

Clean Run[®]

THE MAGAZINE FOR DOG AGILITY ENTHUSIASTS VOL. 19, NO. 04 APRIL 2013 \$7



**How You Can Avoid Losing Your
Focus and Energy at Trials**

**Teaching and Perfecting
the Lead-out Pivot**

**Training Your Dog to Perform
Tunnels Independently**

Iliopsoas Injuries and Prevention

The Dog Owners Training Club of Lynchburg, VA congratulates its members who completed agility titles in 2012!

Jim Smotrel and Collie "Slater"
Completed MACH5, MACH6, T2B2 and T2B3
MACH6 UGRACH Millknock Daydrn Step N Stone
CDX RE HSA4 MXB3 MJS3 MXF MFG TQX T2B3 THD TDIA



PHOTO BY STEWART EVENT IMAGES

Fred Ochsner and Doberman Pinscher "Mason"
Completed MACH2
MACH2 PHYRESIDES'S DOUBLE DARE YOU
CD MXG MJC OAP MJP OF NFP CGC



PHOTO BY STEWART EVENT IMAGES



PHOTO BY VICKI AND JENNIFER KING

MACH2 Brooklyn
9/16/1998 - 11/16/2012

MACH3 Whoa Nelly
Brooklyn's little sister

Vicki King and Dalmatian "Whoa Nelly"
Completed MACH3

MACH3 Merry Go Round Whoa Nelly MXC MJB2



PHOTO BY VICKI KING

Amy Rookstool and Australian Shepherd "Cory"
Completed MACH
MACH CORY RE MXB MJB OF HIC

And also...

Allen & Chris Armistead & Gabe
Pointer, OA OAJ
Margaret Bissell & Icey
Keeshond, MXG MJG
Vicki King & Felan
Border Collie, AX AXJ MX MXJ
MacKenzie Krason & Kaila
Australian Shepherd, OFP AJP
Reilly Krason & Torque
Australian Shepherd, MXJ
Candy Lawhorne & Folly
Portuguese Water Dog, AX MXJ
Clair Malinowski & Maddie
Doberman Pinscher, AX OAJ OF
Cyndy Ochsner & Kitt
Doberman Pinscher, MX OF XF MJB
Fred Ochsner & Betts
Doberman Pinscher, NA NAJ OA OAJ AXJ

Mallory Riveros & Millie
Pointer Mix, UAGI
Dot Romano & Eve
Vizsla, UAGI
Amy Rookstool & Derby
Border Collie, MX MXB MJB OF
Rachel Shaw & Henna
Border Collie, AXJ
Rachel Shaw & Yonder
Chihuahua, OA OAJ
Rachel Shaw & Odette
Catahoula Leopard Dog, NA NAJ
Judy Smotrel & Mica
Collie, OA AX AXJ MX MXJ T2B OF MJB
Cathy Waller & Fei
Doberman Pinscher, NA NAJ OA

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THE MAGAZINE FOR DOG AGILITY ENTHUSIASTS

APRIL 13 VOLUME 19 NUMBER 04



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Knowledge Equals Speed! Teaching Verbal Directional Commands, Part 2

When you get behind your dog, you need to provide him with information to allow him to continue with the course or he will have to slow down and head-check back to see what you want. This month we'll look at verbal commands to turn your dog right and left. By Dawn Weaver



Puppy Agility Games, Part 2

These games teach your puppy some of the most important aspects of our sport without any agility equipment. This month you'll learn the advanced stages of the games you taught your puppy in Part 1, and put the games together to teach your puppy brilliant responses to your handling maneuvers as he interacts with "obstacles." By Anne Stocum



Living Room Agility: Come, Out, and Go

To successfully navigate an agility course with you, your dog needs to clearly understand where he's going. Verbal cues can help you be more precise. This month in your living room you'll work on a recall to side cue, a cue to tell the dog to move laterally away from you, and a cue for the dog to go on ahead of you. By Frankie Joiris

Cover

10 Power Paws Skills:

Lead-out Pivots

No matter what handling system you use lead-out pivots should be taught for a variety of a lead-out scenarios. The teaching of the LOP focuses on some important skills all dogs should understand. The foundation exercises are presented here as well as some advanced LOPs for you to perfect. By Nancy Gyes

18 Eating to Win

At trials, do you lose focus and energy as the day goes on? It could be that high sugar and carbs are literally stealing your energy. A competitor and judge shares her experiences about the effect of her food choices. By Alison Bryant

