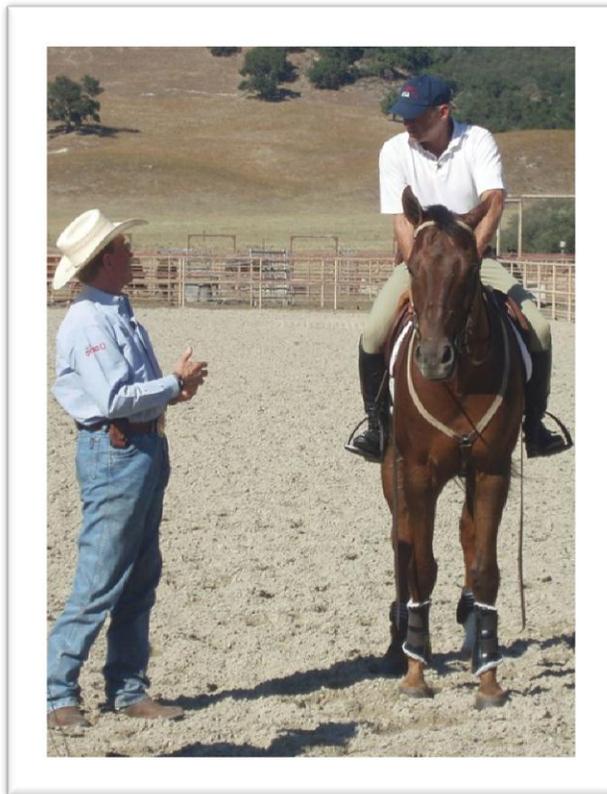




# FUTURE PERFORMANCE HORSES

2012 *Les Vogt* Horsemanship Clinic



## Table of Contents

Introduction and Contact Information	3
Maps	4
Clinic Itinerary	5-8
Les Vogt's Biography	9-16
A Winning Performance in the Ring	17-24
Enhancing Your Horse's Self-Esteem	25-26
Flex - Ability!	27-33
Horseman's Handy Guide to Biting	34-36
Pre-Flight Check	37-40
Riding In Your Mind	41-42
Suppling Your Horse	43-44
The Five Easy Pieces	45-50
Elevator Bits	51
Leg Protection	52-53
Thoughts of a Winner	54
Extra Registration Form	55-56
Extra Space to Take Notes	57-60

# FUTURE PERFORMANCE HORSES is proud to present...

*Les Vogt*

Welcome to the first-ever Les Vogt clinic to be held in Alabama! Future Performance Horses is proud to host one of the horse world's most distinguished clinicians. With 15 reining and working cowhorse world championship titles to his credit, Les is also considered to be among the industry's most accomplished horsemen. His successes are legendary. He was the co-champion of the very first World Championship Snaffle Bit Futurity more than 25 years ago. He is a THREE time NRCHA Hall of Fame inductee (as a competitor, owner, AND breeder). He owned and guided the great King Fritz to his position as one of the greatest cowhorse sires in history, and is credited with being the single largest influence in the creation of the "Chex dynasty." Today, Les continues to dominate in the show pen, stars in the #1 rated television show on RFD-TV ("Equine Insights"), AND conducts clinics around the world, as the demand for his training philosophy increases.

We are sure you will benefit from and find value in Future Performance Horses' 2012 Les Vogt clinic. Be assured this is NOT just a reining or working cow horse clinic; this is a performance horsemanship clinic. The emphasis here is to help individuals improve their horsemanship skills and assist them in reaching their desired goals, whether they be in the arena or out. The skills used to attain a higher level of performance from your horse are the same regardless of your chosen competitive discipline, and Les knows how to help you get to where you want to be.

## CLINIC LOCATION, DATES, AND TIMES

Pioneer Arena \* 514 Arrowhead Drive \* Arab, AL \* 35016

Saturday	July 7 <sup>th</sup> 2012	8 AM Check-In * 9 AM Clinic Begins * 5 PM Clinic Ends for the Evening
Sunday	July 8 <sup>th</sup> 2012	8 AM Check-In * 9 AM Clinic Begins * 5 PM Clinic Concludes

## PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU...

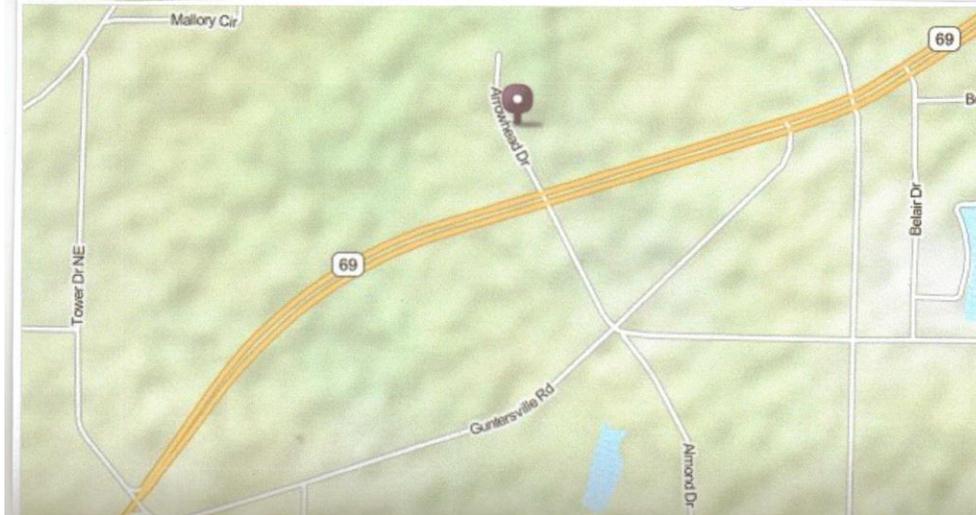
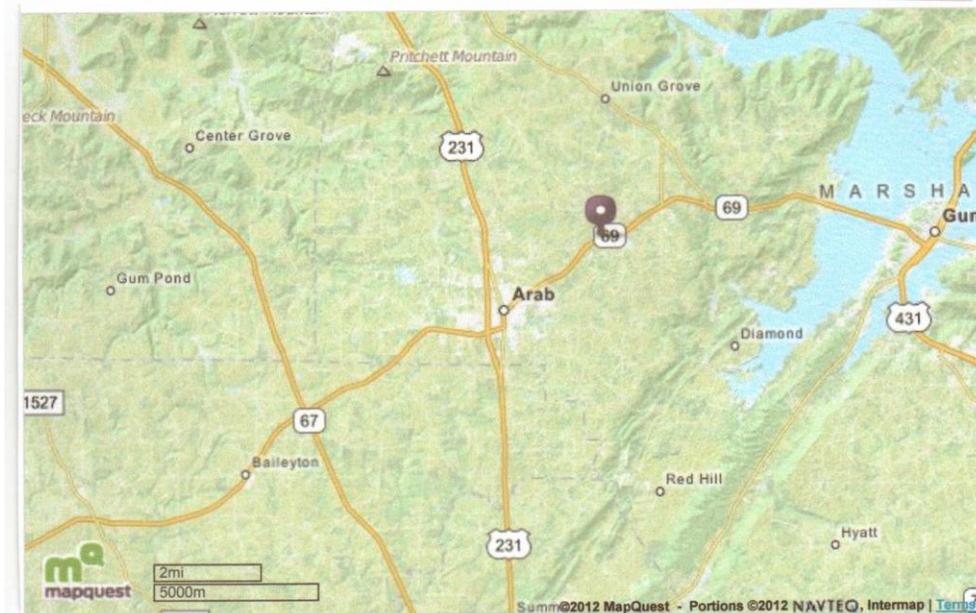
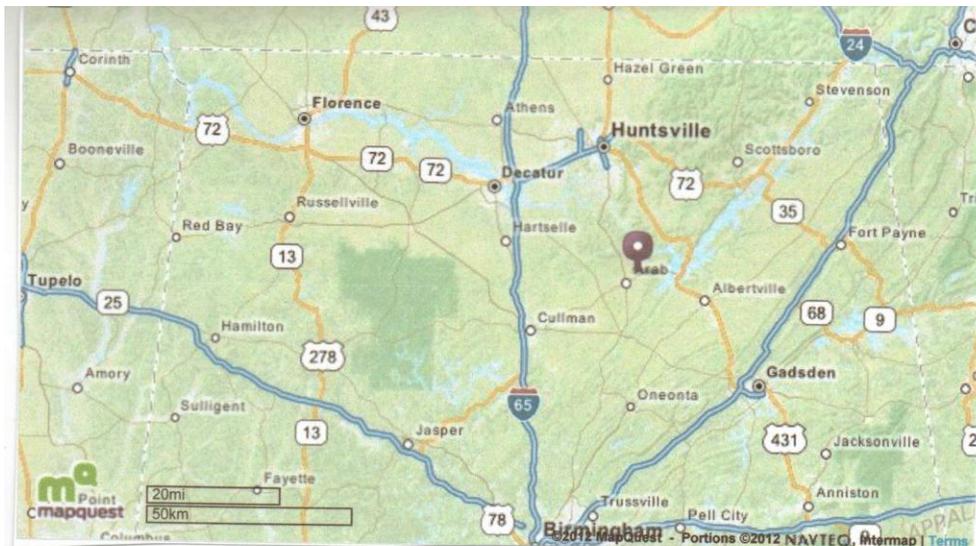
- \* Provide current proof of both a negative Coggins test (within 12 months) AND a health certificate (within 30 days)
- \* Check in, sign a liability release form, and pick up t-shirt/name-tag before unloading your horse
- \* Pay \$50/night for any additional stall(s) you may need, beyond the ONE complimentary stall for ONE night (Saturday)
- \* Bring a folding chair, clipboard, pen/pencil, etc. to use while taking notes during lecture components of the clinic
- \* ONLY use shavings in your stalls (straw is PROHIBITED)
- \* Keep dogs contained and/or on a leash at ALL times
- \* Completely strip your own stall of all bedding/feed/hay/waste/garbage/etc. prior to departure
- \* ALWAYS treat others as you would like to be treated and respect the property as if it were your own

### PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

Amy Smith  
 (334) 797-7787 or (256) 498-0002  
 Amy@FuturePerformanceHorses.com  
 www.FuturePerformanceHorses.com

### ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY/ON-CALL CONTACT NUMBERS:

Veterinarian: Dr. John Edwards (256) 640-5993  
 Farrier: Jason Smith (205) 237-4549  
 Arena Manager: Charles Tidwell (256) 640-6336



## Clinic Itinerary

Saturday — July 7, 2012

8 AM: Check-In

9 AM: Clinic Begins

1. Performance Evaluation (Rider Participation)
2. Communication
  - a. Understanding how to develop a program that works for you by using Five Easy Pieces System
3. Foundation Body Control (Rider Participation)
  - a. Exercise #1 Lateral Flexions
  - b. Exercise #2 Shoulder Control
  - c. Exercise #3 Rib Cage Control
  - d. Exercise #4 Hip Control
  - e. Exercise #5 Circle Back-up Drill
4. How to evaluate stiff spots, left side vs. right side. Applicable to every type of equine discipline.
5. Turn Arounds/Spins (Rider Participation)
  - a. Head Position, Horse and Rider
  - b. Body Position, Horse and Rider
  - c. The Value of Forward Motion
6. Overview — Questions and Answers
7. Circles and Lead Changes
  - a. The Perfect Circles (What is Correct)
  - b. Staying in Frame
  - c. Speed Control
  - d. Getting Setup for Lead Changes
  - e. Executing Perfect Lead Changes
  - f. How to Fix Bad Changes
8. Stops
  - a. Fundamentals
  - b. Run Downs
  - c. Weight Distribution (Horse and Rider)
  - d. How to Keep Your Horse Stopping

## Clinic Itinerary

Sunday — July 8, 2012

8 AM: Check-In

9 AM: Clinic Begins

### 1. Introduction (Lecture and Discussion)

#### a. What Makes a Winner:

- i. Simply enough, it is directly related to your commitment to excellence
- ii. Convince your mind that the decision to win is yours
- iii. Attitude — Self Image = Aura = Ring Presence
- iv. Inner desire to give that 2<sup>nd</sup> effort
- v. Motivation — People that work hardest are the luckiest
- vi. Courage and Self-Discipline
- vii. Determination — Mental Toughness
- viii. Dedication and Perseverance
- ix. Competitive Drive
- x. Sacrifice — Little things in life & pay the price for the things that are worth while
- xi. Put it all together and sell yourself and your run to the judges = Showmanship
- xii. Winning is not everything, but making the effort to win is!!!
- xiii. Winning is a habit; unfortunately, so is losing
- xiv. Winning is not a sometime thing, it is an all the time thing
- xv. If you can accept losing, you cannot win
- xvi. Compliment your horses performance & you've done your job — the opposite is obvious
- xvii. The harder you work, the harder it is to accept defeat
- xviii. Perfection = *What it is all about!*
- xix. How to think:
  1. Visualize the arena, pattern, etc. (500 times)
  2. Visualize your superior ride
  3. Visualize winning — *Never just placing!*
  4. Avoid negative visualization
- xx. Personal Physical Conditioning — Clears your mind & lets you function to full capacity
- xxi. Spiritual and emotional aspects at the game
- xxii. *Show some class!!!* Look the part — shape up and clean up.
  1. You
  2. Your horse
  3. Your equipment
- xxiii. *Never be intimidated!* Never do anything to prepare your horse just because the rest of the boys are doing it — unless it is your idea, i.e. schooling — riding in the arena before the show, etc...

