

Respond to a Send

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Wouldn't it be great if you could simply point at the trailer and get your horse to willingly walk in? Here's a tip that will put you on the right road to accomplishing just that. Teach your horse to respond to a "send," which is a combination of the Porcupine Game (Game No. 2) and the Driving Game (Game No. 3). Start with your horse in halter and lead line (a 12-foot line minimum is best). Stand facing your horse, with the lead line in your left hand. Bring up your "life" (energy and intent), and then slowly bring your left hand out and up to the left, directing your horse's nose to the left. Watch for the response, and the instant he thinks left, release. Start again, slowly lifting your hand and extending your arm until he moves a step, then release. By accepting the slightest attempt, your horse will learn more quickly than if you were to force him to move. If your horse doesn't even think of moving off when you lift the lead line, increase the pressure – this is the "Porcupine" aspect of a send). You can do this by tightening your fingers on the rope a little, so he gets more of a "feel" for what you want. Don't release until you see a change. You can also take the end of the lead rope in your right hand and swing it toward the opposite shoulder – driving him to move away from the swinging rope. (This is why the 12-foot rope is the best tool.) The instant he makes the effort to move, stop, release, wait and start again. These tiny efforts won't seem like a lot at first, but one willing step today will give you five willing steps tomorrow; whereas, five forced steps today will get you one forced step tomorrow. Build one step at a time until you can send your horse around you in a complete circle simply by lifting your arm.