



For The New Exhibitor

Morris Hills Dog Training, Inc. and all of today's Obedience Exhibitors would like to welcome you to the world of Obedience Competition! Since you are here today, we can assume that you have caught the training bug, just like us. We also understand that not every new competitor is lucky enough to have a friend or mentor to be there by their side for their first few times in the ring. We thought you might appreciate some friendly advice and maybe answer a few questions for you.

First piece of advice –

Read the rules and regulations! This is your obedience bible. Know it. Understand it. Live it. If you don't already have a copy, copies can also be downloaded from the AKC website at www.akc.org. Any time you have questions on the rulebook, ask the obedience chair or an experienced exhibitor. If they don't know the answer, they can find someone who does. You can also e-mail the obedience department of the AKC at obedience@akc.org or call them at 919-816-3521. The #1 rule that you will find in the rulebook: no food or toys in the ring. Check your pockets before going in. The other #1 rule: the dog must be wearing a regulation collar (no pinch collars, halters, etc.) with nothing hanging from it (license, rabies tag, etc.). Don't let forgetfulness ruin a good run through.

When do I check in and pick up my armband?

When you arrive at the trial, check in at the stewards table at your ring to get your armband. If your armband is not yet available, they will let you know when to return.

My class doesn't have a scheduled start time. It says, "after noon". How do I figure the start time of my class?

"After noon" means 12 pm or later. Some morning classes may move quickly, some more slowly. Also, some teams may not show up for their class. It's always best to check on the class before yours about halfway through to see how it is proceeding. You may also ask the table steward if the current class is running on schedule and when the Judge plans to break for lunch.

The class has started and I'm the first one in. How will I know what to do?

The Judge will always ask the first handler in the ring if they would like to see the heeling pattern. If you are not the first team in, be sure to watch the Judge demonstrate the heeling pattern or make sure to watch one of the other entries in the ring. Also, the Judge will be very explicit in his or her instructions at all times. If you don't understand, or didn't hear, let them know. They understand that this is your first time. They want you to succeed as much as you do!

I'm in the ring. Any advice?

- Breathe
- Relax
- Watch your heeling pace – keep the same pace you do in training

- Watch your change of pace for “fast” and “slow”! Your pace must change, not necessarily the dog’s.
- On Stand for Exam don’t forget to leave from and return to heel position
- On the Recall, your hands must be at your sides in a natural position when you call the dog, and you can give a verbal command or a hand signal *but not both* to come and to finish.

Are you ready?

The Judge will ask you this question before every exercise. Before you answer, take a deep breath, make sure that you and your dog are focused on each other, then reply that you are ready. Take your time. You paid for your five minutes in the ring. Don’t rush yourself through it!

I survived! Now what?

Keep track of how your class progresses. When the last team is in the ring, a steward will start lining you up for the group exercises, also known as the longest 1 minute of your life. Make sure you have a 6-foot lead. Try to look comfortable and at ease during this exercise. It will be hard, we know! Your dog will be looking to you for reassurance. If you stare at them and look fidgety, they will think something is wrong and come over to reassure you that they are ok. If this happens, just remember *that we have all been there!* So try to act relaxed. This is your mantra: “My pooch knows this exercise and he will stay for me. I have nothing to worry about” Smile as you say this over and over in your mind 😊

One last bit of advice -

After the class is over and you have collected not only your green qualifying ribbon but also that coveted blue, go up and talk to your Judge. Ask them where you lost points and where you could improve. They’re always happy to talk with an exhibitor who wants to improve upon that day’s performance. If you don’t like what they have to say, just remember it’s only one person’s opinion. But keep the information filed away. You may hear it repeated again someday and discover that it really is an area to be worked on.

Also, don’t forget –

Check the score sheets after your class. They will be posted on a table in the obedience area. Keep track of your total score, points on each exercise, arm band number, Judge and day and place of the trial. Jot the score data on the back of your armband or take a photo of the posted score sheet. You’ll want to report your score breakdown to your instructor, to help target your future training. And although it is a rare occurrence that a qualifying score doesn’t get credited to the right person, it does happen. A lot of paperwork flies around the day of a show. A score could get entered in the wrong column of the Judge’s book or the AKC may later overlook a qualifying run in a dog’s showing record. If this happens, speak to your Judge and/or the Trial Secretary the day of the show, or call the AKC at 919-816-3521 if you discover the problem later on.

Good Luck -- we know you will do well in the ring today! And whatever happens, you get to go home with the best dog!