

Top Dog Agility Players



Rules and Regulations

Draft 3.5 January, 2015

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1 General Provisions

1.1 Mission

The purpose of Top Dog Agility Players is to provide an inexpensive, competitive, games-oriented agility venue for dogs of all sizes without regard to breed or pedigree; and facilitate broad-based league play competition providing a shared experience that spans geographic boundaries.

1.2 Competition Guidelines

Top Dog Agility Players competition is intended to be a recreational format for the sport of dog agility. Extraordinary flexibility is provided under Top Dog rules to allow a *Host Club* to use their training space as an approved venue.

A *Host Club* may organize and conduct a competition under the sanction of Top Dog Agility Players without prior approval so long as:

- a) The Host Club is adequately and appropriately insured;
- b) The event judge is approved by Top Dog;
- c) Games and courses are reviewed in advance; [games and courses obtained from the Catalog of Games and Courses have already been reviewed and approved].
- d) Only dogs registered by Top Dog engage in the competition

Please note that a premium for the event is optional. Top Dog Agility Players will maintain a calendar of upcoming events so long as the Host Club notifies the organization in a timely manner. A link to an existing premium can be included in the calendar listing.

There is no application for a Top Dog event. Consequently there is no trial application fee.

1.3 Dogs Eligible to Compete

Top Dog Agility Players is open to all dogs, without regard to breed, pedigree at least 12 months of age. No dog may participate with apparent injuries, lameness or bandages, blind dogs, bitches in season and dogs that are aggressive. A dog may compete under a judge who is a member of the same household.

All dogs showing at a Top Dog event must be registered with Top Dog Agility Players in order to report scores. "Registered with Top Dog Agility Players" means the dog either: a) has a Top Dog registration number, or b) the trial secretary has both the registration form and payment in hand; (these must be included with the trial secretary's paperwork).

A dog owned by the judge of record may be shown under that judge and *may be* shown under a different judge and run by that judge of record. This is a provision of the rules subject to revocation should these liberties ever be abused.

Download a current [Top Dog Registration Form](#).

1.4 Clubs Eligible to Host Competition

A Club is a loose definition for a group who competes on Top Dog games and courses. There are no real limitations to size or constitution. A club is initially registered with Top Dog upon submission of event results.

Member clubs are responsible for their own insurance and are not required or otherwise policed by Top Dog to prove their insured status.

1.5 Qualification of Judges

Competition shall be conducted by a judge and stewards appointed for specific tasks in conduct of the event competition.

A judge must be preapproved by Top Dog Agility Players for scores submitted in League Competition. Only approved persons are permitted to judge at a sanctioned test or event pursuant to the guidelines established in these Rules and Regulations.

The judge or appointed stewards shall observe and signal course or game faults or points. The judge alone will sign off on competition results.

2 Titles and Certification

Top Dog Agility Players will confer the following titles for performance:

Top Dog Beginner (TDB)

To earn the TDB title the dog must earn three qualifying scores.

Top Dog Intermediate (TDI)

To earn the TDI title the dog must earn three qualifying scores subsequent to the TDB title.

Top Dog Superior (TDS)

To earn the TDS title the dog must earn five qualifying scores subsequent to the TDI title.

Additional Titling

Additional titling requirements are presently under review, and will be published at a future date.

3 Jump Height Divisions

Jump heights are determined based on the height of the dog at the withers. It is the responsibility of the judge appointed by the host club to measure and determine the correct scoring jump heights for all dogs in competition. The score sheet for an event shall contain two important indicators: 1) Jump Height; and 2) Scoring Jump Height.

A dog may jump at any jump height the owner/handler desires. Jump height exemptions are *self-declared*. A dog may be jumped at a lower height for any number of reasons (the dog is slightly lame; the surface is not optimal for jumping at full height; the dog is a non-confident jumper). Top Dog Agility Players will not monitor dogs' jump heights in league competition.

