

10 Things You Should Know Before Becoming a Working Student

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I thought it might be helpful to give you all a little heads up of things you should know before going to be a working student. Keep in mind, this list is half in jest—but also perfectly serious as well.

1. You will become a stall-cleaning expert.

And you will develop favorite horses depending on which ones are the cleanest in their stalls. “Tidy in stall” will also be added to your list of “must-have traits” in the next horse you buy, and you will cringe at the thought of what you put previous barn workers through with your old horse, who was a disaster in his stall.

2. The laundry never ends.

I hope you like rolling polos! And rolling standing wraps. And folding towels. And the smell of bleach mixed with horse sweat.

3. Choosing which stall to put a new horse in is an art form.

All of a sudden, that placid gelding you’ve been working with for months will turn into a raging dragon at the sight of the new horse you put next to him. HOW DARE YOU PUT SUCH A PEASANT IN HIS PRESENCE?! But then when you try to move the new horse next to the mare down the aisle, who has been perfectly fine next to geldings before, OH GOD NO YOU DID NOT. THAT GELDING DOES NOT FIT HER HIGH STANDARDS. It can become a really fun game of musical stalls.

4. You will become very particular about how tack is cleaned.

And inevitably, you will have incredibly high standards and get irritated when other people don’t clean it just like you do.

5. Caffeine will become a staple in your diet.

Whether it’s coffee, Red Bull, or tea, you will find it hard to survive without caffeine. The people that manage it *without* caffeine are not to be trifled with. Be very cautious.

6. There is ALWAYS something you can be doing.

Even if you finished your official “to-do” list, there is always more to get done. Take the initiative and do it! Sweeping is something that can constantly be done. Polishing up less-used tack is important, too. Top off waters. Scrub boots. Get together another load of laundry (see #2).

7. Working with a sense of urgency is crucial.

Gone are the days of leisurely spending time cleaning your favorite horse’s stall. It’s time to pick up the pace, because you have a list of 50 things that need to be done before lunch...and also don’t forget to grab the tractor and mow the paddocks, and also here are four horses that need to do canter sets today. Have fun!

8. Be on time! No, be early!

Whether it's being on time to the barn every day, or having that horse for your coach ready before she even asks, make sure you're planning ahead. And hey, if you plan on bringing coffee and donuts to the horse show for everyone, you'll get a gold star!

9. You will spend way too much time trying to look good, only to get your clothes covered in dirt and sweat every day.

But you won't regret it, because equestrian style is priceless. Even if you have a slobber stain on the sleeve of your \$65 polo, the clients will appreciate that you tried to look professional (and so will your boss).

10. You will have days where you cry. You will have days where you are so tired, you feel like you can barely function. But if you work hard and stay positive, you will learn so much (and you will also have so much fun!).

Even when you are too sore to walk you will find a way. When you have a bad ride, you will be able to continue. If it feels like you aren't progressing, trust me when I say that you are. You can stare at the grass all day but you'll never notice it growing. It's the same with your progress in riding and learning horsemanship. Just because there's no noticeable change today, doesn't mean you won't have advanced six months down the road. Stay positive and cherish every day, because there is so much for you to learn!