



Village Club Equestrian Program

FOCUS: The focus of the Village Club equestrian program is the development of horsemanship skills both on and off the horse. Safety is taught from the very beginning and at every level. Focusing on safety allows all riders to enjoy being around horses without unnecessary risk.

GOAL: The goal of our lesson program is to help develop the whole rider. Our lessons are geared to meet the needs of the rider while reinforcing positive character development, such as safety, good judgment, responsibility, accountability, and respect.

PROGRAM: All riding courses include skills to improve the rider's position and ability to safely control their horse in the arena. The curriculum is progressive and is designed to build a strong foundation of basic skills and knowledge, helping riders to develop confidence at one level before moving up to the next.

The Village Club riding program teaches the balanced seat, which is an all-purpose seat which enables the rider to stay in balance with the horse and influence the horse without the use of force. With a good basis in the balanced seat, a rider can easily adapt to any style of riding be it jumping, dressage, western, gaited or saddle-seat.

REQUIREMENTS: All beginning riders must enroll in private lessons where the instructor will teach the student either in the round arena or on the lunge line. The student will learn to balance on the horse at the walk and trot without the use of reins. When the student is able to stay safe and balanced without interfering with the horse, the rider may progress to riding off the lunge and/or in the large arena learning to steer the horse, proper arena etiquette and riding patterns.

EVALUATION: All students new to the VC riding program must sign up for three introductory riding lessons with Mary Sayre. The VC Riding instructor(s) will determine the student's riding level and make the appropriate recommendation for progressive lessons.

As a prerequisite to jumping, all riders must complete a Jumping Evaluation and be able to demonstrate the required skills to progress to safely jumping a horse.

EQUIPMENT: All students must supply their own hard-soled shoes or boots with an appropriate heel, and an ASTM/SEI approved riding helmet. The Village Club equestrian dress code requires long pants or breeches, hard soled shoes/boots with a heel, riding helmet. Shirts must cover the rider's mid-section and shoulders. No spaghetti straps, halter tops or midriffs allowed.



Riding Curriculum

Throughout each level, student continues to gain more advanced knowledge of equine management topics introduced in previous levels. SAFETY and awareness of student, horses, and others is emphasized at all times. **Proper horse care is expected** -- grooming before and after each lesson, appropriate warm up and cool down. Students are also expected to put away all items used and clean up after their horses before and after riding.

Level One – for beginner riders new to horses. Riders in level one can expect an introduction to horses and horseback riding. The emphasis is on safely handling horses, gaining confidence to comfortably catch, halter, groom and tack a horse. Mounted lessons may be controlled on the lunge line or in the round pen and will focus on basic riding skills for the beginner rider to be able to control the horse in walk and trot.

Level one riders will learn:

- How to safely approach a horse, halter and lead properly
- Equine terminology -- basic parts of horse, colors, etc.
- Correct use of grooming tools and why grooming is essential to equine health
- How to clean the horses' hooves
- How to tack/untack with assistance, learn basic parts of the bridle and saddle
- How to safely mount and dismount
- Proper balanced seat position with shoulder/hip/heal in alignment
- The importance of the warm up and cool down period for the horse
- How to hold reins to steer and stop the horse
- How to use leg aids to cue the horse to walk and/or trot
- How to ride posting trot
- Use of the two-point position, practice at halt and walk
- When to use an emergency dismount and/or 1 rein stop

Level Two – for beginner riders who have ridden before and have some experience with horses. This is a natural progression from Level One and will continue the riders' education focusing on the balanced seat while learning to canter. Riders may be controlled on the lunge line while learning to canter.

Riders in Level Two will learn:

- More advanced equine terminology (parts of horse, parts of hoof, anatomy)
- How to maintain a 2-point position/half-seat in walk and trot
- How to trot and identify the correct posting diagonal
- Introduction to canter (note: student should not progress to canter unless he/she is capable of holding two-point position at walk and trot, and moves easily - without losing balance or position - between posting trot, two-point, and sitting trot)
- How to walk/trot over ground poles
- Arena etiquette, passing left stirrup to left stirrup
- How to tack/untack independently
- How to inspect, clean and care for tack

Level Three – for beginner/intermediate riders who are proficient with the skills from Level 2. Riders continue their education and gain strength and balance in all 3 gaits. Riders are developing confidence and are able to progress to cantering without the control of the lunge line.

Riders in Level Three will:

- Walk/trot/canter independently and in two point/ ½ seat position
- Ride at walk and trot without stirrups
- Begin to learn to use aids for leg yielding and lateral exercises
- Walk/trot course of ground poles/cavaletti
- Make accurate turns with the ability to steer and stop on command
- Introduction to equine first aid (vital signs, basic wound care, bandaging)
- Begin learning about basic vet and farrier care (vaccinations, shoeing)
- Learn Introductory dressage test (walk/trot) (optional but recommended)

Level Four – for intermediate riders who are proficient with the skills from Level 3. Riders continue to build confidence while working toward a solid balanced seat and independent hands. Low level jumping is introduced.

Level Four riders will:

- Be introduced to low level jumping (cross rails, small verticals -- approx.18") at trot and canter (note: student may not progress to jumping until he/she successfully completes evaluation)
- Demonstrate proper position over fences using long crest release and control of the horse before and after the jump
- Learn to adjust the horses stride in between jumps
- Begin learning about conformation
- Learn how to load a horse in a trailer/trailer safety
- Learn Training /Beginner Novice dressage test -- discuss dressage basics
- Be introduce to lunging/round pen work
- Learn more advanced grooming skills such as clipping, mane pulling, braiding

Level Five – for intermediate riders who are proficient in the skills from Level 4. Progressive exercises to allow rider to jump more challenging courses and prepare for horse showing if interested.

Level Five riders will:

- Jump increasingly larger fences with height up to 2'6"
- Learn to "walk" a course un-mounted to decipher pattern and strides required
- Jump courses, demonstrating lead changes throughout (simple or flying)
- Continue learning Training level dressage tests
- Begin small grids/gymnastics focusing on rider position and horse obedience throughout
- Introduction to equine nutrition

Level Six – for intermediate/advanced riders who are proficient in the skills from Level 5. Level 6 lessons are progressive lessons focusing on the “thinking rider”. Rider learns to use aids with more finesse and enhances communication with horse through use of seat, legs, and hands.

Level Six focuses on:

- Advanced jumping -- 2'6" and above
- Introducing more difficult jumps (corners) and more difficult courses
- Learning to lengthen and shorten strides at canter, adding and removing strides in a line
- More advanced grid/gymnastic work improving position, balance, and control
- Learning First/Novice level dressage test -- discuss the training pyramid and more advanced topics
- Understanding lateral movements such as shoulder fore, haunches-in, and turns on the haunches
- Learning how to lunge using side reins

To schedule lessons contact:

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For questions or concerns about the equine program contact:

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