**How to Clean Your Tack**

How many holes from the loose end?

Left Cheek Piece \_\_\_\_\_

Right Cheek Piece \_\_\_\_\_

Nose Band Height \_\_\_\_\_

Left Stirrup Leather \_\_\_\_\_

Right Stirrup Leather \_\_\_\_\_

Other notes:

**Why?**

Horse tack is very expensive and keeping it clean will prolong the life of your equipment. Clean, supple tack looks better, and is more comfortable for you and your horse because it will prevent rubs and sores. Regular inspection of your tack, while cleaning, ensures it remains safe.

**What you need:**

* 2 Small buckets with clean warm water
* Leather Cleaner with sponge
* Leather Conditioner with sponge and cloth/rag
* Leather Protector with sponge
* Saddle rack and bridle hook
* Clean dry cloth or rag
* Metal polish and rag
* Dish scrubber or SOS pad
* Toothbrush
* Toothpick
* Hard stiff brush

**Cleaning your bridle:**

1. Before taking the bridle apart, make a note on a piece of paper the location of each buckle, so that when you put it back together it will fit your horse. Pay close attention to how the bit is attached. You would not want to put the bridle together with the bit upside down or backwards.
2. Take the bridle completely apart.
3. Place the bit into a bucket of warm water and allow it to soak while you inspect the bridle.
4. Inspect the leather for damage and significant dirt/jockeys.
   1. Pay special attention to the stress points. This includes any area where metal was touching leather (like buckles and around the bit.
   2. Pay special attention to the areas where the bridle touches the horse (like the noseband and browband). There are where jockeys will often show up.
   3. Look for cracks near buckle holes and loose stitching.
   4. Look for excessive stretching and distortion of the pieces.
5. Remove any jockeys you find by gently scraping them off with your finger nail, dish scrubber, or toothbrush.
6. Remove the bit from the bucket and wipe off any grime.
   1. Hang to allow the bit to dry while you clean the rest of the bridle.
   2. If needed, you can put the bit in the dish washer.
7. Get a sponge damp (not wet) and wipe off the grease and dirt from all the leather pieces.
   1. Press firmly into the leather with the sponge and scrub to remove most of the dirt.
   2. If your sponge leaves droplets or streaks of water on the leather, it is too wet.
8. Get another damp (not wet) sponge and add a small amount of leather cleaner to it. This will help remove any remaining dirt and grime from your leather.
   1. If your sponge makes bubbles while you are cleaning, there is too much soap on it.
   2. Rinse your sponge, ring it out well, and use less soap going forward.
9. Wipe the soap off your leather with the water-only sponge.
10. If the leather seems dry or still, apply leather conditioner.
    1. Using too much conditioner or applying it too often can cause the stitching to rot or the leather to stretch, so only apply if needed.
    2. Use a dry sponge to apply the conditioner.
    3. Bend the leather back and forth with your hands to help the leather soad up the conditioner.
    4. Wipe off any excess with a rag.
11. Protect the leather with glycerine saddle soap. This helps to seal the pores of the leather and nourished it.
    1. Get a sponge damp (not wet) and rub the soap into the saddle. Do not use too much water or make a lather.
    2. Work the soap well into the leather pieces.
    3. You should be able to see a fingerprint on the leather after you have rubbed the soap in, and the leather should feel smooth and supple.
    4. Use a toothpick to clean out the holes in your leather.
12. Use metal polish on the buckles of the bridle to bring out a nice shine.
    1. Be careful not to get metal polish on the leather.
    2. Do not use metal polish on the bit.
13. Put the bridle back together, and store the bridle in a clean place or in a bridle bag if it may be exposed to a lot of dust from the environment.

**Cleaning your saddle and other equipment:**

1. Make a note on a piece of paper the location of each buckle for your stirrup leathers and other equipment, so that when you put it back together it will fit you and your horse. If your stirrup leathers do not have an anti-stretch nylon layer, switch the sides they are on so the left side does not stretch more than the right side due to mounting.
2. Remove the saddle pad, girth, stirrup leathers, stirrup irons, and other equipment from the saddle.
3. If your saddle has adjustable knee or thigh blocks, pay close attention to how they are positions prior to removing them. Consider taking a picture.
4. Remove the rubber pads from inside your stirrup irons and place the pads and irons in a bucket of warm water. Allow them to soak while you clean your saddle pad and inspect your saddle.
5. Follow the specific instructions for the type of saddle pad(s) you have.
   1. Use a curry comb and a stiff brush to remove the majority of the dirt and hair from the underside of the saddle pad. After removing most of the dirt and hair, you can wash most cloth saddle pads in the washing machine. For stubborn stains on a white pad, pretreat with a stain remover.
   2. Gel pads should be washed with a damp sponge and allowed to air-dry.
   3. Sheep skin or fluffy fleece pads should be brushed out with a fine-bristled shedding brush (similar to what you would use on a dog). This breaks up the sweat/grime/matting, removes hair and shavings, and fluffs up the fleece. Shake out the pad. Either handwash the pad or use the gentle cycle in a washing machine. Only use detergent specifically designed for sheepskin. Allow pad to air-dry and fluff it back up once completely dry.
6. Inspect your saddle and equipment for damage.
   1. Pay attention to the billets and stirrup leathers and look for excessive wear, cracking, and stretching.
   2. Examine the stitching and make sure nothing is torn or broken.
   3. Look closing at the saddle shape and ensure the tree is still solid.
   4. Evaluate the padding around the knee roll and also the panel. Check that you can fit at least 3 fingers between the two sides of the panel, the entire length of the channel. If the padding feels hard or lumpy, it may need re-flocking.
   5. Look for other signs of wear or cracking of the leather.
7. Use a stiff brush to remove the majority of the dirt and hair from the girth, stirrup leathers, and other equipment like breast collars and leather halters.
   1. Nylon material can be washed in the washing machine by placing a sock of the buckets and securing the sock with a hair-tie.
   2. Synthetic, neoprene or gel material should be scrubbed with a damp sponge and allowed to air dry.
   3. Leather material should be washed following the leather cleaning procedures just like the bridle.
8. Remove any dirt or grime from the pads and stirrup irons.
   1. Use an SOS pad to remove rust and stains.
   2. If needed, you can put the pads and irons in the dish washer.
   3. Allow the irons and stirrup pads to dry while you clean the rest of the saddle.
9. Clean, condition, and protect the leather saddle using the same procedure as you did with the bridle.
10. If you have a synthetic saddle, most of them can be washed with mild soap and water, rinsed, and air-dried.
11. If your stirrup bars can open/close apply a lubricant to keep them moveable.
12. Polish your stirrups, stirrup bars, nail heads, D-rings, and buckles with metal polish.
13. Put your saddle back together and store under a saddle cover. Consider using stirrup covers to protect your saddle while it is being stored.
14. Ideally your saddle rack will be padded so that the padding of the panels remains in good condition and does not develop permanent impressions.