



ROPING BASICS

AQHA Professional Horseman Pat Hooks teaches the fundamentals of roping, including swinging a rope, appropriate roping gear and developing a winning attitude to excel in the exciting sport of roping.

From the America's Horse library

A Bit of Common SENSE

This Oklahoma cowboy has fortitude

and plain-spoken wisdom.

Story and photos by Holly Clanahan

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PATRICK HOOKS SAYS A STORY ABOUT HIM COULD BE PRETTY short, consisting just of his slogan: “There’s one bit that works on all horses – a bit of knowledge.”

“You could just put that one sentence in there and say this is what it all boils down to,” he says.

Although there’s an important kernel of truth in that motto, there’s a lot more to this AQHA Professional Horseman from the Oklahoma Panhandle.

True, common sense is the driving force behind Pat, as he offers clinics and participates in horse expos across the country and also invites people to his Texhoma, Oklahoma, ranch for private lessons. He also runs a registered Black Angus cattle operation, does farrier work, trains cattle dogs and loves the ranch horse versatility competitions that showcase the talents of horse and rider alike.

“I think you should be a well-rounded person to be an

American cowboy, and I’m proud to say that I am one,” he says, without a hint of braggadocio. “I’ve earned that. I got it through wet saddle blankets and not giving up. You know, I’m 50 years old, and I’m still learning.”

If there’s another attribute of the American cowboy, it’s his never-say-die attitude. Pat’s fortitude got quite a test three years ago when he suffered three heart attacks in one day.

“I was out feeding, and I had a deep, sharp pain come across my shoulders. I didn’t have the normal deal you hear about, where your arm hurts or your chest will hurt you. ... Mine came across the top of my shoulders,” he says.

He drove himself to his rural doctor’s clinic, where it was thought that he wasn’t in danger. He went home, took a few aspirin and looked up his symptoms online.

“To make a long story short, I went back to the doctor,” and asked for more tests, Pat says. “I said, ‘I think y’all need to



Ground work is an important element in Pat's training protocol. He teaches young horses to circle him, then yield their hindquarters, then move their front ends across to complete a change of direction.

re-lick your calf just a little bit here.' ”

He eventually ended up in an ambulance heading for more advanced facilities in Amarillo, about two hours away.

“When it was over with, said and done, I basically had three attacks that day,” Pat says.

After a stay in the hospital, Pat went home and began herbal therapy to help with the cholesterol buildup that caused his problems. And true to form, he didn't stay on his back for long.

He'd been home for just a day when some friends brought over a horse they were having trouble with. A pajama-clad Pat ensconced himself in a lawn chair outside the round pen while his friends worked the horse.

“I finally seen all I could see; I just couldn't stand it anymore,” he says. “I moved that lawn chair to the middle of the round pen, and I flagged that colt and got him to hook up on me, and I got up on him (bareback) and I rode him.”

Then, trouble hit.

“I looked up, and my wife was standing there,” Pat says. “The boss mare was home, and the stud was fixing to get lined out.”

Even though he knew he was pushing his limits, he's quick to say that he knew he wasn't in any physical danger, since his heart muscle hadn't been damaged.

“I was glad to know I had enough physical strength to get myself up on the horse, and I had to know if I could still do this. I had to know,” he says.

He wasn't down for the count, but he had been dealt quite a blow.

“It has probably taken me two years to get my hand-eye coordination back and to gain my strength back,” Pat says. “It's not going to come quick to people like you would think it would.”

And here's where you learn another truth about the American cowboy: He's pretty resourceful.

“If there's such a way of benefiting



Here, Pat uses a flag to get this colt used to being touched all over.

from the heart attack, I had to learn how to think smart,” Pat says. “I had to depend upon my knowledge more than my physical strength.”

It was just another step in his journey of increasing his knowledge and becoming a better horseman today than he was yesterday.

Pat’s beginnings were in Kentucky, where he grew up riding ex-racehorses and seeing local farmers who still used teams of horses to cultivate their tobacco and move timber. Teams of pulling horses were highly prized in that day. His mother died when he was young, so he was raised in part by his great-grandmother who was born in the Civil War era.

When one of Pat’s children accused him recently of being old-fashioned, he retorted: “I’ve got every right. I was raised by somebody that was around all the way back to the Civil War.”

He grew up watching TV Westerns, inspired by Gene Autry and Roy Rogers.

