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How To Install An Emergency Brake On Your Horse

By **Andy Curry**

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Imagine being on a horse and he bolts. You pull those reins to slow him down but it's no use. He resists and the fence posts go whizzing by you as you panic and pray he doesn't shift his bodyweight and you fly off his back into a post.

It's scary to be on a horse that runs on his own volition and can't be slowed down. Many people will sell their horse because they're so scared of that happening again. How do you keep a horse from bolting like that?

There is a way to temper your horse even if he spots something that scares him and he wants to run in fear. I call it, "Installing an emergency brake."

This is done on the ground while you're doing ground training. Every time you work with your horse you should spend a few minutes doing this - even if you know your horse "gets it." It simply cannot be done enough.

What does it look like when you use the emergency brake on your horse? While you're riding, you reach down to either rein. You tightly grab the rein, slide it up your legs along the seam of your pants up to your hips. At the same time, you are loosely holding the other rein. As you do this, your horse's nose will be pointing back towards his rear end.

Why does this work? Ever try to run forward while looking backwards? Need I say more? (There are exceptions. Some horses are so limber they will run forward with their nose buried in their sides - but not many)

But you can't simply get on your horse and expect to pull his head back if he takes off. You must do some ground work first. And here's what you do.

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Put a halter on your horse and hook a lead rope to the halter. Stand on the left side of your horse. Stand by your horse across from his back leg. Take your right arm and put it over his rump. Next, pull the lead rope towards you and rest your left hand on his back.

At this point your horse will resist some. If he pulls his head forward you hold the lead rope in place. Eventually he will move his head back towards you and give into the pull you have on the lead rope. The second he moves his head back towards you then you release the lead rope tension and praise him. In other words, when you see the lead rope has slack in it because he moved his nose back towards you, then release.

Eventually, you want him to touch his nose to his body. That's the goal you're shooting for because the more his head comes around the better control you will have. Also, there's a second goal you're shooting for. When you pull the lead rope around to bring your horse's head back, you want it to be where you don't pull. He moves his head back for you. As you pull on the lead rope his head moves

back with no exertion from you. His head follows. It's called being responsive. This is important because when you're riding your horse and you have to pull his head around you don't want to have a tug of war while you're riding a bolting horse. You want him to automatically do it.

At first your horse won't be able to touch his nose to his body. So you start with small successes. At first you pull his head back towards you until you get resistance. When you do, hold the lead rope tension. Don't make the tension more or less, simply hold it there. The second he looks back toward you more and creates slack in the lead rope, you give him immediate relief and take the tension off the lead rope completely. Then you tell him what a good boy he is. Pet him too. Let him know that's just what you wanted.

As you do this, you will want him to bring his head farther and farther back until he begins to touch his nose to his body. Don't try to get him to touch his nose to his body within the first one or two ground sessions. That's rushing it and you likely won't make it happen. This takes time to get your horse to understand what you want him to do.

Remember to do this on the other side of your horse too. What your horse can do on his left side, he should be able to do on his right side.

When you have your horse touching his nose to his side, then you're ready to get on him and test his emergency brake. Get on your horse and go for a test ride. If he starts to run and you don't want him to, grab a rein and pull his head around. Don't jerk the reins...pull. Then boot him into a circle. When he slows down or stops like you want him to then release the pressure. Remember to do it on the left and right reins.

If your horse doesn't easily touch his nose to his body while riding him, then you need to have him practice it more. Also, before you go riding have him touch his nose a few times on each side with the bit in his mouth. Doing these things will cinch your riding into a pleasant experience.

Andy Curry is a nationally known horse trainer and author of several best selling horse training and

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Vehicle Safety Habits For The Beginner Driver

By George Gabriel

It is good practice to check you're vehicle out before proceeding out on the road, and know all the safety features of the vehicle that you are operating. It is part of defensive driving to do these checks before you take you're vehicle on the road.

Vehicle inspection should be first on the list, before proceeding out on the road.

Take out the tire wrench. You are going to need it to check the tires. Hit the tire to make sure there is sufficient air. You may want to carry a tire gauge in you're car. Do a visable inspection of tires, looking for possible cracks or worn tires.

Are there any visible leaks under the car? Do the signals work? Do the headlights work? (High and low beam.) Do the brake lights work?

Check to make sure there's enough engine oil; break fluid, and power steering fluid. Also check battery water level and coolant level. Do not open radiator cap! Vehicle must be cooled down first, if parked recently. (caution: see owners manual before opening cap.) Last will be transmission fluid. (Vehicle must be running to read proper level.) (Make sure you're emergency park brake is applied.)

Now you are ready to enter the car. Go over the safety features of your vehicle. .

Communication features:

Signals help you warn other drivers, which way you intend to turn. Brakes warn other drivers your slowing down or stopping. Horn warns other drivers and pedestrians to be alert. Emergency signals warn other drivers of a problem that you may have.

Visibility features:

Mirrors should be adjusted before you leave any parked position. Mirrors should be used quite often to see what is happening around you at all times. When you think your going to have to stop, check you're rearview mirror first. You may have to touch your brake, to warn others behind you. You may have to stop a little further ahead to give the driver behind you room to stop safely. It's all part of driving defensively. Headlights should be working, high and low beam. Wipers are a must in bad weather

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conditions. Windshield must be clean.

Safety features:

Emergency brakes should be applied when in a parked position at all times. Test you're emergency brake by applying the handle, or pushing to the floor, depending on the make and model of the vehicle. Remove gear out of park position with foot on brake pedal and put in drive position. Ease up on brake pedal. Vehicle should not roll forward. It is a good habit to always release park brake after putting vehicle in gear. The vehicle will not roll forward if you forget to put you're foot on the brake pedal, if the park brake is functioning properly. Seat belts: Make sure you're seatbelt is on. Including passengers. It is a violation in most, if not every city and state not to wear it.

Comfort:

Heater should be adjusted accordingly, for maximum comfort. Driver must open windows if too hot. Seat adjustments should be adjusted for maximum visibility and comfort.

(Check owner's manual for further knowledge of vehicle features and safety features.)

These topics that we covered should be second nature when reaching for them, especially when you get an unexpected downpour, or hit with mud from a passing vehicle, if you have to look for you're wipers, you may find yourself on top of another vehicle or in a ditch! Do not attempt to drive without this knowledge.

Owned and operated a driving school for several years. Taught over 2000 kids and older people how to drive. Now operating a golf tee time site at

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