



# WESTERN RIDER PREREQUISITES

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**Please review this entire page with your child and discuss the “Important Prerequisites” to confirm readiness for Western Riders and a valuable Western Rider Experience.**

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**EXPERIENCE** Previous experience with some independent riding is necessary to participate in the Western Rider program. Campers must feel ready to walk, trot and lope, or canter.

**DESIRE** Choosing the best program for a particular child can sometimes be a challenge. The Western Rider program is intensive for riders who already have experience as well as a desire to “really get out and ride.”

**COMFORT** As in all our programs for children, our goal is for each child to succeed and to have a positive camp experience which is safe and enjoyable for the participant. Campers need to be at ease and open with the animals. Horses can sense when a rider is tense or fearful. The development of a safe partnership between horse and rider is only successful when the child feels comfortable. Only sign up a child who understands and wants to participate in this program, who meets the grade requirement (rising 6th–11th graders), and who understands and commits independently to all the prerequisites.

**OPEN RANGE RIDING** What we do is “open-range riding.” Not usually in a line, the group walks and trots on and off trails through forests and meadows. Each rider turns and moves their horse independently. Our horses are trained to be responsive to the rider, and each rider must learn to partner with a horse that is alert to the rider’s signals. Every rider needs to be able to focus on the horse’s signals in return and in a variety of situations. **Safety is paramount for your child, their horse, the other children, and the other horses.** Many other children’s riding programs take place in a riding ring where the fence defines the outside boundary of the horse’s space to move within. Riding at the Colorado Mountain Ranch does not include this containment. Riding at CMR is NOT riding horses that have learned specific habits such as going around and around the ring or performing mainly one or two specific moves. The attention, focus, and determination of the rider is of greatest importance to “get out and ride” in the spirit of riding the open range in the old West.

**GOOD LISTENER AND LEARNER** The rider MUST listen well, pay close attention, and respond to teaching, suggestions, and coaching from the instructors. Each child must be able to learn to manage themselves, the horse, and their personal horse-rider combination without compromising the safety of themselves, the horse, or others.

**PARTNERING WITH THE HORSE** In our style of Western riding, the rider must partner with the horse to support the horse's natural alertness, while also staying confident. Learning to communicate with the horse through a variety of cues simultaneously - using thoughts, eyes, voice, legs, balance, pressure, and reins. Reining needs to be lighter and less controlling, especially when compared to English style riding. There needs to be conscious rein management in order to use minimal pressure on the bit or bosal. These techniques require constant attention, clear understanding, and effort.

**DOES MY CHILD ANSWER "YES" TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you have some independent horse experience riding on your own?
2. Are you comfortable and not scared around big strong animals?
3. Are you determined to be alert to "listening" and communicating closely with the horse?
4. Are you ready for a mental partnership with the horse?
5. Are you able to focus and attend to the communications from the horse, as well as directions and pointers from the instructors?
6. Are you interested and willing to put learning to ride as first priority, above social and other distractions?
7. Do you have the tenacity and strength - especially in the arms - for turning and pulling up a horse with a strong head?
8. Do you have no hesitation to trot during open range riding?
9. Are you confident in your riding ability?

**PLEASE NOTE:** If there is a safety concern or if it is in your child's and/or the Western Rider group's best interest, we may need to give your child more individualized and less-advanced instruction and trail rides so they can gain riding experience and become more comfortable. If this is the case, we will inform you and make an alternative plan.