

GENERAL INFO FOR NEW STUDENTS

About the Sessions

What time of year are lessons given?

We teach all year round. Sessions are broken up into the School Sessions (September to June), and the Summer Session (July & August).

Can I start riding if a session has already started?

Yes! There are always available spaces for riders who wish to join in part-way

What if I only want to ride part-time?

Part-time students are scheduled into available time slots, after the full-time students are scheduled

Are there advantages to booking for the entire session?

Yes! The lessons are offered at a discounted rate with a substantial saving. Also available to full-time students are: 1) make-up lessons when necessary, 2) participation in the free grooming/tacking up Saturday lesson, 3) occasional theory classes are offered to full-time students

How do I register for the first time?

Lessons are booked directly through Shirley Guertin and must be accompanied by payment. E-mail info@centaurridingschool.com or call 613 835-2237. Application forms and lesson price lists are available on this website. Before the first lesson, an acceptance of risk form will need to be signed by the student (or the parent/guardian of children under 18).

What is "First Ride"?

New students are offered a discounted lesson price for their first lesson. This 45-minute lesson will include both in-barn and riding. If this new student has prior experience, this will give the instructor the chance to evaluate the skills in order to find the best class for the student. If this is a new student without prior experience, this lesson will serve as an introduction to riding and our school. This lesson also serves as orientation to the new student.

If I need to miss a lesson, can I make it up another time?

With 48-hours' notice, make-up lessons are available during School & Summer Sessions to those riders who are booked in the entire session.

What happens if weather conditions are bad?

If lessons are to be cancelled due to bad weather, you will receive an email by 4:00. It will also be announced on Facebook. For Saturday riders the email will be sent by 6:00am. The lesson will be re-scheduled to one of the quiet days.

How do I register for the next session?

By the 5th of the month preceding start of next session, current students and everyone already on our mailing list, are sent a reminder via email. To ensure a spot in the next session, a note indicating the preferred lesson day & time accompanied by payment (full, or booking fee plus post-dated cheques) - payable to Shirley Guertin - must be given by due date. Without a booking fee, lesson spots will not be reserved.

What are Quiet Days?

The School Session is a 40-lesson package, held over a ten (10) month period. However, each 10 month period consists of a varying number of weeks - some have 43 weeks, some have 44 weeks. The Summer Session is an 8-lesson package, held over a two (2) month period. However, each 2-month period consists of a varying number of weeks - some have 9 weeks, some have 8 weeks. For this reason, each session will have "Quiet Days". On these days regular lessons are NOT held, but we sometimes plan extra activities such as horse shows or rider level exams. Quiet Days are listed in the Events section of this website, as well as posted in tack room, arena and on the daily schedule sheets. If you do not know where to look please ask for assistance and someone will be happy to help you.

There are 2 driveways, which one should I use?

Please use the south driveway (beside the Centaur sign). The north driveway is private.

Why is the gate at the road closed?

The gate at the road is to remain the way you find it. If it was open, then simply drive through. If it was closed, please close it immediately after entering. WITH ONE EXCEPTION: THE LAST PERSON LEAVING AT NIGHT IS ASKED TO CLOSE THE GATE, regardless of how found. The gate is to keep horses in, not people out. At times, we need to leave it open in case we are expecting large trucks or hay wagons. But most of the time you will find it closed. This system works very well if everyone follows it. It's one of those "unwritten" farm rules. You might also find our "equine lawnmowers" loose on the driveway. In this case please use the other driveway.

What kind of payments are accepted?

You can pay in cash, by cheque or etransfer. We do not accept credit cards

About the Lessons

What do I wear?

Please note that it is the law in Ontario to have proper headgear and foot wear for riding.

You are welcome to ask your coach to check out new equipment before wearing it, just to make sure it is suitable.

Helmets- All students must wear a correctly-fitting, ASTM-certified riding helmet. We have helmets you are welcome to borrow, but we strongly suggest you buy your own. Bicycle, or other sport helmets, are not suitable for horseback riding.

Boots - must have a well-defined heel to prevent the foot from becoming lodged in the stirrup. Children's rainboots are often suitable, but do make sure that the coach verifies their safety. For winter riding, the boot must not be too big and clunky - it could get snagged in the stirrup.

Breeches - Leggings or sweat pants without inseams that may rub can be worn instead of breeches, but breeches are designed for riding and are very comfortable. Jeans are not recommended.

Gloves are recommended year-long but are a must during the cold weather.

Tops - Form-fitting tops should be worn tucked in.

Riders should dress for the weather in layers with sweaters that zip or front-button so they can be easily removed or put on while the student is helmeted and mounted. Jackets must be zipped up if they are worn while riding.

