

Riding Helmet Fitting

Did you know?

- The activities with highest risk of head injury are: motorcycle racing, car racing and horseback riding.
- A fall from two feet can cause permanent brain damage. A horse elevates a rider eight feet or more above ground.
- When a rider falls, most impacts occur in the back of the head. Riding helmets are designed to cover that area, and bike helmets are not.
- It has been proven that riding helmets save lives and prevent serious brain injury! That is why we use them.

Fitting a helmet:



Incorrect Fit



Correct Fit



Correct Harness Fit



Measure For Size

1) What's the correct size? US helmet manufacturers (and some foreign) size helmets numerically, usually from 6 ½ to 8. To find your approximate helmet size, use a tailor's tape measure and measure the circumference of your head just above your eyebrows. Divide the measurement by 3.14 (pi), then round to the nearest eighth inch. For example, a circumference of 22" divided by 3.14 yields 7.006, which rounds to a size of 7.

2) Put your helmet on right: Make sure the helmet is level - the visor shouldn't tip up or down. If you have long hair, tie it back at the nape of your neck - don't shove it under the helmet, or you'll get a poor fit. Fasten the harness, making sure it's comfortably snug. When trying on a new helmet you should wear your hair in the same style that you will wear it for riding such as a braid or plait doubled up and tucked under in a hair net).

3) Check the fit of your riding helmet: Make sure the helmet fits snugly all the way around. Wiggle it back and forth and side to side; when it moves, your scalp (and your eyebrows) should move with it. If it slides freely, you need a smaller size. If it squeezes uncomfortably, go up a size.

4) Check the shape of your riding helmet: If the helmet squeezes your brow but still rocks freely side to side, it's too round for your head; if it fits at the sides but rocks back and forth, it's too oval. Many helmets come with fitting pads you can slip into the inside hatband to solve these problems. For example, if the helmet is too round, put a pad on each side. Or, try a different style with a more or less oval shape.

5) Check the brim of your riding helmet: The helmet's brim should rest ½" to 1" inch above your eyebrows. If it sits higher, you're not getting full protection; any lower, and it could obscure your vision. Some helmets can be adjusted (with lacings or foam pads) to rest lower or higher. Or, try a style with a deeper or shallower crown.

6) Check the fit of the retention harness (chin strap): The chin strap should fit snugly under the chin. If there is a 'V' harness, the tip of the V should fit under ear. Helmets are made to work with a snug harness. You should be able to fit one finger between your chin and the strap.

What if you have a bad fall while wearing a helmet?

- You can't tell by looking at or even from feeling a helmet if it's been damaged. The material that absorbs the concussion, expanded polystyrene (which is similar to the material used to protect heavy electronics during shipping), may be damaged and unable to absorb another impact in the same area.
- Also, while helmets should fit the same over time the head liner - the soft material between the head and the hard - outer shell-compresses, making a helmet looser
- Save your box and receipt. Most manufacturers will replace the helmet free of charge or for a small fee if there is suspected damage after a fall, but do require documentation.

General rules for helmets:

- Helmets must be worn by everyone in Pony Club must wear a riding helmet (even members over the age of 18).
- Helmets usually only last about five years, but can be older than five years old

Horse Management Rule Book, 2002: II. Section 5 -

Helmets must:

- Have a manufacturer label.
- Have an SEI label inside referencing ASTM standard F1163-88.
 - ASTM - American Society for Testing and Materials
 - SEI - Safety Equipment Institute
- Fit level on the head, about 1" above the eyebrows, with the brim straight ahead.
- Fit snugly and equally well all the way around.
- Must have a chin harness that is adjusted for firm contact with the chin or jaw.
- Fit without the competitor's hair used to make the helmet fit.

Helmets at Pony Club rally:

- For D's - can be any conservative color.
- For C's - Formal: helmet must be black or have a black cover.
- For C's - Informal : helmet black or any conservative color
- Helmet covers **must** be removed when jackets are waived if the helmet is vented.
- Helmets **must** be kept in the tackroom at overnight competitions (along with boots, jackets, and all equipment).
- Helmets **must** be worn at jogs.
- Helmets **must** be worn for longeing.
- ALL members of pony club must wear an approved helmet, regardless of age

If your helmet comes off during competition:

- You **must** replace it and re-secure it before you continue or you will be ELIMINATED.
- You **must** dismount to replace your helmet.
- Someone may hand you your helmet - it is not unauthorized assistance.

References and more information:

Meszoly, Joanne. "Advances in Protective Headgear." Equus August 2006: 30-35

American Medical Equestrian Association - http://www.ameaonline.org/helmet_safety.html

American Riding Instructors Association - <http://www.riding-instructor.com/helmets.php>

Troxel - <http://www.troxelhelmets.com/>

Del Mar - <http://www.delmarhelmets.com/>

SEI - Safety Equipment Institute <http://www.seinet.org/>

Charles Owens - <http://www.charlesowen.co.uk/>