

# Rainbow Level Coloring Book

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A special introduction to the Learning Levels Curriculum  
for very young students



HorseSense Learning Levels

# A Note About the Levels Program

The Learning Levels program is our unique method of tracking progress in students as they develop into versatile, well-rounded riders and horsemen. Students work to master specific skills in each of the levels, and receive recognition for completion when they are able to consistently demonstrate each of the skills to their instructor. In many cases, achievement of one level is a prerequisite for learning more advanced skills such as jumping.

The Levels are divided into two branches to reflect the main areas of study within our riding school:

- The *Horsemanship Levels* concentrate on the rider's ability in the saddle, culminating in a rider who is balanced, educated and confident and can ride a schooled horse with skill and tact on the flat, over fences and in the open.
- The *HorseSense Levels* focus on the extensive body of knowledge needed to care for and work with horses successfully, testing students on horse handling, veterinary and stable management skills.

If you are not already a participant in the Levels Program and you are interested becoming one, please ask your instructor for more information.

Nikki and Dana Surrusco  
HorseSense Learning Levels, LLC

  
<https://HorseSenseLearningLevels.com>

Visit our website to learn more about the Learning Levels program.



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and Nikki Surrusco

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# Welcome to the Rainbow Level Guide to Horsemanship!

The Rainbow Level is an introductory level for young riders, ages 4 through 7, who are not yet able to ride and care for a pony independently.



Rainbow Level riders ride on the leadline, or with a "Ground Buddy" walking close by, to ensure their safety and control. They may require help with tasks such as leading and grooming, as well as the simple reading and writing required to complete the Level.

This guide presents each requirement in simple language with a full-sized illustration. We recommend using it as a coloring book, and reading through the material with the student.

Please remember that this guide is meant to be a supplement to regular lessons, and not as a replacement. The activities mentioned in this guide should be practiced only under the supervision of an instructor or another knowledgeable adult!

## Here's what you'll learn in Rainbow Level:

### Unmounted Safety

#### Grooming

### Ground Handling

#### Horse ID

### Equine Behavior

#### Pony Parts

#### Tack

### Mounted Safety

### Flatwork Skills

### Jumping Skills

### Stable Management

Ready to Ride .....	p. 5	Horse Talk .....	p. 20
Use Your Head .....	p. 6	On Your Own .....	p. 21
Greeting Your Pony .....	p. 7	Two-Point Position .....	p. 22
Moving Around .....	p. 8	Jump to It .....	p. 23
Keeping It Clean .....	p. 9	Up and Down .....	p. 24
Time for Tack .....	p. 11	Cool Down .....	p. 25
Parts of the Saddle .....	p. 12	Tasty Treats .....	p. 26
Parts of the Bridle .....	p. 13	Caring for Your Pony .....	p. 27
Follow the Leader .....	p. 14	Pony Parts .....	p. 28
Safety First .....	p. 15	Breeds of the World .....	p. 29
On and Off .....	p. 16	Colors and Markings .....	p. 30
Sitting Pretty .....	p. 17	How High? .....	p. 31
Taking the Reins .....	p. 18	My Pony .....	p. 32
Warming Up .....	p. 19	Practice Makes Perfect ....	p. 33

## About Rainbow Level

The Rainbow Level is an introductory level, designed to get you started on the journey of becoming a skilled and effective rider. Let's take a look at the requirements of the Rainbow Level and see what you will be learning. You can use this checklist to make goals for yourself and to see how far you've come!

### Rainbow Level Objectives

- I take regular lessons—at least once a month with a knowledgeable instructor.*
- I always wear boots and an ASTM-SEI approved helmet when I am working around horses. I can put on my helmet myself and show you how it fits correctly.*
- I can tell you how to dress safely for riding.*
- I can show you how to correctly approach a pony, and how to move around a pony safely—including walking around behind.*
- I can tell you why you have to groom a pony and pick out his feet before every ride.*
- I can help my instructor or an older, more experienced rider prepare for a ride. I help with the grooming, cleaning hooves, and putting on the saddle and bridle. When I am a little bit bigger, I will be able to tack up a pony without any help.*
- I can show you the basic parts of a saddle and bridle, such as the bit, reins, stirrups and girth.*
- I can lead a pony safely, both with a halter and lead rope and with the bridle reins.*
- I can help do a safety check on my tack and pony before I ride. I can pull down the stirrups, put the reins over my pony's head, and help check the girth.*
- I can mount and dismount correctly and safely. Even if I have to use the mounting block, or have my instructor give me a leg up, I know it is important to get on and off a pony carefully.*
- I can demonstrate a basic balanced position while my pony is walking and standing still. I know that a bad position is dangerous for me and uncomfortable for my pony, so I always work hard to keep my eyes up, heels down, and “building blocks” in place.*

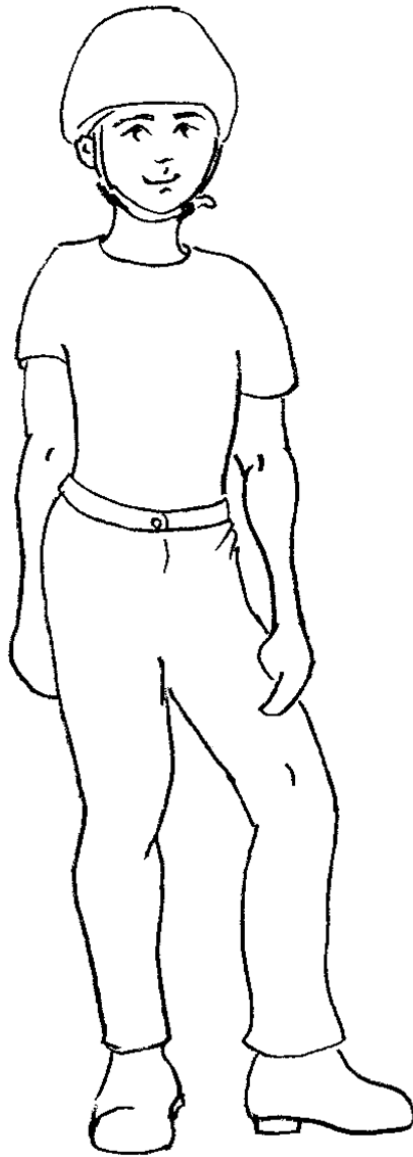
## Rainbow Level requirements, cont.

- I can pick up the reins and hold them correctly, at a suitable length.*
- I can perform basic stretches and warm-up exercises at the walk, on the leadline. (This means someone is holding onto my pony to help me steer him.)*
- I can go Around the World.*
- I can demonstrate how I use my aids (my seat, legs, hand and voice) to ask my pony to walk, halt, and turn.*
- I can walk once all the way around the arena without a leadline.*
- I can ride in a balanced two-point position at the halt and the walk.*
- I can walk my pony over ground poles, showing a good jumping position, keeping my eyes up and riding straight over the middle of each pole.*
- I can ride the trot on the leadline. I can ride both a sitting trot and a posting trot, holding on to the saddle if necessary. I can keep up a steady rhythm at the posting trot, so it is comfortable for both me and my pony.*
- I can tell you why it is important to cool out my pony after hard work, and help take care of him after a ride.*
- I can name at least ten parts of the pony, and at least three grooming tools.*
- I can feed a treat to a quiet pony safely. I know why it can be dangerous to feed a pony too many treats, and always ask permission.*
- I have filled out the "My Pony" worksheet with the name, color, markings, height and breed of the pony I usually ride. It is okay if my instructor or another experienced horseperson helps me to find this information and write it down.*
- I have helped an experienced horseperson clean out a stall. I know why it is important to clean out a pony's stall and water buckets every day.*

Good luck, and don't forget to have FUN!

You are on your way to some amazing rides!

# Ready to Ride



**Long hair should be tied back or tucked under your helmet.**





**Close-fitting clothes are best, so your instructor can see your position. Tuck in baggy shirts!**

**Proper riding pants will keep you from getting rubbed raw in the saddle. When you start trotting more, you may want a pair of half-chaps to protect your legs and improve your grip.**

**Paddock boots are best for growing feet. You can get tall boots when you are a bit older!**

I take regular lessons with an experienced instructor.

When I come to ride, I wear:

-  An ASTM-approved helmet, to protect my head if I fall.
-  Boots with a smooth sole and a heel, to keep my feet from slipping through the stirrups.
-  Stretchy long pants -- riding tights or jodhpurs are best!
-  No dangly jewelry allowed!

# Use Your Head

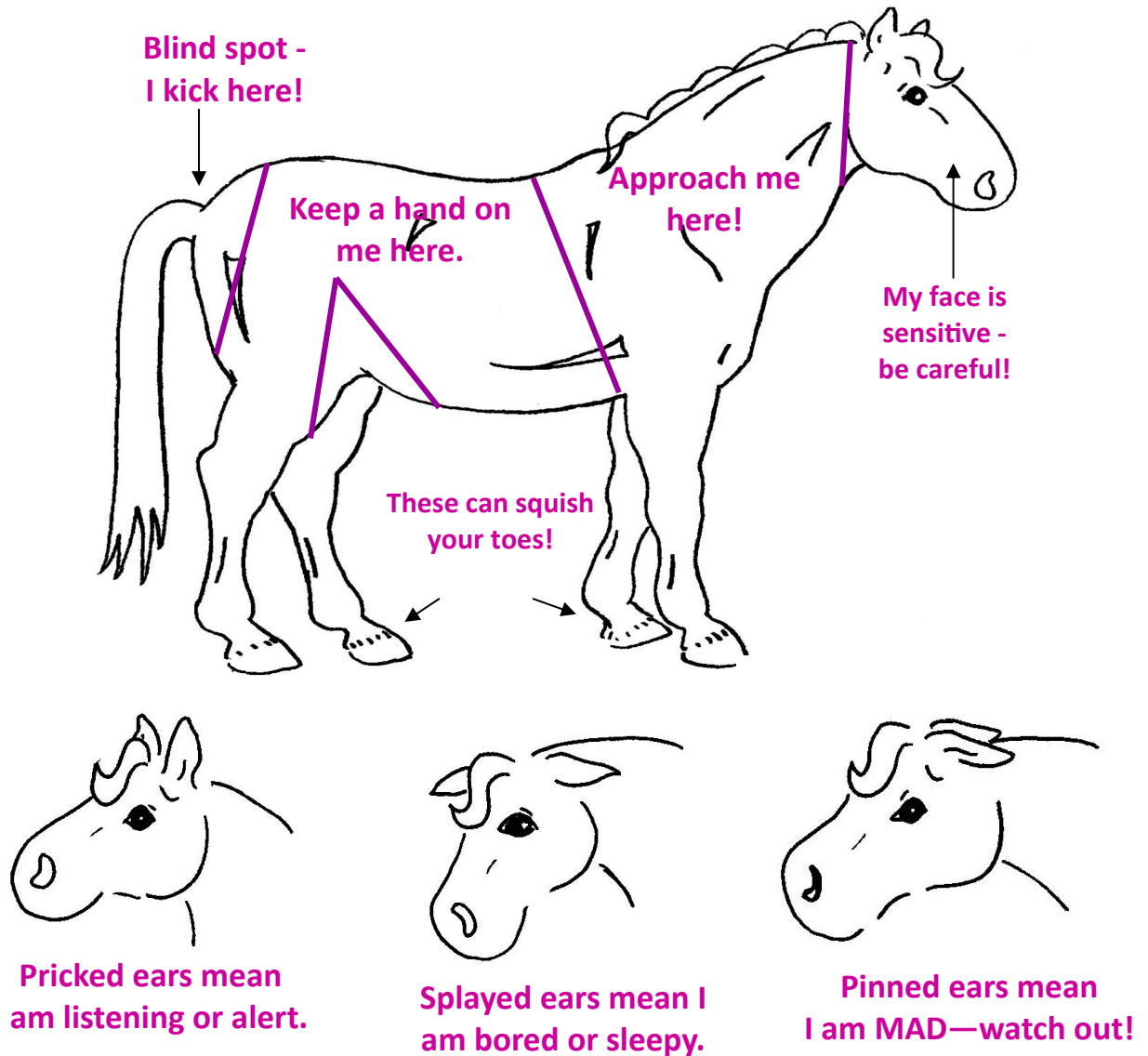


I can put on my helmet myself, and show you if it fits correctly.  
It should...

