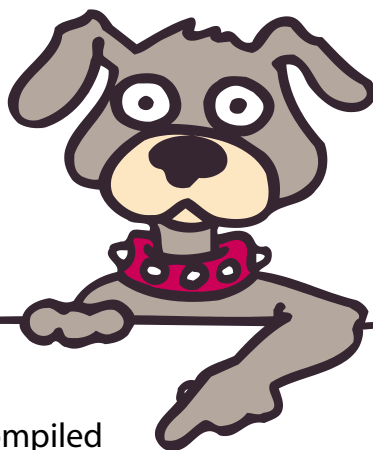


FITTING AND SHOWING YOUR DOG





Compiled
by Ruth Avila,
Snohomish County Dog
Care and Training Leader.

Information was taken from
fitting and showing materials
in Pierce and Snohomish
counties with input from
4-H Dog Care leaders in
Washington State.

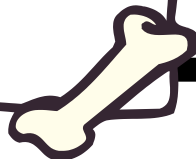
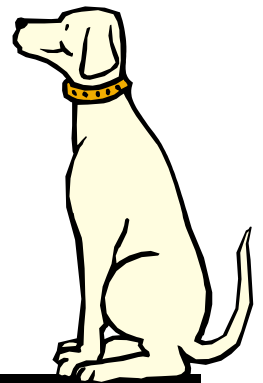


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FITTING AND SHOWING YOUR DOG

Fitting and Showing training teaches 4-H members to properly care for and exhibit their animals.

Fitting refers to the animal's grooming, condition, and cleanliness.

Showing refers to the member's ability to present the animal to its best advantage before a judge. Mixed breed, purebred, spayed, or neutered dogs may be used. The dog does not have to be owned by the member, but the member must have regular access to it for training purposes.

Fitting and Showing is a completely different competition from Obedience. Do not confuse the two. Do not confuse the dog. Think of your dog as a first grade student. He or she will be taught both obedience and fitting and showing, but they are as different as math and spelling. Use different commands for each class.

Learn about the Breed

It is a good idea before you learn to show your dog, to find out how your dog would be shown in conformation. Every breed is shown a little differently. The best way to find out how to show your breed is to:

- Study pictures of your breed of dog.
- Ask your leader, program leader, or show superintendent. They can also recommend someone for you to talk to.
- Talk to a reputable breeder.

Look at how your breed's feet are placed and how the head and tail are held. If you are watching a class of dogs, notice how fast the dogs are moved and how the handler holds the lead. You will need to gait your dog at a speed that makes your dog move its best.

If you have a mixed breed dog, you must choose the one breed which your dog most resembles and show him or her as if purebred. When you enter Fitting and Showing, put an "X"

after the breed of dog so the judge knows it's a mixed breed.

Also, check what types of show leads are used in the breed ring.

Choose a Show Lead

It is possible to use your obedience leash and collar for Fitting and Showing, but this is not a good idea. However, you can use the same training collar with a show leash that is less bulky and easier to gather into your hand.

There are several different kinds of show leads. The main difference between them is the amount of control they give you. Any of the leads are okay for any breed although some are more commonly used than others. The most common types of show leads are described as follows:

Spring Clasp is a leash and collar combination often used on smaller dogs. It does not give much control. Another problem with this lead is the clasp. The spring in the clasp breaks very quickly allowing the leash to slip off. This can cause great problems in the ring.

Martingale is another leash and collar combination. This lead gives a fair amount of control and is usually the best choice for a small to medium dog. It also works well on some big dogs. Martingale leads come in various lengths and colors. On some, the collar section is made of chain. This gives even more control. When you buy a Martingale lead, make sure that when the leash is pulled tight, the two metal rings do not touch.

Collar and Lead have two separate parts, the collar and the lead. The collar is a slip collar similar to those used in obedience. It is usually made of very fine chain or nylon. Leads come in different lengths and are made of nylon or very thin leather. This combination is the best choice for a medium or large dog or one that



doesn't like to trot.

Humane Choke is a collar that can be used on large or hard-to-handle dogs. It is used in combination with the leashes mentioned above. It pulls and releases equally well from both sides.

When you choose your leash and collar, try to match the color of the dog. If you have a hot pink or electric blue leash and collar, the judge will be distracted from watching your dog.

General Appearance

The dog must have no mats, dirt, or parasites. Coated dogs must be brushed thoroughly and regularly to prevent matting. No artificial coloring is allowed (you may use grooming powder, but it must be completely brushed out).

Nails must not be sharp, rough, or touching the ground so as not to affect foot position or movement. They must be cut regularly to prevent the quick from growing too long.

Teeth, ears, and eyes must be clean. Teeth must be cleaned often to prevent tartar buildup. Keep ears clean to prevent infection. If the dog's eyes weep in the ring, the handler must keep them wiped.

Whiskers do not have to be trimmed, but if they are, it must be done neatly.

It is recommended to trim the hair of the dog's foot between the pads.

Grooming should be done throughout the year. Ask your leader, program leader, or show superintendent about breed specific grooming.

Preparing Your Dog for the Ring

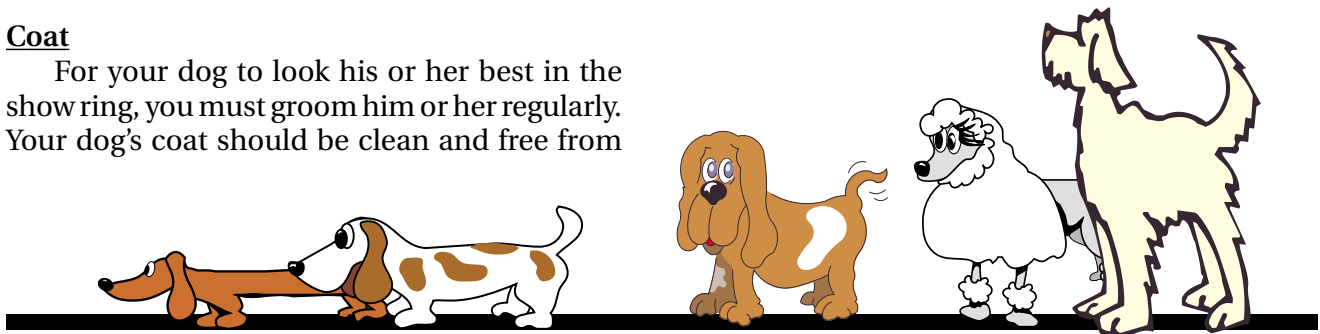
Your dog will receive a score in each of the following categories:

Coat

For your dog to look his or her best in the show ring, you must groom him or her regularly. Your dog's coat should be clean and free from

mats and dead hair. He or she should not have dandruff or untreated sores. If the judge finds evidence of fleas, you will lose points. Make sure you treat your dog for fleas. The length of your dog's coat will determine what you will need to keep his or her coat in shape. Each coat type will be examined separately in this project so you can learn how to groom your dog correctly.

