January 31, 2013

4-H Horsemanship Skills
Explanation Sheets
Level 1
Handling and Riding
History and Development of the Pennsylvania 4-H Horsemanship Skills Program

The goal of the Pennsylvania 4-H Horsemanship Skills Program is promoting safety and knowledge while developing and educating youth. The skills were first created and tested by Patricia A. Kelly, 4-H Volunteer Leader with 4-H members and volunteers in Westmoreland County. The Horsemanship Skills Program was further developed and implemented with the input and cooperation of extension and industry professionals, volunteers and 4-H members throughout the state.

The following Westmoreland County youth and adults assisted with the initial Level 1 Skill Explanation Sheets: 4-H members - Erwin Wahl, Erin Buckley, Lindsay Ament, Katie Sheraw, Julia Tryon, Rachel Wolinsky and Rebakah Baker; Westmoreland County 4-H Leaders – Patty Kelly, Kristy Pitzer Golkosy, Becky Wolinsky, Dorinda Baker, Lyndsey Androstic, Melonie Androstic and former extension educator Joann Logan.

Westmoreland County 4-H program piloted the 4-H Horsemanship Skills program for several years before the program was introduced to other counties and throughout the state. Evaluation and development of the program and additional program resources is ongoing.

These skill explanation sheets were updated in 2011-13 by: Bethany Bickel, Kelli Cole, Pat Comerford, Kirsten Dubbs, Duane Duncan, Tammy Eichstadt, Dave Gallaher, Nina Hill, Patricia A. Kelly, Andrea Kocher, Pam Nealer, Jeanne Price, Cindie Searight, Sue Shuman, Amy Snover, Lew Trumble, and Donna Zang.

This booklet and other supporting resources are developed in conjunction with the 4-H Horse Program Development Committee and Penn State Extension educators.

For additional information see the 4-H Horse Program website at:

animalscience.psu.edu

Youth 4-H, Horses, Horsemanship Skills
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Introduction

The Horsemanship Skills Program provides a planned progression of skill development to promote safety, horsemanship, education and life skills of youth and program participants. This book contains information for 4-H members, volunteers, examiners, educators and professionals to learn and assess acceptable methods of performing skills in Level 1.

The methods described in this book were developed based on industry standards, review of horsemanship and safety references *, and review by industry professionals. Use of these procedures will help provide consistency and uniform standards.

Youth must correctly demonstrate each skill in order to pass Level 1. Examiners must require that youth demonstrate that they have mastered or surpassed the standards for each skill. The primary objectives for youth, volunteers and examiners are to ensure that the skills are performed safely and correctly.

The methods described in this book provide an acceptable standard for safe and correct skill completion. It should be recognized that there will be some differences in the interpretation of skill evaluation and county use of program materials. If questions arise about specific details, examiners should work together to determine the standard for acceptable skill completion.

Guidelines for Use of this Book

These skill explanation sheets are to be used in conjunction with the following materials:

Pennsylvania 4-H Horsemanship Skills Resource Book (Member) *
Pennsylvania 4-H Horsemanship Skills Resource Book (Volunteer/Professional) *

Use of these materials will help participants to:
Correctly learn skills
Prepare for testing
Understand and demonstrate acceptable methods of skill completion

The references used for all skills are listed in the Resource Books. Leaders and youth are encouraged to review and study these references to help in learning the skills.
Safety Considerations

Safety is first and foremost and should be considered at all times when working with horses. A safe working area for both handling and mounted activities is required. In addition, correct and safe attire, tack and equipment that is used with correct horsemanship handling and riding methods will promote safety.

Testing should not be allowed if equipment presents a safety concern. Leaders and examiners should assist the youth to correct safety concerns with tack or equipment prior to testing.

Protective Headgear
Youth are required to wear properly fastened protective headgear which meets or exceeds current ASTM (American Society for Testing Materials) / SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) standards for equestrian use and carries the SEI tag. Headgear must be properly fitted with harness secured and is required at all times while riding or driving, or while handling Production Project animals at any 4-H activity.

To be effective, the helmet must fit correctly. All pads/liners around the circumference of the head should fit snugly without causing discomfort in any area. The retention straps (harness) must be properly adjusted to keep the helmet in place. Pressure should be firm, but not uncomfortable, and uniformly distributed among all of the straps. Adjust the straps so that there is slight pressure under the chin when the strap is buckled.

To determine if the helmet is properly adjusted, tip the helmet from side to side and front to back. The headliner should gently grab the surface of the skin. When properly adjusted, the helmet should not move around on the head without moving the skin. The helmet should not easily "roll" forward or backward and should not be removable without unbuckling the strap.

The helmet should be level from side to side and front to back. The front edge of the helmet liner should extend down to within about an inch from the top of the eyebrows.

A fall or significant impact to the helmet may destroy the helmet’s ability to absorb concussion and protect the rider’s head from injury. The helmet should be replaced after a fall or significant impact/blow to the helmet.

Clothing
Clothing and attire should be clean, workmanlike and appropriate to seat, discipline or use of horse. Show clothing is acceptable but not required. Clothing should be neat and properly fitted. Loose or baggy clothing that could trap or snag a rider is not acceptable. A shirt with short or long sleeves is required.

