

North Carolina 4-H Horse Program: Developing Effective Oral Reasons

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*At the time this document was prepared, Courtney Hathaway was a graduate student in Extension Education and an intern with the North Carolina Extension Horse Husbandry.

Foreword

This manual could not have been completed without the efforts of Courtney Hathaway. A 2002 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Courtney joined 4-H at an early age and was actively involved in the North Carolina 4-H Horse Program until she aged out. In addition to Courtney, a number of other talented North Carolina 4-H and collegiate judges have contributed to the development of this manual. It is dedicated to the outstanding volunteer leaders who have contributed to excellence in horse judging for many years.

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Table of Contents

Foreword	2
Acknowledgments.....	2
Chapter 1 – Introduction	7
Criteria Used for Judging Oral Reasons	7
<i>Accuracy</i>	
<i>Relevancy</i>	
<i>Organization</i>	
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Presentation</i>	
Oral Reasons Scores.....	8
Chapter 2 – Organizing Oral Reasons.....	9
Basic Organization.....	9
<i>Pairs</i>	
Formats for Organizing Oral Reasons.....	9
<i>Commendation-Grant Format</i>	
<i>Commendation-Grant-Fault Format</i>	
Parts and Descriptions of Oral Reasons	12
<i>Introductory Statements</i>	
<i>Lead-in Statements</i>	
<i>Pair Discussions</i>	
<i>Commendations</i>	
<i>Connective Terms</i>	
<i>Grant Phrases</i>	
<i>Fault Phrases</i>	
<i>Conclusion Statements</i>	
<i>Combination or Criteria Statements</i>	
<i>Identification Points</i>	
<i>Pair Transition Statements</i>	
Organizing Terms within a Set of Oral Reasons.....	15
<i>Organizing Conformation Reasons</i>	
<i>Organizing Performance Reasons</i>	
Developing Terminology for Oral Reasons.....	20
Chapter 3 – Preparing and Presenting Oral Reasons in Competition.....	21
Note Taking	21
<i>Halter Abbreviations</i>	
<i>Performance Abbreviations</i>	
Preparing Oral Reasons	22
Learning Oral Reasons	23
Chapter 4 – Developing and Improving Oral Reasons Skills.....	24
Learning Conformational Relationships.....	24
Conformational Relationships to Performance	24
Using More Advanced Methods	25

Chapter 5 – Basic Halter and Performance Terminology	26
Basic Halter Terminology	26
<i>Type: Breed Character</i>	
<i>Topline and Balance</i>	
<i>Legs and Bone</i>	
<i>Movement</i>	
<i>Breeding Class Terminology</i>	
Basic Performance Terminology	30
<i>Way of going</i>	
<i>Consistency</i>	
<i>Manners</i>	
Chapter 6 – Presenting Oral Reasons on Stock seat Classes	34
Stock-Type Halter	34
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Geldings, by Caitlin Caudle</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Paint Mares, by Andrea Harris</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Stock-Type Geldings, Joanna Saito</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Stallions, by Amy Weddle</i>	
Western Pleasure.....	37
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Western Pleasure, by Lori Lucas Stroud</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Western Pleasure, by Victoria McNally</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Western Pleasure, by Eric Sellers</i>	
Reining	40
<i>Incorporating Scoring Into Reasons</i>	
<i>Taking Notes During the Class</i>	
<i>Terminology: Overall Performance</i>	
<i>Terminology: Sliding Stops and Rollbacks</i>	
<i>Terminology: Spins</i>	
<i>Terminology: Circles</i>	
<i>Terminology: Backing</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Reining, by Brittany Spears</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Reining, by Joanna Saito</i>	
Western Riding	47
<i>Incorporating Scoring Into Reasons</i>	
<i>Taking Notes During the Class</i>	
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Western Riding, by Victoria McNally</i>	
Trail.....	51
<i>Incorporating Scoring Into Reasons</i>	
<i>Taking Notes During the Class</i>	
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Trail, by Andrea Harris</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Trail, by Eric Sellers</i>	
Pleasure Driving.....	55
<i>Terminology</i>	
Chapter 7 – Presenting Oral Reasons on Saddle seat Classes	56
American Saddlebreds.....	56
<i>Terminology</i>	

<i>Example Oral Reasons: Mixed Sex American Saddlebred Halter, by Amanda Jordan</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: American Saddlebred Geldings, by Mary Susan Jones</i>	
Arabians.....	58
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Arabian Mares, by Caitlin Caudle</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Arabian Mares, by Shannon Ross</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Arabian Stallions, by Andrea Harris</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Half-Arabian Geldings, by Shannon Ross</i>	
Morgans.....	62
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Morgan Mares, by Mary Susan Jones</i>	
English Pleasure/Country English Pleasure.....	63
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Country English Pleasure, by Jessica Hlebak</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Arabian English Pleasure, by Andrea Harris</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: English Pleasure, by Shannon Ross</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Country English Pleasure, by Leigh Williams</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Country English Pleasure, by Kristine Lang Vernon</i>	
Park or 3-Gaited Classes	68
Terminology	
Plantation Pleasure.....	68
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Plantation Pleasure, by Mary Susan Jones</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Plantation Pleasure, by Andrea Harris</i>	
Chapter 8 – Presenting Oral Reasons on Hunt seat Classes	71
Conformation Hunters.....	71
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Conformation Hunters, by Andrea Harris</i>	
Field Hunters/Hunters in Hand.....	72
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Hunters in Hand, by Amanda Jordan</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Hunters in Hand, by Rebecca Rocque</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Hunters in Hand, by Joanna Saito</i>	
AQHA Hunter Under Saddle.....	74
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Under Saddle, by Caitlin Caudle</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Under Saddle, by Mary Louis Joyce</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Under Saddle, by Andrea Harris</i>	
Hunter Hack.....	78
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Hack, by Megan Barham</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Hack, by Lori Lucas Stroud</i>	
AQHA Working Hunter	80
<i>Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Working Hunter, by Leigh Williams Theofanous</i>	
USEF Hunter Under Saddle.....	81
Terminology	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: USEF Hunter Under Saddle, by Joanna Saito</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: USEF Hunter Under Saddle, by Joanna Saito</i>	

Chapter 9 – Presenting Oral Reasons on Equitation Classes	84
Western Horsemanship.....	84
<i>Incorporating Scores into Reasons</i>	
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Western Horsemanship, by Lori Lucas Stroud</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Western Horsemanship, by Lori Lucas Stroud</i>	
Saddle seat Equitation	86
<i>Incorporating Scores and Reasons</i>	
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Saddle seat Equitation, by Andrea Harris</i>	
Hunt seat Equitation.....	88
<i>Incorporating Scores into Reasons</i>	
<i>Terminology</i>	
<i>Example Oral Reasons: Hunt seat Equitation, by Leigh Williams Theofanous</i>	
Chapter 10 – Draft Horses	92
<i>Terminology</i>	
Appendix	93

Chapter 1

Introduction

A set of oral reasons is a one- to two-minute oral presentation made by a horse-judging contestant to an official in which the contestant justifies how he or she placed a specific class of horses. Placing classes, in combination with presenting oral reasons, encourages contestants to be objective, honest, and fair when judging and helps eliminate personal preferential evaluations.

Junior contestants generally give two sets of reasons per contest, whereas seniors and intercollegiate contestants give between four and six sets, depending on the contest.

Criteria Used for Judging Oral Reasons

The National Horse Judging Team Coaches' Association has identified oral reasons as being judged on five main criteria: accuracy, relevancy, organization, terminology, and presentation.

1. Accuracy

Accuracy, or truth, is the primary consideration in oral reasons. The presentation of false information is the highest fault in oral reasons. While the official will consider the omission of major comparison points in the class, an accurate set of reasons should receive a high score, regardless of the contestant's placing score.

2. Relevancy

Reasons should reflect the actual differences in the horses in each pair and should consist primarily of those points of comparison that were significant in placing the pair. The presentation of irrelevant or unimportant points will result in a lower oral reasons score. Contestants should never give a "canned" set of reasons, in which the contestant memorizes a set of reasons and uses this set for each class, regardless of relevancy.

3. Organization

Styles of reasons will vary with individual personalities and coaching methods, but all reasons should be well organized and systematic. The basic approach is to compare horses in three pairs: the top, middle, and bottom pairs. Other additions to this structure are acceptable, as long as the basic three-pair organization is followed. Descriptions of horses in each pair should be comparative and focus on why one horse in the pair was placed above the other horse.

4. Terminology

Terms used in oral reasons to discuss horses or performances should reflect terminology commonly used by horsemen. Comparative terminology should be used to describe horses in each pair; descriptive terminology should be limited to the top place horse and faults for the last place horse. Additional information on reasons terminology is included in the *Presenting Oral Reasons* sections of this guide (chapters 6 through 9).

5. Presentation

Presentation is the way in which contestants present themselves when giving reasons. Oral reasons should be presented in a poised, confident, convincing manner, but should never convey arrogance. Excessively loud and boisterous or shy and unconvincing reasons will be penalized. Reasons should be presented in a relaxed, conversational tone. The presentation should not contain long pauses and should not last longer than two minutes. Oral reasons should be presented in correct English, and enunciation of words and syllables should reflect correct punctuation. Contestants should dress appropriately and professionally to convey a more confident and poised image to the officials and other contestants. Appropriate clothing includes jeans that are not torn or faded, a pressed shirt, and shoes appropriate for judging boots). Contestants should be neat and well groomed.

Oral Reasons Scores

Reasons scores reflect a combination of accuracy, relevancy, organization, terminology, and presentation, regardless of the contestant's placing score. If contestants see the differences in the horses and reflect those differences accurately in their reasons, they will not be penalized on the reasons score because their emphasis for placing the horses differed from the emphasis of the official judges. The following chart shows the approximate range of oral reasons scores.

Score	Performance
46-50	Good to excellent
41-45	Above average to good
36-40	Average
31-35	Below average

A contestant who is reasonably well prepared and completes a set of reasons should not receive a score below 25.

Chapter 2

Organizing Oral Reasons

Reasons should be logically organized so they are easier for the official to understand. This section describes overall guidelines for organizing oral reasons and contains examples of reason formats.

Basic Organization

Pairs

For oral reasons purposes, each class is divided into the following three pairs:

1. The top or initial pair, which consists of the first- and second-place horses
2. The middle or intermediate pair, which consists of the second- and third-place horses
3. The bottom or concluding pair, which consists of the third- and fourth-place horses

All reasons should consist of the following basic elements:

1. Introduction
2. Combination statement
3. Comparison of the first pair
4. Comparison of the second pair
5. Comparison of the third pair
6. Conclusion

Depending on the oral reason format, each pair of horses in a set of oral reasons is described using commendations, grants, and faults. Within each pair, a commendation is a trait in which the higher-place horse is superior to the lower-place horse. A grant describes a superior trait that the lower-place horse has over the higher-place horse. Faults are traits in which the lower-place horse is inferior to the higher-place horse and are used only on the lower-place horse within a pair.

Contestants should balance the number of commendations and faults for each horse in the class to reflect the actual merit viewed in the class. A horse that is heavily criticized and lightly commended by a contestant may have been placed higher by the official judges.

Formats for Organizing Oral Reasons

Two main formats used for oral reasons include the commendation-grant (Table 1) and commendation-grant-fault (Table 2) formats. These formats can be used to organize any reasons class.

Commendation-Grant Format

In the commendation-grant format, only reasons and grants are given for the top two pairs, and faults are given only for the last-place horse. The commendation-grant format is simpler to learn than the commendation-grant-fault format and is appropriate for junior and beginning contestants. Because reasons in this format do not provide as much information as the commendation-grant-fault format, senior and advanced contestants may choose to use the latter.

Table 1 shows a sample format for writing reasons using the commendation-fault format. This example corresponds with the Half-Arabian Geldings example set of reasons included in the Presenting Oral Reasons on Saddle seat Classes section of this guide. Please refer to this example set of reasons as you review the example format below.

In the following format, the class name and placing are written at the top of the page. The rest of the page is divided into three columns and three rows. One column is used for commendations, grants, and faults, and one row is used for each of the three pairs in the class. In each box, the horses being discussed and their identification points are listed in the upper left corner. Abbreviations can be used in each box to list traits for each horse. Additional abbreviations are listed in the Note-Taking section of this guide. To save time, contestants should write short phrases in the oral reason format and refrain from writing complete sentences.

Table 1: Commendation-Grant (C-G) Format

Half Arabian Geldings 4-1-3-2		
Commendations	Grants	Faults
4 light grey/1 chestnut <i>stood ↔ side, truer tracker, ∠ shldr & past., strng. back/croup, lg hip/croup, bone, long smth musc., ref head, dish, scope mitbah, neck shot ↑er shldr.,</i>	1/4 <i>deep hg./flnk/spr. rib</i>	X
1/3 flea-bit grey <i>closer, dp. bodied, ref more arch neck ↑er ∠ shldr., back-underline, firmer musc. arm, shrt. cann. knee/hock ↓ ground, cleaner more sym. col. bone, shorter eye →m, cleaner muzzle</i>	3/1 <i>longer neck, prom. wither, flex knee/hock, ↑er tail set</i>	X
3/2 light grey <i>bal, exh. sub. musc. frnt → rear cleaner neck, longer ∠ shldr./past., shorter back, m.n. level topline, deep hg./flnk, wider chest, ↑er tail set</i>	2/3 <i>stood m.s.c. viewed from front</i>	2 <i>⊥ shldr., longer weaker back, looser coup., shrt. crp/hip, shallow hg./flnk, longer cannons, c-h, rotate, over-knee</i>

Commendation-Grant-Fault Format

Commendations, grants, and faults are presented for each pair in the commendation-grant-fault format. This method is more advanced and provides more specific information about the class. After a contestant is accustomed to presenting oral reasons in the commendation-grant format, he or she may choose to use the commendation-grant-fault method. Table 2 shows a sample format for writing reasons using the commendation-grant-fault format.

In the following format, the class name and placing is written at the top of the page. The rest of the page is divided into three columns and three rows. One column is used for commendations, grants, and faults, and one row is used for each of the three pairs in the class. In each box, the horses being discussed and their identification points are listed in the upper left corner. Abbreviations can be used in each box to list traits for each horse. Additional abbreviations are listed in the Note-Taking section of this guide.

This example corresponds with the Half-Arabian Geldings example set of reasons included in the Presenting Oral Reasons on Saddle seat Classes section of this guide. To follow the abbreviations listed below, please refer to that section.

Table 2: Commendation-Grant-Fault (C-G-F) Format

Half Arabian Geldings		
4-1-3-2		
Commendations	Grants	Faults
<p>4 light grey/1 chestnut <i>stood ↔ side, truer tracker, ∠ shldr & past., strng. back/croup, lg hip/croup, bone, long smth musc., ref head, dish, scope mitbah, neck shot ↑er shldr.,</i></p>	<p>1/4 <i>deep hg./flnk/spr. Rib</i></p>	<p>1 <i>thick thrtlch., loose coup., shrt. steep croup/hip, c-h, rotate, posty-leg</i></p>
<p>1/3 flea-bit grey <i>closer, dp. bodied, ref more arch neck ↑er ∠ shldr., back-underline, firmer musc. arm, shrt. cann. knee/hock ↓ ground, cleaner more sym. col. bone, shorter eye →m, cleaner muzzle</i></p>	<p>3/1 <i>longer neck, prom. wither, flex knee/hock, ↑er tail set</i></p>	<p>3 <i>neck ↓ shldr., loose coup., shrt. croup/hip, coarse jnts., splay, wing, plainer head</i></p>
<p>3/2 light grey <i>bal, exh. sub. musc. frnt → rear, cleaner neck, longer ∠ shldr./past., shorter back, m.n. level topline, deep hg./flnk, wider chest, ↑er tail set</i></p>	<p>2/3 <i>stood m.s.c. viewed from front</i></p>	<p>2 <i>∠ shldr., longer weaker back, looser coup., shrt. crp/hip, shallow hg./flnk, longer cannons, c-h, rotate, over-knee</i></p>

Parts and Descriptions of Oral Reasons

Introductory Statements

Each set of reasons should begin with an introductory statement, which contains the full name of the class and the class placing. This statement may also contain a lead-in statement, a combination statement, or both. The introductory statement gives the official a first impression of the contestant's delivery and should be spoken with confidence and conviction. Sample introductory statements are listed below:

- Sir/Ma'am, I placed this class of two-year-old Quarter Horse mares 1-2-3-4.
- Manners, consistency, movement, and collection are the criteria I used to place this English Pleasure class 1-2-3-4.

Lead-in Statements

A lead-in statement points out major traits that are shared by both horses in a pair. Lead-in statements should be used with the combination statement in the top pair and can also be used to introduce the second and third pairs of horses. Lead-in statements may describe all positive traits (top pairs), both positive and negative traits (intermediate pairs), or all negative traits (bottom pairs).

Once a trait is mentioned for a pair in the lead-in statement, the contestant does not need to further describe the trait in the comparisons of the horses. Thus, lead-in statements allow contestants to provide more detailed information about a pair in less time. Examples of lead-in statements are :

- My top pair of typier, more balanced mares began with 1, who exhibited the best combination of breed character, structural correctness, and refinement.
- The two larger-framed, heavier-muscled geldings in the middle pair . . .
- In the bottom pair of shorter, leaner-muscled mares, I started with 3 . . .

Pair Discussions

The pair discussions explain in broad terms why the top horse was better than the bottom horse within a pair. The pair discussion should contain one or more criteria used to separate the pair and can be formulated in a number of ways. Play around with different combinations, and see what is comfortable for you.

Commendations

The commendations in each pair make up the body of a set of reasons. These are simply the reasons you preferred the higher-placed horse within a pair over the lower-placed one. Commendations are normally comparative in nature.

Connective Terms (Table 3)

Connective terms are all the words used in normal paper writing to connect one sentence or thought to the following one. They are also used to highlight or emphasize a particular characteristic.

Grant Phrases (Table 3)

The grants within a pair explain in what characteristics the lower-placed animal excelled over the higher-placed animal within the pair. There will never be a perfect horse, so the lower-placed animal will always be superior to the higher-placed animal in a pair in at least one

trait. Grant phrases are different ways of saying “I grant.” By using different terms, you prevent a set of reasons from sounding monotonous and repetitive.

Fault Phrases (Table 3)

These are phrases that mean, “I fault” and are used to vary a set of reasons and prevent repetition. The faults are the problems that the lower-placed horse within a pair had. They differ from horse to horse, and should be kept short and to the point. There is no reason to harp on little faults; it is more important to explain to the reasons listener the major faults of a horse.

Conclusion Statements

Contestants should end reasons strongly by giving a final statement that justifies the ranking of the last-place horse. An example is listed below.

- Therefore, 4 could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Combination or Criteria Statements

A criteria statement is a summary of the priorities or major categories used to judge the class and is used to describe only the first-place horse. The discussion of the first pair should begin with an appropriate combination statement that describes the most desirable qualities for the particular class. The middle and last pairs should be introduced with shorter topic sentences that explain the most relevant difference between the two animals.

Combination statements for specific classes are provided in Table 3 and in the remaining sections in this guide.

Table 3: General Terminology for Conformation and Performance Reasons

These are some general criteria statements for halter and performance classes. There may be additional criteria for classes such as Reining, Western Riding, or Hunter Hack.

<p><u>Halter Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance • Structural correctness • Muscling • Refinement/quality • Breed character/breed type • Quality of movement/way of going 	<p><u>Performance Classes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of movement/way of going • Manners • Consistency • Collection • Impulsion
<p><u>Pair Transitions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In considering my ___ pair, • In moving to my ___ pair, • With regards to my ___ pair, • In analyzing my ___ pair, • In evaluating my ___ pair, • Despite these criticisms, • Even so, • However, • Despite this, • Yet, • But, 	<p><u>Connective Terms</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition • Moreover • Furthermore • Also • Aside from this • Supplementing • Additionally • More specifically • Along with this • Consequently • Plus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finally, • Drawing your attention to • Proceeding to • Concluding with my bottom pair, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complement this • At the same time • An added advantage
<p><u>Grant Phrases</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will concede • It should be noted • I do readily admit • Indeed, • I realize • I understand • Now, there's no doubt • I do recognize • Even though • Yes, • Sure, • I am fully aware 	<p><u>Fault Phrases</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, • Yet, • But this does not compensate for the fact that • Unfortunately • But I still elected to • But I criticized • But still completes the class (last horse only) • But that's where the advantages end • But I still placed • But, • I faulted • Despite these advantages, • But the problem is • Yet I criticized • But ___ was guilty of • On the down side
<p><u>Action Words</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibited • Displayed • Showed • Demonstrated • Performed • Executed • Possessed • Presented 	

Identification Points

Each horse in the class should be identified once in the set of reasons. By identifying characteristics of the four horses in the reasons, contestants demonstrate to the official that they saw and remember the class. Each horse should be identified by coat color or coat markings (such as blaze, strip, or stockings). Horses may also be identified by any unique marking such as a splint, blemish, brand, scar, and so on. In performance classes, horses may be identified by tack including bits, bridle style, etc.

Pair Transition Statements

Transition statements are connector phrases that are used both within and between pairs to make reasons flow smoothly. A variety of transition statements should be used in a set of reasons (see Table 1). Within pairs, the following connector words can be used: “Especially,” “Furthermore,” “In addition,” and “Also.”

The following examples of transition statements can be used when moving to another pair. Transition statements are often followed immediately by lead-in statements about the pair.

- Moving to my [second/third/middle/intermediate/final] pair, . . .
- In my [second/third/middle/intermediate/final] pair, . . .

Organizing Terms within a Set of Oral Reasons

Each contestant should develop a system to describe qualities of each horse in the same order within pairs in halter and performance reasons. Learning to describe traits in the same order for each horse encourages contestants to judge more thoroughly and present more systematic reasons. It also enables judges to remember more attributes for each horse in the class, which avoids the need to memorize oral reasons.

Judges should also develop their own system or flow of reasons to describe a horse. Ideally, at least two different flows should be used when describing the three pairs in a set of reasons to reduce the repetition of the terminology.

Organizing Conformation Reason Flows

Beginning contestants may choose to describe conformational traits in a specified order to obtain a consistent flow when presenting reasons. However, in competition it is preferred to first mention significant traits that had the most impact on the class placing. This shows that the contestant is aware of the most significant traits and protects contestants in the event they forget their reasons in the middle of a set. A typical conformation reason flow recommended for beginners is described in Figure 1, which starts at the head and goes back to the rear quarters and down through the legs. The conformation flow ends with the front and side views and movement from front, rear, and side views.

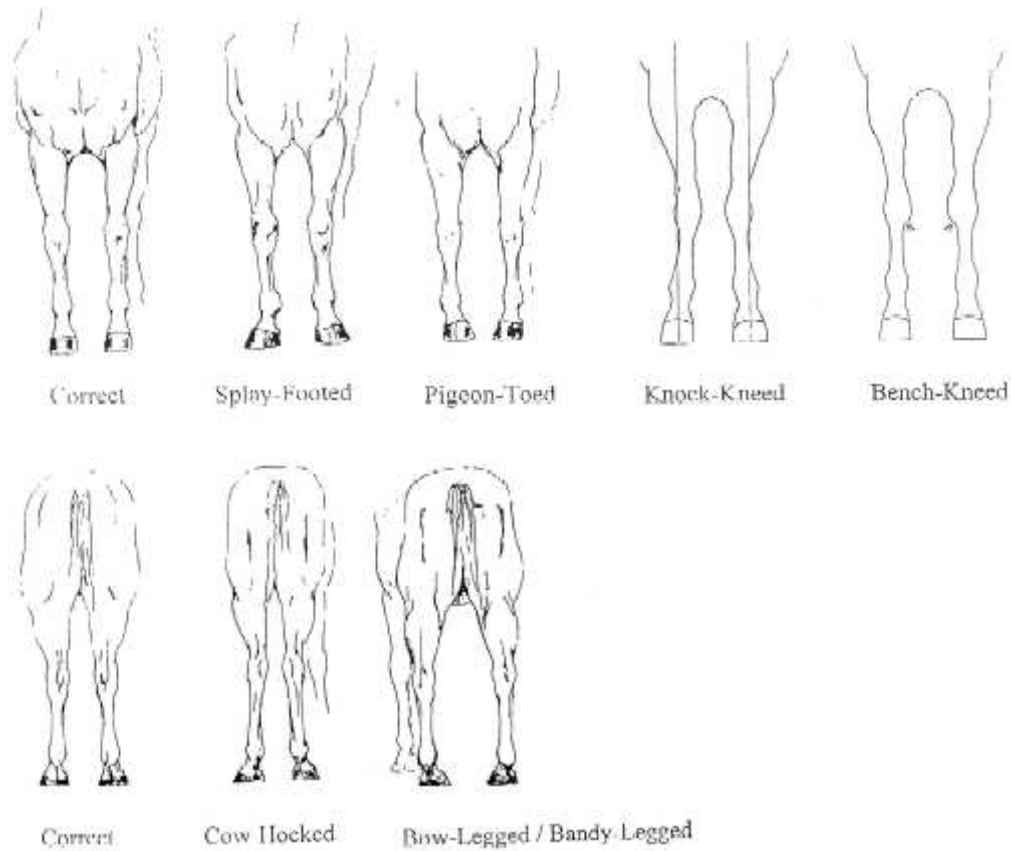
Figure 1. A typical conformation reasons flow.