“That was what kind of struck my fancy to be a cowboy,” he says.

He describes himself as a country boy, muddling his way through with horses until the early 1980s, when he began to hear talk of natural horsemanship methods that promised better, more effective means of training.

And some other things began to sink in.

You’ve heard the mantra “Make the right thing easy and the wrong thing difficult”? Well, Pat’s father told him the same thing when he was a young child; it just didn’t take hold until much later.

He and some other boys were fighting with an off-the-track horse who was athletic enough to flick riders off his back just as soon as they got a leg over it.

“Daddy was kind of observing, and here’s what he had to say: ‘You know, if you’d let that horse plow the tobacco for about three days, he might ride a little better.’

“It just simply went over my head,” Pat says. “But all in the world he was trying to say was, ‘Take that rank thing, get him good and tired, make this bucking deal difficult and then offer him a chance to ride, and he might like that idea a little bit better.’ ”

That’s not the only simple statement that Pat has soaked on – and gotten big dividends from.

In the mid-1990s, he was participating in a clinic with Ray Hunt, who is considered one of the founders of natural horsemanship.

“You know, the only thing he had to say to me was, ‘Pat, think about the feet.’ ... That’s probably one of the most important statements that has ever been made to me.”

So he did think about the feet, realizing that riders have to time their aids with the footfall of the horse to be most effective. He wrote a book, “Fix It Up for the Horse,” that explains in detail how to understand a horse’s footfall at each gait.

“In my personal opinion, if you’re going to become a horseman, that’s something you have to know,” Pat says. “I think if folks knew the payoff (which is much more responsive horses), they would do it. I think they would put forth the effort.” 🐾

Words of Wisdom

SOME PEARLS FROM AQHA PROFESSIONAL HORSEMAN PATRICK Hooks:

- “It doesn’t matter who jumpstarts you or who points you in the right direction; somewhere along the line, you better put on a lot of wet saddle blankets (meaning get a lot of first-hand experience on horseback). You can talk it all day long, but until you throw a leg over one and pay your dues, you’re just whistlin’ ‘Dixie.’ ”
- For people just getting started with horses, “I don’t know why in the world they don’t go get them an older horse, 15 or 20 years old, and learn how to ride. Go have some fun and learn your basic fundamentals. You know, it’s a lot easier to learn while you’re on top and in the middle than it is when you’re on the ground.”
- “People need to get back to common sense. ... Things ain’t changed for a thousand years.” Get a good rope halter, a 22-foot line and maybe a lariat, “and you can get a whole lot of work done. You can leave the gimmicks at the store where they belong.”
- “Keep in mind that you’re dealing with another creature that is just as valuable as you are. ... The horse is a very smart animal. He can think, he can make decisions on his own. It’s a matter of you fixing things up for him to where he can get it figured out. That’s your job as the steward or the teacher of this animal, to try to help him as much as you can, to guide him to the right spot to make that right decision.”

- “Let him be a horse. We pamper him too much. We’ll put blankets on him and give him pneumonia. ... We cram the best food in the world down his system and don’t give him hardly any at all of it (instead of large volumes of lower-quality food like nature would provide), and then we wonder why he acts the way he does. If we’d get back to letting a horse be a horse, I think that’d help people a lot, too.”

Pat with his son, Zach, and wife, Terri.



Roped In

Interested in learning
how to rope but don't
know where to start?
How about right here!

By Patrick Hooks

I SHARE THE FOLLOWING SLOGAN WITH FOLKS IN ORDER TO KEEP their minds working: “There is one bit that works on all horses—a bit of knowledge.” The same goes with roping. There is no one kind of rope or loop that works in all situations.

I was visiting at the table of knowledge one day with my friend Steve Gaillard about heel shots. As we talked, I realized that I had been throwing loops, rather than roping. In order to accomplish some of the ranch roping shots I had been working on, I had to start thinking about the individual parts of the loop, the jobs they had and how they landed on the target to make the more difficult shots.

In upcoming articles, I hope to share some fundamentals and practical ideas to make things a little easier for the beginning roper. With the increased interest in Ranch Horse Versatility events, more folks are wanting to learn to rope.

Let's start by looking at the different parts of the loop. It will be much easier to become a roper rather than a loop thrower if you know your loop parts.

