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*Your Pathway to Working in the International Horse Industry,
from Complete Beginners to Qualified Professionals*



Student Workbook

SISOEQO305A 3/5

Riding on Trails

Student Name:

USI (Unique Student Identifier) :

(For further information, please visit OnlineHorseCollege.com/usi)

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Other Personal Information

Students are to follow all recommended safety considerations at all times.

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Riding on Trails Workbook

Students are to complete all previous online assessments prior to attempting any practical activities in this unit and to follow all recommended safety considerations.

Assessments for SISOEQO305A are as follows:

- 1) Plan Trail Rides
- 2) Prepare for Trail Rides
- 3) Riding on Trails
- 4) Evaluate Trail Rides
- 5) Practical and Q&A Assessment

These assessments incorporate the following unit from the SIS10 Sport, Fitness & Recreation Training Package which include the listed elements

SISOEQO305A Ride horses in tracked areas

- Plan for the riding activity
- Select and prepare horse and equipment
- Demonstrate horse riding skills in a trail ride situation
- Evaluate the ride

Further information about this assessment is available at www.training.gov.au

Riding on Trails Introduction

To be able to guide others in trail ride situations you need to know how to conduct yourself safely and professionally. This workbook covers topics that are required to perform horse riding skills in trail ride situations including mounting, dismounting, ride pace control and obstacle navigation.

Activities and Extension Lesson

Through-out this workbook you may find various activities and an extension lesson towards the end of this workbook. Unless specifically requested, you are not required to submit these results to your assessor. The extra activities and extension lesson are included in this workbook to support your learning.

Completed Assessment Information

Information about your completed assessments in your course is available on your Training Plan. If you do not yet have the link to your online training plan, you may not have submitted your completed Enrolment Form.

Enrolment Forms are available on the link below

Please send your completed enrolment form to Teacher@OnlineHorseCollege.com

Mounting in Open Areas

At some stage when trail riding you will need to dismount and mount the horse in an open area, without assistance. There are some points to remember when mounting in open areas.

Mount away from trees. Avoid getting on the horse under trees or low branches where you can bump your head.

Avoid using the fence to mount. Fence rails may be weaker than they look and it is hard to control the horse whilst perched on a fence.

There are a couple of options for mounting horses in open areas. One is to keep the horse facing the gate while you mount. This has the benefits of helping to keep the horse still while you get on however if you are riding in a group some horses may become anxious at not being able to see their trail mates. On the other hand, some horses may be better controlled to prevent them walking off if they are faced away from the group. The method used will come down to whichever suits the horse and the situation the best.

A common technique used for mounting is to turn the horse's nose to the near side while mounting so that if the horse goes to walk off the horse walks in a circle. This allows the rider to maintain a degree of control over direction if the horse moves off when they are yet to sit down into the saddle. This technique also has its advantages and disadvantages for different horses. Some horses may feel too restrained and panic in this position; the use of this technique will depend on the horse and situation.

It can become a difficult task to mount if you are riding a particularly tall horse or maybe you are a little short or a little inflexible and hauling a mounting block around is impractical. A simple way to make the task of mounting easier for those who are "vertically challenged" is to lengthen the near side stirrup for mounting. You will need to make the stirrup long enough so that mounting is easier but not so long that you can't get your right leg over the horse once you are standing in the stirrup. Once you are mounted in the saddle you can then readjust the stirrup to the correct length for you. This is also a handy technique to help get other inexperienced riders onto their horse as opposed to giving leg up's.



Dismounting in Open Areas

Dismounting in open areas will be much the same as dismounting in an enclosed area such as an arena.

The same considerations to the techniques used for mounting are needed for dismounting. For horses that fiddle or walk off you can choose to turn their nose towards the near side while you dismount or face them towards the gate.

There are also a couple of points to remember when dismounting.

Check the footing or area you will land on before you dismount. Make sure you won't land in holes, mud or unstable footing.

Ensure there is enough room between your horse and any other horses on the ride.

Leave enough room for you to dismount and position your horse where it cannot sniff or kick at other horses or be sniffed or kicked by other horses.

Remove both feet from the stirrups to dismount. If the horse moves or takes fright while you are dismounting having no feet in the stirrups will prevent you from being dragged.



Riding Posture

Your posture when riding on trails may be slightly more relaxed than when riding in the arena however you should still aim to maintain a position and seat that is of the least burden to the horse, where you can maintain your balance in all gaits, in both directions and still give the necessary aids to guide and control that horse. Remember your security in the saddle and the effectiveness of your aids depends greatly upon your position when riding, and becomes even more important when riding in open areas to maintain control and safety as you ride over various terrain and footing.



