



Musical Dog Sport Association (MDSA) Performance Guidelines

EFFECTIVE JULY 5, 2011*

Changes since 2010 are in **RED.*

*These performance guidelines describe the manner in which
MDSA performances (titling and non-titling) will be conducted.*

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Snapshot: MDSA Classes (Titling and Non-Titling)

The chart (Fig. B) summarizes the various MDSA performance classes, both titling and non-titling. Be sure to review the full requirements for each class in *Section 10 and Section 11* before entering.

MDSA Rookie Class		Music Time: 1:00 - 2:15 minutes
Rookie Class Non-titling	MDSA members only. Dog must not have earned MDSA title. Leash and/or treats and/or toys permitted. Two (2) time entry limit per dog .	
MDSA Novice Class		Music Time: 1:15 - 2:15 minutes
Novice Freestyle Dog (NFD) Titling	No title pre-requisite to enter. Three (3) qualifying legs.	
Novice For Exhibition Only (FEO) Non-titling	No title pre-requisite to enter. Unlimited entry limit.	
MDSA Standard Class		Music Time: 1:30 - 2:30 minutes
Standard Freestyle Dog (SFD) Titling	NFD title pre-requisite to enter. Three (3) qualifying legs.	
Standard For Exhibition Only (FEO) & Standard With Props FEO Non-titling	NFD title pre-requisite to enter. Unlimited entry limit.	
Standard With Props (SFD-PRP) Titling	SFD title pre-requisite to enter. Three (3) qualifying legs.	
MDSA Premier Class		Music Time: 2:00 – 3:30 minutes
Premier Freestyle Dog (PFD) Titling	SFD title pre-requisite to enter. Three (3) qualifying legs.	
Premier For Exhibition Only (FEO) & Premier With Props FEO Non-titling	SFD title pre-requisite to enter. Unlimited entry limit.	
Premier With Props (PFD-PRP) Titling	PFD title pre-requisite to enter. Three (3) qualifying legs.	
MDSA Veteran Class		Music Time: 1:00 - 2:30 minutes
Veteran Freestyle Dog (VFD) Titling	Dog must be seven (7) years or older on date of event . Three (3) qualifying legs.	
Veteran For Exhibition Only (FEO) Non-titling	Dog must be seven (7) years or older on date of event . Unlimited entry limit.	
MDSA Team Class		Music Time: 1:30 - 3:00 minutes
Team Class (TEAM) Non-titling	No title pre-requisite to enter. Group must have two (2) to eight (8) teams. At least two (2) MDSA members. On or off lead permitted.	
MDSA Brace Class		Music Time: 1:15 - 2:30 minutes
Brace Freestyle Dogs (BFD) Titling	Each dog must have SFD title pre-requisite to enter. Three (3) qualifying legs. Same dogs, same handler.	

Section 1: MDSA Vision of Canine Musical Freestyle

The Musical Dog Sport Association's definition of canine musical freestyle is a dog sport in which training, teamwork, music, and movement combine to create an artistic, choreographed performance highlighting the canine partner in a manner that celebrates the unique qualities of each individual dog. It is built upon the foundation of a positive working relationship of a dog and handler team.

The following are essential elements of an MDSA canine musical freestyle performance that should be present, regardless of class entry or event format:

- A performance is always presented with the above MDSA canine musical freestyle definition in mind.
- The dog and handler seem intangibly linked in the performance. The relationship and bond the team shares is clearly illustrated.
- The music is selected to enhance and showcase the movement of the dog.
- All movement is choreographed with the music and presented in an artistic and creative manner. The performance should not look like an obedience routine set to music.
- The movement of the handler complements the dog's movement.
- Canine musical freestyle is the creative expression of teamwork, training, willingness and joy shared by a dog and handler.

