



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 – Drum roll please.....

I am no great trainer by the stretch of anyone's imagination so let's make that point crystal clear right now. One thing that I have learned from my trainer (and from judging) is to know when to step up to the plate and ACT, if necessary. It can be difficult but there will be times to just "suck it up buttercup" and put on the best Oscar performance for your dog when in the ring.

Specifically, I am speaking when showing your dog in the performance rings. We spend great amounts of time bonding with and training our dogs (some more than others ☺) and then enter a show expecting things will go well. Or, we are at least of the opinion it is worth a try when mailing in the entry.

Then comes the day of the show and it is Showtime! As we enter the ring with our teammate we are happy, full of expectations with set goals in our mind; furthermore, we are proud we have reached the point to enter the ring. Once in that ring, one needs to also keep in mind to apply the BEST acting skills you have until you step out of the ring. For the most part these skills will work well and come naturally as long as all is going according to plans. But if the dog makes an error (or the handler errors) that is when the BEST Oscar performance for the day needs to take place. Don't let the dog see any disappointment in your attitude if it made an error.

So the dog has made a mistake! Sometimes that is all it is, a mistake. Big deal. Remember it is a **dog** you are working with, and when were you perfect all the time during your learning processes? Other times an error is a result of Murphy's Law, but most often it can be a result of a lack of proofing, showing too soon, not fully training for the task at hand, communication, or good preparation on your part. It's a hard pill to swallow for some as it is always easier to blame someone or something.

The **moment** the performance goes awry REMEMBER from that point on you are working on the next time you are to enter the ring. All is not lost for your remaining ring time. Keep the **entire** ring time positive for your dog. That may require digging deep into your mental toolbox and coming up with your best acting skills. *Don't dwell on the error(s) in the ring as your disappointment may be the memory the dog takes out of the ring.* Entering the ring once again in the future could bring back that past memory of a negative experience. Then history repeats itself.

As an obedience judge there are times I witness a handler showing disappointment to their dog when an error is made. This comes in the forms of spoken language, tone of voice and/or body English. The dog then shuts down and it goes downhill from there. The day then ends being a total loss with nothing gained. Success in training is not all about a green ribbon; it is also about building attitude, so use your ring time wisely and to your dog's benefit, not detriment.

Next time you are at a dog show sit outside the obedience or rally rings and watch the Oscar Performances going on. The contenders for the best actor/actress Oscars will be the handler(s) who always keeps the dog "up" and happy. They will be ones interacting with the dog between exercises keeping the dog engaged and focused. When and if there is a mistake, observe and learn the skills of the best performing actors. The Oscar winners will reap many rewards in future performances and those dogs will enjoy the sport the most, plus look forward to going into the ring once again to please their handler!

There is a time and place for everything. Think of the dog show ring as a stage where you are the main performing actor for the day. Will it be Oscar worthy? Training and fixing issues/mistakes is for another place and another time.

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