

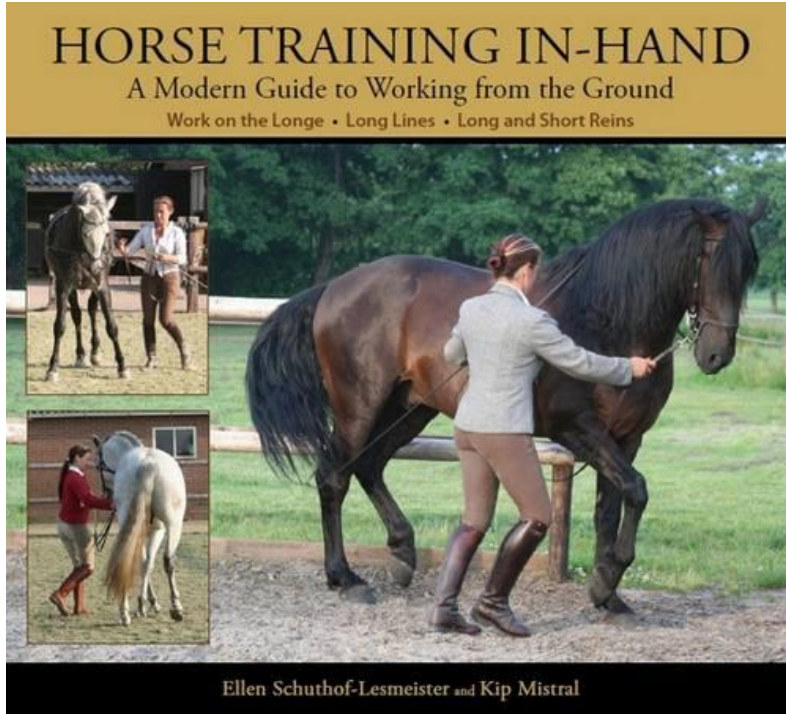
## Clinics & Other Events

**May 7-8** Suzanne von Dietze Clinic @ Flintridge Riding Club  
La Canada Flintridge, CA \$25/day to audit Contact: Brigette Beasley  
[equinepartners@hotmail.com](mailto:equinepartners@hotmail.com)

**May 21-22 Julie Leiken Clinics.** Contact Brigette Beasley, 520-465-8194, [equinepartners@hotmail.com](mailto:equinepartners@hotmail.com) for more info.

**June 25 Dressage University "Part IV Work in Short Reins" presented by Kip Mistral @ Willow Woods 6-9 pm** Contact: Bobbi Berry  
[bberry@theriver.com](mailto:bberry@theriver.com)

**October 7 TDC Night @ Gaslight Theater** 6:00 pm show  
"Wizard of the Rings" Tickets: \$25 Contact: Lynn Boice  
[lwboice@gmail.com](mailto:lwboice@gmail.com)



Text and photos from  
**HORSE TRAINING IN-HAND**  
 By Ellen Schuthof-Lesmeister  
 And Kip Mistral  
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In the book, *Horse Training In-Hand*, the authors define the term “work in-hand” as meaning that the handler trains the horse from the ground as opposed to doing so while on his back. The book describes five types of in-hand groundwork: basic longeing, double-longeing, long-lining, short-reining and long-reining. The following excerpt is from Part IV: Work in Short Reins, Lesson 1: Walk, Halt, Rein-Back and Trot on the Rail. You will start by practicing these movements with a cotton longe or lead line attached to the center ring of the cavesson and then progress to short reins.

**Work in Short Reins**

*Short reins are simply ordinary bridle reins. During short-rein exercises you walk beside the horse, positioning yourself at his head, neck or shoulder, and sometimes his side. Your horse will stretch his shoulders and free ribs, step under himself to straighten his hindquarters, supple and straighten his body in preparation for collection, and learn obedience to you as he learns to yield his body willingly. On the short reins you can teach shoulder-in, leg-yield, half-pass, renvers, travers and piaffe, up through the haute école.*

- responsiveness to your aids
- Increase acceptance of your ‘polite domination’ of his space
- Introduce schooling in a space between you and the arena fence or wall (Note: Resistance to this is mainly a problem with stallions, extremely sensitive or young horses, or those with bad manners)
- Establish rein “contact” via the cavesson and bit

