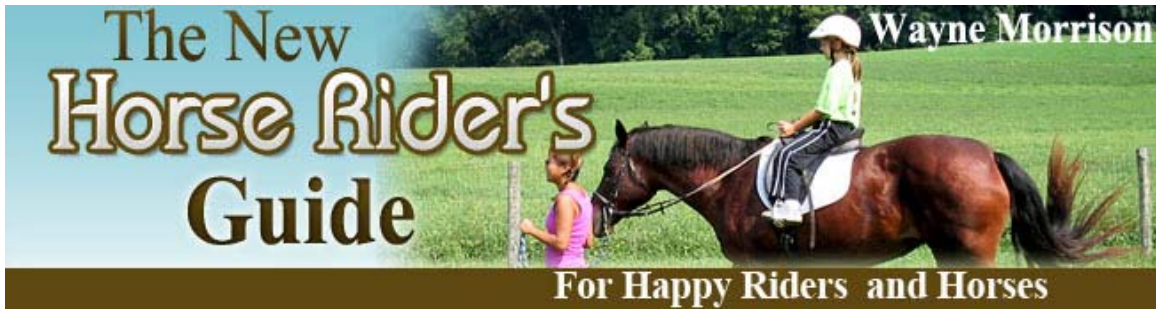


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Contents

Please Read This First.....	2
<i>Terms of Use</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Disclaimer.....</i>	<i>2</i>
Contents	3
About the Author	5
Introduction	6
Differences between Western and English Styles	7
Feeding Your Horse	8
Don't Forget the Water!.....	9
What Does Horse Ownership Cost?.....	10
Leasing a Horse	11
For Information Only	13
Basic Skills	14
How to Mount a Horse	15
How to Dismount from Your Horse	18
Veterinarian	20
Farrier	22
<i>To Shoe or Not?.....</i>	<i>23</i>
The Importance of Lessons	24
Solo or Group Instruction?.....	24
Choosing an Instructor	26
Group Classes	26
Dealing with Obstacles.....	27
Insurance	28

Getting Fit to Ride	29
Trail Riding Tips	31
Rules for Riders	32
Signs of Illness	33
What Those Ribbons Mean	34
Clothing for Comfort and Safety	35
Getting Your Own Horse	37
Housing your Horse	38
Good Stable Practices	38
The Last Hurdle	40
Important Facts	41
Resources	43
Organizations	43
<i>Australia</i>	43
<i>United States of America</i>	43

About the Author

Wayne Morrison had his first encounters with horses very early. His grandparents had a couple on their farm when Wayne was young.

The time that he spent there riding and caring for them are still some of the sharpest and most cherished of his childhood memories.

Wayne said, "My parents and grandparents were careful to teach me that riding the horse was just part of it. I learned that looking after them and looking out for their wellbeing were equally important."

His work has required him to travel but Wayne has taken every opportunity he could find to ride. When he retires he will move his family to an area where he can fulfill his dream of getting his own horse.

He wrote this ebook to share his knowledge with people that are interested in starting to ride horses.

He hopes that the information and tips will make it easier for them to fit this wonderful activity into their lifestyle successfully.

Wayne believes that his book will help people who may want to start horse riding, but are unsure about the demands they might face with time, costs and many other important factors.

Wayne said, "My book covers a lot of topics which are important to new riders, whatever their age, personal situation and what type of riding they want to do."

He hopes that it will assist readers to have an easier and more enjoyable time and ensure their riding adventure starts off on the right foot.

Introduction

The horse has been a valuable servant of humans for centuries.

That's all the history about the horse/human partnership you'll find in this book.

I hope you will find it a valuable primer for everyone that has ever thought they would like to take up riding as a hobby or even perhaps have their own horse.

You will find information about various topics which are very important for anyone that wants to start riding but has little or no experience of the horse riding industry and wants to get started by knowing what questions to ask, have some indication of when they are getting reliable answers and also when they are not.

Starting horse riding is a lot different to buying almost any other type of animal. The costs and the commitment of time and effort are obviously higher. I have included some suggestions about where you might save some money and also where it is best to spend a little more to avoid possible serious problems later on.

There are also a lot of factors which may not be obvious for the person who is just at the thinking stage.

I hope that these pages will help you move forward into your own horse riding experience and discover why it is so popular with people of all ages in every country.

Wayne Morrison

Differences between Western and English Styles

The two most popular styles of riding are the Western style from the U.S.A., and the English style.

The Western style was developed to help cowboys. They favored horses that were strong, stocky and capable of covering large distances without being too tired to give a burst of sustained energy and help the rider to catch and return a wayward cow to their herd. The horses' strides were usually shorter than a horse trained in the English style. The shorter stride may use less energy.

The English Style emphasizes form and precision. It developed from Europe's military styles of riding.

The English and Western gaits (ways of moving) are not all directly equivalent except for the walk. Also, some of the points are given different emphasis in each style.

The Western walk is a 4 beat gait which lets the horse and rider cover a lot of ground without too much obvious effort.

The English version is very similar with perhaps more emphasis on style and form.

The English Trot is a 2 beat gait like the Western Jog but the Western gait is slower and each stride won't cover the same distance as the English equivalent.

The English Canter is a 3 beat gait which covers more ground with each stride than the Western Lope.

The English Gallop and the U.S.A. Run, Canter or Lope are both 4 beat gaits.

A horse can walk at about three miles an hour.

Feeding Your Horse

Horses which do different activities, or are of different ages, may need different feeding regimes.



If you have an area of pasture which is providing good nutrition for your horse, that's great. You will need to monitor the area to ensure that the right grasses maintain their dominance in it and are not over-run by poor quality plants which would not continue to give the horse adequate nutrition.

