

## Chapter 11

# Showmanship

The purpose of showmanship is to demonstrate teamwork between the handler and the dog, showcasing your skills as a handler. Regardless of the breed of dog, you learn the skills required to present your dog and bring out his finest qualities. Your presentation is being judged, not the dog's conformation. You learn breed characteristics for the breed your dog represents. You learn the anatomy and physiology of the dog, and how to move as one with your dog. In 4-H, the purpose of showmanship is also to test your knowledge about dogs and responsible dog ownership by participating in an interview, which contributes to your overall showmanship score.

## Preparing for Showmanship

The dog is judged on both its performance in the ring and its appearance, i.e., grooming, not conformation. In addition to obeying commands to gait, stand, and turn, it must look alert, be well groomed, and allow strangers to touch it. Because the dog is being judged on condition, grooming, and temperament, as well as the way it moves, showing in this class requires as much careful preparation as does showing in an obedience class. When competing in a showmanship class, bathing the dog before the show is not your only concern. Conditioning a dog's coat, body, and mind takes careful preparation. A dog that is not physically fit or is afraid does not present a positive image.

You are being judged as a team in showmanship. The dog is a tool to show off your skill as a handler. Your presentation of the dog is being judged, not the dog's conformation. There should be smooth coordination between the two of you. Grandiose gestures or jerky movements distract the judge's eye from seeing you and your dog at your best.

Training your dog for showmanship consists of two parts, stacking and gaing. **Stacking** means posing your dog. All breeds, with the exception of the German Shepherd, are posed basically the same way. There are variations on how the tail is posed, as well as some other minor differences. Visit a dog show to learn how your particular breed is displayed to correctly highlight your dog's best attributes. It is very helpful if your dog knows how to Stand/Stay before you begin training for showmanship. **Gaiting** is a method of moving your dog.



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German Shepherds are stacked differently from other breeds.

## Stacking

The first and most important step in stacking your dog is to gain control of the dog's head. You must have control of the dog's head to have control of the dog. This is achieved in either of two ways. One method is by making sure the show lead is snug just behind the ears, holding the lead taut and close to the neck. Hold the lead just tight enough to keep it in place, but not so tight as to choke the dog. The other way is by holding the dog's lower jaw and cheek on the side closest to you without wrapping your fingers around the muzzle. It is helpful to practice in front of a mirror so that you can see if your fingers are interfering with

the judge's view of your dog's muzzle. Always maintain close control of the dog's head any time it is being examined.



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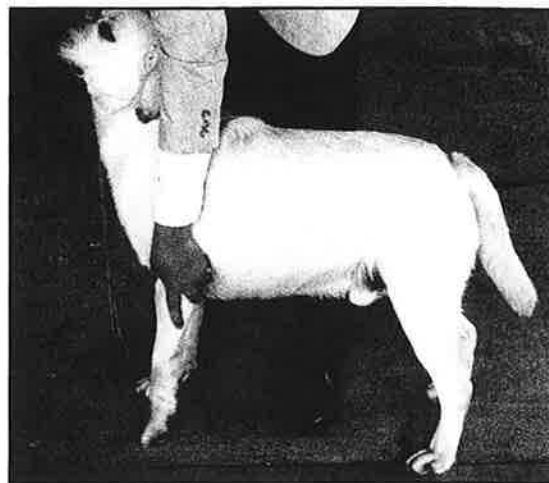
Head control may be achieved by using the collar up behind the dog's ears.



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The head may also be controlled by holding the handler's side of the face and jaw.

Once you have control of the head, you need to position the front legs. Start by setting the leg on the judge's side first. Tilt your dog's head toward you to take the weight off that leg. Next, grasp the leg by the elbow, with your thumb on the inside bend of the joint. Lift and place the leg so that you can form a line straight down from the shoulder through the pastern, perpendicular to the floor. Once that leg is set, push the head away from you and set the front leg closest to you. The feet should be shoulder width apart, parallel, and facing forward.



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To place the front legs, grasp the leg by the elbow.

