



# How to Prepare & Show Your Rottweiler in German Style Conformation Shows

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*I was born in 1961 in Berlin, West Germany. I obtained my first dog, a German Shepherd mix, in 1973 and in 1975 titled him to a BH and FH. At that time I joined the SV and have been a member ever since. In 1979, I acquired an additional female German Shepherd which I titled to a SchH 3. She became my dual-purpose drug detection/patrol dog when I was a Customs Officer in 1980. In 1983, I acquired another female German Shepherd and began breeding. I became Regional Vice Champion and successfully competed at the Bundessiegerprüfung with her. In 1986, I raised my first female Rottweiler puppy after I titled her mother all the way to SchH 3. I joined the ADRK and participated in numerous conformation shows and trials. After moving to the USA in 1992, I have titled and shown over 100 Rottweilers. I joined the United States Rottweiler Club in 1993. In 1999, I was blessed to place second at the USRC National SchH 3 Championships with my dog Douglas vom Haus Supke; he also was one of the very first dogs passing the Körung (ABST) held by the USRC and judged by Roger Vandereyken in California. Since then I have participated in a number of ABSTs, BSTs, and Sieger shows. I have held the office of President of the Tucson Rottweiler Club, USA and have served as USRC SW Regional Director. In 2002, I was elected as USRC President and served as President for 4 years. I am a professional schutzhund trainer, put on schutzhund workshops, and I also train dogs for the police and hospitals.*



L-R: Katie Hodges & USRC Judge Andreas Mueller

## Why do we have conformation shows?

The written standard of the breed is a description combining the desired (breed typical) temperament and physical structure. The standard describes a conformation that is meant to make tasks at work of our breed physically as easy as possible. It is the conformation show where both the temperament and the physical capabilities (given by conditioning and structure) are evaluated. One might ask: How is temperament evaluated during a conformation show? Our dog will be shown freely, meaning there are no commands that control his behaviour as much as in a working trial. He will be next to other dogs, he will be approached by the judge, and he will be touched by the judge. If the judge discovers any traits of behaviour, or structural faults that are disqualifying by the written standard, the dog will fail, and a rating will not be given. Other than that, the rating given at a conformation show will directly reflect the dog's looks and temperament through a written critique. This critique should be a complete description of what the judge sees at this particular presentation. When I say complete, I mean that he

will include the temperament as evaluation criteria in his critique. Without actively doing anything to the dog, the judge will see if the temperament is, for example, outgoing, open, or shy, if the dog is friendly or if he is attentive.

Besides the physical fitness that a dog must have in order to compete in the German style conformation ring, there are a few things that will give a team the edge to be better than their competitors.

## Groom your dog and pack your supplies

Grooming should include a good bath, loose undercoat removal, ear cleaning, and nail trimming. Bring a chair for you and a crate for your dog as it is not permitted to tie out your dog on show grounds. Remember in hot months to also bring shade and plenty of water. Do not forget grooming tools for last minute touch ups, dog dish, show leash, fur saver collar and your dog's favourite toy. Check the show premium for a list of all the required paperwork for the class you are entering. Bring the original papers to the show and present them at check in.

## Familiarize yourself with the ring procedure

The procedure is almost always the same. If not, it will still be very similar! The dogs will be called into the ring in catalog order. The judge will then check teeth on each dog. Then, every single dog will be evaluated while standing. The standing examination will last about 5–10 minutes. Then the individual dog will be examined while moving away from the judge, sideways and coming at the judge, trotting. After every single dog entered in this class completes this procedure, all dogs will be lined up in a circle around the ring by catalog number again. The whole class will then be moved counter clockwise around the ring. On the judge's demand, the handlers will be showing their dogs running or walking. Then the judge will most likely take the lesser quality dogs out into the centre of the ring, until only the top of the class is still moving around. In the final line up in the centre of the ring, the judge might look at the overall order of placements and will look at the presentation of the dog after it has been physically challenged by the gaiting examination. The judge then gives the final placement.

## Showing teeth

First, you will have to show the front of the teeth. Put the back of your dog between your legs and have him sit. Reach into his collar by the bottom of his neck with your right hand. Now he has very limited options to move. As you are holding the collar slightly tight upward, use the index finger and thumb of your right and the left hand to push his jaws together and pull his lips up in the front to show the scissors bite to the judge. Then you use the same hand positioning to hold his jaws apart and pull upper and lower lips apart one side at a time, in order to let the judge examine the premolars and molars. At the very end of the examination, you will be asked to have his mouth held wide open to let the judge see the very back of the mouth (Molar 3/M3). It is important that the handler positions his own head further away from the dog during the procedure so he does not block the judge's view. To prepare the dog to have his mouth examined, you should start with the dog very early, touching his mouth very briefly and presenting food right after. Extend the period of time handling his mouth. Try not to overextend your expectations to the point where the dog is fighting you or pulls away. Always present the food at the moment he is still in acceptance. If he starts fighting you, withdraw the food and start a new sequence. In training, you

should also practice to have a stranger around, close to your dog while you practice. Some dogs have a challenge with the presence of a stranger being close while the handler is trying to restrain him and touch his mouth. After the dentition has been examined, the testicles will have to be examined as well. Hold your dog tight by the collar; you might reach under his flanks with your other hand to hold his rear up. The judge will reach down and touch the dog's testicles. The training process should be similar to the procedure of showing teeth, starting with the handler restraining the dog by the collar and feeding him at the same time. Avoid allowing the dog to have a negative connection with being restrained. Since the restraint is a necessary action prior to the judge checking testicles, it has to be trained to be positive. Some dogs that are shown untrained for those circumstances are going to be restrained, followed by a stranger touching their scrotum. After a couple of repetitions, the dog has learned the process and is getting suspicious as soon as he is restrained.



