

# AKC Senior Hunt Test How-To

Reprinted from Waterloo Amateur Retriever Club

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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 Senior Test). The marshal of the Senior 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 Senior 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.

In the Senior test your dog needs to demonstrate much more stability, marking, and handler control, than in the Junior test. In the Senior test your dog is required to be off lead during the entire test.

The Senior test requires a land double (two marks thrown before the dog is sent), land blind, a water double, and a water blind. At least one of these situations should be a walkup (after you and your dog leave the holding blind, you precede with the judges to the line, all the while you and your dog are being judged). On the walk up you may have a mark thrown from behind you, landing in front of your dog.

Your dog may also encounter a diversion bird thrown near your dog's return path from a mark. Diversion shots may also be used at some point during the test. Your dog will also be required to honor (after your dog has finished it's series it is required to sit a short distance from the working dog at the beginning of it's series) at least once in a Senior test. Marks for a Senior test should not normally exceed 100 yards.

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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).

### Requirements at the Line

You may take your dog to the holding blind on a slip lead. Once the judges have called your dog either to the line or on the walkup, remove the slip lead. If you are on a walkup and a bird is thrown, you may use your whistle to sit your dog if you prefer.

At the line, you signal for the first bird to be thrown, usually called the memory or money bird, and the judges will signal for the second bird. Your dog should be steady at the line. A controlled break or creeping will receive a lower score in trainability. The judges will tell you if it matters which bird is picked up first. Usually your dog should go for the second bird first, which most of the time will be the shorter bird. Dogs may be resent on a mark, however, you will be scored lower in perseverance.

### Requirements during the Test

The handler shall always carry and/or shoulder an empty shotgun except when honoring the working dog or when running a blind. Your dog **must** deliver to hand after a retrieve. After the first bird is retrieved to hand, send your dog for the second bird. If your dog switches (on a line for one bird and then changes it's mind and goes for the other bird, or drops one bird and goes for another, or establishes a hunt and before retrieving the bird, returns to an old fall and establishes a hunt), it is an automatic **disqualification**. You may handle your dog on marks, however, resulting in a lower score in marking.

After the second bird is retrieved, take your dog to the line for the blind (a mark that the dog has not seen fall). In a Senior test, blinds will not be run between marks. Handle your dog to the mark. If your dog pops (stops and turns for instruction without a whistle) continually, you may receive a lower score in perseverance. The same scenario of two marks and a blind will occur for the water series as well.

### 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 receive a Senior title, your dog needs four qualifying scores if it already has a Junior Title, or five qualifying scores if not titled yet.