



How to Pick the Perfect Horse

"There is nothing so good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse"-John Lubbock, 'Recreation,' The Use of Life, 1894

Did You Know? There are over 350 types of breeds of horses all over the world!

Buying a horse or pony is a big decision. It can be a culmination of a life dream for some, and also one of the most costly purchases that you will make in your lifetime. For the latter reason alone, it is important to approach finding your new horse with plenty of forethought.

For example, you may have always dreamed of owning a 17hh dappled grey Thoroughbred and just saw one listed on a local horseman's website. You've considered the questions about horse ownership and think you have a budget for all the costs involved. Now it is time to find the right horse for you- right?!

Just because a horse is "a good deal" doesn't mean he'll be good for *you*. If he doesn't match your needs in several key ways, he won't make you happy-even if you get him for free.

So why not just buy that big dappled grey that you saw online? Because the horse's temperament and training need to match your goals and skills. He may look like the perfect horse, but for all you know, he may not even be trained to have someone ride him yet!

Below are some key criteria to consider when picking out the "perfect" horse:

- **Is the horse a match for your riding ability?** The horse's temperament and training must match your own experience and ability level as not only a rider, but a handler as well. Unsure as to what your ability level may be? Take a few lessons with a reputable trainer, then ask him or her to recommend a type of horse that would work best for you; this trainer may even be able to help you find that "perfect" horse!
- **Does the horse suit your needs or riding goals?** Ask yourself- do you want to take nice relaxing trail rides? Be competitive in the show ring? Both of these warrant a horse with different backgrounds and experiences.
- **Does the horse require more exercise than you can provide?** Say, for example, you go look at that 17hh Thoroughbred, who has been in a program where he gets ridden 6 days a week, and is as quiet and well behaved as can be. So you buy him and bring him home, and only end up being able to ride him twice a week, so he becomes a bit "wild" and un-rideable. Always be sure to ask what type of program or riding schedule the horse requires.
- **Have you decided on a set budget?** Of course, money can be the deciding factor when purchasing a horse. In fact, sometimes the "better deal" horse can be a bigger financial burden because of health or soundness issues that were the reason for the lower price to begin with. It's always important to keep in mind that the upkeep of a horse is what can be most costly and be the "downfall" of horse ownership. Having a horse is a rewarding experience, just be sure you have the budget to support its needs!
- **Do you have someone to help you?** Do you have a trainer picked out? What about a veterinarian? A trainer can go with you to look at horses you might want to give you their professional opinion on its suitability for you. Additionally, it's almost always a good idea to

have a veterinarian picked out and available to come do a pre-purchase exam on a horse, or come and examine the horse after it has been purchased. Pre-purchase exams can help you find out whether or not the horse has any underlying health or soundness issues that could be a problem immediately or down the road. Keep in mind that every horse will have some negatives, but the key is to talk to your vet about what you can and cannot live with based on your intended use for the horse.

So where can I find my prospective horse?

- Classified ads in newspapers
- Notices on feed/tack store bulletin boards
- Horse Shows
- Internet Searches
- Auctions

This list is certainly not all-inclusive, but if you are seriously searching for a horse, you should be able to come up with a good selection of prospects from one or more reputable sources.

The explosion of the internet has certainly made a difference in the ability for information to be made available almost instantly. Websites such as [A Home For Every Horse](#), [Equine.com](#), and [Retired Racehorse Project](#) that are backed by reputable organizations are the best place to start when searching for a horse online. *(A note about buying online from social media- there have been instances of people simply posting a listing for a horse or pony they have for sale, and it ends up being a false listing. Be sure to do your research and ensure that the person posting the listing on social media is legitimate.)*

Additionally, keep in mind that purchasing a horse at an auction can be risky as you may not be able to find out the background or health status of the horse. Auctions can be better suited to the more experienced horseperson who will be able to spot any potential issues with the horses' health, temperament, and training.

Buying a horse is a major decision, do not make it quickly or on an impulse. Once you have found your horse though, enjoy! After all, isn't the saying "Horses can be cheaper than therapy"? Have fun with your new horse, knowing that you have done all you can to make an informed decision.