


Typical Harness Measuring Mistakes

When you order a new harness, a good harness maker/retailer will ask you for measurements of your horse (or existing harness) in order to make sure your harness fits your horse properly. Although the harness maker can usually “catch” an “off” measurement that doesn’t seem to match the typical horse of that size, proper measurement can make a big difference in getting that perfect fit, especially with smaller horses and ponies, where ¼” can be huge! You can use a dressmaker’s tape, or use a string and measure it. Here are some typical mistakes that drivers make when measuring their horse. We will start at the front, and work our way back:

- *Browband* - The length of the browband includes the width of the crown of the bridle, so that width should be accounted for when measuring the horse. Measuring too close to the back of the ear may make the browband too tight, pulling the crown against the back of the ears. The harness maker will account for the distance over the winker stays. This is a part that has no adjustment, so it needs to be accurate. I like to have one finger width between the ear cartilage and the crown.
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- *Caveson (noseband)* – Although the “two fingers below the cheek bone” rule works well for horses, that distance needs to be reduced for ponies and minis. We use one finger for those equines.
 - *Throatlatch* – Yes, the throatlatch should be snug, but pulling the tape too tightly will cause the harness part to be too short. The measuring tape should mirror the adjustment of the throatlatch. It should also be behind the jaw as well.
 - *Breast Collar* – Some harness makers ask that you measure the length of the breast collar to where the breast collar will be, however, that is such an arbitrary point on the horse depending on how long the breast collar is designed. A more accurate way to measure is just to the girth on both sides (behind the shoulder), but not any farther. The harness maker can adjust the length of the breast collar with this measurement. If your harness measuring chart doesn’t show the measurement this way, make sure you explain in your notes to what point you measured your horse. You may need another person to hold the tape on the off side of the horse.
 - *Neck Strap* – Measure just to the top of the breast collar. Having an existing harness on the horse is helpful to find that measurement.
 - *Full Collar* – Sorry, that is a full article in itself. We are only going to deal with breast collar harness here.

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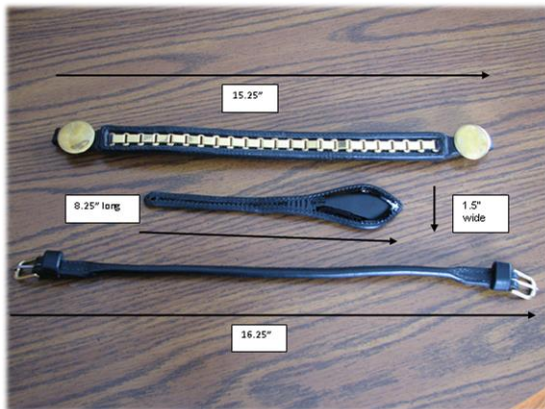
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- **Saddle/Girth** – Make sure you place the tape where the saddle will sit on the back, well behind the withers. If you measure up onto the withers and around the girth, your measurement will be too long.
- **Backstrap/Turnback** – Remember that your saddle is 3-5 inches wide (depending on the size of the horse). Measuring to the front of where the saddle sits will make your backstrap (turnback) too long. Also, make note where the “base of the tail” is. Draw an imaginary horizontal line from the point where the tail attaches to the body on each side. Your measurement should go to this point.
- **Breeching** – Measure your horse all the way to the flank where the hair swirls. (See red circle on photo.) Remember to measure *under* the tail. If you measure too short, your hip strap may pull back, especially with synthetic harness that doesn’t have as much “flexibility” as leather. This is another part that has no adjustment, so make sure the measurement is accurate. This is another place where having another person to hold the tape is beneficial. In the case of the breeching, too long is better than too short.
- **Hip Strap** – Again, make sure you measure from flank to flank over the hips, not behind that area. Also, measure just to the top of the breeching. This is also where it is helpful to have an existing harness on the horse.



- **Measuring Over Harness** – This is going to add length to whatever you are measuring, especially if the existing harness is padded or raised. You can measure the horse with the harness on to make sure you are measuring to the correct placement, such as a breeching or a breast collar (neck) strap, but make sure you are not measuring over that harness. To match an existing harness, either measure the *inside* of the harness, or you can also flatten pieces to get the correct measurement, such as with a browband *if* that part fits properly in the first place.



Hopefully, these hints will help you in measuring your horse. As always, if you have questions on how to measure your horse for a new harness, contact us! We can help make sure your new harness fits *just right* the *first time*!