

A Guide For New Riders

Tips for first-time horseback riders and parents

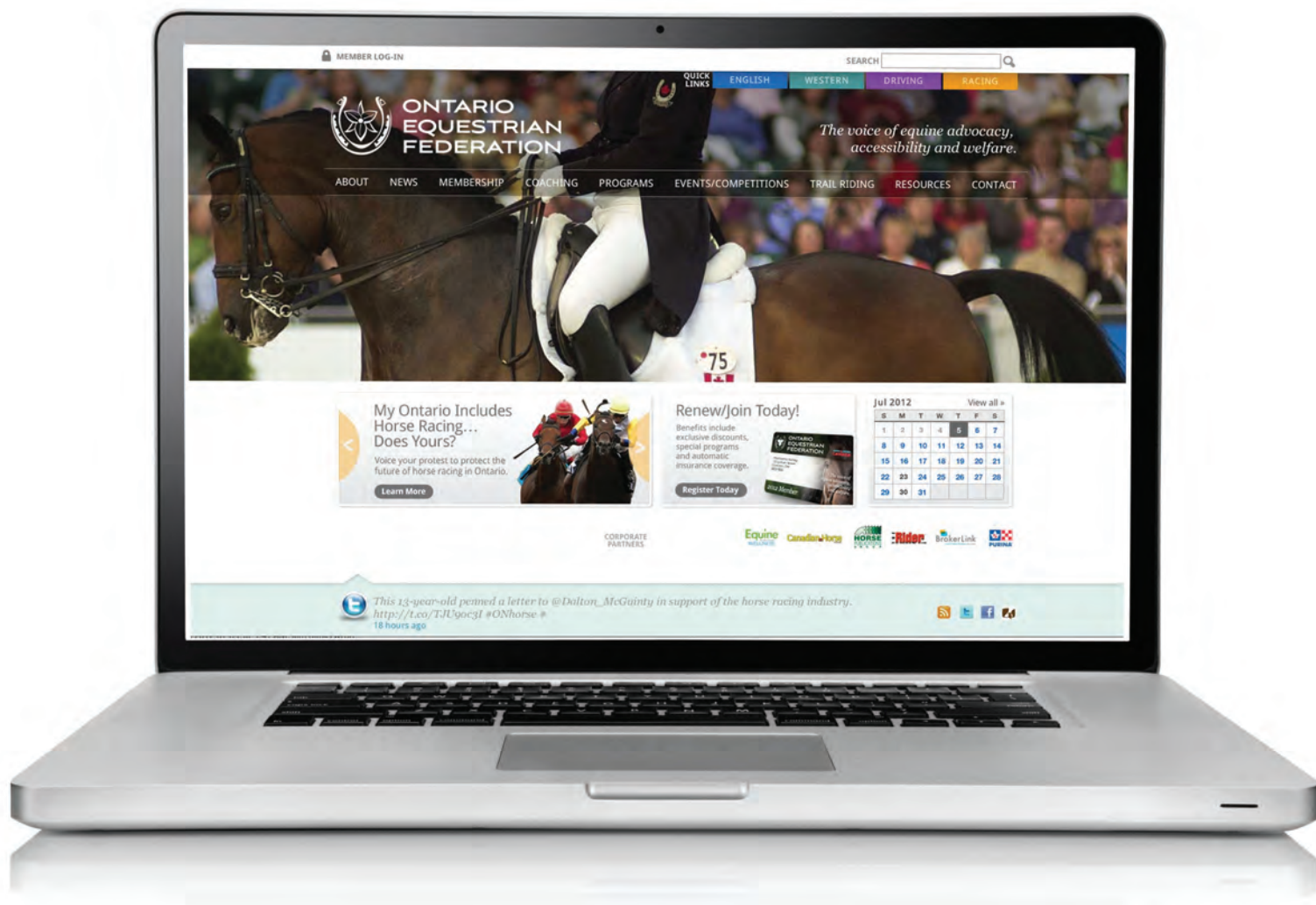


Ontario Equestrian Federation

The Ontario Equestrian Federation invites you to visit their website

www.horse.on.ca

to search for accredited stables and certified coaches in your area, to keep current on the latest news in the equine industry, browse the online business directory and tons more!



@oefhorse

Don't forget to follow the OEF on Facebook and Twitter!

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WHAT IS THE ONTARIO EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION?

The Ontario Equestrian Federation (OEF) is one of the largest equine organizations in Canada.

Mission Statement:

Striding for Equine Excellence! The OEF is the umbrella organization committed to equine welfare and providing leadership and support to individuals, associations and industries in Ontario's horse community.

Vision Statement:

Committed to the highest standards of horse welfare, advocacy, pursuits and accessibility.

Membership Benefits:

Members of the Ontario Equestrian Federation enjoy the peace of mind of having automatic personal liability insurance coverage, but there are many other benefits. Individual OEF members also receive discounts and savings on a variety of products and services, are eligible to participate in a variety of riding and driving programs and receive the **WHOA!** quarterly newsletter. Junior riders are also eligible to apply for the OEF Youth Bursary. Each year the OEF proudly offers a minimum of five \$1,000 bursaries to junior members to help them achieve their equestrian goals. The OEF also rewards riders for doing what they love most! Through the RIDE ONTario program every hour you spend riding or driving brings you closer to a reward level.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE ONTARIO EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION?

