



Horse Racing



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About the Tutorial

Horse Racing is a very old sport, where the racers ride their horses to reach the destinations. The winner is the one who reaches the destination first. This tutorial will give useful information about horse racing, the training, types of racing and many other aspects.

Audience

This tutorial is meant for those people, who are interested in learning the basic rules of horse racing and how to run the horses in a competitive environment. In addition, this tutorial will also let the readers know about the procedure to take care and to train the horses.

Prerequisite

The person should have some basic knowledge about how to control and handle a horse and what to do if the horse gets injured.

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Horse Racing – Overview

Horse racing is one of the ancient sports in the history of mankind. It was able to register its name in the list of those few games, who have managed to gain popularity across the globe. From three quarters of a mile to 22-mile thoroughbred, horse racing is the most popular form of racing today.

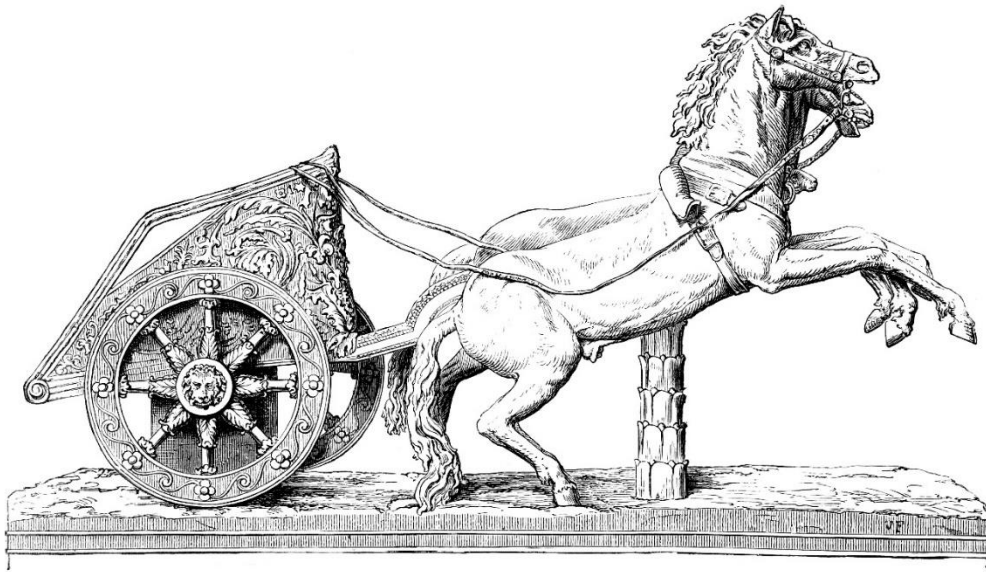


Objective

In this game several jockeys try their luck with their horses. Their aim is to win the race by making your horse ride efficiently and as fast as they can. Winning only one match does not get you fame. Consistency does matter. So, the more number of continuous wins will fetch that jockey a lot of respect in his fraternity.

