



AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB®



AKC Sports & Events

# Holding an AKC Event

The American Kennel Club has prepared this brochure to give clubs an overview of how to plan a successful event. If this is your first event or your hundredth, it is always a good idea to consider how your event can be the best in the country! Hopefully this document will inspire new ideas.



## Contents

- Preparing for Your Event
- Event Marketing & PR/Media
- Additional Club Resources
- Create a Canine Extravaganza!

Every event will have a myriad of nuances which cannot be covered in this overview. If you are interested in holding a specific activity or have additional questions, contact AKC Club Development.

### **AKC Club Development**

Webpage: [Club Development](#)  
[clubdevelopment@akc.org](mailto:clubdevelopment@akc.org) | (919) 816-3705

# Preparing for Your Event

Dog events take planning; there are a lot of moving parts.

*Tip: It takes members; check out our membership growth ideas in the Additional Club Resources section.*

Below is a brief outline of what is needed to get your club's event planning started. (Note: Individual sports have in-depth documents that detail holding those events, i.e. the [AKC SHOW MANUAL](#) covers holding a conformation event.)

## Essential Positions:

1. **Event Chair:** Oversee all matters for the event  
Visit AKC.org to get started: [SHOW TRIAL/CHAIR TOOLS](#)
2. **Event Committee:** 5-member committee responsible for event hearings
3. **Event Treasurer:** With the club, determine event budget, and manage event funds based on that budget
4. **Event Secretary:** Maintain records and keep club up-to-date

## Some Typical Committees (including some of their responsibilities):

1. **Trophies & Ribbons:** Order all trophies at least 9 months prior to show
2. **Advertising**
  - Flyers, local advertising, media outreach
  - Club and/or event website
  - Exhibitor and Spectator outreach
3. **Social/Hospitality**
  - Site food and beverages
  - Judge housing and food
4. **Site Set-up and Breakdown**



*Tip: The AKC conducts yearly studies to evaluate the economic impact dog events have on each state's economy. Often this information will assist clubs that work with local municipalities and local businesses. If you are trying to get the best deals or interest local businesses in advertising, make sure you know what financial benefits your event brings to your area: [DOG EVENT ECONOMIC IMPACT BY STATE](#).*

Once the club has determined that they want to hold a dog event, here are the initial steps to getting started:

1. **Secure Show Location**

Potential events need space: conformation, agility, obedience, rally, and performance events (e.g. Fast CAT, scent work, breed-specific events [often specialty driven]). Site should be secured as early as possible, often 2 years in advance.

  - Obtain AKC Approval  
Submit site plan for all-breed and limited-breed conformation events
  - Finalize Contracts  
Ensure all fees, equipment, and expectations are addressed in contract



Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricultural Center – In 2018, 153 AKC events were held at this location (hosted by 47 different AKC Clubs).

*Tip: The AKC provides a site locator for specialty clubs. Parent clubs are asked to provide feedback when using a site for others to consider:*  
[Locate a Site for your Specialty.](#)

**2. Determine Superintendent, Trial Secretary, or Show Secretary**

(See a specific sport's version of the Show Manual to evaluate your needs.)

Contract in place (recommend having in place 1 year prior to show)

**3. Hire Photographer**

Contract in place (recommend having in place 1 year prior to show)

**4. Contact and Hire Judges**

Determine the number of judges needed: base hiring on past entry numbers. Consider any changes, i.e. new specialty added, new date, new events, etc. (A good overview of hiring judges and scheduling can be found here

[CREATING AN EFFECTIVE SCHEDULE.](#))

▪ Create a list of judges to contact (It is the club's responsibility to review the premium list prior to publication.)

1. Contact Judge
2. Determine Fee
3. Determine Expenses
4. Transportation
5. Contract

*Tip: Contracts are critical when hiring judges; both parties need clear and concise confirmation of their responsibilities. The AKC provides a sample conformation judges contract in the [AKC SHOW MANUAL](#) on page 175.*

**5. Submit AKC Event Applications and Judging Panel**

Most events require that the application and judging panel be submitted to the AKC at least 18 weeks prior to the closing of entries. Check the rules early to see a specific event's requirements.

