



Handling Your Own Doberman Pinscher

by Barbara Gaines

So, you have gone out and purchased a registered Doberman Pinscher and become quite interested in our wonderful breed. You have heard about AKC shows and Champion Dogs and think you would like to enter your dog. You have compared your Dobe with other people's and your Dobe is every bit as good looking, even better than many. Of course, some people who seem to know quite a bit about dog showing have advised you to hire a handler if you want to win. You have given it a lot of thought and have decided you do want to show your dog but you are not going to hire a handler. You want to handle your own Doberman! If so, then by all means do. True, the novice is handicapped when it comes to competing against a professional, as the professional handler has the experience and know how. But if you have a respectable representative of the breed and take the time to properly prepare yourself and your Dobe, you can show and finish him. You can also make some nice wins along the way and have a heck of a lot of fun while doing it. However the unknowledgeable exhibitor with an inexperienced dog out of control is just doing some wishful day dreaming

Dog shows are basically a participant sport where a large percentage of the exhibitors are fanciers and owners. Sports attract people because they offer acclaim to some, breed recognition for others and recreation for many, but for everyone there must be some fun. Dog shows offer all the disappointments and thrills of highly competitive sports. It can be fun, if you accept the "game" for what it is. If you can play the game for the pure enjoyment of competing, trying your best to win, you will never regret getting into the "dog game".

Dogs are shown for a judge's opinion on a given day to see if that individual dog comes close to the recognized and approved standard for his particular breed. The rewards from showing can be a cabinet full of trophies and ribbons, but most important of all is the deep reward that can be yours when you have created an outstanding specimen from your own planned breeding or when you have developed a great dog, proving you have an eye for a dog along with training and handling ability.

The judges are expected to judge each dog before him according to the AKC standard for its particular breed. The physical conformation, coat, ability to gait smoothly and general behavior in the ring are all factors the judge considers in his final placements. Obviously all judges do not interpret or evaluate all points of the standard the same, therefore a dog may win at one show and be put down at the next show under a different judge. Those dogs put down at a show are not necessarily inferior specimens of the breed. The judge has simply given his opinion that the dog he put up is nearer to the standard of perfection for the breed from the group of dogs competing there "that day". The same judge may put a dog down at one show and at another show with a different group of dogs,



considering the dog's condition, appearance and behavior on that day put the same dog up. This is where the "sporting factor" enters into showing and is why each dog show is a new challenge.

Winning at the shows and/or achieving a dog's championship is not just a matter of deciding to show your dog and attending some shows. It is the product of serious thought and work weeks "before" entering the shows.

Show quality dogs are bred but show dogs are "made". If your goal is a winning Doberman Pinscher - a Champion - then there are certain requirements you and your Doberman must meet if the two of you are to achieve your goal. You must have:

1. A good representative of the breed.
2. A properly socialized dog.
3. A dog in top physical condition.
4. A properly groomed dog.
5. A correctly show trained dog.
6. A dog properly presented in the ring.

How and Where to Begin:

Take your time, don't rush into buying, hopefully a top winning dog. "Before you buy", get involved. Join the parent club of our breed, The Doberman Pinscher Club of America. Join a local Doberman Pinscher Club and a local All-Breed Club and attend their meetings. The friends and acquaintances you make will be able to give you a helping hand and direct you to the sources of information you are seeking. Don't be reluctant to admit you are a novice. Every breeder, exhibitor and handler was a novice at one time. Ask questions, but when you do ask, listen. Weigh advice carefully. You will be given both good and bad. But listen, until your experience qualifies you to distinguish between the two.

Read your breed standard - learn it! Study the Doberman Pinscher breed books and All-Breed books on movement and structure, training and exhibiting. Write to the American Kennel Club and ask for a free copy of their "Rules Applying to Registration and Dog Shows", Read it thoroughly. It is your bible for entering, exhibiting and conducting yourself properly at AKC licensed shows. Send your name and address to the local show superintendents and request to be put on their mailing lists to receive premium lists of the coming shows. Attend AKC shows and watch your breed in the ring. Join a local handling class for instruction and exposure to group work. Try to attend several different courses instructed by different individuals, as each instructor has his own method of teaching. Enter fun matches; they are beneficial and offer inexpensive, actual in the ring experience for you and your dog.

