

# Freework - *TTEAM Up With Your Horse*

Are you looking for different ways to work with your horse? Linda started doing “freework” at her demonstrations in Europe 20 years ago.

When you teach a horse to be led without a halter it changes the way you work together.

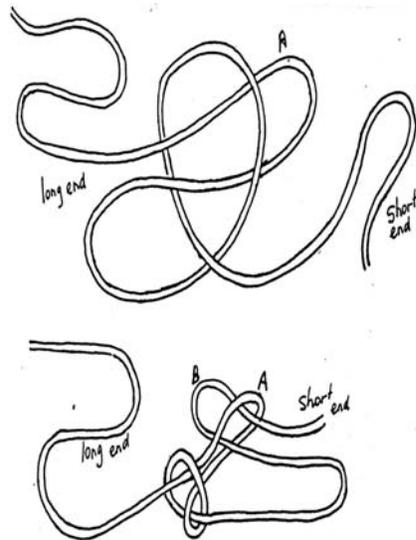
Some horses have learned to be well behaved and controlled on the halter but as soon as it comes off they will take off. Other horses that are timid to catch or halter would be much easier to work with if you control them with a hand under the jawl. By working without a halter horses learn to have more self-control; the handlers learn a new kind of balance because they don't have the lead to depend on and gain a new sense of the word TEAM.

Many methods teach a horse to “face up” and then “join up” by first free lunging or sometimes chasing them around a pen. The horse then comes over and starts following the handler around. To do this successfully it is generally necessary to be very experienced and very aware of your timing. In our experience most horses are willing to follow you without first running around if you follow these steps.

In this series of photos the horse is Randver an Icelandic gelding imported from Iceland. This was the first time he had done freework and he seemed to enjoy it. Randver could be a little shy to catch and this session helped him be more trusting.



Photo 1: Using a 3/8” cotton rope or driving line tie a bowline knot around the neck just behind the ears. A bowline knot or the quick release bowline are the only knots to use as they will not tighten around the horse's neck. If you have a catch-rope – a 3/8” rope with a light snap on the end and a ring tied into the rope so you can adjust the size – you can use it instead of tying a bowline.



loop B through loop A and pull on the long end of the rope to tighten. The rope will not tighten around the horse's neck but will undo if you pull on the short end.

Drawing: This is how to tie a bowline as a quick release knot as shown on the horse in the previous photo. Place one end of the rope around the horse's neck (we'll call this the short end). Just under the horse's neck make Loop A with the long end of the rope. This is basically a slipknot in itself or a cast on stitch, if you knit or crochet. Fold the short end of the rope, making loop B.

## Why do Freework?

- If you have a horse that tears away from the handler when being turned out
- If you have a horse that is hard to catch
- To improve your timing and body language
- To improve your relationship with the horse – there is a mutual trust that occurs
- It is a great winter activity or if you are unable to ride your horse due to an injury

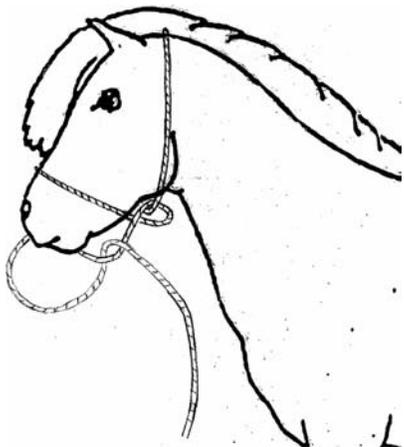
Sometimes I teach “freework” as a starting place in 6-day workshops with participants who have some TTEAM experience. It helps them be more precise in their use of the wand and aware of their own body language as a way of communicating. The feedback has been positive and the one question comes up – “then why use a lead chain or soft lead if I can do this with just a light rope or nothing on the horse's head”. This is a good question.

It is our experience that while many horses find it easy to comply when they are fairly free, the challenge comes to transfer that to the containment of the lead line or reins. When we use the various leading positions with the nylon halter and the chain lead, or Zephyr soft lead, we physically “show” the horse what we want and use these positions to influence the horse in the same way we would under saddle. For example the Dingo – steadies the horse back with the lead in a similar way to the reins, it teaches the horse to wait for a signal and position his body in a more confined posture. We want the horse to learn that he can soften in the poll without stiffening and tightening his neck, back and pelvis. These leading positions help make the transition from work on the ground to riding.



Drawing: Note how the rope is brought through the neck loop in order to make the half-hitch over the nose. Take the rope through the loop from the front of the neck loop (closest to the horse's head) and then bring it over the nose. By taking the loop from front to back, rather than back to front, it helps keep the rope around the horse's

neck from pulling forward over the jawl.



Drawing: Make another loop with the long end of the rope, bring the half-hitch over the nose and above the first rope already on the nose. This will help keep the rope from slipping.



