BEGINNERS’ GUIDE TO HORSE RACING
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INTRODUCTION

Exploring the unknown is scary but it is exciting and invigorating too. A part of us tends to fear something new but the innate desire to expand our horizons draws us towards it anyhow.

There is much for the newcomer to learn about racing but with its open-door policy, the industry is willing to teach. Everyone is embraced. There are no outsiders in the ever-expanding racing community.

Choosing what to wear, what to eat and what music to listen to is all part of the day, and there is nothing wrong with picking your horse on the strength of its name or the owner’s colours.

This guide is aimed at enhancing the racing experience for the newbie by providing a basic explanation of how to make a bet, how to study the form and what class of horse is competing in a Grade 1 or Listed contest.

There are many ways to enjoy a day at the races but a little understanding of what is unfolding in the saddling enclosure, the parade ring and out on the track might just add to the occasion.
**term no.1 | beginners’ guide**

**WHOOOHOO/YEEAAAHEY -/wu’huu / jea’hay/ n & v**

Exultant sound made when the horse you backed has won. You won’t notice yourself doing it, but you will. Tune the frequency and decibel level to suit your vocal chords.
A DAY AT THE RACES

BASIC TIPS

Tired of the same old social scene, same old stale faces and places? Then go along and have a fun day out in the open air, because no matter where you are in the country there is probably a race meeting within reach. Come with friends and family on a warm Summer’s day and wander about with a cold drink. Come in Winter, snuggly wrapped up and warmed up by a couple of hot drinks and lively banter in the bars.

There is no dress code in Irish racing so you can dress up or dress down, shirt and tie, slacks, old dress, new dress, hat or not, jeans and t-shirt, it doesn’t matter, just go.

But if you are looking for a chance to show off that new outfit there are prizes for the best-dressed lady (and sometimes man) at most major meetings and, at the bigger meetings and festivals, a designated ladies day.

However, before leaving home, (well it is Ireland!) it’s a good idea to check the weather forecast for the day because sometimes you will need to bring a coat or an umbrella.

Pick up your daily paper which will have all the racing news and information you will need and remember, the WWW is packed with racing sites - goracing.ie will give you an intro to every Irish racecourse, with all the races, breaking news and special offers.
One of the best things about Irish racing is the variety on offer in the unique amphitheatres around the country. Each festival offers a different experience, atmosphere, culture and tradition. And if you're staying for a couple of days, you get to sample the sights and sounds of the locality.

**Punchestown**
The Irish National Hunt Festival is our Cheltenham, with the cream of Ireland and Britain’s jumping crop convening for a climactic end to the season. It’s a combination of countless Grade 1 races, Kildare hospitality and an opportunity to mix it with celebrities from racing and beyond.

**Leopardstown**
Leopardstown is as identifiable with Christmas as Santa and Turkey. Patrons carry on in the festive spirit at the Stillorgan track, with a feast of sensational Grade 1 racing starting on St Stephen’s Day and lasting four days in total. The Irish Champion Hurdle and Hennessy Gold Cup are amongst the most sought-after prizes of the season.

**Fairyhouse**
The Irish Grand National on Easter Monday is the centrepiece of the three-day Easter Festival, which begins on the Sunday. Each day attracts massive crowds in the mood to witness sporting history and party. Less than 15 miles from Dublin’s city centre, it is very accessible.

**The Curragh**
The Home of the Classics boasts a number of summer festivals around the biggest occasions, with the Guineas Festival in May, the Derby at the end of June, the Oaks in July and the St Leger in September. The best flat horses in Europe make the trip to this world-famous arena for some of the best racing— and parties - the world has to offer.

**Galway**
7 fantastic mid-Summer racing days and Nights in the most vibrant city in Ireland. Guaranteed to be an electric atmosphere every day. One visit and you’ll be hooked.

www.goracing.ie
Killarney
One of the most picturesque courses in Ireland, surrounded by mountains and lakes, Killarney plays host to three short festivals. They take place in May, July and August. Both are extremely popular for holiday-makers from home and abroad as the town is amongst the most tourism-oriented in the country.

Listowel
More divine countryside, coastal drives, tradition and entertainment but don’t forget the seven days of National Hunt and Flat racing in September that comprise The Harvest Festival.

Bellewstown
It may mean ‘The Town of the Hags’ but don’t let that put you off. This is a lovely little jewel in the heart of the Boyne Valley, with a three-day festival in July, just after the Derby and another in August. The historic sites of Newgrange, Tara and Slane are nearby.

Tramore
Although there is nothing to stop you from donning the three-piece suit or high heels here, t-shirt and shorts is just as acceptable at this seaside resort. Unsurprisingly, families flock to the sunny south east for the four-day August festival.

Limerick
Provides a host of music for the Summer Twilight Racing Festival from May to July, but is best known for the four day s of National Hunt fare at Christmas time that attracts thousands looking to ring out the year in style.

Cork
Another three-day Easter festival that starts a day earlier than Fairyhouse, on the Saturday. It fills the appetite for racing, food, music and all-round craic in the southern part of the country.

There are many other festival-style meetings, check out www.goracing.ie for full details
THE ORIGINS OF RACING

The horses that compete in racing are members of the thoroughbred breed. Their origins can be traced back to 3 Arabian stallions that were imported into England in the early eighteenth century and were bred with native stock to produce a faster, stronger breed. So, all racehorses are in fact distantly related. Thoroughbreds are now to be found in all parts of the world and many of the best are bred in Ireland.

THEY COMPETE IN 2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF RACES:

FLAT RACING

These races are run over distances ranging from 5 furlongs (\(\frac{5}{8}\) mile or 1000 metres) to 20 furlongs (2 \(\frac{1}{2}\) miles or 4000 metres) and are started from stalls. As the name suggests, there are no obstacles in flat racing. The flat racing season runs from mid-March to mid-November. Flat horses mature quickly and start running as 2 or 3-year-olds.

The Curragh in Co. Kildare has been the headquarters of flat racing in Ireland since the early 18th century and according to history the ancient Celtic Kings held racing there.

NATIONAL HUNT OR ‘JUMP’ RACING

All jump races are contested over at least 2 miles and the horses have to jump a number of obstacles. This makes for spectacular viewing. These races are started from a tape barrier. Jump horses mature more slowly and don’t run until they are 4 or 5-year-olds. Jump racing goes on all year round but its main season runs from November until the end of April. Some flat horses also run in jump races when they get older.

www.goracing.ie
THERE ARE 3 TYPES OF JUMP RACE: STEEPLECHASE, HURDLE AND POINT TO POINT.

STEEPLECHASE
Run over “fences” which vary in size. The word steeplechase was coined in County Cork in 1752. Two gambling men, Edmund Blake and Cornelius O’Callaghan wanted to settle a bet as to whose horse was faster. So they organised a race across country from the steeple of the church in Buttevant to that of St Mary’s in Doneraile. Hence the name, which is often shortened to “chase”.

HURDLE
Run over obstacles measuring about 3 feet 1 inch in height.

POINT TO POINT
Run over fences on designated farmland throughout the country in the Spring and Autumn. This is basically the nursery for young jump horses and many champions have emerged from this circuit. Racing at its most rustic.
HANDICAP - /ˈhændɪˌkæp/ n&v(r)
A race in which the weights are calculated by an official assessor (called a handicapper). The better class horses carry the highest weights while the lesser class horses carry lower weights. The idea is to give all horses an equal chance of winning.
FLAT RACE TYPES

FLAT MAIDEN
A race for horses that have not won a flat race before. These races are normally confined to an age group. A 2-Y-O maiden is for horses aged 2 year old only that have not won a race while there are also 3-Y-O maiden races and ones for older horses as well.

FLAT HANDICAPS
A race in which the weights are calculated by an official assessor (called a handicapper). The better class horses carry the highest weights while the lesser class horses carry lower weights with the top weight generally being 10st extending down to a bottom weight of 8st 4lb. A Nursery is a handicap for 2 years old only. Each flat horse normally receives a rating from the Official Handicapper after he has raced at least 3 times and he can then enter a handicap. Ratings generally go from as low as 47 to as high as 120+. The flat handicaps normally have a top and bottom rating and some of the typical types of handicaps are listed as follows:- 47-60, 47-65, 50-80, 60-90,60-100, 70-100.

Horses rated above 100 can run in handicap races but generally don’t as they would have too much weight to carry. These horses can be aimed at listed and pattern races.

CONDITIONS RACE
A notch below listed standard, there are certain conditions for qualification. Sometimes these races are confined to winners of one race, winners of two races, winners of races of a certain value or from a certain date. Previous winners generally have to carry extra weights in terms of penalties.

LISTED/PATTERN RACE
These races are more valuable races and generally attract the better class horses. A horse would usually be rated above 90 to compete in listed races and the weights would include penalties for winning certain types of races. A Group 3 race is a slight step up from listed level with horses generally rated 100 taking part while a Group 2 race attracts horses rated from 100 to 115. The most prestigious and important races are Group 1 races. These are very valuable races and the winners of these races generally become stallions at the end of their careers or, if they are fillies, they become valuable broodmares when they retire. There are 12 Group 1 races in Ireland at the moment with five of these called Classic races.

CLASSIC RACES
The 2000 Guineas, The 1000 Guineas, The Derby, The Oaks and The St Leger are the 5 Classic races in Ireland. Fillies can run in all five Classic races with colts only allowed to run in the 2000 Guineas, The Derby and The St Leger. The 1000 and 2000 Guineas are run over a mile with the Derby and the Oaks held over a mile and a half while the St Leger is run over a distance of one mile and six furlongs. In Ireland, the 5 Classic Races are all held at the Curragh Racecourse in Co. Kildare.
LENGTH - /ˈlenkt/ n.
The approximate length of a horse: about 8 feet. Winning margins are measured in lengths, ranging from 1/2 a length to a distance (more than 20 lengths). Smaller winning margins are a short-head, head or a neck.
NATIONAL HUNT RACE TYPES

BUMPER
A special type of flat race for horses beginning their national hunt careers. These races are confined to horses aged between 4 and 7, run over a distance of at least 2 miles up to 2 1⁄2 miles, and ridden by Qualified Riders (amateurs). A horse can only race in a maximum of six bumper races unless he wins one in which case he can race in winners bumpers, but as these races are viewed as introductory races, the competitors normally go hurdling or steeplechasing as soon as they can.

