



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Center

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OUR MISSION

To promote the well-being of disabled individuals through the provision of therapeutic horseback riding, subject to the consent of their medical advisors or other appropriate professional counsel, and to provide proper training for instructors and volunteers for the above purposes.

OUR PURPOSE

To provide a memorable healing experience to physically disabled, emotionally challenged, or behaviorally at-risk youth and adults through physical, social and emotional interaction with horses, volunteers, and staff at a professionally staffed equestrian center.

OUR VALUES

For the riders, animals, community, and everyone touched by HOPE Equestrian, we pledge: Safety, Respect, Compassion, Excellence & Honesty

A Brief History and Vision

HOPE Equestrian Center was founded in 1988 in Wimer, Oregon and offered therapeutic horseback riding to over 40 riders per week for over 5 years. The program ran until 1993 and then realized due to the remote location they could not continue. The board however stayed active and gained community involvement in an effort to re-open what they believed to be a worthy organization. In 1994 they did just that with a pilot program of 15 riders. The program then moved to Light House Stables in Eagle Point where it ran until 2000. At this time the program had grown to serving approximately 60 riders per week and moved to Wagner Creek Farm. HOPE continued to run until 2004 when daily operations were suspended until a firm financial foundation could be established to enable resumption of services.

In the Spring of 2005, HOPE once again opened it's "doors" in Medford, Oregon. It started with only 10 riders per week for less than half the year in an outdoor arena. In 2007 the program started to grow again and was given temporary use of an indoor facility directly across the street for the winter and was able to add another 8 weeks running a total of 32 weeks for the year. HOPE then found a covered arena off Foothill and was able to run there for a full year serving 35-50 riders per week for 40 weeks. From 2009 - 2023 HOPE operated at TLM Training Center. TLM gave us the opportunity to grow and expand our program. We started running only 3 days a week in the winter and 4 days a week in the summer due to arena availability. Then in 2012 TLM allowed us to build our own arena where we grew to running 5 days a week serving approximately 70 riders a week.

In the fall of 2023, HOPE moved across the street onto our own property at 77 Riley Rd. where we are growing even more! HOPE now runs 5, 8-week and 1, 4-week session per year as well as 9, 3-day camps. We currently take one week off in November, December and January.

All of us at HOPE are proud of our success and excited about our future. We have seen a steady growth in the program and would like to see that continue well into the future. HOPE focuses on a therapeutic approach to riding as opposed to a primarily recreational approach. There continues to be growing interest in the Northwest to support programs that synthesize disciplines; conventional medicine, art and alternative forms of healing. It offers a very effective piece in a person's overall life growth process, joining many dynamics that are often not present in traditional therapy situations. Feasibility studies on therapeutic riding conducted by Southern Oregon University have shown that over 35% of the disabled individuals in the Rogue Valley can benefit from physical activity like therapeutic riding. It is our desire to be able to serve all special needs individuals who could benefit from a therapeutic riding program in the Rogue Valley. Our instructors are required to be PATH (Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship) Certified and our volunteers all receive formal training. We see a bright future for HOPE Equestrian Center and would like to thank you for your interest in becoming part of the HOPE family.

INTRODUCTION TO THERAPEUTIC RIDING

Understanding Therapeutic Riding Therapeutic riding uses equine-oriented activities for the purpose of contributing positively to the cognitive, physical, emotional and social wellbeing of people with disabilities.

I. Sport Riding

People with physical, mental and psychological impairments can participate in sports activities, adapted as needed, with the horse. The lesson focuses on increasing individual riding skills while gaining a therapeutic benefit, as well as increasing muscle tone, strength, self-esteem, improved coordination and balance, social interaction and communication, and development of a sense of control. Students may groom and tack their horses with the help of their volunteers, then participate in mounted activities tailored to their individual needs. Therapeutic riding instructors are primarily responsible for the design and implementation of the program.

II. Freestyle Therapeutic Riding

This class combines the cognitive aspects of therapeutic riding with the physical aspects of therapeutic vaulting, combined in a unique format. Riders work on physical goals by moving and manipulating their body on top of the horse; they could be sitting backward with their eyes closed, or standing up on the horse's back to practice balance. Combining a series of moves helps them with task sequencing and memory. This class is done without the use of the saddle, and almost always uses the help of one leader and two sidewalkers per horse.

III. Equine Facilitated Mental Health

Equine Facilitated Mental Health focuses on exploration of relationship skills, self-discovery and personal growth. While the benefits of Equine Assisted Activities overlap physical, mental and emotional realms, the Equine Facilitated Mental Health programs specifically target participants with mental and emotional health challenges.

Why Horses?

Horses are unique in their response to humans because they are prey animals, not predators, and their survival demands they be extremely sensitive to the environment. Horses are able to “read” people in terms of their feelings and intentions. Horses ignore the outward form and respond, instead, to the person’s inner substance.

General Information For Volunteers

This is truly a collaborative effort and volunteer input is greatly appreciated. You are a part of an extremely dedicated and capable group of volunteers.

Conduct Your personal interaction with the riders can be a significant and positive part of the rider's therapy. However, the Instructor must have the practical ability to be heard and purposefully direct a lesson. Please limit suggestions and social talk to time outside of an actual lesson.

Respect We want everyone concerned to have an enriching and fun time. The more we work together towards this great common purpose, the more skilled and comfortable we all become. A purposeful habit of respect for riders, caregivers, volunteers and instructors is very important. Along with the comfort and fun please remember to stay vigilant for safety issues and remember that conversations that undermine or include profanity, gossip or complaints are never appropriate when riders, care givers, or parents are present. Please keep you cell phone ringer silent and do not check or respond to phone calls or texts during a lesson.

