



## Trainer Changes

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Over the course of time, things change. Riders change, horses change, and sometimes people decide to change trainers. In fact some people change trainers a lot. I wonder why that is? Do they do the background research before the big move to check into what really matter to them?

I often hear people asking if they can watch a lesson with a prospective new trainer, which seems like a good idea to get the idea of teaching style and so on. However I think there are a few more things to keep in mind beyond location and experience level.

First, can you identify what is important to you in your riding world? For example, do you horse show a lot? If so, you need a barn environment that is also built around competitions and travel to appropriate venues. If you don't show a lot, or prefer practicing at home to competing, or if your job doesn't allow for a lot of out-of-town travel, then you should find a barn that suits those parameters. It doesn't make much sense to ride at a barn that doesn't do a lot of "away" shows while you are anxiously riding at home dying to hit the road, nor does it make sense to always be left behind when the rest of the barn is away.

Do you ride hunters, equitation or jumpers? What success has the prospective trainer had coaching in that area? Do you have a longer term goal in mind – like aiming for the Young Riders stream through Equestrian Canada, hunter derbies, big equitation classes? A trainer that has experience in these areas might be ideal, or a trainer that has aptitude for varied areas might help you through the evolution of your riding.

Does your horse need professional rides at home or at the show? Not all trainers provide this service or believe in it, while others have it as a more prominent part of their program.

Now we are well on the way to whittling down trainers that match with your values from the above questions.

Every barn operates differently and has a different atmosphere. It's important to think about how much control you want to have over daily items, what level of services you would prefer in your home barn environment, and what kind of surroundings you like for your daily riding.

Some barns have managers who organize everything – farrier, vet, physio appointments, entries, shipping, clipping, and even some offer grooming service; others leave management to the horse owners and riders completely. It's important to consider, as it's not really fair to go to a full-service barn and demand that they change their operations and program so that you can do your own entries and farrier appointment scheduling – it just slows the flow of things at the barn and make you or them angry.



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Finally each barn has its own ambience. Some have a lot of students, group lessons, lots of kids (or adults), and a fun group of parents that are involved and make for a big team of cheerleaders at the shows and social events. Other barns are more private, one-on-one lessons, in a quiet and more serious setting. There are pros and cons with each one, and you should ponder these points before making your next move.

Success will come from consistency and trust in a program that both you and your horse understand well; so changing a lot isn't in anybody's best interest. It's worth the time to do your homework and really think about what is important to you so that you can find the right fit!