



Ground Driving: A Win-Win for Rider and Horse From The Shea Center's website

At The Shea Center, one method of steering a horse during hippotherapy lessons is called ground driving. Ground driving involves a trained staff member "driving", or controlling, the horse from the rear with long lines attached to the bridle. This technique is used in lieu of a leader holding a lead rope at the front and leading from a horse's halter.

There are many benefits to ground driving in a hippotherapy lesson. By driving a horse from the behind, the horse handler is able to get a more extended and fluid walk. Pushing the horse engages the horse's hind legs, which lifts and strengthens the back and activates muscles in the haunches. This is beneficial for the horse and rider: The natural gait and movement of the horse works as a therapy tool to improve the rider's strength, balance, and sensory integration; encouraging the horse to engage its core and haunches results in a stronger, more fit equine partner.

Long Lining & Ground Driving By Mindy Schroder From Chimacum Tack's website

Sometimes we use the terms long lining and ground driving interchangeably, but actually they are two different things.

Long Lining/Long Reining

Long lining is when we use two long lines attached to our horse's bridle or halter to practice arena work. Long lining can be used to help our horses become more flexible as well as improving the different gaits.

Most of the time people will have a surcingle on their horse when practicing long lining. They will run the long lines through the rein turrets on the surcingle saddle. In some cases, it is highly recommended to do so, because it will create a line from the bit to the turret that is more correct for the horse to use its body correctly.



Other times it is recommended to run the line through the rings on the surcingle that are more along sides of the horse. This is a great technique for horses that are green and just learning to long line. By running the lines alongside them we have a bit more control of the hind end, which helps us keep the horse moving in a straight line, and also helps us to keep them from turning and facing us.

Andy Marcoux has some wonderful long lining online classes you can sign up for. Here is a link to a blog where he talks about his journey to learning how to long line: [My Long, Long Lining Lining Story](#).

Books about long lining:

Long Reining with Double Dan Horsemanship

Long-Reining: From the Beginning Through the Levade

Horse Training In Hand: A Modern Guide to Working from the Ground

Chimacum Tack sells a nice long lining kit. This kit comes with an english bridle, a surcingle with lots of ring options as well as rein turrets and a back strap with 3 straps which provides more stability. You also have a choice between a treed surcingle or a treeless. It comes with the elastic style girth. This kit also comes with a set of 1/4" diameter yacht rope long lines. These long lines are 18' long, a nice length for the miniature horse. They are lightweight and yet have a good feel to them, which allows you to communicate better with your pony. For the large horses/draft horses we can get a larger diameter long line in a 22' long length.

Ground Driving

So what is ground driving then? Ground driving is when you take your horse or pony out into the world and direct them from behind. This is what Zorro and I do a TON of. I always revert to ground driving in between driving him in the cart. (We also do practice long lining. I do lots of that when I am helping him with a body issue.)

I love ground driving because you can do this when hiking on trails, walking on the road, out in your pasture and in the arena. I will set up obstacle courses and practice all kinds of things; maneuver around cones, jump jumps, cross bridges, go over tarps, etc.



Ground driving is typically used when training driving horses. This is one of the first steps people do in preparation for pulling a cart.

You can do ground driving with a riding saddle, a surcingle or even without any tack on their back. I will often ground drive in a side pull bitless bridle, a halter or his driving bridle. Sometimes I ground drive with my 18' long lines, sometimes I ground drive with my 11' rope driving lines and sometimes I ground drive with ONE 10' lead rope.

There is a wonderful group of people on Facebook that do both long lining and ground driving. If you are interested in doing more of either of these things and want a little encouragement and direction, I highly suggest joining their group! Search: [Long Line Horsemanship](#) on Facebook

My Long, Long Lining Story
By Andy Marcoux
From Coachman's Delight website

Every once in a while experience walks up to me and gives me a good dope-slap. Sometimes, it does so several times because, well I probably need it. The dope-slap I'm thinking of right now has to do with long lining horses.

I first became enthralled with long lining in college. One of our classrooms overlooked the indoor arena, where that particular day, a top level German dressage clinician was teaching. The scene was only a mild distraction from class until he took the long lines from his student. At that point, my world stood still for a moment as I watched the horse move in ways that seemed to defy imagination.

