

*Animal Sciences*

# THE BASICS OF TRAINING YOUR DOG

Leader Guide

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## Contents

<b>For the leader.....</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Lesson 5.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Basic commands.....	2	The stand for examination (Part II).....	7
<b>For the member and the leader.....</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Lesson 6.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Basics of training.....	3	The recall (Part I).....	8
<b>Lesson 1.....</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Lesson 7.....</b>	<b>8</b>
The heel and sit.....	4	The recall (Part II).....	8
Teaching to heel.....	4	<b>Lesson 8.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Teaching the sit.....	5	The figure 8.....	8
<b>Lesson 2.....</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Lesson 9.....</b>	<b>9</b>
The long sit.....	5	Review of exercises.....	9
<b>Lesson 3.....</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Graduation.....</b>	<b>9</b>
The down exercise; slow, normal, and fast heeling.....	5	<b>The brace: pre-novice or novice.....</b>	<b>9</b>
The down exercise.....	5	<b>The team.....</b>	<b>10</b>
The down stay exercise.....	6		
Slow, normal, and fast heeling.....	6		
<b>Lesson 4.....</b>	<b>7</b>		
The stand for examination (Part I).....	7		
Holding the leash.....	7		



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## For the leader

This guide shows the steps to follow in obedience training. You may wish to teach these exercises in a different order and may have equal success; however the order as listed is suggested. You may also know of different training methods that are equally as successful.

At the start of the first class of instruction, demonstrate the Heel and Sit as discussed in Lesson 1 by using a dog belonging to one of the members. The class should form a circle around the instructor. Continue the training exercises for a half hour, take a five-minute break, and continue practice of the exercises for the remaining half hour.

For one half hour at the beginning of the second class, practice the exercises as taught at the first class. After a five-minute break demonstrate the next exercise (Lesson 2) using one of the member's dogs. The class should then practice the new exercises for the remainder of the class period.

At each subsequent meeting follow the format of practicing the exercise learned in the previous lesson during the first half of the class period, take a five-minute break, and then learn the new exercises in the next lesson.

## Basic commands

The following list of commands may be helpful to a 4-H leader in conducting the Pre-novice course. The leader will use similar commands when conducting training classes in Brace and Team classes.

### Lesson 1 - The Heel and Sit

- Class forms a circle around instructor.
- Have your dog sitting squarely at your heel.
- Forward.
- Exercise finished.

### Lesson 2 - The Long Sit

- Class forms a circle around instructor.
- Prepare your dog for the long sit.
- Leave your dog.
- Back to your dog.
- Exercise finished. The dog is praised in the sitting position.

### Lesson 3 - The Long Down

- Class forms a straight line in front of instructor.
- Prepare your dog for the long down.
- Down your dog.
- Leave your dog.
- Back to your dog.
- Exercise finished. The handler then says the dog's name and "Heel," takes two steps forward and puts the dog in the sitting position before praising.
- Left turn.
- Right turn.
- About turn.
- While heeling, the instructor will give the command, "Slow," "Normal," and "Fast."

(Although the above three turns were demonstrated in the first meeting, they are usually not used in a class exercise until the third lesson.)

### Lesson 4 - The Stand for Examination (Part I)

- Prepare your dog for the stand for examination.
- Stand your dog. (Handler leaves the dog when satisfied he is standing firmly.)
- Walk away about six feet.
- Back to your dog.
- Exercise finished. (The handler then moves the dog three steps forward as described in Lesson 3, before praising him.)

### Lesson 5 - The Stand for Examination (Part II)

- Use the commands given in Lesson 4.
- The instructor should examine each dog after the handler has left him in a standing position.

### Lesson 6 - The Recall (Part I)

- Have your dog sitting squarely at your heel.
- Leave your dog.
- Call your dog. (The handler runs backwards several steps gathering in the dog and has him sit directly to his front.)
- Back to your dog.
- Exercise finished. (Dog is in sitting position for praise.)



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### Lesson 7 - The Recall (Part II)

- Have your dog sitting squarely at your heel.
- Leave your dog.
- Call your dog. (He is to sit squarely in front of you.)
- Finish your dog. (Handler moves dog from in front to the heel position.)
- Exercise finished.

