

Essential Equipment for the Rider



Taking up any sport is exciting and it can be tempting to rush out and buy a new wardrobe to 'look the part'. Although once you start competing there are certain 'dress codes' required, if you are just starting out or simply want to enjoy hacking in the countryside then you only need a few basic items.

Casual Riding

Hard Hat:

The most important piece of equipment that you will ever buy as a rider and you should never get on a horse without wearing a hard hat - either a riding helmet or a jockey style skull cap. Always buy your riding hats from somewhere with trained fitters. They will help make sure you buy the best hat for your head and that it fits correctly.

Your hat size will depend on your head circumference, which should be measured above the ears. The hat should sit on your head and be secure but comfortable without any undue pressure on the temples that might cause headaches. Never buy a second hand hat as it may be damaged. Invest in the best that your money can buy and make sure it conforms to the latest UK safety standards.

Footwear:

Leather riding boots are expensive and although a great investment they are a luxury rather than a necessity. There is a range of riding boots available to suit all budgets but make sure they fit well and have a small heel. Shoes with no heel such as trainers and sandals are dangerous for riding as the foot can slip through the stirrup. Wellington boots are not suitable for riding either.

Jodhpurs:

Jodhpurs are designed for riding and are the most comfortable and practical item of clothing. They are available in a range of styles and colours and should be well fitting but not too tight. Jeans and trousers can rub unless chaps are worn over the top of them.



Jacket:

A warm, waterproof jacket is a must, especially for the cold, winter months, plus a lightweight one for the summer. The jacket should be roomy enough for allow for layers underneath while allowing unrestricted movement of the arms. Long coats are not generally advisable.

Gloves:

Necessary for comfort - to prevent blisters and sores - and for warmth in winter. Choose gloves that have been designed for riding - ie those that will not slip if the reins become wet.

Riding whip:

The most important 'artificial aid' and one that all riders should get used to carrying, although it should only be used when absolutely necessary.

Body Protector:

Body or Back Protectors are foam filled vest type garments that are worn over the top of clothes and either over or under a jacket to give protection to the back and chest area of the rider in the event of a fall. Originally designed to protect jockeys while racing they are now widely used, especially when jumping, and can help to prevent serious injury as the result of a fall or kick. Second hand body protectors should be avoided as if these have been subject to a fall or kick the protection they offer can be diminished even if they look intact. Choose a body protector that fits well and conforms to the current safety standard, which is BETA 2000.



High-Viz Gear:

The wearing of Hi-Viz clothing is vital for safety when riding on the roads as a motorist can see a rider wearing Hi-Viz clothing three seconds sooner than one who is not, giving the driver longer to take defensive action. There are numerous Hi-Viz products available for riders and horses to make them more visible to motorists. A Hi-Viz tabard should always be worn but other products include hat covers, mitts and flashing stirrup lights for riders and leg wraps, exercise sheets, martingale and bridle covers for horses.

Around the Yard

Stable yards are no place for high heels and designer clothes - looking after horses is a messy business. Clothing will depend on the weather and the time of year but as a general rule you will need:

- Sensible footwear, including Wellington boots in the wet
- Jeans or hard wearing trousers
- T-shirt and/or fleece/sweatshirt/jumper
- Waterproof jacket/coat
- Gloves to protect hands when carrying hay bales, water buckets etc and for warmth in winter
- Hat or cap to keep off the rain

Competition Clothing

The clothing and equipment required for competitions depends on the discipline - ie whether you are taking part in dressage, showjumping, cross country etc.