**Parkour Training and Safety Information**

Parkour is a great way to add interest to the walks you take with your dog. It further strengthens the relationship you have with your dog and is another way to get out an enjoy the great outdoors. This sport is intended to be accessible for dogs of all ages, sizes and breeds. It helps improve focus and expend energy in young dogs and can help keep the mind of an older dog sharp.

Because the intention of Parkour is exploration and interaction with the surroundings, dogs will be jumping on, going under, climbing in and going around objects and obstacles encountered while walking. Safety is extremely important. Badge evaluators will watch to make sure dogs demonstrate all required behaviors AND handlers follow all safety rules. Evaluators may call a halt to the evaluation at any time if she finds the dog to be overly anxious or stressed or if she determines there is a safety risk.

All dogs must be wearing a harness with a strap that comes between the dogs front legs. The harness must have straps that are appropriately sized for the dog and straps must be a minimum of one inch in width for all but the smallest dogs. A leash should be used unless the leash itself would pose a safety risk. The leash must be attached to the back of the harness and may be dropped if the area is safe in order for the dog to complete a maneuver. Certain situations might necessitate the dog being off leash but only if the area is safe and the dog is performing a simple maneuver at ground level. Long lines may be used for sends in busy areas but the handler must be aware of the line at all times to avoid any dangerous situations for people or dogs.

The harness is intended to help with spotting and assist the handler should the dog start to slip or fall. It should not be used to lift the dog or help the dog get on an obstacle. Proper spotting technique requires the handler to be close to the dog with eyes on the dog at all times and hands ready to guide. The handler must avoid becoming distracted while the dog is performing any maneuver.

Consider the shoulder height of the dog before allowing him to jump down onto any hard surface such as concrete, asphalt or natural rock. If the height of the obstacle is greater than the shoulder height of the dog, the handler must assist the dog in getting down from the obstacle. If the dog is jumping down to a soft surface such as dirt, grass or sand the height may be increased to twice the dog’s shoulder height but never greater than 42”. Dogs under 18 months of age should not be allowed to jump down from anything higher than their wrist.

Dogs must perform all obstacles independently and with confidence. All behaviors must be intentionally cued. Dogs should be able to distinguish between cues even when using the same object. Handlers may touch their dog at any time in order to ensure safety, but they may not lift or pick up a dog and put them on an obstacle. The only time picking up a dog is allowed is to safely remove a dog from an obstacle. Handlers should consider how their dog will get OFF an obstacle before asking them to get ON it. It might be easy enough to lift a 20 beagle off a waist high bolder but impossible if the dog is a 100 pound St. Bernard. In order to meet the requirements for the badge dogs must get both on and off obstacles.

Handlers must be aware of the appropriateness of an obstacle before asking the dog to engage with it. Playgrounds may be used only if playground rules allow it and only if children are not using the playground equipment.

Agility equipment may be used sparingly and only after a diligent effort has been made to locate another suitable obstacle. If agility equipment is used the use must be minimal and it must be used in a novel or non-traditional manner.

Every effort should be made to find objects in the environment for a dog to interact with before seeking to introduce an obstacle to the environment. Take advantage of what you find while on a walk in the woods to practice Parkour. A lake shore or beach is a great place to find things for your dog to interact with. Consider the places you already go with your dog and think about things in those places that you might use for Parkour. This sport really teaches us to look at an environment in a different way, maybe even seeing things that we hadn’t seen before. In this way, Parkour can enrich the lives of dogs and humans as it strengthens the bond between the two.

Always use caution when practicing Parkour. Accidents can happen very quickly and unexpectedly. When in doubt, safety comes first!