

JUNIOR HORSEBACK RIDING BADGE – MEETING 1

Badge Purpose: When girls have earned this badge, they'll know what it takes to be a good rider—from understanding horse body language to controlling the horse's speed while they're riding.

Activity Plan Length: 1.5 – 2 hours

Time	Activity	Materials Needed
15 minutes	Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls recite the Girl Scout Promise + Law. 	<input type="checkbox"/> (Optional) Girl Scout Promise and Law poster
20 minutes	Horseback Riding 101 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls will explore the fundamentals of horseback riding. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Phone or computer with internet access
10 minutes	How to Read a Horse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls learn how to interpret horse body language. 	<input type="checkbox"/> "How to Read a Horse" handout (one per group of 4 girls) <input type="checkbox"/> Writing utensils
10 minutes	Safety First <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls review how to safely interact with horses. 	None
15 minutes	Fit for Riding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls will practice exercises to strengthen their bodies for horseback riding. 	<input type="checkbox"/> Rubber or soccer balls <input type="checkbox"/> Chairs
15 minutes	Wrapping Up	<input type="checkbox"/> (Optional) Make New Friends lyrics poster

Note to Adults/Leaders

Girls will need to ride a horse in order to earn this badge. Be sure to make proper arrangements prior to working on this badge. Find a list of Girl Scouts River Valleys' approved stables online at: volunteers.girlscoutsrv.org/reference/activity-directory/#stables.

Reference [Safety Activity Checkpoints \(Horseback Riding\)](#) to ensure safety and proper planning and participation.

Getting Started

Time: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: (Optional) Girl Scout Promise and Law poster

Welcome everyone to the meeting, recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law.



Activity #1: Horseback Riding 101

Time: 15 minutes

Badge Connection: Step 1 – Know the basics of horseback riding

Materials Needed: Phone or computer with internet access

1. Riding a horse is one of the most exciting things you can do. But just like with any activity, it pays to be prepared before you head out on the trails. Here are some things you need to know before you saddle up. With your girls, review:
 - **The difference between Western- and English-style riding.** Watch the following video with your girls: bit.ly/englishvswestern. After you've finished watching the video, discuss the similarities and differences between the two types of riding styles.
 - **The types of horse riding equipment.** Tell girls, you learned that Western- and English-style riding require different types of equipment. Before you go for a ride, you'll need to "tack up," AKA put gear on your horse. Hand each girl a copy of the "Tacking Up" sheet. Have them following along on their sheet as they watch videos of how to tack up your horse (English and Western):
 - Western: bit.ly/tackupwestern
 - English: bit.ly/tackupenglish
 - **The best riding gear for you.** Tell girls, now that we've reviewed what kind of equipment your horse needs to safely ride, we'll go over what kind of gear you, the rider, should wear.
 - **Helmet.** Always, always, *always* wear a helmet when you ride. Just like when you're riding a bike, you want to protect your head from injury in case you fall. Look for a helmet that's labeled as ASTM/SEI certified (that means the helmet is specifically made for horse sports).
 - **Clothing.** If you're just riding for fun, you can usually just wear your everyday clothes. Make sure you wear long pants (they protect your legs from being pinched or scraped by the straps and buckles). Your clothes in general should not be too baggy—anything that's loose or flowing risks getting caught on the saddle if you fall off your horse. Dress appropriately for whatever weather you're riding in (layers for the winter, breathable clothing in the summer).
 - **Shoes.** Wear boots or other closed-toe shoes with a 1 to 1 ½" heel. The heel helps stop your feet from slipping through the stirrup. The bottoms of your shoes should also be relatively smooth—if you wear something like hiking boots with a lot of grip, they'll get caught in the stirrup too.

Activity #2: How to Read a Horse

Time: 15 minutes

Badge Connection: Step 2 – Take care of a horse and learn about safety

Materials Needed: "How to Read a Horse" handout (one per group of 4 girls); writing utensils

Prep Needed:

- Add any prep directions here. If there is no prep needed, delete the section including the words prep needed.
1. We stay safe while riding a horse when we wear a helmet and proper gear. Another way we can stay safe is by listening to and understanding what a horse is trying to tell us. Ask girls, how do you think horses try to communicate with us? *Through body language.*
 2. Have girls break off into groups of four. Hand each group a "How to Read a Horse" handout and a writing utensil. Girls should try and guess which emotion matches with each numbered horse. When girls have finished, come back as a larger group and review the answers:
 - **1: Relaxed.** Ears are forward, but relaxed. Horse is interested in what's in front of it. Eyes and general body are soft and relaxed.
 - **2: Stressed.** Horses tend to yawn to relieve anxiety when they're stressed.
 - **3: Angry.** Ears are pinned back flat against the neck. Upper lip is curled and teeth are visible. Horse is telling you to keep your distance!
 - **4: Happy.** Eyes are soft and slightly droopy. Eyes are facing forward.



- **5. Scared.** Head and neck are held high. Eyes are wide open and whites of the eye are visible.

