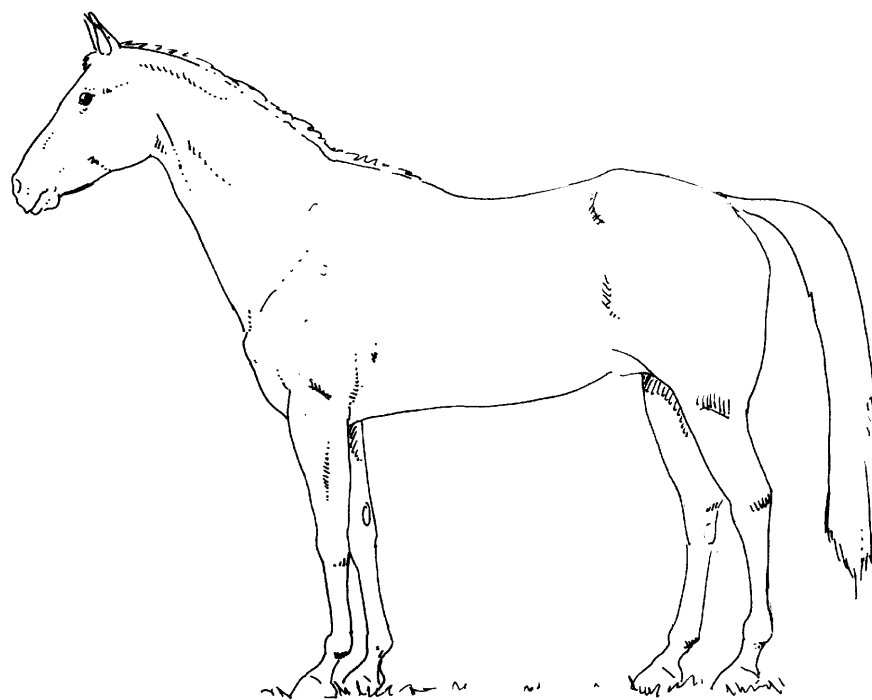


# BEGINNING HORSEMANSHIP



by

**JENNIFER  
LEACH**



4-H 

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

### Acknowledgment

The author acknowledges Iris “Dolly” Hughes, former director of the WSU Horse Program, for her wisdom and knowledge about horse behavior, horse safety, and horsemanship.

## **Washington 4-H Youth Development Policy on Protective Headgear in the 4-H Equine Program**

All Washington 4-H junior and intermediate youth participating in Performance Horse, Driving, Trail, Western Games, Hunt Seat Over Fences, Rodeo, Team Penning, and Team Roping Projects and activities will wear American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) and Safety Engineering Institute (SEI) #1163 equestrian approved protective headgear, properly fitted with chin strap, when mounted and riding in 4-H horse riding activities.

October 1, 1997, all 4-H youth in 4-H horse projects and activities will wear protective headgear.



## **INTRODUCTION**

This handbook is written for beginning riders, to help them prepare and ride horses safely. It also includes important information about the horse's senses and social behavior.

Use this handbook in conjunction with the Washington 4-H Horse Advancement program to provide beginning riders with the skills and knowledge to handle and ride horses safely and competently.



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# Chapter I



# HORSE BEHAVIOR and SENSES

- **Vision**
- **Touch**
- **Hearing**
- **Social Behavior**

## Goals

When you have learned the material in this chapter, you will:

- Know about the horse's sense of vision (sight).
- Know about the horse's sense of touch.
- Know about the horse's sense of hearing.
- Know about the horse's social behavior.

## Vision

The sense of vision (sight) is special in the horse. Like people, the horse can see the same scene with both eyes at once; this is called binocular vision. But the horse can also see separate pictures with each eye; this is called

monocular vision. It is important to know about the horse's sense of sight to understand why a horse reacts the way it does.

## Monocular Vision

The horse's eyes are set wide apart compared to human eyes. This wide eye position allows the horse to see areas to each side of its body. This increased side vision was developed to protect the horse from predators, so it could see danger coming from either side without turning its head (Fig. 1).

## Binocular Vision

To judge distances, the horse uses its binocular vision (looking at the same thing with both eyes at once). However, the horse's binocular vision is not as good as its monocular vision. Some horses have better binocular vision because their eyes are set closer together. Other horses have to learn to develop their binocular vision through training. An example of this training would be teaching a rope horse to follow cattle at the correct distance, teaching a barrel racing horse to judge the distance to the barrel to make a nice smooth turn around it, or teaching a jumper how to properly approach and jump a fence.

## Some Facts About Vision

- A horse has a blind spot directly behind its hindquarters.
- A horse can't see directly below its head.
- A horse must lower its head to see faraway objects.
- A horse must raise its head to see close objects.
- If an object is closer than four feet, the horse can't see it with its binocular vision.
- It takes time for a horse to adjust its eyesight to a dark stall, a dark trailer, a dark building, etc.
- A grazing horse can see almost all the way around its body.
- A horse has a hard time focusing clearly on objects, but it is very good at detecting movement.

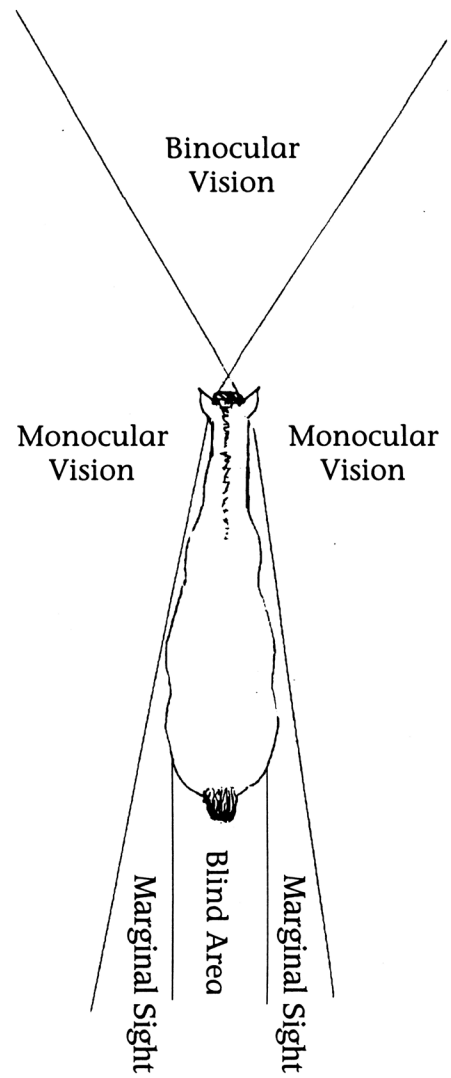


Figure 1



# Touch

The horse has a well-developed sense of touch. As a result, touch is the horse's most important sense for responding to cues (signals) from the rider.

## Sensitive Areas of Touch

The most sensitive areas to touch on a horse are around the eyes, ears, and nose. The horse's survival depends on seeing, hearing, and breathing, so the horse wants to protect its eyes, ears, and nose.

Other areas sensitive to touch are the withers, ribs, flanks, and legs. Horses that haven't been handled very much are very fearful of anything touching or holding their legs. Horses are also very fearful of anything touching their flanks, so it is important not to let the rider's legs or the back cinch touch the sensitive flank area.

The sense of touch plays an important part in riding. The horse responds to the rider's hands through the touch of the bit on its mouth and to the touch of the rider's legs on its ribs. But the horse's mouth and ribs have to be kept sensitive through the correct and careful use of the hands and legs. If the rider's touch is light and gentle, these areas will stay sensitive and the horse will respond. But a rider who always jerks on the horse's mouth or kicks the horse in the ribs will have a horse with an unresponsive mouth and sides. It takes a conscious effort by the rider to keep these areas responsive.

Another sensitive area that plays an important part in riding is the horse's withers and back. A horse responds readily to shifts in the rider's weight. You can ask your horse to stop, turn, and go forward by slightly shifting your body position (weight), along with cues from your legs and hands. Exaggerated weight shifts may throw the horse off balance or confuse it. This is why it is important for the rider to stay deep in the saddle and sit up straight.

# Hearing

The horse has an excellent sense of hearing. In fact, the horse's sense of hearing is much better than its sense of sight. Because of this, the eyes and ears always work together. First, the ears will point towards the sound so that the horse can hear it better. Then the horse will try to see what is making the sound.

The horse's sense of hearing can be useful in riding. The horse can be trained to respond to soft voice commands such as "walk," "jog," "lope," and "whoa." The horse may also respond to "clucking" to make it go forward. These voice commands work best when combined with gentle leg cues, light hands, and shifts in weight.

# Social Behavior

Horses have a very strong desire for the company of other horses. This is a basic survival instinct. A group of horses can protect themselves from predators much better than one horse alone.

The basic desire of a horse to be with other horses can cause problems for the rider or handler. A horse separated from other horses may become nervous and uneasy. As a result, it may not pay attention to cues from the rider or handler. Many times the horse will not want to leave the barn because it feels safer there. This is called a "barn sour" horse.

Fortunately, most horses learn they have nothing to fear by being alone or leaving the barn. But it takes time and careful handling to change this basic behavior pattern.

# Learning Review: Horse Behavior and Senses

## Vision

1. Explain monocular vision.
2. Explain how a horse sees a close or distant object.
3. Explain how a horse sees while grazing.
4. Explain binocular vision.
5. Identify two areas (blind spots) where the horse cannot see objects.

## Touch

1. Identify the three most sensitive areas of touch on the horse's body and explain why they are so sensitive.
2. Identify four other areas sensitive to touch.
3. Explain how the sense of touch plays an important part in riding horses.

## Hearing

1. Explain how the horse's sense of hearing is useful in riding.
2. Explain how the horse's sense of hearing compares with its sense of sight and how the two senses work together.

## Social Behavior

1. Explain why a horse has a strong need for company.
2. Explain the major problem that occurs when a horse is separated from other horses.
3. Explain why a horse becomes "barn sour."

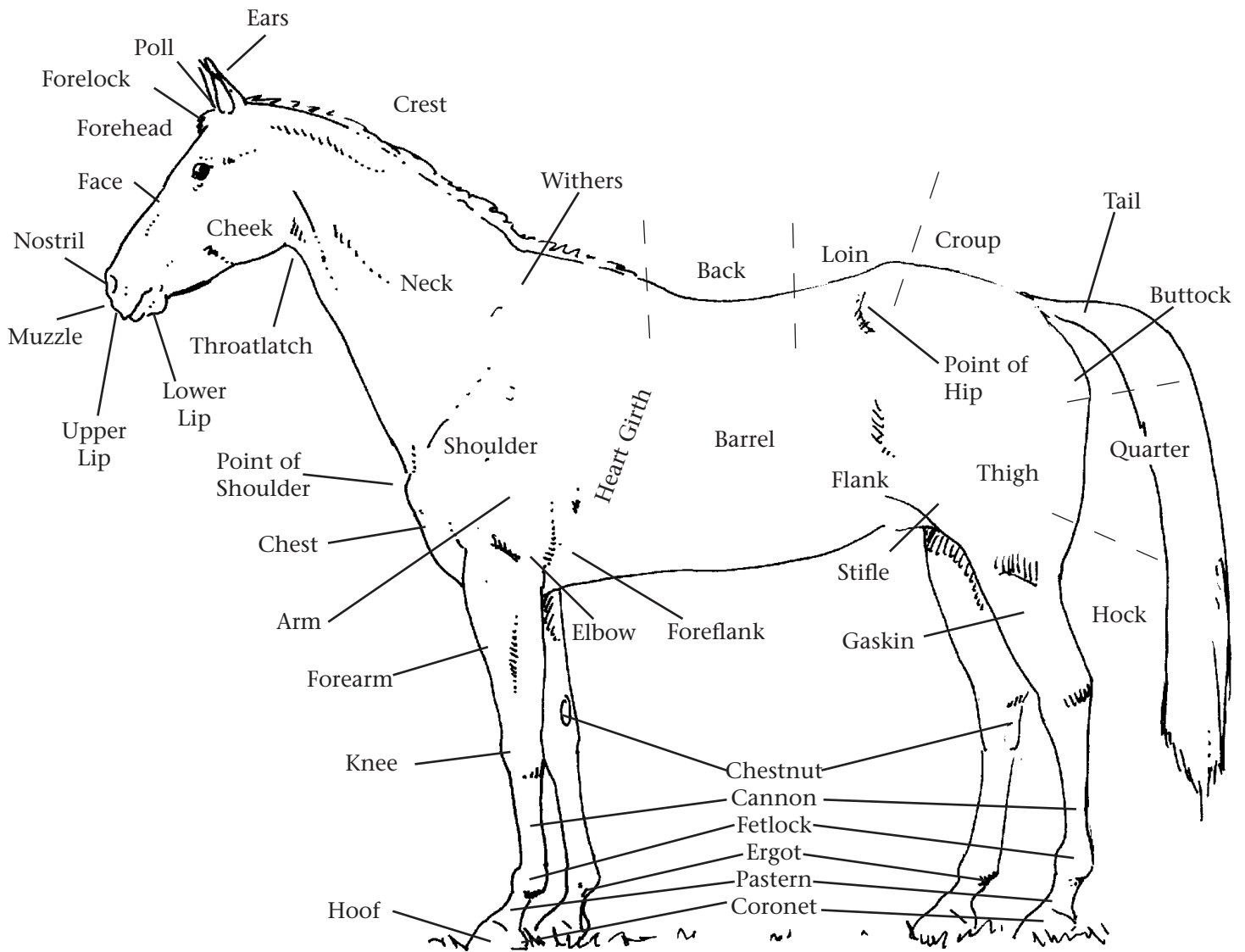


Figure 2

## Chapter II

# PREPARING the HORSE for RIDING

- **Parts of the Horse**
- **Colors and Markings**
- **Catching the Horse**
- **Leading and Tying**
- **Grooming and Hoof Cleaning**
- **Saddling**
- **Bridling**
- **Mounting and Dismounting**
- **Unbridling and Unsaddling**

### Parts of the Horse

#### Goal:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will know the parts of the horse.

Knowing the parts of the horse is the first step in learning horsemanship. You must know the parts of the horse to understand how to catch, lead, tie, groom, saddle, and bridle a horse (Fig. 2).

