

KUSA BREED JUDGES LEARNING PROGRAMME

STUDY GUIDE 3: GENERAL

RING MANAGEMENT AND ETIQUETTE

EXAMINATION CONTENT FOR LEVEL 1 ONLY

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CONTENTS

On being a judge	2
You are in charge of the ring	2
An 'eye' for a dog	3
Essential qualities of a judge	3
Self-evaluation	4
Preparation is the key	4
Know your breed standards	5
Making quick decisions	5
Integrity and impartiality	5
Using personal preference	6
Beware of hobby horses	6
Judging the dog on the day	7
Beware of speed wobbles	7
Before you step into the ring	9
Soliciting assignments	9
The judging contract	9
Breach of contract	9
Record-keeping	9
Restrictions between judging appointments	10
Ethical behaviour	10
Transport arrangements	10
Breed revision	11
Sorting what you need	11
Managing your judging appointment	12
Punctuality	12
Arrival at the venue	12
Ring management	12
Ring planning	12
Working with your Ring Steward	13
Making allowances	14
Bizarre behaviour	14
Bizarre dress sense	15
Questions and complaints	15
Do's and don'ts for judges	16

The contents of this study guide will be assessed in Practical Training & Assessment

ON BEING A JUDGE

"Decisiveness is a characteristic of high-performing men and women. Almost any decision is better than no decision at all." -- Brian Tracy

You've made the decision to enter the world of breed judging – a decision that wasn't made lightly and one that has probably evolved from years of passionate involvement with purebred dogs. You have undoubtedly trained your eye to evaluate and grade your own dogs and you have an appreciation for quality. People say you have "an eye for a dog" – the bottom line is that you gain a huge amount of enjoyment evaluating dogs and you feel privileged that exhibitors care enough for your opinion to enter their dogs under you.

You may be entering the world of breed judging for the first time, or you may already be a seasoned judge with more than a few group qualifications behind you. The passion, the dedication is the same – and so it ought to be. Judging dogs is a highly subjective process and these guidelines are not designed to be prescriptive. This study guide explores key aspects of judging that may be completely new to you, or they could serve as refresher for what you already know.

If you're embarking on your judging studies for the first time and have yet to write the Paper 1 examination, this study guide provides the content you will need for the Paper 1: Ring Management and Etiquette. You will attend a practical training workshop at which you will be advised how to prepare for that examination and what format the exam will follow.

Whether this is the first time you are undertaking the KUSA Breed Judges Learning Programme, or whether you are already a Licensed Judge of one or more breeds or groups, it is at this point that you will want to renew your commitment to your personal goal(s) and reflect on the enormity of a breed judge's role and responsibilities.

One of the most important truths a judge needs to contemplate is the effect judging decisions can, and often do, have on breeding trends, even to the point of determining changes to the appearance, temperament, and gaiting styles of breeds. With apologies to JFK, "Ask not what dogs can do for you, but what you can do for dogs." Judging should not be an ego trip – it is a very serious job in the interests of the pedigree dog. For this reason, breed judging must NEVER be viewed as a frivolous activity or an opportunity to appease popular notion.

As a breed judge, your task is simultaneously very easy and very difficult. The very easy part is that you only have one task to perform – to find the best dogs. The very difficult part is that you only have one task to perform – to find the best dogs.

If you arrive at a result without fear or favour, you will earn the respect of those truly interested in their respective breeds. You may lose a few friends and you may make a few enemies, but if you consider the breed first and your ambitions second, exhibitors will appreciate your decisions and you will benefit in the long run.

You are in charge of the ring

As a judge, you are in full charge of the ring and you have authority over everyone else in the ring. For the novice judge, this is a very sobering concept. You decide how your ring will be managed, you decide on the procedure of judging – within the limits of the rules – and it is your job to maintain a smooth-running ring. You need to give an impression of calm exposure, friendly control, and reassuring confidence even though you may be quaking in your boots. Practise courtesy and good manners and be considerate of exhibitors, dogs and any other official as the conditions demand. There's no need for you to adopt a bombastic attitude – gently, gently moves mountains. As difficult as it may be, you must remain unruffled when exhibitors lose their tempers and you should be able to calmly handle whatever unexpected circumstances or emergencies may arise in the ring. You need to have the courage of your convictions in whatever decisions you make – a dithering judge earns no respect. Give clear instructions at all times and don't be afraid to request the Ring Steward or other officials – politely, of course – your preferences for how you would like your ring managed.

An 'eye' for a dog

What is this elusive thing called “an eye for a dog”? Have you heard the old-timers claim that if you don’t have the “eye”, you will never be a good judge, and no amount of training is going to help you become a good judge. Is this true?

Some people call “having the eye” an instinctive process – something that you’re either born with or you aren’t. The reality is that it is actually a cognitive process – a mental activity – that is the sum of all sensory stimuli balanced against one’s knowledge and a sense of aesthetic appreciation. You would hardly walk into the field and exclaim, “Oh my golly! That is the best armadillo I have ever seen!” unless you are an expert on armadillos and have studied them extensively. In the same way, you can hardly appreciate art if you’ve never seen a piece or art before. In other words, the sense of aesthetic appreciation comes together with a certain level of knowledge and experience.

