

FEDERATION CYNOLOGIQUE INTERNATIONALE (AISBL)

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Judging Guidelines for FCI Rally Obedience



March 1, 2026

These guidelines are clarifications to assist judges in understanding and applying the rules and regulations of FCI Rally Obedience. They are based on the official "FCI Rally Obedience Regulations and Rules" and contain clarifications by the FCI Rally Obedience Commission. Judges must use these guidelines as an addition to the official regulation. The document is intended for public use, as an appendix to "Regulations and Rules for international FCI Rally Obedience trials".

General Guidelines

- ***The evaluation and comments (especially for overall impression) of a judge should be based on the dog's observable behavior, not on its presumed emotional or mental state. The evaluation should not be based on the dog's breed.***
- It is not required that the handler's step is finalized before the dog lies down, sits, or stands. This applies to all exercises.
- If deductions are made for overall impression, the reason must be forwarded to the handler.
- The dog is allowed to jump, for example when returning to heel, in sidestep exercises, side shifts or when backing up.
- The dog is allowed to move as needed for natural movement while changing positions. After the position is taken, it must be kept static.
- Only defined clear mistakes can be deducted.
- If a competitor enters the ring without being invited by the judge, the judge can request a restart with no deductions made. In case of a restart, the time is reset.
- If the competitor doesn't enter the ring after the welcome, the judge can give further instructions.
- The -10(*) point deduction for a visible leash is taken only once in a course.
- For exercises with exercise area D, the sign can be placed on either the left or right side.
- When judging the distance between the dog and handler, the closest part of the dog to the handler must be used, including the tail.
- When walking around the dog, the handler is allowed (but not required) to step over the dog's tail.
- The dog's pace while backing up is not defined.
- The team can start the execution of an exercise before the exercise area but must make sure that at one point a part of the team is inside the exercise area.
- ***When judging a dog's speed, the judge must consider the normal speed of the individual dog, not the breed.***
- ***While judging the team, the judge must take care not to distract the team more than necessary.***
- ***Judges are expected to stand or move with the competitors while judging, they must be in adequate physical and mental condition to manage the demands of competitions.***
- ***In exercises where the "dog length" is used, it is the length between the dog's front and hind legs.***
- ***If the dog picks up anything inside the ring (-10p), and it fails to release it on command, the handler can take it away, but a -10p deduction will be added in the next version of the regulations. Until then, a deduction in the overall impression can be used.***
- ***The turn angle in exercises (180, 270, 360 degrees as required) is judged by the team's approach, rather than the sign's orientation.***

- ***The handler is allowed to pass signs that are not part of the course order on the left or right.***
- ***The walking path in cone exercises is not defined, as long as the team is within 50cm of the cone.***

Execution of exercises

1. Stops

- A "nanostop" is a very short stop by either the handler or dog, made as a natural and fluent part of the exercise to change direction, tempo, or position. Nanostops are allowed and are not deducted.
- Clear Stop deductions: A "clear stop" is defined as a stop of at least 2 seconds. Clear stops, when not part of the exercise, should be deducted. Shorter stops may result in deductions for slowing down or delay.

2. Sidestep

- If the dog begins the sidestep before the handler and makes a nanostop before the handler catches up, it is not considered a clear stop and is not deducted.
- In exercises requiring two sidesteps (401-404), if the dog does not move its front and hind legs simultaneously, the 5-point deduction should be applied only once. This does not apply to exercise 416.
- Jumps are allowed during sidesteps.
- ***Sidestep askew over a foot length in total when 2 steps are required: deductions for askew should be judged separately by step, not judged together as one fault for the two steps, e.g. 2x -3 points, not -10p***
- ***In the sidestep exercises, if the dog is askew <45 degrees while using its hind legs, no deductions are applied.***
- ***In the sidestep exercises, if the dog starts his fore or hind legs with a delay, and is askew <45 degrees, the delay deductions can be applied.***

3. Down

- In the down position, at least one of the dog's elbows must touch the ground.
- ***In the down position, the dog is allowed to lay on the hip/ change to the hip.***

4. Sit

- In the sit position, at least one of the dog's front paws must touch the ground.