## Learning Review: Parts of the Horse

1. Identify the following parts of the horse:

|             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| poll        | gaskin            |
| cannon      | point of shoulder |
| crest       | croup             |
| heart girth | point of hip      |
| withers     | loin              |
| barrel      | forearm           |
| elbow       | hock              |
| flank       | throatlatch       |
| chestnut    | quarter           |
| back        | shoulder          |
| ergot       | pastern           |
| buttock     | muzzle            |
| stifle      | fetlock           |
| arm         | coronet           |
| forehead    | face              |
| nostril     | neck              |
| chest       | knee              |
| hoof        | foreflank         |
| thigh       | tail              |
| forelock    | cheek             |
| upper lip   | lower lip         |

## Colors and Markings

### Goal:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will be able to identify the colors and markings of any horse.

You need a working knowledge of horse colors and patterns. Familiarize yourself with the following descriptions of the five basic horse coat colors and their five variations.

### Coat Colors:

The five basic horse coat colors are:

Bay

Black

Brown

Chestnut

White

White markings on the legs may occur with any basic coat color pattern.

1. Bay—A bay horse is one whose color is hardest to describe, but easiest to distinguish. It is a mixture of red and yellow, being the color of a loaf of well baked bread. A light bay shows more yellow, a dark bay more red. The darkest is the mahogany bay, which is almost the color of blood, but without the red overtone.

It's easy to tell a bay from a chestnut; bays always have black manes and tails; chestnuts always have red (or flax) manes and tails. The body color of a mahogany bay and a chestnut can be the same, but the mane and the tail color clearly identify the coat color.

2. Black—A black horse usually has black eyes, hoofs, and skin. The points are always black. Tan or brown hairs on the muzzle or flank indicate that the horse is not a true black but a seal brown.

3. Brown—Many brown horses are mistakenly called black because they are dark. A close examination of the hair on the muzzle and around the lips will quickly tell whether the horse is brown or black. The mane and tail are always dark.

4. Chestnut (sorrel)—A chestnut horse has a basically red coat. Its mane and tail are normally the same shade as the body. If the mane and tail are lighter in color than the body, the horse is termed a flax or flaxen chestnut. The mane and tail of a chestnut horse are never black. Chestnut color varies from bright yellowish red to a rich mahogany red.

5. White—The true white horse is born pure white and dies the same color. Very little, if any, seasonal change takes place in its coat color. Age does not affect it.

The American Albino Horse Club registers "Albinos." These are white horses with clear white body color, brown eyes (rarely blue), and pink skin. They also register "Albinos Type A" horses having a very pale ivory body color and white mane and tail. Their eyes are blue and their skin is pink. A third group of light-colored horses is called "Albinos Type B." Their body color is a very pale cream; mane and tail darker than body (cinnamon-buff); eyes are blue. If during the life of a white horse, hairs of a color other than white are found, the chances are that the horse is not white, but grey or roan.

## Color Variations:

Five major variations to these basic coat colors exist:

- Appaloosa
- Dun (Buckskin)
- Grey
- Palomino
- Pinto & Paint
- Roan

1. Appaloosa—An appaloosa horse may have a variety of spotting patterns, but it must have at least three other coloring characteristics:

Mottling of the skin around the nostrils, muzzle.  
Striped hoofs: alternate vertical stripes of white and dark.

White around the eyes.

The spotting patterns can be either:

- Leopard color pattern: white coat with dark spots scattered over the horse's body; or
- Blanket color pattern: white "blanket" over the croup, loin, and back, with dark spots in the blanket.

2. Dun (Buckskin)—A dun horse has different shades of yellow. It may vary from a pale yellow to a dirty canvas color with mane, tail, skin, and hoofs grading from white to black. Duns always have a stripe down the back.

There are special colors of duns ranging from cream, the lightest, through palomino color, to duns with black points. A coyote dun is one with black points and black line. A zebra dun is one with black points and a zebra stripe or stripes on legs and withers. A red dun is a dun of reddish-orange cast often with a red stripe down its back and red mane and tail. In the Thoroughbred Stud Book, these horses are listed as sorrels; sometimes ranchers refer to them as claybanks.

Grulla. This is a dun horse with roan characteristics whose yellow hairs are mixed with brown or black. They always have black points. They are a smooth greyish blue like a mouse, not a blue-roan or grey; the color is more subtle and always permanent. Some seem purple or smoke-colored. Most are black-lined and have zebra stripes on legs and withers.



3. Grey—Most so-called white horses are really grey. Many people even call an old grey horse an albino, especially if it has light skin, hoofs, and one or more white eyes. Born blue or almost black, more and more white hairs come into this coat until, by the age of 8 or 10, this horse will appear almost white. The dapple generally comes between the second and fifth year. Young grey horses are often called roan; when the horse has a great deal of black still in its coat, it is called steel grey. When small specks of black are present, it is called flea-bitten; when more white shows, the horse is silver grey.

4. Palomino—The palomino has a golden body color, varying from bright copper, to light yellow, with a white mane and tail. True palominos have no black points. The breed description lists the ideal color to be that of a “newly minted [copper] coin.”

5. Pinto & Paint—Paint and pinto horses have four color patterns. The major factor in these color patterns is the white spotting.

Tobiano pattern: white crosses over the horse’s back and extends downward. The head is marked like that of a solid-colored horse, such as a blaze, star, or snip. All the legs are white and body spots are regular, oval-shaped, and distinct.

Overo pattern: white does not cross the back and one or more legs are dark. The head markings are often bald, apron, or bonnet-faced. The tail is usually one color.

Piebald: pinto/paint horses with black pigmented skin and coat color.

Skewbald: pinto/paint horses with brown pigmented skin and coat color.

6. Roan—A roan horse is any horse whose coat carries white hairs intermingled with one or more base colors. Many are born and die about the same color. Whether a horse is light roan or dark roan depends on the proportions of white hairs in comparison to the colored. Most roans are combinations of bay, chestnut, or black with white hairs intermingled. They are known, in order, as red, strawberry, or blue roan. The roan coloration is generally not uniform and some patches on the body will be darker than others.

## Color Patterns of Head and Points:

### 1. Head

When discussing or describing an individual horse among many, it is necessary to be more specific than just using a general color term. Instead of just saying "the dark sorrel," it may be necessary to say "the dark sorrel with the blaze face."

**Star**—a small, clearly defined area of white hairs on the forehead.

**Snip**—a small patch of white that runs over the muzzle, often to the lips.

**Stripe**—a long narrow band of white working from the forehead down toward the muzzle.

**Blaze**—a white stripe down the face to the lips.

**Bald Face**—one which has white over most of the flat surface of the face, often extending toward the cheeks.

Terms for Eyes and Face. Normally horses have a rich brown eye with a black pupil, and no white shows around the edge. When this coloration varies, many adjectives are used to distinguish the difference. When the eyeball is clear, some shade between white and blue, it is normally termed china-eyed, glass-eyed, cotton-eyed, or blue-eyed. If one eye is defective, it is called a wall-eye. In some places wall-eyed refers to the white in the face covering the eye area. Orey-eyed is also used to denote a horse who shows, because of fright or because its pupil is overly contracted, white around the rim.

### 2. Leg Markings

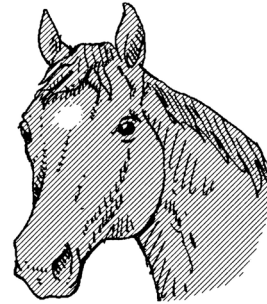
**Coronet**—a white strip covering the coronet band.

**Pastern**—white extends from the coronet to and including the pastern.

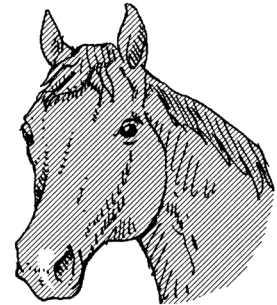
**Ankle**—white extends from the coronet to and including the fetlock.

**Half stocking**—white extends from the coronet to the middle of the cannon.

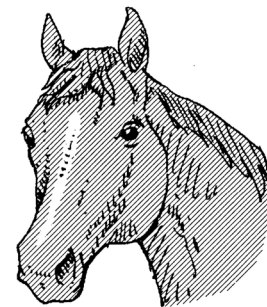
**Full stocking**—white extends from the coronet to and including the knee or hock.



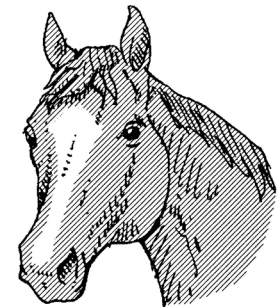
Star



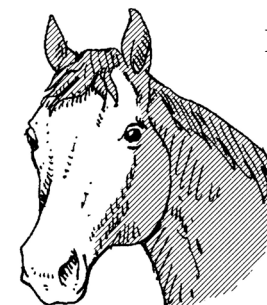
Snip



Stripe



Blaze



Bald Face

### 3. Mane and tail

Black points always indicate a dark mane and tail, while white points or light points refer to a light mane and tail.

Flax or flaxen, when applied to mane and/or tail, indicates a straw yellow or dirty white. It is normally caused by a mixture of dark hair in the white.

Silver refers to a mane or tail that is white with a few black hairs, giving it a silver cast.

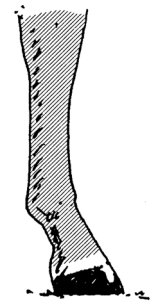
True white manes and tails have only white hairs.

Rat-tailed is a horse with little hair in its tail.

Broom-tailed or bang-tailed is a horse with a heavy, coarse tail.

### Learning Review: Colors and Markings

1. Discuss or identify the following basic coat colors:
  - bay
  - black
  - brown
  - chestnut or sorrel
  - white
2. Discuss or identify the following variations to the basic coat colors:
  - dun
  - grey
  - palomino
  - paint (pinto)
  - roan
3. Discuss or identify the following head markings:
  - star
  - snip
  - stripe
  - blaze
  - bald face
4. Discuss or identify the following leg markings:
  - coronet
  - pastern
  - ankle
  - half stocking
  - full stocking



Coronet



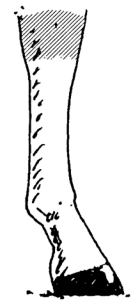
Pastern



Ankle



Half Stocking



Stocking

# Catching the Horse

## Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the parts of the halter.
- Know the correct method to catch a horse.
- Know the safety precautions for catching a horse.
- Know how the safety precautions are related to the horse's senses of vision, touch, and hearing.

To catch a horse means to come up to a horse with a halter and properly place the halter on the horse's head. But catching a horse safely and correctly is not so simple. To catch a horse the right way, you must know how a horse sees, hears, and responds to touch. You must also know the parts of the halter and leadrope (Fig. 3).

Catching a horse safely involves three stages:

1. Organizing stage: getting the halter ready.
2. Approach stage: getting next to the horse to catch it.
3. Haltering stage: putting the halter on the horse.

## Organizing Stage

Catching begins by getting the halter and leadrope ready before entering the stall, pasture, or paddock where the horse is. Get ready by:

1. Putting the unbuckled halter in the left hand with the crownpiece of the halter sticking up;
2. Then putting the end of the leadrope in the first two fingers of the left hand so the end of the leadrope is sticking up (Fig. 4).

## Approach Stage

This is the most important part of catching. If the horse is not approached correctly, it may become hard to catch. If you don't approach the horse safely, you could get hurt. Remember, the horse can't see an object closer than four feet in front of its face or an object directly behind the hindquarters. Also, the horse is sensitive to touch around the ears, eyes, and nose—so go slowly as you approach these areas.

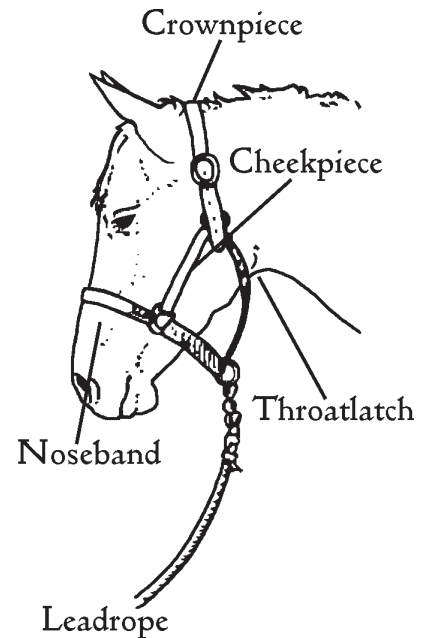


Figure 3

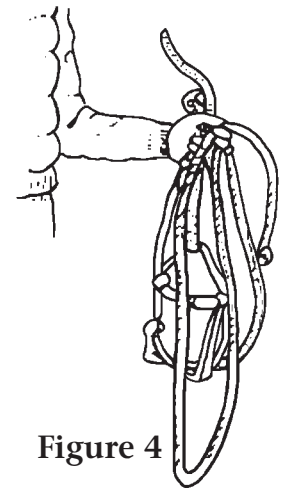


Figure 4

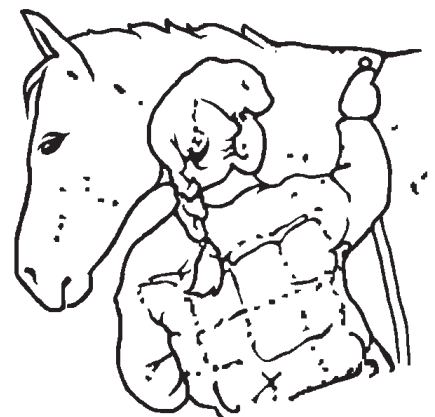


Figure 5

The approach stage is divided into five steps:

1. Walk up to the horse's left shoulder, making sure the horse sees you.
2. Firmly place your right hand with the lead rope on the horse's shoulder (Fig. 5).
3. Slide the leadrope over the neck until one or two feet of rope are hanging on the horse's right side.
4. Move the leadrope up the neck; then grasp both parts of the rope together with your right hand (Fig. 6).
5. Now rotate the rope in a clockwise direction (toward you) so the right hand and the end of the leadrope are at the top of the poll (Fig. 7).

