

4 back up

For this exercise the horse needs to be really relaxed, with his head about at wither height, and the poll soft. Then gradually start applying pressure backward on the nose band until he thinks about backing up or actually does back a step. Instantly release pressure and praise. When the horse has a problem with this or crowds you you can also push on his nose with your free hand. One can also push against the chest, but since driving horses have to learn to move against pressure there it can be a bit confusing for them. Although they can and will learn to understand the difference over time.

Back Up



Back Up



5 head down

This is a very important exercise for a driving horse, and you should make sure that he does this really well. Not only does it make it a lot easier to put the bridle on, but should the horse become stuck with his bit or a rein around a shaft he will not panic,

and when you need to hold him in a dangerous situation on the head he will know how to respond properly. Needless to say it is also useful should the horse step on his lead rope or get tangled up some other way with his head, or is tied and gets scared and tries to pull back.

To teach him to respond to pressure, start applying pressure downward with the lead rope.

This sometimes takes some patience and strength. Many horses will respond to that first by raising their head. Again, every slightest attempt needs to be rewarded.

Eventually you should be able to just press lightly with your hand on the top of the poll, or pull ever so lightly down on the lead, and he should keep his head in any desired position, for as long as you are asking him. This also helps a lot with ear shy horses.

This exercise also will help to make him lead on very light contact.

Head Down



6 flex neck to each side

Although this exercise is more important for a riding horse as one can use it to get a horse to stop under saddle, it still is a good thing to teach to the driving horse. It helps to enforce the request of yielding to pressure, supple his neck and helps detect stiffness problems.

You start this by first turning his head to your side by bracing your free hand against his neck and with your other hand on the halter ask him to look your way.

When he does this, move your free hand further toward the shoulder and repeat. Most horses will at first circle around you, until they understand the request.

You can also take the tail into your free hand, bring it forward and let the horse sniff on it.

This helps to control the rear end a bit better, but usually also results in a lot of circling at first.

As another variation you can turn the horse's head away from you by bringing the lead over

his back and apply pressure to the rope until his nose touches his side opposite of you.

Flex Neck To Each Side



7 turn all the way around, following the lead

From this last position, you can run the lead around his hind quarters and make him turn around all the way. Another way of yielding to pressure

Turn All The Way Following The Lead

1



2



3



4



8 pick up all feet from the same side

this is very valuable for the driving horse, especially in the pair, as when a horse is hitched and you need to check his feet for whatever reason you need to do it from the same side, or with a single horse, you don't need to run around to the other side and it is just another thing to do with your horse to establish communication

Pick Up All Feet From The Same Side



9 rope around the legs

you want to get your horse used to being touched around and between the legs just in case he gets tangled up in traces or other parts of the harness, should something brake

It also is very helpful to put the rope around the ankles and lift the leg this way, moving it in all

Lift Legs With Rope



directions. This gets the horse used to not panicking, should his legs get tangled up in something

10 rope under tail

this is of course a good practice for accepting the crupper, but also a good preventative for ground driving, should the long rein or rein get caught under the tail

Rope Around Legs And Under Tail



All the above exercises are very elemental and simple, and it does not take long at all for the horse to learn them,

but their far reaching effect on your relationship with the horse is enormous. It is a true pleasure to handle a horse that understands those basics, and it gives the horse great peace of mind by understanding what he is supposed to do.

As mentioned earlier, horses like to interact, and like us humans, are very willing to “play games” that lead to reward and appreciation. Who does not like doing things that work out well, get approval and praise.

11 standing untied

One can do this of course in a stall as well, but it becomes more meaningful in an open area.

We tell the horse to Whoa, and when he moves we just move him back quietly to where he was.

Since we can easily do this now, it is not a big deal, we get to practice all the previously mentioned maneuvers, and the horse will soon find out that he does not have to do any work if he complies and stands still.

Standing Untied



12 sending the horse out onto a circle

Let's say you want to move your horse off to the left.

You stand near his left shoulder, your left hand holds the lead about 1 ½ to 2 feet away from the halter, plus the surplus length. Your right hand holds the other end of the rope, with about 1 foot left hanging. This end can be twirled toward the horse or also be used to touch the horse if the twirling is not enough. It is our driving aid.

With the left first finger pointing, you raise the lead ahead of the horse to show him where you want him to go, and with the right you twirl a little the end of the rope. Just like before, increase this aid in increments until he listens. You also look where you want him to go. This is very important.