History

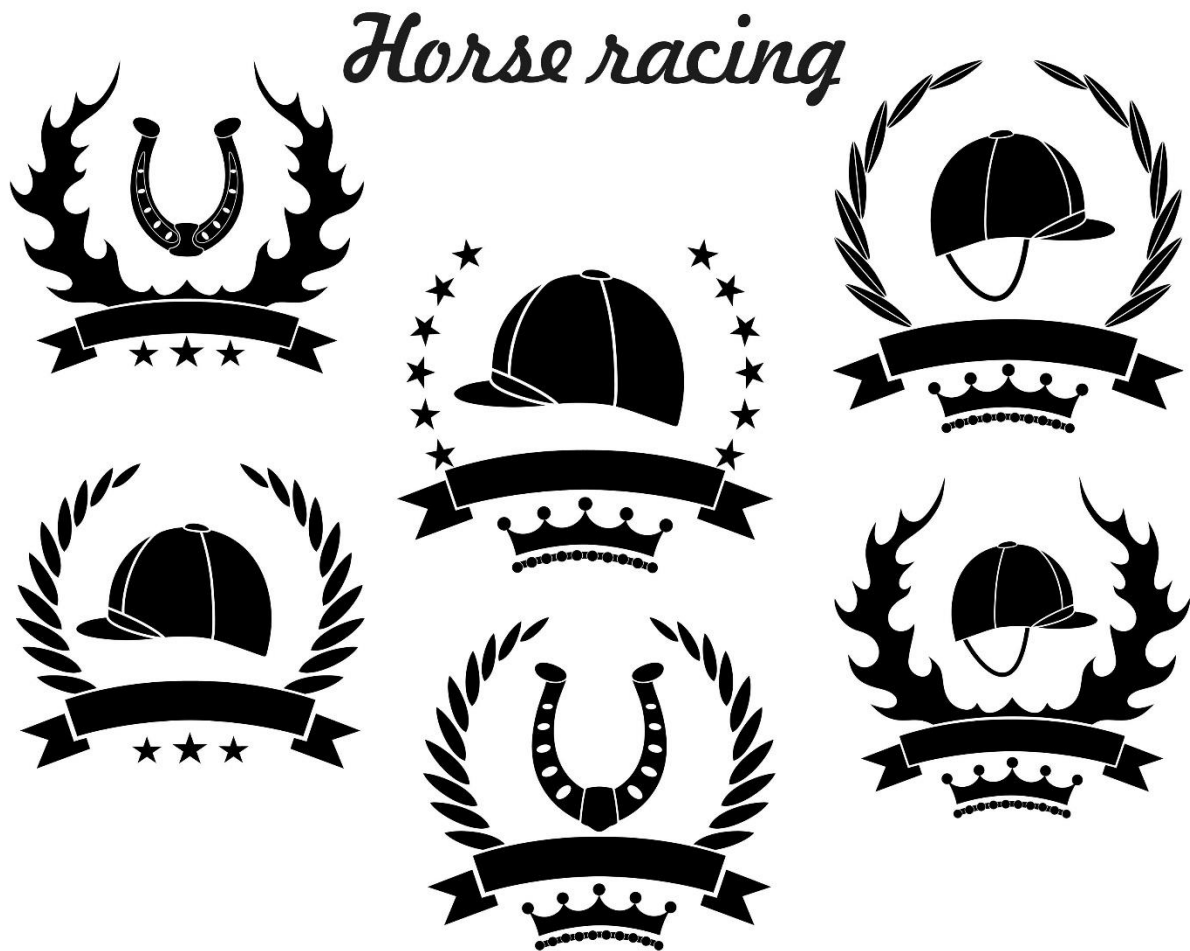
Making a connection with the mythological facts regarding horses, it is believed that the game was played between Odin the god and giant Hrungrnir. Archeological facts suggest that by 648 BC, Greeks had introduced horse racing in their Olympic games. From this fact, one can easily guess the history and the popularity of this game. Not only Greece but also Syria, Babylon and Egypt had admired this game since that era. They used to compete horse racing by attaching chariots to them.



There were grievous injuries and death in some cases, which were the major risks that the rider and their horse were facing in chariot racing. Then, Romans who along with chariot races, popularized mounted horse racing. As the popularity rose the demand of more skilful horses came into the picture, which in turn brought hybrid horses into the market.

Participating Countries

Horse racing is widely admired all over the world. It has so much charisma that people of all ages cannot stop themselves from watching the powerful bodies racing to their maximum potential. United Kingdom followed by United States of America are the trending countries, where this game has a tremendous fan following.



Similarly, Canada is also popular for this game. The famous horse of Canada is called as the "Northern dancer". There are several European countries like Belgium, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, who are active participants. Some of the first races in Hungary can be dated back to 1827 and France has the biggest racing industry than any other countries in Europe.

Asian countries like China, India, Singapore and UAE are also known for their keen interest in organizing this game throughout the calendar year. India is known to be the oldest country in Asia, where horse racing is believed to be conducted under rules since almost two centuries. In 1977, the first race course was set up in Madras (now Chennai).

Adding to the list, Dubai is famous for organizing the prestigious Dubai World Cup, with a prized purse of 10 million dollars, making it the costliest race in the world. South Africa is not quite far in this. The history of horse racing in Africa can be traced back to year 1797. **Durban July Handicap** is the most premier event that is running in South Africa, since 1897.

South America too has its active participation in this game since so many years. In Argentina, this game is known as **Turf**. Most of the horses for these races are imported from South Africa, Australia, United Kingdom and France. New Zealand's bloodstock industry generates 120 million dollars a year by exporting horses to Asia and Australia.

Horse Racing – Equipment

The best life experiences are those in which you enjoy your moments and at the same time, gain popularity. Horse racing can prove best to you, if you have a keen interest in it. To get started with horse racing one should be aware of the equipment and terms that will be encountered most often.



