

SHOWING YOUR GOLDEN RETRIEVER

When you purchase your Golden Retriever, you will make it clear to the breeder whether you want one just as a lovable companion and pet, or if you hope to be buying a Golden Retriever with show prospects. No reputable breeder will sell you a young puppy and tell you that it is *definitely* of show quality, for so much can go wrong during the early months of a puppy's development. If you plan to show, what you will hopefully have acquired is a puppy with "show potential."

To the novice, exhibiting a Golden Retriever in the show ring may look easy, but it takes a lot of hard work and devotion to do top winning at a show such as the prestigious Westminster Kennel

Club dog show, not to mention a little luck too!

The first concept that the canine novice learns when watching a dog show is that each dog first competes against members of his own breed. Once the judge has selected the best member of each breed (Best of Breed), that chosen dog will compete with other dogs in his



group. Finally, the dogs chosen first in each group will compete for Best in Show.

The second concept that you must understand is that the dogs are not actually compared against one another. The judge compares each dog against his breed standard, the American Kennel Club (AKC)-approved written description of the ideal breed specimen. While some early breed standards were indeed based on specific dogs that were

Ribbons, medals and trophies bedeck the walls of famous dog homes. Winning in the show ring indicates that a breeder has been successful in his program.



AKC GROUPS

For showing purposes, the American Kennel Club divides its recognized breeds into seven groups: Sporting Dogs, Hounds, Working Dogs, Terriers, Toys, Non-Sporting Dogs and Herding Dogs.

famous or popular, many dedicated enthusiasts say that a perfect specimen, as described in the standard, has never walked into a show ring, has never been bred and, to the woe of dog breeders around the globe, does not exist. Breeders

intention of competing with your Golden, a specialty is like a festival for lovers of the breed who congregate to share their favorite topic: Golden Retrievers! Clubs also send out newsletters, and some organize training days and seminars in order



Competing in an all-breed show with your Golden Retriever is an exciting prospect. It takes many years of experience to become a competent, consistent dog handler.

attempt to get as close to this ideal as possible with every litter, but theoretically the “perfect” dog is so elusive that it is impossible.

If you are interested in exploring the world of dog showing, your best bet is to join your local breed club or the national parent club, which is the Golden Retriever Club of America. These clubs often host both regional and national specialties, shows only for Golden Retrievers, which can include conformation as well as obedience and field trials. Even if you have no

that people may learn more about their chosen breed. To locate the breed club closest to you, contact the AKC, which furnishes the rules and regulations for all of these events plus general dog registration and other basic requirements of dog ownership.

The AKC offers three kinds of conformation shows: an all-breed show (for all AKC-recognized breeds), a specialty show (for one breed only, usually sponsored by the parent club) and a Group show (for all breeds in the Group).



BECOMING A CHAMPION

An official AKC champion of record requires that a dog accumulate 15 points under three different judges, including two “majors” under different judges. Points are awarded based on the number of dogs entered into competition, varying from breed to breed and place to place. A win of three, four or five points is considered a “major.” The AKC assigns a schedule of points annually to adjust to the variations that accompany a breed’s popularity and the population of a given area.

For a dog to become an AKC champion of record, the dog must accumulate 15 points at the shows from at least three different judges,

including two “majors.” A “major” is defined as a three-, four- or five-point win. The number of points per win is determined by the number of dogs entered in the show on that day. Depending on the breed, the number of points that are awarded varies. In a breed as popular as the Golden Retriever, more dogs are needed to rack up the points. At any dog show, only one dog and one bitch of each breed can win points.

Dog showing does not offer “co-ed” classes. Dogs and bitches never compete against each other in the classes. Non-champion dogs are called “class dogs” because they compete in one of five classes. Dogs are entered in a particular class depending on their ages and previous show wins. To begin, there

The American Kennel Club encourages Junior Handlers to become involved in dog shows. There is no better education for the next generation of dog people.





Golden Retrievers are popular show dogs around the world. This Golden is an accomplished champion from Europe.

is the Puppy Class (for 6- to 9-month-olds and for 9- to 12-month-olds); this class is followed by the Novice Class (for dogs that have not won any first prizes except in the Puppy Class or three first prizes in the Novice Class and have not accumulated any points toward their champion title); the Bred-by-Exhibitor Class (for dogs handled by their breeders or handled by one of the breeder's immediate family); the American-bred Class (for dogs bred in the USA!); and the Open Class (for any dog that is not a champion).

The judge at the show begins judging the Puppy Class, first dogs and then bitches, and proceeds through the classes. The judge places his winners first through fourth in each class. In the next-level class, the Winners Class, the first-place winners of each class compete with one another to determine Winners Dog and

Winners Bitch. The judge also places a Reserve Winners Dog and Reserve Winners Bitch, which could be awarded the points in the

SHOW ETIQUETTE

Just like with anything else, there is a certain etiquette to the show ring that can only be learned through experience. Showing your dog can be quite intimidating to you as a novice when it seems as if everyone else knows what he's doing. You can familiarize yourself with ring procedure beforehand by taking a class to prepare you and your dog for conformation showing or by talking with an experienced handler. When you are in the ring, listen and pay attention to the judge and follow his/her directions. Remember, even the most skilled handlers had to start somewhere. Keep it up and you too will become a proficient handler before too long!