If you have the land but it does not have a suitable type of pasture, making the change will require professional advice, which will probably be available from your State Agricultural Department in the early stages. They will analyze the composition of the current grass cover and give you a better idea of its suitability as pasture for your horse as well as advice about how that might be improved.

Other paid assistance may also be needed and a significant amount of time and effort.

It's probable that your horse will need vitamins or other supplements added to its regular feed.

Ask your veterinarian about the type of feed they suggest for your horse because they know its physical state and also know the variety, prices and quality of the various types of feed which are readily available in your area.

Hay is dried vegetable matter that has been gathered, dried and compressed to make feeding it easier, has either legumes (alfalfa or clover etc.,) or grass (Bermuda or Timothy, etc).

The horse's feed is usually given in one or two parts before and after the working part of their day.

The amount is measured to give the animal sufficient for nutrition, but limited to prevent it gaining unnecessary fat.

If hay is in short supply or your horse has worn teeth, you can provide their

hay as hay cubes which are easier to chew and have less dust.

Regular hay is preferred for most horses because it supplies more roughage than other choices. This is important for keeping the horse’s digestive system in good shape. It also makes the horse chew more to get the nutrients from the hay.

Don’t Forget the Water!

Water is just as important for the health of your horse as it is for every human.

The horse cannot survive well without a constant and generous supply of fresh, clean water.

This is one of the major reasons that your horse needs frequent checks through each day. If its water supply is fouled or stopped, then its health may suffer within a fairly short time.

You need to prevent weather conditions interfering with the supply as well.

In some areas, it may be necessary to use a special heating element to ensure that your horse’s drinking water does not freeze. If they cannot get to the water, that is just as bad as if there was no water provided.

What Does Horse Ownership Cost?



As the horse’s owner, you have full responsibility for all the costs and care which is involved.

I cannot give specific financial numbers because costs and conditions vary so widely in different areas. But, I will try to give you an idea of the items which you will be responsible for, whether you hire the horse all horses that you ride or actually buy and become responsible for the maintenance of your own horse.

The cost of owning a horse is not just counted in money terms, though that will be a significant amount.

You will also have to invest a significant amount of time and energy, probably on a daily basis, for the time you have the horse. That could be up to twenty five years!

What you don’t do or provide yourself, you have to pay for.

If you have to travel for business or family holidays, you need to arrange and pay for reliable supervision for the animal. That may not always be easy and is something which you need to sort out well before you make a trip.

You also have to accept the cost of housing and caring for the horse and its gear, including its feed.

Whether you have the horse housed at your home or at a boarding stable, there will be times when you will have to cancel other arrangements and go to the horse with little or no advance notice.

Leasing a Horse

A popular intermediate step when you have been bitten by the desire to own your own horse but want to "try before you buy" is to arrange to lease a horse from someone that owns a horse but does not want to, or doesn't have the capacity to look after it on a daily basis.

There may be a number of good reasons for them leasing their horse. They may do it for the money, because they are too busy to tend to and ride the horse often enough, have problems which mean they are unable to give the horse sufficient daily attention or have lost interest.

They may offer a lease while they decide whether they will eventually sell the horse or become more involved with it after the lease expires.

I think leases can be a good thing and, provided you are aware of and comfortable with your rights and responsibilities, they can be a wise first step on the road to horse ownership or a means of giving you a better understanding of the nitty-gritty facts about that ownership before you make the ultimate decision about getting a first horse of your own.

Although this section is focused on the commitment you are faced with when you own a horse, I have written it that way because I know it will not deter any reader who is sincere and has the resources to become a responsible horse owner, but will give all readers a chance to weigh up the possible impact on their current lifestyle of taking that major step.

I believe that horse ownership is great when the person has the means and the time, but can quickly become a burden for people who do not give all the factors due consideration in advance.

If they rush in, they will be locked in and that can lead to disaster for both the owner and the poor horse as well.

Remember that the only agreement you have with the person that leases a horse to you is what is in the printed formal lease which you have both signed.

Make sure that the lease covers as many factors as you can in clear and

simple language. If you have limited experience, try to have a more experienced person look through the lease before you sign it.

Ask all the questions you need to but maintain a polite, professional manner even if you think some details may be weighted against you. They may be there because of the owner's previous experience with leasing their horse(s).

Verbal "understandings" are not worth the paper they're not written and signed on. So, try to keep that in mind if you find yourself becoming very attached to the horse you lease. Although you may be able to make a deal to buy the horse, it will be a completely separate negotiation.

That way, neither you nor the horse's owner are compelled to make a deal about selling or buying before that time comes and you are both better aware of the possible alternatives you have at the end of the lease.

For Information Only

The information about the riding techniques in this book are just to give you a theoretical idea of what is involved, so you can understand and use your qualified instructor's advice more easily.

They must not be used as instructions

That would not be safe in all circumstances for all readers and their horses.

There are too many factors which are involved.

You need to discuss what you should learn and what you should leave until you have sufficient experience with an experienced riding coach in person. He or she can use their experience to judge your physical condition and other factors and then advise you how you should proceed with your training.

Their personal guidance through the process would be a very wise investment so that you can get the best possible enjoyment and memories throughout your horse riding.

It is not something you can do as well from a distance.

Taking shortcuts may cause more problems for many riders and their horses than we think about when we are full of enthusiasm about starting something new!

Horse riding is an activity that always involves some risk of serious injury even when the riders are experienced.

You need personal instruction from a qualified professional or an experienced, successful rider who knows your capabilities, so that your particular needs are fully addressed, before you start riding horses safely.

Basic Skills

There are two main styles of horse riding which are commonly referred to as English and Western.

Whichever discipline you are interested in following, this section will give you an idea of what is involved in learning to do some of the basic skills in horse riding.

Stepping through them with the help of this book will help you learn the procedures more quickly but your instructor will personally guide you about such important factors as:

- You are making every move correctly
- How exactly the horse is responding to your actions
- The effect you are having on the horse
- If you need to correct some small error that might otherwise affect your control and communication with the horse or injury later on.