- **Short Coat.** *Example: Labrador Retriever.* The biggest problem with shorthaired dogs is dandruff. To groom your dog you will need a bristle brush and a damp cloth. Use short strokes with the brush and flip it up a little at the end to remove dead hair and dandruff. Run the damp cloth over your dog to remove any excess dandruff.
- **Rough Coat.** *Example: German Shepherd.* The biggest problem with rough-coated dogs is a packed coat. A packed, felted coat is caused by undercoat that has not been removed. To groom your rough-coated dog, you will need a bristle brush for the shorter hair and a slicker brush for the longer hair. Some of the best tools for removing a packed coat are the shedding blade or rake. These tools can be found at dog and horse supply stores or can be ordered through dog supply catalogs.
- **Long Coat.** *Example: Collie.* Mats, especially around the ears and hindquarters, are the biggest problem with long coats. You will need a rake, pin brush, and slicker brush. Combs are also useful. The rake is used in the thick areas because it will reach all the way to the skin. Use the pin brush on the shorter areas. If your dog is matted, you may need one of the special mat splitting tools.
- **Clipped Breeds.** *Example: Poodle, Terrier, Spaniel, etc.* In 4-H, your dog does not have to be clipped. However, if you own one of these breeds, it is a good idea to learn to clip



your dog yourself. Talk with breeders or professional groomers to help you learn how to groom your breed. If you get good enough, you could even make some money clipping other people's dogs. If your dog has been clipped, when you go into the ring you will be asked who clipped him or her. If the dog is professionally clipped, ask the groomer to leave ears, teeth, toenails, and scissoring for you to do.

Bathing

Before you show your dog, you should bathe him or her. Any dog shampoo is okay as are human shampoos and dishwashing liquid. Check with your breeder or 4-H leader to find out what shampoo is best for your dog. Concentrated shampoos and dishwashing liquids should be diluted. Here are the steps to follow in bathing:

- *Brush* your dog to remove any mats or dead hair.
- *Soak* your dog to the skin in warm water. Do not get water in ears or eyes. Cotton balls can be placed in the ears to keep out water.
- *Apply shampoo*, starting with a ring around the neck and work it into the skin with your fingers—from the neck, all the way back to the end of the tail, and down to all of his or her toes.
- *Rinse* your dog well with warm water. Shampoo left on the dog will dry and look like dandruff.
- *Use a wash cloth* to wash your dog's face.
- *If your dog is very dirty*, shampoo him or her again.
- *After the final rinse*, take the cotton balls out of the dog's ears.
- *Keep your dog warm* and away from drafts until he or she is dry.
- *To dry your dog quickly* and to make his or her coat fluffier, you can use a blow dryer. Use a low heat setting and brush your dog as you dry him or her. Do not hold the dryer too close

to the dog's skin. Make very sure you and/or the floor are not wet when you use a dryer to prevent electrocution.

- *Wash your brushes* at the same time you wash your dog so they will not make the dog dirty again.

Toenails

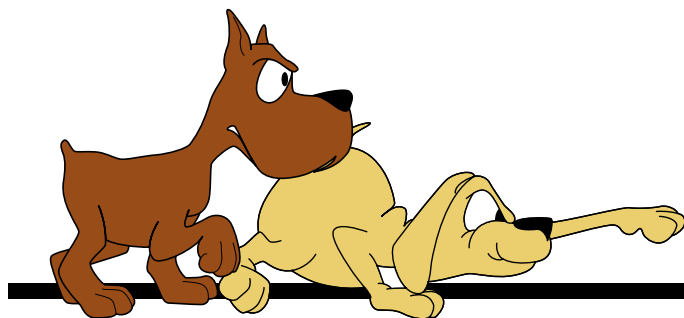
In the ring, the judge will check to see that your dog's toenails do not touch the ground. Even if your dog was not judged on toenails, it would still be important to clip them. Toenails left unclipped will cause the dog's foot to spread. They can also grow back into the foot. Clip your dog's nails every week. Three ways to shorten nails are described below. No matter which method you use, the toenails should be clipped almost to the quick.

The quick is the place where the blood vessel ends in the toenail. If you cut beyond that point, the nail will bleed. It will also hurt the dog and cause him to be shy of the clippers the next time. To stop bleeding, use Kwik Stop, flour, cornstarch, or Styptic Stick (what men or women use while shaving). If your dog has white toenails, you can see the quick. If your dog has black toenails, it is more difficult. Trim small portions at a time. As you near the quick, the trimmed part will begin to bulge out and look more alive. Usually the quick is about where the toenail begins to curve.

If you clip your dog's toenails regularly, the quick will recede and you will be able to cut the nails shorter. If you do not clip the toenails, the quick will grow out. When your dog's toenails are long, your dog does not move as smoothly as he or she should. It can also cause the dog to walk farther back on its pasterns, causing the whole front of the dog to apply pressure to the whole leg. Eventually, the dog can begin to limp from the pain.

Now, let's look at the tools used on the toenails. Have your leader or groomer show you how to safely cut your dog's toenails.

- *Dog toenail clippers*. There are several different styles available: quality, Guillotine, or scissors type. Choose the one that works best for you.



- *Files*. Special metal files can be used on toenails. It takes longer to shorten nails this way, but if your dog really fights, it may be your only choice. Another use for files is to smooth nails you have clipped with clippers.
- *Grinders*. The grinder is like an electric file. Grinders work very well, but they are also expensive and must be used very carefully to avoid injuring the dog. Use the sand paper wheel not the sand stone because the sanding stone gets too hot. Do not use a grinder unless you have an expert show you how.

Scissoring

All breeds, even the shorthaired ones, require some trimming. The trimming described here is used on most breeds. However, some breeds require more trimming; some, less. It is up to you to find out what trimming your breed needs.

It is best to buy a special pair of scissors for your dog. This way you always know they are sharp. Blunt tip scissors work best because they don't poke the dog. When you trim places that show: feet, legs, etc., always trim in the direction the hair grows. If you don't, you will leave scissor marks. Another way to avoid scissor marks is to use thinning shears.

- *Pads (bottom)*. On all breeds the under side of the foot should be trimmed. Trim the hair between the pads and toes so that it is even with the bottom of the foot. Some breeds require the hair to be trimmed even shorter.
- *Feet (top)*. Most breed standards call for a neat foot. There are many breeds that carefully shape the hair on the top and edges of the feet. Check with your leader or breeder. To achieve this, trim the hair around the edge of the pad.
- *Front Legs*. Trim the back of the leg from the foot to the pastern for most breeds.
- *Back Legs*. Most breeds call for good bone in the legs. If you trim too much on the hind legs you will make the legs look thin. Trim the back of the hind legs from the pad to the hock joint. As you trim the hock, hold the thinning shears vertically, not horizontally. By trimming vertically you will trim

up the hock versus horizontally when you would be more apt to cut out chunks.

- *Whiskers*. Whiskers do not have to be cut and some breeds require that they not be cut. Cut them as short as possible. Push the whisker toward the nose as you clip. If you don't do this, the dog can partially retract the whisker. Don't forget the whiskers around the eyes.

Ears

The judge will check to see if your dog's ears are neat and clean. You should clean your dog's ears every week. Always look at the matter you take from the ears. If the matter is black or red, your dog could have ear mites. If there is a lot of liquid matter, he or she could have an infection. Have your vet check the ears.

To clean the ears use a cotton swab to run out all the little crevasses in the ear. The dog will usually flinch if you start to poke too far. When all the crevices are cleaned, use a piece of cotton dipped in vinegar, Novasan, rubbing alcohol, a special ear medication, or an ear wipe. Rub it over the inside of the ear. You know your dog's ears are clean when you can rub your finger anywhere in the ear and it comes out clean. This is what the judge will do. Excessive hair should be removed from inside the ear canal to prevent infection. Use your fingers or a pair of tweezers and pluck out the hairs.

