

Glossary of Horse Racing Terms

The horse racing industry has its own vocabulary of unique terms and phrases. Here is a glossary that will help you learn about the breeding and racing of Thoroughbreds, along with general equine knowledge.

Information Provided by NTRA Communications, Inc. View the full glossary of racing terms from Equibase: [Industry Glossary](#)

Also check out this interactive glossary of racing terms from America's Best Racing: [Racing Terms](#)

A

action

1) A horse's manner of moving. 2) A term meaning wagering, for example, "The horse took a lot of action."

age

All Thoroughbreds celebrate their birthday on Jan. 1.

all out

When a horse extends itself to the utmost.

allowance race

A race for which the racing secretary drafts certain conditions to determine weights to be carried based on the horse's age, sex and/or past performance.

apprentice

Rider who has not ridden a certain number of winners within a specified period of time. Also known as a "bug," from the asterisk used to denote the weight allowance such riders receive.

apron

The (usually) paved area between the grandstand and the racing surface.

B

baby race

A race for two-year-olds.

backside

Stable area, dormitories and often times a track kitchen, chapel and recreation area for stable employees. Also known as "backstretch," for its proximity to the stable area.

backstretch

1) Straight portion of the far side of the racing surface between the turns. 2) See backside.

bandage

Bandages used on horse's legs are three to six inches wide and are made of a variety of materials. In a race, they are used for support or protection against injury. "Rundown bandages" are used during a race and usually have a pad under the fetlock to avoid injury due to abrasion when the fetlocks sink toward the ground during weight-bearing. A horse may also wear "standing bandages," thick cotton wraps used during shipping and while in the stall to prevent swelling and/or injury.

bell

Signal sounded when the starter opens the gates or, at some tracks, to mark the close of betting.

bit

A stainless steel, rubber or aluminum bar, attached to the bridle, which fits in the horse's mouth and is one of the means by which a jockey exerts guidance and control. The most common racing bit is the D-bit, named because the rings extending from the bar are shaped like the letter "D." Most racing bits are "snaffled," (snaffle bit) which means the metal bar is made up of two pieces, connected in the middle, which leaves it free to swivel. Other bits may be used to correct specific problems, such as bearing in or out.

blinkers

A cup-shaped device to limit a horse's vision to prevent him from swerving from objects or other horses on either side of it. Blinker cups come in a variety of sizes and shapes to allow as little or as much vision as the trainer feels is necessary.

bloodstock agent

A person who advises and/or represents a buyer or seller of Thoroughbreds at a public auction or a private sale. A bloodstock agent usually works on commission, often five percent of the purchase price, and can also prepare a horse for sale.

boxed (in)

To be trapped between, behind or inside of other horses.

break maiden

Horse or rider winning the first race of its career. Also known as "earning a diploma."

bred

1) A horse is considered to have been bred in the state or country of its birth: Secretariat was a Virginia-bred. 2) The past tense of "breed."

breeder

Owner of the dam at time of foaling unless the dam was under a lease or foal-sharing arrangement at the time of foaling. In that case, the person(s) specified by the terms of the agreement is (are) the breeder(s) of the foal.

Breeders' Cup

Thoroughbred racing's year-end championships. Known as "Breeders' Cup World Championships," it consists of fourteen graded races conducted over two days with purses and awards totaling \$30 million. First run in 1984.

broodmare

A filly or mare that has been bred and is used to produce foals.

C

call

Running position of horses in a race at various points.

cannon bone

The third metacarpal (front leg) or metatarsal (rear leg), also referred to as the shin bone. The largest bone between the knee and ankle joints.

chestnut

1) A horse color which may vary from a red-yellow to golden-yellow. The mane, tail and legs are usually variations of coat color, except where white markings are present. 2) Horny, irregular growths found on the inside of the legs. On the forelegs, they are just above the knees. On the hind legs, they are just below the hocks. No two horses have been found to have the same chestnuts and so they may be used for identification. Also called "night eyes."

claiming

Process by which a licensed person may purchase a horse entered in a designated race for a predetermined price. When a horse has been claimed, its new owner assumes title after the starting gate opens although the former owner is entitled to all purse money earned in that race.

claiming box

Box in which claims are deposited before the race.

claiming race

A race in which each horse entered is eligible to be purchased at a set price. Claims must be made before the race and only by licensed owners or their agents who have a horse registered to race at that meeting or who have received a claim certificate from the stewards.

