



**THE KENNEL CLUB**

*Making a difference for dogs*

**THE KENNEL CLUB  
WORKING GUNDOG CERTIFICATE  
HANDBOOK**



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**The aim of the Working Gundog Certificate (WGC) is to provide credible proof that a handler and dog are a competent partnership, with the qualities to fulfil the general requirements of work on a shoot.**

**1.0** It is not a competition, nor is it an assessment of the suitability of dogs for entry into competitive gundog events. The assessment may be either at a WGC day, a gundog working test (GWT) or on a shooting day.

**1.1** The certificate is open to all dogs on the Kennel Club breed register, whose handlers wish to demonstrate their working ability.

**1.2** Many dogs are trained to the high standards required to carry out all those tasks in the shooting field that are difficult, impossible or impractical for their handlers to accomplish, such as finding and retrieving dead or wounded game from difficult locations, thick cover, rivers, ponds, over hedges, ditches, fences and locating sparsely situated game on open moorland.

**1.3** The work of a gundog is complex and numerous training aspects, skills, experience and abilities may be demonstrated simultaneously. For this reason, many of the assessment exercises set will comprise several different elements and combinations of the criteria. For example, a simulated drive may test control, obedience, temperament, hunting and retrieving. A hunting exercise, meanwhile, may assess hunting, control, pointing or retrieving.

**1.4** To gain the Working Gundog Certificate you and your dog will have to successfully complete the assessment. The Certificate will be marked with the criteria achieved.

The criteria are laid down as minimum standards of good practice and the levels of training necessary, so that handler and dog can show they could be an asset to a shoot, and will not interfere with the well being of other people, dogs or livestock.

**2.0** The criteria are: **Control, Obedience, Temperament, Hunting and, where appropriate, Retrieving.**

### **2.1 Control:**

This will be considered throughout and concerns whether a handler has reasonable control over the dog. A dog unable to be controlled or control itself or the use of excessive or continuous noisy commands to maintain control would result in a ‘not ready’ assessment being given. Barking and whining are never acceptable, however a slight noise, which does not detract from the dog being a useful shooting companion, may be acceptable in some circumstances and according to breed standards.

### **2.2 Obedience:**

The dog should walk to heel, off lead, remaining reasonably close to the handler without running off. It should show steadiness by remaining at heel, staying in the sitting position, or dropping to shot when other things are happening around it such as other dogs retrieving, game moving or dummies being thrown. The dog should return to the handler on command.

NB. Off-lead heelwork is not a requirement for the pointing only breeds.

### **2.3 Temperament:**

Working gundogs need to be able to mix and work with people and other dogs without showing any undue aggression.

Care needs to be taken to ensure that any incident is viewed sensibly and in its entirety. For example, if a dog has been pestered by another and finally resorts to growling or snapping, this needs to be viewed in relation to the provocation and the dog’s overall behaviour. Dogs that are gun-shy would also be given a ‘not ready’ assessment.

## 2.4 Hunting:

The dog must hunt effectively in difficult locations and on open ground, handlers may give encouragement to their dog, but certain exercises are designed to assess the hunting capability. Clear refusal by a dog to enter cover, would be assessed as 'not ready'. The pointing breeds will locate game by air-scent and the style of their hunting will vary from the other breeds, there is no necessity to enter cover to be able to point game.



## 2.5 Retrieving:

The dog must pick up dummies or game from a variety of locations, over obstacles, from land and water and bring them to the handler. If a dog hunts well but does not find a dummy or game, a ‘pass’ could be given, provided retrieving is satisfactory when assessed on other exercises. Handlers will be able to encourage their dog but a clear refusal to pick-up and retrieve, or picking up and subsequently abandoning the dummy or game, will result in a ‘not ready’ assessment. Sloppy retrieving, or poor delivery, which could allow wounded game to escape, must not be condoned. However, if the dog puts the retrieve down briefly to readjust its grip, this may not be penalised provided that its retrieving overall has been satisfactory.

Water. The dog needs to demonstrate that it will enter water freely, swim and bring a dummy or game out of the water to the handler. A straightforward, marked retrieve should be set. A dog, which uses its initiative and enters or returns by an indirect route or needs encouragement by the handler moving forward, should not be penalised. Distractions on the water or dense reeds must be taken into consideration. However, refusing to get in or out of the water, putting a retrieve down on leaving the water for a reason other than to readjust its grip, failure to retrieve or return to the handler will be classed as ‘not ready’.

Obstacles. An obstacle may be a fence, wall, hedge, ditch, stream or other natural feature, which the dog must negotiate to retrieve a marked dummy or search for game. It is the confidence and ability to negotiate the obstacle that is being assessed, not individual brilliance to cover long distances or height. Therefore, dogs which find a way through, under, round or need encouragement by the handler moving forward, should be passed provided they do it effectively and without a clear refusal to work.

**NB.** Some breeds do not retrieve and are used solely for locating, pointing or flushing game.

# THE ASSESSMENT



**The purpose is to see whether the handler/dog partnership is ready for the shooting field. It is, therefore, essential that all the necessary qualities of a competent working partnership be demonstrated.**

**The assessment may be taken either at a WGC day, a Gundog Working Test or on a shoot.**

## **What will happen at a GWT**

**3.0** The participants will be assessed against the criteria using separate exercises or those exercises used for the GWT may be utilised.

**3.1** The assessors are responsible for making sure that all the criteria can be assessed using the exercises available on the day.

## What will happen on a WGC day for dogs that retrieve using dummies

3.2 On arrival at the event, participants should:

- a) Register with the organiser and draw an identification number.
- b) After the introductions by the organiser, handlers and dogs will walk to the start area, with dogs off lead (assessing: control, obedience, temperament and behaviour in the company of other handlers and dogs).

NB. The following exercises should then take place in any order:

- c) There should be a simulated drive with half the participants beating and half waiting with the standing guns. During the drive dummies will be thrown and guns fired. At the end of the drive, the waiting dogs will then be sent for the marked retrieves thrown during the drive and the beating dogs can sweep up behind the line of guns for unseen dummies. This exercise will then be repeated with the dog's roles reversed, (assessing; control, steadiness, hunting, marking ability, obedience, delivery, ability to retrieve and return to handler).
- d) There will be a simple marked retrieve from water (assessing; willingness to enter water and swim, control, ability to retrieve and return to handler).
- e) Dogs will be required to complete a marked retrieve from over an obstacle (assessing: willingness to negotiate an obstacle, control, ability to retrieve and return to handler).
- f) Finally several handlers and their dogs will be positioned close together while a mini drive takes place: shots are fired and dummies are thrown in front. The dogs will then be left sitting whilst their handlers collect the dummies (assessing: temperament, obedience, control).

**NB** Only standard canvas dummies which may be covered with fur or feather will be used for retrieves.

## What will happen on a WGC day for dogs that point

**3.3** The assessment may be run at a specifically arranged WGC day or in conjunction with a pointing breeds training day.

**3.4** The presence of live game is essential to assess hunting, locating, pointing and steadiness.

**3.5** Dogs must be tested for their stamina. To hunt ground in a regular pattern, point live game, produce on command and be steady to flush and shot.

**3.6** Some participants may wish to take the retrieving assessment which might be organised on the day or at a later GWT or a WGC day.



## What will happen on a WGC assessment taken on a shoot using game

**3.7** This may be any type of shooting day, either private or one organised by a club specifically for the assessment and will be for dogs and handlers who are already experienced working with game.

**3.8** The participants should be employed in their usual function, and so may be assessed at the peg, in the beating line, picking up, with a walking gun, wildfowling, rough shooting, or a combination of these or other tasks. The actual tasks accomplished will be indicated on the certificate.



## At the end of an assessment day:

**3.9** Those that pass will be awarded a Working Gundog Certificate with the specific criteria and tasks that have been assessed recorded on it.

**3.10** Those who are assessed as 'not ready' will receive an assessment form with guidance on the areas requiring further training.

## **Notes to participants**

**3.11** Information about proposed WGC days, gundog clubs, working tests and pointing breeds training days can be obtained from the Kennel Club.

**3.12** It is the duty of the handler to satisfy him or herself that their dog is suitably trained, physically fit and prepared to undertake the work allocated by the assessors before directing their dog to undertake the allotted exercise.

**3.13** It is acceptable for handlers to carry a walking/shooting stick.

**3.14** Handlers may give quiet reminder commands to their dog, to maintain control and steadiness but these should be kept to a minimum. Handlers should not use excessive noise either verbal or whistle.

