

ADVICE ON  
Specifications and standards of  
Mounting Blocks

The  
British  
Horse  
Society



**A rider usually has best control of a horse while mounted by using the rider's seat, legs and reins. Mounting and dismounting can therefore be hazardous because the first two means of control are removed and the last is compromised. The risk in mounting or dismounting may be further raised by the rider's age, agility, relative size to the horse or disability. The risk can also be raised by the horse's temperament and whether it has just been distressed or by the sensitivity of its back. Reduced control while mounting may also increase risk to other people in the vicinity.**

Riders lower the risk of mounting by using a mounting block to raise themselves in relation to the horse. This reduces the effort required to reach the horse's back and the time taken, so restoring control quickly. It also reduces the strain on the horse. Some riders are not able to mount without being raised even if they are able to ride for miles. They may also be unable to walk far.

Use of a mounting block is automatic for many riders at the start of a ride and the lack of a mounting block when forced to dismount out on a ride may mean they cannot remount. This may prevent some riders from using that route. Where a situation has been created that forces a rider to dismount it is therefore desirable to provide a mounting block to increase the safety of both horse and rider and any other users directly or indirectly. Such circumstances may include a bridge which is narrower or has lower parapets than ideal, or a low underpass.

Mounting blocks will also be welcomed at car parks where horsebox parking is permitted and at a picnic place, shop, café or toilets where riders may dismount to use the facilities.

## Position of Mounting Blocks

The siting of a mounting block needs to consider the space available and the proximity of the situation which has caused the rider to dismount.

Riders will most commonly mount from the left side of the horse so a mounting block should be sited:

1. To the near side of the natural line of travel after the obstruction where horse and rider can easily access the mounting block
2. With firm level ground for the horse next to the mounting block away from gratings and overhanging vegetation and with adequate manoeuvring space to come alongside the mounting block

If a mounting block is situated after crossing a bridge over a busy road or

railway, it should be sited at a distance that the horse is not disturbed by the hazard. This is likely to vary depending on the site and environment and may be best assessed with the help of the local BHS Access Officer. It is likely to be at least five metres. For a less disturbing hazard such as a watercourse bridge or underpass without heavy traffic, the mounting block may be sited 2-3 metres after the obstruction where it does not interfere with the manoeuvring space required for either the obstruction or the mounting block.

A horse's saddle will be about halfway along its length (up to 3m long from nose to tail) so equal distance before and after the point at which the rider will stand to mount is needed.

Dimensions are given in mm.

## Large Mounting Blocks

### Specification

- Step height 240mm to 260mm
- Total height up to 780mm
- Width minimum 600mm
- Step length minimum 450mm
- Top platform length minimum 750mm
- It is recommended that steps are provided at both ends of the central platform so that if a horse walks forward, the rider can go down the steps rather than have to jump off a high platform.
- Clear manoeuvring space 3.7m high and at least 1.8m wide to the right side of the mounting block extending at least 3m before and beyond the mounting block.
- The material forming the mounting block should be such that striking it with horses' hooves or rider's footwear should not make a sudden ring or noise likely to startle a horse.
- The material forming the steps and platform should be of a non-slip nature.

Figure 1 – Side view of a mounting block (dimensions in mm)

