

# PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES FOR LUNGEING THE HORSE

We all know that equestrian sports, and dressage no less than any other, bear an inherent risk of mishaps and accidents. Even if we know our equine partner well and have mutual trust, we must bear in mind that nowhere else can Murphy's Law strike as unpredictably as in the horse world. Everybody involved with horses should act with care and circumspection to avoid disaster. This is particularly important for the professional since he/she is a role model for students and observers alike.

To mitigate the risks to all involved it is of crucial importance that safety factors are considered in all aspects of the handling and training of horses.

Unsuitable or uncomfortably fitting tack, as well as improper use of equipment, can provoke the horse into unforeseen reactions, not only endangering the horse itself, but also the student and the trainer. Frequently this may result in litigation, or the destruction of a reputation or a career.

Among other things, this program advises on safety guidelines that must be observed not only at the official USDF testing, but should be standard practice at everybody's home base.

## Safety Factors

- Teach the horse to always **walk** away from the trainer (not rush away)
- Proper condition of equipment
  - \* No bad stitching or worn-out patches on tack, especially side reins or lunge line.
  - \* Buckles and snaps secure.
- Proper fit of equipment
  - \* Check bit and noseband.
  - \* Reins done up or taken off.
  - \* Cavesson correct height, not chafing, eye strap tight.
  - \* Lunge girth, appropriate number of rings.
  - \* Side reins at correct length for unfamiliar, young or well-schooled horse.
  - \* Stirrups run up or taken off.
  - \* Boots or bandages secure.
- Lunge line held correctly
  - \* It is desirable to make a bridge.
  - \* Make neat loops.
  - \* Do not wrap lunge line around your wrists or hand.
  - \* Do not get your fingers twisted in the lunge line.
  - \* Do not let the lunge line trail on the ground.
- Handle the whip correctly
  - \* Never put the whip on the ground.
  - \* Do not let the whip trail on the ground.
  - \* Do not poke the tip into the ground.
  - \* Do not get your feet tangled in the lash.
  - \* Remove knots from the lash.
- Attire
  - \* Must wear a safety helmet.
  - \* Wear properly fitting gloves.
  - \* Do not wear spurs.
  - \* Riding boots or paddock boots are preferable.
  - \* Do not lunge in tennis or running shoes.
  - \* Shoes should have ankle support and have a firm-grip sole.

# Choosing a Location to Lunge

## *Enclosed area*

To ensure that the horse never learns he can get away from the trainer, particularly when working with youngsters or re-schooling projects, it is essential that the lungeing ring has some type of fencing around it.

When working in an indoor arena, partition the lunge area off with panels or jump standards and poles. Ideal size is 20 meters in diameter.

## *Footing*

Footing should be secure and springy but not too deep. Footing should not be slippery. It must be leveled regularly as the movement of the horses will fling it to the outside, creating a slope/mound. If the horse is constantly worked on this slope, it could cause unsoundness.

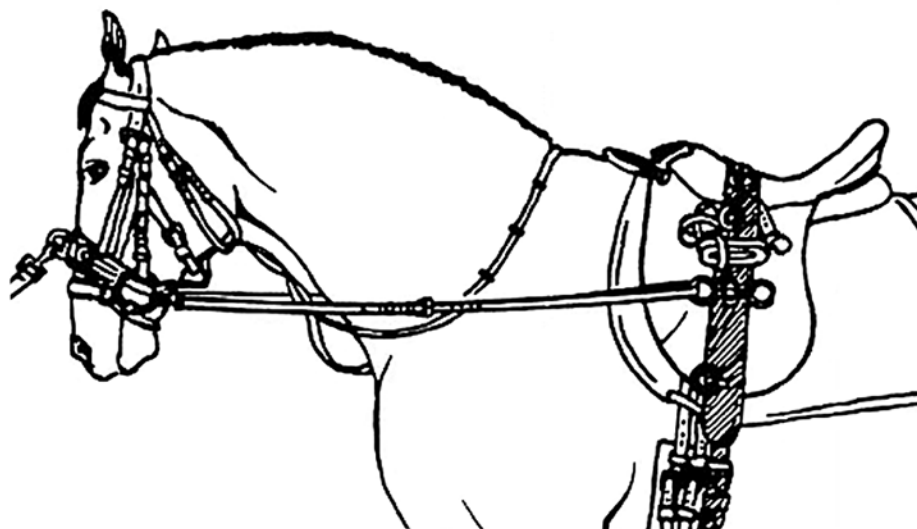
## *Size of diameter*

Even if space is a problem, bear in mind that the lungeing ring should not be smaller than 15 meters in diameter. The smaller the circle, the more wear and tear on the horse's legs.