In reality, because you are involved with dogs and have chosen to follow the route of judging, you already have a natural “eye” – the ability to find quality between mediocrity. If this were not the case, you would be more interested in another hobby than you are in dogs. Because dogs hold your interest, you see with intent and you build your knowledge.

Having said that, having the natural “eye” is not enough. Knowledge and understanding is what feeds “the eye”. So, despite the old-timers’ claims that “an eye for a dog” is the only equipment you need in order to judge, you should prefer the route of common sense and develop your “eye” through life-long learning and experience-building to keep it ‘in tune’.

You will always learn something new, and you will never know it all.

Essential qualities of a judge

A judge’s personality, attitude and behaviour make a huge difference to the judge’s success in the ring. Let’s have a look at the psychology of judging:

Motivation:	A good judge has a sincere interest in dogs and dog sport. A good judge has a desire to build a reputation of integrity and ability. There is no financial or status reward in judging – the reward is the personal satisfaction that you have done a good, honest job. Although tired after a long appointment, judges are usually ‘on a high’ at the end of the day, fired with delight and enthusiasm, which is a far greater motivation than any material benefit.
Courage:	Unusual situations occur without notice. As a good judge, you are strong-minded and possess the courage of your convictions; you are able to deal with whatever situations are thrown at you; never lose your head or become nervous; never panic. As a good judge, you are poised and unruffled, able to deal serenely and confidently with any situation with an aura of calm control.
Self-assurance:	If you are overly sensitive, you’re going to have a difficult time accepting that exhibitors will say nasty things about you. It is impossible to please everyone – the winners will love you, the losers will probably never show under you again – that is the nature of this competitive environment. You cannot take criticism to heart – you need to learn to accept that it will happen and there’s nothing you can do to stop it. As long as your integrity and ability is sound, however, most people will respect your decisions.
Courtesy:	Exhibitors will lose respect for a judge who addresses them gruffly and grunts the occasional, incoherent instruction. Wear a smile on your face and be friendly. It’s okay to greet the exhibitor and ask about the dog’s age and whether it’s okay to examine it, but it’s not acceptable to hold a full-on conversation in the ring with an exhibitor. Discourage any exhibitor who attempts to do this.
Attitude:	Travel and other difficulties immediately before an appointment can easily cause stress. Unhappiness and agitation are never good companions while you are judging, so you will need to find ways to adjust your attitude and pack away your irritations and negative feelings. A healthy attitude is one where the judge

Confidence:

acknowledges that he/she is just one element in a cohesive event. While the responsibility of serving as a breed judge is enormous, the role is not equivalent to a CEO of a major company, so best you set aside any emerging egos. Those who lack self-confidence will find judging an extremely stressful activity. You will be in charge of the ring and you need to show it – not by being demanding and autocratic, but through the quiet, poised control you exude in your stance, behaviour, facial expression and communication.

Self-evaluation

There will be many critics who will have plenty to comment about your judging decisions, but none will be as important as the little voice inside your own head. Self evaluation is a continuous process, fuelled by the genuine desire to improve. The essential art of continuous self-evaluation will question and challenge your own practices and serve to enhance your learning curve. Self-evaluation is “inside information”. The ability to critically evaluate your own thoughts and actions not only has huge value in terms of maintaining a high level of ethical behaviour, it also contributes towards building consistency of action.

Active recall during the judging process will bring to mind previous assignments in the same breed and whether or not you are judging according to the same standards as you did last time and how closely, with that recollection, the current exhibit compares to the breed standard and previous exhibits. This recollection becomes particularly useful when judging in another country or a different region.

Post-assignment evaluation is also a valuable learning tool. Unless you recognise where you are falling short, you can never improve. Seldom does a judge leave a ring without at least one little pang of insecurity, particularly in classes where a couple of exhibits may have possessed similar qualities and a decision was difficult. Could the decisions have gone another way? Should they have gone another way? Obviously, your decision has been made and you cannot alter it, but the purpose of reflecting about such possibilities is to sharpen your breed knowledge. While decisions need to be made rapidly in the ring, it is useful to reflect on the day’s assignment and ponder ways to avoid similar dilemmas in the future. It may also be useful to return to the breed standard to confirm and strengthen your opinion.

Preparation is the key

Nothing can be more unnerving than walking into a ring without sufficient preparation.

Dedicated judges review breed standards prior to every appointment. No exhibitor contentedly enters a dog at great expense to be judged as a generic dog and awarded almost exclusively on its away-and-back soundness and/or rapid gait around the ring. The task of a breed judge is to find and evaluate the unique characteristics of each breed – the hallmarks that make that breed different from another – *in addition* to conformation, temperament and movement. Finding these hallmarks – and not confusing them with those of another breed – can only be assured with fresh knowledge of the breed standards. Exhibitors expect nothing less.

The examination at the end of the learning modules is not the end of the story – rather, if a breed judge is to earn and maintain the respect of exhibitors and breeders, it is the starting point of a culture of life-long study and research. Breed and general judging books should become an essential part of a good breed judges’ personal library and every possible resource (including the internet and established breeders) should be regularly utilised. As a dog judge, you will *never* know it all! Some of the most respected and successful judges continue to learn from peers for the rest of their lives. Discussions with established breeders are extremely valuable and should always be encouraged. Peer discussions between judges regarding procedures are also useful learning tools, but do avoid the temptation to criticise particular dogs – especially from the side of the ring, which is very different from proper evaluations inside the ring.

