

Tips on Using the Pedi-Score Tool Kit

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"Keeping records is at the heart of a concrete breeding program...The average breeder can...elevate his breeding stock to a much higher state of perfection...[by means of careful recording, objective analysis and assessment of the characteristics of each dog." (Grossman, 1983)

Based on the philosophy of successful master breeders, the **Tool Kit** was designed to help you breed better Basset Hounds, from improving a conformation feature like shoulder angulation to decreasing the incidence of health problems

Why use a recording system?

Since no one can possibly remember all the conformation and health details of each puppy they produce, a recording system is crucial in that it:

1. *Helps breeders avoid health defects.*
2. *Increases our breeding "luck" by providing a written history of the good and bad things a dog has passed on to offspring.*
3. *Helps breeders decide which puppies to keep and which to discard.*
4. *Allows breeders to more quickly determine if there is a producing pattern or "nick" in their animals, particularly with regard to which bitches do well with a popular stud (Craigie, 1997).*
5. *Provides a record of conformation and health details which might seem unimportant now but may be of vital interest in the future as a breeder starts to emphasize different features.*
6. *Enables breeders to exchange more accurate information about their dogs' producing abilities.*
7. *Furthers knowledge on the transmission of genetic disorders and how complex structural features such as the legs, head, body, etc., are inherited in a particular breed.*

Why Should You Score and Record Your Dog's Outward Appearance?

"Breeders should commit to paper things...about the dogs they have bred.... Whatever system is used must be relatively simple to follow and it must be such that information sought can be obtained easily and quickly." (Willis, 1989)

Despite the fact that a dog's outward appearance does not always predict his/her genetic make-up or genotype, the visible, physical make-up or **phenotype** of a dog is still one of our best indications of what he might pass on to offspring. Phenotype is also what breeders must rely on in deciding which puppies to keep for breeding stock (Grossman, 1983). Evaluating your dog's outward appearance and recording this information for future reference is therefore one of the first and most important steps in deciding how a dog will fit into your breeding program. Steps to take in evaluating your dog's physical appearance using the **Tool Kit** include the following:

1. Make xerox copies of **Chart #1: Evaluating a Dog's Outward Appearance** (remember not to write on the master copy).
2. Evaluate the dogs you are currently using in your breeding program by scoring their conformation features on the basis of **1 (Excellent)** to **5 (Very Poor)**. Your first evaluation may take 30 minutes. If you are a novice, it will take longer and you may need to refer to **Chart #4: Parts of the Basset Hound**, to help you locate things like the "upper arm" or "keel" on a real dog.
3. To evaluate a litter, use **Chart #5**, a portion of which is presented in Figure 1. A dog's scores can be quickly transferred from one chart to another.

Scoring Tips

- a. **Evaluate dogs unstacked.** Breeders need to know the virtues and faults of the real dog.
- b. **Use the score of "1" (Excellent) sparingly.** Ask: Is this the most perfect this feature can be? In most cases, it probably is not. If a feature like shoulder angulation "meets the Standard" and is acceptable but not noteworthy (in other words, the shoulders on the dog are OK but they don't really catch your eye) then you would probably give shoulder angulation a score of "3".
- c. **Always score your dog against the Official Standard, not against other dogs in a litter or in your kennel.** Remember, you are trying to "build" your dog based on what the standard calls for. There are always one or two puppies in a litter that are better than the others but these "pick" puppies may themselves be quite faulted when they are compared to what the Standard calls for. Always give a score based on the Standard.
- d. **On scores of 4 or 5, use fault abbreviations (Figure 2) to explain how a trait is faulty.** In our example, the sire of our litter scored **4 WS** for Overall Balance, meaning his "shoulders are wider than the hindquarters" and need improvement.
- e. **The Tool Kit scoring system should NEVER be based on giving a dog a "total score" by adding up the sum of his/her scores.** This is because some faults are more serious than others.
- f. **Use an eraser pencil.** Conformation can change with age. Also, with more knowledge and experience, a breeder may realize that the beautiful front assembly they thought Rover had, is, in reality "below average." They may change their original score of **2 (Above Average)** to a **4 (Below Average)**!
- g. **Have more than one person evaluate.** The opinion of another knowledgeable and objective breeder can be golden. No one wants to be kennel blind but the tendency to overlook the faults in one's own dogs is common and can affect the scores you give your dog.

Figure 1 TOOL KIT CHART #5: EVALUATING A LITTER
(Abbreviated Chart)

Sire: ROVER Dam: STAR

{PUPPIES IN THE LITTER. INDICATE M OR F BEFORE NUMBER}

	TRAITS	SIRE	DAM	M 1	M 2	M 3	F 4	F 5	6	7	8	9
A	Overall Balance	4WS	2	3	4ws	4WS	3	2				
B	Shoulder Placement	4SFF	2	3	4SFF	4sFF	3	2				
C	Shoulder Angulation	4 SS	2	3	4SS	4 SS	3	2				

SCORING SYSTEM

1-EXCELLENT (Exemplifies the Standard in every way; can't be improved)

2-ABOVE AVERAGE (Meets the Standard and is noteworthy.).

3-AVERAGE (Acceptable; conforms to the Standard but is not noteworthy).

4-BELOW AVERAGE (Departs from the Standard; needs improvement).

5-VERY POOR (Is very far from the Standard; extremely faulted).

Figure 2 TOOL KIT CHART #2: FAULT ABBREVIATIONS
(Abbreviated Chart)

A. OVERALL BALANCE C (Cobby) L (Too long) TC (Too close to ground) LG (Leggy) H (Too heavy) LS (Lacks substance) IS (Insufficient sternum)

EH (Over 15"- DISQUAL.) TD (Seems like 2 different dogs) WS (Viewed from top, shoulders wider than hindquarters) SH (Slack hindquarters)

B. SHOULDER PLACEMENT SFF (Set slightly far forward) VFF (Set very far forward)

C. SHOULDER ANGULATION [Angle of shoulder blade and upper arm= should be approx. 90 degrees] SS (Slightly steep) VS (Very steep)

Putting Your Scores To Work!

In our next section we will discuss how to use your scores. One general guideline is: If your bitch has steep shoulders, which you scored a **4**, try to breed her to a linebred male that has a shoulder angulation score of at least a **3** and preferably a **2**.

References

- Craige, P. 1997. *Born to win: breed to succeed*. Wilsonville, OR: Doral
Grossman, A. 1983. *The standard book of dog breeding*. Fairfax, VA: Denlinger.

