

Sebastian Riding Associates, Inc.



Volunteer Handbook

Our Mission

Sebastian Riding Associates is a private nonprofit community based organization chartered to administer, develop and promote therapeutic horseback riding programs for children and adults with mental and physical disabilities.

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What is your horse telling you? www.riovistaproducts.com

♥ *Our thanks to KB, SPJ, SK and ME for their talents and labors in preparing this document* ♥

Volunteer Handbook

I. ABOUT SEBASTIAN

Sebastian Riding Associates is a therapeutic and educational horseback riding program for children and adults with disabilities. Since its beginning in 1975 the program has grown to serve close to 100 a year students ranging in age from two to 75 years old, with a wide range of physical, cognitive and emotional disabilities.

Located in Evansburg State Park, Sebastian leases its land and facilities from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The 27-acre property includes a barn, heated indoor arena, lighted outdoor rings, and an office/residence.

Sebastian is a private non-profit agency governed by a Board of Directors. The program operates seven days a week year round. Daily activities are managed by a small full-time staff, supported by a team of part-time Physical and Occupational Therapists, therapeutic riding Instructors, barn staff and community volunteers.

A. Lesson Activities

Sebastian conducts two types of riding sessions, based on an intake evaluation of each rider conducted by a staff Physical Therapist.

The majority of Sebastian's lessons are taught by a therapeutic riding Instructor. These classes may be a private or group (2 riders) lesson and last one hour. In addition to time astride, Sebastian riders spend time grooming and tacking their mount, and learning safe behavior around the barn and horses. Lessons may also include ground exercises with the riding Instructor that will help the student develop the flexibility, balance and rhythm to build riding skills. Members of the lesson team are the Instructor, the student, horse, and volunteers, as appropriate.

Young children and students that require physical or occupational therapy are placed in a physical or occupational therapy session. These sessions are scheduled for 45 minutes; however, the duration of the ride is ultimately based on the student's condition and stamina. The physical or occupational therapy session may involve both hippotherapy and unmounted hands-on work with the therapist. Members of the lesson team are the Sebastian Physical Therapist (PT) or Occupational Therapist (OT), therapeutic riding Instructor, student, volunteers and the horse.

Based on each student's needs, lesson goals at

Sebastian may include:



The Sebastian Team

- Our Students & their Families
- Licensed Physical / Occupational Therapists
- Therapeutic Riding Instructors
- Our Horses & Ponies
- Our VOLUNTEERS!

- Physical development, including increased balance, trunk strength, flexibility, range

of motion, symmetry and coordination;

- Language and speech development;
- Thought processes and cognitive growth;
- Communication, social and life skills;
- Riding skills and equitation.

The riding Instructor will share these goals with members of the lesson team. Last, but not least, Sebastian riders will build confidence and have FUN!

The number of volunteers needed for each class varies with the number of riders and the level of support the rider requires, based on the student's riding skills and/or disability. If there are two Instructors teaching concurrently, we could need up to six volunteers at one time.

B. Special Events

In addition to our lessons seven days a week, Sebastian hosts and attends a number of special events throughout the year. These activities include horse shows, fundraisers, summer camps and trainings/clinics for staff, riders and volunteers. All of these events need a lot of volunteer help particularly in the planning and actual day of the event. They are always fun and very rewarding! Annual events traditionally include:

- SRA Student Horse Show
- Special Olympics Horse Show (home and away)
- Devon Handicapped Rider's Event (away)
- Spring Benefit Trail Ride (may be away)
- Summer Camp for the Montgomery County Association for the Blind
- Other Benefit Events (Walkathon, Hoedown)

Schedules, notices and sign-up sheets for special events are posted on the bulletin board in the arena. We'd love your help.

C. Public Relations and Fundraising

We welcome volunteer ideas and efforts to help expand community and public relations, raise funds and solicit support for the program.

II. OUR VOLUNTEERS



Doubling Your Donation

Did you know many employers have programs to match volunteer hours and contributions? This can be a great source of funds to help support Sebastian. Please check with your employer about matching your contribution.

Sebastian could not exist without the aid of community volunteers who fill a lot of shoes: pitching in to help with our lessons, our horses, our barn and property, in the office and beyond.

Sebastian volunteers come from every segment of the community and in all ages (we have a 13-year-old minimum), shapes and sizes. Prior experience with horses or people with disabilities is helpful, but is not required. What *is* needed is a willingness to learn, a desire to help others and a regular commitment of time.

To assist with lessons and in the barn, volunteers should be physically able to walk, jog, and help aid a student on a horse. For others who would like to participate in other capacities, there are opportunities to pitch in with fundraising, special events, office work, and building, maintaining and repairing our property.

If you are not a “horse” person but would like to volunteer in your particular area of expertise, please let us know and we will be happy to benefit from your talents. We are always on the lookout for helpers skilled and licensed in the trades—electricians, plumbers, carpenters—to help maintain our facilities. We always need help planning and running our fund-raising and other events.

A. Setting Your Schedule & Joining the Team

Although there are many accolades, if any one word could best describe a great volunteer it would be **DEPENDABLE!** We count on our volunteers in planning for our lessons, teaching safe classes and getting our barn chores done.

Please call ahead and set a time to stop by and see what we do. After you observe our work at Sebastian and decide you would like to help with lessons or barn work, we ask that you select a regular day and time to join a team. Once you have established your schedule with an Instructor, you should arrive as planned or call in advance to let us know if you are not be able to come help out.

We depend on you to help insure the safety of our riders and care for our horses. Volunteers who choose and keep a regular schedule are invaluable in helping us conduct safe lessons, care for our horses and manage our barn. They, in turn, find the volunteer experience to be more meaningful and enjoyable:

- Volunteers are an important part of our therapeutic team. Our riders get to know their helpers and look forward to seeing them every week. Most of us (and even more so for some of our riders with disabilities) gain comfort and trust with a consistent and predictable environment.
- Our regular volunteers learn and develop skills that allow them to take a more active and independent role helping with our horses and riders.
- Our steady volunteers are eligible to attend “advanced” trainings.

B. What to Wear and Bring Along

Volunteers should dress appropriately for working around and with horses, and according to the weather. Of particular importance are sturdy shoes or boots that will protect your feet. Sandals or open-backed sneakers are not good barn shoes. If you are working in the barn or around the property, you may want to bring your own work gloves. Since we

often teach outside in nice weather, sunscreen and a hat are recommended. It is important to dress appropriately for cold weather; wear layers including long-underwear, turtlenecks, polar fleece, coat, gloves and insulated socks.

If you are joining us for the day, pack a snack or meal and something to drink. If you need utensils, cups or paper goods, bring them too. In hot weather, bring plenty of liquids to keep yourself hydrated. We have a refrigerator and microwave to share.

C. Volunteer Jobs

Volunteers fill a number of critical roles in Sebastian's therapeutic horseback riding program. During lessons, the key positions are those of Sidewalker and Leader. Beyond these specific roles, volunteers provide invaluable assistance caring for our horses, our barn and property. Our best volunteers learn the Sebastian "routine" and are keenly attentive to what's going on and what's needed in order to maintain safety and get the daily work done.

1. The Attentive Helper

Rarely is there a time at the barn when there isn't work of some type to be done. In addition to helping with lessons as a Sidewalker or Leader, the best volunteers learn our routine and practices, look around, and take the initiative to retrieve and ready a horse for a lesson, wipe down and return tack to its proper place, check and fill water buckets or tubs, and tidy up the arena and barn. Volunteers also assist in feeding and turning horses in or out. For people new to horses, Sebastian provides a great opportunity to learn.

When you first arrive at Sebastian:

- Record your visit in the volunteer notebook in the lounge
- Put on your nametag
- Check the lesson board in the barn for lesson times, riders, horses and tack
- Check in with the Instructor on duty (as long as you're not interrupting a lesson)

Before the Ride

When you first arrive at the barn, head to the lounge, put on your nametag and sign in using the volunteer notebook. On the Volunteer Sign-In sheet, write your name at the top, then for each day you volunteer, enter the date, the time you arrive, the time you leave and the total hours worked. After you have signed in, head into the barn and check the lesson board.

Each Instructor posts the lesson lineup daily on a white board next to the tack room in the rear of the barn (the "lesson board"). When you arrive at the barn to volunteer, check the lesson board for lesson times, riders, horses and tack. The saddles are

WEDNESDAY

1:15 Kevin - Snowflake - greenfelt, sm dev

4 Katie - Missy - greenfelt, sm dev

4:30 Tori - Price #9

5 Rose - Ichibus - El Comp, med dev

5:30 Andrew - Smokey #11

6 Mike - Winston - El Comp, stirrups

6:30 Dana - Thunder (groom)

* DO NOT USE SKIP - LOST KF SHOE*
Bell boots on corduroy for turnout!

identified by number (tag on the saddle) and are stored in the tack room accordingly (rack with corresponding number). Each horse has its own bridle with his name on it hanging in the tack room.