5. Stand

- ***For a stand position to be accepted as a stand, all four paws must be standing still. If the dog after this accepted stand moves the paws away from the original spot, it can be either a minus 3 deduction for 2-3 paws not standing still, or it can be a minus 10 for all four paws moving. This applies to all exercises where the dog must stand. Note: It is allowed for the dog to step on the position, as long as the paws are not moved from the original spot.***

6. Handler Slowing Down

- The deduction "Handler is significantly slowing down or speeding up to help the dog to perform" cannot be applied in exercises 417 and 418 while the dog is going around the cone, jumps, and recalls. In these exercises, slowing down or changing pace is accepted, as long as it is not a clear stop.

7. Lifting Heel or Toe

- Lifting the heel or toe without the entire foot leaving the ground is not considered "stepping on the spot» and should not trigger the deduction "Handler's feet are not standing still in position."

8. Tight Turns on A4

- During tight turns on A4, neither of the handler's feet can be fully clear of the A4 area at any time.

9. Recall Exercises (321, 322, 323, 421, 422)

- When the handler leaves the dog in the exercise area for a stay exercise, that stay exercise is being judged until the handler starts to turn around at the recall sign, after which the judging shifts to the recall sign. If the whole dog moves outside the exercise area of the stay exercise before the handler turns, both exercises are lost. If the dog moves or changes position but a part of the dog stays in the exercise area, the recall exercise can be approved.
- If the dog makes a false start (moving outside the exercise area) before the handler is in the recall position, the recall sign is lost (-10 points).
- The recall cone can be placed on either side of the walking line.
- The handler must give the recall command while in the exercise area.
- ***In the recall exercises, the handler can take extra steps in the exercise area after turning around but before he stops. The handler can turn in either direction. Taking an extra step after the stop results in a -5 point deduction.***

10. Pendling

- If the dog makes unwanted movements such as "pendling" (for example moving backward and then forward again when backing up) or moves backward/forward or to the sides before taking a position, hesitation or delay deductions can be applied.

11. Sideshift Exercises

- The dog can be askew during the sideshift exercise without deduction. However, being askew before or after the exercise results in a deduction for being 45 or 90 degrees askew.

12. Reusing Jumps

- If a jump is reused in the course and the dog drops the bar, all following uses of the jump are considered complete if the dog goes through the jump. No jump is expected on a jump without a bar.

13. Changing Positions and Turning on the spot

- It is clarified that the dog is allowed to stand up before moving in exercises such as sidesteps, turns, or when backing up from a sit or down.
- When changing positions or turning on the spot, the dog must clearly lift its rear from the ground. Stepping or jumping into the new position is acceptable, but sliding is not allowed. The deduction for sliding is -10 points for an incorrectly performed exercise.

14. Change of Pace Exercises

- The change of pace must be performed when part of the team is inside the exercise area. A 10-point deduction applies if it is performed before or after.

15. Walk around

- In moving exercises (318, 419), the dog must be in the final position when the handler reaches the dog's opposite shoulder.

16. Course Building

- Signs and other obstacles should not be placed in the walking line.
- This includes situations where signs are placed together, where the width of the full exercise area must be clear when walking forward.
- ***The path of the team can be set up between cones or jumps, but only if there's at least 1.5m between them.***
- ***It's the judge's obligation to set up the course so every team can pass between the signs, cones and jumps.***
- ***In situations where signs are placed together, the width of the full exercise area must be clear when walking forward (minimum one meter from the exercise).***

Specific Exercises

410 "STOP, SEND AWAY, STAND, WALK FORWARD, RECALL":

- The dog can pass the sign on either the front or back side of the sign.
- If the dog makes a complete spin while sent to the cone, 10 points are deducted.
- Going around the cone once is not considered a spin.
- Hesitation or delay deductions can be used if the dog does not go directly to the cone.
- The dog's pace while approaching the cone is not defined.
- If the cone is in the front the handler is allowed to pass the dog on the right side, left side or between dog and cone.
- ***If the dog does a jump exercise while going to the cone or coming back, that's a -10 point deduction***
- ***Rounding the recall cone while going to the cone or coming back, a deduction for delay can be applied***
- ***If the dog rounds a cone from a different exercise, then a -10p deduction must be applied.***

