

Bits

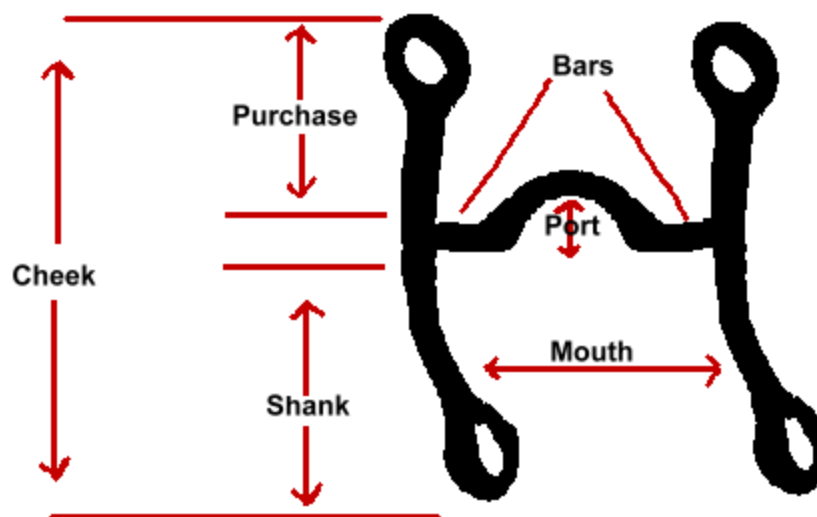
Direct & Indirect Pressure

The Basic Snaffle Bit



Snaffle bits are used in a wide variety of events both English and Western. They are simple, consisting of a mouthpiece and bit rings. Designs of the mouthpiece and rings vary widely. They use direct pressure on the corners of a horse's mouth. Most horses are started in snaffle bits because they are simple. Snaffle bit rings may be loose (allowing the mouthpiece to slide) or may be fixed. The simple O-ring snaffle has rings shaped like an O; A D-ring is like it sounds, with D-shaped rings. Full-cheek snaffles feature a spike above and below the ring, to prevent it from slipping through a horse's mouth; Eggbutt snaffle rings are between an O and a D shape.

The Basic Curb Bit

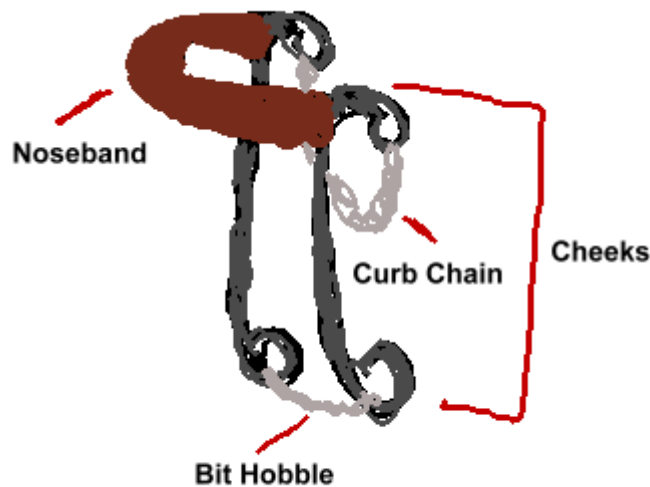


The mouth is the how wide the mouthpiece is. The cheek is the full length of the bit from the top to the bottom. The purchase is the part of the bit that is above the mouthpiece, while the shank is the part that extends below. The bars and between the port and the cheeks. The port is the rise in the middle

of the bit. A small port is also called 'tongue relief' because it takes pressure off of the tongue. A high port, on the other hand, can touch the roof of the mouth and must be used with care.

The design, shape, and size of curb bits vary widely. Some mouth pieces are solid, while others are broken (snaffle, chain mouth, 3-piece, etc.). Curb bits without swiveling cheeks are often used to neckrein horses, versus direct pressure that is used with snaffle bits. Curb bits with swiveling cheeks are like a combination of snaffle and curb, and can be used to direct or neck rein. Such a bit will probably need a bit hobble to keep the cheeks together. Curb bits give more leverage, meaning that less pressure is applied to the reins to give the same cue. This type of bit is used with a chin strap and applies pressure to the poll, chin, and mouth.

Hackamores



Hackamores are not really 'bits' as they do not use a mouthpiece, and instead work on the horse's nose, chin, and poll. Some horses prefer hackamores to bits (and some dislike them). The hackamore's nose piece may be a leather strap, leather-covered chain, or rope. There are many different types and styles of hackamores. The cheek length and style may vary. The bit hobble keeps the cheeks together, preventing them from bending too far outwards.