

North Okanagan Therapeutic Riding Association (NOTRA)

VOLUNTEER MANUAL

Mailing Address:

Box 58
Vernon, BC V0E 1B0

Physical Address:

Historic O'Keefe Ranch - 9380 Hwy 97
(North of Vernon toward Kamloops)

Program Coordinator Phone: 250-549-0105

Ranch Phone (during session only): 250-549-0176

Website: www.notra.info

E-Mail: notra@telus.net

*“Providing recreational horseback riding therapy for children and adults
with disabilities since 1984”*

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Welcome!

We are very thankful for the interest you have shown in becoming a volunteer with the North Okanagan Therapeutic Riding Association. Our goal is to be the very best therapeutic riding centre that we can be. The demand for our program has been growing by leaps and bounds over the last several years, and is only limited by the number of volunteers that we can schedule. It is crucial that we have enough volunteers in order to effectively run the classes and provide optimum safety for our riders. Your volunteering is invaluable to the program.

As a NOTRA volunteer you are an important member of team and one who is greatly appreciated. Volunteers are trained to assist with leading the horses, sidewalking with riders and preparing the horses for the riders. Volunteers also assist with the feeding of the horses and the cleaning of their paddocks at either the beginning or the end of the day.

NOTRA provides two 7 – 8 week riding sessions for children, teens and adults with disabilities. The spring session runs from mid-April through early June and the fall session runs from early September until the end of October. Classes currently run Monday through Thursday and generally last 45 minutes. Throughout the year there are many fundraising and promotional activities such as our annual Ride-A-Thon, our promotional booth at the Interior Provincial Exhibition (IPE), parades, raffles, hot dog sales, etc. These are all activities where volunteer involvement is crucial as well.

This volunteer manual has been prepared for you to answer some of the questions you may have. You may also use it as a resource and refer back to it once in awhile. Please read it carefully as it is important for the safety of the rider as well as yourself. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask one of the Instructors or the Program Coordinator.

Our History

Horseback riding has long been recognized in Europe as an excellent means of providing physical, psychological, social and educational benefits for people with disabilities. The first Canadian program was initiated in Ontario in the late sixties and now there are many therapeutic riding programs all across Canada.

NOTRA began as the vision of June Osborne and Agnes Sovereign whose husband Art Sovereign, had seen the benefits of therapeutic riding in his practice as a physician. NOTRA was incorporated as a society in 1984 and has been serving mentally and physically challenged children and adults by providing recreational horseback riding therapy since that time. Our program runs under the guidelines of both PATH International (Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship) and CanTRA (Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association).

NOTRA started with approximately 20 clients and was based out of the Osborne farm in Coldstream, BC. As the clientele grew, NOTRA moved around to several different private farms in the Vernon area before finally settling in at our current home at the Historic O'Keefe Ranch in 1993. From its modest beginnings, NOTRA has grown to the point where we are providing lessons for anywhere between 70 – 90 clients per week depending on the session.

Our NOTRA riders range in age from 4 – 80 and attend from Kelowna, Lake Country, Lumby, Vernon, Armstrong, Enderby, Salmon Arm and Sorrento. No such program is currently in operation in Vernon or the surrounding areas.

Benefits of Therapeutic Riding

Therapeutic riding is an alternative form of therapy using horses to help person with various disabilities. Activities involving the horse can be used to assist people with disabilities in achieving physical and mental health, and cognitive, behavioural, social and communication goals.

Some of the benefits:

Psychological Benefits:

- General sense of well being
- Improved self-confidence
- Increased interest in the outside world
- Improved risk-taking abilities
- Development of patience
- Emotional control and self-discipline

Social Benefits:

- Interaction and the development of friendships with the volunteers and other riders
- Development of respect and love for animals
- Increased experiences

Physical Benefits:

- Improved balance
- Strengthened muscles
- Improved coordination, faster reflexes and better motor planning
- Decreased spasticity
- Increased range of motion of the joints
- Improved respiration and circulation
- Sensory integration

Educational Benefits:

- Sequencing, patterning and motor planning
- Differentiation between objects
- Improved eye-hand coordination and visual spatial perception

Basic Requirements for a Volunteer

1. Minimum age: 14 years old
2. Many volunteers initially come to NOTRA because of their love of horses, but a desire to assist riders with disabilities to fulfill their goals and realize their potential needs to be a very motivating factor as well.
3. Attend a Volunteer Orientation and Training prior to starting as a volunteer and attending a Training refresher/update at least once per year.
4. Commitment to regular attendance for the entire 7 or 8 week session – this is very important in providing continuity for the NOTRA rider.
5. A comfort around horses, but it is not necessary to come into volunteering with a high level of horsemanship skills.
6. A reasonable level of fitness. A volunteer should be able to walk briskly for 45 minutes to an hour and jog short distances (the length of the arena) with arm at shoulder height.
7. Clothing: Due to the nature of riding activities, please wear comfortable clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. Footwear is very important. Shoes should have low heels and closed toes, be sturdy so that they protect the feet from horses' hooves and should provide good stability on rough surfaces. Gloves are recommended, especially in colder weather.
8. Jewelry & Perfumes: Do not wear perfume as it attracts stinging insects. As well, some riders may be allergic to scent. Avoid wearing loose scarves or anything dangling that could get caught. Keep jewelry to a minimum (e.g. no large rings, dangling earrings, bracelets or necklaces). Long hair should be tied back.
9. An open mind. Many volunteers bring with them an extensive equestrian background in a certain discipline. Therapeutic Riding is not limited to any one discipline. Training techniques and equipment may seem strange and may be the opposite to everything you have learned. Our instructors are trained to facilitate "recreational horseback riding therapy" and there are techniques and equipment used that have been specifically designed to assist the disabled rider.

