

Dog Show Etiquette

6 pointers for a polite and pleasant show experience.

Nikki Moustaki

Dog shows are exciting, the perfect place to meet people who are as enthusiastic about your breed as you are. As a spectator, all you have to do is sit back, relax, and cheer for your favorite dog. But if you want to get a little closer to the action with ringside seats, there are a few rules of dog show etiquette that everyone should follow (even if you're sitting in the nosebleed section):

1. Don't bring your own dog to the show. Even if little Poochie can fit in a Pucci bag, dogs who aren't in the show are not allowed on show grounds.
2. Never pet a show dog without asking permission. Owners and handlers spend a lot of time grooming and perfecting their show dogs before entering the ring, so the best time to ask is after they have finished competing.
3. Keep kids contained. Children may distract the show dogs, and those little sticky chocolate-covered fingers aren't a good complement for a show dog's coat, especially if the dog is light colored or white.
4. Keep munchies away from the ring. The show dogs may become distracted by your food if you're eating too close to them. Remember, the dogs aren't perfectly trained little robots – they are just dogs.
5. Talk to exhibitors after they've shown. Once the handler is done with the ring, he or she will be much more relaxed and able to chat.
6. No booing! Dog showing is a "gentleman's sport," so booing and heckling are not appropriate. However, applause and positive cheering are great for a good show around the ring. If you can get the people around you to do "the wave," more power to you!

Follow these fundamentals of dog show etiquette for an enjoyable time.

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