

ASCA OBEDIENCE STEWARD GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Stewarding at obedience trials can be both rewarding and enjoyable. Not only are stewards giving back to the sport that they love, but they can learn a lot by watching the trial and working under a judge. Some even find stewarding helps them overcome ring nerves, by being present in the ring with a judge but without the pressure of performing. By being well prepared and responsive, stewards help the judge make the ring run smoothly. Good stewards can help to make a long day a little less prolonged.

Besides reading these guidelines, it is helpful if stewards are familiar with the obedience rules and/or if they are mentored by someone with ring experience. A prepared steward knows what might happen in a class and when the judge might need assistance.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

ALL activities in an obedience ring are carried out at the direction of the judge. Please listen to the judge's instructions and be prepared to follow them. Each judge has different ring procedures; some judges rely on stewards more heavily than others for various tasks.

STEWARD REQUIREMENTS

- Three stewards are generally required per ring: one table steward who serves as the judge's secretary and two ring/gate stewards. (In a pinch, a ring could get by with two stewards.)
- Stewards may compete in classes other than those in which they are stewarding. Generally, the fewer staffing changes there are, the more efficiently the judge can run the ring. It is especially helpful if the table steward remains the same throughout the trial.
- Stewards should arrive at least 45 minutes prior to the start of the first class to help the judge set up the ring and to receive the judge's instructions.

TABLE STEWARD DUTIES

At the judge's discretion, the table steward will:

- Handle class conflicts - Prior to the start of the trial, ask the judge how he or she would like to handle competitors with class time conflicts.
- Check in entries (pre-entries plus day-of-trial entries if applicable) - verify jump heights. Give out armbands and rubber bands. Coordinate with the ring stewards to set up a gate board visible to competitors, which lists in run order each dog's number and jump height/s (for classes with jumps). Place a check next to or a slash across the number when the handler checks in (a second mark will be added when the team enters the ring).
- Set up paperwork for the judge (if so instructed) - the judge may delegate or choose to fill in the preliminary information on the Judge's Score Sheets. Check that the Judge's Book for each class has listed the numbers for each entered dog. For any classes with jumps, double check that the Show/Trial Secretary has marked "V" on the Judge's Book next to the number of each dog eligible to jump veteran heights. (this is determined by checking the dates of birth on the

entry forms.) Make sure the Judge's Score Sheets are reordered to reflect any changes in running order due to conflicts. Enter the start time into the Judge's Book for each class.

- Plan group stays - consult with the judge on whether the Novice A and B classes will be combined for group stays. For larger classes ask the judge how he or she would like to split the competitors into groups. (When more than seven (7) dogs are to be judged, more than one group is needed for group exercises.) Communicate the group stay plan to competitors.
- Set up Group Exercise Sheets - fill out the preliminary information prior to the group stays, listing the entries in catalog order. Above each dog's number, write its breed. For Aussies, write each dog's color instead of its breed. When group exercises are held after individual exercises, ask the judge whether to denote nonqualifying teams or to mark any team that has not returned for the group exercises on the sheet.
- Continue class paperwork (if so instructed) - after each team works, double-check the judge's math. Enter the scores from the Judge's Score Sheets into the Judge's Book. Be neat, write firmly (because you are making duplicate copies), and do not make unauthorized changes. After completing each entry into the Judge's Book, be sure to turn the sheets upside down on the table so that people cannot see the scores before they are announced at the end of the class. Judge's scores are confidential until after the judge gives out the awards or concludes a class in which no one qualified for an award.
- Correct errors - if you notice an error in the judge's paperwork, bring it to the judge's attention when he or she is free, before you or the judge enter it into the Judge's Book. The judge must initial any corrections in the Judge's Book.
- Prepare class ribbons and awards - while the judge finalizes paperwork at the conclusion of each class, gather the needed placement ribbons, qualifying ribbons and awards. Check if the judge wants competitors from the A and B classes to enter the ring together or separately for awards. Bring the ribbons and awards into the ring. Hand them to the judge as he or she announces each placement.
- Fill out Unofficial Score Sheets - copy the scores for each exercise from the Judge's Book onto the sheets for the handlers. Hand out Unofficial Score Sheets to handlers following class awards.
- Enter the end time. When each class is completed, write the end time into the Judge's Book, if requested.
- Prepare end of trial awards. At the completion of the regular classes, assist the judge (if requested) in determining the winners of these awards: Highest Scoring Dog in the Regular Classes (aka High in Trial), Highest Combined Score in Open and Utility (aka High Combined), High Score Junior Handler, High Scoring Aussie (optional) and High Scoring Other Breed (optional). Gather the ribbons and prizes. Bring them into the ring. Hand them to the judge as he or she announces each award.

