Any girl fortunate enough to ride has double joy—an exhilarating exercise that takes her over the countryside, and friendship with her horse.

> -Girl Scout Handbook, 1940



Horseback Riding

iding a horse is one of the most exciting things you can do. But ask any good horseback rider her secret to success and she'll say that *understanding* a horse is as important as learning to ride one. Get clued in to horses, and get ready to ride!

Steps

- 1. Know the basics of horseback riding
- 2. Take care of a horse and learn about safety
- 3. Prepare for your ride
- 4. Practice your ride
- 5. Go for a ride

Ршрозе

When I've earned this badge, I'll know what it takes to be a good rider—from understanding horse body language to controlling the horse's speed while I'm riding.

Made possible by a generous grant from the Elliott Wildlife Values Project



More to Explore

Not all horses are the same. Different types of horses are called breeds.

Draft horses work on farms because they're strong enough to pull equipment. The ones at a racetrack? They're called **thoroughbreds**, known for their speed and spirit. Which breed will you be riding?

Three other fun ones to know:

- American quarter horse Typically good tempered and popular for new riders
- American paint horse
 Its coloring acts as
 camouflage
- **Miniature horse** Originally bred as pets for children of royalty

Below, draft horse and miniature horse: Miniature horses were bred from different types of horse and pony breeds. Some look stocky like ponies, and some look just like tiny horses. They grow to be about 3 feet tall at the shoulder.

Before You Start

Be sure to:

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- Let your camp counselor, troop volunteer, or a parent know you'll need to ride a horse in order to earn this badge.
- Find out where you can ride a horse. Is it a Girl Scout camp? An equestrian center, horse ranch, or private lesson?

Know the basics of horseback riding

You want to learn how to ride a horse. Start with the basics: riding styles—Western or English—what kind of gear you and your horse need, and how to talk like a rider.

To understand horseback riding, here's what you need to know:

- The difference between Western- and Englishstyle riding. Find out which style you'll ride.
- **Types of horse riding equipment.** What are a saddle, saddlecloth, bridle, and bit? Find out how to make these comfortable for the horse and rider.
- The best riding gear for you. Learn about the type of pants (long are recommended to avoid pinching or scraping on the straps and buckles),

shoes (boots or closed-toe shoes with a smooth sole and at least a half-inch heel to prevent feet from sliding through stirrups), and a safety helmet designed for horseback riding.

CHOICES – DO ONE:

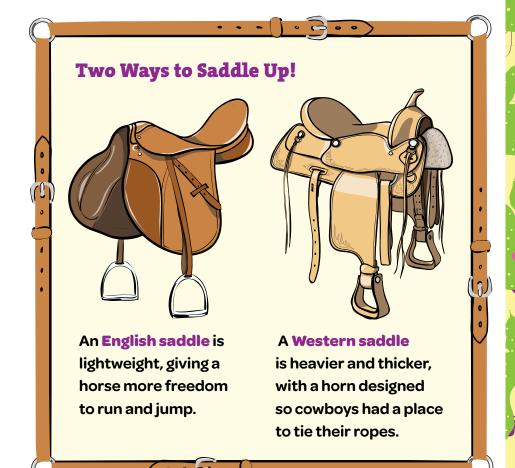
Interview a horse expert. This could be someone at an equestrian store, riding stable, Girl Scout camp, or horse ranch. Ask about the different styles of riding and the gear you'll need for you and your horse.

OR

Invite an expert to talk to your troop. How about a trainer from a riding stable, a groomer, or someone else who knows about horse equipment and gear? Ask about the different styles of riding and the gear you'll need for you and your horse.

OR

Take a horse workshop at a Girl Scout camp or community center. Find out when workshops are hosted so you can learn about the different styles of riding and the gear you'll need for you and your horse.



RIDER LINGO

Tack: Saddles, stirrups, bridles, halters, reins, and bits are all part of horse tack. When you put gear on your horse, it's called "tacking up."

Cooling out: After you ride a horse, it needs to be cooled down by being walked, brushed, or sponged down. It also needs small sips of water.

In front of the bit: When your horse pulls the bit over its teeth and you lose control.

On the bit: When your horse accepts your control.

Leg up: Mounting (getting on) a horse by having someone help support your legs.

Nearside: The left-hand side of the horse.

Offside: The right-hand side of the horse.

Posting: When you rise up and down on a trotting horse to keep from bouncing.

Wrangle: When you round up horses, like ones in a barn or in a field.

HORSEBACK RIDING 3

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Horse Care and Safety

Here's what you need to know:

- How to be safe around horses. How do you approach a horse? Where's the safest place to stand near a horse? How do horses use their tails and ears to let you know how they're feeling? **Remember to always** wear a helmet when vou're near horses.
- How to brush a horse and clean her hooves. What type of brush should you use on a horse's delicate face? Why is hoof care so important for preventing horse injuries?
- How to clean a stable. Find out how to muck out a stall, what type of bedding is used for horses, and how much water should be available for her to drink.
- How to feed a horse. Find out how much and what kind of food a horse needs daily. What are acceptable treats for a horse?

