



# Hints for Obedience Stewards

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**S**tewarding in obedience is a great way to support the sport and represent the club. If you're interested in showing your dog, stewarding also gives you an opportunity to observe the action close up. It's a good way to learn some handling techniques, ring procedures, regulations, and the nuances of competition. Also you'll get to meet some nice people, including judges (who aren't ogres after all).

Here's a list of hints for stewards at AKC obedience trials and matches. If you've never stewarded before, don't worry, it isn't difficult — it's fun. If you're an experienced handler and you've stewarded before, you can skim through these hints for reminders of what to explain to the rookies.

## Rules and regulations

- ❖ **The judge runs the ring.** Stewards are provided to assist the judge and can act only on the judge's instructions. Some judges cede authority to stewards for logistical matters such as resolving conflicts in showing order or deciding where the handlers will go for the out-of-sight sits and downs in the Open class; but ultimately, any decisions about the competition are the judge's alone.
- ❖ **Dogs are judged in catalog order.** If a handler has a conflict — for example, if a handler is showing two dogs or in two classes or in breed and obedience — **the judge decides** how to solve the problem. Typically, the judge resolves schedule conflicts by moving a handler to the end of the class or group (that is, by having the stewards tell the handler the revised order).

As a steward, you might be approached by a handler who wants to be rescheduled (usually for later in the class) whether as a matter of "gamesmanship" or to avoid being next to some particular dog in the group exercises. Stewards can't change the showing order. Any adjustments or accommodations for show conflicts or dealing with latecomers are the judge's decision.
- ❖ **For the group exercises,** remember this rule about catalog order when you line up the dogs in Novice and Open. The dogs line up in **catalog order**, even if that wasn't how they did the individual exercises. The dog with the lowest number in the group goes in first. For example, even if dog #3 was judged at the end of the class (because of some conflict or late arrival), the order for the group exercises might be 3, 20, 21, 22 ...
- ❖ **Don't show the catalog to the judge.** In conferring about a handling conflict, late comers, or other matters, judges aren't allowed to look at the catalog until after their classes are completed and their

judge's books are turned in. Also, in calling or referring to any handlers, use their armband numbers, not their names.

- ❖ **Scores are confidential until the end of the class.** Stewards (and judges, for that matter) can't disclose any score or partial score or placements until after the class is completed. Handlers are understandably eager to learn their scores and might ask a steward to sneak a peek at the judge's worksheet — but that's a no-no.
- ❖ **Stewards should be courteous and considerate, but don't play favorites.** It's quite natural to do some silent cheerleading for your friend in Novice A or for the old, white-faced Golden in Graduate Novice or Veterans — that's fine, but stewards should be impartial, too. It's a matter of good sportsmanship. Likewise, if there's a **run-off**, don't give anyone advanced notice. In a run-off, the judge will want the dogs involved to be called back one at a time.
- ❖ **Stewards help run the show.** The best stewards are quietly efficient, just as the best umpires in baseball are "invisible." Do your best to **make the show successful and enjoyable** for everyone. If there are problems with the ring, gates, jumps, mats, and so on — problems you can't solve — notify the judge, chief steward, or show chair.

## Before your class

- ❖ Report to the chief steward about **30 minutes before your class** is scheduled to begin, so you can pick up your steward's badge, a catalog for the ring, and your lunch ticket.
- ❖ While waiting for your class to start, stroll around the rings to find out where the handlers have set up camp. This will help later on, when you're rounding up handlers for the group exercises or a run-off. Find out where the bathrooms and exercise area are, because some nervous handler is bound to ask about them. Take note of where the trophy table is and where you can find the chief steward or the show chair.
- ❖ **Meet with your judge and go over the ring procedures.** Some judges give their stewards very detailed instructions; others are more casual. If you've never stewarded before, or never stewarded in Open or Utility, let the judge know. Most judges are very helpful. Everyone was a rookie once, so don't be bashful about asking for help.
- ❖ **Check your ring** and make sure everything's all right — poster board sign with the correct numbers for the class and a marker, clean-up supplies, mats, gates, jumps, and so on. Make sure you have a catalog and pen and the correct armbands for your class.
- ❖ Of course, stewards, like exhibitors, should have no food in the ring — check your pockets! Don't chew gum (some judges consider it food, and so do some dogs). Also, make sure you don't have any jangling keys or jewelry, a floppy hat (for outdoor shows), or anything else that could distract a dog in the ring.
- ❖ Ideally, each obedience ring should have three stewards (and, in case of very large classes, four). Very small classes (typically Utility and the Non-Regular classes) can get by with two stewards. Regardless of the number, the **stewards have to work together**, efficiently, as a team. Decide beforehand who'll do which jobs.

