**Preparing and Assisting RDA Sessions**

By the end of this module a volunteer should feel confident that they can prepare and lead an equine for a therapeutic riding session and also effectively side walk.

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| Time | Learning Outcome | Content | Technical Content | Resource |
| 5 minutes  Section 1 | Introduction | Aims and objectives for the leading and side walking module | By the end of this module volunteers and prospective coaches should feel confident that they can prepare and lead an equine for a session and effectively side walk. | 2 Tutors indoor/outdoor arena, |
| **Preparing the equine and arena** | | | | |
| 60 minutes  (30min for each group) | That the area is safe for riders, careers, and volunteers and equine.  The equine(s) are appropriately tacked up ready for the rider | Practical Session: Split the group into two. One group look at tacking up and one look at the arena settings. Then swap over.  Check that the equines have the correctly fitted tack on.  The arena has been set up and the equipment is set out correctly. | This is basic best practice for an RDA Session. For more advanced rules then please look at the RDA Rule Book.  **Bridle:** Headcollar should be fitted under the bridle with no noseband.  Bit should sit level in the equines mouth and have a couple of wrinkles either side of the mouth.  Throatlash – once done up should allow for a fist between the equines throat and the throatlash.  Reins can be attached to head collar, whilst the rider is learning about rein aids, to prevent harm to equines mouth. It can then be moved to bit when riding skills improve and riders are working towards rein aid independence. If using dog clips they must face away from the equine  **Saddle:** If using a saddle these should be correctly fitted by a qualified saddle fitter.  A numnah should be used. The saddle should sit just behind the withers and there should be four fingers from under the pommel to the withers. The numnah should be fitted under the saddle and pulled up to the gullet.  Girth should be fitted either, on the first and second strap, or first and third strap. It should never be fitted onto the second and third strap.  Double check girths are tight enough before the rider mounts and then check again once the rider in mounted.  Stirrups should ideally have toe-caps on if required.  Stirrup should either be run up, crossed over or removed altogether if not in use.  All equipment should be fit for purpose and in good condition.  Please refer to the tack and equipment guidance for more information on equipment.  <http://www.rda.org.uk/assets/Tack-and-Equipment-For-RDA-Groups-0118.pdf>  **Notes to remember:**  If using a neck strap this should be fitted through the girth and ideally onto the saddle.  Balance Straps should be fitted onto the D rings of the saddle.  Reins may be removed or looped in the throatlash.  **Scenarios for incorrectly fitted tack:**   * Throatlash twisted * Headcollar and noseband being worn * Girth done up on the incorrect straps * Saddle wrongly positioned * Saddle too small * Wrinkled numnah * Girth too tight/ too loose * Numnah back to font / upside down   **Potential Hazards:**   * Gate to school left open * Coats left on the fence of the school * Jumps stored away safely when not in use * No obvious signs of screws or nails sticking out. * Dropping collected * If using an outdoor arena other hazards to think of our other equines walking past, weather and generally more coming and going. Nothing to stop riding just people need to be aware of potential hazards and how they might be reduced. | 2-3 equines.  2 equines to have tack on and one untacked.  Tutor runs through how to tack up correctly using the technical content.  Then they move on to the other two equines and look at what is fitted incorrectly and how this should be changed.  Depending on time and size of group volunteers to work in pairs and tack up an equine.  Arena Activity: Have a couple of scenarios or session plans where the arena is to be set up with varying equipment depending what is available at where the training is taking place. Tutor to go through setting out cones, bending poles, poles on the ground etc. Tutor to also go through potential hazards that might be in the school. |
| **Leading** | | | | |
| 15minutes | Know and understand the correct way to warm up an equine ready for the session. | Practical session:  Leading the equine around the arena changing the rein getting an active and rhythmic walk and include a short trot on both reins. | **Pre – mounted warm up:**  Equines should be led from a coupling that is attached to the bit. If the rider is using the rein and the lead rope is required then this should be attached to the head collar. (This is to avoid mixed signals to the equine.)  Bring the equine towards the audience and go through things a volunteer should look for when checking the correctly fitted tack. If a fellow volunteer has tacked the equine up, it should still be double checked.  Start walking the equine around the arena incorporating stops and starts, changing the rein, and trotting. Use vocal aids. To change the rein means changing direction. You can do this from the letters A to C, C to A, B to E, E to B, or across the diagonals.  We recommend trotting the equines even if your riders are not going to trot onboard, to help the equine warm up and encourage an active walk.  An active and rhythmic walk improves therapeutic input and benefits the rider.  Ideally, an equine should be warmed up for a minimum of 10 minutes before a rider is mounted. Older, stiffer equines may need longer.  If, as a volunteer, you have any concerns that the equine isn’t his usual self or may be lame then please let the coach know as they will make the decision whether to use that equine or not. If you are using riding school ponies that you hire there is a possibility that there might not be another equine available, if the one you have got, isn’t suitable. If you have any concerns then please do not use the equine and think about either swapping riders over half way or maybe carrying out stable management. This might be a difficult decision to make, but equine welfare must be a priority. | One equine tacked up and being led by an able experienced volunteer or possible other tutor.  Leader – It is recommend that leaders where gloves and hats but it isn’t a compulsory rule.  Coats/jackets zips should be done up. |
