

## Essential Equipment for Buying a Horse

For the first time horse owner there is an often bewildering amount of equipment available on the market but it is best to start with the basics to keep costs to a minimum.

When you buy a horse it is sometimes possible to negotiate a price for its tack and rugs. This can be ideal, especially if it is your first horse, but make sure that the equipment is in good condition and fits well.

Below is a list of the main items that you will need.

### Head collar and rope

Choose a leather or synthetic head collar but make sure it is the right size for your horse and is well made and sturdy. The rope should have a clasp that fits securely on to the head collar but can be released easily.



### Saddle

It is often possible to purchase second-hand saddles in good condition but whether you choose leather or synthetic it is vital that it fits you and your horse, so ask a qualified saddle fitter for advice. Be aware it is the saddle fitter's job to make the horse feel comfortable, but it is also important that you feel safe and are able to ride effectively. The length of a saddle is measured in inches from the stud on the pommel at the front to the centre of the cantle at the back, with the average size around 17ins. Lucinda Green advises: "If you can afford to buy only one saddle and you want to jump, then buy a jumping saddle rather than a general purpose, because a good one will put you in a much safer balance for jumping and you can still do dressage in a jumping saddle."

### Bridle

Good quality leather bridles are best and again these can be second hand as long as they are in good condition and the stitching is secure. Bridles generally come in pony, cob and horse sizes and have moveable cheek pieces to allow the size to be altered. Check that the reins are a suitable length - too short and you will not be able to hold them correctly; too long and they could become entangled with your feet.

### Bits

Ask the previous owner of the horse for advice on the most suitable bit as a radical change can cause problems. Make sure the bit is in the right size for the horse's mouth and is not too low. Ideally, the corners of the horse's mouth should be gently creased by the bit.



### Stirrups

These should be the right size for your feet - too small and your feet could become stuck; too large and your feet will slip around in them. Stirrup leathers should be suitable for your length of leg to allow for them to be shortened or lengthened as required.

### Girth

Choose from leather, synthetic or elastic and buy two so you always have a spare. Make sure it fits your horse by placing the saddle on his back and then measuring from half way up the girth straps, under the horse's belly to halfway up the straps the other side.

### Saddle cloth/numnah

Protects your horse's back and the bottom of the saddle. Choose good quality cotton and buy at least two to allow for regular washing.

### Rugs

If your horse is to be turned out he will need two good quality turnout rugs - one heavyweight and another lighter one. There is a wide range available and a good fit is very important. Most now cover the neck as well as the body and some come with hoods which can help to keep horses clean in a muddy field. If your horse is stabled then he will also need a stable rug and a cooler, which is made from breathable material and is useful for travelling if your horse tends to sweat up and to help him dry after washing down.

### Protective Boots

There is a wide range of boots for various purposes on the market. Boots on front and hind legs may help to protect. Lucinda Green says: "There is a growing school of thought that boots can do more harm than good due to overheating of the tendon fibres and restriction of blood flow to the legs - extremities which are already ill supplied."

### Stable Equipment

This includes wheelbarrow, mucking out tools, grooming kit, feed and water buckets, hay net etc.