

WALKING HORSE OWNERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Welcomes You To



Individual or Group Trail Riding Program

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www.walkinghorseowners.com

Welcome to “Happy Trails”

The following information is provided for new trail riders or as a refresher; we’re just happy that you love your horse and the great outdoors. So, take a look and join the fun and adventure.

***Tidbit:** A trail ride can be of any length, including a long distance, multi-day trip or a simple short outing. It originated with horse riding, and in North America, the equestrian form is usually called “trail riding. In the UK and Europe, the practice is usually called horse or pony trekking.*

Guidelines

1. The program is open to all Tennessee Walking Horses, registered or unregistered.
2. The program is also open to any other gaited breeds.
3. The rider and owner must be a WHOA member.
4. There is no limit to the amount of time taken to achieve award hours. Yearly membership is required to participate.
5. Awards are based on hours logged.
6. Hours logged must be hours spent in forward motion while riding the horse.
7. A rider can enroll as many horses as they wish in the program however a separate enrollment form and log sheets must be submitted for each horse the individual rides.

Awards

“Happy Trails” participants receive a welcome gift followed by gifts as hours are accrued to each award level. Participants will also be recognized on WHOA’s website and e-magazine.

NEW TO TRAIL RIDING?

With a little guidance and practice you will enjoy trail riding at its best.

If you are a newcomer or, have an inexperienced horse; first master basic skills at home, in a small enclosure or in a place you feel comfortable; stopping and turning, as well as having control at all gaits. If you want to go on group trail rides with your friends, it’s important to know if your horse can behave in a group on the trail. Some horses will kick out or get nervous around other horses, which can make the trail ride dangerous for everyone involved.

Before you go out on the trail, ride with a small group of riders. This will allow your horse to get used to being in a large group of horses. You may notice that your horse will either be more of a follower or more of a leader.

Some horses like to stay in the pack of horses where they feel comfortable while more dominant horses usually like to be out in front leading the group. While a leading horse is usually a bold horse when it comes to crossing obstacles, these horses can sometimes start a ruckus if they are stuck behind another horse.

Even if they're stuck in the back doing exercises beforehand will help your horse learn to stay calm. This can make a real difference on the trail. These exercises may simply consist of riding figure 8s or, riding in a small circle. This will get your horse's attention focused on you. Dedicate time in training to work out the quirks that may come out on the trail.

Be Prepared to Face Obstacles That Your Horse Isn't Used To

Trail riding introduces your horse to many things they may not come across in daily life. It gives them new obstacles to go through and new challenges to overcome; your horse may not handle these new things with ease.

Having the knowledge and ability to get your horse through new obstacles will greatly benefit you on the trail. Being assertive yet rewarding will go a long way with horses, as well as staying calm and collected. Always prepare your horse as much as you can for new obstacles. A great way to do this is by putting your horse through some kind of desensitizing training.

PREPARATION - Take a Trail Buddy

One of the most important things to remember when trail riding: take a trail buddy. This is vital especially if you're going off the property to a location you are unfamiliar with.

There are a number of reasons to bring along a friend whenever you go trail riding; however, the biggest reason is for your safety. Too many times, riders go out by themselves and are thrown or lost. Leave a message as to which direction or trail you intend to take.

Wear a certified helmet that fits snugly and always buckle the chin strap. Secure pertinent information inside your helmet such as: name, address, phone number, and any medical information that might be needed.

Having a trail buddy, one of you could go for help if needed or apply basic first aid. Always remember that two minds are better than one. Never hit the trail without a buddy, and never leave the buddy behind.

Check trail-head websites for trail maps, availability, challenge level, closures or closures due to hunting or logging.

Check the Weather Beforehand - Always check the weather report before you decide to go on a trail ride. One of the worst things is getting stuck out on your horse in the wilderness in inclement weather. If the forecast is calling for a chance of thunderstorms or, snowstorms; it's best to refrain from going out.

Rain can also turn a relaxing trail ride into a daunting nightmare. It can make the trails slick and cause visibility to be poor. Nonetheless, weather can change in an instant, different than what's predicted, so always pack a lightweight rain poncho and saddle cover as well.

