

The 15 Buttons of Horse Speak



1. Greeting Button – Horses touch or point with this button for greetings, check-ins and as a friendly gesture. Use to greet /investigate the environment too.

2. Play Button – Used between horses to initiate play. It's best for humans to leave this button alone. Pushing here is a direct invitation to have your space invaded.

3. Bridge-of-Nose Button – An extremely sensitive button used to talk about trust, calmness, balance and security. Many horses are defensive of humans touching this button. Go slow and develop trust.

4. Go-Away-Face Button – Yielding the face away is a sign of respect. A little pointing or pressure on this button is a polite way to ask for a little space and respect. Show thanks and mutual respect by yielding your own face away.

5. Mid-Neck Button – About physical space, hierarchy and connection. Pressure here is a strong way to ask for space. Gentle touch or sniffing here displays connection.

6. Shoulder Button – Used for strong messages about space and hierarchy - observe how horses take and yield space with their shoulder. Also the "buddy-up" spot - horses will line up here with each other and with humans for connection.

7. Back-Up Button – Use to claim space in front of another horse. Also used for "self-talk" when horses need to "get back in their body" after a stressful or intense moment. Can be used gently by a human for a resistance-free back up.

8. Friendly Button – Horses who are really bonded or comfortable with each other will rub each other with this button. When a horse feels trusting of you, he will offer this button to you. Humans often rub this button as a greeting, but horses don't greet this way. It is much more polite to offer your knuckles to the Greeting Button.

9. Follow-Me Button – A sweet and intimate button used by Mom to soothe and steer her foal. Also used between bonded horses to express relaxation and deep connection. May have become sensitive due to halter pressure or forced collection. Use gentle touch here to ask for lowering of the head and relaxation, saying "Follow-me to a calm and relaxed state of being."

10. Grooming Button – Horses strengthen social bonds and display affection by lipping and nuzzling each other in this area. It symbolizes friendship and connection.

11. Girth Button – Horses line up with each other at the Girth to say "We are a team. We move together." The Girth Button is about connection and connection in movement. Watch for your horse to line up with you at the Girth - he's saying "We are a team."

12. Jump-Up Button – This button is all about vulnerability. Friends will show bonding by sniffing each other here and mentors will show concern by sniffing here.

13. Hip-Drive Button – This button is all about protection, leadership and forward movement. Conversations around this button among horses are about who can lead and who can follow. A confident horse may drive a less confident horse using this button, saying, "I've got your back" or may allow the less confident horse to follow at this button, saying "Follow me and be safe". Offering a Hold Hand to this button tells your horse "I've got your back" and offers support and protection.

14. Yield-Over Button – This button is used to talk about space around the hind end. Horses will indicate another's Yield-Over Button to say, "I'm here, please give me space, please don't kick." Humans can use it to politely ask for space, yielding, a step over and away.

15. Sit-Down Button – An emotional and practical button and strongly connected to the Back-Up Button. Contact with this button offers comfort and connection. Also used horse-to-horse as a correction - "Settle down and stop your nonsense."