Privacy/ Confidentiality In the course of your work at HOPE you may learn information regarding our clients' families, their health and mental challenges etc. Please assume all information regarding our clients is personal and, therefore, confidential. It is our expectation that you keep this information to yourself discussing such issues only with the Instructors.

What actually takes place in a lesson? One, two, or three volunteers per rider and an instructor may work with a group of riders. The rider may learn how to groom and tack a horse with the guidance of a volunteer. Instructors teach special riding skills. The rider may play games on horseback, perform gymnastic movements on the back of a horse, learn riding skills, or go for a trail ride. Each rider will have individual goals to work toward. As a volunteer, you will be involved in every aspect of the lesson from grooming and tacking, through the class itself, and cleanup afterwards.

Preparing for a Class Your volunteer time is important to us for funding purposes, so please be sure to record your hours each time you volunteer.

- Arrive 15 min prior to class (30 min prior if you are working the 1st class of the day.)
- Sign-in on the volunteer attendance sheet.
- Check Lesson Board for student, horse and tack assignments.
- Allow time for exchange of ideas with instructor concerning your student.

What To Wear For safety as well as comfort, volunteers should dress in close-fitting clothing. Loose/floppy clothing can get caught and tangled with equipment. Dress in layers that you can shed as you exercise, especially during cooler months. Bring a jacket--it's cooler at the barn than you may think! During the summer, be sure you dress coolly. Be prepared to protect yourself from the sun. You will be doing lot of walking on uneven terrain, so comfortable shoes are important. It hurts when a horse steps on your foot, so make sure your footwear is sturdy as well. Attire should be barn professional. We define "barn professional" as modest, in good repair and family appropriate. Last, but not least, avoid dangly earrings and jewelry that might hamper your movements, get pulled off by a rider, or distract the horse.

Do Volunteers Ride HOPE Equestrian horses? This is a question many volunteers ask! We would love to be able to offer riding opportunities to our wonderful volunteers. However, because we focus on the needs of our challenged riders and providing a meaningful experience for them, offering lessons or riding time to volunteers on a regular basis would be a strain on the horses and staff.

However, as a reward for your hard work, we do offer a raffle for a free ride each month. Each time you work in a class, put your name on a raffle ticket and put it in the bucket. Once a month, we draw two names. Those two volunteers are invited to come out on a designated day to take a lesson with one of our instructors.

Experienced riders willing to donate their expertise and ability may apply to the Schooler or Horse Buddy program.

Roles & Job Descriptions for Volunteers

This is truly a collaborative effort and volunteer input is greatly appreciated. You are a part of an extremely dedicated and capable group of volunteers.

GENERAL JOB DESCRIPTION

Qualifications:

1. Minimum age of 13
2. Physically capable of performing assigned tasks; lifting saddles, arm extensions, standing, walking (for a 45min. at a time, indoors & outdoors, on uneven surfaces.)
3. Willing to learn and follow HOPE Equestrian procedures
4. Ability to adapt collaboratively and be flexible
5. Able to receive and accept constructive feedback
6. Able to commit to a consistent volunteer schedule
7. Willing to make and return phone calls from volunteer substitution.
8. Horse knowledge and experience helpful but not required
9. Dress in an appropriate and professional manner
10. Adequate vision and hearing to ensure the safety of horses and participants
11. Comfortable working with the disabled (including physical contact)

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Responsibilities:

1. Arrive when scheduled
2. Assist instructors and therapists by leading or side walking with riders
3. Assist with activities required at the end of the day and or lesson
4. Perform miscellaneous task assigned by staff

Here are some of the “jobs” you may be asked to perform as a volunteer:

In a class:

Sidewalker
Leader
Assist Un-mounted Activities
Runner

Outside of a class:

Tack Cleaning
Grooming
Moving Horses
Site Clean-up

THE SIDEWALKER

Job Description

Objective:

Support the rider during grooming, riding, mounting and dismounting and help the rider guide their horse in following directions of the instructor as necessary. The amount of support required is dependent on each rider.

Qualifications: Ability to hold your arm raised and out to the side for extended periods of time

Responsibilities:

- Assist with rider support during mounting and dismounting as necessary
- Walk next to the rider throughout the class, giving support as necessary
- Help the rider follow directions given by the instructor

Effective Sidewalking

Sidewalkers are the ones who normally have the most hands-on duties during therapeutic riding lessons. They are directly responsible for the rider. As such, they have the capability to either enhance or detract from the lesson.

In the arena, the sidewalker should help the student focus attention on the instructor. Avoid unnecessary talking. Input from too many directions is very confusing, to riders who already have perceptual problems, it can be overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one student, one should be the designated “talker” to avoid this situation.

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as independent as he or she can possibly be. You are at the rider’s side, so help the instructor to challenge the rider to the best of their ability.

Sidewalking Guidelines

It is important to maintain a position by the rider’s knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security to the rider.

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Holds There are various ways to hold onto the rider without interfering:

One common hold is the “thigh hold.” The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle (flap or pommel) with the hand closest to the rider. The fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider’s thigh. Be sure not to lean on the horse or rider since this pressure may imbalance the rider or irritate the horse.

Another common hold is the “ankle hold,” which is used for riders who need some support, but not as much as a thigh hold provides. The hand closest to the rider holds around the back of the ankle, helping to stabilize the lower leg.

When something other than a thigh hold or ankle hold is required, your instructor will let you know, and help ensure that you know how to perform the hold correctly.

Listen to the instructor’s directions so you can be ready to reinforce when necessary,

BUT allow the rider plenty of time to process the information before you begin to assist. For example, if the instructor says, “Pull on the right rein towards me”, and the student seems confused, gently tap the right hand and say “right.” The instructor will guide you in how much reinforcement is needed.

Do not offer any more support than the rider needs. Too much help inhibits the rider’s independence and learning.