- One set of short reins (attached to the side rings of the cavesson in Stage Two)
- Cotton longe or lead line (attached to the center ring of the cavesson- Note: this is necessary in Stage One and a good safety precaution during all initial lessons in the short reins)
- Dressage whip
- Rectangular arena

**Walk, Halt, Rein-Back and Trot on the Rail**

**Goals for this Lesson**

- Develop the horse’s attentiveness and precise

**Necessary Equipment**

- Working cavesson
- Bridle with full-cheek snaffle
- Surcingle
- Side reins (optional)

**Thoughts before you begin**

On short reins, you work close to the horse at his head, neck, shoulder or side, usually along the arena fence or wall (unless you are performing yield or half-pass exercises in which you move across the diagonal). It may take you some time to become comfortable

with your new position in relation to the horse.

Perform all the exercises here in both directions, with you positioned on both sides of the horse. As with earlier lessons, I recommend that you begin each new one on the left side of the horse, but once he is familiar with it, start with his stiff side, change to his supple side, and end the lesson working the stiff side again. This method enables the horse to supple his stiff side more effectively. (In the process, you may find that you, too, have a stiff and a supple side!)

There are two distinct stages in teaching a horse to work in short reins and they concern the horse's graduation from one configuration of training equipment to another. Within each stage, work the horse in both directions. Do not try to master both stages in one day. If you have problems at this point in the process, it is probably because you are pushing the horse too fast.

### Stage One

#### Step 1

*Walk on the rail with the longe or lead line.*

For this lesson, a cotton longe or lead line should be clipped to the center ring of the cavesson.



Fernando bends slightly to the inside, from poll to tail, as he walks in a circle with me beside him in the position appropriate for work in short reins.  
Photo credit: Kip Mistral

You are not using the short reins yet. Position yourself at the horse's left shoulder facing the horse-this is the correct position for handling a horse in short reins. Your leading hand holds the longe or lead line close to the horse's head, and your driving hand holds the excess longe or lead line and whip. Hold the dressage whip handle up and shaft down except when using it. When needed, rotate the whip so the handle is down and the shaft is up, and flex your wrist so the shaft of the whip is held horizontal, parallel to the horse's body. This can take some practice!



The dressage whip in "active" mode. When my hand is held normally with my thumb on top, the end of the whip handle points toward the ground and the shaft points up. I then flex my wrist and rotate the whip so the shaft of the whip is held horizontal, parallel to the horse's body as shown here.  
Photo credit: Kip Mistral

I find that in this proximity to the horse, holding the whip along his side-even without touching him-can encourage him to move or straighten. When a stronger aid is needed, press your driving hand against the girth area, and when necessary, press or tap the whip against the horse's side.

Walk in a circle to the left, rotating your hips slightly to lessen the amount your legs need to cross in order to move forward. Gradually move the horse from the circle to the long side of the arena. Make sure the horse bends correctly as you move on the arc of

the circle and doesn't evade your aids.

Straighten the horse on the track, positioned between you and the fence or wall of the arena, and walk beside him for three or four steps. Then, leave the rail to begin another circle on the left rein. Again return to the track, and this time straighten him for several more steps along the fence. Continue this pattern until you are walking straight down the entire long side of the arena with the horse calmly respecting your new position near his head.

### Stage One

#### Step 2

*Halt on the rail with longe or lead line.*

When the horse works well in the walk along the track, introduce the halt. After several straight steps, raise your leading hand, say, "Halt," and turn your left shoulder toward the horse so that you are at a 90-degree angle to his shoulder. Move the end of the whip gently on to the top of his hindquarters as you tell him to halt, to give him extra support and to introduce an additional halt cue.



When you ask for the halt from the short rein position, place the end of the whip gently on the top of your horse's hindquarters. This will become an additional - and useful- halt cue as you proceed with work in-hand.  
Photo credit: Kip Mistral

In the future, when the halt is required for other exercises, you

only have to put the whip there and he will respond. However, the first time you ask, he probably won't stop! Remember the Rule of Three (see on page 8) and repeat the command, now vibrating the line on the cavesson and increasing the pressure with your body as needed until he finally halts. Praise him.

