



Dog Talk



AKC Obedience Judging Articles

by John Cox

JUDGING ARTICLES:

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AKC Judge's Books

Take A Moment, Step Into The Shoes of an Obedience Judge

by John Cox

Take a moment and consider yourself as one applying to judge in the sport of Obedience and look to what it takes to fill the shoes of such a judge. We are all quite opinionated when it comes to the question of what makes an excellent Obedience judge and opinions will vary as to what it takes to fill the shoes of an obedience judge. What kind of judge would YOU make and how would YOU go about judging? As in every field there are variations (some good and some that could use improvement) in how an individual accomplishes a task so consider the options in meeting your ideals of an EXCELLENT judge. Take a close look at some of the aspects and decision-making involved in judging with you stepping into the ring as the judge.

You have decided that you want to judge obedience trials so now what are the steps required to meet this goal? One starts by applying first for Novice - Open and Utility are applied for separately at a later time. Before prematurely applying to judge Novice Obedience Classes at American Kennel Club member or licensed trials, the AKC has certain requirements that must be met. Failure to meet any requirement will result in the application being returned. Exemptions from some requirements may be made for applicants from Alaska, Hawaii or Puerto Rico.

To qualify as an applicant – you must have:

1. Personally owned, trained and titled a dog to an AKC Utility Dog (UD) title and at least one other dog to an AKC Companion Dog (CD) title;
2. Been active in the sport a minimum of six (6) consecutive years;
3. Acted as a steward in Novice/Open/Utility class (depending upon class applying for) at AKC member or licensed trials a minimum of ten (10) times;
4. Have judged at AKC sanctioned obedience A or B matches a minimum of five (5) times. Judging a non-regular class at an AKC trial with a minimum of ten (10) dogs competing may substitute on a one to one basis to replace the match requirement. Apprentice assignments beyond the three (3) required may be used on a one to one basis to replace the match requirement. Apprentice judged under three (3) judges with a minimum of ten (10) dogs in each class. **Apprenticing is for prospective judges only and is to be done at the level they are eligible to apply for.**
5. Actively participated as an assistant trainer or as a trainer in a dog training club or similar organization;
6. Attended an AKC obedience seminar within the last three (3) years.

Check out the AKC web page for further details: http://www.akc.org/events/obedience/judging_requirements.cfm

As a judge you are to:

1. Qualify the dogs that meet the minimum requirements in the Obedience Regulations
2. Non-qualify the dogs that do not meet the minimum requirements
3. Separate and place the top four dogs and handlers in the class

A good knowledge of the Obedience Regulations and Guidelines For Obedience judges is only part of judging - one has to have the fortitude to carry out the correct decisions. All decisions are not going to be clear-cut and scoring faults is not going to be easy. Every infraction from perfection (providing it is worth at least one-half point) should be scored. This may sound like nit-picking but consider the following: If the dog and handler in the ring make a minor or substantial error and it is not scored, is this fair to the next dog and handler when they perform the exercise (or between exercise) perfectly? In theory, you would be giving the same score for different qualities of work.

While studying judges, keep notes on both the good points observed and points you feel might be improved upon. Pay particular attention to the following:

1. Is the judge giving the impression of being the one in charge of the ring and meeting his/her judge's responsibilities?
2. How does the judge set up and run their ring?
3. What instructions are given to the stewards?
4. What kind of heeling pattern is used? Is it a good one and does it appear to have been thought out?
5. What position is the judge in for observing and scoring the performance of the dog and handler in the ring?
6. The scoring of a performance.
7. How are the ribbon prizes presented?

1. Is the Judge giving the impression of being the one in charge of the ring and meeting the Judge's responsibilities?

The Guidelines For Obedience judges addresses the duties of a judge in the areas of judge's responsibilities, appearance, impartiality, knowledge, and responsibilities to exhibitors, spectators and to the sport of purebred dogs.

JUDGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

It is vitally important for all judges to understand their responsibilities to the sport. Obedience judges symbolize the entire sport of obedience training. While presiding over a ring they represent The American Kennel Club, an organization devoted to impartial administration of every rule and regulation adopted to promote and protect the interest of purebred dogs, their breeding and their exhibiting in shows, obedience trials, tracking tests, and field trials.

IMPARTIALITY

Judges should be friendly and courteous, but above all they must be impartial and firm. It is fine to have a sympathetic attitude toward some unexpected failure provided the decision and scoring are not affected. Competent judges are aware that they cannot make concessions to one exhibitor without doing a disfavor to all other exhibitors. First, consideration must be given to those who enter the ring prepared to perform the exercises as required by the Regulations, without any special treatment.

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE EXHIBITORS

A judge must remember at all times that every exhibitor is an important participant in the sport. Without exhibitors there would be no trials. It must also be remembered that for every experienced exhibitor, there are hundreds of newcomers. The alienation of newcomers may eventually cause them to lose interest, stop training and quit the sport. The sport needs the novice, because the future of the sport is in the hands of the novice.

2. How does a Judge set up their ring?

The way the obedience ring is set up WILL affect the dog's performance. To be sure the ring is going to be the way YOU want it is one reason to be at ringside at least 45-minutes before the scheduled starting time of the class. This will allow time to set up the ring, check the equipment, make changes if necessary and instruct the stewards on how YOU want the ring to run. A good judge will plan the ring set-up so every dog and handler can move between exercises and perform each exercise to the best advantage. While you are observing judges, see how they check the following:

RING SIZE

The ring should be paced off to make sure it meets the requirements in Chapter 1, Section 32 of the Obedience Regulations. If the ring does not meet the specifications, you are going to need to take action.

FLOOR AND GROUND CONDITIONS

It is your responsibility to see that every handler and dog have a fair shot at a good clean performance; this is first accomplished by having good ring conditions as per the Regulations. If you don't deal with these deficiencies, how are you going to deal with the scoring of a dog/handler when they are affected by such conditions?

If indoors, the floor shall have surface or covering that provides footing for the largest dogs. Rubber or similar non-slip material totaling at least four feet in width must be laid for the takeoff and landing at all jumps unless the surface, in the judge's opinion, is such as to not require it.

If outdoors, "The ground shall be clean and level, and the grass, if any, shall be cut short." Short means SHORT! Keep in mind the small dog trying to retrieve a dumbbell, scent articles or accomplishing a Long Down in long grass. Blades of grass and weeds will be sticking the dog in the face and unfairly affecting its performance as compared to the Saint Bernard whose face is a good thirty inches from the ground. Of course, a Saint Bernard will not look kindly to having long blades of grass going up his nostrils as he bends down in the course of picking up a dumbbell! Level ground means level! The handler and dog, not to mention the judge, should not have to concern themselves with trying to maintain their balance when walking in the ring.

EQUIPMENT

You now have the ring all squared (actually rectangular) away and it is time to check out the equipment. If indoors, and matting is to be used, there are a few things to keep in mind. If your ring is fully matted - you've got it made! You, the handler and dog have ideal conditions. If not fully matted, matting for jumping must be four feet wide and laid for the takeoff and landing at all jumps. If the mats you are supplied with are only three feet wide, two will have to be used to make the required four-foot width for jumping. Length of mat is now also a concern. A dog must be positioned at least eight feet (in Open) in front of the High Jump and Broad Jump. Also, the dumbbell must be thrown at least eight feet beyond the High Jump. This means there should be AT LEAST sixteen feet of matting to be fair to all breeds of dogs for takeoff and landing.

The Jumps are regulated and the required measurements are in Chapter 4, Sections 11 and 13, and Chapter 5, Section 14. These sections also deal with the painting and numbering of the jumps. There are all types of jumps that one will encounter. Beside the wood jumps we now have PVC (plastic) styles. These jumps must have the same properties of the wood jumps. For example, the boards in the High Jump must be rigid and not able to bend and fall out of the upright standards. The Bar must be weighted and have the integrity of a wood bar. It is up to the judge to measure the jumps and have corrections made if needed.

DEALING WITH RING AND EQUIPMENT DEFICIENCIES

The judge should take immediate action to correct the deficiencies in the ring or equipment by bringing them to the attention of the Trial Secretary or Superintendent. If there are undesirable ring conditions they must be reported to the American Kennel Club if the deficiencies have not been promptly corrected at the judge's request per Chapter 1, Section 34. The judge reports to the AKC by writing up the uncorrected problem inside the judge's Book cover. Also, a letter (or email) should be sent to the Obedience Department as a follow-up. Had the judge reported incorrect equipment at the club's prior show, it would have been corrected and you would not be dealing with such problems. Don't hesitate to take action - you owe it to the sport and exhibitors!

