

Exotic Training and Tricks

Developing Spanish Walk, rear and hind leg walk is shown with horses at beginning and transitional stages, mounted and/or at liberty. Cues for lie down, sit-up, and "play dead" are shown, showing how the cues may be changed depending on whether the horse is mounted, on a line or at liberty. For instance, the bow is cued with a tap on the front of the cannon bone. However, mounted, the cue is moved up to the elbow where a rider's toe or heel may rub to produce the bow. Position change may require different cues for the same trick.

The tap on the side of the neck for a striking rear will become a vertical whip, popped in the rhythm of the strike. Thus, there can be a great distance between handler and horse, whereas with the tactile cue the handler must be next to the horse.

Several cues may be developed for Spanish Walk depending on whether the horse is mounted or on long lines, or at liberty. In fact, I gave one lady an alternate mounted cue as she had little use of her legs. What you think at first is a limitation can make you a more creative and intelligent trainer.

I cultivate trust and enthusiasm in the horses for several reasons. First, it is more enjoyable and less stressful for me. Second, it is more enjoyable and less stressful to the horse. Third, I want to develop the more animated tricks for an exciting liberty performance. A happy horse will inject extra brilliance and enthusiasm into his work. In fact, once they learn it, it becomes fun. An unhappy or indifferent horse will give a lackluster performance, like a child who hates practicing the musical scales. So we must push in a certain way to get through the "scales" so the horse will enjoy his "concerto".

Arab stallions and Saddlebreds are shown on the tape. Spectators' questions are answered. It is candid and spontaneous.

Video: 100 minutes - \$65.00



A Woman's Touch

Horse Training Video



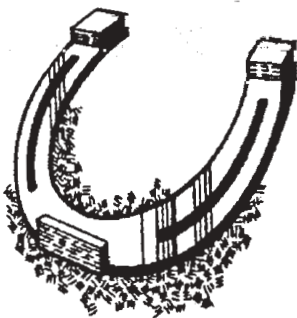
Sylvia Burrage is the author of the videos

EXOTIC TRAINING AND TRICKS • EXOTIC ABC'S • PIAFFE • REINLESS RIDING

The Piaffe

*Getting maximum
Elevation, Suspension and Rhythm*

The Piaffe is a trot in place. Usually when you see piaffe it is more like a stepping in place without enough energy to make a clean forward transition into passage or trot. And the riders are working so hard with their hands and legs trying to force the collection. It has already been proven by the late, great trainer Albert Ostermeyer that the horse can have extreme collection, elevation, and perfect transitions with such incredibly light control, that reins are not needed at all!



Paintings from the renaissance era show piaffe with high elevation of the legs and extreme collection. These are the models I use. Philosophers may argue whether it is a trick or a natural gait.

I will leave that argument to them. However, for training purposes, it is much easier for the horse to understand if it is taught like a trick. Rather than trying to worry the horse into piaffe with whips and produce kicking, confusion, and suspicion, we train the hind legs to a specific cue. Then at any point beyond that training we have a very light touch that gives us a back up system should the horse lose elevation, suspension, or rhythm. That is the whole key to this method.



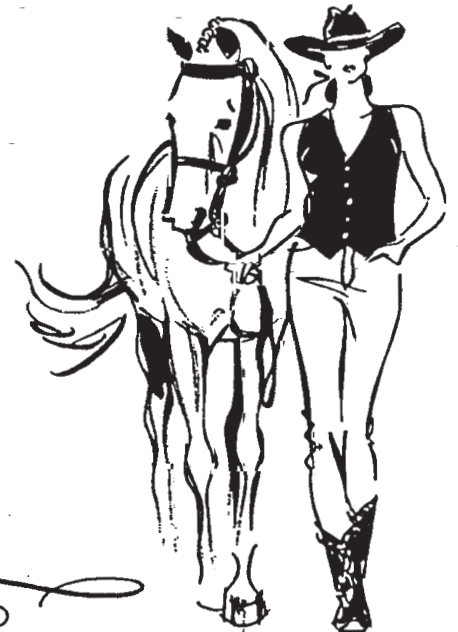
Many horses may kick in learning piaffe.

The video presents the horses cross-tied next to rails.

This was only so the camera had a better view. I always start with the horse in a stall that has flexible plywood walls so if they kick, they don't hurt themselves.

