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How to Pack a Saddle for Shipping

I have seen all sorts of interesting ways to pack a saddle when they are shipped back to me. Most of the time it is packed in a box that is too large and/or has too much extra stuff in the box. Pro-Tip: never use packing peanuts unless you hate your saddle fitter.

First off do not have a shipping store pack the saddle for you unless you really have too. They use a box that could fit three saddles and a lot of excessive material that is not needed resulting in extra cost.

A couple of example are:



Extra Material



Extra room in the box

This is how I recommend packing a saddle. One of the most important thing is to select a box that is an appropriate size. The box should be sized so that the saddle does not move around but it should not be so tight that the flocking is damaged or the flaps are excessively bent. Plus, the bigger the box, the more it costs to ship. Suitable boxes can generally be found at home improvement stores like Lowes or Home Depot. Another source is moving stores such as U-Haul, however I find their boxes a little flimsy. I recommend double walled boxes usually labeled as heavy duty. For most English saddles, you can get one saddle in a box that is 18" x 16" x 22". This is not a common size if you cannot find it, I recommend a 18" x 18" x 24" box that is frequently available.

To further protect the saddle from rubs, I recommend wrapping it with a thin sheet of foam or bubble wrap placed under the saddle cover. The important parts to cover are over the front of the pommel, the seat, and any area of the saddle with more delicate type of leather like patent. For calf skin, consider adding more foam or covering with multiple layers. I also like to put the saddle in a 55 gallon size trash bag to protect from water damage.

Examples of a properly wrapped saddle are:



Foam coving the front of the pommel and seat before the saddle cover.

The next step is to place it into the box. This really depends on where the opening is on the box. If you can, it is best to place the saddle pommel down or on the seat. I do not like to place a lot of weight on the blocks if you can help it. They are more delicate. Then tape up the box.

Example:



Saddle in trash bag placed pommel down in box

When I place the label on the box, I use the packing tape to cover the entire label so it is more water proof and less likely to be ripped off. I have also seen people use ziplock bags with the label inside. You can also include a copy of the label inside the box or write contact info on the inside of the box. Generally, for trials, you are responsible for the saddle until it gets back to the saddle fitter. This include the time is it in transit back to me and I because of this, I recommend shipping insurance to cover any damage while in transit. I do not like signature required if you can help it on the box. I have a lock box on my front porch for deliveries and I am never home to receive packages. However, if shipping to somewhere else, check to see what they prefer.