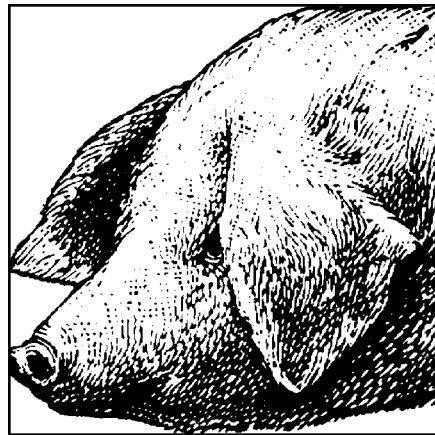

Oral Reasons



Good judges of livestock have a special quality that an average judge does not possess. A good judge can accurately and concisely describe an animal or group of animals so that an audience knows exactly what the judge saw. The ability to describe animals accurately and concisely is the basic foundation of the reasons process. This section is devoted to reasons, starting with the basics and ending with a lengthy list of terminology.

Giving reasons will help you do the following:

- ✗ Develop a system for analyzing a class of livestock
- ✗ Think more clearly on your feet
- ✗ Organize and state your thoughts more clearly
- ✗ Improve your speaking poise and presentation
- ✗ Improve your voice
- ✗ Develop your memory

You should know the parts of the various livestock species and how they join to make a particular breeding or market animal. Every animal is different and so is every class of livestock. Therefore, there are no guidelines or rules for placing a class. Nor is there a right way or a wrong way to deliver or present a set of reasons.

HOW GOOD ARE YOUR ORAL REASONS?

The judge will determine the value of your reasons by the following:

- ✗ **Accuracy** – You must tell the truth. You must see the important things in the class correctly. Accuracy is very important. You will lose points for incorrect statements.
- ✗ **Completeness** – Describe all the major differences in your reasons. Omit small things that leave room for doubt.
- ✗ **Length** – A well-organized, properly delivered set of reasons must never be more than 2 minutes in length.
- ✗ **Presentation and Delivery** – Present your reasons in a logical manner that is pleasant to hear, is clear, and is easy to follow. If reasons are poorly presented, the value of accuracy may be lost because most of what you say doesn't "get through" to the listener. Speak slowly and clearly in a conversational tone. Speak loudly enough to be understood, but avoid talking too loudly or too rapidly. Use well-organized statements and use correct grammar. Emphasize the important comparisons and be confident in your presentation.
- ✗ **Terminology** – Use correct terminology. Incorrect terminology greatly detracts from the value of your reasons. Study and use the terms in this guide (See "Terminology for Oral Reasons").

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RULES FOR GIVING ORAL REASONS

- ✗ Do not claim strong points for one animal unless the animal has them. Claim the points when one is superior, and then grant to the other animal its points of advantage.
- ✗ Strongly emphasize major differences. Present the important differences first on each pair.
- ✗ Be concise and definite. Don't search for things to say. If you don't remember, go on to the next pair you are to discuss.
- ✗ State your reasons with confidence and without hesitation. Talk with enough vim and vigor to keep the judge interested, but do not yell or shout.
- ✗ End reasons strongly. Give a concise and final statement on why you placed the fourth-placed animal last.
- ✗ Be sure you have your reasons well organized so you do not hesitate when you present them to the judge.

The most important factors that go into an effective set of reasons include the following:

- ✗ Accuracy
- ✗ Organization
- ✗ Delivery
- ✗ Terminology

Let's review these factors to improve your set of reasons.

IMPORTANCE OF ACCURACY

Accuracy is the *most important* aspect of a good set of reasons. Not only must you be able to see important differences among animals, but you must be able to describe these differences accurately. Two animals may be extremely similar except for one or two minor differences, or they may be extremely different and have very little in common. In your reasons, you must be able to identify the important differences and similarities among animals and convey these traits to the judge. The official judge will want you to paint a picture of the animals by using the proper terminology to describe the animals.

Correct phrases about the livestock are the foundation of accuracy. Claim strong points for an animal only if the animal has them. Do not try to make small differences into big placing points. Furthermore, do not try to impress the judge with a discussion of every point that is different among animals. Discuss only the most important reasons for placing one animal above another.


ORGANIZATION OF A SET OF REASONS

Organization is the *second important* factor that should be a part of your reasons. It is easier for the person listening to you to understand what you are saying if you present things in a logical, well-ordered fashion. This organization begins with taking notes. If your notes are organized, your reasons will be organized also.

In your reasons, divide a class into three pairs: a top pair, a middle pair, and a bottom pair. Your notes for reasons also should be divided into three pairs.

When taking notes, use either the 4-H Judging Reasons Notecard or a notebook, both of which will be described in this section.