The basic parts of the loop are the **base**, **tip**, **honda**, **spoke** and **coils**. The **base** is the top portion of the loop. The **tip** is the bottom of the loop. The **honda** is the eyelet your rope passes through to create a loop. The **spoke** is the part of the loop formed as the rope passes through the honda eye and travels to where it is held by the roping hand. The **coils** are the remaining rope left in your off hand after your loop has been made. Other parts of the loop you need a visual on are the **top strand**, **bottom strand** and the **tail**.

The **base** is where you will build balance in your overall loop. Often, there will be shots thrown that will call for extra coils to be held in hand at the base. The base is a counter-weight for the tip and helps control the distance a loop can be thrown.

The **tip** is the piece of the loop you actually throw. As you learn to rotate your loops, you will learn to feel the counter-

balance of the tip. The tip guides the loop's travel when thrown.

The **honda** can make or break your shots. A metal honda lets the rope run, allowing the top strand and tip to travel farther. The metal releases its bite on the top strand when slack is placed in the loop. A rawhide honda will hold the top strand firmly, allowing the loop to stand up and remain open.

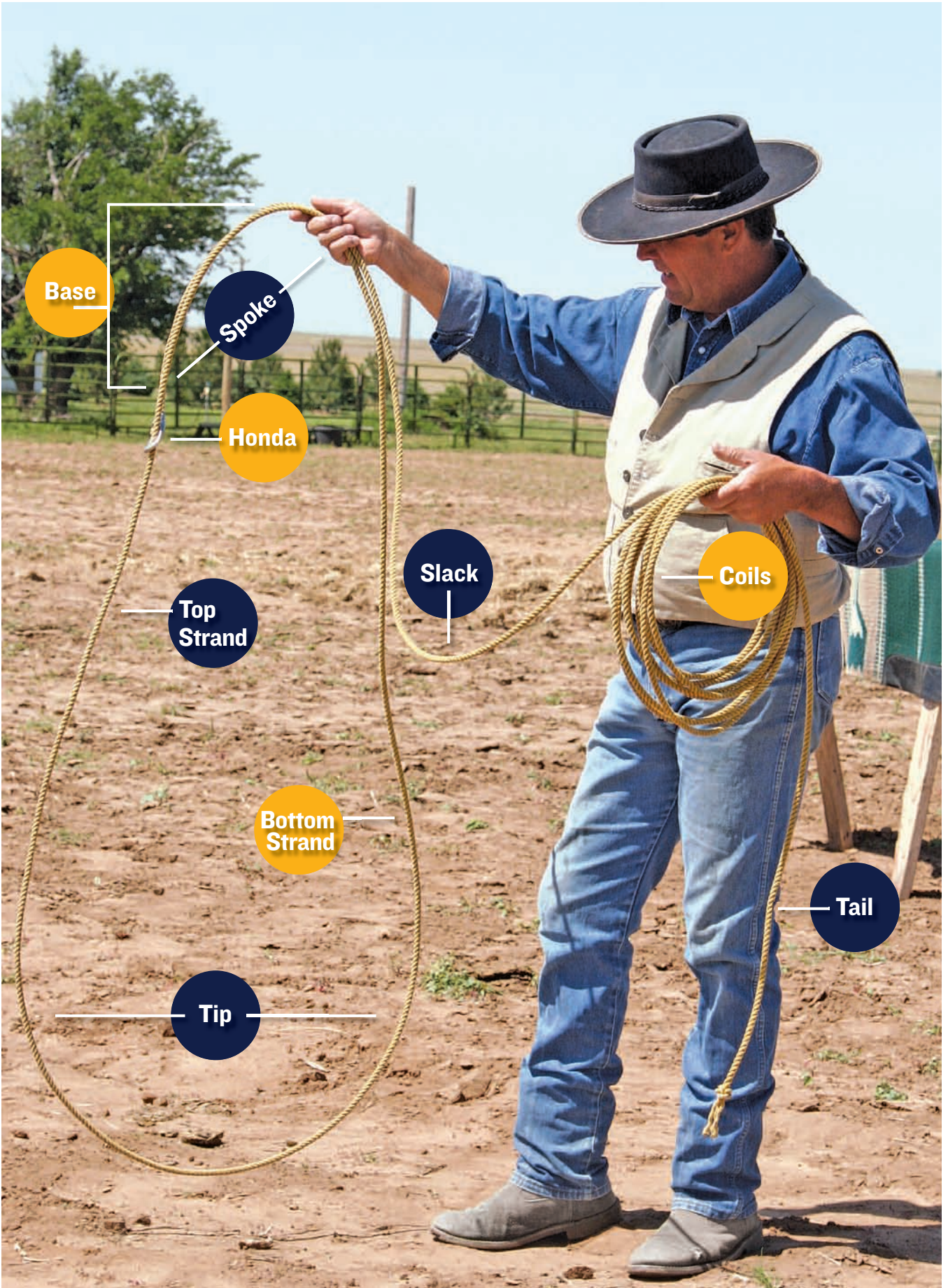
The **spoke's** length should be about an arm's length. Learning to pull or hold the spoke's travel after your loop has landed on its target will affect the tip of the loop's distance of travel dramatically.

