

# Equine Massage Basics



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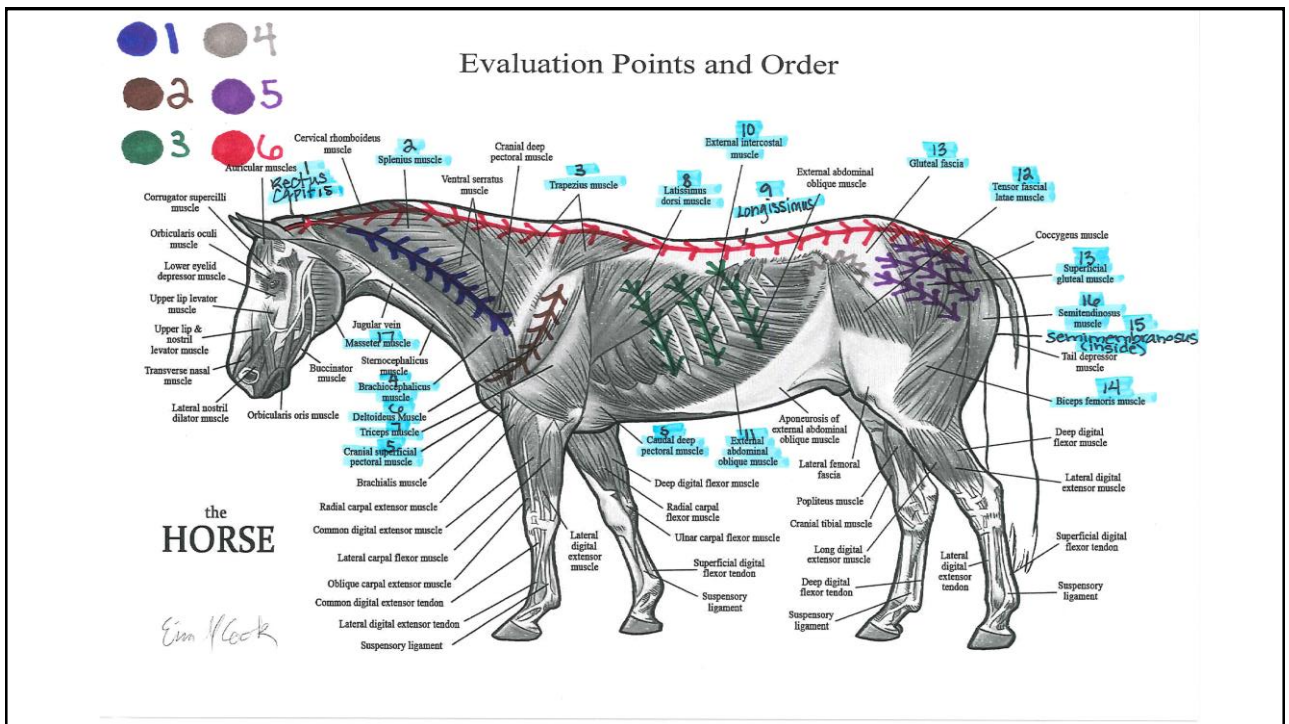
## Massage Etiquette

