

Caring for your Driving Whip

Driving whips require a little more care, especially in the method of storage, than other styles of equestrian whips. Bow top whips, which are the most typical style of carriage driving whip in the US, require a method of maintaining the bow so that the top of the whip does not crack where the hard stick ends.



The best form of storage for your good whip investment is a whip reel. Whip reels come in sizes for 1, 2, 3, or 6 whips. It is a round piece of wood with a groove in which the top of the lash (or thong) is placed, and the stick is hung straight down from the whip reel (left). The whip should hang on its own from the whip reel, but if for some reason the lash won't sit in the groove of the reel, a finishing nail can be nailed into the wall at the point where the hole in the lash meets the popper while the whip is on the reel. Then the hole can slip over that tiny nail, keeping the whip from sliding down. There are more "historically accurate" methods of holding a thicker whip on a reel, but they are more cumbersome for the average carriage driver and really designed to protect a fragile, antique whip made of natural materials.

In lieu of a whip reel, some people have used small coffee cans or large tuna cans over which to hang the lash. This method definitely requires a nail in the wall to hold the whip, and there is nothing to keep the whip from sliding off the front. It *works*... but is not ideal.

Some people store their whips in a PVC tube. If the tube is long enough and the lash is left outside the tube, it will more than likely keep the top of the whip from cracking. However, this method really only protects the stick and doesn't do much to keep the shape of the bow. The lash should definitely not be stored inside the tube which creates a tight bend of the bow, leading to cracking. The PVC tube method works for transport, but we actually have a whip reel in our trailer (right) on which we place our whips and put the handles in a piece of foam pipe insulation which is attached to the wall.

Any leather on a whip can be periodically conditioned with a good leather conditioner. This includes the handle and leather lash. If, for some reason, your whip becomes broken, it can usually be repaired for \$25-50 depending on the location of the break. This is a good option for expensive or favorite whips. Other than being stepped on, ran over, or other form of blunt force trauma, improper storage is the most common cause of broken whips. If good care is taken, your good whip should last indefinitely.



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