Starting from the top, whilst riding your focus should be in the direction you are travelling (not looking down at the horse).

Your shoulders should be level with the chest open. To achieve this think that you push your rib cage out. This will bring your shoulders back without 'pulling' them which will create tension.

Your spine needs to sit in line with the horses' spine and your weight should be carried evenly on both seat bones.



Shoulders should be positioned over the hips so that you're not leaning forward, drawing your weight out of the saddle.

Your elbows should be by your side and the forearm should form a straight line which runs from the elbow, along the forearm, down the rein to the bit in the horses' mouth. This will allow for good communication to the horse. Hands hold the reins with your fingers closed around them and thumbs positioned on top facing upwards, with an even contact on the reins.



From your hips your legs drape around the horses' ribs and your lower leg should stay in contact with the horses' sides all the time, but not squeezing or gripping

Stirrup lengths even, with your stirrup iron sitting just behind your toes, on the ball of your foot with your heel dropped down so it becomes the lowest point in your body. Toes pointing forward.

Maintaining Ride Pace

Maintaining ride pace means to control and monitor the speed of horses and riders in the group. The pace maintained should be a speed and consistency which allows the group to complete the ride at the anticipated time, maintains the safety and enjoyment of horses and riders and is appropriate to the fitness and abilities of the horses and riders.

When planning the trail ride you will need to take into consideration the need for rest stops. The time taken to have rest breaks should be included in your planning of how long the ride will take.

Most of the riding will be done in walk and ride management should avoid allowing the riders to become spread out where individuals can become lost or separated from the group. When trail riding it can become very frustrating for horses and riders to continually be stopping and starting to wait for horses which are too slow. The ride should be structured so that horses that maintain a faster pace or longer length of stride towards the front and slower horses towards the back; this prevents the more forward moving horses catching up and getting too close to the hind end of slow horses in front. In trail riding establishments it will take continual monitoring and correcting of horse speeds to maintain a steady pace and distances between horses.

The distance between horses when trail riding is the same for when riding in an arena; a minimum of 2 horse lengths between horses and a maximum of approximately 4 horse lengths.



When changing the pace during a ride the whole ride should be notified of this intention. The whole ride should be informed what pace to move into (instructions for how to move the horse into the new pace can be given at this time as well) and what they should do if they need to slow down or need help. Once the ride is ready the command or signal can be given to move into the new pace. The establishment procedures should provide information on the preferred method for changing pace during trail rides.

Riders following another rider should not move to faster paces or gaits until the rider in front has. So in a group of four riders moving into trot, the rider at the front of the ride trots, then rider 2, then rider 3 and finally rider 4. Moving into faster paces in this manner will help to prevent horses getting too close to horses in front. Well-seasoned trail horses will often move into the new pace automatically once the horse in front does. Changes of pace should only be made if the whole group is capable of riding the new pace. Allowing some horses to speed up or slowdown will pose risks to the safety of riders and compromise ride management.

Negotiate Obstacles

There are many obstacles that may be encountered during trail rides and it is important to navigate them with care to maintain safety and to abide by your minimal environmental impact responsibilities (see pg.14).

Low tree branches

If low branches need to be passed by going underneath them then the rider should shorten the reins and lean forward over the horse's neck to go under them. If the horse speeds up while going under the branch the rider will be able to move with the horse and regain control. If the rider leans back to go under the branch they are in a vulnerable position over the horse's hindquarters and cannot see where they are going or control the horse effectively.

Rivers, creeks & streams

Before crossing water you need to make sure the current is not too strong. Try to cross at designated points if possible to minimise erosion. If a designated point is not available cross in areas where footing into and out of the water is firm. Cross in areas that are free from debris such as tree branches and holes though it can be difficult to determine in cloudy or muddy water, especially if horses have already walked through.

Logs & Rocks

Fallen trees and logs are quite common obstacles to be encountered on trail rides. The size of the log will determine what sort of action to take. Small logs or logs with low sections can be stepped over in walk however keep in mind that some horses may be inclined to jump over logs from a walk even if they are small, though young, green or inexperienced trail horses will be more likely to do this and these kinds of horses are unlikely to be used for inexperienced riders. Where the track is wide enough you may be able to ride around the obstacle but ensure you adhere to minimal impact practices (see pg. 14). Where the log or rock cannot be ridden over or around an alternative route may need to be sought. Riders who cannot control the horse while maintaining position and balance in walk, trot, canter and over jumps should not be allowed to jump obstacles; business policies and procedures should be sought in regards to allowing experienced riders to jump on trail rides.



Negotiate Obstacles (cont.)

