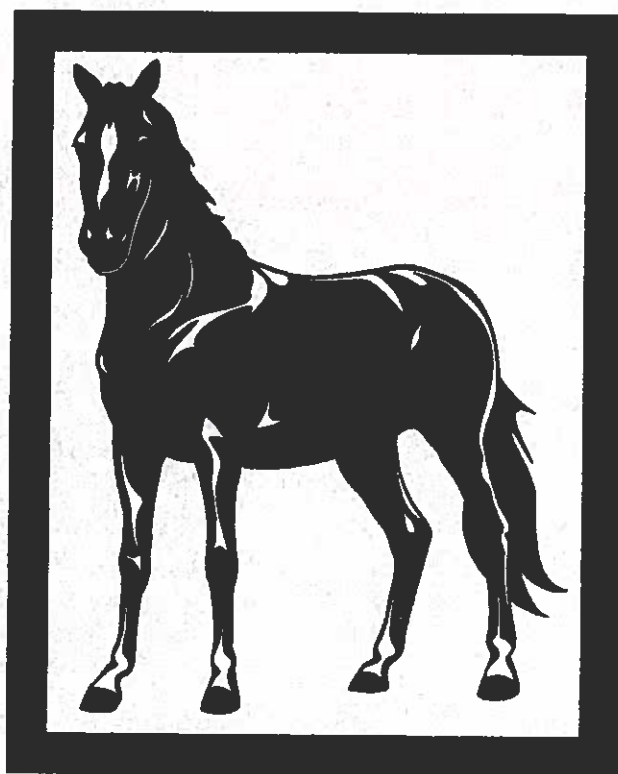


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**Colorado
State**
University

Extension

**MA1500G
Member's Manual**



**Beginner's Horse Judging Guide
Essentials of Competitive
Horse Judging**

COLORADO 4-H HORSE PROGRAM

Essentials of Competitive Horse Judging

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Introduction

Competitive horse judging is just one of the many facets of the Colorado 4-H program. So, why choose to be a member of a competitive horse judging team? Most obviously, horse judging helps participants learn more about horses. Horse judging participants gain a basic understanding of soundness and conformation as well as the knowledge to make better decisions when evaluating animals for purchase. Students also develop a better understanding of a horse's strengths and limitations. More important than these horse-related skills are the number of life skills developed through competitive horse judging. Past team members cite leadership, communication and decision making skills as benefits to horse judging. Competitive horse judging can also build confidence and teamwork skills.

The *Essentials of Competitive Horse Judging* manual is intended to introduce youth and leaders alike to the world of competitive horse judging. It is written at a basic level and intended to walk new judges through their first contest. It introduces the fundamentals of evaluating horse conformation and movement and also provides an overview of common classes, oral reasons and what to expect at a horse judging competition. The *Essentials of Competitive Horse Judging* manual should serve as a stepping stone to a more comprehensive resource.

Breed Differences

There are many equine breeds and disciplines, each with unique histories, advantages and challenges. Breed associations and horse show organizations publish standards against which horses of that breed or discipline are evaluated. Styles and trends can change frequently but the fundamentals of conformation and quality movement endure. Information in this manual is applicable to any breed or type. However, when preparing for breed specific competitions or classes, coaches should contact the appropriate breed association for more detailed judging standards.

Classes

A class is a specific event within a show or competition. At a horse judging contest, participants judge from six to twelve classes. Each class is worth a possible fifty points and consists of four horses for evaluation. Classes are categorized as either halter or performance. Halter classes are judged on a horse's conformation, while performance classes are judged on the performance of a horse-exhibitor team using specific class criteria. The most common performance classes are Western Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Western Horsemanship, Hunt Seat Equitation, Western Riding and Reining. The criteria for these classes are discussed briefly in chapter 2. Some other possible but less common classes which are not introduced in this manual are Showmanship at Halter, Trail, Calf Roping and Pleasure Driving.

Oral Reasons

Oral reasons provide competitors an opportunity to defend their class ranking or placing to an official in the form of a short speech. At most competitions, participants present between one and four sets of reasons. Reasons, like classes, have a maximum score of fifty points. Contestants have ample time to prepare their reasons, but only two minutes to present them to an official. Note taking, preparation and presentation of oral reasons are outlined in chapter 3.

Reflection Questions & Activities

1. As a 4-H horse project participant, why do you think it is important to know the fundamentals of equine evaluation?
2. Aside from horse related skills, what skills do you think you can gain from participating in horse judging? Name some situations in which you might use these skills.

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Coaching the Team

Targeting Life Skills, Utilizing Experiential Learning Tools and Coaching Tips for Success

Every coach has a different set of knowledge and experiences and thus something unique to offer. Whether you are an expert or a beginner coach learning with your team, here is some information to help guide you through the process.

Targeting Life Skills

In addition to teaching valuable equine evaluation skills, this manual was designed to help coaches and leaders implement the Targeting Life Skills model. Clearly rooted in the 4-H program, the Targeting Life Skills model derives and categorizes life skills according to the 4-H pledge. It identifies thirty five generic life skills (for example: communication, goal setting, decision making, self-esteem, teamwork) which are assigned to four quadrants designated by the four H's in 4-H: head, heart, hands and health. Program leaders and coaches are encouraged to link the topic, subject and content to life skill objectives. For each chapter of this manual, specific life skills were targeted as listed below.



- **Conformation** critical thinking, decision making
- **Movement** critical thinking, decision making
- **Reasons** communication, planning/organizing
- **Practice** cooperation, leadership, self-motivation, teamwork

As you coach your judging students, keep in mind the bigger picture of what they are learning beyond the obvious horse related skills. The Targeting

COACHING THE TEAM

Life Skills philosophy asserts that subject matter and life skills together form the basis of planning experiential learning opportunities. The life skill targeted influences the teaching method utilized and therefore allows learners to apply the life skill while learning content. See the life skills targeted page in the appendixes for a more detailed list of what life skills were targeted in the reflection questions and activities in this manual.

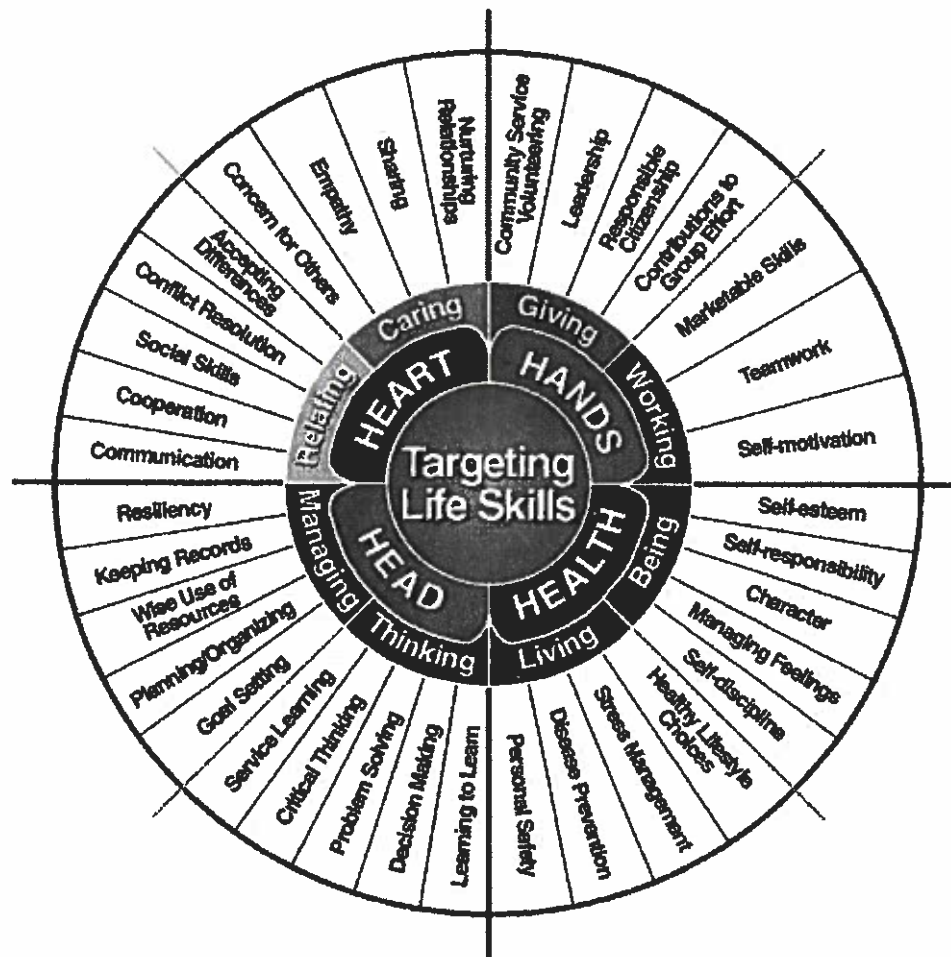


FIGURE 1: THE TARGETING LIFE SKILLS MODEL (Hendricks, 2006)

Experiential Learning

The educational philosophy of 4-H is expressed in its motto *learn by doing*. The experiential learning model provides an excellent tool for planning and implementing experiential learning activities for your horse judging students. The five steps of the model are *experience, share, process, generalize* and *apply*. Activities may combine steps of the model but the three general stages of *do, reflect* and *apply* should always be present.

