

# Online HorseCollege



## **Student Workbook**

### **2.R.01 Your Ideal Horse**

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## **How to Buy A Horse Introduction**

Setting out to buy a horse can be a daunting (not to mention expensive) experience. Buying the right horse can create to years of joy, memories and new friendships. Buying the wrong horse can be disastrous for the confidence and progression of both horse and rider.

This workbook highlights areas which, as a potential horse owner, you need to think about before signing the check book and investing in your own horse.

## Making the Decision to Buy

So you've decided to buy a horse, possibly it is your first horse and this prospect can be as daunting as it is exciting.

The initial purchase price of the horse is just the beginning of horse ownership and whilst having your own horse can be a very rewarding and fulfilling experience it can also be expensive and time consuming. In horse ownership you become responsible for the health and upkeep of a very large animal, this can include things like grooming, feeding, exercising and cleaning (tack, hooves, stables, yards, paddocks, clothes, feed bins, buckets, the list goes on!).

If you don't have the time, space or the extensive knowledge to care for your horse then you will more than likely need to pay someone else for their services (i.e. agistment, which is when a landowner charges someone to keep their livestock on their property). Some agistment providers offer services, for a price, to perform different duties for you for example rugging/unrugging, feeding, manure removal, horse training. The cost of agistment often includes the use of facilities like tack rooms (these can be shared or private rooms), wash bays and arenas.

Then of course there is buying the gear and equipment for your horse. If this isn't your first horse then you may already have all the gear you need but if it isn't or if your new horse is a different size to the last one you're going to need to buy task. As a guide, you could expect to spend the following outfitting and up-keeping your horse:-

### Starting Costs

Helmet	\$70
Halter and Leadrope	\$25
Grooming Kit	\$30
First Aid Kit	\$60
Saddle	\$500+
Mounts	\$100+
Bridle	\$40+
Bit	\$40+
Saddlecloth	\$30+
Winter Rug	\$100+
Summer Rug	\$50+
Tack Cleaning Equip.	\$25+
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1050+</b>

## Making the Decision to Buy (cont.)

### Monthly Costs

(Prices Vary Greatly Depending On You & Your Horses' Requirements)

Agistment- \$120	\$25+
Shoeing/Trimming	\$25+
Worming- \$30	\$20+
Feeding- \$60	\$20+
Bedding-(if stabled)	\$30+
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$120</b>

Another consideration is how much time you will be able to spend with your horse. Naturally the more time you spend with your horse the better the bond and relationship between the two of you will be.

An alternative to buying a horse is leasing. It is a good option for those who want to trail what horse ownership is like without the financial outlay. However there are risks involved in that usually after a period of time the owner may want the horse back or sell the horse on. Occasionally a horse will be leased with the option to buy at the end of the lease. If leasing a horse sounds like a better option for you then it is advisable to have a lease contract in which the responsibilities of the lessee and owner of the horse are detailed and outlined. This way you will know exactly what your financial and care responsibilities are.



## Where to Look

The possibilities can seem endless on where to search for the new equine member of your family, especially when it comes to the internet.



### Newspaper/Classifieds/Magazines

There are still numerous horses listed in papers and magazines, it's also a convenient resource as they are usually issues on a weekly or monthly basis & if you're looking for a horse in the local area rather than interstate (buying a horse from interstate means you'll also need to finance transport to move the horse to your area). In Australia we have magazine and horse publications like Horse Deals and Horses & People which provide advertisement for the sale of horses.



### Feed & Saddlery Store Noticeboards

The noticeboard at your local saddlery or feed store usually has advertisements for gear and horses for sale. The advantage of this is that the horses advertised will be in your local area but the disadvantage is that advertisements may be few and often old.



### Websites

Can have an abundance of advertisements which can seem endless. The advantage of this source is that you can browse at your convenience and often pictures (and even videos) of horses for sale can be viewed. If you have your heart set on a certain breed, breed societies often have websites with sale ad's and registered studs and breeders.

It is important to err on the side of caution as there are some scammers out there who promise the horse of your dreams in return for your bank account details.

### Word of Mouth

Those with a finger on the pulse of the horse industry will often know of horses for sale. People and businesses like coaches & riding schools, breeders, competitive riders, farriers, pony clubs and riding clubs are good places to start.

If you have a riding coach they will be able to provide you with insight into the type of horse that would suit your abilities.



## Where to Look (cont.)



### **Horse Sales/Auctions**

While horse sales and auctions present many horses, sometimes at a much cheaper price tag there is a large amount of risk. This is because you don't get to try the horse out prior to purchase, you can observe the horses in yards before they are brought into the auction pen where they may or may not be ridden and they may or may not show more than one pace you then have a couple of minutes to bid then that horse is ushered out and another in.

The likelihood of horses at auction being underweight or injured from transit to the sale yards is somewhat high and you may end up spending what you saved on the purchase on feed and health care.

If you have a good eye for horses and the experience to back it up auctions can be a good place to pick up a bargain.



