

# Online HorseCollege



## **Student Workbook**

### **3.T.14 Safe Riding**

[www.OnlineHorseCollege.com](http://www.OnlineHorseCollege.com)



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## ***Safe Riding 3.T.14 Workbook***

Students are to complete Teaching 3.T.09-12 online assessments prior to attempting Teaching 3.T.13-16 and to follow all recommended safety considerations.

Practical assessments for Teaching 3.T.13-16 are as follows

- A) Supervise Horse Handling
- B) Safe Riding
- C) Risk With Horses
- D) Risk Analysis

These assessments incorporate the following unit from the SRS03 Sport Industry Training Package which include the listed elements

SROEQO003A Supervise horse handling

SRXRIK001A Undertake risk analysis of activities

*Further information about this assessment is available at [www.training.gov.au](http://www.training.gov.au)*

## **Safe Riding Introduction**

This workbook focuses on coaching riders and riding in situations where there are groups of horses and riders. As always safety is an important element. By maintaining safe practices when you ride you will minimise hazards and risks to yourself and other.

## Arena Rules

When riding in an arena that is used by many riders or when teaching groups of riders there are rules to abide by to avoid collisions and interfering or interrupting training of other horses and riders and for general safety.

A considerate rider is aware that the practice of these rules is a safety factor for others in the arena. Different establishments may have unique rules specific to their operations and facilities.

Some common and widespread rules are:-

- Announce to the other riders when the gate to the arena is being opened on your entry and exit. This can be as simple as calling out "GATE". In some places you may be required to ask for permission before entering and you should certainly check with the instructor if a lesson is being conducted. The purpose of this rule is to let other people using the arena that the gate will be open and to alert them to your location and presence in the arena.
- The gate should always be closed when mounting or dismounting. This is so a horse doesn't try to leave the arena.
- Maintain safe horse distances. A minimum of 2 horse length between each horse will ensure you stay out of kicking or biting range.
- Walking should be done on the inside tracks. Because it is the slowest pace walking is kept towards the centre area of the arena to keep out of the way of riders working at faster paces.
- The faster pace has right of way. This means trot has right of way over walk, canter has right of way over trot.
- Halting should be done on the centreline. If you are going to bring your horse to a halt the middle of the arena is the place to be because it will keep you out of the way. This means that if you are mounting or dismounting it should be done on the centreline.
- Lateral work has priority over walk, trot and canter.
- Jumping has priority over lateral work, trot and canter. Let other riders know you are going to approach a fence by calling out "JUMPING" or similar.
- When passing another rider (head on) you should pass left shoulder to left shoulder. It is desirable for riders to ride in the same direction however this is not always possible.
- Avoid horses which are being lunged.
- If a rider falls off everyone should come to a halt as safely and quickly as possible.
- Give way to riders on horses which are out of control.
- When passing another rider from behind pass to the inside or request the track by calling "TRACK PLEASE" or similar.
- Wear a helmet.





## Arena Rules (cont.)

Some other rules you may come across include:-

- Removing any manure left by your horse from the arena.
- Putting away jumps and poles after use.
- Specific time frames for when the arena is available for use.

When in a situation where many horses are working in the same area it is important to maintain a safe distance, usually a minimum of two horse lengths, between you and any horse you come behind or follow. This is in case the horse in front kicks out or if your horse tries to bite the other.

In the event of a fallen rider the following action should be taken:-

- 1) The person who has seen the fallen rider should come to an immediate halt, raise their hand and say (loud enough for everyone to hear) something along the lines of "Halt! Fallen rider".
- 2) Horses are kept clear of the fallen rider while they are attended to and checked for injury.
- 3) The loose horse is caught to prevent further hazard.
- 4) Once the fallen rider is treated (i.e. removed from the area or given the all clear) riders can resume their activities.





## Weather

The weather elements can have a great influence over when you ride and staying safe while you ride.

### Storms:-

It's not so much the chance of getting wet from a storm but more the possibility of lightning strike. Lightning can strike 16 kilometres (10 miles) away from a storm, therefore even if the storm hasn't reach you, you're still at risk of being struck by lightning.

The behaviour of some horses may change when bad weather is approaching. And often children may become worried or anxious about thunderstorms.

