THE CARSON JAMES

HORSETRACKS

TRAINING SYSTEM



HORSETRACKS

© 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

First Edition

All rights reserved. No portion of this document may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law. For permissions contact: support@carsonjames.com

Plublished by:

CarsonJames.com LLC

Edited by:

Carson James
Julie Rhodenizer
Jared Rhodenizer

Cover design by:

Jared Rhodenizer

Interior design by:

Chloestudio4
Jared Rhodenizer

Video production by:

Brooke Rhodenizer

WELCOME TO HORSETRACKS

This program outlines the agenda for building the foundational elements that should be established in any horse. Most horse 'problems' can be traced back to a faulty foundation. Fix the foundation, fix the horse.

As you're working through these sessions, try and absorb the concept behind each exercise. Horsemanship is more about your approach and timing than a set method.

You should plan on spending around 30 minutes to an hour for each session. Remember this process is just as much for you as it is for your horse. Look for the small changes. It is mission critical that every stride at a walk and trot be done with energy and effort from the horse. Eliminate any dull or lazy attitudes.

Anywhere the instructions say to do something on one side, be sure to repeat it on the opposite side as well. A horse does not have two brains, but signals are processed independently on the right and left sides. During most of the riding sessions, you will ride two-handed with your hands forward, wide, and low.

You will need a lunge whip/flag, a halter and lead rope (8 ft minimum), headgear, and saddle. Recommended headgear is a traditional hackamore (bosal, mecate, hanger), a rope halter, or a snaffle bit. If you typically ride your horse in a shank bit, that can also be used. But remember that if you are applying one pound of pressure on the reins, your horse will be feeling more because it's not a 1:1 ratio type bit. You will not be wearing spurs.

Alright, let's get going.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY

Horse, horse activities and horse training can all be extremely dangerous. Although horses can appear to be calm and passive animals, they can be unpredictable and dangerous at times. Do not attempt any of the training demonstrations or advice from this program without proper supervision, safety equipment and proper facilities. Neither CarsonJames.com LLC nor its employees, agents, sponsors, or producers of the content contained in this program are liable or responsible for any injuries or loss restulting from the use of including but not limited to the exercises, demonstrations, information, videos, audio recordings, or advice for horse and horse training activites contained herin.

ABOUT CARSON JAMES



Carson James' background is in Vaquero Horsemanship, and for the majority of his career, he worked on cattle ranches where he rode horses all day, every day. His knowledge comes from real life experience using traditional Buckaroo horsemanship to train horses and fix problems. He is now taking all of this knowledge and experience and sharing it with horse owners through his blog, his Insider list, and his Buckaroo Crew. He has a unique way of breaking things down where they're easy to understand, both for the horse and the human.

MP3 PLAYER INSTRUCTIONS

Make sure the device is charged using the Type-C charging cord included that connects on the top of the player. There is a battery life indicator on the LCD display when the device is turned on.

Turn the on/off switch to 'on' and connect headphones.

Fully insert the SD content card with the print facing down and the gold lines facing up. It should click into place.

Press the play/pause button on the front of the player.

Pause the track by pressing the play/pause button.

Go to the next or previous track by pressing the up/down arrow key on the side of the player.

Adjust the volume by long pressing the up/down arrow key.

ACCESSING VIDEOS

The video for each lesson can be accessed by clicking on the thumbnail image at the beginning of each section. You can also visit this link to view all videos in a combined playlist: bit.ly/horsetracks-videos



TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Liberty Direction Changes — Page 1

02 Facing Up — Page 6

03 Handling The Feet — Page 9

04 Cinch Rope — Page 13

05 Leading | Backing — Page 16

06 Leading Exercises — Page 20

07 Leading By The Shoulder — Page 25

08 GW Lateral Movements — Page 27

09 Fencing — Page 33

10 Magnets — Page 36

11 Light To The Leg — Page 39



TABLE OF CONTENTS

12 [Optional] Steering Page 44

13 Reins Page 48

14 Backing Under Saddle Page 51

15 Lateral Hips Page 55

16 Lateral Shoulders Page 59

17 Straightness Page 63

18 Circles And Figure Eights Page 67

19 Speed Transitions Page 72

20 Stopping Foundation Page 75

21 Signal Stop Page 80

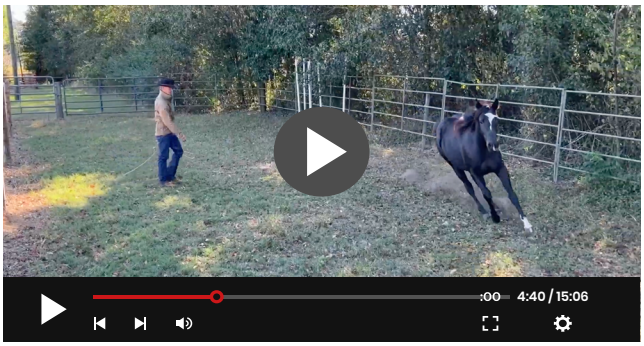
22 Horse Trax Conclusion Page 83

01

Liberty Direction Changes

In this exercise, we will work on direction changes while lunging at liberty (no halter or bridle). This can be done in a round pen, other type pen, or even in a stall or pasture. A lunge whip/flag would be helpful but not required.

TRACK 01
Liberty Direction Changes



GOAL: Your horse will travel in smooth consistent circles in both directions around you at a walk and trot.

- [ ] Horse made it 2 laps at a walk without turning in..
- [ ] Horse made it 3 laps at a walk without stopping, speeding up, or looking outside of the pen.
- [ ] Horse made 5 laps at a trot without turning in.
- [ ] Horse made it 5 laps at a trot without stopping, speeding up, or looking out.
- [ ] Horse can easily walk and/or trot as long as I stay behind his shoulder.
- [ ] Horse can transition from a walk to a trot and back to a walk.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

You will use your body position and energy to control the horse's thoughts and movements. This will be great practice in reading your horse and adjusting your approach to work at his current level. The main objective is to sync up with your horse. You have an idea, and then successfully communicate that idea to your horse in a way he can understand. Following these instructions will ensure that your horse is aware of your presence, attentive, and responsive to your cues.

Things To Know

It is important to stress that you do not have to do this in a round pen. You can do it in any shape pen.

You can even do a slower, closer encounter type version of this in a stall. I've done it a hundred times.

I've even done this in a pretty large pasture using a golf cart.

I've also done it in a pretty large pasture when we didn't have a golf cart or four-wheeler. I just had a few friends come out and we were each responsible for a section of the pasture. We basically turned the pasture into a giant round pen.

So, be creative. Remember, there's nothing magical about a round pen. The goal is to build some confidence and understanding into your horse. To begin establishing some control of his movements. And in this section, what we're trying to accomplish is just a couple of very basic things. But you may be surprised at how many horses have trouble with these things or are not very sure about them. It's a perfect starting point.

Establish Flow

As you're standing in your round pen or other area, you've got your horse in there at liberty. Nothing on his head.

The only thing that you're trying to get established is some natural flow. You're just looking for some consistency because that's an indicator that your horse is getting a little more sure. If he's bouncing off of the walls like a ping pong ball, then you know he's like,

> "Hey, I have no idea what's going on here, and I'm a wreck."

So you're trying to build steady flow and consistency because that's an indicator of understanding.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Understand The Driveline

Now, before we start driving the horse around, make sure you understand about the driveline. It's a very basic concept, but it's very important.

If you draw a line from the horse's shoulder coming straight out away from his body, the general rule of thumb is, if you are behind that line, it will have a tendency to have him go forward and make him more apt to turn in and face you when you're wanting him to face up.

If you get in front of that line, especially if you jump out in front of that line quickly, it will make the horse feel trapped. Then the odds of him turning away from you and into the fence are going to be much, much higher.

And we'll talk about this a little bit more as we go. But remember, for these couple things you're about to try to get going, it is pretty important that you stay behind the horse a little bit. Make sure you don't crowd his front corners. You want to make sure you position your body correctly.

For example, if the horse is going around to the right – You want to keep yourself back behind that driveline or maybe even behind his ribcage to where his front right corner is wide open so he doesn't feel like he has to turn into the fence or away from you.

Another way you could look at it is as you're driving him around on a circle to the right, you want to be walking in a small circle as well, like you're chasing his hip. And if you are positioning yourself to chase the hip, that'll help you not get in front of the driveline and accidentally cut him off too hard and cause him to turn back or turn into the fence.

Approach Your Horse

So with an understanding of the driveline, you're going to approach your horse. Ideally, you will have a flag or Walmart bag on the end of a lunge whip. We don't really want to use actual whips. A flag is a much better tool of communication. And, obviously, if your horse is really, really sensitive, just waving your hand and smooching could get all of the response you would need.

Feel out your horse and see how sensitive he is. If it seems like you're having to really work hard to get him to even start going around, this is where you're going to need to go from 1 ounce to 10 pounds.

First, let's go through this with a really dull, heavy horse who is not very sensitive.

Dull Horse

If your horse is dull, the first thing you would need to do is get him more sensitized so he's understanding and knows that he needs to be alive and attentive. So, you would go up to your horse and, when you're about 10 feet away from him, you would wave that flag and maybe smooch a little bit. If he didn't, pretty immediately, with some alertness and effort, go right out to the edge of the pen and start going around, then you would come in at him pretty firmly waving your flag pretty hard. You might even tap him on his hip three or four times until he thinks, "Oh shoot, they meant it." And he moves on out of there.

One of the biggest things you want to avoid is building a horse that's dull and pluggy. There's multiple mental reasons why you want to avoid this. If he's lazy and unresponsive, you should skip the gray pressures. Instead of going from what you would call one pound, two pounds, three pounds, you would want to start at one pound where you're just waving the flag a little bit and you're smooching a couple times. But after a few seconds, if he hasn't jumped up into a trot and moved up against the edge of the pen and started going (or responded in a lively way if you're in a smaller area) you don't want to slowly increase the pressure, because he'll just learn to lay on that and ignore it. If he misses it, then you let him know by going out and really waving the flag and act like, "Hey dude, I said get going. Let me show you what I meant by that. See?" And very quickly, you'll notice he gets much more sensitized and respectful of the flag, and when you ask him to move his feet. This is critical.

Sensitive Horse

Now, if it's a really sensitive horse, it'll be very easy. You may not even need a flag. Just waving your arm and smooching might be enough to get him to respond with some effort and go around. So, all you're trying to get going right now is that you can stay behind his driveline, and you can get him to trot or walk about 10 laps to the right and 10 laps to the left. If you're in a big paddock or something, then maybe it would just be five. You're looking for some consistency and flow. He's not just randomly going... and bouncing off the walls.

So, you might have to spend a few minutes pushing him around the pen or your work area before he softens up, calms down a little bit, and flows around there. Keep him going but only use enough pressure to keep him moving.. And then, if he tries to stop, come back in with the pressure. The instant he goes, you lower your pressure and leave him alone. Don't get in the habit of nagging while trying to keep him moving.

As Much As Necessary | As Little As Possible

With some horses, when you first work on this, you might have to use a good bit of pressure to even get him to go ten feet, and then they try to stop. So right there, you'll jump back in. But right when they start going again, you ease back down. Don't hang on them. Otherwise, they won't get light and sensitive to all this.

Remember to stay behind their rib cage or their shoulder. And if they end up going into a lope, don't push anymore. Just hang right there and wait for them to come back down. As you do this, it will get softer.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

The end result is you can pretty easily have them go from walk to a trot, back to a walk, up to a trot, back to a walk. You can consistently have them go up and down between trot and walk. And you won't really be using voice cues for this. This is more about learning that your body position in relation to the horse, and the energy coming from you, is how you speed them up and slow them down.

Energy

When we say the energy, we mean that if I'm walking in that small circle chasing the hip with some purpose, and I've got a little more energy in that walk, that should be enough for him to maintain a trot. If I bring down my energy, and I start walking a little more casually, he should automatically come back down to a walk. And then, if I completely stop walking and stop driving him, his go-to is that he's going to stop and/or come off the rail a little bit and face me.

Goals

You may need to spend one or two sessions working on this. The goal will be controlled, consistent, cadenced flow in both directions, left and right. The horse will go into a trot and back down to a walk.

See if you can get him to walk three full laps around the pen without randomly trying to go into a trot. And then, see if you can get him to hold a trot without randomly trying to go into a lope.

Conclusion

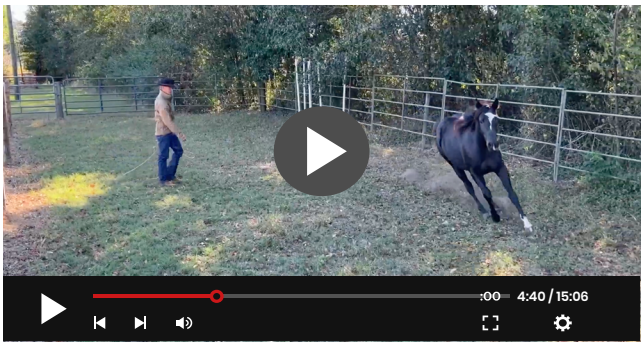
Every horse may respond a little differently and have individual levels of sensitivity, but you're going to do the exact same thing. Just let them work on it. They will start to pick up on your body language and your energy, and they will start to sync up with you. And that's what you're going for.

02

Facing Up

This session will be teaching your horse to face up. You will be in the same location used for '01 Liberty Direction Changes'. Your horse will still have nothing on his head.
If the previous exercise has been firmly established, this will be an easy thing to get going.

TRACK 02
Facing Up



GOAL: Your horse will be drawn to you and face up when you ask him to stop going.

- [ ] Horse will face up when I ease off and step towards his front end.
- [ ] Advanced challenge for the overachievers - Horse faces up, walks up to me, and follows me around the pen.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The objective of facing up is to draw your horse's attention to you. You will create a situation that causes the horse to stop moving, face you, and even come towards you. Your horse will begin to want to be wherever you are.

Things To Know

As you begin this maneuver, make sure that as you drive the horse around, you don't use your body position to cut off that front corner. As long as you don't step too far out in front of him and cut him off hard, he will start to face up more and more.

Understanding Angles

The easiest time to get facing up established is when the horse is at a walk. Start your horse walking around the pen to the left. You will be driving him, going with him a little bit, just enough to keep him at a walk. As he's going around, you'll notice you're basically following him. So you're walking these small little circles to the left as well. As you're doing this, imagine an invisible line shooting back over your left shoulder. That's going to be the angle you use to yield and back AWAY from the horse as you slide over more in front of the driveline.

Understanding Angles

The reason you don't want to go directly to your left when asking the horse to face up, is that it might cut him off too hard, cause him to stop, and turn into the fence away from you. So you are going to slide over and get in front of him, but you're going to do it in a yielding type of way. As you smoothly move to the left to stop him, you're also going to be backing away from him at the same time. That's going to create a little bit of a draw.

Now the first few times you do this, he might just stop. Or he may start to look outside of the pen. Or he may drop his nose to eat grass. Or he might actually even turn into the fence away from you and try to go the other way. If he does any of these things, go back to your right and reestablish driving him around to the left. (If he's going to the right, it would be the opposite).

Possible Scenarios

You might have to do this several times until he finds the right answer – he stops and looks at you. Now, if he is really new to this, you might just be looking for him to roll one of his ears and look at you with the ear. When you see that tiny change, you would immediately turn around and walk off. That lets him see that you made a really big change when he indicated that he was going to use a little bit of his attention to look at you. Even if all he did was give you an ear.

He might actually go so far as stopping and completely looking at you. In this case, you would also turn and walk away from him for five or six seconds. Then you would turn back around and try to walk up to him and pet him.

Now with some horses, you would need to be careful that you weren't moving in trying to pet him prematurely if that would cause him to leave.

A good rule of thumb is if they're looking at you with both eyes, you can keep walking closer. But if they turn away, you want to pause or back up. What I like to do if they look away, is start backing up and maybe pat my leg a little bit. Sometimes that will be enough to get them to look at me again.

