

IMPROV

Official Rulebook



FOR DSA SANCTIONED IMPROV EVENTS

Date: 9/1/10

Note: Sanctioned IMPROV competition will begin in January, 2011. DSA will begin accepting applications for Competition Registration Numbers and trial sanctioning requests on September 1, 2010.

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DSA-Sanctioned IMPROV Obedience Rulebook

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Note: Sanctioned IMPROV competition will begin in January, 2011. DSA will begin accepting applications for Competition Registration Numbers and trial sanctioning September 1, 2010.

In the meantime, we hope that groups will begin holding Novice and Standard IMPROV fun matches starting immediately. We welcome any and all ideas and feedback, with the goal of making the beginning of IMPROV as a sanctioned competition sport as smooth and enjoyable as possible for our participants. Thank You!

Dog Scouts of America
www.dogscouts.org

What is IMPROV Obedience?

IMPROV* stands for **Impromptu Multifarious Performance Requiring Obedience and Versatility**. It was created in the 1970s by Lonnie Olson. IMPROV fun competitions have been being held informally at DSA camps and some White Shepherd specialties since it was first introduced in Dog Scout Camp in Michigan in 1996.

In short, it is a different kind of obedience competition, which puts the emphasis on your dog's ability to perform cues as asked, at any given moment. The dog and handler can not rely on pattern training or context to perform some “memorized” routine. They have to be ready to do new things under strange contexts (like real life situations). IMPROV tests how ready your dog is to be useful in real life.

*Impromptu means performed without preparation, and Multifarious means many-faceted, or containing numerous parts. The whole is a Performance which requires the ability of your dog to listen and act on cues (Obedience), which may stretch the boundaries of what he is usually asked to perform in and Require him to respond to all cues in any and all circumstances (Versatility).

IMPROV does not have a standard course or judging format. However, it does have standard categories of exercises. Each time you go into a ring, you will be required by each different judge to do a different set of exercises, based on that judge's creativity when setting the course. This is what makes IMPROV more fun and challenging than standard obedience – you never know what you will be asked to do.

IMPROV is also different in that it requires teamwork, creativity and versatility on the part of the handler and dog. Each team will be given a “problem” to solve, and with a little creativity and lateral thinking, each handler may have a different approach to handling the same problem put before them.

There are no failures in IMPROV. Dogs at all levels of training can compete. There are provisions for helping the dogs perform the exercises (for a point reduction), and “bending” the rules is allowed.

“Cheating” has been legalized during IMPROV Obedience. It is called “Lateral Thinking;” and it is encouraged. Handlers are asked to think creatively to use the skills of their dog, and all of the things they and their dog already know how to do, to figure out how to accomplish a new task. Each handler is allowed to take One Useful Item of his choice into the ring with him, which may be called into play on certain exercises. Use your lateral thinking skills and see how you and your dog could benefit from bringing a particular article into the ring. There are a few “Unbendable Rules” for safety and sportsmanship, but the guidelines of the exercises are fair game for interpretation...

The *Unbendable* Rules (no “lateral thinking” on these)

Collars/Harnesses:

Electronic training/collar devices are not allowed on the grounds at an IMPROV show or match. This includes electronic training devices, shock collars, and bark collars that shock a dog. Dogs may not participate with training devices/collars that would aid loose leash walking or heeling, or inflict punishment on the dog (to include choke collars.) The premium must list if a host organization does not allow other collars or leading/tethering devices.

Flat buckle collars are allowed. These include any collar that fastens at a stationary point rather than tightening. Properly fitted limited-slip/martingale collars are allowed (when tightened fully, the collar is only snug and does not press into the dog’s neck muscle.) Properly fitted harnesses are allowed as long as a stationary leash attachment is on the dog’s back. No-pull type harnesses are not permitted while testing. All equipment is subject to review by the judge.

Training aids, such as head halters and no-pull harnesses, are permitted on competition grounds, but not during the team’s testing.

Leashes:

Novice IMPROV testing may be done on or off leash as the handler decides for each exercise, except for the loose-leash walking exercise in Novice Exercise 1, which must be performed on leash. Long lines will be provided by the match or trial hosts for distance exercises, to be used at the handler’s discretion.

Standard IMPROV tasks are all off-leash exercises. The dog may be leashed in between exercises at the handler’s discretion. The handler must have the dog safely under control at all times, and must not allow their dog to interfere with another dog’s performance.

Food/Clickers:

The handler may not bring food or a clicker (or similar, visible training device used as a ‘conditioned secondary reinforcer’) into the ring while their dog, or another dog, is performing exercises.

This is to ensure that the dog is performing the exercises as requested based on a solid working relationship with the handler and foundation skills the dog has already learned. Dog Scouts of America strongly believes that reward-based positive reinforcement training - including Clicker Training - is the best way to teach a dog new skills and manners; however, the IMPROV competition is designed to test the skills a dog and handler team already have. As such, during competition the exercises should be performed without these training tools.

Ending Exercises Early:

If the handler is satisfied with a dog’s performance prior to the entire exercise time elapsing, the handler may call out “Time!” in a clear and loud voice. At this point, judging will end, and the team is scored only on their performance prior to calling “Time!”.

The “One Useful Item:”

In both levels of IMPROV, the handler may choose one item to bring into the ring. This item may not be food or a clicker, or something alive or previously alive, but otherwise can be any single item the handler and/or dog can carry into the ring. It will be specified either in this rulebook, or by the trial judge, if there is an exercise where the One Useful Item may not be used, or may not be used in certain ways, without a points deduction being assessed (but in general, the dog needing the least help from the handler to execute a task may score more points for that facet of their performance.)

This One Useful Item is the only thing teams may bring with them into the ring to enhance their performance, with the exception of a prop for Exercise 6 (as outlined in the description for that exercise.)

Destructiveness, Disruptiveness and Safety:

If the judge observes a dog destroying or damaging equipment, facilities, or supplies used in the match, or engaging in unsafe behavior, the judge will stop that exercise, with zero points scored for that exercise. The judge will specify if and when there are exceptions to this rule. (Example: if crushing a paper cup is part of the game.)

Within reason, dogs may bark or otherwise vocalize while participating in the trial or match. However, if the judge determines that the dog has ceased working and is continually barking or doing some other disruptive behavior, the judge will end the exercise.

The judges will always strive to present exercises that are safe for the average, under-control dog to participate in. However, due to the variability of IMPROV exercises, and the variability of canine behavior, it would be impossible to predict all outcomes. The dog's handler is responsible for the safety of, and control of, their individual dog. If there is an item or action within the trial/match's exercises that would present a safety issue due to the behavior or lack of control of that particular dog, the handler must not allow the dog to perform that task, or must stop the dog from continuing any unsafe behavior. (Example: if an exercise involves the dog touching a coin placed on the ground, and the handler knows that their dog is likely to instead pick up and swallow the coin, it is the handler's responsibility to refrain from having the dog perform that particular action.) Handlers may ask to remove one or more items from the ring and continue the exercise without those items, taking points deductions as appropriate, at the discretion of the judge. There will not be an exception or adjustment made to the dog's score, and the dog will be scored as would any other dog that did not perform that particular part of the task – as with the rest of IMPROV, handlers that are better able to direct their dog's actions will tend to reap higher scores.

In all cases above, the dog may continue to participate in further exercises.

In milder cases and when it is safe to do so, it is the judge's option to provide a warning of “stop that behavior” and allow the handler to attempt to end the dog's prohibited behavior prior to the judge calling “exercise complete” (meaning the handler must cease the exercise immediately).

Lateral Thinking:

There are no restrictions (other than safety, sportsmanship, and the dog's well-being) on the way a team goes about solving a problem or performing an exercise. “Lateral thinking” is encouraged, so it is likely that each team will perform exercises differently to leverage the team's abilities. Restrictions contained in the description of exercises – such as a “handler’s box” that the handler is intended to stay within during an exercise – should be treated as guidelines, and the handler may “bend” these rules in exchange for

point deductions.

Handlers:

Dogs may not be professionally handled, and should be handled by a member of the dog's household or family. The dog may be handled by different people in different matches or trials but must be handled by only one person during all six exercises of a single IMPROV match or trial.

Competition Ring:

The competition “ring” does not need to be a ring at all – the area may be indoors or outdoors, and of any size and shape that will accommodate the exercises. Variation in the competition area contributes to the varied contexts in which the dog-handler team should be able to perform the exercises. Multiple areas may be used in order to have different areas suitable for different exercises, but all exercise areas should be on the same site and readily accessible. Areas with excessive distractions are discouraged, and the entire competition area must be safe for on and off-leash participants (who are under control of their handlers). Ring gates and/or fenced areas are encouraged as a safety measure.

