



3. Have your helper cup his left hand under your knee and put his right hand under your ankle.

4. Then, on the agreed count, either sink on your right knee once and spring up ("down and up") or bounce off your right leg twice ("one, two") and then jump ("three"), keeping your body upright.

Jump as high as you can, your body straight so you don't collapse in your helper's arms. He'll follow you upward, supporting your knee in his left hand, keeping his back straight and firm, pushing up from his legs, boosting you just high enough to let you extend your arms and support yourself by leaning on your hands. (If your horse scoots away from you while you're in the air, ask your helper either to let you down or — if the horse hasn't moved far — to add boost in the direction he's going.) Lifting correctly, your helper will feel the effort most in his thighs and only a little in his back and shoulders.

5. As soon as you can extend your arms fully and your hips clear the saddle, smoothly swing your right leg over, giving the cantle at least four inches' clearance. (If your helper has given you too much boost, tell him right away, so he'll know to push less next time.)

6. As your leg comes over, lean into the heel of your right hand and press your right elbow into your middle to stabilize your upper body . . .

7. . . while your helper guides your left knee and lower leg onto the horse's side (rotating his hands to the outside so your leg doesn't pinch them), still supporting any weight you don't have under control. To avoid flopping onto your horse's back, close your knees on the saddle as your



helper slows your descent by steadying your left leg. If your horse stays quiet, proceed as in photo 8. If he just won't stand still, ask your helper to hold him until you're organized. But should he take off, rear, spin, spook, or otherwise misbehave, drop your seat into the saddle, put your right hand on the reins, and deal with each misbehavior as you normally would.

8. Slowly let yourself down by easing the pressure in your knees. Let your legs slide down the flaps to find your stirrups, your helper guiding your left foot



into its stirrup as I'm doing here. As you sink into your heels and full seat, transfer your right hand from the pommel to the reins. Tell your helper when you're secure, so he can let you take over. ■

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# GET A LEG UP

Hunter/jumper trainer Ray Texel shows you how to do it.

**N**ot only is a leg up a quick method of mounting — and so particularly useful with the habitually hard-to-mount horse — but it doesn't put too much strain on the horse and tack. A good leg up happens in one smooth, swift motion: You jump off your right leg and, aided by a helper, rise above your horse until you can support your weight in your arms, swing your right leg over, land softly in your two-point, and settle into your seat. That may sound simple, but to give and get a leg up safely takes skill and practice. So as soon as a student can mount from the ground, I teach her how to both give and get a leg up, as I'll show you here. To master both techniques, first follow along as my student Joanna Wolffer and I demonstrate the leg up. Next, I suggest you watch others who do it as I describe, so you see the process in motion. Then practice hands-on with a horse who'll stand still for you.

A couple of safety tips: First, if your horse spooks or you don't jump with enough spring, your helper will end up supporting you entirely. So never ask a friend with a back injury for a leg up. (And if you're *giving* a leg up, even if you don't have a back problem, you're wise to help people of your weight or less — certainly no more than fifteen pounds above your weight.)

Second, the most important part of a leg up is coordinating the jump and the lift. So before you begin, agree with your helper on a countdown method; then *stick to it!* There are two ways to count: "down and up" and "one-two-three." In both cases your helper waits for your jump, then *follows* you up, lifting as he feels you rise. With either method, say the count together out loud so you're in sync.

1. Stand facing your horse, your nose in line with your stirrup leather, your left leg bent at a ninety-degree angle for your helper to take. Have your helper stand behind and to the left of you, at a forty-five-degree angle to your left shoulder, with his left foot just to the left of where your left foot was, his right foot back a little, his legs bent for pushing power, his hips over his center of gravity, and his shoulders in line with his hips so his spine stays straight and firm even when he leans forward to take your leg. If your horse scoots or dances, have your helper step back while you (on the ground) stay at your horse's side like a magnet until he realizes you're not going anywhere and stands. If he's very hot or excited, have a second helper stand to his left and hold his head.

2. Gather both reins and a tuft of mane in your left hand, right in front of the withers. Keep your right rein slightly shorter than the left; if your horse turns right, his hind end will move toward you instead of away from you. Take just enough feel of his mouth that should he walk away in mid-boost — when most of your weight will be on your right hand — you can slide your left hand toward the pommel to stop him. Place your right hand just behind the pommel.