4-H Motto

Learn by Doing

COACHING THE TEAM

- **DO** actual experience or activity
- **REFLECT** by questioning, sharing and processing
- **APPLY** what was learned in practice and real-life situations

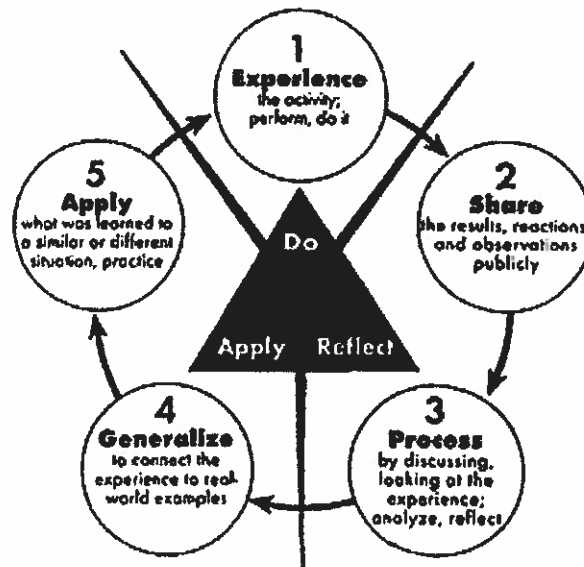


FIGURE 2: THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL

(Jones & Pfeiffer as cited in National 4-H Cooperative Curriculum System, 2003)

Coaching Tips

Keep your priorities straight.

Although the objective of any team at a competition is to win, keep in perspective the 4-H mission and vision. Most of your team members will not become professional judges. The more important long-term benefit of competitive horse judging is the development of life skills, including character. Whatever decisions you make regarding your team, make sure they are aligned with the values of the 4-H program.

Talk the Talk. Your team members will mimic what you say. Always use the appropriate terms when describing an animal. Typically, reasons are the biggest challenge for new judges. Teach reasons and proper reasons terminology from day one.

Stress the Big Picture. Most individuals go through a phase of over-analyzing the horses. Although recognizing minor advantages and faults is an important skill for

COACHING THE TEAM

advanced judges, always keep your team focused on the big picture. *The main things are the plain things*, focus on the main judging criteria and clear differences in the class.

Tell Them Why. Research in the field of educational psychology suggests that students retain information better when they can relate it to something that they know rather than just memorizing it. Explain why certain features are important to a class. Why is it important for a horse to have a sloping shoulder or a short back? Why does a hunter horse need a long stride? Why should a western pleasure horse be soft and smooth?

Show Them, Too. In addition to explanations, use as many visual tools as possible. Practicing with live classes is a luxury and not usually available to teams for every practice. Use photographs, videos and even objects from around the house. How will a student remember what sickle-hocked is if they have never seen a sickle? Bring one to a practice and they'll probably never forget! Will your team members with no exposure to livestock know what calf-kneed or cow-hocked means? Show them!

Confidence is Key. Confidence is the most important attribute of a successful horse judge. They must have confidence in their decision making when evaluating a class and confidence in their placing when presenting reasons to the judge. It is the coach's job to balance confidence and constructive criticism. You must be able to constructively criticize team members in order for them to learn from their mistakes, but never at the expense of their self-confidence.

Practice Like the Real Thing. Don't ever take less than 100% from your team, even at practice. Part of preparing for a contest is practicing like a contest. Put judges in a reasons order. Sometimes reasons rooms are far from soundproof at competitions. So introduce distractions like the television or another judge giving reasons as students advance in their skills. Bring in guest reasons takers, so your team is accustomed to giving reasons to a number of people. Along with your critiques, give judges a score on their reasons. Look up reasons scoring guidelines on the National Horse Judging Team Coaches Association (NHJTCA) website in the Official Handbook section.

Stress Remembering, Not Memorizing. Help team members build skills to remember the horses in the class, not memorize their reasons word for word. Quiz students periodically on horse colors, markings and descriptions so they begin to visualize the classes. Encourage the use outlines and key words instead of writing out reasons word for word.

Know What to Expect. If you have never taken a team to a specific contest before, get as much information as you can ahead of time. Make sure you read the rules and all contest information well in advance. Go over the list of possible classes and make sure your team members have been exposed to them. If you know some other teams who have been to the contest in the past, ask about what classes are common. Many contest officials will use similar classes from year to year.

Common Classes

Halter, Western Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Western Horsemanship, Hunt Seat Equitation, Western Riding and Reining

There are a number of possible show events or classes that contest managers choose from when organizing a horse judging event. Each class has a unique set of judging criteria. There are two basic categories: halter and performance classes.

TIP:

When you are first beginning, it can be difficult to distinguish between the different classes. Think about the meaning of the class name. This usually is a good place to start.

Halter

The Big Picture: Balance, Muscling, Structural Correctness, Breed & Sex Characteristics. Halter classes offer judges the opportunity to evaluate horses based on their conformation. Conformation is the build of the animal including bone structure, muscling and other body tissue. Horses are led into the arena where judges are given a profile, front and hind view. Finally, horses are tracked, or walked and trotted. The name of the halter class will describe the group of horses, for example Yearling Fillies, Quarter Horse Geldings, Arabian Mares.



Performance

Western performance classes are shown using Western tack and attire. In Western classes the gaits are referred to as the walk, jog and lope. English performance classes are shown in English tack and attire. In English classes the gaits are referred to as the walk, trot and canter. Typically when judging performance classes at a contest, all tack and attire is considered legal.

Western Pleasure

The Big Picture: Broke & Quiet, Soft & Smooth, Functionally Correct, Consistency & Quality. During the Western Pleasure class contestants ride simultaneously around the show arena. They are asked to walk, jog and lope in both directions. At the conclusion of the class, horses are lined-up and asked to individually back. Horses are reviewed on manners, quality of movement and ability to perform the required gaits, transitions and maneuvers of the class.



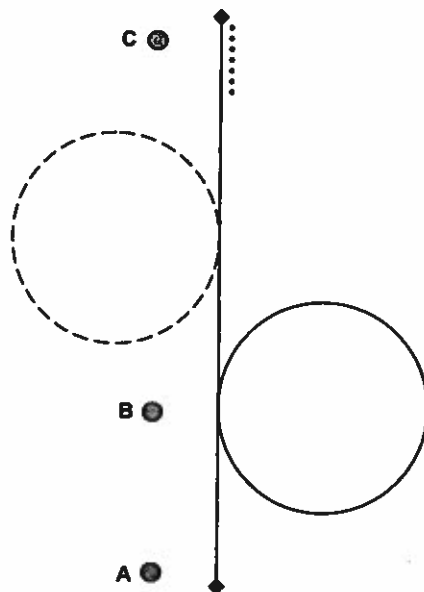
Hunter Under Saddle

The Big Picture: Broke & Quiet, Soft & Smooth, Functionally Correct, Consistency & Suitability. Hunter Under Saddle is an English performance class in which contestants ride simultaneously around the show arena at a walk, trot and canter. At the conclusion of the class, horses are lined-up and asked to individually back. Much like Western Pleasure, this class evaluates the horse's manners, quality of movement and ability to perform the required gaits, transitions and maneuvers of the class. Above all, Hunters Under Saddle must be broke and obedient to the rider. Credit is given to the horse that has a long, purposeful hunter stride.