# Considerations for the Health of the Horse

Because moving on a consistent circle can be quite strenuous, please remember:

- The smaller the circle, the greater the stress on the joints.
- The circle should not be smaller than 15 meters in diameter for the average horse.
- A very free moving horse should have a circle larger than 15 meters.
- To enhance collection of a well-balanced horse, the circle can be made smaller (10 meters) for short periods only.
- Lunge on level footing.
- Change direction every 5 – 7 minutes.
- Give short breaks at the walk, but remember not to walk too much if the side reins are short.

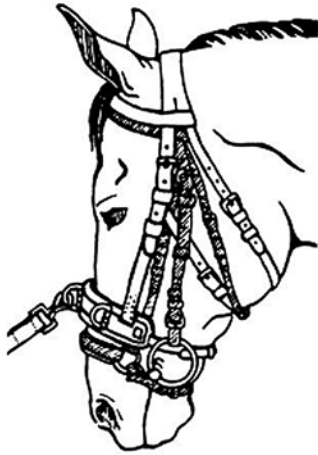


*Figure 1*

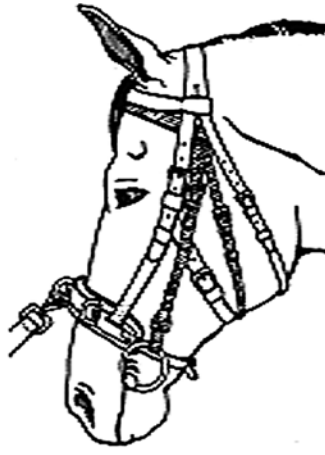
Horse correctly equipped with tack for lungeing without a rider.

## Lungeing Equipment & Proper Fit

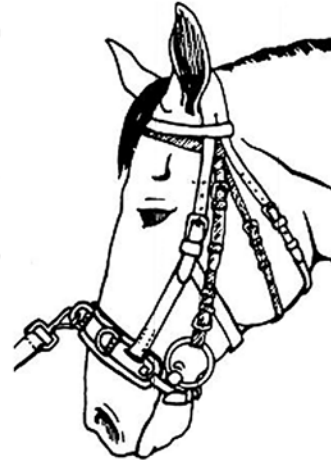
- Bridle with:
  - \* Thick snaffle bit.
  - \* Reins intertwined through the throat latch when lungeing horse alone. For lungeing horse with rider, see *Lungeing the Rider on Horse*, practical directives, (p. 14).
  - \* Dropped noseband. (A regular cavesson noseband could interfere with lungeing cavesson.) (See Fig. 2A)
  - \* No noseband, but adjust the lungeing cavesson accordingly. (See Fig. 2B & 2C)



**2A.**  
**Lungeing cavesson fitted correctly on bridle with dropped noseband.**



**2B.**  
**Method of fitting lungeing cavesson with a bridle without a noseband.**



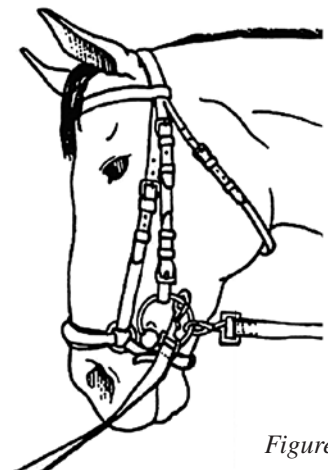
**2C.**  
**Another method of fitting lungeing cavesson with a bridle without a noseband. Not very common.**

- Saddle, with the stirrups run up and securely fastened or taken off.
- Lungeing cavesson of good quality and not too broad with throat latch (optional) and eye strap to keep the cavesson from slipping into the horse's eye.
- Lungeing surcingle (or roller) with several rings at various levels.
- Lunge line, preferably 10 meters (33-35 ft.), but no shorter than 7 meters.
- A lunge whip with lash long enough to reach the horse on a circle that is between 15 and 20 meters in diameter. A 'Telewhip' is recommended, but any whip that fulfills this requirement is also acceptable.
- Side reins.
- Standard (plain leather).
- With rubber donuts.
- Sliding side reins (as training tool).
- Boots or bandages.

