



First Training Principles

Human and horse welfare depend upon training methods and management that demonstrate:



1. Regard for human and horse safety

By acknowledging the horse's size, power and flightiness | By learning to recognise flight/fight/freeze behaviours early.
By minimising the risk of causing pain, distress or injury | By ensuring horses and humans are appropriately matched.

2. Regard for the nature of horses

By meeting horse welfare needs such as foraging, freedom and equine company | By respecting the social nature of horses.
By acknowledging that horses may perceive human movements as threatening | By avoiding dominance roles during interactions.

3. Regard for horses' mental and sensory abilities

By acknowledging that horses think, see and hear differently from humans | By keeping the length of training sessions to a minimum.
By not overestimating the horse's mental abilities | By not underestimating the horse's mental abilities.

4. Regard for emotional states

By understanding that horses are sentient beings capable of suffering | By encouraging positive emotional states | By acknowledging that consistency makes horses optimistic for further training outcomes | By avoiding pain, discomfort and/or triggering fear.

5. Correct use of desensitisation methods

By learning to apply correctly systematic desensitisation, over-shadowing, counter-conditioning and differential reinforcement.
By avoiding flooding (forcing the horse to endure aversive stimuli).

6. Correct use of operant conditioning

By understanding that horses will repeat or avoid behaviours according to their consequences | By removing pressures at the onset of a desired response | By minimising delays in reinforcement | By using combined reinforcement | By avoiding punishment.

7. Correct use of classical conditioning

By acknowledging that horses readily form associations between stimuli.
By always using a light signal before a pressure-release sequence.

8. Correct use of shaping

By breaking down training into the smallest achievable steps and progressively reinforcing each step toward the desired behaviour.
By changing the context (trainer, place, signal), one aspect at a time | By planning the training to make it obvious and easy.

9. Correct use of signals or cues

By ensuring the horse can discriminate one signal from another | By ensuring each signal only has one meaning
By timing the signals with limb biomechanics | By avoiding the use of more than one signal at the same time.

10. Regard for self-carriage

By training the horse to maintain gait, tempo, stride length, direction, head, neck and body posture.
By avoiding forcing a posture or maintaining it through relentless signalling (nagging).



This poster is a summary of the First Training Principles. To read the extended version go to:

www.equitationsscience.com