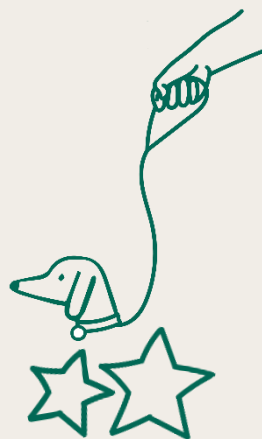




## YKC HANDLING JUDGES CRITERIA



HANDLING JUDGING CRITERIA  
2026 (CRUFTS 2027)



# YKC HANDLING JUDGES CRITERIA



## A: YKC HANDLING COMPETITIONS

1. This document is for YKC handling competition Judges and also for YKC members who require the full criteria of how YKC handling will be judged.
  - i. This document is in support of the main YKC Handling Rules for 2025 (Crufts 2026) which can be found on the YKC website.
2. The following YKC Handling competitions are available for members to compete in:
  - i. YKC Handling **06-11** Years
  - ii. YKC Handling **12-17** Years
  - iii. YKC Handling **18-24** Years

## B: DOGS

1. It is to be reinforced that it is **NOT THE DOG** that is being judged, but how well the show handler handles the dog.
  - i. *N.b. The dog which stands perfectly and has immaculate pattern work is not necessarily being handled by the best handler.*
2. The dog need not be a close match to the breed standard, but should be still be healthy and able to complete all pattern work.
3. Bitches in season shall not be permitted to compete in YKC handling classes.
  - i. Upon discovery that a bitch in season is about to, or has entered the YKC class, the judge shall quietly move the dog and handler to one side and ask for them to remove themselves from the class.
4. Docked dogs may not be entered into a YKC Handling competition at a show where the public pay an entry fee to attend (this includes Crufts).
5. **Dog Welfare:**
  - i. Any handler's actions that could be injurious to the dog must be penalised by immediate elimination from the ring.
  - ii. Judges should ask handlers to relax during periods of inactivity should the circumstances warrant it.
    - a. Handlers should remain aware of the judge during this time, and should be expected to present at a moment's notice.
    - b. Appropriate conditions include, but are not limited to:
      - (1) Large class sizes
      - (2) Adverse weather conditions (too hot, cold, damp etc)

## C: JUDGES CONDUCT

1. Judges at Kennel Club Handling Competitions are expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards in accordance with Kennel Club Rules and Regulations and appropriate Codes of Best Practice as published from time to time.
2. Judge's discretion prevails and Judges' decisions are final.
3. Judges should take note that if the class is scheduled for young competitors, they are likely to be less experienced due to age.
  - i. Judges in this instance shall offer simple instructions when judging handlers in the younger age group (e.g. 6-11 years).
  - ii. Judges should use their discretion when selecting which patterns are to be used.
    - a. If the judge has decided that some handlers are too young to understand some of the more complicated patterns, they must not use those patterns deemed too complex for any competitor in the same class; the judging must remain fair for all being judged.
    - b. In any mixed age category YKC handling competitions (namely the YKC Handler of the Year final) it may occur that members of the 06-11 Years age category may be required to complete complex movements if other means of differentiating the competition has failed.



## D ■ YKC HANDLING OBJECTIVE

1. YKC Handling classes are a reflection of what occurs in the breed ring, but rather than focus on how close the dog is to the breed standard, these classes look to see who can exhibit their dog in the best manner.
  - i. To achieve this goal, the following 6 categories will be judged:
    - a. Unobstructed View
    - b. Movement
    - c. Stacking / Standing
    - d. Groupwork
    - e. Individual Assessment & Pattern Work
    - f. Sportsmanship & Rapport
  - ii. In the event of handlers being deemed as equal by the judge, places will be distinguished by the 'Unobstructed View' ruling.

