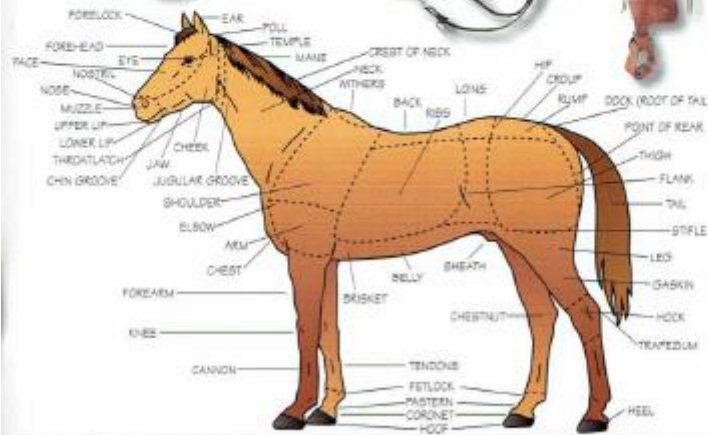


MERIT BADGE SERIES



HORSEMANSHIP



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

HOW TO USE THIS PAMPHLET

The secret to successfully earning a merit badge is for you to use both the pamphlet and the suggestions of your counselor.

Your counselor can be as important to you as a coach is to an athlete. Use all of the resources your counselor can make available to you. This may be the best chance you will have to learn about this particular subject. Make it count.

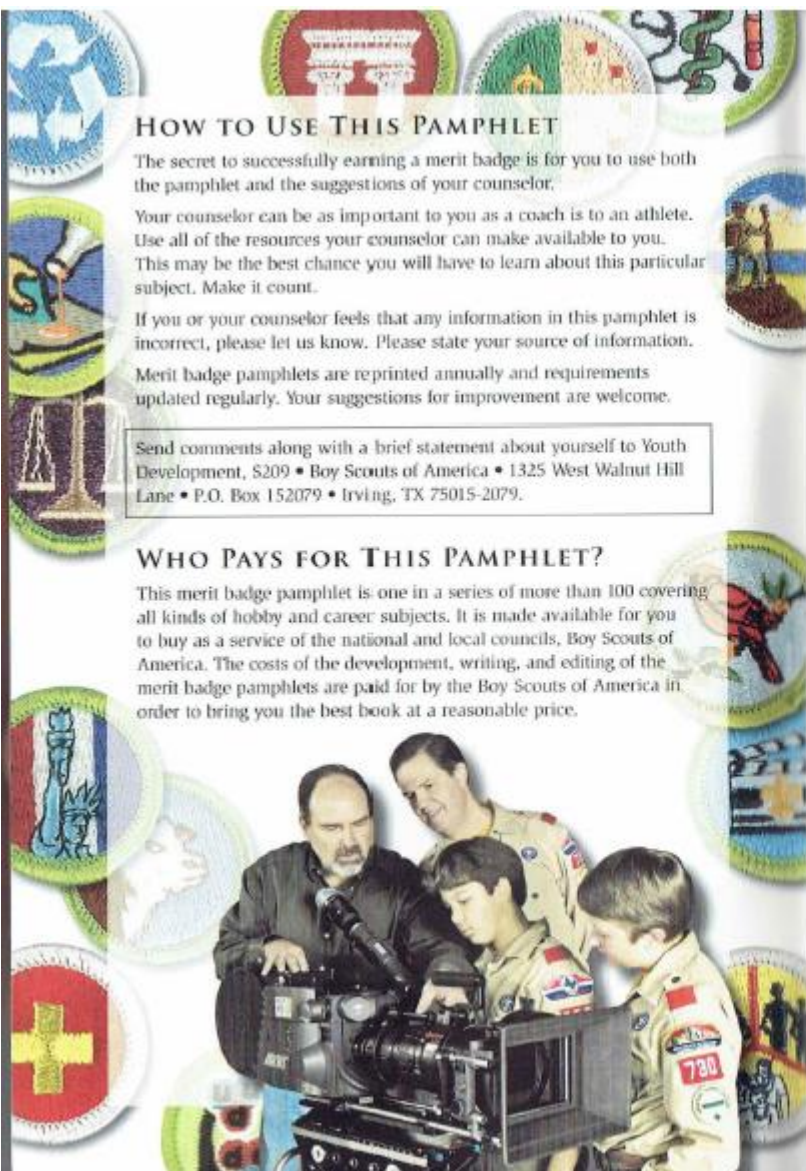
If you or your counselor feels that any information in this pamphlet is incorrect, please let us know. Please state your source of information.

Merit badge pamphlets are reprinted annually and requirements updated regularly. Your suggestions for improvement are welcome.

Send comments along with a brief statement about yourself to Youth Development, S209 • Boy Scouts of America • 1325 West Walnut Hill Lane • P.O. Box 152079 • Irving, TX 75015-2079.

WHO PAYS FOR THIS PAMPHLET?

This merit badge pamphlet is one in a series of more than 100 covering all kinds of hobby and career subjects. It is made available for you to buy as a service of the national and local councils, Boy Scouts of America. The costs of the development, writing, and editing of the merit badge pamphlets are paid for by the Boy Scouts of America in order to bring you the best book at a reasonable price.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
MERIT BADGE SERIES

HORSEMANSHIP



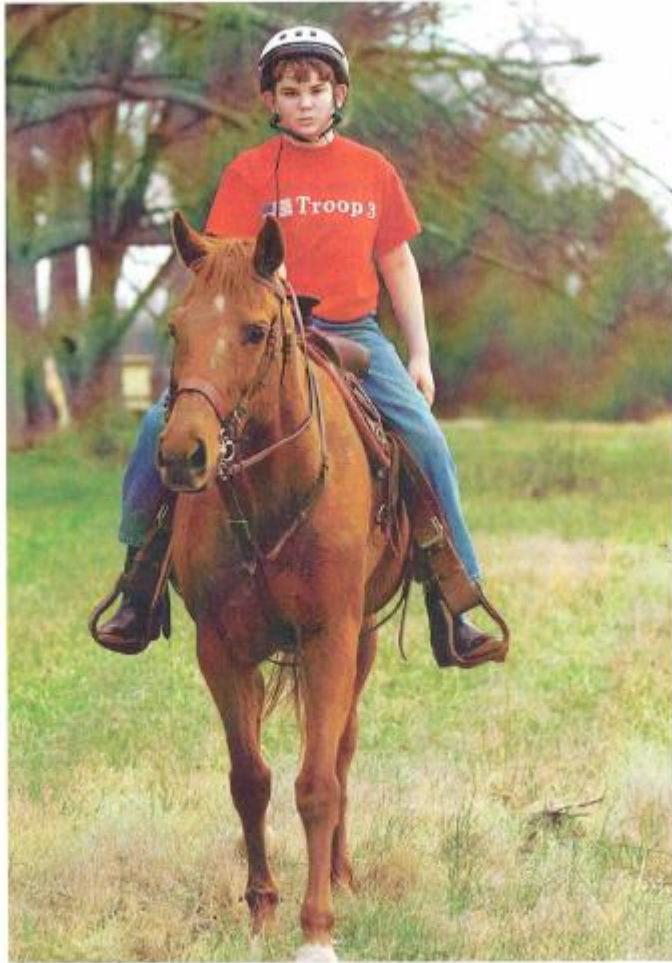
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

Requirements

1. Do the following:
 - a. Describe the safety precautions you should take when handling and caring for a horse.
 - b. Describe the fire safety precautions you should take in a barn and around horses.
2. Name the 15 main parts of a horse.
3. Name four breeds of horses. Explain the special features for which each breed is known.
4. Describe the symptoms of colic. Name and describe four other horse health problems.
5. Explain what conformation is and why it is important. Explain the difference between lameness and unsoundness.
6. Explain the importance of hoof care and why a horse might need to wear shoes.
7. Demonstrate how to groom a horse, including picking hooves and caring for a horse after a ride.
8. Explain how to determine what and how much to feed a horse and why the amount and kind of feed are changed according to the activity level and the breed of horse.
9. Do the following:
 - a. Name 10 parts of the saddle and bridle that you will use, and explain how to care for this equipment.