When the dog's front legs are in position, set the rear legs. Remember to maintain control of the head with the hand that is closest to the head. To set the rear legs, grasp the point of the hock, lift slightly, and pull or push the leg into position. There should be a straight line from the hock through the heel and perpendicular to the floor. Another way to do this on a larger dog is to reach under the dog, grasp the stifle, and place the leg into position. After you set the judge's side, set the near side (the side closest to you). The back legs are usually set a little wider than the front.



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The rear legs may be placed by grasping the stifle.

If your dog's top line tends to dip in the middle, presenting a swaybacked appearance, first check to make sure you do not have the hind legs stretched back too far. If that is not the cause of the problem, set the rear legs by reaching under the dog and positioning them

by grasping the stifle. This usually results in your dog's back becoming level, thus removing that dip. If the back is arched, make sure that the rear legs are not too far under your dog. If that is not the cause of the problem, set the rear legs without reaching under the dog, again positioning them by grasping the stifle or point of the hock. This usually results in your dog's back becoming level.

**Free stacking** is a term used to describe walking your dog into a stack without using your hands to position the dog's feet. One method often used is to give your dog the command to stand, and then use the lead to move its head and shift its weight, just as you did when doing hands-on stacking. Pull the lead gently forward or back, and/or right or left, to cause different feet to move.



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If your dog does not need its tail held, you can teach it to free stack.

Once stacked, the dog's attention may be kept with the use of **bait**. This may be a small piece of food or a small toy that is no bigger than your fist. Before entering the ring always ask the ring steward if that judge permits the use of bait. Then use the bait *discreetly* to keep the dog's attention focused on you. This gives an alert posture and is helpful in keeping the ears tilted forward in prick-eared breeds. Do not throw the bait to keep your dog's attention, and do not leave pieces of food lying in the ring.

Small dogs are shown on a table. They are carefully lifted on the table and stacked the same way as a larger dog. The front feet are placed near the center front edge of the table. It takes some practice to get your dog accustomed to this. If you do not have a grooming table to practice on, use a picnic table or other sturdy table, placing a rubber bath mat on it for traction. It is permissible to carefully lift a small breed by its chest and gently set it into position. Never drop a dog into position because that can be harmful to its feet and shoulders and can cause the table to move, thus scaring the dog. Great care should be taken when lifting the dog down from the table as many get excited and try to jump.



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Small dogs are shown with their front feet centered on the edge of the short side of the table.

Keep checking the placement of the dog's feet once it is stacked. Any movement out of position needs to be corrected quickly but smoothly. The lead should be gathered neatly in your hand and not draped over the dog. If you must kneel beside your dog after it is stacked, keep only one knee on the ground so that you can change positions smoothly and with ease. You must keep the dog between you and the judge, and therefore have to move around your dog. Position yourself facing slightly toward the dog's head, with the knee closest to the dog being down. The exception is if you are stacking a toy breed on the floor, then it is permissible to put both knees on the ground. However, you still must be prepared to move around your dog smoothly as needed.

