

Fitting and care of your saddle

Padding

To ensure the saddle remains stable and in place as you ride we strongly suggest you use padding underneath the saddle which should be placed just behind the high point of the withers of the horse.

What padding is suitable for your horse is the million dollar question! Don't worry, it is as simple as the saddle, you don't need to overthink it, maybe start by looking at what you already have in your tack room and trying that. A full sized pad is preferable and it should end below, or at, the bottom of the lower saddle flap. All horses are different but as a rule of thumb the rounder or more flat backed low withered builds will be very happy in just an average saddle pad like our Classic Total Contact pad we sell. It has just the right thickness to be comfortable for horse and rider but you can still "feel" the horse which is, after all, the whole point of the TCS! The more high withered or dippy backed horses might need a little more padding for the comfort of them and their rider. Our TC Saddle seat pad will be suitable for high withered horses as well as all other shaped horses, but there are many other options on the market that will suit you and your horse . Our Saddle seat pad will also give you more rider stability as it is more structured but without taking away the close contact. If you have a boney behind then be mindful that your horse may feel your seat bones so take this into account when choosing your padding.

If you look on our Facebook Group Community page you will see many different combinations people have used.

Saddle position

The Total Contact Saddle goes on top of the padding of your choice with the front edge a little behind the high point of the wither (on the downward slope for want of another way to describe it) You will find it naturally finds its place on your horse.

IMPORTANT - Please ensure the swing bar is in the correct position before riding, slide it so the stirrup bar hook is as upwards as it can be.

Girths & Leathers

Girth - It's purely your preference if you order a short girth strap or a long girth strap saddle. The shorter billet saddle is intended for those that wish to use a longer / standard length girth and the longer billet for those who wish to use a short / dressage girth. There is a caveat to this that if a rider doesn't have the flexibility to bend down and adjust a short under girth they may be better with a short billet saddle or if they want to use the TCS on a Shetland pony then the long billet may be too long and swamp him.

Leathers - The stirrup safety bars are set much lower on the TCS than a regular tree'd saddle. You will find that your regular length of stirrup is likely to be up to 4 holes too low because of this. You can use regular leathers with buckles that you might already have but many TCS owners find dressage leathers or T bar webbers work well with the TCS. They are flatter and therefore less bulk under the thigh. We sell our own branded T bar leathers and we generally find riders 5'0 to 5'6" in height find the 24" Webbers are the best length for them.

Pressure

Simply put the saddle spreads the pressure so any forces created by the rider are dissipated over a wide surface area with no one point pressing on the horse. Think someone treading on your foot wearing flat shoes (TCS) or treading on your foot with stilettos (some treed saddles)

We have done a number of pressure tests over the years and every time the saddle comes out very well with no pressure of note. The only pressure that shows up on the tests are the riders seat bones if you are a slimmer rider, not all riders create pressure. This is easily solved with suitable padding, you might want to be mindful about what padding you use to keep your horse comfortable.

We also follow up with our clients. The TCS has now been around for over nearly 20 years now and the feedback we get is that it helps horses and riders where other saddles can't. We have reports from body workers & back practitioners including osteopaths, equine physios, McTImoney practitioners, Bowen and others.

How to ride in a TCS

You can mount from the ground although we would not recommend this whatever saddle you use. It will be a bit harder to mount using a TCS from the ground as it doesn't have a pommel or cantle to hold onto, you will need to be quite nimble!

So you are now on board - You don't need to sit on the saddle, you can sit a little behind it but the most important thing is what feels comfortable for you. You will find your natural position, let your legs drape down the girth line to find your balance. This may feel odd at first if you have been used to a saddle and knee rolls but you will soon get used to this feeling and will enjoy the freedom to move.

A few things to try as you get used to your saddle is to stand in your stirrups at a halt and find your balance and if your horse is sensible enough do the same in walk and maybe even trot, this will help you find your balance and natural seat. Another great exercise is to ride with no stirrups at a walk and really move your hips along with your horse's movement.

You will "feel" your horse so he may feel more spooky but that is because you can now feel his muscles respond more quickly than in a traditional saddle. It might feel like you are riding a new horse for a few rides, so take your time to get used to the feeling and find your balance.

Saddle Care

Your saddle will come to you with a high oil content due to the tanning process, but we still advised you treat your saddle with Effax or similar to give a layer of protection before using.

Your saddle can be cleaned using a range of proprietary leather cleaning products like cream cleaners, leather balm or similar and normally a quick wipe over is enough to keep it looking good. However, should your saddle get more than light dirt on it please DO NOT use hot water or soapy water on it as this may affect the leather. In this case remove as much of the heavy dirt as possible with a soft cloth and then clean with a cream cleaner or leather balm. Leather is NOT inherently waterproof and neither is your

saddle. Ensure that your saddle is stored in a damp free place and not put away in anything other than a dry condition. In case it gets scuffed then the use of a good quality boot or shoe polish/concealer and a buff up will help to restore the surface. The use of a product that is oil based should only be used lightly and on the back side of the saddle. It should be applied lightly with a sponge and then left to dry overnight. A wax based product is better suited to try and keep the saddle leather soft and, to an extent, water resistant - saddle leather is not 'waterproof' . Synthetic saddles do not need the same level of care and can be used in water and the sea with no ill effect.