Rights of a Volunteer

- The right to orientation and regular training sessions.
- The right to supervision.
- The right to be involved in planning some aspects of the program, and evaluating the program.
- The right to be involved in evaluating their own performance.
- The right to be regarded as a person and accepted as an individual.
- The right to have a written job description.
- The right to be provided with the opportunity for varied experiences.
- The right to recognition.
- The right to be informed about the disabilities of the riders you will be dealing with.

Responsibilities of a Volunteer

We ask each volunteer to ...

1. Regard their volunteer time as a job. We ask that you be on time and phone as soon as possible if you are unable to attend. (It sometimes takes a fair bit of time to find a replacement!)
2. Put the program and clients first, and for the needs of the volunteer not to exceed the needs of the client.
3. Be sincere in the offer of service and believe in the value of their assignment, and to give more to the program than they expect to take away.
4. Understand the requirements of the job and to ask questions if not sure.
5. Be willing to learn and to participate in orientation, training sessions and meetings and to be cheerful and enthusiastic and willing to share ideas.
6. Respect confidentiality when assisting a person with special needs.
7. Work alongside participants. Volunteers are not expected to supervise or counsel participants, but simple be that extra set of eyes and ears.

We value your time, dedication and enthusiasm and hope that you derive satisfaction with your time with us. If you have any concerns regarding your volunteer assignment, please let us know. There is a binder in the volunteer lounge where you can record any of your questions or concerns should one of the instructors or the Program Coordinator is not available.

Time Commitments & Hours

NOTRA sessions run from mid-April to early June and from early to mid-September until the end of October. If at all possible we ask volunteers to commit to the full 7 – 8 weeks of the session.

Most volunteers commit to a two-class block once per week which translates to approximately 2 ½ hours. We do have volunteers that come out for only one class if that is all that their schedule or physical limitations allows for while others volunteer for a full day or multiple days. We are grateful to have good volunteers and are happy to work with your schedule.

We encourage volunteers to come out to the same classes each week as it provides continuity for the rider and makes scheduling easier, however we do have volunteers who work shift work or on call so we are willing to work with this as well.

Volunteers who are willing to be on a call list to help us out on short notice are especially appreciated. Understandably, sometimes volunteers need to cancel their shift and we need to find replacements.

Currently, NOTRA classes are scheduled in 3 blocks per day:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| BLOCK 1 | 9:30 – 10:15 & 10:30 – 11:15 |
| BLOCK 2 | 12:00 – 12:45 & 1:00 – 1:45 |
| BLOCK 3 | 3:30 – 4:15 & 4:30 – 5:15 |

*depending on the session, not all blocks are offered on every day

Volunteers are asked to arrive at least 15 minutes before the classes start to help get the horses ready & you will likely stay approximately 15 minutes after class to put horses and tack away, etc.

Block 1 volunteers are asked to come a little earlier to help with feeding and cleaning paddocks in the morning if they can and Block 3 volunteers are asked to stay a little later to help with feeding and cleaning paddocks if at all possible.

Volunteer Job Description & Guidelines

Bringing the horse in from the paddock

If you are unfamiliar with catching a horse, please ask for help from the Instructor or a more experienced volunteer. They will be happy to assist you with the proper procedure.

If the horse's hindquarters are facing you when you walk up to him, get his attention by speaking to him before approaching him. Let him know you are there; he may startle if he doesn't see you coming.

When putting on the halter, stand on the left side facing the same direction as the horse. Make sure the halter is not too loose or too tight.

Always use the lead rope when leading the horse anywhere. Never coil the lead rope around your hand; should the horse pull back or bolt for some reason, it could do serious damage. Never lead by the halter alone or just a lead rope around the neck; it is too easy for a horse to get away from you this way.

When leading the horse through a gate, be careful that your horse's paddock mate doesn't sneak out with your horse. Please close and latch all gates behind you.

At the polebarn

Once you have brought the horse to the polebarn, attach your horse to one of the poles with the "trailer-tie", leaving the lead rope attached to the horse and either draped over the rail or through the ring the trailer-tie is attached to. Often another volunteer will have set out the tack and grooming tote for you in advance in which case, look for your horse's name on the tote to know which tie to attach to.

Be sure to keep a healthy distance between your horse and other horses in the polebarn area. There can sometimes be "personality conflicts" between some of the horses and we don't want any biting or kicking.

Grooming the Horse

The grooming totes for each of the horses are kept on the shelves to your right as you enter the tackroom. Each horse has their name on their grooming tote. In each tote is a rubber or plastic curry, dandy brush and a body brush. If your rider is present, or helping you with grooming, please ensure they are wearing a helmet.

Grooming should be done in a quiet manner. Aggressiveness and rushing around at this point may upset the horse for the lesson. Never make sudden movements around a horse, especially his head. When walking around a horse, never duck under the rope he is tied with, always walk around behind, staying close to the horse, keeping one hand on his body to let him know that you are there.

If there is enough time to give the horse a thorough grooming using the procedure below, please do so. However, as there is only 15 minutes between classes, time is often limited in which case at least make sure the saddle and girth areas are groomed.

Grooming procedure

1. Working in sections, use the rubber curry in a circular motion. The object here is to loosen and shift all caked dirt, sweat marks, etc.
2. Working in sections, use the dandy brush (the brush with the firmer bristles) in short flicking motions to drive the bristles deep into the hair to remove dirt and dandruff and to stimulate circulation. Always brush in the direction of hair growth. After 4 - 5 strokes, draw the brush across the curry to clean off the dirt.
3. Following the same order, take the body brush and use long smooth strokes in the direction of hair growth to clean off any remaining dirt and to spread the natural oil over the whole coat. Every 4 - 5 strokes clean the brush on the curry.
4. The body brush can now be used on the legs. Run your hand firmly down each leg before brushing it, feeling for any heat, swelling or tenderness. Brush firmly in a downward direction. Pay special attention to the back or the pastern - caked dirt can irritate this area.

Please do not brush the mane and tail - excessive brushing may cause hairs to split and fall out. If the horse's mane and tail got brushed by every volunteer before every class it would soon get very thin!

Picking out hooves is left to the Instructor or one of the volunteers that the Instructor designates. Many of our horses are arthritic and having their legs lifted too high or at an awkward angle by inexperienced volunteers can make them quite sore.

Tacking & Untacking

Outside the tackroom, under the polebarn is a corkboard with the class schedule posted. On it is the information about the classes for the given day (time, rider, horse and tack). The saddle listed on the class schedule will be clearly marked a saddle rack inside the tackroom.

To Saddle a Horse:

It is important for the safety of the horse, rider and handlers that the horse be properly saddled. Have all the tack ready before you start.

A saddle pad is protection for the horse's back. Western pads are square in shape and kept in the trunk just inside the tackroom door. English pads are usually the shape of an English saddle (dressage pads are more of a square shape) and are kept on the sawhorse against the left wall. All saddle pads should

be kept clean. A dirty pad can cause sores and discomfort. To keep the pads clean we use a sheet under them. These are easier for us to wash frequently than the pads themselves. The sheets that fit under the western pads are hanging over a wire in the trunk with the western pads; the sheets that fit under the English pads are draped over the saw horse with the English pads and can be distinguished from the western sheets as they are more rectangular in shape where the sheets for the western pads are square.

There are different types of saddles used for therapeutic riding and each will have slightly different straps and buckles to secure it.

English & Treeless Saddles – these are kept on the wall directly in front of you when you enter the tackroom. The girths for these saddles are kept separately and are hanging on the wall to the left of the saddles. Long, medium, short and dressage lengths. As you get to know the horses you will become good at estimating the length of the girth you will need. If in doubt, ask the Instructor what length you will need.

The method for tacking up with an English or Treeless Saddle:

- Place the sheet and pad high up on the withers of the horse so it can be slid back into position and smooth the hairs in the right direction. Center the pad on the horse's back slightly forward and covering part of the wither. Check both sides of the horse to see that it is even on both sides.
- Place the saddle making sure that it is laying flat on both sides and with no straps or flaps tucked under.
- Attach the girth to the right side first, making sure that if there is elastic on the girth buckles that they are on the left side for ease in tightening. The buckles should be on the second or third hole from the bottom of the billet straps.
- Tighten the girth on the left side enough to keep the saddle on, but not too tight initially. Be sure that there are plenty of holes left on the billet straps for further tightening before the rider gets on. If you are nearing the top holes on both sides, the girth is too long, will not be able to be tightened enough for safety and you will need to get another one.
- Stirrup lengths should be posted along with the tack for the horse. Holes are counted from the bottom unless otherwise stated. Adjust the stirrups to the length that has been indicated for the rider. This is a big help to the instructor in getting the riders on the horses and into the class in a timely manner.

Western Saddles – these are kept on the wall to your right when you enter the tack room. The cinch for the western saddles stay attached to the saddle. Occasionally the cinch will be switched if the saddle is going onto a particularly small or large horse. Pad placement on the horse is the same for western as it is for English. Western saddles are significantly heavier than English saddles, so please do not hesitate to ask for assistance if you can't lift them onto the back of the horse. The cinch for the western saddle is done up differently than the girth of an English saddle. There are no buckles; the cinch is fastened by tying a knot similar to the knot of a man's necktie with the latigo on the left side. If you are unsure of how to tie this knot, please ask someone with experience to show you how.

Adaptive saddles – we have several saddles that are specialized and need to be put on a specific way. If you are tacking up a horse with any of this specialized equipment, please ask for assistance from someone with experience.

To Unsaddle a Horse:

- Undo the girth (or cinch) on the left side first.
- For English saddles, undo the right side of the girth and lay it over the saddle. (Western – leave the right side of the cinch done up & drape it over the saddle from the right side).
- Lift the saddle and pads off of the horses back. Be sure to pull the saddle back from the horse's wither before removing it.
- Return the saddle to the tackroom, being careful to put it back on its proper rack. Return the saddle pad & sheet to their designated spots.

To Bridle a Horse:

For the most part our horses do not wear bridles, but are led exclusively by the volunteer by its halter and lead. Some riders will have reins attached to their halter by clips once they have finished their warm up exercises in the arena. Riders who are more advanced and are steering their horses more independently may have a cavesson with reins attached. Cavessons more snugly fitting halters with rings on the noseband specifically for attaching reins. The cavessons are hanging on the left wall between the halters and girths.

If the horse you are tacking up requires a cavesson:

- From the left side of the horse, unclip the trailer tie from your horse's halter
- Put the lead rope around the horse's neck
- Remove the halter and put on the cavesson
- Unsnap the lead rope from the halter and attach it to the "leading V" on the cavesson (some of the cavessons have a ring like on the halter).
- Hang the halter on the bridle hook on the post to which your horse is tied.