- ... Sit over my eyebrows, not above my forehead.
- ... Be tight enough that my eyebrows wiggle when I lift the brim up and down.
- ... Be adjusted so the chinstrap touches my skin, and can't come off.

I always pull back my long hair—and spit out my gum!

# Greeting Your Pony

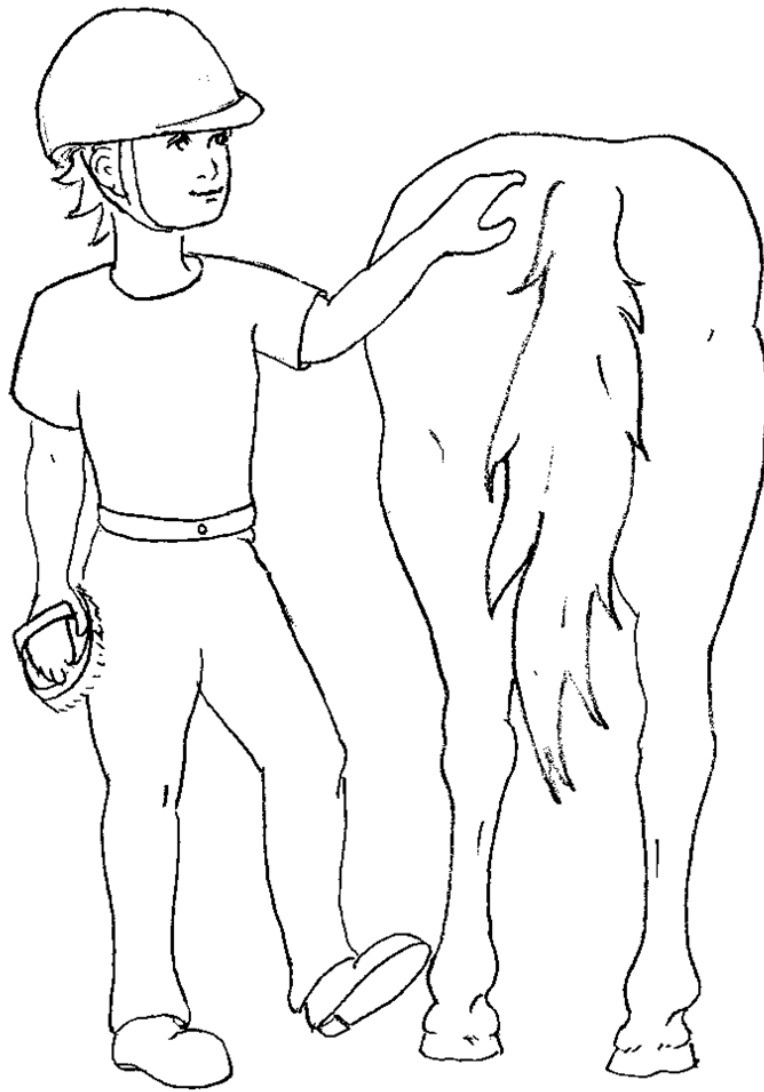


I always approach my pony from the side, towards his shoulder and neck. I know that if I come straight towards his head, or walk up behind him, he might get scared and kick!

I watch my pony's body language to see what he's thinking. If his ears are flat back against his neck, I know he is warning me and I keep my distance.



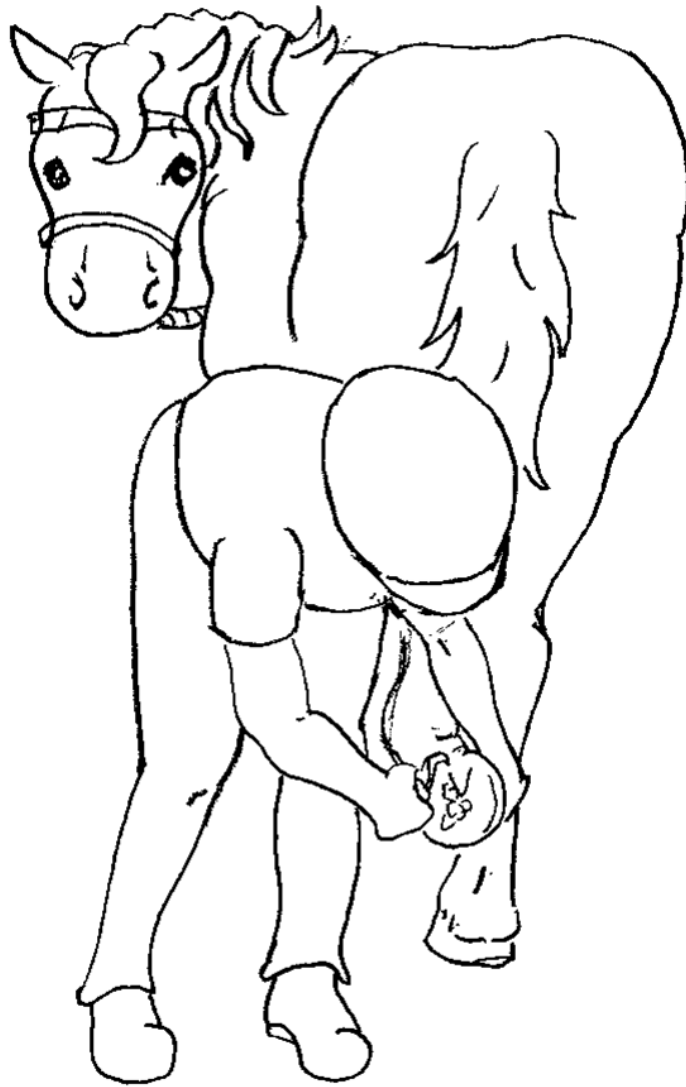
# Moving Around



When I am working around my pony, brushing or putting the tack on, I make sure he always knows where I am by keeping a hand on him.

If I have to walk around to the other side, I let him know by putting my hand on his hip or shoulder before I start to move. I can duck under his neck, or go around behind by walking VERY close—but I never stop and stand in either of these places, where I might get stepped on or kicked!

# Keeping It Clean



Before I can ride my pony, he has to be groomed. We start by picking out the hooves.

The hoof pick scrapes away dirt until the underside of the hoof is clean. Sometimes ponies can get painful rocks stuck in their hooves, under the shoe or in their frog. (The frog is the V-shaped rubbery part in the middle of the hoof.)

# Keeping it Clean, cont.

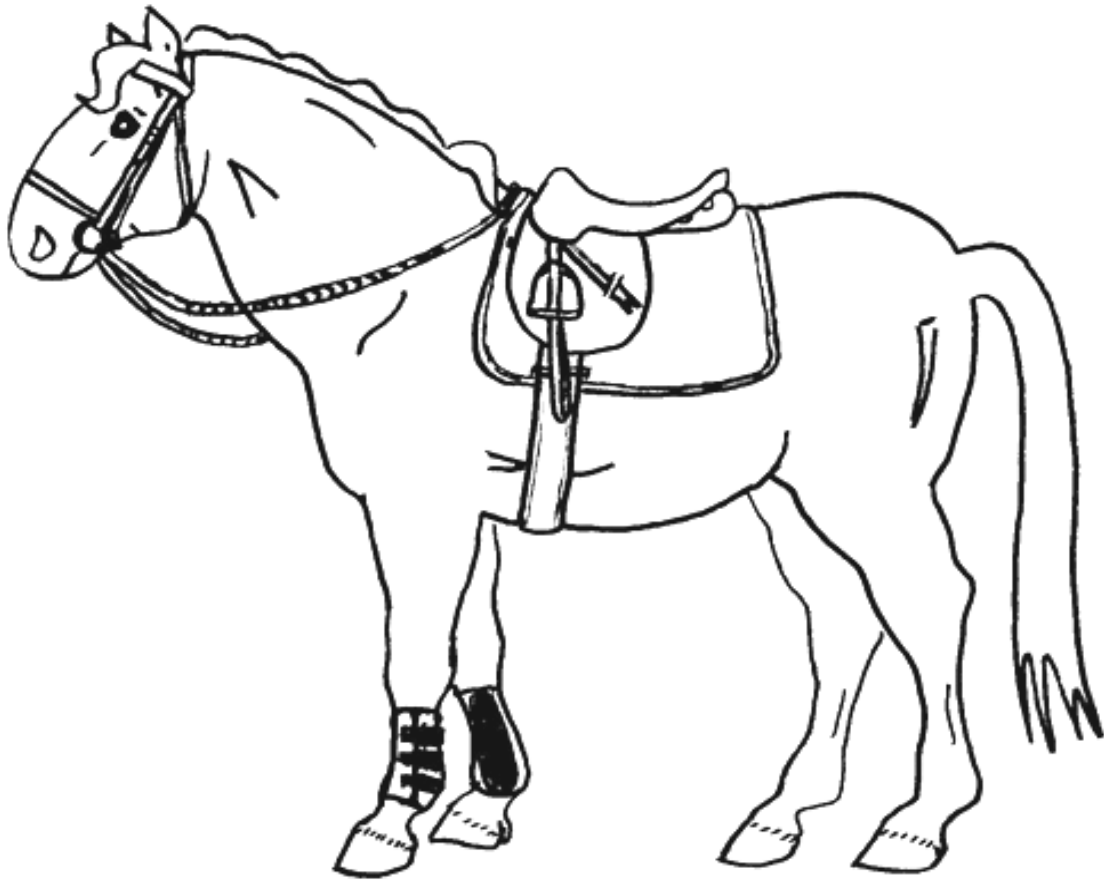


After the hooves are clean, it's time for the currycomb. We use this in circles on the horse's body (but not his face or legs) to loosen the dirt.

Next comes the dandy brush. This has stiff bristles and sweeps the dirt away. Finally, we finish up with the body brush. The body brush makes the horse shiny, and is soft enough to brush his face.

If the horse isn't clean where his tack sits, he might get sores!

