



# Rider Certification Program

## Study Guide

### Level 1

This study guide has been designed to provide you with some of the important information that you will need to know for the Level 1 test. This information has been condensed from the larger Equestrian Bahamas Rider Certification Program Study Guide, which is available online at [www.equestrianbahamas.org](http://www.equestrianbahamas.org), or from your trainer.

The Level 1 test consists of two parts: a Stable Management test, and an Under Saddle test. The pass mark for each part of the test is 80%. The Stable Management test has a written portion and a practical portion.

You should present yourself and your horse for the test as if you were riding in a clinic. Required attire for the rider includes: an ASTM approved helmet that is properly fitted, hard soled, heeled, ankle boots or higher and fitted, seamless pants. Half chaps are permissible. A well-fitted shirt with a collar and tucked into the pants or breeches is recommended with a belt that is visible. Gloves are recommended at all levels. Hair must be either tucked into the helmet or kept tidy with a hair net. A single braid is acceptable if hair is very long. Your horse need not be braided or clipped, but your turnout should be neat.

In both parts of the Stable Management test, you will be asked to show that you have mastered certain principles and skills in stable management. The answers for these questions are all contained in this study guide. The Under Saddle part of the test will be conducted in a ride format: in other words, you will ride in a group with other test candidates. The test administrator will give you certain instructions which you should do your best to follow.

We hope that you will find this study guide useful. Have fun, learn lots, and good luck!

## HORSE COLOURS

Horses come in many different colors. Some breed groups and colour breeds have their own color standards. There are no colour standards in the hunter/jumper discipline, but the definition for the most common colours include:

<p>BAY: A <i>bay</i> horse is a brown-coloured horse with black points. Points are defined as the tips of the ears, muzzle, mane, tail and legs.</p> <p>A <i>dark bay</i> is dark brown with black points.</p>	 <p>Bay</p>	 <p>Dark Bay</p>
<p>BLACK: A <i>black</i> horse is black in colour with black points</p> <p>BROWN: A <i>brown</i> horse is a dark horse or nearly black in colour with brown points.</p>	 <p>Black</p>	 <p>Brown</p>
<p>CHESTNUT: A <i>chestnut</i> horse is a reddish-ginger or copper with the same color or lighter mane, tail and legs.</p> <p>A <i>liver chestnut</i> has a dark purplish hue.</p>	 <p>Chestnut</p>	 <p>Liver Chestnut</p>
<p>GREY: White or grey coat with dark skin, eyes and muzzle. A <i>grey</i> horse is born as a darker grey and lightens with age, until he is nearly white.</p> <p><i>Iron grey</i> is a mixture of dark grey, black and white hairs.</p> <p><i>Dappled grey</i> has circles of darker colors generally on the hindquarters.</p> <p><i>Flea-bitten grey</i> has grey or chestnut specks throughout the body.</p>	 <p>Grey</p>  <p>Iron Grey</p>	 <p>Dappled Grey</p>  <p>Flea-bitten Grey</p>

<p>ROAN: A dark coat with white hairs mixed in. Roans can be bay (bay and white), blue (black and white), strawberry (light chestnut and white) or red (chestnut and white).</p>		
<p>DUN: A tan or mouse color with dark legs, dorsal stripe, mane and tail. May have zebra stripes on the legs.</p> <p>BUCKSKIN: A dun with no dorsal stripe</p>		
<p>PALOMINO: Golden coat with a cream or silver mane and tail.</p>		
<p>PINTO: Large coloured patches of any colour and white. Note that "Paint" is the name of the colour breed, not a colour in itself. A pinto horse is not necessarily a Paint. Black and white pintos are known as <i>piebalds</i>. Any other color and white is a <i>skewbald</i>.</p>		
<p>APPALOOSA: Roan with patches of spots, or dark with light spots (snowflake), white with dark spots (leopard) or dark with a white blanket containing spots (blanket). Appaloosa is considered both a breed and a color.</p>		 