Teeth

The final thing to clean on your dog is the teeth. Your dog must not have any tartar on his or her teeth. Tartar is the yellow substance you often see on teeth. Clean teeth are white. If your dog has a bad buildup of tartar, you may want to have it removed by your vet. Once the teeth are clean, keep them clean yourself. If the tartar is not removed, the teeth will eventually rot and fall out, or your dog could develop a gum disease or abscess which could lead to other internal problems.

The best way to keep your dog's teeth clean is to prevent tartar buildup in the first place. Feeding dry dog food, milk bones (or other hard biscuit type products), or beef



knuckle or leg bones (not beef ribs, or any chicken or pork bones, as they can splinter) is a good way to do this. Watch your dog while he or she is chewing the bones so that he or she doesn't get the bone stuck or have other problems. You can also brush your dog's teeth with dog toothpaste.

To remove tartar from the teeth, you will need a tooth scaler. You can buy this at pet supply stores or get one from your dentist. Have your leader or groomer show you how to do this. Always scrape from the top of the tooth down. Remember the tool is sharp, so don't poke the gums. Don't forget to clean your dog's molars. Cleaning the teeth will also help to keep your dog from having bad breath.

Exhibitor

Be poised, prompt, and alert. Be neat and clean.

In Fitting and Showing, you should dress as carefully as you prepare your dog. If your dog is to look his or her best, you must, too. Dress as you would for pictures at school or to go out to dinner.

- *Pants.* If you wear pants, make sure they are neat and clean. They should not drag on the ground or have ragged hems.
- *Dresses.* If you wear a dress, make sure it is not too short because you will have to kneel and bend over. Also, make sure the dress does not hit your legs at the same place your dog reaches. This is distracting and the dog could wind up under your dress. Also, make sure the neck of the dress does not gap when you bend over.
- *Shirts and blouses.* T-shirts are inappropriate in Fitting and Showing as are halter and other bare-type tops. Again, watch the neckline.
- *Scarves or neckties* should be secured so they do not flap, distract, or hang across the dog.
- *Slacks, dress shirts, polo shirts, sweaters, vests, or suits* can be worn.
- *If you are using bait with your dog,* make sure your outfit has pockets at the proper places or you can use a bait pouch.

The main rule is dress conservatively. Fitting and Showing is not a fashion show. You don't want to distract from your dog.

Handling

Judging is on correct handling of leash, posing, and gaiting (for your breed). The dog's conformation is **not** judged in this class. Smoothness and control are of utmost importance. Bait (food or a small toy) may be used, but it must be used correctly. (This will be discussed later in this publication.)

You've practiced and practiced. Your dog is groomed and so are you. It's time to show. Most judges follow the same basic routine. This section will help you prepare for what you will do in the ring. From the moment you enter the ring your objective is to present your dog to his or her best advantage. Through your actions and attitude you want to say to the judge, "Look at this dog! He(she) is beautifully groomed. I am stacking and gaiting him (her) perfectly and I am very proud of him (her)!"

Do not get between the judge and the dog except on the turn on the down and back if you choose. It is very important that you never allow any part of your body to interfere with the judge's view of your dog.

Always keep at least one eye on the judge. Judges will sometimes give hand signals instead of voice commands. If you are not looking, you will miss these signals. Watching the judge shows that you are alert. Keep in mind, your dog is attached to you through the leash.

Always make sure your dog is looking his or her best.

The judge will be watching you (and your dog) while the dog is moving and when he or she stops. These two main parts are **gaiting** (trotting) and **stacking** (posing).



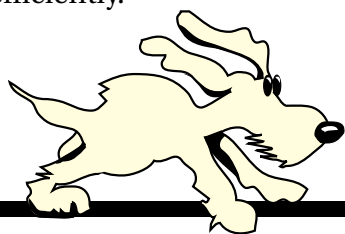
Gaiting

Dogs should move at a brisk trot, not walk or break into a gallop. Puppies as young as five weeks may start this training. After the puppy is accustomed to wearing a soft collar, take him or her outside (if possible), fasten a show leash to the collar, and let him or her go where he or she wishes at first. If he or she balks, try putting a dish of food five feet away, and walk him or her toward it. When he or she is walking well, give him or her an upbeat command such as, "Let's go!" or "Gait!" **Do not** use the obedience command "Heel!" Remember, you do not want your dog to confuse his or her school classes. Likewise, if he or she always wears his or her show collar and show leash in Fitting and Showing practice, he or she will eventually learn the behavior that goes with that equipment. Teach him or her to gait on either side of you. If he or she breaks into a gallop, give a quick command and leash correction. As soon as he or she is back under control, say, "Good gait, Good boy(girl)!" Remember, the most important part in any dog training is **praise**. Soon your dog will be moving proudly, with head up on a loose leash.

There is more to gaiting than simply taking off running. To make it less complicated, let's look at each aspect of gaiting separately:

Speed

Your dog must move at a fast trot. This is the gait at which a dog looks best. Each handler must work with his or her dog to determine how fast he or she must run. Remember, the bigger the dog, the faster you must go. With a very small dog, you can walk. It is helpful to have someone watch you gait your dog and tell you at which speed your dog looks best. If you go too fast, your dog will gallop (run); too slow and he or she will pace (legs on the same side moving together). At the proper speed, your dog will move smoothly with little bounce, his or her legs reaching forward efficiently.



Handler's Arm Position

The next step is to get your arm in the proper position. The leash is always held in the hand closest to the dog. Gather the leash so that it goes in a straight line to the dog's head. Make sure the excess lead is hidden in your hand. Do not hold the leash so tight that it chokes the dog. Work with your leader and club members to develop a natural arm position that looks good for you and your dog and keeps your dog slightly away from you.

Dog Position

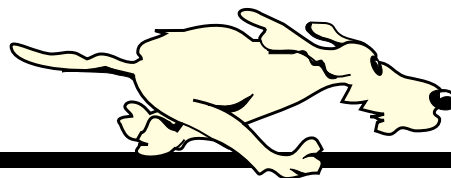
When you gait, your dog must stay in the proper position. He or she must stay away from your body and slightly ahead of you. Usually, holding your arm out from your body is enough to keep the dog away from you. If your dog crowds you, reach down with your free hand and push him or her away. You are allowed to do this in the show ring. Many dogs do not like to trot fast and will lag. This makes it look like you have a tight lead. If your dog lags, snap the leash and pat your leg to make him or her go faster. You can do this in the ring.

Hand Changes

The golden rule of Fitting and Showing is never get between the dog and the judge except on the down and back. This means if you change directions while gaiting, or if the judge moves, you must change to the other side of the dog. Most dogs are used to staying on your left side because of the obedience training. You should practice gaiting your dog on your right side so he or she will get used to it. When he or she gaits equally well on either side you are ready to start learning hand changes.

There are two methods of getting to the other side of your dog:

- When you change directions, reach across in front of your body and take the leash in your free hand as you slow to a stop. Turn toward your dog (and the judge). Make sure your



Another way of doing the down and back is to move directly away from the judge. At the end of the ring, make a tight turn toward your dog, using your free hand if you need to turn his or her head to go back the way you just came. Check to make sure your dog has stacked his or her front properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Check the rear to make sure it is stacked properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Make your movements smoothly, calmly, and quickly. Then present your dog to the judge to show proper expression.

The third way of doing the down and back is to move directly away from the judge. At the end of the ring, do a tight about-turn away from your dog to the right. Go back the way you just came. Check to make sure your dog has stacked his or her front properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Check the rear to make sure it is stacked properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Then present your dog to the judge to show proper expression.

