



*Photo: Brian Aghajani*

# IPO TRIAL CHECKLIST

Everything You Need to Know About  
Hosting a Trial

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## IPO TRIAL CHECKLIST

*Is your club hosting a trial? Have you volunteered to be Trial Secretary for the first time? If so, then this trial checklist is for you! Within this checklist, you will learn how to secure the trial date, create a trial flyer, plan for each phase of the event, and properly set up for trial day. This trial checklist is geared toward a club-level USCA trial, but will work for most other organizations as well (other than the Requesting an Event and Submitting Paperwork processes, which are specific to USCA Rules and Regulations).*

**Time Frame:** Allow *at least three months* to plan for a trial (longer if using a foreign judge)! Trials can be approved and prepared for in less time, but it creates unnecessary stress on all involved. By adequately preparing for a trial, you can ensure that the event is well-prepared for and smoothly run.

**When To Schedule A Trial:** Schedule your trial for the time of year that works best for your location. You want to have decent weather and access to good tracking fields, and this will vary by region. Most importantly, the conditions should be safe for the dogs and provide the greatest opportunity for a successful event.

Trials may be one, two, or *in rare cases*, three-day events. Trials must be scheduled for either a Saturday or Sunday, or both days if entries allow. According to the USCA Trial Rules, "Fridays or Mondays may only be used as over flow in the event that there are more than 24 phases scheduled on the adjoining Saturday or Sunday" (see "USCA Approved Variances" in the USCA Trial Rules), or if there are unusual circumstances due to weather or time constraints. Additionally, an event that starts on a Friday may not start until 12 noon, per USCA rules. Most trials should only take one or two days; the exceptions are championship trials, or extremely full trials that require an additional day in order to meet the requirements for phases per day per judge. Make every effort to schedule your trial for Saturday and/or Sunday.

**Purpose of the trial:** The rules for IPO provide specific reasons for an IPO trial. This includes recognizing a dog for its particular purpose, testing the work ethic and athletic ability of the dog, preserving utility in working breeds, promoting health and overall fitness of the dog, and proving breedworthiness. But for clubs hosting an IPO trial, there is one overriding duty: **providing a proper venue and smoothly run trial for handlers to showcase their dogs and earn their titles**. Competitors should not have to worry about whether a trial is going to be well-run, set up properly, operated according to the rules, and run fairly with the best interests of the dogs and handlers in mind. Therefore, it is the duty of the club to ensure all these requirements are met.

### SECURING THE TRIAL DATE

- I. **Contact judge and check availability for trial date** at least three months before the anticipated trial date. FCI and SV Judges should be contacted a minimum of six to eight months in advance.
- II. **Select a designated trial secretary** or person to handle registration and paperwork for the trial.

**III. Create trial flyer and registration form** immediately after confirming with the judge, or skip to Step IV and create the trial flyer after your event has been approved.

**A. Trial flyer should include:**

1. Date of trial
2. Judge
3. Location of trial
4. Titles offered
5. Cost for entry
6. Contact information and mailing address for registration
7. Hotel/Lodging options
8. Any additional information, such as entry deadline, tracking conditions, etc.

**B. Trial registration form should include:**

**1. Dog Information**

- a. Registered Name of Dog
- b. Present Titles
- c. Registration Number and Registry
- d. Tattoo/Microchip number
- e. Scorebook Number
- f. Breed
- g. Date of Birth
- h. Sex
- i. Title entered for
- j. Whether the dog is Handler Owner Trained (HOT)

**2. Handler Information**

- a. Handler name
- b. Phone and email address (for contact purposes)
- c. Address
- d. IPO organization membership number and expiration date (For example: USCA membership # and expiration date)
- e. Date/Club where *handler* earned their first BH (i.e. took the written BH Exam)
- f. Whether or not the handler needs to take the written BH exam

**3. Owner Information (if different from handler)**

- a. Owner name
- b. Owner address
- c. Owner membership number and expiration date (if applicable)

**4. Liability Waiver and a Signature Line**

**IV. Submit an Event Authorization Form** through the USCA website immediately after confirming with the judge. Upload your trial flyer and registration form with the EAF, if you have this prepared in advance. Otherwise, you may create your flyer and registration form later, and send it out to clubs in your region (see Step V).