Then after a few times, if they keep looking away when I try to walk up, I abort the mission, step to the right, (or direction that will put me behind the horse's shoulder again) and drive them around a little bit more. The horse figures out, "Oh man, I think I was onto something there, but when I looked away I had to go back out and keep making laps around this pen".

Goals

These are some things you can do to get a horse to start thinking about bringing his attention to you. Remember, it all starts with just the thought of coming in towards the human. You're not looking for them to totally come off of the fence and walk right up to you. That will come later on, but this is how you get that started.

Every time they look at you, you'll try to walk in and rub them on the head for a second. Maybe even scratch them on the withers for ten seconds. Give them a reason to want this to keep happening.

Conclusion

As you do this, the horse's draw to you gets stronger and as he gets more sure that coming to you mentally and physically is a good deal. He will then start coming off of the fence towards you more. Then it will get to where he comes all the way up to you. Pretty quick after that he'll start following you around the pen.

But it all begins with driving him around at a walk, sliding over in front of him, while also backing away from his front end. And this causes him to stop and face up.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

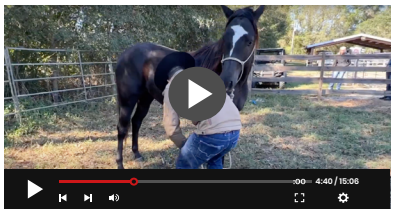
03

Handling The Feet

This section will cover setting your horse up for a long, happy, successful career of having his feet handled. Your horse will be in a halter with a lead rope. A lunge whip/flag is used in several of these exercises. You will use the flag to desensitize his feet and legs to being touched. Then you will progress to actually picking up his feet.

TRACK 03
Handling The Feet





GOAL: Your horse will allow you to handle his feet with confidence.

- ☐ My horse stands still with a relaxed expression while I use a flag to rub all 4 feet
- ☐ My horse walks a consistent circle around me while rubbing all 4 feet without stopping, or moving away
- ☐ I can massage his legs while holding a foot for 30 seconds
- ☐ My horse lets me pick up his foot and draw small shapes in the ground for 20 seconds without bracing
- ☐ I can firmly tap all 4 feet with my hand for 30 seconds

Objective

We will alleviate any anxiety or stress in the horse about having his feet rubbed, handled, trimmed, or shod. An additional objective is to help your horse know how to relax and not panic if a leg ever gets tangled up in a rope or vine.

Things To Know

Before you conclude that your horse is already totally fine with having his feet handled, I want you to try this little test. Because it's one thing for a horse to stand still and allow you to do something to him. It's another thing for him to allow that same thing while he is moving.

People often make a mistake thinking, "Oh look, he's standing still and letting me do this. He must be pretty okay with it." But, in reality, he's not really standing still. He's frozen solid.

Test The Flag

If your horse is afraid of the flag in general, you would need to spend some time petting him with the flag, exposing him to the flag, getting him where he's okay with the flag.

Get him brave about the flag first if that is an issue. Basically lead him with the flag in your hand and let him 'chase' it away until he's okay with the flag getting closer and closer.

Begin At A Standstill

You can start this off at a standstill with the leadrop in your hand. Begin to approach your horse with a lunge whip with a flag in the other hand. Using the flag on a lunge whip will keep you out of the kicking zone in case the horse decides to kick at it. Make sure you're not within striking distance. It doesn't really matter which foot or leg you start on. You don't want to have too much slack in the lead rope in case the horse decides to turn away and jump out of there. If he does that, and were to kick, you are now in range of the hind feet. So only have a 5-6 foot distance between where the lead rope ties to the halter and your hand that's holding the lead rope. That way, if they do go to turn away, you can abort the mission, drop the flag, pull their face towards you, and that will have the hind end move away from you.

You're going to go in and very subtly start trying to rub. Maybe start with trying to rub the shoulder with the flag. If they seem okay with that, work your way down to the leg. Then work your way down to the fetlock and the hoof.

If your horse starts to get really bothered, just back off a little bit. The goal is to not push him over the edge. If they get a little bothered, that's okay.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Add The Motion

Have your horse walk a circle around you on a lead line. As he's walking around you, use your lunge whip with the flag on it, and rub all four of his feet and legs. Make sure he can continue walking around in a flowy, relaxed, natural manner as you're doing all of the rubbing of his legs and feet with the flag.

When you first start this, you may notice that when you try to do it, he evades. Or you might notice that it makes him freeze up. He stops walking. So this is why we want him to be walking as we do this. It's the only sure way to know he's truly okay with it.

Build Confidence

So, assuming that your horse is fairly okay with a flag petting him and rubbing on him a little bit (not that he has to be completely desensitized to it) you're going to make sure you can rub up and down his legs. When he's okay with that, get him to start walking a circle around you. And this can be a lot of back and forth. You might get him walking around and then right when you touch him with a flag, he tries to stop. So then you try to get him going again. But usually it only takes about 5 to 10 minutes before you can have him walking circles around you while rubbing all up and down his legs and his feet with that flag.

Goal

The main goal is for the horse to be okay with things rubbing around his legs. He can walk a completely cadence natural circle around you with a soft expression on his face. And he does it as though you didn't even have a flag. That's what you're going for with this exercise.

Progress To Picking Up The Feet

Now it's time to pick up a foot. Bend down and pinch a leg with your hand just above the fetlock where the leg gets skinny on the back side. Pinch and pull up in a rubbing type motion. The instant he shifts his weight off that foot, give him a full release and pet him for a few seconds.

If the horse starts to walk off when you try to pick up a foot, begin shaking the lead rope to stop him. And then try to squeeze the leg again. If he keeps walking off, put him to work lunging for a few minutes. Then try again. After a few times, the horse will decide it's a better deal to stand still and allow you to handle his feet than to have to lunge around.

After the horse shifts his weight several times, now you can pull up on the foot to where it comes off the ground. Right when the foot comes off the ground, release it. Don't try to hold it up at first. Do this several times until the horse is sure about you picking up his foot.

Then you can begin holding the foot for 2-3 seconds before you give it back. Always retreat before the horse gets to the point of uncertainty and feels like he needs to pull his foot back away from you.

If you hang in there too long and he tries to take his foot back, give it to him. Then put him to work lunging at a trot with a lot of direction changes.

Continue this process with all 4 feet until the horse gets certain that you holding his foot is the best option. Make that a good deal.

It's also a good idea to tap on his foot and get him used to that for future shoeing. Gradually increase the amount of time you tap on the foot until the tapping doesn't phase him.

Conclusion

Every horse needs to be really good at having their feet picked up and handled.

You don't have to get it all in one day. Just be consistent and life will be much happier for you, your horse, and your farrier.

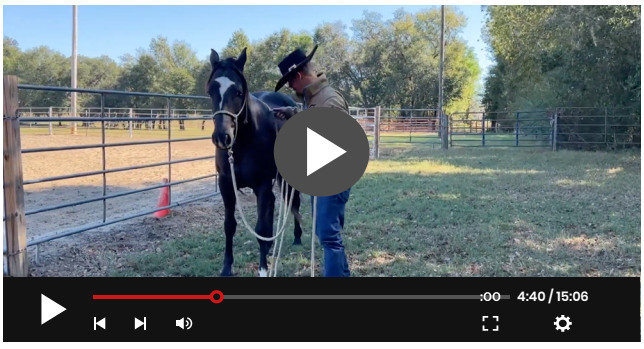
HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

04

Cinch Rope

This often neglected exercise will ensure that a cinch being tightened around your horse does not cause him anxiety and stress. Your horse will be on a halter with a lead rope. You will also need a soft lariat catch rope or a long cotton rope (20 ft minimum) that you will use to simulate a saddle cinch. You can be either in an enclosed area or out in the open.

TRACK 04
Cinch Rope



GOAL: Eliminate braces in your horse using a cinch rope

- [ ] My hose calmly walks around the pen with flow and cadence while wearing a loose cinch rope
- [ ] When I pull on the rope while he is standing still, he calmly walks off

Objective

Many horses get cinch bound when they feel something tighten up around their belly. This can be what causes a 'cold-backed' horse to buck when he's first being saddled. The tightened cinch creates un-sureness and bother inside of that horse. This exercise will get rid of all that. We will replace all this unsureness with confidence, softness, and understanding.

Things To Know

Even if your horse is not a colt and has been saddled many times, a tightened cinch may still be causing him to become uneasy. This process is focused on changing how the horse feels and where he goes in his mind when he starts experiencing something tighten around his girth area.

Purpose

The purpose is to help your horse be in a relaxed frame of mind when he feels the cinch getting tightened, instead of it being an event that causes him to tense up, or be flinchy, or hold his breath, or get tight mentally and/or physically in any type of way.

It will teach him to actually relax when he feels the cinch getting tight. He will now go to that untroubled place in his mind.

Bare Hands

Now this sounds a little bit counterintuitive, but I don't want you to wear gloves when you're doing this. The logic is that if your horse gets really bothered and decides to leave and run, you will turn loose of the rope because you don't want to burn your hands. Wearing gloves may enable you to keep the rope tight and mistakenly push him over the edge of what he can presently handle.

Preliminary Info

You will begin by dropping your rope over his withers. Reach under his belly and grab the rope from the other side so that you have this big giant loop around his cinch area. This is going to be a great lesson on not overexposing the horse. You will need to read the horse and make sure that you're not doing something too big too soon.

Even when I do this in a pen, I will have a halter on the horse so I can keep him walking smaller circles around me. You're going to feel him out and only go as far as he can handle. You're not going to cross that line. When he starts to look a little bit bothered, you will either retreat a little

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

bit or stay right where you're at until he relaxes again before trying to add more tension to the rope.

The end result of this is that as he's at a standstill, you can tighten the catch-rope that's around his girth area. As you tighten it in a very relaxed way, he just either takes a step forward or walks off.

Process

Begin tightening the rope around his belly. What usually happens is it becomes hard to get him to take a step and unlock his feet and begin walking.

You will work to where you can be pulling and releasing this rope that's around his girth, and he will just maintain a relaxed, cadenced walk around you.

Now if he goes to stop, you can actually start pulling on that rope – pulling, pulling, pulling. And at the same time with your other hand, you will pull forward on the lead rope a little to encourage him to walk. When he walks off, relax the rope around his belly.

Conclusion

What you're trying to do is get him in a mental habit of relaxing and freeing up his body, his mind, and his feet when he feels pressure constricting his cinch area.

This has many more applications than just getting a horse to accept a cinch or a saddle. That will happen, but it's more about where he goes in his mind.

I would highly recommend doing this even if your horse seems to be okay with these things. Remember, the end goal is that when you add tension to the rope, he relaxes and begins walking around. That's what you're going for.

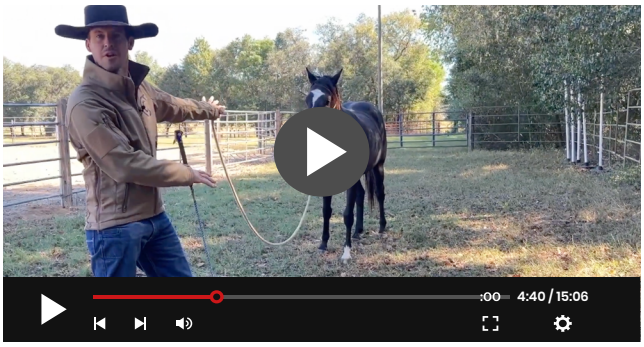
05

Leading | Backing

The first thing we need to know about leading, or any groundwork at all, is this key concept. You have to be able to stop the feet and have them back away from you. This is the first tool you need to get built in. This exercise will accomplish that.

Your horse will be in a halter with a long lead rope (12 ft length is handy). You will be facing your horse as you wiggle the lead rope and ask him to back up. This is one of the best exercises you can do to ensure a horse is attentive and responsive.

TRACK 05
Leading | Backing



GOAL: Your horse will yield his feet away from you and back up consistently when you wiggle the lead rope.

- ☐ Horse took one step back within 2 seconds when I bumped the rope
- ☐ Horse took one step back within 2 second when I wiggled the rope
- ☐ Horse backed consistently without stopping for ten steps when I wiggled the rope (no bumps required)
- ☐ Horse sped up a little when I began bigger movements in the rope

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The reason we do the backing first is because at any point during any type of groundwork, no matter what you're working on, if the horse comes closer without your permission (crowds you), it's critical that you abort whatever your mission is, and have him back away from you. Respecting space is crucial. When your horse yields his feet away from you, it's a sign that he is seeing you as a leader.

Things to Know

So before we really even get into leading, we're going to talk about getting your horse to where he does more than just follow you around. That is not halter broke. 'Halter broke' means you have refined, light control of his feet while on the ground. The control is more a signal, a body language, than simply pulling him around.

The Goal

To get all this started, the first thing we need to get established is that when you barely wiggle the lead rope, that horse will stop and/or back up for as long as you want him to back, as long as you're wiggling the rope. We're really not too worried about how fast he backs up. We're just trying to get it to where all you have to do is barely wiggle and he starts taking sequential steps back. And he's getting a release every time he takes a step.

The Process

You will be standing out in front of your horse, about five or six feet away from him. At any point, if he walks towards you, you're going to start shaking the rope really big or waving your arms or doing whatever you have to do in order for him not to come towards you. If he takes a step towards you without you asking him to, get him back.

You're going to start off by barely wiggling your rope a little bit. Your hand is only going to be moving about three inches. And if you look down at your rope, you'll notice it puts that signal through the rope up to his nose on the halter. We will refer to this as one ounce of pressure.

If you get no response, you may need to jump to ten pounds of pressure. You're going to raise your hand up high and then come down real suddenly. That's going to put a fairly firm bump on the nose of the halter. That's what you will do ONLY when one ounce doesn't work. Always offer the light deal first.

Get Started

As you're standing out in front of your horse, start wiggling the lead rope a little bit. We're going to give him a few seconds here. Now, if he hasn't taken a step back yet, or if he hasn't even shifted his weight back a little bit, you're going to raise your hand up and now go down and give a bump.

And then if he still hasn't shifted his weight back or taken a step back, go up real high again and then go down and give a bump again. So you will continue going down, down, down until he shifts his weight or takes a step back. If he goes forward or sideways, just keep on doing the big ones. Down, down, down. At some point he will either stop moving or he might even stop and then back up a step.

Watch The Feet

Watch the feet very carefully when you do this. Remember, it's not the pressure, it's the release that they learn from. So make sure when any one of those four feet even goes kinda back, you give him a full release for a few seconds.

Repeat this several times. A little bit of a wiggle, just a little bit, and let him feel it for a few seconds. If he still hasn't taken a step back, we're going to go up high with our lead rope hand and we're going to go down, down, down. Be sure to watch his feet. When he backs up, you're going to give him a full release or even if he shifts his weight rearward.

All you're doing here is letting your horse feel the light wiggle and then showing him what that means.

You Missed It

Following up with the bigger pressure is to convey, "Hey buddy, you missed it. You should have gotten it done before I had a chance to get bigger and heavier." This is how you create lightness in a horse. You teach them to beat you to the heaviness.

Work On It

I want you to work on this for a few minutes until, when you wiggle that rope just a little tiny bit, within a few seconds, he shifts his weight back and/or takes one step backwards before you have a chance to get real big and heavy.

Remember, you're only going to give him (at most) five seconds on the light pressure before you go big. You don't want him to learn to ignore it and hang on it.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Repetition

Keep repeating that process until he'll give you at least four or five consistent steps with a release in between. You can wiggle the rope and he takes a step back. Then you release.

Then you can wiggle the rope and he takes more steps. You need to get several of those to get him real sure about it. Make sure he is getting confident about what he needs to do here.

Do this a few times until you can back him five or six steps without ever having to get really big with your pressure.

