

Fundamentals of the Reining Horse Spin

The spin is one of the most exciting maneuvers the Reining horse will perform in its pattern. It is exciting to watch and exciting to execute as a rider. To watch a finished Reining horse spin, it looks like an effortless maneuver to the spectator but it takes a long time and a lot of patience to get the spin to this point.

We start out teaching the turn around on our two year olds with baby steps and repetition as the foundation. The spin at its most basic form is just control of the horses shoulders. This means that the horse needs to be taught to move his shoulders in a sideways movement both left and right. For some horses this takes a lot more time than others. This is not a natural movement for most horses and they will fumble in the beginning.

Once our horse lets us move the shoulders sideways, going away from rein and leg cues, we continue building on this. It takes one step at a time, until the horse can complete a 360 degree rotation with the hind end in a stationary position. Depending on the horse, this can take two days to six months to accomplish this. Once this foundation is laid, we introduce other exercises to improve and add finesse to the maneuver. One of the exercises I use the most to do this is to trot the horse in a circle counter arched. From a stand still position I ask the horse to complete a 360 degree rotation, ask the horse to stop and then ask the horse to trot off in either direction and make a 20 foot in diameter counter bent circle. I will establish rhythm and cadence trotting on the circle before I ask for counter bending. Counter bending means trotting the horse one way, while having them bent to the other direction. If I am trotting a circle to the left, my horse is looking to the right. As he is trotting, I use my outside

direct rein to help put his neck in the position that I want and use my outside leg to drive his ribcage up underneath him. This gets the horse in a position to execute the spin to the right more efficiently. When I feel that the horse is in a solid rhythm and soft throughout his body, I will ask him to stop and spin to the right with my neck rein and leg cue. I will complete 1,2 or3 complete rotations to the right and then stop and trot off to repeat the exercise in the opposite direction. This is a great exercise to use every day to teach and improve the spin in your program.

A common mistake many people make is moving around too much in the saddle when the horse is trying to perform the spin. The best thing we can do to help the horse is to stay in the middle of the horse and try not to get in his way. Excessive twisting of your upper body, or having your legs braced in an awkward position will only make it harder for your

horse to get around.

A Reining horse has to complete at least 4 revolutions to both the left and the right. Sometimes the pattern will ask for 4 ¼ to have the rider faced in the different direction when they lope off with their circles. You can incur a penalty, or mark a 0, by not following the pattern and doing too many or too less revolutions in your spin, or underspinning/overspinning when your horse should have shut off their spin.

The spin is one of the hardest maneuvers to teach a horse because it requires a lot of feel and it takes a lot of time in the saddle to gain that feel. It can be very frustrating but equally rewarding when the horse masters it.

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