## Gaiting

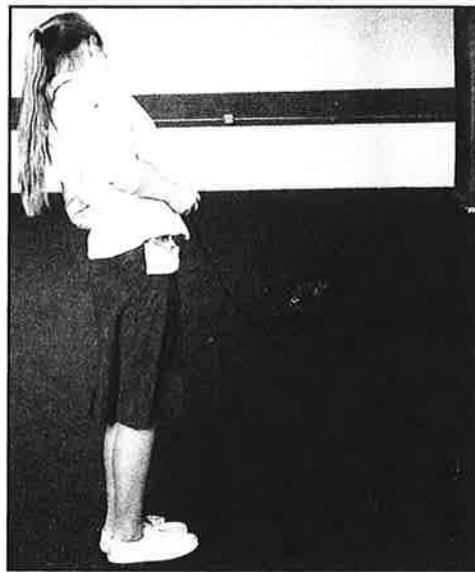
Another component of showmanship is moving your dog. This is called **gaiting**. Dogs are moved around the ring at a specified gait, based on breed. Most breeds move at a controlled trot. To begin, enter the ring with your dog at your left and be positioned so that you can gait around the ring in a counterclockwise direction. Make sure to keep about three feet between you and the dog in front of you in the line. After stacking, the judge has all dogs gait around the ring. The first person in line should look back along the line and ask the other handlers if they are ready, saying something like "Is everyone ready?" The reason for asking this is consideration for others in the class. Once the group is ready, the first person steps off, with the others following. With a large, fast dog, the handler may be running. The handler with a small breed may be only moving at a walk. Resist the temptation to travel at the same speed as the dog in front of you. Move your dog at the speed required for a showy trot. If your dog is bouncing or galloping, you are moving too fast and need to slow down. If the dog in front of you is moving slower than your dog, pause, allowing some space, and then move off again with your dog at the proper speed. Check to see what side of the ring the judge is facing to watch the dog's gait. Hold your dog back a few seconds, out of the judge's view. Then, just as the dog in front of you is passing in front of the judge's line of vision, start moving your dog at its proper speed. Do not pass the dog in front of you.



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When gaiting your dog, move it at a trot.

Put the dog at your right side if the judge reverses the direction. This takes some practice since most dogs are taught to heel on the left and need to be taught to perform on the opposite side. Always remember to keep the dog between you and the judge. Head control is just as important while gaiting as it is while stacking. Make sure that the collar is positioned up behind the dog's ears. The lead should be gathered neatly in your hand with no dangling ends flapping about. Your elbow should be bent at a 90-degree angle with your forearm parallel to the ground. Your thumb is up with the lead exiting the bottom of your fist. Try to float when you move, making your gait as smooth as possible. This can be done by taking long strides. Taking short, choppy steps when running causes your dog to do the same, and your movement is not as smooth. Keep one eye on the dog and one eye on the judge while also watching the ground to see where you are going. It is really important to be aware of your dog, the judge, the ring stands and rope, and the ground at all times.



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Any time your dog moves, check to be sure his feet are in the correct position.

There is no need to make direct eye contact with the judge during the gaiting pattern. Too much head movement is distracting from the picture of your dog gaiting around the ring. Just be aware of the judge's position in order to keep the dog lined up, and between you and

the judge. When you are moving directly away from the judge, it is not recommended that you look back over your shoulder because you will not be able to see where you are going. It also causes your body to twist, throwing off your stride. If you are gaitting up to the judge, stop three to four feet in front of him or her. Stopping too close to the judge does not allow him or her to see the front conformation of your dog. When you stop, look at your dog's legs. Are they in the proper position? If not, try to get them into position by free stacking. You always want your dog presented properly.

## Individual Exam

After the dogs have gone around the ring as a group, the judge examines each dog individually. All the dogs in the ring should be stacked in one long line, nose to tail, with approximately three feet between them. This gives the judge room to move between dogs. Remember to maintain control of your dog's head any time the judge is examining him.

You may be asked to show your dog's bite. **Bite** refers to how the front teeth of the upper and lower jaws come together. Many breeds have a standard that lists the type(s) of acceptable bites. The most common types of bites found in dogs are overshot, undershot, level, and scissors bite.

To show your dog's bite, with the dog's mouth closed, place the lead in your right hand and grasp the lower jaw from underneath. With your left hand over the dog's muzzle, carefully peel the lips away from the front teeth and turn the nose towards the judge. Make sure you do not inadvertently show the dog's bite to the floor. It is not necessary to show any more than the front teeth. However, some breed standards require the judge to check for missing teeth. In those breeds, you should get used to showing first the bite and then showing the teeth on the sides of the mouth. When judging, many judges prefer not to put their hands on a dog's mouth, thus avoiding transferring germs to the next dog in line. In those cases, the judge may ask the handler to show the teeth. Therefore, in 4-H if the judge asks to see the bite, the front teeth are shown. If the judge asks to see the teeth, then the sides are

also shown. The exhibitor should be proficient in showing both.



