

Young Horse Development

Linda Allen and Julie Winkel

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Linda Allen is one of the top hunter jumper trainers in the US; Julie Winkel, likewise, is a top h/j trainer based in Nevada. She writes a conformation column for 'Practical Horseman' and was instrumental in some of the recent positive changes that are being seen in the hunter show rings.

Jose... (Natural horsemanship trainer used by Winkel)

“When we ride a horse, we become one energy bubble instead of two.”

“I’m a horseman, this is a horse. Groundwork is good, but he’s meant to be ridden.”

Julie Winkel and Linda Allen

- Longeing: Is good, if done for the right reason and in the right way
- Walk on a long rein: relaxes the mind, allows the older horse to physically relax. Lets the horse be in front of you, and go forward
- **The more times it takes for a horse to figure it out, the better he understands it** when he does
- We’re smarter than horses, they’re stronger than us
- **Expect a horse to be its age and treat it as so.** When we get glimpses of them acting older/more mature than they are, and then commence to train them that way – that’s when we get in trouble.
- When training:
 - o Linda:
 - 1. Forward – the horse has to be going out the front door
 - 2. Straight
 - 3. Consistent – have self-carriage
 - 4. Balanced
 - o Julie:
 - 1. Forward
 - 2. Must have steering:
 - Has to go where you want
 - Follow directions
 - This leads to straightness eventually
 - 3. Rhythm and relaxation (harder at the canter)
 - 4. Balance

- **Don't try and fix everything at the same time.** Fix the weakest link in the chain first.
- Draw reins: the horse only learns to get away from pressure and drop behind the bit, get away from the hands. **Never use draw reins to train a horse.** Take them off – the horse is evading.
- If a horse is TOO elastic: it's difficult now, when green – but will be a great advantage to you later.
- **If you change tack (rather than change tactics),** your horse will just learn a different resistance later.
- **Take the time to work through the problem in a snaffle.** Don't go to a twist.
- **Give the young ones a break** – *they don't have a long attention span, get bored easily,* so let them have **success, and some reward.** Don't get a horse sour.
- **Don't do a lot of transitions in the early stages, but do change direction a lot.** This gives the horse rhythm and self-carriage.
- **Spurs:** *don't use them on 3 and 4 year olds.*
 - o They don't understand the leg, and will back up into the leg.
 - o *Use a stick to educate the horse to the leg.*
 - o The rider can't be afraid to use the leg; *you must be able to thump on them.*
- It's easy to make a horse more sensitive; *if they start off sensitive, that is more difficult.*
- Trot poles:
 - o Don't make the obstacle the whole thing
 - o Make the obstacle part of the job in addition to the obstacle
 - o Vary it
- **The rider's job: pace and track**
- **The horse's job: the jump**
 - o When you get to a jump, completely give and let the horse do his job
- **Let horses make mistakes**
 - o They can correct them, deal with their own problems
 - o They must learn this so they know how to get out of trouble
 - o Good riders often help green horses too much, they over think; the horse does not learn how to deal with situations
- **Take your time.** *Don't try and change it all at once.*
- *Scratch the horse on the withers:* this is what the horse does in nature, it has meaning to him
- **How to train a horse/rider:**
 - o **Give them high self esteem**
 - o **Confidence is everything in the horse/rider**
- A horse that hurries: sink in, sit with a light seat. Support with a soft leg, seat and arms.
- **Know when to quit**
- ***If the horse is struggling with a concept, make sure he's not also struggling with you.***
- **Let the last thing they do be easy:** *they'll remember the last thing.*
- A sensitive horse might bump the first rail – then bump all the rest. It's because they get frustrated/rattled and can't/don't try to figure it out

- The more sensitive a horse is, the more important the horse is used to the leg; otherwise, you put the leg on the horse and it's electric
- Exercise:
 - Pole, (9') Pole (one stride) pole
 - Pole (9') cross (one stride) pole
 - Pole (9') cross (one stride) vertical
 - **Horses learn through repetition**
 - Keep a space between the cross rails, in case the horse bumps it
 - If the horse is rushing – trot forward out of the corner, then slow down on the approach
 - Julie Winkel doesn't canter with young horses; will jump them first, this helps with canter
 - **Riders often act too much with the upper body;** the horse reacts, then the rider has to use the hands
 - **Allow:** *the more we can allow the horse to do his job, the better he becomes*
- Exercise: pole (9') cross (one stride) ascending oxer; loop around, jump angled ascending oxer
 - **Control the corner,** keep the horse's nose to the centre of the jump
 - The important part is to come around the corner and get to the centre of the fence; **If they stop, no big deal** – but DON'T let them look down at the jump. The horse **MUST** look beyond the jump.
 - The horse should come around the corner **and listen 50% to the rider and focus 50% on the jump.**
 - *The rider needs to be still*
 - If the horse is focussing more on the rider (looking back) – *soften the hands.*
 - **ALLOW** the horse to jump rather than **TELL** it to jump.
 - *It's better to LET a horse learn,* rather than trying to teach them something.
 - Correction is better on the landing side
 - Give him something to do: circle, transition, focus on that
- *Every perfect horse at home is a waste of time:* school the horse, challenge it.
- Green horses: always give them ground lines (NOTE: loose ground rails are not allowed in Pony Club)
- Don't canter single fences a lot – do it as a test every so often.
- If you jump a three year old, **he can do it – but he won't last**
 - *Slow it down*
 - Older green horses can be pushed faster than younger green ones
 - Some horses/breeds mature earlier, some later
 - QH/TB mature at 3
 - Warmbloods might not mature until 8
 - *Quality is better than quantity.*
 - The longer it takes to make a horse, the better its basics are.

