

TACK AND EQUIPMENT

CARE OF TACK

The saddle, bridle, and other gear to equip a horse are called **tack**. It is your responsibility to make sure all tack is clean, well adjusted, in good repair, and safe for use. You also should know which tack to use for the activities you want to do.

Inspect tack often and carefully. Check particularly around buckles, Chicago screws, folds, holes, and other places that take a lot of stress (such as where the latigo attaches to the D-ring). Make sure stitching is not rotten or pulling apart. Do not ride with questionable tack or you might have a serious accident.

STORING TACK

You can help maintain the quality of your tack by storing it properly. Keep all leather in a dry area with good air circulation, out of direct sunlight, preferably at room temperature. A fabric cover over saddles and bridles protects them from dust and dirt.

Store saddles on racks, sawhorses, or barrels. Do not hang them on a rope from the ceiling or place them on their front edges; the skirts will turn under and the stitching on the horn may break.

Hang bridles on wide, rounded hooks. You can make bridle holders from cans or blocks of wood. Hanging bridles on a thin hook, such as a nail, can strain the leather causing it to crack or break.

Hang blankets or pads so air can circulate and dry them. You may need to protect them from mice.

CLEANING TACK

It is important to keep tack clean. Stiff, dry leather breaks easily and often cannot be restored. Sponge it after every use to remove dirt and sweat. You can use just water or a mild leather soap with water. Never, no matter how wet it is, put leather near heat to dry.

Periodically, you will need to clean your tack more thoroughly. Make sure you use a soap made for cleaning leather. Using a cloth or a soft-bristled brush, clean the item completely.

Apply a light coat of leather oil or conditioner from time to time. Use a commercial product or pure neatsfoot oil (not a compound) to soften leather and darken it. Follow with a good glycerin saddle soap to remove oil from the surface. When the leather is dry, buff it for a rich shine.

While conditioning is necessary to keep leather pliable and restore lost natural oil, be careful not to over-oil your leather. Excess oil collects dust, rots stitching, and comes off on clothing. It is much better to give your leather tack a routine light conditioning than to soak it only once in a while.

If you have trouble with your leather tack getting mildew or mold, you can wipe it periodically with a mild acid solution such as vinegar and water.

Brush or wash blankets and pads when they are dirty. Let them dry in a well-ventilated area. Use soapy water and a sponge to clean nylon equipment.

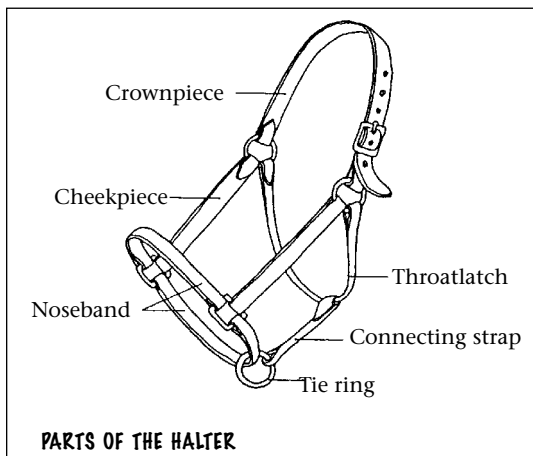
GENERAL TACK AND EQUIPMENT

HALTERS AND LEAD ROPES

Halters and lead ropes are available in several materials and at various prices. They can be made of rope, nylon, or leather. Nylon web halters are made like leather halters, but they are less expensive, last longer, and are easy to clean. Matching leads come with or without a short length of chain. A flat nylon lead may be very difficult to untie even using a quick-release knot, and its edges may cut bare hands.

Leather halters have many adjustments for proper fit. They require more care and must be inspected and cleaned regularly.

Halters come in many sizes according to the age, type, and weight of the horse. The noseband of the halter should fit about 2 inches below the bony part of the cheek. If it is too high, it can rub against the cheek and irritate it. If the noseband is too low, it may restrict breathing or the halter may slip off. The noseband should not be so loose that it fails to give good control.



PARTS OF THE HALTER

Never leave a halter on a loose horse. If a horse catches its foot in a halter, or catches the halter on a fencepost or other protrusion, it could be severely injured or die.

Halter ropes should be at least ½ inch in diameter and 6 to 10 feet long, with a heavy-duty snap. Nylon ropes are stronger than cotton or manila.

SADDLES

A saddle must meet the following four requirements:

IT MUST FIT THE HORSE.

Not every saddle fits every horse. Fit depends on the size and shape of the withers, length of the back, slope of the shoulder, and the overall size of the horse. Friction or pressure on the back causes saddle sores (galls) that take a long time to heal. Many vendors will allow you to try a saddle on a horse to make sure it fits before you purchase it.

IT SHOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE HORSE'S PERFORMANCE.

A horse's performance can be hindered if the rider does not remain over the **center of balance**. The center of balance of a standing or walking horse is a few inches behind the withers. As the horse increases speed, the point of balance moves forward. Jockeys and riders of jumpers ride with their weight well forward to permit the horse to move freely. On the other hand, the more collected a horse is, the farther to the rear the center of balance moves. The rider of a gaited horse has to sit well back from the withers to free the forehand, so a cutback saddle is preferable.

IT SHOULD SUIT THE ACTIVITY.

For roping, the saddle has a flat seat and low cantle that allow for a quick dismount but offer little security for the pleasure rider. Gaming requires a very lightweight saddle that puts the rider further forward. Pleasure riders want a comfortable seat, perhaps lightly padded, and free-swinging stirrups. Show riders may want a deep equitation seat and tooled leather for a better grip. Research the variety of saddles described in catalogs and on the Internet.

IT SHOULD FIT THE RIDER.

Each person will have to try several saddles to choose the one that has the most comfortable seat, cantle, and stirrups. Comfort adds to the pleasure of long rides.

For specific information on Western saddles, see "Western Tack," page 105. For specific information on English saddles, see "Hunt Seat Tack," page 110, and "Saddle Seat Tack," page 114.

BITS

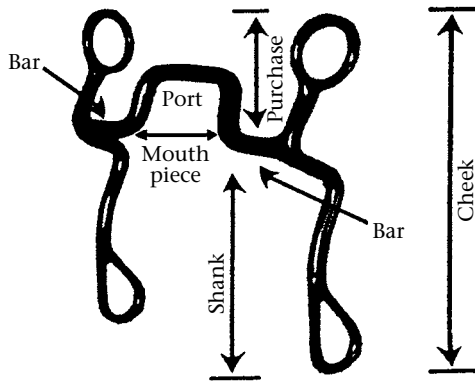
The way the bit is used is far more important than the bit itself. Horses should be ridden with the lightest possible rein contact. Riders who have trouble are usually those who depend too much on the reins and not enough on weight, balance, and other aids to control their horses.

Learn about bits and the horse's mouth, so you can choose the best bit for you and your horse. After studying the horse's needs and choosing a riding style, borrow several bits from friends or tack shops before buying one. Give the horse an hour or two to get used to the new feel before expecting optimum performance.

For specific information on Western bridles and bits, see page 107. For specific information on English bridles and bits, see pages 111 and 114.

PARTS OF THE BIT

It's helpful to be able to identify parts of a bit and know definitions of some bit terms.



Mouthpiece—The part of the bit that goes in the horse's mouth.

Purchase—The part of the bit above the mouthpiece. The purchase affects both the timing and the leverage of the bit.

Shank—The part of the bit below the mouthpiece. This allows the bit to have leverage. The shorter the shank, the less leverage and the less severe.

Cheeks—The sides of the bit including both the purchase and the shank.

Bars—The portion of each side of the mouthpiece that rests on the bars of the horse's mouth.

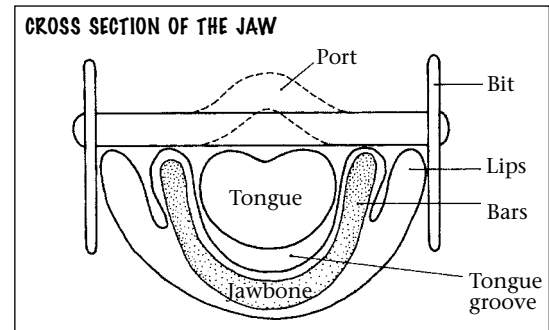
Port—The center part of the mouthpiece. Both the height and the width are important to create the proper tongue pressure and relief.

PRESSURE CONTROL POINTS

Bits help control a horse by putting pressure on one or more particular parts of its head or mouth. Different bits and bridle parts apply pressure to specific places. In general, there are seven pressure control points, and specific parts of the bridle that affect them.

PRESSURE CONTROL POINT	PART OF BRIDLE
1 Bridge of nose	Hackamore
2 Chin groove	Curb chain
3 Corners of the mouth	All bits with mouthpieces
4 Bars of the mouth	All mouthpieces
5 Roof of the mouth	High ports
6 Tongue	Chain, three-piece snaffles
7 Poll	Bits with shanks and draw gags

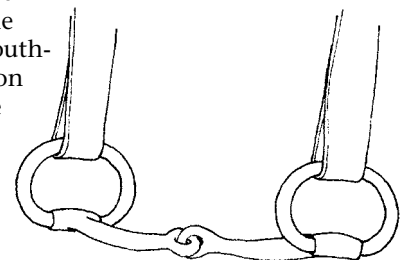
The **bars of the mouth** are bone covered with thin skin. They are very sensitive. Repeated rough treatment deadens nerves and thickens the skin, making a horse **hardmouthed** or **cold-jawed**.