# Gate steward and table steward

The **gate steward** manages the flow of dogs and handlers into the ring. The **table steward** performs some clerical chores for the judge. Sometimes these jobs can be combined, but if the class is very large or the judge needs more help with the paperwork, the table steward may not be able to handle the gate as well; one of the **ring stewards** will usually be the gate steward.

## ❖ Armbands

As the handlers check in, give out the armbands and check off the numbers in the **catalog**. For Open and Utility classes, as the handlers check in, get the dogs' **jump heights** and jot them down too.

## ❖ Ring sign

Near the gate, there's usually a posterboard sign listing the armband numbers for that class. As each handler checks in, put a **slash line** (/) through her number on the sign. Later, as the handler enters the ring with her dog, put **another slash** (\) through her number (making an X).

Also mark when the judge will **break** for the group exercises (sits and downs) or for lunch. It's a real convenience for handlers and it'll save you from answering the same question from every handler in the class.

For Open and Utility, you can jot the dogs' **jump heights** on the ring sign as a convenient reminder for the ring stewards who set up the jumps.

**Keep count** of how many dogs have checked in and entered; judges often rely on the stewards for reminders about when to break for the group exercises (6 to 12 dogs).

## ❖ Who's next

As the dog in the ring gets close to the end of the individual exercises, make sure the **next dog** is outside the gate (unless the judge is going to break for the group exercises or for lunch).

If you don't see the next handler, call her armband number ("Golden Retriever #45"), not her name.

Once you've told a handler that she's next, don't let another handler go ahead of her, unless the judge tells you otherwise.

Don't let a dog and handler into the ring until the previous team has left and the judge is ready.

When it's time for the **group exercises** — Sits and Downs — help line up the dogs in catalog order.

## ❖ Worksheets and the judge's book

Most judges use some kind of worksheets (and then transfer the scores to their judge's book). Usually, the table steward prepares the worksheets, listing each dog's number and breed. There's usually a separate worksheet for the group exercises, listing the dogs in the group in catalog order.

Keep the judge's book and worksheets face-down on the table so no one can peek at the scores. Judges often ask the table steward to double-check their arithmetic, but as a steward, you shouldn't make any changes to the worksheets — and, of course, only the judge can mark the judge's book.

## ❖ Ribbons and trophies

As the class nears completion, one of the stewards should get the **ribbons and trophies** (from the chief steward or whoever is in charge of trophies). When the judge finishes scoring, check if any handlers are eligible for trophies which may require them to register at the trophy table, such as Highest-Scoring Junior Handler, Highest-Scoring Golden Retriever, etc., High-in-Trial (or -Match), and High Combined (Open B and Utility B).

## Ring stewards — Novice

In the Novice class, ring stewards serve as posts for the Figure-8, an extra set of hands for the judge, and benign sentries in case a dog breaks during the group exercises or runs out of the ring. When you're not in the ring, stay close by the gate and be alert for dogs who might bolt. Make sure the next handler knows she's next — some Novice A handlers may need a friendly reminder, and some handlers may be unaware of changes in the showing order because of latecomers, absentees, and so on.

### ❖ Figure-8 posts

Take your position for the Figure-8 without having to be reminded by the judge. Your cue is when the judge says "*Exercise finished*" at the end of the Heel on Leash. Judges and handlers alike appreciate stewards who are alert and prompt. The posts should be **8' apart**. The judge will usually have marked the positions. Decide beforehand which steward will take which post.

Some judges want the stewards to stand with their arms folded to avoid distracting a dog going around the post. Others may want you to keep your arms at your sides. Stand still and avoid staring at the dog.

### ❖ Stand for Examination

Your cue is when the judge says "*Exercise finished*" at the end of the Figure-8. One steward should take the leash from the handler and put it on the ring table. Meanwhile ...

The other steward usually remains to hold the judge's clipboard during the Stand for Exam. (Decide beforehand who'll do which job.) When the judge says "*Exercise finished*," return the judge's clipboard and get out of the ring.

