

Horses are majestic and graceful animals, but to a new rider, they can be a little scary, too. This badge will expose you to being around horses so you will have a better understanding about them. You will learn about their habits and needs and how to be safe around one. Please check badge availability at [here](#) before beginning activities.

Steps

1. Know the basics of horseback riding
2. Learn horse safety
3. Find out how to groom and care for a horse
4. Horse Stories
5. Prepare for a ride

Purpose:

To gain knowledge that will allow you to expand your skills and gain confidence. You will learn basic horse terms, horse safety, and get comfortable around horses. Upon completion of this badge, you will be ready to challenge yourself with the Junior badge, Horseback Riding.

Before you start:

- Bring an adult
- Wear sunscreen
- Check the weather forecast
- Bring water
- Adults - consult and follow Safety Activity Checkpoints

Step 1: Know the basics of horseback riding

Before you can start to learn how to ride a horse, you need to learn about what gear you and your horse need and the importance of certain gear. Find out how to dress when riding and what gear is important and why.

Here is what you need to know.

- Learn what “tacking up a horse” means and the different riding equipment. What are a saddle, saddlecloth, bridle, and bit? What does a girth do, and how does a saddle pad protect the saddle. Find out about the two types of saddles- Western and English. How are the stirrup and reins used when riding a horse? Find out how to make these comfortable for the rider and the horse.
- Find out about riding gear that is worn when riding a horse. Learn to dress for safety when riding. Find out why it is important to wear a helmet. What is considered suitable footwear?

CHOICES – CHOOSE ONE

1. Visit a riding stable, Girl Scout camp, or horse ranch. Interview a horse expert. Learn about the different gear for you and your horse. Watch them tack a horse. Find out how to dress for safety and comfort when riding a horse.
2. Invite an expert to talk to your Girl Scout Troop. This expert can be anyone who works with horses that has knowledge of gear for horse and rider. Learn about the different gear for you and your horse. Find out how to dress for safety and comfort when riding a horse.



3. With an adult's help, find a website about horses or visit a library and read books about horses. Find out about the different gear for you and your horse. Find out how to dress for safety and comfort when riding a horse.

Step 2: Learn horse safety

Learning horse safety is an important aspect of riding a horse. Learning to read a horse's mood and how to maneuver around a horse is important to keep a rider safe.

Here is what you need to know:

- Learn about horse body language. How do horses use their ears and tails to let you know how they are feeling?
- Find out to maneuver around a horse. How do you approach a horse? Where is safest place to stand around a horse?
- Learn how to lead a horse with a lead rope and halter.

CHOICES – CHOOSE ONE

1. Visit a riding stable, Girl Scout Camp, or horse ranch. Interview a horse expert. Learn the different body languages of a horse. Find out how to approach and maneuver around a horse.
2. Invite an expert to talk to your Girl Scout troop. This can be anyone who has experience around horses. Learn the different body languages of a horse. Find out how to approach and maneuver around a horse.
3. With an adult's help, find a website about horses or visit a library and read books about horses. Look for different pictures that show the different body languages of horses. Find out how to approach a horse and where the safest place to stand around a horse.

Step 3: Find out how to groom and care for a horse

Horses require a lot of care. Find out what food they eat and how much a horse needs daily. What foods are an acceptable snack? Find out what tools are used to groom a horse. How are horses groomed and cared for before and after a ride? Learn how their hooves are cleaned and why it is important. What everyday care is needed in a stable?

CHOICES – CHOOSE ONE

1. Spend time with a groomer at a riding stable. Watch someone groom a horse and find out about the tools they use in grooming the horse. Find out what the horse's coat feels like and brush the horse's mane. Ask what the horse eats daily, how much they eat, and what treats are allowed. Find out what chores are done each day in the horse's stall to keep them clean.
2. Spend time with a large-animal veterinarian or horse trainer. Watch someone groom a horse and find out about the tools they use in grooming the horse. Find out what the horse's coat feels like and brush the horse's mane. Ask what the horse eats daily, how much they eat, and what treats are allowed. Find out what chores are done each day in the horse's stall to keep them clean.
3. Spend time with a groomer at Girl Scout riding camp. Learn how to brush a horse and assist someone who grooms the horse. Learn what tools they use in grooming the horse. Find out what the horse's coat feels like and brush the horse's mane. Ask what the horse eats daily, how much they eat, and what treats are allowed. Find out what chores are done each day in the horse's stall to keep them clean.

Step 4: Horse Stories

Horses play many roles in our lives. Learn what roles horses have played in history, read about a famous horse, or find out about the different breeds of horses.

CHOICES – CHOOSE ONE

1. Learn about the history of horses. How did horses help in developing our country (transportation, farming, communication, sports)? Draw a picture of a horse in one of these roles.
2. Read a story about a famous horse or read a fictional book about a horse. Find out why the horse was famous and draw a picture of the horse in the story. If you read a fictional book, draw a picture of the horse in the story.
3. Read a story about the different breeds of horses. How are they alike/different? Find out about the parts of the horse and make a poster illustrating the different parts (hoof, muzzle, nostril, flank, crest, etc.).

Step 5: Prepare for a ride

As a beginner rider, it is important you become comfortable being on a horse. Practicing mounting and dismounting and riding your horse in a horse ring will help you gain confidence and become more comfortable.

To complete this step, learn to do the following, which will prepare you to move on to the Junior Badge Horseback Riding.

- Learn to mount and dismount your horse. Find out how to sit in the saddle and hold the reins.
- Learn the commands to steer your horse. Learn how to make your horse start walking and how to stop. How do you make your horse turn to the right or left? What role do the reins and stirrups have in steering your horse?
- Take an instructor- led short ride in order to get the feel of how the horse moves.

CHOICES – CHOOSE ONE

1. Take part in horseback riding at Girl Scout camp.
2. Take lessons at a horseback riding stable
3. Ask a local horseback riding expert to give you lessons.