

## Montana State Horse Project Bit Rule Examples



The following pages are guidelines of the rules stated in the **Montana State Horse Show rule book**. The pictures show examples of bits that are acceptable (✓), are not allowed (⊘), or may or may not be acceptable (?) depending on a measurement that cannot be judged by the picture. Understand that this supplement gives only some *examples* of legal and unacceptable bits. **In no way does it try to include every bit that is allowed or not allowed.** If there are any discrepancies between this and the printed rulebook text, the printed rulebook will have precedence.

# Western Division

## 32. BITS - WESTERN AND SPEED EVENTS

- A. References to hackamore mean the use of a non-mechanical, flexible, braided rawhide or leather, or rope bosal, the core of which may be either rawhide or flexible cable. Absolutely no rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered.



Rawhide bosal



Easy/Fast stop  
*Rigid material under jaw*



Fast stop  
*Not flexible material over nose*



Mechanical Hack.



*Would have to measure  $\geq 5/16$ "*



*Connecting bar should meet measurements described*



*Not smooth*



*Not smooth*



*Not smooth*



*Connecting bar would have to meet measurements described.*



*Wire wrapped; not smooth*

- B. Reference to snaffle bits in western performance classes mean the conventional O-ring, egg-butt or D-ring with ring no larger than 4". The mouthpiece should be round, oval, or egg-shaped, smooth and unwrapped metal. It may be inlaid, but must be smooth. The bars must be a minimum of 5/16" in diameter, measured one inch in from the cheek with a gradual decrease to center of the snaffle. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece, loose connecting ring of 3/4" or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8" to 3/4" (measured top to bottom, with a maximum length of 2"), which lies flat in the horse's mouth is acceptable.



O-ring



Egg-butt

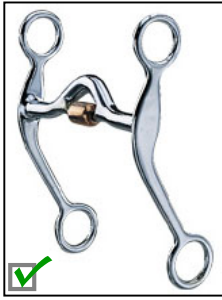


Offset D-ring

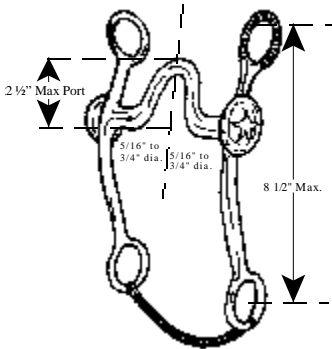


*Mouthpiece not smooth*

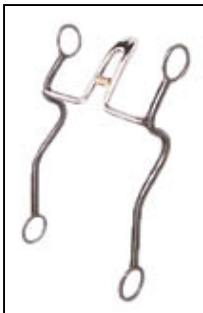
Offset D-ring,  
with slow twist



C. References to a bit in western performance classes mean the use of a curb bit that has a solid or broken mouthpiece, has shanks and acts with leverage. All curb bits must be free of mechanical device and should be considered a standard western bit. A description of a legal, standard western bit includes:



Legal Bit



? Port would have to measure  $\leq 2 \frac{1}{2}$ " high and shanks  $\leq 8 \frac{1}{2}$ " long

- 1) 8 1/2" maximum length shank to be measured as indicated in the diagram illustrating legal bit. Shanks may be fixed or loose.
- 2) Curb bit mouthpieces must be round, smooth, and unwrapped metal of 5/16" to 3/4" in diameter, measured one inch from the cheek. They may be inlaid, but must be smooth. Nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar), such as extensions or prongs on solid mouthpieces. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece, loose connecting ring of 3/4" or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8 to 3/4" (measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2"), which lies flat in the horse's mouth is acceptable.
- 3) The port on a bit must not be higher than 2 1/2" maximum, with rollers and covers acceptable. Broken mouthpieces, halfbreeds and spades are standard.
- 4) Slip or gag bits, and donut and flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable.



✓ Half-breed



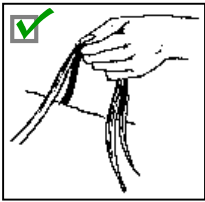
Gag action AND not smooth



Donut mouthpiece



Flat polo mouthpiece



Split reins - correct

D. Except for hackamore/snaffle bit classes, speed event classes, or junior horses shown with hackamore/snaffle bit, only one hand may be used on the reins, and hand must not be changed. The hand is to be around the reins; index finger only between split reins is permitted.

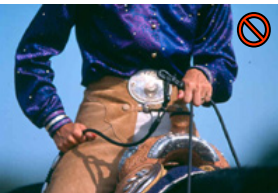


Split reins - correct



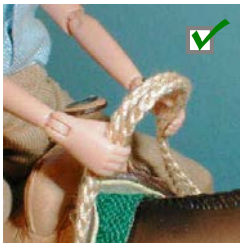
romal reins - correct

E. References to a romal means an extension of braided material attached to closed reins. This extension may be carried in the free hand with a 16 inch spacing between the reining hand and the free hand holding the romal. The rider's hand shall be around the reins with the fingers closed, thumb on top, and no fingers between the reins.



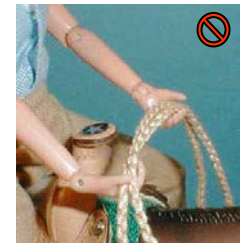
romal reins - wrong

F. The romal shall not be used forward of the cinch or to signal or cue the horse in any way. Any infraction of this rule shall be penalized severely by the judge.



