

Lil Folk Farm



Beginner Riding Skills

Beginner Riding Skills

1. Mount and dismount properly
2. Rider aids
3. Basic equitation
 - a. Sitting tall in the saddle
 - b. Eyes up looking where you are going
 - c. Hands and arms in correct position
 - d. Holding reins correctly
 - e. Heels down
 - f. Half Seat
4. Steering and transitions
 - a. Go from walk to halt and halt to walk
 - b. Check and release at the walk to slow horse down
 - c. Walk around the ring on the rail in both directions
 - d. Weave in and out of cones or poles
 - e. Walk over ground poles
 - f. Trot once around ring in both directions staying on the rail
5. Beginner riding skills
 - a. Drop and regain stirrups at the halt and walk
 - b. Demonstrate how to shorten and lengthen the reins at a halt and walk
 - c. Demonstrate posting technique at the walk
 - d. Around the world
 - e. Emergency dismount at the halt

The Beginner riding skills emphasize basic balance, position and control of the horse
 To pass this level, youth must have mastered each skill

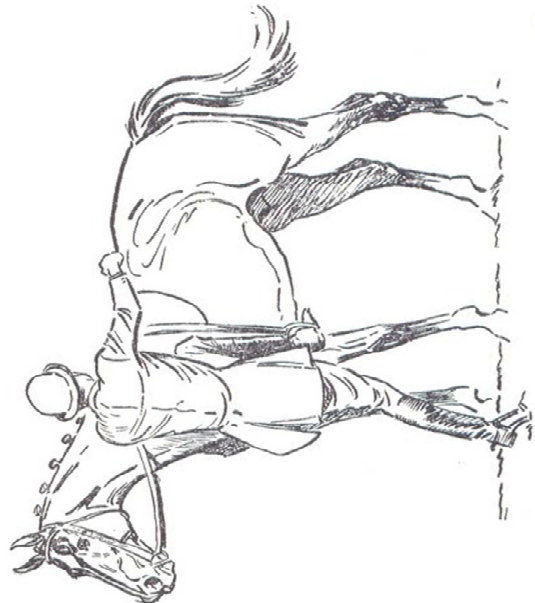
Beginner Riding Skills	Started	Achieved
Mount and dismount properly using mounting block if needed		
Demonstrate proper position at the walk		
Go from halt to walk and walk to halt		
check and release at walk		
walk around the ring on the rail in both directions		
ride a circle in both directions		
weave in and out of cones		
walk over ground poles		
demonstrate posting technique while walking		
drop and regain stirrups at the halt and walk		
demonstrate a trot along one rail of the ring in both directions		
hold the reins correctly at the halt and walk		
demonstrate how to shorten and lengthen the reins at a halt and walk		
Emergency dismount at the halt		
Complete a pattern of 5 simple obstacles at the walk		

MOUNTING AND DISMOUNTING

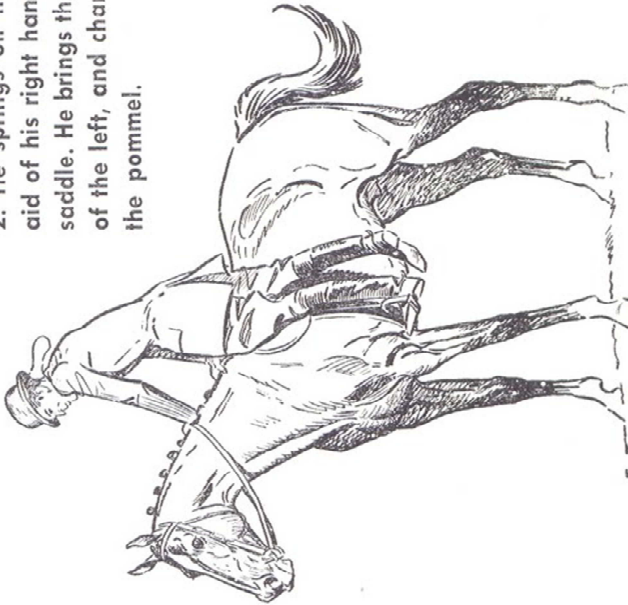
Mounting and dismounting is usually done from the horse's left side. Make sure your horse is standing still while you are mounting. Ask someone to help hold your horse if they won't stand still while you try to mount.

MOUNTING

1. The rider stands half facing to the rear, opposite the horse's left shoulder. He takes the reins in his left hand, with the little finger between them, and the bight falling to the off side. Adjust the reins so that they give a gentle, even bearing on the horse's mouth. Now, place the left hand, with the reins, on the horse's crest. The rider then places the left foot in the stirrup, assisted by the right hand if necessary, and brings the left knee against the saddle. Without pause, he places the right hand upon the cantle, and rises by an effort of the right leg, aided by the arms. He keeps the left knee bent, and firmly pressed against the saddle, the toe depressed, and the upper part of the body inclined slightly forward in order to keep the saddle from turning.



