

University of Arkansas 4-H and FFA Horse Judging Manual

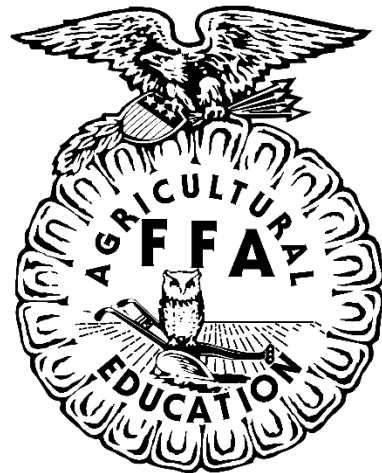


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GIVING REASONS

While a major emphasis in a 4-H and FFA horse judging program is placed on students learning to evaluate horses objectively, equal importance is placed on students learning to discuss and defend judgments rendered in the process of placing a class of horses. The combined process of placing horses, then defending those placings, teaches students to be totally objective, honest, and fair in their approach to evaluating horses. Further, this process of giving reasons discourages student judges from rendering opinions which may be based on personal likes and dislikes, and encourages them to make defensible judgments in regard to current standards in the horse industry.

Another major purpose for giving reasons in judging contests is that it offers an opportunity for students to learn how to think, organize thoughts, and speak about those thoughts in a refereed environment. Students who master those skills find them useful in many ways for the rest of their lives. Many leaders in agriculture, business, and industry had judging team experience, and they frequently point to the reasons process as significant in developing leadership abilities.

Giving reasons should be a positive, pleasant learning experience for students. Students should be encouraged, not discouraged, when giving reasons, and they should gain confidence in themselves through practice. Performance in the reasons room by students who are prepared should be evaluated from a positive view, rather than a negative view, giving every advantage possible to students who do a good job. Reasons judges should never use a negative, penalizing “fault out” system for scoring reasons. Reasons judges should be positive. Their actions toward students and their scoring method should reflect a positive approach.

Before most students, and even experienced judges, are able to give an effective set of reasons, it is necessary for them to spend considerable time learning the anatomy of the horse and proper terminology. Then they must gain experience. In order to give a competent set of reasons, it is necessary to train the mind to absorb and retain a mental image of the good and bad characteristics of a horse. The judge must develop a vocabulary based on current industry terminology that will enable him/her to state these points accurately, concisely, and effectively.

In learning to give a good set of reasons, a judge develops the following skills:

1. The ability to make a decision after weighing all points of consideration.
2. The ability to present and defend a decision.
3. The ability to stand and speak with confidence to a group of people or an individual.

Rules and reminders for giving a set of reasons in a judging contest:

1. Learn to *visualize* the animals. Do *not* read your notes in the reasons room. It is more beneficial to visualize the horses than your notebook when giving a set of reasons.
2. Talk in a *slightly* louder than ordinary voice. Be confident and enthusiastic, but do not shout. When contestants shout in a reasons room, they can appear over bearing and become un-conversational.
3. Stand approximately four to six feet in front of the reasons-taker. (Hint: If you were to fall straight forward, your forehead should land on the listener's feet.)
4. Always start your reasons by giving the class name and your placing, followed by the reasons why you placed the class that way.
5. Be sure to *compare* each animal to the one you placed below. Simply stating that a horse was a "good looper" will not accurately describe the qualities of the horse. There are many definitions of a what a good looper is and thus could lead to a differing opinion. Explain how the horse's lope was comparatively better. See #6 and #7 for a more in-depth description.
6. Use *comparative* terminology. Note: Most of the terms used are adjectives ending in "er," like heavier, taller, wider, deeper, etc., or the word "more" prior to a descriptive term. The only time superlative terms may be used is when describing the first- or last-place animal. (Superlative terms end in "est," like tightest, longest, shortest, etc.)
7. *NEVER* use indefinite terms, such as better, good, nice, best, etc., which explain nothing about the class and do not compare one horse to another.
8. Proper *organization* is important. Follow the format set out later in this guide, and discuss each animal in a logical and systematic manner.
9. *Don't memorize* your reasons. Always think about the class and picture the animals in your mind.
10. Do *not* learn one set of reasons and apply it to each class. No two animals are alike, and each class differs greatly.
11. Big, fancy words are not important. Use *well-known* and *straightforward terminology* that is easily understood by the untrained horseman and accepted in the equine industry.
12. The *truth* about a class is the most important factor in giving reasons. Be accurate and do not make up points that were not true just to make your reasons longer.
13. There is *no substitute for accuracy*. (Reasons are scored approximately 75 percent on truth and accuracy and only 25 percent on organization and delivery.)

14. A set of reasons does not need to be long. A minute and a half should be sufficient if you are organized. *Two minutes is the maximum time limit* without penalty.

15. Always be prepared to answer questions concerning the class. If you can readily visualize the class in your mind, answering questions will be easy.

16. Train yourself to give a good set of reasons. To be able to give reasons takes practice. However, learning a format and flow makes it much easier. Here are some suggestions to improve your reasons:

- a. *Practice* giving reasons to other people.
- b. *Practice* writing reasons just as though you were speaking them.
- c. *Practice* giving reasons in front of a mirror.
- d. *Practice* your reasons using a video camera or a tape recorder to hear yourself.

17. *Look people in the eye* when you talk to them. This conveys confidence and conviction in what you are saying and is a more conversational method of communicating.

18. *Stand up straight*. Do not slouch, move around, or "speak" with your hands. Keep your hands in front of you or behind your back. You are making a presentation to an official and should give them proper respect.

Reasons should be accurate and specific, and proper terminology should be used to describe the individual horses. A good set of reasons should describe a class in such a way that someone listening to the reasons that have never seen the class can visualize the animals and "see" them in their mind.

The organization of reasons, or the "flow," should unfold in a definite order. Although the organization should follow a definite pattern, each person giving reasons will develop an individual approach that is convenient to their way of speaking. A set of reasons should be comparative in nature, using a minimum of descriptive terms.

In addition, terminology within a set of reasons should vary and not appear monotonous due to a repetition of terms and expressions. Presentation, or delivery, is an important part of giving reasons. Oral reasons should be spoken in a pleasant and pleasing voice. They should be given in a convincing, confident manner with the utmost conviction, but they should never be shouted or given in an offensive manner. A good set of reasons should leave the official with a favorable impression of the reasons-giver. Remember, the maximum time for presenting a set of reasons is two minutes, so it is important to be concise and discuss only the factors that influenced your placing.

ORGANIZING AND TAKING NOTES

In competitive horse judging, students are often required to give reasons for their decisions several hours after they have placed a class. Therefore, it is necessary for students to take an adequate amount of notes on a class as they judge it.

Also, it can be helpful to circle large differences in animals, therefore highlighting and bringing them to attention. In the blanks next to each of the numbers, write the identification points (IDs) of each horse. These can be color, markings, blemishes, or any distinguishing characteristics that help the students remember and describe each individual horse. Each person will probably develop his/her own method of taking notes, but the important thing is to get the essential facts into your set of notes. Many judges develop a type of shorthand, using abbreviations while taking notes, which save them time.

After taking notes, write your order of placement at the top of the page. You should make certain that this agrees with the placings you write on the card that will be turned in to contest officials. Also, make sure the proper class name and number are placed on the appropriate card and respective note page before turning the card in.

When preparing to give a set of oral reasons, use the notes previously taken on the class to prepare an ordered, concise set of reasons. The easiest way to set up a notepad to give a set of reasons is to take a page and write both the name of the class and your placing at the top of the page (Figure 1). Then, divide the rest of the page into a “9-box system” as shown below. In placing a class of the standard four horses, there will be three pairs. For example, if a class is placed 2-1-4-3, 2 and 1 are the top (initial) pair, 1 and 4 are the middle (intermediate) pair, and 4 and 3 are the bottom (concluding) pair.

Prior to your 9-box system, you should give an opening statement including the class name and your placing. In box 1, compare your first and second place horses, highlighting the better qualities in the first place horse. The “big boxes” are boxes 1, 4 and 7. These boxes should contain more information than others. Ideally, your first sentence in these boxes will include a “bingo word” or broad criteria. Then the next sentences in these boxes should be used to supply supporting details for this bingo word. In box 2, supply a grant, or good quality for your second place horse. In box 3, criticize your second place horse and explain why they must stay second. These three boxes create your first out of three pairs in a set of reasons. Boxes 4-6 follow the same guidelines but refer to your middle pair of horses (those placed second and third). Boxes 7-9 follow the same pattern but pertain to your last pair of horses (those placed third and fourth).

By using this grid system for organizing a set of reasons, it is easier for the student to format the important facts in a logical manner without jumping from one animal to another. It is easiest to describe in-hand or halter classes in the following manner: Each horse should be discussed front to rear and/or top to bottom in order to create a coherent image in the listener’s mind.

By organizing each horse's description this way, the reasons-giver is "painting a picture" of each individual horse for the official. Furthermore, it is a consistent, logical format that is easy to remember and follow for both the reasons-giver and reasons-listener.

Performance classes without a pattern should be described in a slightly different manner. It is effective to use cause and effect statements regarding the horses' brokenness, consistency and quality of movement in order to illustrate your understanding of equine movements. For example: "3 was more responsive to his rider's more subtle cues, allowing him to be more consistent in frame and headset at the lope".

In a pattern class, each horse should be discussed in the order of the maneuvers of the pattern from start to finish. Again, as the maximum time for a set of reasons is two minutes, it is imperative to stress the important facts within a class and not get bogged down with details that did not affect the placing. Ideally, a set of reasons should be completed in 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 minutes.

Class Name :		Placing:	
Opening Statement:			
Box 1: 1/2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color of horse and other identification that will help you remember the horse • Compare 1 over 2 • Use a bingo word and at least two supporting details. 	Box 2: 2/1 Grant of 2 over 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You should always be able to find a grant for your 2nd place horse. They are 2nd for a reason! 		
	Box 3: 1/2 Criticize 2 and explain why he must be left 2 nd <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can be beneficial to use identifying color in all criticism boxes. 		
Box 4: 2/3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color of horse and other identification that will help you remember the horse • Why 2 beats 3 • Use a bingo word and at least two supporting details. 	Box 5: 3/2 Grant 3 over 2		
	Box 6: 2/3 Criticize 3 and explain why he must be left 3 rd		
Box 7: 3/4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color of horse and other identification that will help you remember the horse • Why 3 beats 4 • Use a bingo word and at least two supporting details. 	Box 8: 4/3 Grant 4 over 3		
	Box 9: 3/4 Criticize 4 and explain why he must be left 4 th		

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD REASONS

1. **Organization:** Styles of reasons will vary with individual personalities and coaching methods, but all reasons should be well-organized and systematic. Within that framework, judges should score well organized reasons similarly, with no preference given to individual style. The basic approach is the comparison of animals in three pairs: the top pair, the middle pair and the bottom pair. Other additions will be included and are perfectly acceptable as long as the basic organization is followed. However, reasons should not consist of a simple description of each animal. The focus should be on why one animal in a pair was placed over the other animal in that pair.
2. **Relevancy:** Reasons should reflect the actual differences in the pair and consist primarily of those points of comparison that were significant in the placing of the pair. Use of comparative or descriptive reasons that are irrelevant or unimportant in the placing of the pair are discouraged and should be scored lower. Judges should be alert to the so-called “canned” or pre-prepared reasons that may sound good, but, in fact, do not fit the particular points.
3. **Accuracy:** Truth is the primary consideration in scoring reasons. Students should be credited for accurate statements regardless of how the horses may be placed. Redundancy in terminology describing similar points of discussion between separate pairs of horses should be avoided. Errors of omission are to be considered when the student leaves out something important, but inaccurate statements are considered the major fault in a set of reasons. A complete and accurate set of reasons should receive a high score, even when placings differ from official placings. Official judges are cautioned to listen carefully for accuracy and should not penalize the reasons score simply because the student’s placing is different from the official placing. It is entirely possible for a student to receive a high reasons score with a low placing score.
4. **Terminology:** Some emphasis should be placed on use of terms commonly used to discuss horses or performances. Terminology will vary among students, but it should reflect terminology commonly used among horsemen. Major emphasis should be placed on comparative rather than descriptive terminology. However, descriptive terminology can be used to a limited extent in the opening statements and to describe faults.
5. **Presentation:** Oral reasons should be presented in a poised, confident, convincing manner, but they should never convey arrogance. Loud, boisterous, arrogant delivery is not desirable and should be penalized. Likewise, shy, timid, unconvincing presentations should not receive the highest scores. Reasons should be presented in a relaxed, conversational manner. The presentation should not contain lengthy pauses

and must be delivered within two minutes. Speaking manner will vary, but all students should use correct English. Oral reasons should be grammatically correct with proper pronunciation and enunciation of words and syllables. While good presentation is important, reasons judges are cautioned that this is not a contest of oratory at the expense of accuracy, relevancy, organization and terminology used in discussing a particular class of horses.

GRADING AND SCORING REASONS

Reasons scores are to be reflective of organization, relevancy, accuracy, terminology and presentation of reasons, regardless of the student’s placing of the class. A bad placing must not automatically result in a low reasons score. If students see the differences in the horses and reflect those differences accurately in their reasons, they must not be penalized on the reason’s score because their emphasis for placing the horses was different than that of the official judges. Reading reasons from notes should be strongly discouraged at judging contests. It is recommended to inform students that they will receive a zero score if they read their reasons verbatim. This is designed to encourage students to practice and give reasons without notes, as it will make the process of learning to give reasons more expedient.

Reasons should be graded, then scored as per the following outline:

REASONS PERFORMANCE	GRADE	SCORE RANGE
Good to Excellent	A	46-50
Above Average to Good	B	41-45
Average	C	36-40
Below Average	D	31-35
Poor	E	30 and below

A contestant who is reasonably well prepared and gets through a complete set of reasons should never receive a score less than 25. A contestant who reads their reasons will be given a score no higher than 25.

Reasons judges should mark the contestant’s reasons score on the individual cards provided for each participant. The cards will have only the contestant’s number for identification, and care must be taken to ensure contestants and cards are in the proper order and agree when the score is recorded. It is also advised to keep a master sheet of scores for contestants in case a card is lost or score questioned.

ETIQUETTE IN THE REASONS ROOM: Official Judges

Reasons judges must be continually aware that their actions and mannerisms can be stimulation or distracting to the student presenting reasons. Judges should be polite and encouraging to the student and should never present a harsh, critical attitude. Judges must be

aware that any personal action can have either positive or negative influences on the students as they prepare for the next set of reasons or future contests. Emphasis should be on a positive attitude, not on excess criticism.

There is no need for judges to attempt to educate contestants individually during the reasons session. Teaching is the responsibility of the coaches. Judges should focus their attention on the accuracy and quality of reasons performances, irrespective of the class placing. Remember, contestants have already been awarded points for their class placings. Also, reasons judges should never tell contestants the correct placing of a class.

It is particularly important that judges avoid any mannerisms which may be distracting to students. Eating, drinking, smoking, chewing, etc. must be avoided while students are presenting reasons. Also, judges must not stand, move around, use excessive eye and head movements, yawn, etc. while students are presenting reasons. Judges must be aware the student who is presenting reasons is trying very hard to concentrate on the class of horses, and mannerisms or actions of the reason judge must not cause a break in their concentration.

ETIQUETTE IN THE REASONS ROOM: Students

Before entering the reasons room, the student should be focused and ready to deliver their reasons. The student should not be chewing gum and may **not** use any sort of written notes. Should a contestant use notes at any time during the set of reasons, he or she should not expect to make higher than a score of 25 for the set.

One should place their feet shoulder width apart, keeping their feet and hands stationary with their eyes fixed at the judge's forehead or eyes. Students may begin their reasons upon the judge's acknowledgement. There is no reason to say anything to the reasons taker other than "hello." Avoid statements such as: "Are you ready" and "Can I go ahead and begin." The reasons taker will be ready for you to begin, or they will let you know otherwise.

REASONS FORMAT

The opening statement of a student's reasons should include the class name, the placing, and the most obvious, unarguable good and/or bad statement about the class. Reasons are comparative between each pair. Each pair should cover two or three main points.

Simply format your reasons by comparing your top, middle and bottom pairs. Each pair should include a grant. For example, you placed horse 1 over 2 and discussed why throughout your top pair. Before moving to your middle pair, however, you should grant something that 2 did or had better than 1. Include these grants in all your pairs.

Close your reasons explaining why you placed the final horse last. Finally, you may optionally restate the class name and your placings.

The next few pages will break down each portion of a set of reasons and give you good and poor examples of each.

OPENING STATEMENT

Making an accurate and unique opening statement is extremely desirable because it makes a good first impression on the reasons judge. However if one should give a poor opening statement or lie it makes it hard to gain respect from the official and receive a high score. That is why being honest is the most important part of the opening statement as well as any other part of reasons. With more experience, opening statements can become more creative and flashy. An opening statement should have the name and placing of the class along with the two critical details placing the top horse first and the bottom horse last. Every class is different so having different opening statements is good. The opening statement should be short and to the point as well as accurate.

Good Examples:

- I placed the Aged Geldings 1, 2, 3 and 4 finding an obvious winner in 1 who best combined quality, balance and muscling to the highest degree and ending with the lightest made.
- I placed the reining 1,2,3,4 beginning with the athlete that challenged the pattern to the highest degree and ending with the most heavily penalized.

Bad Examples:

- I placed the Aged Geldings 1, 2, 3, and 4. Finding this to be a two pair class.
- Sir, I placed the Aged Mares 1, 2, 3, and 4. 4 is the heaviest muscled horse in the class who is nicely balanced.

Good example (whole middle pair):

In my middle pair, balance alone placed 2 over 3. The buckskin stood on a longer, more laid back shoulder and was deeper hipped, allowing him to be shorter over his topline in relation to a shorter underline. I will say 3 was wider from stifle to stifle when viewed from behind. However, the gray was steeper through his shoulder and shallower hipped, leaving him third.

Note the use of “balanced placed 2 over 3.” You should avoid “I preferred” or “I believe.” Here, you bingo word “balance” places the pair for you.

Bad example (bottom pair):

- In the bottom pair I prefer 3 over 4. 3 is a eye appealing horse who is heavy muscled and well muscled. 4 is heavy muscled but is the least desirable to look at on the profile.

GRANTS:

Grants give the reasons giver a chance to give credit to horses that are placed under another horse. There are three grants given through the course of a set of reasons. Once in the 1st pair, again in the second pair and finally a grant will be given for the last place animal. Grants may be very obvious or very slight depending on how close the pair was. Generally your grants should be short and to the point. The main goal like always is to be honest and accurate; this shows the reason taker that you saw the class correctly, which will help you score higher on your reasons.

