

A GUIDE TO SHOWMANSHIP



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Grooming and handling dogs

This publication has been prepared to instruct 4-H members in how to show their dogs in showmanship classes. It also will be helpful to anyone who wishes to enter his dog in a breed show.

Competition is important in the development of good attitudes and good sportsmanship. In addition, competing for honors in showmanship classes encourages both youths and adults to groom and handle their dogs to the best of their ability. Proper feeding, care, and training are basic to grooming; therefore, these classes play an important role in the 4-H Dog Care and Training Program.

At dog shows you can meet many people, all of whom have a love for dogs. You will learn a great deal about feeding and caring for your dog and about dog behavior. If you have not attended a dog show, plan to do so soon.

Both purebred and mixed-breed dogs can be shown in showmanship classes. The dog is judged both on his performance in the ring and on his appearance. In addition to obeying commands to gait, stand, and turn, he must look alert and be well groomed. Because the dog is being judged on condition, grooming, and temperament as well as on the way he behaves, showing in this class requires just as much careful preparation as does showing in an obedience class. When competing in a showmanship class, bathing the dog the night before the show will not be your only concern.

How to dress as an exhibitor

Girls should wear dresses, skirts, or dress pants and shirts. Boys should wear dress pants and shirts or suits. The clothes should accent the dog; shoes, not sandals, should be worn.

Showing your dog

The following 30 points describe the procedure that is used in showmanship classes:



Figure 1—A typical 4-H showmanship class.

1. The judge or announcer will signal the beginning of the class and ask the handlers to enter the ring, taking their dogs in as large a circle as the ring will allow. The judge will usually direct you in a counter-clockwise direction after entering the ring. Keep the dog on your left side when going counter-clockwise to place him between you and the judge. If the judge asks you to reverse your direction, place the dog on your right so he is still between you and the judge. If the dog in front of you is slow, you may hold your dog back until you have a space to gait your dog. Holding back is more acceptable than passing the slow dog. Everyone should attempt to keep his dog moving at a suitable speed since it benefits the handlers as well as the judge and spectators.



Figure 2—Always keep your dog between you and the judge.

When moving in a circle, your dog should be moving at a trot. If you are showing a small dog you may only have to walk briskly to put him at his natural gait; with a large dog you may have to run flat out to put him at a showy trot. You should train your dog to move with his head up or carry it at the position suggested by the breed standard. You may encourage your dog to move with animation by talking to him as you move. This will also help in keeping his attention. Just remember that a happy dog is a handsome dog. You should also remember that you are on exhibit. Move as smoothly as possible and try to perform as a team with your dog. Remember, however, that your purpose is to show your dog and not yourself.

2. After you have circled several times, the judge will signal that the exhibitors should line up. The dogs should remain in order and be posed head to tail. The judge may look at them briefly from a distance of about 25 feet to get an overall perspective of the class.

3. Next, the judge will carefully inspect each dog. You will be asked to bring your dog in front of the others for inspection and gaiting. In order to show your dog correctly, you must know how a properly posed and gaited dog of your breed performs. Breed magazines and attendance at dog shows will help you understand the standards for your dog. If your dog is a mixed breed, he should be shown according to the standards of the breed he resembles most.

Posing your dog

The following information describes how to move your dog's legs to set him up to his best advantage. If done properly, he is less likely to move them after you remove your hand.



Figure 3—If a dog moves its foot out of position, do not be afraid to move it back. This girl will want to re-pose her dog as soon as possible.

It will take a bit of practice for you to learn to make the proper moves around your dog so that you can present him with assurance. After some practice, you will be able to move around your dog very smoothly and work as a team. When training your dog to pose, let him know that you mean business and that it is not playtime. Practice training your dog twice a day for a 15 or 20-minute period. Training twice a day for a shorter period is much better than once a day for a very long period. In a grooming and handling competition, the judge may purposely or accidentally cause your dog to move one of his legs, thus changing the appearance. If this happens, correct the pose immediately but smoothly.

4. When posing your dog start with the judge's-side front foot first, then move the front foot nearest you. Next move the hind foot on the judge's side, and finally move the hind foot on the side nearest you. The front foot should be placed by grasping the elbow and moving the foot into the correct position. The hind legs should be grasped by the hock. Check to make sure your dog has not moved any of its feet out of place again. However, only move feet that are out of place.

5. With small breeds you may wish to set the front end by lifting your dog slightly and re-settling him.

6. Next, place the rear legs. Grasp the leg just above the hock and place the leg square.

7. You can also place the rear legs by reaching under the dog. When placing the legs, you must lift up slightly on the dog's head because he will tend to lower his head when you touch his legs.



Figure 4—This handler is correctly showing the judge the dog's teeth.

