



Hogan is the only French Bulldog to earn an IDPKA specialty title (in the "Two Feet On" category). Here, he balances his front paws on a chain.

*It happens fast, and he makes it look easy.*

"Hit it!" says Bea Page, and with a running start, Hogan the French Bulldog springs toward a board angled nearly vertical against a fence. He swiftly hits the board with his front feet, then rear feet, bouncing off like a rubber ball. He trots back to Page with a satisfied grin.

"Yes, sir! Good boy!" Page says as Hogan looks to her, eager for the next challenge.

This fancy footwork is called a "tic tac," and it's one of several moves required to earn a title with the [International Dog Parkour Association \(IDPKA\)](#).

In this discipline, Hogan is a record-setter: He's the first of his breed to earn an IDPKA title, and the only Frenchie to hold an intermediate and a specialty title.

But in its essence, parkour—for humans and for dogs—isn't about titles or rankings. Combining athleticism and creativity, parkour encourages dogs and owners to engage with their environment in new and exciting ways.

"It just really builds a bond like nothing else that I've done," Page says. "Parkour is actually my favorite of all the sports—love, love, love, love, love it!"



## ***The French Connection***

Parkour (for humans) was developed in France in the 1990s by actor and stunt coordinator David Belle. The name derives from the French word *parcours*, or route, and the objective is to traverse the environment as swiftly and creatively as possible.

*Traceurs*, or practitioners of parkour, maneuver urban landscapes with cat leaps, gap jumps, dive rolls, vaults, balancing, “underbars,” and tic tacs—stuntman-style moves that require skill, imagination, and an understanding of one’s own abilities.

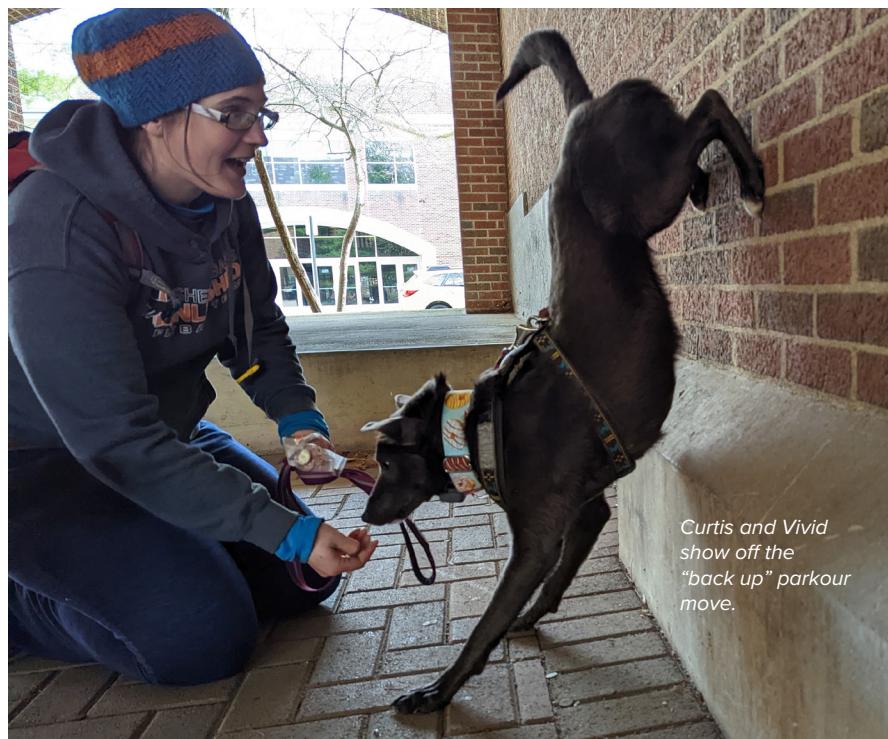
IDPKA founders Karin Coyne and Abigail Curtis, of Ohio, are active in the sport themselves and would often bring their dogs along when training. They adapted the parkour movements for canine bodies and began teaching dog parkour classes at a local training facility.

“We love parkour, and we really, *really* love the dog parkour, and we wanted to find a way for it to grow and still have the structure and meet the spirit of what we want,” Curtis says.

She and Coyne initially balked at

suggestions to create a dog parkour titling program—the original sport’s founders eschewed competition, comparison, and commercialization.

Could they promote parkour in a way that appealed to dog-sport athletes—who typically chase titles and ribbons—while honoring and preserving its ethos?





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What they came up with was a non-competitive, video-submission titling track, emphasizing accessibility, safety, exploration, and personal growth.

### Playing It Safe

For each IDPKA titling level, dogs interact with an obstacle using balance, confidence, and agility—like weaving through a bicycle rack, trotting along a retaining wall, jumping over a log, or crawling under a bench. [The rules are thoughtfully constructed](#) using measurements based on the dog's structure so that obstacles can be scaled—this makes the sport accessible to all dogs, with no particular breed having an advantage.

For example, at the training level, dogs cannot jump off an obstacle that is taller than their stopper pad. (The height limit is raised to shoulder-level as the dog advances in age and skill.) Dogs are required to wear a back-clip harness with thick straps. Handlers are instructed to spot their dogs and be ready to lower them off an obstacle safely, if needed. Submissions with safety violations or dogs who appear stressed or reluctant result in a non-passing score.