Clean Up:

Dog owners are responsible for cleaning up anything that comes out of their dog. Trial hosts are responsible for providing means to clean and disinfect surfaces from odors. Failure to responsibly clean up after your dog will result in excusal from the trial or match without any refunding of entry fees.

Limitations:

Dogs under 16 weeks of age, and bitches in season shall not be eligible to compete in IMPROV trials.

The owner/handler has full responsibility to have complete control over the dog while attending an IMPROV trial or fun match. Handlers may not allow their dogs to freely roam, and should not allow their dog to approach/greet another dog without the permission of that dog's handler—this is both as a courtesy and in order to encourage only positive interactions between dogs.

Any judge or host club/organization has the authority to dismiss a dog/handler from the “ring” area or the show grounds. A judge may disqualify any dog for fighting or attempting to bite another dog or person. The judge may disqualify a competitor for any unsportsmanlike action.

No exhibitor, spectator, or their children and/or dog may be in a testing ring area, which is currently not in use, for any reason, without the host club or judge's permission. Any such instance will result in an excusal from the balance of the trial without refund of any fees; spectators will be excused from the trial site. Dogs not entered in the trial or match may not use any equipment without the host club/organization's permission and the owner signing a liability release form.

Registration and Entry

Registering with DSA, Entry Eligibility

All dogs entering in an IMPROV trial must be registered with DSA prior to the host club's closing date for that trial. If the trial has Day of Show (DOS) entries, a printed email or online registration confirmation from DSA with the assigned DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN), must be presented at the trial. See the Forms section in the rulebook for a DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) Request Form, or the IMPROV page on the DSA website.

Initial DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) Request Forms must be mailed with the proper fee payment, or if available, purchased and submitted online. Allow at least 2-3 weeks for the form to reach DSA and to be processed.

DSA CRN numbers are emailed to legible email addresses for all forms, when received and processed. If there are any questions regarding filling out DSA CRN forms, contact DSA (See the Contact Us page on the DSA website for IMPROV and DSA Competition contact info.)

Any healthy dog, 16 weeks or older on the day of the trial, may enter an IMPROV trial—and thus is eligible for a DSA CRN. Mixed-breeds and purebred dogs are equally eligible for entry. Wolves or wolf-hybrids are not allowed to enter IMPROV trials.

Updating Your DSA Registration Information:

Send address, phone, email, or other changes to DSA by mail or email. Send name changes by mail to DSA, and include \$5 per dog to receive a new id card with the name change.

*** See the Contact Us page on the DSA website to find contact information for staff handling IMPROV inquiries. ***

Trial Entries & Check-in Procedures

A general liability waiver will be a standard part of the entry forms for DSA-sanctioned IMPROV trials. It is highly encouraged that organizations and groups holding “Fun Matches” also require participants to sign a general liability waiver in order to protect those organizing and hosting the match, and to encourage participants to be responsible for their own, and their dog's, behavior throughout the match.

The entry form must be completed, signed and mailed to the Event Secretary for the event. The Secretary will create a running order once all entries have been received. If an entry has been accepted by the host group and a payment rejected by the bank, the competitor shall be required to pay a \$25 rejected payment processing fee. Entry is considered complete only after proper entry forms are submitted and payment is made; if the trial fills before that happens, the person loses their spot in the trial.

There are two levels of IMPROV obedience. It is the handler's decision at which level to start their dog. Once a dog has earned a qualifying score at the Standard level, it can not drop down to the Novice level. Once the Novice level has been started, the dog and handler team must complete the Novice IMPROV title (IMPROV-N) before advancing to Standard IMPROV.

Description of IMPROV Exercises

There are two levels of IMPROV obedience, Novice and Standard. Each has the same 6 general exercise categories. The requirements are similar for both levels; however in the Standard level the exercises are designed to further challenge the dog and handler team's foundation skills of off leash control, ability to work well at a distance, retrieving skills, and overall problem solving. Novice IMPROV was created for beginner teams, or teams with new, less experienced dogs, to enjoy while continuing to train these foundation skills. There are many ways to achieve these training goals. There are wonderful articles available on the Dog Scouts of America website that help to teach these skills, as well as many others. Please feel free to check out, http://www.dogscouts.org/Article_links_page.html for links to articles.

NOVICE IMPROV OBEDIENCE

There are 6 exercise categories each with a designated time limitation and maximum points allowable per exercise. The exercise categories will not change but the specifications within the exercises may vary from trial to trial.

Total possible points at the Novice IMPROV level are 160. A score of 100 points or higher is necessary to qualify. Please see score sheets in the Forms section of this Rulebook for details on suggested scoring for each exercise—however, the judge may modify the way in which the total points for each exercise are allocated. Judges may also alter time standards to fit exercise design. Changes to the time standards below, or the scoring outlined on the score sheets in this Rulebook, will be covered in the judge's briefing.

Exercise 1: Object Touch (30 seconds / max 30 points)

The dog will make contact with 3 unusual objects or surfaces, willingly, on cue, on a loose 6' or shorter leash without the handler touching the dog. Unusual surfaces should have one or more of the following novel qualities: unusual texture, moves (safely) when the dog steps on it, has open spaces below it, requires the dog to step over or around (not jump) raised sections or objects, makes noise. Objects/surfaces should be placed 15-30 feet apart (variation in distances should be considered when determining maximum time allowed.) For maximum points, the handler should not touch the dog or objects and the dog should perform this exercise in heel position. The judge should call out "Touch!" once the initial contact is made with each object/surface. (Surfaces should not be standard agility equipment.) Judge will designate when time starts and stops.

Foundation Skills: attention of dog to handler, walking on a loose lead, socialization to novel experiences.

Exercise 2: Send Dog (30 seconds / max 30 points)

Handler sends the dog away from handler in any direction while handler stays in a designated area no larger than 3' x 3'. Points are awarded for distance from the marked area, dog moving in the direction indicated by the handler, and the dog remaining away from the handler until released. Use of a placed or thrown target object is allowed, but will score less points than distance control of the dog without a target. Judge will designate when time starts. Time stops at the maximum time, or when handler calls "Time."

Foundation Skills: working at a distance, directional control.

Exercise 3: Distance - “The Great Divide” (1 minute / max 20 points)

Two parallel lines at least 3' apart should be marked on the ground. The dog and handler start on opposite sides of this marked gap. The dog does cued behaviors without crossing either line (repeating the same behavior is allowed, but more points are awarded for more different behaviors used). As the dog executes the handler's cues, the Judge will call out behaviors and/or points so that the scribe and handler can keep track of points scored. Judge will designate when time starts. Time stops at the maximum time, or if person or dog crosses either line (including if person or dog crosses the infinite parallel lines indicated by the marked portion, i.e. you may not “go around” the line marking to avoid crossing it.)

Foundation Skills: working at a distance, cued behaviors.

Exercise 4: Retrieve (2 minutes / max 20 points)

Retrieve of 3 objects, chosen by the judge. Objects can be thrown or placed 10-15 feet away (if placed, this will be done by the judge or person designated by the judge.) The handler must decide which method to use before starting the exercise, and must use the same method for all of the objects. The handler can choose the order of the objects. The objects should not be dog toys, food, bones, or any “dog” item – items should be normal household items that can be easily picked up, carried and held in the dog's mouth (like a crumpled ball of paper, pen, ballcap). Judge will designate when time starts. Time ends at the maximum time, or when handler calls “Time.”

Foundation Skills: working at a distance, retrieve.

Exercise 5: Tab A in Slot B (judge sets course time, generally 2 minutes / max 30 points)

This is an interactive exercise that demonstrates the team's ability to perform completely new behaviors based on previous training. The judge will determine the exercise, which will loosely consist of a “Tab A” going to/into a “Slot B.” Tab A and Slot B can be an object, place, your dog, you, or any other creative interpretation that the judge can come up with! Games may test ability of dog to work away from the handler, interact with objects, figure out a problem quickly, perform an unusual request, etc. So, the handler might need to get the dog (Tab A) on/into/under/through something (Slot B) without the handler crossing a start line. Or the dog may need to move from one place (Tab A) to another determined place (Slot B) in a certain way, or accomplishing some other task along the way. Or the dog may need to do something with an object (Tab A) and a place or other object (Slot B). The only limit is the judge's imagination! Judge designates when time starts and stops.