- b. Show how to properly saddle and bridle a horse.
 - c. Demonstrate how to safely mount and dismount a horse.
10. Explain and demonstrate how to approach and lead a horse safely from a stall, corral, or field and how to tie the horse securely.
11. On level ground, continuously do the following movements after safely mounting the horse. Do them correctly, at ease, and in harmony with the horse.
- a. Walk the horse in a straight line for 60 feet.
 - b. Walk the horse in a half-circle of not more than 16 feet in radius.
 - c. Trot or jog the horse in a straight line for 60 feet.
 - d. Trot or jog the horse in a half-circle of not more than 30 feet in radius.
- ~~↳lope (center) the horse in a straight line for at least 60 feet.~~
- ~~↳lope (center) the horse in a half-circle not more than 30 feet in radius.~~
- Ⓐ/ Halt straight.
- Ⓕ/ Back up straight four paces.
- Ⓘ/ Halt and dismount.

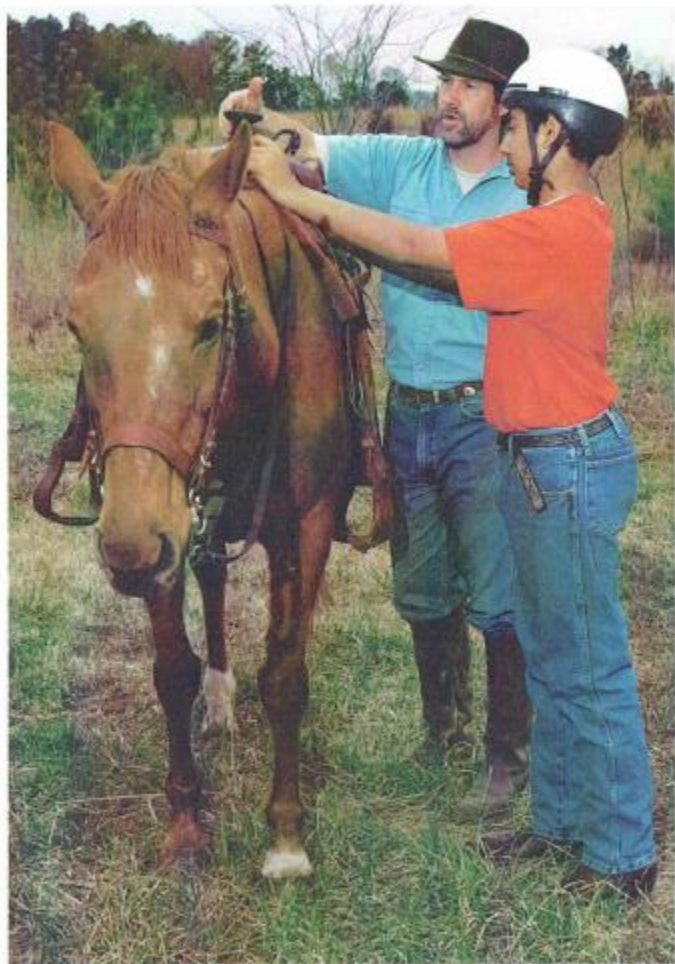




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What Is Horsemanship?

The goal of a good horseman is to become so sensitive to the entire horse, to the movements of its body and to how the horse thinks, that the rider can sense trouble, anticipate exactly how the horse will react, and move to control that reaction even before the horse is aware of its own feelings. A good rider will do these things without thinking, without even being able to explain what he did.

Will you be a rider or just a passenger? To be a good rider you must know what a horse is. You must understand the horse, and why it behaves as it does. You and your horse must become almost as one. Only then can each of you completely enjoy the advantages of the other.

The horse is a flesh-and-blood creature, but it's also a bundle of instincts. If you understand the instincts that cause a horse to act in a certain way, you can use that knowledge to become more skilled as a horseman.

Part of the Herd

Though they possess individual personalities, horses have a herd instinct. They do not like to be alone. Like other herd animals—animals that are preyed upon—horses are alert, timid, and insecure. Living in herds provides horses a sense of security and safety from real and perceived predators.

Horses also develop relationships within a herd. Wild herds have a leader, and the other horses are ranked behind this lead horse in a pecking order. This prevents fighting over food, water, and mates because a lower-ranked horse almost always yields to a higher-ranked horse.

Fossils reveal that horses have been evolving for approximately 60 million years. The first horses were no bigger than dogs and had multiple toes rather than hooves.

One of your goals as a horseman will be to soften and improve your handling and riding skills so that the experience is calm and comfortable for you and the horse. This will help you and the horse build mutual trust.

Horse Terminology

- A *stallion* is a male horse older than 4 years that is used for breeding.
- A *mare* is a female horse older than 4 years.
- A *filly* is a female horse younger than 4 years, and a *colt* is a male horse younger than 4 years.
- A *gelding* is a castrated male horse of any age. A gelding cannot be used for breeding.
- A *yearling* is a horse older than 1 year but not yet 2 years old.
- A *foal* is a young, unweaned horse of either sex, and a *weanling* is a newly weaned horse.

The leader of a wild herd usually is an older mare that the other horses respect. She leads the herd to food and safety and even settles disputes, sometimes using discipline. If a stallion is part of the herd, he protects the herd and leads it to food and water while the lead mare still leads the herd in social and day-to-day matters.

Domesticated horses also seek a leader. To practice good horsemanship, you will need to become the leader of your horse. The horse will seek direction, reassurance, food, and safety from you. If you do not become the leader, the horse will try taking the role.

Humans and horses have a long history. At various times, horses were a source of food and clothing or were viewed in mythical or religious ways. People eventually learned that horses could be domesticated and ridden. The invention of the wheel allowed people to put horses to work, hitching them to wagons and chariots for transportation, hauling, sporting events, and warfare.

Instincts, Senses, and Behavior

One of the horse's most important instincts is defense. When startled or afraid, a horse's strongest impulse is to get away. Horses use their speed, agility, bucking, and kicking to defend themselves.

Horses also develop habits. Some habits, such as those that you train the horse to do, are good and help foster your relationship with the horse. But some habits, such as biting, are bad. If you do not prevent or correct poor habits, the horse will be difficult to manage.