It is safest to dismount and put the horses away. As the coach you will need to make sure this is done safely, quickly and quietly.

Should you get caught out in a storm dismount as soon as possible and move under shelter with or without your horse.



### Rain:-

Whether you do or don't ride in the rain may come down to personal preference but there are a few things to take into consideration.

Teaching in the rain also poses its own challenges.



- Certain surfaces may become slippery when wet and develop into an unsuitable ground to work or ride on
- Some horses may become sore over the back in wet weather
- You may need to alter your training program (for horses and riders) for rainy weather. For example a jumping lesson can be turned into a dressage lesson or theory lesson.
- The sound of rain on arena and shed roofs can be frightening for some horses who are not accustomed to it. This sound can also make it difficult for you to teach riders because they will have reduced hearing ability due to this it can become an unsafe environment.
- Some horses may become difficult to handle.
- Saddlery and tack will often require cleaning and/or oiling after becoming wet, especially leather.

## Weather (cont.)

### Heat:-

In hot weather horses, like people can become dehydrated and suffer from heat stress especially young and old members of the equine and human population. And a horse which doesn't sweat does not necessarily indicate a fit horse (Anhydrosis, also known as 'the puffs' is a condition where a horse is unable to sweat and therefore has difficulty cooling the body).

When teaching take into consideration that horse and rider may be a little more lethargic than usual, provide regular and frequent breaks.

This is a good time for the rider to have a drink.

Remember to make sure that while stopped the rider keeps at least one hand on the reins, if necessary you can assist by holding the cheek strap on the bridle.

If the situation permits the horse can be sponged with water. It is important that the excess water also be scraped off after sponging otherwise the wet hair will trap heat and the horse will not cool down. The neck, belly and hindquarters of the horse can be sponged, if you are concerned about the behaviour of the horse whilst this is done it is best to dismount the rider.

- If you have the facilities use undercover or indoor arenas
- Avoid riding or avoid strenuous exercises (i.e. cross-country) in the hottest parts of the day
- Provide regular and frequent breaks
- Monitor horses and riders for signs of heat stress
- In group activities locate riders waiting for their turn in the shade (it is important that they maintain safe distance and practices whilst doing so)



## Weather (cont.)

### Cold:-

The mercury tends not to drop as low in Australia as in some other countries but it is still important to consider the horses needs.

Quite possibly due to the colder weather the horse may have lost a little bit of fitness due to not moving as much in the paddock as in the warmer weather and particularly bad weather may have meant a break from riding.



Some points to consider are:-

- Take the time to warm up slowly
- Watch for signs of fatigue i.e. heavy breathing, stumbling, irregular stride
- Groom thoroughly on horses with dense, thick winter coats
- Consider boots or pads to protect and minimise concussion on frozen ground, studs can be used in shoes on ice
- Be aware of 'snowballing' (culmination of snow on the sole of the hoof) under the hoof when riding on snow
- Clipped horses need additional care, an exercise blanket which covers the back and hindquarters of the horse may be useful
- Indoor arenas can be good for avoiding the elements, however they can become dusty

## Water Reluctant Horses

Some horses may be reluctant to go through or near puddles of water even in an arena environment. There are a couple of different options to help cope with this problem but firstly there are some considerations.

If a student is riding the horse you need to decide if the rider is capable of dealing with this problem, if they are not it may be best to avoid the water and either school the horse later on yourself or when a more experienced rider is mounted.

Sometimes the reluctant horse will be happy to follow a more confident horse through water and this can be an option in group lesson situations.

Another alternative is to put the horse on a circle near the water and slowly edge the circle further towards and into the puddle.

Horses which are particularly objective to water may require an experienced rider and be worked away from the water for a period of time until the horse is responsive to the riders aids again. Once this is achieved then the horse can be represented to the puddle.

To get the horse familiar with water, as an unmounted training exercise move it to a restricted area such as a small yard and use a hose to create a water puddle. It needs to be large enough that the horse will need to walk through it at some stage. A puddle which is too small can be avoided too easily.