### ❖ After the Recall (end of the individual exercises)

Your cue is when the judge says "*Exercise finished*" at the end of the Recall. One steward should **return the leash to the handler** — quickly, because some Novice dogs have been known to bolt out of the ring. Give the leash with the clip up, so the handler can easily fasten it onto the dog's collar.

Meanwhile, the other steward should **make sure the next dog is ready at the gate** (unless the judge is breaking for the group exercises or for lunch). Don't let the next dog and handler into the ring until the previous team has left and the judge is ready. Once you've told a handler that she's next, don't let another handler go ahead of her, unless the judge tells you otherwise.

### ❖ Group exercises (Long Sit & Long Down)

Find out when the judge will **break** for lunch or for the group exercises, such as after each ninth or tenth dog. It's a real convenience for handlers if you mark this on the ring sign (and it'll save you from answering the same question for every handler in the class). Line up the dogs in **catalog order**. Follow the judge's instructions on dealing with dogs who break.

### ❖ At the end of the class

After the last group of dogs does the Long Sit and Long Down, you can help the judge and table steward in double-checking the judge's arithmetic and handing out the class **ribbons and trophies**. Be ready to round up handlers if there's a **run-off**.

# Ring stewards — Open

In the Open class, ring stewards serve as the **Figure-8 posts** (as in Novice), handle the leash and dumbbell, set up the **jumps**, and help with the **group exercises** (sits and downs). Decide beforehand who'll do which jobs.

All exercises in Open are off leash and in the group exercises, the handlers leave the ring and go out of sight of the dogs. Decide beforehand which steward will lead the handlers out of the ring and where they'll "hide."

When you're not in the ring, stay close by the gate and be alert for dogs who might bolt (yes, even in Open B).

In AKC, Open A always uses the same order of exercises (see box, *right*). Open B has six possible orders (defined in the AKC *Obedience Regulations*); the judge chooses from these and posts the order of exercises before the start of class. These "scrambled" orders can make stewarding in Open B a little disorienting at first.

## ❖ Setting the jumps

Set the jumps according to the information from the gate steward or table steward (who notes the dogs' jump heights when the handlers pick up their armbands). Usually, one steward sets the high jump; the other steward sets the broad jump. (Check each other's settings.)

## ❖ High jump

For the high jump, put the larger boards toward the bottom. For example, if a dog is jumping 22", put two 8" boards on the bottom, then the 4" board, and the 2" board on top. (This makes it easier for the judge to check the setting is correct.) Store any unused boards out of the way (usually, outside the ring). Minimum is 8", maximum is 36".

## ❖ Broad jump

In AKC, the broad jump is **twice** the high jump — for example, if the high jump is 18", the broad jump is 36". Here's an easy formula for how many boards to use:

$$3 - 28 - 44$$

That is, use three boards from 28" to 44". Less than 28", use two boards. More than 44", use four boards. Space the boards evenly, with the smallest board closest to the take-off point. In adjusting the boards, don't move the end board.

Another way to remember it is 2' is 2 boards, 4' is 4 boards, and everything in between is 3 boards.

## ❖ As the dog enters the ring

One steward should take the leash and dumbbell and put them on the ring table. Don't hold or play with the dumbbell — many Open dogs are dumbbell-happy and easily enticed or distracted by it. Handle the dumbbell by an end, not the shaft.

### ❖ **Figure-8 posts**

Take your position for the Figure-8 without having to be reminded by the judge. Your cue is when the judge says “*Exercise finished*” at the end of the Heel Free. Judges and handlers alike appreciate stewards who are alert and prompt.

The posts should be 8’ apart. The judge will usually have marked the positions. Decide beforehand which steward will take which post. Some judges want the stewards to stand with their arms folded to avoid distracting a dog going around the post. Stand still and avoid staring at the dog.

### ❖ **Retrieve on the Flat**

Your cue is when the judge says “*Exercise finished*” at the end of the Drop on Recall. Some judges like to deal with the dumbbell, and others want a steward to give the dumbbell to the handler. If you’re dealing with the dumbbell, get it to the handler without being prompted. (Judges and handlers alike appreciate this efficiency.) Hold the dumbbell by an end, not by the shaft which the dog will have to mouth. Likewise, be ready to take the dumbbell from the handler as soon as the Retrieve Over the Jump is completed.

