



# Freedom Ride, Inc.

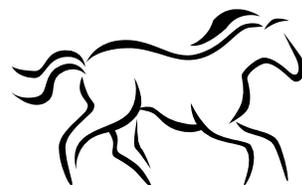
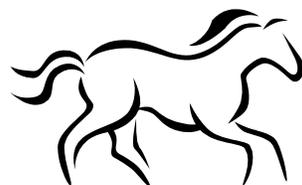
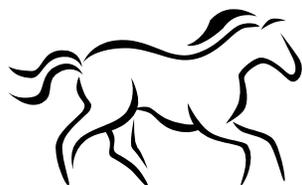
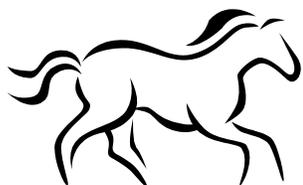
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Professional Association of Therapeutic  
Horsemanship International

# T.E.A.M. Manual & Reference Guide

*Freedom Ride, Inc. - Volunteers  
Horsepower for the Spirit...*



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# Welcome to Freedom Ride – Therapeutic Riding Program

As a non-profit organization, Freedom Ride, Inc. relies on the strength of our many dedicated volunteers to assist our students and staff in a variety of different areas. This manual is to serve as a guide for any questions or concerns you might have regarding your job as a volunteer at Freedom Ride. Keep it in a safe place; it is a great reference tool! Because of the nature of our work and the people we serve, it is important that everyone be as knowledgeable and consistent as possible to uphold the highest quality and safety standards. Most of all, volunteering at Freedom Ride is a wonderful way for you to help make a difference in the lives of some very special riders. However, if you ask any Freedom Ride volunteer they will tell you, “I get more back from our students than I could ever give.”

As a volunteer you are part of the **T.E.A.M. – Therapeutic Equine Activity Member**

## *Freedom Ride, Inc.*

Mission: Freedom Ride, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to enriching the lives and experiences of individuals with disabilities in the Central Florida community through therapeutic horse riding and related activities.

## **Your Volunteer Time is Important!**

We recognize that your time is valuable and that it is our responsibility to make sure that when you participate at Freedom Ride, your time is spent in worthwhile and rewarding activities. There might be times when you arrive expecting to horse handle or sidewalk, and we might have an abundance of T.E.A.M. members and/or a shortage of riders. If your assistance is not needed in the arena for a class, there is a list of other volunteer activities with which Freedom Ride needs assistance. If you feel that your time is not being utilized well, please let the Volunteer Coordinator know. Any time you spend with us is greatly appreciated. You are a very important part of the Freedom Ride T.E.A.M. Thank you in advance for your time, effort and help!

# What is Therapeutic Riding?

## Overview

The movement of the horse, the rhythmic side-to-side, forward and backward movement is similar to a human. As participants sit atop of a horse, their pelvic area, trunk and upper body move in motion to the horse. This stimulation gently relaxes taut muscles and therefore increases range of motion for the rider. The movement of the trunk encourages riders to work harder to balance their upper bodies, and routine activities develop hand-eye coordination. Learning new routines, sequencing and accessing short-term memory skills assist individuals who otherwise may experience difficulty with these tasks. Just as important, riders are able to participate in an activity like their siblings and able-bodied friends, increasing self-esteem and confidence.

## Major Concept & Skill Development

- **Body Localization** – Student develops the ability to locate and identify parts of the horse’s body. This activity aids in developing awareness and understanding of one’s own body.
- **Body Abstraction** -- Student develops the ability to generalize and transfer body localization to him/her and others.
- **Muscular Strength** – Student develops the ability to use his/her muscles to perform physical tasks with the horse.
- **Health & Hygiene** – Student develops an understanding of the principles of health and hygiene. In caring for the horses, students are led to understand and utilize good habits.
- **Balance & Rhythm** – Student develops the ability to maintain gross and fine motor balance and to move rhythmically with the horse. Student is continuously involved in interpreting and reacting to the horse’s movements.
- **Body Spatial Organization** – Student develops the ability to move in space. The majority of the activities require the student to direct and move the horse within a given area.
- **Directionality & Laterality** – Student develops the ability to know and respond to right, left, up, down, forward, backward and directional orientation.
- **Time Orientation** – Student develops an awareness of time concepts, by involving him/her in determining feeding time, exercise time and resting time for the horse. Students develop an awareness of the effect of weather and seasonal changes on horse riding activities – they learn to anticipate riding activities based on weather conditions.
- **Visual Acuity** – Student develops the ability to see objects in his/her visual field and to differentiate them meaningfully and accurately.
- **Visual / Form Discrimination** – Student develops the ability to differentiate visually the forms and symbols in the horse’s environment.
- **Anticipatory Response** – Student develops the ability to anticipate the probable outcome of his/her behavior with the horse. If he yells or kicks the horse, he knows the horse will probably become frightened or run. This aids the student in predicting the consequences of his/her own behavior and that of others in a given situation.
- **Comprehension** – Students develop the ability to use judgment and reasoning in riding and working with the horse. This enhances his/her ability to use judgment and reasoning when interacting with other forces in his/her environment.