Observe the rider at all times. Never become so relaxed that you are not totally aware of the rider, horse, leader, instructor, and activities around you.

When the rider is using body and leg aids and does not need to be supported, do not touch the horse, saddle, or pad since this may interfere with the aid applied by the rider.



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THE LEADER

Job Description

Objective:

To be primarily responsible for the horse before, during class (i.e. maintain safe spacing in the arena and elsewhere, assist the rider during class while maintaining control of the horse. Responsibilities include following the directions of the instructor and supporting his/her leadership role.

Responsibilities:

- Lead the horse during class, either alone or within a group which may include 2 sidewalkers, keeping the main focus on your horse while maintaining communication w/ team
- Listen to and carry out directions of the instructor

Leader Guidelines – Rules for working in class and general horse handling

- As a volunteer, one of the most challenging duties you may be assigned is the position of leader. **A leader's first responsibility is the horse, but you must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in or around the arena.** In addition, you must also consider the sidewalkers, making sure there is enough room along the fence and around obstacles for them to pass.
- An effective leader pays close attention to the rider's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This attention reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. However, you should not execute an instruction for the rider before he or she has time to process the information and make an effort to comply.
- Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider and/or sidewalkers. A rider may get confused by too much input and not know who's in charge. (Instructors often make terrible leaders because they can't keep their mouths shut!)

Proper Leading Position:

- Stand at the horse's ear, with your shoulders and eyes forward.
- Your right hand should hold the lead rope about 12 to 18 inches below his chin in a slack manner. Allow a U-shape to form with the lead rope at all gaits. Hold the tail end of the lead in your left hand, doubling the excess back and forth across your palm. Never wrap it around your hand. In class, make sure the lead rope is between the reins, not over them.

Talk to the horse: Most of them know "whoa", "walk", and "trot," or can learn the words. If the horse does not stop upon command, tug slightly backward on the lead, and then release. If the horse does not respond immediately, repeat with several small but firm tugs.

Move out at a brisk walk to provide the most therapeutic benefit.

Keep a minimum of two horse-lengths distance between your horse and the horse in front of you.

Allow space for sidewalkers when next to a fence or obstacle.

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Make transitions gently. When changing pace, have the horse follow your pace rather than you following the horse's. Move from a walk to a fast walk into a trot and from a trot down to a fast walk, then to a walk. Make turns gently. For riders with a great deal of fear or with serious balance issues, even say out loud, "we are turning to the left now. etc. This will make the transition or turn smooth, will not throw the rider off balance and helps to create comfort and trust.

When the horse is frightened by an object, let him stop, face the object, look at it, and sniff it. Don't let the horse spin and try to flee. Give the horse time to overcome his fear and reassure him and help to calm him in a slow, soft voice.



Ground Training Guidelines For Leaders

When working with a therapy horse outside of class, (transferring to and from the field) the same rules apply as when you are in class. We also encourage our leaders to perform ground exercises with the horses to keep them “tuned.” Here are some points to remember:

- The idea is to set the horse up for success by giving him easy access to the right answer.
- As prey animals, horses pick up on subtle changes that we are often unaware of, so keep your cues as consistent as possible.
- Make corrections quick and to the point. Timing is everything, and the horse needs every opportunity to connect the unwanted behavior with the correction.
- Make praise even bigger. Again, it’s about timing. Really fuss and let the horse know that he’s given you the right answer. You will probably see a “light-bulb” moment when he makes the connection between a cue and a response.

You can become more effective and comfortable during a lesson by practicing with the horse before your rider is mounted.

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OTHER TASKS

Cleaning

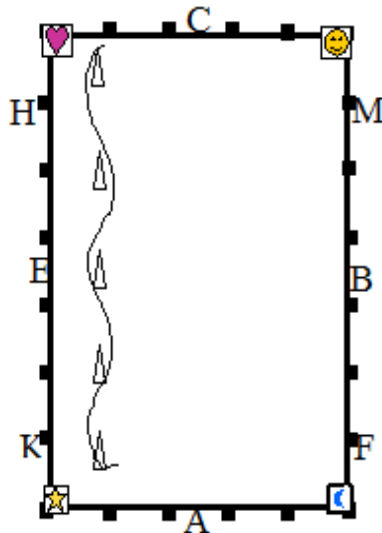
Horses eat a lot. The natural effect of that consumption is that we need to be cleaning up after our equine buddies. Manure is picked up with the use of an “apple picker” or rake-like pitchfork, collected in a wheel barrow and then taken to be dumped out into the manure spreader (large trailer near big training arena.)

Manure can be picked up in arena during a lesson, but DO NOT take the wheel barrow into the arena while a lesson is being conducted. As always, be sure to shut all gates as soon as you pass through them and be vigilant to stay out of the rider’s and horse’s line

of travel.

Arena Set-up

Many times obstacles and games are set-up to facilitate learning for the riders. Here a few commonly used set-ups:

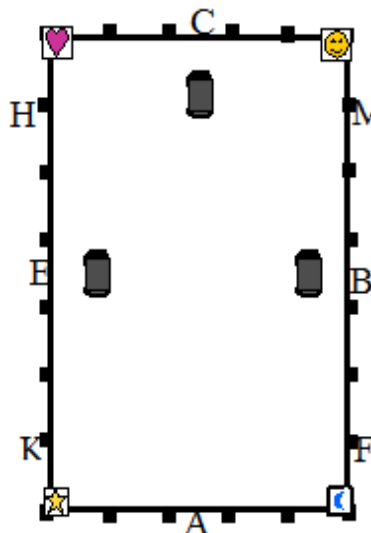


Simple 5 cone sig-zag
outside rails;

Line of cones should be:

- * straight
- * evenly spaced
- * approx 8ft off outside rail.