Foundation Skills: may be one or more of any of the Foundation Skills for other exercises.

Exercise 6: Useful Behavior (max 20 points)

Dog should demonstrate a useful behavior, and handler should be able to explain how they actually can use this behavior. For Novice, the behavior does not necessarily need to be unique, but more points are awarded for unique behaviors or new, original uses of traditional ones. The team may bring in a prop (in addition to their One Useful Item) for this exercise—this prop must be easily carried into the ring by the handler without assistance and set up within 10 seconds.

Foundation Skills: cued behavior.

STANDARD IMPROV OBEDIENCE

There are 6 exercise categories each with a designated time limitation and maximum points allowable per exercise. The exercise categories will not change but the specifications within the exercises may vary from trial to trial.

Total possible points at the Standard IMPROV level are 210. A score off 125 points or higher is necessary to qualify. Please see score sheets in the Forms section of this Rulebook for details on scoring for each exercise—however, the judge may modify the way in which the total points for each exercise are allocated. Judges may alter time standards to fit exercise design. Changes to the time standards below, or the scoring outlined in the score sheets in this Rulebook, will be covered in the judge's briefing.

Exercise 1: Object Touch (2 minutes / max 50 points)

Three novel objects are placed in the ring. The handler has the dog heel from object to object, having the dog make contact with each object. Objects should be placed approximately 30 feet apart (variation in distances should be considered when determining maximum time allowed.) For maximum points, the handler should not touch the dog or objects. The judge should call out "Touch!" once the initial contact is made with each object. Judge will designate when time starts and stops.

Foundation Skills: heeling, targeting, socialization to novel experiences.

Exercise 2: Send Dog (60 seconds / max 30 points)

The handler will stand in a designated area and direct his dog to a spot, marked in some fashion ("x," a circle, a box, etc) at least 20 feet away. The handler may recall the dog and re-try. The handler may move forward to a second closer line and direct the dog from there, for a point reduction. The handler may not touch the dog. Judge will designate when time starts. Time stops at the maximum time, or when handler calls "Time."

Foundation Skills: working at a distance, directional control.

Exercise 3: Distance—"The Not-so-straight Recall" (2 minutes / max 10 points)

The handler leaves his dog on a stay and walks to a designated handler's area, 30-60 feet away. The handler then instructs his dog to do as many different cued behaviors as he can elicit from the dog before the dog gets past the "front" line, which is between the dog's original position and the handler's area (position of handler's area, and front line, to be determined by the judge). A maximum of 10 different behaviors will be counted (no points are scored for repeated behaviors). Hand signals and verbal cues are allowed, as are repeated cues. As the dog executes the handler's cues, the Judge will call out behaviors and/or points so that the scribe and handler can keep track of points scored. Time starts when the handler gets to their designated area. Time stops at the maximum time, or if person or dog crosses the "front" line (including if person or dog crosses the infinite parallel line indicated by the marked portion, i.e. you may not "go around" the line marking to avoid crossing it.)

Foundation Skills: working at a distance, cued behaviors.

Exercise 4: Retrieve (3 minutes / max 60 points)

“Fetch an Unusual Object.” This demonstrates the dog's willingness to perform as asked, even though the object he is requested to fetch might be something he has never had in his mouth before, is difficult to pick up, can't fit in his mouth, or is otherwise unusual in some way. The dog will be required to fetch 3 objects, selected by the judge. Objects may be larger than the dog, or need to be dragged, but different objects proportional to dog's size should be provided for different sized dogs. (If the size does not cause the difficulty level to be significantly different for different sized dogs, then the judge may ask all sized dogs to retrieve the same object. A dog should not be asked to retrieve an object if there is no way the dog could fit any part of it into its mouth.) Objects should not pose any danger to the dog. If the object is too large to carry, it should have a strap, handle or other device such that the dog could drag the item. Objects will be placed by the judge about 20 feet from the dog, in order selected by the handler. Judge will designate when time starts. Time ends at the maximum time, or when handler calls “Time.”

Foundation Skills: working at a distance, retrieve, socialization to novel experiences.

Exercise 5: Tab A in Slot B (1 minute / max 30 points)

This is an interactive exercise that demonstrates the team's ability to perform completely new behaviors based on previous training. The judge will determine the exercise, which will loosely consist of a “Tab A” going to/into a “Slot B.” Tab A and Slot B can be an object, place, your dog, you, or any other creative interpretation that the judge can come up with! Games may test ability of dog to work away from the handler, interact with objects, figure out a problem quickly, perform an unusual request, etc. So, the handler might need to get the dog (Tab A) on/into/under/through something (Slot B) without the handler crossing a start line. Or the dog may need to move from one place (Tab A) to another determined place (Slot B) in a certain way, or accomplishing some other task along the way. Or the dog may need to do something with an object (Tab A) and a place or other object (Slot B). The only limit is the judge's imagination! Judge designates when time starts and stops.

Foundation Skills: may be one or more of any of the Foundation Skills for other exercises.

Exercise 6: Useful Behavior (max 20 points)

The handler demonstrates a really unique and useful behavior that the dog can perform. The handler must explain how this particular behavior is useful. Maximum points are awarded for behaviors which are both very unique and extremely useful. The team may bring in a prop (in addition to their One Useful Item) for this exercise—this prop must be easily carried into the ring by the handler without assistance and set up within 10 seconds.

Foundation Skills: cued behavior.

Competition and Titling

Points and titles are awarded only in DSA-sanctioned trials. Novice and Standard IMPROV “Fun Matches” may be held either as “just for fun” without any scoring, or using the same scoring rules with optional placements and prizes awarded – but these would not be points-bearing trials.

Titles earned shall be placed after the dog's name.

Judges may modify how the total points for each exercise are allocated, but the 6 exercise categories and their total point values will remain consistent in all trials and matches (if a fun match is scored). Score totals considered as “qualifying” will remain as listed in this Rulebook and may not be modified by the judge. The judge may use a modified score sheet, but each score sheet must be marked with the disclaimer that: “This is not a standard score sheet. There is nothing “standard” about IMPROV obedience, except that you receive more points for distance control, quick and willing responses, and ingenuity. The exercises on a future course might be completely different from the ones presented here.”

**** Note: As IMPROV grows as a competitive sport, DSA will expand the titling system, to include more advanced titles.***

Novice Titles

Novice IMPROV (*IMPROV-N*)

Earned by a dog that has 3 qualifying scores of 100 or higher in DSA-sanctioned IMPROV trials.

Novice IMPROV Champion (*IMPROV-NCH*)

After achieving IMPROV-N, obtaining 10 additional qualifying scores of 100 or higher in DSA-sanctioned IMPROV trials.

Standard Titles

Standard IMPROV (*IMPROV*)

Earned by a dog that has 3 qualifying scores of 125 points or higher in DSA-sanctioned IMPROV trials.

Standard IMPROV Champion (*IMPROV-CH*)

After achieving IMPROV, obtaining 10 additional qualifying scores of 125 or higher in DSA-sanctioned IMPROV trials.

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The IMPROV Trial

“Fun Matches” can be offered by any group after contacting the Dog Scouts of America IMPROV contact for approval (see Contact Us page on the DSA website for current contact info). Teams can be scored and placements given but scores will not be recorded for titling, nor would points be accumulated.

Any group can apply to Dog Scouts of America to hold a sanctioned trial. Once approved, the organizing group will need to follow the below guidelines for their trial. Fees will be paid to Dog Scouts of America from the host club organization.

Premium List

The host club must make a premium list available to prospective entrants at least 8-12 weeks prior to the event date. The Premium List will list a limitation for the number of handler dog teams per trial per day. Part of the Premium will be the trial entry form, which must include a liability waiver all entrants will be required to sign.

Exhibitors need to contact the host club for any questions regarding the trial, do not contact DSA. The premium must have the chairperson and the trial secretary email addresses and phone numbers, and the trial secretary's mailing address.

