First Barrel Food for Thought...

The "button hook" approach will keep a horse more balanced in four wheel drive, but creates a difficult, sharp angle coming into the turn.

This diagonal approach may seem like the straightest, fastest path between two points, but this angle can make it more likely that your horse will become unbalanced and lean into or shoulder the turn.

Running straight into the arena, aligned just to the right side of the third barrel (if right barrel is first), and then making a gradual arc to the "cross," starting at a point approximately 10 yards (30 feet) from the first barrel, both helps to keep your horse upright and balanced, while creating an angle that makes the turn easier for a horse at high speeds.

BarrelRacingTips.com