Dogs with a jump height exemption jump at their exempt height but are scored with dogs in their measured height (Scoring Jump Height). Please note that a dog can jump at any height greater than his measured height if desired. This includes 24" and 26" jump heights.

Scoring Jump Height is the measured height; the height at which the dog would jump if no jump height exemption whatsoever is extended.

Jump Height is the exempt height; the height at which the dog actually competes.

Dogs Jumping 4"

Intended for dogs measuring 8" or less at the withers; or dogs with a jump height exemption measuring 12" or less.

Dogs Jumping 8"

Intended for dogs measuring 12" or less at the withers; or dogs with a jump height exemption measuring 16" or less.

Dogs Jumping 12"

Intended for dogs measuring 16" or less at the withers; or dogs with a jump height exemption measuring 20" or less.

Dogs Jumping 16"

Intended for dogs measuring 20" or less at the withers; or dogs with a jump height exemption measuring more than 20".

Dogs Jumping 20"

Intended for dogs measuring more than 20" at the withers.

4 Equipment Specifications

Top Dog will allow equipment under the specification of any American agility organization with a *preference* for the equipment subscribing to Top Dog standards.

4.1 Optional Equipment

For standard classes some obstacles will be optional. These include: the table, the tire, the collapsed tunnel, and spread hurdles.

4.2 Specifications for Contact Equipment

A-frame ~ Ramps must measure one of: 6'8", 7', 8' or 9'. For a 9' board the apex will be set at 5' (60"); for an 8' board the apex will be set at 4'5" (53"); for a 7' board the apex will be set at 3'11" (47"); for a 6'8" board the apex will be set at 3'8" (44"); with a preference for the 9' board.

Contact zones must be 42" long. Slats are optional. When used, slat spacing must be in the range 9" to 1' slat to slat, slat size must be 1" to 1-1/2" wide by 1/4" to 3/8" thick.

The surface must have sufficient traction so dogs can ascend and descend safely. Rubber surfaces (granule or matting) are allowed.

A-frame ramp	Apex
6' 8" ramp	3' 8"
7' ramp	3' 11"
8' ramp	4' 5"
9' ramp	5' 0"

Dogwalk ~ Ramps must measure one of 12', 10', or 8'. For a 12' board the apex will be set in a range from 4' to 4'6" (48" to 54"); for a 10' board the apex will be set in a range from 3'4" to 3'9" (40" to 45"); for an 8' board the apex will be set in a range from 2'6" to 3' (30" to 36").

11"-12" board width; with a preference to the larger dimension of 12" wide.

Contacts shall be 36" long. If the dogwalk contacts are painted with longer contact zones, then a 2" to 3" wide tape of a high contrast color to the contact color may be used to mark the 36" contact zone. The tape shall be placed so that the bottom edge of the tape is at the 36" mark.

Slats are optional. When used, slat spacing must be in the range 9" to 1' slat to slat, slat size 1" to 1-1/2" wide by 1/4" to 3/8" thick.

The surface must have sufficient traction so dogs can ascend and descend safely. Rubber surfaces (granule or matting) are allowed if a club so desires.

Dogwalk ramp length	Apex
8' ramp	2' 6" to 3'
10' ramp	3' 4" to 3' 9"
12' ramp	4' to 4' 6"

Teeter ~ Ramps must measure one of 12', 10', or 8'. For a 12' board the apex will be set at 20"; for a 10' board the apex will be set at 16.5"; for an 8' board the apex will be set at 13"

11"-12" board width; with a preference to the larger dimension of 12" wide.

36" long contact zones. If the teeter contacts are painted with longer contact zones, then a 2" to 3" wide tape of a high contrast color to the contact color may be used to mark the 36" contact zone. The tape shall be placed so that the bottom edge of the tape is at the 36" mark.

A three-pound weight placed 12" from the up end of the teeter must drop the teeter in less than three seconds but not so quickly as to create a safety issue for dogs.

