

Teaching Your Mule To Stand When Mounting



If the mule moves forward, ask the mule to step backwards

The worst thing you can do is allow your mule to walk off while being mounted. Tim Doud shows us how to fix this important behavior problem.

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Many mule owners have problems with their mule moving as they mount. Believe it or not, your mule is actually running away with you, the rider. It is the same as a mule running away while you are riding; it can be just as dangerous.

If your mule starts walking as you are swinging your leg over the saddle, it puts you in an unbalanced position. The worst thing you can do is allow your mule to walk off. If the problem is not important to you, it will not be important to your mule.

So how can we fix this problem? First you will want to have your mule saddled and in a safe place, like a round pen or small arena. Your mule should be wearing a full cheek, D ring or O ring snaffle bit.

You need to teach your mule to stand still, not punish your mule for moving. There is a big difference. When we punish a mule for not getting the right answer from our question, your mule will resist and stop trying. On the other hand, your mule will look forward to learning and keep trying if we just ask the mule to stand still if he moves.



Stand up in the stirrup and step down



Diamond Creek Angel stands like a statue as Tim mounts after being taught these steps

If at any point in the lesson your mule moves, step down (if you're mounting), stop the lesson and reposition your mule.

Pick a spot in the round pen or arena. Have your mule stand at this exact spot. If your mule walks two steps forward, ask your mule to take two steps back until he is standing at the exact same spot. Likewise, if your mule moves to the left, ask him to move to the right. If he moves to the right, ask him to move to the left.

Remember, you are not punishing your mule for moving, you are asking him to move back to the spot he was standing at.

Next, break down your mounting so your mule will not move. Standing at your mule's head, walk around to the left side stirrup. Then walk back to his head. If your mule moves off, he is telling us we went too far. Ask your mule to go back to the spot and start again. Your job is to get your mule to stand still.

After your mule is comfortable with you walking up beside him, walk up beside him and rock the saddle horn, then walk away. By walking away, we are releasing the mule the same as if you released the rein. We are taking pressure away from your mule and telling him, "Yes, you answered my question correctly."

Rocking the saddle horn lightly will allow the mule to stand up straight in order to support your weight when you mount.

Now, walk up, rock the saddle horn and pick-up your foot as if to step into the stirrup, then walk away. When your mule is comfortable with that step, place your foot in the stirrup for a second.

Slowly build on having your foot in the stirrup for a longer period of time. When your mule seems bored with the step you are practicing, it is time to move to the next step. Your mule is telling you he is comfortable with that part of the lesson.

You will then walk up to the side of your mule, rock the saddle horn, place your foot in the stirrup, stand up in the stirrup and step down. Always remember if your mule moves off, ask him to move back to the spot you have picked for him to stand.

After many repetitions of all the steps, you are ready to mount. If you think your mule will move off, do not mount.

Walk up and mount your mule. When you are mounted, have your mule stand still, do not ride off. Have your mule wait for your cue to move forward. What if your mule does move on his own?

The answer is the same as when he moved on the ground. Place the mule back in the same spot as when you started.

Soon you will have a mule that will stand like a statue and will wait for you to tell him to move off. He will also look to you for other cues as you and he are working together.

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