## 2. Showmanship Skills (Rider Participation)

### a. Reined-work Preparation

- i. Pre-show practice warm-ups
- ii. Pre-show schooling shows
- iii. Pre-show warm-up (dial-in best combo for best complete run on that particular day)
- iv. Pre-show schooling vs. Show warm-up equipment

### b. Reined-work Execution (Circles, Changes, Stops — all with style)

- i. Present that aura — *Watch Me! I'm Good!*
- ii. Never let 'em see you sweat. Pretend you're having fun, even if you aren't! Fake it!
- iii. Keep a pleasant facial expression
- iv. Avoid errors (penalties), then look at the circumstances that allow greatness — recognize them and take advantage of them!
- v. Concentrate on Concentration — *Think Ahead!!!*
- vi. Let the judge make you — he wants you to win
- vii. *Loosen up!* If you're prepared, your inner mind knows all the answers!
- viii. Recognize horse's physical/mental limits: Go for max, but stay within his comfort zone!
- ix. The rider that gets the most done with the least amount of effort usually wins

### c. Execution at Circles (Show your horse to the max!)

- i. Use the Arena
- ii. Perfectly Round
- iii. Speed Control
- iv. Hand Position — Wrist Position
- v. Rider Body Position (to help frame horse)
- vi. Horses Go Where You Look

### d. Execution of Lead Changes

- i. Maneuvers are only as good as the approach — *Think Ahead!!!*

### e. Execution of Stops and Rundowns

- i. Stay Away From the Rail (your horse will run cleaner — *Think Ahead!!!*)
- ii. Approach to Stops
- iii. Rider Body Position (horse goes where you go)
- iv. Keep Your Pattern in the Best Dirt for Your Horse
- v. Ride into the Stop

## f. Turns — Spins

- i. Initiation Most Important Post
- ii. Never Ask for Early Speed in Spins
- iii. How to Count Spins Accurately
- iv. How to Stop at 12:00

## g. Rollbacks

- i. Leg at  $\frac{3}{4}$  Turn
- ii. Hand Position
- iii. Rider Position
- iv. Timing Factor
- v. Leg Position
- vi. Make Them Snappy and Smooth

## 3. Fencework Strategy (Lecture)

## 4. Individual Fencework (Rider Participation)

- a. Horse Position and Control
- b. Controlling Cattle — Reading Cattle
- c. How to Maintain Composure Under Stress
- d. How to *let* (NOT Make) It Happen
  - i. Looking for Circumstances
  - ii. Recognizing Circumstances and Taking Advantage of Them

## 5 PM: Raffle &amp; Clinic Conclusion

**BEFORE LEAVING...**

Please strip your stall and clean up any mess you may have made during your stay.

Stalls, RV/trailer hook-ups, etc. WILL BE checked before you will be allowed to retrieve your proof of negative Coggins test/health certificates and claim your goodie-bag/clinic participation award.

**Thanks!!!**

## Les Vogt's Biography

I was raised around traditional California bridle horses in California's Central Valley where my Dad farmed and ranched. I was an inquisitive kid and got the kind of horseman's education you couldn't buy, then or today. My dad, Norman, hired on with several ranches after the war and I can remember watching him with the other cowboys as they worked in the corrals and feed lots. I'd hide and watch them, because they had no time for a kid. It was like a secret club they were all in, and I knew from the first moment that their work with the horses and the cattle was what I wanted.



It's natural that I ended up riding because my Dad and my Grandpa were horsemen, and I always admired them, worshipped them almost. I fell in love with western horses watching John La Mothe, a cowboy and horse trainer who worked with Dad. John's horses were so soft, so confident in their work. I still remember how tall and proud he rode, and I knew that I was seeing my destiny.

I can remember my Grandpa Chet, who was a real old-timey horse trader who handled most of his work from his office, which was the local saloon. He'd get to trading with some of the other guys, and holler out for one of the kids- usually my Dad- to get one of the horses and bring it around. They did a lot of trading sight unseen, too- like a blind horse for a runaway team, that kind of real horse trading that was helped along by drinking and ego. But they really were knowledgeable about horses- it was in their blood, and mine too.

My Grandma, who lived to be over 100 years old despite Grandpa, used to tell us stories about the days when Grandpa was into harness racing in Ohio. They lived in the tack room at the track, and Grandpa was obsessed with his horses. He had a world's champion pacer too- a horse called Chet Volo. Grandpa gave me a bottle of liniment that he said would cure anything- he claimed it would even dissolve ring-bone. I've never had the nerve to use it, especially since it's been fermenting all those years, but it sure worked for Grandpa. He was one of the real horse whisperers.



My first horse was a mare called Sweetheart, one of those patient horses that forgive and forget. We got her when I was five, then when I was about ten, Dad bought California Honey Girl. She was a finished bridle horse, and just like a kid hot-roads around when they're learning to drive a car, I about wore that poor mare out. We'd gallop up and down the canal banks and I'd stop her hard a hundred times a day. She'd keep stopping but get a little worse each time, then my dad would take her back and get her repaired again. Every horseman with an honest bone in their body will tell you they wrecked a lot of horses before they ever made one, and California Honey Girl was the first one I ruined.

All the kids around rode and dreamed of rodeos. We knew about the important events, like Salinas and Monterey and the Cow Palace. Some of those places had rodeos and horse shows together, and I didn't realize until much later that I was literally born in the lap of classical California horsemanship. We'd get all dressed up and go watch, and see horse after horse that were bridled in the classic way, showing straight up in the spade bit. Most of the riders were cowboys from the ranches, not guys whose names we remember now, but they were very skilled hands. We took it for granted that there'd be a dozen or fifteen bridle horses in the open stock horse class that were each capable of winning. I grew up watching the greats, horsemen in every sense of the word.

So I got a little older and decided to strike it rich at the rodeos. I rode bareback broncs mostly, and won the California State Championship two years. About that time, my wife, Corolyn, was riding in shows and made it look like easy money so I started showing and suddenly gained a lot of respect for her riding skills. We were young and broke and having a wonderful time.

About then, we noticed a couple of very good horses at the shows that had "Chex" in their name, and found out they were sired by a horse from Oregon called King Fritz. One evening, we saw a breeding ad for King Fritz and decided to give his owner, Fritz Watkins, a call. I said "I want to buy your horse" and he said "Good. I just decided to sell him an hour ago." Corolyn and I had saved up \$1,000 for fencing at our place, so I sent that up as earnest money for King Fritz and a group of brood mares. We had a month to come up with the other \$69,000 for the horses we'd bought sight unseen over the phone. Somehow, I convinced a banker to loan us the money, and we were in the breeding business.



King Fritz was a phenomenal sire. When people found out we owned him, they started sending me some of his older colts to ride and they were so talented I'd load up three horses and go to a show and win first, second, and third. This was in the 70's, in the glory days of the cow horse Snaffle Bit Futurities. We worked hard, but with those horses, winning came easy. I thought I was a great horse trainer, and that all those old guys I used to watch when I was a kid sure had lost their touch. My youthful ignorance was such that I didn't realize it was the horses, not me, that were great.

We paid off our debts and were at the top of the heap of the show horse world, but God was watching my arrogance. King Fritz died, all my pregnant mares aborted, and I got divorced in about 6 months' time. It was back to square one and without all the Chex horses, I had to learn to ride and train horses from scratch almost. Having King Fritz early in my career was both a blessing and a curse, and most days I'm still not sure which was most important.

I gained a classical education with those Chex horses because they taught me what it's like to win big, the feeling of doing something really well. In my life, I've chased a lot of thrills but nothing compares to going down the fence on a great cow horse. Running wide open at thirty or thirty-five miles an hour, hearing yourself breathe and feeling your horse's heart beat between your legs and knowing your horse is going to gather, stop, turn the cow, and be galloping in the opposite direction in three seconds flat is an unparalleled rush.



In a way, I'm a passenger on this ride, and in another way, I make it all happen. Once you ride a cow horse, you're hooked forever trying to recapture that feeling of speed suspended, of time stopped for an instant then resumed fast-forward.

It took some time to find my roots as a horseman after King Fritz, but I kept at it and had more champions along the way. By now it was the late 80's and the cow horse world had lost some of its glitter, and suddenly there was this giant thing called reining. I was riding a great horse at the time called Chex A Nic, and decided to go to a reining and show those split-rein boys a thing or two. It was a very humbling experience. I discovered that there was a world of difference between the cow horse dry work and the way the reiners were showing their horses at that time. A good horse is a good horse, but the reiners had so much precision, so much more finesse, that it was almost like watching a different sport. Unlike the old-time cow horse guys, though, the reiners were friendly and helpful. I hooked up with some of them like Bob Loomis and figured out how to present a reiner, and the next time out I didn't feel like a hick from the sticks.

In 1992, I took Chex A Nic to the Quarter horse World show and he won both the senior reining and the senior working cow horse, the first time the same horse had won both events in one year. It justified my training methods and also proved that a horse can work cattle and rein, that competing in both classes doesn't confuse the horse. Nowadays, a lot of those reiners are getting interested in cow horses, so where I borrowed from them now I'm getting a chance to return the favor a little bit. Western performance horses- cutters, reiners, ropers, cow horses- are all evolving quickly right now towards an ideal western horse that's light, responsive, balanced, athletic, and fun to ride. The horses and the methods are changing, yet I see more horsemen rediscovering value in some of the traditional training and tools.

My Dad started making silver bits and spurs in the 60's, and I eventually bought the company. I also designed protective leg boots for horses and have invented quite a few things to solve horse training problems that crop up. I've always collected horse equipment like women buy earrings, but just like training methods, it's not so much the equipment as the application that gets results. Nowadays, I've sold some of the businesses and concentrate on teaching clinics. From all my years riding, I give clinics to share my experience and to save people some of the mistakes and detours I took. Clinics are fun- even though I teach about thirty of them each year- because I get to travel and meet interesting people who I think sometimes teach me more than I teach them!

Teaching makes me ride better too. We used to think there was only one correct way to do things with horses, and now, the more I see the less I know. There's not such a gap between cow horses and jumpers or between reining and dressage- the horses don't care what they do. If we can teach a horse to go anywhere at any speed, with no apparent effort on the part of the rider and no more resistance from the horse than it takes to snap a single hair from his mane, we've achieved an ideal of horsemanship that I saw every day in the cowboys and horses that worked the California ranches. It made me shiver when I watched the Lippizzanners in Vienna a few years ago and realized I was seeing the same harmony between horse and rider that I'd seen at brandings when I was a little boy.



