

# **TDAA Judges Guidelines**

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**Prepared for the  
Teacup Dogs Agility Association**

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## **Introduction**

The TDAA Judges' Guidelines present the desire of the TDAA to ensure that judges are aware of those policies and procedures that support the organization, its host clubs, and its exhibitors. The official Rules and Regulations of the TDAA is the ultimate authority and supersedes this document.

Forms referenced in this document are available at the TDAA website, [www.k9tdaa.com](http://www.k9tdaa.com).

### *How the TDAA is Different*

The Teacup Dogs Agility Association is unique within the agility community in many ways. It is important that TDAA judges are familiar with these differences. Not only do these differences impact the competitive aspects of the TDAA, they also impart a unique spirit to the exhibitors. Understanding these differences enables judges to develop challenges and conduct trials that capture this uniqueness.

#### **Food and touching the dog are permitted**

TDAA Rules and Regulations permit the handler to praise and pet a dog in the ring, and to stop to give the dog a food reward. Performance faults are assessed only when the use of food or touching assists the dog in the performance of an obstacle or the direction of the course.

#### **Dogs are allowed to express their style**

There are no restrictions as to adornments or clothing allowed on dogs unless there is a safety concern. A dog may wear a collar with tags. A dog may have ties, tapes, pins, and odd accoutrements that are specific to a breed or type of dog. The judge should exercise judgment and common sense. If the clothing or adornments are so outrageous as to hinder the dog's ability to move or perform the equipment in a safe manner, then the clothing or adornments should be disallowed.

Aversive training devices are never allowed. These include choke collar, pinch collar, bark collars, and electronic (shock) collars.

#### **Veterans and dogs with jump exemptions are not a separate class**

When a dog is given an exemption to jump at a lower height, that dog can remain on the championship title track. Such dogs are not relegated to a secondary program or given a separate and unequal slate of titling objectives.

#### **Shorter transitional distances are used between obstacles**

The shorter transitional distances used in TDAA between obstacles require tighter handling, provide more possibility for run outs and off-courses and require a keener sense of timing for the handler. The shorter distances reflect a stride length proportional to the course, comparable to what larger dogs face in the "big dog" agility organizations.

### **Smaller obstacles are used**

While larger obstacles from other venues are permitted (so long as they can be adjusted for the lower slope), the TDAA prefers a number of obstacles of smaller dimension, including the tunnels, contact obstacles, and hurdles.

### **Obstacle familiarization may be conducted at each trial**

At the beginning of each day of a trial, obstacle familiarization is allowed and encouraged. The smaller scale equipment used in the TDAA might be totally alien to dogs that have not trained on the equipment and possibly have never seen it. The judge should allow all dogs a period of familiarization on all obstacles. All dogs in the trial, regardless of competition level, may participate in obstacle familiarization.

When familiarization is conducted, the judge should instruct exhibitors that food will be allowed in the ring so long as great care is taken not to drop the food on the working surface. It is recommended that the judge define the order in which the obstacles should be presented to the dogs so that the queue of performance moves in an orderly manner. Stewards should be assigned to oversee the orderly conduct of the familiarization – only one dog should be familiarizing at a time, for no more than two minutes. If obstacle familiarization takes place on a course that is set up to run, the path chosen should not be consistent with required or expected paths that the teams might take during that event.

Once the first class of the day has started, obstacle familiarization for late arrivals is at the discretion of the host club and the judge and, if allowed, shall be done only for the latecomers and in a time and manner that does not delay the trial.

### **Multiple warm-up obstacles are allowed**

A warm-up area for dogs may be provided with any type of equipment. At a minimum, a warm-up jump should be provided and may also provide a set of weave poles, a teeter, a tunnel, or a tire. There are no restrictions except that the equipment may not be arranged in a fashion that mirrors any challenge that is on the field.

### **Dogs can be Fast-Tracked**

The Fast Track is a titling option whereby a dog that has earned advanced titles in another agility organization can move up to that same level in the TDAA by demonstrating those skills in TDAA courses and games. The dog's owner must first demonstrate proof of the advanced level title by submitting a copy of the titling certificate from the organization in which that title was earned.

## Standards and Guidelines for TDAA Judges

The TDAA judge is the backbone of our Association in the sport and their actions and opinions influence conduct beyond the performance ring. Because of that influence, the TDAA has established education and testing procedures for approving judges in the sport.