1. Head
2. Poll
3. Neck
4. Shoulder
5. Wither
6. Back
7. Coupling
8. Croup
9. Thigh
10. Heart girth
11. Rib cage
12. Rear flank
13. Arm
14. Buttock, hindquarter muscling
15. Forearm
16. Stifle
17. Knee/hock
18. Cannon

Figure 2: Conformation Front and Rear Views



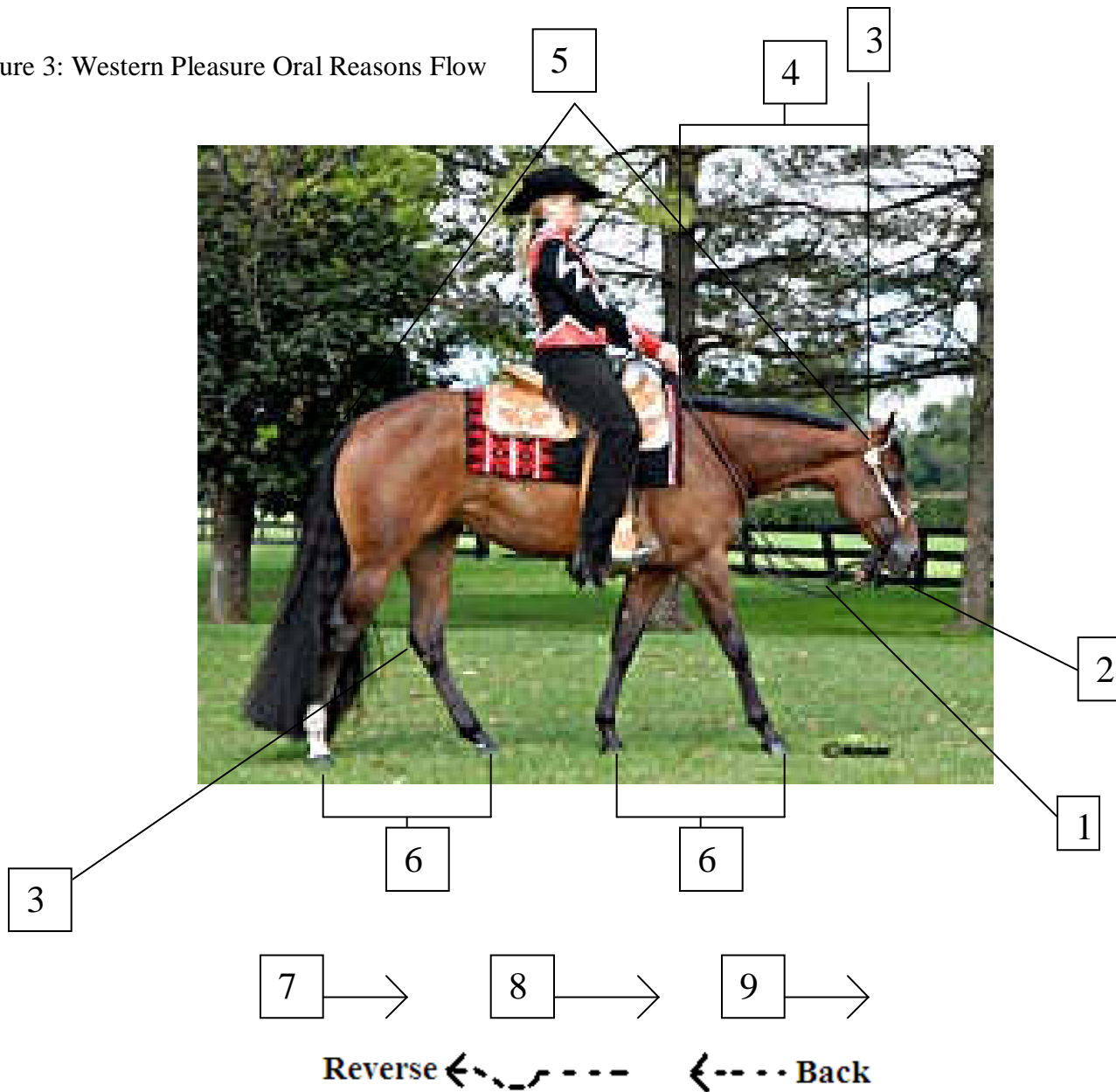
Organizing Performance Reason Flows

The list below shows an example of how to organize traits of each horse within a pair in a set of performance reasons. In addition to the traits listed below, in performance reasons, each horse's speed and rhythm at all gaits should be discussed.

1. Mouth (rein length)
2. Head set (height, poll flexion, relationship to topline)
3. Manners (ears, mouth, tail wringing)
4. Movement
 - A. Collection (hock depth)
 - B. Self-carriage
 - C. Cadence (rhythm)
 - D. Speed (impulsion)
 - E. Gaits (walk, jog/trot, extended jog/trot, lope/canter, hand gallop)
 - F. Length of stride
5. Upward/downward gait transitions, reverse, back

Examples of reason flows for pleasure classes are provided in Figure 3: Western Pleasure Oral Reason Flow. Additional flows (Figure 4: Hunter Under Saddle (USEF) Oral Reason Flow and Figure 5: English Pleasure/Country English Pleasure Oral Reason Flow) can be found in the appendix. All performance class flows follow a logical approach that describes how the class was run (quality of movement in each gait and specific maneuver/gait is described in a specific order).

Figure 3: Western Pleasure Oral Reasons Flow



General Introductions (Lead In); stress when appropriate manners, consistency, movement, collection, flow, self carriage

1. Worked off a looser, freer rein.
2. Being suppler and quieter in the mouth with a more expressive alert appearance.
3. Exhibited more flexion at the poll and hock. Driving with deeper hock.
4. Had a more consistent head set, being more nearly level from poll to wither.

5. Resulting in more self-carriage with a more collected rounded frame from wither to croup.
6. Moved with more cadence and rhythm and softer hoof-to-ground contact while working at a more ideal rate of speed.
7. Maintained a more natural walk exhibiting consistent forward motion.
8. Jogged with more flow in a more distinct, slower, two-beat diagonal gait while maintaining a quieter topline.
9. Extended a more angulated shoulder, loping with a more sweeping, ground-covering stride, resulting in a flatter knee and lighter hoof contact (emphasis on three-beat gait).
10. Reversed more readily, arching around the rider's inside leg while maintaining forward motion.
11. Backed more readily off diagonal pairs while maintaining a quieter mouth.

Conformational traits can be related to movement in performance reasons; however, contestants should not start any commendation, grant, or fault with conformational traits. Instead, these traits can be discussed in the middle of the commendation, grant, or fault. A list of conformational traits in relation to performance is included in the Conformational Relationships to Performance section of this guide.

Developing Terminology for Oral Reasons

It is important for contestants to use correct grammar and terminology when giving reasons. The use of incorrect or inappropriate language and terms can detract from the overall quality of the reasons. This guide contains examples of correct terms that can be used when giving reasons.

Contestants should not repeat terms in a set of reasons. As contestants gain more experience giving reasons, they should develop their vocabulary by describing the same trait using multiple terms. Terms can also be used together to form phrases that provide a more advanced and precise description of a horse.

Comparative terminology should be used when possible in a set of oral reasons. To make a statement comparative, use “-er” suffixes or “more” when appropriate. For example, it is more desirable to say that “1 had a longer, leaner neck tying higher onto a more well-laid-back shoulder” than “1 had a long lean neck tying into a sloping shoulder.” However, a horse cannot be “more pigeon-toed” than another. If two identical faults are seen on a pair, such as pigeon toes, the faults cancel each other out.

The terms “good,” “better,” “nice,” and “pretty” are vague and should be avoided. Instead, describe the horse with a comparative phrase by using “more” or a word with the “-er” suffix. Avoid the use of words with the *-ly* suffix. These words are vague and should be replaced with comparative terms. For example, instead of saying “1 was poorly muscled,” contestants could say “1 had a lighter muscle pattern.”

Do not use the word “number” when referring to a horse. All horses should be identified by their numbers. For example, instead of saying “number 4 had a longer neck,” contestants should say “4 had a longer neck.”

A horse should never be called “it” in a set of reasons. Use “he” or “she” instead. However, contestants should be careful in a mixed-sex class when making references to gender. To avoid confusion on the official’s part, call a horse by its number instead of “he” or “she” whenever possible.

Contestants should use direct language by avoiding the use of “lacks” or “has” or “for being.” For example, instead of saying “3 lacks muscling,” say “3 was lighter muscled.” Contestants should also avoid the use of words with the “ing” suffix. Contestants should say “I fault 4 because he is swaybacked” instead of “I fault 4 for being swaybacked.” Finally, contestants should avoid using phrases that reflect personal opinions. For example, instead of saying “I would like to see 1 with a shorter back,” contestants should say “1 had a longer back.”

Chapter 3

Preparing and Presenting Oral Reasons in Competition

This section provides information on how to effectively prepare and present oral reasons in a judging contest and gives tips on how contestants can use preparation time more effectively. Additionally, the information in this section can help contestants gain points in the reasons room by conducting themselves more professionally before an oral reasons official.

Note-Taking

In a judging contest, contestants are allowed 17 minutes to judge conformation classes on which reasons will be given (15 minutes are allowed for non-reasons classes). Less time is typically provided to judge performance classes on which oral reasons are given. It is important for contestants to use this time wisely by concentrating on the class and collecting as much information as possible in their notes. Additionally, contestants should compile notes in a manner that will help them recall the class.

The diagram below (Table 4) shows a common format for taking notes on all halter and most performance classes. In this diagram, commendations for each horse should be listed in the left column, and faults should be listed in the right column.

Table 4: Common Note-Taking Format

Class Name:	Final Class Placing:
Commendations	Faults
<u>1 ID</u>	
<u>2 ID</u>	
<u>3 ID</u>	
<u>4 ID</u>	

During the class, contestants should circle the notes that determined each horse's placing in the class. These traits should be described at the beginning of each pair within the set of reasons for the class. This helps contestants more easily visualize the class and ensures that the most important qualities of each horse will be emphasized in the reasons.

Halter Abbreviations

Oral reasons should be as accurate and complete as possible. Therefore, contestants should collect as much information as possible when they take notes. However, contestants should not spend more time taking notes than looking at the class. By developing a system of abbreviations for note-taking, contestants can save valuable time when observing the class. This is particularly important in performance classes, when a horse can break gait or go off-pattern within seconds.

Contestants should develop their own note-taking system and a set of abbreviations that are easy to use and remember. Examples of some abbreviations for halter terms are listed below.

Abbreviation	Conformational Trait
∠	More angulated shoulder and pasterns
⊥	Steeper shoulder and pasterns
FW	Flatter wither
S back	Shorter stronger back
MGRC	More gradually rounded croup
SC	Steeper croup
P toe	Pigeon toes
C hock	Cow hocks
P leg	Posty legged
Tube	Steep shoulder, long back, loose coupling, short croup

Performance Abbreviations

It is essential for contestants to pay equally close attention to all four horses in each performance class and make note of each horse's performance. While judging performance classes, contestants should position themselves along the rail to permit a continuous view of all four horses in the class. Some contestants also hold their note pads at eye level to view as much of the class as possible while taking notes. To make note-taking faster, contestants can use the following abbreviations.

Abbreviation	Performance Trait
W (1)	Walk
J (2)	Jog
T (2)	Trot
L (3)	Lope
C (3)	Canter
Bk	Back
1	First way of the ring
2	Second way of the ring
M	Manners
\(B)	Broke first direction of ring
(B)/	Broke second direction of ring
S.O.	Strung out

Preparing Oral Reasons

During a judging contest, preparation time should be used efficiently to allow more time for practicing reasons. Each contestant should develop a method of writing and learning reasons that is easy to remember and most effective for him or her.

When contestants prepare oral reasons, they may rewrite and reorganize their notes using proper terminology. Less experienced contestants may write out each set of reasons word-for-word. As contestants gain more experience, they should write reasons only in shorthand and learn the reasons by looking only at the abbreviations in their notes. The note-taking formats and abbreviations shown in this guide can be used to help contestants learn to prepare oral reasons without rewriting the notes taken during the class.

Contestants can save time by writing reasons between classes and during breaks in the contest. This also allows contestants to write reasons while the class is more memorable. However, contestants should not begin learning sets of reasons until the order that each rotation will follow is announced, since reasons are not necessarily given in the order that the classes are judged in the contest.

Learning Oral Reasons

Each contestant will be given at least 20 minutes between each set of reasons to prepare and learn the next set of reasons. If a contestant is not given 20 minutes to prepare, he or she should alert the room coordinator and request more time.

When learning and presenting reasons, contestants should visualize the class. Contestants should never memorize a set of reasons; instead, they should learn to describe the class based on a mental image of the horses. Before participating in a contest, each contestant should learn to recite reasons without pausing or referring to notes. By avoiding pauses, contestants can deliver their reasons more effectively and earn a higher presentation score. After learning the oral reason flow for an ideal horse in each class, contestants can practice reciting a set of reasons in front of a mirror.

To learn a set of reasons, contestants should repeatedly visualize the class while saying the reasons silently to themselves without pausing. Contestants may also have the opportunity to practice reasons aloud while waiting outside the reasons room. Learning a set of reasons in a contest environment requires complete concentration in a quiet setting. Contestants should not speak to other contestants while preparing reasons or waiting for their rotation, but should focus on the reasons that they will be presenting in the next rotation.

Chapter 4

Developing and Improving Oral Reasons Skills

Beginning contestants should initially present reasons in a basic format and use more advanced methods as they gain experience. Beginners can start by using the commendation-grant format, as previously discussed. In addition to learning how to organize oral reasons, beginners should remember the relationships between conformational characteristics and correlated traits. A system for learning conformational relationships is described in the Learning Conformational Relationships section of this guide.

Learning Conformational Relationships

The information in this section was developed by Arden Huff, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and the Virginia State 4-H Horse Program. The material has been used to teach conformational relationships to many judging contestants.

Beginning contestants can learn conformational relationships and reasons terminology by understanding three basic body types: Miss Perfect, The Cube, and The Tube. Miss Perfect most closely resembles the ideal and exhibits balance, refinement, quality, and structural correctness. The Cube lacks balance, quality, and refinement, and has a short, compact frame covered with bunchy, coarse muscling. Generally, the Cube is structurally incorrect through the shoulder and topline. The Tube is longer-framed and shallower or pinched through the heart girth, lacking balance, refinement, and quality.

This system uses some basic conformational correlations to help contestants remember standard types of horses. For example, most longer-backed horses like The Tube have correspondingly steep shoulders. Most steeper-shouldered horses like the Cube also have steep pasterns. Likewise, a balanced horse such as Miss Perfect has a shorter back and coupling, longer croup, and more sloping shoulder with a correspondingly sloping pastern. Illustrations of Miss Perfect, The Cube, and The Tube are available in the appendix.

Conformational Relationships to Performance

The related conformation traits that contestants learn using the models based on Miss Perfect, The Tube, and The Cube affect a horse's performance under saddle. Contestants can describe these conformational relationships in reasons to demonstrate a better understanding of horse judging. Some conformation relationships to performance are listed below.

- A thicker, coarser throat latch denotes that a horse may have limited flexion in the poll due to constricted breathing.
- A horse with a shorter, heavier neck has decreased balance and flexion at the poll, causing a loss of mobility. This horse has shorter, heavier strides.
- A longer, more sloping shoulder and pasterns result in more elastic and springy strides with minimal concussion.
- Shorter forearms result in shorter strides.
- Longer forearms are correlated with a longer stride that covers more ground.
- Straighter toes result in a truer and straighter stride.
- Pigeon toes cause a horse to wing-out or paddle, and splayed feet cause a horse to wing-in or dish.
- Calf knees result in heavier, pounding gaits.
- Buck knees and long toes are correlated with stumbling and a lack of coordination.

- A horse that is wider at the hocks rotates the hocks when tracking and moves stiffer, with less flexion in the hocks.
- A cow-hocked horse exhibits a more collected stride, with more flexion in the hocks while driving forward farther.
- A post legged horse is stilty and airy behind when tracking and will also be more uncollected.
- A horse with sickle hocks and a steeper croup may have curbs and wind puffs. This horse will move with more collection and natural balance. However, the useful performance of the horse may be limited due to eventual unsoundness.
- Longer, lower, weaker pasterns are correlated with ringbone and possible sesamoid bone damage. A horse with weaker pasterns moves with an excessively springy stride.
- A horse that is shallower through the heart girth and pinched or narrower in the ribs has reduced heart and lung capacity, which limits the horse's ability.

Using More Advanced Methods

Once a contestant has learned to use the commendation-grant format and is comfortable with basic conformational relationships, he or she should advance to the commendation-grant-fault format.

Contestants can also improve their oral reasons skills by expanding their terminology to include a more comprehensive terms and phrases. Contestants should learn to combine related terms and describe the same traits in many different ways. Contestants should also be able to describe conformational traits and relate these to other traits.

Chapter 5

Basic Halter and Performance Terminology

This section contains halter and performance terminology that can apply to all breeds and performance types. The terms in these sections should be used in addition to the terminology listed in the specific class descriptions.

Basic Halter Terminology

The terminology listed in this section describes type or breed character; topline and balance; legs, bones, and movement; and traits specific to breeding horse classes. These terms can be used in oral reasons to describe conformation characteristics of all breeds. Breed-specific terminology is included in the remaining sections of this guide.

Type: Breed Character

Commendations

Was a higher-quality, more stylish [mare/stallion/gelding]

Exhibited more refinement and style

Combined balance, symmetry, and breed type to a higher degree

Exhibited more refinement, expression, and presence

Had more [substance/type/style/quality/balance/symmetry]

Exhibited more desirable type

Exhibited more [Quarter Horse/Morgan/etc.] character about the head and neck

Exhibited more smartness and style about the head

Was more [refined/stylish/alert] about the head

Was sharper chiseled about the head

Had a [sharper/shorter/foxier/neater/more alert] ear

Was shorter from [poll/eye] to muzzle

Had a wider forehead

Was wider between the eyes

Had larger, wider set eyes

Had a more [alert/prominent/expressive] eye

Was more expressive about the eyes

Had a [cleaner/trimmer/more refined] muzzle

Had larger nostrils

Was shorter headed and wider from eye to eye with a larger, more prominent eye

Exhibited more refinement in the muzzle

Had a [cleaner/trimmer/finer] muzzle with a [larger/ more flaring nostril]

Had a [larger/flatter] jaw

Was neater and trimmer about the throat latch

Was cleaner in the throat latch

Had a longer, trimmer neck

Had a cleaner neck

Faults

Was [plainer/coarser/thicker] about the head

Had longer ears

Was longer from [poll/eye] to muzzle

Was narrower between the eyes

Had smaller, duller eyes

Had a larger, coarser muzzle
Was Roman-nosed
Was [parrot-mouthed/monkey-mouthed]
Had an undershot jaw
Had an overshot jaw
Had a thicker, coarser throat latch
Had a [shorter/thicker/crestier] neck
Was thicker and coarser in [his/her] neck
Was ewe-necked
Had a lower neckset
Had a shorter, thicker neck

Topline and Balance

Commendations

Exhibited more balance and symmetry
Exhibited a more balanced, symmetrical appearance overall
Had a more desirable topline with sharper withers, a shorter and stronger back, and tighter coupling
Exhibited a more balanced appearance, with a shorter topline relative to the underline, and greater depth and spring of rib
Had a longer more [sloping/angulated/well laid back] shoulder
Neck tied in higher at the shoulder
Had a longer neck tied into a more well laid back shoulder
Had a [longer/trimmer/leaner] neck set higher onto a more sloping shoulder
Had a more desirable slope to the shoulder
Had [trimmer/cleaner/higher/more prominent] withers
Had a trimmer, more prominent wither which tied into a shorter, more powerful back
Was a shorter backed [mare/stallion/gelding] with a longer underline
Was shorter and stronger over the topline
Had a shorter, stronger back and coupling
Was shorter coupled and stronger over the loin
Was shorter and stronger over the topline
Was fuller in the loin
Had a longer hip
Was longer through the hip
Was tighter coupled
Was longer in the underline with a shorter topline
Had a longer, trimmer underline
Had a smoother underline, tapering more gradually into the flank
Was deeper barreled
Had a deeper barrel
Was deeper through the heart girthheart girth with greater spring of rib
Exhibited more depth in the heart girthheart girth
Exhibited more spring of rib
Was deeper through the heart and rib
Was a deeper ribbed, wider chested [mare/stallion]
Was deeper through the flank and rib with more spring of rib
Had a wider chest
Exhibited more depth in the chest

Faults

Was [off-type/off-balanced]
Exhibited less [style/symmetry/balance]
Was coarser and less balanced
Had a shorter thicker neck set lower onto a steeper shoulder
Exhibited less angle to the shoulder
Had a steeper shoulder and correspondingly steeper pasterns, causing [him/her] to travel with a shorter, choppier stride
Had a [coarser/flatter] wither
Was flatter over the withers
Was mutton withered
Had a shorter neck set lower onto flatter withers
Had a longer, weaker back and a shorter underline
Was longer and weaker over the topline
Had a lower back
Walked downhill, with a lower wither and higher croup
Was longer in the coupling
Had a weaker loin
Was higher in the hip
Had a shorter, steeper croup
Dropped off over the croup
Was pinched in the chest
Was tied in behind the elbow
Was shallower in the chest and ribs
Was narrower in the chest and shallower in the heart girth
Was narrower at the stifle

Legs and Bone

Commendations

Stood straighter and more structurally sound
Stood more structurally correct in the [front/rear]
Was more correct in the leg and bone structure
Stood more structurally correct when viewed from the [front/rear]
Had more quality of underpinning because [he/she] was cleaner chiseled about the knees, hocks, and fetlocks
Stood on [cleaner/flatter/finer/higher quality/straighter column of] bone
Was cleaner about the knees and hocks
Joints were smoother and cleaner
Had a longer forearm and a shorter cannon bone
Stood on shorter, stronger cannon bones
Cannons were set more squarely from the center of the knee
Had more slope to the pasterns
Stood down with knees and hocks closer to the ground
Exhibited a more symmetrical column of bone
Had a more symmetrical knee-cannon junction
Had longer, more [sloping/angulated] pasterns
Was more defined about the joints
Toed straighter ahead
Had more set to the hocks
Had a more correct angle to the hocks

Had a rounder, tougher foot with a desirably deeper heel
Was more ideally deeper and wider at the heel

Faults

Stood on bone that was too fine relative to [his/her] size/stood on finer bone
Was coarser in the underpinnings
Stood on coarser bone
Toed out/was splayfooted
Toed in/was pigeon-toed
Stood [buck-kneed/over at the knees]
Stood [calf-kneed/back at the knees]
Stood bench-kneed
Had a longer, weaker cannon bone
Had offset cannons
Had shorter, [steeper/straighter] pasterns
Stood camped under
Stood cow-hocked
Stood sickle-hocked
Had a curb
Was [boggy/puffy] in the hocks
Was coarser about the [knees and hocks/joints]
Stood base-narrow
Stood closer in the front/rear

Movement

Commendations

Moved sounder with a longer, smoother stride
Was more fluid in [his/her] movement
Moved out straighter and more correct at the [walk/trot]
Was a [sounder/freer] moving [mare/stallion/gelding]
Traveled [straighter/truer]
Tracked straighter when viewed from the [front/rear]
Moved with more alertness
Had a more elastic walk
Moved with less hoof-to-ground contact
Had a longer and more [cadenced/ground covering] stride
Moved more correctly and deeper off [his/her] hocks
Was freer and easier moving
Was truer and more correct in [his/her] action
Worked with more balance and coordination

Faults

Traveled [lame/unsound]
Traveled [base-narrow/close]
Traveled wide at the hocks
[Crossed over/winged in] when tracking
Winged when tracking
[Rotated the hocks when tracking/rolled out at the hocks]
Was uncoordinated in [his/her] gait
Was a poorer mover

Had a shorter, straighter shoulder resulting in a shorter, choppier stride
Moved stiffer

Breeding Class Terminology

In breeding classes, contestants should mention the breed name when describing the breed character. For example, say “1 exhibited more American Morgan breed character.” In reasons, contestants should mention the full breed name instead an abbreviated or shortened name (“Arabian” instead of “Arab”).

Mare Commendations

Was a higher-quality, more stylish mare
Exhibited more femininity about the head
Was more refined and feminine about the head
Was deeper through the heart girth with more volume and capacity
Had more breeding capacity with a deeper heart girth, greater spring of rib, and wider chest
Exhibited greater volume and capacity
Was deeper-ribbed with a wider chest, allowing for greater breeding capacity
Was deeper in the chest cavity
Was deeper and wider in the chest with more breeding capacity

Stallion Commendations

Was a more stylish and refined stallion
Had a [larger/deeper/more prominent/more masculine/more powerfully muscled] jaw
Exhibited more testicular [uniformity/development]
Had a larger scrotal circumference

Gelding Commendations

Was a bigger, stouter gelding, standing taller at the withers
Exhibited greater [size/scale/frame]
Was a larger-framed gelding, showing more size and scale
Stood on heavier, denser bone
Exhibited greater athletic ability

Basic Performance Terminology

In performance reasons, contestants should discuss the speed and cadence of all horses at all gaits, both ways of the ring. The gait that should be emphasized the least in a set of reasons is the walk; however, all horses should have a true four-beat walk. While the horses are walking, contestants should make note of identification points for the four horses and notice any conformational traits that may affect the horses’ movement at other gaits.

The terminology listed in this section describes way of going, consistency, and manners. These terms can be used to describe performance on the rail in most performance classes. In performance classes that are judged primarily on other criteria, such as reining and western riding, these terms should be used sparingly. Emphasis in these classes should be placed on comparison of the specific maneuvers. Terminology for specific performance classes is listed in the remaining sections of the guide.