Riding uphill

When riding up slopes, hills or other ascending features of the landscape the rider needs to shorten the reins, lean forward and if necessary grab hold of some mane. Ideally the rider should be in a position similar to 2 point seat however most riders who come to trail riding businesses have little to no experience riding and will lack the strength and balance to get into 2 point seat. It is important that the rider's hands come forward to allow the horse to use its neck and back.

It is good practice to keep the ride in walk when negotiating hills for group safety and ride management; when moving at faster paces some horses can become excited once reaching the top of the hill and pop in a buck or jump. Uphill the horse will want to speed up to make it easier going against the pull of gravity. If the rider cannot control and maintain the speed of the horse up or down hill then they are not capable to do so in the next fastest pace.

Riding downhill

Downhill the horse will want to speed up because gravity is pulling it that way and it is easier than engaging the hind legs. When riding downhill encourage riders to lean back with their lower leg forward (almost in an exaggerated position) for support, hands down and forward but keeping a contact with the horse's mouth. Again it is good practice to keep the ride in walk when riding descends.

If the rider cannot control and maintain the speed of the horse up or down hill then they are not capable to do so in the next fastest pace.

When riding up or downhill try to keep the ride in single file to avoid horses getting too close, cutting each other off and establishing a pecking order. It may help to allow bigger distances between horses for negotiating ascends and descends.



Minimal Impact Procedures

Minimal impact practices are designed to assist in maintaining the ecological and fundamental values of natural settings for outdoor recreational activities. The use of these practices is with the aim of leaving the least possible trace or impact of your presence or journey through the natural environment.

A minimal impact approach to riding should be adopted when conducting trail rides: -

- Stay on marked trails to avoid damaging vegetation and habitat
- Avoid riding during or immediately after wet weather
- Only cross watercourses at designated crossing points
- Do not allow horses to graze on vegetation (this is also good ride management practice and will be covered in another unit)
- Tether horses for short periods at rest stops and hitching posts to minimise soil damage
- Limit the spread of weeds by cleaning your personal and horse gear before visiting the trail (e.g., clothes, shoes, floats, manes, tails, hooves)

In Australia, having minimal impact on the environment is encouraged through the 7 principles of 'Leave No Trace': -

- 1) Plan ahead & prepare**
Understand any regulations of the area you will access, research your destination, seek permits (if required), prepare for emergencies and weather, bring plenty of food and water and take a map, compass or gps.
- 2) Travel on durable surfaces**
Avoid unstable or eroded soils, when crossing water use firm and stony areas, use bridges where possible for crossing water, avoid letting horses graze on vegetation.
- 3) Dispose of waste properly**
Remove all rubbish including biodegradable food and use toilets where provided.
- 4) Leave what you find**
Check your vehicle and equipment for weeds and pests before leaving, respect indigenous and cultural sites, leave rocks, plants and animals as you find them, do not travel through quarantine areas.
- 5) Minimise the impact of fire**
Light fires in cleared areas, never light fires during bushfire periods, keep fires small, collect timber only where permitted.
- 6) Respect wildlife**
Observe wildlife from a distance, never feed wildlife and report injured animals to the land manager.
- 7) Be considerate of your hosts & other visitors**
Respect the wishes of all hosts (indigenous, pastoral, land manager and locals), read signage, leave gates as they are found, take initiative to avoid dangerous situations between horses and other trail users.

Minimal Impact Procedures (cont.)

In Australia, each state has codes of practice or rules for conducting horse riding in natural areas. In the below table are websites where this information can be accessed.

QLD Department of National Parks, Sport & Racing	Code of Conduct for Recreational Horse Riding
NSW Office of Environment & Heritage	Code of Practice for Horse Riding in Parks
VIC Department of Environment & Primary Industries	Horse Riding Code of Practice
WA Department of Sport & Recreation	Horse Trail Riding Activity Statement
Government of SA – Horse SA	Numerous resources available here
TAS Department of Premier & Cabinet	Horse Riding & Trail Riding Activity Statement

You should also check the business policies and procedures regarding its practices in minimising environmental impact.



Extension Lesson

This activity is for you to complete to confirm your learning in this subject area.

Unless specifically requested, you are NOT required to submit this completed activity to your assessor.

Practice the following riding tasks. You will be assessed on them at the end of this unit.

- Mounting in an open area
- Dismounting in an open area
- Demonstrate appropriate posture for riding in walk, trot and canter in an open area
- Maintain consistent rhythm and tempo of pace in an open area
- Negotiate logs, low branches, ascending and descending inclines safely.

Recommended Reading

Websites:-

See your state link on page 14 for the code of conduct for riding in national parks.

References

Publication: -

4.T.28 Teach Open Area

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