

# AccelleRate

By Kenda Lenseigne

You fire up the crew cab, adjust the seat and turn up the volume as George Strait croons *Amarillo By Morning* through the speakers. You make your way out of the driveway to grab the road beneath you, and accelerate as you feel the ponies start to breathe a little fire under your gas pedal. The sign reads, “25MPH curves ahead”, so you touch the brake as you approach the turn to slow the engine enough to keep the wheels where they’re supposed to be. At a precise and instinctual moment, you release the brake at the apex of the turn and move your foot back to the gas to accelerate ahead. Those of us who have been driving for a while have learned by experience how to judge speed and distance while maneuvering our vehicles down the road. If there’s a turn ahead, we automatically rate then accelerate to get through safely and with the most efficiency to keep moving forward.

This translates so incredibly well when it comes to managing our horses through a mounted shooting pattern, mainly because the majority, if not all of us have experience behind the wheel. CMSA’s courses have varying degrees of turns, from 90 to 180 to full 360’s and all at a fast pace. Where fast is fast, efficient is faster. Those who manage their 4-legged vehicle best, both in and out of the turn tend to rise to the top of the leader board.

What is Rate?

In physics, rate can be categorized as:

**Speed**, the rate of change of position, or the change of position per unit of time

**Acceleration** the rate of change in speed, or the change in speed per unit of time

In more relatable terms for Mounted Shooting, let’s use the rundown barrel as an example for using rate:

**Speed:** Adjusting the speed of the horse by “checking” (pulling back gently) on the reins while also changing position in the saddle (sitting down, deeper, or back slightly). This notifies the horse

*prior* to the turn, that a turn is coming therefore he or she can collect all four legs, engage the hindquarters and prepare for the most balance and efficiency possible. This “braking” before the barrel can range anywhere from 10’-30’ or 1-3 strides more or less depending on the degree of the turn and the ability of the horse.



## Acceleration:

As we have rated our speed prior to the barrel turn, we can then engage the “gas pedal” at the top (apex) of the turn by squeezing the sides of the horse and releasing the rein pressure. This will notify the horse that he or she can accelerate out of the turn and make the most of the time on the clock.







**Making a pocket:** Depending on the ability of your horse, it's important to come into a barrel turn wide, and then deep (8-10' off of the barrel,) so that when you begin to accelerate at the apex your horse will come out of the turn on a straight line. The alternative is coming in too tight, which ultimately means you'll come out of the turn too wide, making the first two rundown shots difficult to achieve. It can also mean that the rundown won't be straight, and for every time we deviate off our straight line (by unintentionally swerving), we cost ourselves valuable seconds on the clock.



Not only do rate and accelerate apply to the turns within our courses, but they can also apply to our warm up and shut down circles. As we see the light turn green, we can accelerate from the start line, and within the course using rate and accelerate through each turn. After the number 10 target, we can then apply rate to our shut down circle, just as we would if there was a barrel at the finish line. For those of us who may worry about the shutdown, and the fast-approaching fence, imagine an invisible barrel at the finish line, and rate for it!

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