The Positive Riding System

General Lesson Plan
By Henrik Johansen

…A Very Good Idea

This lesson plan can be used both for private lessons and group lessons. A General Lesson Plan is a syllabus for 12 lessons.

Everyone who teaches riding should know how to make a general lesson plan. In the case of riding schools focusing on group lessons, I believe all training should be done according to a general lesson plan.

Advantages of a Lesson Plan

Creating and following a sequential plan for the education of horse and rider has many advantages:

- **It helps you work toward an established goal.** In order to plan ahead you must set a goal before the work begins.
- **It helps you achieve continuity in your teaching.** It also makes it easier for you to remember what the student worked on in the last lesson.
- **It helps the student to be aware of the goal and the methods for achieving it, even before the lesson begins.** This gives the student an opportunity to prepare. It also demonstrates that the trainer is serious about his roll as an instructor, and makes parents happy in the case of young students.
- **It helps to ensure that all the details are included.** It is important for the trainer to have an overview and not to forget something. When you prepare a lesson plan, it forces you to think through each and every lesson.
- **It creates more variety in your teaching while at the same time keeping the goal in sight.**
- **It improves satisfaction for both rider and trainer.** It is satisfying to feel well prepared and to work toward a specific goal.
- **It helps riders, little by little, to begin to have more in common** – this principally applies to group lessons.
- **It provides the information to allow another teacher to take over** – this also applies mainly to group lessons.

How to Fill in the Form
(see example on page 4)

1. Print a blank General Lesson Plan.
2. **Objectives** - Write down a goal for a three month period (or twelve weekly lessons).
3. **Date/Time** - Record the date and time you plan to start each lesson.
4. **Topic** - List a topic that will lead to the goal of the lesson. Write only enough words to help you to remember the details.
5. **Additional subjects** – List any additional subjects you intend to cover. It is not only riding schools that should teach students about subjects such as grooming and horsemanship.
6. **Memo** - make notes on the bottom of the form about anything you need to remember.

Some of the lessons can be repetitions of previous lessons if the subject is complicated or there is a need for review. The last lesson can be used as an evaluation – to determine if you have reached the goal with your student.

If there are several instructors at a riding school, it is a good idea to sit down together once every three months to develop these gen-
eral lesson plans. This assumes that the stu-
dents ride once a week, which is often the
norm. Once you have made a few lesson plans
it becomes quite easy and does not take much
time. And it is quite likely that several groups
a week can use the same lesson plan at a riding
school.

Give the students a printed copy of the plan to
take home with them. This will give the stu-
dents an opportunity to prepare for the next
lesson and will create a mind frame that their
lessons are a serious endeavor. Using lessons
plans like this also makes it possible for an-
other instructor to take over the lessons in case
of illness, vacation or other absences.

General lesson plans are also useful for private
lessons. They give you an overview, help you
to become more structured in your teaching
and are a super way to remember everything
you want to include. With a lesson plan, you
will feel better prepared, and therefore more
relaxed.

Let’s take an example of a student who is
about to go to her first competition, or needs
help to improve at the next competition. The
General Lesson Plan can be a really good tool.
You can create the plan by yourself or together
with your student. At the very least, the student
should have a copy.

The General Lesson Plan for our example
could be focused on riding a test more success-
fully, and might look something like this (also
see the sample form on page 4):

• At the very top, write the level and the test
  that your student is going to ride.
• In the “Topic” column, write the partial
  goals that, after a number of lessons, will
  lead to the student being able to ride the
test. This will help you to work systemati-
cally towards fulfilling the overall goal. It
  is not necessary to write the details of what
you are going to say in the lessons. Just
include enough to help you remember what
you want to do. The overall goal can, of
course, take more or fewer lessons than the
twelve lessons on the General Lesson Plan.
Exactly how many you will need depends
on many factors, and only you, as the
trainer, will know when the goal has been
reached.
• It is a good idea to have your student ride
  through the entire test as part of the last
  lesson so that you can check that she is
  completely ready.

You should not feel restricted by the lesson
plan. If there is a need, change the plan as you
progress or repeat a previous lesson if neces-
sary. Have fun!

Educational considerations:

• **Motivation** – If we can motivate the stu-
dents everything will be easier. It is not
possible to successfully teach a student
who is not motivated.
• **Participation** – The students must actively
participate in the lessons in order to stay
motivated, and when it comes down to it,
to feel that they are getting something for
their money.
• **Praise** – Praise lets the rider know that he
has performed the movement correctly.
Praise increases motivation (but can some-
times be used to excess).
• **Positive critique** – A much more positive
message comes from using the words “do it
like this” rather than “don’t do that”.
• **Variation** – This is important, not only
with respect to the rider but also in consid-
eration of the horse. Do not, as so many
trainers do, keep the horse and rider on a
little circle around you more than abso-
lutely necessary. This creates unnecessary
wear and tear on the horse’s legs and can
lead to overuse and strains.
• **Connection and understanding** – In order
for the rider to get as much as possible out of the lesson, there must be continuity from lesson to lesson. Try to work toward a goal by starting first with something the student can do successfully (it should go well) and build on this until you reach the goal. It is much more difficult for the student to understand what you want when you jump from one thing to another.

- **Do not just plow ahead** – In order for both horse and rider to have learned a movement, they must have experienced and recognized the feeling of having performed it correctly. It is a waste of time to quit working on something before you can at least say things are on the right track. If we advance too quickly, the only result will be a frustrated horse and rider.

- **Assessment** – Everything that the horse and rider do should be assessed along the way, including the effect of your own teaching.

- **Pay attention to each individual** – This is in regard to group lessons. It is very important that you pay attention to each person during a group lesson. If you feel you have to spend so much time with each individual that the group as a whole suffers, then it is a good idea to split the group up. It is not always easy to coordinate students into a homogeneous group due to students’ time constraints and other complications, but do your best to place students in a group where they can benefit from the instruction of the other students in the group.

- **Include everyone** – It is important that everyone understands and can keep up. If a student feels he cannot keep up with the group, you will lose that student.

- **Goals** – It is important to have goals and to make sure you are on your way toward those goals during the whole lesson.

- **Evaluation** – It is essential that you, either alone or together with the student, evaluate the work so that both you and the student know where the main focus should be placed during the next lesson. This evaluation should be the basis for the planning of the next lesson(s).

**Note:** Please see sample form on the following page.
### The Positive Riding System

**General Lesson Plan for 12 Lessons**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Hanna</th>
<th>Objectives: To help Hanna understand how to use the aids and how the horse is supposed to answer. Prepare Hanna to ride a test.</th>
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**Memo:**

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