Way of going

Commendations

Worked in a more ideal [western/hunt seat/saddle seat] frame
Exhibited a more [desirable/stylish] overall picture
Exhibited a more [natural/correct] [headset/head carriage]
Carried the head more correctly over the withers
Looked straighter through the bridle while working on a looser, freer rein
Was more naturally relaxed in the mouth and poll
Was suppler in the poll
Exhibited more flexion at the poll and collection in the hocks
Exhibited more natural collection while working at the [gait]
Moved rounder over the topline with a more collected frame
Worked closer to the ground while maintaining a more distinct foot fall pattern
Had a leveler plain of motion
Had more flexion in the poll and a suppler mouth, resulting in more flexion in the hocks, a rounder frame, and a more collected stride at the [gait]
Was more collected at the [gait], allowing for a longer, more cadenced stride
Exhibited more natural collection while working at the [gait]
Exhibited more set to the hocks
Was more cadenced and rhythmic at the [gait]
Had a longer, freer, more ground-covering stride
Had a freer stride at the [gait]
Exhibited an easier, more fluid way of going
Moved with a more correct cadence
Exhibited more rhythm and balance
Backed in a more two-beat fashion
Exhibited a more ground-covering [gait]
Gave a softer, smoother ride
Was a more consistent and efficient performer
Exhibited a more fluid and stylish way of going
Exhibited more [brilliance/style/action]
Was more fluid in [his/her] movement

Faults

Had a shorter, thicker neck, resulting in a lack of engagement and suppleness through the poll
Was heavier on the forehand, moving with a ground-pounding stride
Was strung out
Exhibited less cadence
Cross-cantered
Cantered disunited
Was [stilty moving/moved stiffer]
Was [more rigid in the poll/exhibited more resistance in the poll]
Nosed out on the move, lacking flexion in the poll
Was overcollected and worked behind the vertical
Worked heavy on the forehand, moving with a pounding stride
Was sluggish
Was long-backed and loose-coupled, resulting in a strung-out [gait]
Had a more upright shoulder and pasterns, resulting in a pounding stride
Rooted the nose at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring
Worked flatter over the topline

Was strung out at the [gait]
Was chargey at the [gait]
Exhibited less type of quality and movement
Was lame
Exhibited inconsistent movement, moving faster the [first/second] way of the ring than the [second/first] at the [gait]
Stumbled at the [gait] as a result of lack of collection

Consistency

Commendations

Held the head more consistently [vertical/perpendicular to the ground]
Carried a more consistent, desirable headset
Worked lighter on the bit, with a steadier headset
Was a more solid performer
Exhibited a more consistent way of going
Was more consistent at the [gait]
Had more consistent impulsion at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring
Exhibited more consistency in speed and impulsion at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring
Had a more consistent speed at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring
Exhibited a more consistent length of stride
Was more rhythmic at the [gait]
Exhibited smoother cadence at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring

Faults

Had an inconsistent headset
Was [over the bit/overflexed]
Was inconsistent in the headset at the [gait]
Bobbed [his/her] head
Was chargey at the [gait]
Four-beat at the canter the [first/second] way of the ring
Exhibited inconsistent [speed/impulsion] at the [gait] between the first and second way of the ring
Was too fast at the [gait]
Exhibited less rhythm at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring
Broke in [front/hind] at the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring

Manners

Commendations

Was a more willing and obedient performer
Exhibited a more willing and pleasant attitude
Was more responsive to the rider's aids
Was more alert and attentive to the rider
Was more broke
Was [lighter mouthed/quieter on the bit]
Worked with lighter contact on the bit
Rode with a quieter mouth and exhibited more alertness to the rider
Rode on a looser, freer rein
Reined quicker and more readily
Bent easier around the rider's leg when reversing

Took leads [smoother/quicker/more readily/with less hesitation]
Had a quieter tail set
Stopped more squarely and readily
Bent easier around the rider's leg when reversing
Had smoother, quicker [upward/downward] transitions
Exhibited prompter transitions
Reversed quicker on the haunches in the transitions
Was more rapid in [his/her] transitions
Stopped more squarely and easily
Backed straighter and more readily between the rider's [legs/cues], working off diagonal pairs of legs

Faults

Was less responsive to the rider's cues
Anticipated the rider's cues
Worked less willingly between the rider's aids
[Gummed/chewed] the bit
Was checked in the bit
Fought the bit
Needed excessive restraint
Was sour-eared
Worked with the ears pinned
Did not work squarely to the rail
Faded off the rail toward the center
Wrung the tail when cued
Missed the [right/left] lead the [first/second] way of the ring
Had slower transitions
Hesitated in the transition from the [gait] to the [gait] the [first/second] way of the ring
Broke gait
Bucked
Resisted when backing
Gaped the mouth when backing
Backed crooked over [his/her] tracks

Chapter 6

Presenting Oral Reasons on Stock seat Classes

This section discusses terminology and strategies for giving oral reasons on stock-type halter and stock seat performance classes. In this section, the terms listed for each class should be used in combination with the general terms listed in the section of this guide titled Basic Halter and Performance Terminology.

Stock-Type Halter

The ideal mare or stallion shows the best combination of breed character, structural correctness, quality or refinement, balance, and muscling. For mares, femininity can also be added to this combination statement; for stallions, masculinity can be added.

The top place stock-type gelding shows the best combination of balance (athletic ability), structural correctness, muscling, refinement, and breed character. Muscling should be emphasized in all stock-type conformation classes. Total body volume and capacity should be emphasized only for mares. In stock-type halter reasons, heads should be discussed for mares and stallions, but not for geldings. This varies from giving reasons on English breeds, for which emphasis is placed on breed character regardless of sex. The following conformation terminology should be used in stock-type conformation reasons.

Commendations

Was more [desirably/evenly/gradually] [turned/rounded] over the croup

Was a [smoother/longer/trimmer]-muscled [mare/stallion/gelding]

Was more powerfully muscled [throughout/from end to end]

Had [heavier/more prominent/firmer/longer/more athletic] muscling

Muscle tied in [smoother/cleaner/neater/lower] onto knees and hocks set closer to the ground

Was heavier V-ed up in front

Had a [deeper/more prominent] pectoral muscle

Had [longer/trimmer/firmer] muscling throughout the arm and forearm which tied on more neatly to a cleaner, smoother knee

Exhibited more [bulge/tone/scope/dimension/depth] of muscling in the pectoral region

Was heavier muscled through the arm, forearm, and V of [his/her] chest

Exhibited more powerful muscle through the quarter, stifle, and gaskin

Was wider from stifle to stifle, narrowing deeper into the inner and outer gaskins

Exhibited heavier muscling in both the inner and outer gaskin, tying into cleaner hocks set lower to the ground

Walked out wider, indicating a thicker, heavier muscled [mare/stallion/gelding]

Was heavier muscled through the stifle, thigh, and buttock that carried down deeper into fuller inner and outer gaskins

Faults

Was [lighter/looser/longer]-muscled in the [forearm/gaskins/stifle]

Had a [shorter/bunchier/coarser] muscle pattern

Had a flatter muscle pattern, with less bulge and tone of muscling

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Geldings

Provided by Caitlin Caudle

Format: C-G

Muscling, balance, and structural correctness are the criteria I used to align this class of Quarter Horse geldings 1-2-3-4. In reference to my initial pair of taller-framed individuals, I do prefer 1 the bay over 2 the black as 1 stood wider from arm to arm, forearm to forearm, and stifle to stifle in addition to being the most V'ed up in the pectoral region. 1 was deeper in the heart girth and had more spring of rib. He was longer in the hip and fuller through the thigh, while having greater circumference to the inner and outer gaskins. I do acknowledge that 2 was shorter and stronger over the top line and more structurally correct when viewed from the front. These qualities of balance and structural correctness allowing me to place 2 over 3 the grey in my intermediate pair.

Two (2) exhibited a shorter, stronger top line with a more prominent wither and greater turn over the croup. In addition, 2 showed more dimension from end to end with muscling that tied in lower to knees and hocks set closer to the ground. I do acknowledge that 3 had a larger hip and a fuller thigh, with muscles carrying down deeper into fuller inner and outer gaskins, these qualities allowing me to position 2 over 4 the buckskin in my concluding pair of less balanced individuals.

Three (3) was a taller-framed individual who stood more structurally correct when viewed from front and rear with knees and hocks set closer to the ground. In addition, 3 was cleaner through the throat latch with a longer, leaner neck tying in higher to a more angulated shoulder. I do recognize that 4 was wider from arm to arm, standing wider when viewed from the front in addition to being a more balanced individual, but this does not compensate for 4 being shorter necked and longer over the top line with a looser coupling. In addition, 4 lacked volume, depth and definition of muscling from end to end and can therefore merit no higher placing in this class today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Paint Mares

Provided by Andrea Harris

Format: C-G-F

I placed this class of paint mares 2-1-3-4. In my top pair of more refined mares, I placed 2, the chestnut tobiano, over 1, the sorrel overo, because 2 exhibited the best overall combination of breed character, structural correctness, refinement, and balance. Two (2) was more expressive about the head and had a longer, more angulated shoulder. Two (2) was also deeper through the heart girth with greater spring of rib and was more gradually rounded over the croup with a longer hip. Two (2) exhibited a firmer muscle pattern overall, with a heavier-muscled stifle, thigh, and buttock narrowing deeper into fuller inner and outer gaskins, although 2 stood crooked on the left front foot. I grant that 1 had a longer, leaner neck and exhibited more prominent muscling in the pectoral region. One (1) also stood down on more columnar bone, though I fault 1 for being looser in the coupling and steeper over the croup, and for standing splayfooted and winging when tracking.

In my middle pair, I placed 1 over 3, the tobiano with the blaze, because 1 most closely followed my top place horse in breed character and refinement. One (1) was finer about the head, being shorter from eye to muzzle with a larger eye. One (1) had a longer, trimmer neck and was shorter and stronger over the back. One (1) exhibited more volume of muscling from end to end and was heavier V-ed in the chest, while standing down on cleaner, flatter bone. I grant that 3 was a

larger-framed mare, though I fault 3 for having a neck set lower and for being lower in the back and shorter over the croup. Three (3) also stood back at the knee, and was splay footed and base narrow.

Moving to my bottom pair, I placed 3 over 4, the minimum white chestnut, because 3 had a longer neck set onto a more well-laid-back shoulder. Three (3) was deeper through the heart girth with more dimension of muscling throughout, especially in the hindquarters. Three (3) exhibited more defined muscling through the hip and buttocks, carrying down into more heavily muscled inner and outer gaskins. I grant that 4 was longer over the croup and stood down on shorter, stronger cannon bones, though I fault 4 for being plainer about the head with a thicker neck set onto a steeper shoulder. Four (4) was also longer over the topline and exhibited the lightest muscle pattern in the class. Four (4) stood down on upright pasterns and over-in-the-knee, and was splayfooted and post legged. For these reasons, 4 could not merit a higher placing in the class today, Sir.

Example Oral Reasons: Stock-Type Geldings

Provided by Joanna Saito

Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this class of stock-type geldings 1-3-2-4. In reference to my top pair of more balanced horses with more volume of muscling, I placed 1, the bay, over 3, the sorrel, as 1 exhibited the best combination of structural correctness, muscling, balance, and refinement. One (1) was a taller-framed gelding with a longer, smoother pattern of muscling that had more tone and definition from end to end. One (1) had a more chiseled head being shorter from eye to muzzle, with a longer, cleaner neck, which tied in higher to a more laid-back shoulder. One (1) had a stronger topline with a shorter back, tighter coupling, and longer hip. One (1) exhibited more dimension and scope of muscling in the fore- and hindquarters, and 1 walked out wider, indicating a thicker, heavier-muscled gelding. One (1) also had a straighter cannon-to-knee junction and stood down with knees and hocks set closer to the ground. In addition 1 tracked out the straightest and truest with the longest stride. I grant that 3 had more prominent withers and a more gradual turn over the croup. However, I faulted 3 for having a lower neck set onto a steeper shoulder and being back-at-the-knee.

Moving to my middle pair of steeper-shouldered and shorter-hipped geldings, I placed 3, the black, over 2, as 3 more closely followed my top horse in muscling and balance. Three (3) had more dimension from end to end, having more bulge in the pectoral region, forearm, and gaskin. Three (3) also was deeper in the heart girth, fuller in the rear flank and had greater spring of rib. In addition, 3 had a shorter, stronger back and loin. I grant that 2 was shorter from eye to muzzle and had more slope to his pasterns. However I faulted 2 for being lighter in the muscle pattern, especially the buttock and thigh; 2 also was over-at-the-knee and tracked out with a shorter stride.

Finally, in my bottom pair of longer-backed, looser-coupled horses that were flatter in their muscle pattern, I placed 2, the dun, over 4, the palomino, as 2 more closely followed my top pair in balance and dimension of muscling. Two (2) had more pectoral development, more bulge of forearm, more depth in the heart girth and a longer hip. Two (2) also stood more structurally correct front and rear. I grant that 4, the palomino, stood on cleaner bone and shorter cannons. However, I faulted and placed 4 at the bottom as 4 was the narrowest-muscled, shortest individual with the steepest shoulder and croup, standing splay footed and winging, and therefore could merit no higher placing today.

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Stallions

Provided by Amy Weddle

Format: C-G

Balance, muscling, structural correctness, breed character, and refinement were the criteria I used to align this class of Quarter Horse stallions 1-2-3-4. In my initial pair of more masculine stallions, I preferred 1, the sorrel, over 2, the bay, as 1 was wider from eye to eye and shorter from eye to muzzle with a more massive jaw. One (1) stood cleaner through the throat latch with a longer, leaner neck while standing shorter and stronger through the top line with a tighter coupling, thus allowing for a more massive hip. To compliment this, he stood wider from arm to arm and stifle to stifle with a longer, fuller buttock region tying deeper into a fuller inner and outer gaskin. Yes, 2 was more structurally correct in the knee to cannon junction, and it was structural correctness that led me to place him over 3, the grey, in my intermediate pair of tubular individuals.

Two (2) stood straighter when viewed from front and rear and was the truest tracker of the class while having more volume of muscling from end to end, having depth of body and spring of ribs. I do concede that 3 was a more refined stallion standing on a cleaner column of bone, and it was this distinct advantage in refinement that compelled me to place 3 over 4, the liver chestnut, in my concluding pair of lighter-muscled horses.

Three (3) was wider from eye to eye and shorter from eye to muzzle with a longer leaner neck and exhibited a higher degree of testicular uniformity. I must admit 4 had the longest and most sloping shoulder of the class, allowing him to move with a longer stride while tracking, but this is where it ends. Four (4) simply lacked the desired muscling in the class while being a narrow-made stallion standing on a course column of bone and therefore could merit no higher placing today. Thank you.

Western Pleasure

The ideal western pleasure horse shows the best combination of way of going, consistency, and manners or disposition. Western pleasure horses are asked to perform at three gaits (walk, jog, and lope), and they are required to back. The following performance terminology should be used in western pleasure oral reasons.

Commendations

Had a more nearly level headset with more flexion in the poll and collection in the hocks

Had a steadier, more consistent headset

Had a headset more nearly level from poll to wither to croup

Carried the poll more desirably above the withers

Had a leveler headset with more flexion in the poll

Was more naturally relaxed and softer in the poll and mouth

Exhibited a freer, brisker walk with a slower, more collected jog

Exhibited a more distinct two-beat jog

Exhibited a more distinct three-beat lope

Moved [flatter over the croup/with a quieter croup]

Had a flatter plane of motion

Worked closer to the ground

Worked with a flatter knee

Had a more rhythmic [walk/jog/lope] the [first/second] way of the ring

Moved at a slower [walk/jog/lope] while maintaining a more distinct foot-fall pattern

Exhibited smoother cadence at the [walk/jog/lope] the [first/second] way of the ring

Faults

Worked on a tighter rein

Was lower in the headset

Exhibited an illegal headset with the tips of the ears consistently below the wither

Was faster and chargey at the lope with a shorter stride

[Walked/jogged/loped] heavier on the forehand

Was choppy at the [walk/jog/lope]

Exhibited excessive speed at the [walk/jog/lope]

Stumbled at the [walk/jog/lope] as a result of less collection and attentiveness

Was strung out at the [jog/lope]

Was less responsive to the rider's cues

Example Oral Reasons: Western Pleasure

Provided by Lori Lucas Stroud

Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this class of western pleasure 4-2-3-1. In reference to my top pair, I placed 4, the sorrel with the blaze, over 2, the grey, because 4 exhibited the best combination of way of going, consistency, and manners. Four (4) was more cadenced at the jog and maintained a more consistent headset, being leveler from poll to wither to croup. Four (4) exhibited more flexion of the poll and hocks, resulting in a more collected, rhythmic lope both ways of the ring. Four (4) moved out with the longest stride at the jog and lope, performed smoother upward and downward transitions, and reversed more readily, bending around the rider's legs. I grant that 2 backed smoother and straighter off diagonal pairs and was brisker at the walk, but I faulted him and placed him second for being chargey at the lope both ways of the ring and for elevating the poll and wringing his tail at the jog the second way of the ring.

Now, moving to my middle pair, I placed 2 over 3 because 2 more closely followed my top horse in consistency. Two (2) exhibited a brisker walk both ways of the ring, was more cadenced at the jog, and exhibited less knee action at the lope the first way of the ring. Also, 2 worked off lighter contact from the rider the second way of the ring. I grant that 3, the bay, was slower at the jog and worked off a looser rein the first way of the ring, but I fault him and place him third for having a head set too low the first way, breaking from the jog to the walk the second way, elevating his poll, and being checked and chargey at the lope the second way.

In my bottom pair, I placed 3 over 1 because 3 was a slower jogger and loper the first way and exhibited more poll and hock flexion at the jog, moving with his hocks closer to the ground. I grant that 1, the chestnut with the star, was more responsive to the rider, performed smoother transitions both directions of the ring, and was checked less frequently, but I fault him and place him last in this class today for having a higher headset and being chargey and strung-out at the lope both ways of the ring. Therefore, he could merit no higher placing in this class. Thank you, Sir.

Example Oral Reasons: Western Pleasure

Provided by Victoria McNally

Format: C-G-F

Manners, consistency, way of going, and collection were the criteria I used to align this class of western pleasure 4-3-2-1. In reference to my initial pair of horses who traveled straighter down the rail, I did prefer 4, the black, over 3, the bay, as 4 displayed the most self-carriage and flow of the class. Four (4) had a more ideal headset being more nearly level from poll to withers while driving deeper off the hocks allowing for more collection. To complement this, 4 had a longer, more angulated shoulder allowing for more length of stride with a flatter knee, and showed more extension and length of stride when asked for the extended jog. Yes, 3 did back straighter and quieter between the rider's legs, but this fails to compensate for the fact that 3 lacked rhythm and cadence at the jog by failing to show a distinct 2-beat gait.

Even so, I still did prefer 3 over 2, the bay with a blaze, as 3 was more consistent in the rate of speed and was ridden on a looser, freer rein throughout the class. Also, 3 traveled straighter down the rail. I do not deny 2 had an outstanding lope, having driven deeper off his hocks and being a more collected mover, but reluctantly goes third as he lacked manners, having to be checked by the rider throughout the class.

Despite this criticism I still did prefer 2 over 1, the grey, in my concluding pair of horses who were mouthy at the bit during the back as 2 drove deeper off the hock, had a more distinct 3-beat lope, and had a flatter knee at all gaits. Yes, 1 was ridden on a looser, freer rein throughout the class but goes last for having been lame on the front right leg throughout the entire class and could therefore merit no higher placing today.

Example Oral Reasons: Western Pleasure

Provided by Eric Sellers
Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of western pleasure horses 3-2-1-4. Starting with my top pair of more broke, higher quality moving horses, I placed 3, the sorrel, over 2, the bay, because 3 exhibited the best combination of consistency, way of going, and responsiveness to the rider's cues. Three (3) exhibited a more cadenced and balanced stride at the jog and reached further from the shoulder. Three (3) maintained more flexion at the poll and hocks resulting in a more natural rounded, collected frame at the lope as he loped off with a flatter knee. Three (3) was more consistent in his more natural, leveler headset and was most responsive to the rider's cues. I grant 2 reversed quicker and quieter around the rider's leg.

Moving to my middle pair of less broke horses, I placed 2, the bay, over 4, the chestnut, because 2 exhibited a more desirable distinct footfall pattern at the jog both ways of the arena while being more collected at the lope the first way of the ring. I grant that 4 was a more broke horse requiring less checking from the rider. However, I fault 4 and placed him third for being indistinct in the footfall pattern at the jog both ways of the arena.

Moving to my bottom pair, I easily placed 4 over 1, the chestnut, because 4 was a more broke and consistent horse as he maintained a leveler, more consistent natural head carriage while working with his knees and hocks set closer to the ground, allowing for more collection. I grant 1 was more distinct in the symmetrical footfall pattern at the jog both ways of the ring, but I faulted 1 and placed him at the bottom of the class today because he broke gait at the lope down the far rail and also broke to the jog and then to a complete stop. Furthermore, 4 had to be handled and checked excessively throughout the class, and thus lacked the manners of my top three horses. Therefore, 4 could not merit a higher placing on my card today. Thank you, Sir.

Reining

The ideal reining horse shows the best combination of dispatch, ease while performing the prescribed pattern, and responsiveness to the rider. When giving oral reasons on reining classes, contestants can emphasize accuracy, precision, speed, neatness, calmness, ease, consistency, or manners—depending on the class.

In reining reasons, contestants should emphasize each horse's performance on the individual maneuvers, as well as overall performance. The pattern should be broken down into its individual maneuvers, and each horse's performance on these parts should be emphasized in the reasons. Maneuvers include stops, backs, lead changes, altering speed and size while circling, spins, rollbacks, and upward transitions. Horses often go off-pattern in reining classes by making too many spins. Therefore, it is crucial that contestants pay close attention to every horse and be familiar with the prescribed pattern prior to judging the class.

Incorporating Scoring into Reasons

This section describes a scoring grid for reining, based on 2008 NRHA and AQHA rules, which can be incorporated into reining reasons for advanced contestants. For up-to-date information on scoring reining, coaches and contestants should refer to a current rulebook, which can be found at www.aqha.com.

Reining classes are judged on a scoring pattern in which each horse receives a numerical score from 0 to infinity, with 70 being an average performance. In this scoring system, horses receive positive scores when a maneuver is performed better than average, zero for an average performance, and negative scores for penalties or poor maneuvers. Each maneuver is scored plus or minus 1½ points.

When using a scoring system to judge a class, contestants must score each horse consistently. Contestants who use scoring systems should have a concept of a range of scores for each maneuver. The chart below describes penalties, abbreviations for use when taking notes on a reining reasons class, and corresponding scores in accordance with the National Reining Horse Association. Contestants should record the appropriate penalties and use them to develop oral reason terminology for reining reasons. When a run is complete, the contestant should total all maneuver and penalty scores and add or subtract that total from a 70 score (average performance) to determine final run score.

Score	Penalty Description
No score	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abuse of an animal in the show arena or evidence that an act of abuse has occurred prior to or during the competition• Use of illegal equipment or bits• Use of tack collars, tie downs, or nose bands• Use of whips or bats• Use of any attachment which alters the movement or circulation of the tail• Failure to provide horse and equipment to appropriate judge for inspection• Disrespect or misconduct by the exhibitor• Closed reins except as standard romal reins
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of more than index or first finger between reins• Illegal use of two hands or romal, changing hands

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern • Running away or failure to guide • Jogging in excess of ½ circle or ½ length of arena • Went off pattern by failing to complete the maneuvers in the correct order and as written • Inclusion of maneuvers not specified, such as backed more than two strides or turned more than 90 degrees where not prescribed • Went off pattern by overspinning more than ¼ circle • Balked or refused a command • Fall by horse or rider
-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding saddle with either hand • Used hand to instill fear or praise • Spurred in front of the cinch • Committed major disobediences such as bucking, kicking, or biting
-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed change of lead for complete circle
-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed change of lead for ¾ circle
-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Froze up in a spin or rollback • Delayed change of lead for ½ circle • Broke gait • Failed to go beyond markers on a stop or rollback • On walk-in patterns, failure to stop or walk before executing a canter departure • On run-in patterns, failure to be in a canter prior to the first marker • Jogging beyond 2 strides but less than ½ circle or arena
-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed change of lead for ¼ circle • Over-spun by ¼ circle • Underspun by ¼ circle • Each time a horse is out of lead
-1/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-spun by 1/8 circle • Underspun by 1/8 circle • Delayed change of lead by one stride • Starting circle at a jog or exiting rollback at a jog up to 2 strides • Failure to remain a minimum of 20 feet from the wall or fence when approaching a stop or rollback

Taking Notes During the Class

One effective note-taking method for reining is to use a grid as shown in this section. In the grid, each maneuver in the pattern is listed in order in a row across the top of a sheet of paper. The numbers of the four horses are listed down the left side of the paper. When the horses enter the ring, identification points are noted before the pattern begins. Short notes (abbreviations save time and space) and penalty (p) and maneuver (m) scores for each maneuver are noted for each horse. The sample grid shown in this section can be used when judging AQHA reining pattern number 4. This grid corresponds to the set of reining reasons provided by Brittany Spears. This pattern includes the following maneuvers.