## a ■ UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW (A.K.A THE GOLDEN RULE)

1. In order for a judge to accurately assess whether a dog in the breed ring meets the breed standard, the judge must be able to see the dog!
2. **A handler should make every effort to allow the judge a clear view of their dog at all times.**
  - i. Where required, the handler should alter their own position to ensure they do not obstruct the judge's view of their dog.
    - a. This might mean, for example, that the handler may need to switch from the dog being handled on their left to being handled on their right.
    - b. This should be done discretely, without drawing the judge's attention from the dog to the handler
  - ii. Basically, a handler should **NEVER** stand or move between the judge and their dog.
3. Whilst the dog is being stacked or standing, the judge may manoeuvre around the dog, at a steady and considered walking pace. During this time, handlers should 'shadow' the dog.
  - i. Shadowing is the process where the handler moves themselves to the opposite side of the dog to the judge, ideally adjacent to the dog's leg that is furthest away from the judge at any given time.
    - a. Imagine that the judge is a light-source, wherever the judge moves, the handler should move to where the dog's shadow would be (hence shadowing).
  - ii. Any movement that is required during shadowing must be conducted calmly and discretely.
4. If a dog should be part of a lineup, adequate space should be left between each dog to allow for the judge to comfortably step between each dog and allow a clear view of the dog's front.
  - i. Handlers should be penalised for not allowing enough room between their dog and other objects (dog, ring perimeter, table etc).
  - ii. A handler is only responsible for a gap directly in front of, and to the sides of, their dog.
5. YKC members should wear appropriate clothing when competing in YKC Handling competitions.
  - i. There are several things to consider when selecting an outfit for YKC Handling:
    - a. Complimentary Colour
      - (1) The colour of the handler's outfit should not blend with their dog's coat colour as it makes viewing the dog's topline more challenging for the judge.
        - (i) i.e. if you have a black coated dog, don't wear a black outfit.



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- b. Free from distraction
  - (1) Any item of clothing that may distract the judge or dog is unsuitable e.g.
    - (i) Anything that drapes or dangles could distract the dog
    - (ii) Any clothing item that is too “loud” may divert the judges attention away from the dog and onto the handler.
    - (iii) Any clothing featuring text or logos
    - (iv) Any clothing that is provocative (revealing)
- c. Freedom of movement
  - (1) Any items of clothing worn should not impede the handlers range of movement e.g.
    - (i) High heeled shoes are not suitable
    - (ii) Handlers should be able to bend and kneel down freely
- d. Smartness
  - (1) Typically, to mirror the Breed ring, handlers should wear smart attire.

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## **b** ■ MOVEMENT

- 1. The dog’s movement (gait) is a large factor in many breed standards. In order for the judge to properly assess the dogs movement the following rules should be observed.
- 2. The speed of the dog’s movement while being judged shall be based on a natural trot for the breed.
- 3. During groupwork, a handler may not overtake another handler.
  - i. If a handler exhibits a dog that is faster than the dog/s in front, that handler should delay setting off to ensure that they have sufficient space to be moving at a trot when the judge is looking at their dog.
- 4. A handler should ensure that all movement is direct and purposeful.
  - i. During pattern-work, lines must be straight with sharp, neat turns
- 5. A handler should understand the reason behind why the dog is moving and what the judge is looking for:
  - i. These include:
    - a. Dog walking away from the judge: Judge’s view of dogs hind quarters and movement
    - b. Dog walking towards the judge: Judges view of the dogs front
    - c. Dog walking side on to the judge: Judges view of the side and overall gait of the dog.
  - ii. With this knowledge, the handler should ensure that, when moving their dog, the judge receives the perfect view of their dog at all times.

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## **c** ■ PRESENTING THE DOG - STACKING & FREESTANDING

- 1. During any moment where the dog is not in motion, unless instructed to relax by the judge, a handler’s dog should be being presented to the judge.
- 2. To present a dog, a handler should set the dog up so that the judge is able to view the dog’s side.
  - i. A handler may set the dog up by stacking or freestanding.
    - (1) Stacking a dog requires the handler to hand-place their dog’s legs into the correct position.
    - (2) Freestanding a dog requires the dog to place its own feet into the correct position.
  - b. No preference is given to one method over the other.
  - ii. The correct position for the dog’s paws is:
    - a. Imagine a regular rectangle, with a paw on each corner.
      - (1) The front paws should flow straight down from the shoulder .
      - (2) The rear leg should be very slightly extended to be in an alert position.
        - (i) The rear leg should not be overextended
      - (3) The overall outcome should be a balanced overall look with a flat topline (back).



