

Your First Time at a Trial?

If you've never entered a trial you may be nervous the first time. Just to help calm some of the nerves here are some things to be aware of and take to the trial.

Whether you're entering an Obedience or Agility trial you should have received a confirmation letter and judging program in the mail. So check out when you are supposed to be in the ring, and arrive at least a half an hour a head of time. Remember that Agility trials times can change at any time. You might want to arrive earlier to an Agility trial to watch the upper level teams compete. Volunteering at Agility trials are a great way to learn how trials are run. Clubs are usually short of volunteers and would appreciate your help.

As soon as you get to the trial site, check out where crate space is available and where your ring is located. Since you're there in plenty of time: set up your crate, get your dog settled with his chew and cover his crate if needed, then check in.

If you're at an Obedience trial, you will need to check in at the table next to the ring. This means letting the steward know you're present and get your armband, remember to pick up some rubber bands at the table. If you may have a ring conflict, ask the steward about it, they may need to talk to the judge before changing the running order. Be patient with the stewards, they are volunteers.

If it's an Agility trial there most likely will be a place to pick up your number and check in near the Secretary's table, be sure to pick up a copy of the course while you're there. You will also need to ask the at the Secretary's table about having your dog measured, usually the judge will take some time before the Novice class to measure all the dogs that need to be. If the judge is a Volunteer Measuring Official (VMO) or if a VMO or Field Representative is present then you will also need your dog's Registration or ILP number so be sure to bring it along just in case.

Remember not to wear jewelry that makes noise and empty your pockets before going into either the Agility or Obedience rings. Food and toys are not allowed in the ring; cellphones and keys should not be taken in either. Your dog should be wearing a collar that does not have any tags attached. Remember to wait for permission to enter the Obedience Ring, the judge will invite you in when s/he's ready.

In Agility you will need to be ready to go into the ring when the Gate Steward tells you to, so stay aware of the running order, this should be posted by the ring gate. Be aware that some venues don't allow a dog to wear a collar, other require it.

Be sure to bring:

Your confirmation letter and judging program.

The premium list and directions to the show site.

A copy of the rule book

Your dog!

A portable crate

A battery powered crate fan.

Dog treats/toys for rewarding the dog.

Chew or Toy for crate time.

A jug of water for your dog

Water Dish for your dog.

Plastic clean up bags.

An extra collar and leash.

Vaccination records

Sheet or blanket to cover the dogs crate if needed.

Brush or grooming tools for touch ups before going into the ring or before pictures.

Towel for drying off a wet dog.

A folding camp chair or lawn chair. Some shows have chairs available, but it's not guaranteed.

Snacks/Lunch for you.

Cooler with Drinks for you.

Box of Tissues/Roll of Toilet paper (sometimes show sites run out)

Roll of Paper towels for cleaning up spills

Camera (some shows don't have photographers)

A book to read.

Notebooks/Training Diary

Pens to write down scores, etc.

First Aid Kit.

If it's an outdoor trial, you will also need:

Shade for you and the dog.

Hat for you.

Sunglasses

Suntan lotion

Insect repellent

Rain gear

Change of clothes/shoes.

What's most important is to have fun, this is our hobby. No matter how you and your dog do in the ring, you get to take your dog home and love him. We all will have the good and bad days, but our relationship with our dogs are the most important part of what we do.