

# **TDAA Judges Guidelines**

V 5.1



P. O. Box 48  
Waterford, OH 45786  
[www.k9tdaa.com](http://www.k9tdaa.com)

**Prepared for the  
Teacup Dogs Agility Association**

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By Bud Houston

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## Introduction

This version of the TDAA Judges' Guidelines represents the desire of the TDAA to ensure that judges are aware of those policies and procedures that support the organization, its host clubs, and its exhibitors. The official rules and regulations of the TDAA is the ultimate authority and supersedes this document.

Forms referenced in this document are available at the TDAA website, [www.k9tdaa.com](http://www.k9tdaa.com).

### *How the TDAA is Different*

The Teacup Dogs Agility Association is unique within the agility community in many ways. It is important that TDAA judges are familiar with these differences. Not only do these differences impact the competitive aspects of the venue, they also impart a unique spirit to the exhibitors. Understanding these differences enables judges to develop challenges and conduct trials that capture this “uniqueness.”

#### Dogs are allowed to express their style

There are no restrictions as to adornments or clothing allowed on dogs unless there is a safety concern. A dog may wear a collar with tags. A dog may have ties, tapes, pins, and odd accoutrements that are specific to a breed or type of dog. The judge should exercise judgment and common sense. If the clothing or adornments are so outrageous as to hinder the dog's ability to move or perform the equipment in a safe manner, then the clothing or adornments should be disallowed.

Aversive training devices are never allowed. These include choke collar, pinch collar, bark collars, and electronic (shock) collars.

#### Veterans and dogs with jump exemptions are not a second class

When a dog is given an exemption to jump at a lower height, that dog remains on the championship title track. S/he is not relegated to a secondary program or given a separate and unequal slate of titling objectives.

#### Shorter transitional distances are used between obstacles

The shorter transitional distances used in TDAA between obstacles require tighter handling, provide more possibility for run outs and off-courses and require a keener sense of timing for the handler. The shorter distances reflect a stride length proportional to the course, comparable to what larger dogs face in the “big dog” agility venues.

#### Smaller obstacles are used

While larger obstacles from other venues are permitted (so long as they can be adjusted for the lower slope), the TDAA prefers a number of obstacles of smaller dimension, including the tunnels, contact obstacles, and hurdles.

### Obstacle familiarization may be conducted at each trial

At the beginning of each day of a trial, obstacle familiarization is allowed, and encouraged. The smaller scale equipment used in the TDAA might be totally alien to dogs that have not trained on the equipment and possibly have never seen it. The judge should select all of the equipment that might be strange, new, and different to the dogs in attendance, and allow these dogs a period of familiarization. All dogs in the trial, regardless of competition level, may participate in obstacle familiarization.

When familiarization is conducted, the judge should instruct exhibitors that food will not be allowed in the ring, and should also define the order in which the obstacles should be presented to the dogs so that the queue of performance moves in an orderly manner. Stewards should be assigned to every obstacle to oversee the orderly conduct of the familiarization, and to ensure that exhibitors do not obsessively drill their dogs on a single obstacle. If obstacle familiarization takes place on a course that is set up to run, the path chosen should not be consistent with required or expected paths that the teams might take during that event.

For multi-day trials, dogs that were not present in earlier days of the trial shall be given preference for the familiarization in latter days. Once the first class of the day has started, obstacle familiarization for late arrivals is at the discretion of the host club and the judge and, if allowed, shall be done only for the latecomers and in a time and manner that does not delay the trial.

### Multiple warm-up obstacles are allowed

A warm-up area for dogs may be provided with any type of equipment. At a minimum, a warm up jump should be provided for each ring. However, the warm up area may also contain a set of weave poles, a teeter, a tunnel, or a tire. There simply are no restrictions except that the equipment may not be arranged in a fashion that mirrors any challenge that is on the field.

### Dogs can be Fast-Tracked

The Fast Track is a titling option whereby a dog that has earned advanced titles in another agility organization can move up to that same level in the TDAA by demonstrating those skills in TDAA courses and games. The dog's owner must first demonstrate proof of the advanced level title by submitting a copy of the titling certificate from the organization in which that title was earned.