Know your breed standards

It stands to reason that the breed standards form the basis of your knowledge of a breed. You must understand the breed standard thoroughly and be completely familiar with the terminology and unusual vocabulary used.

The history and development of the breed is also important to understand, as is the breed's purpose. "Form follows function", so if you understand what the breed is or was meant to do, it will make a whole lot of sense why it looks the way it does.

In your studies, you will find some standards that seem vague and generic, while others contain excessive detail, suggesting that no leeway can be tolerated. Some standards focus intensely on faults, serious faults and disqualifying faults, which is unfortunate because it encourages fault judging – a judging technique that is negative and uncompromising in its approach and should be avoided.

When you judge an exhibit, you do not recite the whole breed standard word for word and work through it in check-list fashion..... there will never be enough time to do this! So, in addition to your knowledge and understanding of canine conformation and movement, you also need to know and find those characteristics that make the breed what it is. During your study of the breed standards, you will develop lists of hallmarks – those attributes peculiar to that particular breed – and these you can memorise for easy recall.

Experienced judges go over their breed standards and hallmark lists each time they judge no matter how many years' experience they hold. This is only fair to the exhibitor who is paying for the judge's informed decisions.

Making quick decisions

As a novice judge, it is perfectly acceptable that you will work a little slower and more cautiously at first, taking great care to make the correct decisions. Bear in mind, however, that the ability to make quick decisions is a prime requisite for judge, so you will need to learn how to keep the process flowing smoothly.

Judging 25 – 30 dogs an hour is a good average, which allows approximately 2 – 2½ minutes per dog. This sounds quite generous, but you also need to consider that there will be call-backs and class selections, which in reality leaves only about 1 – 1½ minutes per dog. In addition, there's signing of the judges sheets and you may need to deal with queries or emergencies. You will not have time, therefore, to mull over every dog at leisure and move them again and again and again. It will be a challenge during your first few appointments, but as your knowledge and experience base grows, you will find it easier to make decisions quickly. As you gain experience and confidence, you will be able to maintain a good, steady pace and not be found guilty of holding up the whole show. When you travel overseas, for example, Australia – where judging is expected to progress at a rate of about 40 dogs an hour – you will be better equipped if you get into the flow of precise and quick decision-making from the start. This, of course, you can only do if you are well equipped and know your task.

Making decisions is a taxing process. If you are well-prepared, it is easier to have the courage of your convictions and avoid dithering or displaying indecision. There's no need to agonise over every possibility. Michael Canalizo (AKC All-breeds Judge) once said, "They don't get any better the longer you look at them, you know!"

Integrity and impartiality

Integrity is a quality that will be quickly established by your paying exhibitors – and generally, you will only be granted one opportunity to prove this valuable quality. Once a tainted decision has been made, the judge has compromised his/her future as an apparently reputable, honest judge. Remember, it's often not enough to do good, one must always *seem* to be doing good as well. You, as an honest self-critic, will be solely responsible for deciding your future as a judge and whether or not it will be worthwhile to persevere further. Only you will truly know if your decisions are based exclusively on your knowledge of the breed(s), or if your placements have been tinged by some extraneous element.

Judges who bow under the pressure to return favours or pave a path for the future, make themselves the object of ridicule. A judge who has to spend time concentrating on who ought to get which award has no time left to actually judge the dogs and the end result is simply bad judging. A win under a political judge is often an embarrassment for the exhibitor. Never underestimate the acute observation skills of exhibitors!

Impartiality means that nothing must be considered during the judging process beyond the quality and merit of the dogs. The judge who sticks to that rule gains and maintains respect from exhibitors. If you aim to succeed, remember that a reputation for impartiality is probably the most important characteristic you can earn. Exhibitors will forgive honest errors, but will never support a judge with an agenda.

A judge's private and personal attitude towards friends, acquaintances, people of influence, and enemies has no place in the ring. You need to be totally clear in your mind that you are able to treat all exhibitors equally. Not easy, in view of the weakness of human nature, but crucial to success.

When judges enter the ring, absolutely nothing should take precedence over the actual quality of the dogs. Just as an obvious political decision made by a judge in favour of a friend's dog causes ugly gossip, there are some who go to the other extreme and refuse to place any dog belonging to a friend. This is "reverse politics", which is just as unfair as "payback" judging.

Using personal preference

Have you heard the comment. "Oh, that judge will just do her own thing."? Is that a compliment or an insult? Perhaps, it's a compliment in that the judge is not swayed by public opinion, advertising campaigns, past wins or political pressure... which is all good. But if it implies that the judge will select her dogs on her own opinion, ignoring the breed standard(s), it's time to worry.

There are many factors that help to decide a winner, but the most important criterion should, obviously, be how closely the dog resembles the breed standard. Anything else is not a true judgement of the dog and may be nothing but the promotion of a generic show dog. This implies that the judge ought to be completely familiar with the breed standard and be able to translate the words in the breed standard to the characteristics of the live exhibit in front of him/her.

Breed judging is subjective – it relies on interpretation and opinion. "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Different opinions are healthy. Very few classes are entirely cut and dried – in many cases, the decisions could go either way on the day. When competition is fairly even and decisions go different ways, it adds interest to dog shows. After all, why else do exhibitors keep coming back for more? Consider how dull it would be if the same dogs win every time.

