

## Judging Resources

Oklahoma State University Horse Judging Manual

[https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource002678\\_Rep3963.pdf](https://extension.unh.edu/resources/files/Resource002678_Rep3963.pdf)

Oklahoma State University Horse Judging: Developing Oral Reasons

To order contact: Steven Cooper – [steven.cooper@okstate.edu](mailto:steven.cooper@okstate.edu)

Judging101.com

[www.judging101.com](http://www.judging101.com)

CEV Multimedia - Video Tapes for Horse Judging

[www.cev-inc.com](http://www.cev-inc.com)

AQHA Judging Videos

How to videos for: Trail, Western Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, etc

AQHA Judging Championship – World Show Judging Contests

[www.aqha.org](http://www.aqha.org)

NRHA Maneuver Standards

<http://www.insidereining.com/pdfs/msorderform.pdf>

Interactive Horse Judging CD-Rom produced by K-State Research and Extension

Trail and Hunter Hack (also has good Hunter Under Saddle classes)

[www.oznet.ksu.edu/pr\\_eyas/cd.htm](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/pr_eyas/cd.htm)

Video Horse World – DVD's with runs from AQHA Congress (\$30 for judging teams)

[www.videohorse.com](http://www.videohorse.com)

Blackhawk College – AQHA 2012 World Show Judging Contest

To order contact: Aaron Callahan – [callahana@bhc.edu](mailto:callahana@bhc.edu)

## Evaluating Reining

The primary selection criteria for judging the reining class are: Mannerisms and Discipline, Pattern Accuracy and Degree of Challenge. Horses individually complete a prescribed pattern that is designed to score the ability of the horse to rein. Scoring systems are detailed in rulebooks. Quality of performing the individual maneuvers within the pattern is scored positively or negatively. Additionally, incomplete or incorrect maneuvers are penalized.

To rein a horse is not only to guide him but also to control his 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 his 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 a fault that must be marked down according to severity of deviation. Credit will be given for smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness and authority of performing the various maneuvers while using controlled speed.

### **Scoring System for Reining (also for Ranch Pleasure and Trail)**

- +1.5 Excellent (WOW!)
- +1 Very Good (High degree of speed variation, very smooth transitions, very good mover, v. responsive)
- +1/2 Good (Some degree of agility, smooth transitions, good mover, responsive)
- 0 Average (Correct, no speed variation, lacks agility and style, average mover)
- -1/2 Poor (Incorrect maneuvers, some resistance, lacks smoothness and finesse, rough transitions)
- -1 Very Poor (Incorrect maneuvers, excessive resistance, excessive handling, very rough transitions)
- -1.5 Extremely Poor (Oh no!)

## Reining Penalties

### 1/2 Point

- Delayed change of lead by one stride
- Starting a circle at a jog up to two strides
- Leaving a rollback at a jog up to two strides
- Over/underspinning up to an 1/8 of a turn
- Failure to remain 20 ft from the wall when approaching a stop or rollback
- Failure to remain 10 ft off the center line in a runaround

### 1 Point

- Out of lead each quarter of the circle
- Over/underspinning more than 1/8 but up to 1/4 of a turn

### 2 Point

- Break of gait.
- Freezing up in spins or rollbacks.
- Jogging out of a circle or rollback over two strides
- On walk in patterns, cantering prior to reaching the center of the arena and/or failure to stop or walk before executing a canter departure.
- On run in patterns, failure to be in a canter prior to reaching 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

### 5 Point

- Spurring in front of cinch.
- Use of free hand to instill fear.
- Blatant disobedience including kicking, biting, bucking, rearing and striking.
- Holding on to the saddle with either hand.