411 "CALL FRONT STAND, BACK AWAY, STAND, WALK FORWARD, RECALL":

- *In exercise 411 the handler while walking forward can either recall the dog or pick up the dog from either side. In this exercise the "Dog is out of position" -3p deduction does not apply.*
- *As the exercise description says "the handler walks forward next to the dog and then recalls the dog" at least one part of the handler must be on the same height as at least one part of the dog.*

417/418 "90° LEFT/RIGHT TURN AROUND CONE":

- *In exercises 417/418 the dog must catch up with the handler before the following exercise.*

420 "STOP, RECALL OVER JUMP":

- The handler must give the recall command while in the exercise area.

421 "TURN AROUND, RECALL OVER JUMP WITH DIRECTIONS":

- The dog can pass the sign on either the front or back side of the sign.

422 "TURN AROUND, BACK AWAY, SIT, DOWN, RECALL":

- A moving sit in reverse is not expected.
- If the dog stops in its natural movement, it is not considered a stand position and does not lead to a deduction.
- For longer standing positions, delay deductions are used.
- A dog is allowed to move as needed for natural movement while changing positions. After the position is taken, it must stay static.

Building a Course

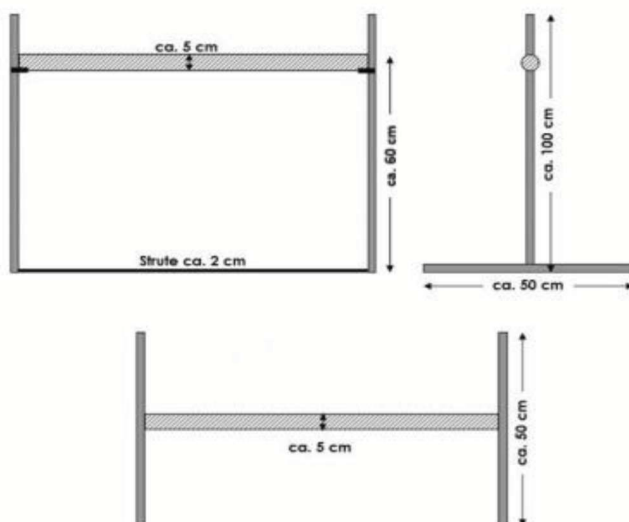
The Ring

- Ring size: min. 20x20m, no obstacles, non-slip, clearly marked.
- Separating walls are part of the ring, e.g. no extra distance needed
- (Chief) judge decides on suitability, changes needed
- At least 1 entrance must be kept open (e.g. the dog has the possibility to leave)

Equipment

- Responsibility of the organizer and trial secretary
- (Chief) judge decides if it's acceptable
- 2 complete sign sets, A4 size
 - For international competitions English language version is mandatory
 - Other competitions English is recommended
- Sign holders (at least 22pcs)
- Number signs, 1-20 (Start+Finish have no numbers)
- Two open hurdles for the jumps
- 100cm wide, 10-40cm adjustable
- No side wings, e.g. agility hurdles
- Bar 3-5 cm, easily dropped

