



*“Unlocking human potential
by harnessing the power of a horse.”*

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Volunteer@StridesTC.org

Updated 1/2022



Welcome to Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center, known simply as Strides!

We are so excited you are interested in joining our volunteer team. At Strides, we are dedicated to enriching the physical, emotional, mental and social well-being of our clients, in an environment that is safe, nurturing, challenging and fun. Volunteer training is an ongoing process. What you learn in our volunteer orientation and training courses will start you off on the right path with the information and tools you need to be an effective and productive volunteer. Our hope is that this training will provide you with a good foundation for your association with Strides and that your time spent with us will be safe, rewarding and fun. We want you to be vested in the positive outcome for each rider and we will provide you with the education to accomplish this. Many volunteers feel they are getting as much therapy as the clients, just by being here and helping. Strides is very grateful for the volunteers that give us their time every week. Without you and the gift of your time, energy and skills, we would not exist to offer our services to our community. Whether you clean a stall, assist during therapy sessions, fundraising events or help out in any way, your service is valued. Our door is always open to you and we are never more than a phone call away to give you the support you need.

Warm regards,

Melissa Rojas
Strides Executive Director

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GENERAL RULES & GUIDELINES

Strides is a member of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.), therefore, we follow PATH Intl rules and guidelines in all aspects of our practice and activities in order to maintain the highest standards for our staff, volunteers, horses and clients.

Many of those rules and regulations regarding volunteers are set forth in this handbook. The rules and regulations are needed to guarantee safety and uniform standards of conduct. Strides will also provide you with additional educational materials for use as necessary, so that you might better serve our clients.

We ask that you follow the rules to keep yourself and everyone around you as safe as possible. Non-compliance with general rules and guidelines such as to threaten the safety of participants, equines or other individuals, may result in your immediate dismissal from center activities, or, if more appropriate, notification that you require additional training or guidance before continuing volunteer activities. At all times while acting as a volunteer for Strides, your conduct should reflect your commitment to these safety procedures, adherence to the confidentiality policy and concern for the general welfare of our clients, other volunteers and staff.

VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS

1. Volunteers must be 14 years or older*. If less than 18 years old, parental consent to volunteer is required.
2. Horse experience is not necessary.
3. A background check must be passed before volunteering.
4. We urge you to speak up if you are unsure of any situation.
5. We encourage everyone to lead by example and share their knowledge.
6. Do not feel intimidated if you do not know something, just ask- we love questions!
7. We ask all volunteers, even those with horse experience, to do things “the Strides way” to maintain consistency for our horses and clients.

We strive for a team approach to volunteering. Everyone is here to make it a great experience for every volunteer and client involved.

*Under 14 years old please discuss with the Executive Director for a suitable service role.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

All volunteers must fill out a Volunteer Application found online at www.stridestc.org/volunteerforms before they are allowed to volunteer their services. A liability waiver and background check are mandatory. Once the form has been submitted, volunteers can sign up to help by logging into the Volgistics “**Volunteer Information Center**”; the link is found in the footer of the Strides webpage.

First time logging into the “VIC”

- You will need to use the same email address you used when submitting your application.
- Then click “Need a Password” found below the Password box.
- Create a password.

Once a volunteer has signed into the Volunteer Information Center, they can sign up for activities through the calendar.

It is **mandatory** that volunteers log the hours they spent volunteering, as it is an important part of our records as a non-profit organization.

If there are any questions about how to log into the volunteer center, or how to log hours, please contact the volunteer coordinator by calling 509-492-8000 or email Volunteer@StridesTC.org.

VOLGISTICS & THE VOLUNTEER INFORMATION CENTER (VIC)

Strides is required to track how many hours our volunteers provide to the program. We report this information to the public and our donors. Thus it is **MANDATORY** that you record all your volunteer hours in **VOLGISTICS**. We thank you ahead of time.

Our staff also utilizes Volgistics for all scheduling needs including, but not exclusive to: lessons, therapy, events / fundraisers, and feeding horses.

1. Update your Volgistics profile through the Volunteer Information Center (VIC) at least twice a year so staff is aware of your availability and contact information.
 - a. Log in
 - b. Click on “MY PROFILE” tab

- c. Update your availability and contact information as appropriate. Include your assignment preferences.
 2. You can see how many hours you have volunteered by clicking the “MY SERVICE HISTORY” tab. In WA state, a volunteer’s service hours have a monetary value.
 3. Click “ACCOUNT” and check your messages preference: can we send you a text, call, email?
-

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES DURING RIDING & EQUINE ACTIVITIES

To be an effective team member of Strides:

1. **Please be prompt and reliable.** If a volunteer is late, the lesson may be late and the client may not be able to participate in the activity. If a volunteer fails to show and a substitute volunteer is not arranged, our clients may not be able to participate in the lesson/activity due to lack of staff. Our clients need consistency and do not accept change well. Involvement in equine assisted activities is very special to our clients. Please be sure not to disappoint them.
2. Strides requests that volunteers be firmly committed to Strides and arrive early to help prepare the horses and the arena for lessons.
3. We ask that you stay about 30 minutes after the lesson to help clean up and discuss what went well and what may need to be done differently.
4. If you cannot work, please let the volunteer coordinator know as soon as possible so that he/she can arrange for a substitute.
5. Strides requests all volunteers to be positive role models for our clients, exhibiting calmness, discipline and kindness to all.
6. It is most important that all volunteers and staff respect the client’s confidentiality.

7. When the scheduled activity begins, pay close attention to the instructor and avoid unnecessary chatter.
 8. Instructors welcome your feedback and suggestions for working with the clients. Since you will be working closely with them, you may notice things and have ideas that would make the lesson or activity more useful and effective. However, please realize that some of the things the instructor does are designed to deal with the particular needs of the client and may differ considerably from able-bodied riding practices. As in any lesson, it is important that there be **one instructor**, even if that instructor has several assistants. For our clients, who often have difficulty sorting out sensory input, that is especially important. Please provide the rider with as little help as possible and as much help as is necessary for the rider to follow the instructor's directions.
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CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

1. Riders and their families have a right to privacy that gives them control over the dissemination of their medical and other sensitive information.
2. Strides shall preserve the right of confidentiality for all individuals in the program.
3. The staff and volunteers of Strides shall keep confidential all medical, social, referral, personal and financial information regarding any participant and his or her family.
4. All volunteers and employees who work for Strides shall be bound by this policy and will sign a statement agreeing to abide by these guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Full-time staff
 - b. Part-time staff
 - c. Temporary employees
 - d. Volunteers
 - e. Members of the Board of Directors
5. **Social Media Policy**: we love volunteers who want to spread the word about Strides but we DO NOT allow volunteers to take pictures of clients for any reason even if it does not go on social media. In addition to clients, volunteers and staff may not have given photo consent. This policy governs the publication of and commentary on social media of Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center. and its related companies ("Strides"). For the purposes of this policy, social media means any facility for online publication and

commentary, including without limitation blogs, wiki's, social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

1. Always approach a horse from the side in such a way that the horse is aware of your presence before you are too close. Talk to the horse. Keep your hand on your horse when walking around him from the rear.
2. Pet the horse by stroking the shoulder or neck. Avoid touching a horse's face.
3. Always walk around the horse. Never duck under or step over the lead rope.
- 4. Horses must be tied with a slip knot.**
5. Use a lead rope and both hands when leading a horse. One hand should be 6 to 8 inches from the halter; the other hand should hold the gathered lead rope, folded in the hand. Never wrap the lead rope or reins in a circle around your hand or body. If the horse should rear, release the hand closest to the halter so that you will stay on the ground.
6. When leading a horse, walk beside the horse on the left side, not ahead or behind. If the horse hangs back on the end of the rope, step back and use the end of the lead rope in your left hand behind your body to encourage forward movement.
7. When leading the horse into a pen or turning the horse out into the pasture, turn the horse so that he faces you and the gate. Close the gate before removing the halter or releasing the lead rope.
8. Keep lead ropes and reins off the ground.
9. When bridling the horse, keep your head clear in case he should throw his head or strike to avoid the bridle.
10. Adjust the saddle and girth carefully. Tighten the girth a hole or two at a time. At Strides, we check the girth a minimum of three times since horses hold their breath when first saddled. Always check the girth before taking the horse to the mounting area. Never tighten the girth in the ramp area. After the rider is on, the instructor is in charge of girth adjustments.
11. When standing in the halt position, please keep in front and off to the left side of the horse to avoid being hurt if the horse should throw his head up.
12. DO NOT leave a horse in the cross-ties or hitching post unattended.

