Junior Showmanship

Junior Showmanship Regulations and Guidelines for Judging Juniors at American Kennel Club International Dog Show

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AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB®

AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB'S MISSION STATEMENT

The American Kennel Club® is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to upholding the integrity of its Registry, promoting the sport of purebred dogs and breeding for type and function. Founded in 1884, the AKC® and its affiliated organizations advocate for the purebred dog as a family companion, advance canine health and well-being, work to protect the rights of all dog owners and promote responsible dog ownership.

Helpful Phone Numbers

To obtain a Junior Handler number:
Call. . . . . (919) 233-9767
Email . . . . . juniors@akc.org

JR Certification forms:
Call. . . . . (919) 233-9767
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Regulations For Junior Showmanship

Section 1. Approval of Classes. An International Show is a show given by a foreign club or association pursuant to a written licensed agreement between The American Kennel Club ("AKC") and the foreign club or association ("Club") which will be held by the Club at which AKC championship points may be awarded ("AKC International Show License Agreement"). A Club holding an International Show may also offer the Junior Showmanship competition at its show.

Section 2. Amateur Status. An individual listed as an agent is not eligible to compete in Juniors, nor any person who distributes rate cards or otherwise advertises themselves as handling dogs for pay in the show ring or accepts payment for handling dogs. "Participation in Junior Showmanship is intended to encourage Juniors to learn how to care for and present different breeds. Part of the educational process may include apprenticeship or assisting professional handlers. Juniors may take their employers' dogs into the ring while still retaining amateur status."

Section 3. Standard for Judging. Junior Showmanship shall be judged solely on the ability and skill of the Juniors in handling their dog as in the breed ring. The show qualities of the dog shall not be considered including dogs with breed standard disqualifications and/or defined faults. Junior Handlers shall not be required to exchange dogs. The judge must excuse a handler and dog from the ring if, in his/her opinion, the handler cannot properly control the dog. Otherwise, a dog may only be excused or disqualified under the provisions defined in **Section 5 of the Junior Showmanship Judging Guidelines.**

Section 4. Approval of Judges. Only those persons whose names are on AKC's list of eligible All-Breed Junior Showmanship Judges may, at the discretion of the AKC, be approved to judge the junior showmanship classes at any International Show held by the Club, except that if it becomes necessary to replace an advertised judge after the opening of the show and no person on the eligible judges list is available to take his or her place, the Club may select as a substitute for the advertised judge a person whose name is not on the eligible judges list, provided such person is not currently suspended from the privileges of the AKC, is not currently suspended as a judge, and is not ineligible to judge under the provisions of the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows*. The name and assignment of each judge shall be included in the list of judges sent to AKC for approval by the Club. Junior Showmanship entries shall be included

in computing judges' assignments under Chapter 7, Section 11, of the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows*. Any change in judges shall be handled in accordance with the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows*.

Section 5. Classes and Divisions. The regular Junior Showmanship Classes shall be:

(A) **Novice.** This shall be for children who are at least 9 years old and under 18 years old on the day of the show and who at the time entries close, have not won three (3) first place awards, with competition present, in a Novice Class. A first place in Novice without competition leading to a Best Junior award with competition at an International Show or AKC licensed or member show would count as one win towards moving to Open. Junior Handlers who win a third first place in Novice Class with competition after the closing of entries for a show, including any win in Novice that leads to a Best Junior with competition present, are required to transfer their entry from the Novice Class to the Open Class by notifying the Show Secretary prior to the judging of the class at the show.

(B) **Open.** This class shall be for children who are at least 9 years old and under 18 years old on the day of the show, and who have won three first place awards in a Novice Class or if a win in Novice leads to a Best Junior with competition present it will count as one win towards moving to Open in an International Show or AKC licensed or member show.

(C) Master. This class will be for children who are at least 9 years old and under 18 years on the day of the show, and who have won the 10 Best Junior wins with competition. The calendar for this class will be consistent with the eligibility dates for the AKC National Championship. All Juniors meeting the criteria for this class are required to enter the Master Class and must change their entry the day of the show if entries have already closed. Once the eligibility time frame for that year has passed all participants return to the Open Class to compete for the following year.

