

Section 6: Checking the Fit

The fitting check is done with the rider mounted and the girth tightened. The saddle should be as close to the withers as possible without causing uneven pressure. There is no need for clearance (or the old rules for treed saddles: three fingers gap under the pommel and daylight through the channel etc), as we are no longer trying to protect the horse's back from a steel frame. Instead, we are just aiming for close, even contact around the back, with no pressure points.



At halt, you should just be able to push one finger knuckle (without a glove on!) under the front binding of the pommel, between the saddle and the saddle cloth or pads.

"The walking finger test" is used to gauge optimum fit.



It may feel a little tight at halt, but as the horse walks forwards, he will lift the base panels of the saddle with his shoulders and back muscles and the whole saddle will ride a little higher.

You should feel this lightening of the pressure on your finger, giving the sensation that your knuckle is held snugly in place without being tightly squeezed.

If you cannot feel this lightening of pressure and your knuckle is uncomfortable, then the fit is too tight.

If you have the saddle fitted too high or loose on the back, there may be a loss of stability as the saddle will not be engaging correctly with the back and flexing with the movement.