

## About Changing Parameters

- **A ‘parameter’ is something that we are keeping constant.**
- If we ask for, and click&treat, a ‘halt’ while beside the horse’s head, this position is the ‘constant’ or parameter we have chosen.
- If we then move on to asking the horse to allow us to step in front of him after the halt before the click&treat, that is a new parameter.
- If we change standing in front of the halted horse, facing him, to standing in front of him with our back to him, it is a new parameter.
- If we step in front of the horse with our back to him and wait five seconds instead of two seconds before the click&treat, we have once again changed a parameter.
- If we step in front of the horse while he is in motion rather than halted, we have changed a parameter.
- **Whenever we change a parameter, we return to clicking for ‘less’ and work our way forward again until the horse can confidently get 10/10 in the new situation.**
- **Horses are super observant of such small changes, and can often be ‘thrown’ by them if we proceed too fast or ask for too much too soon.**

## Rules Work in Both Directions

We can think of parameters as ‘the rules of the game’. It is up to us to teach the horse the rules of the game we want to play with him. Equally, it is up to us to stay true to the rules.

**The horse can only become as reliable as we are reliable in our teaching.**

All the games we want to play with horses entail having control of where the horse puts or keeps his feet. We can then add other things to go with this ‘foot control’. Things like wearing a saddle, carrying a rider, or poll flexion.

**To teach the rules of the game fairly, the handler needs to be aware of these things:**

1. The thin-slices probably needed to teach the overall task to this particular horse
2. How little or how much the horse already understands about the task
3. Gaps in the handler’s training skills
4. How the handler is orientating his body in relation to the horse (at all times)
5. How **consistent** his signals are and how quiet his body is when not giving a signal
6. How good the timing of his release and/or click is
7. How good and **consistent** his rope handling skills are
8. How good and **consistent** the handling of his body extensions (including rope/reins) is
9. How good he is at using his breathing and core body energy to show intent.

**The horse can only be as smooth as the handler is smooth. The horse can only learn as smoothly as we can teach smoothly.** Becoming aware of when we change **parameters** (consciously and unconsciously) is a big step forward as we develop our skill.