

Commonsense Horsemanship

SELECT THE RIGHT SNAFFLE

Most tack rooms have a large collection of snaffle bits—and for good reason. This is the most versatile of mouthpieces, suitable for everyday riding, starting young horses, reschooling problem horses and “finishing” an advanced horse’s mouth and carriage.

Snaffle bits are popular for dressage, jumping, eventing, driving and racing. They are also widely used in English and Western pleasure, reining and ranch work. Snaffles are ideal for beginner riders because they are relatively forgiving and much less complicated than a two-reined curb bit. Yet an expert rider can achieve the heights of performance with a snaffle alone.

Snaffles come in a variety of designs and materials, each intended to highlight or enhance a particular bit action. In fact, the sheer volume of the options can make choosing one for your horse daunting. In this article, we’ll provide an overview of snaffles and their many forms to help you identify the one most appropriate for your horse and riding goals. Next month we’ll delve a bit deeper and discuss the common methods of riding and training with the snaffle bit.

What makes a snaffle

Contrary to popular belief, the mouthpiece of a snaffle is not necessarily jointed. The mouthpiece may be solid (often called a straight bar snaffle), have a single joint or have multiple joints (such as the French



Whether you’re relying on this versatile bit to start a youngster or to “finish” a veteran, success will depend on choosing the right type for your horse.

By Susan E. Harris

Link or Dr. Bristol snaffles).

The key feature of the snaffle is its rings: They are positioned on each side of the mouth rather than beneath it. This makes the snaffle a “direct pressure” bit, meaning that it guides the horse with a direct rein aid. When you pull one rein, the snaffle slides slightly through the mouth so that the bit presses against the tongue, the lips and bars, while the ring on the opposite side exerts a gentle lateral “push” against the face to help turn the head. The snaffle can also be used for simple backward pressure on one or both sides of the mouth.

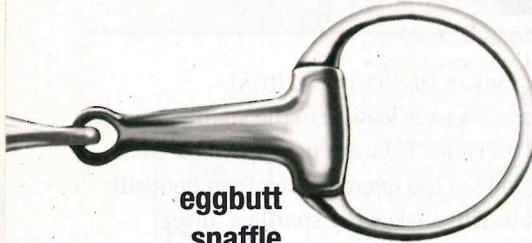
The snaffle lacks “force multipliers,” shanks that provide leverage or a curb chain that squeezes beneath a horse’s chin. Apply six ounces of pressure to the reins, and the horse feels six ounces of pressure in his mouth. This makes the snaffle more forgiving than some other bits, and the bit of choice when asking the horse to reach out and take contact with the rider’s hands.

That said, I’d like to dismiss the notion that all snaffle bits are mild or “you can’t hurt a horse with a snaffle.” Like any bit, the snaffle is as good or as bad as the hands at the other end of the reins. Specifically, a jointed snaffle can have a strong pinching or “nutcracker” effect if you apply strong pressure on both reins, especially if the reins are pulled in a downward direction. In these situations, the bit “breaks” over the lower jaw, which can