To give you some encouragement I'll tell you that I am no expert in piaffe. However, many people have asked me to do this video to explain how I get such extreme elevation and suspension and can keep the rhythm so steady. My background in training tricks and high school was a great help. I already knew how to put all sorts of cues on horses. To push them through their resistance without overkill that could make the horse dangerous

To me, cultivating an enthusiastic attitude is the most important part of the final result. If you note how easily horses learn cues from other horses it would seem logical to use cues to train them.



Piaffe *continued* Getting maximum Elevation, Suspension and Rhythm

So first we start with one hind leg. Put away your whips. We want a slow, thoughtful response. We want the horse to just raise one hind leg high and hold it there for a few seconds. You need to find something that will get the leg up without producing kicking. A horse that is kicky may need to have his hind legs gentled first. I have giant reeds growing here which often are just the right item. Dowels, broken lunge whips, ½ or ¼ PVC plastic pipe, bamboo, molding. You must find what works best and then, much harder, figure out how to use it. It will be different for every horse. Somewhere between the hock and the coronet, whether front or back, inside or outside. At the same time you apply your object, cluck. Once you get piaffe started the cue can be moved anywhere we wish. As the horse gets dull to one object you will have to change to another. In one session, I may change several times and then end up with the same object I started out with!!

Usually a week is enough to work each leg separately. By then the cluck alone will get the legs up. The hind legs tend to get lazy on clucks alone, losing elevation. So you'll still use an object. Then, you can alternate the legs and slowly increase the tempo. This may take a few weeks. When the horse is steady and calm in this you are ready for the first step of piaffe.

You must get one leg up before the other comes down. This may take a lot of experimentation to find what works for your horse. I like to have an object for each leg. Possibly a whip at this stage. After a week of dubious progress I found the trick with one horse was a short, lashless whip on the near leg, and with the other whip, a lash long enough to reach around the back of the horse to the other side to lightly cue the far leg. And remember these must always be applied in rhythm and with the cluck. Be happy with one hop, or even the hint of a hop and put the horse away. Remember, attitude is the most important thing.

I don't just keep banging on the horse's legs, hoping to get something. If six taps don't bring something, I'll change my approach. Sometimes I may use objects on both sides of the leg, rather than get heavier with one object. Don't worry about the front legs. When you get enough bouncing in the hind end the front legs will start stepping. Remember, this is a very slow process. Instead of being anxious to increase the number of hops a horse can easily give, I concentrate on getting the hop on the very first cluck. A little extra effort here will save arguments with the horse later. It is not enough that the horse merely drops his haunches and catches himself with the other leg. He must push upwards first to get the bounce, otherwise he's just stepping in place, not trotting in place. And if he's just stepping, the horse may not engage the front legs.

As the horse develops more impulsion in the piaffe, but is prevented from going forward by the crossties, the hind end will swing to one side, trying to expend the extra energy.

When the horse is piaffing, he will be oblivious to other cues, even ones he knows. When the hind end bends toward you, you have an opportunity to teach the horse that he can obey a cue and still remain in piaffe. I take a dowel or stick and sand one end into a point, just sharp enough that the horse won't try to move through it. I just let him meet it in the general area on his side where my spur will be when I am astride. At first he will stop piaffing. But keep trying and eventually he will learn to obey the stick and maintain his piaffe. Then you can straighten him out easily. Of course, you can always put the biting rig on him, but that only treats the symptom and doesn't train the horse. My method will save a lot of work under saddle as you can control any sideways drift without sacrificing piaffe.

Once you get the piaffe in the crossties off the clucks alone, you could probably ride the horse right there. Just clucks produce it. However, as my horses are extra hot limit testers, I find great value working the piaffe in hand all over the arena. There are other reasons too. The piaffe we have taught does not need reins. Should you sit through the piaffe and apply any pressure to the reins, the horse will probably back up, though still in piaffe. Working in hand we can encourage the horse to lean on the bit so we can ride the piaffe with contact. Also, without the crossties we can lead the horse forward, with lighter contact. I may piaffe the horse 20 or 30 feet, teaching him to maintain the rhythm and with even steps. This will prepare the horse for the transition into passage, so that the rider won't have to push to get it, but will have it smooth as glass just by lightening a bit on the reins. With the transition in place, passage should come easily. You might consider using a curb bit for piaffe. That way the rein tension you develop with it will be separate from the snaffle work. Also, it helps to round the horse so the hind legs can come farther underneath, thus allowing the front to elevate with more extreme leg action. I suggest developing the particular piaffe you desire on the ground before ever riding it. Working on the ground you can help the horse so much. In the saddle you have little control and can only hinder and confuse the horse.