Boots or footwear with a heel and sole appropriate for riding are required.
Level 1 Horsemanship Skills

Member Skill Sheet

Rider’s Name (Last) _____________________________ (First) _____________________________ (Age) ________
Address ____________________________________________
Club _____________________________ County _____________________________ Check if Production ________
Horse’s name _____________________________ Seat/Discipline _____________________________ Date ________

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Riding Test must be ridden one or two handed as correct for discipline

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Level 1 emphasizes basic, correct, and safe principles of handling and riding.
To pass this level, the 4-H member must have mastered each skill of the test.
Retest will be section by section (handling/riding) in Level 1.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-1 Approach and catch horse safely (tied and loose)

**Equipment:** Halter and lead rope.

**General guidelines to follow when approaching a loose horse:**

- **Always be calm** and **confident** and **move slowly** when approaching a horse.
- Walk - never run up to a horse or chase a horse while trying to catch.
- If you have lead rope and halter put them over your shoulder.
- **Always speak** to your horse when approaching.
- Always try to approach horse from the front, towards their shoulder.
- Extend your hand and speak (maybe calling the horse’s name as you approach). If the horse starts to move away you should stop, wait until the horse stops and then approach again.
- If horse is wearing a halter, hold halter and attach the lead rope.
- If horse is not wearing a halter, slide the lead rope around the horse’s neck and loop the rope or tie the rope in a knot close to the horse’s head to hold him while you put the halter on. It is also acceptable to use a properly adjusted neck rope with a fixed ring so that the rope does not tighten on the horse’s neck.

  **Note:** Tying the rope around the horse’s neck allows the handler to hold the horse more securely. However, if the horse bolts and escapes before the halter is in place, the horse could be entrapped and injured by a dangling halter attached to the lead.

- Horses are animals of flight and often will run or kick if startled or frightened.
- Never approach a horse from directly behind or directly in front as those are their blind spots.
- Pay close attention to the horse’s head, ears, neck and body position. They will indicate the horse’s mood. Example: ears laid back flat are a warning sign of danger.

**Guidelines to follow when approaching a tied horse:**

- Always speak.
- Approach towards the horse’s shoulder.
- Extend your hand.
- Be careful not to startle the horse.

**Guidelines to follow when you must approach a tied horse from the rear:**

- Always speak.
- Place your hand on the horse’s hip.
- Make the horse move over to give you enough space to enter.
- Keeping hand on horse, walk up to the horse’s head and rub or pat its neck.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-2 Properly halter a horse

Equipment: Halter and lead rope

General guidelines to follow when haltering a horse:

- The halter and lead rope are used to lead and tie your horse.
- Always be calm and confident and move slowly when haltering a horse.
- Stand to the left side of your horse between his head and shoulder.
- Talk to your horse while haltering to reassure him.
- Slide the halter over the horse’s muzzle (nose).
  - If the halter fastens with a crown piece (long strap) place it gently behind the right ear and slide across behind left ear. It should now be in place to buckle.
  - If the halter fastens from the throatlatch (under the jaw), gently slide the crown piece over both ears and then fasten the throatlatch.
- In an enclosed area, such as stall:
  - Tie or loop the lead rope around the horse’s neck before haltering to control the horse and let the horse know to stand still. Tie or loop the lead behind the horse’s ears at/near the poll rather than low near the horse’s shoulder. Keeping the rope high on the horse’s neck will help to maintain control. Keep a hand on the lead rope until you have the halter in place.
- In an open area, such as at a trailer:
  - Secure the horse with a lead tied around top of neck without the halter attached. Keep a hand on the lead rope until you have the halter in place.
  - If the horse is bridled, take off bridle and remove from horse. Put on halter as described above and then fasten lead rope and take off neck.
- Please make sure your halter and lead rope are in good condition and fit properly.
- Halter should fit properly for the horse’s comfort and safety.
  - Fit should not be too tight nor too loose.
  - Nose piece should be across the bridge of the nose; approximately two (2) fingers width below the cheek bone.
  - Crown piece should lie immediately behind the ears and across the poll.
  - Throat latch should fit snuggly. Should allow two (2) or three (3) fingers between the strap and the horse’s throat.
- Never lead a horse without a lead rope - even for a short distance.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-3  Lead, turn and back horse safely and correctly

Equipment: Halter and lead rope (7 to 8 feet in length)

General guidelines to follow when leading a horse:
- When leading with a halter **ALWAYS** use a lead rope.
- Never hold onto the halter when leading a horse.
- Stand to the left side of the horse between the horse’s head and shoulder. Preferably at the throatlatch.
- Use your right hand hold the lead about 6 inches from the halter.
- Fasten the lead rope to the ring behind the horse’s muzzle (under chin) – do not attach the lead to the side rings.
- Use the left-hand to hold the extra lead rope. **NEVER** wrap the lead rope around your hand or body. If using a lead with a chain shank, **do not** place your hand on or around the chain.
- When leading, extend your right elbow slightly toward the horse and keep your knuckles on top of the rope.
- If the horse makes contact with you, its shoulder will hit your elbow first and move away from you.
- Horses should not pull or push you when leading, but walk quietly and obediently beside you.
- Look where you are going and when walking forward face forward.

Guidelines for properly turning a horse:
- Always turn the horse away from you - never pull the horse towards you.
- Continue moving around the horse as you turn to prevent the horse from stepping on you.
- Horse should willingly turn when asked **without** pushing or pulling.

Guidelines for correctly backing a horse:
- From a leading forward position - turn and face backwards (towards the rear of the horse) remaining to the side of your horse.
- Gently ask your horse to back slowly by moving your hands and feet forward (towards the rear of the horse).
- Horse should back willingly without throwing head or resisting.
- **NEVER** stand, lead or back from a position directly in front of the horse.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-4 Lead a horse into and out of a stall

Equipment: Halter and lead rope

Guidelines for leading a horse into and out of a stall:

♦ When leading a horse into or out of a stall always make sure the door is completely open and the latch is flush with the door. A swinging door should swing outwards and make sure it does not hit the horse when going in or out of stall.

♦ When getting a horse out of a stall, wait to enter the stall until the horse turns and faces you and the door. Do not go in a stall with a horse that will not turn around or has ears laid back.

♦ Put the halter and lead on the horse to take it out of stall, making sure that the horse stops and waits until handler is ready for the horse to exit.

♦ When entering the stall, the horse should stop readily and wait until the handler is ready for horse to enter. The size of the door will determine how the handler and horse will enter.

♦ The safest way to enter is to walk straight a few feet into the stall until the hip of the horse clears the door, then pull the horse’s head towards you as you back to the door. Partially close the door before taking off halter and lead. (This method is recommended, especially if leading an unfamiliar, scared, or excited horse.)

