



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK
POWELL RIVER THERAPEUTIC RIDING

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Powell River Therapeutic Riding Association (PRTRA)

Volunteer Handbook

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1. Who we are

Powell River Therapeutic Riding Association is a registered non-profit organization formed in the spring of 1991. The primary objective of the program is to use horses to provide therapeutic rehabilitation to children and adults with physical, cognitive, emotional, and learning disabilities, and to become a major contributor to the well-being of people with disabilities in our community. It is also our aim to provide opportunities to participate in the program and to build skills and knowledge for members of the Powell River community.

Any individual within the region who has a physician's referral is a candidate for therapeutic riding. Once the potential rider has been assessed as suitable, admission is limited only by our ability to provide a safe, comprehensive program, which in turn is determined by the numbers of horses, volunteers and instructors available.

Currently, we hold small-group classes and private lessons four days per week for 75 riders, ranging from preschool age through to adulthood. Classes are led by our Instructors, who work hard to provide a safe, fun and challenging environment appropriate to the needs and capabilities of each individual. Our riding Instructors hold current First Aid Certificates and are Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association (CanTRA) certified.

The success of these classes is also made possible by the 60 or so dedicated volunteers who lead the horses and assist the riders in the arena and out on the trails. Every year there is a waiting list of children and adults with a variety of physical, cognitive and social disabilities who would benefit from participation.

Our Association is a member of the B.C. Therapeutic Riding Association, Horse Council BC and CanTRA, and the program is fully insured.

2. What is Therapeutic Riding?

Therapeutic Riding, also known as Equine Assisted Therapy, Equine Facilitated Therapy and Riding for the Disabled, is the use of the horse and equine-oriented activities to achieve a variety of therapeutic goals, including cognitive, physical, emotional, social, educational and behavioral. The benefits of using horses for therapy for a wide range of disabilities is well-documented, but includes improved physical strength and stamina (in some cases riding can activate muscles required to help walk again); greater balance and coordination; and of course the sense of confidence and autonomy that such changes inspire. For those with learning and



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social difficulties, the experience of riding classes can help significantly to enhance concentration, attention and communication skills. For riders who may have been looked “down” on and been defined by their disability, being up on a powerful horse, working in tune with the animal to achieve new goals, is an exhilarating and life-changing experience. Ultimately, it is sociable exercise in the form of fun! There are lots of great sites on the internet if you are interested in learning more about the forms of Therapeutic Riding and the ways in which they can assist with specific disabilities.

3. Volunteering with us

Our volunteers are a major part of what make our program a success. There are many different ways to volunteer with us:

- during lessons with the horses and riders
- grooming and tacking the horses for lessons
- assisting in fundraising activities
- as a board or committee member
- office/administrative support
- work parties, buildings and grounds maintenance and cleaning

We strive to give you the opportunity to apply your skills and to learn new ones. We are committed to the ongoing education of our volunteers, so if you would like to try something new, please ask and we will do our best to give you the skills you need so you are comfortable to perform it.

The volunteering relationship is two-way; while we aim to give you the best experience we can, we also ask for some things from you:

- **Notification of volunteer assignments** is sent via email at the beginning of each week. Changes in schedule and requests for additional volunteers to fill any gaps will also be sent via email (sometimes by phone) so it is important that we have current, correct contact details. **Please be sure to notify us** as much in advance as possible if you cannot make an assigned shift.
- Volunteers are asked to **become members of PRTRA** (\$10 per year) and to sign a Code of Confidentiality Policy, liability and photo waivers (attached).



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- Please do not park in the parking lot; the school bus/vans need to be able to turn around. You may park along Myrtle Ave. or on the outdoor arena side of our facility off the road (the truck and horse trailers must be able to get by you).

Instructions for obtaining your CRC:

PRTRA requires all volunteers to be of 16 years of age or older and to have a background or Criminal Records Check done so they may work with people in the program. We specifically require a **Vulnerable Persons Check**. This is a free service that you must apply for on-line at <https://justice.gov.bc.ca/eCRC/>. This link will take you to the sign in page, scroll down and enter this code: DFKFUH8PQX in the box at the bottom where it says “enter the access code provided by your organization”, continue to enter the little secret code and click ‘request a new criminal record check’ (unless you are sharing one you have done previously-then click that). You will then be taken to our page where you will see our organization’s information, read through and click ‘Next’, read through that page, answer the questions as you choose and proceed. You will then be taken to the application page where you enter your information and proceed through the application process. If you require any assistance, please contact the Office & Volunteer Coordinator at 604-485-0177 or prtravolunteer@gmail.com.