**ALWAYS TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS AND REPORT ANY SAFETY CONCERNS
IMMEDIATELY TO THE INSTRUCTOR**

DRESS CODE

Our dress code rules are for your safety and comfort during a session. We do not wish to restrict personal style or individuality – we just want to keep you free of injury, harm or frustrations.

Wear comfortable closed toed shoes that protect your feet and ankles. Waterproof shoes are preferred for walking outside, especially in the spring and winter. No sandals, open-toed shoes or open-backed clogs or slides. When riding, wear long pants to protect your legs.

Hats and sunscreen are advised during the summer. However, some of our clients may try to remove your hat without warning – be prepared. No jewelry other than small earring studs and a watch. Dangling jewelry can get caught in manes or tails, or be snatched by a client or distract them during a session. Long hair should be pulled back. Avoid wearing any perfumes- this may irritate the horses, participants, or other volunteers.

Do not wear clothing with offensive or suggestive messages or slogans that promote alcohol or drug use. No revealing clothing such as short-shorts & low-necked shirts. Strides attire is available for purchase.

Everyone on a horse MUST wear a helmet. NO EXCEPTIONS!

BARN ETIQUETTE

Parking

Parking is provided in the front of the property near the horse pens; if there is not enough room then you can park in the secondary family parking area by the small arena.

Personal Items

Please leave pocketbooks and personal items locked in your vehicle – we do not have storage space for them while you are busy with your duties. You may store your water bottle, snack, and car keys in the volunteer area by the tack room.

Cellphones

Do not use cellphones during the session and if possible please leave your cellphone in your vehicle. Always keep your ringer turned off.

Gates

All gates are to remain shut. Please close entrance gates, horse pen gates and pasture gates behind you even if there is no horse in the area.

Pets

Please leave your pets at home.

First Aid Kit

The Human first aid kit is located in the tack room. Please alert the instructor if it is needed for any reason. If someone is injured in a way that is beyond what can be cared for by the first aid kit, the instructor will call for emergency medical treatment.

General

No running, screaming or boisterous behavior. Please practice courteous behavior with clients, parents, horses and each other. If you use the hose to wash or water horses, be sure to turn the water off and fold the hose neatly away. Make sure that you clean up after yourself; recycle your water bottle & throw away your trash in the respective bins.

Horses

A therapy horse's job is very stressful so please abide by the following rules to minimize their mental and physical stress.

1. The horses need rest while in their pens. Please do not reach over their fence to call them to you unless you are ready to take them out.
2. A horse's personal bubble is their head; do not pet horses on the nose or face area, as it invades their personal space, but also encourages them to enter your space or nibble.
3. Do not lean on or hug the horses. Their job is to carry clients that are off balanced. When you lean on them as well you are making them work their bodies to maintain balance.
4. When horses are wearing a halter and lead rope or bridle, they are not allowed to graze, put their heads down to sniff the floor or rub their faces on their front legs. To allow them to do so will teach them that it is acceptable. For safety reasons, when horses are under tack or halter and lead, they are at work and must have their heads up.
5. Never feed a horse with your hands.

UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR

All program horses are evaluated before being accepted into the program and are trained to accept new equipment and props that they may encounter at Strides. They receive regular schooling and conditioning, and are re-evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they remain appropriate for the program.

Equine Senses

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

Horses move away from pressure and resist force. They show their moods by their body language (ears, eyes, nostrils, legs, tail, etc). Horses instinctively know when another horse (or human) is their equal, superior, or can be dominated.

Learning horse communication will aid you in working with program horses. A strong and confident leader will tell the horse that he or she should be following the cues of the human leader. Precise and consistent cues from the leader will keep the horse alert and responsive to what is being asked of them. There must be no confusion over who is in charge. It is not about physical size and strength, it's about confidence.

Smell

The horse's sense of smell is very acute. It allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

Implications:

- Horses should be allowed the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- Treats should not be carried in pockets since horses may desire to go after them.
- There should be no food in the riding arena.

Hearing

The horse's sense of hearing is very acute. Horses may combine their senses of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or alerting sounds.

Implications:

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. Hearing and not seeing is often the cause of the fright/fight response. If the horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
- Always be aware of the position of the horse's ears.
 - Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest.
 - Ears that are laid back often communicate that the horse is upset and/or showing aggression toward another horse or toward a person.
 - Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest.
 - Ears flicking back and forth also indicate attentiveness or interest.
 - Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (*easily startled*), exhaustion or illness.
 - Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.

Sight

The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head. There is good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poor frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering his head. The horse's visual memory is very accurate. Horses are thought to see quite well in the dark, due to the large size of their eyes. There is still controversy as to whether horses see in color.

Implications:

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or on the trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects from both sides (with both eyes). Before class, introduce any new props that may be unfamiliar to the horse.
- The horse has better peripheral vision; consider a slightly looser rein, enabling him to move his head when taking a look at objects.
- Although the horse has good peripheral vision, consider two blind spots: directly in front of him and directly behind him. The best way to approach a horse is obliquely, toward his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front.
- The horse may be unable to see around the area of his mouth. This is a safety consideration when hand feeding; therefore, **DO NOT HAND FEED STRIDES HORSES. ALWAYS PUT TREATS IN A BUCKET.**

Touch

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

Implications:

- Handlers should treat horses gently but firmly.

- Each horse has sensitive areas (e.g. the flank and belly areas). It is important to be familiar with them.
- Watch the rider's leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a “clothespin” effect with their legs. Ask the instructor/therapist for the best handling technique.
- Horses will often touch or paw at unfamiliar objects. For example, a horse may paw at a bridge or ground pole before crossing over it.

Taste

Taste is closely linked with the sense of smell and helps the horse to distinguish palatable foods and other objects.

Implications:

- Taste is closely linked with smell and touch. Therefore a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects or people. BE CAREFUL, as this could lead to possible biting.

Sixth Sense / Energy

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

A horse’s energy bubble is 25ft around. A person’s energy bubble is 10ft around. When you are 35ft away from a horse, it can feel your “vibes” and will react to that energy. If you feel angry, your energy bubble will move the horse away from you. If you feel nervous, the horse may move away from you or may try to be the leader and dominate you. If you feel confident and CALM, the horse will feel confident and calm and have an easier time listening to you.

Other Body Language Signs

1. Tail
 - a. Tucking the tail down tightly → horse may bolt, buck, or kick
 - i. Watch out if ears are flattened, too!
 - b. Switching the tail → annoyance or irritation
 - i. May be due to biting insects, bothersome equipment, client position, volunteer leaning into horse, or another horse is too close
2. Legs

- a. Resting one leg (especially with droopy ears) → calm & resting
- 3. Face
 - a. Wrinkling up the face and swinging the head → threatening gesture of an angry or bossy horse → beware of biting or kicking.

The Horse's Lifestyle

It is a good idea to increase our appreciation and awareness of the horse's lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to the horse's reactions to various situations.

Flight as a Natural Instinct

Horses are built for speed and would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

Implications:

- At a sudden movement or noise, a horse may try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly. Avoid sudden movements on or off the horse.
- A frightened horse that is being tied up or held tightly may try to escape by pulling back against the pressure. Relax your hold or untie him quickly. Usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind a horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse may either try to turn and kick out or face the danger and rear, especially in a tight area like a stall. Using a halter with a lead rope may help to maintain control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse appears frightened or fearful (*note the position of his ears*), it may be helpful to allow a more experienced horse to lead the way.
- Most horses chosen to work in a therapeutic riding setting have less of an instinct to flee. The horse may look to you for reassurance. It is helpful for the volunteer to remain calm and talk to the horse in a soothing voice.