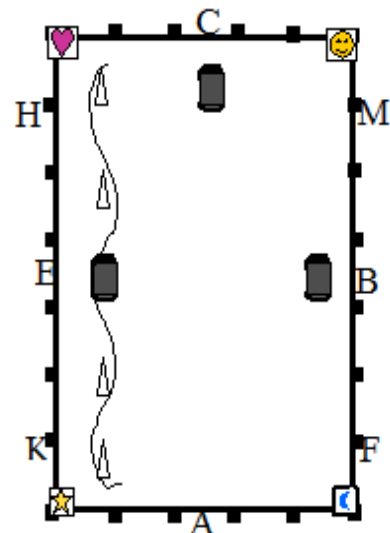
Can be set up on either side of arena or on both sides.



Simple Barrel Pattern

Barrels should be set up:

- * at E, B, and C
- * approx 8ft off rail for class with independent riders
- * approx 12ft off rail for class with riders who need sidewalkers



Zig-Zag & Barrel Pattern

Barrels should be set up:

- * at E, B, and C
- * approx 8ft off rail for class with independent riders
- * approx 12ft off rail for class with riders who need sidewalkers

Line of cones should be:

- * straight in line with barrels
- * evenly spaced
- * can be set up on one side or both sides of the arena

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Mounting

Mounting can be the most challenging and frightening part of a lesson for a rider. However, when the staff and volunteers assisting in a mount are professional, safe and confident the mounting experience can set a very positive tone for the lesson.

TYPES OF MOUNTING

Ramp Mount—used for riders who are in wheelchairs or otherwise not able to climb stairs. Also used for smaller riders.

Block Mount—used for able-bodied riders.

From the Mounting Block Leaders wait near the mounting block for the instructor to

tighten the girth and check tack. When requested, lead the horse to the mounting block with the stirrup on the near side (left) next to the mounting block. The Leader will then stand directly in-front of the horse until the rider is sitting securely in the saddle. Sidewalkers assist the rider or wait at the cones on the off-side of the mount.

The rider stands securely on the mounting block. All riders will need supervision from an instructor.

The safest method is to have the sidewalker assist from the off-side with the mounting. This person holds the stirrup leathers to counter balance the rider's weight. The rider grabs the pommel, places the left foot into the stirrup, swings the right leg over the horse, and sits gently then places the foot into the right stirrup. The sidewalker on the off-side may need to help the rider bring his or her leg over.

The horse is led forward away from the mounting block a few feet. The instructor tightens the girth and adjusts the stirrups.

From the Ramp After the rider is on the ramp, the leader leads the horse between the ramp and the off-side block. Once the horse is in position, the leader stands directly in front of the horse until the rider is securely in the saddle and the instructor requests that the horse be moved forward.

A sidewalker stands on a mounting block on the off-side of the horse opposite the mounting rider.

An instructor stands on the ramp with the rider. The horse stands in the proper position for an easy transfer. The leader attends only to the horse and does not help with the rider.

Once the rider is mounted and the cue is given by the instructor and rider to "walk on," the leader guides the horse out slowly and quietly. The ramp-side personnel must support the rider as they step down off the ramp and off side block. Once the horse is clear of the ramp or block, lead to just inside the arena. Stop and wait for the instructor for final adjustments. Change "neutral" position to the near side of the horse. Sidewalkers support the rider as directed by the instructor.

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Dismounting

Instructors dismount riders one by one in the center or on the rail of the arena.

The leader stands directly in front of the horse, asking the horse to be still. Off-side side walkers are ready to assist with the rider's leg if necessary.

Grooming

Grooming keeps the horse's coat clean and healthy, and eliminates dirt, dried sweat

and loose hair that can irritate the horse under the tack. Grooming also stimulates nerve endings of the skin and helps to relax and warm up the muscles.

The **rubber or metal currycomb** is used first in a circular motion on neck and body to loosen dirt and stimulate skin. Do not use on face and legs.

The **body and dandy brushes** are used in long, sweeping strokes on neck, body and legs. Brush the face with the soft brush only.



The **hoof pick** is used to remove any debris or stones embedded between the sole or shoe and the frog (the sensitive V-shaped pad in the center of the foot).

- A. To lift the horse's foot, run your hand down his leg to just above the hoof and squeeze as you command "foot." The horse will usually lift his foot
- B. Starting near the hoof wall, run the hoof pick from the heel toward the toe.



Catching and Releasing Horses to the Fields/Paddocks/Stalls.

- **Catching therapy horses in their paddock or field:**

Approach the horse with halter unbuckled and lead rope organized over arm (never wrap lead around arm/hand.) Speak to the horse as you approach from the side, not the rear or directly in front of the horse. Gently slide the lead rope over the horse's neck (optional) and slide the halter over the horse's head. Buckle the halter.

Approach the gate with the lead in one hand. Open the gate and swing it open. If the gate opens towards you, backing the horse and pivot your body, keep your hand on the gate at all times. Lead the horse through the open gate with your free hand. Make

sure the gate is well open to avoid trapping horse between gate and fence and causing injury. As the horse walks through the gate, swing the gate closed immediately behind him to prevent other horses from following.

- **Releasing therapy horses to their paddock or field or stall:**

Releasing horses to a field can be one of the more dangerous activities in horsemanship. Horses can get excited about getting to their friends or grass, and may turn and kick out as released or, if other horses are near, get in a tangle with them. It is important to be alert at all times.

Approach the gate with the lead in one hand. Unlatch gate, lead horse through, keeping one hand on the gate and moving your body around to the inside of the field. Close the gate and latch it. Move your horse to face the gate, giving yourself plenty of room to move away once you release the horse. Unlatch the halter and back away from your horse – do not turn your back to the horse until he has moved away from you a safe distance. Be sure to latch the gate as you leave.

