



## Dog Scouts of America Trails Titling Program

## General Information

The Trails Titling Program was designed to provide additional opportunities for people to get out with their dogs and enjoy various trail activities together. These titles are not intended to be easy to achieve, and they do require a level of physical fitness for both the human and canine members of the team. However, once achieved, these titles are something to be proud of. You will be sent a certificate and the appropriate patch upon approval of submitted titles and you can use the initials of the titles achieved after your dog's name.

There are certain rules that **MUST** be followed while working toward **ALL** DSA Trails titles.

- Dogs and handlers must obey all applicable laws and policies, including leash laws and regulations and whether dogs are permitted in certain areas.
- When off leash in an area where this is allowed, dogs must be kept under control, and only permitted to approach other people or dogs after the handler receives permission from a responsible adult.
- The handler must clean up all of the dog's waste and deposit it in an appropriate trash receptacle. The handler must always carry plenty of waste bags for this purpose.
- Dogs are not permitted to harass wildlife, harm the environment, or perform other behaviors which might cause dogs to be unwelcome in the area in the future.
- Whether members of DSA or not, the handler must be familiar with and strive to uphold the [Dog Scout Laws](#).
- Handlers may not use harsh corrections or training techniques, or use any training equipment that may cause pain or discomfort to the dog (electronic, shock, prong, or choke collars, etc.) Articles on [reward-based training methods](#), [the Dog Scout way](#) and [DSA's position on punishment](#) can be found on the DSA web site.
- A minimum of 1 mile is required for each log entry to encourage an ongoing fitness commitment by the handler for the dog.

### Logging and Verifying Miles

Separate logs must be maintained for Pack Dog, Trail Dog and Cycle Dog. The use of the DSA mileage logs is preferred, but not required. Any log used should include the dog's name, date, distance and hike or ride location.

DSA prefers that a GPS mapping program or app such as [WoofTrax/Walk for a Dog](#) be used for mileage verification. This will help you to keep track of miles until you can physically put them on your log.

Miles logged for DSA Backpacking and Hiking badges may be counted towards titles. Miles logged for the Bicycling badge may not be counted toward Cycle Dog titles. Letterboxes and Geocaches found for those badges may be counted toward Letterbox Dog and Geocache Dog titles.

Note: Even if the dog carries a backpack while logging miles toward Trail Dog titles, the same miles **MAY NOT** be used toward Pack Dog requirements. Each hike must count as **EITHER** Pack Dog mileage **OR** Trail Dog mileage, but not both.



### Required Pack Items

The items listed below are important for safety and responsibility on trails and must be carried on every logged hike. For Trail Dog titles the items may be carried by either the handler or the dog. For Cycle Dog titles the items must be carried on the handler or on the bike as the dog cannot wear a backpack while cycling.

#### Items for the Dog:

- Water
- Bowl
- Poop Bags
- Spare Collar
- Spare Leash

#### Survival Items:

- Flashlight
- First Aid Kit
- Waterproof Matches
- Compass
- Handler/Dog ID
- Knife
- Signaling Device (whistle, mirror, cell phone, etc.)
- Map of Area (if needed)

### Trail Manners

When hiking be sure to [Leave No Trace](#). These practices reduce your impact on the environment and are familiar to most Dog Scout parents.

Plan ahead to make sure dogs are welcome in the area you plan to hike or bike. This includes checking on wildlife in the area to make sure the area is safe for both you and your dog. Familiarize yourself with trails in the area by using either an online or a printed map. Check on elevation changes. The [AllTrails](#) web site and app can help you to identify appropriate trails for hiking with your dog.

Move to the side of the trail or to a wide spot when people and/or other dogs are coming towards. Follow safety standards for cycling and always call out to let people in front of you know that you are behind and will pass them.

If hiking, some approaching people may want to greet your dog. As a responsible pet parent, you must ensure that you manage your dog's environment and politely decline if you need to. Assess the situation carefully before allowing your dog to greet any unknown dogs, and don't forget to ask people to "please get your dog back" if either you or your dog is uncomfortable with the situation. Dogs must be trained to not bark, lunge, or attempt to chase other people or dogs, bicycles, or horses with whom you may be sharing trails.

Respect any wildlife in the areas. Do not feed any wildlife you encounter and observe only at a distance. Do not follow or otherwise harass wildlife, including controlling your dog's behavior and not allowing him to bark or lunge at animals you encounter.

Always leave what you find. Observe but do not touch any cultural or historical artifacts or structures. Leave rocks, plants, and other natural items as you find them. Don't take souvenirs, no matter how tempting they may be.

Following these practices ensure that your hike will be safe and fun for you and your dog and ensures that the area will remain available to you for hiking and/or biking for many years to come. Additional information can be found at [TreadLightly.org](#).