- Use subtle *transitions within gaits*.
 - It's *essential that the horse moves forward* from when you ask/where you ask
 - Transitions must be smooth, relaxed, and happy when you ask.
 - Jumper/hunter only needs to go forward/back a few strides (unlike the dressage horse who has to hold a lengthening across the diagonal)
 - *Transitions must be smooth but prompt*
- **If you want a horse to be better, ask more often, don't ask harder.**
 - After 3-4 times, he will start to anticipate = more responsive to the aids
- There are two main things when riding a horse
 - *How fast it is going vs. how fast it wants to be going*
- Use rails for flat work, make them think about their feet, keep their balance/rhythm, make adjustments to the stride
- **Poles are good; they prevent you from jumping them too much.**
 - Jump a maximum of 2 times a week when young
- If shortening the stride, the horse still needs to be in front of the leg
- When the horse catches a rail behind (when trotting over a pole):
 - Typical of the green horse
 - He doesn't know how to shorten behind
 - Harder for the leggy/longer strided horse
 - If they don't learn to shorten, this is when they jump over the shoulder, twist, etc.
- **Chips (short/close distances):**
 - Horse does it because it feels safe
 - If the horse has a scopy, powerful jump, it will choose to go long; this becomes iffy to a wide fence (and can be dangerous on a cross country fence, if long distances turn into a habit)
- Once they figure out trot poles, you can raise the jump
- *A quality trot is key:*
 - Should be marching and straight
 - Maintain to the fence, don't anticipate. Sit still
 - Focus on the middle of the last jump
- Changes:
 - Get yourself and the horse straight, then wait one stride longer to ask for the change.
 - When asking, don't lean
 - Just before wall, sit back with upper body, horse will change under you
- Stopping is harder than jumping
 - **Don't give the horse a reason to stop**
- Riding a horse is like driving a nice car
 - You press on the gas, sit and steer. *Don't row the boat*
- **Jump lower fences of different types:**
 - *This teaches style and technique*

- *The simpler the exercise, the more perfect it should be* (e.g., transitions walk to trot).
 - How a horse does a walk to canter transition will tell you how it jumps
- *Harder is not the same as higher:*
 - A high jump should be easy
 - Don't make low too easy
- The more a horse can think, the better its technique will be
- The less the rider does, the more the horse starts to do.
 - The next step: land, sit still, see if the horse will do it himself
- Horses don't reason, don't think the way we think, but they do have a sense of blame/responsibility
- You need to see HOW LITTLE you need to ride a horse – not how much.
- *Green horses don't think as fast*
- Concentrate more on the quality of the canter in the approach
- Green horses:
 - Jump them off a curve
 - This helps with balance and straightness
 - The rider's job is to keep it smooth (the curve, the canter)
- Free jumping set up:
 - Standard practice in Europe
 - Not a necessity
 - Sometimes it's an impossibility (due to facility, etc.)
- Free jumping:
 - Is a good way to teach a horse to look at things
 - Have a box with grain (raised) in the ring
 - This stops the horse from going too fast; he'll go to grain instead
 - Lead the horse into the shoot:
 - The most experienced horse person is required for this role
 - Use placing rails
 - This allows the horse to learn rhythm and balance without having to jump too high
- Round pen: teaches them what *cluck* and *whoa* means
- Hands take the forward away from a horse, makes them tougher
 - What works for them is to go forward
- If the horse is kicking the wall (when ridden):
 - Take away the reward (ride far enough away from the wall)
 - Gallop him hard: take the edge off him
- **Horses like rules**
 - They live by rules and parameters
- When teaching jumping:
 - *90% should be no issue (easy) in horse's mind*
- Riding on the flat:
 - **Light contact is not the same as a loose rein**

- *Horse should travel on a long fluid stride that is ground covering*
 - Horse should appear **relaxed** and **happy**
- The horse should point his nose to where his feet will be
- Canter is more important than the trot
- Don't ride in a ½ seat (2 point); ride in a light seat, close the hip angle
- When judging Pre/Baby Green classes:
 - Overlook mistakes if corrected quickly
 - Quality – should be lenient
- Amateur: the expectation is that the horse is VERY broke
- Distances:
 - Okay deep vs. bad deep
 - *Bad deep is when the rider gets ahead*
 - Okay deep is acceptable
 - Bad deep is unacceptable
- Trotting on course: deal breaker for a judge
 - Hunter classes are judged out of 100; it is an automatic drop to 40 when trotting
- **Spookiness:**
 - **Will not disappear with schooling**
 - **Make him work**
 - **Make compromises (cut corners)**
- Changes:
 - Use pole on the landing side
 - Land straight, go forward, rider sits up/back just before wall (change at turn)
 - Fix the thing that's preventing the change first (straightness, etc.)
- Handy Hunter:
 - Need efficient turns, brilliant forward pace, inside options, good form
 - After the hand gallop, the next fence at an increased pace (but not increasing to the fence)
 - Pace first, distance second
- Derby
 - more natural, without ground lines, more options