

MARKS OF QUALITY

Quality marks show that the requirements of certification have been met and the manufacturer has complied with an approved system of regulation and testing. They also indicate ongoing monitoring by independent bodies to ensure that the hats continue to be made to a high standard. Quality symbols include:

Kitemark

This is the registered trademark of the British Standards Institute. The Kitemark indicates that a company complies with a rigorous system of regulation and testing, including regular batch and audit testing of random samples. The triangular version of the logo is being phased out and is being replaced by a newer version.



IC Mark

This quality mark is operated by Inspec and applied to PAS 015 and VGI-compliant helmets.



SEI – Safety Equipment Institute

This quality mark is the American equivalent of the Kitemark for ASTM standard hats. The SEI is an organisation similar to the BSI and set up to ensure that a manufacturer's products meet the claimed standard. Its regulations include design approval and the audit testing of products. Hats must be tested at least annually and the company should show an internal auditing and quality-control system that might include batch testing.

SAI Global

The Quality Assurance Scheme of Australia's "five ticks" standard mark shows certification to its version of the Kitemark and calls for batch testing and company auditing.

CALLING TIME ON YOUR OLD HAT

Hats should always be replaced if they have suffered any sort of impact. Although they might appear fine on the outside, the inside could tell quite a different story. For this reason, BETA always encourages riders to invest in a new riding hat, rather than buying a second-hand one, where the provenance is unknown.



It's also time to say goodbye to your hat if it's more than a few years old because the protective liner and inner padding will have started to deteriorate and the safety standards might be out of date.

BETA-trained retailers are the best people to help you find your perfect riding hat. Just look out for a BETA Safety Course certificate displayed in-store, and ask for the person named on it, as they have been trained to offer a professional hat-fitting service.

HAT TAGGING

If you take part in competitions that require hats to be tagged, be aware that the tagging process only confirms that the hat has been made to one of the standards accepted by the governing body concerned. It does not check the fit or safety of the item.

A HELPING HAND

If you need a new riding hat or your current one needs checking, BETA-trained retailers are happy to help. To find your nearest one, visit the member directory at www.beta-uk.org.

Further information and advice about riding hats, fitting and general safety wear is also available from the BETA office. Please telephone Tina Hustler on 01937 587062, email tina@beta-uk.org or visit www.beta-uk.org

THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES ARE MEMBERS OF BETA AND HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS LEAFLET FOR YOUR BENEFIT.



Free copies of all BETA's leaflet guides can be ordered from the BETA office. Email Ann FitzGerald, ann@beta-uk.org, or order from BETA's online shop at www.beta-uk.org.

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BETA GUIDE TO RIDING HATS



Find out more about the correct fit, safety standards and quality marks



KEEPING YOU SAFE

A riding hat is one of the most important pieces of safety equipment you can buy. Modern technology means that you can choose from a huge range of extremely strong, lightweight and comfortable hats and skulls.

Wearing one can help to keep you as safe as possible by reducing the risk of serious injury. It is crucial, therefore, that a riding hat meets appropriate standards to ensure a high level of shock absorbency and prevent penetration. Making sure that a hat is a good fit with a correctly adjusted and fastened harness is also really important.

You can always buy a new hat, but your head is for life – so make sure it is protected!



CHOOSING A HAT



The type of hat you choose and the standard it complies with largely depends on the type of riding activity you take part in. If you compete under rules, it is always best to check each discipline's rule book before investing in a new one.

Although a hat can help to keep a rider as safe as possible, no hat can prevent serious injury under certain circumstances. You should always choose a hat based on the level of risk involved, choosing standards offering higher levels of protection where there is greater risk and the one that fits best.

FINDING A PERFECT FIT

A well-fitting hat sits firmly on the head – just above your eyebrows and ears – and should fit snugly all the way around the head with no pressure points at the temples. You can check for pressure points by flexing your jaw, which in turn, expands your temples. Pressure experienced when doing this indicates that a helmet is too tight and may cause discomfort after continued wear.



STRAPPING UP

No one would dream of getting on a horse without first checking the girth, so isn't it strange how many riders forget to check that the harness on their hat is correctly fastened.

A riding hat or skull's harness consists of two parts – a chin strap that sits neatly under the jaw and another component that fits round the back of the neck. Some hats may also incorporate a dial adjustment.



Many riders remember to do up their chin strap but the back strap is completely forgotten. Unfortunately, this is the very strap that helps to prevent the hat tipping forwards on to your nose.

Some harnesses, particularly those with lots of leather and lacing, are a little harder to fasten than others, so, if you need a helping hand, pop into your local BETA-trained retailer who will be happy to check it for you.