Photo 2: This photo shows the rope put on under the halter. After taking the rope through the loop around the neck bring the loop under the throat piece of the halter and under the noseband of the halter.



Photo 3: If you have a horse that is difficult about the halter this is an excellent way of taking a halter off and still having control of the horse. It can be used to change the horse's behavior about haltering or if you are bridling a horse out in the open it is safer. You can take off the rope halter after bridling the horse by simply undoing the bowline knot and unthreading the rope from under the bridle.



Photo 4: The next step is to work your horse in the Grace of the Cheetah position so you are 4' - 8' away from him. Working from the left side the rope is held in the right hand and wand in your left hand. Ask him to walk, trot and whoa from this position.



Photo 5: To stop make a quarter turn on your inside foot which will bring your body to a right angle to the horse. Bring the wand to the chest of the horse to indicate the stop. The aim here is to be far enough in front of the horse to keep his body and head fairly straight when he stops and avoid the horse swinging his hindquarters away and facing you.



Photo 6: Use Dolphins Flickering through the Waves to teach the horse to maintain a distance from the handler. The rope is folded in the outside hand (left in photo) and the wand in the right hand. This allows you to use the Dingo to start forward movement and then bring the wand forward and flick lightly on the top of the shoulder to keep the horse from moving towards you. (see page 20 for details)

### Tips:

- It is easier to start working alone in the ring without other horses to distract.
- It can be difficult to work on grass as it is so tempting.
- Use a fenced area to start.
- Once you are comfortable working on the left side moving to the right side of the horse will be another lesson for both horse and handler.



Photo 7: After asking for the trot with the Dingo, transfer your wand from your right hand to your left so it is in front of the horse – this will make it easier for you to run in balance. When you want to ask your horse to walk from a trot – as you are running exaggerate taking the weight onto your right foot by pausing for a moment and then walk on. You can reinforce the signal with a small up and down movement with the tip of your wand but most horses will walk immediately from the signal of stepping and pausing with your right foot.



Photo 8: When walking through the labyrinth from the left side bring your right hand up and under the horse's jaw. To turn around a corner to the left use a touch and release signal with your fingertips on his jaw. This is a good exercise to teach a horse to lead just from his head – Icelandic's have long beards in the winter and long manes so sometimes we just take a handful of many by reaching under the neck to the other side and use that instead of a halter.

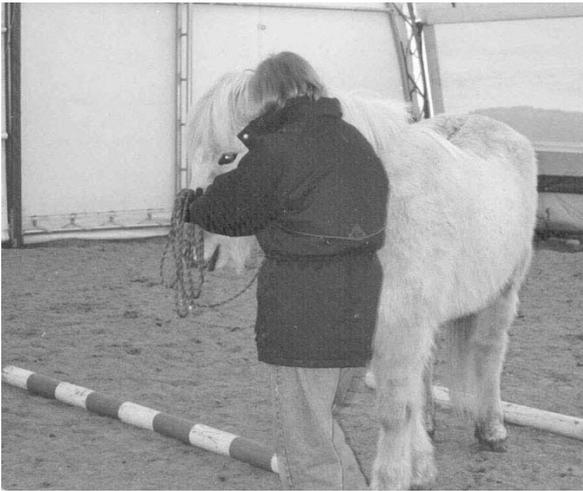


Photo 9: To turn away from the handler around a corner of the labyrinth, place your left hand on the horse's nose and your right hand under the jowl. Gently bend his head away from you as you go around the corner.



Photo 12: When trotting with the loop just around his neck you can either stay just in front of the horse's shoulder or move away from him up to 5' – 6' as you develop a connection to your horse. Notice the wall is used to help keep him straight. To walk use the same technique as described in photo 8.



Photo 10: Once he is responding quietly slip the rope off his nose leaving the rope only around the horse's neck. You can use the wand or just your hand to ask him to come forward in walk.



Photo 13: In an earlier newsletter we have shown using the "Dance" exercise using the wand and lead. You can also use it with just a rope around the neck and eventually with nothing on the horse's head. This exercise is excellent for the handler to become aware of using clear body signals. For the horse it helps teach patience, self-control, fine motor skills and precision. Randver is stopped in front of a pole and I am asking with a small signal to come forward and I have rocked my weight to my left foot encouraging a forward step from him.



Photo 11: If your horse doesn't follow you forward into trot use the Dingo, either with the wand or just with your hand, as pictured here, to ask him to go forward.



Photo 14: Just as he starts to step forward I stand up and slightly move my upper body towards him so he will stop with a foot on either side of the pole.



Photo 15: To ask him to back bring your body towards the horse, touch him on the point of the shoulder of the leg that is going to move, or just move your hand and upper body towards it. If the horse does not understand you can touch him on the bridge of his nose.