Slats are optional; and not particularly desirable. When used, slat spacing must be in the range 9" to 1' slat to slat, slat size 1" to 1-1/2" wide by 1/4" to 3/8" thick.

The surface must have sufficient traction so dogs can ascend and descend safely. Rubber surfaces (granule or matting) are allowed if a club so desires.

Teeter ramp length	Apex
8' ramp	13"
10' ramp	16.59"
12' ramp	20"

5 Performance Rules and Qualifying Criteria

These rules for performance apply to all dogs in every division.

5.1 Minimum Obstacle Requirements

For numbered courses there is no real minimum or maximum number of obstacles; but in general Top Dog should observe a rational standard: a minimum of 17 and a maximum of 20 obstacles.

Further *there is no defining list of required obstacles* for a numbered course.

5.2 Qualifying Criteria by Level

In Top Dog dogs at all levels compete on the same standard courses and games. The criteria to qualify on standard courses by level shall be:

- Beginner ~ 20 faults or fewer to qualify
- Intermediate ~ 10 faults or fewer to qualify
- Superior ~ 0 faults to qualify

In games, qualification criteria (by level) shall be set by the judge under the direction of Top Dog Agility Players course reviewer.

5.3 Performance Faults

Standard scoring shall be determined on a faults-then-time basis. A dog may place in a class without actually achieving a qualifying score. In the event of a tie in number of faults, the winner shall be determined on the basis of lowest time. In the event of a tie in both faults and time, the judge may use his discretion to determine a tie-breaking scenario.

Performance faults shall be assessed on the following basis:

- Missed contacts ~ 5 faults
- Wrong-course ~ 5 faults
- Fly-off of the teeter ~ 5 faults
- Missed weave poles, one occurrence only ~ 5 faults
- Displacing hurdle poles ~ 5 faults
- Refusals (contacts only) ~ 5 faults
- Excessive Delay at Start: ~ 5 faults to Elimination
- Outside assistance ~ 5 faults to Elimination
- Leaving the table before completion of the count, (one occurrence only) ~ 5 faults
- 3 occurrences of leaving the table early ~ Failure to Perform
- 3 occurrences of missed weave poles ~ Failure to Perform
- Failure to perform ~ 20 faults
- Excessive handler assistance ~ 5 faults to Elimination

- Unsportsmanlike behavior ~ Elimination and Excused
- Aggression to humans or other dogs ~ Elimination and Excused
- Dog ceasing to work or leaving the test area ~ Elimination and Excused
- Fouling the course ~ Elimination and Excused

5.3.1 Signaling Performance Faults

The judge might use these signals to the scribe for performance faults:

- Standard faults – Raised open hand
- Failure to perform – Two raised open hands
- Refusal – Raised closed fist
- Elimination – Crossed arms
- Excusal – Blow the whistle

5.4 Rates of Travel

In tests in which performance is measured on the basis of faults, the judge shall measure the dog's path and set a Standard Course Time (SCT). For standard classes the judge shall use a number within the range; using a lower number for more technical courses and a higher number for more flowing courses.

The preferred rates of travel shall be in the range 2.0 YPS to 4.0 YPS. The judge may establish a range based on the measured jump heights of dogs in competition, but is not required to do so. A judge may establish rates of travel outside of the preferred range.

5.5 Performance Standards

5.5.1 Obstacle Performance

5.5.1.1 Weave Poles

The dog is required to enter the weave poles from right to left between the first two poles, and weave alternately down the line of poles until the performance is complete. All poles must be taken for a complete performance.

After making the entry if the dog misses a pole to the extent that he has to back up to correct, then he will be faulted for a missed pole. The exhibitor, at his or her discretion, may correct for the missed pole by restarting the line of weaves or by redirecting the dog back to the missed pole. Three occurrences of missed poles shall be deemed a failure to perform, and the judge will instruct the exhibitor to go on to the next obstacle.

