



## Results of OLC Introductory Class Survey Feb/March 2026

## Summary of Introductory Class Survey

In February 2026 a survey was issued to the obedience community to gain responses from people who have had some involvement with the Introductory Class in the past two years either as a competitor, a judge or a show organiser to help in a review of the class and considerations on how it can be improved.

This survey was not expected to achieve the same level of responses as other OLC surveys because it was about one specific class which not everyone will have had experience of. However, a creditable 98 people responded from a good cross section of competitors, judges and show organisers who responded.

The class has mixed support across the interested parties with nearly 87% of competitors saying they like the class or like elements of the class. On the flip side over 64% of judges do not enjoy judging the class and will not judge it again, and only 23% of show organisers schedule the class.

74.5% of respondents felt there is value in having an entry level class below Pre-Beginners and based on the free text responses and the analysis below, across both perspectives, there is broad consensus that:

- New competitors need **support when entering the sport**
- The transition from training to competition can be **challenging**
- Confidence-building and positive early experiences are **critical for retention**

Those who **support** the current Introductory Class acknowledge that the class:

- Provides a low-pressure starting point for newcomers.
- Helps handlers and dogs gain confidence in the ring, especially with on lead exercises.
- Fills a perceived gap between informal training and Pre-Beginners.
- Supports gradual progression into competitive obedience.
- Provides a supportive learning environment with simpler exercises, allowing the use of food rewards and offering practical experience of ring procedures and judging.
- Encourages participation and retention by attracting newcomers and helping to sustain interest through early success and positive experiences.

Those who **have concerns** about the Introductory Class indicate that the class:

- Has poor structure and flow with the exercises described as **disjointed, stop/start, and confusing**. The class does not reflect real competition or training patterns.
- Offers weak progression value as the skills do not transfer effectively to Pre-Beginners and lack alignment with established progression pathways.
- Competes with other entry routes such as Pre-Beginners and the Good Citizen Special Pre-Beginner Stakes heats.
- Can be more challenging than Pre-Beginners despite its purpose, as some described it as more technical or harder than expected.



- Experiences practical and logistical issues such as the difficulty in recruiting judges and competitor confusion leading to longer class times.

### Conclusions and Considerations

The central divide is whether the current Introductory Class:

- **Adds value as a confidence-building bridge into the sport, or**
- **Creates confusion and inefficiency without supporting progression**

The Introductory class clearly meets a need for **confidence-building and accessibility**, particularly for absolute beginners. However, concerns about its **structure, progression value, and practicality** are significant.

A balanced way forward may include:

- **Retaining the class but refining its format** to improve flow and alignment
- **Repositioning it as optional or training-focused** rather than mandatory
- **Ensuring clearer progression towards the Pre-Beginner exercises.**

Overall, the evidence suggests the concept is valuable, but **its current implementation requires improvement** to fully support both competitors, judges and show organisers.

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### Survey Results

#### OVERALL RESPONSES

We received 98 responses of which:

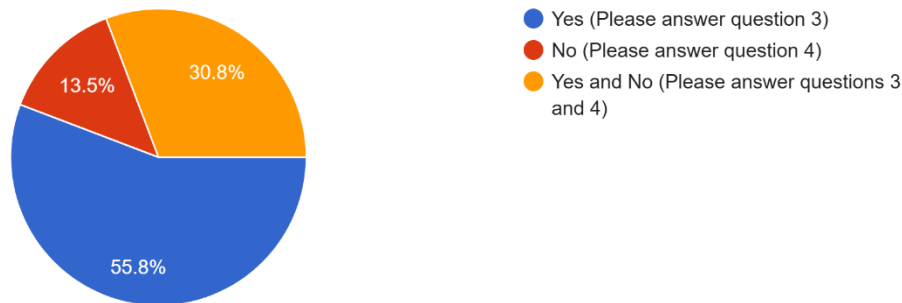
- 52% competed in the class
- 30.6% had judged the class
- 29.6% were show organisers

(Note respondents could be in more than one category)

74.5% felt there is value in having a class below Pre-Beginners for those new to Competitive Obedience

#### COMPETITORS' RESPONSES

Nearly 87% of competitors answered Yes or Yes and No to the question 'Do you enjoy competing in the Introductory Class?'



14% of competitors only enter shows with an Introductory Class and 69% would enter Pre-Beginners if it was the lowest class.

#### What Competitors like most about the Class

- I can reward my dog a lot in the ring (81.5%)
- It's a good entry level class for me (67%)
- The exercises are broken down as in training (63%)
- There is no set up for heelwork (26.5%)

#### What Competitors dislike most about the Class

- The round doesn't flow as you have to keep stopping after each short exercise (63%)
- The exercises are too disjointed (60%)
- I would rather work Pre-Beginners and Beginners (23%)
- The heelwork patterns are confusing (14%)



### What Competitors would like to improve about the Class

30% responded that no change was needed, they liked the class as it is.

Others felt it could be improved as follows:

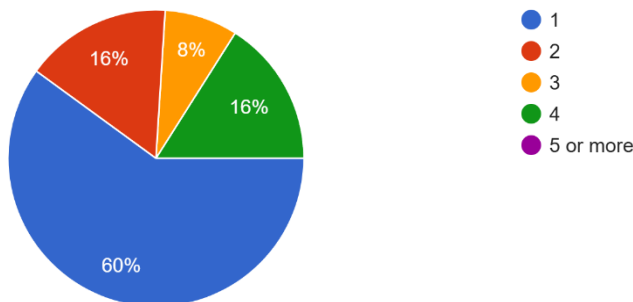
- Make it optional to enter for those who would rather start in pre-Beginners (65%)
- Have the recall as one exercise (39%)
- Allow handlers to carry food (37%)
- Add in different exercises like some from the Good Citizens Award Schemes (28%)

### Other Competitors' Responses

It is noted that there were several comments about variations in how the class is judged and how it was clear some judges had not bought into the class.