Western Horsemanship & Hunt Seat Equitation

The Big Picture: Pattern Accuracy, Rider Positioning, Control & Finesse. As the names imply, these classes are designed to test riding skill. Western Horsemanship is a Western class and Hunt Seat Equitation is an English riding discipline. Contestants ride a pattern prescribed by the judge or contest officials one at a time and then work on the rail simultaneously. Credit is given to the rider who completes an accurate pattern, maintains correct positioning and controls the horse. These classes are placed on 75% pattern work and 25% rail work. It is recommended that judges use the rail work to break ties. There is an established scoring system for Western Horsemanship and Hunt Seat Equitation that is useful as judging skills advance.



1. Lope (canter) right lead from **A** to **B**.
2. At **B** lope (canter) circle to the right.
3. Between **B** and **C** jog (trot) a circle to the left.
4. Lope (canter) left lead to **C**.
5. At **C** stop and back.

FIGURE 3: SAMPLE WESTERN HORSEMANSHIP OR EQUITATION PATTERN

Western Riding

The Big Picture: Pattern Accuracy, Lead Changes, Manners, Movement. Western Riding is a pattern class used to judge the ability of the horse and rider team to execute a number of lead changes, pass over a log and transition between gaits. The judge or contest officials choose from a number of approved Western Riding patterns, each of which contains the same maneuvers. Contestants ride the pattern one at a time. Evaluation of this class is based on correctness of the pattern, lead changes at the lope, quality of movement and manners. There is a scoring system for Western Riding that is useful as judging skills advance.

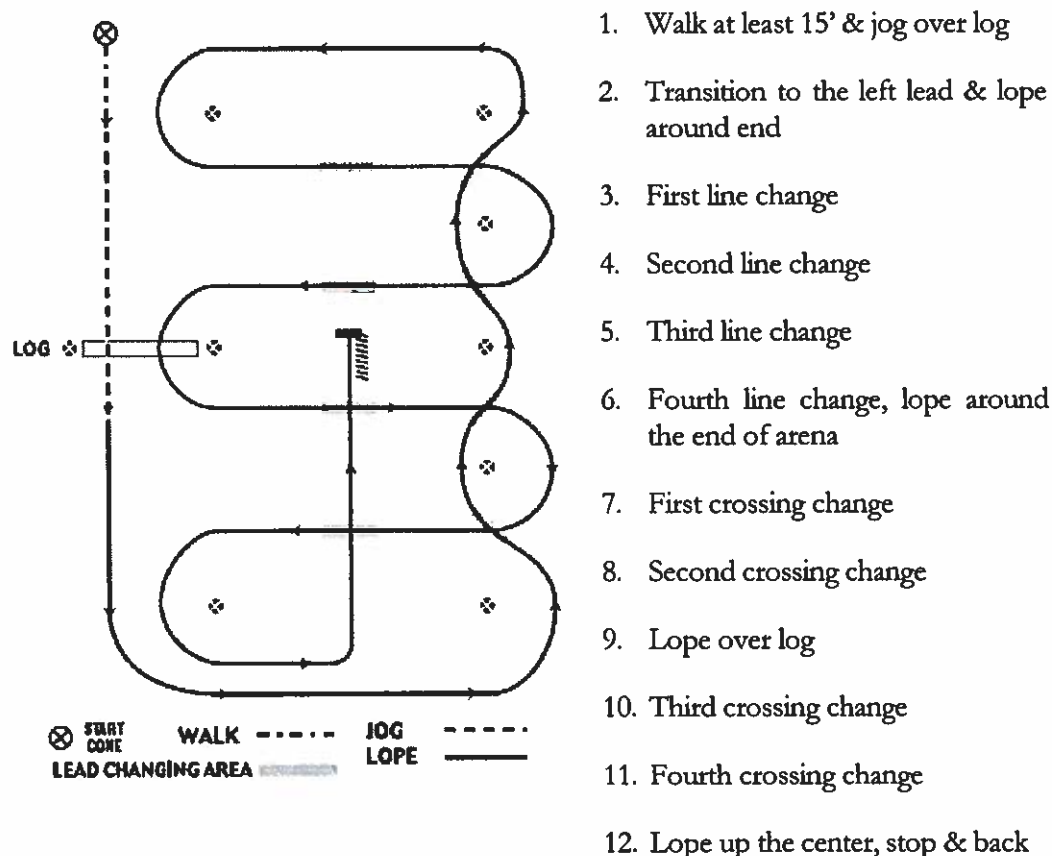
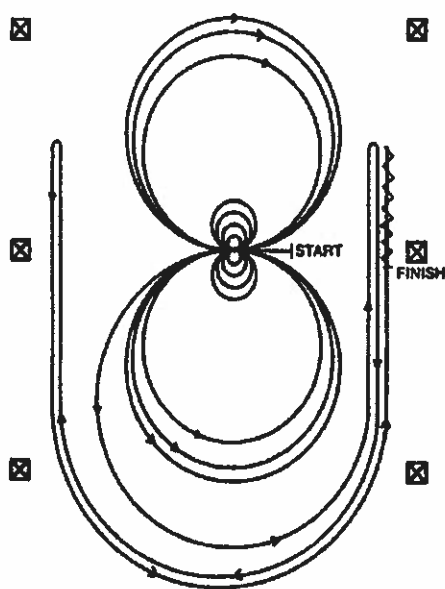


FIGURE 4: AQHA WESTERN RIDING
PATTERN I (AQHA, 2007)

Reining



The Big Picture: Pattern Accuracy, Control, Finesse, Authority. Reining is evaluated based on the ability of the horse to complete a pattern consisting of a series of advanced maneuvers including spins, stops, rollbacks, circles, figure eights and backing. Judges or contest officials choose from a number of approved Reining patterns, all of which include these maneuvers. Contestants ride the pattern one at a time. Credit is given for complete control in maneuvers as well as smoothness, finesse, disposition, speed and authority. There is a detailed scoring system helpful in placing Reining classes.



Horses may walk or trot to the center of the arena. Horses must walk or stop prior to starting pattern. Beginning at the center of the arena facing the left wall or fence.

Complete four spins to the right. Hesitate. Complete four spins to the left. Hesitate.

Beginning on the left lead, complete three circles to the left: the first two circles large and fast; the third circle small and slow. Change leads at the center of the arena.

Complete three circles to the right: the first two circles large and fast; the third circle small and slow. Change leads at the center of the arena.

Begin a large fast circle to the left but do not close this circle. Run up the right side of the arena past the center marker and do a right rollback at least twenty feet (six meters) from the wall or fence – no hesitation.

Continue back around previous circle but do not close this circle. Run up the left side of the arena past the center marker and do a left rollback at least twenty feet (six meters) from the wall or fence – no hesitation.

Continue back around previous circle but do not close this circle. Run up the right side of the arena past the center marker and do a sliding stop at least twenty feet (six meters) from the wall or fence. Back up at least ten feet (three meters). Hesitate to demonstrate completion of the pattern.

FIGURE 5: NRHA REINING PATTERN 6 (NRHA, 2007)

Reflection Questions & Activities

- 1.** In what type of class is a horse's conformation evaluated? Define conformation in your own words.
- 2.** Name some situations outside of competitive horse judging when it may be useful for you to know how to analyze a horse's conformation.
- 3.** Which two performance classes focus on evaluating manners and movement?
- 4.** Outside of the show arena, why do you think a well-mannered horse is important?

Oral Reasons

Note Taking, Preparing and Presenting Oral Reasons

Oral reasons give you the opportunity to present your placings to an official judge and defend them in the form of short speech. Many judges are intimidated by reasons, but there is no reason to be! As a beginner, the first step to performing well in reasons is taking good notes. There are many effective formats for note taking and you may develop your own format as you become more experienced. Here are some general tips to make sure your notes are helpful when it is time to compile your reasons.

Note Taking

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING:

- In halter classes, place the class first and then fill in your notes.
- In performance classes, try to watch the entire class and jot down short notes. You don't want to miss anything because you are too busy writing.
- Write down a short description of the horses to help jog your memory. (For example: Palomino, Bay with hind socks, Dark Grey)
- Take the most time on notes for your top horse and close pairs.
- List notes in the order of importance. Start with the big picture variables and support your assertions with relevant details.