When approaching a water obstacle, no matter the size it is important to look up where you intend to go in case the horse tries to jump across it. It will also help to keep your body and mind focussed on going forward. Remember to reward the horse every time it makes an attempt to go through the water, this can be done by simply ceasing leg aids and if appropriate a small scratch on the neck. If the horse decides against going into the water at this point then you should resume leg aids and keep the horse positioned in the right direction.



## Riders

An important part of teaching groups is matching horses and riders. Good matches can assist in lesson running smoothly without incident. Bad matches can result in the coach's loss of control of the group, loss of rider confidence, enforce bad behaviour in the horse and put other riders in the group at risk.

It is a good idea for the coach to have knowledge of what a horse is like so they can better determine the type and level of rider it would suit. The best way to do this is to ride the horse. This will allow the coach to determine how slow or fast the horse reacts to the aids, the level of training/education of the horse (including jumping), how the horse responds to group and individual (private lesson) situations and what the horses' movement is like (whether the horse is easy or difficult to sit on i.e. bouncy or smooth paces).

Of course in a large establishment with many horses it may not be practical to ride every horse. Establishments should have records detailing information about each horses training and education background, personality and behavioural characteristics and what type of lesson/ride they are used for, along with general identification descriptions. These records can be a quick and easy reference for coaches.

Another option is lunging. Lunging can be a useful exercise for both horse and rider. But if you're stuck for time then lunging a horse can help to become familiar with it. Even though you will not be mounted you can still gain an indication of how the horse will respond to the aids by how it responds to you on the lunge. Visually you will be able to observe the horses' movement and gain an idea of the type of paces it has.



Lunging is also good for horses which have become a little 'fresh' (exuberant) from lack of work or a spell (holiday). It can be used to correct and school problems like bucking, rearing, shying, general misbehaving and those which have a tendency to become out of control. Though the risk of falling off the horse because of these issues may be removed it can still be quite hazardous to be on the ground lunging. Ensure that horses being lunged because of these issues are done so by a person who has experience lunging and handling difficult horses.

## Riders (cont.)

It is a good idea for beginners (early stage learners) to learn to ride on the lunge, on a quiet and suitable horse and under the instruction of an experienced riding coach. A coach with experience will be able to quickly identify and correct riding problems, recognise threats to the safety of the horse and rider and pass on knowledge which is generally recognised and accepted within the industry.

The benefits to a beginner learning to ride in this situation are:-

- They will be able to focus on improving their technique without the concern of needing to direct and guide the horse. Because of this some riders may improve at a faster rate.
- A quiet experienced lunging horse will help build their confidence.
- The rider can build upon their skills of communicating with the horse while still being within the control of the instructor.
- More one on one time with the coach.
- Lesson can be better tailored to address the riders' individual needs and stage of learning.

When deciding on horse and rider combinations you need to consider:-

### **The size of the rider and horse**

The severity of injury sustained is greater if a small rider comes off a big horse (i.e. 6 yr old on a 16h horse) and because they are smaller they may have trouble in finding the strength to give the necessary aids to a large horse. This is not to say that a small experience rider cannot effectively ride larger horses but for riders at early stages of learning they are generally unsuitable and can be frightening.

Tall or large riders on smaller horses may have difficulty in giving leg aids (usually because their legs hang past the horses' sides) and may be too heavy for the horse.



### **Riders' level of ability & Horses' level of education/training**

It is important to choose a horse which is in the range of ability and fitness of the rider. Over facing riders with horses which they are not ready for can result in loss of confidence in the rider and behavioural problems in the horse.



For example a rider just learning to canter would be unsuitable on an elementary dressage horse. But the same horse could be better suited to a rider who is learning about canter leads. Or a rider in the final stages of learning, in a jumping lesson, mounted on an aged school horse who is used primarily for beginners may become bored and find the horse unchallenging but the same horse may be suited for a rider learning about trotting poles.



## Riders (cont.)

### **The type of lesson**

Some horses may be better suited to dressage/flatwork, jumping or lunge line lessons. In an ideal world every horse could do both, but this is not the case. Most of the time horses which are inexperienced in one area can be schooled in another area.

A horse's workload should be considered too to avoid the same horse being used over and over (usually due to popularity and reliability) when another is just as suitable.



### **Personality, attitudes and behaviour**

Certain horses and riders just don't click. For example highly strung, nervous type horses don't respond well to highly strung, nervous type people.