### Zero score/DQ

- Use of more than index or first finger between reins.
- Use of two hands (exception in snaffle bit or hackamore classes designated for two hands) or changing hands.
- Use of romal other than as explained in general western equipment rules.
- Failure to complete pattern as written.
- Performing the maneuvers other than in specified order.
- The inclusion of maneuvers not specified, including, but not limited to:
  - Backing more than 2 strides.
  - Turning more than 90 degrees.
- On run in patterns, once beginning a canter a complete stop prior to reaching the first marker. (Exception: a complete stop in the 1st quarter of a circle after a canter departure is not to be considered an inclusion of maneuver; rather a two point break of gait penalty will apply.)
- Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern.
- 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.
- Over spins 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

Entry #	Maneuver Description	L circles LLS	L Spins	R circles LLS	R spins	Figure 8	RRB	LRB	SB	Final Score
	Penalty									
	Maneuver Score									

Entry #	Maneuver Description	L circles LLS	L Spins	R circles LLS	R spins	Figure 8	RRB	LRB	SB	Final Score
	Penalty									
	Maneuver Score									

Entry #	Maneuver Description	L circles LLS	L Spins	R circles LLS	R spins	Figure 8	RRB	LRB	SB	Final Score
	Penalty									
	Maneuver Score									

Entry #	Maneuver Description	L circles LLS	L Spins	R circles LLS	R spins	Figure 8	RRB	LRB	SB	Final Score
	Penalty									
	Maneuver Score									

### Example Terminology for Comparable Advantages in Reining

Manners/Discipline

More controlled

Settled more readily

Performed with a more cooperative attitude

More willingly guided

Quieter and calmer

Showed more response and obedience to the rider

Less cueing from or resistance to the rider

Pattern Accuracy

Was more precise, controlled and responsive throughout the pattern

Ran a more precise pattern

Ran a more precise and controlled pattern

Challenge

Quicker

Faster

Ran a more aggressive and controlled pattern

Challenged the pattern, running harder, sliding further in the stops, spinning faster

Challenged the pattern to a higher degree of difficulty

Lead Changes (In addition to terms in Western Riding)

More correct by being more simultaneous

More prompt and efficient

Exhibited more natural, effortless lead changes

Changed leads with less obvious cues from the rider

### Spins

Faster and flatter in the spins

Was more correct in the spins

Flatter, lower, Faster

More correct in maintaining the hind pivot foot

More correct in the stopping points of the spin

Smoother and more level in the spins

Showed more acceleration in the spins

### Rollbacks

Rolled over the hocks more correctly

Rolled back harder and cleaner over the hocks

Loped out of the rollbacks more correctly

Quicker, snappier

### Back

Backed more readily, showing more flexion at the poll

Backed faster and freer

Backed faster and with more ease

### Circles

Showed more size and/or speed variation in the circles

Ran more correct and precise circle

Ran rounder circles

Circled with a more correct arc to the body

More willingly slowed to small circles

Ran harder, more challenging large circles

More symmetric in circles

### Stops

Stopped harder and slid further

Dropped (hocks) deeper into the ground

Deeper and longer stopping horse

Stopped harder and slid further, staying more relaxed on the forehead

Was a harder stopping horse, staying in the ground longer

## **Example Reining Reasons**

Sir, starting with a pair of individuals that best combined finesse, speed, and agility, I aligned the reining 3-4-2-1.

In my initial pair of bays, it was 3 over 4 as 3 simply ran the more demanding and aggressive pattern. He carried this advantage into his rundowns which allowed him to develop more speed and drop down harder into the ground causing him to have longer sliding stops.

I realize that 4 did back faster and settled more readily; unfortunately he was short and restricted in his stops, so I left him second.

Despite this, it was 4's degree of difficulty and pattern precision that separated him from 2 in my intermediate pair. The bay maintained a lower center of gravity during the spins, and maintained a more stationary hind pivot foot while crossing over more efficiently up front. Along with this, he was faster spinning and also more correct in the stopping points of his spins. I realize that 2 showed more size and speed variation of large and small circles, but I left him third as he scored lower mainly because he received two half-point penalties for over spinning in both sets of spins.

