



AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB®

Training and socialization doesn't stop with puppyhood it's something your dog needs throughout his life to keep his mind sharp and his body in good physical condition. Now that your puppy has graduated from his first obedience class or your dog has earned his Canine Good Citizen® certificate, what's next? One of the best ways to keep you dog engaged mentally and physically for the rest of his life is getting started in AKC events. Did you know that training your dog for competition actually deepens the canine-human bond you share? Plus it's fun to meet lots of dog owners who love the same activities as you and your dog.

How Do I Get Started in AKC Dog Shows, Trials and Tests?

The best way to start is to join a local dog-training club. You can search www.akc.org for a complete list of clubs across the country. Local clubs frequently offer training classes for all different types of competition. Even if competition is not your ultimate goal, the relationship that training forms between you and your dog will be very rewarding. Local clubs also have "fun matches," where you and your dog can test your skills in the ring. Training and handling your dog in any AKC Event is an exceptional and enjoyable experience. From your first attempted show, test or trial to earning your first AKC title, you and your dog will develop a bond. Training classes offer the best hands-on way to practice for the ring or field, and watching competitors at actual events will gain you expertise. These events bring many hours of fun for you and your dog. You will make lots of friends in the sport, and you and your dog will take pleasure in your new hobby for many years to come.

OBEDIENCE, RALLY, AGILITY TRIALS OR THE COURSING ABILITY TEST

All dogs are eligible to compete in Obedience, Rally, or Agility trials or the Coursing Ability Test. Your dog must have an AKC number via one of the following:

- *AKC Registration* as one of the 175 recognized breeds.
- *AKC Canine Partners program* enrollment. A program for mixed-breed dogs and dogs ineligible for AKC registration.
- *Purebred Alternative Listing (PAL) program*. A program for purebred dogs that cannot be fully registered with the AKC to participate in AKC events.
- *Foundation Stock Service® (FSS)*. Recorded breeds on the road to full AKC recognition.

Getting Started in Obedience: Obedience trials showcase dogs that have been trained and conditioned to behave well in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs. AKC 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 as they execute a series of specified exercises. Accuracy and precision are essential, but the natural movement of the handler and the willingness and enjoyment of the dog are very important. Each level of obedience competition — novice, open, and utility — requires mastering a specific skill set, which increase in difficulty, before advancing to the next level.

Most AKC clubs conduct a variety of classes instructed by trainers who have won awards in obedience competition with their own dogs, and they make sure to stay up-to-date on the latest training techniques. They have experience training all breeds of dogs and can help solve behavior problems. Most clubs accept all types of dogs, mixed breeds and purebreds, and prospective students are usually welcome to observe a class before signing up for a training course.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OBEDIENCE HERE](#)

Getting Started in AKC Rally®: AKC Rally® is a companion sport to AKC Obedience. Both require teamwork between dog and handler along with similar performance skills. Rally provides an excellent introduction to AKC Events for new dogs and handlers and can provide a challenging opportunity for competitors in other events to strengthen their skills. The dog and handler team move at their own pace, very similar to rally-style auto racing. Rally was designed with the traditional pet owner in mind, but it can still be very challenging for those who enjoy higher levels of competition.

A rally course includes 10 to 20 stations, depending on the level. Scoring is not as rigorous as traditional obedience. Communication from the handler to the dog is encouraged and there should be a sense of teamwork and enthusiasm as they go through the course.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT RALLY](#)

Getting Started in Agility: Running a dog in an agility trial is the ultimate game for you and your dog. In an agility trial, a dog demonstrates its agile nature and versatility by following cues from the handler through a timed obstacle course of jumps, tunnels, weave poles and other objects. It's an activity that strengthens the bond between dog and handler and provides fun and exercise for both, which might explain why it's so enjoyable to watch and has become the fastest-growing dog sport in the United States!

There are several types of classes offered at an agility trial: Standard, Jumpers with Weaves, Fifteen And Send Time (FAST) and Preferred. 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 a least

one paw in the contact zone in order not to receive a fault. This 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.

Agility is a time and fault sport where the qualifying requirements are more challenging as the competition class levels get higher. There are two types of faults: time and penalty. Time faults are given for every second a dog goes over the Standard Course Time as set by the length of the course.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT AGILITY](#)

Getting Started in the Coursing Ability Test: The Coursing Ability Test (CAT) is an introductory event fashioned after the sport lure coursing. It will provide a fun and healthy activity attractive to many dog owners. The test is a non-competitive pass / fail event with dogs run singularly. The (CAT) is for any dog of any breed, including mixed-breeds, as long as it is at least 1 year old and individually registered or listed with AKC.

To pass the test, a dog running alone must pursue a lure, completing the course with enthusiasm and without interruption within a given time. Most dogs will chase a lure and have fun in the process. Dogs that pass the CAT three times will earn a Coursing Ability (CA) title. Ten passes and a dog earns a Coursing Ability Advanced (CAA) title, and 25 passes results in a Coursing Ability Excellent (CAX) title.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CAT](#)

DOG SHOWS

Purebred dogs are eligible to compete in Conformation Dog Shows. Your dog must have an AKC number via one of the following:

- [AKC Registration](#) as one of the 175 recognized breeds.
- [Foundation Stock Service® \(FSS\)](#). Recorded breeds on the road to full AKC recognition.

Getting Started in Conformation: Dog shows (conformation events) are intended to evaluate breeding stock. The size of these events ranges from large all-breed shows, with over 3,000 dogs entered, to small local specialty club shows, featuring a specific breed. The dog's conformation (overall appearance and structure), an indication of the dog's ability to produce quality purebred puppies, is judged, thus spayed or neutered dogs or mixed-breeds are not eligible to compete.