GENERAL RING STEWARD DUTIES

At the judge's discretion, the ring stewards will:

- Assist the judge with setting up the ring - set up jumps where directed. Help remove anything littering the surface of the ring. If needed, remind exhibitors that setting up crates within 10' of the ring is not allowed.
- Set jumps for each dog - use the height specified when the handler checked in, which should be written close to their number on the gate board. The judge will verify that heights are correct. If in doubt about jump heights, use a tape measure before the first dog enters to confirm that the highest portion of the jump is set to the correct height.
- Walk heeling patterns - before each class, demonstrate the heeling pattern called by judge, if requested.
- Help w/ refreshments - coordinate with Show/Trial Secretary to provide snacks and beverages for judge.
- Maintain an accurate gate board - mark "C" next to the numbers of teams with conflicts. Remember conflicts are handled according to the judge's directions. Write "Abs" next to the numbers of teams that are verified to be absent. As a team enters the ring, draw a line through that armband number to keep other handlers informed. On the gate board indicate when groups will be held, if the A and B classes will be combined for group exercises, when breaks will start and end, etc.
- Escort exhibitors into the ring (if requested) - as soon as the judge calls for the next competitor, walk the team to the judge's chosen set up position. Take the leash, if applicable. Place the leash in the designated spot (EXAMPLE: a table corner or a chair by the gate designated for leashes). Be subtle when picking up or moving with the leash, so as not to distract the dog.
- Get competitors ready - ensure that each team is near the ring and prepared to enter as soon as the judge calls for them. As each team enters the ring, seek out the next competitor.
- Pay attention to the ring - be ready to carry out ring duties as needed. Refrain from having food or gum of any type in your mouth, hands, or pockets when you go into the ring. Bait bags and toys are not allowed in the ring.
- Return the leash - promptly bring the leash to the handler in the ring as soon as the judge commands "Exercise Finished" for the last individual exercise.
- Line up teams for group exercises - get the competitors in line in the order on the Group Exercise Sheet (usually catalog order) just before the group stay exercises. When the groups take place after individual exercises, coordinate the line up during the last competitor's individual exercises. Lead the line into the ring when the judge is ready, following the route indicated by the judge.
- Assist with group exercises - stand where the judge indicates during group stays. Be prepared if requested, to quietly take a dog that strays from its location during the group stays by the collar or to calmly place a slip lead around its neck. If needed, move the dog away from the other dogs. Stand quietly with the dog until the judge directs the handler to move the dog.
- At the completion of a trial, if there are to be more trials on that or the next day, block the ring entrance to keep everyone out.

UTILITY CLASS RING STEWARD DUTIES

- Preparation for the Utility class: Set the jumps. It is helpful to designate two locations (such as two chairs) near the ring entrance for handlers' gloves and articles: one for the items of the team currently in the ring and one for the items belonging to the next team. This will make it clear which articles and gloves to take into the ring for each team.
- Preparation for each Utility competitor: Adjust the jump heights. Before judging each dog, the judge will have two articles removed from the article bag for the scent discrimination exercise. A ring steward may be asked to hold the bag while the judge or the handler takes out one metal and one leather article. A judge may ask a steward to remove the articles. Remove the articles carefully with tongs. Be sure that no one except the handler touches these two articles. Place the articles where the judge has directed. Check that there are four metal and four leather articles left in the bag to be placed out during the scent discrimination exercise. Remove the three gloves from the handler's bag (if the handler has not already done this) and place them where a steward can quickly pick them up for the directed retrieve exercise.
- Signals: There are no steward requirements during this exercise.
- Scent Discrimination: Bring the bag of articles into the ring immediately after the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the previous exercise. When the team is set up and facing toward where the article pile will be placed, remove the articles from the bag as directed. (Some judges want stewards to dump them with noise, while others prefer that they be removed quietly.) Touch each article and place it 6" away from the other articles. When done, take the bag and leave the ring. When the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the second scent discrimination exercise, return, pick up the articles, and place the unscented ones back in the bag. Do not put the two scented articles or any incorrectly retrieved article in the bag with the unscented articles; rather place them in a separate compartment, on top or beside the bag.
- Directed Retrieve: Bring the gloves to a corner at the far end of the ring immediately after the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the previous exercise. After the team sets up in a position between the jumps, the judge might nod or otherwise indicate that you put the gloves out. The gloves should not be placed before the handler and dog are set up facing away. Drop one glove in each corner and one directly behind the handler. Each glove should be 3' away from any ring barrier. After dropping the gloves, move away from the glove area to stand where the judge has directed. (Often this is just outside the ring barrier or beside a jump.) When the judge says, "Exercise finished," return to pick up the gloves on the ground and to take the retrieved glove from the judge or handler. Place the gloves in a separate compartment of the article bag or on top or beside the bag.
- Moving Stand: The judge might ask you to hold the clipboard during this exercise. Once the judge says, "Exercise finished," return the clipboard to the judge.
- Directed Jumping: There are no steward requirements during this exercise.

