



Things to think about for your first trial

by Cheryl Pyrek

Things to Have (Besides You and Your Dog)

A Crate for Your Dog

You will need to leave your dog at some point. You cannot leave him alone or tied to some object. You must have a crate or someone who will hold your dog when you leave him. If your dog is not used to being crated, the regular weekly class time is a great place to slowly acclimatize them to it. Ask your class instructor for tips on doing this.

A Chair

You will want to sit down. Bring a chair so you can sit with your dog. Each venue varies... it may look like it has a lot of chairs... but bring in 30-40 handlers and you will have quickly lost in a game of musical chairs unless you bring your own.

Food and Drink

You will be there a good long time. You will want to eat. Food will be sold at some trials. You can bring your own food to most trials. Often fast food is available nearby, but I've found it's often hard to leave and buy food. Often clubs provide lunch for volunteer workers. Consider working a few classes. Check the premium for information concerning food and volunteering. (Hint: I always stop for coffee right before I arrive)

Water for Your Dog

You will need a bowl, at least. Indoor sites have running water in the bathrooms so you can fill your dog's water bowl there. Sometimes it's easier to bring water from home and your dog might prefer the taste, while avoiding any intestinal issues.

Special Treats for Your Dog

You cannot treat your dog in the ring, but you will need them to reward your dog after his brilliant runs. Bring something really good and bring enough. He'll learn that even though there's nothing in the ring at trials, if he's good, it will be worth the work when he's done.

Floor Protection/Crate Covers

Some sites will require that you have something under your crate to protect the floor. (Check the premium) Mats are nice, but if you don't have one an old throw rug, a towel, blanket or sheet will work fine. Some dogs object to dogs walking by their crates and covering their crates often helps.

General Stuff for You and Your Dog

Leashes, collars, poop bags, beds for the crates, sweatshirts, rain jackets, if it's raining. Bring general stuff to keep your dog and you comfortable. An old T-shirt or sweat shirt that is ready for the washing machine i.e. it really smells like you, can be a great security "blankie" for a dog.

Arrival Time

You will have to measure your dog at your first two or three trials in most agility organizations. Base your arrival time on the time for measuring. (Check the premium for the measuring time.) Remember that before you measure you will have to park, unload your stuff, carry your stuff in, set up your stuff and unload and potty your dog. I usually arrive about 45 minutes before measuring time, when I have to measure.

When you no longer have to measure, your arrival time will be determined by the trial site, how much time you need to be comfortable and the start time. (Check the premium for the start time). Some people like time to relax, some people like to arrive at the very last minute. Some sites are tight on parking space, some sites are tight on crating space, some have plenty of both. The more you trial, the more you will get to know each site and make your plans accordingly. As a general rule, if I have never been to a site, I always arrive as close to the time the doors open as I can. This gives me the best possible chance at getting decent crating space, parking space and have time to relax and warm up my dog... and myself, to reduce the chance of injury.

Agility Trial Courtesy

RESPECT DESIGNATED POTTY AREAS. DO NOT ALLOW YOUR DOG TO POTTY IN NON-DESIGNATED AREAS. CLEAN UP AFTER YOUR DOG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Also realize that in a trial environment with excited dogs and handlers, your dog may find it necessary to potty more than you ever imagined necessary. Five potty runs too many is better than one too late.

Consider Volunteering at the Trial

It's not required, but remember, agility trials are expensive, labor-intensive endeavors. You're there, you might as well help when you're not running. There's usually a sign-up sheet at the trial. Often lunch is provided for workers. Sometimes there's a worker raffle.

Have Some Consideration for Your Crating Neighbors

It's a dog event and dogs bark and make noise. But no one wants to spend the day next to a dog who barks, whines or lunges at other dogs all day long. If your dog has issues, please do what you can to keep him under control.

Now, take a deep a deep breath, give your dog a hug and a kiss and spend the day having fun with your dog.