

Dog Scouts of America

Frisbee Freeflight Training Instructions

These instructions are very basic guidelines to help you achieve the objectives on your merit badge check-off sheet. They are not intended to supersede any of the information your instructor gives you at the Orientation & Safety or Field Session.

Frisbee disk throwing is a skill in itself. Your first job is to learn how to throw a frisbee accurately. If you can not hit a target with your frisbee, how can you expect your dog to “connect” with any of your throws?

Make sure your technique is correct, and then practice many throws at a target, at varying distances before you ever involve your dog.

When you are ready to include the dog, get him excited about the frisbee by waving it around. If he leaps up and tries to play tug-of-war, go ahead and let him. Encourage him to WANT the frisbee. Throw a few “rollers” so that the dog gets the idea of running after the moving frisbee and snagging it in motion. Get the dog hyped enough that he will either rear up onto his back legs, or jump up for the frisbee. Let him practice jumping up and taking the stationary frisbee from your hand. Then, gradually add lateral movement, until the dog can track and “catch” the frisbee from your moving hand, a few feet higher than his head.

When you first throw the frisbee, make short, easy tosses until the dog becomes less clumsy at catching the disk. The basic throw and catch, or “mini-distance” is the foundation for the more intricate Freestyle event.

For Freeflight competition, you will need to combine all of your fancy throws with your dog’s fancy catching ability, and put it to music for a 90 second routine which will be scored on agility, catching ability, style and execution. At camp, we have shortened the program requirement to 1-minute.

In freeflight performance, you will be working with multiple disks (up to 5). You are judged on the catch, and there is no need for a fetch or a presentation, so it is important to let your dog know when it is okay for him to spit out the disk in his mouth to receive another one. We do this by tossing multiple disks to the dog, and each time before we throw the next one, we “tap” our leg with the frisbee as a signal to the dog to let go of the one he has in his mouth. Once the two of you build a routine, your dog will know which catches tend to involve multiples, and you won’t always have to signal.

All of the advanced throws should be mastered first without the dog, before ever attempting to involve him. Until you become proficient, use a human partner, or

throw at a target to perfect your skill.

The ingredients for a good freeflight performance are:

1. A dog that is willing to go airborne and turn him self “inside out” to catch any disk.
2. A thrower who has good control of the disk and can do a variety of throws.
3. A performance that choreographs smooth style with innovative moves and great leaping and catching ability on the part of the dog.

Freeflight competitions are judged with the “P.A.W.S.” method: Presentation (smooth style and choreography—a pleasing performance); Aerobatics (agility in catching); Wow factor (innovative throws and impressive catches); Success (execution of each throw—the dog connects and catches what you put up).