# Time for Tack



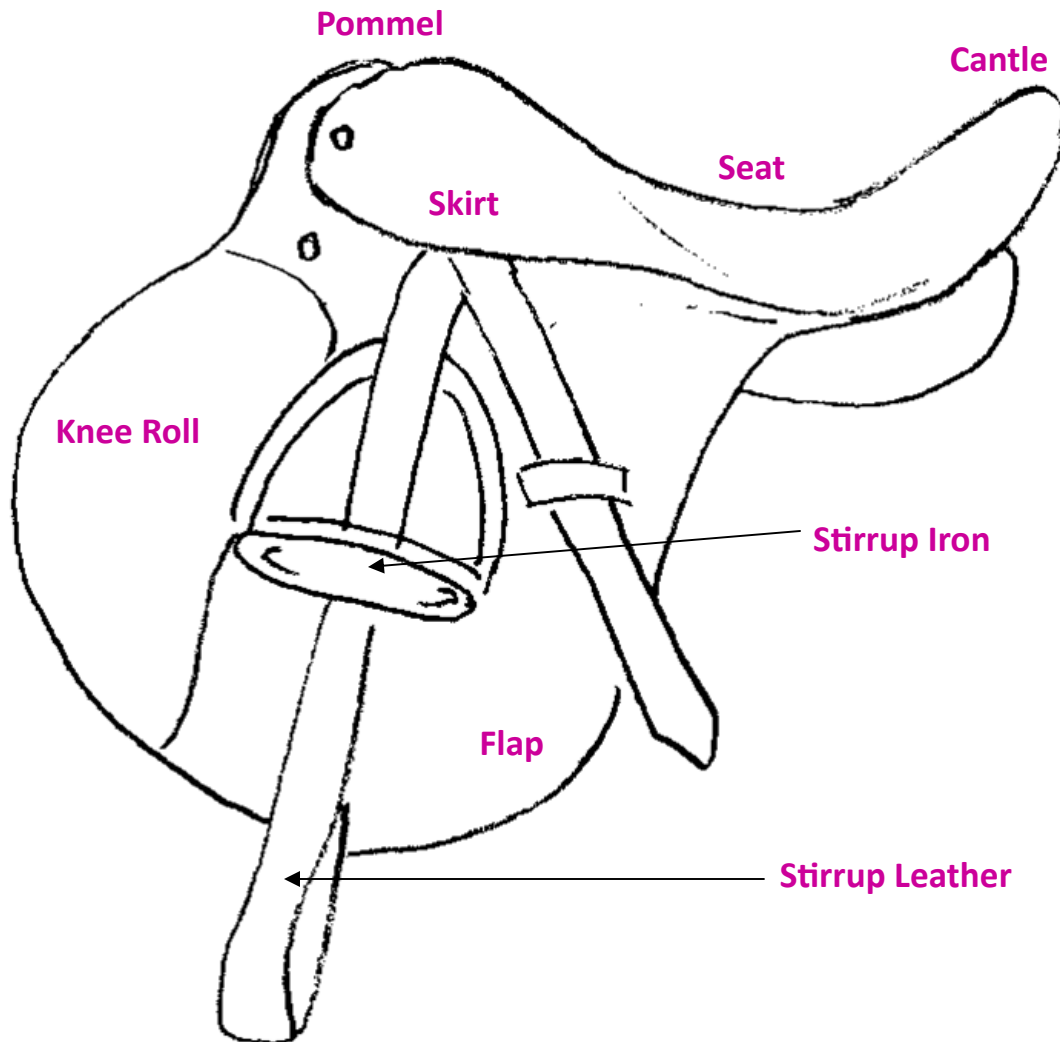
Now it's time to tack up. The tack is all of the equipment we use to ride.

The tack includes the saddle, saddle pad, girth, and bridle.

Some ponies wear special tack such as protective boots or ear bonnets.

When I am not riding, the horse wears a halter. This is safe for leading and tying, since it does not go in the horse's mouth.

# Parts of the saddle

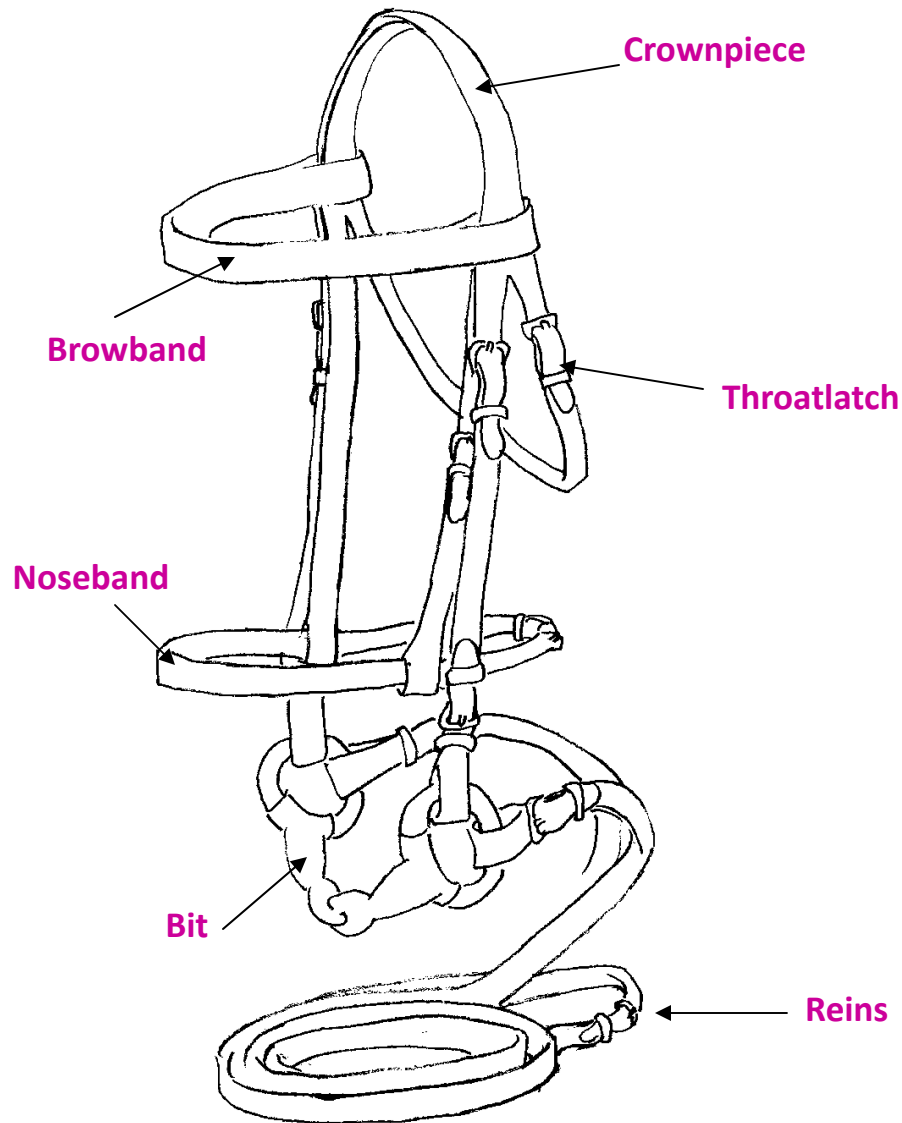


We put the saddle on the pony before the bridle. The saddle pad goes on first. Some ponies wear an extra pad called a riser pad.

Next is the saddle: we put this on very gently!

Then the saddle pad straps are attached to the saddle, and the girth fastens to the billet straps to keep the saddle on. We might also have to adjust the stirrups to make them the right size for my legs.

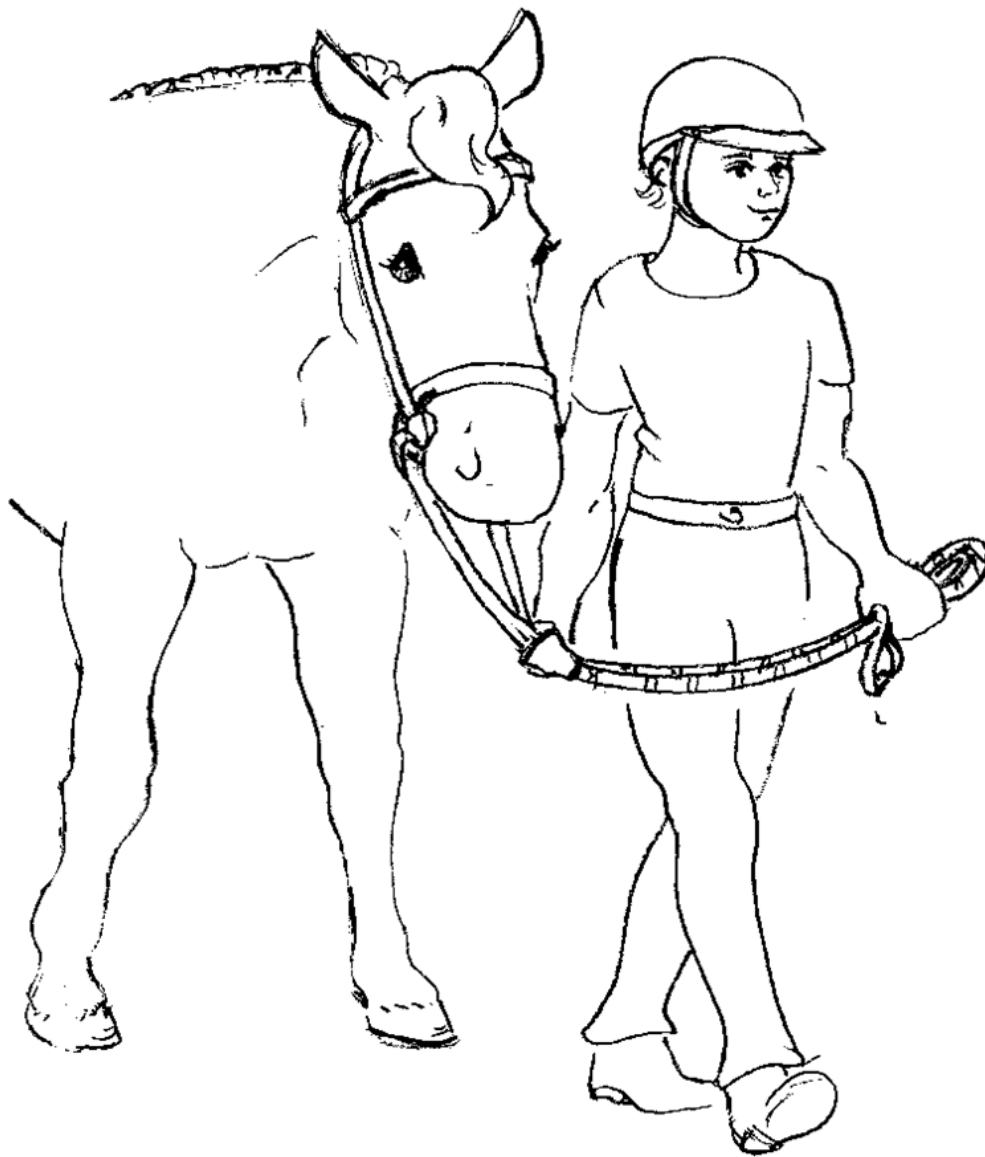
# Parts of the Bridle



The bridle goes on last. We put the reins over the pony's head, and buckle the halter around his neck so he can't run away.

The bit goes into the horse's mouth, and the crownpiece goes over his ears. We fasten the noseband and the throatlatch. Finally, we can take the reins over the horse's head for leading. I know it can be VERY dangerous to let the reins hang down, and I never let them touch the ground!

# Follow the Leader



I lead my pony by the reins to the arena. I walk straight forward, looking ahead. If my pony thinks I know where I am going, he will follow me willingly. If he gets too close, I flap my elbow like a chicken!

It is important that I hold the reins correctly. One hand goes below the bit, the other holds the reins in folds—not looped around my hand. If my pony pulls away, I don't want my fingers to get stuck.

