

HorseSense Learning Levels

EQUINE TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
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Red HorseSense

ARENA	A large indoor or outdoor riding area usually fenced, and with soft footing.
ASTM-SEI HELMET	Equestrian head protector that has been manufactured according to safety standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials, and tested by the Safety Equipment Institute.
BALE	A square bundle of hay that is tied with strings.
BALING TWINE	Thin rope made of jute that is used to hold hay bales together. Natural-fiber twine (not plastic) also makes good breakaway tie rings for tying horses.
BARREL	The sides of a horse's midsection; the back is above it and the belly is below.
BEDDING	The material placed on the floor of a horse's stall to soak up waste and cushion the ground.
BELL BOOTS	Protective boots made of hard rubber that fit around the horse's pasterns and cover the hoof wall to protect the coronary band and heels.
BELLY	The underside of the middle of a horse's body, below his barrel.
BILLET STRAPS	Straps with punched holes that allow the girth to be buckled to the saddle; there are usually three on an English saddle.
BIT	The mouthpiece of a bridle that is used to guide the horse. There are many different types and designs for different uses.
BLIND SPOT	Point where a horse's monocular vision doesn't reach; a horse has two such places, directly in front of his head and directly behind his tail.
BODY BRUSH	Grooming tool with soft bristles that pulls oils from horse's skin and makes his coat shiny. Also used to clean sensitive areas like muzzle, face and lower legs.
BODY LANGUAGE	A form of non-verbal communication, which consists of body posture, gestures, facial expressions, and eye movements.
BREAKAWAY HALTER	A safety halter which has a replaceable crownpiece made of leather or other material that is designed to break if a horse gets caught or tangled in his halter.
BREASTPLATE	Straps that attach to either side of an English saddle, running across the horse's chest, to help keep the saddle in place.
BREECHES	Calf-length riding trousers, often worn with tall boots.
BRIDLE	A leather piece of tack that fastens around the horse's head and holds the bit in place. Its design, size, and shape varies for different uses and riders.
BRIDLE PATH	Space between a horse's ears where the mane is clipped short to allow the bridle's crownpiece to fit correctly.

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BROWBAND	Part of a halter or bridle that fits across a horse's forehead, in front of the ears.
BUCKLE GUARD	Small light piece of leather that fits over the billet straps, designed to protect the underside of the English saddle flap from damage from the girth buckles.
BUTTOCK	Vertical area of muscle behind horse's hindquarters.
CANNON BONE	Sturdy bone on horse's lower leg that supports his weight.
CANTLE	The curved area of the saddle that makes up the back of the seat.
CAST	When a horse is on the ground and unable to get his feet under himself to rise, usually because he rolled too close to a fence or wall.
CAVESSON NOSEBAND	Plain noseband, without special attachments that add pressure.
CHEEKPIECE	Part of a bridle that attaches the bit to bridle; can be raised or lowered to fit bit correctly.
CHESTNUTS	The horny growths on the inside of all four legs of a horse.
CHIN GROOVE	Indentation on horse's muzzle behind lower lip.
CHIN STRAP	The part of a riding helmet that fits snugly under your jaw to keep your helmet on your head.
CLAUSTROPHIC	Afraid or uncomfortable in small or enclosed spaces.
COLIC	Equine bellyache. The symptoms are sweating, pawing, lying down, then getting up, restlessness, rolling, kicking or biting belly, groaning, and change of attitude. Can be lethal if not treated promptly.
CONCENTRATES	Feed made from grain that provides extra short-term energy.
CORONARY BAND	The thin section of connective tissue just above the hoof wall, similar to the quick of a human's fingernail. The hoof grows out from the coronary band. A major blood vessel runs behind it.
CREST	The area along the top of a horse's neck, from which the mane grows.
CROSSTIE	A set of strong straps that attach on the sides of the halter and extend to tie rings in a stall, wash stand, or barn aisle. They are usually equipped with special panic snaps that allow you to release the horse in an emergency.
CROUP	The part of a horse's back that slopes downward from the loin to the tail.
CROWNPIECE	Part of a halter or bridle that fits over the poll and behind the horse's ears.