Section 2: Eligibility

- MDSA freestyle events are open to all dogs, purebred or mix breeds.
- Dogs must be at least one (1) year of age at the date of the competition or on the date video event submission is recorded.
Age exception: Puppies age six (6) months or older at the date of the competition or on the date video event submission is recorded will be permitted to enter the Rookie class, *only*. Please note the special requirements for puppy Rookie entries in Section 11 of these guidelines.
- Video event submissions must be entered within one (1) year of the recording date to qualify.
Exception: There is an exception clause to this time limit rule for the Veteran's class only. See the Section 9c for details.
- Bitches in season may not compete at live events.
- Dogs and/or handlers with disabilities are welcome to compete as long as they are able to perform in a safe and joyful manner.

Section 3: Equipment

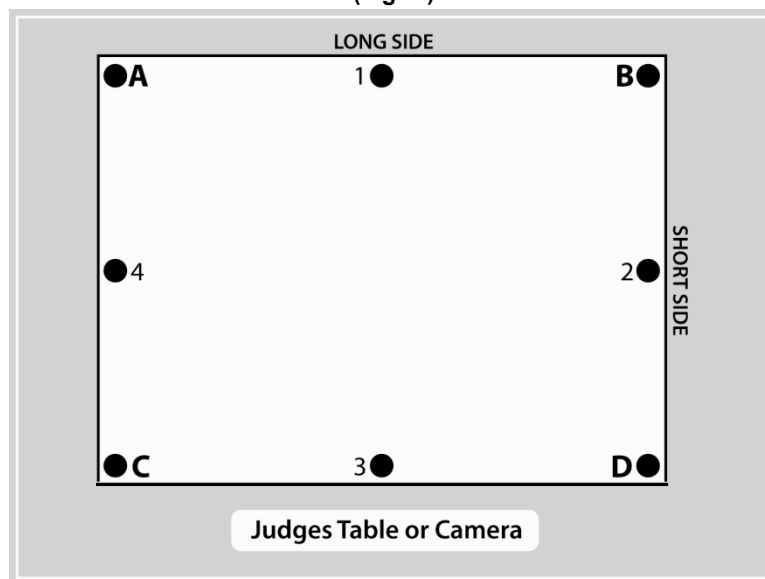
- The ROOKIE and TEAM classes can be performed on-lead, if desired. All other classes are performed off lead.
- Dogs may be shown with no collar or a **properly fitted collar (either buckle or limited slip/martingale)**.
- Decorative collars or bandanas are permitted provided they do not distract from, overshadow or interfere with the dog as the focus of the routine. Decorative collars shall not be wider than an appropriately sized flat collar. Flounces, ruffles, and other similar neckwear are not allowed.
- No special training collars may be used, including but not limited to, prong, **chain**, **correctional slip**, electronic or head halters.

- Food, toys, or clickers are not allowed in any class other than the ROOKIE class.
- Dogs are permitted to wear boots where slick footing is a concern. However, an affected gait, stumble or refusal of behavior caused by the boots will not be excused. Judges will evaluate the routine without regard to the presence of boots.
- All dogs on the show grounds must be on leash or crated, except when in the performance space.

Section 4: Performance Space (See Fig. A for an illustration)

