



The American Driving Society, Inc.

Where Do You Find Out About Carriage Driving?

The best choice for starting to learn to drive is with a schooled horse and an instructor who has experience in the type of driving you want to pursue. They can supply you with the best learning experience: trained horses, well maintained equipment and a safe, enclosed place to drive. You should ask the instructor for credentials, possibly watch a lesson with another student and ask for references. Be a good consumer!

Having some idea of what type of driving you are interested in will help greatly in the search for an instructor. See the document in the ADS Education Library “What Kind of Driving Activities Does the ADS Support?” Be aware that most sport driving is based on systematic and progressive skill development for both driver and horse. (Dressage !)

Also, become familiar with the sport of driving through reading: The ADS magazine *The Whip* is a good place to start. As you are reading this, you’ve found our website! We’ve listed books that are newbie friendly in the library.

There are not a lot of instructors such as this in many parts of the country, so you will need to use other “search options”. If there are people in your area who drive, ask them who teaches. If there is an ADS Regional Club in your area, try to network with them. You can ask your feed store, veterinarian, or equine dentist if they have clients who drive. If there is a driving competition in your area, that’s a great place to start to network with other drivers.

(Volunteering to help is an even better way to watch driving skills up close, and most organizers are happy to teach you on the job.) Breed Associations are another source of information, but be aware the breed association may not have the same driving goals



The American Driving Society, Inc.

as you do. The ADS has several breed partners who have information on the ADS website. Finally, a general online search may help you, but again, never be afraid to ask for credentials.

It is not recommended that a green driver try to learn to drive and teach a green driving horse at the same time, especially if you have never trained any other horse to do a job riding or driving. You will not have the experience to tell if the horse is misunderstanding you, and the horse won't have the tools to understand what is being asked.

You've found the right instructor if:

- They are safety conscious. Their horses, equipment and facility should look well maintained. They should require you wear a safety helmet. Harness and carriages should show evidence of regular care. The horses should be appropriate for the level of driver, newbie horses need to be saints who forgive mistakes, and be a little less reactive, but still schooled enough to give the right feeling when you ask for something correctly.
- Your instructor should discuss your long-term goals, and explain how what they are teaching you will help you reach them.
- Your instructor should be competent in the type of driving you are interested in.
- They should be able to communicate to you in a way that you understand. Teaching children is almost a specialty, some people have the patience and quickness of mind required, some don't!
- They should tactfully push you a little out of your comfort zone, but not rattle your confidence.