This is all I do. Depending on your goals, you must train with your end result in mind. Piaffe can be bold and powerful, or light and elegant. Perhaps you wish to perform with long lines, or in harness. The work in hand can be easily continued on long lines. My goal with the last horse on the video was to get her over her hysteria and spurts of extreme resistance and deviousness as seen in her other training. Piaffe is the most restrictive long-term training I could think of. Week after week she would challenge the crossties rearing, plunging, kicking, hysterical, in a solid lather. She is very hardheaded and it took a long time. But she became lovely in the crossties and I didn't have to punish her once. She finally got tired of punishing herself. The goal with the other mare was to add piaffe to her reinless riding routine. As our first piaffe under saddle need no reins, this should be easy.

These mares may be seen in my video on Piaffe. To obtain videos call (760) 728-4632
Visit our website at <http://www.geocities.com/exotichorsetraining>

Piaffe and Passage

In Hand,
and Mounted

Before attempting passage, the piaffe should be well established in hand and under saddle. Some elementary work with spurs on shoulder-in, renvers (haunches out), and travers (haunches in) will be of benefit for several reasons. The spurs will be needed for piaffe. You don't want them to be a sudden surprise. These exercises done before you do piaffe will acclimate the horse to the spurs. Also starting under saddle in piaffe, horses tend to drift and be crooked. Both my mares would side-pass to the right. Of course you can work them with the drifting side next to the rail. But because of the explosive nature of my mares I started well away from the rail. I would rather be thrown on the ground than get tangled in the rails. Remember, this is a big change and you don't know what those first ridden piaffes will bring. The most difficult problems you thought were behind you may surface.

Sure enough, the first mare, Star, responded with giant leaps as her way of starting and ending piaffe. Instead of subsiding, there became more leaps and less piaffe. So I returned to the groundwork just working the transitions into

piaffe with only six or eight steps of piaffe. After a week I rode piaffe again but with "bottom reins" as a precaution. That hardheaded mare would still leap, but not so violently. It took a lot of work and patience and after a few weeks the leaps became forward lunges. A

few more weeks and the lunges disappeared and the piaffe became enjoyable. Instead of violent tension, there was enthusiastic collection and elegance. She finally realized that piaffe was a safe and fun place for her energy. I should also mention that in starting piaffe under saddle this mare would piaffe backwards in perfect rhythm. Of course this was an evasion. Remember, this mare is about as evasive as they come. Guiding her into a pirouette eventually stopped that. But it was interesting that she could go backwards so well. I suppose it's really a backward passage.

As she got piaffe better under saddle, I resumed working in hand toward passage. Conquering all her leaps really kept my shoulders sore. But eventually she was going forward steadily in hand. But as with piaffe, once you establish the rhythm and steadiness in the hind legs, you must raise the head to get the front legs up. I dreaded this as I knew it would remind her of leaping into the air. I was not strong enough to raise her up directly from the bit, so I ran the reins through the throatlatch. I also had to switch for a while to a snaffle bit as she was too low on the curb and with her nose into her neck. I knew this was a recipe for those leaps in the air. So I used the bottom reins for a while again. In a week, despite all the leaps, some beautiful steps were emerging. Now the piaffe had become a solid foundation for passage. With lots of transitions into and out of piaffe as well as working the passage, the work in hand began to flow smoothly. Just occasional reminders were needed for rhythm as this mare could do piaffe in slow motion. Interesting and impressive, but not something I could think of any use for, and not suitable to transition into passage.

The consistent, daily work finally brought about the attitude change I had so desired.

Always hard to catch, tense, showing the whites of her eyes, this mare now would hang her head over the gate to be halted. She began to enjoy my attention and her work. I finally had made another friend.

The key to starting the passage mounted with this horse was starting from a trot at about the same speed as the passage. I was amazed. It was easy. I use no whip and no leg. Just clucks and light touches on the reins. Just a few good steps, a few times and quit. Three good steps are worth more than forty bad ones. Just as we built piaffe from those few good steps, we now do the same with passage.