I still ride for fun, but it's great to not have to ride a barn full of horses every day. Of course, there's always one special horse at any point in your life, and right now, I'm roping on Tux N Tails, my own horse. Tux has won a lot of reinings and is a multiple world champion cow horse, and all that education doesn't hurt him one bit as a heel horse. He and I just go play together now. If Tux felt just right, or if I found a young horse that was exciting, I might show again but right now I'm enjoying having a real life, not just a show schedule. There's a lot you miss by being at a show every weekend.

Tux is special because he's actually mine, not a client's horse, and because he's that proverbial 'gift horse' with a special story. In the early 80's I was riding a great mare called Commander Tucker, but she eventually went home to be a brood mare. I really liked her, and missed her when she left. Later that year, at the Red Bluff Maturity in June, my life-long friend Skip Brown invited me over to his ranch after the show. I found my way to his place, and was surprised to see a lot of people there that I knew. Then Skip blindfolded me, and I was pretty sure he was going to spin me into the swimming pool for a prank, because somebody'd discovered it was my birthday.

Instead, Skippy lead me out back and took off the blindfold, and there stood Tux N Tails, a skinny brown 2 year-old full brother to Commander Tucker with a red bow around his neck and a tag that said "Happy Birthday." I didn't know what to say- the thought was so great, that my friends had gone out and found me a special horse, but Tux sure didn't look like a show horse standing there. That old saying about looking gift horses in the mouth sure went through my mind, but I figured I'd just take the colt home and see what happened as he developed into a three year-old.

Well, not much happened- Tux was adequate at best. I really liked him as a person, but as a show horse, he just didn't have it. While I enjoyed riding him, I sure had better horses in the barn. Off we went to the Futurity that next year, and Tux was pretty good in the herd work, but when I schooled him at midnight for the dry work, he was awful. He wouldn't stop, leaped in the air, and was just obnoxious. I wasn't sure I'd get him shown, but Tux's always been a clown, kind of like Trickster in Indian stories, and the next day he was really good in his dry work for the judges.



Tux ended up placing in that Futurity, and we never looked back. He got brighter and brighter, and better and better. His next show was the Idaho Snaffle Bit futurity, which he won, and then the next year Tux won the Hackamore Maturity at the futurity and won a six-horse trailer. Tux was World Champion Hackamore horse that year, and then, because I cared about him so much and had the time, I took two years to bridle him. He's been phenomenal- winning the Cow Palace and most of the major shows as both a reiner and a cow horse, and now being a strong heel horse. Thanks, Skip!

Tux is such a personality, and now he's my back yard horse too- I feed him horse cookies and he's completely spoiled. It's good to remember that having a horse is different than a dog or another pet, though- something makes us put so much more into a horse, but one like Tux gives it all back, with interest. I've had the highest highs with horses, and the lowest lows, but I wouldn't change a thing.

After almost 40 years working with horses, I've figured out a few things. Mostly, I've learned that horses aren't so different than people. They can frustrate us, deceive us, and disappoint us, but they should never make us mad. As with humans, every interaction with a horse is a negotiation, and if you learn to negotiate, you'll get more done with less effort- I can't make a horse or person do anything, but I can sure make them wish they had! And, like people, horses do best what they do easiest. Life is much more pleasant when I remember that horses and people are after the same things- good food, good times, a meaningful job, and comfortable companions.

## NRCHA Hall of Fame Article



Many in the reined cow horse world have been influenced by two-time NRCHA Snaffle Bit Futurity Champion Les Vogt, but Vogt remembers being inspired by Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, and Lash Laroo. As a child, he would watch their movies and then, in his words, "go jump on poor old Sweetheart and run that mare, bareback, up and down these mile long canal banks as fast as she would run yelling 'Hi Ho Silver!'"

Clearly, Vogt knew he wanted a horse career from a young age, and by the time he was nine, he was making money. "The neighbor gave me fifty bucks to start the Shetland pony. But I liked the taste of it at the time."

You might say the horse business was in his blood. His roots go back to his horse trading grandfather Chet Vogt.

Early on, with a horse his father had purchased for him, Les and friend Leon Harrell were off to the Cow Palace. Les remembers, "We had one day of formal training. I had no idea what was in store for me but I had prepared by dressing. Leon had bought hats with 4" crowns and 6" brims; blue suede boots that would surely make us cowboys with sixteen inch tops and needle point toes and zippers up the sides and blue suede."

Young Vogt also had a unique approach to the mechanics of showing. "I just went into the arena and ran around. I didn't do any pattern by their standards. I just went in and galloped around, stopped and tipped my hat to the judge." When he got a "no score", he went to the judge to ask what was wrong.

When Les was fourteen, he went to work for "Sun A Via" Ranch where he learned from Johnny Lamont. He remembers, "Johnny stood five feet tall and spoke Castilian. I was scared to death of him. He'd say 'Young man - that is how we are going to do this today.' and I'd just reply Yes Sir!

"I saw guys with tapaderos and spade bits and two- reined horses and Angora chaps that couldn't speak English. They didn't come from Mexico. They had just been on ranches all their lives."

Les studied the technique of those with more experience and began soaking up knowledge. A turning point in his career came when he gambled against all odds on a dare. At first Les was joking around when he called Fritz Watkin, the owner of King Fritz. "Watkin wanted fifty grand for the horse. I'd heard Ingersoll saying good things about King Fritz so my wife, Coralyn said 'well why don't you buy him?'"

Les didn't have the money and didn't expect to be taken seriously, but he called Watkin, agreeing to buy King Fritz and Watkin's Broodmare Band for another \$20,000. "I offered to send \$1000 earnest money to hold the deal together. That's all the money I had and that was for the groceries."

Friend and customer Max Roof helped Les put together a business plan and found a lender. The horse's rise to stardom was so successful the loan was paid off within a year—and the rest of the King Fritz story is legendary.

In January, 1977, tragedy struck. Les remembers, "When King Fritz died it was a dark day around our ranch. I was losing a position in the horse world as well as a really good friend in a horse."

The only bright spot was that Les had a band of 20 plus broodmares in foal to King Fritz. But the tragedy was not over. They contracted a rare strain of rhino, and one at a time, all but two suffered late term abortions.

It was devastating for Vogt. "A few years later the King Fritz horses quit happening and I had to train what people brought me and I haven't really said this too much but I had to start over. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me, having the top end experience and the desire to stay there.

To date Les has 31 championship titles to his name. He's hosted television programs. His image has graced the covers of countless magazines and he's put on clinics and produced videos for Non Pros and amateurs. Although he is retired now, he still enjoys riding for pleasure and has made a business of designing intricate bits and spurs.



## A Winning Performance in the Ring

There are many psychological aspects to acting like a winner before you actually become one, and Les touches on several, including the elements of presenting ourselves to the judge: belief; visualization; and making a commitment to winning.

This is how I feel about showmanship - I feel that how I show is totally dependent on how I prepare both mentally and physically. Even as much as I've shown I don't just click into automatic pilot; I need to refresh and organize my mind to make sure I'm at my best.

Physical showmanship is about presentation - the aura that I present in the show pen. Remember that the results of a judged class are going to be subjective. No matter who the judge is or how they have been schooled in judge's school there still is the human element of emotion.

### PRESENTATION

We want the judge to want us to win. When we trot into the arena (in a reined cow horse class anyway) we want the judge to say, "Wow, that's really a nice picture". We want to wake the judge up. Judges spend all day watching horses and riders do the same patterns over and over so it's important to get their attention right away.

This is a horse show whether it's cutting, reining, or a working cow horse event. I was brought up in the tradition of the California reined cow horse and part of that is taking a lot of pride in the condition of my horse, as I think everyone should. By condition I mean, is he blooming? Is he poor? Or is he overweight? Is my horse well-groomed, does he have a well-groomed, pretty mane and long tail?

Some horses just won't grow a good tail but there are remedies for that. You can buy a false tail or you can do like we do: we buy the horse hair (we know a guy that makes horse-hair ropes) and use a hot-glue gun to attach the false hair to a segment of real tail hair. This will last for quite a long time; up close, it might not look quite as nice as the false tail but for the judge's view, it works great.

### KEEP THAT TACK CLEAN

The next thing we need to think about is our tack. You will occasionally see even really good riders in the show pen who look like they just came in off the Chisholm Trail, the saddle is dirty and looks badly in need of some oil and their silver plates or conchos are tarnished.

This is something I'm really picky about because I grew up in the silver industry with the family business and now create my own bits and spurs for Les Vogt Performax & Les Vogt's California Classics. Silver is a precious metal; to see dirty horse jewelry on a saddle or headstall, is to me, a reflection of that person's values.

I want to look as good as I can when I walk in the ring. My horse should look healthy and well cared for, and my tack and apparel will be spotless. To me it shows that I made the trip for a reason - to win!

One of my earliest memories at the Cow Palace is of Harry Rose, who was certainly a star at that time. Harry was colorful but the thing that struck me was that Harry always had starched shirts and pants and his saddle was immaculate.

I'd never had a saddle with silver corner plates and conchos and I can remember how the lights at the Cow Palace sparkled on that silver; it just glistened. Harry was riding a famous mare of the time called Janie Bar and somebody yelled out, "Harry, will she turn around?" and he answered back, "Darn right she will!" And he spun her around about three times and trotted off. That moment made something happen inside me, I wanted to be like that.

I'm very meticulous about my equipment; I like to take care of it. In fact, if you asked me whether I'd rather lose my car or my equipment I'd say take the car! I'll go into my tack room and polish all my silver, soap and oil all the leather because I like to. Will clean tack and polished silver win a class for you? Of course not, BUT if there are two of you just the same and you have the look and the other competitor doesn't then you'll probably be the winner.

In many shows, you don't have to worry about the silver part but there's no reason that all your equipment shouldn't be cleaned and oiled. Take pride in your appearance and the appearance of your horse.

I also want to touch on personal physical conditioning. I know how it is because I have been in denial myself. Maybe I'll think, 'So I'm 10 or 20 pounds over my best weight, I can still ride.' Or maybe I tell myself that it's okay not to be as fit at certain times of year. That's just not true.

Being fit, personal physical conditioning clears your mind and lets your body function to its full capacity. You think more clearly, you're more relaxed, and you're stronger so you ride better.

#### MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

You want to get the judges' attention and you also want to appeal to the audience. They will pick their favorites and that can affect the judging to some degree.

In the working cow horse event, we usually enter at a trot and then halt in the middle of the arena before we make our departure into the pattern. You will see some competitors enter the arena in a long, unbalanced trot; kind of bumping along in the saddle and you'll see others come in with their horse beautifully in the bridle in a nice collected trot; the package is there and the judge knows it. That rider is presenting him or herself as a winner.

So, trot into the arena in that soft, collected trot we have been working on in so many of our exercises, glance at the judge and look pleasant. It can take some courage the first time but it makes a statement, you are here to win. You have to sell yourself to the judge.

On occasion, I have come into the show pen and seen that the judge is talking to the scribe or looking down at his tablet, not paying attention to me. I won't start; I will look at him and just wait there until he looks up. This is my statement that I'm here to win and I want to show the judge how good I am.

If you come into the arena timid, in a disorganized trot with dirty tack and a horse that's not tidy, you are also a statement to the judge, but probably not one that you want to make. From where I see it, it's insulting to the judge and the show management.

#### MENTAL PREPARATION

So our equipment looks beautiful, our horse is blooming and we are ready to face the judge. How do we do our best? This is where mental imagery comes in.

Today we hear a lot about visualization in sports but I'll tell you when I first learned about it. Greg Ward (who owned the great mare Filinic) and I were on our way to a horse show back in the 60's with our horses in one of those old cattle trucks. We're driving down the highway when Greg pulls over to the side of the road, doesn't say a word, gets out and goes back behind the truck. I figure it's a call of nature or maybe he wanted to check something back there so I wait...and I wait.