**6. Prepare Premium List**

The premium list provides exhibitors with an outline of what is offered, what is expected, and what they need to do to participate. (It is the club's responsibility to review the premium list prior to publication.)

**7. Create Event Schedule**

This is often created by the superintendent or event secretary, but the Show Chair should be familiar with the process and capable of evaluating any issues before publication.

**8. Add Event Documents to AKC Event Search**

Upload or link to documents (e.g. premium lists, running orders, judging programs, flyers) to the club's event information pages via the event documents link in [Online Event Management](#). (For assistance, email [eventplans@akc.org](mailto:eventplans@akc.org).)

*Tip: To assist you with finalizing a conformation event, the AKC has created a [SIX-WEEK CHECKLIST](#).*

# Event Marketing & PR/Media

Interest in participation exponentially grows when people get to experience dog sports in person. Letting people know about your upcoming event may not only drive more entries, but it also gives dog lovers in your community an opportunity to choose to attend a dog-sports event when making their (and their family's) plans for the weekend.

## 1. Update Club/Event Website – Add info as soon as available and on an ongoing basis

- Include all event information on your club or event website; mention entry closing dates and whether any sport/event will have day-of entries. Learn more: [Website Best Practices](#)
- Add info about dog shows, canine sports etiquette, and a FAQ section for common queries
- Embed the [AKC intro sport videos](#) (for the sports being held) on your club/event website
- Highlight events the public can participate in with their dog (if applicable), and whether spectators can bring their non-participating dogs to event

## 2. Email Marketing

- Email previous exhibitors about your upcoming event to drive entries: [Digital Marketing 101](#)
- Contact local dog care and training facilities to spread the word about event
- Contact people who signed up for more info at your stand-alone community and club events
  - Examples: Send a “save the date” email when the show date is set; send an email as soon as the premium list is available; and send a reminder email to potential spectators 1-2 days before your event starts

## 3. Advertising & Event Listings

- Advertise in local newspapers and dog publications; budget for [Facebook event advertising](#)
- Create a Facebook event and make sure your event is listed on local event listing websites

## 4. Social Media

- Social media can be used year-long as a communication tool, but clubs can also use it to build awareness before, during and after an event to generate buzz
- Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the largest social media platforms: [Social Media Best Practices](#)

## 5. Promote Your Event

- Create a press release and media alert to get the word out about your event; send to local press contacts
- See all the possibilities and find templates: [Promote Your Club and Event](#)

## 6. Request Feedback

- Survey exhibitors after your event to obtain feedback and better understand who attended
- Sample questions: How did they hear about event, what event(s) did they participate in, where are they from, satisfaction with event, sport or program suggestions for future events?



# Additional Club Resources

**Growing Membership:** Over time, clubs may decline in membership. This will often inhibit a club's ability to hold an event or meet their own goals. The AKC is here to help your club if low membership is becoming a problem.

The AKC All-breed club Delegate committee has prepared a best practices document which can be useful to any club. All-breed, limited breed, specialty, companion sports and performance clubs can find tips to help them get their message out: [CLUB BEST PRACTICES](#).

Club Development specializes in helping clubs reach out to prospective members. If you are having a social outing (not a regular meeting) that is welcoming to new members, such as a Meet and Greet, let us help you reach AKC registrants in your area.

**B-Matches:** looking for a low-cost way to prepare for your event? Holding a match 2 to 3 months before your event becomes a run-through and gets many of the key players engaged.

- It's an opportunity to meet many of the young dogs in your area, providing them with a pre-event practice.
- The AKC supports conformation B-matches through an email campaign to AKC dog owners in your area. Since January 2017 this campaign has resulted in close to 60% of the matches reporting an increase in entries! Matches also count towards the eligibility requirement to hold an AKC show.

Not sure how easy it is to hold a match, read our outline: [HOLDING A MATCH](#).