STEP 🕥 Take care of a horse ሯ and learn about safety

Horses are beautiful animals, but they are large and powerful. Some people even think they're a little scary. They can be, especially if you don't know their habits and needs, or how to be safe around one. Caring for a horse is a great way to get comfortable. To guide you through this step, see the box on the left for what you need to know about horse care and safety.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Spend time with a groom at a riding stable. Assist someone who grooms horses. Brush and feed a horse. Ask if you can help clean a stable! Practice makes perfect, so do these things more than once if possible. And don't forget to ask about horse safety and anything else you want to know.

Spend time with a large-animal veterinarian or horse

trainer. Join her while she works around horses and learn how to brush and feed a horse. Ask if you can help clean a stable! Practice makes perfect, so do these things more than once if possible. And don't forget to ask about horse safety and anything else you want to know.

Spend time with a groom at a Girl Scout horseback riding camp. Assist someone who grooms horses. Brush and feed a

horse. Ask if you can help clean a stable! Practice makes perfect, so do these things more than once if possible. And don't forget to ask about horse safety and anything else you want to know.



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Grooming Tips

Horses love to be brushed! It makes them look and feel good. It helps circulate their blood, and it releases natural oils to protect their coats from wind and rain. It also gives you a chance to bond with them. Before grooming, make sure your horse is properly tied. Then:

- In circular motions, use a rubber currycomb to remove dry dirt and hair on the horse's body, not her head and legs.
- In short, flicking motions, use a dandy brush to remove mud and hard stains on her body only.
- Use a sponge to clean her nose and eyes.

- Use a mane comb to comb out the horse's mane and forelock.
- Use hoof picks to remove mud and stones from her hooves.
- Use a soft brush over her body. Be gentle around her head and face—they're sensitive!

Anatomy of a Horse

You will get to know a horse better if you understand how these parts work:

Eyes: A horse can see almost completely around her body but not directly in front or behind.

> Mouth: A horse uses her mouth to chew but can't breathe through it.

Chest: A horse's most powerful muscles are in her chest. **Ears:** A horse has excellent hearing. She can rotate her ears around to hear sounds from different directions.

Flank: Either side of a horse where the back legs join the body.

Hooves: A horse's hooves need to be trimmed, like fingernails. A lot of horses wear metal horseshoes to protect their hooves.

Horse Speak

What's your horse trying to tell you? Check out her facial expressions. Look at her ears, eyes, and mouth. Here's how a horse might say ...



▲ *"I like you."* She's nibbling at your

shoulder or hands while you groom or feed her.



▲ "I'm mad."

Her ears are pinned back. Her upper lip is curled. Her teeth are bared. She is stamping her feet. She's swinging her body to get away from anyone trying to control her.



▲ "I'm relaxed."

She's completely at ease. Her eyes may be closed. Her head is lowered, and her muscles aren't tense.



▲ "I'm happy."

She has a soft look in her eyes. Her ears are facing forward. Her mouth and muscles are relaxed. She may let out a sigh.



▲ "I'm scared and nervous."

Her head and neck are held high. Her muscles are tense. She's trembling. Her tail is tucked against her back legs. She's grinding her teeth.

STEP Prepare for your ride

Before you even begin your ride, you should know certain things, like how to get on and off your horse, not to mention how to tie her so she can't wander off.

To complete this step, learn how to:

- Lead your horse. What side should you be on? How close should you be to the horse? How are you holding the lead rope?
- Mount and dismount your horse. Find out how to get on and off your horse. Walk your horse to a mounting block if you use one.
- **Tie a horse.** After you ride, learn how to tie your horse, whether at ringside or in a stable.
- Work with an adult to saddle and bridle a horse. If your horse is already saddled, find out how to check the leather or nylon halter equipment that goes over her head and that is used to lead and tie a horse. Make sure it's strapped tight enough to be secure but not uncomfortable for the horse. Find out how to check the saddle—is it in the correct position and properly secured? Finally, check that the stirrups are adjusted to the right length so that your feet comfortably slide into the correct position.

CHOICES - DO ONE:



Take part in horseback riding at camp.

Take lessons at a horseback riding stable.

Ask a local horseback-riding expert to give you lessons.

Get Fit to Ride

When you ride a horse, you'll be using muscles you don't use every day. Here are some tips for getting ready to ride:

Strengthen your thighs to help you sit tighter in the saddle.

- Sit on a chair with your feet flat and a soccer ball between your knees.
- Squeeze the ball for 15 seconds and release.
 Repeat 10 times.

Improve your posture to help you sit straight in the saddle.