Make Sure You and Your Horse are Physically Fit. Before hitting the trail, make sure the distance and duration of the trail ride is within your horse's current fitness level. Do not go on the trail without some warm-up for you and your horse. Loosen up and start the ride at a slow pace for at least 20 minutes.

Overworking your horse on a trail they're not prepared for can cause injuries to their ligaments and tendons as well as cause them to have sore muscles or even tie up. The last thing you want to happen is to have your horse give up on you miles from home with no way to get back.

Groom your horse thoroughly before trail riding. If the trail you are taking is going to be rough you might want to put protective leg wear, such as polo wraps or boots, on your horse. Use insect repellent for both you and your horse. Remember to check the weather before you ride and dress accordingly.

Riders and light-skinned horses should use sunscreen to protect against harmful UV rays.

Before leaving the barn, trailer or campsite, make sure your horse's shoes are tight and tack is fitting properly and in good repair.

Always carry a fully charged cell phone, first-aid kit, flashlight, water, hoof pick, map, compass Bring a paper trail map use your phone if needed. Take advantage of the technology available to you. For long treks carry an extra battery for your phone.

Be prepared to confront common problems that can go wrong with your horse such as lameness, laceration, colic, tying up and snake bite.

Know how to monitor your horse's vital signs and be able to administer first-aid to both horse and human. Make sure to rest and walk after periods of gaiting. Don't over do it! Bring water for you and your horse but never, ever let your hot horse drink its fill of water. A small amount of water, then wait a half hour or more before letting it drink some more.

Know Your One-Rein Stop - A one-rein stop is considered the emergency brake to your horse. This stop is done by grabbing one rein specifically and pulling the horse's head around and to your knee.

This motion keeps your horse from being able to bolt, buck, or rear. Unfortunately, things happen on the trail that will sometimes startle your horse or cause them to act up. Knowing how to do a one-rein stop will save you from potential disaster and will allow you to get control of your horse.

TACK - Choose Comfortable Tack...For You and the Horse

Tack should be clean and inspected for wear prior to any ride. When it comes to trail riding chose your saddle wisely; you'll be in the saddle for hours at a time, and it becomes no fun when you're in pain.

Carry a First Aid Kit - One of the items that you carry in your saddle bag should be a first aid kit. In the event that someone falls off or a horse gets injured, the wounds will need to be attended to until you can get more professional medical attention.

Having cleansing wipes, gauze, roll bandages, tweezers, scissors, and antiseptic cream on hand can be used to treat both horses and humans. Other items you may want to include specific to horses would be vet wrap, fly repellent antiseptic, duct tape, and a snakebite kit.

Carry A Set of Wire Cutters - This may seem menial, but you should always carry a pair of wire cutters when on the trail. On some trails, there may be loose wire hidden close to the ground; a horse can easily get caught in this wire and lose its cool. Being able to act fast and cut your horse loose can save your horse from much pain and injuries. Chances are you will never need the wire cutters, but I'd rather be safe than sorry.

TRAIL ETIQUETTE - Knowing proper trail etiquette will keep you and other trail users safe. Not all hikers or bikers will understand how horses react to them approaching. Because of this, you want to do everything you can to minimize risk.

If someone is coming up behind you, whether it's a runner or a biker, pull your horse over to the side of the trail, turning their head towards the trail and their hind-end away. This way, you take away the need for the horse's natural reaction for something approaching from behind: to kick. This will also give the horse a chance to see what's approaching.

Always be friendly to passers-by and call out ahead if you need to pass or go by. This will help all trail users to stay safe and respect each other's space. Socializing on the trail with your friends can be fun but remember to always pay more attention to your horse and his body language than to a conversation. Be courteous to those hiking on the trail; some may be afraid of horses. Horses may also be afraid of hikers, so be sure to control your horse around hikers.

