

WORKING TESTS

Notes for a Novice (and not so Novice) Handler

Before the day

- Fill in the entry form carefully and don't forget to sign and date it.
- Entry forms are generally available online from the Organising club's webpage. (A paper copy may have been sent out with the club's yearbook or newsletter but this is increasingly uncommon). Download the form and either print a paper copy and complete, or use a PDF editor to complete the form electronically, save to your documents and then email the form to the Organiser.
- If you have any query about your entry, please contact the relevant Organiser.
- Post or email your entries on time – the closing date is set to allow the draw to be carried out and to give the Organiser time to complete the paperwork (ie. the running orders). If your entry is late your name won't be in the draw and you are unlikely to get a run.
- Write clearly, otherwise your dog's pedigree details may appear incorrectly in the running order. Double check that all the information you have put is correct before sending it off.
- Check the definitions of the classes - entry requirements may vary from test to test. Make sure you are eligible.
- Understand the difference between a Classified and Unclassified test. These are explained in Kennel Club Working Test Rules and Regs J(G) and also in FCRS Working Test Definitions, found on the Society Website.
- Enclose a stamped address envelope and/or your current email address for the result of the draw. This will usually include directions to the venue or any additional information not given on the schedule. Generally the Organiser will email the results of the draw to you. Make sure your email address is written clearly and either check your spam folder if you do not hear back after the closing date, or add the Organiser's email to your address book now.
- Some Clubs may not send out the draw/running order prior to the test unless there is a limit on the number of dogs running. If you do not receive confirmation of your entry you can contact the Organiser after the closing date to check that your entry has been received.
- Make sure the details on your cheque are correct. Make it payable to the relevant Society not the Organiser.
- If paying by bank transfer check all details carefully and reference your payment with your name and the details of the test e.g. NameNDNHdd.mm.yy
- Some tests may be entered by using the Field Trial Management System. This is useful if you are interested in entering more than one test. Once you have registered with the system you can record your details (name, address, email address, contact phone number) and your dog's details (Kennel name, KC registration number, date of birth, breed, gender, breeder's details, sire's name and dam's name) and then use the details without having to type them out each time. Payment for FTMS entries is usually via PayPal. The FTMS can be found here <https://www.fieldtrial.info> and detailed instructions on how to use it are available.
- Familiarise yourself with the rules by obtaining a copy of the KC Field Trial Regulations which includes Gundog Working Tests – directly from the Kennel Club. When you sign your entry form you are stating that you have read and will comply with the rules listed in

Section J(G). If there is anything you do not understand about the KC Regulations or have any other query relating to Working Tests in general, please contact the Working Test Secretary Mrs Sarah Young on 02084643214 or sarah.lyoung@live.com who will be happy to help you. The KC "J" Regs are updated annually and are available from the Kennel Club from Mid-January <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/shop/publications/regulations-booklets/> They may also be downloaded as a pdf from the KC website for free <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/media/3465/field-trial-j-regulations.pdf>

- If you find you are unable to attend, please notify the Organiser as soon as possible. Please bear in mind that once the closing date has passed you should expect to forfeit your entry fee.

On the day

- Bitches in season or dogs that have been in contact with any contagious disease should not be brought to the venue.
- Check the arrival time and allow at least half an hour before the start time to exercise your dog, check in and gather your thoughts. Be aware of where the exercise area is and stay within the boundaries. If you don't, you may be interfering with a test ground. A dog that has not been exercised will usually relieve itself on the first test, which will lose you some, if not all, of your marks for that test.
- If you realise that you are going to miss the start of the test, notify the Organiser. A mobile phone number is usually available. Competitors arriving late may only run with the judge's permission.
- Toilets and other facilities are a luxury at a test. Consider this when planning your journey.
- Dress in an appropriate manner. Wear dark or neutral colours, sensible shoes or boots (the car park may be dry but the stream you have to cross to get to the first test won't be)
- Don't forget your wet weather gear. You may also want to take additional clothing – it may be sunny at home but completely different at the test.
- Pack food and drink for the day. Refreshments are sometimes available and this would be notified in the schedule. If no such notice is given, assume that it is necessary to bring your own.
- Ensure you have with you drinking water and a bowl for your dog.
- Consider bringing a camping stool or chair as you will be waiting around between tests.
- Sometimes the test instructions ask you to bring a dummy
- You may wish to have with you a basic first aid kit for you and your dog. There will be a Vet appointed to be on call but there is unlikely to be one in attendance (unless one of the competitors happens to be a vet!). It may be useful to have an antihistamine in your pocket. If you are prone to insect attacks, there are some effective products that protect you but remember, don't put anything on your dog that could interfere with his nose.
- Carry a pen to record the results.
- Don't forget a raffle prize – not all Organisers run one but if they do, the details will be either on the schedule or the running order.
- Once you have found the meeting point you should let the Organiser know you have arrived. You will be marked present and given a numbered armband, which you must wear throughout the test on your left arm (unless you are running two dogs in which case you will have one on each arm – remember which number relates to which dog and turn