Showing is hard work for the dogs, too!

JUNIOR SHOWMANSHIP

For budding dog handlers, ages 10 to 18 years, Junior Showmanship competitions are an excellent training ground for the next generation of dog professionals. Owning and caring for a dog are wonderful methods of teaching children responsibility, and Junior Showmanship builds upon that foundation. Juniors learn by grooming, handling and training their dogs, and the quality of junior's presentation of the dog (and himself) is evaluated by a licensed judge.

case of a disqualification. The Winners Dog and Winners Bitch are the two that are awarded the points for the breed, then compete



with any champions of record entered in the show. The judge reviews the Winners Dog, Winners Bitch and all of the champions to select his Best of Breed. The Best of Winners is selected between the

There are many obstacles which must be overcome in agility trials for dogs. These trials are almost always very competitive, but also a lot of fun.



Winners Dog and Winners Bitch. Were one of these two to be selected Best of Breed, it would automatically be named Best of Winners as well. Finally the judge selects his Best of Opposite Sex to the Best of Breed winner.

At a Group show or all-breed show, the Best of Breed winners from each breed then compete against one another in their respective groups for Group One through Group Four. The judge compares each Best of Breed to his breed standard, and the dog that most closely lives up to the ideal for his breed is selected as Group One. Finally, all seven group winners (from the Sporting Group, Toy

MEET THE AKC

The American Kennel Club is the main governing body of the dog sport in the United States. Founded in 1884, the AKC consists of 500 or more independent dog clubs plus 4,500 affiliate clubs, all of which follow AKC rules and regulations. Additionally, the AKC maintains a registry for pure-bred dogs in the US and works to preserve the integrity of dog sport and its continuation in the country. Over 1,000,000 dogs are registered each year, representing about 150 recognized breeds. There are over 15,000 competitive events held annually for which over 2,000,000 dogs enter to participate. Dogs compete to earn over 40 different titles, from Champion to Companion Dog to Master Agility Champion.



Golden Retrievers participating in the Parade of Tartans are favorites of the Scottish and Irish. This event took place in Colorado.

Group, Hound Group, etc.) compete for Best in Show.

To find out about dog shows in your area, you can subscribe to the American Kennel Club's monthly magazine, the *American Kennel Gazette* and the accompanying *Events Calendar*. You can also look in your local newspaper for advertisements for dog shows in your area or go on the Internet to the AKC's website, www.akc.org.

If your Golden Retriever is six months of age or older and registered with the AKC, you can enter him in a dog show where the breed is offered classes. Provided that your Golden Retriever does not have a disqualifying fault, he can compete. Only unaltered dogs can be entered in a dog show, so if you

Golden Retrievers can retrieve small birds and well as large game fowl. This dog has retrieved a pigeon.



have spayed or neutered your Golden Retriever, you cannot compete in conformation shows. The reason for this is simple. Dog shows are the main forum to prove which representatives of a breed are worthy of being bred. Only dogs that have achieved championships—the AKC “seal of approval” for quality in pure-bred



CLUB CONTACTS

You can get information about dog shows from kennel clubs:

American Kennel Club
5580 Centerview Dr., Raleigh, NC 27606-3390
www.akc.org

United Kennel Club
100 E. Kilgore Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49002
www.ukcdogs.com

Canadian Kennel Club
89 Skyway Ave., Suite 100, Etobicoke, Ontario
M9W 6R4, Canada
www.ckc.ca

The Kennel Club
1-5 Clarges St., Piccadilly,
London W1Y 8AB, UK
www.the-kennel-club.org.uk

dogs—should be bred. Altered dogs, however, can participate in other AKC events such as obedience trials and the Canine Good Citizen program.

OBEDIENCE TRIALS

Obedience trials in the US trace back to the early 1930s when organized obedience training was developed to demonstrate how well dog and owner could work together. The pioneer of obedience trials is Mrs. Helen Whitehouse Walker, a Standard Poodle fancier, who designed a series of exercises after the Associated, Sheep, Police Army Dog Society of Great Britain. Since the days of Mrs. Walker, obedience trials have grown by leaps and bounds, and today there are over 2,000 trials held in the US every year, with more than 100,000 dogs competing. Any AKC-registered dog can enter an obedience trial, regardless of conformational disqualifications or neutering.

Obedience trials are divided into three levels of progressive difficulty. At the first level, the Novice, dogs compete for the title Companion Dog (CD); at the intermediate level, the Open, dogs compete for the title Companion Dog Excellent (CDX); and at the advanced level, the Utility, dogs compete for the title Utility Dog (UD). Classes are sub-divided into “A” (for beginners) and “B” (for more experienced handlers). A perfect score at any level is 200, and

a dog must score 170 or better to earn a “leg,” of which three are needed to earn the title. To earn points, the dog must score more than 50% of the available points in each exercise; the possible points range from 20 to 40.

Each level consists of a different set of exercises. In the Novice level, the dog must heel on and off lead, come, long sit, long down and stand for examination. These skills are the basic ones required for a well-behaved “Companion Dog.” The Open level requires that the dog perform the same exercises above, but without a leash, for extended lengths of time, as well as retrieve a dumbbell, broad jump and drop on recall. In the Utility level, dogs must perform ten difficult exercises, including scent discrimination, hand signals for basic commands, directed jump and directed retrieve.

Once a dog has earned the UD title, he can compete with other proven obedience dogs for the coveted title of Utility Dog Excellent (UDX), which requires that the dog win “legs” in ten shows. Utility Dogs who earn “legs” in Open B and Utility B earn points toward their Obedience Trial Champion title. In 1977, the title Obedience Trial Champion (OTCh.) was established by the AKC. To become an OTCh., a dog needed to earn 100 points, which requires three first places in Open B and Utility under three different judges. The first dog to earn the OTCh. title was a Golden



Retriever named Moreland’s Golden Tonk, owned by Russ Klippie.

AGILITY TRIALS

Having had its origins in the UK back in 1977, AKC agility had its official beginning in the US in August 1994, when the first licensed agility trials were held. The AKC allows all registered breeds (including Miscellaneous Class breeds) to participate, providing the dog is 12 months of age or older. Agility is designed so that the handler demonstrates how well the dog can work at his side. The handler directs his dog over an obstacle course that includes jumps as well as tires, the dog walk, weave poles, pipe tunnels, collapsed tunnels, etc. While working his way through the course, the dog must keep one eye and ear on the handler and the rest of his body on the course. The handler gives verbal commands and hand signals to guide the dog through the course.

Goldens act like a bunch of kids having their first swim of the season. Goldens love water and you can take advantage of this natural trait by using them as hunting dogs.

Agility trials have become the rage of the dog world. Jumping through a tire is one of the events at agility trials.



TRACKING

Any dog is capable of tracking, using its nose to follow a trail. Tracking tests are exciting and competitive ways to test your Golden Retriever's ability to search and rescue. The AKC started tracking tests in 1937, when the first AKC-licensed test took place as part of the Utility level at an obedience trial. Ten years later in 1947, the AKC offered the first title, Tracking Dog (TD). In 1950, the first Golden Retriever to earn the TD was Featherquest Trigger, owned by Marjorie Perry. A chip off the old block, Trigger was the son of Goldwood Toby UD, the first Golden to earn the UD title in an obedience trial. It was not until 1980 that the AKC added the Tracking Dog Excellent title (TDX), which was followed by the

Versatile Surface Tracking title (VST) in 1995. The title Champion Tracker (CT) is awarded to a dog who has earned all three titles.

FIELD TRIALS

Field trials are offered to the retrievers, pointers and spaniel breeds of the Sporting Group as well as to the Beagles, Dachshunds and Bassets of the Hound Group. The purpose of field trials is to demonstrate a dog's ability to perform its original purpose in the field. The events vary depending on the type of dog, but in all trials dogs compete against one another for placement and for points toward their Field Champion (FC) titles. The first Golden to become a Field Champion in the US was FC Rip, owned by Paul Bakewell III, this back in 1939.

Retriever field trials, designed to simulate “an ordinary day’s shoot,” are popular and likely the most demanding of these trials. Dogs must “mark” the location of downed feather game and then return the birds to the shooter. Successful dogs are able to “mark” the downed game by remembering where the bird fell as well as by the correct use of the wind and terrain. Dogs are tested both on land and water. Difficulty levels are based on the number of birds downed as well as the number of “blind retrieves” (where a bird is placed away from the view of the dog and the handler directs the dog by the use of hand signals and verbal commands). The term “Non-Slip” retriever, often applied to these trials, refers to a dog that is steady at the handler’s side until commanded to go. Every field trial includes four stakes of increasing levels of difficulty. Each stake is judged by a team of two judges who look for many natural abilities including steadiness, courage, style, control and training.

HUNTING TESTS

Hunting tests are not competitive like field trials, and participating dogs are judged against a standard like in a conformation show. The first hunting tests were devised by the North American Hunting Retriever Association (NAHRA) as an alternative to field trials for

retriever owners to appreciate their dogs’ natural innate ability in the field without the expense and pressure of formal field trials. The intent of hunting tests is the same as that of field trials, to test the dog’s ability in a simulated hunting scenario.

The AKC instituted its hunting tests in June 1985, and popularity has grown tremendously. The AKC offers three titles at hunting tests, Junior Hunter (JH), Senior Hunter (SH) and Master Hunter (MH). Each title requires that the dog earn qualifying “legs” at the tests: the JH requiring four; the SH, five; and the MH, six. In addition to the AKC, the United Kennel Club also offers hunting tests through its affiliate club, the Hunting Retriever Club, Inc. (HRC), which began the tests in 1984.

RESCUE PERSONNEL

On the tracking course, Golden Retrievers earn tracking titles that rival the hound breeds known for their scenting prowess. This has a practical function as well...that famous Golden nose also works in search-and-rescue operations around the world. During every international disaster, from mudslides to earthquakes to terrorist bomb sites, Goldens join the ranks of rescue personnel to help find victims buried beneath the mud or rubble.

