

STANDING SQUARE

Always remember the golden rule when training; one step at a time. Don't go on to the next step until the horse/pony has learnt the current lesson.

Get walking, stopping and turning well established first. Voice commands should be established at this point. "Walk on", "trot on", "halt" or "whoa" are common terms. Use "step" or similar to get them to move forward when standing them up. Talk loudly at first gradually lowering the volume for when you are at shows. Only once the above steps have been mastered, should you start stand ups.

Firstly you just want standing still, don't worry about leg placement. Start with a 10 second stand and slowly increase the time. Remember if you are training a foal, concentration time is low. With standing up, do a walk out & ask for a halt. When they move, do a circle & bring them back to the EXACT same spot. Don't push them back to move the feet where you want, you'll cause them to stand under themselves.

Once your horse/pony can stand still for up to 5 minutes (only the head is allowed to move, not the legs) you can start on standing square. Stand to the side but still slightly in front of the horse/pony. You want the hind legs in position first. Ask for a step and when hind legs are in position ask for a halt. It is preferable to have hind legs square although it depends on the horse's top line if it needs some "flattening", have one hind back.

Ask for a step to bringing the fronts forward & square.

If they are leaning forward & their front legs are too far underneath them, wriggle the lead and have them rollback, putting their weight onto their hindquarters and not on the forehead.

Don't ever push your horse or yank side to side to move the legs teach them what "step" means.

When legs are placed where you want reward them. Once they have mastered standing still with their legs placed correctly, then you can ask for the neck. You can use food, treats or something that makes a quite noise is good. Crinkly cellophane paper works well.

You don't want the neck stretched out flatly; you want a nice shapely neck. Have them give with their neck, but try not to let them touch your hand or the object. Praise them, when they give and give something back, like a pat on the neck or a treat.

Training takes patience and persistence but the most important thing is to establish each step before you start on the next.