Maneuver

On the right lead, two large fast circles to the right
 One small slow circle to the right

Grid Abbreviation

Rt circles 2 L/F
 Rt circles 1 S/S

Four spins to the right
 On the left lead, two large fast circle to the left
 Small slow circle to the left
 Four spins to the left
 Figure 8 beginning on the right lead, two lead changes
 Right rollback
 Left rollback
 Stop and back

4 spins Rt
 Left circles 2 L/F
 Left circles 1 S/S
 4 spins Left
 Figure 8, 2 Δ's
 RRB
 LRB
 Stop, back

Horse	Desc.									Penalties	Score
	P	Rt circles	4 spins	Left circles	4 spins	Figure 8			Stop		
	M	2 L/F 1 S/S	Rt	2 L/F 1 S/S	Left	2 Δ's	RRB	LRB	Back		
1 Chestnut	P		-½ O		-½ U					-1	68
	M		-		-		-½ elevate	-½ elevate		-1	
2 Black	P	-1 ½ trot ↑	-½ O	-½ drag						-2 ½	64
	M	-½		-½			-1 scotch	-½ scotch	-1 scotch	-3 ½	
3 Bay	P		-½ O							-½	67
	M	L. Rein	-½ Elevated pvt	L. Rein	-½ Elevated pvt		-½		-1	-2½	
4 Buckskin	P		-½ O							0	71½
	M		-½		-		+✓	+✓	+1	+1½	

Terminology: Overall Performance

Commendations

Performed the pattern with more control and agility
 Exhibited more willingness and precision when performing the prescribed pattern
 Ran a more [challenging/athletically demanding] pattern while showing more control
 Handled more easily and readily throughout the pattern
 Ran a smoother, more aggressive pattern
 Had more finesse and speed throughout the pattern
 Was more accurate in the prescribed pattern
 Performed the pattern smoother, combining aggression and control with attentiveness to the rider's cues
 Exhibited more athletic ability by running a more aggressive, demanding pattern with more finesse and control

Faults

Ran a slower pattern with less precision

Was less broke and required more handling throughout the prescribed pattern
Exhibited less control and style during the pattern
Performed a less stylish pattern
Exhibited more resistance to the rider when performing the prescribed pattern
Performed a slower, less demanding pattern
Performed the pattern with less control, going off pattern by [fault]
Ran a less accurate pattern

Terminology: Sliding Stops and Rollbacks

Commendations

Stopped longer and deeper with the hocks closer to the ground while walking out on the forehand
Stopped deeper with the haunches closer to the ground
Rolled back [harder/smooth/cleaner] over the hocks, with a more firmly planted pivot foot
Exhibited less hesitation in the run-down and stop
Ran down harder and faster from end to end
Exhibited more dispatch in the run-downs
Arched the spine and walked out more relaxed in front when stopping
Was more relaxed in the forehand when stopping, with a rounder topline allowing [him/her] to stop harder on the haunches
Was more mobile in the forehand when stopping
Came out of [his/her] rollbacks faster
Stopped harder with the haunches closer to the ground while walking out in front
Exhibited a more controlled, relaxed stop
Stopped harder and straighter
Was more fluid in the rollbacks, showing a greater degree of control with no hesitation
Slid deeper and straighter with the hocks closer to the ground
Had longer, deeper stops
Performed a straighter, more correct sliding stop, curving the back and walking out on the forehand with the hocks closer to the ground
Ran down harder, stopping easier and longer
Rolled back on a firmer planted pivot foot with more precision in front

Faults

Was less relaxed in the stops and rollbacks, maintaining a straighter back and stiffer forehand
Was straighter over the topline when stopping, causing a shallower, weaker stop
[Walked/jogged] out of the rollback
Was stiffer in the forehand when stopping, resulting in a choppier, shorter stop
Stopped [shorter/crooked]
Stopped shallower, with a stiffer forehand and less drive in the hocks
[Scotched/propped] into the stop
Anticipated the stop
Had a shorter, choppier stop
Ran down slower with less aggression
Scrambled during the rollbacks
Required more handling by the rider during the stops and rollbacks

Terminology: Spins

Commendations

Spun leveler to the ground with a more firmly planted pivot foot
Crossed over in the forehand while (maintaining a firmly planted pivot foot)/(spinning on a more stationary pivot foot)
Spun flatter and leveler to the ground
Held a lower center of gravity in the spins
Spun more readily
Spun faster while remaining level and holding a more firmly planted pivot foot
Crossed over in the forehand with greater cadence
Stayed looser in the front end during the spins, crossing over more accurately in the forehand
Spun quicker and flatter
Exhibited more control in the spins, stopping squarer on all fours
Stood squarer on all fours after the spins
Balanced [his/her] weight more on the hindquarters, resulting in looser, more relaxed action in the forehand

Faults

Anticipated the spins to the [left/right]
Failed to stop squarely after the spins
Spun slower with more elevation in the forehand
Maintained a looser pivot foot
Spun on a less stationary pivot foot
Scrambled during the spins, not crossing over correctly in the forehand or working off of a pivot foot
Exhibited less finesse during the spins, spinning slower and elevating the forehand
Splayed the front feet during the spins, showing less control and agility when stopping
Hopped in front in the spins
Exhibited less control during the spins
Over-spun [one quarter/one half/etc.] of a turn to the [left/right]
Underspun [one quarter/one half/etc.] of a turn to the [left/right]
Went off-pattern by spinning only [once/etc.] to the [left/right]
Walked out of the spin

Terminology: Circles

Commendations

Exhibited more distinction in the speed and size of the circles
Exhibited more symmetrical circles
Exhibited more [acceleration/speed] in the larger circles
Performed circle eights that were more uniform in size
Changed leads more accurately in the center of the ring
Exhibited more precise lead changes
Was more controlled in the circles, showing more dispatch in the large circles and readily slowing down quicker in the small circles
Bent around the rider's inside leg in the circles
Had faster lead changes, originating in the hindquarters and carrying through to the forehand
Was more forward in the lead changes
Performed the circles more centered in the ring

Arced [his/her] shoulder and hip more correctly to the inside of the circles
Exhibited more symmetrical figure eights
Was more exact in [his/her] lead changes
Changed leads squarer, working off the forequarters
Changed leads smoother with less hesitation
Bent around the rider's inside leg during circles
Exhibited easier, quicker lead changes
Was more willingly guided in the circles

Faults

Dropped the shoulder during lead changes
Was chargey in the circles
Exhibited unsymmetrical circles
Exhibited less [distinction/variation] in the size and speed of the circles
Was chargey and on the bit in the circles
Delayed the lead change during the [small/large] circle to the [left/right]
Performed the [first/second] circle to the [left/right] on the wrong lead
Was less correct and precise in [his/her] lead changes
Changed leads [late/early]
Bent to the outside of the circles
Was less [precise/accurate] in the size of the circles
Ran slower circles with less [aggression/impulsion]
Was less willing in the circles, ringing the tail and working harder on the bit

Terminology: Backing

Commendations

Backed quicker and more readily between the rider's legs
Backed [straighter/faster/cleaner], tucking the nose and flexing the poll
Was quieter in the mouth and tail when backing
Backed straighter over the [hocks/tracks]
Stopped squarer on all fours after backing
Backed straighter, placing each foot equidistant from the last
Tucked the nose and flexed the poll, backing quicker between the rider's aids
Was more relaxed in the poll and jaw when backing
Settled quicker after backing

Faults

Bobbed [his/her] head when backing
Mouthed the bit when backing
Rung [his/her] tail during the back
Exhibited more [resistance/hesitation] when backing
Backed [slower/crooked]
Resisted the bit by gaping [his/her] mouth when backing
Was stiffer in the poll and jaw when backing
Went off pattern by refusing to back

Reining Oral Reasons Flow

Combination Statement: Ease, Dispatch, Manners, Pattern Precision

For the oral reason flow for Reining, learn terms that describe the ideal for each of the maneuvers. For example:

Spins: Spun faster, flatter and more level to the ground with a more stationary pivot foot while displaying more even cadence while crossing over on the forehand. Maintained a lower center of gravity.

Circles: Was prompter in the canter departure into the circles and exhibited more willingness to guide, being more arced around the rider's inside leg. Performed a smoother and more correctly placed downward speed transition into the small circles. Showed more size and speed differentiation/variation in the circles. Executed more fluid lead changes. *[Higher degree of difficulty is directly tied into speed in the large, fast circles and ability to slow way down in the slow, small circles and do so on a looser, freer rein.]*

Stops: Exhibited more acceleration in the rundown, stopping with hindquarters further under the body while maintaining a straighter line and walking out further on the forehand. Arced the spine and stopped with hocks deeper in the ground while remaining softer and suppler.

Rollbacks: 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. Rolled over the hocks more correctly with a more stationary pivot foot. Exhibited more snap to the rollbacks. Rolled back cleaner over the hocks. Rolled back harder over the hocks with a more immediate canter departure.

Back: Backed smoother, straighter, and quicker while remaining suppler and quieter in the mouth. Was a faster, straighter backing horse. Backed more readily over his tracks.

Example Oral Reasons: Reining

Provided by Brittany Spears
Format C-G-F

Ease, dispatch, manners, and pattern precision are the criteria I used to align this class of AQHA reining pattern four 4-1-3-2. In analyzing my initial pair of horses that displayed more fluid, simultaneous lead changes, I did prefer 4, the buckskin, over 1, the chestnut, as 4 ran down faster while stopping with the hindquarters further underneath the body while walking out a greater distance on the forehand and snapping back harder over the hocks. Yes, I do admit that 1 maintained a more stationary pivot foot while spinning, but 1 must be faulted for accumulating 1 penalty point for being over in the right spins and under in the left spins.

Even so, I did prefer 1 over 3, the bay, in my intermediate pair of horses as 1 spun faster and flatter, being more nearly level to the ground with a more stationary pivot foot while working with greater cadence and rhythm and crossing over farther on the forehand. Yes, I do admit that 3 worked off a looser and freer rein, but 3 must be faulted for receiving ½ penalty point for over spinning to the right and anticipating a rollback while backing crooked.

Despite these criticisms, 3 maintained an advantage over 2, the black, in my concluding pair of horses, as 3 was prompter in the canter departure into the circles while exhibiting more willingness to guide, being more readily arced around the rider's inside leg. Yes, I do admit that 2 showed greater speed differentiation in the large fast and small slow circles, but 2 must be faulted for receiving 1 and ½ point penalty points for trotting up, over spinning to the right, and dragging

a lead change. Two (2) must also be faulted for scotching 3 times and therefore could merit no higher placing in this class today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Reining

Provided by Joanna Saito

Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of reining 3-2-4-1. In my first pair, I placed 3, the bay, over 2, the chestnut with the star, because 3 exhibited the best combination of dispatch, ease, and precision when performing the prescribed pattern. Three (3) spun on a firmer planted pivot foot while crossing over in the forehand. Three (3) also stopped more squarely on all fours after spinning to the left and exhibited more distinction in the speed and size of the circles in both directions. Three (3) bent more around the rider's leg and was more responsive to the rider's cues when changing leads, originating the lead changes in the rear quarters and carrying through to the forehand. Three (3) also walked out of the sliding stop and reversed smoother with the haunches closer to the ground. In addition, 3 backed quicker between the rider's legs and exhibited more overall responsiveness to the rider's cues, riding with a quieter mouth throughout the pattern. I grant that 2 stopped more squarely on all fours following the spins to the right and spun quicker and flatter.

In my middle pair, I placed 2 over 4, the sorrel, because 2 most closely followed my top place horse in ease and precision. Two (2) exhibited a faster, more aggressive pattern and spun flatter and quicker to the right and left. Two (2) slid deeper into the stops with the hocks closer to the ground, rolling back over the hocks more cleanly and stopping quicker and squarer before backing. I grant, however, that 4 stopped more squarely after spinning to the left, and exhibited more uniformity in the size of the circles to the left and right. Four (4) also exhibited a more consistent headset during the circles and backed quicker and straighter between the rider's cues.

Finally, I placed 4 over 1, the chestnut, because 4 performed a more correct and exact pattern. Four (4) spun on a more firmly planted pivot foot and stopped cleaner and more readily after the spins. Four (4) also exhibited more distinction in the speed and size of the circles, working more readily around the rider's inside leg. Four (4) also backed quicker and straighter, showing more responsiveness to the rider. I grant that 1 exhibited a harder, faster rundown, although I fault 1 for overspinning by 1/8 to the left and underspinning by 1/4 to the right. One (1) was tenser when performing the circles and exhibited chargey lead changes. One (1) also walked out of the sliding stops and exhibited the least desirable disposition in the class. For these reasons, 1 could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Western Riding

The ideal western riding horse exhibits the best combination of way of going, lead changes, ability, accuracy, and responsiveness to the rider throughout the pattern. Contestants should be familiar with the prescribed western riding pattern before taking notes on this class in a contest. Patterns can be found at www.aqha.com. In western-riding reasons, the pattern should be divided into maneuvers, and each horse's performance for each significant maneuver should be discussed. Maneuvers include walk, jog, and lope transitions; transcending a log; multiple lead changes; stop; and back. In addition, the horse's quality of movement, manners, consistency, and accuracy throughout the pattern should be considered.

Incorporating Scoring into Reasons

Western riding is judged according to a scoring system that can be incorporated into a set of reasons for advanced contestants. This section describes a scoring system for western riding.

Coaches and contestants should refer to a current rulebook, available at www.aqha.com, for up-to-date scoring information. Western riding classes are judged on a scoring pattern, in which each horse receives a numerical score from 0 to infinity, with 70 being an average performance. In this scoring system, horses receive positive scores when a maneuver is performed better than average, zero for an average performance, and negative scores for penalties or poor maneuvers. Each maneuver is scored plus or minus 1½ points. When using a scoring system to judge a class, contestants must score each horse consistently. Contestants who use scoring systems should have a concept of a range of scores for each maneuver. The following chart lists abbreviations, descriptions of penalties and maneuvers, and corresponding scores.

Score	Description
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off pattern • Knocked a marker over • Major disobedience or schooling • Illegal equipment • Willful abuse • Completely missing log • Major refusal (stop and back more than 2 strides) • Failure to start lope prior to end cone in patterns 1 and 3 • Four or more simple lead changes or failures to change • Head consistently carried too low • Nose consistently behind the vertical
-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed to complete lead change • Blatant disobedience including rearing or kicking out
-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broke gait at the lope, or broke gait at walk or jog for two or more strides • Performed a simple lead change • Not performing the specific gait or not stopping when called for in the pattern, within 10 feet of the designated area • Additional lead changes anywhere in pattern • In pattern 1 and 3, failure to start the lope within 30 feet (9 meters) after crossing the log at the lope
-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failed to change leads for one stride • Rolled or moved a log • Broke gait at the walk or jog for up to two strides • Out of lead more than one stride either side of the center point and between the markers • Split the log (between two front or two hind feet) at the lope
-½	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticked log • Hind legs skipping or coming together during lead change • Non-simultaneous lead change
+½ to 1½	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performed a lead change simultaneous in the front and rear (maneuver score)

Taking Notes During the Class

One effective note-taking method for western riding is to use a grid as shown in the following example. In the grid, each maneuver in the pattern is listed in order in a row across the top of a sheet of paper. The numbers of the four horses are listed down the left side of the paper. When the horses enter the ring, identification points are noted before the pattern begins. Contestants

should record short notes (abbreviations save time and space) and penalty and maneuver scores for each horse throughout the class. The following sample grid corresponds to AQHA western riding pattern number 1 and with the sample reasons provided by Victoria McNally. This pattern includes the maneuvers listed below.

Maneuver

Transition from walk to jog, and jog over log
 Transition to left lead
 Line changes
 Four crossing changes
 Lope over log

Grid Abbreviation

Walk/Jog/Log
 Lope
 L1, L2, L3, L4
 C1, C2, C3, C4
 Log

Horse	Maneuver Description	Walk Jog Log	Lope	L1	L2	L3	L4	C1	C2	Log	C3	C4	Stop Back	Penalty Total	Score
1 Grey	Penalty													0	75
	Maneuver Score	+½ cad.	-	+1	+½	+1	+½	+1	+½	+½	-	-	-½ head toss		
2 Black	Penalty			-1 E										4	62
	Maneuver Score	-½ no cad.		-½	-½	-	-	-½	- 1½	-	-	-½	-		
3 Bay	Penalty										-1 E			1	70
	Maneuver Score	+½ cad.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		+½		
4 Sorrel	Penalty			-½ drag				-3 B						3½	66½
	Maneuver Score	-½ no cad.	-	-	+½	-	+½	-1	-	-	-	+½			

Terminology

Commendations

- Performed the pattern with greater agility and less duress
- Jogged/loped over the log cleaner with more cadence
- Loped in a more collected frame
- Exhibited a more consistent length of stride over the logs
- Was more fluid in the lead changes down the line/across the center
- Exhibited smoother, more relaxed simultaneous lead changes
- Exhibited quicker, more precise lead changes, originating in the rear quarters and carrying through to the forehand
- Performed the pattern more correctly by changing leads where designated
- Exhibited more controlled stride in the [first/second] crossover
- Stopped [quicker/easier/squarer] on all fours
- Performed smoother lead changes while maintaining a leveler plane of motion
- Exhibited more correct positioning of the lead changes
- Changed leads more equal distant between the cones

Exhibited quieter hands and leg aids when changing leads
Exhibited smoother, flatter transitions with more precision
Backed [straighter/quicker] between the rider's legs
Exhibited more responsiveness to the rider

Faults

[Rubbed/ticked] the log
Broke gait at the [jog/lope]
Was chargey during lead changes
Changed leads [late/early]
Wrung the tail when changing leads
Failed to change leads in the center between the cones
Changed leads off-center
[Initiated the lead change in the forehand/dragged a lead] in the first crossover
[Dropped the shoulder/propped] when changing leads
Failed to stand squarely before backing
[Mouthed/gaped] the bit [when backing/during lead changes]
Backed crooked between the rider's legs
Was less responsive to the rider throughout the pattern

Example Oral Reasons: Western Riding

Provided by Victoria McNally

Format C-G-F

Lead change ability, pattern precision, manners, and consistency were the criteria I used to align this class of western riding pattern one 1-3-4-2. In reference to my initial pair of horses who maintained more cadence while jogging over log, I did prefer 1, the grey, over 3, the bay, as 1 was more fluid in his lead changes and changed leads straighter down the line and across the center. To complement this, 1 changed leads with a more rounded, nearly level top line with a flatter knee. One (1) also performed the lope over the log with more rhythm and cadence. I do readily admit 3 maintained a more nearly level headset while backing, but this fails to compensate for the fact that 3 incurred 1 penalty point for being early in the third lead change across the center.

Nonetheless I still did prefer 3 over 4, the sorrel, in my intermediate pair since 3 had more rhythm and cadence in the jog over the log and incurred fewer penalty points. Yes, 4 was more fluid in the lead changes and maintained a slower legged, more desirable rate of speed throughout the class, but regretfully goes third for receiving 3 penalty points for breaking from a lope to a jog in the first center change.

Despite these criticisms, I did choose 4 over 2, the black, in my concluding pair of horses who lost cadence in the jog over the log because 4 was a more fluid lead changer who changed leads with a more nearly level top line and a flatter knee. I do not deny 2 was more simultaneous in the first center lead change, but goes last for receiving 3 penalty points for being late in the second center change and one penalty point for being early in the first change down the line. Thus, 2 could therefore merit no higher placing today.

Trail

The ideal trail horse exhibits the best combination of attitude, manners, and style. Accuracy and precision can be added to this combination statement, and quality of movement throughout the pattern may also be discussed.

It is crucial for contestants to know and understand the prescribed pattern before judging this reasons class. In trail reasons, contestants should emphasize each horse's performance at each maneuver equally, as well as its overall performance.

Incorporating Scoring into Reasons

This section describes a scoring grid for trail, based on 2008 AQHA rules, which can be incorporated into trail reasons for advanced contestants. For up-to-date information on scoring trail, coaches and contestants should refer to a current rulebook, which can be found at www.aqha.com.

Trail classes are judged on a scoring pattern in which each horse receives a numerical score from 0 to infinity, with 70 being an average performance. In this scoring system, horses receive positive scores when a maneuver is performed better than average, zero for an average performance, and negative scores for penalties or poor maneuvers. Each maneuver is scored plus or minus 1½ points.

When using a scoring system to judge a class, contestants must score each horse consistently. Contestants who use scoring systems should have a concept of a range of scores for each maneuver. The chart below describes penalties, abbreviations to use when taking notes on a reining reasons class, and corresponding scores in accordance with the American Quarter Horse Association. Contestants should record the appropriate penalties and use them to develop oral reason terminology for reining reasons. When a run is complete, the contestant should total all maneuver and penalty scores and add or subtract that total from a 70 score (average performance) to determine final run score.

The abbreviations and scores listed below can be combined when taking notes on a particular maneuver. In addition to the penalties listed below, contestants should note each horse's quality of movement at each gait when working on the rail and each horse's manners throughout the pattern. Contestants can use their notation system for other performance classes when noting this rail work in a trail class.

Score	Penalty Description
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Illegally used two hands• Changed hands during a maneuver• Illegal use of a romal• Performed the maneuvers in the wrong order• Failed to perform a maneuver as prescribed• No attempt to perform an obstacle• Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern• Excessively or repeatedly touches horse• Entering or exiting an obstacle from the wrong direction• Working obstacle from wrong direction, including overturns of more than ¼ turn• Riding outside boundary markers

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third cumulative refusal, balk, or evading an obstacle by shying or backing • Failure to ever demonstrate the correct gait between obstacles • Failed to follow correct line of travel between obstacles • Consistently carried head too low • Consistently carried nose behind the vertical
-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropped slicker or object required to be carried • Shied at a maneuver, but remained controlled • Took hand off gate before completion of maneuver • Use of either hand to instill fear or praise • Stepped out of a maneuver or missed an element with more than one foot • Performed a major disobedience
-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Took a wrong lead • Broke or wrong gait for more than 2 strides • Knocked down an obstacle or severely disturbed course • Stepped out of a maneuver or missed an element with one foot
-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hit or stepped on obstacle • Broke or took wrong gait for two strides or less • Both front or hind feet in a single-strided space • Skipped over required space • Split pole in lope-ever
-1/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each tick of an obstacle on the course • Rubbed an obstacle on the course

Taking Notes During the Class

One effective note-taking method for trail is to use a grid as shown in the following example. In the grid, each maneuver in the pattern is listed in order in a row across the top of a sheet of paper. The numbers of the four horses are listed down the left side of the paper. When the horses enter the ring, identification points are noted before the pattern begins. Contestants should record short notes (abbreviations save time and space) and scores on each maneuver for each horse. This pattern corresponds with the sample set of reasons provided by Andrea Harris.

Work Order	Obstacle Description	Bridge	Back L	Side pass	Logs	Gate	360 Box	Penalty Total	Score
1 Sorrel w/ star	Penalty		-1/2		-1 -1/2 -1/2		-1	3 1/2	66 1/2
	Obstacle Score			-1/2			+1/2		
2 Bay w/ blaze	Penalty							0	73 1/2
	Obstacle Score	+1	-	+1	+1	+1/2	-		
3 Sorrel w/ blaze	Penalty							0	72
	Obstacle Score	+1/2	+1/2	+1/2	+1/2	-	-		
4 Bay w/ star	Penalty							0	68
	Obstacle Score		- 1/2 slow	-		-1			

The final placing for this class was 2-3-4-1.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited a more desirable trail attitude throughout the pattern
Exhibited more trail horse talent when working the pattern
Performed with more style
Negotiated the pattern with greater precision
Performed a more careful pattern, showing more style and speed
Performed each maneuver more naturally
Paid closer attention to each maneuver
Side passed quicker and straighter, crossing over in both the fore and the hind
Backed straighter through the L
Exhibited less resistance when performing the maneuvers
Spun flatter and easier in the box, and stood squarely after the spins
Was ridden on a looser rein
Exhibited a more desirable attitude with a quieter mouth and tail
Maneuvered more correctly through the gate, side passing closer to the gate with no hesitation
Maneuvered easier through the L
Worked around the trees smoother and tighter
Was more relaxed at the (cans) maneuver
Maneuvered more precisely through the L, stopping on all fours at the first barrel
Performed a more challenging pattern
Had fewer penalties when working the pattern
Loped cleaner over the logs
Exhibited less hesitation when [side passing/crossing the bridge/etc.]
Backed straighter through the poles

Faults

Performed the pattern too [slow/fast]
[Rubbed/ticked] the [third, etc.] log with the [right/left] [front/hind] at the [walk/jog]
Stepped out of the L
Side passed crooked
Failed to cross over in both the front and hind when side passing
Refused to walk over the bridge
Spooked
Over-spun
Spun slower
Spun faster, showing less control
Failed to stand squarely after the spins
Was ridden with a tighter rein throughout the pattern
Changed hands at [maneuver]
Failed to look at [maneuver] before crossing it
Went off pattern (describe how)
Took a wrong lead between the [first] and [second/etc.] cones
Backed crooked between the rider's legs
Was excessively handled throughout the pattern
Was tenser, with the rider checking the bit throughout the class

Example Oral Reasons: Trail

Provided by Andrea Harris

Format C-G

I placed this trail class 2-3-4-1. In my top pair, I placed 2, the bay with the blaze, over 3, the sorrel with the blaze, because 2 exhibited the best combination of ease and precision. Two (2) walked over the bridge with less hesitation and maintained a more relaxed frame while backing through the L. Two (2) also crossed over more correctly in the rear when side passing, jogged and walked cleaner over the logs, and maintained a squarer position to the gate when side passing. I grant, however, that 3 backed quicker and more parallel to the logs in the L, and performed each maneuver faster than 2.

Moving to my middle pair, I placed 3 over 4, the bay with the star, because 3 was more challenged when working the pattern. Three (3) backed faster and parallel between the rider's legs and side passed cleaner and more parallel to the L. In addition, 3 had a better position when completing the gate and was faster and less cautious throughout the class, performing each maneuver more correctly. I grant, however, that 4 crossed over more correctly in the front and hindquarters when side passing.

In my bottom pair, I placed 4 over 1, the sorrel with the star, because 4 performed each maneuver cleaner. Four (4) backed cleanly through the L and jogged and walked cleaner over the logs. Four (4) also crossed over more correctly when side passing and was more responsive to the rider's cues throughout the class. I grant that 1 spun quicker in the box, though I fault 1 for ticking the bridge when backing through the L. One (1) also bumped the fourth log in the jog-over and ticked the third and fourth logs in the walk-over. In addition, 1 bumped the log going into the box and failed to side pass parallel to the L, while not crossing over in either the fore or hind when side passing. One (1) lacked the overall ease and precision of the other horses, and for these reasons could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Example Oral Reasons: Trail

Provided by Eric Sellers

Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of trail horses 3-2-4-1. Starting with a top pair of more relaxed and confident horses, I placed 3, the light bay, over 2, the chestnut with the star and snip. Three (3) exhibited a quieter, more responsive performance and required less handling in downward transitions to the jog as he exhibited more cadence and balance in stride while jogging through the serpentine. Three (3) was also quieter about the head as he maintained a safer speed and side passed more centered over the pole. Three (3) exhibited more overall control throughout his pattern as he was more responsive to the rider's cues. I grant that 2 was quieter and smoother through the gate as he maintained more desired forward motion.

Moving to my middle pair, I placed 2, the chestnut with the star and snip, over 4, the dark bay, because 2 completed his pattern with more consistency in his gait, especially at the jog through the serpentine. Two (2) was smoother and more precise in lead departures to the right and exhibited more responsiveness to the rider's cues throughout the majority of the class. I grant that 4 exhibited more expression through the bridle at the bridge as he gave it a more relaxed look and inspection. Furthermore, 4 side passed quicker and quieter as he crossed over more readily in the front.

Now moving to my bottom pair, I placed the more precise patterned horse in 4, the bay, over 1, the chestnut, because 4 completed the pattern in a more precise manner as he side passed over the final log to complete his pattern. He also maintained a more desirable speed and was cleaner through the maneuvers while being ridden on a looser, freer rein. I grant that 1 maintained his gait at the jog and was smoother and more relaxed as he maintained forward motion over the bridge. However, I faulted 1 and gave him a no score in the final maneuver as he failed to side pass over the final log. One (1) was also the least responsive to the rider; he had to be handled through the majority of the pattern as he hit the gate twice while passing through it. For these reasons, he could not merit a higher placing on my card today. Thank you, Sir.

Pleasure Driving

The ideal pleasure driving horse exhibits the best combination of manners, quality, consistency, and way of going. In reasons, the horses' performances should be discussed at all three gaits: walk, trot (park gait), and strong trot (road gait). Pleasure driving horses are also required to back.

The terms below are specific to pleasure driving. Terms used to describe way of going and consistency in saddle seat pleasure or hunter under-saddle terms can also be used in pleasure driving reasons.

