

akc trick dog evaluator guide

AKC Trick Dog Evaluator Guide

The American Kennel Club (AKC) Trick Dog program has gained immense popularity among dog trainers and pet owners alike. This program not only enhances the bond between dogs and their handlers but also promotes mental stimulation and physical exercise for dogs. For those interested in evaluating trick dogs, the AKC provides a structured framework that ensures consistency and fairness. This guide aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the AKC Trick Dog Evaluator process, the requirements for evaluators, and tips for successful evaluations.

Understanding the AKC Trick Dog Program

The AKC Trick Dog program is designed to recognize dogs that have learned a variety of tricks. It encourages training through positive reinforcement, which helps strengthen the relationship between dogs and their owners. The program is divided into four main titles based on the number and complexity of tricks performed:

1. Novice Trick Dog (NTD) - Requires the dog to perform 5 tricks.
2. Intermediate Trick Dog (ITD) - Requires the dog to perform 10 tricks, including some more challenging ones.
3. Advanced Trick Dog (ATD) - Requires the dog to perform 15 tricks, demonstrating a higher level of training.
4. Trick Dog Performer (TDP) - This title allows for greater creativity and the performance of a routine that showcases a variety of tricks.

Role of the Evaluator

The role of an AKC Trick Dog evaluator is crucial in maintaining the integrity of the program. Evaluators assess whether dogs meet the required standards for each title. They must be knowledgeable about the program, patient, and skilled at assessing the dog's performance in a positive and encouraging manner.

Becoming an AKC Trick Dog Evaluator

To become an AKC Trick Dog evaluator, individuals must meet specific requirements:

1. Experience: Evaluators should have substantial experience in dog training, particularly in teaching tricks and behaviors.
2. Certification: Candidates must complete an AKC-approved evaluator seminar. The seminar covers program details, evaluation processes, and assessment criteria.
3. Application: After completing the seminar, applicants must submit an application to the AKC with a fee and proof of their training experience.

Evaluation Expectations

Evaluators are expected to adhere to certain guidelines during the evaluation process:

- Fairness: Each dog should be evaluated based on the same criteria.
- Encouragement: Evaluators should create a positive environment, allowing dogs to perform to the best of their abilities.
- Assessment Criteria: Evaluators must be familiar with the tricks and performance standards for each title.

Preparing for Evaluations

Both evaluators and participants need to prepare adequately for trick evaluations to ensure a smooth and successful process.

Preparation for Evaluators

Here are some tips for evaluators to prepare for conducting assessments:

1. Review Evaluation Criteria: Familiarize yourself with the specific criteria for each title and the tricks required.
2. Practice Assessing: Conduct mock evaluations with experienced dogs and handlers to refine your assessment skills.
3. Create a Welcoming Environment: Ensure the evaluation setting is comfortable and free from distractions.

Preparation for Participants

Handlers looking to have their dogs evaluated should take the following steps:

1. Train Consistently: Regular practice is crucial. Dogs should be comfortable performing their tricks in various environments.
2. Know the Tricks: Ensure that your dog can confidently perform all the required tricks for the desired title.
3. Stay Calm: Dogs can sense their owner's anxiety. Remaining calm will help your dog feel secure and perform better.

Conducting the Evaluation

The actual evaluation process is straightforward, but it requires attention to detail and a clear understanding of the expectations.

Evaluation Steps

1. Check-In: Handlers should check in with the evaluator, presenting any

necessary paperwork.

2. Warm-Up: Allow dogs to warm up before the evaluation begins. This can help them relax and perform more effectively.
3. Trick Performance: The evaluator will ask the handler to demonstrate each trick in order. The evaluator will score each trick based on predefined criteria.
4. Feedback: After the performance, evaluators should provide constructive feedback to handlers, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluators score tricks based on various factors, including:

- Accuracy: How well the dog performs the trick as defined in the evaluation guidelines.
- Completion: The dog must finish the trick completely and correctly.
- Attitude: The dog should exhibit enthusiasm and confidence while performing.
- Handler Interaction: The bond between the handler and the dog is essential. Evaluators will look for effective communication and encouragement from the handler.

Common Tricks for Evaluation

Each title requires specific tricks, but there are some common tricks that dogs can learn, which are beneficial for multiple titles:

- Sit
- Stay
- Come
- Roll Over
- Play Dead
- Spin
- Shake Hands
- Jump Through Hoops
- Weave Between Legs
- Fetch Specific Items

Handlers should ensure their dogs can perform these tricks fluently, as they form the foundation of many evaluations.

Challenges and Solutions

Both evaluators and participants may face challenges during the evaluation process. Here are some common issues and their solutions:

For Evaluators

- Nervous Handlers: If a handler is visibly nervous, take a moment to encourage them before proceeding. A calm atmosphere can enhance performance.

- **Unpredictable Dog Behavior:** If a dog becomes distracted or uncooperative, evaluators should allow for a brief break and encourage the handler to refocus their dog.

For Participants

- **Dog Anxiety:** If a dog shows signs of anxiety, it may be beneficial to practice in similar environments to the evaluation setting beforehand.
- **Handler Stress:** Handlers should practice relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, to help manage their stress levels before the evaluation.

Conclusion

The AKC Trick Dog Evaluator program provides a structured and enjoyable way to celebrate the achievements of dogs and their handlers. By understanding the requirements and preparation needed for evaluations, evaluators and participants can engage in a positive experience that strengthens the bond between them. As the popularity of trick training continues to grow, the role of evaluators will remain essential in recognizing and rewarding the dedication and hard work of canine companions. Whether you're an evaluator or a handler, embracing the journey of trick training can lead to a fulfilling relationship with your dog, filled with fun and achievement.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the AKC Trick Dog Evaluator Guide?

The AKC Trick Dog Evaluator Guide is designed to assist evaluators in assessing a dog's performance in trick training. It provides criteria for evaluating various tricks and outlines the responsibilities of evaluators during testing.

What are the different titles that a dog can earn through the AKC Trick Dog program?

The AKC Trick Dog program offers several titles, including Trick Dog Novice (TKN), Trick Dog Intermediate (TKI), Trick Dog Advanced (TKA), Trick Dog Performer (TKP), and Trick Dog Elite Performer (TKE), each requiring different levels of trick performance.

How can someone become an AKC Trick Dog Evaluator?

To become an AKC Trick Dog Evaluator, individuals must complete an application process, attend a seminar, and pass a written test that covers the evaluation criteria and the requirements for each trick title.

What types of tricks are included in the AKC Trick Dog program?

The AKC Trick Dog program includes a wide range of tricks, such as basic commands (sit, stay), fun tricks (spin, roll over), and advanced tricks (play dead, weave between legs), allowing for creativity and personality in performances.

Is there an age requirement for dogs to participate in the AKC Trick Dog program?

Yes, dogs must be at least six months old to participate in the AKC Trick Dog program. This age requirement ensures that dogs have developed enough maturity and training to perform tricks effectively.

Can mixed-breed dogs participate in the AKC Trick Dog program?

Absolutely! The AKC Trick Dog program is open to all dogs, including mixed breeds, as long as they are registered with the AKC or a recognized organization. This inclusivity encourages all dog owners to participate in trick training.

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