



# YOUNG HORSE DEVELOPMENT

## Get the Right Start with the Method

If you're expecting a foal or starting a colt this spring, Clinton has laid out a step-by-step guide to using the Method to give your young partner the best start.

"The earlier you start working with a horse, the sooner he learns to trust you and learns the right behavior," Clinton explains. "It's

certainly easier to teach a young horse the right behavior than it is to retrain an older horse that's developed bad habits."

At the ranch, Clinton and his staff begin each horse's training by imprinting the foals at birth, establishing trust, and teaching them the basics of leading and haltering. They follow the Foal Training Series, teaching the young horses all 36 exercises included in it. Once the young horses learn to lead with a halter, many of the exercises they are taught come straight from the Fundamentals groundwork exercises, modified for a young horse. Because foals aren't full grown and don't have the same stamina as adult horses, the same expectations and level of performance isn't expected of them.

"Moderation is the key when it comes to training foals. You don't want to underwork

**“MODERATION IS THE KEY WHEN IT COMES TO TRAINING FOALS.”**

or overwork them,” Clinton warns, and recommends working with foals 15 to 20 minutes once or twice a day and giving them short, frequent breaks throughout the session. “You’re not going to be working the foal as hard as you would work an adult horse because he doesn’t have the same stamina as a grown horse. With foals, you have to be conscious that you don’t run them out of air. Once a horse is out of air, he stops thinking and quits looking for the right answer. Then his focus is solely on survival and finding air,” Clinton explains.

In the Foal Training Series, Clinton demonstrates how to imprint a foal and details the training process all the way through weaning the foal when he’s 4 to 6 months of age. “Raising a foal is one of the most rewarding experiences in the world. You’ll get to witness your foal’s progression from a timid newborn to a trusting and respectful partner. But, raising a foal is also a huge responsibility,” Clinton adds. “What you teach your foal now will serve as the foundation for the rest of his life. Working with your foal and teaching him the Fundamentals will give him a head start on

his career and put a solid foundation in place from which you can build off of.”

The series follows the progression of two foals—Sarah, a filly Clinton imprints just hours after birth, and Fergie, a month old filly that hasn’t been handled at all. Along with explaining sought-after success tips and troubleshooting advice, the series details how to positively introduce new experiences to a young horse, all while building the foal’s confidence.

Clinton takes practical innovative approaches to a foal’s first exposure to handling feet, tying and other everyday occurrences a foal will encounter.

On average, it takes Clinton and his staff six weeks to take a foal through the entire Foal Training Series. “Once the foal knows the series, then he’s turned out in a pasture and just allowed to be a horse. Every couple of weeks, we’ll go out and review the exercises with him until he’s weaned,” Clinton says.

Once the foal is weaned, then he is worked with six days a week and taught the

*In the Foal Training Series, Clinton explains how to teach the Fundamentals modified for a young horse. Here he’s teaching Yield the Hindquarters using steady pressure (left) and the Sending Exercise (below).*



“RAISING A FOAL IS ONE OF THE MOST REWARDING EXPERIENCES IN THE WORLD.”



Intermediate groundwork exercises. “When he knows the Intermediate exercises, he’s turned back out in the pasture and we review the exercises with him every couple of weeks,” Clinton says.

When the young horse turns a year old, he’s taught the roundpenning exercises. “I don’t roundpen my young horses until they’re yearlings because they can’t physically handle it. During their yearling year, I do teach them the exercise and expect them to canter. But again, we’re using common sense here—we’re not working the horses until exhaustion,” he points out.



When the horse turns 2, he’s taught the Advanced groundwork exercises and gets started under saddle. Since the horses on the ranch have been handled since day one and know the Fundamentals and Intermediate groundwork exercises well, when it comes time to start them, it’s just another lesson for them. Their first rides are as textbook perfect as it gets.

Clinton explains his technique for starting horses in the Colt Starting Series that details over 50 exercises. While the horses at the ranch don’t pose much of a challenge to start since they’ve been handled since birth using the Method, Clinton knows that not everyone has the luxury of raising a foal and then breaking him to ride. That’s why in the Colt Starting Series, he explains the technique he uses to start young horses using a wild mustang. “I used a wild colt for this series because a wild horse doesn’t let you skip any steps; he forces you to be extremely thorough every step of the way,” Clinton says. “I would rather break down the series into more steps than someone might need rather than leave out important information that could be valuable to starting your horse.”



Working with the mustang, Clinton demonstrates how to establish first touch, halter the horse and teach him how to lead. From there, he begins to work on the Fundamentals groundwork exercises, tweaking some techniques for the wild horse and adding extra desensitizing exercises to ensure the horse is well-prepared for his first ride. A good portion of the series is dedicated to saddling and preparing the horse for a rider’s weight. “You cannot over prepare a

Clinton explains important milestones in a foal’s life like leading (top), haltering (center) and handling feet (bottom) in the Foal Training Series.



