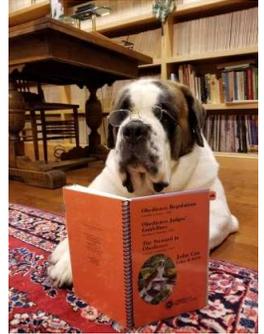


Below is the next in a series of Random Tidbits of information (from me) in regards to the AKC Obedience Regulations. Knowledge of the Regulations provides you the power for...

Saving Withdrawals from Your 200 Account ©

Today's Random Little Tidbit – Reviewing the Requirements for the Perfect Signal, or NOT!

Giving the correct signal to the dog in the obedience ring becomes an integral part in obtaining a perfect performance or, in some cases, a qualifying performance. Executing a signal incorrectly will lead to a **minor, substantial** or **non-qualifying** penalty. So how can one save withdrawals from their 200 account when it comes to **signals**? To answer the above we need to **open and read** the AKC Obedience Regulations (I know, what a concept) to learn just *what a correct signal is and how it is defined*. Xavier is doing just that, follow his lead. ☺ Next, read the exercise(s) and description(s) of the exercises to be performed in the class you are showing, and know the requirements in regards to a **signal** and if a **signal** may be used in a particular exercise. Then study the **principal** features and **non-principal** parts of the exercises to be performed to learn the severity of the scoring of an incorrect signal.



Definition of a Signal - Good Ole Chapter 2, Section 20, Commands And Signals. Let it soak in. Refer back to this Chapter and Section for ALL exercises for help and guidance, especially the new May 2018 exercises. The intent of this Random Little Tidbits article is to spotlight **signals alone**; therefore, I will quote only the parts of Chapter 2, Sections 20 & 21 which have to do with the **signal**. It would behoove you to read the sections in their entirety.

You may need to read this section several times to sort it all out, but remember the devil is in the details. First, let's look at the definition of a **signal**, where it is to be administered and how it is to be performed, quoting from the Regulations.

"...The dog's name may be used *once* immediately before any verbal command **or** before a verbal **command and signal** when these regulations permit **command and/or signal**.

"When a **signal** is permitted, it must be a **single gesture with one arm and hand only**, and the arm and hand *must immediately be returned to a natural position*. A handler may bend their body and knees to bring their hand level with the dog's eyes while giving a **signal** to a dog **in heel position**. **Signals** must be inaudible, and the handler must not touch the dog. *Any unusual noise or motion may be considered to be a signal*. Position of the arms and hands and movements of the head and/or body that aid the dog will be considered additional **signals**. Signaling a correction to a dog is forbidden and will be penalized.

"When these regulations mention a **command or signal**, *only a single command or signal* may be given. When these regulations specify **command and/or signal**, *the handler may give either one or the other or both command and signal simultaneously*. The name will not be used with any signal not given simultaneously with a verbal command. Any extra commands **or** signals must be penalized. An extra command **and/or** signal in any **non-principal** part of an exercise does not constitute a failing score for that exercise.

"The dog should never anticipate the handler's directions but will wait for the appropriate **commands and/or signals**. 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. Lack of prompt response by the dog to a **command or signal** is subject to a penalty. Delay in following a judge's order to give a **command or signal** must be penalized, unless the judge directs the delay..."

"**Section 21. Additional Commands or Signals.** If a handler gives an additional **command or signal** not permitted by these regulations the dog shall be scored as though it had failed to perform that particular part of the exercise. This includes giving a **signal** or command when none is permitted or using the dog's name with a permitted **signal** but without a permitted command."

I. The Signal During a Principal Features of an Exercise vs. a Non-principal Part:

A. The Principal feature of an exercise:

Just what is a **principal** feature of an exercise? In most cases, *but not in all exercises*, it is the part(s) of a particular exercise to be performed *per the description* of the exercise in order to qualify in that exercise. Each exercise lists the principal features in the first sentence of the description. The dog is to perform the defined **principal** features, PLUS the handler is to also perform their actions in accordance with the Regulations. Not only what is stated in the exercise description, but in other Chapters and Sections (**1 and 2**), as well.

B. Signals during a Principal feature of an exercise:

1. Regardless of when a signal is used (principal feature or not) if the signal doesn't comply with **Chapter 2, Section 20** it is subject to penalty. The degree of the handler error will determine the degree of the penalty.
2. Examples of how an incorrect Signal **may/could** lead to a non-qualifying performance. Make note, a Judge's discretion may factor in the examples noted as all may not be black and white during the actual performance of an exercise.
 - a. The dog's name being used before a **signal** when these regulations permit **signal ONLY**.
 - b. When a **signal** is NOT permitted for an exercise.
 - c. When a **signal** is NOT a **single gesture with one arm and hand only**.
 - d. **Signals** which are not a single gesture. Depending on the "nano seconds" lacking of a single gesture this could lead to a NQ during a **principal** features of an exercise.
 - e. Arm and hand NOT **immediately** being returned to a *natural position (hanging naturally* at the handler's sides) after giving the **signal**.
 - f. A handler may bend their body and knees to bring their hand level with the dog's eyes ONLY while giving a **signal** to a dog **in heel position**. **Turning** and bending over the dog may be considered an aid.
 - g. If a **signal** is allowed to be used with a command it MUST be given **simultaneously**, otherwise it is two actions, not one, which results in a NQ.
 - h. **Signals** that touch the dog or are audible may result in a non-qualifying performance.
 - i. Position of the arms and hands and movements of the head and/or body that aid the dog will be considered **additional signals** and can (depending on the extent) result in a NQ during the **principal** features.
 - j. Delay in following a judge's order to give a **command or signal** must be penalized, unless the judge directs the delay. This could lead to a NQ, depending on the extent.
 - k. Signaling a correction to a dog is forbidden and will be penalized.
3. An extra command **and/or signal** in any **non-principal** part of an exercise does not lead to a failing score for that exercise. Learn the **principal** features from the **non-principal** parts of each exercise. For example, the Finish is a **non-principal** part of all exercises.
4. Do not confuse a **signal** with the giving of **direction** for the Directed Retrieve exercise. The *giving of direction* during that exercise is just that; therefore, it is not defined as a **signal**. The definition of a **signal** (see **d and e** above) does NOT apply in that exercise as no "**signal**" is given to retrieve. A "**direction**" (a held action) is given along with a required verbal command simultaneously or immediately following the giving of direction.