### ❖ **After the Broad Jump (end of the individual exercises)**

Your cue is when the judge says “*Exercise finished*” at the end of the Broad Jump. One steward should **return the leash to the handler** — quickly, because very hyper dogs might keep jumping all the way out of the ring! Handlers appreciate being able to get their dogs back on leash to leave the ring. Give the leash with the clip up, so the handler can easily fasten it onto the dog’s collar. Then **reset the jumps for the next dog** (if any) or move them out of the way for the group exercises.

Don’t let the next dog and handler into the ring until the previous team has left and the judge is ready. Once you’ve told a handler that she’s next, don’t let another handler go ahead of her, unless the judge tells you otherwise.

### ❖ **Group exercises (Long Sit & Long Down)**

Find out when the judge will break for sits and downs, such as after each ninth or tenth dog or if the judge is going to break for lunch. It’s a real convenience for handlers if you mark this on the ring sign (and it’ll save you from answering the same question from every handler in the class).

For the group exercises, line up the dogs in catalog order. Follow the judge’s instructions on dealing with dogs who break. At least one steward should stay with the dogs in the ring. Another steward leads the handlers out-of-sight and remains with them until the judge calls them back. Watch carefully for the judge’s signal to return. It’s very helpful if you can “run interference “ for the handlers making their way through the crowd, back to the ring.

### ❖ **At the end of the class**

After the last group of dogs does the Long Sit and Long Down, you can help the judge and table steward in double-checking the judge’s arithmetic and handing out the class **ribbons and trophies**. Be ready to round up handlers if there’s a run-off.

## Ring stewards — Utility

In the Utility class, the ring stewards set up the jumps for the Directed Jumping and also handle the Scent Discrimination articles and the Directed Retrieve gloves. Utility is often a small class (and there are no group exercises), so you may need just two stewards — one places the scent articles, the other places the gloves; one sets the high jump, the other sets the bar jump. Decide beforehand who'll do which jobs. If there are only two stewards, one of you will have to be the gate steward and get **jump heights** as the handlers check in for their **armbands**.

If the class is very large or scheduled later in the morning, find out if the judge will **break** for lunch. It's a real convenience for handlers if you mark this on the ring sign (and it'll save you from answering the same question from every handler in the class).

When you're not in the ring, stay close by the gate and be alert for dogs who might bolt (yes, even in Utility).

In AKC, Utility A always uses the same order of exercises (see box, *above right*). Utility B has six possible orders (defined in the *Obedience Regulations*); the judge chooses from these and posts the order of exercises before the start of class. These "scrambled" orders can make stewarding in Utility B a little disorienting at first.

### ❖ Setting the jumps

Set the jumps according to the information from the gate steward or table steward (who notes the dogs' jump heights when the handlers pick up their armbands). Usually, one steward sets the high jump (boards); the other steward sets the bar jump. Check each other's settings.

### ❖ High jump

For the high jump, put the larger boards toward the bottom. (This makes it easier for the judge to check the setting is correct.) For example, if a dog is jumping 22", you'll put two 8" boards on the bottom, then the 4" board, and the 2" board on top. Store any unused boards out of the way, usually, outside the ring.

### ❖ Bar jump

Set the bar jump the same as the high jump. Minimum is 8", maximum is 36".

### ❖ As the dog enters the ring

One steward should **take the leash and scent articles from the handler** and put them on the ring table. Don't hold or play with the articles — many Utility dogs are ardent retrievers and easily enticed or distracted, and you don't want to get your scent on the articles yet. When you're not in the ring, stay close by the gate and be alert for dogs who might bolt (yes, even in Utility B).

### ❖ **Scent Discrimination**

The judge selects two scent articles (one leather, one metal) for the handler to use. One steward then places the remaining articles in the ring. Place the articles about 6" apart and about 20' away from the dog and handler. (Usually, the judge will tell you where to place the articles.) Remember to handle each of the articles as you put them down. (The judge will place the other two articles.)

Your cue is when the judge says "*Exercise finished*" after the dog has retrieved the second article. One steward should gather all the scent articles, put them back in the handler's carrying case. (If possible, keep the articles that the handler has scented separate from the others.) Make sure the case is locked and put it on the ring table or near the gate just outside the ring so the handler can pick it up conveniently on her way out of the ring. Meanwhile ...

### ❖ **Directed Retrieve**

The other steward places the **three gloves** for the Directed Retrieve. Wait until the dog and handler are in position before you put out the gloves. Usually, the judge will have already told you where to drop the gloves. Put the three gloves 3' from the ring barriers.