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Front cover photo credit: Linnéa Burgess

TIPS ON CHOOSING A RIDING FACILITY

Choosing a riding facility can seem like a daunting task for those just starting out, but there are things you can look for and questions you can ask to help determine whether it's the place for you.

Q: Does the facility and lesson program look professional, safe and well-managed?

A: The area where the horses are being handled before and after lessons should be clear of hoses, buckets and other trip hazards.

Riders should be supervised by a qualified person while handling the horses, including grooming, tacking, mounting and dismounting. The instructor or coach should also do a safety check of the rider's tack before the lesson begins.

The arena should be enclosed by a fence, wall or gates that are closed during the lesson, and only lesson equipment should be in the arena, such as trot and jumping poles, jump standards, jump filler (boxes, flowers, etc.), safety cones/markers.

It is recommended that group lessons not exceed eight riders, but regardless of the size of the group, there should be enough room for the group to ride safely together.

Q: What personal equipment do I need to ride?

A: Riders should all have proper and safe riding attire. All riders should wear long pants, fitted shirts, an approved ASTM riding helmet and boots with a half-inch to one-inch heel to avoid the foot slipping through the stirrup. Riders should NOT wear running shoes, shorts, or helmets made for other sports (i.e. bicycle or hockey helmets).

Q: Is the instructor/coach certified to teach riding lessons?

A: Find out about the lesson program and the credentials of the instructors/coaches teaching lessons. Find out if they have experience teaching beginner riders and if they are certified and active. The Ontario Equestrian Federation highly recommends working with certified coaches who maintain their "active" status to ensure their first aid certificate and training is current. All active certified coaches are listed on the OEF website at www.horse.on.ca.

Q: Do the school horses look healthy and well-behaved?

A: It's normal to find a range of breeds and sizes of horses and ponies used in schooling lessons. The primary talents of a good beginner school horse are good manners and an even, forgiving temperament.

You don't have to be a veterinarian to recognize a healthy horse. To a layperson the horse should appear well-fed, relatively clean and with no untreated cuts or wounds. They should walk freely and willingly (not lame).

Q: Are there rules about parent involvement, such as watching lessons?

A: Stables and coaches will have different rules about how closely a parent or friend is involved during tacking up, lessons and untacking. You should expect to be asked to stay outside the ring or arena during the lesson. Some facilities will have a viewing room or an area outside the ring/arena where you can watch the lesson.

Q: When observing a beginner lesson, how does the instructor/coach interact with the riders? Do they explain the goals of the lesson?

A: There is a broad range of teaching styles among coaches. They won't all appeal to everyone, but a good coach or instructor will recognize the needs of their students and make adjustments to help them learn and be successful. You should discuss your expectations with your prospective coach and, when watching their lesson, look for a theme or goal in the lesson. Some coaches will be more explicit than others, but it helps the students if they understand the goals of the lesson and how the exercises help achieve that goal.

WHY CHOOSE A CERTIFIED COACH?

The National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) is a government-initiated program designed to give the public safe, qualified instructors and coaches at every level of all sport.

Teaching is a complex endeavour which carries with it significant responsibility. With thousands of Canadian children and adults directly involved in riding lessons yearly, the stables, instructors and coaches that service these riders have a duty to provide safe, qualified and professional service.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CERTIFIED COACH?

Certification as an Instructor or Coach demonstrates that the individual is professional and accountable, adhering to established standards of ethics and the Equine Canada Code of Conduct. You also have the reassurance that they are skilled in first aid and safety procedures. A certified instructor or coach also demonstrates equestrian knowledge and technical competency, as well as commitment to not only complete the rigorous testing process, but to continue to maintain skills through ongoing training and education.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CERTIFICATION?

Instructor of Beginner

This program is focused on those who wish to take on the instruction of children and adults learning to ride, establishing foundational riding skills with an eye on safety.



Photo courtesy of Kaleigh Arbuckle



Finding The Right Stable Shouldn't Be Like Looking For A Needle In A Haystack!

Riding stables affiliated with the Ontario Equestrian Federation have committed to safety standards and best business practices. Browse the Ontario Equestrian Federation website to find one near you.

www.horse.on.ca

Ontario Equestrian Federation
1 West Pearce St, Suite 201, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 3K3
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Competition Coach

This program is focused on those who are interested in coaching riders in the competitive environment. More advanced skills in the development of a competitive training program, performance analysis and mental preparation for competition are required to become certified at this level.

Competition Specialist Coach

This program is a further progression of the Competition Coach program, focused on riders competing at the provincial and national levels. Beyond the Competition Coach level, this level requires a working knowledge of the Equine Canada competition rules for the level and discipline they're teaching.

High Performance Coach

This program is administered by Equine Canada. These coaches specialize in developing athletes through refining basic sport skills, developing more advanced skills and tactics and preparing for performance in national to international level competitive standards.

CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS SET GOALS FOR RIDERS

In addition to receiving lessons from a certified instructor or coach, goal-oriented riders who want to measure their knowledge and test their riding skills might be interested in participating in a certification program.

P'tit Trot is an introductory program for children ages five or older who love horses and want to learn about riding and caring for horses. The P'tit Trot book is fully illustrated throughout and introduces readers to the basics of English and Western riding and how to care for a horse or pony.

Included in the program package is a colourfully illustrated four-chapter booklet, a certificate, note pad, plus extra goodies children will enjoy. The colourful drawings and the amusing antics of P'tit Trot help children discover and teach themselves the ABC's of riding and horse and pony care. Parents and instructors/coaches can use this entertaining and educational presentation to introduce children to horses, to prepare and support activities offered at riding camps and as preparation to begin the Equine Canada Learn to Ride program.

Learn to Ride is a national program with national standards that was developed to teach English and Western riders safe horsemanship and practices. Through this non-competitive certification program, both recreational and competitive riders are rewarded with Certificates of Achievement for advancing their learning.

The Western Learn to Ride program is based on the Western Learn to Ride and Intermediate Rider manuals, which evaluate an individual's skills through levels 1-4, as well as an intermediate level, in a variety of areas covered in the manuals.

The English Rider Level 1-10 program has been tailored to further assist those riders who seek to further their riding skills on the flat but who may not wish to continue over fences. Candidates will have the option at Rider Level 3 to either take the full riding phase or only the flat section. This option is continued through Rider Level 4-8.

There are also Learn to Ride programs currently under development for the disciplines of Saddle Seat, Driving and Endurance.

If you are interested in learning more about the P'tit Trot or Learn to Ride programs, please visit the Ontario Equestrian Federation website at www.horse.on.ca, e-mail education@horse.on.ca or call 1-877-441-7112.

WHAT DO YOU WEAR TO YOUR FIRST RIDING LESSON?



So you've booked your first riding lesson. After the initial excitement, you may be left wondering what you should wear. While there are a few must-have items, you won't be expected to have a fully stocked riding wardrobe at this stage.

The most important item that you cannot ride without is an ASTM certified riding helmet. Approved ASTM riding helmets must be properly fitted to the rider so they do not slip on the head, and they should have a chin strap that prevents the helmet from coming off. Riding helmets are specifically designed to protect against the types of head injuries a rider could experience, without interfering with their ability to ride safely.

While it's tempting to buy a used helmet, it's essential to purchase a new helmet that you know has no structural damage that may compromise your safety. A reputable tack shop will carry certified helmets and will be able to assist you in selecting a properly fitting helmet that meets your needs.

While investing in a pair of riding boots is a good idea, it's not essential for your first few lessons. However, make sure that the footwear you ride in has a half-inch inch to one-inch heel to prevent your foot from becoming caught in the stirrup. Also, make sure the shoes or boots you wear do not have a wide, thick sole, as these can make it difficult to remove your foot from the stirrup.

Fitted jeans, preferably with no inseam that can rub your legs, will be sufficient when you are first starting out. It can be tempting to wear shorts during the hot summer months, but they offer no protection to your legs, which will be pinched and rubbed by the saddle. You should also

avoid thin or loose fitting pants, such as leggings or jogging pants, which can be slippery on the seat of the saddle.

It's also advisable to avoid loose fitting clothing, hoodies, jewelry or scarves, which could get caught up while working around the horse or mounting and dismounting. Shirts should be tucked in for both safety and an overall neat presentation.

It's also worth noting that riders who wear glasses should secure their glasses with a strap and should avoid the use of contacts, which can irritate eyes due to the dust at barns and inside riding arenas.

Some riders will wear other equipment such as protective riding vests, riding boots, half or full chaps. This additional equipment is something you may choose to purchase at some point, but is not required to start.

Riders who follow these guidelines will have a safe and comfortable ride – essential ingredients to have fun and learn new skills!



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EQUESTRIAN

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ASTM-SEI Certified



COMPETITOR XC 1037

ASTM Standard F2681-08

RIDE-LITE 1009-08

SATRA M6 Standard



TSERIES

ASTM-SEI Certified

WEARING A HELMET IS THE LAW!

All riders and drivers, regardless of discipline, are encouraged to wear a properly fitted approved safety helmet. The power of example is very influential and can be instrumental in teaching and enlightening others. Not only is it the smart thing to do, it's the law in Ontario!

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

Bill 12

Horse Riding Safety Act-2001

An Act to increase the safety of equestrian riders.

RESPONSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHMENT

2. (1) No owner or operator of a horse riding establishment shall permit any rider under the age of 18 years to ride any horse boarded by the rider in the stables of the establishment or transported by the rider to the establishment unless the rider has and is correctly following equipment in the manner that it was designed to be used.

1. A helmet that meets current standards for equipment designed and manufactured for use while riding horses as established by the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM), the British Standards Institute (BSI) or the European Safety Standards.
2. Hard-soled footwear with a heel of no less than 1.5 centimeters.
3. Tack properly fitted on the horse.

