

## Barn Basics: A Trio of Time Savers

**By making the most of your minutes you can spend more time with your horse**

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Don't you wish you could spend more time with your favorite horse? It seems like there simply aren't enough minutes in the day. Either we're rushing from work or school to the barn, or we feel guilty because we're at the barn and someone is at home waiting for us to return. Sure, as horse lovers we have to budget our money. But we're also forced to budget our time. Here are three timely tips to help you get the most out of your minutes at the barn. Like most riders, you probably want to spend as much time as possible in the saddle. But if you happen to have a horse that's especially fresh or frisky you're probably spending some of your precious time conducting a pre-ride longe or turn out session. After all, who wants to climb aboard and deal with excess equine energy? One way of dealing with this dilemma—while still preserving your safety and your horse's sanity—is to enlist the help of a reliable, horse savvy barn buddy. Arrange to have them longe or turn out your horse at a specified time so that when you arrive at the barn you can proceed directly to grooming and tacking up. Of course, you'll need to compensate them for their trouble, but that's the best part of this deal. You don't have to cough up cash for the service. Instead, form a sort of co-op or helpmate system where you each take turns, according to a schedule, longeing and turning out each other's horse. That way, everyone in the group gets their horse sufficiently exercised. None of you will be stuck dealing with rambunctious horses when you're already pressed for time, and your horses will have a chance to kick up their heels.

Keep a "to do" list handy for all those horse-related tasks you really need to get around to doing if only you had the time. Most likely you can recite the list from memory: Launder leg quilts and wraps, clean tack, sweep the tackroom floor, scrub water troughs and buckets, wash the horse trailer, and replace that cracked fence board. Then, the next time circumstances prevent you from riding—maybe your horse throws a front shoe, it's stormy or you've sustained some kind of minor personal injury—you can start working down the list. Make those non-riding days pay off! Then you won't be spending quality horse time attending to mundane chores.

When you do have a few spare minutes, plan ahead. For example, if your horse is on a course of oral antibiotics or takes daily supplements, measure out a week's worth at a time and place each day's ration in clearly marked zip lock plastic baggies. It'll help prevent a sense of feeling frazzled when you're pressed for time. Who enjoys crushing pills or sifting supplements when the clock is ticking? Another idea is to pre-groom your horse. On the afternoon or evening before a special day of riding or showing, groom your horse thoroughly. Shampoo and condition his tail, then weave it gently into a loose braid and secure it at the end with an elastic band. If he's blessed with splashy white stockings, get them super clean and then wrap them to keep them stain-free overnight. Depending on the weather, clothe your horse in pajamas (a blanket or daysheet) so that his coat remains tidy. Then, when you're hustling around the next day, trying your best to cram a full day of horsey activities into a few free hours, you won't have to spend time currying away a bunch of grime. Your horse will already be fastidiously clean!

See? You can have more time to spend with your favorite horse, as long as you do a little bit of planning.

Get more tips on saving time and money at the barn.