♦ Although not recommended or encouraged, if leading a familiar and calm horse into stall, you may walk in and turn the horse to the right walking around the horse and back to the door. You should realize that this could put you in a dangerous position between the horse and the wall. If the horse becomes excited you could be trapped or injured.

♦ When exiting the stall, close the door partially to prevent horse from walking out, but leaving room for handler to exit. Remove halter and lead and close the door.

♦ Be careful not to allow a small child to lead a horse that is too large or excitable that they are not able to control.

♦ Always use a proper fitting halter and lead.

♦ Never lock yourself in the stall with a horse.
Level 1 – Handling skill
1-5 Practice safety rules when turning a horse loose

Equipment: Properly fitting halter and a lead

Guidelines for turning a horse loose in a field:

♦ Lead horse through the gate.
♦ Turn horse around and have the horse face the gate.
♦ Partially close gate (or close gate) while still holding horse.
  ▪ Keeping a hand on a partially open gate allows you to move away quickly and safely from an excited horse.
♦ The horse should stand quietly while you remove the halter.
  ▪ Some people may leave the halter on the horse for specific reasons.
  ▪ It is preferable for the horse’s safety to remove the halter. It may catch on objects in the pasture and injure the horse.
♦ After releasing the horse you may exit safely. Promptly fasten and secure the gate latch after releasing the horse.

Helpful Hints to Remember:

♦ Never just open the gate and let the horse run through the gate. This will encourage bolting and you could get kicked as the horse runs by you.
♦ Teach your horse to be patient and not to rush or pull when being turned loose.
♦ Do not chase or yell at your horse encouraging him to run and buck when released. This will encourage the horse to become hard to handle when turning loose.
♦ You can place a knot in the end of rope to prevent the rope from slipping through your hand.
♦ Do not drag the lead on ground.
♦ Never wrap a lead around your hand or any part of your body.
♦ Children should not lead large or young horses without careful supervision. Children should not be allowed to lead horses they are not able to safely control.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-6 Safely tie a horse (correct level, length, location, knot, etc.)

Equipment: Halter and lead rope

General guidelines to safely tie a horse:

♦ Use a halter and a sturdy lead to tie a horse.
♦ Always tie a horse using a quick release knot or safety knot.
♦ **Tie a horse at wither height or higher.** The length of the rope when tied should be about an arm’s length; approximately (18 to 24 inches) in length.
♦ The lead should be tied short enough to prevent the horse from becoming entangled or a getting a foot over the lead, but loose enough to be comfortable.
♦ Never tie a horse by the bridle reins and do not hook the lead rope to the bit to tie the horse. *The horse can break the reins and injure himself.***
♦ **Tie a horse to something solid and sturdy** - such as a wall with a sturdy ring or a sturdy fence post.
♦ Do **not** tie the horse to a fence board or rail, unhitched trailers, sliding doors, car door handles or any moveable object.
♦ **NEVER walk under the horse’s neck or under the rope when the horse is tied.** A horse cannot see directly under its head and if frightened could pull back or jump forward causing injury to the handler.
♦ Walk around a tied horse while keeping one hand on the horse’s hip. Stay close to horse so the horse knows where you are or move away from the horse and out of the kick zone.
♦ When moving around the horse, speak to him. This enables the horse to know where you are.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-7 Demonstrate simple grooming of the horse

Equipment: Rubber currycomb, stiff (hard) or dandy brush, soft brush, mane and tail comb or brush, optional – towel

General guidelines for simple grooming of a horse:

Grooming is a very important part of your horse’s health. Grooming will remove dirt, debris and dandruff, which may cause saddle sores or promote skin infections. Regular grooming will help to keep the skin healthy, make the horse’s coat shine and also help your horse feel good.

Groom the horse in the following order:

1. Use the rubber curry in a circular movement all over the horse’s body except for the face, legs or any bony area.
2. Next, use your stiff brush to remove excess hair and dirt that the curry left behind. Brush in the direction of the hair with a “flicking motion”. If needed you may carefully and gently use the stiff brush or a soft rubber brush on face and legs to remove caked-on dirt.
3. After using the curry and stiff brush, use the soft brush to remove surface dirt and put a shine on the horse’s coat. The soft brush may be used on entire body, including the face and legs. When grooming the head, carefully cover the horse’s eyes with your hand to prevent dust from entering the eyes. Optional - A towel maybe used to finish grooming your horse.
4. Use a comb or brush for the mane and tail.
   - When combing the forelock stand to the side and comb.
   - When combing the mane stand next to horse’s neck and comb.
   - When combing the tail stand off to the side. Never stand directly behind a horse when grooming.
   - When combing the tail, start at the bottom and hold the tail hair with one hand, while combing with the other. This helps to prevent pulling hair out.

Important Safety Factors to Remember:

♦ Never use a stiff, rubber or metal curry on face or legs.
♦ Never stand directly in front of or behind your horse when grooming.
♦ Never go under your horse’s neck to get to the other side.
♦ Keep one hand on the horse while you groom.
Level 1 - Handling Skill

1-8  Pick up feet and clean properly

Equipment: Hoof pick

General guidelines for simple grooming of a horse:

1. The horse should willingly allow its feet to be cleaned, trimmed and/or shod.
2. Tie the horse securely in area that is large enough for you to safely move around him.
3. Make sure your horse is standing relatively square and balanced on all four feet, before attempting to pick up a foot.
4. Stand close to the horse when picking up the feet.
5. **Always let the horse know what you intend to do.** Never reach down and suddenly grab the foot.
6. To pick up and clean **front feet:**
   - Stand facing the rear of your horse (You may put your hand closest to the horse on the horse’s shoulder for safety and balance until the horse picks up his foot.)
   - Run your hand down the horse’s leg all the way to the fetlock.
   - Ask the horse to pick up the foot by gently clucking or applying pressure to the leg.
   - If necessary apply pressure to (lean into) the horse’s shoulder to encourage the horse to shift weight and pick up the foot.
7. To pick up and clean **hind feet:**
   - Stand facing the rear of the horse (You may put your hand closest to the horse on the horse’s hip for safety and balance until the horse picks up his foot.)
   - Run you hand down his leg all the way to the fetlock.
   - Ask the horse to pick up the foot by gently clucking or applying pressure to the leg.
   - If necessary apply pressure to the horse’s hip to encourage the horse to shift weight and pick up the foot.
8. Hold the hoof pick in the palm of your hand so that you can pick and clean the hoof from the heel toward the toe and away from you. With an outward motion start on either side of the frog and clean out any dirt, stones etc. When finished with the frog area, work on the outline of the hoof and clean away any debris.
Level 1 – Handling skill
1-9 Bridle horse - check fit and make basic adjustments

Equipment: Properly fitting bridle and bit

General guidelines for bridling a horse:
♦ Pay close attention to horse’s head and always protect your head.
♦ Never put your head under or over the horse’s head.
♦ Stand on the horse’s left side – facing the same direction as horse and stand parallel with horse.
♦ Make sure the horse is secure at all times for safety of horse and handler.

To Bridle:
1. Place lead rope or reins around horse’s neck near the horse’s poll. Place right hand on poll, hold crown piece in right hand or hold bridle below brow band in right hand on the horse’s forehead.
2. Hold bit in left hand.
3. Place the bit between horse’s lips. Keep the chinstrap behind lower lip.
4. Gently ask the horse to open mouth.
   ▪ May need to gently press on interdental space (between teeth) with finger or thumb.
5. Once the mouth is open, pull bridle up and gently slide bit into mouth.
6. Put right ear under crown piece first and then left ear. Handle ears carefully as the ears are sensitive.
7. Fasten buckles and/or chin/curb strap or curb chain.
   ▪ Noseband – allow space for 2 fingers and ½ inch below cheekbone.
   ▪ Throatlatch – allow space for 3 to 4 fingers.
   ▪ Chin chain/ strap – allow space for 2 fingers.

To Unbridle:
1. Place lead rope or reins around horse’s neck near the poll. Slowly slip the bridle over the horse’s ears and gently down the forehead waiting until horse opens its mouth.
2. When mouth is open remove bit carefully. Take care not to hit the bit against the horse’s teeth.
   ▪ Take as much time as needed because rough handling while bridling/unbridling makes a horse difficult to bridle.

Important safety factors to remember:
♦ Horse should be in an enclosed area or secured with the lead tied around its neck.
♦ Do not let the halter hang from the lead if the lead is tied around the horse’s neck.
♦ English reins that are buckled or Western reins that are closed reins should not be placed over the neck until the bridle is secure.
♦ Make sure all straps are flat, not twisted.

January 31, 2013
Level 1 – Handling Skill

1-10 Saddle horse - check fit and make basic adjustments

Equipment: Properly fitted saddle and saddle pad or blanket in good condition

*Saddle only after grooming the horse and checking saddle pad and girth for foreign objects or dirt. Small riders may be assisted in placing the saddle on the horse, but must describe correct placement and process.*

General guidelines for saddling a horse:

1. Place the saddle pad or blanket high on the horse’s withers and then slide it backward onto the withers and the back. This will help to smooth the horse’s hair. Be sure to lift the pad over the withers to make sure the pad is not too tight over the horse’s withers.

2. Gently set the saddle on the horse’s back. It is also acceptable to softly swing saddle into place without moving the stirrups or girth.
   - Western saddle - Bring the right stirrup and the girth over the seat before placing on horse.
   - English saddle - Make sure stirrups are run up or laid across the seat. Lay the girth across the seat, and place the girth through the stirrups before saddling the horse.

3. Make sure the saddle is fitted so that it does not pinch the horse’s withers, shoulders, back or loin and the girth does not pinch behind the horse’s elbow.
   - The saddle should be positioned behind the shoulder blades.
   - Gently rock the saddle until it falls into place on the horse’s back.
   - Place hand under saddle pad and lift the pad into the gullet of saddle.

4. Go to the off side (the horse’s right side) and gently put the stirrup and girth down on the western saddle; attach the girth leaving the stirrups up on the English saddle. The girth should fall a few inches behind the horse’s elbow.

5. Go back to the near side (the horse’s left side)
   - Western saddle: Put stirrup over the horn and pull girth under the horse. Tie girth strap with a latigo knot and/or wrap girth and fasten girth strap snugly into the tongue of the girth ring.
   - English saddle: Pull the girth under the horse and buckle the girth. If the girth has elastic, it should be on the near (left) side. Buckle the girth to either the first and second or first and third billets and cover buckles with the buckle guard.

6. Pull the girth slowly when tightening. You may need to walk the horse a few steps and then tighten again. The girth should fit snugly.

7. Always fasten any accessory straps, such as breast collars, tie downs, martingales, etc. **after** the saddle is securely cinched.

8. When unsaddling, remove any accessory straps **before** removing the girth. On western saddles with a rear girth, remove the rear girth **before** removing the front girth.
Level 1 – Handling Skill

1-11 Demonstrate safety around the horse while handling

*Safety of the handler is first and foremost. Safety of the horse should be considered as well.*

Guidelines for safety when handling a horse:

- Safety precautions and practices listed in all the skill sheets should be followed.
- In addition to specific safety guidelines for each skill, general safety practices should be practiced and evaluated at all times when handling or working with the horse.
- Youth should display a knowledge and confidence that they understand how to implement safe practices in varying situations.
- Handlers need to have an understanding of their horse’s personality and temperament.
- It is difficult to list a safety practice for every situation that may arise.
  - Everyone should be aware of their surroundings, consider safety precautions and pay close attention at all times.

