

Short Story – Jane’s Ride on the Downs (How many deliberate mistakes can you spot?)

It was a glorious sunny morning and Jane was going for a hack on the Downs. "Please remember your grandmother is coming to lunch so don't be late" her mother called as Jane put on her smart new trainers and skipped out of the door.

Her dapple grey pony Fiesta was waiting for her in the stable and whinnied softly at her approach. We are going to have a lovely ride today Jane thought as she made her way to the saddle room. Armed with her tack she carefully put on his bridle and placed the saddle gently on his back. Making sure that the cantle fitted snugly behind his withers and the numnah was pulled well up into the gullet, she tightened the girth. Finally she put on her hat, adjusting the fit so that the peak neatly covered her neck. Her mother was very strict about the risk of sunburn. Normally Jane vaulted into the saddle but today she thought she would mount in the conventional way. So, placing her right foot in the stirrup she sprang lightly into the saddle and rode out of the yard.

A ride on the Downs was always special, with the birds singing and miles of undulating countryside giving fabulous views and the opportunity for long canters on the springy turf. She rode on enjoying every minute of her ride and, after a while, she came up behind a string of Racehorses walking quietly back to the village after their morning exercise. Waving cheerfully as she cantered past them, she marvelled at how well the jockeys sat on their now very excited horses. Someone shouted after her but she did not catch what was being said so cantered on enjoying the wind in her face. At the edge of the Downs she took the track which led down to the road and after walking through the village turned onto a bridlepath between the fields and started for home. Suddenly she remembered that her grandmother was coming for lunch and she was still several miles away. She patted her pony's neck and urged him into a canter. By now he too was over excited so she let him canter all the way home laughing as he finally turned into the stable yard and skidded to a halt on the cobblestones. His sides were heaving and he was very hot and sweating but Jane was pleased to see that she would still be in time for lunch if she hurried. Quickly, she untacked him and led him into his stable and again patting his neck she told him how clever he had been to get her home so quickly. As a reward she fetched him a large feed and a bucket of fresh water and left him to eat his well deserved lunch. He would soon stop "puffing" and dry off during the afternoon and with these thoughts Jane dashed indoors just in time to greet her grandmother.

Short Story – Jane’s Ride on the Downs: The Answers are:

1. **Smart new Trainers** - You should never ride in footwear which does not have a heel in case your foot slips through the stirrup iron.
2. **Cantle fitted behind withers** - The Cantle is at the back of the saddle, so Jane is fitting it the wrong way round.
PS. The numnah should be pulled up well into the gullet so that when the rider sits in the saddle it does not press or pull down across the horse’s shoulders making it uncomfortable and you would always tighten or check the girth before mounting.
3. **Peak of hat over neck** – Jane has the hat on back to front
4. **Right Foot in Stirrup.** - When mounting conventionally from the near side, your left foot would go in the stirrup.
5. **Racehorses** – Out hacking, if you wish to overtake another horse and rider it is courteous to warn of your approach with a “Hello” and politely ask “May I pass” or “Is it OK to pass you”. Then you would pass at an active walk and wait until you are told, or it is safe to increase your pace. Some horses get very excited if another overtakes them and could buck the other rider off. You would never canter past anyone, let alone a string of Racehorses.
6. **Canter all the way home** - When hacking, you ride with consideration for your horse and judge your speed and distance in accordance with the horse’s fitness. One should always allow enough time to WALK the last mile home to cool the horse off and bring down his heart rate. You would NEVER canter all the way home so that the horse arrives with his sides heaving and very hot and sweating. If, for some reason, he did arrive home in this state you would need to spend time cooling him off and getting his heart rate down.
7. **Skidding to a halt on the cobblestones** could easily result in the horse slipping/falling and injuring himself.
8. **Large Feed** - You shouldn’t give a large feed, immediately on return, to a horse in the condition at 6 above. That would be asking for colic. He must have calmed down and his heart rate returned to normal before any feed is offered.
9. **Bucket of water.** A horse should always be given water before feeding. This is one of the Rules of Feeding. So with a horse arriving home very hot and thirsty you must ensure that he has a drink (half a bucket initially to quench his thirst) then, when he has calmed down and stopped puffing he can be given as much water as he wants.
10. **Puffing and dry off during the afternoon** - You shouldn’t walk away and leave a horse, still puffing and in this state, to dry off during the afternoon. Your horse should always be taken care of first and before you even think about going in to lunch or any other activity.