

Side Walker Responsibilities Fall 2020

Please arrive 15-20 minutes BEFORE the lesson starts.

When You Arrive...Wait in your car for your greeter to meet you.

WASH HANDS and SIGN IN

Please get your nametag on the first day at the sign in table (if you do not have it already) and leave it in your car for future lessons.

Your greeter or instructor will let you know when your rider is called. Please practice social distancing and stay at your numbered area at all times.

If you get back in your car, you will need to WASH HANDS again.

Horse handlers and horses will generally enter the arena, walk down the right wall as far as possible, turn left, come up the center line, and line horses up to await mounting. Clients mount one at a time.

Follow instructor's directions on where to stand and what to do - escorting a client up to the ramp, helping get someone out of a chair, lifting a leg over the saddle, or just waiting at the end of the mounting area. When the rider is ready, instructor will prompt the rider to ask (if possible) the horse to "walk on" with physical support as instructed. Please ask permission to touch the rider FIRST. Any adjustment of stirrups or rider position should be done in the center of the ring (not at the ramp) where the instructor will also double-check the girth.

During the Lesson

Your job is to keep the rider as secure as possible, but you need to keep yourself safe too! In general, position yourself next to the rider's leg - NOT at the back of the saddle - even if you are not holding onto their leg. Always move slowly and quietly. If you need to switch sides: depending on the stability of your rider, you will need to communicate with your team, stop, come into the center, and/or ask the instructor for help, then pass in front of the horse, never behind.

Learn the "hand over thigh" hold -face front, fingers holding front of saddle, forearm resting on rider's thigh. For extra stability, place your other hand on the rider's ankle. You may need to do this consistently for the entire lesson, for only part of the class (e.g., during trots), or not at all. When using gait belts, avoid hanging on to strap or resting your elbow on the horse's back.

As a side walker you are an extension of the instructor. Try not to talk over your instructor, but you do want to make sure the rider understands the task to be performed. You may need to quietly repeat or reinforce what the instructor has said ("Shorten your reins" "Put both hands on your helmet"). Talk quietly to the other side walkers and the horse handler.

If the rider has wiggled their feet to ask the horse to walk, you might say "nice job squeezing your legs" so your horse handler know it's OK to walk on.

Be safety conscious and aware of what is happening with the client and the horse. If the client needs more time or does not understand the task, if a rider is leaning to one side, if a horse is uncomfortable (pinned ears, swishing tail, head raised) share this information with your team. Do not be afraid to take the initiative and work together to resolve a problem. If you need the attention of the instructor, bring your team into center, stop, and let the instructor know you need help.

Be aware of your client's balance. Correct a rider's position by moving their pelvis and torso, not their arm. If the rider slides toward you, try to push him back to the midline of the saddle/horse; if he slides away from you, encourage the other side walker to push the rider back.

Help clients "own their ride." Give riders the opportunity to learn, to do, and to make mistakes. Give them the time to process and perform the task (each rider will vary).

Dismounting and After Class

Dismounting usually happens in the center of ring, at the ramp, or on the rubber mat. The instructor will tell you where to stand (e.g., beside, not directly in front of, horse) and what to do (e.g., help lift rider's leg over back of horse).

After the rider dismounts, when appropriate, walk the client back to the caregiver/parent.

Client and caregiver/parent BOTH must SIGN OUT and WASH HANDS

WASH HANDS is the last thing you do when you leave the Farm.