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Top 10 Reasons Every Rider Should Vault

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People have been performing acrobatic and dance-like movements on the backs of moving horses for more than 2,000 years. Long before we had saddles and stirrups, early humans had to “vault on” to their horses. Vaulting as a form of equestrian sport was included in the 1920 Olympic Games as “Artistic Riding”. Modern vaulting was developed in post-war Germany to



introduce children to equestrian sports. In 1983, vaulting became one of only seven equestrian disciplines recognized by the FEI, and the first World Vaulting Championships were held in Switzerland in 1986.

American vaulting can be traced to 1956, when Elizabeth Searle first saw the sport during a visit to



Europe. Seeing a potential application for her Pony Club in California’s Santa Cruz County, she obtained a 16mm film of the basic exercises, and took it back to America. In 1966, the American Vaulting Association was founded. Today the AVA has more than 1,000 members in 100 AVA clubs and affiliates. Vaulting also remains one of the many disciplines within the United State Pony Club.

But why should your average rider consider learning how to vault? Many people see the acrobatic skills demonstrated by upper level vaulters and think—no way am I ever going to do that! However, basic vaulting is

focused on training the vaulter to be light and to move in harmony with their horse without the use of acrobatics. These introductory vaulting skills can benefit any rider at any time.

So here are my top ten reasons why every rider should vault regardless of their primary riding discipline:

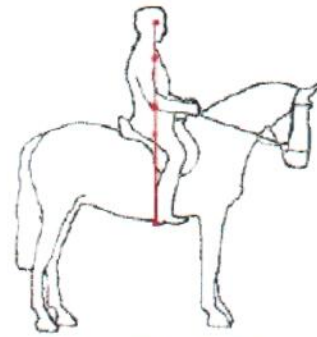
1. It is the SAFEST equestrian sport:

Yes, it is true. Our accident incident rate is lower than the sport of golf. Beginning vaulting moves are usually in contact with the vaulting surcingle, so if an unanticipated dismount is required, the rider usually ends up head up and feet down. The progression of skills learned also promotes safety—for instance, you have to be in an advanced canter class in competition before you are allowed to jump on the horse as pictured—so riskier skills are not attempted too soon for the safety of both the vaulter and the





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Riding Seat and Vaulting Basic Seat—It is the same



Hansen Dam Riding Center Pony Club

Instruction Highlights

horse. The progression for teaching jumps, for instance is something like this: first you would learn to stand at the canter, then move around in the stand, then skim on the horse while standing (roll from flat foot to balls of feet with every stride), then hops, then jumps—learning vaulting skills is all about deliberate progressions.

2. **Vaulting is an easy way to learn how to ride:** Used for centuries by cavalry and riding instructors worldwide, vaulting is the time-tested, safe way to introduce new riders to the art and joy of riding. Vaulting horses are handled by the lunger/instructor, allowing the rider to fully focus on their own skills.
3. **Vaulting promotes balance:** Vaulting creates the ability to be comfortably off-center and easily recover back to the center of the horse.

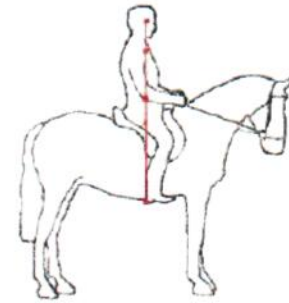


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4. **Vaulting is economical:** Many vaulters can share one vaulting horse, unlike most traditional riding disciplines. This is one reason why many European riding schools have vaulting programs for their beginning students—it is an easy entry into the world of equestrian sport. The tack required is minimal—primarily a vaulting surcingle, vaulting pad (western pads will do in a pinch), and standard lunging equipment—and this can also be shared amongst many vaulters.
5. **Vaulting is versatile:** Any breed or size of horse can be used as long as it has a calm temperament, has balanced and steady gaits, can be lunged, and is of appropriate size for the vaulter.
6. **Vaulting improves a rider's seat:** Vaulting teaches the rider to support their own weight and not merely sit on the horse. Vaulting is also the surest way to enhance an experienced riders' expertise by improving their suppleness, teaching a rider how to move with their horse in balance and harmony.
7. **Vaulting can be a lifelong sport:** There is no minimum or maximum age for competitive vaulting. It is a sport that promotes both flexibility and strength, think of it like pilates on horseback!
8. **Vaulting is fun, which makes learning riding skills easier:** It trains the rider to be the athlete, emphasizing and developing correct posture and carriage.
9. **Vaulting rapidly increases confidence:** With the use of the handles on the surcingle, it is easy to teach riders simple vaulting moves. Mastery quickly builds the rider's confidence and comfort with the horse.



Riding Seat and Vaulting Basic Seat—It is the same





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10. Vaulting promotes safe riding:

The vaulting drills have specific and direct benefit for rider safety. They teach correct and safe emergency dismounts. Vaulting drills develop security in all positions on a horse, without the use of stirrups, allowing the rider to learn in a safe environment what to do if they become unbalanced in a saddle.

Want to learn more? Contact the American Vaulting Association at www.americanvaulting.org or the United States Pony Club at www.ponyclub.org.

Vault on! ■

Meet the Chief, *continued from page 27*


What's your job in real life?

I'm retired now, but my professional background is diagnostic imaging in healthcare which progressed into department director for both invasive and noninvasive diagnostic services. I hold a dual certification in radiology and nuclear medicine. 35+ years of living by state radiation control branch and federal nuclear regulatory commission guidelines, OSHA, JCAHO and HIPAA in a hospital and then in a private practice setting makes it "natural" for me to be able to follow the rules and guidelines in the USPC rulebooks. And having

had to make sure specialized services were staffed 24/7/365 for years, I have learned how to reallocate staff and improvise when needed.

Finish this sentence: Pony Club members would be surprised to know...


I am a Civil War reenactor. My family and I are all members of the 6th Ohio Volunteer Cavalry so Bennie and Lindy get to ride while I get to cook 3 meals a day using cast iron over a wood burning fire wearing a long skirt. The things you do for family... inhale smoke and risk catching your skirts on fire. ■



**USPC Annual Meeting
and Equine Symposium**

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