MAIDEN HURDLE
A race for horses that have not won a hurdle race or a steeplechase but they may have won flat races or bumper races.

BEGINNERS STEEPLECHASE
A race for horses that have not won a steeplechase but they may have won hurdle races, bumper races or flat races.

NOVICE
A novice hurdle is for horses that have not won a hurdle race before the start of the season (the season usually starts at the end of the Punchestown Festival in late April). A novice steeplechase is for horses that have not won a steeplechase before the start of the season.

HANDICAP
Just like the flat, there are handicap races for hurdlers and for steeplechasers with the better class horses carrying the highest weights (usually 11st 12lb) right down to the lower class horses carrying a minimum of 9st 10lb. Ratings generally go from 80 to above 170. Races are scheduled to incorporate the lowest class of horses (generally 80 to 95) while there are also races with rating bands of 81-109, 81-116, 81-123, 81-130. The likes of the Irish Grand National, The Galway Hurdle, The Galway Plate, The Thyestes Chase and the Kerry National don’t have rating bands to allow all types of horses to run with again the highest rated horses carrying the heavier weights.

CONDITIONS RACE
Similar to the Flat, condition races have certain qualification requirements with penalties applying to previous winners. There are races confined to horses that have not won more than one hurdle/steeplechase or two hurdles/steeplechases while other races may have qualifications concerning the value of previous races won.

LISTED/GRATED RACE
Much like the pattern races on the flat, these type of races attract a better class of horse. There are Grade 3, 2 or 1 races with the highest value races being the Grade 1 events. There are no penalties in Grade 1 races and some of the bigger ones in Ireland would be the likes of the Irish Champion Hurdle or the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Leopardstown. Some Graded races are used as a stepping stone to the famous Cheltenham Festival in mid-March and invariably when a horse wins a Graded race, one of the first questions their connections are asked will be concerning whether the horse will be going to Cheltenham.
STARS OF THE TURF

HORSES

The horses are the stars of the show because without them there would be no show. It's because of their speed and bravery that we can all enjoy this great sport of racing. Here we pay tribute to some legendary Irish horses.

NIJINSKY (1967)

Nijinsky, named after a famous Russian ballet dancer, was trained in Co. Tipperary by the legendary Dr. Vincent O'Brien to be the Champion flat horse of Europe both as a two and three-year-old (1969/70). He is widely acclaimed as one of the best flat horses of all time. As a two-year-old he won all of his five races in Ireland and England while the following year he won his first six races including the Irish and English Derby and the English ‘Triple Crown’. It was the ease of his victories that made him so great but he met with his first defeat in the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe in France and was also beaten in his next race. He was then retired to stud and his genes have exerted a huge influence on the modern thoroughbred. Dr. O’Brien was recently voted the most influential racing figure of all time by readers of the “Racing Post”.

ARKLE (1957)

Arkle was the best steeplechaser ever. It’s a fact that brooks no argument. The great horse was named after a mountain in the highlands of Scotland though he was bred and trained in North Co. Dublin. His trainer Tom Dreaper sent him out to win 27 races both here and in England from 1962-66. His wins numbered all the important steeplechases including the Cheltenham Gold Cup three times and there is a statue commemorating him at Cheltenham. He was so superior to other horses of the time that sometimes special provision had to be made for him to carry more weight than normal to give other horses a chance, and he would still beat them! Arkle is still much revered today and is referred to simply as “Himself” with readers of the “Racing Post” voting him as the most popular horse of all time. There are several books celebrating his life and career.
SEA THE STARS (2006)
Perfection. That is the only word to describe Sea The Stars. The pedigree, the looks, the temperament and most importantly the God-given ability to run faster than any other horse on the planet, he had it all. At 8, 10 or 12 furlongs, on soft or firm ground and everything in between, on flat or undulating tracks, in Ireland, England or France, Sea The Stars proved imperious. He took the Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe, the Irish Champion Stakes, the Coral Eclipse, the Epsom Derby, the English 2000 Guineas, etc. His remarkable trainer John Oxx and ice-cool jockey Michael Kinane did not put a single toe out of step throughout his entire career and no pair of professionals in racing were more deserving. Many will hope that Sea The Stars’ impact in the world of horse racing has only just begun and one can only hope that his legacy will grow even more when his progeny begin to reach the racecourse in 2013.

MOSCOW FLYER (1994)
Moscow Flyer was the first horse that Brian Kearney owned. “He changed my life,” he said. He changed every Irish racing fan’s life too. He was the peoples’ horse and was loved by them. Trained by Jessica Harrington and ridden by Barry Geraghty he won 27 races over hurdles and fences, earning €1.4 Million! He won three times at Cheltenham including the Champion Chase twice. Moscow Flyer was a specialist two-mile steeplechaser. Often referred to as the “speed chaser” these horses are probably the most exciting racehorse, by virtue of the speed and accuracy at which they jump. At his best Moscow Flyer was spectacular and imperious though his ‘Achilles Heel’ was to sometimes make mistakes at the fences but if he cleared every fence he won; no question. He retired in 2006 and lives a life of leisure. There is a book commemorating his career.
STARS OF THE TURF
JOCKEYS

Jockeys have the most exciting and glamorous job in racing. It can be dangerous at times but they love it and that's why they do it. Anybody who has ridden a horse can appreciate what a thrill it is to be galloping along at 40 miles per hour and get paid for it. However it's not simply a matter of getting up on a horse and going fast. Every race and every horse is different so tactics need to be worked out to try to win the race. Some horses are front runners while others need to be kept in reserve early in the race to finish fast. There is a difference in size between Flat and Jump jockeys. Flat jockeys are smaller because weight carried in flat races are lower than over jumps. Here is a brief profile of a few top Irish jockeys.