Whether your awards agree with those of another judge is totally irrelevant as long as your awards reflect your informed and uninfluenced opinion. Don't be tempted to "hand out cookies" (ie. distribute awards amongst all exhibitors) and don't be afraid of giving one exhibitor a "clean sweep" if you truly believe that exhibitor has exhibited the best dogs.

Two further warnings arise out of the need to be aware of personal opinions. Firstly, avoid the temptation to publically criticise or ridicule another judge's decision, no matter how odd it may appear to you. And, secondly, take care that your personal opinion is based on your interpretation of the breed standard – not a fantasy.

Beware of hobby horses

Exhibitors have paid good money for your opinion, but will they value that opinion if it is flimsy and hollow? Are you basing your judgement on the breed standard and canine physiology knowledge, or do you have your own particular quirks? Do you proclaim to anyone who will listen that you're a "movement judge" – that if it moves soundly and with style, it will win, regardless of breed type or any other characteristics? Are you a "tooth fairy" – where you will ignore any dog that doesn't have perfect, complete dentition? Do you proclaim to be a "head judge" – so regardless of what the rest of the dog looks like, if it has a good head it will win? Are you a "coat freak" – if it's out of coat, it's out of the ring? And so on.

Best you pack away your particular hobby horses and personal hang-ups. Your task, as judge, is to evaluate the whole dog against its own breed standard – not your idea of a generic show dog – and on its appearance and performance on the day. Anything less than this will earn you a very bad reputation, indeed.

Judging the dog on the day

It's a judge's responsibility to ignore all knowledge of a dog's previous achievements or advertising campaigns. Dogs have good days and bad – just as humans do. So even a top dog could put forward a poor performance and not crack a win on any given day. Unbiased judging ensures that the dog is judged on the day – not on past or future performances.

Some judges feel that puppies ought not to beat older dogs. These judges deliberately withhold CCs on the grounds of immaturity. They argue that they have no right to win over mature dogs and that the youngster may not turn out as well as promised. You are entitled to your opinion, naturally, and exhibitors will gauge this and adjust their entries accordingly. However, is it not biased judging to withhold on a puppy for no other reason than that it is a puppy? Some breeds mature early and some puppies are of such inherent quality that they are more deserving than an older, mediocre dog. Conversely, there are some judges who like to “prove a point” by awarding young puppies over experienced top-winning Champions. That's not to say that a puppy cannot beat a Champion, but you need to be completely sure of yourself before you do this and never do it for reasons other than deserving merit. If you are judging on what the puppy may become one day, you are not judging the dog on the day.

Beware of speed wobbles

There is a temptation to speed through this learning programme to qualify as an All-breeds Judge as quickly as possible. The lure of overseas appointments and prestigious judging appointments can easily provide the wrong kind of motivation. Do you really want to earn the reputation of being a ‘speeder’? Do you want to reach the level of Senior Judge, for example, and still call it a “Toy Pom” or a “Doberman Pinscher”? As mentioned several times in this guide, experience is built in layers over time. With every judging appointment, something new is added to your experiential layer, a new insight is gained, your understanding grows, your confidence builds, your ring management improves.

Take your time, therefore, especially during your first years of judging, and fill every spare opportunity with as much supplementary education as you can. There is way more to becoming experienced than that which resides within the covers of this learning programme.

IF...

(With apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired of waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise.

If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same,
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools;
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men can count with you, but none too much.

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – what is more – you'll be a judge of dogs.

Anon

BEFORE YOU STEP INTO THE RING

If it's your first appointment, you have probably been gearing yourself up for a few months. It is a nerve-racking experience the first time you step into the ring but, in reality, you never really eliminate at least a little apprehension, no matter how much experience you gain.

You're about to step into one of the loneliest spaces in the world – best you be well prepared.

Soliciting assignments

You are not allowed to solicit judging assignments. This means that, particularly for Championship show appointments, you have to wait for an invitation. For Open show appointments, while you are working through your Level 2 studies, you may respond to requests for judges as they appear on various websites.

The judging contract

Once you have accepted the invitation verbally or in writing, you will be sent a judging contract by the Club Secretary. You can see what this looks like on the KUSA website at www.kusa.co.za. The Secretary will complete the first part of the contract and specifically mention what you will be judging. Make sure that everything you discussed is, in fact, mentioned in the contract, eg. Hound Group, Child & Junior Handling, Best Veteran in Show. Bear in mind that “the Club conducting the show reserves the right to re-allocate one or more breeds/groups/classes/trials/grades to another Judge if an excessive or lesser number of entries are received.” Ensure that you fill in all the required information and check the spelling of your name, unless an incorrectly-spelt name in the catalogue is not important for you!

If it is a contract for an Open show appointment, you will probably be expected to make your own arrangements regarding transport and accommodation, although there is nothing to stop a Club arranging these for you if they so desire. Clubs are not, however, obliged to sponsor or arrange your transport and accommodation at Open show level. If it is a contract for a Championship show, make sure that the expenses, accommodation and transport allowances are stipulated. It is considered extremely poor conduct to pad your expense account with trivialities.

Best to make a copy of the contract and keep it on record, and remember to send it back to the Secretary within 14 days or the contract and invitation will lapse.

