Activities for You and Your Basenji

Today there are many rewarding, fun and challenging activities in which owners can participate with their Basenjis. This chapter will discuss the Basenji in: Obedience, Rally Obedience, Canine Good Citizenship, Coursing, Agility, Therapy Dog, Conformation, Junior Showmanship, Basenji Clubs and Rescue Volunteers.
Basenjis in Obedience

Although the Basenji has never topped the list as one of the best breeds to use for obedience, many have done very well in these competitions. Additionally some obedience training is good to help you understand your dog and how to teach him good manners. Also an obedience trained dog is less likely to try to dominate the owner and is likely to be a good companion.

The Basenji does not lack for intelligence but may be described as an independent thinker! Obedience involves performing certain exercises during which your dog is scored numerically. The newest positive training techniques appeal to the Basenji. The concept of partnership and earning a reward appeals to a dog who thinks like a Basenji.

For Novice competition, exercises include: Heel on Leash and Figure Eight, Stand for Examination, Heel Free, Recall, Long Sit and Long Down. Exhibitors start with 200 points and deductions are made for errors. 170 is a qualifying score. Open and Utility classes have additional challenging exercises including retrieving dumbbells and finding scent items. Your dog will also need to learn hand signals for the advanced degree.

Titles that can be attained include Companion Dog (CD), Companion Dog Excellent (CDX), Utility Dog (UD) and Utility Dog Excellent (UDX). Obedience is a partnership between human and hound.

Information on rally and obedience can be found on the AKC Website at www.akc.org
Basenjis in Rally Obedience

Rally is a recent addition to AKC events, and provides a wonderful bridge for individuals moving from the Canine Good Citizen program to the more exacting world of Obedience or the more energetic world of Agility.

Rally is a fun, energetic sport, requiring teamwork between the Basenji and its handler. It is a great event for the average pet owner, as well as the more experienced competitor.

To enter an AKC Rally trial a dog must be either an AKC registered dog, or a dog listed in the ILP program. Information on obtaining an ILP number may be found on the AKC website. Dogs must be six months or older to enter an event.

A typical rally course follows a predetermined route through 10 to 20 “stations”. Located at each station is a sign which gives the competitor instructions on which skill is to be completed.

Unlike regular obedience events, the handler may encourage the dog while competing, and repeat commands or signals as he or she feels necessary. The handler and the dog move at their own pace instead of racing the clock as one does in Agility.

Rally is meant to encourage handlers to train their dogs to be good citizens in their community and to behave in both public areas and at home. It also gives valuable experience to those considering going further in obedience as well as providing a rewarding time for both dog and handler alike.

Titles that can be attained include AKC Rally Novice (RN) AKC Rally Advanced (RA) AKC Rally Excellent (RE) and AKC Rally Advanced Excellent (RAE).

Information on rally can be found on the AKC Website at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org)
Basenjis as Canine Good Citizens

The Canine Good Citizen (CGC) Program was developed by the American Kennel Club to promote both responsible pet ownership and well-mannered dogs.

Participation in the CGC program helps assure that your dog will be a welcome addition to your community. This is a wonderful way to focus on training your Basenji.

Many dog clubs offer a Canine Good Citizen Class which prepares you and your dog for the CGC Test.

In CGC class you and your dog will practice the 10 steps your dog must complete with confidence and control to pass the test.

To pass the CGC test, your dog must
1. Greet a friendly stranger
2. Sit politely for petting
3. Walk on a leash
4. Walk through a crowd
5. Obey the sit, down and stay commands
6. Come when called
7. Behave politely with other dogs
8. React calmly to distractions such as a jogger running by
9. Stay with someone you trust when asked

Upon passing the CGC test, the AKC will issue a Canine Good Citizen certificate.

Further information about the CGC program is available on the AKC website at www.akc.org.
Coursing with the Basenji

**A Field Trial is a competitive event in which your Basenji is judged on his ability to hunt by sight.**

The Basenji is accepted by AKC as a sight hound, a breed that hunts by sight. Actually Basenjis are an all-purpose hound who enjoys hunting in any manner. Field trials evaluate your Basenji’s ability to hunt by sight. Most Basenjis enjoy field trials.

