

# Starting Your Own Horse

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

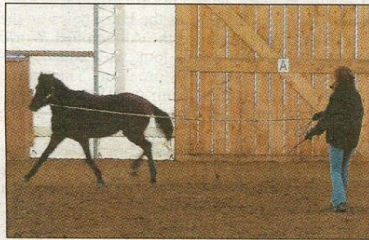
In this our fifth article we will be discussing the "how's" and "whys" of lunging. In this article Gisela will be lunging our 3 year old Quarter horse Stud Colt "Gus".

## Why do we lunge?

When done properly lunging is an invaluable tool in the "starting process". Through proper lunging we will be shaping our horse and putting them into a frame that is comfortable. They begin to associate this comfortable frame with our handling. We continue to earn the horse's trust/respect as we proceed through the various stages of this training series and therefore set the stage for an uneventful first ride. Specific reasons for lunging are as follows:

- Create true bend and develop balance
- Introduce contact and encourage proper forward motion
- Lunging them forward into contact helps build the proper muscles in their neck, back and hind end. Develop sufficient muscle in the young horse to carry us on their back.
- Use of the surcingle safely prepares them for the girth/cinch when being saddled later on
- Create an overall sense of relaxation and trust in us as handlers.

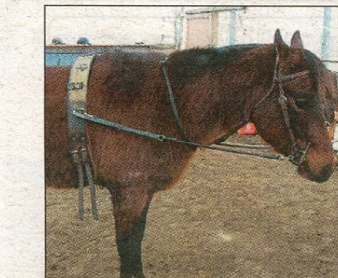
So where do we start?=-



**First Photo** - Gisela starts out very simply by lunging Gus in a halter. The first thing she wants to make sure of is that he is lunging around her willingly without protest. If he decides to protest at least he won't have a bit in his mouth in which case she can address the protest safely before she proceeds. As soon as Gus lunges willingly around her in both directions Gisela will tack him up in order to start shaping him into proper frame as soon as possible.

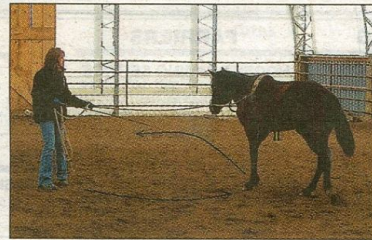


**Second Photo** - In this photo Gisela has tacked Gus up appropriately in order to start shaping him. She is using a full cheek snaffle bit and a surcingle. The lunge line goes through the bit and back to the surcingle. She has attached it to the lower ring on the surcingle. We generally start horses out on the lower ring and work our way up as the training progresses. We want to create a head and neck that are level (or just below level) to the ground with a nose that remains at or slightly ahead of vertical.

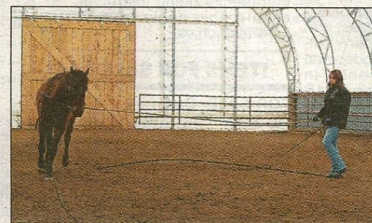


**Third Photo** - On this side Gisela has attached a side rein made of leather and rubber for flexibility. The side rein should be adjusted so that the nose is tipped slightly forward as in the photo. The side rein is used to prevent Gus

from over flexing his neck to the left. This will encourage him to bend through his body as we will see in photo #5. It also simulates the outside rein and introduces the horse to having contact on both sides. An outside rein also assists in balancing the horse. A balanced horse is a happy horse.



**Fourth Photo** - In this photo Gisela is sending Gus out to lunge. Notice the path Gisela takes towards Gus with her whip and feet. She directs pressure at Gus's shoulder which makes him step out with his right front foot and therefore sends him out on the circle. Thanks to proper communication he leaves quietly and level headed.

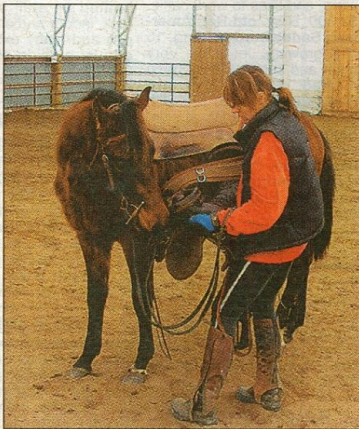
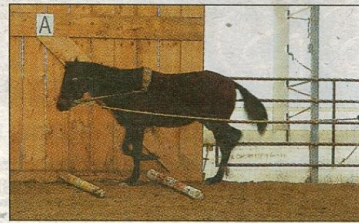


**Fifth Photo** - Now that Gus is out lunging the trick is to keep him there. Footwork here is of utmost importance. Notice the path Gisela is taking as she moves around the circle. She is in a "Driving" position driving Gus around the circle as opposed to a "Leading" position that would pull him around the circle. Please note the outside rein is taught and that Gus is moving correctly in proper bend. (Bent from nose to tail)



**Sixth Photo** - In this photo we see Gisela again in more of a "Driving" position as opposed to a leading position. The "Driving" position helps to promote level headed, correct bend and balance resulting in a relaxed horse.

**Seventh Photo** - Lunging a horse over poles has numerous advantages. Pole work helps to build the hind end, back and neck muscles. It can be used to improve/lengthen stride, help prepare an English jumper or Western trail horse. Start with one pole, then add more as training level progresses. Poles are usually spaced 3-4ft apart. It is very important to make sure your horse is level headed and on the correct bend before taking him to the poles. This will ensure proper muscles are being used and will also promote relaxation. Horses enjoy going over poles and soon they will try pulling you towards them.



## Topics yet to be covered in this series

- Introducing the saddle
- Ground Driving
- The First ride

Gisela now has Gus going forward into contact and is using the contact to help him bend, stretch, balance and therefore achieve an overall sense of relaxation. It will now be time to move on to the next step in our training program.

## Previous Topics Covered

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

So where do we go from here?

In our next article we will be introducing the saddle. Something so simple yet when things go wrong they could lead to a wreck with an impact that could last a lifetime. Take the time it takes to do it right the first time and you'll be good for a lifetime.

# THE Rider

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 techniques & services please visit: [www.symphonystables.com](http://www.symphonystables.com)



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