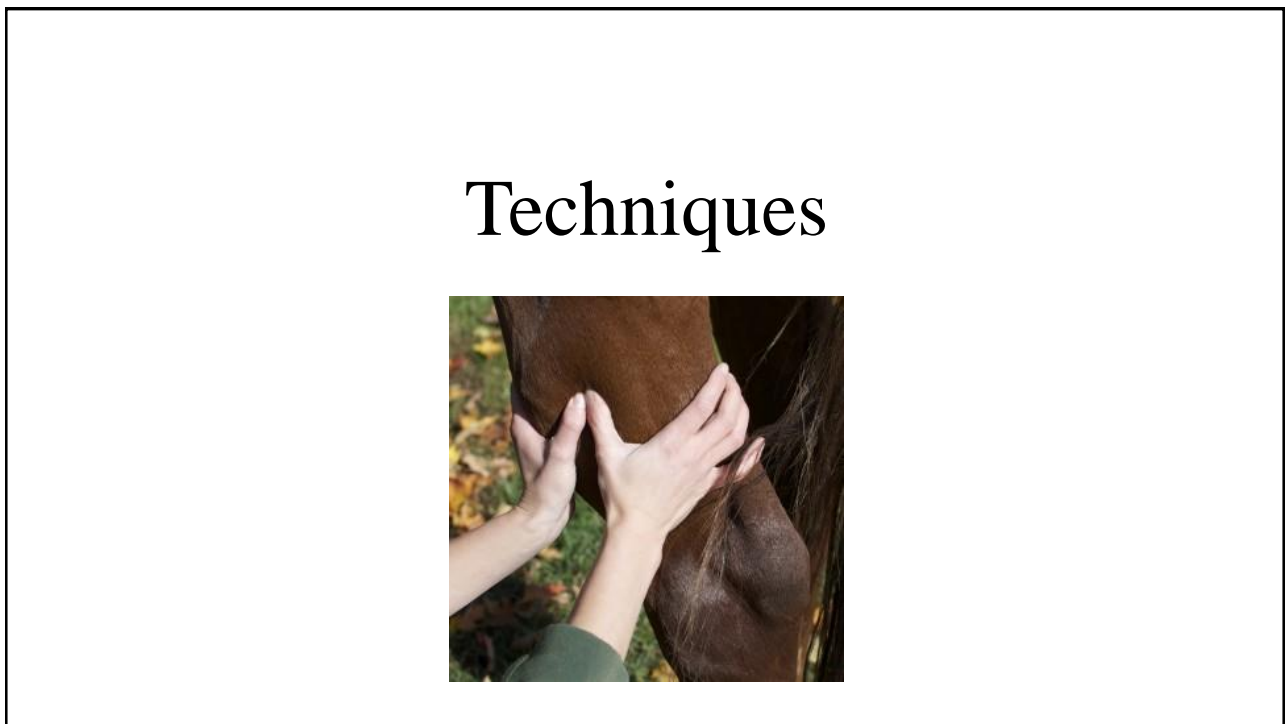
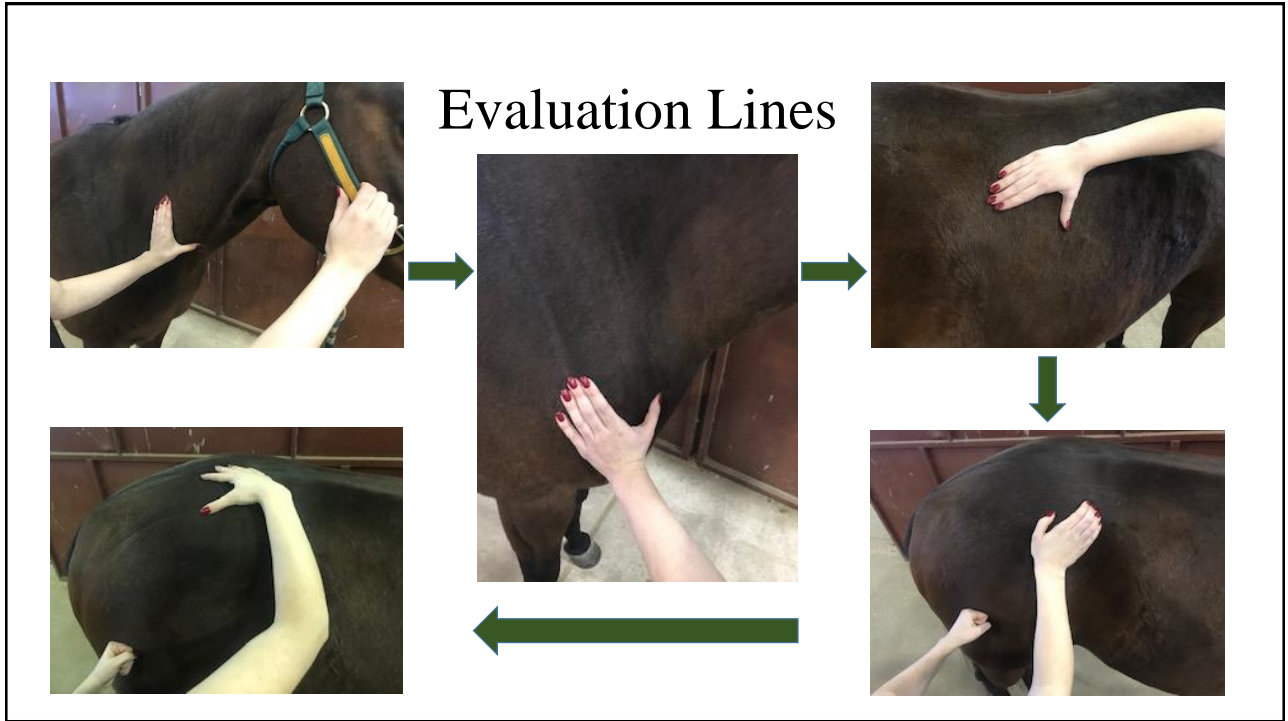
- Do's
  - Understand equine muscles and functions
  - Evaluate health and ensure there are no contraindications
  - Work in a large open space free of obstacles and distractions
  - Have someone hold the horse or use cross-ties if a handler is not available
  - Begin by building a relationship with the horse
  - Pay attention to your horse's behavior throughout the massage
  - Keep records to evaluate progress
  - Maintain correct posture throughout the massage