If you already own a Doberman and you look around and discover you do not



have a Dobe capable of winning his championship, don't give up or get rid of him. This dog is worth hundreds of dollars in knowledge and experience for you. Go ahead, learn with him. Train him, condition, groom and exhibit him if he has no disqualifying faults and get some ring experience. If he does have a disqualifying fault, train him in obedience, get his CD title. This will get you to the shows where you can observe and learn while you are looking for the right Doberman to make into a champion.

Properly Socialized:

If you want a winning Doberman early socialization is absolutely essential. No matter how well bred, how beautiful his conformation is, he can not win if he will not stand up and act like a winner. The dog must go into the ring and behave properly, stack and pose well, bait, be alert and act confident. The show world is large with foreign shaped people and dogs, different sounding equipments unfamiliar odors and strange noises. It can scare the starch out of that gay, confident show-off that has never been out of his own home and back yard.

Your puppy should be mentally prepared for the show world. Get him used to people and strange places. Let your friends and visitors touch and pet him. Let him learn strangers mean no harm. Walk him on lead around the neighborhood so he sees and hears the outside world. Teach him to ride in the car, and walk him on lead as often as you can on public streets, in parking lots, on and over as many different surfaces as you can find such as grass, gravel, cement, asphalt, rubber mat strips, over metal grills, and up and down stairways. Get a crate. Teach him to sleep and travel in it. It helps in housebreaking, chewing problems, is safer for him to travel in and provides a place to keep him in at the shows.

Conditioned:

A dog in poor condition cannot win. Conditioning your dog for show means having the dog in excellent health inside and out. A dog cannot look good if he does not feel well. A complete diet is required weeks before a show for the dog to appear in apparent good health with proper weight, shining coat, bright eyes, and be active and mentally alert. You will want him in good flesh, as a dog overweight is as much out of condition as a thin dog. A healthy coat and skin are a mirror of the dog's physical condition. Make sure your dog is free of external and internal parasites as they spell disaster to the show coat as well as to the animal. Allow your Dobe plenty of proper exercise as good muscle tone is one more important factor in the overall picture of top condition.

Groomed:

Being well groomed can make the difference of your dog winning or loosing. When your Dobe steps into the ring he should be shining clean, properly trimmed and well groomed. Grooming is not something you just do the day before the show; it starts weeks before you enter. Your Doberman should receive regular personal care from you. Routinely brush his coat, trim his nails, and clean his



eyes, ears and teeth. There is no quick shortcut to substitute for a regular grooming schedule. It is the radiance of the show dog.

Train to Accept Examination:

Teach your dog to stand and hold still to have his mouth examined, feet handled, and testicles touched by you. Then teach him to accept examination by friends, neighbors and strangers (in that order) in a stacked position while you hold on to him. Insist he stand quietly. If a Doberman Pinscher will not allow himself to be examined in the AKC show ring he must be dismissed from the ring.

To teach the stand for exam have your Dobe set up in a stacked position as the person to examine him approaches from the front of the dog. Turn loose of the head and front, handing it over to the examiner while you keep control of the rear. That person should open the dog's mouth, touch the tongue and teeth, handle the dog's head and neck. As he finishes with the dog's head and neck you again take hold and control of it, stepping in front of your dog as the examiner handles his front shoulders, front legs, back and then his rear, tail, testicles and back legs. When the examiner finishes with the rear, reposition yourself at your dog's side with him in a stacked position. Practice until you can keep your Dobe in a calm, stacked position while a strange person approaches from the front or rear and thoroughly examines him.

Baiting:

Teach your Doberman to bait, "beg", while he is young. Use small pieces of good smelling food such as liver, cheese, etc. Get him in a relaxed standing position, show him the bait and get him interested by letting him sniff and taste it. Tell him how good it is, tease him with it by offering it to him then pulling your hand away. Move your hand with the bait around and behind your back, toss the bait up and down in your hand, toss him a bite and encourage him to catch. Give him little bites as you work. Always work with him when he is hungry and in short 5 to 10 minute sessions. Work at it until he learns to be interested and really concentrate on the piece of bait in your hand with his ears up.

