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Leading

Joram is stronger than Maria, but he follows her because they are friends. Maria must “speak” to Joram in a way that he can understand what she wants. First, Maria visualizes Joram doing exactly what she would like him to do, then she “speaks” with her body and with her aids—the zephyr lead rope and the “wand.” The wand is a stiff white stick with a plastic “button” on one end, and it is called the wand because the different things you can do with it work like magic.

Elephants have a very flexible trunk. They swing their trunk forward and then back again when they walk. This is exactly how Maria swings the handle end of the wand as she walks with Joram. Leading a horse like this is called the Elegant Elephant: When Maria swings her “trunk” forward, Joram

knows that he should follow her and when she swings it backward, he should slow or come to a stop.

Maria carries the wand with the handle pointing forward to “point” to where she wants Joram to go.



Angie sweeps her dragonfly wings softly over Maria’s arm. “See how nice the touch of my wings feels?” she says. “You should stroke Joram’s legs often with the wand, lightly, like my wings on your arm. It’s best to start higher and move down toward his hooves.”

In all the pictures in this book you can see that Maria never wraps the lead rope around her hand. That would be dangerous. She always carries the rope in loops in her hand.



Joram is supposed to stand as still as a statue. Maria takes three steps to the side until she is holding the end of the long zephyr lead rope. She lightly taps the tip of Joram’s muzzle with the end of the wand to remind him to stand still.



When Maria wants Joram to halt, she points the wand at his chest and taps him lightly. This is the signal to halt. She holds the lead rope with one hand right near the halter and lifts the other hand with the extra loops. In a clear and friendly manner, she moves her hand upward and backward to direct Joram’s head. Then she immediately relaxes her hand again, and Joram comes to a halt.



Joram wants to know whether he has done something right. Maria says, “Yes, good boy, that was right, thank you!”



Riding with a Saddle

Maria tries to mount Joram by clinging to the stirrup and “shimmying” her way up the saddle, but Joram moves away. Angie explains, “Joram doesn’t like it when you do that. If your little brother shoved and poked you, you would get out of his way, too.” Remember, it is much more comfortable for a horse to be mounted with a leg up or a mounting block! After getting on, Maria gives Joram a treat. She holds it in her hand while mounting so it is ready. Angie knows that Joram will stand especially still for mounting when he is waiting for his treat.



Maria rides at the walk. Her legs hang down relaxed and quiet and feel Joram’s belly. When Maria wants to go faster, she taps her legs softly against Joram’s sides, as if she wants to “wake him up” with an almost invisible little kick. When Joram increases his pace, she immediately holds her legs quietly to show Joram that he responded correctly to her cue.

Now Maria wants to halt. Angie says, “When you approach a door

For added balance and security, your left hand can hold onto the mane—never the saddle. The right hand can hold onto the front, right side of the saddle.



Be careful Maria!
Today Maria forgets to keep a soft, friendly contact with the reins, which connect to Joram’s sensitive mouth. Maria’s hands are stiff and heavy. Angie has a good idea, “Imagine that I have tied helium balloons to your wrists,” she says to Maria. “The balloons let your hands float. They become soft and light—that is much better for Joram.”

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It is easier for Joram to carry Maria when she sits up straight and in good balance.



Maria gets help from Bibi, her riding instructor, because she is sitting somewhat slumped with her upper body. It is important that Maria stretches up tall between Bibi’s two hands. Maria must stretch forward and upward as if she were a tree growing up from the ground.



Enough for today: The stirrups are run up, the girth is loosened a hole, and Maria takes Joram’s reins over his head to lead him back to the barn.