



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB®

Conducting Oral Exams

revised 06-28-2023

The proficient judge alters their examination technique from breed to breed based on the priorities as defined by the standard. It should never be identical from breed to breed to breed. To do so requires interpretation of the written word as to what the standard is attempting to convey to you as the judge. The manner in which a breed's approved standard is written will define what would constitute conducting a breed specific examination. Close inspection of a breed's approved standard will determine the appropriate oral exam to conduct when judging that breed, which is an essential component of the breed specific exam.

Oral exams can be generally divided into four (4) categories which individually or in combination will constitute the proper oral exam for a breed:

1. **Bite** – checking the front
2. **Teeth** – checking the fronts and sides
3. **Mouth** – involves opening the mouth to count teeth or check pigment. Always used in combination with a “bite” or “teeth” exam depending on the breed
4. **Thumb exam** – used for smaller, short muzzled breeds that call for an undershot jaw

1. **Bite** – This exam is proper when the standard ONLY refers to the alignment of the bite; scissors, level, undershot or overshot, as a preference, fault or disqualification.

This requires the exhibitor or judge separating the front of the lips to display the meshing of the incisors and canines.

2. **Teeth** – This is required for any breed that references missing teeth or dentition. This includes disqualifications for missing teeth, and any reference to full dentition or a full complement of teeth as a preference or fault due to a lack thereof.

This requires the exhibitor or judge to separate the front of the lips to display the meshing of the incisors and canines AND the flews on each side of the mouth so the judge may observe the pre-molars and molars on the upper and lower jaw for each.

****Note**** While a standard may not reference full dentition, some parent clubs may recommend exams beyond checking the bite (front) due to unique characteristics (i.e. *upper incisors fitting snugly in back of the lower canine teeth on each side*), to inspect for wry mouths, and/or address language that references all teeth (i.e. **Teeth** - *sound, strong and evenly spaced*). Please consult with parent club for specific techniques.

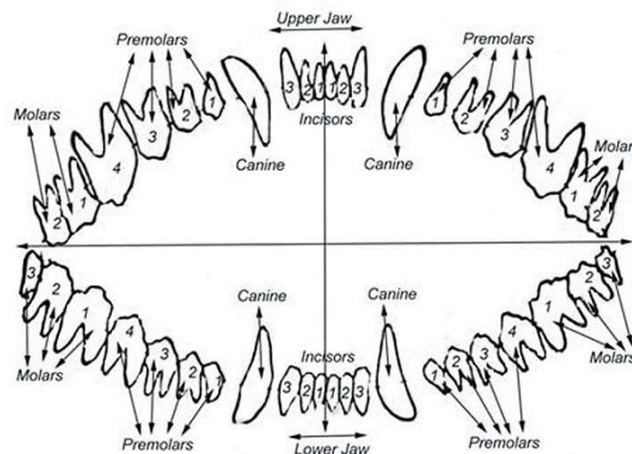
3. **Mouth** – Required for any breed that includes a standard disqualification for pigmentation or missing teeth **that require checking the M-3s**. If the M-3s are excluded from the DQ by the standard (Leonbergers), opening the mouth is not required. It is used in combination with the “bite” and/or “teeth” exam depending on the language within the standard.

Breeds that include a DQ for pigmentation of the mouth but do not reference missing teeth or full (complete) dentition would involve displaying the “bite” and then opening the mouth to check for pigment of the mouth and/or tongue. An example would be the Chinese Shar-Pei which states the bite should be scissors with deviation from being a major fault but also includes that a spotted pink tongue is a major fault and a solid pink tongue is a disqualification. In this case, it is not necessary to “check the sides” as dentition is not referenced in the standard and the entries are likely not used to this procedure and the lack of familiarity could lead to issues.

Breeds that do include DQ’s for missing teeth will require that the front and sides be displayed in addition to opening the mouth so the judge can effectively observe the molars. This is necessary whether the applicable disqualification refers to a specific missing tooth or teeth, or whether it relates to a number of missing teeth.

To count teeth, or determine full/complete dentition one must know the construct of the oral cavity which includes 42 teeth:

- **12 Incisors** – In front of the mouth, six upper and six lower
- **4 Canines** - Behind the incisors, two upper and two lower
- **16 Premolars** - Behind the canines, eight upper and eight lower
- **10 Molars** - Behind the premolars, four upper and six lower



The tried and true method for counting teeth which is taught by all parent clubs for breeds that include disqualification for missing teeth is to “count by zones”. To count by zones, one must know the types of teeth, and the numbers and locations for each. It is not possible to complete this task competently without this general knowledge.

4. **Thumb exam** – Involves the judge running the flat of his/her thumb outside of the top lip OR inside the lips of the dog to feel for the proper alignment of the jaw. This procedure is appropriate in smaller, undershot breeds with short muzzles. This is the preferred means to conduct the oral exam for these breeds as it is not necessary to pry open the mouth and doing so may be problematic and cause the breed to react by squirming or trying to get away. It is recommended that the thumb exam is conducted at the end of the individual examination. A few examples of where this procedure is used would be Japanese Chin, Pugs and Pekingese.

