girth afterward!
- When warming up your horse, is it better to post or to sit to 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.

Page 6 - Mounted Safety

- Name two reasons why a cool-down period is important after working your horse.**

A horse's muscles need to stretch before rest to prevent stiffness; the horse must be completely cooled off to digest grain; in hot weather it's harder for his body to cool, increasing risk of heat exhaustion; in cold weather, a sweaty horse could get chilled and stiff.
- Is it okay to give your horse water after a ride?**

Yes - offer water as soon as possible. A horse that has sweated heavily will need to rehydrate.
- The weather is mild and you just gave your horse a good workout - but he's still sweating and breathing faster than normal after 15 minutes of cool-down walking. What does this tell you?**

It could mean that he was worked too hard for his current level of fitness.
- Your horse's heavy winter coat is still slightly damp after your cool-down ride. What can you do to keep him from getting chilled?**

Cover him with a fleece cooler.

Page 7 - Mounted Safety

- How might you alter your riding plan if the weather is very cold?**

Dress in many close-fitting layers, with riding gloves and pocket hand/toe warmers. Allow extra time for warm-up; keep moving so your horse doesn't get cold and stiff.
- How might you alter your riding plan if the weather is very hot?**

Ride in early morning or evening. Drink plenty of water BEFORE you ride, and bring a water bottle for during the ride. Keep strenuous portion of ride to a minimum, and offer your horse frequent walk breaks. Monitor the horse carefully for panting or fatigue.
- How might you alter your riding plan if the weather is very wet?**

Watch out for deep mud and slippery conditions, which will put your horse at risk. Allow extra post-ride time to wipe down and oil your tack.
- How might you alter your riding plan if the weather is very windy?**

Secure any loose equipment. Be prepared for your horse to be spookier than usual, and work on something relaxing that helps your horse to focus, such as ring figures and transitions.
- You had a good workout planned for today, but the weather is damp, cold, and very windy - and your horse seems extremely nervous and tense. What should you do?**

Consider practicing some quiet groundwork instead of riding. Your safety comes first!

Page 8 - Mounted Safety

- How should you plan to ride if the footing is wet and muddy?**
Ride carefully at faster gaits with gradual transitions and wide turns; no sudden stops or sharp turns. If it feels slick, stay at walk and trot.
- What could happen to your horse if you don't ride carefully on soft ground or deep sand?**
Your horse will have to work much harder, and could bow a tendon or lose a shoe.
- How should you safely ride on very hard footing? Why is it a smart idea to limit cantering and jumping on hard ground?**
Ride at slow gaits on hard ground, preferably at a walk. Cantering or jumping on hard ground causes too much concussion on joints and can cause lameness.
- Is it okay to ride your horse on snowy ground? What about ice?**
Powdery snow may be fine, but slushy wet snow can be slippery. Never ride on slick ice!
- How can you tell that your horse is not fit enough for your riding plan?**
If he seems winded, fatigued, or unable to recover his normal respiration and heart rate after 5-10 minutes of walking, he is being pushed beyond his limits.

Page 9 - Flatwork Skills

- What is a reinback, and how should it be performed?**
Back up the horse so that he steps back with energy, legs moving in diagonal pairs, while remaining relaxed and steady in the bridle.
- What aids do you use to ask your horse to back up?**
Sink weight into heels and shorten reins, then squeeze both legs at or just behind the girth while gently resisting with your hands at the same time. Release the pressure the instant he backs up.

Page 10 - Flatwork Skills

- What do we mean by "rating" your horse's speed?**
Asking the horse to go faster or slower by changing the rhythm and speed, without changing gait.
- Under what circumstances might you need to rate your horse's speed?**
You might have to help your naturally fast or slow horse find an appropriate and comfortable working pace; to ride towards or away from the herd or barn; to maintain spacing or pass safely when riding with a group.
- How can you 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, allowing your seat to swing with him. Keep a light and steady contact on the reins.

How can you send your horse forward into a faster trot?

Post with more energy and squeeze with lower legs just as you sit in the saddle.

What happens if you cluck constantly to ask your horse to speed up?

