

Your First Trial

If you are thinking about entering your first agility trial, then you probably have many questions. This document tries to ask the relevant questions and give some answers.

What is the AAC?

The Agility Association of Canada (AAC) is the organization controlling agility trials in Canada. It sanctions agility trials, maintains rules, approves the judges, keeps track of qualifying runs for each dog, awards titles, and registers dogs for trials. The AAC website is <http://www.aac.ca>. The concept of AAC began right here at ADSC in the late 1980's with Art Newman.

The AAC is a volunteer organization. You can become a member of the AAC if you wish to, but are not required to. ADSC is a member club of the AAC so that it can host AAC trials.

The Canadian Kennel Club (CKC) also has agility trials ~~locally~~ for CKC registered dogs. Locally, Dreamfields runs one or two CKC trials each summer.

There are other agility associations that have trials in Canada but are based in the United States. None of the clubs in Ottawa are associated with any of them.

Are you ready to enter an AAC trial?

Your dog must be over 18 months old.

To enter standard and all games except jumpers, your dog should be able to perform all the obstacles successfully. Your dog should be able to do a simple 17 obstacle course in under 70 seconds (80 seconds for veterans) that includes a dog-walk, a see-saw, an A-frame, a table with a 5 second down, some tunnels, some jumps, a double jump, a spread jump, 12 weave poles, a chute, a tire and a cross-over..

In the jumpers game, there are only jumps and tunnels. You can enter only jumpers in a trial that offers it.

Be prepared to perform the crossover at any ADSC trial. In starters, the crossover is done turning left or right, never straight across.

What is K-9 Kup and how does it relate to AAC trials?

K-9 Kup is a team competition organized by ADSC. There are up to 14 teams consisting of up to 10 dogs each, coming from the various agility clubs and schools in the Ottawa area. Starters level courses and games are run. The trials are not AAC sanctioned. K-9 Kup is intended for novice dogs and handlers to learn about trialing and to have fun. The events provide an authentic trial atmosphere along with a chance to run AAC type courses with judges, but with less pressure and less cost. The other purpose of the K-9 Kup is to acquaint you with all the duties of a trial on a volunteer basis by actually doing them. It is an event put on by the participants for the benefit of the participants.

If you are thinking about trialing your dog for the first time, it is strongly suggested you do K-9 Kup first to get you and your dog used to the trial atmosphere. It is surprising how different a dog can act at a trial verses classes or practicing.

You can find out more about K-9 Kup on the ADSC web site at <http://www.adsc-agility.com/spages/k9kup.html#k9kup>.

How do I find out about AAC trials?

The All Dogs Sports Club web site has an events page that lists all the ADSC events including AAC trials, <http://www.adsc-agility.com/event.html>. Dreamfields also runs AAC and CKC trials - <http://www.dreamfields.com>. A complete listing of approved trials for the AAC can be found on the AAC web site - <http://www.aac.ca>

What must I do before entering my your first AAC trial?

You must get an AAC dog ID card to enter a trial. It can take a month or two to get an ID card, so if you are thinking about trialing get one well in advance. Many a dog has missed their first trial because they did not have a dog ID, or it did not arrive on time.

Your dog is registering for AAC trials when you get an AAC dog ID; you are not joining the AAC. The AAC Dog ID application form can be found at the end of any trial premium and in the forms section of the AAC web site. You do not need to join the AAC to run a dog in AAC trials, but by becoming a member of AAC you will be kept up to date on AAC activities and rules.

Read the rules on the AAC web site <http://www.aac.ca>. It is your responsibility to understand the rules; the judge will not explain the rules before each run.

On the trial entry form you will need put your dog's height at the withers and jump height.

What are regular, specials and veterans?

Regular is the category intended where most dogs run. In regular:

- the dog runs at the jump height for his measurement
- performs all the obstacles
- can optionally jump up one jump height at a trial
- the final jump height circled on the AAC ID card is the regular jump height

Specials is intended for dogs that cannot deal with some aspect of regular. In specials:

- the dog runs one jump height lower than the measured jump height
- the A-frame moves down from 5'6" to 5'
- double, spread and broad jumps are replaced with single jumps
- the course time is the same as in regular
- once in specials the dog cannot move back to regular

Veterans is for older dogs that have slowed down and maybe cannot jump as high but want to keep playing. In veterans,

- the dog must be 7 years or older, or have been in specials 1 year also being 5 years or older
- the dog runs one or two jump heights lower than the measured jump height

- the A-frame is at 5"
- double, spread and broad jumps are replaced with single jumps (same as specials)
- the course time is 20 percent longer
- in gamblers and snooker the times are same but fewer points are needed to qualify
- once in veterans the dog cannot move back to regular or specials

How to enter a trial?

