

Judging the Reining Horse
Patricia A. Evans
Extension Equine Specialist
Utah State University

Judging a reining horse requires keen observation, a willingness to learn the various maneuvers involved in the class, and a thorough understanding of an appropriate scoring system.

A successful reining judge is required to:

1. Make accurate observations and focus on the variations in the performances of the horses
2. Weigh and evaluate the differences in maneuvers and compare them with the ideal
3. Recognize the penalties and evaluate the degree of severity
4. Arrive at a definite timely decision
5. Understand the mechanics of the reining system and score card and be able to communicate thoroughly to a scribe or exhibitor.

The reining class consists of a pattern that includes a specific order of eight to nine maneuvers that include;

Circles (figure eights)	Rollbacks
Lead changes/departures	Sliding stops
Spins or pivots	Backing

Exhibitors are required to perform the pattern individually as described. Judges are required to evaluate and score each maneuver separately as compare to the ideal reining horse. Maneuvers should be scored on both quality and accuracy. Factors influencing quality include the proper position of the horse during the maneuver, speed, smoothness and attitude. Accuracy involved the precision with which the maneuver was executed. Quality and penalty points for each maneuver are tabulated into a final cumulative score. Judges are required to be familiar with typical penalties to enable quick recognition and application of the appropriate points.

Class Description

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

Scores (Maneuver Points)

Maneuver scores are added or subtracted from the score on the following basis ranging from +1.5 to -1.5

-1.5	=extremely poor	+.5	=good
-1	=very poor	+1	=very good
-.5	=poor	+1.5	=excellent
0	=average		

Maneuver scores are subject to judge's opinion and may vary from judge to judge. The most important factor as a judge is to determine what quality deserves a +1 and a -1 and be consistent from horse to horse. Maneuver scores are to be determined independently of penalty points (accuracy).

Scoring (Penalty Points)

Scoring will be based on a basis of 0-100, with 70 denoting an average performance. The following will result in **NO SCORE** (cannot come back if there is a second go)

- Abuse of animal in the show arena and/or evidence that an act of abuse has occurred prior to or during the exhibition of a horse in competition.
- Use of illegal equipment, including wire on bits, bosals or curb chains.
- Use of illegal bits, bosals or curb chains; when using a snaffle bit, optional curb strap is acceptable; however, curb chains are not acceptable.
- Use of tack collars, tie downs or nose bands.
- Use of whips or bats.
- Use of any attachment which alters the movement of or circulation to the tail.
- Failure to provide horse and equipment to the appropriate judge for inspection.
- Disrespect or misconduct by the exhibitor.
- Closed reins are not allowed except as standard romal reins.

The following will result in a **SCORE OF 0:**

- Use of more than index or first finger between reins
- Use of two hands (exception in Snaffle Bit or Hackamore classes designated for two hand) or changing hands
- Failure to complete pattern as written
- Performing the maneuvers other than in specified order
- The inclusion of maneuvers not specified, including, but not limited to
 - Backing more than 2 strides
 - Turning more than 90 degrees
- Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern (including dropping of rein that contacts ground while horse is in motion)
- Balking or refusal of command where the pattern is delayed
- Running away or failing to guide where it becomes impossible to discern whether the entry is on pattern.
- Jogging in excess of 1/2 circle or 1/2 length of the arena
- Overspins of more than 1/4 turns
- Fall to ground by horse or rider

Neither a NO SCORE nor a 0 are eligible to place in a go round or a class, but 0 score may advance in a multi-go event while a NO SCORE may not.

The following will result in a **5 point deduction:**

- Spurring in front of the cinch
- Use of either hand to instill fear or praise
- Holding saddle with either hand
- Blatant disobediences including kicking, biting, bucking, rearing, and striking, cutting a canter departure