Conclusion

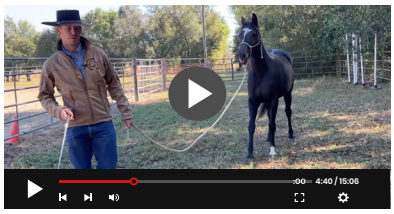
Respecting space and having a horse easily back up by the wiggle of a lead rope is the bedrock of all your groundwork. This exercise needs to be so good that it's almost automatic and your horse gets in the habit of staying out of your bubble.

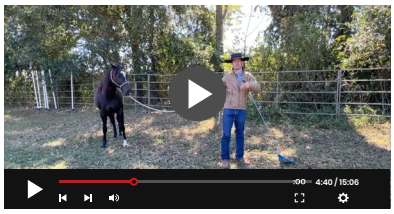
06

Leading Exercises

This session will focus on leading at the walk. It will cover having your horse stay way back behind you and also leading at the shoulder. Your horse will be in a halter with a leadrope. A lunge whip/flag is used in the leading at the shoulder section.

TRACK 06
Leading Exercises





GOAL: Your horse will maintain his distance when leading and learns to yield to halter pressure.

- ☐ Horse waited on me to get out to the end of the lead rope without taking a forward step
- ☐ I led him for 1 minute and he maintained his distance behind me
- ☐ When I stopped suddenly, my horse stopped without taking any extra steps
- ☐ When I tighten the lead, he immediately jumps into a trot and comes up by my shoulder

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The goal is to develop some awareness into the human so they can start using timing and effective communication and carry on a conversation with the horse. To relay the message to the horse that “I want you to stay where I put you and I can position you anywhere that I want as I’m leading you around”.

Things to Know

The better you can do the previous exercise, where you easily and lightly get your horse to stop and even back up a little bit, the better this is going to go. You should be able to lead your horse at your shoulder or eight feet behind you or four feet behind you. He should maintain the distance and position you ask him for.

The Process

Because so many horses are tipped the other way, we always start with getting him to stay way, way, way back there behind you. That’s a pretty simple deal. You’re just going to lead him around and be out at the very end of your lead rope. This works best if you have at least an eight-foot lead. As you’re leading him around, watch over your shoulder as you walk. Now, if the horse stays way back there and keeps enough tension in the lead to keep it from getting real droopy or, even worse, touching the ground, then you’re okay.

Most likely, you’ll be able to go about ten feet and then by that point, if you’re paying attention, you’ll notice the lead rope has gotten a lot more slack in it. That’s because the horse was slowly gaining ground on you as you were leading him. This is what we’re trying to eliminate. We need it to be to where if we tell the horse to stay eight feet back, that’s where he stays.

To even begin getting this established, you’ve got to be able to be in front of him by several feet. So you will face your horse and start backing away from him, feeding out the lead rope so you don’t pull him up towards you. Now as you’re doing this, be ready because he might try to take a step towards you.

Any time that happens, at any point, you’re going to start shaking the lead rope and doing whatever you have to do to get him to stop and then back up a few steps. You might need to work for a few minutes on just getting him to stand still and let you get out in front of him to the end of the lead rope.

What's Next

Once you have that established, then you're going to turn around and simply walk off while keeping an eye on him out of your peripheral vision, looking over your shoulder. If you pay a little bit of attention, you'll feel when the rope has got some tension on it versus when it's getting really droopy. You may even feel the rope starting to vibrate in your hand. That's how you know that it dropped so low it's rubbing the ground. If your horse gets that close, then you're late.

Possible Scenarios

It's very common to have to stop about every five feet that you walk and turn around and face your horse, get him stopped, back him up three or four steps, and then you can turn back around and walk off again. You're going to have to keep communicating the message, "Hey, back, back up. Stop gaining ground on me." Stop and back up again and again and again.

As you do this, he will figure out that he needs to not get within a certain distance of you. You need to be very particular about this. If you put him at eight feet back, he needs to stay eight feet back as you walk around and around and around. You're going to need to work on this for a few minutes, doing it constantly. Planting your feet, turning around, facing him, backing him up a few steps, then turning around and walking off again. Do this until he stays back.

Be Very Particular

If he gains even an inch of ground on you as you're trying to lead him around, don't let that slide. Be particular so the horse can be particular. Lead him around and keep saying through your actions, "Stay back. Stay back. Stay back. Stay back."

Test Your Horse

Assuming you can lead your horse around and he stays back, you've probably gotten him paying really good attention to you. I want you to walk around for a little bit longer and now you're going to start testing him a little bit. As you're walking around, same as before, you're going to look at him over your shoulder. Suddenly, start walking really, really slow. And right when you do that, you want to see his feet immediately, instantly start walking at that real slow, barely moving pace that your feet are moving.

Anytime he walks faster than you, shake the rope, bump him, back him up. Give him a reason to put a little more thought into it. You want him to walk as slow as you walk. So now for five minutes or so, I want you to lead him around and then practice transitions from a real casual walk to a super slow walk and make sure that he does the same. Always be ready to send a wave up that lead rope to say, "Hey, dude," to stop him and slow him up if he doesn't slow up immediately right when you do.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

One Step Further

Now we're going to take it one step further. As you're walking around real casual, you're going to be looking over your shoulder at his front feet. As you're walking, you're going to suddenly, and I mean real suddenly, plant your feet and freeze in your tracks. You should see his feet do exactly the same thing right when you do it. Now, you don't want him to take an extra step after you suddenly freeze. If he does, turn around and face him, back him up five or six steps, and then you'll immediately walk off. Then try it again.

So now once again, I want you to work on this. Repeat this until he immediately freezes the instant that you do. Remember, you want his feet to freeze, not to slow down and then take an extra half a step. Spend a few minutes on that.

Halter Pressure

So now we hope that at this point, the human has a pretty good concept of how to be particular and how to be ready to help that horse get real particular and accurate about how he needs to be attentive when he is being led around from the ground.

Now we will work on being light to halter pressure. Stand in one spot on the left side of your horse. The lead rope will be in your right hand. There will be about two feet of distance between your right hand and where the lead rope ties into the halter. Don't move your feet yet. Hold out and extend your right arm to put some forward pulling tension on that lead rope. Now what that's going to do is make the halter tighten up under his chin and on his poll a little bit. When you do that, the horse should instantly take a step forward before that rope really even has a chance to get tight.

But most likely, that didn't happen. So we're going to work on this for a little bit. This exercise will get a horse light and responsive to a halter. This is how you really help out a horse that pulls back when tied. And this is how you get a horse to lead up real nice and free when you ask him to come forward.

So as you're standing by your horse, you're going to do all that again. Reach out with your right hand and tension that lead rope. In your left hand, you will have a lunge whip with a flag tied on the end. The flag is going to be pointed behind you. Right after you let the horse feel that tension on the halter, if he doesn't immediately take a step or two forward, use your flag with your left hand and just tap him on his butt to try to get him to take a step forward.

Now when you first do this, he might go more sideways than forward. Just keep the tension on the rope and hang in there until you feel like he went forward a little bit. The instant he goes forward, release everything. Work on this for about five minutes and get him where he's pretty sure that when you tighten the lead rope, he needs to take a step forward.

Conclusion

Think of this as the same concept as earlier when we were teaching him to back up. I don't want you to pull the rope really hard. I want you to just raise that right arm to take the tension out of it where you can feel a little bit of tension. Give him a few seconds to take a step forward off of that pressure.

If he doesn't get it done within a few seconds, that's when you're going to come in with your flag tapping back there on his hip to say, "Hey, this is what that meant." So that's the deal. Work on that for a few minutes until you get him where he'll take some nice steps forward. Then you are ready to proceed to '07 Leading By The Shoulder'.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

07

Leading By The Shoulder

We're going to assume that your horse is now good at leading up off of halter pressure from a standstill. So now you will start leading him around at your shoulder. Remember, your horse should be able to lead both back behind you and at your shoulder.

TRACK 07
Leading By The Shoulder



GOAL: Your horse becomes light and responsive to halter pressure.

- [ ] While leading, I wiggle the lead and he begins slowing down until he is way back behind at the end of the lead and holds his position
- [ ] When I lead him around, he is starting to match my speed without much help from me
- [ ] My horse lightly responds to tension on the halter and moves up beside my shoulder

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to ensure your horse is light and responsive to halter pressure and can easily be led at your shoulder.

Things To Know

Never hold your lead rope right under your horse's chin. That can give you a false sense of control, but the goal is to have control of your horse's feet and mind through feel, not force. Hold the lead rope at least twelve inches or so below the chin.

Change It Up

First, you're going to have your horse five or six feet behind you. You don't want to get them too far back, because when you pull the rope to ask him to jump up by your shoulder, it could be hard to reach his hip with the flag.

As you're leading him five feet behind you, smoothly hold your arm out and put tension on the lead rope. What you want is for him to immediately jump right off of the light pressure on that rope and come up by your shoulder. If he doesn't, you know what to do. Use your flag and reach back behind you and tap him on his hip to have him jump forward.

Walk around for five or ten minutes to practice having the horse a few feet behind you, and then adding tension to the rope to ask him to get right up by your shoulder.

Goals

instantaneous from the horse. I don't want you to pull on him. I want you to give a light signal. Just take the tension out, let him feel that on his halter, and then give him a second or two. And if he hasn't jumped right up from behind you and gotten right up there by your shoulder, use your flag.

Conclusion

As you lead your horse around, he should be able to maintain the spot you put him. Whether it's 8 feet behind you or at your shoulder. This goes a long way towards building an attentive, respectful, and refined horse.

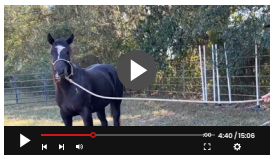
HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

08

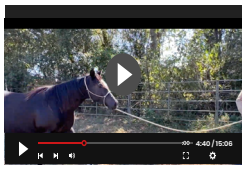
GW Lateral Movements

Lateral movements are a key factor in everything you will do with your horse. This section will establish and refine the process of having control of your horse's shoulders and hips. Your horse will be in a halter and lead rope. A lunge whip/flag is used. Obviously, you would want to do all these exercises on both the right and left sides.

TRACK 08
GW Lateral Movements







GOAL: Establish refined control of your horse's feet by moving his shoulders and hips

- ☐ While backing, when I raise my arm and use some flag, my horse will look in the direction of my arm without walking forward
- ☐ While backing, my horse will reach laterally with the front feet for 1 step in the direction of my outstretched arm
- ☐ I can do the 2 exercises above smoothly, within 5 seconds, with no flag, 3 times on each side without the horse taking a step forward
- ☐ With and without a flag, I can back and yield the front several steps either direction until the horse faces completely perpendicular to where I am facing without taking a single step forward.
- ☐ From the position above I can raise my arm and he walks forward into a lunge at walk
- ☐ Horse is able to make 10 smooth laps at a walk on both sides and does not drift in or out. Horse does not trot, stop, or face up.
- ☐ While lunging at a walk, I can wiggle the lead and the horse stops within 3 seconds without facing up.
- ☐ I can lunge and halt with clean direction changes at a walk
- ☐ When I lift and bump my horse's nose towards me, his hip steps the opposite direction
- ☐ Advanced challenge for the overachievers - when I lean towards and look at my horse's hip, it steps over

Objective

The objective of this section is to work on moving the shoulders and hips by using only a light cue. You will notice your horse's attentiveness, trust, and respect greatly improve as you continue to get refined control of his feet.

Things To Know

These fundamental elements must be in place before your horse can lunge correctly. Your horse will not be able to make smooth and clean direction changes without good shoulder control. The key to establishing shoulder control is for the horse to be backing before you ask the shoulder to step over. The key to hip control is slightly tipping the nose in the opposite direction you want the hip to step.

Shoulders

First, we're going to work on the shoulders. But you must have a good back in place where you can just wiggle the lead rope and he'll easily and consistently continue backing up (refer back to section 05 Leading | Backing). High quality shoulder control is what we're going after. Don't settle for sloppy maneuvers with minimal effort.

It doesn't matter if you're on the ground or on your horse's back. When a horse is first learning lateral movement of his shoulders, it's so much easier to have it always be accurate if you first get him backing.

Here's the trick, and this is what everybody struggles with. Do not attempt to move the shoulders unless the horse is actively backing. If he stops backing, get him backing again. It's not ....back him up and then move his shoulders. It's AS he is backing.

Get Started

You will be facing your horse. The lead rope's going to be in your left hand and your flag's going to be in your right hand. Start wiggling the rope and he should start backing up continually. You will have him back up for a bit. Don't get in a hurry. You're going to stay smooth. You're just letting him back up.

Now AS he is backing, smoothly start bringing your flag mostly in front of him, but also towards the horse's left cheek as the horse is facing you. You will hang in there until you can get him to look to his right. The goal is for him to slightly look to his right (he's still backing). You're only trying to get him to tip his nose to the right away from that flag, which is smoothly working its way up towards his left cheek. When he looks to the right, release everything. You're all done for a minute.

Let him soak on that. Then I want you to rinse and repeat that three or four times. Or even do it ten times until right when you go to reach with that flag, he immediately knows where to look to make it all stop. Get that really well established and get him sure about that.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

He has to continue backing through all of this. That is the key priority. He maintains back. Now you're going to do the exact same thing again, but you're going to hang in there a little bit longer. And you might even need to tap him on his cheek if you're doing this for a full 60 seconds and he still hasn't turned a little bit. So, come up on the left side of his cheek as he is backing. And this time you're going to hang in there even after he looks. When he looks, that's great, but you're going to keep hanging in there until you notice that he reaches to his right with his shoulders. As he's backing, you want to see his front right foot step to his right, which would be away from the flag.

The reason we stay in front of the horse and the flag stays mostly in front of the horse is because it helps them stay back on their hocks and collected a little bit. This will help the front end stay light. That makes it easier to step their front end to the right.

The instant you see the shoulders, or sometimes referred to as the withers, move to his right away from you, away from the flag, completely turn everything off and let him soak. Rinse and repeat that several times until he does it real sure and instantaneously. Then you can ask him to maintain it. Step again, step again, step again.

End Result Of Shoulder Control

The end result is that your horse is backing in a circle. He's maintaining his reverse motion through all of this, but now he's started to reach to the right with his front feet as they come off of the ground, which is obviously what moves his shoulders, his withers, his neck, his cheek – all that is going to move to his right away from you and your flag. This is the ultimate goal of yielding the shoulders and how you would begin to teach it.

Helpful Tips

One main tip about this. Watch their front feet. So let's say you're backing them and you're pushing on the cheek and they look like they're just about to make it, and then they stop backing. Totally forget about trying to move the front end. Bump your lead rope and get them backing again. Backing is what allows this to work. So you're always going to be ready to say with your actions, "Bump, bump, bump. Don't leak forward."

If you work on this exercise for five minutes. Then for five minutes and ten seconds, your horse should not take or attempt to take a single step forward. You'll get really good at this to where you'll recognize when they even start to lean forward a little and you'll go ahead and bump the lead rope right there. This is a great opportunity to improve your timing.

This will be critical once you get on their back. Obviously, in any circumstance, the sooner you can get there, the quicker and more effectively the horse will absorb and consume the material. So you're always ready with that left hand, which is holding the rope, to bump, bump, bump, bump, bump anytime he stops backing. Work on this over a few different sessions. But get it to where it's going really well.

Adjust To Your Horse

Some people might do better to not use a flag and just use their hand and forearm to wave up by the cheek. And this is another thing a lot of people make a mistake on. If the horse is hanging on it, do not be afraid to bump him and get bigger. Do whatever you need (with fairness by offering the light cue first) to not allow him to lug on any of these things. Now if the horse is easily and actively moving his feet, that means he is trying. So you wouldn't necessarily need to increase pressure. That would just be more of a keep presenting it and give him more time to figure out where to go with that front end.

