

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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Principal
Toolkit

Today's Random Little Tidbit - Principal features & non-principal features of the Novice exercises.

Random Little Tidbits #27 touched on this topic in general and covers what constitutes a qualifying score. Let's now look into the different exercises (one by one) in the Regular classes, starting with Novice. This is the class where many of the foundation exercises are located and referred back to in the advanced classes. There will be future Random Little Tidbits articles covering the exercises in Open (#32) & Utility (#33).

Most of the AKC Obedience exercises have principal features **and** non-principal features (there are a couple of exceptions), and both of these features factor differently into the scoring. Knowing how an exercise is scored in regards to these two features can make the difference between points off to a non-qualifying (NQ) performance.

In reading the AKC Obedience Regulations for each of the exercises in a Regular, Alternative, Optional and Non-Regular classes, 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.

Principal features of an exercise.

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 features of the **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. Mastering the foundation exercises will assist one in knowing how exercises are also to be judged.

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. So let's start to sort out the differences.

I. Novice Heel On Leash & Figure Eight (foundation exercise) Note: Other exercises will refer back to this exercise.

"The principal feature of this exercise is the ability of the dog and handler to work as a team. The orders are: 'Forward,' 'Halt,' 'Right turn,' 'Left turn,' 'About turn,' 'Slow,' 'Normal' and 'Fast.'"

There is **only one principal feature** to this exercise. **No non-principal features.** The exercise starts with the first Judge's order "Forward", and continues on to the completion of the exercise where the Judge orders "Exercise finished." The scoring section of this exercise gives details on what constitutes a qualifying score from a non-qualifying score.

II. Novice Stand For Examination (foundation exercise) Note: Other classes will refer back to this exercise.

"The principal feature of this exercise is that the dog stand in position before and during the examination without displaying resentment."

* **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 poses 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. The examination (the principal feature) of the exercise is finished with this action.

* Once the Judge's hand is lifted the **non-principal** feature and scoring takes hold once again as the handler returns to heel position and until the Judge orders "Exercise finished."

III. Novice Heel Free (foundation exercise) Note: Other exercises will refer back to this exercise *which then refers back to the original foundation exercise--Novice Heel on Leash & Figure Eight.*

"This exercise will be performed as in the Heel on Leash but without either the leash or the Figure Eight. The scoring and orders will be the same."

IV. Novice Recall (foundation exercise) Note: Other classes will refer back to this exercise.

"The principal features of this exercise are that the dog stay where left until called by the handler, and that the dog responds promptly to the handler's command or signal to come."

* This exercise starts with the **principal scoring** and ends with **non-principal scoring**.

* After the Judge asks "Are you ready?" the Judge's first order is "Leave your dog." The **principal feature** now starts. The dog is to stay where left until the handler's command or signal to come.

* Once the dog is within reach of the handler (hopefully sitting in front) the Judge will order "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 qualifying, additional scoring of the finish may factor in to a NQ.

V. Group Exercise - Novice A & B

"The principal feature of this exercise is that the dog remain in the sitting or down position, whichever is required by the particular exercise."

* The Novice Group exercise is yet another example of scoring starting with a **non-principal feature to a principal feature 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 to "Leave your dogs." This feature continues until the handlers have returned to heel position after ordered to do so.

* The **non-principal** features and scoring takes hold once again for the short time in which all the handlers are standing in heel position until the Judges orders "Exercise finished."

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