Good Example:

- There’s no doubt that 2 is a higher quality individual, being cleaner through his throatlatch and longer necked. Unfortunately.....

Note in these examples that there is a grant followed by “but”, “unfortunately” or “however.” This means that you are going to grant the horse and then fault it and say why it is still placed where you placed it. This is called the grant-fault method.

Good Example:

- Clearly 2, is the more athletic moving, driving deeper with his hocks and being longer strided, however.....

Bad Example:

- 2 is well balanced, but lacks.....

Terms to use when granting:

- I realize
- I concede
- I recognize
- I appreciate
- I respect
- I am aware
- It was obvious
- It was apparent
- Clearly
- Obviously
- There is no doubt
- Now sure,

- I will say

CRITICISMS:

After you have granted a horse you then critique it and explain why it placed where it did. Criticizing is a lot like granting back to a horse. You should only say a few things and make sure that you're honest. If there is obvious problem with the horse then let the reason taker know that it was easy for you to see that problem. But always be careful to not be too critical or say too many negative things on horse so you do not offend anyone. If a horse is that bad just give a generalized statement, there is no need to list every problem with it when everyone else can see the same things.

Good Example:

- However, the sorrel was a lower quality individual being coarser through his throatlatch and shorter necked so he must stay third. Still, it is 3 over 4 in the bottom pair.....
- ...but, the gray stands slightly sickle hocked so he must stay third. Nevertheless, it is 3's muscle that still places 3 over 4 in the bottom.....

Bad Example:

- 3 was somewhat light muscled and was slightly lower quality than 4.

Bad Example:

- 3 was the lightest muscled horse who was also poor balanced and had the worst structure as well as lacking shape and expression to its muscle shape and was toed in.

Transition terminology, or the words used to transition from box to box, can be reused in a predetermined pattern between a contestant's sets of reasons. We call this a student's reasons "skeleton". However, details about horses should always be custom-tailored depending on the class.

To transition between pairs, a student should use smooth transitions that help the judge follow the reasons from pair to pair without confusion. The best transition terms do not always come from a list or a book; some of the best terms can be learned from your fellow students.

The following table will provide you with terminology to assist in transitioning through pairs.

Opening for Pairs	Continuing Terms for Pairs	Grants	Criticism	Closing
Beginning Opening Moving to Continuing with Coming to Concerning the In analyzing In discussing Closing with Culminating with Concluding with Even so	Further Furthermore In addition Additionally Moreover Beyond this Coupled by Complimented by Also	Granted I grant I realize None the less I appreciate that Undoubtedly I recognize that I did recognize I concede I contrast Now sure I will say I acknowledge However I readily admit	I criticize I fault However Nevertheless Unfortunately	Thus Therefore In closing Culminating with Reaching a final placing

BINGO WORDS:

Bingo words are used to introduce the central point in each pair. This is a technique that is not used by many people so it allows you to set yourself apart from the competition. Bingo words should be used on the most important or obvious fact that needs to be brought to the reasons takers attention first. The use of bingo words helps to prioritize your reason with the most important to the least important.

Examples:

Muscle alone placed 1 over 2.....

Quality of movement clearly placed 3 over 4.....

Balance and quality easily sorted 2 over 3.....

Stops coupled with spins placed 2 over 1.....

TRANSITIONS:

Transitions are simply a way of moving smoothly from one section of the reasons to another. This is done as simply as possible while still maintaining a smooth transition. Transitions are good way to bring out creativity. The reasons giver can use unique and original terms that will set them apart from the competition.

- Directing your attention
- In addition
- I admire

- I understand
- Surprisingly
- But in reality
- But after this
- Without a doubt
- On the other hand
- However
- Plus
- Besides this
- Furthermore
- Although
- Even so
- There was a definite Advantage

Many of these will also work as grants.

CLOSING STATEMENT:

A closing statement should be brief and to the point. After you have stated why you place the last horse you will provide a closing statement that helps provide a finished presentation to your reasons. There are many different acceptable styles. A popular one the students is: Therefore the Aged Mares are placed 1, 2, 3, and 4. This allows you to restate your placing and still be short and to the point. **CLOSING STATEMENTS ARE NOT ALWAYS NECESSARY.**

Good Example:

Three is the least functionally correct and acquired the most penalty points thus placing at the bottom of the class. Therefore the Reining is placed 1, 2, 4, and 3.

EXAMPLE REASONS

Aged Mares

I placed the aged mares 1, 2, 3, and 4 beginning with the most modern profiling and ending with the coarsest made.

It is easily a matter balance that keeps 1 over 2 in my initial pair. The bay stands on a longer, more laid back shoulder and is deeper through her hip. This allows her to be shorter over her topline in relation to her underline, creating a more easily divisible profile.

I will say 2 stood taller at the withers. However, the gray is steeper shouldered and shallower hipped, so she must stay second.

Even so, in my intermediate pair, it is a combination of structural correctness and muscling that keeps 2 over 3. The gray stands stronger through her knees while showing a more appropriate set through her pasterns and hocks. In addition, she shows more prominent muscle bulge through her forearms and gaskins.

I do see that 3 is slightly shorter over her topline, but the sorrel stands over at the knees and earns her home in third.

Moving on to my final pair, it is a simple matter of quality that keeps 3 over 4. The sorrel shows a more attractive head, being shorter from muzzle to poll and wider from eye to eye. Also, she is cleaner through her throatlatch and longer necked.

Now there is no denying that 4 stands wider through her chest floor when viewed from the front. Nevertheless, I fault the coarse-made black and leave her fourth as she is the longest topped, poorest balanced, giving me no choice but to leave her fourth.

TIPS FOR PRACTICING REASONS

The best way to get good at giving reasons is just to give them over and over and over. Say your reasons out loud with your eyes focus on a stationary object or person; you can even practice in front of the mirror. Complete your reasons every time you give them. Don't stop and start over just because you got lost or stumbled on your words. If you do get lost, simply take a deep breath and continue; Do not make the judge aware of your mistake.

Sources: Dr. Bob Mowrey, Dr. David Denniston, Dr. Kris Wilson, and Dr. Jim Heird

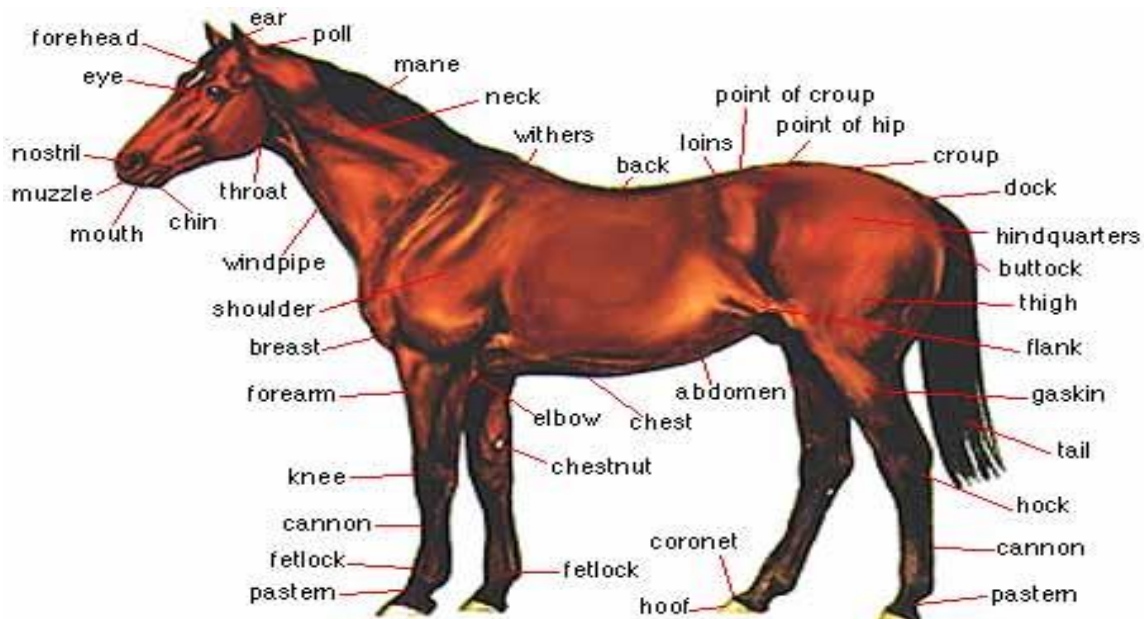
Halter

CLASS DESCRIPTION

The halter class is a class where the horse is judged based upon its conformation, overall appearance, and usefulness. Conformation is defined as the physical appearance of a horse due to the arrangement of muscle, bone, and other body tissues. Keep in mind that very few classes will possess the “ideal” quarter horse. Also, the horse that may win the class isn’t necessarily a high quality horse, only the highest quality of the horses in that particular class. Thus, the purpose of the halter class is to preserve and reward the ideal type by selecting individuals in order of their resemblance to the breed ideal and select those that have the most positive combination of the following factors:

1. Balance
2. Structure
3. Quality
4. Muscle

When evaluating a halter class, the above four factors should be used (in that order) to select and rank the horses being judged. Further, proper horse judging begins with understanding the parts of the horse. Before progressing through each section of the halter section, it is important to familiarize yourself with the parts of the horse.

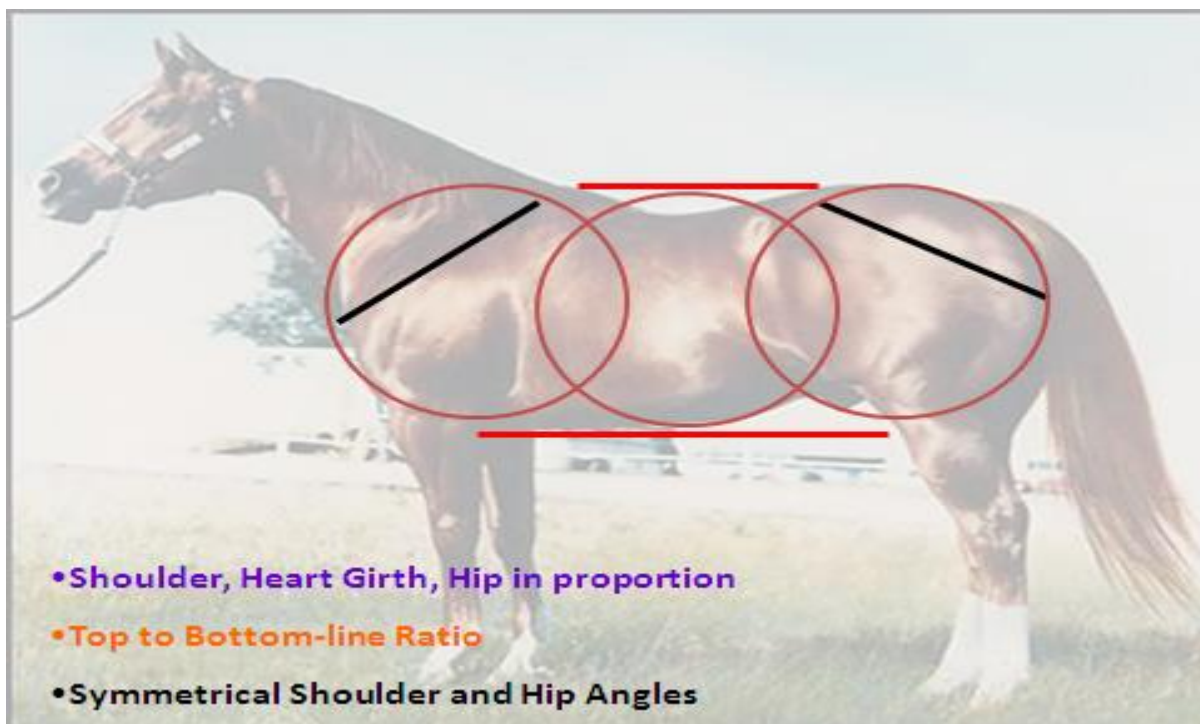


BALANCE

Balance is the single most important criteria for judging the halter horse.

Balance refers to the structural and aesthetic or smooth blending of body parts, and balance is influenced almost entirely by skeletal structure. Normally when describing balance, horses are referred to as being balanced from front to back and from top to bottom.

A correctly balanced horse from front to back should be equally divisible into three parts of length of shoulder, length of top line, and length of hindquarter. Also, balance from front to back is largely dependent on the angles of a horse's shoulder and hip. Slope of shoulder changes when the angle of the shoulder is increased or decreased. This can be easily visualized if you draw an imaginary trapezoid on the side of the horse with the top and bottom of the trapezoid being the back and underline and the sides of the trapezoid being the slope of the shoulder and hip. If a horse is steep in the shoulder and hip, then the top line of the trapezoid becomes longer and subsequently the back of the horse is longer. If the horse is more laid back in the shoulder angle then the top line of the trapezoid becomes shorter and the horse has a shorter back. Another thing to remember about assessing balance from this aspect is that most of the time when a horse is incorrectly balanced, they will be long in the back. Rarely do you ever penalize a horse for being too long in the hindquarter or shoulder. Normally, the long-backed horse will also be short in the hindquarter. It is ideal to have a short top line and a long underline of the body. A long back coincides with the short neck of the straight-shouldered horse. In addition to overall balance, slope of shoulder influences length of stride.



Balance should also be evaluated from the top to bottom of the horse. This simply means that a correctly balanced horse should have the same length of the front leg as the depth of the heartgirth.

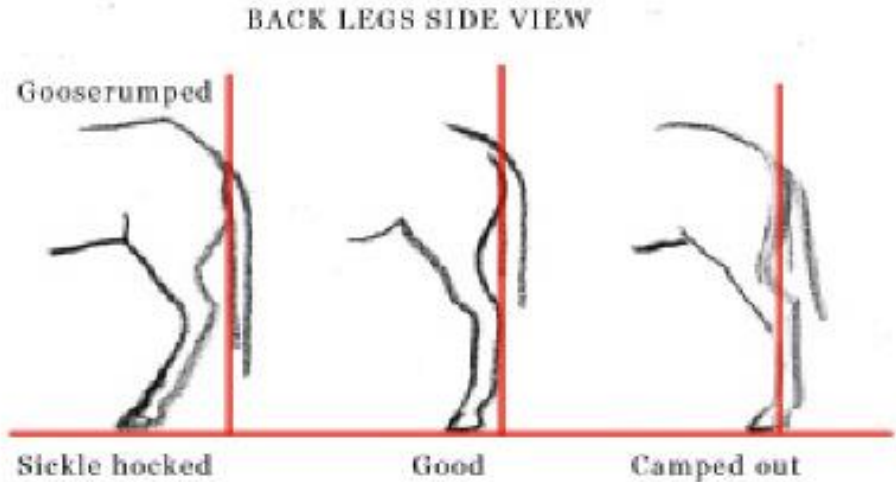
The heart girth is measured from the top of the horse's withers to the bottom of the chest behind the horse's elbow when viewing them from the side. In other words, the heartgirth is measured where you would position a girth or cinch if you were saddling the horse. Horses that are incorrectly balanced from this aspect are termed shallow hearted. Consequently, as was observed in the front to back balance, rarely would you ever call a horse too deep in the heartgirth. Normally, an incorrectly balanced horse from this aspect is shallow in the heartgirth.

STRUCTURAL CORRECTNESS

*Structure refers to the alignment of a horse's skeletal system. Structural correctness is an important aspect of judging halter horses because of the old adage "**form is related to function.**"*

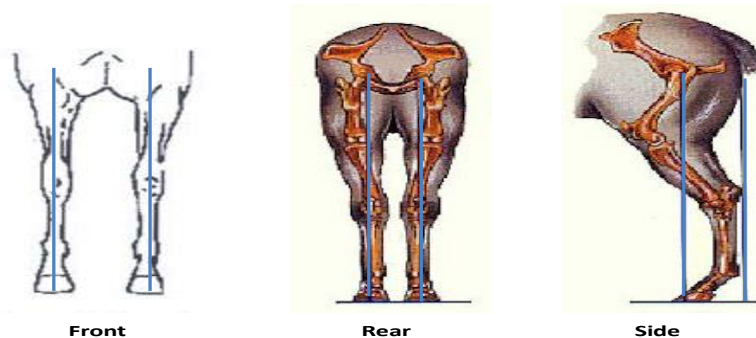
If a horse is not correctly formed, then that horse will most likely not be able to function as correctly as an ideally formed horse. This also refers to a horse's longevity. Horses that are not structurally correct are more likely to break down than horses of superior structural correctness. Simply put, a horse with structural problems will most likely not last as long as the horse that is free of any structural abnormalities.

When assessing structure in horse judging, one should evaluate the horse from the front, rear, and side views. When analyzing structure from the side view, one should drop an imaginary line from the tail head to the ground. In a correctly balanced horse, this line will touch the back of the hock and should run down the back of the leg from the hock to the fetlock and then down to the ground. Two of the most undesirable deviations from this view are often termed sickle hocked and post legged.

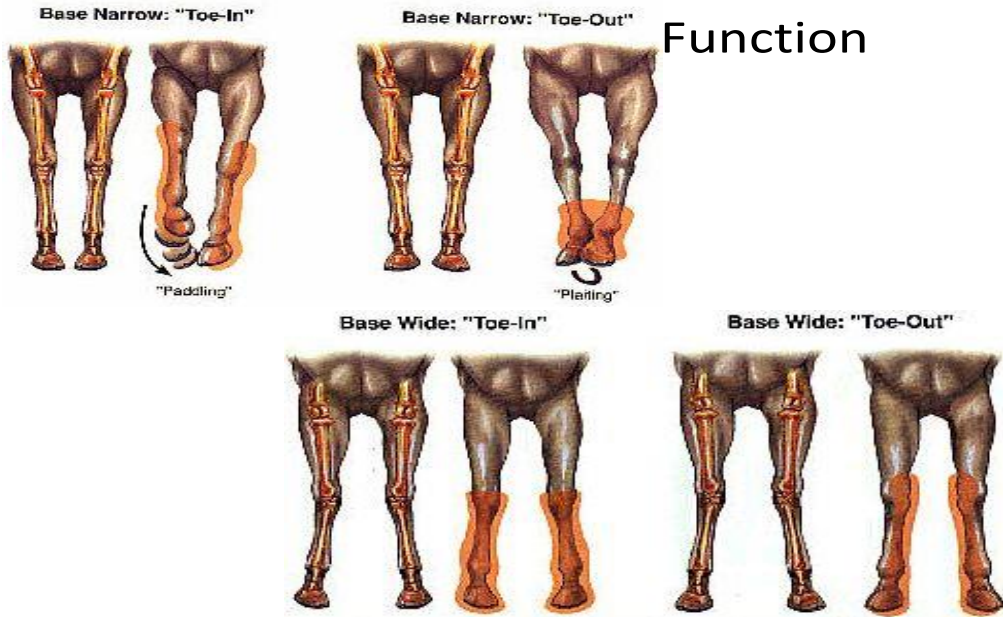


Horses that are sickle hocked have too much set or angle to the hock. In these horses, their hocks will touch the imaginary line but their fetlock will often be forward of the line. Horses that are post legged simply don't have any angle to their hocks. Their back leg appears to be as straight as a post. These horses will often appear to waddle as they move.

