



2026 EDITION
TAUGHT AT OCEAN VIEW STABLES

FOUNDATIONAL HORSEMANSHIP CERTIFICATION

Level One Packet

The 46 skills of Level One across Courses 100 to 106: what each one is, why it matters, and exactly what your instructor needs to see before signing it off.

STUDENT NAME	START DATE	PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR
I Zero Assistance A sign-off counts only when you do the whole skill alone, safely, correctly and calmly while your instructor watches in silence. No reminders, no corrections, no help.	II Rule of Three A skill is mastered after three sign-offs on three separate days, from at least two different instructors. One instructor may give two of the three, never all three.	III The Horse Comes First If you cannot do it without anger, hurry or force, you are not ready to be signed off. The horse should finish every session calmer than he started.

How to use this packet. Bring it to every lesson. Each skill lists what passing looks like, why it matters and what to watch for. Each time you pass, your instructor initials and dates a box here. For Courses 100 to 103, your instructor also records the sign-off in your lesson log, which is your official record, and you receive an email when a skill reaches its third sign-off. If this packet and the lesson log ever disagree, the lesson log governs.

Inside

I	The Leyden Way: field guide	2	II	Your path: Level One and beyond	3
100	Equine Science and Care	4	101	Ethology and Safety	6
102	Ground Mechanics	9	103	Applied Equitation	11
104	Confidence and Desensitizing	13	105	Balance, Trail and Collection	17
106	Liberty Preparation	21	III	Progress, completion and attestation	24

"It don't take much if it's there soon enough."
TOM DORRANCE

FIELD GUIDE

The Leyden Way

Leyden Horsemanship teaches natural horsemanship in the vaquero and buckaroo tradition, the line of horsemen credited to Tom Dorrance, Ray Hunt and Buck Brannaman. Its starting point is the horse himself: a prey animal who looks for safety, comfort and clarity, and whose first answer to trouble is to leave. Our method rests on three ideas: go back to nature, test like a scientist, and reason from first principles.

Feel, Timing, Balance

Feel

Noticing the smallest change in the horse's thought and body, and feeling the whole horse, not just the part in your hand.

Timing

Releasing at the instant the horse searches in the right direction. Help that comes early can be small.

Balance

Helping the horse carry himself, while you stay organized, quiet and centered.

When Things Go Wrong

Confusion, fear or discomfort?

When a horse says no, find out which one before you respond.

Worried vs. disrespectful

They are different problems with different answers. Fear is never punished like defiance.

Reduce the ask

When stuck, go smaller, not louder. Escalating teaches bracing.

Safety Stop

Stop all movement, make space, reorganize, return to a smaller ask.

Step out reset

If your hands or voice are no longer soft, end the session and walk away.

The Language: Pressure and Release

The Phases

Phase 1 is a whisper, Phase 2 a conversation, Phase 3 a boundary, Phase 4 a return to softness. Live in Phases 1 and 2.

The release teaches

Pressure is information, never punishment. The horse learns from the moment it stops.

Neutral

After every correct answer, be still. Neutral tells the horse, "That was right; we can rest here."

Barn Rules Everyone Follows

- Firm, closed-toe boots around horses. Never sneakers, sandals or soft shoes.
- Approach at the shoulder, speaking, never straight at the head or from behind, where the horse cannot see you.
- Behind the hindquarters, stay close to the body or well clear. The danger zone is in between.
- Keep a hand on the horse and keep talking as you move around him.
- Never wrap a rope or rein around your hand or body.
- Tie only with a quick release knot, to something solid, never by the reins or bridle.
- Ask an instructor before handling a horse you do not know.

Reading the Horse at a Glance

RELAXED, READY TO LEARN

Low head and neck, soft eye and blink, licking and chewing, a big breath out, a cocked hind leg, a slow tail, weight shifting at rest.

WORRIED, NEAR THRESHOLD

High head, tight face and lips, snorting, wide eyes, a clamped or lashing tail, ears pinned or flicking hard, feet that want to move. Make the ask smaller.

A very quiet horse is not always a calm one. A horse that has shut down looks still but has stopped trying. Shutdown calls for less pressure, right away.

Before Every Ride

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Boots on; nothing loose or dangling on you. | ☐ Mounting spot open, away from fences and gates. |
| ☐ Horse checked: eyes, legs, hooves and back, all normal. | ☐ Your plan for today told to your instructor. |
| ☐ Tack checked out loud: latigo, billets, cinch, back cinch, stirrups, bridle, reins. | ☐ You know the Safety Stop and the one-rein stop. |
| ☐ Cinch rechecked after the first few minutes. | ☐ One breath, one look before you move off. |

YOUR PATH

Learn Wide, Then Go Deep

Level One is built to make you a horseman who can handle any horse, not just one. Once you graduate, your path becomes your own.

STEP 1

Level One

Many instructors, many horses, one standard.

STEP 2

Graduation

All Level One skills mastered under the Rule of Three.

STEP 3

Planning Session

You, the Leydens and your favorite instructor.

STEP 4

Your Custom Path

A lease horse, your own instructor, a plan built around your goals.

During Level One: many instructors, many horses

Throughout Level One we encourage you to learn from several of our instructors and to ride a different horse whenever you can. This is by design. Every instructor sees something different in you and explains things in their own way, and every horse asks a different question: a quiet horse teaches patience, a sensitive one teaches feel, a pushy one teaches clear and fair boundaries, and a worried one teaches you to slow down.

Working through the same skill with many different horse personalities is how you learn to problem solve, in training, in riding and in everything else at the barn. A skill that works on one familiar horse on one good day is a start. A skill that works on any horse is yours. It is also why the Rule of Three asks for sign-offs from at least two different instructors.

What this looks like for you

- Expect a different horse often, and a new instructor from time to time.
- Treat each new horse as a fresh test of the same skill.
- Use the Notes lines to record what each horse taught you.
- Tell us which instructors and horses you click with. We will remember when it is time to plan your next step.

After Level One: go deep

I

Lease a horse

Graduates can lease a horse and start building a real partnership: one horse, week after week, growing your skills together.

II

Your own instructor

You can be paired with a dedicated instructor who knows you, your horse and your goals, and follows your progress from lesson to lesson.

III

More of the horse world

Level One graduates can also join the barn at endurance rides, outside clinics and other events.