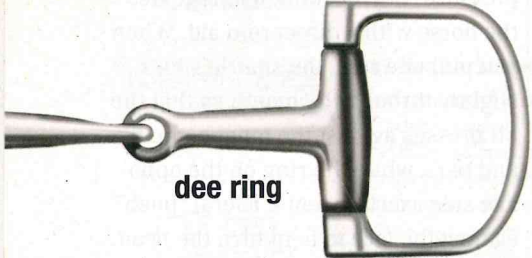
RING TYPES



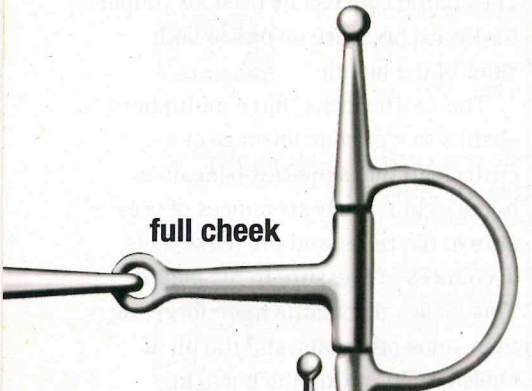
loose ring



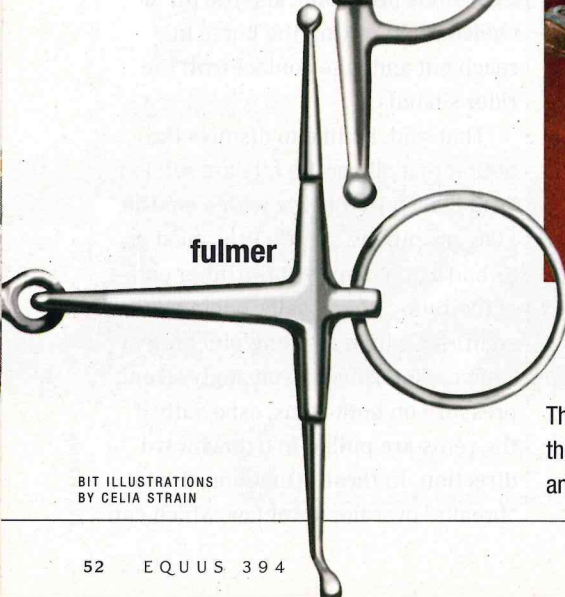
eggbutt snaffle



dee ring



full cheek

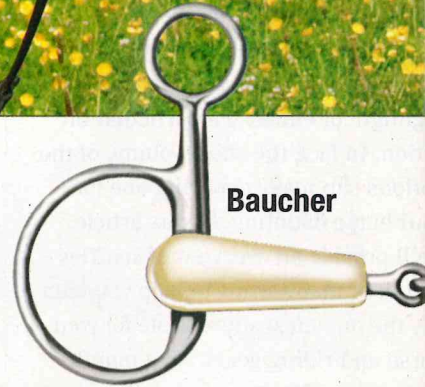


fulmer

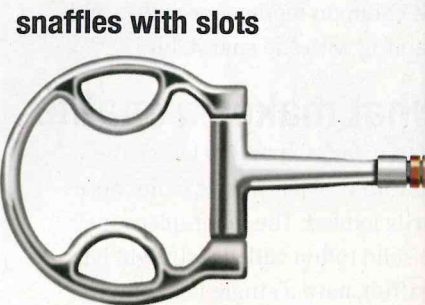
BIT ILLUSTRATIONS
BY CELIA STRAIN



POWER STEERING: The bar-like cheeks extending from the rings of a full cheek snaffle offer lateral guidance during a turn. The keepers, loops of leather that connect the bit to the bridle, stabilize the mouthpiece and place more pressure on the bars.



Baucher



snaffles with slots

cause the center joint of the bit to hit the palate or press downward into the tongue, depending on the direction of the rein pressure. Snaffles with two or more joints and a central link reduce this nutcracker effect and are less likely to bump the palate but put more pressure on the center of the tongue.

Ring it up

The array of snaffle bit styles can be overwhelming and confusing. One easy and useful way to categorize them, however, is by the type of ring they feature. Different rings offer specific advantages and drawbacks.

Loose ring snaffles have rings that slide freely through holes at the ends of the bit, making the mouthpiece more mobile, which encourages a relaxed, responsive mouth and makes it more difficult for a horse to “set” himself against it. But its loose rings can pinch the corners of the lips if the holes are too large. You can purchase rubber bit guards to prevent that from happening.

Eggbutt snaffles have “C” shaped rings, attached to the mouthpiece with a flattened, slightly oval-shaped hinged joint that prevents pinching of the lips. The ends of the mouthpieces are typically slightly thicker than the rest of the bit for comfort on the edges of the mouth. Eggbutt snaffles tend to be more stable in the mouth than loose rings, encouraging a quiet mouth.

Dee ring snaffles have, as you’d expect, “D” shaped rings. In addition to preventing pinching of the lips, this straight side exerts some lateral guiding pressure to aid in turning. Like eggbutt snaffles, they stabilize the bit in the mouth.

Full cheek snaffles feature a smaller ring for the headstall and rein attachment with straight, bar-like “cheeks” extending vertically from the ring. The cheeks exert lateral guiding pressure for turning. When used with keepers—



KNOW THE RULES!

Before you begin snaffle shopping, check the rules and requirements for your discipline. Dressage, eventing and Western snaffle bit classes have very strict specifications regarding bits. If you are training for these disciplines, it makes sense to use only the types of mouthpieces allowed in competition.

small loops of leather that connect the bit to the bridle—on the upper cheeks, the bit is fixed in the mouth with more pressure on the bars. Half-cheek snaffles have bottom cheeks only and are primarily used for driving and racing.

Fulmer snaffles are hybrids of sorts. They feature full cheeks at the end of the mouthpiece, but with loose rings for rein attachment. This offers the extra guidance of a cheek while turning but the mobility of a loose ring to prevent the horse from setting his jaw against the rein pressure.

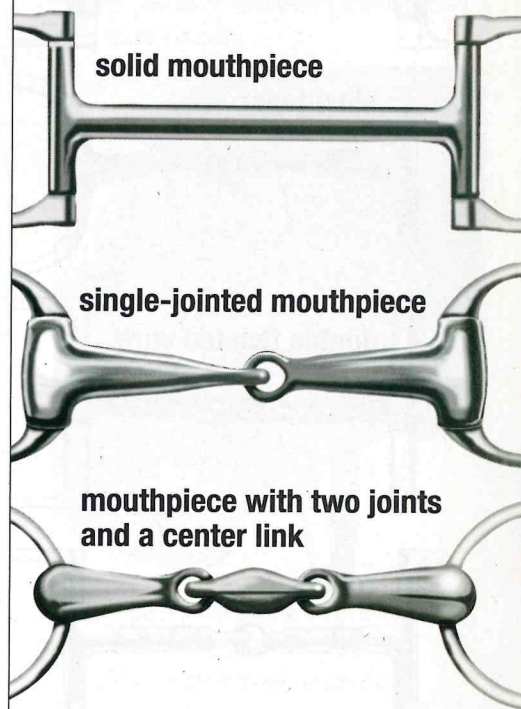
Baucher snaffles, also called “hanging cheek” snaffles, have round or eggbutt rings for the reins but also a short upper cheek with a small ring, to which the headstall attaches. This makes the bit very stable in the mouth and applies more pressure to the bars than other snaffles do. Baucher bits also apply slight pressure to the poll, although not nearly as much as a leverage bit, such as a curb.

Snaffles with slots, hooks or lifters fix the position of the rein and headstall on the ring instead of allowing these to slide freely. The upper slot or hook fixes the bit position relative to the bridle, with an effect similar to that of a baucher snaffle. If the reins are placed in the lower slots or hooks, this allows each side of the bit to act with a rotating or “lift” effect, like a milder version of a gag bit.