PRTRA treats all personal information as confidential and does not release it to any other organization. Any information provided may be used for data collection, fundraising or mailings. If you prefer to have your name excluded from any of these uses, please notify the PRTRA office at 604-485-0177.

- Volunteers must attend **training in Side Walking (SW) and/or Horse Handling (HH)** (see below for explanation) before participating in classes. While we anticipate that everyone can successfully participate in some way in our program, it may be the case that not every activity is suitable for all volunteers. Please be aware that completing training does not guarantee that you will be able to volunteer in a particular role. Although we will do everything we can to get you doing what you want to do, it is up to the Instructors and the Office & Volunteer Coordinator to consider the safety of both you and our riders and make a final decision.
- We provide three training sessions per year. We always welcome any input from the volunteers regarding training, things of notice regarding the riders, safety and any questions.
- Training for Horse Handling will occur at times that are set by the Instructors and PRTRA depending on interest, time available etc. This training is more specific and the Instructors will decide if the person has passed the training and is ready to fulfill the position of Horse Handler.



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- Experienced volunteers are **required to attend at least one training session each year** to refresh their skills and get up to date on any new information.
- One final thing we need from you: please remember that our riders are individuals just like anyone else! Give assistance only if you are asked for help and **be patient**, they often just need a little extra time. Meet them as an equal as this helps them to build their confidence. Keep physical contact to a minimum; some love it and some do not, just like the rest of us! A calm, quiet demeanor is important for helping the riders stay calm and focused for their lesson.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of our program. We appreciate the time and energy, skill and commitment that they bring and are always willing to hear what they have to say. If you have questions please direct them to the appropriate staff member. If you are unsure of who to speak to or have concerns about an aspect of the program, please ask. If you need to raise a complaint or resolve an issue it is best to put this in writing to the program coordinator who can then direct it to the appropriate person – that way everyone’s privacy is respected and we are all able to stay focused on our work. There is a list of contacts near the end of this handbook.

4. Side Walking (SW)

1. As a volunteer with our riders you will start as a Side Walker (SW); this means you will be in the arena and on the trails at the side of the horse and rider during the lessons. The SW is there to keep the rider safe, thus the degree of assistance from the SW will depend on the balance and skill of the rider. The SW has the most ‘hands-on’ duties in Therapeutic Riding; they are the person who helps the rider and the Instructor. **It is very important that the SW keeps quiet and lets the rider do the work and gives them the time they need to perform their tasks – patience is key!** Sometimes there is some chatting while riding the trails; please keep it centered on the lesson, making sure the rider feels included, but keep it to a minimum. The Instructor is still teaching and needs to be heard, and it is confusing and over-stimulating to the rider if there is too much talking and someone other than the Instructor is teaching. You are there as an aid to the rider to help only when necessary and help keep them safe.

We are now using a colour system to provide the volunteers with a general understanding of how much assistance to provide to their rider.

RED Riders: need full assistance, at least one SW

YELLOW Riders: need some assistance, may have one or two SW.

HH will reinforce the riders’ aids by making sure the horse does what was asked; eg. if the rider attempts to whoa, make the horse stop.



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GREEN Riders: very close to being independent, probably no SW.

HH are there for the rider's safety and do not need to control the horse: eg. if the rider does not attempt to whoa, HH will not stop the horse.

We can help/prompt by touching: hand to turn; putting hand up for whoa; pointing to walk on.

Use one word prompts if needed.

Remember every situation is different, watch your rider and assess when to step in and help or leave the situation as is, ask the Instructors if you need to and use your judgement.

In general - give every rider time to respond to Instructor and keep instructions and words to a minimum.

Therefore in the arena, the SW should help the student focus their attention on the Instructor, with minimal prompting and talking. **It is very important to avoid unnecessary talking with the rider and other volunteers.** Too much input from too many directions is very confusing to anyone and to our riders, some of whom already have perceptual problems, it can be very overwhelming. It is also difficult for the Instructor if they must yell or compete with people chatting or if they must continually ask for quiet. Each volunteer should concentrate solely on her/his duties during the lesson.

You are facilitating the Instructors with your rider's therapy and are essential to the success of the program.