### Safety Precautions:

Never approach the horse:

- At its head because this is a sensitive area to touch and the horse can't see you clearly.
- Directly behind because the horse can't see you and may kick.
- At the hip because this will make the horse move forward and also it can't see you clearly.

Always speak to the horse to be certain it knows you are there and to reassure it.

### Haltering Stage

The halter will still be in the left hand. The right hand is at the poll holding the leadrope to keep control of the horse. Move the halter under the horse's neck so the right hand can grab the crownpiece and place it over the poll. Then slide the noseband up and over the horse's nose (Fig. 8). Finish by fastening the crownpiece to the buckle on the halter. Be sure the noseband of the halter is about 1 1/2 inches (2 finger widths) from the cheekbone (Fig. 9).

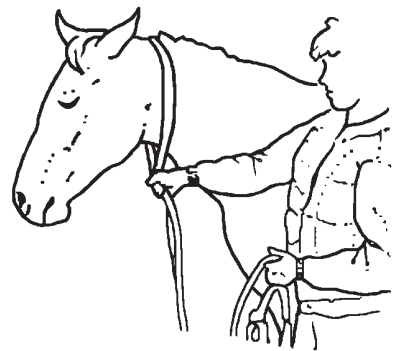


Figure 6

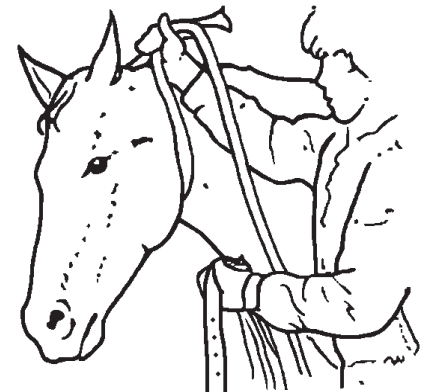


Figure 7

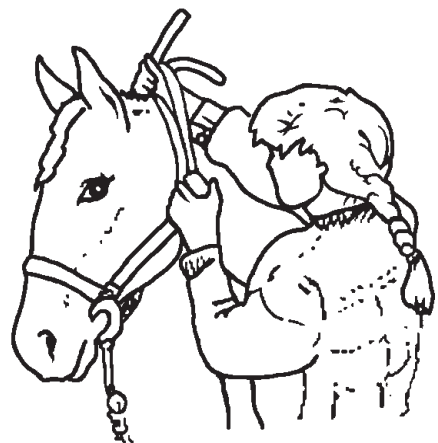


Figure 8

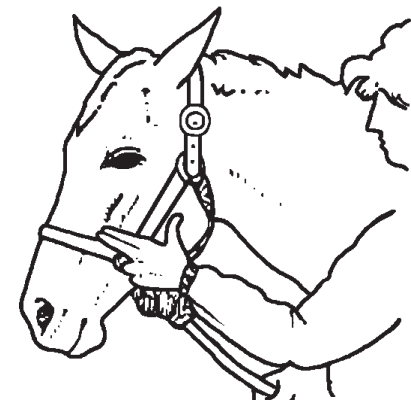


Figure 9

## Learning Review: Catching the Horse

1. Identify the following parts of the halter:  
crownpiece  
cheekpiece  
throatlatch  
noseband  
leadrope
2. Demonstrate how to organize the halter and leadrope in preparation for catching the horse.
3. Demonstrate the safe way to approach a horse for catching, including putting the leadrope on the horse.
4. Demonstrate the correct way to halter a horse while still maintaining control of it.
- 5a. Explain why the horse's sense of sight may cause problems when you try to approach or halter a horse.
- 5b. Explain why the horse's sense of touch may cause problems when you try to approach or halter a horse.
- 5c. Explain how the horse's sense of hearing can help when you approach a horse.

## Leading and Tying

### Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the correct method of leading and tying a horse.
- Know the safety precautions for leading and tying a horse.
- Know how the safety precautions are related to the horse's senses of vision, hearing, and touch.

It is important to lead a horse correctly. Knowing the right way to lead will help you keep proper control of the horse and avoid being run over or stepped on.

## Leading Position

To lead a horse, take a position on the left side of the horse, with your shoulder even with the horse's throatlatch (Fig. 10). Have your right hand on the leadrope about 8 to 10 inches below the snap. Keep some slack in the leadrope, so the horse can carry its head in a natural position. Your left hand holds the extra leadrope folded in a figure eight.

## Safety Precautions:

- Never wrap the leadrope (or bridle reins) around your hand, wrist, or body.
- Always turn the horse to the right (away from you), so the horse won't step on you.
- If the horse pulls back suddenly, do not rush to the horse's head or grasp the halter. This will frighten the horse and may cause it to pull back more.
- If the horse rears up, let go with the hand close to halter, hold onto the folded end, and wait for the horse to calm down. Then go back to your original position.

## Leading

To move the horse forward, give a slight pull on the leadrope in a forward direction. At the same time, give a low clucking sound, then stop pulling as the horse steps forward. Using light pressure, continue pulling and releasing until the horse is moving steadily. The horse should walk or trot beside you, not behind you. Remember, do not let your horse lead you! To stop the horse, pull the right hand and leadrope back toward the horse's chest, stop walking, and say "whoa." Do not pull down on the leadrope, because this pulls the horse's head down and out of position.

## Tying

Once the horse is caught, tie the horse to something that is safe, secure, and solid. Use the quick-release knot (Fig. 11) and tie it so the knot is at least as high as the horse's withers (Fig. 12). Many times, the safety of your horse will depend on its willingness to stand tied. Your first lessons in tying horses should be provided by your 4-H leader or another experienced handler.

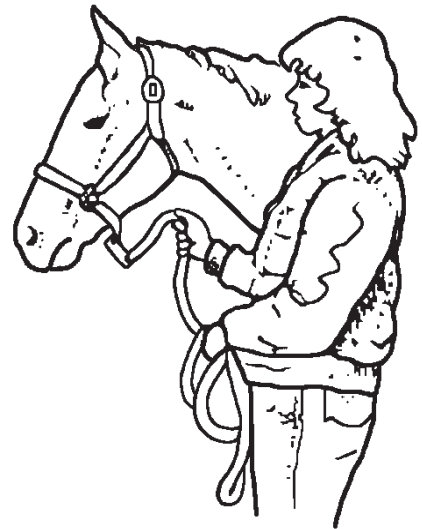


Figure 10

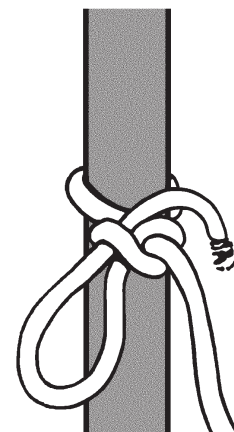
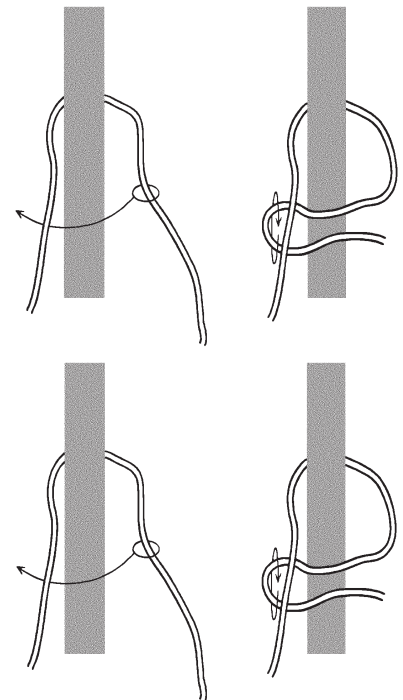


Figure 11

## Safety Precautions:

- Do not tie to: fence boards, wire fences, gates, wobbly or rotten posts, cars, machinery, etc.
- If a horse is pulling back on the leadrope while tied, approach to the side and back of the shoulder to urge the horse forward. Do not approach the front, which may cause the horse to pull back more.
- When the horse is tied, do not work around its head from the throatlatch forward. The head is very sensitive and the horse may pull back.
- Always tie with a halter and leadrope—never with bridle reins, rope, twine, etc.

## Learning Review: Leading and Tying

1. Demonstrate the correct method to lead and tie a horse.
2. Identify and demonstrate safety precautions for leading and tying a horse.
3. Explain why you should not approach a horse at its head when it is tied.

## Grooming and Hoof Cleaning

### Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the basic grooming equipment.
- Know the correct procedure to groom a horse and clean its feet.
- Know the safety precautions for grooming a horse and cleaning its feet.
- Know how the safety precautions for grooming and hoof cleaning are related to the horse's senses of vision, touch, and hearing.

### Grooming

Grooming involves removing dirt and mud from the horse's body. A horse that is not groomed may get sores in the saddle and girth area. Grooming also stimulates the hair follicles to secrete oil, which helps keep the coat in good condition.

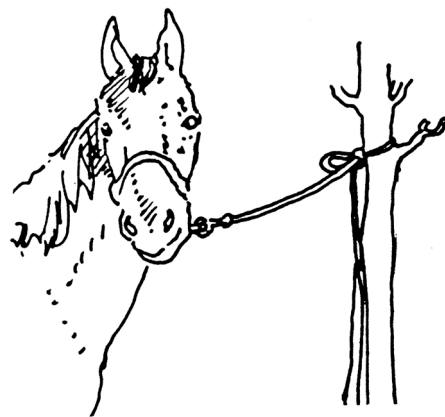


Figure 12



Hard-bristled brush



Soft-bristled brush



Hoof pick



Mane and tail comb



Curry comb



## Equipment

The basic grooming equipment is a curry comb, a hoof pick, a hard-bristled brush, a soft-bristled brush, and a mane and tail comb (Fig. 13). The curry comb is used to remove mud or caked dirt. (Never use the curry comb on the horse's face or below the knees or hocks.) The hard-bristled brush is then used to remove the loose dirt. (Never use the hard-bristled brush on the horse's face; however, it can be used below the knees and hocks.) The soft-bristled brush is used to remove the finer bits of dirt and dust. It can be used anywhere on the horse, even the horse's face. To groom the mane and tail, first separate the tangles with your fingers or a brush, then comb with the mane and tail comb.

## The Grooming Process

1. Approach the horse at the left shoulder, making sure the horse sees and hears you.
2. Slowly move to the throatlatch area and begin the grooming process (Fig. 14) by first brushing the neck, then brushing the back and cinch area, and finally brushing the hindquarters and legs (Fig. 16). It is very important to clean the back and girth area so the horse won't get sores from the saddle or cinch.
3. Repeat the process on the right side. To move to the right side, place your left hand on the horse's hip and walk closely around the hindquarters (Fig. 15). Also talk to the horse while you are doing this.

## Safety Precautions:

- Never brush the horse's head while the horse is tied. This is a sensitive area and the horse may pull back.
- Always stay behind the forelegs because the horse may strike (Fig. 14).
- Always walk close around the hindquarters, keeping your hand on the horse and talking so it knows you are behind it (Fig. 15). Remember, this is the horse's blind area.
- Always stay in front of the hindlegs so you won't get kicked (Fig. 16).
- Always have a 90° angle or more between the horse and the tie area (fence, wall, etc.). This is

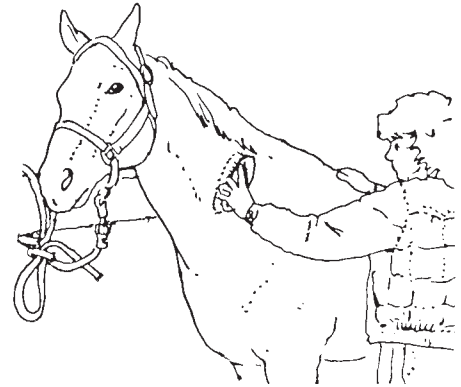


Figure 14

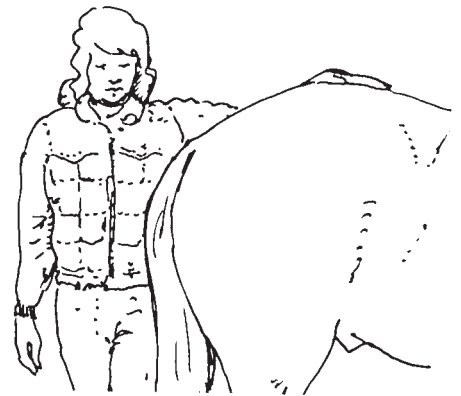


Figure 15

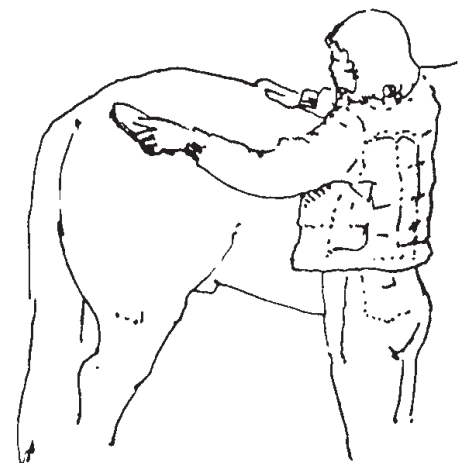


Figure 16

so you won't get pinned if the horse suddenly moves over (Fig. 17).