2. He springs off his right foot, with the aid of his right hand on the cantle of the saddle. He brings the right foot by the side of the left, and changes the right hand to the pommel.



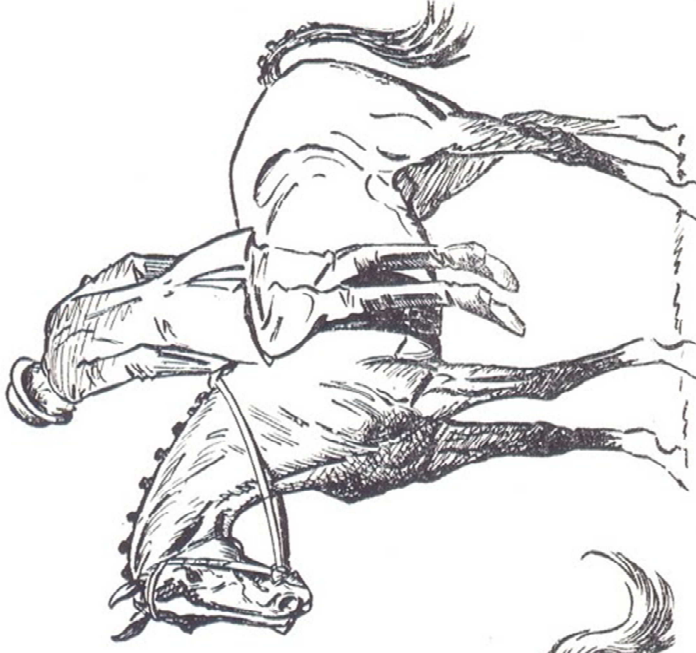
3. He now passes the right leg, knee bent, over the horse's croup without touching it, and sinks down lightly in the saddle. He then places the right foot in the stirrup and takes the reins in both hands.



DISMOUNTING



1. The rider passes the reins into his left hand, and places that hand on the horse's crest. He then places the right hand on the pommel of the saddle, removes the right foot from the stirrup, and passes the right leg, knee bent, over the croup without touching it.



3. He puts the weight of his body on his hands, removes the left foot from the stirrup, then descends lightly to the ground.



2. He now places the right foot by the side of the left foot, the left knee being against the saddle and the upper body inclined slightly forward.

RIDER AIDS

There are a variety of aids that can help you ride and work with your horse. Your voice, hands, legs and weight can control your horse if your horse is trained to respond to them. You can also use aids such as spurs, whips, bats or crops to help control your horse.

VOICE

Your voice is a very important aid when working your horse. Certain words such as *whoa*, *easy* and *back* are readily understood by a horse. Many show horses have learned the words *walk*, *trot*, *lope* and *canter* from hearing them repeatedly during lunging, training and in the show ring. Some riders do not use complete words, but instead develop voice sounds (e.g. clicking or kissing) to mean something to their horses. Be consistent and use the same word or cue each time. Repeat it often to teach your horse what you mean. Make your sounds distinct from each other. For example, *whoa* and *go* sound too similar to be effective. Many show ring judges do not like to hear voice commands, so use them very softly when showing or avoid using them in the show arena.

Your tone of voice means as much to your horse as actual words. It indicates pleasure or displeasure. Learn to always use a low, soft voice when working around your horse. Screaming and yelling will only frighten the horse.

HANDS

Your hands control the forehand (forequarter) of your horse directly by use of the reins. In advanced riding, your actions on the reins have an indirect influence on the hindquarters. Relax your hands and arms, hold your shoulders back and down, and keep your upper arm in a straight line with your body. Your forearm forms a straight line from the elbow to the horse's mouth as you hold the reins. Some movement of the arm is permissible, but excessive movement will confuse the horse.

Good hands are steady, light, soft and firm in their actions. You can achieve this only if your body is in balance and in rhythm with your horse. As you begin reining and rein cues, remember the importance of relaxing your arms, elbows, wrists, hands and fingers. Allow a small amount of slack in the reins to relieve pressure on the bit but hold the reins firmly enough to maintain light contact with the horse's mouth.

Learn to signal or cue with your reins (a give and take action) by slightly flexing your hands. Simply opening and closing your fingers is cue enough for a trained horse if you have the correct degree of contact with your horse's mouth.