Directions for Side Walker (SW)

- When the SW arrives for a class they check the schedule on the table in the centre, when it is time for class, they enter the arena by the side door, always knocking first. They then check the chalkboard schedule to confirm which rider they are assisting and wait quietly.
- If there are 2 SW's for the rider, the name in the first SW spot will be the 'First SW'. The First SW will be the 'talker', assisting the rider with any voice prompts. They will be the one to go to the mounting block and use the Thigh Hold (see HOLDS below) to walk the rider over to the check station (letter M on the arena wall by the door).
- The Second SW will wait at the check station, at letter M and join the rider once they have stopped to check their tack and move on.
- When the First SW goes to the ramp/mounting block, they first make sure the rider is wearing their helmet, safety belt and proper boots. They will stand beside the horse opposite the rider as they mount. The SW may also assist in the mounting process, guiding the rider's leg over the horse, helping the rider put their foot in the stirrup etc. The Instructor or Assistant Instructor will assist the rider on the near side (left) of the



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horse. Everyone then proceeds to the check station (M) where the Second SW then takes over for the Instructor.

- The Instructor will then check the stirrup lengths, girth and safety equipment, inform the SW of the hold they are to use for that rider and pass on any special instructions to the SW. This is a good time to introduce yourself to the rider and say hello.
- Once the lesson is over, the SW will stand with the rider until the Instructor comes to help the rider dismount. SW assists if the rider is unable to remove their feet from the stirrups. It is important to stay with the rider once they have dismounted, watch they do not run off, to another horse, or under or behind their horse. You can help them 'run their stirrups up' and go around the front of the horse and HH to do so on the other side, then help them exit the arena or return to the supervision of their caregiver.

HOLDS - there are 3 ways to hold onto the rider:

1. The Heel Hold - this is the most common hold and simply involves using your hand to hold onto the back of the foot at the heel.
2. The Thigh Hold - this is the hold we use from the mounting ramp to the letter M check station. This is a medium hold for riders who need some more support, the SW stretches their arm across the rider's thigh up to the flap or pommel on the saddle and hangs on to that. The Side Walker's arm rests gently on the rider's thigh, sometimes with more or less pressure depending on the condition of the rider, the SW can check with the Instructor and/or physiotherapist to confirm the amount of pressure and position of the hold;
3. Stirrup Leather Hold – this is the hold used for riders who do not need very much support. The SW simply holds on to the stirrup leather of the saddle that is behind the rider.

NOTES

- The safety of the rider is the first and foremost responsibility; **never leave the rider unattended** when they are mounted on the horse or around the horses. If you must switch sides or stop for any reason, tell the Instructor, who will call the riders to a halt so the SW can then switch sides one at a time, moving around the **front** of the horse. Once everyone is ready again, the SW can inform the Instructor who will call the class to continue. Often the arm of the SW will get tired - be careful to not push down or push up on your rider if this happens - simply let the Instructor/AI know you need to switch sides to relieve your arm.
- **The SW are asked to keep interaction with the horses to a minimum** – no physical contact such as petting, speaking to or directing them during classes. The horse needs to be focused and we try to keep their stress levels low as they already have a lot going on around them. (See 'Working with our Horses for more information).
- If you are the only SW, you will walk on the right side of the horse so there is a Horse Handler on the left side and you on the right.



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- It is important to maintain a position by the rider's knee. Being too far forward or back will make it very difficult to assist with instructions or provide security if the horse should trip or shy.
- If the rider starts to lose their balance, gently push them back into position. Do not grab the rider - just provide enough support to help the rider regain their proper position in the saddle. Often you can tell them to shift either way to center themselves.
- Helping the rider with their lesson: Prompt the rider only if necessary or if directed by the Instructor/AI. Remember to keep your use of words simple and to a minimum as discussed above. Any unnecessary interference should be avoided.
- Inform the Instructor/AI if the rider is uncomfortable or needs assistance.
- Enjoy! You are the rider's 'right-hand-wo/man', there to assist them as they work hard to reach their potential. It is a very rewarding position to be in!!