The Horse as a Herd Animal

Horses like to stay together in a herd or group with one or two dominant horses and a pecking order among the rest of the herd.

Implications

- Be aware that a horse may not like being alone. This is a consideration when horses are leaving the arena or a horse loses sight of the others while on a trail ride.
- Be aware that if the horse in front is trotting or cantering, the horse that is following may also attempt to trot or canter.
- If one horse spooks at something, the surrounding horses may also be affected.

- For safety, keep at least one horse length between horses when riding within a group to respect the horses' space and pecking order.

Horse Lingo

A big part of being consistent with the horses is using the same language. If everyone uses the same terms and phrases during all handling, the horses will better understand what is being asked of them. At Strides, the terms and phrases that our horses are familiar with are:

- “Walk on” – used to ask the horse to move forward at the walk
- “Whoa” – used to stop the horse
- “Easy” – used when you want the horse to slow down
- “Trot” – used to ask a horse to trot; clicking your tongue can help as well
- “Good” – to praise the horse
- “Uhuh” – can be used as a verbal correction
- “Back” – used to back up the horse

These words should be used while grooming and tacking, in the warm-up, and during the lessons. Consistency is the key to success with any herd.

Your tone of voice is very important

- A quiet gentle, tone can be used to soothe a nervous horse.
- A firm and assertive tone can command a quick response from the horse.

INAPPROPRIATE PERSONAL CONDUCT

At all times, while participating in Strides related activities, the instructor is responsible for providing appropriate responses to inappropriate rider and/or volunteer behavior in the riding ring. Riders/clients, family members / caregivers and/or volunteers are responsible for attending to the behavior of observers and others not in the ring. Those who cannot be prevented from engaging in inappropriate behavior will be asked to leave. They will not be allowed to return unless such behavior is corrected.

HOW TO FIT A RIDING HELMET

Do the Five-Point Safety Check when selecting a client's helmet or your helmet.

1. FRONT: the helmet should sit firmly in place about 1 inch above the eyebrows.
 - a. More than 1" = too small
 - b. Less than 1" = too big
2. SIDE: the straps on the side should meet just below and in front of the earlobes.
3. BACK: a snug-fitting helmet is best.
 - a. The harness on the back should prevent the helmet from moving forward.
 - b. Avoid using your hair to create a proper fit.
4. THROAT: the strap under the chin should be snug, but not tight.
 - a. Tilt the chin up and down to ensure a proper fit.
5. TEST: grasp the helmet with two hands and rock it back and forth.
 - a. The skin and eyebrows should move with the helmet.

No helmet can protect against every head injury. However, studies show a dramatic reduction in the severity of injuries when a properly fitted helmet is worn every time you ride a horse.

WHEN TO REPLACE A HELMET: Every 5 years or IMMEDIATELY after a direct impact from a fall occurs.

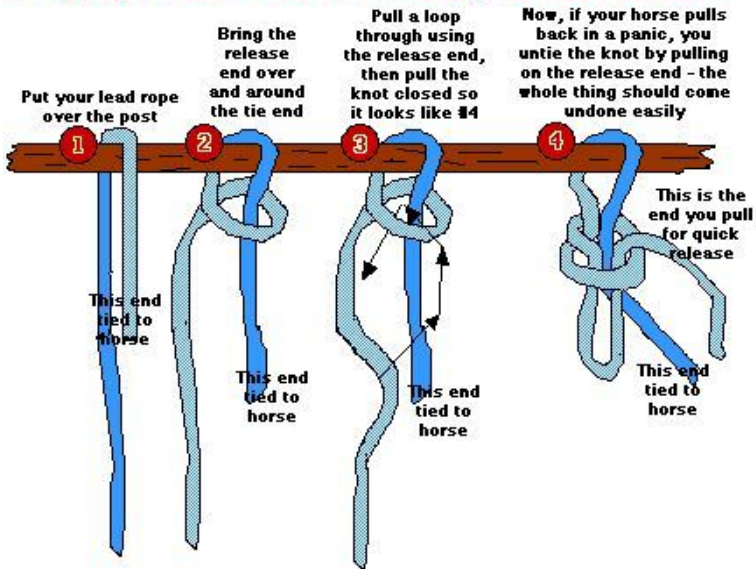


HOW TO TIE A LEAD ROPE

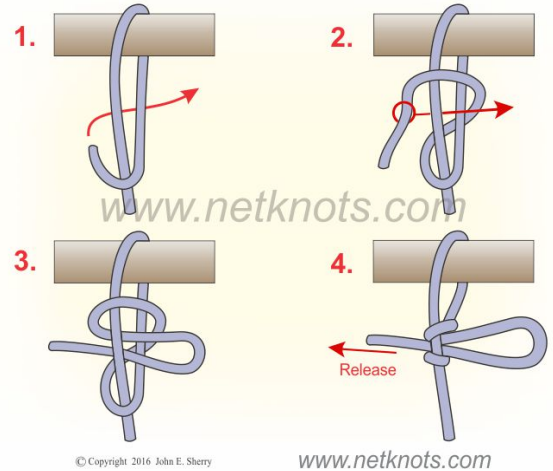
A quick release / slip knot is required when tying horses to the hitching post. No exceptions. If a horse is in trouble, we need to be able to immediately release them from being tied.

Tying the Quick Release Knot

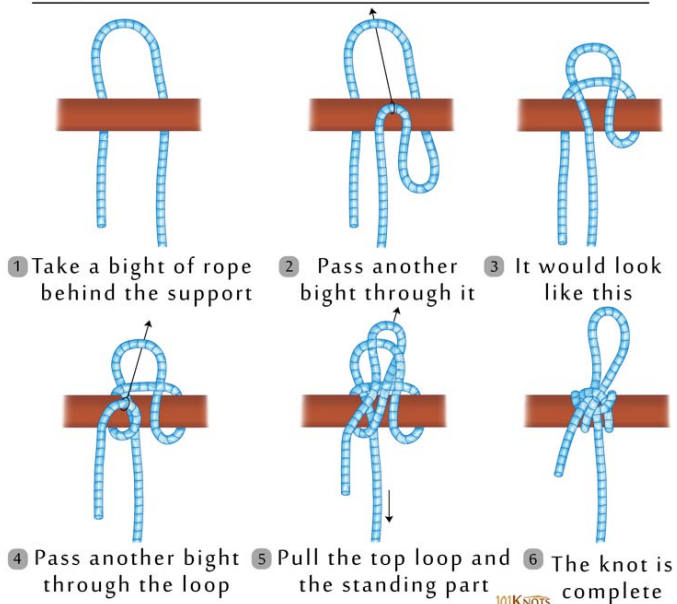
Practice tying this knot without your horse until you can do it correctly and release it just by pulling on the free end. This is the **ONLY** knot you should use to tie horses.



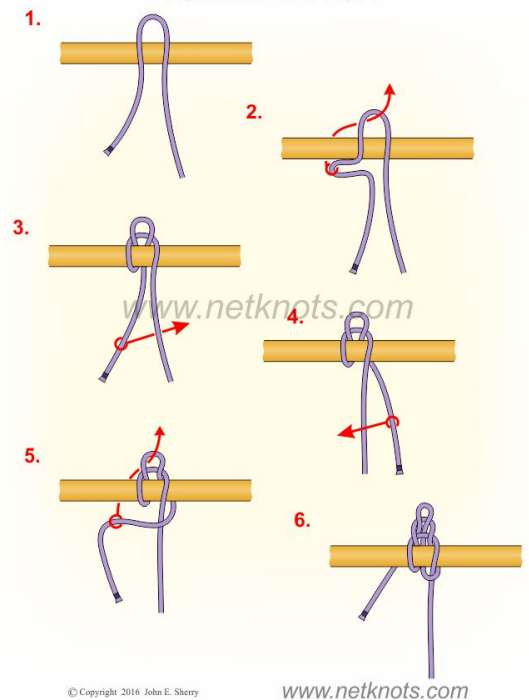
SLIPPED BUNTLINE



Highwayman's Hitch Instructions



TUMBLE HITCH



ROLE OF THE SIDEWALKER #1 (left side of horse)

Main Responsibility: To focus on the rider/client, listen to the instructor, relay and interpret commands to rider and other support team members as necessary.