classic

1) A race of traditional importance. 2) Used to describe a distance A race at the American classic distance, which is currently 1 1/4 miles. The European classic distance is 1 1/2 miles.

clerk of scales

An official whose chief duty is to weigh the riders before and after a race to ensure proper weight is (was) carried.

clocker

One who times workouts and races.

conditions

The requirements of a particular race. This may include age, sex, money or races won, weight carried and the distance of the race.

conformation

The physical makeup of and bodily proportions of a horse how it is put together.

connections

Persons identified with a horse, such as owner, trainer, rider and stable employees.

cooling out

Restoring a horse to normal temperature, usually by walking, after it has become overheated during exercise. All horses that are exercised are cooled out.

cribber

A horse that clings to objects with its teeth and sucks air into its stomach. Also known as a "wind sucker."

crop

1) The number of foals by a sire in a given year. 2) A group of horses born in the same year. For example, "An excellent crop of three-year-olds." 3) A jockey's whip.

croup

Along the horse's topline, the area between the back and the tail. A straight, level croup provides maximum outreach of the Thoroughbred's hindquarters as it gallops, producing a longer stride.

D**dam**

The female parent of a foal.

dam's sire (broodmare sire)

The sire of a broodmare. Used in reference to the maternal grandsire of a foal.

dark bay or brown

A horse color that ranges from brown with areas of tan on the shoulders, head and flanks, to a dark brown, with tan areas seen only in the flanks and/or muzzle. The mane, tail and lower portions of the legs are always black unless white markings are present.

dead heat

Two or more horses finishing a race in a tie.

Derby

A stakes event for three-year-olds.

distaff race

A race for female horses.

E

Eclipse Award

Thoroughbred racing's year-end awards, honoring the top horses in 11 separate categories; the leading owner, trainer, jockey, apprentice jockey and breeder; as well as members of the media who have demonstrated excellence in their coverage of the sport. Their namesake is Eclipse, the great 18th-century racehorse and sire who was undefeated in 18 career starts and sired the winners of 344 races. Any Eclipse Award winner is referred to as a "champion."

entry fee

Money paid by an owner to enter a horse in a stakes race.

equipment

See bandage; bar shoe; bit; blinkers; bridle; earmuffs; halter; hood; nose band; overcheck; overgirth; reins; saddle cloth; saddle pad; shadow roll; shank; stirrups; tongue tie.

estrus (heat)

Associated with ovulation; a mare usually is receptive to breeding during estrus. Referred to as "horsing."

estrous cycle

The length of time between consecutive ovulations.

exercise rider

Rider who is licensed to exercise a horse during its morning training session.

extended

Running at top speed.

extensor tendon

Extends the knee (carpus) joint, ankle joint, pastern and foot and flexes the elbow. The muscles begin above the knee and attach to the coffin and pastern bones.

F

farrier

Horseshoer, blacksmith. Also called a "plater."

fast (track)

Footing that is dry, even and resilient.

fault

Weak points of a horse's conformation or character as a racehorse.

fee

1) Amount paid to a jockey for riding in a race. 2) The cost of nominating, entering or starting a horse in a stakes race.

fetlock (joint)

Joint located between the cannon bone and the long pastern bone, also referred to as the "ankle."

field

The horses in a race.

filly

Female horse four-years-old or younger.

firm (track)

A condition of a turf course corresponding to fast on a dirt track. A firm, resilient surface.

flank

Area between the horse's ribs and hip. Lacking heavy musculature and the site of important internal organs, the flank is a very sensitive region on the horse's body and cannot be touched by a jockey's whip during a race.

flat race

Contested on level ground as opposed to a steeplechase. Often used in the term, on the flat.

flipping halter

A halter used in the starting gate to help prevent a horse from flipping.

float

1) An equine dental procedure in which sharp points on the teeth are filed down. 2) The instrument with which the above procedure is performed.

foal(ed)

1) A horse of either sex in its first year of life. 2) As a verb, to give birth. Also known as "dropped." 3) Can also denote the offspring of either a male or female parent.

forearm

Area of the foreleg located between the elbow joint and the knee (carpus), which is made up of the radius bone and the ulna.

forelock

Lock of mane hair that falls forward from the poll (top of the head) to just above the horse's eyes.

founding sires

The Darley Arabian, Byerly Turk and Godolphin Barb. Every Thoroughbred must be able to trace its parentage to one of the three founding sires.

fractional time

Intermediate times recorded in a race, as at the quarter, half, three-quarters, etc. The "quarter time," for example, refers to the time after the first quarter-mile, not the first 25 percent of the race.

frog

The V-shaped, pliable support structure on the bottom of the foot.

front-runner

A horse whose running style is to attempt to get on or near the lead at the start of the race and to continue there as long as possible.

full-brother, full-sister

Horses that share the same sire and dam.

furlong

One-eighth of a mile, 220 yards, 660 feet.

futurity

A race for two-year-olds in which the owners make a continuous series of payments over a period of time to keep their horses eligible. Purses for these races vary but can be considerable.