The essential joy of being with horses is that it brings us in contact with the rare elements of grace, beauty, spirit, and fire." –Sharon Falls Lemon

A trail ride can become dangerous for someone who is being pushed by the rest of the group to do something that they don't have the capability to do just yet. Slower rider/horses should form a group for equal skills and abilities

Leave one horse length between horses, two if gaiting. Pass on the left at reduced speed after giving the person you are passing a verbal heads up. Follow the designated trail leader who will ride at an appropriate speed for the whole group. The leader will let you know of any dangers seen on the trail, and riders will pass the message on to those behind them. If you want to pass a fellow rider, please let them know that you plan to pass. If your horse kicks, be sure to tie a red ribbon on the tail. Uphill traffic has the right of way on the trail.

Always be aware of your surroundings and think ahead so you don't put yourself or your horse in a dangerous situation. Be a proactive rider. Avoid riding on footing that can be hazardous to your horse such as roots, holes and debris.

Change positions within your group and do transitions often. This will help the horse wanting to be at the front all the time, as well as keep the horse concentrating on you and not the outside environment or other horses. If your horse spooks on the trail, it is OK to get off the horse to address the spooky obstacle. It is safer to deal with a sticky spot on the ground than under saddle.

TRAIL SAFETY - If you plan to stop and tie your horse, take a halter and lead rope with you. Whenever you head out on the trail, make sure you pack extra equipment. This can look like storing extra reins and clip-on horseshoes in your saddlebags. In the event that a piece of tack breaks or an extra piece of equipment is required, you should be well equipped to handle the situation.

Extra reins can be used not only to steer your horse but also to tie a tourniquet or act as a sling in a medical situation. Prepare and fill your saddlebags beforehand to make sure you are prepared for the trail.

Place the horse's halter on and over their bridle. Tie the lead rope off to the saddle. It makes it easier and safer to tie your horse off to trees and objects. If your horse is acting up on the trail, you can easily hop off and do groundwork using the halter they have on. This will get your horse focusing back on you and the commands you are giving. This is great for green horses or horses that haven't been out on the trail much before.

Having a halter already on your horse will make it easier to catch the horse if you fall and the horse takes off. It will also make it easier for ponying or helping another horse and rider who may need to be led through an obstacle.

Never Use Your Reins to Tie Your Horse - The reins are connected to the bit; if the horse was to freak out and pull back while being tied, they could easily do damage to their mouth; for this reason, always carry a halter and lead rope with you. You'd be surprised at the number of times you may have to dismount and tie your horse off. Bringing a halter along will make things much more manageable when this happens.

Stay On the Trail - To hikers and horseback riders alike, always stay on the trail! I can't tell you how many times I've heard of people wandering off the trail to then be lost for days. The fact of the matter is the trail is marked and the path is proven worthy; if you go off trail, you may run into loose rocks, cliff edges, and other hazardous landscape that can put you and your horse in danger. Sometimes, the trail may not be marked clearly enough. Bring a compass with you on your rides. The least it can do is point you in the right direction.

Tidbit: *If when mounting your horse, the horse takes off before the command to go, stop horse and have the horse back 3-4 paces. Rest, and then begin to walk forward. After a few lessons, the horse should stand still until given the command to walk.*

To encourage your horse to be willing and obedient on the trail, be his leader! This means you, the rider, are always in control. When approaching new obstacles that might frighten your horse, stop and let your horse address them in a safe manner. Let him swing his head to see it from both eyes and let him smell it. Take your time. Once your horse learns to trust you, the next obstacle you address will take less time to accept.

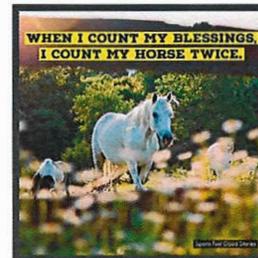
Move your horse the opposite way he wants to take you. If he goes left, go right; if he goes right, go left; if he backs, go forward; if he goes forward without you asking, stop and back a few steps. This works the horse's mind and reminds him that you are the leader. As your horse's leader, he will trust you!

If your horse gets too close to a tree or obstacle and might hit it, slightly turn his head pointing his nose toward it and use your inside leg aid (leg closest to the obstacle) to yield him away from the obstacle. If you use too much rein aids, you will actually turn him more into the tree.