You enter a trial by getting a trial premium, filling it out and sending it to the trial coordinator along with payment for the runs.

Most clubs post the trial premium on their website, typically on an event page. If they do not, you can e-mail or call the trial coordinator to ask for a premium to be mailed to you. You can find out who the trial coordinator is on the approved trials section of the AAC website <http://www.aac.ca>

For ADSC, the premiums are posted at <http://www.adsc-agility.com/event.html>. As a member you will receive an e-mail when ADSC trial premiums are posted.

To enter a trial you will typically:

- the print the premium
- fill the premium out, including
 - your dog's AAC ID number
 - dog's height at the withers (shoulder)
 - your dog's competition level (Regular, Specials and Veterans)
 - your dog's jump height for this trial (you are permitted to jump one height up if desired in regular)
- write a cheque for the required amount based on the classes you are entering
- mail the premium and cheque to the trial coordinator stated on the premium before the entry deadline

Your entry must be sent before the deadline date, which is on the premium. Most local trials have limited entry and fill up well before the deadline. It is good idea to enter early - this is especially true of masters.

A trial acceptance will be sent to you by mail or e-mail before the trial, typically after the closing date. If you have not received an acceptance a week before the trial and have not ~~not have~~ been notified that you did not get into the trial, ask the trial coordinator by e-mail what is happening.

Can I withdraw from a trial once I am entered?

Yes, you can withdraw - meaning you get your money back and are out of the trial. Before the entry deadline you can simply contact the trial coordinator to withdraw.

After the trial entry deadline withdrawing may be more complicated. A good reason is required to withdraw, usually being a physical problem with your dog, or with you. Depending on the club, after the trial deadline you will need a note signed by a veterinarian or doctor to withdraw. If you need to withdraw, contact the trial coordinator with your problem and she will inform you what is required.

You cannot typically withdraw the day before the trial.

Dogs in heat are not allowed on the grounds at any trial.

Do I need to show up at a trial?

If you do not show up to an entered trial, there is no penalty other than losing your money.

It is a courtesy to let the trial know you will not be there. Send an e-mail to the trial coordinator the night before the trial, or maybe tell a friend that is going to the trial.

What do I expect on trial day?

There will be lots of people and lots of dogs. You need to arrive on time and make sure you bring everything you will need.

The basics that you should bring:

- your dog
- his AAC ID card
- a leash
- a quick on and off dog collar
- water for your dog
- a chair
- a crate (at outdoor trials if you bring a tent you can use a stake)
- dog treats
- shade tent for outdoor trials
- sunscreen
- hat
- clothes and shoes you can run in

The following is basically what you will do at trial:

- You will arrive.
- Leave your dog in the well-ventilated car, find a place to sit somewhere around the field you will be running in and leave some stuff there to hold the spot. Set up if you have time.
- Go to the check-in desk and find out where and when dog measurements will be

- Get your dog. Your dog should always be on leash unless he is running a course or in his crate.
- Go to get him measured; don't forget your AAC ID card.
- After the measurement, go back to the check-in desk and check-in. You will be given a catalog listing the events and the running orders. Verify you are in the events you think you are. You will also be given a printout of the courses.
- If you are one the first 10 dogs, you should start getting you dog ready to run including going for a pee.
- A call will be made for a judges briefing for your event.
- Put you dog in the crate and go to the ring of the event. Do not expect anybody to be there to hold your dog for you.
- Stand with the other handlers and listen to the judge's briefing.
- The judge will describe details of the event and particular instructions. You will be told the running times, the judge's table count, how long you have to walk the course. When the judge asks if there are any questions, feel free to ask in the briefing. If you feel your question is only for you then you can ask the judge after the briefing more privately.
- Walk the course and figure out how you think you should handle it.
- Check-in with the gatekeeper. Check the listing to verify where you are running.
- Go back to your spot and hang out, watch the dogs run, enjoy yourself, talk to the other handlers. Pay attention to what is going on. How are the other dogs doing? Where are they having problems?
- About 10 to 15 dogs before you run, get him ready to run.
- Take your dog for a pee and a dump.
- Warm him up using the two jumps supplied for warm-ups.
- 4 dogs before your run, go to the gatekeeper area and tell the gatekeeper your are there.
- Look for where are the leashes being put.
- Watch the dog that's running, do you remember the course correctly?
- Listen to the gatekeeper's calls. She will call who's in the hole and who's on deck.
- When you are on deck (next), go to the entrance and wait. Watch the dog that is running.
- If you were instructed (by the judge or gatekeeper) to go on the course when the previous dog was at a certain point, do it. Get ready to run. Do not take your dog's collar off until the previous dog is finished.