If you keep looking at the horse he may not move.

As soon as he responds by moving off you drop the lead out of your left hand and give him full freedom to move. Then you pick up the lead again with the left hand close to your right hand.

The goal at this point is that he walks calmly around you 2 or 3 times. You keep encouraging him with the driving end of the lead, and if he comes in toward you you step quickly toward him waving the entire lead at him.

Send Out Onto Circle

1



2



3



4

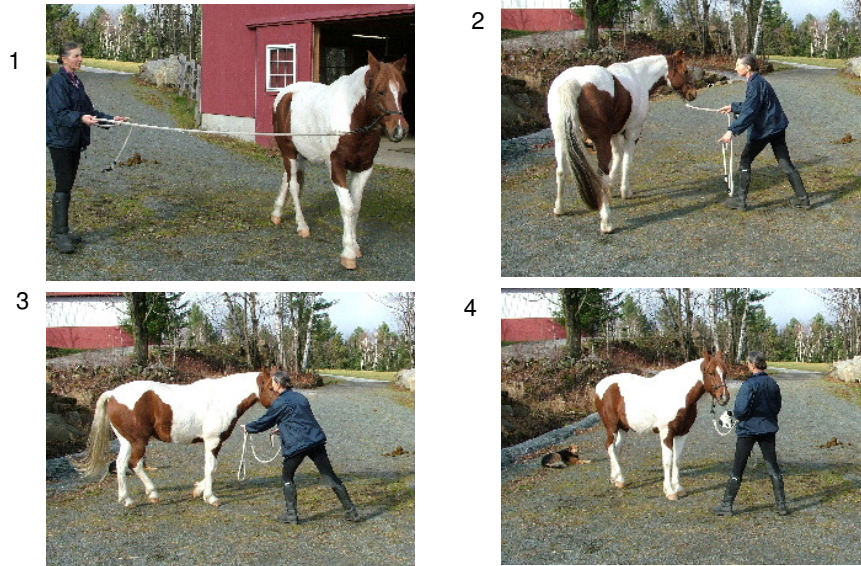


13 bring back in

Then we bring him in by disengaging his hind quarters. To achieve this we slide the left hand up on the lead, crouch down with our posture, stare at his hind quarters, point with the right hand there as well, control his forward movement with the left hand. If all this is not enough we can move closer to him and touch his hind end with the end of the lead. Most likely this will not be necessary. He will step over for 2 or 3 steps and come to a halt. Praise lavishly and try again, alternating the directions.

This work on the lead is a wonderful exercise to teach the horse voice commands and basic longeing skills. This does not require much space, no round pen, and the ground does not have to be totally level.

Bring Back In



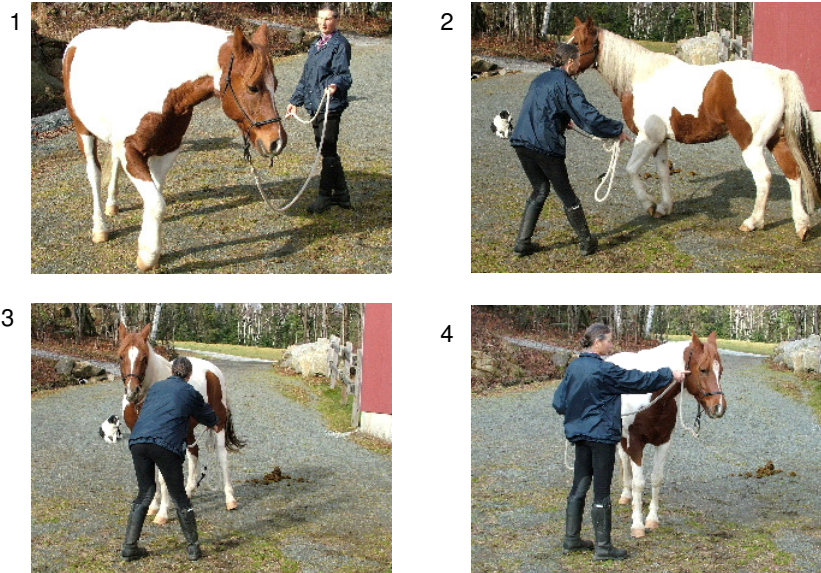
14 change direction

One can change the direction without actually bringing the horse to a stop.