RUBY WALSH (1979)
As a jockey Ruby Walsh is subtle, strong and stylish; he is the ultimate jump jockey. He makes a very difficult job look effortless but then the very best at their profession always make it look easy. In his case less is more, his genius is to get horses into a natural rhythm during a race and not interfere with them too much thus enabling them to jump better, and win! It is all instinctive with him.

Ruby (short for Rupert) who hails from Kildare, is the son of the well-known trainer and RTE TV presenter Ted Walsh and so has been riding horses all his life.

He was Champion Qualified Jockey while still at school and has since been Irish Champion Jockey many times and has won many HRI National Hunt Awards. He has won most of the big races in the UK and Ireland including the Aintree Grand National, Irish Grand National and Cheltenham Gold Cup though despite his grey hair he is still young.

Ruby also has an amazing ability to come back from injury, the occupational hazard of a jump jockey's life, and his many broken bones and other injuries would make most ‘normal’ people wince.

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Pat Smullen has been established as one of the top riders in Europe for many years now and with age very much still on his side, his best years look to still be ahead of him. His greatest attribute as a rider is his consistency and he rarely loses a race he should have won, which is the mark of a great jockey.

Having become Dermot Weld’s stable jockey in 1999, Pat Smullen has been a regular visitor to the big-race winner’s enclosure both in Ireland and abroad. He has won three Irish Classics on horses trained by Weld, namely the Derby on Grey Swallow (2004) and the 1,000 Guineas on Nightime (2006) and Bethrah (2010). He also enjoyed an English Classic win on Refuse To Bend in the 2,000 Guineas in 2003. One of Pat’s most prolific partners was the Weld-trained Vinnie Roe, with Smullen riding him to no less than four wins in the Irish St Leger as well as a win in the Prix Royal Oak at Longchamp.

Smullen was crowned Champion Jockey for the sixth time at the conclusion of the 2010 season, with his remarkable consistency proving to be significant once again. With the support of Dermot Weld to rely on, Pat Smullen can be expected to remain as one of Ireland’s leading jockeys for many years to come.
ON THE BRIDLE / ON THE BIT -  (Expression)
A horse going the pace seemingly without much effort or need for its jockey to push it. Can be deceptive as sometimes these horses will not find extra speed when their jockeys do push them at the end of a race.
NINA CARBERRY (1984)
Nina Carberry is without doubt the best female jump jockey in Britain and Ireland. She has been Champion Qualified Jockey in Ireland numerous times and will surely be so many more times. Associated with the Noel Meade yard from the very outset of her career, her first win on the racecourse came when she was just 16 in the 2001 Ladies’ Derby at the Curragh on the Meade-trained Sabrinski.

The first of Nina’s many winners at the Cheltenham festival came in 2005 on Dabiroun in the Fred Winter Hurdle for Irish trainer Paul Nolan. In 2006 she became only the 14th woman ever to ride in the Grand National and in 2011, she became just the second woman to ride the winner of the Irish Grand National, scoring on Organisedconfusion, who was trained by her uncle Arthur Moore. Horse racing is part of Nina’s blood as her father Tommy was a great Irish jump jockey and her brothers Phillip and Paul are prominent jump jockeys too.

Nina is one of the best jockeys riding in ‘Bumper’ (special National Hunt flat) races. She is also a specialist at riding in Cross Country races such as those staged at the Punchestown Festival in April.

She is still officially a ‘Qualified Rider’ or amateur as they used to be known but she is anything but amateur and is as stylish and effective as any of the professional jockeys with the added attraction of being much better looking than them!

JOHNNY MURTAGH (1970)
Johnny Murtagh is one of the leading flat racing jockeys, not just in Ireland, but in the world. As a jockey he always has horses in the right place in a race to maximise their chance, is strong in a finish and he knows instinctively where the winning post is. However, he is particularly brilliant in the big events because he has such a cool nerve on such occasions and has won almost every major race worth winning in Ireland, Britain, Europe and some in the USA.

Johnny, who comes from Navan in Meath, was proficient in many sports as a youngster including soccer and boxing, but decided to become a jockey after he attended the jockeys’ training academy RACE at the Curragh. After graduating he rode his first winner as a 17-year-old for trainer John Oxx at Limerick in 1987. He was then Champion Apprentice Jockey two years later in 1989. He has been outright Champion Irish Jockey many times.

