



Dog Scouts of America Evaluation Criteria

K9 Fitness

PURPOSE: This badge is designed to show that the handler and dog have worked together to improve and/or maintain the overall health and fitness levels of the dog. During the process, the handler may find that their own fitness improves as well! The badge requires the dog and handler to work together as a team to meet the requirements and log their activities over time. Only exercise that is interactive may be used in earning the badge, so both dog and human team members must participate in logged activities in some way.

DOG REQUIREMENTS: The dog must be able to participate in a minimum of 2.5 hours of aerobic/cardio exercise a week, with this time logged in at least 6 of 8 consecutive weeks. Qualifying activities must include the performance of exercises that increase the dog's stamina, strength, and flexibility. Exercise must be appropriate for the handler's fitness goals for the dog and the dog's current/anticipated level of activity. Exercises that are performed in short intervals, such as agility, flyball, dock diving, and lure coursing do not meet the criteria as they allow the dog to resume a normal resting heart rate between repetitions. Training or practice sessions where a dog is continuously working on drills or sprints, or dock diving and swimming for 15-30 minutes would meet the criteria. It's important to ask your evaluator if you are unsure if an activity may be logged as some activities may vary depending on how they are performed.

HANDLER REQUIREMENTS: The handler must develop an exercise plan that is safe and appropriate for the dog to meet the goals established by the handler for the dog, whether that be participation in dog sports or trails activities, or to improve the dog's overall health or quality of life, especially for overweight dogs, senior dogs, and/or those with degenerative conditions. All activities must be performed correctly to ensure the dog's safety and the dog must be trained for the logged activities using only positive reinforcement methods. Proper equipment for the activity is required at all times. Any requirements we have established for specific badge activities must be followed for this badge as well. The handler is advised to review existing badge materials for backpacking/hiking, biking, dock diving, cani-cross, skijoring, etc. before beginning any activity to make sure they understand our safety regulations and the equipment we require for the activity.

Handler must be able to accurately identify the status of the dog's weight, clearly describe signs of overheating and fatigue and actions that must be taken should this occur, and demonstrate warm up and cool down routines. It is expected that the handler always attends to the dog's nutrition and hydration needs.

In the areas the handler is using for exercise, all laws and posted rules and regulations must be followed. The handler should ensure that the dog never causes a disruption or creates a dangerous situation for either member of the team as well as any others who may be sharing the space.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED: The required equipment varies depending on the activity and must always meet our minimum requirements as specified for specific badges. Harnesses must be non-restrictive and appropriate to the sport. An exercise ball, disc or wobble board is required to demonstrate strength exercises and cavalettis, ladders, perches etc. may be required to demonstrate proprioception exercises. The evaluator must be satisfied that appropriate equipment is being used for all activities.



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PROCESS: The handler must state the fitness goals they have established for the dog and outline a plan of progression to meet those goals. An accurate log of activities performed is required, to include a minimum of 2.5 hours of exercise per week during at least 6 of 8 consecutive weeks. The intent of the badge is to set the dog on a path of health and fitness that is maintained even after the badge is earned. Therefore, the evaluator must be certain that the handler intends to continue to exercise the dog appropriately for his lifetime. As such, the handler's plan should demonstrate or explain how the fitness routine is accommodated into their daily schedule.

Activities that the dog takes part in regularly should be demonstrated to the evaluator either in person or by video as there may be seasonal activities that cannot be demonstrated at the time of evaluation. All other badge requirements must be demonstrated at the time of evaluation.

Handlers are encouraged to take photos and videos of their dog standing still when beginning on the fitness journey and again after 8 weeks. They should be able to clearly note any changes they see in the dog's physicality with regard to weight, top line maintenance, muscle gain, improved stance, etc.

ALLOWED:

- Short hydration breaks
- Recreational activities such as playing fetch
- Food or toys used as rewards
- Exercise session exceeding 15 mins in length

NOT ALLOWED:

- Unsafe performance of any activity
- Improper equipment
- Forcing participation from the dog
- Aversive training methods
- Fearful or stress dog while performing activities
- Lack of participation of the human partner
- Logging sessions that total less than 15 mins a day
- Exercising only enough to get the badge, with no intention of maintaining regular exercise