5. SAFE WORK PRACTICES FOR ALL PERSONNEL WORKING WITH OR AROUND HORSES **(Reference: Safe Work Practices Policy F.8.4.i)**

GENERAL

- 1. Please – no talking, this is very important for safety also, everyone needs to be able to hear the Instructors or if someone calls halt for an emergency!**
- 2. Please do not bring pets or young children to the riding lessons.**
3. If you are not sure about something, please ask the Instructor/AI/Volunteer Coordinator.
4. We do our best to ensure that all our tack is in good repair; however, there are times when we may not spot a potential problem. If you see any sign of possible safety hazards, e.g. rotten stitching, torn leather, etc., please bring it to the attention of the Instructors.
5. If our vet or farrier is working on horses while you are at the centre, please refrain from going over and asking questions. Unless you are specifically asked to be in attendance, please stay clear of the area.
6. If you cannot make it in for your shift, please contact the office/Volunteer Coordinator as soon as possible.
7. Confidentiality and conduct are key concerns when working with children and people with sensitive issues. Please make sure you have read, understood and signed the attached **Confidentiality Policy and Code of Conduct** and return it to the Office and Volunteer Coordinator. **(Reference: Management/Governance Policy, Code of Conduct and Confidentiality Document A.8.i).**
8. If you have an issue or concern, we are always willing to hear you and work on repairing the situation. Our Volunteers are very, very important to us.



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9. Please be alert at all times during lessons, things can happen very quickly with horses. Riders can lose their balance suddenly. There are many obstacles on the trails such as roots and rocks that can cause a horse or person to trip, slip or fall, poke an eye, scratch an arm etc.
10. Approach horses from the shoulder.
11. Always announce – quietly – your arrival to the horses.
12. Avoid abrupt, strange or loud noises and movements.
13. Keep ropes and reins off the ground.
14. Never wrap straps, ropes, reins, ties or anything around your hands.
15. Never crowd a horse, always maintain a good distance.
16. Keep an eye on riders at all times.

CLOTHING and FOOTWEAR

1. Wear short jackets or sweaters that can be buttoned or zipped. Loose, flapping clothing, and long coats are not appropriate as they can startle the horse and can snag or catch on equipment.
2. Shoes must cover the whole foot, sturdy boots are best, running shoes are acceptable. Rubber boots are available. Open-toed shoes or sandals are not safe in PRTRA's environment.
3. Non-slip gloves or mittens are recommended year round, and are mandatory for Horse Handlers.
4. Scarves may be worn if they are tucked into your jacket.
5. Keep jewellery to a minimum. Long earrings or necklaces may snag on equipment or distract a rider or horse.
6. Do not wear perfume. Horses and some people are sensitive or allergic to it.
7. Dress appropriately for the season and forecast weather conditions as time is spent in the unheated arena, stable and outside on the trails.
8. Do not carry purses, cell phones, backpacks, food or drinks while working with clients and horses as they are a distraction and may cause an accident.

HORSE SAFETY, BARN & ARENA

(Reference: Safe Work Practices Policy F.8.4.ii)

1. All gates, entrances and exits to the arena must be closed or secured before riders mount.
2. When there are people and/or horses in the arena, knock on the door or call at the gate and wait for permission to enter.
3. All riders must wear riding helmets when they are around the horses.
4. A volunteer or Instructor must supervise riders when they are around the horses.



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5. No running, shouting, loud or strange noises in the arena or barn.
6. No cameras in the arena unless permission is given by the Instructors.
7. NO SMOKING in the barn or riding areas.
8. NO GLASS containers in the barn or riding area.

6. Working with our horses

Therapeutic Riding horses are selected for their calm and gentle dispositions. They must be willing, hardworking and very tolerant. These horses are exposed to a large number of stimuli almost every day. In addition to a rider, they generally have several people very near to them, speaking, adjusting tack, etc. whenever they are working. This amounts to having a lot of different people in their personal space. They are scheduled very carefully to suit the rider and also so that they do not have to 'perform' all day. Without these horses, we would not have a program and we treat them with the respect and care they deserve. Therefore, it is important to be aware of how to interact with them.

- Because their eyes are located on the sides of their heads, it is best to approach them from the side while speaking quietly to them. This puts you in their line of vision and lets them know your whereabouts.
- As a prey animal, horses flee or fight if startled or frightened. This is why we must always remain alert to anything that may startle them, such as clothing or materials flapping and new objects on the trail or in the arena.
- This is also why we stress the importance of no loud, sudden or strange noises, so encourage the riders to talk to the horses in a quiet tone of voice.
- It's also why we always walk around the front of the horse, as one never knows when something may cause a horse to kick out.
- When working with the horses, try to get to know them and how they will react to outside stimuli.
- Keep your movements slow and deliberate and try to let the horse know your intentions.
- Ears also indicate mood: ears pricked forward indicate interest; moving back and forth mean that the horse is listening to sounds around them; slack ears indicate that the horse is resting or inattentive, and ears pinned flat back indicate displeasure.
- Horses are herd animals and maintain a pecking order both in and out of the field. Do not allow the horses to get too close to each other as they may feel either threatened or a need to dominate one another.
- Always treat the horses with respect; if you are struggling with a horse or are concerned with their behavior, speak to an Instructor and ask for help. Each horse listens and responds differently. They have their own 'personalities' and experience moods, fear, nervousness and other emotions also. What may work with one horse could be too