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To show the bite, pull the dog's lips back from its front teeth.

Get your dog used to being touched all over its body. The judge checks ears, teeth, nails, condition, and grooming. As the judge examines your dog, watch carefully to make sure the judge hasn't changed your dog's appearance in any way. If the dog's feet have been moved or the hair disturbed, fix the change by replacing the foot or by running your hand or comb over the coat to put it back in place.

After the judge has finished examining your dog, you are asked to gait your dog in one of four patterns: the Down and Back, the Triangle, the "L," or the "T" pattern. There are two major goals to accomplish in gaitting: (1) keep the dog between you and the judge (do not block the judge's view of your dog as you move along the pattern), and (2) practice gaitting, turning, and switching hands with the lead (when necessary) until you can do it smoothly with no wasted motion.

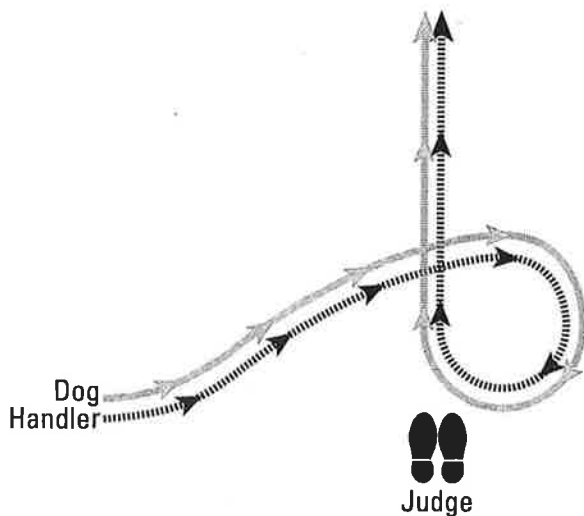
At a dog show, the judge has a limited amount of time to examine a large number of dogs. If the exhibitor wants to get the most out of his time with the judge, the dog is ready and waiting for the judge as soon as the previous dog has finished gaitting. As you move into the pattern, the next person in line should move into your place. If that person has a small dog, it should be placed on the table at this time. If you are the person after the small dog on the table, move up when that small dog has been lifted off the table and is gaitting. The judge has the opportunity to see the dog being stacked on many occasions in the ring, and can

see the lifting procedure when the handler lifts the dog to the ground after being examined. It is neither necessary nor desirable to hold up the ring by making the judge wait.

When you are stacking your dog in the line, make sure you are not stacking your dog directly behind the grooming table. If you do, the judge is unable to see your dog clearly when he or she steps to the center of the ring. Therefore, leave that space empty. It is permissible to back up so that you are not in the corner, with other handlers adjusting as needed.

The judge may walk between dogs at any time. Remember to always keep the dog between you and the judge. If the judge passes in front of your dog, you move around to the back of your dog. If the judge passes behind your dog, you move around to the front. Do **NOT** step over your dog.

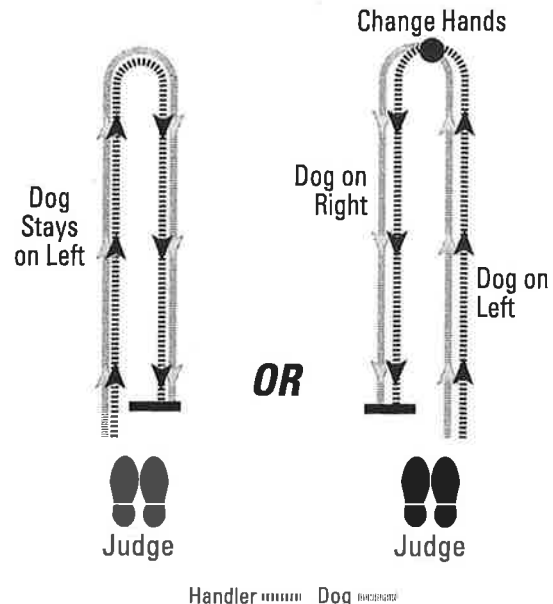
## Courtesy Turn



Every pattern should start with a courtesy turn, except the Down and Back pattern with two dogs. This enables you to get your dog under control and moving at the correct gait in the smallest amount of space. To perform this, step forward past the judge, with the dog at your left side. Then turn in a very tight circle with the dog on the outside. Remember to turn, and do not stand still and just circle your dog. Make only one circle before you start off on the pattern. After completing the

circle, move your dog away from the judge in a straight line, making sure your dog is lined up with the judge.