## Correct Use of Equipment

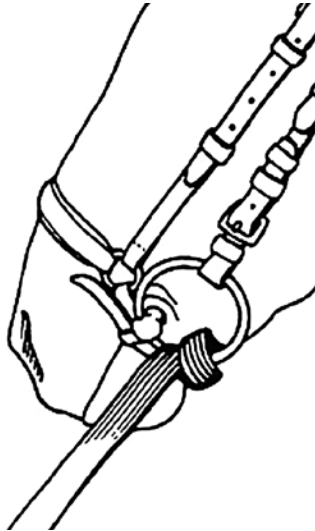
### *The Lunge Line*

- Purpose: The line is a substitute for the reins and rider's hands.
- Material: Use cotton or jute, because nylon slips.
- Attachment:
  - \* It is strongly recommended that a lungeing cavesson be used. This is the least severe method, because it preserves the sensitivity of the horse's mouth. The line should be attached to the center ring of the lungeing cavesson.

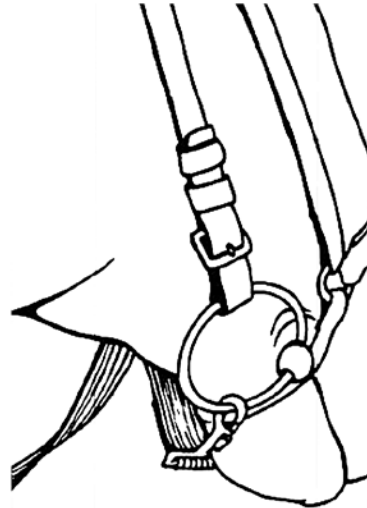


*Figure 3*

- \* There are times when lungeing without a lungeing cavesson is warranted, e.g. when it doesn't fit, or when the horse runs through it (does not respect it). You may also attach the lunge line to the bit rather than the cavesson when long-reining and doing work-in-hand. (see Fig. 3)
- \* If lungeing cavesson is not used, the following are acceptable.
  - a. Send line through inside bit ring, wrapping around the ring once, then under the chin and clipped to the bit ring on the far side (see Fig. 4A & 4B).



*Figure 4A.*  
**Method 3b near side**

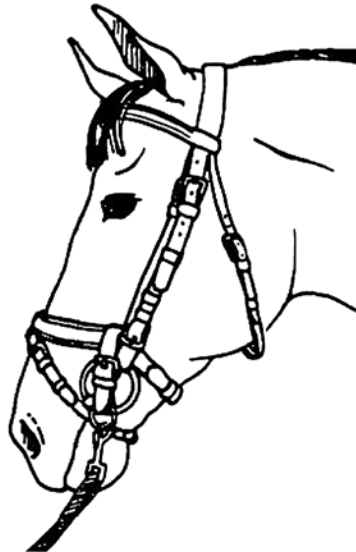


*Figure 4B.*  
**Method 3b off side**

- b. Attach a leather thong to the end of the lunge line that will go through the inside bit ring and nose band together (see Fig. 5A & 5B). **This method is preferable to 4A & 4B.**



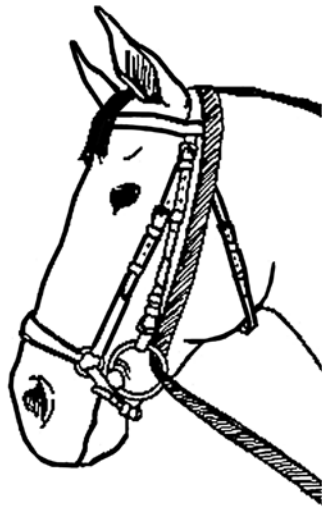
*Figure 5A.*  
**Method 3a with dropped noseband**