No entry may be changed or cancelled unless notice of the change or cancellation is received in writing by the Show Secretary named in the premium list to receive entries, prior to the closing date and hour for entries, except that a correction may be made from one age division to another, as well as, move from Master to Open or Open to Novice if a win has been disallowed or the Junior miscalculated number of placements, provided this transfer is made by the Show Secretary prior to the judging of the class at the show.

(D) **Junior, Intermediate and Senior Classes.** The Novice and Open regular classes may be divided by age into Junior, Intermediate and Senior Classes, provided the division is specified in the premium list. A Junior Class shall be for children who are at least 9 years old and under 12 years old on the day of the show. The Intermediate Class shall be for children who are at least 12 years old and under 15 years old on the day of the show. The Senior Class shall be for children who are at least 15 years old and under 18 years old on the day of the show.

(E) **Best Junior Handler.** A club offering Junior Showmanship Classes with its International Show must offer Best Junior Handler. If a prize is offered, it must be described in the premium list in accordance with the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows* Chapter 5, Section 3. The Junior Handler placed first in each of the regular Junior Showmanship Classes, if undefeated in any other Junior Showmanship Class at that show, shall automatically be eligible to compete for this prize.

(F) **Reserve Best Junior Handler.** A club offering Junior Showmanship Classes with its International Show shall offer Reserve Best Junior Handler. If a prize is offered, it must be described in the premium list in accordance with the Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows Chapter 5, Section 3. After the judge has awarded the Best Junior Handler, the second-place winner from the class that the Junior was awarded Best Junior Handler is to return to the ring to compete for Reserve Best Junior Handler.

Section 6. Armbands. Armbands with the catalog numbers assigned to the Junior must be worn in the ring.

Section 7. Eligibility of Dog. Each dog entered in a regular Junior showmanship Class at an International Show must be an AKC recognized breed or Miscellaneous Breed with an AKC number and at least 6 months of age on the day of the event, including those with breed standard disqualifications. Dogs may be PAL, Full-, or Limited-Registered to compete in Junior Showmanship Classes, additionally, spayed, and neutered specimens are eligible for competition. The dog must be entered in one of the classes associated with the International Show or must be entered for Junior Showmanship only. An eligible dog other than the one entered may be substituted. Such substitution must be accompanied by an official International Show entry form. The junior must have the AKC number of the substitute dog. All such substitutions must be made with the Show Secretary prior to the judging of the class at the show. BITCHES IN SEASON ARE NOT ELIGIBLE.

A Junior is limited to one substitution at an International Show. If one of the owners of the dog is a judge, the dog may be entered in Junior Showmanship Only to be exhibited by the Junior at an event where the judge is judging classes other than Junior Showmanship.

Section 8. Premium List. A Club holding an International Show that has been approved to offer Junior Showmanship must list the classification in its premium list, with a description of the entry requirements for each class offered, and the name of the judge of each class. The number of entries in any or all classes may be limited, provided the limits are specified in the premium list.

Section 9. Entry Forms. To be acceptable each entry form must meet all requirements of Chapter 11, Section 4 of the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows* and must show in the appropriate areas the name and address of the Junior Handler, the Junior Handler's AKC number, the Class which the Junior Handler is entering, and the Junior Handler's date of birth. The identification slip for the entry of the dog shall show the entry of Junior Showmanship and the Class.

Section 10. Closing of Entries. Entries for Junior Showmanship Classes shall close at the same time entries close for the International Show.

Section 11. Judging Program. The judging program shall list the Junior Showmanship Classes, the ring(s) in which they are to be judged, the name(s) of the judge(s), the hour of judging, and the number of entries in each class.

Section 12. Catalog. The complete information on any dog entered for Junior Showmanship shall be listed by classes in a separate section of the catalog following the regular classes. Such information shall include: The Junior Handler's number, the Junior Handler's name, the dog's name, the dog's registration number, the dog's date of birth, breeder, sire, dam, owner, breed, and number in regular classes if applicable.