When the judge says "*Exercise finished*" after the dog has retrieved the glove, one steward should gather the gloves and put them with the handler's scent articles. Meanwhile ...

### ❖ **Moving Stand and Examination**

The other steward usually holds the judge's clipboard during the Moving Stand and Exam. The judge will usually tell you where to stand so you'll be out of the way. After the exam — again, when the judge says "*Exercise finished*" — give the judge the clipboard and get out of the ring. You can start to put together the things you'll give back to the handler: scent articles, gloves, and leash.

### ❖ **After the Directed Jumping**

Your cue is when the judge says "*Exercise finished*" after the second jump. **Return the leash to the handler** — quickly, because some very hyper dogs might keep jumping all the way out of the ring! Give the leash with the clip up, so the handler can easily fasten it onto the dog's collar. Give the handler her scent articles case and gloves as she leaves the ring. Then **reset the jumps for the next dog** (if any). Don't let the next dog and handler into the ring until the previous team has left and the judge is ready. Once you've told a handler that she's next, don't let another handler go ahead of her, unless the judge tells you otherwise.

### ❖ **At the end of the class**

After all of the dogs in the class have been judged, you can help the judge and table steward in double-checking the judge's arithmetic and handing out the class **ribbons and trophies**. Also, be ready to round up any handlers involved in a **run-off**.



## Non-regular classes

The non-regular classes are just for fun and glory — there's no title involved. They're offered (if at all) after the regular classes. The entry for these classes is usually small. There are no qualifying scores or placements here; typically, every handler gets a "participation ribbon."

- ❖ **Pre-Novice** — Sometimes called Sub-Novice. The same as Novice but all of the exercises are on-leash (for example, there's no Heel Free). Usually, both the dogs and handlers are "green" and will need some additional shepherding and encouragement.
- ❖ **Graduate Novice** — You'll need to set the high jump and broad jump, and deal with the dumbbell as in Open:
  1. Heel Free (including the Figure-8)
  2. Drop on Recall
  3. Dumbbell Recall
  4. Recall Over High Jump
  5. Recall Over Broad Jump
  6. Long Down (as in Open)
- ❖ **Graduate Open** — Similar to Utility and not very often offered. You'll need to set the high jump and bar jump, and deal with scent articles and gloves; there's no group exercise:
  1. Signal Exercise
  2. Scent Discrimination
  3. Directed Retrieve ("gloves")
  4. Moving Stand and Examination
  5. Go-Out (scored separately from directed jumping)
  6. Directed Jumping
- ❖ **Brace** — One handler, two dogs in tandem; Novice exercises. This is always fun to watch.
- ❖ **Team** — Four dogs and handlers working together in a double-sized ring with two judges. The exercises are largely the same as Novice, except for a rather intricate way of doing the Figure-8 (requiring five stewards) and a serial Drop on Recall.
- ❖ **Veterans** — Older dogs, Novice exercises. Of course, everyone should turn out to watch and applaud this class — keep the Kleenex handy — and indeed sometimes this is where you'll see some truly splendid work from retired OTCH dogs.
- ❖ **Versatility** — Dogs and handlers perform 6 individual exercises — two each from Novice, Open, and Utility.

# Dos and Don'ts for Stewards

## ❖ Avoid conflicts of interest.

If your spouse or other family member is showing a dog in the class where you're stewarding, tell the judge and the chief steward. You can usually swap with a steward from another ring until that dog has finished working. You might also want to swap with someone to avoid stewarding for a dog and handler whom you train with all the time, if your familiar presence might distract the dog.

If the show is shorthanded, it's generous and considerate to volunteer to steward, but at a trial or sanctioned match, you're not allowed to steward for a judge if you're showing your dog under that judge — even in a different class.

## ❖ Observe courtesies of address.

In the ring, always address the judge formally (Mr., Mrs., etc.) even if you're otherwise on friendly terms. The dog fancy thrives on such old-fashioned etiquette as well as collegiality, and the formality simply looks better to spectators.

Likewise, **call handlers by number, rather than by name** — for example, "Open A dog number 201" or "Golden Retriever number 44." Yeah, everybody knows everybody in obedience, but this form of address pays homage to a principle of impartiality and avoids the appearance of favoritism.