G

gait

The characteristic footfall pattern of a horse in motion. Thoroughbreds have four natural gaits-walk, trot, canter and gallop. Thoroughbreds compete at a gallop.

gap

An opening in the rail where horses enter and leave the course.

gaskin

Area of the hindleg between the stifle and hock joints, consisting of the tibia and fibula.

gate

See starting gate.

gate card

A card, issued by the starter, stating that a horse is properly schooled in starting gate procedures.

gelding

A male horse of any age that has been neutered by having both testicles removed ("gelded").

girth

1) An elastic and leather band, sometimes covered with sheepskin, that passes under a horse's belly and is connected to both sides of the saddle. 2) Deepest point of the horse's midsection, around which the saddle girth is tightened.

goggles

Clear coverings for the horse's eyes used for protection from mud or debris.

good (track)

A dirt track that is almost fast or a turf course slightly softer than firm.

graded race

Established in 1973 to classify select stakes races in North America, at the request of European racing authorities, who had set up group races two years earlier. Always denoted with Roman numerals I, II, or III. Capitalized when used in race title (the Grade I Kentucky Derby). See group race.

graduate

1) Winning for the first time, horse or rider. 2) A horse that has moved up to allowance, stakes or handicap racing.

grandsire

The grandfather of a horse; father ("sire") of the horse's dam or sire.

gray

A horse color where the majority of the coat is a mixture of black and white hairs. The mane, tail and legs may be either black or gray unless white markings are present. Starting with foals of 1993, the color classifications gray and roan were combined as "roan or gray." See roan.

groom

A person who cares for a horse in a stable. Known as a "lad" or "girl" in Britain.

group race

Established in 1971 by racing organizations in Britain, France, Germany and Italy to classify select stakes races outside North America. Collectively called "pattern races." Equivalent to North American graded races. Always denoted with Arabic numerals 1, 2, or 3. Capitalized when used in race title (the Group 1 Epsom Derby). See graded race.

H

half-brother, half-sister

Horses out of the same dam but by different sires. Horses with the same sire and different dams are not considered half-siblings in Thoroughbred racing.

halter

Like a bridle, but lacking a bit. Used in handling horses around the stable and when they are not being ridden.

hand

Four inches. A horse's height is measured in hands and inches from the top of the shoulder (withers) to the ground, e.g., 15.2 hands is 15 hands, 2 inches. Thoroughbreds typically range from 15 to 17 hands.

handicap

1) Race for which the track handicapper assigns the weights to be carried. 2) To make selections on the basis of past performances.

handily

1) Working in the morning with maximum effort. Compare with, 2) A horse racing well within itself, with little exertion from the jockey.

handle

Amount of money wagered in the parimutuels on a race, a program, during a meeting or for a year.

hand ride

Urging a horse with the hands and not using the whip.

hard (track)

A condition of a turf course where there is no resiliency to the surface.

harrow

Implement or unit with pulling teeth or tines used to rake and loosen the upper surface of a track.

head

A margin between horses. One horse leading another by the length of its head.

heat

1) A race in which more than one running is required to decide the winner. More common in harness racing. 2) A breeding term. See estrus.

heavy (track)

Wettest possible condition of a turf course; not usually found in North America.

helmet

A lightweight fiberglass cap worn by riders to prevent head injuries. It is required equipment that is not considered part of a jockey's riding weight.

high weight

Highest weight assigned or carried in a race.

hip

Joint located in the hindquarters, which is formed by the pelvis and the femur.

hock

A large joint just above the shin bone in the rear legs. Corresponds to the level of the knee of the front leg.

homebred

A horse bred by its owner.

hood

A (usually) nylon covering which goes over a horse's head to which blinkers or earmuffs are attached.

hoof

The foot of the horse. Consists of several parts that play an integral role in supporting the weight of the horse. See "Hoof" subsection of "Musculoskeletal System" in [veterinary supplement](#) for a more detailed explanation. For hoof injuries, see cracked hoof; heel crack; quarter crack; toe crack.

horse

When reference is made to sex, a "horse" is an ungelded male five-years-old or older.

hot walker

Person who walks horses to cool them out after workout or races.