| 20 minutes | Know and understand how to lead an equine both to a mounting block and round the arena incorporating soft turns | Practical session: Start off by showing an equine stood square on all four feet.  Show how you would lead an equine to a mounting block and then how you would lead an equine round the arena explaining the importance of correct leading. | When halting the equine for mounting and dis-mounting. It is important to try to get the equine to stand square to help the rider as much as possible.  Go through and show the Three Stages of Leading:  Leading at Stage 1 (**Leader has control of the equine**) This method of leading is used when the rider has minimum control of the equine and is often used with a rider that requires two side walkers and a leader. The leader has control of the equine and follows the commands of the rider and coach, with minimum input from the side walkers. The leader is placed between the shoulder and head of the equine with enough contact on the lead rope to keep control at all times. This method of leading should be practised by the leader whilst warming up before the session starts. There should be a small “smile” in the lead rope  Leading at Stage 2 (**Control of the equine is shared between leader and rider**)  At this stage of leading, the rider is now at a level where they should be working to control the equine in walk or trot and practicing working independently. The leader is positioned at the equines shoulder but with a lighter contact than used at Stage 1, allowing the rider to direct the equine. There may be a need for one side walker but usually at this level the rider works with just a leader. This leading procedure should be practiced in the warm up session before the lesson starts in walk and trot. It is of paramount importance this is achieved during the warm up to ensure the suitability of equine and to check the leader is competent to lead.  Leading at Stage 3 (**Rider has control of the equine**)  The leader at this stage is positioned beside the rider’s leg and allows the rider to control the equine. The leader’s role is to ensure the rider is applying the correct aids with input from the coach, before the rider comes off the lead rein. The leader is just there in case an incorrect aid is given to the equine and also acts as a confidence-giver to a rider that is ready for the transition of moving from being led to riding independently. | One Equine tacked up with no rider and an experienced volunteer or other tutor. |
| **Side walking** | | | | |
| 20 minutes | Roles of the side walker(s) | Practical session: Introducing the different scenarios that you could do.   * Rider with a leader and 2 side walkers. * Rider with a leader and one side walker * Rider with just a leader or side walker.   Also include the importance of communication and communicating clearly to help the rider achieve the best. | As a team depending on numbers working with the equine and rider before the session starts decide who is going to be the communicator with the rider and how/when to communicate with rider.  Side walkers ideally should stand in line with rider’s legs approx. 1m away if they can.  Side walkers should ideally provide riders with minimal support at ankles to keep lower leg in a good place, which often keeps the upper body in a better position. Riders that have insufficient upper body posture to sit up should not be riding in an RDA session.  Side walkers should never be working with arms and hands above their shoulder height constantly. Side walkers can adjust a rider’s position if needed.  If you are using a scenario where you have a leader and two side walkers then one should be the communicator to encourage, repeat or reinterpret instructions, and both to ensure that the rider is safe (holding reins or bunny ears, with feet in stirrups).  If you are using the scenario where you are using 1 side walker and a leader then the side walker is used (both communicator and safety). Whenever side walkers are used, the leader is only responsible for the equine. | One equine tacked up with a volunteer rider. (Volunteer within equine’s weight.)  Leader or other tutor and 1 / 2 side walkers.  Depending on numbers could be run with more than one equine and split into smaller groups and make it a hands on session. |
| 40 minutes  (20 minutes practical session / 20 minutes theory session) | Understanding Riders Capability, lesson content and goals | Practical & Theory Session: Know and understand the rider’s goals for the session and have the ability to feedback about the rider’s progression during the session. | Coach to set up a session with a rider and 2 side walkers and as the session progresses show how you would let the rider progress and go down to 1 side walker and then no side walkers and then to riding independently. If this level of change (from 2 to 0 side walkers) is not likely to be reasonable or safe progression – may be able to drop 1 side walker, or for a single leader to become a side walker.  Or ask the volunteers to space themselves around the arena to be there in case of a situation.  Coach, Volunteer and Rider to show what a good debrief at the end of the session would look like (what went well, what could be improved, where progress was made, future goals and how to achieve them). This can be done through a series of ways if verbal is a problem. It could be done through body language as an example.  Theory Session:  How to complete rider record form, setting targets and measuring achievements. | Equine tacked up with ideally an RDA rider if not then a volunteer rider.  Leader and 1 / 2 side walkers  Depending on numbers could be run with more than one equine and split into smaller groups and make it a hand on session.  Participant Progression Form |

TOTAL – 2 hours, 40 mins