Many times a new exhibitor will get their start at dog shows by finding a mentor, usually the breeder they acquired the puppy from. Many AKC clubs also offer “handling” classes to teach owners how to present their purebred dog to a judge at a dog show. Dogs must be at least 6 months old to enter a dog show.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT DOG SHOWS](#)

TRACKING, EARTHDOG, LURE COURSING, HERDING, FIELD TRIALS, HUNT TESTS, COONHOUNDS and OTHER BREED-SPECIFIC EVENTS

Purebred dogs are eligible to compete in Field Trials and Tests. Your dog must have an AKC number via one of the following:

- [AKC Registration](#) as one of the 174 recognized breeds.
- [Purebred Alternative Listing \(PAL\) program](#). A program for purebred dogs that cannot be fully registered with the AKC to participate in AKC events.
- [Foundation Stock Service® \(FSS\)](#). Recorded breeds on the road to full AKC recognition.

Getting Started in Tracking: Dogs have a very keen sense of smell – 100,000 times stronger than humans! Dogs with the help of their noses are often used to find lost people and animals, drugs, avalanche and disaster victims, and even to detect cancer! AKC Tracking is a canine sport that demonstrates a dog's natural ability to recognize and follow a scent and is the foundation of canine search and rescue work. Unlike obedience and rally trials, where dogs respond to the

handler's commands, in tracking the dog is completely in charge, for only he knows how to use his nose to find and follow the track. For many, the greatest pleasure of tracking is the hours spent outside training and interacting with their dogs. The tracking community is known for its camaraderie and they all share in the excitement of a "pass" and the disappointment of a "fail."

Getting started in tracking is easy and you won't find a more willing participant than your dog! A puppy instinctively uses his nose – training your dog to track simply hones his natural ability. And since all dogs have a natural ability to follow a scent, any breed is capable of learning to track. Your first step is finding a tracking class or an instructor who is experienced in the sport. You just need a harness, a 20- to 40-foot lead, a few flags to mark your track, and an open grassy area free of obstacles such as roads, ditches or woods. Before you enter a Tracking Dog Test (TD), you must have the dog certified by an AKC-approved or provisional judge. This certification form must accompany the entry form. Once you and your dog are ready, find a tracking event in your area by going to the AKC Events Calendar on the AKC website.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT TRACKING](#)

Getting Started in Earthdog: The purpose of non-competitive Earthdog tests is to offer breeders and owners of small Terriers and Dachshunds a standardized gauge to measure their dogs' natural aptitude and trained hunting and working behaviors when exposed to an underground hunting situation. The noncompetitive program begins with a basic introduction to den work and quarry and progresses through gradual steps to require the dog to demonstrate that it is willing to perform the required tasks including seeking its quarry, locating and working it underground.

The initial test is called *Introduction to Quarry* and it is an instinct test for terriers and dachshunds. The behaviors tested are willingness to follow a scent to the entrance; willingness to enter a dark den; and willingness to work the quarry. The dog may work the caged rats by barking, digging, growling, lunging, biting at the protective bars or any work that the judge feels displays a desire to get to the quarry.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT EARTHDOG](#)

Getting Started in Lure Coursing: Lure coursing is an event for all Sighthounds. Afghan Hounds, Basenjis, Borzois, Greyhounds, Ibizan Hounds, Irish Wolfhounds, Italian Greyhounds, Pharaoh Hounds, Rhodesian Ridgebacks, Salukis, Scottish Deerhounds, and Whippets are eligible.

The AKC offers this program that the dogs and owners love so well, to test the dogs basic coursing instinct or hunting by sight ability. The dogs chase an artificial lure, in an open field and are judged by two judges, on the dogs overall ability, speed, endurance, agility, and how well they follow the lure.

The dogs can earn titles, such as Junior Courser (JC), Senior Courser (SC), and Master Courser (MC). They can also obtain a Field Championship (FC) and the title of Lure Courser

Excellent (LCX). The upside of this event is the dogs are kept in such good healthy shape, by doing something that comes naturally and that they really like to do.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT LURE COURSING](#)

Getting Started in Herding: The purpose of non-competitive herding tests is to offer herding breed owners a standardized gauge by which a dog's basic instinct and trainability are measured. The purpose of the competitive herding trial program is to preserve and develop the herding skills inherent in the herding breeds and to demonstrate that they can perform the useful functions for which they were originally bred. Although herding trials are artificial simulations of pastoral or farm situations, they are standardized tests to measure and develop the characteristics of the herding breeds.

Dogs must have training and prior exposure to livestock before being entered in tests or trials. Both parent and local clubs should provide opportunities for such training and exposure. The initial test is called *Instinct Test* and it is a test for herding breeds. The dog needs no training before entering this class and may be handled by the judge, owner or a designated handler. The judge is looking for the dogs ability to move and control livestock by fetching or driving.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT HERDING](#)

Getting Started in Field Trials and Hunt Tests for Pointing Breeds, Spaniels, Retrievers, Hounds: The best way to get involved in any of the breed specific field trials or hunt or instinct tests is to find a local club and start training your dog.

[FIND A LIST OF ALL AKC CLUBS](#)

[LEARN MORE ABOUT FIELD TRIALS AND HUNT TESTS](#)

Getting Started in Coonhound Events: Bench shows, field trials, nite hunts and water races are competitive events that provide owners with the opportunity to demonstrate the beauty and natural abilities of purebred Coonhounds. At the same time, deserving dogs achieve AKC recognition by acquiring championship titles on three different levels in each activity.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT COONHOUNDS](#)