Clinton's number one focus when working with horses, but especially colts, is safety. The Jeffrey's Method is an extra step he takes to desensitize colts to his touch and weight before getting in the saddle.

horse for his first ride, but you can certainly under prepare him," Clinton warns. "When I was apprenticing with Gordon McKinlay I learned this lesson the hard way. I want people to learn from my mistakes (and pain!) rather than their own. That's why I go over every single detail of how to start a horse and include what to do if things go wrong."

Clinton spends the first two and a half rides on each colt in a roundpen, and then rides the colt in an arena where he can focus on getting the horse to move his feet. "Once you're confident you can cue the horse forward on your own and shut him down, it's crucial to get him out of the roundpen and into a larger area where you can really move his feet. The smaller area you ride a horse in, the more it shuts them down mentally, and that's when horses start to get pinny eared and sour," Clinton says.

After the first three rides, the young horse's training program follows the Fundamentals riding exercises. "The first six weeks of a colt's life under saddle are the most important in

his career. It's vital that his training runs smoothly so that he doesn't develop any bad habits," Clinton explains. "Training young horses is certainly rewarding, but unless you have the knowledge to get the job done, things can go wrong very quickly. A great deal of time went into producing both the Foal Training Series and Colt Starting Series to guarantee everything was covered to ensure horse owners at home can get the same success with their horses as we do at the ranch."

### THE FUNDAMENTALS SERIES IS KEY

No matter if you're starting a colt or training a foal, having access to and knowing the Fundamentals is important to your overall success. Clinton produced the Foal Training

“I WANT PEOPLE TO LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES (AND PAIN) RATHER THAN THEIR OWN.”

In the Colt Starting Series, Clinton focuses on saddling a colt for the first time. He first desensitizes the horse to pressure around his barrel (top), lets the colt investigate the new objects he'll be wearing (top center), desensitizes the colt to the saddle pad (bottom center), and explains the importance of moving the horse's feet after saddling him (bottom).



and Colt Starting Series as supplements to the Fundamentals Series, and both series are shot more like training diaries than the strict 8 Steps to Success lesson format of the Fundamentals. "That's not to say we don't follow the 8 Steps in the Foal Training and Colt Starting Series, because we do, we just don't go into as much detail as we do in the Fundamentals," Clinton clarifies. "By the time you're ready to work with a foal or start a colt, your horsemanship skills need to be better than average, and that means that you should know the Fundamentals of the Method well." Ideally, if you're starting a colt, you should be proficient at the Intermediate and Advanced Series as well.

## WHERE TO START WITH YOUR HORSE: TWO COMMON QUESTIONS ANSWERED

**Q** I have a yearling that I want to teach the Method to. Should I get the Foal Training Series or the Fundamentals Series?

**A** For yearlings and onwards, we recommend the Fundamentals Series. For horses younger than a year old, we recommend using the Foal Training Series because it goes into great detail on how to imprint a foal, teach him basic leading lessons and how to start the Fundamentals exercises. Although the Fundamentals exercises are taught to the foal, they are modified for young horses. One of the biggest differences to training a foal compared to an older horse is the use of steady pressure rather than driving pressure. Whenever you cue your horse to do something, you use either steady pressure or driving pressure. Steady pressure is just that, a steady, consistent pressure. Driving pressure has a beat or rhythm to it—"one, two, three, four."

Clinton prefers to teach foals to move off steady pressure first because it's less intimidating to them. It's easy to scare a foal or become overbearing with driving pressure. However, if you're working with a yearling or older horse, chances are you won't be able to make him feel uncomfortable enough with steady pressure to look for the right answer. This is especially true if the horse has been taught to ignore humans and is lazy and heavy.

If you're working with a yearling, it's best to start with the Fundamentals because most of the exercises in the Foal Training Series won't apply to your horse, especially if he's already been taught to halter and lead. He'll be mature enough by that stage that you'll be able to use driving pressure when teaching him the exercises.

But again, if you're using the Foal Training Series, it's highly recommended to also have the Fundamentals Series to refer to.

**Q** I want to break my colt to ride using the Method, should I get the Colt Starting Series or the Fundamentals?

**A** You'll need the Colt Starting Series. In the series, Clinton explains step-by-step how to establish first touch with a wild horse through the horse's 14th ride, including taking the young horse on the trail for the first time. In the Fundamentals Series, Clinton does not explain how to introduce the saddle to the horse, prepare the horse for feeling a rider's weight, how to bridle a horse, etc.; the series assumes the horse is broke to ride. The Colt Starting Series goes into great detail about all of those topics and much more, like how to transition the colt from the hackamore to the snaffle bit, handling feet, bathing and ponying the colt. While the Colt Starting Series will give you a comprehensive lesson plan to follow to safely start your colt, and even includes review sessions to ensure you're on the right track, it is highly recommended that you are competent at the Fundamentals. In fact, we recommend you have the kit to refer to as you work with your young horse. The best success tip Clinton says he can give to horsemen starting colts is to be proficient at the Fundamentals level of the Method. "The first six weeks of a colt's life under saddle are the most important in his career. It's vital that his training runs smoothly so that he doesn't develop any bad habits," Clinton says. "For that to happen, you must be a confident, knowledgeable and trustworthy leader for him, which are all skills you learn from the Fundamentals level of the Method."

