

# Buying a Horse or Pony

## (c) Part 2- the Face to Face check:

Even if you have years of experience, it is much better that you bring another experienced horseperson with you to look at potential purchases. That person can take photos and/or video and help you focus on your buying criteria. They can also serve as an extra pair of eyes and ears to spot details you might miss.

If you work with a trainer, make sure that your trainer goes out with you to look at the horse before you buy. When you make the appointment with the seller, ask to see the horse brought out of the stall or pasture, before it is groomed, saddled and bridled (rather than the seller having the horse ready to ride when you arrive).

### Visual Inspection

Your initial impressions:

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### Condition

Overall healthy appearance?  Yes  No

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Weight: fleshy, thin or just right? (body score?) \_\_\_\_\_

Muscle tone: fit or flabby or atrophied? \_\_\_\_\_

Coat condition: slick and shiny or shaggy and unkempt \_\_\_\_\_

Eyes: large, bright and clear, free of discharge?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Breathing: normal and healthy breath sounds, not exerted? Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Any visible injuries or scars? \_\_\_\_\_

### Legs and feet

Any brands or tattoos? (do they match the papers?) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Front legs: straight and free of blemishes?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Rear legs: straight and free of blemishes?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Condition of horse's feet? Well trimmed? tatty? cracked? poor condition? – shod or barefoot?

\_\_\_\_\_

Do the hoof and pastern angles appear uniform on both front feet and both hind feet?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Temperament

Does the horse look interested and friendly when you approach? Note the horse's ear position.

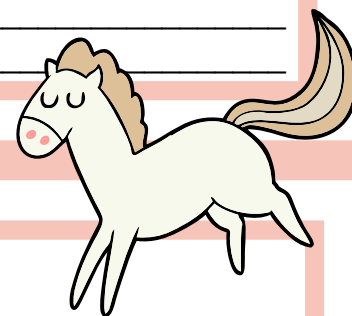
Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the horse stand quietly while being groomed, saddled and bridled? Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Pick up the horse's feet – is he compliant or resistant? Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

While moving around the horse on the ground, ask him to move his hindquarters over, first one direction, and then the other. Is he compliant or resistant? Does he raise his leg or swish his tail?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_



## Soundness and Way of Going

Ask to see the horse on a lunge line or in a round pen at the walk, trot and canter in both directions, preferably on a hard surface. Note his way of going as well as his temperament and willingness. Look for any gait irregularities, head bobbing or other indications that the horse may not be completely sound.

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Ask to see the horse trotted toward and away from you on the leadline, preferably on a hard surface. Note any interference or gait irregularities. Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## Stable Area

What kind of housing is the horse in – stall, pasture, paddock?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Check out the stall and/or fencing – do you see any signs of cribbing or stall kicking?

C. If the rubbish bin is easily accessible, discretely walk by and look for any tubes of calming paste, syringes, or other items of interest. (1) Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## Performance

Note the equipment being used – type of bit, type of saddle, crop, spurs, tie downs, any other special equipment. Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the horse stand quietly while the girth/cinch is tightened? Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does the horse stand quietly while being mounted? Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the horse's general demeanor under saddle? Watch for any signs of inattention, nervousness or spookiness. Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How responsive is the horse to his rider's cues – is he soft and willing or resistant? Pay special attention to gait transitions and backing up. Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ask the seller to have the horse do everything he has been advertised to do, even if you do not plan to make use of all of the horse's talents. Make sure you see all gaits in both directions, plus halts from all gaits and backing up. Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you still like the horse (2), ride him yourself and test everything that he has been advertised to do. Note how responsive he is to you and whether you feel comfortable on him. Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If possible, ask to ride the horse outside of the arena (or even if the seller rides him out of the arena). This will take the horse outside of his comfort zone and give you an idea about his general temperament. Does he stay quiet and relaxed or does he get nervous?  
Does the seller look nervous when you/your trainer (or the seller!) rides the horse outside of the arena? Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Veterinary Evaluation

If the horse still meets your criteria, it is recommended that you obtain a vet check from a licensed veterinarian who does NOT treat the seller's animals. A basic vet check without X-rays may cost \$100-300 but keep in mind that even a "free" horse could cost you thousands in vet bills, so the cost of a vet check is a really good investment! Honestly - this is from someone with experience. To help your vet evaluate the horse thoroughly, make sure that you tell them what you are looking for in a horse and what you will be doing with this horse. At a minimum, your vet check should include tests for general health, vision, dental health, hoof health and soundness. For performance horses, you may want to consider having the vet take and evaluate X-rays. You may also consider having the vet draw a vial of blood to keep on file for testing in the event that the horse's health, soundness or temperament changes dramatically after purchase.

1. This is a good job for the person who accompanies you to look at the horse.
2. Be considerate and tell the seller that the horse isn't right for you as soon as you know. The seller will be grateful that you didn't waste their time. Trust your initial impressions and don't let the seller try to talk you out of your decision. Keep in mind that you need not provide details about why you aren't interested in the horse - a simple, tactful, "I don't think he's the right horse for us. Thank you for showing him to us." is sufficient.

Any other notes:

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What's next?

[ActaVet - Buying a horse or pony](#) - a full guide with free downloads and videos.

Also available -Buying a breeding horse (mare or stallion)