



## Tack Explained: Western Saddle

Now, the equestrian world made our job even more complicated by making not one type of saddle but two! Today, we'll be looking at the Western saddle, the saddle used predominantly in the USA, and the classic cowboy saddle. Western saddles are created for comfort, as they were used by cowboys for long rides out to herd cattle. Now, they make perfect trekking saddles. Let's have a look at how they work:

The Western saddle has a tree, just like an English saddle, but it looks slightly different because it has to account for the horn, which is the part cowboys use to sling their lassos over. So, Western saddle trees look like this. On top of this, there is a small amount of padding (which is usually left out on model scale ones) which is then covered in leather. The horn and pommel is covered in leather as well. On the sides of the seat are the seat jockeys, which are shaped pieces of leather which sit on the sides of the saddle, covering the join of the tree to the skirt. The skirt is a square-ish piece of leather on which the whole saddle is built onto. Ontop of this, there is the back jockey, which sits underneath the seat jockeys, but ontop of the skirt. It is a similar shape to the skirt, but smaller. This again



covers joins. Then, there are the fenders, which like the stirrup leathers on an English saddle. These have that special shape that you should recognise. The fenders are actually one long piece on model saddles, which sit underneath the saddle tree. These are not adjustable. On the end of the fenders are the stirrups, which are just like English stirrup irons, except clad in leather. Now for the complicated part, the cinches.



Cinches are just like English girths, except seem much more complex because there are two of them! Western saddles have both a front AND a back cinch, for reasons that I don't know! The front cinch could be weaved (braided string) or leather, and is generally thicker than the back cinch. The back cinch is thin and made of leather. These cinches are attached to the saddle by billets. Now, these billets are essentially strips of hole-punched leather that are looped through holes or rings in the skirt to keep them attached to the saddle. The cinches have buckles at each end which are buckled onto the billets. This billet and cinch system is very difficult to replicate in model horse scale. It takes a LOT of patience!

The final thing I have to say about Western saddles is their tooling. Have you ever seen a Western saddle that has fine swirly rose patterns embossed into the leather? This is called tooling, and believe it or not can be replicated in model horse scale. By using a leather tool, nail art tool, or even just a run out ball point pen and some baking paper, you can tool your own designs onto the leather! Tooling is usually applied on the fenders, seat jockey, skirt and back jockey, and can be customized however you like! I have not tried this yet, but plan to! Have a look at the intricate tooling on this saddle by Jennifer Buxton from Braymere Custom Saddlery:

Some western saddles also have plating, which are metal plates on the edges of the skirt, jockeys and even sometimes the horn. These are solely for decorating.





Absolutely beautiful tooling on this one, even on cinch// Smooth and clean cut saddle, nice horn coverage



Nice cinches on this one, also a breastcollar



Beautiful details, but if you look past them, nice structure





My own saddle. Pretty simple, but it's got a nice structure



Well fitted western saddle//



Kind of blurry, but nice tooling and good structure

PICTURES:

1. Braymere Custom Saddlery
2. Braymere Custom Saddlery
3. Donna Allen
4. Rachel Fail
5. Alice Jordan
6. eXtensions Horses
7. <https://wiki.ezvid.com/best-horse-saddles>

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