

# Get the Most Out of Training

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Whether we are working with a Professional Trainer or on our own, each of us has our training goals and training plan in mind. For most of us it is a thought of what we would like to achieve and what we think we need to do to get there. Our plan is in our heads. Progress is seen as it comes. But how do we get the most out of our training sessions? How do we get the most out of our lessons? How do we get the most out of our trainers? The answer is relatively simple. Apply the Scientific Method and keep a written record. This simple technique allows us a way to establish our Goals, Formulate a Plan of Action, Evaluate the Efficiency of that Plan, and Reformulate the Plan in order to obtain our Ultimate Goals in a timely and documented (written) manner. Essentially, there are five steps to the Training Plan; one of which is static (Step 1) and four, which are dynamic and repeated on a continual basis. It takes some time to perform these tasks, but the time is well worth the money and time we spend on the training our horses (or ourselves), allowing us to monitor our progression and progress with more efficiency than we would do so otherwise. Keeping this written plan in a binder at the stable also allows others to document care/training provided in your absence allowing you to monitor what is being done with your horse. If you have a trainer working with your horse ask them to become familiar with your Training Plan and have them document their rides in a ride log stating the duration of the ride, what exactly was worked on, any issues or concerns that were encountered and any overall grooming or care issues or concerns. You too should document your rides in the Ride Log.

## The 5 Steps:

1. Identification of Ultimate Goals
2. Identification of Immediate Goals
3. Formulation of Implementation Plan to obtain Goals
4. Reevaluation on weekly or monthly basis
5. Reformation of Plan

Step 1. Identification of Ultimate Goals: Write down your long term Ultimate Goals for your horse (or yourself if it is a Riding Instruction Plan). It could be:

1. Dressage - as far as we can go
2. Jumping - up to 4'
3. Combined Tests - First Level Dressage - 3'3" Show Jump Course
4. Three Day Eventing at Training Level -- First Level Dressage / 3'3" XC course (3'11" brush) / 3'3" Show Jump course

The key is to be realistic for you and your horse.

Step 2. Identification of Immediate Goals. This is what needs to be improved upon NOW in order to advance towards your Ultimate Goals. An example of a horse new to dressage is below:

Goals/Plans:

- Gain muscle mass - haunches, top line
- Increase endurance - increase distance tolerance / exercise tolerance
- Increase over all strength
- Enhance hoof condition / health
- Begin to pick up right lead more consistently and hold right lead
- Develop acceptance of contact.
- Keep a Ride Log to Monitor Progression

Step 3: Formulation of Implementation Plan to Obtain Goals – Essentially, what do you need to do to make the identified goals happen? The sample below is based on a horse new to dressage.

The black print below is your stated goals.

The blue print below is your planned actions needed to reach your goals.

- Gain muscle mass - haunches, top line (5-6 day riding schedule, increase feed, implement supplements, etc)
- Increase endurance - increase distance tolerance / exercise tolerance (5-6 day riding schedule with 60 minute workouts. Walk hills. Trot sets as tolerated then walk to rest, followed by trot sets as tolerated.)
- Increase over all strength (Hope to achieve through 5-6 day riding schedule with 60 minute duration or rides.)
- Enhance hoof condition / health (Begin Supplements. Have hoofs cleaned daily. Apply products to hoofs. Farrier schedule every 5 weeks.)
- Begin to pick up right lead more consistently and hold right lead. (Hope to achieve through overall improved strength and conditioning. If no improvement noted with increase exercise tolerance, will have Chiropractic/Massage Evaluation and Treatment done.
- Develop acceptance of contact. Hope to achieve through increased muscle mass and exercise tolerance. If still having issues, will evaluate bit use and possibly change bit.
- Keep a Ride Log to Monitor Progression keep a daily Ride Log recording time ridden, what gaits were worked on, what transitions were worked on. Any issues. Any concerns.

Step 4: Re-evaluation of Plan. Evaluate the above Implementation Plan on a weekly or monthly basis for success/progression or stagnation/failures and reformulate a New Implementation Plan for the next week/month.

The black print below is your stated goals.

The blue print below is your planned actions needed to reach your goals.

The red print is the evaluation of your plan.

- Gain muscle mass - haunches, top line (5-6 day riding schedule, increase feed, implement supplements, etc) Continue with current plan of 5-6 day a week riding schedule.
- Increase endurance - increase distance tolerance / exercise tolerance (5-6 day riding schedule with 60 minute workouts. Walk hills. Trot sets as tolerated then walk to rest, followed by trot sets as tolerated.) Increase workouts duration as tolerated. Extend trot sets as tolerating current distance well. Begin Canter sets and off property work to increase exposure to the unknown.
- Increase over all strength (Hope to achieve through 5-6 day riding schedule with 60 minute duration or rides.) Increased Strength and Endurance noted following 4 weeks of 6 day workouts. Continue with current plan.
- Enhance hoof condition / health (Begin Supplements. Have hoofs cleaned daily. Apply products to hoofs. Farrier schedule every 5 weeks.) Chipping and flaking resolved. Continue with current supplement formula and farrier plan.
- Begin to pick up right lead more consistently and hold right lead. (Hope to achieve through overall improved strength and conditioning. If no improvement noted with increase exercise tolerance, will have Chiropractic/Massage Evaluation and Treatment done. With increased strength, right lead was obtained more consistently at the end of the month. Continue with 5-6 day workouts. Correct leads appear to be increasing with increased strength and endurance. If any issues persists - have Chiropractic evaluate.
- Develop acceptance of contact. (Hope to achieve through increased muscle mass and exercise tolerance. If still having issues, will evaluate bit use and possibly change bit. Acceptance of bit is better, but needs to improve. Continue with current bit and plan of 5-6 day workouts. If issue persists, consider using different bit.
- Keep a Ride Log to Monitor Progression (keep a daily Ride Log recording time ridden, what gaits were worked on, what transitions were worked on. Any issues. Any concerns. Ride log maintained well by Trainer. Need to make myself write up my rides on a more consistent basis.

Step 5: Reformulate Plan: changes are underlined and italicized to highlight their addition to the next week/month

- Gain muscle mass - haunches, top line
- Increase endurance - increase distance tolerance / exercise tolerance
- Increase over all strength
- Enhance hoof condition / health
- Begin to pick up right lead more consistently and hold right lead

- Develop acceptance of contact.
- Keep a Ride Log to Monitor Progression
- *Begin Carrot/Treat Stretches to increase Range of Motion and enhance flexibility after each ride*