Riding apparel is available at several area tack shops: Greenhawk, Encore Equestrian Tack and Apparel. Some tack shops have a second hand section where you can purchase items at a cheaper cost than buying new, as well they will help you sell any outgrown items.

HAIR must be kept out of the face by being tied back. No gum chewing allowed while riding.

At what time should I arrive for my lesson? (Regular programs)

Grooming, saddling, bridling the horse are part of every ride. Students should arrive a minimum of 30 min. before their scheduled lesson to allow ample time to get the horse ready; i.e., arrive at 6:00 for 6:30 lesson.

Beginners who are learning the grooming and tacking up skills will need more time.

Is help available to help riders get ready for lesson?

Help is available on Saturdays. There is an extra fee for In-Barn Help. There will not be anyone assigned during week evenings to help riders groom and tack up.

At what time should I arrive for my lesson ? (HFY & Mini's)

These riders should arrive at the scheduled start time, not ½ hour before.

What is expected of me in the stable before and after my riding lesson?

Students are responsible for caring for their horse and equipment. Horses need to be thoroughly groomed before and after each ride, and haltered. All equipment must be put away clean. The students' work areas must also be left swept and tidy. Plan on 30 minutes post-lesson.

Are there seasonal considerations for horse care?

Horses should be sponge-bathed after lessons in summer; dried off with straw and/or a cooler in winter. Spring and fall can be muddy, and extra time will be

necessary for grooming. Students will be told about special seasonal considerations by their instructor.

What are the free grooming / tacking up lessons given on Saturdays, and can I take part?

On Saturdays, grooming, horse-handling and tacking up lessons are offered to beginner riders at set times. They are free of charge if the student is enrolled in a session. There is a minimal fee for part-time riders. These lessons enable beginners to practice these skills with an instructor present. This is a great opportunity for beginners to acquire more hands-on experience with horses. This service is not available to non-Centaur riders, nor HFY/Mini riders.

When can I start to learn to jump?

Important skills to have before starting jumping are pace control and steering. The rider must be efficient at directing the horse's speed, and be able to turn accurately. Once these skills are in place jumping lessons are started. The actual part of getting over a jump is relatively easy. But getting to the jump at the right speed isn't as easy as it looks. Pace control and steering are practiced every single lesson, even if there are no jumps present in the ring. The coach will decide when it's time to start going over the obstacles.

Can I feed treats to the horse I ride?

Horses love carrots and apples. We ask students that they leave their horse's treat in the tack room for the staff to feed. Carrots and apples should be cut into pieces. Feeding treats often and by hand encourages horses to become nippy, and for this reason we strongly discourage riders from feeding treats.

How are horses assigned?

Horse assignments are posted on the schedule board. The instructors consider many factors when assigning horses including the riders' size and skill, and the horses' temperaments, workloads, training. Each horse will teach you something.

How much weight can a horse carry?

The amount of weight that a horse can carry varies depending on the horse's own size and strength, but in general a horse can not comfortably carry a rider of more than 180 lbs. If you are a large rider, please let Shirley know this when you are booking your assessment lesson so that we can determine which horse would be most suitable for you to ride.

Are parents and friends allowed to go in the stable area?

For safety and stable management reasons, only riders and Centaur staff are permitted in the stable. Parents can drop off their children at the tack room, and family and friends are invited to watch lessons from the comfort of the Lounge or from the stands in the arena. (Exception HFY, where parents should wait in the lounge or picnic area). We ask that parents refrain from entering the stable area.

How does Centaur accommodate students with different motivations and goals?

Adults, pre-teens, teenagers and young children have different equestrian interests and goals -- some seem to enjoy the time spent with the horses in the stable as much, and in some instances, even more than riding. Some students are interested in competing and others want the recognition associated with earning certificates for their achievements. Others want to be with horses for animal-loving, leisure, fitness or recreational reasons. Some students like to learn more about barn operations. Let Shirley know your (or your child's) equestrian motivations and goals and Centaur will formulate a riding and theory plan based on those goals.

How can I learn more about horses and riding?

Equestrian Canada (EC) is the governing body for equestrian pursuits in Canada. Ontario Equestrian (OE) deals with provincial matters. New riders will find EC Rider Manuals helpful in learning the fundamentals of horse care and riding. These manuals are available for sale at tack stores or from EC or OE directly. Also recommended is the book The Principles of Riding from the German Equestrian Federation. For Francophones, La position et les aides is a helpful guide.

ABOUT HORSEMANSHIP FOR YOUTH

What do HFY students learn during the in-stable part of the lesson?