Ideal Leg Structure



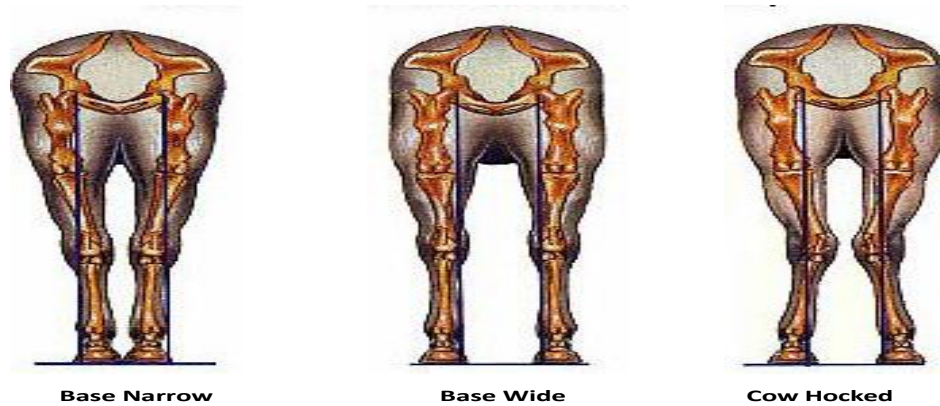
From the front view, an imaginary line should be dropped from the point of the horse's shoulder to the ground. In a correctly structured horse, that line will run down the center the horse's front leg with an equal amount of the leg on each side of the line. Horses that deviate from this ideal may be in at the knees, bow legged or bench kneed. In horses that are bench kneed, the bones appear not to line up in a straight line. Also, horses may toe in or toe out. Horses that toe in may be called pigeon toed. Additionally, horses that toe out are called splay footed. **Pigeon-toed horses will paddle out when traveling and splay-footed horses will wing in when traveling.**



Often, halter horses may bend forward at the knee. These same horses will often shake at the knees. This is a deviation from the ideal. Additionally, horses from this view may be back at the knees. This is often called calf kneed. This is a far more severe structural defect and should be penalized severely.

Structure of the hind legs should also be analyzed from the side and rear view. Just like the front view, one should draw an imaginary line from the point of the hip to the ground when analyzing structure of the hind limbs from the hind view. Any deviation from this line should be considered a defect in structure. Often, horses may be in at the hocks or out at the hocks. Both deviations are undesirable. Horses will naturally toe out slightly from the rear view and that should not be penalized for doing so.

Rear View



Structure is a very important aspect of evaluating halter horses, but it is important to remember not to use a single trait select horses. When evaluating halter horses, you must take all of the criteria into consideration before making a judgment. Just like in judging all classes, the traits of the horse are all relative and should be compared to the other horses in a positive manner. For example, you probably wouldn't want to place the most correctly balanced, heaviest muscled and highest quality horse last because it was in at the toes when viewed from the front. In reality, this horse should be moved down one place.

QUALITY

Quality is the attractiveness of the horse specifically through their head and neck.

When quality is evaluated, emphasis is placed on the horse's head and neck. A high-quality head is triangular in nature, with a prominent jaw tapering to a refined muzzle. A high-quality head has large eyes that are set far apart on the sides of the horse's head. This allows the horse to have a great deal of peripheral vision. A high-quality head also has short, trim ears and a large nostril. All of the traits of a high-quality head have specific functions. For example, large nostrils allow a horse to breathe easier when performing. A high-quality neck is long and trim in nature. A high-quality neck ties high into the point of the shoulder and is also trim in the throatlatch. Horses that are of poor quality often will be thick in the throatlatch, may display a crest over the neck, and be low tying in the neck (the neck ties low into the chest). There are many factors that contribute to a horse being of low quality and as in all aspects of horse judging, each attribute of horse is relative and should be compared fairly.

MUSCLING

Muscling serves many purposes can aid in the athletic ability and function of the horse; therefore it is vital for halter horses to have adequate amounts of muscling while at the same time not possessing too much.

Horses that carry too great of a volume of muscling can be less agile and potentially have feet problems. The ideal horse has muscling that is both long and well defined. It is common to think that more is better, but once a horse has adequate amounts of muscling it is not necessarily an advantage to have more muscling.

It is relatively useless to refer to a horse as “muscled” without expanding on that explanation because there are different types of muscling, as some horses will have greater volume of muscling, while others may have greater expression of muscling. For example, on one hand, a horse can have more quantity of muscling. This horse will be heavier muscled or possess more substance and in many cases weigh much more. Substance refers to the amount of body capacity of the horse in terms of width, depth and thickness. On the other hand, a horse can have more expression or quality of muscling. A horse with higher-quality muscle will show more expression and separation (delineation) of muscle. This basically means the horse has more definition or development of its muscle pattern. A horse can also be more athletically muscled or be more “athletic appearing.” A more athletic-appearing horse will have a longer muscle pattern that is also well defined and delineated as opposed to a horse that is short and has muscles that are bunched together. Both horses may be heavily muscled, but they have two distinctly different muscle patterns.

Side View

The most beneficial view to evaluate muscling is from the profile (side). From the profile view, one can evaluate all the major areas which represent the quantity and quality of muscling that a horse possesses. These major areas are the:

- Forearm
- Pectorals
- Shoulder
- Hindquarters
- Stifle
- Gaskin

Front View

Once you have evaluated muscling from the profile view, it is necessary to view the horse from the front to evaluate width through the floor of the chest. From the front, an adequately muscled horse will have an inverted (upside down) ‘V’ where the pectoral muscles tie deep into the insides of the front legs. Not only is it important for there to be depth in the floor of the chest, but it is also equally important for there to be width through the floor of the chest. Width gives the horse strength, plus also allows the legs to be set further apart so that the horse doesn’t interfere when it’s traveling.

Rear View

From the rear, it is important for the width between the stifles to be wider than the width at the top of the hip. Therefore an adequately muscled horse will appear “pear shaped” from the rear.

Travel/Way of Going

When the horses are traveled, it is important to get in a spot where you will be able to see the horse clearly without having to look around or over people. Once you have watched the horses travel, it is important to remember to include points about the travel in your reasons. However, it is not necessary to talk about traveling in every pair. One or two good, accurate points about travel should be sufficient. When the horses are traveling, it is important to look for deviations in both the stride and foot placement as well as if the horse is sound. A halter horse should not be disqualified (or placed last) unless it is grade-three lame. A horse must consistently bob its head at the trot to be considered grade-three lame.

JUDGING HALTER IN A JUDGING CONTEST

There are several keys to keep in mind when judging halter in a judging contest:

- It is important to never stop and gaze at a horse for an extended period of time. This causes you to “pick a horse apart” or find more negatives than positives in a horse. Instead, it is important to keep moving when judging halter and judge strictly on the positive and add up the good qualities each horse has.
- You should move down the line at the profile view and develop a placing based on your first impression. The majority of the time your first impression is your best. After you have developed a placing, it is then important to study the horses further, especially when developing a set of reasons for the class.
- If you suspect that a horse has a structural defect it is wise to come back and view that horse again to determine if the horse does have a defect or if it is just set up incorrectly. At any given moment a horse can be standing in a manner that may give the appearance of a severe structural problem, while in fact, the horse is actually set up incorrectly. However, the best method to determine if your inclinations are correct is to study the horse while it is traveling. The way in which a horse travels is an extremely important part of evaluating the total value of a horse. We would not want to ride a horse that had severe problems with movement.
- It is also recommended that you not swap your placing at the last moment because that is the most often detrimental to your placing score. You must always remember that most of the time your first impression is your best. **Your first priority is to get the class placed correctly.** After you have placed the class correctly, developing a good set of reasons will be easy. However, if you start developing a set of reasons before you have the class place, you will most often miss a placing.

REASONS TERMINOLOGY FOR JUDGING HALTER

BALANCE

Compliments

- More correctly balanced
- Exhibits more balance
- More nearly proportional
 - from end to end
 - from top to bottom
- More uniform in height
- Lower set in knees and hocks
- Longer, more sloping shoulder
- More angulation to the shoulders
- Has a more desirable slope to her shoulder, and is neater and sharper at her withers.
- Deeper-barreled horse
- Shows greater capacity in the heart girth
- Deeper ribbed, wider chested
- More prominent withers, with a more functional top to bottom line ratio
- More arch (spring) to rib
- Longer in the hip, shorter in the back and shows more depth of heart girth and hind rib indicating more body capacity
- Taller at the withers and shows more uniformity of height from the croup to the withers
- Shorter-backed gelding that is longer in the underline
- Deeper flanked
- Deeper hind rib
- Deeper cinching
- More powerful top line
- Shorter topped
- Shorter and stronger over the top
- Wider topped, showing a more powerful loin
- Stronger coupled
- Higher at the withers
- Fuller in the loins
- Longer, wider croup
- Nicer turn of the croup
- Straight and smooth over the topline
- More horizontal over the croup
- Stronger, more horizontal over the back, loin, and croup
- Shorter back in relation to the underline, due to a more sloping shoulder and longer, flatter croup
- More laid back in the shoulder, creating a shorter, stronger back in relation to a longer underline
- Stronger linked in the back and loin
- Shortness of back, length of underline and depth of heart combined to give a more balanced appearance as viewed from the side
- Exhibits more balance with all parts blending smoothly and symmetrically

- Longer and flatter over the croup
- More horizontal over the croup
- More nearly proportional
- More easily divided into three equal parts of shoulder, barrel and hindquarter
- Uniform from front to end and from top to bottom
- Longer and deeper through the hip

Faults

- Shallow middled, light quartered
- Shallow through the heart girth
- Lacked the capacity and depth of...
- Narrow in the chest and shallow in the heart girth
- Shallow hearted
- Long and weak over the top line
- Steep shoulder and croup
- Short, straight shoulder
- Too straight in the shoulders
- Mutton withered
- Thick (mutton) withers
- Low-backed, weak loin, high hips
- Weak though the back and loin
- Has a long, weak back in relation to the underline
- Shallow hiped

STRUCTURAL CORRECTNESS

Compliments

- Stands straighter and more structurally sound
- More structurally correct being...
- Squarer-placed legs
- Stands on straight legs
- Stands wider both fore and aft, with all four legs set squarely beneath
- Stands more squarely on the feet
- Stands more structurally correct through the hocks and front legs
- Cleaner about the knees and hocks, with a finer and flatter cannon bone
- Cannon bones coming out more neatly to the center of the knee
- Stands with the cannon bones extended more squarely from the center of the knee
- Stands on a shorter cannon
- Stands on more rugged, durable-type bone
- Seems to possess a heavier, denser bone
- More substance of bone
- Stands on a straighter column of bone
- Knees and hocks closer to the ground
- More correct angle at the hock

- Wider between the hocks as viewed from the rear
- Cleaner at the hocks
- Longer, more sloping pasterns
- More shapely foot that is wider and deeper at the heel
- Hoof is more open at the heel
- Wider, deeper heel
- Straighter legged
- Well-defined tendons
- Joints free from swelling and blemishes
- Hooves more proportional to the body size
- Straighter and more symmetric in the knees and hocks
- Straighter down the front legs
- Shorter, flatter cannon bones
- Straighter through the knees
- Straighter in the toes
- Shorter and stronger in the top line
- Straighter down the hind leg when viewed from the side or rear
- Straighter and more symmetric in the hocks
- Straighter in the hind feet
- Larger, more rounded feet
- More desirable slope to the pastern
- Greater length to the pastern

Faults

- Structurally incorrect, being...
- Stands crooked and structurally unsound
- Shorter, straighter pasterns
- Short, steep pasterns
- Longer, weaker in the pasterns
- Post legged
- Stands close at the hocks, appearing to be cow-hocked
- Sickie-hocked stallion, mare, etc
- Crooked through the front legs with the cannon bone coming out of the side of the knees
- Long, weak cannons with splints and wind puffs through the fetlocks and hocks
- Back at knees, appearing to be calf-kneed
- Stands over at the knees, appearing to be buck-kneed
- Splay footed
- Flat footed
- Stands on a hoof too small for the size
- Cracked, brittle hooves
- Hoof narrow at the heel
- Contracted at the heel
- Stands on bone too fine for her massive size
- Round, coarse bones
- Too fine a bone

- Too light a bone
- Puffy about the knees and hocks
- Stocked up behind
- Stocked up in all fours
- Joints are puffy and swollen
- Coarse in underpinnings
- Lacks definition of tendons
- Club footed
- Mule footed

QUALITY

Compliments

- Sharper-chiseled features
- More sharply chiseled about the head
- Especially shorter from the eyes to the nose, as well as being...
- Shorter headed
- More triangular about the head
- Shorter down the bridge of the nose
- Shorter face
- Brighter about the eyes
- Broader between the eyes
- Wider from eye to eye
- More prominent, larger, brighter eyes
- More refined and shorter through the muzzle
- Shorter, neater ear
- More erect ear
- Tighter in the throat latch, and has a longer, leaner neck which ties higher in the shoulder
- Trimmer throat latch coupled with a longer, smoother neck
- Longer, leaner neck
- More shallow through the throat latch
- Higher tying from the neck into the shoulder
- Exhibits more presence and quality through the head and neck
- More shallow through the throat latch
- More elegant and refined head and neck
- Sharply, sculpted face
- Dry features of the face
- Has more active, alertly poised ears and a large, more lucid eye
- Finer featured
- More chiseled head
- More expressive about the eyes and ears
- Shorter distance from eye to muzzle
- More prominent through the jaw
- Larger, more flaring nostrils
- Cleaner cut about the head and throat
- Longer neck that rose out of a more angulated shoulder

- Greater definition to the jugular groove
- Shows more alertness about the head
- More elegant head
- Larger, flatter bones
- Cleaner boned
- Straighter and more symmetric in the knees
- More feminine head
- More tapering muzzle
- Knees and hocks lower to the ground
- Larger eye
- More prominent jaw
- Higher-quality hair coat
- Finer hair
- More stylish, eye appealing, higher quality mare
- Shows more refinement about the head and neck
- More alert about the head, showing a brighter eye
- Has a smoother blend of all body parts
- Nicer profiling
- More athletic in appearance
- More alert and attentive appearance
- More stylish

Faults

- Rough-made mare, lacking femininity
- Coarser made, lightest muscled and most narrow based
- Lacking style and presence of...
- Least attractive
- Longer, coarser, plainer headed
- Coarse head
- Less refined in the bone structure
- Long ears
- Long face
- Narrow between the eyes
- Duller, smaller eye
- Large, coarse muzzle
- Thick throat latch
- Heavier, thicker through the throat latch
- Too thick at the base of the neck
- Low neck attachment
- Crest over the neck
- Neck joined in extremely low into steeper shoulders
- Small, unattractive head
- Looks dull and sulky out of the eye
- Lower-quality hair coat
- Possesses a rough hair coat
- Lacks style, symmetry, and animation
- Low headed, plain, lacking eye appeal

MUSCLE

Compliments

- Shows more tone and power of muscling from end to end
- More powerfully driven from the hindquarters with a thicker, more bulging stifle
- Shows a greater volume of muscling over the larger frame
- Heavier and has more bulge to the muscle pattern
- An expressively muscled stallion, mare, etc
- Exhibits more ripple and bulge of muscling
- Has more muscling from end to end
- More powerfully muscled in the shoulder, loin, hip and through the plane of the stifle
- Spreads a greater total volume and mass of muscling over a larger frame
- Fuller through the forearm and shoulder, and is more powerfully muscled though the quarter, dropping down into a more flaring gaskin
- Showing more width through the stifle dropping down to a more bulging gaskin
- Fuller loin and heavier-muscled shoulder
- More length of hip
- Stands down on a wider, more desirable foundation
- Wider chested, wider-walking mare, stallion, gelding, etc.
- Carries more powerful muscling in the chest
- More powerfully built through the front
- More evident V muscling
- V-ed up deeper in the front
- Longer and stronger hipped horse
- Exhibits more muscle development in the lower quarter
- More uniform and athletically muscled hind leg
- Being thicker and more bulging through the stifle
- Shows more total dimension of the hip, evidenced by being longer and flatter over the croup, and having more width and depth through the hind leg
- Shows more thickness through the center of the stifle in relation to the points of the hip
- Thicker, heavier-muscled stifle
- Heavier-muscled arm
- Stronger in the stifle
- Heavier-muscled thigh
- Carries more volume of muscling to the upper, central and lower portions of the hip
- Heavier-muscled stallion that was particularly wider from stifle to stifle
- Wider fore and aft
- Stood out wider both fore and aft
- More dimension to the quarter, a quarter that is wider from stifle to stifle
- Heavier muscled throughout
- Longer muscled
- Deeper, smoother tying
- Greater circumference to the gaskin
- Larger more bulging gaskin
- More powerful gaskin
- More heavily muscled over the loin
- Longer, more bulging forearm

- Forearm ties deeper and smoother to the knee
- Forearm showed greater circumference
- More prominent pectoral muscle
- Greater separation and delineation
- More powerfully developed
- Wider through the stifle
- Wider through the center portions of the stifle
- Greater width and depth to the stifle
- Longer, lower tying muscle pattern throughout

Faults

- Narrowest-based horse, lacking adequate muscling
- Narrow chested, close-traveling horse
- Lacks volume and dimension through the hip, gaskin, and stifle
- Flat chested
- Narrowest designed
- Flat through the V muscling and exhibits short, bunchy muscling from end to end
- Shows equal width between the top of hip and through the stifle when viewed from the rear
- Short in the underline
- Long coupled
- Tapers when viewed from the rear
- Lighter made

WAY OF GOING

- Moved with more clearance between her knees and hocks
- Was a wider traveling mare
- Moved straighter and more correct at the walk
- Tracked out straighter with more length of stride
- Straighter, truer stride
- Exhibited more length and spring at the walk
- Moved with a more athletic and agile stride showing greater drive off his hocks
- Moved with greater softness of stride
- Longer, more ground covering stride
- Longer, softer-strided horse
- More forceful stride
- Moved out with a longer stride, showing more freedom of movement
- More direct stride
- A prompt stride
- Longer, further reaching stride
- Freer moving, having a bolder stride, longer stride
- More fluid
- Sounder moving horse
- Softer moving horse

- More coordinated mover
- More flexion to the hocks and more elevation and reach from the forehead
- More flexion of the knee and hock, with more reach
- Folded his knees and worked more with his hocks
- Lifted his knees and drove with his hocks
- More forward impulsion
- More collected stride
- More stylish on the move
- Showed more movement and freedom of motion in his shoulder
- More athletic and agile stride
- When on the move, she exhibited more beauty and presence, possessing a more floating stride
- Drove from behind with more hock action

The information found in all judging materials have been compiled from the American Quarter Horse Association Official Rulebook, the American Paint Horse Association Official Rulebook, the National Reining Horse Association Official Rulebook, the National Horse Judging Team Coaches Association Official Handbook, the Texas Tech University judging manual, the Colorado State University judging manual and from personal experience. Special thanks to Dr. Dave Denniston, Dr. Kris Wilson, and Dr. Jim Heird for their expertise in the area of horse judging. The information in this handbook is to be used for educational purposes only.