Once you have successfully completed a few halts along the track, check to see if your horse is standing straight and square at the halt. He should not be falling toward you or out away from you—his body should be parallel to the arena fence or wall, and his front and hind legs should be relatively even and each bearing an equal amount of weight. (It is desirable to instill this habit now so he stands straight and square later under saddle.) This is a good test of your own position, too. If you are too far forward (near his head), your presence and the consequent pressure he feels may cause him to swing his hindquarters out in the halt. When this happens, fall back a bit toward his shoulder to create a more neutral posture. If you are too far back (near his side), he may turn inside with his forehand when you halt. Correct this by moving forward a bit. You can also position your driving hand and whip alongside him, not necessarily touching him, to help “support” him and keep him straight.

When your horse halts willingly, straight and square on the rail, ask for the halt again, but now try to reduce your body language. For instance, decrease the degree of angle where you block him with your body from 90 degrees to 45 degrees. Then, see if he will respond when you remain facing him and simply flex your shoulders back a bit. Lessen the amount you use your voice and how much you

vibrate the line. Then try to just move the whip to the top of his hindquarters to see if he responds. Soon you will be able to halt your horse with only the slightest of aids.

#### *Stage One*

#### **Step 3**

*Rein-back on the rail with the longe or lead line.*

In a correct rein-back, the horse lifts his feet and steps backward with the diagonal pairs rhythmically and evenly. His ability to do this well depends on his physical condition and strength. Practicing the rein-back happens to be an excellent way to improve physical condition and increase back strength because in order to back up, the horse lowers his hindquarters, balances his weight over them, and raises his back. Incorporate the rein-back in your work along the rail. Begin at the walk on the left rein and ask for the halt. Turn 90 degrees so your left shoulder is at your horse's head and your body faces his hindquarters. Using your voice, ask him to “Back.” Your leading hand should have loose contact on the longe or lead line—vibrate it to encourage the horse to back away. Escalate the pressure as necessary (see “Rule of Three” on page 8 of newsletter). Keep the horse straight by holding your driving hand and whip up alongside him.

When he has offered you one rein-back step with each foot, reward him by letting him go “forward and down” and remember to praise him liberally. Horses don't like to back up because they can't see where they are going, and backing up is also a sign of submission. Note: With a young or underdeveloped horse, ask for only

a step or two at first and build his strength over time.

Make it easier for the horse to understand what you are asking by requesting the rein-back at the same place on the rail for a while. However, once he has the hang of it, be sure to back him at different places in the arena. When a horse learns to perform a movement in one particular spot only, he will likely have trouble managing it elsewhere.

#### *Stage One*

#### **Step 4**

*Trot on the rail with the longe or lead line.*

Before you begin this exercise, make sure your horse's “brakes” work! He should be willing and comfortable doing walk-to-halt transitions in-hand.

Begin at the walk on the left rein on the perimeter of the arena. When you reach the long side, give a vocal command for the trot. If he doesn't respond, increase the pressure with your driving hand and whip. Be prepared to have to walk quite quickly and with long strides to keep up with him.

Allow just a few steps of trot and then transition back to walk with your voice command, a turn of your body, and vibration on the line. Increase the number of trot steps gradually. When the horse goes too fast, circle toward the inside of the arena to get control of his speed, then bring him straight along the track again. When he is gentle and obedient, ask him to reduce his speed a little by turning your shoulder toward him and blocking his forward drive. This begins a bit of collection.

When he moves forward steadily in the trot, experiment with trot-walk and trot-halt transitions.

*Stage Two*

**Step 5**

*Repeat Steps 1 through 4 in the short reins.*

Once you and your horse have mastered Steps 1 through 4 using the working cavesson and the longe or lead line, attach one set of short reins to the side rings of the cavesson. If you wish, keep the longe or lead line attached to the center ring for safety. If you are using side reins, clip them to the cavesson rings.

Stand at the horse's left shoulder, facing him. Hold the cavesson rein nearest you in your leading hand, close to the horse's head where you have the most control (the leading hand should also hold the longe or lead if you are using it- see photo).