The **coils** must be kept neat and organized. If your coils are ever tangled, reorganize them and start over. A half hitch around a body part is a train wreck about to happen. Consider the length of your coils by judging the distance you will be from your target after your loop has landed.

The **top strand** will for, the most part, be the part of the loop that will be called upon to strike your target first. You need to keep the top strand up and open to make trap shots. A trap shot is a loop that is thrown in front of the hind legs of an animal or roping dummy. The hind feet then step into the open loop on their next stride.

The **bottom strand** will act as the brakes on your loop. As you learn to throw your loop, your hand movement will ask the bottom strand to strike either the ground or animal body part – which places the brakes on the base of the loop, which in return helps control the tip's travel.

The **tail** seems useless, but it will actually determine the form of your coils. You will learn to gauge your tail, so it won't be too long or short. Please keep in mind that as your tail runs out, the tail knot has a special effect to your fingers and hand. You need to know if you're about at your rope's end, so to speak. 🍷



Learning the Ropes

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This is your key to the terminology you'll see when buying a rope.

By Patrick Hooks

Photos by Holly Clanahan

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE TYPES OF ROPES AVAILABLE. A LITTLE time spent learning about each type's purpose will give you a better start at roping, and you will be more likely to swear by your rope rather than at it.

If you're just starting out, be honest with yourself and shop for the rope you need rather than someone's gimmick. Consider the job at hand, environment and the style of roping to be done.

The photo at right shows four common types of ropes with various hondas. On the left is a 50-foot 9.5 mm poly rope with a metal-swiveled honda. Next is a 60-foot 5/16-inch XXX soft nylon with a swivel honda. Then a 35-foot 3/8-inch medium-soft nylon with a tied rawhide honda, and on the end is a 50-foot 3/8-inch scant soft nylon with a tied rawhide honda.

Confusing? Let's decipher it.

Length

FOR TEAM ROPERS AND BEGINNERS WHO WILL BE ROPING A dummy with conventional shots, you probably will lean toward 30- to 35-foot ropes with tied rawhide hondas.

Big-loop shots used in ranch roping require a 50- to 60-foot rope or longer. This much rope is literally a handful when you're also holding a set of reins with your coils. Get used to this much rope on the ground before you get horseback.

When working horses in the round pen, a 50- to 60-foot rope is very useful. Consider the extra slack needed in the rope to work the horse after the shot has been made from the center of the pen. Most round pens are 50 to 60 feet across. The extra length prevents choking the horse and burning your hands, and allows time for your work.

If you're pasture-doctoring cattle or practicing head

shots in the arena, your choice of length will depend on if you are tied on or if you dally. "Tied on" means that the tail end of the rope is tied to the saddle horn before you ever take your shot. If you "dally," you take wraps around the horn with the tail of the rope after the catch has been made. Tying on takes a 35- to 40-foot rope, and for dallying, I would use a 50- to 60-foot rope. I personally prefer the longer rope because it lets me place my horse in position to the steer and dally up after I make my catch. With the longer rope, I don't have to be in such a hurry to dally. Folks who lean toward team roping are much more proficient with a shorter rope than I am.

Lay

THE LAY OF THE ROPE IS HOW PLIABLE it is. The rule of thumb is:

S = soft

M = medium

H = hard

An X before the standard letter = extra.

For beginners, I would suggest a soft lay until you get the hang of things and give your hands a chance to callus up a little.

Most headers in team roping use a soft lay. Heelers use from medium soft up to a hard. The stiffer lay allows the loop to stand up and stay more open when a team-roping shot is thrown.

For working horses in the round pen, a XXX soft is a popular choice. The extra-soft lay isn't as quick to burn the horse when pressure is applied.

