

Spin To Win

In this article we are going to talk about what makes a successful spin. The spin is one of the maneuvers in every Reining pattern and a very exciting part of the sport of Reining. Some of the fundamentals that you need to first be aware of with the spin, as with any maneuver, are:

- 1- To be on pattern. This means that you have the required amount of spins and in the direction that was designated by your assigned pattern. Depending on the pattern, you may be required to walk to the center of the arena and perform your maneuver there, or the spin may come after a stop in a different area of the arena. There are many variations within the 11 patterns you may have. You can also lose points if you have an under-spin or an over-spin, so stopping your spin at the correct place is very important.
- 2- Correctness. We need to execute the spin in the correct form that is called for by the NRHA standards. The front end of the horse moves around the back stationary inside pivot foot. This means you do not want your horse to swap ends, or change their planted pivot foot while they are completing their spin. The pivot foot does not need to be drilled into the ground, but it must remain in one spot and their hind end cannot move around. There needs to be cadence and rhythm with the front feet, as the horse spins around their hind end.
- 3- To add a degree of difficulty. Difficulty is measured by the increase of controlled speed. This being said, speed is never credited without finesse. Your horse may be able to spin very fast, but if it is not

controlled as outlined above, you will not get credit for the maneuver.

Knowing these 3 things will help you to prepare your horse at home to get the most credit earning spin in the show pen. Once your horse knows the basic foundation of the spin, as we talked about in an earlier article about teaching the basic maneuvers to a 2 year old, we can start to fine tune the maneuver and work on more advanced exercises. I like to ask my horse to spin 1 or 2 revolutions at a speed he is comfortable with. I ask him to trot out into a circle of about 20 feet in diameter, keeping him on this circle at a trot, keeping him soft on my hands and his body as straight as I can get. His neck should be arched to the inside, following the curvature of the circle. When I feel that he is balanced, rhythmical, and soft, I ask him to stop and spin in the direction that I was trotting. I will keep him in the spin 3 or 4

revolutions and then stop, exit the spin and repeat the exercise in the opposite direction. I always ask my horse to spin with the outside neck rein first and will follow up with my inside hand to keep him looking in the direction he is going. I like to do this exercise every day. The trotting aspect helps the horse to find his rhythm and balance and over time he will associate this with the spin. The main thing is to stay consistent with your cues and be prepared to be patient in repeating this exercise every day. The spin is the hardest thing for most horses to master and it will take time to see the results you want. Next month we will go over the stop.

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Nick Valentine owns Valentine Reining Horses in Lucama, N.C. He focuses on showing, training, sales, coaching and clinics at Francois Gauthier's facility, Sunny Pines Farm go to www.valentinereining.com for more.



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