

think

like a pony

In the Saddle Journal 1



This journal will help you to continue your path to understanding ponies so that you can become their leader and friend in the saddle.

By working through this journal you will build a personal scrapbook of your achievements which will help you to progress in your horsemanship.

Award 1

Like you, when a pony can **relax**, they feel calm. When you are **relaxed** and calm, you can think, listen and learn.

The most important thing to help your pony to relax is for them to have a constant, regular **rhythm** in all their gaits. Working on the **rhythm** of your pony's walk will help your pony to **relax** and build a foundation for trot and canter.

If your pony does not 'walk out' easily it can be frustrating and may lead to tension. You may even be tempted to kick on every stride or urge your pony forward with your seat.

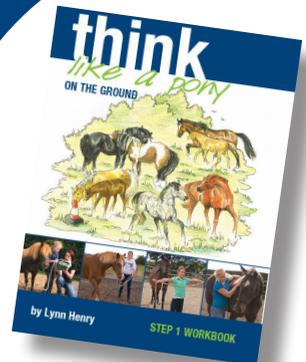
This will cause tension for you and your pony which will prevent either of you moving freely.

To allow your pony to walk forward freely you must be able to follow the **rhythm** and movement of the walk in a happy and **relaxed** way.

Work through your Think Like a Pony in The Saddle Step 1 Workbook alongside this award to complete the tasks, answer the questions and show photographic evidence of your progress. Pages are included at the end of this task section for you to place your photographs. You can add more pages if you wish.

When you have finished, ask your parent or guardian to mark it and then fill in the Award 2 Claim Form and submit it to get your certificate.

Have Fun!



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Award 1

Relaxation and rhythm in Walk

At walk your goal is to:

- Improve your pony's rhythm
- Achieve an athletic, purposeful walk
- Help your pony to track up
- Help your pony to relax

Are there any other goals that you wish to achieve?

1).....

2).....

3).....

4).....

Any help you may need to answer the questions can be found in the **Think Like a Pony Workbook 1.**

Music

Music has a big effect on all of us. When we listen to music it can affect our mood and the way that we move.

It is the beat and rhythm of the music that affects our body and mind.

- Have you ever heard a piece of music and immediately felt like you wanted to move, dance or tap your feet?
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- What is your favourite music at the moment?
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- Does your favourite music make you feel happy or light-hearted?
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- What is the rhythm or beat of your pony's walk?
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All mammals have a constant rhythm to their movement and can be affected by the rhythm of music.

When we hear an irregular rhythm or sound that we feel uncomfortable with, it has the effect of agitating us or making us feel tense or even stressed.



1. Lift your mood



2. Help you to follow and feel rhythm



3. Lift your pony's mood



A good walk has a regular 4 beat rhythm. When you ride it can become difficult to count all 4 beats. It is easier to get in time with the front legs and count 1-2, 1-2, 1-2, 1-2 and so on.

When you are counting, it is helpful to think of your legs as your pony's front legs.

Remember! A pony should be able to track up in walk.

They may even over track. If they track up it means they are swinging through their back and stepping under with their hind legs.

What does tracking up mean?

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You should always be aiming for the best walk possible because the better the quality of the walk, the better the quality of the other gaits, especially canter.

Finding a Rhythm....

- Listen to music and imagine riding at walk with your pony.

To find a sound or piece of music you want to ride to, walk and stride out with purpose while you listen or sing. Imagine your legs are your pony's front legs.

- Do you feel you are rushing?

If the answer is yes, then the beat of the music is too fast.

- Do you feel you are walking too slow?

If the answer is yes, then the beat of the music is too slow.

Most ponies will either walk too fast or too slow.

My favourite song to ride the walk to is 'You've Got a Friend in Me' by Randy Newman, which featured in the film Toy Story. I ride a horse whose legs are longer than a pony's and this rhythm works for her.

If you ride a pony, their legs will be shorter so their stride will be shorter. This may mean that the 'You've Got a Friend in Me' rhythm may be too slow.

You may need to experiment.

If the rhythm is too fast your pony may become unbalanced and break into a trot.

If the rhythm is too slow your pony will not move forward or track up.

- What music did you choose and why?

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- Make an area to ride at walk at least 20 metres in length. When you ride make sure that you ride in balance, carry your own weight and allow your pony to move forward.

- Count the number of strides that your pony takes between the markers. To count, just count the beat of the front legs as they stride forward (**show photographs**).

- You can repeat this a few times.

- How many strides did your pony take between the markers?

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- Was it the same in different areas of your arena or paddock?

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- If not, why do you think it changed?

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Ponies sometimes walk faster if they think they are going back to their friends or paddock.

- Show photographs of you and your pony riding in the areas where your pony changed rhythm and write a note of how the rhythm changed.

- Change direction. Is the number of strides the same in both directions?
-

- If not, why do you think it changed?
-
-

Ponies are sometimes stiffer on one side than the other and this will affect the way they walk.

- Ask your helper if your pony tracked up or even over tracked. If they did- well done (show photographs). If not, why do you think they are not tracking up?
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-

If your pony is not tracking up, his rhythm in walk may be too slow and he may not be swinging through his back.

- Can you feel your pony's barrel swinging as you walk together?
-

Now play your music or sing your song and count the strides again.

Make sure you maintain your balance and position and follow your pony's walk as you have done before.

Ask your helper to check that you are not swaying to the music.

- Did music improve your pony's rhythm and stride length? If so, how?
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- Did the walk feel more powerful when you played music or sang a song?
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- How was your mood affected when you played music or sang a song?
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- Could you feel your pony's barrel swing more?
-

- Do you feel as if your pony was taking you forward more?
-

Ask your helper if your pony tracked up or even over tracked (show photographs).

- Did listening to music or singing help you to be aware of your pony's walk or rhythm?
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- Show photographs of walking with and without music to see if you can see any difference in the way that you and your pony move together.

You will find that smiling also helps your mood.

When you sing or listen to music it helps you to feel happy, be aware of rhythm and relax.

When your pony finds his rhythm, he will relax.