

Online HorseCollege



Student Workbook

2.R.03 Mount & Dismount

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Contents

Introduction	Pg. 4
Gear Checks	Pg. 5 & 6
Mounting Procedure	Pg. 7
Gear Checks While Mounted	Pg. 8 & 9
Position	Pg. 10
Dismounting Procedure	Pg. 11
Extension Lesson	Pg. 12
Recommended Reading	Pg. 13
References	Pg. 14

Introduction

This workbook covers topics about what you need to do before you get on to ride. It describes and provides information on important practices to get into the habit of doing for both you and the horses' safety and so you can have an enjoyable ride.

Gear Checks

There are some final things to check on your own personal equipment and the gear on the horse prior to mounting (getting on).

When you give your horses' gear the final check, start from the bridle then work your way back on one side then do the other side.

You should check:-



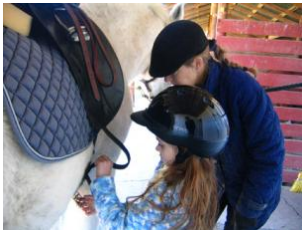
Above- 'Toe stoppers'

Your personal attire for riding. Your clothing for riding needs to reflect safety rather than fashion.

- Long pants will protect your legs not only from the weather elements but also from the stirrup leathers rubbing or pinching and trees and branches when on a trail ride. They will also minimise cuts and scrapes to your legs in the event that you come off. Most riders will either ride in jeans or jodphurs. Jeans are more commonly ridden in for Western sports while jodphurs for English disciplines. It will come down to riding in what you feel more comfortable.
- A shirt with sleeves. This will protect you better from sunburn, cuts and scrapes should you fall off and the environment while trail riding.
- Enclosed footwear. Riding boots are ideal as they have very little grip on the sole (this is because its better to have your boot slip out of the stirrup, than have it stuck because there is too much grip). Special 'clogs' (also known as 'toe stoppers') are available in saddlerys which attach to the stirrup iron to reduce the risk of your foot getting stuck or pushing too far through the stirrup. Enclosed footwear also provides some protection for your feet should you get stood on by a horse.
- A helmet. Helmet standards will vary depending upon your location. Ensure yours is within those standards. To check if your helmet fits, shake your head forward and backwards and side to side. Your helmet should be tight enough around your skull not to move. But not so tight it causes discomfort.
- Present yourself neat and tidy for riding, for example avoid clothing that might flap around and frighten the horse. Avoid wearing excessive jewellery as it may come off or get caught on equipment.

Gear Checks (cont.)

Check the gear and equipment on the horse:-



- For any twisted or looped straps. These cause pressure points which cause discomfort for the horse.
- Buckles fastened to the wrong straps. This will interfere with the safety and effectiveness of the gear/equipment.
- If the saddle cloth has shifted. If the saddle cloth has slid or moved under the saddle it will cause a pressure point which equals horse discomfort.
- If the saddle has shifted. Sometimes if the girth isn't adjusted firmly when the saddle is first put on it will slide back.
- The tension of the girth. You will need to tighten it before you mount. This is so your weight in the stirrup when your getting on doesn't pull the saddle around to the side.
- The length of the stirrups. This can be done by using your arm as a guide, keeping your arm straight, finger tips go on the buckle of the stirrup leather then using your other hand hold onto the stirrup iron and bring it back into your arm pit. If the stirrup leather has slack in it, they may be too long & you will need to move the buckle up the holes. If the stirrup iron doesn't reach your armpit you may need to make them longer. This method can be used as a rough guide and doesn't always work for everyone. You will need to consider what you are planning to do during your ride as well. As a general rule jumping exercises will require shorter stirrups while dressage work will require longer stirrups.



The longer dressage leg.



The shorter jumping leg.

