

MORE THAN JUST HEELING

by Alison Jaskiewicz

Canine Freestyle Federation would like to set the record straight - CFF Freestyle is FAR MORE THAN JUST HEELING TO MUSIC, despite what you may have seen repeatedly published by others. Yes, there is more than one group promoting Freestyle and their styles of Freestyle are very different. Please take the time to differentiate among them and the events and demos they sponsor.

Here are the facts about CFF Freestyle:

Every CFF competition Level requires more than heeling. Any performance of only heeling would be eliminated for not fulfilling the required moves and also score poorly in Artistic Impression. CFF demonstrations adhere to the same definitions and guidelines as competitions while remaining a bit more flexible about required movements.

Yes, heel and front are foundation positions required for a standard of judging, but the creative potential for movement in and out of and relating to these two positions is boundless. Don't believe anyone who tells you there is a position or movement which is a dead-end or useless in Freestyle. There are always creative possibilities in Freestyle. Your job is to choose the ones which make your dog look his best.

Yes, Freestyle is based on obedience. You have devoted hours, months and years training your dog. Don't you want to build on that training rather than throwing it out and starting all over? Actually all types of Freestyle build on obedience whether they acknowledge it or not.

CFF defines traditional positions such as heel and front as well as movements new in Freestyle such as lateral work, pivots and others. We do not assume that everyone has the same mental images of these positions and movements. They almost certainly do not and a defined standard is necessary for judging.

Each Level of CFF competition has required movements. Points will be lost for not performing these movements. All other movements are defined as optional. If they add to the quality of a performance you may earn a higher score but you will never lose points for not performing them.

CFF trains its judges carefully and is constantly refining that process. CFF judges must have earned a UD because they must have an excellent understanding of the training involved. They must study videos, and actual performances or classes if possible. They must practice scoring and discuss and review their scoring with CFF representatives. Their eye must be trained to understand and evaluate movement and choreography. This is a far different task from judging obedience as every performance is different.

Just as in obedience and in all established sports, CFF judges may not participate in a competition where they are judging. To maintain fairness in judging it is imperative that there be no possible appearance of impropriety or prejudice.

CFF is very specific that the dog must move with the music. A well known principle of dance is that the eye is always drawn to movement which matches the rhythm of the music. This is why CFF requires the dog to move with the rhythm of the music. This is a dog sport and the focus should be on the dog. The handler may, and frequently does, also move with the rhythm of the music. However, if the handler alone moves with the rhythm of the music the focus shifts to the handler and the dog becomes a prop. If music is selected as an accompaniment without regard to the rhythm it is not an integral part of a presentation. As such the music imposes no restraints on the performance, but does not contribute to it either.

CFF offers you the opportunity to learn how to create movement with music with your dog, unique to your dog, reflecting your bond and relationship with your dog and a delight to the spectator's eye.

CFF IS FAR MORE THAN JUST HEELING TO MUSIC. CFF incorporates sound, solid and proven theories of movement and choreography developed by the dance community over many, many years. CFF would like to help you learn these principles so you and your dog can experience the joys of Freestyle.

**Canine Freestyle Federation
Built on Obedience and Training
Growing with Music and Choreography**

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