SNaffles AND CURBS

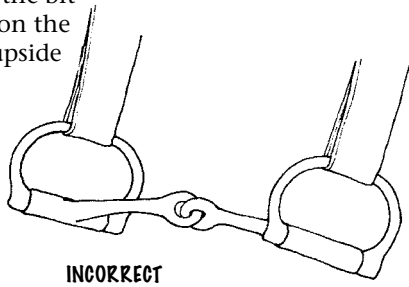
In general, bits may be divided into two kinds, snaffles and curbs. A **snaffle** is any bit with direct pull on the mouth and **no leverage**. A snaffle may be jointed or it may be a solid bar. More pressure is put on the tongue than on the bars of the mouth when the mouthpiece

is solid. The jointed mouthpieces act on the tongue and the bars with a pinching (nut-cracker) action.



CORRECT

Make sure the bit is not put on the headstall upside down; the jointed part should curve downward.



CORRECT MEASURE OF BIT LENGTH

Curb bits have leverage, with the lower jaw clamped between the bit's mouthpiece and the curb strap. The longer the shanks on the bit, the more leverage the bit has.

Snaffle bits are used with one rein in each hand (reins crossed in Western). Curb bits are used with one hand on the reins.

Because snaffle bits keep the mouth light, they are recommended for training young horses and for retraining older ones.

COMPOSITION OF BITS

Bits are made of various metals. Quality stainless steel bits are good, and their weight makes a horse more responsive to rein aids. Stainless steel has no taste and creates a dry mouth, so often the roller, the mouthpiece, or portions of the mouthpiece are copper, which helps the horse salivate. This avoids dry flesh and allows the mouth to stay soft and responsive to the rider.

Sweet Iron actually has a sweet taste and is meant to rust.

Some cheaper bits are chrome-plated and will rust when chipped.

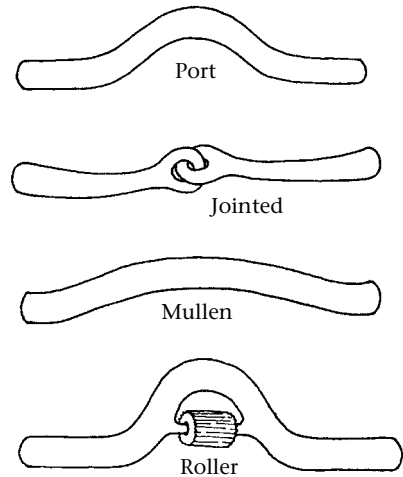
Aluminum bits are inexpensive but are very undesirable. They are too lightweight and cause a dry mouth.

COMFORT

Some horses have thick, fleshy tongues while others have thin ones. Some horses will accept bit pressure on the tongue and others will not. A few animals have a small tongue groove that does not seem to leave enough room for the tongue; they may put their tongues over the bit. Tongue relief can be provided by four different means: mouthpieces with ports, jointed mouthpieces, mullen mouthpieces, or mouthpieces with rollers.

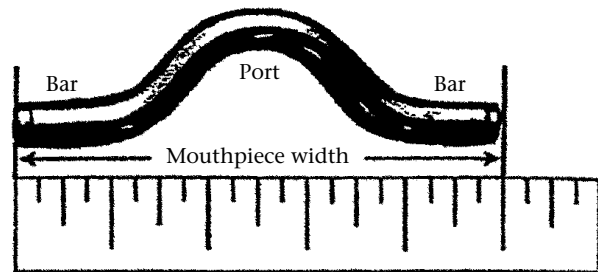
The **mullen mouthpiece** has a forward curve that puts even pressure across the bars and the tongue. The **roller** (also called a **cricket**) lets the tongue slide easily under the bit, increases saliva, and may serve as a pacifier.

The width of the mouthpiece is important. If it is too narrow, it will pinch the lips; if it is too wide, it will slide from side to side, and the chin strap will not work properly. For proper fit, a jointed bit should have two or three creases in the corners of the horse's mouth, and an unjointed bit should have one or two creases. Round leather or rubber bit guards may be used on the mouthpiece of a bit that is too wide.



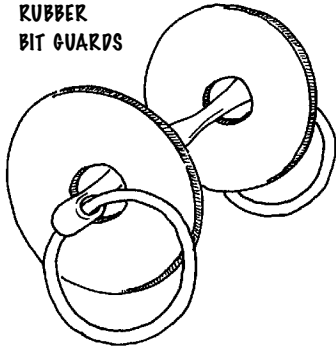
BIT MOUTHPIECES WITH TONGUE RELIEF

A thicker mouthpiece spreads pressure over a larger surface, and is softer and more comfortable for the horse's mouth. The thinner the mouthpiece (for example, single twisted wire), the more severe the bit. Likewise, a smooth surface bar is milder than a twisted one.

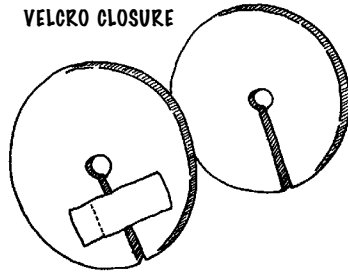


MEASURING MOUTHPIECE WIDTH

RUBBER
BIT GUARDS



NEOPRENE
BIT GUARDS WITH
VELCRO CLOSURE



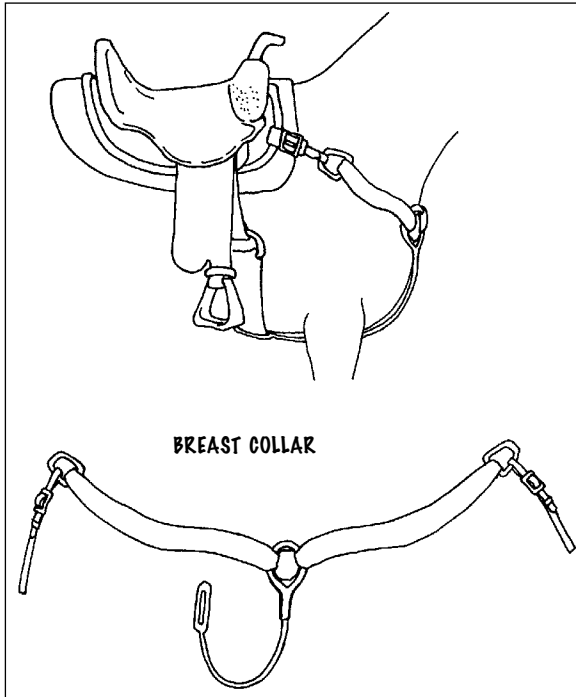
BIT GUARDS

Bit guards are circular rubber discs with a hole in the middle that slip over the bars of the bit. They protect the horse's lips and corners of the mouth. They can also help fit a bit that is too large, and they prevent a snaffle from being pulled through the mouth.

BREAST COLLARS AND BREASTPLATES

A **breast collar** is a strap around the horse's chest. It helps hold the saddle in place on horses that have straight shoulders, low withers, and long backs. It attaches to the saddle on both sides, either directly to the rigging or, on some saddles, to a special D-ring. The breast collar meets in a ring at the center of the horse's chest, and an additional strap attaches between the horse's legs to the girth/cinch. Adjust the breast collar so it does not interfere with the horse's windpipe or shoulder. A breast collar may be used in either English or Western riding.

A **breastplate**, used with English equipment, has a "Y" at the center of the chest with straps running up over the shoulders to the saddle.

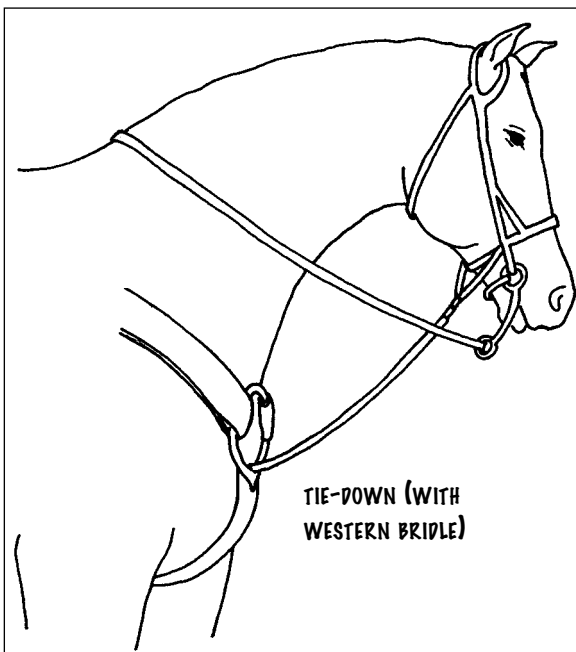


BREAST COLLAR

TIE-DOWNS

A tie-down often is used on horses who tend to carry their heads too high or have a habit of tossing their heads. It attaches to the noseband at one end and the girth at the other. Adjust the tie-down so that when the horse is at rest, you can lift up the tie-down to reach the horse's throatlatch. For safety, use the tie-down with a breast collar to prevent the horse from stepping through it. Attach it to the breast collar or run it behind the collar. A tie-down may be used with any type of bridle, but it may interfere with the action of a hackamore bit.