Terminology

Commendations

Moved in a more correct pleasure frame while showing more driving manners and style
Was more natural and relaxed in the head and neck
Had a truer walk
Walked brisker and flat-footed, with more reach in the forehand
Exhibited a bolder strong trot/road gait
Exhibited a longer stride at the strong trot/road gait
Was more free-flowing at the trot, with more impulsion and rhythm
Traveled straighter and more evenly between the lines
Was more responsive to the driver
Was more attentive to the driver's cues
Had a more powerful, reaching stride at the strong trot
Backed straighter between the lines
Stood quieter on all fours after backing

Faults

Exhibited less distinction between the trot and strong trot
Was overflexed, with [his/her] head behind the vertical
Was inconsistent in [his/her] stride
Was overflexed
Moved out with a shorter, choppier stride
Had a slower trot with less forward motion
Was more sluggish in [his/her] gaits
Carried [his/her] poll below the withers
Backed crooked between the lines
Resisted when backing
Was less mannerly when backing, mouthing the bit and ringing the tail

Chapter 7

Presenting Oral Reasons on Saddle seat Classes

This section discusses terminology and strategies for giving oral reasons on English-type halter and saddle seat performance classes. In this section the terms listed for each class should be used in combination with the general terms listed in the section of this guide titled Basic Halter and Performance Terminology.

American Saddlebreds

The ideal American Saddlebred shows the best combination of breed character, structural correctness, refinement, and balance. Since muscling is not a major consideration in judging American Saddlebreds, muscling should be discussed only minimally in these conformation reasons. If muscling is discussed in reasons for American Saddlebred classes, it should only be mentioned in terms of length and smoothness.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited more American Saddlebred character about the head
Was more refined about the head, with a larger eye and cleaner muzzle
Was cleaner and trimmer in the throat latch
Had a longer, more arching neck set onto a longer more sloping shoulder
Was shorter and stronger over the topline when compared to the underline
Was longer and flatter over the croup
Was leveler over the croup with a higher tail set
Was wider through the chest
Exhibited a smoother muscle pattern from end to end
Exhibited more definition of muscling throughout (greater substance)/tone of muscling
Stood down on finer bone
Stood truer in the front on shorter, stronger cannons
Exhibited more brilliance and animation when tracking

Faults

Was coarser about the head, with a smaller eye and longer face
Was thicker in the muzzle
Was coarser and thicker in the throat latch
Had a shorter, thicker neck set onto a steeper shoulder
Had a steeper shoulder and correspondingly steeper pasterns
Was longer over the topline and looser in the coupling
Was [lower in the back/swaybacked]
Dropped off over the croup
Had a steeper croup
Was pinched in the chest
Exhibited a [longer/looser/lighter] muscle pattern
Stood down on thicker coarser bone
Exhibited less [ring presence/animation/brilliance] when tracking
Tracked with less [animation/brilliance/ring presence]

Example Oral Reasons: Mixed Sex American Saddlebred Halter

Provided By Amanda Jordan

Format C-G

American Saddlebred breed character, balance, structural correctness, and refinement are the criteria I used to align this class of Mixed Sex American Saddlebred horses 4-3-2-1. In analyzing my initial pair, I found an obvious winner in 4, the chestnut mare, over 3, the light chestnut gelding, as 4 exhibited more refinement and breed character about the head, having wider set more expressive eyes, a cleaner muzzle, and more alert ears. Four (4) had a stronger, more level topline paired with a longer underline, while also exhibiting a smoother muscle pattern from end to end. I do admit that 3 stood with a more desirable slope to the shoulder and pasterns, allowing for greater extension of the forearm when tracking.

It was these advantages that allowed me to place 3 over 2, the chestnut with two socks, in my intermediate pair because 3 stood more structurally correct when viewed from the front, allowing for truer movement when tracking. Three (3) also stood on a cleaner column of bone while moving with more animation, having the knees and hocks breaking higher. However, I fully recognize that 2 had a longer neck that tied in higher to the shoulder.

It was these strengths that allowed 2 to easily maintain the advantage over 1, the darker bay, in my concluding pair, as 2 was more level over the topline with a shorter back and stronger coupling while being deeper through the heart girth with a more bold spring of rib. Yes, 1 stood on a cleaner column of bone while having a higher tail set, moving with more brilliance and animation, but this fails to compensate for the fact that 1 had a severely low swayback with a longer, plainer head, while also standing knock-kneed. Therefore, he could merit no higher placing in this class today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: American Saddlebred Geldings

Provided By Mary Susan Jones

Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this class of American Saddlebred geldings 3-2-1-4. In my top pair, I placed 3, the chestnut with the flaxen mane and tail, over 2, the black, as 3 exhibited a better combination of American Saddlebred breed character, balance, structural correctness, and refinement. This taller-framed gelding had a cleaner and more refined throat latch and neck and was smoother in his muscle pattern from end to end. Three (3) also exhibited more animation while tracking. I grant that 2 stood straighter through the knees when viewed from the side and was more prominent over the wither, yet I faulted this horse because he was coarser over the bridge of the nose, lower in his back, and rougher over the croup. In addition, 2 stood pigeon-toed and paddled when tracking.

In reference to my middle pair, I placed 2 over 1, the chestnut with the left hind sock, as 2 had a bigger, bolder eye and was more prominent over the withers. Two (2) was deeper in the heart girth and stood more structurally correct. I grant that 1 was more expressive about the head, had a longer, leaner neck and a shorter topline. However, I faulted 1 because he was narrower from front to rear, rougher and shorter over the croup, and steeper in the pasterns. One (1) also stood splayfooted and tied in at the knees.

Lastly, in my bottom pair of less-refined geldings, I placed 1 over 4, the chestnut with the star, as 1 exhibited more breed character about the head, was longer and trimmer in the throat latch and neck, and stood down on a higher-quality, more-refined column of bone. I agree that 4 was more

nearly level over the croup, but I faulted 4 for being plainer about the head and longer from eye to muzzle. Four (4) had a shorter neck and steeper shoulder and pasterns. This gelding was also much coarser in his bones and joints and crooked in his right knee-cannon junction, and therefore could merit no higher placing today, Sir.

Arabians

The ideal Arabian exhibits the best combination of Arabian breed type, structural correctness, refinement, and balance. Although Arabian geldings should exhibit greater athletic ability than Arabian mares and stallions, breed type is emphasized when judging all three sexes. Since muscling is not an important factor in judging Arabians, muscling should be discussed only minimally in Arabian oral reasons. If muscling is discussed in reasons for Arabian classes, it should only be mentioned in terms of length and smoothness.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited more Arabian breed character about the head, with a larger eye, more pronounced jibbah and finer muzzle

Exhibited more refinement and elegance about the head

Was drier about the head

Was more stylish about the front

Had larger, wider-set eyes with sharper-chiseled features

Had a more prominent jibbah with more scope through the mitbah

Was finer about the muzzle with a larger nostril

Had a drier muzzle

Exhibited greater scope through the mitbah

Was more dished from forehead to muzzle

Had a more prominent jibbah

Had a longer, more arching neck set higher onto the shoulder

Was more prominent over the withers

Exhibited more arch to [his/her] neck

Was more well-crested

Had a longer, leveler croup with a naturally higher tail carriage

Was leveler over the croup

Exhibited [more elevated/higher] tail carriage

Moved with a flashier, more animated way of going

Had higher action

Exhibited more [presence/animation/brilliance] when tracking

Moved with more spring and flexion in the knees and hocks

Exhibited a [longer/trimmer/smooth] muscle pattern

Faults

Was plainer about the head with smaller, duller eyes and a larger muzzle

Was [straighter/longer] from [eye/poll] to muzzle

Was flatter from forehead to muzzle

Was coarser about the head with a smaller eye and larger muzzle

Was thicker and coarser through the throat latch

Exhibited less scope through the mitbah

Had a [shorter/thicker/crestier] neck with less arch from poll to wither

Was flatter at the withers
Was [steeper/more dropped off] over the croup
Exhibited a lower tail setting
Had a shorter [croup/hip]
Stood on [thicker/coarser] bone
Exhibited less [animation/style/presence] when tracking
Exhibited a coarser, heavier muscle pattern

Example Oral Reasons: Arabian Mares

Provided by Caitlin Caudle

Format C-G

Breed type, balance, structural correctness, refinement, and femininity are the criteria I used to align this class of Arabian Mares 1-2-3-4. In reference to my initial pair of more refined mares, I do prefer 1, the grey, over 2, the chestnut, as 1 was typier about the head with a larger, brighter eye, a more prominent jibbah, and a smaller muzzle. One (1) showed greater scope through the mitbah and exhibited a more arching neck tying higher on a more angulated shoulder. One (1) was shorter and stronger over the top line with an appropriately long underline in addition to having more depth of heart girth and spring of rib. I do recognize that 2 stood with knees and hocks set closer to the ground while having a higher tail set, these qualities of structural correctness and breed type allowing me to align 2 over 3, the black, in my intermediate pair.

In my middle pair, I do prefer 2, the higher-quality, longer-strided mare, over 3, as 2 had a more chiseled appearance about the head with a smaller, more alert ear and more scope to the mitbah. Two (2) was shorter and stronger over the back in addition to being more structurally correct when viewed from front and rear. I do admit that 3 had a longer, leaner neck shooting higher out of a more laid back shoulder, and because of this I do prefer 3 over 4, the dapple grey, in my concluding pair of less refined individuals.

Three (3) had a larger, brighter eye, being flatter in the jaw with a trimmer throat latch and neck. In addition, 3 was more nearly level over the croup with a more elevated tail carriage. I do concede that 4 was wider through the chest floor with more spring of rib; however, I criticized this coarser made mare as she was plainer about the head with a thicker muzzle and a smaller eye. Four (4) was also longer and weaker over the back and rounder over the croup, in addition to showing less refinement of bone in the legs while standing pigeon toed and bench kneed and can therefore merit no higher placing in this class. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Arabian Mares

Provided by Shannon Ross

Format C-G-F

I placed today's class of Arabian mares 1-2-3-4. In my top pair of more feminine mares, I placed 1, the chestnut, over 2, the bay, as 1 exhibited the best combination of breed type, balance, refinement, and substance. She was drier headed, having a more bulging jibbah and a finer muzzle with a larger, wider set eye. One (1) was shorter from eye to muzzle and had more scope through the mitbah. Her longer, leaner neck shot out higher from a longer, more angulated shoulder. One (1) was stronger over her topline, having a shorter back and a longer, leveler croup with a longer hip and a higher tail carriage. She had a longer, smoother muscling pattern from end to end and stood on a higher quality of cleaner, flatter bone. I do grant that 2 stood more structurally correct, tracking truer and exhibiting more flexion of her knees and hocks. Two (2)

was also deeper through the heart girth. However, I faulted this mare, as she was longer from eye to muzzle. She also stood on longer cannons and had a lower tail set.

In moving to my middle pair, I placed 2, the higher-quality, longer-strided mare, over 3, the grey. Two (2) had a more chiseled appearance about the head with a trimmer muzzle, a more dished face, and a shorter, more alert ear. She had a longer, more arching neck, which tied on higher to a more well-laid-back shoulder. Two (2) also had a shorter back in relation to a longer underline and was a closer-coupled mare who was leveler over her topline. Two (2) was also a freer mover. I realize that 3 stood on shorter cannons with knees and hocks set closer to the ground and that she was shorter from eye to muzzle, but I faulted her, as her neck tied on lower to her shoulder. She was looser coupled and had a shorter croup and hip with a lower-set tail. She was also sickle-hocked, back-at-the-knee, splayfooted, and winged while tracking.

In moving to my bottom pair of more structurally incorrect mares, I placed 3 over 4, the black. Three (3) exhibited more femininity about the head, having a larger, brighter eye and a cleaner, flatter jaw. She had a trimmer throat latch and neck, with a more sloping shoulder and pasterns and a shorter, stronger back. Three (3) was leveler over the croup and stood on a cleaner column of bone. I do grant that 4 was a tighter coupled mare who had more length to the croup and hip. She was wider through the chest floor and had more spring of rib. However, I faulted this coarser mare and placed her at the bottom of the class, as she was plainer about the head having a thicker muzzle and a smaller eye. Her thicker neck tied on lower to a steeper shoulder. She was longer and weaker in her back and was too rounded over the croup. Four (4) stood on a rounder, coarser column of bone. As she was also bench-kneed, post legged, pigeon-toed, and paddled, while standing cow-hocked and rotating her hocks, she could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Example Oral Reasons: Arabian Stallions

Provided By Andrea Harris

Format C-G-F

I placed this class of Arabian Stallions 3-2-1-4. In my top pair of typier Arabians, I placed 3, the bay with the star, over 2, the bay, because 3 most closely resembled the ideal Arabian type, showing more Arabian breed character, refinement, structural correctness, and balance. Three (3) was typier about the head with a larger drier eye, a more prominent jibbah, and a smaller muzzle. Three (3) exhibited more scope through the mitbah and exhibited a more arching neck set onto a more angulated shoulder. Three (3) had more pronounced withers and was shorter over the topline compared to the underline. In addition, 3 stood down on finer bone with shorter, stronger cannons and was the straightest and most animated mover in the class. I grant that 2 had a longer neck and was leveler over the croup with a higher tail setting, though I fault 2 because he had a longer, weaker back and was looser in the coupling.

Moving to my middle pair, I placed 2 over 1, the bay with the strip, because 2 most closely followed my top place horse in Arabian breed type and quality. Two (2) was shorter from poll to muzzle with a more pronounced jibbah, and was trimmer and cleaner in the throat latch. Two (2) had a longer neck set onto sharper, more prominent withers, and was leveler over the croup with a more elevated tail carriage. Two (2) was also deeper in the heart girth with a greater spring of rib. Furthermore, 2 tracked truer with a more animated stride, exhibiting snappier knees and hocks and a higher tail carriage. I grant that 1 was shorter and stronger over the topline, though I fault 1 because he was leveler from poll to muzzle with a shorter, lower-set neck. In addition, 1 was steeper over the croup and stood sickle-hocked.

In my bottom pair of coarser Arabians, I placed 1 over 4, the dark bay, because 1 exhibited more Arabian breed character and structural correctness. One (1) was shorter from eye to muzzle with a larger eye and cleaner throat latch. One (1) was more balanced, and shorter and stronger over the topline, which was shorter when compared to the underline. One (1) also stood straighter and more correct on cleaner, finer bone and tracked straighter when viewed from the front. I grant that 4 had more prominent withers, though I fault 4 because he exhibited the least Arabian type in the class. Four (4) was plainer about the head, with a longer face, smaller eye, and larger, coarser muzzle. Four (4) also had a shorter, thicker neck and a steeper shoulder and correspondingly steeper pasterns, and was longer and weaker in the back and coupling. Furthermore, 4 stood pigeon-toed with steeper pasterns on coarser, larger bone. For these reasons, 4 could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Example Oral Reasons: Half-Arabian Geldings

Provided by Shannon Ross

Format C-G-F

I placed today's class of half-Arabian geldings 4-1-3-2. I placed 4, the light grey, over 1, the chestnut, because 4 exhibited the best combination of quality, substance, balance, structural correctness, and breed type. Four (4) stood straighter when viewed from the side and was a truer tracker. He had a longer, more angulated shoulder and pasterns, being stronger over his topline with a shorter back and a closer coupling. Four (4) demonstrated more length to the hip and croup and stood on a higher quality of cleaner, flatter bone, having a longer, smoother muscling pattern from end to end. He was more refined about the head, having a more dished face. Four (4) exhibited more scope through the mitbah, having a neck that shot out higher from his shoulder. I grant 1 was deeper through the heart girth with a greater spring of rib, though I fault 1 for being thicker in the throat latch, looser in the coupling, and for having a shorter, steeper croup and hip. One (1) also stood post legged and cow-hocked causing him to rotate the hocks when tracking.

In moving to my closer middle pair, I choose 1, the deeper-bodied, more refined gelding, over 3, the flea-bitten grey. One (1) had a more arching neck that tied on higher to a well-laid-back shoulder. One (1) also had a shorter back in relation to a longer underline and had a firmer muscling pattern over his arm. One (1) stood with his knees and hocks set closer to the ground on a cleaner, more symmetrical column of bone. He was also shorter from eye to muzzle and was cleaner about the muzzle. I grant 3 exhibited a longer neck and a more prominent wither. Three (3) also moved with more flexion in the knees and hocks and carried a higher tail set. However, I fault 3 because his neck was set lower on the shoulder. Three (3) was looser in the coupling with a shorter croup and hip. Three (3) also stood down on coarser joints and was splayfooted, causing 3 to wing when tracking. In addition, 3 was plainer about the head.

In my bottom pair of horses, I placed 3, the more balanced gelding who exhibited more substance of muscling from front to rear, over 2, the light grey. Three (3) had a cleaner neck and longer, more sloping shoulder and pasterns. He was more nearly level across his topline and had a shorter, stronger back. Three (3) exhibited more depth through the heart girth and flanks and was wider through the chest floor. He also had a higher tail carriage. I grant that 2 stood more structurally correct when viewed from the front. However, I faulted this horse who had a thicker neck which tied on lower to his steeper shoulder, and placed him at the bottom of the class today as he also had a longer, weaker back. He was a looser coupled gelding with a shorter, more rounded croup and hip. Two (2) also stood on longer, weaker cannons and was over in the knee.

In addition, 2 was cow-hocked and rotated the hocks when tracking. For these reasons, 2 could merit no higher placing in the class today.

Morgans

Like Arabians, the ideal Morgan exhibits the best combination of breed character, structural correctness, and balance, with heavy emphasis on character and little emphasis on muscling. The terminology used in Morgan judging matches that in the Arabians section of this guide, with the exception of the terms *mitbah* and *jibbah*, which are used only when describing Arabians.

Terminology

Commendations

Head was shorter from poll to muzzle with a larger eye, finer muzzle, and a larger, rounder jaw
Was broader in the forehead with larger eyes and more refined muzzle
Had a higher, more arching neck
Had a longer neck set higher onto a deeper, more angulated shoulder
Exhibited more crest to the neck, with the topline of the neck longer than the underline
Neck was tied on higher to a more angulated shoulder
Was more prominent in the withers
Was more defined over the withers
Was longer over the croup
Had a leveler croup rounding into a more well-muscled thigh
Had a higher tail carriage
Tail was attached higher and carried more well arched
Was more animated when tracking
Exhibited more brilliance and ring presence on the line

Faults

Was roman nosed
Was coarse muzzled
Had a thicker, coarser throat latch
Was shorter necked, lacking arch
Topline and underline of the neck were more nearly equal in length
Neck was set lower onto a steeper shoulder
Had flatter, coarser withers
Exhibited a longer, weaker back
Exhibited a lower back
Was steeper over the croup
Had a shorter, higher croup
Was insufficiently muscled over the croup
Had a lower tail carriage

Example Oral Reasons: Morgan Mares

Provided By Mary Susan Jones
Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this class of Morgan mares 1-2-3-4. In my top pair of more refined mares, I placed 1, the liver chestnut, over 2, the bay, as 1 exhibited the best combination of Morgan breed character, balance, and structural correctness. One (1) had a longer, leaner neck, a shorter back, and a longer hip with a higher tail set. One (1) exhibited more depth and capacity in the heart girth and stood

straighter on a higher-quality column of bone. One (1) was also the truest and most animated tracker in the class. I grant that 2 was more expressive about the head, cleaner through the throat latch, and exhibited more substance of muscling from end to end, but I faulted 2 for being steeper in the shoulder and pasterns, rounder over the croup, and for standing splayfooted and cow-hocked.

In reference to my middle pair, I placed 2 over 3, the dark chestnut, as 2 was higher in her neck set, tighter in her coupling, and exhibited more width through the pectorals. I realize that 3 stood straighter through the knees when viewed from the front, but I criticize 3 for having a shorter, thicker neck and a longer topline. Three (3) was narrower from front to rear, stood back at the knee and was post legged.

Lastly, in my bottom pair of more narrow-made mares who were weaker in their topline, I placed 3 over 4, the black, as 3 exhibited more femininity about the head, was more nearly level over the croup, and stood straighter through the rear. I grant that 4 stood on shorter cannons with knees and hocks closer to the ground, but I faulted 4 for being plainer about the head, coarser through the throat latch, and longer in the coupling. In addition, 4 was coarser in her bones and joints and stood bench-kneed and pigeon-toed, and could merit no higher placing today, Sir.

English Pleasure/Country English Pleasure

Arabians, Morgans, American Saddlebreds, National Show Horses, and crosses of these breeds are typically shown in English Pleasure and Country English Pleasure classes. For class descriptions and judging priorities for various breeds, consult a current United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) rulebook.

The ideal English Pleasure and Country English Pleasure horse shows the best combination of manners, consistency, collection, ring presence, and high quality of movement. The horses may be asked to work at the walk, trot, and canter. Horses may also be asked to perform at the strong trot and hand gallop. English Pleasure and country English Pleasure horses must also back.

The following chart shows the most significant variations in English Pleasure and country English Pleasure.

English Pleasure	Country English Pleasure
Manners, consistency, quality of movement, and brilliance are judged equally	Manners and consistency are emphasized
Horses demonstrate balanced action in the front and rear while remaining consistent and controlled; collection is emphasized	Quality of movement is not as critical; excessive action are penalized; collection is emphasized
Horses are penalized for breaks of gait, jiggy walks, wrong leads, etc.	Poor manners are severely penalized
Horses have immediate hoof weight	Horses are rewarded for forward movement (impulsion) with rolling action; length of stride is emphasized

Terminology

The terms listed in this section apply to both English pleasure and country pleasure.

Commendations

Maintained lighter contact with the bit

Required lighter rein contact

Was expressive about the head with more alert ears

Exhibited more brilliance and animation

Was bolder and more animated in the ring

Exhibited more action

Had more ring presence

Was a bolder, more brilliant mover

Had a more vertical headset

Was more consistent and vertical in [his/her] headset

Exhibited more flexion in the poll and springier strides

Flexed the poll more correctly while showing more collection in the hocks

Worked with a rounder topline

Moved with the forearm more parallel to the ground

Broke over with a higher, flatter arm

Moved in a more upright frame

Exhibited a truer flat-footed walk

Was more fluid at the walk

Exhibited lighter contact with the ground while exhibiting more snap and action in the knees and hocks

Knees flexed equally with the hocks, creating a balanced cadenced stride with an equal degree of action

Exhibited more spring to the pasterns, with more snap to the knees and hocks

Exhibited a more ground-covering stride at the hand gallop

Exhibited a lengthened stride at the strong trot

Had [higher/more vigorous/rounder/crisper/truer/straighter] action

Was more prompt in [his/her] action

Reached out more in [his/her] action

Was more free moving at the [gait]

Moved out faster and stronger at the strong trot

Exhibited more control at the hand gallop

Was bolder at the trot with a more rhythmic canter

Exhibited more even elevation in the fore and hindquarters

Moved with a more ground-covering stride at the hand gallop

Had a more elastic walk

Faults

Was less responsive to the rider

Was less supple through the bit

Was a slower mover, with less animation and brilliance

Exhibited less ring presence

Was less consistent in the headset

Was nosed out beyond the vertical

Was overflexed behind the vertical

Moved in a lower frame

Moved with less elevation in the forehand

Had less animation in the forehand, with the forearm not breaking over parallel to the ground

Had heavier contact with the ground, showing less snap and animation in the knees and pasterns
Exhibited less movement in the knees and hocks
Performed a nervous, jiggy walk
Was strung out and chargey at the hand gallop
Lacked distinction between the canter and hand gallop
Failed to show distinction in stride between the trot and strong trot
Exhibited excessive speed at the [strong trot/hand gallop]

Example Oral Reasons: Country English Pleasure

Provided by Jessica Hlebak

Format C-G-F

Manners, consistency, and way of going are the criteria I used to align this class of Country English Pleasure 4-3-1-2. In reference to my initial pair, I placed 4, the chestnut, over 3, the bay, as 4 traveled quietly on a light rein while remaining responsive to the rider and displaying a higher quality of movement, reaching farther with the front end and driving deeper with the hocks. Yes, 3 did show more vertical knee and hock movement at the trot. However, 3 mouthed the bit during the class and was sluggish in the downward transitions.

Even so, 3 placed over 1, the liver chestnut, as 3 maintained a more consistent and desirable perpendicular headset while moving with more animated ground-covering strides. It is true that 1 had prompter canter departures both directions. Yet, 1 broke from the trot to the canter the first way of the ring.

Despite these criticisms, 1 placed over 2, the black, as 1 required less handling from the rider, traveling on a light rein while being quiet about the mouth. I cannot deny that 2 was a higher quality mover showing more brilliance of animation. But 2 was unruly through that class, breaking from a walk to the trot the first way and missing a lead the second way of the ring and for these reasons can merit no higher placing today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Arabian English Pleasure

Provided by Andrea Harris

Format C-G-F

I placed this Arabian English Pleasure class 4-2-1-3. In my top pair of more responsive Arabians, I placed 4, the dark bay, over 2, the grey, because 4 exhibited the best overall combination of manners, consistency and way of going. Four (4) was more animated at all gaits and worked with more flexion at the poll and collection in the hocks, with a freer, more ground-covering stride, particularly at the strong trot. In addition, 4 was more consistent in the impulsion at all gaits both ways of the ring. I grant that 2 exhibited a smoother downward transition from the canter the first way of the ring, though I faulted 2 for failing to show distinction in speed and impulsion between the canter and the hand gallop.

In my middle pair, I placed 2 over 1, the light bay, because 2 most closely followed my top-place horse in way of going and consistency. Two (2) exhibited more brilliance and animation throughout the class and worked with a steadier headset and a more balanced and collected stride. In addition, 2 was more responsive to the rider's cues, working more parallel to the rail. I grant that 1 exhibited a more ground-covering stride at the strong trot and hand gallop, though I fault 1 for mouthing the bit throughout the class and breaking from the trot the first way of the ring.

Moving to my bottom pair, I placed 1 over 3, the chestnut, because 1 exhibited more overall consistency in the gaits throughout the class and exhibited a more distinctive strong trot and hand gallop. I grant that 3 worked with a quieter mouth, though I fault 3 for working with a shorter, choppier stride and lacking cadence at all gaits. In addition, 3 responded slower to the rider's cues, especially in the transitions. Three (3) failed to work parallel to the rail, and broke from the walk the second way of the ring. For these reasons, 3 could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Example Oral Reasons: English Pleasure

Provided by Shannon Ross

Format C-G-F

I placed today's English Pleasure class 2-1-4-3. I placed 2, the chestnut, at the top of the class and over 1, the dark bay, as 2 exhibited the best combination of cadence, collection, consistency, manners, and ring presence. Two (2) was more alert about the head, being more elevated in the bridle and suppler to the bit, showing greater flexion at the poll and hocks resulting in a more rounded topline. He was a bolder, more cadenced mover with a loftier, more animated trot and exhibited more drive off the hocks. Two (2) folded his knees with more elevation, showing a higher degree of collection at the canter. He was more responsive to his rider's aids, being smoother and quicker in his upward and downward transitions. I do grant that 1 lengthened the stride more distinctively at the hand gallop and backed more readily between the rider's legs, though I fault this looser-coupled horse as he was strung out at the trot and trailed the hocks behind him.