The horse transitioned between gaits, changes of direction, yields, collection, and extension while the trainer explained what his audience was watching. All the while the trainer seemed to effortlessly waltz in the middle as the horse worked around him. Despite the fact that I couldn't hear from inside the classroom, I was awestruck. I have no idea what was going on the class that I was supposed to be paying attention to, but I knew that one day I wanted to be able to work a horse that way.

Learning the Hard Way

Much of my learning to long lining was by trial and error. Since so few people even knew how to long line, finding instruction in the skill was difficult. At least I had experience in ground driving, and that served me well to transition into long lining. I built my skills a little at a time, taking every opportunity I could to long line horses and ponies when I had the chance. In time, it became a staple of my training regime as a full time trainer for my various employers.

I didn't use the skill just to get horses started for carriage driving. I discovered how useful long line was for physical therapy for horses recovering from injuries. Working horses unencumbered by a rider or carriage gave me just the tool that was needed to get those horses ready to return to their regular work.

Continued Growth

My Long, Long Lining Story 2When I struck out on my own as an instructor, giving carriage driving lessons through the New England winters meant lean times. But as it turned out, there were plenty of dressage riders in my area who weren't too keen on riding during the cold weather. Lucky for me, they also didn't want their horses to go without work. Long lining carried me through more than one cold, dark winter.

It didn't take long for those riders to see that long lining was giving their horse more benefits than just keeping them exercised. They were getting better results in their riding. Many chose to work my long lining into their horse's regular work schedule for the rest of the year. That meant on any given day that I was working horses, there'd be at least 2 or 3 that were on long lines.

That led to great relationships with trainers who were more accomplished than me in the saddle. They could relate to me what they were looking for in their clients' horses, and I could translate that to my skills. As with any skill, the more you practice, the more proficient you become. I credit most of my understanding of horse's movements to this experience.

Can You Long Line from A Bar Stool?

After the loss of a leg from a good day of skiing gone bad, I got curious if I could long line from a barstool. My girlfriend at the time set me up in the middle of the arena and brought me "Sneaky Pete" to me. Pete was a regular in my long lining work, so we knew if things when bad, they wouldn't go too bad.

What followed was pretty comedic, but it all worked out in the end. Within a few sessions I was able to long line comfortably and effectively from the bar stool, and I was back in business.

The Second-Nature Dope Slap

My Long, Long Lining Story 3Well, this is a very long way of saying that I've long lined a lot of horses over a long time. Long lining to me is about as natural as falling out of bed. This is where the dope-slap comes in.

I first wrote "Introduction to Long Lining" as a class about 5 years ago. Being as passionate about long lining as I am, I wanted everyone to have all the fun experiences that I have. So the class sort of jumped from "here are the things to get started long lining," to "now try this lesson plan that took me about 2 years to become proficient at in weekly sessions." Umm, I guess I got a little bit... overzealous.

My second nature relationship with long lining allowed me to forget just how challenging it was to learn in the first place. It was no picture of grace. I've had more than a few "at liberty" moments with horses.

Over the years I've taught dozens of people to long line. I often have entire days devoted to long lining instruction. I've seen that with the right instruction, just about anyone can long line a horse. It just takes a methodical approach. And the rewards for the students far outweigh the challenges of getting started.

Finally listening to the dope-slap, I've reworked my long lining class to make it track a little more accurately with the reality of novice long lining. The foundation has remained the same, but I've improved upon the lesson plans to provide better coaching through the process. I've also added a more appropriate "Elementary Long Lining" lesson plan to follow-up those foundational steps.

Give It a Try

So if you've tried your hand at long lining before, but gave up because it was too frustrating, I hear you. I want to help you get back on track. If you've never long lined before, I can tell you it's tricky, but so worth the effort!

Take a look at the upcoming Long Lining 101 class. You'll get the instruction that wasn't available to me when I was learning the skill. If you stick with it, you'll get really comfortable with long lining. Then you'll be ready to jump into developing more skills like long lining cavelettis and exercises to improve your horse's impulsion. Of course, I'll be putting together a follow-up class for those skills as well!

