

My First Dog Shows

Attending Your First Dog Show

If you have never been to a dog show before, it can be a very confusing and puzzling activity. Some of the first questions asked by a newcomer are:

1. What is the judge looking for?
2. Why do only some dogs go in once and others go in again?
3. Do the dogs win lots of money?
4. What is a Championship?
5. Can we pet the dogs? Are they all friendly?

What is the Judge Looking For?

The purpose of the Dog Show is to select the best representative of every breed. Once that is done, they then go on to select the one dog in the show that best fits the Official Breed Standard for their own particular breed.

This is done by comparing each dog in the ring to the Official Breed Standard as written by each Breed Club. The Official Breed Standard is a description of each breed, which specifically describes what that breed should look like and how it should move and act.

For example, the Chinese Shar-Pei Standard, as written by the Chinese Shar-Pei Club of America, states that a Chinese Shar-Pei should be an alert, dignified dog of moderate size. It should be square in profile and be 18" – 20" at the withers. The short harsh coat has loose skin covering the head and body. It goes on to talk about the deep set eyes, the small ears, the high set tail, the shape of the skull, the black tongue, gums and flews. Further, it says that the Shar-Pei moving at a moderate trot will converge on a center line. The description goes on to further describe what a "perfect" Shar-Pei should look like. The judge has the responsibility to know the standard for each breed he judges. He then is asked to select the best dogs in the ring each day that meet that standard. This is done as follows:

How the Dogs Compete

When dogs compete at a show, only one dog and one bitch of each breed will win points towards their championship at each show. The dogs (males) compete against each other, as do the bitches (females). The classes are divided according to age and category.

Puppy Classes

Puppies are often divided by age. Occasionally a show will combine the puppy classes into only one class for Dogs and one for Bitches. When they are divided, they are divided by age.

- 6-9 months of age
- 9-12 months of age

Adult Classes

The Adult Classes are divided in several ways. Some by age, some by who bred the dog or bitch, some by how much they have shown and if they have won points previous to the current show. The divisions go as follows:

12-18 month class – This class is for the dogs who are not fully mature. It is for dogs over the age of 12 months, but under the age of 18 months.

Novice Class - This class is for dogs new to showing and needing to gain experience. The rules state that the dogs in this class may not have received three firsts in the Novice class or any first place win in any other class. In addition, they shall not have any points towards their championship.

Amateur-Owner-Handler - This class is for owners that show their own dogs and have never been a professional handler, conformation judge, or ever employed by a professional handler.

American Bred – Dogs in this class must have been born in the United States. There is no stipulation as to age or who may show the dogs.

Bred By Exhibitor – Dogs in this class must be shown by the Breeder. Further, the breeder must be an owner or co-owner of the dog at the time it is being shown.

Open – Generally the dogs entered in this Open class are mature, but they do not need to be. Any dog over six months of age and not a Champion of Record may enter this class. At some shows, some breeds, such as the Chinese Shar-Pei, split this class in a variety of ways. The Shar-Pei split this class by coat variety. We have **Open Horsecoat** and **Open Brushcoat** at most shows. Whether to split this class is up to the discretion of the Show giving club.

Winners Dog and Winners Bitch

After the above Dog classes are judged, the winners of each of these Dog (male) classes come back in the ring to select the top, non-champion dog in the breed. This will be the dog that is named Winner's Dog and gets points towards his Championship. The number of points awarded depends on the number of dogs defeated that particular day. The next best dog will receive the Reserve Winners Dog award which does not carry any points toward his Championship. In the event that the **Winners Dog** is disqualified or for some other reason is unable to receive the points, they will then be awarded to the **Reserve Winners Dog**.

The same procedure is followed to select "Winner's Bitch" and "Reserve Winner's Bitch." Winner's Bitch will receive the points towards her Championship depending upon the number of other bitches defeated that particular day.

The winners of both Winners Dog and Winners Bitch will go back in the ring one more time for the Best of Breed Class and compete for Best of Winners and also against the Champions of Record who will be competing for Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex.

