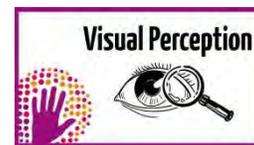


Below is the next in a series of Random Tidbits of information (from me) in regards to the AKC Obedience Regulations. Knowledge of the Regulations provides you the power for...

## ***Saving Withdrawals from Your 200 Account*** ©

### Today's Random Little Tidbit – **Be careful of your perceptions in regards to the duties of an Obedience Judge!**



Let's *open* the AKC Obedience Regulations and see what it says in regards to the *Obedience Judge*. If you don't have a copy it is available online to download to your phone or computer. <http://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RO2999.pdf>

#### Judges, too, must play by the rules.



We have a set of Regulations so we all know what to expect from a judge. When the written Regulations are ignored we then have issues in the game we are playing. There is more to good judging than just being perceived as "nice." There are Regulations which ***must be followed***, as in any other game or sport. The obedience judge who fully carries out and adheres to these Regulations, Judging Procedures, Judge's Guidelines and the AKC Blog are the ones who deserve our respect for doing their job and doing it well!

Keep in mind an Obedience Trial is not a match! It is a place where one competes against the Obedience Regulations as written. A trial is a place to exhibit one's dog which then becomes a learning experience of where one is at in their training. It is not a place to train in the ring, which is where matches come into play. Judges also need to keep this in mind! At a trial a judge is there to **officiate and observe** the performances **only**, not to offer help or assist with training while in the ring judging. There can/may be devastating consequences for the dog and handler when a judge crosses that line and ventures elsewhere, which will be pointed out later. The Regulations were written the way they are to present an even playing field for all, and to help avoid issues which may/can occur otherwise.

Now let's look at a particular sentence in the **Obedience Regulation's "Purpose"** and see how it relates to the judge. "All contestants in a class are required to perform the same exercises in substantially the same way so that the relative quality of the various performances may be compared and scored."

**This is accomplished when the judge follows and adheres to the specific wording in the Obedience Regulations. I will go into more detail in Tidbit #53 for each exercise but, for now, here are few a items to keep in mind.**

- ✓ **Chapter 2. Regulations for Performance and Judging Standards and Procedures:**
- ✓ **Section 1. Standardized Judging:** Standardized judging is of paramount importance. Judges are not permitted to inject their own variations into the exercise but will see that each handler and dog perform the various exercises exactly as described in these Regulations.
- ✓ A handler who is familiar with these Regulations should be able to enter the ring under any judge without having to inquire how that particular judge wishes to have an exercise performed and without being confronted with any unexpected requirements.
- ✓ **Section 4. Judge's Directions:** The judge's orders and signals should be given to the handlers in a clear and understandable manner but in such a way that the work of the dogs is not disturbed.
- ✓ **The Blog: (address below, sign up!)** expands on this subject, plus others. "Several judges have been observed using only one word for an order that requires more than one word to be used. Example: "left" for "left turn", "about" for "about turn" "send" for "send your dog." This confuses exhibitors who are not familiar with your judging procedures or may be new to the sport.
- ✓ **Editor's Note:** Please use the orders as they are stated in the Obedience Regulations (in quotes) for every exercise. Just do it! If you have trouble remembering, print those orders on your worksheets for a quick glance. The handlers are counting on YOU to get them right; doing so IS a part of Standardized Judging.
- ✓ **Section 5. No Added Requirements:** No judge will require any dog or handler to do anything, nor penalize a dog or handler for failing to do anything, that is not required by these Regulations.
- ✓ **Section 6. Judging of Classes and Different Breeds:** The same methods and standards will be used for judging and scoring the regular, preferred, optional titling and non-regular classes and in judging and scoring the work of dogs of different breeds, including dogs listed with AKC Canine Partners.

## Play by the Rules & Regulations

**A. Judges need to be aware** of their actions, have knowledge and know of the job they are there to do and just do it! Exhibitors need to be aware judges are there to make decisions based on the Regulations, and not to push an issue into what could elevate to an unfavorable outcome for the exhibitors or dog in trying to “help.”

**B. The Judge’s Responsibilities as a Judge, per the Judge’s Guidelines:** Judges must understand their responsibilities to the sport.

**1. Responsibility to Exhibitors.** Each exhibitor has paid an entry fee for the purpose of competing and having their dog’s performance evaluated. Judges are expected to be friendly and courteous to all who enter the ring. Without exhibitors, there would be no trials. For every experienced exhibitor there are many newcomers. **The future of this sport is in the hands of the novice.**

**2. Responsibility to Spectators.** Spectators form their opinion of the sport through seeing the actions of the judge, the handler and the dog. Care must be taken to avoid any action that might reflect poorly on the sport. Judges should work to maintain spectator appeal in the sport while keeping foremost in mind the welfare and convenience of the exhibitor and the dog.

**3. Responsibility to the Sport.** Approval to judge carries with it the full endorsement of the AKC. Whether judging at a licensed trial or sanctioned match or engaging in any dog-related activity, judges must be cognizant of their responsibility to the sport.

**4.** Judges must never ignore or condone any type of abuse of a dog at any time. All judges are expected to take appropriate action when witnessing such conduct.

