



Crest release

To start with, hold on to the neck strap or grab a handful of mane to stop yourself from jerking your horse's mouth if you get left behind when he takes off. As your legs and seat become tighter and more independent, you will be able to develop a crest release with your hands just pressed up into the crest of your horse's neck. Finally, a following hand which floats beside the horse's neck following the bit in his mouth, as he stretches his frame over the fences. You may hear the term "three point position" used, this means a cross between the two point position and sitting right down in the saddle, your seat sort of floats against the saddle. This is used when you

want to give a little more push to your horse with your seat, between jumps, or when you need to bring your shoulders back to steady him.



Following hand

Remember that you may have the best trained horse in the world, but if you are a weak and unbalanced rider, then your horse cannot do his job properly!

Clothes

Next let's talk about clothes. While practising at home you can wear any comfortable breeches, jeans or pants. You must wear boots with a smooth sole and a heel so that your foot will not slide through the stirrup or be too easily trapped if you have a fall. If you are not wearing tall boots then full length or half chaps are fine for giving your legs more support and protection against getting pinched by the stirrup leathers. Always wear an ASTM/SEI approved helmet. No joking and no excuses!



Informal outfit

For the show ring quite strict rules apply. You must wear either jodhpurs or breeches. Jodhpurs are fitted riding pants that go down to the ankle and are worn with jodhpur boots or lace-up ropers. Breeches are worn with tall boots. In either case the colour should be light: beige or tan. You may wear breeches with half chaps but they must match the colour of your boots. With your boots you may wear spurs if your horse needs them but remember english spurs are worn much higher than western ones. The spurs should rest on the seam between the leg and foot of the boot, not way down low on the heels like cowboys wear.

Fashions come and go, but basically, show jackets should be dark, either black, navy blue or dark grey. In schooling or 4-H shows you may wear a tweed jacket. Under your jacket wear a light coloured shirt, either with a tie, stock or a collar with a stock pin. To finish off the look and to give yourself better grip on your reins, wear gloves, preferably leather or string in dark colours.

Of course, girls will wear their hair neatly tucked under their helmets and kept in place with a hair net. If you have a white or coloured plastic helmet, then buy a velvet cover for it as helmets should be black or very dark.

Tack

Use an english saddle; either all purpose, eventing, close contact or jumping. All purpose is the best choice for general use as the others are more specialized and require greater skill to use as they offer different rider support. Do not use a dressage saddle as the straight cut flap does not allow your knee to move forward when your stirrup leathers are shortened. When you start to jump, shorten your stirrup leathers by at least 2 holes from your regular length. This increases the spring angle in your ankle, knee and hip joints. When you jump higher, you will want to shorten your stirrup length again.

Under your saddle use a saddle pad. For the hunter show ring a numnah, (a pad shaped like the saddle) above it is required, in either white or black. For general riding the larger square all purpose pads are useful as they fit all sorts and sizes of saddle. Remember to pull the saddle pad up into the

gullet of the saddle to take the strain off the horse's spine when you are saddling up. If your horse's back is uneven or swayed and you cannot find a saddler to re-stuff your saddle to fit him, try using one of the various wedge pads which come in all shapes and sizes. Remember the seat of the saddle where you sit should be level and that the stirrup leathers should hang straight down.

The stirrup leathers should match the saddle in colour and should be the best you can afford because a cheap, easily broken leather could cause a bad fall. Stirrups should be stainless steel because it is a strong metal and easy to keep clean. The stirrups may have rubber pads in them to help keep your feet from sliding around.

The girth also should match the saddle in colour and be made of leather, fabric, string or synthetic material. Some horses with sensitive skin find a string girth more comfortable and less likely to rub girth galls. These string girths are often white and should be kept sparkling clean by washing. Of course it goes without saying that all your tack should be kept clean and supple.