“L” Pattern. (Figure 2.) Move directly away from the judge. At the end of the ring, make a 90-degree turn toward your dog. Move to the side of the ring. Change hands on the leash, turn the

dog’s head toward you, pivot toward the dog and come back. Move back till you are directly across the ring from the judge, turn and gait back to the judge. Again, check to make sure your dog has stacked his or her front properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Check the rear to make sure it is stacked properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Make your movements smoothly and quickly. Present your dog to the judge to show proper expression.

“T” Pattern. (Figure 3.) Move straight away from the judge. At the end of the ring, make a 90-degree turn toward your dog. Move in this direction to the side of the ring. Change hands, turn the dog’s head toward you, pivot toward the dog and come back; move all the way across the top of the ring. When you reach the other side, change hands again. Reverse direction and move back to the point directly across from the judge. Make a 90-degree turn and move back to the judge. Stop about 6 feet away unless the judge puts up his or her hand to stop you sooner. Check to make sure your dog has stacked his or her front properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Check the rear to make sure it is stacked properly; if not, stack the leg that is out

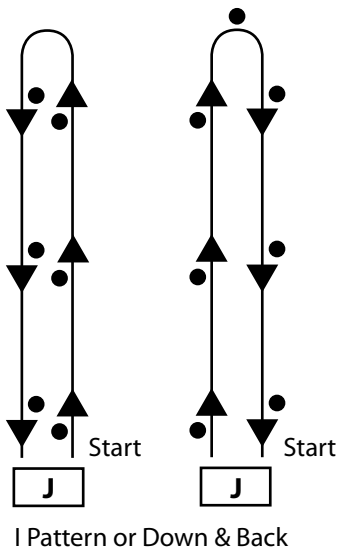


Figure 1b. Figure 1c.

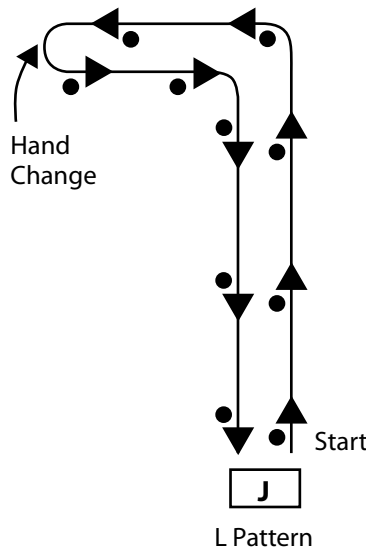


Figure 2.

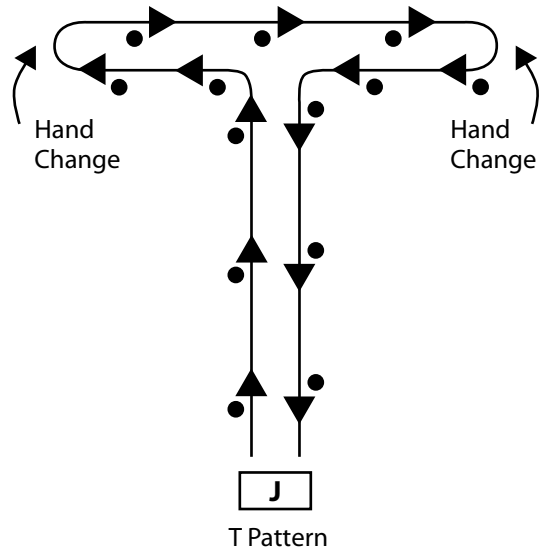
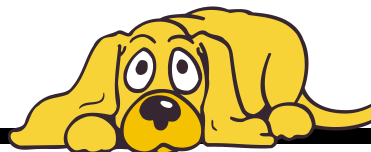


Figure 3.



of position. Make your movements smoothly, calmly, and quickly. Present your dog to the judge to show proper expression.

Triangle. (Figure 4.) If the judge is at the edge of the ring, move directly away from the judge parallel to the edge of the ring. At the end of the ring, make a 90-degree turn toward your dog. Continue across the top of the ring. Turn and move back diagonally to the judge. Keep the dog on the inside of the triangle to avoid any unnecessary hand changes. If the judge is in the middle of the ring, ask the judge which way he or she would prefer you to go.

Pair Gaitting. (Figure 5.) You may be asked to pair gait with another dog and handler. This allows the judge to compare how two handlers show the front and rear movement of two dogs. Conformation is not being judged here, but your handling of the situation is. The two handlers bring their dogs to the judge and stack them facing him or her, dogs next to each other, handlers on the outside. Dogs should be kept close enough for comparison, but not close enough to interfere with one another. At the judge's direction, take your dogs down and back together

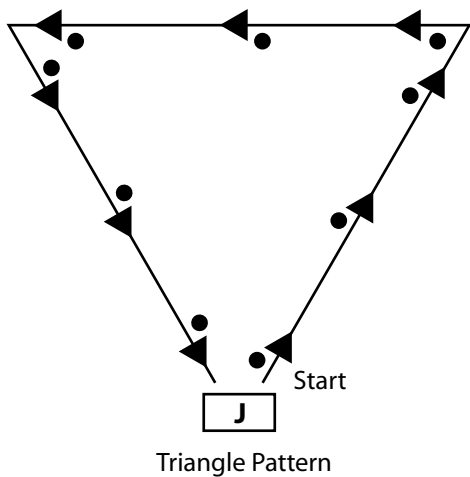
in an "I" pattern. Keep the dogs on the inside and abreast of each other. The faster dog must be held back to let the slower one keep up. Move the dogs straight away from the judge and straight back to him or her. At end of pattern, stack dogs again. Study pattern diagram for hand changes.

In some of the runoffs for champion and reserve champions, the judge may ask you to switch dogs with another handler and show the other handler's dog.

Often a judge will stand back and slowly look down the line at each dog and handler. Some members use this opportunity to show off a point on the dog. If your dog has a lovely topline, a good rear angulation, or nice length of neck, you may emphasize it with a subtle brush of the hand. Be sure it is a **good** feature; you do not want to call attention to your dog's faults.

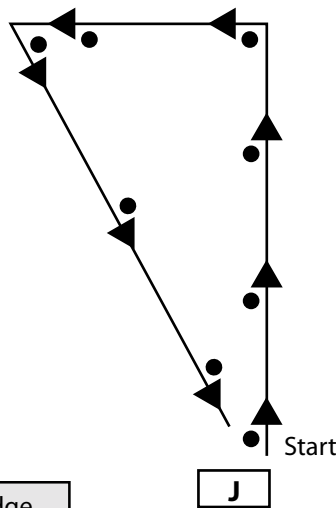
GROUP GAITING

Next, the judge will usually have the entire line gait in a circle. Watch for him or her to make a circular motion with his or her hand. If you are first in line, ask the person behind you if he or she is ready. Do not start out until the next



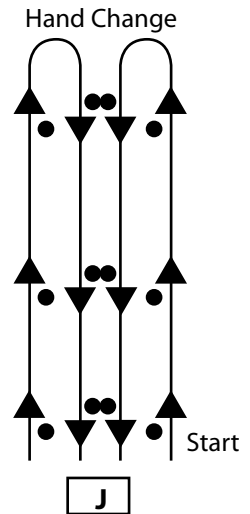
Triangle Pattern

Figure 4a.



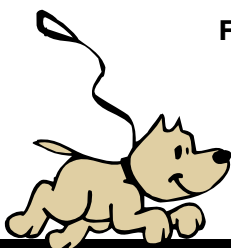
Triangle Pattern

Figure 4b.