Related Tasks

Before the lesson:

- Arrive at the barn 30 minutes before lesson start time.
- Check Lesson Plan or consult with the instructor to understand the pattern and purpose of the day's lesson.
- Check the assignment board.
- Greet the rider when he/she arrives. Help the rider with a helmet if help is needed.

Please stay with the client throughout the session, until the lesson is over and the client returns to his/her family/caregiver/teacher. There is no need to hold clients' hands unless they are small children.

Check rider's equipment:

- Make sure the client's helmet fits properly.
- If special adaptive equipment is needed for that rider, be sure it is readily available.
- With outside sidewalker, adjust stirrups to proper length -- away from mounting area.
- Instructor/assistant instructor or designate will recheck stirrup length.

Mounting procedure:

- Consult with the instructor to determine the appropriate mounting procedure for the client.
- Assist the instructor from the mounting block or mounting ramp.

Lesson procedure:

- Walk or jog beside the rider, providing physical support as needed.
- Be continually alert for the need for immediate help.
- Monitor the rider's balance. Advise the outside sidewalker and the horse leader if the rider needs assistance regaining balance.
- Reinforce the instructor's directions as needed.
- Encourage the rider with eye contact, simple gestures and instructions.
- Keep such instructions to a minimum so that the rider will not be confused as to who is teaching the lesson.

- Provide only such assistance as is necessary if the rider cannot perform the instructions on his/her own. Do as much as is necessary but as little as possible.
- Keep chatting to a minimum. Many of our riders may get overloaded or confused with too much auditory input.
- Alert the instructor/assistant instructor/class coordinator of any environmental concerns, such as weather or other conditions that might make riding hazardous.

After the lesson:

- Unless otherwise instructed, wait for the instructor to assist the rider in dismounting.
- Accompany the rider to parent/guardian or safe place.
- Help the rider remove the helmet if necessary and return it to its proper place.
- Communicate any comments about the session to the instructor.

Emergency procedure:

- Remain with rider until the instructor takes over.

ROLE OF THE SIDEWALKER #2 (right side of horse)

Main responsibility: To ensure overall safety of the client during mounting and lesson.

Related Tasks

Before the lesson:

- Arrive at the barn 30 minutes prior to class session.
- Help the instructor in setting up the arena for the lesson.
- Put out helmets and gait belts.

Equipment safety check:

- Assist the inside sidewalker in adjusting stirrups to proper length.
- Assist with any adaptive equipment as needed.

Mounting procedure:

- Assist in the mounting procedures from opposite the mounting block/ramp.
- Hold the saddle secure while the rider is mounting by holding the stirrup down.
- Check that the rider is sitting squarely in the saddle.

Lesson procedure:

- Walk or jog beside the rider, providing physical support as needed.
- Be continually alert for the need for immediate help.
- Monitor the rider's balance, correct it with the help of the team.
- Provide only such assistance as is necessary if the client cannot perform the commands on his/her own. Provide as much help as is necessary, and as little as possible.
- Riders may become confused with too much auditory input. Allow the inside sidewalker to provide most of the verbal instruction.

After the lesson:

- Aid the instructor in dismounting the rider.
- Report observations or concerns to the inside sidewalker to communicate to the instructor.
- Help put the horses and equipment away.
- Assist the barn manager with chores, such as cleaning tack, etc.

Emergency procedure:

- Summon assistance as needed or as directed by the instructor.

METHODS OF SIDEWALKING

1. Trunk hold:
 - a. Hold onto the client's gait belt to steady their trunk.
 - b. Place your other hand on their knee or ankle to stabilize them.
2. Thigh hold:
 - a. Place your forearm closest to the client over their thigh, grasping the front of the saddle or bareback pad with their fingertips.
 - b. Don't use too much or too little pressure when performing this armlock; allow the weight of your arm to rest on the client's leg.
 - c. Never lean into the horse.
3. Ankle / Calf hold:
 - a. Form a "C" shape with your hand closest to the client (like Lego hands).
 - b. Hold the back of the client's ankle to stabilize the client's lower leg.
4. Passive Sidewalking "standby assist":
 - a. Walk alongside the client for safety and physical assistance as needed.
 - b. If instructor / therapist permits, you may provide moral support and reinforce directions.

DO'S & DON'T OF SIDEWALKING

1. Do an immediate thigh hold on any client if an unexpected incidence arises
2. Alert the instructor immediately if you see ANY unsafe situation with your client
3. Keep your focus on your client at all times
4. Stay next to your client at all times
5. Never rest your arm on the horse's side or hindquarters nor lean into the horse with your elbow
6. Never hit or tickle the horse in the flank to get them to trot
7. Never stop to tie your shoelaces without warning the team
8. Be mindful or making your conversations appropriate for the client
9. If there are bad behaviors from the client, bring it to the attention of the instructor
10. If your arm / shoulder becomes tired / sore during a hold, please inform the instructor / therapist. At the first available time, the team will stop and allow the sidewalkers to change sides. This means Sidewalker #1 and Sidewalker #2 must be aware of each other's roles and responsibilities.

ROLE OF THE HORSE LEADER

Main responsibility: To focus on the horse, leading and controlling the horse before, during and after the lesson. Report any horse related problems to the instructor.

Related Tasks

Before the lesson:

- Arrive at the barn at least 45 minutes to one hour before the lesson to groom and tack up the horse.
- Check the lesson plan or consult with the instructor to understand the expected routine.
- Warm up the horse in the round pen before the lesson.

Horse preparation:

- Collect the horse (*Follow Horse Retrieval/Turnout Procedures*) and cross-tie / tie the horse for grooming and tacking up (never leave a horse unattended) in the hitching post.
- Groom the horse.
- Report any sores and treat them under the direction of the instructor.

Tack (follow tacking procedures):

- Appropriate tack will be designated by the instructor.
 - Saddle or adaptive equipment will be determined based on the needs of the rider.
 - Safety stirrups must be on all stirrup irons.
- A halter goes on under the bridle, with the lead rope attached to the halter.
- Bridle with reins; unless instructed otherwise, reins are connected to the bridle.

TIGHTEN GIRTH BEFORE TAKING HORSE TO MOUNTING BLOCK. The instructor or horse leader will check the girth prior to mounting, when in the ring and prior to trotting.

Mounting procedure:

- Stand directly in front of the horse's face, holding the horse gently by both sides of the bit or halter with both hands so that the horse cannot change position. This is called the halt position.
- Wait for the instructor to give permission before leaving the mounting block or ramp.
- Walk straight away from the ramp or at a slight angle to the outside as instructed by the instructor.

Lesson procedure:

- Hold the lead line about 6 to 8 inches from the horse's head with the extra length folded in (not wrapped around) your free hand.
- Stay between the horse's head and his shoulder when leading; keep a light touch on the lead unless restraint is required.
- Use voice commands to aid in transitions from one gait to another.
- Always keep at least two horse-lengths apart from the next horse.
- Listen to the instructor to assist your rider in moving the horse forward. Provide only such assistance as is necessary; only lead the horse forward or turn the horse if the rider cannot perform the instructions on his/her own. Some of our riders need extra time to process an instruction, so be sure to allow for that time.
- When standing in the halt position, keep in front and off to the left side of the horse to avoid being hurt if the horse should throw his head up. Make sure that the horse is standing balanced on all four feet.

After the lesson:

- Brush or, if weather permits, rinse off and return the horse to its designated pen.
- Rinse off the bit after every use; clean bridle/reins/girth/saddle with clean cloth/sponge
- Replace all equipment and sweep or rinse off the wash area.
- Place soiled pads and dirty towels in the laundry bin.
- Report observations and feedback concerning the horse and their behavior in the horse's chart.

Emergency procedure:

- The horse leader remains with the horse at all times even if the client falls off.
- Role is to control and calm the horse in an emergency situation.