Nonetheless, it was 2's advantage in functional correctness that placed him over 1 in my final pair. The dun was simply more correct in completing the prescribed pattern.

Finding no obvious grants of 1 over 2 and as the dun received a score of zero for backing greater than 4 steps between the spins, I left him last.

Thank You.

## **Evaluating Western Horsemanship**

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. The horse's head and neck should be carried in a relaxed, natural position, with the poll level with or slightly above the withers. The head should not be carried behind the vertical, giving the appearance of intimidation, or be excessively nosed out, giving a resistant appearance.

### **Example Terminology for Advantages in Western Horsemanship**

#### **Pattern and Horse**

More precise, prompt in execution of  
More responsive, more willing, more alert  
Completed pattern with less faults  
Moved with more cadence  
Backed straighter, quicker, or with less resistance  
Stopped more correctly, quicker, promptly, or straighter  
More correct, smoother, prompt, straighter or flatter in lead changes  
More correct, smoother, prompt, precise, straighter with transitions  
Horse appeared more relaxed  
Moved with less anticipation to cues or willing  
Horse performed with less obvious cueing or direction from the rider  
Horse and rider worked more in unison, completing the maneuvers of the pattern with more ease and precision

#### **Rider Position**

Seat: Deeper, more balanced, more correct, more relaxed  
Hands and arms: Quieter, lighter, more supple, maintained more consistent rein length, more direct line of contact with the horse's mouth, steadier contact with the bridle, straighter from the elbow down the reins, straighter through the wrist, hand and rein contact.  
Upper body: Head and/or shoulders more correctly aligned with seat and legs, more vertical from shoulder to hip, straighter through the shoulders, more relaxed, squarer through the shoulders.  
Lower body: More leg contact, more knee contact, steadier lower, upper leg, more correctly positioned leg (foot), tighter with the lower leg, heel down further or toe pointed straighter.

### **Example Western Horsemanship Reasons**

Starting with the most complete horse and rider combination and ending with the least consistent, I placed this class of Western Horsemanship 4-3-2-1.

I realize that my class winner could have ridden her horse on a looser rein at the jog; however, it was 4's added advantage in body position and pattern precision that placed her over 3 in my top pair. Four had a deeper, more relaxed seat while being squarer in her shoulders and tighter with her lower leg. Additionally, she was smoother and more prompt through the transitions and quicker when pivoting.