Section 13. Ribbons and Prizes. The color of ribbons or rosettes for Junior Showmanship Classes shall be:

- First Prize: Rose
- Second Prize: Brown
- Third Prize: Light Green
- Fourth Prize: Gray
- Participation Ribbon for Novice Class exhibitors that do not receive a placement at the option of the Club: Light Blue. This ribbon is not required to have the club name and date.
- Best Junior: Rose and Green or any unassigned color or combination of colors not used at that event is permitted.

– Reserve Best Junior: Rose and Gray or any unassigned color or combination of colors not used at that event is permitted.

Ribbons shall be at least 2 inches wide and approximately 8 inches long, and shall bear a facsimile of the AKC seal, the words "Junior Showmanship", the name of the show-giving club and the date.

No money prizes shall be offered.

Gift cards/certificates, non-redeemable for cash or US Savings Bonds may be offered.

Clubs offering a scholarship as a prize must submit funds directly to the school the Junior is attending. Clubs may establish an account to maintain these funds until the time the Junior requests the award be sent to the school.

All other prizes must be described, or value stated and must be offered for outright award. No prize may be offered that is conditional upon the breed of the dog being handled.

Section 14. Judge's Book. A club offering Junior Showmanship Classes with its International Show shall provide for the judge a judge's book, which shall contain a breed judging sheet with appropriate heading for each Junior Showmanship Class. The judge shall place the handlers first, second, third and fourth, and mark his/her book accordingly. Absentees should be noted in the judge's book along with the dogs excused and the reason, therefore. The judge should also note the time that he/she commences, and the time that he/she finishes judging and shall sign the book.

Section 15. Limited Classes. The Show Secretary shall forward to The American Kennel Club, with the records of the show, the judges' books for the Junior Showmanship Classes. A certificate will be issued from the American Kennel Club to each Junior Handler upon the recording of their third win in Novice with competition and the tenth Best Junior Handler win with competition during the eligibility timeframe. As determined by the AKC Board of Directors, junior showmanship entries are exempt from the fees set forth in the AKC International Show License Agreement.

Junior Showmanship Judging Guidelines

Section 1. Definition and Purpose. Junior Showmanship classes are non-regular classes which are judged solely on the ability and skill of Juniors in handling their dogs as in the breed ring. The purpose of Junior Showmanship Competition is twofold: to introduce and encourage Juniors to participate in the sport of dogs; and to provide Juniors with a meaningful competition in which they can learn, practice, and improve in all areas of handling skill and sportsmanship. It is important that judges of Junior Showmanship Competition understand the definition and purpose of these classes and take seriously their role in guiding the future guardians of the sport. JUDGES ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE A GENUINE INTEREST IN JUNIORS AND IN JUNIOR SHOWMANSHIP COMPETITION.

Section 2. Prerequisites for Judges. (See Page 1, Section 4) Those who judge Junior Showmanship must be familiar with the Junior Showmanship Rules and Regulations as well as all other Rules and Policies that apply to all judges. The occupational eligibility requirements in Chapter 7, Section 1, of the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows* would apply to Junior Showmanship Judges, except that a professional handler may be approved. The Guidelines for Conformation Dog Show Judges apply to individuals approved to judge Junior Showmanship and it is therefore necessary to be thoroughly versed in these areas.

Section 3. Responsibilities of the Junior Showmanship Judge. It is important for judges to be teachers by example. They should be prompt, courteous, patient and properly attired. Judges must be impartial and totally separate the handling ability of the Juniors they judge from any other consideration. As a judge of Juniors at an International Show, it is essential to be familiar with the appropriate presentation for every breed. Impartiality extends to eliminating from the judging process bias for or against the breed handled, friendships, external knowledge of a Junior's record of competition, or prior knowledge or assumption of the dog's training or preparation.