When you are comfortable and approved for horse handling by an Instructor, you may help prepare for a lesson by retrieving and placing the horse on crossties 10-15 minutes before lesson time. If the horse is really dirty, do a “pre-groom,” taking time to pay special attention to feet, legs, girth area, chest between the front legs, and belly (where a student may not spend a lot of time). Check for lost shoes or injuries and alert the Instructor to any finds or concerns. (See more on Grooming later in this handbook.)



During your time at Sebastian, you are an extra set of eyes for the Instructor with the primary goal of SAFETY. You can help model safe and proper barn practices by moving slowly and quietly around horses, never walking behind or under the neck. After use, place grooming tools in the grooming boxes and rehang halters, cross ties and lead ropes.

For PT lessons that do not include grooming and tacking with the students, seasoned (and approved) volunteers may be responsible for independently retrieving, grooming and tacking the horse. The horse should be in the arena and ready at the start of the lesson.

For Instructor lessons, once the horse is groomed and tacked, the rider usually helps lead the horse into the arena. At the request of the Instructor, volunteers may assist the student with leading or may proceed ahead to “clear a path” for safe passage through the barn, open gates, or retrieve lesson games and props.

After the Ride

After the lesson, volunteers may help the Instructor and rider lead the horse back to the barn, unpack, and put equipment away. An attentive volunteer will untack and rehang tack independently. To put away tack at the end of the lesson:

- Remove therapy leads and lead ropes from bridles and hang up front.
- Sponge off bits using the bit bucket in the tack room prior to hanging the bridle.
- Hang bridles on the proper hook by horse’s name.
- Place saddles on numbered saddle racks. English saddles should be placed with pommel in, and Western saddles should be placed with the horn out.
- Remove the saddle pad and place it upside down on top of the saddle.
- Towel or sponge excess sweat/dirt from the girth and hang by the leather (not elastic) end.

Feeding

Horses are fed twice a day—in the morning and evening. To start each feed, check water and feed hay about 15-20 minutes before grain. All volunteers can help check water and hay; volunteers who have been trained and approved by an Instructor may be placed in charge of feeding.

Retrieving Lesson Horses & Turnout

Sebastian horses generally spend 12 hours in the stall and 12 hours turned out. In the summer, we keep the horses in during the day and out at night. In the winter, we turn out during the day and bring the horses in at night. Volunteers may be asked to

retrieve a horse from the pasture or stall in preparation for a lesson. Depending on the season, volunteers helping close the barn at the end of the day may help bring in or turn out the herd.

Closing the Barn

After a long day, nothing beats a great close-up crew. When all lessons have been completed, volunteers can help with the following:

- Do all the horses have clean water—full stall buckets and water tubs in turnout fields?
- Is all tack put away?
- Is the tack room locked (without the cats inside)?
- Is the barn aisle swept and clear of trash, clutter or obstacles?
- Are grooming tools in the boxes?
- Are helmets wiped clean and put away in the helmet cabinet?
- Are props and games (cones, ground poles, etc.) placed along the arena walls?
- Is the arena picked clean of manure?
- (In the winter) are the arena heaters turned off?
- (If it's freezing out), are stall, barn and arena doors closed?
- (In the summer) are the stall fans and barn fan turned off?
- Is the lounge latched (without the cats inside)? (Those pesky raccoons can make a real mess.)
- Are arena, lounge and barn lights turned off?
- Check again! Do all the horses have clean water—stall buckets or water tubs in turnout fields? Did you remember the back stalls and the arena?

2. In Lessons – The Sidewalker

A Sidewalker walks alongside a rider throughout the lesson, from mount to dismount. The Sidewalker is an extra set of eyes and hands to aid the Instructor or PT in conducting a safe lesson. Our riders have a variety of disabilities. Some students require two Sidewalkers; others require only one, and some students ride independently.

While a volunteer in training as a Sidewalker can perform the job without knowledge of horses, the most effective Sidewalkers are able to read a horse's body language to enhance lesson safety.

The job of the Sidewalker is to help the Instructor insure the safety of the rider. This involves helping maintain the centered seat and balance of the rider who is unable to do so on their own. It is critical that Sidewalkers **FOCUS ON THE RIDER** throughout the lesson, not on the horse, other lessons or surrounding activities. The Sidewalker must be constantly aware of the student and his position on the horse.

- During the mount, the Sidewalker assists the Instructor with the student's mount by taking the "offside" position in the mounting area (usually at the mounting block) and firmly holding the stirrup to offset the rider's weight and keep the saddle centered as they mount. When necessary to support the student, the Instructor may give the Sidewalker specific directions for physically helping the student with the mount.
- Throughout the lesson, the Sidewalker stays close to the rider, beside the rider's hip/knee. The Instructor will tell you how much and what kind of support the rider may need. In general, we work to provide as little support as is necessary to encourage our riders to do the work.
- Provide hands-on support as needed. Basic support holds are (1) a hand on the rider's thigh or calf, or (2) a hand on the rider's heel or above the ankle. The Instructor will provide you with direction. Some of our riders may be tactile defensive (they don't like to be touched). When in doubt, ask the Instructor or the rider.
- Do not place your hand directly on or apply pressure over a rider's joints (knee, ankle).
- Let the Instructor know if the rider is unbalanced so adjustments can be made, or the horse slowed or stopped. Let the instructor know if the rider's foot comes out of the stirrup.
- Seasoned Sidewalkers may be asked to assist in fixing stirrup length, help position a rider's hands on the reins, or adjust the position of the leg.
- At the direction of the Instructor, Sidewalkers may also assist the rider in carrying out requests from the Instructor.
- Check the rider's clothing, stirrup leathers, buckles etc. to prevent pressure sores or chafing.
- When necessary, prevent the rider from falling off should they become unseated. Remember, however, that our goal is for our riders to balance themselves, rather than to have you hold them on!
- If the horse becomes excited but the rider and leader seem able to handle the situation, the Sidewalkers should each place a forearm across the rider's thigh and grip the front of the saddle securely. This is the Sidewalker's best position for their own security, the rider's safety and for keeping up with horse.
- Sidewalkers may be called upon to assist in an Emergency Dismount. An Instructor calls for an Emergency Dismount after making the judgment that the rider is safest off the horse. The Instructor, or designated Sidewalker, if the

Instructor is not positioned to do so, will calmly and quickly manage the
Emergency Dismount:

1. Tell your rider “we are going to dismount.”
2. Ask and assist the rider in clearing his feet from the stirrups.
3. Wrap your arms around the rider’s waist.
4. Lift or pull rider off the horse
5. Move the rider to a safe place.
6. The Leader, NOT the Sidewalker, will manage the horse.

(Also see the later section on Emergency Procedures.)

- If a door or gate needs to be opened, a toy or prop picked up, or assistance is needed elsewhere, the Sidewalker may leave the rider’s side only when all members of the team are aware and ready. Unless otherwise agreed upon, any movement away from the rider should be while the horse is halted.
- Following the lead of the Instructor, encourage the riders to do as much for themselves as their ability allows. Always give the rider ample opportunity before intervening with help.
- Assist the Instructor with the student’s dismount by taking the “offside” position, insuring the student’s foot is out of the stirrup before the dismount and providing additional assistance if needed.
- If you are not sure what to do, ask the Instructor!
- **KEEP YOUR EYES ON YOUR RIDER!**
- Also see the great article, *Effective Sidewalking*, appended to this handbook.

3. In Lessons – The Leader

The Leader is in charge of the horse during mounting, dismounting, and throughout the lesson. If a student needs prompting or assistance, a door or gate needs to be opened, a toy or prop picked up, this is the job of someone else, not the Leader. Do your best to avoid distracting conversation with the student, Instructor or Sidewalkers. **THE LEADER’S ONE AND ONLY CONCERN IS THE HORSE!**

- Throughout the lesson, the effective Leader will listen carefully and take cues from the Instructor. Often a good Instructor will drop subtle hints for the Leader to move the horse in ways that will give the student the necessary feedback from which they can learn. Be attentive! Make a game of it—it’s kind of fun!
- At the beginning of most lessons, the Leader will bring the horse to a halt between the mounting block and the ramp so that the rider can mount. The majority of riders will mount from the horse’s left side, but this may differ depending on the rider’s specific needs. The rider may use the ramp or the mounting block, depending on horse size and the rider’s physical requirements. When in doubt, ask the Instructor.
- When leading a horse into the ramp, walk on the same side as the mounting block to give yourself enough room to stay near the horse’s shoulder. Make a wide turn, aligning the horse between the ramp and the block, leaving enough space so that the horse does not injure his legs. Move the horse as close to the ramp as possible and adjust the horse’s position until he is standing squarely. It is vital that the horse stands as quietly as possible during the mount. Position yourself slightly in front of the horse’s shoulder, facing the horse’s chest and opposite hind foot to discourage forward motion. Once the rider is seated, the Instructor will ask you to lead out of the ramp. Stay on the side of the horse from which you came into the ramp, walk straight until the horse clears the ramp, and make a slow, wide turn to avoid crowding the horse or unsettling the rider.
- Mounting is one of the riskiest parts of the therapeutic riding lesson. With safety as our primary concern, the Instructor and lesson team should strive to get the rider mounted and out of the ramp area as quickly and smoothly as possible. Stay attentive and follow your Instructor’s lead. Shortly after the mount, the Instructor may ask you to halt the horse, out of the flow of traffic in the center of the arena, in order to adjust the rider’s position and stirrup length. Be sure to keep the horse standing squarely so that the stirrups hang evenly on each side.
- Lessons are most often conducted with riders being lead around the arena or ring near the wall, leaving enough space for the horse, rider and outside Sidewalker to move comfortably. This is termed on the “rail” or “track”. The Instructor may ask you to “track right”—that is lead in a clockwise direction or “track left”—traveling in a counterclockwise direction.