- When the previous dog finishes, take off your dog's collar with the leash attached. Toss it behind you. Wait to start.
- A bell or some sound will indicate that the timer, scribe and judge are ready for you to run. This sound does not mean you must start right then, but you should start in a timely fashion. Do not wait for the bell to take off your dog's collar.
- Run your dog. Have a good time, don't stress yourself out or your dog.
- While you were running, your dog's collar and leash were moved to the exit by the leash runner.
- When you finish, get the leash and collar, and put them on your dog.
- Leave the ring.
- Praise your dog!
- Go back to your spot. Give your dog some water.
- Watch some more agility. Make some new friends.
- The current event will end.
- The next course will be built, or may already be ready in another ring.
- Be prepared for the judge's briefing or walk-through for the next course to be called . Frequently, you will be told to walk the course before the judges briefing. This will not happen with snooker or gamblers.
- At some point the ribbon presentation for your event will be called out. Regardless of how you did, go to the ribbon ceremonies and cheer on everyone else. You may be surprised that your less-than-perfect run will win a placement ribbon and a dog treat. You can take your dog to the ribbon ceremony if he is friendly and controlled (there will be other dogs there).
- After ribbons are presented, the score sheet is posted with the times and faults. Go check how you did. What was your time? Did you get the faults and points you thought you did?
- Repeat all this for several courses.
- At the end of the trial, pack-up everything and clean up your site.
- Bye for now, see you next time.

How to I get my dog measured?

When you enter your first trial, you need to put your dog's height at the withers and jump height on the form. You do not need to get this perfect but a best try is required. ADSC has measuring devices. You are welcome use them, but please do not remove them the grounds. Your instructor should be able to help you measure your dog.

Jump heights are determined using the following values.

Dog Height	Jumper Height in Regular
12" or less	10"
> 12" to 16"	16"
> 16" to 21"	22"
> 21"	26"

Your dog needs two measurements on the ID card in the same jump height category by different judges to determine the official jump height. The dog must be over 2 years of age for the measurement to be recorded on the ID card. If he is under 2 years old then you must get him measured at each trial but the measurements will not be recorded. If your dog is over 23", a single measurement is required and he does not need to be 2 years old. The final height marked on the card is the dog's normal jump height in regular.

Arrive at the trial before the check-in start time. Go to check-in desk area and ask a trial official when and where you can get your dog measured. When you go to get measured, there will be a helper and a judge. Hand your ID card to the helper. The judge will ask you to stand your dog then will measure him. The judge will sign the card and tell you whether you need another measurement or not. Then you can go to the check-in desk and check-in.

Remember the judge will be a dog lover, but likely a stranger to your dog and could be a man or a woman. It is your responsibility to be able to stand your dog and have stranger touch his shoulders (to find his shoulder blades) and then put a bar (or wicket) on his shoulders. The judge cannot (and will not) measure a dog that will not stand still. It is a good idea to bring some treats.

How do I find out about the rules?

The AAC rules can be found on the AAC website <http://www.aac.ca>. You will also find out about the rules in your agility classes and at K-9 Kup. There are judges in the club and at trials that are always happy to talk about the rules.

It is your responsibility to know the rules, including the game rules. The judge will not recite the rules in a judges briefing, but will answer questions about them.

What are the games verses standard?

There are standard runs and five games: gamblers, snooker and team relay, jumpers and steeplechase.

In standard, the rules prescribe the number and kind of the objects at each competition level to provide an open and flowing course demonstrating an ability to perform obstacles and handle a sequence with changes of side and challenges.

In gamblers, the intent is to be able to accumulate points on objects of your choice with a final emphasis on being able to work at a distance.

In snooker (as in the pool hall type), emphasis is on accumulating points on your objects of choice after jumping each of four possible red jumps followed by a closing sequence. The game requires more thinking and ad-hoc handling skills.

In team relay, emphasis is on teamwork, with each dog completing half a standard style course

In jumpers, the emphasis is on speed and control without contact objects.

In steeplechase, the emphasis is on speed with weaves and one or two A-frames.

What are the trial positions?