For pasture-doctoring or working penned cattle, a soft or medium works well.

When throwing big-loop shots for ranch roping, a soft or medium soft lay nylon is usually the choice.

Diameter

THE DIAMETER OF YOUR ROPE DETERMINES THE AMOUNT OF weight to be thrown. Also, consider the comfort in your hand. Cowgirls will probably choose a size smaller than cowboys.

A common diameter for working penned cattle and roping the dummy is 3/8-inch to 5/16-inch. When pasture work is done, a 7/16-inch to 1/2-inch (9.5 to 10.0 mm) rope is often used to place weight in the loop for long-distance shots.

You often see the word "scant" following a measurement. This means "close" or "almost."

Consider the environment in your area. A loop thrown with a 5/16-inch XXX soft lay of rope on a windy day will not travel as well as a larger diameter, stiffer lay of rope, such as a 9.5 mm poly.

When roping horses, common diameters are 5/16 inch, 3/8 inch and 9.5 mm.



Patrick Hooks hopes to "rope in" beginning ropers who may be interested in versatility ranch horse classes or similar activities.

Fiber

THE MOST COMMON MATERIALS ARE nylon, poly, nylon-poly blend and cotton. A rawhide reata, or lariat, is for the serious at heart.

The choice of fiber is a personal choice. Different fibers wear out and break in differently under different circumstances. Consider weather conditions. If you're in a wet environment with manure and mud, the poly is a good choice.

Team ropers usually use nylon or a blend. For big loops, the action of a poly is very similar to rawhide. For roping horses, a nylon or poly is good, and the same goes for working cattle in a pen or outside doctoring.

Hondas

THREE COMMON STYLES OF HONDAS are swivel, tied and breakaway. And hondas are made from three types of material: metal, rawhide and plastic.

The swiveled honda is more helpful in preventing figure eights than the tied honda. (A "figure eight" is when an X or half hitch forms in the loop, making it impossible to get a nice, round, open loop.) These hondas swivel on a knot tied in

the end of the rope.

Hondas that are hand-tied at the rope's end often have a leather or rawhide "burner." A burner is the protective piece attached to the honda that prevents the rope from burning or wearing itself out as it works through the honda.

Breakaway hondas are handy for training colts and people alike. Breakaways will save your fingers and the horse's hide for the beginner. When pressure is applied to the loop, the honda breaks away, releasing the pressure.

When roping horses, I would suggest using a metal honda. The metal honda allows slippage when pressure is released from the rope. A rawhide honda will hold the pressure or bite of the rope.

If throwing big loops, a metal honda is handy. When slack is pulled back from the spoke, the metal honda allows the slack in the rope to slide or run.

When team roping or throwing a conventional heel shot, the rawhide honda works real well. The rawhide honda helps hold up the loop for a conventional heel trap shot or a flank shot, say, in the branding pen. ■

Building a Loop

It all starts with this simple move.

By Patrick Hooks

LET'S START OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT WITH A LITTLE LIGHT-hearted encouragement from one of the best ropers the world has ever known, Will Rogers. He implied that as someone was learning how to rope, there would be times he would call his rope anything but a rope.

If you're just starting out, be patient. Roping will eventually become very rewarding and enjoyable as you progress. But know that some shots take years to learn. So as you follow along in the articles to come, please be patient with yourself as you learn the basics and about the many different shots that can be thrown. Recognize your accomplishments as you begin and realize there will be a building-block learning process.

Roping a dummy target from the ground is the only place to start. Later, as you add a horse and livestock to the equation, that will be another huge accomplishment. The rush of making your first catch while horseback – whether it's in the sorting pen with a breakaway honda or the first time you catch with the big loop – will become a very memorable time in your life.

It all starts with building a loop.

Begin by holding your coils loosely in your off hand and gripping the loop and small spoke in your roping hand, as shown in Photo 1. There should be at least one coil's length of slack between your hands. To build more slack, roll your coils in a forward motion.

Next, continue to grip the rope and spoke and rotate your throwing hand counter clockwise in a backward motion, right to left, 360 degrees, as seen on Photo 2. This motion rolls a length of coil from your slack and off hand into your loop, making the loop larger each time you roll a coil into the loop.



After you roll your roping hand over, take a new grip with your roping hand on the strand of rope going to the honda and pull the loop further up onto the spoke, forming a larger loop, as shown in Photo 3.

