



# Personal Space

**Stage:** Grounding

**Module:** 1 - Meeting

**Code:** YHa1iii

## Goal

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To teach your horse to be aware of your personal space and be able to stand independent of you.

## Purpose

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This exercise is to be used if your horse makes the mistake of crowding your personal space. It also indirectly trains certain movements, such as hind end control, by making your horse aware of how they should be when around you.

## Equipment

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Halter, 12 foot rope

## Prior Learning

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- MEETING: First Approach
- MEETING: Contact

## Method

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- Define your personal space as the circle of space around your body that you can reach with your outstretched arm
- Have your horse in a halter with a long rope and take them to an enclosed area
- Use your free hand or end of the lead rope to move them away

## Tips

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- Think of your personal space as your 'horsefield' in which you are projecting invisible energy to keep your horse out and you safe. As you teach your horse the cues to move away from you, you can decrease the amount of energy you need to put in to influence them
- Get your horse to move to face you, not the other way round
- Your horse may not enter your space but you may enter theirs. Do so in the manner a horse might. Use smooth, small steps and approach them to give them a rub
- Focus on your horse's feet. If your horse 'creeps' back towards you, step them back to where they were. If they move past you or into you, move their hind end and get them to face you again



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## When to End

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Generally, I like to spend as much time on them as it would take to give them a quick groom (don't imagine they are caked in mud or getting ready for the show ring). If you spend too much time with a sensitive horse they may become agitated, so try not to go too far into their sensitive areas or it may take a longer.

## Details

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In your first groundwork session with a horse you need to establish two things - that they have nothing to fear from your presence but that they must respect your personal space. I use this exercise with a horse that walks past me or into me when I am handling them.

You can define your personal space as the space around your body in which a horse might influence you – usually the distance of an outstretched arm. It is this space that you want your horse to respect.

If you are leading your horse and they push past you or into you, create some energy by bringing your hands up or swinging the end of the lead rope to move them away. This energy should be directed at their hind end or ribs. Keep using energy until they are standing straight and looking at you.

Once your horse is not walking into you or past you, you can ask them to stand and then back

away from them to see if they will stay where you put them. Simply raising your arms and directing energy in front of them should see them step back to where they were if you completed the 'move away and face' part of the process successfully.

If the horse gets distracted, wanders off or creeps back in towards you, repeat the movement. You may notice some signs as the horse starts to figure out the rules. They may lower their head and try and creep back to you but be calm and consistent and just repeat the steps until they are able to stand relaxed and out of the space in which they may be able to influence you with their body.

The only rule here is that the horse can't approach you unless invited, and it is not advisable to invite a horse into your space until their groundwork training is a little more established. You may, however, approach them. Once your horse is settled and focussing on you, move towards them like a horse would move when investigating something new. Use small, smooth steps, moving in to give them a rub.

When a horse is standing near to you and sniffing and nuzzling they may just be trying to familiarise themselves with you. But be wary. Quite often this behaviour turns into lipping or nipping then shoving with the head in order to try and influence you to move. This isn't bad behaviour as it is natural in a horse's social system to establish a hierarchy in this manner.



FOUNDATION TRAINING

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***Details continued...***

If a horse can move you then they are establishing themselves above you in this hierarchy.

If your horse gets used to always being at your

shoulder then this is where they will want to be if they are ever worried. This can be very dangerous. The best way to deal with this situation is to not let it become a habit. Teach your horse that they can stand quite comfortably away from you and relax.