

# Riding Shouldn't Hurt

**Poorly fitting saddles cause poor position, discomfort, and pain for riders.  
Do you feel like you fight the saddle rather than use it to help you ride?**

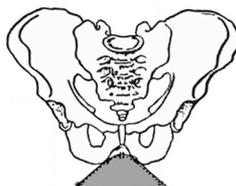
*by Jochen Schleese – Certified Master Saddler, Saddle Ergonomist*

Some riders seem to have had an inherent ability to ride, excelling in their discipline to become FEI riders and trainers. Others seem to have similar advantages – a good horse, natural athletic ability, discipline to train, and yet – something is missing.

Over 20 years ago many female riders first came to Jochen Schleese to find solutions to issues they were experiencing as riders – repeated urinary tract infections, hip, knee and back issues and pain in the pelvic area. Puzzled that these maladies generally escaped male riders, Jochen figured that it must be due to the differences between the male and female pelvis and their interface with the saddle. On examining many 'butt casts' and the comparative muscular / skeletal structures, Jochen reflected on how these differences related to riding ability – often women struggled, whereas men rode with relative ease.

## **Male Saddle. Female Saddle. What's the difference?**

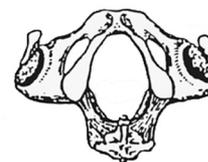
Position and balance of the rider are the key ingredients in all riding disciplines because



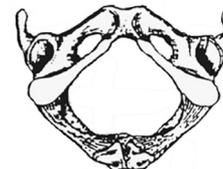
**Male Pelvis**



**Female Pelvis**



**Male Pelvis**



**Female Pelvis**

*Bottom View*

the majority of time is spent sitting. The seat bones are the key structure for the foundation of position and balance. Women experience difficulty achieving the classic "shoulders-hips-heels" straight line (especially in dressage), because the pelvis is balanced differently and the articulation of female hips is different from that of men. It is painful for a female rider to sit straight only on her seat bones because her pubic bone will hit the pommel area in the front of the saddle; as a result most women 'collapse' at the hip to escape the pain. The leg shoots forward, and women fight the saddle for correct position instead of concentrating on riding.

For men, this does not provide the challenge it does for many women. Men have two "V"

shaped seat bones set close together, giving them a bipod axis. Saddle manufacturers have traditionally afforded special attention to the male skeletal structure. Unfortunately, too many women ride in saddles built for men – a main reason for their issues. Women have a broad range of hip shapes, all of which need to be accommodated when constructing a saddle. Unlike the "V" shaped man's seat bones, women's are usually flatter. Women have a more prominent pubic bone with a lower pubic symphysis. Their tail bones are longer, and their gluteus muscles generally higher than a man's. The combination of skeletal structures causes women to sit as on a tripod. Herein lies the problem for most women – unless the pelvis is straight, the pommel of the saddle interferes with the pubic bone. Unless the

abdominal muscles are used, it is almost impossible for a woman to sit correctly in a saddle which was built for a man, especially because the 'male' saddle will also lack the necessary support from behind – causing her to 'scoot back' to find the support she needs.

The traditional 'male' saddles are built fairly wide through the crotch area (twist) but are narrow in the seat. Women find themselves sitting with their legs pushed outwards from the hip, and perching painfully on the seat seaming. Female anatomy dictates the saddle for women should be exactly opposite – narrow in the crotch area and wider in the seat area.

Over 25 years of research and innovation provide the foundation for Schleese's line of truly female saddles that are uniquely designed for women and the well-being of the horse. The points mentioned above are only a few of the considerations in the design of a well-fitting saddle made for women. Schleese's 80 point Diagnostic Saddle Fit Evaluation examines 25 fit points to rider (55 to horse). A rider out of balance and not comfortable in the saddle will not be able to properly communicate aids to the horse. Are you sitting comfortably?

**Ride pain free. For you. For your horse.**

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

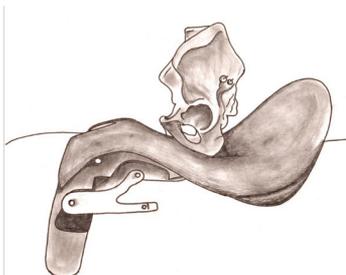
[www.schleese.com](http://www.schleese.com)

[www.saddlesforwomen.com](http://www.saddlesforwomen.com) and Guys too!

*All photos: By Schleese*



***Female Pelvis On The Saddle***



***Male Pelvis On The Saddle***



***Pressure Points On The Saddle***  
***Left: Female, Right: Male***