Tie-downs are used only in Western games.



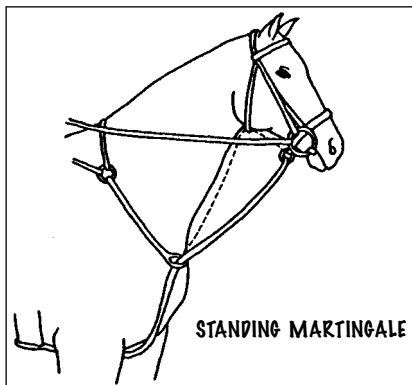
TIE-DOWN (WITH
WESTERN BRIDLE)

MARTINGALES

Martingales are not allowed in performance classes, but they are permitted in jumping. Martingales should only be used with snaffle bits.

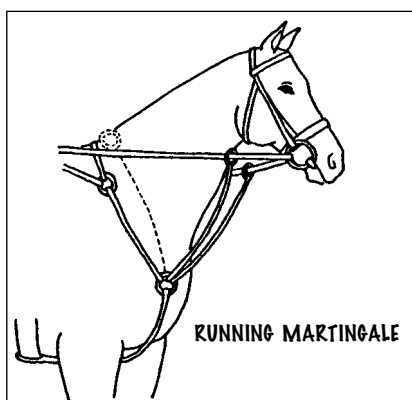
STANDING MARTINGALE

The **standing martingale** (or **tie-down**) is a strap that runs from the noseband between the front legs and attaches to the girth. It is supported by another strap around the neck in front of the shoulders. It keeps the horse from lifting its head too high or thrusting its nose too far forward. Never use it to set the position of the head.



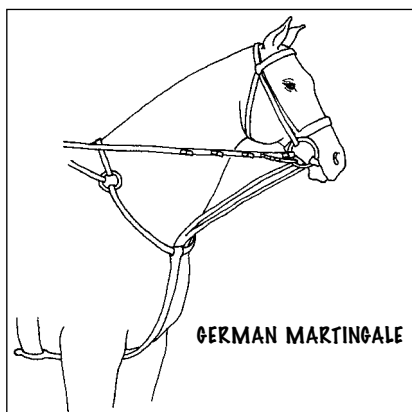
RUNNING MARTINGALE

The **running martingale** is very similar to the standing martingale, but instead of one strap, it has two short ones with rings in the ends through which the reins are run. It helps correct head carriage problems and is often used in training to encourage the horse to lower its head and flex (bend) at the poll. The running martingale should never pull the reins down when the horse's head is in position.



GERMAN MARTINGALE

On a **German martingale**, instead of the reins running through the rings, the straps are longer and run through the rings of the snaffle and then connect back to the reins. The reins have multiple rings on each side. You adjust the tension by how you connect the reins and rings.



LEG PROTECTION

Leg protection is used to help prevent injuries. Young horses in training should have leg protection. They bang their legs more often because they tend to be less coordinated and balanced than more mature horses. Some riding activities, such as jumping, reining, or gaming, put extra stress on the horse's legs and may require leg support. Some horses, because of their conformation, are more likely to injure themselves and can benefit from some type of leg protection.

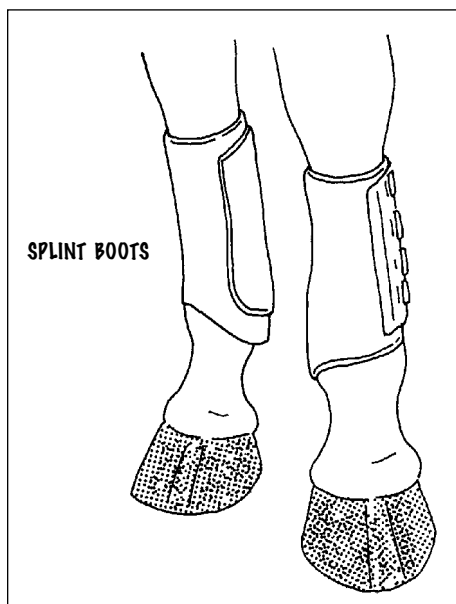
BOOTS

Boots can be made of leather, felt, vinyl, or neoprene. They can be fastened with buckles or Velcro. The type you choose depends on the amount you want to pay, how much time you want to spend putting them on and taking them off, the amount of support needed, and the amount of time you are willing to spend taking care of them. The boot lining must be kept clean, because grit in the boots can rub and cause sores.

Boots must fit properly and be put on correctly, or they can do more harm than good. Boots that are too tight can cut off the horse's circulation; boots that are too loose can slip out of place or come off.

No boots of any kind are allowed in equitation, showmanship, trail, or dressage. They are allowed in gaming and jumping. Be sure you know the specific rules of your county and state for each event.

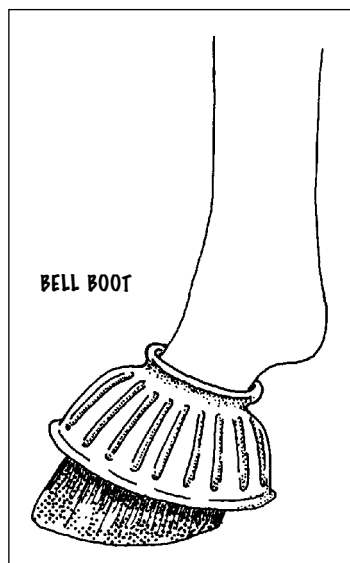
There are several types of boots. You need to select the type that offers the best protection for the activities you do.



SPLINT BOOTS

Brushing is when the hoof of one leg hits—or brushes against—the inside of the opposite leg. This often happens making tight turns or at high speed and can cause splints or lameness. To prevent brushing, use **splint boots** (also called **brushing boots**). These protect the cannon bone area as well as the fetlocks and offer support for tendons during training or competition. They also protect the lower leg from scrapes while jumping.

Splint boots start just below the knee and end below the fetlock. The padded part goes on the inside of the leg, and the shaped cup fits over the inside of the fetlock. The boots should be fastened on the outside of the leg.



BELL BOOTS

Bell boots (or **overreach boots**) are used on the front feet to protect the heel and the coronet. They are very helpful on horses that overreach. (Overreaching is when the toe of the hind foot hits the heel or coronet of the front foot.)

Bell boots come as pull-ons or with Velcro fasteners. They must fit properly or they may rub sores on the coronet band.

SKID BOOTS

Skid boots protect the back of the rear fetlocks in stock horse, reining classes, and Western gaming. The cup that fits over the back of the fetlocks protects the ergot and helps prevent injury during sliding stops.

ANKLE OR FETLOCK BOOTS

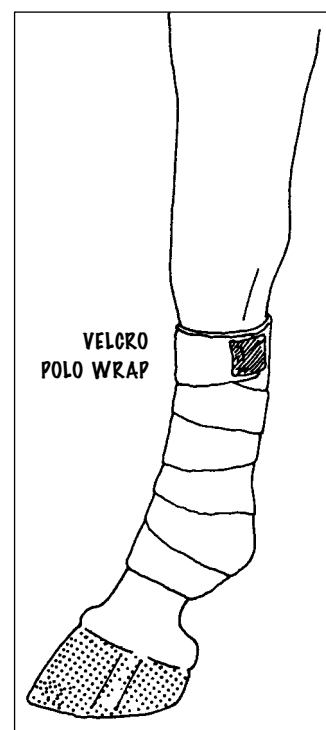
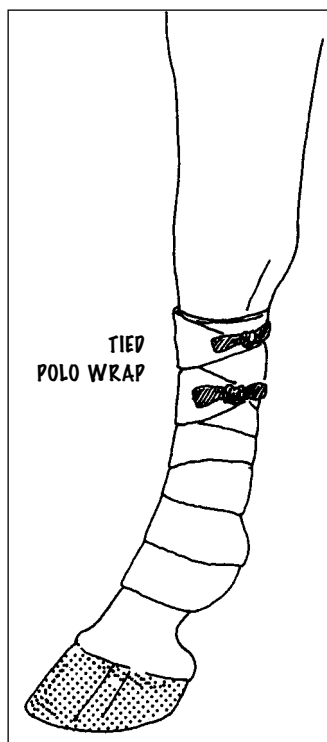
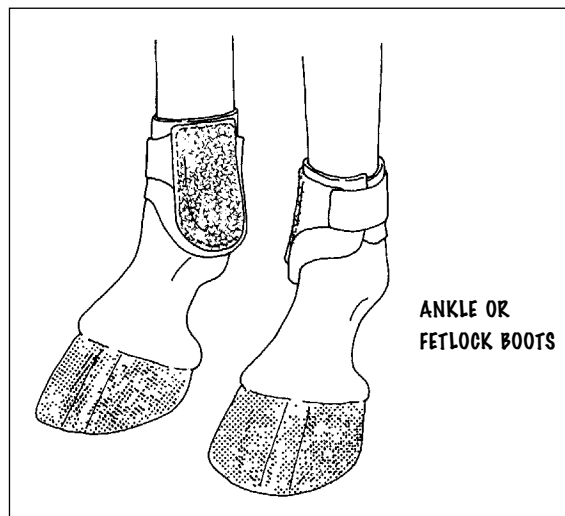
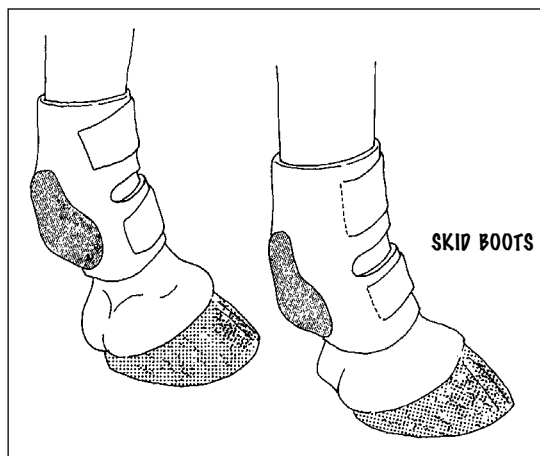
These are shorter versions of splint boots. They usually are used only on the hind legs.