Features

- 5 Editorializing: A Letter to my Husband**
A humorous look at some of our agility quirks.
By Linda Aloï
- 32 Awesome Paws Drills**
Many handlers ask, "which way is faster, the inside or outside path?" The only way to find out is to time you and your dog running the sequence. This is a simple setup for you to use to time different handling strategies.
By Linda Mecklenburg
- 45 Class Challenges for Rising Stars: Snooker Roulette**
One particular skill a handler playing Snooker needs is to be able to adjust to changes in what she planned because of what is happening on course. Here's a game to help you learn that skill. By Stuart Mah
- 48 Competing in Different Championship Events**
Unlike 20 years ago, there are many venues to choose from when trying to qualify for a national championship event. Whether your focus is distance and speed, or you like more technical courses and the different games, there is a big event for everyone! By Amber Abbott

- 55 Can You Handle It**
Here's an analysis of the winning runs in Small Individual Agility at the 2012 FCI Agility World Championships as well as sequences based on the course that will fit in a 60' x 80' training space. By Marquand Cheek
- 59 Ultimate Instructors: Lesson Planning & Foundation, Part 1**
To be effective, a lesson plan does not have to be an exhaustive document that describes every possible classroom scenario. Instead it should provide the instructor with a general outline of teaching goals, learning objectives, and the means to accomplish them. By Lauren Langman

Columns

- 6 Tip of the Month** By Jan Manning
- 7 Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Agility...** By Brenna Fender
- 8 Backyard Dogs** By Dudley Fontaine
- 21 The 10-Minute Trainer** By Daisy Peel
- 37 The Judge's Debriefing** By Melissa A. Wallace



26 Iliopsoas Injuries and Prevention

The iliopsoas has a dynamic role in movement. Canine athletes and working dogs that accelerate quickly (like sprinters), jump, brake abruptly, make tight turns, or twist in the air are prone to iliopsoas strains and injuries. By Dr. Julie Mayer

62 Out Spot Out! Teaching Independent Obstacle Performance, Part 1

Independent obstacle performance is the ability of the dog to complete an obstacle and maintain criteria regardless of your motion and position relative to the obstacle. It is an essential skill for all facets of agility, but is particularly important for distance work. Tunnels are a good place to start. By Lorrie Reynolds

Cover Dog

MACH 3 Whytestar Million Dollar Baby, MX, MXJ, OF, T2B2, a.k.a. Hillary, a 7-year-old Yorkshire Terrier owned by Susan Poirier of Rhode Island. Photo by Lesley Mattuchio, www.pbase.com/lesleylou.

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FlashPaws Agility Training Center Congratulates its 2012 Agility Title Winners



(Agility titles earned in 2012 are in boldface)