The following will result in a **2 point deduction**

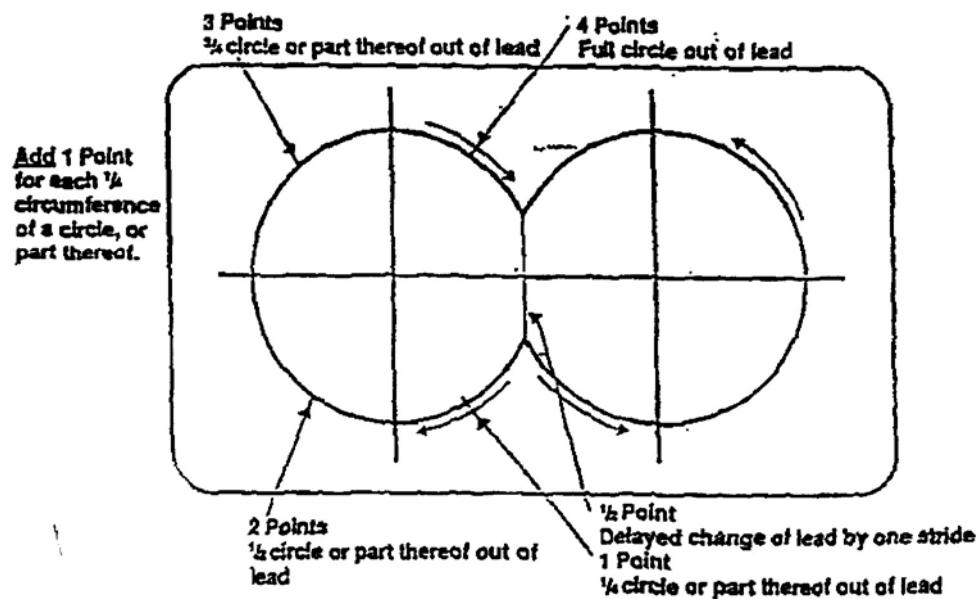
- Break of gait
- Freeze up in spins or rollbacks
- On walk-in patterns, failure to stop or walk before executing a canter departure
- On run-in patterns, failure to be in a canter prior to the first marker
- If a horse does not completely pass the specified marker before initiating a stop position

Penalty Points

Starting or performing circles or figure eights out of lead will be judged as follows:

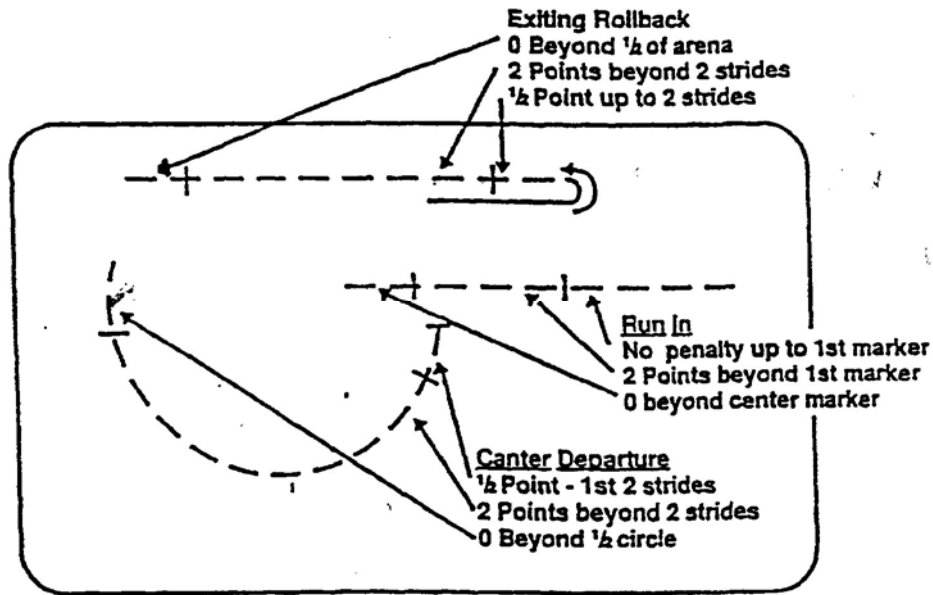
1. Each time a horse is out of lead, a judge is required to deduct **one point**. The penalty for being out of lead is accumulative and the judge will deduct **one penalty point for each quarter of the circumference of a circle** or any part thereof that a horse is out of lead. A judge is required to penalize a horse **one-half point for a delayed change of lead by one stride**.