POLO WRAPS

Polo wraps are thick, stretchy cloth bandages. Wrapped many times around the horse's leg, they offer adequate protection. They also can help warm the legs. They must be wrapped evenly and correctly or they could come loose, causing the horse to trip and possibly bow a tendon.

How to apply fleece polo wraps as exercise bandages:

1. Start the bandage at the edge of the tendon on the outside of the leg and wrap counterclockwise on the left legs and clockwise on the right legs.
2. Wrap the bandage 1½ times around to anchor it and then begin wrapping downward. Use fairly firm but even pressure and overlap each wrap about half the width of the bandage. Apply most of the pressure when wrapping backward against the shin instead of forward, which pulls against the tendons.
3. When the wrap reaches the ankle, keep the front edge of the bandage above the bottom of the fetlock joint and drop the bandage down and under the back of the fetlock joint and then back up in front forming an inverted V at the front of the ankle. This gives room enough for the pastern and fetlock joint to flex.
4. Continue to wrap back up the leg, always keeping the wraps parallel to the ground and using even and fairly firm pressure. Wrap to the bottom of the knee or hock, and then wrap back down with a little less pressure over the previous wraps. Fasten the Velcro closure on the outside of the leg. Do not fasten on the inside or over the tendon.
5. A strip of elastic adhesive tape may be fastened over the closure for added security. Do not pull the tape tightly enough to indent the bandage.



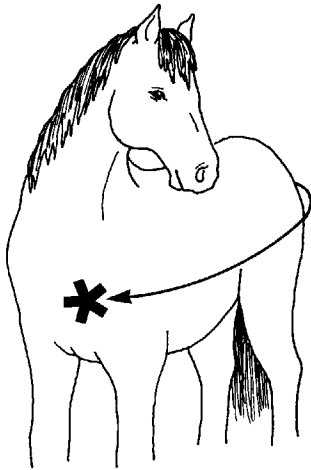
STABLE BLANKETS

Blankets may be heavy, insulated covers to keep horses warm in cold weather, or they may be lightweight sheets for use in cool weather. Blankets help keep the horse's coat clean and smooth. Fly sheets also help protect the horse from insects. Loose coolers prevent hot horses from becoming chilled.

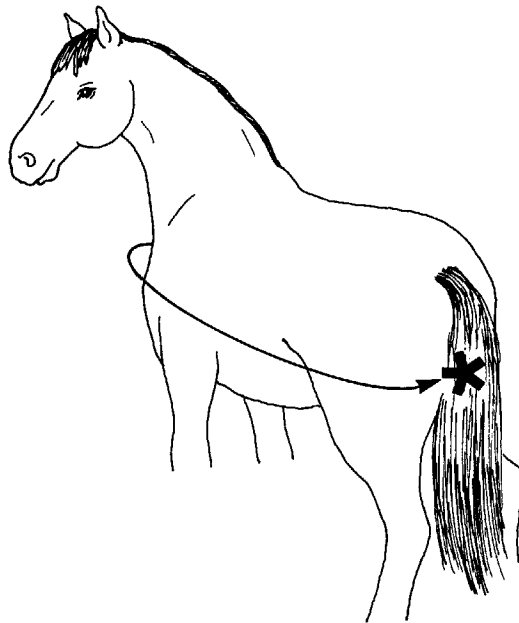
Do not throw the blanket over a horse. Fold it, lay it over the lower neck, and unfold it over the back. Buckle the chest straps first, and unbuckle them last. Fasten the web straps at the flank last and unfasten them first. Adjust the belly straps just snugly enough to allow your hand to slip underneath, so that one of the horse's feet cannot accidentally get caught. If the blanket has leg straps, unfasten them first.

A blanket should have New Zealand-type straps around each hind leg to provide safety for a horse in pasture. Cross the hind leg straps when you fasten them.

For correct size, measure horizontally from the center of the horse's chest to the tail.



MEASURING FOR A BLANKET



SPURS AND CROPS

Spurs are allowed in performance classes (except showmanship and driving). They may have rowels or be blunt. They may either have straps to hold them on or be the type that slides on. You must use English-type spurs in English classes and western-type for Western classes.

Use spurs and whips (**bats**) to reinforce leg and weight aids, not as a substitute. **Never** use them for punishment.

Crops may be used in hunt seat equitation, jumping classes, and Western games. Whips are used in saddle seat equitation, driving, and dressage. Refer to the *4-H Horse Contest Guide* (PNW 574) for length restrictions.

WESTERN TACK

WESTERN SADDLES

Western saddles are large and heavy for small young riders to handle, but they offer a great deal of security for a beginner.

The foundation of every saddle is the **tree**. Until recently, all quality stock saddles were made on wooden, rawhide-covered trees. Modern trees are made from plastic and sold under the trade name "Ralide." They are strong, free from warping, lightweight, and less costly to produce.

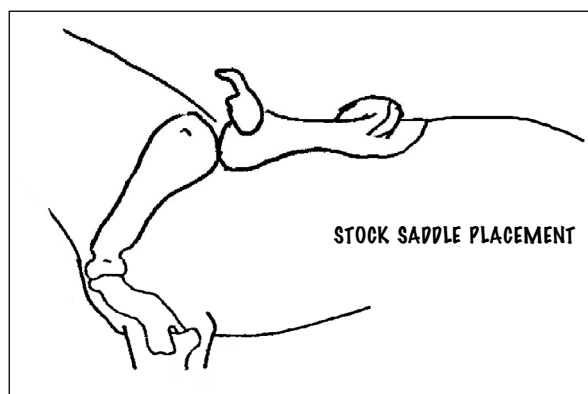
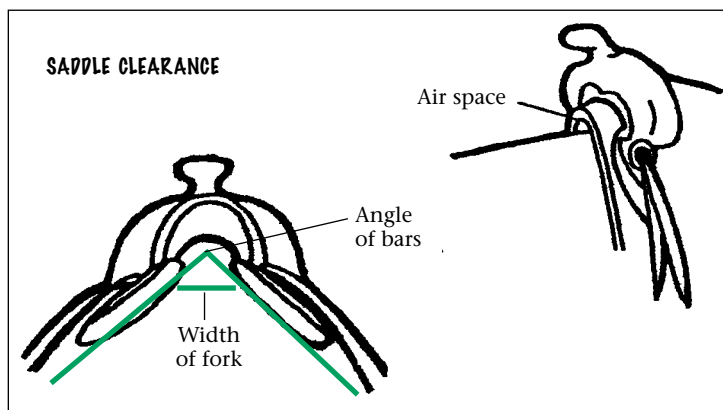
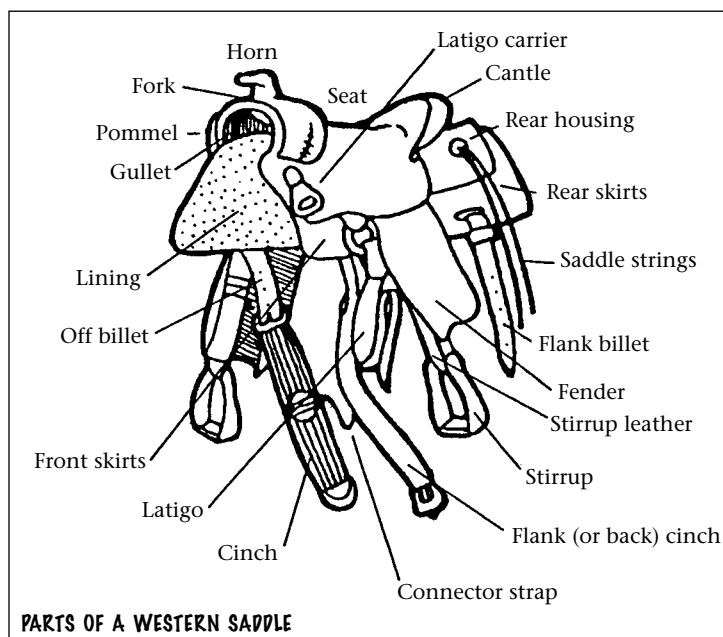
A western saddle tree has two measurements: the width of the fork and the angle of the bars.

