

Unmounted Horse Leaders

An Unmounted Horse Leader may participate in the Saddle Up For Success (school program), in an Equine Assisted Learning lesson or in a Day Program unmounted lesson.

One of the most significant differences between a Horse Leader (mounted lessons) and an Unmounted Horse Leader is the amount of communication between the participant and the leader throughout most of the lesson specifically in the school and day programs. In an Adaptive Riding Lesson once the participant is in the arena and mounted on the horse the leader focuses solely on the horse limiting communication with the participant allowing for he/she to focus on the instructor and what they are doing. In contrast, as an Unmounted Horse Leader communication is key unless indicated otherwise by the facilitator or Instructor or in the case of a participant in an Equine Assisted Learning where the Unmounted Horse Leader may be guided to focus solely on the horse. The Unmounted Horse Leader requires flexibility and an openness to respond to the instructions of the facilitators or instructors.

- Follow the Hope Haven method of handling the horses. Consistency is very important as it directly translates to happy horses.
- Responsible for the horse at all times and must be aware of the participant.
- Halt the horse and advise the instructor if the participant indicates there is a problem.
- Hold the lead rope with 2 hands - one hand on the rope 6"-12" from the halter and the extra folded in the other hand. Ensure you follow the "Fold and Hold" method .
- To allow the horse freedom of movement through his head and neck, make sure not to hold the lead rope too tightly.
- Walk behind the ear and in front of the shoulder to ensure you can see any behavioral issues when and if they arise to allow for timely correction. Ensure participant's walks behind the ear and in front of the shoulder if you are accompanying he/she leading the horse.
- Ensure the horse's head is always facing forward in order for the horse's body to be straight which will therefore translate to the participant.
- Avoid unexpected sharp turns. If a quick change must happen, let the participant(s) know what you are doing.
- Allow the participant to do as much as possible for themselves. Help only when necessary, they will have a feeling of accomplishment if they do it by themselves.
- Maintain 1-2 horse lengths between horses at all times. Cut corners only when you need to catch up and have been asked to do so.
- Use one short pressure forwards on the lead rope and say "Walk On" to encourage the horse to move forward. Let the horse take the first step before you walk forward.
- Use ½ halts and say "whoooooa" to halt horse, say "Easy" to slow it down.
- Use arena letters. Example, for a change of rein from B to E - leave the track at B and walk straight to E, turning the opposite direction at E.
- If you need to tie your shoe, blow your nose, go to the washroom, etc. have someone else hold the horse.

- Before trotting ensure participant(s) are prepared; maintain a steady rhythm at the trot.
- When entering or exiting the arena or barn yell “Door” to let others know you are coming.
- Watch for signs of irritation or distraction in the horse: ears flat back or pricked forward looking at something, swishing tail, biting, kicking, stomping, etc. and notify the Instructor; make sure the horse’s attention is on you.