You should always get someone to help you when you do your first few mounts and other basic moves.

If your instructor is not available, it should be someone who knows you and who is a person you have confidence in and will readily accept instruction from.

Whatever other people are available and willing to help you, an experienced instructor is always preferable and well worth what they charge.

Conveying information to people that they don't know well so they understand and follow instructions in a timely manner is a learned skill.

Take enough lessons to be comfortable so that you can do what you have been learning in real time, when you are on top of a large and probably excited horse, moving at speed and with no-one close by.

You should always arrange to have at least one other person with you even after you have gained more experience. Sharing your concerns and your triumphs while you ride or socially will help you both improve more rapidly.

How to Mount a Horse



Before you walk the horse out of the stall, check that your clothing and helmet are comfortable and well fastened.

Make sure that the area where you will mount the horse is completely free of hazards and potential problems.

Don't try to get on or off any horse in a confined space, no matter how well you know each other.

If you intend to mount the horse inside the stable, make sure that the roof is high enough and there

are no open doors near where the horse is standing so that the mount is safe to do.

These are fairly obvious safety precautions but too easy to forget when you are excited about your first few mounts.

Ensure that the floor or ground is clear.

Then, ask the other person to hold the head of your horse so that it stays calm during your first mount.

Always examine the gear on your horse just before you start to mount.

Check that the girth (English saddle) or cinch (Western style) is correctly fitted and that the fittings on your horse's bridle are secure.

There should be no signs of significant wear or other weakness in any of the gear.

If you are using the English style, drop the stirrups low to make it easier for you to step into them.

With either style, you can use a mounting block if there is one available or position the horse next to some rise in the ground's surface which you can use to make your mounting less of a stretch.

This will also reduce the strain on your gear and the amount of pressure on the horse's back when you are mounting.

Even when you have someone restraining the horse's head, you should still hold the reins and perform each part of the mount as if you were alone with the horse.

You never let go of the reins when you are mounting the horse.

We always mount on the horse's left (near) side, but it is worth learning to mount from the other side later on as well. That might come in handy if you find yourself off the horse on a trail and cannot remount your horse from the near side.

Hold the reins with your left hand. You can also grasp a small amount of the horse's mane with your left hand.

Some riders face forward and turn the stirrup slightly counter clockwise before they put the toe of their left boot into it.

People who follow the traditional style will face towards the back of a horse and turn the stirrup slightly clockwise before they put the toe of their boot into it.

This ensures that the leather does not twist but remains flat against the horse as you mount. This is more comfortable for both of you.

Place your left foot in the stirrup with the ball of your foot resting on the bottom bar.

Grasp the cantle of the saddle with your right hand.

Your right leg provides most of the propulsion for your mount.

Do not use your hands to lift yourself up. They are just to balance your body as you rise.

Your right hand lets go of the cantle as your right leg rises over the horse's back. Then, you put your right hand on the reins.

Make sure your right leg clears the horse’s back completely and lower yourself into the saddle as gently as possible.

You do not want to risk startling the horse or causing yourself any discomfort because you make a hard landing on its back.

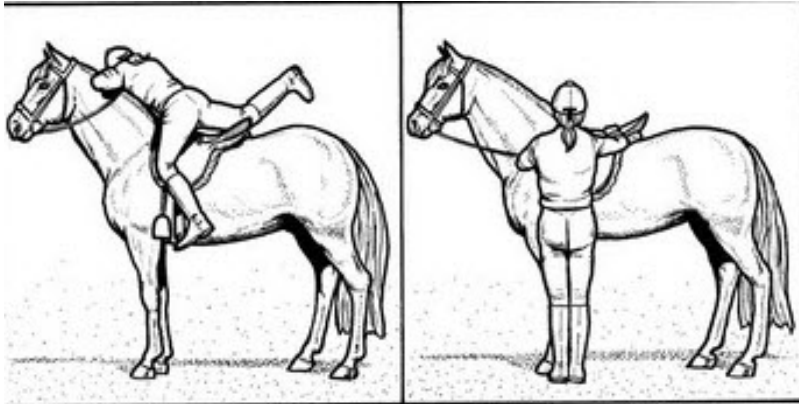
You may need to use your right hand to adjust the leather on the right side before you put your hands in the correct position on the reins.

If the horse starts to move before you are fully seated, you may have to consider whether to try to secure your position in the saddle or slide off and stop the horse when you have both legs on the ground.

But, in your first attempts, your friend will control the horse for you.

How to Dismount from Your Horse

Dismounting is like the mount in reverse in some respects. But there are some important points which I will point out as we go through it.



You should always have someone holding the horse when you make your first few dismounts. If you need help for more dismounts, that's okay. Your

safety and the comfort of the horse and other people in the area are more important than going solo a bit more quickly.

Do not try to dismount from a moving horse, however slowly it seems to be moving. Apart from possibly injuring yourself, you may startle the horse or somehow cause it to injure itself, you or someone in the area!

Pull both feet gently out of your stirrups.

Hold both reins in your left hand. You can't let them become completely loose because you may need to control the horse if it starts to move before you have fully dismounted.

Lift your right leg up and across the horse's rear without touching it.

Your left leg provides most of the power for you to push clear and land to the left of the horse.

Bending your knees will help to cushion the impact of your landing.

When you are firmly on the ground, your right hand holds the reins near the bit.

Then, you raise the reins forward over its head so you can lead the horse.

I believe this method is usually the most comfortable for both the horse and the rider most of the time. I always use it unless it is not practical in a particular situation.