GIVE ATTENTION TO LIGHTING

Be aware of lighting if indoors or out. Pay attention to the dog's line of sight for jumping and signals, and consider where the Group Exercise will take place in the ring. For example, the sun would be better on the dogs back than in its face. Lighting might affect where you want the gate and table in relation to the heeling pattern, plus the position of the jumps may need to be thought out.

WHERE DO YOU WANT THE GATE?

Where the ring gate goes in relation to the ring is YOUR choice. If you don't care for the location of the gate when arriving at the ring, change it! It is best to be comfortable with the gate in relation to your heeling pattern and set-up of the ring. The end result will be a better job of judging.

WHERE DO YOU WANT THE JUDGE' S TABLE?

Give some real consideration as to where YOU want the judge's table. At the AKC Obedience Judging Seminars it is suggested that the table be OUTSIDE the ring. Their reasons make good common sense:

The ring is for the use of the dog, handler and judge.

* If stewards are on the outside of the ring their attention is more likely to be focused on the ring activities, and they will be ready when needed.

* If there is food on the table for the judge or stewards, it is now outside the ring.

* The dog and handler have a better opportunity to perform with the elimination of the commotion around the judge's table. It also frees up more space for better use of the ring.

MARKING THE RING FOR THE DIFFERENT EXERCISES

One thing a judge should strive for is to be consistent. Every dog and handler deserves the same opportunity when entering the ring. One way to help achieve consistency is to mark the ring for the DIFFERENT exercises as needed. For example, mark where you want the stewards to stand for the Figure Eight. This makes sure the stewards are always the eight feet apart that is required. If not marked, you will notice the stewards unconsciously standing farther apart for larger dogs and closer for smaller dogs. Also be aware of the other "required" marks for the advanced and Preferred classes.

RIBBONS AND PRIZES

Before starting the class, make sure you have all the ribbons and prizes required for that class. This will help your efficiency in being able to present the ribbons and awards after marking the placements in your judge's Book.

3. What instructions will be given to the Stewards?

In the Obedience ring a steward CAN make a big difference in how efficiently a ring functions. Their actions can also have an affect on the performance of the dog in the ring. The judge is in sole charge of the way they want the ring conducted, but if this is NOT conveyed to the stewards the first several handlers may be entering a "zoo" instead of an Obedience ring. A helpful suggestion: Have typed steward instructions with your judging equipment. Having your detailed instructions at hand ensures you won't overlook anything and have them available for the stewards' reference during the class.

4. What type of heeling pattern is used? Is it a good one and appear to have been thought out for your ring?

When you are invited to judge at a trial, there is an important Chapter and Section to keep in mind. CHAPTER 2, SECTION 6 – JUDGING OF CLASSES AND DIFFERENT BREEDS: "The same methods and standards will be used for judging and scoring the regular, preferred, optional titling and non-regular classes and in judging and scoring the work of dogs of different breeds, including dogs listed with AKC Canine Partners." The time to be aware of this regulation is BEFORE you set up your ring and plot out the heeling pattern and the areas for the different exercises. Large breeds (and super-fast dogs) require a considerable amount of room to maneuver. If this is not factored in beforehand, then the dog's performance could be compromised. All breeds need be given ample space so they have the opportunity to work towards perfection. Also, heeling patterns should be smooth and not choppy. Choppy patterns (explained below) seem to be more of a hindrance to the larger and faster working teams. The next time you go to a trial, notice how the judge has set up their ring. **PAY ATTENTION** to how the space is used for the different exercises. Make note of the heeling pattern. Also observe how far a dog travels before a halt or a turn and how much space is used for the dog and handler to execute the Fast or Slow. There is NO perfect way to set up a ring or a perfect heeling pattern for all breeds, but some judges make better use of the ring space. When judging at an all-breed trial, you have to be ready for whatever breed comes into the ring -- be it a Chihuahua or an Irish Wolfhound. It is imperative that all breeds be given an equal chance to earn a perfect score if you wish to be a fair judge.

HEELING PATTERNS

Heeling is in every AKC obedience class. In choosing a pattern that works for you, also consider the handler and dog. You must give ALL handlers and dogs an EQUAL opportunity to do the principal part of heeling -- the ability of the dog and handler working as a team. Teamwork is best performed when a heeling pattern is smooth. One way to accomplish this objective is to have only one heeling function per leg of the pattern. This provides ALL teams a chance for a smooth performance but when two heeling functions are on one leg of a pattern it becomes choppy and the teamwork starts to suffer. For example, a Fast, Normal, and Halt on one leg would be choppy. Picture an Irish Wolfhound doing this pattern smoothly. Another example...heeling down the center of the ring and making a Right or Left turn and then Slow, using half the ring, before turning again. The choppy pattern will unfairly affect the performance of the larger and/or faster breeds. There is just less room and time to respond if too much is going on during one leg of the heeling pattern. Remember, you are going to be judging these actions. The faults you observe MAY have been caused by YOU by not giving thought to the heeling pattern. The small breeds will start to gain an advantage and you, as a judge, will find your goals of fairness and consistency going down the tubes. A pattern does not have to be long to achieve the smooth objective. The simple "L" pattern (although minimal) lends itself to a smooth performance if you give some thought to where different heeling functions will take place. The "Forward" followed by a few steps and then a "Halt" is another example of unfairness to large breeds, plus it is also choppy. Picture the extremes. A Chihuahua and handler start to heel and the handler walks forward two or three steps and halts on the judge's order. This small breed has had a chance to get up and walk a fair distance before going into a sit. The next dog in the ring is an Irish Wolfhound. The handler starts to heel and walks two or three steps and halts on the judge's order. The Irish Wolfhound starts to move forward in heel position, and maybe just moved one-half or one body length, and now has to go into a sit. Did this breed have the same opportunity to have a smooth performance? The handler of the Irish Wolfhound had no choice but to stop on the judge's order or be penalized for delay in following a judge's order. The judge was consistent and stopped both dogs in the same spot, but lacked good judgment in setting up a heeling pattern that was fair to all breeds. Had the judge halted each dog further away from the Forward, both breeds would have had an equal opportunity for a smooth performance.

FIGURE EIGHT

When planning the area for the Figure Eight think about the ring barriers and, in Open, also consider the jumps. You want to provide ALL dogs the opportunity to go around the outside post and not have to concern them with the possibility of running into an object. Figure Eight posts that are in the corners of a ring or too close to a jump jeopardize the performance of the larger breeds. This type of set up is also too restrictive for the disabled handlers and their dogs. If you are judging indoors and using mats on slick floors, use THREE mats if possible. Large breeds should have mats under them at all times during the Figure Eight if that is the case for the smaller breeds.

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

As you set up for the different individual exercises ask yourself, "Is this exercise going to be fair to ALL breeds and handlers when they enter my ring?" Another point to keep in mind is the disabled handlers and their space requirements. Make a mental picture of an Irish Wolfhound being handled by a person in a wheelchair. With this in mind you should have no problem in setting up the ring that is fair to all who enter.

5. What position is the Judge in for observing and scoring the performance of the dog and handler in the ring?

It is absolutely essential to develop skills in observing dogs and handlers and being able to evaluate their performance fairly and consistently. To help accomplish this goal, give considerable thought as to where the best positions are to observe without interfering with the performance of an individual exercise (or between exercises). Where you stand determines what you can see. It also gives the impression to the spectators outside the ring as to whether or not you know what you're doing! Every judge should want to give the appearance of being professional and precise. There is no perfect position but there are positions that will help the judge better fulfill their responsibilities to the sport. A judge should know what position to be in and why. Sometimes when you are observing from one angle you may be "giving up" being in another position to see other errors that may be occurring. The good judge will recognize what they are giving up," knowing that these errors are less common and of lesser significance than errors observed from their chosen position. When you think through the Regulations, most of the exercises have two common denominators - heel position and the recall. The majority of exercises will refer back to these two items. A few examples of judging positions taken from the Guidelines and AKC Obedience Judging Seminar notes -- are as follows:

HEEL POSITIONS

Heeling Exercises

After planning your heeling pattern, the next step is to plan YOUR positions during the course of the pattern. Judges should attempt to position themselves so the dog and handler will be observed from the rear, front and sides, and the judge's movements during the heeling pattern should be consistent from dog to dog. Knowing where heel position is located is of paramount importance during the course of judging. The five faults of heeling in regards to the dog are forging, lagging, wide, crowding and not being straight in line with the direction of the handler. When starting the heeling pattern, be in position to check for the handler and dog moving out together on the "Forward." This is an area where lagging and forging can occur and you will want to be in a good location to watch and score if needed. Being on the dog's side in line with the handler is preferable. During the Utility Signal Exercise, this position will also be important at the end of heeling; the judge will have a better view of the dog stopping and standing in heel position. It is a scorable fault if the dog is not in heel position at this point. You have to be there to see it!