A trial is an event requiring the work of many different people doing many different jobs. Most of these jobs are done by volunteers. Here is listing of the different jobs.

Trial Coordinator

- arranges for judges
- applies to AAC for trial
- handles trial applications and acceptances
- provides score sheets, scribe sheets, gate sheets, catalog
- submits results to AAC

Volunteer Coordinator

- manages volunteers soliciting help and matching people to jobs
- communicates with volunteers about jobs
- manages volunteers at a trial

Judge (AAC official)

- designs courses
- provides handouts of courses
- measures dogs
- judges runs

Scorekeeper

- records the scores from the scribe sheets
- calculates final score, qualifiers and placements

Gatekeeper

- manages the gate and dogs ensuring the trial keeps moving
- may instruct each handler when to enter the ring
- calls out height changes for the ring crew
- may communicate the current dog to the scribe

Timer

- times each run and blows a whistle in events such as gamblers, snooker and for maximum course time.

Scribe

- ensures the scribe sheets are in the running order
- gets the scribe sheet for the current dog
- records judges calls on the scribe sheet for each dog
- records the time from the timers on the scribe sheet for each dog

Ribbon Presenter

- hands out ribbons and prizes

Ribbon/Prize Manager

- takes score sheets information to organize ribbons and prizes

Leash Runner

- moves the leash from the start to the exit

Scribe Runner

- takes the scribe sheets from the scribe to the scorekeeper

Chief Course Builder

- manages each course build telling the course builders where to put obstacles

Course Builders

- put obstacles where the chief course builder indicates
- set course to first height before walkthrough
- help the judge tweak and measure the course

Ring Crew

- manages equipment during the event, raising and lowering obstacles for each height and division

Many other things that need getting done

- setup for the trial (tables, chairs, ropes, score tent, setup first courses, and so on...)
- keeping the toilets stocked
- take down after the trial putting everything away
- and a hundred other little things

What to expect from the judge?

The judge is a friendly person that loves dogs and is happy to answer any questions you have. The judge is the authority on the field. The judge is paid \$1 per run judged by the club.

The judge designed the courses that she judges.

The judge will give a judges briefing before each course is run.

The judge will watch you go around the course, and raise her arm to call faults after they occur. In snooker and gamblers the judge will call out numbers and blow a whistle at appropriate times.

During a run if you ask a question, the judge is not permitted to answer. It's not that she doesn't want to help.

The judge will count from 5 to Go when your dog downs on the table.

The judge will measure your dog.

What is a Q?

A Q is a qualifying score in an event. Normally a qualifying score is a run with no faults under the set course time.

In gamblers and snooker, a Q is determined by getting enough points. In the case of gamblers, your dog must also perform the gamble.

How titles are earned and do we move up?

In starters, you need 3 starters qualifiers in standard under at least two judges to get an Agility Dog of Canada title (ADC) and then you are in advanced standard.

One qualifier in each game (gamblers, snooker, team relay and jumpers) under at least two judges earns a Starters Games Dog of Canada (SGDC) title. With the games, getting a single qualifier in a game moves your dog into advanced in that game. For example, regardless of your starters standard situation you will need to get 1 starters gamblers qualifier and then proceed to advanced gamblers at your next trial. The dog will no longer compete in starters gamblers.

Your dog needs 3 advanced standard qualifiers under two judges to get an Advanced Agility Dog of Canada (AADC) title.

For advanced games, your dog needs 2 advanced qualifiers in a game under two judges to proceed to masters in that game. Two qualifiers in each game earns an Advanced Games Dog of Canada title. One advanced standard qualifier and a game no longer puts your dog into the masters game.

Your dog needs 3 Masters standard qualifiers under two judges to get a Masters Agility Dog of Canada (MADC) title. The advanced games no longer effect the masters standard title.

For masters games, your dogs needs 3 masters qualifiers in each game under two judges to get masters title in that game.

Steeplechase is new game open to all dogs including starters - no titles are needed to enter. Getting 10 steeplechase qualifiers under four different judges earns your dog a Steeplechase Dog of Canada title (SCDC).

Having a MADC title and titles in all four masters games earns your dog an Agility Trial Champion of Canada (ATChC) title.

Having an ATChC with 10 Masters standard qualifiers plus 25 masters games (including steeplechase) gives your dog a Bronze Award of Merit.

Having an ATChC with 25 Masters standard qualifiers plus 50 masters games gives your dog a Silver Award of Merit.

Having an ATChC with 50 Masters standard qualifiers plus 100 masters games gives your dog a Gold Award of Merit.