If your horse requires an actual bridle:

- Your horses bridle will be on the same hook as it's halter
- From the left side of the horse, unclip the trailer tie from your horse's halter
- Put the lead rope around the horse's neck
- Hold the bridle by the crownpiece with your right hand
- Remove the halter and and drape it over your left forearm
- Lay the bit in your left hand
- Life your right arm over the horse's neck, raising the bridle over your horse's face and guiding the bit into the horse's mouth with your left hand.
- If the horse won't open its mouth easily, place your thumb into the side of its mouth. Between the front teeth and the molars is a space where there are no teeth.

- Gently push one ear and then the other through the crownpiece.
- Pull the forelock over the brow band.
- Fasten the throatlatch loose enough to accommodate 3 fingers between the jawbone and throatlatch.
- If the bridle has a noseband, secure it snugly, but not overly tight.
- The reins will be put on to the bridle by the Instructor in the ring after the rider is done their warm up exercises.

To Unbridle a Horse:

- Undo the throatlatch and noseband (if there is one)
- Slip the crownpiece forward over the ears, holding onto the bit so it doesn't drop out of the horse's mouth and bang on the teeth.
- Drape the bridle over your left forearm and put on your horse's halter and re-attach it to the pole by the tie.
- Rinse the bit before returning the bridle to the tack room.

Safety in the Arena and on Out Rides

In the Arena:

To prevent biting & kicking, keep a minimum of one horse length space to be kept between the horses at all times.

Do not let the horses "visit" or touch noses with other horses in the class or over the fence line. They will often 'squeal' and strike.

Then arena gate must be closed while a class is in session.

If adjustments are needed, bring the horse and rider off of the track and let the instructor know.

Pay attention to the directions of the Instructor.

Know the emergency procedures (taught at the orientation/training) for an emergency dismount, and what to do in case of a rider falling off, sudden inclement weather, etc.

Ask the Instructor for clarification if you are not certain about how to handle a certain rider.

When trotting, wait for the Instructor's directions. Make sure the sidewalker(s) is ready and then give the ok to the Horse Handler to trot. Trot ONLY along the long side of the arena unless directed by the Instructor to continue around the corner. Avoid crowding the horse in front.

Outside the Arena:

Always keep a safe distance between horses ... approximately one horse length.

Keep a firm hold on the lead rope and keep it quite short to avoid the horse putting down its head suddenly to eat grass.

Follow the Instructor's directions.

Keep together as a group. If you stop for adjustments, let the riders ahead of you know so they can stop and wait for you. If you find you are lagging behind with a slow horse, ask the riders in front to wait until you catch up.

Never take a horse out alone. A minimum of two horses must go out even if one needs to be led riderless. Some horses become very nervous and spooky when taken out alone.

Pay close attention to the rider at all times. If the rider looks like they are tiring and can't finish the ride, let the Instructor know immediately.

The Horse Handler (Leader)

The Horse Handler leads the horse and must keep it under control at all times. The degree of assistance will depend on the rider and on the horse. We encourage the rider to be in control to the best of his / her ability and the Horse Handler assists when required. As the rider progresses, the assistance of the Horse Handler will decrease.

Horse Handler Duties:

- Do not mount a rider without the Instructor or Coordinator present.
- While the rider is mounting, the horse must be kept as still as possible. The Horse Handler should stand in front of the horse, gently containing it. If held too tightly the horse will toss it's head and move around. 100% attention should be given to the horse. The temptation is to watch the rider mount or to help with a stirrup, etc. Be sure to keep your eyes on the horse until asked to move the horse forward.
- To move the horse forward, stand between the horse's head and shoulders facing in the direction in which you intend to walk. Give the verbal command using the horse's name (e.g. "Walk on Thunder"). Give the horse a moment to make the first step then walk forward yourself. Do not look at the horse – look up and where you are going.
- Lead the horse from the left side, unless requested to change sides in a lesson.
- Keep both hands on the lead rope. Place your right hand on the lead approximately 6 – 12" from the halter. The remaining portion of the lead is held folded in the left hand neatly and safely. Do hold the lead 'looped' around your left hand. Do not allow the lead to drape where you or the horse could step on it. NEVER drop the end of the lead on the ground ... our horses DO NOT GROUND TIE ... especially with a rider on.
- Ensure that the reins do not dangle low enough to accidentally be stepped through.
- Lead at an even pace.
- Never put your finger through any of the rings on the halter or the bridle – if the horse throws its head you could break a finger.
- **AVOID SHARP TURNS THAT CAN UNBALANCE A RIDER.**
- During the class, if you must stop to make adjustments or to talk to your rider, move off the track to centre of the ring to do so. Remember to warn your rider and sidewalkers of your intentions.
- **Be aware of the space you need to leave for your sidewalker on the right side of the horse. Be considerate and don't scrape them off on gateposts, fence rails or objects around the arena.**
- When the Instructor gives a command, give the rider time to process the information and give the aid if needed. We would like the rider to do as much of the work as possible on their own.

