Horses are the noblest animals

Though horses come in many sizes and in many colours, are of varied temperaments and exhibit a range of strengths and areas of weakness, all horse breeds known today can be traced back to just two ancient lineages: a line of Arabian horses originating in the Arabian Peninsula and the now-extinct Turkoman horses that came from the Eurasian Steppe. Each breed of horse has offered man a different potential and for those reasons resulted in being bred for different purposes.

As a result, humanity has essentially created 5 different types of horses.

Draught horses

The biggest and strongest of all the horse breeds. There are Friesians, Belgiums, the Pertheron, and the widely recognised Clydesdales. Specifically bred to pull or carry heavy loads, they were historically used in farm work and as mounts for military officers in battle.

Light horses

Bred for their speed, agility, endurance, and rideability, they are excellent riding horses and cowboys in the American West used them for herding work, particularly Appaloosas and American Paint horses. Other breeds, such as Quarter Horses, Arabian and Thoroughbreds are known for their racing skills.



Warm bloods

Developed by crossing draught horses with the more spirited breeds like Arabians or Thoroughbreds, these horses are both athletic and even-tempered. Capable of competing in show jumping, working equitation, combined driving and dressage, they are called sporting horses. This category of horse includes breeds such as: the Dutch Warm Blood, Quarter Horses, and Tennessee Walkers.

Gaited horses

Bred for a distinctive ability to move gracefully and smoothly, they were valued as horses for long-distance travelling because they have a great deal of endurance as well as being easy to ride. Also called saddlebreds, they are a light horse, bred specifically for riding, and are best known for possessing an exceptionally smooth ride. This category includes Florida Cracker Horses, American Saddlebreds, Campeiros, and Icelandic Horses.

Ponies

Any horse below 150cm tall is considered a pony. Ponies were bred for all the same activities as larger horses, including riding, pulling wagons, and carrying burdens. Nowadays, they are popular for teaching young children to ride. Their small size makes them easier for children to care for and ride.

Different breeds

Today, there are over 300 different breeds of horses in the world, and they are used for a variety of specific needs. Horses are raised for meat production and for different kinds of jobs: racehorses that will race alone, pull a sulky or jump; farm horses that will be ridden or work around the farm; ranch horses that are used to round up cattle; pleasure horses just to ride; show horses that are taken to horse shows.

burden: *carico, soma*
tack: *finimenti*
thoroughbred: *purosangue*

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The Arabian breed

The oldest and noblest horse breed is the Arabian because of their elegant appearance and their nature. Typically, they have a slender body, a narrow and fine head and big, expressive eyes and nostrils. Thanks to their good-natured character and the fact that they easily form bonds with humans, they are popular horses for recreational riding or used as show horses. After being replaced as racehorses by English thoroughbreds, these oriental horses have qualified for another discipline: endurance riding.



1 Match each word to its definition.

1. Saddle
2. To herd
3. Lineage
4. Sulky
5. Round up
6. Eventing
7. Even-tempered
8. Dressage

- ☐ **a.** An equestrian sport including several different contests: cross-country, dressage and show jumping.
- ☐ **b.** Direct descent from an ancestor.
- ☐ **c.** A competition in which horse riders have to make their horse perform controlled movements.
- ☐ **d.** A seat with a raised ridge at the front and back, fastened on the back of a horse for riding.
- ☐ **e.** Not easily excited, calm.
- ☐ **f.** To keep or look after livestock.
- ☐ **g.** A light two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle for one person, used chiefly in trotting races.
- ☐ **h.** A systematic gathering together of people or animals.

2 Answer the questions.

1. What were the ancestors of all horse breeds?
2. What were draught horses specifically bred for?
3. What were Appaloosas horses used for?
4. Why are warm bloods called sporting horses?
5. What are the different breeds of horses raised for nowadays?
6. Why is the Arabian breed considered the noblest horse breed?

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3 Read the text and answer the questions.

Western Riding or English Riding: What is Classical Riding?

Classical riding is correct riding, and this implies not only to know how to ride, but to have a full knowledge of the horse, too. The emphasis is placed on the rider, who should learn about his own body and how even slight variations in his posture may affect the way the horse moves. Classical riding is not simply riding in an older style, according to the German or Spanish riding school: as riding dates back to the early Greeks, the term "classical" refers to the platonic notion of an ideal, where perfection is attained when dancing with a horse as a willing, engaged and responsive partner. There are two main different riding and training techniques: English and Western riding. Both involve controlling a horse in a variety of environments and require a high level of cooperation between horse and rider. While the roots of Western riding lie in American ranches, where cowboys trained their horses for working on farms, English riding evolved in Europe and was linked to military use. As a consequence, special ~~tack~~ was adapted to support special activities. Therefore, while the English saddle is more formal, smaller, lighter and designed to give the rider a closer contact with the horse's back, the western saddle is larger and heavier, making it easier for rider and horse to work a long day. The position of the rider is much the same but, in English riding, the rider makes direct contact with the horse's mouth via the reins, which are held separately in each hand to control the animal's speed and direction. On the contrary, most western riding horses are ridden on little or no contact and the rider uses his seat, his weight and the reins, both held in one hand, to give aids to the horse. Because of their different purposes, the two disciplines compete in different events. Common Western riding events include roping, barrel racing, Western pleasure and trail, while English riding competitions include dressage, jumping, eventing and an assortment of hunter classes (Hunters, Jumpers and Equitation).

1. How important is a rider's posture?
2. Where does riding come from?
3. What does the term 'classical' refer to?
4. Why do English and Western styles of riding require different tack?
5. What are their main differences?

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