## ❖ Be quiet and unobtrusive.

Some judges enjoy chatting with their stewards; others are more taciturn. Bear in mind that judging requires careful concentration. If you have **questions** about how to do something — such as how to deal with a dog who breaks in the group exercises — by all means ask. If you have general questions about rules or scoring, or if you have **comments** about a particular dog, handler, or exercise, hold off your comments until after the class or until lunch.

Likewise, in chatting with handlers: Some handlers may appreciate a friendly, encouraging remark; others may be too nervous or trying to focus on the competition. Novice handlers, of course, may be especially anxious or uncertain. Your courtesy, cheerfulness, and efficiency can help reassure first-timers and veterans alike.

## ❖ Be neat, attentive, and efficient.

If the hospitality wagon comes by with drinks and snacks for the judges and stewards, remember to keep your refreshments out of the ring. If you need a break — especially during large classes — tell the chief steward.

Stewards needn't dress formally, but please keep in mind that you're representing the club and the sport. You should dress neatly — no blue jeans and T-shirts. Wear comfortable, non-skid shoes. Outdoors, if you're wearing raingear or a jacket, make sure it doesn't flap around (especially on the Figure-8 or any time you're in the ring).

## ❖ Be prepared.

Bring a **leash** with you — maybe a lightweight four-footer which you can keep folded in your pocket, or one of those noose-style leads used by vet techs and kennel workers. This is in case a dog breaks in the group exercises or if there's a run-away dog. You should also have a pen and, say, an index card or two, so you can jot things down, such as the order of exercises in Open B or Utility B or the rule for setting the Broad Jump.

❖ **Do what you can to make the show a success.**

Stewards aren't expected to be janitors, but whatever you can do to help keep the show moving will be most appreciated. If a dog fouls in or near the ring, call for a clean-up crew or tell the chief steward (who'll get a clean-up crew for you).

**Help out with the spectators.** Some spectators may not be aware of the rules and customs of obedience competition and could be distracting to a dog in the ring. In such cases, politely ask them to move back or to be quiet. For example, watch for children with dripping ice cream cones, breeding handlers strewing liver treats, and so on. Try to keep the aisle clear near the ring entrance so handlers have enough room to warm up their dogs and when they line up for the group exercises in Novice and Open.

Stewards aren't umpires, but if you **notice any problems** affecting the competition, tell the judge. Not all problems are your concern. For example, if you notice that a dog has broken a stay in the group exercises and that the judge seems to have missed it (perhaps, the dog lay down and then got back to a sit), there's probably no point in saying anything unless there's a safety issue (such as if the dog seems about to bolt or to go to another dog). Judges can't change their scoring based on a steward's say-so. However, if you think there's an error in the judge's arithmetic or in identifying a dog — for example, if two handlers' numbers were confused — notify the judge, chief steward, or trial chair.

❖ **Support the sport.**

At the end of the class, stick around and help distribute the **ribbons and trophies**. Be a good ambassador for the sport. Congratulate the handlers whose dogs qualified or placed; offer an encouraging word of consolation to those whose dogs didn't qualify. Hold your opinions about the judge or any of the dogs and handlers until you're well away from the show site.

After the class is completed, always part cordially from the judge — "It was good working with you," etc. — even if the judge was a tyrannical slave-driver and the class was a disaster. You might be showing under that judge sometime.

*Thanks for stewarding! Here's hoping you enjoy the show!*

# Addendum: Stewarding in Rally

Rally is a new sport, a variation on obedience which is meant to serve as a bridge between basic pet training (such the CGG) and competition obedience. Stewarding in rally is a great way to represent the club and encourage newcomers. If you're interested in showing your dog, stewarding also gives you an opportunity to learn the nuances of the rally exercises, which can be trickier than what we grizzled obedience veterans might think.

As a steward, your job is to assist the judge and to run the trial with efficiency and fairness. It's quite natural and commendable for you to be affable and encouraging, especially with handlers in the Rally Novice A class who are, ostensibly, rookies, but you shouldn't show favoritism. It's easy to get caught up in the demotic, camp-like atmosphere, but you have to remain impartial. Neither stewards nor onlookers should coach a handler in the ring. For example, rally allows handlers to retry an exercise if they realize they've done it incorrectly or incompletely, and it may be tempting to call out to a handler to tell her to retry a station — but *don't* do this.

