

How to Watch a Rodeo
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Bareback Bronc Riding — The event is judged according to the performances of both the rider and the bucking horse. It is a single-handhold, eight-second ride which starts with the cowboy's feet held in a position over the break of the horse's shoulders until the horse's front feet touch the ground first jump out of the chute. The rider earns points maintaining upper body control while moving his feet in a toes-turned-out rhythmic motion in time with the horse's bucking action.

Steer Wrestling — This event, which was originally called "bull dogging", requires the cowboy to leap from the running horse onto the back of a 600+ pound steer, catch it behind the horns, and stop the steer's forward momentum. He then wrestles the steer to the ground with all four of its legs and head pointing in the same direction. The hazer, who rides along the steer's right to keep the animal running straight, assists the steer wrestler.

Saddle Bronc Riding — Known as rodeo's classic event, saddle bronc riding is judged similarly to bareback bronc riding but there are additional possibilities to being disqualified; that is, losing a stirrup or dropping the thickly braided rein that is attached to the horse's halter. The cowboy sits on the horse differently due to the saddle and rein, and the forward and backward action of his legs covers a different area of the horse. Saddle broncs are usually several hundred pounds heavier than bareback horses and generally buck in a slower manner.

Tie Down Roping — This event, which was originally called "calf roping", is an authentic ranch skill that originated from working cowboys. Once the calf has been roped, the cowboy dismounts and runs down the length of the rope to the calf. When the calf is laid down on the ground, the cowboy ties three of its legs together with a six-foot piggin' string. Calves are given a head start, and if the cowboy's horse leaves the box too soon, a barrier breaks and a 10-second penalty is added to the roper's time. In all of the timed events, a fraction of a second makes the difference between winning and losing.

Cowgirls Barrel Racing — This event is a horse race with turns. The cowgirl's time begins as she rides her horse across the starting line in the arena. She makes a run around three upright barrels, which are in a cloverleaf pattern, and back to the starting line where the clock stops. Tipping a barrel is permitted, but if it is knocked to the ground, a five-second penalty is added to her time.

Team Roping — Team roping is the only rodeo event that features two contestants. The team is made up of a header and a heeler. The header ropes the horns, then dallies or wraps his rope around his saddle horn and turns the steer to the left for the other cowboy who ropes the heels. The heeler must throw a loop with precision timing to catch both of the steer's hind legs. The time clock stops once both ropers have made a catch and brought the animals to a stop, facing each other.

Bull Riding — Bull riders, who might not weigh more than 150 pounds, place a flat braided rope around a bull that weighs almost 2000 pounds. The bull rope is placed around the animal, just behind its shoulders. It is then looped and threaded through itself and the cowboy wraps it around his riding hand with only his grip holding him in place. The rider relies on balance and leg strength to make the eight-second buzzer. Look for bull riders to sit up close to their bull ropes and to turn their toes out because rides are judged on the riding style of the competitor and the bucking ability of the bull.