



# *How to Bet on Horseracing*

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## Table of Contents

How to Bet on Horseraces .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table of Contents .....	1
Introduction.....	3
Handicapping a Horserace .....	4
Types of Horseracing Bets .....	7
Choosing an Online Racebook .....	9
Glossary .....	10

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## Introduction

There is nothing more exciting and thrilling than horseracing. You can feel your heart pounding and you may even find yourself holding your breath as you anxiously wait for the horses to cross the finish line. It does not matter if you are at a racetrack and watching the race in person or if you are at home watching the race on television or on your computer, you always get that same feeling the minute that the starting gates pop open. If you want to add even more excitement to your horseracing experience, you can place a bet on your favorite horse. Now you will have a specific horse that you can cheer on and if they do well in the race, you can even win money. Can you think of anything better than spending a day at the racetrack surrounded by the electric environment and having the possibility of going home a little richer than when you arrived.

In this eBook, you will learn some general information on how to handicap a horserace that will help you have a successful betting day at the racetrack. You will also learn about all of the different bets that you can place from the simplest wagers to some very exotic wagers. Finally, you will be provided with some helpful information on how to select an online racebook so that you will be able to wager on a horserace, even if you cannot be at the racetrack in person.

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## Handicapping a Horserace

There is not a right way or a wrong way to handicap a horserace. Handicapping is more of an art, that takes some practice to master, than a science. You can ask any handicapper the method that they use to pick the horses that they think will win and all of them will tell you that they are always modifying, or even changing, the ways that they pick their horses because they are always learning new methods and angles to become a more successful handicapper. A good handicapper will tell you that each race is different and you will have to look at it like a puzzle, if you find the right pieces, everything will fit together and you will be able to place good bets and win money.

Becoming a good handicapper does not happen overnight. To become a good handicapper, just like everything else in life, you have to study and practice. There are many different methods and strategies that different people use to handicap different races and many people will tell you that they use a combination of methods to place many of their bets. Some people will tell you that they will only pick horses that are a certain color, or they may bet on the horse that is wearing their favorite number. There are also people who will tell you that they use more sophisticated methods when it is time to choose a horse, or combination of horses, to place a bet on. The following list is just a sampling of the more common methods that good handicappers use to select horses to place their bets on.

- **Speed Handicapping** – If you want to think of horseracing in the most basic sense, the fastest horse will win the race, but how do you know which horse in the field is the fastest? A good way to get an idea as to which horse is the fastest is to look in the daily racing program at the Beyer Speed Figure. The Beyer Speed Figure is used by handicappers to compare how fast one horse ran against another horse, even if they did not compete against each other in the same race. A horse will be given a speed figure that is based on many different factors that we will not go into here. Handicappers can then use the speed figures to help them determine which horse in the field is the fastest. So in theory, a horse that has a speed rating of 91 running 7 furlongs at Churchill Downs should be faster than a horse that has a speed rating of 87 running the same distance at Saratoga. Many handicappers will often equate a horse's speed figure with the race

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level that they should be competing in. For example, a horse that has a speed index in the high 100's is considered to be a stakes caliber horse, a horse that has speed figures in the 80-90 range is most likely to be an allowance horse or a high priced claimer, and a horse that consistently earns speed figures in the low 50's is going to be a low priced claiming horse. It is not a good idea to use speed handicapping as your only method to pick winners; instead, speed handicapping should be used in conjunction with other handicapping methods to give you the best chance of placing a winning bet.

- **Pace Handicapping** – Pace handicapping is predicting how the race will unfold once the horses leave the starting gate. Handicappers will try to predict which horses are the speed horses that will lead the race, which ones are going to make a dramatic move in the middle of the race, and which horses can come from behind to close the race and win. The best way to determine a horse's running style is to look at their past performances. This will give you a good idea if they are a speed horse or a closer. If you were to look at a race and see that there is only one speed horse and the rest are closers, the speed horse will determine what the pace is going to be and if there is not another speed horse in the race to pressure him, he will probably have plenty of energy left to finish the race without the closing horses ever pressuring him. On the other hand, if there are several speed horses in the race they will be battling against each other and will most likely be very tired at the end of the race. This is when you will want to pick a closer, because they will have the energy left at the end of the race to easily pass the tired speed horses.
- **Class Handicapping** – Simply put, class handicapping is trying to determine if the horse is good enough to compete with the other horses in the field. If you are looking at your program and the race that you are trying to handicap has eight horses with speed figures of 90 or better and two horses with speed figures in the 60's, the two horses with the 60 speed figure are outclassed by the other eight horses. You can easily throw them out of the picture and only focus on the other eight when you are trying to pick your winner. There is a flip side to this scenario, you could find yourself handicapping a race that has one horse with a speed figure of 90 and the other horses all have speed figures in the 70's. The most likely winner of this race is going to be the horse that has the 90 speed figure because he is running against horses that are not as good as he is. This would be

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like a high school baseball team playing against the New York Yankees, who do think is going to win that match up?

