



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 – Timing is of the Essence When Giving Judge's Orders!

As judges well know, there is a lot of thought and preparation that goes into the judging process before one steps into the ring on that day to judge. Once in the ring after it is all set up, stewards briefed, equipment checked, etc., there is one more item that may have been overlooked. That item is the “essence of timing” when giving judge's orders to the team once *they* enter the ring. The timing of giving the order has to be foremost in one's mind and given not too early or too late. The essence of timing of a judge's order becomes especially critical when that team (or dog) is moving.

A judge also needs to be mindful to allow a *response time* from the handler after giving an order. There is a normal *minor* delay from when the judge's order is given for the handler to hear/see the order, and then respond to that order. This is all taking place as the team (or dog) is moving briskly forward and covering ground.

Furthermore, if the judge's order requires the handler to give a command and/or signal to the dog during that exercise, that too requires good timing to give the team adequate space so that order may be carried out to its fullest. Failure of good timing when giving an order is putting the team in a position where their performance may be compromised. And look who may have caused this compromise when that timing is off!

For example, let's look at a few common exercises where the team (or dog) is moving when a judge's order is given, and the timing of that order is critical:

- 1. Heeling** (Fast, Slow, Turns, Halt, Utility Stand)
- 2. Drop on Recall.** (Judge's order to drop)
- 3. Moving Stand & Examination** (heeling is only “about” 10-feet, then the next order is expected to be given).

Heeling:

According to the Obedience Regulations and Guidelines, the Fast and Slow must be of significant length, not a few steps. The Fast is to be on the long dimension of the ring and the Slow may be on either dimension. A key factor here is to have adequate space for the team to decelerate (Slow), or accelerate (Fast), then maintaining the Slow or Fast for a significant length. A savvy judge will give the order for the Fast or Slow *immediately* after a turn to the leg where the Fast or Slow is to be performed. That quick action provides the necessary timing the handler needs to hear and react. Even then the moving team could have traveled forward five feet while promptly responding to the order. Giving that order early allows the distance needed for the significant length, plus having the distance needed at the end of the Fast/Slow for a smooth transition back to Normal. The transition back to a Normal (brisk pace) is paramount and needs to be judged; it cannot if a Normal order is late with a turn element coming up (Left turn, Right turn or About turn). Different breeds and speeds of the handler's briskness need to be kept in mind in calling the orders for consistency from team to team.

In regards to the Utility Signal exercise, keep in mind the sooner the “Stand your dog” order is given after a turn, more distance is achieved for the handler to be away from the dog for the remaining signals and the Recall. Give this serious thought and practice it.

Drop on Recall:

The timing of giving the order (a signal to drop) for this exercise is quite critical. When a handler calls their dog it will leave the spot left in a variety of ways:

1. Like a car blasting its rockets as if on the Utah Salt Flats gaining speed as it goes.
2. A sauntering walk.
3. A brisk trot or gallop.
4. A trot slowing to where “it” may be anticipating where the Drop will be.

A judge will be keeping the principal features of this exercise in mind: “The principal features of this exercise, in addition to those listed under the Novice Recall, are the dog’s **prompt response to the handler’s command or signal to drop** and the dog’s remaining in the down position until again called or signaled to come. **The dog will be judged on the promptness of its response to the command or signal.**” In addition, a dog must drop **immediately** to a complete down position, and return to the handler exhibiting a brisk trot or gallop as defined in the Novice Recall.

Here again, the savvy judge will want to call the order to have the dog dropping near the center of the distance of the recall. This allows the dog adequate room to perform the exercise with precision before and after the drop. To accomplish good timing of the Drop signal (an order) to the handler, the judge needs to keep in mind:

1. Allowing a response time for the handler to respond to the judge’s signal.
2. Allowing timing for the handler to give the command or signal to the dog to respond.
3. All this is happening as the dog is hopefully coming in at a brisk trot or gallop.
4. Timing of the order is of essence as all the above elements happen at a rapid pace as the dog is moving in.
5. The order needs to be consistent from team to team regardless of the dog’s speed towards the handler.

Timing of the judge’s signal to the handler has proven to be best executed at about the **1/3** mark of the distance to be traveled by the dog. By the time a traveling dog *responds promptly* to the handler’s command or signal and drops, puts it near the middle of the recall distance. This allows adequate distance for a continuing trot or gallop to the handler after the drop. Giving an order too late (at or past the ½ way location) to the handler may cause the dog (who is traveling briskly and responding promptly) to end up too close to the handler. The dog needs a good distance a ways out from the handler for a brisk trot or gallop back into the handler. This is yet another exercise to give serious thought and practice.

Moving Stand and Examination:

If this exercise is performed correctly it covers only about 22-feet (less than half the distance of the length of a Utility ring). The exercise starts with only “about” 10-feet of heeling, which in reality can be only a few paces. At the end of the “about” 10-feet of heeling, the handler then leaves their dog (on the judge’s order) and continues on for about 10-12 feet and turns to face their dog. Calling orders for the different elements in this exercise can be a challenge for good timing in giving the orders while maintaining the required distances.

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