8. When posing or "stacking" your dog, place the legs wide enough to indicate strong front and rear ends. The feet should point straight ahead. The rear legs should be positioned far enough back so that the portion of the leg between the hock and pastern is perpendicular. This stance will help the dog to present a strong back, rather than giving the appearance of being sway-backed. His head should be held high enough to add style. In some breeds proper technique is to hold the dog by his lower jaw and the side of the muzzle on the side opposite of the judge. The manner in which the tail should be held varies somewhat between breeds. Other breeds are shown "free standing," meaning that the handler stacks the dog, but does not hold the muzzle or tail.

9. Be careful not to stretch your dog out too much. This causes your dog's back to flatten and takes away from the overall character of the dog.

10. Small breeds are shown and handled the same as large dogs, except that they may be shown on a table to enable the judge to examine them more easily.

11. The eyes should be clean and clear.

12. The ears should be clean.

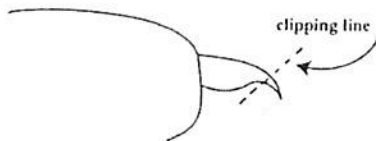
13. The judge will ask to see your dog's teeth. Place your hand over the muzzle, just behind the nose, with the thumb and fingers over the canine teeth, and gently pull back and up (figure 4). This will show the bite and cleanliness of the teeth. The premolars may be shown by raising the flews on each side back to the corner of the mouth.

14. The coat should be clean and free from snarls and the skin should be healthy. The judge may check behind the dog's ears and other areas where extra grooming is required.

15. The toenails should be clipped to a length so they do not exceed the toes.

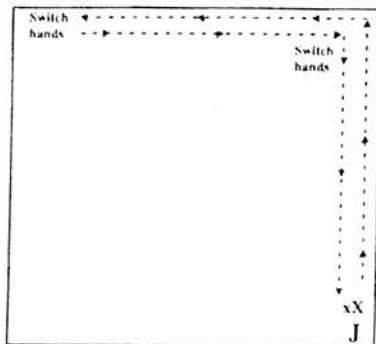
16. When the judge examines the rear quarters you should move to the front.

17. Small breeds may be examined on a table.



Proper toenail clipping procedure

Gaiting your dog in the "L" pattern



After the judge has examined your dog, he will ask you to gait him. He may ask you to use the "L" pattern that is shown in the diagram.

21. Before gaiting your dog, honor the judge by turning your dog in front of him. Some judges prefer not to be honored. You may ask the steward when entering the ring if the judge or show committee has a preference.

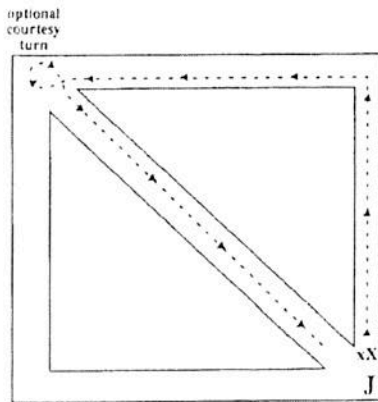
22. Regardless of whether you honor the judge, be sure to get your dog under control at this time and go away from the judge in a straight line for about 25 feet. This allows the judge to clearly see the action of your dog. Take your dog at a brisk trot or the natural gait specified in the breed standard.



23. Make a square turn to the left and continue for about 25 feet.
24. To reverse the pattern, switch hands on the lead and turn the dog in toward yourself. Do this as smoothly as possible.
25. On the way back to the judge, allow the dog to get ahead of you. Turn the dog one quarter turn to the right, while switching hands on the lead. At the same time, the handler should make a quarter turn to the right and continue on toward the judge.
26. Now bring the dog straight toward the judge. During the entire procedure the dog should travel with style and animation.
27. Handler should stop in front of the judge at a distance about equal to the height of the judge. Present your dog in a natural pose. The judge will check if your dog stands straight on his front and rear legs. A bait such as cooked liver may be used in some areas to show your dog to his best advantage.

Figure 5—Gait your dog at a speed appropriate for its size and breed.

The triangle pattern



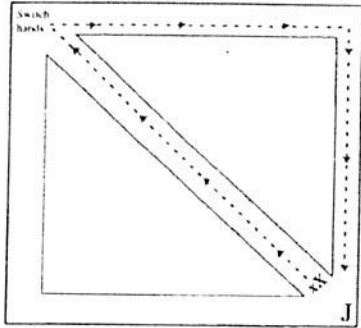
The judge may ask you to follow the triangle pattern as illustrated. This pattern will be easy for your dog to learn as he will remain on your left side at all times. Neither does it require changing the lead from the left to the right hand.