## Standards and Guidelines for TDAA Judges

The TDAA judge is the backbone of our venue in the sport and their actions and opinions influence conduct beyond the performance ring. Because of that influence, the TDAA has established education and testing procedures for approving judges in the sport.

Qualified individuals must meet the following requirements before being placed on the TDAA Approved Judges List. The judge must:

- have sufficient experience to competently perform the judge's responsibility as may be evidenced by active participation in the sport, indicated by experience to demonstrate ability as a judge,
- have passed an approved TDAA judging clinic & examination (every three years), demonstrating knowledge, self-confidence, creativity, and effectiveness while judging, and
- be of good character and in good standing, setting forth a professional image for the sport and the TDAA.

### *TDAA Judges' Code of Ethics*

Judging is a privilege, not a right. The TDAA Agility Judge's conduct must always be impartial, and dignified. A judge's actions must be above reproach.

Judges shall be professional in demeanor and arrive neatly and professionally dressed, appropriate to weather and ring conditions.

Agility placements shall be awarded strictly on the dog and handler performance as a team as described in the TDAA Rules and Regulations.

Judges shall be ever mindful that trials are staffed largely or entirely with unpaid volunteers. Volunteer staff will be treated with kindness and respect.

When a TDAA judge makes a commitment to judge a test event, he or she is bound by those commitments. There are certain events that could warrant breaking a commitment.

TDAA judges should be aware that poor sportsmanship will not be tolerated. When TDAA judges are entered in an agility trial as an exhibitor, the judge will be expected to exhibit exemplary behavior and good sportsmanship at all times.

A judge will not measure dogs at a TDAA trial for which he is *not* the judge of record unless he is invited to do so by the judge of record.

A TDAA judge shall not become an activist in disputes, make public criticisms, or otherwise engage in behavior that may be generally viewed by the TDAA as inappropriate conduct that may create a conflict of interest as a representative of TDAA.

Any judge found to be abusing the privilege of judging for TDAA or violating this Code of Ethics may have such judging privileges revoked or suspended by the TDAA.

## Responsibilities of the TDAA Judge

Congratulations on becoming a judge for the Teacup Dogs Agility Association. We are certain you will find this role challenging and rewarding. As a judge, you have demonstrated your mastery of the spirit and the rules of TDAA; you are also a representative of the organization, with all the rights and responsibilities thereof.

### *Acceptance of a Judging Assignment*

The TDAA allows its judges to accept assignments without consultation with or pre-approval by the organization. Judges must have current certification to accept assignments. Judges without current certification will be removed from the list of active judges.

Judges are responsible for keeping their contact information on the judges list up-to-date. Changes to this information should be communicated to the TDAA webmaster.

Preparing for a judging assignment requires a lot of work. A checklist of typical tasks required for a successful judging assignment follows. This list is general in nature and is not intended to be all-inclusive; in some cases, additional tasks may be required.

- Confirm that you have the date available and are willing to commit. If the date is clear, make the commitment and get an acknowledgement from the host club.
- Record the names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of the trial secretary, the trial chairperson, and whoever has been appointed to be liaison to you.
- Discuss and confirm expenses and fees. Provide the host club with a contract or ask the host club to provide you with one. Verify who will be making and paying for travel and hotel arrangements.
- Obtain a schedule of classes. You may be asked to assist in this process. Try to be more interesting than playing only sequencing games.
- Get a detailed drawing of the trial site. You need to know the size of the ring, what obstructions may exist, what side might be preferred for entry and exit, and so forth.
- Get a list of available equipment. Because the TDAA allows a wide range of obstacle specifications, you must know the dimensions of nearly every piece of equipment.
- Communicate with the host trial committee so that they have the appropriate verbiage for the description of games in the premium list. You should have an idea, fairly early, of what the qualification criteria will be for each game.
- Make travel arrangements. The host club should not be encumbered with an extraordinary airfare expense because you failed to make travel arrangements until the last moment.