## SAFETY

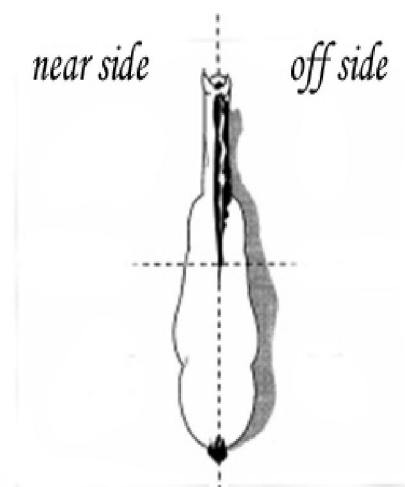
Safety is very important when working around horses. You are dealing with a large animal that lives by the “flight first” rule of survival. If the horse is startled or scared, the horse will try to run away. Here are important rules to remember:

### SAFETY FIRST

- Always ask for help if you need it.
- Close gates, stall doors and stall guards properly. Keep washstands and aisle ways clear.
- Approach a horse where he can see you, on the left side, and use your voice.
- Don’t stand directly in front of or behind a horse.
- Never kneel down next to a horse, or duck under a horse’s neck or belly.
- Wear appropriate clothing and protective footwear. Always wear a helmet with the chin strap securely fastened when riding.
- Do not wear dangling jewelry or headphones with wires. Long hair should be tied back in a braid or ponytail, never left loose.
- Use cross ties whenever possible. Never tie a horse unless using a safety knot.
- Always use a lead rope when leading a horse. Never wrap the lead rope around your hand, and never clip a lead rope to the horse’s bit.
- Never leave a horse standing with a dangling lead rope, reins, etc. Always run up your stirrups if you are not on horseback.
- Remember that your horse is much wider than you are. Do not attempt to “squeeze through” a narrow opening when leading your horse.
- Always be aware of your surroundings.
- Do not run, yell, or throw things when around horses.
- Always check your equipment before riding. This includes double-checking your girth.
- When riding keep at least one horse length between you and the horse in front of you.
- Candy and gum should not be eaten or chewed while riding. This is a choking hazard.

### NEAR SIDE AND OFF SIDE

The left-hand side of the horse is referred to as the “near side”, and the right-hand side is called the “off” side. Always approach a horse from the near side, and begin all routines such as grooming and tacking up from the near side. Horses are accustomed by training to being approached from the near side, and so are more comfortable this way. This all goes back to the days when knights and soldiers wearing swords rode and fought on horseback. Since a sword was usually hung from the left hip, mounting from the left meant that the scabbarded sword did not have to cross the horse’s back as the rider swung his leg over! Even today, young horses are trained to be handled, led and mounted from the left side.





## GETTING STARTED

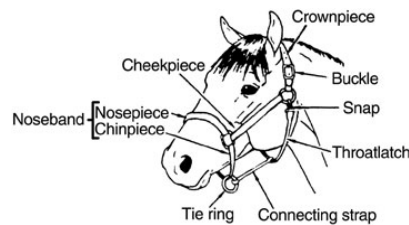
You are expected to know how to approach a horse, put on a halter, and lead it from the stall. You may ask the tester for assistance, but you must be prepared to tell them what should be done.

### Entering the horse's stall

1. Gather the horse's halter and lead rope before entering the stall. As you approach the stall, talk to the horse, so that he knows where you are, and that you are entering his "house".
2. Open the stall door, but do not enter until the horse is facing you. Never walk into the stall and approach the rump of a horse.
3. Still speaking, approach the horse from the front confidently, with no sudden movements.  
*Note:* You should close the stall door so that it is no longer wide open, but NEVER bolt the door of a stall while you are in the stall. It is easy to be hurt if trapped in a stall with a startled horse.
4. Speak to the horse quietly, and gently stroke its shoulder and neck area before putting on the halter.

### Putting on the halter

In order to make sense of the following steps, take a look at your horse's halter and know these parts: cheek pieces, crownpiece, throatlatch, noseband, buckle and snap.



Stand on the left side, facing forward to put on the halter. Place the lead rope around the horse's neck to prevent him from walking away as you put the halter on.