# Safety First

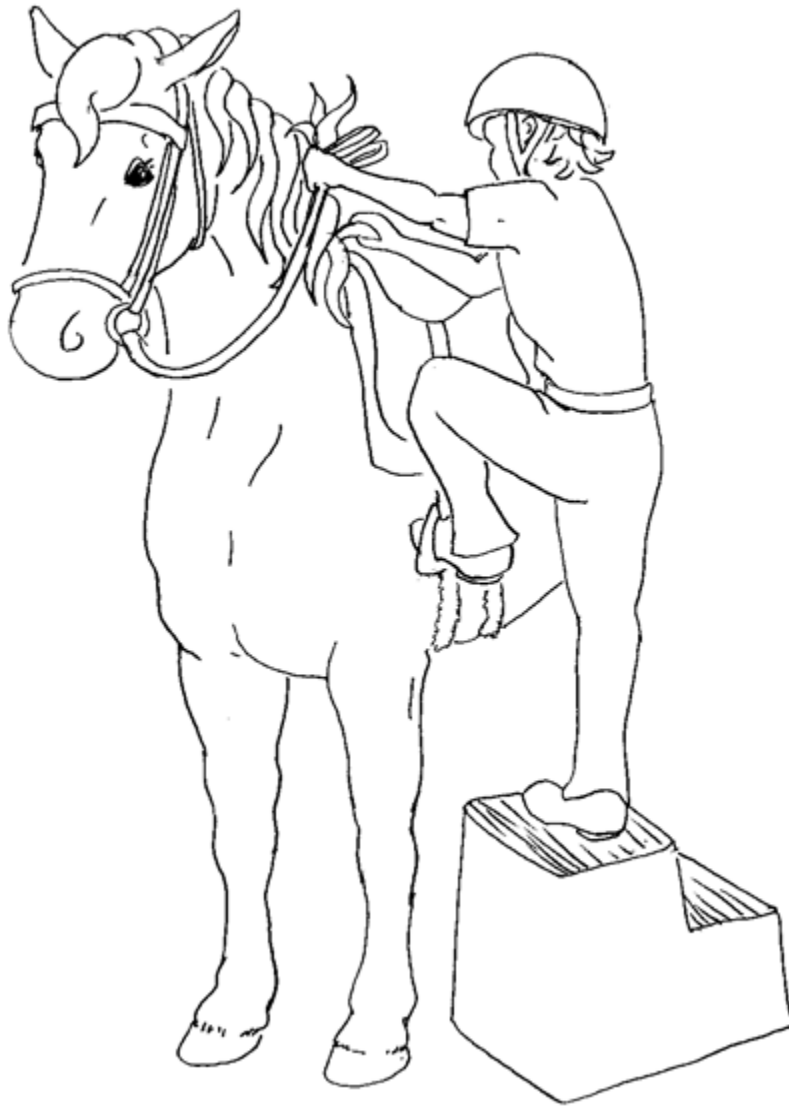


Before I mount my pony, I always help my instructor do a safety check. We put the reins over my pony's head (no twists!) and check the girth. It should be tight enough that I can just barely slip my fingers under it, behind the pony's elbow. If it is too loose, I might fall off!

We look at all the buckles to make sure everything is fastened tight. Finally, we pull down the stirrups.



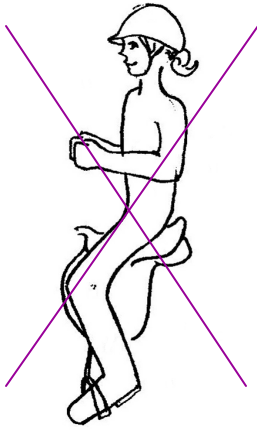
# On and off



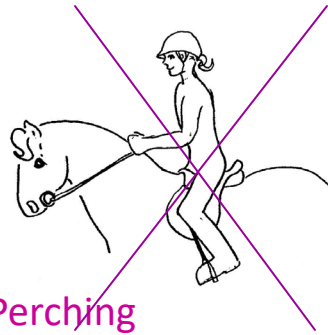
We mount on the left side of the pony. Unless my pony is very small, I get on using a mounting block. I hold the reins and the pommel of the saddle, put my left foot in the stirrup, and swing my right leg over. I sit down gently, so I don't hurt my pony's back! My instructor might also give me a leg up, or a boost.

When it is time to get off, I take both feet out of the stirrups, lean forward, and swing my right leg over the cantle, or the back of the saddle.

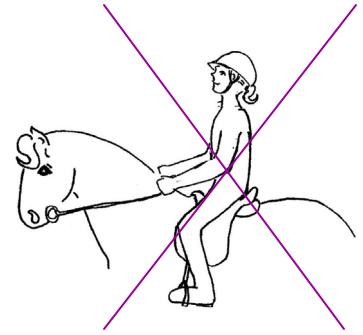
# Sitting Pretty



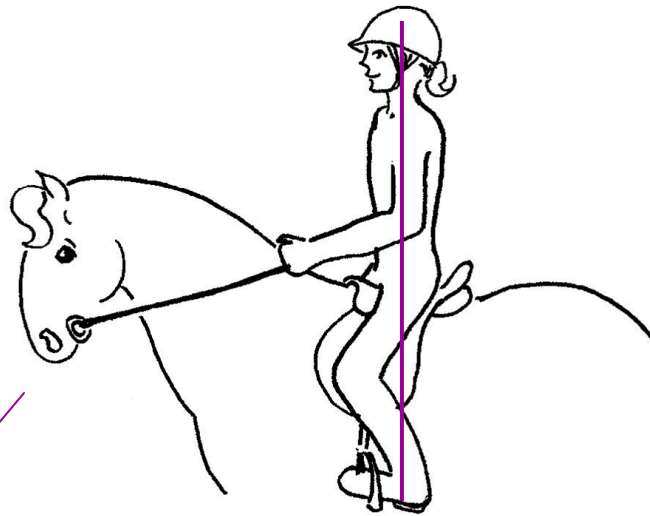
Diver toes



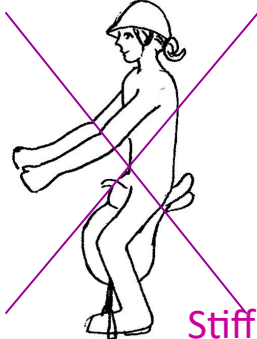
Perching



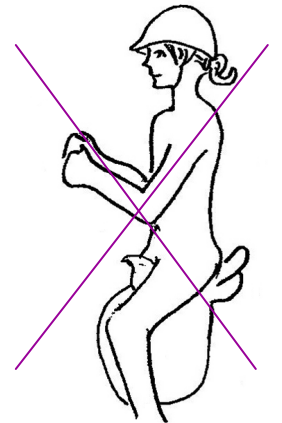
Chair seat



A beautiful  
balanced position!



Stiff elbows

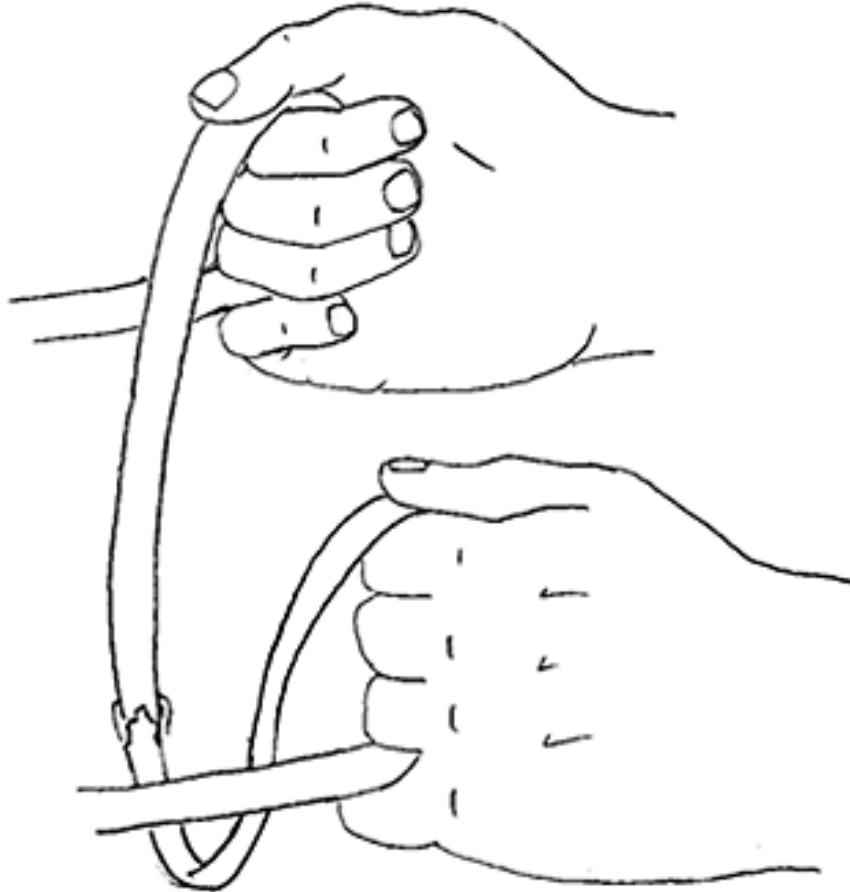


Conductor hands

I sit very tall in the saddle, with my eyes up, my knees bent and my heels hanging down lower than my toes. If you draw a line through my body, my head, shoulder, hip and heel should all be lined up—like I'm a tower made out of building blocks!

I work hard on keeping all my body parts in place. I know that a balanced position is important for my pony's comfort and my own safety.

# Taking the Reins



When I am ready to pick up the reins, I hold them with both hands. I wrap my three middle fingers around the reins, so it looks like I am making a fist, with my pinky hiding behind the rein and my thumb on top.

I am *very* careful with the reins, since they are attached to my pony's mouth. I keep my hands right over the pony's withers, and I only put pressure on them if I need help stopping or turning. I also make sure they are the right length—too short, and my pony will be uncomfortable. Too long, and I will have no control!