	<i>Quarter Horse Geldings</i>	<i>1-2-3-4</i>
<i>Open:</i>	<i>1 dominated class with balance & style</i>	
<i>1/2</i>	<i>(Bay) Balanced</i>	
	<i>Long, lean neck, ties in high</i>	
	<i>Long, sloping shoulder, prominent withers</i>	
	<i>Short back & long underline</i>	
	<i>Breed character: bright eye, chiseled, prominent jaw</i>	
	<i>Grant 2: Stood straighter (1 toed out)</i>	
<i>2/3</i>	<i>(Palomino) Heavily muscled, stouter made</i>	
	<i>Wide chest floor, V-ed up, more forearm</i>	
	<i>Powerful shoulder, more dimension to hip</i>	
	<i>Wide stifle to stifle & in/out gaskin</i>	
	<i>Stood squarely: straighter legs fore & hind</i>	
	<i>Grant 3: Softer while tracking</i>	
<i>3/4</i>	<i>(Grey) Stylish, Eye Appealing</i>	
	<i>Neck: longer, leaner, arching, cleaner throat</i>	
	<i>Back: stronger with longer underline</i>	
	<i>Stood correct, tracked fluid, coordinated</i>	
	<i>Grant 4: Taller framed</i>	
<i>4</i>	<i>(Bay with white socks) Narrow, shallow</i>	
	<i>Long, weak back</i>	
	<i>Straight shoulder & pastern</i>	
	<i>Tracked short, rough</i>	

FIGURE 6: SAMPLE NOTES FOR REASONS CLASS

Preparing & Presenting Oral Reasons

When you are ready to prepare and present your reasons, there are four key things to remember. They are to *tell the truth*, to *deliver with confidence*, to *compare, concede and criticize* and to *get organized*.

Tell the Truth. It is crucial that reasons accurately describe the designated class. Students may be tempted to memorize a few sets of reasons and make every class fit into them. This doesn't work! Experienced reasons takers see through "canned" sets of reasons. Tell the truth about what you noticed in THAT CLASS, THAT DAY!

ORAL REASONS

Deliver with Confidence. Dress professionally, so you can feel good about your appearance. Smile, be friendly and respectful as you enter the reasons room. Wait for the reasons taker to acknowledge you before you begin. Speak with authority in a voice slightly louder than a normal conversational voice. No need to shout, your reasons taker should only be 4-5 steps away! Speak with animation and use inflection on key words. Speak at a reasonable pace, using natural pauses at commas, periods and paragraph breaks. Keep eye contact with the reasons taker. Stand up straight and stand still with your hands relaxed at your sides. In terms of your reasons score, it is generally better to pause or leave something out than to look at your notes. It is strongly recommended that you DO NOT take your notes into the reasons room with you.

Compare, Concede, Criticize. The most important words to use when formatting reasons are comparative terms. Most comparative terms end in -er. Stronger, cleaner, heavier, etc. Remember that with each pair in your reasons you are comparing one horse to another, not just describing a single horse. Even though you may prefer one horse over another, there may be something about the lower placed horse that is worth mentioning in your reasons. This is called a grant. You are conceding that, although 1 is better than 2 overall, 2 may have this single superior quality. Use grants when possible, but if there isn't one, that is okay. Criticize as a last resort. Criticisms are used when you can't describe a problem with comparisons and concessions.

Get Organized. You can use small variations in the reasons format to add individual style. However, always deliver your reasons within the accepted organizational framework, using proper opening and closing statements as well as three pairs. The opening statement expresses the most obvious or important distinction of the class. Perhaps the top horse was exceptional, or maybe all four horses were of superior quality. There might have been a specific factor that helped you to decide the placing. These are the kinds of things you mention in an opening statement. Next, compare your first and second placed horses in the top pair. In your middle pair, compare your second and third placed horses and in your bottom pair, compare your third and fourth placed horses. Notice the organizational structure of the sample set of oral reasons on the next page. How can you revise these reasons to suit your own style, keeping in mind that you must always say the placing, opening statement and discuss all three pairs?



Anatomy of Oral Reasons

Opening Statement	{ Ma'am, Opening with the individual who dominated the class in terms of balance and style, I placed this class of Quarter Horse Geldings 1-2-3 and 4.	
Top Pair	{ In my initial pair, it is 1 over 2. One showed more balance and symmetry and more closely typified the ideal Quarter Horse. One exhibited a trimmer throatlatch and longer, leaner neck that tied in higher to a longer, more sloping shoulder. Furthermore, 1 had more prominent withers which extended further into a shorter, stronger back. This, coupled with a deeper barrel, contributed to a more desirable top to underline ratio. One also showed a more breed character as evidenced by a brighter eye, more prominent jaw and more finely chiseled muzzle. I do concede that 2 stood straighter when viewed from the front, as 1 was slightly toed-out.	Compare Concede (Grant)
Middle Pair	{ So, in my intermediate pair, it is 2 over 3. Two was a stouter made, wider-based, more powerfully built gelding who showed more tone and power of muscling from end to end. When viewed from the front, 2 was wider through the chest floor, more prominently V-ed and showed a greater circumference of forearm muscling. At the profile, 2 was more powerfully muscled through the shoulder, showed more strength from withers to loin and more dimension to the hip with a longer, flatter croup. When viewed from behind, 2 showed more width and depth, being wider from stifle to stifle and showing more bulge to the inner and outer gaskin. Two also stood more squarely on a more rugged, durable frame, exhibiting a greater circumference of bone and being straighter from knee to toe and from hock to heel. I do appreciate that 3 moved with greater softness of stride.	Compare Concede (Grant)
Bottom Pair	{ So, in my final pair, it is 3 over 4. Three was a more stylish, eye appealing, higher quality gelding. Three was more ideal at the profile, with a longer, more gracefully arched neck and a shorter, stronger back in relation to a longer, more tapering underline. Three was also a more athletic gelding that showed greater muscle expression, being fuller through the forearm and shoulder and more uniformly muscled in the hip, stifle and gaskin. Furthermore, 3 stood more structurally correct and moved with a more fluid, coordinated stride while tracking. I admit that 4 was a taller framed gelding. Even so, I conclude the class with 4 today as he was a narrow-based, shallow-bodied, weak backed individual, lacking the balance and substance to compete in this class today. Four was straight in the shoulder and pastern and despite his larger frame, moved with the shortest, roughest stride in the class.	Compare Criticize
Closing Statement	{ So for these reasons, ma'am, I placed this class of Quarter Horse Geldings 1-2-3-4. Thank you.	

Pairs, Grants and Transitions

Referring to Pairs

TOP	Primary	BOTTOM
First	MIDDLE	Closing
Foremost	Central	Concluding
Initial	Intermediate	Ending
Leading	Middle	Final
Opening	Second	Finishing
Preliminary	Transitional	Last

Introducing Pairs

Advancing to the	Proceeding to
After closely analyzing	In regards to
Coming to the	TOP
Concerning the	1 combined to a higher degree
Continuing to	Being the most powerfully muscled and nicest balanced, it is
Drawing your attention to	3 over 4 in the leading pair
Focusing your attention on	Prioritizing manners over
In analyzing the	movement in the foremost pair, it is 4 over 2
In discussing	MIDDLE
In justifying the	In the intermediate pair,
In reference to	With emphasis on functional correctness and way-of-going, it is
Moving to	1 over 3 in the transitional pair
BOTTOM	Finally, in the closing pair
In the final and concluding pair	In closing, I preferred

ORAL REASONS

Transitional Terms

Accompanying	Comparatively	In contrast
Accordingly	Continuing	It was also apparent
Additionally	Despite this	Moreover
Also	Even so	Nonetheless
As well	Furthermore	Over and above
Aside from this	However	Plus
Besides this,	However, at the same time	Still
Beyond this	In addition	Supplementing

Grants

I accept	I certainly credit	I noticed and admit
I acknowledge	I concede	Indeed
I admit	I do not disregard the fact	I realize
I agree	I do regard	I recognize
I allow	I do respect	Yes, I
I am aware		
I am conscious of	I give consideration to	
I appreciate the fact	I grant	

Reflection Questions & Activities

- 1.** What real-life skills do you learn when you practice oral reasons? Name some situations outside of horse judging in which you may use your reasons skills.
- 2.** Find four of the same object around your house (writing utensils, cups/mugs/glasses, books, etc.) but make sure they are not exactly the same (different colors, sizes, features). Rank your “class” of objects and write a set of reasons based on this ranking. Make sure that you use the proper organizational structure and comparative terms.