- **Size:** The stage will be rectangular.
 - ✓ **LIVE EVENTS:** The ring dimension is always 40 x 50 feet (12 x 15 meters).
 - ✓ **VIDEO EVENTS:** The preferred dimension is 40 x 50 feet (12 x 15 meters). When space is an issue, a 30 x 40 foot (9 x 12 meter) ring may be used.
- **Ring Markers or Gating:** The performance space is based on a proscenium stage.
 - ✓ **LIVE EVENTS:** With ring gates on four sides.
 - ✓ **VIDEO EVENTS:** The space must be designated in either one of two ways:
 - **With markers** approximately 12 inches (30 cm) in height. Small cones or potted flowers may be used. The markers will be placed at the corners and the center points of each side.
 - **With ring gates** on four sides.
 - Video submissions missing ring marker(s) or gate(s) will be marked as a minor or major error, depending on severity and at judge's discretion. Major errors will disqualify (DQ) the performance.
- **Judge Placement for Live Events:** The judge shall be placed on the front, long side of the space. The judge's table will be placed a **minimum** of 6 feet (2 meters) from the edge of the front of the ring.
- **Video Events:** The camera will be placed a **minimum** of 6 feet (2 meters) from the edge of the front of the ring. The camera should remain in a stationary position if at all possible. Camera pans and zooms are acceptable, but both the dog and handler **should** remain in view as much as possible **and as choreography permits**. Remember, the judges are not at the ring with you to see your physical setup and placement of your dog. A short pan of the ring and dog/handler placement just prior to beginning your routine is a good way to demonstrate your physical space to the judges and alleviate questions, especially if you begin your routine separated from your dog at a distance. The music should remain as close to the camera as possible. The footage should be the original copy unless it has to be copied in order to conform to one of the acceptable formats. Absolutely no editing should be done to the original footage. Record at least 30 seconds of video before and after the routine to allow for fades when editing. Record a title screen for approximately 30 seconds before filming your routine. See Event Entry Form for additional video specifics.

(Fig. A)



Section 5: Performance Elements

Creative heelwork is an essential element of canine musical freestyle. Handlers are encouraged to explore the unlimited possibilities. Moves should fit both the music and the dog's personality and strengths. The dog should never be asked to perform moves which are beyond its level of training. The dog should never be required to perform beyond its physical capability.

There are no required moves, nor a specific number of moves requirement in either the titling or non-titling classes. A pleasing, balanced presentation is the goal. The choice of what moves or behaviors to use and how to present them is very important and should be carefully considered. It's also important to consider the flow of the performance; moves should flow smoothly from one to another. Creativity in a performance is encouraged, especially at the higher class levels. Each individual move, even the most basic of skills, can be performed in an almost endless variety of ways. For a list of freestyle moves ideas, go to the MDSA Web site at www.musicaldogsport.org and click the link to **Moves Ideas** in the **Publications** section.

Example moves or behaviors include, but are not limited to:

Left Side Heel	Serpentines	Switches
Right Side Heel	Down	Pivots
Front work	Jumping	Recall
Circles	Rollover	Weaves
Spins	Bow	Zigzag

Section 6: Signals and Commands

- The handler may use verbal cues, visual cues or both.
- Verbal cues should be quiet and not distracting.
- Visual cues should be smooth and should not detract from the performance. When possible, visual cues should seem to be a part of the choreography. Multiple signals should be avoided.
- No force real — or implied — should be used, including grabbing and physically positioning the dog. Touch is allowed, but only as a demonstration of praise.
- Handler signals appearing to lure the dog into performing are not allowed. In props classes, the prop should not be used as lure, either.
- It is the handler's responsibility, prior to entering the ring, to arrange a subtle signal for music steward to start the music.
- At the beginning and conclusion of the performance, the handler shall acknowledge the audience with a courteous nod, bow or wave. Handlers may choose to acknowledge their dog at the conclusion of the performance before acknowledging the audience.

Section 7: Music

Music is a necessary part of canine musical freestyle. The music shall be carefully chosen to complement and showcase the movement of the dog and the dynamics of the team. Music is a powerful tool for communicating emotion, energy, joy, bond, relationship and teamwork.

- Choreography may reflect the style of music, such as country, swing or 50's.
- The music shall reflect a respect for the dog, the audience, and the sport. As such music lyrics shall not contain profanity or be obscene. Use of such music will be considered a *major* error in all classes.
- Handler is free to choose from all musical styles and genres. There is no requirement for use of either lyrics or use of instrumental only.
- Music editing is acceptable, and in some cases, required in order to meet the class time limit.
- Handlers are required to work within the time ranges for the class. Timing of the performance begins and ends with the music.
- Music more than 5 seconds over/under the class time limit may be scored as a *minor* error. Music 10 seconds or more over/under will be scored as a *major* error and will disqualify (DQ) the performance.
- Only CDs will be used at live events. The CD should be marked with the team's name, song title and artist. CDs shall have the song used for the performance as the only track.