Qualified individuals must meet the following requirements before being placed on the TDAA Approved Judges List. The judge must:

- Be at least 18 years of age,
- have sufficient experience to competently perform the judge's responsibility as may be evidenced by active participation in the sport, indicated by having, at a minimum, achieved a TACH with a dog on TDAA courses, and demonstrated ability as a judge,
- after initial certification as a TDAA judge, which requires passing an approved TDAA judging clinic & examination and being observed judging a trial by an RMJ, the judge must recertify after an initial three-year period, and then every **six** years thereafter, demonstrating knowledge of TDAA Rules, course design, self-confidence, creativity, and effectiveness while judging, and
- be of good character and a member of TDAA in good standing, setting forth a professional image for the sport and the TDAA.

### *TDAA Judges' Code of Ethics*

Judging is a privilege, not a right. The TDAA Agility Judge's conduct must always be impartial, and dignified. A judge's actions must be above reproach.

Judges shall be professional in demeanor and appearance, appropriate to weather and ring conditions.

Agility placements shall be awarded strictly on the dog and handler performance as a team as described in the TDAA Rules and Regulations.

Judges shall be ever mindful that trials are staffed largely or entirely with unpaid volunteers. Volunteer staff will be treated with kindness and respect.

When a TDAA judge makes a commitment to judge a test event, he or she is bound by those commitments. It is acknowledged that there are certain events that could warrant breaking a commitment.

TDAA judges should be aware that poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated. When TDAA judges are entered in an agility trial as an exhibitor, the judge will be expected to always exhibit exemplary behavior and good sportsmanship.

A judge will not measure dogs at a TDAA trial for which they are *not* the judge of record unless invited to do so by the judge of record.

A TDAA judge shall not become an activist in disputes, make public criticisms, or otherwise engage in behavior that may be generally viewed by the TDAA as inappropriate conduct that may create a conflict of interest as a representative of TDAA.

Any judge found to be abusing the privilege of judging for TDAA or violating this Code of Ethics may have such judging privileges suspended or revoked by the TDAA.

## **Responsibilities of the TDAA Judge**

Judging TDAA events is a challenging and rewarding experience. Judges have demonstrated a mastery of the spirit and the rules of TDAA, and are representatives of the organization, with all the rights and responsibilities thereof.

### *Acceptance of a Judging Assignment*

The TDAA allows its judges to accept assignments without consultation with or pre-approval by the organization. Judges must have current certification to accept assignments. Judges without current certification will be removed from the list of active judges.

Judges are responsible for keeping their contact information on the judges list up-to-date. Changes to this information should be communicated to the TDAA.

Preparing for a judging assignment requires a significant effort. A checklist of typical tasks required for a successful judging assignment follows. This list is general in nature and is not intended to be all-inclusive; in some cases, additional tasks may be required.

- Confirm that you have the date available and are willing to commit. If the date is clear, make the commitment and get an acknowledgement from the host club.
- Record the names and contact information of the trial secretary, the trial chairperson, and whoever has been appointed to be the judge's liaison.
- Discuss and confirm expenses and fees, especially maximum amounts for travel and lodging expenses. Provide the host club with a contract or ask the host club to provide you with one. Verify who will be making and paying for travel and hotel arrangements. These arrangements should be made well in advance to ensure that reasonable costs are incurred.
- Obtain a schedule of classes. In some cases, the judge may be asked to assist in this process.
- Get a detailed drawing of the trial site, including the size of the ring, what obstructions may exist, what side might be preferred for entry and exit, and so forth.
- Get a list of available equipment including quantity and dimensions.
- Communicate with the host trial committee so that they have the appropriate verbiage for the description of games in the premium list.

- Design your courses. Course and game design guidelines are provided in the following sections of this document. Whenever possible, nest courses so that course changes are efficient during the trial. Verify that your courses actually match the information you received from the club showing the dimensions of the ring and the equipment they have available.
- Write the briefings for the games. Written briefings and copies of the courses should be available for exhibitors the day of the trial.
- Get the courses approved. The course review process is presented in a later section.
- Obtain and review a trial premium and a copy of the standard confirmation letter.
- Ensure that the necessary supplies and equipment for the trial will be available, including: a whistle, a stopwatch, a roll of duct tape, a measuring tape (for measuring equipment), copies of the courses and briefings, a measuring wheel, and wickets.
- During the trial, after completion of each class, the judge should check with the Scorekeeper to ensure the scoring has been recorded properly, the correct ER values are being used, and that there are no unresolved questions, from the Scorekeeper or the handlers, regarding how the runs were scored. Prior to leaving the trial site on the last day, verify all scoring is complete and submit an expense report.
- Within one week of your assignment, complete and submit a Judges Report to the TDAA (the Judge's Agility Test Report form is available on the TDAA website at <https://k9tdaa.com> in the "Files & Forms" section).

