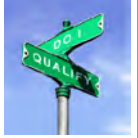




Below is the next in a series of Random Tidbits of information (from me) in regards to the AKC Obedience Regulations. Knowledge of the Regulations provides you the power for...

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Today's Random Little Tidbit - Principal features & Non-principal features of an exercise.

Most all of the AKC Obedience exercises have Principal features **and** Non-principal features (there are a couple of exceptions which I will cover later), and both of these features factor into the scoring. Knowing how an exercise is scored factors into these two features and can and make the difference between points off to a non-qualifying (NQ) performance.

In reading the Regulations for each exercise in a Regular, Alternative or Optional titling class, the **Description** lists the principal feature of that exercise in detail. The **Judge's Guidelines** will also expand the details of a few exercises. The **Scoring** section of each exercise then lists, in detail, non-qualifying (NQ), substantial and minor deductions. The **Glossary of Terms** lists point values of substantial or minor deductions, plus definitions of words used in the Regulations.

I. What is a Qualifying Score?

According to Chapter 1, Section 15, **Qualifying score:** "A qualifying score means that the dog has earned more than 50 percent of the points for each exercise with a total score of at least 170 points. This score must be earned in a regular, alternative, or optional titling class at a licensed or member obedience trial."

In addition:

- * "A qualifying score in the judge's book is certification that the dog has performed all the required exercises according to these regulations and justifies the awarding of the obedience title associated with the particular class."
- * "In deciding whether a faulty performance of an exercise warrants a qualifying score, the judge will consider whether the awarding of an obedience title would be justified if all dogs in the class performed the exercise in a similar manner. The judge must not give a qualifying score for the exercise if they decide that it would be contrary to the best interests of the sport if all dogs in the class were to perform in the same way."
- * "A qualifying score must never be awarded to a dog whose performance has not met the minimum requirements."

II. Principal features

The principal feature of an exercise must be met to earn a qualifying score in that exercise. In the **advanced** classes (beyond Novice) there can be more than one principal feature. The principal features of an advanced exercise will also include all the applicable principal and non-principal features of the listed **foundation** exercises, which must also be met to earn a qualifying score. A foundation exercise is an exercise where a particular performance element is first defined in the Regulations. For example, the Novice Heel on Leash and Figure Eight is a foundation exercise. All other exercises in all of the other classes which have elements of heeling will refer back to this exercise for full details and applicable scoring guidance.

Different exercises can be challenging in learning the principal feature from a non-principal feature. There are a few exercises which switch back and forth from one to the other. It can be a brain twister until sorted out. Case in point:

III. Novice Stand For Examination (foundation exercise)

- * This exercise starts with **non-principal scoring to principal scoring** and then back to non-principal scoring.
- * After the Judge asks, "Are you ready?", the Judge's first order is, "Stand your dog and leave when you are ready." The **non-principal** feature and scoring of *this* exercise is at the beginning of the exercise where the handler stands the dog in position. Scoring has started on the Judge's first order (Chapter 2, Section 4), but only for such things as rough treatment by the handler or active resistance by the dog to its handler's attempts to have it stand.
- * The **principal feature** and scoring starts when the *handler* gives the command/or signal to Stay, or just leaves the dog. Keep in mind, neither a command or signal are *required* to be given as the description reads "may give." The scoring of the principal feature starts at this point and continues until the Judge lifts their hand off the dog's hindquarters.
- * Once the Judge's hand is lifted the **non-principal** scoring takes hold once again as the handler returns to heel position and until the Judge then orders, "Exercise finished."

IV. Group Exercise - Novice A & B

- * The Novice Group exercise is yet another example of scoring from **non-principal to principal and then back to non-principal**.
- * After the Judge asks "Are you ready?" the Judge's first order is, "Sit (or Down) your dogs." The **non-principal** scoring is at the first and second parts of the exercise for such things as rough treatment of a dog by its handler or resistance by a dog to its handler's attempts to make it sit or lie down, which starts with the first order.
- * The **principal feature** (scoring and timing) starts with the Judge's second order, "Leave your dogs." This feature continues on until the handlers have returned to heel position.
- * The **non-principal** scoring takes hold once again for the short time in which all the handlers are standing in heel position until the Judge's orders, "Exercise finished."

V. Utility Signal Exercise – Knowing the principal features, plus the nuances of an exercise for scoring.

- * "The **principal features** of this exercise are the **ability of the dog and handler to work as a team while heeling** and the dog's correct response to the signals to **stand, down, sit and come.**"
- * The heeling is judged and scored as in the **foundation** exercise (**Heel on Leash and Figure Eight**).
- * If there is no teamwork between the dog and handler while heeling, this will result in a non-qualifying (NQ) performance. This occurs before the other principal features, the signals! Other exercises will also have additional principal features to be aware of in the applicable foundation exercises listed in their scoring section.
- * One also needs to read and understand *which signals* are addressed in the **principle features** of the signal exercise *and which are not*. There is no mention in the principal features of the Signal exercise *for a dog's correct response to the signal* to start the heeling. Why? A handler is not required to give a signal to start heeling. The foundation exercise states "may". In Chapter 2, Section 20 it also states, "Moving forward at the heel without any command or signal other than the natural forward movement of the handler's body will not be considered anticipation." Furthermore, in the **Scoring** section in this advanced "signal" exercise, it states a substantial deduction will be made for any audible command during the heeling or finish portions of the exercise. The finish portions of the Signal exercise are a non-principal feature, which is defined in another foundation exercise (**Novice Recall**). An example of what was mentioned above; *The principal features of an advanced exercise will also include all the applicable principal and non-principal features of the listed foundation exercises, which must also be met to earn a qualifying score. A foundation exercise is an exercise where a particular performance element is first defined in the Regulations.*

VI. The Finish

- * The Finish is not a principal feature of any exercise. Therefore, failure to finish or extra commands or signals to finish do not require a non-qualifying (NQ) score for any exercise. However, if during the principal features the scoring was at the line of non-qualifying, additional scoring of the finish may factor in to a NQ. See Qualifying Score "*" above.
- * An extra command and/or signal in any non-principal part of an exercise does not constitute a failing score for that exercise.

VII. Heel on Leash and Figure Eight (foundation exercise) + Heel Free exercises:

There are only principal parts to these two (2) exercises.

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