

Exercises: Groundwork – Rope Leading

Rope leading is not an exercise on its own, as you lead your horse everyday from the pasture to the paddock, from the stall to the arena, from the trailer to the track, etc.

Yet, leading a horse implies that the horseman or horsewoman is in charge and the horse follows the pace. The following explains how to teach your horse to respect your leadership in all circumstances.



Q&A

What if my horse pushes me when I lead him?

Once you have gone through the lunging and backing up exercises with your horse, such behavior should not happen anymore. It might happen by 'accident', that is your horse is not paying attention and bumps in you: do not let this happen, back your horse up 10 meters to wake it up and make sure it is focused on you all the time.

Position

Obviously, leading means the horseman should come before the horse. Yet, there is no religion of the good position: be right in front, or at the shoulder, or both at the same time... it does not matter.

The only important parameter to take into account is the position of the horse relatively to yours: he ought to respect your personal space and never crowd you.

Security

Since you may have to lead a colt or a 'wild' horse from time to time, you should consider to put yourself in a safe spot. In such occurrence, the position is important and you should stay by the head of your horse a slightly in front of him, th hand holding the rope raised in order to push the head away if your horse tries to crowd you.

Process

A good leading consists of three steps: the horse starts as soon as you walk, the horse stays behind you all the time, the horse stops as soon as you stop.

I. Start:

If your horse does not start when you walk off, you should pull on the rope and wait. Wait for your horse to switch his weight forward. Later, keep pulling until your horse starts to walk toward you. Pretty soon it will follow you as soon as you start to move and you will not need to pull anymore.

II. Follow:

After you worked the lunging exercise, your horse will follow you easily, that will not be an issue. Yet, it can happen that your horse tries to go faster and pass you, then you should stop and back it up until it gets back behind you.

III. Stop:

A good exercise to prepare this step is to back your horse up. Next, when you walk with your horse and stop, if it does not stop, you should back it up a few steps. Start to walk and try again until your horse stops right with you.