
AN INTRO TO

AKC Sports

An Introductory Guide to AKC Sports and How to Succeed at Them

THE AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB



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How to Get Started

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Understanding the Activities Available to You and Your Dog



The need for training, socialization, and activity doesn't end after puppyhood for your dog. All are necessary throughout their life to keep their mind sharp and body fit. One of the best ways to keep your dog at their best is by finding activities to get involved in. Plus, it's fun to meet other dog lovers who enjoy the same kinds of things you do!

The best way is to join a local dog-training club. You can [search akc.org](https://www.akc.org) for a [complete list of clubs](https://www.akc.org) across the country. Local clubs frequently offer training classes for all different types of activities. Even if competition is not your ultimate goal, the relationship that training forms between you and your dog is very rewarding. Training classes offer the best hands-on way to practice with your dog, and watching others actually compete will gain you expertise. You and your dog will make lots of friends as you get more involved in training and enjoy your new hobby for years to come!

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What are the Different Sports?

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Sports Available to You

- Obedience
- AKC Rally®
- Agility
- Coursing Ability Test
- Tracking



All dogs are eligible to compete in Obedience, AKC Rally®, Agility, Tracking and the Coursing Ability Test. Just make sure you have an AKC number via one of the following:

[AKC Registration](#) for one of our recognized breeds

[AKC Canine Partners](#) for mixed-breed dogs or those ineligible for AKC registration

[Purebred Alternative Listing \(PAL\)](#): a program that allows unregistered dogs of registrable breeds to compete in fun events.

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Obedience



What is Obedience?

AKC Obedience is an event that demonstrates the usefulness of the dog as a companion to man. It showcases dogs that have been trained to behave well in the home, public places, and in the presence of other dogs.

Obedience trials allow exhibitors and their dogs to enjoy companionship and competition as they proudly earn AKC titles. Dog and handler teams are judged on how closely they match the judge's mental picture of a theoretically perfect performance. Accuracy and precision are very important, but the natural movement of the handler and enjoyment of the dog are as well.

There are three levels of competition in Obedience: Novice, Open, and Utility. We'll discuss all these levels in the following pages.

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Level 1: NOVICE – For the dog just getting started in obedience. (In addition to Novice, there is also a [Beginner](#) level.) Exercises for “Novice” include:

- Heel on Leash and Figure Eight – The handler shows whether the dog has learned to watch the handler and adjust its pace to stay with the handler.
- Heel Free – The dog and handler perform a heeling pattern for the judge with the dog off-leash.
- Stand for Examination – The dog must stay in a standing position as its handler walks a short distance away. The judge will then lightly touch the dog on the head, the body and the hindquarters. The handler then returns to the dog.
- Recall – The handler demonstrates that the dog will come on command.
- Long Sit (1 minute) – The dog must remain sitting in the presence of other dogs while the handler stands across the ring.
- Long Down (3 minutes) – The dog must remain in a down position in the presence of other dogs while the handler stands across the ring.