- Use short tugs and 'cluck' rather than a steady pull to keep a lazy horse moving.
- Be sure to keep a minimum horse length distance between you and the horse in front. Handlers should keep the horse from being too close if the rider cannot. A simple command that the rider halt, cross the ring to an empty spot or do a circle can prevent an accident.
- Once the lesson has started, it is important that the handler be alert and pay close attention. The Instructor will address the rider by name rather than the name of the horse or volunteer.
- Avoid talking with the sidewalker(s) and rider except as it relates to the lesson.
- At the halt, stand facing the horse's shoulder so you can see the rider, the horse and other volunteers.
- Trot the horse ONLY when requested to do so by the Instructor.
- **When trotting, keep your horse in a straight line and at a SLOW, even pace. Most of our riders cannot post the trot, so you must keep the horse to a slow 'jog' so they can sit to it. Several of the NOTRA horses will jog along a fast-walking leader. The Instructor will let you know if a more forward trot is needed in order to facilitate a posting trot.**
- No matter how careful we are, occasionally falls do happen. If a rider should fall, the Handler must take care of the horse and move it a safe distance away from the fallen rider so it doesn't step on them. A horse left unattended is an added danger.
- At the end of the ride, ensure that stirrups of the English saddles are run up, either by yourself or the rider if they are able. Be sure the reins are secured out of the way. If the rider is leading the horse back to the polebarn, stand on the opposite side of the horse's head, ready to assist should the need arise.

The Sidewalker

The Sidewalker's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the rider. The degree of assistance from the Sidewalker will depend on the balance and the ability of the rider. Sidewalkers can also help the Instructor in many other ways i.e. keeping the rider's attention on the lesson, assisting in the left/right directionality when steering, spatial orientation, helping the rider understand the Instructor's directions and helping to keep the horse walking on.

Sidewalker Duties:

- Introduce yourself to the rider and accompany them to the tack room area. Try to stay with the same rider each week as there is a comfort in familiarity for them.
- Assist the Instructor in checking that the rider is wearing a correctly fitting helmet & transfer belt before entering the polebarn area.
- If they are there early and they are able, they can assist with grooming and tacking the horse, but only with your supervision.

- The Instructor will check the tack and tighten the girth before the rider mounts, but may ask you to check it during the ride. If you notice the girth is loose or stirrups need adjusting, let the Horse Handler know so they can take the horse to the middle of the ring and the Instructor can make any adjustments.
- When a rider is mounting, hold onto the stirrup leather on the right side of the horse and provide enough weight so that the saddle stays straight on the horse (counter weight).
- The Instructor will double check stirrup adjustment once the rider is mounted. Some riders muscles relax during the ride requiring the stirrups to be re-lengthened after a bit.
- Stay with the rider while mounted or in the pole barn area at all times.
- The Instructor will let you know what hold (if any) is needed for your particular rider while they are mounted.
- Walk beside the rider just slightly behind their body line so that you can see them at all times.
- **Keep your hands free, not in your pockets.**
- If the rider starts to lose their balance, ask the Horse Handler to stop the horse and then gently adjust them back into position. Give enough support to help them regain their proper position in the saddle.
- Do not lean on the horse or hang onto the saddle or saddle pad. Some horses get extremely irritated by this and could go so far as to cow kick at you.
- Keep conversation to a minimum during the lessons so that the rider is focussed on the Instructor.
- Sidewalkers who accompany poorly balanced riders need to change sides occasionally to relieve stress on their arms. To change sides, ask the Horse Handler to go off the track and halt. Once stopped, switch sides one at a time.
- Remind the rider to maintain correct posture (i.e. straight line between shoulder, hip and ankle and straight line from elbow & hands to the bit).
- Warn the rider if you are about to help or touch them.
- Help the rider carry out instructions, giving the rider time to process the information. To give assistance, use hand over hand.
- During the exercises, pay attention to your rider and assist only if necessary.
- In an emergency, follow the Instructor's directions.
- Assist the rider to dismount on your own only if asked by the Instructor.
- When helping the rider to dismount, ensure the rider's right foot is out of the stirrup.
- At the end of the lesson stay with the rider and help them remove their helmet, transfer belt and put them away before returning them to their parent or guardian.
- If a rider is capable they can help untack the horse and put the saddle away.

Supporting the Rider:

It is important that the Sidewalker apply support as directed by the Instructor. Different levels of support may be required depending on the activity or the ability of the rider.

Minimum Hold:

The minimum hold is used for riders with good balance needing a little support to steady their position or encourage the leg to stay long and heel down. The Sidewalker will cup the rider's ankle with the hand closest to the rider.

Medium Hold:

The medium hold is used when the rider needs more support and is often used coming out of the mounting block or when trotting. The Sidewalker holds the front of the saddle flap with the hand nearest the rider. The forearm rests just above the rider's knee.

Maximum Hold:

The maximum hold is used for riders who need a lot of support. It is basically the same as the medium hold except the Sidewalker's forearm supports the rider at the hip joint. When applied by both Sidewalkers this hold provides a lot of support physically and gives confidence to timid riders.

Full Hold:

This hold is for the very unbalanced rider or to give an unbalanced rider extra security when needed, for example, when riding up and down hills on the trail or when learning to trot. The Sidewalker supports at the knee with the outside hand and uses the inside hand to support the rider's back by hanging onto one of the loops on the transfer belt. The caution here is not to let your arm tire and pull the rider over to your side.

Mounting & Dismounting

The mounting and dismounting procedures can be varied as the number of riders in a lesson. **WAIT FOR INSTRUCTIONS.** The Instructor must supervise all mounting and dismounting.

- Know the procedure used for each rider in mounting & dismounting.
- Before going to the mounting block, have the girth tightened and the stirrups adjusted.
- Only those people required to mount a rider should be on the block or ramp.
- In most classes, the most able riders are mounted first and dismounted last.