# **History of Therapeutic Riding And Freedom Ride**

Therapeutic riding has been in existence for centuries. In 300 BC, horses were used as a form of therapy for injured warriors.

In 1952, Liz Hartell, who had been disabled by polio, won a silver medal for her dressage test at the Helsinki Olympics. This event established therapeutic horsemanship as being of prominent value to handicapped individuals internationally.

In 1965, the Riding for the Disabled Association was formed in Coventry, England. This organization promoted wide acceptance for therapeutic riding throughout Europe. Today, there are more than 200 programs in England with more than 5,000 students participating.

In 1968, Cheff Center for the Handicapped in Augusta, Michigan, opened its doors as the largest therapeutic riding center in the world, with more than 220 students with disabilities riding per week.

In 1969, the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) was formed in Ashburn, Virginia. This organization's goals are to train individuals to formulate and operate therapeutic riding programs. This was the start of a growing trend. Today there are 670 programs operating in the United States, including Freedom Ride, Inc.

In the fall of 1997, Anne Galliher was inspired to start Freedom Ride after seeing how a horse helped her best friend regain strength and coordination after major surgery.

Anne Galliher then formed Freedom Ride and began a pilot program in July of 1998 at Springdale Farm in Longwood, Florida, with two riders. The program has gradually expanded by adding students with various disabilities.

In February of 2003 Freedom Ride made its move from Springdale Farm to 10 beautiful acres at Trotter's Park in Orlando. Freedom Ride is currently the only Premier Accredited PATH Center in Central Florida. Today Freedom Ride services 100+ riders and 200+ volunteers each year.

Over the years, Freedom Ride has partnered with many organizations to provide equine assisted activities across the Central Florida area. Some of these organizations include Access Charter School, Innovative Children's Therapy, LifeSkills, Magnolia School, Paragon School, Princeton House Charter School, and UCP.

The program's course of instruction includes the use of games and exercises, an individual's confidence is improved and his/her muscles are stimulated and moved in ways that otherwise might not be possible.

# What is Hippotherapy?

Hippotherapy is a physical, occupational and speech therapy treatment strategy that utilizes equine movement and is part of an integrated treatment program.

In the controlled Hippotherapy environment, the therapist modifies the horse's movement and carefully grades sensory input. Specific riding skills are not taught (as in therapeutic horseback riding); but rather a foundation is established to improve neurological function and sensory processing.

The horse's natural gait (walk) provides sensory input, which is variable, rhythmic, and repetitive. Thus the responses in the patient are similar to human movement patterns of the pelvis while walking. The variations of the horse's gait enable the therapist to grade the degree of sensory input to the patient, and thus utilize this movement, in combination with other treatment strategies, to achieve desired results. Hippotherapy naturally provides an integrated, multi-sensory experience and can also be modified to enhance or decrease certain types of sensory stimulation.

Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Speech Therapists may use equine activities on and off the horse that will benefit the individual. While riding provides enormous benefits, when combined with off-the-horse task, the combination of these two horse activities help the body to integrate the changes made during the riding session into functional skills. Activities used might include, gait training on stairs, ramps, uneven or even surfaces. Balance or weight-bearing objectives may use activities such as grooming, painting or bathing the horse. If the individual is working on daily living skills, doing tasks around the stable (i.e. cleaning stalls, feeding the horses or other chores) can be used to improve such skills.

For the speech-language pathologist, the multidimensional movement of the horse provides input that appears to facilitate arousal and attention resulting in an organizing effect on the central nervous system. The combined stimulation for the various sensory systems, cortical pathways, neuroanatomical structures, and the effect on the motor systems facilitates speech and language function. The Hippotherapy treatment and setting provide arousal and focused attention; facilitated motor skills for speech production, information processing, and language organization; relevant content/context, conversational application, and integrated tasks.

