

THE SPORT OF DOG OBEDIENCE

The purpose of the Sport of Obedience is to demonstrate the usefulness of the dog as a companion of man. Dogs are being trained and conditioned to behave in the home, in public places, and in the presence of other dogs. It is also required that the dog demonstrate willingness and enjoyment of its work, and that the handler move naturally and smoothly while working the dog. The American Kennel Club, along with other clubs throughout the world, sponsors Obedience Trials that tests the capabilities of the dog/handler teams. A qualifying score of 170 out of 200 points must be obtained under three separate judges in order for a dog to earn a title. There are many levels of titles in the sport.

Basic Dog Obedience: This level of obedience can be taught to any dog from eight weeks old on up. The handler and dog attend training classes together and the handler is taught how to teach his dog acceptable behavior. A relationship and bond of mutual trust, respect and love begins to take effect between the two. By the completion of this level of training, the dog should be walking at the handler's side in a controlled manner while on leash, sitting when the handler stops walking, standing still while being examined by a stranger, and coming when called. In addition, the dog should remain in a sitting or down position for an extended length of time while the handler is moving around the room away from the dog. For many people this is all they want from an obedience class and from their dog. However, some people begin to see obedience as a hobby and move on to the more advanced levels and into obedience trials.

Obedience as a Hobby and Sport

Novice Level-Companion Dog Title: The dog and handler are required to do a heeling pattern both on and off leash that includes right, left, and about turns, fast, slow, and halts. They will also be required to perform a figure 8 pattern, a stand for examination, and a long recall. Then, as a group, the entire novice class will sit their dogs for 1 minute and down their dogs for 3 minutes while the handlers stand across the ring from their dogs.

Open Level-Companion Dog Excellent Title: All work is performed off-leash. The team is required to do a heeling pattern, a figure 8 and recall. They will also be required to down the dog while he is on a recall. The dog is also required to pick up a dumbbell and bring it back to the handler. This will also be done over a high jump. The dog must also jump a broad jump on command of the handler.

Utility-UD Title: The utility dog level work is performed off-leash. The heeling exercise is done with hand signals and no voice commands. The dog will stand, sit and down on signals. He must find a specific leather and a metal dumbbell placed among a group of other dumbbells. The dog must also retrieve one designated glove out of three. On command, the dog must leave the handler's side, run out in a straight line, then sit. The dog then must jump over a high jump and a bar jump as directed.

Obedience Trial Championship-OTCH Title: In order to achieve this level the team is required to earn 100 points with three first placements in a combination of the Open and Utility competitions. Points are awarded according to the number of dogs competing.

Performance Events

In addition to Obedience Trials there are Performance Events held providing opportunities to earn additional titles. Rally, Agility, Flyball, Herding Tests & Trials, Lure Coursing, Earthdog Tests, Tracking and Hunting Tests give dogs and owners recognition for achievement.