

10 Ways To Master The Skills Of Farriery

- Foot.
- Anatomy.
- Respect the horse.
- Respect the client.
- Iron and forge work.
- Economic business.
- Responsibility for health.

The number "7" represents wholeness and perfection in the Greek language. These seven skill areas and mastery levels (described later) represent the whole of farrier science and craftsmanship. They mark the path to perfection for those motivated to pursue it.

Your quest for excellence in mastering the skills of highly effective farriers must be an integral part of what drives you. The principles, techniques and skills of farriery will be of little value unless you have the motivation, discipline and commitment necessary to implement them in your life.

become masters of skill while others barely get the job done?

Here are 10 principles of success you can tap into to help you reach your goals and become a highly skilled farrier.

By Dr. Doug Butler

HIGHLY SKILLED farriers are committed to be the best in the profession.

They know that confidence comes from being good at what they do. They are determined to pay any price, overcome any obstacle or confront any challenge if that is what it takes to learn what is needed to achieve mastery of skills.

Over the past four decades, I've often asked myself why some farriers are more successful than others. Why is it that some farriers make a great income and others barely get by? Why do some

1 *Decide to master all of the skills of farriery.*

Love your work enough to commit yourself to master all of the skills at the highest level you desire. The best people in any industry are the ones who want to be there. Highly skilled farriers desire to master the skills of farriery more than anything.

Be persistent and determined to be successful. This is the most important ingredient to success in any career. Using the word "farrier" as an acronym, I have divided the skills possessed by a balanced farrier into seven areas:

2 *Set specific, well-defined goals.*

Determine what you want from your farriery career. Why did you choose to get into this profession? Are you now where you wanted to be when you began? What level do you want to achieve? Why do you want to be there? What will it take to get there? And what price are you willing to pay to make it happen?

Take time to reflect on these questions and set new goals for your future. Determine what sacrifices you will need to make to accomplish your goals.

Only you can take the responsibility for your personal growth. Personal

strength is developed by accepting total responsibility for your success. Dependence on others builds weaknesses and keeps you from growing.

3 Measure your progress in all seven skill areas.

What level are your skills and farrier business on?

At the present time, the American Farrier's Association has identified by examination four levels of practice

(Intern, Certified, Journeyman and Therapeutic). In addition, the Specialized and Educator levels have been proposed.

Within each level are seven specific skill areas. The accompanying chart below identifies what skills individuals should master to be considered accomplished at these levels.

Ideally, we should master the level we are at before accepting work on the next level. Have you mastered all of the skills at your level? Is your business bal-

anced? Be honest with yourself. Each of us has more to learn about farriery.

It would be difficult to master all the levels in a lifetime. Even educators must never stop learning. The best teachers are always the most enthusiastic students in a class.

4 Practice all skills at your level to perfection.

Consistent practice is absolutely essential.

AFA Certification Levels Classified By Skill Areas				
SKILL AREA	INTERN	CERTIFIED	JOURNEYMAN	THERAPEUTIC
Foot	Pull shoes; Clean out the foot; Clinch and finish accurately; Knows shoeing sequence.	Trim and dress hoof safely and accurately; Nail safely and securely.	Trim foot for hot-fitting; Nail consistently in sound horn in a line parallel to coronary band.	Trim and dress distorted foot of diseased horse and apply therapeutic shoes accurately.
Anatomy	Know common names and position of bones below the horse's knee; Know names and functions of horny structures of foot.	Know scientific names of bones below knee; Know names and functions of sensitive and elastic structures of foot.	Know normal foot and leg structure and function, blood pumping mechanism of foot, tendons and ligaments of leg.	Know blood circulation and nervation of leg; Know tendons and ligaments of limb and functions in movement.
Respect the Horse	Know how to hold and restrain a horse (head restraints) and proper working positions at horse; Know leg unsoundnesses.	Know how to train a horse for shoeing (leg restraints); Know horse conformations and consequences.	Know and understand horse behavior and physiology; Know horse's gaits and defects.	Know horse foot and leg pathology, including terms.
Respect the Client	Protocol with public; Perception of farrier; Presentation of self.	Protocol with client; Perception of farrier; Presentation of self.	Protocol with other farriers; Perception of associations; Presentation of self and profession.	Protocol with veterinarians; Know medical vocabulary to increase understanding and facilitate communication.
Iron and Forge Work	Recognize shoe types and sizes; Recognize nail types and sizes; Learning oxyacetylene and arc welding.	Fit keg shoes accurately and make keg shoe alterations with forge and welders.	Make fullered shoes and fire weld; fit handmade clipped and bar shoes accurately to the foot.	Make and accurately apply therapeutic shoes using all of the various processes.
Economic Business	Understand costs of setting up and doing business; Maintain and keep accurate records.	Know how to establish prices for farrier services; Use telephone effectively; Market services effectively.	Calculate expense and profit per horse; Tax calculation; Business plan.	Inventory control; Tax and estate planning; Budgeting.
Responsibility for Health	Strengthen leg and back muscles.	Strengthen upper body; Develop physical stamina.	Work on life balance; Develop physical endurance.	Strengthen emotional endurance; Develop patience.
Summary and Overview	Capable of being able to help a competent farrier and becoming efficient with tools—works with supervision; Chance of error is great.	Skilled farrier won't hurt the horse when trimming or driving a nail—works toward job completion; Chance of error is reduced.	Competent farrier capable of efficiently making accurate shoes and shoeing within a specified time period—works to a standard. Chance of error is minimal.	Respected professional working with veterinarian to solve lameness problems—work as a partner; Chance of error is shared.