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much or too little for another. One can always find a way to communicate in a positive way with each horse.

- They also appreciate positive attention; encourage the riders to praise the horse for a job well done and thank them for carrying them through their lesson. A kind word or rub on the neck will make for a good relationship between horse, rider and handlers.

7. Horse Handling (HH)

The job of the Horse Handler (HH) is to lead the horse and keep it under control at all times. This position requires separate training after the volunteer has been a Side Walker (SW) for some time.

Directions for Horse Handler (HH)

- If you are the HH for the first class of the day, go to the barn and collect your horse – see Instructions below – When you first arrive to HH - take it to the arena when the Instructor says you can, once you enter, make sure rope 'gate' is across the arena entrance.

When you first arrive to HH:

- When going to get your horse from the barn or the previous HH in the arena, say hello and enjoy a moment with your horse.
- Then set your mind to work mode, that is, create a clear intention and a soft resolve and give your horse their space.
- **Next, connect with your horse by performing the ground work warm up –**
 - Step 1: Disengage your horse's hind end, make sure you have enough room to do this safely.
 - Step 2: Ask them to walk on and whoa (back them up if they do not whoa properly), do this a few times, speeding up and slowing down, you may even trot if there is time and room.
- Line up for class between M and H, leave a lot of room between the horses.
- When called up to the ramp, step out confidently and ask your horse to walk on using the open hand- go position and clear intention, do not look at your horse, bump bump if needed, you may need to disengage their hind end again to get them going so you are not pulling on the horse, please ask for assistance if needed, there is no rush.
- Once parked at the mounting block move into the parked position (described below), give your horse their space, keep a loose hold on the lead rope and watch for problem behaviours such as head butting, nipping, moving forward. Use the techniques taught such as finger to nose and stepping in to your horse's space. Please make sure your horse's feet are as square as possible (with minimal fussing) so they are balanced and ready to accept the riders' weight.



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- Make sure the lead is between the reins otherwise it will interfere with the 'aids' given by the rider with her/his reins and could confuse the horse. You will be on the left side of the horse about even with their eye at their head. The tail end of the rope should be held in your left hand, loosely folded to avoid tripping. Never coil the rope around your hand. Do not hold the bridle or reins - this could hurt the horse's mouth.
- Upon the Rider's command of 'Walk On' once they are mounted, lead the horse slowly away from the mounting block – **make sure to stay right beside the ramp all the way along the ramp** and then proceed to the check point, which is the letter M on the wall to the right of the entrance door. Stop at the check point when the rider is prompted to say "Whoa". The Instructor will adjust the stirrups at this point and make sure all tack is secure. At this point the HH moves around the front of the horse to lead on the left side.
- Use vocal commands, "walk-on", "T-rot", cluck, "Whoa" and "Easy" (to calm them or slow down). Give the horse a moment to understand the command and then execute it yourself.
- Do not look at the horse as you lead it forward, step out confidently with your hand in the open go position and bump bump if necessary
- Use a voice prompt to 'walk on' and maybe a cluck or two, you want to have the horse's attention and prompt it to move its feet. Do NOT pull on the horse's head, this is a lose-lose situation! Again, if you are confident, steady, and move out with purpose, your horse will be more inclined to follow you.
- When the rider is prompted and says "Walk On", begin circling the arena 'at large' which means, along the wall. Make sure to use the back half of the arena, that is – turn across letters B and E - so you do not interfere with the other riders as they are mounting. Keep a safe distance from the wall and be mindful that your Side Walkers have enough room also.
- Keep your horse at an active walk as much as possible – this has the most therapeutic benefit for the rider
- Once all of the riders are mounted, the Instructor will tell the class what they are doing for the day's lesson. Make it a habit to check back on your rider regularly especially when they are asked to perform a function, then you can confirm how much assistance you should be providing as per their Red/Yellow/Green classification.
- It is important to keep the horse steady while the rider is doing class exercises, games etc. **When you halt for more than a few seconds, turn to face the horse and rider, not directly in front of the horse but a little to the side – this is the 'parked position', stand quietly and loosely hold the lead.** Continue to pay careful attention to the horse and watch for unwanted movement, the Side Walkers will assist the rider if they need it. If the horse is restless, try loosening your hold (you may be holding too tight or too close to the snap), talk to it and/or stroke its neck if this helps to calm it.