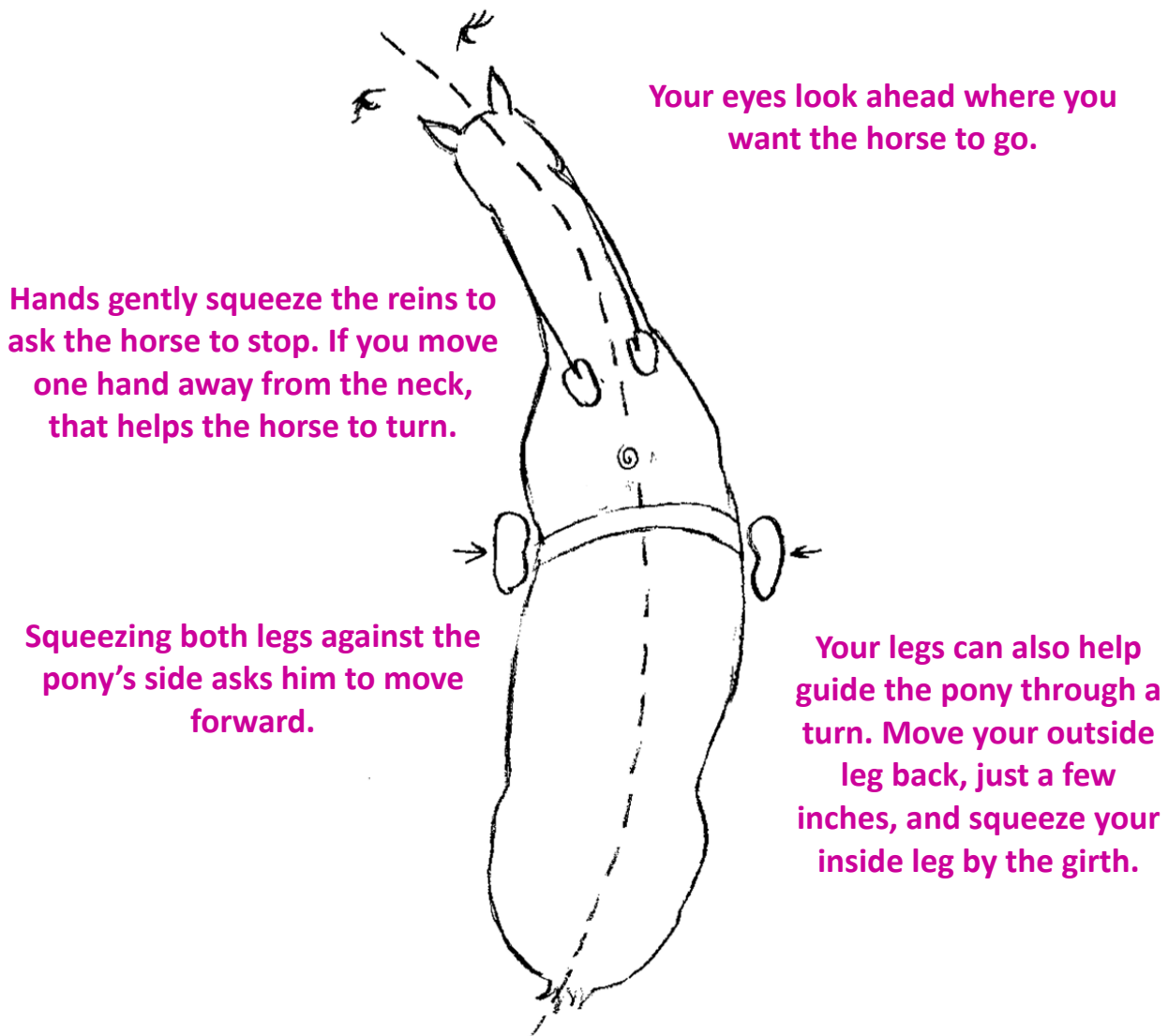
# Warming Up



We start each ride with warm-up exercises to get my muscles loose. First, I move my arms in big circles, like a windmill. Then I reach towards my pony's ears and his tail. I also bend down to touch my toes, and across to touch my opposite toe.

Sometimes we also practice balancing exercises like standing up in the stirrups, and going "Around the World": I can turn all the way around in my saddle while my instructor holds my pony still. It feels funny sitting backwards!

# Horse Talk

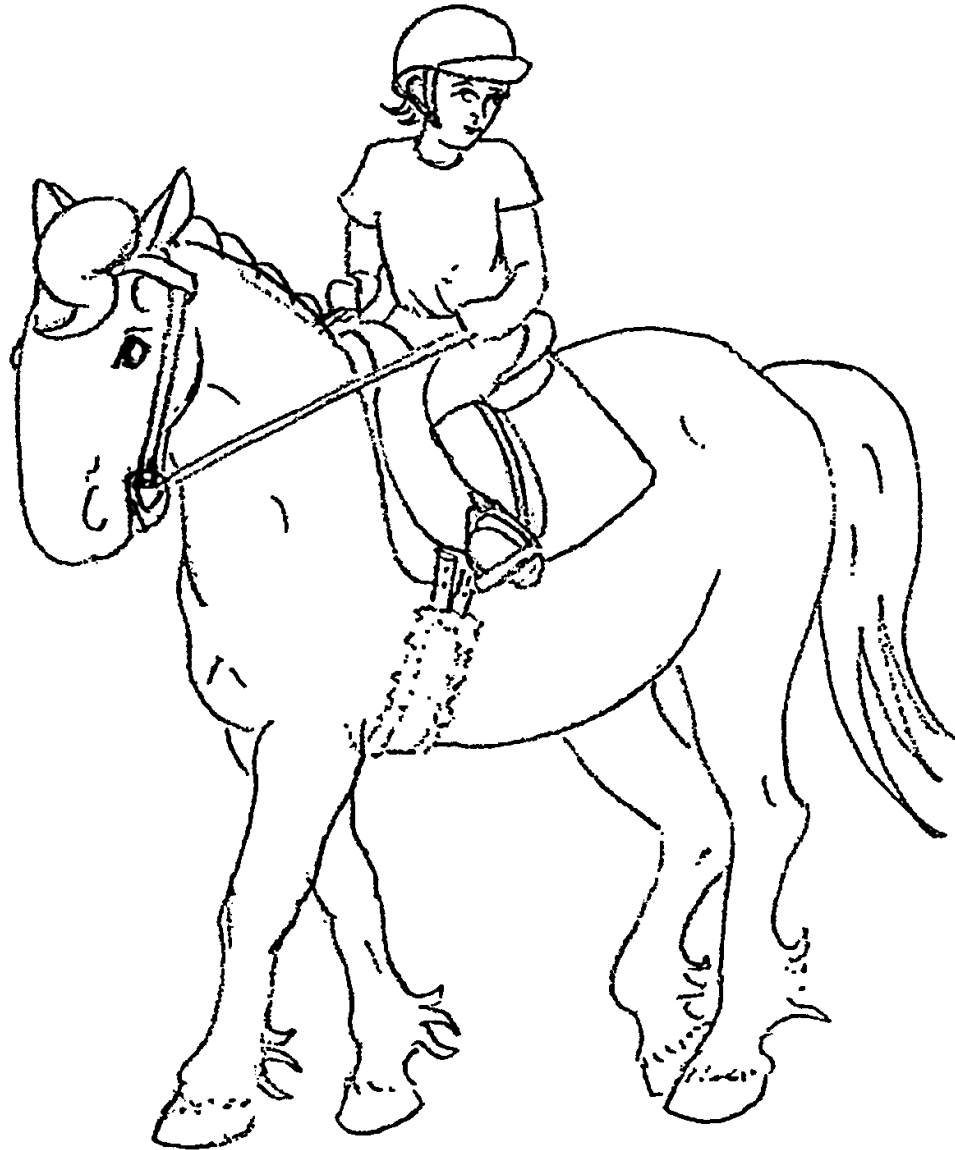


I use my seat, legs, hands and voice to talk to my pony. These signals are called "aids."

If I want my pony to walk or speed up, I sit tall and squeeze with my legs, like I'm giving my pony a leg hug. If he's feeling lazy, I might have to add a little bump with my heels, or a "cluck" with my voice.

To halt, or stop my pony, I tighten my tummy muscles and sit deep and still. I can squeeze my fingers on the reins, and say "Whoa," in a low voice.

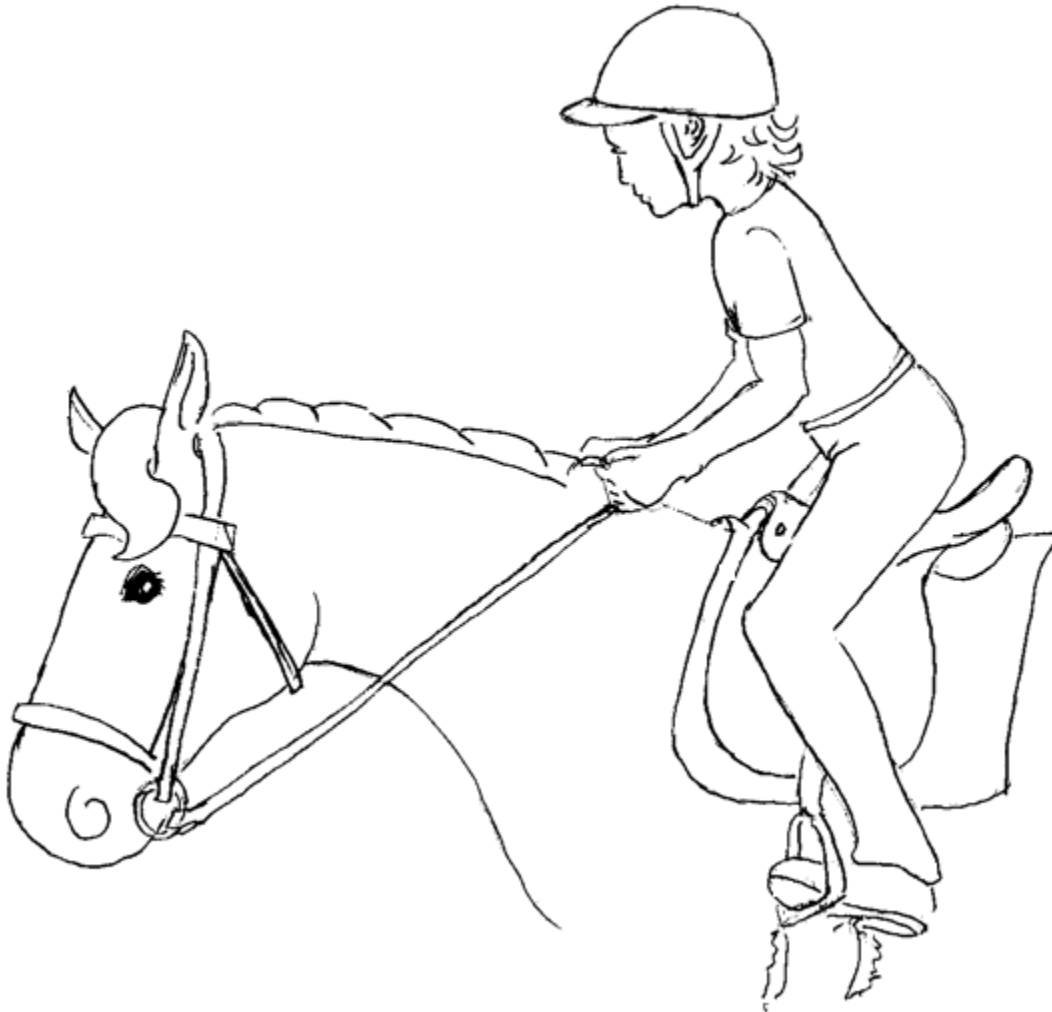
# On Your Own



I always look in the direction I want to go. If I want to turn my pony, I look, and turn my own body (like my belly button is a headlight—no leaning!). If I am turning right, I move my hands slightly to the right, so there is a space between my right rein and the pony's neck. I can also squeeze my right leg at the girth, and move my left leg back just a little bit. I am careful not to put too much pressure on my reins, or my pony will stop.

Once I can ask my pony to walk, halt and turn smoothly, I'm ready to try walking around the arena without a leadline!

