



HorseSense Learning Levels

ENGLISH HORSESENSE



PROGRESS SHEETS FOR: _____

The Learning Levels curriculum teaches and tests students on riding skills, barn safety and horse knowledge.

To earn a checkmark, students must be able to demonstrate an objective consistently and confidently.

All objectives must be met and signed off by an instructor for students to graduate to the next Level.

STUDENT MUST MEET THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS:

- ☐ Commit to a regular schedule of unmounted lessons and independent study.
- ☐ Understand and follow all posted barn rules. Students should share these rules with friends and family and enforce safe behavior from anyone who joins them at the stable.
- ☐ Dress safely for lessons, in approved attire.
- ☐ Listen attentively to the instructor (and assistants, if applicable).
- ☐ Come to lessons rested, hydrated and ready to learn!



Instructor's signature

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will learn basic safety practices for working around horses; simple identification of tack and grooming equipment; elementary equine anatomy; and basic needs of the horse.

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Know and discuss safety rules in barn, pasture and arena.	
	Describe safe riding attire; demonstrate how to correctly fit a helmet.	
	Catch horse in stall and pasture, with safe technique.	
	Demonstrate safe leading from near side, both in barn and through doorways/gates.	
	Tie horse safely, using an effective quick-release knot.	
	Demonstrate basic grooming to prepare a horse for a ride.	
	Know names and functions of basic grooming tools.	
	Demonstrate picking out hooves safely, with knowledge of reasons for basic hoof care.	
	Know parts of the horse, to include: withers, poll, croup, hock, fetlock, etc.	
	Know parts and functions of saddle and bridle.	
	Know how to store tack correctly, and give at least two reasons for cleaning tack and equipment.	
	Know basic rules for feeding.	
	Be able to identify good and bad hay, grain, and water.	
	Demonstrate mucking and re-bedding a stall, cleaning stall thoroughly and efficiently.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will refine leading and grooming skills; will learn to care for tack; to describe and measure horses; to apply protective boots and blankets; to identify elementary feeding principles and situations requiring veterinary care.

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Jog horse in hand, with safe technique, as though jogging for soundness.	
	Blanket and remove blanket from horse safely.	
	Correctly apply splint boots, bell boots, and shipping boots. Know what each is used for and which vital areas are protected.	
	Clean and condition a saddle, bridle, and girth, knowing reasons for each step.	
	Reassemble saddle and bridle without assistance.	
	Care for a horse after a workout, to include:	
	- Cooling out	
	- Thorough grooming and post-ride inspection	
	- Appropriate feeding and watering	
	Know normal TPR range for a horse, and discuss how to take TPR.	
	Know basic colors and markings.	
	Know basic types and breeds of the horse.	
	Know how to measure a horse for height.	
	Know reasons for basic feeding principles, to include discussion of roughage and concentrates.	
	Know signs of colic and action to take.	
	Know which injuries can be handled with minor treatment and which need veterinary attention.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will be able to assess fit of tack; to identify basic first aid equipment; to understand concepts of conditioning for horse and rider; to apply simple bandages; to understand elementary stable management principles and routine horse care; to identify common breeds and riding disciplines.

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Fit a saddle, bridle (including bit), girth and halter to a horse.	
	Identify items in equine first aid kit, giving reasons for each item's use.	
	Take and record TPR.	
	Measure a horse for weight and height.	
	Administer a paste or gel dewormer safely.	
	Apply a stable bandage.	
	Describe ten riding disciplines (English or Western).	
	Name five breeds in each of the following categories: sporthorse, draft, gaited, pony, color breeds.	
	Discuss safe trail riding practices, including appropriate tack and equipment.	
	Discuss basic conditioning for horse and rider.	
	Know signs of a hoof needing trimming or shoeing.	
	Know basic stall and pasture management practices to keep horse safe and happy, to include:	
	- Provision for water, forage	
	- Shelter and living arrangements	
	- Fly and manure management	
	- Seasonal considerations	
	Create a simple calendar showing routine care needed for horse, to include: immunizations, shoeing or trimming, deworming, dental care and Coggins test.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will be able to perform thorough grooming; to understand action of bits and specialty tack; to identify farrier tools; to understand principles of horse gaits and movement, basic first aid and parasite control, and safe longeing and trailering practices.