Snaffle reins - correct

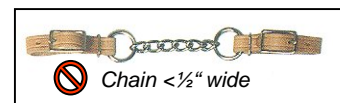
G. Junior horses (4 years old and under) competing in junior western pleasure, western horsemanship, reining, western riding, and trail that are shown with a hackamore or snaffle bit will be ridden with two hands on the reins.



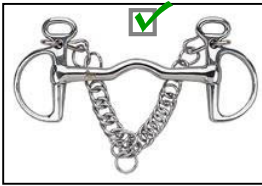
Snaffle reins - wrong

H. Horses four-years old and younger may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit. Horses five-years old and older may only be shown in a curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit. In the speed events only, horses of any age may be shown with a snaffle bit.

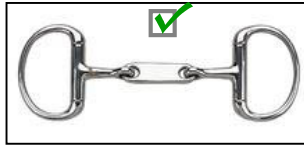
I. Chain curb straps are permissible, but must meet the approval of the judge, be at least 1/2" inch in width, and lie flat against the jaw of the horse. Absolutely no rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered.



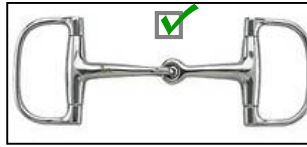
# English Division



Kimberwick, low port  
Smooth, 1-piece mouthpiece



Dr. Bristol  
Smooth, 3-piece mouthpiece



Egg-butt D-ring  
Smooth, 2-piece mouthpiece



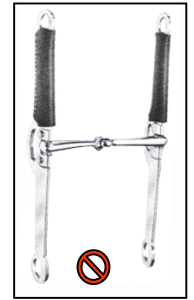
? As long as mouthpiece measures  $\geq \frac{3}{8}$ "  
✓ Either rein attachment location is acceptable.

## 33. BITS - HUNTER CLASSES

Bits used in hunter classes must be at least 3/8" or larger in diameter. The mouthpiece may consist of one, two, or three pieces and must be smooth. Waterford bits are permitted. Smooth full cheek snaffles are permitted. Any port may not be taller than 1 1/2". Slow or fast twist, corkscrew, twisted wire, double twisted wire, and triangle (knife edge) bits are not allowed. If a bit is used that requires two reins, it may be used with a converter. True gag action and elevator bits are not allowed.



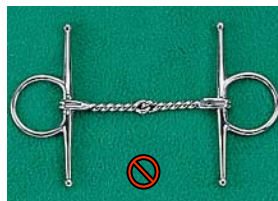
Gag bit  
True gag action



Elevator Bit



Pelham w/ converter  
acceptable



Full cheek w/ fast twist  
Mouthpiece not smooth



Full cheek w/ slow twist  
Mouthpiece not smooth



European Elevator Bit



O-ring snaffle  
Mouthpiece would have to measure  $\geq \frac{3}{8}$ "



O-ring w/ twisted wire  
Mouthpiece not smooth

## 34. BITS - BRIDOONS (Saddle Seat and Hunter)

Design of the bridoon mouthpiece must conform with that of acceptable snaffles described in #32B and #33. However, smaller dimensions of the mouthpiece are permissible.



Bridoon w/ 3 piece mouth



Bridoon w/ twisted mouth  
Mouthpiece not smooth



Bridoon w/ jointed mouth

## Speed Events Division



Wonder Bit



Gag action  
*Mouthpiece is also not smooth*



Mechanical Hack.

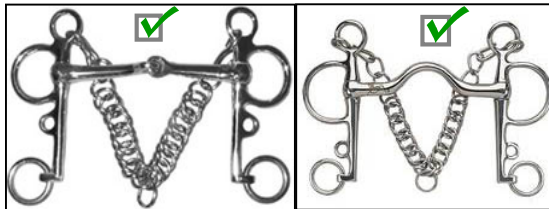


Stop & Turn  
*Rigid material under jaw*

**TACK:** Western-type saddles will be used. A mechanical hackamore or other type bridles may not be used. Use of two hands on the reins is allowed in speed events. Judge or appointed equipment official may prohibit the use of bits or equipment deemed too severe. Use of martingales, tie-downs and nosebands is permitted in these classes. Draw reins are not allowed in speed events. Horses of any age may be ridden in a snaffle.

**BITS:** Will follow the same rules as the Western Division.

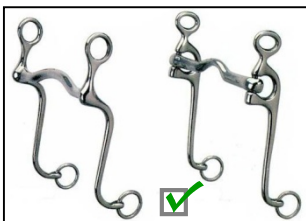
## Saddle Seat Division



Pelhams



✓ Weymouth bit with bridoon



Walking Horse Bits  
*OK if shanks measure  $\leq 8$ "*

**TACK:** Flat English type saddles are required for trotting horses; hunter, forward seat, and dressage type saddles are prohibited. Dressage or breed specific saddles are required for non-trotting horses. Horses must be shown in full bridles (curb and snaffle) or pelham with two reins, standard walking horse bit, or bit appropriate for breed. No figure 8, flash, or drop nose bands are allowed in Saddle Seat classes. Snaffle bridles will only be allowed in Saddle Seat Pleasure, Showmanship, and Conformation classes. Bits with shanks over 8" in length not permitted. Draw reins, martingales, hackamore, and similar equipment are all prohibited. (Pasos may show in hackamores as approved by PFHA for Pleasure classes.) Set tails, boots and/or artificial appliances including chains and rollers (pertaining to legs) are prohibited.