Best of Breed/Best of Opposite Sex Best of Winners

After Winners Dog and Winners Bitch are selected, all the dogs and bitches with the designation of Champion go into the ring to compete against each other, and against the Winners Dog and Winners Bitch to determine the **Best of Breed** and **Best of Opposite Sex**. All dogs and bitches in this class, except for the Winners Dog and Winners Bitch must be Champions.

Best of Breed -- This is the dog, who in the eyes of that judge on that particular day, is the closest to the Official Breed Standard of those dogs and bitches viewed in the ring. The winner of this title will go on to compete with all the other Best of Breed Winners from the other breeds at the show that day. The numerous breeds are divided into seven groups by the American Kennel Club. Chinese Shar-Pei compete in the Non-Sporting Group, so the Shar-Pei Best of Breed Winner will compete in the Non-Sporting Group later in the day.

Best of Winners

Best of Winners is selected next by the judge. This is either the Winners Dog or Winner Bitch - whichever the judge feels is the better example of the breed standard on that particular day.

Best of Opposite Sex

The final selection of each breed is the Best of Opposite Sex. This is the dog or bitch of the opposite sex to the Best of Breed that most represents the Official Breed Standard of any that the judge saw on that particular day.

Non-Sporting Group

Eighteen different dog breeds make up the Nonsporting Group, which is one of the seven groups representing all the breeds registered by the American Kennel Club.

Once all eighteen breeds have selected a Best of Breed winner, these winners compete in the Non-Sporting Group Competition. The judge selects the top four members of the Group and assigns them the Group I, Group II, Group III, and Group IV placements. The Group I winner goes on to compete with the other Group I winners from each of the other six groups for Best in Show.

Best In Show

Each of the winners from the seven Groups compete in the last class in the show for the "Best In Show" title.

Championship

In order to receive a Championship in the American Kennel Club any given Dog or Bitch must defeat enough other dogs and bitches to gain 15 points. Of those 15 points, at least six of them must be won at two separate shows where enough dogs and bitches are defeated to give at least three points on any given day. These three to five point scores are called "majors." It is required that each dog or bitch get two "majors" to complete the Championship. If they have 15 points and do not have two majors, they will not receive their Championship until they get the majors.

Do the Dogs Win Lots of Money

Occasionally there will be monetary trophies, but for the most part, the ribbon and the points are the main "wins." The title of Champion is the goal that those showing at Dog Shows are striving for.

Can We Pet the Dogs/Are They Friendly?

Most of the time, the owners or handlers will let you pet the dogs if you ASK first. The exception is the dogs who have been groomed and have a longer coat. An example would be a Poodle or Old English Sheepdog. These dogs involve major hours of grooming to be prepared to enter the show ring. If someone comes up and "pets" them before they go in the ring – it could ruin the grooming that has taken so many hours – in many cases five or six hours. This would mean that the dog would not have a chance to win in the ring. Entering dog shows, traveling to get there, and all the things that go along with the sport are very expensive. If someone "pets" a dog because they want to see what it feels like before the dog goes into the ring, all that time and money has been lost. For this reason it is not a good idea to even think about petting a show dog unless you ASK FIRST!

Sometimes a handler or owner will tell you "no." It's very possible that the dog you are asking about will have to go back in the ring again for the Group or Best in Show. They need the grooming to stay perfect until that is all over. They don't want to take a chance on having it ruined.

There are many breeds that don't have a grooming problem; but for one reason or another, the handler doesn't want you to pet the dog. Dog shows can be a stressful time for some dogs. If the handler tells you "no" it could be that the particular dog you asked about is new to showing and is a bit stressed. It could be that the handler has to get to another ring with another dog. This is a major sport for many who are at the Dog Shows and it is not something that they take lightly.

Most of the time, the majority of the people showing dogs will be glad to talk to you about the show and about their breed specifically if you wait until they are done showing. Then just ask them politely if you could get some information about their breed, or pet their dog.

Enjoy your first Dog Show!

For more information visit the link below:

<https://www.akc.org/sports/conformation/>