- Design your courses. Course and game design guidelines are provided in the following sections. Whenever possible, nest your courses so that on the day of the trial, the majority of time spent is on running dogs rather than changing the position of equipment. Check to see if your courses actually match the information you received from the club showing the dimensions of the ring and the equipment they have available.
- Write a briefing for your games. You should make written briefings available for exhibitors as well as copies of your courses for the day of the trial.
- Get approval for your courses. The course review process is presented in a later section.
- Advise the club on the design of scribe sheets for the games. This should be done as soon as your courses are approved so that the club may prepare the sheets for the trial.
- Try to find out where the host club will put you up during the conduct of a trial. You should not insist on staying at a fancy hotel. A modest hotel should suffice for most of us. On the other hand, you should not feel compelled to stay in someone's house if that makes you uncomfortable. Communicate your preferences to the host club.
- Obtain a trial premium and a copy of the standard confirmation letter. These will give you details about the trial that might not otherwise be available to you.
- Find out who will be responsible for picking you up at the airport (if you fly). Make sure you have a phone number to call in case no one shows up. Have a standby phone number you can call in an extreme emergency. In a pinch, it would be appropriate to rent a taxi to your hotel if no one shows up to get you.
- Make sure you have supplies and equipment necessary for the trial. You should bring with you a whistle, a stopwatch, a roll of duct tape, a measuring tape (for measuring equipment), copies of the courses and briefings, and a friendly smile. In some cases, you may need to bring a measuring wheel or wickets; check with the host club.
- Review the rules for performance faults and for establishing standard course times before you begin judging. Study the games that you designed so that you understand exactly how each will be played and what the qualifying criteria will be.
- After completion of each class, review the score sheets with the Scorekeeper to verify scoring, placements, and qualifying runs are correct. Verify SCTs are correct. Prior to leaving the trial site on the last day, verify all scoring is complete and submit an expense report.
- Within one week of your assignment, you must submit a Judges Report to the TDAA (form on page 15 of these Guidelines).

## *Potential Judges Conflicts*

A judge may judge a member of his own household, as well as friends, students and acquaintances. Please note that this liberal policy is subject to revocation should it ever be abused.

If a judge desires to have his own dog shown in a trial for which he is the judge of record, another handler must run the dog.

## *Course Reviews*

Courses are to be submitted electronically to the TDAA course reviewer a minimum of five weeks prior to the event. The course reviewer as of the date of issue of these guidelines is Bud Houston [Houstan.Bud@gmail.com](mailto:Houstan.Bud@gmail.com).

Along with courses, it would be helpful for judges to submit:

The order of classes. This will enable the course reviewer to check nesting between classes. Although not required, nesting will facilitate more efficient trials.

A list of available equipment, including dimensions. For jumps, the number of winged and wingless versions must be included.

Courses should be submitted in electronic format, preferably designed with the Clean Run Course Designer. Course file names should reflect the order of classes with the first two digits of the file name. For example files might be named 01SupStd1SAT.agl, 02IntStd1SAT 03BegStd1SAT. This helps the course review keep track of the order and will also help you keep your files straight and organized.

All games submitted for review must include a comprehensive briefing. Note that a briefing is not just for the exhibitor. Include in your games briefings the scoring basis and qualification criteria. Refer to *The Book of Agility Games* for existing rules for agility games. You can always contact the course reviewer for guidance.

Do not send finalized courses to the host clubs. Copies for the exhibitors are at the discretion of the club. If the club desires copies for the exhibitors, they must inform the judge, who will then bring the required number of copies to the trial.

Only the first course of the trial, without numbers and without gamble lines or similar markings, may be sent to the club for course building the night before.

## *Signaling Performance Faults*

When judging standard courses, the judge should give these signals to the scribe:

- Standard faults – Raised open hand
- Failure to perform – Two raised open hands
- Refusal – Raised closed fist
- Elimination – Crossed arms
- Dismissal – Blow the whistle, politely ask the exhibitor to leave

## *Briefing Ring Personnel*

Your briefing to the scribe should be explicit. Insist that the scribe watch you (and not the dog) for your signals. You do not have to make eye contact with the scribe. Try to avoid wrenching your body towards the scribe when you make a signal. Just make the signal, and trust that the scribe is watching you as directed.

In your briefing to the scribe and timer, you will make it very clear how the scribe sheet is to be completed during the running of the competition. The scribe should record the digital reading on the stopwatch. The time will be translated to minutes and seconds at the scorekeeping table.

An exchange between the scribe and the judge is encouraged in which the judge verbally summarizes faults at the end of the dog's run. This is unusual in American agility, but is a system used elsewhere in the world.



