

WHERE IT FITS WITHIN THE RECOMMENDED AMOUNT OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Horseback riding provides the benefits of a moderate-intensity exercise if done for a half-hour or more three times a week. That means that your remaining exercise time (based on a recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity) can be dedicated to aerobic exercise.

You can do other exercises that will make you a stronger and more efficient rider and will contribute to your daily 60 minutes of physical activity. Here are some examples:

- Strength: for arms, push-ups and planks (an exercise that tightens core muscles by using the arms to raise the body off the floor and hold it straight and rigid, like a plank of wood); for legs, squats and lunges
- Aerobic/cardiovascular: 20-30 minutes of brisk walking, walking/jogging

Inner and outer glutes work

PARTS OF BODY USED	MUSCLES AFFECTED (See <i>Terms to Know</i> in Facilitator's Guide)	HEALTH BENEFITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper & lower legs • Heart • Lungs • Abs • Hips • Buttocks • Lower back • Inner thighs • Arms • Shoulders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quads (<i>Quadriceps</i>) • Hamstrings • Pelvic muscles • Abductors • Hip flexors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves posture • Enhances balance and coordination • Develops core strength • Strengthens muscles • Boosts the cardiovascular system, especially during trotting because of the horse's gait • Improves the digestive system (and stimulates the appetite!) • Promotes faster reflexes • Stretches tight muscles throughout the body • Increases range of motion in joints



The Top 15 Benefits of Horseback Riding

BLOG-orig, CHA BLOG

By Sarah Evers Conrad

Everyone has their own reasons for wanting to learn how to ride. The benefits of horseback riding are innumerable and are shared amongst all horseback riders. If you are already a rider, you may be thinking that you don't need this information. But I hope you will continue reading. I imagine I am not the only horse person who has met people who could not understand why I loved riding so much. If you have too, the next time this happens, please share this blog post. And if someone is considering a new hobby, maybe the information below will help convince you to join the rider ranks.

I was first bitten by the horse bug at age five when I saw the movies "The Black Stallion" and "The Black Stallion Returns" for the first time. I was five. From that point on, I devoured any horse book I could get my hands on. At age 10, I was able to start horseback riding lessons. My parents finally gave in to all of the begging. Horseback

riding has been my main hobby throughout my life. So I have experienced many of the benefits of horseback riding firsthand. I know that being involved with horses has led me to be the person I am today.

Let's discuss some of the benefits you can expect to have from riding horses regularly.

Positive Character Traits

Horseback riding teaches responsibility to those who ride and even more so to those who take care of horses. Horse caretakers must know how to care for the horse during times of health and illness. Learning all about horse health, along with tack and farm care, involves a lot of time and responsibility in order to put that knowledge into practice every single day for the benefit of the horse. In addition, horseback riding teaches patience, discipline, understanding, empathy, compassion, self-control, and dedication. Without these traits, the rider will not go far in their horsemanship studies.

Physical Health

Horseback riding is physically demanding and can help you stay in shape. In fact, it is now considered moderate-intensity exercise after the 2011 publication of a study commissioned by the British Horse Society (BHS) to look at the physical health, psychological, and well-being benefits of recreational riding. The study was done through the University of Brighton with help from Plumpton College.

To be considered moderate-intensity, researchers determined that riding must be done for at least half an hour or more, three times per week. This level of activity meets England's recommendations for minimal level of activity and beyond. In addition, activities associated with riding burns energy at a moderate intensity. Horseback riding can burn hundreds of calories, as does grooming and saddling. Please note: Actual calories burned depends on body weight, workout intensity, conditioning level, and metabolism.

Riders can develop better reflexes and a sense of balance and coordination as they use their entire body to guide and propel the horse forward. Riding also offers cardio benefits. Riding, lifting saddles onto the back of a horse, mucking stalls, moving hay bales, etc., builds muscles and physical strength.

Problem-Solving

Riders must learn to problem solve and make quick decisions from the back of the horse. For instance, if a horse is set on going one way and the rider wants to go the other, he/she has to determine how to make a 1,000-pound animal go the direction that the rider has chosen in a humane and safe way. The unexpected can happen and riders must think quickly in the saddle to remain safe and in control.

Psychological Health

The study completed by the BHS concluded that horseback riding stimulated mainly positive psychological feelings. More than 80% of rider questionnaire responses claim that horseback riding made them feel "quite a lot"

or “extremely cheerful, relaxed, happy, or active.” Learning to ride develops confidence and self-esteem. When a rider learns how to stay on and also meet goals set by a riding instructor or themselves, those feelings of “I can do this,” really make an impact. After all, riding is not easy. And not everyone can do it. Becoming a skilled rider means that you have a skill many people do not. In addition to self confidence, riders may gain an increase in self-esteem and self-image.