Figure 2: Oral Reasons Card

4-H JUDGING REASON NOTECARD	
Class Name _____ (A)	Placing _____ (B)
Opening Statement _____ (C)	
<hr/>	
Top Pair – Reasons for _____ over _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(D)</div>	Grant to _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(E)</div> Criticize _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(F)</div>
<hr/>	
Middle Pair – Reasons for _____ over _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(G)</div>	Grant to _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(H)</div> Criticize _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(I)</div>
<hr/>	
Bottom Pair – Reasons for _____ over _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(J)</div>	Grant to _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(K)</div> Criticize _____ <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(L)</div>
<hr/>	
I place _____ last because <div style="text-align: center; padding: 10px;">(L)</div>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-end;"> <div style="font-size: small;"> Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status. Form 655 </div> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> </div>	

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You may use the Reasons Notecard or a notebook in the same manner as shown in Figures 2 and 3. However, the notecard may be easier for beginners and juniors. Line A is used for class name and Line B is for class placing. Section C refers to the opening statement for the class. Boxes D, E, and F refer to the top pair; boxes G, H, and I refer to the middle pair; and J, K, and L refer to the bottom pair. Boxes D, G, and J are for placings; boxes E, H, and K are for grants; and boxes F, I, and L are for faults or criticisms. This outline for note taking can be used for any class of four animals with any placing.

Figure 3: Notebook

The image shows a notebook page with a grid layout for taking notes. The page is divided into sections labeled A through L. Section A is at the top, followed by Section B. Section C is a diagonal line. Below are three rows of three boxes each, labeled D-F, G-I, and J-L. Each box has a diagonal line in the top-left corner.

A		
B		
/ c		
/	/	/
D	E	F
/	/	/
G	H	I
/	/	/
J	K	L

SAMPLE NOTES

When you begin taking notes, always write down the most obvious characteristics first, then underneath the big things, write the details or specific differences.

Reasons Format

The format used for reasons is simple and straightforward and allows for a complete description of a class. This style does require an understanding of livestock evaluation as animals are analyzed in great detail, and one must have the ability to recognize important differences and to place these differences in a priority order.

Following is an outline that demonstrates the basic format:

Opening statement	Selecting the most . . . , I chose the alignment of 1-2-3-4 for the (name of class) .
Criticism of top animal	I realize that 1 could be
Comparison of 1 over 2	Nevertheless, I used 1 over 2 in the top pair as he was
Grants 2 over 1	Sure, 2 was
Criticism of 2	but, the Duroc barrow is . . . , so he is second.
Comparison of 2 over 3	However, with these faults aside, it is the . . . of 2 over the . . . of 3.
Grants 3 over 2	I recognize that 3 is
Criticism of 3	but at the same time, he is
Comparison of 3 over 4	Even so, in my concluding pair, 3 beats 4. He is a more
Grant 4 over 3	I realize 4 is
Criticism of 4	However, this does not make up for the fact

The type of terminology used in each section of the reasons is important. In the opening statement on the top animal, you may use either descriptive terms or class comparisons. In the pair comparisons, you may use either class comparisons (. . .est) or simple comparative (. . .er) terms. Grants are comparative terms or class comparisons. Criticisms are descriptive (no “er” terms) or class comparisons.

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Properly used, this format will allow you to completely describe all of the important points in a class in a well-organized, easy-to-follow manner.

Transitions

Transitions are a way of moving smoothly from one section of the reasons to another. This is done as simply as possible while still maintaining a smooth transition. We strongly discourage excessively wordy transition statements.

Listed below are words to use when moving into a grant:

- X Grant
- X Recognize
- X Realize
- X Concede
- X Admit
- X Yes

You may want to try something such as this statement: “2 is straighter lined and cleaner fronted, but he is . . .” (move into criticism). Here we are using only “but” for the transition term, but effective voice inflection is necessary to make this work.

To move into a criticism, use the following language:

I realize that 1 is . . . ; nevertheless, I used him in the top pair over 2 as he was

But he is the lightest muscled, barest handling

But I criticized 2 and left him second, as he was

But I faulted 2 and placed him second, as he was

When moving into another pair, here are some transitions that can be used:

Still, in the bottom pair, I used 3 over 4.

Nonetheless, in the top pair of heavier muscled gilts, it's 1 over 2.

Nevertheless, in the middle pair, I used 2 over 3.

Even so, in the bottom pair

However, in the middle pair

Just a brief word about originality: Experiment with different transitions and phrasings. Try them on the coach, and if he or she doesn't like them, you will be the first to know. Note to the juniors: Get the basics down first, then start finding original ways to say things.

SAMPLE SET OF REASONS

“I placed the Angus Heifers 3-1-4-2.

