



COMPETITION OBEEDIENCE *Subnovice to Novice*

At Hidden Valley Obedience Club we believe a strong correct foundation is critical to a successful competition obedience dog. Therefore we provide Subnovice classes to prepare the new dog/handler team for competitive obedience. Upon the successful completion of our Subnovice classes, you should feel confident entering the Novice class which will do the final preparation for the competition ring.

It is essential that you read the sections about Pre-Novice (Subnovice equivalent) and Novice in the AKC, American Kennel Club, Obedience Regulations booklet provided to you. That will help familiarize you with the terms used in this class and with competition Obedience. These regulations are also on-line at www.akc.org.

SUBNOVICE OBJECTIVES

Successful completion of this class means that the following objectives were obtained:

1. Dog will heel with attention on the handler for 10 steps in a straight line
2. Dog will be attentive to a focal point on the handler from either the front or heel position upon hearing a cue word such as "Ready" or "Watch me".
3. Dog will maintain a sit stay for one minute and a down stay for 2 minutes at the end of a 6 foot leash without distractions.
4. Dog will respond correctly to the commands, Sit, Down, Stand and Back with minimal prompting and with the handler in front of the dog.
5. Dog will promptly come to front position with the handler in a chute and dog up to 6 feet away from the handler.
6. Dog will complete a prompt, accurate finish without hesitation to both the right and left sides of the handler, but without the sit.
7. Dog will maintain a stand stay without foot movement or change in position while being examined by another person.
8. Dog will respond quickly to verbal and non-verbal cues to pivot to the right in front of the handler or to the left behind the handler.



Week 1

- **“Get it!”** – use motivator such as treat or toy
 - 🐾 Remember to hold treat or toy straight in front of your left shoulder; keep moving forward to encourage your dog to keep moving forward.
- **“Leave it”,** or “Don’t Touch”, or “Off”, or whichever cue you use for your dog to NOT touch something.
 - 🐾 Remember immediate positive reward when your dog turns its nose away from the item not to be touched, encourage your dog to look directly at your face (unless you’re telling your dog “Leave it” from the sandwich you’re eating at the time).
 - 🐾 Remember that “Leave it” is a cue, not punishment.
- **Release cue** – Ends the behavior you previously cued your dog.
 - 🐾 Examples are “OK”, “Free”, “Break”, or other cue you prefer.
 - 🐾 Encourage your dog to move forward out of the previously cued position.
- **Attention** with the dog in front - using luring & rewards
 - 🐾 Remember for this week, use cue while dog is already looking at you.
- **Use of motivators** in training, food & toys
- **Lure vs. Reward**
- **Importance of leadership** in training
- **Target stick**, especially useful for small dogs.
- **Technically correct Sit**
- **Games** used in teaching & stimulating dogs – Example “Find it” game.
 - 🐾 Use “Find it” at home to find hidden treat or toy, or after “Get it” to find a tossed treat or toy.

Week 2

- **Review** : Get it, Leave it, sits, attention in front
- **Place** – [Dog gets into heel Position from behind handler] – **No verbal yet, only lure.**
 - 🐾 Randomly mix with “Get it” in front of you to keep it exciting for the dog.
- **Stand**
 - 🐾 Kick-back stand is preferred for competition Obedience.
 - 🐾 If your dog already has a good stand or a conformation show stack, it’s o.k. to use those stands.
 - 🐾 Be aware that if your dog steps forward into the stand during competition, you will need to put yourself in heel position.
 - 🐾 Suitcase or handbag method: Gently wrap leash under dog’s belly so that you have a “handle” to gently lift and/or hold dog in a stand position. If this method bothers your dog, use another training method.
 - 🐾 Sue Ailsby’s “under the chin” method works with some dogs (might be difficult with small dogs): While your dog is in a sit, bring treat or toy directly under dog’s chin & toward its throat. Not low, or the dog will down. Hopefully, the dog will step up its hind end, while leaving its front feet still.
- **Down or Settle** – “Sphinx” or backing into down.
- **1-2-3 steps “Get it’s”**
- **Sit Stays** - Termed “Groups” in competition and training.
 - 🐾 Reward dog’s eyes on handler *during stay*.
 - 🐾 Remember to release calmly with release cue.