Conformation & Halter

Evaluating Conformation and Judging Halter Classes

Each horse breed association has its own image of what is ideal. The external features chart on page 19 is fashioned from a picture of the ideal Quarter Horse. For all breeds balance and structure are essential. In stock breeds like the Quarter or Paint Horse, muscling may take precedent over breed and sex characteristics. Conversely when judging Arabians or Morgans, breed and sex character may be prioritized over volume of muscle. Even with these differences in the ideal, four key categories are central to judging halter. They are *balance, muscling, structural correctness* and *breed and sex characteristics*. When evaluating horses at halter, we compare them to the breed standard, thus the first placed horse should most closely typify the breed ideal. Each feature that we look for in an ideal relates back to the function and beauty of the horse.

CONFORMATION

The build of the horse including bone structure, muscling and other body tissue.

Judging Halter

- **BALANCE:** The overall appearance of the horse. All parts of the body are in correct proportion resulting in a pleasing, balanced appearance.
- **MUSCLING:** Quantity and definition of muscle tissue.
- **STRUCTURAL CORRECTNESS:** Straightness and correctness of limbs.
- **BREED & SEX CHARACTERISTICS:** Refined, quality features that associated with specific breeds or sex..

CONFORMATION & HALTER

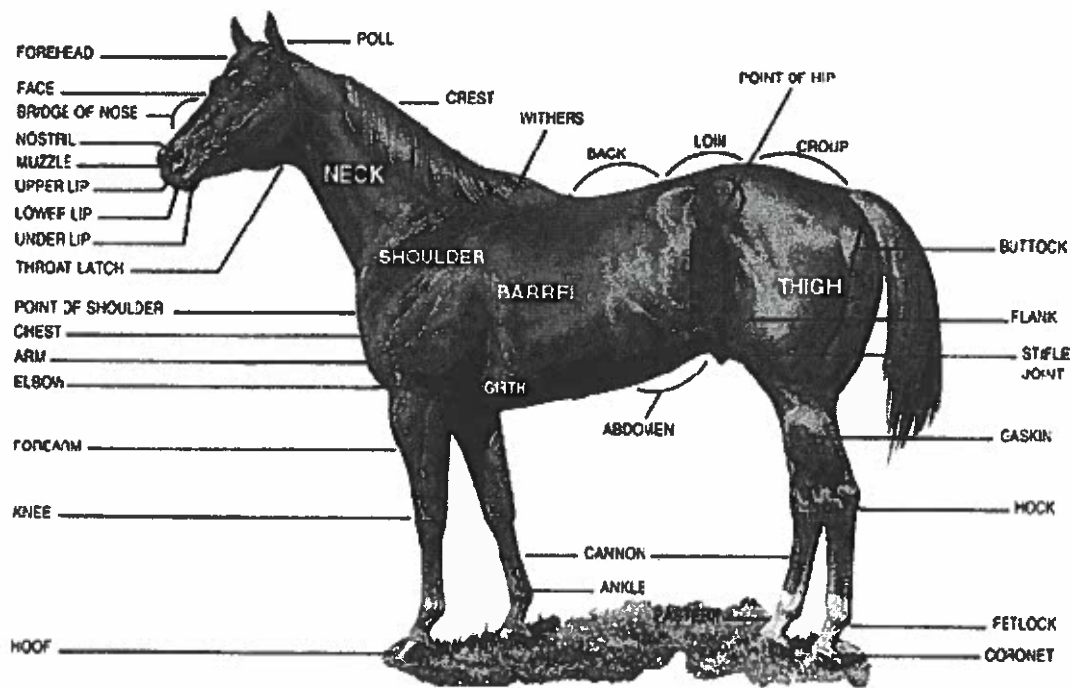


FIGURE 7: THE AMERICAN QUARTER HORSE – EXTERNAL FEATURES

(Reprinted with permission from the American Quarter Horse Association)

Balance. Balance is the most important judging criteria when evaluating conformation and perhaps the most difficult to see. Generally, a balanced horse should be in correct proportion and show a smoother blend of all body parts. From the poll to the withers, the topline of the neck should be approximately twice as long as the bottom. Conversely, the back should be shorter than the underline of the body from heart girth to flank. Both of these proportions are governed by the angle of the shoulder. A straight, steep shoulder does not allow for favorable proportions of the neck and body. A longer, more gently sloping shoulder is desirable. The shoulder and the pastern serve as shock absorbers. An individual with a sloping shoulder and pastern is more likely to be softer and smoother to ride, while a straight, steep shouldered and pasterned horse is apt to ride like a pogo stick. A more correctly angled shoulder will also allow for a longer, more efficient stride. The hindquarters of the balanced individual will appear square from the profile, showing length in proportion to the neck and back. A more basic way to evaluate balance is to break the topline into three parts: neck, back and hip. They should be nearly equal. Balance can also be evaluated by breaking the body into three parts: from the point of the shoulder to the barrel, the barrel to the point of hip and point of hip to end of buttocks.

CONFORMATION & HALTER

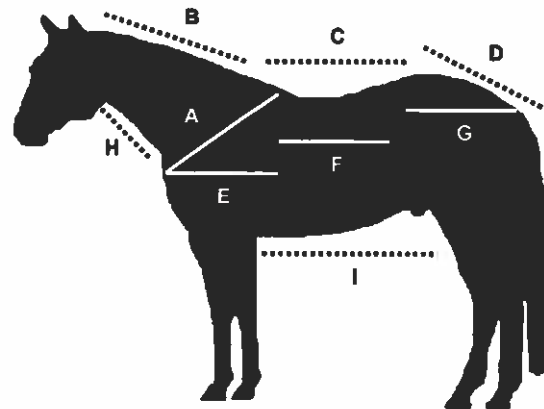


FIGURE 8: POINTS OF BALANCE AND PROPORTION

BALANCE AND PROPORTION:

- **A** Angle of the Shoulder, approximately 45°
- **B > H** Top of neck approximately two times length of bottom
- **C < I** Length of back shorter than length of underline
- **B = C = D** Approximately equal length of Neck, Back and Hip
- **E = F = G** Body Proportion

Muscling. Muscling is an important quality in halter horses, particularly in stock-type breeds like the Quarter Horse, Paint Horse and Appaloosa. At the profile, muscle quantity and definition is most visible in the shoulder, loin and hip. From the front, the chest should show a prominent inverted V and greater circumference of forearm muscling. From the rear, an individual should stand wider from stifle to stifle. The shape of the hip from behind should be more like an orange than an apple. Down the leg you should observe more bulge to the inner and outer gaskin area. In addition to quantity and definition, consider muscle quality. Long, athletic muscle tissue is preferred to short, bunched muscling.

Structural Correctness. Structural correctness refers to the straightness and correctness of a horse's limbs. There are dozens of possible structural deviations. This resource will only go over a few of the most common structural issues. Generally speaking, a horse should appear straight in the legs when viewed from the front or back. Common defects observable from the front view are being *toed-in* or *toed-out*. From the hind view, if the hocks come together, the horse is *cow-hocked*. The opposite extreme is a horse that is *bow-legged*. From the profile view, if the knees are slightly bent over the cannon, it is called *over-in-the-knees*. Oppositely, if the cannon bone angles out in front of the knee, it is called *calf-kneed*. If the angle to the hock is decreased, so the horse stands under from the hock down, it is called *sickle-hocked*. Conversely, if there is not enough angle to the hock, it is called *post-legged*. Structural deviations may become more apparent when the animals are tracked. They should track straight and true. A horse that is toed-out may *wing-in* while tracking. A horse that is toed-in will *wing-out* or *paddle-out* while tracking.

Breed and Sex Characteristics. Breed and sex characteristics refer to breed or sex specific features that should be present. They are most easily and most often observed in the head and neck. Mares should show refinement and femininity. Stallions and geldings should also have finely chiseled features, but should be more masculine, with a more prominent jaw, etc. Geldings do not exhibit as masculine of an appearance as stallions.

Form to Function

The table below describes what to look for in specific features and why they are considered important.

Feature	Description of Ideal	Why?
Head	Refined, Proportional, Sculptured	Beauty, Quality
Eye	Wider from eye to eye Large, Quiet, Soft	Greater arc of vision Quiet, docile disposition
Throatlatch	Trim, Clean, Refined	Greater flexion at poll
Neck	Long, Lean, Clean 2 to 1 top to underline ratio	Increased flexibility Balanced appearance
Shoulder	Long, Sloping	Greater length of stride Smoother gait
Withers	Prominent, Sharp	Proper fitting of saddle
Back	Short, in relation to a longer underline	Strength of back Balanced appearance
Barrel	Spring of rib, deep heart girth	Greater capacity
Hindquarters	Fuller, Longer, More powerful	Collected movement Greater ability to drive
Legs	Straighter from front or behind	Freer movement More structurally sound

Halter Reasons Terms

The list below provides a number of acceptable reasons terms for halter classes. Can you think of any more to add?