After a little while, I get out to see what's going on back there and when I get to the back of the truck, I see Greg walking in a figure eight and after each circle, he'd kind of jump sideways and go the other way. I said, "Greg, are you all right"? He said, "Yeah". I said, "What are you doing"? Greg looked up and he said to me, "I'm just changing leads on Filinic"! When we got back in the truck I said, "How do you change leads on Filinic back there behind the truck?" He said, "Visualization. You've got to visualize".

Visualization is a short-cut to success: it's a method to improve your skills without using up your horse. Your mind doesn't differentiate between you actually riding the pattern or just visualizing it. And while mental imagery doesn't replace actual riding it does hone your performance, it reduces stress and anxiety, and makes you a more confident rider.

This is how I use visualization: I will call the show secretary before the horse show and ask what the pattern will be. They usually have this information a week or so before the show and I can usually find out. You may not always be able to find out the pattern ahead of time so it is a good idea to at least be familiar with the different ones so that you don't have to memorize it right on the spot as this adds a lot of stress.

I know most of the arenas that I will be going to and I want to visualize my ride in the arena I will be showing in if at all possible. The size of the arena makes a difference in how the pattern rides - if you are doing a lead change across a big arena then you will probably go almost straight across it but in a smaller one you would go more diagonally.

Once I know the pattern and the arena, I go out behind the barn or in a room where I can lock the door, or sometimes even in the back of the horse trailer — anywhere I can be completely alone and not be interrupted. It doesn't have to be a big space but I have to be by myself.

I walk the pattern on foot, visualizing exactly what I will do from my trot into the arena to when I finish my pattern.

Here's how it works: I've trotted in, halted and acknowledged the judge with a glance. Now we'll say our pattern starts off with a departure to a left circle, I'm going to go through my cues for the departure and they're going to go perfectly.

Then I'll ride that particular horse around the left circle, making sure I have achieved my desired speed in the first quarter of the circle, that I look ahead and hit the markers dead center, that I am prepared to catch my horse's mistakes before they happen. The key to any maneuver is in a perfect approach to it, and then it can be perfect. Then on to the second big circle and I make sure I'm right on my previous tracks. I'll go on and on like this through the entire pattern.

I have to be completely concentrated: so if I get about halfway around my circle and start to think about getting a hair cut then I have to start all over again. I have to be in a bubble and there is nothing else in there except me and my horse.

Even as much as I've shown and used visual imagery, I still have to run through the pattern 50 to 100 times at first before I can get through it without making a mistake or allowing any external thoughts to interrupt my concentration.

Sometimes I will be riding two or three horses in the same class and each horse is different to show. I will do this exercise with each horse changing the imagery for each horse's abilities and difficulties.

As I've said this has to be repeated over and over, but finally after numerous repetitions you'll nail a perfectly executed pattern. It's a great feeling because now your mind knows you can do it. The feeling of security, comfort and relaxation you will have at a show is just incredible.

Once you get the hang of this, you may even imagine you and your horse doing something so well that you lose your train of thought and forget which way you should go next. This can happen in the show pen as well so it is really important not to "Wow!" yourself. Stay in the moment in your mind and in the arena. Perfection is concentrating on concentration.

As you get to the point where you can mentally repeat this perfect ride you will find that your confidence grows to the point where you no longer wonder what your performance will be like. You know what your performance will be like: you've got it together. This helps with that presentation — that aura — that we talked about earlier. Now when you go into the arena it's kind of a "been there — done that feeling."

## A WINNING PERFORMANCE IN YOUR MIND

### **Belief**

I've also found that motivational books can be helpful and Vince Lombardi is one of my favorites. Here's an example of how this can work: When I had Non-Pros and Juniors riding with me, some of them - especially the Junior riders - had inexpensive horses and they were horses that I didn't particularly like. I knew they had major holes in them however, we, as a team, wanted to win.

If I got on some of those horses for a tune-up or to school them they wouldn't perform for me, they wouldn't stop well, they might turn a cow sometimes for me but not all the time. They just weren't special horses.

The oddest thing was - and I did this many times - that if I could convince that naive Non-Pro or Junior rider that their horse was wonderful and they would believe in me and that horse, that horse would stop for them and turn a cow for them like a champ. Since they didn't know the holes in their horses and I didn't tell them, the holes didn't exist.

Now here's an example of the opposite effect: There was a guy riding with me - a Non-Pro named Dale Putnam - he had a mare and he was having some unbelievable runs on her. So I decided I'd take her to the Cow Palace and show her, she looks like she had a big open run in her. I was never so embarrassed in my life: I knew all the holes in her and boy were they exaggerated when I rode her!

Sandy - who was my wife at the time - had a horse called Bill. Sandy loved Bill, she thought he was magic, Sandy had never shown before and she wanted to start showing him. She told me she wanted to take him to Salinas (you just don't start showing there because they are professional Non-Pros) I told her it would be embarrassing and I wouldn't go. Sandy and Bill went to Salinas and they were second. And they didn't come back home: she goes on to another show in Monterey and she wins it! That put her in the lead for the Novice Non-Pro for the year.

Sandy and Bill won and won and I couldn't figure out how they were doing it, but I left her alone because it was working for her. Finally, they were at a show in Paso Robles and Sandy went off course. I said, "Sandy how come you went off course"? She said, "I didn't, Bill did". She said this with a straight face. "Don't you know you're not supposed to turn away from the cow"? Her reply, "I know, but Bill forgot"!

She honestly believed what she said and after that, she and Bill completely fell apart.

A good presentation, practicing perfect visualization, and belief in your horse are all things that I think help make a winner. And sometimes, ignorance is bliss!

## Commitment to Winning

Winning is also directly related to your commitment. You have to convince yourself that the decision to win is yours. That means being motivated, and at higher showing levels, somewhat obsessive and having the inner desire to give that second effort.

If you have a bad day, do you carry that to the next class or show? No! You have to have some mental toughness; get yourself by the bootstraps and re-design your emotions so that the negative thought of that not-so-good day doesn't exist.

When this happens to me, I don't like to even talk about it; although I will certainly analyze what went wrong. I won't let it in because I would rather deal with positive stuff. I'm not a happy loser and I don't think winners are. I don't kick the dog or anything, but I'm probably not the guy you want to take to dinner that night.

We need to define what a bad day is. For me, it used to be when I didn't win first and I still like to win today, but my ideals have changed a little over time. Now, a bad day is when I rode my horse in such a way that I robbed him, I didn't give my horse all the advantages that he deserved. I rode worse than my horse was - he wanted to be better than I let him be. That's a bad day.

A good day is when I showed my horse to his best - I covered up his inadequacies - even if I only get second or third. I had a clean ride and I feel good about it.

Winners don't become discouraged by losing, they get better. They learn from their mistakes but they don't dwell on them.

You also need to have dedication and perseverance of course and a certain amount of competitive drive. If you have all these things then you will probably get to the show grounds early - if you can - so you'll have plenty of time to warm up and get your thoughts right before you go into the arena.

Everybody is a little bit different at a show. When I am at a show I don't socialize at all, I don't really want to be around anybody at a major event. If I've got a live-in trailer, I'll be in there by myself just lying down and relaxing. I am at the show to win if I can and I want to program myself to do my best.

You can create a blueprint for winning; believe it or not winning is a habit. Once you have followed your plan and been successful, you need to utilize that tool before every show. Consistently putting in bad performances is also a habit and one that you want to break. If things are not going well and you don't do anything differently, then losing becomes a habit. You need to analyze where your preparation is going wrong and change it.

One thing that can help is to hang around with the people who are having success. See how they prepare, see how they warm their horses up, see what makes them winners and then try to emulate that. You will usually find that they are quite helpful and friendly if they know that you are sincere.

I don't feel compelled at this time in my life to protect the winner's position as I did earlier in my career. I'm in a different world now, I'm not down the road competing every weekend and trying to win World Championships. Now, I get my thrills by showing up three or four times a year, and if I can win the big event and make the usual winners scratch their heads and think how glad they are I don't show every weekend then I'm happy. It's more fun for me now.

### **Don't Be Intimidated**

There are usually three questions your friends will ask you when you arrive on the show grounds: When did you get here? Where are you stabled? What's the dirt like? This last question is a big, big deal to reining and working cow competitors - what the dirt is like.

Usually the dirt hasn't been worked up the day before the show but you still see everybody out there schooling in it anyway. You're just getting ready to unload your horse and right away you hear, "The dirt's terrible. It's really heavy." So now, you have a pre-conceived idea, before you've even unloaded your horse, that the dirt is bad. This can happen with the judging if you get there after the show has already started and hear, "The judging is really bad." You will be starting the show in a negative frame of mind.

Another thing that can be intimidating in this scenario is that you have just arrived from a long drive, unloaded and bedded your horses and now you look up and see everybody headed for the practice pen. You're dying to saddle up and get out there instead of heading over to your motel and kicking back.

Look, you brought a horse that's ready to show so he doesn't need to go in there and school. He also doesn't need to go in there and learn where the out gate is, where his friends back at the barn are - these are things he can use to cheat you. Almost every horse will feel the magnetic pull of the out gate.

There's no point in taking him into some tough dirt and making him work either. Say he's really been stopping well at home - what's the point in discouraging him or making him sore in an arena that hasn't been prepared?

Going to watch the schooling isn't a good idea either because this can lure you into getting out there. Make a plan and then stick to it no matter what anybody else is doing.

You may also run into some of your competitive 'friends' who like to bring up your past, such as - "Did you ever get that left lead problem fixed"? In other words, they bring back the dead, things that you've already killed off in your mind. They like to insinuate that you or your horse is going to have a problem. Don't let them intimidate you, stick to your plan.

If you really feel your horse needs to get in the pen because he's young and inexperienced or maybe a little spooky in a new place, it's better to get up early in the morning when everything is quiet and let him have a look around. Make sure you take him in one gate and out another gate if at all possible.



## Enhancing Your Horse's Self-Esteem

"A true horseman can see self-esteem in horses, because he looks for it and nurtures it.

Like a good school-teacher, a capable horse trainer will enhance the self-esteem of each student."

Your horse is not a machine- he's a complex organism with the ability to think and evaluate the world much like a human. And like humans, horses respond to stimuli on both physical and emotional levels. Understanding your horse's emotional needs is as important to successful training as knowing when he is hungry or sore. Great horses are born rarely, but many horses become great because of the way they are treated.

### WHAT IS YOUR HORSE'S SELF-ESTEEM?

Your horse's self-esteem is the way he feels about himself. Like human athletes, horses may perform far beyond their apparent physical abilities, a quality horsemen call "heart." Maintaining your horse's self-esteem, or "heart" is as important as maintaining the health of his body.

### WHO SEES SELF-ESTEEM IN HORSES?

A true horseman can see self-esteem in horses, because he looks for it and nurtures it.

Like a good school-teacher, a capable horse trainer will enhance the self-esteem of each student.

### WHY MAINTAIN YOUR HORSE'S SELF-ESTEEM?

It's critical to maintain your horse's self-esteem because:

- \*Your horse is your partner in success.
- \*Your horse will try harder to please you.
- \*Your skills as a horseman will be enhanced.

### HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR HORSE'S SELF-ESTEEM

- \*Be realistic about your horse's potential.  
He must be reasonably built and bred for a high-performance event to have a chance of success.
- \*Spend a few minutes every day evaluating your horse's emotional health.
- \*Train to reinforce your horse's positive feelings and confidence.
- \*Build a foundation of basics before you ask for more advanced work.
- \*Train your horse within his comfort zone- don't push too fast, too far.
- \*Reward your horse every time he pleases you- horses crave affection.
- \*Maintain your horse's physical fitness as well as mental stamina.
- \*Train your horse by his abilities, not your ego.
- \*Train offensively, not defensively.
- \*Invest your time and emotion in horses you like, and that like you.
- \*Leave your temper at home.





## Flex - Ability!

To the layman, vertical flexion appears to be only a downward flexion of the neck, but the real horseman knows it is the beginning of one of the most necessary ingredients of pure horsemanship, roundness in the horse's topline. It's totally dependent on two things: the amount of relaxed flexion in the neck and the amount of collection or "reach" from behind.