Horses have highly developed hearing, smell, sight, taste, touch, and what many call a sixth sense, which allows horses to recognize impending danger and to detect the moods of people around them.

Large, funnel-like ears aid a horse's hearing. The ears can rotate in any direction to pick up sounds and vibrations. A horse's ear position also is a signal of its mood. For instance, when its ears move back and forth, it is alert and listening. The ears will usually hang toward the side when a horse is relaxing or dozing. When the ears are laid back, it indicates aggression or displeasure.

Horses use their sense of smell to identify each other and other animals that could be predators. A horse's sexual behavior also is affected by smell.

Because their eyes can move independently and are positioned on the sides of the head, horses can see almost all the way around their bodies except immediately in front of and behind them, where they have blind spots. Horses also see well in the dark. But their eyes do not focus like human eyes do; a horse must raise and lower its head to see objects clearly.

Horses can detect the same four basic tastes as humans: salty, sweet, sour, and bitter.

Some people believe horses have a sweet tooth, just as people do. You might notice that your horse likes to eat apples or molasses, for example. Many commercial horse feeds have added sweeteners to make the taste more appealing.

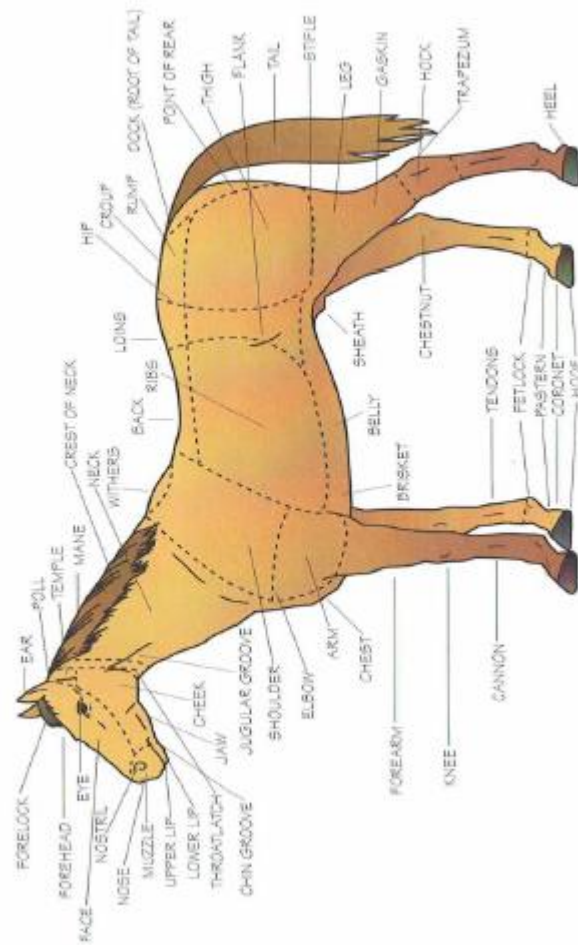
Touch is a way for horses to communicate with each other and humans. By grooming each other with tongue and teeth, horses keep clean and develop friendships. As you earn the Horsemanship merit badge, you will learn how grooming your horse will help you strengthen your relationship.



A horse's ears point to where it is directing its attention.

Horse Talk

Horses communicate through body language, vocalization, smell, taste, and touch. A horse might show displeasure by pinning back its ears, baring its teeth, biting, and turning to show its hind legs. Signs of aggression or excitement include squealing, snorting, and grunting. A horse might whinny or neigh if a meal is late or when separated from its usual companions.



Parts of a horse

The Horse

You can learn a lot by reading about horses, but the best and most fun way to learn is to actually care for and ride a horse. Taking lessons can speed up your learning. But first, learn the parts of a horse so that you can discuss them with confidence.

Markings and Coat Colors

A variety of natural markings and coat colors gives horses their distinct looks.

Common face markings include the following:

- Star—a white mark on the forehead
- Stripe—a narrow white mark from the forehead to the nose
- White muzzle—a broad white mark that covers the muzzle
- White lips—a white mark covering just the lip area



Star



Stripe



White muzzle



White lips



Blaze



Interrupted stripe



Snip



Bald

- Blaze—a broad white stripe that runs from the forehead down the nose bridge, and covers the nostrils
- Interrupted stripe—a narrow, white mark from the forehead to the nose
- Snip—a white mark between the nostrils
- Bald—a mark similar to a blaze but wider, encompassing the eyes and mouth

Leg markings include the following:

- Coronet—a white band around the coronet
- Pastern—white coloring from the hoof to the fetlock joint
- Sock—white coloring from the hoof to the top of the fetlock joint
- Stocking—white coloring from the hoof up to or covering the knee



Coronet



Pastern



Sock



Stocking

The most common colors of a horse are brown and black, but nearly any color combination is possible. Many horse colors have specific names, such as the following:

- Bay—a reddish coat with a black mane, tail, and points
- Chestnut—various shades of gold and reddish brown, from pale to a rich red
- Strawberry roan—a chestnut color mixed with white hairs
- Blue roan—black or brown mixed with white hairs
- Palomino—a golden coat with a pale tail and mane
- Pinto—two coat colors of irregular patterns, usually white and another color such as brown or black

The great variations in a horse's color boils down to genes. For instance, a buckskin carries the cream gene, which "dilutes" its red/brown coat, giving it a yellow, cream, or gold coat. The buckskin also has black points such as on the mane, tail, and legs. Dun horses carry the dun gene, which gives the coat any color variation of yellow or cream. A dun always has a black dorsal stripe running down the middle of the back and some variation of other markings. The Appaloosa is a breed with distinctive dark patches over a white coat.



A characteristic buckskin



Palomino



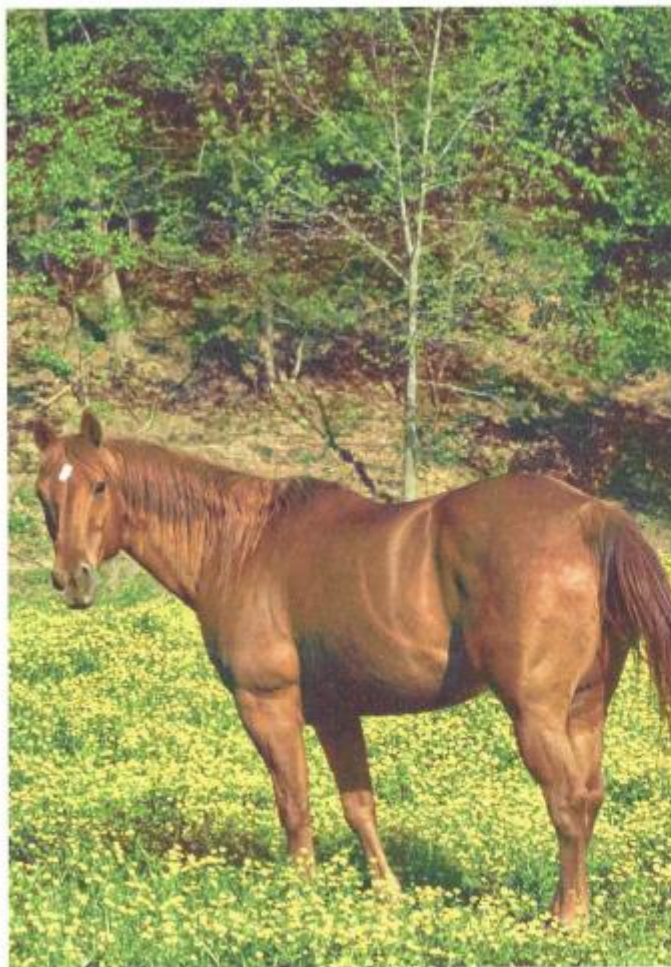
Dun with light-colored guard hairs at the dock, alongside the trademark black dorsal stripe.



