

Evaluate bridle fit

How to double-check the size and adjustment of your horse's headgear.

A well-fitted bridle not only keeps your horse comfortable but also helps to convey your aids so he can respond promptly and with confidence. Here's how to initially adjust this essential piece of equipment and assess its fit.

Initial adjustments

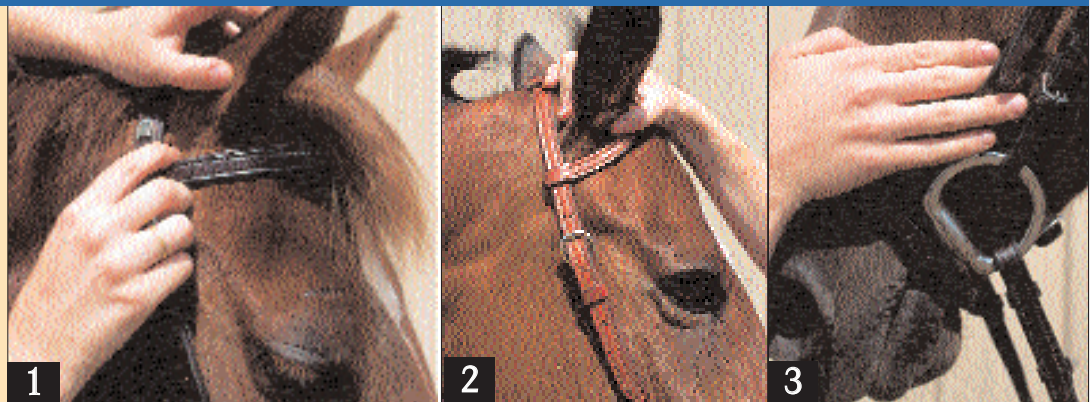


1a Start with the headstall adjusted for a loose fit, which will leave the bit resting low but comfortably in your horse's mouth. Alternating sides, raise the cheekpieces one hole at a time until the bit sits correctly—usually so it makes one wrinkle in the corner of the mouth. Then check that both cheekpieces are buckled on equivalent holes so the headstall is level. A Western bridle (**1b**) has fewer buckles than an English one (**1a**), but the fitting process is the same.

2 On an English bridle, lift the noseband to the desired position, normally about an inch below the cheekbones, and adjust the side buckles. Then secure the throatlatch and any other buckles.

Fit check

It is most important to verify that the browband holds the crownpiece in a comfortable position. If the browband is too long, the crownpiece can slip back, taking the rest of the bridle with it. A too-short browband will pinch or chafe the base of the horse's ears.



A cavesson is properly adjusted if there is just enough room for you to slide two fingers between the buckle and your horse's jaw. An additional checkpoint for this noseband is the tightness of the flash attachment (arrow). It will pinch painfully if it is adjusted to the point that it wrinkles the mouth.



On a Western bridle with earpieces, check the clearance all the way around the ear.

Confirm that the noseband lies at least two fingers' width below the cheekbones.



The throatlatch is sufficiently loose if you can slip your hand underneath it sideways. If you can't adjust it so it is loose enough, you may need a bigger crownpiece. 🐾