

Taking Notes and the Reasons Format

Taking notes is a necessity when you judge several classes and are asked to give reasons on those classes at a later time. Perhaps the best devices for taking reasons are a 6" x 8" stenographer's spiral notebook and a pencil.

The format used for reasons at Iowa State University is straight-forward and allows for a complete description of a class. This style requires a thorough understanding of livestock evaluation. You must have the ability to recognize important differences and place these differences in order of priority.

A class of livestock consists of three pairs: a top pair, a middle pair, and a bottom pair. In each pair, we have three basic sections: comparison, grant, and criticism. The following is an example layout of a note page to aid in taking notes on a class using the "compare-grant-criticize" format. The following description of the basic format, including examples of how to transition from one section to another, will assist you in taking notes for an organized and detailed set of oral reasons.

Top Pair	1/2	Transition	Grant
	Compare		Criticize
Middle Pair	2/3	Transition	Grant
	Compare		Criticize
Bottom Pair	3/4	Transition	Grant
	Compare		Criticize

Introduction

Within a set of oral reasons, the “compare-grant-criticize” format is preceded by an introduction. The introduction begins with a statement of how the class is placed and may be stated as follows:

- ◆ I placed the market steers 1, 2, 3, 4.
- ◆ My preferred alignment of the market steers is 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Opening Statement. The introduction of a set of oral reasons includes the statement of how the class was placed (above) and an opening statement. The purpose of an opening statement is to describe the general logic of the class, or in other words, what may be obvious to an official judge in the first minute of the class. To start off, there are really only three effective situations to describe in opening statements: an outstanding individual, a top pair, or an individual that combines certain priorities most effectively. Examples of these situations, respectively, are listed below and can be applied to any particular class of livestock.

- ◆ I started with the red heifer as she excels the class in terms of broodiness and eye appeal.
- ◆ In a top pair of more correctly designed gilts, I personally prefer the added muscularity and width of skeleton found in 1 over 2 in my initial comparison.
- ◆ I started with 1 as she most effectively combines growth and substance.

Description of the top pair

Step 1: Compare. The first step in describing the first pair in a class is to describe why individual 1 is better than individual 2. There are two important points to remember within the compare section. The first of which is to keep your description in a logical format by keeping selection priorities together. Secondly, it is important to describe the differences between two animals in order of priority. For example, if the biggest difference between a pair of breeding heifers is that one is more correctly balanced than the other, then the differences in this trait category should be mentioned first. It may happen to be that heifer 1 is also more muscular than 2; however, this will be mentioned after the description of balance, due to the fact that it is of lesser importance in the alignment of the pair of females. The following is an example of the “compare” section within the description of the top pair in a class.

- ◆ The red heifer is clearly more correctly balanced. This is primarily due to the fact that 1 is longer necked, smoother shouldered, and leveler hipped. Additionally, she also obtains an advantage in muscularity when compared to 2.

Notice that the above description begins with the general priority of “balance” and then follows with the specific details of how this heifer is more correctly balanced than the other. In this way, it is much easier for the reasons listener to follow and understand how you interpreted the differences between the two heifers. The final point within the comparison section of a pair description is to only mention the characteristics that actually play a role in placing the two animals. If an animal also has a slight advantage in one other trait, it is not important to mention if it doesn’t assist in placing the pair of animals. This will aid in keeping oral reasons cleaner and more organized.

Step 2: Grant. It is also important within the description of a pair of animals to explain the opposing side of the pair. There has never been a competitor, to my knowledge, who has placed every class correctly. Especially in the instance of a close pair, it is imperative to point out the reasons why someone may prefer the pair switched.

Transition phrases that lead into the grant of your reasons format are typically one or two word phrases that let the reasons listener know that you are beginning to talk about the opposing individual within a paired comparison. They are usually a great place to add in phenotypic IDs to “spice-up” your description (obvious characteristics that set one individual apart from the rest, i.e. color differences, gender differences, conformational IDs). Even though your grant within a pair is typically short and general, it is important to remember to keep descriptions in order of importance. For example, if the 2nd, 3rd, or 4th place animal has a class advantage in a major area, this should be the first thing mentioned. For starters, the key words used in grant transitions can be the same in every set of reasons. In the following examples, the key words are underlined.

- ◆ I realize that the dark fibered ewe is more attractive from a profile as she is longer necked and more correct in her topline.
- ◆ I appreciate that 2 is wider skeletoned and more opened up underneath.
- ◆ Yes, 4 obtains a class advantage in muscularity as he is biggest topped and thickest ended.
- ◆ Now, I will be the first to admit that the Yorkshire appearing barrow is more athletically driven as he is more comfortable off both ends of his skeleton.
- ◆ Admittedly, the short switched bull appears easier fleshing due to his added moderation and volume.

