Utah 4-H Dog Program – Exhibitor Divisions and Dog Classifications

Exhibitor Divisions

Once an exhibitor meets the minimum requirements to enter the show (see **Qualifications to Show** on the website), they must select which division they want to compete in based off of the definitions below. Score sheets for each division can be reviewed and youth should select a division that best suits their skills and abilities, or describes their dog show experience. If no division is selected, the exhibitor will be placed in the Novice division for each event. Once a handler/dog team has competed at a regional or state show in one division, they CAN NOT return to a lower division. The show committee may request that a handler/dog team move into a division they deem more appropriate (higher or lower) prior to the start of the show.

Classes are divided based on a combination of handler and dog experience and skill. These experience and skill levels are divided into new, semi-experienced, experienced, and expert.

Definitions

New dog or handler:
- less than 2 years of experience
- have not shown at an AKC or breed specific event.

Semi-experienced dog or handler
- 2 or more years of experience
- have shown at an AKC or breed specific event, (but have not placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors)
- has competed and won first place in the Novice division at the Utah 4-H State Dog Show.

Experienced dog or handler
- 3 or more years of consecutive experience
- competitor at an AKC or breed specific event placing in the top 3 with at least 5 other competitors
- Competed and placed 1st or 2nd in the Pre-Open division at the Utah 4-H State Dog Show with 5 or more competitors

Expert dog or handler
- 3 or more years of consecutive experience
- Competitor at AKC or breed specific events, placing in the top 3 with at least 5 other competitors in 5 or more separate events
- competed and placed 1st or 2nd in the Open division at the Utah 4-H State Dog Show with 5 or more competitors
- handler has been paid or compensated to train or show a dog at an AKC or breed specific event

The below class divisions are applicable for obedience, rally-o, and agility. All other contests and events will be divided and judged according to age group (junior, intermediate, senior). These divisions are designed to allow youth to feel more confident in their levels while encouraging them to set goals and advance their skills as a dog handler and as a member of a team.

If a complete class (5 or more dogs) cannot be compiled, divisions may be combined. For example, if there are only 4 Novice exhibitors, and 3 Pre-open exhibitors, the 4 novice exhibitors may be moved into the Pre-open category or vice versa.

Divisions

Novice: New x New | New x Semi-experienced
This division is for handler/dog teams that are both new, with less than 2 years of experience and have not shown at an AKC or breed specific event, OR with one new and at most one semi-experienced member, and has not placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors at an AKC (or breed specific) or State Dog Show. For example, a dog with more than two years of experience and a handler with less than 2 years of experience would be considered a novice *unless* they had placed in the top 3 at another qualified show or won 1st place in the Novice divisions at the State 4-H Dog Show with 5 or more other competitors.

Pre-Open: Semi-experienced x Semi-experienced | New x Experienced
This division is for handler/dog teams with two or more years of experience, but have NOT placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors at an AKC (or breed specific) event, or placed 1st with at least 5 competitors at the State 4-H Dog Show, OR a team with one experienced member and one new. For example, an experienced dog with 2 or more years of experienced that has placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors at a qualified event, matched with a new handler would show in the Pre-open division.

Open: Experienced x Experienced | Experienced x Semi-Experienced
This division is for handler/dog teams where both members have 3 or more years of consecutive experience, have placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors at an AKC (or breed specific) event, placed 1st with at least 5 competitors at the State 4-H Dog Show in the pre-open division OR one of the members has placed in the top 3 at a qualifying event with 5 or more dogs and one has not.

Advanced: Expert x Expert | Experienced x Expert
This division is for handler/dog teams where both members are experienced, where both have placed 1st at the State 4-H Dog Show in the Open Division (with at least 10 exhibitors in their class), or have placed in the top 3 of at least 5 dogs at 3 or more AKC (or breed specific) events.

*Note: once an exhibitor has competed at a level, they can NOT move down to a lower level with the same dog. *

Puppy and Aged Classifications

Animals being shown in the puppy division should have a vet certificate verifying age. Aged dogs may be shown in this category at the owner's discretion. Once a dog competes in the Aged division, he can NOT move back to the Standard division.

Novice Puppy: This division is for exhibitors that have two years or less experience and are competing with a puppy that is between 7 and 12 months of age at the time of show registration.

Open Puppy: This division is for experienced handlers with two or more years of experience, have placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors at an AKC (or breed specific) event, *or* placed 1st with at least 5 competitors at the State 4-H Dog Show event in the Novice division and are competing with a puppy that is between 7 and 12 months of age at the time of show registration.

Novice Aged: This division is for exhibitors that have two years or less experience and are competing with an aged dog that requires special consideration for jump height and certain maneuvers.

Open Aged: This division is for experienced handlers with two or more years of experience, have placed in the top 3 with at least 5 competitors at an AKC (or breed specific) event, *or* placed 1st with at least 5 competitors at the State 4-H Dog Show event in the Novice division, and are competing with an aged dog that requires special consideration for jump height and certain maneuvers.

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Handlers

Dogs *(not including puppy or aged dogs)*	New	Semi-experienced	Experienced	Expert
New	NOVICE	NOVICE	PRE-OPEN	OPEN
Semi-experienced	NOVICE	PRE-OPEN	OPEN	OPEN
Experienced	PRE-OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	ADVANCED
Expert	OPEN	OPEN	ADANCED	ADVANCED