(2) No owner or operator of a horse riding establishment shall permit any rider under the age of 18 years to ride any horse hired out by the establishment, unless the rider has and is correctly using the equipment described in paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 of subsection (1) in the manner that it was designed to be used.

AVAILABILITY OF EQUIPMENT

(3) Every owner or operator of a horse riding establishment shall ensure that the equipment described in paragraphs 1 and 2 of subsection (1) is available for hire at reasonable rates.

EXCEPTION

(4) An owner or operator of a horse riding establishment is not in contravention of subsection (1) or (2) if the rider does not have the equipment described in paragraph 2 of subsection (1) but is equipped with properly functioning and sized hooded stirrups, safety stirrups designed to prevent the rider's foot from passing through or becoming wedged in the stirrups, or stirrups designed to break away when the rider falls from the horse.

The Highway Traffic Act is amended by adding the following section:

Duty of horse riders

104.1 (1) No person under the age of 18 years shall ride or be mounted on a horse on a highway unless that person has and is correctly using the following equipment in the manner that it was designed to be used:

1. A helmet that complies with the requirements under the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2001.
2. Footwear that complies with the requirements under the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2001.

Bill 12 in effect as of September 27th, 2001



Photo provided by Tipperary Equestrian

HOW DO I PROPERLY FIT A RIDING HELMET?

Courtesy of Tipperary Equestrian



Photo provided by Tipperary Equestrian

CHOOSING THE RIGHT HELMET:

Finding and sizing a properly fitted helmet is essential to riding safely. It is important to consider the type of riding you'll be doing to ensure the helmet you choose is suitable for the discipline you pursue. And most importantly, do you know what a well-fitted helmet feels like?

SIZING A HELMET:

- Before searching for a new helmet it is a good idea to measure the circumference of your head (from forehead around to the back of your skull) to establish an idea of the size range that you're looking for.
- A new helmet should feel snug on your head with no pressure points. This gives the helmet foam an opportunity to conform to the shape of your head.
- A properly fitted helmet will not have any excessive up and down (rocking) movement on the head with the front liner padding slightly above the eyebrows. Excessive rocking of the helmet is a result of a loose fit.
- The helmet should sit on the head with the front liner padding approximately one finger width above the eyebrows.
- Manufacturers are required to include a helmet manual. It should be referenced for proper care and fit guidelines specific to the brand of helmet.

FITTING THE HELMET CHIN STRAPS:

- The down straps of the helmet should be angled forward to correctly position the chin strap under the chin and the closure by your jaw. It is important to follow the manufacturer's guidelines for fitting.
- The helmet chin strap should be adjusted to fit snug and secure when under the chin so that the rider can at least fit two fingers underneath the straps.

IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW:

1. Be sure that it is ASTM/SEI certified.

Anyone riding and working around horses should wear an ASTM/SEI certified helmet. Traumatic brain injuries are the leading cause of death among equestrians. These injuries can occur to any rider, on any horse, partaking in any discipline.

The Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) is an organization that certifies protective equipment for a variety of industries. ASTM International (the American Society for Testing and Materials) is one of the world's most respected standards organizations, setting standards for protective headgear. For equestrian helmets, SEI has selected the ASTM standard F1163 to evaluate helmet performance. SEI requires testing at an independent lab to the F1163 ASTM standard.

How do I know that its ASTM/SEI approved?

All ASTM/SEI certified helmets contain their date of manufacture and the SEI seal under the headliner inside the helmet. For more information on SEI Standards and to view a listing of SEI certified helmets you can visit the website at <http://www.seinet.org>

2. Replace your helmet if you have hit your head in a fall.

If your helmet has taken an impact from any type of fall, it should be replaced. Equestrian helmets are made for one impact only. Even if you don't see any damage, the area of the helmet where impact occurred could still be compromised. We strongly recommend replacing any helmet that has taken an impact from any type of fall.

Most manufacturers have an accident replacement program should a helmet be involved in an accident within a certain period from the purchase date.

3. The safest helmet is not the most expensive. Go for the one that best fits your head and suits your discipline.

4. Replace your helmet every five years.

5. If you have long hair, use a hair tie to place it into a low ponytail on your head. Be sure to avoid having the hair tie on the inside of your helmet.



Photo Credit: Epona Photography by Laurie Houghton

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT RIDING DISCIPLINES?

Barrel Racing:

A rodeo event in which a horse and rider attempt to compete a clover leaf pattern around three preset barrels in the fastest time.

Combined Driving:

An equestrian sport involving Carriage Driving. The sport has three phases and is most similar to the mounted equestrian sport of Eventing. Part of the challenge of Combined Driving is that the drivers may only communicate to their horses using their hands and voice.

Cutting:

A Western riding event where a horse and rider are judged on their ability to separate a calf from a cattle herd and keep it away for a short period of time.

Dressage:

Each horse and rider perform the same test, a combination of movements and gaits, designed to demonstrate the level of achievement of the horse to show a perfect understanding with his or her rider. The horse and rider achieving the highest score is the winner. In the popular freestyle competition, the rider designs and choreographs an original test ridden to music of his or her choice.