Section 8: Attire

- The handler's attire should not interfere with the dog as the focus of the routine.
- The handler's attire shall reflect a respect for the dog, the audience, and the sport.
- Attire shall complement the dog, the theme of the music, and choreography.
- Attire, including footwear, shall not overshadow, detract from or interfere with the performance of the dog.
- Footwear that could possibly harm or cause injury to the dog, such as high heels or cowboy boots with a hard heel, is not permitted.
- Keep in mind your attire reflects upon you, your dog, your professionalism, MDSA and the sport of canine musical freestyle. This is a performance, not practice, so it is expected that an effort be made to avoid your every day street clothes or clothes you might wear for training or practice.

Section 9: Overview: Title Requirements

- All performances will adhere to these entire Performance Guidelines and also the additional requirements specific to the class entered (see Section 11).
- Entrants are allowed, but not required, to enter the Rookie class for performance experience and to receive feedback prior to entering the Novice level.
- Entrants that desire to earn their dog's *first* MDSA title will begin working toward a title in the Novice class.
- Three (3) qualifying legs are required to earn a title (Note: See Section 9a for special grandfather clause to this rule). Legs toward a title may be earned at video and/or live events.
- Performances for each **qualifying leg** must be earned with a new routine with new choreography and new music. (See Section 9b for a special exception to this rule.)
- Performances for each qualifying leg must be earned with the same handler and dog team.
- Only one (1) **titling class solo** entry per dog, per event is allowed.
- Entrants may rework and re-enter the same routine to earn a qualifying leg only if the routine received a Non-qualifying (NQ) or Disqualifying (DQ) score or it was entered in a non-titling class at a previous event.
- There are no placements. Entrants are in effect competing against themselves to earn titles. All entrants receive at least one evaluation with a rating from an MDSA Judge. Entrants may also receive additional evaluations from apprentice judges for training purposes; however, the ratings of the apprentice judges are not used for purposes of determining qualifying/non-qualifying legs.
- Unless stated otherwise in individual class requirements (see Section 11), entrants need not be an MDSA member to earn MDSA titles or enter MDSA events.
- Upon successful completion of requirements for each title, handler will receive an MDSA title certificate and dog is eligible for title designation after name. Qualifying scores will receive a ribbon. **Non-titling entries will also receive participation ribbon(s).**
- **The following will be marked as errors in a performance. Errors can be minor or major and are rated at the judge's discretion. Minor errors are considered a warning notice. Major errors will automatically disqualify (DQ) a performance. MDSA considers the following as performance errors:**

- ✓ Luring
- ✓ Dog leaving ring
- ✓ Dog out-of-control
- ✓ Excessive barking
- ✓ Use of food or training aid (when not permitted in the class)
- ✓ Fouling the ring
- ✓ Harsh treatment of dog by handler (either real or implied)
- ✓ Music over or under in time. Music more than 5 seconds over/under the class time limit may be scored as a *minor* error. Music 10 seconds or more over/under will be scored as a *major* error.
- ✓ Music profane or obscene
- ✓ Other issues, at the discretion of the judge, that may affect the safety and well-being of the dog and other competitors, the positive working image of the sport, or for unsportsmanlike conduct on the part of the handler. Examples include but are not limited to: inappropriate attire or footwear, video submissions missing ring markers, or inappropriate equipment used on the dog.

Section 9a: Special Grandfather Clause for Qualifying Leg Requirement

The January 1, 2010 three (3) qualifying leg requirement to earn a title applies only to teams that are entering a routine to earn their first leg toward a new title on or after January 1, 2010. Teams that have already earned title(s) and/or have already earned one leg toward a title prior to January 1, 2010 will be grandfathered. This means that teams will only be required to complete two (2) qualifying legs to earn the title currently in progress. However, note that all other requirements presented in these guidelines will apply to *all* teams entering competition.