In moving to my middle pair I placed 1, the freer-moving gelding, over 4, the light grey. One (1) had a longer, more fluid stride, breaking with his knees and hocks more nearly parallel. He had a brisker, more flat-footed walk and covered more ground while being more collected at the hand gallop. He was also more up in the bridle and more relaxed through the poll. I grant that 4 exhibited a more collected trot, showing more drive off the hocks, though I fault 4 for gumming the bit. Four (4) was also jiggy at the walk the first way of the ring, demonstrated excessive speed at the canter, and backed slower and crooked between the rider's aids.

In my bottom pair of poorer-mannered, more inconsistent horses, I chose 4 over 3, the dark grey. Four (4) had a more cadenced and rhythmic trot and was more rounded over his topline. He was freer moving from the shoulder, having a longer, more animated stride with more vertical action of his knees and hocks. I do grant that 3 backed quicker and straighter off diagonal pairs. However, 3 broke from the trot to the canter the second way of the ring and was chargey at the canter. This steeper-shouldered mare exhibited a shorter, rougher stride, as this poor-mannered horse also moved heavier on the forehand and mouthed the bit throughout the class.

Example Oral Reasons: Country English Pleasure

Provided by Leigh Williams

Format C-G

I placed this Country English Pleasure class 1-2-4-3. In reference to my top pair, I placed 1, the light grey, over 2, the flea-bit grey, because 1 maintained his gait throughout the class and best combined consistency, manners, and way of going. One (1) was more responsive to the rider's cues and was more expressive about the head with more consistent speed and cadence at the trot, working with more flexion at the poll and hocks and more forward motion. One (1) also exhibited

more extension and length of stride at the strong trot and hand gallop, although I grant 2 for being more relaxed in his frame the first way of the ring at the walk.

In my middle pair, I chose 2 over 4, the bay, because 2 exhibited more impulsion throughout the class while being more relaxed through his poll and frame. Two (2) was smoother and quieter in his upward and downward transitions and exhibited less resistance to the bit. Two (2) also exhibited a more ground-covering stride and was more symmetrical at the trot with an equidistant footfall pattern both fore and rear. However, I grant 4 exhibited a more consistent speed at the trot.

In the bottom pair I chose 4 over 3, the dark bay, because 4 was a more consistent mover throughout the class and maintained the correct lead the first way of the ring at the canter. Four (4) also exhibited more driving impulsion off the hocks at the canter. I grant that 3 exhibited more collection at the canter and exhibited a more distinct length of stride at the strong trot. However, I faulted 3 for cross-cantering the first way of the ring and breaking gait from the strong trot to the canter for three strides the second way of the ring. Three (3) also required excessive restraint from the rider at the hand gallop and fought the bit throughout the class. Therefore, 3 could not merit a higher placing today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Country English Pleasure

Provided by Kristine Lang

Format C-G-F

I placed this class of Country English Pleasure class 1-2-4-3. As I analyze my top pair of more mannerly and consistent horses who were more responsive to the rider throughout the class, I placed 1, the grey, over 2, the bay. I began the class with 1, as he was the most consistent horse in the class. One (1) had a more cadenced and collected trot and was smoother and more balanced at the canter. One (1) maintained a more perpendicular head carriage throughout the class and was quieter about the mouth and tail. In addition, 1 was more responsive to the rider's aids and backed smoother and straighter. I realize 2 had a longer stride at the trot and canter; however, 2 was more inconsistent in the trot the first direction of the ring, mouthed the bit at the canter the second direction, and backed more crooked than 1.

In reference to my middle pair of more responsive horses, I left 2 over 4, the chestnut. Two (2) was more balanced and rhythmical in the canter and was more cadenced and distinct at the trot. Two (2) exhibited a higher degree of flexion at the poll and was smoother in both the upward and downward transitions. I grant that 4 was quieter with his mouth, but I do fault this shorter-strided horse and leave him in third place today because he lacked the manners and consistency of my top horse. Four (4) nosed out throughout the class, jiggled at the walk, and lost his symmetry and cadence at the trot in both directions.

Moving to my bottom pair of less mannerly horses who lacked the collection and cadence of my top pair, I placed 4 over 3, the bay with 4 socks, as 4 was more consistent in maintaining the correct leads in both directions. Four (4) had a higher degree of animation at the trot and backed more readily over diagonal pairs. Although 3 was more supple to the bit throughout the class, I must fault him and leave 3 at the bottom of my class today for taking the wrong lead in both directions. Three (3) also jiggled at the walk, lacked consistency and cadence at the walk and trot, and was more rigid at the poll. Therefore, 3 could not merit a higher placing today.

Park or 3-Gaited Classes

The ideal Park or 3-gaited horse exhibits the best combination of way of going, manners, and consistency. Park and 3-gaited horses perform at the walk, trot, and canter. These horses are usually not asked to back.

Horses in Park and 3-gaited classes will have hooves built up with pads and wedges, and emphasis is placed on action (quality of movement) and ring presence. Less emphasis is placed on violations of manners, such as breaks and wrong leads. Prancing, animated walks are acceptable in these classes. Park and gaited horses should be penalized less severely for a break of gait. Arabians perform in park classes, whereas American Saddlebreds compete in 3-gaited classes.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited more elevation and animation in the forehand
Moved lighter in the forehand
Exhibited more drive off the hocks and extension in the forehand
Was a more [animated/brilliant] mover
Moved with an airier stride
Exhibited bolder action, reaching out farther in the forehand while exhibiting more impulsion from the hocks
Broke over with the knee more parallel to the ground
Broke with knees and hocks above parallel
Had more spring to the pasterns and snap and flexion of the knees and hocks
Exhibited a more sweeping motion in the hindquarters

Faults

Was less animated
Exhibited lower action in the forehand
Exhibited less drive off the hocks
Moved heavier on the forehand
Exhibited excessive speed at the [trot/canter]
[Paced/racked] instead of trotting
Exhibited shorter, choppier strides
Moved out lower and flatter in the forehand

Plantation Pleasure

The ideal Plantation Pleasure horse exhibits the best combination of quality of movement, consistency, and manners. Plantation Pleasure horses perform both ways of the ring at the flat walk, running walk, and canter. Plantation Pleasure horses are also asked to back.

Terminology

Commendations

Nodded the head more rhythmically from the head, neck, and shoulder
Was more expressive in the bridle, nodding the head more distinctly at the [flat walk/running walk/ canter]
Worked with the hocks farther behind at the running trot
Exhibited more distinction in speed between the flat walk and running walk

Exhibited more animation and ring presence, breaking over parallel in the forehand
Exhibited a longer stride
Exhibited a more reaching stride
Worked with more collection in the hocks

Faults

Was less expressive in the bridle
Paced
Racked
Exhibited less overstride
Nodded the head less distinctly
Failed to distinguish between the flat walk and running walk
Exhibited less impulsion in the hocks and animation in the forehand
Exhibited less ring presence

Example Oral Reasons: Plantation Pleasure

Provided by Mary Susan Jones
Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this Plantation Pleasure class 1-2-3-4. In my top pair of more animated movers, I placed 1, the black, over 2, the chestnut, as 1 exhibited a more desirable combination of way of going, manners, consistency, and ring presence. One (1) had a longer, freer stride behind while showing more action and animation up front. One (1) had a more desirable head carriage, being more up in the bridle and more alert with the ears. One (1) also exhibited a greater speed differentiation from the flat-walk to the running walk and arched more readily around the rider's leg in the reverse. One (1) was also smoother in his downward transitions. I grant that 2 had a more rhythmical and distinct head nod, a slower and more collected canter, and was smoother in his upward transitions. However, I faulted 2 as he was flatter in his knee, lacked the longer, overreaching stride of 1, and gummed the bit during the back.

In reference to my middle pair, I placed 2 over 3, the bay, as 2 exhibited more distinction between the flat walk and running walk. Two (2) also exhibited more collection and had a slower and more relaxed canter moving with his hocks underneath. In addition, 2 was smoother and quicker in his transitions. I realize that 3 exhibited more reach from behind, was more expressive through the bridle, and backed straighter, but I faulted 3 for being chargey and strung out at the canter and rougher in the upward and downward transitions. Three (3) was also less animated at all gaits, lacking the ring presence seen in my top pair.

Lastly, in my bottom pair of horses with less knee action, I placed 3 over 4, the palomino, as 3 was more consistent at all gaits, arched more readily around the rider's leg during the reverse, and backed straighter off diagonal pairs. I grant that 4 had a more distinct head nod and exhibited a greater difference in speed between the flat walk and running walk, but I criticize 4 for taking the wrong canter lead both ways of the ring, being held on a tighter rein throughout the class, being shorter-strided, and exhibiting more resistance in the back. For these reasons, 4 could merit no higher placing today, Sir.

Example Oral Reasons: Plantation Pleasure

Provided by Andrea Harris

Format C-G-F

I placed this Plantation Pleasure class 1-4-2-3. In my top pair, I placed 1, the black with the star, over 4 because 1 exhibited the best overall combination of way of going, consistency, and manners. One (1) was more alert about the head with greater ring presence. One (1) also bobbed more rhythmically from the head, neck, and shoulder at the walk and running walk, and worked with the hocks closer to the ground, sweeping and striding further underneath. In addition, 1 exhibited a more distinct footfall at the canter. I grant that 4 was quicker in the upward transitions and backed more readily between the rider's legs, although I fault 4 for lacking consistency in impulsion both ways of the ring.

Moving to my middle pair, I placed 4, the black, over 2, the black with the star and snip, because 4 more closely followed my top-place horse in way of going and manners. Four (4) was ridden with a quieter hand and exhibited more elevation in the forehand while breaking over with the knee parallel to the ground. In addition, 4 bobbed the head more correctly during the walk and running walk. I grant that 2 exhibited more alertness about the head and reversed smoother around the rider's leg, although I fault 2 for having an inconsistent head carriage while working with the hocks farther behind.

In my bottom pair, I placed 2 over 3, the bay, because 2 was more responsive to the rider's cues and exhibited more animation. Two (2) exhibited smoother, quicker transitions and looked straighter through the bridle. Two (2) also exhibited higher action in the knees and was more collected in the hocks at all gaits both ways of the ring. I grant that 3 was more collected in the hocks, although I fault 3 for showing less head, neck, and shoulder action. Furthermore, 3 paced at the running walk and worked with the hocks farther behind at the running trot. Three (3) also threw the head and mouthed the bit throughout the class, and for these reasons could not merit a higher placing today.

Chapter 8

Presenting Oral Reasons on Hunt Seat Classes

This section discusses terminology and strategies for giving oral reasons on hunter-type halter and hunt seat performance classes. In this section, the terms listed for each class should be used in combination with the general terms listed in the section of this guide titled Basic Halter and Performance Terminology.

Conformation Hunters

The ideal conformation hunter exhibits the best combination of balance, structural correctness, athletic ability, refinement, and quality. The terminology used in conformation hunter classes closely matches that of the gelding or generic stock-type halter classes. Although substance of muscling should be considered in conformation hunter classes, it is not a primary judging point. Muscle should be discussed in terms of length and not width or bulge. Structural correctness and its relationship to length and trueness of stride are important. Contestants should emphasize this conformational relationship in each pair in conformation hunter reasons.

Terminology

Commendations

Was more correct and refined

Stood down on cleaner, flatter cannon bones with well-laid ligaments

Exhibited a longer, more laid back shoulder and correspondingly sloping pasterns, allowing for a longer stride

Was stronger over the topline with a shorter back and coupling and a longer croup

Exhibited a [longer/trimmer/firmer/smooth] muscle pattern from end-to-end

Stood more structurally correct when viewed from all angles

Faults

Was coarser about the front

Had a shorter, steeper shoulder and pasterns, resulting in shorter, choppier stride

Was longer and weaker in the back and loin

Was less balanced, with a longer topline when compared to the underline

Stood down on longer, weaker cannons and coarser bone

Had [bunchier/shorter] muscling

Stood less structurally correct

Example Oral Reasons: Conformation Hunters

Provided by Andrea Harris

Format C-G-F

I placed this class of conformation hunters 1-4-2-3. In my top pair of more structurally correct hunters, I placed 1, the bay, over 4 because 1 exhibited the best overall combination of balance, athletic ability, and structural correctness. One (1) had a longer neck set higher onto a more sloping shoulder, and was more prominent over the wither with a shorter, stronger back. One (1) had a longer hip and was more gradually rounded over the croup, while being deeper through the heart girth with a smoother, firmer muscle pattern throughout. One (1) stood down on cleaner, flatter bone and stood straighter when viewed from the front and rear, traveling truer and easier. I grant that 4 stood down on shorter, stronger cannons, though I fault 4 for having a lower neck set, being looser over the coupling, and standing splayfooted.

In my middle pair, I placed 4, the chestnut, over 2, the chestnut with two socks, because 4 more closely followed my top-place horse in athletic ability and structural correctness. Four (4) had a longer neck set higher onto a more well-laid-back shoulder and was shorter and stronger over the topline with a longer hip. Four (4) was deeper through the heart girth with greater spring of rib and stood more structurally correct on shorter cannons with cleaner, flatter bone. I grant that 2 was a larger-framed horse, though I fault 2 for having a steeper shoulder and shorter, steeper hip, and for being pinched in the heart girth. Two (2) also stood pigeon-toed, over at the knee and cow-hocked on coarser bone.

Moving to my bottom pair, I placed 2 over 3, the liver chestnut, because 2, the larger framed hunter, had a longer shoulder and was more prominent over the wither. Two (2) was deeper through the chest and heart girth and tracked with a straighter, more cadenced stride. I grant that 3 was stronger over the coupling, but I fault 3 for being shorter in the shoulder, lower in the back, and pinched in the heart girth. Three (3) also stood on coarser bone and was over at the knee with a left front clubfoot, while standing cow-hocked and post legged. For these reasons, 3 could not merit a higher placing in the class today, Sir.

Field Hunters/Hunters in Hand

Hunter in Hand classes are specified as field hunter in judging contests. The ideal field hunter exhibits the best combination of athletic ability, balance, and structural correctness. Breed character and refinement are of minimal concern when judging field hunters, and this should be reflected in field hunter reasons.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited a longer, leaner neck

Was more angulated in the shoulder and pasterns, permitting a more cushioned stride

Was more balanced over the topline, with a shorter topline and comparatively longer underline

Had a shorter, stronger back and loin, with a longer croup and hip

Was a taller [mare/stallion/gelding] with a deeper frame

Was deeper in the heart girth with greater spring of rib, allowing [him/her] to better utilize oxygen while performing

Exhibited more substance of muscling and bone

Stood on a higher substance of bone more adequate to support [his/her] frame

[His/her] muscling tied onto cleaner knees and hocks

Stood more structurally correct

Stood on flatter, wider cannons

Tracked with a longer, more ground-covering stride working with a sweeping movement from the hindquarters

Faults

Was a shorter, smaller-framed [mare/stallion/gelding]

Had a shorter, thicker neck set onto a steeper shoulder

Had a shorter, steeper shoulder and corresponding steeper pasterns

Was longer and weaker over the topline with a shorter croup and hip

Was longer over the topline when compared to the underline

Was pinched through the chest and heart girth

Exhibited a shorter, bunchier muscle pattern with the muscle tying onto coarser knees and hocks

Stood down on longer, weaker cannons and smaller, finer bone

Stood less structurally correct
Moved with shorter, choppy strides when tracking
Exhibited less pendulous motion in the hindquarters when tracking

Example Oral Reasons: Hunters in Hand

Provided by Amanda Jordan
Format C-G

Balance, structural correctness, movement, and substance of muscling are the criteria I used to align this class of Hunter in Hand horses 1-2-3-4. In analyzing my initial pair of horses who had shorter toplines in relation to longer underlines, I did prefer 1, the grey, over 2, the bay, as 1 had a trimmer neck that tied in higher to the shoulder, followed by more prominent withers while being deeper thru the heart girth with a more bold spring of rib. I do admit that 2 stood with a more correct set to the hocks when viewed from the side, while being cleaner thru the fetlocks.

It was these advantages that allowed me to place 2 over 3, the chestnut, in my intermediate pair because 2 had longer, more sloping shoulders and pasterns, allowing for greater length of stride when tracking while also having a longer hip. However, I fully recognize that 3 had a longer neck that tied in higher to the shoulder.

It was these strengths that allowed 3 to maintain the advantage over 4, the liver chestnut, in my concluding pair of horses who had lower backs, since 3 was more structurally correct when viewed from the front, allowing for truer movement when tracking while standing down on shorter cannons with a higher quality column of bone. Yes 4 was cleaner through the throat latch with a longer, leaner neck while showing greater length of stride when tracking, but this fails to compensate for the fact that 4 was a coarser-made horse who had a lower, weaker back and shorter hip while standing bench-kneed and pigeon toed, resulting in a paddling movement when tracking. Therefore he could merit no higher placing in this class today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Hunters in Hand

Provided by Rebecca Rocque
Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of hunters in hand 4-1-2-3, as 4 exhibited the best combination of balance, frame, and muscling. In my top pair of larger-framed horses, I placed 4, the bay, over 1, as 4 was more refined about the head, having a larger eye and being shorter from eye to muzzle. Four (4) also had a longer neck set higher onto a more angulated shoulder, was shorter and stronger over the back and loin, and exhibited more uniform muscling from forearm to forearm. Four (4) also stood wider from forearm to forearm and stifle to stifle, and tracked the truest. I grant, however, that 1, the grey, was a taller-framed horse with a shorter topline corresponding to a longer underline.

In my middle pair of more balanced horses I placed 1 over 2, the chestnut, as 1 was a larger-framed horse that exhibited more balance and athletic ability. One (1) was more balanced with a shorter back and longer hip, as well as a more gradually rounded croup. In addition, 1 was firmer muscled and stood down on a higher quality of bone. One (1) also stood straighter on all four corners and tracked truer. I grant that 2 had a longer neck that tied onto a more laid back shoulder and had a more prominent wither. Two (2) also stood down on shorter cannons with knees and hock set closer to the ground.

Lastly, in my bottom pair of smaller-framed, lighter-muscled horses I placed 2 over 3 as 2 had a shorter back and longer hip. Two (2) also stood wider in both the front and rear. I do grant that 3 was cleaner through the throat latch with a more prominent wither. However, I faulted 3 and placed him last because he was the narrowest-made, smallest-framed horse in the class. Three (3) was longer over the topline and flatter in his muscle pattern. As 3 also stood splayfooted and cow-hocked, 3 could merit no higher placing today. Sir, thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Hunters in Hand

Provided by Joanna Saito

Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this class of hunters in hand 1-2-4-3. In reference to my top pair of more structurally correct and refined hunters, I placed 1, the bay, over 2. One (1) exhibited the best combination of balance, muscling, and frame. One (1) had a cleaner throat latch and a longer, trimmer neck tied on higher to a more angulated shoulder. In addition, 1 was stronger across the topline with a shorter back, tighter coupling, and longer hip. Also, 1 had a longer, smoother pattern of muscle and stood on cleaner bone, tracking out with a longer stride. I grant that 2 had a deeper girth and more prominent withers; however, I faulted 2 for having a shorter hip and lower neck set.

Moving to my middle pair of less balanced, closer-stifled horses, I placed 2, the dun, over 4, as 2 more closely followed my top horse in quality and correctness. Two (2) was shorter from eye to muzzle, cleaner over the crest, and had a smoother turn of muscle over the shoulder. Two (2) had a wider spring of rib and more angulation to the pasterns. In addition, 2 tracked out with more trueness and freeness from the shoulder. I grant that 4 had a higher neck set and taller frame; however I faulted 4 for being base narrow and splayfooted, and for winging.

Moving to my bottom pair of less structurally correct, shorter-strided horses, I placed 4, the chestnut, over 3, as 4 had a longer pattern of muscling and stood more structurally correct when viewed from the rear. In addition, 4 had cleaner joints and a longer neck that tied on higher. I grant that 3 stood with knees and hocks set closer to the ground. However, I faulted and placed 3, the palomino with the boggy hock, at the bottom of the class, as 3 was the coarsest, most structurally incorrect hunter in the class. Three (3) exhibited a shorter frame and shorter, bunchier muscling. Three (3) also stood over-at-the-knee, was sickle-hocked and cow-hocked, and was pigeon-toed, causing 3 to paddle. For these reasons, 3 could merit no higher placing today.

AQHA Hunter under Saddle

The ideal hunter under saddle exhibits the best combination of way of going, movement, consistency and manners or disposition.

Hunter under Saddle classes used in judging contests follow either American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) or United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) rules. Under these rulebooks, the emphasis on certain traits varies and should be reflected in reasons. For information on USEF hunter under Saddle, refer to the USEF Hunter Under Saddle section of this guide. The following chart outlines the primary variations between AQHA and USEF Hunter under Saddle.

	AQHA Hunter under Saddle	USEF Hunter under Saddle
Overall Performance	Judged as a pleasure class.	Judged on suitability for purpose of encountering fences.
Headset	More level, to fit the conformation and way of going for each horse. Working with the poll consistently below the wither results in disqualification.	Higher to suit the horse's natural neckset and frame.
Trot/Canter	Hunters trot more aggressively. Hunters canter with less impulsion and a higher degree of collection.	Hunters trot at a speed to suit the horse's frame. Emphasis is placed on impulsion, not collection. Hunters move in sweeping strides with pendulous movement in the hindquarters.

Terminology

Commendations

Was more alert through the bridle
 Held the head steadier in line with the wither
 Maintained a more relaxed and consistent headset, carrying the head in line with the wither
 Carried the poll, wither, and hip in a straighter line
 Was more consistent on the vertical
 Exhibited more flexion in the poll and collection in the hocks, working with a rounder topline in a leveler plane of motion
 Worked in a rounder frame with a higher degree of collection at all gaits
 Worked with a flatter plane of motion
 Moved with a lower center of gravity
 Exhibited a more ground-covering stride
 Covered more ground in fewer strides
 Had a longer, lower stride
 Exhibited a more consistent and collected [trot/canter]
 Moved with a flatter knee and more collected hocks
 Was more collected at the [trot/canter]
 Was lighter on the forehead
 Moved freer out of the shoulder
 Extended farther from the forearm
 Exhibited more extension in the forearm
 Moved with a flatter knee
 Exhibited more snap and flexion in the knees
 Exhibited more extension of stride throughout the class
 Exhibited more collection in the hocks while reaching out further from the forearm
 Exhibited softer hoof to ground contact

Faults

Required more handling by the rider

Exhibited an excessively low headset, carrying the head below the withers
Nosed out
Over flexed so the nose was carried beyond the vertical
Worked with the nose behind the vertical
Carried [his/her] head too [low/high]
Had an inconsistent headset
Was shorter and thicker through the throat latch, resulting in less engagement and suppleness in the poll
Was hollower in the back
Failed to reach out desirably from the forearm, resulting in a shorter, choppier stride
Exhibited less [push/drive] off the hocks
Was more vertical in [his/her] strides
Exhibited less forward motion in [his/her] gaits

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Under Saddle

Provided by Caitlin Caudle
Format C-G-F

Manners, Consistency, Way of Going and Collection are the criteria I used to align this Hunter under Saddle class, 4-2-3-1. In reference to my initial pair of longer strided individuals, I do prefer 4 the grey over 2 the chestnut, as 4 was more expressive throughout the bridle while staying suppler in the bridle and softer in the mouth. In addition, 4 extended farther out of the shoulder, reaching out with a longer, more ground-covering stride with a flatter knee and softer hoof to ground contact. I do recognize that 2 showed with more drive of the hocks at the trot while maintaining a more consistent rate of speed at the canter, however 2 must be criticized for over flexing at the walk and exhibiting more knee action at the trot.

Despite these criticisms, I easily placed 2 over 3 the black in my intermediate pair as two exhibited more flexion in the poll and collection in the hocks, working with a rounder top line throughout the class, in addition to remaining more responsive to the rider's aids. Additionally, 4 backed straighter and more readily off of diagonal pairs. I do acknowledge that 3 remained quieter in the mouth the first way of the ring at the canter, but I must criticize 3 for showing an inconsistency in head carriage throughout the class.

Nonetheless, I still prefer 3 over 1 the dun in my concluding pair of poorer quality movers as 3 was a longer strided individual who was lighter on the forehand while exhibiting more extension in the forearm. I do readily concede that 1 drove deeper with more collection in the hocks at the canter, however this does not compensate for the fact that 1 had an inconsistent head carriage and was a shorter strided individual who was ill-mannered and mouthy while remaining hesitant to back off of diagonal pairs and could therefore merit no higher placing in this class today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter under Saddle

Provided by Mary Louis Joyce
Format C-G-F

I placed this class of Hunters under Saddle 1-3-4-2. In my top pair, I placed 1 over 3 because the dark bay displayed a more desirable combination of calmness, consistency, and way of going. He was more supple through the poll and jaw, showing a longer more relaxed head carriage and moving in a rounder frame. He pushed out more from the hindquarters with more impulsion and a

longer, freer, more elegant ground-covering stride. He also backed more readily. I will grant, however, that 3 had less knee action, but I criticize him for being a shorter-strided horse who was stiffer over his topline and more hollow-backed.

Coming to my middle pair, I placed 3 over 4 because the light bay most closely followed my top horse in calmness and consistency. He moved in a more relaxed manner, moving out from his shoulder with a lower, more cadenced stride. He maintained a more correct hunter pace both ways of the ring at all three gaits. Furthermore, 3 was more prompt in his downward transition and was more responsive to his rider's aids. I will grant, however, that 4 was a longer, freer, more elegant mover with a more energetic stride, but I criticize him for refusing to walk and for breaking at the trot.