METHODS OF HORSE LEADING

1. Active leading
 - a. The horse leader is 100% responsible for the horse. The horse is getting all aids from the leader, not the participant.
 - b. This type of leading is primarily for participants doing exercises, or participants that are unable to control their horse.
 - c. Program horses are trained to look to the leader for directions if none are coming from the participant.
2. Supportive leading
 - a. The horse is still on lead, but the horse leader is not actively giving the horse aids. The participant will be giving the horse aids for walk-on, halt, and steering, but may not be proficient enough to be completely independent. In this way, the participant can practice skills while the horse leader makes sure the horse is following the cues given by the participant.
3. Passive leading, on or off lead
 - a. The horse leader continues to stay by the horse's head, but does little to control the horse.
 - b. When the participant is ready, the lead line will be removed. This is a big step for many participants. It's their first big move to independence yet the horse leader is still close by to help out when necessary.
4. Spotter
 - a. The horse leader is asked to take the horse off lead and stand in the center of the ring.
 - b. Spotters watch one rider/horse at all times during the lesson.
 - c. While it may seem a non-active job, spotters are extremely important to independent riders. They must be ready to assist instantly if the rider or instructor needs their help.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

Horses are extremely aware of and sensitive to the person leading them. A horse leader's manner of walking briskly or just sauntering along can greatly affect how the horse will respond and how effective the client's lesson will be.

DO'S & DON'T OF HORSE LEADING

1. Alert the instructor / therapist immediately if the horse is being difficult, making you comfortable, or if you see ANY unsafe situation.
2. Lead the horse as close to the mounting ramp as possible and help him stand squarely. Stand in front of the horse to keep him still while the client gets on.
3. Stand in front of the and facing the horse whenever the horse is asked to stand still for any period of time.
4. Allow the horse's head to move in a natural rhythm.
5. Use short, quick forward snaps of the lead rope to get the horse to move quicker.
 - a. Do not pull on the lead rope, the horse will pull back.
6. Remember to lead from between the horse's head and shoulder, on the left side of the horse
7. Maintain one to two horse lengths between you and the horse in front of you
8. Do NOT drag the horse behind you
9. Never wrap the extra lead rope around your hand, instead hold the lead rope in two hands with the extra lead folded in your hand
10. Do NOT have a "death grip" on the lead rope too close to the horse's head (this is similar to grabbing a person by the collar of their shirt and pulling them around).
11. Hold the lead rope "softly", but firmly.
12. Do NOT pick up balls, cones, poles etc. during a session – your job is to remain focused on the horse during activities.
13. Do not pull against the horse if they are scared and backing up in a panicked state. Instead, follow them slowly and calmly while speaking to them in a calm voice (saying "Easy" or "Whoa") until they stop moving their feet.

ROLE OF THE INSTRUCTOR

Main responsibility: To ensure that the lesson is proceeding in a safe and organized manner.

Related Tasks

Before the lesson:

- Develop goals and objectives for each rider/client.
- Develop a lesson plan, obtaining materials needed for the lesson.
- Assign volunteer roles in consultation with volunteer coordinator.
- Determine tack necessary for each horse/rider.
- Know the location of the barn equine first aid kit.
- Set up the arena with the help of volunteers.
- Fill in the assignment board:
 - Post on the board the list of horse/volunteer/rider teams for the session.

Lesson procedure:

- Communicate the lesson plan to volunteers before class begins, either by posting the written plan or by holding a short meeting with volunteers before the lesson.
- Lead the group through the class, attending to each individual rider's needs.
- Approve individual rider's activities if they differ from the lesson plan.

After the lesson:

- Put away equipment in the arena with the help of volunteers and leave the arena as it was before the lesson.
- Evaluate the lesson using input from volunteers.
- Write progress notes on each individual client/rider pertinent to goals and objectives.

Emergency procedure:

- The instructor is in charge of critical decision making and delegation of appropriate tasks in any emergency situation or safety concern.
- The instructor is responsible for handling horse injuries and determining if a vet should be called. The instructor should immediately report any concerns to the Executive Director.

ROLE OF HORSEMANSHIP / VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTOR

Main responsibility: To teach the unmounted riders/clients horsemanship

Related tasks

Before the lesson:

- Arrive at the barn 30 minutes prior to class.
- Create a lesson plan and make sure that sufficient teaching materials are available.
- Set up a clean area outside the arena in which to teach.
- Retrieve appropriate horses from pens.

Lesson procedure:

- Teach the unmounted riders about grooming, horse conformation, tack, etc., using equipment, handouts, horses, etc. Refer to the Ground Lesson/Vocational Program Manual.

After the lesson:

- Keep unmounted riders with you until their teacher/parent/caregiver is present.
- Put away all teaching materials so that they will be available for the next class.
- Write progress notes; update appropriate forms.

Emergency procedure:

- Remain with the unmounted riders, keeping them away from the horses.

ROLE OF LEAD CLASS VOLUNTEER

(If available)

Main responsibility: ensure that horses are ready for each class at the appropriate time with the appropriate equipment.

Related tasks

General:

- Know the horses and all the tack needed for the lesson.
- Know the location of the equine first aid kit.
- Provide mentoring to new volunteers.

Before the lesson:

- Arrive at site early enough to have horses ready for class (1 hour before the class is scheduled to begin).
- Oversee getting all needed horses ready for each class.
- Designate tack as requested by the instructor.
- Collect horses or have horse leaders do so.
- Oversee volunteers (*primarily horse leaders*) in grooming and tacking up horses.

Horse Check:

- Appropriately cross-tied and not left alone.
- Groomed
- Hooves picked
- Girth tightened
- Fly spray applied
- Tacked correctly

Tack Changes:

- Have any necessary in-session tack changes ready.

After the lesson:

- Oversee untacking of horses by volunteers, including washing of hot horses.
- Oversee returning clean tack to their proper place.

Emergency procedure:

Notify the instructor and barn manager of any concerns.

ROLE OF VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Main responsibility: To perform the administrative and liaison duties needed for volunteers and their training. The volunteer coordinator is the initial contact of prospective volunteers, and guides new volunteers through the training they will need to follow correct policies and procedures to make their time at Strides meaningful and valuable, for all involved. The volunteer coordinator's organized and helpful demeanor sets the entire atmosphere so that the instructor and other volunteers are free to concentrate their efforts on their work.

Related tasks

Before the lesson:

- Assign training specific to the volunteer's time/skills/desires.
- Contact all volunteers each week to confirm their scheduled time.

Lesson procedure:

- Advise the instructor of any new volunteers, determine what training is needed and coordinate the appropriate training.
- Make sure that everyone who will work in the arena either has a Volunteer Application on file or fills out the Volunteer Application.

After the lesson:

- Ensure horse leaders enter comments in the horse's chart.
- Determine availability of volunteers for the following week.
- Ensure volunteers log their hours, helping and teaching how to do so if needed.
- Obtain future volunteer personal schedules and arrange substitutes as necessary.
- Call substitutes as needed.

ROLE OF BARN MANAGER

Main responsibility: To oversee the proper care of Strides' horses & supervise horse exercisers to ensure that the horses are ready for each class with the appropriate equipment.

Duties & Responsibilities:

- Solid working knowledge of equine assisted services provided at Strides
- Advanced horsemanship knowledge
- Solid working knowledge of basic medical treatments
- Solid working knowledge of equine nutritional needs
 - Manages horses' customized feeding program
- Solid working knowledge of equine behavioral management techniques
- Oversee routine farrier visits
- Oversee routine veterinary care & assists with veterinary treatments as necessary
- Arrange transportation as necessary for horses
- Maintain horse records: training, hours worked in lessons, health care, etc.
- Supervise & ability to train volunteers that handle the horses
- Order supplies, equipment, and feed as appropriate
- Manage horses' exercise programs for lessons each week
- Assess horses' health / readiness for lessons each week
- Fit and assess each horse's tack; make changes as necessary
- Participates on the Strides Equine Assessment Team to provide feedback on if a horse is appropriate for Strides' programs
- Oversee the upkeep of property to ensure horses' safety and or health; if unable to repair then contact the Facilities Manager.

Education, Training, & Certification:

- College degree is not necessary, however, it is useful to have a Bachelor of Science degree in equine science, animal science, or equine business management.
- Not required, however, beneficial for professional development to contact an organization such as the [Certified Horsemanship Association](#) (CHA), which offers instructor certification clinics for barn managers.