Section 9b: Special Exception Clause for Back-to-Back Live Events

This clause describes a special exception to the following rule: Performances for each **qualifying leg** must be earned with a new routine with new choreography and new music.

Effective July 5, 2011, the same routine with same choreography and same music can count up to two (2) qualifying legs if all of the following requirements are met:

- Routine earns a qualifying score on both days of an MDSA back-to-back live event. An MDSA back-to-back live event is defined as two separate MDSA live events held on two consecutive days. There is no requirement to perform under two different judges. This exception does not apply to video submissions.
- The entry was not a qualifying leg in a previous MDSA video event. (Note that the routine earning qualifying leg(s) in an MDSA live event - including back-to-back live events – still cannot subsequently earn qualifying leg(s) in an MDSA video event.)
- Qualifying leg(s) were earned in the same title class level.

Section 9c: Special Exception Clause for Veteran Title Class Entries

This clause describes a limited-time exception to the following rule: Video event submissions must be entered within one (1) year of the recording date to qualify.

Effective July 5, 2011, the “within one (1) year of recording date” rule does *not* apply to entries that meet both of the following requirements:

- Entries are for the Veteran’s title class for the August 2011, December 2011, or April 2012 MDSA Video Events only. Dogs need not be living at the time of entry into the Veteran title class.
- Entries were **originally** submitted in any of the following events:
 - The Veteran Class in any MDSA Video Event from June 2008 through April 2011.
 - The Veteran Class in an MDSA Live Event. In these situations, filmed footage of the live competition must be submitted.
 - MDSA non-titling video events (referred to as film festivals) or non-titling live events (referred to as fun matches) are specifically *excluded* from this exception to the time-limit rule.

Entries will be judged by the Performance Guidelines for the Veteran title class in effect on the date of re-submission. No special consideration will be given to the fact the entries may have been originally filmed under different guidelines.

Section 10: Description of MDSA Titling Classes

NOVICE CLASS (Beginner level)

Music time range: 1:15 - 2:15 minutes

Title: Novice Freestyle Dog (NFD)

Pre-requisite: None

Qualifying Legs: Dog and handler team earning three (3) qualifying legs (Q).

The purpose of this class is to show that the team is proficient in the foundations of freestyle – creative heelwork, movement, choreography, focus and attention.

- Team should demonstrate proficiency in front work and right and/or left side work.
- Team should demonstrate sustained focus and attention between dog and handler. Some minor breaks in attention are permitted at this level.
- Team should demonstrate a positive working relationship and a visible bond.
- Team should demonstrate a strong proficiency in foundational freestyle moves (for example spins, circles, switches or weaves). Optional moves are always encouraged, but not required at this level. The handler should not ask the dog to perform behaviors they are not yet confident or willing to perform or are physically unable to perform safely and comfortably. Be sure to read *Section 5: Performance Elements* for additional guidelines and expectations when choosing or creating moves for a performance.
- The team shall present a creative performance with a basic-level application of core choreographic elements: floor pattern design, simple creative heelwork, changes in pace, changes in directions, contrasts, transitions, flow, variety of moves and move combinations.

- Larger signals and slightly louder verbal cues are permitted, as long as they don't overshadow the dog. An intermittent delayed response to *some* cues on the part of the dog is permitted at this level.
- Music should complement the rhythm and dynamics of the team. Music for Novice class *will not* count for or against in the overall team score. Music will be evaluated and feedback provided that is intended to be educational in purpose. However, a severe error resulting in disqualification (DQ) *is still possible at this level* if the music contains profanity and/or obscenities.
- The team **should** cover the performance space.