Opening Statements

Combined size, scale and structure to the highest degree...

Dominated the class in terms of...

Due to his/her advantage in muscling and quality...

Exhibited the best combination of...

Greater presence and style, exhibiting...

More athletic in appearance, being...

More closely typifies the ideal, being...

More representative of the ideal, as he...

More rugged and durable framed individual...

Balance

Broke more easily into three parts of neck, back and hip

Deeper barreled

Exhibited a more correctly angled shoulder, was more prominent in the withers, thus allowing for a shorter, stronger back in relation to a longer underline

Exhibited more balance with all body parts blending smoothly and symmetrically

Longer, more sloping, more angular shoulder

More powerful topline

More symmetrical, proportional, balanced

Nicer turn of the croup

Shorter and stronger over the top in comparison to a longer, more tapering underline

Showed greater capacity in the heart girth

Showed more balance and symmetry

Muscling

Exhibited more tone and power of muscling from end to end

Greater circumference of forearm muscle

More developed, fuller in his/her...

More massively, powerfully muscled

More prominently, deeper V-ed

More vast and bulging from the inside to the outside of the gaskin

Showed greater definition and development of muscle in his/her...

CONFORMATION & HALTER

Showed more dimension and depth of muscle tissue

Showed more expression of muscle throughout

Spread a greater volume of muscling over a larger frame

Stood wider, showing greater dimension to the chest

Wider or stronger from stifle to stifle

Structural Correctness

Cleaner about the knees and hocks with a finer and flatter cannon bone

More correctly angled hock

More substance of bone or heavier, denser bone

Stood on a straighter column of bone

Stood straighter and more structurally sound

Stood wider both fore and aft, with all fours set squarely beneath him/her

Straighter from knee to toe and hock to heel

Straighter, cleaner or more correct

Breed & Sex Characteristics

Larger, brighter, kinder, more expressive eye

Longer, leaner or cleaner neck

More elegant and refined head and neck

More gracefully arched neck rising out of a more sloping shoulder

More masculine/feminine in his/her features, being...

More prominent through the jaw

More sharply chiseled, more refined, more sculptured about the head and neck

More stylish showing greater quality

Tighter, cleaner, leaner or thinner through the throatlatch

Way of Going (Tracking)

Extended further from the shoulder thus exhibiting a longer, freer stride

Freer moving or more fluid

Greater freedom of movement

More collected stride showing more forward impulsion

Moved out with a longer stride showing more freedom of movement

Moved with greater athleticism, showing more drive off the hocks

Moves out straighter and more correct at the walk / jog

Straighter or truer stride

Was a wider traveling individual

Reflection Questions & Activities

1. Understanding form to function and using reasons terms. Fill in the table below according to the example.

Feature	Positive Reasons Term	Function
Eyes	wider from eye to eye	greater arc of vision
Head		
Throatlatch		
Neck		
Shoulder		
Withers		
Back		
Barrel		
Hindquarters		
Legs		

Movement & Performance

Evaluating Movement, Judging Western Pleasure and Hunter Under Saddle

The Western riding that we see today in show arenas originated with cowboys in the Western United States. Imagine being in the saddle all day, every day. It would be important to have a horse with a willing, pleasant attitude that gave a smooth and comfortable ride. This is the basis for the characteristics that we look for in a Western Pleasure horse. Pleasure horses are ridden on a reasonably loose rein, should maintain a near level topline and a headset near vertical. Gaits in the Western Pleasure class are referred to as the walk, jog and lope.

The history of the hunter horse is rooted in fox hunting. The hunter must be able to follow the hounds chasing the fox. In addition to being willing, this horse must be able to cover ground with an efficient stride. It naturally follows that when we judge hunter horses today, we look for a horse that is more suited to purpose, with a longer, more sweeping stride. This is the background for how we evaluate the Hunter Under Saddle class. Hunter horses should be ridden so that the rein is reasonably tight and the rider has light contact with the horse's mouth. Hunter horses should also perform with a level topline and a headset near vertical. The gaits in the Hunter Under Saddle class are referred to as the walk, trot and canter.

Do you remember the big picture criteria for judging Western Pleasure and Hunter Under Saddle? Western Pleasure horses should be *broke and quiet, soft and smooth, functionally correct and consistent, quality movers*. Hunter Under Saddle horses should be *broke and quiet, soft and smooth, functionally correct and quality, suitable movers*. Above all else, these horses must be broke and quiet or well-mannered. A well-mannered horse is calm and relaxed. Additionally the broke and quiet individual is willing, obedient and responds readily to the rider's aids and cues. This is visible with smooth upward and downward transitions as well as reversing and backing easily. A well-mannered horse performs with a positive expression without pinning the ears or wringing the tail. This must be accomplished without restraint or intimidation from

Manners over

Movement

the rider. Therefore, horses that move with their head tucked behind the vertical or require constant checking by the rider should be penalized.

The other criteria in Western Pleasure and Hunter Under Saddle are related to quality of movement. This concept can be elusive to define and difficult to see. The five C's help us to describe quality movement. Quality movers are *correct*, *cadenced*, *consistent*, *collected* and show a high degree of *complexity* or difficulty.

Evaluating Movement

Correct. Correctness is the most important feature of a quality moving horse. A horse that is functionally correct maintains the specified gait without breaking. At the canter or lope, the functionally correct individual is on the correct lead. Finally, the correct horse exhibits a true walk, jog or trot and lope or canter. The table below summarizes what constitutes a correct gait.

Gait	Number of Beats	Description of Ideal
Walk	Four beats Each hoof hits the ground independently	Natural, flat-footed, relaxed, straight, true, maintains forward motion without intimidation
Jog (Western) Trot (English)	Two beats with diagonals hitting the ground simultaneously	Cadenced, distinct, precise, ground-covering, square, balanced In English classes the rider will <i>post</i> , or rise and fall with the two beats of the trot. The rider should <i>rise and fall with the leg on the wall</i> (horse's outside foreleg) when traveling in a circle or on the rail. This is called being on the correct diagonal.
Lope (Western) Canter (English)	Three beats starting with the rear drive leg, then the other hind leg with the opposite fore and finally the lead leg	Rhythmic, collected, natural, easy <i>Correct lead</i> – at the lope or canter the leg that extends farthest forward is called the lead. When traveling on the rail or in a circle to the left, the horse should be on the left lead and vice versa.

Cadenced. Cadence refers to the rhythm of the gait. A cadenced horse distinctly exhibits the correct number of beats each gait. Also, the cadenced individual shows balance of stride. The rhythm of the cadenced horse is consistent throughout the class.

MOVEMENT & PERFORMANCE

At the jog or trot the less cadenced individual may tend to shuffle or jog in the front and walk in back. Likewise, at the lope or canter, the less cadenced individual may exhibit an incorrect four-beat gait.

Consistent. A consistent performer is steady throughout the class, showing a constant and reasonable pace at all gaits. A consistent mover transitions between the gaits without any dramatic change in speed or frame.

Collected. A collected mover uses impulsion from the hindquarters to drive forward. A collected mover will round the back and engage the hip and hind leg, keeping the hocks underneath the body. Additionally, the collected mover is able to lift the shoulder and use less knee action. A less collected individual will appear hollow at the back and may drag the hocks behind. They may appear to be pulling from the front end rather than driving from the hindquarters.

Complexity. Complexity refers to the level of difficulty a performer achieves in his/her movement. A soft, smooth stride is preferable to a choppy, rough stride. The individual who extends forward from the shoulder allowing for less knee action (flatter knee) generally shows a more efficient, stylish stride. The animal performing with a higher, more bent knee expends more energy covering the same distance and may give a rougher ride. It is common to ask exhibitors to extend the jog or trot and occasionally the lope or canter (the extended canter is called a *hand gallop*). The extended stride should show visible lengthening and cover more ground, it should not just be an increase in speed. The extended stride should still be a balanced, rhythmic, flowing motion. An individual performing with a greater level of difficulty will be softer, smoother, flatter in the knee, more efficient in stride and show greater extension when called for.

Western Pleasure & Hunter Under Saddle Reasons Terms

The list below provides a number of acceptable reasons terms for Western Pleasure and Hunter Under Saddle classes. Can you think of any more to add?

