

BUYING YOUR FIRST HORSE

Before, During, After - What People Won't Tell You

Considerations before you even look...

- *Your Goals*

Do you want a horse just to ride or a horse to also be your companion? A horse is a lot more than just something to ride, what will happen if you cannot ride? For this, consider more frequent lessons instead.

- *The Costs*

Not only is there the initial cost of the horse but also high monthly maintenance costs, what will happen if you can't afford these? For this, consider part or full loan instead.

- *The Yard*

Not everywhere will offer the same support, training or level of care for their horses as we do at ESR. For this, please research carefully and ask opinions.

- *The Seller*

Most sellers are genuine, but some will not be honest about what they are selling or why. For this, take someone trusted for a second opinion and avoid dealers.

- *The Horse*

Consider your goals, experience and time, what is reasonable, safe and fun for both you and the horse, what happens if it is not the right fit? For this, consider part or full loan instead, and take regular lessons.

- *Time and Commitments*

Sometimes life can get in the way for you, or your horse can suddenly need more care than normal. Can you afford full livery or adapt your schedule? For this, consider part or full loan.



Which horse?

Factors to consider when deciding what kind of horse is right for you

- *Size (and are you growing)*
- *Age (older horses can be quieter but often cost more)*
- *Time (do you have the consistency to bring on a young or green horse)*
- *Type (do you like a more whoa-than-go or more go-than-whoa)*
- *Experience (realistically, what can you handle, between youngster and schoolmaster)*
- *Goals (happy hacker or eventer, find a horse than enjoys what you do)*
- *Yard (can you provide the environment the horse needs to be happy)*
- *Education/Support (can you find trainers and professionals who will have both of your best interests)*



Considerations when viewing a horse...

- *The Seller*

A private seller is usually more trustworthy and looking for a genuine sale. Dealers are out to make money and may not be honest about their animals.

- *Their Yard*

Yards will tell you a lot about how much they care - is it clean, do the horses look relaxed, are the fields looked after?

- *The Basics*

Is the horse up to date on it's teeth, feet and jags? Does it catch, lead, tie up, load, can you pick it's feet, tack up, mount easily, hack alone and in company, is it safe in traffic, the arena and open spaces? Can it do the things you will be asking of it?

- *The History*

You want to know what the horse has done ground and riding wise, how it typically is to handle and ride, anything physical or behavioural that might affect its ridden career, and what those effects are (for example, an ex hunter may develop arthritis and be strong in open spaces)

- *The Condition*

Is the horse lacking muscle or overweight, is it obviously lame, seems stiff or has an unusual movement, does the horse look happy and relaxed, are the feet in good condition, will the conformation lead to problems in the future?

- *The Price*

Expensive doesn't always mean better. Consider all the factors when looking at the asking price and what it includes (tack or full wardrobe)

- *The Viewings*

Multiple of them. Take a knowledgeable third party for a second opinion - let them ride, let them watch you ride, watch the owner ride and assess the horse for your requirements. Trial the horse in different environments and conditions and be suspicious if it has been exercised before you arrive.

- *The Vetting*

Always get your horse at least 2 Stage vetted - it can save a lot of heartbreak and vets bills

- *Don't Fall In Love with the First One You View*

There is more to life than horses; there are also ponies!

AUTHOR UNKNOWN





Considerations now you've picked a horse...

- *The Contract*

Check your contracts carefully, make sure that you're agreed on what is included in the sale, and discuss the possibility of an initial trial period before the sale. Make sure that the passport details match the horse and also what you've been told.

- *The Move*

Find a professional transporter to ensure the horse is protected for the journey. Meet them on arrival, check the horse has arrived with everything needed and then introduce them to the yard - either put them in a quiet stable or in a quiet field to let them adjust. They probably don't want to hang out just yet!

- *The Insurance*

Set up your insurance as soon as you can, as some won't start cover immediately. Insurance for the horse, the rider/handler, and third party are the basics, but you can also insure extras such as tack.

- *The First Month*

Take things slowly, make friends with your horse and spend time just hanging out in the field and the stable. Allow them time to feel safe and establish their new routine.

- *The Professionals*

Register your new horse with your vet, your equine dentist, find a farrier and an equine physio or bodyworker. Get your physio, farrier and dentist out (even if you've been told the horse is up to date!) and get them to check the horse and be honest with you.

- *The Tack*

If the horse came with tack, get the saddle fitter out to check. If without tack, get the saddle fitter to find you one. A good girth will really help keep your horse comfy. Make sure your bridle fits, the bit is the right size and something the horse is comfy in.

- *The Extra Purchases*

Don't rush out and buy things that you don't need. You can get started with their feed, grooming kit, an equine first aid kit, and 2 headcollars and lead ropes (always need a spare!). A lightweight turnout rug can be useful but most other things can wait until you need them.

No hour of
life is
wasted
that is
spent in
the saddle

WINSTON CHURCHILL





Considerations for life with your horse...

- *The Start*

Even before your tack is sorted, you can start on the ground with your horse with liberty, trick training and physio work. Ask your physio for exercises to keep your horse balanced and strong. The more you can help your horse, the better and longer your riding time will be. Even when you start riding, keep doing your groundwork.

- *The Ongoing*

Get feet checked every 6-8 weeks, physio every 2-4 months, saddle checked every 3-6 months, teeth checked every 6-12 months and jags done every 12 months.

- *The Ongoing for You*

Find a trainer to work with you and get regular lessons, but take opportunity to see different instructors who may have different ideas and tools to teach you.

- *The Learning*

Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something and need help. Keep learning as much as you can about every facet of horses and their care, such as BHS Horse Health so you know the signs if something is wrong. If you're a parent, learn how to also handle the horse in case your child is ill or away.

**A horse is
wonderful
by
definition**

PIERS ANTHONY



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