over the number of the dog that is not running at that particular time and test. This is very important as mistakes can be made just glancing at a competitor's arm. Your armband is the means by which you will be easily identified during the day.

- If you have a medical condition or disability please inform the Organiser, who MAY be able to arrange transport or help getting around the tests. If you need the assistance of a stick, please make this known to the Judges. In most cases this will not be a problem, but there may be some restrictions.
- Before the test starts, there will be a briefing to introduce the Host, Judges and Stewards. Competitors must always attend the briefing promptly, both to be courteous to the test Organisers and the Host. This introduction will explain how the day will run and any special instructions.
- Where possible, watch other dogs working. Before running your dog through the test, this is not possible but, as long as the judge is in agreement, you may be able to stand and watch the following dogs – a lot can be learnt. Concentrate on what's going on around you, listen and learn.
- Show respect to the Host at all times and remember to clean up after your dog and to remove the waste matter from the land yourself at the end of the day. Do not leave poo bags behind or place in any provided bins on site - these will invariably be going home in the organiser's car!
- Make sure you have removed your dog's collar before starting the tests – it is against KC rules to run a dog wearing any sort of collar.
- Your dog must be on a lead at all times, except when under Judges' orders. It is common practice for spectators to follow the tests. Be aware of where you stand and ensure that you do not interfere with a working dog or obstruct a handler's view. Quite often spectators are allowed to go much closer to where a dog is working. Listen to the Stewards as to where you can and cannot go.

The tests

- You will be called forward in numerical order. The Organiser will have carried out a draw after entries closed and the day's running order will reflect this. It will also list the details you put on your entry form. Be aware of any absentees and be ready to go forward when the stewards call your number.
- Listen to any instructions the Stewards give you concerning where to wait before you go up to the Judge.
- Turn your mobile phone to silent.
- Before you start the first test, make sure your whistle is at hand and not tucked into layers of clothing.
- Leave your dog on its lead until the judge asks you to remove it.
- The Judge will ask you your number and tell you the information you need to know about what is going to happen in the test. If you are unclear about anything, ask the Judge to clarify the point.
- When the judge asks you to, take your lead off your dog. This usually will be after the instructions have been given. Make sure you put the lead away in your pocket or bag – not round your neck or in your hand. Once you have taken your lead off and confirmed with the judge that you are ready to start the test, you must not touch or speak to your dog in any way until you are told to send your dog. Be mindful of voice commands –

initial commands are fine but you will be docked marks for repeating and certainly shouts of “oi”, “no”, your dog’s name, or any other such words will eliminate you from the test as the judge may deem the dog to be out of control or you to be a “noisy handler” - both are eliminating faults. Think whistle not voice.