CDX OPEN CLASS RING STEWARD DUTIES

- Preparation for the CDX class: Set the jumps. Place the broad jump boards, as directed by the judge, spaced evenly from lowest to highest. The lowest board will be closest to the handler's set up position. Typically, the board ends are aligned on the side of the jump where the handler will end up after leaving the dog (this will be the right side as viewed from the set-up location.) It is helpful to designate two locations near the ring entrance for dumbbells: one for the team currently in the ring and one for the next team.
- Preparation for each CDX competitor: Adjust the jumps. When adjusting the broad jump distance, if fewer than four boards are needed, remove the tallest board first. The measuring stick can be tucked underneath the first or last board, as long as it is not visible to the dog.
- Broad jump: if using fewer than 4 boards for the Broad jump, always remove the tallest board(s) first.

Number of broad jump boards	Distance jumped
1	8" to 12"
2	16" to 24"
3	28" to 44"
4	48" to 72"

- Heel Free and Figure 8: Stewards will place tall cones as directed by the judge for the Figure 8 exercise immediately after the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the previous exercise, if cones are removed during the rest of the class. (generally, the Heel Free exercise precedes the Figure 8; however in the Open B classes the Retrieve on the Flat or the Drop on Recall exercise may precede the Figure 8.)
- Drop on Recall: There are no steward requirements during this exercise.
- Retrieve on the Flat and Retrieve Over the High Jump: Before the first retrieve exercise, bring the dumbbell to the judge immediately after the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the previous exercise. Then leave the ring. After the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the second retrieve exercise, take the dumbbell from either the judge or the handler, as directed by the judge. Return the dumbbell to the designated area outside the ring. When handing the dumbbell to the competitor, it might be safer to approach from the side away from the dog.
- Broad Jump: There are no steward requirements during this exercise.

ODX OPEN CLASS RING STEWARD DUTIES

- See the CDX Open Class Ring Steward Duties. The first five individual exercises are the same for both classes. There are no group exercises in this class.
- Additional Preparation for the ODX class: Locate the cone needed for the Directed Open Exercises and designate a location for it near the ring entrance.
- Preparation for each ODX competitor: After adjusting the jumps, remove the cone if needed and place it near the ring entrance.
- Directed Open Exercises: These always follow the common five Open individual exercises. Immediately after the judge says, "Exercise Finished" at the completion of the previous exercise, pick up the cone. After the handler leaves the dog and walks to the opposite side of the ring, either hand the cone to the judge or place the cone at the designated, marked spot, as directed by the judge.

NOVICE CLASS RING STEWARD DUTIES

- Heel on Leash and Figure 8: Steward duties are the same as for the CDX Open Class Heel Free and Figure 8. EXCEPTIONS: Figure 8 always follows the Heel on Leash and one steward may be asked to take the handler's leash after the Figure 8.
- Stand for Exam: Be prepared to hold the judge's clipboard during this exercise. Once the judge says, "Exercise finished," return the clipboard to the judge.
- Heel Free: There are no steward requirements during this exercise.
- Recall: There are no steward requirements during this exercise.
- Group exercises: See the General Ring Steward Duties Group Exercise paragraphs. Novice group exercises are done with the handlers inside the ring for a 1-minute sit and a 1-minute down. Both stewards usually stay in the ring to assist the judge.

NON-REGULAR AND OPTIONAL TITLING CLASSES

- Beginner Novice Optional Titling Class: Prior to the start of the Beginner Novice class, assist the judge in gathering and setting up the signs needed for the heeling pattern.
- The non-regular classes, when offered, begin after the trial's regular and optional titling classes are completed and the major awards such as High in Trial and High Combined have been given (unless there are multiple obedience rings running simultaneously). Steward duties are similar to those in the regular classes.