If the horse stops moving, his expression is really dull, and you can barely get him to move, that's a horse not trying. That would be the horse where it would be like one ounce, one ounce. "Hey, you see my hand? You feel that halter? You missed it. Boom, boom." You get real big as if to say, "Hey sucker, quit hanging on that. Get off it." Then obviously the second he kind of wakes up and moves, you would stop and let him absorb that for a minute.

And there's other horses that are trying, but they're also kind of bothered. So it's like the minute you go to raise the flag, they get really weird. Okay, well, don't raise the flag as high. Keep the flag further away from them. A major point of this exercise is that you get to adjust yourself to find the approach that works best with different types of horses.

Types Of Horses

There are four basic types of horses.

You've got the one that Ray Hunt would call "responsive and right on".

You've got the one that's dead and dull and pluggy and needs to be given a really good reason to wake up and get light. That's where the firmness comes in.

You have others that are really trying, they just have no idea what they're supposed to do. That's where it's a hang in there and wait and look for the smallest change, slightest try, and reward it. Rewarding small tries goes along with all this.

But then you have the one that is definitely moving his feet, but he's spastic. Like, "Oh my gosh, I don't know what's going on." Some of these horses, right when you push on their cheek, they'll act like they're going to do it and they might do it a little bit and then they try to run off and they just jump out of there. Well, in that case, you'd stop them and bump, bump and get them stopped, and get them backing again.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Backing Is The Key

So remember, at any point really, but especially when you go in there to push on that cheek, and especially right after those shoulders move away a little bit, nine out of ten times you will need to be right there ready with your halter rope to bump, bump so they don't try to walk off immediately after taking that lateral step with their shoulders. You've got to be really good about that. Be on your A game.

If a horse backs up really well and he's not dull to pressure, this is a very easy thing to get going. You will begin to realize that a lot of wonderful things are built into your horse in the process of getting lateral shoulder control. That's how all this stuff goes. It's only hard for people because they usually don't keep the horse backing. And remember to push on the cheek, not the neck or the shoulder.

Now The Hind End

Moving the hind end is fairly easy. Just about everybody knows about disengaging the hip. But we're going to hit on it briefly.

Let's say the horse is facing you. The lead rope is in your left hand. You're going to start walking towards the left side of his body (your right), back towards his hip. As you go back there, adjust your lead rope to where there's only about three to four feet in between your hand and his chin. Then you're going to lift and bump on the lead rope in your left hand. Your flag or the tail end of your lead or some kind of reinforcement aid is going to be in your right hand.

As you walk back there to his hip, you might want to even smooch a little bit. But lifting and bumping his nose towards you (mostly the lifting action) with the lead rope is going to really help him disengage his hips. Remember the hips will be very easy to unlock if the nose slightly tips the opposite direction that you want the hips to go. So if you're walking to the horse's left hip, meaning you're walking towards his left side, and you bump his nose a little bit to his left, the hind end is going to be way more apt to step to the right.

Lightness

Try to get this really light. The lighter you get it and the further away from the horse you can be when you do it, the more advanced your groundwork is getting. So think about lightness with the hips, too.

Remember, think one ounce, give them a few seconds and then jump up to ten pounds if he doesn't respond. Don't fall into the trap of slowly adding more pressure until he does it, because they'll learn to lay on that and be dull.

When they're first learning it, you're just playing a big game of hot and cold. Anytime they get the slightest bit lukewarm, or even if they even get a little bit less cold in the beginning, you need to go ahead and release them because they got just a little closer to it.

When working on the horse's left side, keep your left hand high, up by the eye or the cheek area. That will allow you to bend the nose a little to the left without having the shoulders come in. Anytime that happens, you're going to abort the mission and push really firmly on that cheek and neck area as if to say, "Hey, shoulders, get back out there. Don't come in here where I'm standing."

Remember, earlier we said anytime the horse starts to crowd with any part of his body, it's critical you abort whatever you were working on and fix the crowding-ness. Because if they crowd, there's really no point in trying to work on much of anything. It all goes back to their instincts. A horse that crowds can't see you as a confident leader.

Advanced Version

The advanced version of the hips would look more like this. You're standing eight feet out directly in front of your horse at the end of your lead rope. Take one step to your right and then barely lean towards his hip from there. Look at the hip. Point your whole body at it. Point your eyeballs at it. And you might wiggle the lead rope a little bit. Lifting action is not required. Bent nose is not required anymore. Just that little gesture from your body language, a small wiggle in the rope and a little bit of a smooch or click, causes the hind end to pop right over.

The even more advanced version is to do this from even further away. Instead of being directly in front of him and taking one step to your right to push on that left hip, you will be directly in front of him and not even step left or right. You will just slightly lean around him a little bit like you're trying to stare at that hip. And with just that gesture, the hip will step over.

Conclusion

Building clean and sharp lateral movements into your horse is an integral part of his foundational training. You can't get this stuff 'too good'. The ultimate goal would be that you simply assume a position, the horse does the rest, and the movement just easily happens.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

09

Fencing

Before moving on to the riding section, we need to ensure that your horse is okay with you on his back. To implement this lesson, you will need a way to get up above the horse. You can sit on top of a panel or study gate, you can stand on the back of a pickup, you can stand on a tall stump, or you can even use a mounting block. We will work on having your horse come underneath you and willingly give you his back. Your horse will be in a halter with a long lead rope. A lunge whip/flag will be handy.

TRACK 09
Fencing



GOAL: Build a deep desire in your horse to be right underneath you

- [ ] Horse will come underneath me from either site without swinging his hip out
- [ ] Horse will easily place his back right under my body and stand relaxed as I move all around him

Objective

The goal of fencing is to build a deep desire in the horse to want to be right underneath you, i.e., have a human up above him. You're actually creating a magnet to draw the horse underneath you. It's also going to eliminate any chance of the horse being unsure about being mounted. When a horse is not good at standing still to be mounted, this is the fix.

Things To Know

This is something that you need to do no matter how long you've been riding any horse. There's no scenario where this is not greatly beneficial. Many horses being ridden around are not comfortable with the fact that a human is above their back. If a human being on his back is a source of anxiety for the horse, many problems will follow. This fencing exercise has been the missing link for more horses than I can count.

Do not skip this one.

How To Begin

You will need a flag and a halter with a lead rope that's at least 8 feet long. Climb up on something that puts you above the horse – a panel, a fence, a tailgate, or even a mounting block if that's the highest thing you have. The secret to getting this going is to not try to pull the horse up underneath you. The secret is to send him over to one side and make it feel good to be where you are. Work on either his right or left side until he gets confident about it. Then do the same thing on the other side.

The Process

We'll first be working on the horse's right side. So that means you would need to push the horse over to your left so he is parallel up against the fence (if you're sitting on a panel) or parallel to whatever you are using. So now as you're standing or sitting there, if you look to your left, your horse is somewhat parallel to the fence. Now, as you start to try to reel him in and get him closer to you, he will probably do okay as far as getting his face right up to you.

On some horses, when you try this, you might have to work on it and pull on them some because they might get sticky and not be real sure about even getting their face up to you.

So don't be afraid to pull, but every time they take a forward step, you should release them. If they are really stuck and you get them to take even a small forward step, you should just take 30 seconds to pet them or just leave them alone. Allow the horse to process how he got that release. So when the feet get stuck, don't get in a hurry. Just keep pulling and releasing and pulling and releasing until they take a forward step.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Hips Swings Out

And then once they get up to that point, about the time their withers start to get right in front of you, the butt will start to swing out. Now, all you have to do when that butt swings out is start all over again. Just come in there with your flag and push him all the way back over there to your left side where he's five or six feet down the fence from you and then start over.

You're just going to keep on rinsing and repeating this. And every time he evades being under you in any way, just start over again.

With most horses, it only takes about 15 or 20 minutes until they'll put their back right underneath you, which is what you're looking for.

Progression

Once you get to this point, climb up and down the fence, put one leg over, pet them with your leg, use your toe and scratch their butt, anything you can think of. Get them to where they are so comfortable with it, that it's not even a thing anymore.

Conclusion

Repeat the same process on the horse's left side. The key to getting this good is to simply start over any time they step out away from the fence. Use the flag or lead rope and put them back where they started. This fencing process has proven to be a fail proof problem fixer time and time again. Take the time to get it good.

10

Magnets

As we begin the riding section, we will first discover and eliminate any magnets. A magnet is anything your horse is drawn to. It could be another horse, the barn, the gate, etc. You will want to do this

TRACK 10
Magnets



IMPORTANT: If your horse is hot, goey, and reactive, skip ahead to section "20 Stopping Foundation" and do the re-directing exercise before continuing on. Once you have that conquered, proceed with section "10 Magnets".

GOAL: Change your horse's thinking about where he wants to be

- [ ] I can successfully make it difficult for my horse to be close to his magnet
- [ ] My horse is beginning to consider leaving the magnet
- [ ] Allowing total free rein, my horse no longer seems to have much of a preference of where he wants to be

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The objective is to change your horse's thinking about where he wants to be. We will make it difficult to go to the magnet and easy to make the decision to leave it.

Things To Know

Even though this is one of the easiest things to fix, it's the thing that really gets in the way of many horses and riders. I used to think that for this to work, you had to get them hustling and really make them trot tight fast circles close to the magnet. Then through experimenting, I found out you can completely fix these magnets just simply at a walk. Now the reason this is so powerful is because gone are the days where you're trying to fight the horse to get him to go where you want him to go.

Eliminating magnets is one of the absolute, hands down, most important fundamental things you need to get taken care of before you can expect to make much headway with a horse.

Prelude To The Process

You're going to totally let your horse go exactly where he wants to be, and then get in his way and make it difficult to be there. The reason this is so great is you make it his idea to decide that he wants to leave the magnet.

This makes the horse more open to your suggestions. It gets them more mentally neutral. Now they don't have all of these other thoughts and ideas that are getting in the way of what you're trying to do.

A really common one is... say you're trying to work on doing circles to the left, but over to the right is the barn. Every time you come around, he loses his cadence and doesn't really stay on the circle. He falls onto your right leg because he is trying to get where that magnet is pulling him.

Remember, it's a very simple timing thing. Even on horses that are really sticky. The most this should take is about 20 to 30 minutes to start seeing him make some changes.

Watch him carefully. When you first start out, he might begin to leave that area, or he might only leave it for a few feet, and then he'll turn right back to go right back. Then, a few minutes later, he might go as far as 20 or 30 feet away from whatever that area was. Then he'll turn back. So you just keep repeating, showing him that "Hey, this is difficult to be around here."

Pretty quick he will get to where he wants nothing to do with that area anymore. Remember, it's very important that you don't really use much rein at all. You're trying to give him complete freedom so you can tell if you need to keep doing it or he's pretty much got the idea.

The ultimate test is that you can point him at the area he's drawn to, drop the reins and cross your arms, and then tell him to go. Before he gets to that area, he will automatically turn and go any random direction except for that area. That's how you know you've successfully eliminated that magnet, i.e. the buddy sour exercise.

Instructions

Get on your horse, let the reins be very loose, and have him start walking around. The goal is to keep him walking, but don't steer him at all. Now, after you do this for about five minutes, you will probably find that he has a preference of where he wants to be.

If you're riding in an arena, a real common one is he only stays down on one end instead of just randomly walking around taking up the whole pen. That's another thing that you want to start seeing when you work on this – that he starts to go any random direction and take up the entire area that you're riding him in.

When you figure out where his preference of being is, any time he is in that area you will start rhythmically bumping the reins. Left rein, right rein, left rein, right rein, and you can do it with a little bit of firmness. You won't jerk on your horse, but make life in that area unpleasant.

You will also use a little bit of leg to annoyingly kick, kick, kick, kick. You're going to keep this going for quite a while. As you're doing that, you will time it that anytime he points away from that area, ease off and open up. Meaning you're going to relax the reins and relax your legs and pet your horse. Make it feel good every time he faces away from that area.

Then, without trying to steer him or control him at all, as he comes back around to that area, you start amping it up again, getting in his way. That is literally all there is to it. There's not really a wrong way to do it, as long as you're making it difficult to be in the general area he's drawn to and easy to not be there.

When you first start, if he even glances towards another direction, then you could ease off for a second or two right there.

Start working on that. You don't have to get it all in one session. But you should see a big change within two or three sessions of doing this for about 30 minutes each time. If your timing is accurate, and you're doing what we're talking about here, within two or three rides you'll have this part completely knocked out and taken care of.

More Visual Examples

If you would like more visual references of doing this, we have many, many examples on the buckaroocrew.com website. If you do want to trot them and hustle their feet when they are in the area they are drawn to, that will be effective, too. Or even combine that with the bumping and kicking.

Conclusion

It doesn't really matter if you make the feet hustle or just bump the bit and kick a little. As long as you're making it difficult to be in one area and easy to be in the other, that's all there is to it.

Have at it.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

11

Light To The Leg

Every horse needs to be light to the rider's leg. And it should only take about ten minutes to get that going and see a significant difference in his response to your leg aid. You will be mounted on your horse in an area large enough so that he feels like he has room to move out and go somewhere. You will NOT be wearing spurs.

TRACK 11
Light To The Leg



GOAL: Your leg, seat, and body position cues to begin to mean something to your horse

- ☐ From a stand still, I can barely touch with my heel as I move my hand one inch forward and the horse immediately walks off with energy.
- ☐ While at a walk, with the same cues as above, the horse jumps smoothly into trot and slows back down on his own within 30 seconds.
- ☐ While at extended trot, when I increase the life in my body, the horse smoothly rolls into a lope for several strides and comes back to trot on his own.

Objective

The objective is for your leg, seat, and body position cues to begin to mean something to your horse. With just a slight suggestion from you, your horse will begin moving or move faster, with an immediate response.

Things To Know

This is the exercise I have everybody do at clinics to help them really understand and feel how the process of going from one ounce to ten pounds is what creates the lightness. If your horse is ultra sensitive, you may not need to begin with very much pressure at all. Adjust to fit your horse. But never settle for a dull or lifeless response. Always keep in mind that your horse can feel a fly land on his body. If you make a light cue mean something to the horse, he will begin to be light.

Never get heavier with your cue until you have given the horse an opportunity to respond to the light cue first.

Begin The Process - 1st Element

You will be sitting on your horse, and you won't really be up off of your butt. You'll be sitting down on your pockets, very dead, very dull. You'll basically be at zero in your seat. Your reins will have a couple of inches of slack in them.

Now, I want you to practice this three or four times, and don't overdo it because if you overdo this, you're defeating the purpose. Slide your hand forward about two inches and you're done. Bring it back to where it was, just resting on the horse's mane/wither area. Now let's try that again. Pick up the reins an inch and slide your hand an inch or two forward, and done. Back to normal. Back to neutral, let's call it. Hand on the mane or withers.

Add The 2nd Element

Now we're going to add a second element to it. This time as you come to life with that hand (we're talking an inch here, guys) I want you to also roll up off of your pockets into a more active seat position like you would be if you were walking or trotting. So this time we'll do the seat along with the hand. The hand and the seat come forward an inch, and we're done. Back to square one, back to dead, back to zero.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Add The 3rd Element

Now we're going to add one more element to it. This time, and listen guys, don't overdo this because it won't work. When I say we're going to let a little bit of leg touch him, I want you to think of it like this. You're going to let the denim of your jeans just barely brush the little fuzzy hairs on their bellies. Another way to think of it is you're just going to barely let them feel the edge of the leather of your saddle fender move about an eighth of an inch on their rib cage.

Remember, everybody knows a horse can feel a fly land anywhere on his body, but nobody truly believes that because they're not treating their horse like he actually can feel these subtle changes.

So when I say use your leg, I mean where if you actually feel yourself squeeze with the heel or the calf, you have done way too much. I mean a little bitty reaching style touch of a leg. It's not a squeeze. It's literally a quarter of an inch movement of the calves.

We're going to do all three together, the seat, the hand, and the calves, and come to life with all three of them, and done. Go back to zero. Do it two more times. It all comes to life, a quarter of an inch change and that's it. You go back to zero with everything.

