



AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB

AKC® Code of Sportsmanship and Civility

Preface: The tradition of competitive purebred dog events predates 1884—the year the American Kennel Club (AKC®) was founded. Those involved in these sports share core values, including a strong commitment to sportsmanship and a welcoming, respectful culture that embraces the diverse community united by a love of dogs.

These values are evident across all aspects of the sport: conformation, performance, companion, and family dog activities. Many believe that the enduring principles of sportsmanship and civility are key reasons the sport has thrived for over 140 years.

Recognizing that periodically reaffirming our shared values strengthens our community, the revised code will be shared widely to highlight the foundational values and principles that define the sport.

- Sportspeople always place the welfare of their dog above all else.
- Sportspeople prioritize the long-term health and preservation of their breed, making decisions that reflect a deep commitment to responsible breeding and ownership.
- Sportspeople respect the history, traditions and integrity of the sport of purebred dogs.
- Sportspeople conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the sport, the American Kennel Club, and themselves.
- Sportspeople appreciate, encourage and support all who associate with and participate in the sports by fostering an environment where respect, equity, inclusion, and courtesy are foundational.
- Sportspeople understand, uphold and abide by all AKC bylaws, rules, regulations and policies.
- Sportspeople contribute to a positive atmosphere at events by avoiding negative gossip, disparagement, or unsportsmanlike behavior.
- Sportspeople extend their values of civility, fairness, and respect to all digital and social media platforms.
- Sportspeople actively support the education and mentorship of newcomers, helping them learn the rules, values, and traditions of the sport in a respectful way.
- Sportspeople recognize that they are role models in the sport, and strive to lead by example through humility, kindness, and ethical conduct.
- Sportspeople treat fellow exhibitors, judges, officials, volunteers, spectators, and AKC staff with dignity and respect, regardless of experience, background, or differences in opinion.
- Sportspeople are committed to fair play, honesty, courtesy, and competition, approaching both winning and losing with grace.
- Sportspeople understand that strong competition and civility can—and should—coexist. They appreciate the quality of their competitors, and the effort put forth by others.
- Sportspeople uphold their responsibilities to the sport of purebred dogs and refuse to let personal gain or self-interest influence their decisions or behavior.
- The sportsperson judges only on the merits of the dogs and considers no other factors.
- The sportsperson judge or exhibitor accepts constructive criticism.
- The sportsperson exhibitor declines to enter or exhibit under a judge where it might reasonably appear that the judge's placements could be based on something other than the merits of the dogs.
- The sportsperson exhibitor refuses to compromise the impartiality of a judge.
- Sportspeople are willing to share honest and open appraisals of both the strengths and weaknesses of their breeding stock.
- Sportspeople decline to exploit any positions of authority or recognition for personal advantage.
- Sportspeople appreciate those that have gone before them and realize they are responsible for maintaining and enhancing the sport for future generations.



**Everything We Do,
We Do for Dogs.**

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