

## Getting Your Leads on a Greenie

**Teaching a green horse his leads isn't easy. Here are some tips to help.**

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Teaching a green horse his leads isn't easy. Before you resort to running around in circles, stop and consider whether you've adequately prepared your greenie for this new lesson. Your horse should willingly move forward from your leg. Next, he should move away from leg pressure, especially outside leg pressure. That means that when you circle at the trot and squeeze with the calf of your outside leg he'll spiral in and make his circle smaller, even if just for a few steps. Finally, he should follow his nose when you ask him to bend. If you take up contact with your inside rein, for example, your horse should yield his head and neck laterally to your hand.

Once your green horse understands these basics, you're ready to work on leads. Follow these step-by-step tips. In this scenario we'll say you'll be tracking to the right. Begin trotting on a large 20 meters circle, so that the track intersects with the end of your arena. That way the corners will invite your horse to continue on a bend in the correct direction. Sit the trot so that your weight in the saddle supports your leg pressure. If you lean forward you'll force your horse onto his front end, which makes it harder for him to push from behind. And his hindquarters are where he'll strike off on the correct lead. Plus if you post, you'll only confuse your horse. He'll think you just want to trot at a really brisk pace.

Just as you approach the corner—and the bend in the arena rail—increase your contact slightly on your inside rein. This will tip his nose to the inside of his turn. Now apply your outside (left) leg behind the girth. Your inside (right) leg is a supporting aid, and remains at the girth, where it prevents your horse from falling in around his turn.

Your horse should respond by picking up the right lead. Canter your large circle once to reinforce the lead and then continue on around the arena. Walk and repeat the exercise, making sure to practice each side equally. Always reward your green horse with pats and praise.

Of course, it's not always that simple. Like people, horses favor one side over the other. Your horse will probably want to pick up the same lead every time, regardless of the direction of your circle. Remain patient. Bring him back to the walk, calmly school him again to move away from outside leg pressure and try again. If he wants to avoid the entire issue by merely trotting, tap him with your crop to remind him that he must respond to a request to go forward. Although you may get frustrated, resist the urge to contort your horse's head and neck to the outside and shove his weight onto his inside lead. Forcibly throwing your greenie on to his lead might work in the beginning, but it is an incorrect use of your aids and eventually you'll have to correct what you created. Instead, it's best to take your time and lead your horse down the proper path.