

HART STUDENT RIDER LEVELS



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INTRODUCTION

The Horsemanship Skills Program provides a planned progression of skill development to promote safety, horsemanship, education, and life skills of riders of all ages. This book contains information about the program and resources for riders starting with Level 1 through Level 4. In this book you will find sample skill sheets for riders, skill evaluation sheets for examiners, and testing information for examiners and youth. References are included to help both adults and youth learn methods for developing skills and understand how skills should be properly executed. The program is designed to provide opportunities for all youth to be involved and succeed, regardless of their riding style, skill, or ability to own a horse. Youth who do not own a horse may participate by sharing or leasing a horse. The Horsemanship Skills Program is optional with some exceptions. Participation in the program and/or mastery of skills will satisfy some project requirements to enable for riders to join 4 H if they so choose. This program may also be used in conjunction with the 4-H Horse Safety Checklist, 4-H Horse Safety Standards, and other safety resources. Development of the program is ongoing. Additional supporting materials and activities will be added as they become available. Please check the Web site periodically for updates.

HART STUDENT RIDER

LEVELS

Definitions

Level 1 - Total Beginner Total beginners have little experience (if any) at all with horses in general. They may have been on a "trail ride" at a rental stable once or twice but they do not know general horse handling or the basic commands to make the horse move forward, turn, trot, stop and back unassisted. They cannot saddle or bridle a horse themselves and are not comfortable handling a horse from the ground.

Level 2 - Advanced Beginner These people have a little experience with horses. They may have grown up around horses or taken a few lessons. Maybe they used to ride a little as a child, but they may not be able to saddle and bridle a horse by themselves. This rider can mount and walk off unassisted. They know how to ask the horse to move forward, turn and stop. They may also be able to even trot or canter on a very smooth, well broke horse.

Level 3 – Confident Beginner A confident beginner has the knowledge of an advanced beginner, but will also be able to handle a horse that may not be overly willing to do as asked. Sometimes an older horse that is well broken may still balk at leaving the barn or be a little reluctant to leave a secure place. This rider will have the confidence to give a little kick if needed or use a more persuasive aid when required even though they may lack experience. They may or may not be able to post or rise to the trot. They are willing to learn and have no "fear" of horses.

Level 4 – Novice Novice riders have some pretty basic experience with horses. They have possibly had a few lessons, maybe owned a horse as a child (or recently), but have not competed or trained young, green horses. They can catch, halter, groom, saddle and bridle a horse by themselves. They can mount and ride off unassisted. A novice rider may or may not be able to rise (or post) to the trot, but they can trot without bouncing and can stay comfortable with a slow canter on a gentle, well broken horse. They should know how to ask and

obtain a slow controlled walk, trot/jog and canter/lope. They can change direction and circle their horse. They are learning what a diagonal is and leads are. They may have even started a little jumping and are comfortable on a well broken horse, but may not be comfortable on a greener, younger or less experienced mount.

Level 5 – Intermediate The intermediate rider has taken lessons or trained under a mentor for a while, rides in a specific discipline (or has experience in several disciplines) and may compete. He or she has ridden several different types of horses and can independently manage a horse's care. Their seat is secure, they do not apply unintentional aids to the horse when they lose balance or become unseated. They know how to rise or post to the trot and ask for and obtain a specific lead or change in lead. They are capable of riding a less experienced horse and helping in that horse's training. They are able to train/compete at a more advanced level with a trainer's assistance. The intermediate rider is knowledgeable about different horse breeds and disciplines. He or she knows basic horse conformation and can detect lameness issues

Level 6- Advanced Advanced riders have ridden most of their lives and have worked with a trainer/mentor for several years or had several years with intense riding instruction. They have competed successfully at recognized shows in their discipline. They are able to ride most horses including working with young/green horses without assistance. They know advanced manoeuvres in their preferred riding discipline and can positively affect the horse they are riding at all times. The advanced rider is able to teach lessons to beginners, break and train horses and teach a horse advanced manoeuvres. The advanced rider knows horse breeds and conformation well and is able to detect unsoundness vs. blemishes in a horse.

Level 7- Professional Professionals are paid to ride horses. They have studied under masters and are able to break horses, train and handle problem horses. The professional makes his or her living from horses. They are able to teach both horse and rider and have themselves competed in high level equine sport.