Various mounting methods:**Regular mount from the mounting block:**

The rider will mount, usually from the left side, with minimal assistance from the Instructor and Sidewalker. The Sidewalker on the off side will hold and put weight on the stirrups leather to ensure that the saddle stays straight on the horse's back. The Sidewalker will also assist the rider to lift their leg over the horse's back so they don't kick the horse while swinging their leg over.

Regular mount from the ramp:

If the rider doesn't have a lot of "bounce" or is on a particularly tall horse, then can do the regular mount off of the ramp. At the ramp the rider does not put their foot in the stirrup but lifts their leg directly over the horse and sits down. The foot on the right side can be placed in the stirrup for balance but the foot on the left side is left out until they are clear of the ramp.

Crest Mount:

From the mounting ramp, the rider stands with the assistance of the Instructor and Sidewalker/Caregiver with their back to the horse and the saddle. The rider will sit down sideways on the saddle. The Sidewalker on the steps on the right side of the horse receives the rider and guides them into the saddle then, with the assistance of the other Sidewalker on the ramp, supports the rider's back as the Instructor bring one leg over the neck (crest) of the horse. This mount is useful for riders with tight abductors or poor balance who would have trouble mounting the conventional way.

Full Lift:

This lift is used only for riders who meet the weight restrictions and are not able to stand or bear weight on their own.

Three people are needed on the mounting ramp for this lift as well as the Sidewalker on the steps on the right side of the horse. A designated strong volunteer holds the rider under the arms and around the wrists, the Instructor holds the rider below the knees. The two lift at the same time, while the third person pulls the wheelchair out of the way. The Sidewalker on the steps reaches out and guides and supports the rider as they are placed in the saddle.

Dismounting:

Riders will be dismounted to the ground whenever possible as it is the safest.

- Before dismounting, ensure the rider's right foot is out of the stirrup
- Be ready to assist the rider in swinging their leg over the horse's back

If dismounting at the ramp, stay with your rider until they have reached the ramp and be ready to assist the Instructor as directed.

- Ensure the rider's right foot is out of the stirrup and that the reins have been removed so that the right leg does not get caught if it is brought over the crest.
- Support the rider as needed as the rider is lifted of the horse.

Emergency Procedures

The Instructor is responsible for the riders and horses in the arena and on the trail. Volunteers and caregivers must answer to the Instructor. Please follow directions and instructions as quickly and safely as possible, especially in an emergency situation.

IF A RIDER FALLS

- The Horse Handler should remove the horse immediately.
- The Sidewalker stays with the rider.
- DO NOT attempt to move the rider without direction from the Instructor.
- If the rider is unconscious or if back or neck injuries are suspected, the rider is **NOT TO BE MOVED** (an ambulance must be called).
- The instructor will ask the rest of the group to circle away from the incident and put an experienced volunteer in charge of them.
- If the fall is not serious, the Instructor may decide to mount the rider again or wait until later.
- In all cases the Instructor must complete an Incident Report and the Horse Handler and Sidewalker(s) may be asked of their report of the incident.

IN THE CASE OF SUDDEN, INCLEMENT WEATHER (Severe wind & rain, thunder & lightening or hail)

- Whenever possible the riders should be dismounted in the ring ... the Instructor may even direct the Sidewalker to dismount the rider.
- The Sidewalker will take the rider out of the ring, being careful to keep them away from the horses if they are spooky or agitated and they will stay with the rider until they can be returned to the supervision of their caregiver or parent.
- If the rider cannot be dismounted to the ground, regular dismounting procedures will be attempted if they are deemed safe as quickly as is safe.
- If the horse is too agitated to attempt a ramp dismount, an emergency dismount may be done in the ring and the rider's wheelchair brought to them.