Emergency Veterinary Clinic and Emergency Medical Assistance should be listed in the premium and be readily available onsite at the trial. ** A sample premium that can be edited to fit your trial can be found on the DSA website in the IMPROV area.*

Confirmation

Entry confirmation must be sent to the participating exhibitors. Final confirmations must be emailed or postmarked at least 7 days prior to the first day of the trial. The confirmation must include check-in time, order of classes and level groupings, and the dog's entry information. Additional information may be included. **Exhibitors must verify their entry information and report any discrepancies to the trial secretary prior to the trial. The show secretary is not obligated to make changes at the trial if it is exhibitor's error.**

Awards and Ribbons

The host club is required to award each qualifying score with a qualifying ribbon or rosette. The Qualifying ribbon or rosette shall be red. Each ribbon or rosette shall have a card attached to record score information. Each Qualifying ribbon or rosette shall be printed with the following (order may differ, Logo must be first):

DSA Logo, Name of the host club, IMPROV trial (or match, if ribbons are awarded at a fun match), “Qualifying Score”, City and State of Host club or organization

The host club is required to award 1st through 3rd place in each level. The host club may award more places if desired, in other colors. The awards may be sashes, ribbons or rosettes. Each sash, ribbon or rosette shall have a card attached to record class information.

First Place = Blue

Second Place = Red

Third Place = Yellow

Other awards may be given, which may or may not be included in the Premium List. These include but are not limited to, ribbons or rosettes indicating finishing a title, placement awards (leashes, toys, dog treats, etc), special awards – non-trophy (youngest handler, etc). If an award is given that could be considered a Trophy (e.g.: statue, pewter, crystal, etc), that award should be listed in the Premium List. Cash awards are not permitted, although gift certificates are allowed. Awards or prizes should not be given that are inconsistent with the positive training approaches of DSA.

Show committee and officials:

The following officials shall preside at each IMPROV trial:

Judge: The Judge shall be chosen from the approved DSA-sanctioned IMPROV Judges list.

The Judge's duties are as follows:

- ◆ Designing exercises appropriate to Novice and Standard levels using creativity and imagination prior to the trial.
- ◆ Select and inspect equipment to be used for exercises following requirements for safety.
- ◆ Instruct timer about timing and maximum course times.
- ◆ Briefing exhibitors prior to each class.
- ◆ All decisions of the judge are final.
- ◆ If a judge's dog is competing during a trial where the judge has been in the role as a judge, then even if it is judged by other persons, the dog is not eligible for placements if earned.

Show Chairperson & Show Secretary: The Chairperson is the official contact person for complaints or infractions. The Chairperson is also the back up for the Show Secretary in an emergency situation. The show secretary is responsible for answering prospective entrants questions, emailing/ mailing premium lists to prospective entrants, email/ mailing confirmation notices, posting running orders, ensuring the table help understands the scoring procedures, and submission of trial results forms and score sheets to DSA and the host club.

Course Builders: The course builders are responsible for the set up of the exercises as designated by the Judge. Changes are not to be made to the physical course design without authorization from the Judge.

Table Stewards: The table stewards are responsible for recording class information for the results catalog. Information to be recorded in the results catalog include: Judge's name, marking absent dogs, dogs' score information. Score sheets are turned into the table steward, who will total the score and determine the qualifying scores. The table stewards shall determine class placements for both levels.

Timekeeper: A timekeeper is required for both levels to time each exercise except for exercise 6. If there is a problem with the stopwatch, the timekeeper shall notify the Judge. The timekeeper shall sound a whistle, bell, or buzzer (or other easily discernible signal) when handler and dog teams exceed exercise maximum time allowed. As appropriate, timekeeper will track half and other time increments as needed for scoring. If time increments will be called out, this must be done consistently for all teams.

Gate Steward: A gate steward is responsible to keep the “ring” running quickly and smoothly. The Gate Steward has no responsibility to find dogs. It is preferred to have 3 dogs ready to enter the “ring” area at all times. The Gate Steward has authority to change the order of teams to be judged as long as they inform the judge of such a change.

IMPROV Trial Site

The IMPROV trial ring area should be selected to provide sufficient room for exercises to be conducted, and for the safety of participants—size will vary based on course design. At a minimum, the site will need at least 35 feet of uninterrupted linear space to conduct the exercises properly. The ring area should be free of excessive distractions. It is preferred to have the ring area enclosed by a fence, gating or ring flags to separate the trial area from spectators. Areas must be provided for crating and exercising dogs. When possible, a spectator area should be available, preferably away from the crating area.

Judge's Guidelines

Judges are the backbone of any sport and their actions and opinions influence conduct beyond the performance ring. A set of standards for judges has been developed to improve the standards of adjudication. Persons meeting these qualifications may be added to the "Approved Judges List."

Standard for Judges

Qualified individuals shall have met the following requirements before being placed on the Approved Judges List:

- ◆ have sufficient experience to competently perform the judge's responsibilities, as may be evidenced by active participation in the sport, being an active member of a training group that routinely encourages training methods involving operant conditioning and positive reinforcement
- ◆ have satisfactory attendance, participation and completion of an approved DSA judging clinic, demonstrating sufficient creativity and understanding of IMPROV Obedience *and/or* judge candidates may submit videotape of their setup and administration of IMPROV "Fun Matches" in which they sufficiently demonstrate all judges' responsibilities (see information on DSA worldwide certification program on the DSA website.) If pursuing certification via videotape, candidates must include judge's briefing in video, and submit score sheets.
- ◆ be of good character and in good standing with DSA

In order to maintain a position on the Approved Judges List, each Judge must:

- ◆ be a current member of DSA
- ◆ when requested, periodically pass a short form examination dealing with rule changes
- ◆ have satisfactory attendance, participation and completion of an approved DSA clinic once every three years *and/or* submit a sample of their judging via videotape
- ◆ maintain an active role in the sport
- ◆ be of good character, setting forth a professional image for the sport
- ◆ at all times when representing DSA or IMPROV, or on site at an IMPROV event, will utilize and promote only positive training methods that are in accordance with DSA's position on punishment, which can be found on the DSA website

Persons on the Approved Judges List:

- ◆ during a trial or match, are expected to uphold an image of integrity and as a competent professional, both on and off the course. An integral part of this image is appropriate attire consisting of slacks with a coordinating shirt. A judge shall not wear any apparel bearing business, sponsor or other organization insignia (other than DSA.)
- ◆ shall recognize their role as a judge is a privilege not a right
- ◆ shall diligently fulfill all responsibilities with regard to judging assignments
- ◆ shall seek to assist fellow judges when needed in fulfillment of judging responsibilities when viewed in the best interest of the sport

Disciplinary Actions

A person on the Approved Judges List who shall violate the standards in fact or in spirit shall be subject to disciplinary action in the form of reprimand, probation, suspension or removal from the Approved Judges List. All disciplinary action proceedings shall be conducted by the DSA Board of Directors in "closed session" and shall remain confidential, except that the decision to suspend or remove a person from the Approved Judges List shall be published.

Exercise Planning Guidelines

The most important aspect of planning the various exercises for a trial or match is to remember the safety of the dog when performing the various exercises. This applies to dogs of various sizes.

When planning exercises, it is important to remember that in IMPROV, we want each dog-handler team to be challenged. We want the teams to be confronting brand new scenarios, contexts, objects, etc. each time. We don't want trials where there are several teams scoring maximum points—exercises should always be planned so that the absolute best team you can think of would still find the exercise challenging and need to use lateral thinking to attempt to accomplish the task. This is the fun of IMPROV! While Novice exercises should be geared toward teams that have not yet mastered the foundation skills for Standard IMPROV, the “sky is the limit” with your Standard IMPROV exercises.

Sample Exercises:

Novice Ex 1: dog walks over baby gate and aluminum foil lying on ground, touches beach ball

Novice Ex 2: send dog past a line marked by chalk on a paved surface while handler stays in place

Novice Ex 3: dog sits, downs, stands, waves, spins, backs up, speaks, rolls over, sits, and downs

Novice Ex 4: dog picks up plastic coffee cup, paper towel roll, purse

Novice Ex 5: dog crawls under a table while the owner is within a handling box

Novice Ex 6: retrieving a dropped item

Standard Ex 1: dog touches a shovel, a set of wind chimes, and a penny placed within the ring

Standard Ex 2: send dog to a square outlined on the ground

Standard Ex 3: dog sits, downs, stands, spins, and backs up before crossing line (would score 5 points)

Standard Ex 4: dog retrieves a broom, a length of hose, and a horse feeding bucket that has rope handles

Standard Ex 5: dog carries a wooden block to a plate

Standard Ex 6: dog carries a donation plate and is directed to another person to “collect” donations

Notes on equipment:

As in the planning of exercises, selection of equipment and items used should always keep dog safety at the forefront of planning. In general, Judges should ensure that multiple “copies” of equipment to be used, so that in the event one item is damaged, the trial can go on fairly by using a copy of the item used for previous teams. Also, different sized items should be available for different sized dogs, as appropriate—with the intent that all dogs can physically perform the requested task. Please note that our sample entry forms ask for each dog's weight to give an idea of sizes of dogs entered in a given trial.