## Before the trial

- ❖ Report to the trial chair or chief steward **about 30 minutes** before your class is scheduled to begin, so you can pick up your steward's badge, a catalog for the ring, and your lunch ticket — and so you can **meet with your judge**.

Some judges give their stewards very detailed instructions; others are more casual. If you've never stewarded before, or never stewarded in rally, let the judge know. Most judges are very helpful. Everyone was a rookie once, so don't be bashful about asking for help or explanations.

- ❖ **Coordinate efforts with the other stewards.**

There are five stewarding jobs in rally, although depending on the number of entries, some of these jobs can be combined (for example, ring steward and honor steward). Since rally trials may have very large entries, it's important that the **stewards work as a team**.

- ❖ **Check your ring** and make sure everything's all right — poster board sign with the correct numbers for the class, clean-up supplies, mats, gates, jumps, rally signs, course maps, and so on. Make sure you have a **catalog** and the correct **armbands** for your class.

## Check-in

Stewards should decide beforehand who's going to handle check-in and **giving out the armbands** — usually the table steward or the gate steward. Check off the handlers in your **catalog** and on the **ring sign**, same as in traditional obedience. For the Rally Advanced and Rally Excellent classes, as the handlers check in, ask for their dog's **jump height** and jot it down in the catalog or on the ring sign (if there's room) so that as a dog is about to go into the ring, you can make sure the jumps are set correctly. Also, at check in, make sure each handler gets a copy of the **course map**.

In rally, as in traditional obedience, **dogs are shown in catalog order**. If handlers have conflicts (such showing in rally and traditional obedience at the same time), or if someone arrives late, **the judge decides** how to solve the problem. Some judges cede authority to their stewards for resolving conflicts — typically, you move the handler to the end of the class. Other than that, stewards can't change the showing order.

**A note on move-ups:** Rally trials allow for move-ups so that dogs who complete, say, their RN title on Saturday can show in RA on Sunday. At check-in, you may get some handlers who have moved up to a higher class. Move-ups have to be done by the **show superintendent or secretary** — they can't be done by the judge or by the stewards.

Make sure that any move-ups in the class are added to the ring sign and that there's a score sheet for those dogs too.

## Gate steward

**T**he gate steward manages the flow of dogs and handlers into the ring — very much as in agility. It may be most efficient for the gate steward to distribute **armbands** as the handlers check in.

- ❖ Your chief job is to **ensure the next dog is “on deck” and ready to go**. Typically, you'll stand next to the ring entrance and the ring sign which lists the running order. As each dog and handler team enters the ring, you cross off that handler's number on the ring sign.

**Note:** In calling the dogs, use the handler's catalog or **armband number** (for example, “Golden Retriever number 40”) rather than the dog's name (which could be distracting) or the handler's name. Yeah, everyone knows everyone, but it's good to observe the courtesies and formalities of old-fashioned sportsmanship.

- ❖ If the **next dog** can't be found, call the following dog. Give people a chance to get their dogs out of their crates and make their way to the ring, but don't let anyone hold up the show. It's *not* your job to roam the show site to find handlers. Report **absences and latecomers** to the judge and the table steward — again, to make sure the score sheets are in the proper order.
- ❖ Don't let the next dog and handler into the ring until the previous team has left and the judge is ready. **Coordinate with the table steward** to ensure that the score sheets are in the proper order for the judge and that you're calling the correct dog into the ring.
- ❖ Once you've told a handler that she's next, don't let another handler go ahead of her, unless the judge tells you otherwise.
- ❖ For the Advanced and Excellent classes, make sure the **jumps** are set to the correct height for the dog going into the ring, and let the ring steward know if there's a change in jump heights. (See the information on rally jump heights in the section on ring stewards on page 15).
- ❖ If the class is very large, and the judge is going to take a **break** before completing the class, mark this on the ring sign. It's a real convenience for handlers and it'll save you from answering the same question from every handler in the class.
- ❖ It's usually best if one person serves as **gate steward for an entire class**, so this job does involve a time commitment as well as organizational skills and attention to detail.

## Table steward

The table steward is a clerical assistant for the judge. Typically, you'll prepare the judge's score sheets, filling in the particular class and the dog's number, breed, and jump height (if applicable). You'll have to **coordinate with the gate steward** to make sure the score sheets are in proper sequence in case of changes in the showing order.