Keeping his weight down under 9 stone has been a constant battle for Johnny, but the fight has been worthwhile considering the outstanding career he has had so far and it isn’t over by a long way yet. Having enjoyed three immensely successful years as the retained rider for the Coolmore operation from 2008-2010, Murtagh has returned to where he began his career, with John Oxx, and he looks sure to continue at the highest level for many years to come.
ODDS ON - /audz / n. pl - . /aun/ - prep., adv., adj)
Sometimes confusing - a bookmaker price. Eg. at “6 to 4 on” you have to stake 6 to win 4. This will appear as 4 /6 on bookmakers boards but is referred to as 6 to 4 on.
HOW TO PICK A WINNER

That’s the $64,000 question that we would all like answered. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this, it is like trying to solve a jigsaw puzzle. However, if you follow the pointers below you can at least tip the odds in your favour.

The American sports writer Damon Runyon famously wrote that it was difference of opinion that made horse racing. He was right. Everybody at the races has an opinion; racegoers, bookmakers, owners, trainers and jockeys. That’s part of the attraction of the sport; i.e. the fun involved in finding out who is right and it’s even better fun when it’s you.

On any given day a first time racegoer could easily pick loads of winners and experienced racegoers pick none. Everybody’s opinion is equal until after the race is run...

HOW TO READ A RACECARD

Buying a racecard is one of the first things you should do when you arrive at the racecourse. It will contain all the information you require for your day at the races. It is a good idea to bring a pen with you because sometimes the racecard information changes on the day (non-runners, jockey changes etc). This will be announced over the loudspeaker.

Below is a guide as to how to read the information on a typical racecard.
THE FORM GUIDE

‘Form’ is the information you need to know in order to make the right decision regarding what horse to back. It consists of the following....

HORSE ‘FORM’
Basically, has the horse been running well recently? Is it in good form? It is usually best policy to bet on a horse that has good form figures: i.e. has finished in the first 4 in at least some of it’s previous runs. The racecard will provide details of its last three races.

GOING
What the ground conditions are like on the course. The descriptions are as follows: heavy, soft, yielding, good, good to firm and firm. Some horses run equally well on any type of ground but many have a preference.

DISTANCE
It’s important that the horse has run well over a similar distance to what it’s running over on the day. Though some horses are quite adaptable beware of radical changes, up or down, from its previous run.

WEIGHT
An old racing adage is that weight brings horses together. The issue of weight is not so much the amount it has to carry but how much it is conceding to other horses in the race. Obviously the more weight a horse has to carry the harder it will be for it to win.

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**COURSE**
We have all heard of the ‘horses for courses’ theory. Well, it has an element of truth and certainly some horses do run better at particular courses so look out for horses that have winning course form. Often a big, long-striding horse will prefer a big, open course whereas a smaller, speedier horse will be more suited to a smaller, tighter course.

**SURFACE**
Some horses are better on an artificial, all-weather racing surface, like that at Dundalk racecourse but are not so good on natural turf courses and vice versa.

**TRAINER AND JOCKEY**
Racing is very competitive in Ireland with some of the best trainers and jockeys in the world competing here so naturally races are not easy to win. Some trainers and jockeys are specialists at certain courses, for one reason or another so be aware of that. It is a good idea to check up whether the trainer has been having winners of late. Sometimes trainer’s go through good and bad spells and it’s definitely a positive if the stable is going well. Remember, jockeys are like any sporting performer; when their confidence is high they perform best so it’s good policy to follow one who has ridden winners recently or on the day. A confident jockey can motivate the horse and vice versa.

**EXTRA INFO**
Every racecard has a guide written by a racing professional so that is worth reading. If you want extra information read the racing section in the daily papers. For serious punters there are dedicated racing publications such as the “Racing Post” and “Irish Field” plus specialist websites.
THE PARADE RING

In your quest to pick the winner it is important to look at each horse before the race. You can often pick up vibes (both positive and negative) from how they look and behave. Here are some pointers:

‘GOOD VIBE’
- It’s striding around purposefully, looking alert, focused and calmly taking in what is happening.
- It has good muscle definition and its coat is so shiny that you can almost see your reflection in it.
- It wins the best turned out award.
- Basically, think of how a top athlete looks and behaves in the build-up to an important event at the Olympics and apply that to the horses.

‘NEGATIVES’
- It’s not relaxed, is getting upset and is generally misbehaving.
- Kicking with its hind legs or pinning its ears flat against its head is a sign of bad temper.
- It’s loping around lazily like a Labrador dog looking for somewhere to lie down.
- Its coat looks dull and it lacks muscle definition.
- It’s sweating-up a lot. A little bit of sweat is often a good sign but profuse sweating, especially between the legs, signals an agitated, nervous horse unlikely to run well.

GOING TO THE START
It’s also a good idea to see the horses cantering to the start to check that it moves fluently and seems comfortable on the prevailing going. All horses are different and move differently but even to a novice it will be apparent if a horse is uncomfortable on the going.

DECISION TIME!
Having decided which horse you want to bet on, either go into the betting ring and scrutinise the various bookmakers’ boards or go to the Tote outlets. (see p.27 for how to put on a bet)
ALTERNATIVE METHODS

Of course there are several other, less conventional, but often surprisingly accurate methods of picking winners that don’t involve hours of studying!

