

Side Walking

During lessons the **side walker** is responsible for the **rider**. The side walker works in a team with the coach and the leader. Where there is more than one side walker, work as a team with only one person giving verbal instructions.

ROLE OF THE SIDE WALKER:

- Greet and escort the rider from/to the mounting area.
- Assist the rider to correctly fit their riding helmet.
- Check that the rider is correctly attired for riding (jackets to be buttoned/zippered and not flapping, closed-in shoes are worn). Alert the coach if clothing is not appropriate.
- Some riders require special equipment to be fitted to their horse. Ensure that special equipment is available and correctly fitted.
- Assist the rider to carry out the coach's instructions.
- Walk level with the rider's body, do not drop behind.
- Monitor your rider for fatigue or discomfort and alert the coach.
- Complete some basic paperwork as instructed by the coach.

VOLUNTEERS WILL BE TAUGHT:

- How to fit helmets, adjust stirrups and other equipment.
- How to assist a rider at the mounting ramp or when using a hoist.
- Safe transfer techniques.
- Appropriate handholds for supporting a rider e.g. open hand, changing position frequently.
- To recognise common signs of fatigue, illness and onset of seizure activity.

IMPORTANT TIPS:

- **NEVER** hold onto the horse or rider or gear as a means of support for yourself. If you are getting tired, inform the coach immediately.
- **NEVER** leave a rider. You must stay with the rider at all times, this includes walking through puddles on trail rides.
- **ALWAYS** relay the instructions as given by the coach. Changing instructions can cause confusion and can delay the rider's response.
- **ALWAYS** show respect for your rider and use language that is appropriate for their age.

If a rider should slip, do not take their weight on yourself. Just guide them safely to the ground bending your knees.

WORKING AS A TEAM:

- The RDA environment contains many distractions which can affect a rider's concentration. Where there are two side walkers, decide who will give instructions to the rider. Keep verbal instructions to a minimum.
- Clients work hard both emotionally and physically. Try to make the riding sessions fun for everyone. Use positive encouragement where appropriate.



Side Walking holds

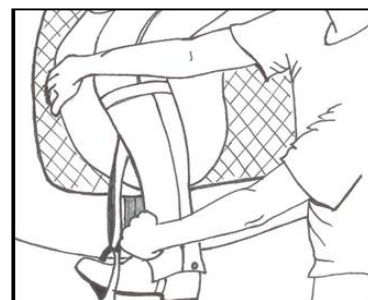
Hand-over-thigh hold

This is most commonly used for unbalanced riders. It provides a feeling of security whilst allowing the rider to develop core strength and balance. When using this hold take care to walk forwards parallel to the horse without twisting your body. Look where you are going!



Knee and ankle support

Keeps the knee in position as well as the lower leg. Provides stability and balance. This position should not be held for very long as it is uncomfortable for helpers to maintain. Swap sides regularly. You can also just hold across the knee and not the ankle, or visa versa.



Heel hold

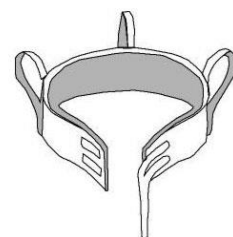
Best used for beginner riders learning to trot. Can also be used in progression from the hand-over-thigh hold as the rider's balance improves. Keeps the rider's heels down and the lower leg in the correct position and prevents the lower leg from slipping forward.



WORKING WITH HIGH SUPPORT RIDERS

Riders with poor balance and/or impaired muscle tone may require additional support throughout the lesson. When using handholds you should:

- Change the positions of your handholds frequently to avoid loss of sensation in the rider's leg.
- Only physically support the rider if instructed by the coach; likewise you must not remove physical support without prior consent of the coach.
- Let the coach know (or your team members) if you are getting tired.



FITTING A TRANSFER BELT:

Transfer belts are helpful when transferring riders from wheelchair to the horse or for adjusting a rider's position in the saddle.

- Belts are to be fitted around the waist, not around the chest.
- Place the belt around the waist and fasten snugly without being tight.
- Ensure that the belt does not compromise pegs, abdominal feeding tubes or drainage devices.
- Do not use the handles of the belt to support, hold or drag a rider into position
- Do not lean your weight onto the handles or loop your hand through the handles.



For more information refer to the RDA Volunteer Information Handbook