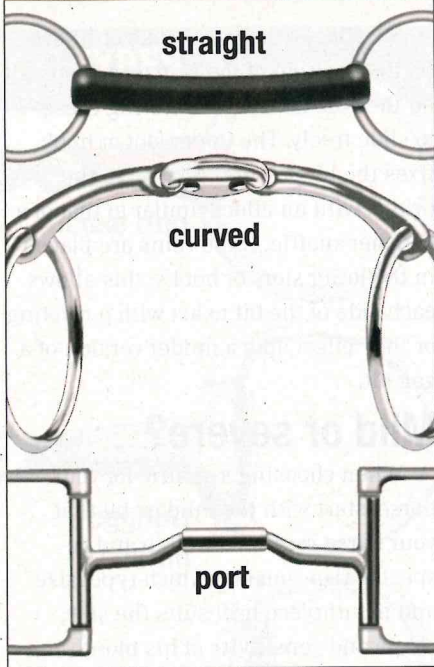
Mild or severe?

When choosing a snaffle for your horse, start with the mildest bit that your horse responds well to and respects. Also consider which type, size and mouthpiece best suits the size, shape and sensitivity of his mouth. Doing so will preserve the sensitivity of the horse’s mouth and avoid causing pain, which leads to resistance to rein aids. Although horses vary in their

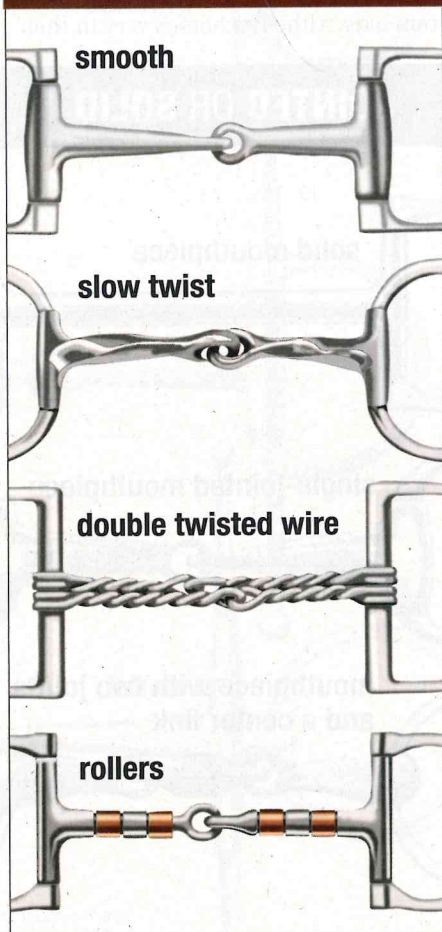
JOINTED OR SOLID



SHAPE & CONSTRUCTION



SURFACE FEATURES



responsiveness, the most important factor in biting is the hands (and heart and head) at the other end of the reins.

Several factors influence a bit's severity:

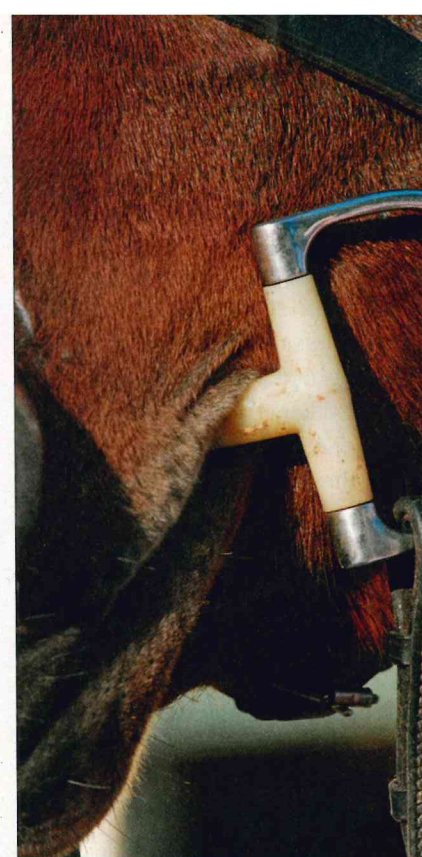
- **Jointed or solid mouth:** A solid mouthpiece is usually regarded as milder than a jointed snaffle, but some horses may prefer a more flexible bit. Snaffles with two joints and a center link generally have less pinching or "nutcracker" action than single-jointed bits. However, the central link puts more pressure on the tongue.

- **Mouthpiece shape and construction:** A simple mouthpiece that conforms to the anatomy and shape of the mouth is the most comfortable and least severe. Some horses need a bit with more arch in the mouthpiece or one designed for greater tongue relief. Examine your horse's mouth and talk to your veterinarian to get an idea of how your horse's mouth is shaped. Certain mouthpieces are designed to act severely or to concentrate pressure in a particular spot.

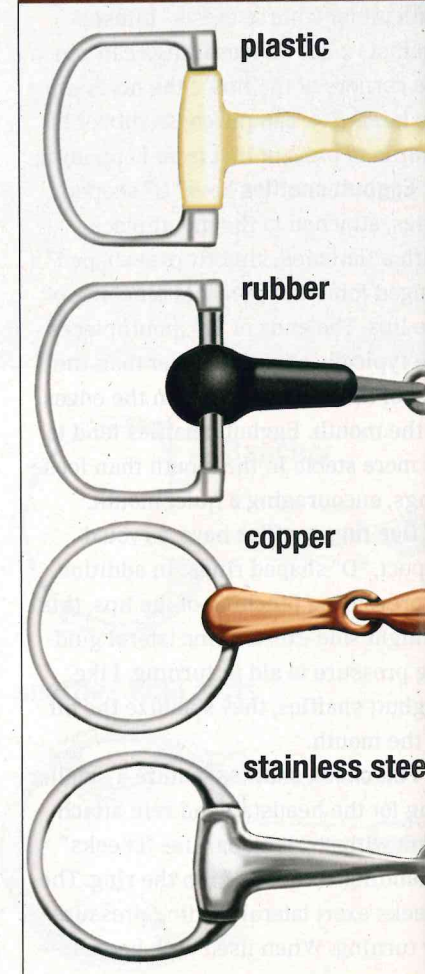
A so-called "correctional mouthpiece" has a high, hinged port in the center, with the ends of the hinges projecting slightly downward; this is a severe bit designed to be comfortable only when the horse carries his head in a vertical position.