Equipment and items selected for Standard exercises should proportionally increase the challenge of the exercises. For instance, in Novice exercise 1, two of the three items to be touched might generally be surfaces that the handler can ask the dog to walk over, versus a vertical object requiring a body touch. Whereas in Standard exercise 1, the items selected could be more challenging to make contact with due to their making noise, having moving parts or odd texture, or being placed in a less obvious way.

The course plan should not be released to trial staff until the day the trial begins, if any trial staff will compete. Ideally, the judge will keep items and equipment to be used secret until the day the trial starts as well, and bring the items to the trial with them, rather than having the host source the items—if the judge would like trial host to provide budget for purchase of items, the Judge should make this request and agree on a budget prior to accepting the position as judge for the trial. (And whomever pays for the equipment shall keep it, unless otherwise agreed upon.) The Judge will ensure that a long line is part of the course setup for Novice exercises where dogs may be working at a distance from the handler.

Scoring Guidelines

Because “lateral thinking” is encouraged, scoring can be a challenge to the Judge. The general scoring sheet can be used to help designate scores for the different exercises. These are meant to be guidelines. Any changes to the explanation of exercises contained earlier in this rulebook (to include time standards), should be communicated clearly during the judge’s briefing, and/or prior to the start of the exercise. Judges should not alter the maximum points available for each of the six exercises, but may alter how these points are allotted for the exercise—any changes to the scoring outlined in the score sheets in the forms section of this Rulebook should also be communicated to teams in advance of starting the exercise.

As a general rule, scores of 0-10 should be assigned as follows:

- 0 This score is reserved for teams who do not attempt the exercise, the dog/handler are stopped by the judge for engaging in unsafe behavior or damaging equipment, or for attempts in which the handler engages in unsportsmanlike conduct and/or is abusive toward the dog, including but not limited to harsh physical corrections of the dog.
- 1-4 Scores of 1-4 should be assigned to teams which do not necessarily have mastery of the Foundation Skills for the exercise, but use their skills, communication, creativity, and problem solving to negotiate the exercise.
- 5-9 Scores of 5-9 should be assigned to teams whose negotiation of the exercise demonstrates an understanding and/or previous training of the Foundation Skills for the exercise, and use their skills, communication, creativity, and problem solving to negotiate the exercise.
- 10 A score of 10 should be reserved for teams whose performance not only meets all of the criteria for the exercise, but also demonstrates an excellent working relationship and *is as good a performance as the judge could imagine any team giving*. (Typically, there would not be many 10’s scored in any given trial, if the exercises are challenging enough.)

Generally, Teams should score more points for:

- ◆ Clearly demonstrated fluency in the exercise Foundation Skills
- ◆ Dog needs little assistance or repeated cues from handler
- ◆ Team accomplishes the task quickly
- ◆ Handler demonstrates precise distance control of the dog
- ◆ Dog quickly and enthusiastically follows all cues given by the handler
- ◆ Dog willingly and enthusiastically confronts new and unusual requests made by the handler
- ◆ Handler demonstrates excellent insight into the dog’s abilities and how best to “coach” the dog; handler’s plan on how to approach the exercise is well matched to dog’s abilities
- ◆ Team is able to accomplish the tasks by leveraging many cues and behaviors taught previously to the dog, and with very little “bending” of the exercise’s guidelines

Generally, Teams would receive point deductions for:

- ◆ Any “bending” of the exercise’s guidelines, either from the Rulebook or the Judge’s description of the exercise
- ◆ Needing to make many attempts to accomplish the task
- ◆ Needing to use “lateral thinking” in order to make up for a lack of fluency in the Foundation Skills for that exercise
- ◆ Excessive frustration of the handler or dog, indicating lesser communication skills of the team
- ◆ Handler physically moving the dog or its body parts, or directing the dog by pulling its leash (in Nov-ice) rather than by giving cues to the dog which the dog voluntarily follows
- ◆ Dog ceases to work at one or several points during the exercise
- ◆ Lesser quality of performance, as determined by the Judge in conjunction with this Rulebook

If there is a “tie” for placements:

The judge may select any of the six exercises, and have teams either re-try the same exercise that was set up for the trial, or set up a different version of the exercise for tied teams to attempt. The judge may choose to set up a more difficult version of one of the exercises for this purpose. The team earning the most points for the exercise with the most impressive overall performance is the winner of that placement.

Setup of Exercise Runs and Grouping of EntrantsCompetitors in A and B classes will be judged separately, as follows:

A: competitors that have not yet earned a title in the IMPROV level they are competing in

B: competitors that have earned a title in the IMPROV level they are competing in

Generally, A and B class competitors will run the exact same course, intermixed as part of the same running order. However, at the judge’s discretion, the runs of A and B competitors may be completed in separate groups, and/or the judge may make minor modifications to the course setup as appropriate to the A and B level.

Regardless of how the A and B teams run their courses, placements and ribboning will be done separately for each class. (That is, A class competitors are only competing against other A class competitors for placements.)

Depending on volume of entries and exercise design, the judge may choose to organize entrant performances in several ways.

Trial Chairperson and Judge should work together to select a method to organize team performances:***Team Performs All Exercises Consecutively***

This method of organization is quite simple, and reduces waiting time for the team. The only drawback for this method is that the trial site must have enough space available for all exercises to be set up at the same time.

Teams Take Turns On Each Exercise

With this method of organization, all teams take turns completing one exercise. After all teams have performed that exercise, the next exercise is started.

Exercises Are Grouped

At times, it may be convenient for entrants and judges if exercises are grouped—that is, one team performs several of the exercises, followed by another team performing that same set of exercises, etc. until all teams have completed this set of exercises. The trial then moves on to another exercise or set of exercises. This method of organization can be convenient if some exercises will be held in different areas of the site (for instance indoors versus outdoors).

Entrants are grouped into Heats.

If there are a large number of entrants, and teams will take turns, it may be advisable to group teams into Heats to reduce waiting for teams in between exercises. Even when grouped into Heats for competition, each team is still competing against all other teams in that trial.

Entrants are grouped into multiple Trials, with small entry size for each.

Trial secretary may also have chosen to simply plan a larger number of Trials (separate competitions), with limited entry size. This allows for a more manageable number of competitors for judging. The main drawbacks of this method would be increased cost for ribboning and prizes, and that teams will compete against a more limited number of other teams (and may feel that “luck of the draw” placed them unfairly in a trial with more experienced teams.)

Sample Script for Judges Briefing:

Welcome!

IMPROV was developed in the 70's by creator, Lonnie Olson, who wanted a more fun way of showing off a dog's versatility and the communication that exists between a dog and handler team that have a wonderful bond.

In a nutshell, if you can't already do what today's exercises ask, and haven't already practiced it over and over, GOOD! We want you and your dog to have fun working through the challenges together.

Remember that the safety and well-being of your dog, yourself, and others in attendance are the priority. You are 100% responsible for your dog's actions, and your dog should be under control at all times. You are responsible for your dog's safety, and if you are asked to do anything during competition that might endanger your dog or others, you must refrain from this activity. Please see the Unbendable Rules in the IMPROV rulebook for clarification on this and other rules for today's activities. We will uphold the Unbendable Rules at all times during the trial. Remember that as long as you are in compliance with the Unbendable Rules, Lateral Thinking on the exercises is encouraged, so be creative in helping your dog complete an exercise.

Due to the nature of IMPROV, judging is somewhat subjective—but my goal is to award points in line with the Judge's Guidelines published in the IMPROV Rulebook. Today's scores will seek to reward versatility, quick response to a variety of cues, ability to work at a distance from the handler, the overall utility of the dog, creativity, and the communication and working relationship between dog and handler. In accordance with IMPROV Rules, Judge's decisions are final. {Here, you can describe any specific things you will be looking for in one or more exercises, or in awarding of the Overall Performance points.}

While you are here, please practice good responsible dog ownership, including cleaning up after your dog and ensuring your dog's behavior doesn't negatively impact other competitors or spectators. Remember that during competition, we want the emphasis to be on fun for you and your dog, and you are prohibited from using harsh corrections and punishment.