Figure 1 - Out of Lead/Delayed Change



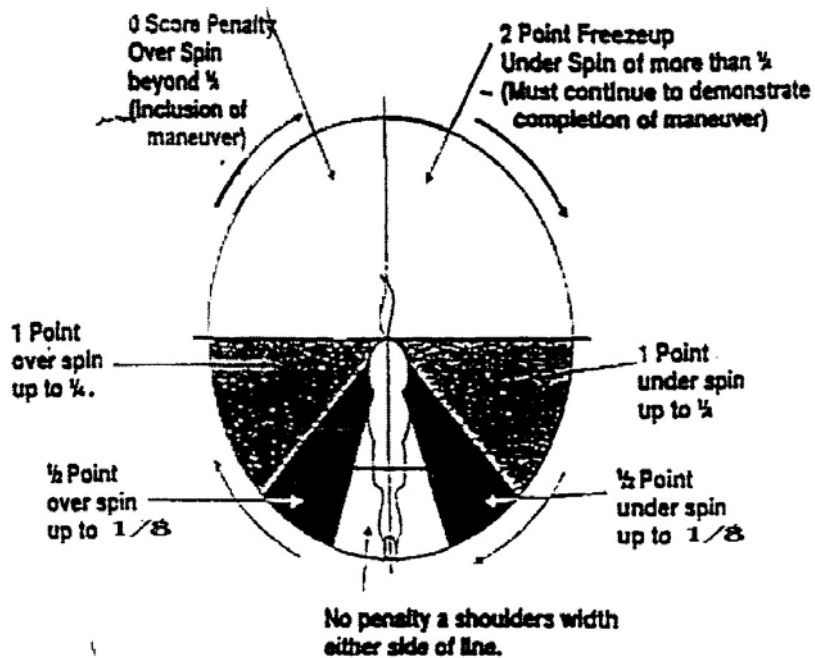
- Deduct **1/2 point** for starting circle at the jog or exiting rollbacks at a jog up to two strides. Jogging beyond two strides, but less than 1/2 circle or 1/2 the length of the arena, deduct **two points**.

Figure 2. Jogging



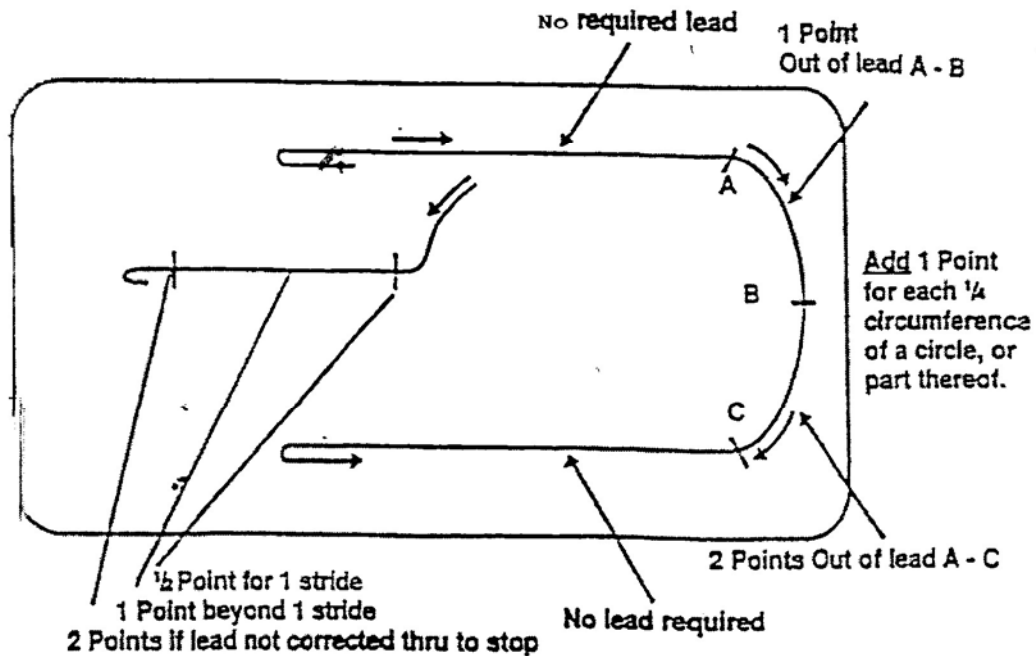
- A **1/2 point** penalty deduction will be given for failure to remain a minimum of 20 feet from the wall or fence when approaching a stop and/or rollback.
- Deduct **1/2 point** for over or under spinning up to one eighth (1/8) of a turn, deduct **one (1) point** for over or under spinning from one-eighth to one-fourth (1/8 to 1/4) turn

Figure 3 - Over/Under Spin



5. In patterns requiring a run-around, failure to be on the correct lead when rounding the end of the arena will be penalized as follows: for 1/2 turn or less, **one (1) point**; for more than 1/2 turn, **two (2) points**.

Figure 4 - Out of Lead Rundown



General Class Rules:

Faults against the horse to be scored accordingly, but not to cause disqualification

- Opening mouth excessively when wearing bit
- Excessive jawing, opening mouth or head raising on stop
- Lack of smooth, straight stop on haunches-bouncing or sideways stop
- Refusing to change leads
- Anticipating signals
- Stumbling
- Backing sideways
- Knocking over markers

Faults against rider to be scored accordingly, but not to cause disqualification:

- Losing stirrup
- Failure to run circles or figure eights within the marker is not considered a fault depending on the arena conditions and size, however, failure to go beyond markers on rollbacks and stops is considered a fault