

Pattern Perfect

A judge and a top competitor offer tips to finesse your horsemanship pattern.

By Jennifer Nice

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Horsemanship is considered by many exhibitors to be among the most difficult of the western pattern classes. It requires soft, invisible cues from the rider to the horse to execute precise transitions and maneuvers in a relaxed and willing manner. The class is designed to demonstrate how well the exhibitor can guide his or her horse. It is similar to reining and western riding competition in that the patterns share common elements that should be performed smoothly and with precision. However, in horsemanship, the rider is judged, not the horse.

Horsemanship requires poise and rhythm. The individual maneuvers that comprise a pattern vary from simple transitions, straight lines, halts and turns to more difficult pivots, the extended trot and lope, circles at various speeds and squares.

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