The equipment used in horse racing are listed below:

Equipment	Usage
Bit	A piece of metal put on the mouth of the horse for controlling purpose.
Blinkers	Used to cover the eyes of the horse partially so that he can only state straight.
Fence	It is a structure over which the horses used to jump in a competition
Bridle	A leather type instrument used to cover the head of the horse and partially his mouth
Halter	This is the rope tightened around the horse that is used by the rider for controlling purpose.
Stirrup	It is attached just at the position where you put your leg while riding the horse.

Whip	A leather material having stick at one end and is used to make the horses run faster.
Stall	Waiting frame for the horses before the start of the game
Silks	It is the colored shirt that the rider wears
Tack	The rider puts it on the horse before riding it.

Horse Racing – How to Ride?

To ride a horse, you should be able to make a strong bond with them. Because they are animals and they tend to carry out your orders only if you are kind to them. So first you should learn how to tame them. Always give a gentle pat on their neck while riding them; it will make them sure that they are doing right.



To understand them better, try to see the world through their perspective. This will help you a lot in understanding them. Upon completion of a task, reward them with a healthy treat. This will make a mark in their mind, so that they will try to perform better always.

How to Ride a Horse?

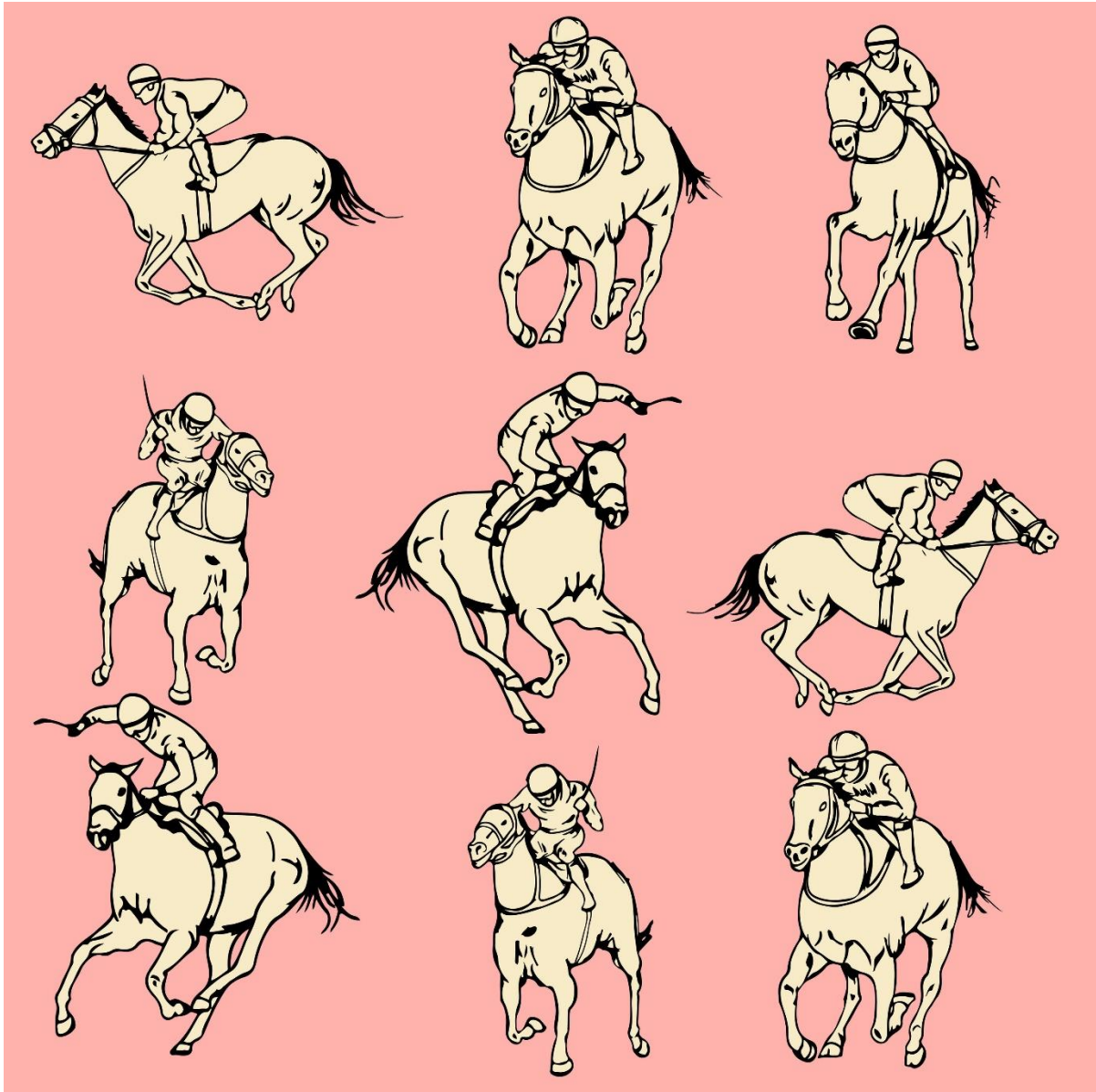
Stand at the left side of the horse and mark the stirrup. Now put your left leg on the stirrup. With one hand hold the reins properly making a firm grip on the front side of the saddle and put one hand behind the saddle. Now gently mount on the horse without kneeling on him. Make sure that the girth is tightened.



