

# For Rally & Obedience students new to trialing

## **What is a trial?**

A trial is a performance competition where your dog is competing against himself or herself in an effort to win points or ribbons that add up to “titles” granted by some sort of national sanctioning organization. The organization (like American Kennel Club) has strict guidelines, rules and regulations for how the trial should be run, scored and judged. This is meant to standardize the requirements and the process for a dog to earn “titles.” These performance titles are codes or initials that go after your dog’s registered name, indicating that he/she has met the standards necessary to be awarded such a title.

AKC trials are held for agility, obedience, rally, tracking, herding, field tests, drafting, water rescue, barn hunt, and other performance events. The results are recorded and preserved forever in the sanctioning body’s records. Other national organizations may hold trials for agility, barn hunt, and breed-specific events like water and drafting tests.

## **Okay, then, what’s a “fun match”?**

A “fun match” is held as practice for a real trial. The match is run with similar rules and guidelines as a trial, but fun match results are not recorded or maintained for posterity. A fun match gives you the feel of a real trial without the pressure or expense.

## **Why enter trials?**

If you enjoy training your dog and the camaraderie of group classes, or if you simply take great pride in your accomplishments with your dog, you may choose to enter trials. A trial is like a huge “group class,” where everyone (even folks you don’t know) is rooting for you and your dog when you’re in the ring. They’re fun social events you can enjoy with your dog and with people who have the same passion (dogs) that you do. There is great satisfaction in knowing your dog did well in a trial, and in accumulating the ribbons and titles that result from good performances.

As with many other sports—bowling, golf, archery, for example— you may enjoy the activity itself so much that you choose to enter tournaments. Dog performance sports are the same. You don’t have to be a world class athlete to enter most dog sports. You don’t have to be bent on winning every time, either. You participate for the fun and satisfaction. Dog trials are something you can enjoy for your entire life, regardless of your age or physical limitations.

## **Does my dog need to be registered to compete?**

Yes. For AKC rally and obedience trials, your dog must be registered with AKC, but need not be a purebred. Directions for registering your dog, purebred or not, are on the AKC website. Mixed breeds and breeds not recognized by AKC are registered in a different classification from AKC purebreds, and must be spayed or neutered to be allowed in performance events. All types of registrations can now be done on-line at the AKC website. Make sure this is all done

several weeks prior to entering your first trial, as it can take some time for the registration to be processed on AKC's end. You will need an official registration number for the trial's entry form.

### **What is a "Q"?**

"Q" is slang for "Qualifying Score." In most performance trials, you hope to earn a "Q" by getting at least a minimum required score set forth by the sanctioning body. In AKC, the minimum rally score is 70 out of a possible 100 points; in obedience, it's 170 out of a possible 200 points; in agility it's 80 out of 100 possible points. Once you have acquired 3 "Qs," at a certain level, your dog is granted a title that becomes a suffix to his registered name. (*See below.*) Note: UKC, CKC, NADAC, USDAA and other organizations have different but similar criteria.

### **What is an "NQ"?**

"NQ" is slang for "Non-qualifying score." If you didn't get a score of at least 70 in Rally and 170 in Obedience, you "NQ'd." To be eligible for placement ribbons, you must first "Q." AKC does not give out participation awards.

### **Who am I competing against in a trial?**

**No one!** You are "testing" your team (you and your dog) to see how you measure up on a course that is identical for everyone else in your skill category that particular day. When you pass the "test," you earn a green ribbon acknowledging you have done so, and your score is permanently recorded by AKC. If your score and time are in the top four of all the other competitors in your class that day, you will also receive a placement ribbon (and maybe even a dog toy) as frosting on the cake. The green "Q" ribbon, however, is the most important.