EMERGENCY DISMOUNT

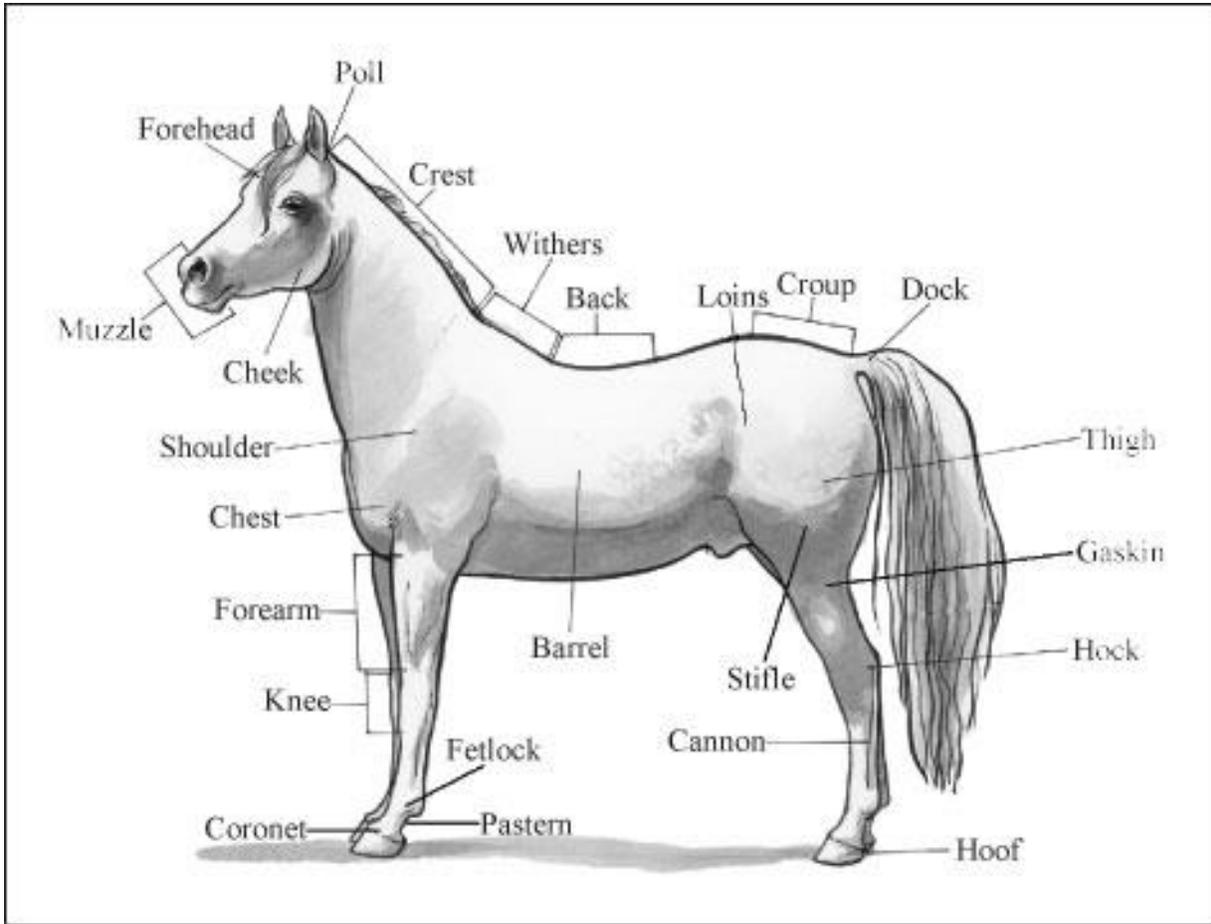
To be used in a situation where the horse is spooking, the rider is seizing or having a behavioural outburst.

- The Horse Handler is to steady the horse to the best of their ability.
- The Sidewalker on the right side of the horse pull the rider's foot out of the stirrup.
- The Sidewalker on the left side grabs the rider by the transfer belt and pulls the rider off, supporting them as best they can. If the rider cannot bear weight, hold them against you and slowly lower them to the ground, going down with them. *In most cases the Instructor steps in and is the one to pull the rider off of the horse.
- As soon as the rider is off, the Horse Handler removes the horse to a safe distance away from the rider.

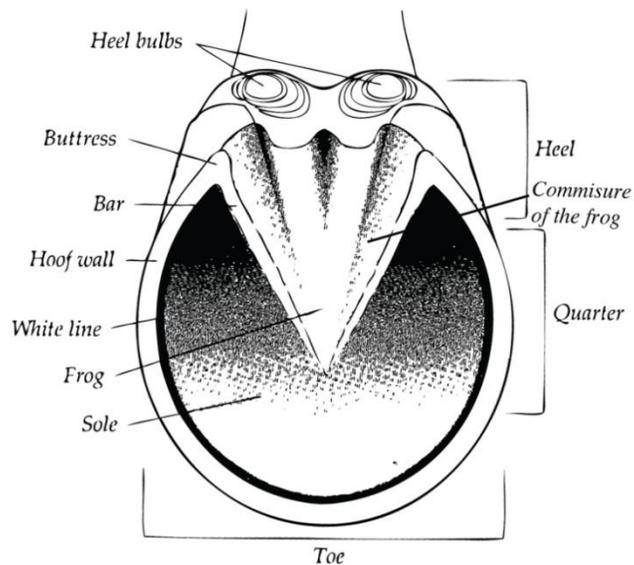
Points to Remember

1. All beginners are stiff. A relaxed confident volunteer encourages the rider to be relaxed and confident too. Have a positive attitude and use lots of positive words like “great”, “fantastic”, “well done”, “good effort” and “good work”. Do avoid negative comments and / or over-praising.
2. Always pay attention, never be over-confident, inattention causes accidents.
3. Progress is measured in months and years. The degree of progress is not a reflection of the team of volunteers or Instructor(s) ... it is a function of the disability and it depends on the motivation of the rider. *Encourage and praise the effort just as much as the action.
4. Avoid overloading your rider with information. Relaxation and enjoyment go hand in hand with learning. Fatigue produces negative results. *A change of activity is often helpful. Be flexible.
5. Treat each rider, regardless of disability, in a friendly, respectful manner and expect appropriate behaviour in return. Address questions and conversation to the rider if it concerns them. First give the rider opportunity to speak and make decisions for themselves. Caregivers or parents will fill in the blanks as required.
6. Read and understand emergency procedures. Participate in the hands on portion of the Orientation and Training. ASK QUESTIONS if there is an aspect of the program you do not understand. No question is foolish or insignificant!
7. If you are not happy with your volunteer assignment, please tell us. We would like you to derive satisfaction from your work. We value your time, dedication and enthusiasm!