Activity #3: Safety First

Time: 15 minutes

Badge Connection: Step 2 – Take care of a horse and learn about safety

Materials Needed: None

1. Whenever we interact with animals, it's important to follow rules to keep the animal and ourselves safe. Review some general rules with your girls:
 - **Let the horse know you're approaching.** Horses have trouble seeing directly in front and directly behind them, and can be easily spooked by things they can't see. Use a soothing, gentle voice to tell your horse where you are.
 - **Slow introductions.** Always walk up to a horse, never run.
 - **Approach a horse from the shoulder.** Approaching a horse from the side lets the horse see where you are. Hold out the back of your hand for the horse to smell. Don't approach straight-on or directly behind the horse.
 - **Keep a hand on your horse.** Use your hands as a way to communicate with your horse. When you're grooming or tacking up, keep a hand on your horse's shoulder or hindquarters—this lets your horse know where you are even if it can't see you.

Activity #4: Fit for Riding

Time: 15 minutes

Badge Connection: Step 3 – Prepare for your ride

Materials Needed: Rubber or soccer balls; chairs

1. Tell girls, you might think that your body won't need to work hard once you get on the horse because it'll be like riding a car—the horse will do most of the work for you, so you can just sit back and enjoy the ride!
2. It actually takes quite a bit of strength to control the horse and stay in proper form while riding. This is where getting your body strong and fit can help you be a better rider.
3. Lead your girls through a few strengthening and balance exercises:
 - **Half-boat pose:** Begin by sitting with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Keeping your knees bent, lift both feet off the floor until your legs are parallel to the floor. Reach your arms toward your feet, and hold the pose for 30 – 60 seconds. Rest and repeat.
 - **Stirrup stretch:** Stand on the first step of a flight of stairs. Move your feet into position so that the balls of your feet are balanced off the edge of the step. Lift your feet up and down to stretch your heels and calves.
 - **Saddle strength:** Grab a rubber or soccer ball and a chair. Scoot to the edge of the chair so your thighs are off the seat of the chair. Squeeze the ball between your knees for 15 seconds, then release. Gradually increase the time you hold the ball as you go (15, then 20, then 30 seconds, etc.).

Wrapping Up

Time: 15 minutes

Materials Needed: (Optional) Make New Friends song lyrics poster

Close the meeting by singing Make New Friends and doing a friendship circle.



More to Explore

- Field Trip Ideas:
 - Visit a horse stable and learn more about horse care.
 - Visit an equine-assisted therapy facility to see how horses help people with their physical and mental health.
- Speaker Ideas:
 - Invite a large animal veterinarian to come to your meeting to talk about horse care.
 - Invite an older Girl Scout who's experienced in horseback riding to talk about how she developed and practiced her skills.



How to Read a Horse

Is your horse...

Happy
Relaxed
Scared
Angry
Stressed

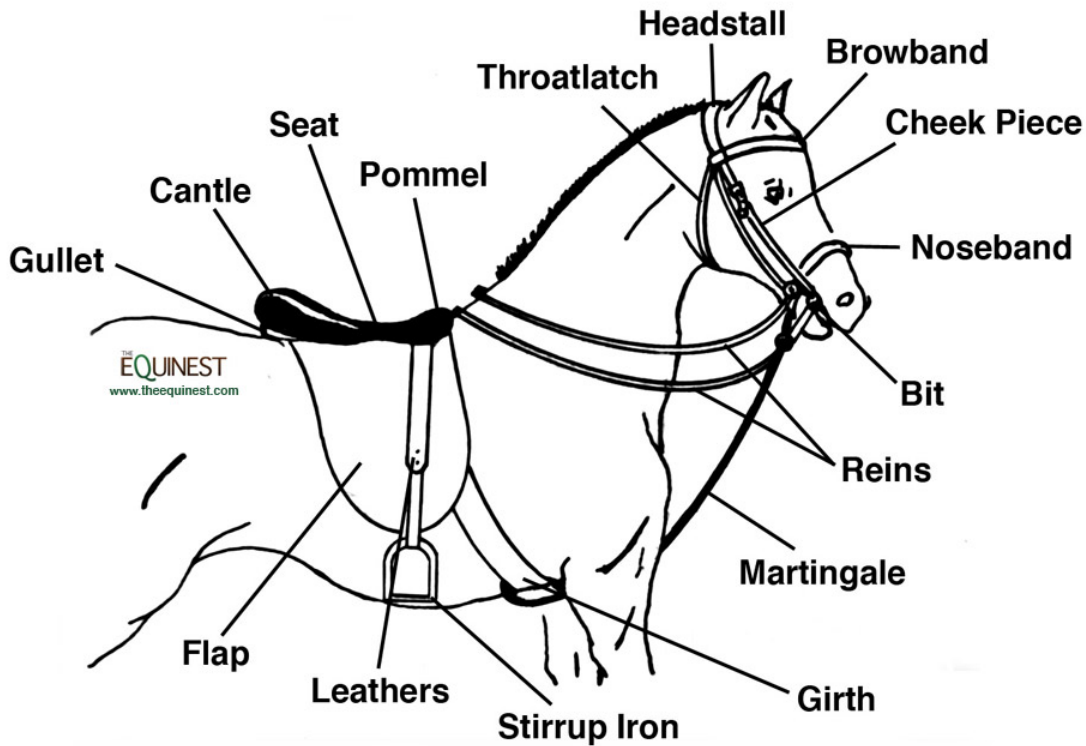


1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Tacking Up

English



Western

