



Judges Training Manual

Version A – 07/23/20

Judges Training Manual

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Introduction

One of the most important duties we assume as TICA Allbreed judges is the responsibility of training new judges. This manual has been developed to provide guidance to judges conducting ring-training sessions. Its purpose is to ensure that the expectations of both the trainee and TICA are met. At the end of the trainee's formal ring training, we would hope to be adding a new judge with a well-rounded knowledge of the expectations of exhibitors, visitors, clubs, and TICA.

Please remember that the trainee will soon be your peer and will represent TICA, just as you are doing now. Training judge and trainee should have respect for one another at all times!!! Your job is to help mold the best TICA has to offer – and that comes through positive attitude and constructive criticism.

The Preliminaries

In accordance with the requirements of the Judging Program, trainees shall complete the Permission to Train Form for each show at which s/he wishes to train, obtaining written permission from both the club hosting the show and the instructor giving the training. These forms shall be signed by all parties prior to the day of training.

Training Sessions are limited to one training session per calendar day.

Ring training consists of handling a minimum of 40 kittens, cats, alters, household pets or new breeds. The selection of the cats for training is at the training judge's discretion, but trainees are limited to 2 ring training sessions with the same judge during any 1-day, 2-day or 3-day show period, provided that the training sessions are on different cats/classes.

The trainee may train with any Approved Allbreed Judge, ten of which must be different Licensed Ring Instructors. Trainees must train with a minimum of 30 different judges and s/he may repeat sessions with the same judge no more than 3 times during their training.

Trainees residing in North America must train in at least six North American Regions. Trainees residing on either the East or West Coast must train on an opposite coast at least once. Trainees located centrally must train on both coasts. All trainees are strongly advised to train at least once overseas. Criteria for overseas training is defined in Judging Program 44.3.2.5.

The trainee is expected to handle his or her own cat(s) during the training period, but without calling attention to the ownership of the cat(s). The trainee shall not leave the judging ring and may not have access to a show catalog until s/he has completed training and been dismissed by the instructor. The instructor shall complete the evaluation form and review any Breed Comparison Reports, scanning and emailing or mailing copies to the Trainee no later than three days after the close of the show. If mailing copies, then upon request, the trainee shall provide the instructor with a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Ready, Set, ...: When you agree to work with a trainee, you might ask them to contact you about a week in advance of the session. This gives the two of you the opportunity to discuss the trainee's requirements, what session you will be working on with them, what the trainee has previously worked on and what help they might require. As a result, you and the trainee will arrive at the session with some expectation of what will be worked on. **GO!**

Beginning the Ring Training Session

Be prepared: Make sure you have a copy of the breed standards and the uniform colors descriptions. It is also useful if you have photos or drawings of breeds you've agreed to work on to refer your discussions to. Remember, the Standards were written from cats, not cats from Standards. The old saying, "a picture is worth a thousand words," comes into play here.

Pick the correct "level": It is important to determine how far along a trainee is with their ring training so that you can determine how to conduct the session. Obviously, your expectations should be different, depending on whether this is the first or the last training session for the trainee. You will have the superior knowledge and expertise, so don't try to prove it by making the session so difficult that learning is hampered by "intimidation."

Mutual expectations: Discuss with the trainee your mutual expectations. Your trainee may be somewhat nervous, if this is their first session with you, so let them know how you'd like to conduct the session and what to expect. Gear the session to the level of knowledge or expertise you'd expect. On the flip side, have the trainee tell you their expectations, concerns, topics or breeds they'd like to pay particular attention to. (Hopefully, you've had an opportunity to discuss this prior to the session.)

Stages of training: The trainee shall have a minimum of 40 ring training sessions handling approximately 40 kittens, cats, alters or household pets. The first 35 of these training sessions shall consist of handling full classes (i.e., championship cats, alters, etc.) or handling full breeds and/or breed groups (i.e., the Persian Breed Group; Maine Coon kittens, cats and alters; etc.). The selection of cats for training shall be at the training judge's discretion but should complement the training needs of the trainee. Trainees shall make a set of judge's books, if not furnished by the hosting club. These books shall be made from another judge's book and not from a show catalog.

At the end of a training session, the instructor may ask the trainee to write a Breed Comparison Report on a breed or breed group designated by the instructor. This report will be handed in to and reviewed by the instructor who will then send it to the appropriate persons. A minimum of fifteen Breed Comparison Reports are required during the training period.