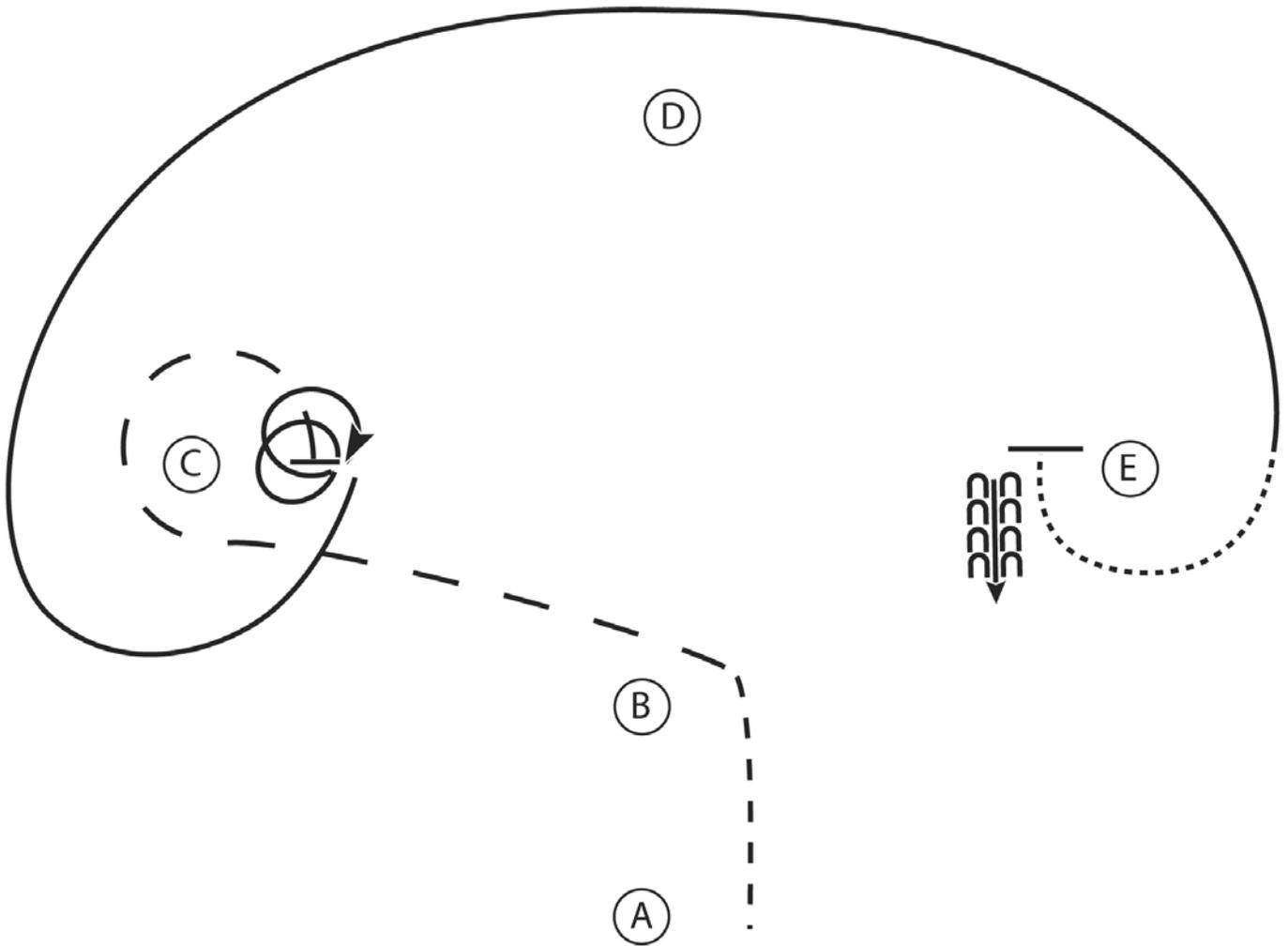
I grant that 3 rode with lighter contact. Still, I left her second as she was somewhat loose in her seat and incorrect in her upper body. Nevertheless, as 3 was more correct in his body position, I placed him over 4 in my middle pair.

Three was straighter from hip to heel and used fewer visible cues through the lead changes. Furthermore, he had greater knee contact and was more correct in his hand position throughout the class.

I recognize 2 backed her horse straighter and quicker. However as her leg was too far forward and was slow to pivot, I left her third.

Even so, it was 2's obvious advantage in functional correctness and responsiveness that placed her over 1 in my bottom pair. She was more correct in maintaining the prescribed gait through the first maneuver. 2 also used more subtle rein cues which allowed for smoother, sharper lead changes with less resistance from the horse.

I will admit that 1 was more correct in both her upper and lower body position, however, as the girl on the grey broke gait at the lope and was delayed in the lead changes, thus making her the least correct, I left her last. Thank You



1. Jog A to B
2. Extend the jog to and around C
3. Stop at C and perform 2 360 degree spins to the right
4. Lope with speed to D
5. At D slow the lope and continue to E
6. At E walk, walk a circle around E
7. At E stop and back

Walk	.....
Jog	-----
Extended Jog	-----
Lope	—————
Leg Yield	
Lead Change	↘
Back	←←←← ←←←←
Marker	⊙ (B)
Sidepass	←-----→

## **Evaluating Western Pleasure**

The primary selection criteria for the Western Pleasure class are: Manners and Willingness, Functional Correctness and Quality of Movement.

