

DAN JAMES & DAN STEERS with Kayla Starnes

LONG-REINING

WITH  **D** DOUBLE DAN
horsemanship



Safe, Controlled Groundwork Techniques
to Build an Effective Partnership on the Ground
and Success in the Saddle

Contents

Foreword by Bo Jena.....	v
YouTube Tutorials	vi
1: Introduction	1
Who We Are	2
Why Long-Reining?.....	4
Before You Get Started.....	6
Safety	7
Introduction to Tack.....	8
How to Hold the Long-Reins	18
How and Where to Stand.....	20



LEVEL ONE

2: Preparing the Trainer and Horse	23
Communication and Feel.....	25
The Bucket Game	26
Long-Reining the Person.....	27
Long-Reining the Person with Cones	30
Desensitizing the Horse to Long-Reins.....	33
Desensitization Adding Movement and Speed	35
3: Advancing to a Bit and Two-Rein Work	39
Lateral Flexion	42
One Inside Rein	45
Distance Control.....	50
Speed Control.....	51
The Stop	51
Two Reins Desensitizing Exercise	52
One Inside Rein, One Direct Rein	55
One Inside Rein, One Direct Rein with Transitions and Stops	58
Two Direct Reins	58
Beyond the Basics of Rein and Whip Management	62

4: Beyond Circles—Advanced Level One Exercises	65
Walking Down the Arena	66
Walking Down the Arena ³ / ₄ Position	68
Walking Down the Arena in the Cones	70
Trainer Changing Positions	72
Lateral Yield.....	73
Lateral Yield Front End	76
Lateral Yield and Changing Direction.....	77
Level One Wrap-Up	80

LEVEL TWO

5: Transitioning to Teaching the Horse	81
Warm-Up	82
Roundness and Softness	83
Roundness and Softness—One Inside Rein, One Direct Rein	86
Roundness and Softness—Two Direct Reins....	89
The Back-Up.....	92
Backing Up with Long-Reins	93



6: Combining Speed, Direction Change, and Spirals 95

- Lightness and Obedience 96
- Serpentine 97
- Coordination..... 99
- Intermediate Lateral Movement.....103
- Intermediate Lateral Movement—Tail to the Fence..... 106
- Intermediate Lateral Movement—Off the Fence.....107
- Level Two Wrap-Up108

8: Speed Control, Transitions, and Obstacles 123

- Speed Control within the Gait124
- Speed Control within the Gait—Canter125
- Controlled Transitions.....129
- Adding Obstacles131
- Adding Obstacles—Distance and Height.....132
- What’s Next?134

9: Advanced Lateral Work 135

- Lateral Movements on the Fence136
- Leg-Yield Back to the Fence140
- Shoulder-In143
- Shoulder-In at the Trot.....144
- Advanced Lateral Movement.....144

10: Pinwheels and Flying Lead Changes 149

- Pinwheel.....150
- Pinwheel at the Trot.....152
- Flying Lead Changes154
- Flying Lead Changes on a Straight Line159
- Level Three Wrap-Up.....162

- Moving On.....163
- Acknowledgments165
- Index.....166

LEVEL THREE

7: Refining Long-Reining 109

- Starting under Saddle 111
- What Level Three Produces.....112
- What Age Can a Horse Begin Level Three?114
- Re-Educating Problem Horses115
- Warm-Up115
- Collection and Extension117
- Next Steps122

3

Advancing to a Bit and Two-Rein Work

Now that you and your horse have established some basic skills and communication, it is time to progress to the second part of Level One. In this chapter, you will add a few more pieces of tack: first, the bridle and bit with one rein and later, a second rein.

With young horses, exchanging the halter for a bridle is something new, and allowing them time to familiarize themselves with the new equipment is fine. Once they adjust to carrying the bit with no fuss, the following exercises teach and test responsiveness to rein pressure. While a trained riding horse will not need this adjustment period, he will still benefit from the next steps in Level One. You are primarily teaching him to carry a bit, follow his nose in a circle, and get used to a person working near him.





Remember, Level One is just as much about training the person as the horse. With this in mind, try to find any areas of your own education that need reinforcement. For example, where you stand, rein management, and whip handling aren't important in the first two exercises in this chapter, but by the time you get to the third exercise where the horse circles you with two reins, they become more crucial (fig. 3.1).



3.1 Level One is mostly about teaching the person instead of the horse. In the first couple of exercises, where you stand, and how you manage the long-reins and handle the whip are less important than the lesson you are teaching the horse. However, as you can see here, once you reach the point where your horse is circling you with two long-reins (see p. 52), you will find you need sharper feel and reflexes, so really begin to focus on improving your form and communication with your horse.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Position

In later exercises, if you get in front of the horse's roller, you'll have trouble doing them successfully. If this is a rare occurrence, you can just get back into position as quickly as possible before your horse notices. But if you consistently notice an issue with your position in relation to the drive line, this is the time to sharpen your feel. First, review the section in chapter 1 that covers the topic (see p. 19). Then, lunge your horse with a halter and regular lunge line. If you'd like to put a roller on your horse to represent the drive line, that's fine, but don't run your line or long-reins through its rings. The roller should only be a visual marker as you practice finding and maintaining your position.

