

Starting Your Own Horse

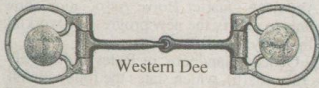
Interested in "Starting your own horse" but not sure where to start?

In this, our fourth article, we will be discussing bit selection and the best way to introduce the bit for the first time. Correctly introducing the bit for the first time could save you years of headaches. Everything that we do that precedes our ride sets the stage for that ride. It's a good idea to set the stage properly in order to achieve the best performance.

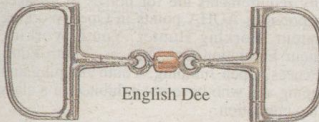
Layered approach to training

Every step we take in the "starting process" can be considered a training layer. One layer builds upon the other until we have built up enough layers that we can safely put that first ride on our horse. Each layer is added to another slowly and in a way that the horse can understand. Very simply put the "starting process" is a matter of trust between horse and rider and that trust is built one layer at a time. As we successfully work our way through each training layer it's time to move on to the next. Let's think of introducing the bit as just one more training layer.

In this article we will be working with our 3 year old Quarter Horse stud colt "Gus". Having established his trust through our previous training "layers" we now feel quite confident he will accept the bit without too much fuss when asked properly.



Western Dee



English Dee

Bit Selection

The best choice for starting a young horse is the snaffle bit. You will see two examples/variations on the left. The snaffle bit can be single or double jointed. Double jointed being the milder of the two. I like to choose a bit that will taste good in a horse's mouth. A bit made of "sweet iron", copper, containing copper, or made of "black steel" will have a nice taste in the horse's mouth that will encourage salivation and taste through the horse's mouth and aid with lateral flexion. The jointed mouth piece allows us to work with either the left or right side of the horse.

sweet. The bars on the side of the "Dee" bits help prevent the bit from sliding sideways through the horse's mouth and aid with lateral flexion. The jointed mouth piece allows us to work with either the left or right side of the horse.



First photo: Now that Gus is willing to leave his head in position, Gisela reaches over with her right hand to take up the bridle that was resting on her left wrist and raises it to Gus's mouth. With her left hand on the outside of Gus's mouth she slips her middle finger into his mouth and tickles his tongue in the area of Gus's lower bars of his jaw. There are no teeth in this area. Tickling his tongue causes Gus to relax his jaw and open his mouth.



Second photo: As Gus relaxes his jaw and opens his mouth by holding onto his bridle, Gisela lifts the bit upward into Gus's mouth with her right hand. As she pulls the bridle over his ears she gently folds the ears forward. **Third photo:** Gisela has quietly and successfully introduced the bit to our young stud for the first time with no stress involved. She praises him with to acknowledge a job well done.



Third photo: Gisela has quietly and successfully introduced the bit to our young stud for the first time with no stress involved. She praises him with to acknowledge a job well done.

Now that Gisela has successfully completed the task she will repeat it half a dozen times. Gus needs to be aware that this was not just an accident. Having introduced bridling to Gus in such a quiet fashion will lead to years of trouble free bridling.



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

- How's and Why's of Lunging
- Introducing the saddle
- Ground Driving
- The First ride

So Where do we go from here? In our next article we will be discussing the age old art of lunging that has been around for over 500 years. We will be discussing.

Written by Walter Mantler - Symphony Stables

Walter & Gisela Mantler own and operate Symphony Stables, a training facility in south-western Ontario. They have apprenticed directly under Chris Irwin for years and are recognized among his top trainers. They breed, start, train and finish horses for both Western and English disciplines. They run a series of horsemanship and personal development clinics throughout the year. To learn more about their services please visit: www.symphonystables.com



In the series of photos Gisela is asking Gus to willingly bring his head to her. She asks for his head as opposed to reaching out to grab it. She is standing beside Gus's rib cage facing the same direction as Gus. With her right hand she touches Gus roughly where the cinch would go or maybe slightly behind that area. This causes his rib cage to bend away and his head to come in towards her. She continues to apply pressure until Gus brings his head all the way around. She at this point "catches" his head with her left hand. You will note that she has the bridle draped over her left wrist. This way it would be in position to be lifted to Gus's mouth. She will practice this quietly and repeatedly until Gus is comfortable bringing his head in and leaving it there.

Once he is comfortable responding to this exercise we are ready to move on to the next step.

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