

Visitor's Guide To AKC Dog Shows

What To Do On The Day Of A Dog Show To Ensure A Good Time

Knowing what to look for and how to approach dog show exhibitors helps you enjoy being a dog show spectator.

Try to get to the show an hour before the breed or class you're interested in is scheduled to allow yourself enough time to get parked, through the admission process and find the show ring. When you get inside the show venue, a good place to start is the club or the superintendents' table. There you will find the people who are putting on the show and most familiar with what's going on. You can pick up a free judging schedule from the superintendent, or for a small fee, purchase a catalog that includes the schedule as well as information about all the dogs entered including their owners' names and addresses.

Dog Show Organization and Layout

At most shows, there are distinct showing and grooming areas. Grooming areas can be quite crowded and not always well organized. Usually people with the same breed will cluster together, sometimes this is organized by the show giving club, but usually it is a more informal process. The other main area will be the actual show rings where the competition takes place. The rings are the ONLY place the breed or class you are interested in has to be at a certain time. At unbenched shows most if not all the dogs will leave shortly after competing, so it is important to get to the ring on time. At agility, obedience and rally trials, the crating and competition areas are closer together and less segregated by breed.

Basic Manners For Dog Show Spectators

Dog shows are all about the dogs; be careful not to do anything to upset or muss up dogs being shown. Remember exhibitors are coming to these shows to compete and they and their dogs may be nervous before they show. If you are interested in petting or learning more about their dogs, ask if you can touch the dogs and when would be a good time to talk. Most dog show people love nothing better than to talk about their dogs, but may be a bit abrupt while they're working on their "game face" or performing an intricate grooming procedure.

Children At Dog Shows

Dogs and kids generally go together very well, but not every dog and every kid are naturals at understanding each other. Children need to ask the owner or handler for permission before touching any dog. Children also need to be taught not to run up to or away from a dog, as it may trigger the dog's flight or chase instincts. Don't let children take enticing toys or food right up to dogs. I've seen more than one ice cream cone or stuffed toy snatched away. When watching the show, keep back from the ring gates; don't move or reach through the gates and don't allow children to enter the rings!

When You See A Really Cool Dog

Ask before you pet or take a photo up close; most exhibitors are flattered by the attention, but they don't want the dog's grooming mussed up or attention distracted

before going in the ring. If they ask you to wait until after showing, they are willing to talk to you they just need to finish the competition. If you're looking for a puppy or dog of that breed, ask for a card. Good breeders have a strong network within their breed and can refer you to other breeders or even breed rescues if they don't have the right dog or puppy for you right now.

Other Things To Do At The Dog Show

Regardless of why you decided to visit the dog show, take time to check out some of the other activities and attractions while you are there, such as:

- Obedience, Rally and Agility
- Breed conformation competition
- Junior Showmanship
- Canine Good Citizen (CGC) testing
- Dog Show Vendors
- Show grooming area

What to Take Home From The Dog Show

One thing you can't do at an AKC dog show is come home with a dog. You can come home with contacts to start the process of buying a dog or puppy from a reputable breeder. You may get new treats and toys for your own pets, and most importantly, a greater appreciation for the vast array of dogs and dog activities that celebrate our relationship with dogs.

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