

Mounting Trouble

“My young horse is a pleasure to handle and ride but I’m having some trouble when I mount. She stands still for me to get on but the second I’m on board she’s off! Any tips would be welcome.”

My first big thing is not to make an issue out of it. It's a tricky thing with a young horse. You need discipline without too much friction. Easier said than done!

First thing's first. Check the obvious -

1. Make sure you're not sticking your toe in where it's not wanted as you launch yourself up there. Sometimes these things become an issue and in your attempt to get on 'in time' you may be doing more harm than good. Try mounting from a forward facing position on the block. Put your foot in the stirrup with your toe facing the front. This eliminates the need to twist round as you get up.
2. Is your saddle sitting too low at the back? This could be enough to send your horse forward as you sit down. Make sure you can fit a couple of fingers between the numnah and the saddle **when you're mounted**. (It doesn't matter how high up it is before you get on if it drops once you're on)
3. Is your horse cold backed? If she sinks away from the saddle or humps as you sit down when you first get on this could be the case. If she's fine when you get on after lunging or part way through a ride then this is highly likely. Some horses grow out of it, others don't. The best thing to do long term is stay off the saddle for 100 yards before you sit (lightly) on her back. Eventually she'll realise you're not going to sit immediately and she should stop rushing off as you get on.

If the answer is “no” to all the above it's safe to assume it's a habit. All habits need to be broken but bear in mind they take weeks to form and won't go away overnight.

"Stand still" should be practised on the ground as a voice command. It's very rarely done. At the end of the day it's just good manners, isn't it?

It's something I make a point of doing with all my horses on the way in and out of the field. I expect them to stand for a couple of seconds initially and gradually increase it to a maximum of ten seconds (ish). At that time they get a treat. One pony nut is enough to get them to halt and wait for it!

This also has the added plus that a horse very rarely tries to tank off when I lead it - they're almost begging me to do the "stand still" thing :) The great thing with teaching that stand still = treat is it works when you're on board too. Say it and get someone to give them something or lean down and give it. It's bribery, yes, but it's harmless and it works without causing tension.

When I'm mounting I always use a portable block and I always get on with the horse facing a wall/fence/gate with a fence/wall on the opposite side to me. That way I don't have to say "No" or put too much pressure on the reins but the horse can't swing away from me or walk on.

It does depend on the horse, of course, and yours may still try to walk forward and to the left so you'll need a bit more contact on your right rein to stop that.

Another way is to mount with your horse turned away from the direction they think they're going to go - or the direction they're naturally drawn to.

Obviously you can get someone to hold her as you get on but it's good to be able to do things on your own. If you can't stop her as soon as you get on do it as soon as possible. Then pat her and walk on when you're ready. Each time you get on make sure you never let her keep going. Gradually you'll reduce the distance she covers.

One thing I don't do is get off and start again. I would with an older horse but a youngster needs to get going. I would do it at the end of a good session though. When things have gone well just get off and on a few times. (With the fence/gate in front of you so she can't wander off.) Make a huge fuss about her standing still too. Once she realises she gets attention when she's stationary you'll be coming back asking for ways to get her walking forward again!

Good luck. Lorraine

'Get in Touch'

If you have any questions or would like help with your horse don't hesitate to contact me on lorraine@schoolyourhorse.com or you can now upload a video on the forum under "Show and Tell".

<http://www.schoolyourhorse.com/forum/?mingleforumaction=viewforum&f=17.0>

It doesn't have to be a perfect film – prop your mobile on the ménage fence and hit play – you'd be amazed what can be seen from a few minutes of film.

Whatever you decide to do with your horse make sure you both enjoy it! Lorraine