Crossing the line of weave poles when the weave poles are not the next correct obstacle shall be deemed a wrong course only if the dog attempts a weaving motion upon entering.

5.5.1.2 Table

The table is an optional obstacle. When used, the dog may be required to perform one of three obedience exercises on the table for a count of five seconds: sit, down, or stand. If the dog breaks the position during the count, the count shall resume from the point of interruption (cumulative) when the dog returns to the required position.

Additionally the judge may specify “no performance” on the table. The table count will ensue after the dog gets onto the table regardless of the position assumed by the dog.

In a “stand” the dog is permitted to shift his feet. However, if the dog raises two feet into the air, turns around or walks around on the table, sits, or lies down, the stand is broken, and the count must be resumed once the dog is returned to a standing position.

Leaving the table before the end of the count shall be faulted for the first occurrence only. When the dog has dismounted the table prior to the completion of the count the performance count shall be resumed from the point of interruption (cumulative) once the dog is back on the table and in the required position. Leaving the table three times shall be deemed a failure to perform, and the judge will instruct the exhibitor to go on to the next obstacle. Leaving the table prior to completion of the count and not returning to complete the count shall be deemed a failure to perform.

5.5.1.3 Teeter

The dog must mount the ramp tip the board and dismount touching the contact zone before leaving the plank.

Leaving the teeter before beginning the tip (plank doesn’t move) shall be deemed a refusal. Failing to re-attempting the teeter after a refusal shall be deemed a failure to perform. Leaving the plank after the plank has begun to move shall be deemed a fly-off only if the downside ramp does not touch the ground. If the dog pushes off before the plank settles the performance will not be faulted if the plank touches the ground. However the judge shall exercise discretion and may call the fly-off if the dog appears out of control in the dismount (legs wind-milling in the air, failing to land squarely on his feet, and so forth).

The up “safety” contacts are judged only when the dog side-mounts the board. If the approach to the board is straight and square, the judge shall not consider the contact zone for the purpose of performance. On a side mount, the dog must touch the yellow contact zone or will be faulted with a missed contact.

5.5.1.4 Dogwalk

The dog must mount the ramp in the direction designated by the judge, and dismount touching the contact zone.

Leaving the dogwalk on the up-ramp shall be deemed a refusal. Failing to re-attempting the dogwalk after a refusal shall be deemed a failure to perform. Leaving the dogwalk on

the center plank shall be deemed a failure to perform, and the judge will instruct the exhibitor to go on to the next obstacle. Leaving the dogwalk on the descent plank before the yellow contact zone shall be deemed a missed contact only.

The up "safety" contacts are judged only when the dog side-mounts the ramp. If the approach to the ramp is straight and square, the judge shall not consider the contact zone for the purpose of performance. On a side mount, the dog must touch the yellow contact zone or will be faulted with a missed contact.

5.5.1.5 A-frame

The dog must mount the ramp in the direction designated by the judge, and dismount touching the contact zone.

Leaving the A-frame on the ascent shall be deemed a refusal. Failing to re-attempting the A-frame after a refusal shall be deemed a failure to perform. Leaving the A-frame on the descent plank before the yellow contact zone shall be deemed a missed contact only. Not attempting the A-frame after a refusal shall be deemed a failure to perform.

The up "safety" contacts are judged only when the dog side-mounts the ramp. If the approach to the ramp is straight and square, the judge shall not consider the contact zone for the purpose of performance. On a side mount, the dog must touch the yellow contact zone or will be faulted with a missed contact.

5.5.1.6 Hurdles

The dog must jump the hurdle in the direction designated by the judge, crossing between the standards and over the bar without dropping the bar.

5.5.1.7 Tire

The dog must jump the tire aperture in the direction designated by the judge. Jumping through the tire or between the tire and frame in the wrong direction shall be deemed a wrong-course.

5.5.1.8 Tunnels

The dog must enter the tunnel in the direction designated by the judge, and exit on the opposite end. Entering the wrong end (all four paws) shall be deemed a wrong-course.