28. If honoring the judge is preferred by the judge or show committee, do so. If this is not preferred, take your dog straight away from the judge for about 25 feet at a brisk trot or the natural gait specified in your breed standard.
29. Make a turn to the left and continue for about 25 feet. Talk to him as you move to keep his attention and looking his best.
30. Make a second turn to your left and go straight toward the judge. Stop before the judge and present your dog in a natural pose. This will allow the judge to see how correctly your dog stands when his feet have not been placed. A courtesy turn may be used. For dogs that are difficult to control, a courtesy turn is a good way to regain position.

Alternate patterns

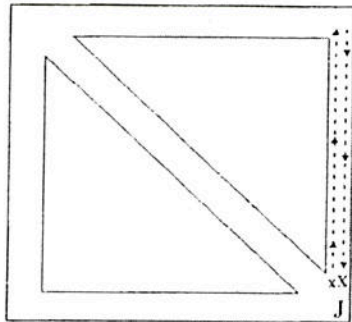
Although the "L" pattern and the triangle pattern are the two most frequently requested by the judge, there are other patterns that may

be used instead. These patterns are most commonly used when a class is particularly difficult to judge, or in the case of a tie between two contestants. Following are descriptions of some of the most commonly requested alternate patterns.



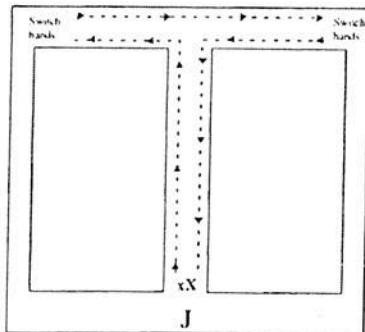
Reverse triangle

Leave the judge with your dog on your left side. Go down the diagonal. Switch hands at the end of the diagonal; the dog is now on your right. Go down to the end of the ring, turn right, and head back toward the judge. It is optional to switch hands on the final turn.



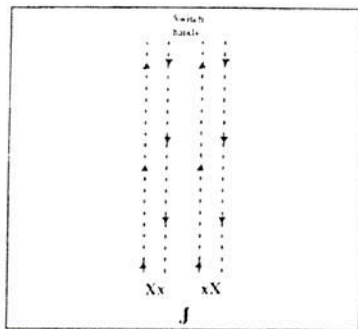
Down and back

With your dog on your left side, go straight down the ring. When you get to the end, you can either switch hands or make a small circle; then come back toward the judge.



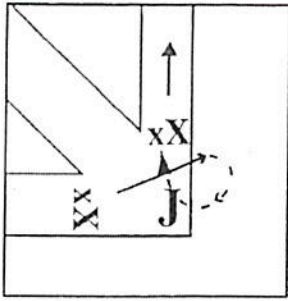
The "T" pattern

With your dog on your left side, go down the center of the ring, turn to the left and at the end of the mat, switch lead to right hand and go all the way across to the end of the mat. Switch lead back to your left hand and return up the center to the judge.



Two dogs together

Dogs must stay on the inside so they are together at all times. Go down away from the judge; when you get to the end, both handlers must switch hands. Keep the same gait as the other person.



The courtesy turn

To execute a courtesy turn, start with your dog on your left side. Cross in front of the judge on an angle to a point just past the judge. Finally, turn and start to gait, traveling away from the judge.

Training your dog for showmanship classes

It will take practice to train your dog to perform all patterns well. Walk him through the pattern several times before going at a brisk trot. Young dogs in particular may mistake the brisk trot for some kind of game and therefore not pay close attention. Walking through the pattern will also give you more time to change hands and to turn your dog with authority.

You may teach your dog to pose or stack more easily if you begin training away from distractions, such as, other people and dogs. After your dog has made some progress, find a location where there will be distractions similar to those in a show ring and ask someone unfamiliar with your dog to examine him as the judge will. When shown in breed classes, the male dog will be checked for the existence of both testicles and their normality. You should rehearse this examination also. Each training session should be no more than 15 to 20 minutes in length. Try to end each lesson on a pleasant note and give your dog plenty of praise.

Tips on showing

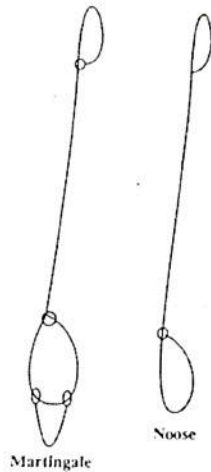


Figure 6—Your dog's temperament is important in a showmanship class.

The following points are important when showing your dog. Wear the armband identification on your left arm. When posing your dog, keep him between yourself and the judge. As the judge moves around your dog, step backward or forward so you do not block the judge's view. Move around your dog with alertness and smoothness. Your positions and the moves you make should be well rehearsed. After the judge has examined your dog and has turned away, be prepared for him to glance back for a final look.

