

GENERAL INFO FOR NEW STUDENTS

What equipment will I/ my child need?

Please note that it is the law in Ontario to have proper headgear and foot wear for riding.

Helmets- All students must wear a correctly-fitting, ASTM-certified riding helmet. There are a limited number of helmets available to borrow, but we strongly suggest you buy your own. Bicycle helmets are not suitable for horseback riding.

Boots - must have a well-defined heel to prevent the foot from becoming lodged in the stirrup.

Breeches - Leggings or sweat pants without inseams that may rub can be worn instead of breeches, but breeches are designed for riding and are very comfortable. Jeans are not recommended.

Gloves are recommended year-long but are a must during the cold weather.

Tops - Form-fitting tops should be worn tucked in.

Riders should dress for the weather in layers with sweaters that zip or front-button so they can be easily removed or put on while the student is helmeted and mounted. Jackets must be zipped up if they are worn while riding.

Riding apparel is available at several area tack shops: Apple Saddlery, Greenhawk, D.M. Supplies. Some tack shops have a second hand section where you can purchase items at a cheaper cost than buying new, as well they will help you sell any outgrown items.

HAIR must be kept out of the face by being tied back. No gum chewing allowed while riding.

Can I feed treats to the horse I ride?

Horses love carrots and apples. But having said that, we prefer that no treats be brought to the stable. We have had horses choke on treats, and they can die from this.

How do I register for the first time?

Centaur offers riding lessons in 12-week sessions. A half-hour private assessment lesson will be needed before assigning a newcomer with prior experience to an appropriate class. Lessons are booked directly through Shirley and must be accompanied by payment. E-mail info@centaurridingschool.com or call 613 835-2237. Application forms and lesson price lists are available in the tack room or from the web site. Before the first lesson, an acceptance of risk form will need to be signed by the student (or the parent/guardian of children under 18).

What are Quiet Days?

Lessons are sold in blocks of 12 held over a three (3) month period. However, each 3 month period consists of a varying number of weeks - some have 12 weeks, some have 13 weeks, and once in a while there are even 14 weeks in a given 3-month period. For this reason, each session will have one or two "Quiet Days" meaning that there will be no classes held on those particular days. On these days we sometimes plan other activities such as horse shows, which all are welcome to attend, or rider level exams. Quiet Days are listed on the opening page of the website, are posted in the tackroom, arena and on the daily schedule sheets. If you do not know where to look please ask for assistance and someone will be happy to help you.

If I need to miss a lesson, can I make it up another time?

You have up to one year to make-up properly cancelled lessons. As long as you are riding at Centaur this opportunity is open to you. It's the rider's responsibility to look on the Make-up Sheet on the Schedule Board for riding opportunities. Sign-up is on a first-come basis. Full instructions on how to do make-ups are posted on the Schedule Board and website. If a student needs to miss a lesson, please call or email Shirley or leave a note in her tack room mailbox at least 48 hours in advance. Lesson scheduling is done through Shirley only, not through your instructor.

How do I register for the next session (current students)?

By the 5th of the month preceding start of next session, current students are reminded via email to let Shirley know their plans for the next session. A discount is offered to "on-time" sign-ups. To ensure a spot in the next session, a note indicating the preferred lesson day & time accompanied by payment (full, or booking fee plus post-dated cheques) - payable to Shirley Guertin - must be given by due date.

How are horses assigned?

Horse assignments are posted on the schedule board. The instructors consider many factors when assigning horses including the riders' size and skill, and the horses' temperaments, workloads, training. Each horse will teach you something. Asking is all right, but please don't demand that you (or your child) ride (or not ride) certain horses.

How much weight can a horse carry?

The amount of weight that a horse can carry varies depending on the horse's own size and strength, but in general a horse can not comfortably carry a rider of more than 180 lbs. If you are a large rider, please let Shirley know this when you are

booking your assessment lesson so that we can determine which horse would be most suitable for you to ride. We may not have a suitable horse.

What is the level of progression for Beginner Riders under age of 12?

Riders under the age of 12 normally start in the Horsemanship for Children program, then progress onto the Horsemanship for Youth program, and then onto beginner group lessons.

