



# The International Society for Equitation Science Training Principles

Effective riders follow principles based on learning theory when training horses.  
Timing and consistency are the keystones for optimal training.

## 1. Release the pressure immediately when the horse responds.

Soften the pressure of the signal (such as rein and leg pressures) the instant the horse responds appropriately.

## 2. Use signals that the horse can differentiate.

Signals must be clearly distinguishable from each other (i.e., use one signal to go with faster steps and another signal to go longer in the stride)

## 3. Train and initiate responses one at a time (shaping).

Train each response component of complex movements separately.

Separate opposing signals (such as the reins and the rider's legs) by not using them at exactly the same moment.

## 4. Train habitual responses using consistency and repetition.

The horse will automatically respond in the desired way if the behaviour is precisely targeted (i.e., train all movements and transitions to occur with consistent characteristics, including timing and duration).

## 5. Train only one response per signal.

Reinforce only one response for each separate signal, although signals for the same response can be associated with each other.

## 6. Avoid fear during training.

During all horse/human interactions, make sure that characteristics of the environment, including the humans, do not become associated with fear in the horse.

## 7. Train persistence of responses.

Reward the horse for maintaining a behaviour by NOT applying pressure until the next signal is given (at which point pressure is again applied).

## 8. Check for relaxation.

Strive for relaxation when training each response and vary only for the relevant level of activity.  
Techniques and equipment must not be used to mask distress or undesirable behaviour.

*React quickly when applying a signal or rewarding behaviour.*

*Decide what you want to achieve in each session and work within your capabilities.*

*Avoid being fearful and nervous because anxiety causes muscles to tense and reduces focus on the horse.*



Find out more about the International Society for Equitation Science and the Training Principles at:

[www.equitationscience.com](http://www.equitationscience.com)