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Groom a horse to turnout inspection quality (no braiding necessary).	
	Perform a safety check on a younger rider under supervision.	
	Know how to adjust different types of tack, including:	
	- Martingales	
	- Auxiliary nosebands	
	- Breastplates	
	- Curb chain	
	- Western cinch	
	Identify different types of bits, to include both snaffle and leverage bits.	
	Apply a polo wrap and discuss its purpose.	
	Know how the following injuries are treated: stone bruise, laceration, puncture wound, abscess, swollen tendon, injured eye.	
	Discuss life cycle and prevention of internal and external parasites.	
	Know names and functions of farrier tools used in trimming and shoeing.	
	Know basic horse movement, to include number of beats in each gait, footfall pattern, faulty movement, and methods of detecting unsoundness.	
	Discuss what conformation is and why it is important, to include basic faults of the forelegs and hind legs, back, shoulder, neck and head.	
	Name and locate five unsoundnesses.	
	Perform a pre-trip safety check on a truck or trailer.	
	Safely load and unload a quiet horse, with assistance.	
	Discuss reasons for longeing, safe longeing practices and equipment. Demonstrate how to hold and give aids with a line and whip.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will be able to demonstrate safe longeing and an understanding of gaits and distances; to evaluate basic conformation points; to plan conditioning schedules and relate horse's work and condition to feed rations; to continue expanding knowledge of stable management and veterinary care; to begin relating equine behavior to human management practices.

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Know elementary concepts of equine behavior theory and relate them to 1) riding and training practices, and 2) stable management practices.	
	Longe a quiet horse for exercise, showing safe technique and consideration of the horse.	
	Set walk, trot, and canter poles for a selection of three different-sized horses.	
	Build a simple gymnastic grid for an average 15.2hh horse.	
	Discuss different types and reasons for clipping.	
	Evaluate a horse's conformation, listing both good and bad points.	
	Know basic conformation traits specific to the following breeds: Arabian, Thoroughbred, Quarter Horse, Andalusian. Relate to suitability for specific disciplines.	
	Know stable vices, causes and possible remedies.	
	Discuss equine dental structure and the need for routine dental care.	
	Know specific immunizations needed for local area and at what frequency.	
	Wrap a hoof.	
	Discuss correct measurement of feed and suitable feed rations for horses in light, moderate, and hard work; including considerations such as conditioning, injury and/or illness.	
	Identify parts of the horse's digestive system.	
	Identify different types of grains, hays, and supplements.	
	Create an eight-week conditioning schedule to prepare a horse and rider for a strenuous activity (i.e., horse trial, show jumping competition, fox hunt, etc.).	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will be able to understand and demonstrate show-quality grooming; to apply more advanced bandaging techniques; to evaluate longeing performance; to understand more advanced concepts of equine farrier and veterinary care; to identify daily horse management practices and safety issues related to trailering; to understand the economic realities of horse ownership.

PART 1: ADVANCED HORSE CARE, LONGEING AND TRAVEL

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Groom a horse to turnout inspection quality, to include appropriate hunt or button braids in the mane.	
	Thoroughly clean an udder and a sheath.	
	Longe a quiet horse and evaluate performance and movement.	
	Fit side reins.	
	Pull a mane.	
	Apply a shipping bandage.	
	Wrap a tail for travel.	
	Know how to select and maintain a trailer and tow vehicle.	
	Identify different types of shoes and their uses, to include traction devices such as borium and studs.	
	Identify a minimum of five toxic plants native to this area.	
	Know location, appearance and treatment of unsoundnesses: navicular, splints, strained or bowed tendon, ringbone, sidebone, curb, bone spavin, capped hock. Discuss blemishes such as windpuffs and bog spavin.	
	Describe causes, signs, and treatment of laminitis/founder, tying up, choking, ulcers, thrush, skin conditions.	
	Name five diseases of the horse and describe symptoms and preventative measures.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