- Never walk under the horse's head or neck when it is tied. The horse may pull back, then lunge forward and pin you against the tie rail, fence, wall, etc.

## Hoof Cleaning

A special part of grooming is cleaning the hoof. If the feet are not cleaned properly, the horse may develop an infection called thrush. Cleaning the feet means removing dirt and rocks from the sole and the frog area. This also helps prevent bruised soles. It is very important to clean the cleft of the frog and the commissure (Fig. 18) because this is where thrush begins.

## Hoof Cleaning Process

### FRONT FOOT:

1. Begin with the left front foot. Put your left hand at the horse's shoulder and push lightly. This puts the horse's weight on the other foot (Fig. 19).
2. Slowly move your hand down the leg to the cannon bone and squeeze between the tendon and cannon bone. The horse will lift its foot (Fig. 20).
3. Grasp the toe for more control, then put your hand under the front of the hoof to hold it. Clean the bottom of the foot with the hoof pick (Fig. 21) by smoothly pulling the pick from the heel toward the toe.
4. After cleaning, put the foot down slowly so your horse knows the foot is being released.

### HIND FOOT:

1. Move to the flank area and put your hand at your horse's hip.
2. Slowly move your hand down the leg to the cannon bone and squeeze the tendon, just as you did with the front foot.
3. When the horse gives its leg, step back to the flank area and bring the leg with you to maintain safe control of the hind leg.
4. Then step forward and put your inside knee (the one next to the horse) under its raised leg (Fig. 22).
5. Grasp the toe and place the foot on your knees. Clean it like the front foot.

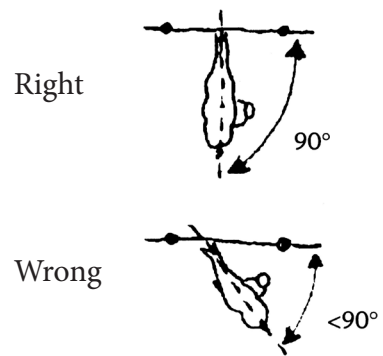


Figure 17

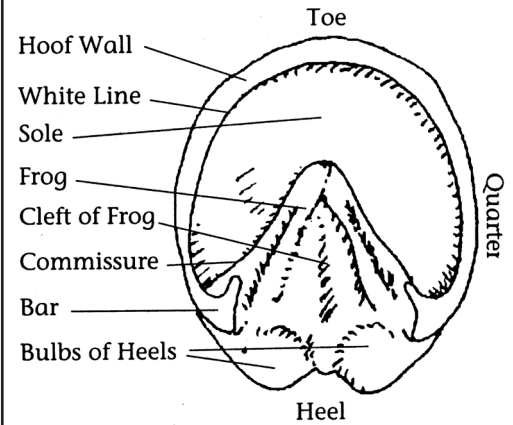


Figure 18



Figure 19

### Safety Precaution:

- When cleaning the foot, always move the hoof pick from heel to toe. Never move the hoof pick from toe to heel because you may jab the horse's leg or fetlock.

## Learning Review: Grooming and Hoof Cleaning

1. Identify the following grooming equipment and explain what it is used for and where it is used on the horse: hard-bristled brush, soft-bristled brush, mane and tail comb, hoof pick, and curry comb.
2. Demonstrate the correct and safe method to groom a horse.
3. Demonstrate the correct and safe method to clean a horse's feet.
4. Explain why a horse does not like to be brushed on its face with a curry comb or hard-bristled brush.
5. Explain the purpose of grooming the horse and cleaning its feet.
6. Explain why it is important to talk to and touch a horse when moving around its hindquarters.

## Saddling

### Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the parts of the Western and English saddles.
- Know the correct method of saddling a horse.
- Know the safety precautions for saddling a horse.
- Know how the safety precautions for saddling are related to the horse's sense of touch.

An incorrectly saddled horse is like a person who has to wear poorly fitted boots. The same way our feet begin to hurt and get sores, the horse's back begins to hurt and it gets saddle and cinch sores.

Correctly saddling a horse requires a saddle that is properly fitted (both for the horse and for the rider), a saddle blanket or pad, and knowing the parts of the horse and of the saddle. The two types



Figure 20



Figure 21

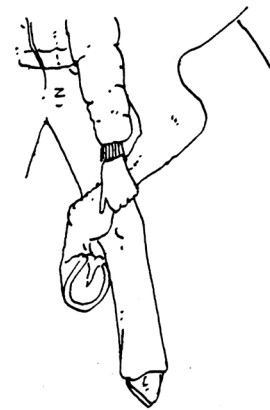


Figure 22

of saddles are Western (Fig. 23) and English (Fig. 24). Because they do not have exactly the same parts, the saddling process is a little different for each type.

Before the saddling process begins, the horse should have been groomed, especially in the saddle and cinch (girth) area.

## Western Saddling

### The Saddle Blanket

The saddle blanket is approximately 12 inches by 18 inches and should be at least a quarter of an inch thick. It should be clean; dirty blankets can cause sores. Place the blanket well forward on the withers. It should lie evenly, with equal amounts of material on the horse's left and right sides. Then slide the blanket back until the front edge is about 4 to 6 inches in front of the withers. This is done to smooth down the hair while still protecting the wither area. The blanket should lie flat, with no wrinkles, so that it doesn't rub sores on the horse's back. It helps to pull the blanket up in the gullet of the saddle to prevent binding over the withers and to allow air circulation under the saddle.

### The Saddling Process

The saddling process involves four steps that must be done in order.

1. Get the saddle ready by putting the cinches and right stirrup over the seat and out of the way. Also, clean any dirt, sawdust, etc., off the sheepskin lining.
2. Bring the saddle to the horse's left side. Gently place the saddle on the horse's back, leaving 4 inches of blanket in front of the saddle.
3. Move to the right side to let the cinches down and to check that they are not twisted. The cinches may also need to be adjusted. The center of the front cinch should be in the center of the horse's heart girth area and the cinch ring should be above the foreflank (Fig. 25).
4. Go back to the left side and begin the cinching process:
  - a. Put the left stirrup over the saddle horn and out of the way.

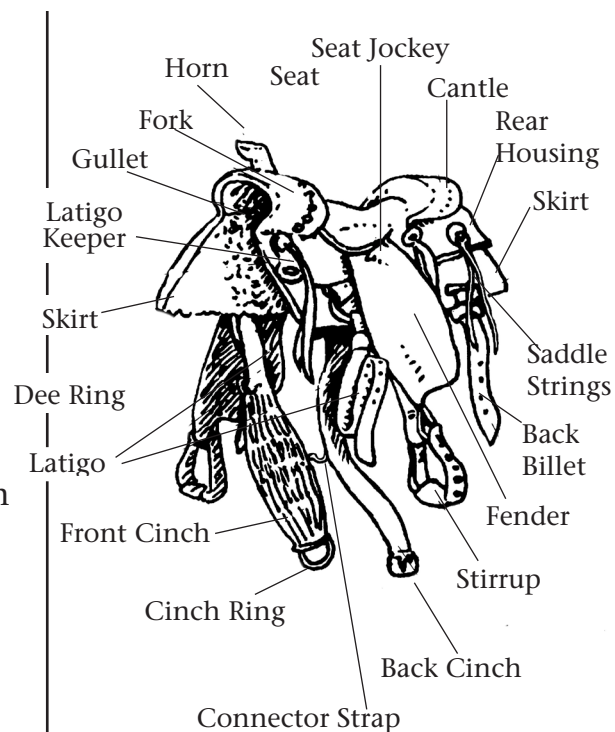


Figure 23: Western Saddle

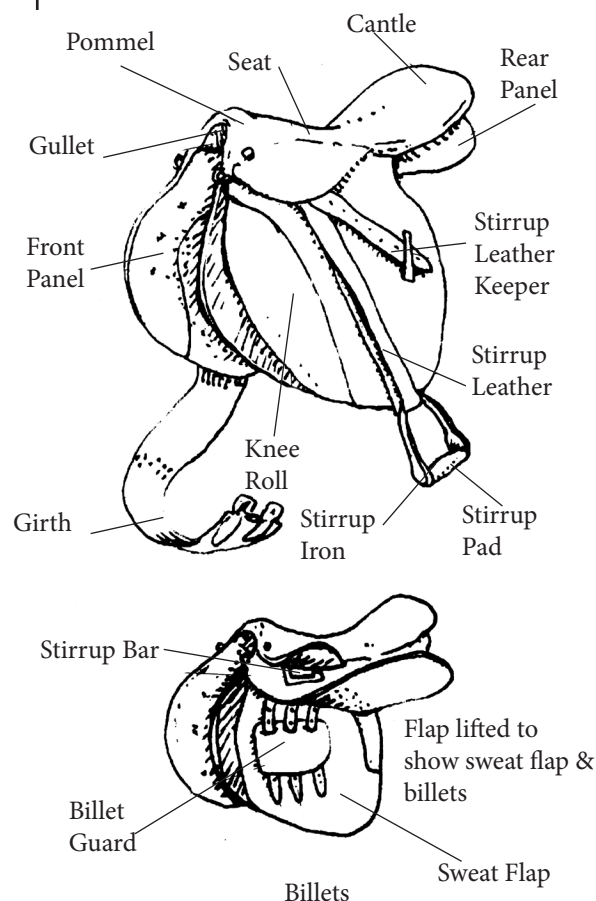


Figure 24: English Saddle

- b. Reach under the horse and grab the cinch ring and pull it to the left side of the horse.
- c. Thread the end of the latigo through the cinch ring and then through the front dee ring of the saddle. Then go through the cinch ring again.
- d. Tighten the cinch by pulling the end of the latigo until it is snug.
- e. There are two ways to fasten the latigo; you can use either one. One way is to put the tongue of the cinch ring into one of the holes in the latigo and then pull the latigo to be certain the tongue is locked into place (Fig. 26). The other way is to tie a cinch knot (Fig. 27).
- f. Finally, reach under the horse, grasp the back cinch, and buckle it to the back billet on the left side. The back cinch should be snug and the connector strap attached.

Some important points to remember about saddling:

- Be sure there is enough room between the gullet of the saddle and the withers of the horse. (Rule of thumb: If the rider weighs less than 150 lbs. then two fingers should fit between the gullet of the saddle and the withers of the horse. If the rider weighs more than 150 lbs. then three fingers should fit between the fork and the withers.) If there is not enough room, then add another blanket!
- The front cinch ring should always be above the horse's elbow area (in the foreflank area).

### Safety Precautions:

- Always fasten the front cinch first, then the back cinch.
- Be sure the connector strap is fastened between the front cinch and back cinch. This is so the back cinch doesn't go into the horse's sensitive rear flank.
- The front cinch should not be too tight or fastened too quickly. This makes some horses "cinchy," so they lie down or flip over backwards.

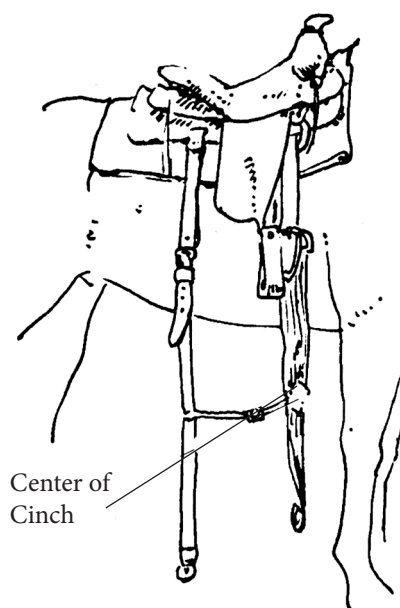


Figure 25



Figure 26

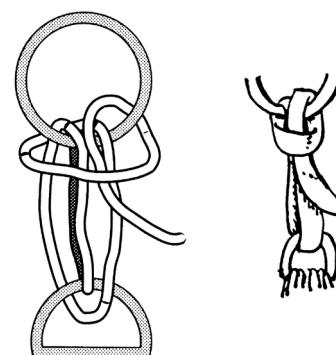


Figure 27

## The Final Cinch Tightening

Do not tighten the front cinch extremely tightly at first. After the horse is saddled, lead the horse a few steps and tighten the cinch a little more. Then lead the horse a few more steps and tighten the cinch again so that it is tight enough for two fingers to fit between the latigo (not the cinch) and the horse. It is important to cinch the horse slowly so it doesn't become cinchy.

## English Saddling

### The Saddle Pad or Blanket

Horses with high, thin withers will need a saddle blanket, saddle pad, or pommel pad placed under the English saddle. This is to prevent the gullet of the saddle from resting on the withers.

Place the saddle blanket or pad well forward on the horse's neck, then slide it back into the withers area to smooth down the hair. There should be 3 to 4 inches of blanket in front of the English saddle; the blanket should also extend beyond the back of the saddle (Fig. 28).