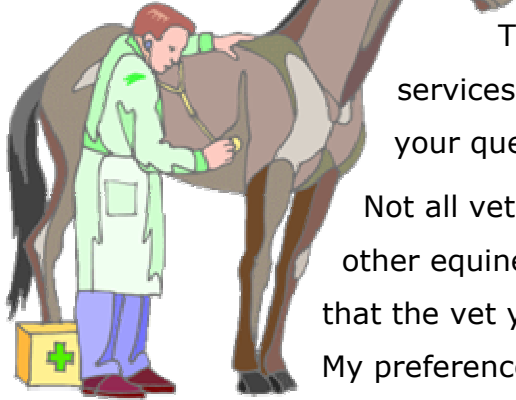
Always have someone either holding the horse or very close by until you are able to do this without strain on either you or the horse.

You should practice doing it by lifting the left leg later on, in case you ever have a situation where this exact procedure is not practical.

Veterinarian

Your veterinarian is those that provides through the

probably the most important person among essential support for you and your horse entire time you have it.



Take time to thoroughly check all the services in your area before you do anything else in your quest to become a horse owner.

Not all vets have enough experience with horses and other equines to be a good choice. You need to ensure that the vet you link up with has relevant experience.

My preference is for one that specializes in horses.

If you don't find one in your immediate area, you might have to take your horse to one farther away or wait too long for a suitable vet to travel to treat your horse. Either way, that would be risky, frustrating and very expensive.

If you have an agricultural college in your area, they will have contact details of any suitably qualified veterinarians in your area.

It is very important that they are prepared to travel at whatever time they are called if the situation with your horse requires it. Horses don't make allowances for holidays but your vet needs to have them covered either personally or by appropriately qualified and reliable associates.

Some out-of-regular-hours visits are almost inevitable and will also incur higher fees. Even if you have your own horse transport, you may not want or be able to load and transport your horse when it is sick for fear of making the problem worse.

Of course, you also need to know the level of charges which you will have to pay as well.

When you visit the service to evaluate it, thoroughly check the facilities, talk with the staff (but please don't interrupt their work) and watch how they interact with their customers and prospective customers like yourself.

Ask for referrals but don't just rely on the word of praise from the vet's own

favorite and happiest customers. Talk with other horse owners at events and feed stores or other suppliers of horse gear.

Time for talking with the vet will be limited because all the good ones have very busy practices, but try to get an impression of their style of treatment because you will sometimes deal with them in stressful situations. You want someone that you feel you can be open and comfortable with at those times.

Donkeys and other animals that are related to horses have their own particular requirements, so experience in treating one type is not necessarily sufficient for providing a full coverage to another type.

A guide to their focus on horses is whether or not they have current membership of an appropriate professional body.

Each association can give you a list of their members in your area which can help to shorten the time your own research will take you.

Vets are business people and your continued use of their services will depend on paying their bills promptly. Check their fees for common services, such as immunizations, and find out whether they have payment plans available for large bills which may come unexpectedly at any time.

If you have already obtained your horse, but find it hard to decide between different vet services, it might be worthwhile to have a paid consultation from each before making your final decision.

You will get some idea how your horse reacts to the vet's style, though this is not a major factor. Vets that are on your final list will be capable of treating any horse, but some horses will not be as comfortable on a first visit with a vet as they will quickly become when they see the same one several times.

You will get some idea from seeing a couple of different vets do an examination as to how thorough each is. How they answer any questions from you will also help you decide which you prefer to start a, hopefully, long-term relationship with too.

Your investment of time and money in these examinations can save you much more of each and possibly a lot of stress through the following years.

Farrier



The choice of farrier to equip your horse with shoes and trim its feet is equal in importance with your choice of vet for its long term health.

Just like human beings, a horse’s health depends to a large degree on the proper care its feet receive.

Your best source for a recommendation might be the equine vet which you chose for treating your horse, especially if your horse has a particular problem which relates to its legs etc.

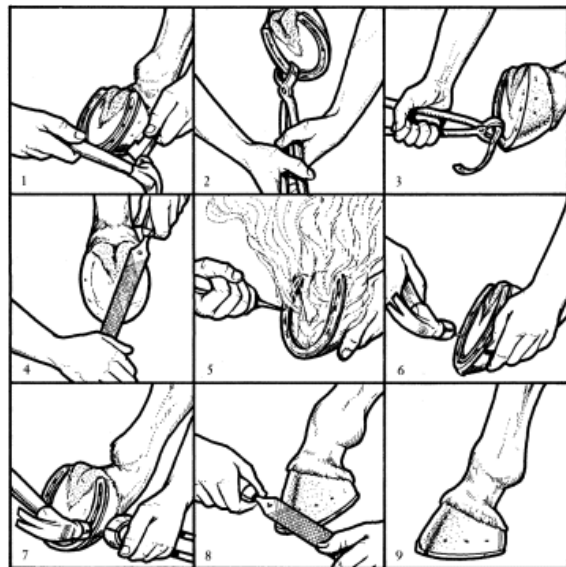
I would also get other feedback about any farrier from any other horse owners I know through personal contact or who are members of the same organizations which I belonged to. Ask them privately to also let you know about any bad experiences with any farrier which they had personal knowledge of.

If you are focused on a particular type of event or activity which you will use your horse in, check whether or not the farriers you contact have experience in that area.

Always ask for the prices which they charge for specific services.

Ask whether they are members of recognized organizations for farriers and where they did their training.

Ask if they are involved in further education – even a trade as old as theirs’ has improvements being introduced even if they may just be variations of traditional methods.



Some new techniques have been introduced in this trade in recent years. My preference would be to use a farrier who has been trained in the traditional methods and has no problem providing references from local riders for you to check.

Always check the references personally and note if any seem to be based on some sort of family or commercial relationship, rather than between service provider and happy customer.

To Shoe or Not?