- The safest and most effective place to position yourself for leading is at the horse's shoulder with your feet lined up with the horse's front feet. Keep your shoulders square, body tall and chest facing forward to encourage the horse to walk or trot briskly but comfortably. The lead rope should be held securely in both hands. If leading from the left, place your right hand between 1 and 2 feet from the therapy lead, centered under the horse's chin. Fold the remaining length of the lead rope and hold it securely in your left hand. Be careful not to allow the lead rope to become coiled or looped around either hand. Both hands should be kept high enough so that contact is made on the horse's mouth only when the head position needs to be changed.
- Stay equally attentive to your surroundings and to the horse. Look ahead to where you're going and use your peripheral vision to monitor your surroundings and the horse. Be aware of anything that he may find startling or frightening. A good Leader is able to anticipate a horse's reactions and direct his attention back to the work at hand well before the horse decides on fight or flight. A good Leader will also alert both the Instructor and the Sidewalkers to the horse's state of mind without worrying the rider. If a horse becomes frightened and pulls back, go with him. Don't try to stop him. Use a calm voice and say "whoa" to steady him. DO NOT let go of the lead unless the Instructor requests it.
- When asking for the horse to stop, or halt, pay special attention to your body position in relation to the horse. Resist the urge to pull on the lead rope. Instead, rotate your body so that you are now facing the horse's chest, shoulders upright and square, and plant your feet firmly. (In horse body language, the change in the angle of the herd Leader's body tells the whole herd when to stop or turn.) If the horse is inattentive or slow to respond, bring the thumb of your left hand (when leading from the left side of the horse) into the center of the horse's chest and allow him to run into it (a few good digs may be necessary for the very distracted horse). Think of the lead rope as your emergency brake; use it only when absolutely necessary!
- To increase the length of the horse's steps, or stride, or to increase the speed, or tempo, of the walk, change your steps accordingly and walk assertively forward. Most horses will instinctively match stride with the Leader of their herd (YOU!) By staying as close to the horse's shoulder as possible you will have the most influence. Changes in gait cannot be accomplished by trying to pull a thousand pound animal like a little red wagon. Besides being an exercise in futility, it also causes the horse to flatten or hollow his back, making the movement uncomfortable for both horse and rider.
- The trot can be accomplished by changing your own steps from a walk to a jog. Even if the horse does not trot on immediately, keep the jogging rhythm in your own steps, but change your stride length to stay near the horse's shoulder. Many horses respond well to the word "Trot!" or to a few clucks with your tongue. Be careful to keep your shoulders square; any time you

twist toward the horse with your body it is a request for them to slow down instead of trot. Regardless of the speed of the trot requested by the Instructor, be sure to keep the horse's rhythm as even and consistent as possible to give your rider the best chance to find their balance.

- To aid in developing a rider's balance, you may be asked to weave the horse, perform quick halts and starts, or lengthen or shorten stride. If you must change direction or pace without a request from the Instructor, give warning to the rider and Sidewalkers. Avoid sharp turns unless specifically requested by the Instructor. An unsteady rider could be unseated.
- Keep a close watch on spacing, both around objects and other horses. Remember that you have a horse, student's knees and a Sidewalker or two behind you. Make wide berth of barrels and go through the center of doorways and gates to avoid "picking off" your Sidewalkers. Keep your horse well apart from others in the class. Stay at least two horse lengths apart. Even a well-trained horse may take a warning kick at another horse that invades his space.
- When venturing out of doors, the Leader must be especially attentive. Watch out for horse-terrifying objects such as garbage cans, plastic bags, shadows and wind! When walking through the grass, be ready for the horse to attempt a quick snack. Watch his ears, and keep your hands lifted so that the horse cannot drop his head all the way down to the ground. When leading along the trail, keep an eye out for low hanging branches—remember that extra clearance is needed for the height of a rider on horseback!
- Based on the rider's skill, you may be asked to take complete control of turning and halting the horse. As a rider becomes more independent, the Instructor may request that you allow the student to "take control." In these cases, allow the student as much freedom as possible to experience frustration as well as success without letting them get into an unsafe situation. Be alert to traffic congestion and take evasive action if your rider does not!
- For the dismount, the horse is again brought to the center of the ring out of the way of other horses and riders. The job of the Leader is again to keep the horse standing as still and square as possible. Some students require extra assistance or alternate positions to dismount, and this may cause the dismount to take a bit longer. No matter what, keep the horse as steady as possible and allow the Instructor and Sidewalkers to take charge of the rider.
- In case of a problem or incident in the riding area, immediately halt the horse and rider (see the later section on Emergency Procedures). If the rider removes his helmet or if it is not properly attached follow this procedure.

III. SEBASTIAN ETIQUETTE (Good Manners)

First and foremost, our riders are individuals, with their own personalities, abilities and lifestyles. We respect them, enjoy them and help them learn and grow. A disability is a functional limitation that interferes with a person's abilities in one of the major life functions. A major life function may include hearing, seeing, speaking, breathing, performing manual tasks, walking, caring for oneself, learning or working. At Sebastian, we work with people with a wide range of disabilities—and are committed to helping each of them live more full and functional lives.

A. Meeting Our Riders

As you meet people at Sebastian, understand that regardless of any disability, our riders are individuals—and should be respected for themselves. During our time together, we strive to celebrate our riders' abilities and to provide the support to help them work with and beyond their disabilities.

When you first join the team, allow the Instructor to take the lead in greeting and introducing the student to you. Take your cues from the Instructor as you meet the rider, get to know them and become involved in the lesson.

- **Privacy and Confidentiality. Please do not talk about or discuss students with anyone other than SRA staff.**
- Don't prejudge. While our students may learn, think and move differently than others, their accomplishments may surprise you.
- Enjoy your friendship with this person, who may indeed be an inspiration to you.
- When speaking with a student, maintain a conversational tone (i.e., you don't have to shout). Speak directly to individuals, not past or around them.
- Presume intellect.
- Treat adults as adults.
- Listen attentively and be patient. If necessary, ask questions that require short answers. Wait for an answer. If you do not understand, ask for clarification.
- If you offer assistance, wait for the offer to be accepted. Respect their space!
- A sense of humor goes a long way. Don't be afraid to laugh and join in the fun.
- Show respect. Treat everyone as an equal.
- Focus on what people are able to do and what they can learn to do with the proper support. Do not focus on the disability.
- Any questions about a person's disability, progress, or behavior should be conducted in private with the Instructor. Likewise, any discussion you may hear about a student is privileged information and your discretion is expected.

B. Lesson Courtesies

As you assist with a lesson, listen carefully and follow the lead of the Instructor or Physical Therapist. To avoid confusion, the Instructor or PT should be the only team member speaking. When working in the arena and barn during lessons, keep noise and idle chatter to a minimum. Many of our riders are very distractible and our barn cats alone provide ample diversion.

We all learn differently. Sometimes our riders may need a little extra processing time or may need requests from the Instructor demonstrated or explained differently. Please allow the Instructor to work with the students without interruption. As you learn to work together as a team (the horse, rider, Instructor/PT and volunteers), the Instructor may request that you take a more active role in assisting the rider.

Only the Instructor or Physical Therapist may conduct the rider mount and dismount.

C. Barn Manners

Every barn has its rules. At Sebastian, we may observe special practices because of our special rider population. Even volunteers who have horse experience need to learn and observe our barn methods.

- Walk—do not run—in and around horses, the barn and arena. In the interest of safety and consideration for our lessons, please No Horseplay!
- NO SMOKING anywhere at Sebastian! No eating, drinking or chewing gum during lessons.
- Only volunteers who have been approved by an Instructor may handle a horse. In the absence of specific instructions and training, no volunteer shall remove a horse from his stall or retrieve a horse from the pasture or otherwise work with a horse.
- A properly secured halter AND lead rope must be used at all times when handling an untacked horse.
- As you work in the barn, you can help by setting a good example for our students. Move gently and quietly. Walk in front of, not behind a horse. Walk around the nose, not under a horse's neck. Treat our horses with respect.
- Do not give horses any food from your hand. It encourages nipping. Treats may be given to horses in their feed tubs. Please ask permission before you give the horses any treats. They have special diets just like people do.
- Unless specifically directed by an Instructor, volunteers should not be in the hayloft.
- Do not cut or pull a horse's mane, forelock or tail or body clip or trim without the permission and supervision of an Instructor.
- Never leave a horse out of the stall unattended, whether tied or not.