If you use your voice too often (especially a clucking sound), he will begin to ignore it.

When slowing your horse's speed, should you remove all pressure from your legs?

No - keep your legs against his side so that he continues to move forward.

What does it mean when your horse "breaks gait" - and what aids should you use to prevent it?

If the horse slows down too much he may "break" into a slower gait (eg, from a trot to a walk). Avoid this by carefully balancing your driving aids (leg) and restraining aids (seat and rein).

Page 11 - Flatwork Skills

Using seat, rein and leg together for a brief moment to rebalance the horse is called _____.
half-halt

Why is the half-halt an important riding skill to learn?

A half-halt is useful for getting a horse's attention and preparing him for transitions. 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!

Describe the steps in riding the half-halt.

Sit up tall. Squeeze your lower legs, and at the same time, briefly close your fingers on the reins and/or increase the bend in your elbows. Immediately release the leg and rein pressure - the resistance should last about as long as a heartbeat.

Page 12 - Flatwork Skills

Why is looking down a bad riding habit? Where should you look instead?

Looking down throws your weight forward, unbalancing your body and the horse's body. It signals a lack of intention, making the horse unsure of where you want to go. Look through the horse's ears to where you want to be - not where you are!

What do we mean by riding with positive intention?

Riding with an idea of what you want to achieve - and believing that you will do it - so that you are clearly communicating with your horse.

Page 13 - Flatwork Skills

- What are four reasons you should learn to ride without stirrups?**
1) It will make your body stronger and your leg position secure. 2) It teaches your hips to follow the movement of your horse's gaits. 3) It improves your balance and confidence. 4) It prepares you for safely riding bareback.
- Dropping and picking up your stirrups without looking down at them is an important safety skill. What is the correct way to pick up your stirrups?**
With your eyes up and both hands on the reins, lift your toes and turn them in to slide them into the stirrups. Keep your leg quiet against the horse's side and don't forget to keep steering!

Page 14 - Flatwork Skills

- Trotting without stirrups for 5 minutes is HARD! Why should you learn to do this?**
It teaches you to improve your strength and endurance, which are important athletic skills for equestrians; it also helps your body learn to ride efficiently, without wasted motion, which makes it easier for the horse to carry you.
- What does it mean to "cross your stirrups"? Why should you do this?**
Cross your stirrups by pulling them up over the horse's withers; this keeps the stirrups from banging against your ankles and the horse's sides when riding without stirrups.

Page 15 - Flatwork Skills

- How many beats are there in the canter?**
The canter is a 3-beat gait.
- Which beat of the canter determines the lead, with one leg thrust forward ahead of the other legs?**
The third, or last beat.
- If the horse is turning left, should his left or right foreleg be leading the canter?**
The lead should be on his left foreleg.
- In a right-lead canter, which leg does the horse move first?**
The left hind leg moves first in a canter.
- In the canter, how does the horse's back move? How is this different from the way the horse's body moves in the walk and trot?**
The horse's back swings forward and backward in the canter; in the walk, his body sways from side to side; in the trot, his body moves up and down.

What skills should you master before safely learning to canter?

You should be able to trot independently with balance and confidence, with and without stirrups; you should have a secure two-point position with weight in your heels; you should ride accurate ring figures and transitions.

Page 17 - Flatwork Skills

Riding the canter with your seat deep in the saddle, following the movement of the horse, is called "sitting the canter". What are two other terms that are used for this seat?

Full seat or three-point seat.

How does raising your inside hand over your head when riding the canter help to improve your seat?

Raising your hand lowers your center of gravity and helps keep you from bouncing.

Page 18 - Flatwork Skills

Name three positions you can use to ride the canter.

1) sitting canter, 2) two-point position, 3) light seat

Describe how to ride the canter in a light seat.

In a light seat, your weight is in your heels, but your seat stays close to the horse, just brushing the saddle with every stride.

Page 19 - Flatwork Skills

Where does your outside leg go when you ask the horse to canter?

Your outside leg should slide back a few inches behind the girth.

When riding the canter, should your hands follow the motion of his mouth or stay still above the pommel?