!**in foal**

Pregnant mare.

infield

Area encompassed by the inner rail of the racetrack.

inquiry

Reviewing the race to check into a possible infraction of the rules. Also, a sign flashed by officials on the tote board on such occasions. If lodged by a jockey, it is called an objection.

in the money

A horse that finishes first, second or third.

intra-articular

Within a joint.

irons

See stirrups.

isolation barn

A facility used to separate sick horses from healthy ones.

J**jail**

Refers to the requirement that a horse which has been claimed that next runs in a claiming race must run for a claiming price 25 percent higher for the next 30 days. Commonly used in the phrase The horse is in (out of) jail.

The Jockey Club

An organization dedicated to the improvement of Thoroughbred breeding and racing. Incorporated Feb. 10, 1894 in New York City, The Jockey Club serves as North America's Thoroughbred registry, responsible for the maintenance of "The American Stud Book," a register of all Thoroughbreds foaled in the United States, Puerto Rico and Canada; and of all Thoroughbreds imported into those countries from jurisdictions that have a registry recognized by The Jockey Club and the International Stud Book Committee.

jockey fee

Sum paid to rider for competing in a race.

jog

Slow, easy gait.

jumper

Steeplechase or hurdle horse.

juvenile

Two-year-old horse.

L

lame

A deviation from a normal gait due to pain in a limb or its supporting structures.

laminae

A part of the hoof. See insensitive laminae and sensitive laminae. See "Hoof" in [veterinary supplement](#) for a more detailed explanation.

laminitis

An inflammation of the sensitive laminae of the foot. There are many factors involved, including changes in the blood flow through the capillaries of the foot. Many events can cause laminitis, including ingesting toxic levels of grain, eating lush grass, systemic disease problems, high temperature, toxemia, retained placenta, excessive weight-bearing as occurs when the opposite limb is injured, and the administration of some drugs. Laminitis usually manifests itself in the front feet, develops rapidly, and is life-threatening. In mild cases, however, a horse can resume a certain amount of athletic activity. Laminitis is the disease that caused the death of Secretariat. Also known as "founder."

lead [LED]

Lead weights carried in pockets on both sides of the saddle, used to make up the difference between the actual weight of the jockey and the weight the horse has been assigned to carry during the race.

lead [LEED]

1) See shank. 2) The front leg that is last to hit the ground during a gallop or canter. See "Gaits" for a more detailed definition.

leg up

1) To help a jockey mount a horse. 2) A jockey having a mount.

length

A measurement approximating the length of a horse, used to denote distance between horses in a race. For example, "Secretariat won the Belmont by 31 lengths."

ligament

A band of fibrous tissue connecting bones, which serve to support and strengthen joints and to limit the range of motion. There are also ligaments that support certain organs.

listed race

A stakes race just below a group race or graded race in quality.

lug (in or out)

See bearing in (out).

lunge

1) Horse rearing and plunging. 2) A method of exercising a horse on a tether ("lunge line").

M

maiden

1) A horse or rider that has not won a race. 2) A female that has never been bred.

maiden race

A race for non-winners.

mane

Long hairs growing on the crest of the horse's neck, which are usually kept clipped to about six inches in length for neatness, or decoratively braided.

mare

Female horse five-years-old or older.

mash

Soft, moist mixture, hot or cold, of grain and other feed that is easily digested by horses.

middle distance

Broadly, from one mile to 1-1/8 miles.

morning glory

Horse that performs well in morning workouts but fails to reproduce that form in races.

morning line

Probable odds on each horse in a race, as determined by a mathematical formula used by the track handicapper, who tries to gauge both the ability of the horse and the likely final odds as determined by the bettors.

muddy (track)

A condition of a racetrack which is wet but has no standing water.

mudder

Horse that races well on muddy tracks. Also known as a "mudlark."

muzzle

1) Nose and lips of a horse. 2) A guard placed over a horse's mouth to prevent it from biting or eating.