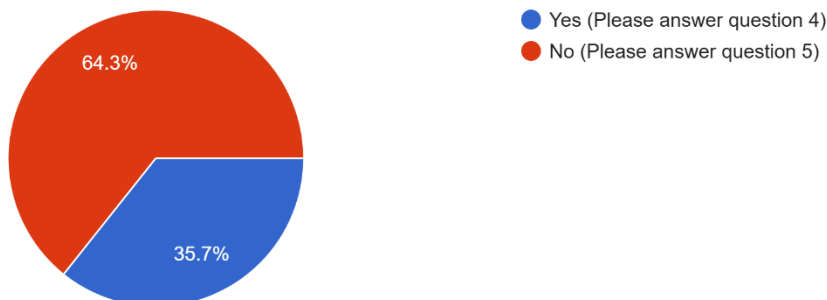
## JUDGES' RESPONSES

60% of judges have judged just one Introductory Class since April 2024 and 16% had judged 4 or more.



63% of judges often judge the lower classes.

Over 64% of judges said they did not enjoy judging the Introductory Class and would not judge it again.





### What Judges who enjoy judging the Introductory like most about the Class

- It's a good introduction to competing (76.5%)
- There are lots of opportunities for the handler to reward their dog (71%)
- The exercises are broken down as in training (41%)
- It's good to have different heelwork patterns (23.5%)

### What Judges who don't enjoy judging the Introductory dislike most about the Class

- It's too much stop and start between exercises (69%)
- The exercises are too disjointed, the heelwork patterns too complicated and the round doesn't flow (58%)
- The scoring isn't easy, particularly working out the marks for Engagement (50%)
- It does not seem to give competitors any better ring experience than Pre-Beginners (31%)

### What Judges would like to improve about the Class

Only 3.3% responded that it didn't require change.

Others felt it could be improved as follows:

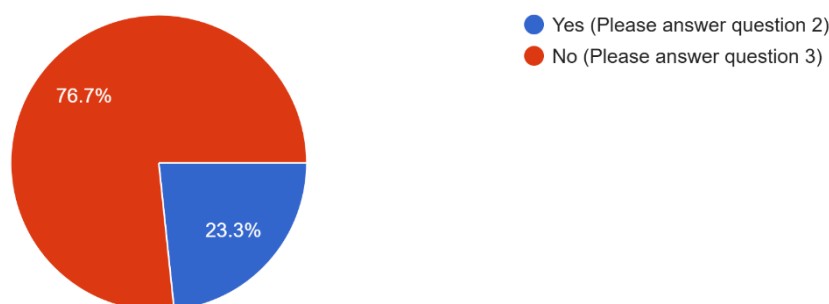
- Make the round flow better (63%)
- Make the heelwork patterns more straightforward (30%)
- Allow handlers to carry food (27%)
- Add in different exercises like some from the Good Citizens Award Schemes (23%)

### Other Judges' Responses

It is noted that there were a few suggestions to make the recall one exercise, make the scoring easier and to go back to the original class exercises.

## SHOW ORGANISERS' RESPONSES

Only 23% of show organisers who responded schedule the Introductory Class.





### Why do show organisers schedule the Class?

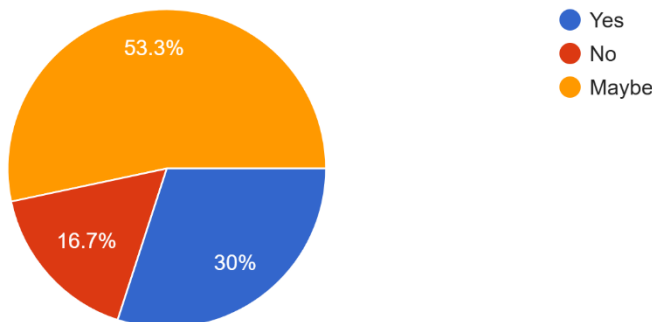
- It's a good entry level class and we like to support newcomers (71.5%)
- We allow competitors to enter 3 classes (43%)

However, 86% responded that the class is OK but they would like to see it improved to attract more entries and make it easier to get judges.

### Why do show organisers not schedule the Class?

- We scheduled it in the past, but struggled to get judges (50%)
- The class does not seem to give competitors any better ring experience than Pre-Beginners (42%)
- We scheduled it in the past, but entries were low (38.5%)
- We already host a heat for the RKC Special Pre-Beginners Stakes as the entry level class (34.5%)
- We've seen other shows struggle to get judges (31%)

### Would show organisers consider scheduling the Introductory Class if the format changed?



There appears to be some enthusiasm amongst show organisers to schedule an entry level class if the content is improved which should make it easier to attract judges and competitors.

### What show organisers would like to improve about the Class

No-one responded that no change was needed.

Others felt it could be improved as follows:

- Make the round flow better (72.5%)
- Make the heelwork patterns more straightforward (45%)
- Allow handlers to carry food (38%)
- Add in different exercises like some from the Good Citizens Award Schemes (38%)