A good pleasure horse has a free-flowing stride of reasonable length in keeping with his conformation. He should cover a reasonable amount of ground with little effort. Ideally, he should have a balanced, flowing motion, while exhibiting correct gaits that are of the proper cadence.

The quality of the movement and the consistency of the gaits are major considerations. He should carry his head and neck in a relaxed, natural position, with his poll level with or slightly above the level of the withers. He should not carry his head behind the vertical, giving the appearance of intimidation, or be excessively nosed out, giving a resistant appearance. His head should be level, with the nose slightly in front of the vertical, having a bright expression with his ears alert.

He should be responsive yet smooth in transitions. When asked to extend, he should move out with the same flowing motion. Maximum credit should be given to the flowing, balanced and willing horse that gives the appearance of being fit and a pleasure to ride.

Faults to be penalized include wrong leads, excessive speed, breaking gait, excessive slowness, slow transitions, touching the horse or saddle with the free hand, head carriage too high or too low, nosing out, over flexing, opening the mouth, stumbling, short, choppy strides, tight reins, or excessively long reins.

### **Example Terminology for Comparable Advantages in Western Pleasure**

#### **Functional Correctness**

Fulfilled the requirements of the class more by  
(maintaining gait, taking correct leads)  
More functional in the leads  
More efficient in maintaining gait

#### **Head Carriage and Head Set**

Steadier and more consistent head carriage (set)  
Head carriage more nearly parallel with the ground

More correct head set, showing more flexion at the poll  
Head set more nearly perpendicular to the ground  
Traveled more nearly in frame throughout the class  
More desirable head carriage; Leveler from poll to wither  
More relaxed and natural at the poll; Leveler framed

#### **Walk**

Freer, more forward moving  
More relaxed  
Freer in his shoulder

#### **Jog (in addition to walk terms)**

More distinct  
Slower cadenced  
More deliberate  
More collected at the jog  
Cleaner  
Softer  
Freer  
Longer strided  
Showed a more definite 2-beat jog  
Squarer, 2 beat jog  
More cadenced  
Flatter kneed at the jog  
Moved with knees and hocks closer to the ground

More balanced in stride length front and rear  
Lope (in addition to walk and jog terms)  
More fluid  
Deeper hocked  
Placed his hocks more underneath his body  
More distinct, 3-beat lope  
Showed more drive and impulsion at the lope  
Showed more collection, driving off the hocks more

Mannerisms

Calmer  
More relaxed  
Quieter  
More alert  
More accepting of cues  
Required less deliberate or obvious or visible cues  
More willing  
Quieter, steadier  
More consistent  
More attentive to the rider  
More responsive in the upward (downward) transitions

**Example Western Pleasure Reasons**

I placed this class of Western Pleasure 4-3-2-1, starting with the highest quality mover in 4, and ending with the most functionally incorrect in 1.

Although 4 could be quicker in the upward transitions, I placed 4 over 3 in the top pair as the bay was freer and more distinct at the jog both directions, and was more collected at the lope. In addition, 4 was slower cadenced at both the jog and lope, especially when moving to the right.

I realize 3 moved from both the jog and walk into the lope more quickly, but I left him second as he was a less distinct and cadenced mover.

Even so, responsiveness placed 3 over 2 in my intermediate pair. The sorrel was more willing as evidenced by responding more quickly to the rider's cues. 3 was quicker and more efficient in both the upward and downward transitions and was more attentive with the ears, as well as quieter with the tail throughout the performance. Furthermore, 3 showed more flexion at the poll and backed faster and freer when asked.

I admit 2 was more distinct at the jog, but I left him third, as he was much less responsive and willing.

Nonetheless, 2 placed over 1 in the bottom pair, as the palomino was simply a higher quality and more functionally correct mover. 2 was more cadenced and deliberate at both the jog and lope, showing greater collection both ways on the rail. Moreover, 2 maintained the jog when going to the right, and was more efficient at picking up the correct lead while traveling to the left.