## Create a Canine Extravaganza!

Is your club struggling to raise money? Is attracting new participants or finding new members difficult for your club? Many AKC clubs are finding success in all these areas by holding additional and diverse attractions at their events that dog owners find exciting. Adding one event can make a difference. Here are what other clubs are saying about this concept:

**Therese Forman, Shasta Kennel Club (Redding, CA)**

"I believe the more diverse events you offer, the better to attract the public and gain support and interest in our community of what dog sports are available. Fast CAT was very well attended even in pouring rain, for our very first event, and we made very good money."

**Martha Brown, Rubber City Kennel Club (Akron, OH)**

"I think the Meet the Breeds is a value. We have many spectators that come just for that."

**Benita Bottom, National Capital Kennel Club (Washington, DC)**

"Some exhibitors that do conformation thanked us because they like being able to participate in multiple venues."

**MaryBeth Lanassa, Mississippi Gulf Coast Kennel Club (Gulfport, MS)**

"Except for the weather problem we feel it went very well. We had CAT and Fast CAT and, in spite of conditions, dogs and people had a great time. We ran over 400 dogs!" The exhibitors liked the ability to participate in other activities"

**Nancy Mellott, Caddo Kennel Club of Texas (Gladewater, TX)**

"I believe having multi events helps a lot, both in financial and by the dog show world in general."

**Pam Ireland: President, Memphis Kennel Club (Memphis, TN)**

"We need to continue to offer events that will appeal to all dog owners."

Clubs add events in a variety of ways. They could have an existing member doing scent work or Fast CAT, or there is a local specialty club that excels at lure coursing. Opportunity is out there in many ways!

*Tip: If you find a club with an expertise that your club currently does not possess, work with them to hold their event in conjunction with yours. Make sure both clubs' expectations are reasonable and spelled out. The AKC has created a [SAMPLE LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING](#) template to help you accomplish this.*

# Resource Links

## AKC Club Development

Website: <https://www.akc.org/clubs-delegates/clubs/about-club-development>

## Preparing for Your Event

- AKC Show Manual (conformation): <http://images.akc.org/pdf/RESHOW.pdf>
- Show Trial/Chairperson Tools: <https://www.akc.org/clubs-delegates/clubs/resources/show-trial-chairperson-tools>
- Dog Event Economic Impact By State: <https://www.akc.org/clubs-delegates/government-relations/toolbox/state-economic-impact>
- Locate a Site for your Specialty: <https://webapps.akc.org/site-locator/#/>
- Creating an Effective Schedule: [http://images.akc.org/pdf/Scheduling\\_Best\\_practices.pdf](http://images.akc.org/pdf/Scheduling_Best_practices.pdf)
- Online Event Management: <https://www.apps.akc.org/apps/eventplans>
- Six-Week Checklist: [http://images.akc.org/pdf/Conformation\\_Show\\_Chair\\_Event\\_Checklist.pdf](http://images.akc.org/pdf/Conformation_Show_Chair_Event_Checklist.pdf)

## Event Marketing & PR/Media

- Website Best Practices: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/4988826594627428609>
- AKC Intro Sport Videos: <https://akc.tv/watch/4/2026/series/intro-to-akc/?ctx=/watch/4/2026/series/intro-to-akc>
- Digital Marketing 101: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8814486047399578626>
- Social Media Best Practices: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1050091172894373633>
- Facebook Event Advertising: <https://www.facebook.com/business/help/860042077457803>
- Promote Your Club and Event: <https://www.akc.org/clubs-delegates/promote>

## Additional Club Resources

- Recommended Best Practices: [http://images.akc.org/pdf/clubs/all\\_breed\\_club\\_resources/Recommended\\_Best\\_Practices\\_final\\_ppt.pdf](http://images.akc.org/pdf/clubs/all_breed_club_resources/Recommended_Best_Practices_final_ppt.pdf)
- Holding a Match: [http://images.akc.org/pdf/Match\\_Best\\_Practices.pdf](http://images.akc.org/pdf/Match_Best_Practices.pdf)

## Create a Canine Extravaganza!

- Sample Letter of Understanding: [http://images.akc.org/pdf/Sample\\_letter\\_of\\_understanding\\_3.22.18.pdf](http://images.akc.org/pdf/Sample_letter_of_understanding_3.22.18.pdf)



There are many benefits to holding multiple AKC sports and attractions as part of a weekend of dog sports, from increasing entries to providing exhibitors with activities they may be interested in trying. Plus, spectators get to see the wide variety of things they can do with their dogs through an AKC club.