*The Colt Starting Series also includes exercises like Check Around to the Tail (top), Leading by the Feet (top center), Laying the Colt Down (bottom center), and even bathing for the first time (bottom).*



# WHAT'S IN EACH SERIES:

## FOAL TRAINING SERIES

1. Imprinting the Foal
2. Catching the Foal
3. Desensitizing to Touch
4. Touch and Rub: Yield the Hindquarters
5. Backing Off String Pressure
6. Touch and Rub: Yield the Forequarters
7. Leading Exercise: Inside Turns
8. Leading Exercise: Figure-8's
9. Haltering
10. Stepping Laterally from String Pressure
11. Getting Two Eyes with the Long Line
12. Leading Exercise with the Long Line
13. Leading Exercise with the Halter
14. Yield the Hindquarters Stage Two
15. Yield the Hindquarters Stage One
16. Yield the Hindquarters and Spiral Out
17. Desensitizing to the Lead Rope
18. Yield the Forequarters Off Driving Pressure
19. Turn and Draw
20. Flexing the Head and Neck
21. Sending Exercise
22. Lunging for Respect Stage One
23. Desensitizing to the Stick and String
24. Turn and Go
25. Lunging for Respect Stage Two
26. Backing Up Method 1: Tap the Air
27. Backing Up Method 4: Steady Pressure
28. Circle Driving
29. Backing Up Method 2: Wiggle, Wave, Walk and Whack
30. Backing Up Method 3: Marching
31. Leading Behind
32. Touch and Rub: Poll
33. Leading Beside
34. Desensitizing on the Tie Ring
35. Picking Up the Feet
36. Weaning the Foal



## COLT STARTING SERIES

1. Roundpenning
2. Desensitizing to the Lariat
3. Roping the Colt with the Lariat
4. Leading with the Lariat
5. Haltering
6. Getting Two Eyes with the Halter
7. Yield the Hindquarters Stage One
8. Yield the Hindquarters Stage Two
9. Lunging for Respect Stage One
10. Desensitizing to the Lead Rope
11. Desensitizing to the Stick and String
12. Sending Exercise
13. Turn and Go
14. Lunging for Respect Stage Two
15. Ponying with a Saddle-Broke Horse
16. Yield the Forequarters
17. Backing Up Method 1: Tap the Air
18. Flexing the Head and Neck
19. Leading by the Feet
20. Laying the Colt Down
21. Jeffrey's Method (Human Curry Comb)
22. Desensitizing to Rope Around Belly
23. Saddling
24. Circle Driving
25. Stirrup Driving
26. Desensitizing to Plastic Bags
27. Backing Up Method 2: Wiggle, Wave, Walk and Whack
28. Backing Up Method 3: Marching
29. Backing Up Method 4: Steady Pressure
30. Leading Beside
31. Pick Me Up Off the Fence
32. Desensitizing to Feed Whackers
33. Desensitizing to the Stock Whip
34. Desensitizing to the Dressage Whip
35. Head Shy Exercises
36. Check Around to the Tail
37. Picking up the Feet
38. Touch and Rub: Poll
39. Touch and Rub: Hindquarters
40. Helicopter Exercise
41. Run Up and Rub
42. Leading Behind
43. First Ride (in the roundpen with a helper)
  - a. Flexing at the Standstill
  - b. Front End, Hind End
  - c. Walk, Trot, Canter
  - d. Inside and Outside Turns
44. Second Ride (in the roundpen with the helper doing less)
  - a. Flexing at the Standstill
  - b. Front End, Hind End
  - c. Walk, Trot, Canter
  - d. Inside and Outside Turns
  - e. Yield the Hindquarters at a Standstill
45. Third Ride (with the helper ideally doing nothing)
  - a. Start in Roundpen
    - i. Flexing at the Standstill
    - ii. Yield the Hindquarters at a Standstill
    - iii. Forward and Around in a Circle
    - iv. Walk, Trot, Canter
    - v. Inside and Outside Turn
  - b. Move to Larger Area
    - i. Flexing at the Standstill
    - ii. Yield the Hindquarters at a Standstill
    - iii. Forward and Around in a Circle
    - iv. One Rein Stops
    - v. Cruising Lesson
46. Desensitizing to Water
47. Introducing the Snaffle Bit
48. Riding Your Colt Outside the Arena for the First Time