- **Surface features:** A snaffle with a smooth surface is more comfortable than one with edges, ridges or projections which bite into the tongue, bars and corners of the lips. The most severe mouthpieces include corkscrews, twisted wires and triangle snaffles. Mouthpieces with rollers that spin freely around encourage the horse to "mouth" the bit instead of leaning or trying to grip the bit with his teeth.

- **Thickness:** A thick mouthpiece distributes bit pressure over a wider area, while a thin or narrow mouthpiece concentrates the pressure and has more "bite." However, horses with low palates,



MATERIALS





BUTTON UP: A flash noseband discourages a horse from opening his mouth and getting his tongue over the bit.

TONGUE TROUBLES

When a horse gets his tongue over the bit, it's a disaster for comfort and control. This typically happens when the horse pulls his tongue backward to avoid painful pressure. Underneath the tongue, the bit will press into the bars and the tongue stay, the sensitive string of tissue that connects the tongue to the base of the mouth. The horse may come to an abrupt stop, fling his head into the air and work his mouth in distress or even rear. Adjusting the bit slightly higher in the mouth may help, but you may have to change to a mouthpiece that suits the horse better, provides some tongue relief, and doesn't provoke him to withdraw his tongue. Some riders use a flash or dropped noseband to discourage the horse from opening his mouth and getting his tongue over the bit.

ARNOLD BRONKHORST

thick tongues or small mouths may find a thick mouthpiece uncomfortable. This is an instance where you'll need to be guided by close observation and a trial-and-error approach.

- **Mouthpiece materials:** Soft or flexible materials such as nylon, plastic or rubber are milder than metal bits. Some mouthpieces are made of copper, sweet iron or other alloys intended to encourage saliva production. Many horsemen think that aluminum dries out the mouth, while chrome may flake off, leaving rough spots. Stainless steel is smooth, durable and chemically neutral.

Fitting questions

Once you've chosen a type of snaffle, you'll need to determine the size of bit your horse needs. If a bit is too small, it can rub the corners of his mouth raw. A bit that is too big (or hung too low) might hit the roof of the mouth and cause pain; it may also be less effective because it slides through a horse's mouth or under his tongue (see "Tongue Troubles," left).

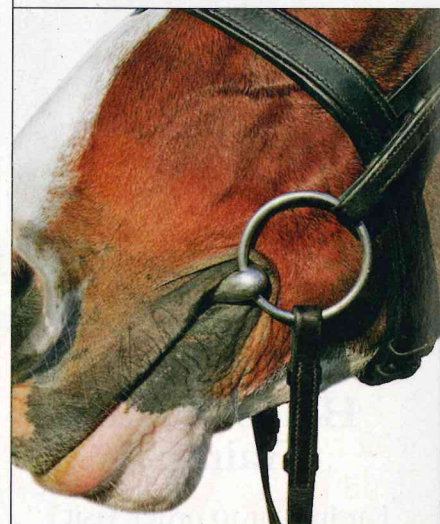
Bit sizes range from 3½ inches to six inches. A properly fitted bit extends about a quarter inch beyond the horse's lips on each side. The easy way to determine what size bit your horse needs is to measure one you already know fits him well from the inside of one bit ring across the mouthpiece to the inside of the other. If that's not an option, slip a wooden dowel into your horse's mouth and mark it about a quarter inch from the corners of his lips. Then measure the distance between the marks. You can also use a specialized mouth-measuring device.

When the bridle is properly adjusted the snaffle lies comfortably at the corners of the horse's mouth. On an English bridle, the snaffle usually makes one or two small wrinkles at the corners of the lips. Western trainers often place a snaffle bit slightly lower,

FITTING



CORRECT: When an English bridle is properly adjusted, the snaffle usually makes one or two small wrinkles at the corners of the horse's mouth.



TOO TIGHT: If the snaffle is set too high, the horse will be uncomfortable. Let down the bridle's cheek pieces by a notch or two.

CELIA STRAIN

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**THAT'S NOT
A SNAFFLE**



Some bit makers and tack catalogs cause confusion by labeling any bit with a jointed mouthpiece a "snaffle." And in fact, some bits, such as pelhams, incorporate snaffle features. However, it's important to understand that any bit with a jointed mouthpiece, shanks and/or a curb chain is actually a jointed curb, a fairly severe type of bit. On the other hand, some trainers use a chin strap on a snaffle bit to prevent the bit from slipping sideways through the mouth, but this is for stability only; it does not act as a curb strap.

so the bit just touches the corners of the lips, because they expect the horse to "pick up" the snaffle with his tongue.

The first time you place a new bit in a horse's mouth, adjust the bridle to be slightly larger than you think you'll need, but don't fully fasten each buckle. With the bridle and bit in place, tighten one side of the bridle and then the other to raise the bit slowly and evenly to the desired position. Also keep an eye on bit position as you ride: If the bridle's

cheek pieces bulge out from the horse's cheeks when you put pressure on both reins, the bit is too low.

