

AKC Agility Trial – Volunteer Job Descriptions

The success of our trial is dependent on the efficiency, skill, and courtesy of our workers. The best workers are both invisible and very present – all at the same time.

The jobs below include free training!

While all agility trial jobs require your full attention, the following tasks are relatively easy to learn and you can watch most of the runs while you do them.

Bar Setter. Bar Setters adjust bars, tire, table, etc. for height changes and reset dropped bars as quickly and efficiently as possible. The judge decides where the bar setter's chairs will be and you are responsible for the obstacles near you. If you're not sure how to set an obstacle in your area, ask before the class starts and we will be happy to show you.

Be in your chair several minutes before the first dog in the class is on the line. Listen for the Gate Steward to call out "last dog this height" – after that run, you'll need to briskly reset jumps, change the table legs, etc. Glance around the ring to make sure all obstacles are set & anchored correctly.

During a run, try to be invisible while watching the action. If the dog on course comes over to you, turn away & ignore the dog; do not touch it or say anything.

Leash Runner. No running, but lots of walking! Once the dog and handler leave the start line, go pick up the leash wherever it was dropped and walk it to the designated spot near the last jump. Place it so it's easy for the handler to pick up so they can quickly leash their dog and leave the ring. Make sure your movement doesn't distract the team in the ring. Stop moving if the dog is approaching an area of the course near your path & let the dog pass. Try to be invisible!

Sheet Runner. No running, but less walking than leash runner. You'll sit/stand outside of the ring near the Scribe, who will give you completed scribe sheets for each dog. When you have 3-4 sheets in hand (or at a height change, whichever comes first), walk over to the trial secretary's table and hand them the scribe sheets. Then return to ringside to wait for more scribe sheets. You'll take the scribe sheets directly to the secretary—do not let exhibitors look at them. If they ask, tell them that they need to ask the secretary, who will be happy to let them view their sheet.

Course Builder. Be ringside, ready to build the next course when the last dog of the previous class is finishing his run. Follow the directions of the Chief Course Builder. The Chief Course Builder provides instruction about what pieces of equipment are needed and where to place them. Efficiency in course building can significantly affect how quickly a show moves along. After the course is built, a couple of people should remain in the ring to assist the Judge as s/he tweaks the course. Do exactly as the Judge says—do NOT move any obstacles after the Judge has placed them.

If you've done those jobs and want to learn something new:

Gate Steward. This is a more challenging job that requires your full attention and a voice that can carry. You must be pleasant and encouraging, and also unflappable. It's important for the gate steward to be loud enough to be heard but not so loud as to disturb the dog on the line or on course. The Gate keeps the trial moving by making sure the Scribe has the correct scribe sheet and by getting dogs on the line when the Judge wants them there.

You'll stand near the ring entrance, next to a board with the gate sheets (running order) or with an iPad if AgilityGate is used. First, make sure all of the exhibitors have checked in. If they haven't, call out for them while they are walking the course ("Is Rover here?") and either check them in or find out if they are absent. Then you'll make sure that the Scribe is aware of any changes (moves or absences) in the running order before the class starts. Occasionally, changes will be made while the class is running—it's your job to let the Scribe know.

Pay attention to the timer display so you know when to begin lining the dogs up to start the class. You'll usually see the Judge enter the ring just before the class starts – that's your cue to get things moving. Always make sure next 3-4 dogs in the running order are nearby and ready to go. It's your responsibility to get the next dog "on the line" at the appropriate time. You should have one team "on the line" (or running), one team "on deck," and one team "in the hole." When the dog running in the ring gets to the obstacle the Judge designated in the briefing, tell the handler "on deck" they may go in the ring now. As the team enters the ring, say "Rover on the line" so the Scribe can hear it, then cross off the name on the gate sheet. It's best to draw a line across the page so handlers waiting to run can see it from a distance. Then you can turn to the handlers who are waiting to go in and read off the next 4-5 names on the running order. (Example: "Sally is on deck, Harry is in the hole, then I have Huey, Dewey, and Louie. 16" dogs get ready")

Just before the last dog of each jump height runs, and after the previous exhibitor has completed their run, call out "last dog this jump height" so the Judge & Bar Setters know that the bars, etc. need to be adjusted.

You may also be in a position to make sure the gate is closed after teams enter the ring.

Remember, many exhibitors are nervous. Be firm and assertive, but polite and helpful – keep the trial moving while remembering that we're all here to have a fun day!

Note: Ultimately, the Judge is in control of the running order, so if there are issues, talk to the Judge. Handlers may only move their dogs if they have a conflict, usually because they are running 2 or more dogs too close together. If that is the case, they may not switch the order of their dogs when they are moved: the first dog listed must run before the second dog.

Uncommon occurrences:

Sometimes the dog in the ring gets the zoomies or there is another concern about it approaching the dog coming into the ring; in that case, the next team on the line may want wait to enter the ring.

Some handlers prefer not to line up with the other dogs as they wait to go into the ring. That is fine, as long as you have seen them & they know who they follow.

If a handler is late, tell them they will run at the end of their jump height & let the Scribe know. If a handler has missed their jump height, you may approach the Judge and ask if they can run BEFORE the course is changed.