Lateral Flexion

The first exercise in part of Level One is *Lateral Flexion*: simply bringing the horse's nose around to willingly touch or almost touch his shoulder while his feet remain still. What is the purpose of this, you ask? True, you don't see many driving or riding horses standing around just holding their noses to their shoulders. But it is an important exaggerated step that will serve you well later, no matter what you ultimately intend to do with your horse, and certainly when he's learning to long-rein.

Let's explain. At some point, whether you are weaving through cones or riding around a tree, you will need to pick up your rein to ask your horse to change direction by following his nose (figs. 3.2 A & B). History has taught us if we can guide a horse's nose, we guide his feet. And the rein is our most direct way to communicate when long-reining.



3.2 A & B *Once you have taught your horse to touch his nose to his shoulder with a rein cue, he will find curving around cones or trees in long-reins a snap. Remember, where a horse's nose goes, his feet follow.*

However, the faster your horse's feet go, he'll tend to have a slower, duller reaction to your cues. This is natural, but by knowing about it, you can work around the limitation. You do it by asking for an exaggerated response in this exercise, then making that response an automatic habit. Later, when the pressure is on, you can count on getting the smaller reaction that you actually need. In this instance, you want the horse to learn to tip his nose when you pick up softly on the rein so he will curve left or right with rein pressure. By teaching him at a standstill to dramatically swing his head sideways to his shoulder, you can count on getting the slight tip you need once his feet get moving.

If you have practiced lateral flexion with a halter and lead as we teach in our *Ground Control* series, you should find lateral flexion with a bridle a very simple transition. However, if your horse is unfamiliar with the concept, allow more time for him to grasp the idea.

EXERCISE

1. Start by outfitting your horse with a bridle headstall with snaffle bit (see fig. 1.3, p. 9). If you are standing on the horse's left side, attach a single, standard riding rein or short lead rope to the near bit ring on the bridle. You will stand on one side or the other, next to the horse's rib cage where you can easily reach the withers with your horse-side hand, the entire time, so no sense complicating things with extra rein or rope dragging in your way, especially if your horse shuffles around while he's learning.
2. Flip the tail of your rein or rope up over the horse's back, out of the way, leaving a generous loop of slack from the bit. How much slack? When standing on the left side of the horse, if you can reach with your left hand from where you are standing, grasp the rope, and tip the horse's nose *at least* halfway to his shoulder when you move your left hand toward the horse's withers, you're fine. Remove some of the slack in the rein or rope if the one movement of your hand to the withers doesn't do the job. Here's a tip: The spot to grasp is usually about the halfway point on a regular lead rope, and you can tie a string or stick a piece of tape to mark the spot if it helps. The grasp and flex is essentially the role of the left hand.
3. The right hand rests just behind the withers where it is comfortable for you, gently weighing the excess rein or lead rope in place. This is also a safety measure, because if your horse were to become scared and jerk the lead from your left hand, you could quickly grab it with your right hand to prevent him from escaping.
4. Some horses readily grasp this concept, and when you pull the rein or rope toward the withers, they yield to the pressure. Others feel a bit trapped and may move their feet around or pull against you. If this is the case, maintain your position as best you can, neither loosening nor tightening your pull. Waiting gives the horse time to think his way out, and solutions *he* thinks up on his own usually work better than ones you force on him. If you maintain steady pressure and calmly retain your position, your horse will eventually conclude that the best way to feel comfortable is to put slack in the rope himself.

5. Sometimes a horse will tip his nose but still have his feet moving. In this case, don't release your hold until he has softened his nose and is standing completely still. However, when this happens, you do need to be prepared to drop the rein from your left hand immediately, as if it were suddenly a hot potato. Your quick release might be the most important part to teaching this exercise. The horse doesn't care what response you are looking for, he just wants to understand it as quickly as possible in order to feel comfortable again. If you are quick and consistent when releasing pressure, he will become just as quick and consistent performing good behavior to find the reward. The communication between human and horse that we discussed earlier does matter—your horse can only perform as well as you can communicate.
6. Be sure to practice lateral flexion on both sides of your horse. Set up your reins and hands in a mirror image to the first side. Note: Just because your horse can tip his nose to the left lightning fast, doesn't mean he won't be confused when you ask for it to go to the right. People have the ability to comprehend and apply what they've learned in one situation to a new situation. Horses can't as easily. So, when you start working on a new side of his body, you might as well be teaching a new horse.