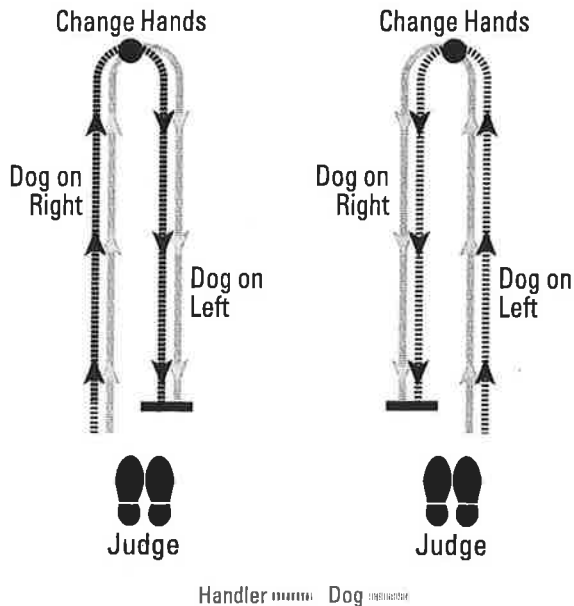
## Down and Back Pattern (One Dog)



To perform the Down and Back pattern, complete a courtesy turn, and gait your dog away from the judge. When you reach the end of the ring, turn toward the right, just as you would do an about turn in obedience, and return to the judge. The objective is to perform the turn smoothly and to make sure your dog is lined up with the judge when both leaving and returning. The Down and Back pattern may be performed on the diagonal, so pay attention to the directions the judge gives you.

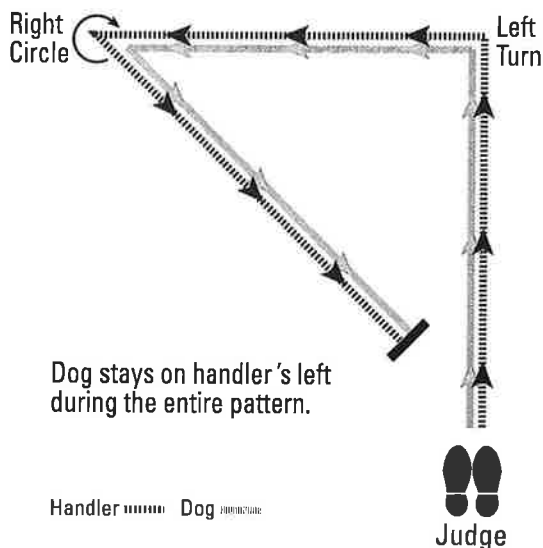
You may practice the Down and Back by switching hands, therefore switching sides when you return. Go down with the dog on your left. Then switch the lead to your other hand and return with the dog on your right. This type of Down and Back could be used as a tiebreaker, with the judge requesting you to switch hands. Sometimes you may need to switch hands if you are at an outdoor trial and the ring conditions are such that your dog might step in a hole or puddle if you don't switch hands. You also need to know how to switch hands in the Senior B level showmanship class when performing the Down and Back pattern with two dogs.

## Down and Back Pattern (Two Dogs)



When doing the Down and Back with two dogs, the handlers step off at the same time, with the dogs in the center and the handlers on the outside. When the end of the ring is reached, both handlers turn toward their dogs, switch hands and return, stopping three to four feet in front of the judge. For safety reasons, this Down and Back pattern is done only in Senior B level 4-H classes.