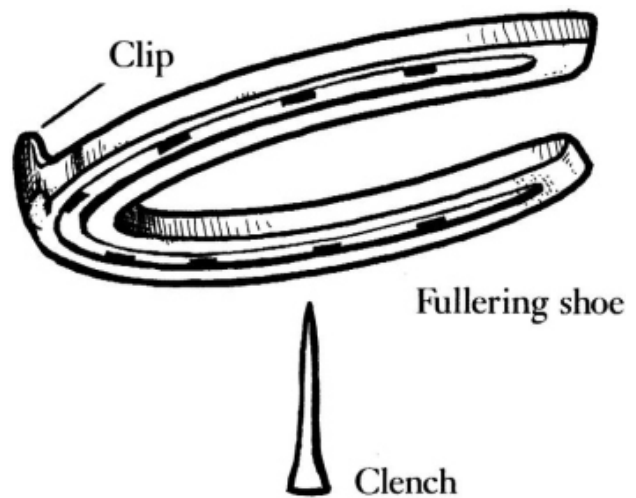
Some people believe that shoes are not good for horses.

My belief and experience suggests that they prevent and assist with problems that probably won't come right without some form of treatment.

A farrier said that they shoe horses for three reasons, "protection, correction and traction."

I am most comfortable with that view but felt I should mention the other system. I do not have any experience of it, so I cannot help you further.

I suggest that an experienced equine vet might be a good source of independent information on any advantages or disadvantages which the no-shoeing system may have.



The Importance of Lessons

I hope you understand that personal instruction from a professional is the best way to start learning to ride.

Please put aside any idea of buying or leasing a horse until you have some experience in what is involved through visiting stables and mixing with riders and the other people involved in our hobby.

You will need some time to decide what way is best for you to progress your horse riding. It is a very good idea to arrange to meet with some experienced people that can give you information about the good and any bad points of various options in your area as early as possible in your research.

You will spend a lot of money on this, but you should not rush to do so.

Getting the best information about services and suppliers along with some reliable friends in the business is a wise first step.

Solo or Group Instruction?

Most instructors work with a boarding stable. They may own some horses which are kept there for students' use or the stable may provide them to those students who need them as required for a separate fee.

I suggest that you visit the available stables and find out as much as you can about the instructors from past students, people that have dealt with the stables and your own impressions of the atmosphere and other factors around each stable.

You need to check the professionalism of the way staff deal with customers, including some like you who have not yet signed up, the standard of presentation and maintenance around the premises, their attention to cleanliness and safety and, of course, the health and attitude of the horses.

You might want to check the horses which students may use and any other benefits which particular stables or instructors offer.

Some instructors also train horses. They can be a good choice if you have or are about to buy your own horse.

Some other good questions are:

- Does the stable offer the particular style of riding which you are most interested in?
- What gear and other supplies would you need?
- What can be bought or rented at that particular stable?
- Are there any horses available for lease which would be suitable for you to learn with? This would be a significantly more costly option than renting whatever horse was available each time. But, you might feel more comfortable working with just one horse through the sessions.
- How long are the classes?
- How convenient are they to your regular schedule?
- What are you likely to be able to do after x lessons?
- What is the full cost of the series?
- Are there any extra benefits or charges?
- Can you arrange to have a refresher session, perhaps with a later group, to fine-tune some particular technique and what would be the charge for that?

The instructor you choose will probably have the most effect on how well you learn, but their surroundings and your dealings with other people at that stable will also affect your experience to some extent.

Choosing an Instructor

With personal instruction, the most important element is how comfortable you are with each other.

Ask if you can pay to attend a group class before signing up for a set of lessons.

You also need to decide whether to have individual or group lessons.

People often decide which they choose just on the reputation of the instructor and how the choice will affect their overall budget.

Even if you are comfortable about paying the local rate for solo teaching, you might consider some group lessons to start with and then use personal training to improve any areas where you feel need more attention.

Group Classes

If cost is important, just start with some group classes. Being with other people who are also just beginning to learn horse riding is helpful because you will see that everyone has things which are harder or easier to do consistently well. Watching the instructor take someone through a particular move is better than a video because you know that the person being instructed is really close to your level of experience and not another instructor pretending to be a raw student.

It helps you to know that the problems you have at first are no more than some others also experience. The group will also be supportive and you will probably meet people that you will share your horse riding experience with even after your sessions are over.

Dealing with Obstacles

When you are riding a trail and come to some sort of obstacle which your horse does not want to get across for the first time, your response will have a great effect on the way that your horse deals with strange or difficult obstacles for a long time into the future.

If you believe that it is safe to get over the object, and within the capabilities of you and your horse, you must encourage it to try again to get over it.

But, you will be risking damage to your relationship with the horse if you let a battle develop between you and the horse.

Your first move, after deciding that the task is safe, is to dismount and walk the horse to the other side. Sometimes, this will be enough to give the horse confidence to tackle the obstacle successfully.

If not, ask another rider to take their horse over it. Your horse may follow their lead.

If you let the horse avoid the obstacle at this point but continue along the same direction, some horses will start to think that they will be able to pick and choose what barriers they tackle for you in the future.

That must be discouraged.

So, change your direction of travel. You might try the same obstacle at another time yourself or arrange for a more experienced rider to take your horse over the obstacle in the near future.

If you are not sure about the obstacle, always be on the side of caution for the sake of yourself and your horse. There'll always be more obstacles for you to test yourselves with.

Insurance

Many horse owners regard insurance of their horse, including death cover and public liability etc., as essential.

Costs can be substantial if you or your horse causes damage or injury to other horses or people and their property. And, many people will sue rather than negotiate.

But, it is vital to read any policy you are offered with great care.

You will be bombarded with the potential benefits of buying the policy but not every agent will point out equally clearly your responsibilities under the policy.

There may be exclusions in the cover and you will probably have to ensure that you make full disclosure of any relevant facts which might affect the coverage.