# **T.E.A.M. Opportunities at Freedom Ride**

- Registered Program T.E.A.M. – These volunteers may help in a variety of different areas such as horse handling, side walking, grooming, tacking, events, and more. Beginning with the basics, each job is outlined with the volunteer’s responsibilities. Volunteers must be able to complete volunteer duties independently without direct one-on-one supervision. Freedom Ride T.E.A.M. members are a part of all aspects of the program. We realize that there are as many ways to do things in the horse world as there are people who work with horses. For this reason, please follow Freedom Ride procedures closely. They were created to ensure everyone at Freedom Ride is safe and happy! Remember – Safety Always Comes First!!!
- Horse Care – These volunteers help with responsibilities within the barn. Their job is to help groom, clean stalls, keep the tack clean and orderly as well as the tack room, and help prepare hay and feed.
- Side Walking – These volunteers are responsible for the riders in the classes. When a student arrives he or she is to be greeted by the sidewalker and taken to the horse he or she will be riding in class. Sidewalkers are ultimately responsible for the well being of the student and will be expected to report any concerns to the instructor immediately. When a sidewalker is not working in a class he or she will assist with horse care responsibilities.
- Horse Handling – These volunteers are responsible for handling the horses during classes. Horse Handlers need to show confidence and comfort in handling the Freedom Ride horses. They will be expected to report any concerns about the horses to the instructor or staff member on duty. Horse handlers can also substitute in as sidewalkers when needed and assist with horse care responsibilities when not working in a class.
- Special Events– Volunteers assist Special Event Committee members with the coordination, set-up and clean up of Freedom Ride’s special events.
- Administrative – Volunteers are needed to call individuals, assist with special projects, computer work and other general work that may include assistance with fundraising, grant writing and corporate sponsorships.

## **T.E.A.M. Rules & Reminders . . .**

1. In order to maintain compliance with PATH Standards, Freedom Ride requires all volunteers to complete a registration application and annual update forms.
2. Please dress appropriately, and wear your Freedom Ride t-shirt! Remember you are working in a barn with large, heavy animals and representing Freedom Ride. Open-toed shoes are unacceptable. Please refrain from wearing revealing clothing, large jewelry or anything that might get in the way.
3. This is a NON SMOKING Facility.
4. Dogs ARE NOT allowed on the property.
5. Feel free to bring beverages or snacks. A refrigerator is available in the Volunteer Center. Please remember to label your items.
6. A hat, sunglasses and sunscreen is advisable, as well as clothing for rainy weather.
7. When helping in the classes, please refrain from excessive talking to riders and other volunteers.
8. Freedom Ride's primary concern is safety! Anyone participating in mounted riding activities are required to wear a helmet.
9. Volunteers are to refrain from having their cell phones in the barn area while working. Volunteers are NOT to have cell phones in the arena during classes, and will be asked to leave the arena if their phone goes off.
10. Volunteers are NOT allowed to hand feed the horses, please check with staff before offering the horses treats. If allowed, treats may be given in a bucket.
11. Remember, volunteers are asked to help in many ways. Please speak up if you are asked to do anything you do not know how to do or are uncomfortable with.
12. All T.E.A.M. members must schedule the days they wish to volunteer with the Volunteer Coordinator. T.E.A.M. members not listed on the daily schedule will need to check in at the office before they proceed to the barn.
13. Attendance is very important at Freedom Ride. Our riders depend on the volunteers in order for their lessons to happen. It is very important that you let us know if you will not be able to attend your scheduled shift. We ask that you provide at least 48-hour's notice by calling our office or emailing the Volunteer Coordinator.
14. Always sign in when you arrive and don't forget to sign out when you leave! - It is important that we can track your hours.
15. Please understand that all of the horses are the responsibility of Freedom Ride, and Freedom Ride makes decisions regarding feeding, medical care, exercise and suitability for the program.

# Basic Emergency Information

In order for an effective emergency procedure plan to be implemented, it is imperative that all volunteers are aware of the location of the following items:

## **Emergency Telephone:**

Located in the administrative office. The telephone number is (407) 293-0411.

## **Directions to Freedom Ride:**

From I-4: take exit 46 - Lee Road. Follow Lee Road west. Continue past the light at Edgewater Drive and turn into the first entrance on the RIGHT – look for the brick wall, and sign marked “Freedom Ride.” Follow the road to the back of the Trotters Park property to the parking area, near the office trailer and stables.

From Orange Blossom Trail: Cross railroad tracks onto Lee Road. Entrance is located just after Trotters Park entrance and just before the Edgewater Drive light. Make LEFT turn – “Freedom Ride” sign on brick wall – follow road to parking lot.

## **Emergency Contact Numbers:**

Contact numbers are located on the side of the barn outside the Barn Manager’s Office and the backside of the tack room. Numbers are also located in the office to the RIGHT side of the staff entrance door.

## **Human First Aid Kit:**

Located in the Feed Room and Administrative Office bathroom.

## **Equine First Aid Kit:**

A basic care kit is located in the feed room. There is a medication kit located in the Barn Manager’s office along with the advanced emergency kit.

In case of an emergency, you will also need to be familiar with the location of the following forms:

**Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment Release Forms:** Every volunteer and rider has a completed form that provides details of their emergency contacts, insurance, preferred healthcare provider and consent/non-consent for treatment information. These forms can be found in the Administrative Office. The instructor and/or staff member on site will have access to these files.

**Incident Report Forms:** These are located in the Administrative office. An incident report is to be completed for all incidents (no matter how small) that occur. Even if someone does not appear seriously injured at the time, a form should be completed so that a record of the incident can be kept. Please have a staff member review and sign the report after it has been completed.

