

Starting Your Own Horse

Interested in "Starting your own horse" but not sure where to start?

A good start is essential in creating the nicely finished horse that we all strive for. Whether western, english or even driving the early stages of training are the same. Horses have a memory that is second only to an elephant. If they have a rough start they will remember it for a long time, and it will inhibit the rest of their training process. In this series of articles we will discuss step by step the procedures necessary to start your own horse in a manner they will understand, keep their spirit intact and help them enjoy their work. A horse that enjoys his work will go further in the show ring and on the trail.

Topics to be covered in this series that lead to the first ride are as follows:

- Round pen work
- In hand work
- Lunging techniques
- Introducing the bit

- Introducing the saddle
- Long lining
- The First ride

For the purpose of this series we will be working with two 3 year old stud colts. "Gus" a Quarterhorse western prospect, and "Fonzi" a 3 year old Arabian English prospect. We will take them straight from the pasture to their first trot in this series.

It's a matter of trust Before you can even think about climbing into a saddle you need to earn your horse's respect and trust which will build confidence. This confidence building starts on the ground. If we haven't earned their respect and trust on the ground we certainly won't have it in the saddle. The key to earning their respect and trust is through clear and effective communication.

horse that is upset and maybe having a bad day. Quite often when a horse's body is bent out of shape it increases their flow of adrenaline, they lose focus, are unbalanced, and become excited. It will be very difficult to teach an unfocused horse anything. What we need to do is "bend them into a shape" that makes them feel good. Bending them into a shape that feels good produces calming endorphins. Calm mind, calm body, ready to learn. Pretty soon the horse associates us with the feel good endorphins and they look forward to the work. This is where we really start to build trust, respect and therefore build their confidence in us as handlers.

In the example below we have two pictures of a thoroughbred we have been working with. The first picture shows him "bent out of shape" adrenaline flowing. The second picture shows him being "bent into shape" endorphins flowing.

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Fonzi



Gus

Communication

Horses communicate primarily via body language. We will need to understand this body language and work with it in the round pen, on the lunge line and throughout the rest of their training. One very important element that we will introduce in this series is our own body language, how horses read us and how it affects them. When we start to move deliberately and appropriately in a way they understand a true partnership between horse and handler begins.

Bending them into shape

We have all heard the term "bent out of shape". This phrase was actually derived from the horse world. We use this phrase to describe someone that is maybe upset and having a bad day. The horse's mind is directly affected by the shape of their body. When a horse's body is literally "bent out of shape" you see a



Basic training in a nutshell

Listed below are the key points of what we have discussed. Bear these in mind throughout your training.

- We need to earn the horses respect and trust in order to build their confidence by starting on the ground first
- We need to set up a clear communication with our horse by reading their body language, understanding our own and then take deliberate appropriate actions.
- We need to bend our horses into shape. The more consistent we are in keeping them in the correct shape the quicker respect, trust and confidence will grow. Bending them into correct shape creates a calm, comfortable body, resulting in a calm mind ready to learn.

So Where Do we Start??

In our next article we will be taking you to the round pen. The safest place to start a green horse and establish the initial stages of respect and trust. We will be discussing body language, deliberate appropriate responses to body language and introduce the initial stages of bending them into shape.



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