

## Where to Start in Showing Dogs

**Young dog lover should research breed clubs, standards, and consider handling classes.**

*By Allan Reznik*

Q. My daughter is 9 years old and loves the show world of Dachshunds. She is starting out in the local 4-H and wants to take it further. We would like to know where someone her age should start. What exactly are the show qualifications for Miniature Dachshunds? What should we do to make sure that our Dachshunds are good for showing, and what should my daughter work on to become a good trainer? She does it all by herself and loves every minute of it. She works for 45 minutes a day with her dogs.

A. I applaud your daughter's enthusiasm and passion for Dachshunds and the sport of conformation! We always need new exhibitors coming up through the ranks and it's never too early to start.

There are two national clubs you should become familiar with: the Dachshund Club of America, <http://dachshund-dca.org>, and the National Miniature Dachshund Club, [www.dachshund-nmdc.org](http://www.dachshund-nmdc.org). Check their websites to find regional Dachshund clubs in your area, as well as experienced breeder-exhibitors who can evaluate your dogs and assess their chances in the show ring.

Every breed, including Dachshunds, has a standard that describes the ideal specimen from nose to tail, and it is this standard that dog-show judges keep in mind when evaluating the dogs that are exhibited in their ring. You can read more about the Dachshund standard on these two national club websites.

Your daughter has two options to pursue as far as conformation goes. In regular breed judging, the judge is comparing each Dachshund to the breed standard. However, children can also compete in Junior Showmanship, which is organized by age of child rather than by breed. Here the judge is evaluating the young handlers on how well they show their dogs, rather than judging the dogs on how closely they meet their breed standard.

To learn the "moves" and understand how dog shows are run, contact your local all-breed kennel club and ask about handling classes. Such classes are offered at a nominal charge and owners benefit from the expert instruction given by experienced breeders and handlers.