WHEN YOU PASS THIS PACKET

Your Graduation Planning Session

There is no one-size-fits-all Level Two. It is built for you. When you pass this packet, you sit down with Zachary and Kalea Leyden and the instructor you have learned best with, and together we design your next chapter.

We look at where you are today, what you love most about horses and where you want to go, then build a plan around your goals, your horse and your pace.

COME READY TO TALK ABOUT

- What you enjoy most: groundwork, trail, liberty, collection or something else
- The horses and instructors you connected with
- Your goals for the next year
- How often you can ride

Care, safety and preparation that honor the horse

KEY IDEAS

- Timing in this course.** Timing starts on the ground. Notice small things early and answer them while they are small: a flinch, a held breath, a shifted foot.

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
100.1 Hazard walk. Walk the barn with an instructor and name five hazards (gates, loose tools, slick ground, dogs, feed buckets) and the fix for each.		
100.2 Tool tour. Lay out the grooming kit and explain each tool's job and the order you use them in.		
100.3 Body check report. Groom a horse and report three findings, or "all normal," using the correct names of the body parts.		

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
03 Hoof care and picking PASS WHEN Stand at the shoulder for a front foot or the hip for a hind foot, facing the tail, feet together, bending at the knees. Run your hand down the leg and give your cue to lift. Clean from heel to toe around the frog. Point out the frog, sole and wall; check for rocks, odor, cracks, bruising and loose shoes. Guide each hoof back to the ground. TIMING Ask as his weight shifts off the foot, and set it down before he asks for it back. WHY IT MATTERS No hoof, no horse. Daily picking is how small hoof problems are caught before they become lameness. WATCH FOR Kneeling or sitting near the feet. Letting the horse drop his foot. Picking toward your own body.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
04 Saddling, unsaddling and fit checks PASS WHEN Name the parts of the saddle and what each does. Place the pad forward and slide it back. Set the saddle quietly and check that the withers are clear, with room for about three fingers under the fork. Tighten the cinch in stages, walking the horse between, and help a cinchy horse settle instead of punishing him. Tie a California knot that lies flat. Check that a back cinch is connected to the front cinch and snug enough that a hind foot cannot catch in it. Check the cinch again after the first few minutes. Afterward, unsaddle calmly, check the back for dry spots and rubs, and put the tack away clean in its place. TIMING Tighten a little at a time, between breaths. If he braces or holds his breath, stop and wait for him to let it out. WHY IT MATTERS How you saddle tells the horse what kind of session is coming. A cinchy horse is giving you information, not misbehaving. WATCH FOR Tightening the cinch all at once. Burrs or grit under the pad. A loose back cinch. Dragging tack across the horse's back or dropping the cinch loose all at once.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
05 Health awareness and after-care PASS WHEN Name and point to at least 15 parts of the horse. Identify horses in the herd by color, markings, brands and breed. Rinse a horse after a ride and give a full bath: safe tie, wet from the legs up, soap, rinse until no soap is left, scrape. Leave your tools and workstation clean and organized. TIMING Check every horse at the start and end of every session, so you catch a change the same day it begins. WHY IT MATTERS You are the horse's first line of care. Knowing what normal looks like for each horse (his eating, his manure, his attitude, his legs) is how you notice when something changes. Report it; leave the diagnosis to the vet. WATCH FOR Spraying water in the face. Soap left in the coat, which itches. Turning a wet horse out in cold wind.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE

NOTES

Read the horse and keep him emotionally safe

- Worried is not the same as disrespectful
- Draw the horse in; never chase or trap
- Slack in the rope means the horse is with you

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
101.1 Ten-minute watch. Watch a horse in turnout for ten minutes and write down every body-language signal you see and what you think it means.		
101.2 Halter both ways. Halter and unhalter with a flat halter and with a rope halter, tying the rope halter knot correctly three times in a row.		

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
08 Leading, personal space and rope management PASS WHEN Lead from beside the horse, between his head and shoulder, on a soft hand and a loose line, with the extra rope folded in your other hand. Stop, back up and walk on from a feel. Correct walking fast, lagging, pulling, spooking and grazing without jerking the rope. Through a gate, turn the horse to face the gate before you release him. Easy horse first, then a harder one. TIMING Correct rushing or lagging on the very first step it happens, then give back the slack at once. WHY IT MATTERS Leading is a conversation carried in the rope. Every lead teaches the horse something about how close he may come and who decides where the feet go. WATCH FOR Walking ahead and pulling. Letting the horse crowd you. Coiling the rope around your hand, which can trap you if he bolts.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____
09 Tying and knots PASS WHEN Tie a quick release knot and a bowline without a reference. Tie to a solid post or tie rail at about withers height or higher, with about an arm's length of rope: short enough that he cannot get a leg over it, long enough that he does not feel trapped. Pick safe tie points, tie near water or offer water regularly, and explain what to do if a horse pulls back. TIMING Tie once he is standing quietly, and untie before he gets restless, so waiting always ends well. WHY IT MATTERS A tied horse has to feel safe enough to wait. A horse that pulls back against a hard knot can hurt his neck; the quick release lets you free him in an emergency. WATCH FOR Tying by the reins or bridle. Tying to gates, loose panels, wire fencing or anything that can move or break. Leaving a tied horse alone. Standing in front of a horse that is pulling back: stay clear and call an instructor.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____
10 Bridling with intention PASS WHEN Name the parts of the bridle and the bits we use, and what each does. Check the bridle before use. Ask for head down. Slide your thumb into the gap behind the front teeth to invite the mouth open and present the bit without touching teeth. Fold each ear forward gently, one at a time. Check that the bit makes a slight wrinkle at the corners of the mouth, two fingers fit under the curb strap, and the throatlatch lets him flex. TIMING Present the bit the moment he lowers and softens his head. Never race a horse whose head is going up. WHY IT MATTERS The bridle connects your hands to the horse's mind. A quiet bridling builds a soft mouth; a rushed one starts a brace that lasts the whole ride. WATCH FOR Banging the bit on the teeth. Forcing the ears. Twisted cheek pieces. A bit hanging too low or pulled too high.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____

NOTES

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
11 Round pen and hooking on PASS WHEN Explain why hooking on matters. In the round pen, drive the horse, read the inside ear, lower your energy at the right moment and invite him in until he follows you. TIMING Take the pressure off the instant the inside ear comes to you or he licks or lowers his head. One second late keeps him running. WHY IT MATTERS The goal is a horse that chooses to stay with you, not a tired one. An inside ear, licking and a lowering head are your cue to take pressure off. Research on round-pen work shows horses learn the pattern quickly, so keep sessions short and quiet. WATCH FOR Running a horse around for minutes. Too much energy for too long. Chasing a horse to the point of exhaustion, which is never part of this method.	DATE	INITIALS DATE	INITIALS DATE	INITIALS DATE