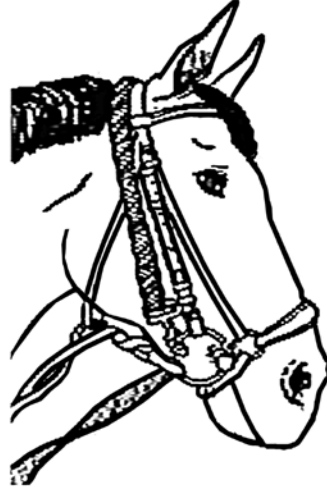
*Figure 5B.*  
**Method 3a with flash noseband**

**Both methods only recommended when lungeing cavesson does not fit the horse.**

- c. Send line through bit ring, over the poll, down to the outside bit ring. This attachment acts like a gag. It is severe and should only be used for special circumstances (see *Fig. 6A & 6B*).



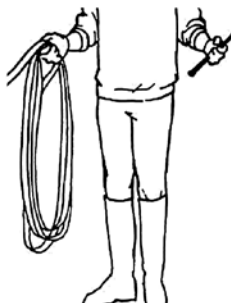
*Figure 6A.*  
**Method 3c near side**



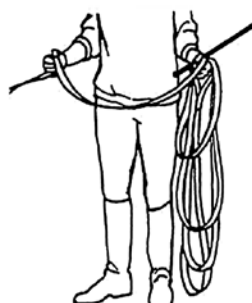
*Figure 6B.*  
**Method 3c off side**

- **Holding the Lunge Line**

- \* The hand holding the lunge line should be pointing just slightly in front of the horse's head. It is permissible to hold the lunge like a rein as when riding. Trainer's elbows should be bent.
- \* Neat loops in one hand, whip in the other. (See *Fig. 7*)
- \* Cascading loops with bridge (hand nearest the horse's head holds line, but bulk of the line is held in the whip hand). **This is the safest method.** (See *Fig. 8*)
- \* Looped back and forth across the palm. (See *Fig. 9*)



*Figure 7*



*Figure 8*



*Figure 9*

- **Feel**

- \* The lunge line must have a consistent bungy-cord-like connection. Remember, the lunge line is a substitute for the reins! Do not let it trail on the ground. Quickly take up any slack which might develop in unusual circumstances.
- \* Short tugs on the lunge line, together with the voice, slow the horse down.
- \* Horizontal "snake lines" have the same, but softer effect.
- \* Vertical "snake lines" together with the whip pointing towards the shoulder make the horse go out on a larger circle.

- **Storage:** When the lunging is finished, put the line away in neat loops with the end rolled around and passed through (see *Fig. 10*).

## The Lunge Whip

- Purpose: **The horse should accept the whip as an aid and not run from it.** Remember, the whip is a substitute for the rider's leg.
- Length: The whiplash must be long enough to reach the horse.
- Technique
  - \* Frame the horse between the lunge line and the whip (**making a triangle**). Maintain an elastic arm with a bend in the elbow. Follow the horse's movement with soft swinging motions with the whip.
  - \* When the whip is lifted, the horse should respond with increased forward drive. If there is no response, a downward/upward motion towards the horse may be used. For additional impulsion, flick the lash towards the quarters in the direction of the hocks. Do not crack the whip. Also use your voice (see 3b).
  - \* If the horse spirals in the center of the circle, flick the lash towards the shoulder together with vertical "snake lines" on the lunge line.
  - \* When the horse is going too fast, a combination of pointing the whip towards the front of the horse while stepping in the same direction will encourage it to slow. However, caution must be taken with this method. Also use voice (see 3c).
- Holding the whip when not in use
  - \* NEVER put the whip on the ground.
  - \* When not needed, such as when approaching the horse and when adjusting tack, the handle should be placed under the armpit with the lash end pointing to the back.
- Horses afraid of whip
  - \* When first introducing the whip to the horse and when handling horses which are fearful of the whip, familiarize and de-sensitize them first in the stable. Treats such as sugar and carrots will help!
  - \* The horse should allow itself to be stroked with the whip (with lash secured) in the center of the arena before going to work.
  - \* When lunging a fearful horse, at first, hold the lash together with the whip handle and follow the movement of the horse holding the whip still.



