



What should I look for when **purchasing** a used *saddle* ?

Generally used saddles are on the market for a number of reasons, some of which could be:

- they no longer or never fit either horse or rider and are non-adjustable (which unfortunately is the case with many English saddles that have been built on a traditional English spring tree with a traditional English gullet plate);
- Or they have been put aside for the next latest greatest fad or model;
- Or the rider no longer rides or has changed disciplines.



In any case, with a used saddle, it is usually a case of caveat emptor, especially if buying privately. If you purchase a used saddle from a reputable dealer, generally it will have been tested for soundness (i.e., tree is not

broken or twisted), the billets are stitched on properly and the threads are not fraying, and the leather is not ripped or torn or wrinkled and has been conditioned regularly. These are all cosmetic points; key is whether or not the saddle fits the rider (and is gender appropriate!) and whether or not it will fit the horse or can be adjusted to fit the horse. In this consideration, the saddle support area is crucial, since the length of the saddle is one thing that can never be adjusted after the fact unless the panel is changed. The saddle needs to lie behind the shoulder blade and no further than the 18th thoracic vertebra – which is simple to determine by feeling where the last floating rib ends. The saddle must never lie on the lumbar vertebrae, as this is where several reflex points will result in negative behaviour such as bucking or stumbling.

Used saddles from renowned manufacturers will generally keep their value; determine whether the saddle is right for you and your horse and make sure you have it fitted properly before riding.



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Ergonomist, teaches saddle fit principles to
protect horse and rider from long-term dam-
age caused by ill-fitting saddles.

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