## **Safety**

Please use common sense and approach trails activities with safety in mind, just like any other physical activities. Be sure both you and your dog are prepared for the physical challenges that come with these activities. If the activity level is a significant change for you or your dog, discuss with a medical professional before beginning. Keep your hikes/rides short at first and increase the distance only as you and your dog are capable. Stretch out before beginning and warm up your dog for the activity. When a dog is learning to carry a pack, start with an empty pack and add weight in increments on subsequent hikes. DSA recommends that packs weigh less than 20% of your dog's ideal body weight.

Always notify someone that cares about you that you are going on a hike/ride. Tell them your planned route and your expected return time. You may wish to use your cell phone to send coordinates at the trailhead and/or at points along the way. Don't forget to contact that person when you return as this person should attempt to contact you or send help if you do not contact them when you get back.

DSA does allow small dogs to be carried when needed. Handlers who are not able to walk the required distances may use alternate means as long as it is safe for the dog to move along side. A golf cart, 4-wheeler or powered wheelchair are examples of "alternate means". A bicycle does not fall into this category since if you are using a bike you are working on a Cycle Dog title. Since it is the dog that is getting the title, alternative or substitute handlers are allowed.

## **Required Equipment**

Your dog will need a properly fitted and non-restrictive backpack for working on Trails Titles. A properly fitted pack places the weight of the pack over his shoulder blade area (withers), and not in the middle of the back. The shoulders are built to carry weight and the spine is not. This is especially important in long-backed breeds.

Make sure the pack you use has a non-restrictive harness built in. This type of pack does not impede the dog's shoulder movement by any kind of horizontal strap across the front. The pack should have a harness hook-up which goes over the dog's head, comes to a "V" at the hyoid bone and continues down between the dog's front legs. This allows any pulling pressure to go on the middle of the dog's chest and not on the forelegs.

Packs should be made from a lightweight waterproof material, with adjustable nylon web straps and quick-snap buckles for ease in putting on and removing the pack. The [Dog Scout Store](#) carries non-restrictive, adjustable, lightweight Kurgo packs.

To make sure the pack is comfortable for the dog, make sure the weight is distributed evenly between the two saddlebags. This can be easily accomplished by carrying two smaller water bottles rather than one bigger one. By having two containers, water can be shifted from one side to the other to keep the pack perfectly balanced.

When pursuing Cycle Dog titles, the dog must be connected to the bike using a "springer" type device. This device keeps the dog safely away from the tires of the bike and counteracts any sudden sideways pulling the dog might do. There are different types of these devices so make sure that you get the right solution for the bike you'll be riding. The springer device must be connected to a harness that the dog wears while cycling. Any non-restrictive harness works well when cycling.

Small dogs may ride in a basket attached to the front of the bike when working on a Cycle Dog title. The dog should be attached to the basket for the first 10 miles of riding. You should work toward having the dog stay



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in the basket without restraint after that. However, don't remove the restraint until you are confident that your dog will not jump out of the basket. A dog is easily injured if he were to jump out of the basket, but he is safer unrestrained if you were to lose control or fall off the bike for any reason.

Depending on time of year or the surface the dog will be running on, you should have some booties on hand. Booties can protect the dog from hot pavement or cold conditions, or any salt that may be in the area, and can help protect the dog's paws when traveling distances. Whenever possible, have the dog positioned next to the bike so that he can run on grass.

### Training

There are some important behaviors and skills your dog must demonstrate consistently when participating in Trails Titling activities. These include:

- [Walk on a loose leash](#)
- [Leave it](#) – generalized to be useful with wildlife, edible hazards, passers-by, etc.
- [Come when called](#), particularly if off leash
- Move to side of trail and stay while others pass
- [Wear a loaded backpack](#)
- Potty on cue – so that you can designate appropriate areas
- [Sit or down stay](#) while handler picks up waste, locates a letterbox, etc.
- Lift paws and [allow handling of entire body](#) – to search for parasites, minor injuries, etc.

### Submitting Your Title Request

Your dog must have a **Competition Registration Number (CRN)** in order to earn DSA titles, including Trails and other types of titles. This number is different from a DSA membership number. The CRN can be requested when you submit your first title and must be included on subsequent title submissions. Once your dog has completed the requirements for a title, fill out the online title request form that can be found in the Trails Titling section on our web site. You will upload your log with the appropriate information included (screenshots of GPS application, copies of letterbox stamps, etc.) and make your payment. Title submissions and any DSA-sanctioned competition entry forms will include a general liability waiver.

### Updating Your CRN

Use the CRN Update Form found on the web site to alert DSA of changes to name, address, phone, or email and make the payment of \$5 per dog for processing. When you update your CRN, this changes your information on any title records **BUT NOT** for the purposes of general DSA membership. You are responsible for making sure that DSA always has your correct address and other contact information on file for the purposes of title records **AND** DSA membership.