Pair Gaitting

Figure 5.



few people behind you are ready. Here are some rules to follow when gaiting:

1. Do not pass unless the judge tells you it's all right.
2. Leave at least as much space between dogs as you did in the line.
3. If you are behind a little dog, remember that the judge usually watches only one part of the ring. When you are out of the judge's sight, slow down to a walk if you must and allow a larger space to build up in front of you. As you pass in front of the judge, speed up to your normal gait.
4. If the judge moves to the outside of the circle, as you come to the section where the judge is, allow the dog to gait ahead of you; pass behind the dog as you change hands on the leash. You are now on the correct side of the dog. When you pass the judge turn toward your dog, pass in front of your dog to the other side, change hands on the leash, face forward and continue around the ring. **Do not** pass the leash behind your back.
5. Watch the judge to hold out his or her arm in the stop signal.

PATTERN TIPS

- Make sure your dog is on the side you want him or her before you start gaiting.
- Try not to make any extra hand changes.
- If your dog tends to run past the turns, reach down and turn his or her head with your hand. When you come back from the pattern, with the last couple of steps try to walk your dog into a stack. If he or she doesn't walk into the stack, quickly check to make sure he or she has stacked his or her front feet properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Check the rear to make sure it is stacked properly; if not, stack the leg that is out of position. Make your movements smoothly,

calmly, and quickly. Present your dog to the judge to show proper expression.

- Make sure the leash and collar are on the same side of the dog's head as you.
- Do not lift up under his or her stomach as that may cause him or her to roach his or her back like a camel.
- Do not let him or her sit and then stand him or her.
- Learn to stack your dog from either side, front and rear.
- Always stack first the part the judge is looking at. Most breeds are stacked in the four-square stance, with their forelegs perpendicular to the ground and their hocks perpendicular to the ground (straight up and down).
- Learn the correct pose for your particular breed of dog.

If the judge is standing in front of you:

1. Get the dog's head under control.
2. Set the dog's front leg on the judge's side by picking it up at the elbow, not at the foot, pastern, or forearm.
3. Then, stack the dog's leg on your side.
4. Set the dog's back leg, judge's side, by lifting at the stifle or the hock joint.
5. Then, stack the dog's rear leg on your side.
6. Present your dog by either baiting him or her with treats to get him or her to look alert, or hold him or her by the chin and tail as in the sporting breeds.

Lineup

When you come into the ring, you will usually gait once around and then line up. Always stay behind the person you followed in and do not crowd. When you stop, leave at least three feet between you and the dog ahead of you. Remember that the tail of sporting breeds is held out. If you are behind one of them, you will want to leave extra space for the dog's tail. Also, make sure your dog is exactly in line with the first dog in line. Now stack your dog. Remember to keep one eye on the judge. He or she may walk around the line several times. When the judge changes sides, you must change sides also. If the judge



steps in front of you, you step behind the dog. If the judge steps behind you, you turn toward your dog, and pass in front of him or her to the other side as you change hands on the leash. If the judge stands in front of your dog, you stand to the rear of the dog. Keep your dog stacked unless you are told to relax. Do not talk to anyone.

Stacking

Whenever you stop in the ring you will pose or stack your dog. When you stop, say, “Stand,” and gently slide your hand in front of the dog’s stifle.

Sporting Stack

This pose is used by all the sporting breeds. In this pose, the front legs are placed perpendicular to the ground directly beneath the withers. The back legs are placed so the line from hock to pad is perpendicular to the ground.

When your dog’s feet have been placed, kneel beside him or her and hold his or her head by placing your fingers in the groove beneath his or her chin and your thumb on the side of his or her muzzle nearest you. You can also stand beside your dog and hold him or her either by the collar or slide your hand up the leash and hold the tail. Remember, when you stand, stand straight.

If your dog has a short tail, place two or three fingers under it and lift it slightly above horizontal. If the dog has a long tail, place your thumb and index finger on the top of the tail. Make sure you hold the tail at the very tip. Allow the feathering to fall naturally.

Vertical Tail Stack

Most hounds and terriers, as well as any other breeds that carry their tails either straight or curled above their backs, use the vertical tail stack pose. The legs are placed in the same manner as the sporting stack. Do not put your hand

on the dog’s head. With your other hand, hold your dog’s tail above his or her back in its natural position. To determine the natural position for your dog’s tail, check your breed standard. If you own a breed whose tail curls on his or her back, position the tail as follows: lay the tail over the back and shift your hand to the base of the dog’s tail to be sure the tail stays in place.

Natural Stack

Most herding breeds require that the dog stand naturally. In Fitting and Showing, you must stack the dog, but you want it to look as natural as possible. Place the dog’s feet squarely under him or her. The hocks and front legs must still be perpendicular to the ground. Now, depending on the size of the dog, either stand or kneel slightly in front of him or her. If you are in front of him or her, the lead may hang slightly loose.

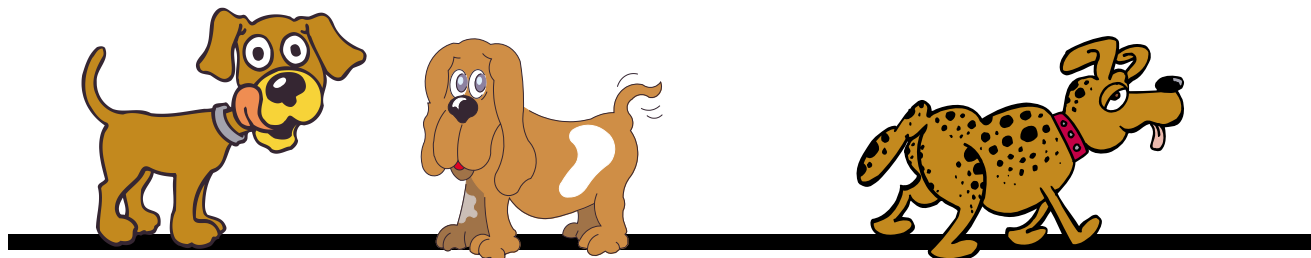
German Shepherd Stack

German shepherds have their own method of stacking that is designed to show off their angulation and topline. The front legs are stacked straight down—perpendicular—just like other breeds. However, the right rear leg is pulled forward. The distance it is pulled forward depends on the amount of angulation the dog has. The left rear is stacked with the hock perpendicular to the ground. The stack remains the same regardless of which side the judge is.

Stacking on the Table

Most small breeds are stacked on the table. Practice at home. Before you even pick up your dog, practice squatting and standing several times. Then practice picking up your dog in one of two ways:

- After squatting, reach over your dog; place the palm of your hand under the chest of your dog. With your other hand, support the bone



structure of the lower jaw. Bring the dog in toward your body and pick up him or her.

- After squatting, “scoop” the dog up in your arms by placing one arm around the rear legs, the other around the front, and “scoop” him or her up into your arms. Carefully place the dog on the table. Then stack him or her about one inch from the front edge of the table closest to the judge’s side.

To remove your dog from the table, pick up him or her in the same manner as you lifted him or her onto the table. Carefully place him or her on the ground between you and the judge.

PLACING THE LEGS

Now that you know how your dog is supposed to stand, you must learn how to place the legs. This might seem easy, but if you do not do it correctly you will lose points. If the judge is standing in front of you, position the dog’s front feet first, starting with the front leg on the judge’s side.

To position the front leg, hold the leash with your right hand at the point where it joins the collar. If you have a sporting dog, hold him or her by the head as described earlier. Pull the dog slightly to the side to shift his or her weight from the front leg you want to move.

