

Know Your Rules

“Know Your Rules” is designed as an aid to new judges, old judges, event managers, and participants. It is a compilation of the most frequently missed questions on the judge’s test along with common general membership questions. It is also a quick “reference” for judges that hold other judges’ cards to identify the scoring differences of our association from other organizations. “Know Your Rules” will always be available on the web and will be continually updated as needed with new rule changes.

****Judges and Clinicians – First and foremost, this is **educational!!** – Please talk to your participants during competition as needed. Try to help them stay on pattern and safe. The National Finals is the ONLY event that is not open to first-time NVRHA participants, so in all other events, help them breathe by assisting. You are the sideline trainer for everyone!!**

How to use the Minus "-7" maneuver score

A -7 maneuver score is applied when the maneuver is **not attempted at all** - "Did Not Attempt."

Novice Cutting Example 1:

Exhibitor enters the herd and sorts the numbered cow. After a few moves, Exhibitor loses the cow back to the herd. After repeated efforts, to sort and drive the cow, time expires. Penalties/deductions for this example include:

L - Losing the cow back to the herd, however many times this occurred.

M - Not driving between cone and marker

N - Not penning

*NOTE: No -7 maneuver penalty would be applied because exhibitor was still attempting when time expired. These penalties can be combined with maneuver penalties, depending on the participant's actions.

Novice Cutting Example 2:

Exhibitor enters the herd and after losing cow 3 times stops working and exits herd. Penalties/deductions for this example include:

Scoring maneuver, setting up for drive: **-7**

Driving to pen between marker and fence: **-7**

Penning: **-7**

Penalties:

M not driving between marker and fence: **-5**

Penning: **-5**

These penalties can be combined with maneuver penalties, depending on the participant's actions.

Trail Example 1:

Participant rides to bridge and walks around it to next obstacle. Penalties/deductions for this example include:

Maneuver: **-7**

Missed pattern penalty: **-10**

Trail Example 2:

Participant rides to bridge and horse refuses, rider regroups and makes second attempt, horse refuses again. Penalties/deductions for this example include:

Maneuver: **-3**

Penalties: **-5** first refusal AND

-5 second refusal

How to apply the -10 penalty

The -10 penalty is applied for major infractions, such as going off pattern, illegal equipment, lameness, etc. Refer to rulebook section X for complete list. It's important to note that the -10 score for the same infraction can only be charged once per run. For instance, if a rider switches to using two hands in a reining pattern and then returns to one hand, the -10 penalty is applied once, even if the rider goes back to two hands later in the pattern.

“Lameness” judging

Lameness is a condition penalized as a -10 in the Conformation classes only. This is marked by checking the box on the Conformation score sheet. If a horse is determined to be unserviceably sound during a riding event, the judge may deem the horse unable to continue competing.

Judges assisting participants during competitions

Judges are encouraged to help participants, especially Novices, during competitions. For example, during cow work, judges may offer guidance, such as advising a participant to slow down or step up. This assistance should be educational, ensuring participants have the best possible experience, particularly in clinic-based settings. Note: Don't try to encourage Novice riders via undeserved favor on the score sheets and mark them high. This will move them out of their assigned division before they are ready and cause a lot of frustration for them down the road too soon. Instead, encourage them verbally and mark their maneuvers accordingly on the sheets, so they stay in the correct division.

Judges assisting participants during conformation class

Judges should allow participants to reattempt a trot after a failure. Do not be quick to assist in the trot, as part of the score consists of participant and horse showmanship. Judges should refrain from assisting, unless necessary after a first attempt, to maintain the educational aspect of the competition. This assistance should be given only after the participant has failed to complete the trot on their own and judge should assist as safely as possible for participant and judge. It is important to see the horse trot for soundness evaluation. If a trot is not attainable, the following penalties/deductions apply:

Penalties

Box checked for unconfirmed soundness: **-10**

Off-pattern: **-10**

Maneuver deductions

Maneuver score: **-3**

Participant Showmanship: **-3**

Horse Showmanship: **-3**

Maintaining trail obstacles

Judges should ensure that trail obstacles are reset and maintained after every horse to provide a fair opportunity for all participants.

Additional Resources and other educational materials?

"Know Your Rules" is continuously updated and available online. Judges and participants are encouraged to regularly check the web for the latest rule changes and clarifications.

Who can I contact for further clarification?

For any questions or clarifications, please contact Jay Henson, Judge's Committee Chairman, who is available to assist with any inquiries related to "Know Your Rules."

New rules for 2025

How to interpret a maneuver score

Maneuver scores range from -3 to +3, with increments of 0.5. These scores reflect the quality of the execution of a maneuver, with -3 indicating a poor performance and +3 indicating an excellent one.

-3 -2.5 -2 -1.5 -1 -0.5 **0** +0.5 +1 +1.5 +2 +2.5 +3

Holding the saddle horn during events

Participants **ARE** allowed to hold the saddle horn in **ANY** event at **ANY** time without penalty, as per the new rules for 2025.

P.S. Remember to **read your rulebook** thoroughly to ensure you're up-to-date on all the rules and guidelines!