Appaloosa



Pinto



Choosing a Horse

Because horse breeds can be as varied as breeds of other animals, such as dogs and cats, it is important to weigh the characteristics of each breed before choosing a horse. You will need to decide what factors are best for the purpose you have in mind for the horse, whether riding for pleasure, working cattle, showing, or competing. Decide on the breed, age, size, and sex of the horse accordingly.

Owning a horse is expensive and time-consuming, so first determine why you want one. Deciding whether you are able to handle the responsibility and expense takes great consideration. If you decide to buy a horse, have an experienced horseman help you select one, and have a veterinarian examine it. Buy from a knowledgeable and reputable horseman.

Equine describes anything relating to a horse or horse family.

Horse Breeds

A breed of horse is an equine group that has a set of characteristics that distinguish it from other horses. These characteristics are preserved through selective breeding over a period of time. With purebred horses, the pedigree, or lineage, is recorded in a stud book. A male horse used for breeding often is called a stud. Stud stables or farms provide purebred male horses for breeding.

American Saddlebred

This breed, originally the Kentucky Saddler, was developed during the 19th century in the southern United States. Its ancestors include the Canadian Pacer, Narragansett Pacer, Morgan, Arabian, and Thoroughbred.



The American Saddlebred is an elegant and comfortable riding horse.

Gymkhana includes competitions where horse and rider compete against others in timed events, including barrel racing, pole bending, and stake racing.

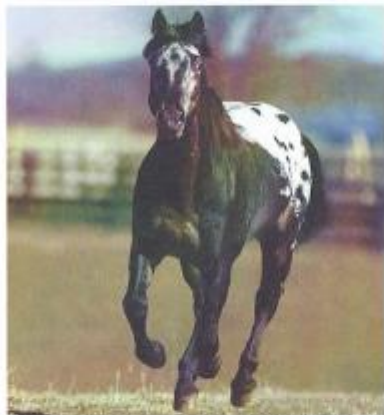
Because of its high-stepped gait, the breed is popular for recreational riding and show competitions, faring especially well in the five-gaited, three-gaited, fine harness, park, and pleasure categories. It also is popular for farm work and riding over rough terrain. American Saddlebreds have strength, stamina, and a pleasant temperament. They usually are bay- or chestnut-colored, but they also can be gray, black, palomino, and roan. These horses usually stand 15 to 16 hands tall.

A horse is measured in hands. One hand equals 4 inches. The measurement starts from the top of the horse's withers. A pony is shorter than 57 inches, or 14.2 hands; miniatures are shorter than 34 inches, or 8.5 hands.

Appaloosa

The Appaloosa is a distinctive and popular breed in the United States. The breed was developed by the Nez Perce Indians in the 18th century using stock the Spanish conquistadors brought to the Americas, but it was nearly wiped out in the late 1800s due to indiscriminate breeding. In 1938, Claude Thompson, a wheat farmer from Moro, Oregon, wanted to preserve the breed and established the Appaloosa Horse Club. The club has been largely responsible for the breed's rebound.

The Appaloosa has five coat patterns: blanket, marble, leopard, snowflake, and frost. The American Appaloosa stands from 14.2 to 15.2 hands, but European types can grow larger. Appaloosas are excellent to use as pleasure horses and in parades, jumping, reining, dressage, and gymkhana games.

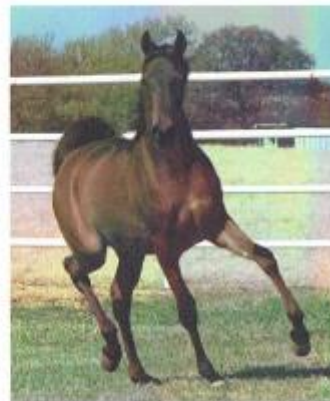


The Appaloosa has endurance, is athletic, and is easy to train.

Arabian

The Arabian is considered the oldest and purest of all breeds. Developed in Arabia, the breed's purity has been carefully maintained for thousands of years. Arabians have been bred in the United States since Colonial times.

Its short head and dished (concave) face make the Arabian unmistakable. The nostrils and eyes are large, and the eyes are widely spaced and positioned lower on the face than in other breeds. The ears are small and sometimes curve inward. Most Arabians are under 15 hands, with the ideal height between 14.2 and 15 hands. True Arabians have solid color and can be chestnut, gray, bay, or black. They often are seen in show classes for English and Western pleasure, trail, cutting, reining, jumping, and dressage.



Arabians bond well with humans and are known for stamina, speed, intelligence, and grace.

Draft Horses

A draft horse is a large horse bred for pulling heavy loads. Although machinery has largely replaced the work horse, the draft horse continues to hold a place of importance and tradition in farming areas. Common breeds of draft horses include the Belgian, Percheron, and Clydesdale. Draft horses weigh at least 1600 pounds

and stand at least 16 hands high. They have relatively deep, wide, strongly muscled bodies with strong backs and quarters. Their legs are short, and the leg bones are large and strong. Draft horses share the common traits of strength, patience, and a docile temperament, making them ideal for a multitude of purposes, including farming, show, and other recreational uses.



Clydesdale



Morgans bond well with humans of all ages. Its traits include loyalty, tirelessness, reliability, and versatility.



The calm disposition and comfortable ride of the Tennessee walking horse make it very desirable.



Thoroughbreds were brought to the United States in the 18th century, and nearly all were bred for racing. Others were used as saddle horses and polo mounts.

Morgan

The Morgan was developed in the United States in the late 18th and early 19th centuries from the offspring of a horse named after its owner, Justin Morgan. The Morgan is considered a general-purpose horse.

Morgans have small ears set above a broad forehead. They have large eyes, an arched neck, a broad chest, a short back, and compact bodies. The coat usually is reddish but can be brown or black. They are usually between 14 and 15 hands tall. Morgans excel in many disciplines, including driving, carriage, park saddle, harness, hunter, dressage, cutting, competitive trail, pleasure saddle, reining, classic pleasure, and jumper.

Tennessee Walking Horse

The gait that made a day's work in the saddle comfortable for Southern plantation owners continues to be the best-known characteristic of the Tennessee walking horse. Today, this docile horse is a favorite mount of park rangers, mounted police, field trail enthusiasts, hunters, endurance riders, competitive trail riders, and show-ring performers. It is famous for the running walk that produces the unusual sliding ride that is so comfortable. The Tennessee walker can cover as much as eight miles an hour at the walk instead of the four or five typical of other mounts.

