

HorseSense Learning Levels

EQUINE TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
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Red Horsemanship

AIDS	Signals that a rider uses to communicate with her horse (e.g., hands, seat, voice, legs, crop).
ARENA	A large indoor or outdoor riding area usually fenced, and with soft footing.
ARTIFICIAL AIDS	Communication devices that can be used to reinforce our natural aids. These include crops, whips and spurs.
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.
BALANCED POSITION	Rider position in which a straight line can be drawn from the ear, down through the shoulder, hip and heels, allowing the rider's weight to be equally distributed so that the rider does not interfere with the horse's movement and both horse and rider can move in harmony.
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.
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.
BEND	The curve of your horse's spine as you ride through turns.
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 hundreds of 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.
BLOATING	The horse takes a deep breath of air, expanding his barrel, and holds it while you tighten the girth so that the girth will actually be too loose when he lets out his breath. Also called "blowing up"!
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.
BOLTING	When a horse runs away out of the rider's control.
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.

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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.
BROWBAND	Part of a halter or bridle that fits across a horse's forehead, in front of the ears.
BUCKING	When a horse puts his head down between his knees, rounds his back and kicks upward with his hind legs, usually in an attempt to get rid of a rider or saddle.
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.
CANTLE	The curved area of the saddle that makes up the back of the seat.
CAVESSON NOSEBAND	Plain noseband, without special attachments that add pressure.
CHAIR SEAT	Rider position error in which the rider's lower leg comes too far forward, tipping her backwards onto her seat bones and out of balance.
CHANGE OF REIN ACROSS DIAGONAL	Method used to change direction while riding a large "Z" diagonally across the arena.
CHANGE OF REIN ACROSS SHORT DIAGONAL	Method used to change direction while riding from the corner at a diagonal and returning to the rail halfway down the long side.
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 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.
CONDUCTOR HANDS	Rider position error in which the rider's hands are too high, causing discomfort for the horse and weakening the rider's base of control.
COURSE	A pattern of jumping fences that must be ridden in the correct order.
CROP	A short inflexible whip used while riding to encourage the horse, with restrained taps, to move forward. Also called a "bat".

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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.
CROSS-TRAINING	Conditioning for the rider: participating in other athletic activities such as yoga, dance, martial arts, and organized sports that complement your in-saddle exercise.
CROWNPIECE	Part of a halter or bridle that fits over the poll and behind the horse's ears.
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.
DIAGONAL	In the arena, this term refers to the path that you take to ride from one corner of the ring, through the center, to the opposite corner.
DISENGAGING HINDQUARTERS	The movement made by a horse when he stops going forward and swings his hindquarters sideways.
DISMOUNT	The act of getting your body off the horse's back.
DIVER TOES	Riding position error in which the rider's toes point down, with the heel up; this pulls the rider forward out of balance.
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.
DRIFTING OUT	Movement in which the horse turns to the outside when you are trying to riding a circle; sometimes the result of a rider's ineffective aids - or a horse veering towards a gate.
EMERGENCY DISMOUNT	The action involved in quickly removing yourself from the horse's back, usually to prevent injury.
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.
EQUESTRIAN	An athlete who rides, shows horses, or participates in horse activities.
EQUITATION PATTERN	A short collection of movements designed to allow you to practice and show off your riding skills.
FALLING IN	Movement in which the horse turns to the inside when you are trying to riding a circle; sometimes the result of a rider's ineffective aids - or a horse veering towards a gate.

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FARRIER	A horseshoer; one who trims horses' feet and shoes them. Used to be called a 'blacksmith'.
FENDERS	Leather panels that connect the stirrup to the main part of the Western saddle.
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.
FLY SPRAY	Insect repellent that is applied to horse's chest, belly and legs before riding to discourage bothersome flies.
FOOTFALL PATTERN	The sequence of leg movements a horse makes at each gait; we can hear the number of beats as the horse places each foot on the ground.
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!
FULL-SEAT POSITION	Riding position in which you sit deep in the saddle; your two seat bones and your crotch are the three points that connect you to the horse. Also called "three-point" position.
GAIT	A pattern of movement as a horse moves forward. (Walk, trot, canter, gallop, pace, rack, etc.)
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.
GRID	A line of jumping fences or ground poles, carefully spaced, used for training both the rider and the horse.
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 HANDLING	The skills and knowledge required to catch, lead, and tie a horse safely, as well as more advanced unmounted training skills.
GROUND POLE	Jump pole placed on the arena ground in such a way that a horse must step over it; used singly or in combination with other poles as a training aid for both horses and riders.

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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.
HALF-CIRCLE REVERSE	Method used to change direction while riding: basic U-turn shaped like an ice cream cone.
HALF-SEAT POSITION	Riding position in which the rider shift his weight into his feet as he rises slightly in the saddle, tilting forward just enough to stay balanced. Also called "two-point position".
HALF-TURN REVERSE	Method used to change direction while riding two 90-degree turns so that you cross straight through the middle of the arena.
HALT	The gait where the horse stands still, with no forward movement.
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.
HEADS UP	Verbal warning given loudly to riders and unmounted bystanders whenever a horse is loose or acting dangerously. When you hear this phrase, you should immediate halt and be aware of your surroundings.
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".
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.

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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.
INSIDE	When working in an arena, this is the side of the horse and rider that faces the middle of the arena.
JODHPURS	Ankle-length riding trousers worn with paddock boots.
JUMP	Riding with your horse over obstacles made up of horizontal poles or solid objects, in which the horse leaps over the obstacles with all four feet in the air.
JUMPING POSITION	Riding position in which the rider shift his weight into his feet as he rises slightly in the saddle, tilting forward just enough to stay balanced. Also called "two-point" or "half-seat".
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.
LEAD ROPE	A long cotton or nylon rope that is clipped or tied to the halter to lead the horse.
LEADLINE	Teaching technique for beginner riders in which the instructor keeps the horse safely restrained on a long line while a student is learning to balance and use the reins correctly.
LEG UP	Assistance in mounting from a person who lifts you from one bent leg as you jump from your other leg onto the saddle.
LONGE LINE	Long, sturdy line, attached to the horse's bridle, that your instructor holds while you ride in a circle around your instructor; allows you to concentrate on aids, position, gaits, and transitions without having to steer the horse.
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.
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.

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MOUNT	The act of climbing onto the horse's back; term is also used to refer to a horse that is used for riding.
MOUNTED GAMES	Sport in which teams of riders compete in relay races, completing a tasks with a variety of equipment.
MOUNTING BLOCK	Sturdy moveable object, with 2-3 steps, that the rider can stand on to help her mount.
NATURAL AIDS	Signals you give the horse from a part of your body that tells him what to do. These include our seat, legs, hands, and voice.
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.
OBSTACLE COURSE	Fun riding track through stations set up with chutes, cones, bending poles and other equipment to challenge your steering and control over your horse.
OFF SIDE	The right side of a horse.
ON THE RAIL	Riding on a track close to an arena fence or along the inside edge of an open arena.
ONE-REIN STOP	Emergency brakes method where you assume your safety seat, shorten one rein and apply steady pressure as you turn the horse and disengage his hindquarters.
OUTSIDE	When working in an arena, this is the side of the horse and rider that is next to the rail.
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.
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.
PERCHING	Rider position error in which the rider grips with the knees, pulling her position forward out of balance.

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PICKING A HOOF	Cleaning rocks and debris from a horse's hoof.
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.
POSTING TROT	Method of riding the trot in which the rider rises out of the saddle and sits again in rhythm with the horse's gait.
PREDATOR	A carnivorous animal that instinctively hunts other animals for food.
PRESSURE POINT	Irritation or sore place on your horse's body caused by a part of your tack that is improperly fitted so that it rubs or pokes him.
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.
PULLEY REIN	Strong rein aid that involves strongly pulling one rein back and forth in an attempt to slow down a bolting or unruly horse.
QUICK-RELEASE KNOT	Method of tying a lead rope with a slip knot that can be undone easily.
RAIL	Perimeter fencing around an arena, inside of which a horse is ridden. Can also refer to the poles used in an arena jump.
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.
RELEASE	Rider movement in which the hands move forward onto the horse's neck, causing slack in the reins so that the horse is not caught in the mouth by the bit as he jumps.
REVERSE	The riding movement used to turn a horse around so that he is traveling in the opposite direction.
RIDING POSITION	The way you sit on your horse when you ride.
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.

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ROLL UP STIRRUPS	Technique for keeping stirrups on an English saddle secured while you lead a horse from the ground, in which you slide the stirrup iron up the back of the stirrup leather, then hold it up off the flap while you pull the entire stirrup leather through and under the iron.
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.
SAFETY CHECK	Pre-flight check to be sure that you, your tack, and your horse are tacked up correctly before you mount.
SAFETY SEAT	Position that helps you stay balanced when your horse is out of control: sitting deep in the saddle, with your shoulders back, your heels down, and your eyes up, possibly with one hand holding the mane.
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.
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.
SITTING TROT	Method of riding the trot in which the rider remains in a deep seat during the gait.
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.

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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.
STIFF ELBOWS	Rider position error in which the rider's elbows are flexed, with no bend, so that the rider can be pulled forward out of balance.
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.
STIRRUP STAND	Exercise where rider holds her arms outstretched and rises out of the saddle as if posting to the trot then holds that position to check her balance.
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.
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.
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.
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.
TRACK	The path you and the horse travel when you are riding.
TRANSITIONS	Change in a horse's gait, upward or downward (ie, a walk to a trot).
TREAT	Small tidbit of food appropriate for horses that can be fed from the palm of your hand.

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TROT	A 2-beat gait, averaging 8-10 mph, in which the horse moves diagonal pairs of legs; the slower version of this gait is sometimes called a "jog".
TWO-POINT POSITION	Riding position in which the rider shift his weight into his feet as he rises slightly in the saddle, tilting forward just enough to stay balanced. Also called "jumping position" or "half-seat".
WALK	A slow 4-beat gait, averaging 4-6 mph, in which the horse moves one foot at a time.
WARM-UP STRETCHES	Exercises that a rider can perform in the saddle to limber and stretch his muscles while warming up his horse.
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.