Western Pleasure

CLASS DESCRIPTION

A considerable amount of controversy over the criteria for judging the western pleasure class has occurred in recent years. Moreover, western pleasure has seen many changes throughout the years and the trends seen will most likely keep changing. However, the main question that should enter your mind when judging this class is: **Does the horse appear as though it is a pleasure to ride?** Once you ask yourself that question, you should find the forward moving, balanced strided and well-mannered horse and allow it to rise to the top because it is likely to be the most pleasurable horse to ride.

Moreover, western pleasure is the building block for all other western riding classes. A pleasure horse has free-flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with its conformation. It should move across the ground with little effort and should have a balanced flowing motion. The quality of movement and consistency of gaits is a major consideration. The pleasure horse should carry its head and neck in a relaxed, natural position with the poll level even with the withers. It should carry his head slightly in front of the vertical giving the appearance of being willfully guided. It should be shown on a reasonable loose rein with light contact. The horse should be responsive yet smooth in the transitions. Maximum credit should be given to the flowing, balanced, willing horse that gives the appearance of being fit and pleasurable to ride.

The four major criteria for judging the pleasure class are:

1. Functional Correctness
2. Brokenness
3. Cadence and Consistency
4. Quality of Movement

Functionally Correct

Western pleasure horses are those which pick up gaits and leads when called for and do not show any deviation from those gaits throughout the class, going either direction. Breaks of gait (both upward and downward) and wrong leads are evidence that a horse in the pleasure class is not very functionally correct and is probably not a pleasure to ride.

Broke and Quiet

The second most important quality that a western pleasure horse should possess is the ability to be broke and quiet. If the pleasure horse is not broke and quiet, then he cannot effectively be evaluated on the other three criteria listed above. A horse that is broke and quiet is one that is free from major and minor refusals to the rider such as bucking, rearing, balking, mouthing the bit, ringing the tail, and pinning the ears. Once it is determined the horse in the pleasure class is broke and quiet, it is time to judge the horse on the way that he/she moves.

Cadence and Consistency

The consistency and quality is extremely important in judging the western pleasure class. A pleasure horse that shows consistency and quality is one who gives the appearance of being a “pleasure” to ride. These horses are expressive, natural, attractive, and appear as though they are enjoying their work. They offer an overall pleasing picture when viewed the rail and simply possess great amounts of eye appeal. The horse that is consistent in his/her quality of movement should be given credit.

The American Quarter Horse Association has now implemented a new system for calling gaits for the western pleasure class. The lope is now asked for as a “lope with a slight increase in forward motion.” This does not mean that the horses should increase their speed dramatically, and, if you have been to a large Quarter Horse show lately, the judges are not placing racehorses. However, it does mean that credit should be given to a horse that moves in a balanced, forward-moving stride with a great degree of lift and flow. Likewise, a horse that is moving in an excessively slow, unbalanced stride should be penalized. Depending on what contest you attend, the contest officials may or may not ask for a lope with a slight increase in forward motion. They may simply just ask for a traditional lope. Either way, the description of the gait should not dictate how you judge the class. The AQHA also has now asked judges to ask for an extended jog at least one direction of the rail. An extended jog should be a lengthening of gait and not a quickening of pace. Just because a horse is going faster, it does not mean that the horse is moving more correctly or with a higher degree of quality.

Some of the words being used when describing western pleasure horses today are **balance, lift, flow and self-carriage**.

- Balance in a moving horse is the ability of the animal to keep itself properly oriented or positioned while in motion, thus giving an impression of stability in motion. This also relates to stride length. The best way to visualize this is to draw an imaginary line down the center of the horse. A balanced horse at the jog and lope should take relatively the same length of stride forward of the line as they take behind the line. Quite often, horses will be forced to shorten their stride in an attempt to make them to move at a slower pace. Most of the time (this can be seen especially at the jog) the horse will then begin to move in an unbalanced stride. Sometimes, these horses will be called lame because they are moving longer with a leg on one side of the body than they are with the other. However, a horse cannot be called lame to the degree to excuse that horse from the class or placing unless they are bobbing their head consistently at the jog.
- Lift is a period of suspension or an elevated carriage, and flow is to move smoothly, easily and to be fluid.
- Self-carriage is a term that encompasses balance, lift and flow. Without the components of balance, lift and flow, self-carriage cannot be achieved. Balance and flow cannot be achieved without forward motion and the proper cadence. When a pleasure horse lacks forward motion or cadence, balance is sacrificed and flow is lost. This horse is not comfortable. Remember, a good pleasure horse should appear to be comfortable and a pleasure to ride.

The lack of forward motion affects the balance of a horse’s movement and interferes with its flow and cadence in its gait. When the balance and flow are interfered with enough, this horse may start

bobbing its head and hesitating in its motion. This horse may turn sideways with its hip towards the center of the pen. This type of movement is often referred to as being “over canted.” A horse should be penalized when it is excessively canted toward the center of the pen. However, a correctly moving pleasure horse will be slightly canted to the degree that its rear leg closest to the rail should be in a line with its inside front leg. A horse that lacks forward motion may also cock its head slightly away from the direction it’s traveling or put its head too low on the forehead. Often, a horse that carries its head too low also appears to be behind the vertical.

Quality of Movement

A soft and smooth horse is one that hits the ground light and soft on all four feet and travels with some drive and impulsion from behind. It should also be noted that pleasure horses will not travel with as much drive and length of stride as the hunter under saddle horse, yet they shoulder main cadenced and smooth at all three gaits shown. Quality of movement at each gait is described in detail below.

DESCRIPTION OF GAITS AND MOTIONS

There are four gaits seen in the western pleasure.

1. Walk
2. Jog
3. Lope
4. Back

(+) A GOOD WALK:

The horse travels in a four-beat gait, level topline and a relaxed appearance, yet is bright and attentive. This horse flows slowly but deliberately and touches the ground softly.

(0) AN AVERAGE WALK:

The horse simply travels in a correct four-beat gait with a level topline and relaxed appearance.

(-) A POOR WALK:

The horse travels in an uneven pace without cadence. This horse may have a robotic appearance and hesitates between foot placement. This horse has no flow and may appear intimidated. Conversely, a horse may travel with an excessively swift pace, pushing against the bridle and attempting to break stride to the jog.

(++) AN EXCELLENT JOG:

The horse travels in a motion that appears effortless and efficient. This horse travels distinct and deliberate, yet touches the ground very softly. The horse is confident, yet still soft in its motion while being balanced and under control. This horse swings flat with its knee and hock and has some cushion on its pastern because it is moving with lift and self-carriage. The horse’s expression is bright and alert.

(+) A GOOD JOG:

The horse appears very comfortable to ride, always has a consistent two beat gait, is guiding well, and has a relaxed and level top line. This horse may let the hocks drift back into the tail from time to time or this horse may exhibit some knee action, but is obviously soft on the ground.

(0) AN AVERAGE JOG:

The horse travels in a two-beat diagonal gait in which the diagonal pairs of legs touch the ground simultaneously. This horse has a level top line and a relaxed appearance.

(-) BELOW AVERAGE JOG:

The horse seems to hesitate or skip a beat in the two beat motion. Also, this horse does not keep an even and balanced motion and may not have a level top line. This horse appears to shuffle and may appear to walk on the hind or front legs. A horse must have a true two-beat gait to be average at the jog.

(--) POOR JOG:

The horse cannot seem to maintain a two-beat gait and appears very uncomfortable in an attempt to accomplish the gait. This horse does not have any flow or balance in its motion and appears very uncomfortable to ride.

(++) AN EXCELLENT LOPE:

The horse rounds its back and has a strong, deep stride and a flat swing with its front legs. This horse swings its legs correct and long yet seems to do so effortlessly. This horse keeps a very level top line and the hocks don't drift behind the tail. This horse has a relaxed yet alert and confident appearance. This is a unique horse in that it is correct and deliberate yet soft. This horse has a great degree of lift and self-carriage.

(+) A GOOD LOPE:

The horse appears to have more lift and flow than the average horse with a strong but smooth drive from behind. This horse may exhibit some knee action or may let its hocks drift into the tail slightly, but this horse still has a level top line and relaxed appearance. This horse definitely appears comfortable to ride and exhibits self-carriage.

(0) AN AVERAGE LOPE:

The horse has a true three-beat gait, with a level top line and very little head and neck motion. This horse has a comfortable motion, guides well and has a relaxed appearance.

(-) BELOW AVERAGE LOPE:

The horse may appear to have a distinct gait but has no lift. This horse also may be hollow in the back and consequently will display knee action on the forehand and will be uncollected behind. This horse shuffles and has a lack of flow. Also, this horse bobs its head to an extreme to give the appearance of exerting a great deal of effort. This horse does not appear comfortable to ride.

(--) A POOR LOPE:

The horse does not have a distinct true three-beat gait. Additionally, this horse has no flow, rhythm or balance. This horse appears out of sync and is obviously not comfortable to ride.

(+) A DESIRABLE TOPLINE:

A correct top line is defined as one that has the ear being level with the wither at the lowest point or eye being level with the wither at the highest point. This is called head carriage. Credit should be given to a horse with a still and consistent top line that exhibits self-carriage.

(-) AN UNDESIRABLE TOPLINE:

This will occur when a horse's head is consistently higher than eye level with the withers. Consequently, the back will become hollow and this horse loses drive from behind. This may also occur when the head is consistently lower than ear level with the withers. This horse becomes heavy on the forehand and has a lack of lift and flow. In both cases, the horse loses self-carriage and appears to struggle.

(+) A DESIRABLE HEAD SET:

The horse's head will be slightly nosed out. The horse will also appear to be comfortable and have an alert appearance. This horse will also be ridden on a trusting (loose) rein. If the horse is ridden on a trusting rein while displaying an attractive gait, this horse by definition displays self-carriage.

(-) AN UNDESIRABLE HEAD SET:

This horse's head will be behind the vertical. The horse will appear to be uncomfortable and may appear to be intimidated. Often this horse will be ridden on a tight rein, but a horse can be behind the vertical and intimidated while being ridden on a loose rein. This horse will often pin the ears and mouth the bit.

(+) (0) THE BACK:

The horse should back at least one horse length quietly. This should be done with light contact and smoothly. This is the standard or average; however, more credit should be given for correctness and smoothness rather than how quickly it is done.

(-) A BELOW AVERAGE BACK:

This horse appears resistant or heavy in front. The horse gaps its mouth or throws its head.

Competitive judging contestants should be reminded that western pleasure is a class to judge how horses move on the rail and emphasis should be placed on just that. Rules in the respective rule books should be followed; however judging students should not look for horse to commit errors and be disqualified. On the other hand, they should always judge horses on the positive (not just in western pleasure, but in all classes) looking for what a horse does well. When giving reasons, on the western pleasure class it is important that students emphasize movement of the horses and keep their reasons concise and accurate. It is also important for the judging student to be specific about gaits and which the direction the horse is going. This presents a clearer picture for the reasons taker to use as a guide throughout the set of reasons.

Faults to be scored according to severity:

1. Excessive speed (any gait)
2. Being on the wrong lead
3. Breaking gait (including not walking when called for)
4. Excessive slowness in any gait, loss of forward momentum (resulting in an animated and/or artificial gait at the lope)
5. Failure to take the appropriate gait when called for (during transitions, excessive delay will be penalized)
6. Touching horse or saddle with free hand
7. Head carried too high
8. Head carried too low (tip of ear below the withers)
9. Overflexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
10. Excessive nosing out
11. Excessive movement of the topline at the lope
12. Opening mouth excessively
13. Stumbling
14. Use of spurs forward of the cinch
15. Horse appears sullen, dull, lethargic, emaciated, drawn or overly tired
16. Quick, choppy or pony-strided
17. Overly canted at the lope (when the outside hind foot is further to the inside of the arena than the inside front foot).

Faults that place contestants below all others:

1. Use of more than one hand on the reins
2. Switching rein hands
3. Use of more than one finger between the reins
4. Never performing a designated lead or gait

Western Pleasure Reasons Terminology

FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS

Compliments

- Better fulfilled the requirements of the class
- Maintained gaits without anticipation of cues
- Traveled straighter down the rail
- More efficient in utilizing both leads
- Traveled in the prescribed gait
- Looked straighter through the bridle
- More functionally correct in the lead changes
- Worked more squarely down the rail

- Better utilized the correct lead
- Maintained the correct/desired/prescribed gait throughout the class
- More prompt, efficient in upward/downward transitions
- More responsive to riders aides and cues
- Smoother, more fluid
- Showed more flexion of the poll
- More nearly perpendicular to the rail
- Steadier head carriage
- Traveled with neck more nearly parallel to the ground
- Maintained a more correct head carriage
- Maintained a more correct head set

Faults

- Broke gait
- Picked up wrong lead

BROKENESS

Compliments

- Easier to show
- More responsive
- Honors the bridle
- Back with mouth shut
- Less gapping of the mouth
- Quieter in the mouth with less resistance to the bit
- Softer mouth
- Backed straighter
- More freely backed
- More promptly backed
- More voluntarily backed
- Backed with less aid and cueing from rider
- Backed with less effort, less resistance from rider
- More willing
- Calmer
- More relaxed
- Steadier, quieter
- More alert
- Worked with less resistance from the rider
- Fresher
- Works on a looser rein
- More consistent
- More solid, seasoned, broke
- More disciplined
- Quieter in the mouth
- More responsive to the bridle
- More attentive, expressive
- Required less obvious cues from the rider

- Responded with lighter, more subtle cues
- Kinder
- Softer in the mouth
- Looser working
- Worked on a looser rein throughout the class, higher degree of difficulty
- More responsive to pressure
- Worked with less resistance to the rider
- Looked straighter through the bridle
- More pleasant attitude
- Less objectionable to rider or other horses in the class
- Quieter with ears, tail, mouth
- Appeared easier to show
- More consistent throughout the duration of the class
- More willing performer
- More obedient
- Required less checking and fixing
- Required less constant attention
- More broke
- Quieter with the tail
- Was more prompt in the transitions

Faults

- Constantly fighting the rider
- Challenging the rider's authority
- Constantly having the ears pinned throughout the class
- Mouthing at the bit
- Tossing the head
- Pushing against the bridle
- Less willing performer
- Less attentive
- Less willing to the rider's cues/commands
- Less desirable/less pleasurable attitude
- Less obedient to the rider
- More checking and fixing
- Required less attention/restraint to the rider
- More green appearing
- Mouthing at the bit
- Constantly fighting the rider
- Challenging the rider's authority
- Worked more on the bit

CADENCE AND CONSISTENCY

Compliments

- More cadenced at each gait
- More cadenced through the right lead lope
- More consistent in headset
- More consistent in his head carriage
- Showed a more evenly cadenced, two-beat jog
- Showed a more evenly cadenced, three-beat lope
- More consistent in frame
- More consistent in speed
- More consistent in pace

Faults

- Inconsistent in pace
- Inconsistent in frame
- Poorly cadenced jog

QUALITY OF MOVEMENT

Compliments

- Freer moving
- More relaxed
- Quieter
- More desirable
- Higher-quality mover
- Traveled deeper into the corners
- Traveled with more cadence
- More drive from hindquarters
- More suitable to purpose
- More stylish mover
- Moved with flatted knees
- Exhibited less vertical action in the knees
- Less elevated in the knees
- Less animated in the knees
- Moved with a more pointed toe
- Took slower, more deliberate strides
- Even strided
- More collected, greater amount of collection
- Freer
- Flat footed
- More consistent
- Covered more ground
- More attentive
- More relaxed
- Slower
- Softer
- More collected
- More distinct

- More deliberate
- More cadenced
- More attractive
- More symmetrical at the jog
- Hindquarters driven up under
- Engaging hocks
- More synchronous two-beat gait with the diagonal pairs hitting the ground more simultaneously
- Flatter kneed with less vertical movement
- More consistent at the trot
- Moved with more drive from the hindquarters
- Steadier
- More relaxed
- Calmer
- Traveled with a more rounded frame
- More even strided
- More fluid
- More flowing
- Natural, free moving
- Traveled with feet lower (closer) to the ground
- More athletic
- Straighter
- More collected at the lope
- More consistent at the lope
- Showing a greater amount of drive and impulsion
- Driving the hocks further underneath the both
- More synchronous three-beat gait, more correct three-beat lope
- Traveled with a more rounded frame
- Longer, more loose and relaxed strides
- Showing a greater amount of drive and impulsion by driving the hocks farther underneath the body and therefore traveling with a more rounded and desirable frame
- More modern mover, traveling at a slight cant, enabling 3 to swing the hips and drive with more power and impulsion while also rounding the back and lifting out of the shoulder
- Drove deeper with the hocks allowing him to move through a freer shoulder onto a flatter knee
- More powerfully driven from behind
- Lighter in the forehand
- Swung the legs more freely from the shoulder
- Backing more freely
- Backing with a greater amount of ease
- Backing more willingly
- More level topline
- More consistent
- More relaxed
- Less movement
- More correct with the head slightly in front of the vertical
- More consistent topline
- Head carriage that was more nearly parallel to the ground

- Kept head more nearly even with the withers
- More desirable flexion to the poll

Example Reasons

Western Pleasure

I placed this class of Western Pleasure 1-2-3 and 4, beginning with the highest quality mover and ending with the least broke.