We've provided a brief overview of the many sports and attractions that AKC clubs may be able to hold. Whether held in conjunction with your club's primary event (e.g. conformation, agility, obedience) or held independently, or as a multi-event day, these activities are a great way to spend the day. Each has different rules, regulations, and requirements—please contact **AKC Club Development** at [clubdevelopment@akc.org](mailto:clubdevelopment@akc.org) to answer any questions.



## Events Associated with Conformation Dog Shows

**Pee-Wee Classes** – This attraction introduces conformation showmanship to children 5-9 years old who want to learn how to show dogs. This is not a competitive class, but rather a fun, learning experience for the child and the adult. This event is like a precursor to Junior Showmanship and is great for a family new to conformation.

**4-6 Month Beginner Puppy Competition** – This is a conformation show for puppies 4 to 6 months of age. It is intended to introduce new exhibitors and their puppies to dog shows in a stress-free and relaxed environment.

## Events that Can Be Held as a Stand-Alone Event But Are Often Associated with Conformation or Held in Conjunction with Other Events

**Obedience** – A companion sport where dog and handler teams demonstrate the dog's ability to follow specified routines guided by verbal instructions from the judge.

**AKC Rally®** – A companion event where dog and handler teams navigate a course designed by the judge with exercise signs.

**FSS Open Show** – Informal AKC-sanctioned event that gives Foundation Stock Service and Miscellaneous Class breed owners and their dogs a way to gain conformation ring experience.

**Match Show** – Matches are a great way to introduce new people and their dogs to AKC sports. Matches can be held for a variety of events, including conformation, agility, rally, obedience, tracking and scent work.



## Stand-Alone Events that Can Be Held in Conjunction with Other Events (Great add-ons for your main event!)

**Canine Good Citizen (CGC)** – The Canine Good Citizen Program, which is recognized as the gold standard in canine good manners, is a fun, 10-step test administered by CGC Evaluators that appeals to all dog owners.

**AKC Trick Dog** – This fun, crowd-pleasing event has four levels of official AKC titles. CGC Evaluators can conduct testing, which makes it a good one to hold in conjunction with Canine Good Citizen.

**Lure Coursing** – An event primarily for sight hounds that involves a system of mechanized lures and pulleys that simulate the unpredictability of chasing live prey. Newer events include the Coursing Ability Test (CAT) and Fast CAT, which are open to all breeds. Fast CAT, an excellent addition in a multi-event setting, is 100-yard dash, that dogs love!

**Earthdog Tests** – Non-competitive Earthdog tests offer breeders and owners of small terriers and Dachshunds a standardized gauge to measure their dogs' natural aptitude when exposed to an underground hunting situation.

**Herding Test** – Non-competitive herding tests give dogs an opportunity to herd livestock in a specific timed manner.

**Farm Dog Certified Test (FDC)** – Exercises that represent situations a dog would encounter in a typical farm environment. It's an excellent addition for shows held on a fairground with livestock.

**AKC Scent Work** – Scent Work is a positive and challenging activity that allows dogs the opportunity to use their strongest natural sense. (Variety of testing options making scent work a great addition to any event.)

**AKC Temperament Test (ATT)** – The ATT is a pass-fail test that assesses a dog's temperament, providing all dog owners with information about their dog's reactions to a variety of stimuli, including sounds, smells, touches, and objects.



## AKC Title-Recognition Sports (Often Run by Other Organizations for AKC Clubs) Are Great Diversions for Exhibitors and Spectators

**Diving Dogs** – Dogs race down the length of a dock and leap into a pool of water to compete for height or distance. The AKC recognizes North American Diving Dogs Organization (NADD) titles.

**Barn Hunt** – Barn Hunt is based on the traditional role of many breeds in ridding areas of destructive vermin and is open to any dog that can fit through an 18" wide by bale-height tall tunnel. The AKC recognizes Barn Hunt Association (BHA) titles.