LEVEL 1 Horsemanship Skills

Rider Skill Sheet

Rider's Name [Last] _____ [First] _____ [Age] _____

Address _____

Horse's Name _____ Seat/Disipline _____ Date _____

Ground work

- 1.1 Read the horse's body language.
- 1.2 Put horse in round pen.
- 1.3 Get the horse to move.
- 1.4 Control the direction of movement.
- 1.5 Change the direction of movement.
- 1.6 Stop the horse
- 1.7 Get the horse to join-up.

Handling

- 1.8 Approach and catch the horse safely (tied and loose).
- 1.9 Properly halter the horse.
- 1.10 Lead, turn and back the horse safely and correctly.
- 1.11 Lead a horse into and out of a stall.
- 1.12 Practice safety rules when turning a horse loose.
- 1.13 Safely tie horse (correct level, length, location, knot, etc)
- 1.14 Demonstrate simple grooming of the horse
- 1.15 Pick up feet and clean properly
- 1.16 Bridle horse-check fit and make basic adjustments
- 1.17 Saddle horse-check fit and make basic adjustments

- 1.18 Demonstrate safety around the horse while handling.

Riding

- 1.19 Mount and dismount properly (may use mounting block)
- 1.20 Describe and discuss safely riding in a group
- 1.21 **Use proper basic seat, leg, and body position with balance**

Proper use of reins; hand position and action

At a walk with control and proper position:

- 1.22 start and stop (gradual and balanced)
- 1.23 check and release (demonstrating control of horse)
- 1.24 turn while walking and walk in both directions
- 1.25 ride a circle in both directions and do a figure 8

At a jog or trot with control and proper position:

- 1.26 start and stop (gradual and balanced)
- 1.27 check and release (demonstrating control of horse)
- 1.28 turn while jogging or trotting in both directions
- 1.29 ride a circle in both directions and do a figure 8

- 1.30 Drop and regain stirrups while at a halt

- 1.31 One rein Emergency stop

- 1.32 Emergency dismount

1.33 Equipment, clothing, helmet (fit, condition, suitability, et.)

1.34 Overall attitude and confidence

End of Test

1.35

LEVEL 2 Horsemanship Skills

Rider Skill Sheet

Rider's Name [Last] _____ [First] _____ [Age] _____

Address _____

Horse's Name _____ Seat/Disipline _____ Date _____

LEVEL 3 Horsemanship Skills

Rider Skill Sheet

Rider's Name [Last] _____ [First] _____ [Age] _____

Address _____

Horse's Name _____ Seat/Disipline _____ Date _____

LEVEL 4 Horsemanship Skills

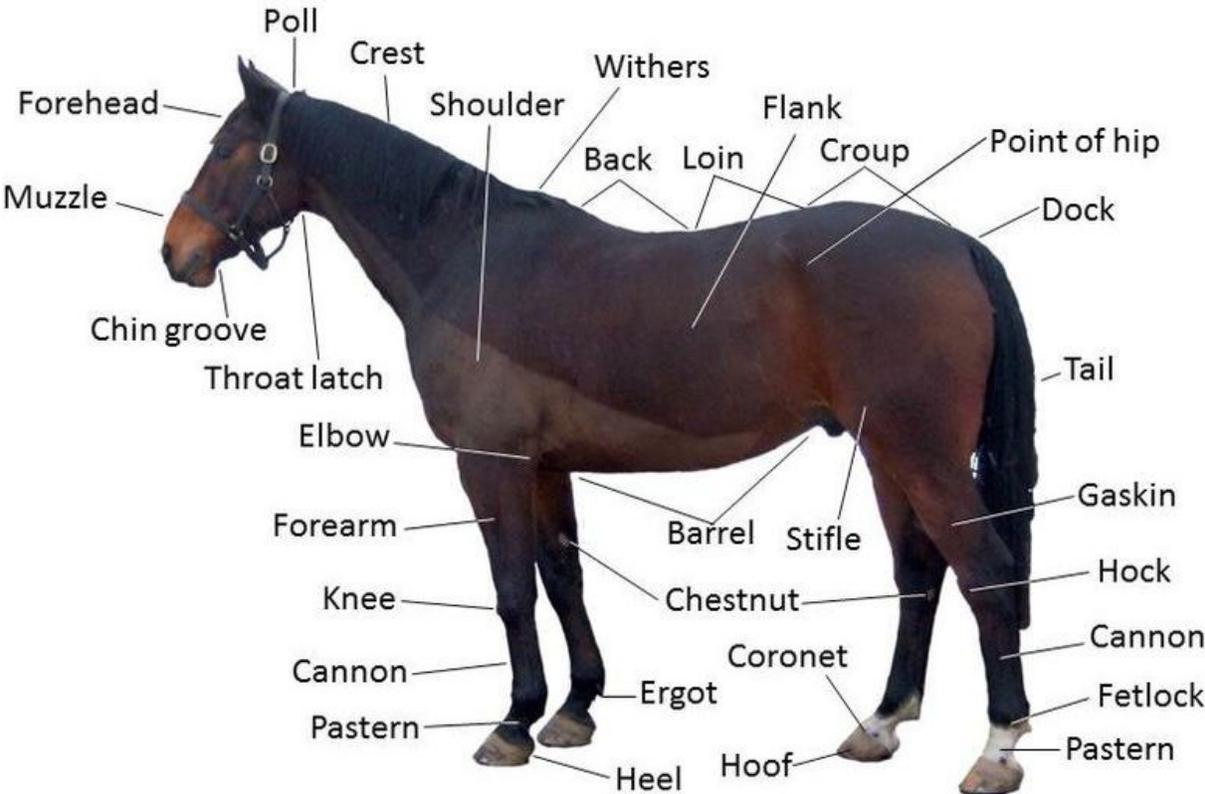
Rider Skill Sheet

Rider's Name [Last] _____ [First] _____ [Age] _____

Address _____

Horse's Name _____ Seat/Disipline _____ Date _____

PARTS OF A HORSE

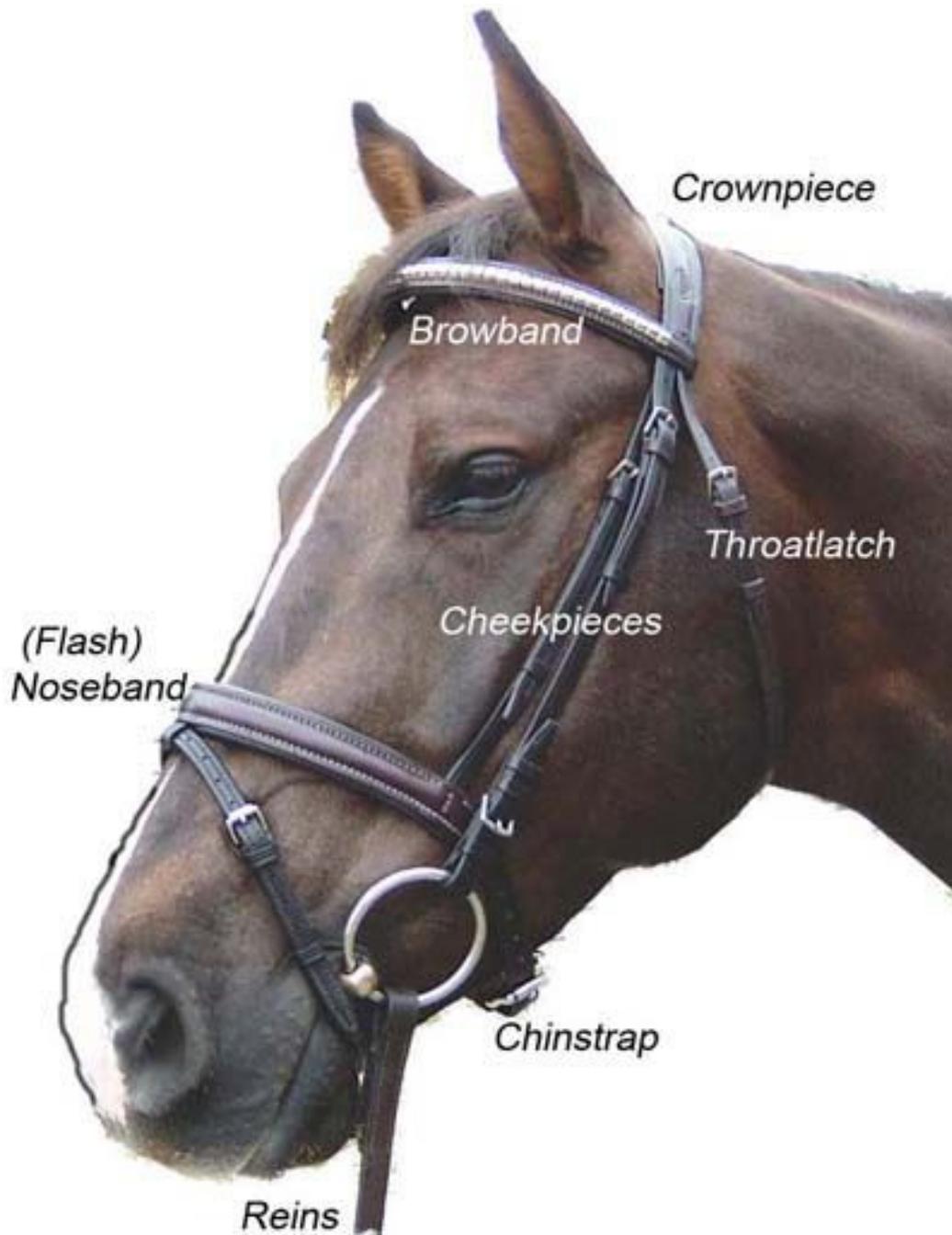


PARTS OF THE ENGLISH SADDLE

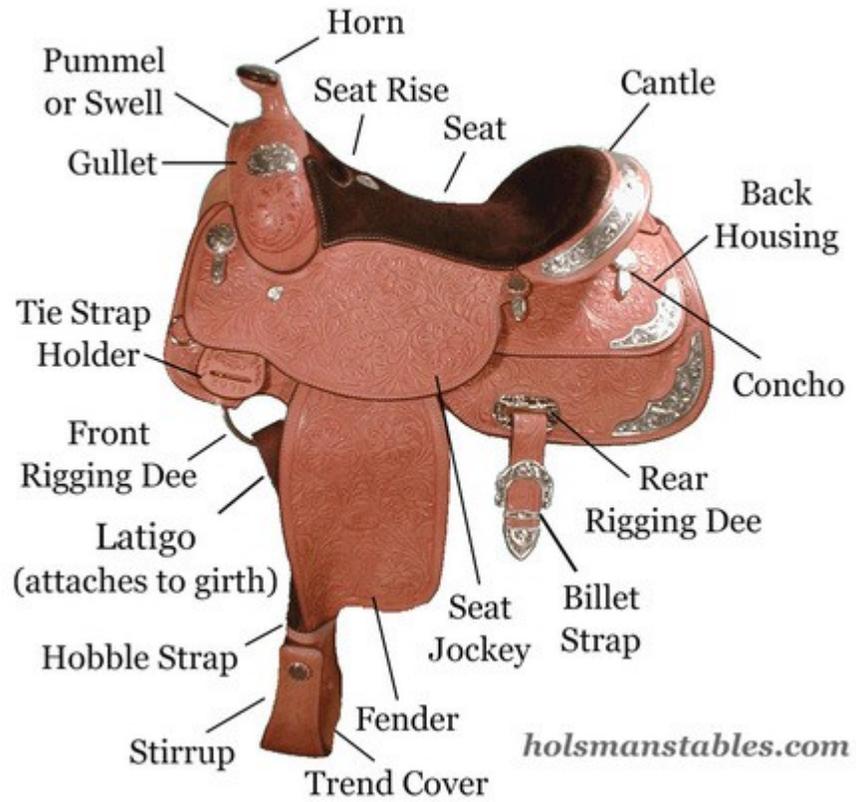


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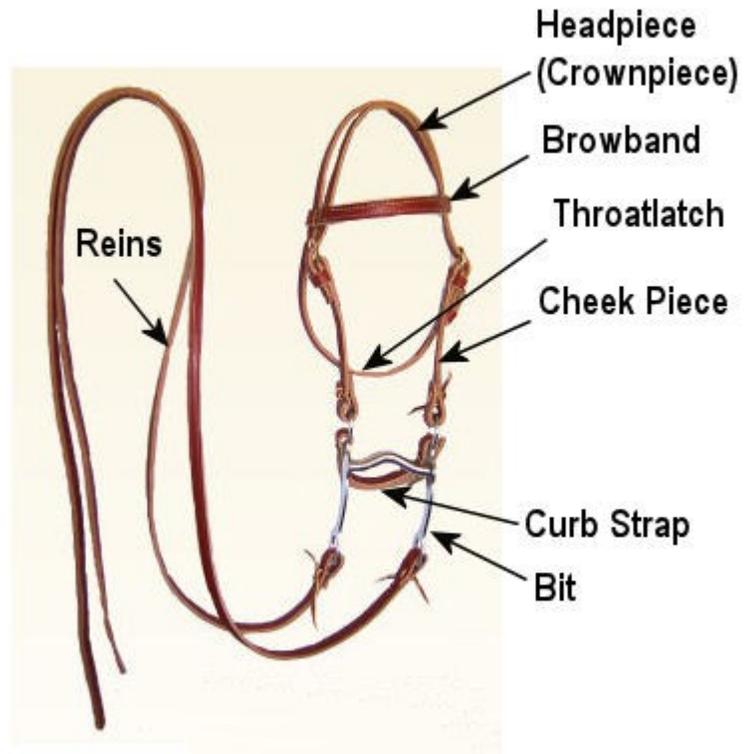
PARTS OF AN ENGLISH BRIDLE