Step 3: Criticize. Now that the other side of the comparison has been accomplished by a complete grant, it is important to state specific reasons why you still prefer the 2nd place animal in this position. This is established by stating direct criticisms that, in your opinion, don’t allow the individual to be placed any higher. Of course, the same rule of keeping traits in order of priority still applies; however, it is not necessary to say more than three negative things about a particular animal. If this animal has a class disadvantage in a major area, then use an (...est) term to describe this fault and mention it first in their criticism. As discussed within the prior section, only the important characteristics that played a role in making your decision need to be mentioned. The conclusion of each criticism should end in the phrase “so he’s second”, “so he’s third”, or “so he’s fourth” to let the reason listener know when you are finished discussing that particular pair. Again, much like that of grants, transition phrases that lead into the criticism of your reasons are typically one or two word phrases that let the reasons listener know that you are beginning your opinion of why the opposing individual should conclude a paired comparison. For starters, the key words used in criticism transitions, typically used in negative connotation, can be the same in every set of reasons. In the following examples, the key transition words are underlined.

- ◆ However, he is the shallowest bodied and poorest structured bull of the class, so he's fourth.
- ◆ Unfortunately, the heavy sheathed bull is upright in his shoulder and restricted in his movement, so he's third.
- ◆ Despite this, he is the lightest muscled and softest handling of my initial three, so he's third.
- ◆ Still, this does not compensate for the fact that she is the flattest and shallowest ribbed heifer that should prove the hardest fleshing of any in the class, so she's fourth.
- ◆ On the other hand, he's a plainer topped barrow who falls short of the shape and composition of my class winner, so he's second.
- ◆ At the same time, she's also the frailest made and poorest performing heifer of the four, so she's third.

Transitions between pairs

The above format outlines how to describe the initial pair within a class; however, each class contains three distinct pairs. To complete a set of reasons, simply follow the above "compare-grant-criticize" format through the two remaining pairs. With that in mind, to effectively utilize the format described above and transition between pairs in a method that is easy for the reasons listener to follow, some sort of transition between pairs must be used. Much like that of an opening statement, an effective transition statement will generalize the obvious characteristics that place one individual in a pair over another. Within the following example transition statements, the underlined words may be interchanged, allowing the structure of the sentence to be used almost every time. Notice that the underlined words are generalizations and are not specific characteristics. The specific details, in an organized fashion, that break-down the general terms use in your transition is what will follow your pair transition. As you become more comfortable with the reasons format, it is important to use some creativity in your transition statements. This will make you sound unique in relation to other competitors.

- ◆ Nevertheless, it is a matter of muscle that compels me to place one over two in my final comparison
- ◆ Yet, it is her decided advantage in balance that places her over three in the intermediate pair
- ◆ Even so, in regard to my final comparison, it is certainly volume that places three over four.
- ◆ Still, three beats four in my concluding comparison due his distinct advantage in structural correctness.

Tying thoughts or phrases together

Many times within a set of oral reasons, the situation where there is more than one major category that places a pair (ex. muscle and leanness) may arise. In this case, it may be helpful to use phrases that tie these categories together in a fashion that doesn't simply sound like a extensive list of terms. The point of this section is not to make reasons more complicated, but only to make them more interesting to listen to. If we keep in mind that our job in oral reasons is to "paint an interesting and accurate picture", then describing a specific view from which the trait is observed will make reasons more interesting. The following are examples of this type of tie-in phrase.

- ◆ When viewed from behind....
- ◆ From a profile....
- ◆ He further separates himself when viewed from the rear view as....
- ◆ As I study him from the side...
- ◆ Down his top, he reads more.....

Additionally, phrases that introduce the specific details after the general category has been stated may also be included to help "paint the picture". Examples of these are listed below.

- ◆ More specifically, she is....
- ◆ This is primarily due to the fact that she....
- ◆ To break this down, he is....

Finally, phrases that introduce a new major category or tie thoughts together within a category are also helpful in a pair comparison and are as follows.

- ◆ Not only is she....., but she also....
- ◆ From a carcass standpoint, he is...
- ◆ Just as importantly, he also is...
- ◆ Furthermore
- ◆ Additionally
- ◆ He compliments this by...
- ◆ She further separates herself with her added advantage in...
- ◆ In terms of....., he is....