

Best Practices for Holding a Match

A match is often a new owners first experience with dog shows and our dog family. With good planning, this is the perfect opportunity for your club to provide a fun welcoming experience to new dog lovers. Many of us began and honed our skills at matches; falling in love with a sport that may last a lifetime. Preparation is the number one factor in having a stress-free fun event!

Like any event it's good to have a few people planning your next match, #1 **Form a committee**. Matches are fun and a relaxed educational event, planning can help make it happen. For anyone that has never done this before a serious and detailed document is the AKC Show Manual:

<http://images.akc.org/pdf/RESHOW.pdf> this is for point shows but there are some great ideas which can be used to help with match planning as well.

Matches are great events when the weather is just right #2 **Select the time of year** for your area that has the best chance of being a gorgeous day. Consider what is going on in the area: other dog shows, cultural events, Holidays, etc...When possible find a free weekend or consider if your match works well with other activities. More action adds to the interest but also can create more work, find the right balance.

Matches are often held outdoors at a nice park or a small portion of a fairgrounds, #3 **Select a site** that has either a building suitable for the anticipated entry or has a flat grassy area large enough to set up rings. The site should have plenty of shade, be easy for people to set-up and mingle and parking nearby. Remember to consider restrooms and sources of drinking water. While electricity is critical at a point show for a match it is a convenience. Whether indoors or out making sure the dogs and owners are comfortable.

The AKC will help you promote your match once you #4 **Submit a completed [AKC® Sanctioned Match Application](#)**, the AKC automatically sets up a 2 email match promotion for eligible dogs in your area. The club will be provided an opportunity to add information to the email or can opt out if they want. Letting dog owners in your area know about the opportunity to meet up with other great dog lovers helps grow this great sport.

This is often a good opportunity to give an aspiring judge a chance to see what judging is about. #6 **Select judges** that are knowledgeable dog people that are relaxed and patient and want to learn.

Don't forget #7 **Food and drinks** can help the day run smoother. Find vendors or organize club members to provide the necessities. Many events will advertise having BBQ or other great foods and with the proliferation of Food Trucks getting some good food may be easier than you think. Some people may come for the food and get caught up in all the cool dogs!

The early bird catches the worm, and this is no different when starting the day, #8 **Get the site ready** as early as possible. If you have access to the site, the night before getting a head start won't hurt. If you are setting up that morning make sure you have plenty of time and assistance to get everything ready before taking entries and judging starts. Avoiding delays helps make for a more enjoyable experience.

#9 **Make sure the simple things** are covered like adequate garbage receptacles hand wipes, water...

Someone with some knowledge and a smiling face can brighten up even the most confused participant.

#10 **The more club members** at the match the better,

#11 **Celebrate** everyone's success, if you see someone getting a dog to walk on lead for the first time let them know how great that is, be exuberant.

Making sure the site is cleaner after the show than when you found it ensures future access, **#12 Plan on a clean-up party.** Make sure you have plenty of help, so the chore goes faster, and you have time to relax before heading home to celebrate a great event and start thinking about the next one!

Bonus: Think about potential sponsors, matches are fairly localized so a potential small business will be interested or a larger dog food company. The worst that can happen is they say they're not interested.