PARTS OF THE WESTERN SADDLE



PARTS OF THE WESTERN BRIDLE



RIDER SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Everyone who rides horses--no matter how experienced or how careful--eventually falls off. The key to safe riding is to accept this reality, and do your best to protect yourself from serious injury when your turn comes. Fortunately for today's riders, the technology of protective attire has taken monumental leaps forward. In the last 20 years, we've gone from strapless, hard-shell hunt caps with little more than decorative value to lightweight, safety-tested, foam-lined helmets capable of absorbing tremendous blows. Safety vests, unheard-of two decades ago, are now commonplace and continue to undergo revolutionary changes. Even the stirrup, an invention that dates back to the second century B.C., is now available in styles designed specifically for safety.

To the consumer, the sheer variety of helmets, vests and stirrups, and the technological innovations they represent, may seem intimidating. Whatever your equestrian interests, there's never been a safer time to ride--or fall off--a horse.

Helmets



"A good helmet," as one manufacturer puts it, "is like an air bag for your brain." Though nothing inside a riding helmet actually inflates on impact, Dru Malavase, who has worked with the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) and the U.S. Pony Clubs Inc. to develop helmet standards, says it's a fitting analogy just the same. "When you fall off a horse, your body will come to a stop when you hit the ground, but your brain keeps traveling at the same speed," she says. "It will slam into the inside of your skull, and may even bounce back to the other side and slam into it again. Many times, the

worst injury to the brain is on the opposite side of the impact." A small bump to the brain can result in a minor concussion; a massive jolt can cause permanent brain damage or death. Since the mid-1970s, helmets have undergone a dramatic transformation to reduce the potential for head injury. The safety-conscious Pony Clubs formally adopted helmet standards in 1980, and manufacturers began making helmets to their impact-absorption specifications shortly thereafter. By 1984, the American Horse Shows Association (AHSA) had adopted the same standards, requiring junior riders in certain disciplines to wear approved headgear. Today, a wide variety of English and Western-style safety helmets are readily available for riders who choose to wear them.

Despite these advances in headgear technology, Malavase says, the equestrian community has been slow to embrace the riding helmet. "Riders are about as bad as any group of people when it comes to not wanting to wear helmets," she laments. The most common excuses--that the helmets are too heavy and too hot--simply don't hold up: Today's helmets are actually 75 percent lighter than older models, she says, and "studies have shown you are actually cooler in a white, ventilated helmet than you are in just your bare head." It doesn't help that top riders are often pictured wearing purely ornamental headgear. "It's really disappointing to see a high-profile rider in an unapproved, useless hunt cap or top hat," Malavase says. "It says in the AHSA rule book that no judge can discriminate against a competitor who wears protective headgear. So there's really no excuse."

Besides the good ol' helmet, which I mentioned already as being No.1 important when staying safe on horseback, here are a few other riding accoutrements that can help keep you safe (and make you feel safer) while in the saddle.

Boots.



Choose a pair with a one-inch heel to prevent your foot sliding through the stirrup and getting caught.

Gloves.



You'll have better grip on the reins and can protect your hands from rope or rein burns and blisters.

Protective vest.



Commonly used by eventers, several models are now being marketed for recreational use.

SAFE HABITS

Safe Habits

Creating safe habits means learning what you need to do to be safe on the ground and in the saddle, and then doing those things the same way every time you work with your horse until they are automatic.

Learn how a horse thinks

Horses do not think like people. People are predators, horses are prey. People focus on what they are doing. Horses have to be aware at all times of their surroundings to protect themselves from predators. Horses in the wild have 2 enemies. Mountain lions and people. You must learn to think like a horse in order to understand what they are thinking before you can communicate with them.

Learn how to read a horse's body language

You have to learn how to read a horse's body language to tell what kind of mood they are in. Are they calm and relaxed, nervous, excited, afraid, ready to run away, ready to kick or bite you ?

Horses communicate with other horses using body language as well as being vocal. You must learn to communicate with a horse the same way.