Endurance:

An endurance ride is a test of horse and rider teams over challenging terrain of distances up to 160 kilometres in one day. The welfare of the horse is paramount and vet checks are used to monitor and evaluate each horse's ability to maintain the level of exercise being undertaken. To be successful, the competitor must have knowledge of pace and efficient and safe use of his or her horse across country.

Eventing:

An English event that is an all-around test of horse and rider of three distinct tests that takes place on separate days. The Dressage test is followed by Cross-Country, a timed test that includes a series of solid jumps set in natural terrain. Jumping is held on day three, in a stadium ring. This test is also timed and is designed to exhibit the horse's jumping ability and willingness to continue after the previous day's exertions.

Hunter:

An English style of competition where horses are judged on conformation, temperament, manners and their ability to manoeuvre a course of jumps and on the flat. As a horse's ability and experience increases, so does the difficulty on the course. A good show Hunter must possess excellent jumping form.

Mounted Games:

A branch of equestrian sport that involves fast games played by people of all ages on mounts up to a height of 15 hands. Riders require a high degree of athletic ability, good riding skills, hand-to-eye coordination, determination, perseverance, a competitive spirit and the ability to work together with other riders and a willingness to help one another.

Pole Bending:

A timed Western event that features a horse and mounted rider running a weaving or serpentine path around six poles arranged in a line.

Polo:

A team sport played on horseback in which the objective is to score goals against an opposing team. Players score by driving a small white plastic or wooden ball into the opposing team's goal using a long-handled mallet. Polo is

traditionally played at speed on a large grass field up to 300 yards in length and each polo team consists of four riders and their mounts.

Reining

A judged event designed to show the athletic ability of a Western type horse in a show arena. In Reining, competitors are required to run one of several approved patterns. Each pattern includes small slow circles, large fast circles, flying lead changes, roll backs, 360 degree spins done in place, back ups and the exciting sliding stops that are the hallmark of the Reining horse.

Roping:

A rodeo event that features a calf and a mounted rider. The goal of this timed event is for the rider to catch the calf by throwing a loop of rope from a lariat around its neck, dismount from the horse, run to the calf and restrain it by tying three legs together in as little time as possible.

Saddle Seat:

A style of horseback riding within the category of English riding that is designed to show off the high trotting action of certain horse breeds, most notably the Saddlebred.

Show Jumping:

A jumping competition in which the combination of horse and rider is tested under various conditions over the course of obstacles. It is intended to demonstrate the horse's freedom, energy, skill, speed and obedience in jumping as well as the rider's horsemanship. Penalties occur for exceeding the time allowed, for knocking down or refusing to jump an obstacle. The winner has the least number of penalties.

Team Penning:

The object is for three team members on horses to collect three head of cattle with the same numbers on them from a herd of 30 cattle located at one end of an arena. The team then attempts to put these three head of cattle into a small pen at the other end of the arena. All this is to be done in 90 seconds or less.

Therapeutic:

Therapy in which disabled individuals ride horses to relax, develop muscle tone, coordination, confidence and well-being.

Trail Riding:

Riding outdoors on natural trails and roads as opposed to riding in an enclosed arena. Trail rides may be informal activities by an individual or small group of people, or may be larger events organized by a club. Some trail rides may even be directed by professional guides or outfitters, particularly at guest ranches. There are competitive events, which test the ability of horse and rider to navigate obstacles commonly found on the trail, such as opening and closing gates, crossing streams, etc.

Vaulting:

The performance of gymnastic and dance-like movements to music on a moving horse.

Western Pleasure:

A Western style of competition that evaluates horses on manners and the suitability of the horse for a relaxed but collected gait cadence and relatively slow speed of gait, along with calm and responsive disposition.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF RIDING?

Horseback riding has many great benefits for your overall health and well-being. Here are three reasons why you should go horseback riding!

Riding Makes You Sweat

Horseback riding is a sport that has many great physical benefits. You may think that riding a horse isn't that much different than going on a ride at an amusement park. You just jump on and the horse does all the work, right? Well, not quite. A one-hour ride can burn similar calories to that of a 30-minute jog (6 mph) or cycle ride (9 mph). Therefore, all the health benefits associated with engaging in regular cardiovascular exercise are gained. After your first ride you may feel muscles that you never knew you had!

Benefits include:

- Improved balance and muscle strength
- Improved coordination, faster reflexes and increased motor planning
- Stretching of tight or spastic muscles
- Decreased spasticity
- Increased range of motion of joints
- Improved respiration and circulation
- Stimulated sensory integration
- Improved visual-spatial perception
- Improved eye-hand coordination

Riding Makes You Think

Horseback riding is a great activity to help exercise your mind. Controlling a large animal challenges you to pay close attention to your actions. Your horse will rely on you to make decisions and practice good judgment.

