

SO YOU HAVE A YEARLING NOW WHAT?

What to do with your teenager whilst you wait for them to grow up.

This list summarises suggestions for more information on training each specific exercise; please seek professional help.

1. **Schedule a Gelding Appointment:** If you have a colt, Handling a yearling is far more enjoyable and more manageable than a stud colt. Young horses also heal faster, making it less stressful for the horse later in life.
2. **Teaching Leading Skills:** You have probably already introduced the halter and lead, instructing him to give to pressure and follow you around. Remember, these early lessons are laying the foundation for tying, ponying, bridling and much more. You may be able to wrestle your yearling now, but he will grow, and there will come a time when he's too big to make him do anything. Instead of forcing him to follow you lay down some good leading skills. Teach him some foundation groundwork exercises to yield his hind and forequarters, back up, and circle you calmly at the end of the lead. Practice your leading skills to walk calmly beside you respecting your space, change directions, turn both into and away from the horse, and stand quietly.
3. **Take long walks together:** Once your yearling is leading well, you can spend time walking him in hand in different locations; if you plan eventually on trail riding your yearling when he is grown, why not expose him now to some of the trails. Long walks enable you to put miles on your yearling without putting unnecessary stress on his joints. Long walks will broaden your yearlings world, letting them see things outside their familiar surroundings. It will develop trust; your yearling will have to look to you to protect him when he is scared of scary things. I think this translates to trust under saddle when the day comes to ride him.
4. **Ponying on trail rides:** If you are experienced at ponying and have a safe, reliable horse to pony from, then take your yearling on some tag along trail rides. You will need to have above-average leading skills and ensure your horse is comfortable with ropes around him.
5. **Practice Grooming practices:** Grooming is a great way to instil your yearling manners whilst taking time to bond with him. Get your yearling used to being touched all over, face, lips in his mouth, flank under his tail etc. Handle his feed get him used to lifting them, practice tapping them with a small hammer if you plan to shoe your horse. Introduce your horse to clippers if you are planning on clipping. You don't need to clip your youngster, but you can turn them on and have him get used to the noise and then try

brushing him with them in your hand. Introduce your horse to fly, fill a bottle with water and practice spraying your yearling all over. Introduce your yearling to sponge baths and later the hose.

6. **Load up and hit the road:** Take your time to teach him to load, take him for short rides with an older experienced horse as a company buddy.
7. **Learning herd dynamics:** Allowing your horse time to socialize with his four-legged friends teaches him equine etiquette. Living with older, more experienced horses, as long as they are not known, kickers help your yearling discover his place in the pecking order. Those manners usually carry over into your yearlings interactions with humans.
8. **In hand obstacles:** Bridges, gates, tarps, bags, balls, anything you can think of that are safe objects to expose your yearling to will help with future things he may encounter. Create a short trial course to walk your yearling through; remember to keep sessions short.
9. **Consider Showing your yearling:** Halter, longe-line, Partnership on the Ground, Showmanship and in hand trail are just a few of the events your yearling may be able to enter. Exposing your yearling to different places will help him later in life; he'll figure out that unloading in a new location is no big deal focusing on you rather than his insecurities.

Remember to keep all your training sessions short; your yearling does not have a large attention span and will not cope with the excessive physical strain on young joints. Assess your yearling whether they can handle mentally or physically the above suggestions.

As you can see, there is so much you can do with your yearling to prepare him for his adult horse life, so get out there and have fun with your teenager.