

4-H FREESTYLE RULES

JUNIOR LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS:

Junior Beginner :

This level is for juniors with little or no experience. The Junior should move to the beat of the music and may be on or off leash. They will be judged on: how many moves the dog and handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dog and handler are interacting; and control of the dog by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. Judges must look to see if the handler has control of their dog. The routine length must be within 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Junior Intermediate :

Juniors must move into the Intermediate Level if they have three qualifying scores in Junior Beginner at the 4-H Level or any other Titling Organization. In Musical Freestyle (MF), the Junior should be dancing to the music with dance steps (foot movement). In Heelwork to Music (HTM), the Junior should be moving to the beat of the music with foot movement. The routine may be on or off leash. Moves should match the music selected. Judges will be looking for: how many moves the dog and the handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dog and handler are interacting; and, control of the dog by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. The handler's control of the dog is imperative. The routine length must be between 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Junior Advanced:

Juniors must move into the Advanced Level if they have three qualifying scores in Junior Intermediate at the 4-H Level or any other Titling Organization. In Musical Freestyle (MF), the Junior should be dancing to the music with dance steps (foot movement) and have arm (and/or hand) movements to the beat of the music. In Heelwork to Music (HTM), the Junior should be moving to the beat of the music with foot movement and have arm (and/or hand) movements to the beat of the music. The routine must be off leash. There must be a good variety of moves successfully completed. The Junior and dog should be dancing/moving together as a team with no visible hand signals and the dog must be off leash. The routine must cover 50% of the ring space. The dog and handler should be interacting positively and should appear to be dancing/moving as a team. The routine length must be between 1:30 and 2:15 (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Sassy Senior:

Entry with a dog nine years old or more. The Junior should move to the beat of the music and may be on or off leash. They will be judged on: how many moves the dog and handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dog and handler are interacting; and control of the dog by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. Judges must look to see if the handler has control of their dog. The routine length must be within 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Handi-Dandi :

Entry with either the dog or the handler or both must be physically and/or mentally challenged. The Junior should move to the beat of the music and may be on or off leash. They will be judged on: how many moves the dog and handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dog and handler are interacting; and control of the dog by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. Judges must look to see if the handler has control of their dog. The routine length must be within 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Brace:

Entry with one handler and two dogs. The Junior should move to the beat of the music and may be on or off leash. They will be judged on: how many moves the dogs and handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dogs and handler are interacting; and control of the dogs by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. Judges must look to see if the handler has control of their dog. The routine length must be within 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Pairs :

Entry with two handlers and two dogs. The Junior should move to the beat of the music and may be on or off leash. They will be judged on: how many moves the dogs and handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dogs and handler are interacting; and control of the dogs by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. Judges must look to see if the handler has control of their dog. The routine length must be within 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

Team :

Entry with equal number of handlers (but more than two) and dogs. The Junior should move to the beat of the music and may be on or off leash. They will be judged on: how many moves the dogs and handler successfully complete; the variety of moves; how the dogs and handler are interacting; and control of the dogs by the handler. The routine should cover 50% of the ring space. The handler and dog should appear to be having an enjoyable experience. Judges must look to see if the handler has control of their dog. The routine length must be within 1:30 and 2:15 minutes (plus or minus 15 seconds, allowed for recording and playback device speeds).

HEELWORK-TO-MUSIC (HTM):

1. A HTM routine should be done with the dog and the handler in close proximity to each other throughout the routine. On all moves, the dog and handler team should move as one entity throughout the routine, displaying heelwork and creativity in the many positions and behaviors possible in HTM.
2. Heelwork is defined as any position between the handler and the dog within 360 degrees radius and includes, but is not limited to: right heel; left heel; face-to-face; face-to-back; back-to-back; back-to-face; and all angled positions between handler and dog within 360 degrees.
3. HTM routines may include:
 - Sustained close-in heelwork sequences, with the dog and handler moving together in sustained parallel position to one another (straight, curved or circular patterns);
 - Moving or stationary close-in heelwork behaviors done next to the other or together (for example, spins, turns, pivots, paws or hands on moves etc.);
 - Close-in connecting moves (either stationary or in motion) that connect heelwork sequences together;
 - Other creative and/or original close-in moves.
4. During heelwork sequences, behaviors, and/or moves the dog and the handler should maintain the same close proximity to each other throughout each type of sequence, behavior, or move. During a move such as a spin, the closest part of the dog's body in relation to the handler (head, shoulder, side, rear) should maintain the same close proximity.
5. The general heelwork position and proximity in a HTM routine will be determined during the first 15 seconds of the routine.
6. Judges will penalize each instance of the loss of the heelwork proximity in HTM routines with .1 to 1.0 point deductions from the Technical Merit (TM)– Precise Execution score, depending on its severity.