A horse having a relaxed, flexible neck is just imperative. You'll never have a bad ride if the neck is good, and you're not going to have a good ride if the neck is bad. So how do you get that perfect neck?

Any message from the rider must go through the reins, to the bit and from there to the horse's brain. But even the most perfect signal from the rider can't make it from the horse's brain to his body if he has resistance in his neck. In order to make sure that a clear message gets through to our horse's body we have to teach the horse to be supple in his neck. We have to teach him vertical flexion.

### Vertical Flexion

Vertical flexion appears to the layman to be only a downward flexion of the neck; however the real horseman knows that vertical flexion is the beginning of one of the most necessary ingredients of pure performance horsemanship. If the horse is round in his neck, it also allows for his top line to be round.

The degree of roundness we achieve is dependent on two things: the amount of relaxed - and that's the key word - flexion in the neck and the amount of collection or reach from behind. If we don't have collection along with the flexion we've achieved, then the opposite of what we're after occurs: the weight of the horse will tip on to the forehead.

In our present horse society there is so much emphasis on the vertical flexion that it is easy to forget how important it is to engage the hindquarters. And, a horse who is flexed but unengaged looks nearly the same to the untrained eye. It took me a long time, and I watched thousands of horses, to understand what they meant when they said, 'You've got to get him round on top, get him to lift his rib cage, raise his back.' I didn't get it. When someone would say, 'His back is up pretty good.' I'd just say, 'You bet it is!'

The essence of making the horse rounder in his top line is to get him to re-distribute his weight from his natural state of 60% weight on the forehead and 40% of his weight carried behind to 60% of his weight on the hindquarters. In other words we need to shorten his wheelbase. This makes him much more comfortable and fun to ride; it doesn't matter if you're on a reined cow horse, a rope horse or a trail horse.

A horse who is carrying himself correctly will go from a lope to a trot or stop smoothly whereas - and we've all had this experience - a horse who is balanced on his forehead will make this transition very uncomfortable for the rider. Since the horse doesn't speak English, our job is to send him a message that he can understand. A horse with a soft supple neck has a better chance of interpreting our signal correctly; whereas a horse that is scared or defiant will have a neck as stiff as a board. The importance of a supple neck is one of the best kept secrets in horsemanship. It is the key. Any horse that has resistance in the neck is going to have performance flaws.

## Two Ways to Introduce the Horse to Flexion

### Tying Around

Before you can teach a horse to flex vertically, you need to teach him to flex laterally that is side to side. There are two ways to teach the horse about flexion. I have used both ways depending on the horse. Tying the horse around is a method that I used to use a lot but probably not as much now. Many people still do it in the early stages of training. I use a round corral with good footing so that the horse won't have uneven ground if he struggles with his balance.



Tying the horse around should be done very carefully and I tie the off rein first, making sure there is enough slack to accommodate the bend to the flexing side. It should be tied to the front cinch under the crease of the shoulder where the foreleg starts. It is critical that you tie the off rein to insure that the horse's head stays perpendicular. We want him to learn to flex at the poll, not tilt his head to get away from the pressure. And never tie this rein so tightly that the horse feels trapped and panics; it is meant to stabilize only.

I tie the direct rein to the back cinch ring of the saddle and make sure that it is snug enough for him to turn his head but not so tight that he is frightened or loses his balance. A good rule of thumb is to picture the hands of a clock: if straight ahead was noon you'd want to tie him around to about 11 o'clock or 1 o'clock (depending on the side) to start off with. As you progress you can gradually increase it to 10 or 2 o'clock. Remember, you should always start off loose and only tighten as the horse gets used to it. No rushing = No wrecks.

Once I have the horse tied around and I can see he's not going to panic or fight the contact, I'll start to move him around by clucking to him. I want him to understand that he can flex and move at the same time. Some people will tie a horse around and just go off and leave it but usually they will come back to find him just standing there leaning on the bridle - that's definitely something you don't want him to learn! At the most I will do 20 minutes a side.

Tying a horse around can be a good way to let the horse figure out the correct response to pressure from the bit without him being able to blame you for his discomfort. I used to use this method more than I do now. To be right honest I'm not really sure how much benefit you get out of it. I think my horses are as good or better than they've ever been and I'm not tying them around. So what am I doing to get my horses soft in the neck?

## Achieving Flexion on the Horse

On most horses I'll just start right off asking for a direct vertical flexion. I'll back the horse up against a wall or fence and then ask him to flex vertically by moving my hands back and forth and bumping him with both legs. I can move the bit from side to side, warming the corners of the mouth without the rings getting in the way. We never pull when we meet a resistance; instead we just move the hands a little faster.

The rule is that flexion consists of 50% leg and 50% bridle. When I talk about leg in this case it's not spur, it's what I call 'boot tops'. You can bump them pretty hard with 'boot tops' but not with the spur; the spur can make them mad.

So here is the key - the BIG key - to successfully teaching your horse to give to the bridle. While you're moving that bit back and forth in his mouth, look for the slightest little gesture from the horse - any indication that he is thinking about responding to the motion of the bit and the bumping from your leg with the correct response - maybe he just drops his head and neck a fraction of an inch; when it happens, you must release both leg and bit pressure instantly.

Even if he is just getting a fly off his chest, reward him with the release. The other thing I've learned from my fiancée Kay is the importance of "Atta boy"! She makes a big fuss over her horses when they do well and I'll see them respond to that. The horse wants to do the right thing.

We should always ride not the horse but his mind. If you expect the horse to master a movement the same day you introduce it to him, Good Luck! That's asking for a lot. I always say train for tomorrow - plant the seeds for tomorrow. A systematic training program will set things up for tomorrow.

It's important to remember that we train in stair steps; some horses and riders can take big stairs while others take baby stairs. I have to say I'm not a believer in hurrying a horse along. I really, really enjoy the process; the day to day challenge of creating a horse that's a piece of art, that's a part of you.

## Flexion At The Walk

Okay, you've gotten that first response from your horse and you've rewarded him instantly; you've been able to repeat this several times and feel that your horse understands what you want. This is a breakthrough and you've set a baseline. This means that you know how you got to a certain point and you can do it again any time you want. You can go back to this point at any time; it's a tool in your toolbox.



Now it's time to ask the horse to flex while he's moving. We walk out - on the rail or on the trail - using our 'boot tops' and the exact same motion with our hands. You might find that the horse is less responsive now that you're moving which brings up the question of which bit to use.

Of course we always want to use the mildest bit possible but if the horse has a short attention span and is interested in anything but you then you may have to use a snaffle with a stronger mouthpiece at first. Give your horse the benefit of the doubt but you do what you have to do.

We follow the same procedure as at the halt, giving the horse immediate release from the pressure of both hand and leg as soon as he indicates he is trying to do what we want. We set our baseline again and go from there. This is when it starts to get fun; pretty soon you'll feel your horse drop his head and neck as soon as you pick up your reins and nudge him a little with your legs.

Another exercise you can do at this stage is to teach your horse to drop his head even lower. You do this the same way (starting at the halt) but after your release you don't wait for him to come back up but instead ask him to drop lower and lower, releasing a bit each time, until he has his nose nearly on the ground. This exercise just reinforces the horse's obedience to our flexion cues. You'll find that you are starting to get a 'flexy' horse.

### Adding Collection

Now that we've got our horse flexing at the halt and walk we need to add collection. Remember the more flexion you have the more collection you have to have. We want to create power not speed, or as I call it, slowing the front motor down and speeding the back motor up.

OK, so how do we do this? We've already got the basics because we've taught our horse that when we move the bit from side to side and bump with our legs he should drop his head and neck. Now, at the walk, we ask him to flex and continue to bump with our 'boot tops' to get him to take more powerful - not faster - steps behind. Remember to release the pressure as soon as he tries to do what you are asking.

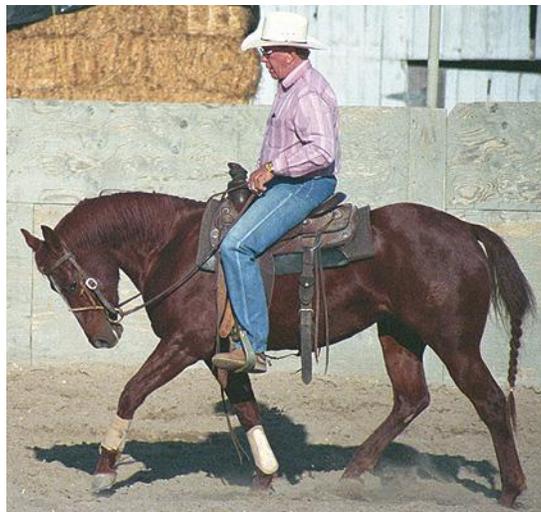


At this point I WILL NOT skip steps. It is crucial to our future training that the horse understands this lesson: I want his response to my cues to be perfect at the walk before I'm ready to move on to the jog. I'm prepared to spend whatever time it takes. This doesn't mean that I won't jog or lope my horse - I'd just do it on a slack rein.

### Flexion & Collection At Jog & Lope

By the time you feel ready to give this a try at the trot and lope you should feel that you have your baseline pretty well established. You do want to remember that jogging and loping in a flexed position will mean that your horse will be using muscles that he hasn't been using before. Don't expect him to be able to hold the flexion for long periods of jog and lope; he has to build up his strength. You set your baseline and go from there.

If you have really done your work at the walk, you probably won't find the jog too difficult. The process is the same: get a response or 'gesture', release immediately and establish your baseline. It may take a little more time in the lope just because you and your horse are dealing with more speed but take your time and if you need to take a step back, do it.



Once we have walk, jog, lope going good we 'downshift' lope, jog, and walk. This is more difficult because we are bumping with our leg asking the horse to move forward and slow down at the same time. If your horse is as soft in the bridle as he should be by this time he will understand that the pressure on the bit overrides the bumping with the leg.

### Trouble Shooting

One way to stay out of trouble is not to keep nagging your horse after he's done what you want. When he looks like he is getting the idea then go on to something else or go out for a trail ride. I usually work my horses about 20 or 30 minutes; that's enough.

And never be afraid to take a step back. That's why we set our baseline, so we have something to go back to, something we know will work. They always used to say, "Never quit when the horse is winning." Well I have won some battles but I've never won any wars. Usually when you get to this point tempers are short on both sides and that's a good time to quit. Come back out tomorrow; go back to your baseline. Ride for 'gestures' and gestures turn into perfection.

Riding a truly collected horse is a thrill. When you have your horse collected he should feel balanced and ready to respond to whatever cue you give. Enjoy it!





## Horseman's Handy Guide to Bitting

A bit is like a telephone to communicate with your horse. Here's a guide to avoiding busy signals, crossed lines, or static when placing your next rider-to-horse call. Bits come in hundreds of designs and variations, but all share characteristics in common whether used on racehorses, show horses, or Shetland ponies. Grand Prix dressage horses in Europe wear bits that, in purpose and design, are not so very different from the spade bit of the California Vaquero (but don't tell that to either rider!).

The rider's skills are the most important variable in the bitting scheme. A naturally light-handed rider who is experienced in training horses may never need anything but a simple ring snaffle in her tack room, while a more aggressive rider who is in a hurry to train her horse may end up with an arsenal of bits to retain control as the horse rapidly becomes dull to each new device. Humans shape the horse, and kindness and time invested yield the best results. Choosing progressively stronger bits is usually indicative of a training or communication problem, not a bitting problem. Horsemen know it's best to use the mildest bit that gets the job done, even if that's just a classic snaffle.

Horses' mouths vary as with every aspect of their physique - some horses have thin, sensitive mouths, while others have thick, rubbery lips, tongues and gums. Thin-skinned horses often are more sensitive to bit subtleties. A trained horse that has not been abused or frightened by bits has what horsemen call an "educated" mouth, and respond to mild bits as a more callous horse would respond to an authoritative bit. Horses also suffer dental problems including sore teeth or scrapes on the tongue or gums, which can cause head-tossing, fidgeting, and acute discomfort. Many bit problems are reduced or eliminated with proper dental care, so horses should have their teeth checked by a veterinarian at least once a year, and more often as they age.

