# Riding & Training Terms, Horse

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

## riding TERMS

There is a wealth of jargon used throughout the horse world. This is especially true when discussing equine riding, whether English, Western, dressage, or competitive. Learning this vocabulary allows you to better understand articles, event language, and what trainers, farriers, veterinarians, and other horse owners are saying. The following list of terms, while in no way comprehensive, contains some of the terms used to discuss horse riding.

**Above the Bit:** Where the horse evades the rider's aids by raising the head above the level of the rider's hands. This reduces the amount of control the rider has over the horse.

**Action:** The movement of the horse's legs.

**Aids:** Signals or cues by which the rider communicates his wishes to the horse. The "natural" aids include the voice, the legs, the hands, and weight. "Artificial" aids include the whip and spurs.

**Airs Above the Ground:** *High school* movements performed by highly trained horses, where either the front legs or all four legs are off the ground. Airs above the ground include the *levade* and the *capriole*.

**Amble:** The slower form of the lateral pacing gait. (See *Pacer*)

**Back:** To step a horse backward.

**Barrel Racing:** A timed event in Western riding where horse and rider complete a cloverleaf pattern around three barrels.

**Bascule:** Term used to describe the arc a horse makes as it jumps a fence.

**Blistering:** Application of a caustic agent, or blister, to the leg. Formerly and, occasionally, still used in the treatment of a number of conditions, such as *spavin*, *ringbone*, and *bowed tendon*. Thought to encourage internal healing in some cases.

**Bosal:** A braided noseband used in western equitation. Western bitless bridle.

**Breaking, or Breaking-In:** The early education of the young horse, where it is taught the skills it will need for its future life as a riding or driving horse.

**Broken-In/Broke to Ride:** Horse that has been accustomed to the tack and the rider and has begun initial training. (Also called *greenbroke*.)

**Buck:** A leap in the air with the head lowered and the back arched.

**Canter:** Three-beated gait of the horse in which one hind leg strides first (the leading leg), followed by the opposite diagonal pair and finally the opposite foreleg. Called the *lope* in Western riding.



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**Capriole:** One of the *Airs Above the Ground* in which the horse leaps with all four legs and strikes out with the hind legs in mid-leap.

**Cavelletti:** Adjustable low wooden jumps used in the schooling of horse and rider.

**Chip/Chip-In:** When a horse puts in a short, additional stride in front of a fence.

**Chukker:** A seven-and-one-half-minute period in a polo game; from Hindu meaning "a circle."

**Class:** A grouping of horses in a show involving horses with riders or shown at hand that perform according to the class specifications as described in the rulebook of that show.

**Collected:** Controlled gait: a correct coordinated action.

**Collection:** Where the rider, by means of carefully balanced driving and restraining aids, causes the horse's frame to become compacted and the horse light and supple in the hand. The baseline is shortened, the croup is lowered, the shoulder is raised and the head is held on the vertical.

**Cooling Out:** Cooling down a heated horse by walking, brushing, giving very small drinks of water, and sponging him off after he has been worked.

**Counter Canter:** School movement in which the horse canters in a circle with the outside leg leading, instead of the more usual inside leg.

**Courbette:** One of the *Airs Above the Ground*. After performing the *levade*, the horse bounds or hops forward on bent hind legs.

**Combined Training:** Equestrian competition held over one or three days and including the disciplines of dressage, cross country, and show jumping. Also known as *Eventing*.

**Cross-firing:** Condition in which the hind foot strikes the opposite front leg or hoof.

**Crow Hopping:** When a horse hops or leaps repeatedly in the air, with all four feet off the ground at the same time, he is said to be crow hopping.

**Crow Hops:** Mild bucking motions.

**Cues:** Another name for *aids*. Signals by which the rider communicates his wishes to the horse.

**Dishing:** A faulty *action*, where the foot of the foreleg is thrown outward in a circular movement with each stride.

**Disunited:** Canter in which the horse's legs are out of sequence.

**Diagonals:** The horse's legs move in pairs at the trot, called diagonals. The left diagonal is when the left foreleg and right hindleg move together, the right diagonal is when the right foreleg and the left hindleg move together.

**Dressage:** (i) The art of training the horse so that he is totally obedient and responsive to the rider, as well as supple and agile in his performance. (ii) Competitive sport which, by a series of set tests, seeks to judge the horse's natural movement and level of training against an ideal.