Common safety errors *to avoid* as handlers progress through the skills:

- Put equipment of any kind on the ground where horse or handler could step on it.
- Fasten breast plate to saddle before tightening girth or cinch.
- Leave a saddled horse standing unattended (loose); example; the handler runs to get a mounting block and the horse is left unattended.
- Standing directly behind the horse to comb its tail.
- Standing directly in front of the horse when backing.
- Moving under a horse’s neck when the horse is tied.
- Not holding the reins when mounting.
- Failure to walk/move the horse and check the girth before mounting.

These or other unsafe practices should result in a retest to help increase knowledge and promote an appreciation of safety.
Level 1 – Riding skill

1-12 Mount and Dismount properly (may use mounting block)

Equipment: The following applies to all mounted skills:

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment as stated in the current 4-H Horse Show Rule Book or as appropriate for seat, discipline, or use.

Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline. Show attire may be used as well as neat, working attire that is appropriate for seat/discipline.

A safe and sturdy mounting block may be used if needed.

Mounting:
Teach the horse to stand quietly while rider mounts with or without mounting block.
If you are a beginner never mount or ride alone.
Always use a safe area to mount (good footing, ample space, free of dangerous objects, etc.)

♦ Must check girth or cinch before mounting (girth should be snug; 2 fingers between girth and horse).
♦ Stand on left side of horse.
♦ Put reins over horses head –
  ▪ (One rein on each side of the neck and establish even contact on reins).
♦ Hold reins in left hand and place hand on neck.
  ▪ (May hold onto mane if needed.)
♦ Face the tail of horse standing by horse’s shoulder.
♦ Take stirrup in right hand and turn it towards you.
♦ Put left toe in left stirrup.
♦ Hold pommel with the right hand.
  ▪ Although not recommended, it may be acceptable to hold the cantle and then the pommel in some seats. If this is how you mount, you must explain to the examiners why this is necessary and why this could be a problem for the horse.
♦ Guide toe toward the girth or cinch to avoid toe hitting horse’s side.
♦ Keep body close to horse for a balanced mount.
♦ Keep left hand on reins and right hand on pommel.
♦ Take 2-3 hops and swing up – try not to pull up or drag the saddle against the horse’s back.
♦ When standing with left foot in stirrup lean forward over horse’s center of gravity.
♦ Swing right leg over horse – do not hit horse’s croup with foot. Ease down gently in saddle.
♦ Put right foot in stirrup.
♦ Make sure you straighten your saddle after mounting and sit squarely so stirrup length is equal on each side of the horse.
♦ Make sure reins are even.
♦ Rider should learn to use a mounting block correctly if unable to mount without pulling on the saddle.
Dismounting: (reverse of mounting)

- Quietly swing right leg behind body and over horse. Take care not to hit horse with right leg.
- English riders -
  - Slide down (with both feet out of stirrup), placing right hand on seat or pommel of saddle. It is also acceptable to swing right leg over horse before removing left foot from the stirrup. Both feet should be removed from the stirrups before sliding down to the ground.
- Western riders - may step down or kick left foot out of stirrup and slide down.
- Rider should land close to horse’s shoulder.
- When dismounted, immediately brings reins over horse’s head for leading.
- English riders are to run stirrups up immediately after dismounting.
Level 1 - Riding Skill

1-13 Describe and discuss safely riding in a group

**Equipment:** See page 18 for details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

**General guidelines for riding safely in a group:**

- **Always keep at least one horse length** between you and the horse in front of you.
  - If the distance is safe you should be able to see the hind heels of the horse in front of you when looking through your horse’s ears.

- You should always keep alert when riding in a group.
  - Be aware of your surroundings and watch for other horses acting up or situations that may frighten your horse.
  - When passing another horse don’t cut too close to the horse you are passing.

- Try to stay away from horses that do not like your horse and vice versa.

- You should not ride in a group of horses until you have good control and knowledge of your mount.

- In the show ring if passing - pass wide and make sure you have a good distance between you and the horse behind you before moving back to the rail. In most situations it is unsafe to pass another horse between that horse and the rail. It is best to pass toward the center of the ring.

- Before trail riding, riders should be capable of proper control of the horse at all gaits. Inexperienced/novice riders should be properly instructed, supervised and accompanied by experienced, knowledgeable riders and experienced horses when riding in groups or on trails.

- When trail riding you may ride abreast (shoulder to shoulder), depending on temperament and experience of horse and rider, but stay a safe distance away to avoid being kicked.

- When riding in groups or on trails, always ride at the speed that is comfortable for the least experienced rider in the group.

- When trail riding in groups, avoid riding away from other horses in the group, especially from another horse that is a good buddy.
Level 1 – Riding Skills

1-14 Use proper basic seat, leg and body position with balance

Equipment: See page 18 for details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

Learning to sit in a proper, balanced position leads to effective riding.

General guidelines for proper position of rider:

♦ Look straight ahead. Hold your head up and keep your neck long.
♦ A straight line drawn 90 degrees from the ground should touch the back of the rider’s heel, pass through the point of the rider’s hip and shoulder to the ear.
♦ This position will place your center of gravity (the area in front of your spine and below your rib cage) in the correct position above your hips. This position allows your legs to fall into the proper position to correctly use leg aids.
♦ Sit tall in the saddle, shoulders should be square, and do not twist your upper body.
♦ The rider should stay relaxed in the correct position. Staying relaxed improves calm communication with the horse.
♦ When viewed from the rear, there should be a straight line that runs down the rider’s spine through the middle of the cantle, through the horse spine and then the middle of the horse’s body.
♦ Keep elbows relaxed and close to the sides of your body.

Leg position:

♦ The ball of the rider’s foot should be on the stirrup, with rider’s heel lower than toe and the ankle flexible.
♦ The rider’s heel should be positioned to the rear of the girth.
♦ The rider’s inner knee bone and lower leg should be in light contact with the horse’s sides.

Stirrup Length:

♦ English – The bottom of the stirrup should reach the ankle bone of the rider (when the foot is out of the stirrup).
♦ Western – When the rider stands in the saddle, the distance between the rider’s body and the saddle should be 1 to 2 inches.