### *Potential Judges Conflicts*

A judge may judge a member of his own household, as well as friends, students and acquaintances. Please note that this liberal policy is subject to revocation should it ever be abused.

If a judge desires to have his own dog shown in a trial for which he is the judge of record, either another handler must run the dog or another certified judge must be present and judge the runs.

### *Course Reviews*

Courses are to be submitted electronically to the TDAA course reviewer **a minimum of six weeks** prior to the event. The course reviewer as of the date of issue of these guidelines is Dennis Vogel. Please send your courses to [teacupagility@gmail.com](mailto:teacupagility@gmail.com).

Along with courses, it would be helpful for judges to submit:

- The order of classes. This will enable the course reviewer to check nesting between classes. Although not required, nesting will facilitate more efficient trials.

- A list of available equipment, including dimensions. For jumps, the number of winged and wingless versions must be included.

Courses should be submitted in electronic format, preferably designed with the Clean Run Course Designer. Course file names should reflect the order of classes with the first two digits of the file name. For example, files might be named 01SupStd1.agl, 02IntStd1.agl and 03BegStd1.agl (if possible, please send all the courses in one zip file). This naming convention helps the course review keep track of the order and will also help you keep your files straight and organized.

All games submitted for review must include a comprehensive briefing. Note that a briefing is not just for the exhibitor. Include in your games' briefings the scoring basis (i.e. the ER code) and qualification criteria. Refer to *The Book of Agility Games* for existing rules for agility games. You can always contact the course reviewer for guidance.

Review comments will be provided by the course reviewer. **It is a requirement that you update your courses to reflect the changes indicated by the course reviewer and return updated copies to TDAA.**

Do not send finalized courses to the host clubs. Copies for the exhibitors are at the discretion of the club. If the club desires copies for the exhibitors, they must inform the judge, who will then bring the required number of copies to the trial.

Only the first course of the trial, without numbers and without gamble lines or similar markings, may be sent to the club for course building the night before.

### *Signaling Performance Faults*

When judging standard courses, the judge should give these signals to the scribe:

- Standard faults – Raised open hand
- Failure to perform – Two raised open hands
- Refusal – Raised closed fist
- Elimination – Crossed arms
- Dismissal – Blow the whistle, politely ask the exhibitor to leave

### *Briefing Ring Personnel*

Your briefing to the scribe should be explicit. Insist that the scribe watch you (and not the dog) for your signals. You do not have to make eye contact with the scribe. Try to avoid wrenching your body towards the scribe when you make a signal. Just make the signal, and trust that the scribe is watching you as directed.

In your briefing to the scribe and timer, you will make it very clear how the scribe sheet is to be completed during the running of the competition. The scribe should record the digital reading on the stopwatch. The time will be translated to minutes and seconds at the scorekeeping table. An exchange between the scribe and the judge is encouraged in which the judge verbally summarizes faults at the end of the dog's run. This is unusual in American agility, but is a system used elsewhere in the world.

## Measuring Dogs

The process for measuring dogs begins with the application for the dog's registration. This form is available online at: <http://k9tdaa.com>.

Upon receipt of the application and payment the TDAA sends to the registered owner a *Temporary Jump Height* form (this form is available on the TDAA website at <https://k9tdaa.com> in the "Files & Forms" section). At the same time the dog's registration information is entered into the TDAA database making the dog eligible for competition.

The exhibitor will bring the *Temporary Jump Height* form along to the TDAA trial. The form is presented to the judge, along with the dog, for measurement and signature. The form will require only two signatures unless the measurements disagree, whereupon measurement and signature by a third judge is required.

The judge should follow this handling procedure:

- If it is the first measurement and signature *or* a second measurement that disagrees with the first, return the form to the exhibitor.
- If it is the second measurement and signature (that agrees with the first) *or* a third measurement, hold onto the form and give it to the Trial Secretary to be sent on to the TDAA with other trial documents.

Make sure that the form is complete and all of the exhibitor's personal information is included on the form.

When the TDAA receives the completed *Temporary Jump Height* form:

- A TDAA Jump Height Certificate is emailed to the exhibitor/owner of the dog.
- The dog's jump heights are recorded in the TDAA database, allowing the dog to earn TDAA titles.

You will also have to measure dogs of mixed pedigree that defy any specific breed description. The judge should understand the measurement of dogs and be prepared to give an exemption to mixed breed dogs.