After analyzing the close top pair, it was quality of movement that placed 1 over 2. The palamino had a more stylish way of going, moving with more balance and cadence at the walk, jog and lope. 1 traveled with a more definite two-beat jog and three-beat lope, having more impulsion and drive from the hocks. I am fully aware that 2 was quicker through his upward transitions. However, the sorrel was shorter strided so he must stay second.

Even so in my intermediate pair, it easily brokenness and consistency that keeps 2 over 3. The sorrel simply appeared more pleasurable to ride. 2 was more consistent and calmer going both ways of the arena while having a more desirable head set and neck carriage, In addition, he showed more flexion at the poll and looking straighter through the bridle while working off a looser rein. I will say 3 showed a more cadenced 2-beat jog, but the black was move heavily handled by the rider so he finds his home in third.

Proceeding on to the bottom pair of poorer-performing individuals who required the most restraint from their riders, it was definitely quality of movement that placed 3 over 4. The black drove deeper with his hind end allowing him to move through a freer shoulder and onto a flatter knee at the lope both ways of the ring. I do recognize 4 was quicker to back. Nevertheless, I fault the resistant bay and leave him 4th as he was the shortest strided and heaviest footed.

Therefore the Western Pleasure is placed 1-2-3-4.

Example Reasons **Western Pleasure**

Sir, I placed this class of Western Pleasure horses 4-3-2-1, finding a bottom in 1 who picked up the wrong lead to the right and was thus the least functionally correct horse in the class.

In the initial pair of higher quality movers, it was attitude that placed 4 over 3. 4 was a more responsive and willing performer, moving straighter down the rail while being ridden on a more trusting rein. 4 also required less checking and fixing and thus presented a more pleasant attitude, whereas 3 constantly pinned the ears throughout the class. Likewise, while both horses loped with a considerable amount of cadence, 4 moved with more drive and impulsion off the hindquarters especially while moving the second way of the rail. I do fault 4 for being resistant to back, and I grant that 3 backed more readily.

Moving to the middle pair, it is quality of movement that placed 3 over 2. 3 had a more synchronous two-beat jog with the diagonal pairs hitting the ground more simultaneously. 3 also rounded its back more when asked to lope with forward motion and had a stronger, deeper stride while still maintaining a freer shoulder, a flatter knee and a more pointed toe. 3 simply exhibited more collection, cadence and self carriage. Additionally, three exhibited a more stable topline, whereas 2 bobbed the head while loping. I will admit that 2 worked with a more pleasurable attitude, and it was 2's attitude and functional correctness that compelled me to place 2 over the less functional 1 in the bottom pair.

2 simply picked up the correct lead when asked to lope to the right. Likewise, 2 was smoother and more willing in the downward transitions, especially from the lope to the jog in the second direction. In addition, 2 moved with more lift and flow than 1 who tended to let the hind legs drift behind the tail. I readily admit that 1 was more consistent, synchronous and softer at the jog.

However, I left 1 last in the class because 1 was the least functionally correct horse, missing the right lead. Likewise, 1 was hollow in the back, strung out behind and moved with considerably more knee action than the rest of the horses in the class. 1 was ridden on the tightest rein and also required the most assistance from the rider.

Therefore the Western Pleasure is placed 4-3-2-1.

Thank you to Dr. Dave Denniston, Dr. Jim Heird, Dr. Kris Wilson and the Official Handbook of the American Quarter Horse Association for contributing to this guide for judging western pleasure.

Hunter Under Saddle

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Much like Western Pleasure, the Hunter Under Saddle is judged on the four following criteria:

1. Functional Correctness
2. Brokeness
3. Cadence and Consistency
4. Quality of Movement

Functionally Correct – Functionally correct horses are those that are correct when performing all three gaits. Horses that break gait and pick up wrong leads are not functionally correct and should be judged accordingly.

Broke and Quiet – Broke and quiet horse are free from major and minor refusals and give the appearance of being quiet and willing to the rider's cues and aids/ once it is determined the horse is broke and quiet the horses are then evaluated on their quality of movement.

Cadence and Consistency – Soft and smooth movers are Hunter Under Saddle horses that move in a cadenced manner and hit the ground light and soft on all four feet when traveling. Horses should move with a large amount of impulsion from behind and travel with long, bold stride.

Quality and Way of Going – Quality and way of going are important when evaluating the Hunter under Saddle Horse. Hunters should show a great deal of quality and style and should fit the part of an English horse. This horse will have a big, long, bold stride and when traveling (especially at the trot) should flatten out at the knee and cover a larger amount of ground. The canter will be longer strided than the lope of the western horse; however, it should be noted that Hunter Under Saddle horses should still be broke and quiet and level over the top line when traveling at all three gaits.

Hunter under saddle horses should be **suitable to purpose**. Hunters should move with **long, low strides** reaching forward with ease and smoothness, be able to lengthen stride and cover ground with relaxed, free-flowing movement, while exhibiting correct gaits that are of the proper cadence. The quality of the movement and the consistency of the gaits is a major consideration. Horses should be obedient, have a bright expression with alert ears, and should respond willingly to the rider with light leg and hand contact. Horses should be responsive and smooth in transition. When asked to extend the trot or hand gallop, they should move out with the same flowing motion. The poll should be level with, or slightly above, the withers to allow proper impulsion behind. The head position should be slightly in front of, or on, the vertical. This class will be judged on performance, condition and conformation. Maximum credit shall be given to the flowing, balanced, willing horse.

Horses are shown under saddle, not to jump, and are shown at a walk, trot and canter both ways of the ring and should back easily and stand quietly. Horses are reversed to the inside away from the rail and may be asked to change to canter from the flat-footed walk or trot, at the judge's discretion.

FAULTS

Faults are to be scored according to severity such as:

- quick, short or vertical strides
- being on the wrong lead and/or wrong diagonal at the trot
- breaking gait
- excessive speed at any gait
- excessive slowness in any gait
- loss of forward momentum
- failure to take the appropriate gait when called for
- head carried too high
- head carried too low (such that poll is below the withers)
- over flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
- excessive nosing out
- failure to maintain light contact with horse's mouth
- stumbling
- if a horse appears sullen, dull, lethargic, emaciated, drawn or overly tired
- consistently showing too far off the rail

Faults which will be the cause for disqualification, except in novice amateur or novice youth which shall be faults, are scored according to severity:

- head carried too low (such that poll is below the withers consistently)
- over flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical consistently

GAITS

Walk – The walk should be a forward-working walk, rhythmical and flat footed; extremely slow or “jiggy” walk to be penalized.

Trot – The trot should have long, low, ground-covering, cadenced and balanced strides. Smoothness is more essential than speed. Extreme speed is to be penalized as well as excessive knee action.

Canter – The canter should be smooth, free moving, relaxed and straight on both leads. The stride should be suitable to cover ground following hounds. Over collected, four-beat canter

is to be penalized. Excessive speed is also to be penalized. A horse that is over-canted (hip pointed too far to the inside of the arena) should also be penalized.

Hand Gallop – The hand gallop should be a definite lengthening of the stride with a noticeable difference in speed. The horse should be under control at all times and be able to pull up, not a sliding stop, and stand quietly.

Hunter Under Saddle Terminology

GENERAL

Compliments

- Higher combination of...
- Greater combination of...

Faults

- Was the least broke, poorest mover in the class
- Failed to perform duties in a pleasurable manner
- Lacked consistency and efficiency
- Showed least ability

FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS

Compliments

- More suitable to purpose
- More closely resembled the characteristics of the ideal hunter-type horse, being...
- Better fulfilled requirements of the class
- Maintained gaits without anticipation of the rider's cues
- Travels straighter down the rail
- Efficiency in utilizing both leads
- Prompt, efficient lead changes
- More responsive to cues
- Traveled straighter down the rail at a more desirable speed
- Showed more flexion at the poll, looking straighter through the bridle while working off a looser rein
- Went on the longest rein with the lightest contact
- Looked straighter through the bridle
- Was more mindful of the bit and carried head more correctly (naturally)
- Head held more nearly perpendicular to the ground
- Had more contact with the bit
- More mindful of the bit and carried head more correctly
- Steadier head carriage and head set
- More responsive to bridle
- Nicer headset, traveling with more flexion to the poll

- Held head more naturally and showed more alertness and expression about the head
- More relaxed through the jaw, yet more attentive about the head and ears
- Held head closer to the vertical

Faults

- Was ridden on the tightest rein
- Lacked the desirable length of rein
- Required the most restraint from the rider
- Carried head too high
- Traveled with nose stuck out
- Heavy on the bit
- Was hard mouthed, fighting the bit throughout class
- Behind the bit
- Was over flexed and heavy on front end
- Above the hit and hollow down the back, lacking collection at the lope
- Is over collected and behind the vertical
- Too high in the head carriage
- Did not back
- Was forced to back
- Was unwilling to back
- Hesitated and swished tail excessively when asked to back
- Raised head and mouthed at bit, lacking flexion and give to the bit when asked to back
- Backed crooked and unwillingly
- Has slow transitions
- Had rough transitions
- Was slow in the transitions of gaits, throwing the head and wringing the tail

ATTITUDE/ MANNERISMS

Compliments

- Bolder
- Honors the bit
- Worked more on the bit
- A willing worker
- More alert and attentive
- More willing and obedient
- Appears more pleasant
- Expressed a kinder, more agreeable attitude
- Showed more expression while working, showing more willingness and alertness out of the eyes
- Gives the appearance of enjoying the work
- Maintained poll above the withers
- More responsive and willing
- Calmer

- More alert
- Moved with less restraint
- Responsive and agreeable to aids
- Reined readily without hesitation
- More consistent
- More solid/seasoned/broke
- Most broke/consistent/relaxed horse
- More consistent and efficient throughout the performance
- Fresher
- Steadier, quieter
- More disciplined
- More attentive/expressive
- Responded with lighter more subtle cues
- Softer in the mouth
- More responsive to pressure
- More pleasant attitude
- Showed less resistance and hesitation to the rider's aids and cues
- More steady, solid consistent performer
- Most broke and honest performer in the class
- Showed to give a more pleasing ride
- Quieter, calmer and more consistent performer
- Less resistant to rider
- Less objectionable to rider or other horses in the class
- Quieter with ears/tail/mouth

Faults

- Was the least broke horse in the class
- Simply not broke
- Was a high-headed nervous horse
- Inconsistent throughout the class
- Required the most restraint from the rider
- Travels with excessive speed and must be controlled with undue restraint
- Needed excessive restraint
- Breaks gait
- Lacks consistency at the walk/trot/canter
- Missed leads
- Was an unwilling performer
- Anticipated rider's cues and aids
- Hard mouthed, fought the bit
- Mouthed excessively at the bit
- Poorly mannered about the head

MOVEMENT

Compliments

- Light contact on the reins
- Freer
- More flat footed
- More consistent
- Covered more ground
- Had a more definite two-beat trot
- Longer stride
- Freer moving
- More extended
- Lower frame
- Looser moving
- Flatter knees
- Less elevated/animated in the knees
- Showed a greater amount of collection
- More forward looking
- More sweeping
- More cadenced
- Engaged hindquarters with greater drive and impulsion
- More supple at the trot, hitting the ground softer and smoother with all four feet
- Moved in a more collected way at a more ideal speed
- Was a lighter, softer traveling horse
- Moved in a more rhythmic way of showing more brilliance and style
- More fluid
- More flowing
- More elegant mover
- More deliberate mover
- More purposeful stride
- More length and spring of stride
- Natural, free moving
- Traveled with the feet lower/closer to the ground
- More athletic
- Straighter
- Reached further
- Exhibited less vertical action in the knees
- More powerfully driven from behind
- Moved out with a more pointed toe, thus having a longer stride
- Slipped across the ground staying lower and leveler, showing greater reach of forearm at the walk, trot and canter
- Was a flatter-moving horse, that appeared to give a more comfortable ride by hitting the ground softer and lighter on all fours
- Backed more freely
- Backed more willingly (with less resistance to the rider)
- Backed quicker and easier
- Backed with less hesitation

- Backed with a greater amount of ease
- Backs easily without being forced
- More responsive when asked to back, responding by dropping off the bit, backing faster and straighter
- Backed with less mouthing at the bit
- Quicker to make transitions throughout the gaits
- Smoother transitions
- Smoother and quicker in transitions
- Accepted transitions with less resistance
- Smoother, faster more prompt transitions
- Stopped squarely and easily
- Took leads without hesitation
- Showed more response to rider, picking up leads quickly and more correctly, going both ways in a quieter fashion
- Freer moving in the shoulder, showing more extension of stride in all gaits
- Brisker-moving horse that maintained more extension of stride throughout class
- Showed more impulsion and drive off hocks
- Was a lighter, softer traveling horse that showed more spring and animation of stride
- Longer, more ground covering, purposeful stride
- Bolder-moving horse that showed more length of stride as well as impulsion and drive off hocks
- Brisker-moving horse that maintained more extension throughout duration of the class
- Lengthening equally from shoulder and stifle, achieving greater length with each stride
- Moved forward into the trot with more hindquarter impulsion, more willingly without hesitation
- More sweeping trot
- Showed more energy and purpose of stride
- Exhibited greater forward impulsion from the hindquarters while at the canter
- Engaged rear quarters with more drive

Example Reasons
Hunter Under Saddle

Sir, I placed this class of Hunters Under Saddle 4-2-3 and 1, finding 1 to be the most ill mannered and lowest-quality mover, thereby being placed at the bottom of the class.

Upon consideration of my top pair of 4 over 2, 4 traveled in a longer and lower frame, being longer strided with a flatter topline. Furthermore, 4 brought the hind legs further under the body to achieve greater drive while at the canter, and moved down the rail in a straighter line with more scope and attention to the rider.

However, I do grant that 2 was more consistent with a natural-appearing head carriage during the canter and backed faster than 4.

In my intermediate pair of 2 over 3, I recognized that 2 presented a higher degree of difficulty, being slower legged at the trot with a flatter knee. In addition, 2 showed more free-sweeping extension from the shoulder, thereby being longer strided at the trot, and as well propelled the hocks with a higher degree of collection, covering more ground with a slower pace.

Now in the analysis of my bottom pair, I did place 3 over 1, realizing that 3 was more responsive to the rider's aids and cues, and was quieter with both the mouth and tail when asked to transit between gaits. As well, 3 was more consistent in speed at the canter, whereas 1 tended to charge the bit and run away from the rider's control.

Finally, it is 1 who I criticize and place at the bottom of the class today for being least suitable to purpose, being ill mannered, requiring an excessively tight rein. 1 was simply the poorest performer in the class.

Therefore the Hunters Under Saddle are placed 4-2-3-1.

Example Reasons **Hunter Under Saddle**

I placed the Hunters Under Saddle 4-1-2 and 3, finding 4 at the top of the class today for traveling in a longer, lower frame with a flatter knee.

In the initial pair, 4 projected a higher degree of style, moving down the rail with a more forward looking attitude, maintaining a longer frame. Furthermore, 4 trotted with a longer, sweeping extension from the shoulder, thus striding out further with a flatter knee, and also cantered with greater drive from the hind legs, achieving a higher degree of collection.

Placing 1 over 2 in my intermediate pair, I recognized that 1 floated more easily over the ground with less action from the knees and hocks while at the canter. In addition, 1 remained more vertical with the bridge of the nose traveling the second way of the arena, whereas 2 was overflexed at the poll.

However, I do grant that 2 was longer strided, covering more ground; nevertheless, it was the excessive knee animation that 2 exhibited which kept 2 in my bottom pair.

Though, I do recognize and appreciate 2's ability to stride out even longer at the trot, so I do thereby place 2 over 3 in my bottom pair. As well, 2 remained more consistent and steady traveling down the rail with less fixing from the rider, and also cantered with a more forward-reaching stride.

Finally, it is 3 who is criticized and placed at the bottom of the class for continuously pushing on the bridle down the rail, and 3 was comparatively the shortest-strided horse in the class.

Therefore the Hunters Under Saddle are placed 4-1-2 and 3.

Sources: Dr. David Denniston, Dr. Kris Wilson, and Dr. Jim Heird

Western Horsemanship

Judging the Western Horsemanship is much different than judging the Western Pleasure class, in that the class is judged on the ability of the horse and rider to complete a pattern designed by the judge. For judging contestant purposes, the pattern will be distributed prior to the class beginning. The judging participant should spend time looking over the pattern and visualizing what the pattern should look like. The following is a more in-depth description of the Western Horsemanship class. Information was compiled from American Paint Horse Association (APHA) and American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) handbooks.

The western horsemanship class is designed to evaluate the rider's ability to execute, in concert with their horse, a set of maneuvers prescribed by the judge with precision and smoothness while exhibiting poise and confidence, and maintaining a balanced, functional, and fundamentally correct body position. The ideal horsemanship pattern is extremely precise with the rider and horse working in complete unison, executing each maneuver with subtle aids and cues. All exhibitors must enter the ring and then work individually or each exhibitor may be worked from the gate individually.

The ideal horsemanship run: Keep in mind we are judging the rider's seat and their ability to guide the horse through a pattern! The rider should sit square in the seat with a straight line through their head, shoulder, hip and heel. The horse will travel easily through maneuvers while the rider shows minimal movement and cueing.

Western Horsemanship Judging Criteria:

1. Pattern Correctness
2. Penalties
3. Rider Position
4. Pattern Precision/Degree of Difficulty

SCORING: Exhibitors are to be scored from 0 to infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Patterns will be divided into 6 to 10 maneuvers, as specified by the judge, and each maneuver will be scored from plus 3 to minus 3 with 1/2 point increments acceptable that will be added or subtracted from 70. Maneuver scores should be determined independent of penalties, and should reflect equal consideration of both performance of the exhibitor's pattern and the horsemanship form and effectiveness of the exhibitor to result in the following scores: -3 extremely poor, -2 very poor, -1 poor, 0 average or correct, +1 good, +2 very good, +3 excellent. Exhibitors overall horsemanship form and effectiveness should also be scored from 0 to 5 with 0 to 2 average, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent. Exhibitors should also be judged on the rail, and their pattern score and/or ranking may be adjusted as appropriate. (Sourced from 2022 AQHA Rulebook)

PERFORMANCE. The exhibitor should perform the work accurately, precisely, smoothly, and with a reasonable amount of promptness. Increasing speed of the maneuvers performed increases the degree of difficulty, however, accuracy and precision should not be sacrificed for speed. Exhibitors that perform the pattern sluggishly and allow their horse to move without adequate

impulsion, collection, or cadence will be penalized. The horse should perform all maneuvers in the pattern willingly, briskly, and readily with minimal visible or audible cueing.

