



Association of British Riding Schools

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SO YOU WANT TO WORK WITH HORSES

Most school leavers today join the equestrian workforce via college training, your local careers office should be able to advise about this. Some employers still prefer to employ their trainees direct and take responsibility for organising their training.

However you choose to enter the horse world there are several things you should take into account when selecting a yard to work in.

1. What opportunities are being offered for training and towards which examinations? Is anyone in the yard capable of giving the training needed? Unless you want to teach, it is not necessary for you to take a teaching examination.
2. For which type of work with the horse would you want to qualify? This could be:
 - Riding School
 - Livery Yard
 - Racing Yard
 - Stud Farm
 - Competition... Show jumping, dressage, eventing, showing ...
3. Hours - including hours of training (and remember you cannot clock on and off with horses) - should be agreed as an average. Be prepared to work extra hours when there is an emergency or a special event. Most employers will appreciate extra time put in willingly.
4. Living conditions (if living in). You cannot be expected to give your best if living conditions are bad, on the other hand some trainees/staff tend not to respect good surroundings and abuse furnishings e.g. carpets get spoilt by constant wear by muddy boots - it works both ways.

Be prepared to become professional. Show initiative, work to standards whereby senior staff do not feel the need to check your work all the time, they have less time to teach you new and interesting things if they are constantly clearing up or re-doing your work. Look as smart as possible (especially if you come into contact with customers and public) - boots kept as clean as possible, shirt and jodhpurs (not T-shirt and jeans), tidy hair, no jewellery.

Do not think that you do not need skills learnt at school if you want to work with horses - to perform more than menial tasks you need to speak well - good communication with customers, suppliers, vet, farrier etc. is essential. You will also need basic arithmetic to measure feeds etc. and legible writing for record keeping, writing messages and so on. Biology is essential to understanding how a horse works and therefore helping to prevent it becoming ill.

Physical fitness - you need to be fit and fairly strong to work with horses in and around a yard. Late nights coupled with a diet of fizzy drinks, crisps and chocolate will not sustain you for long in this profession.

This is an all-weather job. Horses' requirements change with the seasons and sometimes it is hard and challenging when the rain is bucketing down or the biting cold is attacking fingers, toes, ears and nose relentlessly but the horses' needs come first and it's your job, no matter how you feel, to see that the animals in your care are warm, comfortable, well fed and exercised. On the bonus side - if in the right yard - there are opportunities to travel with the horses.

There is great satisfaction seeing your special charges turned out well and watching them compete. Helping to break and school young horses and meeting interesting people, accumulating knowledge, building on expertise until people seek you out as an employee and you no longer have to go looking for a job. The pay and conditions can be good for a person who can do the job well.

If you have not been put off up to now, then Good Luck with your Career!