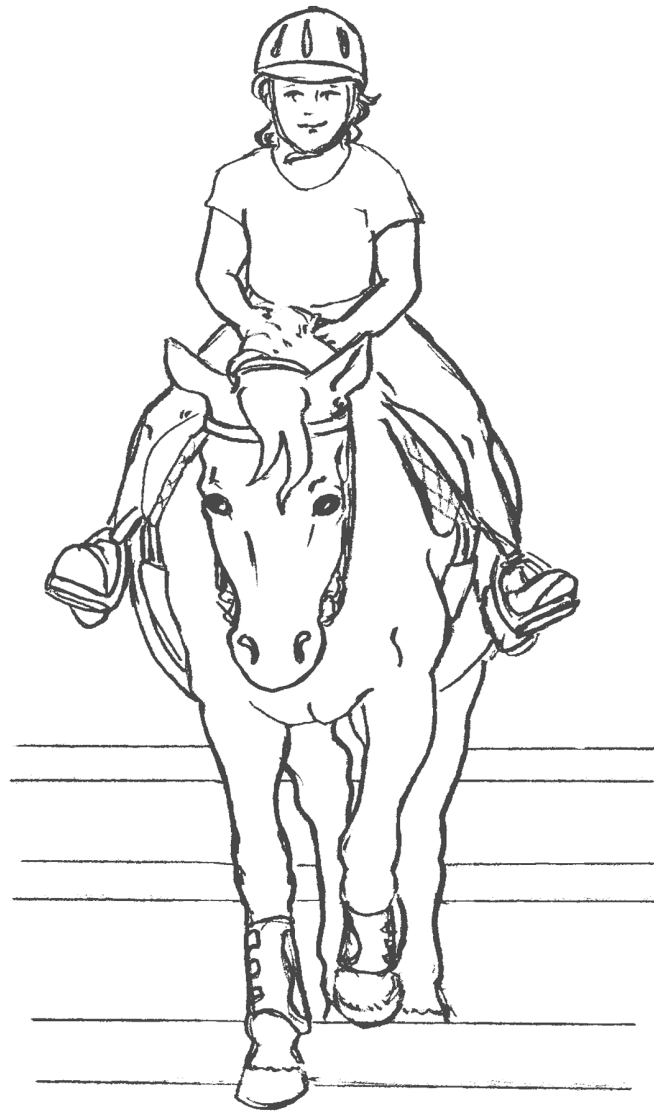
# Two-Point Position



I also practice my two-point position at the halt and the walk. In two-point, I move my hands forward and hold some of my pony's mane. I let my heels sink down so I can stand up out of the saddle, just a little bit. I keep my knees and my hips bent, so my shoulders go over my knees.

I use two-point to improve my balance and my leg strength, and for walking over poles. Someday, I will ride in this position while I jump and gallop!

# Jump to It

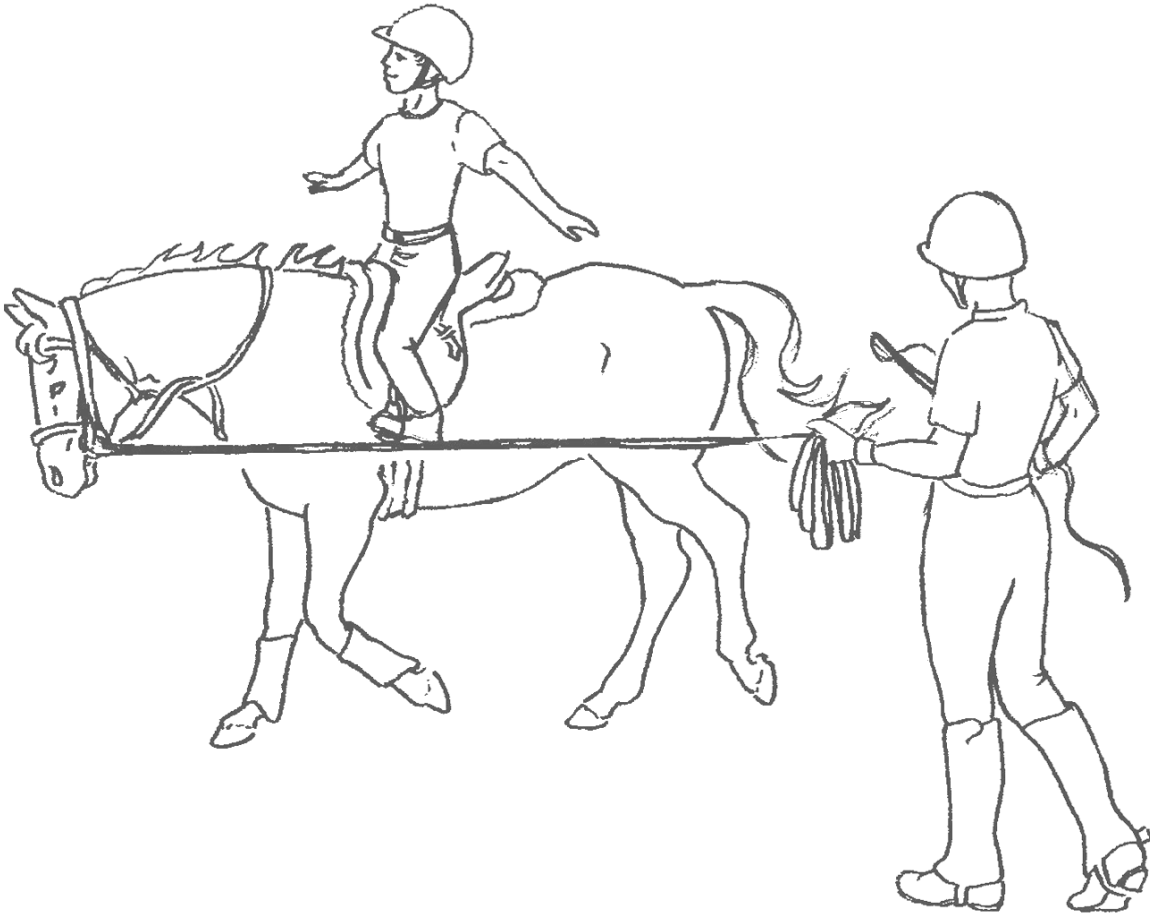


Even though I am not ready to safely jump *big* jumps yet, I can practice jumping over ground poles. Every time I go over a pole, I make sure to:

- 🐾 Approach from far enough away that my pony gets a good look at the jump.
- 🐾 Line up with the very middle of the pole.
- 🐾 Get in my two-point and hold mane while my pony steps over.
- 🐾 Keep my eyes up, and look to the other side!



# Up and Down

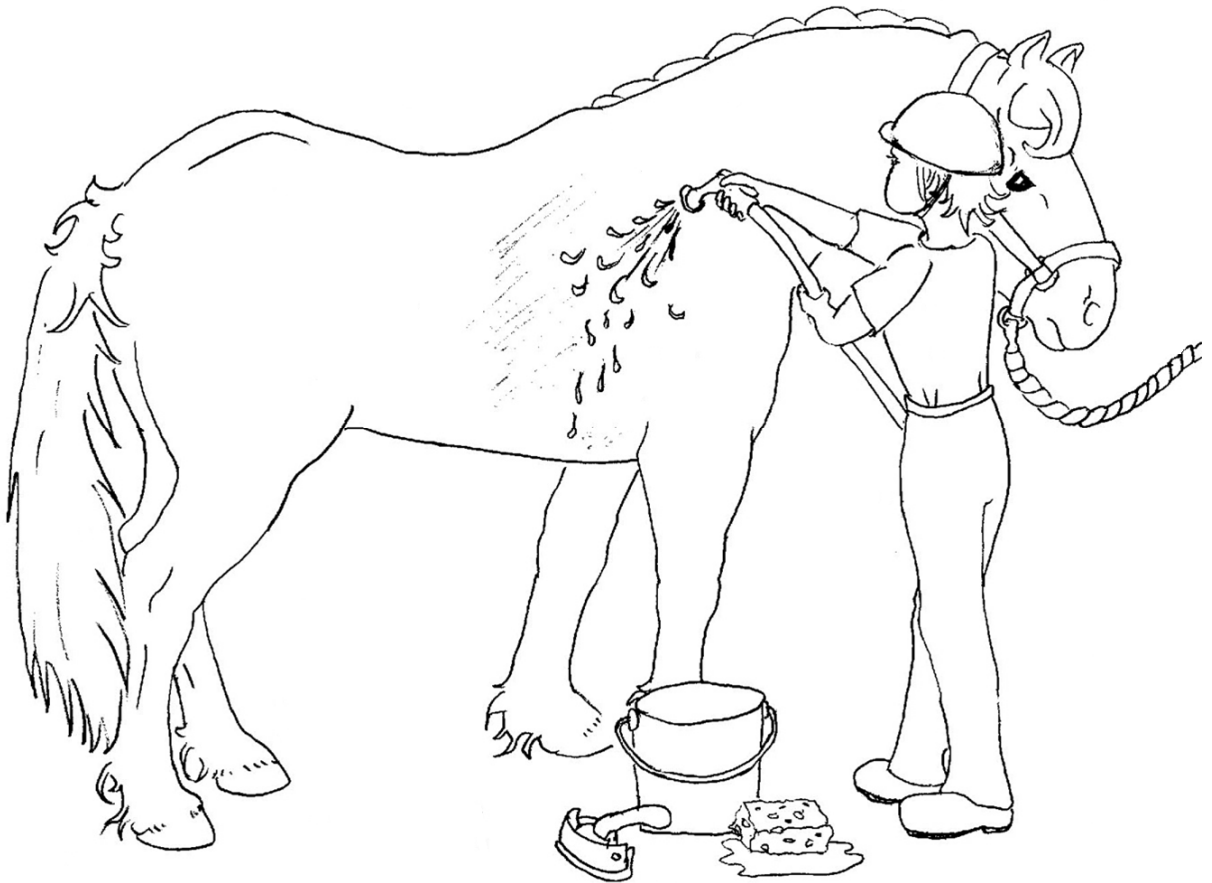


When I am comfortable at the walk, I am ready to learn to ride the trot. Trotting is like jogging, and it can be VERY bouncy.

First, I learn to sit the trot, holding onto the saddle.

Then, I can learn to post. Posting is when I rise up and down in time with the horse's trot, swinging my hips forward so I stand up in the stirrups. Posting can be tricky to learn, but once you do, it takes all the bounciness away.

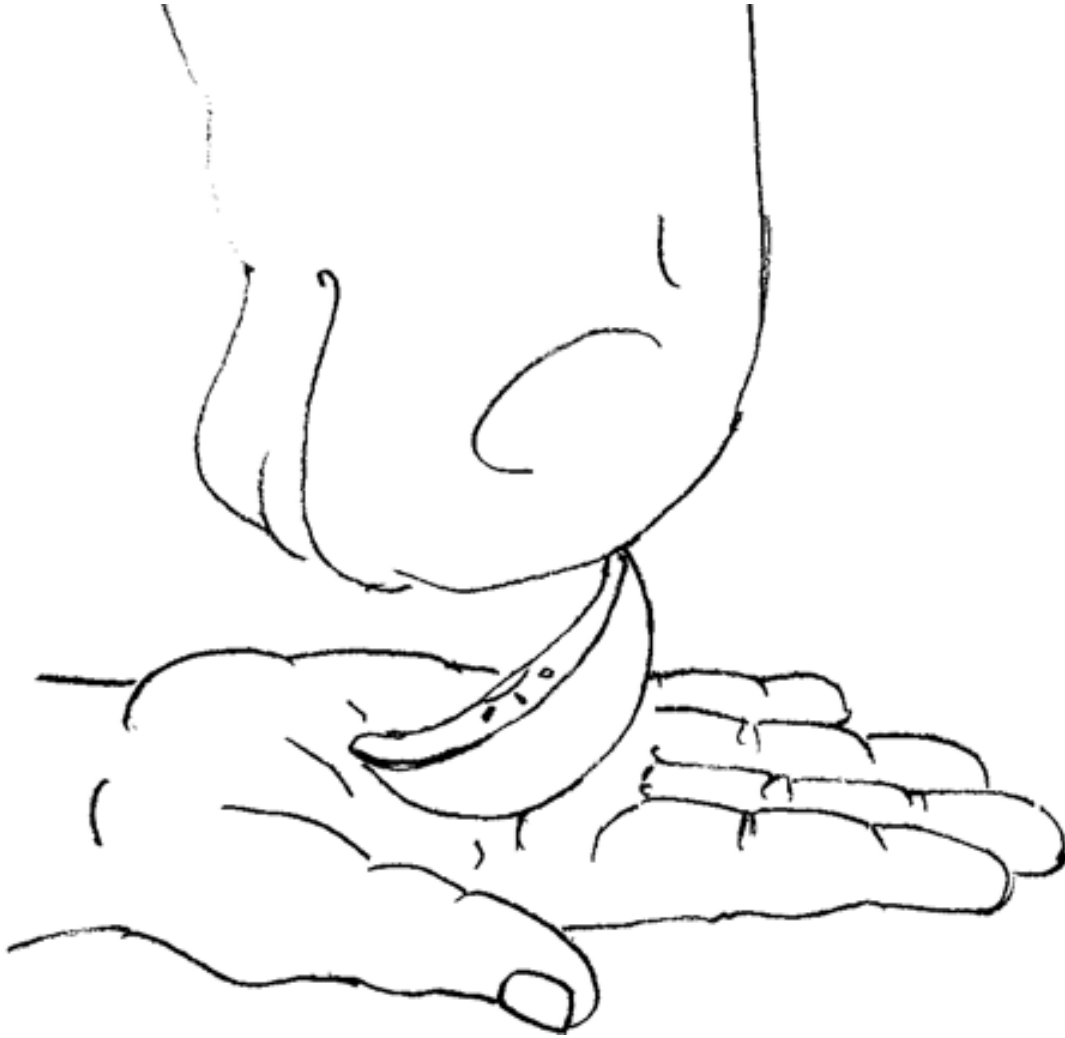
# Cool Down



At the end of my ride, we always walk the pony to make sure he is cool. He can get sore or sick if his muscles don't get a chance to relax after a workout!

