

In Ring Hands-On Examination

The Golden Retriever is a coated breed and structure must be verified by a thorough, hands-on examination.

- The AKC standard states: Over-all appearance, balance, gait and purpose to be given more emphasis than any of his component parts. To gain an overall impression of each dog, begin your initial assessment by viewing the dog standing. This gives the opportunity to consider size, correct proportion in the head (foreface nearly as long as skull), length of neck, level topline, body depth, correct body proportions of height to length, (a ratio of 11:12 measured from withers to ground and from breastbone to buttocks) and length of leg.
- Approaching from the front, view the head and expression, width of chest, straightness of the front legs, amount of bone and check for round, compact feet.
- Feel for breadth and slight arch of back skull and examine the head proportions. Check ear length (reaches to the inside corner of the same side eye) and set. Look for a dark eye, correctly shaped and placed. This is also a good time to check for dark pigment on the eye rims, nose and lips.
- Examine the bite and dentition by gently lifting the lips in front, then on both sides of the mouth. The breed standard requires full dentition and prefers a scissors bite, with undershot or overshot being disqualifications. It is not necessary to open the mouth and count teeth but check for obvious gaps in the dentition.
- Moving to the side, run your hand down the neck, feeling for arch and correct length, continuing to the withers. Check for correct layback and approximately equal bone lengths of scapula and humerus.
- Run your hand down the front to feel for a well-developed forechest, correct width of chest and depth of brisket, any of which may be disguised by a full natural ruff, or by excessive trimming and sculpting.
- Check that the elbows are well set back, close to the ribs and feel under the coat to ensure that the brisket extends to the elbows.



- Check for correct spring of rib, level topline, correct length of loin, proper weight and condition.
 - Examine for correct bend of stifle, which can be disguised by excessive coat.
 - Examine tail set and tail length (to reach the hock joint). Check the inner thigh for muscling and condition.
 - Check that the rear legs are strong and straight and that the rear feet are round and compact.
- Viewing the dog from the rear may also reveal additional detail about the fit of the blend of neck into shoulders, the fit of the elbows and the correct spring of rib.
 - Check for a firm, dense coat, lying close to the body and for good undercoat. The outer thigh area or along the back, just above the tail, are good places to check coat and undercoat.
 - Stand back and once again view the overall picture the dog presents and decide if the hands on confirms the correct structure and balance.