LEGS

Your legs control the forward motion of your horse and its shoulders, barrel and hindquarters. When you squeeze your legs, your horse should learn that this is a signal to shift its weight to its hindquarters, lighten its weight on its forequarters and get ready to move out. Getting a response to this cue is very important; you will need it every time you move your horse, ask for collection or a change of gait, or correct misbehavior.

As you press with one leg or the other, your horse responds by moving away from the pressure or by moving against the pressure. When your horse responds to leg cues, less cueing is required by your reins. Balance pressure on the horse by using contact in the seat of your saddle and your thighs. Maintain light contact with your knees so your lower legs can be used for cueing.

SEAT/WEIGHT

Although horses are trained to move away from pressure, they move under weight. Your body weight becomes a cue when you shift position in the saddle. This does not mean that you throw your weight by leaning excessively, you can give a weight cue by placing more pressure on one stirrup than the other by shifting to press more firmly on one seat bone. As you train your horse, you will find responses come from very slight weight shifts. Learning to be a good equestrian involves learning the effects of the aids, combining them to make your horse perform and using them in training and showing. The art is in developing a feel for when to apply the aids and when to release them.

SPURS AND CROPS

Artificial aids should be used only to reinforce natural aids. First, press the horse with the calves of your legs. If your horse doesn't respond, tap the horse with your heel. Finally, it may become necessary to tap the horse with your crop or touch it with a spur. *Give the lightest cue first.* If your horse doesn't respond, use increasingly stronger cues. In this way, you tell your horse to respond or light discipline will follow. Remember, however, to give the horse time to learn what the cue means before using negative reinforcement.

BASIC EQUITATION

Equitation is the art of horseback riding. Proper equitation will aid your horse as it performs.

General pointers

The rider should maintain a natural position during all gaits. Practice proper cueing until your horse moves into any of the gaits lightly and smoothly. This will help keep your balance and avoid punishing your horse's mouth and side(s), which occurs if you lose balance. Get light control of your horse with the reins before cueing it with your legs so the horse does not rush out and has to be pulled back. The horse's head should always be carried at an angle that is natural and suitable to the horse's conformation and breed at all gaits.

ENGLISH EQUITATION

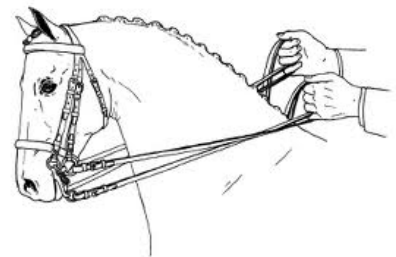
The rider must sit in a balanced position that does not interfere with the horse's own balance or ability to perform.

The position in the saddle for English riding is basically sitting in the center of the saddle on the seat bones, sitting deep and tall with your head set squarely on the shoulders and eyes looking forward. Your body should follow a vertical straight line from the shoulder through the hip to the heel.



Shoulders should be directly over the hips, keeping weight evenly distributed over the seat bones. Shoulders should be relaxed with upper arms hanging loosely by the sides, elbows bent, forearms straight and the hands over the horse's withers. The distance of the hands from the withers is a matter of how and where the horse carries its head. There should be a straight line from the rider's elbow, hands and reins to the horse's mouth.

For bridles with one rein, hold the reins so that the rein goes from your horse's mouth in between your ring finger and pinky, up through your palm and over your pointer finger. Then place your thumb on the top of the rein as it exits your hand. Close your fingers loosely around the reins. Your hands should be tipped slightly towards each other. The bite of the reins (excess rein) should be on the right side of the horse. If you are riding with a bridle with two reins, the rein attached to the snaffle bit should go under your pinky finger and up through your palm, and the rein with the curb bit should go between your pinky and ring finger and up through your palm.



Legs should be underneath with the inside of the calves on the horse's side and knees lightly touching the saddle. Feet should be directly under the knees with the stirrup on the ball of the foot. Heels should be down with toes facing forward. A general rule to measure correct stirrup length is that when the leg hangs loosely (out of the stirrup), the bottom of the stirrup should line up to the bottom of the ankle bone.

Position in Motion

The rider's body should be vertical when the horse is at the walk and sitting trot, but inclined slightly forward when the horse is at trot, canter and gallop, with no more than 20 degrees in front of the vertical.

Jumping Position/Two Point/Half Seat

The purpose of the jumping position is to adjust the rider's balance to match the horse during jumping and galloping. This allows the horse freedom of movement through his back. The rider should remember to shorten the stirrup one to two holes from the flat length. When the horse is jumping, a straight line from the rider's shoulder, knee and toes should be formed. The rider's shoulders are slightly forward and hips are moved slightly back, hovering over the saddle. The rider's angle closes at the hip. The rider's weight is pushed down into the lower leg and heel, with the ankle acting as a shock absorber. His eyes look forward, and his hands follow the horse's mouth while it jumps.