### **How much does it cost to enter a trial?**

Entry fees at most Rally or Obedience trials sanctioned by the AKC cost roughly \$25-\$32. The sponsoring AKC club actually sets the fees; hence, the variance. These fees are for EACH dog and EACH run you enter. There is usually a discount for entering your dog in more than one category on a given day (i.e., entering Novice Rally AND Novice Obedience with the same dog). Over the lifetime of your dog, it can add up. If you go "all the way" with a dog, earning all the normal rally and obedience titles, you will enter AT LEAST 39 rally *trials (and that's if your dog qualifies every single time)* and AT LEAST *nine (more likely 20 or 30)* times in obedience. Obedience is a lot tougher than rally, so you will probably have to enter more times to accumulate enough qualifying scores for titles. By the time you've earned those titles, you'll be so hooked on the sport that you'll want to continue trialing and accumulating even more green ribbons. So start saving your money. Even over several decades of trialing, it's still a cheaper sport than skiing or boating!

### **How do I enter trials?**

Find out when and where the trials are scheduled and contact the trial secretary. You can enter on-line or through the mail. AKC supplies a standard entry for which each sponsoring club can modify by adding its trial's dates, location and other pertinent information.

You can find trials by going to [infodog.com](http://infodog.com) or to <https://www.akc.org/sports/rally/events/>. Negotiating the process can be a bit confusing the first several times, so ask your instructor for help if you need it.

### **Do I have to enter all days of a multi-day trial?**

No. If a trial is held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, you may enter any or all of those days. You will require a separate entry form for each day, each dog, and each event.

### **What is a "Premium List"?**

This is the show announcement prepared by the sponsoring club. It's sent out or posted on-line usually two months prior to the show and trials. It contains all pertinent information about the show location, RV information, and the events that will be held. It also contains standard entry forms and lists the prizes that will be awarded.

### **What is a "Closing Date"?**

The closing date is the last date the show or trial secretary will receive entries. This date is usually about two weeks prior to the show or trial.

### **What is an "entry confirmation"?**

After you have mailed in your show entry request, or done it on-line, the show secretary will wait until the show's closing date and then assemble the rosters of which dogs will be showing in which classes and which times. Once that is finalized, she will send you an "entry confirmation," either by mail or email. This will confirm that your dog is listed correctly by name, category and class. It will also tell you what time your class will show, who your judges are, and how many other dogs will be in your class. Once you receive this confirmation, check it immediately for accuracy and get back to the trial secretary if there are any corrections to be made.

### **What is a "call name"?**

This is the name you use for your dog around the house, in the field, and in everyday training. This is usually different from his official registered name, which often includes the name of his kennel.

### **What's an "All Breed Dog Show"?**

Most rally and obedience trials are held as part of an "All Breed Dog Show." This a big dog show sanctioned by AKC in which several events are happening simultaneously. The main event is "conformation." Breeders enter purebred dogs in this "beauty contest" (like Westminster Kennel Club's big show on TV) to be judged on correctness of their build,

movement, temperament and looks. They are judged against the AKC standard of what a particular breed should look like. Conformation showing is quite subjective and can be rather political. The goal is to earn a “championship” on a dog. This title (Ch) becomes a prefix to the dog’s registered name and deems him or her worthy of being bred to perpetuate only the very best properties of their breed. Championships are earned by accumulating a certain number of points from shows. The points are determined in part by the placement of a dog and by the number of dogs being shown in the same class with it.

Other activities at an “all breed” show may include obedience and rally trials and occasionally an agility trial, as well as exhibition-type events. These performance events are held at the same site as the “breed rings,” but are usually tucked away in a quieter location that is conducive to the concentration needed by rally and obedience competitors.

### **What should I bring to a Rally or Obedience trial?**

- Your dog (yes, people have been known to forget this item!)
- Your dog’s entry confirmation letter
- A regulation leash
- A regulation collar
- A crate
- Chair
- Chew toys (no squeakies)
- Dog treats
- Water bowl
- Poop bags
- Creature Comfort items (reading material, snacks, etc.)

