



Barrel saddles have a deeper seat than most to help the rider stay put during hard turns and fast runs. The horn is also taller, making it easier to hold onto during turns. If the seat is done properly, it will also help the rider to be stable and in control. Generally, barrel racers like a half rough out saddle so they can get more grip.



The cutting saddle has less rise in the seat with the lowest place or pocket a bit further ahead. This makes it easier for the rider to stay centered. The swells and horn are also very high so the rider can hang onto the horn at a proper angle to push or pull on it to remain stable.



Western endurance saddles were originally designed specifically for endurance competition. They feature sturdy construction combined with light weight, and generally are fitted out with a number of ties and dees for securing all of the accessories necessary for a long and grueling ride. Recently, endurance saddles (both Western and their English counterparts) have found increasing favor among pleasure riders.



The Old Time Ranch Saddle has a higher cantle and pommel than other saddles. It is intended for long days on the range. The rider can balance easily on the "pockets" or in a "chair seat" position. It has many strings and attachment points to tie bedrolls and bad weather gear onto.



Penning and All-Event saddles provide the rider with a comfortable and deep enough seat to stay put in when training, penning, or roping. The horn, tree and rigging are also built strong enough to rope with. An All-Event must be multipurpose and comfortable for either men or women. The swells are lower than those of a cutter saddle, but a bit higher than most roping saddles.



The plantation saddle is another variant that is gaining popularity among pleasure riders. It combines many features of both English and Western saddles giving the rider a deep seat with the sense of security of a Western saddle, while retaining the closer contact of an English saddle.



Since pleasure riding seldom entails heavy work or long days, the Pleasure Saddle is lighter in weight than most of the saddles intended for heavy jobs. The balance point tends to be to the back of the saddle. All of these points allow the horse and rider to enjoy the trail more.



The ranch saddle is built to give its rider comfort with long hours of riding. The entire saddle must also be built strong and durable as a working cowboy may ride that same saddle roping and working day after day - in all kinds of conditions. Generally a deeper, well shaped seat is preferred as well as a plate rigging system. The plate rigging delivers a more even pull throughout the tree to give the horse more comfort. Most cowboys want the fork or swells of the saddle to sit low on the horse with a horn that is bigger in diameter for ranch style roping.



The reiner has a low horn so it won't interfere with the rider's hands or reins. The seat must be shaped to allow the rider to roll their pelvis back for making big stops. The reining saddle should also be built so as to allow as much feel to the horse as possible.



The modern roping saddle has a deep seat and the fenders hung in a position to ensure that the rider can be up and balanced when ready to rope. The horns and trees are very strong to take the sudden strong jerks of a steer on the end of the rope. As well the rigging must be one that pulls off the top of the tree bars and has great strength. Generally suede out padded seats are preferred to give more grip. The swells of the saddle are kept reasonably low as to keep the leverage of the rope on the horn to a minimum.



Western equitation Saddle, the center of balance is in the center of the saddle. The stirrups are turned so the rider's foot will fall in a proper line with his hip and upper body. The tooling and silver accents are part of the show scene.



Show saddles generally have a lower horn so as not to interfere with the reins. The saddles are usually very ornately tooled and silvered to give a classy look. The skirts are also deeper to show off the silver and tooling more. The seat must be very balanced to help the rider achieve proper riding posture.