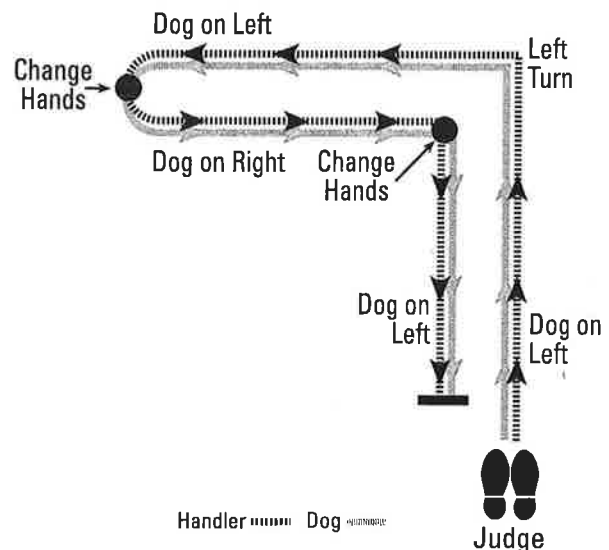
## Triangle Pattern



The Triangle pattern starts with the standard courtesy turn and gait away from the judge.

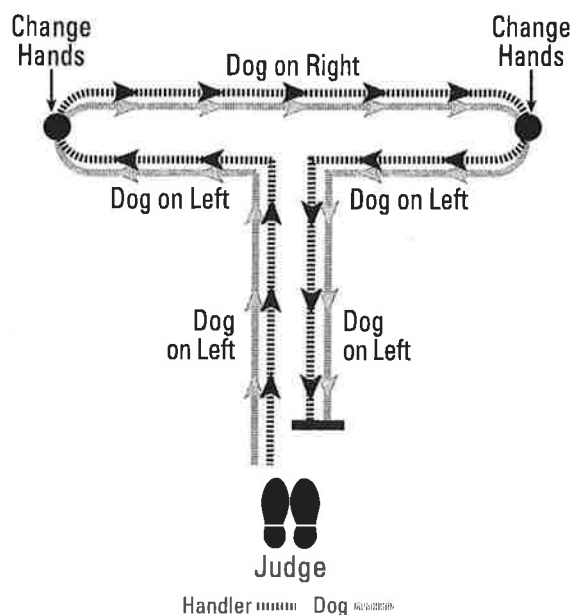
When you reach the end of the ring, make a left turn and continue to the corner. When you reach that corner, make a right circle and continue back to the judge, stopping three to four feet from the judge. To do a right circle, spin in a clockwise direction around your right hand with the dog at your left side. When you are facing the correct direction, step off at your normal gaiting speed. This enables a large dog to make a very sharp turn in a very small space. If you are working with a very small toy breed, the right circle may be eliminated. There are no hand changes in this pattern.

## "L" Pattern



The "L" pattern starts the same way as the Triangle pattern. Make your courtesy turn, gait away from the judge to the far end of the ring, and then make a left turn. When you reach that far corner, turn toward your dog and transfer the lead to your right hand. Continue turning until you are facing back along the way you came. Then gait back to the corner with your dog at your right side. As you approach the corner, let your dog continue past you and transfer the lead back to your left hand. Make a right turn and gait back to the judge. This puts the dog back at your left side for the final approach. The most difficult part of this exercise is at that farthest corner where you switch hands. It takes practice to make the switch and turn smoothly. You must also get your dog comfortable with gaiting at your right side.

## "T" Pattern



This pattern is a modified "L" pattern that is started midway down one side of the ring. After your courtesy turn, start in the same manner as the basic "L" by going across the ring, away from the judge, to the far side of the ring. Make a left turn, go across to the end, change hands, return, and continue on to the opposite side of the ring. When there, let the dog go past you, change hands and do an about turn, and continue back to the center. Make a left turn and continue back to the judge with the dog at your left side.

### After Performing a Pattern

After you have finished your individual pattern, the judge sends you to the end of the line. Do an about turn, with the dog at your left at the outside of the turn, and go back around the ring to the end of the line. The judge may or may not watch you return to the end of the line. Always present yourself as if the judge is still observing you. Continue to move up and restack your dog as each dog completes its pattern.