A good position for judging a Sit is from the front or back of the dog and handler. For example, consider a dog making a SLIGHT error on the Sit; from this location the judge can observe sitting wide, crowding or not straight in line with the handler - three of the more common faults. If judging from the side, two faults could best be observed - forge and lag. This is a good example in choosing a position to see MOST of the errors from one location. A spectator sitting in the bleachers outside the ring can observe a dog sitting a foot in front or behind a handler on a halt. YOU want to be in the BEST position to observe most of the minor errors, if any. This is part of judging fair and consistently.

Planning a heeling pattern that allows you to judge from the dog's side most of the time is preferable to being on the side of the handler. Two key elements in the heeling exercise are the Fast and Slow. The judge needs to watch the transition from Normal to Fast or Slow and back to Normal and evaluate heel position. The "Fast" signifies that the handler must run, handler and dog moving forward at NOTICEABLY ACCELERATED speed. "Slow" signifies the handler and dog must NOTICEABLY DECELERATE from a brisk walk. Judging on the dog's side is a favorable place to see if the dog is maintaining heel position or making any of the five heeling errors. Judging from the handler's side obscures the view of the dog's position. Also, momentarily stepping behind the dog and handler on the Fast or Slow will give an excellent observation point for judging straight in line with the handler.

Other Areas of Heel Positions:

A dog is in heel position at some point during EVERY exercise. A good judge will study the different exercises in various classes and see when the dog or handler is required to be in heel position. Then studying Chapter 2, Section 18 (Heel Position) and see how it relates to all the different exercises. To observe a fault you first have to recognize that fault. Let's look at two exercises and notice the importance of the judge's location for judging heel position.

NOVICE - STAND FOR EXAMINATION (Chapter 3, Sections 7 and 8)

The handler is to be in heel position before leaving and after returning to the dog. In this exercise the handler is the one to assume heel position. To start the exercise it is suggested that the judge be in front of and to the left of the dog. This allows the judge to observe the handler's movements and watch if the handler assumes heel position before leaving the dog. The key elements to view are the five errors of heel position as listed above. This position is excellent to observe if the dog is straight in line with the handler as the handler leaves. After performing the examination, the judge steps back away but in line with the dog's left shoulder. From here one can view if the handler returns to the heel position. The most common faults are the handler returning to a forged or lag position and it is best observed from this location.

NOVICE - GROUP EXERCISE (Chapter 3, Sections 14 & 15).

The judge must be in a good location to watch all the handlers return to heel position. If a dog breaks the Long Sit or Long Down as the handler is returning to heel position, the judge will have to determine if the handler was in heel position when the dog broke. Knowing heel position and being able to observe it has a great impact on this exercise - the end result in scoring is a pass or fail depending on the judge's decision!

RECALLS

Anytime the dog is coming into the handler, the Recall exercise is involved. The judge needs to be in a good position to observe the dog and handler fulfilling the key elements of the Recall: The giving of the command or signal, dog's prompt response to handler's command or signal, dog moving directly to the handler, moving at a brisk trot or gallop and returning close enough to the handler. Recalls are referred to in many of the exercises in the Regulations so let's again look at a couple of different exercises and notice the importance of the judge's position as it relates to the Recall.

NOVICE - RECALL (Chapter 3, Sections 10 and 11)

The suggested location for a judge is off to the side of the dog and handler and slightly behind. A narrow angle gives a better view of the team and being on the side of the dog gives a less obstructed view. As the handler leaves the dog, both can be observed. When the dog is called or signaled the judge can move in (at a distance) and follow the dog. If the path of the dog is followed the judge will "give up" a good view of noticing if the dog sat out too far or came in too close. Walking in at the angle will afford a better view of the Front, and then the judge can step behind the dog to judge the Front and Finish.

OPEN - RETRIEVE ON THE FLAT (Chapter 4, Sections 9 and 10)

When the handler sends the dog to retrieve the judge is basically observing two Recalls plus the retrieving parts of the exercise. The dog must go out directly, at a brisk trot or gallop, retrieve promptly, at the end of the ring with the team or at the far end of the ring in front of and off to the side of the team. Both locations give the judge a constant view of the dog and handler at the same time. A judge who stands in the middle of the ring can only watch the dog OR handler - not BOTH at the same time. The same holds true for the Retrieve Over High Jump and Scent Discrimination. If you compromise your viewing of an exercise you also compromise your judging of an exercise!

6. The scoring of a performance.

Judgment is based on knowledge and experience and as a judge scores a performance they will be drawing from these resources. Having a good knowledge of Obedience before you start judging is important, but one's knowledge and understanding will grow with experience. In Chapter 2 of the Obedience Regulations, Sections 1, 5 and 24 need to be reviewed. Before stepping into the ring to judge you will need to be aware of the various faults and have an understanding of what penalties are to be applied to said faults. From reading the Regulations one will obtain an idea of what constitutes a minor or substantial penalty. The Glossary of Terms defines a minor penalty as 2 1/2 points or LESS and a substantial as 3 or MORE points. The Regulations also mention some of the more common faults and state whether to apply a substantial or minor penalty. They also give the latitude of applying a minor or substantial penalty. Sounds simple, but good judging comes from knowing when to apply which penalty and the assessment of points to be taken off.

The heeling exercises are among the most challenging to judge. The scoring is not all clear-cut. For example, what point value will YOU apply to a dog that does NOT sit as the handler comes to a halt? The Regulations list some of the faults associated with heeling and the scoring in Chapter 3, Section 6: "Substantial or minor deductions shall be made for such things as lagging, heeling wide, forging, crowding, poor sits, failure to sit, handler failing to walk at a brisk pace, occasional guidance with leash and other imperfections of heeling." These are imperfections in heeling, as the dog is not performing the exercise to perfection as described in Chapter 3, Section 5. YOU now have to determine if this is a minor or substantial penalty and then what point value to deduct.

Let's say you had three different dogs come into YOUR ring and on the first halt during the heeling exercise each dog failed to sit. As you penalize the no sit do YOU have a preset value of points to assess? For example, do you feel a no sit is a substantial penalty and therefore subject to a three or more point deduction? Or, are you going to consider the different actions that took place as the handler halted before making your decision?

To help make up your mind, consider a few of the variables in regards to the three dogs not sitting:

1. The handler halts and the dog stands in perfect heel position.
2. The handler halts and the dog stands on the handler's left side but out at a 45 degree angle to the direction in which the handler is facing.
3. The handler halts and the dog forges ahead and then comes back and stands in front of and facing the handler.

Each dog made the error of not sitting but the degree of error differed from dog A to C. Are you still going to deduct a set number of points for a no sit or develop a scoring system that might be a little more flexible as to the seriousness of the error? Keep in mind, one of your responsibilities is to separate the top four dogs and handlers in the class. What if dogs A, B and C only had that one error. Will you have a three-way runoff, or will you have separated their work by scoring the differences in their work? These are some of the tough decisions YOU are going to have to make!

In all exercises the first thing to keep in mind is the principle part of the exercise and did the dog and/or handler meet the requirements. If in question, refer to the Regulations for that exercise and if still in doubt read the first sentence of Chapter 2, Section 3, QUALIFYING PERFORMANCE. In the scoring of a performance, another area to consider is the penalizing of SEVERAL serious faults during an exercise. The Regulations may state when a substantial deduction is to be applied but the judge must also keep in mind if the dog and/or handler are fulfilling the minimum requirements of that exercise and if the performance warrants a qualifying score.

For example, the Retrieve On Flat is a twenty-point exercise. In order for a dog and handler to have a qualifying performance in AN exercise, they must earn OVER 50% of the points available in that exercise. In this case they must earn at least ten and one-half points. Now, let's look at a dog's performance on the Retrieve On The Flat.

1. The dog SAUNTERS out to retrieve the dumbbell on command.
2. The dumbbell is picked up, then dropped and again picked up.
3. The dog SAUNTERS back to the handler and performs a perfect Front.
4. The dog SAUNTERS into a Finish (on command) and has a poor sit.