STANDARD CLASS (Intermediate level)

Music time range: 1:30 - 2:30 minutes

Title: Standard Freestyle Dog (SFD)

Pre-requisite: NFD title

Qualifying Legs: Dog and handler team earning three (3) qualifying legs (Q).

The purpose of this class is to showcase the dog and the relationship between the dog and handler and a fluency in freestyle behaviors, choreography and music.

- Team should demonstrate proficiency in front work, right side and left side work.
- Team should demonstrate an element of basic distance work in the routine. There are no requirements as to how distance is achieved or for how long, but the expectations for this level are to demonstrate a basic ability and comfort level on the part of both dog and handler. Examples include (but are not limited to) a simple stay and recall or asking the dog to move away from the handler a short distance and then return. Distances will not be measured, nor is a specific distance required. However, to aid the judge's ability to clearly distinguish distance, a good rule of thumb is to strive for a *minimum* distance of approximately two times the handler's height. Keep in mind, as is the case with other moves, the handler should not ask the dog to perform behaviors or distances they are not yet confident or willing performing or are physically unable to perform safely and comfortably.
- Team should demonstrate sustained focus and attention between dog and handler. Breaks in attention should be *very few* and *very minor* at this level.
- It is expected that the team is fluent in and builds upon the foundational freestyle moves from Novice level. Appropriate use of one or more optional, more complex moves is expected at this level. Example optional moves include (but are not limited to) side passes, front passes or mirror moves. Creative moves or move combinations of the handler's creation are also considered as optional moves and always encouraged. The handler should not ask the dog to perform behaviors they are not yet confident or willing to perform or are physically unable to perform safely and comfortably. Be sure to read *Section 5: Performance Elements* for additional guidelines and expectations when choosing or creating moves for a performance.
- The team shall present a creative performance with the application of core choreographic elements: floor pattern design, creative heelwork, changes in pace, changes in direction, contrasts, transitions, flow, variety of moves and move combinations. It is expected that the team builds upon the basic knowledge gained from Novice level choreography successes and errors to create a routine with an intermediate level of complexity and *more individual originality*.
- More emphasis should be placed on musicality in the choreography. In other words, some attempt should be made to pair one or more choreographic elements – such as moves, floor patterns, speed changes – **with** the music content or style.
- Signals are permitted, but should be small. Signals should complement the choreography and/or music content or style. More emphasis on verbal cues or body movement cues is preferred at this

level. Cues should not overshadow the dog. Dogs are expected to demonstrate fluency and accuracy in their response to most of the handler's cues.

- The music should match the dog's movement, and complement the rhythm and dynamics of the team. Music for Standard class *will be counted* in the overall team score at this level.
- The team **is required** to cover the performance space.

PREMIER CLASS (Advanced level)

Music time range: 2:00 - 3:30 minutes

Title: Premier Freestyle Dog (PFD)

Pre-requisite: SFD title

Qualifying Legs: Dog and handler team earning three (3) qualifying legs (Q).

The purpose of this class is to focus on the positive relationship between the dog and handler, at an advanced level, showcasing it in a creative and artistic manner. All freestyle elements – advanced training, focus and attention, teamwork, choreography, music and presentation – should be combined and executed at an advanced level. The bond and relationship of the handler and dog should be clearly evident and is a necessary part of a Premier freestyle routine.