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- In good weather the class may go outside. Do not let the horse eat. Listen for people, dogs, bikes or any other strange sounds that may startle your horse. Watch for garbage or any other strange objects on the trail that may startle your horse. Be aware and observant, you should see or hear anything that may cause your horse distress. You should also note the body language of your horse to monitor if they are alert, tense, afraid or irritated. Communicate anything important to the Instructors.
- If there are any problems during the class, notify the Instructor, who will address it.
- At the end of the lesson you will bring the horse to a halt in the arena and wait for the Instructor to come and help your rider dismount. For certain riders, you will have to lead the horse back to the mounting ramp to dismount. Once your rider is off, check the chalk board to see if your horse remains for the next class or will be returned to the barn. If you are taking your horse to their stall, once you are in and have the door closed or your horse still in hand, loosen their girth by a few notches so they are more comfortable as they wait.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES FOR HORSE HANDLERS

(Reference: Safe Work Practices Policy F.8.4.ii)

1. Be alert and aware at all times, you must be aware of the rider, Instructors, Side Walkers and any potential hazards in the arena or on the trail.
2. Be careful that your lead rope does not hang to one side, drag, or dangle. This is a serious safety hazard.
3. Never put your fingers through any rings on the halter or bridle – if the horse throws its head up it could break your finger or you could be dragged if they bolt etc.
4. The extra lead rope should always be held in your other hand. Do not wrap it around any part of your body as you could be hurt or dragged if the horse spooks.
5. Do not talk or chat with the rider, Instructors or Side Walkers; this is confusing and can be over-stimulating for the rider. It also makes it very difficult for Instructors to teach and be heard.
6. If your Side Walkers need to change sides to relieve their arms, notify the Instructor, who will halt the class to make the change. Be Alert during the change!
7. No rider is to mount, dismount, or move their horse, unless under the direction of the Instructor/Al.
8. Never trot the horse unless requested to do so by the Instructor. If you are instructed to trot, keep the horse in as straight a line as possible, and at an even, slow pace.
9. Never let go of the horse unless asked to do so, or you are in danger. If the horse startles, hold on and turn the horse's head to the side, or turn it in a large circle if necessary. This will break any runaway motion.
10. Keep at least one horse length between horses; it is not safe for the horses to be too close together. If you need to pass, **do so on the inside, not between the wall and the other horse, this is dangerous.** You may also halt your rider to allow some room. The



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Instructors may also suggest you do a circle or cross the arena. Many horses do not like anything too close behind them and may kick out and injure you or your horse. Handlers should keep the mounts from becoming too close if the rider can not.

11. Notify the Instructors or Staff of any concerns you might have, no matter how small you think they might be.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Horses learn at the point of release, as soon as they respond to your request – release the pressure. Start by asking, then tell if you need to – start out with the quietist softest ‘ask’, then increase the pressure.
- An effective HH pays close attention to the rider’s needs as well as to where the horse is going. This reinforces the rider’s attempts to control the horse, remember, we are working toward independence for every rider – **consistently check back on your rider and know your rider’s colour!**
- Your responsibility is to the horse; Side Walkers are responsible for the rider so you can leave it to them to provide assistance during lessons.
- Do not execute an instruction for the rider before they have had time to try. They need time and patience so they may fulfill their instructions and learn, thus providing the maximum therapeutic benefits. Patience!!
- Only Horse Handlers are to take horses into the arena unless otherwise directed.
- No feeding horses unless asked to do so.
- Any special requests (e.g. taking a child to the barn, removing bridle etc.) must be approved by the Instructors prior to implementing request.
- Changes to the schedule must be brought to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator or the Instructor before class – please do not implement changes without consulting staff.
- If a parent, rider or anyone else has questions or concerns about the program, please direct them to a staff member or, preferably, put them in writing for the attention of the Board of Directors; it is not your responsibility to discuss our operations.

