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A sidewalker's job is just as important as the leader's job, but for different reasons. Some riders have very poor balance, some are very nervous, some have very little or no muscle power in their legs, some simply require the mental support of having someone close by "in case", or as an extensions of the instructor's requests. Sidewalkers walk beside the horse and rider, ready to steady the rider if necessary. They position themselves just behind the body line of the rider, taking care to avoid putting pressure on any of the major muscles, but they do exert a gentle pressure pushing the rider firmly against the saddle or surcingle. You can rest your hand on the saddle in front of the rider, but take care that you do not allow yourself to be dragged along by the horse. Keep an active pace beside the horse. If you are the only sidewalker for the rider, it is easier for you to walk on the opposite side to the leader, especially at the trot. However, if there are two sidewalkers, you will have to work as a well co-coordinated team to avoid stepping on one another's heels. Take care not to rest your arm or hand on the horse's back behind the saddle; this can be very aggravating to the horse.

Some riders require an ankle hold, which requires steadying the ankle joint in the correct position on the horse.

Sidewalkers give support, both physical and mental. They are there to help the rider carry out the instructions to the best of his/her ability, and keep the right position on the horse, without losing his/her balance. If the rider starts to slip to one side, alert the leader, and take the horse in toward the center of the arena for adjustments.

Sidewalkers may be requested to help the student with right and left orientation, basic control or spatial awareness. Sidewalkers should give praise and encouragement when appropriate. Give students time to process the directions. Help the rider focus attention to the instructor. If the student does not hear or was not paying attention to the instructor, the sidewalker can reinforce the directions.

### **Spotter**

A student may progress to a point when s/he is almost ready to ride independently. They may need a spotter to walk along for moral support or "just in case". Riders with certain disabilities (such as seizure disorders) may be able to ride independently, but need a spotter as a precaution. The spotter is a leader and sidewalker rolled into one. Because the spotter does not have a hold of the horse, he must be careful not to make a sudden movements towards the horse that could cause the horse to jump away and possibly unseat the rider. Remember, never run towards a horse. The spotter must be able to read the horse and interpret behavior before it happens.

### **Off-Sider**

An off-sider assists the instructor with mounting and dismounting. The off-sider may be directed to hold the offside stirrup while the student mounts. If the rider is mounting from the ramp, the off-sider is on the opposite side standing on the offside block. The off-sider may be trained to assist in mounting and dismounting riders.

### **Un-mounted Instruction**

Volunteers may assist the students in grooming and in tacking their horses. These volunteers are tackers or groomers. The groomer helps the student clean the horse. The tacker helps the student put the saddle and bridle on the horse. (Groomers and tackers may also prepare the horses before the lesson). This is an excellent time for student and volunteer interaction. Groomers and tackers must be consistent in technique in order to facilitate skill acquisition.

## **Volunteer Job Checklists**

The volunteer job checklists help the volunteers determine mastery of all the elements of a particular volunteer job.

NOTE: If any volunteer is interested in receiving additional training for some of the more specialized volunteer jobs, please let the instructor know so that a training session can be arranged.

### **Side-walker:**

1. Demonstrate how to pay attention to the student.
2. Demonstrate how to stay close to the student in order to assist if needed. Never has hands in pockets.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of amount of physical assistance the rider needs to maintain balance.
4. Demonstrate how to let rider be as independent as possible.
5. Direct riders attention to the instructor
6. Does not carry on disruptive conversation during the lesson.

### **Leader:**

1. Demonstrate side-walker duties.
2. Demonstrate proper distance from the rail.
3. Demonstrate how to maintain horse speed appropriate to the disability
4. Demonstrate what to do if a horse tries to bite.
5. Demonstrate what to do if a rider steers the horse too close to another horse.
6. Demonstrate how to allow the rider to control the horse – knows when to help and when to back off.
7. Demonstrate how to reinforce the rider when the rider attempts to control the horse and the horse doesn't respond.
8. Demonstrate how to properly hold the lead rope.
9. Demonstrate proper safety procedures for leading a horse.

### **Spotter:**

1. Demonstrate leader and side-walker duties.
2. Demonstrate how to help a rider that is riding independently but still needs a person nearby.
3. Know why the rider needs a spotter (medical, psychological, etc.)
4. Demonstrate proper body position and movement around a horse that is not secured by a lead rope.

