



Therapeutic Riding Equestrian Center Volunteer Handbook

Mission Statement:

TREC is dedicated to enhancing the physical, mental, emotional and social well being of individuals with special needs through safe equine assisted activities.

TREC is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit corporation.

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING WITH TREC

Please take a few moments to read this handbook so that you will have a safe and pleasant experience with TREC.

1. A volunteer must be at least 14 years old and physically fit to walk approximately one hour.
2. A waiver must be signed before you can volunteer. If you are under 18 years of age, your parent or guardian must sign it.
3. All volunteers are to maintain and respect the confidentiality of all students and volunteers.
4. We ask volunteers to please sign the logbook when starting and exiting each session.
5. Every volunteer is covered by insurance while on the stable premises. Please inform us of any accidents, no matter how minor it may seem to you.
6. Proper footwear is necessary for safety. Boots are preferred, but sneakers are OK. No sandals allowed.
7. Do not wear loose fitting or dangling jewelry.
8. Avoid wearing perfumes or colognes. These can cause allergies or attract insects.
9. Please turn off your cell phones.

WHEN YOU MEET OUR STUDENTS

1. First of all remember that our students are people like everyone else, except for the special limitation of their particular handicap.
2. Be yourself when you meet them.
3. Help them only when they request it. When individuals with special needs fall down, they may wish to get up by themselves.
4. Be patient, let the students set their own pace in walking or talking.
5. Please don't ask embarrassing questions. If the students want to tell you what their disabilities are, they will bring up the subject themselves.
6. Don't remove wheelchairs or crutches from the person unless they ask you to. They may want them close by.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Learn to tack the horses
Help with rider's equipment
Become a leader or sidewalker
Help train new volunteers
Become a mounting assistant
Become a NARHA registered instructor
Help with fundraising

HOW TO LEAD A HORSE

The leader's primary responsibility is the horse

The proper position for the leader is to walk just back of the horse's head. **Do not get in front or too far behind.** The lead line, which is attached to the halter, should never be used to pull the horse forward. Care must be taken to ensure that the horse's head is not being pushed up in the air since that may throw the rider off balance. Also, do not let the horse's head get too low to the ground as that may pull the rider forward.

Keep your hands away from the animal's mouth as they do sometimes bite. A good rule of thumb is to hold the lead line in your right hand approximately 6 to 8 inches away from the ring or buckle. Hold the extra in your left hand but **NEVER** wrap it around your hand, just fold and hold lightly.

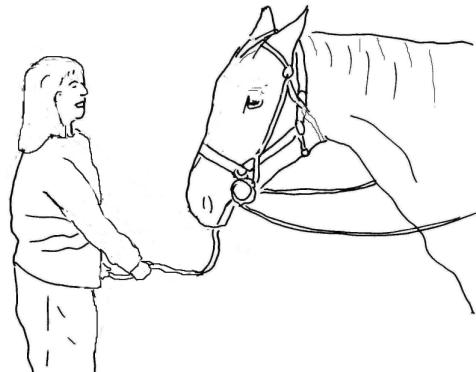
Remember, just as the size of the horse varies, so does its stride. Adjust your pace to that of the horse so that you are not pulling him forward or holding him back.

The riders are to be encouraged to do as much on their own as possible. The instructor will point out to you when the rider does need assistance.



Correct leader position at a walk

This shows the correct position for the leader at a halt



AT THE MOUNTING BLOCK

Leaders: pay close attention to the instructor (or mounting assistant) because he/she will tell you where to position your horse at the mounting block. You will want to place the horse as close as possible to the side of the block on which the rider will be mounting. Your responsibility while the rider is mounting is to keep the horse as quiet as possible. **Stand directly in front of the horse.** After the rider's feet have been adjusted in the stirrups, the instructor will ask the rider to tell the horse to "walk on".

Sidewalkers: **Please do not attempt to put the rider on the horse.** The instructor will do this unless the client is instructed to go ahead without help. If the client is standing with you waiting to mount, **please be careful that the client does not go behind the horse** but stands quietly beside you.