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
101.3 Knot drill. Tie a quick release knot and a bowline five times each without a reference. Note how long each takes.		
101.4 Gate turnout drill. Lead a horse through a gate, turn him to face it and release him safely, working from both sides.		
101.5 Bridle inspection. Inspect two bridles and find any worn leather, loose keepers, twisted cheek pieces or a bit hung at the wrong height.		
101.6 Call the signals. Watch a partner lead a horse and call out the horse's signals out loud as they happen.		
101.7 Easy horse, harder horse. Catch two different horses in turnout and describe how your approach changed for each.		
101.8 Personal space minute. Stand still for one minute and calmly reclaim your space every time the horse drifts into it.		
101.9 Pull-back plan. Tell your instructor what you would do if a tied horse pulled back, and exactly where you would stand.		
101.10 Round pen observation. Watch an instructor's round pen session and note every moment the pressure came off, and why.		
101.11 Ear fold practice. Practice the gentle ear fold on a horse that is easy about his ears, both sides.		

NOTES

102 COURSE 102 Ground Mechanics

Operate the feet to reach the mind

Groundwork is where the horse learns the language you will use in the saddle. Every ask follows the same phases: start with a whisper, build only as much as you need, then return to softness the moment the horse tries. The release is what teaches. If you can move the feet softly from the ground, you can reach the mind from his back.

Timing in this course. In groundwork, timing is the release. The horse links your release to what he was doing in that instant, so release within a second of the try.

KEY IDEAS

- The release teaches
- Reduce the ask: go smaller, not louder
- Feet first: controlled feet lead to an available mind

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
12 Lateral flexion PASS WHEN Get flexion left and right with the feet still, on a soft feel, and release within a second of the try. TIMING Release within a second of the give, the moment you feel it in the rope, not after he holds it. WHY IT MATTERS Flexion is the first language. A horse that gives his head on a light feel will give it when you need a one-rein stop. WATCH FOR Pulling steadily, which teaches brace. Releasing late. Letting the feet walk off: get stillness first, then ask again.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
13 Hindquarter yield PASS WHEN The inside hind leg steps under and across, in both directions, while you stay out of kick range. Release and return to neutral. TIMING Release on the first step where the inside hind leg crosses. Waiting for more teaches him that step was not the answer. WHY IT MATTERS The hindquarters are the engine. Disengaging them takes away the power to run and gives a worried horse a place to settle. It is the ground version of your emergency brake. WATCH FOR Walking into kick range with poor position. Accepting a shuffle instead of a clean cross. Pressing with no release.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
14 Forequarter yield PASS WHEN The inside front foot steps across, in both directions, without pulling the head around. Two clean steps, then release. TIMING Ask as the inside front foot is about to leave the ground, and release the instant it crosses. WHY IT MATTERS Where the shoulders go, the horse goes. Moving the front end is the beginning of steering and keeps the horse from leaning on you. WATCH FOR Standing too far forward, which blocks the step you want. Pulling the head without moving the feet: that is a bend, not a yield.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
102.1 Flexion count. Ask for ten flexions each side with the feet still. Notice how many seconds he takes to soften, and watch that number shrink.		

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
15 Backing on a soft feel PASS WHEN The horse backs about ten feet with no brace and no dragging. Release every good step, then walk forward quietly. TIMING Release as each foot lands, so the next ask can be lighter than the last. WHY IT MATTERS Backing is unnatural for a prey animal. When he backs softly, he is trusting you and paying attention, and you have a calm way to reclaim your space. WATCH FOR Pulling straight back hard. Too many steps without a release. Accepting crooked backing.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
16 Desensitizing and threshold reading PASS WHEN Sack out with a rope or flag using approach and retreat. Read the threshold signs (breathing, eye, muscle tension) and work near the edge, never past it. Take the flag away only when the horse stands still and shows a sign of relaxing: a lick, a blink, a big breath, a lowered head. The horse stays relaxed and you stay safe. No flooding. TIMING Retreat the moment he stands still and shows relaxation, never while his feet are moving. WHY IT MATTERS Desensitizing builds a horse that thinks instead of reacting. The goal is not zero reaction; it is stopping before his nervous system tips from thinking into fleeing. WATCH FOR Flooding: too much, too fast. Taking the flag away while he is moving, which teaches him that running makes scary things leave.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
17 The send and circles on the line PASS WHEN Send the horse on a circle both ways at the walk and trot with steady distance and calm rhythm. Stop him with a hindquarter yield so he faces up. Change direction through the middle without rushing. TIMING Lower your energy the moment he finds the rhythm you asked for. Pressure that stays on after the answer makes him run. WHY IT MATTERS Sending is directing the feet while keeping the mind with you. It shows whether the horse respects your space and can go, slow, stop and turn on a light ask. WATCH FOR Over-driving until he runs. Standing dead still with no intention. Letting him drift in toward you.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
102.2 Four Corners pattern. Flexion, hindquarter yield, forequarter yield, then backing, on both sides, fluid and calm.		
102.3 Yield from a distance. Move the hindquarters from about six feet away using only your position and the rope tail.		
102.4 Back between poles. Back the horse straight between two ground poles without touching either one.		

103 COURSE 103 Applied Equitation

Carry the same softness from the ground into the saddle

In the saddle, nothing new is invented: the flexion, yields and backing you built on the ground become your seat, legs and hands. Your body is the first aid and the reins confirm what your seat already asked. Before every transition, take one breath and one look.

Timing in this course. In the saddle, timing means asking with your seat first, giving him a moment to answer, and releasing the moment he does.