Thoroughbred

Thoroughbred ancestry dates to three 17th-century sires—the Darley Arabian, the Godolphin Arabian, and the Byerley Turk. In England, offspring from these stallions were bred with stronger domestic horses, resulting in a horse that could carry weight with a sustained speed over longer distances.

Intelligent and courageous, thoroughbreds are a popular choice in many disciplines, including hunting, jumping and eventing, and horse trials. Thoroughbreds usually are between 16 and 16.2 hands. The head is lean, and veins can be seen underneath its thin skin. The alert eyes are big and the nostrils are large. Principal colors are black,

brown, gray, chestnut, and bay. Thoroughbreds often are high-strung, nervous, and sensitive, and they can be temperamental.

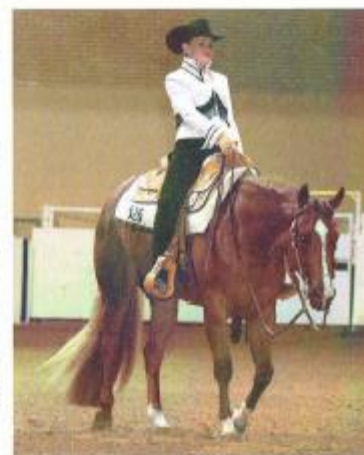
Quarter Horse

The quarter horse was the first breed established and developed in the United States. It was developed from Spanish and Middle Eastern breeds that were crossed with horses from England and Ireland in the early 17th century. This combination resulted in a compact, heavily muscled horse that excelled in short-distance racing.

The quarter horse often is used for ranch work. Because of its ability to start, stop, and turn quickly, it is perfect for working cattle. It excels as a cutting horse, hunter, and pleasure horse. The quarter horse stands between 15 and 16 hands, and the usual color is chestnut.

Paint

The paint is descended from Spanish horses and is distinguished by its two-toned coat. Within the breed, the coat patterns are divided loosely into three types: tobiano, which is a mostly white coat with dark spots; overo, which is a mostly dark coat with white spots; and tovero, a combination of tobiano and overo. American Indians liked the paint because its blotchy coat provided a natural camouflage. Western cowboys liked it because it could maintain a comfortable pace over long distances. Paints stand between 14 and 16 hands and have a wide range of builds and temperaments.



The quarter horse got its name from English settlers in the United States who raced them on quarter-mile stretches.



Paints can come in a variety of colors that generally fall into one of three coat patterns—tobiano, overo, or tovero.

Conformation

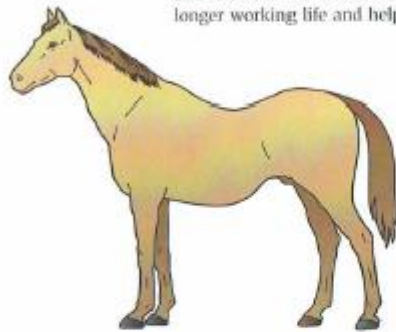
Conformation refers to a horse's build. It includes the horse's skeletal and muscular structures and all of the physical features and proportions that are characteristic of its breed. A horse's conformation is a critical indication of its soundness and ability. A well-proportioned horse will be well-balanced, which allows it to move efficiently and makes it less prone to unsoundness and strain. A well-balanced conformation will give the horse a longer working life and help it maintain a better temperament.

As you choose your horse, keep the following things in mind.

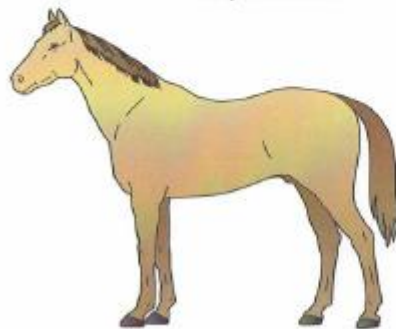
First, look at the horse's general build. It should be muscular and the muscles should look evenly built, giving the horse a balanced shape.

Look for a well-shaped head that is proportional to the rest of the body. A head that is too big or small will upset the balance of the horse's overall appearance. Likewise, the features of the face—the ears, eyes, and nostrils—should be symmetrical and look proportional to the size of the head. The neck should be muscular, proportional to the rest of the body, and slightly arched.

The arch in the back should dip slightly, and the withers should be prominent, showing firm support for the neck muscles. In a mature horse, the croup will be aligned with the withers. If the arch in the back dips



Swaybacked horse



Horse with normally curved back

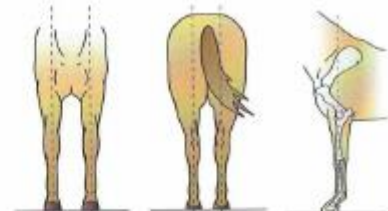
too low, the horse is sway-backed. A well-aligned back and withers means a saddle will fit better.

Straight legs are important for long-term soundness. Irregularities affect how the horse moves (which might affect its rideability) and may lead to unsoundness. View a horse from all sides to assess the legs.

When viewing the forelegs and hind legs from the front and behind, the alignment of each should follow a vertical line dropped from the shoulder blades and buttocks through middle of the knees, hocks, and fetlocks to the center of the hooves.

From the side, the vertical alignment of the forelegs passes through the center of knee, cannon bone, and fetlock, and lands behind the heel. When viewing the hind legs from the side, a line dropped from the point of the buttock to the ground should touch the hock and continue down the vertical line formed by the rear of the cannon bone and fetlock.

The illustrations here show some conformation faults you might see in a horse's legs:



Proper front and hind leg alignment, front and rear views

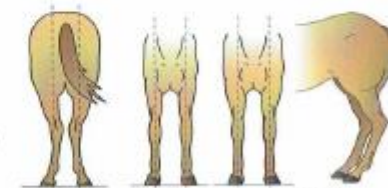
Proper front leg alignment, side view



Bend-kneed—the cannon bones are turned outward below the knee

Knock-kneed—the legs are curved inward at the knees

Bowlegged—the hocks are positioned too far to the sides



Cow-hocked—inwardly turned hocks, which can make the toes point outward

Splay-footed—the toes are turned outward below the fetlock

Sickle-hocked—excessively angled and weak hocks

Age Considerations

A well-cared-for horse can be saddle-mounted for about 20 years. An older horse that is already trained makes a better mount for a beginning rider than a young, untrained horse.

Sex, Disposition, and Soundness

Mares and geldings usually are the best choices for saddle horses. Geldings usually are calmer and steadier than mares or stallions. A mare might be more difficult to handle when she is in heat, which occurs for several days about once a month throughout the spring, summer, and fall.



Beginning riders should start with a mature, trained horse. A beginning rider should never consider mounting an untrained or unbroken horse. Stallions should never be chosen for young or novice riders.

Owning a Horse

If you keep a horse in a pasture, the general rule is one horse per acre. A horse kept in a barn or stable will need bedding so that it does not stand on a hard surface constantly. Dust-free wood shavings make a good, clean bedding. Hemp also can be used.

Stables and barns should be cleaned every day, sometimes more often. Remove all horse



Before you buy a horse, be sure you have a place to keep it. If you do not live on a farm or ranch, you will need to board the horse. Boarding rates will vary according to services provided.

waste and soiled bedding. Sweep and hose down the floor. After the floor is dry, add clean bedding.