The following pages contain suggested topics to include at different stages of the trainee's ring training experience. While you are certainly free to tailor your sessions with your trainee, it is important that you include these topics. It is important to your trainee to have the benefit of our collective "wisdom" and experience in order to develop their own organization and style.

And do not forget: Thank the exhibitors for their patience during the conduct of ring training sessions. Having a quality ring training session and a well-trained judge will surely benefit them in the end. Let visitors in on what is going on, too. So much is a mystery to them, already, besides seeing two people in the ring instead of one! Explain your process.

One suggestion was to post a "Ring Training in Progress" sign in front of the judging table.

Beginning Sessions 1-5
Introduction to TICA, The Business
The Judge's Many Roles
Handling Basics
Introduction to TICA – The Business

What is the business of TICA?

TICA is a registry of cats. But to support that business, TICA does a whole lot more. Probably the most important activity supporting the business of *registering* cats is the whole collection of activities and programs which support *exhibiting* cats—licensing of shows, judges, and clerks, and maintaining a multilevel system of titles and awards.

What are the Vision and Mission of TICA?

It is important to understand what TICA, the business, is trying to accomplish. As judges, we have an important role in ensuring that TICA accomplishes its goals so that it remains strong and continues to grow.

The *Vision* of TICA is:

- “To be the cat fancier’s choice for registration, exhibition, comradery, and guidance on feline care and welfare and genetically sound, responsible breeding.”

TICA’s *Mission* is:

- To be the most accurate and comprehensive feline registry in the world
- To encourage and sanction cat shows that are both enjoyable and educational

How does TICA intend of fulfill its Vision and Mission?

TICA has adopted certain “strategies” which it pursues in order to encourage cat fanciers to participate in TICA. These *Strategies* are:

- Conduct judging without known titles.
- Maintain the unique show format.
- Encourage a friendly show atmosphere
- Membership entitles an individual vote.
- Integrate business processes in order to deliver timely and professional service to customers.
- Support the development of new clubs in order to increase the number of show opportunities for current members and as a way to encourage more interest in the cat fancy.
- Preserve and expand the cat fancy.
- Deliver a quality recognition program
- Maintain the genetic-based registry.
- Register Household Pets; recognize and honor them on an equal basis with pedigreed cats.
- Collaborate with other registries in order to support feline welfare efforts.

In addition, the organization has adopted a set of “values” which guide its decisions and the conduct of its business. You might consider these as ethical statements or “guiding principles”. They are:

- Conduct judging without known titles.
- We respect, honor, and promote the welfare of all cats
- We maintain an accurate and comprehensive genetic registry
- We foster comradery and good sportsmanship
- We provide friendly, efficient customer service

The essence of TICA is captured in its “*Motto*”:

- “TICA for fabulous felines, fun and friendships!”
- “Wherever You Are, You’re in TICA’s World”

How does TICA know when it is successful?

The following are the *key success indicators* that the organization chooses to track as indicative of its success in fulfilling its Vision and Mission:

- Conduct judging without known titles.
- Growth in cats exhibited in TICA shows
- Growth in registrations
- Satisfaction of clients with services provided by TICA

The Judge’s Many Roles

Remember, the business of TICA promises “Fabulous Felines, Fun and Friendships.” It is a “given” that the organization, exhibitors and visitors all expect us to exercise our professional training and make our best judgment regarding the quality of the cats presented to us. But our role is greatly expanded.

From the Exhibitors’ perspective.

- Handling. While many of our exhibitors are extremely competitive, many others just enjoy showing their beloved cats and socializing with their friends and fellow cat fanciers. Perhaps the most important thing we can do as judges is reduce the concern that substantially all exhibitors have over how their cats are handled. Most exhibitors will forgive us our choices of the cats we recognize, but no one will forgive us if we don’t handle their cats with respect. A show is definitely not “fun” if the exhibitors are worrying about how we will handle their cats. Much weight is given to this skill in both written evaluations and complaints/feedback from exhibitors.
- Demeanor/Appearance. When we are “behind the table,” we have to remember that we are professionals, being paid for a professional job. It is important that we look and act professional. While we can still be “fun” and “friendly”, we shouldn’t forget that the most important job that we have is to judge cats, not spend time socializing with friends.

From the Visitors’ perspective.

Education. Visitors are paying money to visit our shows. They are important not only from the revenue they generate for the club, but also as potential exhibitors. While they may be quite happy to see all the beautiful cats and visit with the breeders, they are delighted when we can take some time to talk about the cats and provide a little education.