Liver Recipe:

Boil liver in water with a little salt and garlic for about 20 minutes, then rinse in clear water and dry with a paper towel. Cut into 2 inch squares. You can carry it in your pocket without it staining your clothes and the dogs love it.

Setting Up or Stacking the Dobe:

Each breed has an accepted style of posing and stacking. Some are shown with little or no stacking by stopping in a natural stance on a loose lead; others are posed by stacking them into position. Dobermans are shown both ways but more frequently stacked; therefore he will definitely need to be taught to be stacked. You will want to practice with your Dobe until you can set him up easily and quickly without a lot of difficulties. Dogs tire very soon in the stacked position so



practice him at home until he learns to hold his pose without wiggling for several minutes. In large classes with tough competition, your dog may have to pose for a considerable length of time, and being able to hold a pose can make the difference of a win or loss. After he will stack easily and hold his pose, practice baiting him while he is holding a pose on a loose lead. You will want him to learn to bait and take the tidbit without breaking his stacked position.

The Doberman Pinscher is set up square. Front legs perpendicular to the floor when viewed from the front or side with toes pointing straight ahead. Rear feet are set slightly wider than the front feet with hocks perpendicular to the floor when viewed from the side or rear, with the toes pointing straight forward. Always place your dog's front feet by firmly grasping the elbow of the front leg, lifting it up about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch off the floor, and setting the leg where you want it with the toes pointing straight forward. Set the rear feet by grasping the leg firmly at the stifle joint and lifting it up about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch off the floor and setting the leg where you want it with the toes pointing straight forward. Control of your dog is the most important element of stacking your dog. One hand always has hold of the dog somewhere, being used to control the dog (hold him in position), while the other hand is used to place a part of the dog.

Learning the Stacked Position:

Take the lead in your left hand, walk your Dobe into a standing stop. Stand on the right side of him and hold either his collar or muzzle with your right hand. Reach over the dog's back, and with your left hand grasp his left elbow and place the left foot. Now change control to your left hand by taking hold of either his collar or muzzle with your left hand. Grasp the right elbow with your right hand and set the right foot. Now change control back to your right hand. Reach under the dog with your left hand and grasp his left leg at the stifle joint and set the left rear leg. Next, still keeping control with the right hand, reach back with your left hand and grasp his right leg at the stifle joint and set the right rear leg. Now, still keeping control with the right hand on the collar or dog's muzzle, check that you have all four feet set properly. Now position his head. You should have his neck and head pulled up into an alert position with his head on a parallel with the floor. Now with your left hand gently stroke and position the tail; then softly rub upward on the back of the neck behind his ears and pull the ears into an upright position. You are trying to gently but firmly place and mold the dog into the beautiful stance he sets himself in when he is loose out in the back yard and alerts to something. That elegant in appearance, of proud carriage, reflecting great nobility and temperament pose. Practice stacking him in front of a large mirror so you can see what he looks like to the judge.

Teaching to Gait Smoothly:

I like to use a light nylon choke collar and a 3 foot light weight leather lead with a small snap. Place the collar properly on the dog's neck. Wad the lead up and hold all of it in the left hand with it laid over the index finger. Hold your left arm



out from your shoulder so that your arm is parallel to the ground. Start moving, telling the dog "lets go", "come on", whatever you want, but not "Heel". The dog should move with you at a trot. You will want to practice this at the speed that your dog will move the smoothest. His back should not be bouncing up and down, and he should not be dragging you around on the lead. If he breaks his smooth speed, give a sharp snap of the lead and a firm "No" and stop, then start moving again. Do not let the dog pace, gallop, forge ahead of you, lag behind you or crab (move with his body at an angle to the line of travel). While the dog is moving properly, talk pleasantly to him and sound pleasant so he will enjoy the gaiting and. get his tail up. Practice gaiting him in a long straight line with him on both the left and the right side of you. Practice gaiting him in a straight line with him on your left, turning and coming back with him still on the left. When he will do this smoothly, practice gaiting him in a straight line with him on the left of you, turning and switching the lead to the right hand as you turn and coming back with him on the right side of you. Practice moving in a straight line; then slowly bring the dog into a stop as you step in front of him, taking several steps backwards, and walking your dog into a stop with him standing fairly square on his four feet, with his front toes pointing straight ahead. As you stop, you will be using the lead to guide him, you should be talking to him and using your bait to get him to stop in an alert pose without actually touching him.