At what time should I arrive for my lesson ? (non-horsemanship lessons)

Grooming, saddling, bridling the horse are part of every ride. Students should arrive a minimum of 30 min. before their scheduled lesson to allow ample time to get the horse ready; i.e., be in the tack room at 6:00 for 6:30 lesson.

Beginners who are learning the grooming and tacking up skills will be told from week to week when to arrive for their lesson. The arrival time will get earlier as they master more tasks which they can complete by themselves. When they have mastered all the preparation tasks they should also arrive at least half an hour prior to lesson time to prepare their horse.

At what time should I arrive for my lesson ? (horsemanship lessons)

Horsemanship riders should arrive at the scheduled start time, not _ hour before.

What is expected of me in the stable before and after my riding lesson?

Students are responsible for caring for their horse and equipment. Horses need to be thoroughly groomed before and after each ride, and haltered. All equipment must be put away clean. The students' work areas must also be left swept and tidy.

What are the free lessons given on Saturdays, and can I take part?

On Saturdays grooming, horse-handling and tacking up lessons are offered to beginner riders at set times, free of charge. These lessons enable beginners to practice these skills with an instructor present. This is a great opportunity for beginners to acquire more hands-on experience with horses. Let the grooming instructor know why you are there upon your arrival.

How can I learn more about horses and riding?

Equine-Canada (EC) is the governing body for equestrian pursuits in Canada. The Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF) deals with provincial matters. New riders will find EC Rider Manuals helpful in learning the fundamentals of horse care and riding. These manuals are available for sale at tack stores or from the OEF directly. Also recommended is the book The Principles of Riding from the

German Equestrian Federation. For Francophones, La position et les aides is a helpful guide.

I am a parent and I would like to participate in my young child's riding activities. What can I do?

For safety and stable management reasons, only riders and Centaur staff are permitted in the stable. Parents can drop off their children at the tack room, and family and friends are invited to watch lessons from the comfort of the Lounge or from the stands in the arena. Parents should be sure to keep informed of Centaur's activities and registration dates by reading the posted information in the tackroom and checking their email.

Other ways you can ensure your child benefits to the maximum from the lessons are:

- 1) Teach your child how to do and undo buckles and snaps. In this age of Velcro, many kids have never had to do this. All horse equipment involves buckles and snaps.
- 2) Practice teaching them left from right.
- 3) Equine-Canada is the governing body for equestrian pursuits in Canada. New riders will find EC Rider Level 1 Manual helpful. These manuals are available for sale at tack stores.
- 4) Make sure your child is on time for each lesson.
- 5) Try really hard to not miss any lessons.
- 6) Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for each lesson. (We ask that the HFC students bring a pair of soft-soled running shoes as well as their riding boots to each lesson.)

Are parents allowed to go in the stable area?

We ask that parents refrain from entering the stable area. However, parents of Horsemanship riders will be invited on occasion for a "parent/teacher" "show & tell" session. You will be invited into the stables on those days to watch your children preparing their horses for their lesson. We want to show you what your children have been learning and the progress they are making. This is your chance to ask any questions directly to the coaches.

Are there seasonal considerations for horse care?

Horses should be sponge-bathed after lessons in summer; dried off with straw and/or a cooler in winter. Students will be told about special seasonal considerations by their instructor.

How does Centaur accommodate students with different motivations and goals?

Adults, pre-teens, teenagers and young children have different equestrian interests and goals -- some seem to enjoy the time spent with the horses in the stable as much, and in some instances, even more than riding. Some students are interested in competing and others want the recognition associated with earning certificates for their achievements. Others want to be with horses for animal-loving, leisure, fitness or recreational reasons. Some students like to learn more about barn operations. Let Shirley know your (or your child's) equestrian motivations and goals and Centaur will formulate a riding and theory plan based on those goals.

HORSEMANSHIP PROGRAM

What is the Horsemanship Program?

The Horsemanship program is an educational riding program for children.

The Horsemanship program is divided in two:

- 1) Horsemanship for Youth (HFY) - for 8 yrs and up
- 2) Horsemanship for Children (HFC) - for 6 & 7 yr olds

The programs are designed for children who have never ridden before. Classes are taught in groups. Children are taught the basics of horses and riding.

