

Warm Beach Camp

Horsemanship Curriculum

Horsemanship instruction follows the curriculum guidelines of the international organization, Certified Horsemanship Association (CHA). Safety is the highest priority in riding and horsemanship instruction. Riding staff are certified as safe riding instructors through a CHA certification clinic held each year in June. On-going staff training and development is provided by CHA certified year-around staff.

Campers are assigned a lesson group based on their demonstrated experience and any prior assessment done at a CHA program. CHA programs have four levels of instruction each gradually more skilled and demanding. Written and riding tests are made available to campers who want to move from one level to another.

Campers are assigned a horse for the duration of camp. They are taught to safely lead, tie, groom, and saddle the horse. As a “horse owner” for the week, campers are responsible to clean up after their horse as well.

At Warm Beach Camp, we divide level one and level two into A and B categories. Since it is often not possible to graduate an entire CHA level in one week of camp, we want campers to feel successful in the skills they have acquired. Thus, campers may start at level 1A and graduate to 1B and then to level 2A then 2B. Levels 3 and 4 are not subdivided.

| Level One | Level Two |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic safety and horse sense • Safely approaching a horse • Leading and tying • Grooming and saddling • Mounting and dismounting • Basic Start, Stop, Turn, Go at a walk • Using the 4 natural aids of the rider to communicate with the horse: Hands, legs, weight, voice • Walking circles and teardrop shaped reverse patterns in the arena • Walking through a serpentine pattern around traffic cones • Control at a trot • Proper equitation or posture in the saddle • Posting at the trot (rising and falling in rhythm with the horses trot) • Two Point position (a balanced posture out of the saddle used when horses go over objects such as a pole) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse science such as parts of the horse, saddle, breeds, etc. • Demonstrated respect and empathy for the horse • Improved trot control • Posting on the correct diagonal (a specific rhythm of the horses trot) • Improved trot posture and control in two point position • Improved equitation or posture in the saddle at walk, trot • Introduction to the canter • Control and equitation (posture) at the canter – working on balance, relaxation, and ability to move with the horse while maintaining safe control. • Ability to smoothly transition from walk to trot to canter or lope and back down again • Beginning barrel racing and pole bending • Beginning trail course |
| Level Three | Level Four |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct equitation (posture) in the saddle at all three gaits, walk, trot, canter, while also doing circles and transitions from one gate to next • Demonstrating improved balance, relaxation, and movement with the horse • Overall calm, confident, consistent riding manner • Ability to correct horses with firmness, consistency, and gentleness • Beginning principles of horse training • Improved barrel racing and pole bending • Advanced trail course | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth transitions using half halts, collection, and extension • Smooth, bending circles while maintaining forward motion • Ability to demonstrate a feel for the correct lead and smooth transitions of simple lead changes (a lead refers to the leading legs in a horses canter/lope) • Ability to ride a horse in a straight line at all three gaits • Forehand turns and pivots that display sensitivity and feeling for what the horse is doing in response to the rider’s cues (use of hands, weight, legs, and voice) • Learn to re-school camp horses • Learn basic horse training & how to evaluate a horses training level |

Riding classes are taught in a riding arena allowing for maximum group control and safe confinement of riders as they learn to improve their horse control. The essence of riding is harmony with the horse. To achieve harmony, riders are schooled in a variety of ways that improve balance, relaxation, and moving in rhythm with the horse.

Most Campers are at Level One or Level Two. Campers that have been riding on their own, receiving lessons at home, or in some cases have gone to enough camps can reach levels three and four. Levels Three and Four require body coordination and an ability to understand riding theory usually found in 14-18 year olds. Riding skill development is truly a life-long process and one that cannot be rushed. We believe that riders develop their skills in an atmosphere of positive reinforcement, support, and fun.

Both written and riding competency tests are required to pass between levels. Certified instructors evaluate riding tests and score written tests. Campers with testing anxiety or other challenges related to written testing can request oral assessment. We work hard to maintain a non-competitive and low pressure environment around testing. Camp should be safe and fun and having undue pressure to perform and “succeed” can detract from the overall benefits of the experience. Campers are not required to take tests unless they want to pass from one level to the next.

Horsemanship Campers learn riding skills, enjoy trail rides, have fun with mounted arena games, and experience unique activities such as vaulting. Horses and horse-related activities comprise most of the camper’s day. However, we do take time out for three meals a day, swimming, climbing tower, and cabin small group time throughout the week.

We believe that riding and caring for a horse develops life-skills of responsibility, faithfulness, diligence, and communication. We also demonstrate how the relationship between horse and rider illustrates our relationship with God, the master trainer. Time is taken each evening to observe and reflect on how God’s truth in the Bible is illustrated by the horses and the discipline of riding. Just as a horse’s ultimate potential is realized in relationship to the rider and harmony between horse and rider is the goal of riding, so to our ultimate potential is found in harmony with God.

Horsemanship Camp enriches a Camper’s life physically, relationally, spiritually, and emotionally. Camp is a time of new discovery, improved skills, friendships, and teamwork. Kids may “come for the horses” but they leave with so much more!