If you have a halter with a detachable throatlatch:

1. Check that the crownpiece is buckled and the throatlatch is unfastened.
2. With your left hand guide the noseband and chinpiece around the horse's nose. With your right hand reach up to gently slide the crownpiece over the horse's ears.
3. If necessary, bend the horse's ears *forward* to fit through the crown piece, not *backward*.
4. Secure the halter by fastening the snap on the throatlatch.

Some halters do not have a detachable throatlatch. To put on a halter of this type:

1. Unbuckle the crownpiece so that the halter is ready to be put on.
2. Hold the noseband in your left hand. Guide the crownpiece under and around the horse's neck with your right hand.
3. Guide the noseband onto the horse's nose, and the crownpiece over the horse's neck, just behind the ears, and fasten the buckle.

This is also a good method to use if you have a horse who is very head shy or nervous about being touched around the ears.

## Leading Your Horse to the Cross Ties

1. Place your right hand 6 to 8 inches below the metal snap of the lead rope.
2. Fold the excess lead rope and hold with your left hand. NEVER loop the excess lead rope around your hand.
3. Unlatch the stall guard or open the stall door all the way open, and lead the horse by staying at the near side (left) shoulder and looking ahead to where you want the horse to go.
4. Position your horse in the middle of the aisle way and secure them with the cross ties.

## Cross Tie Safety

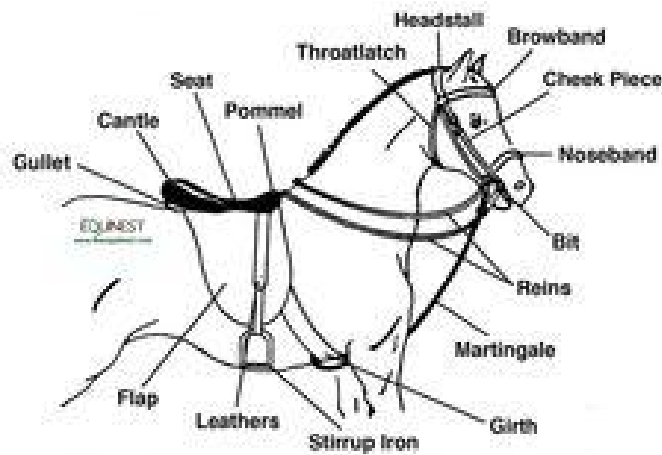
1. Cross ties are to be placed on the cheek rings of the halter. Never place them under the chin.
2. Remove the lead rope and place it on a hook, or in the grooming box. Don't just throw it down in the aisle way, and NEVER leave the lead hanging in front of the horse.
3. Do not leave the horse unattended once in the cross ties. Ask someone to watch your horse if you need to leave for any particular reason.
4. Always walk around the front of the horse, and under the cross ties.
  - a. Don't walk under the horse's neck or behind them
  - b. Don't reach over the cross ties, as this could cause an injury to you should the horse suddenly lift its head.
5. When leading your horse past another horse on cross ties, please make sure you have enough room, and that someone is with the other horse. NEVER pass a horse when another tacker is picking the feet.

## TACKING UP

You are expected to know how to tack up your horse. If you need help at any point you may ask the tester for assistance, but you must be prepared to tell them what to do.

When tacking up a horse it is a good idea to follow the same procedures each time. This is reassuring to the horse, and helps you to remember all the steps.

To make sense of the steps, you should be familiar with the different parts of the horse's tack:



### **Putting on the Saddle**

1. Place a clean saddle pad on the horse's back just behind the withers. Some horses have a thin line pad or wither pad that goes on top of the saddle pad.
2. Gently set the saddle on top of the saddle pad. "Tent" the saddle pad to prevent pressure on the horse's withers. Adjust the saddle so that it is level – the pommel (front) should not be higher than the cantle (back).
3. Attach the Velcro tabs of the saddle pad (if your saddle pad has these), first on the left side and then on the right. Make sure that they are above the buckle or billet guards.
4. Fasten the girth on the RIGHT side of the saddle, making sure that the girth is even on both billets.
  - a. If the girth has a d-ring attached this should face the front of the horse.
  - b. If your girth has elastic on only one side, then the non-elastic side should be fastened on the right.
5. If you are using a standing martingale, buckle the martingale around the horse's neck so that the neck strap buckle is on near side of the neck. Place the girth strap of the martingale between the horse's front legs, and guide the girth through the loop, being sure that the loop is centred under the horse.
6. Gently and slowly start to tighten the girth from the LEFT side, and tighten until snug.
  - a. Make sure the girth is even on both sides.
  - b. Stretch the horse's legs to prevent pinching or girth sores.
  - c. Pull the billet guards down to cover the girth buckles.