Bit mechanics combine hardware and action. Hardware is described in two main categories: mouthpieces and cheek pieces. Actions or effects of bits that depend on these combinations of mouthpieces and cheek pieces include leverage, flexibility, and balance. Let's look closer:

Mouthpieces are of two main types: snaffle or jointed mouthpieces (generally considered mild); and solid or curb mouthpieces which are deemed to be more advanced and sophisticated than snaffles. There are seemingly endless variations of materials and shapes for mouthpieces, each flaunted as a panacea for all horses at some point in history. Basic jointed ring snaffles much like today's have been unearthed, dating from more than 1,000 C.C., however, and most cheek bit styles are relatively unchanged since the 1700's. Cheek pieces also show tremendous divergence. The earliest bits used thousands of years ago often had bone or antler cheeks, and were used somewhat like bookends to keep the mouthpiece from sliding through the horse's mouth -- just as round or D-shaped rings, full or half cheeks, egg butt and other shapes are often paired with snaffle mouthpieces today. When men decided that it might be useful to train a horse rather than just point it toward the enemy, cheeks with leverage (created primarily by the braking action of a chain or strap under the horse's chin) were developed.

These cheeks usually have rings to attach the headstall at the top, some short distance to where the mouthpiece attaches, then more length below the mouth terminating in bottom rings for the reins. Cheeks, also called shanks, range in length from perhaps three inches to extremes of twelve inches or more, but...the longest cheek is not necessarily the strongest. Why?

Leverage ratios: A leverage bit acts like a teeter-totter in your horse's mouth, transferring energy from the reins to the mouthpiece, which rotates and absorbs some of the energy, then sends the remainder along to the headstall rings and curb strap. On a teeter-totter, even a skinny kid can launch a chubby playmate into the air with a long enough plank (lever) and a log (fulcrum) placed strategically close to the heavier child. Likewise, overall length of a bit is not as relevant as the placement of the pivot point (mouthpiece, or fulcrum).

Let's look at it mathematically: a simple western curb or English Weymouth bit usually has the headstall ring about an inch up from the mouthpiece or fulcrum - we'll call that unit "1". Now, from the mouthpiece down to the rein attachment is usually about four inches, so we'll call this unit "4" and express the ration as 1:4. The greater the difference between these two numbers, the more efficiently the bit will transfer the energy originally sent from your hands on the reins to the horse's mouth, chin, and poll, and the sharper it will feel to the horse. (Ring snaffles are considered neutral, or 1:1, because without a fixed mouthpiece or curb strap, true leverage is not created.)

A bit's flexibility is the mechanical construction that transmits a message from the rider's hands to the horse's face. Bits made with flexible cheeks (such as swivel cheek English bits, or loose-jawed western bits) allow a horse to feel the nuance of rein pressure long before that pressure becomes a pull. Simply moving the reins an inch or so warns the horse, as he feels his bit shift ever so softly, that he's about to receive an important phone call from his rider, whereas a fixed cheek bit tends to deliver a more blunt message, with little warning.

Flexibility in mouthpieces works the same way: a horse's exquisitely sensitive mouth can feel (or be trained to feel) the slightest vibration on the reins long before a pull actually changes the mouthpiece's position. However, many horses and riders do not recognize the subtle touch of pressure or change in rein tension that is emphasized by flexible cheeks and mouthpieces. For these teams, a solidly joined bit works well. Bits with solid cheeks and mouthpieces are simple to understand and to use for ordinary riding, but flexibility is of paramount importance if a feather light touch and instant response is the goal.

Balance is the last element we'll discuss. Bit shoppers sometimes hold a bit's mouthpiece across their palm to "check his balance", but this is irrelevant because bits hang or balance from their "ears" or rings, not the mouthpiece. A thoughtfully designed bit inherently has balance, because it is made to hang from the headstall so that the mouthpiece fits comfortably in the horse's mouth. Flattened headstall rings can add stability to a bit's balance as well.



## Pre-Flight Check

### Monitor Your Horse's Physical Fitness In Five Minutes A Day!

"In only a few minutes... he has methodically examined his horse's body for injury or muscle soreness, he's compared stride length and hoof print pattern to the horse's average, he's noted any changes from the animal's normal response to palpation and he's performed flexion tests on each leg's major joints..."

Just as a careful pilot inspects his airplane's structural integrity before take-off, World Champion horseman Les Vogt examines his horses before each ride with a Pre-Flight Check. In less than five minutes a day, Vogt's checking sequence lets him quickly and conveniently monitor his horse's physical well-being and attitude and compare any changes to an established range of normal response for that horse.

Vogt encourages every horseman to conduct a pre-ride evaluation, and explains here in detail how his own system works. "I do my Pre-Flight Check before every ride so I know exactly how my horse's body is responding to my training program- I can tell each day if I need to modify that day's goals before the training session instead of after it," states Vogt. "Also, it's a great time to connect with my horse mentally- all in a few minutes and with no special tools or complicated evaluation." And, Vogt adds, his checking process keeps him from loading up a sore horse and hauling it to an event.

"Everybody has a sore horse now and then, but it's best not to display them in public!" he commented. In Vogt's Pre-Flight Check, the first step is a quick but thorough visual and physical examination of the horse from head to tail.

Vogt starts with the horse fresh out of the stall or pen with no warm-up. "I stand my horse on hard level ground, then inspect him in the same order every day: near side head, neck, body, hip, legs, and then the same on his off side. I'll walk around the horse and often stop to feel a tendon or take a closer look at a bump or scratch, while I also evaluate his overall muscle tone and condition," Vogt says.

"Because I check my horses daily, I know each one like a book and could probably tell them apart blindfolded. I know what's normal, down to the temperature in each leg and hoof, so I can tell by daily comparison if a problem is brewing, and can consult with the vet right away," explains the popular trainer.

The second check, gait evaluation, is perhaps the most important on a day-to-day basis. Vogt simply asks the horse to jog a small circle on the end of the lead rope, and carefully observes. "With just a glance, I can see if my horse is favoring a shoulder or nodding his head because of a hoof or leg related lameness. I also check his tail position, because his tail is the end of his spine and a change in the way he carries his tail is like a crystal ball indicating to me that something is making him travel differently," Vogt claims. "I want to see how he moves compared to yesterday, and even if he looks OK, I always check his hoof prints to see if his stride is normal."

Vogt explains that every horse has a characteristic tracking pattern of his hoof prints when jogged in a circle, as unique to each horse as a thumb print is to a human. While some long strided horses' inside hind hoof print will pass their inside front hoof print with each stride, most horses will have between one and 12 inches of clearance between the toe of a hind foot and the heel of a front foot in the small circle. "It doesn't matter for this check what the horse's hoof pattern is, only that I can recognize what is normal for each horse in both directions.

Then, I look for major and then minor changes in the pattern," Vogt explained. He added that some horses' hoof patterns will not be identical in both left and right circles, so 'normal' hoof print patterns for each horse are determined by daily observation over a period of a week or two. "If a horse is starting to be bothered by pain anywhere in his body, it often shows up as a change in his hoof pattern first," stated Vogt. "Then," he added, "I can explore my suspicions further with flexion tests and palpation. I can't evaluate a horse's gait as accurately as a vet can, but I can sure read the handwriting on the wall- or in this case, the hoof prints in the dirt."

Vogt's third check is a careful palpation alongside the horse's spine which may reveal chronic tender spots, often in the loin and heavy muscles along the croup. Placing his fingertips a couple inches to the side of the horse's spine, Vogt starts at the horse's poll on the left side and presses his fingertips firmly but gently in a slow, continuous sweep from the top of the horse's head along the spine's length through the neck, withers, back, and croup to the base of the tail. Vogt comments "Some reaction to this test is common in high performance horses in stressful training. I compare my horse's 'normal' reactions against what I find as I increase the intensity of his training sessions." The horseman also adds "It's uncomfortable for the horse if I press directly on his spine, so I use my fingers to probe gently alongside the spine to find trouble spots."

Vogt emphasizes that horses often react to this palpation more strongly on one side than the other, and he recommends massaging tender spots to relax bunched muscles and promote a physically balanced horse. "I have a big vibrating horse massage machine called a Thumper that the horses love- it's like their own masseur- but you can give your horse an enjoyable massage with a tennis ball too; just roll it under the palm of your hand around the sore areas to ease the muscles," Les advises. He adds that there are many useful massage programs, and recommends asking your veterinarian to demonstrate a suitable routine.

The fourth check consists of leg flexions of the knees, ankles, shoulders, stifles, and hocks. At this point, Vogt cautions "I don't tie my horse up for the flexions. It's safer to have a helper hold him or to hold the end of the lead myself, being careful to keep it away from the horse's feet. These flexions are somewhat awkward for the horse, so I don't do them on a reluctant or agitated horse, and I always use good horsemanship to think ahead.

"For knee flexions, Vogt begins by facing his horse's tail and picks up the left front hoof as if he were going to clean it. Then he folds the horse's leg up, bracing the horse's knee just above his own locked knees. With both hands around the horse's ankle, he exerts pressure on the knee joint by pulling the cannon bone and fetlock towards the horse's elbow, checking for flexibility and possible flinching response by the horse.

To check the ankle or fetlock, Vogt moves his hands down to the horse's toe and pulls the toe firmly towards his waist, putting flex on the ankle joint and again checking for sensitivity and flexibility. Next, Vogt unfolds the horse's knee joint and carefully pulls the horse's foreleg first back towards the tail and finally straight out in front of the horse to check the shoulder for soreness and range of motion and flexibility.

To complete his front leg evaluation, Les repeats the flexions on the horse's right side, always looking for change from the previous day and comparing reactions with the horse's normal response.

To check hocks and stifles on hind legs, Les does a standard hock flexion. Like a veterinarian, he'll face forward and hold the horse's hoof up high for at least 60 seconds to compress the hock, then have an assistant immediately trot the horse forward. "This flexion requires a helper, so I don't do it every day unless I suspect the horse is developing hock problems" said Vogt. "Also, it won't work if I don't send the horse right out," he says. "I really need to know what a horse's normal reaction is to this test, as many of them will take at least a few soft steps on their cranked-up leg. I know I would!" he adds.

In only a few minutes, Les Vogt completes the four steps of his Pre-Flight Check. He has methodically examined his horse's body for injury or muscle soreness, he's compared stride length and hoof print pattern to the horse's average, he's noted any changes from the animal's normal response to palpation and he's performed flexion tests on each leg's major joints. If any disturbing changes are detected, Vogt will further evaluate the possible problem and consult with his veterinarian. If all systems check out, Vogt is now confident that his horse is ready for action in the show arena, training pen, or along a favorite trail.

Les Vogt believes that "The Pre-Flight Check is one of the most important things I do with my horses, because it's so easy to discover not only how my horse feels physically, but it gives me a moment to check his mental state too. It's affordable horsemen's insurance: I've avoided a lot of injuries using my Pre-Flight Check and skirted some deep equine mind games as well."

### **Pre-Flight Check Synopsis**

1. Inspection
  - a. Visual Inspection
  - b. Physical Inspection
2. Gait Analysis
  - a. Overall Visual Evaluation
  - b. Hoof Print Pattern Evaluation
3. Spine Palpation
  - a. Examination
  - b. Massage
4. Leg Flexions
  - a. Knee, Ankle, Shoulder, Stifle



## Riding In Your Mind

"Riding in your mind allows you to mentally rehearse your performance without exhausting yourself and boring your horse."

Great athletes- from the school yard to the Olympics- use mental imagery to prepare for competition. Visualizing riding success is a short cut to victory- a method to improve your skills without annoying your horse. Mental imagery does not replace actual riding, but it can enhance and hone your performance, reduce stress and anxiety, and make you a more successful, confident rider.