# Emergency Procedure Action Plans

The following is meant to act as a guideline for you to follow in case of an emergency. Please remember, as a volunteer you will never be expected to perform a task outside of your level of knowledge or experience. Since emergency situations are by nature generally unexpected and unplanned, always refer to a Staff member to provide direction based upon the individual circumstances.

## **General Mounted Activity Emergency Action Plan**

- All horses within the riding arena will come to a halt with Horse Handlers clipped on lead.
- If a rider has fallen, keep the rider down where he/she is and still until the instructor can check him/her for signs of injury.
- Signs of serious injury may include:
  - Unconsciousness (even for a moment).
  - Bleeding or fluid draining from the nose, mouth or ears.
  - Serious bleeding from any part of the body.
  - Limb at an unnatural angle, or pain upon pressure or movement.
  - Pupils contracted unevenly.
  - Signs of shock (paleness, mottled color, sweating, nausea, fainting).
- The instructor will determine if the rider is able to remount and finish the lesson.
- When the rider remounts, give him/her time to rebuild his/her confidence.
- Other mounted riders should remain at a halt until directed by the instructor. Sidewalkers and horse handlers should refrain from excessive talking or noise.
- No one is allowed to enter the arena, including parents and additional volunteers unless summoned by the instructor. If summoned, please enter at a walk and remain quiet/calm.
- The type of accident or results of any mishap will determine whether the instructor will continue or end the class.
- If circumstances call for the arena to be evacuated, other mounted riders will be dismounted either by the instructor or under the supervision of the instructor.
- The sidewalker will escort the rider out first and the handlers will then escort the horses back to the barn.

## **Rider Falls or Jumps off Horse**

- If the rider appears off balance and falling, or about to jump off – inform the horse handler to stop and call for the instructor immediately.
- All other horses in the arena must halt; volunteers will remain with their riders and horses.
- The Horse Handler needs to move the horse away from the fallen rider.
- Sidewalkers are to remain with the fallen student until the instructor comes over, DO NOT move the student once he/she is on the ground.

## **Rider Removes Helmet while Mounted**

- The Horse Handler should immediately halt the horse and inform the instructor.
- The instructor will dismount the rider or allow the sidewalker to dismount the rider.
- The rider must put his/her helmet back on or be removed from the arena.

- The rider may or may not be allowed to remount to finish his/her lesson.

### **Runaway Horse**

- IN ARENA: Be aware of the loose horse, Horse Handlers must keep their horses calm while sidewalkers offer assurance to the rider if he/she becomes nervous. Inform the instructor if your horse becomes difficult to control and the rider needs to be dismounted.
- OUT OF ARENA: Be aware of the loose horse and do not run after it, this may cause the horse to continue running. An instructor or other staff member will tend to the loose horse but may ask for assistance from volunteers if necessary.

### **Horse Steps on a Person's Foot**

- Lean into the horse and push to get his/her weight off of the foot. Pulling away can make the horse step harder.
- Remove shoe and check foot for signs of injury.

### **Severe Weather**

As an organization we are very concerned about the health and safety of our riders, volunteers and horses. Therefore, should the heat index reach or exceed 95 degrees, mounted instruction will be stopped. It will be at the discretion of the instructor as to whether ground classes will continue at the facility. Horses should be checked at regular intervals for heat exhaustion. Wherever possible, they should be moved into a shaded area and have a plentiful supply of water. Similarly, should there be a threat of severe thunderstorm and lightning activity, classes will also be cancelled. (See notification of cancellation). Severe weather may bring adverse conditions such as those caused by wildfires. It is up to the discretion of the instructor whether classes will continue.

### **Fire in Barn**

Emergency services should be contacted – call 911. Fire extinguishers are located at the center aisle way on both sides of the bar, in the Volunteer Center, Administrative Office, Feed and Tack Room. Volunteers and riders should congregate in the parking lot, or outside the facility fence line, depending on the location of the fire.

### **Evacuation Procedure**

In the case of hurricane and wildfire activity, the Freedom Ride Board of Directors and instructors will make arrangements for the evacuation of the Freedom Ride horses from the facility.

### **Notification of Cancellation**

Please do not assume that classes are cancelled due to bad weather. Remember, this is Florida; it may be raining where you are, but clear at Freedom Ride. For some riders, a “ground” class may take place in the barn. As a volunteer, please do not assume that if classes are cancelled you are not needed! Even if weather does not permit classes, volunteers are still needed to assist with the daily care of the Freedom Ride Horses – stalls still need to be cleaned and the horses still need to eat – rain or shine. Freedom Ride will provide notice if shift times have been changed or cancelled, or if staff will not be on site.