The errors listed in A, B and C are substantial deductions, depending on the extent, as per Chapter 4, Section 9. Are YOU going to deduct the minimum points (three) for a substantial deduction for EACH occurrence in A, B and C? Then are YOU going to score the lack of being prompt and smart in the performance of the Finish along with the poor sit? Let's say you take JUST a half-point off for the Finish and another half-point off for the poor sit. Look at your total deductions. You may have taken off ten points from a twenty-point exercise. That is NOT MORE THAN 50%. Are YOU going to fail the dog? Or, will it be your philosophy of judging to score harder during the first several major faults and ease off as long as the work is still qualifying in your mind? The dog did perform the exercise by responding promptly to the handler's "Fetch" command and completed the exercise as per the requirements in Chapter 4, Section 8. These are just a FEW examples of things to THINK of when you step into the judge's shoes. Who said judging Obedience was easy!? It is a challenge and very rewarding when you leave the trial knowing you did your best for the sport.

7. How are the ribbon prizes presented?

After the last dog in the class has been judged, the scores are recorded and the judge calls the qualifying teams back into the ring for presenting the prizes and awards.

The American Kennel Club wants like the presenting of ribbon prizes to be a bit of a ceremony. Winning the blue through white ribbons is a big deal and the judge should present the winners to the spectators, who are on the outside of the ring. A good judge will first address the onlookers and briefly state what constitutes a perfect score, and may go into detail describing a qualifying score. The judge should keep their comments to a minimum during the awards ceremony and then announce the prize winning dog and handler. It is suggested to mention the score BEFORE the armband number. If armband number is announced first the spectators will clap and cheer and miss hearing the score.

As a judge you will want to "present" the first four prizewinners and separate the four teams away from the rest of the qualifiers in the class. This way the spectators can observe and take note as to who won. Have the winners come forward to receive the ribbon prize and ask them to remain in front of the group. Then do the same for second through fourth. Also, keep in mind to speak up when awarding the four placements so people in the second row outside the ring can hear. After the placements are concluded the judge then goes to each handler and tells them their score. You then conclude the awards and turn in the Judge's Book. If time permits after turning in the Book you may speak with exhibitors about their scores. The judge is encouraged, but not required, to discuss the scoring, but a judge need not enter into any discussion with any contestant who appears to be dissatisfied. This sport is based on good sportsmanship and that is the image to project.

When speaking with exhibitors use the same words that appear in the Regulations. For example, don't tell the handler the dog lost points for bumping during the heeling. "Bumping" is NOT a word used in the Regulations. The judge should have chosen words such as crowding or not allowing the handler freedom of motion at all times, rather than commonly used obedience lingo. Using terms other than those found in the Regulations might be misleading and confusing, creating some doubts as to the knowledge of the judge. Judges bear the responsibility of educating exhibitors -- new and "old."

Summary

If you are considering applying to judge Obedience in the future, keep a good perspective...judging should be taken seriously but not to the point where the fun and common sense are lost. At the same time don't overlook the dedicated, experienced exhibitors who have invested countless time and work into the sport, or the Novices just starting out. They deserve and demand good, fair, consistent judging and it will be up to YOU to meet these demands. Don't let the title of judge go to your head, or form the opinion that you "know it all" and "have seen it all." NO ONE has a 200 in that department - so keep mentally fit by attending AKC Obedience Judging Seminars, training dogs, and observing other judges. Obtaining approval to judge is JUST the beginning!

This article only provides you with a LITTLE idea of what it takes to step into the shoes of an Obedience judge. If you plan to walk in these shoes always put the sport of dogs first in your thinking. We have a fun sport and it requires responsible people to keep it sound. Judges in Conformation, Tracking, Field, Obedience and other Performance Events have a BIG responsibility in protecting the integrity of the Sport of Purebred Dogs.

One Standard of Judging

-Or-

Double Standard?

by John Cox

There are three important sections in **CHAPTER 2** of the Obedience Regulations that help define good judging, and should be kept in mind at all times if you choose to judge.

SECTION 1. Standardized Judging: "Standardized judging is of paramount importance. Judges are not permitted to inject their own variations into the exercises, but must see that each handler and dog executes the various exercises exactly as described in these Regulations. A handler who is familiar with these Regulations should be able to enter the ring under any Judge without having to inquire how the particular Judge wishes to have any exercise performed, and without being confronted with some unexpected requirement."

SECTION 2. Standard of Perfection: "The Judge must carry a mental picture of the theoretically perfect performance in each exercise and score each dog and handler against this visualized standard which shall combine the utmost in willingness, enjoyment and precision on the part of the dog, and naturalness, gentleness, and smoothness in handling. Speed is not to be considered as the equivalent to willingness and enjoyment. Lack of willingness or enjoyment on the part of the dog must be penalized, as must lack of precision in the dog's performance, roughness in handling, military precision or peremptory commands by the handler."

SECTION 6. Judging of Classes and Different Breeds. "The same methods and standards will be used for judging and scoring the regular, preferred and optional titling classes and in judging and scoring the work of dogs of different breeds, including dogs listed with AKC Canine Partners."

You can make the choice to judge - but once that choice is made, you must NOT pick and choose which Regulations suit your fancy and by which you will judge. **EVERY Obedience Regulation has a purpose and it is your responsibility to enforce ALL of them.** This is one of the main objectives that goes with the title of Judge. If you wish to be considered fair and consistent in your judging, don't overlook the above sections!

Standardize your judging habits and avoid creating a double standard. Case-in-point: One must strive to judge breed specialties, breed nationals, all-breed trials, obedience specialties or The AKC Obedience Championship Invitational in the **same** professional manner. **Handlers demand good, CONSISTENT judging** and there is no reason to judge differently depending on the type of Trial; or judge A classes different than B classes. Furthermore, ALL breeds MUST be judged with the same standards.

A few important areas in which to avoid double standards in judging are:

1. Making the tough decisions
2. Judging Breed Specialties
3. Judging A and B Classes and different breeds
4. Judging different when an AKC Field Representative is present
5. Judging different between Regular and Non-regular Classes

MAKING THE TOUGH DECISIONS

There are going to be times when a **correct decision** may not be pleasing to the handler or spectators. A couple of examples, (1) the cute Saint Bernard may have CLEARLY anticipated a Recall and you will have to enforce a non-qualifying score. You cannot choose to overlook the fact that the dog failed or pretend you did not see the anticipation. (2) There will be other times when one dog heels better than another dog, but the **HANDLER** (of the better heeling dog) made errors and thus places behind the poorer heeling dog. Your decisions will not always be obvious to others. We all see things differently but

YOU are the Judge, and YOU should be able to explain and back up your decision(s) [using the words in the Regulations] if asked so others may learn. **Sometimes it takes just plain guts to enforce a Regulation(s), but that is a responsibility you accepted when you pinned on the Judge's badge!**

JUDGING BREED SPECIALTIES

The same Regulations are used to judge breed specialties and all-breed trials and National Trials. Avoid developing a double standard in scoring. It may appear that breed specialties are a little more laid-back, but guard against letting your judging standards loosen. "Giving out" high scores at specialties to encourage handlers, or trying to gain popularity as a "nice Judge," is a misconception. Such actions will create confusion in the minds of new handlers when they are later scored more realistically under other Judges. **It is not fair or consistent to judge a handler differently depending on what kind of show they chose to enter.**

JUDGING THE A AND B CLASSES AND DIFFERENT BREEDS

You cannot choose to "get tough" on Golden Retrievers and Border Collies with "competition handlers" in the B classes and then loosen up when you judge a "green" junior handler with a cute Saint Bernard in the A classes. **This type of judging serves no purpose but undermines the sport and demeans you as a Judge.** New handlers and those going for titles in the A classes need to be encouraged, but "giving away the store" is not the way to accomplish this goal. Score ALL dogs and handlers with the same standards and after the class is over, encourage the handlers to come and talk about their scores. You can be sympathetic if they had a not-so-good performance and point out the errors that you observed. This will help teach them the areas that need a little more practice for a better day next time. This is how new handlers learn to respect our sport and its Regulations.

