

Horse Sense

Required: 2 Skill Builders
1 Technology
1 Service Project
1 Career Exploration
2 from any other
7



Horses have been a major part of human history. Whether you live in the country or in a city, have your own horse or ride at a nearby stable, this interest project will help you better understand horses, increase your riding skills, explore careers and hobbies that involve horses, and share your love of horses and horsemanship with others.

Skill Builders

1 At a riding academy, stable, or riding program, learn how to do the following activities safely: groom, lead, tie, bridle, saddle, and mount a horse. Learn how to post, to go from walk to canter, to gallop, and to turn left and right on a horse. Find out how to hold a horse for a farrier (blacksmith) or veterinarian. See page 91 in *Safety-Wise*.

2 Identify six safety rules to use on and off the horse and in the stable, ring, or on the trail. Create posters, signs, etc., listing these rules. Offer to post them to help others.

3 Help plan and/or take part in a group overnight trail ride. Properly pack gear that will be carried by the horses. Take part in the care and maintenance of the horses and their tack while on the trail. Or demonstrate your skills as a rider during at least three group trail rides of one hour or longer. Perhaps pack and carry a trail meal with you.

4 Learn about horse breeding. Talk to a horse breeder or visit the library and read a book about horse breeding. Select one breed of horse that interests you and research its history. Identify essential characteristics of the breed. Make a drawing of the ideal horse in this breed.

5 Visit a library or museum to learn about two topics from this list, or a topic of your own:

- Mythology and horses.
- Horse images in art.
- How horses were introduced to North America, and their effect on the American Indian culture.
- The domestication of horses.
- Horses in the lives of royalty or gentry.
Create a photo essay or visual and text display of your findings.

6 Learn to assess a horse physically and temperamentally. Consider personality traits, physical attributes, age, training, and learning ability. Find out what faults a horse might have and how to correct them. Using this information, create on paper a "perfect horse," listing the qualities suitable for you and your riding style. Or visit a ranch or stable and select a horse to ride based on these qualities.

Technology

1 Find out how modern science has contributed to the health, breeding, training, and care of horses. What technology was involved?

2 Learn about *tack* (bridle and saddle) and how to care for it. Name two or three different saddles, bits, girths, and pads. Which would you choose for your riding style? Explain to a group why some equipment is better-suited to particular riding styles. Explain and/or demonstrate the different types of

tack and equipment and how to care for it to a group of beginning riders. Be able to recognize worn and unsafe tack. Or enter a horse show or rodeo. Identify five pieces of the equipment that you will need. List five criteria that the judges will be looking for in the particular event in which you will be competing.

3 With permission, visit two or three stables and interview the owners about as many of the following as you can:

- Boarding prices.
- Stall accommodations.
- Storage of hay and feed.
- Number of horses.
- Feeding schedules.
- Types of riding rings and trail systems.
- Amount of pasture.
- Types of bedding.
- Method of manure disposal.
- Quality and amount of water easily available to horses.

Keep a record of your findings, and list the technology that is used in the care, feeding, and hygiene of horses.

4 For a minimum of two months, track the financial responsibilities involved in owning a horse. Include the cost of rent or purchase, tack, farrier's bills, veterinarian's bills, training, supplies, food, etc. You may also need to include other expenses, such as show fees, riding instruction, and transportation, if they apply.

5 If you have access to the Internet at home, at school, or at the public library, track information about horses. Print it out, and share the reading material with friends or fellow riders.

Service Projects

1 Volunteer to assist in the care of horses at a local animal shelter or elsewhere. Or find out about programs that protect wild horses. Find a way to support the effort, and volunteer your services for at least one day.

2 Find out how horses are used in therapeutic programs for people with disabilities, what the programs entail, and how horses can help. Locate a nearby stable where there is such a program (or any horse-related program that helps people with disabilities), and find out about volunteer opportunities.

3 Make a bibliography of storybooks about horses. Include illustrated and multicultural books. Select your favorites and read them to a group of younger girls. Share your own experiences with them.

4 If you have your own horse, think of ways in which you and your horse can benefit someone else. Advertise your services by word-of-mouth or by posting fliers.

3 Shadow a horse trainer. Learn about her daily responsibilities. How do they differ from the responsibilities of a veterinarian?

4 Attend a rodeo or visit a library and get information about rodeos. List three different rodeo careers that involve horses. Select one that interests you and interview or read about a woman working in that career. Find out about her skills, and about the benefits and challenges, even dangers, of her work.

5 Find out about the skills involved in the production or restoration of carousel horses, such as carpentry, woodcarving, designing, and painting. Visit your local carousel for information. Some cities have carousel organizations that restore old carousels in city parks. See your local historical society or chamber of commerce. Make a collage of carousel horses using original photographs, drawings, or magazine illustrations. At a carousel near you, treat yourself and a young child to a ride.

6 Interview a mounted police officer. Learn about the role of horses in police work and how they are trained.

Career Exploration

1 Find out about three careers related to horses and explore three of them. Find out about the training required, salaries, job market, etc. To what professional organizations do members of each field belong? Give a presentation of your findings to a troop or group.

2 Follow a veterinarian on her horse calls to observe what she looks for when treating a horse. Ask her about the advantages and disadvantages of her career, and what she likes best about it.

And Beyond

READ THE POEM "THE JUMP" ON PAGE 117 in the *Cadette Girl Scout Handbook*. Animal lovers will enjoy these related interest projects:

- Wildlife
- Pets
- All About Birds