

Is your dog smart enough?

Why not try Working Trials!

What are Working Trials?

Originally introduced for police dogs, Working Trials can be said to be 'CSI for dogs!' Working Trials are physically demanding, but are great fun and extremely rewarding. Dogs compete in ascending levels called 'stakes'. From the lowest stake, Companion Dog (CD), through Utility Dog (UD) and Working Dog (WD) to Tracking Dog (TD) and Patrol Dog (PD) at the very top. Exercises are divided into three sections; Nosework, Agility and Control. They comprise various tests, including heelwork, searching for hidden items, long jump and scaling a wall.

Reasons why you should do Working Trials

- Give your dog the chance to show its intelligence.
- If you love the great outdoors you will love Working Trials.
- Your dog does not have to be a pedigree – all dogs can do Working Trials.
- Useful canine skills are developed – a Working Trial dog may even find those lost car keys for you!
- A real social scene to be enjoyed.

All you need to know is:

- Your dog must be registered on the Kennel Club Breed Register or the Activity Register.
- Competitors taking part in any Kennel Club licensed event must familiarise themselves with the Kennel Club Rules and Regulations beforehand. The Working Trial Regulations can be found in the Working Trial and Bloodhound Trial Regulations booklet which is available from the Kennel Club Publications Department.
- Dogs can start competing at 18 months of age.
- No previous experience necessary so request a list of Working Trial Clubs today!

INFORMATION BOX

For a free list of **Training Clubs running Working Trials*** in your county please contact the Kennel Club on **0870 606 6750 ext 226 or 212**, or complete a Further Information Request form available **via the Kennel Club website**.

Alternatively, Trial listings can be found in the **Kennel Gazette**. To purchase the Kennel Gazette please contact the Kennel Club publications department on **020 7518 1016**.

For a **Working Trial and Bloodhound Trial Regulations booklet** please call the Kennel Club publications department on **020 7518 1016**.

*Clubs are listed under county. Not all Clubs are registered with the Kennel Club. Where no clubs are registered in your chosen county, club listings closest to your address will be sent instead.

Visit our website
www.thekennelclub.org.uk

"Working Trials are a thorough test of a dog's ability to use its nose, its fitness to jump and its obedience skills".

Barry Gilbert



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Working Trials: Top Tips

Generally there are three main sections to a Working Trial test:

Nosework

An area of land, approximately half a mile long is used as a track. The dog and handler follow the track in a pattern set by the judge and walked earlier by a 'tracklayer' to recover very small articles which have been placed there beforehand by the tracklayer. We've all heard about the dog's great sense of smell and it is amazing to see it in action in these tests.

Agility

The agility section will test the dog's ability to negotiate over different jumps and hurdles, including a six ft scale. Should the dog fail its first attempt it is only allowed one more chance, and it may end up losing valuable marks.

Control

There are various exercises in this section. 'Heelwork', is when the dog must walk with its shoulder reasonably close to the handler, as the handler walks at normal, fast and slow paces through turns among and around people and obstacles. 'Sendaway' is when the dog will have to leave its handler and cross a distance whilst the handler redirects the dog through a series of commands. The minimum distance is 50 yards but some sendaways at the highest levels can stretch to 300 yards. 'Retrieving a Dumbbell' is when the dog retrieves a dumbbell which has been thrown by its handler. The exercise should be completed at a smart pace without mouthing or playing with the item and only when the handler commands it. 'Down stay' is when the dog must stay in a down position while the handler is out of sight for a period of time. If the dog moves it will be penalised, and to really test the dog, the judge may use distractions. 'Steadiness to gunshot' is when the dog is tested on its reactions to gunshot. The dog will be penalised if it shows any sign of fear, aggression or if it barks. "Speak" on command' is when the dog is ordered to "speak" and cease "speaking" whilst the handler uses a minimum of commands and/or signals. These exercises really do test your dog's ability. Once your dog has progressed up to TD you can then enter a PD Stake (TD and PD are the highest tests). In PD you will be tested at a much higher level, which include Police Dog style exercises.

INFORMATION BOX

Handling your dog

Attending your first Working Trial may cause your dog to behave differently than it does in training. Your dogs in particular can be bothered by crowds or by the fact that he is travelling in a convoy, and if this is the case you can move away from other competitors, this can help to settle your dog, but do not lose sight of the convoy. Dogs should be kept under good control at all times, both whilst waiting to compete and during the Trial. You should always be aware of how your dog is reacting and what it is doing. If it does misbehave, you should never handle your dog harshly, or use punitive correction during a Trial. All dogs should be trained and worked using plenty of encouragement. If for any reason you become aware that your dog is not working well, you should ask the Judge's permission to withdraw.

Preparation for a Working Trial

- There's a great deal to think about before going to a Working Trial. Firstly, you must dress appropriately. You should wear plenty of layers of warm clothing, strong waterproof walking boots or wellington boots, make sure that you also have wind proof and waterproof jackets.
- With the vagaries of the British weather you are well advised to take a change of clothing with you, so that you are not faced with a cold and damp car journey home. Also pack food and drink for yourself, as you will not be near any shops, although some trials will have a kitchen supplying snacks. Judges lunches are provided by the hosting society.
- Working Trials sometimes mean a long car journey so think about your dog's needs too – a good strong travelling cage and plenty of water will make its trip comfortable. Often working dogs are not fed before a day's work but you should remember to pack your dog's bowls and some food as you may not return home from the Trial until late in the evening.
- The schedule/catalogue will tell you where the Trial is going to take place. The base for the Trials is advertised in the catalogue and this is where you should report to.

At the Trial

- You should allow yourself plenty of time to reach the base. If you are late, there is usually a mobile phone number for you to let the Trials Manager know.
- Once you have found the base you should book in. You will receive a catalogue which contains all the competitors' details including your number. There will be a short briefing about where you will be working and the time you will be working, also advice on parking, not to block farm gateways and entrances and that there could be activity on the land, farmers and landowners do not stop working because of Working Trials. It is also important to be courteous to all land owners, shepherds, game keepers and local hunt staff. Working Trial Societies rely on the generosity of landowners to host Trials and keep the sport alive. It is vital, therefore, that you treat the countryside with respect and are always courteous to all staff and those who live in the countryside.

Leaving the Trial

- At the end of the Trial everyone goes back to the base for the Judges summing up and presentation of prizes. It is courteous to stay for this. If for any reason a competitor wishes to withdraw from any part of the stake they must obtain permission from the Trials Manager.
- So, as you can see, there are many exciting and interesting challenges on the long road from basic training to Working Trial Competition. Careful preparation at every stage is vital. Put the effort in and you'll find it an enormously rewarding process.

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Together we can make a dog's life the
healthiest and happiest it can be.
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