Please be reminded, many exhibitors prefer to open their dog’s mouth themselves for examination. It is recommended that all judges ask the exhibitor to display the bite/teeth/open the mouth as appropriate for that breed. However, you have the authority to personally open the dog’s mouth. In breeds where appropriate, the judge must personally conduct the thumb exam.

Oral Exam Chart by Breed

revised 06-28-2023

| BREED | F | S | O | T |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Barbet | X | | | |
| Bracco Italiano | X | | X | |
| Brittany | X | | | |
| Lagotto Romagnolo | X | X | | |
| Pointers | X | | | |
| Pointers (German Shorthaired) | X | X | | |
| Pointers (German Wirehaired) | X | X | | |
| Retrievers (Chesapeake) | X | | | |
| Retrievers (Curly Coated) | X | | | |
| Retrievers (Flat Coated) | X | | | |
| Retrievers (Golden) | X | X | | |
| Retrievers (Labrador) | X | X | | |
| Nederlandse Kooikerhondje | X | X | | |
| Nova Scotia Duck Toll. Retrievers | X | X | | |
| Setters (English) | X | | | |
| Setters (Gordon) | X | | | |
| Setters (Irish) | X | | | |
| Setters (Irish Red & White) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (American Water) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (Boykin) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (Clumber) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (Cocker) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (English Cocker) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (English Springer) | X | | | |
| Spaniels Field | X | X | | |
| Spaniels (Irish Water) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (Sussex) | X | | | |
| Spaniels (Welsh Springer) | X | | | |
| Spinoni Italiano | X | | | |
| Vizslas | X | | | |
| Weimaraners | X | X | | |
| Wirehaired Pointed Griffons | X | | | |
| Wirehaired Vizsla | X | X | X | |
| Afghan Hounds | X | | | |
| American Foxhounds | X | | | |
| American English Coonhounds | X | | | |
| Azawakh | X | X | | |
| Basenjis | X | | | |
| Basset Hounds | X | | | |
| Beagles | X | | | |
| Black & Tan Coonhounds | X | | | |
| Bloodhounds | X | | | |
| Bluetick Coonhounds | X | | | |
| Borzoi | X | X | | |
| Cirneco dell'Etna | X | | | |
| Dachshunds | X | | | |
| English Foxhounds | X | | | |
| Grand Basset Griffon Vendeen | X | | | |
| Greyhounds | X | | | |
| Harriers | X | | | |
| Ibizan Hounds | X | | | |
| Irish Wolfhounds | X | | | |
| Norwegian Elkhounds | X | | | |
| Otterhounds | X | | | |
| Petits Bassets Griffons Vendeens | X | | | |

| BREED | F | S | O | T |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Pharaoh Hounds | X | | | |
| Plotts | X | | | |
| Portuguese Podengo Pequeno | X | | | |
| Redbone Coonhounds | X | | | |
| Rhodesian Ridgebacks | X | | | |
| Salukis | X | | | |
| Scottish Deerhounds | X | | | |
| Sloughi | X | X | | |
| Tree Walker Coonhounds | X | | | |
| Whippets | X | | | |
| Akitas | X | | | |
| Anatolian Shepherd | X | | | |
| Alaskan Malamutes | X | | | |
| Bernese Mtn. Dogs | X | X | | |
| Black Russian Terrier | X | X | X | |
| Boerboel | X | X | | |
| Boxers ¹ | X | X | | |
| Bullmastiffs | X | | | |
| Cane Corsos | X | X | X | |
| Chinook | X | X | | |
| Doberman Pinschers | X | X | X | |
| Dogo Argentino | X | X | | |
| Dogue De Bordeaux | X | | | |
| German Pinscher | X | X | | |
| Giant Schnauzers | X | X | | |
| Great Danes | X | X | | |
| Great Pyrenees | X | | | |
| Greater Swiss Mountain. Dogs | X | | | |
| Komondorok | X | X | X | |
| Kuvaszok | X | X | | |
| Leonbergers | X | X | | |
| Mastiffs | X | | | |
| Neapolitan Mastiff | X | X | | |
| Newfoundlands | X | | | |
| Portuguese Water Dogs | X | | | |
| Rottweilers | X | X | X | |
| Saint Bernards | X | | | |
| Samoyeds | X | | | |
| Siberian Huskies | X | | | |
| Standard Schnauzers | X | X | | |
| Tibetan Mastiff | X | X | | |
| Airedale Terriers | X | | | |
| American Hairless Terriers | X | | | |
| American Staffordshire Terriers | X | | | |
| Australian Terriers | X | | | |
| Bedlington Terriers | X | X | | |
| Border Terriers | X | | | |
| Bull Terriers | X | | | |
| Cairn Terriers | X | | | |
| Cesky Terriers | X | X | | |
| Dandie Dinmont Terriers | X | | | |
| Fox Terriers (Smooth) | X | | | |
| Fox Terriers (Wire) | X | | | |
| Glen of Imaal Terriers | X | X | | |

Key:

F = Check Front (Incisors & Canines)

