

TEACHING BASICS AND DEVELOPING LESSON PLANS

Both the mounted and unmounted lesson plans are meant as examples ONLY. The mounted plan form could be considered to be quite old-fashioned, even though it has been slightly updated from the one appearing in the USPC INSTRUCTORS' CLINIC HANDBOOK through 1983. Most seasoned Instructors use little more than scribbled notes on a 3 x 5 card or the back of a napkin, and present interesting lessons which correctly cover the requirement of the Pony Club Standard. A new Instructor may need the self-discipline of a more structured plan the first few times he or she teaches; it is especially helpful to have a list of required equipment well in advance so that the riders' time is not wasted with trying to remember what is needed and where it is located.

The Unmounted Sample Lesson Plan is the result of a systematic search of contemporary lesson plans used in academic teaching. It mirrors the modern trend toward more open-ended teaching, and covers almost every way to present a topic, while encouraging the student to participate and explore ideas. The old method of "I lecture, you absorb", which many of us remember as the only way to teach, often does not result in a young student's retention of the material presented. Today's students are accustomed to colorful images, constant amusement and stimulation, and very little homework. To keep your Pony Clubbers' interest and to keep them coming to unmounted meetings, the Instructor must work very hard to make some of the "drier" Horse Management topics come alive.

A major goal must be to keep the students doing something physical if at all possible; without the hands-on exploring approach very little learning takes place. We must also involve their minds, of course, and the Plan reflects that in the Discussion and Further Inquiry sections. Whether we approve of what is happening in modern education or not, we are still part of the process. What a wonderful opportunity we have to teach our riders to analyze and to think, using the "carrot" of teaching the care of their beloved horses; after all, most of them place the horse's well-being and comfort well before their own

A major goal of your unmounted program, particularly for younger members, should be to keep the students doing something physical if at all possible; without the "hands-on" exploring approach very little learning takes place. Of course, we must involve their minds, and the Lesson Plan format reflects that in the Discussion and Further Inquiry sections.

Keep in mind that not every number and letter in the Lesson Plan format is used in each lesson; it is expected that the Instructor will pick and choose which are appropriate for that particular lesson and for that particular group of students.

TEACHING TIP

Good Riding Teachers not only teach riders the technical skills of riding, but also how to understand their horse and themselves. Riders have no resistance to learning about their horse, but we often need to be innovative to convince them of the value of knowing themselves and being in the moment.

Often instructors need to teach the rider how to be in the moment. Some hope their students will figure it out, but most students need to understand the vital role this has in learning to 'feel' and having the split second reflexes needed to ride safely and perform well.

- First explain the importance,
- second let them know what you want them to experience, and
- third explain how this will influence and affect their horse.

Often we need to go beyond this and set up a situation where the rider can 'feel' the moment and then build on this.

Communications Between Student & Instructor

Instructors:

Most will agree that a student listens intently and without question to the instructor. However, does the instructor listen to the student? I believe that it is very easy for the instructor to listen to the student's horse before listening to the student.

Teachers:

Instructors will gain twice as much information by listening to the student as well as the student's horse. If instructors listened equally to their student's comments and body language imagine how many clues they would receive? These clues would ensure faster and more effective results.

Instructors should avoid overwhelming their students with requirements.

Riding is not easy for any rider, even if the instructor tells him or her exactly what to do. If the instructor stands in the center of the ring it is much easier, however. Riders' actions become automatic if they have to look at their instructor in the center of the circle. Commands are unnecessary in this situation. Eye contact replaces the use of many words and makes it easier for riders to follow.

Students should hold eye contact with the instructor. Because their outer shoulder is slightly turned forward, the outer rein becomes slightly looser. When the inner rein is also a little shortened the horse will be in the right position and the student sits correctly in the saddle. Students also have an easier time turning the horse and keeping the horse lined up on the curve.

Teachers do this where "instructors/trainers" will not

Teachers should consider what visual aids they can employ in their lessons to make learning easier for their students without drowning them with numerous rules.

Instructors/Trainers versus Teachers – an example:

How often do jumpers (show jumping horses) land on the wrong lead after clearing a fence? In this situation instructors often emphasize that the student should press down in one stirrup or another to counterbalance the horse. This, however, often does not solve the problem.

Teachers:

Teach their students to concentrate on the remaining jumps and focus on the next jump while in the air the horse usually lands correctly. A person's gaze determines their movement (Feldenkrais).

The use of cones to perform a circle, for example, is a visual aid, which allows action commands to be reduced. Simply having the visual stimulus of the cones makes the situation easier to master. Students can recognize their own mistakes better and, with some assistance from their instructor, succeed more rapidly.