D. Odds & Ends

The enclosed Lounge at the end of the riding arena serves several purposes:

- It provides shelter from the weather for riders, their parents and volunteers.
- It contains the volunteer notebook for recording hours, lesson receipts, etc.
- It contains the rest rooms, a refrigerator and microwave for shared use. Please help us keep these amenities tidy.
- It is the space in which our Physical Therapists conduct rider evaluations. Whenever staff need the lounge for rider evaluations, consultations or parent conferences, politely remove yourselves to allow privacy.

We have telephones in the lounge and the barn for use by visitors. When using the phone, please restrict your calls to essential information to keep our line free. And please don't rack up phone charges—we are a private non-profit.

The Office and Residence are for staff and caretakers. Please respect their privacy.

IV. OUR HORSES

Sebastian therapeutic horses have a demanding job. Most of them work six days a week and may work a couple of lessons each day. They need the patience to tolerate riders of varying abilities, many of whom are not balanced or may give them conflicting aids. They need the kindness to accept a lot of handlers with varying skills. Many of our horses are aged. Please help us keep our horses healthy and happy. Only volunteers who have received approval from an Instructor may handle horses. And, when our wonderful mounts are not working, please allow them time to rest.

A. Horse Sense

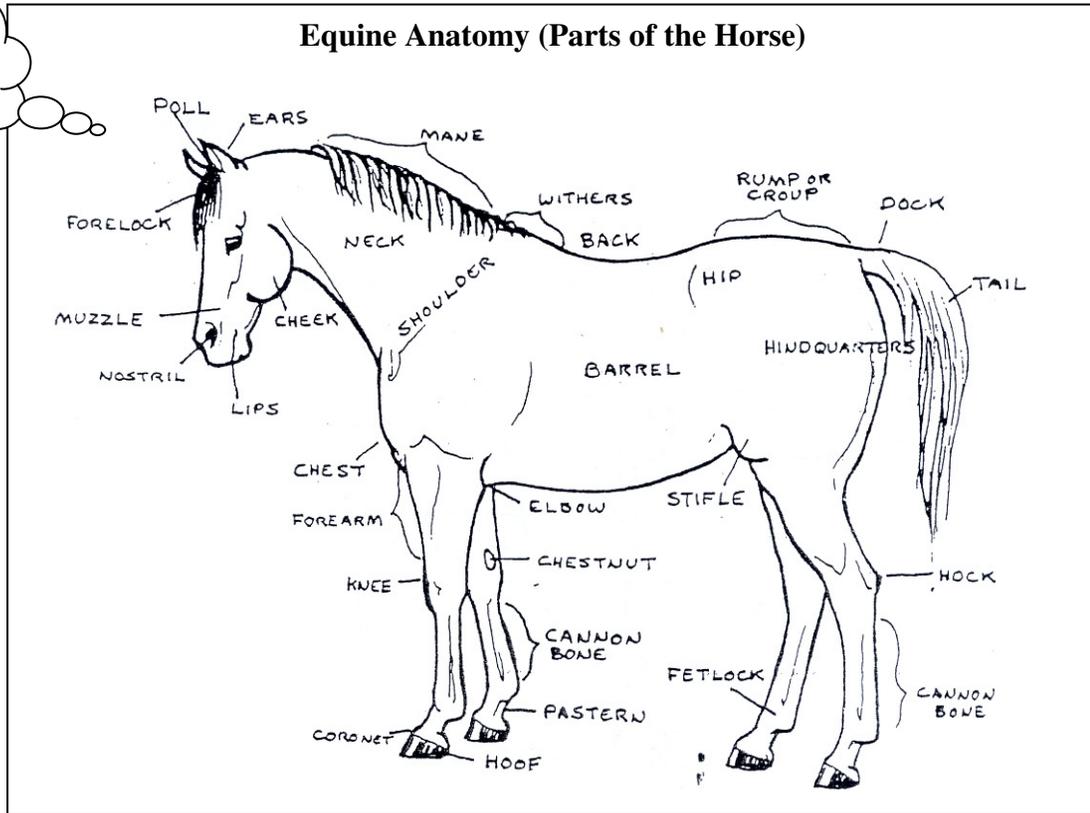
The key to all relationships, whether they are between people, horses, or any combination, is communication. It is only by understanding how others see the world that you can hope to understand them. Vital to elegant communication is awareness and consistency. The meaning of your communication is the response that you get from others, and many times what others think that you said was not what you intended. Be aware of these responses, and use them as feedback to change what you are doing.

- Therapy horses are specially selected for their intelligence, temperament and patience. They undergo extensive and ongoing training to help them understand what is expected of them, and the best horses are very aware of what their responsibilities and duties are during a lesson. The therapy horse in lesson time is a working animal, much like a guide or assistance dog. Allow him to keep his mind on his job by keeping your communication consistent and pertinent to the lesson. Keep idle “chatter”, with voice or body movements, to a minimum, and keep praise in proportion to the task accomplished. A quick scratch on the neck or shoulder and a quiet “good boy” is a clear and welcome reward for a job well done.
- Horses and people are very different in how they see and react to the world. Humans are Predators (like dogs, wolves, lions and bears) while horses are Prey Animals (like deer, cows and rabbits). Horses, like all prey animals, are much less comfortable with physical contact than we are. Most of their natural communication is visual or auditory. It is only when domesticated that the horse is required to respond to physical pressures as communication. Be aware of this difference, and keep random physical contact to a minimum. Many horses are especially sensitive about their heads. A pat on the nose, while possibly a friendly gesture to a dog, is an insult or annoyance to many horses. A horse that starts to nip or shove with his nose is probably trying to tell you to be more respectful of his comfort zone. The one area that most horses welcome physical contact is around the neck and shoulders. This is the area that horses nibble when they perform mutual grooming, and scratching or rubbing this area can often calm or sooth a tense horse and serve as a bonding experience for horse and human.
- Another difference between Predator and Prey animals is the role of instinct and reason in stressful situations. When something strange or surprising happens to a person, we usually try to figure out what is going on before deciding what to do about it. Horses, on the other hand, operate on pure instinct, and their natural reaction to anything different or startling is usually to run first and ask questions later.

- Horses seldom, if ever, do anything “wrong” or unexpected with the intention of being mean or sneaky. They just think and react differently than we do. Horses are highly sensitive animals with strong instincts to run from perceived dangers. When horses do something that we would rather they not do, the best reaction is to give them something else TO DO, to distract them and put them back to work. For example, if the horse you are leading spooks at a sudden noise at the door, turn his head away from the door and keep him walking briskly forward.
- Because of the instinct to run from danger, a horse that is tied or is on cross ties may feel trapped and panic when something unexpected happens. A horse should only be tied using a rope fastened with a quick release knot or cross ties with safety snaps. A rope or cross ties should be attached only to a halter. It is very dangerous to tie a horse by attaching to a bridle with a bit. If the horse were to become frightened and try to escape, he could injure his mouth or tongue. Always stay near a tied horse. Accidents can happen in a split second.
- If a horse does panic when tied, keep calm and speak quietly to him, and move everyone away from the horse. If you can do it safely, release the knot or snap from the wall, but do not put yourself in harm’s way. Many horses will pull back until they break the halter or crossties, so be cautious getting too close in case something gives way and the horse falls backwards. After the excitement is over, the horse may still be quite nervous. When in doubt, do not immediately tie him again, instead have someone hold the horse until you are finished with what you were doing.
- Horses have a very strict social order. While humans and wolves form friendships of equals within their social group (i.e. alphas and betas in a wolf pack), horses have no concept of equality. Every horse knows, or tries to figure out, where he stands in the herd, and their concept of a herd includes all other animals and people they can see at any time. Fortunately horses have a subtle and highly refined body language with which they communicate their place in the herd, so that even if two horses (or a horse and person) have never met, they can hopefully decide where they stand within a few seconds.
- When the body language is unclear, or when two dominant individuals meet, horses may feel the need to discuss who holds the place of herd leader. This is when horses may squeal, bite, kick or strike out with their front feet. To keep this from happening, be sure to keep at least two horse lengths (about 15 feet) between horses at all times. If you must pass another horse with less space between them, watch both horses for ears turning back, teeth baring, lifted back feet or front foot stomping, all of which are warning signs to another horse or human to “get out of my space.” If the “offending” horse is unable or unwilling to back away, the horse that feels threatened may then use violence as a last resort. Be aware of what the horses around you are saying, and respect their personal space whenever possible.

