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## “Teach your Horse to Stand While Mounting”

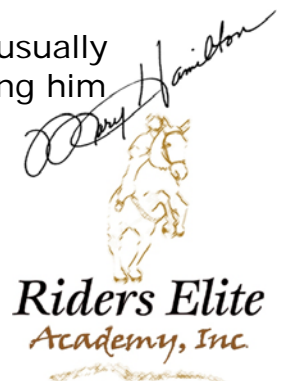
One of the most important moments for your horse to stand quietly is when you mount. One misstep here and you could easily lose your balance and fall off. Standing while you mount also sets the stage for obedience later in your ride. Your horse learns to stand and wait for your cue to walk instead of automatically following another horse down the trail.

To teach your horse to stand while you mount, select a safe training environment like an enclosed arena or round pen. Stretch your leg muscles with a few simple exercises such as placing your feet shoulder width apart and bending slowly forward from your waist, letting your arms hang as if to touch your toes. Keep your knees slightly bent to reduce the stress on your back. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds and slowly stand up. Another good stretch is to put one hand on the wall or fence. Then pull your knee toward your chest with your free hand. Stretch for 30 seconds. Slowly lower your leg to the ground then pick up your foot behind you and gently pull it with your hand to stretch your quads and your knees. This will definitely help you as mounting and dismounting will be a workout for you as well as your horse. Now tack up your horse and prepare to mount.

### **Position**

Set yourself up for success by squaring your horse up so he is balanced when you mount. This means looking at his leg placement and weight distribution. The front and back legs should be parallel and evenly spaced. For example, if one front leg is ahead of the other, he is likely to take a step as you mount to keep his balance.

Use arena walls or fences to your advantage. If your horse usually walks forward when you mount, try closing the door by positioning him





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to face the wall. This prevents him from moving forward as you mount.

### **Verbal Cue**

Use the same verbal cue to stand that you used in the previous two stand lessons. (In February and March issues of HorsenAround) We are just building on what he has learned prior safety articles.

### **Foot in the Stirrup**

Gather your reins and a bit of mane in your left hand. Rein length is important. Don't leave so much slack that your reins are long and loopy. This makes it hard to shorten the reins to make a correction for a misstep. Nor should you hold them so tightly that you pull back on them as you mount. This causes your horse to back up or step sideways.

Place your left foot in the stirrup for a few moments. If your horse stands, praise him and remove your foot from the stirrup. This helps him to not anticipate your mount and focus on the stand cue. If your horse moves off during this step, halt him and do a series of exercises from the ground. (1) Yield his hindquarters sideways by pressing your fingers on his flank until he steps away (2) Back him a step or two by pressing your fingers on his chest until he backs (3) Break him at the poll by applying some downward pressure to the lead rope (4) Yield his shoulders by pressing your fingers on his shoulder until he steps sideways (5) Side pass him by alternately pressing your fingers on his flank to move his hindquarters then pressing his shoulder to move his forehand sideways. Our goal is not to punish misbehavior; it's to put him to work. The message to our horse is, " look how much easier it is to stand".

After all this hard work, ask your horse to stand with the verbal cue and again place your foot in the stirrup. Repeat this process until he stands quietly.





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### **Weight the Stirrup**

The next step is to put your left foot in the stirrup and put some weight in it by standing on your left leg. When your horse stands quietly praise him and step down. If your horse moves off, put him to work again. Yield his hindquarters, back him a step or two, break him at the poll, yield his shoulders or side pass him. Then ask him to stand again as you weight the stirrup.

### **Mount**

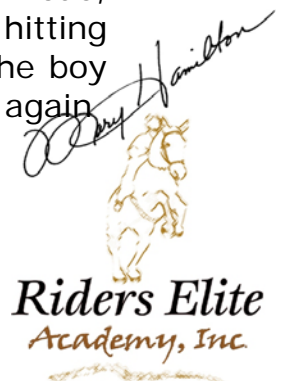
When your horse stands quietly when you put weight in the stirrup, complete your mount by sitting softly in the saddle. If your land with a thud this will also cause your horse to move when you mount. Ask your horse to remain standing a few moments before cueing him to move forward. Be consistent about waiting a few moments. If he walks off, halt him, make him wait and then cue him to walk on.

Training your horse to stand while you mount is an investment in your safety. It gives you time to settle in the saddle and prepare for your ride. Keep these lessons simple by using the same verbal cue to stand whether ground tying, tying to a trailer or mounting.

### **Police Story**

Trooper is a 17 hand gray Holsteiner. He is my current equine crime fighting partner and my best buddy. Trooper is a very entertaining horse. His facial expressions tell me exactly how he is feeling. He is curious and likes to investigate new things by touching them with his nose.

One afternoon I saw a group of teenagers sitting on a picnic table off the beaten path. I saw one of the boys stuff something in his backpack as I approached them. A faint odor of marijuana lingered in the air. I walked Trooper right up to the boy with the backpack. Right on cue, Trooper nudged the backpack with his nose. I said, "My horse is hitting on your backpack. You must have some marijuana in there." The boy replied, "Horses can't smell that kind of stuff can they?" Trooper again





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nudged the backpack with his nose. I said, "Horses can smell all sorts of grasses and I have trained this one to detect marijuana." The boy sighed and reached inside his backpack. He pulled out a baggie of marijuana and pipe which he handed me. So busted.