JUDGING DIFFERENT WHEN AN AKC FIELD REPRESENTATIVE IS PRESENT

Have you noticed how some Judges change their ring procedure and scoring when an AKC Field Rep. is present? Why? If they had only ONE standard by which they judged there would be no problem or reason for uneasiness. **One should judge the same whether at a breed specialty with only one entry in the wilds of Wyoming or at the most prestigious obedience specialty with a class of 48 in Utility B.**

JUDGING DIFFERENT BETWEEN REGULAR AND NONREGULAR CLASSES

The Non-regular Classes have (in most cases) the same exercises as the Regular Classes. Just because there are no Qualifying Scores or titles earned is NOT a reason to judge different. The same standards of judging are to be applied in both classes. For example, guard against judging a dog correctly for WALKING in on a Recall in Utility, and then giving that same dog (the next day) a PERFECT score for WALKING in on the Recall in the Veterans Class. If you judge like this, then what are you going to do when the ten-year-old Saint Bernard veteran RUNS in on the Recall? Are you going to score the Saint Bernard by giving bonus points?

SUMMARY

Keep a good perspective... judging should be taken seriously but not to the point where the fun and common sense are lost. **At the same time, don't overlook the dedicated, experienced exhibitors who have invested countless time and work into the sport, or the novices just starting out. They deserve and demand good, fair, consistent judging and it will be up to YOU to meet these demands.** Develop a good standard of judging and keep JUST that ONE standard for ALL classes ALL dogs.

Judging The Giants

by John Cox

If you are considering judging obedience one very important factor is to be fair and consistent to all dogs that enter your ring. This is not only accomplished by having a thorough knowledge of the Obedience Regulations and enforcing every section, but the pre-planning of your ring will have an impact on the performances of the different breeds of dogs you judge. **If you fail to set up your ring without considering all the different sizes of breeds, your judging will lack fairness and consistency.**

When you are invited to judge at a trial or match, there is an important Chapter and Section to keep in mind. **SECTION 6. Judging of Classes and Different Breeds.** "The same methods and standards will be used for judging and scoring the regular, preferred and optional titling classes and in judging and scoring the work of dogs of different breeds, including dogs listed with AKC Canine Partners."

The time to be aware of this regulation is BEFORE you set up your ring and plot out the heeling pattern and the areas for the different exercises.

Large breeds (and super-fast dogs) require a considerable amount of room to maneuver. If this is not factored in beforehand, then the dog's performance could be compromised. All breeds need be given ample space so they have the opportunity to work towards perfection. Also, heeling patterns should be smooth and not choppy. Choppy patterns (explained below) seem to be more of a hindrance to the larger and faster working teams. The next time you go to a match or trial, notice how the Judge has set up his/her ring. Pay attention to how the space is used for the different exercises. Make note of the heeling pattern. Also observe how far a dog travels before a halt or a turn and how much space is used for the dog and handler to execute the Fast or Slow.

There is NO perfect way to set up a ring or a perfect heeling pattern for all breeds, but some Judges make better use of the ring space. When judging at an all-breed trial, you have to be ready for whatever breed comes into the ring -- be it a Chihuahua or an Irish Wolfhound. It is imperative that all breeds be given an equal chance to earn a perfect score if you wish to be a fair Judge.

I have been in many obedience rings with my Saint Bernards (earning 6 U.D.s since 1969) so I have a good idea what a large breed requires in terms of space for a smooth performance. This experience of showing gave me a hands-on opportunity to observe all types of ring situations. Listed below are a few of my thoughts in regards to heeling patterns and ring planning for the individual exercises.

HEELING PATTERNS

Heeling is in every AKC obedience class with the possible exception of Versatility (depending what exercises the handler draws). In choosing a pattern that works for you, also consider the handler and dog. You must give ALL handlers and dogs an EQUAL opportunity to do the principal part of heeling -- the ability of the dog and handler working as a team. Teamwork is best performed when a heeling pattern is smooth. One way to accomplish this objective is to have only one heeling function per leg of the pattern. This provides ALL teams a chance for a smooth performance. As a Judge, your orders are "Forward," "Halt," "Right turn," "Left turn," "About turn," "Slow," "Normal," and "Fast." The orders may be given in any sequence and can be repeated. When two heeling functions are on one leg of a pattern it becomes choppy and the teamwork starts to suffer. For example, a Fast, Normal, and Halt on one leg would be choppy. Picture an Irish Wolfhound doing this pattern smoothly.

Another example, heeling down the center of the ring and making a Right or Left turn and then Slow, using half the ring, before turning again. The choppy pattern will unfairly affect the performance of the larger and faster breeds. There is just less room and time to respond if too much is going on during one leg of the heeling pattern. Remember, you are going to be judging these actions. The faults you observe MAY have been caused by YOU, by not giving thought to the heeling pattern. The small breeds will start to gain an advantage and you, as a Judge, will find your goals of fairness and consistency going down the tubes. A pattern does not have to be long to achieve the smooth objective.

The "Forward" followed by a few steps and then a "Halt" is another example of unfairness to large breeds, plus it is also choppy. Picture the extremes. A Chihuahua and handler starts to heel and the handler walks forward two or three steps and halts on the Judge's order. This small breed has had a chance to get up and walk a fair distance before going into a sit. The next dog in the ring is an Irish Wolfhound. The handler starts to heel and walks two or three steps and halts on the Judge's order. The Irish Wolfhound starts to move forward in heel position, and maybe just moved one-half or one body length, and now has to go into a sit. Did this breed have the same opportunity to have a smooth performance? The handler of the Irish Wolfhound had no choice but to stop on the Judge's order or be penalized for delay in following a Judge's order. The Judge was consistent and stopped both dogs in the same spot, but lacked good judgment in setting up a heeling pattern that was fair to all breeds. Had the Judge halted each dog further away from the Forward, both breeds would have had an equal opportunity for a smooth performance.

INDIVIDUAL EXERCISES

I will not go into detail on how to set up each exercise for the large breeds. Instead, I will cover two exercises, pointing out items you need to consider when planning your ring. As you set up for the different individual exercises ask yourself, "Is this exercise going to be fair to ALL breeds and handlers when they enter my ring?" Another point to keep in mind is the disabled handlers and their space requirements. Make a mental picture of an Irish Wolfhound being handled by a person in a wheelchair. With this in mind you should have no problem in setting up the ring that is fair to all who enter.

1. Figure Eight

When planning the area for the Figure Eight think about the ring barriers and, in Open, also consider the jumps. You want to provide ALL dogs the opportunity to go around the outside post and not have to concern themselves with the possibility of running into an object. Figure Eight posts that are in the corners of a ring or too close to a jump jeopardize the performance of the larger breeds. This type of set up is also too restrictive for the disabled handlers and their dogs. If you are judging indoors and using mats on slick floors use **three** mats if possible. Large breeds should have mats under them at all times during the Figure Eight if that is the case for the smaller breeds.

2. Scent Discrimination

Give thought to where you are going to place the scent articles. You want to allow the largest breeds ample space to go briskly out to the articles and also be able to circle them. I have observed Judges placing the scent articles in the corner of the ring. This type set up will not allow the larger breeds the freedom of motion, and they will be at a disadvantage. Large breeds are aware of their size and do not like to get into tight spots. Also consider, if the articles are in the corner of the ring and a dog stepped on the correct article, flipping it out of the restrictive ring barriers, then what? You would have no choice but to stop the exercise and start over. Another potential problem area is placing the scent articles too close to the jumps. Allow plenty of room for the dog to work without restrictions. These types of situations can be avoided with a little thought prior to the start of the class.

Judging is more than just observing and scoring Fronts and Finishes. It requires a lot of thought and judgment before the first dog enters the ring and the first order is given. Judging the giants is just one aspect to keep in mind at your next assignment. Besides, the giants can be a welcome relief to your back when it comes to the examinations and measuring!

Below is the next in a series of Random Little Tidbits of information (from me) in regards to the AKC Obedience Regulations. Knowledge of the Regulations provides you the power for...

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Today's Random Little Tidbit – **Stewarding --- The Little Things Can Make A Difference**



A Steward is an integral part of a dog show's success. Most of these folks volunteer their time to the sport and without them the show would grind to a "Halt." In the Obedience ring a Steward CAN make a big difference in how efficiently a ring functions. Their actions can also have an effect on the performance of the dog in the ring. Stewards are mentioned in the Obedience Regulations in **Chapter 1, Section 31**, plus a **full chapter** at the end of the Obedience Regulations to review duties (pages 127-132). Section 31 in the 1st chapter reads: "Judges are in sole charge of their rings until their assignments are completed. Stewards are provided to assist but may act only on the judge's instructions. They must not give information or instructions to owners and handlers except when the judge asks them to do so." The judge shall review with the stewards their duties and the manner in which they are to be performed. Any request from an exhibitor for special consideration must be directed to the judge.