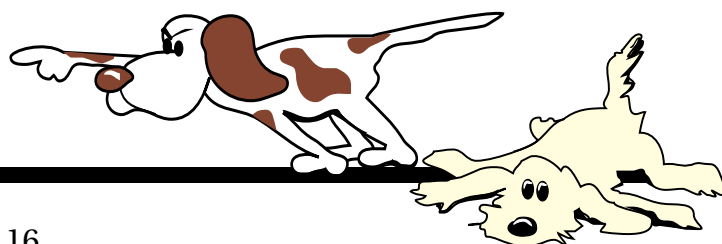
Pick up the front left leg at the elbow and place it straight down so the toes are pointing ahead and the leg is directly under the chest. This should put the leg at a 90-degree angle to the ground. Then put the leash in your left hand, holding it at the point where it joins the collar. At this point you can push the dog slightly to the side to shift his or her weight away from you so you can easily stack your dog’s inside front leg (closest to you), using the same method as above.

To position the rear legs, grasp the leash where it joins the collar with your right hand. Use your left hand to place the rear leg on the judge’s side first, grasp the leg either by the stifle or hock. Place it so the hock is straight and the toes are pointing forward. This will put the hock at a 90-degree angle to the ground. Do the same with the inside rear leg (or the leg closest to you). Make sure the hocks do not turn in or out.

STACKING TIPS

- In the show ring, your dog will have to remain stacked for one-half hour or more. It takes a lot of training to get a dog to stand this long. You should practice every day, gradually increasing the amount of time your dog stands.
- Give your dog a stay command every time you place a foot. This way your dog knows he or she must stay, and you can correct your dog if she or he doesn’t.
- To get your dog to lean forward, pull slightly on the tail. Most dogs will lean forward to counterbalance the pull.
- Reward your dog with a tidbit after he or she has stood awhile. This will keep your dog happy.
- If your dog keeps moving its feet, stack your dog on a raised platform so if he or she moves, he or she will fall off. Remember, keep the platform low enough so the dog cannot get hurt if it does fall.
- Place the lead or collar above the throat, but behind the jaw, and directly behind the ears.
- If your dog is standing correctly, do not move the legs.
- Dogs should be baited to get their attention and show expression. Bait may be tiny pieces of a favorite food, a small squeaky toy, or other noise. Do not disturb other dogs in the process.
- Practice stacking your dog—side, front, and rear—in front of a mirror or picture window.
- Even if your dog has conformation faults, you should attempt to stack him or her correctly. You will be judged on your effort.

Although each breed stacks a little differently, there are certain basic poses most breeds use. It is a good idea to learn all the poses because some judges may ask you to trade dogs with someone else in the ring. The basic poses are described under “Stacking” in this publication.



Showing Points

Showing points in Fitting and Showing literally means to show off specific points on the dog to the judge. In practice, showing points means you move your hands over the dog in such a way that the judge's attention is drawn to the best physical attributes of your dog. 4-H'ers should learn all the points they can, but in competition they should try to show off their dogs' good points. Be prepared to answer if the judge asks you if a particular point is a good one on your dog.

A point may be shown whenever the 4-H'er catches the judge's eye. It is one way of showing you are watching. Some ideal times to show points are on the individual exam, as the judge walks down the line, and as the judge glances down the line after moving the dog.

Showing points should always be done with very subtle movements. The 4-H'er should take great care not to block the judge's view of the dog in any way while showing a point. When a point is shown, it should look almost as if the handler is petting the dog or smoothing the coat. The handler should look the judge in the eye as he or she is moving his or her hand; this shows the judge that the handler is showing a point. Also, the hand movements used when showing points should be very firm and intentional.

SOME POINTS THAT CAN BE SHOWN

- Length of muzzle. Place thumb at stop and second or third finger at nose.
- Length of skull. Place thumb at occiput and second or third finger at stop.
- Width of skull. Shown when judge is in front of dog. Place thumb on one side of skull, fingers on other, with hand at back of skull.
- Length of ear. Shown only on breeds with hanging ears. Pull dog's ear on judge's side forward to nose (hold ear by tip).
- Clean throat (especially on sporting dogs). Hold chin up with one hand, run other hand along curve of throat.
- Good neck. Run hand along crest of neck.

- Straight front. Run hand parallel to front legs from chest to ground.
- Strong front. Push gently on withers.
- Correct topline. Run hand along underline from brisket to tuck-up.
- Strong rear. Push gently on croup.
- Tail length. Bring tip of tail to hock on judge's side.
- Rear angulation. Run hand along stifle to hock.

SHOWING TIPS

- Never show the same point twice.
- Look the judge in the eye as you show a point.
- Make your hand motion firm, but natural. It should almost look as if you're petting your dog.
- Don't cross your arms to show a point.
- Never let go of your dog.

Avoid showing off too many points. When the judge is looking at you, it is your chance to shine! Be sure the dog is stacked, bait him or her, look at the judge with confidence, and smile. With your expression and poise you are saying to the judge, "Look at this handsome animal!"

Handling

HANDLING TIPS

- Never get between the judge and your dog except on the down and back.
- Always be alert and attentive.
- Always fold the excess lead in the palm of your hand with your hand in a fist. No excess leash should ever dangle from your hand.
- Keep one eye on the judge at all times. She or he may use hand signals to direct the handlers.



- Always answer the judge clearly and politely.
- If you don't understand a command, ask the judge to repeat it.
- Don't talk to your neighbor or someone outside the ring.
- Use quiet (not crunchy) bait.
- Avoid fidgeting.
- Keep checking your dog's position. If he or she moves a foot, correct it immediately.
- Never let your dog sit or lie down unless the judge has told you to relax your dog.
- If you are first in line and the judge signals everyone to gait, glance back at the line and make sure the other handlers are up and ready to follow before moving out.
- Observe proper spacing. The judge should be able to comfortably walk between your dog and the one in front of or behind you.
- Water and exercise your dog before entering the ring.
- If you can attend AKC shows (American Kennel Club open dog shows), watch how your breed is shown. Watch the open classes in Junior Showmanship for handling tips.
- If you can enter Junior Showmanship at fun matches, do so. Mixed breeds may compete. It's fun and great practice.
- Keep a positive attitude. The outcome of each competition reflects that judge's opinion on that particular day only. If things didn't go well, focus on ways to improve and look forward to the next time. Do not take out your disappointment on your dog!
- Good sportsmanship is very important. Congratulate the Champion and Reserve Champion before leaving the ring. If you are the winner, accept congratulations graciously and modestly. A simple "thank you" is the best response to a compliment.

- If your dog is standing correctly, do not move his or her legs.
- Dogs should be baited to get their attention and show expression. Bait may be tiny pieces of a favorite food, a small squeaky toy, or other noise. Remember not to disturb other dogs in the process.
- Practice stacking your dog—side, front, and rear—in front of a mirror or picture window.
- Even if your dog has conformation faults, you should attempt to stack him or her correctly. You will be judged on your effort.