1. Failure to follow the prescribed pattern, knocking over or working on the wrong side of the cones, or severe disobedience will not result in a disqualification, but should be severely penalized and the exhibitor should not place above an exhibitor that completes the pattern correctly.
2. Excessive schooling or training, or willful abuse by the exhibitor is cause for disqualification.
3. The horse should track straight, freely, and at the proper cadence for the prescribed gait. Transitions should be smooth and prompt in the pattern and on the rail, and should be performed when called for on the rail. The horse's head and neck should be straight and in line with its body while performing straight lines and slightly arched to the inside on curved lines or circles. Circles should be round, and performed at the appropriate speed, size, and location as requested in the pattern. The counter-canter should be performed smoothly with no change in cadence or stride unless specified in the pattern.
4. The stop should be straight, square, prompt, smooth, and responsive with the horse maintaining a straight body position throughout the maneuver. The back should be smooth and responsive.
5. Turns should be smooth and continuous. When performing a turn on the haunches, the horse should pivot on the inside hind leg and step across with the front legs. A rollback is a stop and 180 degree turn over the hocks with no hesitation. Backing during turns will be penalized severely.
6. The horse should step across with the front and hind legs when performing the side pass, leg yield, and two track. The side pass should be performed with the horse keeping the body straight while moving directly lateral in the specified direction. When performing a leg yield, the horse should move forward and lateral in a diagonal direction with the horse's body arced opposite to the direction that the horse is moving. In the two track, the horse should move forward and lateral in a diagonal direction with the horse's body held straight or bent in the direction the horse is moving.
7. A simple or flying change of lead should be executed precisely in the specified number of strides and/or at the designated location. A simple change of lead is performed by breaking to a walk or trot for one to three strides. Flying changes should be simultaneous front and rear. All changes should be smooth and timely.
8. Position of the exhibitor and performance of the horse and rider on the rail must be considered in the final placing.

Penalties. Maneuver evaluations and penalty applications are to be determined independently. The following penalties will be applied for each occurrence and will be deducted from the final score:

Three (3) points

- Break of gait at the walk or jog up to 2 strides
- Over or under turn from 1/8 to 1/4 turn
- Tick or hit of cone

Five (5) points

- Not performing the specific gait or not stopping within 10 feet (3 meters) of designated location
- Incorrect lead or break of gait at the lope (except when correcting an incorrect lead)
- Break of gait at walk or jog for more than 2 strides
- Loss of stirrup
- Bottom of boot not touching pad of stirrup at all gaits including backup
- Head carried too low and/or clearly behind the vertical while the horse is in motion, showing the appearance of intimidation
- Obviously looking down to check leads

Ten (10) points

- Loss of rein
- Use of either hand to instill fear or praise while on pattern or during rail work
- Holding saddle with either hand
- Cueing with the end of the romal
- Blatant disobedience including kicking, pawing, bucking, and rearing
- Spurring in front of the cinch

Disqualifications (should not be placed) including:

- Failure to display correct number
- Abuse of horse or schooling
- Fall by horse or exhibitor
- Illegal equipment or illegal use of hands on reins
- Use of prohibited equipment
- Off pattern, including: knocking over or wrong side of cone or marker; never performing designated gait or lead; over or under turning more than 1/4 turn

Suggested terms for comparing equitation and horsemanship riders:

1. He was more correct in his pattern being quicker about picking up his leads and quieter about his cues.
2. She was more correct in her pattern showing more shape to her circle and more correct placement of her final stop.
3. She was more accurate in the placement of her second stop placing her in more proper position for her departure into her left lead.
4. She was more precise in her turn around avoiding contact with the second marker.
5. He was more stylish about his first departure at the jog as 3 was extremely crooked and delayed.
6. He was faster in his turn around spinning over his hocks with more flare and setting himself up more properly for his departure into his circle to the right.
7. She was more correct in the placement of her simple at marker two.
8. He was more precise in his flying lead change from his circle to the left and into his circle to the right.
9. He was more correct in maintaining the proper gait when loping down the strait away to the final marker.
10. He was more correct in maintaining the proper lead when performing his circle to the left.

11. She was more accurate in the placement of her circle being more nearly between the second and third marker.
12. He was more correct in pushing his horse forward in the downward transition to the jog after the third marker.
13. He was straighter in his lope from the first to second marker.
14. 2 had the advantage of accuracy and precision throughout the pattern especially evident in his lope line from the third to the fourth marker.
15. She was more correct in picking up and maintaining the proper diagonal in her trot circle to the right.
16. He was more correct in changing diagonals after his circle to the left and prior to his straight line trot to the third marker.

Key terms for pattern work: correct, quicker, quieter, accurate, precise, stylish, faster, and straighter.

Position of Exhibitor. The exhibitor should appear natural in the seat and ride with a balanced, functional, and correct position regardless of the maneuver or gait being performed. During the rail work and pattern the exhibitor should have strong, secure, and proper position. Exhibitors should sit and maintain an upright position with the upper body at all gaits. The rider should sit in the center of the saddle and the horse's back with the legs hanging to form a straight line from the ear, through the center of the shoulder and hip, touching the back of the heel or through the ankle. The heels should be lower than the toes, with a slight bend in the knee and the lower leg should be directly under the knee.

1. The rider's back should be flat, relaxed and supple. An overly stiff and/or overly arched lower back will be penalized. The shoulders should be back, level and square. The rider's base of support should maintain secure contact with the saddle from the seat to the inner thigh. Light contact should be maintained with the saddle and horse from the knee to mid-calf. The knee should point forward and remain closed with no space between the exhibitor's knee and the saddle. The exhibitor will be penalized for positioning the legs excessively behind or forward of the vertical position. Regardless of the type of stirrup, the feet may be placed home in the stirrup, with the boot heel touching the stirrup, or may be placed with the ball of the foot in the center of the stirrup. The rider's toes should be pointing straight ahead or slightly turned out with the ankles straight or slightly broken in. Riding with toes only in the stirrup will be penalized. Those exhibitors that can maintain the proper position throughout all maneuvers should receive more credit. When riding without stirrups, the exhibitor should maintain the same position as previously described.
2. Both hands and arms should be held in a relaxed, easy manner, with the upper arm in a straight line with the body. The arm holding the reins should be bent at the elbow forming a line from the elbow to the horse's mouth. The free hand and arm may be carried bent at the elbow in a similar position as the hand holding the reins or straight down at the rider's side. Excessive pumping of the free arm as well as excessive stiffness will be penalized. The rider's wrist is to be kept straight and relaxed, with the hand held at about 30 to 45 degrees inside the vertical. The rein hand should be carried immediately above or slightly in front of the saddle horn. The reins should be adjusted so that the rider has light contact with the horse's mouth, and at no time shall reins require more than a

slight hand movement to control the horse. Excessively tight or loose reins will be penalized.

3. The rider's head should be held with the chin level and the eyes forward, and may be directed slightly toward the direction of travel. Excessive turning of the head to the inside of the circle, or down at the horse's head or shoulder will be penalized.
4. The exhibitor should not crowd the exhibitor next to or in front of them when working on the rail and should pass to the inside of the arena. When reversing on the rail, the exhibitor should always reverse to the inside of the arena.

Position:

1. He dropped a straighter line from his shoulder, through his hip, and to the back of his heel.
2. He was quieter about his upper body when loping left on the rail.
3. She was taller with her upper body and remained quieter about her hands especially when transitioning from the jog to the lope.
4. He was more correct in the placement of his eyes especially when changing diagonals out of his circle
5. She had a stronger and quieter leg when loping down the straight line
6. He was quieter about his hands when changing leads out of his figure eight
7. She sat deeper in her saddle giving her a quieter appearance at all gaits and a strong seat overall
8. He was more correct in looking up and around his corners consequently being taller and straighter about the placement of his shoulders
9. She used fewer and more subtle cues in changing leads when loping out of her circle to the left and approaching the straight line to the third marker
10. She was more correct in the placement of her eyes when performing her turn around and lope off
11. He was quieter about his hands in his flying lead change at the center marker
12. She was a more stylish rider who sat deeper and stronger in her saddle and was the quietest through her pattern
13. He was the most correct in the placement of his hands
14. She had a stronger leg evident by her being able to keep her heels down throughout all gaits
15. He sat deeper in his saddle and drove his heels down in the stirrups to have the most correct heel position of any other rider in the class
16. She was more correct in looking around her circle especially when changing diagonals
17. He was quieter with his free arm and was more correct about his upper body position
18. She was quicker and more stylish in picking up all diagonals
19. She presented the most desirable picture of horse and rider working in unison; she was a more effective rider, who showed her horse to its fullest potential

20. Executed her aids with more discretion, which complemented the overall appearance of control and harmony of horse and rider working together
21. Gave a more complete picture of horse and rider working in unison
22. Maintained a picture of confidence and control
23. Sat taller in the saddle, riding with more style and confidence
24. Showed a more elegant and correct posture
25. Maintained a smoother and more controlled ride throughout the class
26. Was a stronger, more capable, more confident rider
27. Carried her head up, was more alert, attentive and confident
28. Sat taller and more erect in the saddle, holding her head higher, while looking straighter through the horse's ears
29. Sat deeper in the saddle with her weight more evenly distributed
30. Was quieter and deeper seated
31. Steadier at the canter, sitting deeper in the saddle
32. More rhythmic and effortless in her position and steadier in her seat at the canter
33. Was squarer in the shoulders, yet more relaxed in her back, which allowed her to more easily absorb the concussion of the horse's motion
34. Was squarer with her shoulders and more correctly arched in her lower back
35. Maintained a more correct, straighter line from her shoulder through her hip to her heel
36. Had kinder, more sympathetic hands and was relaxed in her arms, which more easily allowed her to follow the movement of the horse's head at the walk and canter
37. Lighter, more effective hands, which encouraged her horse to have a more elegant head set with more flexion at the poll
38. More stable and educated hands
39. Maintained a horizontal line from bit to elbow
40. Smoother and more effective execution of the aids, showing more adaptability, sympathy and control
41. Had a more secure leg that maintained closer contact with the sides of the horse, which allowed her to be more discreet in her aids
42. Stronger, more effective leg with more angulation to the heel
43. A more solid heel
44. Carried more weight in her heel
45. More correct rotation of the leg, which allowed the toes to be pointed straight ahead
46. Maintained more contact with her upper leg, showing more angulation to her heels, with the toes pointed forward
47. Easier and more fluid posting at the trot
48. More effortless and rhythmic posting at the trot
49. More functionally correct, maintaining correct diagonals at the trot and correct leads at the canter
50. Was quieter with her hands and lower leg at the posting trot

51. Was smoother at the posting trot
52. Maintained a smoother and more controlled ride throughout the class
53. Posted more correctly with the motion of her horse
54. Stayed with her horse and sat the transitions more smoothly

Key words for position: straighter, quieter, taller, correct, stronger, deeper, stylish

Suggested Terms for Criticizing a Rider

1. Was a sloppier rider, with less control of her leg
2. Was round-shouldered
3. Carried his leg too far forward
4. Failed to maintain contact with the knee and thigh
5. Was rough and unsteady with her hands
6. Exhibited less balance and control
7. Took the wrong diagonal (lead) when trotting (cantering)
8. Was rough and behind her horse's motion at the posting trot
9. Was loose and uncontrolled in her lower leg, and failed to keep her weight in her heels
10. Lost her stirrup at the canter
11. Hung on her horse's mouth when posting
12. Had to look down to check her leads
13. Lacked control and confidence
14. Carried her hands too high and with her wrists broken
15. Continually kept her heel in her horse's side
16. Was loose with her elbows at the canter
17. Turned her toes out too far
18. Gripped with the back of her calf
19. Showed no control of her lower leg at the posting trot
20. Leaned forward and hunched her shoulders at the canter

Sample Western Horsemanship Reasons

I PLACED THE WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP 1-2-3-4

There was a top rider in 1 who was the most correct and stylish rider of all and a bottom rider in 4 who had two major deviations from the pattern.

In the top pair, I placed 1 over 2 as 1 was more correct in the placement of his turn around at the second marker. Furthermore, he was straighter and stronger through his upper body and was

more correct in the placement of his leg. He drove his heel deeper into his stirrup having the most correct heel position of any rider in class today.

I will grant 2 was more correct in her departure to the jog at the first marker.

Advancing on to a closer middle pair, I placed 2 over 3. 2 was straighter in her initial departure into the pattern and proceeded to have the nicest stop at the second marker of any horse in the class today. Additionally she had a stronger leg than 3 and dropped a straighter, more correct overall line from her shoulder, through her hip, and to the back of her heel. She was steadier in her upper body at the final straight line lope in the pattern and ended the pattern with a quicker and straighter back at the final marker.

I did see 3 was quieter about his hands in the turn around.

Moving on to an easy decision in the bottom pair it is 3 over 4. 3 was more correct in his turn around as he avoided contact with the marker. Additionally, and more importantly, he was more correct in picking up the proper lead into his final straight line at the lope.

I will grant 4 was smoother in her final stop and back.

However, I faulted 4 and can easily use her bottom as she had two major faults in her pattern. First, due to poor preparation, she knocks over the marker in her turn around. Second, she picks up the wrong lead in her final straight line at the lope for three strides before correcting to the proper lead. Additionally, she is the most incorrect in her body position overall and therefore can go no higher than last. For these reasons, I placed the class of Western Horsemanship 1-2-3-4.

Reference

Official Handbook of the American Quarter Horse Association, 2002.

Hunt Seat Equitation

GENERAL STATEMENTS:

Hunt seat equitation on the flat is an evaluation based on the ability of a rider to perform various maneuvers in harmony with her/his horse. The communication between horse and rider through subtle cues and aids should not be obvious. Equitation is judged on the rider and her/his effect on the horse. Hunt seat equitation on the flat provides a base for natural progression to over fence class.

Hunt Seat Equitation Judging Criteria:

1. Pattern Correctness
2. Penalties
3. Rider Position
4. Pattern Precision/Degree of Difficulty

POSITION: (of horse and rider)

Horse: The poll should be level with, or slightly above the withers, to allow proper impulsion from behind. The head should not be carried behind the vertical, giving the appearance of intimidation, or be excessively nosed out, giving a resistant appearance.



Rider: The rider's hands should be over and in front of the horse's withers, knuckles thirty degrees inside the vertical, hands slightly apart and making a straight line from the horse's mouth to the rider's elbow. (Method of hold the reins is optional, and bight of reins may fall on either side. However, **all reins must be picked up at the same time.**) The eyes should be up and the shoulders back. Toes should be at an angle best suited to the rider's conformation; **heels down, calf of leg in contact with the horse.** Iron should be on the ball of the foot and must not be tied to the girth.

	CREDITS	FAULTS
Seat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting straight down over center of balance middle of saddle such that base of support is seat bones and inner thigh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting behind center of balance with hips rolled under • Leaning forward to point that base of support is lost

Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back straight, but relaxed and supple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive stiffness • Artificial arch in back • Over relaxed, slumped so shoulders roll forward
Shoulders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level and square 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shoulders too far forward, back, or elevated • Shoulders dropped
Head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking straight ahead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking down (ex. to check a lead) • Looking up such that straight eyesight is not just above horse's ears
Arms/ Hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arms held such that approximate straight line exists from elbow to horse's mouth • Reins held such that contact is maintained • Hands firm, yet relaxed, and still 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands too low • Hands held high • Excessive contact (causing over-flexing of the neck) • Reins too long requiring excessive hand and arm movement to achieve contact • Hands moving noticeably • Arms stiff and rigid
Legs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall naturally down horse's side with slight bend in the knee to allow a straight line from ear→shoulder→hip→boot heel • Ankles straight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legs too far forward or too far back (upper body moved off center of balance) • Irons too short or too long causing unnatural bend in knees • Ankles broken to a point where foot rolls inward or outward noticeably
Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot on iron, resting on ball of foot or in, to the edge of boot heel • Heels down • Toes pointing straight ahead or slightly turned out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Toes only" in iron • Toes down forcing heel up • Toes turned in breaking contact of lower leg • Toes turned too far out

GAITS:

The Walk: Should be a 4-beat gait with the rider in a vertical

position with a following hand.

The Posting Trot: Figure 8 at trot, demonstrating change of diagonals. At left diagonal, rider should be sitting the saddle when left front leg is on the ground; at right diagonal rider should be sitting the saddle when right front leg is on the ground; when circling clockwise at a trot, rider should be on left diagonal; when circling counter-clockwise, rider should be on right diagonal. The rider should close his/her hip angle to allow his/her torso to follow the horizontal motion of the horse. The upper body should be inclined about 20 degrees in front of the vertical. *****Rise and fall with the leg on the wall*****

Sitting Trot and Canter: At the sitting trot the upper body is only slightly in front of the vertical. At the canter the body should be positioned slightly more in front of the vertical. As the stride is shortened, the body should be in a slightly more erect position.

Two Point Position: The pelvis should be forward, but relaxed, lifting the rider's weight off the horse's back and transferring the weight through the rider's legs. In this position the two points of contact between horse and rider are the rider's legs. Hands should be forward, up the neck, not resting on the neck.

Hand Gallop: A three-beat, lengthened canter ridden in two-point position. The legs are on the horse's sides while the seat is held out of the saddle. When at the hand gallop, the rider's angulation will vary somewhat as the horse's stride is shortened and lengthened. A good standard at a normal hand gallop should be about 30 degrees in front of the vertical.

Scoring: Exhibitors are to be scored from 0 to infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Patterns will be divided into 6 to 10 maneuvers, as specified by the judge, and each maneuver will be scored from plus 3 to minus 3 with 1/2 point increments acceptable that will be added or subtracted from 70. Maneuver scores should be determined independent of penalties, and should reflect equal consideration of both performance of the exhibitor's pattern and the horsemanship form and effectiveness of the exhibitor to result in the following scores: -3 extremely poor, -2 very poor, -1 poor, 0 average or correct, +1 good, +2 very good, +3 excellent. Exhibitors overall horsemanship form and effectiveness should also be scored from 0 to 5 with 0 to 2 average, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent. Exhibitors should also be judged on the rail, and their pattern score and/or ranking may be adjusted as appropriate.