At the canter your hands should follow the motion of the horse's mouth.

If you lean close to the horse's neck for a canter transition, does it make it easier or harder for your horse to lift into the canter?

It makes it harder! You should sit up straight and push your hips forward to make the canter transition easier for the horse.

Page 20 - Flatwork Skills

What steps should you take if your horse won't transition down from a canter?

First check your position and use of aids - are you asking correctly? Then look for a safe place to circle, starting with a large circle and slowing him down gradually on smaller circles. If all else fails, use a gently pulley rein to regain control.

Page 21 - Flatwork Skills

- Your instructor tells you that you are not riding on the correct lead - what does she mean?**
When you are cantering around a circle or turn, it is best to canter with the inside foreleg leading so that your horse is balanced as he turns.
- You are riding on a long, straight road. Is it important for your horse to be on the correct lead?**
No, the leading leg is only important when your horse needs to be balanced around a turn or circle.

Page 22 - Flatwork Skills

- What three questions should you ask yourself as you learn to recognize a correct lead?**
1) What do I feel happening in the horse's body? 2) What do I feel happening in my own body? 3) Which shoulder do I see moving farther forward?
- Is it a good idea to look down at your horse's shoulder to check your lead?**
You should just take a quick peek without moving your head; leaning over to look at the horse's legs could throw you both off balance.

Page 23 - Flatwork Skills

- If you are changing direction at the canter, how can you change the horse's lead?**
Ride a simple change: ask your horse to perform a downward transition, rebalance him, and ask for the canter again in as few strides as possible.
- What are three reasons that your horse might canter on the wrong lead?**
lack of balance; unclear aids from the rider; stiffness or soreness

Page 24 - Flatwork Skills

- Your instructor asks you to ride a circle at the canter. How big should the circle be?**
When you are learning to canter, all of your canter circles should be 20 meters or larger in diameter.
- Your instructor tells you that your canter needs more impulsion - what does this mean?**
Impulsion describes the horse's energy in his hindquarters as he moves.
- How should you use your body to ride a successful canter circle?**
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.

- Your horse won't maintain speed unless you constantly urge him forward. Would you say he is "in front of your leg"?**

No. A horse that keeps moving forward until you signal for him to change speeds would be described as "in front of your leg"; if he needs constant reminding, he is "behind your leg".

Page 25 - Jumping Skills

- What riding skills can you practice on the flat that will help prepare you for successful jumping?**

Opening/closing circles; straight approaches; straight-line halts; flowing turns; steady, rhythmic trot; correct diagonals; secure two-point positions

Page 26 - Jumping Skills

- Why do we ride an opening circle at the start of a jump course?**

The opening 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.

- What is the purpose of riding a closing circle after the last jump on a course?**

The closing circle allows you to gradually - and safely - decrease your horse's speed. It asks him to rebalance and listen to you after the excitement of jumping. It should position your horse away from the gate when you ride your downward transition.

- What is a straight-line halt, and why might you use it when practicing on a jump course?**

After your horse lands over a fence, allow a few strides of trot or canter before asking him to halt. This will help him focus more on your aids than the excitement of jumping.

Page 27 - Jumping Skills

- Is it important to check your posting diagonal between two jumps in a line?**

No, your focus should be on riding straight through the line. Riding on the correct posting diagonal helps your balance in turns, so you should check your diagonal after the second jump to prepare for an upcoming turn.

- What might happen if you look down or change your diagonal or lead right before a jump?**

You will disrupt your horse's rhythm and may cause him to duck out or stop.

Page 28 - Jumping Skills

- How can riding over a grid of trot poles help prepare you for riding a jump course?**

Riding over trot poles allows you to safely practice exercises to improve your two-point position and balance.

- ❑ **Why is it a good idea to knot your reins whenever you ride without holding the reins - particularly when performing balancing exercises over trot poles?**

Tying a knot a few inches from the buckle of your reins so that they rest on the horse's neck, just above the withers, will keep the reins from sliding dangerously to the side where your horse could step through them.