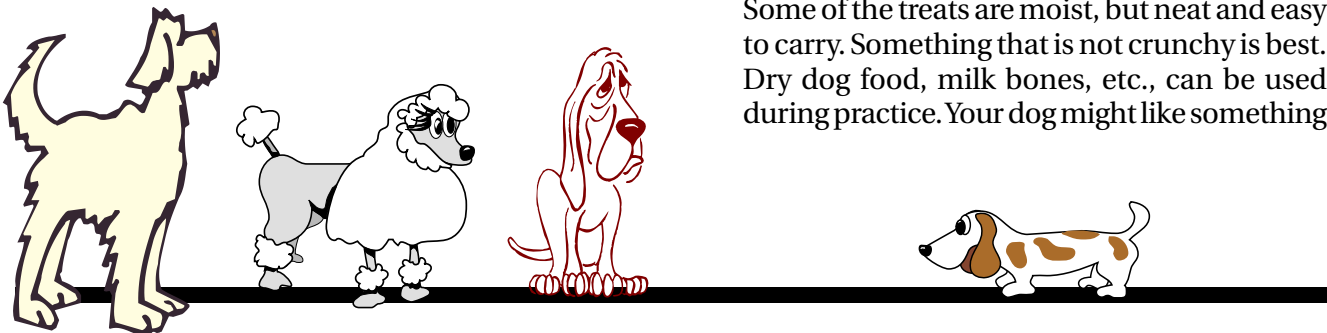
Although each breed stacks a little differently, there are certain basic poses that most breeds use. It is a good idea to learn all the poses because some judges may ask you to trade dogs with someone else in the ring. The basic poses are described on pages 13–14 in this publication.

Baiting

Just like the other facets of Fitting and Showing, you need to practice baiting your dog. Most dogs work better and are happier when they know they get a food reward. Most dogs will stand at attention for food, which makes them look better. Some dogs will bait for a tennis ball or squeaky toy. Whatever you use, do not distract other dogs or people. Continually squeaking a toy can annoy others. Bouncing a ball can be a distraction. Throwing the bait treats would not be wise. Some dogs, especially puppies, get too excited around food and will not stand still. Remember, it takes time and working with your dog to get him or her used to baiting.

BAITING TIPS

- First, find something your dog likes to eat. There are numerous doggy treats available. Some of the treats are moist, but neat and easy to carry. Something that is not crunchy is best. Dry dog food, milk bones, etc., can be used during practice. Your dog might like something



a little tastier like cheese or cooked liver. To cook liver, boil raw liver slices in water. Add garlic salt. Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 250°F. The liver is done when it is firm, yet you can cut into it. Take the pieces out of the garlic salt water and lay them on a cookie sheet; pat dry with a paper towel. Turn off the oven and place the cookie sheet with the liver on it in the oven. When the oven has cooled, the liver is ready to be bagged in plastic bags and placed in the refrigerator. Liver should be frozen if stored for more than a couple days. Another choice could be pepperoni or beef jerky.

- Wear an outfit with pockets large enough to hold a bag of bait, or wear a bait pouch. This will allow you to get your bait out easily. Most people keep the bait in the righthand pocket. Sometimes you may need to bait your dog from the left side, so you might keep a little in the left pocket also.
- You might want to pick a key word that will get your dog's attention such as "Cookie" or "Treat."
- Say your key word and put your hand in your pocket. Jiggle the food around a little. The bag will make just enough sound to get your dog's attention. If you have trouble with a bag, do not use one.
- When your dog's ears go up, take a piece of bait out of your pocket and give it to him or her. Make sure the pieces are small enough for the dog to eat quickly.
- Eventually, your dog will get to where all you have to do is put your hand in your pocket and his or her ears will go up. Once your dog reaches this point, you can start using bait in the ring.
- When your dog learns what the bait is for, you can begin using it to make him or her look better. It can help you walk your dog into a perfect stack.
- Hold the bait at the dog's eye level. This gives the neck a nice arch and keeps the topline level. If you hold the bait too high, the dog will throw his or her neck out of line and cause his or her topline to sag.
- Don't wave the bait up and down in front of your dog as he or she will jerk his or her head up and down trying to follow. This will distract the judge.

Individual Exam

The judge will now call the dogs out one at a time for individual work. Watch for him or her to signal you. Stack your dog in the direction he or she tells you. Stack quickly, quietly, and smoothly. Look at the judge when you are ready.

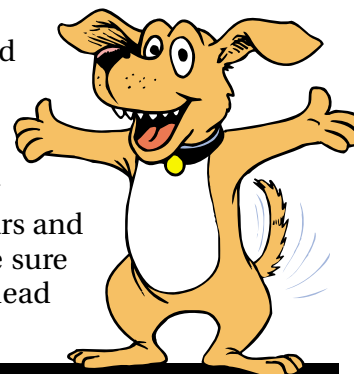
Often the judge will allow the dogs behind a certain point to relax. This means you don't have to stack. Keep watching the judge and don't talk. When you reach the cutoff point for stacking, re-stack your dog. For example, if the judge wants the first six dogs stacked, re-stack your dog when you are sixth in line. Remember who is last in line. When this person is called out for the individual exam everyone should re-stack. When the judge turns to look at the rest of the line, the dogs are all stacked and looking great.

Showing the Bite

The judge will probably ask to see your dog's bite now. The bite is the way your dog's front teeth (incisors) meet. To show the bite, first point the dog's mouth toward the judge. Place the leash in the hand that is under the jaw. With the fingers of your other hand lift the upper lips. Keep the mouth closed. Make sure all of the incisors between the canines are visible. Do not lean over in front of your dog's head, as you are trying to show the **judge** the bite; you can look at it another time. If your dog struggles, practice with him or her **before** the show. Reward your dog when he or she doesn't struggle. You can hold his or her back end between your knees and his or her neck between your elbows to practice. Remember, praise your dog when he or she is doing it correctly.

Showing the Teeth and Mouth

You may be asked to show your dog's teeth. This means all of the teeth. Turn the dog's head and show first one side of molars and then the other. Make sure you turn the dog's head



toward the judge. If the judge asks to see the bite and then the teeth, show them in the order the judge requests.

The judge may also ask to see the mouth. Open the mouth to show all of the teeth. This is usually shown on breeds that must have full dentition according to their standard (German shepherds, Doberman pinschers, etc.).

Examining the Dog

After this, the judge will begin examining your dog. Hold the dog's head during the exam. If your dog has any problems with his or her ears, eyes, skin, etc., explain the type of problem to the judge and what treatment is being given the dog to cure the problem. When the judge finishes with the head, move forward and smooth the hair. The judge will pick up the feet and examine them. When he or she puts down a foot, immediately check to see that the judge placed it perfectly. If not, restack it. The judge will examine the coat. Smooth the hair back into place after the judge moves his or her hand.

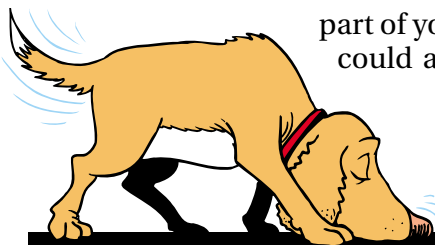
Questions

The judge will probably ask you questions. Answer in a clear voice. If you do not know the answer, be polite and tell the judge you do not know the answer, or make an educated guess.

General Knowledge

Another part of Fitting and Showing is your knowledge of dogs and 4-H. You will be asked five questions—one from each of the categories below. All questions will be taken from either your 4-H materials or from information obtained from the American Kennel Club (AKC).

1. **Anatomy.** You will be asked a question about your dog's anatomy. Most often you will be asked to show a specific part of your dog, but you could also be asked to verbally define parts. If you



are asked to show a part, make sure you show it on the judge's side. This is one time when you may reach over your dog. Use one finger to show the specific point, such as the hock; to show the loin you might point from behind the ribs and in front of the pelvic girdle. If your dog has long hair, make sure your hand can be seen.