These include:

- Picking the jockey’s colours that match your dress.
- Picking the jockey that you think is cute (there are many of either sex who could be labelled as cute), beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
- The horse’s name is an anagram of your own.
- And the old reliable one of closing your eyes and picking a name of the page at random. Watch the looks on your friends’ faces when these ‘alternative’ methods pick out a 20/1 winner!
An each-way bet is 2 equal sized bets, so the total stake is twice the unit stake.

e.g. €5 each-way will cost a total of €10.
BETTING OPTIONS

Fancy a flutter, but not sure what is right for you? Well first off, there are two options for placing your bets at the races, through the Tote or the Bookmakers.

Having a bet is part of the enjoyment of the day and it adds to the excitement of watching the races. You can’t beat the feeling of seeing your horse crossing the finishing line first and winning you some cash! The beauty of betting is that you don’t have to invest a lot to scoop a win. You can play the Tote Placepot or Jackpot for as little as €1, which if you get lucky, could win you thousands! Of course, it’s not all about the winning, but it is a good feeling, especially if you have won more than your friends, making you feel so superior, at least until the next race...

Remember, the rule is whoever wins, buys a round of drinks!

BOOKMAKERS

This type of betting is also very straightforward. You can wander between the bookmakers’ pitches where they display the runners for the next race and the odds/prices that are being offered. There will be differences in their prices so look for the one who is giving the best price on your horse. To place your bet, simply tell the bookmaker: the horse’s number the type of bet i.e. win or each-way the amount you’d like to bet You will then be given a ticket confirming your bet. Keep this safe as you’ll need it to claim your winnings if your horse is successful. After the race, to claim your winnings, simply take your receipt back to the bookmaker you had the bet with and he’ll give you your money. Bookmakers operate a computerized ticket/board system.

TOTE

The Tote are generally located all over the racecourse in prime locations to allow for betting no matter where you find yourself on the day. Betting is straightforward – the guide on the next page will explain exactly what to do. There are screens all over the course to give you an indication of what you’ll get paid if you win your bet. However, these can change right up to the ‘off’ of the race. The Tote put their profits back into the horse racing industry to help keep this fun sport at its best.

RACECOURSE BETTING SHOP

This is the same as a High Street bookmaker’s shop where you write on a betting slip: the name of the horse the type of bet i.e. win or each-way the amount you’d like to bet. You hand the slip and money to the cashier and you will be given a copy of the slip. This copy must be presented back to the cashier when collecting any winnings.
The Tote is the simplest way to bet at the races, with Tote betting facilities in all locations on track. The Tote give all their profits back to horse racing so by betting with them, you are contributing to the sport.

The Tote is a pool betting system. Like the lotto, all money bet goes into one big pool and then that is divided by the number of winners. They offer a wide variety of bet types from the simple Win and Place to the challenging Jackpot and Pick Six. So whether you select horses because you like the name, or because you have studied the form intensely, the Tote has a bet that is right for you!

THE TOTE BETS INTRODUCED

**WIN** - Simply pick a horse to finish 1st.

**PLACE** - A safer bet, you pick a horse you think will place in the race. If there are 5-7 runners in a race you win if your horse comes 1st or 2nd. If there are 8 -15 runners you win if your horse comes 1st, 2nd or 3rd and if the race is a Handicap with 16 or more horses running, you will win if your horse comes 4th!

**EACH WAY** - This popular bet is a Win and a Place bet combined.

**EXACTA** - Pick 2 horses to finish 1st and 2nd in the correct order.

**COMBINATION EXACTA** - Pick 2 or more horses to finish 1st and 2nd in any order.

**TRIFECTA** - Pick 3 horses to finish 1st, 2nd and 3rd in the correct order. This is a good bet if you fancy a few horses in a race!
**DAILY DOUBLE** - Pick the winning horses in races 5 and 6 to win.

**PLACEPOT** - The aim here is to pick horses to be placed in races 1 to 6. This bet has to be placed before the 1st race and is a fun, good value bet.

**JACKPOT** - This small stake, big win bet involves picking the winning horses of races 3, 4, 5 and 6. As the name suggests, you often see people winning big for a small investment!

**PICK SIX** - Challenging but rewarding, this bet requires you to pick the winning horses in races 1 to 6.

**MINIMUM STAKES:**
- €2 on Win, Place & Each Way
- €1 on Exacta and Jackpot bets
- €0.50 on Trifecta and Pick Six bets
- €0.10 on Placepot bets
- €5 on Daily Doubles

**HOW DO I BET WITH THE TOTE?**

Betting with the Tote is easy! The Tote provides betting facilities all over the course, including Tote betting counters with Tote tellers, Tote self-vend machines called Touch Totes and plenty of hand held staff in the seating and corporate areas, so you will never be too far away from getting your bet on.

*When you are ready to place a bet, you need to simply tell the operator the following:*  
- The race meeting  
- The race number  
- How much you want to bet  
- Type of bet  
- What the horse number is

*For example, ‘I would like a €10 Win bet on race two at Leopardstown on horse number 7 please’.*

Then the operator will give you your ticket and you are ready to go cheer your horse home!!! Remember to always make sure the ticket details are correct.

And if studying the form isn’t your thing, you can always simply ask the Tote operator for a ‘Quickpick’!