N

name (of a Thoroughbred)

Names of North American Thoroughbreds are registered by The Jockey Club. They can be no longer than 18 characters, including punctuation and spaces. The words "the," "and," "by," "for," "in" and "a" are almost always lower case unless they are the first word in the name. Examples "Love You by Heart," "Go for Wand" and "Strike the Gold."

nasal strips

Self-adhesive tape worn on the nose to help support the horse's nasal passages.

near side

Left side of a horse. Side on which a horse is mounted.

neck

Unit of measurement. About the length of a horse's neck; a little less than a quarter of a length.

nod

Lowering of head. To win by a nod, a horse extends its head with its nose touching the finish line ahead of a close competitor.

nose

Smallest advantage a horse can win by. Called a short head in Britain.

nose band

A leather strap that goes over the bridge of a horse's nose to help secure the bridle. A "figure eight" nose band goes over the bridge of the nose and under the rings of the bit to help keep the horse's mouth closed. This keeps the tongue from sliding up over the bit and is used on horses that do not like having a tongue tie used.

O

Oaks

A stakes event for three-year-old fillies (females).

objection

Claim of foul lodged by rider, patrol judge or other official after the running of a race. If lodged by official, it is called an inquiry.

odds-on

Odds of less than even money.

official

1) Notice displayed when a race result is confirmed. 2) Used to denote a racing official.

off side

Right side of horse.

off-track betting

Wagering at legalized betting outlets usually run by the tracks, management companies specializing in parimutuel wagering, or, in New York State, by independent corporations chartered by the state. Wagers at OTB sites are usually commingled with on-track betting pools.

on the bit

When a horse is eager to run. Also known as "in the bridle."

on the board

Finishing among the first three.

on the muscle

Denotes a fit horse.

overgirth

An elastic band that goes completely around a horse, over the saddle, to keep the saddle from slipping.

over-reaching

Toe of hind shoe striking the forefoot or foreleg.

overnight

A sheet published by the racing secretary's office listing the entries for an upcoming racing card.

overnight race

A race in which entries close a specific number of hours before running (such as 48 hours), as opposed to a stakes race for which nominations close weeks and sometimes months in advance.

overweight

Surplus weight carried by a horse when the rider cannot make the required weight.

P**pacesetter**

The horse that is running in front (on the lead).

paddock

Area where horses are saddled and paraded before being taken onto the track.

paddock judge

Official in charge of paddock and saddling routine.

parimutuel(s)

A form of wagering originated in 1865 by Frenchman Pierre Oller in which all money bet is divided up among those who have winning tickets, after taxes, takeout and other deductions are made. Oller called his system "parier mutuel" meaning "mutual stake" or "betting among ourselves." As this wagering method was adopted in England it became known as "Paris mutuels," and soon after "parimutuels."

past performances

A horse's racing record, earnings, bloodlines and other data, presented in composite form.

pastern (bones)

Denotes the area between the fetlock joint and the hoof. The joint between the long and short pastern bones is called the "pastern joint." Can also be used to describe the area of the limb or to describe a specific bone long pastern bone. Technically known as the P1 (long) and P2 (short).

patrol judge(s)

Official(s) who observe the progress of a race from various vantage points around the track.

photo finish

A result so close it is necessary to use the finish-line camera to determine the order of finish.

pinhooker

A person who buys a racehorse with the specific intention of re-selling it at a profit.

place

Second position at finish.

placing judge

Official who posts the order of finish in a race.

point(s) of call

A horse's position at various locations on the racetrack where its running position is noted on a chart. The locations vary with the distance of the race.

pole(s)

Markers at measured distances around the track designating the distance from the finish. The quarter pole, for instance, is a quarter of a mile from the finish, not from the start.

poll

The top of the head, between the ears.

pony

Any horse or pony that leads the parade of the field from paddock to starting gate. Also, a horse or pony which accompanies a starter to the starting gate. Also can be used as a verb He was ponied to the gate. Also known as a "lead [LEED] pony."

post

1) Starting point for a race. 2) An abbreviated version of post position. For example, "He drew post four." 3) As a verb, to record a win. For example, "He's posted 10 wins in 14 starts."

post parade

Horses going from paddock to starting gate past the stands.

post position

Position of stall in starting gate from which a horse starts.

post time

Designated time for a race to start.

prep (race)

A workout (or race) used to prepare a horse for a future engagement.

pull up

To stop or slow a horse during or after a race or workout.

purse

The total monetary amount distributed after a race to the owners of the entrants who have finished in the (usually) top four or five positions. Some racing jurisdictions may pay purse money through other places.