- **Trip Handicapping** – Trip handicapping is probably the most difficult form of handicapping a horserace because you have to watch the previous races that the horses have run in. This is easier said than done. A trip handicapper will want to know how easy or difficult a horse had it in its last race. A very costly error that many novice handicappers make is to just look at the results of the horse's previous races without considering how the race unfolded. Just because a horse finished seventh in their last race does not mean that his is going to do poorly in this race as well. That horse could have had to run five horses wide on the track or could have become boxed in going down the stretch. Trip handicapping is one of the most difficult ways to handicap a race because you have to spend a great amount of time watching replays of all of the horse's previous races. The comments section of the racing program will give you a good indication whether or not a horse had trouble in their last race by saying "stumbled at break", "bumped", or "ran five wide".
- **Breeding of the Horse** – It is always a good idea to look at a horse's pedigree along with all of the other factors when handicapping a race. By looking at horse's bloodlines, you may be able to determine if the horse is going to be a sprinter or a closer. A horse's bloodlines may also be helpful in determining if a horse is going to perform better on a dirt or turf racetrack. This is the most helpful when you are trying to handicap a race of first time starters. It is not very helpful when you are handicapping a race full of veteran race horses, by this time you will know what their running style is and whether or not they prefer dirt or turf.
- **Trainers and Jockeys** – A very oversimplified explanation of this is that good trainers train good horses. A good trainer will have a reputation that precedes them and they will earn the business of owners who have very deep pockets and can afford to purchase the best horses. The same goes with jockeys. The good ones are very skilled at what they do and the best trainers will hire the best jockeys to ride their horses so that the horse has the best possible chance of winning the race. There are also certain trainer/jockey combinations that have high win percentages and this information should not be ignored when you are handicapping a race.

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This may seem like a lot of information, so for a novice handicapper, it is often easier to try and pick out the losers rather than the winners. The best way to start is to look at the field of horses and try to find the horses that are obviously overmatched (by looking at their speed figures and their past performances). You should try to eliminate as many horses as you can, this will leave you with only a handful of horses that are going to be competitive. Next you can try to eliminate some of the remaining horses by determining if they are going to be speed horses or closers. If you have narrowed your picks down to five horses and three of them are speed horses that are going to run very fast at the beginning of the race, it is probably safe to assume that they are going to battle with each other but be very tired at the finish of the race. Now you only have two horses left to pick from and that is much better than trying to choose from the entire field. If you have gone through the process of trying to eliminate horses and you are still left with several to choose from, skip that race and try again with the next one.

## Types of Horseracing Bets

Now that you have a good understanding on how to choose the horses that are going to do well in a race, it is time to explain the odds and all of the different wagers that you can make. You know that the minute you get to the racetrack, you are going to see the odds board. You will also see the morning line odds for each horse when you open up the racing program, but what do all of those numbers mean. The odds that a horse is given will tell you how much of a profit you can make and the amount of money that you have to bet to get that profit. For example, if you see a horse's odds at 20-1 this means that you will win \$20 for every \$1 that you bet on the horse. Most racecourses have a \$2 minimum bet, so you could just multiply to get a good estimate on how much you would win. If we use our previous example of a horse with odds of 20-1 then if you bet \$2 then you would win a profit of about \$40. Your actual payoff will vary some because many times the odds that you see are rounded figures, so if you see odds of 20-1 they could actually be 19.5-1. Payoff amounts will use the actual odds and are rounded down to the nearest nickel or dime depending on the rules at each different racetrack.

You will probably notice that the morning line odds are not the same as the odds that are shown on the odds board as it gets closer to post time. This is because the odds of a horse winning

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the race are determined by how many people place wagers on that horse. The morning line odds are set by professional handicappers at each racetrack to give the betting public an idea what horse the professionals think will win the race. As people start to place their own bets, the odds can go either up or down. For example, the morning line odds on one horse are 10-1. If several people place bets on this horse because they think that it is going to win the odds will go down. At post time the odds of the horse are now at 2-1. This happened because more and more people placed bets on this particular horse and now he is the post time favorite.