- Because humans are the smaller, weaker, but hopefully more intelligent of the pair in the human/horse herd, we must always ensure that we are the dominant member, or herd leader. Many people misunderstand the word “dominant” to mean domineering or heavy-handed. The herd leader has two very simple rights:
 1. The herd leader can invade the personal space of any other horse. It is the dominant horse that initiates and ends all physical contact (during mutual grooming for example). When a horse lower in the hierarchy does this, it is an insult to the horse herd leader and dangerous for the human herd leader. The correction for this lack of respect is simply to move the offending body part out of your space, calmly but firmly, and continue on with what you were doing.
 2. The herd leader has the right to move any other horse from one place to another. This is done mostly through body language and visual cues, and in the case of the human/horse herd, physical contact when necessary. One of the most simple and elegant ways that humans can establish themselves as herd leader is by moving the horse around. Ask them to walk, halt, trot, turn, and be attentive to your every movement. This does require the human herd leader to become much more aware of their body language, but the rewards are amazing.
- Roughly 90% of horses are herd members by nature. They are ill at ease with taking on the position of herd leader, and often become nervous or over reactive when forced to take on this role. Most Therapeutic Horses fall into this category. If the human in the herd does not obviously take charge, the horse feels that he must step up to the plate, so to speak, and is usually not happy with the situation. The other 10% of horses are natural-born herd leaders. These are the horses that will always test who is really in charge of the herd. With this type of horse, the human herd leader must be even more consistent and firm, but always fair. While often more challenging to handle, this is the type of horse that has the intelligence to go above and beyond for their riders, to the point of “catching” a rider who is about to fall or resisting his natural instinct to flee if it would put the rider in danger.

How many horse parts does your rider know??

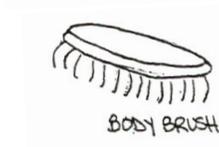


C. Grooming

We groom our horses to keep them clean, make them feel good, warm up their circulation, and prevent diseases and sores. Grooming is a good time to check the horse for bumps, sores or sensitive spots. At Sebastian, horses are groomed with a halter on and crosstied in the barn aisle. (Remember, never hook a crosstie to a bit!) Most of our riders learn grooming and horse behavior as part of their lesson. Our students learn the proper grooming tools, their names and sequence in which they are used and how a curry comb, brush and hoof pick are used. During grooming, we work to help increase our riders' range of motion, gross and fine motor skills and balance.



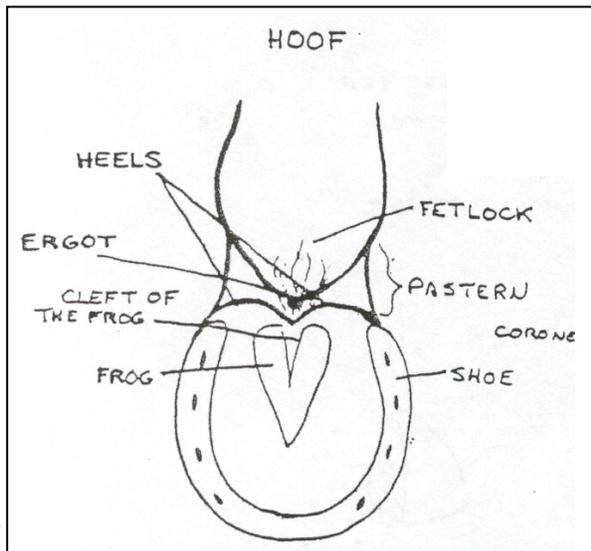
The **CURRY COMB** is used first, in a circular motion, on the horse's neck and body only, to loosen dirt and old hair.



The **BODY BRUSH** is used after the curry comb, in flicking motion always following the grain of the hair.



The HOOF PICK is used to remove dirt, pebbles, and manure from the hooves. To lift a horse's foot, stand next to the horse facing his tail. Run your hand down the back of the lower leg and when the horse lifts the foot, cup the hoof in your hand to support the foot. Using your other hand, pick with the point of the hoof pick toward the ground. Use the pick to clean around the edges of the foot, avoiding the sensitive frog (the soft triangle in the center of the sole of the hoof) and finish with the brush. While cleaning the hoof, check the condition of the horse's feet for lost or loose shoes, chips or uneven wear. When picking feet, bend your knees and crouch, instead of sitting or kneeling. In an emergency, you will be better able to leap out of the way.



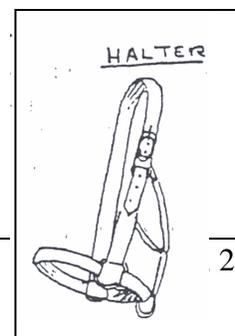
For physical therapy sessions, where the student does not groom as part of the lesson, volunteers arrive prior to the lesson time to help prepare the horse. By checking the lesson board, trained and seasoned volunteers independently retrieve a horse, groom and tack with a final check by the Instructor.

In lessons with a therapeutic riding Instructor, students take part in grooming and tacking with guidance or assistance from the Instructor and/or volunteers. In working with riders during this portion of the lesson, volunteers play a major role in helping maintain barn safety by ensuring that the student does not walk behind the horse or under the horse's neck or belly.

Volunteers should also watch out for the comfort of the horse during grooming. If a horse is hollowing his back, flinching or "ducking out" from under the grooming tools, a gentler touch may be required. While picking a hoof, make sure the horse is balanced and the foot is supported.

D. Tacking

Tacking means to equip the horse with a saddle (or bareback pad), bridle, therapy lead and lead rope. The Instructor is responsible

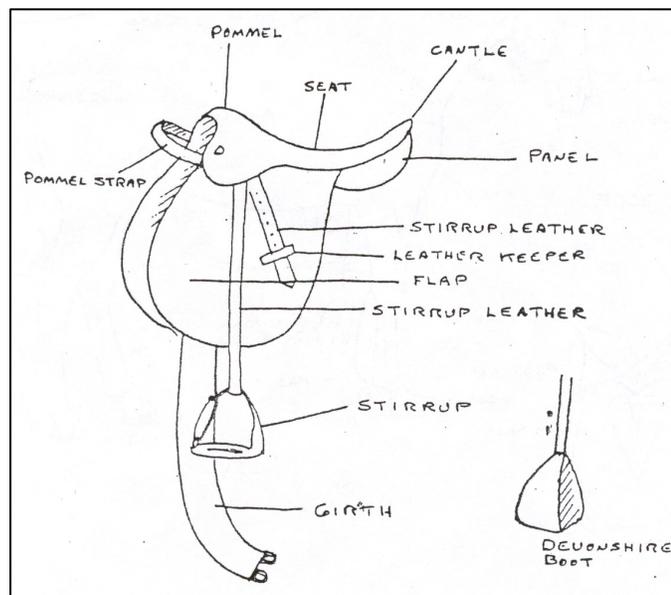


for selection of the tack and its proper fit. The lesson board at the end of the barn next to the tack room should indicate the tack for each lesson. The tack chart at the entrance of the tack room provides details on saddle fit and any additional tack requirements for each horse.

The Instructor is responsible for proper placement of tack. With direction from the Instructor, riders and volunteers may assist by retrieving tack from the tack room, carrying, hanging and lifting tack, checking the saddle pad for bunching or wrinkles, attaching girths and fastening buckles.

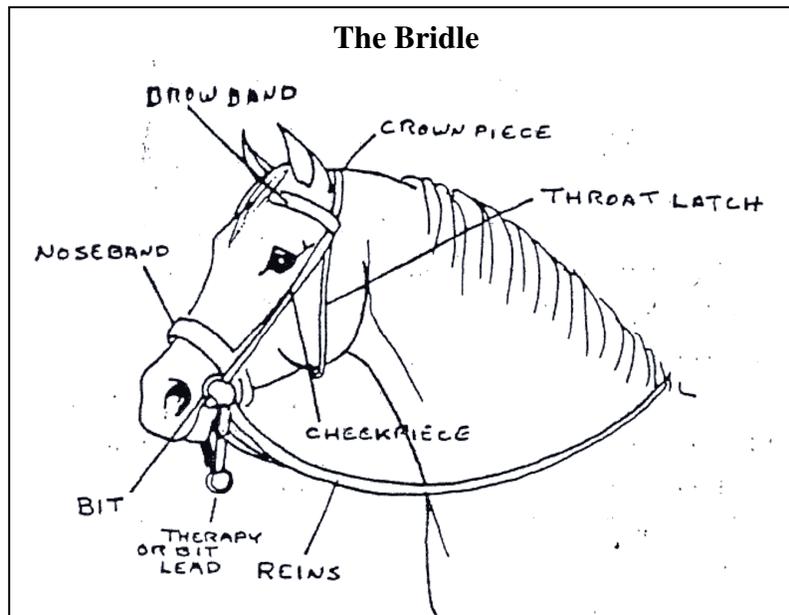
To saddle a horse:

- If the Instructor and student are placing the saddle, the volunteer can help by standing on the far side (the horse's right side) of the horse to check that the pad is evenly placed and there are no wrinkles or bunches.
- When placing the saddle and pad, the tack is lifted forward of proper placement and slid back into place so that the horse's hair lies flat. Once the saddle is placed on the pad, gently lift the pad about 1 inch off the withers, so that when the girth is tightened, the pad will not pinch the withers.
- The girth is fastened by buckling the non-elastic end of the girth on the right side of the horse first. Use the bottom two holes of the first and third billet straps. Gently hand the girth under the horse for the left side attachment. In the barn, the girth is attached securely but not tightened all the way.
- The girth is adjusted in the arena prior to mounting. After the girth is tightened, the horse's front legs are stretched to prevent the girth from pinching.
- Stirrups should be "run up" on an empty saddle.



