

The Insider's Racetrack

You may not be an expert handicapper, but learning racetrack terminology can have you talking and betting like a seasoned veteran in no time.



BLINKERS Device to limit a horse's vision to prevent him from swerving from objects or other horses on either side of him.

ACROSS THE BOARD A bet on a horse to win, place and show. If the horse wins, the player collects three ways; if second, two ways; and if third, one way, losing the win and place bets.

ALSO-ELIGIBLE A horse officially entered, but not permitted to start unless the field is reduced by scratches below a specified number.

ALSO-RAN A horse who finishes out of the money.

APPRENTICE A novice jockey who has not yet ridden for a full year past his or her 35th birthday, or some other time frame specified by a given state's racing rules. While jockeys serve their apprenticeship, they are accorded a 5-10 pound weight allowance, or reduction from their respective weight assignments in all races except stakes. The slang term for an apprentice allowance or rider is "bug boy." The term comes from the asterisk that usually accompanies an apprentice rider's name in the entries.

BACKSTRETCH The straight area of the track between the turns. Also, the stable area.

BANDAGE Strips of cloth wound around the lower part of a horse's legs for support or protection against injury.

BAR SHOE A horse shoe with a rear bar to protect an injured foot; bar shoes may be worn with aluminum pads to protect a bruised frog, or may be worn alone.

BLANKET FINISH Horses finishing so closely together they could be covered by a blanket.

BOX If you have two or more horses that you think will finish in the top spots, but you are not sure of the order, you can box them. Example: an Exacta Box on horses #3 and #6. You win if #3 wins and #6 places OR #6 wins and #3 places. The same method can be applied to boxing a trifecta or a superfecta.

BUG A weight allowance for an apprentice rider.

CALLER One who calls the running positions of horses in a race.

CHUTE Extension of backstretch or homestretch to permit a straightaway run from start.

CLAIMING RACE Race in which horses are entered subject to being purchased for a specified price.

CLOCKER One who times workouts and races.

CLOSER A horse who runs best in the latter part of the race, coming from off the pace.

CLUBHOUSE TURN Generally, the turn closest to the clubhouse.

COLORS Racing silks (jacket and cap) worn by riders to denote the owner(s) of horse.

COLT Male horse under 5 years of age.

COUPLED Two or more horses running as an entry in a single betting unit.

DAILY DOUBLE Type of wager calling for the selection of winners of two consecutive races, usually the first and second.

DISQUALIFICATION Change in order of finish by officials for an infraction of the rules.

ENTRY Two or more horses owned by the same stable or (in some cases) trained by the same trainer and thus running as a single betting unit.

EQUIPMENT Whip, blinkers, etc. Gear carried by a horse and/or rider in a race.

EQUIVALENT ODDS Mutuel price horses pay for each \$1 bet.

EXACTA A wager in which the first two finishers in a race, in exact order of finish, must be picked.

FIELD The horses in a race.

FIELD HORSE (or MUTUEL FIELD) Two or more starters running as a single betting unit, when there are more entrants than positions on the tote board.

FILLY Female horse up to and including the age of 4.

FIRM A condition of a turf course equivalent to fast on a dirt track.

FRACTIONAL TIME Intermediate time recorded in a race, as at the quarter, half, three-quarters, etc.

FRONT-RUNNER A horse who usually leads (or tries to lead) the field for as far as he can.

FURLONG One-eighth of a mile; 220 yards; 660 feet.

GATE Starting mechanism.

GELDING Castrated male horse.

GET Progeny of a sire.

HANDICAPPER One who assigns weights for handicap race. Also one who makes selections based on past performances. *Daily Racing Form* has in excess of 20 full-time handicappers.

HEAD OF THE STRETCH Beginning of the straight run home.

HORSE An ungelded male horse 5 or older.

IN THE MONEY Finishing first, second or third.

INQUIRY Reviewing the race to check into a possible infraction of the rules.

LASIX Term for a diuretic medication used in the treatment of bleeders.

LENGTH Length of a horse from nose to tail, about 9 feet. Also distance between horses in a race, equal to .17 of a second.

LOCK Slang for a "sure thing" winner.

MAIDEN A horse who has not won a race. Also applied to non-winning rider.

MAIDEN RACE A race for non-winners.

MARE Female horse 5 years old or older. Also, female of any age who has been bred.



DEAD HEAT Two or more horses finishing in an exact tie at the wire.

COLORS of a Thoroughbred

BAY The entire coat of the horse may vary from a yellow-tan to a bright auburn. The mane, tail and lower portion of the legs are always black, unless white markings are present.

BLACK The entire coat of the horse is black, including the muzzle, the flanks, the mane, tail and legs, unless white markings are present.

