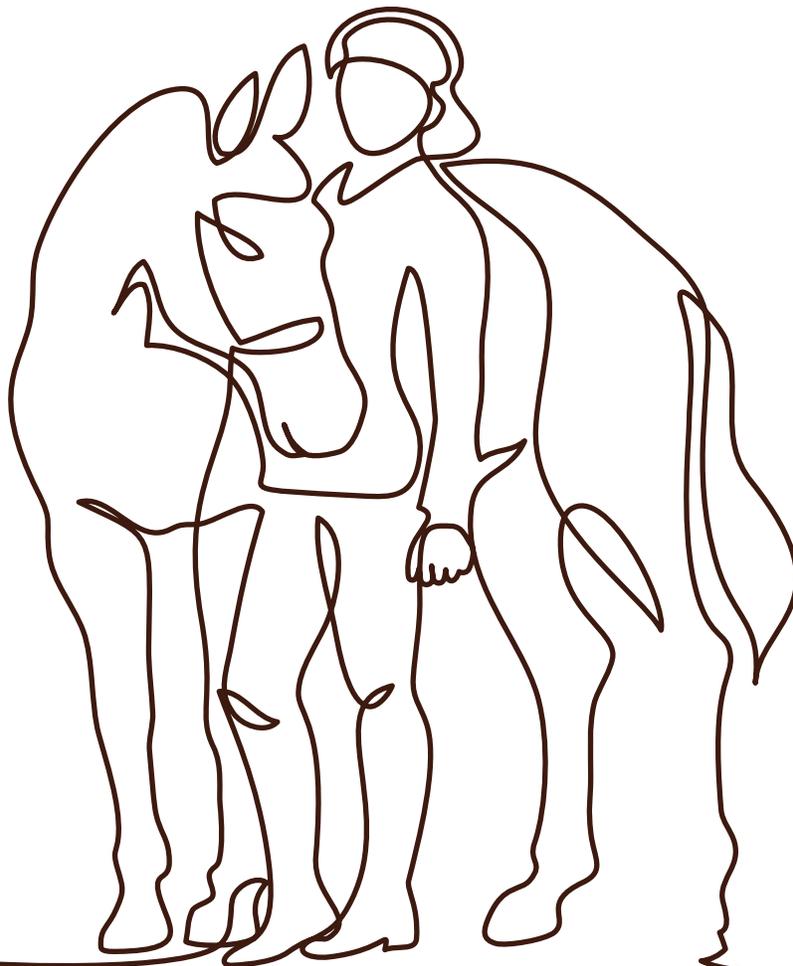


HORSE
WISE



From the Ground Up

Four Easy Steps to Assess Your Horse



A HORSE WISE STUDY GUIDE

Four Easy Steps to Assess Your Horse

Below are the basic tools I use to assess every horse and rider during a first Horse Wise session. No fancy equipment needed — just a halter, lead rope and good observation skills.

The exercise is simple. Go halter your horse, lead him somewhere specific, and return him back to the paddock/stall/pen and turn him loose.

Be sure to go through each step, no matter how basic or mundane it seems. Record your answers afterward. Don't feel silly about noticing small details. That's actually the point of this process. Often seemingly minor patterns lead to the biggest clues about a horse's state of mind.

I. THE START

- 1** How does he handle being caught? Can you walk right up to him? Or does he approach you first? Does he walk or trot away? Once close to him, does he look at you? Or does he look away? Pay attention to the details.
- 2** How does the horse respond to being haltered? Does he stand quietly? Turn his head toward you? Away from you? Lift his head? Stands like a statue, staring ahead? Notice and describe his behavior.
- 3** After you've haltered him and you begin to walk off while leading him, what does he do? Does he walk beside you? Do his feet get slow and drag along? Does he balk? Does he crowd your space and/or want to walk faster than you?
- 4** While leading him through his gate or stall door, does he politely follow? Does he take one final mouthful of grass or hay on the way?

II. THE WALK

- 1 As you begin leading him to your destination, does he walk with you? Does he lunge for grass at any opportunity? Does he lag along behind you, requiring tugs of the lead rope from you? Does he rush ahead, pulling you forward?
- 2 When you stop, does he stop with you? Or does he bump into you abruptly?
- 3 When you walk faster, does he go faster? When you go slower, does he?
- 4 Can you ask him to change directions easily? Stepping to the right for several steps and then to the left without missing a beat? Can you stop him and then back him up easily from the lead rope?

III. THE CONNECTION

- 1 How do you hold the lead rope while leading? Do you grasp it near the halter with your right hand? Do you hold it 2-4 ft from halter clip, so horse has room to walk behind and to your right? Or do you hold it a different way?
- 2 How close does your horse lead to you? Do you ask him to be at your shoulder? Behind and to right of you? Directly behind you? Or does it seem to change constantly?
- 3 How does your horse respond to passing other horses while being led? Or to other distractions (vehicles, gator, farrier, horse trailer, etc)?
- 4 If your attention shifts during the leading (someone comes up to you, your phone rings, text beeps, etc), what does your horse do? Nothing? Waits for you to refocus on him? Grazes? Looks around? Goes to sleep?

IV. THE RETURN

- 1 Do any of your above answers change when you are leading him back to his paddock or pen?
- 2 When you walk him through the gate, does he wait for you to ask him? Does he roll his hindquarters, stop and face you after going through the gate?
- 3 When you unhalter him, does he turn his head slightly to you as you unbuckle the halter? Or does he turn his head away or try to push out of the halter?
- 4 When he is officially loose, does he walk away from you? Or trot away with a playful buck? Or bolt off the second the halter is removed? Or stand still, watching you leave? Or follow you as you exit the pen?

After answering all of the questions above, sit down and review the results.

Do you see a pattern of behavior that shows up in multiple answers?

What things would you like to improve in your relationship with your horse?

Did something come up with your horse that confused or troubled you? If you would like to discuss your results, I'm offering a **free 30-minute consultation** call to anyone who has completed the study guide exercises. Please reach out to Lynn at horsewisecoach.com/contact to schedule.