In practice, every day presents different challenges.

If you are in doubt or are uncomfortable as to particulars of your immediate or general role, please talk to an instructor.

GETTING TO KNOW THE SPECIAL NEEDS RIDER

GENERAL APPROACH AND INTERACTION

It is important to remember that every child or adult is an individual and wants to be understood, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Each has his/her own learning rate and style, unique personality, and temperament. Provide riders with an enriched experience with warmth and a favorable environment in which to learn and grow. All people, disabled or not, want to feel that they are not all that different from their peers.

HOW TO RELATE TO A PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

Being around people with disabilities may be a new experience for you. You may be overwhelmed at first with things you have never seen or do not understand. This is natural for most people. Allow yourself time to get used to being with the person who is disabled. Do not give up on being a part of the program without a fair try, for your experience can be very rewarding. At first you may want to do jobs which are not in direct contact with the riders. Feel free to talk with a staff member about this. This is common. If working directly with our riders is a hardship for you, consider helping HOPE Equestrian in some other way and indicate other areas that you would like to be helpful on your Volunteer Information Form.

CHOOSING WORDS WITH DIGNITY

When talking about a person with a disability, make reference to the person first, not the disability.

AVOID: afflicted with blindness
USE: person who is visually impaired

AVOID: crippled
USE: person with physical disabilities, person who is physically challenged.

AVOID: stricken with...
USE: person who has

AVOID: confined or restricted to a wheelchair, crutches, etc.
USE: person who uses wheelchair, crutches, etc.

The preferred terms focus attention on the uniqueness and worth of the individual rather than emphasizing the disabling condition. The connotation of "disability" is very important to avoid. Words such as defective, deformed, invalid, lame, maimed, spastic, and crippled imply pity, infirmity, and a general lack of competence. People are neither invalid nor defective. People aren't spastic, muscles are. By choosing words carefully, positive images can be conveyed about persons with disabilities.

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SUGGESTIONS TO HELP YOU RELATE TO A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY

Each of us has to learn how to relate to others, especially if it requires new skills. Here are a few suggestions to assist in your relationship with a person who has disabilities.

- Be yourself
- Relax. Let the person with the disabilities put you at ease if you do not know what to say.
- Explore mutual interests in a friendly way. For starters, talk about the horse and whether the person has ridden before.
- Speak directly to the person with the disability. Your attention should be to them and

not to the person escorting them. Find yourself a chair or crouch down at a comfortable distance so that you can converse on the same level.

- If a person has difficulty speaking, allow them to finish their sentence. If you don't understand what they are saying, tell them so. Don't pretend you understood if you didn't. Do not be afraid to say, "I'm sorry I cannot understand you. Please say it again."
- Children and adults will be glad to talk about themselves. They prefer to have someone ask them about their disability instead of staring at them. They often enjoy discussing TV shows, movies, sports, foods, and other things we are all interested in.
- Use conversation and social behavior that you might use in any new situation.
- Offer assistance when asked or when the situation obviously requires it. Do not overwhelm the person with help or insist upon helping when they are managing alone. When a person is trying to increase their physical ability, effort on their part is necessary.
- Do not hinder the rider's ability to expand their skills and independence, even when their movements may appear awkward to you.
- Respect the person's right to independence and their request for the kind of assistance that they require.
- Be guided by the wishes of the person with the disability. Talk about the disability if it comes up naturally, but don't pry.
- Appreciate what the rider can do. Remember that the difficulties the person may be facing could stem from society's attitudes and barriers rather than from the disability itself. People with disabilities generally do not view themselves to be as handicapped as society perceives them to be.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take a person with a disability to accomplish something or respond to something. Be patient.
- Let the person set the pace in walking and talking.
- Be sensitive to separating a rider from his or her wheelchair, crutches, or braces unless asked. Never move someone's crutches, walker, canes, service animal or other mobility aid without permission
- Communicate with your heart and see each person from his or her heart.
- Acknowledge that every person has the opportunity for vast potential in his/her life. Share the feeling that each person's potential is found in the present moment.

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UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

EQUINE SENSES

When developing relationships and working with horses, communication is key. It is critical to provide a safe environment in a therapeutic riding setting. Beginning a process of understanding the horse senses, instincts and implications is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships.

SMELL:

The horse's sense of smell is very acute. Smell allows a horse to recognize other horses and people and to evaluate situations.

Implications:

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- Please do not carry treats your pocket since horses may desire to go after them.
- Volunteers should not eat or have food in the arena.

HEARING:

The horse's sense of hearing is also very sharp. The horses combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fight/flight response.

Implications:

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness.
- Flattened ears indicate an unhappy, frightened, uncomfortable or threatened horse.
- Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest. The horse is tuned into his environment.
- Ears that are laid back often communicate that they are upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.

SIGHT:

The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes.

Implications:

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on a trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a lead length which enables him to move his head when taking a look at objects.
- Consider two blind spots: directly in front and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is to his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

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TOUCH:

Touch is used as a communication between horses and between horses and people. Horses are sensitive to soft or rough touch with a person's hands or legs.

Implications:

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch rider leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a "clothes pin" effect with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist what is the best handling technique.

TASTE

Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish

palatable foods and other objects.

Implications:

- A horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Do not allow this, as it could lead to biting.

SIXTH SENSE

Horses do have a 'sixth sense' when evaluating the disposition of those around them. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of their handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between handlers and horse. It is important to let the instructor/therapist know if you are having a difficult time relating or getting along with a particular horse.

THE HORSE'S LIFESTYLE

In addition to understanding the horse's sixth sense, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse's lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to situations.

FLIGHT AS A NATURAL INSTINCT

Horses would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

Implications:

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse that is tied up or being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly in front of or behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like the stall. A halter with a lead rope may assist with maintaining control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful, it may be helpful to allow a more experienced horse to lead.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing confident voice.

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HERD ANIMAL

Horses like to stay together in a herd or group. One or two horses will be dominant and a pecking order will be established amongst the rest.

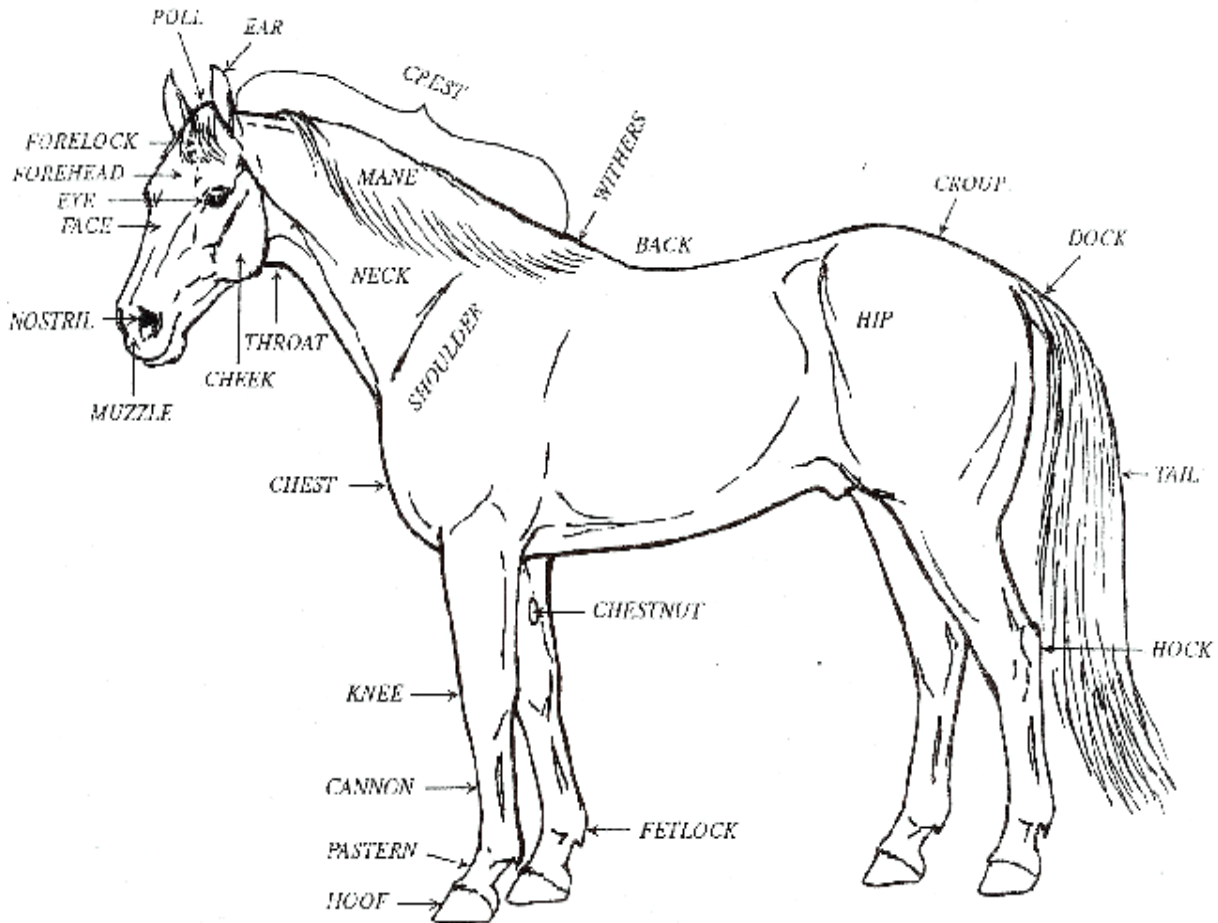
Implications:

- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front of a line is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.
- For safety, it is recommended to keep at least one horse's length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.

** Being aware of horse behaviors is one of the best safety precautions that can be used in your facility. Knowing how to read your horse can prevent an accident and increase the quality of your “mutual” relationship.*

PARTS OF THE HORSE

Some parts of the horse are shown below.



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RISK MANAGEMENT

SAFETY & EMERGENCY POLICIES

I. General Safety Preparedness

1. Fire Extinguishers to be available and serviced regularly
2. First Aid for Human and Horse to be fully equipped.
3. Emergency numbers posted next to emergency phone next to the tack room.
4. Post and observe all safety and restrictive signs.
5. Functional flashlight available.
6. Facility to be kept neat, clean and orderly at all times.

II. General Rules

1. No job must ever become so urgent or routine that every safety precaution is not

observed.

2. Do not attempt to do a job alone when safe practices require the assistance of another person.
3. Keep your work area clean.
4. All on the job injuries must be reported.
5. Observe all “No Smoking” signs.
6. Know how and where to obtain help in an emergency.
7. Do not attempt to lift heavy loads without assistance. Always lift properly, using the power in your legs, not your back. Bend your knees and keep the load close to your body.

III. Natural & Man-Made Hazards

1. Do not remove, alter, or deface any danger or warning sign, or hazard warning label.
2. Do not touch the electrical fence.
3. Use care when working around ditches, dirt piles and trash piles.
4. Watch for traffic while in parking lot.
5. Be aware of forecasted weather and be prepared for it.
6. Be aware of the risks of sunburn, heat-stroke, and frostbite.
7. Watch for and remove any noxious or poisonous plants.

