

**TACTICS OF DRIVING DRESSAGE:**  
**or**  
**WHY AM I BEHIND THIS HORSE STILL LEARNING DRESSAGE**  
**By Sami Nelson**

Excerpt from "The Lash" Winter 2006

Driving your horse should be.....well.....Fun. A get-away in the great outdoors for clearing of the mind. Quality time with that wonderful individual: Your Horse. Quality time with a wonderful friend or family member working and learning as a team. Or as in my case: My retirement teaching job and still.....Fun.

That decision made, with whip and lines in hand and feet planted on the ground you are told... In order to be really successful and SAFE you and your horse must learn:

**Dressage:**

In former times, friendly partnership between man and horse was of vital importance, whether for transportation, for the dissemination of culture or for warfare. Nowadays (and for the foreseeable future), the horse is used primarily as an instrument of sport, show, or for rambling at ease in the country. There are many Drivers/Riders who, when they buy a horse, take his goodwill for granted. The art of training a horse to obey his driver cheerfully and willingly is the fruit of centuries of research, and is in danger of being lost forever, notwithstanding the fact that Our safety and the Safety of our Equine Partner/s is of utmost importance. This training is called Dressage.

With this in mind, beginning our year of driving, may I review for us all, (I being the person who needs it the most), a few training stages we need to have firmly planted in the horse's memory.

Does the horse stand tied quietly?

Does the horse walk quietly when being led, stop when you stop, and back a few steps when asked in hand?

Is your horse trained on the single and /or double longe line and responsive to your voice commands?

Do you use Vienna Reins and work no longer than 5 to 10 minutes in each direction on the longe?

Do you understand the importance of Work in Hand and Long Reining for the suppling and collection of your horse?

Has your horse been ridden or still being ridden for training? Pleasure?

Has your horse been ground driven extensively (without and with blinkers/blinders, winkers etc.) by you, his favorite person, so he is familiar with your voice, and hands?

And if your horse is already been "Harnessed up" and "Put To" does he move forward with energy and willingness?

Does he balance well in the turns and travel straight on the straight lines and on the curves? (This oxymoron we will talk about).

These few logical beginning steps to driving your horse in balance and harmony, are tactics you will continually refresh in your mind and that of your horse in order to keep that wonderful partner sound and happy well into his older years. Quiet Obedience, Forward in Rhythm, Suppleness, and above all straight, will be the things we can help

you with and look for at our Club Play day and ADT in February at the Birt Arena in Nampa. Come and join us for Lots of .....FUN!