If you have a winner you can simply hand your ticket in to any Tote teller and collect your winnings.

If you lose your Tote ticket, remember Tote customer service will do their best to help you retrieve your winnings!

There is also the option of betting through a Tote Account, which offers a wide range of benefits including free racing admissions, the Tote Price Promise and more!

*For more on the Tote visit:*  
[www.thetote.com](http://www.thetote.com)  
Call: 1850 238 669  
UK: 0800 804 7784  
Int: +353 45 491 830

[thetote.com](http://thetote.com)
ACCUMULATOR: A bet involving more than one horse with the winnings from each selection going onto the next.

ALL-WEATHER: An artificial surface track that facilitates racing throughout the year. Dundalk is the only such course in Ireland and it is a polytrack surface – a mix of sand and synthetic fibres.

ANTE-POST BETTING: This refers to backing a horse in a specific period before a race to get a better price. There is a risk though as the horse might not run, in which case you will lose your stake.

APPRENTICE: A young flat jockey who can claim a weight allowance of up to 10lbs depending on his/her age and the number of winners ridden.

BALLOTING: This is a merit-based system put in place due to safety limits on the number of horses allowed run in each race. It is necessary for a ballot to take place if the number of horses declared to run exceeds the limit.

BANKER: A certainty, as in ‘you can take your money to the bank’. Like the bankers though, the certainty can’t always be relied upon to oblige so tread warily!

BEST-DRESSED LADY: A popular competition held during most racing festivals to attract the fairer sex, and thus attract admirers of said gender. A bit of fun for everyone, they are often judged by celebrity figures and the prizes tend to be well worth winning.

BISMARCK: The opposite of a banker. A favourite that you expect to lose and are willing to lay or bet against.

BIT: A two-piece device that fits into the horse’s mouth and is attached to the reins. It allows the jockey to control and steer the horse. There are many different types and shapes of bit but they are usually made of plastic, rubber or steel.

BLACK TYPE: A horse has black type if it wins or has been placed in a Listed race. A horse’s breeding value increases if it gets black type.
**BLINKERS:** A piece of equipment that goes over the horse’s head to restrict its vision and help it concentrate in a race. Some horses lose focus and start looking around them. This device ensures tunnel vision.

**BREATHER:** When a jockey eases a horse down for a short distance during a race to allow it to fill its lungs for a final effort.

**BREEDER:** The person, stud farm or organisation that bred the horse.

**BRIDLE:** The piece of equipment that is fitted onto the horse’s head that includes the bit and reins. There are many different types of bridle, but they are usually made of leather or nylon.

**BUMPER:** A flat race for national hunt horses. It is the usual introductory route to the racecourse for jumps horses.

**CHEEK PIECES:** Sheepskin bands on each side of the bridle. Like blinkers, they are designed to keep a horse focussed on the task at hand.

**CLERK OF THE COURSE:** The official who makes sure the course is safe and fit for racing on the day. Determines the official going.

**CLERK OF THE SCALES:** Ensures that the jockey has the correct weight, before and after a race. If the clerk feels there is a discrepancy, he/she will lodge an objection with the stewards, who will hold an enquiry.

**CLASSICS:** The collective term for the 1000 Guineas, 2000 Guineas, Oaks, Derby and St Leger. These races are only open to three-year-olds, with the 1000 Guineas and Oaks confined to fillies.

**COLT:** A male horse aged four or younger.

**CONDITIONAL JOCKEY:** The national hunt equivalent of an apprentice, the conditional can claim a weight allowance of 10lbs, which is reduced as he/she rides more winners or gets older.

**DRIFT:** When a horse’s price gets bigger due to a lack of support, it is said to be drifting or on the drift.
DAM: A horse’s mother.

EACH-WAY: To back a horse each-way means to back the horse to win and be placed. Thus, a €2 beat each way represents two bets and will cost €4. If the horse wins you collect both the win and place dividends.

FILLY: A female horse aged four or younger.

FORECAST: A forecast is a bet where the aim is to pick the first and second. A straight forecast means that you must select them in the correct order. A dual forecast or reverse forecast means that they can come in any order but doubles your stake as it represents two selections.

FURLONG: There are eight furlongs in a mile. One furlong equals 220 yards or 200 metres.

GELDING: A male horse that has been neutered. Most male horses that compete in national hunt racing are gelded. Most male horses in flat racing are not, as they are bound for careers in the breeding barn.

GIRTH: A piece of strong elastic that is fastened under the horse’s chest to keep the saddle in place. If it comes loose, it will cause the saddle to slip.

GOING: Refers to whether the ground is hard or soft. Different horses react to different ground. If you’re looking at a horse’s movement, a high-knee action would indicate a liking for soft ground, while a horse with a lower, gliding action would generally prefer it good or better. A horse’s preference is a key factor to consider when having a bet.

GREEN: A term used to describe a horse that is very inexperienced and will learn from its first run.

GROOM: Someone employed by a trainer to take care of the horses. Each horse has its own groom with whom it is familiar and who accompanies it to the races.