To maintain the impulsion in passage always trot after your passage steps before you stop and praise the horse. This way you don't have to keep pushing the horse to maintain impulsion. This is especially important for this mare, as she tends to slow down the tempo. So I want to give her the idea of looking forward to the greater impulsion of the trot at all times. This technique will embed impulsion with passage in her mind.

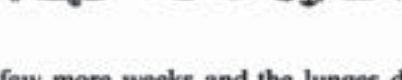


*A Woman's
Touch*

Horse Training Video

by Sylvia Burrage

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You don't push the horse into passage, you release him into it

as he can maintain it on his own with just the clucks and change in rein effect. Later, leg cues are developed with the reins becoming minimal.

The legs don't push, they just ask with gentle squeezes, eventually replacing the clucks. The heels in piaffe and the calves in passage are merely cues that mark the rhythm. *They do not drive the horse forward.*

I see many horses being tightly driven in piaffe and passage, the rider's hands and legs being very active. I can't imagine this is pleasant for the horse. My concept is quite different. Riding just fine-tunes what have developed in hand. I can't emphasize too much that the horse must know passage very well in hand. So much that just light rhythmic touches on the reins and the clucks produce it. Soon passage will seem like an old friend!

In fact, Star became so happy in passage under saddle, that she became reluctant about piaffe. I had put piaffe aside while developing passage under saddle as I wanted no confusion in her mind about going forward. I had to go

back to the ground again to review the transition. Piaffe was there, of course, but she was cranky about getting into it. What was most amazing, was that transitions from passage into piaffe and piaffe into passage were quite easy. Just the change of cues of legs and reins. No forcing. No pushing. This with less than a month under saddle in passage. This would not work if I had not made her "think forward"

You may need to keep the horse's head a bit higher than the finished position because it helps to elevate and lighten the forehand so the horse can "float" elegantly. I want the horse's head where it is easiest for him to produce the passage. Once he knows it well, I can change it.

The other mare, Gem, is starting piaffe under saddle. Her problems are different though she gave a few leaps in the air too. Opposite of Star, her tempo is way to fast. The least excitement and the tempo doubles. While she is an easier and safer horse, her instant excitability stretched out the length of the training time. I decided to do the "in hand" piaffe and passage and just piaffe mounted at the end of the session. This cut down on the excitement level. She was also reluctant about elevation. A touch of

spurs helped her understand. Also she drifted to the right. She knows spurs and heels well from her "reinless riding", but she was very bullheaded, pushing through my right spur.

I always train with spurs with small, sharp rowels just in case of moments like this. Usually a spur is used flat against the horse so the rowel makes little difference. But when the horse tries to push through the spur and well knows better, he must be set right instantly or he will continue to question whether he should obey. Of course this made for great excitement with Gem. But eventually, the tempo will slow down as she becomes relaxed with the work. Also to help slow the tempo I keep her forehand extra high especially in hand. This mare started the passage with the front legs walking. Yes, the hind legs were fine but I had to greatly exaggerate raising the forehand for the front legs to start passaging. It took a long time just to get an occasional floating piaffe step. But once you get one, then you can build more.

I'd like to mention that only rarely did I use a whip or bat in the saddle. A lot of trainers tap the hip for passage rhythm. I tried this in hand but I found that it lowered the hock action so I didn't bother with it.

Answers to frequently asked questions

I don't turn out horses before training sessions. I turn them out afterward.

I train every day, weather permitting which it usually does. This is fairest and easiest for the horse.

never get behind the horse with a whip. This would destroy the horse's confidence. I always work from the shoulder. The exception would be a horse that is trained to drive and in the hands of an expert in long lines.

I find the work in hand much more direct than long lines could ever be. Your hand can help by instantly adjusting the elevation of the head, impossible on long lines. Also an eight foot whip is necessary to avoid being kicked. You are limited as to where you can touch the horse, and you don't have the finesse that you would with a short whip or stick.

I only use what equipment is necessary. Briefly I used a cavesson in conjunction with the "bottom reins".

I used lightweight curb bits with the shanks shortened. The dressage curb, though shorter shanked, was just too heavy for these mares. When I get a machinist to hollow out the mouthpiece then it would work fine.

I've been using this Australian stock saddle for breaking for the last fifteen years. It has saved me from many falls. It's heavy like a western saddle but without the bulk. A most intelligent design.