Horses look at people as a 2 legged animal. You have to prove to them that you are the "smarter horse" because then they will listen to you and that gives you the ability to teach them anything you want them to do. In any group of 2 or more horses, there is a pecking order with the smarter horses at the top who tell the other horses what to do. When you are getting to know a horse, you must prove to him you are smarter than they are and that is how you start to build their trust in you. The horse is looking to you for protection and guidance whether you are walking on the ground or riding on their back. If

they trust you, you can train them to do anything you want them to do and obey your commands. This doesn't happen overnight and you have to do the same thing with every horse you own or ride.

Once you learn how a horse thinks, how to read their body language and how to communicate with them thru voice commands and body language, you can use a round pen to control the horses movements without ever touching them.

Once you can control them from a safe distance, it makes it a lot easier to ride the horse and get them to do what you want.

Horses will continually challenge you to see if you are still in charge or are they in charge when you are working with them on the ground and when you are riding them. You have to know how to show them that **you** are always in charge.

Always remain calm when around your horse. Your horse is looking to you for guidance and leadership because they trust you to keep them safe. If you are upset, nervous, angry, happy or sad, the horse can sense it and react to your moods. They don't know if you are angry with them or not. They just know something is wrong and that if you are angry or upset they become that way too. On the other hand, if you remain calm around them, they will know everything must be okay and therefore they will remain calm too.

Teach your horse to respect your space. This isn't something you teach once and forget. Teach your horse to stay a safe distance from you when you are around them.

Insist on two eyes. This is akin to the personal space thing, but relates more to when you have the horse on a lead or longe line and he's either not cooperating or completely ignoring you. As horse trainer Clinton Anderson often says, "A horse cannot kick you or run away from you if he's got both eyes on you." So bump on that lead rope to keep both eyes on you at all times.

Pay attention to where you're standing. Don't walk right up behind a horse (even one who knows and loves you) without announcing yourself. Horses have a blind spot back there and sometimes, not always, they'll kick first and

ask what they hit later. Stand at a 45-degree angle to your horse's front shoulder. There you're out of kicking range, you can't be run over or stepped on by a pawing front foot, and you can easily get out of the way if the horse starts to come toward you.

Tack and untack the same way every time. The routine ensures that every snap is snapped; every buckle is buckled; and there aren't any burrs, bumps, or wrinkles waiting in hiding for you to clamber aboard so they can give your horse a surprise pinch.

Tighten your girth/cinch three times. The first time you tighten the cinch, get it just barely snug. Walk your horse or do a little groundwork (five minutes or so), and snug it up again. Then, just before you get on, tighten the cinch the rest of the way.

Mess up your hair, not your head, wear a helmet. As my riding friend once put it, "It doesn't take much of a bump on the head to ruin the rest of your life." The good news is helmets are getting better, even a little more stylish. The even better news is that, at this point in your life, you're probably less concerned about what other people think. Putting up with a little bit of helmet head means that if you do happen to take a tumble off your horse and slam your head on a rock, you will most likely be able to ride again-----and enjoy the rest of your life in a non-vegetative state.

Install an emergency handbrake; practice the one-rein stop. A true one-rein stop, the kind that gives you a real emergency brake, has to be taught to your horse and practiced a lot to be effective. It is more than simply hauling your horse's head around to one side. It should be practiced at each gait, every time you ride, so when you have a problem, it is your automatic response to do it, and your horse's automatic response to obey it.

Get control of nervous feet by teaching your horse to bend in a circle. This is another deceptively simple exercise that can be a lifesaver when you need to get control of a horse that is nervous or panicked. Bending your horse this way and that can take his attention away from something he finds scary and put it on you.

Teach your horse to disengage his hindquarters. Every move your horse makes requires power from his hindquarters. So when you feel things starting to head in a dangerous direction, the very best thing you can do is to take away that power. Apply heel pressure right behind the girth or cinch until your horse's back leg on that side crosses in front of the opposite hind leg.

Bail out safely. Learn and practice the emergency dismount.

Nearly one in five emergency department visits for horse-related injuries involves a child under age 15. Special precautions should be taken when children are riding.

Children should:

- Possess the balance and coordination to stand, sit and walk independently.
- They must be able to interact with the horses and other riders in a safe and efficient manner.
- They should possess the social skills and maturity that are age appropriate for the lesson, which will allow them to interact properly with instructors and other students.
- Receive lessons from an experienced, qualified instructor who has a history of safely teaching children.
- Take lessons in riding and handling horses. Lessons should take place in a safe, flat, uncluttered, fenced location away from traffic or external noises.

- Ride with supervision and only on horses properly trained for beginner and novice riders.