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- iii. Once presented, a dog should remain stationary in this position.
    - a. A judge may wish to manoeuvre around the dog to view different angles.
      - (1) The dog should remain stationary during this time and the handler should “shadow” appropriately.
  - 3. Handlers, when forming a lineup, will present their dogs together in a straight line parallel to the ring edge.
  - 4. Handlers undergoing individual assessment should present their dog a few paces away from the judge.
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## GROUPWORK

- 1. The judge will, at certain times, ask the whole class to perform a group activity.
  - i. These activities are limited to:
    - a. Entering the ring
    - b. Lap of the ring
    - c. Exiting the ring
- 2. With all 3 group activities listed above, handlers will be judged on their ability to observe and adapt based on what the handler in front of them is currently doing.
  - i. Handlers should know what speed their dog's natural trot is, and adjust when they set off to ensure they can maintain that speed until they are in position without colliding or overtaking another handler/dog.
- 3. **Entering the ring** will require each handler in turn to:
  - i. Enter the ring.
  - ii. Follow the perimeter of the ring until arriving at the steward OR the dog in front.
  - iii. Setting their dog up to present to the judge with enough space to the dog/steward in front and parallel to the ring.
- 4. **Lap of the ring** will require each handler in turn to:
  - i. Set off to complete a full lap of the ring and end up in a line up
    - (1) Path: Circle just inside the perimeter of the ring.
    - (2) The single lap of the ring requires all handlers to traverse one lap around the ring, starting with the first dog in the line-up.
    - (3) All handlers should follow on from one another, taking care not to get too close to the dog in front. The Handler should pay attention to the specific section of the ring the judge is viewing, and time their handling according.
    - (4) It may be necessary for the handler to hold their dog back while a slower dog in front is being judged.
    - (5) The judge may indicate that more laps of the ring are required, handlers should pay close attention to the judge's hand signals towards the end of their first lap.
    - (6) Handlers should also be aware of the judge changing position from the centre of the ring to the side of the ring during the circle.
      - (i) If this occurs, handlers will have to change hands accordingly so as not to obstruct the judge's view of the dog.
- 5. **Exiting the ring** will require each handler in turn to:
  - i. When instructed by the judge, either by failing to reach a shortlist, not being placed, or after the presentation has occurred, the relevant competitors should leave the ring
  - a. This should be in single file, similar to how each member entered the ring
    - (1) During this time, member should not interfere or obscure any judging still taking place in the ring, and should leave by following the perimeter until they reach the exit.



## e ■ INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT & PATTERN WORK

1. **Individual assessment:** the judge will be focused solely on one dog while they carry out the following activities:
  - i. Initial Presentation to the judge
    - a. Assessment Dogs should be appropriately stood, either on the floor or on a table where required.
    - b. Judges are permitted to move a dog's leg during the initial presentation.
      - (1) The handler will be penalised if they do not notice and immediately correct the stance.
  - ii. The handler will be asked to display the dog's teeth, the handler must demonstrate the left-side, front and right-side teeth, in any order.
    - a. The act of displaying the teeth must be considerate to the dog, and must not cause any distress. Some breeds do not show their teeth in the breed ring, if this is the case, the handler should attempt to display the teeth as best they can.
2. **Pattern Work:** After the initial presentation, the judge will inform the handler which of the approved patterns they wish the handler to perform
  - i. Handlers should begin most pattern work directly in front of the judge approximately 2-3 paces away.
    - a. Handlers should begin setting off in the direction indicated by the judge's feet position.
    - b. Please see the pattern diagram later in the document for further details.
  - ii. The judge may set the same series of pattern work exercises, in the same order, for each competitor. If the judge wishes to set different patterns for each competitor, the pattern combination should be approximately the same length for each competitor.
  - iii. The judge may only select a pattern or patterns from the approved patterns list later in this document.
  - iv. The judge may choose to finish the pattern work with one final presentation of the dog.
    - a. The final presentation is optional, handlers should listen closely to the instructions given by the judge before commencing any pattern work.
  - v. When completing pattern work, handlers are permitted to use the entire area of the ring to complete the required patterns.
    - a. Handlers should only be penalised if, when completing the patterns, they do not utilise enough space for the judge to clearly assess the dog's movement.