Continue to work lengths of coil into your loop by rotating your coils forward, providing more slack for each turn of your roping hand until the loop is about shoulder height to your body's height, shown in Photo 4. The loop size will vary depending on the style of roping or style of shot you intend to take.

In Photo 5, note that the average length of the spoke should be about an arm's length. Your loop should now feel balanced from tip to grip. Refer back to the loop parts, as explained in the July issue of *America's Horse*. The base is the



top one-third, the tip is the bottom one-third. Your top and bottom strands between your roping hand and the tip make up the remaining third. This formula should balance your loop so you feel the centrifugal force of the tip as you begin your swing. 📌

Get Into the Swing

A step-by-step on how to swing a rope.

By Patrick Hooks



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YOU'VE LEARNED ABOUT THE PARTS OF A LOOP, THE TYPES OF ropes and more basics that laid the foundation for success. Now, let's take things a step farther and learn how to swing a loop.

Begin your forward swing by having your loop built and laying to your right. With your roping hand properly placed a spoke's length from the honda, lift your hand up and in a forward motion, traveling right to left as in Photo 1 on the facing page.

As your loop comes up and in front of your body, flatten your loop out as in Photo 2.

When your loop travels to the center of rotation, start to roll your hand up and over, like you're looking at the back of your hand. (Photo 3)

Continue to rotate your loop right to left, allowing the loop to travel over your head, as in Photo 4. Be disciplined with your body movement here. Don't make a habit of ducking your head as the loop crosses over. Don't fret – you wouldn't be the first person to rope himself at this point.

As your loop continues its rotation behind your head and back, learn to reach a good distance back with your roping hand, as demonstrated in Photo 5. Reaching farther back will give your loop more momentum as it turns over in the final rotation of its travel. Also, there will be advantages of reaching farther back as you learn to throw the big-loop shots.

Keep your arm out away from your body as your loop makes its final degree of rotation. Begin to roll your roping hand back over, to see the back of your hand again as you make another rotation with your loop traveling in a right to

left motion. (Photo 6)

To get the hang of nice, smooth rotation and a pretty loop, swing your loop slow. The slower motion will leave your loop opened up.

The Next Step

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THE BASIC MOTION OF YOUR FORWARD swing, you can make progress by learning to control the tip of your loop. The tip is the steering wheel of the loop.

With your forward swing in motion, become more specific with your actions by controlling the angle and travel of the tip as the loop passes on each side and in front of your body. The tip leads the loop's path of travel.

Learning to keep your tip and loop traveling flat (Photo 7) will be the building block for most head shots. The up and down angle of the flat loop will vary depending upon the type of head shot you're after. A head shot is just as it implies, a throw to catch the head of an animal or dummy. On a straightaway, catch headers in team roping and ranch roping will throw more of a flat loop vs. a calf roper, who would tilt the angle of his loop more downward in order to catch a smaller calf.

If you keep the tip and loop traveling in an upward and right-angle motion (Photo 8), that builds the basics for your scoop loops and side-arm shots. A side-arm loop may be used to make a head shot with the animal traveling left to right. A scoop loop is the mate of the side-arm, used for a head shot on an animal traveling right to left. The angle of the side-arm loop's rotation is out at the stirrup, in at your





head. The scoop's angle of rotation is in at the stirrup, out at your head.

You can also work the left side of your body to keep the tip and loop angled down and over your left shoulder, as in Photo 9. This angle is the building block for your conventional heel and trap shots. A conventional heel shot is thrown at an angle so that the top strand of the loop strikes the target – making a hinging effect on the loop – which asks the tip to travel past and through. This sets what is called a trap and allows

the hind leg of the animal or dummy to step in the heel trap.

Swinging a rope will tire the body quicker than you might think. Give your muscles time to build. Tired muscles won't develop good muscle memory for you. Take your time and get your basic muscle memory of the forward swing first, then add your tip and angle control.

After a while, you will be able to make a continuous swing while controlling your tip at different angles and planes without stopping the rotation of your loop. 📌





Roping FOR Dummies

**This is no commentary on the ropers;
we're talking roping dummies here.**

By Patrick Hooks



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WE'VE INTRODUCED YOU TO SOME OF THE BASIC TERMS and fundamentals of roping. And now, it's time to start roping.