7. No distance work should be included in HTM routines.
8. The dog or the handler should not weave through or be in-between the other's legs or arms in HTM routines. (Note: The dog's tail is excluded from this).
9. No intentional attempt on the part of the dog or the handler to jump, either horizontal or vertical, should be included in HTM routines.
10. Judges will penalize each instance of distance, weaving / in-between legs or arms, or jumping in HTM routines with .3 to 1.0 point deductions from the Technical Merit (TM) – Content score, depending on it's severity.

MUSICAL FREESTYLE (MF):

1. Any move is allowed, as long as it does not endanger the dog or handler.
 2. Distance work, weaves, jumps, send-outs, and/or innovative new moves are encouraged.
 3. Moves may be performed from any position.
-

MUSICAL INTERPRETATION AND MOVEMENTS OF HANDLER AND DOG:

In both the HTM and MF styles, the movements of the handler/dog team should be in time with and match the style or theme of the music being played. In some cases, the movements will be in the form of dance steps and body positions. In other cases, as in a theatrical or story-telling routine, the team will be performing interpretive movements, moods, and/or expressions to match the music selected. With each higher level of competition, the team will be expected to perform a higher quality / level of interpretive movements in their routine.

SCORING SYSTEM

TECHNICAL MERIT (TM) Score (50% of Total Score) (1.0 lowest/10.0 highest):

1. Content (amount, variety of moves, fullness of routine) – **3.0** points maximum.

Also includes:

- Different positions the dog is worked on in relation to the handler (within 360 degree radius of the handler).
- Different body positions/movements (with arms, legs, head, feet, etc. – handler and dog)
- Main moves and Transitional moves (moves used as transitions between the main moves).

2. Precise Execution of All movements by dog(s) and handler(s) – 2.0 points maximum.

Also includes:

- How “Precise”, synchronized, and together the handler(s) and dog(s) are throughout.
- How effective handler’s cues are, how quick and well dog responds.
- Consideration of mistakes and/or refusals.
- How well the handler disguises cues to the dog.

3. Flow of movements from one to another by dog(s) and handler(s)– 2.0 points maximum.

Also includes:

- Consideration of set-ups, starts and stops, and breaks in routine.
- Flow of main and transitional moves.
- Flow of the overall routine.

4. Difficulty of Routine (intricacy of steps, different paces, difficulty of handler(s) movements with dog(s) movements) – **2.0 points maximum.**

Also includes:

- Difficult use of different handler and dog body positions/movements.
- Control of handler's body and movements with dog's movements.
- Complex and/or new, innovative moves and combinations.

5. Stepping in Time to the Music - staying with the beat – **1.0 point maximum.**

Includes using the entire body, upper and lower (arms, legs, head, etc.).

TOTAL TECHNICAL MERIT (TM) Points Possible = 10.0

-AND-

ARTISTIC IMPRESSION (AI) Score (50% of Total Score) (1.0 lowest/10.0 highest):

1. Animation, Attitude, Attention, and Harmonious Interaction (Bonding) of dog(s) and handler(s) – **2.5 points maximum.**

Also includes:

- Concentration, and readiness of handler(s) and dog(s) throughout.

2. Quality and Creativity of Choreography, layout of routine - **2.0 points maximum.**

How creative and well all movements are arranged and laid out in the routine.

3. Use of 50% Ring Space - **1.5 points maximum.**

How fully, completely, and balanced the 50% ring area is covered by the handler(s) and dog(s).

4. Coordination of Routine with Music, Musical Interpretation – 1.5 points maximum.

How well the routine matches the music and/or theme that is/are presented.

5. Costume Coordination with Music and Routine – 1.5 points maximum.

How well the handler's costume and the dog's adornment match and/or complement the music, theme, and routine presented.