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CURB BIT	Bit that uses leveraged action for added pressure on a horse's mouth, lips or tongue.
CURB STRAP	Used with a leveraged bit, this strap attaches to either side of the bit and puts pressure on the chin groove when reins are tightened.
CURRYCOMB	Grooming tool made of hard rubber or plastic, used in a circular motion to loosen caked mud and hair.
DANDY BRUSH	A stiff brush used on the horse's body to remove dry mud and dirt.
DOCK	Area where a horse's tail connects to the croup, including the space around the tail.
DOMINANT HORSE	A horse with high status in the herd who will get priority over less aggressive horses when it comes to food, space, or choosing mates.
ENGLISH SADDLE	Smooth, light saddle, without a horn, that allows close contact between the rider and horse. Built for forward-seat riding and used in racing, dressage and jumping.
FARRIER	A horseshoer; one who trims horses' feet and shoes them. Used to be called a 'blacksmith'.
FEED BIN	Storage bin with secure lid for horse feed, made of metal or heavy plastic, used to keep grain dry, clean, and protected from critters.
FENCE	Structure that encloses an area to keep horses contained; term is also used to describe jumps.
FENDERS	Leather panels that connect the stirrup to the main part of the Western saddle.
FETLOCK	A joint that acts like a shock absorber between a horse's hoof and his leg bones.
FIELD/DRESS BOOTS	Tall black leather riding boots worn with breeches as the rider's formal attire for shows and hunts.
FILLIS IRONS	Traditional heavy stainless steel stirrups used for English riding; weight is designed to keep them in the proper position if you lose a stirrup while riding.
FLAKE	A thick, compressed slab of hay; one of the sections of a hay bale.
FLANK	The area around the horse's midsection, where the horse's abdomen meets his hindquarters. On a human, this compares with the waist, below the ribcage but above the hip bone, where one wears a belt.
FLY SPRAY	Insect repellent that is applied to horse's chest, belly and legs before riding to discourage bothersome flies.
FOREHAND	The front part of the horse: his neck, shoulders, and forelegs.
FORELEGS	A horse's front legs.

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FORELOCK	Part of the mane that grows between the horse's ears.
FROG	The triangular-shaped pad on the bottom of the horse's hoof. This is made of 50% water and acts as a shock absorber.
FRONT/BACK CINCH	Wide straps on a Western saddle that pass under the horse's belly to keep the saddle in place.
FULL CHAPS	Leather leggings worn by a rider to prevent chafing from the top of the thighs to the ankles – useful for riding in shorts!
GASKIN	A muscle in the hind leg, above the hock, and below the stifle.
GELDING	Male horse that has been castrated to prevent him from producing offspring.
GIRTH	Wide strap, usually made of leather, that wraps under the horse's belly and attaches to each side of an English saddle; when tightened, it holds the saddle in place.
GRAIN	Seeds of plants like oats, corn, barley, wheat, or rye that are fed to horses. Can be fed whole, or steamed and compressed into pellets.
GROOMING	Cleaning a horse with brushes, combs, hoof picks, and towels to remove dirt from the coat and feet.
GROOMING KIT	The tools used when caring for a horse, such as currycombs, brushes, mane combs, bot knives, hoof picks, sweat scrapers, fly spray, etc.
GROUND FEED TUB	Feed pan made of heavy rubber or plastic that is designed for feeding grain to horses at ground level.
GROUND HANDLING	The skills and knowledge required to catch, lead, and tie a horse safely, as well as more advanced unmounted training skills.
GROUND TYING	Tying method that isn't actually tying at all; rather, the horse stands next to you with his lead rope resting on the ground or over his neck. Not for beginners - only experienced handlers with well-trained horses should do this, and then only under safe conditions.
HALF-CHAPS	Leather leggings that fit between a rider's knees and ankles and protect the leg from chafing.
HALTER	Item of tack that buckles or ties over a horse's head; used with a lead rope attached for leading and tying the horse.
HAY NET	Net filled with two or more flakes of hay and securely hung off the ground in a stall or trailer, or on a paddock fence post.
HEADS UP	Oral warning given loudly to riders and unmounted bystanders whenever a horse is loose or acting dangerously. When you hear this phrase, you should immediately halt and be aware of your surroundings.

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HEEL BULBS	The soft structures at the back of the horse's foot, just above the hoof wall.
HERD	A group of animals that grazes together, with a defined social code of behavior; herds usually serve to help animals protect each other from predators.
HIERARCHY	A social system for a herd of horses in which the dominant horses outrank the submissive horses; also called a "pecking order".
HINDQUARTERS	Large area of muscle, between the horse's back and buttock – this is the muscle that propels the horse forward.
HOCK	The joint in the rear leg that is below the stifle but above the fetlock; it's similar to the foreleg's knee except that it bends backward.
HOOF BARS	The raised projections on either side of the frog on a horse's hoof that protect against vertical stress.
HOOF PICK	Grooming tool used to remove dirt and rocks from the crevices of a horse's hoof.
HOOF WALL	Curved covering of horn that forms the hard outer structure of the hoof; it grows like human toenails.
HOOVES	More than one hoof.
HORN	A large angled knob positioned on top of the pommel on a Western saddle, which traditionally is used for securing lassos and other equipment.
HORSEMANSHIP	The knowledge and skills involved in safe riding and training of horses.
HorseSense	Specific term for all unmounted Learning Levels knowledge and skills involved in maintaining a horse's health and safety.
HORSESHOES	Curved flat pieces of metal that are shaped to fit a horse's foot, and nailed into the hoof wall, to protect the hoof from damage on rough ground.
IN-HAND	Working with your horse when you are unmounted and holding him by the reins or lead rope.
JODHPURS	Ankle-length riding trousers worn with paddock boots.
KIMBERWICKE BIT	Mild curb bit, used with a chain under the horse's chin.
KNEE ROLL	Padded protrusion on an English saddle flap that helps to keep the rider's knee in place.
LATIGO STRAP	The strap on a Western saddle that secure the front cinch to the horse, using either a buckle or a half-hitch knot in the strap itself.
LEAD MARE	A herd's dominant female horse; she decides where the herd will graze and go for water.

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LEAD ROPE	A long cotton or nylon rope that is clipped or tied to the halter to lead the horse.
LOIN	The part of a horse's back that slopes up from the seat to the croup.
LONGEING (also spelled LUNGEING)	Unmounted training conducted with the horse attached to a long leadline, circling the trainer. Used to improve the horse's conditioning, gaits, transitions, and communication. Can also be used for rider instruction.
MANE	Line of hair that grows along the horse's spine, from the ears to the withers.
MANGER	Plastic or wooden box, usually fastened to a corner of a stall, that holds horse feed above the ground.
MANURE	Correct term for horse droppings. It makes good fertilizer when composted and spread on pastures.
MARE	An adult female horse aged 4 years or older.
MARTINGALE	Thin leather strap attached to English bridle and breastplate or girth, designed to keep a horse from raising his head too high.
MUCKING OUT	The act of cleaning a horse's stall or paddock of manure.
MUZZLE	Horse's nose and mouth.
NEAR SIDE	The left side of a horse.
NOSEBAND	Part of a halter or bridle that buckles around the horse's muzzle; when properly fitted, you should be able to fit two fingers beneath it, and two fingers should fit between it and the horse's cheekbone.
OFF SIDE	The right side of a horse.
PADDOCK	An enclosed (fenced), usually small, area of land that horses are kept in; may or may not have grass for grazing.
PADDOCK BOOTS	Short leather riding boots that cover the rider's ankle; worn with jodhpurs and riding tights.
PANELS	Weight-bearing parts of saddle that rest against the horse's back.
PANIC SNAP	Special fastener found on most crossties and some lead ropes that is designed for a quick-release; you can pull down sharply on the snap to free a horse when necessary.
PASTERN	The area of a horse's leg below the fetlock joint but above the hoof.
PASTURE	An enclosed area with grass in which horses are turned out to graze.

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PEACOCK STIRRUP	Safety stirrups with a twisted rubber band.
PECKING ORDER	A social system for a herd of horses in which the dominant horses outrank the submissive horse; also called a "hierarchy".
PELHAM BIT	Bit that combines a snaffle bit with a curb bit; may be ridden with double reins for more control.
PICKING A HOOF	Cleaning rocks and debris from a horse's hoof.
POLL	The joint on top of a horse's skull, which is a small bump between the horse's ears, that connects the skull to the spine.
POLO WRAPS	Stretchy bandages wound around a horse's lower leg to warm and protect the tendons and ligaments.
POMMEL	Front part of the saddle that protects the horse's withers.
PREDATOR	A carnivorous animal that instinctively hunts other animals for food.
PREY	An animal that is hunted by carnivorous animals for food and instinctively avoids dangerous predators.
PROTECTIVE BOOTS	Equipment designed to protect a horse's legs and/or hooves. Includes splint or galloping boots and bell boots.
QUICK-RELEASE KNOT	Method of tying a lead rope with a slip knot that can be undone easily.
REAR BILLET	Strap on a Western saddle that is used to secure a back cinch, typically used for working saddles when roping.
REINS	Long thin straps, usually made of leather, that a rider holds to communicate with a horse's mouth, allowing the rider to tell the horse which way to move or stop.
RISER PAD	Shaped piece of foam that can be placed between the English saddle and the saddle pad to adjust the fit of an English saddle.
ROUGHAGE	Food for horses made from plants that are mostly fiber, like grass hay.
SADDLE BLANKET	Thick, heavy rectangular blanket, often made of wool, that sits under a Western saddle to protect the horse's back from sores.
SADDLE FLAP	Large piece of leather that hangs down from the seat on an English saddle, covering the girth and protecting the rider's leg from the girth buckles.
SADDLE PAD	Padded cloth that is placed under an English saddle to protect it from sweat, and to protect the horse's back from sores.