Breach of contract

Having accepted a judging assignment, it is expected that you will do everything in your power to fulfill the appointment. If, due to illness or other serious occurrence prior to the show, you are unable to fulfill the appointment, you must notify the Club Secretary telephonically immediately, apologise for the inconvenience caused, and follow this up in writing within 7 days of the show. If the reason is found to be unsatisfactory or if no reason is submitted, the Club Secretary will have the right to submit a complaint to KUSA.

Record-keeping

Careful record-keeping and prompt acceptance or refusal of invitations eliminates unnecessary confusion and double-booking. You are advised to keep careful record of all your judging appointments, past and future, Open and Championship. This helps to build your curriculum vitae and serves as easy reference.

Restrictions between judging appointments

Take careful note these judging restrictions between judging the same breed, group or group final:

- ***Between two Open shows in the same Province****: 3 months between judging the same Breed, Group or Group Final.
- ***Between two Open shows in different Provinces****: no time restriction
- ***Between an Open show and a Championship or Qualifying show in the same Province****: 3 months between judging the same Breed, Group or Group Final.
- ***Between an Open show and a Championship show in different Provinces****: no time restriction
- ***Between two Championship or Qualifying shows in any Province****: 3 months must pass between judging the same Breed, Group or Group final
- ***Between Best in Show/Best Puppy in Show at all-breeds shows in any Province****: 3 months
- ***Between any other Best Class in Show finals at All-Breeds Shows in any Province**** there is no time restriction.

All scheduled breed events held under 5E (eg. Junior Dog, Supreme Dog, Supreme Puppy, etc) are excluded from these judging restrictions.

Judging in Namibia is also excluded from these judging restrictions.

** refers to judging clearance areas as defined by KUSA, namely: Eastern Cape and Border, Free State and Northern Cape, Gauteng, Kwa-Zulu Natal, Western Cape and Boland. Clubs under the control of DOGS PC and NAPC are regarded as falling in one Province for the purpose of clearing judges*

Ethical behaviour

If you are officiating as judge, it stands to reason that no co-owned dog or dog owned by a close family member may be shown under you. It is also considered highly undesirable and unethical for a member of your household to exhibit in another group at the same show at which you are officiating.

Judges should be extremely careful with regard to show matters immediately before an appointment. Stay out of discussions in social media and try to limit contact with exhibitors. It is good practice to stay away from a show immediately before an event you are about to judge, but if you consider this an unreasonable restriction, you should, at least, refrain from watching the judging of breeds you are scheduled to judge.

While breeding, exhibiting and judging are by no means mutually exclusive activities, and, in view of the relatively small number of participants in the sport and the likelihood that friends will show under friends, KUSA understands this and holds the position that as long as judges follow good ethical practices, there is no harm in judges continuing the activities of breeding and exhibiting as well. It stands to reason, therefore, that respect for the sport and ethical behaviour is of prime importance. Consequently, judges should be judicious where and when they exhibit.

Transport arrangements

You will not be able to do your best work if you are tired or stressed from travel. For this reason, it is best to request or make arrangements for transport in good time before the show. By accepting a judging invitation, you are effectively committing yourself to the show-holding Club for the whole day, so travel plans should not be arranged so that they interfere with starting or ending times. If transport to the show is your own responsibility, ensure that you allow enough time in case of travel hitches and do not arrive late! Under no circumstances may judges request Clubs to arrange judging programmes to accommodate their travel plans.

Judges are not allowed to travel to or from shows or reside with anyone who is likely to be exhibiting under them.

Breed revision

The night before your appointment, read through your breed standards again and revise your breed hallmarks. You will do yourself a favour if you decline invitations to late-night parties and other frivolity. You really don't want your senses dulled by tiredness (or other!) the following morning.

Take the breed standards with you to your appointment. There is no shame in consulting them if you feel unsure about a technical detail – far better to check the breed standard than make a critical error. The latest Breed Standards are available on the KUSA Website.

Sorting what you need

You will probably already have decided what you will wear. Your outfit will be sensible, comfortable, neat and smart. Beware of billowing skirts in the wind, revealing necklines or hemlines, too much jewelry and allow for changing weather conditions – heat, rain, wind, etc. Don't neglect the type of shoes you choose – you'll be stuck in them the whole day, so you're ill advised to try out brand new shoes in the ring.

Take a couple of pens and pencils with you, plus sun block and any other personal items you may need. A hat may be advisable in hot weather, but please be mindful of the effect this may have on some dogs, especially puppies, and take your hat off if you detect any apprehension. Sunglasses are not a good idea because they affect your judgement of coat colour and may not be appreciated by sensitive dogs.

MANAGING YOUR JUDGING APPOINTMENT

Judges are often the target of the criticism of hypercritical dog folk. Accordingly, judges must avoid any appearance of wrong-doing, not merely wrong-doing itself. Judges should always be mindful of their conduct outside as well as inside the ring, and this includes comments spoken and written in all its forms of distribution. A perfectly innocent action or discussion can sometimes be misconstrued, even by experienced exhibitors.

Punctuality

Never be late arriving at the show! Gauge the length of time of travel, then add extra time. Traffic can cause unexpected delays, which will simply leave you frazzled and very stressed. You should arrive at the grounds at least half an hour before the scheduled start.

