

The Buddy System

When a new volunteer joins the Diamond Centre, they are paired with a buddy – an experienced volunteer who knows the routines and can guide them as they settle in. The purpose of the buddy system is to make sure new volunteers feel supported, confident, and well-prepared in their roles.

A buddy is:

- Someone who is knowagable and understands the routines and best practices of the Centre
- A friendly guide who can “show them the ropes”
- A support person in either the yard or lessons, depending on where the new volunteer is working



If a new volunteer is helping on the yard, a buddy is assigned by the staff team.

If the volunteer is helping in lessons, their buddy is assigned by the coaches. Coaches will choose someone experienced who can guide them.

When possible, try to maintain the same buddy each week but we understand this may not always be possible.

There is no set length of time a volunteer needs a buddy. It depends on their confidence, experience, comfort in the role, and staff or coach observations. The aim is not speed, but ensuring each volunteer feels secure and capable – and this will vary for every individual.



New volunteers may gain confidence in some tasks more quickly than others, so they may only need a buddy for certain activities.

For example:

- A volunteer might become confident with tacking up or untacking after a few weeks and no longer need close supervision for those tasks.
- However, they may still feel unsure about leading in lessons, and will continue to need a buddy in those situations.

This flexible approach ensures that volunteers receive support tailored to their learning pace rather than a fixed timeline.

When assigning volunteers to lead, coaches must carefully consider which horses are appropriate for the volunteers experience level.

Good horse–volunteer matching helps ensure:

- Safety for both the participant, the leaders and the horse
- A positive experience for the new volunteer
- Consistency and smooth running of the lesson



Regular check-ins are an essential part of the buddy system.

Staff or coaches should:

- Ask how the new volunteer is feeling
- Check if they understand their tasks
- Offer guidance or clarification
- Make adjustments if the volunteer needs additional support

The focus is on making sure each new volunteer feels safe, confident, and competent.