WESTERN EQUITATION

The rider sits erect and squarely in the center of the saddle. The rider sits deep in the seat of the saddle and not on the cantle. The rider should not be tipped forward or backward on his or her pelvis. The ball of his or her feet should be the contact point with the stirrup. The rider should push down on the heels and pull up with the toes.

In any style of riding, when the rider sits in the saddle there should be a straight, vertical line through his ear, center of shoulder, center of hip and back of heel. Stirrups should be long enough to allow the rider's heels to be lower than his toes, with his knees bent slightly and his toes directly under them. The body should always appear comfortable, relaxed and flexible. The back should be nearly flat. The rider's body should be supple, poised and balanced in rhythm with the horse's motion.



In western riding, one hand is used. The method of holding reins varies depending on the type of rein you are using.

TRANSITIONS

When you first begin riding you will feel awkward and unbalanced. You may feel unable to make all your body parts do all the things they are supposed to at the same time. You may be using muscles not familiar with the job you are asking, and have difficulty remembering everything you are supposed to do. The key is practice.

Hold one rein each hand. Your hands will be an inch or two forward of the saddle and several inches above the saddle, held so your fists are at a 30 degree angle. The left rein is held with the left hand and the right rein with the right hand.

WALKING

The walk is a 4 beat gait, meaning that the horse moves one foot at a time when they are walking. Cue the horse to walk forward by tapping it gently with your leg or asking it to walk. If your horse requires more of a cue, you can tap a little harder with your leg or use your heel to kick the horse's side. Keep gentle contact between your hand and the horse's mouth. The reins shouldn't be too tight or drooping. There should be a straight line from your elbow to the bit.

STOPPING

To ask your horse to stop you will pull back gently with both hands at the same time. You can also use a voice command such as whoa, to help your horse understand it is time for them to stop. Your horse may require a stronger pull to know that it is supposed to stop, but as with other cues, start off with a gentle cue first. Your legs should maintain contact with your horse when you are asking it to stop.

WALKING FASTER

If you want your horse to walk faster, gently tap it with your leg until they start walking faster. You may also need to loosen up the pressure of your reins or move your hands forward slightly so your horse knows you are asking it to move faster. Your reins should always maintain contact with the horse's mouth and not droop.

WALKING SLOWER

If your horse is walking too fast and you want it to slow down, pull back for a few seconds on both reins at the same time and then release the pressure. Do this again until the horse starts to slow down. If you pull back for too long or pull back too hard your horse might stop.

TROTting

The trot is a two beat gait. The horse's diagonal legs move together when the horse is trotting (left hind and right front, then right hind and left front). To ask your horse to trot, cue the horse by gently squeezing or tapping with your legs. You may also use a voice command to get your horse to trot. Common voice commands for trotting are saying the word trot or making a clicking sound with your tongue. You may need to squeeze or kick a little harder with your leg if your horse isn't responding.

STEERING YOUR HORSE

When you are riding English, the left hand cues for a left turn and the right hand uses the right rein to cue for a right turn. This method of reining is very basic. As you progress in your riding skills, you'll learn how to use the reins with more finesse to guide your horse more precisely.

TURNING LEFT

To turn left, pull back on the rein in your left hand. Start with a gentle pull. If you need more pressure, you can always pull a little harder. As you actively pull back with the left rein continue your contact on the right rein to control the amount of bend your horse will do. The right rein, therefore, should neither be allowed to go slack, nor held too tightly.

At the same time as you cue with the reins, apply pressure with your left leg onto the horse's side so the horse is turning around your leg. As the horse obeys the cue, lighten up with your leg and hand depending on how much you want your horse to turn.

TURNING RIGHT

To turn right use the right hand and leg to cue the horse in the same manner. Your right rein will now be the active rein, and you want the horse to bend around your right leg.

TURNING IN A CIRCLE

Turning in a circle is similar to turning to the right or left. Just keep gently pulling and releasing in one direction to keep your horse turning. Be careful not to turn your horse in too tight of a circle. If the circle is too tight the horse may stop because it can't bend that much. If you are turning in a circle to the left, gently pull and release with your left rein to get your horse to keep turning to the left. If you want your horse to turn a little more, pull a little harder.

KEEPING YOUR HORSE STRAIGHT

It can sometimes be more difficult to keep your horse walking in a straight line than it is to get them to turn. Some horses want to follow other horse or will turn to walk away from something. Keeping a horse straight requires a gentle balance between pulling to the left or right to keep your horse walking in a straight line.

