

Measuring Your Turnout for a Carriage Whip

Carriage whips come in many varieties. There are whips made for ponies vs. horses, singles vs. pairs or tandems and four-in-hands, whips for show vs. practice, etc. Knowing how to measure for a proper whip will save you time and money in the long run. To understand how to measure an actual whip, see our article on that topic. American whips are measured differently than European whips.

First, we should briefly mention the basic parts of a whip. The *stick* is the hard part of the whip on which is attached the soft *lash* (some resources call this the *thong*). The *popper* is on the very end (some resources call this the *lash*). The whip is held by the *handle*.

Most carriage driving rules state that your whip must be able to reach the shoulder of the farthest horse. Some breed show rules state that your whip must not reach past the shoulder. So, your whip length is very important. Some people will have an opinion that a certain size horse takes a specific size whip. However, there are many variables that go along with choosing the length of a whip. How much leg room do you have in your vehicle? Do you like or need a longer or shorter lash? Do the rules prohibit using a whip with a lash? Is a longer lash expected for the turnout?

The miniature horse in the photo below is 37" tall. The cart shaft length is 51" from tip to singletree. The tip of the shaft is appropriately at the point of the horse's shoulder, and there is room behind the horse. The driver is about 5'3". The cart has plenty of leg room, so the driver is sitting back farther from the horse than if the vehicle had less leg room. The whip is being held in the right hand at a 45-degree angle both horizontally and vertically (which is typical and expected in the carriage show ring). The whip being used has a 54" stick (including the handle) and a 24" lash from the end of the stick to the popper (but not including the popper). I frequently use this whip by rotating my hand and cueing the horse under the shaft on the bottom of the horse's barrel by "flicking" the whip, hence the necessity of the longer lash. This whip is appropriately sized for this horse in this vehicle.



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Here is a basic way we measure to get a whip that is the proper length for a horse and a vehicle. Measure from the driver's hand to the shoulder of the horse. The driver can sit upright and reach forward a *little* with the arm/hand but should not lean significantly forward. This is the total length of the whip needed including the stick and the lash. That measurement can come in any combination of stick

and lash (red + yellow lines). If you want a shorter lash (yellow), you can get a longer stick (red). If you want a longer lash, you can get a shorter stick. As long as any part of the whip reaches to anywhere on the shoulder, the whip is legal and appropriate for a carriage show.

In the photo above, the pony is 12:3 hands. The cart shaft length is 63". The driver is about 5'4". This vehicle was built to accommodate a driver up to 6'1", so it has plenty of leg room. The measurement from the tip of the shaft to the front of the wheel (about where her hand is) measures 86". The whip she is holding has a 68" stick and an 18" lash. It reaches the shoulder of the pony when held out alongside the pony. This whip is correctly sized for this pony in this vehicle. When the

pony is put to a different vehicle (right) with more distance from driver to horse, we need to use a longer 72" whip with a 24" lash to be able to reach the shoulder.

Some instructors of beginner carriage drivers like to see the stick reach the middle of the barrel of the horse and have the lash make up the rest of the distance. This is



a good method of measuring for beginner drivers as the lash is usually shorter, hence there is less chance of getting it caught in the vehicle or harness (or a fence or a tree...) while the driver is learning how to hold and properly use the whip.

Some whips come in standard sizes of sticks and lashes, and some more expensive whips can be customized for length of sticks and lashes. For more information on actually Selecting a Whip, see our article on that subject, and then contact us to help you select the perfect whip!

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