In my bottom pair, I placed 4 over 2 because the grey exhibited a more desirable combination of way of going and impulsion. He moved in a rounder frame, pushing from his longer, more powerfully built shoulder with the lightest, most elegant, ground-covering stride in the class. Four (4), in addition, accepted the rider's hands more readily, showing more suppleness through his forehand. I will grant that 2 was a more consistent horse, working squarer to the rail, but I fault this chestnut for being a heavier-moving horse with more knee action, lacking engagement of his hindquarters, and for being chargey at the canter. For these reasons, he can merit no higher placing today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter under Saddle

Provided by Andrea Harris

Format C-G

I placed this Hunter under Saddle class 4-2-3-1. In my top pair, I placed 4, the sorrel, over 2, the bay with one stocking, because 4 more closely resembled the ideal hunter frame, showing the best combination of consistency, way of going, and manners. Four (4) worked with a steadier headset and exhibited more flexion in the poll. Four (4) moved with more natural collection and a flatter topline, exhibited more consistency in impulsion and speed both ways of the ring, and worked more parallel to the rail. I grant, however, that 2 extended farther in the forearm at the trot and was more collected in the hocks.

In my middle pair, I placed 2 over 3, the bay with the star, because 2 worked in a more desirable hunter frame. Two (2) was more relaxed about the head and worked with a freer stride, moving out with a flatter knee and more collection in the hocks. In addition, 2 was more responsive to the rider with a more controlled stride, while not having to be checked at the canter the first way of the ring. I grant, however, that 3 reversed quicker on the haunches and backed quicker and straighter between the rider's cues.

Moving to my bottom pair, I placed 3 over 1, the bay with the blaze, because 3 moved with a smoother stride at all gaits. Three (3) was flatter from poll to wither and worked with more impulsion from the hindquarters and a more ground-covering stride. In addition, 3 exhibited a more mannerly disposition, reversing faster and backing quicker and straighter. I grant that 1 was quieter about the head when reversing and was more supple in the poll, though I fault 1 for having an inconsistent headset during the gaits, cantering downhill, and lacking collection in the hocks. One (1) was less responsive to the rider and was slower in the downward transition from the trot to the walk the first way of the ring. For these reasons, 1 could not merit a higher placing in the class today.

Hunter Hack

Like Hunter under Saddle, Hunter Hack classes either follow American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) or United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) rules.

The ideal AQHA Hunter Hack horse exhibits the best combination of style over fences, way of going, consistency, and manners. Horses should work in a correct AQHA hunter frame and maintain an appropriate hunter pace throughout the course and rail work. Horses should meet the fences squarely in the proper number of strides and depart from and land after the fence in equal distances. AQHA hunter hack classes are judged with 70 percent emphasis on the course and 30 percent emphasis on the work at the rail. Thus, more emphasis should be placed on the fence portion of the class when giving reasons.

Like AQHA hunter hack, the ideal USEF hunter hack horse exhibits the best combination of style over fences, way of going consistency, and manners. Horses should work in a suitable USEF hunter frame and maintain an appropriate hunter pace throughout the course and rail work. In USEF hunter hack, equal emphasis is placed on the course and rail work.

The following terms describe commendations and faults relating to the course for both AQHA and USEF hunter hack. Performance on the rail can be described using the terms listed in the AQHA Hunter Under Saddle or USEF Hunter Under Saddle section of this guide.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited more style and class throughout the course
Performed a safer course, clearing each fence smoother with fewer faults and the correct number of strides
Exhibited more rhythm and cadence throughout the course
Exhibited a more consistent pace between fences
Rounded the body more correctly over the fences entering and exiting fences equal distant
Was rounder over the topline (bascule form)
Used the head and neck by arching more forward over the fences
Exhibited more arch to the neck and back over the fences
Tucked knees and hocks tighter over the fences
Forearm broke over more nearly parallel over the fences
Tucked the hind legs higher over the fences
Exhibited a more even equal distant approach and departure from the fences
Had smoother approaches to the fences
Exhibited a more rhythmic stride between fences
Exhibited less hesitation at fences
Strided the fences more evenly and consistently
Exhibited a more even hunter pace between fences
Exhibited more correct forearm position over the fences
Positioned [his/her] forearms more evenly over the fences
Approached the fences straighter
Exhibited softer contact with the ground when landing
Met the fences more squarely
Was more centered over the fences
Cleared the fences with more impulsion

Exhibited more power and scope over the fences
Was more responsive and obedient to the rider throughout the course
Was more willing over the fences

Faults

Was a poorer mover
Cross-cantered
Counter-cantered
Lost forward motion
Broke gait
Scored [number] disobediences
Dropped a leg over the [first/second/etc.] fence
Split the legs over the fences
Dropped the shoulder over the fences
Over jumped
Dwelted over the fences
Drifted over the fences
Was more rigid over the fences
Was flatter over the topline
Twisted the body over the fences as a result of having less power and scope
Approached the fence longer with a shorter departure
Approached the fence too short, resulting in a longer departure
Circled on the course
Ticked a rail
Rubbed a rail
Had a knock-down on the [first/second/etc.] fence
Refused the [first/second/etc.] fence
Paused before fences
Hesitated before fences
Was disqualified by going off-course
Was disqualified by the rider falling off during the course
Was disqualified by cumulating three disobediences

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Hack

Provided by Megan Barham
Format C-G-F

Jumping ability, pattern precision, way of going, manners, and consistency are the criteria I used to align this Hunter Hack class 4-3-2-1. In my initial pair of higher quality movers who reached out with a longer, more ground-covering stride, I prefer 4, the bay, over 3, the grey, because 4 was more square in his approach to the jump and demonstrated a more equal take off and landing at both jumps. Yes, 3 stopped squarer and backed more readily off diagonal pairs. Unfortunately, 3 was late in the lead change, in addition to being mouthy on the rail.

However, it was 3's obvious advantages in quality of movement that led me to place 3 over 2, the chestnut, in my intermediate pair. Three (3) drove deeper off the hock, which resulted in a collected frame, thus allowing for a rounder bascule over the jump. There is no doubt that 2 was more consistent both ways of the ring, but this does not compensate for the fact that 2 was long to the first jump and close to the second jump.

However, it was 2's consistency on the rail that prompted me to put 2 over 1, the black, in my concluding pair of horses that failed to demonstrate the correct number of strides from fence one to fence two. Two (2) was more responsive to his rider's aids throughout the class, while being cleaner in the lead change. I am fully aware of the fact that 1 was more correct in his takeoff and landing spot to the first jump, but this is where it ends. One (1) simply was the worst mover in the class, while having a skip up in the lead change and a break of gait from the trot to canter the second way of the ring. It was for these reasons that 1 could not merit any higher place today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Hunter Hack

Provided by Lori Lucas Stroud
Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of Hunter Hack 3-4-1-2. In reference to my top pair of dark bays who were higher-quality movers, I chose 3 over 4 because 3 exhibited a more complete and desirable combination of way of going, manners, performance, and suitability. Three (3) was more alert and expressive through the bridle when approaching the first fence, and he was more uniform in his takeoffs and landings. Also, 3 was more desirable in his knee usage throughout the class, being tighter and more evenly tucked over the second fence and flatter on the rail at the canter. I do realize that 4 cantered straighter to the second fence, and he reversed more readily on the rail.

In my middle pair I placed 4 over 1, the chestnut, because 4 exhibited a more rhythmic, even pace both over fences and on the rail, and he more closely followed the way of going of my top horse. Four (4) exhibited greater hindquarter impulsion in his takeoffs and was more relaxed in his poll over fences and during the flatwork. I do grant that 1 stopped smoother and with a quieter mouth.

In my final pair, I chose 1 over 2, the bay, because 1 exhibited greater arc over the first fence and was more responsive to the rider's cues in all transitions. Four (4) also worked with his knees and hocks closer to the ground at both the trot and canter. I do realize that 2 maintained his gaits more precisely on the rail; however, I faulted 2 and placed him last in the class today as he was chargey and overflexed throughout the class, and he lacked the manners and suitability of the horses I placed above him. He consistently mouthed the bit, elevated his poll, and had the poorest form over the fences. Therefore, he could merit no higher placing in the class today. I placed this class of Hunter Hack 3-4-1-2. Thank you.

AQHA Working Hunter

The ideal American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Working Hunter exhibits the best combination of style over fences, way of going, consistency, and manners. Unlike Hunter Hack classes, Working Hunter classes do not include rail work and only include work over fences. Horses should work in a correct AQHA hunter frame and maintain an appropriate hunter pace throughout the course. Horses should meet the fences squarely in the proper number of strides and depart from and land after the fence in equal distances. For a list of terms to describe performance over fences, refer to the Hunter Hack section this guide.

Example Oral Reasons: AQHA Working Hunter

Provided by Leigh Williams
Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of working hunters 3-4-2-1. In reference to my top pair, I chose 3, the chestnut, over 4 because 3 exhibited the best combination of quality, ease, precision, pace, and overall jumping ability. Three (3) was a more pleasant jumper who was more expressive about the head while being smoother and more forward in his approach to the fences. Three (3) also exhibited more obvious length of body while folding his knees up closer to his chest in the first, second, fifth, sixth, and ninth fences, although I grant that 4, the chestnut with the star, exhibited more driving impulsion off the hindquarters between the fences and exhibited more confidence and ease over the fourth fence.

In the middle pair, I chose 4 over 2, the bay, because 4 exhibited a more correct body form while traveling over the third and fourth fences, exhibiting more arc of spine and a tighter tuck of the knees. Furthermore, 4 was more precise in his leads between fences, although I grant 2 exhibited a more obvious length of the body over the sixth fence.

In my bottom pair, I chose 2 over 1 because 2 was more correct in his frame, being suppler down the spine and exhibiting a rounder frame, especially over the first and second fences. Two (2) also maintained the correct leads between fences, although I grant that 1, the grey, was smoother over the last fence. I faulted 1 for jumping flatter and hollower in the back, especially over the first and sixth fences. One (1) also added an extra stride before the fourth fence, resulting in a dangerous fence. In addition, 4 knocked down a rail on the third fence and therefore could not merit any higher placing on my card today. Thank you, Sir.

USEF Hunter Under Saddle

Under United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) rules, the ideal Hunter under Saddle exhibits the most desirable way of going, with manners and consistency considered as secondary concerns. Ideal movers who exhibit minor faults in manners and consistency should not be heavily penalized; however, horses should be heavily penalized for committing major faults such as breaks and wrong leads. For information on the variations between American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and USEF hunter under saddle rules, refer to the *AQHA Hunter Under Saddle* section of this guide.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited a more suitable hunter frame for working over fences

Carried the head more naturally for [his/her] frame

Exhibited a more consistent headset

Carried the head more consistently

Exhibited more extension from the shoulder, moving with a freer forearm and a flatter knee

Had a longer, more ground-covering stride with a higher degree of impulsion

Exhibited a more ground-covering stride with a flatter knee and more sweeping motion from the hip

Exhibited more pendulous motion from the hip

Covered more ground in fewer strides, with a higher degree of impulsion

Initiated movement from the hindquarters with pendulous, free-swinging forward motion

Moved with a more sweeping trot, moving off the hindquarters with a more pendulous stride

Exhibited more pendulous motion from the hip

Exhibited longer strides and increased impulsion at the hand gallop

Faults

Required more handling by the rider

Was excessively high headed

Carried the head excessively low, with the poll level with the wither and the hip

Exhibited an inconsistent headset

Was excessively flexed at the poll, with more collection and less impulsion

Was hollower in the back

Worked in a less consistent USEF hunter frame

Moved with [higher/more vertical] knee action

Exhibited shorter, choppy strides at the [trot/canter/hand gallop]

Moved with less forward motion and drive from the hocks

Exhibited higher action in the hocks

Example Oral Reasons: USEF Hunter under Saddle

Provided by Joanna Saito

Format C-G-F

I placed the Hunter under Saddle 3-1-4-2. In considering my top pair of higher quality movers who were more suitable to purpose, I preferred 3, the gray, over 1. Three (3) showed more drive and impulsion from behind, creating greater lift and self carriage, allowing him to move out in a longer stride with a softer hoof-to-ground contact at both the trot and canter. I do realize that 1 was quieter about the mouth at the trot, but still goes second as he lacked the degree of impulsion found in my top individual.

Bringing your attention to my intermediate decision, I easily preferred the sorrel over 4. One (1) drove deeper with the hocks with more flow and forward motion, moving out of a more angulated shoulder in a longer, flatter, more ground covering stride, while being slower legged at all gaits. Finding no obvious grants, and as 4 was short and restricted in his stride, I leave him third.

Nonetheless, it was 4's distinct advantages in brokenness that compelled me to place him over 2 in my concluding pair. Four (4) was a more collected and consistent performer who maintained a more level head carriage while requiring less aid and cueing from the rider. I appreciate that 2 backed straighter, but I cannot ignore the fact that the bay was high headed, quick legged, and round in his knees, thus meriting no higher placing. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: USEF Hunter Under Saddle

Provided by Joanna Saito

Format C-G-F

Sir, I placed this class of hunters under saddle 1-3-4-2. In reference to my top pair of more ground-covering movers I placed 1, the chestnut, over 3, because 1 had the best combination of way of going, collection and consistency. One (1) was a longer-strided hunter that remained lighter on the forehand, being a more pendulous mover, covering more ground. One (1) cantered with more impulsion and drive off the hocks, was suppler, bending around corners, and backed more evenly and straighter between the rider's legs. I grant that 3 walked freer with a longer stride. However, I faulted 3 for resisting the bit during the upward transitions, hollowing his back, and trailing his hocks.

Moving to my middle pair of less-collected horses that were more resistant in their back, I placed 3, the flea-bitten grey, over 4. Three (3) more closely followed my top horse in frame and way of going. In addition 3 was longer strided, trotting with a flatter knee and more flexion at the hocks. Three (3) also exhibited more ideal impulsion at all gaits and was lighter on the forehand. I grant that 4 was more accepting of the bit and exhibited more extension at the hand gallop while maintaining his frame. However, I faulted 4 for having a steeper shoulder, resulting in a shorter stride; 4 was also heavier on the forehand, trailing his hocks.

Moving to my bottom pair of shorter-strided horses, I placed 4, the bay tobiano, over 2 because 4 more closely followed my top pair in manners and consistency. Four (4) maintained a rounder frame, working closer to the ground with a more natural headset and a quieter mouth. In addition, 4 was smoother in the upward transitions, especially to the canter the second way of the ring. I grant that 2 was lighter on the forehand and moved with a more reaching stride. However, I faulted and placed 2, the dark bay, at the bottom of the class because 2 broke and picked up the wrong lead twice the first way of the ring. Two (2) was a loose-coupled, strung-out hunter, and therefore could merit no higher placing today.

Chapter 9

Presenting Oral Reasons on Equitation Classes

This section discusses terminology and strategies for giving oral reasons on western horsemanship as well as saddle seat and hunt seat equitation classes.

Western Horsemanship

Western horsemanship class consists of a simple pattern followed by rail work. The rail work generally is used to break ties or close scores in the pattern performance.

Incorporating Scores into Reasons

Each rider's performance in a western horsemanship class can be scored on a scale of 1 to 20, or 0 to 100. This scoring system can be incorporated into reasons for advanced contestants.

The following table shows a sample scoring system (1 to 20 for each maneuver) for western horsemanship. This scoring system incorporates both equitation and pattern work into the scores. Coaches and contestants should refer to a current rulebook for up-to-date rules on scoring this class.

Score	Performance
19-20	Perfect run
17-18	Excellent run
15-16	Good run
13-14	Fair run
11-12	Small error in pattern and equitation
9-10	Major error in pattern or equitation
7-8	Major errors in the pattern and equitation
1-6	Off pattern

Terminology

Commendations

Performed a more [accurate/correct/exact] pattern
Performed a more stylish pattern
Exhibited less cueing throughout the pattern
Circled more nearly centered between the cones
Stopped more precisely at the cones
Exhibited quicker lead changes
Backed quieter and steadier with less cueing
Maintained a straighter line between the ear, shoulder, hip, and heel
Sat straighter from shoulder to hip to heel
Maintained a straighter line from knee to toe
Maintained a straighter line from bit to hand to elbow
Was more relaxed in the hands and elbows
Sat more centered in the saddle
Was squarer in the shoulders
Was more correct in [his/her] positioning
Was more comfortable and relaxed in the saddle
Sat closer to the saddle when loping

Sat deeper at the jog
Maintained lighter contact with the bit while exhibiting more control
Exhibited less leg movement in the saddle

Faults

Was less concise in [his/her] pattern
Delayed the transition from the [walk/jog] to the [jog/lope]
Excessively handled [his/her] horse
Took a wrong lead [in the pattern/the first way of the ring/the second way of the ring]
Failed to maintain a consistent arc while circling on pattern
Exhibited rougher [upward/downward] transitions
Spurred [his/her] horse
Exhibited less control over [his/her] horse
Stopped beyond a cone
Broke gait from the [walk/jog/lope] to the [walk/jog/lope]
[Hit/knocked over] a cone
Went off pattern (explain how)
Leaned [forward/backward] in the saddle
Dropped the [left/right] shoulder
Legs were too far forward
Toes came up during the [upward transition/etc.]
Exhibited a looser lower leg
Was less correct in [his/her] positioning
Shifted weight in the saddle
Sat shallower in the saddle at the [walk/jog/lope]

Example Oral Reasons: Western Horsemanship

Provided by Lori Lucas Stroud
Format C-G-F

Pattern Precision, Body Alignment, Dispatch, and Ease are the criteria I used to align this class of Horsemanship 4-2-3-1. In reference to my initial pair of 4, the bay with two hind socks, over 2, the bay, 4 performed a crisper pattern with a higher degree of difficulty by working on a looser rein and performing a flying lead change that was initiated by the rider's proper alignment of shoulder, hip, and heel. Yes, 2 did maintain a quieter seat and leg. However, 2 performed uneven serpentines while riding with a hollow back.

Even so, 2 placed over 3, the chestnut, as 2 performed a cleaner simple lead change while maintaining a more stationary pivot foot and riding with a more desirable leg position. It is true that 3 was guided on a lighter rein. Yet, 3 rode with legs pushed forward while leading with the rein hand and breaking gait before the final stop.

Despite these criticisms, 3 placed over 1, the bay, as 3 executed a more accurate pattern while requiring less handling from the rider. I cannot deny that 1 performed a quality simultaneous flying lead change. But 1 was out of gait going into the first serpentine and was disqualified for two-handing in the pattern and on the rail and therefore can merit no higher placing today. Thank you.

Example Oral Reasons: Western Horsemanship

Provided by Lori Lucas Stroud

Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of western horsemanship 1-3-2-4. In reference to my top pair of higher-quality riders who best combined pattern precision and body alignment, I placed 1, the rider on the chestnut, over 3, the rider on the bay. One (1) was prompter in her transitions and stopped squarer at the second cone. She also was quieter in the use of her rein hand and held her elbows closer to her body. One (1) was also more desirable in her heel-toe relationship. I do grant that 3 was more precise when executing her first pivot, thus allowing her to lope off straighter and closer to the cones.

In my middle pair, I chose 3 over 2, the rider on the grey, as 3 more closely followed the body alignment of my top individual. Three (3) was more supple in her lower back and deeper in her seat, thus allowing her to sit up straighter and maintain a more desirable alignment from ear, shoulder, hip, and heel. I do realize that 2 performed a smoother downward transition to the jog at the third cone.

In my final pair, I placed 2 over 4, the rider on the dun, because 2 executed the maneuvers with greater ease, precision, and confidence. She looked out more evenly over her horse and was smoother in all her transitions. I will grant that 4 rode with a more desirable length of rein, but I faulted her and placed her last for exhibiting the least precise pattern in the class. She picked up the wrong lead between the second and third cones. She also failed to back, was stiffer in her free hand, and lacked the body alignment of the top riders in today's class. Therefore, she could merit no higher placing, leaving this class of western horsemanship 1-3-2-4. Thank you.

Saddle seat Equitation

In saddle seat equitation classes, riders are judged at the walk, trot, and canter and may also be asked to perform a simple pattern. The pattern work and rail work are both weighted at 50 percent. Patterns are optional and may be judged prior to or following rail work.

Incorporating Scores into Reasons

The scoring system for saddle seat equitation matches that shown in the western horsemanship section of this guide. This scoring system can be incorporated into reasons for advanced contestants. As in western horsemanship, coaches and contestants should refer to a current rulebook for up-to-date information on rules and scoring saddle seat equitation.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited a more stylish saddle seat form

Carried [himself/herself] straighter in the saddle from shoulder to hip to heel

Maintained a straighter line between the ear, shoulder, hip, and heel

Sat straighter from shoulder to hip to heel

Maintained a straighter line from knee to toe

Maintained a straighter line from bit to hand to elbow

Was more relaxed in the hands and elbows

Sat more centered in the saddle

Sat straighter and squarer in the saddle

Was squarer in the shoulders
Was more correct in [his/her] positioning
Was more comfortable and relaxed in the saddle
Sat deeper in the saddle at the [walk/trot/canter]
Maintained lighter contact with the bit
Looked straighter through the horse's ears
Maintained a steadier lower leg position when posting
Posted more correctly, switching diagonals quicker and more accurately
Held a more correct hand position
Hands were more [supple/flexible]
Was more confident and correct in the saddle
Was weightier in [his/her] heels
Performed a more [correct/exact] pattern
Performed a more stylish, accurate pattern
Exhibited less cueing throughout the pattern
Circled more nearly centered between the cones
Stopped more precisely at the cones
Exhibited quicker lead changes
Backed quieter and steadier with less cueing
Maintained lighter contact with the bit while exhibiting more control
Exhibited less leg movement in the saddle

Faults

Was less concise in [his/her] pattern
Delayed the transition from the [walk/trot/canter] to the [walk/trot/canter]
Excessively handled [his/her] horse
Took a wrong lead [in the pattern/the first way of the ring/the second way of the ring]
Failed to maintain a consistent arc while circling on pattern
Exhibited rougher [upward/downward] transitions
Exhibited less control over [his/her] horse
Stopped beyond a cone
Broke gait from the [walk/trot/canter] to the [walk/trot/canter]
[Hit/knocked over] a cone
Went off pattern (explain how)
Leaned [forward/backward] in the saddle
Dropped the [left/right] shoulder
Legs were too far forward
Toes came up during the [upward transition/etc.]
Exhibited a looser lower leg
Was less correct in [his/her] positioning
Shifted weight in the saddle
Sat shallower in the saddle at the [walk/trot/canter]
Shifted weight in the saddle
Looked more downward
Maintained a less correct and consistent leg position
Exhibited more movement in the lower legs at the [walk/trot/canter]
Failed to switch diagonals
Switched diagonals with less precision
Looked down when switching diagonals
Maintained less contact with [his/her] calves
Exhibited a looser lower leg

Held the hands lower
Dropped the [left/right] shoulder
Failed to maintain a consistent arc while [circling/reversing] on pattern
Exhibited rougher [upward/downward] transitions
Excessively handled [his/her] horse
Carried less weight in [his/her] heels
Was [stiffer/more rigid] in [his/her] hands
Maintained [tighter rein contact/more contact with the bit]

Example Oral Reasons: Saddle seat Equitation

Provided by Andrea Harris
Format C-G-F

I placed this saddle seat equitation class 1-2-3-4. In my top pair of more stylish and precise riders, I placed 1, the rider on the grey mare, over 2, the rider on the bay, because 1 was more precise when performing the pattern and exhibited more style and skill throughout the class. One (1) looked straighter through the horse's ears and maintained lighter contact with the bit. One (1) also sat straighter and squarer in the saddle and was straighter from ear to shoulder, shoulder, hip and heel. One (1) changed diagonals smoother and squarer on all fours at the cone. I grant that 2 exhibited more flexion in the heel and carried the heel below the toe, allowing for a deeper seat. However, I faulted 2 for dropping the left shoulder and maintaining more contact with the bridle.

Moving to my middle pair, I placed 2 over 3, the rider on the grey gelding, because 2 most closely followed my top-place rider in style and confidence. Two (2) was more relaxed and confident in the saddle, and exhibited a straighter line from shoulder to hip to heel. Two (2) also was weightier in her heels and exhibited less movement in the saddle throughout the class. In addition, 2 circled more nearly centered between the cones and exhibited less cueing in the upward transitions from the trot to the canter. I grant that 3 held his elbows closer to his body and exhibited less movement in his elbows, though I fault 3 for sitting farther back in the saddle and posting off the bit. Three (3) also exhibited more movement in the lower leg, with the heel raising above the toe while posting.

In my bottom pair, I easily placed 3 over 4, the rider on the black gelding, as 3 performed the prescribed pattern more correctly. Three (3) changed diagonals precisely where indicated in the pattern and exhibited quicker transitions. Three (3) also exhibited less movement in the lower arms and exhibited more control throughout the class with less obvious cueing. I grant that 4 sat more centered in the saddle, though I fault 4 and place him last in the class today for going off pattern by failing to circle to the left between the third and fourth cones. Four (4) exhibited excessive restraint on the bit and maintained a less consistent seat. Four (4) was less correct in her positioning and shifted weight in the saddle while failing to maintain the desired depth in her seat. Four (4) also knocked over the third cone in the pattern and exhibited less control over her horse. For these reasons, 4 could merit no higher placing in the class today.

Hunt seat Equitation

In a hunt seat equitation class, riders perform a simple pattern followed by rail work. For hunt seat equitation classes in which the pattern is run first, contestants should use rail work to break ties or close pairs; the pattern should be used to break ties in classes when the rail work is performed first. For more information on pattern emphasis versus rail work, refer to an appropriate rulebook.

Incorporating Scores into Reasons

The scoring system for hunt seat equitation matches that shown in the Western Horsemanship section of this guide. This scoring system can be incorporated into reasons for advanced contestants. As in western horsemanship, coaches and contestants should refer to a current rulebook for up-to-date information on rules and scoring hunt seat equitation.