The farrier's goal is to create a harmonious fusion of iron and steed that brings a horse into ideal balance. This can be done by gaining a solid foundation and competency through mastering one skill level before progressing to another.

Grand Prix dressage is said to be a matter of doing relatively simple things superbly well. Highly skilled farriers whose skill makes them in demand do simple things superbly well.

This will take a lot of practice. As the saying goes: "The amateur practices until he can do it right; the professional practices until he can't do it wrong."

Don't compare your work to others but to a defined standard. Each of the seven skills at one level must be mastered before progression to the next level can occur. A higher level demands a higher standard.

Farriers must make sure they completely understand the basics of farriery before they move on to more advanced procedures. As we learn the craft, we are all at different levels of skill.

Each individual must recognize what level he or she is at in order to progress. You cannot pretend for eventually you will be found out. Admission of ignorance is the first step in education.

Your success in mastering farriery depends upon your understanding and mastery of certain basic general principles. You must know what to do and why you're doing it.

For example, the pianist masters certain principles, learns about music and practices various exercises until he or she develops skill at the keyboard. Once the pianist has mastered the basics, he or she can play any piece of

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music that is placed before him or her with some practice and additional learning.

A novice farrier can learn the basic principles of horseshoeing without being a competent farrier since farriery is easy to learn but hard to master.

A novice motivated from within can learn how the principles relate with one another through countless hours of practice and application. With time and patience, their accuracy and speed in completing the task will improve and they will have a higher skill level.

The highly skilled farrier, like the concert pianist, has mastered the basics and paid the price through hours of personal practice to learn the complex nature of combining principles and techniques to achieve the highest skill level.

5 Learn every day.

Spend time every day learning and developing your mind. Stay current in the field.

How much faith would you have in a doctor who had no books in his office and doesn't read anything? How long would you go to a doctor if he told you, "I learned everything I need to know in medical school 20 years ago. I just follow my feelings. People are just so

much plumbing, anyway?"

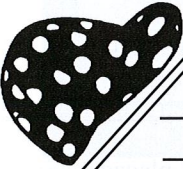
Such a statement would scare you to death! We all expect to be treated with value by a knowledgeable professional.

Knowledge tends to produce pride when you *think* you have learned so much. Wisdom means being humble enough to *realize* that you need to know more. We can never learn it all, but we all know more than we apply.

There is so much information available. In fact, some important truths are ignored or distorted and eventually forgotten. Acquire wisdom by reading books, watching videotapes and listening to audiotapes where one can find information that has taken a lifetime to learn.

A farrier who progresses in his or her mastery of skills must do so in a sequential, orderly fashion. It's absurd to think an individual at a very low skill level can successfully execute an advanced procedure without a corresponding understanding of the basics.

None of us would consent to undergoing heart surgery by an individual who hasn't gone to medical school or rigorously studied, practiced and applied the technique in hundreds of situations before actually cutting through our sternum and operating on our heart.



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6 Be accountable to knowledge gained.