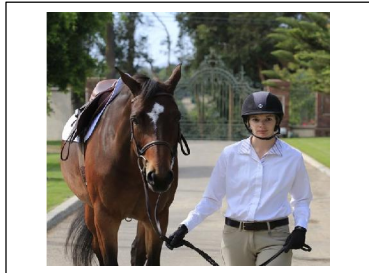
### **Putting on the bridle**

1. Before bridling your horse, make sure that the buckles of the noseband, throatlatch and curb chain (if any) are unfastened.
  - a. Your horse should remain restrained at all times, either by lacing the reins or re-buckling the halter crownpiece over the neck.
2. Holding the bit in your left hand and the headstall (crownpiece) in your right. Stand on the horse's left side when bridling.
3. Gently guide the bit into the horse's mouth, and place the crownpiece over the horse's ears.
  - a. Point the ears forward to get them through the crownpiece.
  - b. If the horse doesn't open its mouth right away, gently push your left thumb in the space just behind the horse's teeth. When the mouth opens guide the bit in so that it is on top of the horse's tongue.
4. Make sure the bridle is straight before securing all the buckles in place.
  - a. If using a standing martingale, attach the martingale to the noseband.
  - b. The noseband should fit tightly enough so that no more than one finger can fit between the horse's jaw and the noseband.
  - c. The throatlatch should be tightened so that four fingers or a fist can fit between the horse's cheek and the throatlatch.
  - d. Make sure that all straps are tucked in to their "keepers".

If your horse normally wears polo wraps or boots you must indicate this to the tester, and ask for their help in putting them on if you do not know how to do so. This will not be a part of the Level 1 test.

## Heading to the ring

Before leaving the shed row check to make sure that you are properly attired and equipped, i.e. you are wearing your hat, boots, spurs and safety vest if applicable; your shirt is tucked in and belted; your hair is tucked away (if applicable), and you have your gloves and crop.



*CORRECT: Rider walks at the horse's left shoulder. Reins are over the head and stirrups are run up safely.*



*INCORRECT: This is unsafe. If the horse bolted the rider wouldn't have much to hang on to. Dangling stirrups can easily catch in something.*



*INCORRECT: Don't try to "pull" your horse from the front...Your horse is stronger than you are; you could easily be trampled.*

## MOUNTING

Before mounting always check your girth and stirrups. If you are using an unfamiliar saddle, estimate the length of the stirrup leathers by placing the fingers on the stirrup bar and stretching the stirrup to the armpit.

The three mounting methods are:

- From a mounting block
- From the ground
- With a leg up

### Mounting from a mounting block

1. Stand the horse straight and square so that he does not bang his leg when moving away from the mounting block.
2. Place the reins over the horse's head, making sure that they are not twisted.
3. Stand on the horse's left side, facing his tail. Hold the reins and stick in your left hand, on the crest of the neck. The bight of the reins and the stick should be on the near side.
4. Place your left foot in the stirrup, with the toe toward, but not touching, the girth.
5. Grasp the cantle with your right hand and push up off the ground with your right leg.
6. As your body rises, push up with your arms to support your body and move your right hand to the pommel.
7. Bend your right leg at the knee and swing it over the seat of the saddle and the horse's croup, making sure you do not stab your horse with the toe of your boot.



8. Place your right foot into the stirrup and sink down lightly into the saddle. Put one rein in each hand and move the bight of the reins to the right side, or off side, of the horse's neck.