## Measuring Dogs

The process for measuring dogs begins with the application for the dog's registration. This form is available online at: <http://www.k9tdaa.com/forms.php>.

Upon receipt of the application and payment the TDAA sends to the registered owner a *Temporary Jump Height* form. This form is included on page 16 of these Guidelines. At the same time the dog's registration information is entered into the TDAA database making the dog eligible for competition, if not titles.

The exhibitor will bring the *Temporary Jump Height* form along to the TDAA trial. The form is presented to the judge, along with the dog, for measurement and signature. The form will require only two signatures unless the measurements disagree, whereupon measurement and signature by a third judge is required.

The judge should follow this handling procedure:

- If it is the first measurement and signature *or* a second measurement that disagrees with the first, return the form to the exhibitor.
- If it is the second measurement and signature (that agrees with the first) *or* a third measurement, hold onto the form and give it to the Trial Secretary to be sent on to the TDAA with other trial documents.

Make sure that the form is complete and all of the exhibitor's personal information is included on the form.

When the TDAA receives the completed *Temporary Jump Height* form:

- A TDAA Jump Height Certificate is emailed to the exhibitor/owner of the dog.
- The dog's jump heights are recorded in the TDAA database, allowing the dog to earn TDAA titles.

You will also have to measure dogs of mixed pedigree that defy any specific breed description. The judge should understand the measurement of dogs and be prepared to give an exemption to mixed breed dogs.

### How to Measure Dogs

The TDAA allows the use of wickets or a measuring device that delivers a precise measurement. The judge's job is to measure the dog and then record the correct jump height for the dog, along with any body type exemptions. Please note that on the *Temporary Jump Height* form the judge will indicate what the dog's jump height would be *without* any exemption; and then to indicate if an exemption should be given to the dog.

Only the judge of record can exercise the authority for the measurement of dogs. Please note that another judge *can* measure dogs at a trial at which he is *not* the judge of record. However, this authority is granted by the express permission of the judge of record.

1. The dog is typically placed on a table so that the judge does not have to kneel on the floor.
2. The measurement should be taken at the withers. The “withers” is the ridge between the shoulder blades of the dog.
3. The dog’s owner may use treats to draw the dog’s attention away from the judge and into a stand. The dog’s owner may hold the dog on leash.
4. If the dog measures higher than the jump height into which he’s entered for the day it is the judge’s responsibility to notify the Trial Secretary to ensure that the dog jumps the correct measured height.
5. The judge will sign the form, indicate the jump height and body type exemptions (if any) and will either return the form to the exhibitor (if more signatures are required) or convey the form to the Trial Secretary if the form is complete.

### Jump Height Exemptions

Special provisions, or *jump height exemptions*, are made for certain dogs because of their structure. This will pretty much be a judgment call by the measuring judge. And while the basis for awarding these exemptions is a bit of a *swag*, you should rely on your gut instinct and a bit of common sense.

The jump heights and cutoffs are specified in the TDAA Rules and Regulations. This document is available online at: <http://www.k9tdaa.com/forms.php>.

While some of the discussion that follows uses specific breeds as examples, you should keep in mind that there are exceptional dogs of almost every breed that mightn’t share the conformation or characteristics of the breed that make them examples here. You might have a Norwich Terrier, for example, that is long legged (rather than dwarfish) and should not be given a jump height exemption simply on the basis of his breed.

**Long Back Dogs** – The exemption for a long-backed dog would be based on the measurement of the dog from the front of the chest to the back of the rear compared to the measurement of the dog's height at the withers. As a rule of thumb, if the dog's length is 150% or greater than the height measurement, the dog would qualify for this exemption.

Dachshund



Dandie Dinmont Terrier



Skye Terrier



**Weight to height provision** (by structure, not obesity) – This exemption should be limited to certain breeds that have a propensity for weight that is greater than their height if you compare pounds to inches.

Basset Hound



Bulldog



Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen



**Dogs with dwarfish legs** – This exemption is granted to dogs whose leg to shoulder height ratio is 1/3 or less of the dog’s overall height. The exemption for dog's with dwarfish legs is based on the measurement of the dog’s wither height, when that height is 150% or greater than the measurement of the space from floor to chest.

Australian Terrier



Cairn Terrier



Scottish Terrier



### **Veteran Dogs**

A jump height exemption (next lower height) will be granted to veteran dogs. A veteran dog is a dog of at least 7 years of age. There will be no special system of titling for veteran dogs.