It is good practice to store the Club Secretary's contact number on your mobile in case of emergencies.

Arrival at the venue

Report to the Secretary and/or Chairman as soon as you arrive. Most Clubs offer you a cup of coffee and refreshments as you settle in and you will probably be asked to sign the certificates before you go into the ring – this to save time during and after the show.

In good time, meet up with your Ring Steward and move to the ring a few minutes early. On your way to the ring, you are likely to see people you know very well. Cutting them dead is as silly as engaging in deep conversation. A friendly “good morning” is most sensible.

Ring management

It is essential to plan how you will judge and gait the dogs in your ring. Familiarise yourself with the position of the place markers, the gazebo or umbrella, the judging table, any other equipment, the entrance, the condition of the surface, and so on, and make any changes if necessary. Look for excrement or litter in the ring and potentially unsafe areas, such as hollows, holes and muddy sections in the grass. Decide where you want the dogs to be set up, where you want the table (if appropriate) and which gaiting patterns you want them to perform. Also consider the path of the sun during the day and be prepared to adjust your gaiting plans accordingly to prevent having to look into the sun.

Planning your moves before you start shows control and a clear mind – attributes the exhibitor appreciates. Nothing is more indicative of a muddled mind than ring management that constantly changes and appears to be random and aimless.

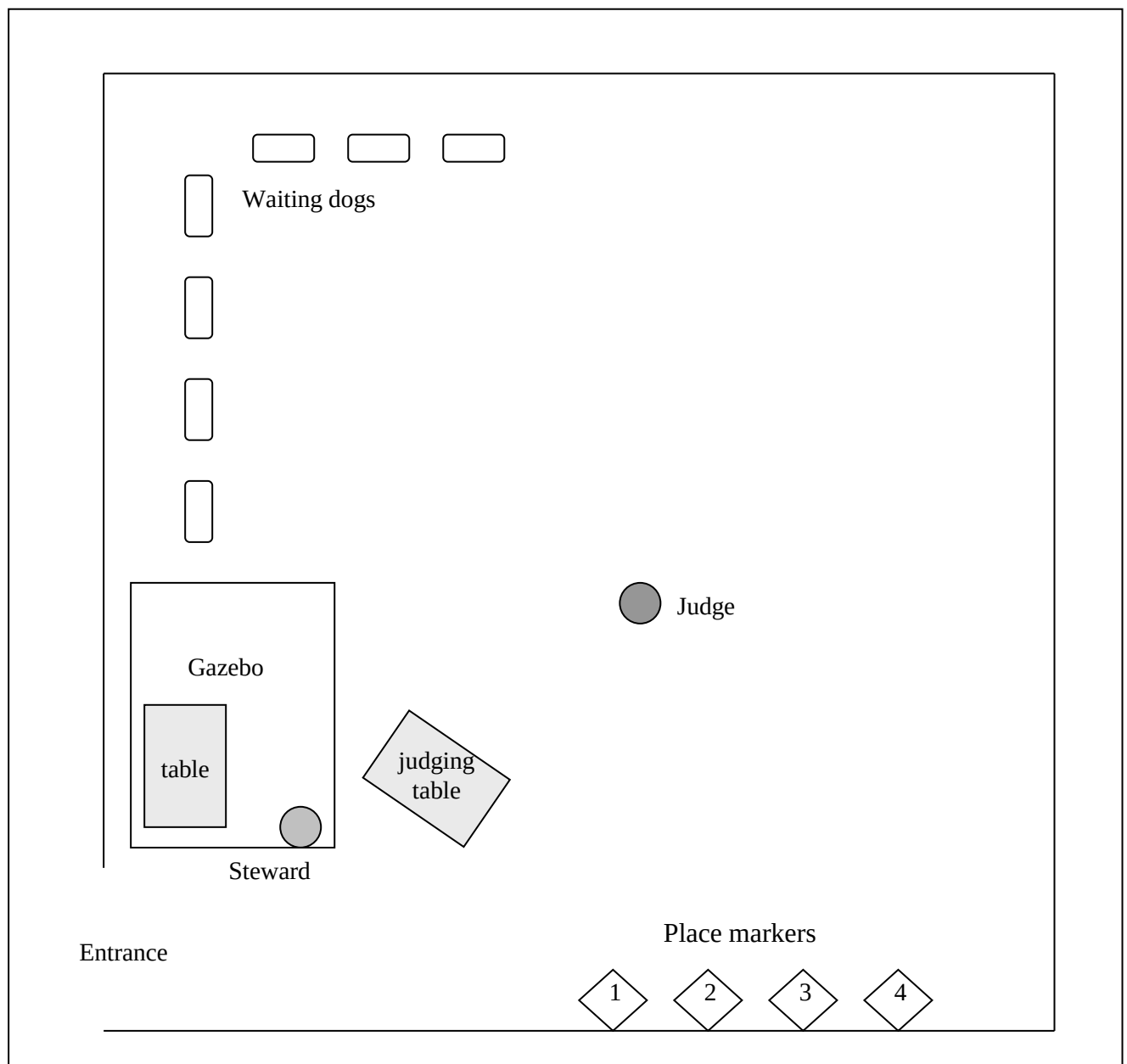
Take a few moments to explain to the Ring Steward how you will judge each dog because most Stewards like to instruct the exhibitors as they enter the ring. Then, be ready to start on time. Once you start judging, you will soon forget your nerves and enjoy the task ahead.

