

## About Stirrup Irons

*You can choose from a wide array of stirrup irons that can benefit you in various ways. Irons have evolved over time from the traditional Fillis iron to those designed for easy release, to ease joint pain or to provide distinct competitive advantages.*

### Traditional Look

The most traditional iron is the Fillis, manufactured in varying grades of stainless steel and available in a range of prices. For many riders, simple Fillis irons are a good choice. Their classic appearance makes them popular, acceptable and affordable for casual riding and the show ring.

Some manufacturers have enhanced the traditional Fillis iron design for hidden benefits to the rider. Offset stirrup irons are one example. Herm Sprenger, in addition to their Fillis Stirrups, designed their Offset Eye Stirrups to help the stirrup leather lie flat against the leg and saddle, giving the rider assistance in keeping the stirrup straight against the ball of the foot. Because this design eliminates twisting of the stirrup leather, lost stirrups can be easier to recover. Stubben's Double Offset Stirrups locate the hole for the stirrup leather in an offset position. This placement gives the rider assistance in putting the heel down and the leg against the horse.

Another innovative Fillis design comes from Korsteel's Flex II Stirrups. These irons provide one-way swivel action in the footpiece, which swivels to a perfect 70 degree angle to assist the rider in keeping the heel down.

### Easy Release Stirrups

Easy release stirrups are intended to prevent a rider's foot from being caught in a stirrup. The most traditional form is the Peacock Fillis Stirrup, in which the traditional Fillis iron has an open side that is then "closed" with a rubber ring hooked at the top and attached to a leather tab at the bottom. The rubber rings (or bands) are the breakaway feature of the stirrup; they can be replaced inexpensively when needed. This type of stirrup iron is popular with many riding schools and camps that teach beginners and for therapeutic riding centers, Pony Clubbers and trail riders.

More recent developments in easy release irons include the Kwik Out Stirrups which have a slide-release mechanism so that the seemingly closed side of the Fillis iron clicks open to release the rider's foot if necessary. Foot Free Stirrups are a centuries-old style revisited. A sculpted design on one side of the iron allows the foot to slip free.

### Technologically Innovated Stirrups

Many types of stirrup irons have been developed in response to issues experienced by avid or competitive riders. To help alleviate joint pain, manufacturers build flexion into the sides, or branches, of stirrup irons. The Herm Sprenger line of 4-F stirrups pivot in four directions simultaneously, allowing greater comfort and flexibility to help alleviate tension and pain in the hips, knees and ankles by softening the impact on joints, cartilage and ligaments. From the 4-F line, riders can choose the Original System 4-F with treads that adapt to the foot for consistent contact, the System 4-F with Offset Eye to assist with leg placement, or the Bow Balance Stirrups with shock-absorbing footbed and anatomical design.

Metalab combines the comfort of an air cushion in the footpad with a flexible jointed branch to alleviate knee and joint pressure in their Air System Irons. Horse-S Jointed Irons and Intec UMS 6-Way Stirrups allow flexion in the stirrup branches to help absorb impact and help alleviate knee and back pain. MDC Ultimate Stirrups have a patented, adjustable top that allows the rider to select one of three stirrup positions—traditional, 45 degree or 90 degree—along with flexible sides for even greater comfort. Royal Rider Flexible Stirrups combine the advantage of a lightweight material with flexion built into the stirrup branches.

Competitive riders looking for the lightest weight stirrups can choose Composite Stirrups, Composite Reflex Stirrups, Equi-Wing Wide Track Stirrups or Royal Rider Original Stirrups, all weighing 200 grams or less.

The OnTyte Magnetic Stirrup System uses a highly engineered method of harnessing magnetic attraction between a magnet housed in the stirrup and integrated plates on the rider's boot sole. The system lends increased stability and balance for the rider, who will feel better connected to the horse through his or her ability to stretch down in the stirrup and around the horse's barrel. The magnetism provides enough security to eliminate concern over losing a stirrup, but will not prevent a rider's foot from separating from the iron when necessary.

## How to Select the Right Size Stirrup Iron

No matter what kind of iron you plan to ride in, the most important aspect is correct sizing. Your irons should be one inch wider than the width of your boot at the ball of the foot. When your foot is in place, you should have ½ inch of space on each side.



While you don't want your boot to fit too snugly into your iron, you also don't want your stirrup to be too wide. This could allow your foot to slip "home" more easily, and you may struggle to keep your stirrups the correct position on the balls of your feet.

**Helpful Tip:** Buy a new pair of winter boots? Remember to check the width of your stirrups. Winter boots are usually wider than all season boots.

**Curious?** Ever wonder why stirrups on an English saddle are called irons? The answer is simple—they were originally crafted of iron!

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