



Getting Started in Obedience

Obedience is an enjoyable, inexpensive sport — and a great way to maintain a **rewarding relationship** with your dog and to keep him **fit and active**.

Training isn't difficult or harsh. You build on what you and your dog have learned already in puppy kindergarten, beginners, or other classes. As you advance in training, you and your dog will have lots of fun and, with a little work, earn some **ribbons, titles, and even prizes**.

If you're interested in obedience, here are some tips to help you get started:

❖ **Join the club!** There are several clubs in this area which offer **training classes**. Make a **commitment** to attend classes regularly and to maintain a positive, learning **relationship** with your dog. Club **memberships** are inexpensive. At most clubs, members get a discount rate for training classes and get other benefits, and you'll learn a lot from other handlers.

❖ **Get good advice.** Watch the successful handlers at your club — the ones whose dogs are working happily as well as earning titles and placements. Those are the handlers whose advice and expertise you want to seek. You needn't copy their style, but you do want to emulate their attitude.

Obedience tends to be a friendly sport, and you'll find that other club members are glad to share their experience and help you get started. Everyone was a rookie once, so don't be bashful about asking questions or seeking help.

❖ **Go to some matches and trials.** As your dog progresses in training, you can enter "**show & go**" or **fun matches** (which are very informal), then **sanctioned matches**, and finally, **obedience trials**.

For lists of upcoming events, see *The Match-Show Bulletin*, *AKC Gazette*, *UKC Bloodlines*, *Dogs in Canada*, and other publications, including online calendars such as the one from CHARLES RIVER DOG TRAINING CLUB (www.crdtc.org), Info Dog (www.infodog.com), and others.

❖ **Volunteer to steward.** Clubs always need help putting on matches and trials. **Stewarding** is a great way to see the competition up close and learn some handling techniques. (It also gets you into the show for free and, usually, a free lunch.) As Yogi Berra said, you can observe a lot by watching. Stewarding gives you the best seat in the house.

❖ **Learn the rules.** Get a copy of the latest AKC **obedience regulations** and other rule books (see www.akc.org).

Similarly, you can get the rule books for other organizations, such as UKC (www.ukcdogs.com), ASCA (www.asca.org), and CKC (www.ckc.ca). In some cases, the rule books are online, or you can order paper copies.



- ❖ **Read about the sport** to get different perspectives and to help you choose the training methods that are right for you and your dog. There are some useful articles in magazines and newsletters like *AKC Gazette*, *Dogs in Canada* (www.dogsincanada.com), *Front and Finish: The Dog Trainer's News* (www.frontandfinish.com), and *Dog Sport* (www.dogsportmagazine.com).

You can order books and videos from Canine Training Systems (www.caninetrainingsystems.com), Dogwise (www.dogwise.com, 800 776-2665), J & J (www.jjdog.com), Max 200 (www.max200.com), and other suppliers. Also, some clubs maintain lending libraries and magazine subscriptions for members, or you can organize a lending library with a group of training buddies.

Here's a list of books which cover competition training:

- Bobbie Anderson's *Building Blocks for Performance: Give Your Puppy a Head Start for Competition* is a superb guide to foundation training for obedience, agility, or other sports.
- *Steppin' Up to Success with Terri Arnold* — 3 volumes — is a very detailed and well-organized guide to Novice, Open, and Utility by one of the most successful trainers around (www.terriarnold.com).
- Willard Bailey's *Remembering to Breathe: Inside Dog Obedience Competition* and *OTCH Dreams: The Agony and the Ecstasy of Life with Competition Obedience Dogs* aren't how-to manuals; they're enjoyable accounts of his training and trialing his obedience dogs.
- Ivan Balabanov's videos — *Obedience Without Conflict*— are meant for Schutzhund, but the method of intense, play-based training applies to competition obedience as well (www.ivanbalabanov.com). Several other trainers also have useful videos, including Sylvia Bishop, Janice Demello (*Around the Clock Method of Scent Discrimination*, and others), Sandra Ladwig (*Straight Talkin' Training*), Joanne Plumb (*Foundations of Competitive Obedience*), and AnneMarie Silvertown (*Problem Solving in Heeling: Focused Attention*).
- Diane Bauman's *Beyond Basic Dog Training* (which also has a companion "workbook") is a classic. Also good — her videos *Obedience Retrieve for All Breeds* and *Teaching Scent Discrimination and the Directed Retrieve*.
- Patricia Gail Burnham's *Treats, Play, and Love: Make Dog Training Fun for You and Your Best Friend* is an update of her classic *Playtraining Your Dog*. Both are superb.
- Sheila Booth & Gottfried Dildei's *Schutzhund Obedience: Training in Drive* is one of the best books on inductive training, especially heeling. Don't let the title scare you — the book doesn't cover "bitework," and its training principles apply equally to competition obedience.
- Judy Byron & Adele Yunck's *Competition Obedience: A Balancing Act* is an exceptionally comprehensive and sensible guide to Novice, Open, and Utility. Their **video** on the inductive retrieve, *Positively Fetching*, is also excellent.
- Adele Yunck also has a very helpful book on proofing — *The Art of Proofing: Preparing Your Dog for Obedience Trials*. Likewise Debby Quigley & Judy Ramsey's *Success is in the Proofing*.