You probably will need a way to transport your horse, which means either buying or borrowing a horse trailer and having a vehicle that can pull the trailer.

Safety With Horses

Before you handle a horse, you should know a few safety rules. Because horses can sense if you are afraid, be confident yet careful around them. Prevent accidents and injuries by following these rules.

• Ground Safety

- Never startle a horse. Always speak reassuringly whenever you approach.
- While working around a horse, stay close to the front or sides so it will not be tempted to kick you and, if it does kick, you will not be struck with the full force of the kick.
- Never approach a horse directly from the rear because a horse has a blind spot directly behind it. You might startle it and cause it to kick, which could result in a serious injury.
- Walk beside your horse, near the shoulder, when leading it—never ahead or behind.



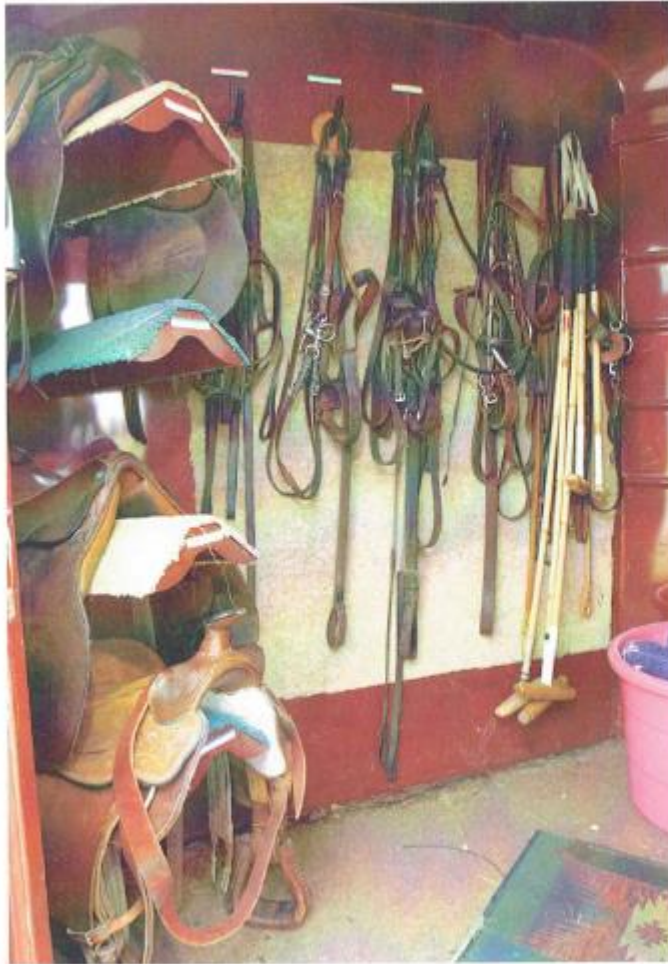
Facing the same direction as the horse, the near side of the horse is on your left, and the off side is on your right.

- Do not wrap the lead strap, halter rope, or reins around your hand, wrist, or body. Lead from the left or near side, using your right hand to hold the lead rope. Keep the excess rope in the left hand in an S shape with your fingers to the outside.
- If the horse rears, release the hand nearest the halter so that you stay on the ground.
- Never mount in a barn or near fences, trees, or overhangs. A sidestepping horse could force you into one of these obstacles.

• Riding Safety

- Never bind yourself to the horse or saddle.
- Keep the horse under control and maintain a secure seat at all times. Horses are easily frightened by strange noises and objects.
- When a horse is frightened and attempts to run, turn it in a circle and tighten the circle until the horse stops.
- Hold your mount to a walk when going downhill or uphill.
- Slow down and hold the horse's head up when riding over rough ground or in sand, mud, ice, or snow, where there is a danger it might slip and fall.
- Avoid paved roads because a horse, especially one with shoes, can slip and fall. When you must cross a paved surface, slow the horse to a walk, or dismount and lead the horse across.
- Beginning riders should not jump a horse. If you cannot avoid a jump, give your horse a loose rein, grasp the saddle, and lean well forward with your heels down.
- If lost on a trail, allow the horse to go its own way. A horse knows where it is fed and, if given a choice, will return to that place.

Never approach a horse from the rear or directly in front. These are blind spots for the horse.



Tack

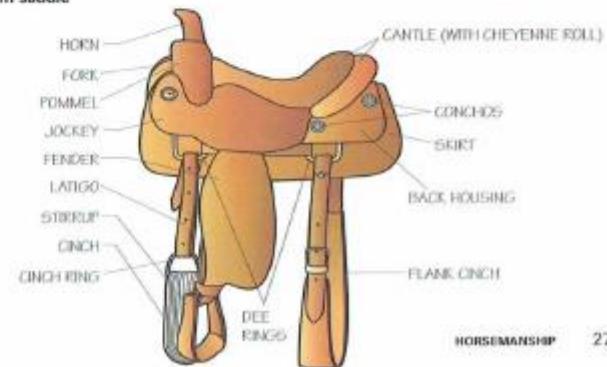
You will need several pieces of *tack*, or equipment, to ride and care for a horse. The cost of equipment can be high. To save money, you might buy used tack that has been well-maintained. Whatever you buy, the tack must fit the horse. Learning to properly use and take care of equipment is important.

Saddles

The type of saddle you get will depend on your reason for riding the horse. Distinctive styles of Western and English saddles are available for dressage, show jumping, Western pleasure, and saddle seat classes. You might choose an English general-purpose saddle or a Western trail saddle because both can be used for several activities.

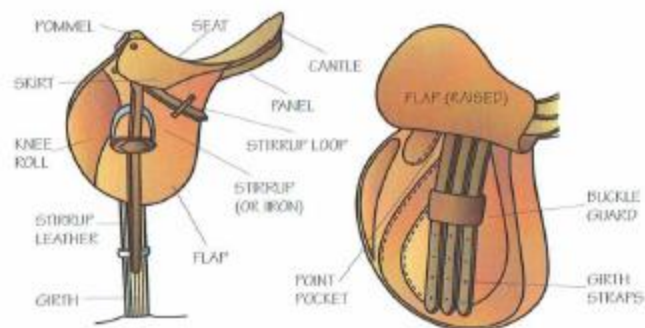
- Saddles are made of leather or a synthetic material. Quality leather saddles are supple, strong, long-lasting, and costly. Synthetic saddles usually are less expensive and easier to maintain, but they might not be as durable.

Western saddle



Tack includes saddles, bridles, harnesses, and other equipment you use for riding or leading a horse.

English saddle



An ill-fitting or poorly adjusted saddle will make the horse's back sore.

English and Western saddles have distinct differences. The Western saddle was designed for driving cattle and is also called a stock saddle. It has a higher cantle (the raised back part), a higher pommel (the raised front part), and longer stirrup leathers than the English saddle. The Western saddle also has a saddle horn, for tying and carrying rope to lasso cattle.