## Do Your Homework

Put some serious thought into what type of horse you want. Consider your riding abilities and confidence and **be realistic**. It won't do you, the horse or the horse/rider relationship any good if you buy a horse which is unsuitable.

Some points to consider:-

### Interests & Ambitions

What is it that you are hoping to do or want to do with your horse? You may have a burning ambition to shine in the show ring or you might be content with exploring trails through the forestry what ever you desire it is important that you look for a horse which will suit your aspirations.



### Riding Ability

This is one of if not the most important point to take into consideration. What level or type of rider are you? If you are unsure a coach or even a friend (one with knowledge and horse riding experience) will be able to help you identify where you're at in regards to your riding.

Further in this workbook you will find some examples of the types of horses which would be suited to different levels of riders.



### Finances

How much do you have or are you willing to spend? Do some research into what type of horse this amount will buy you and from that you may find you need to increase that figure.

Depending on what you want a horse could cost you into the tens of thousands and that doesn't include the equipment you may need to buy!



### Breeds & Types

Are you attracted to any breed? Different breeds tend to have different characteristics and can be better suited to some disciplines more than others. This is not to say that a horse bred for dressage cannot go on trail rides. The internet will come in handy for finding information on different breed characteristics, conformation and athletic abilities.

Don't be drawn to the thinking that purebred is superior over horses with mixed parentage, there are many successful competition horses not to mention aged riding school horses out there who are worth their weight in gold in meeting and exceeding the expectations and needs of their riders.



## Do Your Homework (cont.)

Some horse points to consider:-

### Size

You need to feel safe and comfortable on your horse. A bigger horse will eat more and therefore require more feed which can translate into spending larger amounts of money.

There is no rule that smaller people should ride smaller horses but your horse should be able to carry your weight without struggle. Take into consideration that you need to be comfortable not just riding the horse but also handling it on the ground, if you're a shorter person and have a larger horse it may present difficulties (i.e. putting on halters, bridles, saddles) which you will need to devise solutions to and children with bigger horses may need assistance handling and preparing their mounts.



### Sex

Some people will prefer mares others geldings. This comes down to personal preference. Some mares can be irritable when in season. Of course if any horse is allowed to kick, bite and generally display aggressive behavior towards people they will continue to do so as long as they benefit from the results and this is no exception to mares in season.

Geldings are castrated males (stallions who have had their testicles removed), some people prefer them as they can be more even in temperament.

But both mares and geldings have had success in and out of the show ring.



The dream of owning a stallion and galloping bareback across white sandy beaches appeals to many however with them comes more responsibility and to handle and ride them requires more experience and knowledge. Stallion ownership will require a strong, secure environment to keep him in (often away from mares and other horses) and a confident, experienced handler. They can be dangerous and unpredictable and some equestrian centres, clubs and competitions may turn you away because they don't have the facilities or the insurance to support a stallion.

'Rigs' (are male horses which carry one or both testicles usually concealed in the abdomen) are an unsuitable mount and can be more dangerous and unpredictable than stallions.

## Do Your Homework (cont.)

### Age

It is a reasonable assumption that the younger a horse is the less experience it has had. Both younger and older horses have their advantages and disadvantages.

Younger horses are less experienced and may be unpredictable but are more likely to have less age-related injuries and illnesses.

Older horses tend to have more training and experience but are more likely to have more health ailments that may require special feeding and shoeing.

This is not to say that you will not find a quiet, docile youngster or an excitable, energetic pensioner.

Further in this workbook you will find information that outlines how the age of a horse can be better suited to different riders.



### Personality

Each horse will have their own, unique personality and character. The more time you spend with a horse the more you will learn its quirks.

The personality of a horse can reflect how it is to ride and handle. For example a horse which is a little nervous and flighty can be quite responsive (not always in a desirable way) under saddle and a horse which is relaxed and personable can be obliging under saddle.



## Matching Horse & Rider

Below are a few examples of the types of horse that would be suitable for riders at different stages of learning.

### Early Stage Riders

Riders of this level (e.g. beginners) of ability range from just learning to trot to learning to canter and guide and control the horse. These riders need horses which are going to be a reliable and confidence boosting mount. Horses which have smooth, un-jarring paces will make it easier to maintain balance and position. They should be even tempered and forgiving so that if the rider accidentally bumps the horse with their leg or rein they are not going to over react or respond quickly. Well-schooled and educated horses can suit this type of rider but (for example) a recently retired grand-prix dressage horse would be unsuitable, even though it may be quiet it will be far too responsive for the beginner rider.

Young, green horses are unsuitable mounts for this level of rider. Due to both horse and rider lacking knowledge and experience it can be dangerous situation from which both parties can loose confidence and gain fear.

Stallions and certainly rigs are unsuitable horses for this rider. The size of the horse should be of suitable to the rider so that they can still maintain control and be effective. The type of horse for this rider should be free from vices (i.e. kicking, biting and aggressive habits) as people at early stages of learning will be slow to recognise, if at all, signs of aggressive behaviour.