**Driving:** A discipline in which a horse or horses pull a vehicle such as a carriage, cart, or wagon.

**Engagement:** The hindlegs are engaged when they are brought well under the body.

**English Pleasure:** A saddleseat class judged on manners, performance, attitude, and quality of the horse.

**Equitation:** The art of horse riding.

**Eventing:** Equestrian competition held over one or three days and including the disciplines of dressage, cross country, and show jumping. Also known as *Combined Training*.

**Extension:** The extension of the paces is the lengthening of the frame and stride. The opposite of *collection.*

**Extravagant Action:** High knee and hock action such as that seen in the Hackney and the Saddlebred.

**Flat Race:** A race without jumps.

**Floating:** The action associated with the trotting gait of the Arabian horse.



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**Flying Change:** Change of canter lead performed by the horse to rebalance during turns and changes of direction.

**Forefooting:** Roping an animal by the forefeet.

**Forging:** A fault in a gait which occurs when a hind foot strikes the bottom of the front foot on the same side.

**Four-In-Hand:** A team of four harness horses.

**Fox Trot:** A short-step gait, as when passing from walk to trot.

**Gait:** The paces at which horses move, usually the walk, trot, canter, and gallop.

**Gallop:** Four-beated gait of the horse, in which each foot touches the ground separately, as opposed to the *canter*, which is a three-beat gait.

**Going:** Term used to describe the nature of the ground, i.e. deep, good, rough.

**Green:** A horse that is in the early learning stage of his particular discipline is said to be green.

**Greenbroke:** Horse that has been accustomed to the tack and the rider and has begun initial training. (Also called *broken-in* or *broke to ride.*)

**Ground Line:** Pole placed on the ground in front of a fence to help the horse and/or rider judge the take-off point.

**Gymkhana:** Mounted games, including bending poles, sack race, musical sacks, and a variety of other games and races.

**Gymnastic:** Combination of fences placed at relative distances to each other, used in the training of the jumping horse.

**Habit:** Traditional riding attire for sidesaddle riders.

**Half Halt:** An exercise, basically a "pay attention, please" used to communicate to the horse that the rider is about to ask for some change of direction or gait, or other exercise or movement.

**Half Pass:** Dressage movement performed on two tracks in which the horse moves sideways and forwards at the same time.

**Halter-broke:** Term used to describe a young horse that has been accustomed to the very basics of wearing a halter.

**Halt:** When the horse is at a standstill.

**Hand Gallop:** An extension of the canter.

**Haute Ecole:** The classical art of advanced riding. See also *Airs Above the Ground*.

**High School:** Advanced training and exercise of the horse.

**Horsemanship:** The art of equitation or riding.

**Hunt Seat:** An English discipline which includes riding on the flat and over fences to demonstrate suitability to the hunt field.

**Impulsion:** Strong, but controlled, forward movement in the horse (not to be confused with speed).

**In Front of the Bit:** A term used to describe a horse which pulls or hangs heavily on the rider's hand.

**In Hand:** When a horse is controlled from the ground rather than being ridden.

**Indirect Rein:** The opposite rein to the direction in which the horse is moving. When giving an indirect rein aid, the instruction comes by pressing the opposite rein against the horse's neck.

**Inside Leg:** The legs of both horse and rider which are on the inside of any circle or curved track being travelled.

**Inside:** In a ring, the side of the horse closer to the center of the ring.

**Interference:** Faulty gait in which a foot strikes the fetlock or cannon of the opposite foot; most often done by base-narrow, toe-wide, or splay-footed horses.

**Jog:** Western riding term for trot. Also used to describe a slow, somewhat shortened pace in English riding.



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**Leader:** Either of the two leading horses in a team of four, or a single horse harnessed in front of one or more horses. The "near" leader is the left hand horse and the "off" leader is the right hand horse.

**Leg Up:** Method of mounting in which an assistant stands behind the rider and supports the lower part of his left leg and giving a boost as necessary as the rider springs up off the ground.

**Leopard:** A rope which attaches to the halter that is used to lead or tie a horse with.

**Levade:** A classical *air above the ground* in which the *forehand* is lifted with bent forelegs on deeply bent hind legs - a controlled half-rear.

**Line-Up:** A command used in the show ring for riders to come to the center of the ring and form a line.

**Lope:** Slow Western *canter*.

**Manege:** An enclosure used for training and schooling horses. Also called a *school.*

**Nearside:** The left hand side of the horse.

**Offside:** The right hand side of the horse.

**On the Bit:** A horse is said to be "on the bit" when he carries his head in a near vertical position and he is calmly accepting the rider's contact on the reins.