With all the choices, chances are there is a snaffle bit out there that's perfect for your horse. It will, however, require a bit of research and careful thought on your part to find it. And you'll know you have when your horse is happy and compliant—connected to your hand with the simplest, clearest line of communication. 🐾



About the author: Susan E. Harris is an international clinician and author from Cortland, New York. For more than three decades, she has taught riders and instructors in equestrian disciplines ranging from hunters, jumpers and dressage to Western pleasure. She now teaches Centered Riding® clinics and offers her Anatomy in Motion™/Visible Horse presentations around the world. Harris, who has been honored as a Master Instructor by the American Riding

Instructor Association, is the author of *Horse Gaits, Balance and Movement, Grooming to Win* and the *U.S. Pony Club Manuals of Horsemanship*.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE SNAFFLE



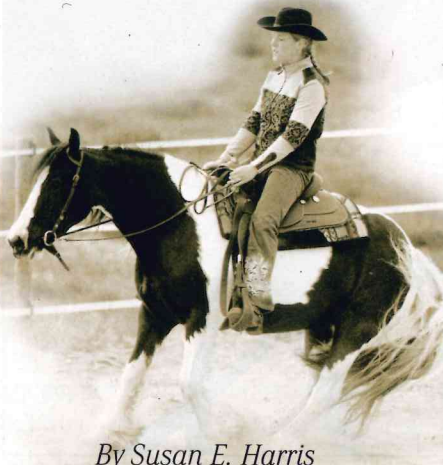
Don't let the simplicity of a snaffle bit fool you. Its basic design is adaptable to endless variations, and its straightforward function allows it to be utilized for a wide array of riding styles and techniques. Last month, we discussed the many snaffle options available as well as how to choose the best one for your horse and riding goals. This month, we explore how to most effectively use this type of bit to take your horse from basic stops and starts through more advanced exercises focusing on contact and connection.

Take up the reins

A snaffle bit facilitates communication between horse and rider, and the dialogue begins as soon as you pick up the reins. How you hold them dictates how the conversation will unfold.

It's most effective to hold one rein in each hand. This allows you to use each independently and deliver your rein aids clearly. There are two ways

The same bit that helps a horse learn to comply with basic aids in his first weeks of training can be used to hone the skills of an experienced horse. Here's how to ride in a snaffle.



By Susan E. Harris

to hold the reins to accomplish this:

- **English style:** Hold one rein in each hand, with soft, closed fists, a straight wrist and your knuckles between vertical and 30 degrees. Grasp the rein lightly between the pinky and ring finger and thread it up across the upper palm with the thumb resting on the end. To apply rein pressure, squeeze your fist softly.

- **Western snaffle bit style:** Again, hold one rein in each hand, but "bridge" (cross) the ends of the split reins over the horse's neck and hold the tail end in the opposite hand. In each hand pull the rein directly up through the bottom of the fist (not through the pinky and ring finger). To apply pressure, squeeze your fist or move your hand. It's important to hold the reins with a long enough "bridge" between your hands so you can use them independently of each other.

There are times, however, when you may want or need to ride in a snaffle bit using only one hand. In these situations, it's most effective to hold your

ARND BRONKHORST



HOLD UP: Bit function is influenced by the position of the rider's hands. When they are elevated, upward pressure is placed on the horse's lips and pressure on the bars is reduced.

wrist horizontally in front of you and bridge the reins through your hand. This allows you to apply pressure to either rein independently by rotating your wrist or moving either your index or pinky finger, while allowing you to neck rein when you'd like.

The height at which you carry your hands makes a difference in how the bit works. A snaffle bit sits in a "neutral" position when your hands are carried

at a level that creates a straight line between the horse's mouth and your elbow. When you apply pressure to the bit with your hands at this height, it acts on the tongue, corners of the lips and bars of the mouth.

Moving your hands from this neutral position causes the bit to function differently. For instance, if you raise your hands above the mouth-to-elbow line, this puts pressure upward into the corners of the horse's lips. This also reduces pressure on the bars and tends to raise the horse's head. That said, some horses are taught to respond to upward pressure as a cue to lower their heads.

If you drop your hands below the

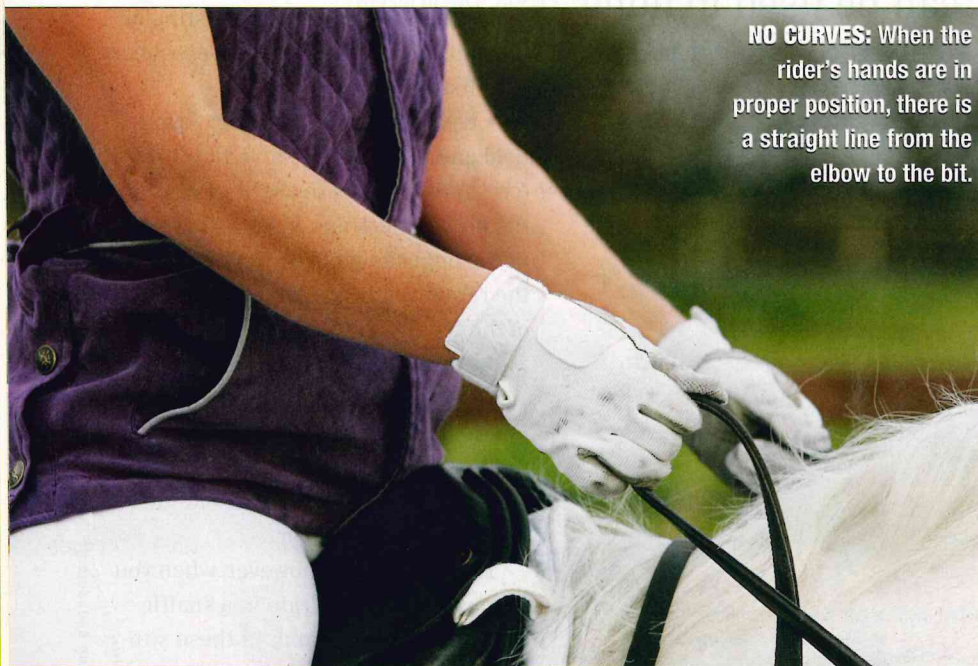
mouth-to-elbow line, you apply downward pressure against the tongue and bars of the lower jaw. This can cause a jointed snaffle bit to "break" over the jaw, applying strong nutcracker-like pressure to the bars. The center joint of the bit may also hit the roof of the mouth. A horse may fight such pressure by raising his head, opening his mouth and stiffening his neck and jaw. Others may duck behind the bit or overflex in an effort to escape the downward pressure.