### Lesson 8 - The Figure 8

- Have your dog sitting squarely at your heel.
- Forward. (Handler passes between stewards and turns either left or right.)
- Halt.
- Exercise finished.

### Lesson 9 - Review of Exercise

- Review all exercises and explain graduation program.

## For the member and the leader

The companionship and affection you share with your dog and the sense of responsibility for his welfare that ownership develops are deeply satisfying experiences for any boy or girl. By training your dog in obedience, you can develop even further what you now enjoy, and you can add a new feeling of accomplishment and reward from what you and your trained dog can do together.

What does it take to train a dog? What must you be prepared to do?

A primary consideration is the age and health of your dog. He should be at least nine months old to begin training.

Younger dogs usually behave as puppies and are, therefore, too difficult for the inexperienced to train. Advanced age is itself no limitation, as many dogs over 10 years old have been trained very well. The major concern with older dogs is their general health. Those afflicted with arthritis or poor sight and hearing should not be forced to undergo training.

Vaccination for rabies is required in most states. Your dog should be vaccinated at four months of age and receive a booster shot after one year. There are also some vaccines that work for three years before requiring a booster shot. Consult your veterinarian for the proper vaccines for your dog.

## Basics of training

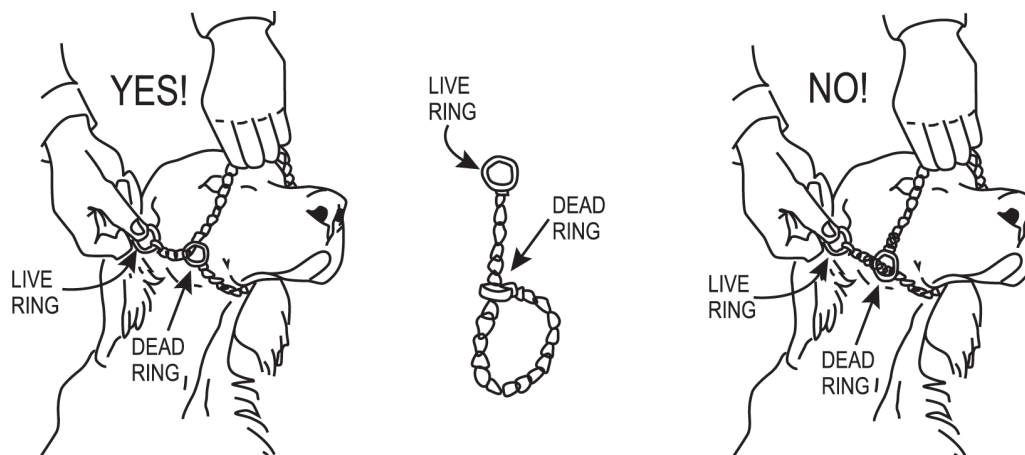
By studying this guide carefully, you can learn to train your dog alone. It is better, however, to train your dog in a class in the presence of other dogs and strange surroundings so that he will learn to obey in almost any situation. There should be 10 or 12 students for each leader in class so that each student and his dog can get adequate attention.

Dog training is not a person working and a dog working – it is a person and a dog working as a team. To become and remain a team, you must concentrate completely on your work and you must get and keep the undivided attention of your dog. Do not talk to someone else while training. Do not be grim, but be businesslike.

There are several ways to keep your dog's attention. The first is to put his collar on properly, close behind his ears. (See Image 1.) Talk to him or make a quick turn and jerk his leash when you suspect his attention has wandered.

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Image 1: Correct placement of the collar



When he is heeling say "Good!" in a pleasant, confident voice. This is especially important in the first two or three classes. You may say your dog's name *once* just before a verbal command or before a verbal command and signal. You may not say his name and then give only a signal. Do not say his name in "Stay" commands. Release your dog from training only from the sitting position at your heel.

Training should be a happy time for you and your dog. If you find you are losing your temper, stop everything until you are calm. Be patient. You may have to repeat a word or command many times before your dog begins to understand. In competition the judge gives penalties for commands he thinks are too loud.

Correction and praise are important. When your dog makes a mistake, correct him immediately while he can still associate the correction with the mistake. Praise every achievement immediately because your dog values your approval and praise is his only proof that he has that approval.