### **What to wear to a Rally or Obedience Trial**

Dress in casual comfortable clothing of good taste. Jeans are okay. Wear the shoes you train in. Bring proper outerwear for the elements, as you will be pottying your dog outside in all kinds of weather. Avoid wearing baggy, loose or floppy clothing in the ring that could interfere with your dog’s movement or sight. If you have long hair, tie it back so it doesn’t fall in your face and obstruct your vision or cause unnecessary movement of hands and body. Consider wearing a vest or hoody with pockets for dog treats, which you will want to use prior to going into the ring. Remember your pockets must be empty when you enter the ring. You are not allowed to carry any fanny packs or treat pouches into the ring. Get rid of anything else that is jingly (like a pile of keys or change in your pocket).

### **What titles can my dog earn in Rally?**

#### **RN (Rally Novice).**

Requirements: Enter at least 3 Rally Novice trials and earn at least 3 qualifying scores (70 out of 100 points). When you have completed a RN, you can move up to RI or RA levels.

#### **RI (Rally Intermediate)**

Requirements: Enter at least 3 Rally Intermediate trials and earn at least 3 qualifying scores. When you have completed a RI, you can move up to the RA level. Note: the RI level is optional. If you choose, you can go directly to the RA level once you have completed a RN.

### **RA (Rally Advanced)**

Requirements: Enter at least 3 Rally Advanced trials and earn at least 3 qualifying scores. When you have completed a RA, you may move up to the RE level.

### **RE (Rally Excellent)**

Requirements: Enter at least 3 Rally Excellent trials and earn at least 3 qualifying scores. When you have completed a RA, you may move up to the RM level.

### **RM (Rally Master)**

Requirements: Enter at least 10 Rally Master trials and earn at least 10 qualifying scores.

### **RAE (Rally Excellent/Master)**

Requirements: Enter and qualify in both RA and RE courses in the same show on the same day. Do this 10 times to earn the RAE title.

## **What titles can my dog earn in Obedience?**

### **BN (Beginner Novice)**

Known as "Beginner Novice." Requirements: Enter and qualify in at least 3 Beginner Novice obedience trials. *Note: this is an optional titling class. You may, if you wish, skip the BN title and enter directly into Novice level as listed below.*

### **CD (Companion Dog)**

Also known as "Novice." Requirements: Enter and qualify in at least 3 Novice obedience trials. When you have done this, you may move up to the next level (GN or CDX, as listed below) if you wish.

### **GN (Graduate Novice)**

Known as "Graduate Novice." Requirements: Enter and qualify in at least 3 GN obedience trials to earn this title. *Note: GN is an optional class. You may skip it and go directly to CDX trials if/when you are ready.*

### **CDX (Companion Dog Excellent)**

Also known as "Open." Requirements: Enter and qualify in at least 3 Open obedience trials. When you have done this, you may move up to the next level (GO or UD, as listed below) if you wish.

### **Graduate Open**

Known as "Graduate Open." Requirements: Enter and qualify in at least 3 GO obedience trials to earn this title. *Note: GO is an optional class. You may skip it and go directly to UD trials if/when you are ready.*

### **UD (Utility Dog)**

Also known as "Utility." Requirements: Enter and qualify in at least 3 Utility obedience trials to earn this title.

### **UDX (Utility Dog Excellent)**

Known as UDX. Requirements: Enter and qualify in both Open and Utility level classes ON THE SAME DAY at the same trial. Do this 10 times to earn the UDX title.

For a complete list of AKC titles and requirements, go here: <https://www.akc.org/sports/titles-and-abbreviations/#suffix>

### **Where can I read ALL the regs?**

[https://cdn.akc.org/Rally/AKC1086\\_ROR001\\_Yellow\\_Insert.pdf](https://cdn.akc.org/Rally/AKC1086_ROR001_Yellow_Insert.pdf)

<https://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RO2999.pdf>

The regs will tell you everything else you need to know about trials—what types of collars and leashes are permitted, scoring procedures, what types of commands or signals are allowed, etc. BE SURE to read your current regs! If you need clarification on anything once you get to the trial, the admin staff and officials will readily answer questions for you, but you are expected to know the rules before you get there.