You need to be aware that this is how you ask your horse to come to life and go. No matter if it's from walk to trot, walk to run, standstill to trot, standstill to walk, whatever.

And just a fun fact, it should take equally as little to bring them back down to a stop or standstill or a walk, even at a full run. They can feel it. It just doesn't mean anything to them because we've never ridden like we expected it to mean something.

Continue The Process

Now this is where we're going to actually put it into action. As you're sitting there on your horse, all three of them (seat, hand, leg) are going to come to life, a quarter of an inch. And then if he doesn't walk off, you're going to bring your calves a good ways off of that saddle, and then go boom with your legs. Give him a good solid kick, and then keep increasing that kicking. (NO spurs). Keep increasing that until they walk off. Once they walk off, take the leg completely off, let them walk five feet or so, and then bring them back down to a stop. Now we're going to repeat.

Remember, it's one ounce FIRST, give them a second or two. "You missed it. Leg, leg". And then right when he walks off, everything's done.

Repeat The Process

Spend about five minutes repeating that. I absolutely guarantee that if you do it just as we're saying, you will see a huge, quick change. Don't be afraid to kick him. Use your legs. Think of a bird wing flapping, bang, kick, kick. But the instant he goes to even start to think about walking off, all of that needs to completely go back to zero. Otherwise you're just kicking your horse and you're not being clear with him. And that's a pretty unkind thing to do to a horse.

After doing just a few of these, you will barely come to life on your horse and 'boom', he will walk off before you have a chance to get big and heavy. When that happens, I want you to take a good 20 second break or so, and pet him a whole bunch. Have at it. Don't continue on until you have this going well.

What's Next

If you've continued on, that means you felt a real nice change and your horse is consistently walking off from a standstill without you actually having to squeeze or kick with your leg.

This is a small sample of what everything needs to start feeling like – the sidepass, lowering the head, backing, all of it. You simply make a slight suggestion and the horse has an idea.

The idea that the horse has is, "Ooh, I think I'll do [blank]." That's how much of a signal it should take. And remember what you just did to get that, because that's what you do to get all of this stuff working. You just do it in a little bit different ways. So remember one ounce and then ten pounds. That's one of the key factors to build lightness into your horse.

Rinse And Repeat

So now, once again, I want you to offer him that light touch. Let him walk off 10 feet or so, then stop him and then rinse and repeat. And I want you to do that several times.... however many it takes. It usually only takes fewer than ten times of getting heavy to where every time you barely go to reach for him, he comes to life and walks off before you actually need to squeeze to get that to happen.

Remember, this is what it also needs to feel like when you ask him to speed up, no matter what the gait is. That's how light it needs to be. It needs to be a suggestion, not a cue. That's what we're going for here. So work on this for 10 more minutes or so. Make sure he really gets sure that he needs to respond when you reach.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Hot Horse Exception

If the horse is really bothered or hot and goey, you probably wouldn't even need to do this exercise. If he's always wanting to go faster than you are asking, you would need to bring him down with the redirecting exercise. With your hands forward, wide, and low, make multiple direction changes within a 30 foot area until his feet slow. [See section 20 Stopping Foundation]

Conclusion

This is the main exercise we use to let people practice the concept of getting a horse to operate off of a touch, off of a suggestion, off of the slightest change in your body. So keep that in mind. That's how we do everything. When you go to sidepass your horse, you're not going to just pick up the reins and push a leg on him. That's making him heavy. You're just going to open the leg of the side you want to go. If he doesn't start sidepassing, then we kick.

Any time your horse resorts back to being heavy to your leg, stop whatever you had planned and get him light again.

Footnote

We don't use the reins to get the horse to back up. We use the reins because he didn't. We don't use the leg to get them to sidepass, or move forward, or do upward transitions. We use the leg because they didn't. Your reins and your legs are like, "Oh, you blew right through it, buddy. Or you missed it." That's the last resort, like the flag should be with groundwork after the horse starts to get the idea.

12

[Optional] Steering

Congratulations, you have made it to steering. Now, just bear with me on this because it is going to make you a master of rein management. In this whole section you will be mounted on your horse in an enclosed area. Your headgear will be only a halter. You will have one rein (leadrope). A rope-type halter is preferred but any type halter will do. You want your lead rope to be at least six feet long.



TRACK 12
[Optional] Steering

GOAL: Practice the concept of proper rein management when steering your horse

- ☐ I can walk and trot around in a halter, tossing the lead on either side and my horse easily and consistently follows his nose.
- ☐ I can smoothly, quickly, and efficiently lengthen and shorten my rein

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The objective of this section is to practice the important concept of rein management. Good rein management will make a huge impact on your horsemanship, therefore your horse. Bad rein management is the root cause of many horse problems.

Things To Know

The reason we will only use one rein (lead rope) is to force you to practice and improve your rein management. You will not have the second rein to rely on as a crutch.

Rein Management Practice

You're now sitting on your horse. Most likely, you got on from the left so the lead rope is coming up his left side. If it's on the right side, throw it over the other side of his face to where the lead rope's on the left.

First, adjust your lead rope so that it's got a little bit of a droop in it, about seven or eight inches of slack. Your left hand is going to be holding the main lead. Your right hand is going to be holding the tail end. Both of your hands are going to be in front of the saddle horn.

Now, if you loosen your left grip you will find that you can use your right hand to let the lead rope slide up and down through your left hand. Wherever the rope is when you re-tighten your grip, that will be the length of rein that you have. Play with that for a few seconds and get to where you can loosen your grip and then feed the rope in and out, back and forth, through your left hand and re-grip. Do that for 20 seconds or so.

Okay, so now we're going to switch things up. With about eight inches of slack, your right hand holding the tail end is going to be the one that has a solid grip. Loosen your left grip and slide that left hand a few inches down the rope towards his face and then re-grab. Now bring your left hand back up a few inches to where it originally was. Now you've shortened your reins a couple inches. Now, loosen your grip and slide your left hand up the rope a couple inches towards your chest and re-grab. Now let that hand go back down a couple inches to where it originally was and, congratulations, you've made the rein a couple of inches longer.

Do that for 30 or 40 seconds until you feel like you can do it without really putting thought into it.

Steering Process

Now we're going to start talking about the rest of your body. Just get your horse walking off and keep turning him to the left. The end result is we're going to have you going in a 20 foot left circle at a walk. A really common mistake that a lot of riders make is when they go to use that left rein, (you're still in a halter so you still only have one rein, left side) they go to pull and they pull back and they even sometimes lift up as well. I don't want you to do that. I want you to get in an absolute habit where pretty much 100% of the time when you're riding your horse around and you're just wanting him to guide and steer, the hand never goes back. That impedes their forward motion. It will over-bend and collapse their neck, which will not allow them to do this comfortably. A lot of times it'll make their butt swing out, you'll lose your forward motion, you'll lose your flow. So there's a lot of reasons why, but as you're riding around there I just want you to practice bringing that left hand kind of down a couple inches, forward a couple inches, and then directly out to the side. Forward, wide, and low.

So as you're pulling that left rope every time you want him to turn a little bit, I want you to ask for a little bit of a turn at a time. Every time you feel him turn a little, release. Make sure that you're not releasing just because he bends. Forget about if he bends. I want you to feel what his feet are doing. A lot of horses will bend their neck all day but they won't really necessarily turn correctly. It needs to feel like that rope is connected to his two front feet and when you bring your left hand directly out to the left, his whole front end of his body goes that direction very easily and lightly. If it doesn't, don't be afraid to pull until you feel the front end make an active try to turn a little bit to the left. Your right leg should close a little and your left leg should open a little bit, just very slightly.

Feel The Difference

We need to be able to distinguish the difference between when a horse is just kind of bent and not actually going the direction with his feet that you're telling them to versus when the feet are actually following the nose and you feel like you just got power steering. It will go back and forth at first.

A lot of horses, when they're green, they'll bend and not really turn. Other times, they'll kind of just immediately turn real nice. Experiment with that. Remember, every time you go to pull with that left hand, have it straight out. Your elbow should be almost straight with not much bend in it. Your right leg should close a little and your left leg should open a little bit, just very slightly.

Do this until both of your legs and your hand all operate in unison. You're going to be opening everything to the left a little bit and closing everything to the right. Then, if they don't actually turn, you might need to keep pulling a little harder and start kicking with that right leg until you feel them actually turn a tiny bit. When they do, then release everything. Take a few minutes to get it all synced up together.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Next Steps

Now that you've got that going, we will practice lengthening out the rope. You can do this from a standstill. Lengthen out the rope to where it's got a good bit of slack in it. Then you're going to pitch it over the horse's face so that it goes to the other side. Then you're going to re-gather up your slack so that there's only a few inches. Spend a few minutes lengthening out that rope a little bit and using your left hand (the right hand's holding the tail) make it pretty long and droopy. Then swing that a little bit, flick it and pitch it to where everything just shoots right over to the other side of his face.

Then, at that point the left hand is holding the tail end and the right hand is your main hand on your right rein. Right after you pitch that over, loosen the right grip and pull with that left hand to get that slack out of there real smooth but quick. Now you've only got four inches of slack in the rein immediately after you pitch it over.

Okay, now we're going to pitch it back over. Pitch it over and gather up your slack to where you only got a few inches of slack in the rein. Now it's on the left side. Pitch it to the other side, feed the slack out, get it nice and loose, and pitch it to the other side and gather up slack and get your rein gathered. I want you to do that about 20 times on both sides.

Practice Makes Perfect

My top recommendation at this point would be to spend another 30 minutes or so riding your horse around and opening one leg while you close the other leg and bringing your hand outward (not back) when you ask your horse to turn. That's very critical.

Spend the next 30 minutes walking your horse around, doing a whole bunch of direction changes, pitching that rope over to the other side. Get it to where your rein, your body, your legs, your hands, are all flowing and it begins to feel like everything is working as one solitary, well-oiled unit.

Conclusion

Once you determine that your rein management is coordinated and flowy, you would be okay to add back the second rein. But don't neglect these concepts. Continue to practice lengthening and shortening your reins in a smooth but quick way.

13

Reins

In this section, we'll be working on rein management with two reins. You will be mounted on your saddled horse. Headgear can be any type - traditional hackamore, snaffle bit, rope halter – shank bit not recommended. The reins could be mecate, split reins, halter leadrope rein, or any other one-piece rein like roping reins or barrel reins.

TRACK 13
Reins





GOAL: Become proficient at lengthening, shortening, and managing your reins

- [ ] I can feel when my reins are on the edge of contact
- [ ] I can add and remove slack from my reins with minimal effort

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

If there was a secret to making a nice horse, it would be having good rein management – the ability to adjust your reins very quickly, efficiently, and easily. The objective of these exercises is to start you on that amazing path. Rein management is something you will start to experiment with and then continue to develop over time.

Things To Know

There are many reasons why it's so important to be good and comfortable with managing your reins. But the most basic one is that it will allow you to have timing and really get with your horse. No matter what the movement is you're wanting him to do, rein management will allow you to be right there with him so you will have a way, way higher amount of success communicating with him.

Look over the accompanying video a couple times for your rein management and don't get too caught up in it. As you ride, you will get better and better at making these little rein movements and adjustments without even having to think about it. Manipulating your reins will become as natural as breathing. No thought required.

Basic Rein Management

As you're sitting on your horse, have one rein in each hand with your hands about a foot apart, maybe even a little wider than that. Your reins should be adjusted to where there's about only two inches of float or slack in them. Now, once you achieve this adjustment, your hands are basically level with the very top of his withers. All your fingers should be around the reins with a completely closed fist.

Advantages Of Good Rein Management

Your hands are forward, wide, and low with two inches of slack. With reins adjusted like this, you can immediately be there to catch your horse.

So let's say you have a horse that's inattentive while you're walking down the trail. Envision if your horse tries to look to the left. He's going to immediately, automatically tighten and run into that right rein. You didn't tighten it. You just had a good hand set. He tightened it. And the minute he brings his attention and his head back to center, he finds his own release. You don't have to give it, he gives it to himself. This is the beauty of rein management.

If he goes to push with his nose or throw his head and you have a hold of your reins real solid with stiff arms, you're not correcting head tossing. He runs into his own pressure. And then when he comes back down, he finds his own release. The key to a lot of this is just being able to keep your hands and arms solid.

Now, as you're still sitting there, I want you to experiment with this. Your reins are adjusted forward, wide, and low. Raise your hands up about two inches and draw back about an inch.

Right in there somewhere you're going to feel that even though all you had to do was barely move your hands a couple of inches, you immediately feel contact on your hands. We call this feeling the other end of the rein.

Contact

We call this contact or feeling his mouth (or his nose if you're in a halter or hackamore). It doesn't really matter which one. It's the concept. So I like to refer to this as being right on the edge of contact. There's not any pressure on your hands where they're at right now, but there's absolutely zero slack either. Meaning if you pull back another inch, you will feel a noticeable amount of pressure on your hands.

Remember not to use your fingertips and not to bend your wrist. You should feel this in your whole hand. All your fingers should be all the way around the reins with a completely closed fist on the rein.

You'll notice that even though you have a full hold of the reins with non yieldable wrists, that you can still just as easily feel right when that little itty bitty bit of pressure goes to kick in.

So this should be proof to you that holding the reins with only your fingertips is not what allows you to be light-handed. You can feel it just as good with a proper handset.

Lengthening and Shortening

We're going to go over a very simple shortening and lengthening exercise. The rest of the more inventive, creative ones can be watched on the accompanying video.

Begin with about two inches of slack in the reins – hands forward, wide and low like we talked about. You're going to loosen your grip and shake your hands a little bit and see if you can get additional slack to slide through your hands. Now there should be about four inches of slack in the reins.

Once you get there, retighten your grip. And there you go. Now your reins are a little longer.

Now we're going to talk about shortening. I call it the shimmy, shimmy trick. Your hands are going to shimmy about two inches up the rein kind of fast, while you tighten and loosen your grip. So you will shimmy, shimmy, shimmy, and then re-grab the reins. And this is going to make them back to where they only have about an inch of slack in them.

I want you to practice shimming up the reins and getting the slack out of them. And then shimming, pushing the reins down a little bit as you push some slack back through your hand.

Conclusion

I can't stress enough the importance of managing your reins. Once you get even a little proficient at it, your reins will become a valuable communication tool instead of a problem causing hindrance.

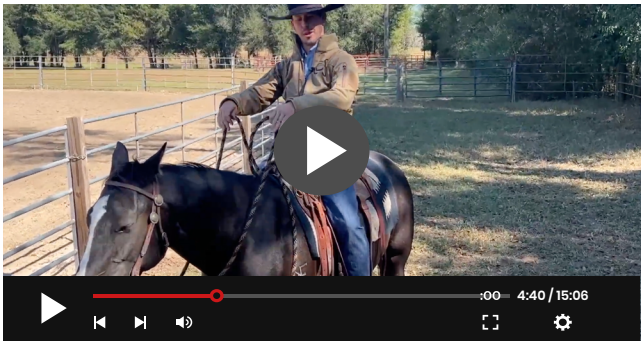
HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

14

Backing Under Saddle

This session is about getting your horse to back up in a proper manner. You will be mounted on your horse and ride two-handed in your typical headgear.

TRACK 14
Backing Under Saddle



GOAL: Give your horse the idea to back up without having to pull him backwards

- ☐ When I pick up the reins and hold pressure he shifts his weight back 5 times in a row
- ☐ When I pick up and hold pressure he takes a step back 10 times in a row
- ☐ When i pick up a signal, he takes a step back
- ☐ When I pick up a signal, he takes ten steps back
- ☐ Advanced challenge for the overachievers - With signal, he backs 100 feet only needing to pull periodically

Objective

The whole objective of this exercise is to give your horse the idea to back up. It is not to pull him backwards.

Things To Know

Starting off, you're not looking for anything big. If he even shifts his weight rearward, give him a full release for five or ten seconds and pet him. Allow him to process. The full release on the reins will make it very obvious to the horse that he found the right answer.