HAND: The unit by which horses are measured. One hand is equal to four inches. The hand increases in measurements of a quarter i.e. 16.1, is 16 hands and one quarter,
which is 65”, which is 5’5”. The average race horse height is 15.3, which is 63”.

HANDICAP: A race in which the weights are calculated by an official assessor called a handicapper. A handicapper's dream would be for every horse to cross the finishing line level, as the job is the give the horse with the best form the top weight and rate everything else in accordance with that to give them an equal chance. Good form leads to an increase in weight (a penalty) and therefore, it is more difficult for a horse that has won a handicap to back that up as it must do so with a bigger handicap.

LENGTH: The measurement of a margin of victory. A length refers to the approximate length of a horse, which is around eight feet. A half-length is the lowest length measurement, with the smaller margins being a neck, head, short-head and nose. Anything more than 20 lengths is referred to as ‘a distance’.

LISTED: A race below Group or Grade status but above a handicap or conditions race.

MAIDEN: A horse that has not won a race.

MARE: A female horse age five or more.

NOSEBAND: A strap attached onto the bridle around the horse’s nose to help keep its mouth closed. A sheepskin cover is often attached to help keep a horse focused straight ahead.

NURSERY: A handicap for two-year-old horses.

HORSE RACING IRELAND: The organisation responsible for the funding, administration and promotion of racing in Ireland.

JOLLY: The favourite in a race.

JUDGE: The official who decides the winner and placed horses in a race and also the winning distance.

LEAD: Weights carried in the saddle to make up the difference between a jockey's weight and that assigned to the horse he/she is riding.
ODDS-ON: A betting term relating to a horse’s price. If you hear ‘six-to-four-on’, this means that if you place €6 on your selection and it wins, your profit will be €4. It is written as 4/6. ‘Six-to-four’ can also be known as ‘six-to-four against’ and means you if you place €4 on your selection and it comes up trumps, you will collect €6. It is written as 6/4.

OFF THE BRIDLE/OFF THE BIT: A horse that is not travelling well and is being pushed along by a jockey to keep up with the pace is said to be off the bridle or off the bit. Not a good sign before the business end of a race.

ON THE BRIDLE/ON THE BIT: A horse travelling well and on the pace without any effort or need for its jockey to push it. It is generally seen as a positive sign entering the closing stages but can be deceptive. Some horses, known as bridle horses, travel well but do not find any extra speed if called upon to battle.

PHOTO FINISH: When a verdict is too close for a judge to call. A photo is taken automatically as the horses pass the winning post and in such an instance, is referred to, to determine the result.

QUALIFIED RIDERS: Formerly known as amateur jockeys, they are non-professional jockeys who ride mostly in point-to-points or bumpers. Their name is prefixed by Mr, Ms or Mrs and they can claim a weight allowance of up to 7lbs depending on the number of winners they have ridden.

REINS: What the jockey uses to control and steer the horse during a race. The reins are the link between the jockey’s hands and the horse’s mouth as they are connected to the bit. Usually made of leather or nylon and are covered in a non-slip rubber.

SIRE: A horse’s father.

SPREAD A PLATE: When a horse loses a shoe it is said that it has spread a plate.
STALLS: They ensure that each horse gets a fair chance at the start. Only used on the flat as the races are shorter. Some horses are more adept at breaking well from the stalls than others. The stalls are numbered from right to left with the numbers allocated by a random draw.

STARTER: The official who is responsible for the start of each race. It is his/her job to ensure that the start is fair and that no horse gets an unfair advantage.

STEWARDS: They attempt to ensure that the rules of racing are adhered to. On a race day, there will be a stipendiary steward, who is a full-time, paid official. He will be joined by a panel of voluntary stewards who are appointed by the Turf Club.

STEWARDS’ ENQUIRY: The investigation lodged by the stewards if they suspect that the rules of racing have been broken either prior to, during or after a race.

STIRRUPS: The attachments at each side of the saddle into which the jockey’s feet are placed. Made of steel or lighter aluminium mix.

TACK: The generic name given to various pieces of equipment that are used on a horse.

TONGUE STRAP: A piece of cloth or elastic tied on the horse’s tongue to keep it in place during a race. Generally used on a horse with breathing difficulties, to prevent the tongue interfering with the soft palate.

TURF CLUB: The regulatory body in charge of the rules and regulations of Irish racing, and maintaining its integrity. It was founded in 1790.

VALET: A person employed by the jockeys to assist them in their preparations for each race. The valet ensures that all the equipment needed is clean and ready for the next race.

VISOR: A similar device to blinkers but less restrictive.

STARTING PRICE: Known as the SP, it is an estimation of the odds available on a horse when the race begins.

WEIGH IN/WEIGH OUT: When a jockey is weighed to make sure that a horse is carrying the required burden. A jockey is weighed out before a race and weighs in afterwards.

WINNER ALL RIGHT: This is the official confirmation that the stewards are happy that the winner has broken no rules.

YEARLING: A horse that has been born on any date in the previous year.

Info correct May 2012
FOR MORE INFORMATION LOG ON TO
www.goracing.ie
WHERE YOU WILL FIND INFO ON ALL IRISH RACECOURSES, UPCOMING MEETINGS AND CAN REGISTER FOR OUR FREE EMAIL WEEKEND RACING PREVIEWS.