

# Pointers on Saddle Fitting...

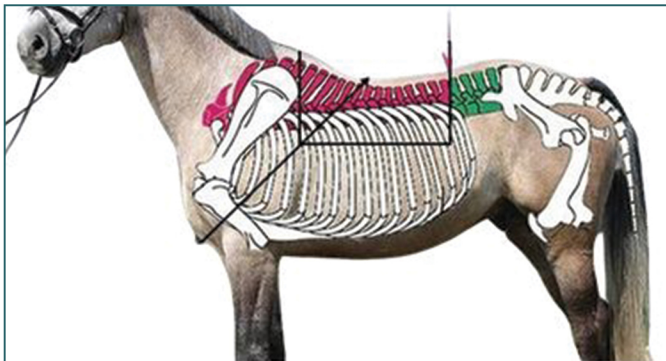
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## Saddle placement and the musculoskeletal effect

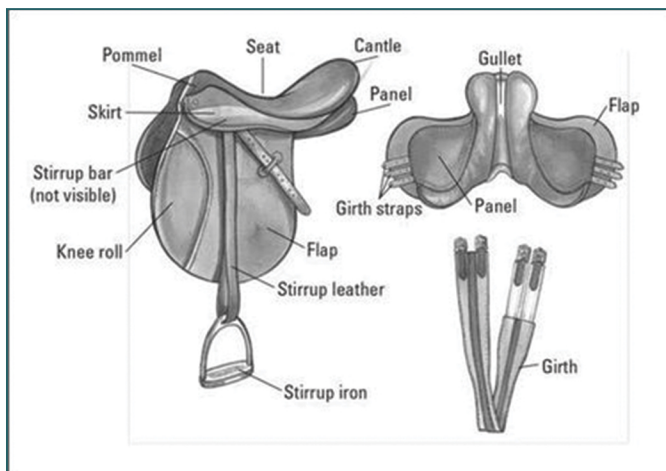
A horse's conformation changes throughout its life-time. These changes are related to training, intensity levels of exercise, and weight maintenance. When fitting a saddle, it is crucial to consider the horse's physical attributes and to continue monitoring saddle placement as the horse matures and develops athletically.

A well-fitted saddle enhances your horse's performance, placing you in the centre of gravity, allowing for perfect balance and unity. It will also maximise equal distribution of the weight-bearing surface over the horse's back.

The Saddlebred's unique conformation generally requires the use of a cut-back saddle, designed specifically to fit its anatomy and athleticism.



It is important to understand that cut back saddles vary in length while the width remains standard.

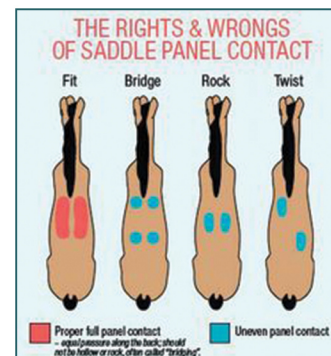


## Some factors possibly affecting saddle fitment:

- The shape of the withers.
- The pommel should present adequate clearance over the wither, ensuring enough width to avoid lateral pinching of the Trapezius muscle.
- The placement of the shoulders. We advise that the saddle sits an inch behind the shoulder blade, allowing free and full rotation of the scapula.
- The shape of the back. Backs vary in shape. Some may be flat, others narrow while some may be sway.
- The length of the back. Each individual has a different length of back.



On either side of the spinal vertebrae, the bones are supported by the Longissimus Dorsi muscle. This muscle, running from the wither to the sacrum, connects the horse's fore quarter to the hind quarter, supporting and predominantly controlling equine movement. This muscle bears direct contact with the saddle and supports a riders weight when mounted in the saddle.