6. Spectator Appeal - 1.0 points maximum.

How well the spectators appreciate, enjoy, and respond to the routine.

TOTAL ARTISTIC IMPRESSION (AI) Points Possible = 10.0

* Consideration is given to both handler(s) and the dog(s) on all scores.

QUALIFYING SCORES

Beginner HTM and MF - 5.5 Average Score

Intermediate HTM and MF - 6.25 Average Score

Advanced HTM and MF - 7.0 Average Score

Team HTM and MF - 6.0 Average Score

Pairs HTM and MF - 6.0 Average Score

Brace HTM and MF - 6.0 Average Score

Handi-Dandi HTM and MF - 6.0 Average Score

Sassy Senior HTM and MF - 6.0 Average Score

FOR ALL ROUTINES:

1. All handlers are responsible for checking in with the music desk before the event with 2 copies of their music, labeled with competitor's name, division, and music selection. Music may be either on cassette tape (to start at the beginning of the tape) or on CD (with track number of selection clearly labeled).
2. Music checks will be available immediately before each competitor's routine, to insure that the volume is at the competitor's preferred level prior to the performance. It is recommended that competitors use the music checks conscientiously, as placement of the speakers may be different at each event and may affect the dog's performance. Toys and/or training aids (other than food/food treats) may be used in the ring during music checks.
3. No food (animal or human), treats, bait, or training aids are allowed in the ring while a routine is being judged. Violations will result in the routine being disqualified.

4. The routine will be performed in an area 50' x 50'. For State show, the ring size is approximate in the lower area of a stadium seating arena.
5. In the instance of a sound system failure, show coordinators will insure that each competitor receives a fair, complete, and uninterrupted performance of their routine.
6. The routine must start, continue, and finish within the confines of the ring area.
7. Use of Ring Space: The goal with this, for all routines, is for the dog(s) and handler(s) to cover as much of the total ring area as possible, presenting moves in various areas of the ring and balancing the routine throughout the ring space. The expectation for how much ring space should be covered is at least 50% of the total ring area.
8. All movements of the dog(s) should appear natural and safe for the dog to perform. There should be no intentional held or forced movement of the dog(s) by the handler(s).
9. In the "Pairs" and "Team" divisions, the handler and dog teams may switch partners with other members in the routine, at any time during the routine.
10. With On Leash entries, the leash must not be dropped more than 25%, or the routine will be disqualified.
11. On Leash and Off Leash entrants will be judged by the same criteria, except for the specific 'tight leash' and 'dropping of the leash' rules for On Leash competitors.
12. In division levels where entrants are given choice to do their routine either On or Off leash, all On and Off leash competitors of each division level, together, compete for placements.
13. The judging time of the routine will start when either the dog or handler begin to move (not when the music starts). The time will stop when both the dog and handler have stopped moving / the ending pose of the routine, or when the 15-second over time is reached, whichever comes first.
14. Audience applause and feedback is always welcome and expected at all events. A competitor or their associate must not request that the general public hold applause during and/or after performances.
15. Canine freestyle is a team sport, with handler(s) and dog(s). In all divisions, the **handler and dog** will be judged and scored, as one unit.

16. Music should portray the relationship between the dog and handler and show personality of dog. Discretion should be used in selecting music. Music must show good taste and should not be offensive or suggestive in language.

HANDLER COSTUMES AND DOG ATTIRE:

HANDLERS:

1. Handler Costumes are permitted and should be suited to the theme of the music. If the music does not have a theme, costuming is at the discretion of the handler.
2. Costumes must be neat and presentable. Glitz, Sequins, etc. may be used where appropriate.
3. Costumes must not be offensive or sexually suggestive. A violation of this will result in the routine being disqualified.
4. Costumes should be done in good taste showing the theme of music and routine. The following is strongly discouraged: short shorts and skirts, tight sweaters, low necklines, bare midriff and belly for girls and bare chests for boys. Costume should not distract, limit, or hinder judge's view of dog.

DOGS:

All dogs may wear:

1. Decorative/Coordinated Neck Collar or Scarf.
2. Decorative/Coordinated Buckle Collar (snap or regular).
3. Non-chain Flat Decorative/Coordinated Martingale Collar.
4. Un-decorated Harness, with no added adornments to it.
5. Decorative/Coordinated Ankle Bands – on any number of the four legs, placed low near each foot, covering no more than 1 ½” of each ankle.

