

## Rod Nikkel Saddle Trees – rodnikkel.com

Problem/Reasons to consider	Position	Tree/Horse Interaction	The Horse	The Tree	The Saddle	Padding, Tack and Saddling Technique	The Rider
Saddle constantly moves from side to side	Saddle in wrong position so shapes don't match	Shape of bars doesn't match shape of horse Wrong spread, angle, twist, rock	Barrel Shaped Excessive fat	Tree broken Excessive crown Different bar shapes	Rigging uneven	Excessive padding Slippery blankets Cinch too loose	Unbalanced or insecure rider overweighting stirrups unevenly
Saddle goes consistently to one side	Saddle in wrong position so shapes don't match, combined with rider issues		Built asymmetrically	Bars set at different angles Tree warped Tree broken Different bar shapes	Rigging built, put on tree or stretched asymmetrically Seat not level stirrup leather holes uneven Stirrup leathers stretched unevenly	Stirrups adjusted unevenly Pads uneven thickness Other equipment uneven More weight carried on one side – saddle bag contents, canteens, etc.	Rider carries more weight on one pin bone or one stirrup Stirrups set unevenly Different length legs
Withers contact saddle		Inadequate gullet height Tree too wide – spread or angle	Excessively tall withers Withers that extend back a long way	Thick or bulgy gullet Too wide at front compared to back Broken fork	Loose nails under gullet		
Interference with shoulder movement, short striding	Saddle up on shoulder blades, impeding movement and causing pain	Front of bar too large for wither pocket area Angle too wide causing pressure on upper front bar tip	Laid back shoulder blades Bulgy shoulders Muscle atrophy behind shoulders Downhill build	Excessively long bar tips No relief built into front bar tip	Improperly blocked skirts Full rigging position	Saddle held too far forward with breast collar	Rider consistently leans forward
Dry spots, soreness, etc. under front bar pad	Saddle up on shoulder blades creating high pressure and damaging muscle between bar and bone	Bar pad and wither pocket not the same shape Wrong spread Wrong angle – esp. too wide	Fat horses Very muscular horses, especially stallions Downhill build	Excessive crown Different amounts of crown between bars Lumps and bumps Broken tree	Screws, nails, strings, etc. causing lumps Rigging asymmetrical Rigging pulls only on front of saddle Skirts not blocked so they stick forward into shoulders	Saddle held too far forward with breast collar Excessive padding Cinching too tight, too long Dirty blankets Wrinkles in blankets Uneven thickness pads	Rider carries more weight on one side Rider consistently leans forward Rider bounces creating high pressure
Dry spots, soreness, etc. in middle of saddle		Too much rock for this horse	Extremely flat back Asymmetrical build	Arizona bars Broken tree Angle in middle of bar too narrow Lumps and bumps	Rigging poorly constructed or installed so it digs in	Dirty blankets Wrinkles in blankets	Rider bounces creating high pressure
Dry spots, soreness, etc. under back bar pad	Saddle up on shoulder blades so tipped back, creating higher pressure at back of bars	Tree bridging	Excessive rock in back Asymmetrical build	Bar too flat – bridging Little surface area Cantle too close to back of bar Lumps or bumps Broken tree	Seat built to throw rider's weight to the back Screws, nails, strings, etc. causing lumps	Dirty blankets Wrinkles in blankets	Rider position with weight far back into cantle Rider leans backwards Rider bounces
Dry spots, soreness, etc. at and behind back bar tip	Saddle up on shoulder blades so tipped back, creating higher pressure at back of bars	Tree bridging	Excessive rock in back Steep rise towards croup	Poor back bar tip relief Inadequate surface area Cantle too close to back of bar Different bar lengths	Improperly blocked skirts Seat built to throw rider's weight to the back Skirts lacing holding down skirts at the back Lumps under skirts	Dirty blankets Wrinkles in blankets Excess weight tied onto saddle behind cantle	Rider position with weight far back into cantle Rider leans backwards Rider bounces
Problems at the bottom edge of the bar	Saddle on shoulder so effectively too narrow for where it is positioned	Angle too narrow Spread extremely narrow	Extremely flat (side to side) back	Not enough relief on bottom edge of bar "Self adjusting" pack trees Broken tree		Excessive padding making a good fit too narrow	Rider bounces
Problems at the top edge of the bar		Angle too wide Excessive bar spread	Extremely narrow back	Broken tree	Upper edge of skirts too low creating line of pressure		Rider bounces