### **Off-sider:**

1. Demonstrate leader, side-walker and spotter duties.
2. Demonstrate proper way to assist on off side of horse at the ramp, mounting block, or on the ground including:
  - Safety
  - Hand position
  - Holding of stirrup as necessary
3. Know the way the student mounts or dismounts

**Groomer:**

1. Know where to locate information to determine which horse needs to be brushed
2. Know names of grooming equipment
3. Indicates which grooming equipment is used.
4. Demonstrate proper grooming technique
5. Demonstrate how to assist student with grooming including:
  - Groomer body position in relation to student
  - How to help keep student on task
  - Safety considerations

**Tacker:**

1. Know where to locate information needed to determine which horse will be used and what equipment will be required.
2. Know names of equipment used
3. Know where the tack is located
4. Demonstrate proper tacking techniques including:
  - How to put the saddle on
  - Proper position of saddle on horse
  - Elastic end of girth on left side
  - Correct technique for bridling
5. Demonstrate how to assist student with tacking including:
  - Tacker body position in relation to student
  - How to keep student on task
  - Safety considerations



## UNDERSTANDING HORSE BEHAVIOR AND EQUINE SENSES

When developing relationships 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 the horse senses and instincts is a step in predicting behaviors, managing risks and increasing positive relationships.

**SMELL:** The horse's sense of smell is thought to be very acute and it allows him to recognize other horses and people. Smell also enables the horse to evaluate situations.

### **Implications:**

- Allow horses the opportunity to become familiar with new objects and their environment by smelling.
- It is recommended that treats are not carried in your pocket since horses may desire to go after them.
- Volunteers should be discouraged from eating or having food where horses are present.

**HEARING:** The horse's sense of hearing is also thought to be very acute. The horse may also combine their sense of hearing and sight to become more familiar with new or startling sounds. "Hearing and not seeing" is often the cause of the fright/flight response. Note the position of the horse's ears. Forward ears communicate attentiveness and interest. Ears that are laid back often communicates that they are very upset and/or showing aggression towards another horse or person.

### **Implications:**

- Horses are wary when they hear something but do not see it. If your horse is acting nervous, talk to him in a quiet and calm voice for reassurance.
- Avoid shouting or using a loud voice. This can be frightening to a horse.
- Watch your horse's ears for increased communication. Stiffly pricked ears indicate interest. Drooping ears indicate relaxation, inattentiveness (easily startled), exhaustion or illness. Flattened ears indicate anger, threat or fear. Ears flicking back and forth indicate attentiveness or interest.

**SIGHT:** The horse's eyes are set on either side of the head; there is a good peripheral (lateral) vision, but poorer frontal vision. A horse focuses on objects by raising and lowering its 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 or not horses see in color.

### **Implications:**

- The horse may notice if something in the arena or out on the trail is different. Allow the horse an opportunity to look at new objects. Introduce new props that the horse may be unfamiliar with.
- 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 and directly behind. The best way to approach a horse is at his shoulder. It may startle him if you approach from behind or directly in front. The horse may be unable to see around the mouth area, which is a safety consideration when hand feeding.

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

**Implications:**

- Handlers should treat the horses gently but firmly.
- Each horse has sensitive areas, and it is important to be familiar with them (i.e. flank and belly areas).
- Watch rider's leg position. Riders may need appropriate assistance to reduce a "clothes pin" effect with their legs. Ask the instructor what is 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 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 or touch; therefore, a horse may lick or nibble while becoming familiar with objects and people. Be careful, as this could lead to possible biting.

**SIXTH SENSE:** Horses do have a "sixth sense" when evaluating the disposition of those around him. Horses can be hypersensitive in detecting the moods of the handlers and riders. A good therapy horse is chosen for their sensitive response to the rider. At times there may exist a personality conflict between a handler and a horse. It is important to let the instructor know if you're having a difficult time relating, or getting along, with a particular horse.

**THE HORSE'S LIFESTYLE:** In addition to understanding the horse's sixth sense, we need to appreciate and increase our awareness of the horse's lifestyle. This will assist us in responding appropriately to his reactions to situations.

**FLIGHT AS NATURAL INSTINCT:** Horse's would rather turn and run away from danger than face and fight it.

**Implications:**

- At a sudden movement or noise, the horse might try to flee. Speak to the horse calmly.
- A frightened horse being held tightly might try to escape by pulling back. Relax your hold or untie him quickly and usually he will relax. Be sure not to stand directly behind the horse.
- If flight is not possible, the horse could either turn to kick out or face the problem and rear, especially in a tight area like a stall. Use a halter with a lead rope to maintain control while working around the horse in a stall.
- If a horse appears to be frightened or fearful (note the position of the horse's ears), alert the program staff.
- 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 if the volunteer remains calm and talks to the horse in a soothing voice.

**HERD ANIMAL:** Horses like to stay together in a herd or a group with one or two horses dominant, with a pecking order amongst the rest.