KEY IDEAS

- Soft is strong
- Mind before body
- One breath, one look

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
18 Mounting and dismounting PASS WHEN Check the cinch and tack. Mount from the block on the left, in an open spot away from fences, with the reins in your left hand while the horse stands on a loose rein. Sit down quietly and let him stand for several seconds. Flex both ways at a standstill before walking off. Dismount quietly. TIMING Mount when he is standing still and relaxed, not the second he stops. If he moves, step down and start again. WHY IT MATTERS How you start is how it goes. A horse that stands still to be mounted and waits for you is a horse whose mind is with you. WATCH FOR Climbing on while he walks off. Poking him with your toe. Landing hard in the saddle. Pulling on his mouth to make him stand.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
19 Balanced seat and soft hands PASS WHEN Ear, shoulder, hip and heel stay lined up at the walk and trot, with a flat, relaxed lower back, knees forward, heels lower than toes and quiet, independent hands carried low and close to the horn. Ride and control a horse bareback at a walk, under instructor supervision. TIMING Follow the swing of his back on every stride, so you move with him instead of bouncing against him. WHY IT MATTERS A balanced rider is easy to carry and can ask with very little. Bareback work proves your balance comes from your seat, not your grip. WATCH FOR Gripping with the knees. Leaning forward. Hands that bounce with every stride. Looking down instead of where you are going.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
20 Steering (direct and neck rein) PASS WHEN Explain the difference between direct and neck reining, and steer a simple pattern softly with each. Neck rein with the reins in one hand. Ride a basic barrel pattern at a walk with no help from the instructor. TIMING Ask for the turn a stride before the spot. A late rein turns into a pull. WHY IT MATTERS The direct rein is the first language: it opens a door and invites the nose. The neck rein is the refinement: a suggestion on the neck backed by your seat and legs. WATCH FOR Pulling the rein across the neck like a steering wheel. Bending the neck without moving the feet. Losing rhythm in the turns.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____

NOTES

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
21 Transitions and stops PASS WHEN Ask for the walk using the phases of pressure (start soft, build only as needed) and keep him walking on a soft feel. Go walk to trot to walk with steady rhythm and a balanced seat. Stop from your seat and breath first, hands second, straight and relaxed. Back a few steps under saddle, releasing each step. TIMING Ask with your seat first and give him a moment to answer before adding legs or hands. Release when he changes gait. WHY IT MATTERS Transitions teach responsiveness and balance. A good stop is a conversation, not a collision. WATCH FOR Pulling to stop. Kicking every stride to keep him going. Letting him drift crooked in the stop.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____
22 One-rein stop PASS WHEN On demand at a walk, slide one hand down the rein and bring it back to your thigh, release the other rein, and wait. Release when the hindquarters step over and the feet stop. Do it on both sides, and explain when you would use it instead of the soft stop. TIMING Release only when the hindquarters have stepped over and all four feet have stopped. An early release teaches him to keep going. WHY IT MATTERS This is your emergency brake. It is practiced at a walk until it is reflex, so it is there before you ever need it. WATCH FOR Yanking the head around fast, which can unbalance the horse. Leaning forward. Releasing before the feet stop.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____
23 Trail and outside control PASS WHEN Ride outside the arena at a walk on an instructor-approved route, calm and in full control. Keep about one horse length between horses; say so before you pass; turn to face a sound that worries your horse; lift branches straight up so they do not swing back. Then dismount and lead your horse past a mildly spooky object. TIMING Act when his ears first lock on something, not when he spooks. Bend him and give him a job right away. WHY IT MATTERS Outside the arena the world is louder. Your job is to keep the horse thinking, not reacting, and to know when to go back to basics: disengage, soften, breathe, approach again. WATCH FOR Riding too close behind another horse. Letting him rush home. Trying to ride through panic instead of making the ask smaller.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
103.1 One breath, one look. Ride ten transitions and take one breath and one look before every one.		
103.2 Mount from both sides. Mount from the block on the left and on the right, with the horse standing on a loose rein each time.		

104 COURSE 104 Confidence and Desensitizing

Build a horse that thinks instead of reacting

A confident horse is a safe horse. In this course you go deeper into pressure and release, then use it to help horses meet the world calmly: sacks, tarps, flags, water, the vet and farrier, and the trailer. The goal is never a horse that has given up reacting. It is a horse that has learned he can think, look and stay with you.

Timing in this course. In desensitizing, timing decides what the horse learns. Retreat on relaxation, never on movement, or he learns that running works.

KEY IDEAS

- Approach and retreat
- Retreat on relaxation, never on movement
- Confidence before compliance

IN DEPTH Pressure and Release

What pressure is

Pressure is anything that asks the horse to change what he is doing. It can be **physical** (a rope, a hand, a leg, a rein) or **psychological** (your focus, your energy, your posture, where you stand). Both are information. Neither is punishment.

Driving and drawing

Stepping toward a part of the horse with energy **drives** that part away. Stepping back, turning your shoulder and lowering your energy **draws** him toward you. The horse's point of balance sits near the shoulder: pressure behind it tends to send him forward, pressure in front of it tends to slow, stop or turn him.

Timing the release

Release on the **try**, not the finished answer: a weight shift, an ear turning toward you, a softening jaw, a lean in the right direction. Release within about a second. Then rest in neutral; the rest is part of the reward. A late release teaches that softness was not the answer.

Steady and rhythmic pressure

Steady pressure is a constant feel, like a fingertip on the hip or a soft pull on the rope. The horse learns to yield into softness instead of leaning against it. **Rhythmic pressure** is a beat: a swinging rope, a tapping stick, a waving flag. The horse learns to move off a rhythm before it ever touches him. Both start at the lightest phase.

The Phases in practice

Every ask climbs the same ladder, in the same order, at the same pace: intention first (your eyes and focus), then a gesture, then a light touch, then only as firm as it takes to get a try. The moment he tries, everything goes back to zero. Because the ladder never changes, the horse learns to answer earlier, until intention alone is enough.

The common errors

- **Nagging:** constant low pressure the horse learns to ignore.
- **Releasing the wrong answer:** letting go when he backs into you or leaves teaches him to do it again.
- **Skiping phases:** jumping straight to firm makes a horse brace or flee.
- **Holding after the try:** the horse cannot find the answer if it never feels different.
- **Different cues from different people:** every instructor and student uses the same ladder.

Example: asking for a hindquarter yield

INTENTION

Look at the hip and lift your energy.

GESTURE

Raise your hand toward the hip.

RHYTHM

Swing the rope tail in a steady beat.

TOUCH

Let the rope tail touch the hip, only as firm as needed.

RELEASE

On the first step across, drop everything and rest in neutral.

Approach and retreat is pressure and release applied to fear. Bring the object close (approach), and take it away (retreat) only when the horse stands still and shows a sign of relaxing: a lick, a blink, a big breath, a lowered head. Retreat while he is moving and he learns that running makes scary things go away.

