

Fitting the Rider to the Saddle.

What is the function of a well fitting saddle?

As riders sit on a horse we must not interfere with the horse's mechanical functioning.

The saddle must be balanced so the rider sits centrally without blocking and sits quietly and comfortably.

Watch for saddle sores on the riders shins where the stirrup leather crosses the front of the lower leg. Make sure your rider has long pants, long socks and preferably jodhpurs and half chaps.

Make sure the rider's weight is evenly distributed on the horses back and the saddle pad should be big enough.

The saddle should not shift when the rider is mounted and allow freedom of movement in both horse and rider.

In an English saddle four fingers width from the cantle to the seat of the rider.

Measure saddle from cantle to rivet on front of saddle.

Length of saddle flap for dressage, inside seam crotch to mid- knee cap plus three inches.

Too small a saddle restricts pelvic and lumbar movement for the rider, the knee will come off the flap and the rider's seat will be too far back.

If the pommel is higher than the cantle and the saddle is tilted uphill the rider will have a posterior pelvic tilt.

Higher cantle and saddle tilted forward downhill the rider will have an anterior pelvic tilt and sit more on the pubic bone or fork.

Tight hip flexors and tight hip adductors prevent the rider having a deep seat and they may sit in the “chair” position.

The saddle can look well positioned when rider is at halt but always recheck position after a few moments.

Size of rider’s pelvis will determine size and shape of saddle seat. Length of thigh determines length of flap. The depth of the rider’s pelvic girdle, distance between Ischial Tuberosities and Pubic bone must be considered in saddle selection.

Large bottomed riders require a more capacious saddle. Stirrup leathers hang at right angles to the ground.

When the rider is doing rising trot the saddle should not “rock”, this means the weight bearing surface is principally in the center and could be caused by poor stuffing.”

The horse that will not stand still and is fidgety could be in discomfort from the weight of the rider in the saddle and poor fit.

If the saddle is balance correctly the lowest part of the seat is in the center of the saddle, close to the pommel. If the lowest part is too far back the rider will have to struggle to keep their center over her feet.

Can your rider get into a half seat and take more weight in the thigh’s and stirrups.

FREE THE TOP LINE

To the rear of the horse is a group of muscles called Psoas. These help to transfer the energy from the hind quarters forward to Longissimus. If the rider sits too far back on the saddle or goes into sitting trot, the horse’s back muscles can lock up and create tension behind the saddle.

Always encourage rising trot to allow these muscles to warm up and the horse to round.

TURNING AIDS AND THE SEAT.

The seat bones should stay centered on each side of the saddle. To turn the horse to the right apply slightly more weight into that seat bone. Incorrect application of the weight aids from the seat is that the rider twists causing the right seat bone to slip to the center of the saddle overloading the left seat bone.

Seat bones are like the rockers of a chair, they are wider at the rear and narrower in front. Approximately six to eight cm long.

Balance of the Rider

A crooked rider makes a crooked horse. If the rider is unstable and leans to left and right the horse will meander on and off the track.

If the horse refuses to leave the track it could be that the rider has collapsed to the inside.

The rider must sit tall and vertical.

Square and level shoulders, open hips and relaxed buttock muscles.

Both seat bones on their respective sides of the saddle.

Stretch down our inside leg through the knee, let the weight of the leg assist.

Look for equal distances ear to shoulder, shoulder to hips and hips to heels from either in front or behind the rider.

Look at the horizontal line ear to ear, shoulder to shoulder, hip to hip, knee to knee and heel to heel.

Straight lines ear, shoulder hip and heel and another line horse's mouth to hand to elbow.

The size of the horse's barrel play's a large part in helping your rider maintain balance.

Asymmetries of the Rider.

Scoliosis

Changes in muscle tone

Collapsed hip

Subluxed hip and\ or leg length discrepancies.