Figure 8 noseband

For general riding you can use any english type of bridle, with a browband and noseband. The noseband may be a plain cavesson, dropped, figure 8 or flash. Always start with the simple noseband, as the others are used to increase the severity of the bit by holding the horse's mouth closed. Be sure they are adjusted so that the horse can breathe easily. Use english reins not split ones; flat, laced or web reins are all comfortable. For showing, your bridle should match your saddle in colour, either brown or black leather with either flat or laced reins. For Hunters it should be plain, no fancy coloured browbands for the show ring. You can check the Equine Canada Handbooks for Hunter and Jumper, Section G and F for exact tack rules for recognized shows.



Flash noseband

A snaffle bit is a good choice for beginner jumpers because it is gentle on the horse's mouth. Most horses in 4-H are happy jumping in snaffles. Certainly while you are learning it is safer to use a mild bit in case you lose your balance and jerk your horse's mouth. If your horse pulls and goes too fast, try a different snaffle like a slow twist or a Dr. Bristol. Stronger bits are kimberwicks and pelhams.

A breastplate is a useful piece of equipment which stops the saddle from sliding backwards which can happen easily when jumping. There are different designs of these and you will have to find out which one suits your horse best. A running martingale is used for a horse that throws his head in the air; it is commonly used on show jumpers and eventing horses going cross country. Remember that if you use a running martingale you must use rubber rein stops on your reins so the martingale rings don't slide up and get tangled with the bit. Standing martingales are of little practical use but are fashionable in the hunter show ring. A useful, temporary piece

of equipment you might try is a neck strap. This can be a stirrup leather or even a braided strap of baler twine placed around your horse's neck about one third of the way up which your hands can grab for support.

For protection on the horse's legs, splint/galloping/jumping boots are a better idea than bandages as they are simpler to put on. Splint boots made out of neoprene or rubber which can be washed are easier to look after than leather ones which require careful saddle soaping and oiling. Bandages have two disadvantages: they can come undone and tangle in the horse's legs, causing an accident and they can be wrapped with uneven tension, causing tendon damage. If there is danger of your horse stepping on his front heels with his hind feet then he should wear bell (overreach) boots for protection.

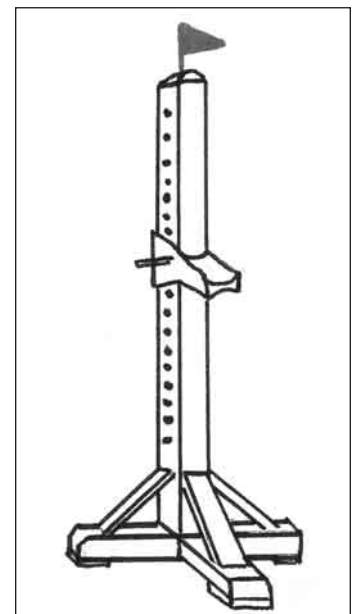
For jumping on soft footing your horse may be able to go barefoot, depending on his hooves. Horses jumping regularly over low heights need front shoes. Once you start competing you will have to consider hind shoes as well. For bad footing many people use caulks (corks, studs) screwed into the heels of the hind shoes. If you must put caulks on the inside heels then bell boots are advised so that your horse does not catch the coronet band on the opposite leg. However, these double caulks put a very great twisting strain on your horse's legs and can cause great damage. Front shoe caulks are only used by very experienced riders competing at a high level again because of the extreme strain they can place on the horse's legs.

When you are schooling, use the minimum of equipment needed so that you and your horse learn to be more accurate and subtle. Shod horses should wear leg protection, barefoot horses are usually safe without boots. Don't introduce extra equipment, especially before a competition or when introducing new or higher fences, without giving the horse time to get used to it.

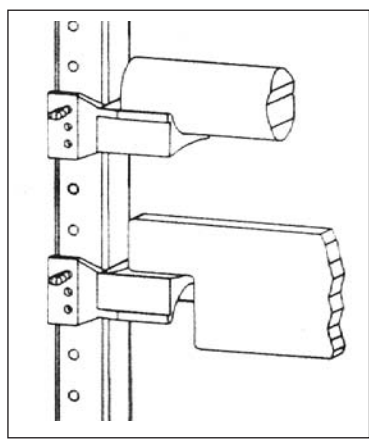
Jumps

Well built jumps encourage horses to jump better because of the confidence they give the horse. Certainly horses can jump almost anything you put in front of them but they will do a better and safer job for you with a nice, solidly built jump.