IMPORTANT! IMPORTANT! IMPORTANT!

Due to the fact that all of our riders have varying conditions, it is requested that volunteers do not handle the riders unless directed to do so by the instructor. Handling a rider without knowledge of his/her disability could be very harmful.

LEADER IN THE RING

Once you have entered the ring with your mounted rider, the instructor will tell you where he/she wants you to position your horse. As the class begins all instruction will be given to the rider by name, so be sure to know the name of your rider.

AT THE WALK

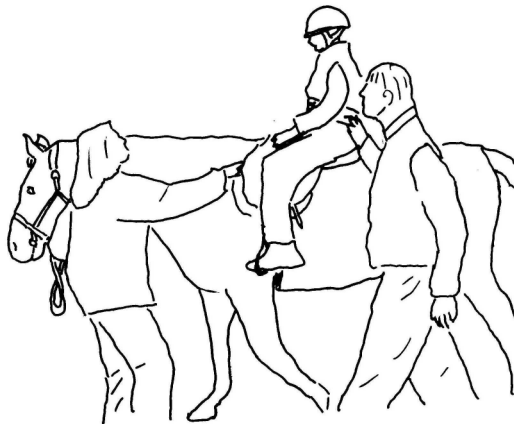
Leaders: **always leave at least one horse's length between you and the horse in front or beside you.** If your rider cannot maintain the safe distance, then you may help them to do so. Remember, many of our riders have a problem with space orientation so consequently they do not realize they are too close to the horse in front of them. Also be careful not to run your sidewalkers into the wall.

AT THE TROT

Often during a lesson the client will be asked to trot. Trotting is faster than walking so the leader has to be more alert. The instructor will come over if necessary to give instructions to the client and to you, while the sidewalkers make sure the rider is holding the handhold. **Don't pull the lead; the horse will try to fight it.** Wait for the rider to say "TROT". Most of our horses are good with voice commands, although you can always run into one that is lazy that day and just doesn't want to do more than walk. This type of horse may need extra prodding. Don't jog in front of your horse, stay even with its neck.

AT THE HALT

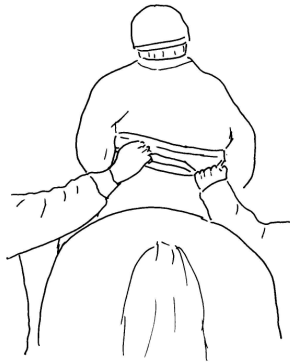
Any time the horse is stopped, the **leader** must stand in front of the horse to keep him from moving forward. This is especially true while the riders are doing their exercises. This is also, however, used as a breather for the horse and you should not hold its head unduly tight. Allow it the freedom of moving its head if it is getting too restless. The leader should refrain from touching the horse's head or face. And never let the horse use you for a scratching post.



The leader is responsible for the horse. By turning and instructing the rider, his/her full attention is not on the horse. The sidewalker is the person who helps the rider.

THE SIDEWALKER

The job of the sidewalker is to maintain the safety of the rider. Some riders, especially in the beginning stages have a balance problem. Depending on the degree of difficulty, there will be either one or two sidewalkers assigned to the rider. The instructor will inform you of the requirements for a particular rider. For example, some riders will not have to be held, but just need to have someone walking beside them in case of emergency. Others will need to be supported with the over the thigh hold, or by means of a safety belt attached around their waist. Be very careful not to pull down or push up on it. It is important that you do not use the safety belt for your own support. As your arm tires, it's hard to avoid this, so rather than gripping the handle firmly, touch your thumb and finger together around the side loop. This way you are in position to assist the rider if needed, but you will not give unneeded support or pull them off balance. If your arm gets tired, ask the leader to move into the center. Trade sides, one at a time if there are two sidewalkers, making sure to walk in front of the horse. If there is only one sidewalker, the instructor will find a substitute. Avoid resting your elbow on the horse's back. This is where the kidneys are located and will cause discomfort.



