

HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

RED LEVEL

The **Red Horsemanship Level** introduces basic handling and riding skills, giving new students a strong foundation in mounted safety.

This Level covers important **horse safety concepts** on the ground before focusing on **beginner riding lessons** such as mounting and dismounting, use of the aids and riding at the walk and trot.

WHO IS RED LEVEL FOR?

-  **Adults and children (typically age 8 and up).** *Younger children (or students who cannot handle a horse independently) should start with our age-appropriate **Rainbow Level** instead.*
-  **Beginners who have never ridden a horse before,** with or without previous horse experience on the ground.
-  **Beginners with previous unstructured experience,** or who are new to your program or style of riding. You may wish to have all incoming students start at this Level to ensure there are no gaps in their knowledge.
-  **Participants in a riding camp** geared toward beginners.

WHAT DOES RED LEVEL TEACH?

-  **Basic horse safety practices** and pre-ride routine, including grooming and tacking up.
-  **Balanced position** and use of the **natural aids** in the saddle.
-  **"Survival skills"** such as a defensive safety seat, retrieving dropped stirrups, emergency stop and emergency dismount.
-  **Introductory ring figures** at the walk.
-  **How to ride in two-point position** or over **ground poles at the walk.**
-  **Posting to the jog or trot,** with the goal of developing the secure position and quiet hands necessary to trot one lap of the arena.

"HORSEMANSHIP, noun: the art of riding, handling, and training horses.

Good horsemanship requires that a rider control the animal's direction, gait, and speed with maximum effectiveness and minimum efforts."

- Encyclopedia Britannica

The mounted Horsemanship curriculum (named to reflect the dictionary definition of horsemanship: *the art and skill of riding a horse*) covers very basic ground handling along with skills in the saddle, making **Red Level** appropriate for an introductory riding course or a starting point for new students in your lesson program.

We strongly encourage instructors to teach this Level alongside the unmounted Red HorseSense Level to increase students' knowledge of horses and barn safety.



HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

YELLOW LEVEL

The **Yellow Horsemanship Level** is a beginner level, designed to build upon skills introduced in **Red Level** and give students the ability to ride safely and securely at the trot or jog.

Our goal for this Level is for students to ride with reasonable accuracy and harmony with the horse, while developing a **balanced seat** and **confidence** in their own ability.

WHO IS YELLOW LEVEL FOR?

-  **Students in regular group or private lessons** who have completed the introductory **Red Horsemanship** Level. *(We recommend requiring a **minimum** of one lesson a week!)*
-  **Riding lesson students** who have the maturity and physical capability to tack up and untack independently.
-  **Riders** who are eager to develop the foundational skills - and physical fitness! - necessary for learning higher-risk activities, such as riding at speed, trail riding and/or jumping.
-  **Students** interested in competing in beginner horse show classes or Introductory Level dressage.

WHAT DOES YELLOW LEVEL TEACH?

-  **How to prepare for a ride efficiently** and care for the horse afterward.
-  **Safe methods of adjusting stirrups** and the girth/cinch.
-  **Posting diagonals** and **changes of rein** at the trot/jog.
-  **Riding without stirrups** at the walk and trot/jog, to include posting and no-hand work on the longe line.
-  **Riding in a balanced two-point position** at the trot/jog and over a grid of poles.
-  **How to plan and ride a flowing course** of ground poles or similar obstacles.
-  **Basic dressage terminology** and ring figures, in preparation for riding an Intro Level test.

Developing a balanced, following seat takes time.

This Level emphasizes the importance of patient, persistent practice, challenging students to master basic skills at slow gaits before advancing. **Yellow Level is designed to prepare students to canter or lope**; we require our students earn a Yellow ribbon before learning faster gaits as we have found that doing so allows them to canter/lope with ease.

An average student can expect to spend six to twelve months working through these objectives. Lessons should reinforce basic skills through a variety of fun challenges such as patterns, obstacle courses and games.



HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

GREEN LEVEL

The **Green Horsemanship Level** is a beginner level, designed to further develop students' basic riding skills while introducing riding at the canter or lope and over obstacles.

This Level encourages **increased independence** while teaching students to consider **their influence on the horse** and their responsibility for the horse's welfare.

WHO IS GREEN LEVEL FOR?

-  **Students in regular group or private lessons** who have completed the **Red** and **Yellow Horsemanship Levels**.
*(We recommend requiring a **minimum** of one lesson a week!)*
-  **Riding lesson students** who have the maturity and physical capability to catch and prepare a horse for a ride independently.
-  **Riders** who aspire to jump, barrel race, and/or ride safely in the open.
-  **Students who are ready to learn more challenging riding skills** and are willing to Level Up their commitment to fitness both in and out of the saddle!

