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English Equitation: Mounting, Correct Seat, Dismounting

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A correct seat in the saddle is basic to all successful activities with horses. It not only indicates sophistication in horse riding, but affords balance to the rider and aids performance of the horse by correct weight distribution. The accomplished rider does everything possible to divert attention from rider and mount in performance classes, and reduces fatigue of the horse on trail and pleasure rides by sitting straight in the saddle.

Methods of mounting, sitting the saddle and dismounting differ slightly but are still basically the same. A rider who has attained proficiency in English riding can easily master Western riding, and vice versa.

Recommended procedures for English riding are illustrated in this publication. For Western riding, see MU publication G02876, *Western Equitation: Mounting, Correct Seat, Dismounting*.

Figure 1. Preparing to lead.

Stand at left shoulder of the horse, snaffle and curb reins in right hand, and bight of reins in left hand. Lead from this position — not in front of horse.

Figure 2. Stand at horse's head.

Reins are in mounting position or "Dismount and stand at Horse's Head."

Only snaffle and curb reins next to rider are held. Nervous horses will run backward worse when all four are held.

Figure 3. Mounting, first step.

Address reins as in Figure 7 (except rider is dismounted) and hold with the bight on the right side, left hand on withers, while right hand positions stirrup over left foot. If horse tends to move toward you, keep right (off) snaffle rein tighter than left (near) snaffle

during mounting, thus reducing the chance of getting stepped on.

Figure 4. Mounting, second step.

With left hand firmly on withers, grasp off side of cantle with right hand. Take one or two hops on right foot to attain momentum to mount. Swing right leg clear of the horse's hips.

Figure 5. Positioning right foot.

Position the right foot in the stirrup before easing the body weight into the seat of the saddle. Avoid dropping body weight heavily into saddle of strange or "cold-backed" horses.

Figure 6. Position of hands.

Hands should be held in an easy position, neither perpendicular nor horizontal to the saddle, and should show sympathy, adaptability, and control. Height of hands above horse's withers is determined by how and where horse carries its head. Figure 6 shows the most common position of holding the reins with snaffle on outside of curb reins and bight on right side of horse. Elbows should be held at sides in natural position, neither in too tight nor out too far.

Figure 7. Addressing the reins.

Judges sometimes use tests of horsemanship in deciding final placings. One common test is to "address the reins" or "pick up reins." With the reins on horse's neck they are picked up according to Figure 7 and held as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 8. Basic position in saddle.

Much of the success of good riders can be attributed to their mastery of this position.

To take a basic position, sit comfortably in the center of the saddle with inside of knees and thighs contacting saddle, feet and legs hanging under the body in a relaxed, natural position. Properly adjusted stirrups will rest between ankles and insteps of the feet, depending on the build of the rider. The irons should then be placed under balls of feet (not toes nor "home") with even pressure on the entire width of soles. The position of the feet should be natural (neither extremely in nor out). The ankles and insteps should be flexible with heel positions lower than toes. Figure 8 is an excellent overall position of rider.

Figure 9. Ready to ride.

Good position of both horse and rider.

When a whip is carried for "bluff" it should be held in the left hand, butt upward, in mounting (and dismounting); then it should be transferred quietly to the right hand and held in the same position with body and leash of whip resting along the rider's right leg.

When the whip is carried for occasional use, as in warm ups or practice, it may be reversed

with the leash carried upward and across the horse's withers. Unnecessary motion or use of whip upsets the horse and may result in poor performance.

Figure 10. Preparation to dismount.

Dismounting generally is the reverse of mounting. With snaffle reins tighter than curbs, left hand on withers holding reins, right hand on pommel, then support yourself in stirrups in preparation to dismount.

Figure 11. Dismounting.

Rider has swung leg over horse's back and placed right hand on cantle of saddle in preparation for stepping to the ground with right foot. It is correct either to step down or slide down from this position, depending on the size of the horse and/or rider.

Figure 12. Stepping down.

The final stage of dismounting where rider has chosen to "step down" instead of "slide down."

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