TREE SIZE	WIDTH OF FORK	ANGLE OF BARS
Regular	5¾–6"	90°
Semi-QH	6–6½"	90°
QH	6½–6¾"	90°
Full QH	6¾–7"	94°
Arabian	7¼"	86°

You often can buy a quality used Western saddle from someone who has outgrown it. First check the condition of the tree. A saddle with a broken tree will make the horse's back sore.

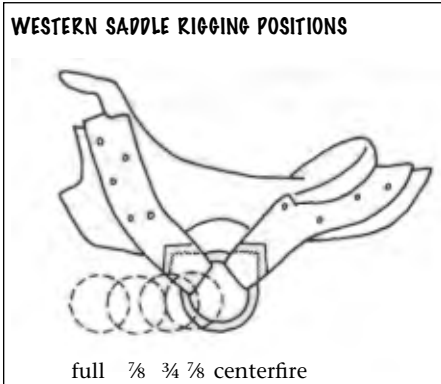
PROPER SADDLE FIT

Saddle fit is an important element of horsemanship. Improper saddle fit can impede a horse's abilities and, in serious cases, cause injury. To properly fit a saddle, you must place it on the horse correctly. Your saddle should ride centered from right to left with the bars of the tree just behind the horse's scapula. The saddle should pull down evenly on the horse's back. Be sure the saddle makes contact with the horse's back in the middle of the bars too – this contact will change with the addition of a rider. For a Western saddle with the rider mounted, allow about 2 inches of space between the withers and the top of the gullet of the saddle. If there is less space, try adding a heavier pad, more blankets, a saddle wedge, or using a cutback pad. If that doesn't help, the horse needs a saddle with a narrower **fork**. Horses with flat (**mutton**) withers need a saddle with wider, flatter construction.



A saddle's width is measured between the bars at the point where the saddle strings pass through the skirts. When the saddle bars are too long on a shortbacked horse, they may press on the loin and kidney area. Square-cut skirts might rub its hip.

The position of the saddle is governed by the rigging: from full rigging directly below the horn, designed for roping, to center-fire rigging halfway between the horn and top of the cantle. There are many types of rigging. Your



horse's conformation determines the type to use. A horse with a well-laid-back shoulder would be comfortable with a full or $\frac{3}{8}$ rigged saddle, while a horse with shorter or steeper shoulders requires a $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{5}{8}$ rigged saddle. The average pleasure horse takes a $\frac{3}{8}$ rigging.

When the saddle is correctly placed behind the shoulder blades,

there should be some space between the horse's elbow and the cinch. This allows the horse the freedom of its front legs and helps prevent binding, which can cause sores.

The cinch should be vertical from the D-rings. If the cinch slopes backward up to the rigging, it can cause **galls** (sores). A breast collar can correct the problem. Tightening the cinch does not solve it and only increases pressure at the withers.

An easy way to check saddle fit is to place your saddle with an appropriate saddle pad allowing the gullet adequate clearance over the withers. Tighten the girth (cinch) and ride the horse until it sweats. Then, remove the saddle and pad. A properly fitted saddle will leave even and complete sweat marks. This is also a good time to **palpate** (feel with purpose) the horse's back for signs of soreness.

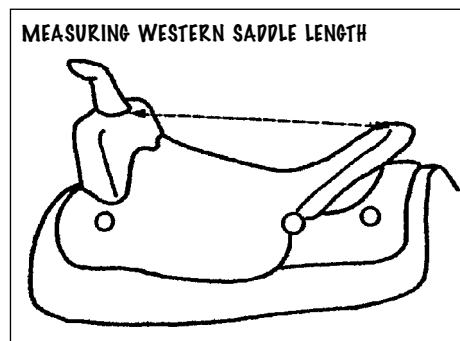
If you find dry spots under the saddle (usually around the withers), it's likely a sign of excessive pressure. If these spots appear to be pain free, additional padding may solve the problem. However, if there is discomfort or the spot is raised in some way, you have a more significant problem. During your inspection, if you find that your horse has pain in the loin area, you may want to be sure the skirt of your saddle is not interfering or rubbing. Your saddle also may be "bridging" or not making contact with the middle of the bars.

Most fitting problems occur at the withers. There must be enough clearance to prevent discomfort for the horse, but not so much that the saddle rolls. A poorly fitted saddle is not only painful, but also may result in a

cinchbound horse (one that tries to lie down or bite) or bad habits such as bucking.

Remember, your saddle fit will change as the horse changes. It will change as the horse gets older, fatter, or skinnier. Anytime soreness or sores exist there is a problem. Some problems are easily fixed with additional or different padding, but sometimes the conformation of the horse is just not suitable to a certain saddle. This may require a saddle change.

A Western saddle's length is measured from the base of the horn to the front of the cantle. The average length of a stock saddle is 15 inches. Youth size is 13 to 14½ inches, and pony saddles for small children are usually 12 inches. The rider's seat should fit into the dish of the cantle with the legs and feet underneath the hips.



Be sure the stirrup leathers can be shortened enough to fit the rider. Types of stirrup adjustments vary, and the ease of changing them should be considered if several people will be using the saddle. The "quick change" buckle is one of the most popular.

A standard stirrup tread is 2 inches wide. Avoid a wide or round (oxbow) stirrup for equitation; they are designed for gaming, cutting, or roping. Be sure the stirrup is not so large that your foot can slip through it. **Tapaderos** (stirrup covers) are **not** allowed in 4-H.

CINCHES

Western cinches are made of mohair, rayon, cotton, or neoprene. They are all washable. They come in various lengths, widths, and styles. A wider and softer cinch is better.

Cinches usually have a large ring with a tongue at each end. If the latigo does not have tongue holes, remove the tongue. The cinch rings should be even on both sides of the horse, about a foot from the D-rings. They should not interfere with the elbows. A short cinch can cause cinch sores.

Many Western saddles are designed with a back cinch, which is necessary for some activities (for example, roping). A back cinch

is optional for pleasure riding or showing. If the saddle has a back cinch, the back cinch and the front cinch must be connected with a connecting strap.

BLANKETS AND PADS

Saddle blankets or pads protect the horse's back, absorb sweat, protect the saddle, and help make up for poorly fitted saddles. They are required with a Western saddle.

Wool meets the requirements for a good blanket, but wool blankets can be very expensive. Blended fiber blankets look like wool blankets, but they are made of cotton that wears out quickly or synthetic fibers that do not absorb moisture well. They are inexpensive, though, and some are machine washable.

Hair pads are long wearing, absorb a great deal of moisture, and they **breathe** (permit air movement). On the other hand, they are difficult to keep clean, become lumpy, and dry slowly.

Felt pads are inexpensive but not long lasting. They need to be protected at the wear points with leather. They are very absorbent, but they are slow to dry.

Foam pads are inexpensive, easy to clean, and good shock absorbers if they are dense enough. Check density by pinching them between your fingers. They do not breathe or absorb sweat.

Neoprene pads are lightweight, easy to clean, and long lasting.

WESTERN BRIDLES AND BITS

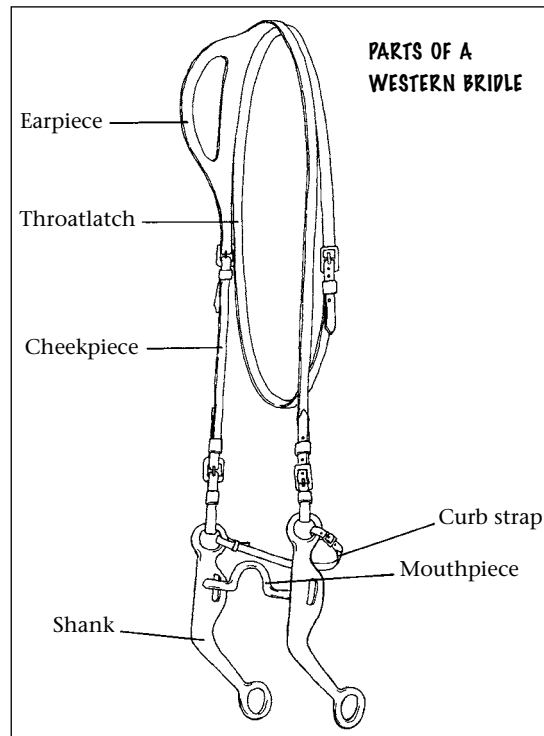
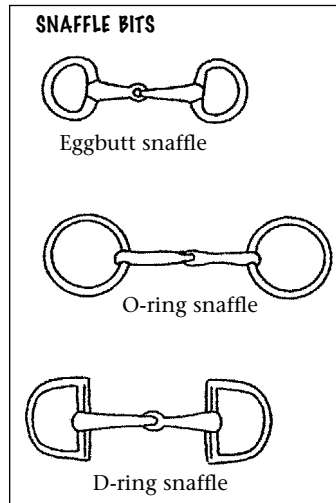
You may use any Western bridle (including snaffles and bosals) that includes a curb strap or curb chain. Western headstalls may have browbands, or shaped or split earpieces. Throatlatches are strongly recommended on all bridles for safety purposes. They are required for Western gaming.

