

Looking for a new activity for your driving students? Why not consider having them work together on a driven drill routine? Just as drill work helps riding students with sequencing, memory and precision, it also helps your driving students. And as an added bonus, it is fun!

The first thing to do is select appropriate music. It is good to find music that has a 1:2 beat (for the 1:2 of the trot, but that varies in tempo. The variances in tempo allow for walk, trot, working trot and strong trot, all within the same song. Find a song that has a short introduction where the turnout has to wait to enter the arena. This is a great place for your students to work on standing quietly, even though they and the equine are anticipating moving forward. STAND can be practiced very well here. , safely and with a concrete reward for both the student and the equine. Examples of music I have selected are “Jailhouse Rock” by Elvis Presley, and “Ghostbusters” by Ray Parker, Jr. We have also driven to “Rock Around the Clock” by Bill Haley and the Comets, and “She Drives Me Crazy” by the Fine Young Cannibals.* Any sassy, fun tune with a good beat will work. I like using a song that is easy to use props and decorate for, and also perhaps tells a story. Just ask yourself, “Can I dance to it?” If the answer is yes, chances are you can also drive to it. Be cautious with lyrics contained in more contemporary songs, as some are not appropriate for all audiences.

You can add various figures to drive in your routine. You don't have to just go around the arena. For example, serpentines, ½ S and diagonals can all be incorporated into the drill. You can drive the side by side, opposing and so forth. Basically, most of the things you do under saddle in a routine, you can do while put to a cart or carriage. The choreography is usually the most difficult part. You want to make it challenging without a huge degree of difficulty. Driving figures can be tedious and difficult, but when you put those figures to music – and have a partner to boot – they become fun.

Be sure to initiate your equines to driving closely to one another to music prior to allowing the students into the vehicle. You should know the routine, and feel comfortable driving it, before you attempt to do it with your students. It is also very important that your Able-Bodied Whip is extra cautious on the join-up sections of the routine as you certainly don't want to lock wheels.

Costumes are as fun in driven drill as they are in ridden drill. Half blankets on the equines can be customized to whatever the music dictates, and of course your students will enjoy dressing the part too. On “Jailhouse Rock” we all dressed as convicts (including the horses) and we had other program students in the stands dressed as escaped convicts. For “Ghostbusters” we wore official Ghostbuster costumes , and the horses were dressed as ghosts. When we did Sharp Dressed Man, the horses even wore tuxedos and top hats! It was great fun for everyone.

You can pick up lots of pointers and direction on setting up a drill routine. Just remember that those tips aren't limited to just the saddle horses. Apply them to your driving equines as well. You will find you have opened up a whole new avenue of fun for you, your students and your horses. Trot On!

*List of other songs we have driven drill to:

- “Stagecoach” from the movie Stagecoach
- “Flying Purple People Eater” by Sheb Wooley
- “I Like to Move It Move It” by will.i.am
- “Centerfield” by John Fogerty
- “Puttin on the Ritz” by Taco
- “Car Wash” by Rose Royce
- “Celebration” by Cool and the Gang
- “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B” by The Andrews Sisters
- “Going to the Chapel” by The Dixie Cups
- “Boot Scootin' Boogie” by Brooks and Dunn

“Pirates of the Caribbean, Curse of the Black Pearl” from the Movie
“Wizard of Oz Medly” from the movie
“Star Wars Theme” from the movie
“Surfin USA” by the Beach Boys
“We Are Family” by The Pointer Sisters
“Happy” by Pharrell Williams

Anita Sepko is one of a few PATH Intl Driving Level II Instructors and is also one of the PATH Intl Driving Instructors at Born 2 Be Therapeutic Equestrian Center, in Sanger, TX. Anita has a varied background in both riding and driving. She was a 4-H Horse Activity Leader for 15 years, and currently acts as an Advisor to the Horse Clubs in Chatham County, NC. She owns and has shown both Icelandic and Friesian horses at Equine Affaire in Massachusetts and Ohio, in the Carolina Classic Horse Expo, and many other trade shows. She has served on the Board of Directors of the United States Icelandic Horse Congress. Anita was Region 8 Instructor of the Year in 2011, and received the Sis Gould Driving Award in 2008. She currently shows her ASP Stars and Stripes Luckenbach (Luke) at Intermediate Level CDE and is bringing along her Fell Pony gelding, Kimberlake Gemini (Gem) and competes him at the Prelim level.