IV. Equipment

1. Use the right tool/equipment for the job and return it to its proper storage space.
2. Do not use damaged or broken tools.
3. Electrical repairs will be made only by qualified personnel.
4. Never lift electrical tools or equipment by the power cord.
5. Do not use aluminum or metal ladders for electrical work.
6. Each employee must know the location of electrical power disconnections.
7. Determine the location of buried power lines before digging.
8. Always read and follow the manufacturer’s safety warnings.
9. Make sure everyone is clear of machinery before starting the engine, engaging power, or operating the machine.
10. Machinery will not be repaired, maintained, cleaned or fueled while the engine is running.
11. Machine controls or hoses must not be used as handles to enter or exit.

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12. All of the machine’s attachments must be lowered to the ground before servicing or maintenance.
13. Check all machinery prior to use to ensure it is in safe operating condition.
14. Always check behind the vehicle before backing up.
15. Do not wear clothing that could catch in moving parts.
16. Do not get between towed equipment and the towing machine until both have completely stopped.
17. Where possible, avoid operating the equipment near ditches, embankments, and holes.
18. Always turn off motors before refueling
19. Pour/pump combustible liquids with the wind behind you to prevent burns in case of a fire.

V. Facilities

1. Follow “Closing of Facility” procedures at the end of the day.
2. Never climb on stored hay
3. Ensure that all fences and gates are well maintained.

VI. Wildfire Policy

1. HOPE Equestrian has an evacuation plan in place for all horses. The evacuation plan, including available trailers, phone numbers and maps, are posted over phones throughout the barn office space.
2. In the extreme case that horses cannot be removed from the property during significant wildfire threat and mandatory evacuation order by Jackson County Sheriff, horses will be tagged using livestock chalk (stored with equine first aid) and released into front pasture without halters. Irrigation will be turned on in pasture. All water troughs on property will be moved to pasture and filled as time allows.

VII. Hazards specific to the equines

1. Do not work horses alone if it can be avoided.
2. Do not let horses trap you without a means of escape.
3. Know about the horses you are working with.
4. If you open a gate, you close it.
5. Instructors promptly request veterinary care for sick or injured horses.
6. Use extra care around horse vaccines and medications.
7. Be aware of horses’ natural instincts.
8. Approach horses from where they can see you.
9. Wear heavy boots or shoes when working around horses.
10. Do not move quickly or be loud around horses.
11. Never wrap the lead rope around your hand. Always fold the excess.
12. Do not stand directly behind a horse.
13. Maintain a safe distance between horses of 2 horse lengths.
14. Volunteers and staff are made aware of the possibility of flushed wildlife on trail rides and obstacle course.

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Horse behavioral-related emergency:

- Stop all horses.
- If sidewalker is present and a dismount is necessary, instructor directs the sidewalker to perform emergency dismount (see Emergency Dismount Procedure following this text).
- If there is a leader only, leader will regain control of horse.
- If rider is independent, instructor will call aloud simple instructions in a confident tone.
- Remember to stay calm and use soothing voice.
- Reassure horses that are nervous or scared.
- In case of fighting horses, quickly move the horses apart.
- Recognize symptoms of rolling, including pawing, lowering of head, bending of knees; dismount rider as trained during volunteer orientation. Move away from the horse quickly.

- In case of a loose horse, horses will be stopped immediately and horse will be caught. If necessary, the instructor will ask for all riders to be dismounted from their horses.
- In the case of a stepped-on foot, call out instructions and help move horse from person's foot; injury will be treated as needed.
- If a horse pulls back when tied, clear away from the horse until it stops struggling and try calming the horse with your voice.
- Instructor will file horse report on behavior and training issues are addressed by HOPE Equestrian Staff.

Emergency Dismount:

1. Emergency dismount is a last resort action. Horses and leaders are given every opportunity to gain control prior to the decision to dismount a rider. Instructors will typically direct the emergency dismount, however in some cases, the team must make the decision to dismount the rider.
2. Leader role: to keep horse moving forward and slightly away from the direction of the dismount. After rider is clear, move horse away from rider to safe location.
3. Sidewalker role: pull the rider's hips toward them, move arms to under the rider's arms, drag rider from horse without lifting, stepping back, allowing legs to drop to the ground but protecting head and back from impact. Pull rider away from danger.
4. Once the emergency dismount has begun, DO NOT let go of the rider until the rider is safely off the horse and you and the rider have stopped moving.

Injuries in the arena

If a rider, volunteer, staff member or spectator is injured and needs immediate care:

- Stop all riders if injury is near class.
- If serious, instructor will designate a volunteer to call 911; emergency information posted by phone by tackroom door.
- Instructor assigns a staff member or volunteer in the ring to reassure and dismount riders, or move mounted riders to far end of the arena.
- If the rider is down, leave the rider down.
- Follow first-aid procedures as trained.

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Off Site Event Policy:

In the event of HOPE Equestrian participation in events off site such as demonstrations, parades and outreach, the following policies apply:

- Copies of Emergency Medical forms for all participants, volunteer and staff are taken to site of event.
- First Aid kit for human and horse are taken to the site of the event.
- Emergency numbers for vet and Ferrier are with the equine first aid kit.
- All events are directly supervised by a PATH certified therapeutic riding instructor.
- Preview of event site is performed prior to event to evaluate and address potential safety risk for equine and human.

VOLUNTEER POLICIES

MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT & INSURANCE LIABILITY RELEASE

Lesson Volunteers must be at least 13 years old. However, youth under the age of 13 are welcome to ask the instructors about cleaning tack, sweeping the stable area, etc. Because working with horses can be a potentially dangerous situation, we ask that all prospective volunteers sign a liability release.

Absence from scheduled class

If you have a planned absence, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator 1week prior to your scheduled class time. If you have an unplanned “last minute” absence, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator AND one of the instructors.