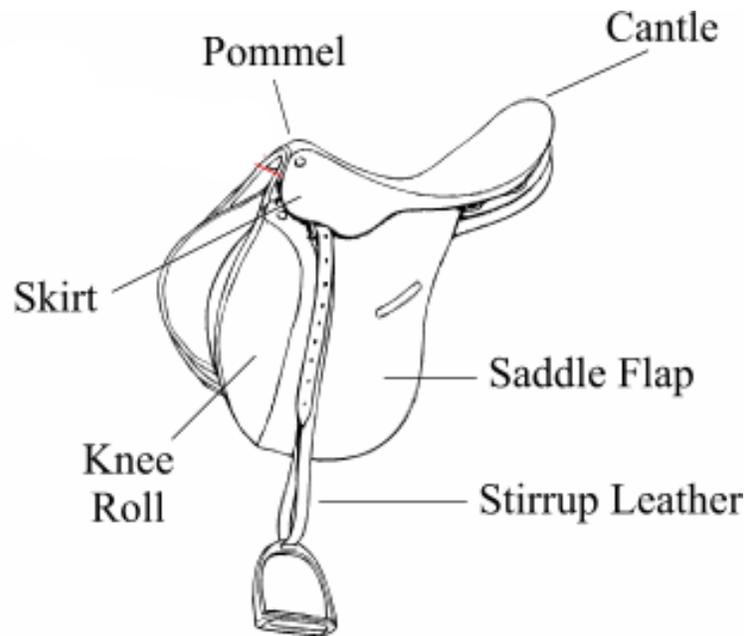
Parts of the Horse



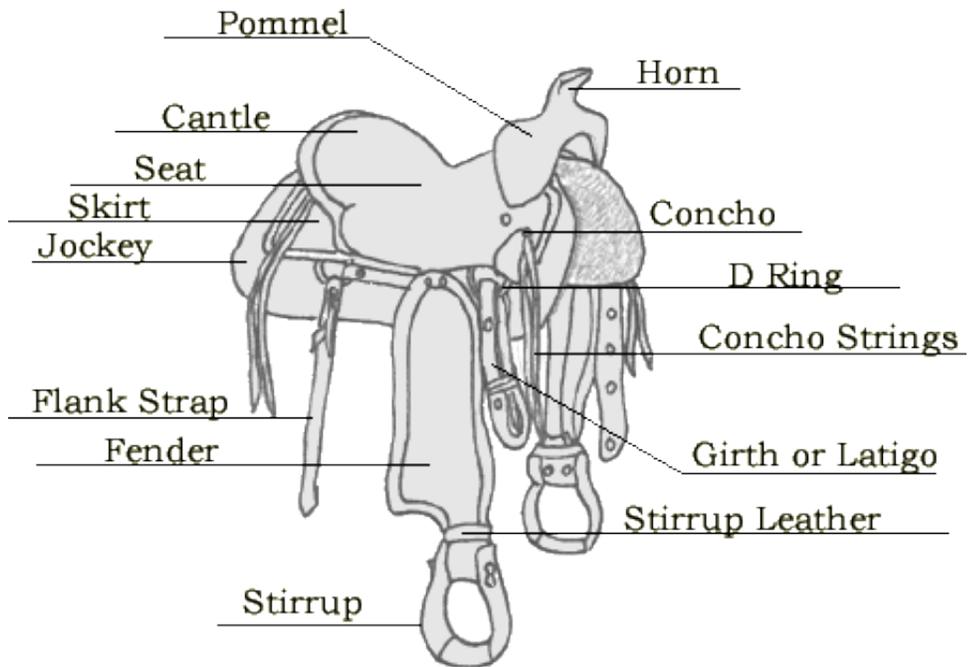
Parts of the Hoof



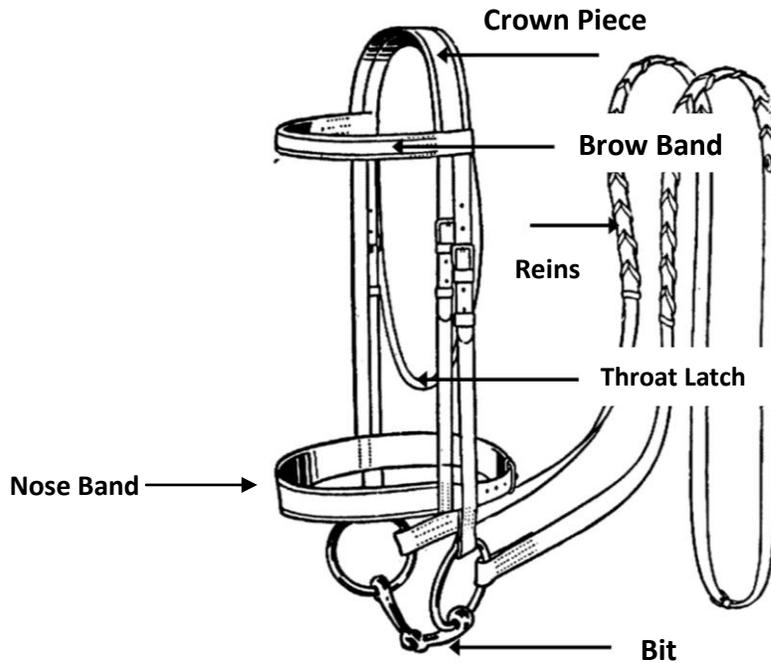
Parts of the English Saddle



Parts of the Western Saddle



Parts of the Bridle



Rider Position

Correct Sitting Position -

Head, shoulder, hip & heel in alignment. Straight line elbows, hands, reins to bit.

Incorrect Position -

Rider "behind the horse's movement" - leaning back, stiff position, lower leg in front of hip, hollow back, hands high.

Rider "in front of horse's movement" - slouching, rounded back, looking down.