- Do not send your dog until the Judge tells you to. If you are asked “are you ready?” this refers to whether you are ready to start the test and **not** an indication for you to send your dog. The only exception to this is if the judge instructs you to “send your dog in your own time”.
- The test starts “at the peg”. A stick or a line on the ground marks this. You should be aware of this and not move away from it whilst working your dog. The Judge may indicate an area within which you are able to move (ie to the left or right) to keep a clear view of your working dog. If you feel it is necessary to move, but this was not part of the briefing, ask the Judge politely if you may. Moving away from the peg is seen as “going forward” and may result in a zero even if your dog completes the exercise successfully.
- Be aware of the “game pile” (pile of previously retrieved dummies which may be quite close behind) when your dogs returns to you as it could well go straight to it and swap. (Ideally these retrieved dummies should be placed in a dummy bag but this does not always happen)
- When the test is over, confirm with the judge and put your dog on his lead as soon as possible. Return to the other competitors.
- In a walk-up it is tempting to “chatter” to your dog to keep them close to heel or stay steady in line – not a good habit to get into – give an initial command and then keep quiet. This includes tapping your hand on your side – just as bad as speaking and a hard habit to break. Very important to stay calm and above all to keep breathing.
- Whilst marking a retriever test, the Judges are looking at a dog’s game finding ability, quickness and directness of the retrieve, a quick pick-up, fast return, natural nose, marking ability, quietness in handling, control, drive and style.
- Accept comments from the Judges as advice and not criticism.
- If your dog commits an eliminating fault in a Working Test, it means you will not be in the awards but, unlike Field Trials, it generally does not stop you continuing throughout the day or until there is a cut off/shortlist.
- Know your dog’s ability. If he is struggling on a particular test, it is better to help him and get a zero than to out-phase him. Always ask the Judge’s permission though to go forward and help your dog.
- Remember that a dog at his first tests will behave differently to how he does in training. The main contributors to this are excitement and handler nerves.
- Never handle your dog harshly if it misbehaves or use punitive correction. The Judge concerned could report you to the Kennel Club. It is also against Kennel Club rules to criticise the Judges, Host or Organisers.
- If you think the test is going badly, you may decide to call it a day and withdraw. Please remember to inform the steward who will get permission from the Judge. It is bad manners not to and may cause confusion to Stewards expecting you to turn up to a test. If you do withdraw, don’t go home, go and watch the other dogs working. If you do decide to go home, please tell the organiser. Don’t forget to return your armband.
- Remember you are under the control of the Stewards who are acting on behalf of the Organiser.

- Dogs that score a zero in a test (classified or unclassified), other than in a run-off, cannot feature in the awards, COMs included. Failure in one part of a double retrieve test will result in a zero for the whole test and not just that one part. Eliminating faults (ie would score zero) include refusing to retrieve, whining or barking, running in or chasing, being out of control, failing to enter water, swapping a retrieve dropping the dummy and poor heel-work.

After the Test

- When all the dogs have competed in their tests, the scores are collated. If you think you have done well, don't disappear and put your dog away as you may still be required. If the scores are equal it may be necessary for a run-off – this could be for any of the places.
- At the end of the day there will be a number of presentations (the winners, the Judges, the Stewards and the Host) for which the competitors are expected to stay. It is usual for the overall winners to thank the Judges etc on behalf of their fellow competitors. The Judges will be invited to give any comments about the day's events.
- If you win you will often be invited to make a speech. It is normal to thank the Club, the Organiser, the Judges, the Landowners and the helpers who have fired shot, thrown dummies, stewarded, made teas etc. and then give some thoughts on the day.
- The results will then be made available to everyone. The results may also be emailed out to all the competitors. It is bad form to share the results of the test publicly or on social media or to post details of the winner until the Organiser or Organising club has done so.
- If you are unsure about the marks you have been given or have a question about a particular test, most Judges will be happy for you to approach them BUT remember, at all times, the Judges' decisions are final. Make it clear that you are asking for advice and clarification, not challenging a decision.
- Please remember to thank the Judges and Organisers before leaving.
- If you want to learn more about Working Tests, probably the best way is to offer to help. Dummy throwers, Stewards etc. have some of "the best seats in the house" at Working Tests, often gleaning important information from Judges as the day progresses. This can be invaluable as a learning tool for seeing how dogs work and the mistakes they and their handlers make.
- We all enter tests hoping to win but please remember they are a tool to evaluate how your training for the field is coming along. If your dog shows a particular weakness, learn from your mistakes, go home and practice. Put the effort in and you will find it a rewarding process. Above all remember to enjoy it!

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by S Young FCRS Hon WT Secretary

(with grateful thanks to Fran Robb who wrote the original)