Obviously, how much of this that we can do is often dependent on the amount of time and number of cats we have to handle. Encourage trainees, as they begin judging and feel comfortable in doing so, to be on the watch for a building visitor crowd and an opportunity to exhibit some “showmanship.”

From the Club’s perspective.

Organization/Timeliness. As we all know, much goes into putting on a cat show. From the clubs’ perspective, our job is not only to judge the cats to the best of our professional ability, but also to do so within a time frame set by the club. While those time frames may often times seem unrealistic, it is still incumbent on us to try our best to honor them. It is important to remember that this commitment is not

only in the case of trying to judge many cats in a short time frame, but also in the case of handling a few cats within advertised show hours. The clubs depend on exhibitors and you are the show.

Handling Basics

Build Confidence! It is important in the early sessions of ring training that the trainee begin to develop confidence in handling the cats. After our many years of experience, we hardly think about our handling “routines.” We have developed our own styles and handling the cats is second nature to us. For the beginner, it can be an intimidating experience.

You are encouraged to let the trainee either remove the cats from or return them to the judging cages. The harder task, but the one which requires the most skill is the removal from the cage. It is suggested that you allow the trainee to do this, at least for some portion of the session. It is this way that the trainee learns how to approach a strange cat and safely remove it without hurting either themselves or the cat. Share with them your techniques. e.g., what do you do when a cat is difficult to remove; when it is shy, frightened, aggressive, or wants to come out its own way! Remind the trainee that you do not need to be a hero and try to drag out a reluctant cat. They can always call for the handler and ask them to remain at the table and soothe the cat.

How do you bend properly to protect your back.? When and how do you use teasers? Discuss cat “body language.”

Discuss with your trainee that their attention should be on the cat at all times. Distraction from the cat (talking to clerks or the audience) can be a good way to get hurt or for a cat to escape the ring. Treat each cat gently and kindly and with respect. Always “be aware”!

Stress that the trainee must be gentle with the cats. Relaxed cats will show themselves off. Do not over handle.

Discuss how you approach the responsibility of judging kittens and the impact you might have on their future show career. Are you extra gentle with them? Do you take a little more time and use a few more toys? Visitors love to watch kittens play!

Let your trainee handle the cat on the table in order to begin developing the judging routine. This will be very awkward at first for the trainee, as they are handling strange cats of many different breeds—plus, they will tend to be nervous and unsure of themselves. Offer pointers but let them build their confidence.

Handling the Breeds. Emphasis should be on handling the different breeds and body types. The judge should help the trainee in basic handling techniques for each breed or breed group (e.g., not stretching PS when taking them out of the judging cage, but definitely stretching BG), help them find a routine in how they will handle each cat (no matter what the breed – maybe checking body, then head, then pattern, etc.), disinfecting the table and hands after handling each cat, and practicing basic mechanics (each HHP gets a Merit ribbon), etc. If the judge sees a solid foundation in handling the cats, and the trainee has not passed out from the pure stress of being in their first training sessions, then perhaps more advanced techniques can be added to these sessions.

Please be receptive to specific questions asked by the trainee regarding the breed standards and other issues – even though these sessions focus on handling. The trainee is very nervous at this point, and it is your duty to help them build confidence and poise. Constructive criticism only, please!

Beginning II Sessions 6-10

Handling

Handling Mechanics

Judging large classes

Selecting cats for finals

Knowledge of Breeds

Handling

Continue to help the trainee develop the handling routine. Help them refine the judging routine – how do you do it? Body, head, tail, etc.? Discuss with the trainee your routine for checking for “faults.”

Mechanics

It’s time for you to share how you approach judging a large class of cats. What is your secret for keeping track of cats when you can’t even leave your top color or division winners in your ring? How to do keep track of the cats that you think are worthy of a final? Do you make lists, or do you have your own “shorthand” in the margins of your judge’s book? Share your tips!

Knowledge of Breeds

Time to start getting to the nitty-gritty regarding breed standards, finding the essence of each cat, marking a judges’ book, and selecting cats for finals. The trainee may or may not be comfortable in initially providing their opinion to the judge. Therefore, the judge should help “bring out” the opinions from the trainee (asking what they think about the length of the muzzle, rather than simply asking “what do you think about this cat”). This will help the trainee develop confidence while providing focus points for each breed (very important at this point!). But essentially, the flow of information is from judge to trainee.