I could find no major advantages for 1 over 2. The chestnut placed last because he was the least broke, evidenced by breaking gait at the trot, missing the left lead and consistently requiring excessive amounts of cueing. Thank you.

**HALTER TERMINOLOGY**

**1. BALANCE**

More proportional  
Nicer profiling  
Nicer balanced

More evenly divided up into thirds  
More proportional in relation of depth of body to length of leg  
**Shoulder:**

Longer, more desirable slope to the shoulder  
Showed more angulation to the shoulder  
More sloping shoulder  
More correct angle to the shoulder  
Exhibited greater length and slope to the shoulder

## **2. STRUCTURE**

Straighter through the knees and toes  
More square in the knees  
Straighter down the cannon  
Cannon more centrally located below the knee  
Straighter down the hock when viewed from the side or rear  
More desirable set to the hocks  
More correct angle in the hock  
More desirable slope to the pastern  
More correct angle to the pastern

## **3. QUALITY**

Showed more quality about the head  
Exhibited more refinement of the head  
Shorter headed  
Shorter from eye to muzzle  
Flatter down the bridge of the nose  
Wider from eye to eye  
Cleaner and shorter through the muzzle  
Cleaner in the throatlatch  
Longer and cleaner down the crest of the neck  
Longer and cleaner in neck  
Higher tying  
Tied in higher at the shoulder

Trimmer in the neck

## **4. MUSCLING**

Heavier muscled from head to tail  
Stood on more substance of muscle  
Showed a greater total volume of muscle over a larger frame  
More heavily muscled  
Showed more overall definition of muscle  
More bulging  
More powerfully constructed  
More expressively muscled  
More circumference of forearm  
More bulging forearm  
Greater separation and delineation of the pectoral  
More muscling through the pectoral region  
V-ed up deeper in front  
Wider through the center of the stifle  
Stood wider from stifle to stifle  
Longer in the hip  
Exhibited more inside and outside gaskin  
More circumference of gaskin  
More bulging gaskin  
More definition of muscling in stifle and gaskin  
Greater width and depth of stifle

## **5. TRAVEL**

Moved out straighter when viewed from the front/rear  
Truer tracking

### **Aged Geldings – Sample Set**

Initiating with a pair that were simply more complete, I placed this class of aged geldings 1-2-3-4.

I realize that 1 could be somewhat more refined in his head, still I preferred his size and muscle over the quality of 2 in my top pair.

The black was deeper hearted and wider through the floor of the chest, thus making him higher volumed. Furthermore, 1 was longer and more nearly level over his croup while having more length and depth of hip.

I will admit that 2 was more refined in his muzzle while being shorter down his face, however as the sorrel was somewhat steep crouped and short hipped, I left him second.

Still yet, it was 2's added advantage in balance, muscle and quality that easily places him over 3 in the middle pair. Two was longer and more nearly level in his shoulder thus allowing for a shorter, stronger top in relation to a longer underline. Furthermore, the taller standing sorrel was more powerfully constructed, standing on more substance of muscle in his shoulder and forearm while being wider through the center of his stifle. Two also was more refined in his head and cleaner and higher tying in his neck.

Finding no appreciable grant for 3 over 2 and as the brown was coarse headed, light muscled and short statured I placed him third.

However, it was 3's slight advantage in profile that situates him over 4 in the bottom pair. Three was longer, cleaner and higher tying in his neck, stronger behind his withers and more nearly level in his shoulder and top-line thus making him nicer profiling.

I do grant that 4 was deeper hearted and somewhat longer hipped, however I criticize the bay and leave him bottom as he was thick necked, straight shouldered and weak topped thus making him the lowest quality, poorest balanced horse in the class.

## Sample Reasons Format

Sir, I placed this class of \_\_\_\_\_

- -

Moving on to my middle pair, I  
placed over because: