

Texas Sheep Dog Association Reference Tool

Version 2 | A resource for first-time herding dog trial hosts and essential trial roles

This document is intended as a practical reference for people hosting their first herding dog trial and for volunteers serving in key trial roles. It brings together role-specific guidance for smooth trial flow, fair treatment of competitors, and good stock handling. The guidance below is based on Texas Sheep Dog Association trial resources and rules, with additional organization for quick use on trial days.

Vital Roles for a Successful Trial

At a minimum, first-time hosts should identify and brief the following vital roles before trial day: Course Director, Setout crew, Scribe, Score Runner, Trial Secretary, Judge support, and stock-handling help for sorting, loading, and exhausting. Even when one person covers more than one job, each responsibility should be clearly assigned so communication, scoring, and stock care do not break down during the trial.

Course Director

- I. The trial committee, TSDA secretary, or trial sponsor may appoint a course director.
 - I. If more than one person is designated course director, they should:
 - I. Carry out all duties at different times during the trial.
 - II. Carry out the specific duties that have been divided among or between those designated.
 - III. Carry out duties as directed by the trial committee.
- II. The course director's duties include, **but are not limited to:**
 - I. Handling complaints.
 - II. Maintaining the run order.
 - III. Determining the method of exhausting stock. The course director may:
 - I. Appoint someone to exhaust.

- II. Require competitors to exhaust the run that follows them.
- III. The course director should be available at all times during trial hours.
- IV. All complaints must be filed with the course director. If s/he is unwilling or unable to handle the complaint, it may be filed with the Board In writing.

The Course Director is one of the most important field positions at a trial. For a first-time host, this role keeps the class moving, acts as the communication link between the judge and competitors, and helps ensure that complaints and field issues are handled through the proper process.

Hereafter, Course Director = CD

- I. CD's are required to maintain the running order. Keep the field moving by letting handlers know when they're about to be up.
- II. At some trials CD's will have a radio. It is imperative for the CD to communicate with the Set Out team especially regarding stops and starts on the field.
 - a. Let them know if a judge takes a break.
 - b. CD may be required to call for sheep to be set out for each.

run, and/or give the Set Out team a 2 minute warning prior to the end of the run.

- c. Inform Set Out when a class is getting close to the end. Let them know how many runs are left and when the last run is on the field.
- d. Inform them when a new class is ready to start.
- e. Be in contact with the Set Out team if there is concern about.

inclement weather and about decisions to stop or re-start the trial.

- III. CD's are to be available at all times during trial hours.
 - a. CD's are the only way a competitor can communicate with the judge.
Example: A competitor may ask the CD to request the judge to deliberate on an unsound sheep.
 - b. CD's may be called upon by the judge to convey instructions to the competitor. Example: notify handler of lack of progress decision or disqualification.

- c. CD's are to be available to answer any questions about the course asked by a handler **prior to** their run.
 - d. CD's are to handle/forward requests from the judge concerning their comfort, ie water, coffee, snacks, etc. Also make sure they receive their meal at lunchtime.
- IV. All official complaints are to be initiated with the CD, and the CD forwards those complaints to the Trial Committee and/or Board of Directors.

Setout

For first-time hosts, the setout crew can make or break the quality and consistency of the trial. Good setout protects the sheep, preserves fairness from run to run, and gives each competitor a proper chance to show their dog.

The setout is often a major determining factor in the success of a run. Sheep must be handled in a calm workmanlike manner both in the pens and during the setout. Sheep that are roughed up, crowded, abused by a dog in the pens, mishandled in loading the chutes and then fought with on their way to the setout point are not “winning sheep” for the competitor at the post.

One of the basic rules of setting sheep is to avoid working the competitor's sheep with your dog. The best way to accomplish this is to walk the sheep out yourself to the setout post, using your dog behind you, to flank or haze as necessary. **Do not** walk out from the setout pen and send your dog to fetch the sheep to you and consequently to the setout post. In this case, you are creating an unfair advantage, or disadvantage, by working the handler's sheep that is standing at the post.

Once the competing dog is sent on his outrun, there should be no whistling, shouting, waving of sticks or rash behavior by either the setout person or their dog. If it is necessary to recall the setout dog prior to the lift, it should be done without affecting the sheep. Any of the aforementioned acts could result in not giving the competitor a fair chance of showing their dog.