- Team should demonstrate superior proficiency in creative heelwork. Complex heelwork should be included.
- Superior presentation is expected at this level. Attire, cues, music, choreography, movement and floor space should be combined in a manner that leaves the audience with an overall impression of poise, professionalism, and a positive working relationship at an elite level.
- An element of advanced distance work is expected. Distance is defined as approximately 10 feet away. A stay, moving stay or send away are all acceptable examples of achieving the distance. However the dog must execute a choreographic element(s) at a distance. There are no requirements as to how long distance is achieved, but the expectations for this level are to demonstrate a higher-level ability.
- Highly developed focus and attention between dog and handler.
- Premier expects that the dog should be allowed a level of freedom of expression and **individuality** in the interpretation of learned and/or taught behaviors.
- Foundational freestyle moves are flawless at this level. Optional moves and/or creative moves are required at this level. The handler should not ask the dog to perform behaviors they are not physically able to perform safely and comfortably.
- The team shall present an interesting, creative performance with the application of core choreographic elements: floor pattern design, creative heelwork, changes in pace, changes in direction, contrasts, transitions, variety of moves and move combinations. Superior musicality, originality and the showcasing of the dog's individual, unique qualities is expected at this level.
- Signals are permitted, but they should complement the choreography and/or music content or style. More emphasis on verbal cues or body movement cues is expected at this level. Cues should not overshadow the dog. Dogs are expected to demonstrate fluency and accuracy in their response to handler cues.
- The music shall highlight the dog's movement and uniqueness and complement the rhythm and dynamics of the team. Music for Premier class *will be counted* in the overall team score at this level.
- Teams will be required to perform a mirror or synchronized move element(s).
- The team is required to cover the performance space in a creative and purposeful manner.

WITH PROPS (PRP)

Title: Titling

- There is a PRP option in the Standard and Premier class levels.
- The criteria used to review PRP class entries shall be the same criteria as used for the corresponding class level. For example, a Standard PRP entry is expected to follow all Standard criteria, from music time to performance elements and requirements, with the exception that a prop is permitted in the performance.
- **To enter Standard PRP, the team must first have earned the Standard (SFD) title. To enter Premier PRP, the team must first have earned the Premier (PFD) title.**
- The use of a prop shall in no way detract from or overshadow the performance of the dog.
- The use of the prop shall enhance the routine and its use should be choreographed.
- A prop should not be used as a training aid nor should it be used as a lure.

VETERAN

Music time range: 1:00 - 2:30 minutes

Title: Titling

Pre-requisite: Dogs that are at least seven (7) years old at the date of the show.

The primary purpose of this class will be to showcase the veteran dog and the special relationship between the veteran dog and handler. While criteria similar to the Novice class will be used to judge these routines, teams are encouraged to create performances that are appropriate for the skill level and physical abilities of the veteran dog and choreography should be adjusted to meet the needs of the each veteran performer.

MDSA will strictly enforce a zero tolerance rule that the veteran dog should never be over faced or required to perform beyond its physical capability. At the judge's discretion, the team will be disqualified (DQ) if the veteran dog shows it is not physically able to safely and happily perform the choreography.

The criteria and requirements used to review Novice class entries will be used to review and qualify Veteran class entries, with the exception of music time, pre-requisites and the following special considerations for the veteran dog:

- Team should demonstrate competency in execution of foundational heelwork.
- The freestyle moves selected are not exclusive to any one level; rather they must be appropriate for the dog, used effectively, and executed with competence.
- The team shall present a creative performance with a basic-level application of core choreographic elements *that are adjusted to meet the needs of the veteran dog*: floor pattern design, simple creative heelwork, changes in pace, changes in directions, contrasts, transitions, flow, variety of moves and move combinations.
- The choreography should celebrate the relationship and bond of the team, and highlight the unique qualities of the veteran dog.
- Larger signals and slightly louder verbal cues are permitted if the dog's physical needs deem it necessary. An intermittent delayed response to some cues on the part of the dog is permitted.
- Music should complement the rhythm and dynamics and/or relationship of the team. Music will count for or against in the overall team score.

BRACE CLASS (Intermediate level)

Music time range: 1:15 - 2:30 minutes

Title: Brace Freestyle Dog (BFD)

Pre-requisite: SFD title on each dog

Qualifying Legs: Dog and handler team earning three (3) qualifying legs (Q).

The purpose of this class is to showcase the dogs and the relationship between the dogs and the handler/dog relationship.