Assigning breed comparisons. You might consider assigning a Breed Comparison Report to your trainee. Remember, this must be completed and returned to you for your review.

Since these reports pertain to cats being shown the day of the show and it is time consuming for trainees to find the cats and owners, you might help out your trainee by letting the exhibitors know that a breed comparison has been assigned and the trainee will be looking for those cats later that day or weekend. Encourage them to seek out the trainee.

The judge should not assign more than one Breed Comparison Report per session. The judge can flip through the judging book and assign classes in advance of handling those cats or ask the trainee to suggest cats or breeds for comparison.

Intermediate Sessions 11-20

Time Management

Handling

Mechanics

Knowledge of Breeds

Time Management

We are often faced with the dilemma of judging the cats in the time allotted by the show committee. We often times have more rather than fewer entries to judge in a timely manner. Discuss with the trainee how you approach your time management first thing in the morning. What decisions do you make from the very beginning? What impact does the experience of your clerk have on your timing? If you have few entries and a lot of time, what do you do? What opportunities do you take given an excess of time? On the other side of the coin, how do you manage to judge twice as many cats in the same period. What “shortcuts” do you take? How do you make up time?

Handling

Continue to watch for the development of a smooth handling and judging routine. You might sit in the audience and observe the trainee handling some cats and give feedback to them. (In private, of course.) Discuss and demonstrate how you make a structural assessment of the cat your judging. What are your techniques? How do you interpret your findings and what impact does it have on your awards?

Mechanics

Ask the trainee to turn in a copy of their judge’s book pages to the ring clerk for review. This is part of developing a routine and should be started as soon as possible in the training program. If the trainee is comfortable enough, ask them to start hanging flats. Do not have them hang “their” flats for you to come along and change. You do not want the audience discussing whether the trainee or the judge was “correct.”

Knowledge of Breeds

The flow of information should be equal between judge and trainee. You should be sharing opinions with the trainee. It is extremely helpful to spend this time discussing the essences of the cats and of judging.

Start challenging the trainee a bit more. Discuss and compare specific features as they relate within and among the breeds. Ask them to compile SP and AB finals. Ask them why they chose those cats. Feel free to refer to the Standards or photos and sketches to help interpret the written word and compare to the cats being judged.

Try a little “exercise.” Ask the trainee to make a quick, overall assessment of each class. Then for each cat, ask your trainee to name the best attribute of the cat. If they had a magic wand, what would they change? Watch for examples of cats which would make a good subject for a genetics lesson. Talk about eye colors, coat patterns, ghost markings, black skull marks on white kittens. Look at paw pads and nose leather. Household pets can make an interesting basis for genetics discussions!

Advanced Sessions 21-35 ***Handling – Showmanship (present finals)*** ***Knowledge of breeds – Selections***

Handling – Showmanship

Consider letting the trainee present your finals for you. You should sit quietly in the audience and observe. Remember, constructive criticism only!

Knowledge of Breeds – Selections

Flow of information is from trainee to judge. Give the trainee time to think about their decisions, and then let them convey that information to you. The majority of the conversation should be initiated by the

trainee. Do not simply give your opinion to the trainee and go on, without discussing the cat (assuming the cat warrants a discussion). There will be times when the cat is simply not a good example of the breed, and you move on quickly. But most of the time, the cat warrants some kind of discussion (every cat has something good about it!). Ask the trainee exactly what they think of the cat (or group of cats) and how they would rank it. Make sure the trainee is seeing the whole cat, and not just the individual pieces. Discuss how to make decisions based upon the points contained in the standards.

Discuss how you make decisions when the class has no outstanding example, when the class is uniformly “mediocre.”

Listen to what your trainee has to say – and make sure it is correct. Any misleading information at this point could easily be ingrained in the trainee’s head. And so, these sessions are some of the most crucial in the development of the trainee. The trainee is feeling anxious about finishing ring training sessions and may think they know it all – so challenge them softly. Find out what they know – and they will hopefully surprise you positively!

The Final Five Sessions 36-40

The trainee shall stay with the training judge the entire day; handling cats as designated by the judge. The art of judging should be refined here. The judge should tell the trainee exactly what will happen that day. The trainee is extremely excited at this point and will hardly be able to contain themselves. So, put them to work! Have the trainee hang all of your flats, present your finals, handle as many cats as you have time for, etc. Do not forget to let your audience in on the plan for the day! It’s still your ring and your decisions.