Reins

You will ride two handed. Gather up your reins with your hands about ten inches apart. You only want to see about an inch of slack in each rein.

Start developing good rein management by having the reins properly adjusted for what you're wanting to do. This is one of the biggest keys in having the appropriate timing, hence clear communication, with your horse.

Make sure that you don't actually feel pressure on your hands except for the obvious weight of the reins. When you ask the horse to shift his weight or take a step back, he may do either one. Either will reward him a full release.

Resist the extremely common urge to tighten the reins by using your fingers or bending your wrist. It is very important that you learn to keep your fingers closed on the reins and that you keep your wrist in line with the forearms. Your elbows should be right against your ribcage.

Now here's kind of the magical part about this. Normally when you think, "I'm going to ask my horse to back up," you think, "I use my hands to pull and release the reins,"

But you're actually going to be using your elbows. Have a full closed hand around the reins, a solid hold, wrists rigid, stiff and lined up with the forearms. Your thumbs and knuckles are basically pointed straight up towards the sky.

Now from here, I want you to start focusing on your elbows. You're going to draw back with your elbows, bringing them back just a couple inches. And when you do that, you will begin to feel pressure increase on your hands.

The further back you bring your elbows, obviously the more pressure is going to increase on your hands. This is what the horse is feeling on his mouth or his nose, depending on what you're riding him in.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Edge Of Contact

When you first do this, I want you to only go to what we call the 'edge of contact'. You're only going to bring your elbows back until you feel the other end of the rein in your hand.

Now, some logic might say that you will not be able to have as much sensitivity because you have a solid, closed fist around the reins. But as you do this, you'll see that nothing could be further from the truth. So just bear with me on that.

Just on the edge of contact means you have taken the slack out of the reins and you can begin to feel where the edge of the pressure begins. And we're talking a one or two ounce increase of pressure that you can feel. This is the edge of contact.

Now you will go to that edge of contact at first and wait there for about five, maybe ten seconds. After ten seconds, if you still have not felt the horse shift his weight back, increase it to what would be more like five or six pounds of pressure.
From there, you will give him another five seconds to shift his weight back or take a rearward step. After five seconds, if no response, you will increase it another five pounds. And then you're going to continue doing that until the horse either shifts his weight back or takes a step back.

If he pushes against your hand with his face (this is why you have a solid grip and have proper hands and rein management) just stiffen up your arms and hold steady and let him work on it. Let him continue pushing against his own self-inflicted pressure.

The Horse's Thoughts

At some point, he will have the thought of, "Hey, maybe I should move backwards in some form." The instant you feel him start to have that thought, (for example he shifts his weight rearward) drop those reins like they're hot potatoes or they just became scalding metal. An instant full release of the reins.

Now if you do this and your horse starts to walk off, same deal. You're just going to increase the pressure and you'll hold.

What if he goes sideways? Same deal. You increase the pressure and wait. You're not trying to pull the horse backwards. That'll end up causing a heavy horse. What you're trying to do here is be in the horse's way. Let him experiment and work out in his own mind. Make it be his idea to move rearward, whether it begins as a thought or is actually a physical action. You're trying to make it his idea.

Progression

After some repetition of this, when you pick up the reins, reach for the horse, and ask him to go backwards, you're not picking up the reins because you're getting ready to pull him backwards. You're simply picking up the reins to cause him to have an idea.

The idea that he will start having more and more consistently because of your excellent, amazing timing is, "Hey, I think I'm just going to go backwards."

Can you see the difference there in causing a horse to back up versus simply assuming a position with your body and your hands and your reins so that he comes to life and starts carrying you rearward? These are going to be the initial steps in building a true proper back up on any horse.

The Goal

The goal is to get him to take one step back, with only two or three ounces (and I do mean only two or three ounces) of pressure. He should consistently take a step back ten times in a row. Only come in with reins when he's not backing up. Your reins will float in timing with his steps. It's also pretty important that he gets sure enough about it to where he gets it done within two or three seconds of picking up the reins and going just to the edge of contact.

Conclusion

Remember, you are not trying to establish a maneuver. You are trying to establish a thought pattern. You're trying to cause the horse to go to a certain place in his mind to where when he feels you reaching for him, he has an idea.

And the idea that he has, "Oh, I think I'll just start going backwards," where he carries you backwards instead of you having to pull him backwards. This is the main foundation of getting a horse to start backing up. It's his idea and he does it with you.

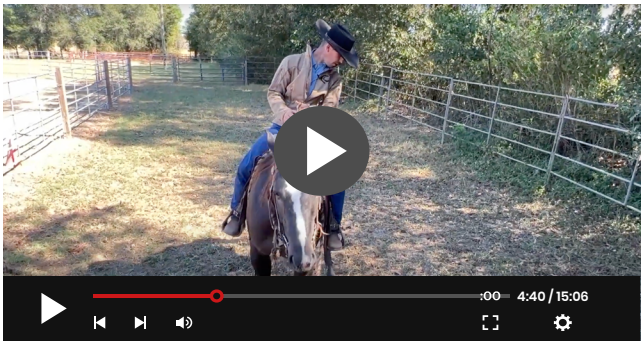
HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

15

Lateral Hips

The section will focus on freeing up your horse's hips laterally. You will be mounted and using your typical headgear. This simple exercise is one of the best ways to release braces in the horse's body and mind.

TRACK 15
Lateral Hips



GOAL: Release braces in your horse by freeing up his hips

- ☐ I can tip the nose and step the hip one step in the opposite direction (both sides)
- ☐ I can tip the nose and step the hip several steps in the opposite direction without any forward motion
- ☐ While pointing at the fence, I can step the hip one step
- ☐ While at the fence I can go from facing to parallel with little effort
- ☐ While in the open I can step the hind around the front for 3 circles with little effort and the front end stays put

Objective

This exercise is what you will use to pick up the correct lead and do flying lead changes if you choose to take it that far. This is how you half pass and side pass. One of the more important reasons to work on hind end lateral control is because it is absolutely mission-critical that you get all of the braces out of your horse. Most of the braces occur in the hind end, and that will actually cause him to also brace through his ribs and his loin and his neck. These exercises will eliminate those braces.

Things To Know

Many people spend a lot of time trying to soften the body, but they never actually get the hips to unbrace and flow through the turns how they should. And even though you might wind up with a horse that bends and is soft, he's still not going to be strong in the right areas. He's still not going to have good balance through maneuvers.

His longevity will not be as good. The odds of him ending up more on his front end are going to be higher if he does not learn to unbrace and use his hind end correctly. We could probably talk for another hour about the mechanics of equine locomotion and why this pertains and is so important. But just trust me. It's all about the hind end. In the next section we will add in developing shoulder control.

Start Here

As you're sitting on your horse, gather up your reins so that you've only got an inch of slack. Both of your hands should be forward wide and low. Now here's where people usually make the mistake when they start trying to do this. You have to understand that this is something that any horse will do even on his first ride. It's not something that really has to be trained into the horse because you're working with his natural locomotion and his natural balance. A colt will do this on his very first ride if you just set up their body correctly.

So, with that being said, the next thing you need to know is the reins are not what causes this to happen.

Remember the reins let them know what to do, the legs and the seat actually have them do it. That's a good way to think of it.

So we already know that if the nose tips one way, the hind end will have a big tendency to go the opposite direction. We also know that an upward lifting motion with a rein will have a tendency to not accidentally move the front end. We want the front end to stay still as we move his hip over.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Step Right

We're first going to try to get the horse to move his hip one step to the right. Here's what you will do. It's not very much with the reins. Lift up on that left rein a little bit and use just enough to barely tip your horse's nose to the left. It might take you a few minutes to get him to simply do that without trying to walk off or back up. If he does walk off, just stop him and start over. If he starts backing up, release the reins, try to get him to walk forward a few steps, then stop him and try again.

Now once you've got that, your left leg is simply going to move back about one or two inches from where it would naturally hang and start bumping lightly with your calf with a rhythmic motion. So kind of think bump, bump, bump, bump, bump.

As you're doing that, be ready with the reins. If he goes to walk off, you'll need to increase the pressure on both reins so he doesn't walk off.

Continue doing this with your left rein and leg. About every five seconds amp up the pressure with the leg and you might give a light bumping lifting motion with that left rein.

There are a lot of different things the horse might do. But don't get in a hurry and just keep hanging in there. You might even have somebody stand on the ground and watch so they can see that he stepped over in his hind end. That's when you will release him and stop the rein and leg. So take your time. Don't over confine the horse. Let him work on it. Let him figure it out. At some point that hip will step over a little bit. When that happens, release everything and pet him for at least 20 seconds or so. Then start over again. Repeat on the other side using your right rein and leg.

Handy Tips

A couple of handy tips. Don't over confine with the reins. If you do, he'll start backing up. Anytime he starts backing up, abort the mission. Ride him forward a few feet and then start completely over. Think of the reins as what you use to stabilize the front end and keep it in the same spot.

Remember, don't overbend the horse's neck. If you do anything more than just slightly tip the nose, if you actually bend his neck, you will collapse his neck. That will throw off his shoulders and cause him to move even more incorrectly. Think of your reins as trying to balance a broom on your finger. Your reins are what you use to do that same thing with the front end. Your reins are what help the front end stabilize and not move around.

When you try to move the hip to the right, the front end might start to try to go that way as well. When you feel that happen, just move both hands directly to the left. That will stop or at least slow up the front end. In this scenario, moving your hands to the left will stop the front end from moving to the right. Then you might have a chance of getting only the hind end to go.

This is later going to be used to make your side pass get really clean, accurate, and balanced. You can start using these lateral movements to build some strength in the right areas of your horse.

You need to get this very well established where you can easily have the hind end move over to the right one or two steps.

Other Side

Now do the total opposite. This time you're going to raise the right rein and slightly tip the nose to the right. And once you get that, you're going to have just a little bit of closed contact on both reins so he doesn't walk forward. And remember having a little contact on both reins is what helps him not overbend and collapse his neck.

So once you get the nose position to the right, the right leg is going to come back just a little bit and you're going to start rhythmically kicking with increasing pressure until you feel that hip pop over and take a step to the left.

The more you do it, the better you'll get at feeling it, the better the timing of your release will be, and the better the horse will become.

More Handy Tips

Another handy tip is you can have the horse facing and teed off into a fence. This will do a pretty good job of eliminating some of the wrong options that he might do in trying to figure out what he's supposed to do. So spend some time with this.

Find a shade tree somewhere and work on it until he can do this easily and he's really, really sure about it.

Advanced Version

The advanced version would be having the hind end walk full complete circles around the front end while the front end remains still. Another way to advance this is you would do it with a completely straight neck. Super advanced would be actually tipping the nose the same direction that you're wanting the hip to go, instead of the opposite way of where you want the hip to go.

Conclusion

Physical braces equal mental braces. Getting the braces out of your horse is well worth your time and effort. Even after your horse gets good at stepping his hip, this maneuver is one you would want to do a few times during every ride.

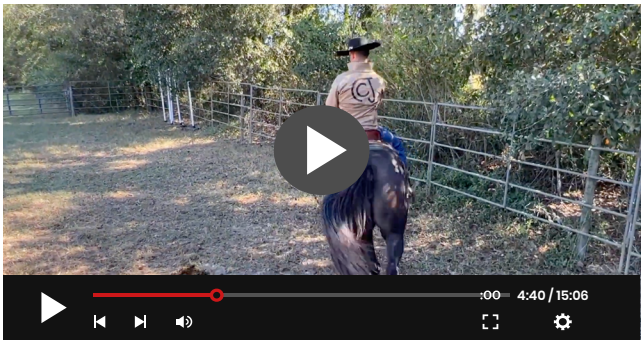
HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

16

Lateral Shoulders

This exercise will work on lateral shoulder movements. You will be on your saddled horse with typical headgear. You will ride two-handed throughout this session.

TRACK 16
Lateral Shoulders



GOAL: Develop shoulder control to help your horse stay balanced when he turns

- ☐ I can load the hocks and reach the front
- ☐ I can reach the front without preloading the hocks
- ☐ I can walk, stop, reach laterally, then walk off

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

Developing shoulder control will help the horse properly use himself to turn. It will also be beneficial to keep him in a more balanced frame during slowing down and stopping.

Things To Know

Moving the shoulders while you're on a horse's back is basically the same as when you're doing it from the ground. It's the exact same footfall pattern. This time you're just doing it from their back. All of the same rules still apply.

Don't really focus on getting the shoulders to step over. Focus on keeping their neck at the proper bend. Focus on keeping your one leg open and the other one actively closed with a little bumping rhythm. As long as you keep a horse backing, they will start to find that open door you're giving them.

How To Begin

Here we go. As you're sitting on your horse, start backing him up. It doesn't have to be fast. It just has to be that he continually flows back. If he stalls out, your turn will fall apart.

Remember, when you first start this, it's 90% back. Nevermind. It is 95% back, 5% turn. That's how you get this going. You're going to start backing your horse.

Right Turn

As your horse is backing, you simply make the right rein an inch or two shorter so it slightly tips his nose to the right. You simultaneously open your right leg, and you close and actively bump with your left leg. But make sure he does not stop backing up. That is the key. If he stops backing, come in with your reins and get him backing again. The instant he begins backing again, get really light and make that feel good.

This is going to be a fix-it-and-wait kind of thing. All you have to do is keep him backing. Wait for him to find his way through that open door, which is your right leg being open.

It is also important to know that your hands will not be completely centered. Not only are you going to have the right rein become a little more active to tip the nose to the right, both hands are also going to be over to the right about four inches or so from center.

When you do that, you'll notice that this hand position closes the left rein on his neck. It really opens up the right rein away from his neck. That door is open. Tipping his nose helps him shape his body to do it easily. Backing ensures that he'll stay in somewhat of a collected state. The beauty is, as long as he's backing, when it does happen, he can't help but do it correctly.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Common Mistakes

The two most common mistakes are:

1. They lose their back, and the rider tries too hard to focus on getting the shoulders to step to the right. Remember, it's all about backing.
2. Another common mistake is to not recognize and reward right when you feel the front end of the horse move to the right (the front right foot coming off the ground to land under your right toe).

You won't need an excessive amount of leg for this, at least for right now. It's mostly the backing that makes that front end get so light that it can easily step over. As long as you throw a little slack and a little release for reward in there every time you feel those shoulders float to the right as you're backing, they will start floating more and more.

Then the horse will start making bigger right steps with that front right foot becoming more efficient in the maneuver. The horse gets more confident about where he needs to go with that front right foot.

Left Turn

Now, going the other way is the exact same thing, just the total opposite. You're going to first get him backing. As he's backing, you're going to smoothly transition his nose a little bit to the left. Simultaneously, both hands move over to the left a little bit. Your left leg will open, and your right leg will close and start actively bumping. Be really aware and feel. If you feel those withers shift to the left, be done for ten seconds or so. Pet on him. Let him know that he found his way off of your leg and your rein. He found his way through that open door you gave him.

Percentages Change

As you and your horse get better and more sure of this — the timing and how it's supposed to feel – you will graduate to where it's 50% back, 50% turn. Meaning, instead of having to back, let's say eight feet to get a 20 degree turn to the right, you'll only have to back three or four steps, and you'll have his front end, his shoulders, his withers turned 90 degrees to the right of where you were when you first started backing.

Then, you'll get to where you're doing 95% turn, only 5% back. This is going to basically look like a reining horse spin, except he will be crossing under instead of crossing over in his front end. Meaning, when you're bringing the shoulders to the right, the footfall pattern will be the left hind foot plants. The right hind foot is going to still be taking backward steps. The front right foot is going to be coming off the ground, going back and to the right landing underneath your toe. The front left foot is going to be crossing under where the front right foot just landed. Then, the sequence will start all over again.