Setout help is often selected from the handler's in attendance at the trial. A good rule of thumb is to limit setout personnel to **experienced handlers and dogs who exhibit good stockmanship skills**. The opportunity to set sheep is not a venue for training/working your nursery dog or to take the edge off a “hot” dog. While Novice handlers are often keen to set

sheep at a trial it is not always conducive to have inexperienced help in this job. Rather, have the less experienced volunteers work in the pen, sorting and loading sheep **without** a dog. Given proper guidance and support, it is a much better way to use help and to aid in the education of the less experienced handlers. Likewise a crew of kids in the setout pen may seem like a cheap option but is often disastrous to the well being of the sheep. Less is more when it comes to help at the top.

Scribe

The scribe is responsible for producing a clear and accurate record of each run. For a first-time host, a dependable scribe helps ensure smooth judging, correct timing, legible score sheets, and fewer scoring disputes later in the day.

I. General:

See that the proper running order is maintained by keeping track of each handler/dog team as they enter the field, making sure that the score sheet and the running order agree. Each handler is supposed to announce himself and his dog's name to the judge before approaching the handlers post. Sometimes they forget. Just be sure you know who's on the field so you're scoring the right handler/dog team!

In the event there are two judges scoring the class make sure the judge's name appears at the top of the score sheet.

It's a good idea (but not essential) to jot scores on the run order just in case the judge wants to look back at them.

Ask the scribe in front of you if there's anything special you need to know. Most judges function pretty similarly: they'll watch an Element or two and then give you the deductions, like "two off the Outrun, nothing off the Lift."

It's a good idea to repeat what you've heard the judge say so that he/she will know you're recording scores correctly.

Do not talk to the judge except to clarify judge scores and comments. Keep conversation to a minimum and only at judge's initiation. It is not the job of the scribe to offer opinions about a run or the performance of the dog. If the judge asks a direct question, scribe can answer but should only be about what was observed, again keeping opinions to a minimum.

Do not discuss judges' comments or judging decisions with others.

Score changes: If the judge changes a score after you have entered it, X out the previous score and write the corrected score near it. Do not write over a score. Score sheets must be legible.

II. Time-Keeping:

The scribe is the official timekeeper and scorer on the field. Having your stopwatch reset and ready when the next team announces itself and steps to the post is critical. The judge is likely to have a watch as backup, but you must be watching and ready to start the clock when the dog leaves the post. If something happens and you're not ready to start the clock, speak up.

III. Scoring:

a. Partial Scores:

Some judges want you to keep track of the deductions as the Element goes along; "that's one, and that's two more," and you'll need to keep a running total of the deductions, tally marks work well! Record tally marks in the Element Box with total points off in the far right Points Off box.

b. Element Totals:

If the judge gives only a total off at the end of each Element, write that number in far right Points Off box.

c. Disqualification or Retire:

Write DQ or RT in the far right Points Off box of the Element in which it happens. Enter no further numbers. Enter DQ or RT in the Total Score box at the bottom of the score sheet.

d. Time is Called:

Write T in the Element box of element in which it happens. Enter the total possible points for each uncompleted element of the course in the far right Points Off box. Example: (time ran out during the drive) enter, 30 off Drive, 10 off Pen and 10 off Shed.

e. Comments:

If the judge wants to comment on a specific element, write it in Element box. Write general comments at the bottom of the score sheet.

IV. Totaling Points Off and Final Scores:

If the Total Points Possible box is not already filled in, write in the total for the course. Add up all the points off and enter in box labeled Points Lost. Subtract Points Lost from Total Points Possible and enter in Total Score box. If time does not allow for completion of this step, the trial secretary will do so.

If you do any computing such as adding points off as you go along, write in the margin, outside the boxes.

V. Please Have Judge Check That The Points Entered Are Correct:

Ask the judge to sign or initial the score sheet verifying the scores are as intended. Some judges will and some won't, it is up to the judge.

Score Runner

The score runner connects the field to the secretary and scoreboard. This role is especially valuable at busy trials because it helps keep results moving, protects score sheet confidentiality, and reduces delays in posting unofficial scores.

Confidentiality

Completed score sheets should not be shared or given to anyone who has not been identified as authorized to have them. Authorized persons are: score runners, trial officials, trial secretary.

Posting Scores

After collecting the score sheets from the scribe, verify the total scores and post them for each handler/dog team on the scoreboard prior to delivering the score sheets to the trial secretary. The scores posted at this time are unofficial scores. Only after the secretary has verified the totals do they become official final scores.

Please observe confidentiality as described above when posting unofficial scores.

Score runners can show unofficial scores to the announcer.

For best results, first-time hosts should review TSDA rules in advance, assign roles early, confirm volunteer coverage for the full day, and communicate expectations clearly with judges, secretaries, and stock handlers before the first run begins.