Field trials are a sport for those who enjoy outdoor exercise and social activity. Those involved in field trialing are known for their enthusiasm for the sport and the love of their hounds and fellow field trialers. The hounds chase a lure (usually a plastic bag) around a circuit in groups of three in yellow, pink, and blue colored jackets. Judges assess performance based on each hound’s abilities, identifying hounds by their blanket color. The hounds run a preliminary course and a final course, and then may run for Best of Breed. Finally, the Best of Breed run for Best in Field, as an optional stake. The hounds are scored by the following criteria (from the ASFA website):

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<th>Points</th>
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<td>Follow</td>
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<td>Enthusiasm</td>
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<td>Agility</td>
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<td>Speed</td>
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<td>Endurance</td>
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The hounds will run the course twice, a preliminary run and a final run. Scores from both runs are added for a combined total score. Hounds are awarded placements and points based on where they finished and the number of hounds they competed against. The hounds are running not only for fun and to keep their natural abilities alive, but also for titles.
You might wish to attend a field trial to learn more about this sport. There are many enthusiasts who will be happy to share their knowledge. They will be able to help you get started with the right training for your hound.

Titles to win include Field Champion (F.Ch.) and Lure Courser or Merit (LCM 1-3) for ASFA. These titles are shown after a dog’s name. AKC offers Field Champion (FC) and Lure Courser Excellent (LCX). A dog with an AKC conformation and field championship becomes a Dual Champion (DC).

If you are interested in field trialing, there are coursing events and titles offered by both the American Sighthound Field Association (ASFA) and AKC.

To learn more and to find events taking place near you, visit the websites: www.asfa.org and www.akc.org.
Basenjis in Agility

Many Basenjis have begun to compete in agility competitions. Agility is essentially a fun sport where dogs, at the direction of their handlers, run through an obstacle course off lead. Events are timed, with jump heights based on the height of the dog at the withers. There is a maximum time allowed and deduction of points for errors or faults.

There are a variety of jump types and other obstacles, which can include a Dog Walk, A-Frame, Tunnels and Weave Poles.

Many Basenjis enjoy this fast paced endeavor. Dogs should be healthy, have sound structure and be at their correct weight. Both you and your hound will be encouraged to stay physically fit for this sport. An added benefit to agility training will be to provide your dog with good basic manners and training.

If you don’t wish to compete in trials or seek agility titles, you may just wish to enjoy the training process. If you do wish to compete, you will need to be familiar with the requirements for entry in trials sponsored by the various agility organizations.

Agility is recognized by the American Kennel Club (AKC), the North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC) and the United States Dog Agility Association (USDAA).

Contact your local breed club, or search the AKC, NADAC or USDAA websites for contact information to find a club with an interest in Agility.
Basenjis as Therapy Dogs

*If you are interested in volunteer service for your community, participating with your Basenji in a therapy program may be for you.*

Therapy dogs provide a welcome respite for nursing and group home residents and hospital patients who may be depressed or lonely. Basenjis are great for this type of work. Though too short for some to reach down to pet many Basenjis will sit comfortably next to a wheel chair, bringing them up to just the right level for petting.

Exuberant Basenjis need to be under control for this work. Your Basenji will need to do some training before becoming a Therapy Dog.

*Therapy dogs also participate in many children’s programs.*

Therapy Dogs International, Inc. and the Delta Society are just two of the organizations involved in training and certifying dogs to become “Therapy Dogs”. Dogs should be well mannered, and many groups like TDI, Inc. require that they pass tests including the Canine Good Citizen Test (CGC) as well as exercises which demonstrate the dog’s confidence when exposed to medical equipment and other distractions.
**Basenji in Conformation**

The sport of showing dogs originated as a way to evaluate breeding stock. Your dog will be judged on its type, structure and movement. You should become familiar with the Official Standard of the Basenji, which is the Standard by which all Basenjis are judged. There is no perfect dog. (Learn more about the Standard in this course.)