To bridle a horse:

- Unbuckle the halter, allow the noseband to slip under jaw, and rebuckle the halter around the neck as if it were a collar.
- Place reins over the horse's head.
- Stand just behind the horse's head, facing forward with headstall of bridle in your right hand.
- Holding onto the headstall with your right hand, use your left hand to guide the bit gently into the horse's mouth.
- Lift the headstall and slide the crownpiece over the horse's ears, gently tucking the horse's ears under the headstall.
- Buckle the noseband snugly (so one or two fingers can fit under the noseband).
- Buckle the throat latch so that you can fit one fist between the horse's throat and the throat latch.
- Attach the therapy lead to the bit in front of the reins.
- Detach the cross ties FIRST (before removing the halter) and hook them to the wall.
- Unbuckle the halter from the horse's neck, and hang it along the wall.



V. **Emergency Procedures**

Instructors are responsible for managing incidents and emergency situations, including a loose horse, a fallen rider, injury to horse or rider, and any other health and safety concerns. Calm, attentive and quick thinking volunteers are invaluable. In emergency situations:

- The Instructor calls STOP!
- Every Leader in the ring halts, moves to the halt position at the horse's shoulder, and stays with the horse and rider.
- Every Sidewalker adopts the security hold across the rider's thigh and the front of the saddle flap and stays with the rider unless directed otherwise.
- All staff and volunteers tune-in for instructions.

Falls are rare but can happen. The Instructor is responsible for a fallen rider, with the Sidewalker as a helper, if necessary. In case of a fall, the rest of the group should halt and await instructions from the Instructor. In case of injury to a rider, the Instructor may ask all riders to dismount and leave the arena. Volunteers and horses should follow. Sidewalkers may be delegated to getting the students to their parents. The Instructor may ask the injured rider's Sidewalker to stay for safety and reassurance. Do not remove an injured rider's helmet. If requested to call for help, get to a telephone, dial 911, tell the dispatcher you are calling from Sebastian Riding Associates, give the nature of the incident, condition of the injured person, and stay on the phone.

Telephones are located (1) in the lounge and (2) in the office. Emergency numbers and directions to Sebastian are next to the telephones.

Sebastian carries insurance for all riders and volunteers and takes stringent measures to ensure safety.

Sebastian's Fire Evacuation Plan, containing the location of extinguishers, is appended to this document.



First Aid Kits

- (1) The LOUNGE — on table against the back wall.
- (2) The BARN — in the feed room.
- (3) The OFFICE — in the rest room.

VI. THANK YOU!

SEBASTIAN RIDING ASSOCIATES CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT ITS VOLUNTEERS! We thank you for your commitment to Sebastian and hope that your volunteer experience here will be a rewarding one.

If you ever have questions please feel free to speak with an Instructor. This also applies to suggestions on making Sebastian's program the best it can be.



Sebastian Riding Associates

3589 B Water Street
Collegeville, PA 19426
610-489-3741
www.sebastianriding.org

SRA FIRE EVACUATION PLAN

- Dismount all riders.
- Take riders to adult (parent, volunteer, staff member).
- Evacuate to yard of house by top pasture.
- Horses can NOT be led past fire and this should NOT be attempted. Under no circumstances should you allow anyone to set a horse free. They can get run over by a fire engine, get in the firefighter's way, or run down a person in the evacuation field.
- Horses in arena from lesson can be unbridled and set out in middle field once riders are evacuated to safety.
- Horses in arena stalls may be led out to the back field.
- Stall doors on the pony paddock side may be opened into pony paddock field and then reclosed.

PRIORITIES

- **R**escue all personnel.
- **A**larm others and call 911.
- **C**ontain the fire by closing doors.
- **E**xtinguish the fire if you can do so safely.
- **E**vacuate the horses, if possible. Do NOT put yourself at risk.

LOCATION OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

BARN	ARENA	OFFICE	GARAGE	HOUSE
Inside barn door	By lounge	Inside front door	Inside by middle door	Inside front door
In front of feed room	By people door at the far end (near outdoor arena)			
In the hay loft by the ladder				

To use a fire extinguisher:

Pull the Pin

Aim the Nozzle

Squeeze the Handle

Sweep side to side

Checklist for Successful Volunteering

- ☑ Make safety your first priority at all times.
- ☑ Treat riders and horses kindly, consistently and fairly at all times.
- ☑ Give Instructor feedback about the rider tactfully and at appropriate times.
- ☑ Acknowledge the efforts of your rider.
- ☑ Consult the Instructor for the best forms of praise and assistance for each rider.
- ☑ Praise should be given equivalent to the deed accomplished.
- ☑ Smiles say a thousand words...only more clearly.
- ☑ Assist your riders in maintaining the order of activity, the horse's spacing, and positions of hands and body when necessary.
- ☑ Remain calm in an emergency and remember your job.
- ☑ Allow your riders to experience frustration—it teaches them how to learn and deal with their feelings appropriately.
- ☑ Do not hang or rest on the horse, rider, fencing or rails.
- ☑ Always inform a rider before touching them or adjusting their position.
- ☑ Be sure to wear horse appropriate clothing (i.e., closed toe shoes always!)
- ☑ Minimize conversation and other distractions, especially with riders who have difficulty staying on task.
- ☑ Assist riders as little as possible to encourage independence.
- ☑ Always check that both of the rider's feet are out of the stirrups before dismounting.
- ☑ Encourage riders to thank their Instructor, helpers and to praise their horse frequently.
- ☑ Always work toward maximizing a rider's capabilities; many are capable of much more than is immediately obvious.
- ☑ Remain calm and in control of your emotions at all times; horses and students are often hypersensitive to feelings of fear or anger in those around them.
- ☑ Talk to, not through, your riders.
- ☑ Encourage and support your team in good times and bad.
- ☑ Leave all gates and doors as you found them, either open or latched.
- ☑ Feel free to ask questions!
- ☑ Notify the Instructor immediately of unusual behavior in horse or rider.
- ☑ The riding Instructor is in charge of all emergencies during the lesson.
- ☑ Speak to a horse before approaching to alert them to your presence.
- ☑ Always walk around the front of a horse, never behind or under the neck.
- ☑ Be familiar with SRA policies and emergency procedures.
- ☑ Keep alert and attentive to the horse, rider, Instructor and your surroundings.
- ☑ If you are unable to understand a rider, ask them to repeat themselves or ask for assistance from the Instructor.
- ☑ Please don't feed fingers to the horses! Give all treats in the horse's feed bucket.
- ☑ Be reliable! Everyone depends on your assistance. Please call in advance if you cannot make your usual volunteer time.
- ☑ Treat each rider as an individual and respect his or her needs.
- ☑ Greet your rider upon arrival and acknowledge their departure.
- ☑ Maintain a professional but friendly relationship with your riders.
- ☑ Your genuine friendship and empathy are appreciated.
- ☑ Do not prejudge a person's abilities.
- ☑ Combine vocal and visual cues whenever possible when instructing or directing riders.
- ☑ No smoking at any time while at SRA.

