

Westminster Viewing Guide

Decode terms and the judging process with a cheat sheet for all things Westminster.

Credit: Lisa Croft-Elliott/WKC Every year since 1877, the Westminster Kennel Club has staged its famous all-breed dog show, making it America's second longest continuously held sporting event. In those early years, of course, you had to attend in person in New York City if you wanted to see the country's greatest dogs.

But since 1948, millions of viewers have been able to see the evening finals of the competition on TV. The 2009 show will air live on USA Network on February 9 and 10. And for the fifth year, viewers will be able to watch highlights of each day's breed judging by logging on to the Westminster website.

This year, whether you're in Madison Square Garden or watching from home, these facts will help you decode popular Westminster buzzwords and demystify judging procedures.

Credit: Lisa Croft-Elliott/WKC **Standard:** Each breed's parent club creates a written description of the ideal specimen of that breed. Most standards describe general appearance, movement, temperament, and specific physical traits such as height and weight, coat, color, eye color and shape, ear shape and placement, feet, tail, and more.

Variety: A division of a breed based on size, color, or coat. For example, Poodles have size variety (Standard, Miniature, Toy) and Collies have coat variety (Rough, Smooth).

Best of Breed or Best of Variety: The dog selected by a judge as the best representative of the breed or variety.

Conformation: The structure and physical characteristics of a dog.

Stack: The pose itself or the posing of the dog by a handler in its natural stance.

Gait: The action of movement of the dog. Generally speaking, a sound and balanced gait usually indicates proper conformation and structure.

Groups: **Sporting:** Gun dogs that were developed to assist the hunter. Examples: Golden Retriever, Cocker Spaniel, and Irish Setter. **Hound:** Hunters that bring down the game, hold it at bay, or track it by scent. Examples: Greyhound, Beagle, and Basset Hound. **Working:** Intelligent and powerfully built to perform a variety of tasks. Examples: Boxer, Doberman Pinscher, and Saint Bernard. **Terrier:** Determined and courageous dogs that pursue their quarry – rats, foxes, and other vermin. Examples: Airedale Terrier, Scottish Terrier, and Wire Fox Terrier. **Toy:** Bred to be companions for people, they are full of life and spirit and often resemble their larger cousins. Examples: Maltese, Pomeranian, and Papillon. **Non-Sporting:** Dogs with a great diversity of traits, many are considered companion dogs. Examples: Standard Poodle, Bulldog, and Chow Chow. **Herding:** Athletic dogs that serve ranchers and farmers by moving livestock. Examples: Collie, German Shepherd Dog, and Old English Sheepdog.

Credit: Mary Bloom/WKC **How the judging works:** Competition at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is held on three different levels. Judges select their winners based upon how closely the dog comes to fitting the ideal as described in the breed standard.

The first level of competition is the breed level. Currently, more than 160 breeds and varieties are recognized. One dog is selected as Best of Breed or Best of Variety and advances to the next level of competition, the Group.

The Group judge chooses four placements, 1st through 4th. This takes place in each of the Groups so that there are seven Group winners who advance into the final round of competition, Best in Show.

There, the judge selects one final winner for the ultimate prize, Best in Show.



This year's show:

When: Feb. 9 and 10, 2009

Where: Madison Square Garden, New York

Tickets: Ticketmaster or <http://www.thegarden.com/>

On TV: 8 p.m., Feb. 9 and 10 on USA Network (Groups and Best in Show)

Information: (212) 213-3165; <http://www.westminsterkennelclub.org/>

Courtesy of the Westminster Kennel Club

Keep checking the DogChannel everyday through the 10th for exclusive Westminster content, a behind-the-scenes look, and live updates each day of the show!

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