- The Brace team shall consist of one handler with two (2) dogs. The dogs need not be of the same breed. The same 2 dogs and handler must be present for each qualifying leg.
- The criteria and requirements used to review Novice class entries shall be used to review and qualify Brace class entries, with the exception of music time and title pre-requisites.
- **Mirrored, synchronized, unsynchronized, symmetrical and asymmetrical move combinations for the brace team are all acceptable variations.**

Section 11: Description of MDSA Non-Titling Classes

These classes do not qualify as legs toward a title: Rookie, FEO, and Team. These classes are intended for performance experience, additional experience when team is not yet ready to proceed to the next class level, or as an additional challenge for the team. Handlers will receive score sheets from the judge(s) that will include comments. Although these are non-titling classes, participants are expected to adhere to the MDSA Performance Guidelines when crafting and submitting a routine. Some additional participation restrictions apply to these classes, so be sure to review the details for each specific class before entering.

ROOKIE

Music time range: 1:00 - 2:15 minutes

Title: Non-Titling

Pre-requisite: MDSA Member

The purpose of this class is to provide entrants with performance experience in a competition setting, practice and learning opportunities when the team is not yet ready to enter titling classes.

- The handler should not overshadow dog nor ask the dog to perform behaviors they are not yet confident or willing to perform or are physically unable to perform safely and comfortably.
- Treats, toys and training aids may be used to praise and encourage the dog but should not be used as a lure.
- The dog may be shown on lead or off lead. The lead shall not be longer than 6 feet (2 meters). The lead should be handled in a graceful manner and not interfere with the performance of the dog. The lead may be dropped as necessary. Continuously tight leads or using the lead for corrections and manipulation are not permitted.
- **For safety reasons, puppies entered in this class that are between the age of six (6) months and one (1) year, are required to abide by a "three paws on the floor" rule. The intention of this rule is to protect young bones during their critical time of physical growth and development. So, for example, jumps or other aerial moves that are cued by the handler are not permitted. It is**

permissible should a puppy spontaneously hop, bounce or jump due to excitement or enthusiasm.

- This class may be entered no more than two (2) times by any dog/handler team.
- At live events this class shall be held after the competition.

FOR EXHIBITION ONLY (FEO)

Title: Non-Titling

The purpose of this class is to provide entrants with additional performance experience, additional practice or learning opportunities when the team is not yet ready to proceed to the next titling level, or to provide a performance venue for those who do not wish to earn a freestyle title or may have already earned a title and still wish to continue to participate.

- There is an FEO option in all title class levels.
- The criteria used to review FEO class entries shall be the same criteria as used for the corresponding class level. For example, a Standard FEO entry is expected to follow all Standard criteria, from music time to performance elements and requirements.
- Teams may enter FEO an unlimited number of times but each entry must be a new routine with new choreography and new music. (See Section 9b for a special exception to this rule.)
- There is no pre-requisite to enter Novice FEO. However, to enter Standard, Premier or Veteran FEO, the team must either meet the pre-requisite for the class OR have received three (3) Successful FEO ratings at the preceding level.
- At live events this class shall be held after the titling competition, but before Rookie class entries.

TEAM

Music time range: 1:30 – 3:00 minutes

Title: Non-Titling

Pre-requisite: At least two (2) MDSA Members

- Teams are made up of two (2) to a maximum of eight (8) dog and handler teams. At least two (2) must be MDSA members.
- Treats, toys and training aids are not allowed. Dogs may be on lead or off lead, but all dogs must either be on lead or off lead. The lead shall not be longer than 6 feet (2 meters). The lead should be handled in a graceful manner and not interfere with the performance of the dog. The lead may be dropped as necessary. Continuously tight leads or using the lead for corrections and manipulation are not permitted.
- The criteria used to review Team entries shall be the same criteria as used for the Novice class level.
- Teams may enter an unlimited number of times, but each entry must be a new routine with new choreography and new music.
- At live events this class shall be held after the titling competition, FEO and Veteran but before Rookie class entries.