**3.15** Handlers should abide by the instructions of the assessors regarding dogs being on or off lead during the day.

**3.16** There will be opportunities during the day to discuss any areas of concern with the assessors.

**3.17** Handling must not involve any physical correction of a dog.

**3.18** Bitches in season must not be brought to an assessment.

**3.19** For those deemed 'not ready' the assessment can be re-taken at a later date after further training.

## How to organise a day

**3.20** Application must be made to the Kennel Club, whether the event is being run at a GWT, on a shoot or at a separate WGC day.

**3.21** When permission is granted, the Kennel Club will send the relevant paper work and assessors should then be appointed.

**3.22** The Kennel Club maintains a list of suitable assessors.

**3.23** A Schedule for the day may need to be prepared.

**3.24** A current Public Liability Insurance document must be available.

**3.25** Veterinary support should be arranged by the organiser.

**3.26** Decisions that will need to be made:

- a. How places are to be allocated.
- b. Meeting and start times.
- c. Meal/drink arrangements.
- d. How applicants will be notified of whether they have a place on the day.
- e. Directions to the venue, including the post code if possible. These should either be put on the schedule or sent later with other arrangements for the day.
- f. Distribution of Handbooks.
- g. Fees to participate.
- h. The organiser will produce a participant list for everyone.

**The aim of the assessor is to ensure, that the handler/dog partnership, meets the aim of the certificate.**

**4.0** An assessor must have knowledge and practical experience of shooting and the practical roles of handlers and dogs working in the variety of tasks required for a day's shooting.

**4.1** The suggestions in this category are: Kennel Club Field Trial Panel Judge, judges at gundog working tests, game keeper, gun/loader, shoot owner/captain, picker-up, beater, gundog trainer.

**4.2** One qualified assessor is required for up to three participants then for larger numbers a minimum of two assessors are required, one of whom must be a qualified assessor.

**N.B.** Qualified assessors are Kennel Club Field Trial Judges or others who have satisfactorily assessed the certificate three times and have been approved to assess the certificate.



## ASSESSING

**Assessors should base their assessments on the criteria.**

**4.3** They should ask themselves the question ‘Would this dog and handler be an asset out shooting and be able to do their work with reasonable efficiency without interfering with the well being of other people, dogs and livestock?’

**4.4** Depending on the organiser(s) of the WGC day, gundog working test or shoot, their knowledge of the ground and requirements for the certificate, suggestions where particular exercises or tests could best be set may be made by the organiser(s) but the assessors will have the final decision.

**4.5** The ground to be used should be viewed and decisions made concerning how best to set the exercises in order to assess the participants, taking particular note of water, obstacles, simulated drives, wind direction and the hunting exercises. Assessors should take reasonable precautions for the safety of participating dogs.

### **4.6 Shoot Days**

On a shoot assessors will observe the participants throughout the day as they work their dogs in their usual role. The assessors will not devise any situation but simply be observing how a handler and a dog cope with the specific task which arise naturally during the day.

**4.7** It is recognised that not all shoots will enable every element contained within the criteria to be assessed. For example, there may be no need for water retrieves, some dogs may be required to hunt more than retrieve, or obstacles may be unsuitable for dogs to negotiate without help. However, good liaison with the shoot should provide sufficient resources and opportunities for those participating.

**4.8** Assessment is on a ‘pass’ or ‘not ready’ basis. Some elements within the criteria will be assessed more than once so it is important to keep accurate notes to enable decisions on the overall performance to be accurately made. For example, if a poor delivery is noted, this should be compared with other retrieves so that an overall ‘pass’ or ‘not ready’ can be given.

**4.9** Dog and handler may be under observation for a considerable time, but perfection and polish are not the objective, has the handler got good control without using undue noise, and is the dog a reliable, efficient shooting companion, which can put game in the bag. It should be recognised that all well trained dogs are likely to make the occasional mistake. However, this is clearly different from a dog which is noisy, unsteady, lacking control, disobedient, refusing to retrieve or enter cover.

**4.10** It is most important that assessors should be prepared to give appropriate advice and guidance to participants.

**4.11** For those deemed ‘not ready’, an assessment form should be completed with brief notes made on the area(s) of concern.

**4.12** A list of all successful participants with copies of the relevant entry forms, signed by the organiser and the assessors, will be returned to the Kennel Club and a Certificate will then be issued.

**4.13** The non-qualified assessor form, where applicable, should be completed by the qualified assessor and returned to the Kennel Club.

**4.14** It is hoped that assessors will give a brief talk summing-up the day.

**4.15** A list of successful participants will be published in the Kennel Gazette.



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