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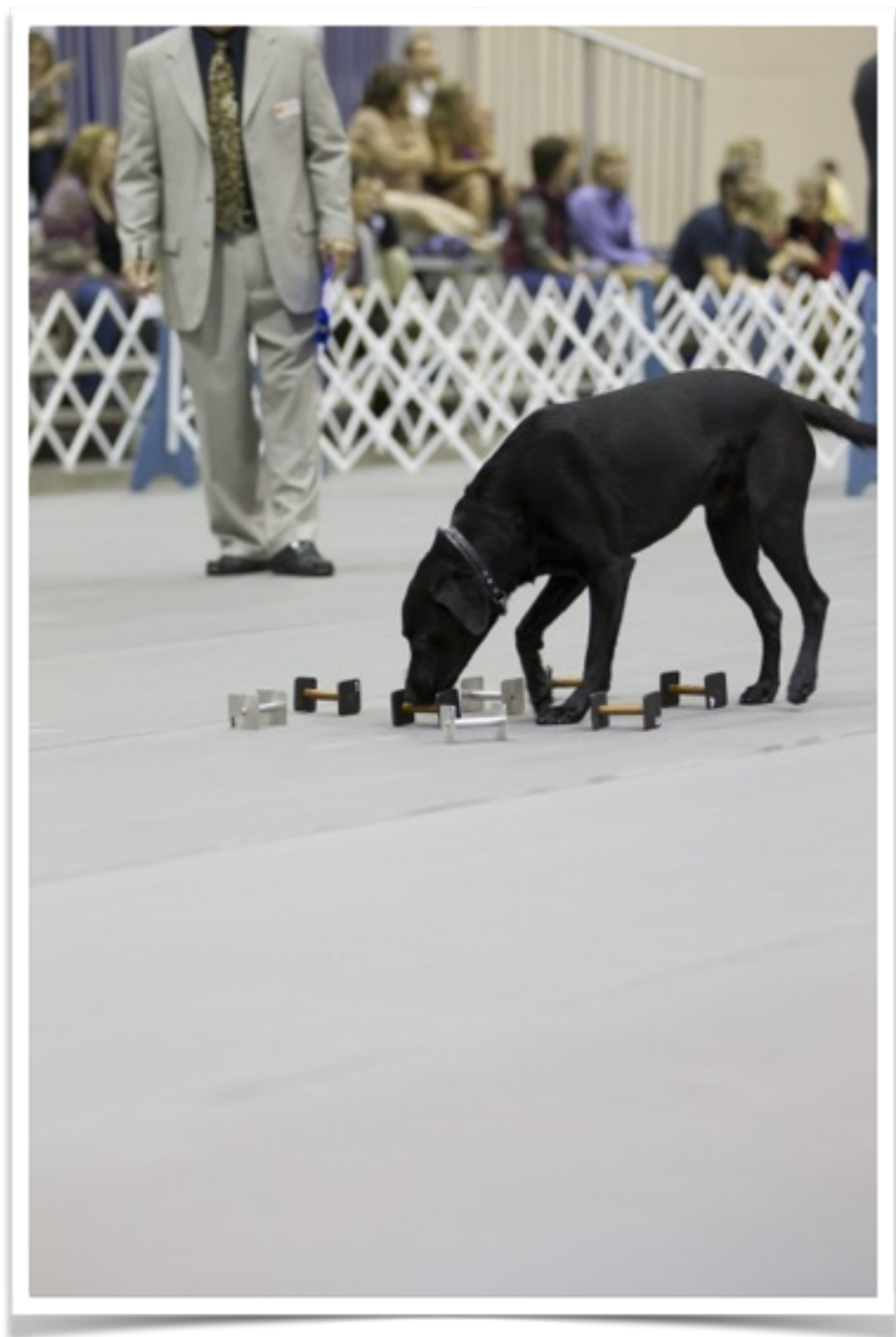


Level II: Open – The second level includes more complicated exercises; the dog must be able to perform a variety of tasks and follow commands either by voice or signal. Exercises include:

- Heel Free and Figure Eight – Same as Novice, but off leash.
- Drop on Recall – The dog must come to the handler when called from across the ring and, on the handler's command or signal, drop into a down position and then, on command or signal from the handler, resume coming to the handler.
- Retrieve on Flat – Demonstrates a dog's ability to retrieve an object on command.
- Retrieve Over High Jump – The dog must jump over an obstacle in order to retrieve an object and then jump the obstacle again to return it to the handler.
- Broad Jump – This exercise shows that the dog is able to jump a width that is twice as long as the dog is tall.
- Long Sit (3 minutes) – This is similar to the long sit in Novice, but the position must be held for a longer period of time with the handler out of the dog's sight.
- Long Down (5 minutes) – The dog must remain in a down position with the handler out of sight.

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Level III: Utility – The third and highest level of obedience competition. Exercises include:

- Signal Exercise – The handler shows the dog’s ability to understand and correctly respond to the handler’s signal to stand, stay, down, sit and come. No voice commands are given; only hand signals are allowed.
- Scent Discrimination – The handler shows the dog’s ability to find the handler’s scent among a pile of articles.
- Directed Retrieve – The handler proves the dog’s ability to follow a directional signal to retrieve a glove and promptly return it to the handler.
- Moving Stand and Examination – The dog must heel, stand, and stay as the handler moves away. The dog must stay and accept an examination by the judge and return to the handler on command.
- Directed Jumping – The dog must go away from the handler, turn, and sit. Then, the dog must clear whichever jump its handler indicates and promptly return to the handler.