In The Ring:

Do not visit with the judge, exhibitors, spectators or ring steward while you are in the ring waiting for the class to start. While waiting for the actual judging to begin, do not let your dog stand in a sloppy position. He does not have to be in a stacked position but keep him alert and looking good with bait. Hold the lead in one hand, not both, and no dangling ends, please. Pay attention to the judge, know when to be ready to move. When the judge is ready to start judging, he will usually have the group move the dogs around the ring in a circle; then he will motion the line to stop. You will want to get your dog set up and looking good as quickly as possible.

The judge will usually next go over each dog individually. On the individual examination the judge will either open the dog's mouth or will have you open the dog's mouth, to look at the teeth. Sometimes when a judge approaches a dog he will make a noise, toss an article or bait him; don't interfere, the judge is trying to see expression and ear carriage and if the dog is blind. If your dog does not respond, throw something of your own to try to get him to react. After the judge has examined the dog he will step back and take a total look at him. At this point, you should have your dog in a well posed position. While the judge is doing the individual examination of the line of dogs let your dog relax but looking good, until the judge gets within two dogs of going over yours; then get him set up and keep him set up and looking sharp until the judge is several dogs past you.

After the judge has gone over each dog individually, he will move each one



individually. When it's your turn to move your dog try to move him at his best possible speed, and looking smart. Remember to start slowing down with the dog about five to six feet in front of the judge as you come back. As you stop, step out in front of your dogs but not in front of the judge, so he can see the dog. Make a noise to catch your dog's attention, and bring him into a stop with him standing straight on his front legs and in an alert position. Have your bait ready in your hand to spark the dog and make him alert. You will only stand there a few seconds while the judge evaluates the total dog standing free; then he will tell you to go to the end of the line. When you are back in line, keep your dog looking good while the other dogs are being moved. Judges have a sneaky way of looking back down the line while judging the other dogs, trying to catch a glimpse of faults while the dogs are loose and relaxed.

After he has moved all the dogs individually, he will probably walk up and down the line and take a good look at all the animals again. If it is a small class he will probably point out his placements at this time. If it is a large class, he will probably pull out five or six dogs and put them in front of the line. He will then check this group again carefully and/or move them again. If you are not in the group pulled out, don't quit; keep your dog looking good because your dog may still be considered. When the judge has finally made up his mind, he will point out the dogs by indicating one, two, three and four. If you are one of the lucky ones you go over and stand beside the number he gave you to receive your ribbon and award, if any. If not, you leave the ring.

What the Judge is Looking at While Evaluating the Dog in the Ring:

1. In profile: General silhouette - neck - shoulders - topline - tail set - depth of brisket - rear angulation.
2. Front View: Head - eyes - ear carriage - expression - width and depth of forechest - legs - feet.
3. Rear View: Rear legs - hams - hocks - shoulders - neck - ribspring - loin.
4. Moving - Coming & Going: Body moving in a straight line - elbows and hocks - legs moving on the same plane - dropping feet down smoothly and straight.
5. Moving - Side View: Carriage of body - Top line - tail placement – reach and drive.
6. Standing Free: General silhouette - soundness of body - pride of carriage - sound and confident temperament.

Good Handling:

1. Keep one eye on your dog, the other on the judge at all times; don't be caught sleeping. Follow the judge's instructions carefully,
2. Stack your dog quickly and properly, then "quit picking". Worry about details later when the judge is not looking. If you keep picking at your dog and restacking him, you will make him tense and look bad, besides telling the judge you don't think he is good enough to go up.