*Mounting correctly: with the reins in her left hand, the rider places her right foot in the stirrup, towards but not touching the girth so as not to dig into her horse's side.*



*The rider swings her right leg clear of the horse's back. Next she will place her right foot into the stirrup, and then softly lower herself into the saddle.*

### **Mounting from the ground**

From the ground, mount the horse the same way as you would from the mounting block.

### **Mounting with a leg-up**

1. To take a leg up, place the reins over the horse's head. Stand on the horse's left side, facing the saddle.
2. Hold the reins in the left hand, on the crest of the horse's neck. The bight of the reins should be on the near side. Take up the slack from the reins so that horse stands still.
3. Bend your left knee at 90 degrees by raising your foot off the ground. Have another person place their left hand on your left knee and their right hand on your left ankle.
4. On an agreed count, the helper lifts upward while you push yourself up with your hands on the pommel and cantle.
5. Move the right hand from the cantle to the pommel. Bend the right leg at the knee and swing it over the seat of the saddle and the horse's croup.
6. Place your right foot in the stirrup and sink down lightly into the saddle. Put one rein in each hand and move the bight of the reins to the off side of the horse's neck.

### **ONCE MOUNTED**

The girth should be checked both before you mount and again after your horse has warmed up for a few minutes. Your stirrup length should also be checked to make sure it is correct.

All riders should know how to tighten their girths and change their stirrup lengths while mounted. At this level you are expected to know HOW to do these things, but you are allowed to ASK FOR HELP if you need it.

To tighten your girth while mounted, keep both feet in the stirrups and put your left leg ahead of the saddle flap. Reach down with the left hand and pull upward on the billet leaving the buckle attached. Use the forefinger of the left hand to guide the tongue of the buckle into the next billet hole.



*SAFE: Keeping your foot in the stirrup, raise your left leg in front of the saddle, and use the left hand to lift the saddle flap and tighten the girth. Bridge the reins in the right hand.*

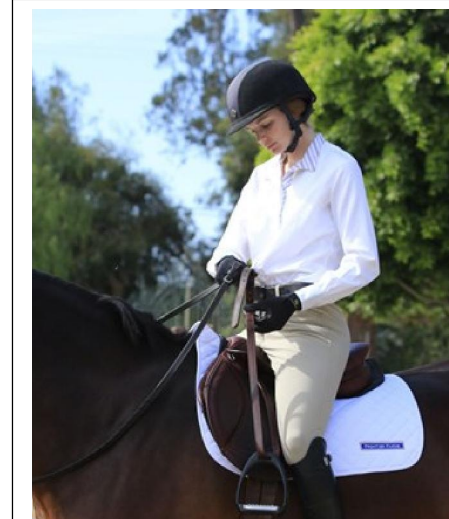


*UNSAFE: Taking your foot out of the stirrup allows the stirrup to dangle behind. This could bang against the horse and spook him, causing him to bolt.*

If necessary, a rider should be able to adjust the stirrup length while mounted. The rider should not remove the feet from the stirrups while adjusting the length.



*SAFE: Keep your foot in the stirrup and hold the reins in the right hand. Reach your left hand in front of the thigh and pull the leather to undo the buckle. Once adjusted, step down into the leather to set it firmly. Reverse hands for other side.*



*UNSAFE: Don't take your foot out of the stirrup when adjusting the stirrup length. This can get a rider into trouble if the horse spooks or takes off.*

## IN THE RING

In the Level 1 test you will be asked to demonstrate your proficiency at the walk and rising trot. You will also be asked to do other things such as halt your horse, drop and pick up your stirrups at the walk, and change the rein on the diagonal.

### Position

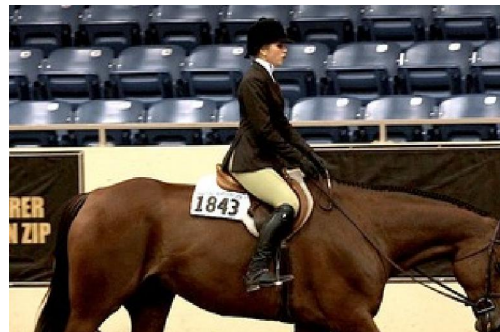
A rider who exhibits correct position is secure, confident, and able to move in harmony with the horse.