{Describe any modifications to the timing and scoring from the template scoresheet in the Rulebook, and/or refer entrants to a posted scoresheet:}

- ◆ Changes to the base time standards outlined in the IMPROV Rulebook are as follows: _____.
- ◆ Changes to scoring guidelines, differing from those outlined on the score sheets in the IMPROV Rulebook are as follows (the maximum points available for each exercise will always be the same, but within an exercise, points may be allocated in various ways): _____.

{Describe the order in which you'll run the exercises, and when each exercise will be explained:}

- ◆ We will run the exercises today in order, with all dogs completing that exercise before proceeding to the next exercise. [Or describe how runs will be organized, if some other way.] I will give one briefing before we move on to the next exercise, describing that exercise and giving any special guidance. This is when I'll answer questions, but remember not to give away all of your lateral thinking ideas! Please ensure you are present for these briefings.

{Describe anything you wish to review, and when—items, collars and harnesses, etc:}

- ◆ Please show me your One Useful Item that you will be using during today's competition prior to starting our first exercise.

Library of IMPROV Forms



The forms on the following pages may be reproduced from this book, or can be obtained online along with other IMPROV information at www.dogscouts.org. You will also find a sample Trial Premium online in a format which may be used as a template to create a Premium that is personalized to your trial.

Novice Level IMPROV Obedience Score Sheet
(score 1-10 on each line)



Handler: _____ Date: _____

Dog's Name: _____ Breed: _____ ID #: _____

Trial Location: _____ Host: _____ Trial #: _____

Exercise 1: Object Touch

TEAM'S SCORE

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 10 | Dog willingly and confidently makes contact with all objects/surfaces | _____ |
| 5 | Dog touches some objects/surfaces, touches just edge of surfaces | |
| 1 | Dog says "no way!" | |
| 10 | Dog heels perfectly and enthusiastically at all times | _____ |
| 5 | Decent loose leash walking, a few "tight leash" moments | |
| 1 | Dog pulls on leash toward or away from surface | |
| 10 | Wow! They're like greased lighting out there! | _____ |
| 5 | Dog and handler take more than half of available time | |
| 1 | Takes longer than allotted time | |

Exercise 2: Send Dog

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 10 | Dog confidently moves greater than 15 feet | _____ |
| 5 | Dog moves greater than half the distance to the goal on handler's cue | |
| 1 | Handler leaves box to assist dog | |
| 10 | Handler has precise directional control of the dog | _____ |
| 5 | Dog moves in consistent general direction indicated by handler | |
| 1 | Dog moves in several directions | |
| 10 | Dog moves away continuously on cue and stays at furthest point on cue | _____ |
| 5 | Dog alternates moving away and back to handler | |
| 1 | Dog returns immediately to handler | |

Exercise 3: Distance - "The Great Divide"

Dog gets two points for each new behavior, one point for each repeated behavior (max 10 points) _____

List behaviors:

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 10 | Dog obeys cues beautifully, immediately, without creeping forward | _____ |
| 5 | Handler uses multiple cues, dog creeps toward line | |
| 1 | Dog says "I cannot possibly do that from way out here!" | |

Exercise 4: Retrieve

TEAM'S SCORE

10	Fetches all items – a dazzling performance!	_____
5	Dog retrieves some items or partially retrieves all items	
1	Dog says “you want me to put what in my mouth?!”	

10	Dog is on a mission—flies out to find the object on his own with gusto	_____
5	Handler needs to move toward objects with dog	
1	Handler walks with dog to object	

Exercise 5: Tab A in Slot B

Up to 10 points awarded for accomplishing tasks/game completely 1-10 quickly, easily, with minimal help, etc	_____
--	-------

10	Amazing! Truly amazing! I cannot imagine better.	_____
5	It is not pretty, but handler and dog work it out	
1	Dog says “I have no idea what you're talking about”	

10	Team is lightning fast	_____
5	Team uses over half of available time	
1	Team goes over time limit	

Exercise 6: Useful Behavior

Is the activity demonstrated potentially useful? 1-10	_____
---	-------

Overall teamwork, creativity, and versatility on the part of dog and 1-10 Handler	_____
---	-------

Total of above (max 150): _____

Overall Performance (max 10 points added to total score) Judge may award up to 10 points for team's overall performance 1-10 as a team.	_____
---	-------

Total Score: _____

Evaluator Comments, Praise, Suggestions for Training:

This is not a standard score sheet. There is nothing “standard” about IMPROV Obedience except that you receive more points for distance control, quick response, and ingenuity. The exercises on a future course might be completely different from the ones above.

Standard Level IMPROV Obedience Score Sheet
(score 1-10 on each line)



Handler: _____ Date: _____

Dog's Name: _____ Breed: _____ ID #: _____

Trial Location: _____ Host: _____ Trial #: _____

Exercise 1: Object Touch

TEAM'S SCORE

Object 1: 10 Dog makes cued, intentional, precise contact with object _____
 5 Dog requires encouragement or repeated tries
 1 Handler touches dog or object, dog says "no way!"

Object 2: 10 Dog makes cued, intentional, precise contact with object _____
 5 Dog requires encouragement or repeated tries
 1 Handler touches dog or object, dog says "no way!"

Object 3: 10 Dog makes cued, intentional, precise contact with object _____
 5 Dog requires encouragement or repeated tries
 1 Handler touches dog or object, dog says "no way!"

10 This is the most lovely heeling I've ever seen! _____
 5 Heeling is "so-so" or requires many reminders
 1 That's not exactly heeling!

10 Wow—I didn't know speeding bullets could do perfect obedience heeling! _____
 5 Dog and handler take more than half of allotted time
 1 Takes longer than time allowed

Exercise 2: Send Dog

10 Handler confidently and easily directs dog without moving an inch _____
 5 Handler can send dog without crossing second line
 1 Handler takes dog to spot

10 Dog hits the stop with a "bulls-eye" under precise control of handler _____
 5 Dog is slightly off the mark
 1 Handler had to help dog into position

10 Bam! Done! If you blinked, you missed it. _____
 5 Takes more than 30 seconds to complete exercise
 1 Takes more than 60 seconds to complete exercise

Exercise 3: Distance - "The Not-so-straight Recall"

Team gets a point for every new cue the dog obeys between the stay and the front _____
 (max 10 points)

List behaviors:

Exercise 4: Retrieve

TEAM'S SCORE

10	For his next trick, the dog will retrieve a plane out of the sky...	Object 1:	_____
5	Dog attempts to fetch, or partially retrieves it	Object 2:	_____
1	Dog says "you want me to put what in my mouth?!"	Object 3:	_____
10	Handler doesn't need to move from their original position at all	Object 1:	_____
5	Handler approaches object with dog	Object 2:	_____
1	Handler touches object	Object 3:	_____

Exercise 5: Tab A in Slot B

10	Swoosh! Team completes this task like they've done it a million times.	_____
5	Team struggles a bit, but they figure it out pretty well	
1	Dog says "forget it!"	
10	Handler has lovely, precise distance control of the dog (20 feet)	_____
5	Handler has to come closer to the container/target	
1	Handler touches object, dog, or container	
10	I didn't think it was possible to do it that fast!	_____
5	Requires more than 30 seconds	
1	Takes over 60 seconds	

Exercise 6: Useful Behavior

Is the activity demonstrated potentially useful? 1-10 _____

Overall teamwork, creativity, and versatility on the part of dog and handler 1-10 _____

Total of above (max 200): _____

Overall Performance (max 10 points added to total score)

Judge may award up to 10 points for team's overall performance as a team. 1-10 _____

Total Score: _____

Evaluator Comments, Praise, Suggestions for Training:

This is not a standard score sheet. There is nothing "standard" about IMPROV Obedience except that you receive more points for distance control, quick response, and ingenuity. The exercises on a future course might be completely different from the ones above.



DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) Request Form

Complete a separate registration form for each dog you are registering. Each dog needs only one CRN to compete in any and all DSA competitions. **Please print clearly or type** – this information will appear on all DSA Competition & Titling records. Registration confirmation will be emailed to you. If you do not have email, it will be sent via US mail. Please allow 2-4 weeks for processing.

Handler Name (s): _____

Address: _____

e-mail address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Dog Name: _____

Breed: _____

Birthdate: _____ Gender: _____ Altered: _____

Height at Shoulder: _____ Approximate Weight: _____

Fees:

DSA CRN Registration	\$35.00	_____
Less Spay/Neuter Discount (enclose proof)	-\$5.00	_____
If this is the 3rd (or greater) dog being registered in this household	-\$5.00	_____
Less DSA Member Discount	-\$10.00	_____
(Member Number/ Exp Date _____)		
Printed copy of IMPROV Rulebook (optional)	+ \$10.00	_____
* Rulebook is available free online at DSA website		
Total		_____

Payment Information

Make check or money order payable to DSA (in US funds drawn on U.S. Banking institutions.)

