



Welcome to the Sport of Schutzhund/IPO/IGP

What is Schutzhund

Schutzhund was introduced in Germany at the turn of the 20th century to test German Shepherd Dogs for the qualities necessary for police work, odor detection, search and rescue, narcotics, bomb detection, and others. Breeders use this insight to determine how and whether to use a Schutzhund-tested dog in producing the next generation of working dogs. Although Schutzhund was originally used to find suitable German Shepherds for challenging tasks, this sport has become widely popular across the globe and many people participate in this sport with various breeds of dogs.

Qualities of an Ideal Schutzhund Dog

- Strong desire to work
- Courage
- Intelligence
- Independent Work Ethic
- Trainability
- Strong bond to the handler
- Perseverance
- Protective Instinct
- Strength
- Endurance
- Agility
- Scenting ability
- Confident Barking
- Bite Quality

The Schutzhund/IPO Titles

1. Begleithundpruefung/BH (prerequisite title)
2. Schutzhund/IPO 1 (first level)
3. Schutzhund/IPO 2 (second level)
4. Schutzhund/IPO 3 (most advanced level)
5. Faehrtenhund/FH 1 (tracking dog title)
6. Faehrtenhund/FH2 (advanced tracking dog title)
7. Ausdauerstest/AD (endurance test)

The prerequisite title is a temperament test which requires basic obedience and confidence around people, dogs, and the environment. A dog that exhibits excessive fear, distractibility, or aggression cannot pass the BH and thus may not go on to compete in the Schutzhund sport. The tracking and endurance titles are commonly offered at IGP competitions, however, they are not mandatory to compete for IPO titles.

Three Phases in Schutzhund (listed in order of occurrence)

1. Tracking
2. Obedience
3. Protection

Dogs must pass all three phases in one competition, usually held on one day, to be awarded a Schutzhund Title. All competitions take place outside on large fields. Each phase is judged on a 100-point scale. The minimum passing score for each phase is 70 points. At any time the judge may dismiss a dog for showing poor temperament, including fear or aggression.

The Phases in Detail

Tracking

This phase tests the dog's scenting ability, its mental soundness, and physical endurance.

- A designated track layer walks a predetermined pattern on a grass or dirt field, usually in the shape of an L, U, or P
- 2-3 small articles are placed along the way
- The articles are 1.5" * 3" in size and can be wood, metal, or carpet
- After 30 to 60 minutes, the dog is directed to follow the track on a 10 meter long line while being followed by the handler
- When the dog finds each article, it is expected to indicate the article, usually by lying down with the article between the front paws
- The dog is scored on how intently and carefully it follows the track and indicates the articles. The length, complexity, number of articles, and age of the track varies for IPO1, IPO2, and IPO3

Obedience

This phase tests the dog's desire to work for the handler, its obedience level, and its ability to work under heavy distractions (people, dogs, gun fire)

- Handler dog teams work in pairs. One dog is placed in a Down position on the side of the field and its handler leaves out of sight while the other handler dog team works the Obedience routine on the field. After the first handler dog team completes all exercises on the field, the teams switch places.
- All exercises are performed off leash on a flat collar
- Fast, slow, and normal heeling exercises, including heeling through a group of moving people
- Gunfire during heeling to test the dog's reaction to loud noises
- Sit and Down in Motion (dog stops to sit/down while handler keeps walking/running)
- 1 to 2 recalls
- 3 retrieves (flat surface, jump, steep A-Frame)



- Send out—the dog is directed to run away from the handler straight and fast and then lie down on command
- Obedience is judged on the dog's accuracy and attitude. Dogs are expected to show enthusiasm for the work.

Protection

This phase tests the dog's courage to protect himself and his handler and its ability to be controlled while doing so.

- This phase imitates law enforcement wherein a “bad person”/helper is detected and detained by the dog with handler guidance
- The helper wears a heavily padded sleeve on one arm
- 6 blinds on the field need to be searched by the dog based on handler guidance. The helper hides in one of them
- When the dog finds the helper, it indicates this by barking and guarding the helper. The dog must guard the helper to prevent him from moving until recalled by the handler
- A series of exercises follow where the handler searches the helper and transports him to the judge
- At judge's cue, the helper either attacks the dog or the handler or attempts to escape. The dog must stop the attack or the escape by biting the padded sleeve. When the attack or escape stops, the dog is commanded to "out," or release the sleeve. The dog must out or it is dismissed

Common Misconceptions about Schutzhund

Schutzhund trainers use compulsion methods and a lot of pressure to get results

Training techniques vary, however, many dogs become trained and are very successful with positive reinforcement training. As judges increasingly scrutinize and demand spirit and the desire for the work in the dog, positive reinforcement training will become increasingly the philosophy of choice to achieve expectations of the sport.

Schutzhund is painful to the dogs

Dogs get treated with much respect. Unsportsmanlike conduct, either by the helper or the handler, towards the dogs is subject to immediate dismissal. Dogs competing in Schutzhund are trained methodically to manage the expectations put upon them. A complete training program to get a dog to the IPO3 level can easily take 3-4 years. Judges also pay attention to overall well being of the dog and whether the dog is well cared for.

Schutzhund makes dogs aggressive and dangerous

Schutzhund dogs are safer because their training makes them obedient, confident, and usually well trained



Only dogs with prospects for a job, i.e. Police Work should do Schutzhund

Most individuals do the sport for fun and to do something challenging with their dog and not with a future job of the dog in mind

Only German Shepherds can do Schutzhund

The sport has grown to accept many breeds. As long as a dog can jump the required height, has protective instincts, the ability to bark as well as develop a confident bite, they can do the sport! Any dog can do tracking titles and all dogs could do most of the required obedience.

Females can't be Helpers

It is rewarding to work with sport dogs. People with athletic ability, old or young, can become certified helpers. There are several female helpers in the sport!