Be aware that running martingales, training forks, draw reins and other "head setting" devices can also apply this type of pressure to a snaffle bit. This gear is meant to encourage the horse to flex and/or lower his head, but it can result in overflexion or going behind the bit. If you use a running martingale or other training device, consider using one set of reins that go directly to the snaffle bit and a second set of reins just for the martingale.

Back to basics

Snaffle bit lessons begin with halts, turns and simple exercises to encourage responses to light pressure with loose or semi-loose reins at slow gaits. The goal is to teach a horse to accept and give to bit pressure while moving with a free, natural head carriage. This is how nearly all young horses are started and how many pleasure horses are ridden on a daily basis.

When riding in a snaffle on a loose rein, you need to apply pressure gently and smoothly to signal the horse that pressure is coming. If you take the slack out of the rein abruptly, it causes sudden, sharp pressure and an unpleasant surprise to his sensitive mouth. To experience this yourself, hold a bit in your hand with a friend holding the reins loosely. Then, shut your eyes and have your friend "stop" you with light rein pressure with no warning. You may be



NO CURVES: When the rider's hands are in proper position, there is a straight line from the elbow to the bit.

surprised at how sharp a “gentle” tug feels when you’re not expecting it.

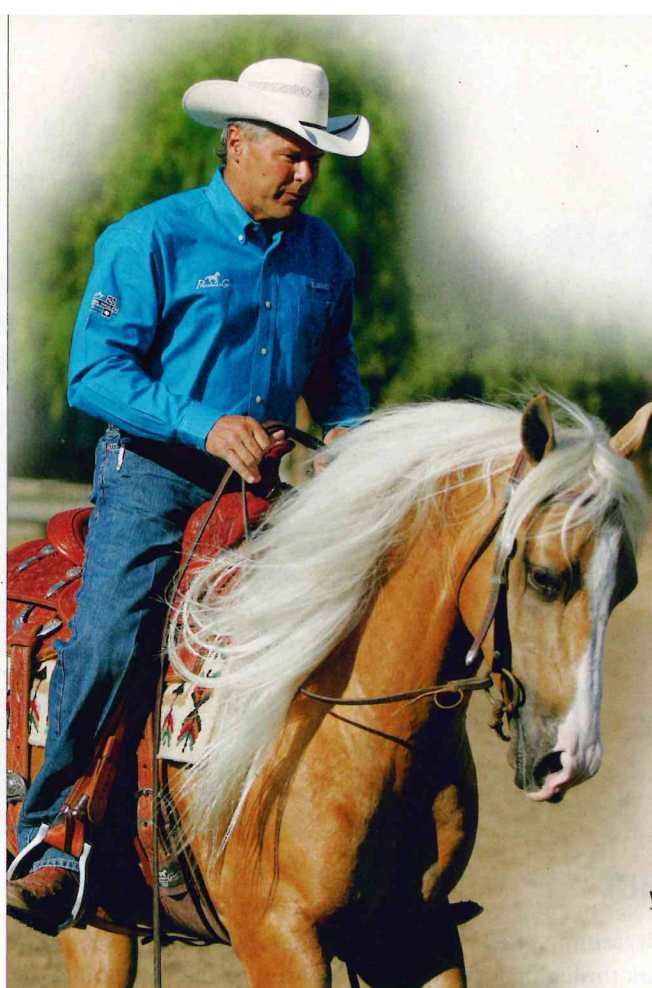
To avoid this, it helps to let your horse know that change is coming. You can do this with a voice command like “whoa,” body language such as taking a deep breath or shifting your balance, or by applying rein pressure gradually and gently. Here are three techniques for applying gentle rein pressure.

- **Flexing fingers:** Hold the rein in a soft fist, with your fingers slightly open and thumb resting on the tail end of the rein. Close your fingers one at a time, starting with your index finger, middle, ring and pinky, for a progressive squeeze on the rein.

- **Rubbing thumbs:** Hold the rein in a soft fist, with fingers softly closed around the rein and thumb on the tail end of the rein. Imagine you have a dab of saddle soap on the ball of your thumb, then rub your thumb firmly forward toward the bit, as if you were smearing the soap forward over the tail end of the rein. (This technique results in a soft pressure and works best on contact or on semi-loose reins.)