### **Double Exemptions**

A *double exemption* may be granted to a dog when they have both a body type exemption and should be granted a veterans exemption status.



## Reference Materials for the TDAA Judge

The TDAA judge is constantly a student of the agility game in general and of the variety of that game as conducted by the Teacup Dogs Agility Association. We have a number of reference materials with which the TDAA judge should be familiar.

These resources are available at <http://www.k9tdaa.com/forms.php>:

- TDAA Rules and Regulations (.pdf)
- TDAA Course Design Guidelines (.pdf)
- Dog Registration (.pdf)
- Membership Application (.pdf)
- Club Building Event Application (.pdf)
- Judge's Agility Test Report (.pdf)
- Temporary Jump Height Form (.pdf)

## The TDAA Course Design College

We also have available a series of educational articles intended to share common course review issues and explore how games are created and played. You can reference these articles here:

<http://budhouston.wordpress.com/category/tdaa-course-design-college/>

## More Internet Resources for the TDAA Judge

TDAA Members discussion list on Yahoo:

[http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/tdaa\\_members/](http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/tdaa_members/)

- to subscribe: [tdaa\\_members-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:tdaa_members-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

TDAA Judges discussion list on Yahoo:

[http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/TDAA\\_Judges/](http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/TDAA_Judges/)

- to subscribe: [TDAA\\_Judges-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:TDAA_Judges-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

TDAA home page: [www.k9tdaa.com](http://www.k9tdaa.com)

TDAA News and Events Blog: <http://tdaanews.wordpress.com/>

TDAA Judges List: <http://tdaanews.wordpress.com/approved-tdaa-judges/>

TDAA Calendar of Events: <http://tdaanews.wordpress.com/tdaa-events-calendar/>



**Official TDAA**

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**Agility Test Report**

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Return this completed form to:  
**TDAA**  
**Post Office Box 48**  
**Waterford, OH. 45786**

**Group** \_\_\_\_\_ **Judge** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Test Dates** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Event Evaluation:**

<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Poor</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall quality of site and facility
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality and availability of timers/scribes
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality and availability of course builders
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accuracy of scorekeepers
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality of group hospitality
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Conformance to TDAA 'preferred' equipment
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attention to compensation and reimbursement

**Course Filings**

Were the course designs used as filed? If not, attach copies of the revised course(s) and explain circumstances on a separate sheet.

**Games ~ Continuous Improvement**

The TDAA is interested in hearing about your experience with the games played at the trial you judged. If you find something very important to share with other judges who must design and judge this game in the future, your feedback will help in our quest for continuous improvement. On separate pages, share your observations of the following:

- What did you learn about the games?
- Was there any event that was overlooked in the briefing?
- Did the qualifying criteria give good balance to the game?
- What would you do to make the game more interesting in the future?

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Rev 1/1/2012** ~ This report must be mailed within five business days following the test date to TDAA, PO Box 48, Waterford, OH. 45786.



**Official Teacup Dogs Agility Association**

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**Temporary Jump Height Form**

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Return this completed form with  
two judge's signatures to:  
**TDAA**  
**Post Office Box 48**  
**Waterford, OH. 45786**

Dog's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dog's Call Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dog's Breed: \_\_\_\_\_

Dog's Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ TDAA # \_\_\_\_\_

On a dog's 7<sup>th</sup> birthday that dog will be eligible  
for a veteran dog jump height exemption.

(if known)

Owner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL Address:: \_\_\_\_\_

*Notify us if your email address changes as we'll be E-Mailing title certificates that your dog earns!*

*Check if this address is a change from the original dog registration form.*

Measured Height Class 4-8-12-16 inches	Judge's Signature (A third measurement is required if the first two do not agree.)	Body Type Exemption	Date

**Exemption codes: E-1 = Long Back E-2 = Weight-Height exemption E-3 = Deep Chest/Dwarfish Legs**  
Only 1 Body Type Exemption is allowed!

*Check if this is a challenge to the dog's original jump height measurement.*

It is no longer necessary to present a jump height card when entering a TDAA trial. You should be aware that if you enter your dog in a jump height lower than his official jump height, then any qualifying scores will be invalidated.