INSIDE STORY

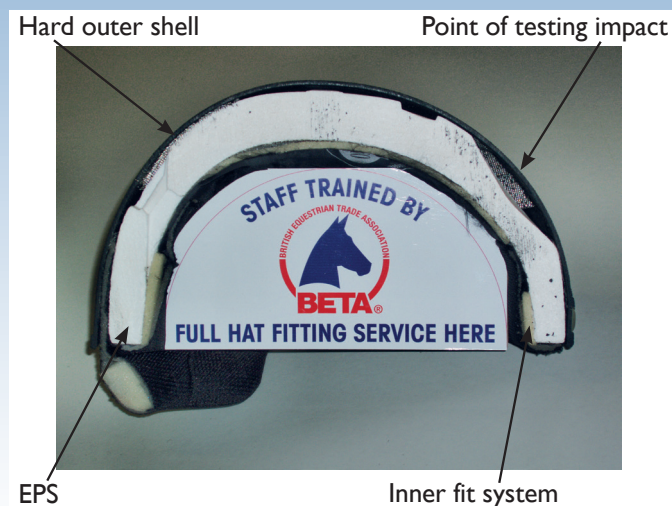
Outer surface – this can be made out of several materials including suede, velvet, leather or simply a textured paint. This surface slides across the source of impact and deflects the energy.

Hard shell – this is constructed from fibreglass, composite or ABS, which spreads the impact around the surface of the hat and crumples, absorbing energy from the impact.

EPS – this is the inner foam, which is created from expanded polystyrene. It is sometimes referred to as “microscopic bubble wrap”. This layer absorbs the remaining energy incurred during a fall and reduces possible concussion/the chance of concussion. Once it has suffered impact, the bubbles are unable to reinflate, which is why you should always replace your hat after hitting your head in a fall.

Inner fit system – this is the innermost fabric component which fits next to the head and makes the hat comfortable against your skin. The textured weave helps keep the hat in place and can form part of the sizing in some models.

Harness – this can be made from nylon or leather. It includes a chin/jaw strap and a strap or padded fabric at the back, which is available in various styles, such as with laces. Some helmets, however, do not feature anything to alter at the back.



SAFETY AS STANDARD

All riding hats and skulls should conform to one of the wide range of standards available and bear the CE Mark.

European standards are created by a technical committee made up of representatives from every EU state. They are reviewed every five years – or if there has been a complaint about efficacy. Not every review, however, results in the introduction of a new standard. History shows that one appears about every ten years. PAS standards are managed by the British Standards Institute (BSI) and reviewed every two years.

Suitable standards include the following:

(BS) EN 1384: 2017 – with or without Kitemark

This new version of the European standard was published in late 2017 and will be accepted for use by disciplines once harmonised.

VGI – with or without Kitemark or IC Mark

The testing specification is similar to that of EN 1384. As the VGI is an interim specification for the purpose of CE marking, it is unclear how long it will continue once the new version of EN 1384 appears on the market. Hats made to the VGI standard will continue to be accepted by UK disciplines and marketed for some time to come.

PAS 015: 1998/2011 – with or without Kitemark or IC Mark

PAS stands for product approval specifications, which are developed by the BSI. A difference in performance criteria exists between the two versions of PAS, with the 2011 standard demanding more from the hats than the previous one. It is expected that acceptance of the 1998 version will be phased out of discipline rules over the next year or two.

ASTM F1163: 2004a/2015 – with SEI mark

This American standard for riding hats is similar to PAS 015: 1998, although it does not include a mechanical strength (crushing) test or a penetration test, so the hats often feature quite large ventilation holes or slots. However, there are many helmets on the market with ventilation holes that pass both the PAS and EN 1384 penetration tests, as well as the ASTM standard.

Snell E2001/E2016

This standard was developed in the United States by the Snell Institute. It's a high-performance standard that includes all aspects of ASTM and PAS 015 but is tested with a sharper horseshoe anvil (to replicate a horse kick or impact with a sharp surface), higher impacts and an additional hemispherical anvil to represent an uneven but not sharp surface such as a tree, fence or cobbled surface.

The law requires children of 14 or younger to wear a hat conforming to the current European standard when riding on the road.

AS/NZS 3838: 2006 – with SAI global mark

This Australasian standard is comparable to EN 1384, although testing includes the hazard anvil from PAS 015 but not a penetration test.

CE Mark

The CE Mark is neither a quality mark nor a standard in itself, but a mandatory declaration under EU law by

a manufacturer to show compliance with essential requirements of all relevant EU directives. Under the Personal Protective Equipment Directive, all safety equipment must bear the CE mark to show that it meets the basic health and safety requirements often evidenced by certification to a recognised standard or specification.



Each standard shows that a hat has passed rigorous testing and has been found to offer appropriate levels of protection.