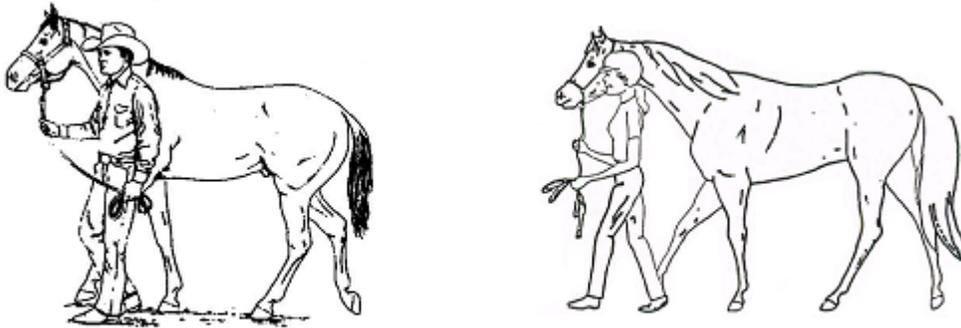
## Lesson Procedures (in the arena)

Volunteers may assist with the lessons as a HORSE HANDLER or SIDEWALKER. Unrelated and unnecessary conversations between volunteers and riders should not exist in the arena. However, you should introduce yourselves to each other and to your student. Also make sure your student knows the name of his/her horse.

### **The Horse Handler....**

As a horse handler, your first responsibility is the horse. If you are working without sidewalkers, you must also be constantly aware of the rider. If a situation arises where you must choose between the rider and the horse, the rider always comes first. If you are working with sidewalkers, they will take care of the rider. You must take care of the horse.

Handling - The proper position for the horse handler is to walk between the head and shoulder of the horse. Care must be taken that the horse maintains a natural head carriage, NEVER "crank" on your horse by holding the lead line on the buckle. Handle from the LEFT side of the horse. A good rule of thumb for holding the lead line is to hold it in your RIGHT hand approximately six inches away from the buckle. The excess lead line should be held in your LEFT hand in a figure eight loop, and should not drag on the ground. A horse handler should never drag a horse to keep up with their walking speed, nor should a horse handler allow a horse to drag them.



**Correct Position for Horse Handler**

**NEVER WRAP THE EXCESS LEAD LINE AROUND YOUR HAND, DRAPE AROUND YOUR NECK, OR TIE AROUND YOUR WAIST.**

Mounting - When the rider is ready, the instructor will ask you to lead the horse to the mounting ramp. Be sure you have the horse as close to the ramp as possible and stand in front of your horse while the rider is being mounted. When the instructor is ready, the rider will ask their horse to walk on. It is important to bring the horse forward slowly, keeping the horse as close to the ramp as possible. Once at the end of the ramp move back to the left side of the horse and proceed into the directed arena. Riders must stay on the rail until the instructor enters the arena - steering through obstacles may only be done under the supervision of the instructor. As the class begins, the instructor will give instructions by the student or horse's name. Be sure you know both.

## **The Sidewalker....**

As a sidewalker, your first responsibility is the rider. As such, you have the capability to either enhance or detract from the lesson. In the arena, the sidewalker should help the rider focus their attention on the instructor. Try to avoid unnecessary talking with the rider or other volunteers. Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone, and for some riders, it can be overwhelming. If two sidewalkers are working with one rider, one sidewalker should be the designated talker.

When mounting with two sidewalkers the sidewalker working on the RIGHT will wait on the offside ramp and the sidewalker working on the LEFT will stay with the rider. When mounting with one sidewalker, the sidewalker will wait with the rider until the instructor is ready, and then move to the offside ramp. Sidewalkers assist with mounting and dismounting. It is important to let the rider do as much of the mounting/dismounting as possible, only helping when the instructor says it is necessary.

During the lesson, it may be necessary to switch sides if your arm becomes tired – ask the Horse Handler to stop the horse and call the instructor over to support the rider while you change sides. NOTE: Even if there are two sidewalkers, you must still have the instructor supporting the rider while you switch with the other sidewalker.

## **Different Forms of Support that Sidewalkers Use:**

- Arm over thigh and ankle hold: The sidewalker rests the inside arm (closest to the horse and rider) over the rider's thigh and lightly holds onto the saddle/tack with their hand while using their outside hand to hold the rider's ankle.
- Arm over thigh hold: The sidewalker rests the inside arm over the rider's thigh and lightly holds onto the saddle/tack with their hand.
- Ankle hold: The sidewalker uses the inside hand to hold the rider's ankle steady – this helps teach the rider to keep their heels down and legs still.
- Spotter: The sidewalker stands next to the rider but does not physically assist them during their lesson – spotters are used for riders learning independence who need or want someone at their side for comfort and moral support. This is the hardest form of sidewalking, as the volunteer does not have physical contact with the rider – it is VERY important to continue paying close attention to your rider!

