

# 4-H Dog Project Specialist and Leader Training

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March 3, 2026



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# Introductions

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In the chat box, share your name, county, and the role you play in the 4-H Dog Project.



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# Dog Project Terminology

**County Level:** Each County may qualify exhibitors for State 4-H Dog Trials by a selection procedure most appropriate to its own County program in compliance with the Dog Level Progression Chart and State 4-H Dog Trials eligibility requirements.

**Discipline:** Reference to a type of dog competition. Currently there are four disciplines competing at the State 4-H Dog Trials: Agility, Obedience, Rally and Showmanship.

**Division:** Reference to a grouping of classes specific to a discipline. For example, the Obedience Advanced Division incorporates classes Open A, Open B, Graduate Open A, Graduate Open B, Utility A and Utility B.

**Exhibitor:** A 4-H registered youth competing in any 4-H State 4-H Dog Trial ranging in age from 8 to 18 years of age as of December 31st of the previous year. Also referred to as a member, handler, or youth or competitor.

**Level:** Reference to a dog's progression through Agility, Showmanship, Obedience or Rally disciplines. For example, a dog may be in the Open level of Obedience or the Novice level of Showmanship.

**Class:** Reference to the specific Class within a Level. For example, a dog's Level might be Novice Obedience and the Class would be Novice A or Novice B.



# Role of the Showmanship Project Leader

**Leaders serve as educators, mentors, and role models. Your responsibilities:**

- Teaching safe and humane dog handling
- Reinforcing positive youth development
- Modeling sportsmanship and integrity
- Encouraging knowledge and skill growth
- Supporting families in responsible dog ownership



# 2026 Focus: Building Confident, Skilled Youth and Their Leaders

- Using the 4-H Dog Resource Materials Effectively
- All Materials Are Referenced To The 2024 Ohio State Dog Resource Handbook
- Chapter Modules Have A Leader Guide, Study Guide, Skillathon Card Ideas, Practice Quizzes, Worksheets and More.
- Additional Ideas or Resources, Just Ask.



## Juniors responsible for:

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, 13 and all parts of the dog on page 130.

## Intermediates responsible for:

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13 and all parts of the dog on page 130, Skeleton of the Dog, page 131, Types of Skulls and Anatomy of the Foot, page 132.

## Seniors responsible for:

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

**"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." — Willian Butler Yeats**



# Resources

## Chapter 5: Selection — Leader Guide

### Chapter Focus

Chapter 5 focuses on **responsible dog selection**, emphasizing matching a dog's traits, needs, and purpose with the owner's lifestyle, experience, ...

### Learning Objectives

Students should be able to:

Explain why careful dog selection is important

Identify factors that influence appropriate dog choice...

### Key Concepts

#### Why Selection Matters

Dogs are long-term commitments

Poor matches lead to behavior and welfare issues

Selection affects success in training, showing, or work

#### Factors to Consider

Size and space requirements

Energy level and exercise needs

Temperament and behavior...

## Chapter 5: Selection

### —Study Guide

#### What Is Dog Selection?

Dog selection is choosing a dog that fits your lifestyle, goals, and ability to provide proper care.

#### Im Station 1 — Selection Factors

Ho Identify two factors to consider when selecting a dog.

Yo Identify two factors to consider when selecting a dog.

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#### Practice Multiple-Choice Quiz — Chapter 5

1. The PRIMARY purpose of responsible dog selection is to:
  - A. Choose a popular breed
  - B. Ensure a good match for long-term welfare
  - C. Improve appearance
  - D. Reduce cost
2. Which factor should be considered FIRST?
  - A. Color

# Learning should be joyful and overflowing with excitement.

## How To Use Study Guides

- Introduce key vocabulary and concepts
- Provide Structured discussion topics
- Prepare youth for quizzes
- Reinforce understanding through repetition
- Connect content to hands-on practice

## Integrating Hands-On Learning

- Practice stacking and gaiting
- Identify anatomy on live dogs
- Demonstrate grooming tools and techniques
- Simulate show ring procedures for confidence building

# Preparing Youth for Showmanship

- Emphasize handler over dog quality
- Teach sportsmanship
- Practice ring patterns
- Develop knowledge responses
- Encourage professionalism



# Building a Strong 4-H Dog Project Starts With LEADERS

- Use materials consistently
- Schedule regular training
- Endorse family involvement
- Encourage work at home
- Focus on growth, not just winning
- Modeling integrity and respect
- Encouragement over criticism



QUESTIONS

Your leadership is the cornerstone of excellence in the 4-H Dog Project. When leaders teach consistently, model integrity, and emphasize youth growth, the entire program benefits. Focus on development, responsibility, and character—winning is secondary to growth.