- ❖ Before the class starts, make sure you go over with the judge the abbreviations or marks she uses on her **score sheets**. Judges may have to write very quickly, so you may have to be adept at deciphering some scribbles.
- ❖ Follow the judge's instructions about marking the **judge's book**. For example, most judges will not let you mark absences or moveups— the judge will mark them.
- ❖ When a dog and handler complete their run, the judge will hand you the score sheet so you can **double-check the arithmetic**. Also, the time steward will give you the time as the team finishes the run. You then **enter the score and time in the judge's book**. Be sure to tell the judge if the score sheet appears incorrect or if something is questionable.
- ❖ Usually, the table steward — or a faithful sidekick — posts the scores at ringside after the run is finished.

Note that **times are *not* posted until the class is completed**; this is because times are used as tie-breakers for placements.

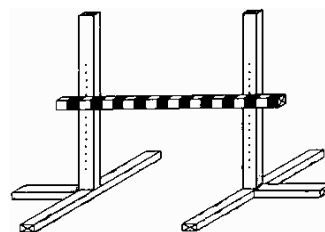
- ❖ Keep the **score sheets** in order, and do *not* hand out score sheets. Handlers are understandably eager to see the judge's scoring of this or that exercise, but they aren't allowed to see the score sheets until *after* the class is completed.
- ❖ After the class, handlers can look at the copies of the score sheets. They may *not* take them. Understandably, people are eager to see the score sheets and often swam the table, but you should make sure that you hand them out in an orderly fashion and that you get them back to be turned into the trial secretary or superintendent.
- ❖ If you're entered in the trial, you can work as the table steward, but not for a class you're entered in. Most judges will want one person to serve as **table steward for an entire class**, so this job does involve a time commitment as well as organizational skills and attention to detail.

## Ring stewards

Ring stewards help the judge **set up the course** — including **setting the jumps** for the Rally Advanced and Rally Excellent classes.

- ❖ During **walk-throughs**, make sure that none of the signs gets knocked over or moved as the waves of handlers pass through.
- ❖ It's helpful to have a ring steward assist the gate steward and table steward — for example, in **posting scores** after each run, and in serving as the “**leash runner**” for the Advanced and Excellent classes. Some dogs, even in Advanced and Excellent, may be young and hyper, so it's important to get the leash back to the handler quickly. Give the leash with the clip up, so the handler can easily fasten it onto the dog's collar. Then reset the jumps for the next dog (if any).
- ❖ As the class nears completion, you can get the **ribbons and trophies**.
- ❖ For the Rally Advanced and Rally Excellent classes, make sure the jumps are set to the **correct height**. **Jump heights** in rally are very modest, and there are only three height settings:

Dog's height	High jump or bar jump	Broad jump
Under 15"	8"	16" (2 boards)
15" to under 20	12"	24" (2 boards)
Over 20"	16"	32" (3 boards)



## Time steward

The time steward times each run, typically with a **stopwatch**. (In rally, time is used only a tie-breaker for class placements). Often, this job can be assigned to one of the ring stewards after the course is built.

- ❖ The judge will position you somewhere outside the ring, lined up with the **Start** sign. You start timing when the judge says “*Forward!*”; stop timing when the dog and handler pass the **Finish** sign. You then report the time to the table steward.
- ❖ Being the time keeper requires some **concentration**. If you're sitting just outside the ring, it's easy to get distracted by passers-by asking questions. Keep your focus on the ring and your stopwatch, and try to be as accurate as possible.
- ❖ If the timer or stopwatch **malfunctions** or there's some other problem with time keeping, notify the judge as soon as the current run is completed.
- ❖ If you're entered in the rally trial, you can be the time steward, but preferably not for a class you're entered in.

## Honor steward

In the **Rally Excellent** class, exercise #50 is an honor sit or honor down — judge's choice — so one steward has to monitor the honoring dog and handler during the exercise, record their score upon completion of the exercise, and get the score to the table steward.

- ❖ Before the class starts, the judge will position you, usually in a chair outside the ring, where you can watch the honoring dog and handler.
- ❖ Most judges will give you specific **guidelines on how to score the exercise** — for example, what to do if the dog breaks the stay or is barking or whining continually. If you have any questions about how to score something, check with the judge before the next dog enters the ring.
- ❖ If you're entered in the rally trial, you can be the honor steward, but preferably not for a class you're entered in.

*Thanks for stewarding! Here's hoping you enjoy the show!*