

## Maintenance Checklist

As always, prevention is better than cure. Regular inspections will ensure your tack remains in good condition for as long as possible, allowing saddles and bridles to do the job they were made for. Here are a few points to look out for when checking your equipment:

- ✓ Stitching that is worn, coming undone or tearing the leather.
- ✓ Cracking, thin or dry leather.
- ✓ Holes that are wearing and becoming elongated. Avoid this happening by using a different hole in the stirrup leather sometimes.
- ✓ Hook studs that are pulling out or corroded.
- ✓ Bits that are cracked, rough, chewed or worn. Rubber and plastic bits are more susceptible to this type of wear and usually have a reinforced wire core that can be damaged if chewed. Damaged bits should always be discarded.
- ✓ Buckles that are bent or with stitching that is coming undone.
- ✓ Buckles with bent tongues.
- ✓ Rusted buckles.
- ✓ Reins that are worn at bends or turns, and at the point where they make contact with a running martingale or metal components.
- ✓ Stirrup bars should be firmly attached, so check that this is still the case, particularly after an accident where the stirrup has been subjected to severe tension or the saddle has been rolled on.
- ✓ Stirrup leathers that are stretched or wearing.
- ✓ Do not fasten bridle cheek pieces at the top hole. If a strap gets broken, you will have nothing to buckle the cheek piece to.
- ✓ Check the bridle's running and fixed loops.
- ✓ Ensure the reins are not too long.
- ✓ Remove stirrup leathers to check that they remain of equal length.

**If you are ever involved in an accident in which your saddle might have been damaged, it is always safer to get it checked over by a saddler.**



Your local retailer will stock a wide range of tack cleaning products to keep leather and synthetic saddles and bridles in great condition.



The British Equestrian Trade Association is dedicated to maintaining standards and promoting rider safety. BETA retailers offer a reliable, expert service allowing you to shop with confidence and they can be located throughout the UK. To find your nearest one, log on to [www.beta-uk.org](http://www.beta-uk.org) or download the BETA iPhone app from iTunes:

**itms://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/beta-directory/id393334362?mt=8**

If you would like further information or advice about issues relating to tack and saddlery, contact BETA, telephone 01937 587062 or email [info@beta-uk.org](mailto:info@beta-uk.org)

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# SADDLE UP SAFELY



## The BETA Guide to Tack Care

**TACK: HOW TO CARE FOR IT • HOW TO INSPECT IT • WHEN TO REPLACE IT**

## Quality First

Always buy the best tack you can afford. Cheaper options are often a false economy and a sudden break can be dangerous. There is a wide range of saddles and bridles available, many made from some of the finest leathers and sporting high levels of craftsmanship.

Synthetic tack has grown in popularity in recent years. Although it is less costly than leather and easier to care for – requiring nothing more than a wash with soap and water – it may not be so readily repaired and may not last as long.

## A Trusted Service

Purchasing a saddle or bridle requires substantial investment, so make sure you buy from a reputable retailer. Remember to look for the BETA logo displayed in-store as an assurance that you can shop with confidence.

Making sure that your horse is fitted correctly for a saddle is vital for his comfort and wellbeing. Always enlist the services of an experienced and knowledgeable saddler to ensure you have the best possible tack, ideally suited for you and your horse, and your riding activities.

A showing bridle, for example, is no good for hunting and a dressage saddle is not suitable for a long-distance ride. Similarly, a narrow or light stirrup leather should not be used by heavy people, who need a stronger, thicker strap.

It's always best to buy new equipment but, if you do opt for second-hand tack, take great care to ensure that it is in good condition and check out the ranges offered by BETA retail members.

## Repair or Replace?

All tack should be checked on a regular basis because leather, stitching and metal deteriorate over time. Ideally, it should be cleaned after every ride and all components dismantled once a week for a thorough clean and inspection.

Tack that has not been used for a while – or has been involved in an accident – should be checked before it is put back into service. If you are unsure about any aspects, take it to a saddler, who will be able to advise you. Always repair or replace broken, worn or badly damaged tack.

## Clean and Care

Keeping tack clean and well-maintained really pays dividends and brings you peace of mind. A few simple steps and a commonsense approach will ensure your equipment stays in tip-top working order.

## Leather

A natural material, leather is extremely strong and will last for years if it is properly cared for. It should be kept supple and is best treated with a natural preservative to both sides. Leather is sensitive to its environment and can easily go mouldy if neglected.

Wet leather should never be dried in artificial heat. It is far better to leave it to dry at room temperature. Be aware that some soaps and solvent-based products can cause colours in leather to run. Any concerns about this should be directed to your saddler, who will be able to advise you.

Leather today is treated at the factory, so needs less oiling than it once did. New saddlery should be cleaned with a sponge and lukewarm water before leaving it to dry naturally. Apply oil sparingly to the reverse side of the leather and use a good-quality leather dressing to the right side. It can then be flexed to make it more supple if you wish.

Supple leather should be treated in the same way as new leather, but there is no need to flex it.



Make sure your horse or pony is fitted with a bridle that suits your horse and riding activities.



Buying a saddle requires significant investment, so always ensure you buy one from a reputable source such as a BETA retail member.

## Stitching

Most modern stitching is done with synthetic thread, which will not rot. The most critical areas of stitching can be found on the reins at the bridle and buckle ends, girth straps, girth buckles and the bridle at the bit ring. Oil and dubbin will not damage stitching.

## Metal

Metal should be cleaned with a toothbrush and warm water or simply rubbed clean with a dry cloth. Many bits can be washed in water before being dried with a cotton cloth. If metal polish is recommended by the manufacturer, be careful not to leave any on the bit or leather. The thumb catch on the stirrup bar, if present, is designed to stop the stirrup leather slipping off, but it should also allow it to drop down in an emergency. To ensure it can do this, the stirrup bar should be kept clean and oiled. For safety reasons, it is recommended that the stirrup bar thumb catches are used in the down/open position.

Any scratches should be polished by an expert to restore them to a smooth finish. Keep an eye out for corrosion, particularly on hook-studs, and ask your saddler if in doubt.



Make sure you check your tack regularly – look out for loose stitching and rusting metal.

## Synthetics

Caring for synthetic tack requires a gentle wipe down with water or one of the specific cleaning solutions currently available. Attention should be paid to stitching and metal fittings to ensure they remain in good order.

Leather is a natural product that, with the right amounts of TLC, will remain strong and resilient for many years.



## Hard and Cracked Leather

Dirt should be removed from the tack with warm water, then left to dry at room temperature. A little oil or leather dressing should be sparingly applied. Repeat this process until the leather becomes flexible, then seal with a natural fatty product. Take care not to weaken the leather by over-oiling it.