Checklist for Successful Volunteering

- ☑ While volunteering provides an excellent chance to meet new friends and to socialize, always be alert to your rider's (and Instructor's) needs and place them first.
- ☑ Always refer to the person, not their disability.
- ☑ Hone your observation skills; body language is key to understanding your riders and horses.
- ☑ Listen to and help the rider focus on the Instructor's directions.
- ☑ Respect rider, family and staff confidentiality.
- ☑ Encourage the rider to become as independent as possible.
- ☑ Allow the rider to experience failure as well as success.
- ☑ Always bring positive energy to each lesson. This is a great opportunity to put our own problems aside.
- ☑ Keep conversation to what is necessary to assist in the lesson.
- ☑ Be attentive to your Instructor. A good teacher will often drop subtle hints about how the lesson team can assist the rider covertly.
- ☑ Allow each rider the necessary time to process instructions before assisting them.
- ☑ Always act in a friendly, professional and safe manner, and lead others by example.
- ☑ Check clothing, stirrup leathers, buckles etc. to prevent pressure sores or chafing.
- ☑ Offer minimal support and only when necessary. Always ask a rider if they need help before assisting.
- ☑ Build your own skills. Participate in every training and class that you are able.
- ☑ Be available and attentive if the Instructor or parents need your assistance in supervising the student.
- ☑ We are all human. In the event of personality friction, please ask to be reassigned to another day, student, or Instructor.
- ☑ Allow students to share their lives if they wish, but do not pry.
- ☑ Your mother doesn't work here! Please return everything (i.e., tack, toys, lesson props, helmets) to its proper place in a timely fashion.
- ☑ If you notice that something is broken, needs attention or could be improved, tell a staff member as soon as possible.
- ☑ Alert SRA staff immediately if a horse is injured or in distress. It is always better to err on the side of caution.
- ☑ Never move a fallen or injured rider. Keep the rider calm, still, and wait for the Instructor to take charge of the situation.
- ☑ Report any incidents or injuries of horses, students or volunteers to the Instructor or SRA staff in charge.
- ☑ Take care of yourself so you can best help our students. Take breaks when needed and drink plenty of water in all seasons.
- ☑ Note the locations of all phones, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and exits.
- ☑ To help maintain everyone's focus, keep pets and children at home when you are volunteering.
- ☑ Be sure to sign in and out of the volunteer book every time.
- ☑ Choose words carefully, they have a strong impact on other's lives.
- ☑ If you are unable to make your usual volunteer day or time, let SRA staff know as soon as possible so a replacement can be found.
- ☑ Always be sober and drug free when volunteering.
- ☑ Enjoy the pleasure of helping others to learn and grow.
- ☑ Share your knowledge and experiences so others can grow with you.
- ☑ Know that together we can make a difference in other's lives.

DISABILITY NOTES

A. Physical Disabilities

1. Cerebral Palsy

CP is a neurological (CNS) condition that affects 500,000 people in the United States. The muscles are normal but the brain is unable to send the proper signals to get the muscles to work. Affecting the extremities, it results in physical weakness, muscle spasticity, difficulties with muscle coordination and balance. CP may be accompanied by language difficulties and learning difficulties.

2. Muscular Dystrophy

Muscular dystrophy is a disease of the muscle, causing it to become weak and easily tired, despite appearing to be strong and large. Most commonly occurring in young boys, the disease can be progressive or static and can result in complete incapacity. Many physical activities are contraindicated for MD victims; riding can be an acceptable outlet for energy and may satisfy the need for activity.

3. Multiple Sclerosis

MS affects the nerves that transmit messages from the brain to the muscles, resulting in increasing weakness throughout the body. Slowly progressive in early adult life, MS is diffuse and chronic in nature, behaving with exacerbations and remissions; causing weakness, visual disturbances, tremors, ataxia and slurred speech. A rider with MS must not be fatigued and may not have sensation to feel tack rubbing until skin is abraded.

4. Visual Impairment

Visual impairments may include a total loss of sight, diminished acuity (or clarity) or field of vision restrictions. People with visual impairments may have difficulty adjusting to distance vision and changes in light intensity. Balance may be compromised and a rider may initially experience gravitational insecurity when mounted. A person with a visual impairment will rely heavily on verbal or sound cues and excessive noise during a lesson can be a great distraction and even a safety hazard.

5. Hearing Impairment

When working with a deaf or hearing-impaired individual take care to discover what means of communication the student employs, whether signing or lip reading and accommodate teaching techniques to that mode. Lack of balance is frequently associated with deafness. When working with a hearing impaired person, look directly at them when speaking, speak slowly, and use simple hand gestures. Even if you do not know sign language you can communicate.

6. Spina Bifida

Spina Bifida is a spinal malformation in which some vertebrae fail to fuse, so that the sac containing the spinal cord may protrude under the skin. Depending on the level of the defect, it may show itself in partial or complete paralysis of the legs and loss of skin sensation.

7. Stroke or Cerebrovascular Accident

Stroke or cerebrovascular accident (CVA) is damage to the brain caused by lesions. Symptoms reflect the area of the brain that is damaged, often affecting one side of the body.

B. Mental Disabilities**1. Learning Disability**

People diagnosed with a learning disability may have average or above average intelligence but learn differently than others. The disability may be evidenced with learning difficulties in the areas of speech, language, reading, writing, or math, and may include perceptual problems such as understanding and following directions and behavioral difficulties. The Instructor will work to explore learning avenues (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) that will assist the rider learn.

2. Downs Syndrome or Trisomy 21

Downs Syndrome, which results from an extra 21st chromosome, is the most common genetic abnormality. Individuals with Downs Syndrome have quite a range of intellectual functioning, from mild to severe retardation. Poor muscle tone influencing gross and fine motor performance, impaired language development due to muscle problems and cognitive limitations, weight problems, hyperflexible joints, heart defects and respiratory problems may present themselves.

3. Mental Retardation

An individual diagnosed as mentally retarded will lack the ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. The rate of learning is slower. Symptoms may include language and communication difficulties, trouble with abstract thinking, generalizing and problem solving, low muscle tone, coordination, and balance.

4. Attention Deficit Disorder

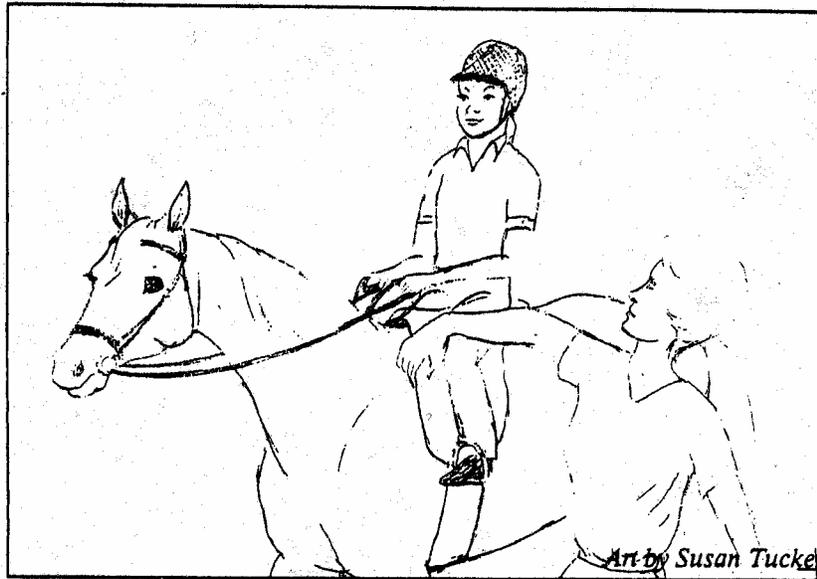
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) refers to a group of problems believed to be caused by minor abnormalities in the brain. Children with ADD characteristically have one or more of the following problems: impulsiveness, disorders of speech or hearing, hyperactivity, perceptual difficulties, clumsiness, and distractibility.

5. Autism/Pervasive Development Disorder

Autism is a developmental disability that affects functioning of the brain. Children with autism, for reasons not clearly understood, may turn their attention inward at an early age, becoming self-absorbed and indifferent to the environment. People with autism are often disturbed by changes in routine or place; they often have no language or limited language, are socially isolated and may experience extreme anxiety. Fixation on sounds, activities, or objects is typical. Intuition, inventiveness, and patience combined with firmness will be the keys to successfully working with these individuals. Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), Asperger's Syndrome, and Rett's Syndrome all fall under the category of Autism.

Effective Sidewalking

By Susan Tucker and Molly Lingua, R.P.T.



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

In the arena, the sidewalker should help the student focus his attention on the instructor. Try to avoid unnecessary talking with either the rider or other volunteers. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone, and to riders who have perceptual problems, it can be very overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one student, one should be the designated talker to avoid this situation.

When the instructor gives a direction, allow your student plenty of time to process it. If the instructor says "Turn to the right toward me," and the rider seems confused tap the right hand and say "right" to reinforce the command. You will get to know the riders and learn when they need help and when they're not paying attention.

It's important to maintain a position by the rider's knee. Being too far forward or back will make it difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.

There are two ways to hold onto the rider without interfering. The most common used is the "arm-over-thigh" hold. The sidewalker grips the front of the saddle with hand closet to the rider. Then the fleshy part of the forearm rests gently on the rider's thigh. Be careful that the elbow doesn't accidentally dig into the rider's leg.

Sometimes pressure on the leg can increase muscle spastically, especially with the cerebral palsy population. In this case, the "therapeutic hold" may be used. Here, the leg is held at the joints, usually the knee or ankle. Check with the instructor for the best way to assist. In the event of an emergency the arm-over-thigh hold is the most secure.

Avoid wrapping an arm around the rider's waist. It is tempting, especially when walking beside a pony with a young or small rider, but it can offer too much and uneven support. At times, it can pull the rider off balance and make riding more difficult. Encourage your student to use their own trunk muscles to the best of their abilities.