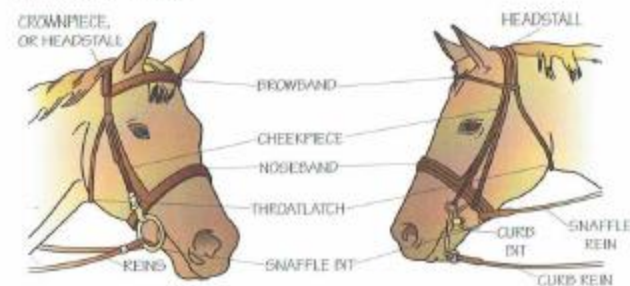
The heavier and larger Western saddle might give a beginner more security, but it is harder to handle than an English saddle, which is lighter and flatter and requires that the rider develop a surer seat, which can lead to better horsemanship. On an English saddle, the rider sits closer to the horse, which allows the rider to more easily use posture and leg movement to communicate to the horse.

Consider the size and shape of the horse when fitting a saddle. Have an experienced horseman check the fit of the tack on the horse to make sure the saddle does not slip, rock from side to side, or pinch the horse's withers.

The main interior support of the saddle is called the tree. It can be made of wood or a hard synthetic material and is covered with leather or synthetic material. The girth or cinch is a strap of leather, cotton, wool, or synthetic material and is used to secure the saddle to the horse. Flaps, skirts, and fenders protect the horse's sides and the rider's legs.

Bridles

The rider uses the bridle and reins to tell the horse where to go, stop, or turn. Pulling or guiding the reins pulls on the bit and the bar in the horse's mouth, which applies pressure to the horse's tongue.



Single rein

Double rein

Bridle types include the single, double, and hackamore. However, only experienced riders should use the double and hackamore bridles. Parts of the bridle can include the headstall, browband, throatlatch, noseband, cheek piece, bit, and reins.

When positioning the bridle, it is recommended that two fingers fit under the browband and the noseband. The browband should allow the headstall to rest comfortably behind the ears, just below the base of the ears. The other parts of the bridle can be adjusted to fit.

Full cheek snaffles are common bits used in both Western and English riding. The ordinary single-jointed snaffle bits should be fitted with about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch clearance between the horse's lips and the bit ring. Double-jointed bits are fitted more closely to the width of the horse's mouth.

The bit should be placed in the toothless gap between the front and back teeth. A correctly adjusted bit should cause only one or two wrinkles in the corner of the horse's mouth. However, this might not be appropriate with horses that have an unusually long or short mouth. A bit that suspends too low will bang against the front teeth. A bit that is pulled too high will press against the molars.



Saddle Pads and Blankets

The saddle pad, or numnah, adds comfort when the horse is wearing a saddle. When fitting the pad on the horse's saddle area, be sure to slide it in the same direction that the horse's hair grows. The pad should not be creased or wrinkled anywhere, and it should be pulled up fully into the saddle gullet.



Clothing

When you learn to ride, wear clothes that are comfortable and will not impede riding. That can include jeans or jodhpurs (breeches that are worn in English riding). Gloves will keep your hands clean, prevent blisters, and give you a better grip on the reins. Western boots, long riding boots, or jodhpur boots are recommended. You should not wear flexible, light shoes or heavy hiking boots. In certain terrain, shoes with cleats add traction.



Safety Stirrups and Helmets

Horse riding can be dangerous, so take precautions to ride safely. First, make sure you have proper-fitting tack to help avoid causing the horse to become irritated and hard to control.

A proper riding helmet is very important. Only helmets approved for equestrian activities (such as one approved for horseback riding by the ASTM) should be used. Helmets designed for other sports will not give you the necessary level of protection.



Wear an equestrian helmet to help prevent head injuries that could be caused by falling from a horse or being kicked. Consider using safety stirrups to ensure that your foot does not get trapped in the stirrup if you fall. Be sure the stirrups fit your footwear. Use stirrups that are $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wider than the footwear.

When participating in Scouting-related horsemanship activities that call for you to work directly with or around a horse, you should wear an equestrian helmet approved by ASTI and ANSI.



Care of Equipment

Your safety and the horse's comfort depend on tack that is clean and in good condition. To take care of tack properly, you will need these items:

- Saddle soap
- Multiple sponges, for washing and soaping
- Chamois cloth
- Leather conditioner such as neat's-foot oil
- Metal polish
- Cheesecloth
- Clean towels
- A blunt knife
- A stiff toothbrush
- A straight stick to poke excess soap out of buckle holes, etc.
- A saddle rack to hold the saddle
- A bridle rack

Clean the tack after each ride, especially the leather parts. If you cannot do a complete cleaning, at least clean under the saddle and wipe the reins clean using a damp sponge.



To properly clean, strip the saddle of the girth and stirrup leathers and, on English saddles, remove the stirrup irons. Using a damp washing sponge, wipe off dirt or any mud on the saddle and parts you have removed. Do not forget the underside of the saddle.

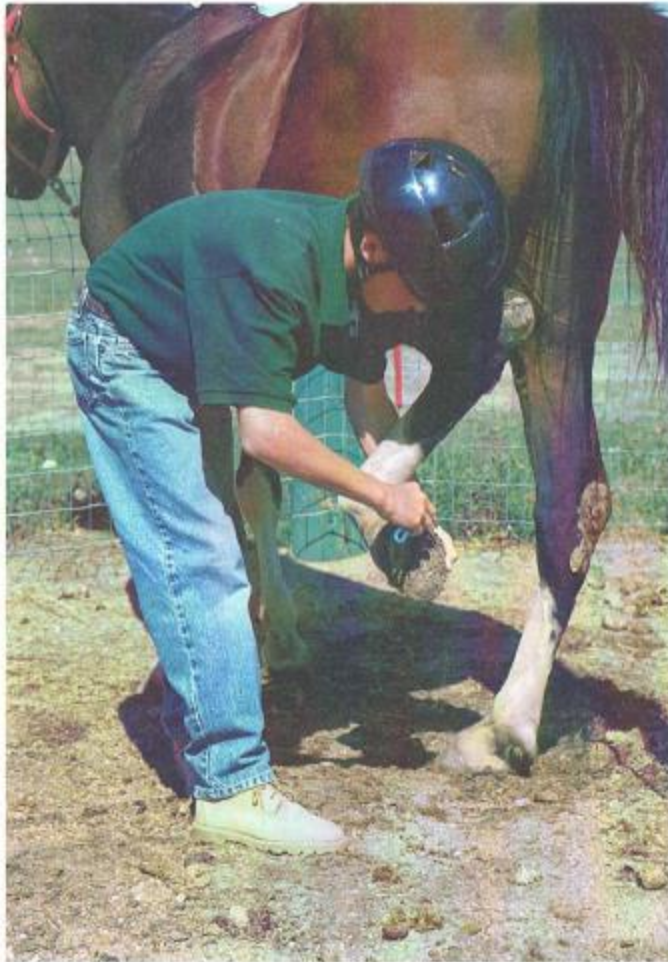


Use a chamois to help dry the tack. After the tack dries, rub a sponge with wet saddle soap and sponge the soap into the saddle using a circular motion. The sponge should be only slightly damp so that the soap does not lather. Re-soap the sponge often. Be sure to soap underneath the flaps, then soap the stirrup leathers, and other leathers. Clean the Western saddle stirrups, which often are covered in rawhide. Wipe off excess soap with a damp cloth. You can oil the leather parts on occasion, but use oil sparingly.