S = Check Sides (Premolars & Molars)

O = Open Mouth

T = Thumb Exam

Oral Exam Chart by Breed

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| BREED | F | S | O | T |
|--------------------------------|------------|---|---|---|
| Irish Terriers | X | | | |
| Kerry Blue Terriers | X | | | |
| Lakeland Terriers | X | | | |
| Manchester Terriers (Standard) | X | X | | |
| Miniature Bull Terriers | X | | | |
| Miniature Schnauzers | X | | | |
| Norfolk Terriers | X | | | |
| Norwich Terriers | X | | | |
| Parson Russell Terriers | X | X | | |
| Rat Terrier | X | | | |
| Russell Terrier | X | | | |
| Scottish Terriers | X | | | |
| Sealyham Terriers | X | | | |
| Skye Terriers | X | | | |
| Soft Coated Wheaten Terriers | X | | | |
| Staffordshire Bull Terriers | X | | | |
| Welsh Terriers | X | X | | |
| West Highland White Terriers | X | X | | |
| Affenpinschers | X | | | |
| Biewer Terriers | X | | | |
| Brussels Griffons | | | | X |
| Cavalier King Charles Spaniels | X | | | |
| Chihuahuas | X | | | |
| Chinese Cresteds | Hairless | X | | |
| | Powderpuff | X | X | |
| English Toy Spaniels | | | | X |
| Italian Greyhounds | X | | | |
| Havanese | X | | | |
| Japanese Chin | | | | X |
| Maltese | X | | | |
| Manchester Terriers (Toy) | X | X | | |
| Miniature Pinschers | X | | | |
| Papillons | X | | | |
| Pekingese | | | | X |
| Pomeranians | X | | | |
| Poodles (Toy) | X | | | |
| Pugs | | | | X |
| Russian Toy | X | | | |
| Shih Tzu | X | | | |
| Silky Terriers | X | | | |
| Toy Fox Terrier | X | | | |
| Yorkshire Terriers | X | | | |
| American Eskimo Dogs | X | X | | |
| Bichons Frises | X | X | | |
| Boston Terriers | X | | | |
| Bulldogs | X | | | |
| Chinese Shar-Pei | X | | X | |
| Chow Chows | X | | X | |
| Coton de Tulear | X | X | | |
| Dalmatians | X | | | |
| Finnish Spitz | X | | | |
| French Bulldogs | X | | | |
| Keeshonden | X | | | |
| Lhasa Apsos | X | | | |

| BREED | F | S | O | T |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---|---|---|
| Löwchen | X | X | | |
| Norwegian Lundehunds | X | | | |
| Poodles | X | | | |
| Schipperkes | X | | | |
| Shiba Inu | X | X | | |
| Tibetan Spaniels | X | | | |
| Tibetan Terriers | X | | | |
| Xoloitcuintli | Hairless | X | | |
| | Coated | X | X | |
| Australian Cattle Dogs ¹ | X | X | | |
| Australian Shepherds | X | X | | |
| Bearded Collies | X | X | | |
| Beauceron | X | X | X | |
| Belgian Laekenois | X | X | X | |
| Belgian Malinois | X | X | | |
| Belgian Sheepdogs | X | X | | |
| Belgian Tervuren | X | X | | |
| Bergamasco | X | | | |
| Berger Picard | X | X | | |
| Border Collies | X | X | | |
| Bouvier des Flandres | X | | | |
| Briards | X | | | |
| Canaan Dogs | X | | | |
| Cardigan Welsh Corgis | X | | | |
| Collies | X | | | |
| Entlebucher Mountain Dogs | X | | | |
| Finnish Lapphunds | X | | | |
| German Shepherd Dogs | X | X | | |
| Icelandic Sheepdogs | X | X | | |
| Miniature American Shepherds | X | X | | |
| Mudi | X | X | | |
| Norwegian Buhunds | X | X | | |
| Old English Sheepdogs | X | | | |
| Pembroke Welsh Corgis | X | | | |
| Polish Lowland Sheepdog | X | | | |
| Pulik | X | X | | |
| Pumi | X | X | | |
| Pyrenean Shepherds | X | X | | |
| Shetland Sheepdogs | X | X | | |
| Spanish Water Dogs | X | X | | |
| Swedish Vallhund | X | X | | |
| Basset Fauve de Bretagne | X | X | | |
| Danish-Swedish Farmdog | X | | | |
| Dutch Shepherds | X | X | | |
| Japanese Akitainu | X | X | | |
| Kai Ken | X | X | | |
| Lancashire Heelers | X | | | |
| Norrbottenspets | X | X | | |
| Peruvian Inca Orchid | Hairless | X | | |
| | Coated | X | X | |
| Portuguese Podengo | X | | | |
| Russian Tsvetnaya | X | | | |
| Small Munsterlander | X | X | | |
| Teddy Roosevelt Terriers | X | | | |

¹ – Please see **Note** on page 2

Key:

F = Check Front (Incisors & Canines) S = Check Sides (Premolars & Molars) O = Open Mouth T = Thumb Exam