Companionship

Horses are social creatures just like humans. Being able to communicate and interact with an animal has already been shown to have a positive effect on people, as has been experienced by those involved with therapeutic riding programs. As a past volunteer for therapeutic riding programs, I have seen children who would not talk much with people. But when they were around horses, they opened up and communication was not a problem. The children saw the therapy horse as their companion and confidante. According to the BHS study, one of the biggest motivations for going horseback riding was “interaction with horses.” Horses make wonderful companion animals and many equestrians call horses their best friends.

Socialization

If we look at the benefits that therapeutic riding has been shown to give to riders, improved interpersonal skills and socialization skills are on the list. Equestrians know they are never alone in this hobby. Riders will socialize with their horses, each other, their riding instructors, employees at the barn, those at competitions, etc. The horse industry is a very social community full of people who will help each other and help care for other horses.

At every barn I have ever been, I developed friends and sometimes lifelong relationships. I have seen people help each other countless times during shows, trail rides, riding lessons, and just hanging out around the barn. In addition, those who ride are members of a variety of horse organizations...from breed registries, to sports organizations, discipline-specific organizations, local clubs, etc. Once you ride, you become part of this entire new world.

Competition

Those who like to compete have a number of disciplines and horse sports to choose from in order to compete with their equine partner. From hunter/jumpers to reining, to dressage, driving, eventing, vaulting, polo, trail classes, gaited competitions, to western events like reined cow and barrel racing—the options are endless.

Transportation

Let's not forget the main reason that people domesticated horses and began riding in the first place: for transportation. People decided that horses would be a great mode of transportation, and this greatly changed the

course of history. Many cultures still use horses for this reason. And for those who weren't in to riding, eventually man learned to drive horses.

The World from Horseback

Horseback riding offers a way to see the world. I know that trail riding has been one of my favorite ways to spend time on horseback. Whether it was riding through the fields and woods of my home state of Virginia, or to the snowy landscape of Ohio during winter, to cantering down the beach in Florida on vacation, to riding through swamps and the lowlands of South Carolina, trail riding has allowed me to see parts of the country I never would have otherwise. It is a great way to see the world doing something you absolutely love.

A Return to Nature

Horseback riding brings us out into the fresh air and closer to nature. Our society spends so much time indoors. We should take every opportunity we can to get outside for some exercise and fresh air with one of our most beautiful animals. In fact, this is why many riders started riding according to questionnaire respondents from the BHS study. Eighty percent of respondents ranked "contact with nature" and "scenery and views" as "important," "very important," or "extremely important."

Relaxation

Horseback riding is relaxing. In fact, therapeutic riding has shown to reduce muscle spasticity as tight muscles are stretched due to the natural motion of the horse. We know going for a walk can be relaxing. When a horse walks with a rider on his back, the rider's pelvis moves in the same motion as if he or she were walking. In addition, riding has been known to increase the range of motion of joints, allowing riders to move more freely.

Lifestyle

Being a horseback rider can lead to a certain lifestyle. But that is for the rider to determine what kind of lifestyle with horses they wish to have. For instance, some love to be rough and wild on the range with a ranch and working horses. On the opposite end of the spectrum might be the rider who travels from show to show in an effort to win ribbons and be the best rider on a circuit or in a show series. Or maybe you want to just be a weekend warrior and ride occasionally. And there are many different lifestyles and variations, and the ability to create a totally unique lifestyle.

Career

And since I have worked in the horse industry as a journalist, one of the benefits of my horseback riding experience has also been a means of livelihood for me. I wouldn't have wanted to begin my career in journalism any other way. And the same is true for so many people I know...the benefits of horseback riding led them to find a career with horses.

Love and the Human-Animal Bond

There is nothing like loving a horse, except for knowing that the same horse loves you back. The human-animal bond is one of the best reasons to learn to ride. Horses are willing to become true partners with their riders. If treated with respect, kindness, and love, then the bond that develops is truly amazing and inspiring.

Fun

Anyone who has sat on the back of a horse knows that it is just plain fun. After all, why else would equestrians spend so much of their money and so much of their time on horses. Because it is worth it. Riding can make you feel more alive than other hobbies. There is an adventurousness to it. It offers freedom, movement, and makes amazing feats of athleticism possible. And there is a total thrill with galloping across an open field, in tune with your mount.

I don't regret a single hour I have spent with horses. Not every moment on horseback is like the scene from a movie where the star rides off into the sunset. Just like learning any new skill, learning to ride involves hard work and dedication. Add in some dirty stalls, stubborn horses, chores by the bucketload, and exhausting days and you will have the time of your life.