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
24 Steady and rhythmic pressure PASS WHEN Yield the hindquarters and forequarters and back the horse from steady pressure (a fingertip or a feel on the rope) and from rhythmic pressure (a swinging hand, rope or stick) without touching him, on both sides, starting at Phase 1 every time and releasing on the try. Explain steady versus rhythmic pressure, driving versus drawing, and the point of balance. TIMING Keep each phase the same length every time, so he can learn to answer at the first one. WHY IT MATTERS Steady pressure teaches the horse to soften into a feel; rhythmic pressure teaches him to move off a signal. Every later skill, from liberty to collection, is built from these two. WATCH FOR Nagging. Skipping phases. Releasing when he moves the wrong way. Different cues on the left and right side.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
25 Object introduction PASS WHEN Using approach and retreat, rub a feed sack, a saddle blanket, a rope and a tarp over the whole horse on both sides: neck, back, belly, legs and rump. Swing a rope over his back and around his legs; drape the blanket and let it slide off. Continue until he stands relaxed with each object on him and shows a sign of relaxing. TIMING Take the object away the instant he relaxes. That moment is when he learns it is no threat. WHY IT MATTERS Everything the horse will meet later, from saddle pads to rain slickers to a rope around a leg on the trail, starts here. A horse that has felt it all calmly does not panic when it happens by surprise. WATCH FOR Taking the object away while he is moving. Flooding: too much, too fast. Standing directly in front of a horse that may jump forward. Tarp work outside an enclosed area.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
26 Moving objects and flags PASS WHEN Move a flag near, over and around the horse while he stands: above his head, along his body, at his legs. Then send him past a waving flag on both sides while he stays calm. Lead him alongside and then over a tarp on the ground. TIMING Stop the flag the moment he stands still. While his feet move, keep the flag moving at the same steady beat. WHY IT MATTERS Prey animals fear movement more than objects. A horse that can stand while something moves around him is learning to think before he runs. WATCH FOR Hitting his face with the flag. Jumping to big movement before small movement is quiet. Letting him jump the tarp toward you: lead from the side with room to step away.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
104.1 Daily handling routine. For one week, handle the ears, mouth and all four feet as part of every grooming.		

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
27 Water and the hose PASS WHEN With the horse held, not tied, run a gentle stream of water from the hooves upward: legs first, then shoulders and body, on both sides. Build to a full rinse while he stands quietly. Lead him calmly through a puddle or shallow water. TIMING Move the water higher only after he relaxes at the last spot, and lower it the moment he tenses. WHY IT MATTERS Baths, cooling, wound care and water crossings on the trail all depend on a horse that accepts water. Starting at the feet lets him meet it where it worries him least. WATCH FOR Starting at the face or back. A cold blast. Tying a horse during his first exposure. Spraying while he is moving away.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
28 Vet and farrier handling PASS WHEN Handle both ears gently, including folding and touching inside. Slide a thumb into the gap behind the front teeth and look at the mouth. Lift each foot and hold it in the farrier's positions (a front foot between your knees, then forward; a hind foot across your thigh) for longer each session, tapping the hoof, and set the foot down only when you choose. Touch him everywhere: flank, belly, under the tail, between the hind legs. TIMING Set the foot down after he relaxes and stops pulling, never during a pull. WHY IT MATTERS A horse that cannot be handled cannot be treated. Good manners for the vet and farrier keep the professionals safe, keep costs down and turn an emergency into a routine visit. WATCH FOR Holding a foot too long too early. Letting him snatch a foot back. Twisting or grabbing ears. Ignoring pain: a horse that will not lift a leg may be sore, so tell an instructor.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
29 Trailer loading PASS WHEN With an instructor, send the horse onto the trailer from the ground without pulling or chasing, let him stand inside quietly, and back him out calmly; repeat until it is easy. Follow the safety order: never stand directly behind the horse or under a ramp; close the butt bar or partition before tying; untie before opening the back to unload. TIMING Let him rest the moment he puts a foot on or in, and end the session on that try. WHY IT MATTERS In an emergency, such as a fire evacuation, the horses that load easily are the ones that get out. Calm loading, practiced on quiet days, is safety work. WATCH FOR Pulling from inside the trailer, where you can be trapped. Ending a session in a fight. Hurrying. Tying before the butt bar is closed.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
104.2 Flag over the top. Move the flag over his head and back on both sides while he stands relaxed.		

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
	DATE	INITIALS	INITIALS	INITIALS
30 Confidence course on the ground PASS WHEN Lead the horse through a ground course of a bridge or platform, poles, a narrow gap, a tarp and a curtain or similar obstacle. He follows calmly, stops when asked in the middle of an obstacle, and backs off it softly. Let him look and sniff before each one. TIMING Ask him forward the moment he has looked, sniffed and softened, not while he is still unsure. WHY IT MATTERS Each obstacle is a small question about trust. A horse that follows you over strange footing on the ground is ready to carry you over it on the trail. WATCH FOR Dragging him over. Standing where he could land on you if he jumps. Asking for speed before calm.				

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
104.3 Hose session log. Record three hose sessions: where you started, how far up the body you got and the relaxation signs you saw.		
104.4 Three calm loads. Load and unload calmly three times, and finish the session on a good one.		
104.5 Spook recovery. The next time something startles him, use the Safety Stop, let him look, then approach and retreat until he relaxes.		
104.6 Rope around the legs. Lay a rope around each leg and ask him to give to its feel softly instead of pulling.		
104.7 Saddle pad toss. Toss a saddle pad gently onto his back from both sides until he stands relaxed.		
104.8 Spray bottle. Introduce a water spray bottle at the shoulder before you ever use fly spray.		
104.9 Clipper sound. Let him hear running clippers from a distance, then feel them held against his shoulder.		
104.10 Rain slicker. Walk around him wearing a rain slicker, then rub it gently over his body.		
104.11 Trailer walk-around. Lead him past, around and alongside the trailer before you ever ask him to load.		

NOTES

105 COURSE 105 Balance, Trail and Collection

Take softness into the real world, then gather it up

This course takes everything you have learned out of the arena. Bareback work gives you a seat that balances instead of grips. Real trail obstacles, ridden alongside your instructor, test whether your horse trusts you when it matters. Then you begin the long road to collection: teaching a horse to carry himself, and you, in balance.

Timing in this course. On the trail and in collection, timing means preparing a stride ahead and releasing before tension builds, not after.