L-R: Andreas Mueller & Lucy Ang with  
Nightshadow X Factor

#### **Standing examination**

Anticipation on the dog's and handler's behalf of "what is going to happen next" will be very helpful to give the best presentation. Presentation is where a good dog can look better and the better looking dog will look best. During the presentation, the judge will describe the dog both standing and gaiting. In German style shows, it is allowed to call or attract the dog from the outside of the ring. Food or items that are

connected with bite work are not allowed! It is most effective to teach the dog to be held by a handler, while the owner is outside the ring calling and getting the dog's attention until the dog is stacking up and showing the best possible positioning on all body parts. In some cases, it is recommended for the baiter to be hiding so the dog is looking for him. This is trained by having the dog held by a person, while the owner is running away with food or toy. The dog should be allowed to run after the owner once he puts the most effort into getting free by pulling on the leash. In order to build his desire to do so, the person holding the dog needs to be very sensitive to the dog's very first attempt to pull and break free. If the first attempt is not rewarded by letting the dog go, he might give up and just give in to being held! Thus, you just moved one step further away from your goal.

The next step could be to have the dog taken by the handler while the owner hides behind a bush or tree (whatever is available). Then the owner calls the dog, and appears from behind the hiding place. The dog should be released by the handler to run after the owner to obtain reinforcement. It is important that the dog hears the owner calling first BEFORE he appears. Only then will the dog understand that the call is actually the announcement for the owner to come in sight. The final step could be that the owner hides and continuously calls the dog. If the dog intends to pull on the leash, he should be allowed to drag the handler following his hearing sense until he finds the owner. The positioning of the dog's legs is most important to have the rest of the body follow. Both front legs should preferably be standing parallel positioned to each other, with the back legs parallel to each other as well. This will lead to the rest of the body being symmetric, one side to the other. The dog should not put too much weight pulling forward into the leash, nor should he stand relaxed. He should be looking straight forward in order to give the judge an option to look at the dog from all sides. The dog should be taught not to be distracted by the judge looking him over. He should concentrate all his energy on focusing in the direction of the

baiter. It is crucial that the handler is capable of manipulating weight shift through tension on the leash to either side in order to reach best positioning of the dog's legs and not by touching the dog as we see in the AKC ring. A natural stand is preferred. If the handler wishes the dog to reposition his left front leg, for example, he should put more tension on his leash pulling up slightly to the right. This way the weight will be taken off his left front, and the dog will move the left leg.

#### **Gaiting examination**

It is imperative to have the dog well-trained to switch his attention back to the handler when he starts the triangle gaiting examination, as it is devastating to have the dog's attention on the baiter outside the ring, trying to get him to trot straight forward, following the handler. Another version is to have the baiter (owner) taking over the leash and present the dog gaiting. Therefore, the dog does not need to be taught to switch his focus. The dog needs to be shown in a trot. The judge will be looking for consistent fluent movement. The handler should take the dog on a short leash on his (handler's) left side. It is important to find the right pace from the start, as there is not much time and room to find it. The handler should start with a slow pace for a couple of steps, then slowly increase speed up to where he is running and the dog starts trotting comfortably with him. The dog needs to be prepared in training that there are two left hand turns (changing directions) to be made in order to let the judge see the three perspectives, watching the dog's movement from the rear, the side and the front. After the triangle presentation, the individual examination will be finished.

#### **Gaiting examination of the whole class in comparison**

The dogs are lined up in the ring in catalog order. Keeping a safe distance from each other, the handlers will start moving their dogs counter clockwise around the ring. The leash should preferably be loose as the dog will move more freely instead of pulling into the leash or being lifted up by the handler, in order to present his natural movement. The handler should keep his dog on his left side at all times, so the judge can see the dog (remember they go counter clock wise around the ring). Sometimes it will happen that an excellent moving dog cannot unfold his true capacity in movement because a less well-structured dog in front of him blocks him. It will be rated unfair to now move up onto the dog in front and cause problems as the dog in front will pay more attention to what is happening behind him than focusing on forward movement. The handler should trust the judge's capability to acknowledge the situation by either advising the handler to pass the dog in front or to select the less well-structured dog to come to the centre of the ring and finish the gaiting examination.



L-R: Brenda Burggraf, Tony Sajewicz,  
Andreas & Borra von Konigliche,  
Select Youth Female

After all dogs are lined up in the centre of the ring, the judge will take a final look at the dogs being presented standing again. At this last sequence of the show, a decision can sometimes be made by the dog still presenting himself strongly, compared to a dog that is not in physical condition and does not want to present himself any more after being physically challenged during the gaiting examination. The dog should know that at the end of the gaiting examination, when he stands in the centre of the ring, to look for the baiter again. The dog needs to know that there is one final chance he could break free and get to the person who calls him. Good luck in showing your dog in German style conformation shows. I will see you there. Andreas Mueller.