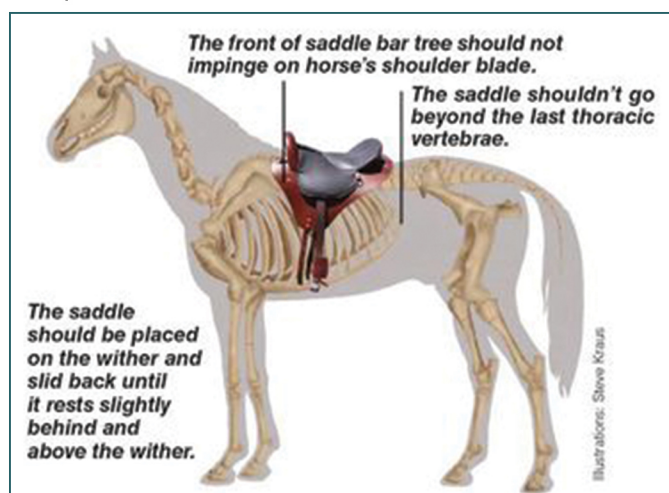


\*All images sourced from the web for visual effect\*



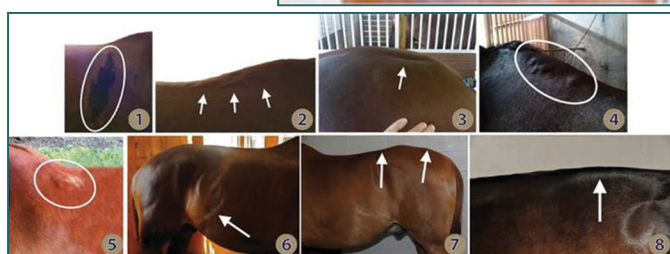
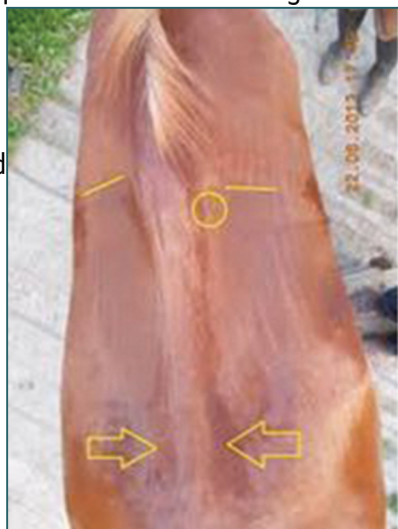
## Guide to fitting your saddle

- Stand your horse on a level surface, place saddle on the horses back at the withers and slide saddle towards the horses tail until it centres
- Check for adequate clearance of the wither
- Check for shoulder clearance
- Check that the tree follows the contour of the horses back
- Check that the saddle is balanced and flat
- Check that the cantle is placed securely without elevating and rocking up and down while the horse engages movement
- The billit straps can assist in seating your saddle at a desired point
- We recommend an elastic girth to allow the rib cage to expand and deflate as the horse breathes



## Signs to look for in horses with poorly fitted saddles

Friction causing hot spots and sores. Ill fitting saddles often cause friction in areas that float resulting in irregular contact. These areas can become inflamed and eventually turn into saddle sores.



\*All images sourced from the web for visual effect\*



## Behavioral changes when saddled

Always monitor changes in your horse while being saddled. Horses mostly show their discomfort while tightening your girth. Always check the 'V' where the deep pectoral ( ascending pectoral) / external abdominal/ fascia meet for over-girthing.

## Restricted movement

Your horse's motion changes from free and flowing to tight and short in stride.

## Uneven sweat patterns beneath saddle placement area

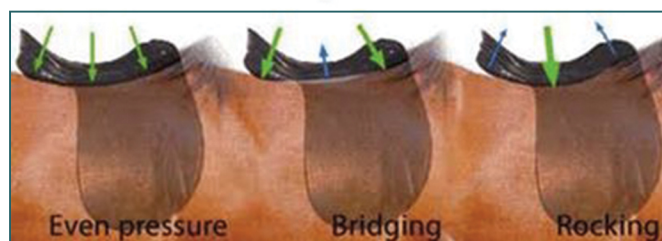
When unsaddling, check for areas that are dry and free from sweat. The dry spots expose areas that your saddle lacks in contact.

## Hypersensitivity in the saddle placement area while grooming

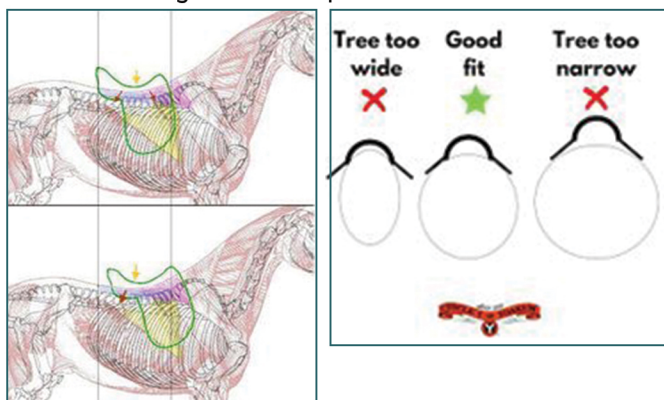
Pay heed to tail swishing, ear pinning and biting while grooming the horse's back.

## Rocking up or down of the saddle

Once a saddle is placed on the horses, it should not tip up towards the shoulder or dip into the scapula.



Saddle rolling from side to side while horse is ridden. This could be a sign of an ill-fitted saddle, however, first check that the rider is balanced and centred before making this assumption.





## Girth Shapes



## Saddle Pads



### Important:

We suggest that your saddle is stored on an appropriately fitting saddle rack. Your saddle spends more time on the rack than on your horses back, if your rack is poorly balanced, your saddle will depress in areas of contact which in turn will affect its placement on your horse.

The underside and gullet of your saddle should be cleaned daily to prevent hard crusts of dirt forming. Saddles should be oiled frequently to keep them soft and pliable.