While some people try to train by "game playing" see no value in it as it has no back-up system. For instance, ride the stallion next to a mare to have him prance in piaffe. Or trot in deep water to get passage. If the horse decides not to do it you must go back to the mare or the water. Also you take what the horse chooses to give, rather than controlling cadence and elevation in an integrated system. In the system you always have the previous step to go back to. That's the difference between training and having to find a mare or deep water. And of course you are limited to stallions if you use the mare technique.

There are several options to get piaffe if the front legs don't engage. The easiest is to simply raise the cross-ties to elevate the front end. If that doesn't work, you may tap the horse behind the withers in rhythm. Remember the cross-ties should be loose enough so the horse can go forward two or three steps. If the cross-ties are too tight he can't go forward so there's no incentive to use the front legs. Start with the horse farthest back in the cross-ties so he has the most steps to take. Another alternative would be an overcheck to help the front end to raise.

had the two critical hints from Albert Ostermeyer, develop piaffe in the hindquarters and don't use whips. And I knew my goal. A piaffe and passage with floating brilliance, not forced, and with the lightest rein and leg cues possible, harmonizing with my reinless riding cues. Also I wanted extreme elevation. So every step I took was based on these goals. That and my training experience determined the system.



MUSICAL REINLESS RIDING

Sylvia Burrage

author of

PIAFFE & PASSAGE

**EXOTIC TRAINING
AND TRICKS**

Integrating music with reinlessriding was the furthest thing from my mind when I developed a system for reinless training. I developed the reinless technique to help focus an extremely hot, over reactive mare.

Reins seemed to be more of a hindrance, making her worse, despite the fact that she was reasonable in the biting rig and on long lines.

Saddlebreds are smoother riding and much calmer to train than the Arabians I was used to, and extremely tolerant and reliable when finished. But I got the exceptions!! One hysterical and suspicious, the other extremely sweet, but a real firecracker to ride!!

Now I am grateful for all the difficulties I've had with this last one, Gem. For I learned so much about riding and training by developing the reinless techniques, that I've altered much of my usual training. I learned very quickly how precisely a horse can obey leg cues alone. This included figures of eight at walk, trot, canter, and backup. At the same time she was learning piaffe. Just as with the other gaits the tempo would be frantic and uneven because of her high excitement level.

The basic key to leg control and quelling excitement is the "back up." And I don't

mean just a few steps. Eventually the back up will not only get the horse to focus on his feet, thus calming him for other work, but will go a long way to developing the roundness so

necessary to achieve excellent balance. Sometimes it took 300 feet of back up to get Gem focused. She wanted to react to everything but me.. The cues I developed are quite simple. You ride erect except for leaning a bit forward for the back up. Both heels behind the girth cue the back up with a strong nudge of heels for every step. This way you can control the exact speed of every step with the time between the nudges. Three quick squeezes of calf signal walk. When walking, one back up type nudge of heels will produce a halt. Working a flat sided figure of eight against the fence quickly developed the turn cues, with the heel behind the girth on the outside of the curve. When changing directions you must let both heels off for at least one stride or you will be giving a stop cue. Nuance can be developed easily, stronger heel pressure making the turns tighter. If the horse had been taught turn on the haunches with the outside heel, it can easily be done reinless by omitting forward

Impulsion. The canter required more thought. I had used up the usual canter cue for turns and I thought leg anywhere behind the girth would be confusing. Having the horse tend to think to turn or stop. So I figured a shoulder cue would not interfere with the previous work. The toe is farther forward on the shoulder than the elbow cue for the bow. I give the forward cue then tap the outside shoulder with my toe. Left shoulder gives right lead and vice versa. The toe pressure on the shoulder also can maintain a turn, or lighten to let the horse go straight. The flying lead change merely requires switching the cue to the other shoulder. This method avoids cross-leading where front and back legs are on different leads. Slow the horse a bit and cue the other shoulder when the horse drops back to a trot. Allow a few trotting steps at first, giving the horse time to think of what the cue means. Hot horses take longer to focus, but as they get calmer they will pick up the new lead with fewer and fewer trotting stops until the flying changes occur.

