

Level 2 Coaching – Task 7: Safe coaching practice



Learning outcomes

About this course

By studying this Fact Sheet you will gain a knowledge and understanding of the importance of safe coaching practice for a Level 2 Coaching including:

- How to set and agree ground rules
- Health and safety management including how to:
 - Prepare the environment
 - Conduct a risk assessment
 - Minimise risk
 - Put contingency plans in place
 - Recognise the appropriate length of stirrup for balance and security
 - Recognise the need to adapt riding according to conditions and weather
 - Use appropriate tack for the horse
 - Effectively control paces
 - Be aware of the need to adapt riding according to ground conditions and slope
- How to follow emergency procedures
- Correct procedure for dealing with and reporting accidents, injuries and illnesses

General principles of safe practice in equestrian sports

Safety of horses and riders is an integral part of daily routine within the racing industry. Accidents and incidents will undoubtedly occur in a high risk sport, and therefore the importance of following safe working practices and procedures cannot be over stated.

Those in a senior position, including employers, coaches and yard managers have a “duty of care” for junior employees. When a “duty of care” is breached, an action of negligence may be brought resulting in possible litigation and court proceedings.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires organisations to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of employees (coaches, grooms, riders etc) and non-employees such as owners and sponsors who enter the premises. There should not be an over-reaction to the need for safety, just a respect for safety procedures.



Safe Coaching Protocols

It is the responsibility of every coach to ensure that learning takes place in a suitable and safe environment. Possible risks associated with the coaching environment, horses, riders, the equipment, the activity to be carried out, the coaching method and level of supervision provided must all be assessed prior to the start of the session. In addition to a risk assessment it is important to have a plan for the coaching session to provide structure and allow for development and progression.

A coaching session plan will detail:

- the date, time and venue of the session
- the purpose of the session
- facilities and equipment needed and provided
- description of the warm up, main body of the session including any specific exercises used, key learning points, the cool down and an evaluation of how the session went and what could be done differently to greater effect



Managing risk and risk assessments

One of the most important tasks a coach must undertake before coaching is an assessment of risk in order to maintain the safest environment possible for the coaching session. Examples of risk include:

- Riders health and fitness, experience and competence should be assessed
- Horse's temperament, fitness and level of training needs to be taken into account before planning the activity
- Experience and capability of horses and riders
- Weather – many Thoroughbred horses dislike the wind and rain causing a change in attitude and performance. Bright sunlight can be blinding for riders.
- Ground conditions/surfaces – type of surface and condition in an indoor or outdoor enclosed arena or ground conditions on the gallops.



Managing risk and risk assessments (cont.)

Further examples of risk include:

- Equipment – maintenance of starting stalls and hurdles or fences. A record of repairs and maintenance should be kept
- Tack and equipment – tack should be checked for unsafe stitching or wear and tear. Riders should wear skull caps and body protectors which meet current safety standard
- Coaching method – appropriate for individuals and/or all riders in a group
- Supervision – adequate help available if using starting stalls or hurdles. First aid cover and a qualified first aider to be in attendance.

Risk Matrix

Likelihood		Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Highly Unlikely
Consequences	Fatality	High	High	High	Medium
	Major Injuries	High	High	Medium	Medium
	Minor Injuries	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Negligible Injuries	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

Horse and rider safety management

Coaches should be aware of the care and welfare of horses during coaching sessions. They should ensure that the welfare of horses are protected and must consider the following when planning a coaching activity:

- Suitability of horse to rider
- Weight of rider
- Age and experience of horse
- Suitability and condition of tack and boots
- Impact of weather and ground conditions
- Fitness of horse



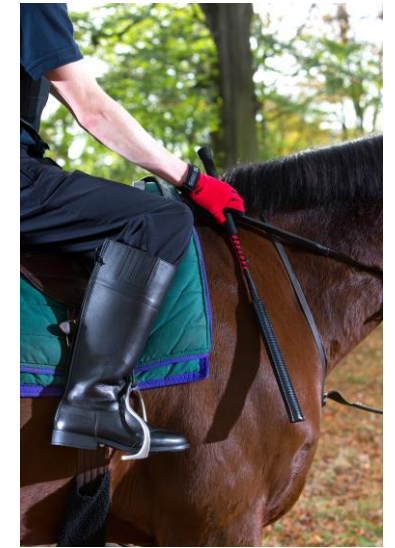
Coaches should be quick to make any adjustments to the scheduled activity to take account of any issues relating to horse and rider welfare.

