



Below is the next installment 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 – Understanding the revised Scent Discrimination exercise

From my understanding in reading the changes coming this December 1<sup>st</sup>, the Scent Discrimination (SD) revision will improve the structure and standardize the performance of the exercise for both the handler and judge, leading to more consistency in judging. Below is how I understand the changes in regards to the **timing** for scenting the article and giving scent to the dog.

Before the revisions the articles were being placed by the steward; keeping in mind this time frame is \*between exercises\* as no exercise has started. The handler has merely moved to the spot where SD will be to observe the articles being placed. As with any before, between or after exercise actions, Chapter 2, Section 22 applies. The new SD exercise is just the same as the older version in this regard. Petting, talking and praise are okay during the time of watching the group of articles being placed by the steward. Nothing has changed at this point.

#### **PLACING THE ARTICLES:**

**Prior to December 1<sup>st</sup> the regulation stated**, *“After the articles have been put out, the handler and dog will turn around and will remain facing away until the judge has given the order, ‘Send your dog.’* This gave the implication that the handler and dog were to remain watching ALL the articles being placed. Not that this was always done, but this is how the Regulations read. A more standardized procedure for judging was felt warranted as handlers wanted the option to turn around *early* and not watch every last article being placed.

**After December 1<sup>st</sup> the regulation states**, *“Handlers may choose to watch the articles being placed or face away. After the articles have been placed the handler and dog will remain facing away with the dog sitting in heel position until the judge has given the order ‘Send your dog.’* This change gives the handlers the option of watching all articles being placed or *they* may choose to turn away at any time.

#### **SCENTING THE ARTICLE:**

**Prior to December 1<sup>st</sup>**, scenting was actually *done between exercises* and it was the intent of the change to bring scenting *into* the exercise for scoring purposes (not between). In this version, any "scenting" scoring before the taking of the article ended up in Miscellaneous Penalties since the exercise had not started--the article had not been taken, which was the first order which started the exercise.

**After December 1<sup>st</sup>** the exercises will begin with a "new" **first order**, **"Take an article."** The judge will first ask, "Are you ready?" Remember, this is just a question and upon an affirmative answer the judge then gives the first order, "Take an article." The scoring of the exercise now begins per Chapter 2, Sec. 4. The handler leaves the dog sitting in heel position (HP) to take an article and returns to HP. **The Regulations do not require the handler to return behind their dog. The handler may talk to their dog only after returning to HP with the chosen article.** A dog moving or not remaining in the sit position will be scored, as will extra handler commands, but not NQed as this is not during the principle feature of the SD exercise. This really should not be an issue in *Utility* as the dog did pass three (3) Novice Stand for Examination where the handler left the dog and returned to HP, not to mention the Novice and Open Group exercises, too!

With the revision the exercise is underway and the scenting is being scored "during" the exercise. This change will allow the handler to talk to their dog during the time frame of scenting the article (after returning to HP), to the Judge taking the article as many like to communicate with their dog during this down time to stay connected. No touching the dog during the scenting of the article process is allowed, or at any other time after the exercise starts. Nothing really different here as there is no touching or petting during any other exercise. Talking is an acceptable form of praise now allowed during this exercise and during this time frame (scenting of the article) to keep the dog connected, which sometimes can take a considerable amount time, others not so much.

During the scenting of the article the Judge will ask the question as to how the dog is being sent. If the handler replies "....." both times, the Judge does not need to ask the question again, as was required before the revision. If the handler does not state "both times", or words to that affect, the Judge will ask the question again.

### GIVING THE SCENT TO THE DOG:

After the scenting of the article the handler will present the article to the judge. The **taking of the article** is now the **second order** of the SD exercise. Talking to the dog now stops as the scenting of the \*article\* is now over. The Judge will proceed to place the scented article among the other articles. After doing that, the judge's **third order** will be, "**Send your dog;**" *at which time the handler then may give their scent to the dog by extending the palm of one hand in front of the dog's nose or gently touching the dog's nose, but the arm and hand must be returned to a natural position before they turn and face the articles.* Keep in mind, giving the scent to the dog while scenting the article or giving the scent to the dog while the judge is placing the article may result in a scorable handler error(s). The change standardizes (and clarifies) the timing of the giving the scent to the dog from team to team.

Keep in mind, SD is two *separate* independent exercises. So after the, "Exercise finished." on the first SD exercise the team is now once again between exercises and praise and petting are allowed as between any other exercises. For the second SD exercise, the team turns away from the group of articles once again and the above is repeated.

### What to do with the first article? There are a couple of procedural options:

1. Handler hands the first article to the judge and the judge puts it on the chair while the handler and dog set up for the second article.
2. Handler puts the first article on the chair and then sets up for the second article.
3. Handler keeps the first article while they set up for the second article, still be allowed to pet and praise their dog without penalty, sets down the first article when ordered to "Take an article" for the second.

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