Volunteer “NO-SHOW” Policy

HOPE Equestrian is always grateful for your time and endless energies. Without your diligent work, care for the riders and the horses, and committed time, we would not have a successful program. **HOPE Equestrian and the riders depend on you.** We trust that you will follow through on the scheduled time to which you agreed. When a volunteer does not show up for their scheduled class, it creates problems and can force us to cancel a rider.

Volunteer “THREE STRIKES” Policy:

Any time a volunteer does not call ahead and does not report to a scheduled class or commitment it is considered a “no-show” situation. After three (3) consecutive occurrences within a 6 month period, the volunteer is removed from the current schedule and sub list. In each case of a volunteer not showing up for a scheduled class or commitment, the appropriate staff member will fill out a Volunteer No-Show form and turn the form in to the Volunteer Coordinator. After the second no-show occurrence, the Volunteer Coordinator will remind the volunteer of the policy by phone or email. After the third and final no-show occurrence the volunteer will be contacted by phone or in person. The volunteer will be asked to take some time from the program to get things in order. The volunteer will be encouraged to return when they are better able to fit the program into their schedule. If the volunteer returns at a later time, their record begins at zero no-shows.

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PROBLEM SOLVING AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

HOPE Equestrian wants to assist in solving problems and settling grievances quickly and fairly. We believe the best way to settle a disagreement or problem is to discuss the issue and find a way to reach mutually agreeable solutions. The grievance procedure can be used if you believe you have been discriminated against due to race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, or if you feel that your rights as a volunteer have been violated.

PROCEDURE

Complaints involving a volunteer, staff member or the program should first be addressed by the persons involved. If this does not resolve the situation, the issue should be taken to one of the Instructors. Depending on the situation, the Instructor may talk with both of you together to help reach an agreement. If you cannot agree, the

resolution will be made by the Instructor. If a resolution still cannot be reached, the next step is to take the issue to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will initiate an investigation to gather facts. A determination will be made by the Executive Director regarding an appropriate solution.

DISMISSAL OF VOLUNTEERS AND GUESTS FROM CENTER ACTIVITIES

HOPE Equestrian Therapeutic Riding Center relies greatly on volunteers as important members of the team that provides services to and assists our clients. We also recognize the extreme importance of the safety and well-being of our clients, volunteers, staff, guests, and animals.

All volunteers and guests are expected to follow HOPE's rules and policies and may not engage in disruptive, unsafe or inappropriate behavior. In the event a volunteer or guest does not comply, the following actions may be taken:

Level 1 Verbal warning: Breaking of HOPE's rules and/or policies and procedures may be followed by a verbal warning from an Instructor or Volunteer Coordinator to be documented in the occurrence report file or volunteer performance log.

Level 2 Written warning: Breaking of HOPE rules and/or policies and procedures for a second time will be followed by a meeting for discussion regarding the infraction (with and Instructor and Volunteer Coordinator.) The purpose of the meeting is to determine the exact reason the infraction occurred for a second time and discuss with the volunteer/guest how to avoid the circumstance ever occurring again. This meeting will be documented and placed in the occurrence file and volunteer performance log.

Level 3 Dismissal from organization:

Immediate dismissal from the property and the organization will occur for:

- Endangering the safety of others
- Inappropriate use of the facilities, mailing lists or monies
- Disruptive or abusive behavior to the animals or people at HOPE
- Repeated disregard of the organization's rules, policies and procedures.
- Possession of a weapon
- Is under the influence of alcohol or drugs

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EQUINE TERMINOLOGY

This glossary is intended to familiarize reader with equine terms commonly used in a riding lesson when referring to equitation, training, gaits and behavior. This document is not a complete representation of the many other terms that are currently used.

Aids/Queues Signals the rider gives to the horse to control speed and directions.

1. Natural Aids/Queues: legs, seat, weight, hands, voice.
2. Artificial Aids/Queues: whip, spurs, martingale

Bay A common color of a horse. Body color ranges from a light reddish-brown to very dark brown with "black points". (Points refer to the mane, tail, and lower legs.)

Bend In relation to the horse shaping his body slightly to the curve of a circle or turn; the response of the horse to bend his body around the rider's leg.

Change of rein To reverse direction. At HOPE we turn the horse in a half circle to the inside to reverse.

Chestnut Sometimes called "sorrel." A common color of a horse. A reddish/cinnamon body color with no black. Mane and tail are the same shade or lighter than the body coat.

Forehand The front section of the horse; forelegs, shoulder, neck and head.

Free walk A walk on a "loose rein" (long rein) to allow the horse to stretch his neck.

Gait The way of going paces; walk, trot, pace, lope, canter, gallop

Hand Unit of measurement equaling 4 inches used to measure the height of a horse. Measurement is taken from the top of the withers to the ground.

Haunches The hindquarters of a horse.

Horse length The suggested distance between horses (eight feet).

Inside leg The leg on the inside of the arena (or) the bend of the horse.

Leg yielding Moving the horse sideways and forward, usually with one's leg.

Lengthening of stride Increasing the length of the stride within a set frame.

Shortening of stride Decreasing the length of the stride within a set frame.

Near side The left side of the horse.

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Off side The right side of the horse.

On the bit The position of the horse's head; the face is close to vertical, neck slightly arched with light contact to the reins.

Outside leg The rider's leg on the outside of the arena or turn (bend, circle).

Pony A full grown horse under 14.2 hands tall.

Pony To lead a horse while riding another horse.

Posting "Rising trot" – the rising and descending of the rider with the rhythm of the trot.

Schooling figures Movements performed to train the horse and rider.

Sitting trot The rider sits deep in the saddle and maintains contact with the saddle while trotting.

Stride One complete circuit of the stepping of all four feet.

Track right Riding with the right rein to the inside of the arena.

Track left Riding with the left rein to the inside of the arena.

Transition To change from one gait to another, changing the stride within the gait (i.e., lengthen, shorten, downward trot, walk.)