This is very important and it is easy to forget something which the company might later claim was required for you to disclose up front.

You may have to pay a certain amount in premiums before full coverage is available.

You may have to ensure that certain documentation is delivered to the company's office and acknowledged within a certain time after the incident which you claim about occurred.

If there is anything which is not clear about any aspect of the policy, get it clearly explained in writing and signed by the relevant person at the insurance company. Then, attach a copy of their letter or fax to your copy of the policy.

You don't find out how good your insurance really is until you have to claim.

Getting Fit to Ride

This section is about you, not the horse.

You may have been told that horse riding is good exercise in itself.

It is but you will not feel many benefits if you don't have enough strength and energy to exert control on your horse when required and absorb the pounding while you ride.

Horse riding is an activity which requires some strength, flexibility, concentration and good temper from you, just like any other high-energy sport would.

If you are seriously unfit, you will risk having problems with controlling your horse, forming a working relationship with it and you will also feel very tired and sore after each ride.

If you are unable to do the required actions and give the horse proper guidance for the whole period you are in control of it, you will affect the connection you need to have between you and you may even cause some injury to the horse as well as yourself.

A simple example is the requirement to be able to keep your reins in position to cue the right action at the right time from the horse.

Any confusion between you and your horse may become a risk to the safety of other people and horses in the area.

So, a regular exercise program to build or maintain your body at a high level of flexibility and power will pay dividends in your enjoyment and achievements when you are horse riding.

Always, ask your doctor or other medical adviser for a full examination and consultation before making any significant change in your lifestyle or level of exercise.

When you have decided on an exercise regime which fits with the doctor's advice, always start each session with a relatively easy exercise to prepare your body and mind for the higher level of effort. It's usually a good idea to slow down in stages after the main part of your exercises too.

It's usually better to have some short sessions regularly through your week, rather than try to cram your exercises into a small number of larger sessions.

Vary the type of exercises to keep your enthusiasm up and also to improve the condition of all the areas of your body.

As with riding, your results will probably benefit greatly from getting a buddy or even a like-minded group of colleagues or friends to share your exercise sessions.

You don't always need to sign up with a gym and use sophisticated and expensive equipment. Anything you save in this area you can spend on your riding!

Walking and swimming are two low-cost and effective forms of exercise.

The benefits in both strength and posture which you can expect over time will pay dividends in all areas of your life as well as making you a more successful and happier horse rider.

Trail Riding Tips

Before you start to ride any trail, you need to study the conditions and plan carefully so that you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Even if you are very confident about your ability (and, just as important, that of your horse), to handle a particular slope, don't give in to the temptation to go at your fastest pace.

The main reason is that speed increases the always present risk for both of you.

This is especially important if you are riding as part of a group.

But, it is also very important when you are riding by yourself, because you want to minimize the risk of an accident which might leave you stranded.

Be cautious how you approach any area you are not familiar with. Many riders and their horses have been injured because they were a little reckless and jumped some object without first checking the whole area around it.

Take a halter and rope when you ride. If you need to tie up your horse, use them instead of your reins.

If the reins are damaged, you may have to walk your horse back to the stable.

Be wary of any body of water because it might be a lot deeper than you think and correspondingly more dangerous to you and your horse.

If your horse is not used to being in or near traffic, try to get some friends to help you by driving past it while you are on a quiet road with little or no other traffic.

Don't let your horse graze any vegetation except when you stop for a regular break and can check what vegetation is in the area.

That grazing could become a habit and even cause wider problems.

Some plants could be dangerous.

Some may be protected and the casual destruction by one or two horses may have the whole area put out of bounds to all riders!

Rules for Riders

Courtesy when riding in groups is not just important, it is essential for everyone's peace of mind and safety.

When a group stops to let their horses drink from a stream, take your turn, wait patiently and don't start riding away before all of the group's horses have finished drinking. Some of the last horses may get nervous and drink less than they should for fear of being left behind when the main group leaves.

Keep to the same gait as the rest of the group you are with. Ask for the group's agreement before significantly increasing your pace.

When you treat other users of the trails as courteously as you hope they will treat you, you are being a goodwill ambassador for all horse riders, not just yourself. Of course, the impression that gives others in the group you are with is likely to also be very positive.

Follow safety guidelines recommended for all trail users like letting someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.

Put a bright and durable tag on your horse's gear with your contact details in case you become separated or injured.

Put your cell phone in a sealed pocket in your clothing. If you put it in a saddle bag, the horse may race away with it if it is startled.

Never ever ride a trail alone, especially one that you are not very familiar with.

Always wear approved safety helmets, riding boots and bright clothing.

Don't ride trails in hunting season unless you are willing to risk injury. If you must, do all you can to be seen by any hunters that are around.

Carry first aid gear for you and your horse.

Get first aid training so that you are able to help yourself or anyone else that has trouble on the trail you are riding.

Signs of Illness



All horse riders should be aware of and watch for the common signs which may indicate a special problem with their horse.

The presence of blood in their manure or urine, in fact - any bleeding at all should be checked.

Swellings, tenderness or inflammation may require veterinary attention.

Refusal to eat or drink. Horses work hard and this unusual behavior is not a good sign.

Signs of horse flu may vary from a running nose and slower than usual

moving around to also having a fever, discharge from the eyes, coughing and poor appetite. The best treatment may be preventative vaccine.

Mild cases may recover with little intervention but serious cases will need antibiotics to fight infections and also drugs to deal with the fever and its effects.

Thrush is a bacterial infection which shows as a smelly black discharge from the triangular frog on their hooves.

Regular checking and cleaning of the horse's hooves can help to prevent the disease.

Severe infections cause lameness and veterinary attention is essential at that stage.

What Those Ribbons Mean

There are three colored ribbons which you might see attached to the base of particular courses tails at competitions or other places where horse riders are gathered.

