



**AMERICAN  
KENNEL CLUB™**

**Performance Events Department**

**\*\*REMINDER\*\***

January 2026

To: All Clubs Licensed to Host Retriever Hunting Tests and Retriever Hunt Test Judges

Subject: **Judges Must Score All Abilities / Added Description of Master Level Dog/ Timing of Qualifying Ribbons**

This is to remind your club of three types of changes made to the *Regulations & Guidelines for AKC Hunting Tests for Retrievers*. Below is a brief summary of each type and how it will appear in the next reprinting of the regulation book with an underline shown for language added and a strikethrough for language deleted.

1) This change emphasizes the importance of judges having to score all abilities by providing a numeric score for each ability rather than summarizing the dog’s performance into one number for all abilities or disregarding some abilities and assigning a numeric score on marking only. This change went into effect October 1, 2025, and is the following:

**Chapter 4 Standards for Junior, Senior and Master Hunting Tests. Section 2.**

The Judges shall score the dogs on (a) their natural abilities, ~~including their~~ and must provide a score from 0-10 on these four abilities – 1) Marking (memory), (2) Style, (3) Perseverance/courage/hunting and (b) to relatively greater degrees in Senior and Master Hunting Tests, their (4) Trainability as evidenced in steadiness, control, response and delivery. These scores, for each of the four abilities, must be represented on each dog’s scoresheet called the “Hunting Test Evaluation Form” as found below.

**AKC RETRIEVER HUNTING TEST EVALUATION FORM**

Dog Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Dog #: \_\_\_\_\_

Test Level: (circle one)      **JR**      **SR**      **MR**

DOGS ABILITIES	Marking Series 1	Marking Series 2	Marking Series 3	Marking Series 4	A V E R A G E	Blind Series				A V E R A G E	Average Score All Series
						1	2	3	4		
Marking (Memory)											
Style											
Perseverance Courage Hunting											
Trainability Steadiness Control Response & Delivery											
<small>Note: A dog must receive a separate independent average score of five (5.0) or higher in each ability related to Marking and a separate, independent average score of five (5.0) or higher in each ability related to Blinds.</small>						<b>TOTAL SCORES</b>					
<small>Note: If at any time, a dog is graded zero (0) by two Judges for the same ability, the dog cannot receive a Qualifying score and the handler must be so informed by the Marshall.</small>						Divided by 4 for <b>OVERALL AVERAGE</b> <small>(must be 7.0 or higher)</small>					

## Guidelines for the Hunting Test Regulations for Retrievers

### Part III Evaluation and Scoring of a Dog's Abilities

In scoring a dog's abilities in a Test, the Judges must assign a numerical score from "0" to "10" that reflects their ~~estimation~~ evaluation of each ability in each test in a series. ~~that they have seen demonstrated.~~ When a dog's abilities are evaluated over multiple series the average score shall be calculated to a tenth of a point. If the average score is less than 7.0, the dog shall not qualify.

A judge that is found with incomplete scores on a dog's scoresheet or evaluation form, may be subject to a fine or disciplinary action. If a judge receives a negative observation report for incomplete scoring, refusing to score all abilities, or not judging to the standard in cases where the Regulations are clear, attendance at a seminar may be required before accepting future judging assignments. If a judge receives a second negative observation report, judging privileges may be revoked.

2) This change provides added descriptions of what is to be expected of a master level dog. This change went into effect December 1, 2025, and is the following:

#### **Chapter 5. Test Requirements for Junior, Senior and Master Hunting Tests. Section 7. Master Hunting Test.**

(10) A Master dog should have one clean triple marking series (not handled on a mark) in a three series weekend test.

(11) A Master dog that is clearly out of the area of the fall and running at length should be graded "0" in Marking.

(12) A Master dog should make continuous progress towards a blind retrieve. Acceptable reasons for a dog not progressing would be occurrences warranting a dog being brought back toward the handler such as, a dog going beyond the blind, a dog being brought back to be seen and a dog being brought back to go over, around or through an obstacle announced by the judges.

3) This change allows clubs the option to award qualifying ribbons follow each dog's run. This change went into effect November 1, 2025, and is the following:

#### **Chapter 1. General Regulations. Section 20. Catalogs. (6<sup>th</sup> paragraph)**

*Qualifying dogs shall not be announced nor shall Qualifying ribbons be awarded until the Official Catalog has been marked by the Event Secretary and both assigned Judges for each individual test level or division thereof have certified the accuracy of the Secretary's Certification at the conclusion of each testing level and/or division.*

*Or at the option of the host club, the timing of when qualifying ribbons are awarded can be changed to following a dog's run, so long as it is clear from the judges, the dog qualified. Clubs utilizing this option should let their judges know in advance of the event and it must be stated clearly in the premium list.*

These regulation updates have been posted to the [Retriever Hunting Tests News And Updates](#) webpage. Please send any comments or questions to: [huntingtest@akc.org](mailto:huntingtest@akc.org) If you send a request to update your email address, please provide your name, city and state.