

Stop on Whoa

I. GOAL

To get the horse to stop from all three gaits when you say the word "whoa" without having to use the reins. You want your horse to act like there's an imaginary cliff in front of him and if he takes one more step after you say the word "whoa," he's going to fall off the edge of it. When you say "whoa," you want all forward movement to stop NOW.

II. WHY

Most horses will stop when you pull on the reins, but a lot of them won't stop if you just say the word "whoa." I want my horses to be able to stop three different ways: When I pull on the reins (one rein or two), when I sit down and relax in the saddle, and when I say the word "whoa." You can never have too many ways to stop a horse. Whether you are in the arena or out on the trail, a good stop is important for your safety and overall control.

III. TEACHING STAGE

1 Follow the fence at the trot [Photo A].

Following the fence gives you and the horse a straight line to work off of and you won't have to focus on trying to steer. Be sure to stay close to the fence so that when you have to bend the horse around in a circle, he has to really pick his shoulder up and do a rollback. If you're too far off the fence, he'll do a screaming U-turn when you bend him around.



2 When you're ready to ask the horse to stop, say the word "whoa" in a very assertive voice and sit down deep in the saddle. Count to yourself – "one thousand one, one thousand two" [Photo B].



3 If the horse doesn't stop by the time you've counted "one thousand one, one thousand two," bend him into the fence by picking up on the rein closest to the fence and using your outside leg to drive him through the turn like you would for a rollback [Photo C]. Then bend the horse around in several circles at the walk, using your inside leg to encourage him to soften his ribcage, hustle his feet and really put some effort into the bending circle [Photo D]. Then trot him off in the opposite direction [Photo E]. When you first pull the horse's nose into the fence, use your outside leg to move his shoulder and encourage more of a rollback. Then soften him with your inside leg. For example, if you're going counterclockwise around the arena, use your right rein and left leg to start the rollback into the fence. Then use your right leg