Work Schedule:

- Flexibility in hours required due to the nature of working with horses. Irregular hours, such as evenings, weekends, and holidays may occur. Sick or injured horses may require tending to during off-hours, where the barn manager may need to call in and assist a veterinarian. Traveling to and participating at events may also be required.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Safety procedures and emergency phone numbers are posted on the board in the feed station. **In case of a fire please proceed towards Honeysuckle Road.**

In general, the on-site instructor is in charge of critical decision making and delegation of appropriate tasks in any emergency situation or safety concern. The Director or barn manager may assist by calling 911 when necessary. The instructor or Director will provide all required medical history and medical treatment forms. The Director will also ensure that an incident report/occurrence report recording all details and parties involved is prepared. It is a Strides policy that all occurrences are documented.

The instructor will give directions to volunteers and riders as to whether they need to dismount or not. She/he will also be responsible for administering first aid as necessary. If the riders are dismounted, the horses will be returned to their pens or to a safe area as directed by the instructor. A volunteer (usually sidewalker #1) must accompany each rider at all times. The instructor or his/her designee will direct volunteers and riders to the appropriate location.

MOUNTED ACTIVITY EMERGENCY PLAN

Examples of emergencies:

1. A rider falls off a horse.
2. A horse becomes loose inside the arena.
3. A horse becomes loose outside the arena.
4. A client, volunteer, or staff member has a seizure.
5. Weather conditions
6. Fire

If there is an emergency while a lesson is in session:

1. All horses will be halted.
2. All horse leaders will assume the halt position in front and off to the side of the horses.
3. All sidewalkers will stabilize their riders with a thigh hold.
4. The instructor will supervise dismounting procedures verbally or personally.

Emergency dismount:

1. Instructor, therapist or horse leader may call for a dismount.
2. Sidewalker #1 tells the rider he/she is going to dismount.

3. Both sidewalker #1 and sidewalker #2 remove rider's feet from stirrups.
4. Sidewalker #1 wraps his arms around the rider's waist, pulls the rider from the horse and moves with the rider to a safe place far away from the horse.
5. Horse leader makes every effort to steady the horse while turning the horse's hindquarters away from the rider on the ground, essentially circling the horse around the horse leader.
6. Sidewalker #2 quickly walks to safety.
5. If circumstances call for the area to be evacuated, riders will be dismounted and will be evacuated first by their volunteers. The horse leaders will remove their horses to an appropriate place out of danger.
6. The instructor will determine if medical personnel are required and will request assistance (usually from sidewalker #2) in contacting specific personnel while the instructor remains with the rider.
7. If the rider is injured, the instructor may ask all others in the ring to leave quietly, placing one person in charge.
8. NO ONE, not even a parent, is allowed in the arena unless summoned by the instructor.

Please note: This plan may need to be modified due to the individual circumstances of a particular situation.

FALLEN RIDER PROCEDURE

1. Make sure both the client's feet are out of the stirrups
2. Try to catch or soften the client's fall if possible
3. Horse leaders should halt the horse & then move the horse away from the fallen client by either circling the horse so the hindquarters are not towards the client or by backing the horse away.
4. Never move a fallen client; wait for the instructor / therapist to assess the client.

LOOSE HORSE PROCEDURE

1. Do not chase the horse!
2. Announce, "LOOSE HORSE!" and inform instructor
3. Look at the ground when approaching the horse so you are not a "threat"
4. Walk slowly at a diagonal towards the horse's shoulder, talking in a low, soothing voice
5. A bucket of grain may encourage the horse to come to you

6. Put the lead rope over the horse's neck first, then put the halter on with the leadrope attached
7. Never lead the horse by the halter with no lead rope; you could be injured if the horse bolts

SEIZURE PROCEDURE

Horse Leaders:

1. Halt mount and assume the halt position.
2. Make every effort to hold the horse.

Sidewalkers:

1. Move in to stabilize the rider. Remove the rider's feet from the stirrups.
2. Perform Safety Dismount of rider if instructor or horse leader calls for one.
(*Petit mal may require safety dismount; grand mal usually does.*)

Safety Dismount:

- a. Sidewalker #1 tells the rider they are going to dismount.
- b. Sidewalker #1 wraps his/her arms around the rider's waist, and firmly pulls the rider from the horse, then moves with the rider to a safe place.

If dismount occurs:

- c. The rider is placed on the ground (*preferably on a towel or blanket*), on his/her side. A cushion (*folded towel or jacket*) should be placed under the rider's head
- d. Loosen tight neckwear.
- e. Do NOT place anything in the rider's mouth.
- f. Do not hold the rider down.
- g. After a seizure, allow the rider to rest or sleep if necessary.

Call 911 IF:

- The seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes.
- The person is not known to have epilepsy or another seizure disorder.
- The person does not return to consciousness.
- He or she seems to be having a slow recovery or a second seizure, or is having difficulty in breathing.
- The person is pregnant.
- The person has a medical I.D.

- There is any sign of injury or sickness.

If 911 is called:

1. A designated person will be instructed to call 911 and tell the dispatcher:
 - a. What happened
 - b. The condition of the injured person
 - c. What help is being given
 - d. The location of the injured person
 - e. Directions to Strides: 180 Honeysuckle Road
2. A designated person will open all gates to the accident site after all horses have been secured. This person will wait at the bottom of the driveway to tell EMS to turn off lights and sirens and to direct them to the location of the injured person.

FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

1. Evacuate all clients under the direction of the instructor / therapist
 - a. Volunteers may be assigned to help clients to a safe area
2. Instructor will designate someone to call 911
3. Instructor will designate volunteers to begin evacuating horses when all clients, volunteers and staff are out of the facility
4. Evacuate horses through the nearest exit gate (pending the fire is not at that gate)
 - a. Begin with the horses closest to the fire
 - b. Lead horses to the nearest paddock/pasture, if possible
 - c. Frightened horses may not want to leave their pens
 - i. Talk to them in a reassuring tone of voice
 - ii. It may be necessary to cover their eyes
 - iii. If a horse is unmanageable or refuses to leave it's pen, leave it's gate open and move to the next horse
 - d. Be aware of the possibility that once outside, a horse may try to run back into the it's pen.
5. If the fire is on the south end of the property (nearest Tri-Cities), we evacuate north to Honeysuckle Road.
6. If the fire is on the north end of the property (near the house), we evacuate south through the gate on the sensory trail to get into the fields.

EXTREME WEATHER PROCEDURE

1. In the event of a rapidly approaching thunderstorm or extreme high winds:
 - a. Dismount all clients immediately under the direction of the instructor / therapist.
 - b. Sidewalkers should escort their clients to the client's present caregiver for them to leave the property. The sidewalk should then take cover in the tack room
 - c. Horse leaders should return horses to their pens after quickly untacking them.
 - i. If time does not permit this, untack horses in arena and turn it out in pasture or arena and then take cover in the tack room
2. In the event of extreme weather and there are no programs taking place:
 - a. If horses are outside, leave horses in the pasture.
 - b. Volunteers can take shelter in the tack room.

PREVENTING DISEASE TRANSMISSION

1. The risk of getting a disease while working with or caring for a client is extremely small with the exception of COVID19.
 - a. Please follow the most updated COVID19 policies posted on our website and in the tack room.
2. The following precautions should be taken to protect yourself:
 - a. Before you begin volunteering, cover any cuts, scrapes, or skin irritations you have in order to avoid contamination
 - b. Notify instructor immediately if the client you are working with has any sudden health issue, such as a bloody nose or other bodily fluids
 - c. Avoid contact with blood and other bodily fluids
 - i. If contact is unavoidable, use protective equipment, such as disposable gloves (located in the first aid kit)
 - ii. Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water immediately after giving care
 - d. Sanitize your hands before and after working with each client.

WORKING WITH THE SPECIAL NEEDS POPULATION

Working with people who have special needs may be a new experience for some volunteers. Please take time to know your participant and direct any questions to the instructor. Physical or mental impairments may be present at birth or may be due to injury, disease or aging. Often a major barrier for people with special needs is not the disability itself but the lack of awareness and understanding from others. Above all, please be considerate and sensitive to the needs of our clients.

Wheelchair Etiquette

Many people are unsure how to act when meeting someone in a wheelchair. Please try to keep the following in mind: always ask the wheelchair user if they would like assistance before you help. Be respectful—people's wheelchairs are an extension of their body space. Don't hang or lean on them unless you have permission. Speak directly—be careful not to exclude the wheelchair user from conversations. If the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit or kneel to communicate at eye level with the person in the wheelchair.

Escorting an Individual with a Visual Impairment

If an individual with a visual impairment looks like he/she needs assistance, please ask first if help is needed. Remember that they may need only verbal directions/cues. If physical assistance is needed, allow the individual to hold onto your arm above the elbow and walk one-half step ahead. The individual also may have a specific way they prefer to receive assistance. Repeat or verbalize information that may be written or posted. If you're uncertain of what to do, ask your instructor how you can help.

General Guidelines for Working with Individuals with Hearing/Language Impairment

Try to maintain good eye contact, looking at the individual when speaking to him/her. Speak clearly, avoid talking slowly or over-emphasizing words and avoid long instructions or conversation. Become familiar with hand gestures and body positions that the participant may be using to represent words and concepts. See your instructor with questions. Provide assistance with communication when needed (i.e. visual cues, gestures, etc.). Alert the instructor if the participant is having difficulty with a hearing aid (i.e. ringing or whistling).

Non-Verbal or Limited Verbal Expression

Many of our participants are non-verbal or limited in their verbal expression. To enhance directions with these individuals, instructors and volunteers may reinforce requests and directions with basic 31 American Sign Language (ASL).

OTHER WAYS VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP

We are always in need of volunteers to help in other aspects of our program. Listed below are two committees where your service would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in participating in one of these committees, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Events & Partnership Committee: assist with annual fundraising events held on our behalf, such as the Gala and the Golf Scramble. If someone approaches you regarding raising funds for Strides, please direct them to call the Event and Partnership Coordinator at 509-492-8000.

Facilities Committee: help with the care and general upkeep of the property, including groundskeeping/ mowing, fence maintenance, building repair, etc.

Administrative Tasks

There are many non-horse related tasks that are part of Strides, such as filing, data entry, copying, telephoning, etc. If you believe you possess organizational skills and want to “work behind the scenes” in the office, please contact the volunteer coordinator, or call 509-492-8000.

Donations

As a non-profit organization, we will always be in need of donations to operate our program. A unique way to honor someone’s birthday or anniversary or to remember someone’s passing is to make a donation and become a Strides partner. If you are interested in making a donation, please call 509-492-8000 or go to our website and learn how you can partner with us (StridesTC.org).

A unique way to participate in helping horses is by sponsoring a horse for a month, 6 months or a year or the Sponsor a Rider program. If you would be interested in either or both of these programs, please contact the Event and Partnership Coordinator at 509-492-8000, leave your name and phone number and you will be contacted.

Another simple way to help is by visiting our Wish List on our website. The items vary from used towels to new helmets and tack. We also have big items we dream about, from a mechanical wheelchair lift to a covered arena. www.stridestc.org.

Community Service Hours

If you are a high school student or know of one who needs community service hours, volunteering for Strides Therapeutic Horsemanship Center would help generate those hours. Please call 509-492-8000 for further information.

INTRODUCTION TO PATH INTL.

(Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International)

PATH International is a membership organization that fosters “safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards and research for people with and without disabilities.” PATH promotes therapeutic riding primarily through public awareness campaigns and educational events. Above all, PATH is concerned with safety and service to its members and riders. PATH International has developed several programs designed to benefit those concerned with therapeutic riding. Please visit the website at www.PATHIntl.org for more information.

Accreditation

This program helps to ensure that PATH Intl. operating centers are conducting safe and medically appropriate programs. All PATH Intl. operating centers are expected to comply with mandatory and applicable standards listed in the PATH Intl. Operating Center Standards and Accreditation Manual. Strides became a PATH Certified Center, and is reaching for the goal to become a Premier Accredited Center very soon.

GLOSSARY OF PHYSICAL & COGNITIVE DISABILITIES

The following are brief, non-medical descriptions of some disabilities and conditions of participants one might encounter at Strides. This is not intended as a comprehensive explanation of a specific disability; rather, it is a general overview with an explanation of how equine assisted services can be beneficial.

Autism

A self-centered mental state from which reality tends to be excluded.

Characteristics: Unresponsiveness to the presence of others; withdrawal from physical contact; severely delayed and disordered language; self-stimulating behaviors; unusual or special fears; insensitivity to pain; unawareness of real dangers; hyperactivity; passivity; unusual behaviors such as smelling/tasting/licking/mouthing all objects; ritualistic behaviors; developmental delay; unusual response to sounds; clumsiness; social withdrawal; resistance to change.

Benefits: Interaction in a group setting including postural and verbal stimulation focuses interest away from self and toward others and the horses.

Cerebral Palsy

Brain damage occurring before, at or shortly after birth. It is a non-progressive motor disorder.

Types and Characteristics:

Spastic - hypertonicity with hyperactive stretch reflexes, muscle imbalances and equilibrium. Increased startle reflex and other pathological reflexes.

Athetoid - extensor muscle tension, worm-like movements, abnormal posturing and slow and deliberate speech.

Ataxic - poor balance, difficulty with quick, fine movements; often described as having a "rag doll" appearance.

Benefits: Normalization of tone, stimulation of postural and balance mechanisms, muscle strengthening and perceptual motor coordination.

Associated Problems: Seizures, hearing defects, visual defects, general sensory impairment, perceptual problems, communication problems, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, learning disabilities.

Cerebral Vascular Accident -Stroke (CVA)

Hemorrhage in the brain, which causes varying degrees of functional impairment.

Characteristics: Flaccid or spastic paralysis of arm and leg on same side of body. May impair mentation, speech, sight, balance, coordination and strength.

Benefits: Promotes symmetry, stimulates balance, posture, motor planning, speech and socialization.

Down Syndrome

Condition in which a person is born with an extra chromosome, resulting in mental retardation and developmental delay.

Characteristics: Broad flat face, slanted eyes. Neck and hands are often broad and short. Usually hypotonic, have hypermobile joints and tend to be short and slightly overweight. Prone to respiratory infections.

Benefits: Riding improves expressive and receptive language skills, gross and fine motor skills, balance, posture, muscle tone and coordination.

Emotional Disabilities

A congenital or acquired syndrome often compounded by learning and/or physical disabilities incorporating numerous other pathologies.

Characteristics: Trouble coping with everyday life situations and interpersonal relations. Behaviors such as short attention span, avoidance, aggression, autism, paranoia or schizophrenia may be exhibited.

Benefits: Increases feelings of self-confidence and self-awareness and provides appropriate social outlets.

Learning Disabilities (LD)

Catch-all phrase for individuals who have problems processing, sequencing and problem solving, but who appear to have otherwise normal intelligence skills.

Characteristics: Short attention span, easily frustrated, immature.

Benefits: Effects depend upon the particular disorder. Stimulates attention span, group skills, cooperation, language skills, posture and coordination.

Mental Retardation (MD)

Lack of ability to learn and perform at normal and acceptable levels. Degree of retardation is referred to as educable, trainable, severe or profoundly retarded.

Characteristics: Developmentally delayed in all areas. Short attention span.

Benefits: Stimulates group activity skills, coordination, balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination. Provides a structured learning environment.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS)

Progressive neurological disease with degeneration of spinal column tracts, resulting in scar formation.

Characteristics: Most commonly occurs in the 20 to 40-year-old range. It is progressive with periods of exacerbation and remissions. Symptoms include weakness, visual impairment, fatigue, loss of coordination and emotional sensitivity.

Benefits: Maintains and strengthens weak muscles and provides opportunities for emotional therapy.

Associated Problems: Visual impairment, emotional lability and impaired bowel and bladder function.

Scoliosis

Lateral curve of the spine with a C or S curve with rotary component.