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AKC Rally®



What is AKC Rally?

AKC Rally® provides an excellent introduction to AKC events for dog owners just getting started, and also those looking to strengthen their skills. Rally was designed with the everyday dog owner in mind, but can still be challenging for those who already participate in other events.

A Rally course includes 10 to 20 stations where the handler must have the dog execute a specified movement/trick. Each station has a sign indicating the description and action required. Communication between the handler and the dog is encouraged, and there should be a sense of teamwork and enthusiasm as they go through the course.

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Level I: Novice – This is the first level for those just getting started in competition.

- All exercises are performed with the dog on leash.
- There is a requirement of 10 to 20 stations to complete with no more than five stationary exercises.
- The exercises performed vary from turning 360 degrees to changing paces during the course.
- Exhibitors at this level may clap their hands, talk to the dog, and pat their legs through the course.

Level II: Advanced – this is the second level, which includes more difficult exercises throughout the course.

- All exercises are performed off-leash.
- There is a requirement of 12 to 17 stations, with no more than seven stationary exercises.
- Exercises include a jump as well as calling your dog to the front of you, instead of to a heel position.



Level III: Excellent – This third and highest level of AKC Rally is the most challenging.

- Exercises are performed off-leash, except for the honor exercise.
- There is a requirement of 15 to 20 stations, with no more than seven stationary exercises.
- Handlers are only allowed to encourage their dogs verbally. Physical encouragement is not allowed at this level.
- The Excellent-level exercises include backing up three steps, while the dog stays in the heel position and a moving stand, while the handler walks around the dog.

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Agility

What is Agility?

Agility is the ultimate game for you and your dog. During an agility event, a dog demonstrates its agile nature and versatility by following cues from the handler through a timed obstacle course of jumps, weaves, polls, and other fun objects. It's an activity that provides fun and exercise for both the dog and handler. Agility is a crowd pleaser and has become the fastest-growing dog sport in the United States!



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There are three types of classes that may be found during an agility event:

Standard

Jumpers with Weaves

Fifteen and Second Time (FAST) - Only occasionally

The Standard class has contact obstacles, which have yellow “contact zones” at each end. Contact obstacles include A-frame, dog walk and seesaw. The dog must place at least one paw in the contact zone, which ultimately encourages safety in training and in running the course. The Standard class also has a variety of jumps; weave poles, pause table, tunnels and a closed tunnel.

The Jumpers with Weaves class does not have contact obstacles or a pause table to slow the team’s forward momentum. This is a very fast course requiring instant decisions by the handler and close attention from the dog.

The FAST class is an additional test of strategy, skill, accuracy, speed, timing and distance handling. It demonstrate a dog’s athletic ability and willingness to work with its handler in a fast-paced atmosphere over a variety of agility obstacles. As indicated by the title, the Fifteen and Send Time class uses fifteen (15) point-valued obstacles and/or obstacle combinations. The course will include a “Send Bonus” or distance element that will award a bonus of twenty (20) points if completed successfully.





Coursing Ability Test

What is the Coursing Ability Test?

The Coursing Ability Test (CAT) is one of AKC's newest sports and is an introductory event fashioned after the sport of lure coursing. It provides fun and healthy activity, attractive to many dog owners. The test is a noncompetitive pass/fail event where dogs run singularly. To pass the test, a dog running alone must pursue a lure, completing the course with enthusiasm and without interruption within a given time.

To earn CAT titles you must pass courses a certain number of times. Three passes will earn the Coursing Ability title (CA), ten total passes earn the Coursing Ability Advanced (CAA) title, twenty five total passes will award your dog the Coursing Ability Excellent (CAX) title, and fifty total passes earn the Coursing Ability Excellent 2 distinction (CAX2). A higher numbered title will be awarded for every additional twenty five passes. Most dogs will chase a lure out of instinct and have tons of fun in the process. The CAT is for any dog of any breed, including mixed-breeds!