Mounting Procedure

Mounting means to get onto your horse. This should be done in an organised fashion to minimise the risk of injury/incident occurring. It is acceptable to use a suitable mounting block (sturdy step) to stand on to make the mounting process easier. A mounting block should be secure to stand on (not wobbly) and needs to be made of a strong material which will not break when stood on (milk crates are not a safe mounting block due to this reason).

- 1) During your gear check you should have already let your stirrups down and check the length.
- 2) Standing on the near side (left side) bring your reins over the horses' head and neck
- 3) Adjust the rein length so that you have a light contact with the bit and no slack in the reins
- 4) Standing beside the shoulder and facing towards the back of the horse, holding both reins in the left hand (and some mane if necessary) and use the right hand to turn the stirrup clockwise towards you
- 5) Place your left toe into the stirrup and then right hand on the pommel of the saddle
- 6) Using small bounces, push your weight into left stirrup lifting yourself off the ground
- 7) Carefully swing your right leg over the back of the saddle and the back of the horse
- 8) Gently lower yourself into the saddle
- 9) Placing the right foot into the right stirrup and taking reins in both hands



Gear Checks While Mounted

Once mounted you may find that your stirrups need adjusting and your girth needs to be checked and possibly tightened.

- 1) To check your girth keep a hold of both reins in one hand. You may find support in holding onto some mane however don't lean on the neck because if the horse puts it's head down you'll probably follow it
- 2) Lean forward in the saddle so that you are bent over either your left or right knee
- 3) Then with your spare hand slide your fingers under the girth in a downwards motion, this ensures the horses' hair remains lying flat and therefore doesn't cause irritation
- 4) Now see if you can pull the girth away from the horses' belly.

If it needs to be tightened you can do this while mounted. Depending on whether your saddle has long or short girth points will determine how you do so.

For saddles with long girth points and shorter girths (common to dressage saddles because it positions the girth buckles lower down on the horse allowing the riders leg to lie flat against the horse):-

- 1) Lean forward in the same manner as done to check the girth tension. Bring your leg slightly back to allow you to reach the girth buckles but keeping your foot in the stirrup
- 2) Then pull the girth point out of the keeper and keep a hold of it
- 3) Position your index finger over the pin of the buckle. By keeping your finger here it will allow you to easily feel where the next hole is and direct the pin through it
- 4) Pull in upwards motion to move the buckle to the next hole
- 5) Push the pin through the new buckle hole
- 6) Once tightened thread the end of the strap back through the keeper



Gear Checks While Mounted (cont.)

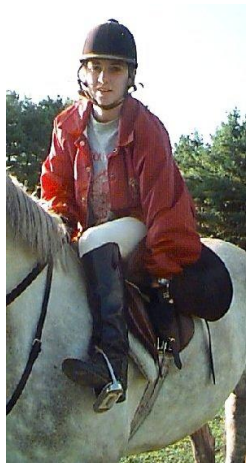
For saddles with short girth points and longer girths (common with jumping saddles):-

- 1) Put the reins into one hand
- 2) Keeping your feet in the stirrups bring either your left or right leg forward so that your knee is bent and your lower leg is in front of the saddle flap (like you're sitting in a chair)
- 3) Lift the saddle flap and either tuck it under your arm or keep it held up using the hand which is holding the reins (don't let go of the reins)
- 4) Then with your spare hand find the girth point and keep a hold of it. On some saddles you may need to lift or slide up a small piece of leather called the buckle guard
- 5) Position your index finger over the pin of the buckle. By keeping your finger here it will allow you to easily feel where the next hole is and direct the pin through it
- 6) Pull in upwards motion to move the buckle to the next hole
- 7) Push the pin through the new buckle hole
- 8) Once tightened position the buckle guard over the girth buckles
- 9) Fold the saddle flap down
- 10) And bring your leg back into position on the saddle