Benefits include:

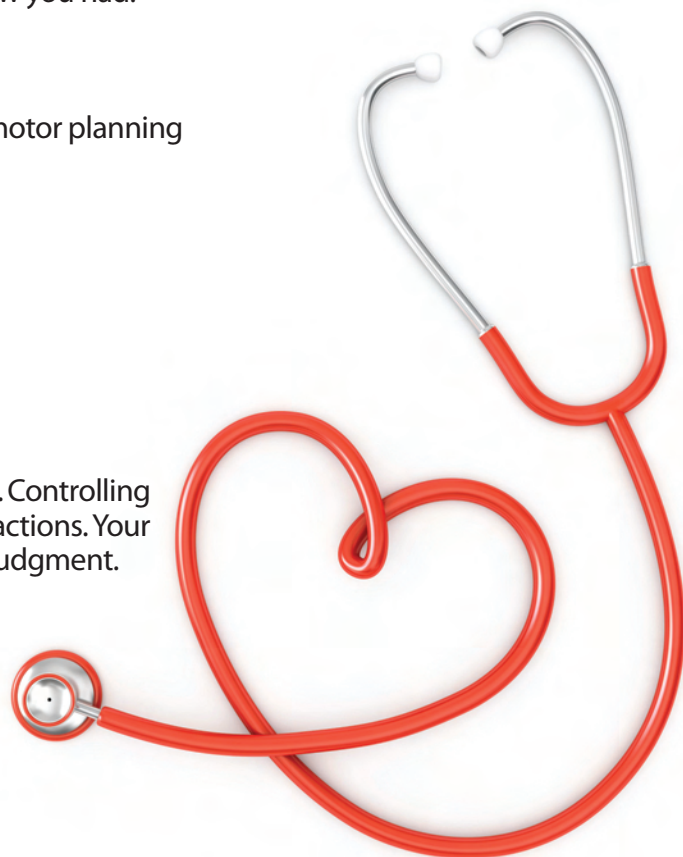
- Increased vocabulary application and recall
- Increased verbal integration and participation
- Improved attention and concentration
- Improved sequencing and planning skills
- Improved judgement and critical thinking skills
- Improved flexibility in thinking

Riding Makes You Feel Good

Horseback riding is recognized as having excellent therapeutic qualities. The emotional benefits can be of equal importance as the physical benefits. Simply being outdoors and enjoying the countryside will boost your general well-being and act as a great stress buster. There is a real sense of exhilaration and freedom when you ride, a feeling that is second to none. Furthermore, developing a relationship and sense of trust between yourself and your horse is highly rewarding. Learning to control and care for an animal much larger than yourself can have a profound affect on your confidence and is a great feeling.

Benefits include:

- Improved self-confidence
- Improved assessment abilities
- Development of patience
- Improved emotional control and self-discipline
- Improved expansion of control
- Development of respect and care for animals



ARE YOU READY TO OWN YOUR OWN HORSE?



Photo courtesy of Kaleigh Arbuckle

So, you've been taking riding lessons. The next step is to buy a horse, right? While every new rider dreams of one day owning their own horse, it's not a commitment to be taken lightly or a decision to be hurried into.

Horses are a lot of work and responsibility and owning one costs considerably more than taking riding lessons. And even if you are ready to invest the time and money into owning your own horse, you must also have the necessary skills and knowledge to safely handle and properly care for it.

For riders taking lessons who want a taste of horse ownership without the long-term commitment, other options are available, such as part-boarding and leasing.

In a part-board arrangement, a rider typically enters into agreement with the horse owner to share the use of the horse for a specified time period each week. For instance, the rider may be entitled to ride the horse three days each week.

Another arrangement that more closely resembles horse ownership is leasing. Some horse owners will lease horses for a specified period of time, such as a year. During that time, the lessee will be responsible for the care and upkeep of that horse. While every lease agreement is different, that typically includes housing the horse, paying for its food and paying any associated veterinary and farrier costs.

If you think part-boarding or leasing is right for you, or if you think you are ready to own your own horse, it's important to first consult with your riding instructor or coach. They will be able to assess your abilities to determine if they think you are ready to take your riding to the next level.

Having a knowledgeable horse person you can trust is essential. They will ensure you are matched with a horse that fits your skills, goals and personality. They will also help you determine whether the horse is healthy and capable of what you will be asking it to do. They can serve as your mentor as you learn more about caring for a horse.

It's important to remember, however, that owning your own horse isn't necessary to be a good rider. Riding a variety of different horses will enable you to develop your skills and make you more adaptable. It will also give you an opportunity to meet different horses and discover what your ideal horse looks like.

SAFETY TIPS FOR YOU



Being around horses can be loads of fun, but even a quiet horse can accidentally hurt you. Here are a few important things to remember when you're at the stable.

- Move quietly, and try not to startle the horse.
- Always wear a helmet when you ride.
- Always wear protective footwear when grooming a horse; no sandals or going barefoot.
- When working around a horse's legs, don't sit or kneel. If the horse moves you will not be able to get out of the way.
- Don't wear necklaces or earrings that dangle and can get snagged when you're working around horses.
- Tie your horse, with a safety quick-release knot, to a solid object that will not break or move if the horse pulls back.
- Tie a horse at the height of its withers and short enough that he can't get a leg over the rope.
- When leading your horse, walk on the left side between the head and shoulder, and always turn your horse away from you.
- Never wrap a lead rope or reins around your hand, arm or any part of your body — if the horse spooks you could be dragged or badly hurt.
- Always be calm around your horse. Speak quietly and firmly.