Mail to: ***Dog Scouts of America, Attn: Ann
161 Beetem Hollow Road, Newville, PA 17241***

OFFICIAL DSA IMPROV TRIAL ENTRY FORM (sample)

[INSERT TRIAL HOST AND ADDRESS]

Return completed form(s) with **entry and registration fees payable to:** [insert here]

Mail To: [Trial host/secretary and address]

Entries close: [insert closing date]



DOG INFORMATION

Reg. Name: _____ DSA CRN #: _____
 Call Name: _____ Approx. Height (at shoulder): _____
 Date of Birth: _____ Breed: _____ Approx. Weight: _____

** Dog must have DSA Competition Registration Number (CRN) / entries will not be accepted and/or considered valid without an DSA CRN.*

OWNER/HANDLER INFORMATION

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____
 E-mail: _____
 Handler's Name (if other than owner/handler above): _____

Entries accepted on a first-come-first served basis. Confirmations will be sent out after entries have closed.

Entered for:	Novice (\$25/run)	Saturday (Trial 1)	Sunday (Trial 2)
Standard (\$25/run)			

GENERAL AGREEMENT

I (we) agree that _____ (the hosting organization) has the right to refuse this entry for any cause, which the organizing committee alone shall deem to be sufficient. In consideration of the acceptance of this entry, of the holding of the event, and of the opportunity to have the dog participate and/or to be judged, I (we) agree to hold the organizing committee, the hosting club, the Dog Scouts of America, including their members, officers, directors, agents and employees, sponsors of the event, and owners of the premises upon which the event is held and their employees, harmless from any claim for loss or injury that may be alleged to have been caused directly or indirectly to any person or thing by the act of this dog while in or upon the event premises or grounds or near any entrance thereto, and I (we) personally assume all responsibility and liability for any such claim. I (we) further agree to hold the aforementioned parties harmless from any claim for loss of this dog by disappearance, theft, death or otherwise, and from any claim for damage or injury to the dog, whether such loss, disappearance, appearance, theft, damage, or injury be caused or alleged to be caused by the negligence of the parties aforementioned, or by the negligence of any other person, or any other cause or causes. I (we) hereby assume the sole responsibility for and agree to indemnify and save the aforementioned parties harmless from any and all loss and expense (including legal fees) by reason of the liability imposed by law upon any of the aforementioned parties for damage because of bodily injuries, including death resulting at any time there from, sustained by any person or persons, including myself (ourselves), or on account of damage to property arising out of or in consequence of my (our) participation in this event, howsoever such injuries, death, or damage to property may be caused, and whether or not the same may have been caused or may have been alleged to have been caused by negligence of the aforementioned parties or any of their employees or agents or any other persons.

I (we) further acknowledge that I (we) have read, understand, and will abide by the Official IMPROV Rules and Regulations of the Dog Scouts of America and the provisions for entry as set forth in the IMPROV Rulebook of which this entry form is a part. I (we) acknowledge and represent that the information supplied by me (us) herein is correct to the best of my (our) knowledge; if any portion of this information is found to be invalid or insufficient to establish the validity of my (our) entry, such finding shall render my (our) entry invalid in its entirety, for which there shall be no refund of fees paid. Further, I (we) represent that I am (we are) the owner(s) of the dog listed hereon, or that I (we) am (are) a family member of the dog's owner as stated and allowed in the IMPROV rules, and that I (we) shall hold the hosting club and DSA, including their officers, directors, employees and agents and their sponsors, harmless from any liability or claim made by dog's owner. Further, I (we) hereby grant to the Dog Scouts of America, trial host, their representatives, agents, and assigns, all rights and permissions to use or appropriate my and the dog's name, biography, likeness, photograph, voice, performing persona, or other indicia or identity for broadcast, telecast, cablecast, transmission, or distribution in any format or media now known or hereafter to become known. I (we) hereby release Dog Scouts of America, the hosting club, their representatives, agents, and assigns from any claim or cause of action for invasion of the rights of privacy, right of personality, or any similar right.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent or Legal Guardian signature for junior or minor entries: Signature: _____ Date: _____

Novice IMPROV Score Tracking Sheet



<i>IMPROV -N</i>	Date	Trial	Score
1. Q > 100			
2. Q > 100			
3. Q > 100			

<i>IMPROV-NCH</i>	Date	Trial	Score
1. Q > 100			
2. Q > 100			
3. Q > 100			
4. Q > 100			
5. Q > 100			
6. Q > 100			
7. Q > 100			
8. Q > 100			
9. Q > 100			
10. Q > 100			

Standard IMPROV Score Tracking Sheet



<i>IMPROV</i>	Date	Trial	Score
1. Q > 125			
2. Q > 125			
3. Q > 125			

<i>IMPROV-CH</i>	Date	Trial	Score	(this column for future use)
1. Q > 125				
2. Q > 125				
3. Q > 125				
4. Q > 125				
5. Q > 125				
6. Q > 125				
7. Q > 125				
8. Q > 125				
9. Q > 125				
10. Q > 125				

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A List of Useful Definitions for IMPROV

- ◆ **A Class** - In a given trial, dogs that have not yet earned a title at that level will only be competing against one another for placements. These dogs will be considered the A Class of that trial. A and B class dogs may be intermixed in the running order of the trial, and may run the exact same course of exercises.
- ◆ **B Class** - In a given trial, dogs that have already earned a title at that level will only be competing against one another for placements. These dogs will be considered the B Class of that trial. A and B class dogs may be intermixed in the running order of the trial, and may run the exact same course of exercises.
- ◆ **Competition Registration Number (CRN)** - A dog must be registered with Dog Scouts of America for competition by obtaining a CRN. The CRN will be used by DSA to track points and titling. The format of a DSA CRN will be “DSA 000000-00”. The first six digits will be the same for all dogs registered from a given household. The last two digits will be unique to each dog in the household.
- ◆ **Lateral Thinking** - Handlers are encouraged to think creatively to accomplish tasks in nonstandard ways, to “think outside of the box” to use the skills their dog knows to solve the problem before them as best they can. Handlers may use Lateral Thinking to “cheat” by bending the guidelines in an exercise in exchange for a point deduction. Handlers must always comply with the Unbendable Rules even when thinking laterally.
- ◆ **Match or Fun Match** - An IMPROV “match,” also referred to as a “fun match,” is where dogs are competing in IMPROV just for fun. Dogs do not earn points toward titles. Fun Matches do not require certified judges. DSA encourages groups to hold fun matches, and to use IMPROV exercises for fun and training—DSA only asks that “Dog Scouts of America” always be credited, and that the name “IMPROV” always be used to describe the event, whether the event is formal or informal. DSA also requests that groups holding organized fun matches notify DSA of their matches.
- ◆ **Trial** - An IMPROV “trial” refers to a DSA-Sanctioned competition, in which entrants may earn points toward titles. A dog may compete only once in each trial. The hosting organization may hold multiple “trials” at a specific event, and if so then a dog may compete once in each trial. A Trial must have at least 3 teams. The Trial Secretary will determine maximum trial size in advance, preferably with Judge’s input, and entries above this maximum will be returned.
- ◆ **Useful Item or One Useful Item** - Handlers may bring One Useful Item into the ring to enhance their performance, and to use in their Lateral Thinking. This item may not be food or a clicker, or something alive/previously alive, but otherwise can be any item the handler thinks might be useful. It must be the same item throughout a trial. (see Unbendable Rules for details)



DSA IMPROV Trial Sanction Application (page 1)

In order for your trial to be a Sanctioned IMPROV Trial, you must provide the following information to the Dog Scout of America office. Once your trial has been sanctioned, teams entered will be eligible to be awarded qualifying legs or titles.

Application fee of \$50.00 applies for one or more trials held on the same day or consecutive days, provided they are listed on one application. For large events with greater than 50 paid entries, there is an additional fee of \$3 per entry, to be paid no later than when scores are submitted for recording.