- V. **Advertise your event to the Region** once it has been approved by the Regional Director. Per USCA rules, events must be advertised 21 days in advance, but an approved EAF *with* the trial flyer and registration form uploaded onto the USCA website counts as event notification.
- VI. **Post trial flyer and registration form** on club website and/or Facebook page, along with the Trial Contact information.

## PREPARING FOR THE TRIAL

### I. JUDGE

- A. **Flight/Travel** accommodations
- B. **Hotel/Lodging** accommodations
- C. **Transportation** to/from airport and hotel
- D. **Judge's dinner** – date/time/location
- E. **Judge's gift** (select air travel-friendly gifts)

### II. HELPER

- A. **Properly classified** for the level of trial
- B. **Proper equipment** for the trial
- C. **Valid helper book and membership** in the correct IPO organization (USCA for USCA trials, DVG for DVG trials, etc.)
- D. **Helper's gift** – something to show appreciation/thank your helper

### III. TRIAL PAPERWORK

- A. **Trial Scoresheets ("Entries" and "Summary" sheet)**—downloaded from [USCA website](#); filled out BEFORE the trial with club, helper, tracklayer, and dog/handler info; printed for trial day
- B. **Judge's Sheets for each title**—downloaded from [USCA website](#), filled out with dog/handler information before trial
- C. **BH exam** – downloaded from [USCA website](#), and printed (if needed)

### IV. TRIAL SET-UP/EQUIPMENT

#### A. General

1. Trial Secretary for the event
2. Microchip scanner and spare batteries
3. Marking paint for marking the field in OB and protection
4. Extra clipboards and pens (in case judge or trial secretary needs them)
5. A way to organize scorebooks as they come in (expandable folder, binder with plastic protective sheets in it, etc.)
6. Waters for judge, helper, and group members

7. Poster board or white board for scores (Title, Dog/handler, A-B-C-Total)
8. Printed labels or club stamp for scorebooks (optional, but very helpful)
9. Microphone/speakers for judge's critiques (optional for club trial, but a must for a Championship event)
10. Plans for food and drinks at event
11. Cashbox and petty cash for event
12. Port-a-Potty (if needed)
13. Hand sanitizer
14. First Aid Kit, just in case
15. Raffle (optional)

## **B. Tracking**

1. Tracking coordinator
2. Tracking fields (always good to have a back-up field)
3. Tracking flags
4. Tracking articles for IPO2 and IPO3 entries
5. Tracklayer(s)
6. Spotters/assistants
7. Numbered slips of paper (or keepsake items, if preferred) for handlers to draw their tracking order
8. Measuring tape or regulation-length tracking line to measure tracking lines against
9. A gift for the owner of the tracking field
10. A gift for the tracklayers (optional, but appreciated)

## **C. Obedience**

1. Flags for long down (one color for female, one color for males)
2. Regulation dumbbells and dumbbell stand
3. Regulation one-meter jump
4. Regulation A-frame
5. Gun (.22 caliber, usually) with enough blanks for the trial, plus extras
6. Blind for the long down (IPO3 only)
7. Four group members for OB Group
8. Chairs/staging area for the OB Group
9. Gun handler for the trial
10. Location and materials for BH Traffic Test
  - a. Bicycle
  - b. Car
  - c. Jogger
  - d. Neutral dog
  - e. Location and leash for tie-out

**D. Protection**

1. Properly classified helper capable of safe trial work, and with proper equipment (padded stick, sleeve, scratch pants, jacket)
2. Six blinds (even if only doing an IPO1, all six blinds must still be up)

**E. Awards**

1. **Trophies** (if desired) — Examples of common trophies include:
  - a. High IPO1/2/3
  - b. High in Trial
  - c. High Obedience
  - d. High Protection
  - e. High Tracking
  - f. High HOT
2. **BH certificates and awards**
  - a. Certificate for each BH Dog/Handler team (prepared in advance)
  - b. Certificate for first-time handlers passing the written exam (given even if the handler passes their exam, but the team fails their BH)
  - c. Medals or ribbons, etc. for BH handlers (optional, but a nice touch)
3. **Certificates for titles earned** (optional, but a nice touch)

**V. TRIAL SCHEDULE****A. Trial secretary sets the trial schedule** once all entries are in. Schedule should include:

1. Start time and meeting place
2. Order of the trial
3. Pairings for obedience (usually done with input from the club members competing)