OPEN JUMP



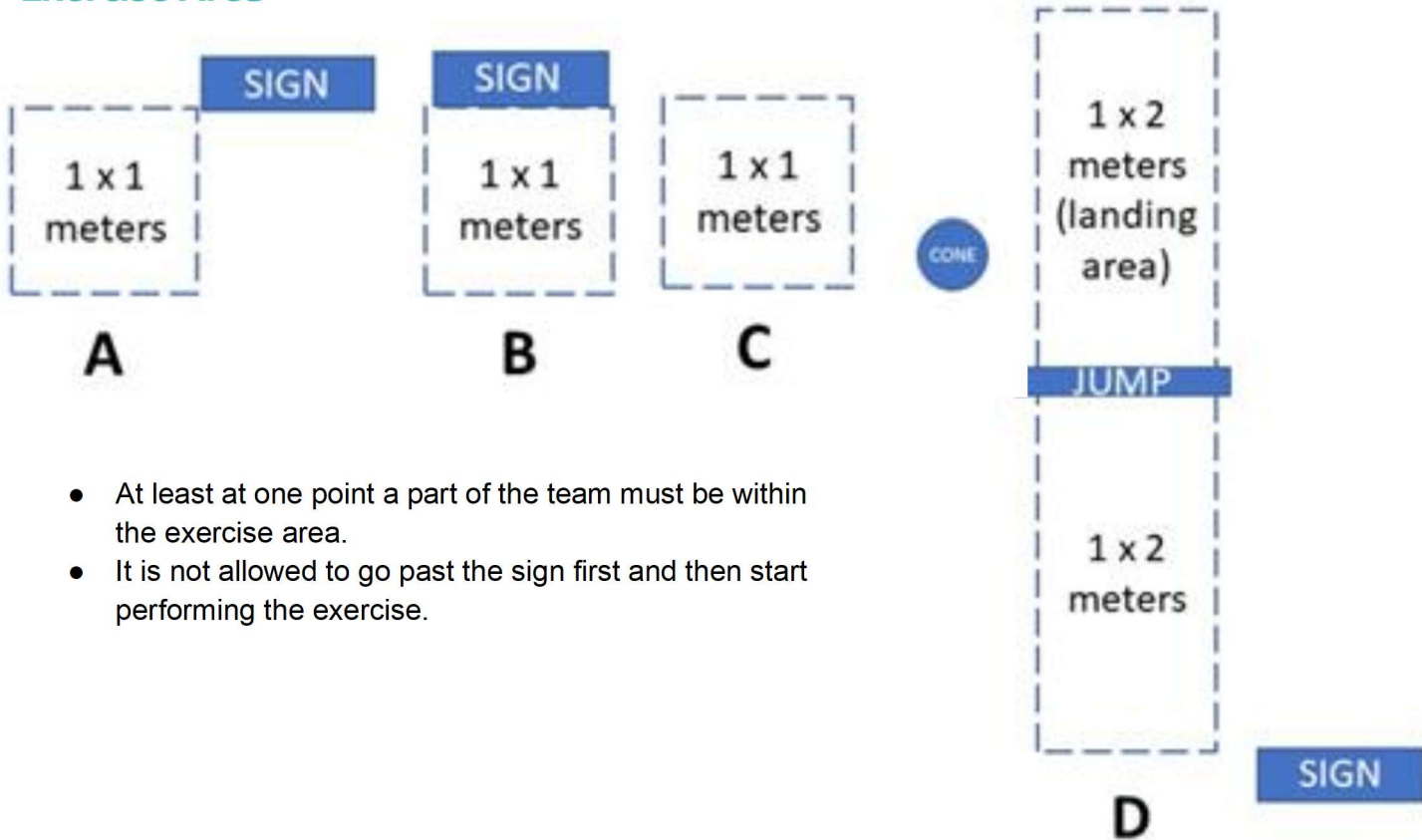
Cones:

- 15cm for figure exercises: spiral, slalom, distractions (119, 120, 121, 122, 221) and as recall cones (319, 408, 409)
- 40-50cm for sending exercises: 410, 417, 418

Other equipment:

- Chalk/spray/paint to mark the ring, under cones, distractions
- For distractions: (dog)toys and/or treats. Treats are covered.
- Electronic timekeeping for CACIROB and FCI Championships

Exercise Area



- At least at one point a part of the team must be within the exercise area.
- It is not allowed to go past the sign first and then start performing the exercise.

Course Layout

- The judge has the right to create the course layout.
- If two or more judges are judging together, they should send their course layouts at least one week before the start
- The course layout will be posted on the wall of the competition ground at least one hour before the start.
- When planning and building the course, the judge must make sure that the course can be performed by dogs of all sizes without the risk of getting unreasonable close to sign holders of other exercises and other obstacles.
- If problems occur, while building up the planned course, like having to less space or having noticed dangerous places, the judge has the right to arrange small changes in the original plan. However, the judge has to inform the handlers at the beginning of the course orientation about these changes.