Judges may solicit or offer to judge the Junior Showmanship classes at International Shows. The AKC shall not approve an individual to judge the junior showmanship classes at separate events held within 30 days and 200 straight-line miles of each other. A judge who is only assigned to judge the Junior Showmanship class at an International Show may exhibit or handle dogs at the same show. However, if a Junior Showmanship Judge plans to exhibit or handle dogs at the same show, or if dogs owned by them are to be entered, the judge should not attend pre-show

social functions with other judges for that show or attend the judges' luncheon the day of the show.

If a Junior co-owns a dog with a judge, the dog may be entered in Junior Showmanship Only, at an event where the judge is judging classes other than Junior Showmanship.

Section 4. Safety. Juniors with varying degrees of experience and dogs with great differences in size, temperament and training need safe ring conditions. Judges must make every effort to ensure the safety of the Juniors and their dogs during competition. Judges should arrange or rearrange competitors in order of gaiting speed or size of dog to avoid crowding and instruct Juniors to leave adequate space between themselves and the Junior in front of or behind them. Moving two dogs together (side by side) is discouraged as is any pattern which places any dog in close proximity to other dogs when lead control is at a minimum, e.g., on a loose lead, etc. In large classes judges should admit only as many Juniors into the ring as can be safely examined. Never hesitate to divide any class for any reason where the safety of the individuals or the dogs is involved. Likewise, do not hesitate to excuse from the ring any dog which is out of control, lame, or a bitch in season. Any dog showing signs of menacing or threatening behavior should be excused immediately. Any dog that attacks any individual in the ring shall be disqualified in accordance with Chapter 11, Section 8A, of the *Regulations for American Kennel Club International Dog Shows*. In the case of a disqualification the judge must complete the necessary Dog Disqualified by Judge for Attacking form and inform the Junior that the dog may not again compete at an International Show or any AKC event unless and until, following application by the owner to the AKC, the owner has received official notification from the AKC that the dog's show eligibility has been reinstated.

Section 5. Judging Routine. The actual routine of judging is to be consistent with the procedures utilized when judging conformation. The number of Juniors, size of the ring, ring conditions, weather, and time of day will influence the actual procedures used. Judges will strive to evaluate competitors in an appropriate and consistent manner. It is essential that only the gaiting patterns and procedures used in regular dog show classes be used.

It is the responsibility of the judge to be aware of the appropriate presentation for all breeds, which is to include knowledge of which breeds are normally examined on a table. Upon request, the Show Secretary will provide the list of breeds entered in Junior Showmanship.

It is urged that the judge request each Junior to present their dog individually for examination, allowing the judge to observe the rapport between the junior

and the dog while being set up on either the ground or the table. Judges should ask the Junior to show the dog's bite, although with younger Juniors judges should use their discretion. The procedure for completing the examination of the dogs should closely resemble that of breed judging but need only be cursory as the quality of the dog is not being evaluated. Judges should be consistent with every Junior, using the same gaiting patterns, the same procedural requests, and allowing each Junior approximately the same amount of time. Judges may revise the gaiting patterns when making final decisions. A judge should not confuse the ability of a Junior to take directions with the Junior's ability to handle his/her dog. Some freedom of expression and expertise should be allowed.

Judges should consider how their own movements in the ring might precipitate awkward and unusual handling results. For example, when examining the class as a whole in motion, the judge should be inside the circle; and when examining a class of standing or posed dogs the judge should not move from one side of the line to the other, creating unnecessary movements.

Judges should limit conversation with Juniors during competition to that which is absolutely necessary. However, judges should be prepared to answer Juniors' questions following judging and be able to provide positive comments and constructive criticism. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD QUESTIONS BE USED AS A MEANS OF TESTING A JUNIOR'S KNOWLEDGE. A suggestion: Should the Junior ask for comments following the judging, ask them to return with their dog, time permitting, and review their presentation.

Section 6. Conflicts. A Junior may have a conflict with their dog in another class. The judge may allow a Junior to enter the ring up until the time they have examined and gaited every dog in the class.

Should a Junior request to be excused to show in another ring, they are permanently excused and may not return.

