



Pets change lives
We change theirs

Essential guide to buying a horse

Before buying a horse

Is owning a horse right for you at this time?

Taking the step to buying a horse is a big responsibility. Horses take an immense amount of time, energy and money to look after. However, when it is the right time they can bring huge amounts of benefits and pleasure to you and your familie's lives. Getting a taste of owning your own horse might help you make a final decision. Loaning or sharing can be an option to explore before you take that final step.

Research

When deciding to get a horse, preparation is key. Know what you are looking for and write it down. Having a list of your requirements can help you make your choice when looking at hundreds if not thousands of adverts. It is worth considering what is a priority and what you can be more flexible on, these are good points to refer back too. Speak to your horsey friends. Ask for their experiences of buying and selling. What tips can they give you? What things should you look out for? Sharing experiences might help you shape your buying journey. Ensure you have somewhere to keep a horse - hold a space at a livery yard if possible.

Where to look

Rehoming from a charity has huge benefits. Not only do they have many horses who might be your possible match, but you have support along the way and all the horses have adequate identification and health checks. If

there isn't a suitable charity horse for you currently, there are plenty of other mechanisms for buying horses. These include magazines, online, through a friend or a dealer. Just remember that there is always a risk when buying a horse and the following tips should help guide you on what to look for.

Remember not all sellers are reputable. There are dishonest people who don't have your or the horse's best interest at heart. If buying from a dealer, research them, ask for references and get people's feedback if possible. Your gut feeling can be a good indicator as to whether someone is being honest or not. Try not to believe you will be "rescuing" the horse. Although tough, if things are not what they seem and the horse looks in poor health, you are better to walk away and notify a welfare organisation who might be able to advise you on who is best to contact.



Taking the next step

Making that call

Your initial call to show interest in a horse can be a vital part of the process. Having a list of questions you have from the horses advert can help steer your conversation. Find out as much information as you can and delve into anything that concerns you. Get them to explain why they are selling the horse. If it is from a private seller, what is the reason - is it something you should be worried about? Does the seller sound genuine? To avoid wasting everybody's time it is best to find out as much as you can before deciding whether to visit them. You can gain a lot of knowledge and a feel for the current owner just by speaking with them. Remember you are entitled to ask as many questions as you like!

Set expectations

If you decide to visit the horse, let the owner know what you would like to see the horse do. We would always advise you see them in the field, being caught, coming into the stable etc. Watching them on the ground is just as important as seeing them being ridden or indeed riding yourself. Watch the horse be handled by the owner. Look at their demeanour, how do they behave? Are they relaxed, alert or unsure? Remember they should feel fairly comfortable in an environment they are used too. Consider what you would do at home and make sure you see them in this environment, or being handled in this way. Get an experienced friend or instructor to tag along with you. Having an impartial, knowledgeable person with you can help you think realistically.

On the visit

First thing, check the horse is the horse you were expecting to see. Are they the same colour, breed, size and do they look the right age? If you can borrow a

microchip checker, take one along with you and make sure you see the horse's correct passport. New regulations which came into place 1 October 2018 make it a legal requirement for ALL horses, ponies, donkeys and their hybrids in England to be microchipped as well as holding a valid UK passport. There is a two year grace period in which owners who have horses born before 2009 have to get their horses microchipped. All horses born after 2009 should already be microchipped and this will be shown in the horse's passport. All details are uploaded by the passport issuing organisation (PIO) to the Central Equine Database so it is really important to make sure the PIO is kept informed of any changes to your horse's details. To check a horse's chip on the National Chipchecker visit: equineregister.co.uk

Write it down

Don't make a decision there and then. As soon as possible make a note of what you liked and what you disliked, score them if you like. Are there things you are unsure about? If so, where are they on your priority list? Can you find out more information, or go and visit again. It is important not to rush or be pressurised into buying, for you and the horse's wellbeing.



Sleep on it

Time to think can be really useful. You are entitled to consider carefully before making a purchase.

Arrange another visit

If needed go again. You can't always be expected to cover everything in one visit. A responsible owner will understand this and want the best for their horse too.

Veterinary check

Speak about vet checks with the current owner and have a vet in mind and what stage vetting you might be after. It doesn't necessarily save you money not getting a potential horse vet checked. You may pay the price in the long run, with an ailment which could have been flagged at this early stage.

If this isn't the horse for you, don't give up.

Consider why and look again. Getting the right horse can take time and you are better to be patient in the long run. Talking "money" is not always easy, but make sure you are happy with the price and don't let money change hands until you are happy with all your checks and that the horse has the right identification. It is advisable to get a receipt just in case.

Exchanging your current horse for a new horse

Exchanges are not ideal and can mean horses fall into the wrong hands or get passed on extremely quickly. Payment plans are not always robust and could end up with your horse being taken back if a payment is missed.

Lastly, don't be fooled by a bargain. Ask yourself and the current owner why!



Your new horse

Before you get them home

Buying a horse can be an exciting time, so being organised and prepared can help you and your horse stay calm and relaxed. Think carefully about when you would like to pick the horse up, discuss with the current owner and come to a mutual agreement. Do you need to arrange transport. If so, what do they travel best in? Do you need to bring travelling equipment, or can you use what they are used to? These small things can mean you set your new horse up to keep as calm as possible when being moved. Ensure you are given their passport while transporting (this is a legal requirement). Get the owner to write down their current management, including dates of recent preventative health treatment and diet. Keeping things like food and routine the same, might help them settle in and prevent the horse from becoming unwell.

Prep their new home

Consider the environment the horse is used to and what might help them settle more. Is it a field or stable? What sort of companion might they be best suited to? You may be restricted by isolation procedures, but talk to your yard owners and see if you can put steps in place to set your horse up to be happy in their new home as soon as they come off the box. Horses are social animals and seeing another horse can often help to reduce their anxiety. Have hay in the field or stable ready and, fresh water for them to drink. Appreciate this can be a big change for them and they will need time to adjust and settle. They might just want to be left alone to get used to their new surroundings.

Time is key

Give your horse plenty of space and time to settle in. It can be tempting to want to pamper them or ride them as soon as possible, but remember, letting your horse get used to their new home will set them up to succeed rather than fail. If there are any concerns with their behaviour, approach the previous owner for advice. As they may be able to help. Bear in mind that a new environment can spark behaviours a horse hasn't shown before and this can be an indicator that their current management might need adjusting.

Equipment

If bought with tack, don't assume it fits correctly. Get a qualified saddler to come and check for you and be prepared for the potential cost of this.

Remember as a new owner you will have 30 days to update ownership details on your horse's passport. Get in touch with the organisation which issued the passport. They will then make sure all your details are correct and uploaded onto the Central Equine Database. If you are concerned about your new horse's behaviour, seek advice from a horse behaviourist. Getting to grips with issues early can help you and your horse. Ultimately if you think you have made a wrong decision, you do have some rights as a buyer under The Consumer Contracts Regulation 2014, and the Sale of Goods Act 1979. However, returning a horse and getting a refund can be hugely stressful for both you and the horse and isn't straight forward.

Taking the time to choose the right horse for you is worth it in the long run, for you and the horse. Happy partnerships have to start somewhere!