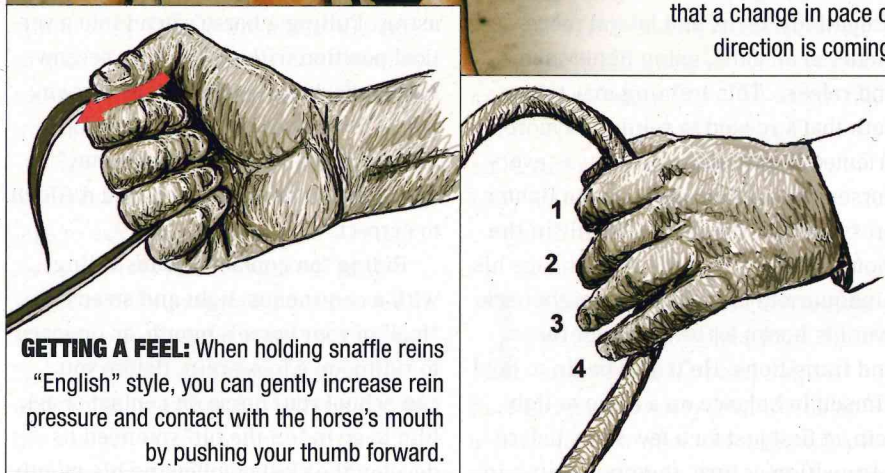
- **One-hand slide:** This technique works well when you first pick up the reins during a ride or after a break. With one hand, hold the reins at the buckle or center, and lift them about two feet above the withers. Place the other hand softly around the reins just below the first hand and gently slide that hand down until you make contact with the bit, then squeeze the reins and hold them as you’d like. The slide gives a gentle signal that contact is coming.

Even after you’ve given the horse a signal, you still need to be careful in applying pressure to the reins. Remember, first and foremost, that it’s pressure, not pull. This means applying a deliberate, consistent amount of “weight” to the bit while holding your hand still. Then when your horse



THE RIGHT STUFF: A well-trained horse can move in balance with excellent self-carriage on a snaffle with a loose rein.

EASY SQUEEZE: By holding your reins in soft fists, then closing each finger in succession, you increase rein pressure incrementally, giving your horse a “heads up” that a change in pace or direction is coming.



GETTING A FEEL: When holding snaffle reins “English” style, you can gently increase rein pressure and contact with the horse’s mouth by pushing your thumb forward.

responds correctly—by slowing, turning, relaxing his mouth, flexing or “giving” to pressure—he is instantly rewarded as you lighten the pressure. Pulling, on the other hand, is using your muscles and moving your hand backward with no regard for what is happening at the other end of the rein. If you’re pulling when your horse gives to the pressure, your hand will fly backward and he’ll get popped in the mouth even though he did what you asked. Distinguishing pressure from pull takes awareness, good

timing and patience, patience, patience.

I can’t overemphasize how crucial it is to reward every good response from your horse with a release of bit pressure. To do this effectively, you must ride in good balance with a secure seat—if you’re insecure, bouncy or out of balance, you may accidentally fall forward or backward, catch your balance on the reins, or lean and pull. If you’re not secure enough yet to do this in a trot or canter, practice halts and turns in a walk until you’re getting better responses from your horse.



VARIATION: This bay is wearing a Western snaffle bit with slobber straps.

Making contact

Loose-rein snaffle bit training progresses to advanced work through more transitions, turns and lateral movements in all gaits, using light touch and release. This training may take a path that's related to reining or more oriented toward dressage, but as every horse advances, he responds to lighter pressure and should give easily in the mouth, flex softly at the poll, engage his hindquarters and shift his weight back over his hocks for hindquarter turns and transitions. He'll also begin to hold himself in balance on a loose or light rein, at first just for a few steps before a transition or turn, then remaining in

self-carriage for longer periods.

The often-misunderstood concepts of "contact" and "frame," however, can lead more advanced snaffle training astray. Pulling a horse's head into a vertical position with severe bits, seesawing hands, head-setting devices or any use of force does not "frame him up"; instead, it results in a "false frame," which is counterproductive and difficult to correct.

Riding "on contact" means riding with a continuous, light and steady "feel" of your horse's mouth, as opposed to riding on a loose rein. Before you can school your horse on contact or ask him to go in "on the bit" you need to develop the skill of following his mouth

accurately with your hands and arms while maintaining a light, steady contact. This is especially important in the walk and the canter, because in those gaits the horse makes "balancing gestures" at every stride with his head and neck, which should not be restricted by rigid arms and hands. Here's an exercise to help develop that skill:

Take a piece of yarn as long as a pair of reins and tie it securely to each side of the bit. With your regular reins knotted on your horse's neck, adjust the yarn reins so that you have contact with the bit when your horse's head is in a normal position. Then ride forward at a walk, keeping the yarn lightly taut. As your horse walks, you'll become

WHEN MORE BIT IS BETTER

The snaffle is a versatile bit but it's not ideal in all situations.

If a horse is headstrong, hard-mouthed, excitable or hard to control, trying to "muscle" him into obedience with a snaffle bit is unwise as well as unkind. Hard pulling can bruise sensitive mouth tissues and make him

unresponsive and "dead" to the rein aids. Plus, horses pull against pain, so just pulling harder may escalate the problem.