The course is designed with safety for non-sighthound breeds, with no turns more acute than 90 degrees. The total length of the course is no less than 600 yards and is as close to 600 yards as possible. The lures consist of plastic strips. Depending of the size and type of dog, they will run either the full course or a 300-yard course.



Dog Shows



Only AKC-registered purebred dogs are eligible to compete in conformation dog shows.

What is Conformation?

Showing dogs (conformation events) is a great sport, where the thrill of competition is combined with the joy of seeing beautiful dogs. For each breed the AKC registers, there is a breed standard, which is a word description of the perfect dog of that breed. Standards describe the mental and physical characteristics that allow each breed to perform the function for which they were originated. The standard describes the dog's looks, movement and temperament. Breeders involved with each breed are attempting to produce a dog that most closely conforms to the breed standard. As an example, read the [Golden Retriever standard here](#).



There are three types of conformation dog shows: All-Breed shows, Speciality shows, and Group shows. Let's talk about what each of these shows entail:

1. All-Breed shows offer competitions for over 170 breeds and varieties of dogs recognized by the AKC. All-breed shows are the type often shown on television.
2. Specialty shows are restricted to dogs of a specific breed or to varieties of one breed. For example, the Bulldog Club of America Specialty is for Bulldogs only.
3. Group shows are limited to dogs belonging to one of the seven groups. For example, the Potomac Hound Group show features only breeds belonging to the Hound Group.

Now that you know about the shows, how do you get started?

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The best place to get started showing your dog is by joining a local kennel club. A listing of clubs by state can be found on our Club Search page or through our customer service department by calling (919) 233-9767.



Local clubs may have information on training classes for the show ring, and for obedience and agility classes. Handling your dog is an exceptional and enjoyable experience. Many times a new exhibitor will get their start at dog shows by finding a mentor, usually the breeder they acquired the puppy from. Some AKC clubs also offer “handling” classes to teach owners how to present their dog to a judge at a dog show.

From grooming your dog before the show, to actually being in the ring, you and your dog will develop a bond. While training classes offer the best hands-on way to practice for the show ring, attending shows and observing your breed is also a great way to gain understanding of what judges and other competitors do.

Find me a dog show to attend

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Thank you for reading our e-book. We hope this information was helpful to you! Check out these products and services we think will make your dog's tail wag.

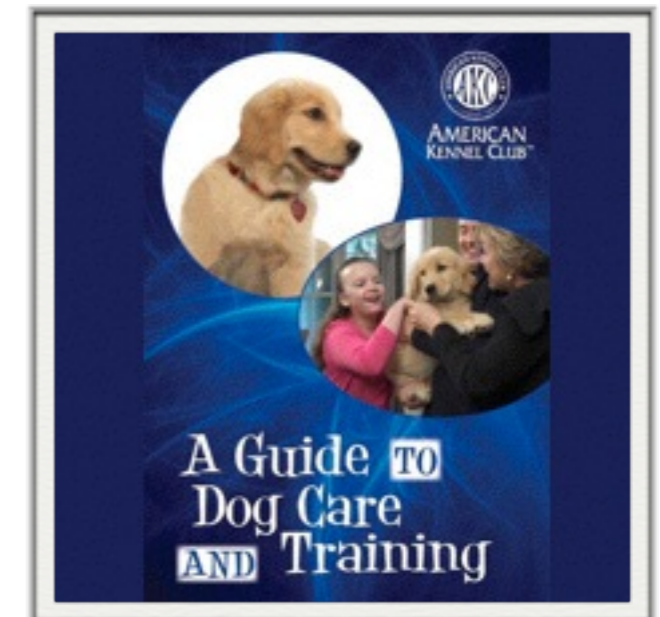
A specialty box of quality toys, treats, and fun meant to strengthen the bond between dogs and their owners. Look inside the box!



The AKC GoodDog! Helpline offers dog owners access to a telephone service that provides live training advice from knowledgeable American Kennel Club trainers.



The Guide to Dog Care and Training DVD presents basic care, nutrition, and training tips from AKC experts.



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