

# Packing for a Trip

Activity Level: Beginner

## Resource Information:

Most saddles can be used as a pack saddle, but some are more suitable than others. The traditional **McClellan** saddle has been used to pack and is very lightweight. This single-rigged saddle has plenty of rings and straps with which to tie things. The regular **stock** saddle has also been used in many situations to pack a variety of gear. A **breeching** and **breast collar** can easily be added to a stock saddle or the McClellan to make them more suitable for packing.

## Traditional Pack Saddles

Traditional pack saddles come in two basic styles: the **Crossback (Sawbuck)** and the **Decker**. Both types of saddles have 2 wooden bars which help distribute the weight of the pack load along each side of the animal's back. The Crossback can be distinguished by two wooden "X's" which connect the bars while the bars on the Decker are connected by two steel "D-rings."

The **Crossback (Sawbuck)** is the most commonly used pack saddle and there are numerous versions of this saddle. Some have an extra long crossback to hold the pack away from the pack animal; others are made of modern rawhide materials. To ensure maximum protection, sheepskin lining is often installed on the blades of the saddle. The crossback is usually rigged for a double cinch and is best suited for hanging **panniers** (the containers used to carry supplies).

The Decker is normally a center fire-rigged, single-cinch saddle with a half breed (a heavy canvas or poly-cover over the saddle with horizontal wooden bars at the bottom). The half breed provides extra padding and offers more comfort and protection for the pack animal. The Decker is best suited for sling loads where the load is mantied (placed in a manta which is a canvas cover). A sling hitch, such as a basket or barrel hitch, can be used to tie the load to the Decker saddle, as well as other saddles. The hitch is important and must secure a balanced load to the pack animal.



Crossback (Sawbuck)



Decker

## Horse Smarts

It is important to select a pack animal with moderately-high withers as high-withered animals tend to be harder to fit and are more prone to sores on their withers. Horses or mules with little or no withers are also undesirable because their conformation allows the saddle to turn and rub, creating painful sores.

The **breeching** is used to hold the saddle back when going downhill and is crucial to keeping the load centered on the animal's back. The breeching must be the tightest when going downhill to keep the pack from slipping forward. The **breast collar** is the other control for keeping the pack centered on the horse's back. It is fastened to the front of the pack saddle and goes under the horse's neck. It prevents the pack from slipping backward on the horse and needs to be tightest when traveling uphill. A **croupier** (a small device that goes around the base of the animal's tail and attaches to the saddle) can also be used to keep the saddle centered, but is better suited to stock saddles.

### The Pack Saddle Cinch

Cinches must be tight before putting on the pack whether using panniers or a mantied load. The cinch on any pack saddle is one of the most critical parts. The Decker saddle usually has a single cinch while the crossbuck has a double cinch. On a double-rigged cinch the front and back cinches are made into one, eliminating the problem of the back cinch sliding back and causing the animal discomfort or a possible wreck.

### Panniers

Panniers are made to fill with gear, food and equipment. They are hard or soft-sided and made of wood, rawhide, leather or canvas. Panniers are easy to use and offer easy access. When using panniers avoid packing noisy items together and pack softer items where the panniers contact the sides of the pack animal. An additional strap can be added to keep the panniers from bouncing. With both panniers and mantied loads it is important to make sure the load is balanced and secure.



**Manta and Panniers**



**Single Diamond Hitch**

## Hitches

To secure the entire load, a **lash cinch** with a half-inch lash rope of soft, twisted nylon 45 to 50 feet in length is used. The lash rope and cinch are used to tie a variety of hitches on the load. The basket or barrel hitch is used to secure hanging gear that is attached to the side of the saddle. Numerous other types of hitches can be used to secure the entire load to the pack animal. Some examples of types of hitches are the single diamond, double-diamond, half-diamond, squaw or Arizona. The **single diamond** is popular as it secures the load quickly and is easily removed.

The following leader guide includes answers and, if applicable, any preparation or considerations that are specific to each activity. Refer to the youth activity handouts for additional details.

## Leader Guide for Youth Activities

**Activity Level:** Beginner

**Expected Time Needed to Complete This Activity:** 2 hours

### Equipment/Resources:

- Writing utensils
- Copies of activities
- Cardboard
- Hole punch
- Yarn
- Paper
- Pencil
- Bales of hay

### Horse Skills:

1. Learn types of equipment used on a packing trip.
2. Develop creative writing skills.
3. Learn how to make a sample set of panniers.

### Life Skills:

1. Organize information for creative communication.

## Main Activity - Your Big Packing Adventure

Help youth develop their stories by helping them develop ideas and descriptions. Encourage them to write any story that comes to mind. Make this an enjoyable and fun experience. You might want to begin by letting youth write down random ideas on a sheet of paper. Once all of the ideas are written down, encourage the youth to begin to put their ideas in a logical order, and fill in with de-

tails of the story. Make sure they include packing terms and equipment in their stories. Encourage youth to read and share their stories with the other club members.

### **Stable Activity - Pannier Packin'**

Youth should make a set of panniers using cardboard and yarn. They can make them whatever size they desire. Use the photo in the handout as a guide. Make sure they have straps over the top to place over the bales of hay. Allow them to be creative in designing the panniers, but make sure that they are functional upon completion. Have youth research and use correct knots to secure the panniers. If you have the capability, plan an overnight pack trip to a nearby park. Let the youth do most of the planning. Use actual panniers or saddle bags (and not the ones created in this activity) for such a trip. If you have a horsemanship camp, you might be able to work in a pack trip during that time and use the facilities there to make the trip imaginative.

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### **References:**

1. American Youth Horse Council. Horse Industry Handbook: A Guide to Equine Care and Management. 2014.
2. Craig Wood, Ashley Griffin and Amy Parker. Youth Leaders Manual, 1998. American Youth Horse Council. Packing for a Trip.

### **Photo Credits:**

1. Crossbuck (Sawbuck) - Chris Tornow. Digital image retrieved from <http://www.horseandmulegear.com/catalog.php>
2. Decker - Chris Tornow. Digital image retrieved from <http://www.horseandmulegear.com/catalog.php>
3. Manta and Panniers - Distinctly Montana Magazine, Bozeman, MT. <http://tinyurl.com/z3944t4>. Digital Image
4. Single Diamond Hitch - Stan Walchuk, Jr. Digital image retrived from <http://tinyurl.com/zeudnfm>

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## Horse Smarts

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## Packing for a Trip

### Youth Activities: Beginner

### Main Activity - Your Big Packing Adventure

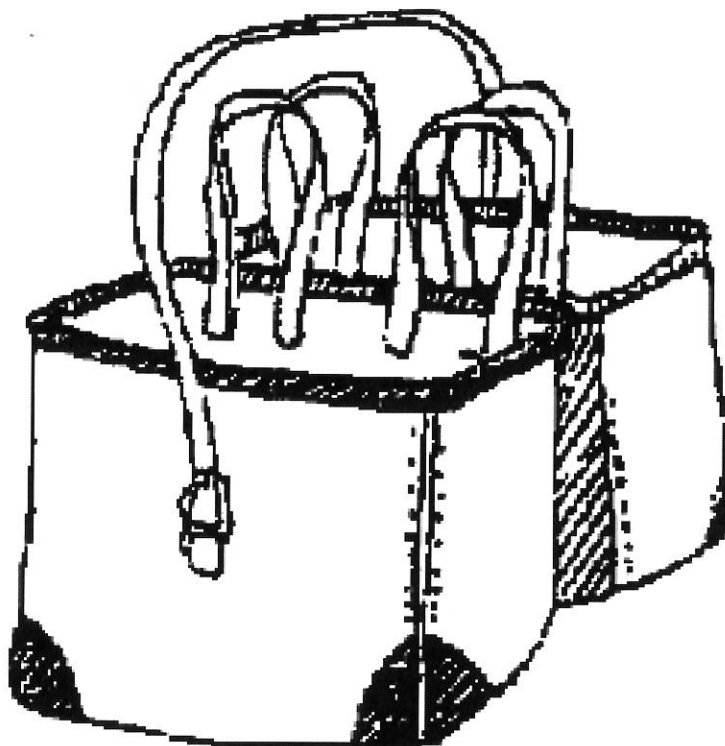
Write a story about a packing adventure that you and your horse have taken or make up an imaginary trip. Be sure to include the following five sections in your story:

- WHO?** Main character: Your name and horse's name, and describe each of you.  
Supporting characters: These can be people and animals. Use words to describe your characters.
- WHEN?** Describe the time period in which the story takes place. Use historical details to establish the time period.
- WHERE?** Describe the place or places where the story takes place. You may wish to name specific physical landmarks or geographic features.
- WHAT?** Include events that you would like to happen in the order they should occur. What kind of saddles would you use? What will you take with you?
- WHY?** Explain why you took the trip. Why did you use the equipment you did and why did the events in the trip occur as they did?

First take some quiet thinking time to imagine your story. Then write information in the sections listed above. Next look over each section carefully, filling in missing information, new ideas, etc. Ask for help if needed. Do you have enough adventure, suspense, mystery and excitement to keep a reader interested? Once the story is completed and you are satisfied with it, share your story with the club or horse leaders.

### Stable Activity - Pannier Packin'

Make a set of panniers using cardboard and yarn, using the diagram below. Plan and pack for a 3 day trip. Plan menus for both you and your horse for those three days.



Once you have planned and packed your panniers, use hay bales as a simulated horse. Properly secure your panniers to your horse. Proper knots should be used to secure the panniers.