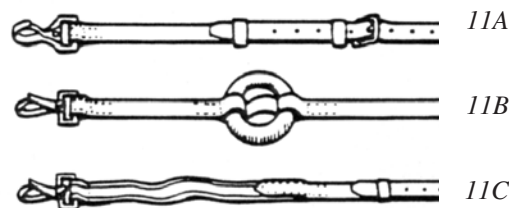
Figure 10

## The Voice

- **Purpose:** The voice forms the "bridge" between the whip and the lunge line. Remember, the voice is a substitute for the rider's seat.
- **To animate:** The voice, alone or in combination with the whip, can be used to animate the horse. Use higher, sharper tone of voice to animate.
- **To calm:** The voice, alone or in combination with the lunge line, can be used to calm the horse. Use lower tone, drawing out the vowels to calm the horse.
- **To praise**
- **Word choice:** Consistently use the same commands: walk, trot, canter, halt.
- **Use sparingly:** Do not babble or tell your horse fairy tales when you lunge, he will tune you out and stop listening to the commands when it matters.

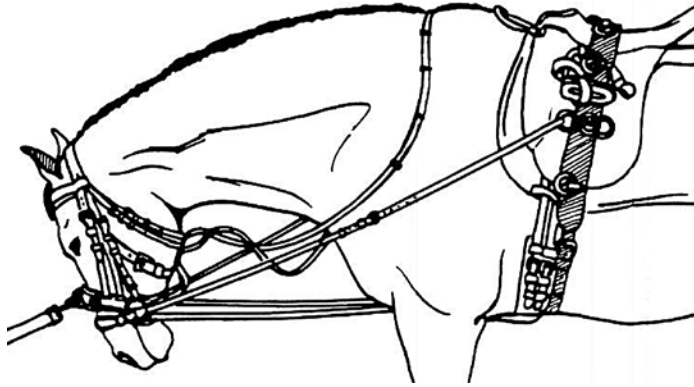
## The Side Reins

- Leather standard solid rein (no elastic)  
To be used only with advanced horses and work-in-hand (see Fig. 11A).
- Leather, with rubber donuts  
Can be used for all horses, as they provide elasticity (see Fig. 11B).
- Leather, with elastic inserts  
They are only useful for very green horses and horses that are not yet ready to accept a contact. In some cases they can also teach a horse to jerk against the bit (see Fig. 11C).
- Nylon side reins  
Unless they have a break-away feature, are not recommended because they are dangerous in an emergency situation.



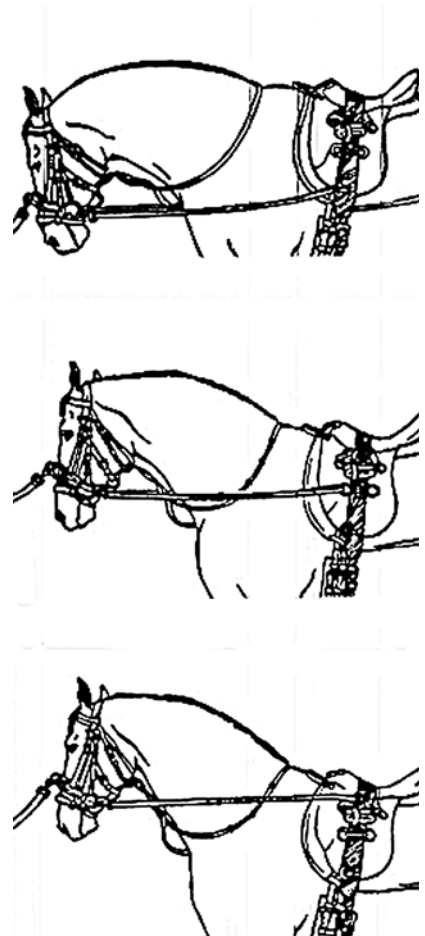
## Sliding Side Reins

- Are very helpful when working horses with conformation shortcomings or re-schooling projects. They can be attached in a variety of ways (see *Fig. 12 and p 24*).