Q

quarantine barn

1) A U.S. Department of Agriculture structure used to isolate foreign horses for a short period of time to ensure they are not carrying any diseases. The structure may be at a racetrack, airport or specially designated facility. Horses must be cleared by a federal veterinarian before being released from quarantine. 2) Any facility used to keep infected horses away from the general equine population.

quarter crack

A crack between the toe and heel, usually extending into the coronary band.

R

rabbit

A speed horse running as an entry with another, usually come-from-behind horse. The rabbit is expected to set a fast pace to help the chances of its stablemate.

racings secretary

Official who drafts conditions of races and assigns weights for handicap events.

radiograph

The picture or image on film generated by x-rays.

rail

The barrier on either side of the racing strip. Sometimes referred to as the "fence."

refuse

1) When a horse will not break from the gate. 2) In jumping races, balking at a jump.

reins

Long straps, usually made of leather, that are connected to the bit and used by the jockey to control the horse.

reserve

A minimum price, set by the consignor, for a horse in a public auction. For example, "The horse did not reach its reserve."

respiratory system

Organ system responsible for gas exchange from nostrils to lungs.

ride short

Using short stirrups.

ridgling ("rig")

A term describing either a cryptorchid or monorchid. Also spelled "ridgeling."

RNA

"Reserve not achieved." See reserve.

roan

A horse color where the majority of the coat of the horse is a mixture of red and white hairs or brown and white hairs. The mane, tail and legs may be black, chestnut or roan unless white markings are present. Starting with foals of 1993, the color classifications gray and roan were combined as "roan or gray." See gray.

rogue

Ill-tempered horse.

route

Broadly, a race distance of longer than 1-1/8 miles.

router

Horse that performs well at longer distances.

S**saddle**

A Thoroughbred racing saddle is the lightest saddle used, weighing less than two pounds.

saddle cloth

A cotton cloth which goes under the saddle to absorb sweat. It usually has the horse's program number and sometimes, in major races, its name.

saddle pad

A piece of felt, sheepskin, or more usually, foam rubber, used as a base for the saddle.

schooling

Process of familiarizing a horse with the starting gate and teaching it racing practices. A horse may also be schooled in the paddock. In steeplechasing, more particularly to teach a horse to jump.

schooling list

List of horses eligible to school at the starting gate before being permitted to race.

scratch

To be taken out of a race before it starts. Trainers usually scratch horses due to adverse track conditions or a horse's adverse health. A veterinarian can scratch a horse at any time.

second dam

Grandmother of a horse. Also known as a "granddam."

set

A group of horses being exercised together.

sex allowance

Female horses (fillies and mares), according to their age and the time of year, are allowed to carry three to five pounds less when meeting males.

shadow roll

A (usually sheepskin) roll that is secured over the bridge of a horse's nose to keep it from seeing shadows on the track and shying away from or jumping them.

shank

Rope or strap attached to a halter or bridle by which a horse is led.

shedrow

Stable area. A row of barns.

shoulder

Area located at the base of the neck, formed by the scapula and the humerus. The angle of the shoulder usually is the same as that of the foreleg pastern. The more "laid back" the shoulder is, the further out the forelegs can reach, producing an even, rhythmic motion. The heavily muscled shoulder area is one of two regions on the horse's body (the other being the hindquarters) that a jockey is permitted to touch with a whip.

show

Third position at the finish.

silks

Jacket and cap worn by riders to designate owner of the horse, or at some smaller tracks, to designate post positions (e.g., yellow for post position one, blue for two, etc.).

simulcast

A simultaneous live television transmission of a race to other tracks, off-track betting offices or other outlets for the purpose of wagering.

sire

1) The male parent. 2) To beget foals.

sloppy (track)

A racing strip that is saturated with water; with standing water visible.

slow (track)

A racing strip that is wet on both the surface and base.

snaffle bit

See bit.

snip

Small patch of white hairs on the nose or lips of a horse.

socks

Solid white markings extending from the top of the hoof to the ankles.

soft (track)

Condition of a turf course with a large amount of moisture. Horses sink very deeply into it.

sophomores

Three-year-old horses. Called sophomores because age three is the second year of racing eligibility.

speed figure

A handicapping tool used to assign a numerical value to a horse's performance. See Beyer number.

splint

1) Either of the two small bones that lie along the sides of the cannon bone. 2) The condition where calcification occurs on the splint bone causing a bump. This can result from response to a fracture or other irritation to the splint bone. A common injury is a "popped splint," see periostitis.

sprint

Short race, less than one mile.

stakes

A race for which the owner usually must pay a fee to run a horse. The fees can be for nominating, maintaining eligibility, entering and starting, to which the track adds more money to make up the total purse. Some stakes races are by invitation and require no payment or fee.

stakes-placed

Finished second or third in a stakes race.

stakes horse

A horse whose level of competition includes mostly stakes races.

stallion

A male horse used for breeding.

stallion season

The right to breed one mare to a particular stallion during one breeding season.

stallion share

A lifetime breeding right to a stallion; one mare per season per share.

stall walker

Horse that moves about its stall constantly and frets rather than rests.

standing bandages

See bandage.

star

1) Any of a number of white markings on the forehead. (The forehead is defined as being above an imaginary line connecting the tops of the eyes.) 2) A type of credit a horse receives from the racing secretary if it is excluded from an over-filled race, giving it priority in entering future races.

starter

1) An official responsible for ensuring a fair start to the race, the starter supervises the loading of horses into the starting gate through a gate crew. He/she also has control of the opening the gate. 2) A horse that is in the starting gate when the race begins, whether he runs or not.

starter race

An allowance or handicap race restricted to horses that have started for a specific claiming price or less.

starting gate

Partitioned mechanical device having stalls in which the horses are confined until the starter releases the stalls' confined front doors to begin the race.

state-bred

A horse bred in a particular state and thus eligible to compete in races restricted to state-breds.

stayer

A horse that can race long distances.

steadied

A horse being taken in hand by its rider, usually because of being in close quarters.

steeplechase

A race in which horses are required to jump over a series of obstacles on the course. Also known as a "chase."

step up

A horse moving up in class to meet better competition.

stewards

Officials of the race meeting responsible for enforcing the rules of racing.

stifle

The large joint above the hock which is made up by the femur, the patella and the tibia.

stirrups

Metal "D"-shaped rings into which a jockey places his/her feet. They can be raised or lowered depending on the jockey's preference. Also known as "irons."

stockings

Solid white markings extending from the top of the hoof to the knee or hock.

(home) stretch

Final straight portion of the racetrack to the finish.

stride

Manner of going. Also, distance covered between successive imprints of the same hoof.

stripe

A white marking running down a horse's face, starting under an imaginary line connecting the tops of the eyes.

stud

1) Male horse used for breeding. 2) A breeding farm.

stud book

Registry and genealogical record of Thoroughbreds, maintained by the Jockey Club of the country in question. Use lower case when describing a generic stud book, all words, including "The," are capitalized when describing "The American Stud Book."

suckling

A foal in its first year of life, while it is still nursing.

superficial flexor tendon

Present in all four legs, but injuries most commonly affect the front legs. Located on the back (posterior) of the front leg between the knee and the foot and between the hock and the foot on the rear leg. The function is to flex the digit (pastern) and knee (carpus) and to extend the elbow on the front leg and extend the hock on the rear leg. Functions in tandem with the deep flexor tendon.

suspensory ligament

Originates at the back of the knee (front leg) and the back of the top part of the cannon bone (hind leg), attaching to the sesamoid bones. The lower portion of the ligament attaches the lower part of the sesamoid bones to the pastern bones. Its function is to support the fetlock. The lower ligaments that attaches the sesamoid bone to the pastern bones are the distal sesamoidean ligaments.

swayback

Horse with a prominent concave shape of the backbone, usually just behind the withers (saddle area). Scoliosis.

I**tack**

1) Rider's racing equipment. Also applied to stable gear. 2) As a verb, a jockey, including his/her equipment, as in "He tacks 112 pounds."

take (takeout)

Commission deducted from mutuel pools which is shared by the track, horsemen (in the form of purses) and local and state governing bodies in the form of tax.

tattoo

A permanent, indelible mark on the inside of the upper lip used to identify the horse.

teaser

A male horse used at breeding farms to determine whether a mare is ready to receive a stallion.

tendon

Cords of strong, white (collagen) elastic fibers that connect a muscle to a bone or other structure and transmit the forces generated by muscular contraction to the bones.