Keep a regular schedule. Work every day at the same time, but do not bore your dog with long lessons. Two 15-minute sessions a day are better than one 30-minute session. Footwork is important. Learn from your instructor to move your feet correctly before you begin to train your dog. (See Image 4.)

**Image 2: Start with your dog in a sitting position.**



## Lesson 1 - The heel and sit

When heeling, the dog should walk at your left side, the area from the back of the head to the shoulder in line with your left hip. When you halt he is to sit squarely at your left, his shoulder still even with your knee. (See Images 5 and 6.)

### Teaching to heel

Place your dog in the sitting position at your left, his collar on properly, close behind his ears. Fold the leash neatly into your right hand and hold it about waist high. Let your left arm hang at your side and control the leash with your left hand. Jerk the leash sharply to keep control. (See Image 2.)

Upon your instructor's command, "Forward," you should:

1. Say your dog's name and "Heel" in a commanding voice, neither weak and pleading nor loud and harsh.
2. Step forward with your left foot. Give a jerk with the leash at the same time. Eventually, the jerk will be unnecessary.

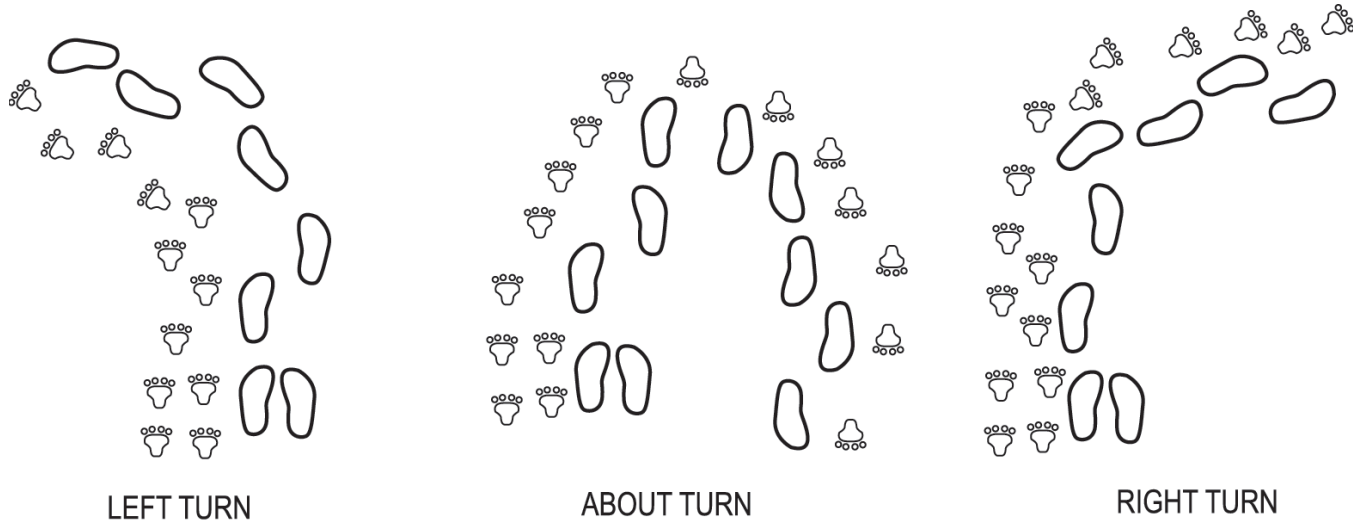
As soon as your dog starts to move, encourage him with enthusiastic praise, saying "Good boy! Good boy!" Heel at a brisk pace.

If he will not move, do not drag him, but jerk the leash repeatedly, saying his name and "Heel." As soon as he starts

**Image 3: Remember to keep a loose lead when teaching your dog to heel.**



**Image 4: Handler's footwork**



to move, praise him and keep him moving. If he forges ahead, jerk him back and say "Heel." If he lags behind, jerk him forward. The jerk on the leash must come only a split second after you say "Heel." If you jerk forward first and say heel a few seconds later, it will be much more difficult for the dog to learn.

Most handlers make the mistake of keeping the leash tight when teaching the dog to heel. The leash should be loose so the dog can make mistakes of lagging behind, forging ahead or going wide. (See Image 3.) When he makes these mistakes, he learns through a jerk on the leash and when he is heeling close he learns that he receives praise. When the leash is kept tight all the time, he only learns to dislike the whole idea of training.