- **Motivational Recalls**

Week 3

- **Review “Leave it”** – Dog should be automatically turning its head toward handler by now.
- **Place-** [Dog gets into heel position from *an angle* behind handler] **No verbal yet, only lure.**
- **Verbal Only “Down” or “Settle” & “Sit”** – Important if dog is not looking at you.
- **“Hurry”** - Pivot to right with treat or toy in right hand to encourage dog’s speed in turn.
- **Sit for Exam**
 - 🐾 Reward & praise while instructor’s hands are on your dog, unless your dog enjoys handling by strangers so much that it gets too excited, just reward standing still.
 - 🐾 Remember to use release word and release dog going forward with you.
- **Review “Stand”** – When dog knows hand & verbal cues, start using one or the other for practice.
- **Progress to more steps in heel position, with attention, for 1-2-3 + steps and “Get it!”.**
 - 🐾 Use “get it!” when your dog is in correct heel position and its eyes are on you.
- **Attention at left side**, in heel position, adding verbal correction for inattention, such as “ah, ah!”
 - 🐾 Keep these attention sessions *short* for this week, and use your release cue. Several successful attentive 2-4 second sessions are better than a longer, inattentive one.

Week 4

- **Review moving attention with 1-2-3 + steps – This week start hiding treat or toy in right hand.**
- **Review “Hurry” - Pivots to right** – verbal cue optional; must be faded for competition.
- **Review sit for exam**
- **Review attention at the side.**
- **Down Stay** - Keep stays short and successful, under 30 seconds, for this week.
 - 🐾 Reward or praise when dog’s eyes are on you.
 - 🐾 Use release cue calmly, and have dog walk forward with you. After this exercise in competition, you are expected to exit the ring in an orderly, controlled fashion.
- **Stand Stay** – Keep stays as short as needed to be successful, 10 seconds or under, for this week.
 - 🐾 Reward or praise when dog’s eyes are on you and it’s standing still.
 - 🐾 If your dog is unsure about strangers handling it, reward while the instructor’s hands are on your dog.
 - 🐾 Use release cue calmly, then walk your dog happily forward with you, using happy voice & quick stride. After stand for exam in competition Novice, you will be walking your dog into position for leash-free heeling. Let your dog know that after the stand, more fun things will happen!
- **1-2-3 step, turn right and “Get it!”**

**Week 5**

- **Review: Place or Finish or (your cue) to Heel Position from behind handler** – Introduce verbal cue if dog is consistent. Then increase distance & angles.
- **Verbals** – Remember to use your word cue only; don't move any part of your body. Say it once.
 - 🐾 Try various positions, such as sitting in a chair or on floor, your back to dog, etc.
- **Review Motivational recalls**
- **Down & sit stays** (Groups) with handler close, or at leash length or longer, if dog is ready.
- **“Hurry” - Pivot to right** – no visible reward at this point, it is a surprise! Hide under arm or in pocket.
 - 🐾 Sometimes try a silent pivot, using just your body with no “hurry” verbal, to see if your dog responds by turning with you. Remember to reward just as well if he does!
- **Attention in heel position** with some verbal or noise distractions by instructor or others.
- **Stand Stay** with handler doing exam & returning to heel position walking around dog.
- **1-2-3 step and turn left & “Get it!”**
- **Front inside chute** - Lure dog's attention to focal point (handler's face big dogs, knees little dogs).
- **Finish** to left or right **Phase 1- No verbal cue and no sit yet, only “get it!”**
 - 🐾 Dog is only going straight back behind handler.
 - 🐾 Handler gets in front of dog; it doesn't matter if the dog is sitting or standing this week.
 - 🐾 Handler will take one step back on right or left to get dog moving.
 - 🐾 Lure straight back & up behind handler's side, so that dog jumps up or forward to **“get it!”**.

