



SINGAPORE
SPORTS COUNCIL

Sports
Safety

Safe Equestrian Guide

Think Safe. Play Safe. Stay Safe.

A Sports Safe Singapore

The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) recognises that safety must be a fundamental component of a sporting culture and a prerequisite for every healthy lifestyle. Therefore, SSC has set a corporate goal of zero injuries, in the belief that all accidents are preventable. Emphasising the need for personal accountability, SSC also urges people to be responsible for the safety of others. SSC's first Sports Safety Division was formed in 2006 directly under the purview of the CEO's office. It is tasked to promote safety throughout Singapore's sporting community and inculcate a safety-first mentality in the minds of every stakeholder. For more information, please visit www.sportssafety.ssc.gov.sg

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Another initiative by the Sports Safety Division, Singapore Sports Council

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INTRODUCTION

Horse riding is a healthy outdoor sport, and people of all ages can enjoy a partnership with one of nature's most magnificent and friendly creatures. Horse riding can be enjoyed alone, in a group, as part of a team or as a family activity, and this can be a lifelong enjoyment.

Children are naturally attracted to animals and to the challenges of riding. Riding is also inherently a high-risk sport, but can be made safer through proper instructions on well-trained horses and in safe riding facilities. It is inevitable, however, that some degree of risk will always exist.

In most cases, common sense is all that is needed to improve safety. Modern technology has been used to reduce risk, and improvements in riding techniques are constantly being developed. In order to minimize risk, it is very important that riders, especially beginners, understand and follow basic safety tips so that they will be able to fully enjoy the fun and joy of this amazing sport.



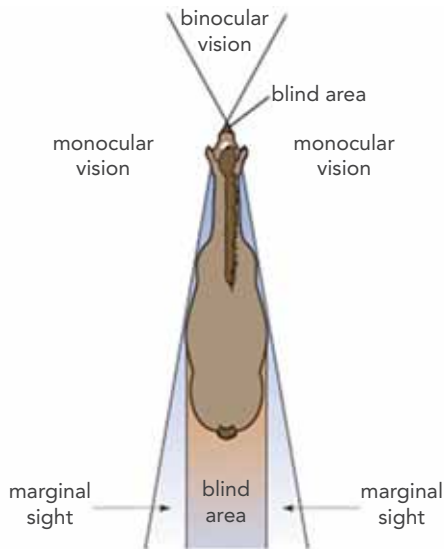
UNDERSTANDING THE HORSE

When you start riding a horse, you are entering into a partnership. That partnership is between yourself and the horse. As with any partnership, it is very important that there is trust, understanding and communication between the rider and the horse. Well-trained horses understand the signals of a rider called "Aids". The rider must also understand the signals and senses of the horse.

To understand a horse, we have to understand the way a horse sees the world. We act from things we have learnt throughout our lives. A horse learns from previous experiences and acts mostly on instinct. To help us understand a horse's instinct, we can divide it into 4 aspects:

1. Sight

Sight is the most important equine sense. For a prey animal like the horse, seeing trouble coming from a long way away gives the horse time to start running away before the predator gets too close. The horse has an all-round vision because the eye is very big and protrudes far out of the skull, which is why the horse's eye is vulnerable to injury. The horse is very alert to any sudden movement around its eyes.



2. Hearing

A horse's hearing is much better than that of a human. This is so that it can hear predators coming from afar. Using sensitive ears, which can turn all the way around, the horse monitors sounds from all directions. It listens constantly for predators or any danger. Loud, unfamiliar noises make a horse nervous, while a familiar, gentle and reassuring sound calms and relaxes the horse.

3. Smell

A horse's sense of smell is very keen. It can smell predators coming from afar. It can also recognize smell of other horses. Mares and foals quickly memorize each other's scents and use this information to help locate each other in a crowd of horses. When you introduce yourself to a horse for the first time, notice how the horse reaches out his muzzle to sniff you. Given this, the most polite way to approach a horse is with the back of your hand extended so the horse may take in your personal scent. Letting a horse breathe in your scent tells the animal that you are a fellow herd-mate (not a predator) and this usually makes the horse more agreeable to being handled.

