

HorseWise

WITH LINDSAY GRICE



Success without a Coach



PHOTO: ROBIN DUNCAN PHOTOGRAPHY

Q We live in Ontario's northern region and there are no coaches in the area who specialize in my daughter's riding discipline. Do you have any suggestions to help her succeed in her riding?

A Although living away from the hub of equine activity can be a challenge, it is possible to map out a plan to suit your needs. The inconvenience and cost of travel to shows and training help is, no doubt, discouraging. Here are some suggestions that have worked for long distance clients of mine and ideas from amateur competitors I've spoken with who come from remote locations:

Boarding School

Some people opt to send their horse to the trainer of their choice no matter what the distance. If this is an option for you and you don't mind being apart from your horse for several months, keep the lines of communication open with the trainer. Ask him what would be a convenient time for you to telephone for an update each week. I often send customers DVDs of training sessions. Travel to the trainer for lessons if you can, and ask to see your horse worked before your lessons. Watch the trainer work other horses and become familiar with his program. Ask if there are horses you can practice on while you're there in order to further saturate yourself with the system your horse will be learning. Take notes so you can carry on with the same program when you bring your horse home.

Working Student

Ask to spend a few days at the farm of a trainer you admire — even without your horse. Take some lessons on his horses. Watch him while he trains. Ask a lot of questions and offer to help in the barn or to groom at a show for him in exchange for this mini clinic. Now go and apply the principles you learned on your own horse.

Clinics are a great way to learn from others. Take notes and ask someone to video you so you can go over and practice the things you learned at home.

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LEFT: Whenever you get the chance to work with or learn from a coach or trainer, ask lots of questions to get the most from your experience.

BELOW: Some coaches let you join their students for help at horse shows in exchange for a coaching fee, giving you the opportunity to watch and learn from both the coach and other students.



Meet in the Middle

Some coaches will agree to let you pay a coaching fee and join their students for help at horse shows. He will give you a game plan before your classes and give suggestions to fix minor issues. You may not receive the individual attention of a private lesson, but you also have the opportunity to watch him coach fellow students and benefit from their camaraderie and experience. Stand at the rail and study the top competitors showing in various classes. Practice placing the class and then review the judge's score cards if you can, and benefit from the feedback.

Attend Clinics

Clinics are another good opportunity to ask questions and learn from others. Take good notes so that you can practice the things you learn at home.

Home Study

Stock up on the most current books, magazines, and DVDs. I have learned so much by reading about various methods, experimenting, and seeing what works. There's a wealth of information available about bits, tack, and horse health care. You can research current trends in your show discipline and get the viewpoints of judges and winning trainers.

Ask someone to take a video of you, especially at shows. Review the footage, compare your look and performance with the other competitors you've seen, and record specific changes you'd like to make. Make another video after making the changes and see if it looks better. I often review videos of my classes and training sessions with an objective eye, making changes in the horse's frame, pace, or my position, then re-filming and reviewing as necessary.

It will take some initiative and perseverance for your daughter to excel without a local coach, but those are qualities that any parent would be happy to see developing in their child — it might be a blessing in disguise! 🍁

Offer your services as a working student, doing barn chores or grooming at a horse show in exchange for lessons.