### WHAT IS RIDING IN YOUR MIND?

Riding in your mind is using mental imagery to picture every detail of a winning ride long before you get on your horse. Riding in your mind allows you to mentally rehearse your performance without exhausting yourself and boring your horse.

### WHO SHOULD PRACTICE RIDING IN THEIR MIND?

Any rider can benefit from riding in their mind, whether it is for a specific competition or event, or to reinforce positive riding behavior. Mental imagery is especially valuable for nervous riders, because they can rehearse every possible scenario (and appropriate resolution to problems) before riding.

### HOW TO RIDE IN YOUR MIND

\*Visualize every detail of your ride: arena, pattern, audience, footing...

\*Mentally rehearse your winning ride over and over- hundreds of times!

\*Avoid negative visualization- plan and visualize corrections to errors

\*Visualize winning or perfection- "Adequate Isn't!"

### WHY RIDE IN YOUR MIND?

Riding in your mind allows you to practice performing without the physical stress on you or your horse that actual riding entails. You have unlimited opportunity to rehearse every part of your ride. You can ride in your mind anytime, anywhere, with no outside interruptions. Using mental imagery can also establish muscle memory so you ride stronger and more positively.

### WHEN SHOULD YOU RIDE IN YOUR MIND?

Ride in your mind before every competition, and to reinforce every physical learning experience. Daily, ride in your mind before each new training exercise to tune into a positive mental mind-set, and review and reinforce each day's successes by replaying the correct cues and signals in your mind.



## Suppling Your Horse

"Every horse will benefit from increased suppleness. A supple, responsive horse will learn easier and perform better than a stiff or rigid horse. "

A supple horse is flexible, willing, and able to perform the work asked for by his rider. He is not stiff, rigid, or sluggish, but responds instantly to his rider's subtle cues. Just as a swimmer has a pre-race routine to prepare their body and mind for activity, and as a ballerina stretches her muscles at the barre before she dances, your equine athlete should be mentally and physically warmed up- called suppling- before he performs.

### WHAT IS SUPPLING?

Suppling is teaching your horse- dressage horse, jumper, reiner, or pleasure riding horse- to yield to the pressure of rein, leg, or body weight. Suppleness is the opposite of resistance, and produces maximum performance with a minimum of effort from the rider. A supple, responsive horse is the basis for all horsemanship.

### WHO SHOULD SUPPLE THEIR HORSE?

Every horse will benefit from increased suppleness. A supple, responsive horse will learn easier and perform better than a stiff or rigid horse. Suppleness increases communication between horse and rider.

### HOW DO YOU SUPPLE YOUR HORSE?

\*Always supple your horse one side at a time.

\*Work one rein or press with one leg gently, until your horse yields.

\*Don't pull directly back on both reins, or apply pressure with both legs.

\*The instant your horse yields to rein or leg pressure, release the pressure as his reward.

### WHY DO YOU SUPPLE YOUR HORSE?

A supple horse is easily guided through any maneuver. He respects his rider and allows the rider to position the horse's body and legs for maximum performance. A supple horse is a good student!

### WHEN SHOULD YOU SUPPLE YOUR HORSE?

Every time you ride any horse, begin with suppling exercises. Search for and eliminate resistance to prepare your horse to think, learn, and excel. Return to suppling if your horse feels stiff or resistant, even in the midst of other training. Suppling reestablishes communication with your horse.



## The Five Easy Pieces

"A true horseman can see self-esteem in horses, because he looks for it and nurtures it. Like a good school-teacher, a capable horse trainer will enhance the self-esteem of each student."

Have you ever wished your horse had an instrument panel like a car, with dials and gauges so you could monitor at a glance your progress down the road? I sure have, and after 40+ years as a professional horseman and teacher, I've developed a system to teach, test, and correct common performance horse problems. Whether you ride trail, rope, rein, jump or ride dressage, my Five Easy Pieces warm-up exercises will help you communicate better with your horse, let you make faster training progress with no resistance, and have a better relationship with your horse.

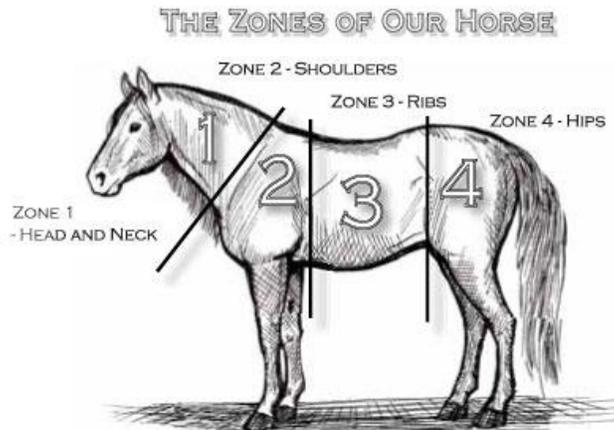
By teaching your horse in small, discreet units, you can avoid the confusion, frustration, and even fear that results from training with a nonsequential system of conflicting commands. You'll also detect developing physical problems early: A horse who usually does Easy Piece four, the hip exercise, with no resistance but suddenly gets sticky and agitated to the left is likely telling you that something over there hurts. Check his back and left leg for soreness or swelling, and you may avoid a crippling injury.

Five Easy Pieces will allow you to teach your horse to travel "in frame". What's frame? It's a general term used by horsemen to indicate that a horse is traveling efficiently, with his body positioned in such a way that he can easily maintain his speed, pace, and position. A good way to think of frame is to imagine it's your horse's posture.

If he looks like a crabby teenager - slouching, neck jutting forward, shoulders haunched, and shambling along - not only is he unpleasant to watch, he's not showing any grace or athletic potential either.

My system will work for a novice rider or a green horse as well as for seasoned pros. Why? Because, by dividing the horse's body and physical mechanics into easily trainable zones, we can pinpoint the exact source of a frame or 'posture' problem, and concentrate on fixing that problem before it compromises our horse's performance. A horse's body and brain form a complex system, but if we can guide that system by working with discrete zones of the horse in basic exercises, we'll build the foundation of learning, conditioning and obedience that is the basis for all advanced training and high performance. Plus, it's cheap and easy: you and your horse can learn my Five Easy Pieces in an area as small as a box stall, with simple equipment, at a walk, and see immediate results.

First, I'd like to identify what I call the 'zones' of your horse, as I'll refer to them by number throughout this discussion. Think of zones as similar to parts of your car: because, like your car, each zone of the horse must work by itself before it meshes with the other zones to make the car, or horse, run smoothly. If any zone isn't working right, it'll compromise the entire system. We have to isolate and correct the problem, not try to fix everything at once. If your car's motor won't start, you're probably going to be disappointed if you work on the transmission to fix that starter. My system of zones, with Easy Pieces to check out each zone, will help you become a top-notch horse mechanic.

**ZONE ONE:**

Zone one is your horse's head and neck, somewhat comparable to the steering and brakes of a car. If you can't steer or stop your car or your horse, you can't go where you want, so we'll always begin with zone one, and Easy Piece one. Control of zone one is important because where a horse's eyes go, his body goes. If you can gently aim his head, I guarantee the rest of the horse will follow, and as a wise old cowboy once told me, "Les," he said, "it's best to ride a horse in the direction it's going."

**ZONE TWO:**

Zone two is your horse's front legs and shoulders- somewhat like the front wheels of your car. They don't create power, but they receive power or momentum from the rear and convert it into direction. Shoulder control is critical to keeping your horse in an efficient frame, especially at speed. Horses that drop their inside shoulder galloping lose traction and may fall, or at the very least will dump onto their forehead and pour energy into the ground, instead of into efficient, balanced, forward momentum. And don't forget that your horse is not a Honda- all horses are rear-wheel drive.

**ZONE THREE:**

Zone three is your horse's rib cage area, his chassis. It provides a place for you, the passenger, and acts as a conduit to transfer power from the back of the system where it's generated, up to the front, where the energy is released. Zone three is like the balance point on a scale; your legs, used towards the cinch or towards the hip, can tip the balance. Control of your horse's ribcage is important in fast maneuvers for precision guidance, for example to spread out or draw in the size of your circles in a reining horse pattern. You don't want to tug on your horse's face and risk unbalancing him and jeopardizing the whole system to adjust the circle when a little outside supporting leg will make it smaller, or a little inside leg behind the cinch will imperceptibly enlarge the circle.

**ZONE FOUR:**

The fourth zone is your horse's hindquarters, his motor. It's like Detroit, where the horsepower comes from! Controlling zone four is critically important to lead departures and lead changes, because a horse initiates a lope departure with his hip, not his neck, shoulder or ribcage. By being able to move your horse's hips even a few inches, you'll be guaranteed to strike off on the correct lead, and eventually do flying changes without hysteria. If you can move your horse's hip into the lead you want, he'll pick it up every time, because horses do best what they do easiest, and you'll have positioned his body to comfortably do what you want.

Remember, too, that each zone has two complimentary halves, the right and left-hand portions. It's very common to have a problem, or what I call "a glitch in the system," in only one side of a zone. Just as humans are right and left handed, horses often have a dominant side, created naturally or by their riders, or frequently due to pain or injury in the opposite side of the zone. A horse with a chronically sore suspensory ligament in his left leg will shift his weight to his right shoulder and leg, for example. Evaluate both halves of each zone every time you ride, then focus on the trouble spots.

Now that we've identified the zones, I'll explain a simple mounted exercise for each area that will help you teach your horse to correctly, and efficiently, use each zone to reach his athletic potential. When the Five Easy Pieces all mesh, your horse will be in a physical and mental comfort zone where he is able to learn, work, and perform with no resistance. You'll be able to guide his physical energy in whatever direction, and for whatever purpose, you choose. Do all these exercises slowly and deliberately, and you'll be surprised how your horse begins to understand what you want, literally a step at a time.

### THE FIRST EASY PIECE

The First Easy Piece is teaching your horse to yield his nose to pressure. We always train a horse from front to back, so we start with his nose. For this exercise, we simply walk in a small circle- about a ten foot diameter- and gently pull the horse's nose to the inside, using slight contact with the our inside leg to help the horse maintain a correct vertical frame. The instant the horse yields to the pull of the rein, release the pull. A horse's mouth or nose (if you use a bosal or side pull) can be sensitized to the slightest vibration of the reins.

This exercise teaches the horse, whether he's a baby colt or an old wise-guy, that he must let his nose follow the most gentle or subtle pull on the rein. It teaches a horse, and later reminds him if he forgets the rules, that he should always be anticipating movement of the reins, and that he should instantly respond by yielding to the cue. By teaching the exercise in a small circle, your horse will also begin to swing his outside front leg over the inside leg as he turns, because it's more efficient and comfortable than taking a bunch of little crab steps. You'll be teaching your horse to turn, pivot, or even spin, while he thinks you're just training his face!

### THE SECOND EASY PIECE

The Second Easy Piece helps you to isolate and control your horse's shoulders. Whether you decide to have your horse lead with his shoulder on a sweeping arc or a diagonal line is not important, but having him initiate the movement with his shoulders is. He shouldn't meander sideways with his head, ribs, or hip leading, but should deliberately move his shoulder in the direction you indicate with hand and leg cues. Viewed from above, you'd see his spine, from poll to tail, bent in a slight arc, with the shoulder area the point extending farthest towards the direction of travel.

Contain your horse's momentum, or forward energy, with your hands, and generate momentum by asking your horse to move away from your leg. If you want to engage your horse's right shoulder, keep your left hand steady, press with your left calf, and be sure your right leg is completely away from his right side, to create an open doorway to the right for his shoulder to move into.

### THE THIRD EASY PIECE

The third exercise, or Third Easy Piece, is simply to sidepass your horse to the right and left on an imaginary line perpendicular to his body. It's similar to exercise two, but instead of leading off with his shoulder, you want your horse's body to stay straight. Like the shoulder exercise, you'll use hand and leg aids to guide your horse's momentum, but try pressing your leg further towards zone four, your horse's hindquarters, to move his body at a ninety degree angle- exactly sideways. Try to keep his body straight (imagine a bird's eye view with his spine straight, not curving) and use your right hand and left leg to guide him to the right and to keep him positioned.