Holding reins:

♦ Western – Reining hand should be held close to the pommel near the horn.
  ▪ Other hand may be held parallel to reining hand, on thigh, or near belt buckle.
♦ English – Hands should be held above the withers at the same angle as the horse shoulder and only about six inches apart.
Level 1 – Riding Skill  
1-15 Proper use of reins; hand position and action

Equipment: *See page 18 for details.*

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

**Western:**
- *Both* reins must be held in *one* hand; Exception: Western horse 5 years of age and younger may be ridden with two hands as noted in current rule book.
- Reins should come into the hand from the top.
- Index finger should be placed between reins.
  - *(Only one finger permitted between reins).*
- Reins should pass through the bottom of hand.
- Extra reins fall to the side of horse as the hand holding reins.
- Hold reins at same level and length and positioned slightly forward of horn.
- Rein hand should stay within about 6 inches of the horn at all times.

**English:**
- *One* rein should be held in *each* hand.
- Reins should come up into the hand between the fourth and fifth (little) finger.
- Reins go through the hand and come out between the thumb and index finger, with the thumb held on top of the rein.
- Hold reins about 6 inches apart.
- Hold reins about the same angle as the withers (about 45 degrees).

**Saddle Seat and/ or double reins:**
- Same as English except:
  - Curb rein should be between fourth and fifth (little) finger.
  - Snaffle rein should be on outside of little finger.
- For Saddle Seat rider’s, the position/distance of the hands above the horse’s withers may vary depending on the individual horse.

**Remember:**
- *Keep hands quiet and relaxed,* but alert.
- Soft and understanding hands will promote a quiet and relaxed head set in all horses.
- *Keep elbows relaxed* and close to body.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-16 At a walk with control and proper position: stop and start (gradual and balanced)

**Equipment:** *See page 18 for details.*

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

**Rider should have an understanding of basic aids of riding. Aids are signals a rider gives to the horse so the horse knows what the rider expects.**

**Natural Aids:**
1. Voice
2. Seat/Weight
3. Legs
4. Hands

**Artificial Aids:** Used only when necessary to support natural aids.
1. Crops, bats, whips
2. Spurs, training equipment, etc.

**To walk forward:**
- Sit balanced.
- **Squeeze with lower legs.**
  - If horse does not move may need to squeeze a little harder.
- May use your **voice** to encourage the horse to walk forward. (cluck, etc.)
- **Hands should be quiet** and move with horse’s head.
  - Be careful not to pull back when asking the horse to go forward.

**To Stop:**
- Sit balanced.
- **Sit deep** - by dropping weight in the saddle with a supporting leg.
- Use voice to say whoa (or another voice signal of your choice).
- Shorten reins and **lightly hold/pull back** on reins. (Close fingers around the reins.)
- Release pressure on the reins when the horse begins to stop
- If horse does not respond, try the steps above again.
  - Be careful not to squeeze with legs when holding/pulling back on the reins.
- **Reward** horse when he stops by release of pressure on the reins.
  - The horse will respond better with pat on the neck or release of pressure as a reward when he is good or does what the rider asks.

**Think about it:**
- Remember to practice until you have mastered a walk and stop that is relaxed, showing good communication between horse and rider.
- If you cannot easily control your horse at a walk you will not be able to control the horse at a trot, canter or other gaits.
- Control of the horse at the walk and stop is the foundation that will determine your success as you advances through the skills.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-17 At a walk with control and proper position:  
check and release (demonstrating control of horse)

Equipment: See page 18 for details.
Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted
ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for
seat/discipline.

The check and release is a method used to keep the horse at a steady
pace or slow his speed. Another term for this is half halt.

Guidelines for check and release at a walk:
♦ A rider uses reins to check horse by using a gentle pull or increased pressure on the reins.
  ▪ Sometimes it can be just a squeezing of the hand.
♦ The rider then releases the pressure when horse responds by steadying or slowing gait.
♦ The rider should be able to check and release to steady and control the gait.
♦ Rider should also be able to slow the gait by a check and release.
♦ The rider should stay in balanced position with heels down while checking and releasing.
♦ The rider’s cues to the horse should not be obvious to an observer, but the horse’s response
  should be obvious.
♦ It always helps to reward the horse when he responds correctly!
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-18  At a walk with control and proper position:
       turn and walk in both directions

Equipment: See page 18 for details.
Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted
ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for
seat/discipline.

Rider should have first mastered the walk and stop.

Mastery of this skill should demonstrate that:
♦ The horse responds to aids to turn in a quiet and willing manner.
♦ The rider uses aids properly to ask the horse to turn.
♦ The rider is able to get the horse to turn easily and confidently while walking.

English Rider (one rein held in each hand):
♦ To turn right – Rider will pull or move the right rein to the right being careful not to pull
  back. The rider should use their left leg slightly behind the girth to maintain the shape of
  the turn and encourage the horse to move away from their leg.
♦ Left rein will gently follow the direction of turn being careful not to pull back.
♦ When horse turns nose to the right the rider may need to use legs to keep the horse
  moving forward.
♦ To turn left – Rider will pull or move rein with left hand with aids as needed. The rider
  should use their right leg slightly behind the girth to maintain the shape of the turn and
  encourage the horse to move away from their leg.

Western Rider (both reins in one hand; Exception: Western horse 5 years of age and
younger may be ridden with two hands as noted in current rule book.):
♦ Horse should know how to neck rein.
♦ To turn - Rider will move hand slightly forward and lay rein against neck in the direction
  they want to turn. Use leg to maintain the shape of the turn.
♦ Be careful not to pull back on the reins.
♦ Use leg aids as needed to ask horse to move forward.

Points to remember:
♦ Horses all respond differently and rider will have to learn how much rein and leg pressure
  is needed to accomplish a smooth turn.
♦ Turns should be done in both directions.
♦ Rider should look in the direction of the turn.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-19 At a walk with control and proper position: ride a circle both direction and do a figure 8

Equipment: See page 18 for details.
Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

Rider should first master the start, stop, check, release, and turn at a walk.