If the trainee is sitting in the exhibitor’s area for part of the time, have them mark their book as they see the cats on the stand. It is interesting to see how a trainee would rank the cats simply by “sight” and not being able to put their hands on the cats or see them up close.

At this point, ask the trainee to take responsibility for their opinions. Ask them to announce their breed or perhaps discuss with exhibitors some of the points the trainee brought up. Don’t embarrass them. To the greatest extent possible, let them show their true judging style. Ask them to judge a large class of MC or BG. The judge could sit in the chairs and watch them, as would an exhibitor. Then discuss what the judge observed. Hopefully, it will be a positive experience for both judge and trainee.

Information flow is from trainee to judge.

The Solo Ring. Solo judging shall consist of handling no fewer than 20 entries (or of handling the entire class if fewer than 20 cats are present.). Solo training sessions and ring training sessions may not be conducted during the same 1-day, 2-day or 3-day show period. At least two of the four solo training sessions must be done outside the region of residence or beyond 500 miles from the trainee’s residence. At least three of the solo judging sessions must be with 3 different Licensed Ring Instructors. Trainees shall furnish their own rosettes for their solo finals. Solo judging may take place before the show begins, during the show or after the completion of the show.

This is it! Well, your trainee has been through lots of learning and lots of training. Now, it is time to put it “all together” in the Solo Ring/s. The solo ring is like a final exam. This is where the trainee will synthesize everything they have been studying, training, and practicing for. They should be able to efficiently run the ring, working with the clerk and (where appropriate) with show management and

exhibitors. They should be able to reach the conclusion of their performance, the presentation of their Best Cat, all done with confidence, authority, and most of all respect for the cat.

This will be the time that the trainee will need to make decisions for themselves. Up till now they have used the set up in the ring and judge's table that you've used. Now, they get to decide if the flats go on their right or left. Where does the judge's book, the spray bottle paper towels and trash go? It might take a ring or two to decide where to put everything so that they are comfortable with it. Watch their routine, i.e. clean table, judge cat, hang ribbons, mark book, clean table-etc. See how well they have defined their "flow".

Before your trainee begins, discuss with them your expectations, and answer their questions or anxieties. Be sure you are comfortable with the clerk; we all know what impact either a "good" or "bad" clerk can have on our own performance. If you are uncomfortable with the clerk, you might talk to the show management about either reassigning someone else temporarily or "drafting" someone for the task.

Also, have the trainee think about how they will present their finals – short comments per cat, taking the cats out, etc. Remind them to stay focused on the cats and not the audience. This will help with the nerves.

One thing that should be stressed is, to keep a feeling of love for the process and to stay in perspective. This is not rocket science or life or death decision making. It is a cat show! Enjoy yourself and so will the cats and everyone who is watching.

So Your Trainee Thinks They're Ready to Be a Judge!

Have License Will Travel. Discuss with your trainee the "ins and outs" of traveling. It won't take them long to become "the expert" traveler. In the meantime, here are some helpful hints to keep your "new judge" prepared. Add your own tips!

Be Comfortable. Shoes are the most important thing to keep you "on your toes" all day. Make sure and have comfortable shoes. If need be, keep a super comfortable extra pair in your briefcase to change into.

Nourishment. Let us face it, you can't always depend on the airplanes to be on time. They certainly do not serve any food. At some point you will be stuck in the boonies with no food in sight. If you have special dietary needs, be prepared. Eat breakfast and do not count on the cat show lunch to be "Atkins Friendly." Have a protein bar handy!

Judging Supplies. Especially in the winter, be prepared for static. Certain parts of the country (and world) are especially problematic when it comes to winter static. You might carry along a can of Static Guard. You can spray the bottom of your shoes to keep you from shocking the cats. Most of the time, you can find some odor neutralizer in the show hall, but it's always wise to carry a small bottle of X-O, just in case.

Carry an expense form with you, as the clubs rarely have one available. Obviously, a pad of paper will suffice.

Speaking of which, make sure to carry along a note pad or scratch paper (for notes and determining finals). If you like to use rings to keep your judging pages together, take an extra along as not all clubs use them. Do not forget a pen and extra finals pages.

First Aid. The clubs are supposed to have a first aid kit as part of their standard show requirements. You might consider taking along your own first kit, including antibiotics.

Don't be Stranded! Sometimes you might find yourself stranded at the airport when that "promised ride" does not show up. Make sure that, before you leave home, you know the location of the show hotel and have the address and telephone number.

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