I help untack my pony and groom him. If he gets hot and sweaty in the summer, we might have to sponge him off, or spray off his sweaty places with a hose.

# Tasty Treats



If my instructor says it is okay, I can give my pony a treat after he's done working. I hold my hand very flat and very still, so the horse can take the treat without accidentally nibbling on my fingers. Carrot and apple pieces, horse cookies, and peppermints all make good treats.

It is important that I ALWAYS ask permission before I give a horse a treat! Some horses have special rules about feeding, or may have to eat their treat in a bucket. Too many treats can teach a pony to push and bite.

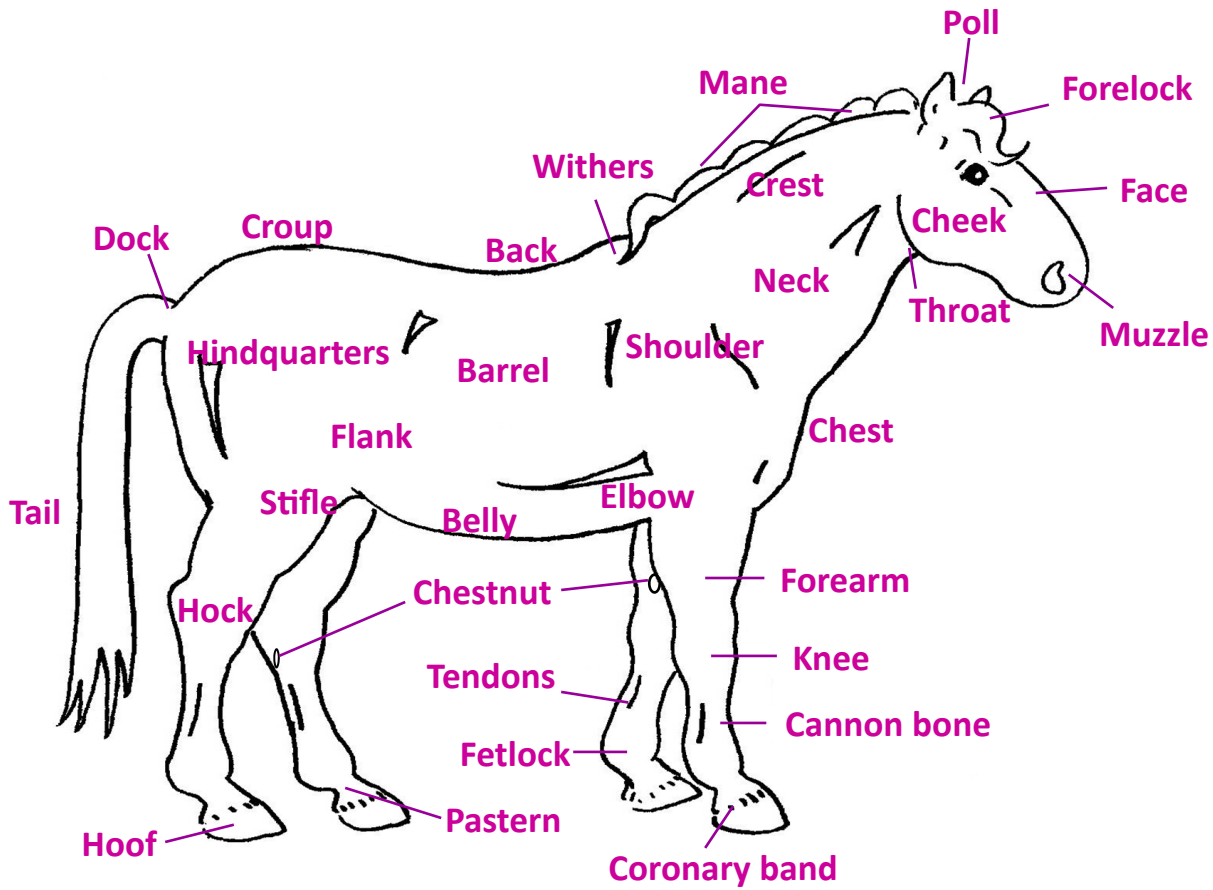
# Caring For Your Pony



There is a lot more to horsemanship than riding. Horses need a LOT of care in order to stay happy and healthy!

- 🐾 They have to be fed every day, with hay and a sometimes a bit of grain. It is important to make sure they get the right food, so they don't get sick.
- 🐾 They need fresh, clean water at all times, and a salt block.
- 🐾 They also need their stalls and paddocks cleaned EVERY day. This means picking up poop!

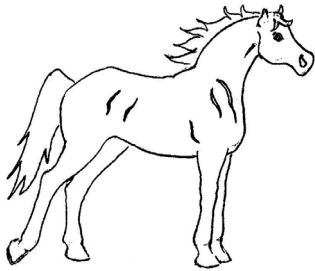
# Pony Parts



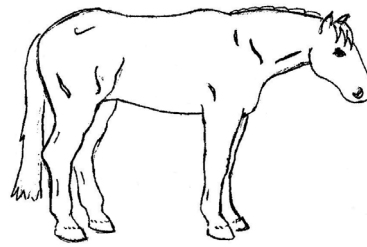
Horses have a lot of different body parts. Some of them are the same parts that we have, such as necks, shoulders, elbows and knees. Other parts have special names, such as hock, fetlock, and pastern.

I practice learning these names and finding them on my pony. How many pony parts can you name?

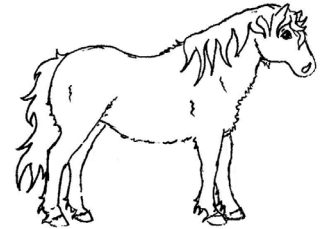
# Breeds of the World



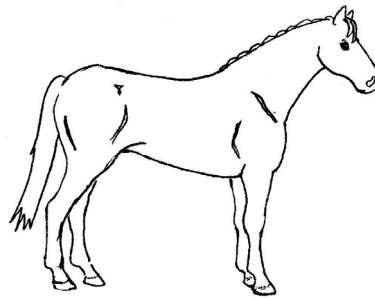
Arabian



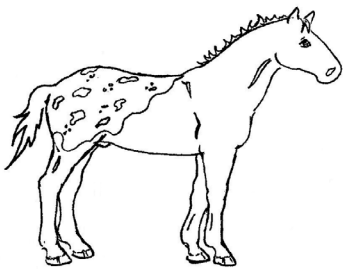
Quarter Horse



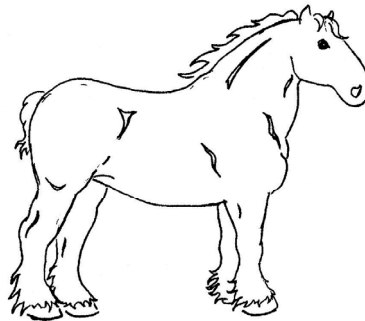
Welsh Pony



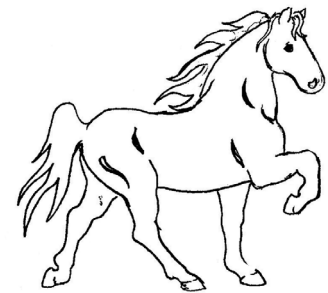
Thoroughbred



Appaloosa



Clydesdale

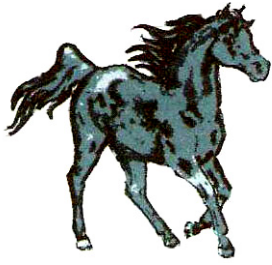


Saddlebred

Just like dogs and cats, horses and ponies come in many different breeds, or types. Quarter Horses, Arabians, Thoroughbreds, and Welsh Ponies are all very common breeds you can find at most barns. Each breed has a different build and is good at different things.

If we don't know what breed our horse or pony is, we call him a "grade" horse. Sometimes horses are a mix of many different breeds!