To adjust stirrups while mounted:-

- 1) Put the reins into one hand
- 2) Using your free hand lift the skirt of the saddle to find the stirrup buckle
- 3) Leaving your foot in the stirrup ease your weight in the stirrup and holding onto the buckle and stirrup leather pull in an upwards motion. Now you should have access to the holes above the buckle
- 4) This part may take some practice but undo the buckle on the stirrup leather and move it up the leather if you need the stirrup shorter or down the leather (towards the end of the strap) if you need them longer
- 5) Once adjusted you need to move the buckle back under the skirt of the saddle. To do this either hold the buckle firmly and press down into the stirrup with your foot to pull the stirrup leather through the stirrup bar or pull downwards on the part of the leather that is against the saddle to pull the buckle back under the skirt.

Right: Adjusting a long girth on short girth points



Left: Adjusting the stirrups



Position

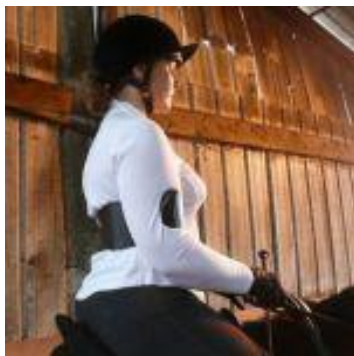
Your security and balance in the saddle and the effectiveness of your aids depends greatly upon your position when riding. Your position and seat when mounted should be such that you can maintain your balance in all gaits, in both directions and still give the necessary aids to guide and control that horse.



Starting from the top, whilst riding your focus should be in the direction you are travelling (not looking down at the horse).

Your shoulders should be level with the chest open. To achieve this think that you push your rib cage out. This will bring your shoulders back without 'pulling' them back which will create tension.

Your spine needs to sit in line with the horses' spine and your weight should be carried evenly on both seat bones.



Shoulders should be positioned over the hips so that you're not leaning forward, drawing your weight out of the saddle.

Your elbows should be by your side and the forearm should form a straight line which runs from the elbow, along the forearm, down the rein to the bit in the horses' mouth. This will allow for good communication to the horse. Hands are level, holding the reins with your fingers closed around them and thumbs positioned on top facing upwards, with an even contact on the reins, one on each side of the horses' neck.



From your hips, which should be level, your legs drape around the horses' ribs and your lower leg should stay in contact with the horses' sides all the time, but not squeezing or gripping

Stirrup lengths even, with your stirrup iron sitting just behind your toes, on the ball of your foot with your heel dropped down so it becomes the lowest point in your body. Toes pointing forward.

Dismounting Procedure

Dismounting means to get off the horse and should also be done in a safe manner to minimise the risk of incident or injury.

- 1) Adjust reins so as to have a light contact on the bit and place both reins into the left hand
- 2) Remove both feet from the stirrups
- 3) Hold/place your right hand on the pommel of the saddle
- 4) Leaning slightly forward, swing your right leg back and over the back of the saddle and horse
- 5) Bring legs together and lower yourself gently to the ground, bending your knees when you land
- 6) Pass the reins over the horses' head
- 7) Run up the stirrups and loosen the girth by a hole or two



Extension Lesson

Check your helmet to ensure it is within the current accepted safety standard for your area. In Australia and New Zealand the current standard is AS/NZ 3838:2006.

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Practice performing the following tasks while mounted, if necessary have some one help you by holding your horse.

- making both stirrups longer
- making both stirrups shorter
- tightening the girth on the left and right sides
- mounting procedure
- dismounting procedure

Practice checking gear by having a friend make a few mistakes with the equipment which you then have to find i.e. twisted girth point, crooked saddle cloth, cheek strap on the bridle buckled to the noseband. Be creative and use a suitable horse. Have your friend keep a note of how many mistakes they made so that you can ensure you correct them all before you ride.

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Recommended Reading

Publication:-

The Principles of Riding

Author:-

German National Equestrian Federation

References

Publication:-

The Principles of Riding

Author:-

German National Equestrian Federation

Images:-

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