**5. As a judge, you are required** to meet these key criteria:

- **Knowledge.** Through experience and continuing study, you must demonstrate sound knowledge of the dogs you evaluate and score. Good judges never stop learning about the sport of obedience.
- **Procedure.** You must demonstrate sound judging procedure and ring control, plus a thorough knowledge of the AKC *Obedience Regulations* and the *Obedience Judges’ Guidelines*. Good procedure is essential. With it, a judge will inspire the confidence of exhibitors and spectators.
- **Impartiality.** It is essential that exhibitors have full faith in the impartiality and competence of judges. There is no room for even the suggestion that anything other than the work of the dogs in the ring is involved in your decisions.

### Judge’s Guidelines: Judging the Dogs.

**1.** The judge has absolute control and unquestioned authority over all persons and dogs in the ring. With this authority comes the responsibility to be courteous and considerate. Be as systematic in your ring procedure from dog to dog as conditions permit. Judges are required to make their own decisions and to accept the responsibility this implies.

**2. A judge’s comments,** other than orders to the handler of a dog, shall be limited to a brief greeting, instructions on positioning the dog, and instructions covering the group exercise. A judge will never ask handlers about club affiliations, their opinions or about their dogs’ past performances.

**3.** The actual judging procedure may vary from judge to judge, but performance requirements must remain the same.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article there can be devastating consequences to the actions a judge may take when stepping outside of the boundaries of the Regulations. Keep in mind, a judge is in the ring to ONLY officiate, judge, observe and rate the performance by scoring in abidance with the Regulations. The judge is to follow the Regulations in their entirety; they do **not** have the option to pick and choose which regulations *they* want to abide by.

An obedience trial is not a training seminar or a workshop. The judge’s duties do not include helping a dog or offering tips on training, or to allow the handler to train their dog while in the ring. **1.** Many handlers may take offence to this action as it may not be in line with their training methods. **2.** Many dogs may not take kindly to a judge helping it make other choices. **3.** The exhibitors outside the ring will not be pleased with the delay in judging as a judge tries to “help” another handler giving them “special” attention.

Let’s take a look at a few hypothetical issues that could backfire when a judge does not play by the rules and takes liberties within the Regulations. We expect the exhibitors to play by the rules, so why not the judges too?

#### **I. Novice Stand For Examination or the Utility Moving Stand and Examination** (or **measuring**, if applicable).

**A.** Judge approaches the dog for examination. The dog demonstrates fear and/or resentment. The **Regulations, Guidelines and Blog mention**, Judges should not expose themselves needlessly to the danger of being bitten. Should a dog in the ring give warning that it may bite if a judge proceeds with the examination, the judge should excuse the dog from the ring and mark the judge’s book “Excused – Unable to Examine.” The judge that follows the Regulations and Guidelines is actually doing the team a favor by excusing them. The handler now knows there was an issue (whatever the reason) and it can be worked on for another day. The only thing lost was a qualifying score for that class on that day only.

B. The judge that wants to be “nice” and “help” the dog and then pushes the issue going in for the exam is not using good judgement, IMO. As an example, let’s look at the judge who wants to “help” and goes in for the exam when the dog clearly demonstrated fear and/or resentment. What if the dog then lunged at the judge giving the impression of an attempt to attack? The **judge** would then have to disqualify the dog and it would not be eligible to show again, that day or any day, until it went through the lengthy reinstatement process. This was not helping the team but doing a GREAT disservice to them.

## II. Utility, Versatility, Graduate Open Scent Discrimination

The following is an actual scenario I observed at a trial. The articles were placed and the exercise had started. The dog went to the pile and searched and searched. It was continually working but not choosing an article. After a lengthy time, the judge was going to “help” (actually said so later) and moved in toward the dog working the pile. The judge was of the opinion the dog would then make a decision with their pressure of moving in. The dog continued working. Then the judge bent down and moved into the pile and pointed to the article. After a bit, the judge then picked up the correct article and presented it in front of the dog’s face. Remember, this is at an obedience trial and we are not at a training seminar or a workshop!!! The handler thought that was SO NICE that the judge “helped” and posted such on public media. Imagine what the handler would have been thinking and posting about the judge if the dog barked or growled or snapped and moved towards the judge. This most likely would be (should be) perceived as an attempt to attack. The judge would then have no choice but to disqualify the dog.

## III. At Your Next Trial

A. Watch the judging with a better understanding of the do’s and don’ts.

B. Give serious thought to becoming a future judge and giving back to the Sport that has served you well. That is what those judges in the ring are doing; giving their all to this Sport so you can enter the ring and be treated the same and judged the same by the Regulations.

C. There are also new judges out there learning the ropes. It is one thing to read the Regulations and another thing to implement them correctly. Show patience with them as they go around the learning curve.

D. Even those of us who have been at this for decades still make errors. It just goes to show we are human too and some days “poop” happens. Keep in mind a simple mistake is something totally different from a blatant action which goes against the Regulations and Judge’s Guidelines.

**Please keep in mind**, this article **highlights** just a few items to remember when observing and learning what good judging is all about. Read and study the Regulations, Judge’s Procedures, Judges’ Guidelines and The Blog for more complete details.

**Random Little Tidbits #53** (A Quick Reference Guide to a Judge’s Duties) will have a follow-up to this article; check it out for the particulars. I also have a **Dog-Talk article on Judging**: if interested, request a copy (pdf file). [dog-talk@comcast.net](mailto:dog-talk@comcast.net)

With all the above said, if you have concerns about Obedience, a judge’s ring procedures or actions in the ring, write to:  
[obedience@akc.org](mailto:obedience@akc.org)

**AKC Blog Address:** <https://akcbedrlyjudges.wordpress.com/about/> Sign up to receive updates.