



Outdoor Trail Riding Mixing Experienced and Inexperienced Riders

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The inexperienced trail rider has wide eyes, quick breathing, and is scared. Her horse is jiggling, or running on top of the horse in front, or backing up, or refusing to cross some obstacle. Sometimes the ride abruptly ends when that new rider comes off the anxious horse possibly hurting herself and having to find the riderless horse.

As an instructor and clinician, I tell folks that trail riding is one of the biggest tests of a horse's ability to override his natural flight and herd instincts. This is especially true when that horse's rider is new to all the variables that can be found out on the trail.

The more experienced trail riders in the group can help make the trail ride safer and calmer for the new rider by riding to the experience level of that rider. Stay in a walk or light trot. Remind the new rider to breathe. If the new rider's horse is behaving in a way that could throw the new rider off balance and cause a fall or other accident, assure the new rider that it's OK to dismount. As a group, stop and encourage her to do some engaging ground work with her horse before remounting.

Experienced trail riders can ride more aggressively on the trail on another day when they are with equally experienced riders. Be understanding of the new trail rider. We were all at that point at some time when we were new to outdoor trail riding.