Stirrups should be of even size on the both sides. To balance yourself properly sit exactly at the middle of the saddle. Heels should be pushed downwards and most importantly make a straight erect body posture with the chin being up. This will give you level of confidence. Don't keep long reins as this may put you in difficulty in controlling the horses. Instead keep them short.

How to Run a Horse?

Now it's time for a walk. A gentle squeeze with your legs is enough to make your horse understand your order. In case your horse is a bit lazy, just give a small kick. Don't ever try to rest your hand ever on the neck of the horse. Try to have a control on the rein by not moving your hands much, because this may accidentally move the horse towards right or left.



Once your horse starts to walk gradually, increase the speed by further squeezing, whipping or with small kicks. Same is the process while you go down. Do not pound yourself completely while slowing down. Another important aspect that every horse rider should follow every time after changing the reins is; checking for the diagonals, failing to which the rider would have difficult time while riding.

Horse Racing – Variants

In this chapter, we will discuss in detail about the different types of horse racing. There are mainly four types of racing, which have been explained below:

- Flat racing
- Jump racing
- Harness racing
- Endurance racing

Flat Racing

Most common form of horse racing is flat racing. Excluding some areas like Great Britain and Ireland where figure of eight tracks are followed, almost all flat racing tracks are **oval** in shape. Some use **polytrack** or **Tapeta** on their surface whereas some use dirt. The running off distance varies in between 400 meters to a maximum two and a half mile long.



Same weight is given to all the horses in terms of fairness. The younger and female horses are also given allowances. These type of races where the weight distribution is similar are also called as **conditional races**. On the other hand, in some races different weights are allocated to different horses, known as **handicap races**.

Jump Racing

As the name suggests the horse has to jump bigger obstacles in this race. Jump racing can be divided into two categories:

- Steeple Chasing
- Hurdling

Between these two, Steeple Chasing is slightly more difficult. In Great Britain, Jump Racing is also popularly known as the National Hunt Racing.



Initially, when a horse starts riding, it is put through flat racing. Gradually, the horse gets enough potential to jump bigger obstacles. At this time, he does hurdle racing. If the horse is believed to have more potential, then only it will be put through steeple chasing.

A type of racing under this category is known as **Chase**, in which the horse has to run over a distance of 2 to 4.5 miles. It has to jump over the fences that are minimum 4.5 feet tall. Another type of racing is **Hurdling**. In this, the horse has to race around a distance of 2 to 3.5-mile and has to jump over 3.5 feet high hurdles. There is another type of racing, which is called as **NH flat** Racing in which the horse has to run over a distance of 1.5-2.5 miles. It is also known by the name **Bumper Racing**.

Harness Racing

This is a type of racing in which the horse has to pull a sulky and needs to move in a particular gait. Two different types of gaits are usually employed, which are Trotting and Pacing.



In Trotting, the horse moves his leg forward in diagonal pairs. Striking the ground continuously, the horse first tries to move the right leg to front and left leg to the hind and vice versa in the second step. On the other hand, in Pacing, the horse uses just the opposite diagonal pairs as compared to a trotter.

Endurance Racing

Unlike horse racing, here the distance is not small. The horse travels across the country ranging from a distance of 40-160 Kms. As it is a long way of travelling, veterinarians are posted at every successive distance to check the health status of these horses, which gives them further permit to continue their journey.



This massive distance is further subdivided into various categories depending on the length of travel. These are marked as stars and noted as CEI. Following are the CEI notations approved by the FEI.