What do horsemanship students learn?

Horsemanship students engage in a safe, step-by-step educational process of: learning about equine breeds, instincts, behaviour, anatomy, colours, markings; gaining experience in handling horses from the ground; developing the skills to groom, saddle and bridle; becoming aware of stable management practices including watering, feeding, turnout, veterinary and farrier care; and, being taught how to become an effective, balanced rider who can correctly and tactfully apply the aids for moving in harmony with the horse.

What is the progression from horsemanship to regular lessons?

Centaur's step-by-step learn-to-ride program adheres to the Equine Canada national standards for horsemanship and riding. It starts with horsemanship for children (HFC). From HFC, students move to horsemanship for youth (HFY), then to Saturday morning beginner group riding lessons and then Saturday afternoon group lessons. A keen, tiny ten-year-old may be able to trot a horse around the arena but be too small to lift the saddle or tighten the girth. Children may spend one year or more in the HFC or HFY program. Many

parents say taking horsemanship and riding lessons helps their son or daughter become more organized and responsible at home and at school.

How soon will my child be ready to ride in regular lessons?

How quickly your child masters the skills required to graduate from horsemanship classes depends on the child's individual maturity, size, strength, ability to focus, organize time and tasks and follow instruction. In essence, when the student is able to get their horse ready for their riding lesson independently and on time, they can register for regular riding lessons.

When will my child be ready to move from HFC to HFY?

The majority of six-, seven- and even many eight-year-olds, are not physically or mentally ready to go on to the more demanding class where they are expected to concentrate on learning how to handle horses, groom, tack-up, ride, un-tack, clean and put away their equipment independently.

Every once in a while, a child comes along with sufficient motivation, maturity and strength, who seems to have potential beyond the scope of HFC, but generally it is doing them a disfavor to push them into the next level -- HFY. It can also cause social problems in the HFY class because younger children need a different kind of attention and style of instruction.

Why did Centaur introduce the HFC classes?

The typical 6 and 7 year-old has a relatively short attention span so the HFC program is designed to provide horse-loving children with a closely supervised, safe, fun, educational introduction to horses, horsemanship and riding. Even older children who participate in Saturday morning classes at the next level, Horsemanship For Youth, are often distracted by cats, dogs, their own thoughts about an afternoon birthday party or family outing! Our Saturday morning instructors patiently coax students in horsemanship classes not to dawdle and remind them to stay on task and on time (you know what it can be like to make sure the children get out to the school bus on time in the morning!

What happens on Parents' Days?

On Parents' Days parents are welcomed into the stable. You'll have the opportunity to ask the instructors about your son or daughter's progress and, if you're interested, to try using the different grooming tools and learning more about what's involved in saddling, bridling and horse and tack care.

Here are some questions that Parents typically ask:

Are parents allowed to go in the stable area?

For safety reasons, we ask that parents refrain from entering the stable area. However, parents of Horsemanship riders will be invited on occasion for a “parent/teacher” or “show & tell” session. You will be invited into the stables on those days to watch your children preparing their horses for their lesson. We want to show you what your children have been learning and the progress they are making. This is your chance to ask any questions directly to the coaches.

How much of the hour-and-a-half HFY lesson will be spent actually riding?

The students will get on the horses each week, but the first lessons in the 12-week session will have a greater proportion of time spent in the stable. As the Horsemanship students learn the stable skills and become more efficient at getting ready to ride, more time is spent in the arena. Focused students will get ahead of the distracted ones, and of course, the older children generally have an advantage over the younger ones.

Why are the children spending so much time in the stable?

One thing parents frequently ask is what percentage of the lesson is allocated to riding time versus un-mounted tasks in the barn. The time spent in the stable is, at this stage in the development of an equestrian, more important than the time spent in the saddle. This is where the children are taught how to safely and correctly approach, halter, lead, turn, tie, move (forwards, sideways, backwards), groom, saddle, bridle and un-tack their assigned horse. They also learn the importance of caring for the horse’s feet, sweeping their work area, and cleaning and putting away all their equipment.

An HFC curriculum is available upon request.

HORSEMANSHIP FOR YOUTH

What do HFY students learn during the in-stable part of the lesson?

