

# THE HORSEFINDER GUIDE TO BUYING A HORSE

Buying the right horse can be a confusing process but it's worth taking your time to get it right. Here's our tips for making the right purchase.

## 1. Take your time.

Make a written check-list of all the essential qualities you need in a horse, including height, abilities, and level of experience – and stick to it. Think about which qualities are deal-breakers and which you can compromise on. Where possible, try to be open with regard to colour and age, in order to keep your search wide enough. Be realistic about what you can handle. It's best to go for a horse you can ride now, rather than something 'showy' you think you'll 'grow into' or something with 'potential' which turns out to be un-rideable.

## 2. Find out all you can before you view.

Read the advert carefully. Next, ring the seller and with any further questions you have. This will narrow down your search further and can save you, and the horse seller, the time it takes for inappropriate viewings. You should include questions about:

- Temperament and personality
- Level of experience
- Capability
- Show record (if appropriate)
- Reason for the sale
- Experience of and attitude to traffic
- Current and former workload
- Veterinary history

Write the answers down, as you may be checking out a lot of horses.



## 3. Take someone more experienced than you to the first viewing.

If you're interested enough to view, it's essential that you don't buy on impulse. A second more experienced pair of eyes can help you spot potential problems. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Ask to see the seller lunge, ride, and load the horse. Pay attention to how the horse behaves when being approached and handled, and look out for any faults or potential physical weaknesses.

## 4. Always ride second during the viewing.

Don't get on a horse which the seller hasn't been happy to ride first, and always wear a body protector. Ask to tighten girths etc. and mount unassisted so that you can be sure you'll be able to do this when you get the horse back home. Take a test ride slowly and methodically, starting with circles, and moving through to transitions and jumps. Ask to hack the horse on road and off-road if possible and check out how he responds to you. If you like the horse, arrange for a second viewing to ride the horse in your particular discipline, renting an arena if necessary.

## 5. Check the horse isn't stolen.

All horses in the UK are legally required to have passports, so ask to see it, and check that the horse matches the description. Confirm any identification marks such as lip tattoos and freeze marks to see that these tally and run a check on the stolen horses register at <http://www.stolenhorseregister.com>. It will also list the horse's previous owners.

**6. Arrange a five-stage pre-purchase vetting.**

Arrange for an independent vet to assess the horse and be present yourself. Explain to them what you'll use the horse for, and pay attention to their notes and opinion on whether it's suitable.

**7. Get proper paperwork.**

If you're buying from a private seller as opposed to a dealer, you have far fewer rights. Get a written representation of the horse you're buying e.g. child's first pony, including any injuries or problems/vices and a list of all items included such as passport, vaccination certificates, tack and rugs in the final sale contract together with a receipt. It's well worth asking for a two week trial, and the terms of this should also be written into the contract.

**8. Arrange insurance.**

Find out how much it will cost to have the horse insured before you purchase, and arrange to have him covered from the moment he's loaded.

**9. Register the horse.**

It's your responsibility to send your horse's passport off to have him registered to you as his new owner.

**10. Settle him in well.**

Get your vet to do a faecal worm count to check his burden isn't too high so that he doesn't infect your pastures, and introduce him to field mates gradually to prevent bullying. Take the time to get to know him properly and to establish the trust necessary for a good working relationship.