### To Table or Not to Table

There are breeds that are typically shown on a table at AKC events. These dogs are usually handled by adults who are physically able to

safely lift those breeds onto the table. In 4-H dog shows, youth may show mixed breeds that could be much larger than the breed their dogs most closely resemble. A youth may not be tall or strong enough to lift his or her dog onto the table. It is unsafe for a small exhibitor to lift a large dog on the table, which may be more than waist high. Youth, regardless of age, should be able to safely table toy breeds. But once you get past the 16-pound toy size, the exhibitor's size in relation to the dog's size must be considered. Ideally, the matter should be brought to the judge's attention *before* the class enters the ring. As the exhibitor, you should know if the breed of your dog, or what breed it most closely resembles, is normally shown on the table. You should be able to explain how it is done properly, even if you are unable to demonstrate those procedures. There is no penalty for exhibitors who are physically unable to safely lift their dogs, especially if they know the correct procedure and timing.

These AKC breeds are normally tabled.

#### Sporting

- Cocker Spaniel (all varieties)
- English Cocker Spaniel
- Hound
- Basenji
- Beagle (both sizes)
- Dachshunds (all)
- Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen
- Whippet

#### Working—None

#### Terrier

- Australian Terrier
- Bedlington Terrier
- Border Terrier
- Dandie Dinmont Terrier
- Fox Terrier (all)
- Lakeland Terrier
- Miniature Schnauzer
- Norfolk Terrier
- Parson (Jack) Russel Terrier
- Scottish Terrier
- Sealyham Terrier
- Skye Terrier
- Standard Manchester Terrier
- Welsh Terrier
- West Highland White Terrier



**Toy—All****Non-Sporting**

American Eskimo  
 Bichon Frise  
 Boston Terrier  
 French Bulldog  
 Lhasa Apso  
 Lowchen  
 Miniature Poodle  
 Schipperke  
 Shiba Inu  
 Tibetan Spaniel  
 Tibetan Terrier

**Herding**

Cardigan Welsh Corgi  
 Pembroke Welsh Corgi  
 Puli  
 Shetland Sheepdog

**Breed Presentation**

Although a handler should present the dog in the proper manner for the breed, it also must be remembered that in 4-H handlers show many mixed breeds. When showing a mixed breed, a handler should identify the breed the dog most closely resembles and show the dog as if it were that breed.

During all phases of handling, the exhibitor's concentration should be on the dog and not on the judge, but not to the extent that the handler is unaware of what is taking place in the ring. Judges evaluate the handler and dog with these questions in mind:

1. Is the dog responsive to the handler? Do 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**

Handlers must follow directions, use space wisely, and execute the requested gaiting patterns. Handlers should appear "ring wise," be alert to the judging progression, and be prepared for changes in the judging routine.

**Appearance and Conduct**

Excessive grooming of the dog in the ring to gain the judge's attention is inappropriate and should be faulted accordingly.

Handlers are expected to handle their dogs without distracting the dogs of other competitors, and a handler who crowds or disturbs other dogs should be faulted. A principle of showmanship is to afford the opportunity to learn the spirit of competition. Winning is important but is secondary to development of sportsmanship in competition.

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

**Use of Bait**

Using bait in showmanship classes is at the discretion of the judge. The steward should check with the judge prior to the start of classes and have the announcer inform the exhibitors as to the use of bait.

**Handler's Appearance**

Always remember that you and your dog are a team. You should be neat, clean, and well groomed. Wear clothing that is comfortable to handle in and that complements your dog. Clothing should not hinder or detract from the presentation of the dog. Examples of *acceptable* clothing for girls are dresses, skirts, dress shorts, skorts, dress slacks, dressy capri or crop pants, collared blouses, or similar attire. Acceptable clothing for boys includes dress shirts, ties, and dress slacks. Sports jackets may be worn, but are not necessary, especially in hot weather. When wearing a tie, a tie tack should be used to hold the tie close to the

shirt so it does not drape over the dog's back or get in the way. Shoes should have non-slip soles and low or no heels. Practice running and bending over in your show outfit. Practice handling the dog in the show clothes and shoes you have chosen to wear.

