

# Beginner's guide to... field trials and gundog working tests

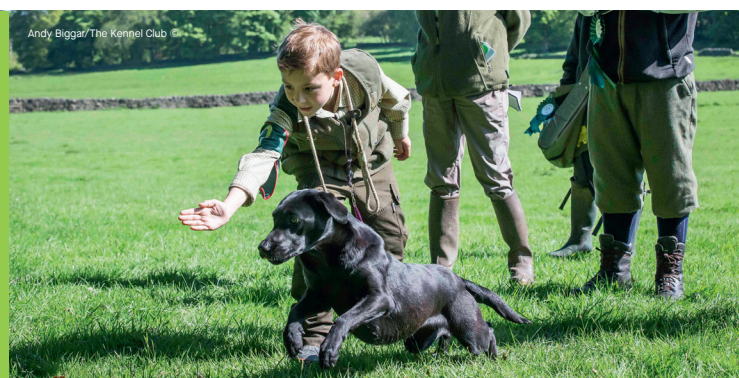
Is your dog in tune with its natural ability?

## What are field trials?

Field trials have been developed to test the working ability of gundogs in competitive conditions. Trials resemble, as closely as possible, a day's shooting in the field and dogs are expected to work with all manner of game, from rabbits and hares, to partridges and pheasants. Many of our best loved breeds were traditionally developed to help man in hunting. Retrievers gathered game in the field; Cocker Spaniels flushed and retrieved game; Pointers and Setters ranged over the fields helping us seek out birds and rabbits for the table. A great many still help us in shooting and hunting today.

## Why should you get involved with field trials?

- If you love the great outdoors you will love Field Trials
- This is a great activity to keep you and your dog fit
- Develop what your dog was bred to do



## All you need to know

- Your dog must be registered with us on the Breed Register as a pure bred gundog under any of the four sub-groups; 1) Retriever 2) Spaniel 3) Hunt, Point and Retrieve or 4) Pointers and Setters
- You and your dog must be fit and healthy to be able to trek across some of the rough terrain encountered on some country shoots
- Before you decide whether you want to get involved with this activity you should find out as much as possible about countryside sports from a number of sources – large Game and Country Fairs are a good source to find out more and ask advice from the people involved
- It's worth reading specialist publications which are filled with articles and tips about training your gundog and the role of the dog and owner in the countryside. Titles include 'The Shooting Times', 'Shooting Gazette' and 'The Field'. These magazines also have sporting calendars which list when and where Game and Country Fairs are being held

## Clubs all over the UK!

If you want to own a dog capable of performing at a day's shooting you are more likely to succeed if it comes from working stock.

Some dogs which have been bred for the show scene, or simply as pets, may have lost much of their working and hunting instinct, which is vital in working gundogs. You will need to be dedicated to developing your dog as a working animal which will require a lot of training. A working gundog can also be more demanding than a pet, or a show dog. They need plenty of exercise off the lead and their minds need to be kept active by working in the field.

A show gundog that has won certain awards in the show ring can also enter for a Show Gundog Working Certificate if it is able to demonstrate a good standard of working ability relevant to its breed.

## Are field trials right for you and your dog?

Come along to one of our training days. For more details visit [thekennelclub.org.uk/gundogtrainingdays](http://thekennelclub.org.uk/gundogtrainingdays)

## 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](http://thekennelclub.org.uk)

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## Training

The first step is to join a field trial society or gundog club which can offer a range of training opportunities throughout the summer months. We can help you find the most suitable society near to you. Field trial societies will be able to help you with specialist field trial training and can suggest trainers who may be willing to train your dog to the gun on a one-to-one basis. Training a working gundog is really an activity in itself and can take many years of hard work, developing a good rapport with your dog to create a dog capable of working in the field.

Field trial societies may organise members' competitions and training assessments which are designed to develop your dog's ability and help with your training technique. These are helpful as your dog should learn to work surrounded by other people and dogs, as it would do out in the field. Clubs may also publish newsletters and magazines, and organise a range of social events.

To find out more about field trials training visit  
[thekennelclub.org.uk/newtofieldtrials](http://thekennelclub.org.uk/newtofieldtrials)

## Gundog working test

Most gundogs are not ready to work in competition for at least two years and the first type of competition you will probably enter will be a gundog working test. These competitions are usually for members of the organising club only.

They are designed to further good, sound, gundog work and encourage dogs' natural working ability, but do not involve shooting live game.

Work is done with dummies, and these friendly competitions are a natural extension of the training you will already be doing with your dog. Gundog working tests are designed to suit the different working abilities of three of the Gundog groups; Spaniels, Retrievers and breeds which Hunt, Point and Retrieve.

## Sub-groups

### Spaniels

Spaniels will be judged on how well they quarter the ground at a field trial, hunting for game and other quarry species, to be steady to flush, shot and fall and to retrieve tenderly to hand on command.

At tests, exercises are set to try and assess a Spaniel's retrieving and game finding abilities using seen and hidden dummies. The judges will also be looking for good directional control.

### Pointers and Setters

At a field trial, dogs shall be required to quarter ground systematically with pace and style in search of gamebirds, to point gamebirds, to be steady to flush and shot. Dogs should not be gun shy. The dog should work its point out freely, on command, without the handler either touching the dog or moving in front of it.

There are no GWTs for Pointers and Setters.

### Retrievers

At a field trial, dogs will be required to be steady by the handler whilst being shot over until commanded to quest for dead or wounded game, from land or water, and retrieve tenderly to hand.

At GWTs, Retrievers are tested on their game finding ability and the speed and directness of the retrieve. Judges will be looking for quick pick ups and fast returns, natural nose and marking ability, quietness in handling, control, drive and style.

### Hunt, Point and Retrieve Breeds (HPRs)

At HPR field trials, dogs shall be required to quarter ground systematically in search of quarry, to point game, to flush on command, to be steady to flush, shot and fall, and to retrieve tenderly to hand on command from from land or water.

It is difficult to assess pointing through artificial tests and there are limitations to how this can be done in a gundog working test. HPR breeds will be tested and judged on their quartering, hunting and retrieving skills in similar ways to the Retrievers and Spaniels.

## Working Gundog Certificate

The aim of the Working Gundog Certificate (WGC) is to provide credible proof that the handler and dog are a competent partnership, with the qualities to fulfil the general requirements of work on a shoot.

The WGC certificate is open to all Kennel Club pedigree registered dogs, crossbreeds and unregistered dogs, whose owners wish to demonstrate their dog's working ability. Owners of crossbreed and previously unregistered dogs wishing to take the WGC must register the dog(s) on The Kennel Club Activity Register in advance.

The certificate will be issued by The Kennel Club and will list those tasks achieved on the day. Successful partnerships will also have the distinction of having their names published in The Kennel Club's field trials newsletter.

## Are you ready for your first field trial?

Visit [thekennelclub.org.uk/fieldtrials](http://thekennelclub.org.uk/fieldtrials)  
or email [gundogs@thekennelclub.org.uk](mailto:gundogs@thekennelclub.org.uk) to find all  
you need to know about entering a field trial and  
the next steps to becoming a field trial champion!

## Get started today!

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