If you’ve purchased a “show prospect,” consult with your breeder fairly regularly regarding the development and training of your Basenji as he matures. Your hound should be evaluated by your breeder from time to time to make sure that it still has the merits of a show dog. Basenji structure can change quite dramatically (and not always for the better) as they get older. For your first show dog, it is usually best to buy one that is at least a year old, as its development will be more predictable.

A show dog should be well socialized, well-trained, well-groomed and well-presented. If you’ve not shown a dog before, it is easier to start with one that is trained. Learn the proper way to present your dog in the ring by attending conformation classes and working with your breeder or other breeders in your area. You not only need to learn to “stack” your dog correctly but to gait him (move him at a trot) as well. Your Basenji will be better able to cope with shows if he is comfortable traveling and eating in his crate.

*Basenji Club of America National Specialty Best in Specialty Show winners from past years*
Attend dog shows in your area and watch not only the Basenjis show but also other breeds as well. It will be much less intimidating to walk in the ring the first time if you are familiar with the procedures. Join the Basenji Club of America and a regional Basenji club in your area. There are a number of educational opportunities at their events which may be of assistance as you pursue your goal. Prior to entering an AKC Show, you might wish to attend training classes and try a few puppy matches to gain a little experience. There is a fine line with Basenjis who become easily bored with repetition to get them trained for dog shows but not bored with the procedure.

As you become involved in conformation, you will want to learn more about the Standard. The Basenji University has courses for prospective breeders to learn more about what the standard means and the best approach to showing and breeding.

![Puppy learning to pose for the show ring](image)

**Kennel Blindness**

It’s easy to become so enchanted with your own Basenji that you become “kennel blind” and unable to be objective about the faults that your dog possesses. This is easy to understand with a beginner but is also a problem for experienced breeders. Remember, there is no perfect dog.

*Conformation is a competitive sport, as you participate and become involved, you will find opportunities for friendship with other competitors, as well as for learning a great deal about the Basenji.*

*Rules and contacts for the dog showing are available on the AKC Website at [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org). A schedule of BCOA Events is available on the BCOA Website at [www.basenji.org](http://www.basenji.org).*
Basenjis and Junior Showmanship

Through the diligent efforts of Leonard Brumby, Sr., a well known professional handler, the first Children’s Handling class was held at the Westbury Kennel Club Dog Show in 1932. Mr. Brumby and many other dog fanciers felt that a “handling competition” for children would be both educational and interesting for them. Junior Showmanship has evolved over time to what it is today. Juniors are judged on their ability to exhibit their dog. Although the dog itself is not judged, it must be eligible to compete in conformation classes at an AKC show.

Juniors compete in either open or novice classes, which are divided by age, 9 to 12 years of age, over 12 to 15 years of age and over 15 to 18 years of age. Juniors are very important to the future of the sport of dogs. Through competing in Junior Showmanship, children will learn the correct way to handle the breed that they own, learn the importance of good sportsmanship, and can learn about responsible pet ownership.

The National Junior Organization was begun in 1997 by the American Kennel Club to encourage the participation of Juniors in AKC events. Additionally, they offer a scholarship program. Many 4-H Clubs also offer dog events including handling classes and competitions.

If you are interested in Junior Showmanship visit the AKC Website at www.akc.org
Regional Breed Clubs and Rescue Activities

Regional Basenji Clubs
There are many regional Basenji clubs you might consider joining. Most clubs have many activities for Basenji owners. Speakers often come to meetings to present a host of topics. Picnics, Fun Days, Fun Matches and practice and real Field Trials provide a number of opportunities to socialize with fellow Basenji enthusiasts.

Rescue Volunteers
For those of you who love the Basenji breed and can spare some time, rescue groups are located in almost every state and all would welcome your volunteer assistance in the areas of in home foster care, transporting rescue dogs, assisting with websites and fundraising events.

Contact your local rescue group for information.
There is a listing of contacts at the BCOA website www.basenji.org.