If the instructor chooses to use a safety belt on your rider, be careful not to pull down or push up on it. As your arm tires it's hard to avoid this, so rather than gripping the handle firmly, just touch your thumb and finger together around it. This way you are in position to assist the rider if needed, but you will neither give unneeded support nor pull him off balance. When you are ready for relief of your arm, ask the leader to stop and trade sides, one at a time, with the other sidewalker.

During exercises, pay attention to your student. Sometimes volunteers forget that the riders are to do exercises and the sidewalkers are to reinforce and assist. The same applies to games. Don't get so competitive that your rider doesn't get to use his skills because you do it for him in an all out effort to win.

The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and grow to be as normal as he can possibly be. You are right at his side, so help the instructor to challenge him to the best of his ability.

Follow the Leader

By Susan F. Tucker, NARHA Accreditation Committee

As a volunteer, one of the most challenging duties you could be assigned is the position of leader. A leader's first responsibility is the horse but must also constantly be aware of the rider, instructor, and any potential hazards in or around the arena. In addition, you must also consider the sidewalkers, making sure there is enough room along the fence and around obstacles for them to pass.

An effective leader pays close attention to the rider's needs as well as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the rider's attempts to control the horse. However, you should not execute an instruction for the rider before he has enough time to process the information and make an effort to comply. Sometimes it may be appropriate to walk into the corner and stand until the student figures out what to do.

Avoid the temptation to talk to the rider or sidewalkers. A rider may become confused by too much input and not know who's in charge. (Instructors often make terrible leaders because they can't keep their mouths shut.)

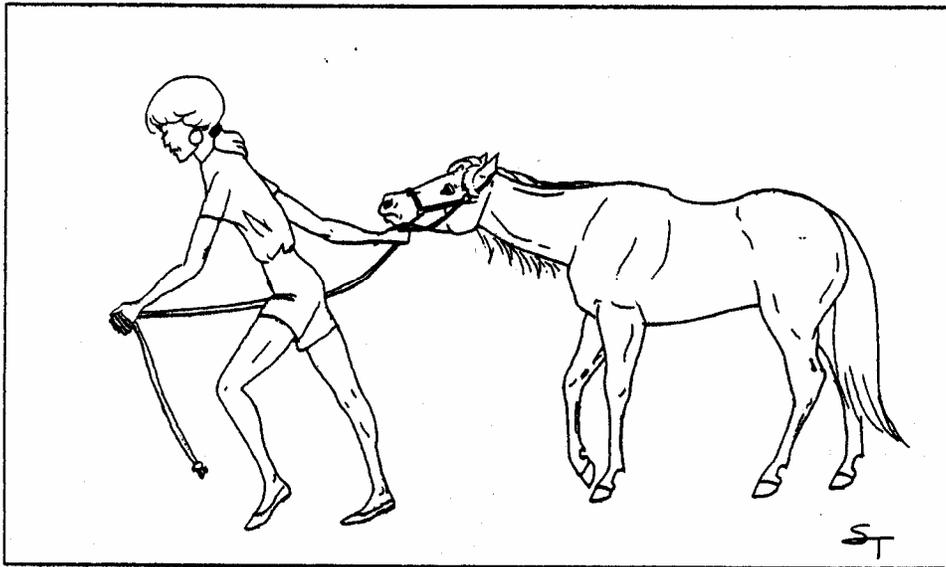


Figure A depicts a few faults common among leaders. Here is a leader grimly marching along $\frac{3}{4}$ head down, one hand on the lead snap, the other inside the coiled end of the rope $\frac{3}{4}$ dragging a strung out horse. In a battle with a horse, you lose. You must get the horse to cooperate. Walk alongside the horse, about even with his eye. This helps keep him in a proper frame, which is more beneficial for everyone.

Talk to the horse; most of them know the words "whoa," "walk," and "trot," or can learn the words. Watch where you're going and what's happening around you. Do not walk backward to look at the rider. It's dangerous for everyone and the horse isn't eager to follow someone who can't see where he is going.

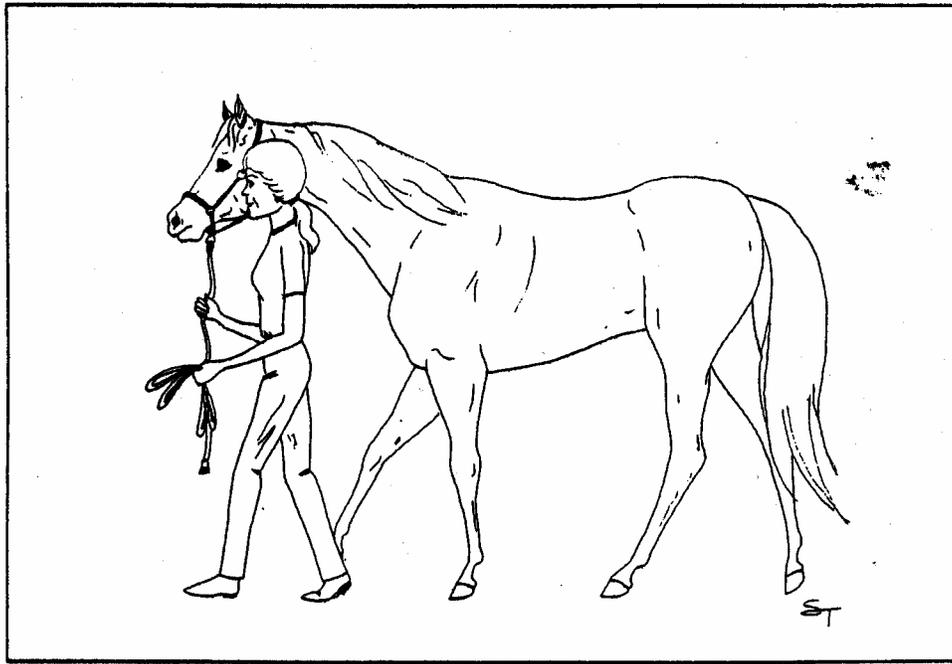


Figure B shows the correct position for leaders. The lead rope is held with the right hand 6-12 inches from the snap, allowing free motion of the horse's head. This is more therapeutic to the rider and less irritating to the horse.

The tail end of the lead should be looped in a figure eight in the left hand to avoid tripping on it. Never coil the rope around your hand. That could end a close relationship with your fingers! Use short tugs rather than a steady pull to keep a lazy horse moving. The horse can set himself against a steady pull, but tugs keep him awake. Move out, about 1,000 steps per 15 minutes, to provide the most therapeutic benefit.

When you halt for more than a few seconds, stand in front of the horse with your hands on/or near the halter's cheek pieces (if the horse permits) or loosely hold the lead or reins. Standing in front is a psychological barrier to the horse and he will stand more quietly than if he has an easy chance to move out. If you like your thumbs, don't put them through the snaffle or halter rings. (This is considered the "HALT" position. You can see the entire environment around the horse and rider, and can easily see if any situation needs to be corrected. If something needs to be corrected please mention to the instructor and have the instructor change the situation.)

If the worst happens and there is an accident, stay with the horse. There are other people to care for a fallen rider. The situation could easily become more dangerous if there are loose horses running around the arena. Move your horse as far from the fallen student as possible and keep calm. Listen for the instructor's directions.

These suggestions can help you control your horse, be a good aide to a rider and be a valuable assistant to an instructor. You will provide real therapeutic input to your rider, as well as make it safe for them to have fun riding. In short, if you lead, we'll be happy to follow.

What is your horse telling you?

The horse has a behavioral pattern based on his life in the wild. Knowing what he's trying to tell you allow for a better partnership.

Body Language



"I'm afraid and I'm about to bolt." Horses will warn you with this expression. The ears are pointed toward what they fear. The head is held high and the white of the eye shows.



"I'm alert and wondering what's next." The horse is content. The ears are forward, the eyes are focused on the object of wonder. The head is held at medium height.



"Get away or else." This expression proceeds a bite or a kick. The ears are laid back, the nostrils take on an oblong shape and the mouth is open with teeth exposed.



"I'm relaxed and secure." The sign of a happy, healthy horse. The ears are relaxed, pointing forward. The eye has a calm look, and the head is held at medium height.

Vocal Language

Nicker. This is a soft, gentle call horses use to greet one another. Mares nicker to their foals and mates. Horses who are very attached to their human caretakers sometimes nicker to them as well. You can also hear nickering at feeding time as you approach with their food.

Neigh. The neigh is used most often by horses who have been separated from the herd or from a very close companion. Neighs have a sense of urgency to them that seems to be saying, "hey I'm over here."

Snort. The snort, made by a rapid blowing of air from the nostrils, is most often heard when a horse is alarmed in some way. If a horse comes upon something that scares him, he may bolt, then spin around and snort at the offending object.

Squeal. This seems to be a message of controlled aggression. Strange horses often approach one another with heads up and necks arched. After a short muzzle sniffing session, one horse squeals. The other horse often reacts with an aggressive facial expression or a return squeal.

Source: <http://www.riovistaproducts.com>
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I have read and understand the roles and responsibilities of a volunteer at Sebastian.

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Date