

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 – Common Handler Errors to Avoid in The Obedience Ring

**Part I - The AKC Novice Obedience Ring...**

We all have different goals in obedience, but the most common goal I would venture to say is to qualify and do the best we can for those few minutes we have in the ring. A handler puts a fair amount of time into training a dog for an obedience title. When that point in training is reached and the dog has demonstrated success the handler is now ready to show, or *so they may think*. Yes, the dog may be ready but what about the handler? Have they trained themselves? Have they opened the **AKC Obedience Regulations** to even grasp what is expected in regards to *their job* in the ring? Knowledge is power and such knowledge may save the day. The Regulations do provide a wide range of “wiggle room” for the dog and handler to qualify, and knowing those parameters can and will work in one’s favor.

This series of articles (**Part I Novice, Part II Open & Part III Utility**) will point out some of the *more common* handler errors which lead to points being deducted, and in some cases all of the available points of an exercise being deducted equaling a non-qualifying (NQ) score. The listings below (and the other parts in this series) were compiled from lists submitted from a number of AKC Judges from around the country. No way is the list complete, or intended to be, but maybe it will help you be aware of ways boost your final performance while *Saving Withdrawals from Your 200 Account*.

Whether you play cards, games, or compete in any sport, it is to your benefit to know the rules. In Obedience we have a set of Obedience Regulations. They are available for FREE on the AKC webpage in a pdf format that can be downloaded to your computer or phone. <http://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RO2999.pdf> Or you may also order a paper copy at a minimal cost.

**Heel on Leash and Figure Eight, Chapter 3, Sections 5 & 6 (not in any order):**

1. Returning to a Normal pace <i>before</i> the judge's order is given on the Fast or Slow.	2. Talking to the dog; this is not Rally. Either during the heeling or whispering “Sit”.	3. Not having adequate slack in the leash.
4. Physically guiding the dog by constantly controlling the dog by tugging on the leash.	5. Not knowing when a command only, signal only or both may be given. Read the exercise descriptions to know what is allowed.	6. No noticeable acceleration on the Fast or noticeable deceleration on the Slow.
7. Stepping into the dog on the Halts.	8. Responding late (or anticipating) the judge's order on the turns or halts. Chapter 2, Section 20	9. Adapting to the dog and motions of the body to aid the dog. Chapter 2, Section 20
10. Not returning to a brisk pace <i>after</i> the judge's order is given on the Slow.	11. Heeling wide on the outside post on the Figure Eight. Adapting to the dog.	12. Chapter 2, Section 19 for guidance on Hand Position during this exercise.
13 Excessively loud commands or touching the dog with a signal.	14. Not walking briskly as defined in the Glossary of Terms; keenly alive, alert and energetic.	This is a “foundation” exercise which may apply to the scoring in an advanced exercise.

**Stand for Examination, Chapter 3, Sections 7 & 8 (not in any order):**

1. Not getting in Heel Position before and when returning to the dog. Chapter 2, Section 18	2. Hand still on the dog when leaving.	3. Not walking Forward when leaving the dog, but backing up, some or all the way.
4. Not knowing where “about” 6 feet is to stop after leaving the dog. Being in line with the Judge is a good rule of thumb.	5. Getting in a rush when positioning the dog and leaving it in an awkward position where it will possibly move before or during the exam.	This is a “foundation” exercise which may apply to the scoring in an advanced exercise.

**Heel Free, Chapter 3, Section 9 (not in any order):**

1. <b>Always learn to read and refer back to the <u>foundation exercise(s)</u> of an exercise. Review Heel on Leash (above) as it is the <u>foundation exercise</u> which applies for all exercises which have heeling.</b>	2. Read Chapter 2, Section 19 for what is allowed for hand positions during the <u>Heel Free</u> exercise. Pay particular attention to the left arm/hand if holding arm against the body.	3. Extra commands when not necessary. Or being savvy to give <i>one</i> extra command to maybe save the exercise, if necessary. Just points off in this case but better than a possible NQ if it gets the dog back to teamwork. Use the extra command wisely and know when to use it.
4. Not naturally moving arms and hands at your sides. For example, holding arms and hands tight against leg(s).		

**Recall, Chapter 3, Sections 10 & 11 (not in any order):**

1. Leaving the dog before the judge's order is given.	2. Hands not at handler's side as the dog is coming in to Sit in front. Chapter 2, Section 19.	3. Double command, double signal, or command and signal to Finish.
4. Excessive body language with head and/or shoulder on Recall or Finish.	5. Touching the dogs' rear in setting up at the start of the exercise. Chapter 2, Section 23	6. Excessively loud commands. Chapter 2, Section 20

7. Touching the dog with hand on the Stay signal/command. Chapter 2, Section 20	8. Bringing left hand up <i>after</i> giving signal with right hand to finish. (error on all finishes) Considered an extra signal. Chapter 2, Sections 20 & 21	9. Not going the full distance for the Recall.  This is a "foundation" exercise which may apply to the scoring in an advanced exercise.
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**Sit Stay – Get Your Leash, Chapter 3, Sections 12 & 13 (not in any order):**

1. Leaving the dog before the judge's order is given.	2. Returning to the dog before the judge's order is given.	3. Not returning to Heel Position. Chapter 2, Section 18 defines Heel Position.
4. Touching the dog's rear in setting up at the start of the exercise. Chapter 2, Section 23	5. Touching the dog with hand on the Stay signal/command. Chapter 2, Section 20	6. After the exercise if finished, not maintaining control of the dog when leaving the ring. Chapter 2, Section 25

**Group Exercise, Chapter 3, Sections 14 & 15 (not in any order):**

1. Holding signals on the Sit or Down. Chapter 2, Section 20	2. Jerking or tightening the leash during the exercise.	3. Touching the dog's collar to get it to Down.
4. Rough handling to get the dog to Sit or Down	5. Not returning to Heel Position after the Sit or Down. Chapter 2, Section 18 defines Heel Position.	6. Delay in following the judge's order to "Leave your dog" for the Sit or Down. Chapter 2, Section 20
7. Handler not walking <i>forward</i> when leaving the dog.	8. Not maintaining control of the dog when leaving the ring. Chapter 2, Section 25	

**Before, Between and After Exercises (not in any order):**

1. Physically positioning the dog. Chapter 2, Section 23	2. Guiding by the collar in classes <u>other than</u> Beginner Novice, Preferred Novice and Novice classes. Chapter 2, Section 23	3. Not " <u>gently</u> " guiding the dog by the collar in the classes of Beginner Novice, Preferred Novice and Novice classes.
4. Praising the dog where it is NOT under <u>reasonable</u> control while being praised. Chapter 2, Section 22	5. Leaving the ring without the dog under control. Chapter 2, Section 25	6. Inability to get the dog set up in heel position at the start of exercises <i>to the extent</i> that points are deducted. Chapter 2, Section 25
7. Multiple firm taps on the head, used to cause the dog to look at the handler when setting up for an exercise. Chapter 2, Section 23 <i>See #1</i>		

**Other Random Little Tidbits articles which may also help save handler errors:**

Tidbits #1, #6, #7, #22, #26 <https://saintbernardarchive.com/library/>

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