### How to Measure Dogs

The TDAA allows the use of wickets or a measuring device that delivers a precise measurement. The judge's job is to measure the dog and then record the correct jump height for the dog, along with any body type exemptions. Please note that on the *Temporary Jump Height* form the judge will indicate what the dog's jump height would be *without* any exemption; and then indicate if an exemption should be given to the dog.

Only the judge of record can exercise the authority for the measurement of dogs. Please note that another judge *can* measure dogs at a trial at which he is *not* the judge of record. However, this authority is granted by the express permission of the judge of record.

1. The dog is typically placed on a table to provide a solid, level surface.

2. The measurement should be taken at the withers. The “withers” is the ridge between the shoulder blades of the dog.
3. The dog’s owner may use treats to draw the dog’s attention away from the judge and into a stand. The dog’s owner may hold the dog on leash.
4. If the dog measures higher than the jump height into which he’s entered for the day it is the judge’s responsibility to notify the Trial Secretary to ensure that the dog jumps the correct measured height.
5. The judge will sign the form, indicate the jump height and body type exemptions (if any) and will either return the form to the exhibitor (if more signatures are required) or convey the form to the Trial Secretary if the form is complete.

### Jump Height Exemptions

Special provisions, or *jump height exemptions*, are made for certain dogs because of their structure. This will be a judgment call by the measuring judge. A judge should rely on his or her gut instinct, and a bit of common sense.

The jump heights and cutoffs are specified in the TDAA Rules and Regulations. This document is available online at: <https://k9tdaa.com>.

The discussion that follows uses specific breeds as examples. Keep in mind that there are exceptional dogs of almost every breed that might not share the conformation or characteristics of the breed that make them examples here. You might have a Norwich Terrier, for example, that is long legged (rather than dwarfish) and should not be given a jump height exemption simply on the basis of his breed.

**Long Back Dogs** – The exemption for a long-backed dog would be based on the measurement of the dog from the front of the chest to the back of the rear compared to the measurement of the dog's height at the withers. As a rule of thumb, if the dog's length is 150% or greater than the height measurement, the dog would qualify for this exemption.

Dachshund



Dandie Dinmont Terrier



Skye Terrier



**Weight to height provision** (by structure, not obesity) – This exemption should be limited to certain breeds that have a propensity for weight that is greater than their height if you compare pounds to inches.

**Basset Hound**



**Bulldog**



**Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen**



**Dogs with dwarfish legs** – This exemption is granted to dogs whose leg to shoulder height ratio is 1/3 or less of the dog's overall height. The exemption for dogs with dwarfish legs is based on the measurement of the dog's wither height, when that height is 150% or greater than the measurement of the space from floor to chest.

**Australian Terrier**



**Cairn Terrier**



**Scottish Terrier**



## **Veteran Dogs**

A veteran dog is a dog of at least 7 years of age. A jump height exemption will be granted to veteran dogs, allowing the dog to jump the next lower height.

A double-digit veteran is a dog of at least 10 years of age, allowing that dog to jump two jump heights lower.

There is no special system of titling for veteran dogs.

## **Double Exemptions**

A *double exemption* may be granted to a dog when they have both a body type exemption and a veteran's exemption status.

## **Reference Materials for the TDAA Judge**

The TDAA judge is a student of the agility game in general and of the varieties of that game as conducted by the Teacup Dogs Agility Association. There are a number of reference materials with which the TDAA judge should be familiar.

These resources are available at <https://k9tdaa.com>:

- TDAA Rules and Regulations (.pdf)
- TDAA Course Design Guidelines (.pdf)

- Dog Registration (.pdf)
- Membership Application (.pdf)
- Application for TDAA Sanctioned Event (.pdf)
- Judge's Agility Test Report (.pdf)
- Temporary Jump Height Form (.pdf)

### **The TDAA Course Design College**

We also have available a series of educational articles intended to share common course review issues and explore how games are created and played. You can reference these articles here:

<http://budhouston.wordpress.com/category/tdaa-course-design-college/>

### **More Resources for the TDAA Judge**

TDAA Judges discussion group on Google:

[https://groups.google.com/g/tdaa\\_judges](https://groups.google.com/g/tdaa_judges)

TDAA Members discussion group:

<https://groups.google.com/g/teacup-dogs-agility-association>

TDAA home page: [www.k9tdaa.com](http://www.k9tdaa.com)

TDAA Judges List: <http://tdaanews.wordpress.com/approved-tdaa-judges/>

TDAA Calendar of Events: <http://tdaanews.wordpress.com/tdaa-events-calendar/>