UNDERSTANDING A HORSE'S BODY LANGUAGE

Horses and ponies are herd animals and are used to living as part of a group, feeling secure in the company of other equines and familiar surroundings. They are timid by nature and their natural reaction to danger is to flee. The horse's sense of hearing is very acute and its sense of smell is also good, enabling it to sense danger some distance away. A horse is a very sensitive animal and able to pick up on the feelings of its riders and handlers, particularly hesitation, fear, confidence and anger.

DO YOU SPEAK HORSE?

Ears Alert & Forward: Ears pricked alert and facing forward indicates the horse is happy and interested.

Ears Flat & Back: Ears laid flat back against the neck show the horse is unhappy or annoyed.

Ears Lowered: Ears lowered slightly to the sides show the horse is relaxed, bored or could show that it feels unwell.

Flickering Ears: Flickering ears indicates that the horse is listening and attentive.

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JOHN DEERE

FREQUENTLY ASKED? RIDING QUESTIONS

Q: What can I expect at my first riding lesson?

A: Riding lesson formats vary. You may not even ride at your first lesson. Initial lessons typically focus on grooming and handling in order to teach the preparation of the horse for riding and safe handling techniques on the ground. Ask your instructor or coach when you schedule your first lesson how long the lesson will be and what you can expect to learn.

Q: What should I wear to my first lesson?

A: As a new rider, you may not want to invest a lot of money into purchasing a full riding wardrobe until you are sure the sport and discipline you have chosen are right for you. However, there are a few items you must have for safety. You need a certified helmet and footwear with a half-inch to one-inch heel (no wide shoes or thick soles that can get caught in the stirrup). For your first few lessons you can get by with stretchy jeans, preferably with no inseam which may result in your leg getting rubbed by the saddle. For more information on suitable riding attire for beginners, see page 9.

Q: Will I need to buy a saddle or bridle?

A: Your riding school should provide all the necessary tack, including a saddle and bridle, for the horse you will be riding.

Q: My child wants to ride and I'd like to try it too, but are riding lessons just for kids?

A: Riding lessons are for everyone! Regardless of your age or experience level, riding lessons will enable you to develop correct skills in a safe environment. A certified instructor or coach has the training necessary to tailor a lesson plan to your needs, learning style and abilities.

Q: I'm not interested in showing. Should I still take lessons?

A: Of course! Everyone has their own riding goals and a certified instructor or coach will be able to design a lesson program to help you achieve them. Riding lessons give you the knowledge and skills needed to be a safe and effective rider no matter what discipline you ride or how you choose to enjoy your horse. Goal-oriented riders may be interested in Learn to Ride, a national program that rewards riders with Certificates of Achievement for advancing their learning through the various levels. For more information on the Learn to Ride program, see page 8.

Q: How old does my child need to be to participate in riding lessons?

A: A certified instructor or coach can help you determine if, and when, your child is ready. The age at which a child is ready to take riding lessons depends on the individual. Every child matures differently, both physically and mentally, which needs to be taken into consideration. Typically, the Ontario Equestrian Federation recommends that children be at least eight years old before beginning riding lessons. Children younger than eight may qualify for riding lessons, but it is recommended they ride on a lead line under the control of a certified coach or instructor.

Q: How old is too old to take up riding?

A: Riding has no age restrictions. If you are physically capable of mounting and dismounting and are able to endure the physical challenges riding places on the body, why not give it a try? A certified instructor or coach can help you determine if riding is the right sport for you.

Q: My horse crazy child is starting riding lessons. Should I buy them a horse?

A: Owning a horse is a big investment – one that shouldn't be taken lightly. While every "horse crazy" child dreams of having their own horse, it's best if they begin by riding schooling horses. These horses are well-trained and a certified instructor or coach will ensure you are matched with a horse that is suitable to your skill level. It also gives riders the opportunity to try different horses, which not only makes them a more versatile and adaptable rider, but also offers insight as to what type of horse and what type of personality might be a good match if, or when, the time comes to buy a horse. For more information on alternatives to buying a horse, see page 17.



Photo Credit: Julia & Andrea McGill

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS FOR RIDER PROGRESSION

Many people wonder when they begin a new sport or activity how fast they should be progressing with their training and skills development. While it is difficult to put exact timelines on learning, as each person should be allowed to learn at their own pace, there are some general guidelines you can use to manage your expectations.

