



BMDCA Info Series

Bernese Mountain Dogs & AKC's Trick Dog Program

2021 #27

Introduction ► If you're looking for something fun for you and your Berner to enjoy, AKC's Trick Dog Program may be just the thing. Launched in 2017, this five-level program enables dogs with any level of experience to participate. It also offers maximum flexibility since training can happen anywhere and anytime that fits your schedule and preferences.

"It is easy to see why trick training is becoming so popular," said Dr. Mary Burch, AKC Canine Good Citizen and Trick Dog Director. "The primary characteristic of trick dog training is having fun. Tricks can be both entertaining and practical, such as teaching a dog 'paws up' for a therapy setting. Trick dog training makes a team out of the handler and dog. We hope this exciting new program will encourage more dogs and owners to become involved in training." (<https://www.akc.org/press-releases/the-american-kennel-club-launches-new-trick-dog-titling-program/>)

AKC has partnered with Do More With Your Dog!™ (DMWYD - (<http://www.domorewithyourdog.com/trickdog/>), an organization founded in 2005 by Kyra Sundance. "Whether through sport, tricks, or companionship, she encourages the integration of your dog into more areas of your life. Dogs have a way of making the activities we share with them more fun, and by giving them training, we allow them to participate in more areas of our life." AKC will recognize DMWYD titles at Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Expert levels.

(<http://images.akc.org/pdf/TrickDogTitleChart.pdf>)

Age Considerations ► Trick Dog training can be enjoyed by dogs of all ages – from young puppies to older dogs. It's a wonderful way to keep dogs engaged and learning. The dog-handler bond that results deeply enriches both lives. To earn a Trick Dog title, the puppy must be at least four months old.

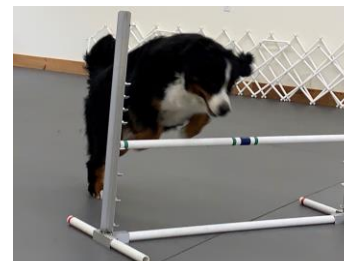


Levels & Requirements ► There are five Trick Dog titles, including: **Novice Trick Dog (TKN)**, **Intermediate Trick Dog (TKI)**, **Advanced Trick Dog (TKA)**, **Trick Dog Performer (TKP)**, and **Trick Dog Elite Performer (TKE)**. (Note: Bolded tricks are shown in the photos.)

At the **Novice** level, the dog performs 10 skills (tricks) from

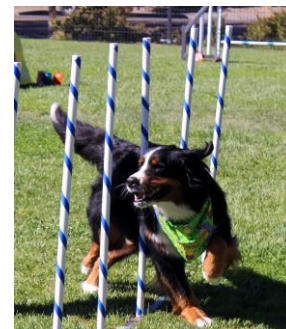
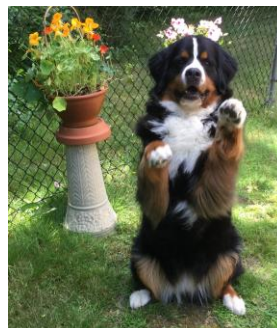
the Novice list. If a dog has a Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certificate or title that is recorded with the AKC the number of required tricks is reduced to five (CGC + 5) to earn the Novice Trick Dog title. The Novice Tricks Checklist contains more than 20 trick options, plus two opportunities for Handler's Choices. The tricks include: bark on cue; fetch it (ball, toy, etc. fetched from ten feet away, brought to within two feet of the handler); high five; shake hands; **jump**; hand signals (one of down, sit, or come); get on; touch it; **sit in box (on cue)**, and more. Each trick must be demonstrated twice.

(http://images.akc.org/pdf/trick_dog_novice.pdf)



To achieve an **Intermediate Trick Dog** title, the dog must have the Novice title, plus perform 10 Intermediate tricks. The 30+ Intermediate trick options include the following, plus there are opportunities for two Handler's Choices: catch; go find; hand signals (three of sit, down, come, stand); **sit pretty**; **remove object from box/toy mailbox**; **weave poles (may lure)**; wobble board; heel with automatic sit; fetch it (20 feet away and deliver to handler); and more. Each trick must be demonstrated twice.