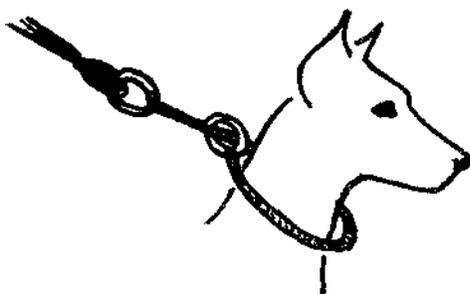


3. If you feel you cannot show your dog to advantage because he is hemmed in or someone is covering you, move, unless the judge has specifically placed you.
4. Keep your dog looking good all the while you are in the ring; keep him either standing alert or stacked. He can relax but still look good.
5. When you hold your dog in a stack or pose for any length of time stand slightly away from him. Crowding or hovering over the dog distracts from him. Talk to him while he is holding a pose; it will help to keep him relaxed.
6. Don't stand between your dog and the judge. You are showing the dog, not yourself. If the judge walks around behind the line, you move around your dog to keep him in the judge's view. When you move around your dog, keep him on the side of you which puts the dog between you and the judge.
7. Pay attention to what the other exhibitors are doing; if they line up their dogs to face a certain way, turn your dog, too.
8. Carry plenty of liver to bait and keep his attention and looking alert. If food does not work, carry a small squeak toy or his ball.
9. Feed the dog the morning of the "day before" the show, then not again until after the show. This will keep him more alert, and he will show more interest in your bait.
10. Don't over hand handle; a little can be good handling; very much is only an insult to the judge, revealing your lack of confidence in the judge's judging ability.

Ring Etiquette:

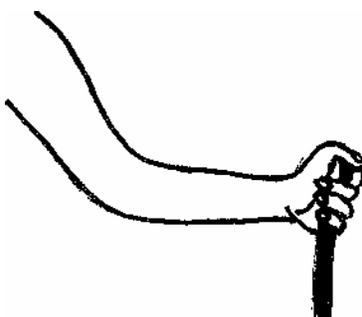
1. Be on time for judging.
2. Exercise your dog before exhibiting; don't let him foul the ring.
3. Don't crowd to be first into the ring; one place in line is as good as another.
4. Do not cover another exhibitor and his dog.
5. Avoid crowding the dog in front of you while gaiting and stacking your dog.
6. Do not bottle up an area the judge is trying to move dogs in.
7. Be a good winner as well as a good loser.

Practice .and practice and PRACTICE SOME MORE until you and your dog are a smooth working and happy team together. I wish you and your Doberman all the enjoyment and good fortune there is to be had in the Dog Show Game. Remember always - it is great to win, it is greater to have competed, but it is greatest of all the deep understanding and closeness you and your dog will develop for one another from having exhibited him.



PROPER WAY TO PUT A CHOKE COLLAR ON THE DOG.

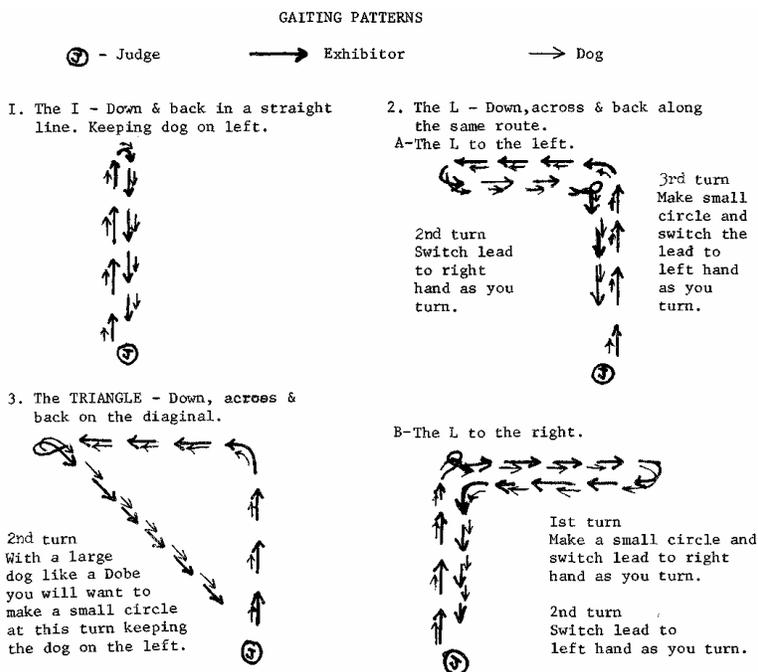
With the dog on your left side the collar comes over the back of his neck and through the inactive ring and attaches to the lead.

