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What are the different parts of a western saddle

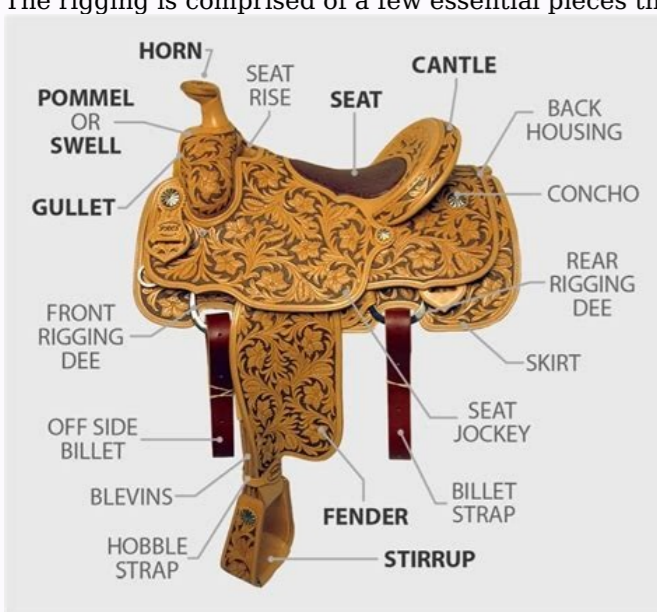
Western saddle parts names. What are all the parts of a western saddle.

The western saddle is a marvelous creation. It is designed specifically for western riding. Referred to by some as a 'cowboy' saddle, the western saddle is often seen on ranches and farms, especially - but not exclusively - in North America. The western saddle was originally designed to withstand long trail rides, ranch work, and rough handling. When you look at the combination of form and function, you can see that the western saddle is truly a work of art. Many western saddles even have intricate artwork and decoration to stand out in competitions. The design of a western saddle is very complex. Every part of the western saddle serves a purpose and is extremely important to its use. All equestrians should know the different parts of a saddle, understand what their purpose is, and know how to determine what design and size of saddle they need to ride their horse efficiently. The information provided here will help you learn more about each part of the western saddle and its purpose.



The beginning of each saddle starts with the tree. The tree is considered to be the "skeleton" of a saddle and every subsequent part of the saddle is designed according to the design of the tree. The majority of western saddle trees are created using wood wrapped with rawhide, but some are covered in fiberglass instead of rawhide. The trees of saddles differ according to what kind of western saddle is being designed. What's common to all saddles though is that the tree should be designed professionally and using quality materials, since it will serve as the base for the rest of the saddle. (source) This is the tunnel created underneath the saddle when it sits on top of a horse's withers. The gullet must be formed just right so that it fits the size and shape of the horse that will be wearing it. If it is the wrong fit, it will cause discomfort to the horse. When the saddle sits on the horse, there should be a tunnel that forms beneath the swell and the height of the gullet above the withers should be somewhere around the width of 2 to 4 fingers. (source) Every western saddle has a horn, making it one of the key ways to distinguish western saddles from English ones. The horn is at the front of the saddle and sits on top of the swell, also known as the pommel or fork. The horn serves a few purposes, including stabilizing the rider when getting on or off the horse. It also provides a place for the rider to attach a rope when roping a cow or other animal. The horn comes in a variety of sizes depending on the purpose of the saddle and the comfort of the rider. For example, roping saddles tend to have a larger horn to support a rope and other accessories. Barrel racing saddles tend to have smaller horns that slant forward because the riders will lean forward and often hold the horn for support. The horn is also an excellent tool for beginner riders to help them feel safe and secure in the saddle! An English Saddle The swell, also called the pommel or the fork, is the part of the saddle that sits on the front of the saddle at the base of the horn. It connects the bars (the two sides of the tree) of the saddle and provides a level of protection when riding. The swell helps keep the rider in the saddle if they are thrown forward and it gives them something else to grab onto in scary situations. The swell also helps when moving a saddle or putting it on a horse. Riders will grab the swell and the back of the saddle to lift it on the horse. (source) The seat sits behind the horn and is the place where the rider will sit when riding a horse. The seat is positioned right on top of the saddle's tree. The size and slope of the seat on a western saddle will determine the comfort level for each rider. There are 3 different slopes including a high slope, a medium slope and a low slope. The most comfortable saddle seats have a curved ground seat that serves as the base and helps make them more comfy than flat seats. The seat is finished by adding layers of materials that improve comfort for riders while also keeping them close to the horse. The finished seat can be hard or soft, and both styles can be comfortable if the seat itself was designed properly.

