

# Showmanship – Written by Jamie Byrd

## Pivoting

Training for showmanship can be a fair amount of work. The hardest part of the class would probably be the pivot. That's where the horse leaves one foot on the ground and goes around in a circle. To train to pivot, you must.

1. Figure out which foot your horse pivots on.

You can accomplish this several ways. The best way would probably be to put a halter on him, and walk into him. Watch his back feet to see which one he stays on the most while going in a circle.

2. Start with the voice commands.

When you want your horse to understand your command, repetition is the key. When I train a horse to pivot, I have one hand on their neck and one holding the lead. I walk into him and push his neck to get him where to go. Another way would be to keep going in circles, and pushing back on the foot. Sometimes the horse gets too far forward or is too far back and that will cause him to step out. By pushing and pulling back on the horse, and saying pivot each time, they will eventually understand what you want them to do.

3. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Pivoting can be one of the hardest things to train a horse. You really want to practice daily. Keep repeating pivot as they go in a circle. After you feel they are starting to get the hang of it, stand about a foot away from them and pull up on the lead. Do everything you did before, just not with your hand on their neck. Make sure you tell them good boy or girl when they do a full circle correctly. If you can't see their foot, then you are too far forward. You should always be able to see both of your horses back feet. The farther one you will have to bend over and lean to see, but that is only during practice.

**Here are a few pictures of how to correctly hold the lead, how to stand and how NOT to make your horse pivot.**

How to correctly pivot...



Walk into their head, they should start to turn their head by themselves...



Start the turn by making sure your hips are still square with the horses head. This is also where you should start pushing and pulling to keep them on the leg.



Finishing the circle. See how the back leg on my side has not moved once?

**This is how NOT to pivot**



## **Showmanship Patterns**

There are 3 different patterns in miniature showmanship. There are also different ways to step, but that is discussed in “Halves or Quarters”

### **Pattern 1**

You will walk into the arena and set up your horse. Body turned to the judge and feet pointed at your horse. It will be uncomfortable. When the judges acknowledges you to come up, turn your feet so they face straight with the judge. Walk your horse up and complete your pattern (discussed in “Halves or Quarters”) when finished, do a half circle (180 degree) pivot and stop. Look back at the judge and smile. Trot your horse all the way PAST the lineup and do another half circle pivot. Stand back in the lineup and cross in front of your horse as needed to stay away from the judge.

### **Pattern 2**

Walk into the arena and set up your horse, as you will for all 3 patterns. When the judges acknowledges you to come up, turn your feet so they face straight with the judge. Walk your horse up and stop in the middle. Do a full circle pivot and the keep walking up to the judge. Do your pattern. When finished, do a half circle pivot and trot past the lineup. Do another half circle pivot and line up again.

### **Pattern 3**

Walk into the arena and set up your horse, as you will for all 3 patterns. When the judges acknowledges you to come up, turn your feet so they face straight with the judge. Walk your horse up and complete your pattern ((discussed in “Halves or Quarters”)) when finished, do a half circle ((180 degree)) pivot and stop. Look back at the judge and smile. Trot your horse HALFWAY and stop. Turn around and smile at the judge. Turn your feet to the horse again and do a FULL circle pivot. Stop, look back and trot past the lineup and do another half circle pivot. Line up again.



Standing in the lineup for showmanship

## Halves or Quarters

There are two different ways to complete your pattern. They both involve a variety of steps and due need some practice.

AMHA- The AMHA pattern is what we call halves. When the judge passes the withers, you will cross over IN FRONT of your horse, so that you are on the same side. When they go around behind your horse, you will cross back over to be on the same side of the judge. When they pass the withers again, you will cross back over and when they stand in front of your horse, cross back to your original starting position.

AMHR- The AMHR pattern is done in quarters. Unlike the AMHA, you NEVER want to be on the same side as the judge. You will start out with the judge in front of your horse. When the judge passes the withers, you should take a small step ((only about the width of a foot)) AWAY from the judge. When they go around behind your horse, you will cross to the other side. When they pass the withers on the other side, you will take another small step away. Then when they are in front of your horse again, you will cross back to the side you started on and pivot away and continue as according the pattern you are doing.

## **Getting Ready for Showmanship**

For showmanship, there are a few things you want to do before the class. The first thing is to get your horse ready. Make sure they are brushed to perfection, as well as they have their forelock gelled and pulled to the side of the mane, and neatly tucked under the halter. The tail should be clean, and the body should be spotless. Your horse should be wearing a show halter; western styles are generally used, although cable halters are acceptable as well. The horse's hooves should be polished and shining, as well as muzzle and above the eyes razored, or at least be clipped. I myself add the tiniest bit of baby oil to the muzzles and above the eyes for an extra touch, although its not needed. Then you will want to get dressed yourself. You will need a pair of black boots. Make sure these boots have been shined and have no scratches. Then put on your pants, and top. Generally I use a blazer in this class, but a slinky or just a long sleeved shirt will work. Next you need a pair of gloves. Put these on last since you don't want them to get in the way or dirty. Next I put on a nice pair of earrings, and maybe a necklace. Just make sure its not too glittery, or it will give the appearance of movement. I then do my hair. I pull it into a bun at the nape of my neck and put my special hairnet over it. I clip it to my hair and it looks very nice. Then I put on my hat, number and gloves, add a little bit of makeup and I am ready to go. I myself am ALWAYS rushing to this class, although I suggest you don't do this. It's a pain and it gets both you and your horse flustered.

Patterns and the quarter system are taken from the Showmanship section of the AMHR rule book.