Clothing that is too tight or too revealing is distracting, and you will be penalized. Do *not* wear short skirts, short shorts, tank tops, halter tops, spaghetti straps, low cut blouses or shirts, shorts hanging too low on the waist, clothing with holes or tears in the fabric, any type of jeans, or other similar types of clothing. Also, do not wear excessive or oversized jewelry, sashes, and anything that will touch or distract your dog. If a skirt is worn, care should be taken so that it does not flap in the dog's face. Do not wear shirts with club names or logos, or clothing with lettering and distracting or offensive wording or designs. Do not wear hats. Do not wear items in your hair that detract from your overall presentation as a team. Do not wear sandals, open-toed shoes, clogs, or similar type shoes.

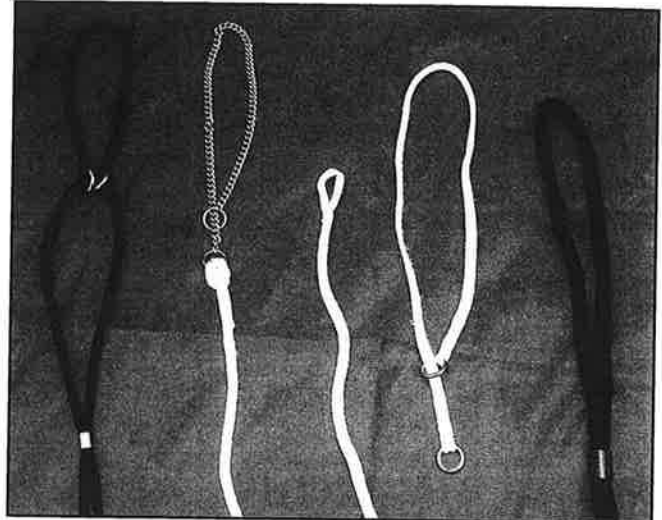
Hair that must be continually brushed out of the eyes or that falls over the dog or your face when you are stacking is distracting. Long hair should be in a braid or ponytail, or clips should be used to keep it out of the handler's face.

Armbands are worn on the left arm.

It is important for you to relax, smile, and act happy while showing! A pleasant attitude and good sportsmanship go a long way toward making you and your dog a winning team.

## Equipment

A dog is shown on a lead that is proportionate to its size. The collar may be nylon, very small chain link, or a combination lead and collar, such as a martingale. Never use a chain lead. Nothing must be hanging from the collar. If you do a lot of obedience work with your dog, you may want to use a chain collar for obedience and a nylon slip collar for showmanship. Most of the working breeds are shown on a chain collar with a leather or nylon lead. Experiment with different types of equipment to find out what gives you the most control over your dog.



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Left to right: martingale lead, fine chain collar and loop lead, loop lead, nylon collar, nylon slide lead. The lead should match the dog in color and size.

## Grooming

It is not necessary that a 4-H dog be shown in a show clip; however, the dog must be clean and his coat free of mats and loose hair. Ears must be clean, but it is not required that all hair be removed from the ear canal. The eyes must be free from matter, and the teeth should not have any tartar buildup. Some staining on the teeth of older dogs is permissible.

The toenails must be of proper length. This does not mean trimming the nails on the day before the show so that the nails have a fresh edge. Properly trimmed nails are achieved by regularly trimming them every week or so, depending on the normal activity of the dog. If you are not sure about correct toenail length, ask someone with experience.

Hair between the pads should be trimmed evenly with the pads to prevent matting and collection of dirt and ice. It is not required that whiskers be trimmed, but if your dog's face is shaved, any stubble should be removed. Some breeds develop static flyaway when they have been freshly bathed. Pin a towel around the dog while it is still damp until it dries to help the hair lie flat.

