

Finding the Right Helmet

How do I make sure my helmet fits correctly?

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Q: I've decided to start wearing a helmet after going without for many years. Helmets are a lot different now than when I was a kid! How do I find the right helmet, and how do I know if it fits correctly?

A: Congratulations! You've made a smart choice. Equestrian helmets are no longer just for jumpers and jockeys, and you'll find styles to suit every need.

Today, hunter/jumpers have updated styles with cutting-edge features for optimal ventilation and fit. Western riders can opt for the western hat/helmet hybrids, or newer helmets that are made with western accents to fit the style. If you ride primarily on trails or just for pleasure, seek out a light-colored, ventilated schooling helmet. It will keep your head cool and this type of helmet is typically quite inexpensive.

Of course, if you still love the classics, you can go for the black velvet helmet that looks much like the old hunt caps with the added benefit of actually protecting your head!

You can measure your head with a tape measure to approximate your helmet size if you plan to order online or from a catalog. However, your head shape will affect your helmet size, so it's best to actually visit your local tack shop and try on a few different brands and models of helmet to find the size and shape that will work for you.

When you try on a helmet, wear your hair the way you will usually have it when you're riding. If you're shopping for a show helmet, this may mean bringing along a hairnet and putting your hair up under the helmet.

When you put on the helmet, it should fit snugly. Shake your head side to side and up and down. If the helmet moves at all, it's too big. Try to slide it back and forth on your head. It should not slide easily. You want your helmet to stay pretty much in place if it comes into contact with an immovable object. Of course, you don't want to feel like your head is in a vice grip, either. If the helmet gives you a headache or leaves a red mark after a few minutes, it's probably too small.

If you're accustomed to wearing a bicycle helmet, an equestrian helmet may feel strange at first. Riding helmets are designed to fit lower than bike helmets, so keep that in mind during the fitting process.

--Leslie Potter

Resources

[Proper Fitting from Troxel Helmets](#)

[How to Fit a Helmet from Charles Owen and SmartPak Equine](#)

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