To determine the proper position, we look at four key angles made by the rider's:

- Heels
- Knees
- Hip
- Elbows

### Heel and Knee

- The heel should be down.
- The angle behind the knee should be approximately  $110^\circ$ .
- Ideal leg position, "at the girth", refers to the rider's leg positioned on the horse's flesh just behind the girth. This leg position provides a sound foundation for the upper body.
- In this properly positioned leg, the rider's knee and toe are on the same vertical line, and the rider's calf is against the horse.



### Hip and Body

A rider should sit tall, with a straight, relaxed back, open shoulders, and a soft hip. The hip acts as a shock absorber, and changes angle according to the gait of the horse.



*Left:* At the walk, the rider's upper body is slightly in front of the vertical, just enough to follow the horse's movement. *Right:* In the working trot rising, the rider's upper body is inclined about 15 degrees in front of the vertical so that he is with the motion of his horse. Note the straight line from shoulder to heel remains.



## Elbows, Arms and Hands

The correct way to hold the reins: in a loose fist, with the rein between the ring and pinky fingers, and the thumb on top. The wrists are straight, not “floppy”.

The upper arm should move freely, as though hanging from a hook at the shoulder. The elbow should allow continuous movement following the horse’s head and neck.



In the proper position, the hands are just over and slightly in front of the withers and in a direct line from the rider’s elbow to the horse’s mouth. Note the imaginary ‘line’ (indicated in red) that may be drawn from this young rider’s elbow to his pony’s mouth.

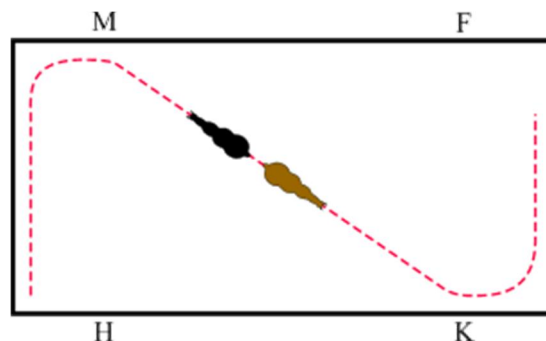
## Diagonals and Changing the Rein

In riding, to *take the left rein* means to travel around the ring with your left shoulder facing the inside of the ring. The young rider in the photo above is on the left rein, because the fence is on his right side. To *take the right rein* means to travel around the ring with your right shoulder facing the inside of the ring.

You will need to know about two kinds of diagonals: your posting diagonals, and the ring diagonals.

**Posting diagonals:** Posting (or rising) refers to the up-down-up-down movement out of the saddle that we make at the trot. In riding, when you are posting to the trot, it is important to be on the *correct diagonal*. When the outside foreleg of your horse goes forward, you should post out of the saddle. When the inside foreleg goes forward, you should sit. If you are on the incorrect diagonal, then sit an extra beat before rising again.

**Ring diagonals:** The ring diagonals are the imaginary lines drawn from one corner of the ring, across the ring centre, to the diagonally opposite corner. If you are asked to *change your rein across the diagonal* then you will follow that path: from one corner to another, going across the centre of the ring. In following this path you will *change your rein*; i.e. you will end up going in the opposite direction from the way you began.



*Left:*

*Changing  
across the  
diagonal*

## **DISMOUNTING**

Dismounting is the last action of riding the horse and is equally as important as any other component of the riding session. Improper dismounting, such as swinging your leg over the pommel in front of you to slide down, can startle or scare him, putting both of you in danger. To dismount properly:

1. Come to a complete halt.
2. Put the stick and the bight of the reins on the left or near side. Hold the reins in the left hand and place your hand on the crest of the horse's neck, while taking up the slack so that the horse stands still.
3. Place the right hand on the pommel of the saddle and remove the right foot from the stirrup.
4. Lift the right leg over the hindquarters without touching the horse. Bring your legs together while standing balanced in the left stirrup. (An alternative to this step is to kick *both* feet free of the stirrups, then lift the right leg over the hindquarters without touching the horse.)
5. Remove the left foot from the stirrup and slide off landing on both feet with a soft bend in your knees. Push your body away from the saddle as you dismount to avoid catching any clothing or equipment on the safety stirrups. (Note: Safety stirrups are notorious for becoming hooked in clothing during the dismount. If you are using safety stirrups, cross the left stirrup over the pommel of the saddle to avoid it hooking in your clothing as you slide down.)
6. Bring the reins forward over the head and immediately run up both stirrups and loosen the girth. It is important to run up the stirrups so that they do not catch on anything.

