



Rider Application

Name	Date of Birth	Date of Application	
Address	Phone	Height	Weight
Name of Parent / Caregiver / Teacher	Email		
Diagnosis or Description of special needs			
Reasons for wanting to join RDA programme. What areas you would like us to focus on? (See p2 'So How Does It Work')			

Learner Profile - Please describe current skills in the following areas:

Physical Mobility Balance Motor Control	
Sensory/Communication Hearing / Vision Sensory Processing difficulties Communication difficulties Language spoken at home	
Social/Emotional Behavioural Social Family / Home situation Self-care skills	
Pre-academic Skills Eye Contact Attention Ability/Span Ability to follow instructions Awareness Motivation/Initiative	
Health Notes (eg epilepsy, allergies, feeding tube, shunt, etc)	
Specialist Support (eg ORS funded) Name of Specialist	

- This information will enable the RDA Group to consider suitability to participate in and RDA programme.
- If accepted, further medical, therapy and/or educational information will be needed for safety and planning purposes.

SO HOW DOES IT WORK?

- Diane Sharp 2006

How does riding improve balance?

The horse provides a comfortable base of support upon which a person who is unstable on his/her own legs can learn to balance. Riding is a dynamic movement activity. The movement of the horse gently shifts the rider off balance and back to the centre, facilitating rhythmical contraction and relaxation of the muscles in the body. Changes in the horse's movement, direction or pace grades the degree to which the rider's balance is challenged.

How does riding improve muscle strength?

Pleasure in riding provides incentive to repeat and persist with otherwise boring exercises. Many activities on or associated with the horse can be used to promote strength and endurance.

How does riding improve coordination skills?

Successful horse riding involves every part of the body working in constantly changing combinations of movements. Therefore it is the coordination of every part of the body that is challenged when the rider moves with and controls the horse. On a horse, posture and gross motor skills are emphasised in support of refining fine motor and other skills.

How is riding good exercise?

Some people with disabilities have difficulty finding physical recreational activities that offer the quality of exercise riding provides. Horse riding may be their only source of continuous activity and regular exercise that they can participate in. Riding involves all of the muscles of the body and in addition stimulates all the body systems. It can also be a relaxing activity as it is an enjoyable activity that encourages active muscle work and deep breathing.

How does riding facilitate the relaxation of high muscle tone?

High muscle tone prevents a person from initiating coordinated movement of the body. Relaxation facilitates improved balance, posture and coordination. The continuous, smooth, rhythmical movement of the horse promotes this relaxation. The natural warmth of the horse also facilitates stretching and careful positioning helps to inhibit any reflexes that may be present.

How does riding normalise muscle tone?

The strong dynamic movement of horse provides proprioceptive and vestibular input that effectively facilitates an increase in low muscle tone. The up and down movement enhances joint approximation and contraction of the deep postural muscles. Changing the horse's tempo and direction as well as doing exercises on the horse combine this natural impact of the horse's movement with functional activities.

How does riding improve posture?

Horse riding gives symmetrical exercise to the body in response to the horse's movement. Muscles on either side of the spine are exercised equally promoting good postural alignment. Tactile input received through the base of the spine while sitting astride a horse naturally facilitates an upright posture. In addition, the activities used in the programme help to improve trunk control and balance and increase the strength and endurance of the postural muscles.

How does riding improve gait (walking ability)?

The horse as a modality for gait training has no equal. No apparatus has been developed to replicate the unimpeded, repetitive motion the horse imparts to a rider. The movement of a horse causes the rider's pelvis, trunk and shoulder girdle to react in ways very similar to the movement of the human walk. Automatic weight shifts occur in the rider in response to the horse's movement, which is an important sensation for riders with asymmetrical weight bearing patterns. The horse is invaluable in providing the feeling of proper stride length.

How does riding improve communication skills?

To communicate children need to learn the basic aspects of communication: speech, facial expressions, body language, signing and gesture. They also need appropriate opportunities (an attentive listener who responds to them), reasons (make requests, ask questions, give information and share their feelings) and the confidence to express themselves. Riders learn basic commands to get their horse to go and stop. The horse willingly responds to their instructions and therefore provides the positive reinforcement that motivates them to continue to make their requests.

How does riding improve social skills?

Bonding with a horse assists in bonding with humans, because the horse becomes a friend to interact with, care for and develop a partnership with. The horse will accept a rider with no prejudgement, tolerate behaviour from a rider that humans find difficult to accept, return kindness and affection, and willingly respond to the rider's requests. Learning to control the horse encourages the rider to control themselves, and they become motivated to follow instructions, co-operate, take turns, share and abide by rules. These are important social skills which riders can actively rehearse and be rewarded by the horse's response.

How does riding improve concentration?

Inattention is probably the most common reason for a child not achieving their full potential. An incentive to concentrate and achieve is provided by the horse's willing response to the rider's instructions, and success in something can be guaranteed. Many children have an arousal level that is greater or lesser than the optimum.