It's easiest to start learning on a roping dummy or sawhorse. This go-round, we will break down the mechanical movement of the loop as it strikes the sawhorse for laying down a conventional heel trap.

Your swing makes a forward swing over the dummy's rear end with your loop's tip angled down over your left shoulder as we discussed in previous articles. Take a look at Photo 1.

You've got to become comfortable with your loop control. As your loop rotates over the dummy's back, you must learn to control your tip.

You should be able to scrape off a few grains of dirt or sand from the dummy's back with your tip as it crosses over the dummy's rear end. Form a habit of keeping your

loop open as you make your rotation over the dummy's back. A slower rotation makes for an open loop. A faster rotation will close the loop.

Take note the forward position of the tip in Photo 2. This is a top view of the forward position of the tip. Use the back of the dummy to gauge how far forward your loop needs to be by noting how far the tip is in front of the rear legs as the open loop crosses over the back of the dummy.

Forming good muscle memory on the dummy will pay big dividends later when you're horseback. Once on livestock, your loop rotation for the heel trap will not only have to be in the described position but also in time with a set of moving legs. Your loop will need to be over the steer's back as the steer's rear legs move back and hop up in the air to place you in time before delivery.

Practice this on the sawhorse until your swing becomes comfortable.

Next up, let's discuss our general body position to the dummy. Place yourself behind and to the left of your sawhorse so you can see both hind legs, as shown in Photo 3. Keep the outside of the left rear leg and the inside of the right rear leg in sight.

Now pinpoint your target – the right rear hock of the dummy, as pointed out in Photo 4. Even though you can't physically see the outside of the right rear leg, remain in position as you deliver your loop and try to imagine looking through the right rear leg to find your target. Don't lean over to the right or left. Remain upright and learn to let the rope do its job.

There is a saying that holds true, "You can't rope what you can't see." Keep in mind that if you move too far right of your target, you will catch only the left leg; too far left and only the right leg will be caught.

Breaking down the loop's travel will also help adjust your distance and body position to the dummy. Look closely at the rope in motion in Photo 5. Take special note of the position of the tip. The total height of your loop and the distance between you and the dummy is determined here. Notice the tip of the loop in Photo 5 passed just in front of the right front leg. If the loop's height had been any longer or if the top strand had hit the target any farther up toward the hock, the tip of the loop would have hit the front legs and died.

When you make your throw, the first piece of the loop to strike the target should be the top strand. The striking point of the target bites the rope and causes a hinging effect to the loop.





The hinging motion of the top strand causes your loop to make an inside turning motion. Broken down into steps, the top strand hits the target point causing the top strand, tip and bottom strand of your loop to start passing in front of the hind legs.

Take a close look at the loop's travel in Photo 6. Notice after the tip and bottom strand pass in front of the right rear leg, the top strand will hinge once more on the left rear leg bringing the tip out the other side.

To help set your heel trap and keep the loop open, you will need to make a downward motion with your roping hand just before you release. It's a motion like shaking hands, just as your top strand hits the target. This downward motion of your roping hand causes the bottom strand to hit and hold on the ground, placing the brakes on the loop. Applying the brakes stops the motion of the loop, leaving it upright, open and in front of the forward movement of the rear legs. This is what's called setting a trap, as shown in Photo 7.

In order to set a good open trap, you will have to completely release the rope with your throwing hand as you follow through with your shot. If there isn't a release, the brakes on the bottom strand won't set, and the loop will close and run out the far side of the steer.

To initially learn the heel trap shot, I would use a rope with a tied honda and rawhide burner. The tied honda with rawhide will grip the top strand of your rope much better than a metal honda. This, in return, will help hold the loop up and open. In contrast, a metal honda will allow the top strand to run, so to speak, allowing the loop to fall down.

A wooden sawhorse will help hold the rope up a little better than plastic or metal. If wood isn't available, a little carpet and duct tape applied to the metal or PVC pipe will slow the rope down for you.



So how much time should it take you to become proficient? The pros work their way up to 100 loops a day on the dummy. Take your time and form good habits. Rope often enough to allow your muscle memory and strength to work for you.

When all the practice starts to come together, you could borrow money at the bank on the loop in Photo 8. It is open, balanced and centered, waiting for the rear legs to step into the trap. ☑

Patrick Hooks is an AQHA Professional Horseman from Texboma, Oklahoma. Visit www.hookshorseranch.com to learn more.

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