*Figure 12*  
**Sliding side reins can be used to stretch the nuchal ligament.**

- When and How to Attach Side Reins
  - \* It is recommended that the horse be brought into the lungeing area, and then the side reins are hooked up to the bit rings. It is not recommended that the horse be walked into the area with the side reins already hooked up to the bit, unless there are special circumstances.
  - \* First, clip the outside side rein to the bit ring, then clip the inside one. Attach the side rein below the reins on the bit ring. At the end of the lunge session unclip them from the bit in reverse order and re-clip to the D-rings on the pommel or to the lungeing girth.
  - \* With an unfamiliar or novice horse, take care to adjust the side reins to an appropriate longer length, to avoid panic. When the horse shows acceptance of the side reins, they may be shortened as required.
- Length of Side Reins
  - \* The level of training of the horse and the degree of collection determines the length of the side reins.
  - \* Both side reins should be of equal length. Stand in front of the horse. Hook your index finger into both bit rings and pull them towards you. Make sure the horse's neck is straight. Counting the number of holes is not a reliable method, as leather stretches differently.
- Attachment
  - \* Generally, with younger horses, use the lower rings on the lunge girth. The length should allow the horse's nose to be well in front of the vertical.
  - \* With more advanced horses, the side reins should be on the higher rings and the length should keep the nose line just in front of or on the vertical. Even with advanced horses, it is advisable to start off lower and longer and move to a higher and shorter position if appropriate (see *Fig. 13A, B, & C*)

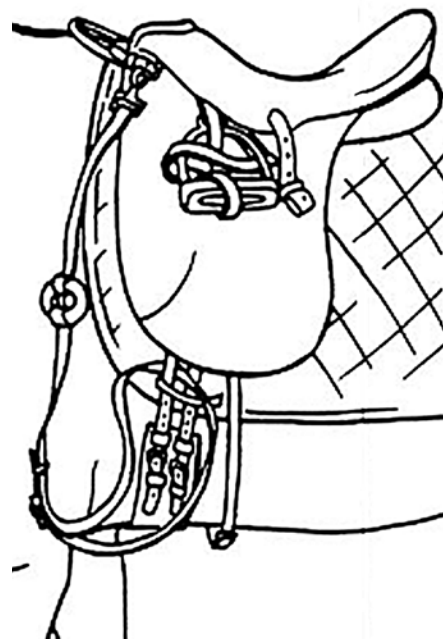


*Figure 13 A, B, & C*

- \* Carefully observe the horse's way of going (bear in mind the pyramid of training). This should provide clues as to the best way of attachment and length of the side reins. Make appropriate choices.
- \* When using the saddle only: attach the side reins so they cannot slip down towards the horse's elbow-above the keepers of the saddle pad and through one billet only (see *Fig. 14*).

## The Position of the Trainer

- Trainer should remain in the center of the circle, pivoting on the heel.
  - \* The reason for this is because one of the goals of lunging is to teach the horse to go on an accurate circle, accepting an even bend and not to fall in or out of the circle.
  - \* Occasionally a situation may develop when it is not advisable to stay on the pivot, but the trainer must resume pivoting as soon as possible.
- With young horses or a re-schooling project, it is often necessary to have an assistant.
- If the horse gets strong, do not bend from the hip forward, it is a sure way to lose your balance. You should brace against the pivot and bring the other leg back, bending at the knee for extra leverage.
- Frame the horse between the lunge line and whip (triangle).
- The trainer's shoulder should be approximately in line with the horse's shoulder.
- The hand holding the lunge line should be pointing slightly in front of the horse's head.
- The horse must stay in front of the aids.
- If the trainer gets in front of the horse, it has the effect of slowing the horse down and in some cases he may even turn around. If this is about to happen, immediately leave the pivot and get behind the horse (get the horse in front of you).



*Figure 14*

A safe method to stirrups and side reins.

## Changing Direction

- Procedure
  - \* The horse should halt on the circumference of the circle and stay out as the trainer approaches.
  - \* Place the whip under the armpit with the tip pointing to the rear.
  - \* Walk towards the horse in a calm but purposeful manner, gathering up the lunge line in neat loops without letting it droop on the ground.
  - \* This is a good time to reward the horse with a pat and/or a treat.
- Other Methods
  - \* Young Horses
    - \* Lead a young horse into the center, change over the whip and lunge line, let the horse **walk** away from you. Stand by the shoulder, allowing the horse to pass in front of you. Follow his progress with a quiet movement of the whip, but do not touch him with the whip to avoid getting kicked.
  - \* Advanced Horses
    - \* Follow the previous method, or walk toward the horse, change over the lunge line and whip and let him do a turn on the forehand to change direction.