Section 7. Judge's Examination and Evaluation. The judge should examine and evaluate the class of Juniors in four basic areas: proper breed presentation, skill in the individual dog's presentation, knowledge of ring procedures, and appearance and conduct. The general rule in evaluating a handler's capabilities is ECONOMY OF MOTION. Handlers who use exaggerated motions and gestures in any phase of their presentation of the dog should be faulted. In essence, the judge should hardly be aware of the capable handler's presence while completing the dog's examination. In many respects a Junior Showmanship judge's principal consideration should be to find those Juniors who possess a "hand for dogs." Those handlers having this

attribute neither over- nor under-handle their dogs. They present their dogs in a quiet, efficient manner. They are able to keep their dog's attention without dramatic or unnatural movements. They are able to gait their dogs in a collected trot, never distracting or interfering with the judge's vision of the dog.

BREED PRESENTATION. While the judge must consider all areas important in evaluating the overall capabilities of Juniors, it is doubly important both that the Junior present his dog in the proper manner for the breed being handled and that the judge be cognizant of the proper presentation for that breed. It is imperative, therefore, that the judge have prior knowledge of the breeds which are to be presented and familiarity with the proper ways of handling those breeds, to include the appropriate place to examine each breed. Breeds designated as ramp optional may be judged on the ramp or ground at the discretion of the Judge. Mandatory ramp breeds must be judged on the ramp. Examination location for a breed must be consistent within the class. Please refer to the current table/ ramp list available at the AKC website. If the Show Secretary does not furnish a list of those breeds in the Judging Program, then the judge should request the list well in advance of the show date. In the individual presentation of the dog the Junior should demonstrate the ability to handle the dog as it is handled in the breed ring, showing the dog to its best advantage in pose and in motion. During all phases of handling the Junior's concentration should be on the dog and not on the judge, but not to the extent that the Junior is unaware of what is taking place in the ring. Remember, you are judging the handler, but time should be spent looking at the dog to gain insight as to how well it is being handled.

1. Is the dog responsive to the handler? Does the dog and handler work as a team?
2. Does the dog appear posed or interested at all times?
3. Is the dog under control?
4. Is the dog moved correctly to the best of its ability?
5. Are the dog's main faults being minimized?
6. Do both the dog and handler appear relaxed?
7. Is the dog presented with an apparent minimum of effort?

KNOWLEDGE OF RING PROCEDURE. The judge shall evaluate the ability of the Junior to follow directions, use space wisely, and execute the requested gaiting patterns. Juniors should appear "ring wise," be alert to the judging progression and be prepared for changes in the judging routine.

APPEARANCE AND CONDUCT. The judge should be aware of the appearance of both the handler and the dog. The Junior should be suitably dressed for the occasion, wearing clothing that will not hinder or detract from the presentation of the dog. The dog should be

groomed and trimmed in the manner associated with the breed for conformation. However, the judge should not evaluate either the dress of the handler or the grooming of the dog, but rather that an effort has been made. Excessive grooming of the dog in the ring to gain the judge's attention is inappropriate and should be faulted accordingly.

The judge shall evaluate the general conduct of Juniors in the ring. Juniors should appear prepared, confident, businesslike, and attentive. They should be courteous to both the judge and their fellow exhibitors. Juniors are expected to handle their dogs without distracting the dogs of other competitors, and a Junior who crowds or disturbs other dogs should be faulted. A principle of Junior Showmanship is to afford the opportunity to learn the spirit of competition. Winning is important but is secondary to development of sportsmanship in competition. Judges who reward unsportsmanlike conduct or actions, regardless of a handler's other capabilities, compromise the very premise of Junior Showmanship.

Juniors should be alert to the needs of their dogs, realizing that the welfare of their dogs is important. Juniors are responsible for the control of their dogs at all times. However, Juniors who exhibit impatience or heavy-handedness with their dogs should be penalized.

Section 8. The Judges Book. After the final placings have been made in each class, judges must mark their books indicating their placements. After all classes have been judged and all placements marked, including absentees and excusals, the book must be signed and returned to the Show Secretary. The judge has the sole responsibility for his/her book, for its correctness and for its safekeeping. They should take proper care in the recording of armband numbers of their winners, seeing they are in the right place and clearly legible. The safekeeping of the book should be entrusted to no one except him/herself.