Coaching for horse and rider safety

Coaches should be clear about the conduct expected from their participants and will set appropriate ground rules. This will include correct use of facilities and equipment and consideration towards other riders. It is generally accepted that riders will pass left hand to left hand if working in opposite directions.

As the ground rules are established, the coach will also check the tack and equipment for safety and security. Girths should be suitably tight and stirrups the correct length for the exercise and ability of rider. Stirrups which are too long will mean the rider has to reach for them and will become insecure. Too short and they will adversely affect rider position and balance.

Studs are not used in racing but the horse should be well shod with no loose or cast shoes.



Coaching for horse and rider safety

Prior to the coaching session a risk assessment should be undertaken by the coach. Contingency plans should be considered if the session is disrupted, which might include a change of venue or activity.

Weather, ground conditions and terrain will also affect the activity. Riders should be encouraged to participate in a range of conditions and learn to ride effectively in a variety of conditions – but coaching activities should be reviewed or amended if safety is compromised.



Gallops should be well maintained, suitably fenced and free from hazards.

How to follow emergency procedures (cont.)

Despite safety measures being put in place, working with and riding horses is a high risk occupation and occasionally accidents and incidents will occur.

Situations which may require immediate attention include:

- Fall of horse or rider
- Rider losing control of a horse
- Tack or equipment malfunction
- Adverse weather conditions
- Unforeseen accidents involving horses, riders and others



How to follow emergency procedures (cont.)

Rider Fall

If a rider falls off whilst riding, go immediately to the injured person requesting that other riders pull up and keep the area around the injured person clear. Ask someone to dismount and catch the loose horse. Send someone for help.

If the rider is conscious ask if they have any pain in a particular area, assess the casualty to decide if professional assistance is required. If the rider is unconscious call 999 immediately and assess airway is open and breathing normal before placing in the recovery position and keeping warm with constant monitoring until help arrives. If casualty is not breathing, commence CPR immediately.

Horse Fall

If a horse falls, check the rider first and deal with them. Ask someone to catch or attend to the horse, ensuring all other riders and horses are in a safe and secure area. Check the horse for soundness or injury and seek assistance if required. Reassure the horse and only allow the rider to remount if both horse and rider are fit and uninjured.

How to follow emergency procedures (cont.)

Rider losing control of a horse

Support the rider in regaining control of the horse. Give calm, clear instructions and ensure other riders and horses are out of danger. When the rider has regained control of the horse, check the tack and soundness of the horse. If the rider shows signs of losing confidence a simpler activity could be undertaken, or consider changing them onto a quieter horse.

Tack or equipment malfunction

Tack and equipment should be checked prior to any coaching session and at regular intervals during the activity. If any tack becomes broken or faulty equipment is observed, it should be taken out of use and arrangements made for repair.



How to follow emergency procedures (cont.)

Adverse weather conditions

Coaching activities should take account of weather and environmental impact. Severe conditions such as very high temperatures, thunder storms, hail and heavy snow can have adverse safety implications for horses and riders and coaching should be suspended until conditions improve.

Unforeseen accidents involving horses, riders and others

With any accident involving participants in a coaching session, the following action should be taken:

- Remove danger to avoid further accidents
- Remain calm and assess the situation
- Seek help
- Attend to injured riders
- Attend to injured horses



Correct procedure for dealing with accidents, injuries and illnesses

Participants becoming ill or suffering an injury

Ensure other riders are out of danger and assess the affected rider. Seek medical help if required and ensure the rider is able to safely return to the yard. Do not insist on a rider continuing a session if they are not fit and well.

Communication is essential both during and after an incident. Make sure that employers are kept informed of the situation. Keep other participants informed of the process but be guarded as to the personal and private details provided.



Correct procedure for reporting accidents injuries and illnesses (cont.)

If an accident happens it must be recorded in the Accident Book which should be kept on the yard for such a purpose. The coach should complete a detailed account of the incident with a drawing of where and how it happened. The rider or participant (where possible) should complete their personal details and an independent witness should verify that a true account of the event has been recorded. Accident reporting documents must be retained for three years after the date of the incident.

Where an injured person is under 18 years, all accident forms should be kept for three years after their eighteenth birthday. All coaches working in the racing industry are required to hold a current first aid qualification.