KEY IDEAS

- Balance before grip
- The trail is the test
- Collection is a result, not a frame

Part One: Bareback and the Trail

Bareback work is done on an instructor-approved horse, on good footing, at the walk first. You may hold the mane or a neck strap for balance; never the reins.

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
31 Bareback balance PASS WHEN Sit deep on your seat bones just behind the withers with your legs long and draped, at the walk and then short stretches of sitting trot. Halt, walk on and back up from your seat with soft hands. Mount from a block, and dismount safely on both sides. TIMING Let your seat move in time with his back. You will feel each hind leg swing; follow it rather than holding against it. WHY IT MATTERS With no saddle to hold you, every brace shows. You feel the horse's back swing and learn to follow it, which is what builds a truly balanced seat. WATCH FOR Gripping with your calves or heels, which tells him to go faster. Leaning forward. Tipping off in the stop. A sweaty coat that gets slippery.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
32 Bareback patterns PASS WHEN Ride circles, figure eights, serpentines and a barrel pattern bareback at the walk, then the trot, with transitions at set markers, steering mainly with your seat and legs and very little rein. TIMING Look and begin the turn a stride before the marker, so the turn happens at the marker, not after it. WHY IT MATTERS Turning without a saddle shows whether your balance is real. If you collapse to the inside, you will feel it at once. WATCH FOR Collapsing to the inside of the turn. Pulling on the reins to stay on. Looking down.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____

Bareback and trail practice *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
105.1 Bareback mount. Mount bareback from a block on both sides and settle quietly before moving.		
105.2 Seat-only halts. Bareback, ride ten walk to halt to walk transitions from your seat alone.		
105.3 Building the sitting trot. Bareback, sit the trot down one long side, then walk. Add a little distance each session.		

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
33 Trail obstacles with your instructor PASS WHEN On the trail with your instructor, ride real obstacles: logs under about a foot high, a bridge, a ditch, a narrow passage, branches and, where there is one, water. Let the horse look and sniff, then go over at a steady walk, never jumping from a standstill. Uphill, lean slightly forward and hold the mane; downhill, lean slightly back and ride straight down. Check the far side for holes, and dismount and lead if he is not ready. TIMING Ask him forward once he has looked and relaxed. Asking while he is still unsure pushes him past his threshold. WHY IT MATTERS This is where arena lessons become real. The same release, the same patience and the same small asks work on a log in the woods. WATCH FOR Forcing him over. Banging his mouth or back. Trotting at an obstacle to rush it. Forgetting that an obstacle looks different from the other side.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
34 Gates on horseback PASS WHEN Ride up beside the gate and stop where you can reach the latch; the horse stands while you rattle it. Open it, keep one hand on the gate the whole time, ride through, then turn or sidepass to close and latch it. Pause before riding off. Do it on gates that open toward you and away from you. TIMING Stop and rest the moment he stands still at the gate. That pause teaches him the gate means rest. WHY IT MATTERS Working a gate is real ranch work and an honest test of your stops, backs and yields under saddle. WATCH FOR Letting go of the gate. Opening it wider than you can ride through. Rushing through. Your leg getting squeezed against the gate.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
35 Bareback on the trail PASS WHEN With your instructor, ride a familiar trail section bareback at a walk, including a gentle hill and a simple obstacle, calm and balanced throughout. Dismount and remount safely using a block, log or leg up. TIMING Feel for tension in his back before it becomes a spook, and change his focus before it builds. WHY IT MATTERS This brings your balance and your horse's trail confidence together. You learn to ride the real world with nothing between you and the horse. WATCH FOR An unfamiliar or excitable horse. Steep or slick ground. Riding beyond your balance: go back to the arena if you feel insecure.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE

Bareback and trail practice *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
105.4 Bareback figure eight. Ride a figure eight bareback using the neck rein and your seat.		
105.5 Eyes up. Bareback, ride a circle looking at a fixed point ahead, never down at the horse.		
105.6 Sidepass along a pole. Sidepass along a ground pole both ways: the groundwork for gates.		

Part Two: The Road to Collection

IN DEPTH Understanding Collection

What collection is

A collected horse shifts more of his weight onto his hindquarters. His hind legs step farther under his body, and his hips, stifles and hocks bend more deeply. His back lifts, the base of his neck rises, and his front end becomes lighter. His stride gets shorter and rounder but keeps the same rhythm and energy, and his poll and jaw stay soft.

What it is not

- It is not a head set. A pulled-in neck with no extra weight behind is **false collection**.
- It is not slow. Losing energy and rhythm is not collection.
- Signs of false collection: tension in the poll and neck, a horse tucked behind the vertical, bracing, stalling, uneven rhythm.

Why it matters

A horse moving on his forehand carries most of the rider's weight on his front legs. Collection is how he carries a rider in balance, turns and stops with his weight behind him, and stays sound over the years. It is the foundation for every advanced movement, and it makes hills, tight turns and transitions easier and safer.

How it is built

Collection is a result, not something you make with your hands. It grows out of rhythm, relaxation, a soft poll, straightness and forward energy, built in the order of the tasks that follow: stretch, soften, bend, transitions, then a few gathered strides. At first a horse can hold it for only a few strides; the strength behind it takes months. Always release forward and down to a stretch afterward.

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
36 Stretch and relaxation PASS WHEN At the walk and trot, lengthen the reins and the horse follows the contact forward and down while keeping his rhythm. Ride a stretchy circle both ways. TIMING Let the reins slide the moment he reaches forward, so he finds the contact going down. WHY IT MATTERS A back that cannot stretch cannot lift. Stretching loosens the topline and is where every collection session starts and ends. WATCH FOR The horse falling onto his forehand and speeding up. Throwing the reins away instead of letting him follow them.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____
37 Softness at the poll PASS WHEN First from the ground, then at the halt and walk in the saddle, the horse softens at the poll and jaw to a light feel on both reins. Release on the give, every time. TIMING Release the instant you feel the poll and jaw give. Holding even a second longer teaches him to brace. WHY IT MATTERS You are asking for a give, not setting a frame. A horse that softens his poll on a feel can carry himself without being held. WATCH FOR Pulling his head in. Holding the feel after he gives. Accepting a horse tucked behind the vertical.	DATE _____ _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____ _____