WHAT DOES GREEN LEVEL TEACH?

-  **Routines for efficient and self-directed ground handling and tacking up.**
-  **How to rate a horse's speed** at the walk and trot/jog.
-  **Riding at the canter/lope**, along the rail, through large circles, and over a single pole.
-  **Awareness of posting diagonals and leads**, including how to ride a simple change of lead to change rein at the canter/lope.
-  **Riding without stirrups and bareback** at the walk and trot/jog.
-  **A balanced and secure position over ground poles**, and for students in the English curriculum, a small **crossrail**.

Green Level is full of exciting milestones!

While **Green Level** is still a beginner Level, it creates a foundation for intermediate horsemanship. Students develop a balanced seat and strong base of support at all three gaits, allowing them to pursue the riding discipline of their choice.

We consider **Green Horsemanship** to be the minimum requirement for students who wish to ride outside of lessons, including lessees, trail riders and members of our show team. Even casual recreational riders can achieve this Level with the help of a well-trained school horse. **This is also the last mounted Level with a ground handling objective.** Students who earn a **Green Level** ribbon are qualified to arrive early and tack up their horse outside of paid lesson time.



HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

BLUE LEVEL

The **Blue Horsemanship Level** is an advanced beginner level, designed to help students make the transition from passenger to thinking rider.

This Level encourages students to ride on the flat with attention to detail and an awareness of the horse's balance, while giving them the skills necessary to ride safely in the open and over obstacles.

WHO IS BLUE LEVEL FOR?

-  **Students in regular group or private lessons** who have completed the **Red, Yellow and Green Horsemanship Levels**.
-  **Lessees or horse owners** who want to practice riding independently between lessons.
-  **Riders who aspire** to jump, barrel race, trail ride, and/or compete in obstacle challenges such as Western trail.
-  **Riders preparing** for their first entry-level dressage, Western dressage or eventing competition.
-  **Confident, ambitious students who are ready to learn more challenging riding skills** and are willing to Level Up their commitment to fitness both in and out of the saddle!

WHAT DOES BLUE LEVEL TEACH?

-  **Mounted exercises** for developing an independent seat.
-  **No-stirrup work** at all three gaits.
-  **Awareness of bend and balance**, including posting diagonals and leads, at the walk and jog/trot.
-  **Riding in a dressage arena** with the goal of riding an accurate Intro C (English) or Basic (Western) Level dressage test.
-  **Balance and control outside of the arena**, including slow gaits in an open space and natural trail obstacles.
-  **English riders** begin serious **jumping** over grids and courses no more than 2' high.
-  **Western riders** learn to ride the **barrel pattern at the lope** and **arena obstacles**.

Blue Level is a bridge between beginner and intermediate riding.

Students apply the skills learned in previous Levels as they tackle bigger challenges and gain confidence in their own abilities.

This Level also introduces a shift in focus: students begin to consider the horse's balance and movement, not just their own performance. While **Blue Level** riders may not yet be able to demonstrate the working gaits and degree of bend expected in a competitive dressage test, they *can* ride with accuracy, rhythm and harmony, setting the stage for more advanced work that benefits the horse as well as the rider.



HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

ORANGE LEVEL

The **Orange Horsemanship Level** is an intermediate riding Level, requiring students to ride with increased confidence, control, and influence over the horse's balance.

Students in the English curriculum develop their jumping skills in the arena and in the open, while Western riders test their position over ground poles and a single low jump in preparation for trail challenges.

WHO IS ORANGE LEVEL FOR?

- 🐾 **Students in regular group or private lessons** who have completed all previous **Horsemanship Levels**.
- 🐾 **Lessees or horse owners** who want to practice riding independently between lessons.
- 🐾 **Riders who aspire** to show, trail ride, and/or participate in activities such as cross-country schooling.
- 🐾 **Riders preparing** to learn how to ride at the gallop.
- 🐾 **Confident, ambitious students who are ready to learn more challenging riding skills** and are willing to Level Up their commitment to fitness both in and out of the saddle!

WHAT DOES ORANGE LEVEL TEACH?

- 🐾 **Elements of a successful warm-up** and the importance of listening to the horse.
- 🐾 **Riding with a steady light contact** and **correct bend** through turns and ring figures at all three gaits.
- 🐾 **Turn on the forehand** and, in the Western curriculum, **turn on the haunches**.
- 🐾 **Riding the hand gallop** with a secure, balanced galloping position.
- 🐾 **Riding cross-country** or **on the trail**.
- 🐾 **English riders** jump a variety of grids and coursework exercises, working up to a 2' course at the canter with correct leads.
- 🐾 **Western riders learn how to negotiate lope over poles** and jump a single 18" crossrail.