Use your body position to help maintain your horse's balance while traveling uphill (tilt upper body forward, extend arms up the horse's neck to give him his head) and downhill (lean upper body back, push feet forward in stirrups so legs are in front of the cinch/girth, and hold reins approximately three to four inches higher than usual).

At a water crossing, pond, river or lake, stop and offer the horse water. Try to know the depth of a water crossing before attempting to cross it.

Always remove a tie-down or martingale before crossing a water obstacle in case you encounter a deep spot. These devices restrict your horse's head so much that he will not be able to swim. Remember: Not all horses can swim!



After the Ride

Always have your horse walk the last mile on the way back to the barn to prevent him from learning to rush home. Make sure to cool your horse down properly to relieve and prevent lactic acid buildup in the muscles.

Check to see if your horse sweated evenly under the saddle pad to make sure your saddle doesn't have any pressure points that can make your horse uncomfortable or cause long-term problems. Rinse or hose off sweat and always offer fresh clean water. Do a visual and tactile evaluation of your horse. Check his legs for swelling or any cuts he might have from the ride. Treat accordingly.

RESOURCES:

What to Pack | NATRC, 16 Horse Trail Riding Tips: Ultimate Guide (equinehelper.com), Tips and Tricks - Equestrian Trails (weebly.com), Trail Tips - AQHA, ETS: Event Types (equinetrailsports.com), WHOA.

WHOA Trail Riding Committee:

Co-Chairs- Dee Dee Miller - maskr8ng@aol.com

Sis Osborne - sisosborne@tds.net

Jodi DeDecker Bubar - jodidedecker@hotmail.com

Linda Starnes - lindastarnes@windstream.net

Rider and owner Membership are required each year while participating in the Happy Trails Program -

On Sign-up: issue Trail Log & Cap with logo.

50 Hours - Certificate of hours & Gift, 100 Hours - Certificate of hours & Gift

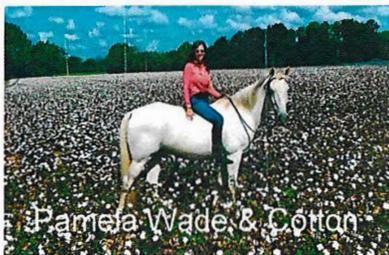
250 Hours - Certificate of hours & Gift, 500 Hours - Certificate of hours & Gift

750 Hours - Certificate of hours & Gift.

Maximum 2,000 Hours - Certificate of hours & Gift

On-line aps are available to track trail time. Trail logs are available on the WHOA website or may be mailed/emailed to you.

The WHOA "Walking On" a-magazine features our Happy Trails riders and their accomplishments on the WHOA website at www.walkinghorseowners.com.



If you have a photograph of you and your trail riding buddy and would like to be featured in the e-magazine we would love to include you. We look forward to hearing about where your trail walks take you and continued participation.

For more information and to download and print your "Happy Trails" enrollment form visit www.walkinghorseowners.com or call WHOA at 615-494-8822.

About WHOA

The Walking Horse Owners Association (WHOA), headquartered in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, was founded in 1976 to represent the interests in all matters pertaining to the sound Tennessee Walking Horse. WHOA's goals are to advocate for fair and equal treatment of all members and to promote and protect the welfare of the breed. WHOA develops and supports programs that increase the value of Tennessee Walking Horses and enhances members' experiences with their horses.

Trail Check List:

<input type="checkbox"/> Water Bottle	<input type="checkbox"/> Sharp Knife
<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit	<input type="checkbox"/> Nylon Cord
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Halter	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Compass
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Rain Poncho
<input type="checkbox"/> Hoof Pick	<input type="checkbox"/> Pliers or Multi-Tool

Equine Vital Signs

Normal vital signs for an at rest horse and foal.

	Temperature	Pulse	Respiration
Horse	99-101°F	23-44 Beats per Minute	10-24 Breaths per Minute
Foal	99.5-102.1°F	80-100 Beats Per Minute	20-40 Breaths per Minute

Veterinarian

Phone # _____

Farrier

Phone # _____

Know what's normal for your horse as ranges tend to vary based on fitness, climate, age, etc.