One Inside Rein

Once your horse has mastered the idea of Lateral Flexion with a bridle and knows the fundamentals of how to do circles (introduced in the advanced desensitization lesson on p. 35), you have the pieces in place to start actual long-reining. The *One Inside Rein* exercise's purpose is to introduce your horse to the driving equipment and techniques of long-reining. It also sets you up for success, starting out very similarly to a typical lungeing exercise, as well as the advanced desensitization lesson from chapter 2, which lets you practice rein management, the use of a whip, and effective leadership before adding the complication of a second rein. When you do add it, you will be ready.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Following the Nose

Most horses naturally follow their noses, but if your horse has a hard time with it, working in a round pen might shorten the learning curve. The fence's shape encourages him into the correct posture and reinforces him learning to circle around you the right way. Then, when you return to an open space, he will pick up a correct circle by habit.

In this exercise, the horse circles around you, just like the exercise in the previous chapter (see p. 35), but, it teaches two very important new ideas that you will use from here on: *distance* and *speed control*.

EXERCISE

1. To begin, you will need a bridle headstall with a bit and a roller on your horse. Attach one long-rein by running it through your near side bit and connecting the end to the lowest ring on the roller. With the horse's head held naturally, you want the rein to make a straight line from the horse's mouth to the roller so you apply as little leverage as possible to the horse while he learns. The finished long-rein will be shaped roughly like a "V" as it runs from the roller to the bit, then out to your hand. You will need to stand behind the horse's drive line for this lesson (figs. 3.3 A–D). This configuration gives you the most control, which we discuss a bit more in depth later in the *Troubleshooting* sidebar on p. 52.
2. Let's say you plan on circling the horse to the left, initially. You set up the long-rein from the roller through the left snaffle ring as described in Step 1, then step back at least a horse-length away to the side and behind your horse's drive line, feeding rein through your left hand as you go. You want enough slack in the long-rein between the bit and your hand so that you aren't tugging on the horse, but it should be tight enough so there's no



3.3 A–D To begin the One Inside Rein exercise, thread one long-rein through the near-side ring on the horse's bit (A) and attach it to the lowest ring on the roller (B & C). You and the long-rein will form a "V"-shape when you take your position just behind the drive line (D).

danger of either of you tripping over the loop. Make sure the long-rein continues to stretch smoothly down from your hand, between your feet, and out behind you.

3. In your right hand, hold your whip, ready to signal the horse to step off. Especially in these first tries, use a carriage whip rather than a lunge whip. You don't want the horse too far from you in case he bolts, so you will keep the circle small. Later, as you both settle into the exercise, you can advance to larger circles, which will require a lunge whip.
4. Tap the whip lightly above the horse's hocks, applying pressure very similarly to when you got the horse comfortable to moving off from a rein cue earlier (p. 36). If needed, ask with a vocal cue and remember to remain consistent with what you use. If your horse is unresponsive, increase whip pressure, tapping as lightly as possible but firmly enough to make your horse move. Ideally, your horse picks up a trot (fig. 3.4). This gait will propel him through the circle without as much danger of a sudden stop as when in the walk. Your horse is also less likely to bolt as he might do if he charged off in a faster canter or lope. If he's not perfect, read on. We cover distance and speed control next.



3.4 Ideally, your horse picks up a trot as you first ask him to move forward in the One Inside Rein exercise. This gait allows the momentum needed to carry him through most lessons, but prevents the possible runaway at higher speeds. If you find your horse moves off too slow or fast, Level One will teach you how to rate him or develop speed control.

TROUBLESHOOTING

One Inside Rein

- Remember, when your horse travels small circles, such as in the One Inside Rein exercise, your long-rein will bunch and twist under your feet (see fig. 2.7, p. 37). Even though it doesn't have a second long-rein to tangle with, we recommend stopping to straighten it now and then, especially when you are changing direction. It only takes a moment to smooth it back out, and this habit will prevent you from tripping. It also gives you and your horse a bit of a break to catch your breath. This is important for unconditioned horses that aren't used to much exercise.
- We can't stress enough, stay *behind the drive line* to keep your horse moving forward. Driving pressure applied by stepping toward your horse's head or tapping his shoulder with the whip encourages him to change direction, slow down, or stop.
- If you are communicating correctly but your horse isn't understanding, slow your movements down. Once he understands, you can start to speed cues back up. If doing things more slowly isn't helping, don't be afraid to go back to earlier lessons. Get excellent responses there, and you'll be surprised how much better your horse performs the One Inside Rein when you revisit it.
- On the other hand, maybe you have a horse that learns too quickly. Sometimes, he starts anticipating maneuvers like the stop. To fix this, don't stop him in the same place. Switch it up every time, and if he starts to halt without being asked, use your whip just above the hocks to drive him forward.
- If at any time, you feel uncomfortable or like you are losing control, pull on your long-rein. It's set up at this point in a way that gives you the most control, and a pull brings the horse's nose right around to get him stopped. It's the most basic, direct control of the horse's face. In fact, we sometimes call this inside long-rein setup a "safety rein," because that's what it does. It even works when your body position isn't perfect, because you can't over-pull the horse with this configuration.