*The ultimate goal for therapeutic riding is to encourage the rider to stretch and meet his/her full potential. You are there right by his/her side, so help the instructor to challenge him/her to the best of his/her ability.*

# SAFETY

Therapy horses are a special kind of horse, selected for their calm temperaments, but remember: NO horse is totally “bomb-proof.” Please be aware of the unpredictable nature of the horses you are working around. The following tips should help you establish safe practices and routines around horses:

## General Precautions

- Never approach a horse directly from the rear. Horses cannot see directly behind themselves. Always approach a horse from the side.
- If you must walk behind a horse, keep your hand on the horse at all times to make the horse aware of your presence and location.
- Walk around your horse; never skip over or under the rope of a tied horse.
- Always speak in “low” voices around, before touching, or when approaching a horse.
- Keep the reins and lead ropes off of the floor.
- Lead your horse from the left side, one-hand six inches from the halter and the other hand holding the end of the lead rope in a figure eight loop. Never wrap a lead rope or reins around your hand or body.
- Walk beside the horse when leading, not ahead or behind him/her.
- Remember that horses are much stronger than humans. If a horse pulls back, DO NOT pull against him/her – this may cause them to become frightened. Speak in a calm voice to encourage the horse to stop backing.
- Never get into a “tug-of-war” fight with a horse! Be assertive, never forceful and frightening. It is important to be the “Alpha Horse”.
- Never squat or kneel down when grooming a horse.
- Provide direct supervision to the riders while grooming, tacking, handling and waiting for mounting. As a volunteer to that rider you are taking part of the responsibility for their wellbeing.
- Review all general procedures in horse care and working classes. Ask one of the instructors for clarification of any process.
- Keep all areas free from trash and clutter and put away all tools and equipment after use. Good housekeeping reduces fire hazards and helps prevent injuries to people and horses.
- All horses MUST be groomed and tacked on the crossties. Crossties are to be clipped on the lower rings of the halter on either side of the nose.
- Lead ropes are to remain clipped to the halter while the horse is on crossties. Lead ropes may be tucked under the halter or draped over horse’s neck to prevent them from hanging on the ground.
- NEVER go alone when turning out or bringing in horses!

Always remember that, as a Freedom Ride volunteer, you will have students observing your behavior with and around the horses. If you are an experienced equestrian, there are certain actions and shortcuts that you may be comfortable with, but that can potentially be hazardous to our students and less experienced volunteers. Be sure to always act with caution, for your actions may be imitated.

## Equipment and Apparel

- All equipment should be in sound working condition and frequently checked, repaired or removed from use, if broken or weakened. If you notice problems with the equipment report it directly to a staff member.
- The instructor teaching the lesson assigns equipment to each rider. The class schedule will show the proper tack needed for that rider.
- All horses have been fitted for specific saddles. Only equipment assigned to the horse may be used for lessons. Designated equipment is important for the safety of the horse and rider. A “Saddle Chart” is located in the tack room containing appropriate saddles and girth sizes.
- Saddles must fit the horse without creating painful pressure points on the spine or back muscles. These can cause a horse to react violently, and can cause painful and even permanent damage.
- Volunteers are not responsible for fully tightening the girth when tacking for a lesson. Girths should be tightened just enough to prevent the saddle from sliding, but still loose – the instructor will make the final adjustment.
- Bridles are only used when an instructor feels the student is capable of using one without injury to the horse. Volunteers are NOT allowed to bridle and unbridle horses for lessons.
- Reins are clipped on the lower rings of the halter on either side of the nose.
- Safe riding attire is required for every rider. This includes long pants, jeans, or britches. Shorts are only permitted at the instructor’s discretion. Shoes or boots with a hard, smooth sole and definite heel are recommended.
- Students without proper riding boots may only ride in saddles with safety stirrups.
- All riders MUST wear a safety helmet whenever they are around the horses. Be sure these helmets properly fit the rider (can it pass the “upside down test”). The chinstrap must be fastened.
- Sometimes, the activity or climatic conditions might require extra clothing or special equipment. The use of sunscreen is strongly recommended.

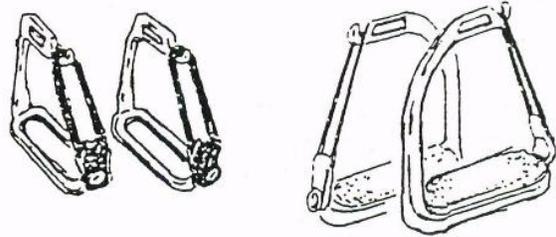
A complete safety check for each rider will be completed prior to mounting by the instructor or designated volunteer. This will ensure that the tack is properly adjusted and safe to use. It is important to check that the saddle pad is flat, and not bunched under the saddle. Be sure the girth is not bunched into the saddle pad; this can cause unnecessary pain to the horse. Check to see that all tack is on your horse before proceeding to the mounting ramp; reins are often forgotten, causing unnecessary delay in the starting of the lesson.