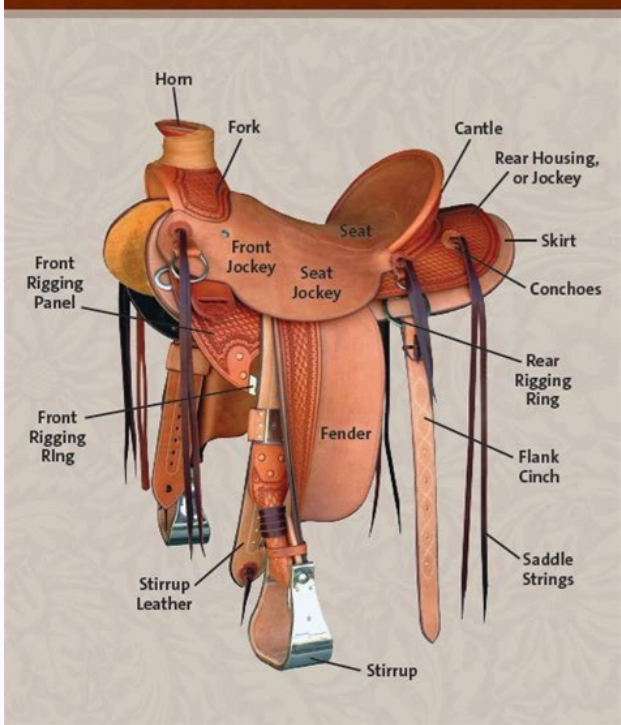
(source) The cantle is the back part of the saddle that extends out from the seat. It serves as the back portion of the saddle seat and provides additional support to the rider. It can be higher or lower depending on the design of the saddle and its purpose. The cantle, like the swell, helps to keep the rider in the saddle. Some riders use the cantle to stabilize themselves when riding. The cantle also stabilizes the bars at the back, like the swell does at the front. (source) The skirt of the saddle is the large piece of leather or other material - depending on the saddle - that sits underneath the seat of the saddle. It is a type of barrier that typically has sheepskin or another cushioning material that protects the horse and helps to keep the horse pads in place. The skirt also helps to balance the saddle by distributing the weight evenly. The rigging is comprised of a few essential pieces that attach the saddle to the horse - the cinch, 2 D-rings, the latigo and the off-billet strap. The cinch, also known as the girth, secures the saddle to the horse and is positioned towards the front of the saddle.



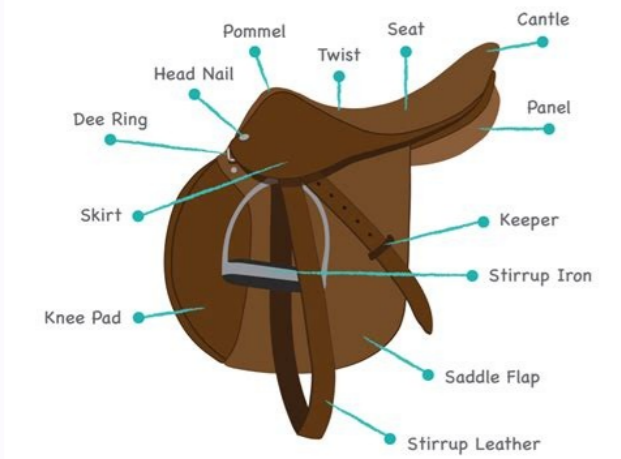
The off-billet strap connects the cinch to the D-ring of the saddle on one side while the latigo attaches the cinch on the other side of the saddle through the D-ring on that side. The rigging is a key component to all saddles and needs to be connected correctly to the saddle to prevent accidents. (source) The latigo keeper, also called the tie strap, sits towards the front of the saddle near the swell or pommel. It has an opening where the rider can place the slack from the latigo after tightening the rigging to the horse. It keeps the latigo end from possibly getting hung up or hitting the horse when riding. The rear cinch, also called the back cinch, sits towards the back of some western saddles and provides additional security for the saddle. It keeps the back portion of the saddle from lifting when riding and this helps to reduce some of the pressure the saddle puts on a horse. The rear cinch is meant to be snug, but not loose or overly tightened. Not every rider using a western saddle uses a rear cinch, but if they do, they should always connect it to the girth/front cinch using a hobble, a leather strip that has a clasp on each end. The rear cinch is connected to the saddle on each side by a billet.

(source) The seat jockeys, also called the housing, on a western saddle are pieces of leather that flair out from each side of the seat as well as at the rear. The jockeys serve to protect the rigging from the legs and clothing of the rider and it provides a barrier to protect exposed portions of the saddle tree. The d-ring that the cinch connects to sits partially under the jockey, which keeps it from getting hung up on the rider's legs. There is a pair of fenders on each western saddle. The fenders sit on each side of the saddle and are where the rider's legs rest when mounted. The fenders keep the rider's legs from directly touching the horse and the come in three different shapes known as the Phoenix, the Arizona and the pear. The fender can be adjusted to fit the length of the rider's legs. The fenders on a western saddle are permanently attached.

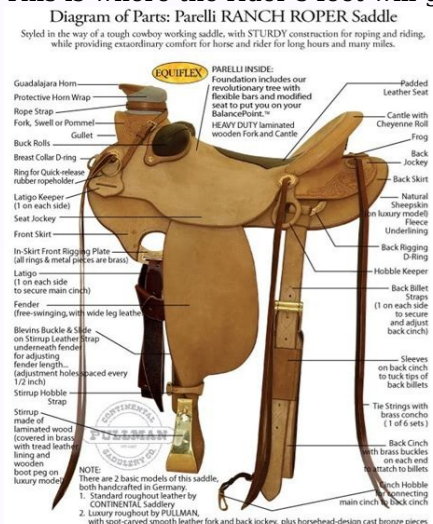
The Western Saddle WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF A SADDLE?



(source) A stirrup is attached to the end of each fender.



This is where the rider's feet will go while they are riding. The stirrups on a western saddle play a huge role in the rider's safety, stability, and balance.



They allow the rider to mount the horse easily and they provide added support when they ride the horse. Stirrups, along with the fender, are designed in a way to keep the rider's boot from getting hung up in the stirrup if they were to fall off the horse. Stirrups can be basic or oversized, depending on the size of boot the rider wears. (source) The breastplate, also called the breast collar, is often purchased separately from the saddle, but it is an integral part of the western saddle and serves a valuable purpose. The breastplate attaches to each side of the front of the saddle and wraps around the chest of the horse. It helps to keep the saddle from sliding backwards or from side to side as the horse is being ridden. The breastplate also provides additional security to the saddle, preventing it from sliding under the horse if the cinch breaks loose. (source) pixabay The western saddle is complex and not only provides comfort for the rider, but also added stability and security. All of the individual parts come together to form a safe, dependable and visually appealing saddle that can last a lifetime. WesternSaddleParts.png