### The Saddling Process

The saddling process with the English saddle involves five steps that must be done in order:

1. Get the saddle ready by putting the girth over the seat. The irons should have already been run up the stirrup leathers and placed under the skirt flap so they are out of the way.
2. Work from the horse's left side. Gently place the saddle on the horse's back. The front end of the saddle should be close to the upper rear edges of the horse's shoulder blades (Fig. 28). Be sure to leave 3 to 4 inches of the blanket or pad in front of the saddle. The blanket should also extend past the rear of the saddle.
3. Move to the right side. Bring the girth down and check that nothing is twisted. Also check to make sure the billets are properly attached to the girth buckles. Most saddles have three billets and two girth buckles. Horses that have narrow chests and big bellies should have the girth buckled on the last two billets to the rear. This will prevent sores in the foreflank. With a broad-chested horse, you can use the two front

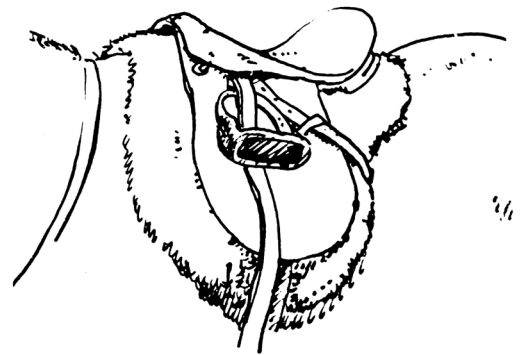


Figure 28

billets. To prevent irritation to the horse's withers, push the pad or blanket well up into the gullet of the saddle.

4. Go back to the left side to begin the cinching process:
  - a. Reach under the horse and grasp the girth. Bring it up to the left side of the horse.
  - b. Lift the skirt and fasten the billets to the girth buckles. Be sure to buckle the same two billets that correspond to the two billets on the off side (the horse's right side). If a leather girth is used, the folded edge should be to the front.
5. When you first buckle the girth, adjust it so that you can fit one finger between the girth and the horse's barrel.

Remember, some horses can become very sensitive to the saddling process. So after the horse is saddled don't forget to lead it several steps and check to see if the girth needs to be tightened. As with the Western saddle, it is important to cinch the horse slowly so it doesn't become cinchy.

## Learning Review: Saddling

1. Identify the following parts of the Western saddle:

|                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| horn            | back billet  |
| front           | cinch fender |
| dee ring        | back cinch   |
| seat jockey     | stirrup      |
| seat            | cantle       |
| saddle strings  | fork         |
| skirt           | latigo       |
| latigo keeper   | rear housing |
| connector strap | gullet       |

2. Identify the following parts of an English saddle:

|              |                        |
|--------------|------------------------|
| pommel       | stirrup leather keeper |
| sweat flap   | cantle                 |
| rear panel   | girth                  |
| seat         | stirrup leather        |
| keeper       | gullet                 |
| stirrup iron | front panel            |
| billets      | stirrup bar            |
| billet guard | knee roll              |
| stirrup pad  |                        |

3. Demonstrate the correct way to saddle a horse.
4. Identify and demonstrate safety precautions for saddling a horse.
5. Explain how the final cinch tightening process and the horse's sense of touch are related.
6. Explain how the horse's sense of touch and the placement of the back cinch are related.

## Bridling

### Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the parts of the bridle.
- Know the correct procedure for bridling a horse.
- Know the safety precautions for bridling a horse.
- Know the different types of bits.
- Know how the safety precautions for bridling are related to the horse's sense of touch.

### The Bridling Process

Bridling a horse involves placing the bit in the horse's mouth and putting the headstall over the ears. If bridling is done wrong, it will cause discomfort to the horse's mouth and ears. This makes the horse hard to bridle. To bridle a horse correctly and safely, you must know the types and parts of Western headgear (Fig. 29 and 30) and English headgear (Fig. 31, 32, and 33), and the different types of bits. You must also know the anatomy of the horse's mouth and the correct position of the bit in the mouth.

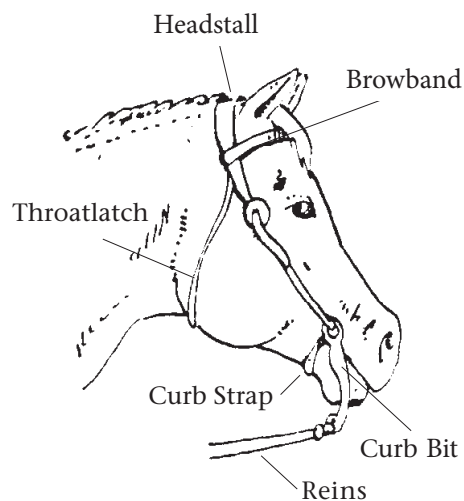
The bridling process is divided into four stages:

1. Beginning
2. Organizing
3. Bridling
4. Finishing

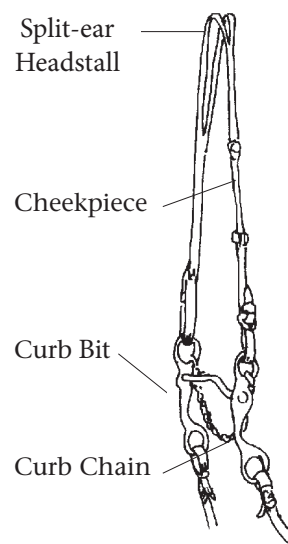
Note: The basic bridling process applies to both Western and English.

### Beginning Stage

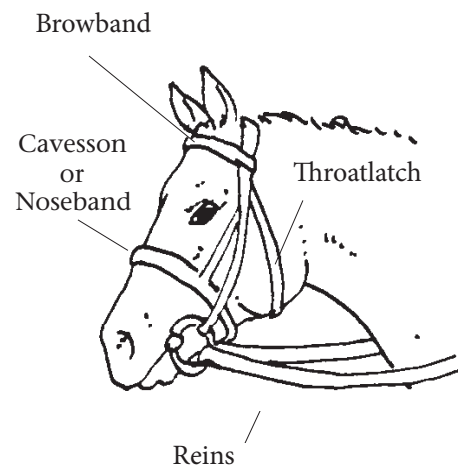
The beginning stage of bridling starts with untying the horse and putting the halter around the horse's neck.



**Figure 29: Western Headgear**



**Figure 30: Split-Ear Bridle**



**Figure 31: English Headgear with Snaffle Bit**



## Safety Precautions:

- Always untie the horse so it won't pull back when it is approached at its head.
- Always keep the halter around the horse's neck and the leadrope over your left arm to keep control of the horse while bridling.

## Organizing Stage

The organizing stage involves three steps:

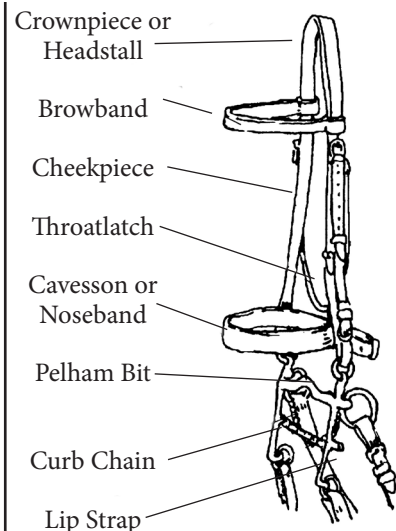
1. Begin by placing the left hand on the bit and right hand at the top of the headstall.
2. Hold the bridle next to the horse's head to see if the bridle will fit (Fig. 34).
3. Before putting the bit in the horse's mouth, warm the bit in your hand. Then place the first two fingers of your left hand under the bit, and the last two fingers on the chinstrap; keep your thumb free to open the horse's mouth. (With an English bridle, you may want to unfasten the curb chain first.)

## Bridling Stage

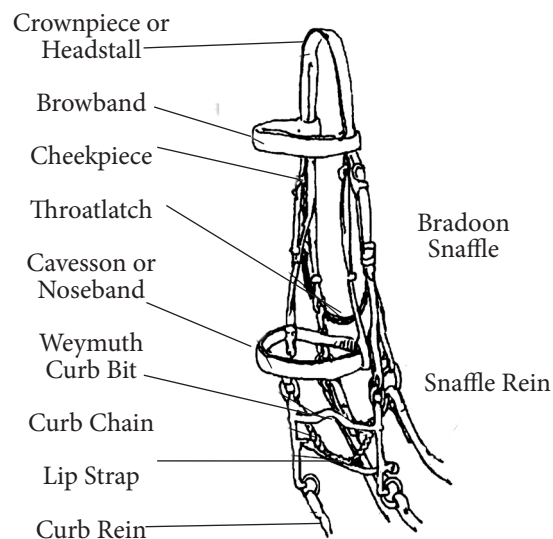
Now you have the bridle organized and you are ready to begin bridling your horse. The bridling stage involves five steps:

1. Slowly approach the horse's head from the left. Place your right hand with the top of the headstall between the left ear and left eye or at the poll.
2. Place the bit between the upper and lower lips with your left hand. Put your left thumb into the corner of the horse's mouth to open it (Fig. 35.) The horse has no teeth between the incisors and molars (Fig. 36), so if you are careful your thumb won't get smashed!
3. When the horse opens its mouth, guide the bit with the first two fingers of your left hand and at the same time pull the headstall with your right hand. As the bit slides into the horse's mouth, slip the chin strap under the lower lip and place it in the chin groove with the last two fingers of your left hand. (For the English bridle this will not be necessary if the curb chain has already been unfastened.)

Note of caution: Do not hit the horse's teeth with the bit. It is irritating and will make the horse hard to bridle.



**Figure 32: English Headgear with Pelham Bit**



**Figure 33: Double Bridle or Weymouth Bridle**



**Figure 34**

4. Once the bit is in place, keep the headstall tight with the right hand. Then take the headstall in your left hand. Push one ear forward (push at the base of the ear) and put the headstall over that ear. Then push the other ear forward and put the headstall over it.

Note of caution: Handle the ears with care or the horse will get hard to bridle.

5. Fasten the throatlatch strap. For English, also fasten the curb chain and the cavesson.

### Finishing Stage

1. Check to see that the bit fits correctly in the horse's mouth. You should find:
  - One wrinkle in each corner of the mouth (more wrinkles mean that the bit is too tight);
  - A 2-finger width between the chinstrap and the chin;
  - The bit is the correct width for the horse's mouth.
2. If the bridle fits correctly, remove the halter from the horse's neck.

### Types of Bits

Basically there are two types of bits, a curb bit and a snaffle bit. The curb bit (Fig. 37) has shanks attached to the mouthpiece. When the rider pulls the reins, the leverage of the shanks increases the pressure applied by the mouthpiece; so a gentle pull can give added pressure to the horse's mouth. The snaffle (Fig. 38) is a bit without shanks. With a snaffle, how hard the bit presses on the horse's mouth depends directly on how hard the rider pulls the reins.

The pelham bit (Fig. 32) combines the effects of the curb and snaffle types. The shanks, or cheeks, have two rings for attaching two sets of reins. When you pull the reins attached to the rings at the level of the mouthpiece, the bit acts as a snaffle (direct action). When you pull the reins attached at the lower end of the pelham shanks, the bit acts as a curb (leverage action).

### Curb Bit

The shanks on the curb bit give the rider leverage action on the horse's mouth. When the reins are



Figure 35

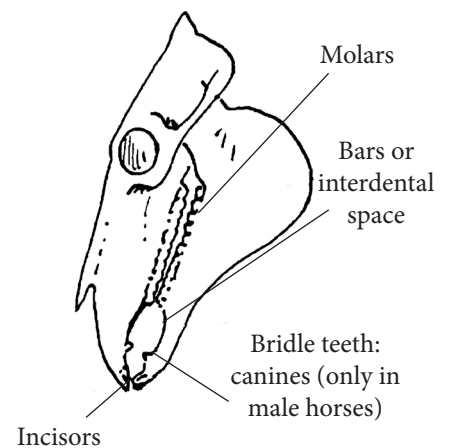


Figure 36

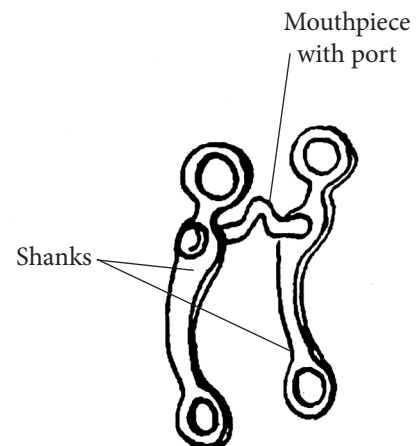


Figure 37: Curb Bit

pulled, the shanks act as levers to press the bit down on the horse's tongue and the bars of its mouth (Fig. 39). At the same time, pulling the reins also applies pressure on the chin groove and the poll. Any bit with reins attached to the end of the shanks is considered a curb bit. This is true even if it has a jointed mouthpiece.

Note of Caution: A curb bit without a chinstrap is useless.

Some important facts about curb bits:

- Curb bits can be more severe than snaffle bits because the leverage action increases the force applied.
- The action of the curb bit results in indirect pressure on the horse's mouth.
- The longer the shanks, the more leverage (more severe).
- A curb bit should not be used as a training bit.
- It takes time and training to change a horse from a snaffle bit to a curb bit.

### Snaffle Bit

A snaffle bit is any bit that does not have shanks (Fig. 38). As a result, it is a direct action bit. A snaffle has rings and usually has a broken mouthpiece (jointed). When the reins are pulled it applies direct pressure only on the corners of the mouth, the tongue, and the bars.

Some important facts about snaffle bits:

- A snaffle bit applies direct pressure on the horse's mouth.
- A snaffle is used to train or school horses.
- A snaffle is not as severe as a curb bit.