8. Grooming and Tacking (G&T)

The horses at PRTRA are groomed and tacked each morning before classes begin. Grooming promotes circulation, and the horses really enjoy it. It is also a good time to check over the horse to look for any abnormalities or injuries. Special attention should be made to where the tack will be.

The horses are all groomed in their stalls. Each stall is equipped with a quick release strap to tie them up. When entering the stall always talk to the horse to let them know you are approaching. Place the halter on the horse and then tie them up to the quick release. Each



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horse has their own grooming box which can be found under the counter. The grooming kit should be placed to the side out of the way. The order of the brushes is as follows;

1. **Curry comb (plastic or rubber):** used in a circular motion to remove any caked on mud. Not to be used on the face or legs.
2. **Dandy brush:** Used in a short flicking motion from head to tail. This removes the dirt and dust brought to the surface by the curry comb. Pay particular attention to where the saddle will sit.
3. **Body brush:** Used in a long stroking motion. This brings up the natural oils in the horses skin and makes them shiny. Can be used on face and legs.
4. **Face brush:** gently brush around the horse's eyes and down their nose.
5. **Hoof pick:** pick out the feet and look for any foreign objects. Pick from heel to toe, alongside the frog.

Once you are finished grooming, you can tack up the horse. Each horse has its own tack which is labeled in the tack room.

1. Place the saddle pad on the back a couple of inches above the horse's withers. Make sure there are no wrinkles in the pad and it lies smooth.
2. Place the gel pad on top of the saddle pad. Again made sure it is smooth.
3. Place the saddle on the horse's back. It is preferred to put the saddle slightly more forward than necessary, as then it can be gently pulled back into position. Never push the saddle forward.
4. Secure the saddle pad to the saddle by placing the Velcro tabs onto the billets of the saddle.
5. Secure the saddle to the horse with the girth. Starting on the horse's right side, place the girth on the first and third billet straps, starting low. The elastic side of the girth should be on the left side. Reach under the horse's belly and tighten the girth on the left. Tighten the girth slowly, and only tighten enough to keep the saddle in place. It will be tightened by an instructor in the arena.
6. Check the schedule on the counter and adjust the stirrups for the first rider.

Once the horse is ready, close the back door of the stalls and untie them. Shut the stall door and secure with the carabiner.

SAFE WORK PRACTICES FOR GROOMERS AND TACKERS **(Reference: Safe Work Practices Policy F.8.4.iii)**



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- Always leave an escape route when in the stall with a horse i.e. leave the door open enough that you can get out in an emergency
- When moving around the horse that is tied up always go around the back of the horse. Do not duck under the head of the horse.
- Never kneel beside the horse and always stand to the side when picking out the feet. Be aware of the horse's balance and movement of their legs as they shift their weight.
- When working around the horse use slow and deliberate movements.

9. Emergency Procedures

Rider Emergency – Fall from Horse

Anytime during Horseback Riding, falling off is a possibility. This does not occur often at PRTRA, if it does, everyone needs to be aware of what to do. When someone falls there is always a danger of spinal injury or concussion, therefore, **do not move them unless there is clear and immediate danger to the person**, for example, the horse is reacting and may trample the fallen person. If there is no danger to them, call the Instructor, who is trained in first aid, and she will follow the protocol for determining if an ambulance needs to be called. The Instructor is the designated 'person in charge' and will tell you what to do.

Rider Emergency - Emergency Dismount

Safety is everyone's concern and is of particular importance when working with people with a range of disabilities. Volunteers need to be especially aware and try to catch any signs that something may not be quite right with their rider. In this situation the Instructor may tell you to remove the rider from the horse so they do not fall off, if they are already starting to fall off, you will need to help them with an emergency dismount. This involves grabbing a hold of their safety belt and gently sliding them off the horse if they are large, or lifting them off if you are able to do so without injuring yourself.