Section 9. Best Junior Competition. If the judge assigned to the Best Junior competition has judged all junior showmanship classes, individual examination is not necessary as the judge is only required to do enough procedurally to ascertain who should be awarded Best Junior. If the junior showmanship classes had been divided amongst multiple judges, the Best Junior competition is to be judged as a new and separate class. Judges must be mindful that the Best Junior competition will include competitors from the Novice, Open and Master classes, varying in age and experience. This should be considered in determining the judging procedures and gaiting patterns used. Once Best Junior has been awarded, second place from the class in which it advanced is to be called into the ring for the Reserve Best Junior competition.

A Guide To
Junior Showmanship Competition For Juniors

Section 1. Amateur Class. An individual listed as an agent is not eligible to compete in Juniors, nor any person who distributes rate cards or otherwise advertises themselves as handling dogs for pay in the show ring or accepts payment for handling dogs.

"Participation in Junior Showmanship is intended to encourage Juniors to learn how to care for and present different breeds. Part of the educational process could include apprenticeship or assisting professional handlers. Junior may take their employers' dogs into the ring while still retaining amateur status."

Section 2. Juniors are important to the sport of dogs. Juniors who learn about good sportsmanship, dogs, handling, and dog shows will be valuable to the sport in the future. Junior Showmanship classes are offered at most dog shows. These classes are held so that young people can:

- Experience winning and losing among those who are similar in age.
- Learn the correct way to handle the breed they own.
- Practice handling skills in competition.
- Improve the way they handle their own dog.
- Prepare for handling dogs in the regular classes.

Section 3. Junior Showmanship classes are judged on the ability of the Junior to handle his or her dog. The quality of the dog is not judged. Juniors will be asked to demonstrate:

- Moving the dog with the rest of the class.
- Presenting the dog in the standing position proper to its breed (including the use of an examining table for those breeds normally judged on a table or ramp at the discretion of the judge, for breeds eligible to be examined on the ramp).
- Moving the dog individually in a regular pattern.

Section 4. Juniors are expected to know basic ring routines. They should be able to follow directions, use space wisely, and be familiar with gaiting patterns. Juniors should appear "ring wise" and alert to what is going on in the ring and should be prepared for changes in the routine of judging.

JUNIORS MUST BE ABLE TO CONTROL THEIR DOGS AT ALL TIMES. Any Junior who cannot control his or her dog will be excused by the judge.

Section 5. Appearance and Conduct. Juniors should be clean, neat, and well-groomed. They should wear clothing that is comfortable to handle in and appropriate for dog shows. Clothing should not distract, limit, or hinder the judge's view of the dog.

Dogs should be groomed and trimmed as they would be for the breed ring. Judges will not evaluate the quality of the grooming and trimming, but Juniors should make an effort to prepare their dogs properly. Unnecessary grooming of the dog in the ring to gain attention is not proper conduct.

Juniors should appear confident, prepared, business-like and attentive. They should be courteous to both the judge and other Juniors. Juniors are expected to handle their dogs without disturbing the dogs of the other Juniors. Juniors should not crowd and they should not distract others by continued use of toys and bait. Juniors should be alert to the needs of their dogs. They should use firm but thoughtful hands in controlling and handling their dogs. Juniors should not be impatient or heavy-handed.

Section 6. Conflicts. Juniors may have a conflict between the Judging of their Junior Showmanship class and conformation judging or another event. Once Junior Showmanship Judging has begun, the Junior will have to make a decision as to where they will compete. A Junior may enter the Junior Showmanship class up until the time every Junior in the class has been examined and gaited. If a Junior starts to compete in the Junior class and requests to be excused to go exhibit in conformation or another event, he or she is permanently excused.

Section 7. Juniors will be judged on their ability to present their dogs in the same way the dog is properly handled in the breed ring. Juniors will also be judged on their ability to make their individual dog look its best in both pose and motion. During all parts of the competition, Juniors should handle their dogs in a quiet, smooth, efficient manner. Juniors should strive to make the DOG stand out as the most important part of the team effort.