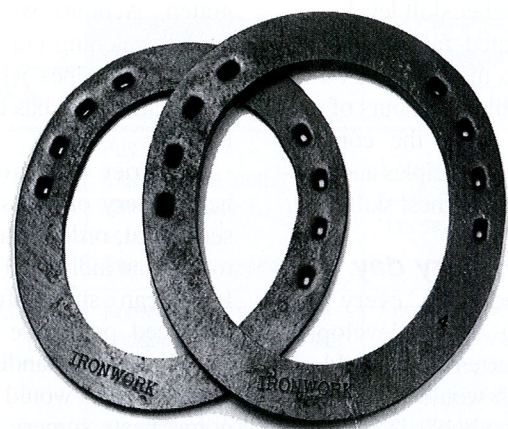
People who aren't accountable to themselves or others will not successfully apply the principles learned.

Many times, preparation for involvement in the learning process is skipped because the learner has not accepted the

responsibility for the acquisition of knowledge.

Effective teachers require that students be accountable for information that is taught, which is why top performers in nearly every field, especially athletes, have coaches.

Application equals acceptance plus action. Once you accept what you have learned from your own study and the



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assistance of a coach or mentor, take action. Learning is not complete until learned principles are applied.

Be accountable to the amount of knowledge gained. Consistent application yields eventual mastery.

7 Seek out a coach or a mentor.

Your reference group will either help or hinder your progress. Find someone at the level where you want to be.

Identify leaders. Go to courses and clinics presented by them. Read articles and books written by them. Watch videotapes and listen to audiotapes made by them. Pay whatever price is necessary to get information and motivation from the best.

Good mentors are positive examples of what they teach. They are organized, responsible and focused on their students. Good mentors bring the subject to life. They are full of enthusiasm and have personal examples and experiences that demonstrate their understanding of fundamental principles. They're good listeners and personalize their training and assistance to meet your needs.

Bad mentors may be egotistical, faddish, insincere, hypocritical, even sadistic and concerned mostly with themselves.

Not all information is of equal value. You need a filter of experience to sort information and present it in an effective way so you can apply it. A coach or mentor should be your filter. They can help you remain accountable to your goals.

8 Seek long-term success.

Short-term success is all about appearance and physical things. Indications of short-term success are a good income, a nice rig, fancy tools, shoeing top-drawer horses, being a smooth talker and living a high lifestyle.

Long-term success encompasses effectiveness and character and includes such things as having loyal, happy clients; gentle, sound horses; a sustainable, consistent business; pride in your craftsmanship; physical longevity; and having a happy family.

Long-term success is what really matters. What kind of success are you building for yourself?

9 Balance your business and life.

Your ultimate goal is probably not more money but to lead a satisfying life. Total concentration on a career tends to undercut other vital sources of fulfillment. Some things in life are much more important than others.

The great German mathematician (inventor of the algebraic solution) Karl Gauss said: "There are problems to whose solutions I would attach infinitely greater importance than to those of mathematics; for example, touching ethics, or our relation to God or concerning our destiny and future." In other words, there are some things that are infinitely more important than horseshoeing.

I had the privilege of meeting Ted Morris, Fellow of the Worshipful Comapny of Farriers, in England in

1986. He was probably the greatest competitive farrier that ever lived.

He showed us all his gold medals, but his wife showed me the most difficult one he ever won. It was silver and hung around her neck.

I asked her why this medal was the most difficult for Ted to win. She said: "Because its silver. Silver is second place and he had to come down from gold and first place to win it for me."

Sometimes, the hardest thing we can do is put others first.

Balance is the most important thing in horseshoeing and in life. A variety of solutions to individual problems are characteristic of good horseshoeing, good music and good life.

Good music comes from harmonic blending of high and low notes to suit the individual occasion. Playing only one key makes dull and even distressing music.

There are 88 keys on the piano but 1,000 symphonies. We all have different tastes in music but prefer harmony

to dissonance. Our profession is one of great income-producing potential. It has the ability to produce tremendous career satisfaction.

It is also susceptible to producing practitioners that live completely out of balance. Many farriers, including myself, have had to learn this truth from personal experience.

The most important thing a farrier can do to achieve balance, success and happiness is to accept responsibility for their own actions. This accepting attitude is the core belief leading to the achievement of balance in any dimension.