Ring planning

Most rings are standard size – 20m x 20m, but sometimes a ring may be smaller, for example for the Toy Group because the little dogs are not expected to move in large patterns.

Try to plan your ring so that the class line-up has the dogs facing the sun so that you can have your back to the sun. You should arrange your procedure so that you don't end up walking kilometers on end – you will be totally exhausted if you indulge in unnecessary movement around the ring.

While each judge is entitled to decide upon their own ring management plan, here is just one example:



Working with your Ring Steward

By the time you step into the ring as a judge, you would already have had some experience as a Ring Steward, so you will appreciate the arduousness of the task. Ring Stewards are volunteers who give of their time and expertise in order to keep the sport of dog showing flowing smoothly. Those who know their jobs well are an extremely valuable asset for any judge, particularly if you are new to this activity. Aside from managing the smooth flow of exhibitors and their dogs, a good Ring Steward will organise your ring methodically for your judging and advise you on awards you may have already made or exhibits that need special attention. The Ring Steward will receive and pass on any veterinary certificates that may be offered for your attention and will willingly carry out any (reasonable) instruction given by you, such as changing the position of the place markers. Value such a Ring Steward and remember to thank him/her after the task.

Avoid becoming bossy with the Ring Steward – let him/her do their job and you concentrate on yours. Politeness costs nothing and the day will be much more pleasant if the working attitude is amicable and cheerful.

Making allowances

Sometimes, exhibitors show several breeds and may still be busy in another ring when their number is called to enter your ring. Strictly speaking, exhibitors ought to make their own arrangements with regard to clashes, but you may receive a request to wait until the exhibitor can arrive at the ring. There is no rule that requires you to do this, but you may, at your own discretion, grant a few minutes grace for the exhibitor and ask the Ring Steward to announce the reason for the short delay. Any longer than a few minutes is unfair for the exhibitors already waiting and may contribute to a delay in judging. Also, take care to make these decisions judiciously, lest you earn a reputation of being a “softy” and have to suffer exhibitors taking advantage of your generosity in favour of more demanding judges.

On hot days, don’t ask exhibitors to gait their dogs more than is absolutely necessary. This is especially important if you are judging giant (eg. Irish Wolfhound, Saint Bernard) or brachycephalic breeds (eg. Bulldog, Pekingese). You can also show your consideration by being mindful of the number of times you gait the dogs of disabled, older or less fit handlers, and those who handle several dogs. In fact, excessive gaiting, under any circumstances, is totally unnecessary.

You will also need to make allowances for novice handlers from time to time. Make your instructions clear and precise, and deliver them in a friendly way. Remember, you were also a novice once and the only reason you’re where you are is because you had support along the way. Nurture the novice handlers and make the experience a pleasant one for them.

Bizarre behaviour

There’s absolutely nothing wrong with a cheerful attitude and an amusing comment now and then to help make the judging experience pleasant for all, but ‘playing to the gallery’ is a big no-no. In other words, avoid the temptation to perform like a ringmaster in front of an attentive audience.

The other extreme – where a judge says nothing and cannot smile – is depressing for exhibitors; the atmosphere seeming to lower the ground temperature to below freezing.

While you are not permitted to hold full conversations with exhibitors in the ring, a friendly smile gives the impression that you are enjoying the dogs and are interested in them. You may greet the exhibitor in the ring and ask mandatory questions such as the age of the dog, whether you can handle it, etc, but you may not hold a discussion with an exhibitor in the ring. Avoid the temptation to stop judging to have a quick chat with a passing friend.

Avoid loud, uncontrolled laughter, swearing, or any kind of rudeness to anyone. Never call an exhibitor by his/her Christian name, no matter how well you know that person. A polite “sir” and “ma’am” is more appropriate. You may not make public comment on an exhibitor’s dog (unless specifically required at a Specialist Show) and you may not discuss another exhibitor’s dog with anybody. Avoid making loud remarks about the dogs you are judging, pulling faces, or showing any kind of disapproval.

Of course, you may not come into the ring intoxicated and you may not smoke in the ring. If you have to have a smoke break, schedule it between classes and move away from the ring. Best you avoid chewing gum because it may not be appreciated by the exhibitors. Also, while it is important for you to take in enough fluids during your judging appointment, you definitely are ill-advised to judge with a soft drink in hand!

Bizarre dress sense

It goes without saying that bizarre dress falls into the category of bizarre behaviour, so do be mindful of your appearance. The exhibitors have taken the trouble to dress smartly and there's nothing worse than finding a judge who just doesn't seem to bother. The internet abounds with candid snaps of some judges' bizarre outfits. Unless you'd like to rank highly on the Wal-Mart-type worst-dressed list, heed the warning to dress smartly, but comfortably, bearing in mind that you have to function in your choice of clothing for the best part of a day.