This is all fine and dandy IF the Judge gives instructions. I have stewarded at trials where the Judge just introduces himself and THAT IS IT for the instructions. Or, the instructions are SO FEW one is still left in the dark as to what the Judge is expecting. In such a case, **ASK QUESTIONS** before the class starts. Such a Judge should be put on the spot as to what will be required of the Stewards. The exhibitors are the ones to be kept in mind, as they will benefit from a knowledgeable Steward. Let's not forget, the handlers and the dogs are the IMPORTANT ones for the day. A few things a Steward will need to know **BEFORE** the class starts are:

Novice A & B & Preferred Novice (No group exercise in Preferred Novice)

1. How does the Judge want to handle conflicts?
2. About how many dogs in each Group?
3. Where are handlers and dogs to be brought into the ring?
4. Where is the Figure Eight to be performed and how and where are the Stewards to stand?
5. Who takes the leash and where is it to be placed?
6. Does the Judge need the clipboard held during the Stand for Examination?
7. Where are the Stewards to stand during the Group exercise?
8. What instructions, if any, are to be given by the Stewards to the handlers?

Graduate Novice, Open A & B & Preferred Open

1. The above Novice items 1, 3, 4, 5, 8 again apply.
2. What is the Steward to do with the dumbbell before and after the retrieves?
3. Where are the extra boards from the High Jump and extra Broad Jump hurdles to be placed when not being used by some dogs?

Graduate Open, Utility & Preferred Utility

The above Novice items 1, 3, 5, and 8 again apply (The above Open item 3 applies in regards to the High Jump).

1. How are the scent articles to be handled when the handler brings them to the table?
2. Where are the scent articles to be placed in the ring and how does the Judge want them arranged.
3. What instructions are given in placing the gloves and picking up the remaining gloves?
4. What is the Steward to do during the Moving Stand and Examination?

The Judge is in sole charge of the way they want the ring conducted, but if this is NOT conveyed to the Stewards the first several handlers may be entering a "zoo" instead of an Obedience ring. If the Judge does not give instructions or if they are vague -- **ASK QUESTIONS BEFORE the first team enters the ring.**

A few things in mind and you will be much appreciated by the handlers and Judge:

1. Be knowledgeable of the class one is asked to steward.
2. Arrive **at least one-half hour before** the start of judging to assist in setting up the ring and receiving instructions.
3. **Pay attention to the dog in the ring.** Be ready when the Judge and handler need the Steward's assistance. For example, know the heeling pattern ends. This way one will be ready to immediately respond for the next exercise, if needed. When a dog and handler have to wait for Stewards, it breaks up their pace and can affect their performance. Being ready when needed will save a considerable amount of time during the day, plus the handlers like the opportunity to get in and out of the ring in an efficient manner. Try to give total attention to the dog and handler in the ring, and if other handlers have questions they can be answered in "off" time. **The dog and handler in the ring come first.**
4. During the Figure Eight exercise, don't stare at the dog. Some dogs may interpret this wrong and thus affect their performance. Be consistent for all dogs in how hands and arms are to be held.
5. In a class with a dumbbell, if asked to bring the dumbbell to the handler, carry the dumbbell in a way in which not to excite the dog. Many dogs love to retrieve and if a Steward swings the dumbbell around while walking out to the handler, the dog could lose control and thus be subject to a penalty.
6. In Utility, **MAKE SURE** the dog is watching **BEFORE PLACING** out and arranging the scent articles.
7. When placing the articles, just handle them enough to arrange them per the Judge's instructions. The Regulations call for the Steward or Judge to **HANDLE** each of the remaining articles -- this does **NOT** imply to "SCENT" the articles. Also, the Steward placing the articles should **beware of a foreign scent on their hands** such as cigarette smoke or food. The scent given when handling the articles should be consistent for all dogs.
8. Concentrate on placing the gloves correctly. Make sure they are on the Judge's mark. If no mark or instructions are given, the center glove is to be centered between dog and handler and about 3 feet from the side of the ring. The corner gloves are to be placed about 3 feet from each side of the ring in the corner. The Directed Retrieve is done in the unobstructed end of the ring, and the **gloves are only to be placed while the dog and handler are facing away.** No table or chair is to be at this end of the ring.
9. Dress appropriately, for weather outside or varying temperatures indoors.

The job of a Steward is not one to take lightly. Know what the Judge requires--think ahead and be ready when needed to save time. The Judge and, most important, the handlers will appreciate the effort.



Dog Talk & Random Little Tidbits articles <http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/newsroom.htm>

Index for *only* the Random Little Tidbits articles:

<http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/Tidbit%20Index.pdf>

John Cox,
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AKC Obedience Jump Charts

(Chapter 4, Section 11)

by John Cox ©

Regular Classes + Approved Breeds for ¾ Jump Height & Preferred Classes --- ½ Jump Height
Measured height nearest multiple of 2" to the height of the dog's withers.



Height to be Jumped	Broad Jump Hurdles	High Jump Chart Board Combinations
4"	(8) 1	4" = 4
8"	(16) 2	8" = 8
10"	(20) 2	10" = 8 + 2
12"	(24) 2	12" = 8 + 4
14"	(28) 3	14" = 8 + 4 + 2
16"	(32) 3	16" = 8 + 8
18"	(36) 3	18" = 8 + 8 + 2
20"	(40) 3	20" = 8 + 8 + 4
22"	(44) 3	22" = 8 + 8 + 4 + 2
24"	(48) 4	24" = 8 + 8 + 8
26"	(52) 4	26" = 8 + 8 + 8 + 2
28"	(56) 4	28" = 8 + 8 + 8 + 4
30"	(60) 4	30" = 8 + 8 + 8 + 4 + 2
32"	(64) 4	32" = 8 + 8 + 8 + 8
34"	(68) 4	34" = 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 2
36"	(72) 4	36" = 8 + 8 + 8 + 8 + 4

Chart for ¾ the Height at the Withers

Measured Height	Height to Jump	Broad Jump
Less than 10"	4"	(8) 1
10 to less than 12 1/2"	8"	(16) 2
12 1/2 to less than 15"	10"	(20) 2
15 to less than 17 1/2"	12"	(24) 2
17 1/2 to less than 20"	14"	(28) 3
20 to less than 23"	16"	(32) 3
23 to less than 25 1/2"	18"	(36) 3
25 1/2 to less than 28"	20"	(40) 3
28 to less than 31"	22"	(44) 3
31 to less than 33 1/2"	24"	(48) 4
33 1/2 to less than 36"	26"	(52) 4
36 to less than 39"	28"	(56) 4

Chart for ½ the Height at the Withers (Preferred Open & Preferred Utility)

Measured Height	Height to Jump	Broad Jump
12" or less	4"	(8) 1
Greater than 12" up to 18"	8"	(16) 2
Greater than 18" up to 22"	10"	(20) 2
Greater than 22" up to 26"	12"	(24) 2
Greater than 26" up to 30"	14"	(28) 3
Greater than 30" up to 34"	16"	(32) 3
Greater than 34"	18"	(36) 3



Broad Jump: To cover a distance equal to TWICE the height of the High Jump

4 hurdles shall be used for a jump of 48" to 72"
 3 hurdles shall be used for a jump of 28" to 44"
 2 hurdles shall be used for a jump of 16" to 24"
 1 hurdle shall be used for a jump of 8"

When decreasing the number of hurdles in the Jump, the highest hurdle(s) shall be removed first.

