

Canine Freestyle

We are working with the Ohio 4-H program to provide information about Canine Freestyle to Ohio's youth. Additional information may be found at WCFO website: www.worldcaninefreestyle.org.

There are several divisions of freestyle competitions and they are known as Musical Freestyle (MF), and Heelwork to Music (HTM), Bar Proficiency Test, Medal Proficiency Test, and K9 Dressage. Freestyle competitions are either "live" or submitted on video. Information about locations of competitions may be found on the WCFO web site. Scores are tabulated based on Technical Merit and also on the Artistic Impression.

Musical Freestyle

1. Any move is allowed as long as it does not endanger the dog or the handler.
2. Distance work, weaves, jumps, send outs, innovative moves encouraged.
3. Steps by handler should be in time to music. Dance steps preferred.
4. Moves may be performed from any position.
5. Props allowed. Must be an integrated part of the routine.
6. No prong/choke collars or training halters allowed.
7. Disqualifications in Musical Freestyle: fouling the ring, leaving the ring, 1bait/training aids in ring, use of prong/choke collars, training halters, music too short or too long, dropping of leash over 25% of routine in Beginners On Leash, abusive behavior toward dog, or abusive behavior towards judges.

Heelwork to Music

1. No distance work. Team of handler and dog must never be further than 4 feet apart and in close proximity to each other. (Exception in Pairs/Team where each team may move away from the other team). Dogs may not pass between the handler's legs.
2. No jumps, weaves, send outs, Distance Spins or Pivots. All moves should be in some form of heel position (left side, right side, front or behind).
3. Heelwork may be performed in any position, always within four feet of each other.
4. Steps by handler should be in time to music. Dance steps preferred.
5. Props allowed. Must be an integrated part of the routine.
6. No prong/choke collars or training halters allowed.
7. Disqualifications in Heelwork to Music are much the same as Musical Freestyle, as shown above. Add, that a dog leaving the handler would result in a disqualification.

The WCFO Proficiency Tests have been created to give Canine Freestylers an opportunity to continually train and test to achieve a standard of excellence in the development of their abilities no matter where they are or whenever they are ready. Everyone is eligible to take the Bronze Bar level tests. You do not have to be a member of WCFO to take the tests. From there a passing score moves you to Bronze Medal. Then a team would proceed to the Silver and then the Gold level Proficiency Tests. For more information visit the website: <http://worldcaninefreestyle.org/proficiencytests.htm>

Bar Proficiency Test : is technically oriented with judging and scoring heavily weighted on the Technical Merit side.

Medal Proficiency Test: is artistically oriented with judging and scoring heavily weighted on the Artistic Impression side.

K9 Dressage Test is a series of exercise sequences performed on both the left and right side of handler as described by the judge at the event. The handler and dog will move to a series of alphabet cards assigned to positions in the ring. It is a newer event and was developed to help the handler and dog to develop skills and technical moves used in Freestyle.

Suggestions for training freestyle:

- Keep training sessions short and fun. Three times a day for 15 minutes or less is plenty. Short frequent sessions are best. Repetition is the key. Put on music and just dance around and slip in a move or two. You can also teach moves without music but it is suggested to have music flowing during sessions. You may not want to use your routine music too often or repeat the whole sequence of moves consecutively too often. Many freestylers suggest that you put the whole routine together shortly before actual competition.
- If you see someone doing a certain move that you might want to learn, ask them how they trained it. Many people are quite willing to share this information.
- Keeping your dog's attention is very important, so doing exercises to help with attention will help.
- Most of your training can be in smaller areas such as a living room or garage as you are teaching basic moves. As you start to put your whole routine together you may need to find a larger area to allow you to do all moves and get the timing of the moves with the music.
- Choose music you like. Be sure it is a good tempo for your dog and for you too. Matching your dogs stride to the beat of the music will help. And also make sure there is no foul language in the lyrics.
- Start on paper. Write down a list of the moves and tricks that you would like to learn or that your dog already knows.
- Plan a routine on paper. Divide the paper into 6 sections. Plan a move in each of the 6 sections. Throw in some heeling in circles, changes of pace and direction. You will fine tune it as you go and get a feel for the routine. This will help you get used to using up ring space based on size of your dog. Large dogs need to use 75% and small dogs need to use 50% of the middle of the ring not at one end or the other.
- Start working on individual moves, tricks and transition moves.
- Start thinking about a costume to help set the mood of the music you plan to use. Costuming can be very simple such as a shirt and jeans for country, black pants and white blouse for something more classical. Or you can add glitter, sequins, hats, boots, boas, hula skirts, special hair styles, body glitter, and have lots of fun with the costume.

Most Important Tip: Make it **Fun** for both you and your dog. You will develop a special bond and you may just entertain a few people along the way. Freestyle is fun to take into nursing homes, schools, festivals and to enjoy with your friends.

Suggested Moves:

Heeling on Left and Right side – with all the traditional turns on both sides.
About Turn – right when dog on left side, left when dog on right side.
About U Turn – left when dog on left side, right when dog on right side.
270 turn – dog inside or dog outside
360 turn – dog inside or dog outside
About Left Turn – dog on the right (becomes an about right turn)
Facing Turn – change of direction (half spin in or conformation turn)
Turning Away Turn – change of direction (half spin away)
Left About Turn – dog on the left (dog goes on outside around handler)
Right About Turn – dog on the right (dog goes around handler)
Bloom Turn – both turn away from each other (1/2 turn back to back)
Sit, Down, Stand, Moving Sit, Moving Down, Moving Stand
Handler walk around dog while in sit, down or stand position - train both directions
Spins on both sides (start this first while standing still then begin to add movement)
Back Up – face to face with dog or with dog on left or right sides
Lateral Moves – face to face with dog to the left or right in side passing motion
Side Pass – dog on left or right side of handler with dog moving away from handler or toward handler.
Dog Circles handler – and then expand this to add handling moving in opposite direction at same time.
Bow or Curtsey (TA-DA)
Beg or Sit Pretty (Sit Up)
Roll Over
Kick Paws / Feet as in shaking hands facing handler or Kicks at handler's side same time as handler kicks left and right feet.
Weave between handler's legs – while handler walking forward or stationary figure 8 between handler's legs
Go Out to circle a prop
Jumping through arms or over legs or outstretched arms
Roll on side – sleeping or dead dog
Dog Sneeze or look to side on cue
Jump up into your arms, or up on back of handler (especially good for ending pose)

All routines need to have a Beginning Pose and an Ending Pose with lots of smiles and wagging tails. Verbal cues are acceptable but luring cues with hands should only be done at beginning levels. Each level of competition requires a specific length of music and moves on multiple sides of the body depending on the level.