2. **Breed standard or history.** You will be asked one question about your dog's breed. You should know your dog's breed standard and history. This can be found in the *AKC Complete Dog Book*.
3. **Health and general care.** This question could be about diseases, shots your dog needs, temperature, etc.
4. **AKC.** This is usually a question about AKC and/or AKC rules.
5. **4-H.** General questions about 4-H—what is the 4-H motto, pledge, where are the headquarters located, etc.

Ring Procedure

The armband is worn on the handler's left arm with the number visible.

The judge, announcer, or ring steward signals the start of the class.

Handlers enter the ring in whatever order they are told.

The lead is held in the hand closest to the dog. Hook the loop of the lead over the index finger. The excess lead is coiled and kept out of sight in the fist. As you move, the forearm holding the lead should be parallel to the ground. Keep the other arm slightly bent and close to your body so it won't swing too much. Keep the show collar or lead high on the dog's neck for better control. Large breeds need a stronger collar or a chain (training) collar. Some breeds should be moved with their heads lower. If you put the snap behind or beside the ear, be sure it does not tilt the dog's head preventing correct movement.

Handlers take their dogs in as large a circle as the ring allows. The judge will usually direct

them in a counterclockwise direction and indicate to the first handler where to stop. Keep your dog on your left side when going counterclockwise to place it between you and the judge. If the judge asks you to reverse direction, place the dog on your right so it is still between you and the judge. Everyone should attempt to keep his or her dog moving at a suitable speed. If the dog in front of you is slow and you cannot gait your dog at the correct speed, hold back and make space. Then, when it is your turn to gait in front of the judge, you will have room to move.

After the class has circled once or twice, the judge will indicate to the first handler where to stop. When the first handler stops and begins to stack his or her dog, the other handlers line up in a **straight line**, dogs head to tail, and stack their dogs. Line up **straight** behind the **first** dog. Leave about one dog's length between your dog and the one in front of you, to give tail room and to avoid crowding. Set up your dog as quickly as possible. The judge will scan down the line for an overall perspective of the class. Be sure to watch the judge, but keep glancing down at your dog to check his or her position.

Next, the judge will signal the first handler to come forward. When that handler moves out, the rest of the line moves up one space. Some judges want the next handler to bring his or her dog up and stack it as they are watching the last handler do his or her patter. Follow the judge's directions. The first handler brings his or her dog up to the judge, stacks, and baits the dog. Do not stand too close to the dog while baiting; this forces his or her head up and unbalances him or her.

At this point, the judge usually examines the dog. She or he will ask to see the dog's bite/teeth. Ask your leader to show you these procedures. Practice handling your dog's mouth so he or she will be accustomed to it in the ring. The judge will be checking for clean teeth, ears, and eyes. As a courtesy, always hold the dog's muzzle during the exam. Your dog may not be a biter, but the judge does not know that.

The judge will check the dog's skin for parasites and the coat for mats. If your dog has a skin condition and is under veterinary care for it, be

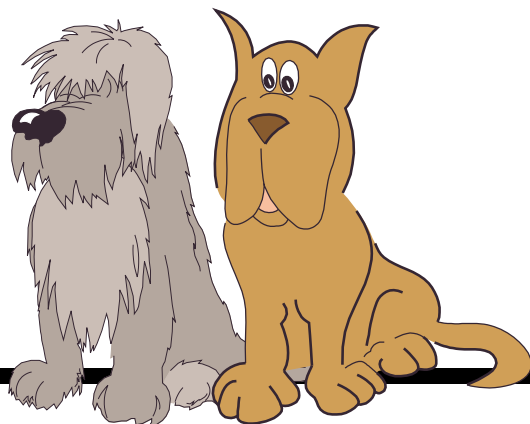
sure you tell the judge what the problem is and how it is being treated. Know the specific name of any medication. The judge will also check the length of the toenails and any other grooming required by the particular breed. If your dog is an unneutered male, the judge will check his testicles. Be sure your dog is **immaculate and perfectly groomed!**

After the judge examines the dog's foot, he or she may replace it in the incorrect position. Correct the stack smoothly and immediately if necessary. Some breeds are stacked and then the collar is removed to show length of neck. This is a maneuver for experienced handlers only. It should be practiced in training class. You lose points if the dog gets away. Loop the collar over your wrist.

Some of the smaller breeds are stacked on a table. If you have a dog that will be table stacked, ask your leader how to do this and practice it regularly, at home, and in class.

The judge will then ask the handler to gait his or her dog in a pattern. This will be a "T" pattern, an "L" pattern, an "I" pattern, or a triangle. Study the pattern diagrams (illustrated in this publication) to understand proper position and hand changes. It is important to listen carefully to what the judge asks you to do. Sometimes a judge will ask you to do something else. Gait and stack your dog according to its breed. Attend AKC shows to see how your breed should look. If you have a mixed breed, show it like the breed it most resembles.

Every dog will be examined individually and will do an individual pattern. Be alert while the other dogs are gaiking. The judge will be scanning the line to see which handlers have their dogs stacked and in line. Keep your dog looking



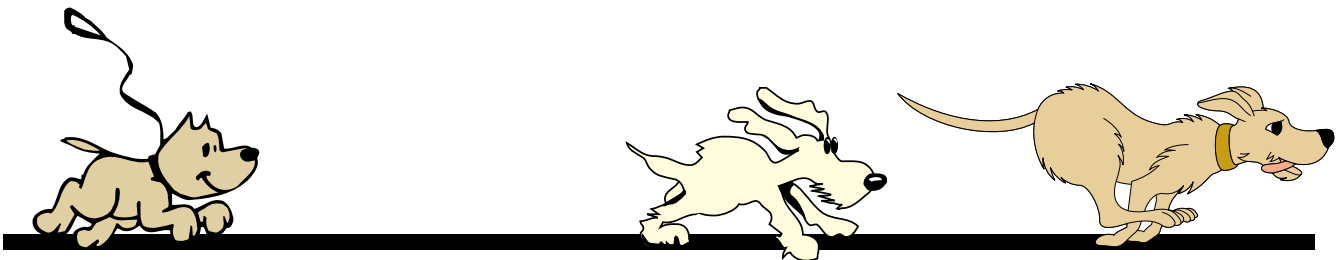
good at all times. The only exception to this is if the judge **tells you** to relax your dog. If the class is very large, the judge may divide it and tell half the people to relax their dogs at the side of the ring. Be alert for when the judge calls your half back again. Relaxing does not mean not paying attention.

The purpose of gaiting the dog is for the judge to see you show the movement of the dog from the side, front, and rear. You may be asked to pair gait with another dog and handler. This allows the judge to compare how the two handlers show the front and rear movements of two dogs.

Conformation is not being judged here, but your handling of the situation is. The two handlers bring their dogs to the judge and stack them facing her or him, dogs next to each other, handlers on the outside. Dogs should be kept close enough for comparison, but not close

enough to interfere with each other. At the judge's direction, take your dogs down and back together in an "I" pattern. Keep the dogs abreast of each other. The faster dog must be held back to let the slower one keep up. Move the dogs straight away from the judge and straight back to him or her. At end of the pattern, stack the dogs again. Study pattern diagrams for hand changes.

While the dogs are in line, the judge may walk around the back of the line. As the judge does this, quickly and gracefully move around your dog so you do not block the judge's view of the animal. **Do not** step over your dog. The judge may walk between dogs. The handlers must keep moving around their dogs to keep them in view. The judge may ask to see fronts or rears. The handlers turn their dogs in a tight semi-circle and stack them according to the judge's direction.



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