**Outfit:** The equipment of rancher or horseman.

**Outside:** When riding in a ring, the side closest to the rail or fence of the ring.

**Overface:** To present a young horse at a fence which is beyond his level of training, or beyond his physical capability.

**Overreaching:** Faulty gait in which the hind foot steps on the heel of the front foot on the same side. Occurs most often when the horse is galloping or jumping.

**Pacer:** A horse which moves its legs in lateral pairs, rather than the conventional diagonal pairs.

**Pace:** A lateral two-beat gait mostly performed by gaited horses.

**Paddling:** Throwing the front feet outward as they are picked up; most common in toe-narrow or pigeon-toed horses.

**Passage:** Dressage movement in which the horse trots in an extremely collected and animated manner.

**Passenger:** One who rides a horse without control, letting the horse go as he wishes.

**Performance Registry:** A record book in which the performance of animals is recorded and preserved.

**Piaffe:** Dressage movement in which the horse trots in place, with *forehand* elevated and croup lowered.

**Pirouette:** Dressage movement in which the forelegs of the horse describe a small circle, while the hind legs remain in place, one of them acting as a pivot.

**Plantation Pleasure:** An English class judged on manners and way of going to include Tennessee Walking Horses, which will show at the flat walk, running walk, and canter.

**Pleasure Driving:** A class of horses pulling carts which is judged on manners and way of going.

**Pointing:** Perceptible extension of the stride with little flexion; likely to occur in the long-strided Thoroughbred and Standardbred breeds - animals bred and trained for great speed.

**Posting Trot:** The action of the rider rising from the saddle in rhythm with the horse's trot. (Also called *Rising Trot*.)

**Pounding:** Heavy contact with ground instead of desired light, springy movement.

**Rack:** The fifth gait of the American Saddlebred - a flashy four-beat gait.

**Rein Back:** When a horse moves backward with the hooves being set down almost simultaneously in diagonal pairs.

**Reining:** Type of Western riding in which advanced movements such as spins and slides are executed in various patterns.

**Reverse:** A command used in the show ring to indicate a change of direction.



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**Rising Trot:** The action of the rider rising from the saddle in rhythm with the horse's trot. (Also called *Posting Trot*.)

**Running Walk:** A four-beat gait faster than a walk, often over 6 miles per hour.

**Saddle Seat:** A discipline of riding which is typically used for breeds that show with high knee and hock action and a very flashy, animated way of going.

**School Movements:** The gymnastic exercises performed in the school or manege.

**School:** Enclosed, marked out area used for the training and exercise of the horse. (See also *Manege*.)

**Serpentine:** School movement in which the horse, at any pace, moves down the center of the school in a series of equal-sized loops.

**Shoulder-In:** Two-track movement in which the horse is evenly bent along the length of its spine away from the direction in which it is moving.

**Showmanship:** A class at a horse show judged on the exhibitor's ability to fit (prepare) and show a horse at halter being poised and confident while leading a well-groomed and conditioned horse through a precise pattern.

**Side-wheeler:** A pacer that rolls the body sidewise as he paces.

**Single-foot:** A term formerly used to designate the rack.

**Speedy Cutting:** The inside of diagonal fore and hind pastern make contact; sometimes seen in fast-trotting horses.

**Spread:** To stretch or pose.

**Trailer:** Transportation vehicle of one or more horses, which is towed behind another vehicle.

**Transition:** The act of changing from one pace to another. Walk to trot and trot to canter are known as "upward transitions." Canter to trot and trot to walk are known as "downward transitions."

**Trappy:** A short, quick, choppy stride; a tendency of horses with short, straight pasterns and straight shoulders.

**Traverse or Side Up:** Lateral movement without forward or backward movement.

**Tree:** The wooden or metal frame of a saddle.

**Trot:** Moderate-speed gait in which the horse moves from one diagonal pair of legs to the other, with a period of suspension in between.

**Two Track:** School movements in which the hindlegs follow a separate track from that made by the forelegs.

**Vaulting:** Equestrian sport involving gymnastic exercises done on the back of a moving horse.

**Vertical:** Upright fence with no spread. Can be rails, planks, gate, or wall.

**Walk:** A slow four-beat gait.

**Warming-up:** The process of going through the gaits while performing suppling exercises to limber up both horse and rider in the beginning of a workout.

**Whoa:** A verbal command used to signal a well-trained horse to stop. Usually combined with gently pulling back on the horse's reins.

**Wrangling:** Rounding up; saddling range horses.



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