Terminology

Commendations

Exhibited a more stylish hunt seat form
Carried [himself/herself] straighter in the saddle from shoulder to hip to heel
Changed diagonals more equidistant between the cones
Exhibited a more stylish and correct hunt seat form
Maintained a straighter line between the ear, shoulder, hip, and heel
Sat straighter from shoulder to hip to heel
Maintained a straighter line from knee to toe
Maintained a straighter line from bit to hand to elbow
Was more relaxed in the hands and elbows
Sat more centered in the saddle
Was squarer in the shoulders
Was more correct in [his/her] positioning
Was more comfortable and relaxed in the saddle
Sat deeper in the saddle at the [gait]
Maintained lighter contact with the bit
Looked straighter through the horse's ears
Maintained a steadier lower leg position when posting
Posted more correctly, switching diagonals quicker and more accurately
Held a lower, more correct hand position
[His/her] hands were more [supple/flexible]
Sat straighter and squarer in the saddle
Was more confident and correct in the saddle
Was weightier in [his/her] heels
Performed a more [accurate/correct/exact] pattern
Performed a more stylish pattern
Exhibited less cueing throughout the pattern
Circled more nearly centered between the cones
Stopped more precisely at the cones
Exhibited quicker lead changes
Backed quieter and steadier with less cueing
Maintained lighter contact with the bit while exhibiting more control
Exhibited less leg movement in the saddle

Faults

Was less concise in [his/her] pattern
Delayed the transition from the [walk/trot/canter] to the [walk/trot/canter]
Excessively handled [his/her] horse
Took a wrong lead [in the pattern/the first way of the ring/the second way of the ring]
Failed to maintain a consistent arc while circling on pattern
Exhibited rougher [upward/downward] transitions

Exhibited less control over [his/her] horse
Stopped beyond a cone
Broke gait from the [walk/trot/canter] to the [walk/trot/canter]
[Hit/knocked over] a cone
Went off pattern (explain how)
Leaned [forward/backward] in the saddle
Dropped the [left/right] shoulder
Legs were too far forward
Toes came up during the [upward transition/etc.]
Exhibited a looser lower leg
Was less correct in [his/her] positioning
Shifted weight in the saddle
Sat shallower in the saddle at the [walk/trot/canter]
Looked more downward
Maintained a less correct and consistent leg position
Exhibited more movement in the lower legs at the [walk/trot/canter]
Failed to switch diagonals
Switched diagonals with less precision
Looked down when switching diagonals
Maintained less contact with [his/her] calves
Exhibited a looser lower leg
Worked with elevated hands
Worked with the knuckles set wider apart
Held the hands higher and stiffer
Dropped the [left/right] shoulder
Failed to maintain a consistent arc while [circling/reversing] on pattern
Exhibited rougher [upward/downward] transitions
Excessively handled [his/her] horse
Carried less weight in [his/her] heels
Was [stiffer/more rigid] in [his/her] hands
Maintained [tighter rein contact/more contact with the bit]
Was less concise in the pattern
Changed diagonals slower between the cones

Example Oral Reasons: Hunt seat Equitation

Provided by Leigh Williams
Format C-G

Sir, I placed this class of hunt seat equitation 3-1-2-4. In reference to my top pair, I placed 3, the girl on the chestnut, over 1, the lady on the bay, because 3 was a more relaxed rider who best combined body position and alignment. Three (3) was more open in her chest and squarer in her shoulders while being more open in her pelvis, allowing for a deeper seat and closer contact with her horse. She was also more relaxed in her lower arm throughout the pattern and on the rail. Three (3) also changed diagonals with more ease and confidence and was quieter and more subtle in her cues throughout the class, especially in her lead changes—although I do grant that 1 exhibited a quieter lower-leg position at the canter and on the rail, thus allowing her to sit stiller in the saddle with less forward motion.

In the middle pair I chose 1 over 2, the girl on the grey, because 1 most closely followed my top rider in body alignment and pattern precision. One (1) was smoother in her transitions while keeping her heels down closer to the ground throughout the class. One (1) also exhibited a more

correct body position being straighter from ear, shoulder, hip, and heel, and overall was a more confident rider throughout her pattern. However, I grant 2 sat quieter and more correct in the lead changes and was more forward in her face, looking out more evenly between the horse's ears.

In my bottom pair, I chose 2 over 4, the rider on the black mare, because 2 was a rider who sat with more stability and performed the pattern with more confidence and ease. Two (2) also exhibited more flexion of the ankle, thus allowing for a lower heel in relation to the toe. She also maintained the correct diagonals in her pattern while holding her hands at a more desirable position over the withers, although I grant 4 exhibited a more obvious bit-to-elbow relationship while being more relaxed in her lower arm on the rail. However, I faulted 4 for being rounder in her shoulders and showing a more obvious arch in her back while performing the pattern. I also faulted 4 for lacking control of her horse and failing to complete the prescribed pattern. Therefore, 4 could not merit a higher placing today. Thank you.

Chapter 10

Draft Horses

Draft horses are judged on conformation, athletic ability, and breed character. Since the hooves, legs (especially the hocks), neck, and shoulder affect draft horses' performance the most, these traits should be stressed in oral reasons on draft horse classes.

Terminology

Commendations

Was heavier-muscled in the neck and shoulder, allowing more draft horse ability
Had a more muscular shoulder blending smoother into the withers
Had a [crestier-/heavier-muscled] neck
Was shorter through the loin
Had shorter, more muscular arms and forearms
Was stronger coupled
Was broader and more well-muscled through the loin
Had a longer, broader croup
Was more heavily muscled over the croup
Was smoother and more level through the hips
Exhibited more dimension of muscling over the hips
Had wider, straighter hocks
Was stronger and more heavily muscled in the quarter and thigh, joining deeper and stronger into the inner and outer gaskins
Stood wider with the point of the hock set closer together when viewed from the rear
Stood on cleaner heavier bone
Had [shorter/wider/flatter] cannons
Had larger hooves that were wider at the heel
Had a wider, more solid foot
Stood on [denser/smoother/larger/rounder] hooves

Faults

Had smaller eyes
Had a severe Roman nose
Was dished from poll to muzzle
Was coarser in the [muzzle/jaw]
Had a longer, weaker back and a shorter underline
Was shorter over the croup
Was pinched at the chest
Was shallower in the heart girth with less spring of rib
Had a lighter, weaker muscle pattern
Was less muscular, exhibiting less draft horse strength
Stood straighter in the hocks when viewed from the rear
Stood on [less substantial/smaller/finer] bone
Had smaller hoofs that were narrower at the heel
[His/her] hooves were smaller in diameter

Appendix

Figure 4: USEF Type Hunter Under Saddle Oral Reason Flow

Figure 5: English Pleasure/Country English Pleasure Oral Reason Flow

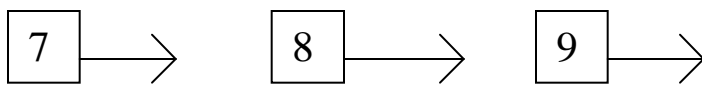
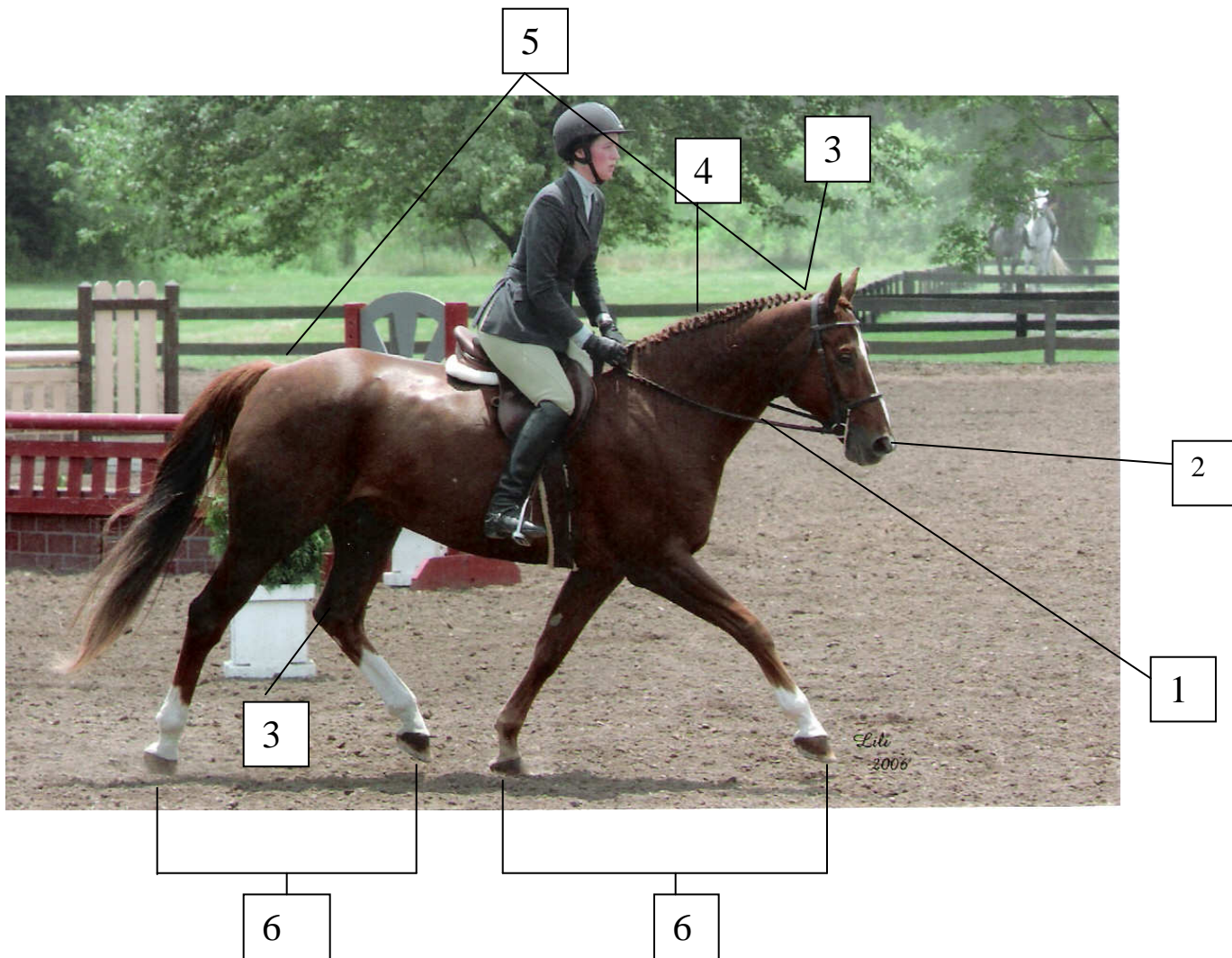
Table 4: Reasons Format Skeleton

Figure 6: Miss Perfect

Figure 7: The Cube

Figure 8: The Tube

Figure 4: USEF Type Hunter Under Saddle Oral Reason Flow



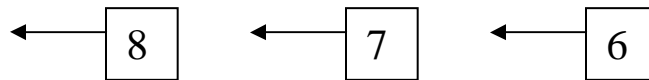
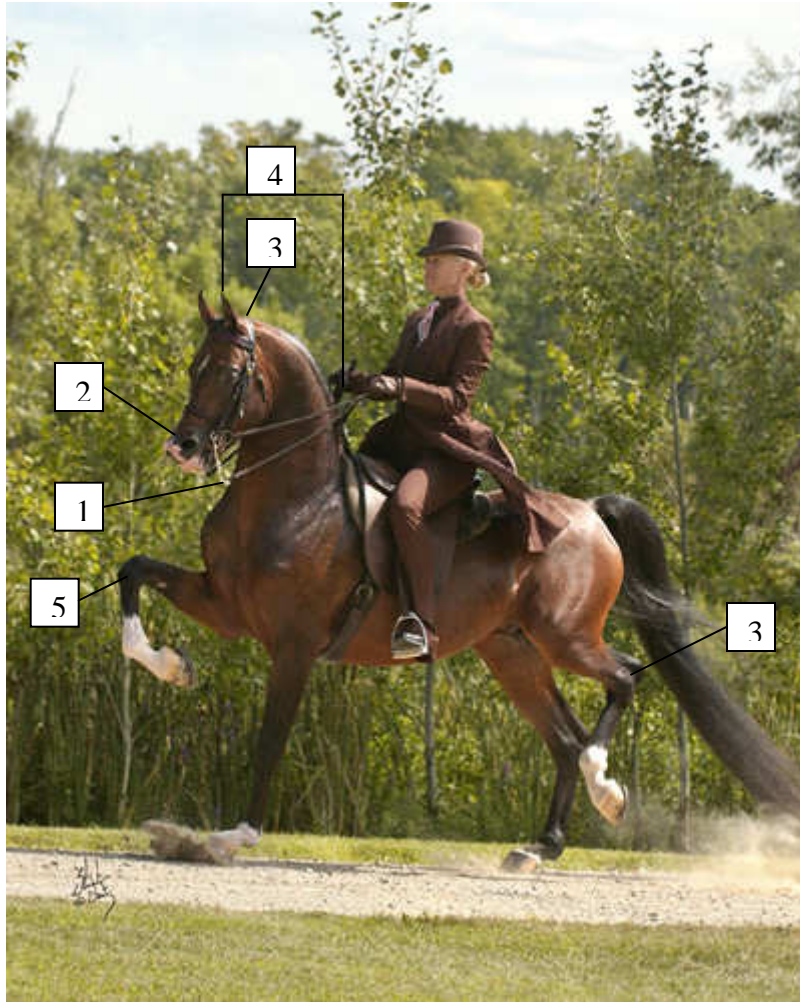
Reverse ← - - - - - ← - - - - - **Back**

General Introductions (Lead In); stress when appropriate manners, consistency, movement, impulsion

1. Worked off lighter rein contact.
2. Being suppler and quieter in the mouth with a more expressive alert appearance.
3. Exhibited more natural flexion at the poll and hock. Driving with more forward motion and impulsion.
4. Had a more consistent natural headset more suitable to its frame.
5. Resulting in a more collected frame from poll to wither to croup.

6. Moved with more cadence and rhythm and softer hoof-to-ground contact while working at a more ideal rate of speed.
7. Maintained a more natural walk exhibiting consistent forward motion.
8. Extended a more angulated shoulder, trotting and cantering with a more sweeping, ground-covering stride resulting in a flatter knee and lighter hoof contact.
9. Reversed more readily arching around the rider's inside leg, while maintaining forward motion.
10. Backed more readily off diagonal pairs while maintaining a quieter mouth.

Figure 5: English Pleasure/Country English Pleasure Oral Reason Flow



Reverse ← - - - - - ← - - - - **Back**

General Introductions (Lead In); stress when appropriate manners, consistency, movement (animation), collection, ring presence (brilliance)

1. Worked off a lighter rein contact.
2. Being suppler and quieter in the mouth with a more alert appearance.
3. Exhibited more flexion at the poll and hock.
4. Drove deeper off the hock resulting in a more collected rounded frame, working in a more perpendicular, higher consistent headset.

5. Moved with more cadence and rhythm with knees and hocks, breaking more nearly level (English pleasure); higher (Country English pleasure).
6. Maintained a more natural flat foot walk exhibiting consistent forward motion.
7. Trotted in a more distinct two-beat diagonal gait exhibiting more rolling motion.
8. Extended a more angulated shoulder, cantering with a more sweeping, ground-covering stride.
9. Reversed more readily arching around the rider's inside leg, while maintaining forward motion.
10. Backed more readily off diagonal pairs while maintaining a quieter mouth.

Table 4: Reasons Format Skeleton

 (Insert Criteria) were the criteria I used to place this class of (Insert Class Name) (Insert Placing) , starting with (1st), (Insert ID's) , who best combined (Insert Criteria) to the highest degree. In my initial pair, I prefer (1st) over (2nd), (Insert ID's) , as 1st was (Insert Commendations) . Yes, (2nd) (Insert Grants) , however (2nd) (Insert Faults) .

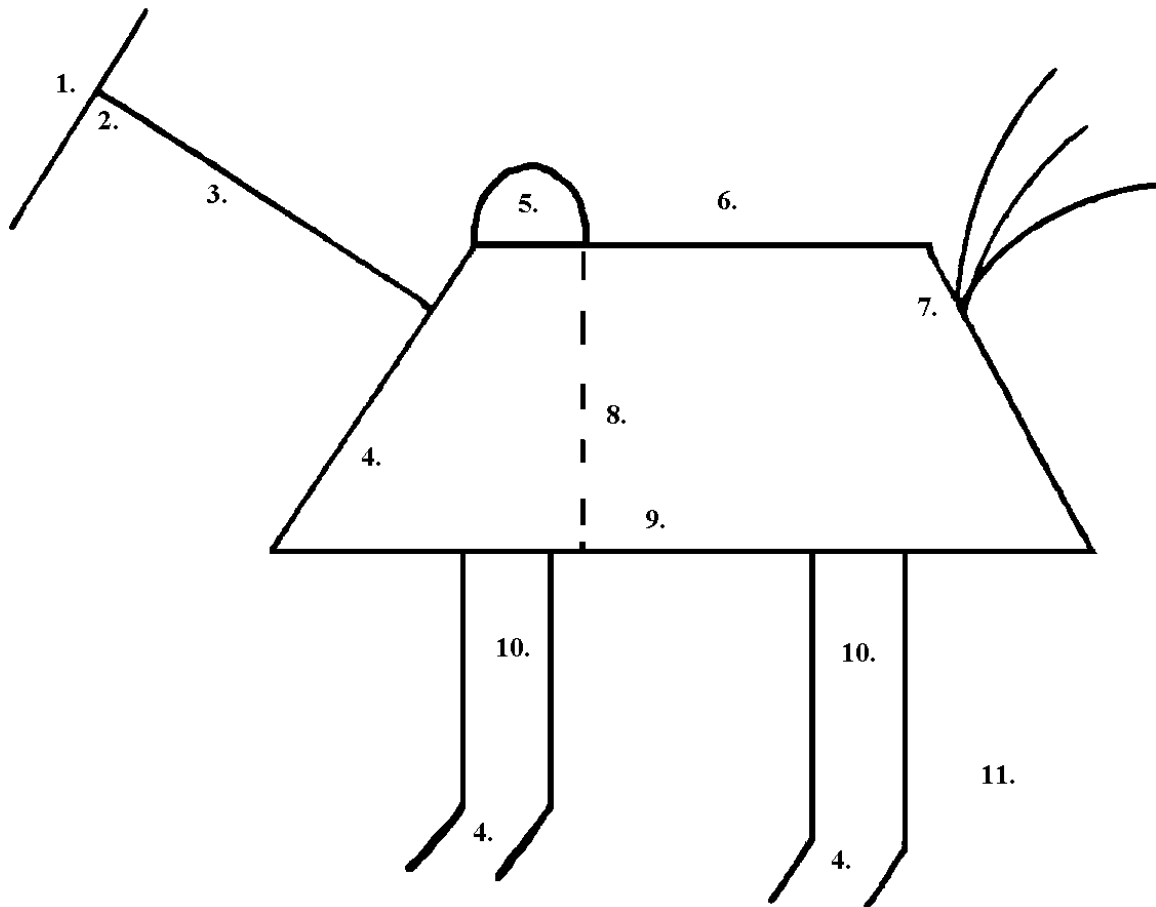
Even so, due to (2nd)'s advantages in (Insert Criteria) placed over (3rd), (Insert ID's) , in my middle pair. (Insert Commendations) . I will concede that (3rd) (Insert Grants) , yet (3rd) (Insert Faults) .

Despite these criticisms, it was (Insert Criteria) that compelled me to place (3rd) over (4th), (Insert ID's) in my bottom pair. (Insert Commendations) . I cannot dispute the fact that (4th) (Insert Grants) , but (4th) (Insert Faults) , and therefore merits no higher placing in this class today.

Thank you.

- (1st) = first placed horse
- (2nd) = second placed horse
- (3rd) = third placed horse
- (4th) = fourth placed horse

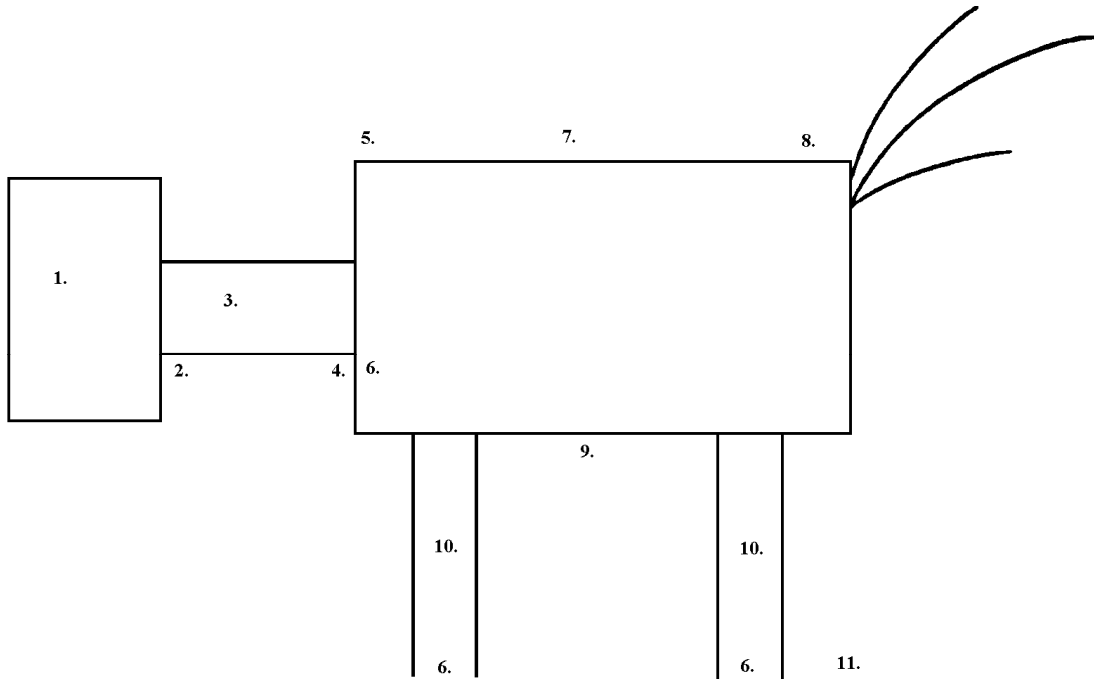
Figure 6: Miss Perfect



Miss perfect may be described in a set of reasons using the following systematic terminology. The numbers in this system provide the flow, or the order in which various parts of the horse will be discussed. Some junior contestants are able to more completely remember a class by drawing a stick diagram on their notepad illustrating a perfect vs. cube vs. tube body type. The stick horse can be converted when writing oral reasons into terms and phrases at a later time.

- 1) Typier about the head
- 2) Cleaner in the throat latch
- 3) Longer, leaner neck that comes higher out of the shoulder
- 4) A more angulated shoulder and pastern
- 5) More prominent wither
- 6) Shorter back
- 7) Longer hip
- 8) Deeper in the heart girth
- 9) Longer in the underline
- 10) Stood on straighter legs with cleaner, flatter bone
- 11) Was a freer mover

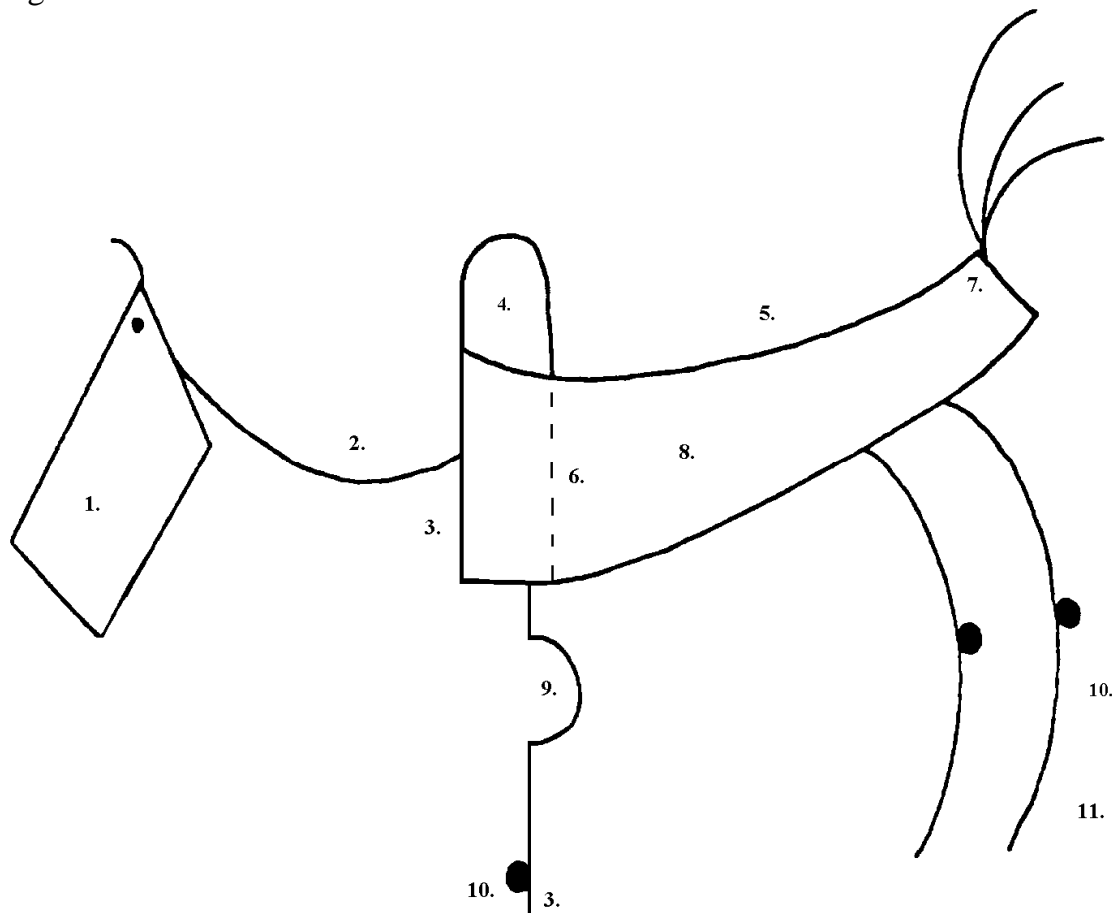
Figure 8: The Cube



The cube typically exhibits the following characteristics.

- 1) Plainer about the head
- 2) Thicker throat latch
- 3) Shorter neck
- 4) Lower neck set
- 5) Muttony over the withers
- 6) Straighter shoulders and pasterns
- 7) Longer back
- 8) Shorter hip
- 9) Shorter underline
- 10) Stood on rounder bone
- 11) Moved with shorter, choppier, ground-pounding strides

Figure 7: The Tube



The tube can be described using the following terms.

- 1) Plainer about the head
- 2) Longer ewe neck
- 3) Straighter in the shoulder and pastern
- 4) Too prominent in the wither
- 5) Longer back
- 6) Shallower in the heart girth
- 7) Shorter hip
- 8) Narrower
- 9) Back-at-the-knee and sickle hocked
- 10) Capped hocks and ring bone
- 11) Stiffer mover, taking shorter, choppier strides