

Harness driving is a sport of pleasure, but safety is of the utmost importance.

The following paragraphs were written by John Greenall. Of West Windsor Vermont.

There are certain "rules" in driving that cover any circumstance. The way you hold your reins is optional but you may be asked to hold the reins in one hand. That does not mean that you cannot assist with the other hand. There are many "styles", pick the one most comfortable for you. Sit on the right side of the seat.(age old English etiquette) Have a whip in hand (The whip is an aid and the horse should be trained to it) Carry a spares kit. (walking home is no fun!) Display a slow moving vehicle sign any time your drive on a public road. Wear a hat (to keep the sun out of your eyes). Use an apron.(optional unless showing, to keep you clean and warm) Wear gloves.(to save your hands) The driver, (or whip) is always the first in and last out of a carriage. **Never take the bridle off your horse** unless it has been unhitched from the vehicle and never leave you horse unattended while hitched.

Harness Always use a black harness with a painted vehicle and a russet or brown harness, with a vehicle that is entirely finished in natural wood, and iron painted brown. If you have a natural wood vehicle and only own a black harness then paint all the iron on the vehicle black and change all the leather (dash, fenders, shaft leathers) to black. This will make it a correct turn out. If the vehicle is light, such as a run-about, sleigh, or cart, only a breast plate is needed to pull the vehicle, but if you plan to drive a heavy surrey or a large phaeton, then a collar is in order. Collars are considered more formal and may not be appropriate for every vehicle. The metal fitting on your turn out should all be the same colour i.e. all silver or all chrome or all brass. And if you use lamps then they should match the metal colour of the harness. And if your vehicle requires formal livery then the buttons on the coat should match as well. The saddle of the harness varies in width from 3 inches for a 4 wheeled vehicle to a wide pad for a 2 wheeled vehicle (it is wide because in a two wheeled vehicle all the weight rests on the animals back and the pad will then distribute the weight and make it more comfortable for the horse). There are wide pads that can be placed under a narrow saddle in order to make the harness suitable for a two wheeled carriage. A gig pad is very wide and has tugs that slide through the saddle in order to balance the weight of a gig. Breeching is required when the vehicle is not equipped with brakes. Some formal turn-outs can use a strap called a false" breeching. After hearing about some very serious accidents, I discourage the use of clips or snaps to attach the breeching to the cart. Take the time to use the straps.



Collars Collars come in two types. The "K", or closed collar, is used on formal harnesses and is often covered with patent leather. Open collars often in work harness. Collars are measured from the inside, bottom to average horse's neck will take about a 21 inch collar. Fit of the collar is important in order to not hinder the horse in his paces. There are small blocks that can be used to make a collar too big fit better, but there is no way to make small work.



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Whips The whip is carried in your hand for safety to use as an aid. Whips vary in length. If you are driving a single, then the thong should be about half the length of the stick. If driving a pair then the thong should be the length of the stick. And if driving a tandem or four then the thong should be 6 to 10 feet long. A rule of thumb for size is to be able to reach the



shoulder of the horse with the lash to give an aid. There are many kinds of materials used to make whips, the whip made of holly wood being the most traditional.

Lamps I have not found any good books as yet on which lamp goes with which vehicle, but a good rule of thumb to follow is a square glass lamp goes with a formal vehicle, such as a Victoria or Brougham, and a round or oval shaped lamp on a sporting vehicle, such as a trap or Meadowbrook. American lamps hang on metal hooks attached to the carriage, and English lamps hang in a circular holder.



Clothing Driving attire is often worrisome to new drivers. What is sporting? Formal? Proper for spring, summer or fall? Tom Ryder offered the best advice I have ever heard, wear what the weather dictates. So, if it is hot, wear a nice light shirt or blouse. If it is raining, wear a raincoat. If it is cold, a jacket is in order. Most of all, be comfortable. Take the time to rehearse your outfit with a friend who can take your picture in your carriage. If you are still unsure, send the picture to someone who has show experience. You want to look the part, ie, sporting means that you look like you are heading for a picnic in the country and formal means that you are stepping out on the town.



Equine Canada rules for attire: Gentlemen must wear a coat or jacket while appearing in any class unless excused from doing so by the judge. Ladies must wear a jacket, conservative dress, tailored suit, or slacks. Floppy hats are discouraged. "Shorts" are NOT permitted.

Unless otherwise specified, the driver shall wear a hat, an apron, or knee rug and gloves. There are no penalties for wearing properly fitted, approved protective headgear in any class or competition.

Long sleeves and brown leather gloves are suggested for all drivers and passengers in a pleasure Driving class and in Combined Driving competitions A and C.

Grooms The rules state that you must have an extra person for a pair and two for a four-in-hand. In combined driving, advanced single drivers must also must carry a groom.



Sporting

If you want to look really smart, then your extra person should be dressed in some sort of livery. It can be as simple as a cap, jacket, tie, buff color pants and leather shoes, brown gloves.

If your vehicle is more formal then formal dress livery is in order. This consists of a black top hat white stock fitted body coat (with buttons of the same metal color as the harness), white jods and high black boots with tan leather around the top (similar to what you see in the hunt field) and brown gloves. Grooms do not wear aprons.



Formal

A less formal turn-out can carry a person dressed as a passenger to fulfill this requirement. That person should dress in a complimentary manner as the driver (but please, not the same!) and wear a matching apron. The person should dismount and head the horses, just as a groom would, when asked to stand in a line up. A note on grooms. Be sure the person you choose is knowledgeable about your horse and vehicle. Please, do not ask children to perform this task as the groom can often be instrumental in preventing a mishap should a situation arise.

To complete the picture of a beautiful turn-out, it is assumed that your horse and your vehicle will

have a balanced look. You would not have a small horse pull a large carriage, not a very large horse pull a small vehicle



If I could be of any help in choosing a carriage or locating a harness, please feel free to contact me. Best of luck

John driving a four of Friesians to a Park Drag at the Devon Horse Show

For more information and accuracy on Canadian rules refer to the Equine Canada rule book available at http://www.equinecanada.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&id=768&Itemid=466