

Spectators Guide for Dog Agility



Gateway Agility Club welcomes you to our dog agility competition

We hope this guide will help you understand and enjoy the fast-paced sport you are watching.

What is dog agility?

In brief, it's a sport in which a dog runs through a timed obstacle course as instructed by the handler. Agility training strengthens the bond between dog and handler, and provides fun and exercise for both.

Remember:

- 🐾 Before you reach out to pet a dog, always ask the owner/handler **FIRST**. Please especially be sure your children observe this rule. Please supervise your children at all times.
- 🐾 Feel free to sit or stand ringside and observe, but please remember to stay back a reasonable distance from the ring itself and away from ring entrances and exits. Also, please do not bring food anywhere near the rings.
- 🐾 **No flash photography** is permitted. It can distract a dog or handler and cause a serious injury.
- 🐾 **It is against the rules for spectators to assist or coach the handler/dog team** by, for example, yelling out the correct obstacle order from the sidelines. It is also not appropriate to shout the dog's name, since this would distract the dog from the handler's commands.

Obstacles you will see on the course

Jumps – Most of the jumps are single bar jumps, come with colorful and decorative wings holding up the bars, double-bar spread hurdle(s), and the tire jump. Each type of jump is set at the proper height for each class, which is determined by the height of the dog at the withers (shoulders). Dogs must clear the full height of the jump without knocking a bar down.

Tunnels – There are two types of tunnels, open tunnels which are long open tubes; and "chutes", which are open at one end and have a collapsed fabric tube at the other.

Contact Obstacles – The contact obstacles, so called because of the yellow "contact zones" at each end, consist of the A-frame, dogwalk and see-saw. To perform these obstacles correctly, the dog must get at least one paw in the down contact zone when they descend the obstacle. The contact zone rule is for safety considerations.

Weave Poles – The dog must enter to the right of the first pole and zig-zag through to the end. They must not miss a pole.

Pause Table – The dog must land on the table and keep all four paws on the table for a count of five seconds.

The Judge: Not only does the judge design the pattern and supervise the set-up of the courses, but must also referee the dogs and handlers performance and indicate faults or mistakes. Watch for his or her hand signals to indicate mistakes.

Faults occur if the handler touches the dog or an obstacle while on course, the dog runs the wrong course, misses a contact zone, misses a weave pole, displaces a jump bar, jumps off the table before the end of the count, or exceeds the amount of time set by the judge for running the course.

What happens at an event

Judge's Briefing: When the course has been set up, the handlers gather together for a "judge's briefing" where the judge summarizes how the class is judged.

Walk Through: Then the handlers may "walk the course." They do this as a group, without their dogs, following the numbers to become familiar with how the course goes. Most handlers try to walk the course as many times as they can in the time allotted, to plan their strategy. You may see handlers during a course walk actually running the course with an imaginary dog, giving the commands as they would during their competing round. Other handlers gather in little groups and discuss potential problem spots and how they are going to handle them.

The Competition Runs: The dogs run the course individually, off leash with or without collars. The "timer" will tell the handler when he or she may begin, starting the electronic timer as soon as the dog crosses the start line and stopping it when the dog crosses the finish. As each dog runs, the judge indicates the faults, which an official, called a "scribe", notes on a sheet of paper. At the completion of the round, the timer tells the scribe what the dogs time was. The information is then conveyed to the "scorekeeper," who calculates the qualifying performances and top placements.

Three levels of agility





NOVICE (for beginners), **OPEN**, and **EXCELLENT**.

As you would expect, the courses and the rules get harder as the teams move up.



Types of classes

Ask someone which class you are watching.

-  Standard
-  Jumpers With Weaves
-  Time 2 Beat
-  FAST (Fifteen And Send Time)

All classes require that the dog, under the direction of the handler, perform all of the agility obstacles in the order and time limit set by the judge. Classes progress in difficulty from Novice through Open to Excellent. Jumpers With Weaves classes are comprised of only jumps and weave poles, and sometimes tunnels. There are only 6 weave poles in the Novice classes.



Applause!!

Please feel free to applaud and cheer the dogs on and show your appreciation at the END of a particularly good or entertaining run.

If you would like to get involved in dog agility, please contact a member of the Gateway Agility Club. Please visit our website www.gatewayagility.org for additional information.