

**Safety Issues for Riding & Mounting:** Any time a horse is being overly rambunctious, you need to be able to reassert your leadership capabilities. **Your ability to do this by being firm - yet in a non-confrontive manner is a must as horses tend to revert to opposition reflex otherwise.** Your understanding of effective methods for re-directing their energy, minds & feet in a non-confrontive manner can't be overestimated. It is a mistake to use static pressure when pulling on reins or using other static pressure brute forces in efforts to handle them in a panic.

Rather than trying to use brute, static force, it is much more effective to be adept at the use of **pressure-release force** (even when using strong force). Use of single rein (a.k.a. direct rein) for re-directing their energies and/or turning them in a circle (wide when at high speed or tight when at more moderate speeds) is a basic requirement for control when they are in a panic and/or even when they are acting with willful misbehavior. Knowing how and when to disengage the hind-quarters as well as how large or small a circle is appropriate for such emergency stopping. When to delay the turning move (i.e. speed being one main factor) is very important. Controlling / re-directing them when bolting from a stop or slow gait are yet other mechanisms to understand. Working from high speed requires a completely different approach in getting into a good position for accomplishing an effective turn, whether it is a tight or large turn (which takes more time). Therefore patience is needed, even when you feel some panic.

**Another pointer on proper use of single rein control for bolting horses:** It is doubtful that an average strength person could ever force turn a speeding horse so tightly as to cause a fall. However, for the few that are strong enough to do so it is a good warning not to do so, generally, It is a better decision to initially move to a wide turn then progress to a sufficiently tight turn in order for disengaging the hindquarters and stopping safely once speed has sufficiently reduced.

In cases where the riding track is too constrained and there is no chance to make a wide turn to begin with, then using a "cavalry lift" is an effective and safe way to progressively reduce speed, although it can require some distance in order to get the horses attention. Otherwise, there is little choice, if you elect to stay on and there is no safe exit from the constrained route, but to bail out. However many riders have not learned how to do that safely. Bailing out "can" be done relatively safely over the rear, although when moving at speed the inevitable fall forward into a roll will surely result in scrapes and bruises at the least. Bailing out usually doesn't result in anything too serious if learned and accomplished correctly and at speed you do not risk being kicked in a rear dismount if you use an upward push with your hands as you move back and off.

**Connections relevant to both Ground & Saddle Work:** A good training and riding exercise that applies to safety measures mentioned above, is to teach/train (making sure your horse knows) that you are capable of redirecting their head and neck - as well as disengaging their hindquarters, before riding out beyond the ménage.

Whether riding at home, at other locations (especially on holiday), it is extremely important that, **before you ride out**, you (and the relevant horse) "know" that you can turn a horse's head and neck laterally to each side (without pain) as well as that you are able to disengage their hocks when required. To ascertain/confirm this, standard leadership exercises should be done from the ground before mounting (this takes very little time) as well as again once mounted. If the horse is not able to follow your request and accomplish these basic exercises, you are likely putting yourself in great danger to ride on. These movements/exercises can be taught to most horses within only a few minutes. *There is no functioning horse alive that cannot bolt or try to bolt under extreme circumstances. Horses have millions of years of DNA learning in place and they are not going to lose their instinctive behaviorisms. "At least not in our lifetimes".*

**Importance of Chin Straps (Not curb straps):** The use of a chin strap on the bit rings (attached below the rein attachment point (not above) is ***paramount*** in being able to control/turn their jaw without hurting their cheek/lip edges and/or teeth. Chin straps prevent sliding a bit through their mouths whenever you need to use single rein pressure to one side or other.

**A note regarding bits:** Chrome bits have nickel in the metal mix, which generates electrolysis in the horse's mouth whenever their teeth touch the chrome. This is much like what happens when human teeth touch tin foil and generate electrolysis. Many people have accidentally done this in their lives and know how bad that feels. Therefore, please consider your horse's point of view and comfort when buying / using bits. There are good materials available for bits such as sweet iron, copper, brass and there are other new materials now in the market which do not contain nickel and thereby do not generate electrolysis and slobber. There are even new plastic bits (some called happy-mouth bits) used by manufactures that no longer splinter as they did in the past. Chrome or stainless steel for other sections of the bit, that doesn't touch the teeth, does not cause such problems and unnecessary slobber and which still gives the look humans want.

***A closing note about advice given above*** is that I will be providing further/more complete explanations, for the techniques I mentioned above for achieving the safety mechanisms I have pointed out above, in following "Essex Rider" articles.

**Ya'll ride safely and Aware.** *Lewis aka Blackie Blackburn,*  
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