

## Introduction to Hacking

There are many riders who ride purely for pleasure and enjoy hacking out rather than the pressure of competition. This of course makes them no less passionate about horses or riding. Here 27-year-old Rosie Newton tells us what it is to be a very “happy hacker” and why competitive riding is not for her.

### When did you first start riding?

Having bugged my parents to let me ride since I started talking they finally gave in when I was seven and booked me a couple of lessons. I think they thought it would be a phase but the rest as they say is history!

### What have you done in your riding career so far?

It didn't take long to realise that one lesson a week was not enough for me so I started to work at the local riding school to earn extra rides. Horses quickly became a passion. For me it is all about the horses, not the competing. The work at the riding school developed into a job as a full time groom but it was all working towards owning my own horse. Up until recently I have been unable to afford my own horse but I am now working for a farmer doing quality assurance and I have had my horse for about a year.

### What horse do you have and when did you get her?

I bought Honey, a solid 16 hands worth of opinionated Irish mare, a year ago. I keep her at a livery yard half an hour away from home but she is pretty low maintenance so lives out in the field. However, the Scottish weather being as it is I do rug her up when it is cold and wet.

### How much time do you spend with her each week?

I spend as much time as I can with her, which amounts to around half an hour in the morning and approximately two hours in the evening, if I take her for a ride. At the weekends I obviously have more time so will be with her for longer.

### What do you do with her?

Most days I take her for a hack, along roads, tracks and up in the hills. I do lots of fun fast work including finding fallen branches to jump. Once a week I remind myself why I hate flat work and take her in the arena. Although we don't compete I do understand the value of schooling.



### Do you do anything with Honey apart from hacking?

I do the odd training day or small jumping competition as well as the occasional day's drag hunting. Really though I just hack and, when I can, take her to the beach for a blast on the sand.

### What is your favourite aspect or riding?

I love being alone with my horse away from the stresses and strains of everyday life. We understand and trust each other 100%, so it is the perfect way to relax and have fun.

### How do you justify the financial commitment owning a horse entails?

I need horses in my life, simple as that. I have dreamt of having my own horse forever and have worked my way up through jobs until I could easily afford to keep one. I have also saved enough money for a rainy day and would not have bought her if I couldn't afford it. I am all too aware of the many hidden and extra costs involved in having a horse and never wanted to be in the situation where I could not pay for what she needs. For this reason I have insured her for every eventuality as I am all too aware how expensive vet's bills can be.

### What is your favourite horsey memory?

When I bought Honey I knew she had a bad back as the result of ill-fitting saddles. It took a lot of remedial work to get her comfortable enough to be ridden and it was a long slow process. Gradually I got her to trust me and relax under the saddle and my first day riding her as a healthy happy horse was a moment of pure joy for me. I will never forget it.

### Who has inspired you the most in regard to horses?

The horses themselves as, they are far more inspiring than people. I do not follow any particular method or type of training having been lucky enough to work with many different people from Argentine Gauchos to those who follow natural horsemanship methods. I find that I cannot be limited to one person's ideas of what is right or wrong with regard to horses. I take each horse as it comes. I think that is the reason I prefer to hack than ride competitively as it allows me to be truly free with what I do with my horse.