For gentlemen, a suit or jacket and tie is appropriate for Championship shows, but a black suit is quite intimidating and probably best suited for special events. At Open shows, smart casual is fine, with or without a tie, but definitely no jeans, and ugly sneakers or shabby pullovers are a big no-no. For ladies, definitely no shorts or short skirts – not even at Open shows! Smart casual to smart can cover a wide range of styles, but be sensible with regard to the effect of wind on a flowing skirt, or gentle rain on a flimsy blouse. Shabby is not appropriate, neither is wearing the same clothes on two consecutive days. Bear in mind that you may need to bend over and there's no need to show the exhibitors your history. Avoid wafting scarves or dangling jewelry that may disturb you or the dog and leave some of your jingly bangles at home.

Most importantly, be prepared for whatever weather conditions Mother Nature may want to throw at you and be sensible.

Questions and complaints

You may be approached by exhibitors who may want to know why you didn't put up their dog. Sometimes, an exhibitor doesn't really want to know about your opinion of the dog, they really just want to voice their displeasure. Beware of falling into the argument trap and try to avoid long, sticky explanations. The best response in such a situation is to politely say "I didn't indicate that there was anything wrong with your dog, I simply preferred the dog I awarded".

If an exhibitor genuinely wants you to give your opinion on the dog, don't be tempted to rely on memory – always request the exhibitor to bring the dog, and then you can give your opinion. Best you give a balanced comment with good points as well as areas you would like to see improved. There's no sense in insulting or annoying the exhibitor.

You may not discuss another exhibitor's dogs and any such discussion should take place outside the ring, after the judging has been concluded – never between classes.

If an exhibitor becomes abusive, try to defuse the situation calmly and as quickly as possible, then report the incident to the Show Manager.

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR JUDGES

In summary, here's a list of important do's and don'ts:

DO respond immediately to a judging invitation and return the fully-completed and signed contract as soon as possible. If you fail to do so within 14 days, your invitation will lapse.

DO, if you have been invited to judge at a Championship show, ensure that your exact judging duties are mentioned as well as the expenses, transport and accommodation allowances.

DO treat all judging contracts with as much respect as business contracts. Once accepted, they should be fulfilled, unless under dire emergencies, in which case the Show Secretary must be contacted immediately.

DO keep careful records in your portfolio of all your judging appointments.

DON'T withdraw from a previously-contracted appointment in favour of a more attractive appointment elsewhere. Your reputation will suffer a lot of damage and you will place the show-holding committee in an awkward situation having to find a replacement judge. "Don't cancel the date with the Nerd who asked first, for the Jock who asked today."

DO arrive promptly and in a good frame of mind at the show venue. While you should take every measure to avoid potential transport hold-ups, contact the Show Secretary as soon as you suspect you may be delayed.

DON'T wear sunglasses in the ring – they taint your view of coat colour and may unnerve a young dog.

DO give clear, unambiguous instructions in a friendly tone.

DO keep a pleasant and relaxed approach. Show that you're enjoying your task – otherwise, why would you be there?

DON'T be rude, officious, gruff, or scornful towards novice exhibitors. Do put novices at ease and help them to enjoy their exhibiting experience.

DO be patient and understanding with nervous or young dogs, giving them an extra chance if necessary.

DO judge all dogs thoroughly and in a consistent manner – it reassures exhibitors that you know what you doing and it is, after all, only fair since every exhibitor paid an entry fee for your well-considered decision; all exhibits deserve their money's worth.

DON'T risk yourself judging a dog that is attempting to bite you. Aggression is not permitted and you need not suffer growling or signs that it will bite. Having said that, there's no need to over-react if a dog is slightly wary or suspicious of you and note that in some breed standards (eg. Saluki, Azawakh), aloofness and wariness of strangers is actually a requirement.

DO keep abreast with the KUSA Constitution and Schedules, Judging Rules and Regulations, and breed standards – all of these could change from time to time.

DON'T allow yourself to be distracted by anything outside of the ring – exhibits in the next ring, friends passing by, discussions between exhibitors, etc. Don't allow your judging to be influenced by crowd applause or cheering. Your task is not to award the dog that gets the loudest cheers!

DON'T allow yourself to be influenced by exhibitors who whisper clues at you while you examine their dog, such as "he only understands an American accent", "a win today will finish him as a Champion", "I travelled a long way for your opinion", etc. As irritating as these comments are, the best reaction is to totally ignore them.

DO protect and nurture your integrity at all times.

DON'T be a "copy cat" judge. Just because another judge awarded a particular dog doesn't mean you have to award it if you feel it is not worthy. On the other hand, don't be the kind of judge that feels the need to "prove a point", denying a dog a win to prove your independence.

DON'T step into the ring with any preconceived ideas. Past wins and advertising campaigns have nothing whatsoever to do with your judging appointment today.

DON'T give an exhibit "the kiss of death" – where you praise an exhibit and show great interest, but then fail to find it for a further award. That's just lip service, which no exhibitor appreciates.

DON'T try to entice exhibitors to enter under you by telling them how marvellous their dogs are. Who's to say you won't find better dogs in the ring, and then how will you cope with the effect of what you said?

DO treat all exhibitors equally, without exception.

DON'T spend time in an exhibitor's gazebo – either before or after your judging. Doing so before your judging is a breach of rules, and doing so afterwards suggests partiality, which will not sit well with other exhibitors.

DON'T apologise for your judging or feel the need to justify your decisions – this shows insecurity and makes a mockery of your decision-making.

DON'T get involved in an argument with an exhibitor.

DO remember that the judge who stops learning is a judge who stops growing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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