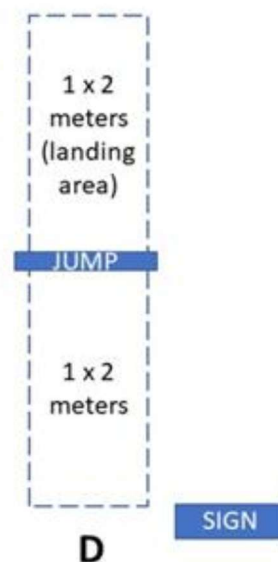
General rules:

- 18-20 exercises + Start and Finish. One sign can be used maximum twice.
- The course must contain at least 7 of the 4p signs and 5 of the 3p signs.
- It has to be indicated in the course layout whether the dog should be on the left or the right side at the start.
- All exercises (except 417 and 418) can be performed with the dog on the left or the right side of the handler.
- The distance between exercises is approximately 3-5 m, depending on the course and the concerned sign. It has to be noted that some signs need more space

- The exercises must be naturally placed in relation to the direction of the team, and always after the preceding exercise. (max 90. degrees)
- All measurements and angles are approximated.
- In figure exercises (119, 120, 121, 122, 221) the sign can be placed 1.5 to 2 m away from the first cone or attached to the first cone.
- After exercises which contain a recall as part of the exercise, the recall is done next to a cone which is placed approximately 5 m after the sign and 1 m away from the walking line (on either side)

Jumps:

- With jump exercises, the sign is placed 2 m before the jump, and there is a 2 m landing area after exercise.
- With exercise 320 (send over two jumps), the distance between jumps is 4 m (2 m + 2 m).
- There can be 2 jumps in total in a course, but these can be reused in multiple exercises.
- All jumps must be placed on the handling side.



A good layout is a good mix of:

- fluent, stopping, position, figure, distance, sending, jumping and recall exercises and
- left handed and right handed parts
- “Easy” and “hard” exercises/combinations
- “Easy”: positions, figures, fluent
- “Hard”: sidesteps, recalls, sends, jumps with some distractions

Placement

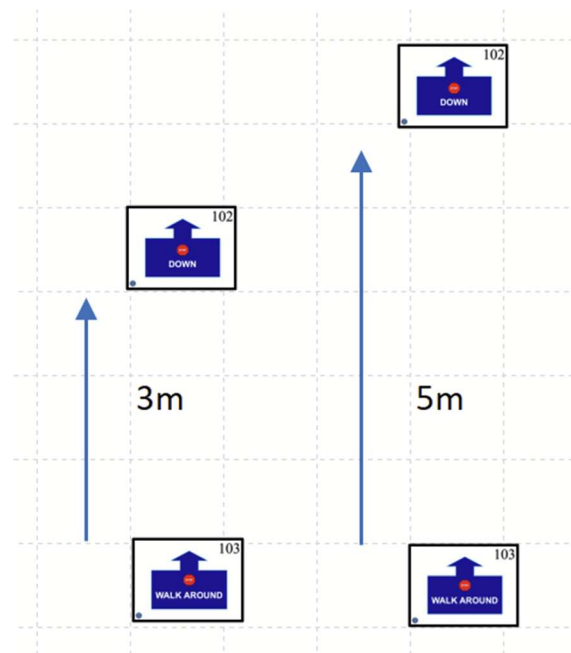
- No element directly in the path of the dog and handler:

“Signs and other obstacles should not be placed in the walking line. This includes situations where signs are placed together, where the width of the full exercise area must be clear when walking forward.”

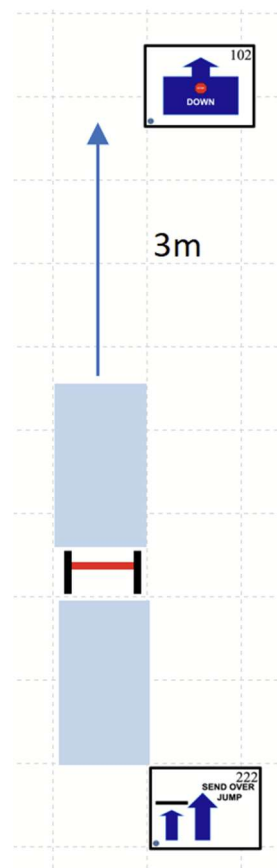
- Otherwise, no rules
- Please use your judgement, a course shouldn't be hard because of equipment placement
- Dogs can be BIG or small!