CHESTNUT The entire coat of the horse may vary from a red-yellow to a golden-yellow. The mane, tail and legs are usually variations of coat color, unless white markings are present.

DARK BAY/BROWN The entire coat of the horse will vary from a brown, with areas of tan on the shoulders, head and flanks, to a dark brown, with tan areas seen only in the flanks and/or muzzle. The mane, tail and lower portion of the legs are always black, unless white markings are present.

GRAY The majority of the coat of the horse is a mixture of black and white hairs. The mane, tail and legs may be either black or gray, unless white markings are present.

ROAN The majority of the coat of the horse is a mixture of red and white hairs or brown and white hairs.

Lingo Thoroughbred glossary

MORNING LINE A linemaker's estimate of the final odds will be in a race, made before betting begins.

OBJECTION Claim of foul lodged by rider, patrol judge or other official. If lodged by an official, it is called an inquiry.

ODDS-ON A horse whose odds are less than even money. A horse whose odds are 4-5 is said to be odds-on.

OFFICIAL Sign displayed when result is confirmed. Also a racing official.

ON THE BOARD Finishing among the first three; sometimes the first four.

ON THE NOSE Betting a horse to win only.

OVERLAY A horse going off at a higher price than he appears to warrant based on his past performances.

Paddock Structure or area where horses are saddled and kept before post time.

PARIMUTUEL PAYOFF The posted amount each bettor will receive for a winning mutuel ticket.

PAST PERFORMANCES A compilation in *Daily Racing Form* of a horse's record, including all pertinent data, as a basis for handicapping.

PHOTO FINISH A result so close it is necessary to use a finish-line camera to determine order of finish.

PLACE Finished second in a race.

PLACE BET Wager on a horse to finish first or second.

POST Starting point or position in starting gate.

POST POSITION Position of stall in starting gate from which a horse starts.

POST TIME Designated time for a race to start.

PURSE Prize money distributed to owners.

QUARTER POLE Marker one-quarter mile from the finish.

QUINELLA Wager in which the first two finishers must be picked, but payoff is made no matter which of the two wins and which runs second.

ROUTE Race at a distance of a mile or longer.

ROUTER Horse who performs well at distance races.

SADDLE CLOTH Cloth under the saddle on which a horse's program number (and sometimes name) is displayed.

SCRATCH To be withdrawn from a race.

SHOW Finishing third in a race.

SHOW BET Wager on a horse to finish in the money; third or better.

SILKS Jacket and cap worn by riders which designate owner of the horse.

SIMULCAST Televising a race to other tracks, OTB offices or other outlets for the purpose of wagering.

STARTING GATE Mechanical device having partitions (stalls) for horses in which they are confined until the starter releases the doors in front to begin the race.

STEWARDS Track top officials responsible for enforcing the rules.



POST PARADE Horses going from paddock to starting gate past the stands.

STICK A jockey's whip.

STICKERS (MUD CAULKS) Caulks on shoes which give a horse better traction in mud or on soft tracks.

STRETCH CALL Position of horses at the eighth pole, when one furlong remains in the race.

TOTALISATOR Machine which sells and records betting tickets and shows odds. Also figures out and displays payoff figures.

TOUT One who gives tips on racehorses, usually with expectation of some personal reward in return; to give tips.

TURF Grass course.

WIRE The finish line. It's an imaginary line running between the poles.

Track conditions

SLOW Footing that is not fast, between sloppy and heavy.

SLOPPY Condition of footing. Wet on surface with firm bottom.

GOOD TRACK Condition between fast and muddy.

FAST TRACK Footing at best, dry, fast and even.

OFF TRACK A wet racing surface.

HEAVY Condition of track similar to, but even slower than, muddy.

MUDDY TRACK Deep condition of racetrack after being soaked with water.

Types of races

MAIDEN RACE A race exclusively for horses that have never won a race. A horse is said to have "broke his maiden" when he wins, and must progress into one of the other types of races described below.

CLAIMING RACE The most common of all races. A race where owners can put their horses up for sale for a specified amount prior to the running of the race. Once the race begins, a claimed horse becomes the property of the new owner though purse money from the race goes to the former owner.

ALLOWANCE RACE One step above claiming races. Horses are *not* for sale in allowance races. Horses competing in allowance races are usually faster than horses competing in claiming races, and are generally being prepared to compete in better stakes events.

HANDICAP RACE A race for which the racing secretary has assigned weights after evaluating each entrant's past performances. The idea is to burden the best horses in the field with the most weight, which would theoretically improve the chances of the less-accomplished entrants.

STAKES RACE The highest class of race reserved for the best horses. Owners typically pay an entry fee to nominate, enter, and run their horses. The Kentucky Derby is an example of one of America's greatest stakes races.

What's a Hand?



Average Height
15.3 to 16.1
hands

Hand = 4 inches