So I am curious, what are your favorite benefits of horseback riding? Share with us in the comments below.

Sarah Evers Conrad is currently the Digital Content Editor at *Horse Illustrated* and *Young Rider* magazines. She also owns All In Stride Marketing. She is an award-winning equestrian journalist with a background in magazine publishing, feature writing, news and event coverage, editing, digital marketing, social media, and website management. Conrad has been published in equine publications such as *The Horse*, *Blood-Horse*, *Equestrian*, *Arabian Horse Life*, *USDF Connection*, *the American Quarter Horse Journal*, *Paint Horse Journal*, *Off-Track Thoroughbred*, *Stable Management*, *Camp Business* magazine, *Lexington Family* magazine, and *HorsesDaily.com* and *DressageDaily.com*. She is also the current editor for the Certified Horsemanship Association's official publication, *The Instructor* magazine. Conrad has also edited several books, including CHA's "The Equine Professional Manual—The Art of Teaching Riding." Learn more at [HYPERLINK](http://www.equestrianjournalist.com) "http://www.equestrianjournalist.com" www.equestrianjournalist.com.

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5 Reasons Horseback Riding Helps in Child Development



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By Sarah Jones.



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Many children go through a phase of wanting to ride horses but some parents might be reluctant, fearing the potential risks of putting their child in contact with such a large animal. However, there are many reasons why children benefit from horse riding.

Learning to ride and making connections with an animal can all create amazing life experiences for your children, giving them a great sense of

friendship and also responsibility as they learn to take care of their horse or pony.

There are also many reasons why getting your child into the saddle can actually benefit their learning and development. Horse riding can help to generate a number of social skills, mental agility and physical skills which can help them in future life.

We spoke to the team of Equisupermarket.co.uk and they shared with us some insights on why horseback riding helps children to develop:

1. Improved health and fitness

Riding a horse or pony is great exercise for children and can help to get them off the sofa and out into the fresh air. Horse riding keeps them active and outdoors, as well as enjoying a physical activity which they can do with their friends.

Riding itself works many muscles and is great exercise, requiring strength, stamina and co-ordination making it an ideal physical activity to support improved health and fitness for children of all ages.

It can also help to reduce anxiety and as children bond with their horse or pony it can have beneficial psychological effects as well – horse riding is often used as therapy for children with disabilities.

2. Life lessons

As children get into the equestrian world they learn lessons which of great value in other areas of life such as falling off and starting again, dealing with fear, learning empathy for an animal, perseverance, hard work and rewards – all of which will serve them in the future.

They can also learn patience and the value of friendship and hard work as well as a healthy respect for animals and how to behave around them. Horse riding requires patience and determination to succeed and if they go on to compete in events they will be learning a whole new set of skills around team work and success.

3. Improved social skills

Joining a pony club or attending group riding lessons means your child will meet new friends outside of school and can learn valuable social skills and meet people from all walks of life. As well as making new friends they will get to experience the loyal bonds of working and dealing with horses.

Having a set of friends outside of school can be very beneficial, particularly if your child is experiencing any problems or issues – being part of something outside of school can open up a whole new world for them.

4. Boost to their confidence

Riding and caring for a horse can be a real boost to a child's confidence as they learn new skills, receive praise and experience the pure enjoyment of looking after their new four-legged friend.

Teaching them to ride can help develop a lifelong passion for horses and learning how to care for them, groom them and muck them out can improve their confidence in dealing with such large animals.

Riding can help children of all ages and abilities and that bond and interaction with their pony can be an amazing and loyal friendship which can also boost their confidence in social situations.

5. Teaching your child to take responsibility

Riding and caring for a horse is a great way to teach your child responsibility because looking after a pony is hard work. Children learn skills including mucking out and grooming and feeding, as well as what to look out for in their pony's behaviour and health.

All of these things help to teach them a wide range of skills and responsibilities. It also helps children to understand how to put others before themselves and how to be kind and compassionate towards animals. It helps them to learn respect and discipline and how to have empathy with an animal.

Horseback riding is an enjoyable pastime for children on the surface and just going pony trekking once in a while can be great fun. But actually learning to ride and becoming part of a riding community and involved in the care and wellbeing of a horse can have a great positive impact on a child's development.

Being part of a horse-riding group can help to boost confidence, increase social skills and teach a child really important life lessons, all while looking after and interacting with wonderful animals.

If your child wants to start horse riding or get involved with horses then these are just five of the key reasons to encourage them to do so – there are many more out there.

Go riding!

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