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## f ■ SPORTSMANSHIP & RAPPORT

1. Arguably, the most important section of the competition is the sportsmanship & rapport.
2. Handlers should be aware that their sportsmanship is on display from the moment they enter the showground.
  - i. Handlers should be courteous to one another, as well as to the judges and stewards.
3. The judge's decision is final.
  - i. Handlers should be gracious, whether they have won, received a placing, or not made the shortlist.
  - ii. The judge may change the order of placings at any time until the awards have been handed to the competitors.
  - iii. Handlers should continue to display good handling etiquette until out of the ring.
4. The handler should demonstrate a strong rapport with their dog.
  - i. During pattern work, the handler should communicate with the dog and be seen to be looking at the dog regularly during movement and stacking or free-standing.
  - ii. Handlers should spend the majority of their time watching their dog on the move and in the stand, handlers staring at the judge during assessment is to be penalised.



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5. Handlers shall not display harsh handling at any time.
  - i. Any instance of malicious harsh handling shall require the handler to be eliminated from the ring.
6. The handler should display awareness of;
  - i. the direction they are traveling in,
  - ii. the line their dog is taking,
  - iii. the position of the judge.
7. Handlers must be in complete control of their dog at all times.
8. Handlers should use a 'show lead' appropriate for the size of dog they are showing.
  - i. The lead should be held without too much slack.
    - a. The handler will be penalised if a lead is too tight as to make the dog uncomfortable.
    - b. Any excess lead should be coiled and hidden from view within a clenched fist.
  - ii. Handlers should begin most pattern work with the lead in their left hand.
9. Handlers must display their exhibit number clearly about their person at all times.
10. Handlers may use treats to bait their dogs.
  - i. Should any treats, either deliberately or accidentally, fall to the floor, the handler should immediately pick them up.
    - a. Failure to do so should be penalised.
11. If a dog fouls in the ring, the handler is expected to clean up after the dog.
  - i. If a handler does not have adequate provision to do so (i.e. no poo bag) this shall be penalised.
  - ii. While the handler is cleaning up after their dog, the judging will be halted and will resume as soon as the ring has returned to a state whereby no other dogs will be distracted by the fouling.
12. Handlers are expected to be courteous to the judge and ring stewards at all times, including thanking the judge after their pattern work is completed.

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## g: YKC HANDLING TIMINGS

1. YKC handling should take approximately 3mins per handler.
  - i. Judges shall attempt to give each handler the same amount of time.
  - ii. Judges shall also aim to give each handler the maximum amount of time.



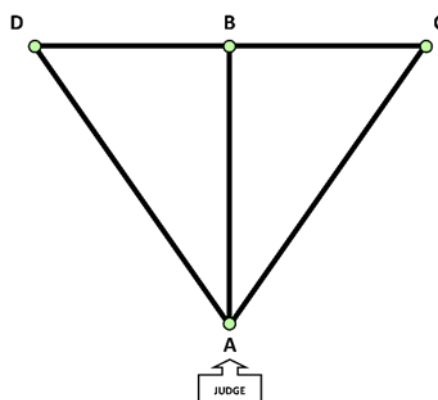
## h ■ GENERAL ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS (JUDGE MAY ALTER)

2. Enter the ring
3. Line up and present dogs (group)
4. Individual assessment
  - i. Each dog moves to the judge in the order the handlers have lined up
5. Pattern work
  - i. Once the pattern work and presentation is complete, the handler should join the back of the line.
6. Groupwork – lap of the ring
7. Shortlist (if applicable)
8. Presentation
9. Exit the ring

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## i ■ YKC HANDLING SHORTLISTING

1. In large classes, the judge may select the best performing handlers thus far and ask all other competitors to leave the ring.
2. From this point onwards, only the shortlisted dogs remain in the competition.
  - i. When shortlisting, a judge must ask at least 2 handlers to leave the ring
  - ii. The judge should avoid a scenario whereby shortlisting a group of handlers would leave one of the remaining handlers in the shortlist unable to be placed
    - a. E.g. if there are awards to 5 places, don't shortlist 6 handlers (pick either 7 or 5).
  - iii. The judge is not allowed to shortlist if the class size is less than or equal to the number of places on offer.
3. As part of the shortlist, the judge may ask the handlers to perform more pattern work.
  - i. The new pattern work may be selected from any of the approved patterns, even if they have already been used.



## APPROVED PATTERNS LIST

1. The following section details the approved list of patterns that a judge may select from. The judge is permitted to ask the handler to complete the patterns as a standard exercise (dog on the handler's left side to begin) or as a reverse exercise (dog on the handler's right side to begin). Figure 1 -

Handling Paths a) Individual Patterns

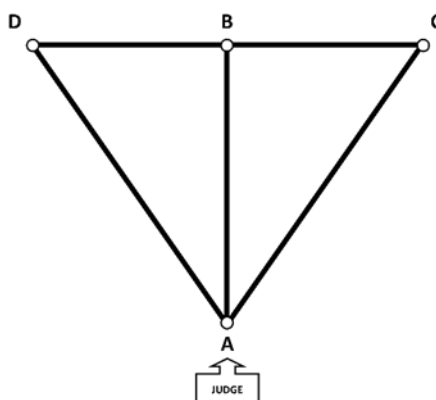
- i. Approved patterns are as follows:
  - a. The Triangle
  - b. Up & down
  - c. The "L"
  - d. The "T"

### a THE TRIANGLE

1. Standard Path:  $A \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow A$
2. Reverse Path:  $A \rightarrow D \rightarrow C \rightarrow A$
3. Description: 'The Triangle' should be made of 3 approximately equal length lines.
  - i. The first straight line should begin with the handler and dog moving away from the judge towards the right-hand side.
    - a. (approx.  $30^\circ$  to the right from direction the judge's feet are pointing)
  - ii. The handler should then make a left turn, bringing the dog exactly perpendicular to the judges view and start the second straight line by proceed forward approximately the same distance as the first straight line.
  - iii. The Handler should then perform their final left turn to face the judge and proceed forward. At each of the corners, the handler should take the outside line with the dog on the handler's left-hand side throughout.
    - a. Handlers should not need to switch hands at corners "C" or "D"

### b UP & DOWN

1. Standard Path:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$
2. Reverse Path:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$
3. Description: The Up and down pattern should feature two straight lines, one directly away from, and one directly towards, the judge.
  - i. The handler should set off in the direction that the judge's feet are pointing.
  - ii. The style of turn should be at the discretion of the handler but as long as the unobstructed view is not broken.



## c: THE "L"

1. Standard Path:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow D \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$  (fig.1)
2. Reverse Path:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$  (fig.1)
3. Description: The "L" pattern is designed for the judge to see the movement of the dog from each of its sides.
  - i. The 'L' should be made of 4 lines. For the initial straight line, the handler should set off in the direction that the judge's feet are pointing.
  - ii. The handler should then make a 90° left turn and walk in a straight line for approximately the same number of paces as the first straight line.
  - iii. Upon finishing the second straight line, the handler should perform an inward-turn, during which they will be required to swap the lead into their other hand.
  - iv. The Handler should then retrace their steps back to the judge beginning with a straight line, followed by a 90° right hand turn
  - v. followed by a final straight to the judge.

## d: THE "T"

1. Standard Path:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow D \rightarrow C \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$  (fig.1)
2. Reverse Path:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow B \rightarrow A$  (fig.1)
3. Description: The "T" pattern is a more complicated form of the L pattern.
  - i. The 'T' should be made of 5 lines. For the initial straight line, the handler should set off in the direction that the judge's feet are pointing.
  - ii. The handler should then make a 90° left turn and walk in a straight line for approximately half the number of paces as the first straight line.
  - iii. Upon finishing the second straight line, the handler should perform an inward-turn, during which they will be required to swap the lead into their other hand.
  - iv. The Handler should then proceed straight for approximately the same number of steps as the first line.
  - v. A second inward-turn should be performed along with an accompanying swapping of hands.
  - vi. The handler should then proceed straight, using around half the number of paces as the first line.
  - vii. To finish, the handler should then turn 90° to the left and walk back towards the judge.