



## FIRST STEPS TO HARNESS

Learn how to prepare your horse/pony to work in harness. This course covers the lessons that you will need to teach your equine before hitching. At the successful conclusion of these lessons, your equine will be ready for its first hitching to a vehicle.

### **Course Structure**

This course will be delivered entirely online through Web based meetings. Upon registration, you will be given login information to attend the sessions. There will be regularly scheduled observation visits to our farm that full course (rather than single session) participants may attend at no additional charge.

Participants will be provided with a web site to access online lessons, course materials, and resources. You will be able to upload photos, link to videos and/or questions to the web site. Such uploaded materials will then be used in the Question and Answer portion of the sessions.

Each session will last 1-2 hours, depending on question and answers.

**Web Based**

Session will be web-based, requiring a high speed internet connection and speakers attached to the computer. Each session will include a lecture section where the new training concepts are shared, specific lessons are demonstrated with use of videotaped sessions, and a lesson plan is shared with the participants. Two question and answer periods are provided. At the start of the session, questions are addressed from the previous lesson(s). This may include shared video or photos provided by the participants. The second question and answer period is included at the end of the session, covering the topics contained in that session.

A lesson plan is provided to the participants to follow with their equine. Specific tests and/or measurements to assist in the assessment of training progress are provided. Photos and/or videos are encouraged.

**Cost:**

Price is \$175 per person for the full course (six sessions). Single sessions: \$35/session (availability permitting). There is no charge for full course students repeating any web session during the six month period following the first session, subject to space availability.

**Class Size:**

The web sessions are limited to a maximum of 15 participants per session.

**Course Requirements**

- Internet connection (DSL, LAN, or cable connection desirable), if Web Based or Combination
- Access to a video upload service (such as YouTube if participant wishes to share video.
- Equine to train. This course assumes lessons with the equine 5 days per week.
- Tack to include: (see resources section for information on buying or building necessary tools)
  - Surcingle
  - Cotton driving lines
  - Sliding side reins

- Wand
- Driving bridle with blinkers
- Driving bit
- Singletree
- Practice shafts
- Harness
- Heart Rate Monitor (not required, recommended)

**Materials provided:**

- Web site containing training materials, lessons and lesson plans.
  - Includes a web location for posting questions, uploading photos, linking video.
  - Includes ability to post questions/ask advice
- Meeting login for web based sessions.

**Course Outline****Session One – The Basics**

Learn how to introduce the basic equipment to your horse/pony. Learn what to expect and how to address common problems. Assumes the equine has no prior training – horses already trained under saddle will require less training.

- Safety!! First & Foremost
- Accept surcingle
- Accept bit
- Accept sliding side reins
- Accept wand
- Accept ropes all over
- Discussion of lesson plan for this section



- Concluding Question and Answer

## **Session Two – Moving forward**

Learn how to begin ground driving. Learn techniques for getting forward motion and how to deal with common issues. Session will begin with a question/answer period to address any questions from Session One (and may include participant-provided photos/video)

- Teach the horse to move forward while on the lead rope from verbal and wand tap
- Teach the horse to move forward with two lines attached to bit
- Teach the horse to move forward with the person behind them
- Discussion of lesson plan for this section
- Concluding Question and Answer

## **Session Three – Ground driving**

Learn how to add directional commands to basic forward movement. Learn techniques for teaching/reinforcing Whoa and Stand. Session will begin with a question/answer period to address any questions from prior sessions (and may include participant-provided photos/video)

- Learn to ground drive around obstacles
- Learn WHOA
- Begin work on STAND
- Discussion of lesson plan for this section
- Concluding Question and Answer

## **Session Four – Dealing with scary things**

During this session, we will discuss adding distractions to the training session. This includes adding more speed and adding potentially frightening distractions. Learn how to teach and address common misbehaviors and spooking. Session will begin with a question/answer period to address any questions from prior sessions (and may include participant-provided photos/video).

- Begin asking the horse to work with distractions
- Drive through/around scary things without refusal, spinning, etc.
- Practical techniques for dealing with spooking
- Discussion of lesson plan for this section
- Concluding Question and Answer

## **Session Five – Advanced Ground driving**

During this session, we will discuss how to begin teaching the equine about true harness work. This includes adding full harness, dealing with more distraction, and finally accepting weight behind them. Learn how to teach and address common misbehaviors. Session will begin with a question/answer period to address any questions from prior sessions (and may include participant-provided photos/video).



- Accept full harness, including blinkers
- Ground drive with noise makers behind
- Ground drive with traces down, attached to single tree
- Add minimal weight to single tree
- Discussion of lesson plan for this section
- Concluding Question and Answer

## **Session Six – Weight and practice shafts**

During this session, we will discuss how to teach the equine about the feel of shafts on it's sides, accepting harness/hitching activity and staying focused on the task at hand with new equipment. Learn how to teach and address common misbehaviors. Session will begin with a question/answer period to address any questions from prior sessions (and may include participant-provided photos/video)

- Begin adding more weight, ask the horse to pull over noisy surface
- Introduce practice shafts, practice standing calmly for hitching
- Ground drive obstacles with practice shafts
- Stand quietly for harness and hitching to the practice equipment.
- Discussion of lesson plan for this section
- Discussion of next steps AFTER this session
- Concluding Question and Answer

**Resources**

Surcingle: Any surcingle will work provided it has rings that reach the middle of the equine's side. Those with only rings on the top will not work.

Cotton driving lines: Leather can be used but cotton are easier to handle and more forgiving of mud/dirt. 18-20 foot length are optimal. Cotton lunge lines (two) can be used.

Sliding side reins: Purchase roughly 20 foot of stout clothes line or cotton rope. You will need two snaps. Firmly tie one snap on the end, the other one will be tied with a slip knot so that you can move it to the appropriate location.

Wand: Driving wand, NOT a buggy whip. Iowa Valley Carriage (<http://www.iowavalleycarriage.com/>) carries appropriate wands.

Driving bridle with blinkers: You will not need this during the first few sessions, but you will need it before Session 5.

Driving bit: Strongly recommend an unjointed bit. Iowa Valley Carriage carries appropriate bits.

Singletree: <http://horsenharness.com/hitchings.html> Either the wood or metal one will work.

Practice shafts: Instructions on building from standard PVC piping available on the web site.

Harness: Multiple sources.

Heart Rate Monitor: Roads End Driving ([www.roadsenddriving.com](http://www.roadsenddriving.com)) sells the monitors.