Page 29 - Jumping Skills

- ❑ **Your instructor asked you to help her set up the fences for a jump course. What does she mean?**

A "fence" is term used for the things we jump - also called "obstacles" or "jumps". In an arena, this typically means setting up a pole between two standards, or upright posts with holes for movable jump cups.

- ❑ **How high should you jump while you are first learning?**

You should start with jumps that are 18" high or less. Jumping over ground poles first, then gradually raising the height, is the safest approach when learning to jump.

- ❑ **You have been practicing your jumping skills over a course of ground poles. Your instructor says you're ready to ride over a small "crossrail". How can you identify this type of jump?**

A crossrail is formed with two poles set in an "x" shape.

- ❑ **Your instructor has set a few trot poles on the ground in front of a fence. What is the purpose of these poles?**

Trot poles placed in front of a fence will help you arrive at the fence in the right rhythm and balance.

- ❑ **Where should you be looking when you jump?**

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 of the jump. Don't look down!

Page 30 - Jumping Skills

- ❑ **Should you jump fences with the same stirrup length you use for flatwork?**

You should shorten your stirrups by 1-2 holes from your normal flatwork length. 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.

- ❑ **Why is it a bad idea to look down at the fence when your horse starts to jump?**

Looking down pulls your weight forward and may cause your horse to stop.

- ❑ **What is a "release" and why should you do it when you jump?**

Moving your hands forward onto the horse's crest will "release" the reins, allowing enough slack so that your horse can stretch his neck as he jumps without having the bit hurt his mouth.

What does it mean to “drop” your horse right before a jump?

Dropping your horse occurs when you throw your hands abruptly forward in a release during the final strides before the fence; this can make him lose confidence right before the jump.

Your instructor tells you that you're jumping ahead - what does she mean?

Rather than letting the horse's motion lift your hips into two-point position over a jump, you are deliberately rising out of the saddle before the fence and throwing your weight forward, which makes it more difficult for the horse to jump.

You started fidgeting with the reins on your approach to a jump, and your horse swerved around the fence instead of jumping. Is this called a refusal or a run out?

When your horse goes around the fence rather than jumping it, it's called a run out.

Page 31 - Flatwork Skills

Name three reasons why you should practice riding without a saddle.

It improves your balance and security to prevent falls; teaches you to relax and move with the horse; helps develop an independent seat; helps you feel the horse's movement; it's fun for you and the horse.

What is an "independent seat" and why is it a riding goal?

Riding in balance, without gripping or relying on your hands; an independent seat allows you to communicate clearly and effectively with your horse.

True or False: When riding bareback, it is important to grip tightly with your knees and lower leg so you don't fall off.

False! Gripping with your knees will tip you forward and could make your horse stop; squeezing with your leg will make your horse go faster. Your legs should be relaxed around the horse's belly; you should sit up straight and tall to stay balanced.

Describe two things you can do that will help you learn to ride bareback with confidence.

Spend a lot of time at the walk before moving to faster gaits; have someone walk with you; practice emergency dismounts; grab mane or use a neckstrap.

Page 33 - Mounted Safety

How does getting your own body fit help your horse?

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 and making it easier for your horse to stay balanced and focused.

Name four things you can do to become a better equestrian athlete.

Yoga or other stretching exercises; aerobics: walking, running, biking, dancing, swimming, etc.; strength training: squats, crunches, Pilates, weights; ride without stirrups and in two-point; eat well; stay hydrated.

Page 34 - Mounted Safety

- Should you try to hold onto the reins if you fall off your horse? Why or why not?**
No - you should let go of the reins so you are not dragged (and so you don't hurt your horse's mouth).
- Describe the correct way to minimize your risk if you find yourself falling off a horse.**
Pull your arms and legs close to your body, let go of the reins, and try to exhale and roll away from the horse as you land.
- Why is it 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. You should immediately tell your instructor if you start to experience any delayed symptoms.
- You fell off your horse and hit your head. You always wear a helmet, so you're fine - but your instructor says you should replace your helmet, even though it's fairly new. Why?**
The warranty for many helmets is voided after a fall because any damage to the helmet might make it unable to fully protect your head. Check your warranty and play it safe - your head is worth it!