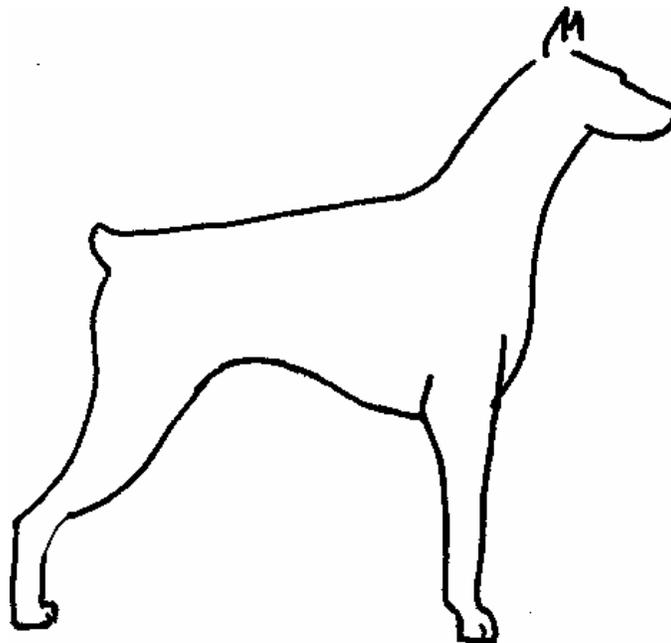


PROPER WAY TO HOLD THE SHOW LEAD,

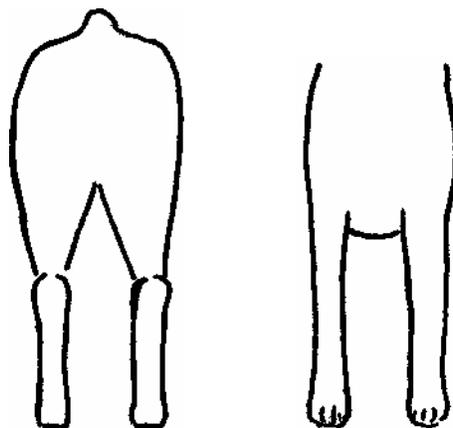
Hold your left arm out from your shoulder so that your arm is parallel to the ground. Wad the lead up and hold all of it in your hand with it laid over your index finger.

Gaiting Patterns



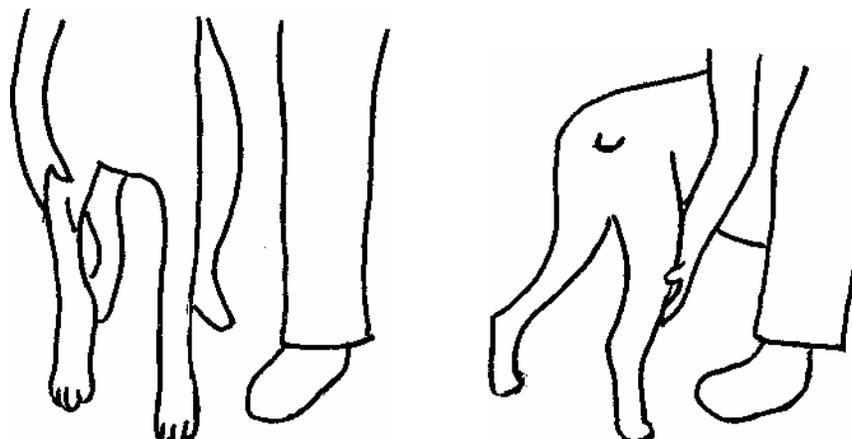


The Doberman Pinscher is set up all four feet square for the show ring.
Rear legs are set slightly wider apart than the front legs.
Top line should be level.
His neck pulled up and arched.
Head held high with muzzle parallel to the floor.



Front legs perpendicular to the floor when viewed from the front or side with toes pointing straight ahead.

Rear legs perpendicular to the floor when viewed from the side or rear with toes pointing straight ahead.



Place front feet by firmly grasping the elbow and lifting the leg up slightly and setting the foot where you want it.

Place rear feet by firmly grasping the leg at the stifle joint and lifting the leg up slightly and setting the foot where you want it.