Some signs that there may be a problem with your rider:

- A dazed look
- Confusion
- Non-communication (if this is unusual for that person)
- Stiffness/spasm of muscle
- Unusual lack of coordination

If you notice any of these or anything else unusual:

- Call out Halt



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- Ask the rider if they feel alright
- Inform the Instructor of your concerns
- Be prepared for an emergency procedure
- If necessary, remove the rider from the horse so they do not fall

Emergency Procedure – RIDER – EMERGENCY DISMOUNT (posted on Arena Billboard)

- Alert Instructor (s) immediately – call out Halt
- Horse Handler – stop the horse
- Side Walkers – Lift or gently slide the rider off the horse, use the safety belt
- Other Side Walker – walk around the front of the horse and assist the First Side Walker in removing the rider away from the horse to a safe area.
- Horse Handler – remove the horse from the immediate area and stay with the horse. There are people to care for a fallen rider. The situation could become more dangerous if a horse gets loose. Keep calm and wait for the Instructor’s directions.
- All other Horse Handlers should immediately lead their horse to a safe area and halt. Remove the other riders if possible and await further instructions. **Do Not** leave your rider unattended. Remain calm, explain to your rider that they must stand quietly and listen to the Instructor’s directions.
- **The Instructor is delegated “Person in Charge” at each riding session. She/he will assign duties to the people as necessary.**

Emergency Procedure – RIDER FALLS OFF HORSE (posted on Arena Billboard)

If the rider is NOT IN IMMEDIATE DANGER of being injured by the horse, do NOT move the fallen rider – they may need C Spine control.

Call the Instructor over to assess if the rider can be moved, the Instructor has first aid and will assess the need for C Spine control, they are the ‘person in charge’ and will instruct you on what to do

If the rider IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER of being injured by the horse, that is, the horse is in the area of the rider and is agitated, rearing, bucking etc. – Remove the fallen rider from the area immediately if you can do so safely. In this situation, the rider’s safety takes precedence over C Spine control procedures

Next, call the Instructor over to begin First Aid procedures



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Emergency Procedure – FIRE or OTHER (posted on Arena Billboard)

- If the class is notified that there is a fire or other emergency:
- The Instructor will stop the class, calling 'Halt'
- The Side Walkers will remove the riders' feet from the stirrups and move the reins up onto the horses neck out of the riders hands
- The First Side Walker will gently pull off the rider of the horse using the safety belt, if there is a Second Side Walker, they should cross in front of the horse and assist the First Side Walker in removing the rider and taking them to the closest 'people' door
- The Horse Handlers will take the horses to the Horse entrance/door
- Everyone is to evacuate the arena as they are ready and walk to the outside arena
- Once in the outside arena, stay with your horse or rider and wait until your name is called as we perform the head count
- Remember to remain calm and in control so that the riders and horses feel secure and safe and remain calm also. Reassure them that everyone and all the horses will be taken care of and be safe
- Keep talking to a minimum so any instructions can be heard
- Do not leave your horse or rider unattended

Incident/Accident procedure

- An Incident Report form is to be filled out by the Instructor in the case of any incident or accident involving horses, riders, volunteers and/or staff.

Complaint or Grievance

- If appropriate, the volunteer should attempt to discuss their concern with the other party.
- If this is not possible or fails to resolve the issue, the volunteer should speak with the Office & Volunteer Coordinator, the Instructors or a Board Member, whomever the volunteer is most comfortable with to initiate PRTRA's Complaint Policy and form,. This should be done in a private and confidential way. We will then follow the proper protocol to resolve the issue.

Current class schedules and contact list

Class Schedule

- Monday – 10:30am to 1:30pm (Preschool – 4 classes) 1:30-4:00pm Independents
- Tuesday – 9:30am to 12:15pm (Adults – 3 classes) 1:30-4:00pm Independents
- Wednesday – 9:30am to 2:00pm (School Children – 5 classes) 2:45-4:45pm Independents
- Thursday – 9:30am to 2:00pm (School Children – 5 classes) 2:30-4:15pm Independents



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- Friday – Currently no program
- Please note: There are no classes on weekends. Session times follow the school year; check with the Office & Volunteer Coordinator for exact dates each year.

Contacts

We appreciate the time and energy that our volunteers donate to PRTRA to make it work and will do our best to answer your questions or address any issues you may have. The following is a list of contacts that you may find useful:

Annie Racine (Office & Volunteer Coordinator)
prtravolunteer@gmail.com

Shannon Durant (Head Instructor)
prtra.shannon@gmail.com

Eileiah Kelly (Barn Manager)
prtra@shawbiz.ca

You can also contact any of the people listed above by phoning the centre at: **604-485-0177**.

Please also visit our website at: <http://www.prtherapeuticriding.com/> for a full list of staff and lots more interesting and important information. We often have information on our Facebook Page and on Instagram.

Have fun and thank you so much for being part of our service to the Powell River community.