Opening Statements

A bolder moving individual that showed more length of stride as well as more impulsion off the hocks (Hunter Under Saddle)

A more athletic individual who was more natural at all gaits, showing greater ability and a quieter more pleasant disposition

A more willing performer who slipped down the rail with more brilliance and style

A placeable top being the easiest, freest moving, most stylish horse in the class

Overwhelmed the class with style and an easy, quiet way of going

MOVEMENT & PERFORMANCE

Broke & Quiet

Backed straighter and faster

Gave a more pleasing ride, being a more broke and relaxed performer

More broke, consistent or relaxed horse

More desirable drape to the rein or longer, more trusting rein (Western Pleasure)

More prompt, smoother, faster transitions

More readily yielded to rider's commands

More responsive when asked to back

More willing, obedient, pleasant, agreeable or responsive worker

Performed in a more willing and positive manner

Quieter, calmer and more consistent performer

Showed more response to the rider, picking up leads more quickly and correctly going both ways

Took leads without hesitation

Was a steadier and nicer mannered performer

Soft & Smooth

Exhibited a softer hoof to ground contact which resulted in the appearance of a smoother, more pleasurable ride

Extended from the shoulder and stifle all the while presenting a softer, lighter stride

Hits the ground lighter and softer with each stride presenting a more stylish way of going

More supple at the jog

Remains the softest and freest through the shoulders, allowing for more reach for the forearm and a more natural head carriage

Traveled in a softer, more supple fashion

Was a lighter, softer traveling horse

Was softer and smoother at the jog, leading into a quieter and more cadenced lope

Was a lower, flatter, smoother moving horse

Functionally Correct

Had a more correct, distinct two beat gait at the jog/trot

Maintained a more level headset when asked to lope in both directions

More correctly maintained the gait commanded

More functionally correct, maintaining the proper lead in each direction

More timely in upward and downward transitions both ways of the arena

Picked up leads more quickly and correctly

MOVEMENT & PERFORMANCE

Walked out more naturally covering more ground and showing a more relaxed stride

Was cleaner in upward transitions

Was more functionally correct, as evidenced by maintaining the prescribed gaits throughout the class

Was more cadenced at the walk and jog/trot and exhibited a more precise three beat gait at the lope/canter

Quality, Consistency, Suitability

Drove more effectively from the hocks

Engaged hindquarters with greater drive and impulsion

Had a more stylish way of going, moving with more balance of stride

Longer, more ground covering, purposeful stride (Hunter Under Saddle)

Longer, more sweeping trot (Hunter Under Saddle)

Maintained a more consistent frame and speed at all gaits

More elegant, graceful in movement (Hunter Under Saddle)

More suited to purpose (Hunter Under Saddle)

Moved in a more collected way at a more ideal speed

Moved in a more rhythmic way, showing more brilliance and style

Rounds the back and drives the hocks further underneath the barrel at the lope

Showed more freedom of movement and drive from behind

Slipped across the ground staying lower and more level while showing greater reach of forearm at the walk, jog/trot and especially the lope/canter

Was a more stylish individual, showing greater extension from the shoulder thus allowing for a flatter knee and a more efficient, ground covering stride (Hunter Under Saddle)

When asked to extend the jog/trot or lope/canter moved out with a freer, flatter stride

Reflection Questions & Activities

1. Traditionally, why was a long stride an important attribute for a hunter horse?
2. Traditionally, why were manners and a soft, smooth stride important for a western horse?

Practice Makes Perfect

Independent and Team Practice Activities

PRACTICE TIP:

A set of reasons a day makes them easy to say!

Independent Practice Activities

1. Give reasons to yourself in the mirror.
2. Present a set of reasons to a family member, friend, 4-H leader or coach.
3. Videotape yourself giving reasons and then watch it back.
4. Go to a local horse show and do your best to pick the winners.
5. Practice giving reasons with the TV or radio on in the background so you can learn to overcome distractions.
6. Use the External Features Worksheet in the appendix to quiz yourself on the parts of the horse.
7. Use the External Features Worksheet in the appendix to write down halter reasons terms that correspond to specific parts.
8. After #7 note why those reasons are important. For example, if you wrote down "longer, more sloping shoulder" as your reasons term for shoulder, you might now add "so the horse can extend, with a longer more efficient stride and also provide a smoother ride."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

9. Find a profile picture of a horse in a book, magazine or on the internet. Then from nose to tail, describe the positive attributes of the horse using proper reasons terms.
10. Find two profile pictures of horses and give a set of reasons on the pair.

Team Practice Activities

1. Give reasons to each other.
2. Play the reasons game. Have one teammate begin a set of reasons by stating the class, placing and opening statement. The person sitting to their left discusses the top pair using appropriate terminology. Continue around the circle until the reasons are complete. This is a way for the team to share terms, think on their feet, practice out loud and re-iterate the organizational structure of a set of reasons.
3. Use a thesaurus and dictionary to look up different words to use in reasons terms. Discuss all new terms with your coach before using them.
4. Brainstorm reasons terms to use for specific classes then specific class criteria (for example, Halter class – balance, muscling, etc.)
5. Go to a local horse show, choose two horses in a class and give a set of reasons comparing the pair to a teammate or your coach.
6. Try #5 without taking any notes, just by visualizing the horses.
7. Quiz each other on the “Big Picture” attributes of each class. What are the most important attributes of a Halter horse? Hunter Under Saddle horse?
8. Watch a horse judging video, take notes and discuss it afterwards.
9. Search the internet for horse judging terms. Write down your favorites and share them with your teammates. Make sure to discuss all new terms with your coach before using them.
10. With a teammate, choose a class and give a judging and reasons demonstration to your 4-H club at a meeting.



Contest Day

What to Expect at a Competition

Each horse judging competition is run differently, but there are many similarities, so here are some general guidelines on what to expect. According to the National Horse Judging Team Coaches' Association rules are communicated in advance of the competition to inform coaches of the contest and help a team or individual determine if they are eligible to attend. Contest rules should include information regarding eligibility, classes, method of conduct, contest schedule, determination of rankings and an entry form. Make sure you are acquainted with the rules of the specific contest you are attending.

ELIGIBILITY

- Make sure you meet the age and membership requirements to participate in the contest and the division you plan to enter.
- Make sure you have the correct number of team members (typically 3 or 4).
- If you plan to judge as an individual, make sure the contest allows individual entries.

METHOD OF CONDUCT

- Do not wear any clothing that will identify you personally or your team.
- Absolutely no talking during the contest – this can lead to dismissal from the competition. If you have questions, ask a contest official or your group leader.
- Horse judging books, materials, manuals, etc. are typically not permitted. (Some contests may allow the use of specified rulebooks.)
- Do not take cell phones, pagers or other electronics into the contest.

CONTEST DAY

- Fill out your placing cards completely, legibly, double check them and turn them in to the appropriate person at the specified time. Make sure you record your placing on your note pad for future reference.

Colorado 4-H Horse Program Placing Card	
CONTESTANT # <u>16C</u>	
CLASS # <u>1</u>	NAME <u>Q.H. MARES</u>
PLACING:	
First <u>4</u>	Second <u>2</u> Third <u>3</u> Fourth <u>1</u>

COLORADO 4-H HORSE PROGRAM	PLACING
	1-2-3-4
	1-2-4-3
	1-3-2-4
	1-3-4-2
	1-4-2-3
	1-4-3-2
CONTESTANT # 16C	2-1-3-4
	2-1-4-3
	2-3-1-4
	2-3-4-1
	2-4-1-3
	2-4-3-1
CLASS # 1	3-1-2-4
	3-1-4-2
	3-2-1-4
	3-2-4-1
	3-4-1-2
	3-4-2-1
CLASS NAME Quarter Horse Mares	4-1-2-3
	4-1-3-2
	4-2-1-3
	4-2-3-1
	4-3-1-2
	4-3-2-1

FIGURE 9: SAMPLE CONTEST PLACING CARDS

CONTEST DAY

CLASSES

- Make sure you are prepared to judge each of the potential classes listed.
- Typically, two to four halter classes will be judged and may be chosen from specific breeds like the American Quarter Horse, Arabian, Morgan, Paint, etc.
- At most contests, halter horses are judged as sound of limb, eye, wind, mouth and reproductive organs.
- Typically four to six performance classes are judged and are commonly chosen from Western Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle, Western Horsemanship, Hunt Seat Equitation, Western Riding and Reining. Other potential performance classes that are less common include Showmanship at Halter, Hunter Hack, Trail, Calf Roping and Pleasure Driving.
- Performance horses are generally judged as they go. This means that unsoundness should be penalized accordingly. Also, exhibitor tack and attire is usually considered legal.
- Make sure you know which patterns will be used in pattern classes and have copies of them.
- Contestants have 15 minutes to judge non-reasons classes and 17 minutes to judge reasons classes.
- Typically contestants will give reasons on one to four classes.
- Listen carefully for which classes are potential reasons classes and take appropriate notes.
- Contestants have two minutes to present each set of oral reasons.
- Do not use your notes or read your reasons in the reasons room, as this results in a severe penalty.