Snaffles must have a curb strap attached below the reins. Cavessons and nosebands are not permitted in Western performance classes. They are allowed in Western games classes.

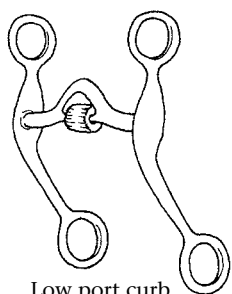
There is a wide variety of bits to use with Western headstalls. Different ports and shanks can be combined. Overall bit length over 8½ inches is prohibited.

REINS

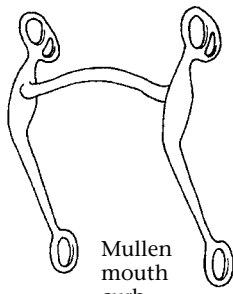
Split (separate) or **romal reins** (with quirt) are allowed in performance classes. You may use only one hand for reining when using any Western bit with shanks. You cannot change the rein hand (except in trail). **Roping** (looped) reins are not allowed in performance but are recommended in Western gaming classes.



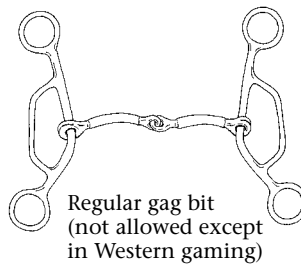
WESTERN BITS



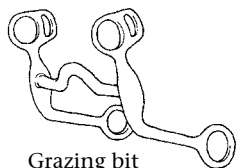
Low port curb with roller



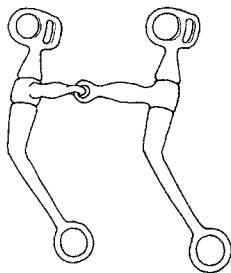
Mullen mouth curb



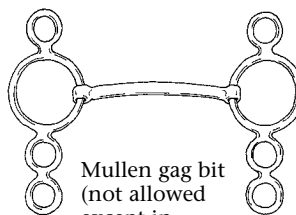
Regular gag bit (not allowed except in Western gaming)



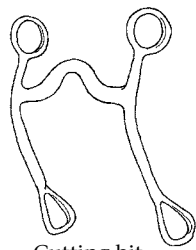
Grazing bit



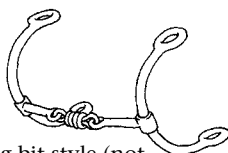
Breaking/training bit



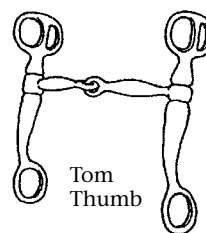
Mullen gag bit (not allowed except in Western gaming)



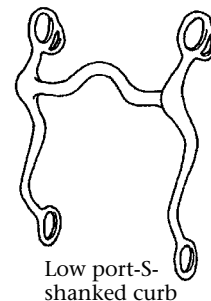
Cutting bit



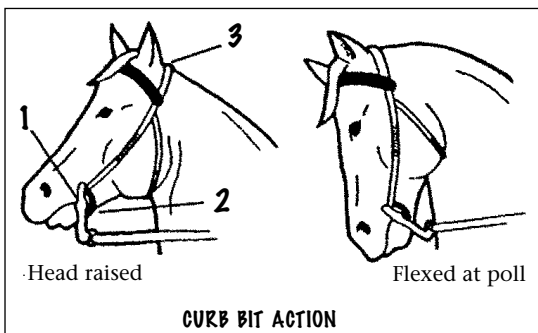
Gag bit style (not allowed except in Western gaming)



Tom Thumb



Low port-S-shanked curb



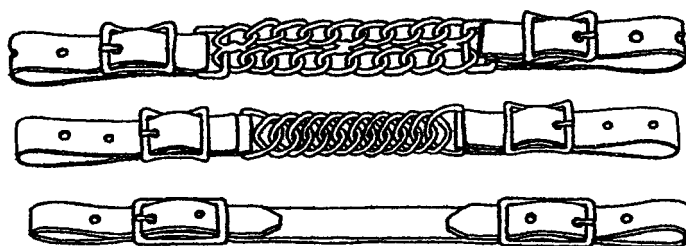
TYPES OF PORTS

		Port with cricket or roller
High port		
		Straight bar (very severe; no tongue release)
Low port		
		Mullen mouth (does not press on tongue)
Medium port		
		Half-breed, high port with roller
Spade		

CHIN OR CURB STRAPS

The curb strap or chinstrap must be at least $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide and lie flat against the horse's jaw. It can be made of leather (not rolled) or flat chain. Bumpy chain links or narrow straps are too severe; eventually, they deaden the horse's sensitive curb groove.

The curb strap should not be snug when the shanks of the bit are in a normal position. There should be room to place two fingers under the strap without applying pressure. This may vary with the type of bit, but there should be contact with the chain when the reins are used lightly.



PROPER FLAT CHAIN AND LEATHER CURBS

HACKAMORES

A hackamore must be adjusted high enough on the horse's face to avoid cutting off its air supply. There are many varieties of hackamores, including gag bits, combinations, and side pulls. They are not acceptable in Western equitation. All are acceptable in Western games as long as they are considered humane and are used in a nonabusive way.

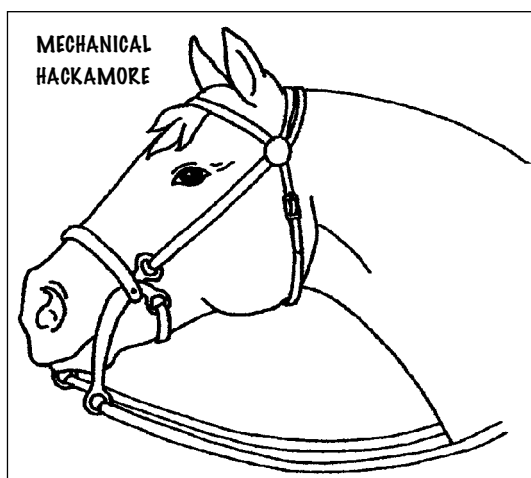
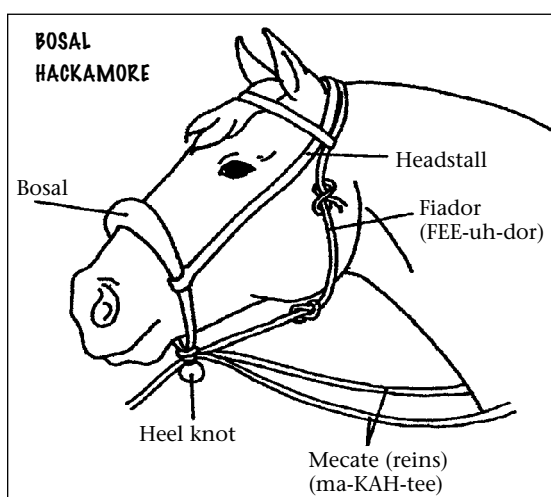
BOSAL

Western horses are sometimes trained with a **bosal** (bow-zall) hackamore to keep the mouth soft. They usually are put into a bridle later. Properly adjusted, the bosal (nosepiece) rests on the horse's nose just below the bony part, about 2 inches from the top of the nostrils. It is used with two hands. Seek help to learn its proper use and special techniques for training.

MECHANICAL HACKAMORES

Mechanical hackamores are widely used in Western games. They offer a great deal of control because of the leverage action of the long shank; and, since there is no bit, there is no possibility of damage to the horse's mouth. Like the bosal, they must rest below the bony part of the nose but not interfere with the horse's breathing.

The mechanical hackamore (or **hackamore bit**) actually is not a bit, since it doesn't have a mouthpiece. The leather or covered metal noseband puts pressure on the nose. The chin groove is affected by the leverage of the long (usually 8- to 9-inch) free-swinging metal shank. The curb strap is attached to a short metal shank that curves back from the end of the noseband toward



the chin. A metal bar, chain, or leather strap usually joins the two cheek bottoms to prevent the bit from swinging forward too high to be effective.

Mechanical hackamores are not allowed in performance classes.

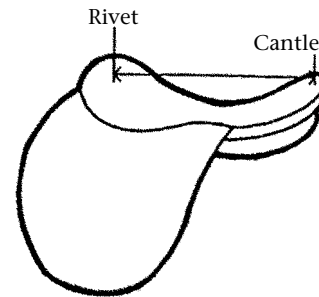
HUNT SEAT TACK

SADDLES AND PADS

There are three types of hunt seat saddles: the jumping saddle (forward seat), the all-purpose saddle, and the close contact. Jumping saddles have knee rolls designed specifically for jumping. The all-purpose saddle is more versatile on the flat, and the close contact saddle is for more advanced riders. English saddles are sold without fittings, which include **irons** (stirrups), stirrup leathers, and the girth.