Finally, an ATChC with 100 Masters standard qualifiers plus 125 masters games gives your dog a Lifetime Award of Excellence.

What trial etiquette do I need to follow?

Following proper trial etiquette will help you and those around enjoy every agility trial.

- Help keep the trial moving.
- Be on time for measuring, check-in, walk-throughs, and judge's briefings. You must be ready before each run when you are 3 dogs after the current one.
- Do not loiter around the gate unless you are in-the-hole, 2 dogs after the current one.
- Do not bother the gatekeeper except to identify yourself 3 or 4 dogs before your turn.
- Do not congregate or hang out around the gatekeeper, or field's entrance or exit.
- Accept the judge's calls ~~and~~ but be vigilant, mistakes ~~are~~ can happen.
- Be considerate of other dogs. Your dog may be friendly, but not all other dogs are.
- Do not bother the scorekeepers - **ever!** If you have a scoring issue talk to other trial officials like the trial coordinator.
- Do not bother the timer or scribe while an event is running except for run specific issues.
- Food is never allowed in the ring, not even in your pockets or mouth.
- No lure at the exit.
- No smoking around other people.
- Always clean up after you dog.
- Dog must always be on a short leash and not interfere with any other dog or person.
- Always clean up any garbage before you leave, and get **all** your tent pegs.

Why should I volunteer?

Agility is volunteer sport, without volunteers we would not have any trials.

At some clubs, it is expected that all the trial positions be done by competitors. Keep this in mind; it may be in your future. It is a good idea to be able to leave your dog alone for long periods so you can go do other things.

ADSC is a volunteer club. There are no paid positions; everything is done by volunteers.

What judges love to see (and what they don't!)

Judges love to see people that are having a good time and treating their dog nicely regardless of what is happening.

Judges dislike it when handlers are angry and yell at their dogs. If it gets bad enough a judge can throw you out of a run and the trial.

Judges like it when handlers that are not running, pay attention to the team running and cheer at the end of each run.

Judges like you to help keep the trial moving by being on time for your runs. Do not take too long to get going when it is your turn.

It is not nice to block the judge's view of the contacts. It is not nice and a very bad idea to block the judges view of table.

Judges do not like to argue calls. After watching a hundred dogs, do not expect the judge to remember your dog's run.

Making the most of my walk-through

During your walk-through you need to learn the course and figure out how you will handle it.

Try to decide everything about your run and answer these questions:

- Where is start line? Where is it relative to the first obstacle?
- Where is finish line? Where is it relative to the last obstacle?
- What side of my dog should I start on?
- Should I lead out? How far?
- What is the course?
- Where are the challenges? How will I handle them?
- Where do I need to cross? Front cross? Rear cross?
- What will my path be?
- What will my dog's path be?

In gamblers:

- How will I get my points? How many points do I need?
- Can my dog do the mini-gamble? Is it worth it?
- Is there a 4 point obstacle? where is it? how do I get there?
- How will I manage to be near the gamble start when the whistle goes?
- How will I handle the gamble?

In snooker:

- How many points do I need?
- How will I get the points? The closing sequence is worth 27.
- What will my course be?

In team relay:

- Who is my partner?
- Are there any dog issues that need to addressed?

- Who wants the first half, who wants the second half? Why?
- Where will the hand off be? How will the receiver and her dog be positioned?

How to make the best of a bad run

The nature of agility is that most runs are not qualifiers. When a problem happens, whatever you do don't get mad. It doesn't help you, or your dog. Everyone loves to see handlers having fun regardless of how the dog is doing.

Learn from your mistakes. What happened? How did my handling affect the dog? Do I need to train something specific?

It is surprising how tense you can be and how that transfers to your dog. The best part about getting a fault is that you can relax. No qualifier for this time. You can try things you would not normally try, like handling from further away. This is an opportunity to try different handling ideas in a trial environment.

Distractions

At every agility trial there will be distractions. They are busy events with many of people and dogs. In multi-ring trials there will be cheering and whistles in the other ring.

There will be clapping and cheering when ribbons are handed out. Dogs will bark during your runs. Occasionally, your dog may be growled at by other dogs around the ring, maybe even during a run.

In all runs there will be a judge and ring stewards in the rings.

In standard a judge will give a table count. This can be an electronic count over speakers at some clubs.

In team, there will be another dog and handler in the ring.

In gamblers and snooker the judge will be calling out numbers and there will be whistles.

The equipment at every club is different.