Penalties. Maneuver evaluations and penalty applications are to be determined independently. The following penalties will be applied for each occurrence and will be deducted from the final score:

Three (3) points

- Break of gait at the walk or trot up to 2 strides
- Over or under turn from 1/8 to 1/4 turn 270
- Tick or hit of cone
- Missing a diagonal up to 2 strides in the pattern or on the rail

Five (5) points

- Not performing the specific gait or not stopping within 10 feet (3 meters) of designated location

- Incorrect lead or break of gait at the canter (except when correcting an incorrect lead)
- Complete loss of contact between rider's hand and the horse's mouth
- Break of gait at walk or trot for more than 2 strides
- Loss of iron
- Head carried too low and/or clearly behind the vertical while the horse is in motion, showing the appearance of intimidation
- Obviously looking down to check leads or diagonals
- Missing a diagonal for more than 2 strides in the pattern or on the rail

Ten (10) points

- Loss of rein
- Use of either hand to instill fear or praise while on pattern or during rail work
- Holding saddle with either hand
- Spurring or use of the of crop in front of girth
- Blatant disobedience including kicking, pawing, bucking, and rearing

Disqualifications (should not be placed)

- Failure by exhibitor to wear correct number in visible manner
- Willful abuse of horse or schooling
- Fall by horse or exhibitor
- Illegal use of hands on reins
- Use of prohibited equipment
- Off pattern, including: knocking over or wrong side of cone or marker; never performing designated gait, lead, or diagonal; over or under turning more than 1/4 turn

Reining

CLASS DESCRIPTION

“To rein a horse is not only to guide it, but also to control its every movement. The best reined horse should be willingly guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and dictated to completely. Any movement on its own must be considered a lack of control. All deviations from the exact written pattern must be considered a lack of or temporary loss of control, and therefore faulted according to severity of deviation. Credit shall be given for smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness and authority in performing the various maneuvers while using controlled speed.”

(Adapted from the National Reining Horse Association Rulebook)

Judging Criteria:

1. Pattern Correctness
2. Penalties
3. Pattern Precision
4. Degree of Difficulty

SCORING

Each contestant will perform a given pattern individually. Scoring for each reining run is on a basis of 0 to infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. There are seven or eight maneuvers per run with each maneuver receiving a maneuver score of:

- 1 ½ Extremely poor performance, completely incorrect maneuver
- 1 Very poor performance, somewhat incorrect
- ½ Poor performance, no degree of difficulty
- 0 Correct with no degree of difficulty
- ½ Correct, some degree of difficulty
- 1 Very good, correct
- 1 ½ Excellent

The horse will also receive a penalty score along with each maneuver score to be added up separately from the maneuver score. Then the maneuver score will be added or subtracted from 70 (average score), and then the penalties will be subtracted from that new total.

In evaluating each maneuver, a judge should consider the horse's performance based on the following hierarchy of concerns:

On Pattern: The judge must ensure that the maneuver being performed by horse and rider is the correct maneuver as dictated by the pattern.

Correctness: Having ascertained that the horse and rider are performing the maneuver required by the pattern, the judge must then ascertain whether the maneuver is being executed correctly. In this regard, the judge must evaluate the performance of the maneuver against the requirements

of the maneuver descriptions. In each group of maneuvers, the judge must ascertain that the horse has been dictated to completely and the basic elements of the maneuver have been fulfilled regardless of the degree of difficulty. In the instance where horse and rider have failed to correctly perform the maneuver, the judge will deduct for a substandard performance. This deduction ranges from – ½ to – 1 ½ for the maneuver

PENALTY POINTS

Penalty points can be assessed at every maneuver, with multiple penalties being possible. Oppositely, a horse may not incur any penalties, in which case the penalty box would remain blank on the score sheet.

One-Half (1/2) point

- Under or overspinning up to 1/8 of a turn
- Jogging out of the rollback or starting a circle at a jog up to 2 strides
- Failure to remain a minimum of 20 feet from the side of the arena when approaching a stop and/or rollback
- Failure to remain a minimum of 10 feet from either side of the center of the arena

One (1) point

- Under or overspinning over 1/8 but under 1/4 of a turn
- Out of lead per quarter circle

Two (2) point

- Break of gait;
- Freeze up in spins or rollbacks;
- On walk-in patterns, loping prior to reaching the center of the arena and/or failure to stop or walk before executing a lope departure;
- On run-in patterns, failure to be in a lope prior to the first marker or break of gait prior to the first marker;
- If a horse does not completely pass the specified marker before initiating a stop position.

Five (5) point

- Spurring in front of cinch;
- Use of either hand to instill fear or praise;
- Holding saddle with either hand;
- Blatant disobediences including kicking, biting, bucking, rearing and striking;
- Horse dropping to its knees or hocks.

Penalty score of zero (0)

- Use of more than index or first finger between reins;
- Use of two hands (exception in junior, snaffle bit, or hackamore classes designated for two hands) or changing hands;
- Use of romal other than as outlined in WESTERN EQUIPMENT;
- Failure to complete pattern as written:
- Performing the maneuvers other than in specified order or exceeding greater than one quarter of the circle out of order;
- The inclusion of maneuvers not specified, including, but not limited to: Backing more than two (2) strides; Turning more than ninety (90) degrees;
- On run in patterns, once beginning a lope, a complete stop prior to reaching the first marker. (Exception: a complete stop in the 1st quarter (1/4) of a circle after a lope departure is not to be considered an inclusion of maneuver; a two (2) point break of gait penalty will apply.)
- Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern; including dropping a rein that contacts the ground while horse is in motion; Balking or refusal of command where performance is delayed;
- Running away or failing to guide where it becomes impossible to discern whether the entry is on pattern;
- Jogging in excess of one-half circle or one-half the length of the arena;
- Overspins of more than 1/4 turn;
- Fall to the ground by horse or rider;
- When going to and coming out of a rollback in a pattern requiring a run-around, a rollback that crosses the center line;

Degree of Difficulty: Having ascertained that the horse and rider are on pattern and have performed the maneuver group correctly, a judge must evaluate the degree of difficulty in completing the maneuver. In the instance where the horse has correctly performed the maneuver and has exhibited some degree of difficulty on a scale of + ½ to + 1 ½ . Credit for degree of difficulty should be given for using smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness, authority and controlled speed while completing a correct maneuver.

A horse or rider can incur the following faults, however no penalty point is associated with these faults. They are to be judged accordingly and then assessed when assigning a maneuver score.

- Opening mouth excessively
- Over bridled or intimidated
- Nosing out
- Lack of smooth, straight stops, bouncing or sideways stops
- Anticipating signals
- Stumbling
- Backing sideways
- Losing a stirrup
- Unnecessary aid
- Failure to run circles within markers

The required maneuvers for every reining pattern are:

Walk in: The walk in brings the horse from the gate to the center of the arena to begin its pattern. The horse should appear relaxed and confident. Any action which may create the appearance of intimidation including but not limited to starting and stopping or checking is a fault which shall be marked down according to severity in the first maneuver score.

Stops: Stops are the act of showing the horse from a lope to a stop position by bringing the hind legs under the horse in a locked position sliding on the hind feet. The horse should enter the stop position by bending the back, bringing the hind legs further under the body while maintaining forward motion and ground contact and cadence with the front legs. Throughout the stop, the horse should continue in a straight line while maintaining ground contact with the hind feet.

Spins: Spins are a series of 360-degree turns, executed over a stationary (inside) hind leg. Propulsion for the spin is supplied by the outside rear leg and front legs, and contact should be made with the ground and a front leg. The location of hindquarters should be fixed at the start of the spin and maintained throughout the spins. It is helpful for a judge to watch for the horse to remain on the same location rather than watching for a stationary inside leg. This allows for easier focus on other elements of the spin. (i.e. cadence, attitude, smoothness, finesse and speed). The ideal spin is correct, fast, low to the ground, and with a level topline and a drape in the reins. The front feet should crossover (outside front over inside front) with ease and agility.

Rollbacks: Rollbacks are the 180 degree reversal of forward motion completed by running to a stop, rolling (turning) the shoulders back to the opposite direction over the hocks and departing in a canter, as one continuous motion. The NRHA handbook states no hesitation; however, a slight pause to regain footing or balance should not be deemed hesitation. The horse should not step ahead or backup prior to rolling back.

Circles: Circles are maneuvers at the lope, of designated size and speed, which demonstrate control, willingness to guide, degree of difficulty in speed and speed variation. Circles must at all times be run in the geographical area of the arena specified in the pattern description and must have a common center point. There must be a clearly defined difference in the speed and size of

a small, slow circle and a large fast circle; likewise, the right large, fast and small, slow circles should be similar to the left large, fast and left small, slow circles.

Backups: A backup is a maneuver requiring the horse to be moved in a reverse motion in a straight line a required distance, at least 10 feet.

Hesitate: To hesitate is the act of demonstrating the horse's ability to stand in a relaxed manner at a designated time in a pattern. In a hesitation, the horse is required to remain motionless and relaxed. All NRHA patterns require a hesitation at the end of the patterns to demonstrate to the judge the completion of the pattern.

Lead Changes: Lead changes are the act of changing the leading legs of the front and rear pairs of legs, at a lope, when changing the direction traveled. The lead change must be executed at a lope with no change of gait or speed and be performed in the exact geographical position in the arena specified in the pattern description. The change of front and rear leads must take place within the same stride to avoid penalty.

Run Downs and Run-arounds: Run downs are runs through the middle of the arena. Run downs and run-arounds should demonstrate control and gradual increase in speed to the stop.

Reining Terminology

GENERAL STATEMENTS

Compliments

- Exhibited the most agility and control
- Ran the fastest pattern with more control and authority
- Showed more willingness and precision in executing the prescribed pattern
- For the most part, 3 accomplished more of the pattern
- Simply got more done
- Was simply more fundamentally correct throughout the pattern
- Ran a more difficult and demanding pattern, and yet showed a more positive expression
- Exhibited more athletic ability and handle throughout the pattern
- Rider had a greater degree of handle on the horse, thus requiring less excessive reining and leg cues
- Was more stylish in the pattern, which was a more definite, well-blended combination of fast and hard, soft and slow
- 4's pattern was quicker and more correct, and 4 was obviously the top horse in the class
- Placed at the top of the class because 3 exhibited a more complete picture of control, smoothness and speed
- Was a more natural, athletic horse, being a brighter, cleaner mover, holding a steadier rhythm and cadence
- The pattern was more accurate and was run with more effort and control from horse and rider

- Was a more suitable reiner, being more broke, accepting the rider's control without resistance
- Smoothly achieved control
- Accepted the rider's contact, staying lighter and more supple through his neck and jaw
- Flowed through the pattern
- More accurate in his pattern
- Illustrated and/or showed a more aggressive manner
- More exciting and pleasing form
- Showed more finesse and control
- More relaxed throughout the pattern

Faults

- Lacked the overall correctness and finesse of those placed above
- Lacked the control, finesse and style
- Lacked the polish, control and style that a knowledgeable horseman would have preferred
- Was the least willing, least athletic horse in the class
- Showed to be under the least control by the rider

STOPS AND RUNS

Compliments

- More controlled ideal stops
- Fell deeper into the ground
- Dropped deeper into the ground
- Dropped the hocks deeper into the ground
- Stopped with the haunches deeper in the ground
- 4's stops were deeper and more completely shut down
- 2's stops were more stylish, being deeper with a longer slide
- Deeper, straighter slides
- Performed a more correct sliding stop
- Had longer slides
- Stopped in a more relaxed manner
- Was more confident in the stops
- Was a smoother, longer-stopping horse
- Exhibited a more controlled and relaxed sliding stop
- Stopped squarer
- Worked off the haunches and maintained movement in the front end, allowing 2 to have a more relaxed stop
- Dropped the hindquarters deeper into the ground, while keeping the front legs relaxed, allowing 4 to execute a more correct sliding stop
- Slid further in the stops with the hindquarters more squarely beneath and the head more tucked as 4 stayed relaxed with the front legs
- 2's stops were executed with 2 being more over the haunches and more relaxed through the mouth, poll, neck and loin

- Was a smoother-stopping horse that stayed more relaxed and supple down the spine, thus allowing 4 to also slide further
- Moved into the stop with greater authority and confidence, sinking deeper, curving the spine and crawling up front, thus sliding further and smoother
- Used the ground more, stopping deeper and staying in the stop longer
- Was softer, prettier-moving mare, with stops that were deep and long
- Was more correct and responsive in the stops, which were longer, harder and deeper
- Eased down into the dirt, holding both hocks steady in longer slides while moving up front
- Stopped with the haunches deeper in the ground, walking further up front
- Drove out harder in the runs, stopped smoother and slid further
- Moved more freely into the rollback, driving out harder over the hocks
- Ran with greater speed and dispatch from end to end, rolling back cleaner over the hocks
- Ran harder with less hesitation into the stops
- Ran with more authority and aggressiveness into the stops
- Ran harder with less anticipation in the straight-aways
- Came out of the rollbacks with more speed

Faults

- Did not stop
- Failed to stop
- Came out of the stops early
- Popped on the front end
- Was heavy on the front end
- Failed to completely stop on every stop
- Ran through the stops
- Was bouncy in the stops
- Stopped on the front end
- Extremely rough in the stops
- Flipped the head in the stops
- Crooked stops
- Stopped short, splaying out thus losing balance in the stops
- Did not use the ground efficiently when stopping, as 2 stopped on the front end
- Came out of each stop too soon
- Anticipated in the runs
- Was sluggish and resistant in the runs
- Ran slow and with greater resistance
- Required more spurring going into the stops
- Anticipated the stops, setting up early at each end
- Bolted into each run and was uncontrollable
- Took the bit and bolted coming out of the rollbacks
- Flipped the head and ran away in the runs
- Changed leads continuously, anticipating going into each stop

CIRCLES AND LEAD CHANGES:

Compliments

- Showed more size and speed variation to the circles
- Ran harder and faster circles
- Ran with more control and confidence in the circles
- Circles were performed more in the center of the arena
- Performed the circles in a more correct and precise manner
- Held the nose to the inside of the circle
- Running rounder circles
- Rated the circles more uniformly
- Drops back more obediently into the slow circles, holding the body correctly while keeping a more steady pace
- Circles with a more correct arc through the body
- Performed the circles in a quieter and calmer manner
- Ran flatter and smoother circles
- Laid down flatter, smoother circles
- Showed a more released arc through the body, setting the nose more to the inside of each circle
- Was more balanced in the circles, staying lighter and more responsive between the reins with the neck, shoulder and hip more correctly arced
- Circled with the head, shoulder and hip more desirably arced in the direction of the circles
- Showed more variation of size and speed of circles
- Showed greater control of the arena and ground, by staying more within the markers while displaying smoother and more balanced circles
- Had a more correct degree of flex through the neck and shoulder
- Was softer in the bridle, following a lighter rein in the more precisely executed circles
- Ran the eights with more speed and was more fluid in the lead changes
- The size of the figure eights were limited, showing 3 to be a more handy and maneuverable athlete
- Greater contrast in the speed and size of the figure eights
- Was more balanced in the figure eights, opening the stride without hesitation in the fast circles, while slowing down more promptly into more evenly shaped small circles
- The figure eights were more symmetrical
- Higher continuity of speed and size as 2 traveled through the circles
- Flowed through the circles
- Size, speed and smoothness of circles
- More alignment and guide to the circles
- Kept the nose tipped to the inside of the circles
- Crisper and more direct lead changes
- More prompt and exact lead changes
- Exhibited smoother, simultaneous lead changes with less anticipation and hesitation
- Was more proficient in the lead changes, stops and turns

- Exhibited more natural, effortless lead changers
- Changing leads with greater dispatch

Faults

- Scurried around in a choppy, frantic manner in the circles
- Dropped the shoulder, drifting in and out of the circles
- Flipped the head, swinging the body off course in the circles
- Was stiff, lacking the desirable arc through the body
- Lacked size and speed variation
- Was slow and unwilling in the circles
- Shouldered out in each circle
- Was over bent in the circles, shouldering out each way
- Was high and charged the circles
- Was out of control in the circles
- Was late in changes of leads
- Anticipated the lead changes, dropping the shoulder to the inside of the new circle
- Was chuggy and rough in the lead changes
- Changed leads early each time
- Drug the lead three-quarters the way around the first circle
- Drug the hind lead change one-fourth the way of the third circle
- Missed a lead three strides going into the second circle

SPINS, ROLLBACKS AND PIVOTS:

Compliments

- Turned faster in the spins with the front loose and low
- Kept a lower center of gravity in faster spins
- Faster spins while remaining flat and holding a more stationary pivot foot
- Held the body straighter in the spins, keeping the pivot foot in place while staying looser and lower in front as 1 reached around
- Each of the spins were faster than the preceding one
- Stayed down more, being leveler in the spins, crossing over cleaner with more reach, while maintaining faster speed
- Faster, flatter spins with the pivot foot firm to the ground
- Showed more desirable spins, turning more ideally over the haunches, while maintaining a lower center of gravity
- Flatter, more consistent spins
- Smoother, flatter spins
- Stayed down lower in more brilliant spins
- Faster spins
- Put in snappier spins
- Had more flexion to the hocks, maintaining a lower center of gravity while spinning
- More correct and agile spins in terms of planting the pivot foot, shifting weight more to the haunches, making the forehand maneuverable, exhibiting cleaner, faster spins

- Showed more snap to the spins
- Ran harder from rollback to rollback
- Rolled back more over the haunches
- Performed the rollbacks in a more correct and willing manner
- Performed more correct rollbacks, being more over the haunches
- Performed a more correct 180-degree rollback
- Rolled over the hocks more correctly, with a more stationary pivot foot
- Rolled back cleaner over the hocks
- Rolled back harder over the hocks
- Kept the hocks underneath in each rollback, pushing off with greater power and drive
- As 2 executed the rollback, 2 showed more control, aggression and a higher degree of difficulty
- Showed sharper, quicker pivots
- Showed more snap and finesse to the pivots
- Performed the pivots with more confidence and ease
- Showed more brilliance in the pivots
- Showed a crisper and more controlled pivot
- Showed a smoother pivot, crossing over cleaner and faster with the front legs

Faults

- Lost the pivot foot, ending the spins far off center
- Hopped around in the spins
- Loped around in the spins
- Backed out of the spins
- Walked out of the spins
- Came up and out of the spins too soon
- Hung in the spins
- Froze-up in the spins and quit the rider
- Shouldered out in the spins
- Was overbent in the spins, losing the pivot foot, thus spinning over the middle
- Was too elevated and unaggressive in the first set of spins
- Stuck in the second set of spins
- Was slow and awkward in the rollbacks
- Rolled back over the middle
- Hung in the left rollback
- Stuck in the right rollback, going away from the gate
- Pivoted over the front end
- Did not pivot
- Was slow and resistant during the pivots
- Flipped the head in the pivots
- Rider forgot to pivot

BACK

Compliments

- Was a faster and cleaner backing horse, with each foot falling equi-distance of the last
- Backed more readily over the tracks
- Faster, straighter back and settled more readily
- Lowered his head, tucked his nose and backed straighter and squarely over the hocks
- Backed faster and with more ease
- Flexed the poll, relaxed the jaw and backed in a straighter fashion
- Was a faster, straighter backing horse
- Was more willing to settle after backing (or spinning)

Faults

- Did not back
- Refused to back
- Was hesitant to back
- Drug the front legs when backing
- Flipped his head and wring his tail when asked to back

MANNERS:

Compliments

- Was more responsive to the slightest cue
- Settled easier
- Worked more efficiently and with a more cooperative attitude
- Was a more willing worker, performing in a more positive manner
- More readily yielded to the rider's cues and aids
- Moved on a looser rein with less restraint on the part of the rider
- Performed with greater willingness
- Was quieter about the mouth and tail
- Was a more willing worker and was under more control by the rider
- Was quieter and calmer
- Performed the duties in a more workmanlike manner, showing more response and obedience to the rider
- Stood calmer after backing
- Showed more response to the rider
- Had less mouthing of the bit
- Was a more suitable reiner, as 2 was more broke
- Performed duties on a looser rein

Faults

- Was ill and resentful throughout the class
- Wrung the tail
- Flipped the head
- Opened the mouth and chewed the bit throughout the duration of the pattern
- Constantly mouthed the bit

- Lacked positive expression and willingness
- Did not yield to the rider's demands
- Required undue restraint on the part of the rider
- Required the most restraint
- Was ridden on the tightest, least obedient rein

Example Reasons **Reining**

I placed this class of Reining 1-2-3-4, placing 1 at the top of the class as 1 was a more athletic performer who challenged the pattern to a greater degree.