Cheeky, challenging or lazy horses may be suited to riders with a calm and assertive disposition.





## Group Lessons

The number of riders in a group lesson can vary depending upon the policies of the riding school. Usually to keep the lesson safe, to allow enough practice time and for the quality of instruction for each rider group lessons with up to 4 riders are large enough however if the riders are experience there can be more.

For group lessons riders are matched with other riders whom are at the similar level of experience, for example some riding schools have beginner, intermediate and experienced group lessons. Each level will work on skills that are of relevant difficulty to that level. Beginner group lessons tend to focus on further developing rider position, seat and horse control. Intermediate lessons can focus on building the rider's independent seat and refining aids and control of the horse. Experienced group lessons are for riders who are established in all three paces and work on exercises which look at influencing the horse's way of going.

Riders in beginner group lessons are learning to maintain distances between their horses and will need prompting from the instructor on how to do this, whereas riders in group lessons for the experienced will be able to anticipate problems and ride the horse accordingly.

Group lessons allow riders more time in the saddle and can be a more affordable option. They will provide social interaction and friendly competition or motivation for development of riding skills. Running for usually an hour they are also fun and provide the opportunity to make friends especially for shy or reserved riders.



## Ride Organisation

Ride organisation is an important part of group lessons and contributes to the safety and learning of your riders and horses. Organising a group and remaining in control of how horse and riders move about the arena is a skill that improves as you become more familiar with coaching groups. There are a few different skills that you will need to develop for coaching and controlling group lessons, they include an eye for how fast each horse moves or is likely to move, which horses are most likely to get along and which horses are not, the capabilities of each rider and what is being practiced in the lesson.

There are three common orders to controlling group lessons:-

- Single file
- Open order
- Working independently

### Single File

For this ride organisation horses and riders follow a designated leader in a designated order one behind the other. They all travel at the same speed and in the same direction. Single file is most commonly used for beginner riders and for large group lessons as it is an order which the riders are least likely to be confused and requires minimal control of the horse to maintain. The order the ride (i.e., group) will maintain should be established from the very beginning of the lesson. For example:-

*(Riders are mounted with their horses standing on the centreline) "You are going to work in single file today with Elise as the leader followed by Karen, Jessica and then Scott. When I call your name you will walk forward to the outside track and track left, make sure you maintain 2 – 3 horse lengths between your horse and the horse in front of you. Elise.....Karen.....Jessica....."*

Note that in the example above the riders are instructed to walk forward when the coach calls their name, if the riders are lined up in the same order they will form single file in (e.g., Karen is on the right of Elise, Jessica is on the right of Karen, Scott is on the right of Jessica) and they are capable of steering their horses to the outside track at the same time then the command "Whole ride walk forward and track left" could have been used instead of calling each individual.



## Ride Organisation (cont.)

To move the group between gaits phrases such as *“Whole ride prepare to go forward to rising trot (or: - working trot rising).....and trot on (or: - and ride trot)”* and *“Whole ride prepare to go forward to walk..... and ride walk”* are used. You should make sure that riders understand that even though you have given the command for the whole to trot on, they should make sure the horse in front of them has begun trotting before putting their horse into trot so to avoid horses running up the tails of those in front, this is common in beginner riders whom aren't as quick or effective to apply the aids.

In single file riders must regulate the speed of their horse to maintain the distance between horses without leaving their position in the line. In other words if a horse and rider get too close to the horse and rider in front of them (riders should maintain a distance of about 2 to 3 horse lengths between their horse and the horse in front of them or if they cannot see the hind legs of the horse in front they are too close) they have to slow their horse down rather than turning away to the end of the ride.

If a horse and rider is too slow where they get too far away from the horse and rider in front of them and subsequently making the horses and riders behind them slow down or return to a slower pace, then the rider on the slow horse needs to either push the horse forward within the pace or cut off the short end of the arena (the rider should still ride two corners, no corner cutting as you are trying to improve the rider's accuracy of guiding the horse) to catch up but the riders behind the slow horse should still ride to the end of the arena to fix the distance between their horse and the slower one. The slow rider should not be allowed to canter to catch up; it is an unsafe practice to have horses cantering up behind other horses.