The correct position for work in-hand in short reins begins with you standing at the horse's shoulder, facing him. Hold the cavesson rein on your side of the horse in your leading hand, close to the horse's head where you have the most control (the leading hand should also hold the longe or lead line if you are using it, as shown here). The rein on the opposite of the horse should come over his back and into your driving hand, which also holds the whip and any excess longe or lead line.  
Photo credit: Kip Mistral

Bring the outside rein over the horse's withers and hold it in your driving hand near the horse's shoulder. The driving hand also holds the whip. Be conscious of your own body. Do not let your driving hand float too high on the horse's back, but keep it at the girth line, near spur height. Hold your

leading hand and rein near the horse's mouth (although watch the "mouthy" horse that likes to nip.) If you hold this hand up too high, it may go numb. After all, this work is all about feeling!

Ask the horse to walk along the rail on the left rein using your voice, body and your driving hand, which applies pressure in the same place on the horse's side-the girth area-that you would apply pressure with your leg. You should be accustomed to moving beside the horse in this position by now, so you can concentrate on developing the horse's responses to the reins. Use the inside rein (left) to invite the horse to come to the inside, keeping contact with the outside rein (right) against his neck to support his movement. Use the right rein to ask him to turn away from you, again keeping contact with the left rein against his neck to support him. Use both reins with equal pressure to keep the horse straight. In other words, keep contact with the horse's "mouth" with both hands in the same way you would when you ride.

Ask the horse to halt on the rail. An important advantage between earlier in-hand work where you schooled the horse on the longe (when you "hold" the horse with only one hand and must rely on your voice and body position to communicate with him) and in short reins (when you hold the horse with two reins fixed either to a cavesson or snaffle bit) is that you can squeeze and/or vibrate both hands to aid the horse to stop.

Ask the horse for the rein-back on the rail. From the halt, continue vibrating the reins to ask him for a step backward. Since you are next to the horse at shoulder position you can "pull" a little with both reins if necessary. You will find it is

easier to keep the horse straight during the rein-back with two reins.

When your horse is comfortable walking, halting, and backing up in the short reins, ask for the trot along the rail. Use the same aids that you have used for trot work in earlier lessons.

Only once the horse is light and responsive in the cavesson and short reins should you add the bridle, bit and second pair of short reins.



Tanguillo wears a cavesson, bridle and two pairs of short reins, all adjusted correctly for work in-hand.  
Photo credit: Stal Paradiso

(Note: when working with a particularly difficult horse, you can use the bridle and short reins earlier in Stage Two to help keep control and ensure obedience and precision). Repeat Steps 1 through 4, introducing the rein action on the cavesson to reinforce your aids.

Once you begin using the short reins in this way, you are a step nearer to riding the horse. For now, use a combination of verbal and physical commands, but plan to eliminate the former. The ideal aid is just the slightest vibration of the rein; and of course, this is one of the ways to make the horse light and responsive.

**RULE OF THREE ~ Always request an action of the horse using the “Rule of Three,” which escalates in a way he will soon recognize:**

- 1. Make your first request with subtlety and finesse-think of your ultimate goal, which is to refine your communication with your horse until your aids are invisible.**
- 2. If a second request is required, make the instruction a bit clearer or slightly stronger so the horse understands better.**
- 3. When a third request is required, make your point strongly.**

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Kip Mistral is a member of the Southern Arizona horse community. Her equestrian odyssey has zigzagged like the proverbial “drunken sailor”. From riding the Phoenix deserts bareback, to working cattle on her uncle’s Montana ranch horses, to horsepacking in California’s Eastern Sierras, to breaking an off-the-track racehorse (who almost broke her), then to her Spanish stallion who inspired her quest for the lightness of classical equitation and the Holy Grail of self-carriage, multiple European trips for research, about 100 published articles, a book and nearly a decade later, Kip has gotten off her chair, into the saddle, joined Tucson Dressage Club and looks forward to getting involved in the Tucson dressage community.



Kip and her stallion, Val  
 Photo: © 2011 by Herman Gordon

We look forward to her involvement and her contributions!

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Dressage University  
**Horse Training In-Hand**  
**Part IV ~ Work in Short Reins**  
**With Kip Mistral**  
 June 25 @ Willow Woods  
 3312 N Riverbend Cir 6-9 pm  
 Contact: Bobbi Berry [bberry@theriver.com](mailto:bberry@theriver.com)