✧ Riding a horse in a circle and figure 8 demonstrates control and proper use of aids by rider.
✧ Rider should ride circles in both directions and practice different size circles.
✧ Use the same aids needed to turn and keep horse moving at a smooth, steady walk.
✧ Rider should look ahead in the direction they are turning.
✧ Rider should stay in a balanced position.
✧ All circles should be round and of even size in the figure 8. Not oval or egg shaped.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-20 At a jog or trot with control and proper position: stop and start (gradual and balanced)

Equipment: See page 18 for details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

Rider should have mastered riding at a walk before trotting

Remember:
♦ A trot is a two beat, diagonal gait that is faster than a walk.
♦ Use aids first gently and with more strength as needed to get the horse to trot at a steady gait.
♦ The rider should practice to stay in the correct position while trotting.

To trot forward from a walk:
♦ Sit balanced.
♦ Squeeze with lower legs.
  ▪ If the horse does not move the rider may need to squeeze a little harder.
  ▪ You may have to lightly kick or sharply squeeze with lower leg.
♦ May use your voice to encourage the horse to trot forward.
♦ Rider’s hands should be quiet and move with the horse’s head.
  ▪ Be careful not to pull back on the reins when asking the horse to go forward.

To stop from trot:
♦ Sit balanced.
♦ Sit deep - by dropping weight in saddle with supporting leg.
♦ May use voice quietly to say whoa (or another voice signal of your choice).
♦ Shorten reins and lightly hold/pull back on reins. (Tighten fingers around reins)
♦ Release pressure/lighten contact on the reins when the horse begins to stop
♦ If horse does not respond, try the steps above again.
  ▪ Be careful not to squeeze with legs when holding/pulling back on the reins.
♦ Reward horse when he stops by release of pressure on the reins.
  ▪ The horse will respond better with pat on the neck or release of pressure as a reward when he does what the rider asks.

More information for English and Western riders is continued on following page. →

January 31, 2013
Level 1 – Riding Skill (continued)

1-20 At a jog or trot with control and proper position: stop and start (gradual and balanced)

Western riders:
♦ Should perform a sitting trot at least two speeds (jog/trot and extended jog/trot)
♦ Rider should keep the lower leg quiet and heels down.

English riders:
♦ Should be able to perform a slow, sitting trot and a normal posting trot on the correct diagonal Posting is a forward and backward movement of the rider’s hips in the saddle in rhythm with the horse while it is trotting.
♦ The trot is a two beat, diagonal gait. This means the horse’s left front leg and right hind leg move together. Likewise, the right front and left hind move together
♦ To post on the correct diagonal, the rider should rise when the horse’s outside front leg and shoulder is forward. When riding in an arena, “outside” refers to the side closest to the rail. Only rise a few inches out of the saddle and post gently. Posting correctly makes the trot more comfortable and balanced for horse and rider.
♦ Riders should not use reins to pull their body forward when posting.
♦ Rider should keep lower leg quiet and heels down.

Note:
Riders of horses that do not trot should not post. (Examples: Tennessee Walking Horses and other non-trotting breeds)

Riders of non-trotting breeds should demonstrate control of the horse, correct body position and use of aids at the respective gaits as appropriate for the breed or type of horse (Example: A rider of a Tennessee Walking Horses should demonstrate mastery of this skill at a running walk.)

Think about it:
♦ Remember to practice until you have mastered a trot and stop that is relaxed, showing good communication between horse and rider.
♦ If you cannot easily control your horse at a trot you will not be able to canter correctly and safely.
♦ Mastery of these foundation skills at the trot ensures success as you advance through the skills.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-21 At a jog or trot with control and proper position:
check and release (demonstrating control of horse)

Equipment: See page 18 for details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted
ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for
seat/discipline.

The check and release is a method used to keep the horse at a steady pace
or slow his speed. Another term for this is half halt.

♦ A rider uses reins to check the horse by using a gentle pull or increased pressure on the reins.
  ▪ Sometimes it can be just a squeezing of the hand or slowing your body movement.

♦ A rider then releases the pressure when horse responds by steadying or slowing gait.

♦ Rider should be able to check and release to steady and control the horse’s gait.

♦ Rider should also be able to slow gait by a check and release.

♦ Stay in balanced position with heels down while demonstrating the check and release.

♦ The rider’s cues should not be obvious to an observer, but the horse’s response should be
  obvious.

♦ It always helps to reward the horse when he responds correctly!
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-22 At a jog or trot with control and proper position: turn while jogging or trotting in both directions

Equipment: See page 18 for details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

Rider should first master the start, stop, check and release at a jog or trot.

For mastery of this skill rider should demonstrate that:

› The horse responds to aids to turn in a quiet and willing manner.
› The rider uses aids to ask the horse to turn.
› The rider is able to turn while jogging or trotting.
› The rider keeps the horse at a steady pace, without breaking to a walk.

English Rider (one rein held in each hand):

› To turn right – Rider will lightly pull or move/lead with the right rein to the right being careful not to pull back. Use left leg slightly behind the girth to maintain the shape of the turn.
› Left rein will gently follow the direction of turn being careful not to pull back.
› When horse turns nose to the right the rider may need to use legs aid to keep horse moving forward.
› To turn left – Rider will lightly pull or move/lead with the left rein to the left followed by aids as needed. Use right leg slightly behind the girth to maintain the shape of the turn.

Western Rider (both reins in one hand): Exception: Western horse 5 years of age and younger may be ridden with two hands as noted in current rule book.)

› Horse s over 5 years of age should know how to neck rein
› To turn right- Rider will move hand slightly forward and lay rein against neck in the direction they want to turn. Use left leg to maintain the shape of the turn.
› To turn left- Rider will move hand slightly forward and lay rein against neck in the direction they want to turn. Use right leg to maintain the shape of the turn.
› Be careful not to pull back on the reins.
› Use leg aids as needed to ask horse to move forward.