Remember that your hands guide the energy of zones one and two, and your legs control the energy of zones three and four. If your horse starts to sidepass crooked, think about how to correct the problem: if his front end is leading, you need less hand and more leg, and if zone four, the hip, is in the lead, you need to use more hand and less leg power to restore your straight line. Don't worry about what your horse's feet are doing, simply concentrate on moving him sideways with all the zones lined up straight.

### THE FOURTH EASY PIECE

The Fourth Easy Piece isolates and moves zone four, your horse's hips or hindquarters. Like the previous two exercises, you'll use hand and leg cues to generate and channel the horse's momentum so that his front end (zone two) remains stationary while his hips (zone four) pivot- it's a turn on the forehand. If you want to move your horse's hip to your left, or clockwise, you'll lift your left hand to restrain his left shoulder, then use your right leg back on his ribcage to create energy and channel it through the open doorway to the left that you've created by keeping your left leg completely away from his left side. If you move your horse's hips even one baby step to the left, then ask him to lope, I guarantee he's going to pick up his left lead, because you just made it physically inviting for him to do so.

If you've worked through the first four Easy Pieces, your horse should now be in frame: showing attractive, athletic horse posture. He should travel like a train on a track- straight forward with no tilting or misalignment. To test your progress, try Easy Piece Five, the circle backing exercise: walk forward in a small circle with his head and neck arcing gently in the shape of the circle, his shoulder upright, his ribcage continuing the arc, and his hips the final part of the continuum. Now, stop, and back in the exact same circle! It's pretty easy to go forward in frame, but putting it in reverse will show up your horse's weaknesses right away.

Here's some hints to help you and your horse get the most from this last Easy Piece: when you walk forward, use your inside leg as a supporting post for your horse to curve around, but when you begin to back up, remember to switch to a supporting outside leg to help move your horse's hips towards the center of your circle, inwards to where you've released your inside leg. Going forward, you'll use your inside hand to pull his nose towards the center, but backing up, your inside hand will cross over your horse's neck to help keep his inside shoulder from dropping, and you'll have to brace your outside hand to get him to put his energy into backing up, instead of drifting out of frame. To establish an arc backing, think of gently positioning your horse so his inside eye can see his hip.

Do this exercise slowly, asking for a single correct step at a time. If you get stuck, simply walk forward until you're 'back on track' and keep in mind that you're asking your horse to be physical in ways that may not yet be comfortable or familiar to him. However, mastering control of your horse's zones is paramount to successful higher level training.

#### THE FIFTH EASY PIECE

The beauty of this last Fifth Easy Piece is that it lets you pinpoint your horse's problem areas, and also develops the muscles in your horse's loin and hind legs- critical to many high performance maneuvers. If his neck and shoulder turn to stone, go back to Easy Piece Number One and get him flexible. If he gets too much arc in his neck, better have a look at that bulging outside shoulder, and fix it with a little bit of Easy Piece Number Two. If you can't get a nice round circle in reverse, but more of a stiff straight line, zone three needs attention, and if everything in front of you looks good, but you're not moving, better have a little talk with zone four.

Use my Five Easy Pieces as a quick diagnostic test whenever you run into a glitch in your training program, and chances are you'll be able to find your horse's real problem in short order. Imagine your horse as a closed energy system, then use the Easy Pieces to direct that energy where it's needed. Although the energy is created in zone four, it is distributed from nose to tail, that is: from zone one to zone four. If zone one has an energy leak, zones two, three, and four won't hold energy either.

Each zone builds upon the correctness of its predecessor. Your goal is to contain and control your horse's energy without creating resistance. If you can consistently work your horse through the Five Easy Pieces without a fuss, then you're ready to move into more specific, high level training, because you've built a solid foundation of body control and energy placement. You can read your horse's gauges to prevent a wreck.

Whether you call these simple body control exercises flexions, warm-up drills, or Easy Pieces, the nuance and mastery of each one is the essence of horsemanship. They're universal throughout time and riding disciplines, too: a cavalry horse in Xenophon's time (about 300 BC) needed to be flexible, willing, and obedient to its rider, just as your performance horse should be today. Horses, like people, will always do best what they can do easiest- so make what you want your horse to do easy for him by repeating the individual exercises over and over, every time you ride. Although my Five Easy Pieces are basic exercises that you can run through in five or ten minutes, you won't master them in a lifetime- and you'll never quit using them, as long as you continue to ride and learn.

#### NOTES...

---

---

---

---

---



## Elevator Bits

"People think I borrowed my elevator bits from an elephant trainer, but they're really quite mild and can do magic things for a horse," says Les Vogt. He goes on to explain that the unusual snaffle bit was designed by the legendary horseman Jimmy Williams to help horses perform in a correct and efficient physical 'frame' without disturbing the horse's momentum and balance.

Les gets technical, but it makes sense: elevator bits have a neutral 1:1 leverage ratio because the mouthpiece is located equidistant between the headstall attachment and the rein attachment; but the shank's overall length of about 8" helps a rider to lift his horse's shoulder without 'putting on the brakes.' An ordinary grazing bit has a *leverage* ratio of approximately 1:3, which means that for every unit of lift, you create three units of whoa. For a horse that drops his inside shoulder in turns or circles, trying to lift the shoulder with an ordinary bit causes a contradiction: the more you lift, the more the horse thinks you want him to slow down.

Les recommends adjusting the elevator bit as shown here—every low in the horse's mouth, just missing the eye teeth. He says "The lower you hang this bit, the more a horse will lengthen his top line as he stretches down toward the mouthpiece.

Horses like to cradle a snaffle with their lips and tongue because it gives them some security that they'll feel a pull with their mouth before they get in big trouble, so I use the elevators low to get horses to relax in their neck, shoulders, and back, which makes it easier to correct that shoulder problem. If a horse braces against the bit, he'll be stiff, hollow his back, and be twice as hard to-fix."

Also, Les advises a very loose curb chain to allow the horse a long warning time before the chain contacts the chin. "This is a training bit, so I want the horse to have a very fair chance to pay attention and respond to my cues before the bit takes firm action. I use these bits all the time at home, and it's amazing how sensitive my horses get to the slightest insinuation of the reins. But, if I run into a shoulder or stiffness problem, I can help the horse right away," says Vogt.

"I like elevator bits for any horse, because they act like a plain old snaffle— you can even put your reins through the direct rein slot to make it look like a snaffle— until you need more sophisticated action. And, even though they look a little unorthodox, elevator bits are very humane, because they help a horse to balance himself efficiently," Les says.

## NOTES...

---

---

---

---

---

## Leg Protection for Your Horse

Your horse's health - whether he's a dressage horse, jumper, reiner, or pleasure riding horse - is at risk with every step he takes. A horse's body weight, plus the weight of his rider, puts a tremendous strain on the delicate bones, ligaments, and tendons of his relatively small legs. Protective leg boots reduce the risk of leg injury and increase the horse's tolerance of stress-they're insurance for your horse.

### WHAT ARE PROTECTIVE LEG BOOTS?

Protective leg boots, made of neoprene, cloth or leather, fasten to a horse's lower legs to protect and support the leg. Leg boots reduce injuries from:

- \*Stress- hyperextension of soft tissue (muscles, tendon, ligaments)
- \*Trauma- a direct hit from a horse's hoof and/or obstacle like a jump
- \*Concussion- pounding on hard riding surfaces or uneven terrain
- \*External Hazards- mud, wire, vegetation, etc.

### WHY USE PROTECTIVE LEG BOOTS?

Using protective leg boots on your equine athlete will:

- \*Reduce injury
- \*Increase your horse's confidence and sense of security
- \*Accelerate your horse's training schedule with less risk

### WHO SHOULD USE PROTECTIVE LEG BOOTS?

Every horse deserves protective leg boots on every ride. There are leg boots designed for virtually every type of riding and every size of horse, in materials and prices to suit any responsible horseman's budget.

### HOW TO CHOOSE PROTECTIVE LEG BOOTS

1) Decide on the boot your horse needs: jumping, reining, all-purpose...

2) Choose a material for the boot:

Material	Protection	Styles	Ease of Care	Ease of Use	Value
Leather	XXXX	XX	X	XX	\$\$
Cloth (Bandages)	XX	X	XX	X	\$
Neoprene	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	XXXX	\$\$\$\$

3) Correctly fit the leg boots to your horse.

4) Be responsible — Use the boots for every riding session or turn-out.



## Thoughts of a Winner

Winning is not a sometime thing; it's an all the time thing. You don't win once in a while; you don't do things right once in a while; you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.

There is no room for second place. There is only one place in my game, -and that's first place. I have finished second twice in my time at Green Bay, and I don't ever want to finish second again. There is a second place bowl game, but it is a game for losers played by losers. It is and always has been an American zeal to be first in anything we do, and to win, and to win, and to win.

Every time a football player goes to play his trade he's got to play from the ground up from the soles of feet right up to his head. Every inch on him has to play. Some guys play 'with their heads. That's O.K. You've got to be smart to be number one in any business. But more importantly, you're lucky enough to find a guy with a lot of head and a lot of heart, he's never going to come off the field second.

Running a football team is no different than running any other kind of organization- an army, a political party or a business. The principles are the same. The object is to win - to beat the other guy. Maybe that sounds hard or cruel. I don't think it is.

It is reality of life that men are competitive and the most competitive games draw the most competitive men. That's why they are there. to compete. To know the rules and objectives when they get in the game. The object is to win fairly, squarely, by the rules - but to win.

And in truth, I've never known a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn't appreciate the grind, the discipline. There is something in good men that really yearns for discipline and the harsh reality of head to head combat.

I don't say these things because I believe in the "brute" nature of man or that men must be brutalized to be combative. I believe in God, and I believe in human decency. But I firmly believe that any man's finest hour - his greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear - is that moment when he has to work his heart out in a good cause and he's exhausted on the field of battle - victorious.

• Vincent Lombardi

NOTES...

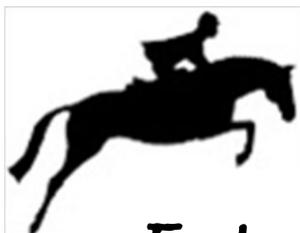
---

---

---

---

---



# Future Performance Horses

Les Vogt Clinic Registration Form

July 7-8<sup>th</sup> 2012

8 AM — 5 PM Saturday and Sunday

Pioneer Arena \* 514 Arrowhead Drive \* Arab, AL 35016

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Horse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Clinic Participant (With Horse) - Limited to First 14 Paid Registrants  \$300.00  
 Stall for Saturday Night  Yes  No

Clinic Auditor — One Day (Without Horse)  \$30.00

Clinic Auditor — Two Days (Without Horse)  \$50.00

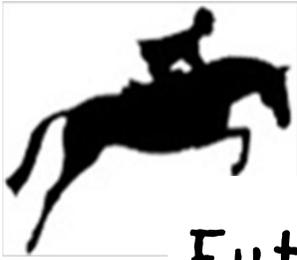
One t-shirt is included with each Clinic Participant's registration. Additional t-shirts are available for \$15. Auditors who would like to purchase a t-shirt may also do so for \$15.

Size  Small  Medium  Large  Extra-Large

Make Checks Payable To: Future Performance Horses

Mail (Non-Refundable) Payment To: Future Performance Horses  
 c/o Amy Smith  
 376 Forest Drive  
 Union Grove, AL 35175

**\*\*\*Point of Contact\*\*\***  
 Amy Smith  
 334-797-7787  
 Amy@FuturePerformanceHorses.com  
 www.FuturePerformanceHorses.com



# Future Performance Horses

## Les Vogt Clinic Participant Information Sheet

Rider's level of experience: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Previous clinics and/or seminars attended: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Horse's age: \_\_\_\_\_

Horse's level of training: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Events in which you compete: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Areas you would like to work on/improve in you or your horse: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---