## Matching Horse & Rider (cont.)

### Intermediate Stage Riders

This stage of rider can often guide and control the horse at walk, trot and canter, ride uncomplicated movements and figures and jump small straightforward fences.

This person has some knowledge of handling and riding but may be rusty on technique, strength, co-ordination and control. They will be able to control and guide the horse with reasonable accuracy, better co-ordinate their aids and maintain their position for greater lengths of time than people at the early stage of riding.

These riders also need uncomplicated horses that will build their confidence and skills however they may be suited to horses which will challenge them in ways which builds upon their abilities. For example a horse which likes to follow a leader will encourage a rider to use the aids more often and effectively when ridden away from other horses.

This level of rider may prefer horses which are less “go - stop” i.e. require less motivation to keep moving. They may also benefit from horses with some schooling in their preferred discipline (usually at a lower level) to learn the basics of their desired sport.

Generally young, green horses are still unsuitable mounts for the intermediate rider. At this stage riders of this level may be able to ride and cope with horses of different sizes but once more they should still be able to maintain effectiveness and control as a rider.

Stallions and rigs are unsafe mounts at this level.



## Matching Horse & Rider (cont.)

### Final Stage Riders

This can be considered as experienced riders (because who is ever at the final stage of learning?) Experienced riders can control the horse in all 4 paces whilst maintain their balance, position and co-ordination in effectively communicating with the horse. They are capable of riding complex movements and figures with accuracy and can apply aids to influence and correct the horse.

This level of rider can be capable of riding to obtain results in their chosen discipline. Experienced riders can ride intricate movements/figures and jump complex obstacles. Riders' abilities can still vary greatly within this category including people who have ridden most of their lives, who are effective and confident in their riding but maybe lack finesse and style to professional riders, trainers and competitors.

Experienced riders can manage horses of various sizes effectively and may have the knowledge to apply schooling and training techniques. Young, green horses may appeal and be suited to riders at this level who are interested in training and education of the young horse. Horses with significant training in the riders chosen discipline are suitable for this level.

Of all three levels of riders, this is the stage most suited to stallions and even then they are better suited to riders with the confidence and knowledge to back them up.



## Points to Remember

Before buying a horse it is advisable to get a vet check. This is an examination of the horse by a veterinarian to identify the horses' state of soundness and suitability for the work required. These can be valuable in recognising health concerns which may have been overlooked by your self or unmentioned by the seller. If you don't know of a vet ask around and have an equine vet perform the examination.

If you are relatively new to horses it is probably a good idea to take someone (e.g. your coach or a horse experienced friend) with you who has some experience and knowledge in horses. They will be able to assist you in asking the right questions and assessing the horse for its suitability.



### Do's & Don'ts:-

- Do ask lots of questions, even write a list of what it is you want to know.
  - Do see the horse unsaddled. By observing the owner/seller catching, handling, grooming and saddling you can get an idea of what the horse is like.
  - Do ask to see him ridden (Before you ride the horse. If the owner doesn't want to ride it, it raises the question of 'Why?'.) This will allow you to see how the horse responds to the rider.
  - Do test ride the horse. If after you see the horse ridden you think it is unsuitable or unsafe for you to ride, then don't. It is in your best interests not to get on a horse which you feel is unsafe or unsuitable.
  - Do wear a helmet when you test ride the horse.
  - Do take a knowledgeable person with you.
  - Do get a vet check
  - Do arrange suitable and appropriate transportation for your new horse.
- 
- Don't buy the first horse you see. Do your research.
  - Don't ride a horse you think is unsafe for you.
  - Don't take the sellers word for it.
  - Neglect your safety. Be wary of new horses in case they are prone to kicking or biting.
  - Don't buy ex-racehorses or mistreated horses for beginners. Horses straight off the track may be cheap and easy to pick up but they only know one speed – fast. These horses require retraining and specialist attention so if you don't have the skills or the know-how its best to leave it to the experts.

## Extension Lesson

Write below some ideas on what might be a suitable horse for you.

.....  
.....  
.....

Ask your coach or another person you know with horse experience to describe a horse which might be suitable for you.

.....  
.....  
.....

Do some research into the sale prices of horses in your local area. Below are examples of horses you might find for sale, using your research write beside each example what it might cost to buy that horse in your area.

- Lower level dressage horse - .....**
- Aged schoolmaster/pony clubbing horse - .....**
- Child's riding pony - .....**
- Show-jumper with proven competition record - .....**
- Pleasure Riding Horse - .....**



## Recommended Reading

Publication:-

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Horses

Author:-

Sarah Montague and PJ Dempsey

Websites:-

<http://www.horseandhound.co.uk/horsecare/1370/57411.html> - Rigs

## References

### Publication:-

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Horses

### Author:-

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### Websites:-

<http://www.horserides.org/buying-first-horse.html>

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