# Obedience

## Rule Updates

- For Pre-Beginner Novice and Beginner Novice Classes, handler can give one-time single phrase of praise or encouragement to the dog, without penalty, for the Heel on Leash, Figure 8 and Recall on Leash exercises. (E.g. Good, yes, nice, super, great, and atta boy/girl.)
- Exhibitors are responsible for knowing the height of their dog at the withers and the associated Obedience jump heights as well as verifying jump height in the ring.

## Resources

- Obedience Guide
- Obedience Score sheets - Pre-Graduate Novice Class change to exercises
- Progression Charts Updated

## Questions

- Sabrina Christie and/or Amber Hansen, Obedience Superintendent



# Rally & Team Rally

For Obedience, Rally, and/or Agility, the same dog may not be shown in the same discipline more than once by more than one family member.

Reminder - Master Rally is now part of regular progression instead of optional class

## Resources

- Rally Guide with Signs available on the State 4-H Dog website, or AKC website
- Rally Apps - great for learning signs! iPhone: Pocket Rally app – Includes all signs, written directions and videos for each sign. Android – K9Rally app – Includes all signs along with written directions – Not sure if there is a fee for this app
- Handlers showing in Advanced and higher classes MUST know their dog's height at the withers OR their Rally jump height (which is different than obedience or agility)
- TEAM RALLY is a super fun, relay team event with costumes and prizes for members in Intermediate or higher level Rally. Counties can enter a max of 2 teams with 4 members each, and Counties MUST enroll their own teams at the same time they promote their youth from County to State in Fair Entry.

## Questions

- Anne Janicki - Rally Superintendent



# Agility

For Obedience, Rally, and/or Agility, the same dog may not be shown in the same discipline more than once by more than one family member.

## Rule Change

- A dog/handler team receiving a qualifying score at a State Agility Trial must advance to the next level the following year.

## Resources

- Agility Waiver
- Agility Guide

## Questions

- Brian Christie, Agility Superintendent



# Progression Charts

Updated for all disciplines at <https://co4h.colostate.edu/4h-project/4-h-dog-project/>

- Overview of what they are used for and why
  - <https://co4h.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2025/12/Dog-Class-Progression-AMJ.pdf>

Project/Exhibit Reqs & Tools

**Dog Class Progression AMJ**

 PDF

- Added as appendix to the rules
- Criteria and commonality for class movement - wording changed for clarification
  - Showmanship
  - Obedience
  - Rally
  - Agility
- Keeping track of members/dogs as they progress – VERY IMPORTANT!
- Questions



**4-H Dog Project  
Class Progression**



Obedience, Rally & Showmanship

Key Points and 2025 Updates



# Volunteering at State Dog Trials

- Sign-up process is in Google Forms for helping at state dog trials and will be shared to families through 4-H Online and to staff in the State 4-H Newsletter.
- Sr. member internship program. Application forms will be sent out to county staff.



Project/Exhibit Reqs & Tools

**Dog Trials State Fair Intern  
Position Description**

 Doc



# Support & Additional Information

- New web-site
- Registering for State 4-H Dog Trials
  - **Counties (Specialists/Coordinators, Key Leaders, and youth) must verify correct classes for your entries based on the progression charts**
  - Team Rally teams must be submitted by County Specialist
- Dog Expo March 28 is great for learning and networking around the disciplines and how to teach skills
- Dog Skill-a-thon contest resource
- Contact State 4-H Office ([lisa.sholten@colostate.edu](mailto:lisa.sholten@colostate.edu) or [dawn.sanchez@colostate.edu](mailto:dawn.sanchez@colostate.edu)) or Superintendents with questions



# Questions?

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