*** Next HVOC session registration page should be up by now. Register for your next session! *
You are welcome to repeat Subnovice to reinforce your & your dog's learning. Check with your instructor to see which class might be right for you & your dog.**

Week 6

- **Multiple Turns** – Progress to 2 or more turns, 1, 2, 3, or more steps left or right, before “get it!”. Hide reward or have it off body on chair or other spot.
- **Review Attention**, sitting in Heel position, with mild sound or sight distractions, such as squeak toy.
- **Sit & Down Stays** - increase time and distance. Try 1 minute sit and 2 minute down stay.
 - 🐾 Ensure you are in correct heel position before cueing & leaving your dog.
 - 🐾 Practice praising your dog quietly after sit stay, while your dog is still in the sit stay, instead of releasing your dog. In competition, this will keep your dog in place for the down stay
 - 🐾 Quietly praise and randomly reward dog's eyes on you during the stay.
- **Front** - Recall into chute with dog outside of chute, handler inside chute.
- **Stand for Exam** with instructor or others examining dog.
 - 🐾 Handler stays close to dog.
 - 🐾 Handler rewards dog while it's standing still and examiner's hands are on dog. NOTE: If dog enjoys handling by strangers so much that it gets too excited, just reward standing still.
- **Back** – Phase 1: handler walking into dog through chutes.
- **Tuck** - teaching dog to pivot to handler's left next while staying in heel position during handler's left turn. The dog moves its hind legs to its right without moving forward, pivoting



around front legs. There are several methods to train this behavior:

- 🐾 This week, we're looking for any movement of the hind legs to the dog's right. Mark & reward, even if it's a tiny step.
- 🐾 If dog has good attention with eyes on handler, handler can cue by turning shoulder, foot, or knee, mark & reward any movement of the dog's hind leg to its right.
- 🐾 Suitcase or handbag with leash.
- 🐾 Tight left circles, handler watching for dog's hind leg to move to its right, marking & rewarding.
- 🐾 If dog doesn't mind, tap hind end gently with dowel. [Note: This might not work with dogs that have been trained to touch the stick. Use another method if they keep nosing the dowel.]
- **Finish to left & right- Phase 2 - No verbal cue or sit yet, only "get it!"** Dog is now moving around behind handler for the finish to the right; still toward handler's back on left side for the finish to the left.
 - 🐾 Handler gets in front of dog; it doesn't matter if the dog is sitting or standing this week.
 - 🐾 Handler will take one step back on right or left to get dog moving.
 - 🐾 For finish to the right, have dog follow lure in handler's right hand to handler's right, then behind handler, toward handler's left.
 - 🐾 For finish to the left, continue to have dog follow lure in handler's left hand going straight back & up behind handler's side, so that dog jumps up or forward to **"get it!"**

Week 7

- **Review "Tuck"** Aim for more hind leg movements to the right this week.
- **Review Stand for Exam** - Handler further away from dog, instructor or other examining dog.
- **Finish - Phase 3 - No verbal cue or sit yet, only "get it!"**
 - 🐾 Handler gets in front of dog; it doesn't matter if the dog is sitting or standing this week.
 - 🐾 Handler will take one step back on right or left to get dog moving.
 - 🐾 For finish to the right, have dog follow lure in handler's right hand to handler's right, then behind handler. Handler quickly switches lure to left hand, then brings it, with the dog following, straight out front, tossing toy or letting dog jump up or forward for lure, "get it!". Handler runs forward with dog.
 - 🐾 For finish to the left, have dog follow lure in handler's left hand, first out away from handler's left side & backwards, then circling into the handler's left side & forward, straight out front, tossing toy or letting dog jump up or forward for lure, "get it!". Handler runs forward with dog.
- **Heel up to 10 steps** without a visible treat in a straight line. No verbal cue yet, just "let's go!"
- **Back with dog in heel position** inside or against chutes or fence.
- **Fronts with dog at angles to the chutes**, if ready; dog outside chute, handler inside.
- **Groups (stays)**, if time

Week 8

- Review learned behaviors.