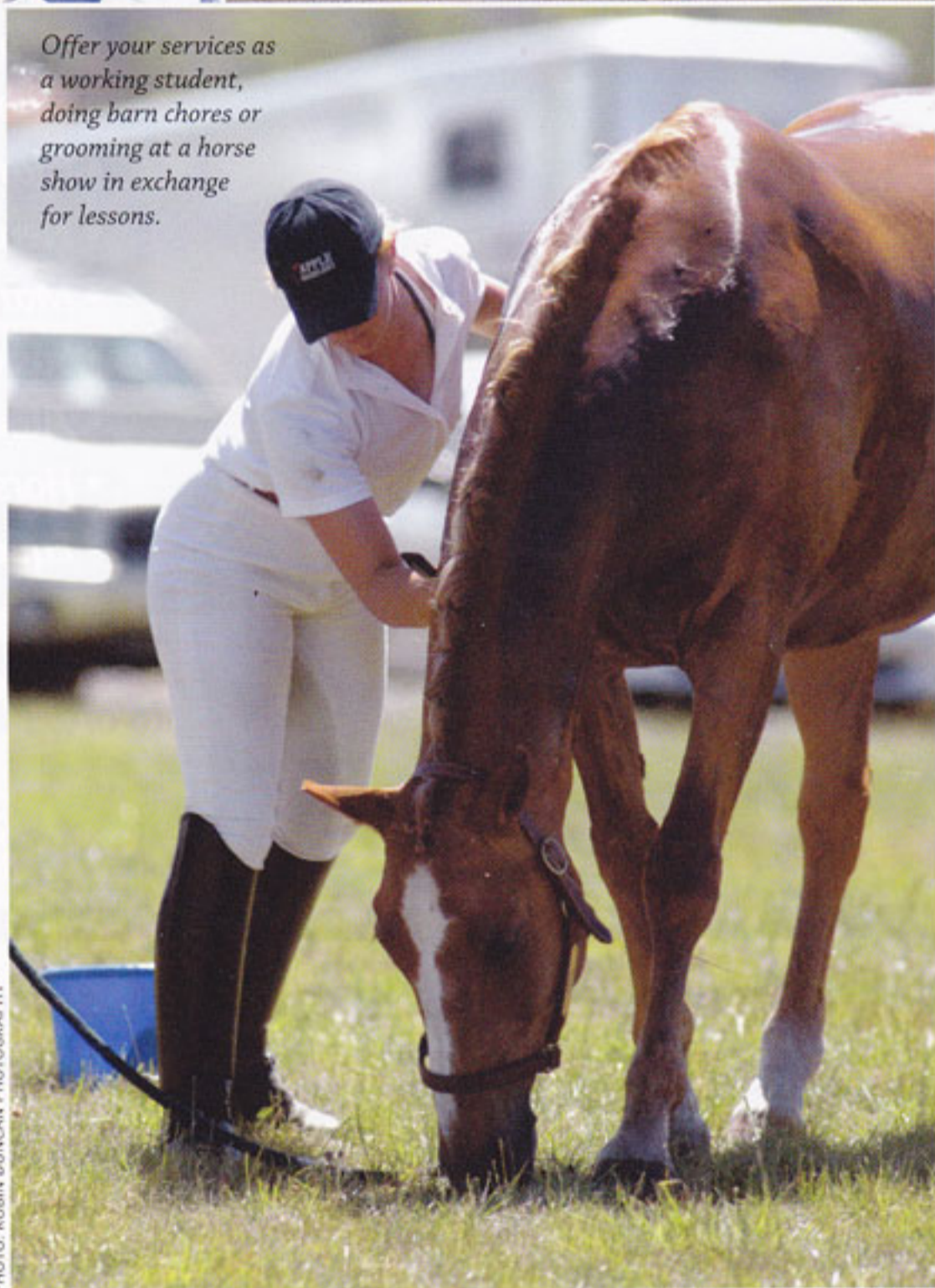


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In over 20 years as a professional coach and trainer, Lindsay Grice's students have won at major shows in the United States and Canada. She continues to actively compete and win in both English and Western events, specializing in the American Quarter Horse Association circuit.

Lindsay judges horse shows and teaches her

popular horsemanship clinics throughout Canada and into the United States, creating thinking horsemen of her students by teaching the "hows" and "whys" of riding. Lindsay has often been a guest lecturer for the University of Guelph's Equine Behaviour programs and regularly teaches weekend clinics for local breed associations and 4-H clubs.

Lindsay draws regularly on the sports psychology training she gained through coaching education. She is a certified Equine Canada coach as well as a NCCP (multi sport) coach. "Handling show nerves, distractions, and disappointments is as much a part of success as technical riding skills," she says.

When asked what she loves about her job,

Lindsay responds, "I love putting complex principles of riding into a language that riders can understand."

For more information, visit her site www.lgrice.com.



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