### Learning Review: Bridling

1. Identify the following parts of a bridle:

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| browband    | reins      |
| cavesson    | cheekpiece |
| throatlatch | curb chain |
| chinstrap   | bradoon    |
| lip strap   | curb rein  |
| snaffle     | rein       |

2. Identify the following type of bits:

- |             |                   |
|-------------|-------------------|
| curb bit    | pelham            |
| snaffle bit | Weymouth curb bit |

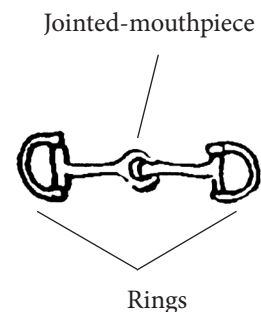


Figure 38: Snaffle Bit

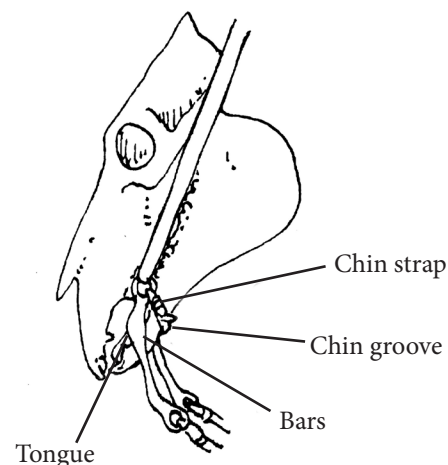


Figure 39: Curb Bit and Reins

3. Explain the difference between a curb bit and a snaffle bit.
4. Demonstrate the correct way to bridle a horse.
5. Describe and demonstrate safety precautions for bridling a horse.
6. Explain how poor bridling techniques might cause a horse to become difficult to bridle.

## Mounting and Dismounting

### Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the correct way to mount and dismount for Western and English.
- Know the safety precautions for mounting and dismounting.

Mounting a horse is the method used to get on a horse. It requires timing, strength, and coordination to do it smoothly. Mounting usually takes place from the left side. However, there will be times you may need to mount or dismount on the right side, so it would be a good idea to practice on both sides.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Techniques for mounting and dismounting may vary, depending on the rider's height and size. Your 4-H leader can tell you how to modify the techniques described here to fit your own build.

### Western Mounting and Dismounting

#### To Mount from the Left Side

1. Before mounting, be sure the cinches are tight.
2. Then stand with your left shoulder next to the horse's left shoulder and shorten the reins enough to feel the horse's mouth. The reins should be short enough to keep the horse from moving forward, but not so short they make the horse back up. Both reins should be the same length. If one rein is shorter than the other, it may cause the horse to move away from you or into you.
3. Place your left hand in front of the withers and grasp the mane.
4. Turn the left stirrup clockwise with the right hand and put the left foot in. Be sure the toe of

the left foot does not jab the horse in the ribs (Fig. 40).

5. Hop on the right foot to a position facing the side of the horse; then, all in the same motion, push off the right foot, grab the saddle horn with the right hand, pull on the mane with the left hand and swing lightly up (Fig. 41).
6. Once up, swing the right leg over the horse's rump, at the same time pushing down on the horn with the left hand to keep in balance. Then sink gently into the saddle.
7. Put the right foot into the right stirrup.

Some important points about mounting:

- Keep your shoulders square.
- Keep your upper body straight.
- Do not pull too much on the saddle horn.
- Really push off the right leg.

### To Dismount on the Left Side

1. Have the reins in your left hand on the horse's neck in front of the withers and have your right hand on the horn.
2. Slide the left foot partway out of the stirrup so the foot won't get stuck after stepping down (Fig. 42).
3. Slightly rise out of the saddle and take the right foot out of the stirrup.
4. Now pass the right leg over the horse's rump, step down to the ground, and take the left foot out of the stirrup.

## English Mounting and Dismounting

### To Mount from the Left Side

1. Before mounting, be sure the girth is tight.
2. Next, shorten the reins so you can feel the horse's mouth. The reins should be short enough to keep the horse from moving forward, but not so short that the horse moves backwards. The reins should also be the same length—if one rein is shorter than the other, it may cause the horse to move away from you or into you.
3. Stand with your left shoulder next to the horse's left shoulder. Place your left hand in front of the withers and grasp the mane.

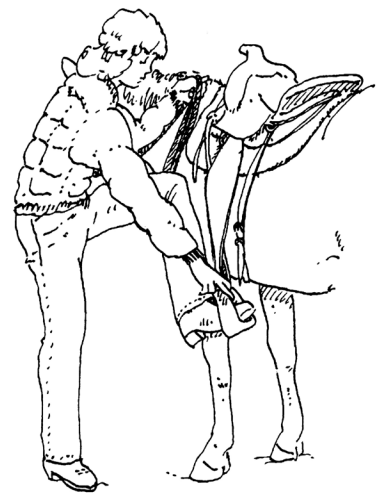


Figure 40

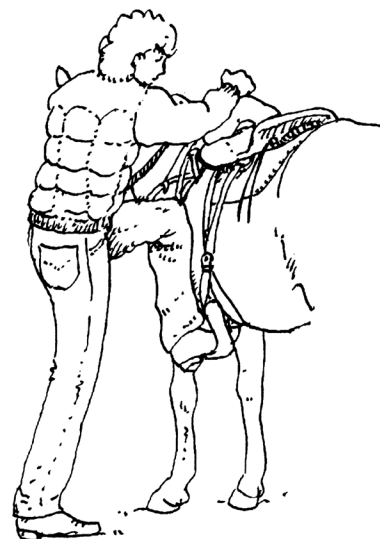


Figure 41

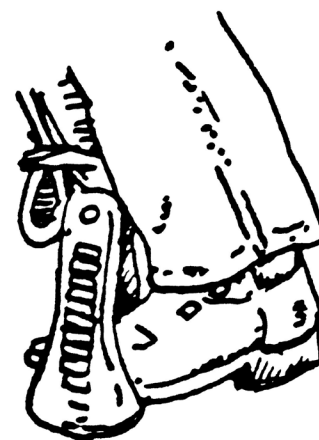


Figure 42

4. Turn the left stirrup clockwise with your right hand and put the left foot in. Be sure the toe of that foot does not jab the horse in the ribs (Fig. 43).
5. Hop on the right foot to a position facing the side of the horse (Fig. 44) and, all in the same motion, push off the right foot, grasp the cantle with your right hand, hold the mane with your left hand, and swing lightly up (Fig. 45).
6. Once up, swing the right leg over the horse's rump and sink slowly into the saddle. Then place the right foot in the stirrup.
7. Adjust both reins and assume the basic riding position.

### To Dismount on the Left Side

There are two ways to dismount, either stepping down or sliding down. They both begin the same way.

1. Begin by putting both reins in the left hand and placing it on the horse's neck.
2. Place the right hand on the pommel, slide the left foot slightly out of the stirrup, then remove the right foot from the stirrup. Next, swing the right leg over the horse's back without touching it.
- 3a. To slide down, shift the right hand to the cantle and keep the weight of your body on your hands (Fig. 46). Then remove your left foot from the stirrup and drop lightly to the ground.
- 3b. To step down, continue the motion of the right leg swinging over the horse's rump and just step down. Then in one smooth motion take the left foot out of the stirrup.
4. After dismounting, run the stirrups up the leathers and bring the reins over the horse's head.

### Safety Precautions When Dismounting, English and Western:

- Be sure your left foot is slightly out of the stirrup before stepping down. This helps you get it out of the stirrup easily if the horse moves.



Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45

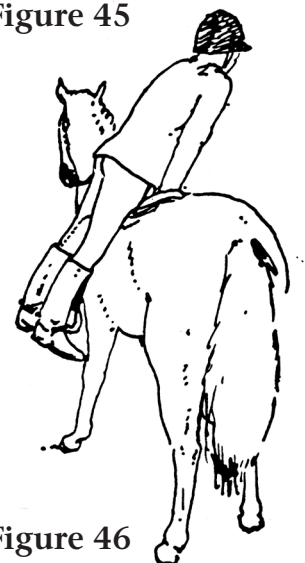


Figure 46

- Face the horse's body or its head when your right foot touches the ground so you will be in balance if the horse moves forward.
- Remember that the techniques described in this handbook for mounting and dismounting are basic.

**The best techniques to use may vary, depending on the rider's height, size, and experience. SAFETY is the most important feature in mounting and dismounting.**

## Learning Review: Mounting and Dismounting

1. Demonstrate the correct procedures of mounting and dismounting.
2. Describe and demonstrate safety precautions for mounting and dismounting.

## Unbridling and Unsaddling

### Goals:

When you have learned the material in this section, you will:

- Know the correct method of unbridling a horse.
- Know the safety precautions for unbridling a horse.
- Know the correct method of unsaddling a horse.
- Know the safety precautions for unsaddling a horse.

## Unbridling

Following the correct method is as important for unbridling a horse as it is for bridling. Unbridling a horse the wrong way causes discomfort to the horse's mouth and ears. This can make the horse hard to bridle. The unbridling process applies to both Western bridles and English bridles except when noted.

## Unbridling Procedure

To unbridle, do the following six steps in order.  
**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Unbridle before you unsaddle (Fig. 47).

1. Working from the horse's left side, fasten the halter around the horse's neck and put the leadrope over your left arm. Then unfasten the throatlatch of the bridle. For English bridles it will be necessary to unfasten the cavesson and curb chain.
2. Pull the top of the headstall carefully over the horse's ears with your left hand.
3. Let the horse open its mouth so the bit can drop out. Do not pull the bit out of the horse's mouth.
4. Move your left hand straight down the horse's forehead to let the bit drop straight out of the horse's mouth. Do not let the bit hit the horse's teeth.
5. Put the bridle over your left arm and put the halter on the horse.
6. Finally, tie the horse to a tie rail, fence, or other safe object.

### Safety Precautions:

- Do not unbridle the horse while it is tied.
- Put the halter around the horse's neck and the leadrope over your left arm to control the horse.

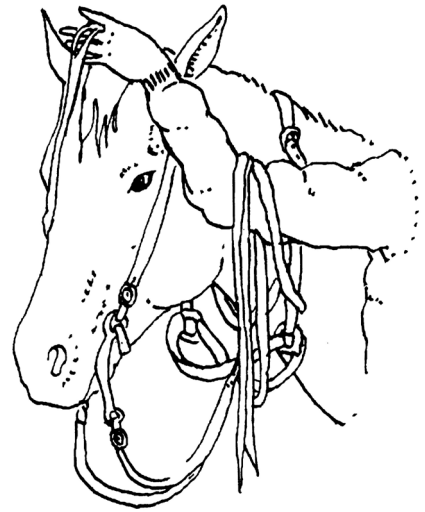
## Unsaddling

### Western

The unsaddling process involves ten steps that must be done in order.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Unbridle before you unsaddle.

1. Put the left stirrup over the saddle horn and out of the way.
2. Unbuckle the back cinch first.
3. Release the front cinch.
4. Fold the latigo and put it back through the dee ring of the saddle. This gets it out of the way so you won't step on it.
5. Bring the left stirrup down.



**Figure 47: Unbridling**



6. Go around the horse's hindquarters to the right side and put the front and back cinch over the seat of the saddle.
7. Go back around the horse's hindquarters to the left side.
8. Put your hand under the saddle blanket and lift the blanket and saddle up off the horse's withers and pull both of them off the horse.
9. Set the saddle out of the way or put it away.
10. Groom the horse and check for any saddle or cinch sores.

#### **Safety Precaution:**

- When unsaddling a horse be sure to undo the back cinch first.

#### **English**

Important Note: Unbridle before unsaddling.

1. Lift the left saddle skirt and unfasten the girth from the billets. (The irons should have already been run up after dismounting.)
2. Move around the horse's hindquarters to the off side (right side) and either place the girth over the seat or remove it.
3. Move around the horse's hindquarters back to the near side (left side), lift the saddle and pad off the horse's withers, and pull them off.
4. Set the saddle out of the way or put it away.
5. Groom the horse and check for any saddle or girth sores.

#### **Learning Review: Unbridling and Unsaddling**

1. Demonstrate the correct method of unbridling and unsaddling a horse.
2. Identify and practice safety precautions when unbridling and unsaddling a horse.



## Chapter III

# HOW the HORSE MOVES

- **Walk**
- **Jog or Trot**
- **Lope or Canter**

### Goals

When you have learned the material in this chapter, you will:

- Know about the center of gravity.
- Know three gaits of the horse.
- Know the beats and footfalls of each gait.

Knowing how a horse moves will help you become a better rider. If you know the beats and footfalls of each gait, you will be more effective in applying cues so the horse will respond better.

### Center of Gravity

The center of gravity of any object is the point around which it is balanced. For a horse, this means that half of the horse's weight is always in front of its center of gravity, and half the weight is behind the center of gravity. When a horse is standing still, its center of gravity lies directly

behind its withers (Fig. 48). The center of gravity is far forward because 60% of the horse's weight is carried on the forequarters and only 40% on the hindquarters.

When the horse goes into motion, the center of gravity shifts. For example, the center of gravity for a race horse shifts forward as the horse extends its head and neck, taking weight off the hindquarters to allow maximum power. The center of gravity for a reining horse shifts back, as the horse puts more weight on its hindquarters and lightens its forequarters, allowing it to make quick turns and sliding stops.

Important Note: The rider's center of gravity should be exactly over the horse's center of gravity. When the horse shifts its weight, so should the rider. This allows the horse to perform or work at its best.

## Gaits

### Walk

The walk (Fig. 49) is a four-beat gait. As the horse walks, its legs are brought forward one by one and in the proper order (sequence). This keeps its body in balance. The sequence of steps is:

- step 1: Right front
- step 2: Left hind
- step 3: Left front
- step 4: Right hind

### Jog or Trot

The jog or trot is a two-beat diagonal gait (Fig. 50). ("Jog" is the Western term for a slow trot.) At each step the horse's body is supported by two legs, one on each side.