Trial Date(s) _____ Trial Level(s) _____

Location _____

Ring Surface _____ Ring Size Available _____

Club/Host Name _____

Contact Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____ Website _____

Is this event being held in conjunction with any other dog sports event? Yes No

If yes, please describe event _____

JUDGES

Trial Date _____

Trial Date _____

Trial 1

Trial 2

Novice _____

Novice _____

Standard _____

Standard _____

Trial Date _____

Trial Date _____

Trial 1

Trial 2

Novice _____

Novice _____

Standard _____

Standard _____

(DSA IMPROV Trial Sanctioning Application, page 2:)

Please note:

If you are holding more than two trials per day, please edit the information to indicate this. If you are holding a two (or more) day event AND offering more than two trials per day, it will mean that you must submit an additional trial application for the second (or more) day. No additional payment is required provided that all paperwork is submitted at the same time. If you have questions please contact the IMPROV coordinator (**contact info for IMPROV staff can be found on the DSA website on the Contact Us page.**)

Trial officials must be provisional or approved at time of trial application submission. If you have not arranged for trial officials but wish to reserve the date, please note "TBD". Once you have finalized your judging panel you must submit a new application (no additional payment required).

PAYMENT INFORMATION***Fees***

Trial Sanctioning Fee \$50.00

For events with greater than 50 entries: Individual Team Administrative Fee \$3.00 per entry.

The \$50 Trial Sanctioning Fee must be paid with this application. Team Administrative Fees are payable when score sheets are submitted for certification and must include all entries.

Please make check payable to DSA in US funds. Checks must be drawn on US banking institutions.

Mail to: ***Dog Scouts of America, Attn: Ann
161 Beetem Hollow Road, Newville, PA 17241***

Please refer to the DSA IMPROV Rule book under Hosting a Trial for complete trial details.

Applications must be received by the DSA IMPROV office a minimum of three months prior to trial date.

DSA IMPROV Trial Recap Sheet

Thank you for hosting an IMPROV Trial. These forms have been created to help you easily report your results to the DSA IMPROV office.



Please Type or Print Clearly.

Instructions:

- This recap must be completed and returned within 10 days of your event. You must attach separate Recap Sheets to the Trial Score Reporting Sheets for each Level of your trial. Do not change, edit, alter these forms.
- Please make additional copies of the Score Reporting Sheet as needed. Your Judge and Scorekeeper must sign all copies or the forms will be returned.
- You must retain all the original score sheets and trial entries for a period of one (1) year from your trial date.
- If, for any reason you cannot comply with this timeline, please contact the IMPROV Coordinator.

For events with greater than 50 entries, please include your check payable to **Dog Scouts of America in U.S. funds drawn on U.S. banking institutions, International Postal Money Orders in U.S. funds** in the amount of \$3.00 per entry with your Recap Sheet.

Trial Date _____ **Trial #** _____

Trial Host _____

Contact Person _____

Judge _____

Trial Secretary _____

Desk Steward _____

Timing Steward _____

Scorekeeper(s) [if more than one, note which trials / sections scored]

Total # of teams entered _____

Total # of entries _____

Mail to: ***Dog Scouts of America, Attn: Ann
161 Beetem Hollow Road, Newville, PA 17241***

DSA IMPROV Judge Evaluation Form

This form is to be completed by the Trial Secretary for this trial, if possible. DSA IMPROV Representatives or Trial Contact persons may substitute for the Secretary. Include an explanation for the substitution.



Complete a separate evaluation for EACH Judge working with you and mail within 10 days of the trial to:

*Dog Scouts of America, Attn: Ann
161 Beetem Hollow Road, Newville, PA 17241*

Name of IMPROV Judge: _____

Trial host organization: _____

City/State: _____

Date of Event: _____

Level (s) judged _____ # Dogs Judged at each level _____

Please answer the following questions by circling Yes/No or rating the answers per the following scale:

5 = excellent

4 = better than average

3 = average – needs work in this area

2 = below average – should study the DSA IMPROV rules and regulations further

1 = poor

_____ Rate the Judge’s understanding of good ring procedures

_____ Rate the Judge’s professionalism in the ring today

_____ Rate the Judge’s understanding of the IMPROV Rules and Regulations

_____ Rate the Judge’s ability to design a fair and functional course

_____ Rate the Judge’s ability to determine how a performance should be scored

_____ Rate the Judge’s ability to apply the description of any specific exercises in the rules and regulations to their scoring of a dog/handler’s performance.

Is the Judge aware of the appropriate scoring procedure for each exercise for all classes judged?

YES / NO

Trial Secretary Name _____

Signature _____ Date Signed _____

Remarks – please provide comments and suggestions on the reverse side of this page or in an attachment. Please summarize and/or include any comments submitted by competitors either verbally or in writing regarding this judge’s performance. You may also wish to convey helpful suggestions directly to the judge, but please ensure they are also included on this form.

DSA IMPROV Judge Compensation and Expense Guidelines

These guidelines are provided to IMPROV judges, representatives, and show committees in order to ensure fair and equal compensation for services rendered and to assist host clubs in budgeting for their event. Compensation made to any trial officials must be in the form of check, cash or money order. Trial officials are prohibited from accepting ‘complimentary’ entry fees as a form of compensation.



1. These fees are guidelines, and trial hosts and judges may come to individual agreements as appropriate. Judge should not be expected to perform their duties for free, but they are not prohibited from doing so.
2. Suggested judging fees: \$5 per entry judged, or a flat fee based on anticipated number of entries.
3. Suggested travel expenses: \$.48 per mile plus tolls.
4. In the event of airline travel, expenses are to be individually negotiated by host club and Judge.
5. Meals are to be provided by host club on day(s) of trial(s) or expenses reimbursed to Judge.
6. Lodging: Hotel reservations are to be made and paid for in advance by the host club.
7. All fees and expenses will be paid at the conclusion of the Judge’s last assignment. Judge shall furnish a written receipt to host club at time of payment.
8. Keeping in mind that Judges must often cancel classes and other income producing appointments in order to assist host club, the following “cancellation policy” is strongly recommended:
9. In the event the host club cancels/postpones the trial(s), the Judge shall be compensated, within 7 days, an amount equal to one half the total Judging fee. If re-scheduling the trial(s), the host club must inform the Judge of the new date within 7 days. The remaining balance and all related expenses shall then be paid at the conclusion of the judge’s last assignment on the rescheduled date. If, due to prior commitment, the Judge is not available for assignment on the rescheduled date, the 50% payment shall be made immediately.
10. The host club must confirm with the Judge, in writing, all terms and conditions of assignment. Confirmation must be sent to Judge within two weeks of verbal acceptance of assignment. A sample judge’s confirmation letter can be found in the IMPROV Rulebook.
11. The Judge and host organization should agree in advance on how supplies and equipment for the courses will be obtained. If any trial officials will participate in the trial, then the courses and supplies to be used on those courses is to remain a secret until the day of the trial. To facilitate this, the host organization may provide a funds in advance for the Judge to obtain necessary equipment, within an agreed-upon budget.
12. Judges may use the following form as a receipt to the host club:

Received from: _____ Date: _____
 Judging Fee(s): \$ _____ Name: _____
 Signature: _____
 Travel: \$ _____
 Meals: \$ _____
 TOTAL: \$ _____
 Note: attach all receipts

DSA IMPROV Sample Judge Confirmation Letter

I, _____, agree to act as an IMPROV Judge for the following event(s) sponsored by _____.



Date _____
 Trial # _____ Level: Novice / Standard / both

This event will be held at: _____

Scoresheets, if modified from the template in the IMPROV Rulebook to be sent to: _____

The trials will be held on a _____ surface.

Ring size: _____

Judge's fees and compensation:

Judging Fee: _____
 Travel: _____ (receipts required)
 Lodging: Hotel reservations made and paid for in advance by host club.
 Meals: _____

Course supplies and equipment budget: _____ to be paid (before / after)
 the trial.

All fees and expenses will be paid prior to the conclusion of the judge's last assignment.
In the event the host club cancels/postpones the trial(s), the Judge shall be compensated, within 7 days, an amount equal to one half the total Judging fee. If re-scheduling the trial(s), the host club must inform the Judge of the new date within 7 days. The remaining balance and all travel, lodging and meal expenses shall then be paid at the conclusion of the judge's last assignment on the re-scheduled date. If, due to prior commitment, the Judge is not available for assignment on the re-scheduled date, the 50% payment shall be made immediately.

Your signature below confirms that you agree to and understand the above agreement and that you have read and understand the latest rules/regulations governing the trial that you have agreed to judge. You must sign this form and return it to the Trial Secretary no later than _____.

Judge Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

Trial Secretary _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____



DOG SCOUTS OF AMERICA

www.dogscouts.org