There are several styles of jumps you can build. The easiest jump is a simple cross rail. A vertical jump is, as its name suggests, an upright one; easy to jump at low levels but much harder when the height gets up over 4 feet.



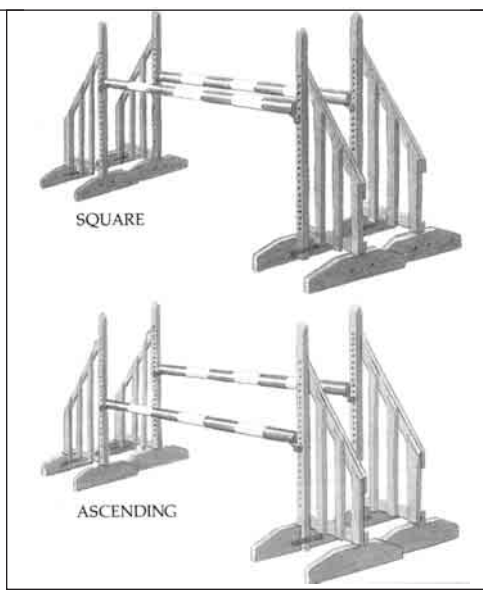
Plain jump standard



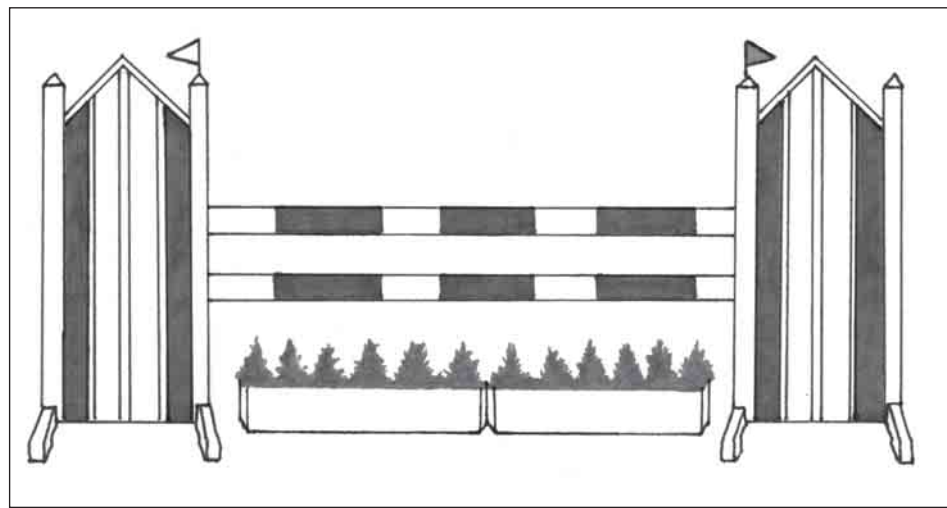
Jump cups

Spread fences, often called oxers, look more imposing to the rider but in fact horses usually like jumping them. Your horse likes an ascending (ramped or staircase) oxe**r** better than a parallel one which has the 2 top poles level.

You might start with plain jump standards which have plastic or metal jump cups. These jump cups should break loose if you or your horse fall on the jump, saving you from a nasty injury. Wing standards