Envision a sense of personal priorities and organize your business and your life around these priorities. Plan and effectively use your time.

You create your future. Michael E. Gerber says: "The difference between great people and everyone else is that great people create their lives actively, while everyone else is created by their lives, passively waiting to see where life takes them next."

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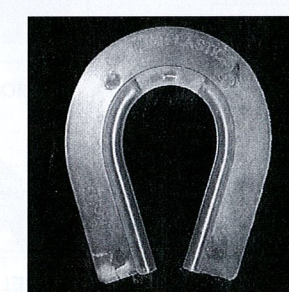
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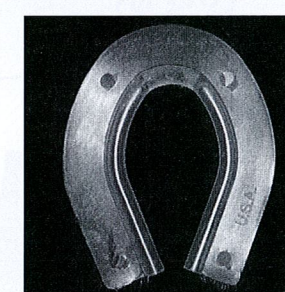
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How do you see yourself? Do you consciously create your life? Or do events in your life create you?

All of us need to step away from the hectic pace of our lives and reflect on what is truly important to us. By doing this, we can realign ourselves with our values and priorities.

Take time to balance your life with activities that give you self-renewal. It will mean all the difference in how long you can last in this demanding profession.

10 Continually learn and share with others.

Never become so much of an expert that you stop gaining expertise. J.G. Holmstrom, a master blacksmith and horseshoer, wrote in 1904:

"In every profession and trade, it is a common thing to hear beginners say, 'I know, I know.' No matter what you will tell them, they will always answer, 'I know.' Such an answer is never given by an old, learned or experienced man because, as we grow older and wiser,

we know that there is no such thing as knowing it all. Besides this, we know that there might be a better way than the way we have learned of doing the work.

"Don't think it is a shame or anything against you to learn. We will all learn as long as we live, unless we are fools, because fools learn very little. Better to assume less than you know than to assume more."

We must continually be in love with the subject of farriery to keep learning and mastering it. After you master a skill, you not only desire to create and share your skill with others but you also yearn to know more and reach a continually higher standard.

You can determine your own level of commitment to mastering farrier skills by frequently asking yourself the following questions:

- ★ What's my skill level?
- ★ When was the last time I learned a new skill and practiced it to mastery?
- ★ What makes my practice time effective toward reaching my goals?

★ How have I applied what I have learned?

★ Are my efforts balanced so that all aspects of my business and personal life consistently receive attention?

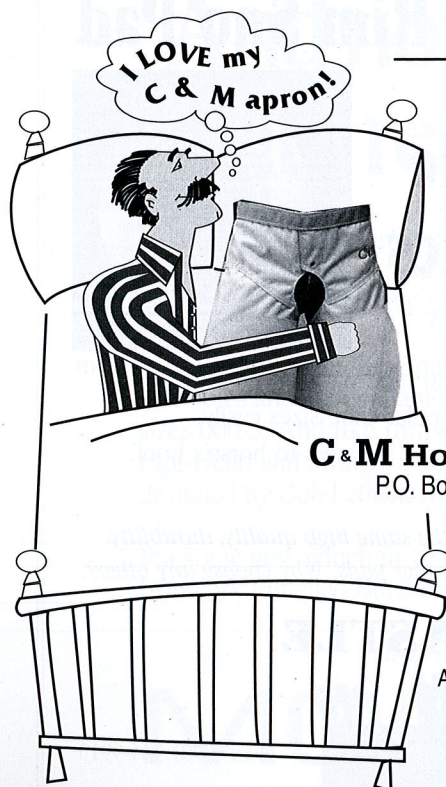
★ How do my actions demonstrate my commitment to lifelong learning?

★ Have I shared my skills with my clients and associates?

By reflecting on these questions, you can determine where you are in your level of commitment to mastering the fundamentals of farriery and what areas you ought to focus on more.

When you work to achieve competence and skill mastery, you simultaneously improve the power of your mind, your self-confidence and the quality of your work. Mastering the skills of farriery at the level we desire should be a lifetime quest for all of us.

Each of us can become better through focused and diligent practice. It's my hope that the application of these proven principles will aid you in moving your work to the next level. Ω



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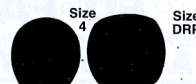
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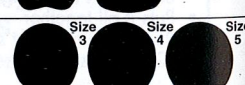
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