**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 of a line 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, it is recommended to keep at least two horse's lengths between horses when riding within a group to respect the horse's space and pecking order.

## Horse and Rider Hints

No smoking on Ivey Ranch property.

Please make sure all stalls and gates are securely latched. Take care that the stall doors are fully open when bringing horses in or out.

Horses may be tied only as directed by the instructor. Never tie the horse by his bridle or to a fence board. Remember that a horse cannot see directly behind him, so talk to him when you approach from behind so he knows you are there.

When walking around a tied or held horse, do not walk under or over the lead rope.

Do not kneel or squat around a horse.

When patting a horse, pat his neck firmly. Do not pat or poke at the end of the horse's nose.

Do not let the horses sniff noses; they are apt to squeal and misbehave.

Helmets are ALWAYS worn (with harness snapped) by the students when they are riding a horse. Some students are instructed to wear their helmets while working on the ground with a horse.

About attire: Wear safe and comfortable shoes (NO SANDALS). Dangling, jingling jewelry or keys can upset a horse or be pulled on by the rider. Perfume can attract insects and some students may be allergic to certain types of perfumes. No cell phones when you are volunteering please. Please NO tank tops or spaghetti strap shirts, shorts, provocative/political/religious/ or "statement" shirts, strapless shirts, or tummies showing.

It is important to remember that the horse is led, not pulled. The rider is taught to ride; he is not just taken for a ride. If at all possible, the rider grooms and completes the various tasks associated with the horse. The rider learns a skill and begins to participate in a sport. These benefits are great.

When working with a student, make sure directions and explanations are clear and broken down into several steps. Use demonstrations when possible. Be consistent. Directions may need to be repeated several times and possibly in several different ways. Be positive and praise success.

Do not feed the horses treats by hand. All treats must be put in the feed buckets in the stalls or in a bucket set aside for treats for the horse. Horses learn much too quickly to bite if they are given treats by hand.

## **Risk Management Planning**

1. Hazards specific to use of equines?
  - Mounted Emergencies / falls
  - Loose Horses
  - Horse health emergencies
  
2. Natural Hazards to the site?
  - Stinging Insects
  
3. Disasters such as fire, flood, hurricane, earthquake?
  - Inclement weather: severe winds, fire, earthquakes, thunderstorms
  
4. Operation of Facilities and/or equipment?
  - Power outage
  - Equipment: blower, lawn mower
  - Injuries to participants, volunteers, visitors
  - Dangerous items such as medicines, poisons, needles, and syringes
  
5. Conduct of personnel and participants?
  - Physical or verbal abuse of humans and equines
  - Drug or alcohol possession on property
  - Compliance with safety rules
  - Confidentiality

## **Conduct of Personnel and Participants**

- Each individual involved with Ivey Ranch Park programs is expected to show respect for the rights and person of all participants both human and equine. If you witness an act of abuse, either physically or verbal, please report the incident and the circumstances to the instructor or the Executive Director.
- The possession or use of drugs, alcohol, or nicotine products on the premises of the Ivey Ranch Park Association is strictly prohibited. Anyone found on the premises in possession of, or using any substances, will be asked to leave the premises immediately and may be barred from further participation in the program.
- All personnel and participants are expected to follow the Ivey Ranch Park Association established safety procedures. Failure to do so can result in the loss of riding privileges for participants. Any volunteer or paid personnel not in compliance with safety procedures will meet with the Executive Director before being allowed to continue with the program. If you observe an instance of unsafe practice, please inform the instructor or Executive Director.
- All volunteers will sign a confidentiality agreement concerning divulging any information contained in the participant's file. Personnel shall keep participants information confidential and will provide only relevant information to the volunteers.

## **Confidentiality Policy**

All medical and personal information concerning students and personnel is confidential. It is expected that all persons affiliated with Ivey Ranch Park Association programs will respect the confidentiality rights of students and personnel. All volunteers will sign a confidentiality statement.

Volunteers are made aware of confidentiality issues in the following manner:

- Confidentiality issues are reviewed with volunteers during volunteer training.
- The volunteer training manual states: "Respect the confidentiality rights, dignity, and privacy of the rider".
- All volunteers are required to sign a confidentiality statement. The requirement of signing a confidentiality statement illustrates the seriousness of the issue with the volunteers.
- Volunteers do not have access to student files and only pertinent information is shared with volunteers – (information that is necessary for volunteers to perform their duties effectively).

Students and guardians are made aware that information about their disability may be provided to volunteers - (information that is necessary for volunteers to perform their duties effectively). Students and guardians are also informed about the confidentiality policy that is in place for volunteers and personnel alike.