5.6.2 Performance Faults

5.6.2.1 Missed Contacts

A dog is required to touch the yellow contact safety zones on the dismount side of the contact obstacles. Up contacts shall not be judged when the dog makes a straight approach. If the dog mounts from the side, missing the up contact zone shall be faulted.

5.6.2.2 Teeter Fly-Off

Determination of a teeter fly-off is judge's discretion. Leaving the plank after the plank has begun to move shall be deemed a fly-off only if the downside ramp does not touch the ground. In other words, even if the dog pushes off before the plank settles the performance will not be faulted if the plank touches.

Considering especially the performance of small dogs, if the dog clearly is ready to dismount before the teeter has settled, the dog will not be faulted for popping off the end if he is clearly under control, and so long as the downside ramp is thrust down enough to touch the ground.

5.6.2.3 Refusals

A refusal occurs when a dog stops or turns away from a contact obstacle after having clearly begun the approach, or by running past the run-out plane of the obstacle. Committing to a contact obstacle (touching any part of the ascent with four feet) and coming back off the obstacle shall also be deemed a refusal.

A run-out plane is the point at which the dog cannot make an approach to the contact obstacle without turning back to begin the approach again. This line shall be drawn through the back edge of the contact zones.

In numbered courses and sequences refusals shall not be faulted for any obstacles except the contact obstacles. Note that certain games may allow for refusals to be called for obstacles other than the contact obstacles.

5.6.2.4 Wrong-course

A wrong course shall be defined as a dog performing or committing all four paws to an obstacle out of sequence, or in the wrong direction. Jumping over any obstacle that is not the next correct obstacle shall be deemed a wrong-course.

Running through any portion of the weave poles when it is not the next designated obstacle shall be deemed a wrong course only if the dog attempts a weaving motion after entering.

During the dog's performance of the weave poles, if the dog sets up a weaving motion moving in the opposite direction of the course flow it shall be deemed a wrong-course. That means the dog may pass through the line of weave poles once only when being turned back to retry the performance. But twice through the poles will be deemed a wrong course.

A dog running under a contact obstacle or across the fabric of the collapsed tunnel shall *not* be deemed a wrong-course. However, if the dog jumps the fabric or the rigid portion of the collapsed tunnel, or the ramp of a contact obstacle, the performance shall be deemed a wrong-course.

5.6.2.5 Handling Faults

The dog is faulted when the handler touches the dog if the touching aids performance. This occurs when the handler collides with the dog in a way that pushes the dog in the direction of the course, and will include the handler touching or bumping the dog during the performance of the weave poles.

The dog is faulted when the handler touches the dog with certain exceptions: a) the dog shall not be faulted for incidental bumping; b) the dog is not faulted for excited jumping on the handler that has no benefit to the dog; c) the dog is not faulted for the handler stroking the dog (in a soothing manner, perhaps).

5.6.2.6 Touching the Equipment

The handler is faulted for touching the equipment only when that touching is intended to aid performance. Touching the equipment should only be called if the handler's evident purpose is to draw the dog's attention to the obstacle. Accidentally or incidentally touching equipment should not be faulted.

5.6.2.7 Outside Assistance

Outside assistance occurs when someone other than the handler attempts to exert some influence to aid the dog's performance. Some possible scenarios might be: a cheering section organized for particular dogs to help the dog get motivated; someone waiting in the dog's line of sight in the closing of a course with a visible Frisbee or food treats for the dog; someone yelling course directions to the exhibitor on the field. Also, when a dog attempts to leave the ring if a person interferes or intervenes, then the dog shall be faulted for outside interference.

5.6.2.8 Elimination

The dog shall be eliminated and the team dismissed/excused from the ring for the current run for any of the following: harsh treatment of the dog; fouling the ring (this includes vomiting, urination and defecation); use of food or toys in the ring; the dog refuses to return to work in a reasonable amount of time; the dog is unmanageable; excessive handling; outside assistance; or, dog aggression.