51 Approved Breeds Jumping ¾ Their Height at the Withers --- Effective August 1, 2012

Akita	Dandie Dinmount Terrier	Newfoundland
Argentine Dogo	Dogue De Bordeaux	Norwich Terrier
Basset Hound	Estrela Mountain Dog	Otterhound
Bergamasco	French Bulldog	Pekingese
Bernese Mountain Dog	Glen of Imaal Terrier	Pembroke Welsh Corgi
Black Russian Terrier	Grand Basset Griffon Vendéen	Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen
Bloodhound	Great Dane	Portuguese Podengo
Bolognese	Great Pyrenees	Pugs
Borzoï	Greater Swiss Mountain Dog	Saint Bernard
Bulldog	Irish Wolfhound	Scottish Terriers
Bullmastiff	Kishu Ken	Sealyham Terrier
Cardigan Welsh Corgi	Kooikerhondje	Shih Tzu
Caucasian Mountain Dog	Kuvaszok	Skye Terrier
Chinese Shar-Pei	Lagotto Romagnolo	Sussex Spaniel
Chow Chow	Leonberger	Swedish Vallhunds
Clumber Spaniel	Mastiff	Thai Ridgeback
Dachshund	Neopolitan Mastiff	West Highland White Terrier

Points Off	Final Score	Judge's Book Conversion Chart For AKC Obedience			
0.0	200.0				
0.5	199.5	10.5	189.5	20.5	179.5
1.0	199.0	11.0	189.0	21.0	179.0
1.5	198.5	11.5	188.5	21.5	178.5
2.0	198.0	12.0	188.0	22.0	178.0
2.5	197.5	12.5	187.5	22.5	177.5
3.0	197.0	13.0	187.0	23.0	177.0
3.5	196.5	13.5	186.5	23.5	176.5
4.0	196.0	14.0	186.0	24.0	176.0
4.5	195.5	14.5	185.5	24.5	175.5
5.0	195.0	15.0	185.0	25.0	175.0
5.5	194.5	15.5	184.5	25.5	174.5
6.0	194.0	16.0	184.0	26.0	174.0
6.5	193.5	16.5	183.5	26.5	173.5
7.0	193.0	17.0	183.0	27.0	173.0
7.5	192.5	17.5	182.5	27.5	172.5
8.0	192.0	18.0	182.0	28.0	172.0
8.5	191.5	18.5	181.5	28.5	171.5
9.0	191.0	19.0	181.0	29.0	171.0
9.5	190.5	19.5	180.5	29.5	170.5
10.0	190.0	20.0	180.0	30.0	170.0

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Points Off	Final Score	Judge's Book Conversion Chart For AKC Obedience			
30.5	169.5	40.5	159.5	50.5	149.5
31.0	169.0	41.0	159.0	51.0	149.0
31.5	168.5	41.5	158.5	51.5	148.5
32.0	168.0	42.0	158.0	52.0	148.0
32.5	167.5	42.5	157.5	52.5	147.5
33.0	167.0	43.0	157.0	53.0	147.0
33.5	166.5	43.5	156.5	53.5	146.5
34.0	166.0	44.0	156.0	54.0	146.0
34.5	165.5	44.5	155.5	54.5	145.5
35.0	165.0	45.0	155.0	55.0	145.0
35.5	164.5	45.5	154.5	55.5	144.5
36.0	164.0	46.0	154.0	56.0	144.0
36.5	163.5	46.5	153.5	56.5	143.5
37.0	163.0	47.0	153.0	57.0	143.0
37.5	162.5	47.5	152.5	57.5	142.5
38.0	162.0	48.0	152.0	58.0	142.0
38.5	161.5	48.5	151.5	58.5	141.5
39.0	161.0	49.0	151.0	59.0	141.0
39.5	160.5	49.5	150.5	59.5	140.5
40.0	160.0	50.0	150.0	60.0	140.0

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RANDOM
LITTLE
TiDBITS (#35)

Below is the next in a series of Random Tidbits of information (from me) in regards to the AKC Obedience Regulations. Knowledge of the Regulations provides you the power for...

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Today's Random Little Tidbit – [Ask Questions Beforehand And Then Get It In Writing!](#)

The letter comes in from the American Kennel Club approving you as a new Obedience and/or Rally Judge. Congratulations! You have met all the qualifications, read the Obedience/Rally Regulations, taken the test(s), had a ringside interview, and now all you are waiting for that first invitation to come your way. *Have you given any thought to how you will respond and what questions to ask when that phone call or email happens?* OMG, this is not covered in the Regulations, BUT there are some suggestions for guidance in the Obedience Guidelines.

Okay, let's take a look at the first step; as quoted from the Guidelines:

ACCEPTING ASSIGNMENTS...

Written Invitations Only. Require all clubs to send you written invitations for assignments. Their requests should clearly specify the class(es) you are being asked to judge. Promptly acknowledge all invitations, again in writing, and keep accurate records of assignments you accept.

Avoid Conflicts. It's your responsibility to acknowledge judging invitations promptly. Careful record keeping and prompt acceptance (or refusal) of invitations helps eliminate unnecessary confusion and conflicts for both judges and trial-giving clubs.

Assignment Limitations. A judge will not be approved to judge the same regular, preferred, or optional titling class at all-breed events within 30 days and 100 straight line miles of each other with the following exceptions:

- A judge may accept assignments to judge the same classes for two obedience trials that fall on the same day at the same site.
- A judge may accept assignments to judge the same classes at two obedience trials over the course of a cluster of no more than five (5) consecutive days at the same site or within a local geographical area as determined by the AKC.
- A judge may accept an assignment within 30 days and 100 straight line miles of another assignment only on an emergency basis. An emergency basis is defined as an advertised judge notifying a club within 72 hours of an approved trial that they cannot fulfill their assignment.

There are no such restrictions on non-regular classes. Assignments to judge the same class or classes at two different breed specialty or group obedience trials are not considered to be a conflict. Breed specialty obedience assignments or group shows are not in conflict with an assignment to judge the same class(es) at an all-breed obedience trial.

Travel Between Assignments. Judges cannot do their best work if they are tired from travel. They should **not** accept assignments on succeeding days where more than a few hours' travel by ground transportation is involved. Judges should understand that upon acceptance of an invitation, they are committing themselves to the trial-giving club for the entire day. Their travel plans should not be predicated on arriving late or on leaving early to get transportation home or to another show. Judges should not ask clubs or superintendents to arrange judging programs to accommodate their travel plans. Judges should not travel to or from trials or stay with anyone who is likely to be exhibiting or handling under them.

Expenses. When you accept an invitation, clearly inform club officials what your expenses and fee, if any, will be, so they will not be surprised by a larger than anticipated bill on the day of the trial. **This is a contract between you and the club.** The more specific details you and the club include in the contract, the less the potential for misunderstanding. This is an important consideration and a courtesy to clubs. **If you sign a contract provided by the club, you and the club are responsible for abiding by its conditions.**

Now let's take a look at the second step:...

The Guidelines do help in getting one started but there is a lot more to know, most of which is learned through the schools of experience and hard knocks. Where are these schools? I queried obedience judges on our judge's email list on helpful hints to be passed along to a new judge, what items to keep in mind and questions to ask. Another thing to keep in mind is the one doing the inviting may also be new at their job. 😊 To start with, make a list and have it by the phone(s) (or computer), which covers the topics needed to be discussed so you won't forget or leave out an important topic. Such items as:

Contact Date:	Trial Date:	Person's name calling:	Phone #:	Club:
Location:	Airport to fly into:	Class(es):	All-Breed Show:	Specialty Show:
Single Breed:	All-Breed Specialty:	Group show:	Restrictions, other than AKC's:	
Agreed Expenses:				
Roundtrip Airfare:	Meals:	Lodging:	Number of nights:	Transportation @ cents per mile
Airport Parking:	Car Rental/Shuttle:	Other:	Fee: Plus Expenses:	Flat Fee:
Definite:	Expect Contract by:	Availability Inquiry:	Hold Date Until:	Other Information:
Judging with:	Indoors:	Outdoors:		

On to a third step and input from Judges who responded:

I. Geography:

There are regional differences in our sport so this may play a role in one's responses, depending where one lives when contacted. Consider that location. Are there a plethora of shows and the opportunity to judge is abundant in your areas of the country, or are you "out in the sticks" with shows far and few? The answer may factor into judging fees (or not) and travel expenses to be charged, especially when starting out with only a Novice provisional approval.