A **yellow** ribbon signifies that the horse is a stallion. You need to be wary around them because they may become aggressive if they are attracted to a nearby mare.

A **green** ribbon indicates that the horse, or possibly the rider, is "green" (inexperienced) and should be given some leeway. A "green" horse may misbehave or cause trouble for other horses and riders because of its lack of experience in crowded conditions.

A **red** ribbon is, as you probably guessed, a warning signal that the horse is inclined to kick if approached, especially from behind.

When you see a colored ribbon on their tail, always give the horse a little extra room and the rider some understanding. They are doing the right thing to help reduce any possible problems and make the event safer and more enjoyable for everybody involved.

Clothing for Comfort and Safety



Quality clothing is important for all riders because of the demands we put on it.

Riders following the English discipline have outfits with strict rules while Western riders have a look but more freedom in the actual styles which they adopt.

An important factor with a rider's entire outfit is that it does not cause any safety issues and some items help to reduce the risks of injury as well.

Western riders often wear hats rather than helmets because that is the tradition but the usual hats offer little protection from injury except perhaps sunburn.



Protective hats are available but many riders continue to risk head injuries because they want to look "right" instead of concentrating on being safer and having a greater chance of surviving a fall.

Helmets made for bike riders don't offer as good a level of protection for horse riders.

A helmet hanging on your saddle offers no protection at all.

Don't use a helmet which you wore in any fall even though it may look okay.

The price of a new helmet is insurance that you will be as lucky next time.

Your shirt should not have any loose areas or open flaps which might catch on your gear or vegetation or anything which they come into contact with in the stable or an arena.

Skin cancer is a risk worth protecting yourself against with suitable sunscreen and long sleeved shirts. It's not just ugly, it is deadly.

Your riding jeans also help to protect your legs from chafing caused by

rubbing on the tack.



Avoid the temptation to wear shorts when it's really hot. Apart from the risk of sunburn or worse, they offer no protection if you fall.

The injuries from riding falls while wearing shorts can be severe.

As well as providing safe connections with your stirrups and protecting your legs, boots also protect your feet from injury when a horse puts a hoof in the wrong spot.

They may be uncomfortable but not as much as swollen or broken toes.

Getting Your Own Horse

I suggest that, however intense your desire to own your own horse, you follow the common wisdom of having the least a year of training and plenty of experience riding and handling horses before taking any action on that most important decision.



I understand the grip that the idea can have on you but you need to have a solid foundation for your decision. The consequences of getting the wrong horse could be disastrous for yourself and, especially the horse that you choose.

Until you have become confident and in the saddle and around horses, and have enough experience to decide what sort of riding you will specialize in, it's pointless to lock yourself into any major commitments which you may come to regret.

Remember that your commitment to the horse may be for as long as twenty-five years!

Housing your Horse

One of the major expenses in horse ownership is providing adequate housing for your horse.

I believe that you will be better able to maintain your horse and your relationship with it if you start by paying for it to be kept at a professional stables for at least a year before you set up new quarters for it on your own property.



This gives you access to professional advice from staff at the stables, advice and support from other, more experienced owners who also have their horses there and reduces the amount of labor and time required of you while you are adjusting to all the demands which horse ownership brings with it.

You will also probably be able to watch the staff doing routine tasks like cleaning the horses and mucking out.

That doesn’t sound exciting but is probably the best way to learn tips and short-cuts that you can use yourself to provide the best care for the horse and reduce your effort at the same time.

Good Stable Practices

Any stable which might be worth serious consideration as a home for your horse for a short or long period must have:

Experienced, enthusiastic and capable staff. If they lack any of these characters, your horse’s well-being and even its safety could be compromised.

Clean and well-built buildings, yards and stalls. The rates you pay mean you should expect and get these. Your horse will suffer if it doesn't.

Frequent cleaning.

Secure storage and feeding units for feed. Any sign of vermin or mold is serious.

You will have to sign a waiver or indemnity which protects the stable and staff from some litigation. It's like the "All Care but no (or limited) responsibility" on your docket when you have your clothing dry-cleaned.

But, don't sign this one unless your enquiries make you confident that you can rely on their standards.

There will also be an agreement for you to sign which puts some obligations on you before they will accept your horse.

That will include having your horse vaccinated and providing current certificates to confirm that. Check with your vet about which diseases and other conditions which your horse and all others at the stable should be protected against.

If they are not listed among those required by that stable, don't take chances.

The presence of a caretaker or security person on the premises can reduce the risk of vandalism or theft. They are also a limited but handy insurance if any of the horses become ill or even just distressed late at night.

The Last Hurdle

I hope that my book will help you to prepare for your horse riding with a better idea of all that involves.

Please don't just focus on the negative points which I've mentioned. You need to be aware of possible problems so that you can protect yourself and your horse from them.

But, I am sure that you will find that the enjoyment of the time you have with your horse, sharing the experiences with your family and friends will more than repay the effort and costs involved.

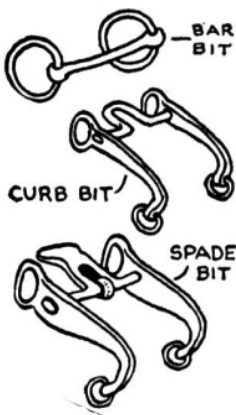
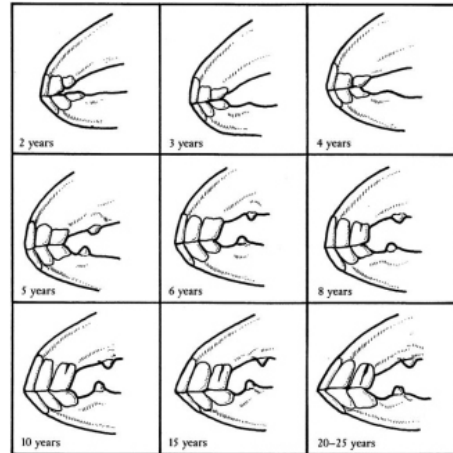
I wish you a long and happy future in horse riding, one of the most enjoyable and exciting hobbies you can have.

