

Longeing Safely

Tips for holding the line.

By Sharon Biggs

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Don't forget your safety sense when longeing. The following guidelines will help keep you safe.

Equipment: A cotton longeline, rather than synthetic, will stop rope burns. A broken chain can cause injuries to both horse and handler. Choose a line that has a sturdy snap. Wear gloves. Gloves will pull free if your hands becomes trapped in the line or prevent rope burns if your horse runs away. Wear a helmet. It will protect your head if your horse comes in on the circle and kicks out. Boots or solid shoes with a heel will help you stay upright if your horse should pull away.

Safety Techniques:

Hold your longe like you would hold a rein to keep your fingers from becoming entangled. Carry the end of the line in your free hand with the excess in folds rather than as a loop. If your horse rushes off, a loop can spiral closed and trap your hand. The stacked line will play out freely. Also, a trailing line can get caught around your legs, so keep it off the ground.

Point or flick your longe whip toward your horse's shoulder to encourage him to stay out on the circle. If he kicks out and he's too close to you, you could get struck.

If your horse bolts off, pull your elbows into your sides, dig in your heels and try to slow him with a few tugs. If you think the situation is out of control, let go! Longeing in a confined space (a small arena or round pen is preferable) allows you to keep control or retrieve a loose horse more easily. With a green horse, make sure there are no obstacles in the arena—if he breaks free, the trailing line can tangle around the equipment.

Read more on longeing equipment >>

Sharon Biggs is the author of *In One Arena: Top Dressage Experts Share Their Knowledge Through the Levels*.