**Flyball** – Teams of 4 dogs race against each other in a drag-style relay race, dashing over a set of hurdles. This exciting event draws large crowds. The AKC recognizes the North American Flyball Association (NAFA) titles.

**Disc Dog** – 10 unique fetch games with a flying disc, including some with agility obstacles, open to all dogs. Each UP game offers 5 levels. The AKC recognizes UpDog Challenge medals earned, which can be applied to qualify for AKC Disc Dog titles.

**Visit [AKC.ORG/SPORTS](https://www.akc.org/sports) for more information**

# AKC Club Resources Needed to Hold These Additional Events

EVENT	ELIGIBLE BREEDS	KNOWLEDGE /EXPERIENCE	PEOPLE NEEDED	SPACE NEEDED	TIME	COST	REVENUE
<b>4-6 Month Beginner Puppy</b>	All	Moderate	2 to 4	Regular Show Ring	Minimal	\$	\$\$
<b>Agility</b>	All	Extensive	3 to 5	X square feet per dog	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$\$
<b>AKC Scent Work</b>	All	Moderate	3 to 6	Moderate	Moderate	\$	\$\$
<b>AKC Temperment Test</b>	All	Moderate	4	Regular Show Ring	Minimal	\$	\$\$
<b>AKC Trick Dog</b>	All	Moderate	2	Regular Show Ring	Minimal	\$	\$\$
<b>Barn Hunt</b>	All	Minimal	2 to 4	x square feet for the course	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$
<b>Bred-By-Exhibitor Groups</b>	All	Minimal	0 add'l for CONF pt show	Same rings as regular show	Extends judging	\$	\$
<b>Canine Good Citizen</b>	All	Moderate	4	Regular Show Ring	Minimal	\$	\$\$
<b>Carting-Drafting Demos</b>	All (Larger Working)	Minimal	2	Moderate	Moderate	\$	\$
<b>CAT / Fast Cat</b>	All	Moderate	2 to 4	Length of course plus runout	Moderate	\$	\$\$\$
<b>Conformation Point Show</b>	All	Extensive	6 to 10	X square feet per dog	Extensive	\$\$\$	\$\$\$
<b>Disc Dog</b>	All	Moderate	0	x square feet for the course	Moderate	\$	\$
<b>Dock Diving</b>	All	Minimal	0	x square feet for the pool	Minimal	\$	\$\$
<b>Earthdog Tests</b>	Most Terrier	Moderate	2 to 4	Enough space to run tests	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$
<b>Education Seminars</b>	All	Minimal	2 to 4	Separate room	Moderate	\$	\$\$
<b>Farm Dog Certified Test</b>	All	Moderate	2 to 4	Enough space to run tests	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$
<b>Flyball</b>	All	Minimal	2 to 4	Moderate	Moderate	\$	\$\$
<b>Herding Tests</b>	Herding	Moderate	2 to 4	Enough space to run tests	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$\$
<b>Jr. Show Handlers Clinic</b>	All	Minimal	run by handlers	2 regular show rings	Minimal	\$	\$
<b>Lure Coursing</b>	Sight Hounds	Moderate	2 to 4	Length of course plus runout	Moderate	\$	\$\$
<b>Match (Fun, B, or A)</b>	All	Moderate	3 to 6	At least one standard size ring	Moderate	\$	\$\$
<b>NOHS</b>	All	Moderate	0 add'l for CONF pt show	Same rings as regular show	Extends judging	\$	\$
<b>Obedience</b>	All	Moderate	3 to 5	At least one standard size ring	Moderate	\$\$	\$
<b>Open Show FSS/Misc.</b>	FSS/Misc.	Moderate	2 to 4	Regular Show Ring	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$
<b>Pee-Wee Classes</b>	All	Moderate	2 to 4	Regular Show Ring	Minimal	\$	\$
<b>Puppy Groups</b>	All	Minimal	0 add'l for CONF pt show	Same rings as regular show	Extends judging	\$	\$
<b>AKC Rally®</b>	All	Moderate	3 to 5	At least one standard size ring	Moderate	\$\$	\$\$



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