Thoroughbred

A Thoroughbred is a horse whose parentage traces back to any of the three "founding sires" the Darley Arabian, Byerly Turk and Godolphin Barb, and who has satisfied the rules and requirements of The Jockey Club and is registered in "The American Stud Book" or in a foreign stud book recognized by The Jockey Club and the International Stud Book Committee. Any other horse, no matter what its parentage, is not considered a Thoroughbred for racing and/or breeding purposes.

tongue tie

Strip of cloth-type material used to stabilize a horse's tongue to prevent it from "choking down" in a race or workout or to keep the tongue from sliding up over the bit, rendering the horse uncontrollable. Also known as a "tongue strap."

top line

1) A Thoroughbred's breeding on its sire's side. 2) The visual line presented by the horse's back.

totalizator

An automated parimutuel system that dispenses and records betting tickets, calculates and displays odds and payoffs and provides the mechanism for cashing winning tickets. Often shortened to "tote."

tote board

The (usually) electronic totalizator display in the infield which reflects up-to-the-minute odds. It may also show the amounts wagered in each mutuel pool as well as information such as jockey and equipment changes, etc. Also known as the "board."

track bias

A racing surface that favors a particular running style or position. For example, a track bias can favor either front-runners or closers or horses running on the inside or outside.

track condition

Condition of the racetrack surface. See fast; good; muddy; sloppy; frozen; hard; firm; soft; yielding; heavy.

trial

In Thoroughbred racing, a preparatory race created in tandem with a subsequent, more important stakes race to be run a few days or weeks hence The Derby Trial.

trip

An individual horse's race, with specific reference to the difficulty (or lack of difficulty) the horse had during competition, e.g., whether the horse was repeatedly blocked or had an unobstructed run.

Triple Crown

Used generically to denote a series of three important races, but is always capitalized when referring to historical races for three-year-olds. In the United States, the Kentucky Derby, Preakness Stakes and Belmont Stakes. In England the 2,000 Guineas, Epsom Derby and St. Leger Stakes. In Canada, the Queen's Plate, Prince of Wales Stakes and Breeders' Stakes.

twitch

A restraining device usually consisting of a stick with a loop of rope or chain at one end, which is placed around a horse's upper lip and twisted, releasing endorphins that relax a horse and curb its fractiousness while it is being handled.

tying up (acute rhabdomyolysis)

A form of muscle cramps that ranges in severity from mild stiffness to a life-threatening disease. A generalized condition of muscle fiber breakdown usually associated with exercise. The cause of the muscle fiber breakdown is uncertain. Signs include sweating, reluctance to move, stiffness and general distress. See "Muscular Injuries" subsection of "Musculoskeletal System" in [veterinary supplement](#) for a more detailed explanation.

U**ultrasound**

1) Diagnostic ultrasound: a technique that uses ultrasonic waves to image internal structures. 2) Therapeutic ultrasound: a therapy to create heat and stimulate healing.

under wraps

Horse under stout restraint in a race or workout to keep it from pulling away from the competition by too large a margin.

untried

1) Not raced or tested for speed. 2) A stallion that has not been bred.

V**valet**

A person employed by a racing association to clean and care for a jockey's tack and other riding equipment.

veterinarian

Commission The commission (or board) veterinarian, sometimes referred to as the state veterinarian, is usually appointed by the state racing commission. This person serves as professional adviser and consultant to the State Racing Commission on veterinary matters including all regulatory aspects of the application and practice of veterinary medicine at the track. *Association* Sometimes referred to as the track veterinarian, this person is employed by the racing association and serves as a professional adviser and consultant to the racing association and its operational staff at the track. *Practicing* Private practitioner employed by owners and trainers on an individual case or contract basis.

W

walkover

A race in which only one horse competes.

washed out

A horse that becomes so nervous that it sweats profusely. Also known as "washy" or "lathered (up)."

weanling

A foal that is less than one-year-old that has been separated from its dam.

weigh in (out)

The certification, by the clerk of scales, of a rider's weight before (after) a race. A jockey weighs in fully dressed with all equipment except for his/her helmet, whip and (in many jurisdictions) flak jacket.

weight-for-age

An allowance condition in which each entrant is assigned a weight according to its age. Females usually receive a sex allowance as well. (Compare with a handicap race.)

white

A horse color, extremely rare, in which all the hairs are white. The horse's eyes are brown, not pink, as would be the case for an albino.

wire

The finish line of a race.

withers

Area above the shoulder, where the neck meets the back.

work

To exercise a horse by galloping a pre-determined distance.

Y

yearling

A horse in its second calendar year of life, beginning Jan. 1 of the year following its birth.

yielding

Condition of a turf course with a great deal of moisture. Horses sink into it noticeably.