For this one disengages the hind quarter like when bringing the horse in, but as soon as he complies one points with the new leading hand into the new direction while using the other hand now to drive the horse on. The horse will turn toward us, but following the new direction signal it will cross over with his front leg away from us like in the turn on the haunches.

This is a very efficient way of changing direction and requires lots of coordination from both, horse and handler. The trainer needs to be very quick changing the leading and driving aid from one hand to the other, the timing has to be just right, and the horse needs to really pay attention and respond willingly and quickly. It is really fun to do once horse and handler get it right.

Change Direction



15 introduce trot and transitions

When he does all this well at the walk we can start with the trot. Since the circle is very small, only a calm jog trot should be expected. One can make the circle larger by moving with the horse, especially if he is too excited at first for a calm trot. When he does well on the shorter lead, one can also use a longer lead or longe line.

Then one can also do lots of transitions, like walk/trot, walk/halt, halt/walk, halt/trot etc. etc.

One can also ask for rein back by voice. This usually needs quite a bit of close up help at first, but eventually one can rein the horse obediently back at the end of the line.

This can be very helpful in many instances: when grooming, harnessing, hitching, when he got himself into a tight spot somewhere in the isle, backing out of a trailer etc.

16 leading at walk and trot, asking for transitions with voice commands, practicing standing and backing, all from both sides of the horse

By now, the horse should follow you around on a loose lead, at the most with some light contact. If he gets "stuck", esp. in the transition to the trot, you can point with your leading hand and drive with the end of the lead like you did on the circle.

His head should be either at your shoulder or just a tad behind you.

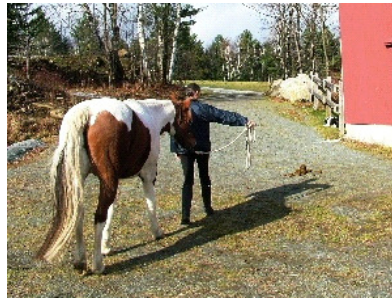
Practice a lot of turns, both ways, to the side you are leading from and to the opposite side. This you do by pointing with the leading hand in front of him, and if necessary, push him a little on the shoulder like in the turn on the haunches.

You can lead him behind your back from one side to the other by switching the lead from one hand to the other.

Leading at Walk and Trot



Following The Lead



17 send the horse ahead

Now is the time to teach the horse to move ahead of the handler. This is great preparation for ground driving. Basically it is the same as the last exercise, but the handler now stays at shoulder height of the horse or even further back, and the horse has to take on the leading role, but still be in full control on very light contact. The aids are the same, the pointing leading hand and the

driving and supporting hand. At first the horse may circle, cut across the handler's path, go strong against the lead etc. But he soon will learn.

From this exercise you can bring him easily back to your shoulder, change direction behind your back and push him ahead of you from the other side.

You now have countless combinations you can ask from your horse and make a walk very interesting and challenging. E.g., you can change from leading him to a circle, out of the circle to moving ahead of you, from there back onto a circle, change direction within the circle, trot off into a straight line, make tight turns both ways, come to a stop, etc. etc.

Send the Horse Ahead



18 side passing

side passing is just another coordination exercise. Although a driving horse never actually can perform side passing as such, he still needs to do a lot of side stepping in turns. This exercise will help him with the understanding and body coordination he will need for tight turns.

It really is a combination of move the shoulder and move the hip.

Except, that now the horse is always looking opposite to where he is going.

In the shoulder move exercise we pointed his head toward where he is supposed to move to, in the hip exercise in the opposite direction.

For this exercise his body should stay straight, only his head and neck are slightly looking toward the side he is yielding away from. His shoulder needs to lead, his body should never be more than 45 degrees to the line of movement. If the angle gets more than this he will step onto his own feet. Usually it is enough to lead the head a little and point the end of the lead toward his flank.

It does take coordination from both parties, but really is surprisingly easy to do.

The reason we have the horse look toward us is that it is easier for him and us like this.

Later, in the carriage, he will look into the direction he is going like in a turn on the haunches.

If you are coordinated enough you can teach it to him like this to begin with, but horses seem

to have no problem with doing it both ways.

The easiest way to start is a few feet away from and along a fence or building, but once the horse understands, you can do it anywhere.

Side Passing