# Important Reminders

- Slow strokes first
- Light pressure, medium, then heavy as horse allows
- Read horse's mannerisms
  - Eyes, ears, mouth, tail
- Work from front to back and follow a routine
- Be consistent left to right
- Good rule of thumb: 30 minutes on each side for full massage
  - Need to build up to this
  - Initial massage may only be 30 minutes total





# Effleurage

- Slide or glide over skin in a smooth continuous motion



# Petrissage

Kneading



Compression



Muscle Squeezing



## Petrissage

Picking Up



Wringing



## Tapotement

- Series of brisk percussive movements following each other in a rapid alternating fashion





# Routine



## Head/Neck

- Masseter
- Ears
- Effleurage
- Petrissage
  - Kneading
  - Compressions
  - Muscle squeezing
- Mane pull



## Shoulder, Withers, Pectoral

- Shoulder
  - Effleurage
  - Petrissage
    - Compress over deltoid and triceps
    - Knead muscles
      - Use front of knuckles over shoulder- only for big muscle groups
- Pectoral- remember pectoral muscles run under and between front legs
  - Effleurage
  - Circles and up using fingertips
  - Muscle squeezing
  - Rub across cinch area on off side
- Withers
  - Rub using thumbs in circles behind withers



## Back

- Effleurage
- Petrissage
  - Kneading
  - Compressions
  - Wringing
- Big circles to small circles with increasing pressure



## Hindquarters

- Effleurage
- Petrissage
  - Compressions
  - Kneading
  - Muscle squeezing
- Tapotement



## Limbs

- Effleurage
- Petrissage
  - Muscle pick up
  - Use thumbs to spread muscle out
  - Muscle squeezing
- Inspect lower limbs for heat or abnormalities





## Signs of Release

- Softening of eye
- Relaxing of topline
- Yawning
- Shaking head
- Passing gas
- Urinating



## Stretching



## Stretches: Head and Neck

- Chin lift

- One hand over poll; other under chin; lift chin up; thumbs point toward each other



- Neck stretch

- One hand on halter; other hand ¼ way down neck; then move to ½ way as you ask horse to stretch around your hand



## Stretches: Limbs

- Front leg

- Rotate from shoulder, flex and extend fetlock joint
- Stretch front leg forward and down asking for extension from shoulder; keep leg low
- Take front leg in line with the opposite leg
- Push knee back until radius forms a 90 degree angle with ground



## Stretches: Limbs

- Hind leg
  - Stretch leg forward and down asking for extension from hip



## Stretches: Back

- Back lift: face the horse's head. Near hand by chest; other hand on off side behind point of hip
- Back lift: use fingers approximately 1/3 way back



## Stretches: Tail

- If tail feels “loose” do not complete tail stretch
- Apply gentle pressure in a pulling motion, horse should pull against you, hold constant pressure