If maintaining distances is a consistent problem you may wish to change the order of the horses in single file (e.g., make Scott the leader or move Karen to the end of the ride). A new leader can be moved into position by having the rider turn across the arena to the front of the ride. Horses can be moved to the end of the ride by having riders circle to the rear. No matter which method you use to rearrange the single file order you need to ensure that the riders maintain distances between the horses so it is achieved safely without biting or kicking.

### Open Order

In this ride order horses and riders also work on the same rein at the same speed but riders are not designated to stay in a set position in the line and they also maintain greater distances between horses. If a rider catches up to the horse in front they can turn away and find a new place in the ride. The space between horses is kept at about 4 to 5 horse's lengths allowing riders greater freedom to gradually introduce them to riding independently (covered in preceding pages). Open order is suited for intermediate through to experienced riders as these riders are more capable of controlling and guiding the horse and require less supervision and specific direction from the coach in how to influence the horse and use aids effectively.

## Ride Organisation (cont.)

Open order also helps to develop rider awareness for other people using the riding area and will encourage riders to ride their horse rather than plodding along as a passenger following the horse in front. Riding in open order will increase the rider's eye for distances and anticipating the speed of movement.



Maintaining a view of all riders whilst they are in open order can be more difficult for the coach as the riders are spaced further apart. The coach should position themselves on the outside of the exercise or on the outside of the arena and project their voice so that the rider can hear them. To initiate changes of direction the coach needs to elect a leader, for example *“Following Jessica the whole ride will change rein from H to F”*. Open order can be formed simply from single file through the command *“Whole ride form open order”*. The ride can be formed back into single file by nominating a leader (and if necessary instructing who follows who in single file) *“Whole ride form single file behind Karen”*.

The same approach can be taken to establish open order from the centreline as is done for single file.

### Working Independently

This type of ride organisation is for experienced riders who are capable of guiding and controlling the horse accurately and maintaining seat and balance at all three gaits/paces. When riders work independently they are free to choose the gait they work in, the direction they travel and figures they ride. Common in lessons with experienced riders, working independently allows riders to work and focus on different skills and exercises in the same lesson. So whilst all riders ride as part of a group lesson they may focus on different areas of skill execution or different exercises from each other. Working independently can be likened to the warm up arena at a competition, horses and riders are there to perform similar skills but they all work their horses separately whilst adhering to common arena rules.

## Ride Organisation (cont.)

When coaching riders working in this ride organisation coaches need to be aware of where all the riders are so that they can provide feedback and ride control when necessary. Riders should be made aware of common arena rules such as:-

- Announce to the other riders when the gate to the arena is being opened on your entry and exit. This can be as simple as calling out "GATE". In some places you may be required to ask for permission before entering and you should certainly check with the instructor if a lesson is being conducted. The purpose of this rule is to let other people using the arena that the gate will be open and to alert them to your location and presence in the arena.
- The gate should always be closed when mounting or dismounting. This is so a horse doesn't try to leave the arena.
- Maintain safe horse distances. A minimum of 2 horse length between each horse will ensure you stay out of kicking or biting range.
- Walking should be done on the inside tracks. Because it is the slowest pace walking is kept towards the centre area of the arena to keep out of the way of riders working at faster paces.
- The faster pace has right of way. This means trot has right of way over walk, canter has right of way over trot.
- Halting should be done on the centreline. If you are going to bring your horse to a halt the middle of the arena is the place to be because it will keep you out of the way. This means that if you are mounting or dismounting it should be done on the centreline.
- Lateral work (sideways work) has priority over walk, trot and canter.
- Jumping has priority over lateral work, trot and canter. Let other riders know you are going to approach a fence by calling out "JUMPING" or similar.
- When passing another rider (head on) you should pass left shoulder to left shoulder. It is desirable for riders to ride in the same direction however this is not always possible.
- Avoid horses which are being lunged.
- If a rider falls off everyone should come to a halt as safely and quickly as possible.
- Give way to riders on horses which are out of control.
- When passing another rider from behind pass to the inside or request the track by calling "TRACK PLEASE" or similar.



## Teaching Groups

In group lessons there will be times when the whole group can practice the exercise and times when it will be better for skill development and safety to have the riders practice one at a time. There are advantages and disadvantages to both methods of group practice.