The average hunt seat saddle length is 17 inches measured from the rivet on the side of the pommel to the center back of the cantle. When the rider is seated, the knees should fit in the knee pockets of the saddle and should not extend in front of or behind the flap. The rider's seat should fit in the deepest part of the saddle and should not hang over any part of the saddle.

The saddle has various billet strap combinations that change the position of the girth to fit the conformation of different horses. It is best to use adjacent billets rather than use the outside billets together. Safety stirrup bars should be open for jumping but may be closed for flat classes. Check billet and leather pieces

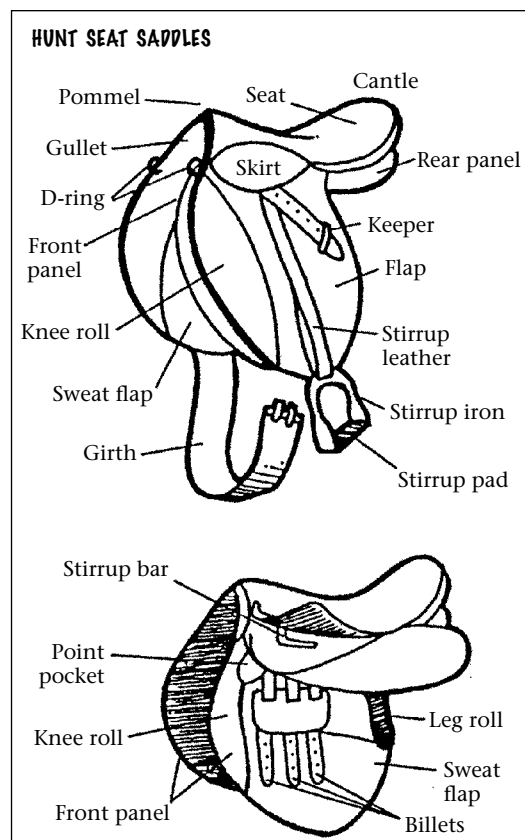
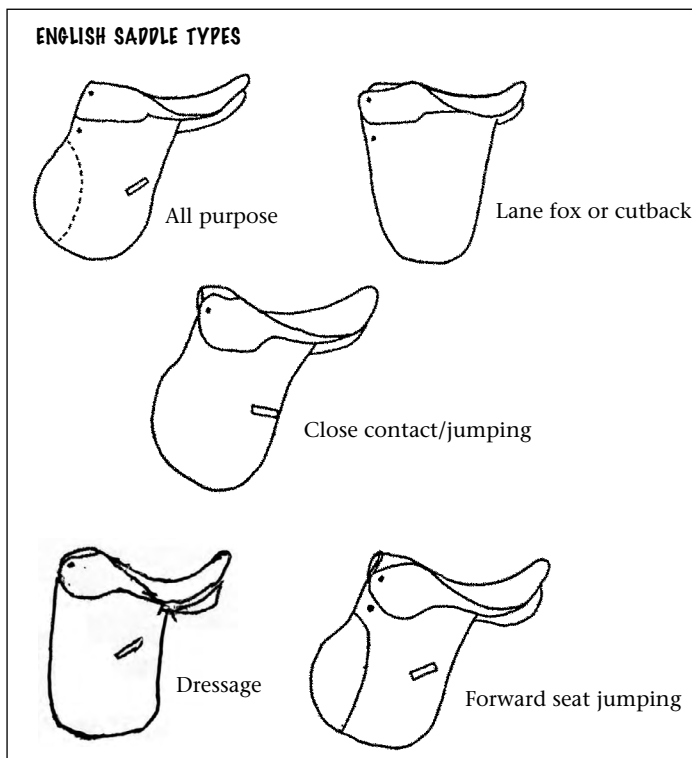


MEASURING SEAT LENGTH

for wear or damage, and replace or repair them when needed.

Girths may be made of leather or synthetic material. Keep them clean and free of sweat and dirt. Check them often for worn or torn areas.

Saddle pads are not required, but they do protect the horse's back, absorb sweat, and protect the saddle. Pads usually are made of sheepskin, felt, or fleece and fit the outline frame of the saddle. Brush the underside of the pad frequently to keep it clean, and check for worn spots. If the material allows, wash when necessary.



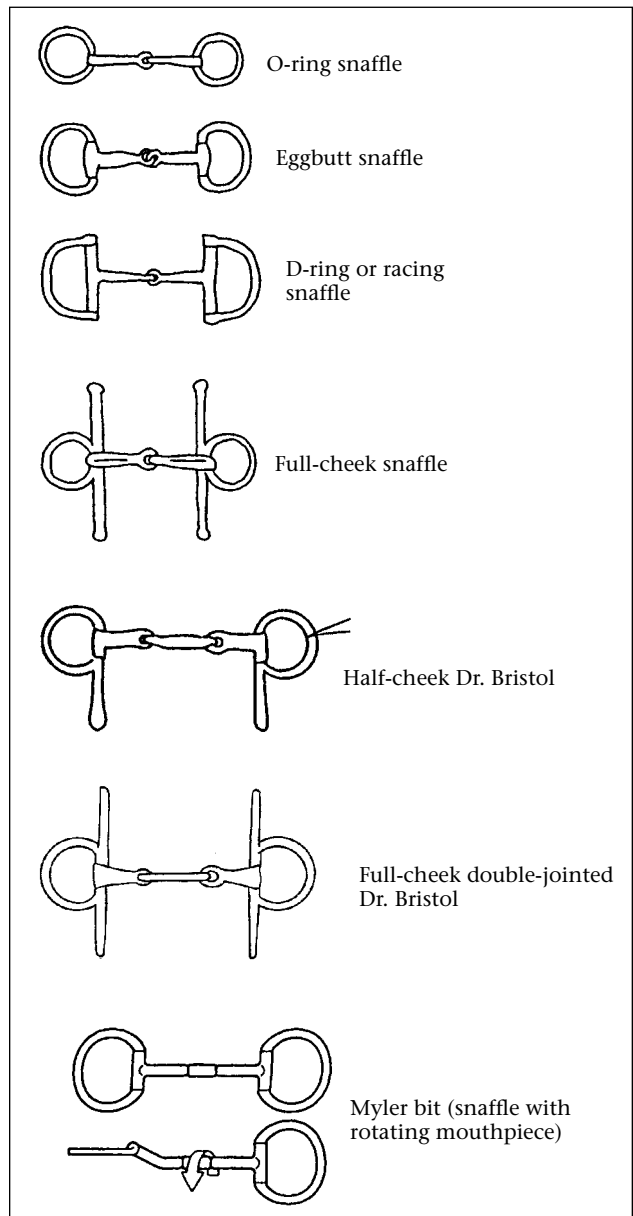
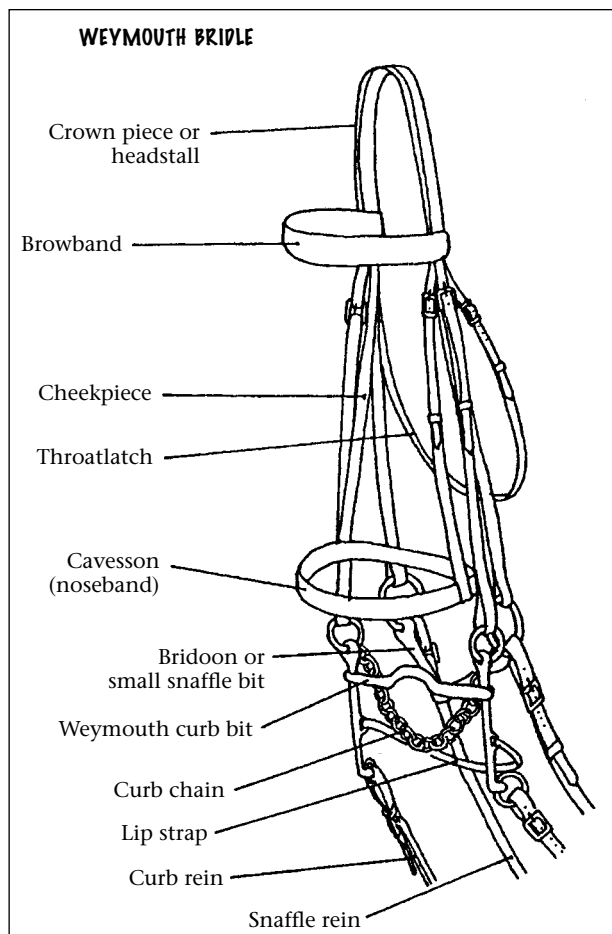
BRIDLES AND BITS

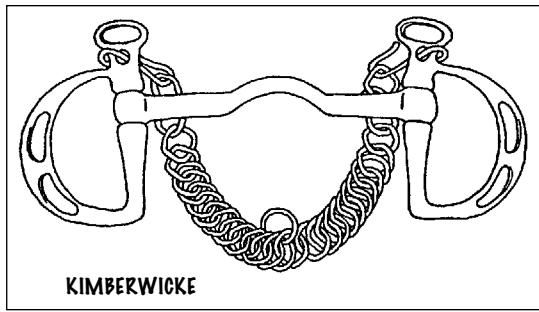
A snaffle, pelham, kimberwicke, full double bridle, or any other English-type bit is appropriate, but it should fit breed type.

