



MYLER BITS

STARTING A HORSE IN A MYLER BIT - FITTING AND TRANSITIONING -

Fitting Instructions

The height of the purchase (ie the part of the cheek above the mouthpiece) is different in every bit, so before you try a new bit on your horse, compare it with your old bit or attach it to the bridle and hold it up to the side of his face, so you can estimate the correct adjustment of the cheek pieces as closely as possible.

Width

Ensure the bit is both level and central in the horse's mouth, there now should be between $\frac{1}{8}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ " gap between the bit ring and the horse's lip on each side. (You may have to straighten the mouthpiece to assess this properly in a jointed bit by pulling the cheeks gently outwards.)

If the bit is too wide, it will slide from side to side in the mouth and give uneven pressure when engaged by the rider. An over-wide jointed bit could hang too low in the mouth and interfere with the horse's incisors.

If the bit is too narrow, the cheeks will squash against the sides of the horse's face and lips, causing rubbing or pinching.

Height

The bit should fit snugly into the corners of the lips, normally making one wrinkle, but do check how it lies inside the horse's mouth. If you pull down lightly on the bit cheeks, there should not be a gap of more than $\frac{1}{8}$ " between the mouthpiece and the corners of the lips. If the cheek pieces bow out when you pull on the reins, this is also a sign that the bit is too low..

Flashes, Martingales, etc.

The entire point of The Myler System is to make the horse comfortable and relaxed in his bit, so there is no need for any gadgets designed purely to force the horse to endure an uncomfortable bit by strapping his mouth shut, holding his head down, etc. Such equipment also infringes the horse's ability to communicate with you. Therefore, a plain, loosely fitted cavesson noseband is normally the most that should be required besides the headpiece and reins, especially as you should be in a controlled environment while you accustom your horse to the new bit.



Loose Ring Cheeks

Take care to ensure there is a good ¼” gap between the rings and the sides of the horse’s face or the lips could be drawn into the ring hole in the mouthpiece and pinched.

Cheeked and Ring Snaffles

Check that the purchase doesn’t rub against the side of the horse’s face. Full-cheeked snaffles should have a leather bit keeper attaching the top of the cheek to the cheekpiece. This holds the bit up in the horse’s mouth to give a clear reward signal and is also critical for Independent Side Movement (ISM).

Cheeks with Hooks (slots)

The top hook should always be used. This holds the bit up in the horse’s mouth to give a clear reward signal and enables ISM.

In order to balance the bit correctly, the cheek pieces must be fastened around the outside branch of the upper hook, leaving the metal on the inside branch against the horse’s face and giving the bit a “normal” appearance from the side.

To make the ISM as effective as possible, the reins should be attached to the bottom hook, again around the outer branch.

Myler Combination Bits

Please see the specific information sheet about Myler Combinations.

Transitioning

TAKE YOUR TIME. Sometimes a horse will let you know that you have the right or wrong bit in as little as 20 minutes, but it often takes a few sessions in a new bit to know for sure. Plan up to 10 or 12 days before you can be certain that you have made the correct choice and make sure this is a quiet time for you and your horse, with no competitions or big outings.

GIVE YOUR HORSE TIME. Allow your horse to get used to the taste and the feel of the new bit, let him test this new equipment before you mount. Ensure the fitting is correct and then allow him to investigate the bit with his tongue. He may chew a bit more than normal while he gets used to the new feel. Ideally, allow him to stand bridled but loose in the stable, supervised but not held, with the reins tucked behind the stirrup leathers, for 10 or 15 minutes so he can settle down and relax.



The next step is to simulate the bit's action prior to mounting so the horse can anticipate how the bit will work. This exercise also allows you to anticipate his behaviour with the bit. In the stable, or enclosed school, stand by his left shoulder and place the reins over his neck as if you were going to mount. Hold both reins just in front of the withers to mimic where the reins would be when mounted. Next, steady the reins in one hand and gently apply rein pressure to both reins with the other, activating the bit and asking your horse to relax at the poll. When he gives to the pressure by “nodding” his head onto the vertical, release the pressure with your hand. He may take a few steps backwards or forwards until he gets used to the idea but you are aiming for him gently to lower his head onto the vertical, releasing his own pressure and learning where the “Comfort Zone” is. This is a great way to introduce new bits as well as to supple a horse prior to work every day. The Mylers highly recommend working with your horse on the ground as part of the transition to any new bit and as a daily suppling exercise.

Ensure your horse is in a safe environment before you mount and then walk away on a loose rein for a few minutes. Very slowly, take up a light contact and walk round the area quietly while you both become accustomed to the feel of the new bit. When you feel the horse is ready to come into the bridle, just close your fingers on the reins, ask the horse to move forward with your seat and leg and when he gives to you, and comes into the bridle, release the rein pressure immediately by opening your fingers and maintain only a very light contact to ensure he recognises the reward.

Any new equipment or training approach should be introduced in a safe environment like a school, until you are confident that you are both ready to work outside.

Anticipate some resistance. If your horse has been resistant in his current bit, there is a strong likelihood he will be resistant in his new bit. Simply put – he is going to try what he knows and some evasions will have become learnt habit rather than direct reactions to his bit.

Independent Side Movement

Myler Bits with Independent Side Movement are simpler and clearer in their signalling than traditional bits, so you should find your horse responds well to this new, unambiguous communication.

As a rider, you may find the Independent Side Movement requires some adjustment in your riding technique. You may find you can be much more subtle in your actions as you ask your horse to bend or lift up his shoulder.

Reward

The need to reward your horse by releasing the pressure the instant he has done as he has been asked cannot be over-emphasised.

In Conclusion:

To get the best out of your Myler Bit (and your horse):

- Take it slowly and quietly.
- Listen to your horse, he is trying to tell you what he needs to be able to do what you want.
- No bit makes up for bad riding or impatience and a bit cannot train your horse. That's your job, – just make sure you have the best equipment and knowledge to communicate with him effectively.
- Have fun, or there's no point!
- Understand what the bit, – and your hands on the ends of the reins, – are doing in your horse's mouth. – Think about what is going on with that tongue:

