

All Things Flyball

Find out why dogs love this sport!

What it is: a relay race with four-dog teams. When the green light goes on the at the starting line, each dog races up a 51-foot lane with four sets of hurdles ranging in height from 8 to 16 inches. At the end of the lane a machine launches a tennis ball that the dog must catch in midair and return to the starting point, clearing all four sets of hurdles. Then, the next dog hits the course, catches a newly launched ball and returns to the starting line until all four dogs have run the course. The winning team completes the course the fastest.

Participants: All dogs, regardless of size or breed. Short, swift dogs rule because hurdle heights are based on the size of the shortest dog in the relay team.

Gear: Jumps, flyball boxes (to launch the balls) and tennis balls.

Tips: Dogs require six to 12 weeks of training, and owners/handlers need up to six months of classes to learn to give commands, work on timing and master handling dogs in this off-leash sport. Break down each step of the sport and use positive rewards (praise and treat) until your dog has mastered the entire sequence.