

# Understanding And Retraining The Off Track Thoroughbred: Unlocking the Potential

Ex-racehorses, also known as Off Track Thoroughbreds (OTTBs), have gained popularity in recent years for their versatility and willingness to excel in various disciplines. These magnificent animals possess immense potential, but understanding their unique training requirements is essential to help them transition from the racetrack to a fulfilling second career.

## What is an Off Track Thoroughbred?

An Off Track Thoroughbred is a racehorse that has completed its racing career and is ready for a new chapter in life. While some OTTBs retire due to injuries or lack of competitive success, many are retired purely because they have reached a certain age or performance level. These horses often possess incredible athleticism and spirit, but they require careful retraining to adapt to their new roles.

## Retraining Considerations

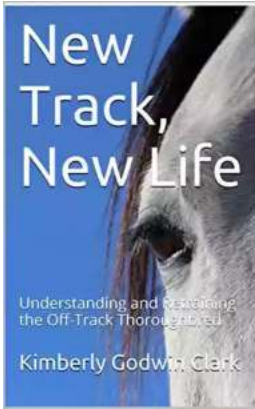
When retraining an OTTB, it is crucial to remember that they have spent most of their lives with a single purpose - racing. Their training has focused primarily on building speed, endurance, and the competitive drive required on the racetrack. Therefore, it is essential to gradually introduce them to a new routine and re-educate them in various disciplines.

### **New Track, New Life: Understanding and Retraining the Off-Track Thoroughbred**

by Kimberly Godwin Clark (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English



File size	: 5177 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Print length	: 131 pages
Lending	: Enabled
Item Weight	: 14.1 ounces



Each OTTB is unique, both physically and mentally, so it is vital to evaluate their overall health and soundness before starting any training program. Consulting with a veterinarian and an experienced trainer can help create a customized plan that addresses any potential physical or behavioral issues.

## **The Importance of Groundwork**

Groundwork plays a fundamental role in retraining OTTBs. It helps establish trust and develops a strong bond between the horse and the handler. Through groundwork exercises, the horse learns to yield to pressure, respect personal space, and follow cues without resistance.

Longeing, for example, helps the OTTB understand verbal commands and body language while building fitness and balance. Working with the horse through various exercises on the ground also aids in desensitization, making it easier to introduce new experiences and challenges under saddle.

## **Gradual Transition to Riding**

Transitioning an OTTB from groundwork to riding should be a gradual process. This allows the horse to build muscle strength, develop balance, and adapt to the

additional weight of a rider. Starting with short, low-intensity rides and progressively increasing the duration and intensity helps prevent physical strain or mental stress.

Introducing the horse to various riding environments, such as arenas, trails, and even obstacles, broadens their exposure and enhances their adaptability.

Patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement are crucial during this phase to instill good habits and encourage the horse's confidence.

## **Retraining Towards a New Discipline**

Once the OTTB has become comfortable under saddle, it is time to focus on their potential in a particular discipline. While many OTTBs excel in show jumping or eventing due to their natural athleticism, others thrive in dressage or even endurance riding. Understanding the horse's strengths and weaknesses plays a crucial role in determining the most suitable discipline.

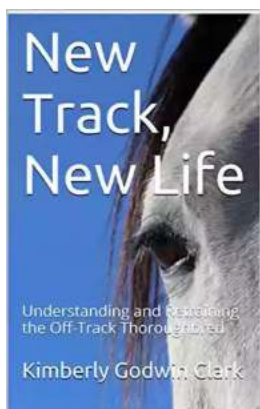
A well-rounded retraining program should include regular schooling sessions with a focus on suppleness, collection, and transitions. Obedience, responsiveness, and flexibility are key attributes that need consistent work to help the OTTB excel in their new career.

## **Benefits of Retraining an OTTB**

Retraining an Off Track Thoroughbred offers numerous benefits for both the horse and the rider. These horses often possess stunning movement, incredible athleticism, and a true eagerness to please. With the right training and guidance, they can develop into successful and trustworthy partners in various equestrian disciplines.

Additionally, OTTBs often come with a reasonable price tag compared to horses specifically bred for certain disciplines. This affordability, combined with their natural potential, makes them an attractive option for riders looking to establish a successful partnership without breaking the bank.

Understanding and retraining an Off Track Thoroughbred demands patience, knowledge, and dedication. These incredible animals have tremendous potential, and with the right approach, they can become successful competitors and cherished companions. Investing time and effort into their retraining not only unlocks their abilities but also provides a fulfilling second career for these exceptional athletes.



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There are so many misconceptions about how Thoroughbreds are handled and trained at the track. This misinformation causes countless avoidable problems. My goal with this book is to provide information to aid anyone who has, or is interested in having a retired racehorse. I believe a person with a working

knowledge of horses and the desire to learn, is capable of handling a horse off the track and being successful, when they have the information they need to understand this wonderful breed.

Kimberly Godwin Clark always had a passion for Thoroughbreds. That passion has produced prospects like 4\* Eventer Houdini, registered name, Rocky Times, and Breeder's Bridge to High Performance Winner Constant Star, among the many other horses that have gone on to successful careers.

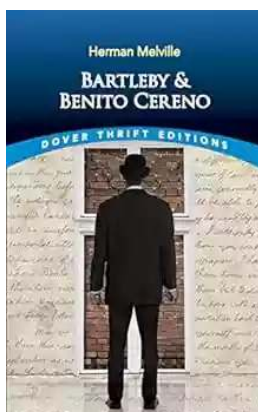
For 25 years Clark galloped, trained and owned Thoroughbred racehorses. She learned to gallop under the tutelage of the great steeplechase rider John Bosley and then went on to the track with Ann Merryman a second generation horseman. She spent most of her professional riding career at Old Hilltop, Pimlico Racecourse in Baltimore, Maryland, but also rode in Florida for several winters before settling at Leighton Farm to begin her new venture in retraining retiring racehorses for new careers in 2007.

To achieve success in this new venture, she enlisted the guidance of such icons as Linda Zang, Elizabeth Madlener , Jim Wofford, David Loman and most recently Stephen Bradley. Her training program is based on knowledge she has gained from a lifetime of working with Thoroughbred racehorses and now the incredible guidance she receives from each horse that comes the Leighton Farm Training program. All of the proceeds from this book benefit the 501(c)(3) charity, Thoroughbred Placement Resources, Inc., which helps retired Thoroughbred racehorses find new lives when their race careers end.

"A copy of the current financial statement of Thoroughbred Placement Resources, Inc. is available by writing 13130 Molly Berry Road, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772 or by calling (410) 802-8425. Documents and information submitted under the Maryland Solicitations Act are also available, for the cost of postage and copies,

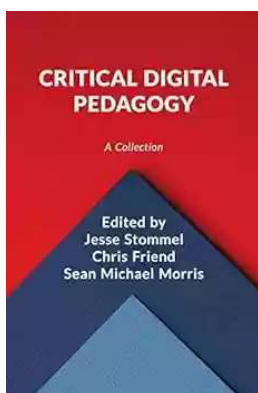
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