

# Obedience Competition: An Exciting Partnership

Obedience competition can be both exciting and demanding for you and your dog. The benefits are spending time together and working as a team. You and your dog may compete and earn titles. Below is a nutshell description of some of the titles available:

## **RALLY:**

Rally is a relatively new competitive venue. After completing a Beginners class, you may want to start practicing for a rally trial. In a rally class, you and your dog will enter a ring and go through a series of exercises as indicated by printed cards in the ring. There are many rally titles available to be earned. The most basic one is Rally Novice, in which all the exercises are done on lead.

Obedience competition has three levels: **Novice, Open, and Utility**, with Novice being the entry class. Each team must pass at least three times in the appropriate class, each time with a different judge. A passing score is called a “leg” and your dog must earn three legs to earn the title “CD” or “Companion Dog”. Each owner-dog team starts the competition with 200 points. The competition exercises are assigned a certain number of points that can be earned if it’s performed perfectly. For example, the sit-stay exercise is worth 30 points. If any mistakes are made, the judge starts deducting points from the original 200-point total. To pass each exercise, the team must earn at least half the points assigned to it. At the end of the competition, points from all the exercises are added together, and a team must have retained at least 170 points to pass. When you and your dog have passed three times, your dog will have earned his title, and this title will be added to his/her registered name, ie: “Saracen MacBramble O’ Briar CD”.

## **NOVICE (CD):**

Your dog must heel on and off leash, walking by your side without lagging, sniffing, or pulling. It must stop and sit when you come to a stop, and it must continue to heel with you when you walk at various paces. It must also heel when walking a figure eight pattern around two people. Dogs must also stand and stay while a judge approaches and touches them on the head, shoulders and hips. The dog cannot sit, walk away, or growl during this exercise; it must remain still. The dog must also demonstrate that it can come when called, off leash, when you are about 50 feet away. A one-minute sit-stay and a three-minute down-stay complete the competition.

## **OPEN (CDX):**

The Open classes add more difficult elements, such as the drop, retrieving on flat, retrieving over a jump, the broad jump, and out of sight sits and downs. All of this is performed off-lead. The title “Companion Dog Excellent” or “CDX” is earned here.

## **UTILITY (UD):**

The Utility classes are yet more difficult. The exercises include hand-signals, scent discrimination, directed retrieval of a glove, and directed jumping over a bar jump and a high jump. The title “Utility Dog” or “UD” is earned from this class.

## **UTILITY DOG EXCELLENT (UDX):**

If you and your dog enjoyed making it through the Utility class, you might aspire to “Utility Dog Excellent” (“UDX”) and “Obedience Trial Champion” (“OTCH”) titles.

It is important to remember that obedience competition should be fun. If you or your dog makes a mistake during an exercise and do not pass, shrug it off and plan your next training sessions to overcome the error. Never take your anger or disappointment out on your dog. The rules of good sportsmanship always apply.