4. Touch

The sense of touch is important to a horse. Their skin is tougher than our human skin, but it is rich with nerve endings. If you sit on a pasture fence and watch a herd of horses for a few hours, you'll see how horses use touch to communicate with each other. The rider can also use touch to convey friendly messages to the horse. A soft touch, pat on the shoulder, massage near the ears or the withers – these are all ways of saying, "I'm not a predator, I'm your friend."



SAFETY IN THE STABLE

Tips to keep you safe in the stable:

1. Do not wear sandals or thin shoes. Wear sturdy shoes or boots that will protect your feet if your horse or pony steps on them.
2. When you are near a horse, remember how a horse senses your presence. Reassure the horse that you are a friend and not a predator. This can be done by:
 - a. standing where the horse can see you
 - b. saying or humming a soothing word or sound
 - c. giving the back of your hand for the horse to smell
 - d. stroking it gently
3. Be calm and quiet. Sudden moves and sounds will frighten the horse and cause him to run, shy (jump sideways) or kick out.
4. Never stand directly behind a horse. The horse cannot see you and may kick.
5. Never stand too close to the side of a horse. It may shy (jump sideways) and step on you.
6. Do not kneel or squat next to the horse. When cleaning a horse's hooves or putting on leg bandages, do not squat or kneel. Bend over so that if the horse moves, you can get out of the way quickly.



- ✓ Lead the horse from the left side, with the right hand to give greater leverage.



- ✗ Never wrap the rope tightly round the hand for fear of injury.

7. Never loop lead ropes, lunge lines, or reins around your hands or any other part of your body. If your horse pulls away, you could be dragged.
8. Always tie up the horses with a quick release knot – this is a knot which comes undone with a single pull. If a horse becomes frightened and pulls away, you can release the knot. The feeling of being trapped is very frightening to a horse.
9. Lead a horse with a halter and a lead rope. Hold the lead rope in the right hand directly under the halter, and take up the spare rope in the left hand. Do not hook your fingers through the straps or rings. If the horse pulls away, your fingers could be caught.
10. Keep your distance from other horses. Do not put yourself and the horse at risk of getting kicked.
11. When leading horses and needing to pass each other, people, and not horses, should pass shoulder to shoulder as this will keep the horses' hind legs away from each other.
12. When going through a passageway or a doorway, make sure the horse has enough space so that it does not hit itself.
13. Never feed the horses without permission. Some horses are on a special diet. Always ask the horse-keeper for permission before feeding the horse.



- ✓ Slice carrots into palm size and hold out on an open palm while feeding the horse.



- ✗ Do not hold the carrot in between the fingers as you might accidentally get bitten.

RIDING ATTIRE

1. Wear a correct fitting helmet of required safety standards whenever you are on a horse. Long hair should be tied back. Wear solid shoes with low heels and light treads or smooth soles.
2. Wear comfortable but not overly baggy clothing. Pants should be jodhpurs or a suitable denim jeans style and tops should preferably be long-sleeved and not too loose-fitting.
3. Gloves, long sleeves or "arm socks" are recommended for jumping and cross-country training. They also give extra protection against blisters, sun and scratches.
4. If jewelry is worn, it must not be the type which can be caught up in ropes and equipment.
5. Wear appropriate spectacle and spectacle hooks that are suitable for sporting activities.



BALANCING POSITIONS

GOOD BALANCING POSITIONS



CORRECT – Good balance position

- Eyes up
- Arms hang beside ribs
- Knee and ankles relaxed
- Head balanced
- Back straight
- Balanced on seat bones
- Feet and legs under body
- Heels down

WRONG BALANCING POSITIONS



WRONG – “Slumping”

- Head and eyes down
- Round back
- Sitting on buttocks
- Rider out of balance
- Arms out ahead of body
- Knees pinching
- Heels up, toes down



WRONG – “Chair seat”

- Back straight, but feet and legs ahead
- Rider out of balance backward
- Knees tight
- Heels level
- Legs too upfront



WRONG – “Perching”

- Too far forward
- Stiff, hollow back
- Sitting on front of seat (crotch)
- Knees tight
- Legs too far back
- Heels level or up

Taken from: *The United States Pony Club Manual of Horsemanship, Basics for Beginners, D Level* by Susan E. Harris (Howell Book House, 1994).



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