Oxers



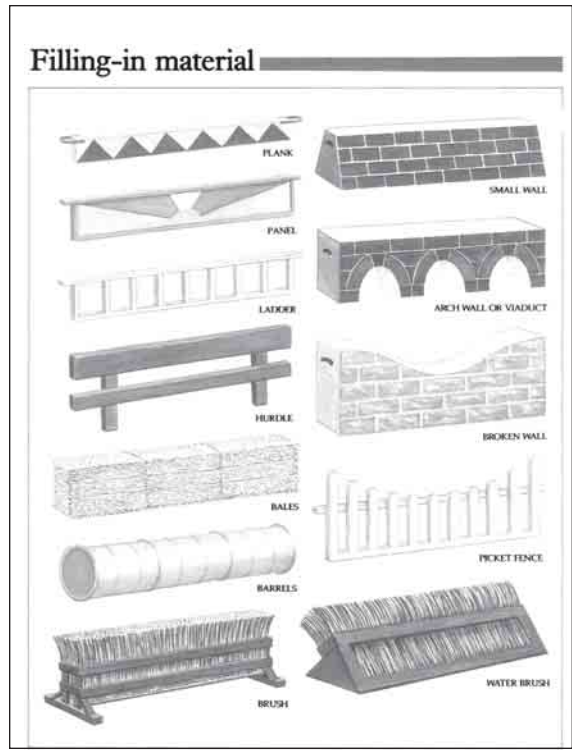
Vertical fence with wing standards

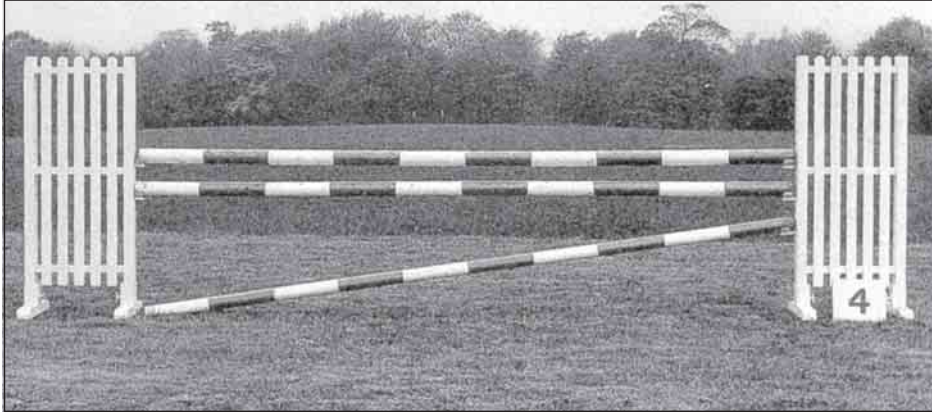
look fancier and make the jump easier for the horse as they direct his attention to the centre of the jump.

Poles used for the jumps are easier for the horse to see if they are white or bright coloured. They should be 10 or 12 feet long and 3 ½ to 4 inches in diameter. Planks

are the same length as poles but have their ends cut and braced to sit in the jump cups which should be turned so that their shallow sides are up.

To make the jumps more interesting and fill in the spaces, use fillers. They can be flower boxes, brush boxes, small picket fences, etc. Fillers are usually built in two 4 foot long sections to fit under the jump and to make them easier to move. They can be 12 inches, 18





Bad and good ground lines

inches or 2 feet high. The main point about fillers is that they should not present a danger to the horse; so use nothing that could trap a hoof or cut a leg if a mistake is made. Horses like to see a ground line to give them something to focus on. It must be either slightly in front of the vertical line of the poles or planks above or in line with them. When building an oxer, the front standards carry 2 or 3 rails and the back ones only 1. This is for safety should the horse not make the spread.

Remember that when planning jumps for a show, the top element must be something that can be easily knocked down like a pole or plank. If you are using a

wooden painted wall, then it must have a pole over it or blocks that can be knocked off.

Be careful not to jump unsafe things. NEVER jump wire! It is very hard for your horse to see and he may hit it with disastrous results. If jumping

barrels lying on their sides, make sure they are braced on both sides so they don't roll if the horse hits them, causing a bad accident. Avoid anything with sharp edges which could cut your horse or you if you fell on it. Horses like solid jumps, not see-through ones. The easiest is a simple cross rail.



Barrels braced on the ground for safety

Never, ever, jump alone! Always have someone watching in case you need assistance. Besides, it helps to have a pair of eyes watching to tell you to keep your heels down or whatever else needs to be corrected. Never jump a tired horse. Be careful when starting or training a horse that you don't present him with more of a jump than he feels capable of jumping. Consider whether your horse's muscles are well enough conditioned to do the job you are asking of him. Many horses refuse because they are unsure of the jump, but are then blamed by their riders for being stupid or lazy.