The sequence of steps for the jog or trot is:

- step 1: Right front and left hind at the same time
- step 2: Left front and right hind at the same time

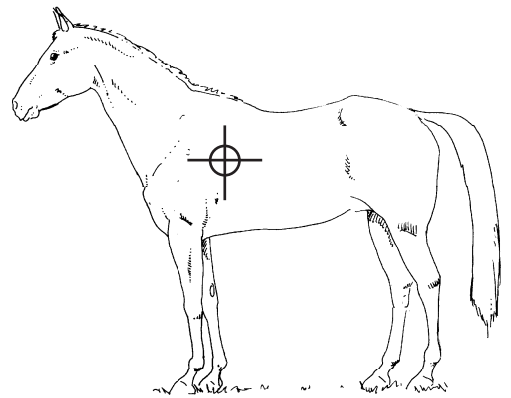


Figure 48: Center of Gravity

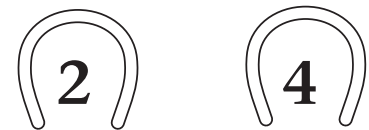


Figure 49: Walk

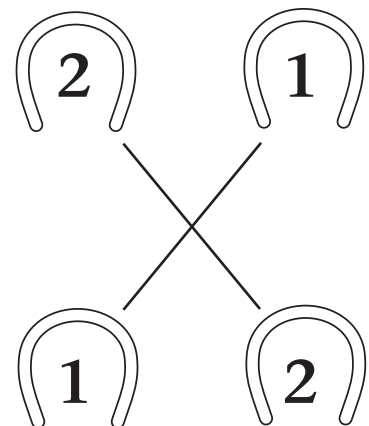


Figure 50: Jog or Trot

## Lope or Canter

The lope or canter (Fig. 51) is a three-beat gait. ("Lope" is the Western term for a canter.) The front foot that moves ahead farther than the other front foot is called the lead foot. A horse can lead either with the left front foot (left lead) or the right front foot (right lead). When the horse works in a circle it must be in the correct lead. If the horse is circling to the left (counter-clockwise) it must be in the left lead. If the horse is circling to the right (clockwise) it must be in the right lead.

The sequence of steps for the lope in the left lead is:

- step 1: Right hind
- step 2: Left hind and right front at the same time
- step 3: Left front (lead foot)

The sequence of steps for the lope in the right lead is:

- step 1: Left hind
- step 2: Right hind and left front at the same time
- step 3: Right front (lead foot)

## Stop

When a horse is asked to stop it needs to shift its weight back. To do this, the horse raises its head and puts one or both hind feet on the ground forward of their normal standing position. At the same time it flexes its hocks and its stifles so it can crouch with its hindquarters. This way, the horse can put most of its weight on its hindquarters and come to a smooth, balanced stop.

When the horse is forced to stop unexpectedly, it doesn't have time to reach its hind legs far enough forward to shift its weight over the hocks. The horse has to bounce to a stiff-legged stop with all the weight on the front legs. This kind of stop is uncomfortable and makes the rider bounce forward and out of position.

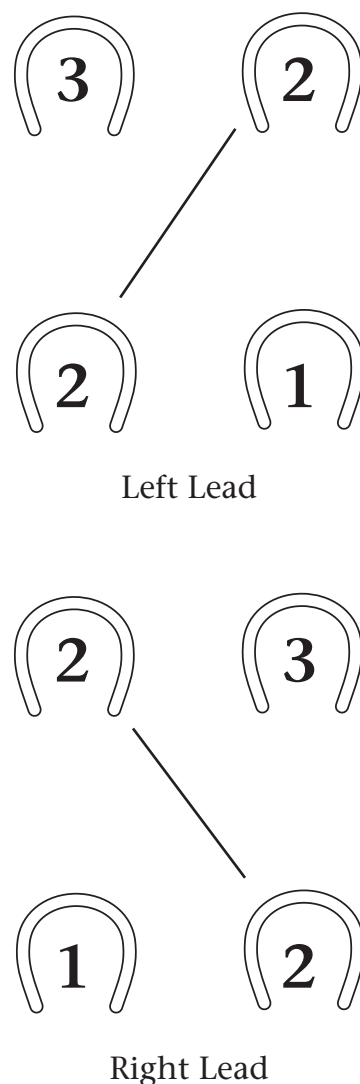


Figure 51: Lope or Canter

## **Learning Review: How the Horse Moves**

1. Explain the beats and footfalls of the walk, the jog or trot, and the lope or canter.
2. Explain why the horse's center of gravity is located directly behind the horse's withers rather than the midpoint of its back.
3. Explain why the horse's center of gravity shifts forward for a race horse and why it shifts back for a reining horse.

## Chapter IV



# The BASIC RIDING POSITION

- **Seat and Upper Body Position**
- **Leg and Foot Position**
- **Hand Position**
- **Position in Motion**

## Goals

When you have learned the material in this chapter, you will:

- Know the correct seat and upper body position.
- Know the correct leg and foot position.
- Know the correct hand position.
- Know how the horse's sense of touch is related to the rider's hand position and seat position.
- Know how the seat position and the leg position affect the hand position.

The basic riding position includes the correct positioning of the rider's legs, hands, seat, and upper body. The basic riding position applies to every style of riding, whether it is Western, English (hunt seat or saddle seat), or Western games. Correct position depends on three factors: balance, flexibility, and contact with the horse.

This chapter describes the basic riding position and how it varies in different riding styles—Western (Fig. 52), hunt seat (Fig. 53), and saddle seat (Fig. 54). For more specific information about different styles of riding, refer to the books listed in the bibliography.

## Seat and Upper Body Position

To develop and maintain balance, the seat should be deep in the saddle and close to the horse's center of gravity. It is important to sit deep in the saddle on the crotch rather than on your buttocks. Sitting back on the buttocks puts you behind the center of gravity. This makes it more difficult for the horse to move.

A strong, balanced riding position comes through many hours of riding, along with suppling and muscle strengthening exercises. For flexibility, it is important to keep the body straight without being stiff, and supple without being slack. The rider's head and eyes should be up and looking straight ahead. The shoulders should be back, not rounded or stooped forward.

## Leg and Foot Position

The legs and feet should hang beneath the hip bones. If they are too far forward it causes the upper body to move backwards. If the legs are too far back it causes the upper body to go forward. However, some saddles are made in such a way that the legs will have to hang slightly forward.

The feet should be positioned so the balls of the feet are on the stirrups and the heels are lower than the toes. The feet should be placed in the stirrup at a natural angle that best suits the rider's build. If the toes are pointed outward, the calves of the legs will grip too much. This pressure will cause the horse to move forward. If the toes are pointed too far inward, the wrong part of the thigh will be in contact with the saddle. This makes it hard to stay in the saddle. For hunt seat, flex the ankles to maintain slightly more calf contact.

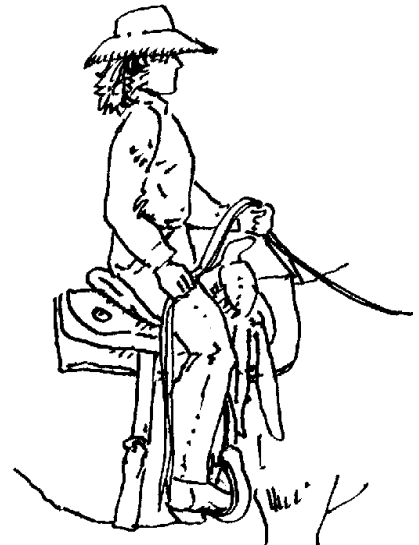


Figure 52: Western Riding Position

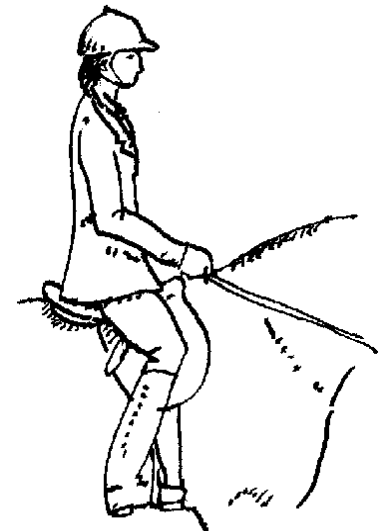


Figure 53: Hunt Seat Position



Figure 54: Saddle Seat Position



Contact means “sticking” to the horse. It doesn’t mean “gripping” or “squeezing” the horse. As much as possible of the rider’s body should be kept in close contact with the saddle and the horse. This can be done by relaxing and stretching the thigh muscles. When the thigh muscles are relaxed, the rider can sit deeper in the saddle. Gripping too hard with the upper legs squeezes the rider’s body up out of the saddle. Gripping too hard with the knees puts the lower legs out of position. When the lower legs are out of position, the upper body will be either behind or ahead of the horse’s center of gravity.

The stability of the leg and foot depends on the correct stirrup adjustment. To test stirrup adjustment, take one foot out of the stirrup and let your leg hang loose. For Western and hunt seat, the bottom of the stirrup should hit the rider’s ankle bone. For saddle seat, the stirrup should be a little longer so that the knee will be only slightly bent when riding.

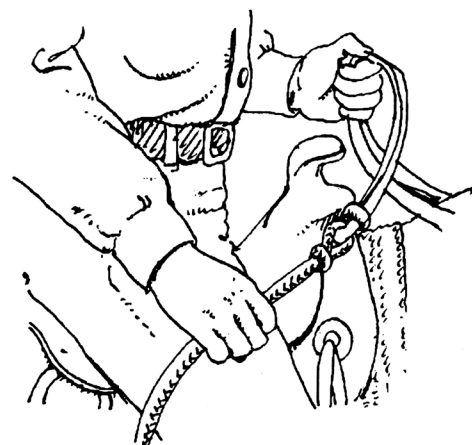
## Hand Position

The hands are part of the communication between the horse and rider. It is through the hands, legs, seat, and body motion that you tell the horse to stop, turn, speed up, or slow down. The hands must communicate a light and supple touch to the horse’s mouth. Quiet hands depend on a balanced seat and a stable leg position.

The major differences between Western and English riding positions are the hand positions and the way the reins are carried. There are also different hand positions for hunt seat and saddle seat.

### Western Hand Position

The position of rein hand for Western should be directly above the saddle horn (Fig. 55). This helps keep the rein hand quiet so the horse’s mouth won’t get jerked. If the rein hand is behind the saddle horn or too high above the saddle horn, the horse’s speed is hard to control. If the rein hand is in front of the saddle, the rein is too short, giving too much contact with the horse’s mouth. This means that the horse will not want to go forward.



**Figure 55: Western Hand Position**

**Important Note:** The correct rein length is different for each gait. Riders can also change rein length to control the horse's movements. For more information, refer to the books listed in the bibliography.

For riding Western there are three types of reins: romal reins, split reins, and roping reins (Fig. 56). Romal reins are held with the hand closed around the reins, which come up through the bottom of the hand. The romal part of the rein is held in the other hand, with about 16 inches between the two hands (Fig. 55).

There are two ways to hold split reins. One way is to hold them exactly like romal reins. The other way is to have the reins go through the top of the hand and come out through the bottom of the hand (Fig. 57). The free end of the reins (bight) falls on the reinhand side. The rider may have one finger between the reins.

Roping reins are held with the reins coming up through the hand.

### English Hand Position

In hunt seat, the hands should be above and slightly in front of the withers. The hands should be two to three inches apart, and halfway between horizontal and vertical. The forearm should be in a straight line to the horse's mouth (Fig. 53). The arm and hand should not be rigid or moving.

For saddle seat, the hands should be held higher above the horse's withers to encourage a higher head set. The exact height of the hands depends on how and where the horse carries its head. The hands should be in an easy position, somewhere between vertical and horizontal (Fig. 54).

### Position in Motion

The body position of the rider while the horse moves through the various gaits is different for each style of riding. The major difference between English and Western is at the trot or jog. For Western, the jog is slow and the rider can sit quietly. For English (both hunt seat and saddle seat), the horse usually extends its stride, which makes it difficult for the rider to sit to the trot. For this reason the rider does a posting trot, moving up and down with the motion of the horse (Fig. 58). The posting motion should not be a

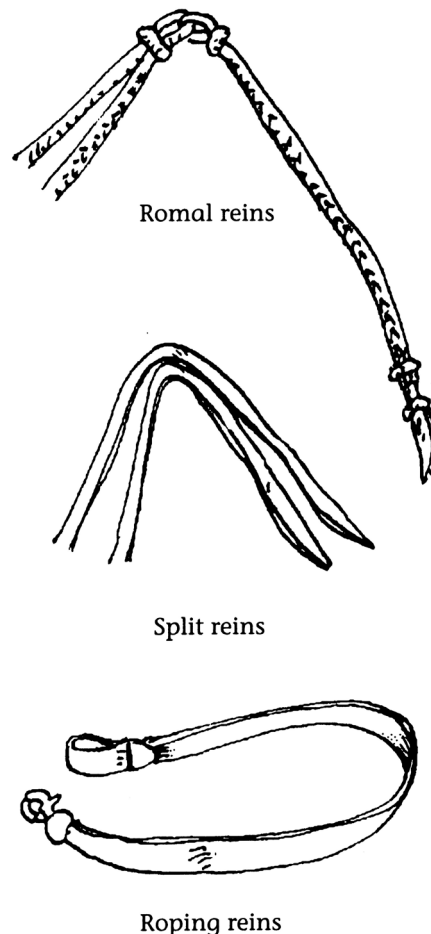


Figure 56: Western Reins



Figure 57: One Way to Hold Split Reins

mechanical up-and-down movement nor swinging backwards and forwards. It should be a slight, smooth, and quiet up-and-down motion with the horse. Remember that the trot is a diagonal, two-beat gait. The horse's left and right shoulders rise alternately, one after the other. The rider should rise with the shoulder on the outside rail of the ring; this makes posting at the trot much easier for horse and rider.

### Hunt Seat

At the walk, keep your upper body vertical (straight up and down) and your seat close to the saddle. At the posting trot, lean your upper body forward and rise slightly in the saddle. At the canter, the upper body position is halfway between that of the posting trot and the walk.

