



VTRA
**VICTORIA THERAPEUTIC
RIDING ASSOCIATION**

Sidewalker Duties

Training Requirements: Sidewalkers Training

Training Recommendations: Attend Sidewalker Training + Emergency Procedures Training yearly. Our practices and policies will change over time and attending these sessions ensures proper communication of these changes.

Before Classes Begin:

- Arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the first lesson.
- Sign-in at the Clubhouse and put on your name tag.
- Check the Sidewalker Chalkboard to see which rider you have been assigned.
- Check the “Volunteer Tips Book” to learn more about your rider.
- If there are two sidewalkers, discuss the division of labour.
 - It’s best to choose one sidewalker to do most of the communication with the rider. This ensures that volunteers don’t accidentally talk over one another and create a sensory overload for the rider.
 - Decide which person will be going to the right-side during mounting. That person will go through the gate first, hold the gate open for the rider and lower the stirrup on the right side of the horse.
 - If you are on the left side of the mounting ramp, stand in front of the stairs and block them.

When Your Rider Arrives:

- Introduce yourself to the riders.
- Some riders will need help putting on their helmets, boots, and transfer belt while others will not. Ask your rider if they need help. This is also an opportunity to do a safety check.
 - Ensure that their jacket is done up properly,
 - They are wearing the proper boots or shoes,
 - They have no loose accessories,
 - They have no gum, candy, food, or drink or horse treats
 - Their helmet doesn’t wiggle if they shake their head.
- Escort rider to the deck and stay with you rider while waiting to mount
 - While waiting you can help the rider prepare for their lesson by reviewing the horse words for “go” and “stop” or asking the rider to identify horses.

The primary responsibility of the Sidewalker is to ensure the safety of the rider.

The Sidewalker also helps by keeping the rider’s attention on the lesson, helping the rider to communicate, and offering encouragement to the rider.



Mounting:

- Please ensure you and your rider are prepared to mount once you get to the deck. The instructor will call your rider's name when it's time to mount.
 - When wheelchairs or ambulatory aids are being used during mounting and dismounting, it is important not to move them quickly or too closely to the horses.
 - Let the rider know where you have left their wheelchairs or ambulatory aid.
- Please refrain from speaking during the mounting procedure so that the rider can focus on the horse and instructor.
- ALL riders leave the ramp in a thigh hold. Instructor will inform sidewalkers of the hold required for each rider once they have cleared the mounting area.

During the Lesson:

- Work as a team with the other volunteers to ensure the rider's success.
- The sidewalker must always stay with the rider and maintain their hold unless otherwise instructed by the instructor.
 - If the participant drops an item, do not pick it up, instead continue to maintain the hold.
 - Do not hold onto the rider's belt. This can cause the rider to be off-balance
 - Do not lean on the horse since it's uncomfortable for the horse.
- Allow the rider time to receive, process, and complete the instructor's direction. If the rider is not performing a task, encourage them verbally and then do hand-over-hand.
 - For example, when the rider is learning to steer start by using verbal cues. If this does not work, tap the hand that needs to steer. If that still does not produce a response, then put your hand-over- the participants hand and perform the action. The rider's hands should always go back to the middle after steering. **Do not pull the reins yourself instead do hand-over-hand to pull the reins.**
- If you need to change sides, advise the instructor or Assistant Instructor, and wait until you are replaced before you leave the rider's side. If you are returning to the rider, move into the position from behind the person already there and walk in front of the horse.
- Check in with the Instructor or Assistant instructor at anytime if you are feeling unsure

Dismount and After the Lesson:

- During dismount, one or more Side Walkers may be required to assist the instructor depending on the type of dismount required. The instructor will explain the dismount procedure at that time.
- After dismounting, the Side Walker on the LEFT side must stay with the rider and assist in running up the stirrups on both sides; the Side Walker must ensure that the rider does not run around or behind the horse.
- Side Walkers escort riders safely from the ring. Please ensure that they keep their helmet and belt on until they are outside of the ring. Once outside, help the riders remove their helmets and belts.
- Sign-out in the Clubhouse.

**Thank you to all the
VTRA Volunteers!**

**Our Vision: Learning,
connection, and joy
through the power of
horses.**



Common Holds:



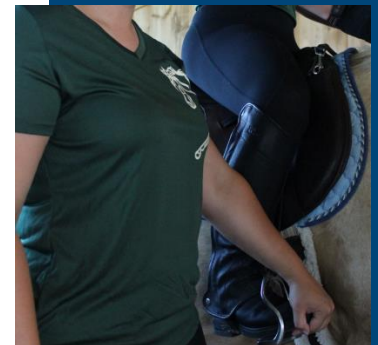
Thigh Hold: This is the basic hold for clients. Sidewalkers place the forearm of the arm closest to the horse across a rider's thigh with a small amount of pressure. This is a very secure hold used for, anxious riders, beginner riders, and/or unbalanced riders.

Heel Hold: Sidewalkers “cup” the ankle of the rider. Placement is important with this hold because too high (above the ankle bones) does not provide support and too low (on the heel) risks pulling off the rider's shoes or boots on accident. Sidewalkers should cup their hand just below the ankle bones with their fingers closer to the horse and thumb on the outside. This hold is used for riders who do not need help balancing but still need support. Ankle holds help keep busy feet away from the horse's side and keep the sidewalker in the proper position.



Double Hold: The double hold is the most secure hold used to fully support the rider's balance on the horse. It is a combination of the thigh and ankle hold. Sidewalkers place their arm closest to the horse in a thigh hold, cross their opposite hand in front of them and do a heel hold.

Toe Hold: Sidewalkers gently hold the riders toe pushing it back. This hold is primarily used when a rider is leaning back in the saddle. This hold encourages the rider to sit centered in the saddle.



Strap Hold: This hold is used for support only. It involves the sidewalker holding the straps on the saddle. This hold is more often used as an emotional support for riders or for riders who need a sidewalker close but do not need help with balance. This may be a rider who has a tendency get off the horse without warning or a rider who needs verbal support.



Name:

Date:

Sidewalker Evaluation Checklist

General Communication/Flexibility

- 1. Candidate is willing and able to work in a team setting, to fill a variety of roles, and to communicate with staff and other volunteers
- 1.2 Candidate interacts professionally and appropriately with all participants
- 1.3 Candidate is here for the benefit of the participant

Overall Safety

- 2. Sidewalker does not let go of the rider unless given permission
- 2.1 Understands and can demonstrate all holds (full, thigh, heel, toe, strap)
- 2.3 Places the safety of the rider as the highest priority, and is observant when working as a sidewalker
- 2.4 Stays in correct Sidewalker position
- 2.5 Does not touch the horse during the lesson
- 2.6 Demonstrates proper change to alternate side of horse

Rider Support

- 3. Does not distract the rider
- 3.1 Uses short, simple directions
- 3.2 Encourages and supports independence, only assisting the rider when necessary
- 3.3 Reinforces the instruction given, rather than gives instruction.
- 3.4 Performs 'hand over hand' steering correctly

Physical

- 4. Physically able to walk and trot while performing a thigh hold
- 4.1 Can walk in a sand ring for 45 minutes
- 4.2 Able to run beside the horse down the long side (approx. 40 meters)
- 4.3 Physically fit enough to emergency dismount a rider

Result

- Safe to handle in classes
- Requires further training

Instructor: _____

Comments/Suggestions for Further Training:
