Beginner's guide to...
working trials

THE KENNEL CLUB

Do you love the outdoors? Does your dog love to use its nose? Is it smart enough to learn some obedience and agility, along with tracking and searching?

What is working trials?

Working Trials presents a variety of challenges and as it involves all the dog's natural behaviours, it must be one of the most satisfying and fun activities for them to participate in. Dogs compete in ascending levels called 'stakes'. From Companion Dog (CD), through Utility Dog (UD) and Working Dog (WD) to Tracking Dog (TD) and the option of Patrol Dog (PD). Exercises are divided into three sections; nosework, agility and control. Working Trials leaves you with a well-trained, well-rounded dog and the sense of pride and accomplishment you get from qualifying is the best feeling ever! Trials challenge you and rewards you, and that's what makes it such a great activity.

Why should you take part in working trials?

- Builds a wonderful 'bond' between dog and handler.
- Gives your dog the chance to use the traits that have been bred into all dogs over the years.
- Working Trials is a fun and natural activity for your dog; all exercises are enjoyed; they especially love the tracking!
- Trials are held throughout the country giving the opportunity to visit many different places.
- Any type of dog can take part if they are fit and healthy. Both purebred and mixed breed dogs can compete on an equal footing.
- Useful canine skills are developed – a Working Trials dog is trained to find small articles and may even find those lost car keys for you.

All you need to know

- Your dog must be registered with us on the 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 booklet is available from our publications department.
- Dogs need to be over 18 months of age to compete but can attend training or participate in Special Stakes at an earlier age.
- No previous experience is necessary so request a list of working trial clubs today.

Register your dog on the Activity Register using form 5 online at **thekennelclub.org.uk/activityregister**

| **Great for fitness with your dog!**

| **Suitable for both Pedigree and Crossbreed dogs**

Judy Meekings/The Kennel Club ©

At a trial

Qualification at an Open Trial entitles the competitor to enter a Championship Trial where, on completion of a successful test, an owner can add the letters of each stake to the dog's name e.g. Our Lad Rover CDex. There are winners and places in each stake, but in the lower stakes this is very much secondary to the qualification, and the aim is to reach the top stakes and compete for Challenge Certificates and the title of Working Trial Champion e.g. WTCh Our Lad Rover TDEx / PDEx.

Dogs progress through the stakes at their own pace without having to beat their fellow competitors, meaning the atmosphere at trials stays friendly with handlers genuinely wishing each other well and sharing successes and disappointments.

The various exercises in Working Trials were originally based on police dog training with German Shepherd owners starting the tests as a means for assessing the quality of their dogs for breeding. Nowadays Working Trials is an absorbing hobby for all dogs and is often described as the most enjoyable and satisfying way of working your dogs.

Get started today!

To find a list of clubs, training classes or competitions near you, use the **'Find a Club'** and **'Find a Show'** services available on **thekennelclub.org.uk**

Working trials exercises

Generally there are three main sections to a working trial:

Nosework

Tracking is a fun and engaging way for dogs to use their superb sense of smell and for the handler/owner to watch and participate in. Many will say that there is no better feeling than going out in the mist and dew of early morning and following your dog round a track that you can neither see nor understand, and watching him take turns and find articles, working out a pattern in a way that is beyond our comprehension. It is the most amazing feeling.

A track is a disturbance of ground and tracking refers to a dog's ability to detect, recognise and follow a specific scent. In WT tracking, the dog must follow where a person (tracklayer) has walked previously. After putting in a pole to mark the start of the track, the tracklayer will walk the required pattern (designed by the judge), turning as necessary and placing articles on the track. Articles are small objects that range in size depending on the level of difficulty e.g. spoon, cable, small piece of carpet, lino, hose, or clothes peg. After the required time has elapsed the handler and dog will approach the pole and, with no knowledge of the pattern, will proceed to follow the track finding articles along the way. The dog will be marked on how accurately they are. Tracks are around half a mile long and have corners and angles, not just a straight line. Tracking may be on grass, heather, stubble, wheat, or any other crop.

Dogs are also trained to search for, locate and retrieve articles to the handler from a designated area (Search Square).

Agility

There are three elements to this section. A Clear Jump (914mm), Long Jump (2438mm) and Scale (1706mm). Smaller dogs have the heights/length adjusted in the lower stakes.

Control

This section should demonstrate the bond between dog and handler and their ability to work as a team. The exercises include heelwork, retrieve a dumbbell, sit stay, recall, down stay, send away (dog is sent away from the handler in a straight line to a point specified by the judge) and speak (dog must bark and cease on command).

Are you ready for your first working trial?

Visit **thekennelclub.org.uk/workingtrials** or email **workingtrials@thekennelclub.org.uk** to find all you need to know about entering a trial!

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