



STARTING A HORSE IN A MYLER BIT

It is very important to take time to transition your horse into any new bit. Any new equipment or training approach should be introduced in a safe environment, like a school, until you are confident that you are both ready to work outside.

The first thing to do is to check the fit and setup of the bit:

Width

See the Information Sheet: *Sizing and Measuring a Bit.*

Height in the Mouth

The height of the purchase (ie the part of the cheek above the mouthpiece) is different in every bit, so before you try a new bit on your horse, compare it with your old bit or attach it to the bridle and hold it up to the side of his face, so you can estimate the correct adjustment of the cheek pieces as closely as possible before you bridle your horse..

The bit should fit snugly into the corners of the lips, normally making one wrinkle, but do check how it lies inside the horse's mouth because all horses are not the same. If you pull down lightly on the bit cheeks, there should not be a gap of more than $\frac{1}{8}$ " between the mouthpiece and the corners of the lips. If the cheek pieces bow out when you pull on the reins, this is also a sign that the bit is too low.

Advice for Particular Cheeks etc

Full Cheek / Large Ring Snaffles and Pelhams

Check that the purchase doesn't rub against the side of the horse's face.

Full-cheeked snaffles should have a leather bit keeper attaching the top of the cheek to the cheekpiece. This holds the bit up in the horse's mouth to give a clearer reward signal when the rider relaxes the contact. Myler's Independent Side Movement (ISM) will not work properly without keepers.

Cheeks with Hooks (slots) (see the Information Sheet: *Hooks on Myler Snaffles.*)

The top hook should always be used. This holds the bit up in the horse's mouth to give a clear reward signal and enables Myler's Independent Side Movement.

To make the Independent Side Movement as effective as possible, the reins should be attached to the bottom hook.

Myler Combination Bits

Please see the specific Information Sheet: *Myler Combination Bits.*

Flashes, Martingales, etc.

The entire point of The Myler System is to make the horse comfortable and relaxed in his bit, so there is no need for any gadgets designed purely to force the horse to endure an uncomfortable bit by strapping his mouth shut, holding his head down, etc. Such equipment also infringes the horse's ability to communicate with you. Therefore, a plain, loosely fitted cavesson noseband is normally the most that should be required besides the headpiece, cheek pieces and reins, especially as you should be in a controlled environment while you accustom your horse to the new bit.

Transitioning

TAKE YOUR TIME. Sometimes a horse will let you know that you have the right or wrong bit in as little as a few minutes, but it often takes a few sessions in a new bit to know for sure. Plan up to 10 or 12 days before you can be certain that you have made the correct choice and make sure this is a quiet time for you and your horse, with no competitions or big outings.

GIVE YOUR HORSE TIME. Allow your horse to get used to the taste and the feel of the new bit, let him test this new equipment before you mount. Ensure the fitting is correct and then allow him to investigate the bit with his tongue. He may chew a bit more than normal while he gets used to the new feel.

It can be helpful to allow him to stand bridled but loose in the stable, supervised but not held, with the reins tucked behind the stirrup leathers, for 10 or 15 minutes so he can settle down and relax. If you are changing to a ported snaffle or Pelham (not a Myler Combination) with a horse who holds his tongue back up in his throat, it may help if you allow him to eat some hay, so he is reassured that he can actually keep his tongue down with the new bit.

Showing the Horse How the Bit will Work

The next step is to simulate the bit's action prior to mounting so the horse can anticipate how the bit will work. This exercise also allows you to anticipate his behaviour with the bit.

In the stable, or enclosed school, stand by his left shoulder and place the reins over his neck as if you were going to mount. Hold both reins just in front of the withers to mimic where the reins would be when mounted.



Next, gently apply even pressure to both reins, activating the bit and asking your horse to relax at the poll and the withers. When he gives to the pressure by “nodding” his head and neck and coming onto the vertical, release the pressure with your hand and praise him. Take your time. He may move his head; lean; and/or take a few steps backwards or forwards until he gets used to the idea, but you are aiming for him gently to lower his head onto the vertical, releasing the pressure for himself and learning where the “Comfort Zone” is. Repeat a few times to check he understands and to reinforce the understanding.

This is a great way to introduce new bits as well as to supple a horse prior to work every day. The Mylers highly recommend working with your horse on the ground as part of the transition to any new bit and as a daily suppling exercise.

Riding with your New Bit for the First Time

Ensure your horse is in a safe environment before you mount and then walk away on a loose rein for a few minutes. Very slowly, take up a light contact and walk round the school quietly while you both become accustomed to the feel of the new bit. When you feel the horse is ready to come into the bridle, just close your fingers on the reins, ask the horse to move forward with your seat and leg and when he gives to you, and comes into the bridle, immediately relax the rein pressure and maintain only a very light contact to ensure he recognises the reward.

Anticipate Some Resistance.

If your horse has been resistant in his old bit, there is a strong likelihood he will be resistant in his new bit. Simply put - he is going to try what he knows, and some evasions will have become learnt habit or muscle memory rather than direct reactions to his bit. If he was very resistant before, he will also have to develop muscle and fitness to carry himself in a sustained outline for a prolonged period.

Be Ready to Adjust Your Riding

The Myler Combination can affect very significant changes in your horse's way of going, so you must be ready to adjust your responses accordingly. You should be able to be much lighter in the hand and more subtle with your lateral aids.

The need to reward your horse by relaxing the pressure the instant he has done as he has been asked cannot be over-emphasised.

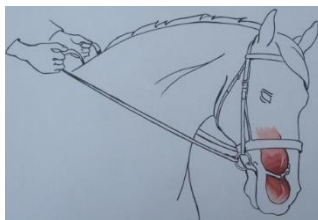
In Conclusion:

To get the best out of your Myler Bit (and your horse):

- Take it slowly and quietly.
- Listen to your horse, he is trying to tell you what he needs to be able to do what you want.
- No bit makes up for bad riding or impatience and a bit cannot train your horse. The training is your job, - just make sure you have the best equipment and knowledge to communicate with him effectively.
- Have fun, or there's no point!
- **Understand what the bit, - and your hands on the ends of the reins, - are doing in your horse's mouth. - Think about what is going on with that tongue.**



*Typical Angle of Pull, approx..
30-40° above mouth*



The Tongue is pulled back into the bottom jaw. Fixed cheek bits will also rotate downwards slightly due to the angle of pull



The Tongue fills the entire mouth cavity, there is no 'extra' space for the bit



X-Ray shows action of bit on tongue, pulling it away from palate and into bottom jaw