The snaffle is the most common bit (eggbutt, D-ring, or O-ring snaffle). This type of bit puts direct pressure on either corner of the mouth (jointed) or on the tongue (unjointed). All snaffle bits work on a direct pull from the reins and have no leverage. Single reins may be laced or braided for better grip and control, especially when jumping.

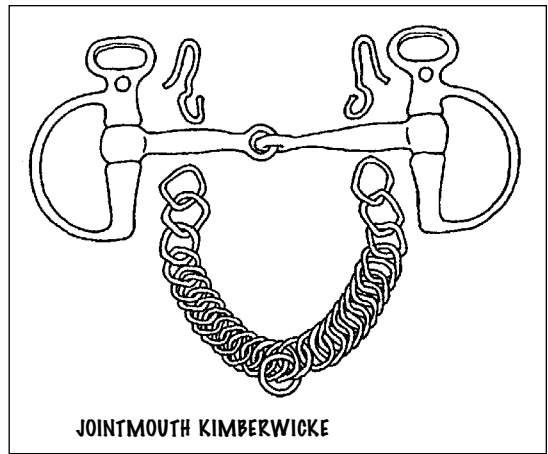
An English curb bit, such as the pelham or kimberwicke, uses leverage for control. The shanks on the bit with the action of the curb chain create leverage. A **pelham bit** is a combination of a snaffle and curb bit. A pelham is used with double reins, the wider rein in the snaffle ring and the narrower rein in the curb ring. The curb chain must be at least ½ inch wide and lie flat in the horse's chin groove.

A **kimberwicke** used with single reins in the lower slot works as a curb bit. A full double bridle is used with a **Weymouth** and a **bridoon** (small snaffle) with double reins. It is not commonly seen in hunt seat.

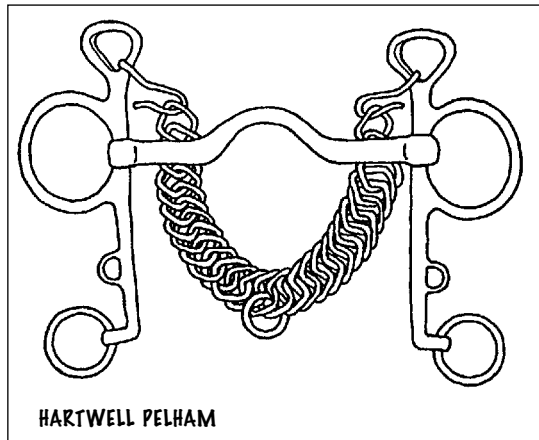




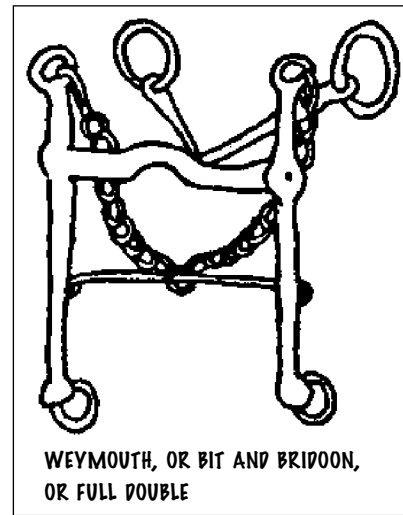
KIMBERWICKE



JOINTMOUTH KIMBERWICKE



HARTWELL PELHAM



WEYMOUTH, OR BIT AND BRIDOOON,
OR FULL DOUBLE

NOSEBANDS

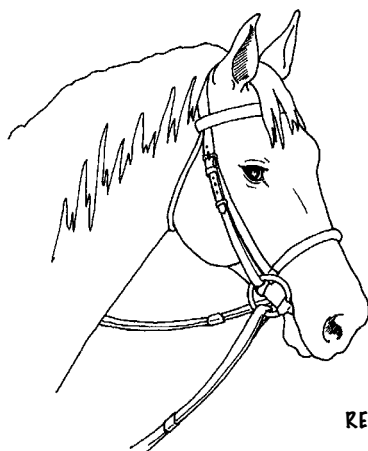
An English bridle with **cavesson** (noseband) is required. There are four main types of nosebands: regular cavesson, dropped noseband, figure-eight noseband, and flash noseband. Refer to the *4-H Horse Contest Guide*, PNW 574, to learn which are acceptable in specific classes. The main purpose of a noseband is to help keep the horse's mouth closed so it can't evade the bit. The noseband is also a place to attach equipment such as a standing martingale.

The regular cavesson should lie about 2 inches below the protruding cheekbone. Generally, you should be able to place one to two fingers between the band and the horse's nose. The width of the noseband can be used to improve the appearance of the horse. A thin or rolled band accents a delicate head, while a thick band can make a long head appear shorter or mask a bump on the nose.

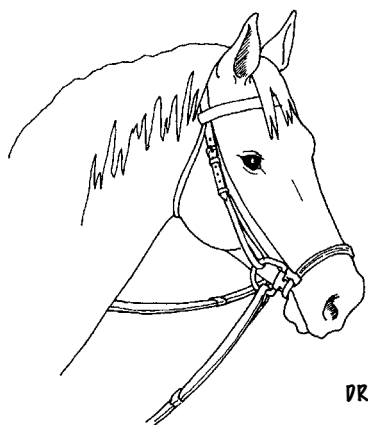
The dropped noseband, which buckles below the bit, is the most effective at keeping the horse's mouth closed. The front of the band should sit above the nostrils, not below the nasal bone. This is important so you don't damage the horse's nasal cartilage. Dropped nosebands tend to restrict a horse's breathing, so they are not good to use for fast work. Do not use a standing martingale with a dropped noseband, and make sure you always unfasten the noseband before removing the horse's bridle.

A figure-eight noseband has two straps that apply pressure to both the upper and lower jaw. The top strap is pulled up, and the bottom strap fastens below the bit. This is thought to be the most comfortable noseband, and it is good for fast work because it doesn't constrict the horse's nostrils.

The flash noseband also has two straps (one like a regular cavesson and one that goes down in front of the bit). Both bands should be tightly fastened, with only one finger between the band and the horse. Fasten the lower strap on the side, not under the chin.



REGULAR CAVESSON NOSEBAND



DROPPED NOSEBAND

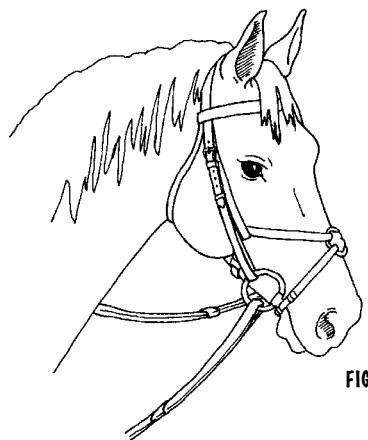
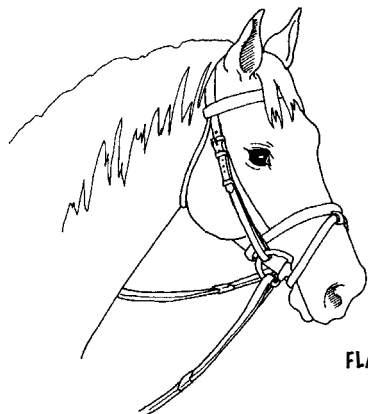


FIGURE-EIGHT NOSEBAND



FLASH NOSEBAND

SADDLE SEAT TACK

SADDLES

The saddle should be the flat or cutback type designed especially for horses with an upright head carriage. The saddle's length is measured from the nail head (rivet) on the side of the pommel to the center back of the cantle. Compared to Western or hunt seat, the rider sits further back on the horse's back to lighten the forehand and emphasize a higher knee action.

Girths usually are made of leather or synthetic material. Leather girths may come shaped for better fit. They usually have an elastic insert on one end that makes them easier to tighten. Girths can be natural leather or patent leather (white or colored to match browbands). Girths usually are buckled in the saddle's first and third billets. Buckle each side the same way. You do not need to leave safety bars open.

BRIDLES AND BITS

The horse usually is shown in a double bridle (Weymouth and bridoon) or a pelham with double reins. When using four reins, the wider rein should be on the snaffle rings. The reins allow the rider to raise the horse's head with the snaffle and to achieve flexion with the curb. The bridle and bit should always be the right ones for the breed. For example, Tennessee Walkers can be shown with a walking bit and two reins. Morgans are shown in double bridles.

On a double bridle, the curb chain is positioned between the snaffle and the curb. Lip chains would be appropriate on Weymouth bits with longer shanks. A less severe bridle is the pelham, a curb and snaffle combined into one bit.

Nosebands or cavessons are required. They may be of plain leather or colored patent leather.