**B. Trial schedule should be emailed** to the judge, all competitors, club members, and interested parties **at least three days in advance** of the trial (one week is better!).**C. Post trial schedule** on club website or Facebook page.**D. Judge's dinner** – Be sure to announce the date/time/location of the judge's dinner!**DAY OF THE TRIAL****I. CHECK-IN**

- A. All handlers check-in with Trial Secretary.
- B. Trial Secretary collects score books and checks USCA membership numbers.
- C. Helper gives his helper book to the Trial Secretary.
- D. Trial Secretary has judge's sheets ready for judge.
  - a. Trial secretary must ensure that the correct judge's sheets are presented to the judge, matched to the proper competitor, and in proper order.

**II. TEMPERAMENT AND ID CHECK**

- A. Trial Secretary instructs handlers to get their dogs for the ID check.
- B. Dogs are presented to the judge one at a time, and scanned for a microchip (or presented for a tattoo check).
- C. Trial Secretary must ensure the judge has the correct scoresheet for each handler, as tattoo or microchip number must be compared against the information on the sheet.
- D. Judge may hold a brief handler meeting after the ID check, once dogs are put away.

**III. SET-UP FOR TRACKING**

- A. Tracking coordinator divides up the field for tracks; designates where the IPO1s, IPO2s, and IPO3s should be laid.
- B. Tracklayers given articles at least 30 minutes in advance of laying tracks.
- C. Tracklayers lay IPO3 and IPO2 tracks; spotters note start times, and assist as needed.
- D. Competitors draw for tracks/tracking order.
- E. IPO1 competitors lay their tracks under the direction of the judge.
- F. Trial Secretary matches the scoresheets to the tracking order, and ensures the judge has the correct scoresheet for each track.

**IV. SET-UP FOR OBEDIENCE**

- A. Set up jump, A-frame, and dumbbells.
- B. Set up flags to mark long down positions.
- C. Have the long down blind on the side of field, ready to be set up for IPO3 Obedience.
- D. Mark the following in marking paint on the field:
  - 1. basic position
  - 2. five paces in front of jump
  - 3. five paces in front of wall
- E. Set up staging area and chairs for the group.
- F. Check and load gun, turn over to gun handler.
- G. Have waters ready for judge/group members.
- H. Have scoreboard ready.
- I. Trial Secretary should have scoresheets paired up and in order for each pair of dog/handler teams in obedience.

**V. SET-UP FOR PROTECTION**

- A. Set up all six blinds.
- B. Mark the following in marking paint on the field (with assistance from judge and helper):
  - 1. call-out position
  - 2. the set-up for the escape
  - 3. the helper's mark for the escape

4. the maximum distance for the dog to catch the helper on the escape
  5. the line for the dog/handler to set up for the long bite
- C. Trial Secretary should have scoresheets in order for the entire flight of protection.

## **VI. BH TRAFFIC PORTION**

- A. Judge will direct this portion of the trial, but have all equipment and volunteers ready:
1. cyclist
  2. person driving car
  3. neutral dog and handler
  4. jogger
  5. leash for tie-out
  6. crowd of people

## **VII. FOOD AND DRINK**

- A. Breakfast/coffee items provided at tracking (and/or back at OB field)
- B. Lunch and drinks for sale
- C. Take care of your judge and helper! Feed them well, offer drinks, provide breaks if needed.

## **VIII. END OF TRIAL – PAPERWORK**

- A. Trial secretary (with judge's oversight) fills in scores on the scoresheets, scorebooks, and helper book; both parties sign the paperwork and scorebooks.
- B. Trial summary and entry sheets (original plus two copies) sent to USCA Office, along with appropriate fees (\$4 per USCA entry, \$29 per non-USCA entry). This is extremely important, as these sheets provide the official record of each dog's titles.
- C. Judge's scoresheets stay with the judge, along with a copy of the finished trial entry and summary sheets.
- D. Judge will provide club with his/her Expense Report; Club Treasurer must write a check to cover the judge's itemized expenses and fees.

## **IX. END OF TRIAL - AWARDS**

- A. Return handler scorebooks and helper book.
- B. Hand out trophies, certificates, and awards.
- C. Present gifts to judge, helper, tracklayers, etc.
- D. Thank the judge, the helper, the tracklayers, the group members, and all volunteers.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**  
You made it through the trial!