## **UNTACKING**

As with tacking up a horse, when untacking it is a good idea to follow the same procedures each time.

1. Start by unfastening the throatlatch, noseband and curb chain if the horse is wearing one.
2. Place the reins over the horse's head as if he were to be ridden and gently slip the bridle off over the ears. Great care should be taken not to bang the bit into the horse's teeth.
3. Place the halter on the horse's head and take the reins back over the head.
4. Clip the horse on the cross ties or tie and hang the bridle neatly on a hook.
5. Unbuckle the girth on the left side of the horse and let go of it gently so that it does not bang the horse in the ankles.
6. Detach the girth from the right side and place it over top of the saddle.
7. Use both hands to lift the saddle and pad off the horse's back and hang it on a rack. If there is no rack available, place the saddle pommel down with the cantle leaning against a solid object. To avoid damaging the pommel or cantle, place the girth under the pommel and between the cantle and the object that the saddle is supported by.
8. If using a martingale, take it off and hang it with the bridle.

## **PUTTING YOUR HORSE AWAY**

One of the final steps of the ride is to put your horse away. A good horseman makes sure that his horse is clean and fairly dry when put into his stall. The processes of grooming and washing are not a part of the Level 1 test, but you must know how to put your horse away properly as you will be tested on this.

When entering a stall, make sure that the door is open to its fullest extent. Walk yourself and the horse into the stall and turn him to face the door. Turning him loose as he walks through the door is dangerous because he may do one or more of the following:

- Kick you
- Bolt into the stall
- Hit his hips on the door frame
- Learn to drag people through the stall doorway

Once the horse is standing quietly, pat him, remove his halter and close and latch the door securely.

### **GIVING YOUR HORSE A TREAT**

Horses enjoy treats but should not be fed refined sugar. Better choices for treats are:

- Horse cookies
- Carrots
- Apples.

To avoid choking, carrots and apples should be cut into pieces.

The safest way to feed a treat is by putting the treat into a horse's feed tub. This is because hand feeding can bring on mouthy behaviors (nibbling, biting, etc.)

If a treat is fed by hand, place the treat flat in the palm of the hand, with the fingers closed and flexed away from the horse's muzzle. Place the palm of the hand under the horse's muzzle and allow the horse to remove the treat from your palm of your hand.

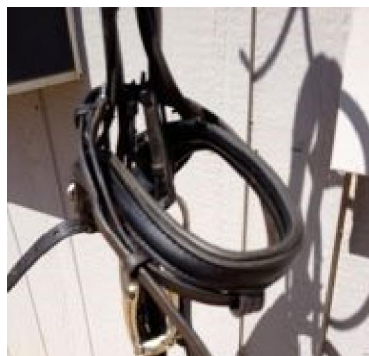
### **LAST BUT NOT LEAST: Putting your tack away**

It is important to care for your tack every single time you ride by cleaning it and putting it away neatly. In the Level 1 test you will be required to wipe down your bit, and put away your tack neatly. This includes hanging your bridle in a figure-8. If you have trouble making the figure-8 you may ask for help, but you have to tell the assistant what to do.

### **Steps to hanging your bridle in a figure-8**



*Step 1: Wrap the throat latch around the bridle, looping it through the reins in the process. Bring it around once more, and fasten by buckling.*



*Step 2: Wrap the cavesson (noseband) around the bridle, tucking the loose end in to the keeper. There should be no need to buckle it.*



*Step 3: If desired, pull the reins up from the top of the throat latch and hang with the crown piece as shown. Alternately the bridle may be hung with reins over the throat latch.*