Whole group practices at same time:-

### Advantages

- More opportunity for riders to practice
- More time spent riding
- Group involvement, riders less likely to get bored
- Horses and riders remain warmed up

### Disadvantages

- Less direct feedback to individuals from the coach
- Less opportunity to apply skills as an individual may lead to riders simply following the leader
- Some exercises may be unsafe to practice with the group as a whole

Riders practice one at a time:-

### Advantages

- Allows riders to practice skills individually
- Allows other riders a break between practice
- Opportunity for other riders to learn from the rider practicing
- More direct feedback for individuals
- More opportunity to focus on specific individual problems

### Disadvantages

- Some riders may become bored and distracted
- Horses and riders cool down
- Fewer turns for practicing
- Can be difficult to include riders in line up

If the whole group is to practice together you need to make sure the group is organised so that safety is maintained and that all riders will be able to practice the exercise appropriately. Pay attention to maintaining safe distances between horses and positioning yourself so that you can see each rider practice the whole exercise. Try to give feedback to each rider each time they ride through the exercise, if this is not able to be done then you may need to look at re-organising the ride or having riders practice one at a time.





## Teaching Groups (cont.)

When riders practice one at a time the riders awaiting their turn need to be positioned so that they will not interfere with the practicing rider but also in a position where the coach can keep an eye on them. Usually it is appropriate, particularly with inexperienced riders to line up the waiting riders in a position that is out of the way but where they can still see, learn and be part of the lesson. To keep riders in the line-up involved you can ask them to give some feedback on the practicing rider, or give them something specific to look for, for example one rider might watch to see if consistent speed is maintained, and another can watch to see if the rider is on the correct diagonal.

It is important that you encourage positive and constructive comments from other riders in the group to maintain group cohesion and confidence of all riders.

With some good group control skills and experienced riders it is possible to have riders working around on a circle usually in walk and call them one at a time to come off the circle and ride through the exercise. This technique is particularly useful for lateral and simple jumping exercises; you will just need to make sure that any rider re-joining the circle returns to walk well beforehand so that horses are not learning to rush back to the group.





## Hazards & Emergencies

As a coach it is part of your job to minimise the risk of riders falling off but inevitably sooner or later someone will come off their horse as it is a part of the learning process of riding animals that have their own thoughts, feelings and reactions. Your job to minimise risk will remain in the event of an emergency. You will need to manage and reduce further risk of incident until the situation is back under control.

Before beginning a lesson it is important to make sure the riders know what you will do in an emergency situation and how they should react. It is as simple as saying to your riders:-

*“If at anytime during the lesson I raise my hand in the air and yell ‘Whole ride Halt!’ I want you to come to a halt/stop as soon and as safely as possible.”*

Any objects in the arena that pose a hazard to riders’ safety or your lesson plan should be removed or relocated accordingly. This includes manure forks or scoop, jump cups, jump wings, jumps, barrels, markers, poles and even horses. If a horse is or has become unsuitable for a rider or for the lesson appropriate action needs to be taken to get the rider a more suitable mount for the lesson.



## Extension Lesson

Describe the type of horse which might be suitable for the following riders:-

**An 8 year old who is having their first lesson**

.....

.....

**A tall rider at an intermediate stage of learning who hasn't ridden in 6 months**

.....

.....

**An experienced show-jumper who previously had their own horse**

.....

.....

**A large, elderly gentleman who has never ridden**

.....

.....

**An intermediate rider who tends to become nervous during canter exercises**

.....

.....

## Recommended Reading

### Websites:-

<http://www.theridingacademy.net/es1rules.htm#Arena%20Rules> – Arena rules

<http://horses.about.com/od/learntoride/qt/arenasafety.htm> - Arena rules

[http://www.horsepark.net/ARENA\\_RULES\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.horsepark.net/ARENA_RULES_PDF.pdf) - Arena rules

<http://weathersavvy.com/Lightning.html> - Lightning

[http://www.myhorse.com/health/seasonal/cold\\_weather\\_riding\\_considerations.aspx#top](http://www.myhorse.com/health/seasonal/cold_weather_riding_considerations.aspx#top) –  
Riding in Snow

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### Images:-

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