Drop-Coated dogs may wear Decorative/Coordinated Hair Bands, Bows, or Barrettes, provided that they are specifically for tying the hair away from the eyes.

*No other adornment than the above is allowed on dogs.

Dogs must not wear:

1. Glitter, Paint, Hair Dye, or Nail Color.
2. Different/un-normal hairstyles or shaves.
3. Any kind of Prong, Choke or Slip Collars (made of chain or any other material).
4. Snoods.
5. Head Halters.
6. Tab/Training Tab.

*Any violation of any of the above will result in the routine being disqualified.

PROPS AND OTHER ITEMS:

1. Props may be stationary or movable.
2. Dogs and/or handlers may carry or retrieve a prop.
3. Dogs and/or handlers may carry and/or retrieve a stationary prop or other item. However, a prop or other item may not be thrown or tossed with the intent that it be immediately retrieved.
4. Props must be an integral part of the routine and must be used by the handler and dog team. A violation of this will result in a deduction of 1.0 point from the Total Technical Merit (TM) score and 1.0 point from the Total Artistic Impression (AI) score.
5. Time allotment for set up and taking down of props is 30 seconds and must be done by the handler only. A violation of this will result in a deduction of 1.0 point from the Total Technical Merit (TM) score and 1.0 point from the Total Artistic Impression (AI) score.
6. No Human or Animal Props are allowed in competitive divisions. A violation of this will result in the routine being disqualified.
7. A prop or other item should not aid the dog and/or handler in the execution of a move. Ring gating, barriers, or other items should not be used to aid movement(s) in the routine.
8. When a prop or other item is used/presented in the routine, the dog's demeanor and/or drive should not change markedly. The dog's eyes or head should not follow a prop/item significantly. A violation of either of these will result in the routine being disqualified.

MISC. DEDUCTIONS:

1. For excessive talking during the routine, a deduction of .1 to .3 (depending on severity) will be taken from the Artistic Impression (AI) – Animation/Interaction score.
2. For excessive barking during the routine, a deduction of .1 to .3 (depending on severity) will be taken from the Artistic Impression (AI) – Spectator Appeal score.
3. If there is physical manipulation of the dog (i.e. grabbing of collar, tight leash, pushing, pulling, tapping, holding, prodding, etc.) and it is done less than 50% of the routine, a deduction of .3 will be taken, for each instance, from both the Technical Merit (TM) – Precise Execution and the Artistic Impression (AI) – Animation/Interaction scores.

DISQUALIFICATIONS (DQ): A routine will be disqualified for any of the following:

1. Fouling/Eliminating in the ring.
2. Leaving the ring (dog and/or handler at any time during the routine).
3. Food/treats/bait/training aids in the ring.
4. Using/presenting a prop/item that causes marked change in the dog's drive and/or demeanor.
5. Dog's eyes and/or head following prop/item significantly.
6. Any additional humans or dogs (outside of competition definitions) in the ring, at any point during the routine.
7. Any violation of dog attire or adornment.
8. Costume, Music, or Routine offensive or sexually suggestive in language or presentation.
9. Routine too short or too long.
10. Dropping of leash over 25% of routine in any On Leash entry.
11. Abusive behavior toward dog, referee, judge(s), or ring steward.
12. Physical manipulation of the dog (i.e. grabbing of collar, tight leash, pushing, pulling, tapping, holding, prodding, etc.) done forcefully or over 50% of routine.

MICHIGAN STATE 4H JUNIOR DIVISIONS

Divisions/Levels/Categories/Routine Times/Requirements

NOTE: TIMES DO NOT INCLUDE THE 15 SECOND OVER OR UNDER ALLOWANCE

DIVISION and LEVEL	CATEGORY	ROUTINE TIME	REQUIREMENTS
SINGLES – Beginners	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS 5.5
SINGLES – Intermediate	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS 6.25
SINGLES – Advanced	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS at 7.0
TEAM	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS at 6.0
PAIRS	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS at 6.0
BRACE	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS at 6.0
HANDI-DANDI	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS at 6.0
SASSY SENIORS	HTM/MF	1:30 TO 2:15	3 SHOWS at 6.0

Average Ring Size - 50' x 50'