

## **Guidelines for Writing Breed Standards**

*\*Excerpt from The American Kennel Club By-Laws, Article IV, Section 4:*

*It shall be the duty and privilege of each parent member Specialty Club to define precisely the true type of the breed of pure-bred dogs which it was organized to promote and improve and its definition when approved by the Board of Directors of the American Kennel Club, shall and will be recognized by the American Kennel Club as the sole standard of excellence for which such breed of pure-bred dogs shall be bred and by which specimens of such breed must be judged in the awarding of prizes of merit.*

*The standards of excellence of all breeds of pure-bred dogs now adopted by parent member Specialty Clubs and approved by the Board of Directors of The American Kennel Club shall not be changed in any respect until the wording of any proposed change or changes first has been submitted to the Board of Directors of The American Kennel Club and its approval of the same has been obtained.*

## **Breed Standard Revision Procedures**

A revision consists of any change, deletion, interpretation, or clarification to any r

## POINTS TO CONSIDER IN WRITING BREED STANDARDS

1. The purpose of a standard is to be a guide for breeders and judges. As such, it is important to keep in mind those features that make the breed unique, those qualities the breed must possess to do the job for which it was created. A standard should emphasize what is important in the breed. Conversely those qualities that are of little or no importance are mentioned only in passing or not at all.
2. The text of the standard must be as clear and concise as possible. Sentence structure should be simple and straightforward. When verbs are used they should to the extent possible indicate the present tense: “is” or “are” rather than “should be”.
3. *The Complete Dog Book Glossary* is the reference source for terminology. Every word used must have the same definition as in the glossary in the **AKC’s Complete Dog Book**. Because of the encyclopedic nature of these references, some words cited may not be acceptable for use in standards. For example, words like forechest, breastbone and prosternum all describe the same thing. A concerted effort is being made to use the same word, with the same definition, from standard to standard. The concern with terminology is to be certain that what needs to be communicated is actually being communicated. There is no desire to limit language or the special flavor standards communicate about their breeds.
4. Any fault to be cited should be included under the appropriate descriptive section of the standard. Care ought to be taken to list only faults that are of special concern to the breed. In general, there is no need to list faults which are obvious from the positive

## STANDARD FORMAT

I. *General Appearance*. This is the most important paragraph in the standard, in the sense that it should spell out what the breed's most important qualities are. The General Appearance section should describe the breed's purpose and emphasize those qualities that are critical to fulfilling its function. In a sense, everything in a standard should relate form to function. Remember, the General Appearance section is not the standard. It is the place to cite the breed's *most important* qualities. These features would then be fully described under their appropriate heading in the body of the standard.

II. *Size, Proportion, Substance*. Height is described in inches measured from the ground to the highest point of the shoulder blades. In those breeds where weight is important it is given in pounds. Proportion is the ratio of height to length. Length is usually expressed as the distance from the point of the shoulder to the rearmost projection of the upper thigh (or point of the buttocks). Practically speaking, breeds are either square or rectangular. Some breeds are just "off" square, while others are extremely rectangular. Some indication of what is appropriate for the breed should be included, even if the indication is that a wide range is acceptable. Substance includes the amount of bone.

### III. *Head*

- i. Expression*
- ii. Eyes* (include color and rim pigmentation)
- iii. Ears*
- iv. Skull*
- v. Stop*
- vi. Muzzle*
- vii. Planes* (Muzzle and Skull)
- viii. Nose* (include pigmentation)
- ix. Lips*
- x. Flews*
- xi. Bite*
- xii. Teeth*

### IV. *Neck, Topline and Body*

- i. Neck*
- ii. Topline*
- iii. Body*
  - iv. Chest*
  - v. Ribs*
  - vi. Underline*
  - vii. Tuck-*

VI. *Hindquarters*

- i. Angulation
- ii. Legs
  - iii. Upper Thigh
  - iv. Stifle
  - v. Second Thigh
  - vi. Hock Joint
  - vii. Hocks (Rear Pastern)
  - viii. Dewclaws
- ix. Feet
  - x. Toes
  - xi. Pads
  - xii. Nails

VII. *Coat*. Include under this heading the description of the hair on all parts of the dog, and describe any trimming of the coat.

VIII. *Color*. Include under this heading the color and markings of the coat (and the skin under the coat if skin color description is to be included). In breeds where multiple colors or color combinations are acceptable, but not all colors are permitted, the *complete* list of all acceptable colors and color combinations *must be* included in the standard. In such cases, any color or color combination not mentioned are *unacceptable*, and judges are to pass judgment on this basis. Color of eyes, eye rims, mouth, lips, nose, nails, etc., are to be given under their respective headings.

IX. *Gait*. A complete, positive description of the breed's gait should be given. Care should be taken to adequately express the importance of the breed's overall ability to move, which is usually best evaluated from the side.

X. *Temperament*. Such temperament description as is appropriate for the breed would not, in any way, bear on the following examination requirements of any dog brought into the show ring. (All dogs in all breeds are expected to stand for examination by a judge, such examination to be as thorough as deemed necessary by the judge, including close inspection of the bite and thorough feeling for muscle tone, testicles and any other factors the judge desires to check. Breeds normally judged on the table are expected to stand for examination on the table. In addition, all dogs must gait for the judge's examination.)