Distances

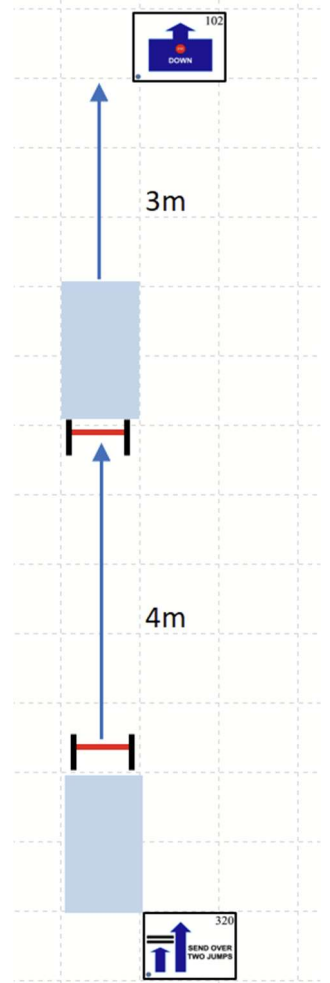
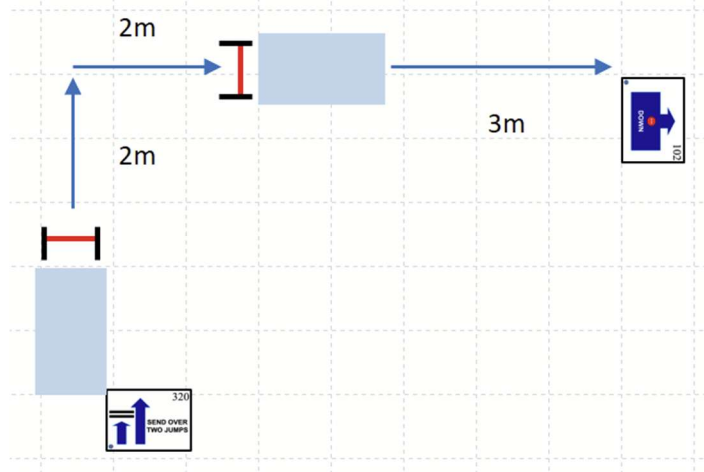
- General rule: 3-5m
- Naturally placed, after the preceding exercise
- Recommended up to +/- 45 degrees



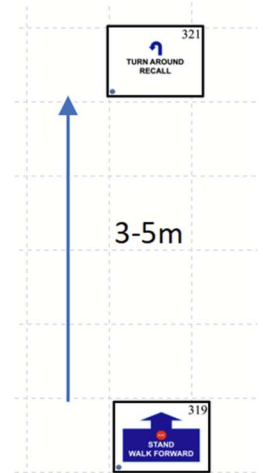
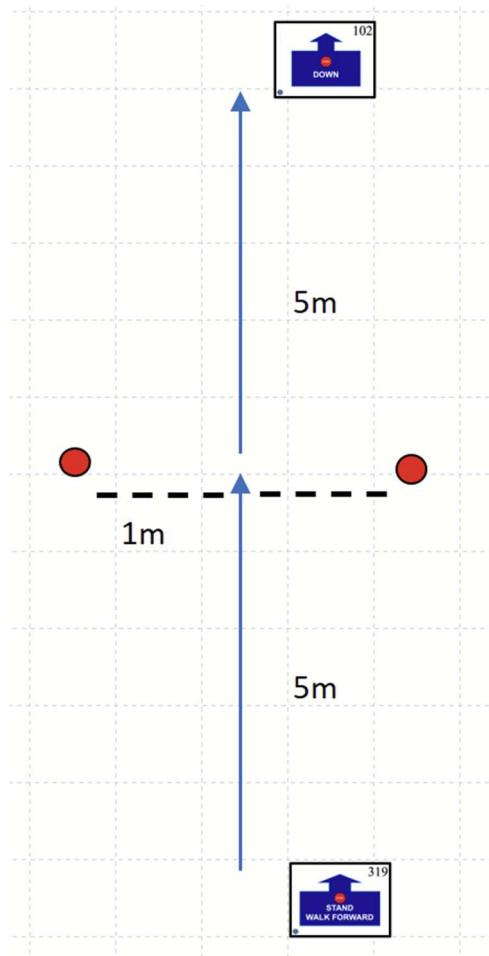
- Jump exercises 2+2m working area