If you have a fabric girth, it can be scrubbed with a mild detergent. Rinse off the soap thoroughly and prevent rust by immediately drying and polishing the metal billet buckles or cinch ring.

Use metal polish on the metal parts. But do not put polish on the mouthpiece or wash it with soap. Wash the mouthpiece occasionally with warm water. Keep saddle blankets and pads clean, dry, and well-aired.

Store tack properly, such as in a well-ventilated storage shed—not in places such as a car trunk or dusty barn. Hang up the bridle, and put the saddle on a saddle rack or saddle horse.

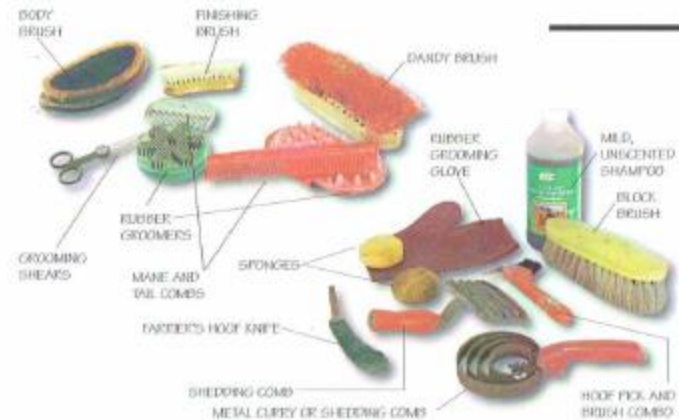


Grooming and Care

Proper grooming of your horse is important. Dirty coats can lead to fungus and other skin problems. Grooming gives you a chance to look for parasites and wounds. Plus, grooming will give you a sleek, good-looking horse.

Outdoor horses do not need to be bathed as often as stabled horses because outdoor horses need to build up more natural body grease for protection against the weather. Also, outdoor horses will roll in the grass or dirt to help stimulate their skin.

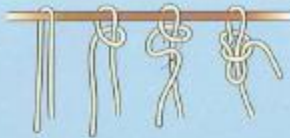
Grooming equipment you will need:



If the horse has caked and dried mud or dirt on it, use the dandy brush to remove the dirt by working in the direction of hair growth. Wash off wet mud, or wait until it dries to brush it off.

Aside from being a necessary task, grooming allows you to communicate and build a closer relationship with your horse. Talk kindly and softly to your horse while grooming.

Before grooming, tie the horse in a safe place inside a stable or outside, using a quick-release knot like the one shown here. This knot enables you to release the horse quickly in case of emergency. Be sure the tie is level with, or slightly higher than, the horse's wither.



Step 1—Tie the free end of the horse's lead rope to a breakaway tie—a piece of string, baling twine, or leather. Then, tie the breakaway tie around a post or through a ring.

Step 2—Create a loop by bringing the free end over and around the tie end (the part of the rope attached to the horse).

Step 3—Make another loop with the free end, and push this loop through the one you made in step 2.

Step 4—Pull the tip of this loop to tighten the knot.

To undo the knot in case of an emergency, pull the free end.

Next, with the body brush in one hand, work from the front of the horse toward the rear. Work the brush in the direction in which the hair grows. Here are some other grooming tips.

- Take care not to bang the hard edges of the body brush against bony areas.
- Keep the hand that is not brushing in contact with the horse. Doing so helps to quiet the horse. It will also warn you of any dangerous movement the horse may make.

Remember, horses have blind spots directly in front of and behind them.



- Use a soft brush or the body brush to gently brush over the eyes and ears.
- After every few strokes, clean your brush with the metal currycomb.
- Keep a routine of the areas brushed, starting with the near side, or left side, so that you do not miss an area. Brush firmly, but do not be too rough.
- Use the body brush on the mane, forelock, and tail. Brush gently, working through a few hairs at a time to avoid breaking the hairs. Use your fingers to untangle any knots while holding the hair in the other hand. After brushing, you can lay out the mane and tail using a damp brush to help keep the hair in place.
- Pull long, unwanted hairs from the mane rather than cut the mane.
- Brush the forelegs, paying special attention to the joint areas and the area behind the pasterns. Do not use a currycomb below the horse's knees.
- With a damp sponge, clean the dirt and discharges from the nose, lips, and eyes. With a different sponge, clean the rear, the tail, and, if you have a gelding, the sheath. Wash the sponges thoroughly after using them.
- A final polish is next. Use a dampened soft cloth or a chamois to smooth down the whole horse.

Normally, you should not comb or brush the tail on a regular basis. Doing so can break the hair or pull it out. Over time, this would result in a sparse, thin tail.

Some horses might be ticklish between the hind legs and on the belly. You might need to use your hand to brush these areas.





Hoof Care

A horse's usefulness depends greatly on the condition of its hooves, which need daily inspection and attention to stay healthy. For example, rocks and other objects can lodge in the hooves and cause bruising. In addition, long-term exposure to bacteria can lead to infections.

Hooves grow continuously. Starting when a horse is about 6 weeks old, the hooves should be leveled with a rasp (file) to prevent the bones from growing crooked. Lifting, inspecting, and cleaning the hooves daily will prepare the horse for the possible next step of shoeing.

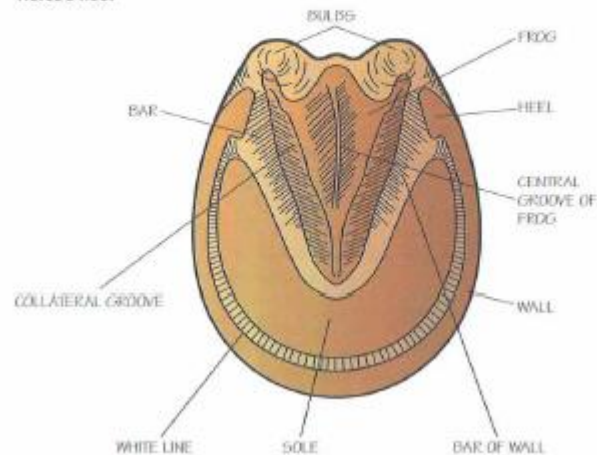


Use the hoof pick to carefully clean the bottom of each hoof from heel to toe. Clean with the point working away from you.



Rasping and shoeing should be done only by a farrier.

Horse's hoof



A hoof pick probably will be the most important item in your grooming kit. Always clean the hooves before and after riding.

Most horses are first shod at about age 2. Shoes help prevent excessive hoof wear under rocky conditions. Horses with shoes need a hoof trim and reshoeing about every six to eight weeks.

Horses with conformation faults can be helped by proper shoeing. A horse that has flat soles or weak hoof walls probably will need shoes. Shoes can protect the hooves from objects, such as stones. Horses that are ridden in the winter, when the footing can be slippery, will need the added traction that shoes provide. Special cleats also can be used to enhance footing under certain conditions.

It is best to keep horses out of wet, muddy areas because these conditions can promote fungal infections. Besides thrush and founder, which are discussed later in this pamphlet, other problems with hooves include corns, bruised soles, abscesses, cracks, splitting, and navicular disease.