II. Areas Where Scorable Signals May Occur During the Principal Features of an Exercise.

- A. Handler gives a command to heel (Heel Free) and then brings their arm up to the waist *during* the heeling. This is scored as an additional **signal**. If one chooses to heel with the hand at the waist, bring it to that position BEFORE the judge's first order ("Forward."), not after.
- B. If a handler chooses to give a **signal** to the dog to Stay, it must Immediately be returned to a natural position. **Review above letters c-f, & h-j as it pertains to Chapter 2, Sections 20 and 21.**
- C. In the **Signal** exercise in Utility when giving the **signals** to Stand, Down, Sit & Come. **Review above letters c-f & h-k as it pertains to Chapter 2, Sections 20 and 21.**
- D. If a **signal** is given to drop the dog in the Open Drop on Recall exercise, **Review above letters c-f, & i-j as it pertains to Chapter 2, Sections 20 and 21.**
- E. **Command Discrimination**. The **principal** features of this new exercise starts on the Judge's FIRST order for a position change. If a **signal** is used (an option) when giving the **signals** to Stand, Down, Sit & Stay **review above letters c-k as it pertains to Chapter 2, Sections 20 and 21**. Also, keep in mind, ONLY when the handler is in heel position may the handler's body be bent as mentioned above in **f**, not at the 15' or 30' positions of the handler. The handler is then in front of the dog and not in heel position. The ONLY **non-principal** part of this exercise is when the handler returns to heel position and before the Judge orders "Exercise finished." *Let that soak in*. This exercise's **principal** features are at the start of this exercise so a **signal** not immediately returned to a natural position (if used) to Down (or Stand) when the dog is in **heel position** could result in a NQ as it is not in accordance with **letters c-j above, as it pertains to Chapter 2, Sections 20 and 21**. Compare that to the **Group** exercise where a signal not immediately returned to a natural position to Down (or Sit) the dog is in a **non-principal** part (before the Judge's 2nd order) where the penalty is less severe.

III. Areas Where Scorable Signals May Occur In Non-principal Parts of an Exercise.

An extra command and/or **signal** in any **non-principal** part of an exercise does not constitute a failing (NQ) score for that exercise. Learn the **principal** features from the **non-principal** parts of each exercise.

- A. The Finish is a **non-principal** part of all exercises.
- B. If a **signal** is given to Down (or Sit) the dog during a **Group** exercise, **review above letters c-f and h-j as it pertains to Chapter 2, Sections 20 and 21**. The **non-principal** parts are at the beginning and end of this exercise. The **principal** feature of this exercise starts on the Judge's second order, "Leave your dogs" and continues until the handler has returned to heel position. When the handler has returned to heel position and before the Judge orders "Exercise finished," the **non-principal** parts apply once again.
- C. **Novice Sit Stay – Get Your Leash**. The **non-principal** part of this exercise is the timeframe from the first Judge's order to the second Judge's order. The **principal** feature of this exercise starts on the Judge's second order, "Leave your dog to get your leash" and continues until the handler has returned to heel position. When then handler has returned to heel position and before the Judge orders "Exercise finished," the **non-principal** parts apply once again. Refer to **I. B. 3.** above.
- D. **Open Stand Stay Get Your Leash**. The **principal** feature of this exercise starts on the Judge's first order, "Stand your dog" and continues until the handler has returned to heel position. When the handler has returned to heel position and before the Judge orders "Exercise finished," the **non-principal** parts apply once again. Refer to **I. B. 3.** above.

There are many areas in the Obedience Regulations where a **signal** is required **or** it is an option. Plus, there are other areas where a **signal** *may or may not be used* with a verbal command. Study the descriptions of the exercises to be performed in the ring and learn the handler's performance in that exercise. Learn the correct use of a **signal** and the definition of a **signal**. Also, be aware of the **Principal features vs. non-principal parts** of an exercise to know the possible consequences (Q or NQ) in giving an incorrect **signal**. One last thing to keep in mind: when executing a **signal** remember the handler is also being judged on Smoothness, Naturalness and Gentleness (Chapter 2, Section 2). Abiding by the Regulations in regards to the giving of a **signal** can save many withdrawals from your 200 Account. That's advice you can bank on!

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