All volunteers, horses and riders participating in the lesson must proceed directly to the arena. Horses are to be kept walking on the rail and cannot be taken through any obstacles until the instructor is present. Once all riders have entered the arena the gate MUST be closed.

# General Types of Stirrups Used at Freedom Ride

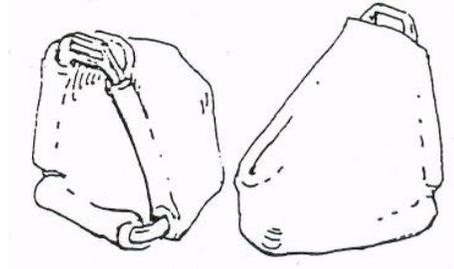
## Peacock Stirrups:

Stirrups that have a quick-release rubber band on the side that will allow the rider's foot to come out in case of a fall. The safety feature should always face away from the horse when positioned on the rider's foot.



## Devonshire Boot Stirrups:

Stirrups with a cover over the front and a closed platform prevent the rider's foot from moving too far forward.



## "S" Shaped Stirrups:

Stirrups that have a safety feature of a curved outside bridge that will allow for the rider's foot to fall free from the stirrup if a fall should occur. The safety feature should be positioned on the outside of the riders.



# Disability Overview

## Hearing Loss

Loss of hearing might be profound, partial or intermittent. It may have been present at birth or acquired during life. Deafness is one of the greatest handicaps because it is not instantly recognized by others, and therefore does not immediately arouse sympathy or understanding. A lack of hearing means failure to understand what is going on in the world. Deaf students might be overactive, noisy and frustrated. They learn by imitation, but miss out on verbal instruction.

*Hints for Helper* - Encourage the deaf rider to copy all he/she can. Let the rider watch others, but do not stop talking to him/her, as the rider may hear and understand some of what you are saying. Turn your head toward the rider. He/she might be able to lip-read. However, the rider may understand parts of words, resulting in confusion. Constant and clear repetition of words will help.

## Visually Impaired

Blindness may be present at birth or result later from disease or accident. Loss of sight might be gradual or sudden with no time to readjust. Visual loss may be partial or complete. When it is partial, it may be restricted by blurring; by being adequate for short distances only; by constant eye movement so the world is constantly moving; by loss of vision to the left or right; by tunnel vision when only objects straight ahead can be seen; or by loss of central vision, when only objects on the periphery can be seen. Blind people might have difficulty moving about, rely on speech and non-speech sounds for judging distances, and find echoes and traveling sounds to be of great value.

*Hints for Helper* - Use your voice and speak even when moving. Describe where you are so that new sounds can be identified (for example, the sounds horses' hooves make on different surfaces or at different gaits). Increased mobility and independence are the main area of achievement. Help the student count the horse's paces down one side of the arena so they can learn when a corner is near. Remember that a blind rider cannot learn by visual example. He must find out for himself with verbal guidance and touch. Also remember that he/she is not deaf and you do not have to shout at him/her in normal conversation.

## Learning Disability

This term describes problems in the areas of speech, language, spelling, writing or arithmetic, which occur in children with average or above-average intelligence. These learning problems are not a result of visual, auditory or motor handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage.

*Hints for Helper* - Learning disabled children are easily distracted, sometimes hyperactive, impulsive, talkative, awkward, aggressive, socially immature and easily frustrated. They will need clear and simple explanations with practical demonstrations of the skills to be learned in the lesson.

## Mentally Impaired

A mental handicap is when intelligence is reduced because of an abnormality of or damage to the brain. There are often additional handicaps such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy and speech

disorders. Some mentally handicapped riders will have recognizable signs of a condition such as Down's syndrome, but others will have no specific clinical conditions. Mentally handicapped riders will behave as if they were younger, have limited speech and understanding of speech, will learn slowly and require much repetition. They will have limited awareness of danger and will need careful supervision. They will enjoy the excitement and achievement that riding brings. People with mental retardation are frequently left out of competitive and sporting activities, and may go through life with a sense of failure and frustration. Riding can provide a chance to compete and succeed, and develop a relationship with a horse that does not depend on speech or verbal communication.

*Hints for Helper* - A pleasant and understanding approach to the mentally handicapped rider will be beneficial. Riding provides a social occasion and opportunities for practicing good manners, learning to take turns, obeying instructions, and using speech and learning to win and lose. This rider will need encouragement and discipline that he/she can understand.

### **Emotionally Disturbed**

Inappropriate behavior usually takes place in a normal school. Consequently, most of these students attend special schools and are taught by specially trained staff. The maladjusted child may have normal, low or high intelligence. He may have a behavior disturbance, which means that he is at odds with his/her family, friends, the world and himself. Frequently he is frustrated, unhappy, and bad tempered. This is a term used to describe students whose behavior makes for difficulties during education. The rider may be rough with others or might feel he/she is already a "loser" in society and therefore dislike competition.