**Image 5: Your dog should sit directly at your side whenever your stop.**



**Image 6: Make sure your dog sits squarely.**



### **Teaching the sit**

Upon your instructor's command, "Halt," you do not repeat the command but merely stop on your right foot, bringing your left foot alongside your right and give the command, "Sit." Quickly reach across your body with your right hand and grasp the leash about 12 inches from the training collar.

Place your left hand on the dog's rump and push down while pulling the leash taut and up with your right hand. Only pull the leash taut; otherwise, the dog will struggle against it. Be sure to pull it straight up or slightly back – not side to side. If you pull across your body, it will make the dog sit at an angle rather than straight. Remember to praise him as soon as he sits.

### **Lesson 2 - The long sit**

The dog is to remain sitting for one minute.

### **Lesson 3 - The down exercise; slow, normal, and fast heeling**

#### **The down exercise**

Start with your dog at heel. Then use whichever of the following methods works best with your dog. Work on getting your dog to go down willingly rather than staying.

#### *Leash method:*

Say "Fido, down." With your right hand, pull down on the leash directly under his chin. At the same time, with your left hand, press down and to one side on your dog's back. As soon as he is down, praise and let him get up.





**Image 7: Stand at the end of your lead while your dog is in the down position.**

***Foreleg method:***

Hold the live ring of the collar with your left hand and lay your left forearm along your dog's back. Say "Fido, down" and press down on your dog's back. At the same time, take your dog's forelegs out from under him with your right arm and lower him to the ground. Don't grab his paws! If he resists, try pushing him off balance at the same time, preferably towards yourself so that he doesn't think it's a game. As soon as he is down, praise him and let him up.

**The down stay exercise**

Once your dog has learned the down command, you can begin teaching your dog to stay in the down position while you leave him. Eventually, the dog will be required to stay down for three minutes. (See Images 7 and 8.)

At first, with your dog down, try standing up straight next to him. Correct him quickly if he tries to get up by jerking down on the leash or tapping him on the nose. When he is steady, say "Stay" and step in front of him. Wait five seconds, and then pivot back to his side. Do not let him get up. Pause at least two or three seconds before going down to him and praising him while he is still down. Give him the release command and let him up. Work up your time and distractions gradually as in the sit-stay.

**Slow, normal, and fast heeling**

In an obedience trial, you will be required to heel your dog at slow, normal, and fast pace. Upon the order, "Slow," from the judge, heeling should quickly change to a definite slow pace that may be easily distinguished from the normal pace. When the order, "Fast pace," is given, the handler and dog must break into a run. The dog should remain in the heel position. The order for a slow, normal or fast pace may be given in any sequence. (See Image 9.)

**Image 8: Practicing the long down with other dogs will help your dog get used to paying attention to you.**



**Image 9: Make your dog match your pace. Do not slow down or speed up for it.**



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## Lesson 4 - The stand for examination (Part I)

There are several ways of teaching your dog the "Stand for examination." Select the method that you think may work best with your dog and don't change.

### Holding the leash

At the start of the fourth week your dog should be heeling well enough for you to hold the leash in your left hand at your waist with your right hand free. This will also allow you to give the stay signals with your right hand without changing the leash to the other hand. In an obedience trial, you may hold the leash in either or both hands; however, you will appear more natural to carry the leash in your left hand and allow your right hand to be free at your side.

The habit of holding the leash in your left hand may be especially useful to you when not in an obedience trial as your right hand will be free for opening doors, carrying packages, shaking hands, and many other things we normally do with our right hand.

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**Image 10: Your dog might not stand squarely when you stop.**



## Lesson 5 - The stand for examination (Part II)

At an obedience trial, the judge will require your dog to stand for examination. Upon the order, "Stand your dog," you may use any of the methods described in Lesson 4. Take the time you need to get your dog standing squarely and when you think he will remain standing and stay for the examination, say "Stay," giving the hand signal and stepping in front of your dog. Stand facing your dog, holding his leash loose and clear of the floor. The exercise does not start until you say "Stay" and move away from your dog. If you say "Stay" a second time, you will be marked for a double command and lose points. The judge will approach your dog from the front, allow the dog to smell his hand and then touch the dog's head, back, and hindquarters. He may also move his hand slowly down the dog's back and apply a slight pressure to make sure the dog is standing firm. Your dog should not move his feet. After the judge has finished the examination, he will step back and say "Back to your dog." After you have returned to your dog, he will say "Exercise finished." You should then say your dog's name and "Heel," take two steps forward, and order him into the sitting position. Then give him praise. (See Images 10 - 12.)