### Saddle Seat

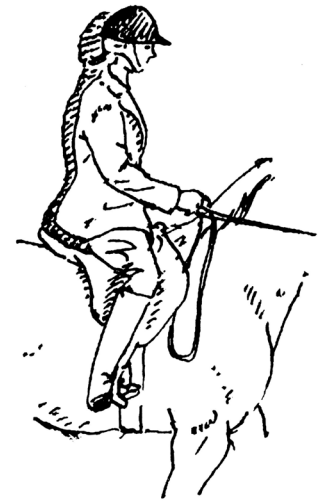
At the walk the rider moves slightly with the horse and the upper body is vertical. The body motion at the trot is rising slightly (posting) in the saddle with the hips under the body and the upper body vertical. At the canter the rider maintains a close, quiet seat with upper body vertical.

### Western

The position of the rider's body at the walk, jog, and lope is a quiet, vertical posture with the seat close to the saddle. The rider should sit at the jog and not post.

## Summary of the Basic Riding Position

In all riding styles the rider should sit straight and tall in the saddle without being stiff. Think of a straight line drawn through the rider's ear, shoulder, hip, and ankle. The back should be straight and the legs directly under the hips. The hips should be flexible and move with the motion of the horse. There is a slight bend to the knee and the heels are lower than the toes.



To post, move forward and up from the vertical position (shaded line) as the horse goes into a trot.



The forward motion of your horse's hindlegs helps push you up and forward to make posting easier.

**Figure 58: Posting Trot**

## **Learning Review: The Basic Riding Position**

1. Practice the correct seat and upper body position.
2. Practice the correct leg and foot position.
3. Practice the correct hand position.
4. Explain how the rider's hand position and seat position are related to the horse's sense of touch.
5. Explain how the rider's seat position and leg position affect the hand position.

## Chapter V



# CONTROLLING the HORSE

- **Hands**
- **Legs**
- **Seat (Weight)**
- **Voice**

## Goals

When you have learned the material in this chapter, you will:

- Know the four cues for riding and controlling a horse.
- Know how to apply these cues.
- Know how these cues are related to the horse's senses of hearing and touch.

# Cues

Cues are the signals by which the rider tells the horse what to do. They are signals which the horse must be taught to understand and obey. These are natural cues that do not need special equipment like whips or spurs:

1. Hands
2. Legs
3. Seat or weight
4. Voice

## Hands

The rider's hands communicate commands to a well-trained horse by applying pressure or contact to the horse's mouth. The horse can respond in several different ways, depending on the kind of pressure or contact. The hands can ask the horse to stop, or they can help control the horse's speed, or they can help in asking the horse to turn.

Riders may have heavy hands, passive hands, or good hands.

1. Heavy hands are hands which always disturb the horse. This is usually the result of an unsteady seat or a fear that the horse will get out of control.
2. Passive hands do nothing. They are light but ineffective, because they leave the horse alone all the time. These hands belong to riders with a good balanced seat, but no knowledge about how to ride a horse.
3. Good hands are quiet but effective. These riders combine the use of hands and legs. Good hands get the best results without upsetting the horse.

## Legs

The rider's legs communicate motion to the horse. Squeezing with both lower legs (calves) will make the horse go forward. If the horse is properly trained, leg pressure, combined with proper contact on the horse's mouth, will produce the following types of movements (Fig. 59):

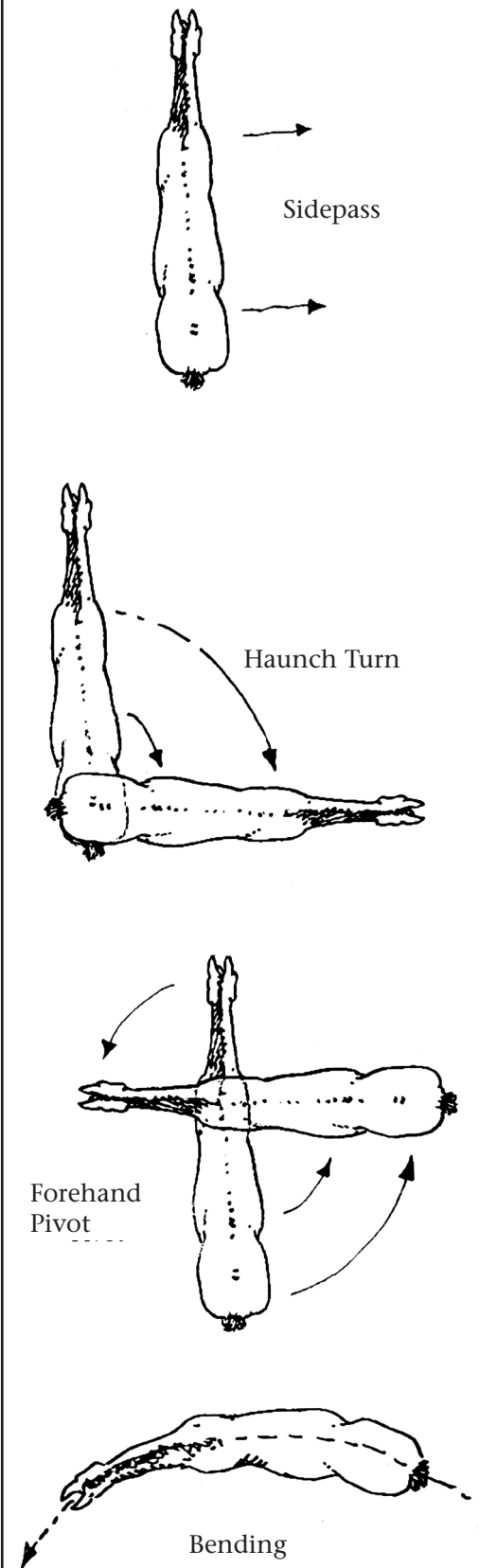


Figure 59

1. Sidepass (horse moves sideways)
2. Haunch turn (horse pivots on its hindquarters)
3. Forehand pivot (horse pivots on its forequarters)
4. Bending (horse bends its body to the inside of a circle)

### **Seat (weight)**

Slight shifts in the rider's weight will help the horse in going forward, backing, or sidepassing. When the rider's weight shifts slightly forward this helps the horse in moving forward. If the rider's weight shifts slightly back this helps the horse in backing. It is important to learn how to sit naturally and softly and to use body movements in harmony with the movements of the horse. Remember to use only slight shifts in body movement, not exaggerated weight shifts that may throw the horse off balance.

### **Voice**

The horse will also respond to voice cues such as "walk," "jog (trot)," "lope (canter)," and "whoa." It is important to use the voice quietly but firmly. The horse has a very good sense of hearing, so never yell or scream — the noise may frighten it.

## **Application of Cues**

Always apply the lightest possible cue that will get the horse to respond. Do not jerk the horse's mouth or kick the horse's sides. The cues applied on a trained horse should be almost invisible to the onlooker, but clear and definite to the horse. Every use of cues should include the complete harmony of the rider's hands, legs, seat, and voice. For the best performance from the horse, all cues are used together, not each one by itself.

### **Walk**

To get the horse to walk:

1. Maintain a slight amount of contact on the horse's mouth.
2. Squeeze with the calves of both legs.
3. Shift your body weight slightly forward.
4. Tell the horse to "walk."

Once the horse is walking:

1. Release the leg pressure.
2. Release a little of the pressure on the horse's mouth.

## **Jog or trot**

To get the horse to jog or trot:

1. Maintain a slight amount of contact on the horse's mouth.
2. Squeeze with the calves of both legs (use more pressure than you do for the walk).
3. Shift your body weight slightly forward.
4. Tell the horse to "jog" or "trot."

Once the horse is jogging (trotting):

1. Release the leg pressure.
2. Release a slight amount of pressure on the horse's mouth.

## **Lope or canter**

For the horse to lope or canter in balance it must be in the correct lead. A horse that is circling to the left (counterclockwise) must be in the left lead. A horse circling to the right (clockwise) must be in the right lead.

To get the horse to lope or canter in the left lead:

1. Maintain a slight amount of contact on the horse's mouth.
2. Apply leg pressure with the right calf.
3. Shift your body weight slightly forward. Do not shift your weight to the left.
4. Tell the horse to "lope" or "canter."

To get the horse to lope or canter in the right lead:

1. Maintain a slight amount of contact on the horse's mouth.
2. Apply leg pressure with the left calf.
3. Shift your body weight slightly forward. Do not shift your weight to the right.
4. Tell the horse to "lope" or "canter."

Once the horse is loping (cantering):

1. Release the leg pressure.
2. Release a slight amount of pressure on the horse's mouth.



## Learning Review: Controlling the Horse

1. List the four natural cues.
2. Explain each cue.
3. Tell which cues depend on the horse's sense of touch.
4. Explain how the cues can help the horse's movements and how they can hinder the horse's movements.

## Conclusion

This handbook presents safe and basic techniques you can use to catch, lead, tie, groom, saddle, bridle, mount, and dismount from a horse. A basic understanding of the horse's vision, hearing, touch, and social behavior will help you with ground handling and riding. Knowing the parts of the horse, saddle, and bridle will also help your horsemanship abilities. Understanding how the horse moves and knowing about the horse's center of gravity will help you develop a better sense of balance, which in turn will make you a better rider and handler.

The methods in this handbook have been tested by experience. Practicing these safe horsemanship techniques will ensure that you and your horse will have an enjoyable, safe, and productive time together. For more information about riding and horsemanship refer to the bibliography.

# Definitions

**Bight** - the part of a rein that hangs free.

**Binocular Vision** - seeing the same thing with both eyes at once. This gives good depth perception. (Compare Monocular vision.)

**Bridle** - the headgear with which a horse is controlled by its rider, including headstall, bit, and reins.

**Canter** - a three-beat gait, like a gallop except smoother and slower.

**Center of gravity** - the pivotal point of any object's weight. Half of a horse's weight is in front of its center of gravity and the other half is behind. When a horse stands still, its center of gravity is just behind the withers.

**Circle** - in show riding, to make a complete circle, start by turning the horse toward the center of the ring, and continue in the original direction of riding.

**Conformation** - the physical shape or build of a horse.

**Connector strap** - a strap used on Western saddles to keep the front cinch and back cinch connected.

**Cooling out** - cooling a heated horse by walking, brushing, giving small drinks of water, and sponging the horse off after it has worked hard enough to sweat. Water is only given in very small amounts and the horse is never allowed to drink its fill.

**Direct reining (plow rein)** - controlling a horse by direct pulls on the reins, with one rein in each hand (e.g., pulling the right rein with the right hand to turn the horse right). (Compare Neck reining.)

**Forehand** - the part of a horse that is in front of the rider.

**Gaits** - the different patterns of foot movement and speed with which a horse may travel, e.g., walk, trot, and canter. Each gait has its own rhythm of footfalls.

**Gallop** - a fast three-beat gait.

**Gelding** - a castrated male horse.

**Grooming** - the process of cleaning and caring for a horse's skin and coat, including currying, brushing, and the cleaning of the feet.

**Halt** - same as Stop.

**Halter** - a headstall with noseband and throatlatch, to which a leadrope can be attached.

**Hand** (unit of measurement) - four inches. A horse's height (at the withers) is usually stated in hands.

**Hands** - a rider's skill and manner of handling the reins (e.g., good hands, heavy hands).

**Hardmouthed** - not responsive to the bit.

**Headstall** - the part of a bridle or halter that goes over the head.

**Inside** - in show riding, all the area between the horse and the center of the ring.

**Jog** - a Western term for a slow trot.

**Lead** - to walk beside the horse, guiding it with rope and halter.

**Leadrope** - a rope attached to a halter, used to lead or tie the horse.

**Line up** - command for all riders to come to the center of the ring or circle and form a line facing the instructor or judge.

**Lope** - a three-beat gait; the Western equivalent of Canter.

**Mare** - a female horse.

**Monocular vision** - seeing a different area with each eye. (Compare Binocular vision.)

**Neck reining (indirect rein)** - a system of reining in which the horse responds to the weight of the rein on its neck, not to a pull on the bit. The reins are held in one hand; to turn the horse, move the rein hand in the direction you want the horse to go (e.g., left for a left turn). Used mostly in Western riding. (Compare Direct reining.)

**Near side** - the left side of a horse (horses are usually handled from this side).

**Off side** - the right side of a horse.

**Outside** - in show riding, the area between the horse and the outer boundary of the ring on the side away from the center; sometimes called the rail or wall.

**Posting** - the movement of the rider up and down in the saddle in rhythm to the trot, usually in English riding.

**Rail** - see Outside.

**Rein hand** - the hand used to hold the reins (usually the left).

**Reverse** - in show riding, to change the direction of riding by turning the horse either toward or away from the rail.

**Romal** - a length of braided rawhide attached to the end of connected reins.

**Roping reins** - a single continuous rein attached to the bit at both ends.

**Sit the trot** - to keep the seat deep in the saddle during the trot; the opposite of Posting.

**Split reins** - reins whose ends are not connected.

**Stable manner** - ideally the good temper and obedience all horses should display when being handled, groomed, saddled, etc.

**Stallion (stud)** - an intact male horse capable of breeding.

**Stop (or halt)** - command to stop a horse from any gait and remain standing until further instruction.

**Stud** - same as Stallion.

**Tack** - horse equipment, e.g., saddles, bridles, and grooming equipment.

**Take the rail left** - command to ride to the rail and follow it with the rider's left hand to the center.

**Thrush** - degenerative condition of the frog caused by bacteria, characterized by a thick, black, foul-smelling discharge.

**Trot** - a two-beat diagonal gait, in which one forefoot and the opposite hind foot move at the same time.

**Walk** - a four-beat gait, in which only one foot clears the ground at a time.

**Wall** - see Outside.

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For additional information, refer to publications listed under “Horse Science Series” in 4-H Projects and Publications (EM2778).

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Jennifer Leach is the 4-H/Youth Development Agent in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. Prior to this she coordinated the riding program at WSU and trained horses and taught riding for 10 years.





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