*Hints for Helper* - The maladjusted child usually responds well to the horse and the opportunity to care for him/her, showing his/her capacity to love and care. Friendships with peers might be difficult, but he/she may crave the company of his/her helpers and his/her horse. Maladjusted children will respond to a challenge, provided they are given the confidence by support and friendship. Stable work will provide an opportunity to join the team at work, and the enjoyment of a task well done.

### **Cerebral Palsy**

This is a medical term denoting brain damage, so that messages for movement from the brain to the limbs are imperfect or misdirected, and therefore the limbs may be weak, stiff, clumsy, constantly moving, floppy or more than one of these abnormalities. Muscles involving speech, eye movement, swallowing and so forth may also be involved. Intelligence may or may not be impaired, but whatever the intelligence, communication is likely to present difficulties. The rider who has cerebral palsy has to make a great effort to make even the simplest movements, so life is a struggle and the smallest skill is a great achievement.

*Hints for Helper* - If a good position in the saddle can be maintained with the assistance of the helper, the rider's control of his/her head, arms and back muscles may be made easier. Foot position in the stirrup is important. In some cases, the helper may grasp the back of the ankle to help keep the heel down. The rider should be encouraged to look where he is going, as control of the head facilitates the use of the arms. Muscle control for people who have cerebral palsy is hard work, but worthwhile when the purpose is riding. When the rider has fun, he/she will cooperate and enjoy his/her riding exercises.

# Confidentiality

Freedom Ride's employees and volunteers have an ethical and legal obligation to respect the privacy of our clients and to protect and maintain the confidentiality of all information that we learn about our clients, their family members and friends in the course of providing services to them. Information of a confidential nature is NOT to be discussed with anyone outside Freedom Ride and only discussed within Freedom Ride on a "need to know" basis.

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to avoid unnecessary disclosure of non-confidential internal information about Freedom Ride and its associates. This responsibility is not intended to impede normal business communications and relationships, but is intended to alert everyone to their obligation to use discretion to safeguard internal Freedom Ride affairs. Volunteers who have any questions regarding a situation should consult with the Volunteer Coordinator who will address the concerns with the Executive Director.

Rider and Volunteer records are legally protected confidential records and must be treated as such. Volunteers who are assisting with office work that include interaction with such files will be required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

## Reminders from Freedom Ride:

All of the horses are the responsibility of Freedom Ride, and Freedom Ride makes decisions regarding feeding, medical care, exercise and suitability for the program.

Only Freedom Ride staff members are allowed to evaluate and determine treatment for injuries incurred by Freedom Ride horses.

Volunteers MUST inform a staff member immediately if a cut, scratch, wound, abrasion, injury etc is noticed on a horse. A staff member will handle the situation.

Freedom Ride will determine suitability of tack and equipment for the program. Equipment not assigned to a horse is NOT to be used without prior authorization from staff.

Volunteers are NOT to fully tighten the girth prior to the lesson. This is the responsibility of the instructors.

Volunteers are to ALWAYS check with staff prior to their shift before beginning any horse care or class activity.

Horses under probation noted at "Staff Only Handling" are not to be handled by volunteers.

## Things to Remember When Working with People with Disabilities

Our primary responsibility is to work as a T.E.A.M. to reinforce the skills the instructor is teaching to the student. Here are a few guidelines to make sure every volunteer and student is comfortable and successful!

- Be yourself when you meet a person who has a disability. Be a friend and treat him/her as an equal. At the same time, be aware of their disability.
- Please do not talk about the rider as if he/she is not present. Ask confidential questions to the instructor in private. Information about students and their disabilities is CONFIDENTIAL. Details are shared on a need to know basis.
- When appropriate, clearly repeat the instructor's directions using the same words, such as, "Sit up tall" or "Pick up your reins."
- Ask questions to check the rider's comprehension. For example, "Where are your legs supposed to be?"
- Use very specific praise. Instead of simply saying "You're doing a great job!" tell the rider exactly what he/she is doing correctly. For example, "I like the way you are sitting up so tall!" or "Great job remembering to keep your heels down!"
- Always keep the rider actively involved, especially with grooming the horse before and after the lesson.
- One of the hardest aspects of volunteering is standing back and letting the student do things for himself. Lend a hand if asked, or if you see a dangerous situation arising. Be patient. Also, try not to predetermine your student's abilities. They will always surprise you.
- Remember to have fun! This is a therapeutic and social activity for everybody!

**Freedom Ride** is dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals with disabilities through therapeutic horseback riding and related activities. Freedom Ride is built on the conviction that we are not bound by our physical limitations. Therapeutic riding empowers people with disabilities to challenge themselves physically, mentally and emotionally. The benefits they reap – from improved strength and flexibility to confidence and self-esteem – are remarkable!