Handling by a stranger may be difficult for your dog and will require some practice. Put your dog in a standing position and ask a friend to examine him.

The dog's training to stand also will be useful when you groom him or when your veterinarian examines him. The dog must show no shyness or resentment during the exercise.

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**Image 11: You can square your dog by placing its feet in the correct position. Make sure to pay attention to the breed when you learn this procedure. Different breeds should stand in different positions.**



**Image 12: After leaving your dog the judge will examine it by rubbing the dog's back. The dog should not sit when the judge does this.**





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## Lesson 6 - The recall (Part I)

The first part of the recall is to teach your dog to come when called.

Put your dog in the sitting position at your heel. (See Image 13.) Swing your left hand in front of his nose and say "Stay." Step away from the dog on your right foot, going to the end of the leash and facing him. Say his name and "Come." Make it a happy call that will make him want to obey. As soon as he starts to move, run backward several steps gathering up the leash and guide him directly to your front within fingertip reach. He must not touch you nor sit between your feet. Give him the command to sit. If necessary, jerk up on the leash. It should not be necessary for you to reach over him and push down on his rump.

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**Image 13: Prepare to leave your dog by placing it in a sitting position by your side.**



When he is sitting squarely in front of you, praise him but do not pat him on the head or praise him so much that he jumps about. After he has sat properly and you have praised him, give the command and signal (right hand fingers down) to "Stay." Go to your right, walking around the dog to the heel position. Then give plenty of praise.

Never scold or do anything unkind that he might associate with coming to you. He should want to come to you.

## Lesson 7 - The recall (Part II)

The second part of the recall is to move your dog from directly in front of you back to the heel position. There are two acceptable ways of teaching him.

Do not always use the same routine, otherwise he will anticipate your command and will get into the habit of walking up to you and going directly to the heel position. Sometimes when you are heeling, halt, have him sit as usual, command him to stay, step directly in front of him and return to his side instead of having him go to heel. This will also make it less boring for him.

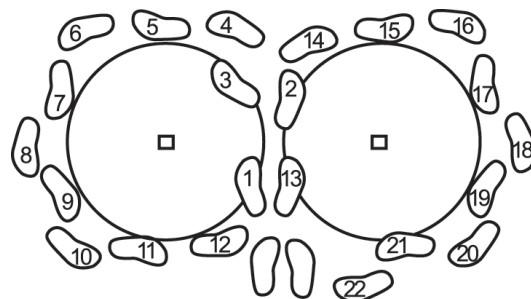
## Lesson 8 - The figure 8

The purpose of the figure 8 is to teach your dog to walk close to people, animals or objects without touching or sniffing. A dog substituting as an object receives training as valuable as that received by the dog making the figure 8. The figure 8 is a variation of heeling. Walk your dog around two objects or people about eight feet apart, making a figure 8 by crossing between them. (See Image 14.)

Start about two feet in front of the objects, one toward your left and the other toward your right. Say your dog's name and "Heel" and guide him around one of the objects and then around the other, making a cross in the center as shown in the illustration. Heel close to the objects and at a faster than normal rate to prevent lagging. In an obedience trial, the handler and dog go around the figure 8 twice with at least one halt during and another halt at the end of the exercise.

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**Image 14: Handler's footwork**



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## Lesson 9 - Review of exercises

After completing the first eight lessons, your dog should have a basic knowledge of the commands and signals used in obedience training. Do not be discouraged if your dog makes mistakes. Dogs that perform to near perfection have usually been trained for several years. Have patience and vary the exercises so neither you nor your dog will tire of them.

Review by doing the exercises exactly as you will at graduation.

The heel on leash and figure 8, the stand for examination, and the recall are performed and judged individually. The dogs appear in the ring together while doing the long sit and long down.

## Graduation

Following the completion of the lessons, a graduation should be conducted. Certificates of graduation may be awarded to all 4-H members who have completed the lessons.