CEI notation having number of star marks	Distance to be travelled (in km)
1	40-79
2	80-119
3	120+
4	160

The first horse that crosses the vet check line having fitness certificate through periodical check up from the veterinarian is declared as the winner. There is a particular speed limit for the horses to ride in a particular day. The key factors to determine a winning horse also includes its speed and the rate of recovery from periodical checkups.

Horse Racing – Training Schedule

To ensure proper conditioning of your horse, you should plan a good training schedule. Starting from a low session, gradually you have to train them from higher sessions, ensuring their good health in mind. The stages of training can go like:

- Foals training for younger horses
- Ground training
- Backing

Foals – Soon after getting birth, foals are handed over to their respective advocates. They use the method of **imprinting**, in which soon after their birth they are exposed to an atmosphere in which they have to lead rest of their life. They are exposed to human touch and voice. This type of nursing method ensures that the foals will learn the fact that humans are not harmful to them and they must be respected.



After 1-2 years of their birth, they are introduced to do some ground training. It makes their bones stronger. However, till the end of this training, it is advised not to ride them.

Following are the various training schedules for training:

Training name	Aim
Round penning	To teach the horse to respond to your commands, giving him/her directions, teaching it how to respond, etc.
Desensitization	To make him/her flapping the objects and to allow itself to touch the objects and feel them.
Ground Driving	With the help of rein, teaching a horse to move forwards accompanied by a man behind its back.
Bitting	Making a horse comfortable with reins, bit and bridle.

The last stage is **Backing** which is the process of riding a horse. In this process, the horse is made comfortable, so that a human can ride on it. Firstly, they are given to pull a cart at the early age of 2 or 3 years. By the time they gain enough human trust and love, they are introduced to human riding.

Horse Racing – Dangers and Criticism

There are a lot of injuries that can happen, if the rider is not careful. The list includes Bowed tendon, Splints, Osselets, neck fracture, and broken hips are some of the common injuries that both the jockey and the horse go through. According to recent study report made by **Equine Injury Database**, the fatal injury cases have increased by 20% in the year 2014 as compared to 2013. According to New York Times, every year out of 1000 horse riders, 600 face medical injury out of which 20% are very critical.



Nowadays, all the horse riding associations are advised to follow a certain set of check points to reduce the injury rates as far as possible.

- Excess strain causes fatigue on the bones of the horses. Hence, trainers are advised to follow a strict training schedule that will focus on the strength of their bones and strain bearing capability under extreme circumstances.
- Pre-screening needs to be followed to know the catastrophic injuries well in advance.
- Educate the owners and trainers about various signs of injuries and teach them how to take care of their horses.

Criticisms on Horse Racing

After dogs, horses are known to be the most loyal animal to mankind. Horse racing, which has been started with an aim of game spirit, now has become the market of gambling and animal torture. This torture has many definitions pertaining to horses. For some, cruelty may be the way a rider rides his horse. Whereas, for some others it may be the poor environment and lack of quality nutrition in which the horses are made to train.

Some major criticisms being meted out on horses are:

- The unnecessary use of whips.
- Despite the limit, excessive breeding of horses.
- Slaughtering of the old and retired horses.
- To enhance the performance artificially by use of dangerous drugs.
- Premature use of horses for riding and hard training.
- Make the young horses run over a hard surface which causes major limb problems.
- Gambling in the games through auction, money betting etc.

For better future of horses, the industry needs to accept criticism positively. Every governing body should make sure that no horses are tortured during their training. Proper quality nutritious food should be provided and strict action should be taken against those who gamble at the market.

Horse Racing – Tournaments

Among numerous races, the Flat racing and Steeple Chases are the most common and widely observed racing tournaments. Almost every nation has their own horse riding clubs and federations to govern them. Some major countries and tournaments are listed below.

Country	Important tournaments
Australia	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Australia Cup2. AJC Derby3. Melbourne cup4. The BMW stakes
France	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Grand Pix de Paris2. Prix du Jockey Club3. Prix de Diane
Germany	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Deutsches Derby2. Deutschland-Preis
Hong Kong	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Hong Kong cup2. Hong Kong Derby3. Hong Kong Vase
Japan	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Champions Cup2. Kikuka Sho3. Tokyo Yushun
New Zealand	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. LvRC Classic2. Easter Handicap3. Auckland Cup
Poland	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Nagroda Derby2. Warsaw Derby3. Nagroda Rulera