PART 2: STABLE MANAGEMENT AND BUDGETING

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Discuss stable and pasture management, to include:	
	- Turnout schedules	
	- Parasite management	
	- Grass management	
	- Different options for fencing and bedding	
	- Routine facility maintenance	
	- Daily care of horses	
	Create a budget for keeping a horse for a year, to include: feed and board, routine health care, emergency care, tack and equipment, and showing and training expenses.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

Student will be able to teach basic HorseSense skills; to demonstrate understanding of jump course design; to evaluate a horse's dressage performance; to demonstrate advanced health care skills; to evaluate more complex concepts of conformation and movement; to understand functional equine anatomy and relate equine systems to feeding, diseases and their control; to incorporate stable management principles in facility design.

PART 1: TRAINING AND PERFORMANCE, ANATOMY AND VET CARE

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Judge an Intro or Training Level dressage test, demonstrating knowledge of basic dressage principles.	
	Design a hunter, equitation and show jumping course, demonstrating knowledge of distances and types of fences.	
	Discuss methods of starting a young horse from the ground up, including ground exercises, longeing, backing, and progressive training.	
	Discuss methods of conditioning for different activities, such as dressage, eventing, games, endurance riding, etc.	
	Evaluate conformation of a selection of horses, discussing relationship to soundness, movement, and athletic ability.	
	Know basic equine anatomy, to include: musculoskeletal, circulatory, respiratory, and reproductive systems; know what diseases or health conditions affect each system.	
	Draw a diagram showing the major bones, ligaments, and tendons in the lower leg.	
	Estimate the age of a horse using teeth as a guide; discuss number of teeth, growth, and dental care.	
	Discuss different approaches to veterinary medicine, to include:	
	- Basic disease prevention practices, including management of infectious diseases	
	- Uses and dangers of common equine medications and sedatives	
	- Other treatment methods such as physical therapy, chiropractic, acupuncture, etc.	
	Give an intramuscular injection.	
	Wrap a knee and a hock.	

NOTES:

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STUDENT'S NAME: _____

PART 2: NUTRITION, STABLE MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTION

✓	OBJECTIVE	DATE
	Discuss nutrients needed for a balanced diet, with consideration for different stages of a horse's life.	
	Using a tag from a commercially prepared feed mixture, analyze nutritional value of a feeding program (to include hay and/or pasture).	
	Discuss equine disaster planning, to include: fire and storm emergency plans, supplies, and evacuation procedures.	
	Draw a diagram of a stable and pasture setup for 1) private 2-horse farm on 5 acres; and 2) commercial boarding and training facility on 20 acres.	
	Teach a new student Red Level HorseSense skills.	

NOTES:

DATE COMPLETED: _____ INSTRUCTOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

A Note About the Levels Program

The Learning Levels program is our unique method of tracking progress in students as they develop into versatile, well-rounded riders and horsemen. Students work to master specific skills in each of the levels, and receive recognition for completion when they are able to consistently demonstrate each of the skills to their instructor. In many cases, achievement of one level is a prerequisite for learning more advanced skills such as jumping.

The Levels are divided into three branches to reflect the main areas of study within our riding school:

-  The *Horsemanship Levels* concentrate on the rider's ability in the saddle, culminating in a rider who is balanced, educated and confident and can ride a schooled horse with skill and tact on the flat, over fences and in the open.
-  The *HorseSense Levels* focus on the extensive body of knowledge needed to care for and work with horses successfully, testing students on horse handling, veterinary and stable management skills.
-  The *HorseCentered Levels* introduce training and groundwork skills, allowing students to apply training techniques in a wide variety of situations while increasing communication and connection with the horse.

If you are not already a participant in the Levels Program and you are interested becoming one, please ask your instructor for more information.

Nikki and Dana Surrusco
HorseSense Learning Levels, LLC
Ellijay, GA


<https://HorseSenseLearningLevels.com>

Visit our website to learn more about the Learning Levels program.



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Special thanks to all of the HorseSense students and horses who made it possible to share our curriculum with you!

Illustrations by Rhonda Hagy
and Evan Surrusco

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