

How to Choose the Right Saddle Pad



Horseback riding provides a sense of freedom and a time to bond with your **horse**. Whether you're going for a leisurely stroll around the grounds or looking to get into event riding, you need to choose the proper **equestrian riding gear** to ensure comfort for you and your horse. While choosing the right saddle can make things easier on the rider, you'll need to take the same approach to your saddle pad.

Whether you have an English or Western saddle, its pad is an important part of any riding experience. Choosing the right saddle pad can make a world of difference to you and your steed, providing cushioning that helps prevent strain on the horse's back. Saddle pads can also affect the life of your saddle, keeping it from unnecessary wear and tear.

Because there are so many options when it comes to saddle pads, it's worth it to do your research. Tractor Supply, America's largest rural lifestyle retailer, is home to a complete lineup of tack and saddlery. Let's explore the biggest considerations to make when shopping for new equine saddle pads.

Which Type of Riding Will You Be Doing?

As the first step in deciding which saddle pad is best, consider its use. English and Western saddle pad styles are made for various purposes. Knowing a pad's intended use can help ensure that everyone is comfortable, and the saddle itself does its job.

English saddle pads are made to fit close to the horse, providing a snug fit. These pads are great for dressage riders who prefer thin pads, which deliver the impact-absorbing properties they need – without sacrificing the stylish appearance. English saddle pads are also smart for those who have taken up jumping as they can be made with additional foam or gel padding that helps distribute weight and add extra cushioning.

Western saddle pads are made to handle their namesake's heavier weight, often comprised of soft materials that help support the load. They are used for competitions, such as barrel racing and cutting, which require pads that will stay in place even during maneuvers.

Some disciplines require saddle padding that is more focused on shock absorption and cushioning. Others, such as trail riding, demand a pad that stresses airflow and the ability to dry quickly. Take some time to evaluate your options and which most closely align with your needs.

Which Material Makes the Most Sense?

Horses will have varied responses to different saddle pad materials. In today's market, you'll see a range of materials when it comes to saddle pads, so you'll need to take this into account when making your decision. Some common options are:

- **Cotton:** This popular choice works well with English saddles and delivers reliable softness.
- **Fleece:** Fleece can be either natural or synthetic and offers generous cushioning.
- **Felt:** These pads help pull sweat away from the animal to help keep it cool and dry.
- **Gel/foam:** These materials absorb impact and help distribute pressure evenly on the horse's back.
- **Neoprene:** This material is a kind of rubber that offers water-resistant properties and stays in place easily.

The material you end up choosing may be based on the discipline you plan to use the saddle pad for, however, don't overlook what's best for your horse. Some horses overheat more easily than others, for instance, so those owners should consider looking at felt pads.

How Does the Saddle Pad's Shape Impact the Fit?

As saddle pads are meant to make life easier on both the horse and the rider, you'll find that the shape can have a noticeable impact. Square and rectangular pads are common options when it comes to Western saddles. These shapes are typically known for a mix of cushioning and contact with the horse. You'll find these shapes in a variety of sizes to suit horses of different body types.

On the other hand, shaped or contoured saddle pads are designed for a more fitted feel, making them a popular choice for English riding. These will offer a personalized fit that conforms to your horse's

back below and against the saddle above. Because of their design, these pads don't extend as much out from under the saddle and therefore can often be found in more basic colors.

What Look Are You Going For?

Once you've researched the style, material and shape that work best for your needs, it's time to consider appearance. Saddle pads aren't only about comfort, after all, as they also provide a fashionable touch that helps you stand out. Whether you're trotting around your property or competing in equestrian events, you can always be riding in the style you love.

As is the case with many [riding gear accessories](#), we strive to provide customers with high-quality saddle pads that get you excited about your next ride. Our inventory includes [black](#), [blue](#) and [white English saddle pads](#), as well as a range of other exciting colors. We also offer a large selection of Western saddle pads, including ones that are [brown](#), [red](#) and [multicolor](#).

No matter which style you choose, the options beyond color are limitless. Find quilted patterns, those with colored trim, acid-wash styles and ones with prints and designs. If you're looking for something a little more subtle, we have plenty of neutral-colored, less-is-more options. You'll even find saddle pads with pockets, allowing riders to keep essential items within reach.

Find the Saddle Pads You Need at Tractor Supply

Going out for a ride should be fun and exciting, but it should also leave you and your horse feeling good. Saddle pads are an easy way to help ensure that your saddle doesn't cause stress on your horse's back. Plus, the wide variety of options lets you invest in something that will work great for your riding needs.

Whether you're interested in finding a pad that will fit nicely with your English or Western saddle, Tractor Supply is trusted by equine owners across the United States, whether they compete or ride for fun while living Life Out Here. Visit your [local store](#) today or shop online if you're ready to order to your horse-riding supplies.