At this level, the time spent in the stable is essential. This is where the children learn the different skills such as approaching a horse, putting a halter on a horse, leading a horse, tying a horse in the crossties, grooming using all the different brushes, picking out the feet using a hoof pick, sweeping their area, organizing all the necessary equipment they will need for tacking up, saddling, bridling, leading their horse to the riding arena and untacking their horse after the mounted part of the lesson. The equipment varies from horse to horse providing an additional challenge. The children are shown how to do all the above skills, while staying focused and managing their time efficiently. Some skills needed to accomplish the above are: how to find the necessary equipment for each horse; how to carry their tack; how to operate stall door latches and saddle racks; how to do up and un-do buckles and snaps; how to sweep; how to ask their horse to move forwards, backwards, sideways and lift up its feet. Many HFY students need help: lifting the saddle onto the horse's back; doing up the girth; putting the bit in the horse's mouth; and organizing the sequence of steps to prepare for riding lessons in a timely manner. HFY instructors oversee pre- and post-lesson activities in the barn and tack room.

What do HFY students learn during the riding part of the lesson?

In the arena, HFY students learn: the protocols and rules for safe riding in a group; the fundamentals of English equitation; how to identify and maintain safe distances between horses on the ground and at the walk; how to prepare to mount/dismount; how to get on/off the horse correctly; adjust the stirrup length; hold and shorten the reins; steer at the walk; and to begin following the horse's motion at the trot.

When will my child be ready for the one-hour Beginner Group class?

Children mature physically and mentally at different rates. Some seven-year-olds who have had previous riding experience but little or no practice with grooming, saddling and bridling may be ready for a Beginner Group after one HFY session. After two consecutive HFY sessions - six months with regular attendance - a strong, determined nine-year old who has no previous experience with horses may have developed the technical and organizational skills to prepare for and ride in lessons with the degree of independence expected of students in Beginner Groups. A self-confident, exceptionally focused six-year-old who starts in HFC may be ready for Beginner Group after one HFY session. A motivated 11-year-old might be ready for a Beginner Group after a session of half-hour private lessons (the first three of the 12 lessons are devoted to horsemanship) supplemented by Saturday afternoon horsemanship practice classes. Students who have attended a week of summer day camp are often ready for Beginner Group lessons after the fall HFY session.

What are the criteria for graduating into the different levels?

This is totally dependent on the student's in-stable skills.

- 1) HFY - where the student learns the barn skills as well as some riding skills. They can graduate once they can mostly get horse ready by themselves in a timely manner. By this I mean they may need help getting the saddle on the horse's back, or bridling, but they can do all else by themselves.
- 2) Beginner Class - one hour lesson. They arrive _ before to prepare their own horse. Staff is provided for 15 min before and 15 min. after riding lesson to help with any little things which may have gone wrong. Student can graduate from this class once they can do all by themselves, including troubleshooting - i.e.- if someone's tack was not put back in right place, or left twisted up, the student now has the skills to figure it out.
- 3) Sat pm classes: there is no staff provided in the barn for helping out, BUT there is staff around in case someone gets into trouble
- 4) Other classes (week evenings): there is no staff provided in the barn for helping out, and no one around to help. Thus student must be totally self reliant, and we must know the student so that we know they are safe in the stable by themselves.

Why students should not be advanced into the next level prematurely?

Some parents request that their child be advanced to the next level, saying that they will learn faster if challenged. This may work in some situations in different sport or school activities, but is not recommend at the beginner stage in riding. If a child has been "pushed" into the Beginner Class from the HFY prematurely, that child will not be able to get his or her horse ready on time for the riding lesson. Since the class must leave the stable as a unit to go to arena, the rest of class will have to wait until that student is ready. This will cause the whole class to lose valuable arena time, can cause animosity between the students, and also puts undue pressure on the child who doesn't yet have the necessary skills for getting ready. Our experience has proven that this is highly detrimental to the student.

BEGINNER RIDERS (adults/ teens)

What do beginner equestrians learn during the in-barn part of a half-hour private lesson?