Dogs will not be eliminated for: wearing a collar and tags; wearing adornments, clothing, ties; or mild cursing by the handler so long as that cursing is not directed at the dog or an official on the field.

Aversive training devices will not be allowed on show grounds. These include choke collars, pinch collars, bark collars, and electronic (shock) collars.

5.6.2.9 Excessive Delay

A dog whose handler excessively delays the start of his round may be faulted in a range from 5 faults to Elimination.

6 The Catalog of Courses and Games

Each course run or game played under the aegis of Top Dog Agility Players shall be recorded in the *Catalog of Courses and Games*. Any course or game in the *Catalog* is approved for use and reuse in competition.

The results from dogs a course or game are held as historic results. When *reusing* an existing course or game in the *Catalog* new players will be competing with the historic players. The scores of historic players may enhance the Lifetime Performance Points earned by new players; and the first place dog might be either a new player, or a historic player.

If a judge were to make *any* change in the detail of the *Game* (eg. changing the scoring basis) this variation would become a new and unique game with no ties or association to the original.

Data for Recording

- Name or Title of the game
- Credit to Course Designer
- Course Map (including, if possible, CRCD source code)
- Qualifying Criteria (including Scoring Basis and Rates of Travel)
- Results

[Download a Current Catalog of Games and Courses](#)

7 Lifetime Performance Points

The highest titles in Top Dog are based on the accumulation of Lifetime Performance Points. These points reflect the quality, consistency, and durability/persistence of the dog's performance in competition over time.

7.1 Schedule of LPP Earned

Lifetime Performance Points are earned for placement in competition. It's a simple formula which accords the following points for placement:

- 1st place dogs in competition (nn)
- 2nd place nn -1
- 3rd place nn -2
- ... (etc)
- nnth place nn-nn

Additionally:

- 10 points are awarded for a qualifying score;
- Either: 3 points are awarded simply for finishing without being eliminated; or, 1 point is awarded for playing.
- When using a historic course or game from the *Catalog of Games and Courses* LPP shall be based on combined new and historic results. New players will earn appropriate LPP based on those combined results. The LPP of historic dogs will *not* be adjusted.
- A dog may compete on the same course or game at different points in time.

8 Rule #8

No Whining!

All systems of rules at their core are arbitrary and capricious. You will live to play another day. Please be a good sport.

Appendix A ~ Inventing New Games for Competition

Existing agility games played by any of the existing agility organizations can be used in Top Dog Agility Players. These games have the advantage that rules are established and generally understood by exhibitors and the games have a track record of rule interpretation, performance, and judging.

A Rational Checklist for New Games

New agility games may also be created. New games may be created by the judge (or anyone) and must be submitted to Top Dog Agility Players administration for review and approval four (4) weeks prior to the date of the test.

When designing a new agility game for use in Top Dog for titling purposes, the following guidelines shall be considered:

- A game should have a clear start and finish line or point.
- Faults that end a game must be clearly determinable.
- Games must have a clearly established time period for play. If the new game has multiple periods, each period shall either have its own clearly established time period or some means to move from one play period to another.
- New games shall have a clear and simple means of breaking tied scores for faults or points. Time measured in 1/100th of a second may be used.
- New games shall provide for how faults are to be determined and how the case of failure to perform affects subsequent play (e.g., missed obstacle, dropped bar, stepping on a line, obstacles taken out of a required sequence before moving to the next portion of the game, etc.)
- Documentation for new games should establish the scoring basis and the qualification criteria.
- Anything that can happen in the conduct of the game will happen. Have you thought the game through?
- Games requiring a Qualifying Course Time (QCT) shall use the rates of travel in section 5.0.

A comprehensive reference for establishing rules and guidelines for Top Dog games can be found in “*The Book of Agility Games*” volume 3. This book is available at www.dogagility.org/newstore.



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