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## *“So You Want to Buy a Horse – Part I”*

“A good horse is worth more than riches”, is a Spanish proverb. Isn't that the truth. But, how do you find a good horse? What do you look for? Anyone looking to buy a new horse can be overwhelmed with choices. In this article, I will share the methods I use to evaluate police horses and horses for my clients to purchase. But first.....

### **Are You Ready for the Expense and Responsibility of Horse Ownership?**

Horses require care and horse ownership is expensive. There are ways to keep the costs down which I will discuss in a future article, however ask yourself these questions before you go horse shopping.

1. Am I prepared for the responsibilities of horse ownership?
2. Do I know what these responsibilities are?
3. Do I know what is required for good horse care?
4. Do I know the essentials of basic horse care, horse illnesses, and what to do in an emergency?
5. Am I prepared for the costs of boarding a horse?
6. Do I know a reputable facility that boards horses?
7. Am I prepared for the costs of setting my property up to safely keep horses?
8. Do I know what facility features are required to make my property horse friendly?
9. Am I able to pay expenses for the board or set-up of my property without going into significant debt?
10. Do I have the cash flow to pay for feed, farrier, vet, tack and other horse care necessities?





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11. Am I committed to put in the time needed daily to take care of a horse if on my own property or to work with a horse where it is stabled?

If the answers to any of these questions are, "No", you are not quite ready yet. Talk to other horse owners, go visit other properties, learn all you can. There are people out there who have learned all these things the hard way who are willing to show and teach you the "ropes".

If the answers to all of these questions are "Yes", you are ready for the Hamilton Red Flag- Green Flag method of evaluating a horse for purchase.

### **What Kind of Horse Should You Buy?**

Selecting a "good" horse is one of the most important decisions you will make. Before you begin your search, make a list of what's important to you in a horse. Include the activity you will use your horse for, your riding level and ability, price range, gender, age, color, breed, lineage, size, temperament, amount of time and training you are willing to put into your prospect, and how far you are willing to travel to look.

What are your objectives as a rider? Do you want to ride English, Western, games, trail, pleasure or show?

Factor in personality, both yours and the horses. For this equine partnership to work well, personalities must compliment and balance one another. Pairing a nervous rider with a high-strung horse results in both losing confidence. If you are a high-energy person, consider looking for a quieter horse. This list sets the parameters for your search.





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Consider who in your household will be riding the horse or have access to your barn and pasture area? Will a young inexperienced child and/or an older experienced rider both be around or using the same horse? If so, look for an even temperament and a solid reputation around children. Keep in mind the old adage, "It takes 700 hours on a horse before they are ready for children to ride them". Will a person with disabilities or challenges be riding? If so, a quiet horse with a proven track record is a must for all involved.

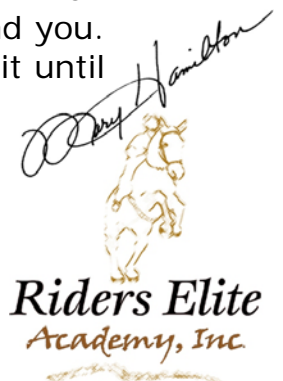
Will the horses be joining other horses? Do you have a pasture area large enough to sustain several horses? Do you have a quarantine area for the new horse? And an area to allow the new horse to gradually be integrated into your herd to prevent injuries.

If you are not an experienced horse shopper, get help. It's worth the money to hire your trainer or a knowledgeable horse person to help you evaluate a new horse. I have seen many novice or unsuspecting people purchase an unsuitable horse. This can be a great source of frustration once you get the horse home.

Next month I will share, where to look for a horse to purchase, phone-screening questions to narrow your search and my red flag green flag method of evaluating a new prospect.

### **Police Story**

Personally, I like quirky horses with a lot of personality. Probably because I spent long days in the saddle and we entertain each other. Aulos was an event horse. A hock injury prevented him from jumping but he was sound for our purposes. Aulos was a big, bay, warmblood, and Aulos was quirky. It was always something new with him. When you weren't looking he would unsnap his trailer tie and come find you. He learned to open the feed window of his stall. He would bang it until he had your attention as if to say, "Here I am".





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Aulos and I were working a security detail for Vice President Gore. A lot of pride goes into serving and protecting our president and vice president. My tack was gleaming, uniform pressed and boots shined. Aulos was groomed for show, clipped, bathed, hooves polished and face aglow. My partners too brought their newest and shiniest equipment and squad cars.

Every two hours we were relieved for a 15-minute break. I grabbed a bottle of water and chatted with a friend from the Sheriff's Office. We stood in front of his brand new squad car. "Pride of the fleet, less than 100 miles on it, fancy new light bar" he beamed. Quirky Aulos, reached his long, warmblood neck over the hood to stretch. We heard a horrendous, finger nail on the chalkboard sort of noise as Aulos made a trail of teeth grooves down the entire length of the hood. Two large, distinct teeth marks all the way through the primer to the metal. We were incredulous; he had never done anything like that before and never has done it again. Brad looked at me and said, "My boss is never gonna believe this". At least we had witnesses.