Piaffe presented some challenge as super excitable Gem was very erratic, preferring cantering in place to trotting in place. I pursued a liberty piaffe with the reasoning that if a horse could do it at liberty, they could certainly do it reinless. I used a corner of the arena, facing her to the fence to block forward motion without having to touch the reins. I have my horses "think forward" in their early piaffe training. So I had to stop forward motion without losing the forward idea in the horse's mind. Otherwise, later work in transitions into passage would be awkward. While she would be excited and lathered up as we started this new approach, it was for more effective than under saddle. I thought the mounted cue would be like the reverse cue, but applied at the girth instead of behind the girth. But that was too much forward in her mind. So, I had some experimenting to do.

Concurrently, several of my video fans sent me videos integrating music with horses, not just as background as part of the act. One opera star even sang on her trick horse. So an idea came to me when I saw a delightful rendition of a well-known Mozart tune. The elaborate variations with lovely flute obligato become possible when I discovered a fellow horse lover, Diana Gee with incredible ability with her flute. She lived so close it seemed like fate for us to find each other. Our first rehearsal confirmed that Gem's piaffe was still too fast in tempo for Diana to play eight notes to my one as I sang in Gem's rhythm. With practice every day, Gem became relaxed slowing the tempo.

Because the flute and voice are equally important, I didn't want Diana behind the rail, but there with me. Also, we need to see and hear each other in order to stay together. So I thought, why not do figures of eight with Diana in the middle of one circle and a harpsichord in the center of the other?? Gem was far from well broke and certainly could use all the practice. But what could I do that would be interesting and intriguing, not boring with my reinless riding? I had only been backing up straight, so why not try a back up figure of eight? This took lots of practice, but it was doable. The act was coming together. The song is four verses and cadenza. So I reasoned a different movement for each verse and some extra piaffes in the cadenza. First verse, walk, second verse (slow tempo), back up. Third verse, piaffe, Fourth verse (fast) turn on haunches, both directions and canter.

Now that I know all this is possible, my mind is racing in many musical-equine directions. Music for the reinless western sliding stops and spins. A guitar serenade to a liberty piaffe pirouette. What possibilities. Of course someone who played an instrument like the guitar could be their own music!! With hands free trick ropers would be stunning, not having to stop the horse to do their tricks. With hands free, I could direct a liberty horse with two whips while riding a reinless horse. What possibilities!! I can't decide which to do next!!!

\$35

For information on videos web; geocities.com/exotichorsetraining. or Phone 760/728-4632

NEW WEB SITE

<http://www.horsetrainingspecialties.com>

Sylvia Burrage is the author of the videos
EXOTIC ABC's and EXOTIC TRAINING AND TRICKS
1852 Carriage Lane, Fallbrook, CA 92028, Phone 760-728-4632

Conventional longeing leaves much to be desired.

Exotic ABC's

Everyone I see flails after the haunches, resulting in the horse bending the wrong way, throwing the shoulder in and haunches out. Chains used on the nose makes it even worse as the horse leans his head out to try and avoid the punishment of a bounce on his nose. The horse is totally out of balance and kept that way. It would be better not to longe at all. A stiff neck, jaw, and back will be produced. That dropped-in shoulder will come back to haunt you under saddle. What kind of attitude do you expect this misery to produce!

A This unique program uses no gimmicks. Forget martingales, draw reins, overchecks, side checks, chains, and whatever other contrivances there are that prevent the quiet understanding contact between hand and mouth. Gimmicks actually inhibit training. But people love to think they've found a short cut. In reality, they are making it much harder for the horse and for themselves. The horse has to learn in spite of the gimmicks.

B The most difficult horses have led me to the easiest training method for groundwork. Hysterical horses, rank stallions, stubborn horses, neurotic horses, even one with part of his brain missing easily learn the two basic cues. The vet was amazed that I could teach the last one anything.

C From my experience with trick training, I started these horses as if being trained for a schooled liberty performance. A halter band that gives complete relief when the horse relaxes his neck is used for the initial sessions.

S The band is also a tool for focusing attention, and if necessary, discipline. Horses rapidly learn to give themselves total relief to the band by giving the exact bend that we wish. In the horse's mind this is easily understood and accepted, as it is supremely consistent. The band is soon discarded when the horse learns the cues. Then he can longe from a snaffle and will be very light as you have the cues established that have taught him to relax his neck. The only other equipment you need is a bridle, saddle, rope, longe whip and a short lashed whip. If you don't have strong split reins, lightweight lead ropes can be used as side reins.



1 Hour, 2 Minutes, \$50.00