SCHEDULE

- Know when and where you are supposed to report, meet your team and begin judging.
- When the contest begins, stay with your assigned group.
- Know when and where the official placings, reasons and awards will take place.

Appendixes

External Features Worksheet

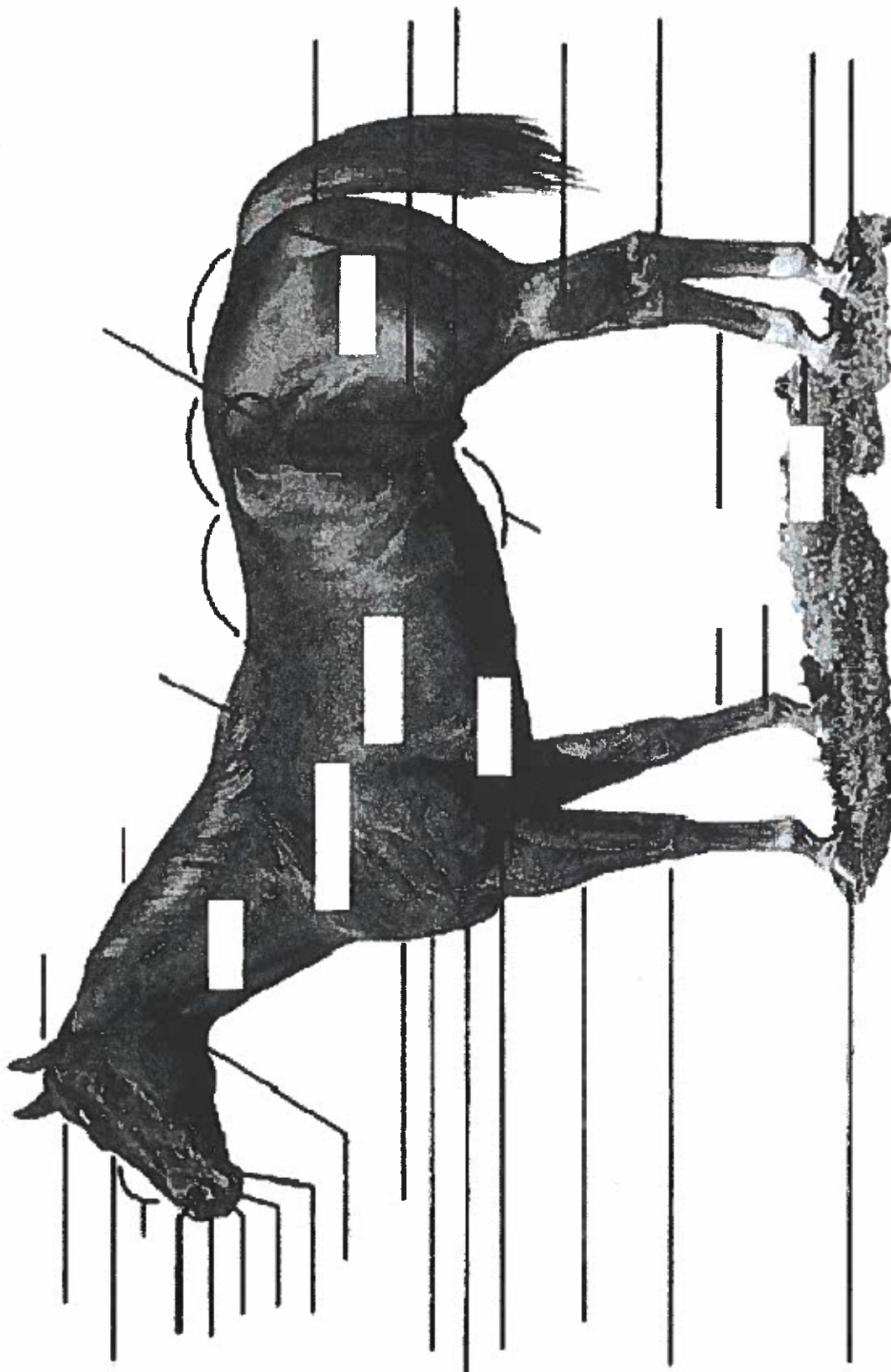
Glossary

Life Skills Targeted

References

External Features Worksheet

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Glossary

AIDS, NATURAL	Legs, hands, seat, weight and voice, as used to control a horse
BALANCE	Refers to the overall appearance of the horse; All parts of the body are in correct proportion to each other and result in a pleasing, balanced appearance
BLEMISH	Abnormality that detracts from animal's appearance but does not affect use or soundness
BREED & SEX	Refined, quality features that are associated with specific breeds or sex.
CHARACTER	
BUCK-KNEED	Knees bent forward; also called "over in the knees"
CALF-KNEED	Opposite of buck-kneed; knees angled backward
CANTER	A three beat gait in which the hind drive leg strikes the ground first, then the other hind leg with opposite foreleg and finally the lead leg; As referred to in English classes
COARSE	Used to express a lack of quality or a rough, harsh appearance
CONFORMATION	The build of a horse – the structure, form and symmetrical arrangements of parts including muscle, bone and body tissue
COW-HOCKED	Hocks are close together and feet are spread wide apart
DIAGONAL	The opposite fore and hind legs that hit the ground simultaneously at the jog or trot; In English classes the rider should post on the correct diagonal with the horse's outside foreleg (rise and fall with the leg on the wall).
EQUITATION	Art of riding horseback

FUNCTIONAL CORRECTNESS	A horse that performs all gaits correctly without breaking and that maintains the correct lead at the lope, canter or hand gallop
GRANT	A positive statement about the lower placed horse in a pair
HAND GALLOP	Three-beat gait, similar to a lope or canter but the stride is lengthened
JOG	A two beat gait in which the opposite fore and hind hooves strike the ground at the same time; As referred to in Western classes
LEAD	In lope, canter or hand gallop, the horse is on the right or left lead as indicated by the inside or leading foreleg; Also the third beat in the stride
LOPE	A three beat gait in which the hind drive leg strikes the ground first, then the other hind leg with opposite foreleg and finally the lead leg; As referred to in Western classes
MUSCLING	Refers to quantity and definition of muscle tissue
OPENING STATEMENT	The first descriptive statement in a set of oral reasons; should serve as a “hook” and describe the most obvious or important characteristic of the class
ORAL REASONS	A short speech given by horse judging contest participants to an official defending their placing on a specified class
PADDLE-OUT	A condition of horses that are toed-in where the foot “paddles” to the outside while traveling; Also called “winging-out”
PAIR	Two horses placed next to one another and compared in a set of reasons; each set of reasons has three pairs
POSTING	The rising and lowering of a rider with the rhythm of the trot
QUALITY	Fineness of feature, fine hair and lack of coarseness
RAIL	Arena fence
SHORT- COUPLED	Describes a horse having a short distance (not more than four-fingers width) between the last rib and the point of hip

SICKLE-HOCKED	The angle of the hock joint is decreased so that the profile of the hind legs resembles the shape of a sickle
SOUND	The horse is physically fit and shows no signs of weakness or illness which interfere with its usefulness
STRUCTURAL	Straightness and correctness of a horse's limbs
CORRECTNESS	
STYLISH	To have a pleasing, graceful, alert general appearance
SUITED TO	A statement used to describe a horse that is well configured for its use,
PURPOSE	especially in Hunter classes
TACK	Riding equipment or gear for the horse such as saddle, bridle, halter and so forth
TOED-IN	The toes point inward towards one another; pigeon toed
TOED-OUT	The toes point outward away from one other; splay-footed
TROT	A two beat gait in which the opposite fore and hind hooves strike the ground at the same time; As referred to in English classes
WING-IN	A condition of horses that are toed-out where the foot "wings" to the inside while tracking
WING-OUT	A condition of horses that are toed-in where the foot "wings" to the outside while tracking; Also called "paddle-out" or "paddling"

Life Skills Targeted

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