

Leading

During the lesson the **leader** is responsible for the **horse**. The leader works in a team with the coach and the side walker(s).

ROLE OF THE LEADER:

- Warm up the horse prior to the lesson.
- Ensure gear is correctly fitted to the horse prior to the lesson, check the tightness of the girth.
- Position and control the horse during mounting, dismounting and during ridden activities.
- Where there is no side walker, the leader's job may also involve verbal support to the rider to relay the coach's instructions and explain how to give a command to the horse (see role of the side walker).
- Always listen to the coach's instructions.
- Complete some basic paperwork as instructed by the coach.

VOLUNTEERS WILL BE TAUGHT:

- Correct techniques for leading a horse into and out of the mounting ramp, holding and positioning the horse in the ramp.
- Correct techniques for warming up a horse prior to the lesson.
- Correct techniques for side leading a horse when side-walkers are not required.

IMPORTANT TIPS:

- **NEVER** try a new method of training/disciplining a horse during a lesson with or without consulting the coach.
- **NEVER** discipline a horse when a rider is mounted.
- **DO** offer as little assistance with guiding the horse as is necessary for the rider to develop their skills.
- **DO** keep the horse still when the rider is performing exercises at the halt.
- **DO** keep the horse in a straight line when trotting. Keep an even pace and don't go too fast.
- **DO** keep the horse moving at an even pace and avoid sudden changes of direction to prevent unbalancing the rider. Take wide turns.
- **DO** stay aware of what is happening in the lesson.
- **ALWAYS** keep one horse's length between your horse and the horse in front at all times.

RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF STRESS IN THE RDA HORSE:

Horses demonstrate a broad range of emotional responses that the leaders need to learn to recognise for the safety of the RDA program. It is important to recognise when a horse is tired, stressed or in pain. Unhappy horses can react in sudden, unexpected ways. Leaders should advise coaches of any changes in a horse's normal behaviour.

Signs of stress can include:

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| - Grinding the teeth | - Pawing the ground |
| - Excessive tail swishing | - Listlessness or lack of energy |
| - Ears laid back | - Fidgeting |
| - Biting/kicking horses or handlers | - Failing to stand still at the ramp |



Correct Leading Techniques

WARMING UP PROCEDURE

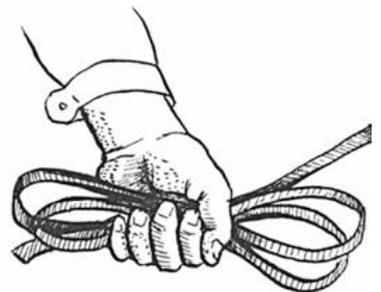
The horse should be warmed up prior lessons. The warm up session should include:

- The horse walking forward actively.
- Transitions between walk and halt, slow walk and fast walk, walk and trot.
- Rein back for 3—5 steps (assists the positioning of the horse in the ramp)
- Walk and trot in both directions
- Walk the horse for 5-10 mins before the rider mounts, particularly if they have been standing for any length of time.



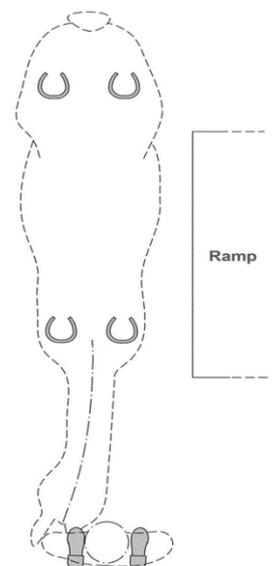
LEADING IN THE LESSON

- Hold the lead rope in loops in your hand (do not wrap around your hand)
- Walk at the horse's shoulder on the left or on the inside track so you can see and hear the coach's instructions.
- When passing by or under obstacles or going through openings, sufficient clearance should be left for the horse, the rider's legs and head, and the helpers who may be side walking.
- At all times, but particularly when trotting and during games, do not become carried away by enthusiasm.
- Be ready to overtake or stop if the horse ahead stops suddenly. If the rider needs to stop, move off the track.
- When the rider is learning to steer, the lead rein should gradually be lengthened so the rider can control the horse with the leader walking by the horse's shoulder and acting as a "safety net" only.



LEADING THE HORSE INTO THE RAMP

- The leader plays an important role in leading positioning and controlling the horse in the mounting ramp.
- Lead the horse into the ramp straight and close to the platform of the ramp.
- The **leader** stands facing the horse or slightly to the side and must show appropriate control of the horse (see diagram right). The coach will give direction on the correct method for controlling each horse in the ramp.



IMPORTANT TIPS FOR MOUNTING:

Never mount a rider when a horse is tied up.

Never mount or dismount a rider without the permission of the coach.



For more information refer to the RDA Volunteer Information Handbook