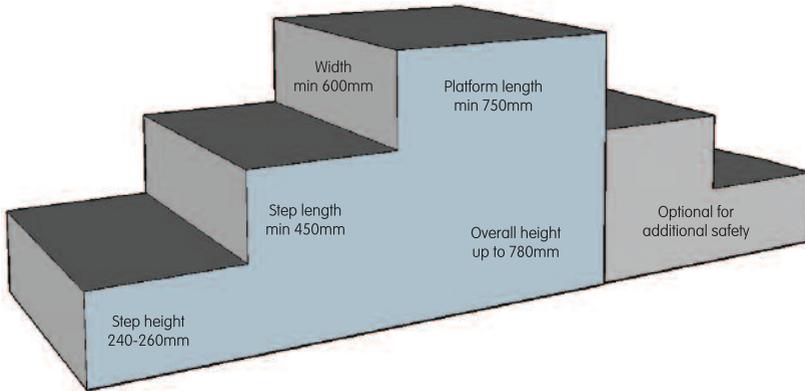
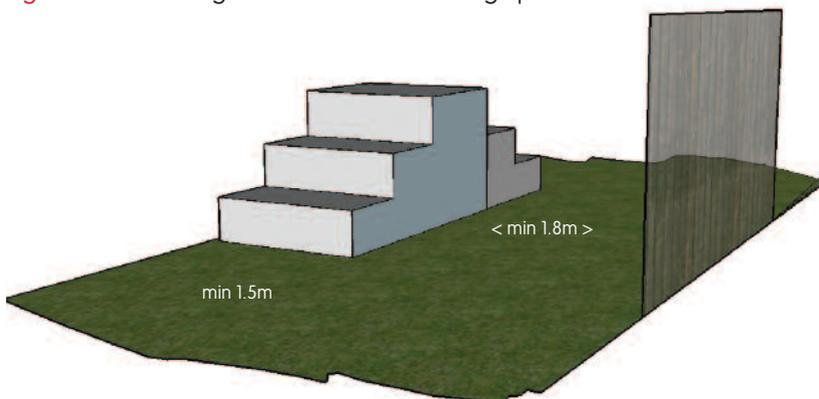


Figure 1 illustrates a mounting block with steps at both ends of the top platform. It is designed to have the horse on the off side of the mounting block, between the mounting block and the viewer. Riders would walk up the steps with a horse to their right and mount from the horse's left side. If the horse should walk forward before the rider has mounted, the rider is able to descend using the additional steps rather than jumping off the top platform. If space does not permit, then the additional steps can be omitted.

The manoeuvring space also needs to be on the off side of the mounting block as shown below.

Figure 2 – Mounting block with manoeuvring space



The manoeuvring space is shown for illustrative purposes between the mounting block and a fence as 1.8m is the minimum space required between the mounting block and another structure. A fence is not a requirement.

The total length of the manoeuvring space is 3m more than the length of the mounting block, 1.5m at each end to allow space for the horse to approach so as to be parallel to the mounting block, and to leave the space by moving forwards.

## Small Mounting Blocks

The specification above is the ideal. There are many situations where such a construction is not reasonable or practicable, perhaps due to constraints of space or distance to transport materials. Equality Act principles apply in terms of what is reasonable in the situation. Where the structure that forces a rider to dismount is in a populated area, well-used by riders of all abilities, including those who may have restricted mobility, the specification will be higher than in a more remote location where use is lower and a rider is more likely to have reasonable mobility to have reached it (remembering that once mounted, people with impaired agility may be able to ride highly demanding terrain for long distances but mounting or dismounting may be difficult). The level of specification should always be considered in terms of the context and local environment and where necessary the advice of the BHS should be sought for a specific site.

Many common items are feasible as mounting blocks including flattened logs, tree stumps, building blocks, a reinforced bank, stone step stile – endless possibilities depending on the site.

- The primary requirement for safety is for the block to be secure and relatively level.
- It requires space to manoeuvre and for the horse to stand with its left side to the block.
- The top should be large enough for both of the rider's feet parallel to and alongside the horse.
- Level ground is needed next to the block for the horse to stand on close to the rider so, for example, a tree stump may seem ideal but the slope of the base of the stump and tree roots may place the horse some feet from the rider, which is not much help.
- For a single block of whatever material, the maximum height is about

500mm for most people to be able to step onto it easily. Toeholds are often easily made and can help immensely.

A simple design, which can be transported and built anywhere if there is nothing on site uses, a 700mm length of 350-450mm plastic drainpipe (commonly twin wall corrugated type) which is stood on end and embedded by 200mm, filled with any material on site (stone or earth), compacted and topped with 30mm concrete to form a slightly convex cap. A hole half way up to create a toe hold may be welcome. The convex top is to prevent rainwater sitting. The plastic will eventually degrade in light so is best situated out of direct sunlight for a longer life. More concrete can be included round the edge of the fill so that degradation of the plastic does not affect the integrity of the structure.

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