I started the class with 3, the heaviest muscled, highest volumed, growthiest heifer in the class. Ideally, I would like to see her longer necked and smoother shouldered! Even so, I used 3 over 1, as she was a larger framed, heavier muscled, bigger volumed, growthier heifer. She was a longer bodied, taller topped heifer that has more arch and spring of rib, with more width and natural thickness down

her top and through all portions of her quarter. In addition, she appeared to have a higher weight per day of age. However, I do admit that 1 was a more feminine-fronted heifer, being more refined about her head, longer necked, and laid in smoother about her shoulder, but she was a shallower ribbed, lighter muscled heifer that is pinched in her forerib.

Coming to my middle pair, I placed 1 over 4 because she was a more feminine, longer bodied, and more structurally correct heifer. She was especially smoother through her neck/shoulder junction, longer sided, and stood more squarely on her feet and legs. Granted, 4 was a heavier muscled, more ruggedly designed heifer that stood on more substance of bone, but I criticized her for being a more conventional, coarser shouldered heifer that was cow hocked and splay footed.

Dropping to my bottom pair, I placed 4 over 2 as she was a heavier, bigger volumed, heavier muscled heifer that stood on a greater diameter of bone. She had more arch and spring through a deeper rib, with more thickness down her top and a greater volume of muscle from hip to hock. However, 2 was a more feminine, leaner about her neck, and smoother shouldered. Nonetheless, 2 was the smallest framed, lightest muscled, narrowest made heifer in the class and stood on the finest bone with the lowest weight per day of age. *Thank you.*"

DELIVERING A SET OF ORAL REASONS

Delivery is the *third factor* that is necessary for a good set of reasons. Everyone is nervous the first time he or she gives a set of reasons, but with practice, it will become easier. These six factors for delivering a good set of reasons will help you:

- X Flow** – The way you put words together into phrases, sentences, and paragraphs is considered flow. A group of short, choppy phrases, each standing alone, is boring and difficult to follow. A group of long, smooth-flowing phrases is enjoyable for the listener. Begin your reasons at one speed and keep a similar pace throughout the entire set. Don't talk too quickly or too slowly. Speaking without hesitation will allow you to receive a higher score for your reasons. The only times to pause are between pairs and when you need to take a breath. Follow every set of reasons with a sincere "*Thank you.*"
- X Inflection** – Voice inflection is one of the most important items in your delivery. Place emphasis on the words that describe the important characteristics of each animal. Careful selection of key words to emphasize will take some practice, but in time, it should become a normal part of your oral reasons.
- X Volume** – The volume you use to deliver your reasons will depend on how you normally speak and the size of the room. If you are soft spoken and are in a large room, increase the volume of your voice in order to be heard and understood clearly. If you are normally loud and are giving reasons in a small room, decrease the volume of your voice so it doesn't echo.
- X Eye Contact** – Try to look at the person who is listening to your reasons. If you maintain eye contact throughout the entire set, your reasons will be more professional. Direct your discussion toward the official even if you do not look the judge straight in the eye. It is easier for some people to look at the top of the judge's head when giving reasons rather than looking him or her directly in the eye. You will receive a higher score if you do not gaze into space or look around the room.
- X Distance** – Depending on your voice and stature, the distance you stand from the judge will vary. A short, soft-spoken person should stand closer to the judge than a tall, deep-voiced person whose voice carries well. Nonetheless, 6 to 10 feet is generally adequate.

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x Stance – When giving a set of reasons, make the situation as comfortable as possible for the judge and for yourself. Stand upright, with your hands behind your back or folded at your waist. Place your feet squarely at shoulders' width. Avoid rocking back and forth or rolling on the balls of your feet.

TERMINOLOGY FOR ORAL REASONS

Terminology is the *fourth and final factor* that goes into an effective set of reasons. Try to put the words and phrases together in a well-organized, logical fashion when describing livestock. Be sure to describe only what you see, and never invent things that are not there.

It is important to know the meaning of every term or phrase you use. An official who is unfamiliar with a certain term may ask you to define it further. As you look over the terms, try to picture an animal with the characteristics described by the terms, or terminology. If you are uncertain about the exact meaning of a term or phrase, ask your parents, 4-H leader, or Extension agent.

More desirable and less desirable characteristics are listed on the terminology pages for several traits of each species (beef, swine, sheep). Use caution when applying the terminology in a set of reasons; in some instances, a desirable characteristic in one situation may actually be an undesirable characteristic in another (for example, larger framed versus smaller framed). Furthermore, not every term in the lists has an appropriate opposite term; if there is no term, it is shown as ———. For terms that contain a blank (_____), insert the appropriate part of the animal you are describing.