Points to remember:

› Horses all respond differently and rider will have to learn how much rein and leg pressure is needed to accomplish a smooth turn.
› Turns should be done in both directions.
› Rider should look in the direction they are turning.
**Level 1 – Riding Skill**

**1-23 At a jog or trot with control and proper position:**
ride a circle both direction and do a figure 8

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**Equipment:** *See page 18 for details.*

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

**Rider should first master the start, stop, check, release, and turn at a jog or trot.**

- Riding a horse in a circle and figure 8 demonstrates control and proper use of aids by rider.
- Rider should ride circles in both directions and practice different size circles.
- Use the same aids needed to turn and keep horse moving at a smooth, steady jog or trot.
- Rider should look ahead in the direction they are turning.
- Rider should stay in balanced position.
- All circles should be round and of even size in the figure 8. Not oval or egg shaped.

**Point to Remember:**

English riders are required to be on the correct diagonal when trotting (except as noted for riders on non-trotting breeds).
Level 1 – Riding Skill
1-24  Drop and regain stirrups at a halt

Equipment:  See page 18 for details.
Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted
ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for
seat/discipline.

Guidelines to drop and regain stirrups:

♦ Rider should be able to remove feet from stirrups and regain stirrups while mounted.

♦ This is a safety exercise that prepares riders to be able to regain stirrup if their foot slips out
of stirrup while riding.

♦ This skill should be practiced and first learned at a halt.

♦ Rider should be able to regain the stirrups without bending over and using hand.

♦ Once foot position is regained, rider should adjust foot to proper position.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-25 Emergency Stop

Equipment: See page 18 for details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

Method 1:
In an emergency stop the rider should:

♦ Put legs forward to brace against the horse’s forward movement. Keep heels down and sit deep.
♦ Shorten reins.
♦ Pull back reins and see saw the reins until the horse stops.
♦ When effectively applied, the horse’s head should raise up, not bow behind the bit.

Method 2
In an emergency stop the rider should:

♦ Put legs forward to brace against the horse’s forward movement. Keep heels down and sit deep.
♦ Shorten reins.
♦ Brace one hand holding the rein against the horse’s neck.
♦ Pull up and back with the other rein to bring the horse to a stop or force the horse into a circle.

Points to remember:

♦ Do not pull reins up towards your head!
♦ Do not reach forward for the rein.
♦ Do not scream!
♦ Say “whoa” in a low, but firm tone of voice. Teach your horse to stop using “whoa” while working in hand as well as when riding.
♦ Use caution if turning or circling the horse at speed. The horse could lose its balance and fall or there may not be a safe space to turn the horse.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-26 Emergency Dismount

Equipment: See page 18 for more details.

Horse with properly fitting tack and equipment; Rider with properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear, boots with heel and appropriate riding attire for seat/discipline.

This is an important safety skill to master. Riders should understand:

♦ The emergency dismount is a safety skill designed to help a rider to quickly dismount when needed.
♦ A rider of any level may need to quickly get off their mount to avoid a run-way or being thrown off the horse.
♦ This skill should be practiced often and mastered, because in an emergency a rider needs to be able to react swiftly to help prevent injury to themselves, their horse or other riders and horses.

In an emergency dismount, the rider should:

♦ Drop both stirrups.
♦ Put reins in left hand and place hand on mane.
♦ Put right hand on pommel or horn of saddle (This position protects the rider from catching clothes on saddle).
♦ Tuck your head.
♦ Swing leg over horse while pushing up and away from horse and vault off horse.
♦ Release reins as vaulting off
   In some situations, the rider may be able to safely maintain the reins. The rider should not attempt to maintain reins if it is likely they could become entangled in the reins or drug by the horse.
♦ Land facing in the same direction as horse is traveling with both feet on the ground.

Points to Remember:

♦ Reverse hands to dismount on the right side.
♦ Practice dismounting on both sides at a halt first and then at other gaits as the skill is mastered.
♦ A rider should strive to be able to emergency dismount at all gaits, but will be asked to perform the emergency dismount at a walk only in Level 1.
Level 1 – Riding Skill

1-27 Equipment, clothing and helmet (fit, condition, suitability, etc.)

See pages 3 and 18 for more details.

Equipment:

❖ Handling and riding equipment must be in **good working condition** to ensure safety of horse and rider.
❖ Equipment should be clean.
❖ Saddle should properly fit horse and rider.
❖ Equipment will vary according to style of riding, size of horse and rider, and age and experience of horse and rider.
❖ Tack and attire should be suitable for the seat/style that you ride or primary use of your horse. You may use your show attire or neat, safe, working attire, providing it is appropriate for the seat/discipline or primary use of your horse.
❖ Training equipment may not be used for testing.)

Dress:

❖ Handler and/or rider should wear a short or long sleeved shirt, pants suited for working around and riding a horse, and boots or shoes with a heel, designed for riding with a heel.
❖ Properly fitted ASTM/SEI protective headgear intended for equestrian use is required for testing when mounted.
❖ Protective headgear may be worn at all times when testing.
❖ Protective headgear is required at all times when handling or riding a production project animal.
❖ Clothes should not be loose or baggy to help prevent clothes from catching on equipment.
❖ Appearance should be neat, clean and appropriate for a 4-H activity.
Level 1 – Riding Skill
1-28 Overall attitude and confidence

A good attitude and confidence will promote safety success.

♦ A handler and/or rider’s attitude and confidence in working around and riding a horse will help to determine their safety, ability and advancement through the skills.
♦ Stay positive.
♦ Be kind yet firm when working with a horse, especially when learning a new skill.

Always Remember:

♦ A mistake is a chance to try harder and improve yourself and your horse.
♦ Doing your best means never stop trying.
♦ Attitude is everything!

If you need assistance or have questions, please contact your club leader or 4-H educator in your county office of Penn State extension. Addresses and phone numbers for each county extension office can be found at: www.extension.psu.edu/counties

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