

Canter departs.
By Charlotte Bredahl-Baker

If I am starting with a young or very green horse, I always teach them on the lunge line first. I think it is important to start with verbal commands on the lunge line first.

On the lunge line I will teach the horse to canter by using my voice “saying canter” with authority and leaning and moving towards the horse. At the same time moving the whip towards the horse. Usually the horse will respond without me using the whip, but if the horse doesn’t listen I will tap him with the whip.

When the horse is trained to pick up the canter from voice command I will use it on his back at the same time I give my normal canter aids. My preparation for the canter with a very green horse: First have the horse going very forward and energetic, then on a circle in the middle of the arena leg yield the horse away from the inside leg. I want the horse to really be moving away from the inside leg as well as being totally soft on the inside rein. When this occurs I add my outside leg behind the girth as well as use my voice command.

It is important that the rider releases the inside rein a bit in the depart as well as keep the inside leg on the girth. If the horse doesn’t respond I will tap with the whip behind the outside leg, to reinforce the leg aid. After awhile the voice command will not be needed.