



HOW TO JOIN A GSDL-WDG BRANCH CLUB

I want to join a GSDL-WDG Branch Club, what do I need?

1. A basic knowledge of the sport

Most branch clubs won't expect you to know all about the sport before you join but you should have a basic knowledge of IGP/IPO and its format. The sport is in three phases. Tracking, Obedience and Protection. Information is readily available on the internet.

Most branch club members train in all, three phases and obtaining working titles is their goal. If you are interested in attending a branch club, to watch their training and to have an opportunity to ask questions, please contact the club secretary (details of all clubs and contacts can be found on our website).

This can be a great insight into the sport and to gain an understanding of whether the sport itself, competition for titles and the training style they have is suitable for you.

2. A reasonable time commitment

A high proportion of people who are interested in the sport drop out within the first year as they become discouraged by the amount of time they need to invest or their perceived lack of progress. This isn't a sport that measures progress in 6 week chunks like other dog training courses or clubs you may have been involved with.

As a guideline, an average member in regular training seeking progress will be attending club sessions twice per week and working at home on obedience, tracking and protection techniques (which your club will define for you). On a weekly basis this time commitment is around:

- Obedience - around 6.5hrs (2 club sessions of 2 hrs each plus 10 mins twice per day at home)
- Tracking – around 4-6hrs (3-4 tracks per week)
- Protection - 10 hrs (2 club sessions of 5hrs each)

Training with a branch club is not a solitary endeavour and members are expected to help one another by attending training regularly, staying for the duration of the session, helping support the smooth running of the club and supporting club organised events.

3. A dog

The sport was originally conceived as a 'fit for breeding' test for the German Shepherd Dog. It goes without saying therefore that the sport is best suited to German Shepherds. However, many other breeds are active in the sport and have competed with great success at club level and can be seen at all levels up to and including the FCI All Breed World

Championships. These include; Belgium Shepherds (Malinois), American Bulldog, Doberman, Rottweiler, Giant Schnauzer, and Dutch Herders, to name but a few.

Is your dog suitable?

Each branch club has their own rules regarding membership and visitors but most will follow a programme that may include, a prospective member being invited to attend several consecutive training sessions during which your dog will be evaluated by the Head or Assistant Trainer. The most important factor is that your dog has a stable temperament. You may be asked to bring high value food and a favourite toy and then you will be asked to play with your dog.

The Trainer will be able to advise you of their opinion concerning the abilities of the dog. Please understand that this honest appraisal of the dog's capability to participate in this sport is no slight on either yourself or the dog by its very nature. Sometimes a dog doesn't have the motivation or heart to succeed in a sport that requires a high level of drive and a high level of self-control. We don't believe in forcing participation on a dog who doesn't want to play; we want to make sure that participating in our sport is fun for both the dog and the handler. We may agree that you have a fantastic dog, but also tell you that this just isn't the sport for him/her.

If you don't have a dog at the moment but you are interested in the sport the best advice we can offer is to take your time, learn as much as you can about the sport and watch the dogs at this and other clubs. If there's a dog you like, you can ask where they came from. Do your research and ask questions before making your decision on whether to get a puppy or a young dog that has been started in work or a titled dog.

4. Membership

After confirming you have the time, the understanding, the commitment and your dog has the drive for our sport, what next?

You will apply to become a member to that branch club and pay a monthly/annual membership fee (as agreed by the club) to contribute to the running and grounds costs of the branch club and replacement and maintenance of equipment supplied by the branch club. You will usually serve a probationary period, as determined by each branch club.

You must also join the GSDL and GSDL Working Branch, to be entitled to train at the branch club and be included in any events run by the GSDL and its branch clubs. Before you can enter a trial you will also need to obtain a performance book for your dog.

5. Equipment

Over the years you will, as most people do, accumulate a vast array of toys and equipment if you remain in the sport.

In your first year however, you can start with a very basic kit. You will need:

- A harness for protection work. Look for a harness specifically designed for agitation and protection which is well padded in areas that are likely to rub.
- A standard leash with clip fastening

- A fur saver chain link collar
- A crate or method of containment appropriate for securing your dog when you are away from your vehicle at training
- A 10m line for tracking and protection
- Whatever treats or toys motivates your dog (we commonly use tiny pieces of hot dog or cooked chicken, chopped to around the size of a 5p) This is so that the dog doesn't have to stop to chew the treat before continuing to work.
- You may choose to buy a bite roll in French linen or jute to play tug with your dog at home.

6. Training Rules

Each Branch Club will have their own sets of rules, please ask to see a copy.

7. Thirst for Knowledge

We don't expect you to know it all, so you will be encouraged to push yourself to learn and develop. If possible, attend workshops with other specialist trainers, go to seminars, chat with other people and ask questions this will enable you to learn and understand the sport to grow and develop. Remember this is a club training environment, not a one to one lesson. All members are encouraged to keep a training plan or log to actively record your progress. This will also help if a trainer or helper with whom you previously worked is not available at any given session.

Please note all branch clubs will adopt their own rules and processes, please use this guide ONLY as just an example of what you might expect.