NOTES

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
38 Bend and lateral control PASS WHEN Bend the horse through his whole body on a circle. Ride a leg yield of a few steps each way, a few steps of shoulder-in at the walk, and a quarter turn on the forehand and on the haunches. TIMING Ask for the sideways step as the inside hind leg is about to leave the ground, when that leg can answer. WHY IT MATTERS Lateral work asks the inside hind leg to step under and carry. It is the strength training for collection. WATCH FOR Bending only the neck. Losing rhythm. Asking for too many steps too soon.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____
39 Transitions that load the hindquarters PASS WHEN Ride walk to halt to walk, trot to walk to trot, and halt, back, walk sequences from your seat first, with the horse stepping under rather than falling onto your hands. Then shorten and lengthen the stride within the walk and the trot. TIMING Prepare a stride before the transition, so his hind legs are ready to step under. WHY IT MATTERS Every transition asks the hind legs to step under and push. Done softly and often, transitions build the strength collection needs. WATCH FOR Pulling for the downward transition. Kicking for the upward one. Letting the horse brace through the transition.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____
40 First steps of collection PASS WHEN At the walk, then the trot, gather the horse for three to five strides: shorter, rounder steps with the same rhythm and energy, a soft poll and a lifted back. Then release forward and down to a stretch. Explain the difference between true and false collection. TIMING Release to a stretch after the third to fifth gathered stride, before tension shows, not after. WHY IT MATTERS These few gathered strides are the beginning of a horse that carries himself. Built slowly, they become the foundation for advanced horsemanship. WATCH FOR Holding collection too long. Getting it with your hands instead of your seat and legs. Mistaking a slow, tucked horse for a collected one.	DATE _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____	INITIALS _____ DATE _____

Collection practice *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
105.7 Stretch warm-up. Start every ride with five minutes of stretching at the walk.		
105.8 Poll gives on the ground. Ten soft gives at the poll on each side from the ground, releasing every time.		
105.9 Spiral in and out. At the walk, spiral the circle smaller, then leg yield back out, both directions.		
105.10 Leg yield on the long side. Leg yield from the quarter line to the rail in both directions.		

106 COURSE 106 Liberty Preparation

Connection with nothing in between

Liberty is the honest test of everything before it. With the halter off, the only thing keeping the horse with you is the relationship you have built. In this program liberty is taught with praise, never treats: the release, the rest, a wither scratch and your voice. It starts online, grows one stage at a time, and always stays safe.

Timing in this course. At liberty, the timing of your reward is the whole conversation. A reward that arrives late rewards whatever he is doing next.

KEY IDEAS

- The release and the rest are the reward
- Liberty is earned online first
- If he leaves, that is information

THE SETUP Liberty, Praise Not Treats

What liberty is

Liberty is working the horse with nothing attached: no halter, no rope. Everything you built online (the draw, the send, the yields, the stop) has to live in your body language and in his wanting to be with you. Liberty does not replace the rope; it proves what the rope was teaching.

Before you start

- **You:** mastered 101 Round pen and hooking on, the 102 yields and send, and Course 104.
- **The horse:** instructor-approved, respectful of space, soft on the rope.
- **The place:** a round pen with good footing and no gaps first; then a small arena. Never an open field.
- **The kit:** rope halter and lead, a stick and string or flag, a neck rope.
- **The rule:** one horse and one handler. No other loose horses in the pen.

The path

Online with the lead held, then the lead draped over the neck, then a neck rope, then liberty in the round pen, then liberty in the arena. Move to the next stage only when the last one is quiet and easy. If anything falls apart, go back one stage; that is not failure, that is the method.

How the horse is rewarded

1. **The release.** Pressure stops the instant he tries.
2. **The rest.** Stand in neutral. Time with nothing asked is the strongest reward you have.
3. **The wither scratch.** The spot horses groom on each other. Scratching it has been shown to lower a horse's heart rate. Scratch, do not slap or pat hard.
4. **Your voice.** One calm word, always paired with the release and the scratch, until it comes to mean "yes."

No food in pockets or hands, ever. Treats pull the horse's attention to your pockets and can teach mugging and nipping. Without food, timing matters even more: reward the try, not the finished answer.

Every session

1. **Warm up online** (yields, back, send) for 5 minutes.
2. **Check in:** does he hook on and follow? If not, stay online today.
3. **One new thing**, asked at Phase 1, rewarded on the try.
4. **Rest and scratch** after every good answer.
5. **Finish on something easy**, within 10 to 20 minutes, and you walk away first.

Safety at liberty

- Never stand between the horse and the fence; always keep an exit.
- If he turns his hindquarters toward you, make distance and redirect his feet.
- If he gets fast or tense, lower your energy and let him settle. Never chase.
- If he leaves, that is information: make the ask smaller or go back online.

NOTES

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
41 The reward system PASS WHEN In an online session, show all four rewards with clear timing: the release within about a second of the try, a rest in neutral, a wither scratch and your one calm word. The horse shows relaxation and seeks you out at rest. No food anywhere. Explain why this program uses praise and not treats. TIMING Release, rest and scratch within a second of the try. A late reward rewards whatever he is doing next. WHY IT MATTERS The reward system is the whole of liberty. If the horse finds rest and comfort with you, he will choose to stay with you when nothing holds him. WATCH FOR Slapping or hard patting. Talking constantly, so your voice loses meaning. Rewarding late. Food in your pocket.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
42 The rope over the neck PASS WHEN Do the yields, the back, the send and the draw back to you with the lead draped over the horse's neck instead of in your hand. He answers exactly as he does when you hold it. TIMING Ask exactly as you would with the rope in your hand, at the same moments and with the same release. WHY IT MATTERS This shows whether the rope or the relationship was doing the work. It is the bridge between online and liberty. WATCH FOR Grabbing the rope when it gets hard. Moving on before this is quiet and easy.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
43 Draw and follow at liberty PASS WHEN In the round pen with the halter off, draw the horse to you by stepping back and lowering your energy. He follows at your shoulder at the walk through turns both ways, stops when you stop, and backs when you back. TIMING Step back to draw the moment he looks at you. Stop your feet a split second before you want his to stop. WHY IT MATTERS Following at liberty is hooking on made permanent. He is choosing your shoulder as the safest place to be. WATCH FOR Letting him crowd or pass you. Rushing the pace. Turning into him so he has to swerve.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
44 Send, turn and return PASS WHEN Send the horse around the pen at the walk and trot in both directions using only your body position. Turn him to the inside to change direction, then draw him back to you to stand. TIMING Lower your energy and step back the instant he turns toward you. That is his invitation to come in. WHY IT MATTERS Sending away and inviting back is the conversation of liberty: he learns that going is his job and returning is his reward. WATCH FOR Chasing. Too much energy for too long. Letting him turn his hindquarters to you: make distance and redirect his feet.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE

SKILL	FIRST TAUGHT	SIGN-OFF 1	SIGN-OFF 2	SIGN-OFF 3
45 Yields and standing at liberty PASS WHEN With body language only, yield the hindquarters and forequarters and back the horse a few steps. Then he stands in place while you walk a full circle around him and come back. TIMING Reward the stand after a few seconds, before he decides to move. Build the time slowly. WHY IT MATTERS A horse that yields and stands with nothing attached has truly learned the cues, not just the feel of the rope. WATCH FOR Stepping into the kick zone. Asking him to stand too long at first. Not rewarding the stand with a rest and a scratch.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE
46 Liberty in the arena PASS WHEN Take draw, follow, send and stand from the round pen into a larger arena. The horse stays with you through a simple pattern around cones and comes back to you if he drifts away. TIMING Draw him back the moment his attention drifts, not after he has already left. WHY IT MATTERS In a bigger space he really could leave. When he stays, the connection is real. WATCH FOR Moving to the arena too soon. Working with other horses loose nearby. Chasing a horse that leaves instead of making yourself the better place to be.	DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE 	INITIALS DATE

Practice tasks *Drills that build toward the sign-offs. Log the date; your instructor initials.*

TASK	DATE PRACTICED	INSTRUCTOR
106.1 Scratch map. Find the spots your horse most enjoys having scratched, and note them for every session.		
106.2 Silent session. Run a five-minute online session without a word, using only your body.		
106.3 Neutral time. Stand in neutral with him for two full minutes after each good answer.		
106.4 Rope-over-neck circuit. Do your whole online warm-up with the rope draped over his neck.		
106.5 Mirror walk. Walk, stop and back in the round pen and count how often he mirrors you within one stride.		
106.6 Draw from across the pen. Invite him in from across the pen with only a step back and a soft look.		
106.7 Inside turns. At liberty, turn him to the inside and note how quickly he turns in on each side.		
106.8 Neck rope check. Lead, stop and turn with only a neck rope before every arena liberty session.		
106.9 End on easy. Finish five sessions in a row on something easy, and walk away first.		
106.10 Liberty journal. Record each session: the stage, the one new thing, and where he chose to stay with you.		

YOUR RECORD

Progress and Completion

Fill one circle for each sign-off. Three filled circles means the skill is mastered.

COURSE 100 · EQUINE SCIENCE AND CARE

01	Barn safety and professional conduct	☐	☐	☐
02	Grooming with intention	☐	☐	☐
03	Hoof care and picking	☐	☐	☐
04	Saddling, unsaddling and fit checks	☐	☐	☐
05	Health awareness and after-care	☐	☐	☐

COURSE 101 · ETHOLOGY AND SAFETY

06	Reading the horse (body language)	☐	☐	☐
07	The catch and haltering	☐	☐	☐
08	Leading, personal space and rope management	☐	☐	☐
09	Tying and knots	☐	☐	☐
10	Bridling with intention	☐	☐	☐
11	Round pen and hooking on	☐	☐	☐

COURSE 102 · GROUND MECHANICS

12	Lateral flexion	☐	☐	☐
13	Hindquarter yield	☐	☐	☐
14	Forequarter yield	☐	☐	☐
15	Backing on a soft feel	☐	☐	☐
16	Desensitizing and threshold reading	☐	☐	☐
17	The send and circles on the line	☐	☐	☐

COURSE 103 · APPLIED EQUITATION

18	Mounting and dismounting	☐	☐	☐
19	Balanced seat and soft hands	☐	☐	☐
20	Steering (direct and neck rein)	☐	☐	☐
21	Transitions and stops	☐	☐	☐
22	One-rein stop	☐	☐	☐
23	Trail and outside control	☐	☐	☐

COURSE 104 · CONFIDENCE AND DESENSITIZING

24	Steady and rhythmic pressure	☐	☐	☐
25	Object introduction	☐	☐	☐
26	Moving objects and flags	☐	☐	☐
27	Water and the hose	☐	☐	☐
28	Vet and farrier handling	☐	☐	☐
29	Trailer loading	☐	☐	☐
30	Confidence course on the ground	☐	☐	☐

COURSE 105 · BALANCE, TRAIL AND COLLECTION

31	Bareback balance	☐	☐	☐
32	Bareback patterns	☐	☐	☐
33	Trail obstacles with your instructor	☐	☐	☐
34	Gates on horseback	☐	☐	☐
35	Bareback on the trail	☐	☐	☐
36	Stretch and relaxation	☐	☐	☐
37	Softness at the poll	☐	☐	☐
38	Bend and lateral control	☐	☐	☐
39	Transitions that load the hindquarters	☐	☐	☐
40	First steps of collection	☐	☐	☐

COURSE 106 · LIBERTY PREPARATION

41	The reward system	☐	☐	☐
42	The rope over the neck	☐	☐	☐
43	Draw and follow at liberty	☐	☐	☐
44	Send, turn and return	☐	☐	☐
45	Yields and standing at liberty	☐	☐	☐
46	Liberty in the arena	☐	☐	☐

Level One Complete

All 46 skills mastered under the Rule of Three. For Courses 100 to 103, your lesson log also confirms completion and opens each course's certification exam. Next: your Graduation Planning Session with the Leydens.

INSTRUCTOR

DATE

Staff Competency Attestation

I confirm that I can perform every skill in Courses 100 to 103 of this packet to the Zero Assistance Standard. If I cannot, I understand this will be documented, I will be placed on an improvement plan, and I may use free off-hours staff lessons to reach the standard.

SIGNATURE

DATE

Further reading. *Soft Is Strong: The Art of Horsemanship* by Zachary and Kalea Leyden, the Level 1 textbook; *True Unity* by Tom Dorrance; *Think Harmony with Horses* by Ray Hunt. The free online academy courses for 100 to 103 are on www.leydenhorsemanship.com.

Original Level One Packet by Kalea Leyden, Co-owner and Programs Developer, 2022. Revised 2026 to align with the Leyden Horsemanship Level 1 logbook and the Rider's Journey lesson log, with safety guidance drawn from university extension horse-safety publications.