He'll be doing a reverse motion spin or a cutting horse turn. Once you have that going easily and consistently, it's very easy to just let him have a tiny bit of forward motion. He's not walking off. He's also not backing up. He's able to just keep his hind end in one spot. He will consistently walk his shoulders in a circle around his hind end. That would be the progression for this.

When you start doing some side passing and picking up the left and right lead canter departure, these are the things that are required to do those maneuvers correctly.

Conclusion

Lateral shoulder control is one of the fundamentals that must be established in order for your horse to be able to carry himself in a balanced way and execute many various maneuvers. Once you get this established, and see how clean and athletic it feels, you will never want to go back to sloppy, lifeless turns again.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

17

Straightness

Now that you have the hips and shoulders moving laterally, we will work on straightness. This will enhance your horse's balance, strength, and coordination. You will be on your saddled horse and will ride two-handed.

TRACK 17
Straightness



GOAL: Enhance your horse's balance, strength, and coordination by developing straightness

- ☐ I can walk 200 feet or further on straight lines and my horse remains balanced from nose to tail
- ☐ I can totally do this at a trot now
- ☐ I can walk and trot large squares with balance and straightness

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The objective of this section is for your horse to become more straight and balanced. You will help him find 'neutral' and begin to build his strength and coordination. This will be a huge advantage throughout his entire career.

Things To Know

If you've ever tried to walk a horse on a truly straight line, you find that it is a very difficult thing to do. The reason for this is because the horse is asymmetrical, meaning they're wide in the back and narrow at the front. If you've ever looked into dressage maneuvers, there are exercises done on the fence. As you're going around an arena, you can use the fence or wall to actually straighten the horse because it helps keep the hip from drifting so that horse will travel straight.

Straightness is so important because, just like humans, horses can get stronger or weaker on one side or the other, and more coordinated on one side or the other. Ideally, you want your horse to be even and balanced to keep him off his front end for longevity and overall happiness. You want him to feel good about being ridden. If a horse is uneven, he will struggle with picking up leads, turns, stops .... everything.

A horse can also be stiff and hollow on one side or the other. Even the bend and softness going to the right or left is determined by which side is stronger and which one is weaker. So if you feel like your horse is stiff to the left and really soft and bends well to the right, it may not simply be because he needs more softening. It's because he needs more equalized strengthening of both sides of his body. Straightness exercises are what help you do that.

Getting Straight

As you're sitting on your horse, have your reins gathered up with only about an inch or two of slack. Hands forward wide and low. Now, here's the goal. Pick any target that's way out in front of you. The further away it is, the better. You're going to start walking your horse on an imaginary straight line all the way to that target.

As your horse walks, your goal is to keep that target right between the tips of his ears. Keep the neck completely straight. From the withers back is where you'll feel more of the crookedness come in.

Every horse will be different, and you're just going to have to do this until you can feel it and start to help it a little bit. But for this example, let's say you're trying to walk and you feel the front right corner fall off and get heavy. This means the horse is falling onto your right leg. It would feel like his front right shoulder is lower than the other three corners, which would be the front left and the right hind and the left hind.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Leveling Up

Think of your horse's back and his four legs like the corners of a table. You want them all to be level. So if you feel that front right corner drop, lift on the right rein just a little, keep his neck and face straight, and you'll simultaneously start bumping a little bit with your right leg until you feel him bring his shoulders back onto that imaginary line.

About the time you get that going, you'll realize he has gotten a little crooked from the withers forward. You might feel your right rein tension up a little bit, in which case you'll bump him back off of that and get him to where he keeps his nose right in between your two hands and keeps his face and neck straight.

Now as you're starting to get a handle on all that, you may feel the ribs bow out and run into your left leg. So then you push those back in, but that also causes the front end to fall to the right off of that line. Then you get from the ribs forward where that part's feeling good for a stride or two, and then you might feel that the hip is bowing to the right a little bit.

The way you would fix that is with your right leg. If you've done the hind quarter control exercises, you would be able to push the hip back in directly behind the withers. Know that until a horse has some straightening done and some specific strengthening exercises, he's always going to travel a little bit crooked. He won't have his weight evenly distributed across all four feet, and he will always have his hip a little bit to the left or to the right of that imaginary straight line.

Or another way to look at it is that his back end will pretty easily stay on that imaginary line, but the shoulders will always be getting unlevel and falling left or right.

Finding Neutral

The beauty of doing this is that it will teach your horse to stay right in the middle of your hands and legs. It'll teach him that the place to be is in neutral. He's standing up square. He's not going left, he's not going right, he stays in the middle of you.

Once you teach a horse that neutral is the place to be, then when you come out of neutral (for example, you open your right rein a little bit and simultaneously close your left leg for a turn) that's really going to be noticeable to your horse. He's going to start trying to figure out what he needs to do to get you back in that neutral position.

Back when I was starting a lot of colts, I would do this for three or four rides. Just get them where they could do it pretty well at a walk and a trot. It got them good at steering really fast. I didn't really even worry about bending their neck or body very much. I wanted their feet. It made all the difference in the world.

Rabbit Trails

There are all kinds of rabbit holes you could dive into on this topic because when we say straightness, we're not solely talking about the horse keeping his tail directly behind his withers (which no horse will naturally do until they're exercised a certain way to have more even muscling).

Just like a human, every horse is naturally stronger on one side than the other. This can cause crookedness. So every horse has it. Crookedness is also going to cause a horse to be more on his front end. Another example of how everything else is everything else.

Spend some time thinking about straight lines. Instead of always doing bend and circle and circle, and then more circles, start doing some squares. Start doing some triangles. Start doing some rectangles.

You will be amazed at how much better that horse starts to feel. How much more even he starts to feel. If your horse drops his shoulder through turns, do some squares on him for a while. It will really help to balance your horse.

Continue working on this. Make it a regular part of your riding program. It's so fun to try to get all this stuff going. To me, it's what makes it all worth it.

I tend to get bored on a horse that's really, really broke. Of course that horse would be a joy to ride if he had a great stop and was super light, but you wouldn't want to overdo the more advanced and fast maneuvers either, no matter how broke he was.

Conclusion

Make all this stuff a fun challenge. See how good you can get it. Be creative.

Think of a figure eight, but turn it into two squares that are stacked. Start doing some figure eights that are actually squares instead of two circles. The goal is for every part of his body to stand up nice and even and stay right in between your reins and right in between your hands and your legs.

After it's successful at a walk, add in the trot and lope. You're always trying to get it better and better and better. So keep on working on it. It's never something that you're actually done with. That's what's so great about horses.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

18

Circles And Figure Eights

Even though your horse can probably already walk in a circle, this exercise will serve to make you a master at being in sync with your horse. Make sure you're riding in an area with enough room to make large circles without your horse feeling confined.

TRACK 18
Circles And Figure Eights





GOAL: Use circles and figure eights to cause your hands, seat, and legs to become one fluid, moving horsey communicating machine.

- [ ] I can walk 30 foot circles with good form and balance
- [ ] I can walk 20 foot circles with good form and balance
- [ ] I can walk 10 foot circles with good form and balance
- [ ] I can walk 5 foot circles with good form and balance
- [ ] Same as above but at trot (exclude 5 foot circle at trot)
- [ ] Same as above with figure eights (get at least 2 strides of pure straightness before direction change)

Objective

The objective is to build some awareness in the rider so that your hands, seat, and legs become one fluid, moving horsey communicating machine.

Things To Know

You may currently be satisfied with your circles, but we want to add some things in to help you get more out of your horse and gain more understanding of how your different aids can heavily influence his movements and his mindset.

Be aware that most people over bend their horses. This takes away their forward motion. Make sure that does not happen.

Left Circles

For the sake of clarity, we're going to start off going to the left. Gather up your reins with only about two inches of slack. Hands forward wide and low. Begin with a normal standard ten to fifteen foot circle. At first, you're not asking him to move inside or outside the circle. Just to stay on it.

The left rein is going to have some contact on it because you do want the horse to bend and tip his nose just a little to the left.

Most people over bend their horses.

You only want to tip his nose enough to see his eyelashes or the beginning of his eyeball on the left side of his face.

As you ride around, get in the habit of being pretty specific with your horse that you want him to maintain a bend in his nose. Make sure that your left hand is going outward and forward. You do not want to feel any back pressure on the reins. That will get in his way, impede his forward motion, and lead to all kinds of problems. So try to get in the habit of pulling outward and almost forward with your left hand when you use it to guide your horse.

Additional Element

Keep walking around in your circles. Now, we're going to add another element. Look down at your right hand and your right rein. You don't want it to have much slack in it. You want it to be just on the edge of contact (refer back to 13 Reins).

You should not feel pressure on your right hand or rein, but you want to be just on the edge of being able to feel something there. This will help the horse not over bend and collapse his neck when you start to make these circles smaller.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Legs

Your legs will also be supporting the horse. Your body and belly button will be pointing slightly to the left as you make a left circle. That will naturally happen. I know you may not even notice it, but the horse can feel it. This will cause you to be a little bit out of that neutral seat we talked about in section “17 Straightness”.

By slightly pointing your body the way you want to go, you’re naturally going to have your right leg a little more in on the horse and your left leg a little more open and back. So just emphasize those leg positions a wee bit more. Your right leg will do more of the work than your left leg. And this is where we get to bring all three of these things together - left rein, right rein, and your legs.

Push Don’t Pull

We have a tendency to think about pulling the horse around to the left. But start thinking about pushing the horse around to the left. Start using more of your right leg and right rein. Try to think of it more as pushing the neck and pushing the withers forward and around to the left.

So what is the job of the left rein when making a left circle? Think of it like this. The left rein is only to keep the horse’s face bent to the left a tiny bit. As you tighten that right rein to push his neck around to the left, if you overdo the right rein without enough support on the left rein, you will pull his nose to the wrong side of the circle or the turn.

Figure Eights

Do three or four circles one way and then start doing figure eights. And obviously, everything is going to shift over. When you’re ready to change the direction of your circle and go to the right, simultaneously and smoothly, the nose will tip to the right, the right hand will move outward a little bit without pulling back. The left rein will now be contacting the neck a little bit without any slack in it, but also without pulling. The right leg will be open, the left leg will be a little bit closed, the belly button will be slightly pointed to the right.

This is going to give a scissor tendency to your legs. As you’re now circling to the right, your left leg will be a little bit more forward than your right leg. So when we say scissoring the legs, that’s what we mean. Do some circles (right and left) and figure eights at a walk until you realize that your body is doing all of these things without having to really think about it.

Progression

Now, we're going to add a little more to it. We'll start off in a ten foot circle to the right. As you're walking, keep the nose tipped to the right and keep some support on that outside left neck rein.

You're going to do exactly what you have been doing, but you will now add a little bit of back pressure to both hands equally. Remember, keep that nose slightly tipped to the right. This is kind of a balancing act, but you'll get to where you can go right to all this without even thinking. So as you're walking your horse around, all you're going to do is add a little more back pressure on both reins. Think of that as closing the front door. This will make the feet come off the ground and go a little more to the right instead of going forward so much.

This alone should allow you to tighten up and make a smaller circle. Play with that for a second. Tighten up your circle a little bit. When you add the back pressure, also bring both hands a little more to the right. That'll really make it clear to your horse that you want him to tighten up that right circle.

Bring the circle down to a six or seven footer. Then ease off and go back to more of a neutral riding position and let him come back out onto a bigger circle. Then, go back into a smaller circle. Do this several times both ways until you kind of can do it without putting much thought into it.

Further Progression

Now, we're going to add a third element. The goal of this is to keep the horse bent to the right, but now we're going to start using some inside rein and leg (right rein and right leg) to maintain the bend to the right, but have the horse's body move to the left. This would be similar to what you would do in a side pass or a half pass, but you're not going to make him move that laterally. It's just going to be a slight thing. It can be really helpful to place an object in the middle of the circle you're drawing. This makes it easier to see the distance from that object that you're riding circles around . It will really help you get good at picking up when the feet are actually drifting outward away from that object.

As you're walking around there to the right, this time you're going to start lifting the right rein a little bit and you want it right up against his right neck. The right leg is also going to come in and hug his right side a little more with some rhythmic bumping. The left arm and rein and hand are going to be as far out away from the neck as you can get it. If you just completely straighten your elbow, that will let you get that left reign completely off of the left side of his neck. The left leg needs to be open as well. Now, remember, you're lifting the right rein, so you should be able to keep him bent to the right with that right rein in your right hand.

If you want to increase it to where he moves even more sideways or laterally away from the inside of the circle or away from your right leg, same deal. Close that front door a little bit to make it more difficult for the feet to come off the ground and go directly forward. They'll have a tendency to come off the ground and go a little more to the left. And when you feel the horse maintain the right bend, but move his whole body to the left, go back to a more relaxed riding position. Let him walk for ten seconds or so, and then you'll pick it up and repeat.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Do this on both sides several times and experiment with how much back pressure causes that lateral movement. Generally, what you'll find is the more you close the front door, the more of a tendency the horse will have to move his whole body to the left. Make sure you maintain that right bend and keep the right rein up against his neck. Spend some time working on that.

Put It All Together

Now, we're going to combine everything we've just been talking about and you're going to get really good at feeling when the horse is on the circle versus when he's going deeper into the circle versus when he's drifting out of the circle. So let's just switch it up.

Go around to the left, just riding normally at a walk. You'll notice he's not really making a tighter circle and he is also not drifting to the right away from the center of the circle. He is not really making a bigger circle either. This is what we call standing up even right in between your reins and legs.

Now, go ahead and bring both hands to the left. We're going to make a smaller circle. Contact his right neck and push that neck and those withers a little to the left, opening the left leg and kind of closing the right leg with a little bit of rhythmic bumping. Keep the nose slightly tipped to the left.

Now, begin to add a little bit of even back pressure on both hands. Start to draw back and that should put him in a tighter circle. Once you get that, very good. Now, we're going to go directly into maintaining left bend, but moving him out away from the center of the circle. So lift that left rein, putting it right up against his neck. The left leg is going to start getting a little busy. The right leg is going to completely come away from the horse. The right rein and the right hand will completely come away from the right side of his neck. So you're wanting to really open that whole right side. Once you get that, begin drawing back evenly a little bit on both reins. Keep doing it until you feel him move laterally or sideways out away from the center of your circle.

Don't get real picky about this. If you get just a little bit, then that's fine. Go back to normal. Release him back onto the circle. Now, he's just walking a normal circle where he is not getting tighter or bigger.

At this point, do some figure eights. And I want you to be constantly be flowing in and out, having your horse do all three of the maneuvers — where he's on the circle, he's stepping in and making a tighter one, and then he's drifting out all while maintaining a little bit of left bend through his face and ideally, the rest of his body.

Conclusion

If you work on this for about 30 or 40 minutes, switching up to practice on both sides, you'll find that your entire body, your hands, your hip, your seat, your legs, your reins, all of it, starts to flow together. The reins compliment the hands and the hands compliment the legs and vice versa.

Everything works together as one fluid unit and this becomes as natural as breathing. You want to get it that way for both you and your horse. So work on this a lot.

19

Speed Transitions

Now you will discover the magic of up/down speed transitions. The benefits of this exercise are too many to list. Just know that it is one of the very best things you can do. And it should definitely be done on a regular basis. You will be mounted on your horse with typical headgear. You can do this in an arena or pasture or any open area.

TRACK 19
Speed Transitions



GOAL: Easily speed up, slow down, and effortlessly transition from one gait to another

- ☐ I can walk, trot, and lope on a loose rein without the horse trying to speed up.
- ☐ I can smoothly go from walk to trot to lope and back down again with no head tossing and no heavy pulling

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The objective is to get your horse in the habit of staying 'with' you. Your horse will be able to easily speed up, slow down, and effortlessly transition from one gait to another.

Things To Know

Transitions will help to get your horse off his front end, improve his balance, strengthen him in the right areas, and help him get closer to achieving self-collection. They will help strengthen his back and round out a back that's hollow.

