

## 4 Training Principles

**Spot** – the spot on the horse you want to move

**Direction** – the direction you want it to go

**Motivator** – the thing you are going to use (pressure is used here) to motivate the horse to change

**Reward** – the release of pressure to signal the horse that he has moved the correct spot in the correct direction

Task

Think about something you teach or do regularly, such as trailer loading, bridling, cueing the horse to canter and so on. See if you can apply the 4 principles to that.

**Spot** – try to have the spot on the horse as small as possible. This may be the most difficult thing to work out but it is also the most important. For example, trying to get the ‘whole horse’ on to the trailer can be a daunting task but simply signaling the horse to move his left front foot back and forward and putting the trailer in his path can radically change that perspective – leading to a speedy, stress-free and successful lesson.

**Direction** – where do you want the spot to move? For example, if you are looking at bridling, the spot is the ear and the direction is down, to place the horse’s head in a convenient position.

**Motivator** – there are many different types of motivators for teaching horses. I always use pressure (negative reinforcement) but food is often used (positive reinforcement) as are the withholding of food and pain (negative punishment and positive punishment), sadly, by some trainers.

Think about your motivator.

In the trailer loading example it might be a light tap of the whip on the hindquarter and gentle rein pressure for backing up. In the bridling example you could use your hand placed on the poll as a motivator to lower his head.

**Reward** – the reward is not only the release of pressure but we can also use positive reinforcement here (adding something) in the form of verbal praise and a stroke on the neck or scratch on the withers.

When trailer loading you would stop tapping the hip, stroke the horse on the neck, verbally praise and allow the horse to rest.

Write your lesson down and define each of the four principles.  
How do they fit?

Could you make the lesson simpler for your horse by redefining one or more of the principles?

The next video discusses the International Society for Equitation Sciences' (ISES) 8 Principles of Training, which focus on best practices for horse training and explain how we can integrate learning theory into our everyday interactions with our horses.