Wayne Morrison

Important Facts

Age: A horse’s age can be estimated by looking at its teeth.

Do NOT do this unless you have been shown personally by someone, such as your Vet, how to do it safely.



Bit: The section of its bridle which fits into the horse’s mouth to signal what the rider wants the horse to do. The fitting of the bit must be accurate or the horse could suffer and your control would be very poor.

Bridle: The gear which is placed around a horse’s head to control it. Most include headstraps and a metal bit. The exception is the:

Bosal: A bridle which includes a noseband that is used to signal to the horse what the rider wants it to do instead of using a bit. Technically, the noseband is the Bosal but the term is often used for the whole bridle.

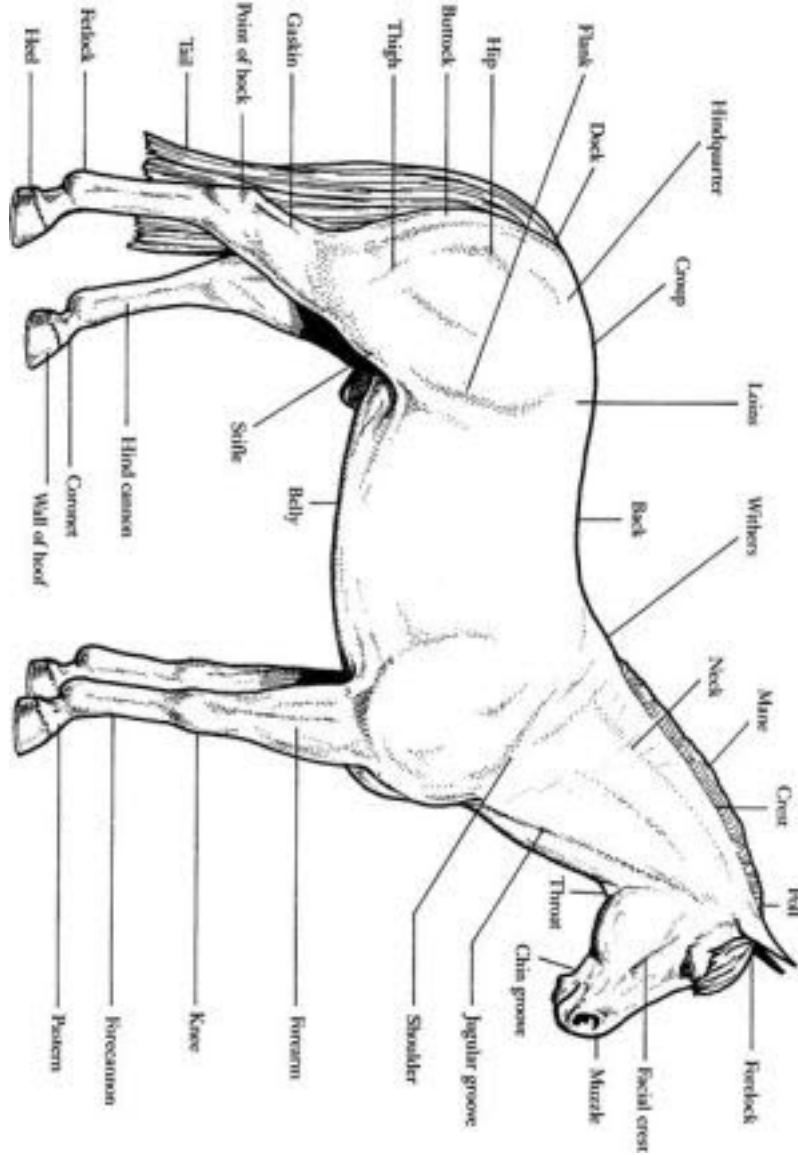
Withers: The ridge which forms a bump on most horses above the shoulders.

They are the point at which the horse’s height is measured.

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Resources

Organizations

Australia

Australian Hunter Horse Association Inc

www.hunterhorses.com.au/

The Australian Hunter Horse Association Inc. ("AHHA") is one of the fastest growing horse organisations in Australia, dedicated to promoting Show and Working Hunter horse disciplines and supporting both breeders and competitors all across

The Australian Horse Riding Centres

<http://www.horseriding.org.au/>

The Australian Horse Riding Centres (AHRC) is a national organisation representing approximately 100 horse riding centres across Australia.

AustraliaHorse Rescue Australia

www.horserescue.com.au/

Horse Rescue Australia Inc. is a non-profit organisation and registered charity, devoted to the care and rehabilitation of horses that have been abused

United States of America

The American Farriers Association

<http://www.americanfarriers.org/>

Promoting equine welfare and providing continuing education for working farriers and the equine community

Brotherhood of Working Farriers

<http://www.bwfa.net/>

Dedicated to offering education and public awareness by promoting the Farrier as the most important equine professional to the overall health of the horse

United States Equestrian Federation

<http://usef.org>

The United States Equestrian Federation [USEF] serves as the National Governing Body for Equestrian Sport.

Horse Rescue Organizations

Horse Lovers United <http://www.horseloversunited.com/>

Horse Protection League <http://www.cohpl.org/>

UNITED KINGDOM

British Horse Society

<http://www.bhs.org.uk/>

The UK's Largest Equine Charity

Especially for trail riders:

The Forestry Commission of Great Britain. This organization has pages with detailed information for horse riders interested in riding in various parts of Great Britain on different areas on its web site. There is a search engine to find more specific information about particular locations at

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/horseriding>

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