You may find the scorecard and certificate in the back of the 4-H Leader's Guide useful to you at time of graduation. This scorecard has been modified somewhat from the AKC Novice scorecard. Most counties require a score of 170 in order to receive a certificate of graduation and qualify for advancement to the Novice course. Those who do not qualify may repeat the course or practice on their own and take the qualifying test at the next graduation.

At the Pre-novice graduation you may do the recall exercise (Part I) as in practice by calling your dog and taking several steps backward to allow your dog to break into a run when coming to you. If you do not run backward several steps, a large dog will not be able to run within the distance of the six-foot length.

The second part of the recall, the finish, may also be done as in practice by taking a step backward with your right or left foot and guiding your dog into the sitting position. If your dog will "finish" upon your command only, you should not give the extra aid by stepping backward.

## The brace: pre-novice or novice

The brace is for boys and girls who have two dogs of their own or for those who want to team up in training a pair of dogs. Dogs of the same breed, size, and color are preferred, but not necessary. The class is judged according to the brace scorecard for Pre-novice or Novice. (See Images 15 and 16.)

In the off lead exercises, the dogs are attached together but off lead. Dogs should have the Pre-Novice or Novice training course and more training is helpful.

When training the dogs to heel on leash and do the figure 8, place the quickest and most responsive dog on the outside because he will have to hurry on the turns. Stewards stand farther apart for the figure 8 to allow more space for the dogs to turn. Heeling is done at slow, fast, and normal speeds.

The stand for examination is made by the judge touching each dog on the head, back, and rump. Remove the leash, hold the dogs by the coupler, and take several steps forward, walking them into the stand or standing them separately.

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**Image 15: A tandem chain is used to connect the dogs.**





shoulder of the person on his left. The three members should look to their left forming a straight line with Number one. Upon the command, "Forward," from the 4-H leader (or judge in competition), step off with your left foot. Upon the command, "Halt," stop on your right foot and bring the left alongside it. Make sharp left and right turns and about turns as shown. (See Image 17.) You will probably soon discover that it will take some training to march straight, make sharp turns, and keep in line. Don't give up; with a little practice you will soon be marching with precision. Several alternates should be trained to fill in for regular members in emergencies.

After the team has learned to march and make turns with some precision, include the dogs. They will likely at this point make fewer errors than the handlers. After you are heeling your dogs well as a team, try the slow and fast gaits. In competition, the team will perform the heel on leash and figure 8 the same as would be required of a single competitor. (See Image 19.)

Next comes the figure 8 which involves eight stewards. In practice, you may wish to use stakes. Upon the judge's command, "Prepare for the figure 8; take your places," the team should line up, each handler facing a pair of stewards. After a brief pause, the judge will command "Forward," and simultaneously each handler will step off on the left foot turning to the left as he begins the figure 8. The judge will command you to halt twice while performing the figure 8. After the second command to halt, the judge will say "Exercise finished." The team will then re-group side-by-side with their dogs in the sitting position.

On command from the judge, "Prepare for the recall," the handlers will remove the leashes and prepare to leave their dogs in a sitting position and on the command, "Leave your dogs," each handler will march forward about 30 feet and turn and face his dog. The judge will then command "Call your dog" and the handlers will simultaneously obey.

The judge will then command "Finish your dog" and all dogs are to simultaneously go smartly to heel.

**Image 18: 4-H teams need not be made up of dogs of the same type. However, dogs of the same ability work best together.**



The stand for examination exercise begins with the team lined up and the dogs in the sitting position off lead. The judge will command “Stand your dog” and team members will simultaneously obey. With practice, all members will be able to give the hand signal and command “Stay,” step off on their right foot, and take a position about 15 feet away facing their dogs. The judge will then examine each dog by touching the head, back, and rump. The judge will next command “Return to your dog.” After the handlers have returned, the

judge will say “Exercise finished” and each member will take two steps forward and put his dog in the sitting position.

The long sit, one minute, and long down, three minutes, should be done with no more than four teams (16 dogs) in the ring at the same time. The dogs will be off lead and the handlers in sight. The judge will give the same commands as for the stand for examination.

**Image 19:** Practice the patterns with plenty of space in between the dogs. Practicing together helps the dogs get used to one another.



**Image 20:** The long sit should also be done in unison.



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