Now that you understand the concept of how the odds work, it is time to explain all of the different types of bets that you can place on your favorite horse.

- **Win** – You bet your horse to finish in first place and if he does, you win your bet.
- **Place** – You bet your horse to finish second, and if he wins or finishes second, you win your bet.
- **Show** – You bet your horse to finish third, and if he finishes first, second, or third you win your bet.
- **Win-Place** – You bet your horse to win and place
- **Across the Board** – You bet your horse to win, place, and show
- **Exacta** – You will bet on two horses in the same race to finish in first and second place in exact order. For example if you place a 1-5 exacta it means the horse number 1 must win the race and horse number 5 must finish second for you to win your bet.
- **Box Exacta** – A box exacta is the same as a straight exacta, the only difference is that the two horses you pick can first or second in either order. This means that the number 1 horse and number 5 horse must finish first or second, but it does not matter what the order is. This bet will also cost twice as much as a straight exacta because you are combining the two horses to finish in either order.
- **Quinella** – You bet two horses to finish first and second in either order. This bet is cheaper to place and usually pays more than a box exacta.

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- **Trifecta** – This bet is the same as an exacta, the only difference is that you are picking the horses that will finish in first, second and third place in that exact order.
- **Superfecta** - You will bet four horses in the same race to finish first, second, third and fourth in the exact order.
- **Pick 3** – You will pick the winners of three consecutive races.
- **Pick 4** – You will pick the winners of four consecutive races.
- **Pick 6** – You will pick the winners of six consecutive races.
- **Paramutual Betting** – Each wager that is placed has its own separate pool. A percentage of the money that is bet into a particular pool is deducted to track cost and taxes; the remaining portion of the pool is paid out to the winning betters.

## Choosing an Online Racebook

There are many times when someone may want to place a wager on a particular race, but they either cannot make it to the track, or they may not live in the same city where the racetrack is located. A great remedy to this problem is to bet on horseraces online. This will allow a person to bet on races that are held at racetracks around the country and even some racetracks that are in other countries.

There are however some important things that you should consider when you are choosing an online racebook. One thing that you should take into consideration is the technology that is being used by the online racebook that you are considering placing your bets with. You want to make sure that the site is both fast and reliable. You do not want to have the site lock up when you are trying to place a last minute bet. The easiest way to determine if the site is easy to use is to navigate through it. This will allow you to judge if the site is going to be fast enough for you to place your last minute bets, or if it is going to give you trouble by locking up while you are in the middle of something. If you want to watch live races on your computer, you will want to

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make sure your computer's systems are up to date and able to accept the live feed from the website.

Now that you have found a racebook that is acceptable, you need to make sure that it is legal to use. You will want to make sure that the racebook is fully licensed for the country that it is operating in. If you cannot find any licensing information on the website, it is probably safe to assume that it is not legal and you should choose a different website to place your bets with. You should also choose a racebook that has 24 hour toll free service. This will allow you to call and speak to a person regarding any questions that you may have before you place your first bet.

Now that you are ready to go, you will have to register with the website that you have chosen. You will also have to make a deposit into an account that the online racebook will use to deposit your winning and deduct your losses. You will also want to find out what all of the fees are up front. This will prevent you from getting a bad surprise later on down the road.

## Glossary

**Claiming Horse** – Horse that is run in a claiming race and can be purchased if a person pays the money to the racetrack before the race begins.

**Closing Horse** – Horse that will run the race behind the leaders and pass them at the end.

**Favorite** – The horse that everyone thinks will win the race.

**Furlong** – Distance used to measure horseraces. One furlong equals 220 yards or 1/8 of a mile.

**Handicap** – A process used to analyze a horserace and predict the outcome.

**Jockey** – Person who ride a horse during a race.

**Odds** – The chance that a specific outcome will occur.

**Pedigree** – A horse's line of ancestry.

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**Post Time** – Time just before a race starts when all of the horse are being loaded into the starting gates.

**Speed Horse** – Horse that will lead a race at the beginning.

**Trainer** – Person who teaches a horse to run in horseraces.

**Turf** – Type of running surface that is covered with grass.

## Useful Links

A review of the best sportsbetting websites on the web -

<http://www.sportsbook-watch.com/sportsbook-review.html>

A review of the best sportsbetting websites that accept US Bets -

<http://www.sportsbook-watch.com/english/us-sportsbooks1.php>

A huge gambling glossary covering many poker terms -

<http://www.sportsbook-watch.com/full-glossary.html>

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