

AKC Junior Hunt Test How-To

Reprinted from Waterloo Amateur Retriever Club

What are the requirements to run in an AKC Hunt Test? Is my dog ready to run a test? Would I even enjoy the stress of training and entering tests? More than likely, these are questions we have all asked at one time or another. WARC has put together an unofficial summary of the AKC rules for a Hunt Test, in a fashion that we hope will help you make the right decisions for you and your dog.

Requirements before the Test

Any AKC Retriever breed, Irish Water Spaniel or Standard Poodle, six months of age (after their adult teeth are in) or older, registered with the AKC, is eligible to enter. Bitches in season are not eligible to enter, nor are they allowed on the test grounds. You may enter a Hunt Test by filling out a premium, which includes information on you and your dog, and should be sent with your entry fee to the Hunt Test secretary of the club holding the test.

On the day of the Hunt Test, the test club will provide a program which will have all the dogs entered in the test, listed by their assigned number. This is called the running order (if your dog is listed as number 2, it is technically supposed to run second in the Junior Test). The marshal of the Junior Test may or may not choose to run the dogs in running order. If they choose not to run in order, they will have you the handler, sign up for a position you would like to run in.

When you arrive at the Junior Test location, the marshal will check you in to make sure all the dogs are present. The judges will explain the Test, and a test dog will be run. The purpose of running a test dog is to allow the judges and handlers to see how the test is intended to be run, and what potential challenges the test may pose for you and your dog. A dog can run as a test dog in any test except the test it has been officially entered in.

A Junior Hunt Test consists of two single land marks and two single water marks, which will be less than a hundred yards. It is at the club's discretion as to what type of birds will be used (pheasants, chukars, guinea hens and or ducks).

You and your dog will be judged in four abilities:

1. **Marking** – How well does your dog see and remember where the bird falls.
2. **Style** – How well and in what manner did your dog retrieve and deliver the bird to hand.
3. **Perseverance/Courage/Hunting** – Dog's determination to complete the task at hand.
4. **Trainability** – Dog's steadiness, control and delivery (The things you should have taught your dog).

In a Junior Test, your dog is allowed to wear a flat buckle collar during the test and you are allowed to approach the line (area where you and your dog must stay behind when running the test) with your dog on a lead. Remember, no corrective devices such as choke, pinch, prong or bark collars, etc., are allowed at an AKC Test.

Requirements at the Line

Once you are at the line, remove the lead. You are allowed to "lightly" restrain your dog at the line, meaning you can put your finger under your dog's collar for a minimum amount of control, or you can use your lead as a slip lead. As one judge put it, "lightly restrain your dog, but no wheelles from your dog please".

When you and your dog are steady at the line, signal the judge to proceed with the test. The judge will signal for the first mark to be thrown. After the bird is thrown, the judge will then, either call your dog's number, or call "dog" (judges choice). Send your dog. The dog must pick up the mark and deliver to the hand of the handler behind the line. Never touch your dog or the bird at the line until the bird has been delivered to hand. You are allowed to encourage your dog to fulfill its task, as long as the encouragement does not turn into correction. This scenario should be repeated on the other 3 marks.

Requirements during the Test

The handler shall carry an empty shotgun on at least two single marks. The handler need not shoulder the shotgun. The hunt area for a fall in a junior test is quite liberal, so don't give up on your dog when it seems to have forgotten the mark.

You are allowed to resend your dog a second time, but the judges will score your dog lower in Marking and Perseverance. You are allowed to handle your dog on only one mark if it can be done crisply and cleanly. However, marking will receive a lower score.

During the water series, if your dog cheats and runs the bank on a mark, that is not a disqualification, just a lower score.

Requirements after the Test

Each ability has categories that receive a score, which the average must not be under 5.0 (you could receive a "0" in a category and still qualify if the average of the ability was a 5.0 or above). Those ability scores are averaged and this will be your score for the test. That average must be 7.0 or above for a qualifying score. Dogs that qualify will receive an official Standard AKC Rosette.

To become a Junior Hunter your dog needs four qualifying scores.