

Destination Training

The video clips (#1-#25) are available on YouTube by searching for **HorseGym with Boots** on the YouTube search engine.

Parts #3-#14 of *HorseGym with Boots* go through the detail of using **destinations** to give the horse a sense of purpose when we are asking him to walk along with us.

Part #17 looks at the detail of smooth “walk on” and “halt” signals.

Accompanying notes are available free as PDF documents. The notes provide much more detail than is possible to put into short video clips.

Once the horse eagerly targets hand-held targets, we can tie similar targets around our environment and ask the horse to walk with us from target to target. This gives us lots of opportunity to seamlessly show the horse that walking with us (being led) is a fun thing because we are always heading to a destination that will result in a click&treat.

We can ‘stretch the value of each click&treat’ by gradually putting the targets further and further apart and/or in more challenging places. Doing this, we build the horse’s willingness to come along with us because he knows that we know where those magic ‘click&treat spots’ are.

When we introduce **mats as a foot target destination**, we open up further possibilities for seamless teaching/learning.

Once the horse is eager to approach his mats because he knows he will earn a click&treat, the mats can serve the same purpose as the nose targets — desirable **destinations**.

But that’s not all.

When a horse learns to line up his front feet tidily on a mat, he will generalise this to a tidy approach to the mat so he can step on it elegantly. We have given him a reason to line up his body and use it with more precision.

An energy conserving horse will be motivated to speed up to reach the mat. A rushing horse will be motivated to calm and collect himself to reach the mat.

For teaching the leading positions, the mat can help sustain the horse’s attention and focus, as well as giving him positive **destinations** or a ‘relaxation spot’ to visit periodically.



As Boots and I step around this barrel in a tight U-turn, we will head out of the turn to a mat for a click&treat.

Knowing that there is a click&treat coming up, motivates Boots to organise her body into a balanced turn while on a completely loose lead rope.

At first, the turns may be very unbalanced. The more we carefully practice this exercise (a little bit often), the more precise the horse will become about setting himself up for a balanced turn.