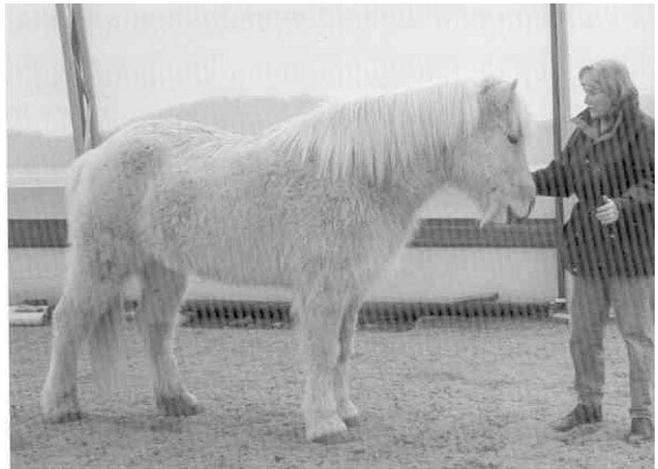


Photo 18: To stop make a quarter turn towards the horse as shown and bring your outside (left) hand in front of the horse as if using the wand. This helps keep the horse straight.



Photo 16: As he starts to step back bring your hand away from the horse to stop asking for the backward movement. Stepping forward and back one step at a time requires more precision and therefore the organization mentally and physically is different than backing quickly.

You can use these same backing techniques to back through the “L” shaped poles.



Photo 19 & 20: Walking through the labyrinth without the halter use a touch and release on the jowl and the nose to turn in either direction.

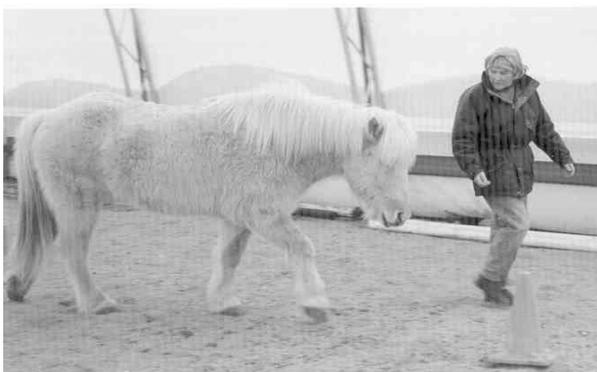


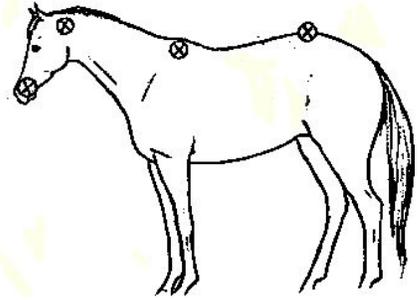
Photo 17: When you first take off the rope you might want to tie (using a bowline) a short piece of twine around his neck as

## Dolphins Flickering Through the Waves

### Purpose:

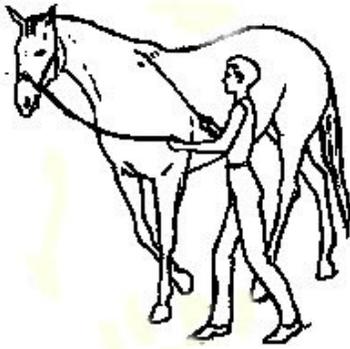
- prepares horses for lungeing
- teaches horse to keep various distances from handler

**Position:** Start in Dingo - the lead will be in your outside hand and the wand in the hand closest to the horse.

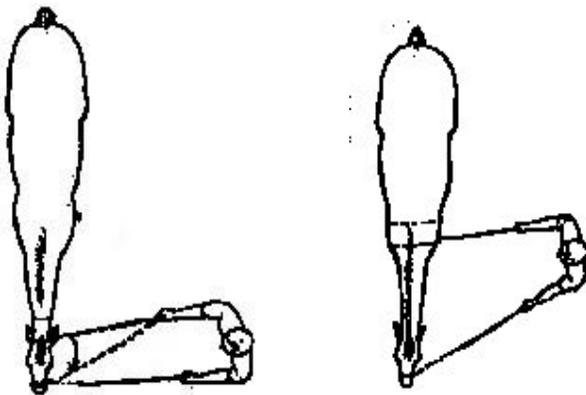


Drawing above shows the 4 places the handler should 'flick' with wand to ask horse to stay on their own track. The flick with the soft end of the wand is meant to be active rather than hard.

Ask the horse to come forward from the Dingo and then slide down the rope away from the horse staying in line with the horse's shoulder. Use the wand to give a light flick on the top of the croup to indicate forward movement; to keep the horse out on the line flick the top of the shoulder; if the horse starts to drop his neck in touch the 'x', just behind the horse's ear and if the horse moves his head towards you give a soft flick on the side of the nose as if you were painting it with a brush.



Drawings above: The handler should keep his feet facing forward and be sure to keep your eyes lively so your are also looking in the direction you want the horse to go.



Drawings above: Show the handlers position in keeping a horse out on a line or circle.

From TTEAM Connections: Jan-Mar 2005

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