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SALT BLOCK	Compressed block (optionally with other minerals) placed in horse's stall or pasture.
SEAT	Part of the saddle where the rider sits; term also used to describe a rider's position in the saddle and ability to follow the horse's motion.
SEAT/BACK JOCKEY	Large pieces of leather around the seat of the Western saddle that keep the rider's body from coming into contact with the saddle's rigging (all the rings and straps that hold the saddle on the horse) while riding.
SHAVINGS	Type of stall bedding, usually made from short, thin curling pieces of pine wood.
SHEATH	Area of a male horse's body that encloses the penis.
SHEDDING BLADE	Grooming tool used to remove loose hair from a horse's coat, usually only when the horse sheds out his winter coat in late spring.
SKIRT	Small flap on an English saddle that protects the rider's leg from the stirrup bar, while allowing access to the girth buckles so that they may be adjusted.
SNAFFLE BIT	A gentle bit that operates with direct pressure on a horse's mouth, lips and tongue.
SNAP	Metal fastener found on the end of a lead rope so that the lead can be attached to a halter.
SOLE	The tough flat bottom of a horse's hoof.
SPACE BUBBLE	The amount of personal distance needed around a horse's - or a human's - body in order for them to feel safe and comfortable. You should respect the horse's need for this invisible area and require him to respect yours.
SPLINT BOOTS	Protective boot that covers the horse's foreleg cannon bones to protect them from blows.
SPOOKING	A horse's reaction when startled or frightened, in which the horse experiences flight-or-fright emotions.
STALLION	An adult male horse who has not been gelding and is capable of producing offspring.
STIFLE	Joint that connects the horse's upper and lower leg, similar to the human knee.
STIRRUP BARS	Curved or hinged pieces of metal that attach the stirrup leathers to an English saddle.
STIRRUP IRON	Metal footrest, with slot for stirrup leather that is buckled to an English saddle, that supports rider's foot.
STIRRUP LEATHER	Adjustable strap that holds stirrup irons suspended below the English saddle.

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SUBMISSIVE HORSE	A horse with low status in the herd who will yield to more aggressive horses when it comes to food, space, or choosing mates.
SUPPLEMENT	Powder, pellet or liquid designed to be added to a horse's food to meet a particular nutritional need.
SWEAT FLAP	Part of the English saddle that rests against the horse's barrel and protects him from the girth buckles, also protecting the girth from sweat and dirt.
SWEAT SCRAPER	Grooming tool used to remove excess water from a horse's coat after bathing.
SWEET FEED	Whole grain or pelleted equine feed mixed with molasses.
TACK	The equipment used for riding and horse handling, including bridles, saddles, girths, etc.
TACK UP	The act of putting a saddle and bridle on a horse as you prepare to ride.
TENDON	Thick, tough band of connective tissue that connects muscle to bone; major structure of horse's leg, behind cannon bone.
THROATLATCH	Part of a halter or bridle that buckles around the horse's throat. Also called a "throatlash".
THRUSH	Common bacterial infection that occurs on the hoof of a horse, specifically in the region of the frog.
TIE RING	Round metal hardware mounted on sturdy posts so that a horse can be securely restrained for grooming and tacking.
TOE	The front area of a horse's hoof, covering a third of the foot.
TREAT	Small tidbit of food appropriate for horses that can be fed from the palm of your hand.
TURNOUT	Allowing horses that are usually kept in a stall to roam free in an enclosed paddock or pasture; the more turnout time allowed the healthier and happier the horse.
UDDER	Organ that produces milk in female horses.
WATER TROUGH	Large container holding 50 gallons or more of water, usually placed in a horse's paddock or pasture.
WESTERN SADDLE	Heavy, deep saddle designed for long hours of riding, with a raised horn that was originally used for roping cattle.
WHITE LINE	The area of a hoof that connects the sole with the hoof wall.
WITHERS	Raised area of the horse's spine, just below the mane and above the back.