Western riders taking one lesson per week can expect the following:

FIRST MONTH:

- Working with horses from the ground: proper rider clothing, safety rules, basic skills to prepare horse to ride
- Riding skills: mount and dismount, correct body position, how to ask the horse to walk, stop, turn and jog
- Simple patterns to practice skills
- Basic horse/equipment care and riding theory

UP TO 6 MONTHS:

- Continue rider position improvement and balance
- Riding skills: how to ask horse to trot and lope, beginning of lateral work
- Patterns to practice previous and new skills
- Continue to learn horse care and riding theory

6 MONTHS TO A YEAR:

- Improving rider "feel" for the horse's movements and reactions
- Riding skills: improving previously learned skills, rider controlled changes of speed, riding with one hand
- Patterns
- Skills for safe trail riding
- Horse care and riding theory

ONE YEAR AND BEYOND:

- More advanced lateral work
- Learning to balance the horse to gain increased responses to rider aids
- Intermediate and advanced movements
- Introduction to showing, if desired
- Horse care and riding theory

English riders taking one lesson per week can expect the following:

FIRST MONTH:

- Rider should gain competency in starting/stopping the horse and develop posting at the trot

UP TO 6 MONTHS:

- Rider should have good control of start, stop, posting and basics of cantering (large and 20m circles). Two point position will be introduced.

6 MONTHS TO A YEAR:

- Rider will gain confidence in control of horse, posting and sitting trot, two point position over small jump or line and good control at canter (full seat and two point).

ONE YEAR AND BEYOND:

- Rider should have solid basics established at walk, trot and canter and be able to jump a small course of fences (knowing how to turn to a diagonal correctly, straighten the horse between jumps and make appropriate corrections on course).

These guidelines will vary from individual to individual. Factors such as frequency of riding lessons and opportunities to practice between lessons can also impact how fast a rider progresses. Riders with above average athletic ability may also progress more quickly.

It's important to remember that you should be challenged, but not pushed beyond your mental and physical limitations. A good riding instructor will know what's best for you and will tailor a lesson program to your abilities and goals.

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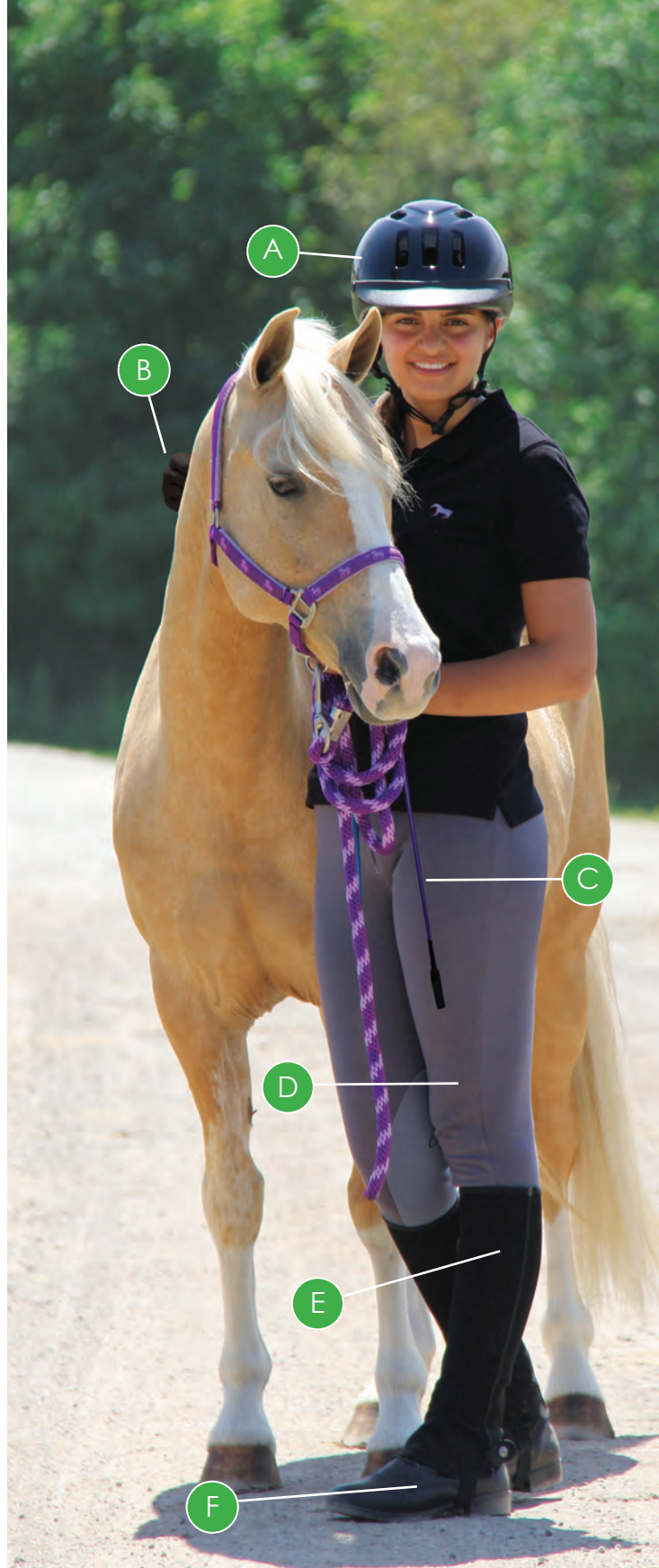
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