

# Lesson Prep

How to get the most out of your lessons

by Troy van Gorder

Should you wish to make your lesson time more effective, here are a few things you might want to try.



## Be Mentally Prepared

(When you groom, groom.  
When you ride, ride)

Arrive at least 30 minutes early. This gives you time to get the horse ready in a relaxed fashion

Time spent grooming and tacking can help slow down the brain from the trials of the day and is very calming and centering.

Enjoy grooming time

Chat with your horse – they are great listeners.

As you groom keep an eye out for any sore spots, missing shoes, cuts/scrapes, etc. These can affect the smoothness of your lesson.

Socialize with others, you have something in common with them –they also love horses.



## Be Fit

Come up with a regular exercise program for when you are not on the horse. Horse time is limited so anything you can do off the horse to maximize the value of your time when you are on the horse can make your lessons all the better. When you are less fit, you spend more time on lesson breaks. The brain and body also do not process and remember as well the more fatigue poisons are running around your system. Think about it – you may spend an hour or two on the horse in a week, but you spend another 112 or so waking hours practicing being



sedentary: sitting or standing with bad posture. Even when we move we don't usually move in a balanced fashion. All this is completely different from what is effective on a horse. I am happy to help you develop an exercise plan or assist a trainer you already have, to come up with a routine applicable to riding.

## Aerobic

Riding is aerobic so the more aerobic activities you incorporate in your life, the easier riding will be. Examples include but are not limited to; fast walking, biking, running, swimming, hiking.

## Strengthening

What are the 3 body areas most useful for riding?  
Core, core, and core.

Sit ups, crunches, crunches especially on a Bosu all can help stabilize your core for the demands of riding. These are easy to do at the home or the gym. Many gyms now have a Bosu or you may easily purchase your own.

## Stretching

Do some stretches within 20 minutes of getting on a horse. This can help pre-loosen you up, speeding up your warm-up and alleviating things like hip cramps. It can also get some mental and physical energy flowing. If you don't know any stretches, I will be happy to provide some.



## Keep a Riding Journal

Sit in the car at the end of a lesson and spend a few minutes debriefing your brain and write down questions and answers, what you felt, verbal descriptions of techniques, what you enjoyed, notes about the horse you rode and what worked well. It can be valuable to jot down questions and clarifications for next time. You can even mentally rehearse parts of the lesson that went well. This will really help you to remember the right brain definitions and visualizing will help you to remember what it felt like when you body correctly performed the task at hand.



## Set Goals

Set reachable goals and time periods  
Let me know what they are and we can work on a plan together on how to achieve them



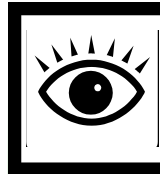
## If you own a horse try a lesson on a different horse

Horses have large variations in 'feel' that come from a lot of different areas, e.g. balance, stride, acceptance of bit, which techniques work, etc. Riding a variety of horses will quickly make you comfortable over a wider range of situations. Your collection of aids/techniques available for use will expand faster. You will also develop a more dynamic balance that will see you through more situations.



## Homework

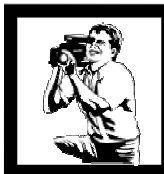
If you ride independently ask for homework and practice it.



## Watch other lessons with me as I teach them (with the student's permission)

Watching others ride and respond to situations is beneficial for a variety of reasons.

You are not alone – things that may be difficult or frustrating for you are probably problematic for others as well. This is a good way to see how someone else deals with the same issues and works to overcome the problems.

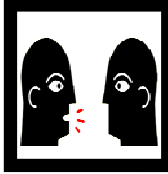


## Video Tape or Take Pictures

Sometimes I will bring a digital camera in and take pictures to illustrate a point. Feel free to ask me to bring it in, or bring your own camera, or better yet bring in a video camera. Either can also be used to assess your progress over time.

It is easier to see examples of correct and incorrect techniques from the ground and how the horse responds to each.

You may find out interesting things that may not have come up in your own lessons



## Communicate with your instructor

Always let me know if you do not understand something. There are many ways to explain a technique. One visual may work for one person where a different visualization can work for someone else.

Don't feel shy about asking unrelated questions.

It is perfectly ok to question why I do things certain ways and not others. This helps you to understand how to problem solve a situation.