If you dive into the exciting world of dressage, you already know that transitions are the one thing that improves every element on the training triangle. In dressage, you work on suppleness, rhythm, cadence, and then collection at the very top of the pyramid. But transitions are a do-it-all. So obviously, we need to start spending more time doing transitions.

Now, when I say transitions, I don't mean you walk for five minutes, trot for five, and then lope for five, and then you're done. I mean constantly changing speed and gait and the speed within that gait.

The Main Thing

Don't allow your horse to lug, whether you're asking him to speed up or slow down.

For example, if you're asking them to go from walk to a trot, you will barely move your hand forward and touch them with your leg. If they don't immediately go into a trot, don't slowly add more pressure. Either kick really big or reach back and tap their hip with a spanker. But don't let yourself be gray about these pressures. See section "11 Light To The Leg".

When you're slowing down, sit down in your seat a little bit, pick up on both reins, but predominantly use only one. Hint to them with just a few ounces of pressure on the reins, "Hey, get down". Then give them two or three seconds. If they haven't come down by then, go ahead and take a hold and pull. Then the instant they come down, loosen back up again. Don't be gray with your pressure. Be very light. Give them a couple of seconds, and then get pretty big if they miss it. Let them know they missed it, and give them a reason to try a little harder next time.

When you do ask them to slow down, remember from section "20 Stopping Foundation" that one rein is going to set and keep them from bending. The other rein is going to be the one that pulls. So if you're going to the left, use your right rein as your set rein and your left rein as the primary stopping rein. So, going to the left, the right rein will lock and take a hold. You won't really have tension on it, but the slack will be taken out. With the left rein, lift up a little bit and draw back to where when you slow them down, you actually tip their nose slightly. Remember, this is the way to have them slow down.

Transitions

With that in mind, just start walking your horse. Jump right up to a medium trot. Go, go, go. Okay, just trot for about another five seconds. Now stop. Now back up about four steps. There's one, two, three, four. Now jump right into a trot. Go, go, go. Go into an extended trot now. Get them trotting really, really fast. Okay, now walk them. Okay, now walk them really, really slow to where they're almost stopping. Don't be afraid to get a hold of those reins and get a hold of their feet. Okay, now go up to a really free extended walk. Now go to a really slow trot. Now go to a fast trot. Now go to a slow trot. Now lope. Now walk. Now trot. Now stop. Back up a few steps. Now walk. Get ready for loping. Get ready, get ready. Lope. Go, go, go, go. Now stop them. Now back them up. Now jump them right out into a medium trot. Jump them out of there.

Continue switching it up. You see how often we change it and how particular we are?

Conclusion

You want to keep doing transitions just like this until you can do it with little to no effort from your part at all. Your horse will begin to really feel your seat, and he will even begin to feel your intention. He will get very good at knowing exactly where you want him to be speed-wise.

From now on, when you ride your horse, you should always work on transitions for at least a few minutes.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

20

Stopping Foundation

This session will help prepare your horse to stop. When a horse stops, he is simply slowing down really fast. So, first we will get him very good at slowing down. You will be mounted on your horse with your typical head gear. No spurs. During the redirecting section, you will turn the horse by bringing your leading hand out to the side with as little back pressure as possible. You will check your horse out on the redirecting section first before moving on to tipping the nose to stop. The key will be to ride with life and energy when you want your horse to go, and decrease the life in your body when you want him to slow down and stop.

TRACK 20
Stopping Foundation





IMPORTANT: If your horse is hot, goey, and reactive, be sure to do the re-directing exercises contained here before continuing on.

GOAL: Give your horse the idea to slow down and stop without pulling

- ☐ While at walk I can melt in, begin redirecting, and the horse finds the idea to stop within 10 seconds
- ☐ He found it within 3 seconds
- ☐ He found it within 3 seconds without having to redirect him
- ☐ While at trot I can melt in, begin redirecting and the horse finds the walk within 10 seconds
- ☐ He found it within 5 seconds
- ☐ He found it within 3 seconds without having to redirect him
- ☐ At a walk I pick up a rein, tip the nose, and the horse stops within 3 seconds
- ☐ At a trot, I pick up a rein, tip the nose, and he walks within 3 seconds
- ☐ At a lope, I pick up a rein, tip the nose, and he trots within 3 seconds

Objective

The objective of this section is to give your horse the idea to slow down and stop. We will work towards your horse having that idea from slight changes you make that do not require pulling.

Things To Know

You want your horse to be responsive to your leg, without being reactive to your leg. This re-directing section is the absolute, hands down, number one best way to help a hot and goey horse begin to slow down in his body and mind and find his way back underneath you. It will make slowing down become your horse's own idea.

Redirecting

Begin by getting your horse walking. And, obviously, because you're wanting him to walk around, you're going to be lively in your body. You're going to be up off of your pockets a little bit. You will be moving with your horse and going with him.

When you're asking your horse to stop, you need to first use your body. So when you do want your horse to come down, instead of being lively, we would just melt down in our seat, turn off our body, and stop moving with the horse. Eventually, that's going to be what lets them know you don't want them to continue moving.

Begin by riding in with life in your body. Think of it like every time he takes a step, you're telling him to take another one. So now all you're going to do is melt down in your body, use no leg, be really dead up there, and bend him to the left. Do a small left circle and then come right out of there and flow him around into a right circle. And then you might do three or four left circles again. And then right circles. This is referred to as multiple direction changes. That's what makes this work. It's not going round and round. It's the direction changes that gets them thinking, "I think I'll slow down and stop."

So you will keep bending them and smoothly doing multiple direction changes, keeping them in the same general area. Pretend you're in like a 50 foot round pen, or maybe even a 40 or 30 foot round pen, and keep redirecting until that horse decides to stop and stand.

Some horses will do this right away. With others, you might have to do this for 10, 15, or 30 minutes before they finally have the idea to stand. And if it takes that long for them to stop, now you know how far off their thoughts were from yours when you turned off your body and quit riding.

Do this redirecting until within ten seconds of picking up the reins and beginning to redirect them, the horse will just turn off all on his own and stand there.

Remember, the purpose of the rein is not to stop the horse. The purpose of the rein is when you reach for it and lift it, along with turning off your body, it causes the horse to have an idea. The idea is, "Oh, I think I'll just stand now," i.e., stop.

This is the main foundation in getting a nice stop on a horse.

1. He can't be hot and goey.
2. You have to pretty easily get him to have the idea of stopping.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Quick Tip On Redirecting

The goal of redirecting is for your horse to think about slowing down. Try to be really focused and aware because as you're redirecting him, there will be times when he doesn't stop, but you'll feel him get a little bit slower. There will be brief little periods where he feels a little bit lazy. Be feeling for that, and every time you feel him even slow up a little bit, even if it's only for a millisecond, you will briefly open up for a stride or two, and then you'll go right back to redirecting. When I say open up, I mean you will completely loosen your reins and maybe pet him on the neck, reach back and scratch him on his butt, and stop bending and redirecting. Remember, for all of this redirecting, there will be no leg involved at all. The idea you're trying to get the horse to have is to stop and stand when you simply quit riding him and lift on a rein.

Redirecting Case Study

Somebody sent me this really blown up barrel horse. The worst one I've ever ridden to this day. This horse had two gaits – jig and full out run. And I tried everything I could think of to get this horse to walk, trot, and lope around on a loose rein. But it just wasn't happening. So I started doing the redirecting exercise, and that's what really turned the light bulb on.

After a week of redirecting, you could ride this horse around at a lope on a completely loose rein, and the minute you just stopped moving and riding the horse, (without even picking up a rein) that horse would come down and stand and cock his leg and chew. It was a night and day difference.

Word Of Caution

Spend some time on this. I would not recommend moving on until your horse is no longer hot and goey, and trying to be out in front of you all the time. Do not proceed until, at a walk and a trot, you can turn off your body, take your legs off, lift up on a rein, and within five seconds they're at a standstill. When I say lift up on a rein, remember, you're not trying to pull them into a stop. That defeats the purpose of this whole thing. You're just trying to get them to have an idea. The idea that you want them to have is, "Oh, I think I'll slow down," i.e., "I think I'll stop." Do this at a walk and trot. Remember, it's the multiple direction changes that help them find you on this deal. Do it and do it and do it until it's as we've described here.

Build On The Redirecting Foundation

Now we're going to move on and talk about how you build upon the foundation you began with redirecting. And with most of these things, you're going to lay down the foundation at a walk and a trot. Too much loping will cause your horse to get tired in his body and mind. So that's one reason we do all of this at a walk to get it initially established and then at a trot, and then even a fast trot as the horse gets more sure and as all this stuff gets easier.

So with that being said, you will now get your horse walking with some effort. Really be alive up there. And I'm not saying kick him and pedal him along, but I'm saying you should have a little bit of rhythm and life in your feet and your legs and your hips and your thighs and your knees

and your seat and your back and your shoulders and your hands and your reins. So everything has rhythm and life, every inch of you does. And you should have the horse walking with some impulsion and energy. If you're trying this and it's not working, don't be afraid to give a hard kick after you try it with just using your body to get him to speed up his walk. See section "11 Light To The Leg". Some horses will immediately go into a trot when you do that, so just bring them back down to a walk. In this case, you can get in their way with a rein and say, "Nope, that wasn't it." But also don't let them walk slowly and lazy.

It can be a lot of back and forth for a while until the horse realizes that what you want them to do is just walk with a more extended stride, more energy, more impulsion, more of an energetic mindset.

Tipping The Nose

As you're walking your horse around, all you're going to do is slide your hand down the left rein a little bit and use your right rein to keep him from bending. So the right rein will have the slack taken out and set, if you will. And the left rein is going to be the rein that actually stops him as you lift up and back towards your body just a little bit. This is going to put a very slight bend in his nose and his neck. And then hold him in that little bind and wait right there until he comes to a standstill. The instant that you even feel him think about coming to a stand, you're going to release him. If he walks off, do it again. You just get one more chance to let him figure this stuff out.

You want to do this until 9 out of 10 times, let's go ahead and say 11 out of 10 times, you can turn your body off, lift up one rein, the other rein will lock and set. And within three or four steps, he comes to a standstill. Then you will do this at a trot and get it to where within five or six strides, he's at a standstill. And to quote Tom Dorrance, "It's important to not have any pressure on the horse as he comes in there to stop. Otherwise, you will have to hold him in the stop". You want it to be a signal where you present a feel to the horse. That causes him to have an idea. The idea that he has is, "Oh, I think I'll come down and stop." So get them real sure about this. Remember, the rein is not to stop them, the rein is to cause them to have an idea.

And after a few seconds, five seconds, three seconds, somewhere in there, depending on the horse, if it doesn't cause him to have that idea, then you can use the reins to get more in his way and make it a little more difficult to continue going.

Give him more of a reason and motivation to try and think of what he needs to do to get that increasing pressure to go away. That's how all of your pressures work. Always remember that.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Give Them A Reason

If you have done as we've described in these recordings, then you have laid a wonderful foundation into your horse to go on and start developing and advancing your stops. Now with that being said, it is important that you understand it is okay to pull if the horse is not taking you up on that light signal.

Suggest the stop with one ounce of pressure and sit down on your pockets. If the horse doesn't get stopped at first within three or four seconds, but then pretty quick after that, If he doesn't get stopped within one or two seconds, take a hold and pull. That will convey the message, "Hey horse, I meant it. When I pick up with one ounce of pressure, don't blow through that with your feet and just keep on walking. That one ounce will turn into an unyielding brick wall and you'll run right into it if you blow through it".

So don't get in the habit of just hanging on your horse and letting him push through. It's okay to pull. What's not okay is to not release when they start to do it, or not to open up as they start to think what you're thinking.

Make sure to never suddenly be at 10 pounds of pulling on the reins. You have to always reach like they're only going to weigh a fraction of an ounce. And then when they don't, that's what your reins and your legs are for. The reins and the legs are for when it didn't work.

Lay the foundation. Do the work to make it the horse's idea. But also know that there will be times when you hint it to him, and he's pushing through it a little bit. In that case you would either start redirecting or do one of the other things we've talked about. But if you've already done all those, you can start to pull a little bit as if to say, "Hey buddy, you feel me asking you to stop? Hey, you blew right through it. And then you take a hold of him, back him up a few steps".

Then try again.

This will get him really sure and confident that he does not need to push through that one ounce of pressure by continuing to walk after you've already closed up the reins.

Conclusion

The goal is for your horse to have the same idea you have. In this case, slowing down and stopping. Make sure you do the redirecting exercise first before you move on to tipping the nose. With repetition and good timing, when you simply decrease the life in your body, your horse will have the idea to slow down and stop.

21

Signal Stop

Now we are ready to advance the stop. This is where it gets really fun. Make sure you have gone through “20 Stopping Foundation” before continuing on to “21 Signal Stop”. You will be mounted on your saddled horse with typical headgear.

TRACK 21
Signal Stop



GOAL: When you decrease the life in your body and barely reach for your horse, he will swiftly come to a complete stop

- ☐ My horse will stop at a walk when I decrease the life in my body and pick up the reins to the edge of contact.
- ☐ My horse will stop at a trot when I decrease the life in my body and pick up the reins to the edge of contact.
- ☐ Advanced challenge for the overachievers - My horse will stop at a lope when I decrease the life in my body and pick up the reins to the edge of contact.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

Objective

The objective is to make stopping become the horse's own idea. When you decrease the life in your body and barely reach for him, he will swiftly come to a complete stop.

Things To Know

This is a great example of setting something up and letting the horse work on it and use his own mind to find it. And it's easy to get going once you have the stopping foundation in place.

Process

Start walking a 30 foot circle. Pick a spot in your circle. It doesn't matter what part of the circle you pick, just be sure to use the same spot every time. We'll call it the 12:00 o'clock spot.

As you're walking around the circle, have life in your body to convey, "Take another step. Take another step." When you get to the 12:00 spot you have picked out, simultaneously take your legs off, turn down your body, melt down into the saddle, and pick up the reins until they're right at the edge of contact. Not to where you're pulling, but just on the edge of being able to feel a little bit of contact on the reins.

When you do this, if the horse comes down and stops, great. Pause and pet him a minute. If he doesn't stop, stay on the edge of contact for a few more strides. If he doesn't get stopped, don't pull more. Go back to normal and make him walk around another full lap. When you get to the 12:00 o'clock spot, give him a chance to feel your cues again. Rinse and repeat that as many times as you need, as the horse needs, until he gets stopped within two or three strides of feeling that signal.

Don't Defeat The Purpose

This is critical. If you physically pull him into a stop, you're defeating the purpose of all this. We're trying to get it where stopping is their idea. All we have to do is reach for them, and it causes them to have an idea.

So don't fall into the temptation of pulling to make him stop. That will mess all this up completely. Keep working on it. This usually doesn't take very long. Typically, before you've gone ten laps doing this same process, they get stopped.

Be Particular

If the horse doesn't get it done within two or three strides, then go back to normal with life in your body and make him go around another lap. Once they start doing this fairly good and they get the idea, then you will move into a trot. Same deal. If they go more than one or two strides at a trot without getting stopped, pick up the life and make them go another lap again.

Conclusion

You will be amazed at how good this starts working, and you are going to fall in love with how amazing it feels to simply suggest an idea to the horse and then he just does the whole thing for you. So have fun with it.

HorseTracks | Copyright © 2023 CarsonJames.com LLC

22

HorseTracks Conclusion

Congratulations for completing HorseTracks.

Every section in this program is designed to improve you and your horse – both physically and mentally.

But the main objective is to help you become better at communicating an idea. And to heighten your ability to both feel and interpret what's going on underneath you.

The goal for each exercise is to cause the horse to have the same thought you are having. That is horsemanship.

Continue to work on these fundamental elements with every horse you ride.

Remember that advanced maneuvers are simply the fundamentals done with more speed and accuracy. There is no limit to how good it can get.

THE CARSON JAMES

HORSETRACKS

TRAINING SYSTEM