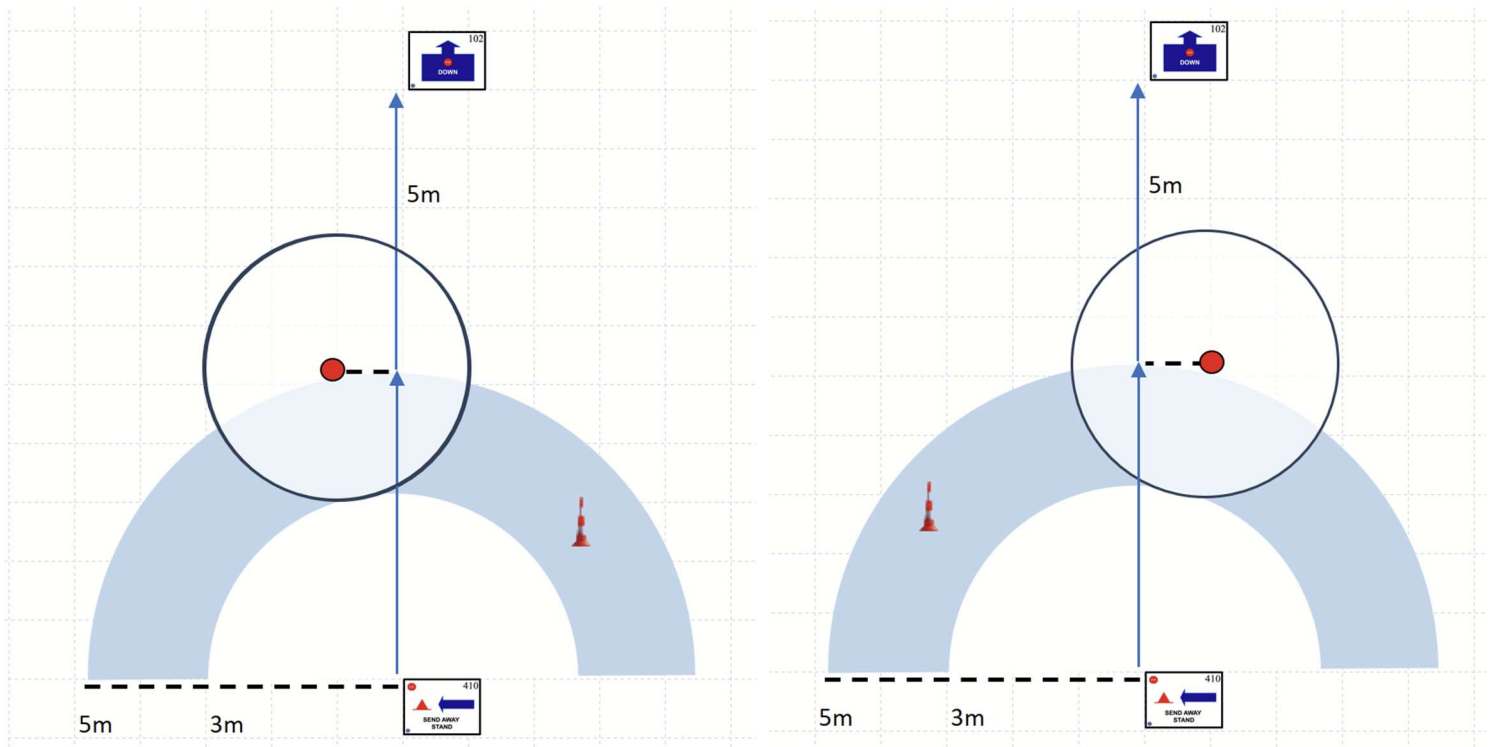
- Double jumps : 2m+4m+2m



- Recalls



- 410 Send to cone



Building the Layout

- No official tool, any software, tool, website can be used, even paper.

These Judging Guidelines were approved by the FCI General Committee in May 2025 (Budapest).

The English version is the authentic one.

The amendments in bold and italic characters were approved by the FCI General Committee in February 2026 (Roma). They are effective from March 1, 2026.