Orange Horsemanship opens doors to all kinds of equestrian activities.

Most students who commit to regular weekly lessons for a few years are able to achieve an Orange Horsemanship ribbon. They should emerge from this level with confidence and competence in basic multi-discipline riding skills, working toward the ability to ride with a soft contact achieved through an independent seat. This allows them to ride happily on a trained horse, and participate in lower-level shows and events.

This Level also represents a turning point: to move on to the advanced Levels, students may need to invest in a horse or otherwise increase their commitment.



HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

PURPLE LEVEL

The **Purple Horsemanship Level** is an intermediate level, designed to reward patient practice by introducing more challenging flatwork and obstacles.

Students in this Level acquire the independent seat, secure base of support and coordinated use of aids necessary for more advanced riding, gaining experience and confidence both in and out of the arena.

WHO IS PURPLE LEVEL FOR?

-  **Students in regular group or private lessons** who have completed all previous **Horsemanship Levels** and who are eager to move on to more advanced riding.
-  **Riders who aspire** to show, trail ride, and/or participate in activities such as cross-country schooling.
-  **Students who are interested in riding at a collegiate level** or considering a career that involves riding, training and/or showing.
-  **Students who demonstrate initiative** by practicing between lessons, asking questions and setting goals.
-  **Confident, dedicated equestrians who are willing to Level Up their commitment** to fitness and independent study.

WHAT DOES PURPLE LEVEL TEACH?

-  **More sophisticated flatwork**, including direct transitions.
-  **Riding a harmonious dressage test** with attention to rhythm, relaxation, and bend.
-  **Introductory lateral steps** such as leg yield and sidepass.
-  **Riding at the gallop** with a secure, balanced galloping position.
-  **Knowledge of striding** and pole distances.
-  **English riders** jump a variety of grids and coursework exercises, in the arena and in the open, up to 2'6"-2'9".
-  **Western riders** negotiate polework exercises without stirrups and more complex trail obstacles, such as working a gate.

Purple Level is about the journey as much as the destination.

Students must learn how to work toward a goal with a commitment to self-directed practice - and to trust the magic of consistent, repetitive training.

Not all recreational students will achieve this Level. Achieving **Purple Horsemanship** requires hours of riding time, and for the average rider, increased fitness. Students who lease or own a horse will have the advantage of extra practice time, but must also keep the horse sound and appropriately conditioned. It is as important for students to be honest about their goals as it is for instructors to clearly outline the requirements of the work.



HORSEMANSHIP CURRICULUM:

TEAL LEVEL

The **Teal Horsemanship Level** is the seventh and most advanced Level in our mounted curriculum, designed to help students become empathetic riders and horse trainers.

It introduces more sophisticated dressage techniques and training philosophy, while asking students to ride with the confidence and secure position gained through extensive experience.

WHO IS TEAL LEVEL FOR?

-  **Students in regular group or private lessons** who have completed all previous **Horsemanship Levels** and who are eager to move on to more advanced riding.
-  **Riders who aspire** to compete successfully, explore new disciplines, and/or develop a project horse.
-  **Students who are interested in riding at a collegiate level** or considering a career that involves riding, training and/or showing.
-  **Students who demonstrate initiative** by practicing between lessons, asking questions and setting goals.
-  **Confident, dedicated equestrians who are willing to Level Up their commitment** to fitness and independent study.

WHAT DOES TEAL LEVEL TEACH?

-  **Progressive training** and dressage theory, allowing students to structure productive and positive schooling sessions on their own.
-  **Coordinated use of the aids** that allows the horse to work over the back with appropriate straightness and balance.
-  **Lateral maneuvers**, including shoulder in and haunches in, and more challenging transitions.
-  **How to ride countercanter** and prepare for **flying lead changes**.
-  **English riders** develop strong jumping skills over 3' courses while learning to design their own gymnastic exercises.
-  **Western riders** apply their skills to a variety of disciplines and demonstrate proficiency in riding one-handed.

Teal Level is for passionate students who persevere.

In an average lesson program, very few students are likely to earn a **Teal Horsemanship** ribbon. **Like a black belt in martial arts, this Level requires years of experience and dedicated practice**, especially if students are also bringing a horse up through the objectives.

We know our students have "graduated" from our curriculum when they have the ability to think like a trainer, when they can ride with awareness and appreciation of different horses and disciplines, and when they understand that this Level is not as much about completion as it is beginning a new journey.