At this level, the time spent in the stable is essential. This is where the children learn the different skills such as approaching a horse, putting a halter on a horse, leading a horse, tying a horse in the crossties, grooming using all the different brushes, picking out the feet using a hoof pick, sweeping their area, organizing all the necessary equipment they will need for tacking up, saddling, bridling, leading their horse to the riding arena and untacking their horse after the mounted part of the lesson. The equipment varies from horse to horse providing an additional challenge. The children are shown how to do all the above skills, while staying focused and managing their time efficiently. Some skills needed to accomplish the above are: how to find the necessary equipment for each horse; how to carry their tack; how to operate stall door latches and saddle racks; how to do up and un-do buckles and snaps; how to sweep; how to ask their horse to move forwards, backwards, sideways and lift up its feet. Many HFY students need help: lifting the saddle onto the horse's back; doing up the girth; putting the bit in the horse's mouth; and organizing the sequence of steps to prepare for riding lessons in a timely manner. HFY instructors oversee pre- and post-lesson activities in the barn and tack room.

What do HFY students learn during the riding part of the lesson?

In the arena, HFY students learn: the protocols and rules for safe riding in a group; the fundamentals of English equitation; how to identify and maintain safe distances between horses on the ground and at the walk; how to prepare

to mount/dismount; how to get on/off the horse correctly; adjust the stirrup length; hold and shorten the reins; steer at the walk; and to begin following the horse's motion at the trot, at both sitting and posting.

What is the progression from HFY to Regular lessons?

Centaur's step-by-step learn-to-ride program adheres to Equestrian Canada national standards for horsemanship and riding. It starts with Mini-Equestrian for children. Riders then move to Horsemanship For Youth (HFY), then to Saturday beginner group riding lessons and then, when truly self-sufficient in the stable, any day of the week.

How soon will my child be ready to ride in regular lessons?

How quickly your child masters the skills required to graduate from horsemanship classes depends on the child's individual maturity, size, strength, ability to focus, organize time and tasks and follow instruction. In essence, when the student is able to get their horse ready for their riding lesson independently and on time, they can register for regular riding lessons.

I am a parent and I would like to participate in my young child's riding activities. What can I do?

Parents should be sure to keep informed of Centaur's activities and registration dates by reading the posted information in the tackroom and checking their email.

There are many ways parents can help:

- 1) Teach your child how to do and undo buckles and snaps. In this age of Velcro, many kids have never had to do this. All horse equipment involves buckles and snaps.
- 2) Practice teaching them left from right.
- 3) Equestrian Canada is the governing body for equestrian pursuits in Canada. New riders will find the EC Rider Level 1-2 Manual helpful. These manuals are available for sale at tack stores.
- 4) Make sure your child is on time for each lesson.
- 5) Try really hard to not miss any lessons.
- 6) Make sure your child is dressed appropriately for each lesson.
- 7) Teach your child how to tell time on a regular clock (not a digital clock). We have encountered many children who can't tell if they are on time because they cannot read a clock.

What happens on Parents' Days?

On Parents' Days parents of HFY students are welcomed into the stable and arena. You'll have the opportunity to ask the instructors about your son or daughter's progress and, if you're interested, to try using the different grooming tools and learning more about what's involved in saddling, bridling and horse and tack care.

About Beginner Riders (adults/ teens)

What do beginner equestrians learn during the in-barn part of a lesson?

Proper fitting of headgear and footwear selection; barn and tack room orientation; a general introduction to horse behaviour and instincts; how to approach, halter, lead, turn, tie and move a horse (forwards, backwards, sideways); the steps involved in and safe, correct techniques for grooming, hoof-picking, saddling, bridling, un-tacking and cleaning and putting away equipment. The first lessons for a newcomer's may be spent mostly in-barn, devoted to horsemanship. It takes a beginner who has had little or no previous experience with horses at least three lessons to learn the skills required to prepare for a riding lesson. As the level of confidence and competence with in-barn skills increases, the student can get ready more independently and spend more of the lesson time learning how to ride.

What do beginner equestrians learn during the mounted part of a half-hour private lesson?

During the riding part of a half-hour lesson, beginners learn how to prepare to mount, mount, hold the reins, adjust the rein length, tighten the girth, adjust the stirrup length, walk, halt, steer straight lines, execute simple turns, dismount and prepare to return the horse to the barn. On the longe line students are taught the correct riding position and work on exercises to help them relax and develop balance and an independent seat at the halt, walk and trot.

What is a longe line lesson?

Quiet, experienced horses that are well-schooled in the practice of longeing are used to teach new riders. The instructor controls the horse by means of a long rope, a longe line, so the new student can focus on developing their balance at the walk and the trot, and need not worry about controlling the horse.

How can beginners learn more about horse handling, care and riding in between their weekly lessons?

To help students progress more quickly in learning how to groom and tack-up and un-tack, Centaur offers free Saturday horsemanship practice time. Ask for the exact times