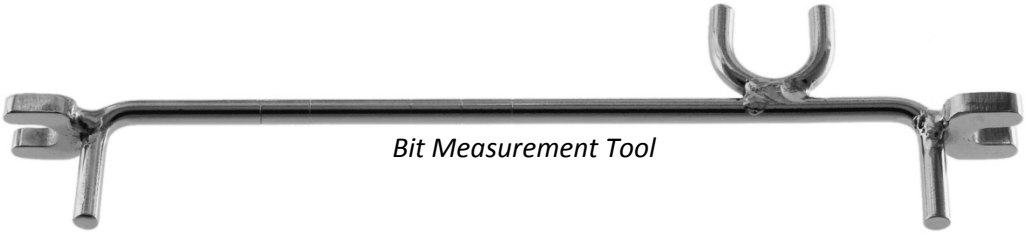
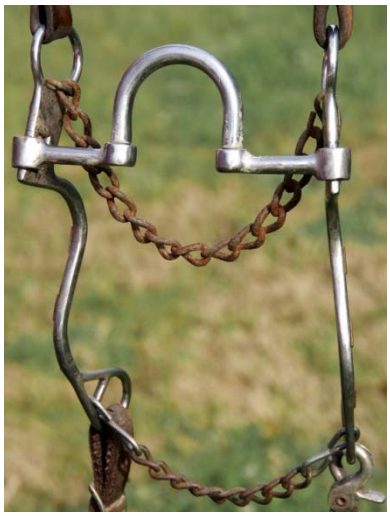
How to Check & Measure a Bit



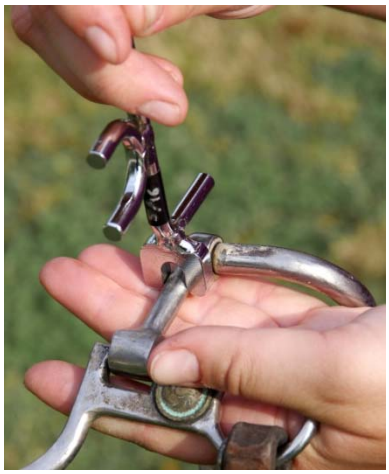
Bit Measurement Tool

1. Be sure to have the original current-year Rulebook as well as the Bit Supplement which has all of the diagrams and examples. You will also want the bit measurement tool and something with a straight edge. If you do not have a bit measurement tool, you can do pretty well with measuring tape and a crescent wrench (with etched calibrations). *(Note: text in this style will pertain to the example bit when making judgment on each step.)*

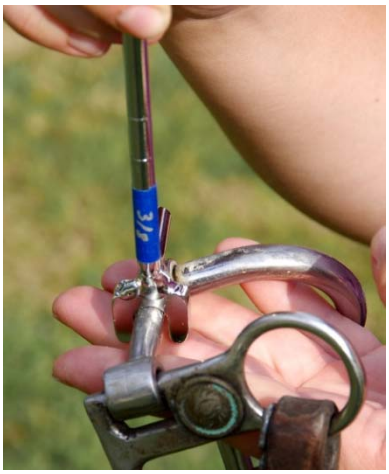


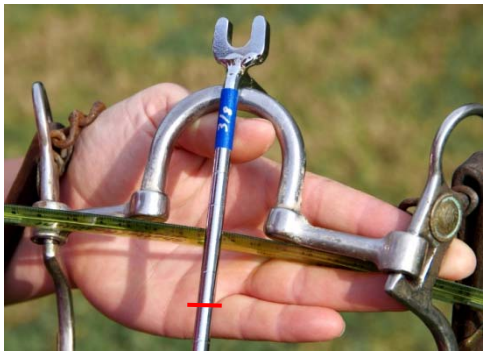
2. Look at the bit and determine if its physical characteristics (not necessarily measurements yet) fit the rules for the division. *Our example is a curb with a 3-piece broken mouthpiece to be used in the Western Division.*
   a. Is the basic type of bit allowed in that division? Meaning snaffle, curb, bosal, hackamore, gag action, etc. *Yes a curb bit is standard for Western.*
   b. Does the shank/ring style fit what is acceptable? *Yes, loose shanks are fine.*
   c. For all divisions' bits except Hunter snaffles, is the mouthpiece smooth? This will be a key determination for many bits. *Yes, this one is smooth, including the joints by the port.*
   d. Is the style of mouthpiece acceptable? One-piece vs. two or three, or what shapes the pieces are. *Yes, this one is 3-piece which is hinged at either side of the port.*
   e. If it is a hackamore or bosal, is it the appropriate type for the division? Is it flexible over and under the nose and made of the allowable materials?

3. After determining that all of the physical characteristics fit within the rules, it is time to measure. It might be helpful to mark the measurement tool to make it easier to tell one end from another. For the example, we marked ours with blue tape on the 3/8" end, and black tape on the 5/16" end. A crescent wrench can also be used to measure diameters <1".



4. Mouthpieces of almost all bits have to be at least 5/16" wide, measured 1" in from the cheek (exception is Dressage, which is 3/8" at cheek). For most, you can see at a glance that it is wider than 5/16", but go ahead and put the tool on it so the exhibitor knows you looked at that aspect. *This bit has a fairly thin mouthpiece, but the 5/16" end of the tool does not fit over it (left photo), so it is an acceptable size. Labeling the tool is helpful here, because the 3/8" end fits freely over the mouthpiece (right photo). It would be easy to use the wrong end of the tool and mistake this bit for being too thin.*





5. Measure anything else required by the rules of the division for which the bit will be used. Refer to the key for the measurement tool to see where to find the various measurement standards.
   a. The port height of any bit with a port (any division) – It will be helpful to have a straight edge to place at the bottom of the bars to have an accurate line as the 'bottom' when measuring the height. *This bit comes in well under the allowed height for Western (the 3½" line is emphasized in red in the picture.)*
   b. The shank length of any bit with shanks (any division) – The bit tool is 8½" long from the outside of each of the bent down bars. Place one end through the headstall ring and push it against the inside, top of the ring. Then look at where the other end reaches compared to the pull-point of the rein. *This bit is 8" (which is also exactly the length from inside to inside of each end of the tool).*
   c. The connecting bar or o-ring size of broken mouthpieces.
   d. The cheek ring size of western snaffles.
   e. The maximum widths of all mouthpieces.
6. Look at any attached equipment which affects the legality of the bit. For example, if the curb chain is allowable, or if a Pelham or Weymouth is being used with two sets of reins. *This bit's curb chain measures exactly ½" and lays flat. It may be ugly, but it is allowable.*
7. If all of the above parameters and measurements fit the rules for the division, the bit is legal. If it is not, and there is still time for the exhibitor to rectify the problem, he/she may return with a different bit or modify the equipment (switch curb chains) to make the bit acceptable. The bit may not be wrapped to make it smooth.

Key to the Bit Measurement Tool