II. Fee Responses From Judges For Ideas:

1. When I first became a Novice Judge, I only charged for expenses (travel/tolls). I was also an approved rally judge at the time, so if I was given a Novice and/or Beginner Novice judging assignment along with Rally, I would also not charge for Rally. As I progressed through the levels, I would only charge if asked to judge a level where I was fully approved, not provisional.
2. If a club is small or generally has very limited entries (say a specialty club), I will work with them and not charge a flat fee. I may instead tell them that I will charge a fee per entry (say \$3.00 per dog).
3. Daily fee (with surcharge if "2 trials in 1 day"), lodging, meals during the weekend and *in route* if driving, IRS mileage rates at time of travel round trip, I give the Google Maps distance. If plane travel: IRS mileage to/from airport, parking per day, Airfare and, if I remember, I ask whether the club will reimburse plane tickets in advance of the trial. Tolls, parking, etc., transport to/from airport to hotel, if any.
4. I state my basic rate. If I decide to give a club a break, or a donation, etc. it's up to me.
5. I have a fee to judge one type of competition one time a day. If I am to judge the same type of competition (two trials in a day) or two kinds of competition (obedience and rally) I add \$25.00 to cover the extra preparation costs. I give single breed specialties a small discount.
6. I would first ask a judge if they were willing to give up part of their weekend assignment. Perhaps give up Novice B and Beginner Novice or Open A and Preferred Open, for example. They almost always said yes. They were helping out a new judge and reducing their work load; nothing to lose really. Once I received the judge's okay I would contact the club, explain that this judge was willing to give up said classes and that I was willing to take those classes at no expense to the club. The club also had nothing to lose and was helping a new judge as well. This method worked great and I really flew from Novice through Utility. In any event, this proactive approach can literally take years off the process.
7. When I was in Novice, I did not charge a fee at all unless I was also doing Rally (for which I was fully approved). I did take expenses in terms of mileage and a hotel if needed. When I got to Open, I started to charge a modest fee and the customary expenses. I don't charge for any of the paperwork since I consider it to be a part of my fee.
8. Don't feel guilty for charging a fee, ever. We have judges who cannot charge a fee (delegates), and there are a few judges who don't charge a fee, either because they don't need the money or they feel it's their way to give something back to the sport. But ultimately judging is a business, and it is one that carries a tremendous amount of responsibility. We go through a lengthy process in order to apply for each level, and a lot of work to be approved at each level.
9. If I'm a member of a club, no fee is charged, just out-of-pocket expenses. But that's up to the individual judge, unless the club has adopted a policy prohibiting members charging a fee. In this instance, the judge is hired in their professional capacity and not being paid to do club work.
10. Each judge has to decide for themselves if they are willing to accept these offers. Typically expenses include travel to and from the event, food and lodging. As for an invoice, judges make up their own as a word document.

III. Contract Responses From Judges:

1. Get a SIGNED, PAPER contract (or a contract to print, sign, scan and return.) I am dealing with one club right now that doesn't seem to "get it." I still don't have a contract though I sent those two signed copies of a paper contract, and a SASE...still nothing.

2. I confirm the date carefully and check carefully for conflicts. I confirm the assignment as it directs the fee.
3. Fee per day, expenses, number of nights necessary in a hotel. Check carefully that assignments don't conflict. SAVE all communications until the assignment is over. I had one local club book me, then another local club wanted to book me for different classes two weeks before the first assignment I had accepted. I contacted Club 1 to make sure it was okay with them. Club 2 sent paperwork into the AKC first. Then Club 1 contacted me to say AKC wouldn't approve me as there was a conflict. When I checked, I noticed that Club 1 had changed the classes I was to judge (different from contract, that's why there was a conflict.) I forwarded a copy of our email discussion noting classes for each club back to Club 1, which really kept me out of hot water. Yes, sometimes they change the classes from what was agreed upon in the contract. That I had checked with Club 1 before accepting Club 2, and kept that communication, saved me.
4. Contracts are between the Judge and the club. AKC **does not get involved** in contract negotiations between judges and clubs.
5. Dates, location, transportation requirements (since sometimes you fly and need to rent a car), fee, what expenses are covered and if they have limits, who is/are my contacts.

IV. Helpful Hints Responses From Judges:

1. Check in your area to see if there is a Judges Group/Association. I know of two on the west coast. Judges meet and discuss all sorts of issues. At these meetings they may discuss new rules and regulations, putting on AKC judges seminar (due every 3 years), what one needs in their briefcase/judges bag, fees, how to organize your calendar for future trials. One group even has workshops where all levels of judges do a mock trial. One Utility, one Open, and four Novice judges and this opportunity was treated like a real trial with the measuring of rings, equipment, steward instructions, etc. There are two mentor judges observing each judge. One would score alongside and the other would view positioning and procedural views. Then each judge would listen to the critiques by those mentors. Most members helped in some way to make it successful!
2. Don't take the last plane out the night before the show. If anything happens, you're sunk as far as trying to get there on time. Think of your health and sanity when trying to save the club a few dollars. I've always tried to fly out the last day of the show rather than charge for an extra night in a hotel, but am starting to re-think that, especially traveling coast to coast. It's also not good to drive home in the mountains at midnight or later after a long weekend of judging and travel.
3. If time permits after apprenticing, a perspective judge might query the judge on how they handle such issues in dealing with clubs and contracts.
4. Take your own "office" supplies. Not only will you know how to work them you can/ should be confident they will work.
5. People who work for their local clubs have better opportunities for assignments; get in there and help with every job. Follow through on your commitments to your club(s). Choose good mentors who can help answer questions along the way. Don't take yourself too seriously, everyone makes mistakes sometimes. Make changes with your ring procedures if you find something isn't working correctly. It is better to get in the habit of running your ring correctly to establish consistency. Have fun and your exhibitors will too!

More Random Little Tidbit articles aimed to give guidance to the new Judge in regards to procedures:

1. Random Little Tidbit #17, Insights Into Judging Obedience.
<http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/Random%20Little%20Tidbits%2017.pdf>
2. Random Little Tidbit #18, Insights Into Judging Obedience.
<http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/Random%20Little%20Tidbits%2018.pdf>
3. Random Little Tidbit #19, Insights Into Judging Obedience.
<http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/Random%20Little%20Tidbits%2019.pdf>

Dog Talk & Random Little Tidbits articles: <http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/newsroom.htm>

Index for *only* the Random Little Tidbits articles: <http://clubs.akc.org/saints/Archives/Tidbit%20Index.pdf>

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Are You Considering Judging? Don't Overlook Your Judges' Case

By John Cox

A judge's case is comprised of one's tools of the trade. Many of the items needed for judging are supplied by the judge. It is NOT the obligation of a club, Superintendent or Show Secretary to provide anything other than:

1. Obedience Ring(s)
2. Jumps if needed
3. Stewards
4. Judge's Book
5. Ribbons

The club and Superintendent/Show Secretary will work out between themselves who will provide the above. These items are not your concern, *except* to make sure they conform to the Obedience Regulations.

The case the judge brings to the ring has the items he/she needs to carry out the duties of judging. What is in your case will depend on what you feel will be needed to do your job in an effective and efficient manner. Judges may travel "light," or they may be prepared for almost anything that might occur.

If this is your first time to outfit a judge's case, listed below are a few items to consider:

1. **AKC OBEDIENCE REGULATIONS & GUIDELINES** - Always carry your own CURRENT copy.
2. **AKC MISCONDUCT BOOKLET** - Don't rely on one being at the trial.
3. **GROUP EXERCISE SHEETS** - It is NOT up to the club, etc. to provide these for your use.
4. **CLIP BOARD**
5. **SEVERAL PENS, PENCILS**
6. **STOP WATCH or TIMER** - For the Group Exercises.
7. **TAPE MEASURE (20' works well)** - For measuring jumps and distances.
8. **RULER** - For measuring dogs to be **certain** of correct heights per the Regulations.
9. **WORKSHEETS** - For scoring individual dogs and being able to refer back to and give input to the handler, if asked.
10. **OPEN B, UTILITY B & VERSATILITY EXERCISE ORDER SHEETS** - You may make your own or a set can be downloaded from the AKC web page at www.akc.org.
11. **MARKERS** - Sticky dots, chalk, etc. to mark distances and/or starting areas for handlers.
12. **STEWARDS INSTRUCTIONS** - A paper that lists your instructions will serve you well. It helps you remember EVERY INSTRUCTION, plus it gives the stewards a hard copy to refer back to. It works well if you have the instructions sealed in plastic for longer wear.
13. **JUDGES BADGE** - Not always provided. You might consider having one made up with your name. Most office supply stores make an assortment of badges.
14. **JUMP CHART** - Extra sheet listing jump heights and jump requirements for different breeds as per Chapter 4, Section 11. Such a chart will assist the stewards and save time looking in the Regulations. Sealing the chart in plastic--as Martha Stewart says--"It's a good thing."
15. **CORRESPONDENCE** - *Take your club correspondence with you!* You may need to refer to it for phone numbers, or contact person during your travel. Also, the correspondence will state the contract terms if there is a question.
16. **EXPENSE SHEET** - Make a copy for the club and your records. You might create a form outlining expenses (and fee, if charged) so they are spelled out for the club treasurer.
17. **CARBON PAPER** - Handy for making a copy of what you might have to write inside the Judge's Book cover. You will then have a copy to refer back to at a later time if questioned.
18. **ANTACID AND ASPIRIN** - For those times when you can't leave the ring.

You will find that a tailored judging case that fits your needs is an important tool in judging. Take the time and effort and be prepared. Your day of judging will be more enjoyable because you planned ahead and are ready to do your BEST job!