Characteristics: Postural asymmetry. May wear a scoliosis jacket or have had stabilization surgery.

Benefits: Stimulates postural symmetry, strengthens trunk muscles. (Note: Severe scoliosis is a contraindication for therapeutic riding).

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

Trauma to the spinal cord resulting in a loss of neurological function.

Characteristics: Paralysis of muscles below the level of injury -can be flaccid or spastic. Fatigue, sensory loss and pressure sores.

Benefits: Stimulates posture and balance, strengthens trunk muscles, is an option for sports participation and recreation.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Accidental injury to the head resulting in intracranial bleeding with death of brain cells.

Characteristics: Gross and fine motor skills deficits. Often have impaired memory, speech, balance and/or vision. May have psychological effects.

Benefits: Stimulates balance, posture, gross and fine motor skills, speech and perceptual skills.

COMPETENCY CHECKLISTS

Below you will find examples of the Strides competency checklists to advance your skills working with the horses.

LEVEL 1: STRIDES GROOMER

- ☐ Name the curry comb
- ☐ Name the hard bristle / dandy brush
- ☐ Name the soft bristle / finishing brush
- ☐ Name the sweat scraper
- ☐ Name mane & tail brush
- ☐ Name the hoof pick
- ☐ Name the bot knife
- ☐ Name the shedding blade

- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a curry comb
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a dandy brush
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a finishing brush
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a mane & tail brush
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a sweat scraper
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a shedding blade
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use a bot knife
- ☐ Demonstrate how to clean a horse's face
- ☐ Demonstrate how to don / doff a fly mask
- ☐ Demonstrate how to pick hooves

- ☐ Demonstrate how to use fly spray
- ☐ Demonstrate how to use Roll-On, Swat, War Paint, or other fly repellent

- ☐ Recognize wounds / sores
- ☐ Verbalize who to report any wounds / sores to

- ☐ Demonstrate how to rinse off a sweaty horse
- ☐ Demonstrate how to wash a horse with shampoo
- ☐ Demonstrate how to thoroughly rinse a horse after shampoo / conditioner
- ☐ Demonstrate how to scrape water from a horse

LEVEL 2: STRIDES HORSE WRANGLER

- ☐ Name the halter
- ☐ Name the lead rope

- ☐ Demonstrate how to approach a horse to catch it using an inviting, calm posture (nonthreatening)
- ☐ Demonstrate lead rope over horse's neck
- ☐ Demonstrate proper halter fit
 - ☐ → 2 fingers between bottom of cheekbone & the halter noseband
 - ☐ → 2 fingers under the noseband
 - ☐ → 2 fingers under the throatlatch
- ☐ Demonstrate a driving posture if horse is resistant to being caught
- ☐ Demonstrate a restraining posture

- ☐ Recognize 3 signs of anxiety
- ☐ Recognize 3 signs of relaxation

- ☐ Demonstrate how to safely hold the lead rope
- ☐ Demonstrate how to pass through a gate while leading a horse
- ☐ Demonstrate where the horse's head should be in relation to self while leading the horse
- ☐ Demonstrate how to maintain your personal space while halted

- ☐ Vocalize "Whoa" in a low pitch at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize "Eeeasy" in a soothing, drawn-out tone at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize "Walk on" with proper inflection at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize "Baaaack" in a soothing, drawn-out tone at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize "UH!" as a warning / reprimand at appropriate time

- ☐ Demonstrate how to tie a lead rope correctly 3/3 times
- ☐ Demonstrate how to unhalter & turn loose a horse
- ☐ Demonstrate to return the halter & lead rope to the tack room

LEVEL 3: STRIDES HORSE LEADER

- ☐ Identify a lunge whip
- ☐ Demonstrate how to pick a horse's hoof
- ☐ Identify thrush
- ☐ Demonstrate how to treat thrush, flush a horse's eye, treat a horse's wound

- ☐ Demonstrate how to saddle a horse:
 - ☐ English saddle
 - ☐ Western saddle
 - ☐ Bareback pads
- ☐ Demonstrate how to make the horse's back level under the saddle for swayback
- ☐ Demonstrate how to bridle a horse
- ☐ Demonstrate how to adjust stirrups

- ☐ Verbalize the long side of arena
- ☐ Verbalize the short side of arena

- ☐ Demonstrate collected walk
- ☐ Demonstrate working walk
- ☐ Demonstrate extended walk
- ☐ Demonstrate trot
- ☐ Demonstrate emergency dismount protocol

- ☐ Demonstrate 3 loop shallow serpentine
- ☐ Demonstrate a figure 8
- ☐ Demonstrate a 20 meter circle
- ☐ Demonstrate a 10 meter circle
- ☐ Demonstrate 3 half halts
- ☐ Demonstrate 2 rolling stops
- ☐ Demonstrate a spiral in & spiral out
- ☐ Demonstrate ½ circle reverse
- ☐ Demonstrate change of rein across the diagonal

LEVEL 4A: STRIDES HORSE EXERCISER

(for those already on this team, learn how to complete ground work, joining up, review exercise program. for newbies, demonstrate your riding skills to be approved as a member of this elite team)

PART A: GROUND WORK

- ☐ Demonstrate how to move a horse forward at a walk during free lunge
- ☐ Demonstrate how to move a horse forward at a trot during free lunge
- ☐ Demonstrate how to move a horse forward at a canter during free lunge
- ☐ Demonstrate to down-transition from canter through to halt during free lunge
- ☐ Demonstrate how to turn a horse inward to reverse directions
- ☐ Demonstrate how to halt a horse during liberty work while keeping it on the circle
- ☐ Demonstrate how to call the horse back into you
- ☐ Recognize 3 join-up signs
- ☐ Recognize when a horse is on the wrong lead at a canter

- ☐ Vocalize “Whoa” in a low pitch at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize “Eeeasy” in a soothing, drawn-out tone at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize “Walk on” with proper inflection at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize “Baaaack” in a soothing, drawn-out tone at appropriate time
- ☐ Vocalize “UH!” as a warning / reprimand at appropriate time

- ☐ Demonstrate join up:
 - ☐ Collected walk x ½ way around round pen
 - ☐ Reverse direction through the circle
 - ☐ Working walk x ½ way around round pen
 - ☐ Extended walk x ½ way around round pen
 - ☐ Halt
 - ☐ Resume working walk between 3 more halts
 - ☐ Cue horse to back on a straight line

- ☐ Demonstrate how to correct a horse that pulls on a lead rope
- ☐ Demonstrate how to correct a horse that turns its head in towards horse handler

- ☐ Recognize signs of lameness. Verbalize who to report it to & where to document it.
- ☐ Recognize signs of fatigue
- ☐ Demonstrate how to assess horse vitals
- ☐ Demonstrate where to chart horse’s workouts.

LEVEL 4B: STRIDES HORSE EXERCISER

(for those already on this team, learn how to complete ground work, joining up, review exercise programs. for newbies, demonstrate your riding skills to be approved as a member of this elite team)

PART B: SADDLE WORK

- ☐ Demonstrate free walk on long rein
- ☐ Demonstrate working walk
- ☐ Demonstrate collected trot, sitting
- ☐ Demonstrate working trot, rising correctly while posting
- ☐ Demonstrate canter on correct lead

- ☐ Demonstrate 3 loop shallow serpentine
- ☐ Demonstrate a figure 8
- ☐ Demonstrate a 10 meter circle at a walk
- ☐ Demonstrate a 20 meter circle at a trot
- ☐ Demonstrate 3 half halts
- ☐ Demonstrate a spiral in & spiral out
- ☐ Demonstrate ½ circle reverse
- ☐ Demonstrate change of rein across the diagonal
- ☐ Demonstrate change of rein through the circle

- ☐ Demonstrate what to do if a horse balks, bolts, refuses
- ☐ Demonstrate walk, trot on sensory trail hills for conditioning

- ☐ Recognize signs of lameness. Verbalize who to report it to & where to document it.
- ☐ Recognize signs of fatigue
- ☐ Demonstrate how to assess horse vitals
- ☐ Demonstrate where to chart horse's workouts.