

Obedience Exercise Handler Hints and Errors

General Hints

1. Make sure you praise your dog between exercises so they don't get stressed. This way you can also keep the dog's attention on you.
2. You can gently guide your dog by the collar if you need to in the lower level classes.
3. Teach the dog pivots so you can position the dog without repeatedly turning around.
4. Make sure your dog is clean. Judges HATE to touch dirty dogs in the Stand for Exam.
5. Tie your hair back if it is long.
6. Make sure your clothes don't interfere with the dog's movement.
7. Have a pleasant expression on your face. The dog may react to the difference in your attitude.
8. Give all cues in the same tone of voice as when you trained.
9. Think about your handling – try to forget about the dog. You should have confidence in him by now.
10. Check with the ring stewards to see if there are dogs with conflicts or absent dogs. Do not go to the steward's table with your dog.
11. Do a brief warm up, but not too much.
12. Make sure your dog has been exercised so he will not foul the ring.
13. Arrive early to the show site. Walk your dog through the whole show area and then put him away.
14. Watch at least 2 or 3 dog performances before you show. Plan where you will position yourself. Watch carefully where each exercise is done and listen to the judge's commands.
15. Don't take gum into the ring. Some judges consider it food. Empty your pockets.

General Common Errors

1. Using your body (knee, foot, hands) to position the dog before exercise. You can't touch the dog at all to position them even if the exercise is over. The only exception is gently guiding with the collar between exercises in the lower level classes.
2. Dog's collar is too loose, too tight, or illegal.
3. Not being familiar with the rules.
4. Entering or leaving the ring with a tight leash.
5. Telling the judge they are ready for an exercise when the dog is not in position.

Heel On Lead

Hints

1. Don't stop too quickly on the halts. You don't have to stop on a dime.
2. When the judge asks if you are ready, LOOK at your dog before you reply.
3. If the dog lags, don't let out the lead. Let it tighten up. The judge will only take points off for a lag. The dog caused the tight lead.
4. Don't look back at the dog. It will only cause the dog to lag more.
5. Many handlers forget to give a "Heel" cue after each judge "Forward" command.
6. If you have questions, ask the judge before the exercise starts.

Common Errors

1. Holding a tight lead (will lose points for lagging and you causing a tight lead). The judge must be able to see the dog work on a leash.
2. Adapting your speed to dog.
3. Not changing speeds when directed.
4. Lead corrections (yanking on the leash).
5. Not heeling so the DOG is on the mat. This only applies when ring mats are used.
6. Stepping into the dog to be in the correct position for a sit.
7. Too many steps after the “Halt” command.
8. Anticipating the judge’s commands such as turns at corners and going back to normal after the fast.
9. Pausing or stopping in the about turn to avoid crowding by the dog.
10. Rounding corners on the left turn to avoid crowding by the dog.
11. Checking each sit after the halt.
12. Extra body movement when giving the “Heel” cue.
13. Moving the leash position after starting to heel.

Heel Free

Hints

1. Don’t forget that you may issue a second cue. It is a point loss, but not a zero.
2. Ensure that you give the “heel” cue before stepping out to avoid leaving the dog sitting behind.

Common Errors

1. Not using one of the correct hand positions – a) Both hands down and “swinging” or b) Right hand down and “swinging” and left hand held up at your waist. The hand position can change for the fast but must immediately return to the previous position with the normal pace. Other hand positions are incorrect.
2. Changing hand position after starting the heeling exercise.

Figure Eight

Hints

1. Make sure to give the dog enough room when executing the inside post (on the left side). Many handlers cut too close, and the dog is forced to drop back into a lag.
2. Give yourself enough room at the start of exercise (especially with large dogs) so you can take at least two steps before going into the turn.
3. Unless you have a forging dog, always start the exercise by going to the left. If you go immediately to the right the dog will often lag because it is expected to get up from a sit and move faster than normal.

Common Errors

1. See Heel On Leash
2. Slowing down when executing the post on the right because the dog is on the outside and must move faster.

Stand for Exam

Hints

1. Pace out the 6 foot distance ahead of time.
2. After standing the dog, move to heel position and take one last look at the dog before giving the cue to stay.
3. If the dog doesn't stand up on the first cue, physically stand the dog, but don't use your feet.
4. Make sure you leave your dog on the foot that you normally leave him for stays (usually the right).
5. If the dog sits or moves from position after the judge has examined him and before you return, the dog has still qualified. It is a major point loss, but not a disqualification.

Common Errors

1. Touching the dog while giving "stay" cue.
2. Backing away.
3. Going too far (must be about 6 feet).
4. Not returning to the heel position.
5. Giving the "stay" cue while out of the heel position.
6. Returning directly into heel position (not going behind the dog first).
7. Rough handling of the dog to position him.
8. Extra cues to stay – "Stay....Stay" or "Wait....Stay".
9. Waiting for the judge to tell the handler to leave.

Recall

Hints

1. After leaving the dog and going to the other side of the ring, don't look up at the judge until you have positioned yourself and are ready for the recall command.
2. Ensure that there is enough room behind you for the dog to execute the finish.
3. Position yourself across the ring so that the dog will not have to sit on the crack of the mat or floor.
4. Use the same tone of voice that is normally given for the recall cue. Many handlers will change the tone of their voice when they are nervous, and the dog doesn't understand.
5. Leave your dog by stepping out on your right foot or whichever foot you normally leave on for a stay.
6. Make sure you have your dog's full attention before leaving him, so he doesn't get up as you leave.
7. Make sure your cue is loud enough if it is very noisy.

Common Errors

1. Bowing when giving the cue.
2. Improper hand position (both arms should be straight at side).
3. Body English for the finish (dropping shoulder, moving feet, etc).
4. Head movement.
5. Moving fingers on the finish.
6. Moving arm position after voice cue to finish is given.
7. Overly loud cue.
8. Double cue (signal and voice) for finish.

Long Sit/Down

Hints

1. Don't position your dog on the crack of the mat, floor, or, if outdoors, in a high or low spot.
2. Look around before getting started and pick up any debris near your dog to avoid sniffing.
3. Make sure that your dog will lay down straight, especially if you are showing a large dog, to avoid having to reposition your dog.
4. When the judge asks if everyone is ready before the exercise starts SPEAK UP, if you aren't ready. Don't rush yourself.
5. Cross your arms to make the exercise look different from the recall.
6. If your dog doesn't sit or lie down on the first cue, give another. The exercise doesn't start until the handlers leave. An exception is rough handling.
7. Make sure you have your dog's full attention before leaving him so he doesn't get up as you leave.

Common Errors

1. Not knowing that if the dog breaks the stay, the owner SHOULD NOT return to the line with other competitors. An exception would be if the judge tells you to do so for any reason.
2. Late leaving of the dog.
3. Not returning to heel position.
4. Positioning the dog or touching the collar. You can't touch them.
5. Extra signals from across the ring.