The temperament of your dog is very important. You can lose points if your dog is aggressive or shy when examined by the judge. If the dog attempts to bite, he will probably be dismissed from the class. Always have your dog under control and keep your composure. If your dog moves his foot or if the judge moves it, correct it as soon as it does not interfere with the activities of the judge. Do not be distracted by friends or relatives along the ringside. Give full attention to showing your dog (but always keep one eye on the judge). Continue to show until all the dogs have been placed and also as you leave the ring.

Learning to show a dog to his best advantage takes time and practice. You can learn by watching professional dog handlers and by studying pictures of your breed in dog magazines to learn the correct position of the tail and the general style you should present.



It is helpful to have knowledge of breed identification, not only for your own dog's breed but for others' as well. Knowledge of body parts and other general dog-related topics will also come in handy when answering the judge's questions in the show ring.

If you have trained your dog in obedience, you may have some difficulty teaching him to gait on the right side. Also, he may sit occasionally when he should stand. These problems can be corrected with a bit of training. Typically, handlers use a fine choke collar or nylon choke collar and a show lead for breed shows. If you use a training collar for both obedience and breed classes, use a chain collar for one and nylon for the other. Other options are nylon martingales or nooses (pictured). This distinction may help your dog to identify the performance that is appropriate. Many dogs do well in both obedience and breed classes. If you wish to participate in both, let no one discourage you.

Grooming your dog

Basic grooming

All dogs should be clean and their coats should be free from loose hair and mats. Ears should be clean with no excess wax. All dogs should be shown with their toenails properly trimmed and most dogs are shown with their whiskers trimmed. Basic grooming can be done by a 4-H member.

Bathing

You may be told that dogs should not be bathed since it will cause dry coats, skin problems, and a variety of other ailments. This is not true—dogs should be bathed when they become dirty or develop a bad odor. Particularly since most dogs are pets and spend much time in the home and with the family, they cannot be allowed to become dirty or smelly. Bathing may remove the natural oils that give luster to a coat, but it will soon return to normal. Coat dressing can be used to give the coat bloom if needed for a show.

Before bathing your dog, fill his ears with a piece of cotton to keep water out. Smear a little vaseline into the corner of the eyes to keep soap from irritating them. Wet him completely from the neck back in order to keep fleas from migrating to his head. You may find it convenient to place a small or medium-sized dog in a tub or wash basin. A sink equipped with a hose and a sprinkler is handy.

Be sure to test the water temperature. It should be comfortable to your hand. A mild liquid dog shampoo is suggested because it penetrates to the skin easily and lathers quickly. Bar soap, either made especially for dogs or a mild all-purpose soap, may be more useful on feet and legs, especially if they are quite dirty. Work a brush back and forth through the coat to clean the skin and to remove any foreign materials from the hair. After washing the dog's coat, wash his head. A washcloth will control the lather and keep it out of the dog's eyes. The damp wash cloth can also be used to clean the inside of his ears. Never get water in the ear! Use a cotton swab

dampened with rubbing alcohol or a commercial ear-cleaning preparation to rid the inner part of the ear of dirt and excess wax. Rinse all the soap from the coat with plenty of water.

When the weather is warm, dogs can be washed outdoors. At other times use a heated room, such as, the garage, basement, or other convenient area so that the dog will not become chilled. After washing, use a comb to straighten tangles and remove water from the coat. You can then use towels to dry the coat. In breeds where it is important for the coat to lie flat, pin a towel around the dog's body.

Trimming the toenails

The toenails should be trimmed. Ask your veterinarian the correct length to trim the nails since it differs between breeds with light colored nails and dark nails. Dog nail trimmers are sold at many dog shows and at livestock supply stores. You may need someone to hold your dog's head while you hold the foot because dogs usually dislike this rather simple operation. After trimming, use a nail file to smooth the edges of the nail.

Trimming the whiskers

Some breeds are shown with their whiskers trimmed off. It is best to use a pair of blunt-nosed scissors for this job because there is less danger of injury should the dog jump. If you do not have a pair of blunt-nosed scissors, an ordinary pair can be used but enlist the help of a friend to hold the dog. The whiskers should be cut smoothly at the muzzle.

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Melanie Miller, Youth Development Specialist, coordinated the project to revise the national 4-H dog project materials. Special thanks to Marilyn and Gerald Hrabik, Kewaunee County 4-H, for their special editing and writing and to the other 4-H dog leaders who helped with the re-write of these project materials. Thanks, also, to Wayne Brabender for editing, Michele Zimmerman, Jefferson County 4-H, for photography, and Deanna Schneider for layout and design.

If you need this material in another format, please contact the Department of 4-H Youth Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension, 436 Lowell Hall, 610 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53703; phone 608-262-1067. Visit Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development on the Web at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/4h/>. This information is produced by the Department of 4-H Youth Development and is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by the Cooperative Extension or bias against those not mentioned.

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Madison, WI 53715
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4-H-437 A Guide to Showmanship

E-3-01-6C-RP



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