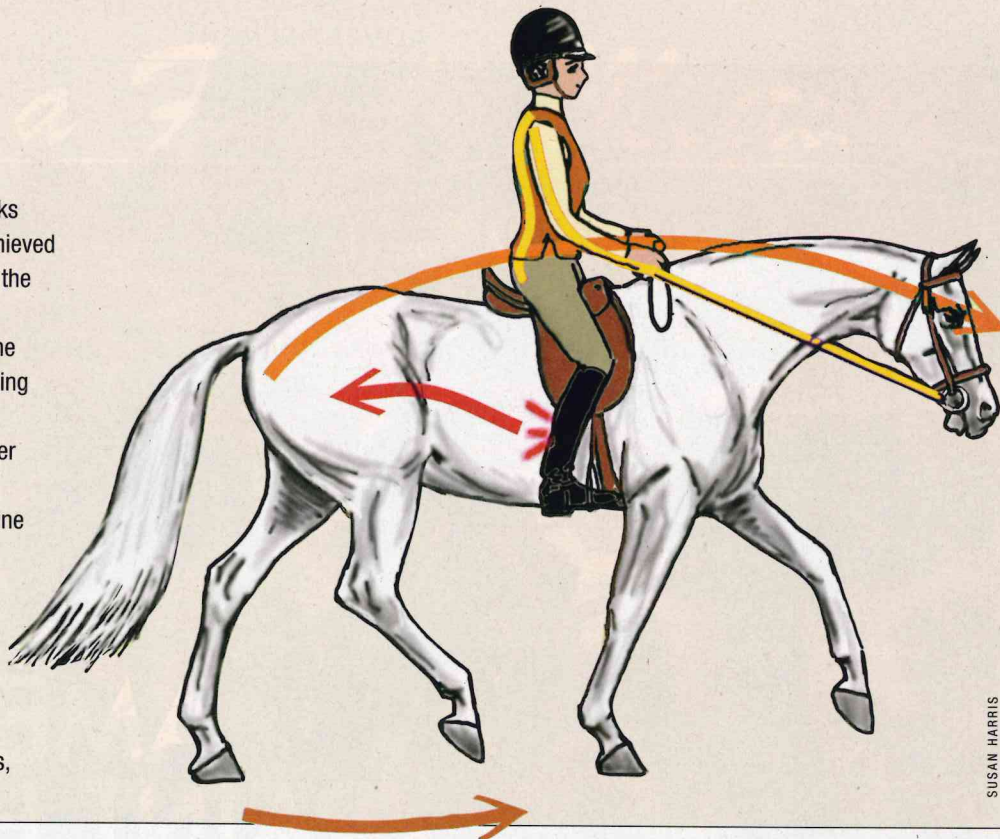
The first thing to try is going back to basics or even ground work with a simple snaffle to teach the horse to respond to reasonable aids in a mild bit. If, after patient retraining, your horse is still not safely controllable with a snaffle, it may be better to use a slightly stronger bit that he respects enough to respond to reasonable rein aids.

Some horses may need "extra brakes" in exciting situations such as polo matches, cross-country jumping or galloping in a group. Likewise, some strong-willed ponies will take advantage of a child when ridden in a snaffle but behave like angels with a bit they respect. However, it is the rider's responsibility to use any bit tactfully and as lightly as possible, and the horse must continue to be schooled in a snaffle to improve his mouth and responsiveness.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

The process of making contact works from the back to the front—it is achieved when the horse reaches forward to the bit. Here's how it's done:

- 1) The rider applies the leg aid on the sensitive spot near the girth, activating the hind leg.
- 2) The hind legs respond with greater reach and engagement.
- 3) The resulting extending of the spine lifts the back and stretches forward through the neck, poll and head.
- 4) The horse reaches forward, making contact with the bit and the rider's hands.
- 5) The rider receives and regulates the contact through her hands, arms, shoulders and back.



SUSAN HARRIS

aware of how much he moves his head forward and back and how much your arms must move to accurately follow his mouth and keep the yarn from breaking. You'll feel how a simple, gentle squeeze on the reins can ask your horse to turn, slow down or halt.

At the trot, the horse's head and neck are steady but your body moves up and down as you post—your elbows must open and close as you post to stabilize your hands. Riding with following hands in the canter is the biggest challenge, because your body must go with the canter motion while your hands and arms follow your horse's mouth, keeping the yarn lightly stretched. You'll know you've achieved a light contact when you can make turns, transitions and halts from any gait without breaking the yarn. (This is an excellent confidence-building exercise for horses who are reluctant to accept contact or who duck behind the bit; however, if your horse leans heavily, pulls or snatches hard enough to break the yarn, switch back to your regular reins.)

Developing such passive, following hands is an important skill for advanced snaffle riding, but it is only a temporary stage. In order to ride your

horse on contact and in balance, the next step is "making the connection." You achieve contact by getting your horse to respond to your hands with his whole body. This is the horse offering to take up the connection with the bit, rather than you shortening your reins until you've "got" him.

True connection is the result of a chain reaction. It starts with using your legs to ask your horse to take a longer, more powerful stride with his hind legs. This makes him use his muscles to lift his back and stretch his head and neck forward; his mouth reaches out and "finds" your hands, and you receive his contact in your hands and arms and down through your back. When your horse makes the connection, he is accepting and responding to all the aids—your legs, your seat on his back, and your hands, and giving you control of his whole body and movement. It's a wonderful gift of trust.

In order to help your horse "make the connection," you must ride in good balance, use your legs effectively, and have your reins at the right length so the horse can take contact with your hands when he stretches his head and neck to the right degree. Keep your hands soft

but positive and follow quietly, squeezing softly to ask for flexion or have a quiet "conversation" with his mouth. This lets you achieve a true "frame" by adjusting your horse's entire body balance, not just pulling in his head and neck. When taken to a level where the horse allows you to influence his balance, carriage, strides and use of his body without resistance, he is truly and correctly "on the bit."

There's a reason snaffles are the go-to bits for many riders. The same bit design that helps a horse learn to comply with the basic aids in his first weeks of training also allows an experienced horse to develop sophisticated skills in a very natural way. The common factor in this progression is a rider who knows how to use this wonderfully simple, and simply wonderful, bit. 🐾

About the author: Susan E. Harris is an international clinician and author from Cortland, New York. For more than three decades, she has taught riders and instructors in equestrian disciplines ranging from hunters, jumpers and dressage to Western pleasure.