(http://images.akc.org/pdf/trick_dog_intermediate.pdf)



For more information, please visit our website at www.bmdca.org.

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At the **Advanced Trick Dog** level, the dog must have the Intermediate title, plus perform 10 tricks from the Advanced list. There are 40+ trick options at the Advanced level as well as two Handler's Choices. Tricks include: back-up; circle right, circle left; pivot (paws on disk); play dead; sing; **weave poles (no lures)**; pulls bag with objects; sit or down at a distance; and more. (http://images.akc.org/pdf/trick_dog_advanced.pdf)

At the **Trick Dog Performer** level, the dog-handler team performs a short routine with at least 10 tricks (three with props). The dog must have all of the preceding titles. At this level no agility or obedience equipment can be used but the handler may design their own equipment. Of the ten required tricks, at least three must be at the Performer level with the remaining at the Intermediate or Advanced levels. No tricks submitted for other titles may be used. The 20+ trick options include: **carry stuffed animal on back**; dig (pretend to dig); **cross paws – one, then the other**; jump up and down with excitement; and more. The handler may substitute tricks not on the list if they are at the Performance level. At least three tricks must use props. http://images.akc.org/pdf/trick_dog_Performer.pdf



At the **Trick Dog Elite Performer** level, the dog-handler team performs 10 tricks. Five must include props and five must be from the Performer level with the balance from the Advanced level. Like the Performer level, no agility or obedience equipment can be used but handler-designed props, including jumps, etc., can be included. No lures are allowed at this level. A story/script is required for providing entertainment. The story can be told by the handler or a narrator. These routines must be performed for an audience of at least five people. The dog must have all of the preceding titles.

http://images.akc.org/pdf/Elite_Performer.pdf

Training Approach ► Like any training, Trick Dog sessions should be positive and fun. You should use a lot of praise, encouragement, and plentiful treats. Trick Dog training is a great way to capture behaviors your dog already gives (shake, drop head, go hide) and then reward them. It is easier to train something they are already doing! Each dog has different skills and interests, so consider those when selecting tricks to perform. Work on those tricks that bring pleasure to you and your dog. It's usually better to train in short sessions spread throughout the day versus long sessions when the fun might start to wear off. Also, keep your dog's age and physical condition in mind. Working safely and appropriately for your puppy or dog are key.

Finding Trick Dog Tests ► The AKC maintains an event calendar that includes Trick Dog competition information - <https://go.activecalendar.com/akc>. You can also contact your local all-breed clubs to see what they might have planned.

Virtual Trick Dog Titling ► "In response to COVID-19, the AKC has opened up the Trick Dog titling program to be accessible via submission of videos which are reviewed and approved by CGC evaluators. If you don't know a CGC evaluator you can [easily search for one](#). This time of social distancing is the perfect opportunity to get your dog involved in the Trick Dog program. Under the new rules, AKC trick titles can be observed and earned digitally. Full rules and [requirements for video submissions](#) and each level of Trick Dog Titles (Novice through Elite Performer) are available online." <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/sports/akc-titles-programs-can-home/>

Concluding thoughts ► Don't miss out on the fun! All dogs can learn new tricks and so can you.

Resources ►

- Teach Novice Tricks - <https://www.akc.org/sports/trick-dog/> (videos)
- Elite Performer Videos - <https://www.akc.org/sports/trick-dog/elite-performer-videos/>
- AKC Trick Dog Evaluator Guide - http://images.akc.org/pdf/trick_eval_guide.pdf
- AKC Trick Dog FAQs - http://images.akc.org/pdf/TD.FREQUENTLY_ASKED_QUESTIONS.noGrndfdate.pdf
- AKC Trick Dog Applications & Checklists - <https://www.akc.org/sports/trick-dog/resources/trick-dog-applications/>
- AKC Trick Dog Training Books - <https://www.akc.org/sports/trick-dog/resources/trick-dog-book-store/>
- Do More With Your Dog!™ - <http://www.domorewithyourdog.com/trickdog/>

