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ALK INTO somebody's tack room, and you're likely to see several different styles of western headstalls. For the most part, which kind you use is just personal preference. But there are a few safety considerations to take into account.

Always use a headstall with a throat latch when you're riding with a snaffle bit. It's too easy for a young horse to rub off the bridle if there's not a throat latch, so that means you either need a browband headstall or a one-eared headstall with a throat latch.

1. This is a sliding-ear headstall, and the ear piece goes over the right ear. Sometimes you'll see these headstalls with two ear pieces, one for each ear. This particular one is adjustable on both sides – something to take into consideration if you have a horse with a particularly big or small head.

2. When you look at split-ear headstalls, make sure there is a good long ear slot, so it will fit both small-headed and big-headed horses. This slot fits over the right ear, and this headstall just has one buckle adjustment;

it's a pretty simple piece of tack.

3. A similar headstall is the slot-ear headstall. It has a slot cut out of the leather for the ear, and this one has been finished up with stitching around it.

4. Browband headstalls can be used with either snaffle or curb bits, and they're a good, safe choice. The throat latch should be adjusted so that you can get a couple of fingers underneath it. Not so tight that it's uncomfortable, but not so loose that it's hanging down under the horse's head.

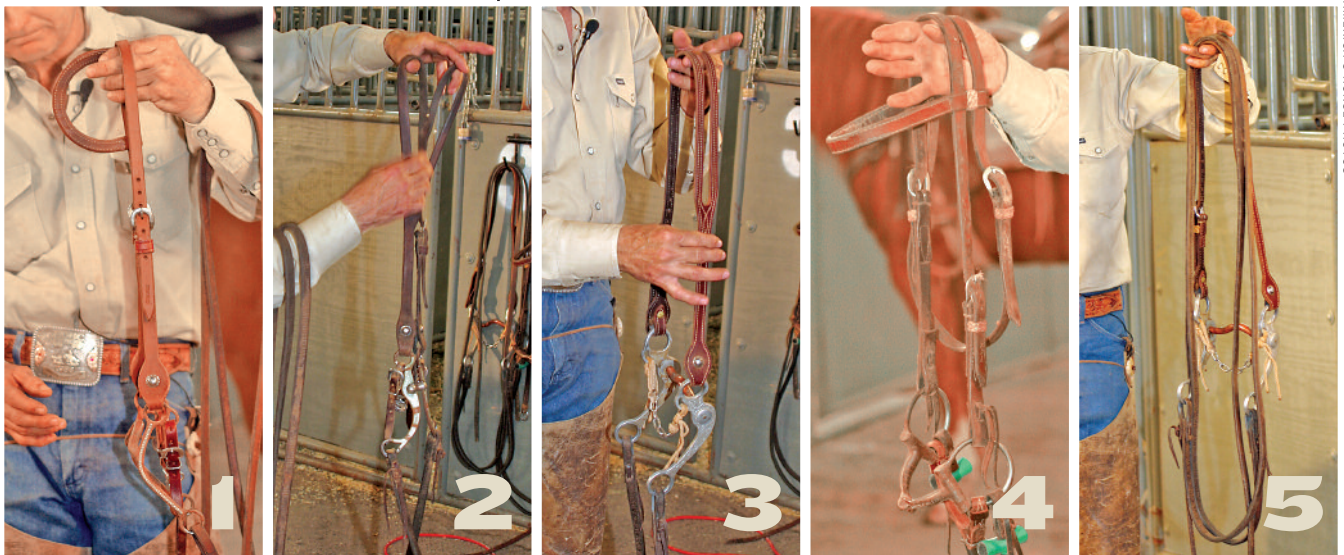
5. One final note on bridles (which is the headstall, plus a bit and reins). When you're done using this piece of tack, don't wad it up in a mess. Hang the headstall on a hanger of some sort, then take the right rein and make a loop under the bit so the rein tail hangs to the right. Do the same thing to the left rein, so its tail hangs to the left. 🐾

**By Dennis**

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*Personal preference and safety are the factors to consider in your horse's headgear.*

*AQHA member Dennis Moreland has been making quality working tack since 1976. Visit [www.dmtack.com](http://www.dmtack.com) to learn more about his Dennis Moreland Second Edition line.*



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