In the top pair, I placed 1 over 2 because 1 ran flatter and more flowing circles on a looser rein. 1 had a more relaxed arc through the body, setting the nose more to the inside of the circles. 1's lead changes were crisper and more direct, and 1 did show more speed from rollback to rollback. When asked to back, 1 did so in a straighter and faster manner.

In discussing the middle pair, it is 2 over 3, as 2 showed a more workmanlike attitude, and was smoother and longer striding in the circles, having lead changes that occurred more directly in the center of the arena. The sorrel also showed more eagerness from rollback to rollback. 2's stops were executed more over the haunches and more relaxed through the mouth, neck and poll.

However, I realize that 2 gaped the mouth and wrung the tail, and furthermore I grant that 3 was quieter at the mouth and tail and showed more quickness to the pivots.

Focusing on the bottom pair, I placed 3 over 4, 3 was a harder running, harder stopping and freer-moving horse that showed less resistance to the rider. 3 was smoother in the stops and showed more speed in the pattern.

I criticize 4 because 4 was the least willing, least athletic horse in the class. 4 was chary, bouncy in the stops and showed the most resistance to his rider when asked to spin.

Sir, it is for these reasons I placed this class of Reining 1-2-3-4.

Example Reasons Reining

Sir, I placed this class of Reining 3124, finding a bottom in 4 who simply ran the least challenging pattern and exhibited the least willingness to perform.

In the initial pair, I placed 3 over 1 as 3 was a more brilliant and aggressive mover. 3 executed faster spins while holding a more stationary pivot foot, finishing in a more desirable location, whereas 1 overspun an 1/8 of a turn to the left. Furthermore, 3 ran harder in the rundowns, and stopped with the haunches closer and more committed to the ground. As a bonus, 3 performed the rollbacks in a more correct and willing manner in both directions.

In my middle pair, I placed 1 over 2 as 1 more precise in the lead changes. 1 started the circle to the right in a more correct lead. As well, 1 worked more efficiently with a more cooperative attitude, being quieter at the mouth, whereas 2 opened the mouth and chewed through the bit, especially in the stops.

I admit that 2 finished the spin to the left in a more correct spot.

In my bottom pair, I placed 2 over 4 as 2 followed the pattern more precisely and had fewer penalties, whereas 4 trotted out of the first rollback. As well, 2 had a more desirable attitude, as 2 was quieter in the mouth, more willing and appeared more responsive to the rider's cues, whereas 4 was hesitant to change leads in the circles and required more restraint from the rider.

I realize and grant that 4 started the circle to the right in the correct lead.

But I placed 4 last as 4 was the least willing performer, executing the least challenging pattern under the most restraint from the rider on the tightest, least obedient rein. 4 also incurred the most penalties. Sir, it is for these reasons I placed the Reining 3124.

Example Reasons
Reining

Sir, I placed this class of reining 4132, finding 2 bottom as 2 received a zero score for overspinning five times to the right.

In my top pair, I placed 4 over 1 as 4 performed the pattern with more precision, receiving fewer penalty points, whereas 1 jogged out of both rollbacks and was hesitant to change leads between the circles. As well, 4 was a more willing performer, entering the ring on a more trusting rein, being more responsive to the rider's cues.

I fully realize that 1 had faster spins, especially to the left, and it was this advantage in spins that helped place 1 over 3 in the middle.

1 executed faster spins while maintaining a more stationary pivot foot and crossing over quicker and more correctly on the front legs. I admit that 1 was delayed on the lead change between circles, however 1 dispatched out of the second set of circles on the correct lead, whereas 3 required a more aggressive cue from the rider to execute the change.

I do admit that 3 exhibited faster, harder stops and snapped out of the rollbacks in the correct gait, whereas 1 jogged out of the rollbacks.

In my bottom pair, I placed 3 over 2 as 3 was simply more functionally correct, spinning the correct number of times, thus receiving fewer penalty points, where as 2 overspun to the right.

I concede that 2 maintained the correct gait and changed leads with more accuracy throughout the pattern; however, I placed 2 last. 2 was the least functionally correct, receiving a zero score for overspinning five times to the right. Sir, it is for these reasons I placed the Reining 4132.

Ranch Riding

The ideal ranch rider: As a judge, look for a horse that has an authentic, useful, ranch horse appearance. He will seem very attentive and make each maneuver look easy. DO NOT criticize a horse for carrying his head higher in this class. If you were in a pasture, you would want your horse to be looking up and ahead. The rider should have contact with the horse's mouth through the reins so they could be ready for any ranch task!

Ranch Riding Judging Criteria:

1. Pattern Correctness
2. Penalties
3. Brokenness
4. Pattern Precision/Degree of Difficulty

1. **Pattern Correctness:** The most important thing the horse and rider will do in this class is... complete the pattern correctly! If the horse adds, omits or performs an obstacle in an incorrect way, an OFF PATTERN should be applied. Note: Continue scoring the run if an off pattern is incurred. However, off pattern runs must be placed below all others who completed the pattern correctly.
2. **Penalties:** The next most important thing to assess in this class are the penalties the horse and rider might incur throughout the pattern.

One (1) point

- Too slow (per gait)
- Over-bridled (per maneuver)
- Out of frame (per maneuver)
- Break of gait at walk or trot for 2 strides or less

Three (3) point

- Break of gait at walk or trot for more than 2 strides
- Break of gait at lope, except when correcting an incorrect lead
- Wrong lead or out of lead
- Draped reins (per maneuver)
- Out of lead or cross-cantering more than two strides when changing leads
- Trotting more than three strides when making a simple lead change
- Severe disturbance of any obstacle

Five (5) point

- Blatant disobedience (kick, bite, buck, rear, etc.) for each refusal

Ten (10) point

- Unnatural ranch horse appearance (Horse's tail is obvious and consistently carried in an unnatural manner in every maneuver)

Off Pattern (OP): Placed below horses performing all maneuvers

- Eliminates or adds maneuver

- Incomplete maneuver

- Repeated blatant disobedience

- Use of two hands (except junior and Level 1 horses shown in a snaffle bit/hackamore), more than one finger between split reins or any fingers between romal reins (except in the two rein).

3. **Brokenness:** Horses must appear broke and responsive to their riders in order for you to consider giving them credit in the maneuver boxes. If brokenness is violated, consider taking away credit in the maneuver boxes.

Compliments

- Consistent headset and frame

- Positive facial expression (forward ears)

- Consistent pace

- Relaxed with the bit

- Traveled with a more authentic ranch horse appearance

- Showed with a more workman-like expression

- Traveled straighter through the bridle

- Remained more focused on the task at hand

- Was more consistent in headset and frame

- Was a more willing performer

- More willing to his rider's aids and cues

Faults

- Resistant to their rider's cues

- Mouthing the bit

- Resistant to the bit

- Inconsistent in frame and headset

- Showed with a negative expression

4. **Pattern Precision/Degree of Difficulty:** Horses who more precisely and quickly complete the obstacles should be given credit in the maneuver score box. These horses will make it look easy!

Compliments

- Quick 360
- Quick and level through lead change
- Quick back up
- Quick, square stops
- Seamless transitions
- Showed a greater extension of the trot
- Showed a greater extension of the lope
- Showed a more forward paced walk
- Was more attentive when picking his way through the deadfall

Faults

- Challenged the pattern to a lesser degree
- Was less attentive when navigating the logs

Example Reasons

Ranch Riding

I placed the ranch riding 1,2,3,4. Beginning with the most authentic worker and ending with one that goes off pattern.

In my initial pair it is a matter of degree of difficulty that sorts 2 over 3. The buckskin responds quicker to his riders more subtle aids and cues. This allows him to show greater extension of stride in the extended trot and quicker stops. Additionally, he remains more level through the turnaround and is more fluid through the sidepass.

I will say 2 showed a smoother flying leadchange. Nevertheless, the gray challenged the pattern to a lesser degree so he must stay second.

Even so in my intermediate pair it is a simple matter of penalties that keeps 2 over 3. The gray simply goes more penalty free through the pattern by better maintaining the left lead lope. I do recognize 3 was a longer-strided, higher quality mover, but the sorrel incurred a 3-point penalty for breaking gait in the left lead lope so I left him third.

Moving on to my final pair, 3 exceeded 4 by staying on pattern. Simply put, the sorrel managed to perform the pattern as it was written. More specifically, 3 executed the turnaround in the correct direction. Now there is no denying 4 was a better partner for his rider, being more willing and responsive. However, the bay must be placed below all others as he performed the turnaround to the left, going off pattern.

Example Reasons

Ranch Riding

I sorted the ranch riding 1,2,3,4. Beginning with the most attentive partner and ending with the heaviest penalized.

In my initial pair it is a matter of brokenness that keeps 1 over 2. The paint is quicker to stop and smoother through his transitions. Also, 2 is more readily responsive to his riders more subtle aids and cues, leading me to believe he would be a top choice on any ranch-hand's string. I will say 2 went penalty free through the pattern. However, the bay required more handling from his rider so he stays second.

Even so in my intermediate pair it is a matter of pattern precision that keeps 2 over 3. The bay navigated sharper corners and showed more obvious variation between his collected and extended gaits. Also, he was more accurate in the placement of his transitions throughout the pattern. I do recognize 3 stayed slightly quieter about the bit, but the palomino was a shorter strided, slower paced mover that challenged the pattern to a lesser degree, so he goes third.

Moving on to my final pair it is a simple matter of penalties that keeps 3 over 4. The palomino managed to better maintain the right lead lope in addition to showing a smoother flying lead change. Now sure, 4 was a longer strided, higher quality mover. Nevertheless, I fault the resistant gray and leave him fourth as he incurred two 3 point penalties for breaking gait at the right lead lope and trotting more than three strides through his simple lead change.

Trail

The ideal trail horse: A horse who approaches and completes each obstacle without hesitation.

Will be attentive to each task and willing to rider's cues. Will seem graceful and coordinated.

Trail Judging Criteria:

1. Pattern Correctness
2. Penalties
3. Brokenness
4. Pattern Precision/Degree of Difficulty

1. **Pattern Correctness:** The most important thing the horse and rider will do in this class is... complete the pattern correctly! If the horse adds, omits or performs an obstacle in an incorrect way, a penalty score of ZERO should be applied.

2. **Penalties:** The next most important thing to assess in this class are the penalties the horse and rider might incur throughout the pattern.

One-half (1/2) point

- each tick or contact of a log, pole, cone, plant, or any component of an obstacle

One (1) point

- each hit, bite, or stepping on a log, cone, plant or any component of the obstacle

- incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for two strides or less

- both front or hind feet in a single-strided slot or space at a walk or jog skipping over or failing to step into required space

- split pole in lope-over

- incorrect number of strides, if specified

Three (3) points

- incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for more than two strides

- out of lead or break of gait at lope (except when correcting an incorrect lead)

- knocking down an elevated pole, cone, barrel, plant, obstacle, or severely disturbing an obstacle

- falling or jumping off or out of a bridge or a water box with one foot once the horse has

got onto or into that obstacle

- stepping outside of the confines of an obstacle with designated boundaries (i.e. back through, 360 degree box, side pass) with one foot once the horse has entered the obstacle.
- missing or evading a pole that is a part of a series of an obstacle with one foot

Five (5) points

- dropping slicker or object required to be carried on course
- first or second cumulative refusal, balk, or evading an obstacle by shying or backing
- letting go of gate or dropping rope gate
- use of either hand to instill fear or praise
- falling or jumping off or out of a bridge or a water box with more than one foot once the horse has got onto or into that obstacle
- stepping outside of the confines of an obstacle with designated boundaries (i.e. back through, 360 degree box, side pass) with more than one foot once the horse has entered the obstacle.
- missing or evading a pole that is a part of a series of an obstacle with more than one foot
- blatant disobedience (including kicking out, bucking, rearing, striking)
- holding saddle with either hand

Disqualified – 0 Score

- use of two hands (except in snaffle bit or hackamore classes designated for two hands) or changing hands on reins; except for junior horses shown with hackamore or snaffle bit, only one hand may be used on the reins, except that it is permissible to change hands to work an obstacle as outlined in WESTERN EQUIPMENT, or to straighten reins when stopped.
- use of romal other than as outlined in WESTERN EQUIPMENT
- performing the obstacle incorrectly or other than in specified order
- no attempt to perform an obstacle
- equipment failure that delays completion of pattern
- excessively or repeatedly touching the horse on the neck to lower the head
- entering or exiting an obstacle from the incorrect side or direction

- working obstacle the incorrect direction; including overturns of more than 1/4 turn
 - riding outside designated boundary marker of the arena or course area
 - third cumulative refusal, balk, or evading an obstacle by shying or backing
 - failure to ever demonstrate correct lead and/or gait as designated
 - failure to follow the correct line of travel between obstacles
 - excessive schooling, pulling, turning, stepping or backing anywhere on course
 - failure to open and shut gate or failure to complete gate (except for Level 1 youth, Level 1 amateur, or rookie classes where they place below all who complete course correctly)
3. **Brokenness:** Horses must appear broke and responsive to their riders in order for you to consider giving them credit in the maneuver boxes. If brokenness is violated, consider taking away credit in the maneuver boxes.

Compliments

- Ridden on a greater drape of rein
- Consistent headset and frame
- Positive facial expression (forward ears)
- Consistent pace
- Quieter at the bit
- Travels straighter through the bridle
- More responsive to his rider's aids and cues
- Stood quieter at the mailbox or when picking up slicker

Faults

- More resistant to the bit
- Required more obvious handling and/or correction
- Inconsistent in headset and frame
- Showed a more negative expression
- Inconsistent in pace and stride length

4. **Pattern Precision/Degree of Difficulty:** Horses who more precisely and quickly complete the obstacles should be given credit in the maneuver score box. These horses will make it look easy!

Compliments

- Quick 360
- Crossing each pole at the same location in a pinwheel
- Quick back-through
- Quick, square stops
- Seamless transitions
- Tight lines of travel in serpentine
- Took a more challenging line of travel
- Was more attentive when picking his way through the walkovers
- Traveled over the poles more consistently
- Worked the gait efficiently

Faults

- Challenged the trail course to a lesser degree
- Took a less challenging line of travel
- Less consistent in location when crossing the poles

Example Reasons

Trail

I placed the trail 1,2,3,4. Beginning with the highest quality mover that navigates the course most successfully and ending with a penalty score of zero.

In my initial pair it is degree of difficulty that keeps 1 over 2. The bay drives deeper through his hocks at the lope allowing him to remain more level when traveling over the poles. Additionally, the bay chose a tighter, more challenging line of travel through the jog serpentine. I do recognize 2 was quicker to navigate the backthrough. However, the sorrel was a shorter strided mover that challenged the pattern to a lesser degree so he must stay second.

Even so in my intermediate pair it is a combination of brokenness and penalties that places 2 over 3. The sorrel is more responsive to his rider allowing him to more cleanly pick his way through the raised poles and stay penalty free when turning around in the box. Now sure, 3 was quicker to navigate the left hand gate, but the gray incurred numerous 1 and ½ point penalties for hits and ticks throughout the course, so he must go third.

Moving on to my final pair, it is a clear matter of pattern correctness that helps 3 excel over 4. Simply put, the gray managed to perform the pattern as it was written. More specifically, he accomplished the walk prior to the sidepass. I will say 4 was higher quality mover that stayed cleaner over the raised poles. Nevertheless, I fault the buckskin and leave him fourth as he failed to walk prior to the sidepass, incurring a penalty score zero.

Example Reasons

Trail

I placed the trail 1,2,3,4. Beginning with the most precise mover and ending with a penalty score of zero.

In my initial pair it is a matter of pattern precision that keeps 1 over 2. The sorrel travels straighter through the reins allowing him to navigate a more challenging, direct line of travel through the lope overs. Additionally, he remains more attentive to his rider allowing him to more carefully pick his way through the walk overs. I do recognize 2 was quicker to back through the L. However, the bay incurred two ½ point penalties for ticks in the walk throughs, so he stays second.

Even so in my intermediate pair it is still a matter of penalties that keeps 2 over 3. The bay better maintained the left lead lope through the pin wheel. Also, he stopped more squarely in the box and was quicker to perform the turnaround. I will say 3 navigated the walk over poles more cleanly, but the paint incurred 3 and 5 point penalties for breaking gait at the left lead lope and stepping out of the confines of the box with two feet, so he goes third.

Moving on to my final pair it is a matter of pattern correctness that keeps 3 over 4. The paint was simply able to perform the pattern as it was written. More specifically, he chose the correct line of travel through the serpentine cones. Now sure, 4 was better broke, staying quieter at the bit and taking more consistent strides. Nevertheless, I fault the black and leave him last as he traveled incorrectly through the serpentine, incurring a penalty score of zero and placing him fourth.