"If you do parkour incorrectly, it can absolutely, 100 percent be very dangerous," says Curtis, who has a degree in veterinary medicine. "But parkour, both human and dog parkour, is really built on that foundation of (needing) to be



*As teams practice parkour, they begin to see their city with a new perspective. Page says, "This fish statue ... at the Weiss Lake Lodge drew my parkour eye to it as a really cool obstacle to interact with."*

safe and strong and smart, and (training) ourselves so that the things we are doing are actually very, very safe and controlled."

As dogs develop physical fitness and body awareness, they're also problem solving and building confidence. Through parkour, Curtis says, dogs are given an opportunity to successfully conquer challenging situations—shifting from a cautious or fearful mindset to one of

confidence and accomplishment.

"At those upper levels, I see the dogs go through the same kind of process that I know I go through when I'm looking at a difficult or complicated movement in human parkour," Curtis says—a process of analyzing, strategizing, choosing the challenge, or opting out.

"It's just so beneficial for a lot of these dogs to learn how to be confident and make those decisions and become the best versions of themselves."

### A Whole New World

Before setting records in parkour, French Bulldog Hogan earned his AKC championship in conformation, as well as his Canine Good Citizen Advanced, AKC Temperament Test, and Trick Dog Performer titles. But Hogan's confidence and sparkling personality caused hiccups in trialing sports like rally and agility.

"He is such a social butterfly," Page laughs. "I have run him a couple of times in agility trials, and as soon as he spots a ring crew, he's off and running to



*French Twist: Hogan is working toward his AKC Trick Dog Elite Performer title, with a skit called "King of K-9 Kandyland."*

# Fun with Frenchies

Despite holding the top spot as AKC's [most popular dog breed](#), the French Bulldog can be a rare sight in companion and performance sports. Page says Hogan is proof that Frenchies are more than capable of enjoying these activities, especially when their handlers keep it fun and rewarding.

"I think the more we do with our guys, the more they just say, 'Oh, that's fun! Let's do more of that.' Because you make it fun, they want to do it," Hogan says.

Patty Sosa, president of the [French Bull Dog Club of America \(FBDCA\)](#), says French Bulldogs have a confident, comical personality that outsizes their small stature.

"When I got my first Frenchie, she was a little dynamite. She was unbelievable, and she thought she was a Bullmastiff," Sosa says. "And I always said I had to put a mirror in the back of her crate so she would realize that she was just a 22-pound French Bulldog."

go greet them and say, 'Oh, hello! How are you? I forgot about my mom over there, because I want to be sociable!'

Enter dog parkour. With no ring times, judges, or special equipment required, Page found an activity that stretches Hogan mentally and physically—at their own pace, and in their own time. And being a true *traceur*, Hogan now finds obstacles that lend themselves fit for parkour behaviors when they're out and about.

"If he'll see something, he'll go offer to put paws up on it or jump over it," Page laughs. "... He just offers the behaviors, because he has such a foundation of knowing that we're out to have fun, and it's going to be rewarding."

Page uses positive-reinforcement, rewards-based training methods, so Hogan is always motivated to play. The most challenging aspect of parkour for Page is finding obstacles that meet the precise title requirements. An expert gap jump, for example, requires leaping between two obstacles that are as far apart as one and a



Peanut and her Doberman Pinscher buddy, Remi

at things," Sosa says.

Sosa recommends searching for breeders on the [FBDCA](#) website, and be ready to wait—a conscientious breeder will ask you questions about your lifestyle, invite you to their home, and pair you with the puppy or adult dog *they* think has most suitable temperament for *your* family and lifestyle.



*Beauty and Brains:* Before Hogan's days as a *traceur*, he stunned in the conformation ring.

half times the dog's body length.

"The dog can do the skills, but finding those obstacles that fit all the criteria at the top levels of the sport is the challenge," she says. "And it's a fun challenge! It's a fun challenge to go out and say, 'Gosh, I need this,' and start looking around for it."

Curtis says this "scavenger hunt" is the element that best captures the spirit of parkour—getting out into the world with confidence, and interacting with the

As a breeder, Sosa has paired Frenchies with a variety of owners, from first-timers looking for a family companion, to a serious obedience competitor who was on track to earn a Utility Dog Excellent title.

She posits that social media and celebrities have contributed to the breed's surge in popularity, but their intelligence and easygoing nature make them appealing, adaptable companions.

"They're thinkers, and we have one in particular—her name is Peanut—and she is such a thinker. You can see the way she cocks her head, the way she looks

landscape in creative, innovative ways.

"I absolutely love hearing dogs be able to go out and have a bigger bubble and enjoy more of their life through the skills that they learned in parkour," Curtis says. "And that's what we wanted for parkour. ... It's not about, can you do this *thing*? It's about the philosophy behind it, and learning to conquer those mental blocks and all of those kinds of things that make it so much more fun for me." **FD**

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*Lindsey Dobruck is the senior consulting editor of AKC Family Dog and the Lancashire Heeler breed columnist for the AKC Gazette.*

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