Long Lining or Ground Driving? What is the Difference?

By Myrna Rhinehart

From IVC Carriage's website

When a good trainer starts a horse, they obviously need to put in some time with the horse on the ground before it is put to a vehicle. A lot of new drivers working with green horses are under the impression that a major step in training the driving horse is ground driving. For my purposes in differentiation, I use the term "ground driving" to refer to walking behind the horse like you were in a vehicle, but without the vehicle attached. Our family doesn't tend to do much "ground driving". We do more what I refer to as "long lining" which is basically staying in the center of the arena while the horse goes around. The purpose of this article is more to introduce the learner to the concept of long lining versus discussing how to do it. There are plenty of resources available on that.

So why do we tend to long line versus ground drive? We are able to maintain better contact on the horse, therefore giving him a more typical feel of the mouth to transition to the contact he will feel when put to a vehicle. We also have better control of the back end of the horse through long lining when we put the lines through the tugs on the driving saddle (or lower rings of a surcingle if you have one). If the horse migrates into the center, the outside rein is there to help him stay out farther on the circle. The muscular structure of the inside hind leg is developed in the circle, which is the start of the horse's proper bending through a turn. From the center of the circle, we can also observe the horse's reactions and development more easily than from behind the horse.

When you ground drive behind the horse, you tend not to be able to maintain the same exact speed as the horse and therefore the contact on the lines “ebbs and flows”. It is virtually impossible to maintain steady, even contact on the bit when ground driving behind the horse, and a lot of people will have no contact at all! Being directly behind the horse also is not necessarily a safe place to be if the horse bucks or kicks out. If the horse decides to bolt forward, it is quite a bit more difficult to bring him back because you have nothing on which to brace and more than likely will get thrown forward and can be forced (either by choice or simply physics) to let go of the lines. Once the horse learns he can “escape” forward by bolting away from you, it is tremendously more difficult to break that habit and he learns to become a “runaway”. If the horse decides to bolt forward in the long lining circle, you can shorten up on the inside line to force him into a smaller circle, therefore decreasing his forward momentum and slowing his movement until you can get him more under control. The circle becomes the “safe, familiar place”.

When we long line, it’s not all just circles. We still do some steering of the horse in the process of long lining by setting up some cones or other obstacles in the arena through which we guide the horse. We will set up “deviations” of cones in a zig zag pattern, or some parallel poles on the ground through which he learns to go through without bumping. We switch direction by having the horse turn away from us. Regardless of where we place the horse, our body is only ever very briefly directly behind the horse. We are off to the inside of the turn most of the time. We can help the horse move out towards bit contact by moving quickly along with him as he trots along a side wall. The horse also learns to be rated in his speed by performing a slow trot in a smaller circle and a strong trot in a larger one. I’m not going to lie; I REALLY don’t want to have to run behind my horse when he’s in a strong trot. That’s too much like work for me!

When we start putting the horse to the drag or shaft trainers, we don’t have to negotiate those items while long lining the horse from the center of the circle. If we would ground drive while the horse is put to the drag, we have to watch where we are stepping so as not to get ourselves tangled in the drag! Again, we can maintain a more even, correct contact with the horse’s mouth through long lining while the horse is learning to pull.

Ground driving can have some benefits, like teaching a young horse to move forward without someone at his head leading him. He has to learn to be the “leader” (in physical location, not in mental capacity). It is also a good step for young horses that are still growing, therefore avoiding extra strain on fragile joints that circle work might produce. However, if they are that young, they probably shouldn’t be bitted anyway to be ground driven. More work can be done with desensitization and ground manners when the horse is too young to be worked heavily in a circle.

There are a few good resources to help you learn more about long lining. *Carriage Driving* is a good one, as well as *Breaking a Horse to Harness*. Both of these books cover long lining enough to be beneficial to your training process. Being a British book, *Breaking a Horse to Harness* calls it “long reining”.

Do yourself a favor. Get out from behind your horse and let the horse go around you while long lining. You will find that to be a much safer and more effective training method than ground driving!