- Lie on your stomach.
- Push your body up until your arms are in a straight line from your shoulders to your wrists and you're on the balls of your feet. (If it's too hard, keep your knees on the ground!)
- Keep your back straight and your stomach muscles tight. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Order of Speed

Horses move in four speeds, also called gaits:

Walk. Slow and steady, the horse always has two or three hooves on the ground.

Trot. The horse starts to bounce up and down, like a fast walk but not a run.

Canter. A medium-speed, smooth run.

Gallop. A stronger, faster stride. Think of horse racing!



Practice your ride

Advanced riders: Make sure you can demonstrate these moves to an expert. If it's possible, help teach a lessexperienced rider how to do them.

Now you are ready to mount your horse, take your reins in your hands, and get moving!

To complete this step, learn how to do these four things and practice them:

- How to coax the horse into motion. Use your leg squeezes and voice commands.
- How to use the reins to steer your horse to walk around a ring or on a trail. Make sure you are holding the reins correctly and using the right amount of pressure.
- How to turn a horse and how to stop a horse.
- What it means to have good form. (See the next page.)

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Take part in horseback riding at camp.

Take lessons at a horseback riding stable.

Ask a local horseback-riding expert to give you lessons.

More to Explore

The best part about riding a horse is that there's so much you can do! You can advance your skills and have amazing riding adventures. Here are some ideas:

• **Learn a new riding skill.** Learn to canter, gallop, jump, back up, or do an emergency dismount. Have something else in mind? Go for it!

- **Try a different riding style:** Ride English and Western style, and journal the difference (note the different saddle, gear) or go bareback riding.
- Join a riding competition or a cross-country ride!

Form Good Riding Habits

What it means to have good form: Keep your back straight, your heels lower than your toes, and the balls of your feet resting on the stirrup irons. Your upper shoulders should be relaxed. You should have a light L shape in your elbows, and keep your arms close to your body.

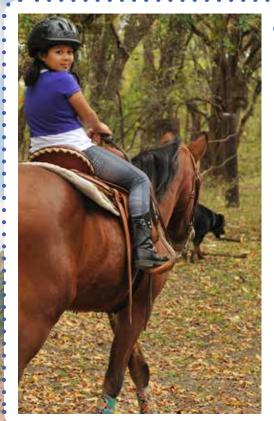


Holding one rein in each hand gives a rider better control of stopping and turning.



Western-style

Holding the reins with one hand became popular because cowboys could use their other hand to herd cattle.



Ring and Trail Safety

Always...

- Ride with another person around.
- Try to keep a horse length between other horses.
- Say it out loud if you make a move (like "passing" or "on your left").

Along a trail:

- Know the local wildlife.
- Watch for low branches and holes.
- Walk up and down steep hills.
- Avoid riding on roads with traffic.

In a ring:

- Make sure gates are closed.
- Ride slow on inside, fast on outside.



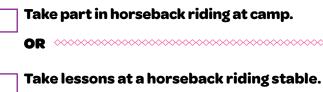
STEP Goon a ride

If you're a beginner, it may take a few lessons to get comfortable on a horse. Once you have the basics down, though, it's time to ride! You can ride your horse in a riding ring or a trail—no matter where you go or what level you are, you'll experience the ultimate thrill of riding!

To complete this step, learn to do the following, which will help you become a skilled rider:

- How to walk your horse with control. Keep your walk smooth, and if your horse slows, know how to nudge it with your heels. What commands are you using? How do you get the horse to turn left or right using your reins and leg squeezes?
- How to trot with ease. Once you're comfortable with walking your horse, try a trot. This may not happen at your first or even second lesson. If you're a first-time rider, your instructor will know when you're ready.
- **How to control your horse's speed.** If you're advanced enough to go into a canter or even a gallop, do so. If not, walk, trot, slow, and stop your horse on command.

CHOICES – DO ONE:



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Ask a local horseback-riding expert to give you lessons.

Always walk-not runup to a horse. Approach from the side, not directly in front or behind her. Introduce yourself by holding out the back of your hand for the horse to smell.

- Make sure there's someone experienced with you when you're caring for a horse.
- Sometimes a horse may buck or rear if she is uncomfortable. Ask the trainer to help you check the saddle fit and bit size for tightness that could make the horse sore. Also, be aware of any riding mistakes you might be making. Are you keeping a light, even tension on your reins? Horses can tell if you're nervous and will get nervous, too. Try to relax and stay confident!



Add the Badge to Your Journey In Get Moving, Sample Session 3, you observe animals in their natural setting and talk about animals, energy, and

movement. What better way to do this than with horses? Jot your thoughts down about what you see in a stable and in a riding ring. How is movement necessary to a horse's survival? What happens when a horse doesn't get exercise?

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Sharing safety tips for horseback riding with Daisies and Brownies.
- Volunteering at a horse shelter, a rescue place for neglected or abandoned horses.
- Organizing a horse grooming and care day at local stable or ranch to do with my troop.



I'm inspired to:

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