The sidewalker on the right is pulling down on the belt. This will either cause the rider to fall to one side, or to overcompensate by leaning to the left. The sidewalker on the left shows the correct position

Whenever there is only one sidewalker, he/she must always be on the side opposite the leader. Notice how the right side is unprotected. The sidewalker must move to the right side



Because it is very important that the rider does not fall, be prepared at all times. Never walk with your hands in your pockets. Do not grab if the rider starts to slip, gently push them back into the right position. Sidewalkers are very important, as they are constantly aware of the rider and what they are doing. The safety of the rider depends on them. **Please stay within arm's length of the horse and rider at all times**

In the arena, the sidewalker should help focus the rider's attention on the instructor. Too many people assisting from too many directions can be very confusing. If two sidewalkers are working with a rider, only one sidewalker should be the "designated talker". This person will remind the rider about "lazy hands", focusing or shortening the reins among other things.

Riders must keep their helmets on while in the arena. Sidewalkers must watch that the belt and helmets are properly worn. If there is a problem, move to the center of the ring and call the instructor. This would also apply if the stirrups need to be readjusted.

The sidewalkers must also watch for problems such as seizures, dizziness or sometimes, falling asleep. Also be aware if the rider shows any signs of discomfort. Once again, inform the instructor.

Since the rider is always close to the sidewalker, you will find they will want to talk to you a great deal. Do not ignore direct questions but do try and get your rider to pay attention to the instructor in the ring. Reinforce the instructor's directions if necessary.

One of the worst distractions in the ring is **excessive talking**. Please keep your conversations with the riders, and other team members, to what is absolutely necessary. Save your conversations with the others until the class is over.

Never mention words like “fall”, as in “you won’t fall.” That puts the notion in their heads. Always say things in a positive light, like “I’m here to help you.”

DURING THE GAMES

Games are important in every lesson. The games may be simple, such as Simon Says and Red Light, Green Light, or more complex like musical cones. The volunteers play an important part in every game. The instructor will give the rules for the game to be played. Watch your rider to see if they understand the directions. Talk to the rider to pep them up and get them ready to play. It helps a lot if the volunteer is excited too, but not so much so that the volunteer plays the game, not the rider. Allow the rider to do as much as possible on their own. The pride of accomplishment comes when they do it by themselves.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Falls are very rare, but can and do happen. If your rider is thrown off or falls, the **leader** must stay with the horse and control the animal. **Never let go of the horse**. A loose horse can cause untold trouble. **Do not panic and stay calm**. The **Instructor** will assess the situation and act accordingly. **Sidewalkers** will help as directed by the instructor.

If someone else's rider falls, all other horses in the arena must be moved away from the accident and then stopped. The leaders must stand in front of their horses and hold them still. The instructors are trained to handle any situation, so please just keep your horse under control and allow the instructors to do their job.

One of the sidewalkers may be sent to call for help.

FOR HELP CALL: 911

Give them our location

THERAPEUTIC RIDING EQUESTRIAN CENTER

8342 Platz Road, Fairview, PA

Located at the intersection of Platz and Sterrettania Road.

814-474-5276

DISMOUNTING

Unless otherwise specified the instructors and mounting assistants will dismount the client. The leaders need to keep their mount quiet by standing in front while dismounting is taking place. Sidewalkers need to make sure both feet are out of the stirrups. After the rider dismounts, one sidewalker should make sure the rider safely exits the arena.

FEEDING THE HORSES

You may bring apples or carrots for the TREC horses, but give them to the staff to be distributed at feeding time. **Do not hand feed the horses.**

Please to do touch the horses in aisles two and three. These are privately owned horses.

CONTACT INFORMATION

TREC may have to close at different times due to extreme weather conditions.
When in doubt or if you have other questions, please call

TREC 474-5276

You can also email us at: volunteer@treceerie.org

Our website is www.treceerie.org

If you know that you will not available to volunteer on a certain day, please indicate in the Log Book by writing "EX" for "excused" in the appropriate box next to your name.

THANK YOU for volunteering. TREC cannot exist without volunteers.
We may not always get a chance to thank you before you leave, but believe me,
it is not because we do not want to. Thanks again. Volunteers like you are great!!!