



Team roping evolved into a sport when a couple of cowboys somewhere, many years ago, turned a common ranching procedure into competition. The procedure, used to secure a steer so that he could be branded or doctored, is for two cowboys to rope the front and hind ends of a steer and stretch him between their horses.


Team Roping competition, now one of the six standard rodeo events, begins with a steer in a chute and ropers on horseback to either side. A run begins with the steer being released from the chute and given a head start down the arena (known as the *barrier distance*, about 10-15 feet), after which point the ropers may give chase. The first roper (the *header*), comes up on the steer's left side and, throwing his loop, ropes the steer around the horns or neck. Next, the header secures the steer by wrapping the rope remaining in his hand around the saddle-horn (called *dallying*). After making his dallies, the header will then steer his horse to the left across the arena, pulling the steer behind him.

It will now be the job of his partner (the *heeler*) to follow with the steer, approach from behind, and skillfully throw his loop so that it encircles both of the steer's hind feet. The heeler will finish the run by stopping his horse while simultaneously dallying his rope around his saddle-horn. All of the action in a team roping run usually occurs in a time span under 15 seconds (sometimes even less than five). And time is of the essence, as the team that performs their job the quickest wins the event.



Time is called by an arena judge (the *flag-man* or *flagger*) who waits until both ropes are taut and each ropers' horse is facing the steer. At that instant, he will drop his flag, signalling the timekeeper to stop the clock and record the team's time. Penalties can be added to the team's total elapsed time; if a team begins chasing before the steer has traveled the length of his allotted head start (called *breaking the barrier* or *breaking-out*) ten extra seconds will be added to the team's time. If the heeler is able to rope only one hind foot, the penalty is five seconds. And, of course, if either roper misses his target, the team receives no score for the run (a *no-time*).

Most USTRC ropings are *four-steer averages* (also called *four-headers*), meaning that a winning team must catch four steers consecutively AND make their runs cumulatively faster than any other team in the competition. If a team misses just one steer, they're out of the money. But if they've roped four steers with a total time less than any other team, they've won a bunch of money and maybe a trophy saddle or buckle. Its a combination of skill, horsemanship, team work, and luck that is fast, furious, and fun for ropers from under twelve to over eighty.

Content provided by [John Findlay](#) 

## MORE TEAM ROPING INFORMATION

### [Glossary of Roping Terms](#)

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