Section 8. Junior handlers should:

- Keep their dog's attention without using dramatic or unnecessary movements.
- Gait their dogs in a controlled trot without distracting or interfering with the judge's view of the dog. Be aware of what is going on in the ring.
- Concentrate on their dog and not the judge.
- Junior handlers who use exaggerated posture, motions or gestures in any part of the competition will be faulted.

Section 9. There are many ways Juniors can find help in learning about Junior Showmanship and handling their own dogs. In addition to the help of parents, Juniors may seek the advice of experienced breeder-exhibitors, professional handlers, handling instructors, and former Juniors. They may also learn from the AKC breed resources, books on handling, books on individual breeds, and by observing breed and group judging at dog shows.

Section 10. Substitution. Juniors are limited to the substitution of one dog per show. Such substitutions must be accompanied by an official AKC International Show entry form. Substitutions must be made with the Show Secretary prior to the judging of the class at the show and may require payment of an additional entry fee.

AKC Code of Sportsmanship and Civility

Preface: The tradition of competitive purebred dog events predates 1884—the year the American Kennel Club (AKC) was founded. Those involved in these sports share core values, including a strong commitment to sportsmanship and a welcoming, respectful culture that embraces the diverse community united by a love of dogs. These values are evident across all aspects of the sport: conformation, performance, companion, and family dog activities. Many believe that the enduring principles of sportsmanship and civility are key reasons the sport has thrived for over 140 years.

Recognizing that periodically reaffirming our shared values strengthens our community, the revised code will be shared widely to highlight the foundational values and principles that define the sport.

- Sportspeople always place the welfare of their dog above all else.
- Sportspeople prioritize the long-term health and preservation of their breed, making decisions that reflect a deep commitment to responsible breeding and ownership.
- Sportspeople respect the history, traditions and integrity of the sport of purebred dogs.
- Sportspeople conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the sport, the American Kennel Club, and themselves.
- Sportspeople appreciate, encourage and support all who associate with and participate in the sports by fostering an environment where respect, equity, inclusion, and courtesy are foundational.
- Sportspeople understand, uphold and abide by all AKC bylaws, rules, regulations and policies.
- Sportspeople contribute to a positive atmosphere at events by avoiding negative gossip, disparagement, or unsportsmanlike behavior.
- Sportspeople extend their values of civility, fairness, and respect to all digital and social media platforms.
- Sportspeople actively support the education and mentorship of newcomers, helping them learn the rules, values, and traditions of the sport in a respectful way.
- Sportspeople recognize that they are role models in the sport, and strive to lead by example through humility, kindness, and ethical conduct.
- Sportspeople treat fellow exhibitors, judges, officials, volunteers, spectators, and AKC staff with dignity and respect, regardless of experience, background, or differences in opinion.
- Sportspeople are committed to fair play, honesty, courtesy, and competition, approaching both winning and losing with grace.
- Sportspeople understand that strong competition and civility can—and should— coexist. They appreciate the quality of their competitors, and the effort put forth by others.
- Sportspeople uphold their responsibilities to the sport of purebred dogs and refuse to let personal gain or self-interest influence their decisions or behavior.
- The sportsperson judges only on the merits of the dogs and considers no other factors.
- The sportsperson judge or exhibitor accepts constructive criticism.
- The sportsperson exhibitor declines to enter or exhibit under a judge where it might reasonably appear that the judge's placements could be based on something other than the merits of the dogs.
- The sportsperson exhibitor refuses to compromise the impartiality of a judge.
- Sportspeople are willing to share honest and open appraisals of both the strengths and weaknesses of their breeding stock.
- Sportspeople decline to exploit any positions of authority or recognition for personal advantage.
- Sportspeople appreciate those that have gone before them and realize they are responsible for maintaining and enhancing the sport for future generations.

Complete text of booklet available at: www.akc.org

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To place a credit card order by telephone call:
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