

Set Your Training Objectives

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Training begins when you prepare your unbroken horse to be backed and ridden. Once he is broken in, you can get him to respond to your instructions so that you can get real enjoyment from riding him.

You may find that you can take your horse further with some dedicated training if you are interested in areas such as show jumping or dressage. Do bear in mind however, that the average horse and rider do not go this far, so don't feel this has to be your next step. If you enjoy riding, continue getting pleasure from your riding and don't worry about what else others are doing. There's nothing nicer than feeling the breeze on your face as you ride through the countryside.

Although while learning to ride, you will have gained some experience from handling your horse unless you are an experienced horseman, with a thorough knowledge of horses and how they work, under no circumstances consider training a young horse on your own. Whatever your level of experience you should always work with a good assistant who should be of a quiet and reliable temperament and needless to say physically fit.

The next step is to get your aims clear and how best to achieve them. Your principle aim is that both you and your horse should enjoy the experience of riding. Your horse should be willing and able to listen to your instructions and obey them to the letter. This will mean designing specific training programmes and schedules and this is where understanding your horse comes into being.

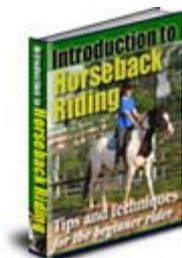
It is also important to understand your horses' anatomy and to recognise that it takes time with skilful and patient training to enable your horse to develop muscle, but his physical ability is just the start. Your horse must want to use his ability, for any horse that is overtaxed, he will become disobedient. To

persuade the horse to work for you and with you at all times, it is important to understand his mentality as well as his anatomy.

Whilst horses have limited intelligence and powers of concentration they generally want to please. You need to encourage these qualities by making your training lessons simple and easy to understand. Plan each lesson in advance with specific goals in mind. You need to judge how much training your horse can take without getting bored or overworked. Keep your horses attention by varying your lessons and by keeping them short and to the point, but most importantly make them fun. The other key to success is to give praise as appropriate and to only use force as a last resort and then only to win a battle.

Make sure your horse understands the difference between “yes” and “no” by giving both praise and punishment, but limit punishment as much as possible because it can do more harm than good.

Remember your horse is not like a dog and cannot be bribed with titbits to perform well. His reasoning powers are not developed in this way. The best way to reward him is through his sensitive response to feel and hearing — offer him a pat, a kind word or, best of all, release him from restraint. Ultimately training is always a two-way process you need to learn about your horse, so he can learn from you.



Roger Bourdon is the author of “Introduction to Horseback Riding” and owner of the site www.anyhorsebackriding.com. If you are interested in horse riding, then sign up for Roger’s free mini course and news letters at www.anyhorsebackriding.com