Proper fitting of headgear and footwear selection; barn and tack room orientation; a general introduction to horse behaviour and instincts; how to approach, halter, lead, turn, tie and move a horse (forwards, backwards, sideways); the steps involved in and safe, correct techniques for grooming, hoof-picking, saddling, bridling, un-tacking and cleaning and putting away equipment. The first three lessons of a newcomer's first 12-week session are always devoted to horsemanship. It takes a beginner who has had little or no previous experience with horses at least three lessons to learn the skills required to prepare for a riding lesson. As the level of confidence and competence with in-barn skills increases, the student can get ready more independently and spend more of the lesson time learning how to ride.

What do beginner equestrians learn during the mounted part of a half-hour private lesson?

During the riding part of a half-hour lesson, beginners learn how to prepare to mount, mount, hold the reins, adjust the rein length, tighten the girth, adjust the stirrup length, walk, halt, steer straight lines, execute simple turns, dismount and prepare to return the horse to the barn. On the longe line students are taught the correct riding position and work on exercises to help them relax and develop balance and an independent seat at the halt, walk and trot.

What is a longe-line lesson?

Quiet, experienced horses who are well-schooled in the practice of longeing are used to teach new riders. Longeing is exercising and/or training a horse or rider on a long rein controlled by an experienced instructor. The rider can learn correct equitation, developing an independent seat and balance in motion at all three gaits: walk, trot and canter, without having to control or steer the horse. During a longe-line lesson the instructor controls the horse from the ground in the centre of a circle and offers the rider exercises to improve position, balance, confidence, coordination and the development of an independent seat that can follow the horse's motion at all three gaits.

How can beginners learn more about horse handling, care and riding in between their weekly lessons?

To help students progress more quickly in learning how to groom and tack-up and un-tack, Centaur offers a free Saturday afternoon horsemanship practice lesson. Two very helpful books that we recommend - Principles of Riding (can

be ordered or bought at Apple Saddlery or Half Halt Press), and the Equine Canada English Rider Manuals (also available through Apple or www.horse.on.ca also shorten the learning curve.

MINI-EQUESTRIAN DAYCAMP

What is the curriculum for the 9:00 a.m. to noon four-day mini-equestrian day camp?

The best way to find out more about the curriculum of Centaur's three-hour mini-equestrian day camp is to visit the riding school on a Saturday morning. Under close supervision in the barn children are introduced to: the techniques involved in safely approaching, haltering, leading, turning, tying, grooming, hoof-picking, saddling, bridling and un-tacking a horse. They learn how to clean their tack; name the parts of the horse, saddle and bridle; start to recognize the ways horses communicate emotions; identify different breeds, markings and colours; know the difference between ponies and horses and between foals, fillies, colts, yearlings.

What do children who are too young to control a horse or pony independently learn about riding during mini-equestrian day camp?

In the daily riding part of the program, mini-equestrians have the opportunity to experience:

- balance in motion at the walk with their horse being led by an experienced rider on the ground
- how to sit correctly in the saddle, hold the reins and ask the horse to walk, halt and turn straight lines with one-on-one help from an experienced rider on the ground
- the feel of the trot
- an introduction to an activity called vaulting -- gymnastics on horseback to improve balance, coordination and confidence
- steering an obstacle course around traffic cones at the walk in the arena
- riding bareback while the horse is being led by an experienced rider

There will be time, too, for observing mares and foals, meeting Centaur's blacksmith, drawing horses, bathing horses, and watching videos and games (a mounted version of Simon Says, for example).

How do I register my child for the mini-equestrian daycamp?

Complete an application form which can be found either online (www.centaurreidingschool.com) or in the stable's tackroom, and drop in Shirley's mailbox along with payment or send to: Centaur Riding School, 3845 Frank Kenny Rd., Navan, Ontario K4B1H9, along with payment.

What equipment will my child need?

Helmets- All students must wear a correctly-fitting, ASTM-certified riding helmet. There are a limited number of helmets available to borrow, but we strongly suggest you buy your own. Bicycle helmets are not suitable for horseback riding.

Boots - must have a well-defined heel to prevent the foot from becoming lodged in the stirrup.

Breeches - Leggings or sweat pants without inseams that may rub can be worn instead of breeches, but breeches are designed for riding and are very comfortable. Jeans are not recommended.

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