# Colors and Markings



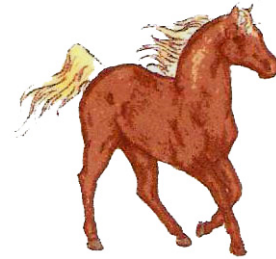
Black



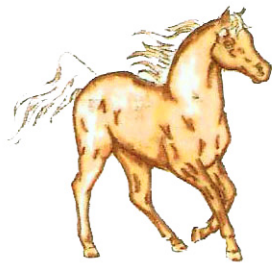
Gray



Bay



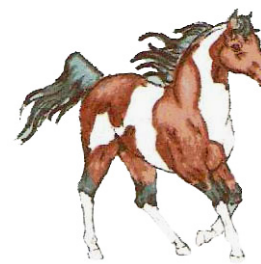
Chestnut



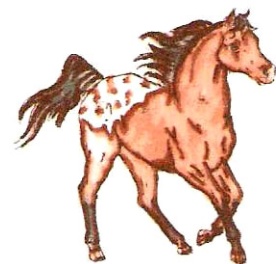
Palomino



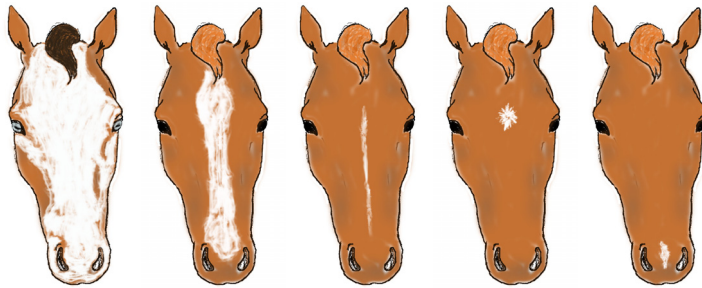
Roan



Pinto



Appaloosa



Face Markings

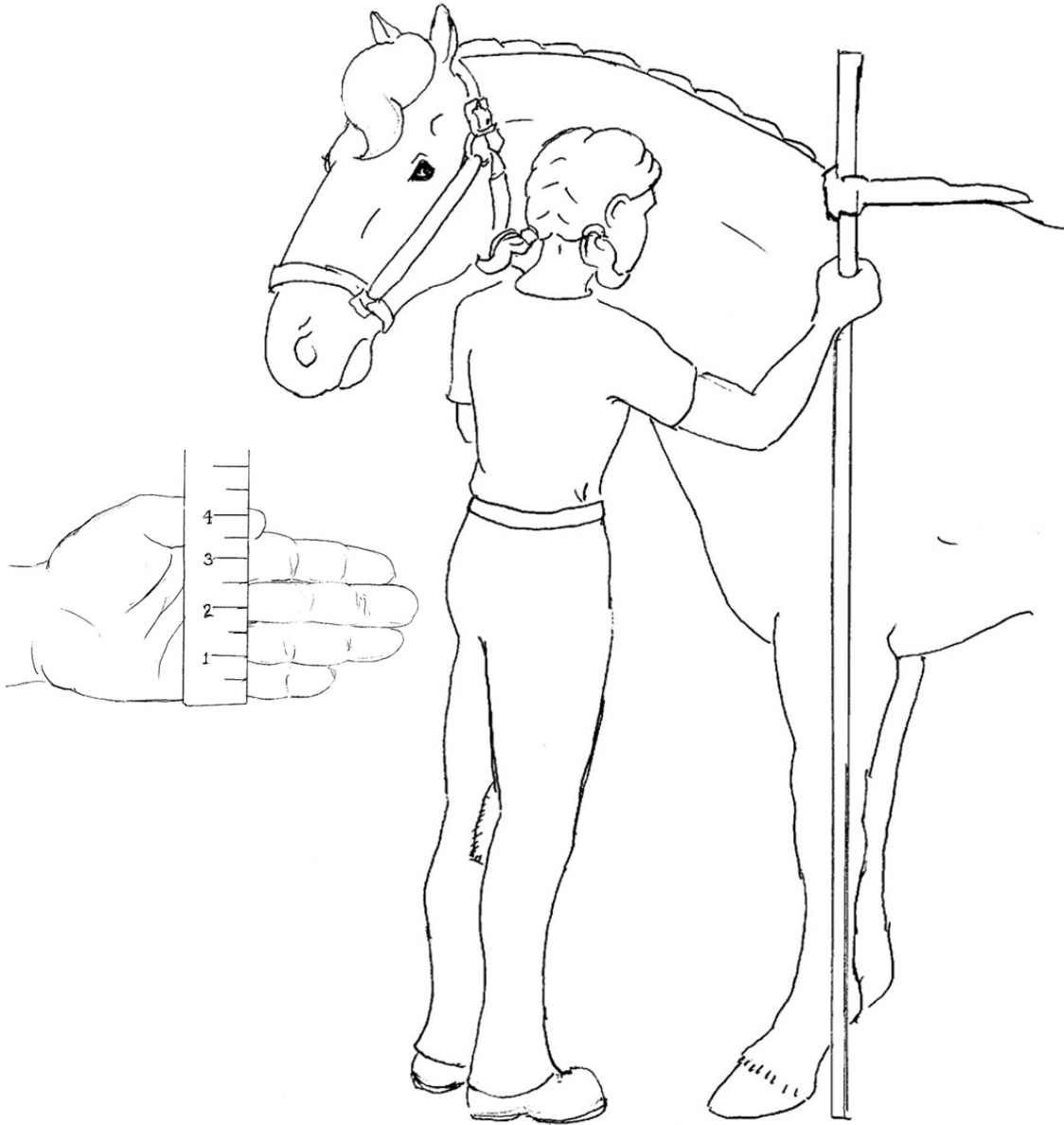


Leg Markings

Horses also come in many different colors. Common colors include black, bay, chestnut, gray, palomino and pinto.

Many horses have markings, or small patches of white on their face and legs. A white spot on their forehead is called a star, while a white spot on their nose is called a snip. Horses can also have stripes, blazes, bald faces, half-pasterns, socks and stockings.

# How High?



Horses are measured in “hands.” A hand (hh) is 4 inches. We measure a horse to its withers instead of its head, since he can put his head higher or lower!

If a horse is 14.2hh or under (that’s fourteen and a half hands high), we say he is a pony. Some ponies can be very small, around 10 hands! We use a special measuring stick or tape to find out my pony’s height.



# My Pony

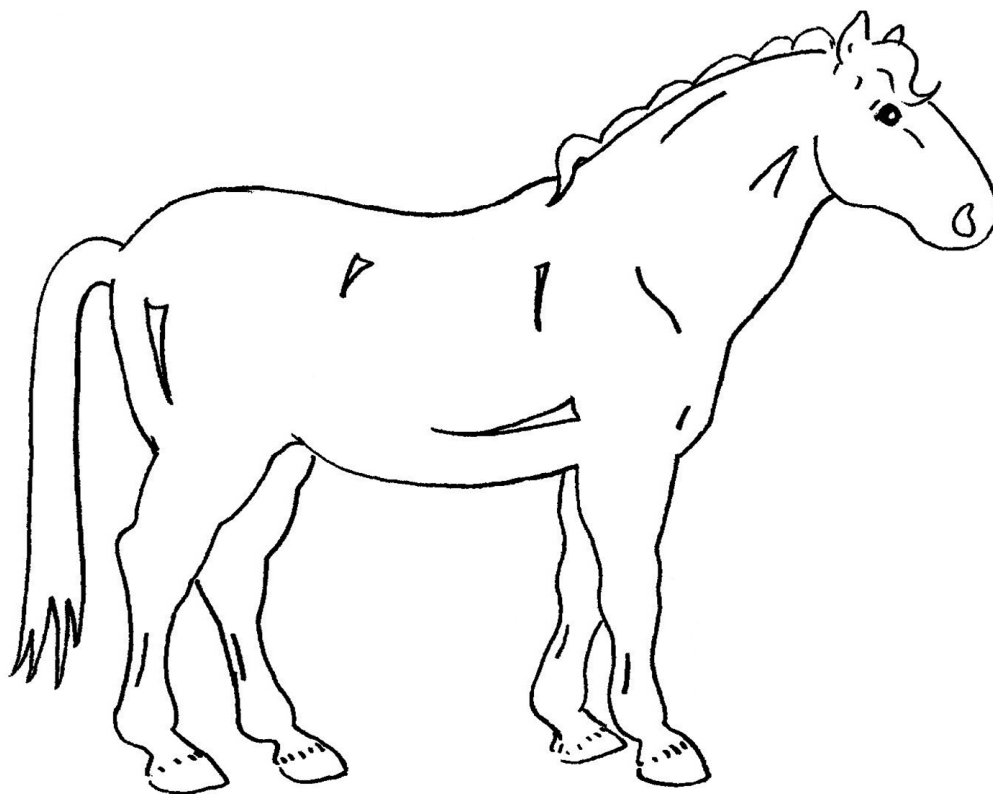
I usually ride a pony named: \_\_\_\_\_

My pony is a:      Mare      Gelding      (circle one)

My pony's breed: \_\_\_\_\_

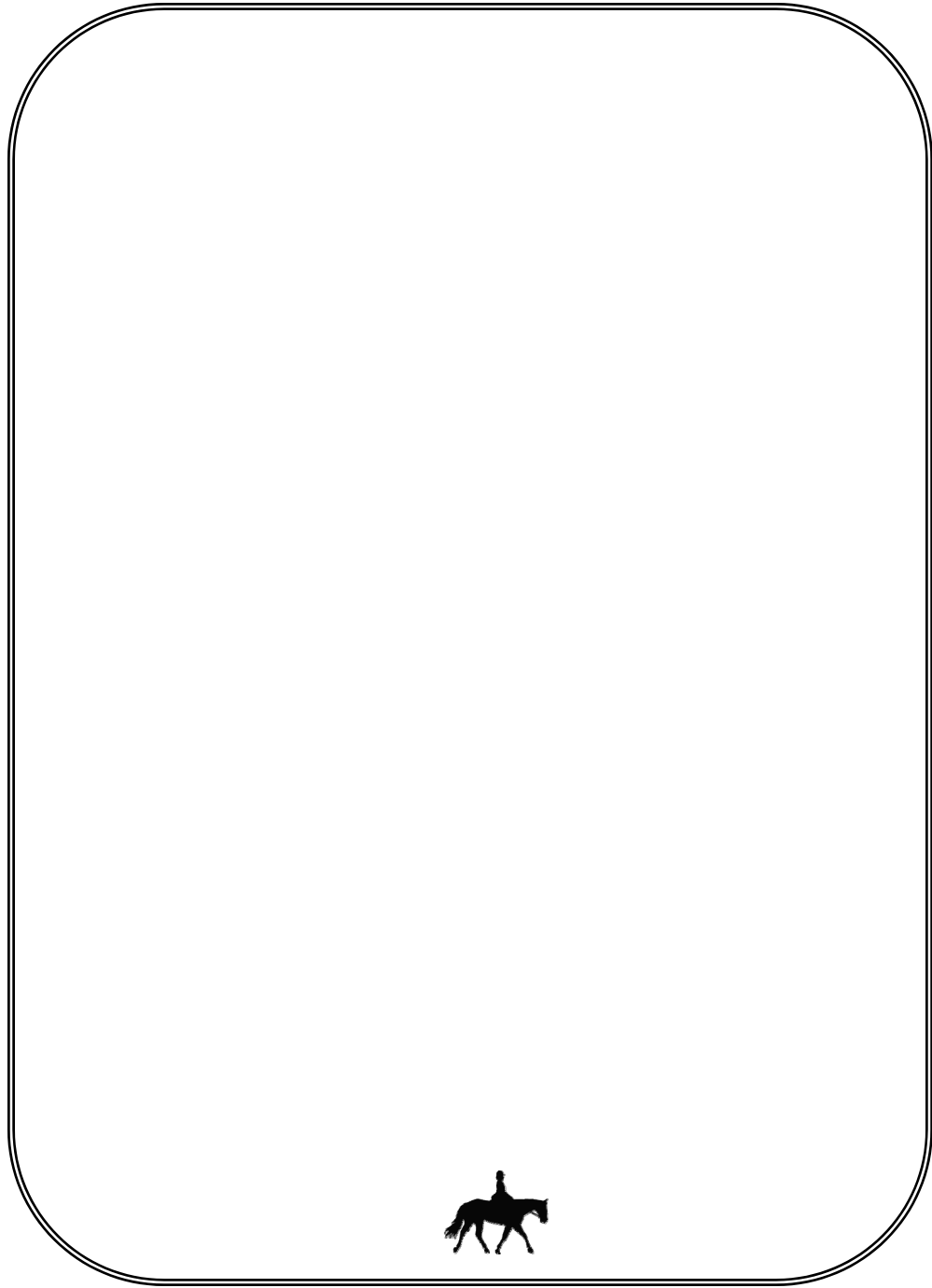
My pony is this tall: \_\_\_\_\_

Color in the picture to show your pony's color and markings.



Once I have learned a bit about horses and ponies, I'm ready to fill in the information for my favorite pony that I ride in lessons. I can use markers or crayons to add his colors and markings. It is okay if my instructor or another experienced horseperson helps me find out his size and breed, or helps me write down the information.

# Practice Makes Perfect



Here is a practice arena that you can use to draw changes of direction, circles, and the other patterns that you ride in your lessons.

Try drawing each figure in a different color, or taking small toy horses and letting them go for a ride!