If your horse starts walking off to the right, you can gently pull with your left rein. You could also gently tap with your right leg to move your horse away from your right leg. Be careful not to squeeze with your right leg though, because if you squeeze, your horse will bend around your right leg instead of moving away from it. If your horse starts walking off to the left, gently pull with your right rein or gently tap with your left leg to get them to move to the right.

Tips:

1. **Use the minimum pressure** on the bit required to cue the horse. Harsh pressure on the mouth can upset a horse and make it insensitive to your commands.
2. **Reins constantly need readjusting** as you ride. Always keep gentle contact on the horse's mouth by shortening or lengthening them according to the horse's gaits.

BEGINNER RIDING SKILLS

DROP AND REGAIN STIRRUPS AT THE HALT AND WALK

If your stirrup falls off of your foot, it is important to regain it quickly without bending over to put your foot in the stirrup with your hand. The best way to get good at this skill is to practice, practice, practice. With the horse standing still, pull your heels up slightly and shake your foot out of the stirrup. Then relax your legs so they hang next to your horse's side. To put your foot back in your stirrup, bend your knee slightly and lift your toes up and reach forward with your foot until you feel the stirrup. Then slide your foot into the stirrup. Adjust your foot position in the stirrup by slightly lifting up your foot to move it forward, backward or to the side. Once you are comfortable regaining your stirrups at the halt, practice this skill at the walk.

LENGTHEN AND SHORTEN REINS AT THE HALT AND WALK

Adjusting your reins is an important skill to master if you want to have effective control of your horse, or if you want to train your horse and he needs very precise rein signals.

If your reins are too tight, your horse might pull its head to try to relieve the pressure, potentially pulling you forward and out of the saddle. Sometimes moving your hands forward is enough to lengthen the reins. Another way to lengthen the reins is to loosen your fingers around the reins and let your horse's motion pull the reins until they are at the desired length. A third way is to manually lengthen your reins by grasping the rein below the palm with the thumb and forefinger of your opposite hand and pulling the reins out of your hands slightly. You should practice all 3 methods of loosening your reins so you can know which method will work best for you.

If your reins are too long, you won't have adequate control of your horse. To shorten your reins, you can bring your hands back closer to your stomach. If you require the reins to be shorter, you can manually shorten the reins by grasping the rein in front of your thumb with the thumb and forefinger of your opposite hand and pull the reins shorter to the desired length. As with lengthening your reins, you should practice both methods so you can determine which works best in different situations.

AROUND THE WORLD

This teaches beginning equestrians to use their seats and legs for balance without relying on their hands or feet. Riders sit mounted in the middle of an arena with aides holding their horses. With the signal to begin, the riders drop the reins and swing their right legs over the horse's neck so that they sit sideways in the saddle on the horse's left side. Next, they move their left legs over the horse's rump so they sit backward in the saddle. Riders then swing the right leg over the horse's rump to sit sideways on the horse's right side. In the final step, they push the left leg over the horse's neck and place their feet in the stirrups.

POSTING AT THE WALK

Posting is rising up and sitting down gently in the saddle with the horse's motion at the trot. The trot can be bouncy, so posting helps to make the trot more comfortable for the horse and rider. The post can be a difficult thing to master, so it's best to practice it at the halt and then the walk first to build muscle and understand how it works.

At the halt, with your weight on the balls of your feet and your knees gently hugging the saddle, use the muscles in your thighs to lift your seat out of the saddle. Most people who are just learning how to post will use their hands on the pommel of the saddle or on their horse's neck to help push them out of the saddle. As your leg muscles get stronger you won't need to use your hands to help push you out of the saddle and you can keep them in riding position to continue to control your horse.

Once you have the basic motion down, ask your horse to walk. Practice going up and down out of the saddle with the horse's motion. When the horse's right front leg goes forward, rise up out of the saddle. When their left front leg goes forward, sit back down. You can practice going up when the left leg goes forward and sitting down when the right leg goes back too. When you trot, you will post in the same way, just at a much faster pace.

EMERGENCY DISMOUNT AT THE HALT

The emergency dismount teaches riders to safely and quickly dismount in case of emergency. An aide holds the horse in place while the rider sits mounted in the saddle holding the reins. At the command "stirrups," the rider takes her feet out of the stirrups. At "reins," the rider drops her reins on the horse's neck while keeping them in one hand. At "hands," the rider places her hands on the saddle's pommel or the horse's withers. At "vault," the rider leans forward over the horse's neck, swings both legs back, and the right leg up and over the horse's rump. She pushes off with her hands, landing on the ground with her knees bent.