- Barbara Cecil & Gerianne Darnell's *Competitive Obedience for the Small Dog* is useful for all sizes of dog. There's also a companion video (www.caninetrainingsystems.com).
- Connie Cleveland's *Dogs Are Problem Solvers* — videos and book — have an extremely well organized regimen for Novice, Open, and Utility exercises, and excellent suggestions for problem solving (www.dogtrainersworkshop.com).
- Michael Ellis, an accomplished trainer in Schutzhund and ring sport, has a series of videos from Leerburg (www.leerburg.com) explaining various aspects of "marker training" — including using food rewards and playing tug. These are very much worth watching, along with some of the "streaming" videos on the Leerburg web site.
- Barbara Handler's *Successful Obedience Handling* is virtually required reading — an especially helpful guide to obedience rules, ring procedures, handler errors, and other aspects of the sport.
- For many years, William Koehler's books — *The Koehler Method of Dog Training*, *The Koehler Method of Open Obedience*, and *The Koehler Method of Utility* — have had very loyal admirers (www.koehlerdogtraining.com) and determined deprecators, so you may want to take a look at them for yourself.
- Brian McGovern's *Competitive Obedience for Winners* (www.chalkwellkennels.co.uk/training-books.html) has excellent hints on attention training and footwork by one of the leading European handlers.
- Liz Palika's "*Fido, Come!*": *Training Your Dog with Love & Understanding* (www.lizpalika.com) covers UKC as well as AKC exercises. (This book may be out of print, alas, but you might find a copy via various online book searches.)
- *Compete in Joy* by Patty Ruzzo & Anne Hassett is inspiring and encouraging.
- Two books by Marie Sawford (www.companiondogtraining.org), a very accomplished trainer in Ontario — *Ring Wise: A Handling Manual for Obedience Competition* and *Ring Ready: An Obedience Workbook* — are excellent guides to "ring craft," problem solving, and proofing. The books' focus is Canadian (CKC) obedience, which is only slightly different from AKC.
- Marsha Smith & Shalini Bosbyshell's *Building a Bridge: From Training to Testing* (www.building-a-bridge.com) presents a sensible and encouraging approach to training, with good hints on teaching attention and focus. Good book for novices.
- Sue Sternberg's booklet *A Guide to the Inducive Retrieve* is superb. Similarly, *The Clicked Retriever* by Lana Mitchell.
- A couple of older books which you may find useful: Winifred Strickland's *Expert Obedience Training for Dogs* and Jack & Wendy Volhard's *Open and Utility Training: The Motivational Method* (www.volhard.com).
- Rally is a new sport meant as an introduction or precursor to obedience. See Pam Dennison's *Click Your Way to Rally Obedience* and Marie Sawford's *Rally On: A Training Manual for Rally Obedience* which covers CARO, APDT, and AKC.



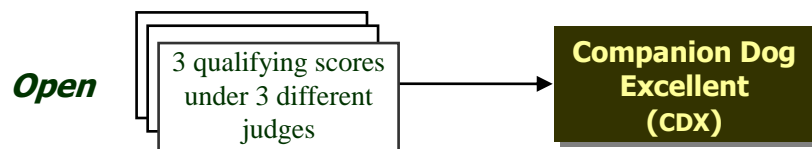
Understanding Obedience Competition

In AKC obedience, a **qualifying score** (“leg”) is at least **170** points out of a possible **200**, with **more than half** of the possible points for each exercise (for example, 15½ out of 30). **Minor deductions** are ½ point to 2½ points (for example, for a crooked sit); **major deductions**, for more substantial errors, are 3 to 5 points.



Dogs who get three qualifying scores in the Novice class earn a CD title and can go on to the Open class.

Exercises: **Heel on Leash** (including the **Figure–8**, 40 points total); **Stand for Exam** (30 points); **Heel Free** (off leash, 40 points), **Recall** (30 points); **Long Sit** (1 minute, 30 points); **Long Down** (3 minutes, 30 points).



Dogs who get three qualifying scores in the Open class earn a CDX title and can go on to the Utility class.

Exercises: **Heel Free** (including the **Figure–8**, 40 points total); **Drop on Recall** (30 points); **Retrieve on the Flat** (20 points); **Retrieve Over the Jump** (30 points); **Broad Jump** (20 points); **Long Sit** (3 minutes, 30 points); **Long Down** (5 minutes, 30 points). In the group exercises, the handlers go out of sight.



Dogs who get three qualifying scores in the Utility class earn a UD title and can go on for the UDX and OTCH titles.

Exercises: **Signals** (40 points total); **Scent Discrimination** (“articles,” 30 points each; 60 points total); **Directed Retrieve** (“gloves,” 30 points); **Moving Stand and Exam** (30 points); and **Directed Jumping** (40 points total).



For a **UDX**, the dog must qualify in both **Open B** and **Utility B** at the same trial **10 times!**

Utility Dog Excellent (UDX)

For an **OTCH**, the dog must earn **100 points** by winning placements in **Open B** or **Utility B** according to a point scale defined in the *Obedience Regulations* — and including three first-place finishes!

Obedience Trial Champion (OTCH)