Glenn Alexander and CH **MACH Morgan** **MXS, MJS, MFB, TQX, T2B, RN, PT, IT**; Christine Baker and **Dart** **AX, AXJ, OF, CL4** and **Cheyenne** **AX, AXJ, NF, CL3**; Michelle Banse and **MACH2 True** **MXG, MJG, MXF, TQX, T2B, PD1, PS1, PJ1** and **Kate** **NA, OA, NF**; Karen Barratt and CH **MACH6 Miller** **MXG2, MJB3, TQX, MFB, RN, HIC, VX, CGC, ROMAX** and **Packer** **NA, NAJ, OA, OAJ, AXJ**; Jackie Blutworth and **Jill** **AAD, SM, AX, AXJ, NF, OAP, OJP** and **NAC MACH2 ADCH-Silver LAA-Silver Pete** **XF, MXS, MJS, NAP, NJP, OAP, AXP, AJP, SCH-Gold, GCH-Platinum, TM-Platinum**; Howard Boyle and **Minipup** **NA, NAJ, OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, MX, MXJ, NF, OF**; Lisa Brooks and **Ginger** **NA, OA, AX, NAJ, OAJ, AXJ, OF, CL2-F, JS-N, NAC**; Melissa Brundrett and **Nicklaus** **NA, NAJ, OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, MX, NF, OF, XF, T2B**; Jim Bryson and **Meg** **MXB, MJS, AAD, AAJ, AAP, AAS, AAG, JH, CD, RE**; Betty Carter and **MACH6 PACH NATCH2 Vers-NATCH2 ATCH4 Boo** **TQX, MXS2, MJB3, MFS, OAP, OJP, OFP, AXP, AJP, XFP, MXP, MJP, MFP, PAX, TQXP, T2BP, MXP2, MXP3, MXPB, MJP3, MJPB, S-EAC, S-ECC, S-EJC, S-TN-E, S-TG-E, S-WV-E, S-HP-E, SSA, AR, SG, AD, SA, AS, AJ, JS-E-SP, GS-E-SP, RS-E-SP, CGC and MACH2 NATCH Vers-NATCH ATCH2 Bravo** **MXC, MJC, MFG, TQX, T2B, T2B2, S-EJC, S-EAC, S-TN-E, S-TG-E, S-HP-E, O-ECC, S-ECC, S-WV-E, RS-E-SP, GS-E-SP, CL2-S, CGC and MACH Bongo** **MXB, MJS, MFB, T2B, T2B2, O-EAC, OCC, O-EJC, TG-E, O-TN-E, WV-E, HP-E, RS-E, JS-E-OP, GS-E, CGC**; Sharon Castle and **Wolf** **CL4-R, CL3-F, CL2, RE, CGC**; Tom Causey and **Shirley** **NA, NAJ**; Ann Chandoha and CH **Razz** **OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ** and CH **MACH3 Dru**; Carole Cribbs and **MACH** and **MACH2 Bandit** **MXG, MJG, MFS, T2B2, T2B3, TQX** and **MACH4 Tino** **MXB2, MJB2, OF**; Cyndy Davis and **Scout** **NA, NAJ, NF, RN**; Kathy Dennis and **C-ATCH Quincie** **MX, MXJ, MJB, XF, T2B, CL4-H**; Annette Dias and **Major Award** **OAJ, MX, MXJ, MXB, MJB** and **Praline** **MX, MXJ, MXB, MJB**; Angela Dominguez and **MACH Beau** **MAD, MXB, MJS, MJB, XF**; Jan Downey and **MACH5 Kenda** **MXS2, MJC3, MFB**; Maggie Downey and **MACH8** and **MACH9 ADCH Markie** **MXS3, MJG3, MFG, TQX, T2B, T2B2** and **MACH16** and **MACH17 ADCH-Bronze NATCH Carly** **MXC5, MJB6, MFB, TQX, ADHF, CGC** and **MACH** and **MACH2 Slam** **MXS, MJS, MXF, MFB, TQX, T2B, T2B2, AD**; Susannah Feagin and CH **Winnie** **NA, NAJ, NF, OA, OAJ**; Helen Fehsenfeld and **MACH Tara** **MXB, MJS, MFB, TQX, SH, WCI, WCX, CD, CGC**; Paula Friedman and **MACH Tymer** **MXB, MJS, CDX** and **Maddie** **CDX, NA, NAJ, OA, OAJ**; Cyndi Goodman and **Chloe** **MX, MXB, MXS, MXJ, MJB, MJS**; Laura Hiatt and **MACH Daisy** **AX, AXJ, OF, T2B, MX, MXJ, XF, T2B2, MXB, MJB, MXF, T2B3** and **Lily** **NA, NAJ, NF, OA, OAJ, OF, AX, AXJ, XF, MXJ, T2B**; Patricia Horton and **MACH3 Sadie** **MXC, MJB2, MXF, TQX, CGC** and **MACH Bodie** **MX, MXB, MXJ, MJB, XF, MXF, T2B**; Susan Inger and **C-ATCH Rudy** **ChST, CTL1-H, AD, SSA, SJ, SS, SR, AG, NAJ, OA, NF, OF, NAC, NJC, NCC, JS-N, RN, CGC** and **Ernie** **CL1-H, CL1-R, CL1-F, CL2-S, CGC**; Brenda Joe and **Ziva** **AXP, OJP, AJP, MXP, MJP, MXPB, MJPB, JS-N, RS-N, GS-O, NAC, NCC**; Randall Knapp and **Billie** **MXB, MJB2, XF**; Lynette Lane and **Windy** **NAP, NFP, GS-N, CGC**; Sally Lukats and **Tigger** **MXB, MJB**; James MacQueen and **MACH Gimble** **MXB, MJB, XF**; Sandy Magie and **Gaius** **NA, CL-1**; Shirley Martin and **Austin** **MX, MJB, XF, NAC, NJC, TN-N, SD, CGC** and **Jenna** **OA, OAJ, CGC**; Deborah McBride and **MACH3 ADCH PDCH-Bronze Chase** **MXG, MJC, MFB, T2B, TQX, PSCH-Silver, PTM-Platinum, LAA-Silver, EAC, EJC, WV-E, ECC, WV-E, TN-O, TG-O, HP-O, RS-E, JS-E, GS-N, HSA-s, HRD1-s, HTAD1-s**; Kathy McLemore and CH **Selkie** **MXB, MJS, NJP, XF, VCD2, GO, RE** and **Skye** **OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ**; Cathy Mitchell and **Mariah** **HIBs, NA, NAJ, NAC, NJC, TN-N**; Susie Morris and **MACH Pearl** **MXS, MJS, MXF, T2B**; Donna Lynn Musgrave and **Pixie** **MX, MJB, XF**; Paula Parrish and **Torrey** **AX, OAJ, CDX** and **Boss** **OA, AXJ, NAP, NJP, CDX**; Harriet Patrick and CH **MACH Sabrina** **MXS, MJS, XF**; Gay Peeples and **MACH ATCH3 NATCH Blair** **MX, MXB, MJS, MXF, MAD, SM, GM, SCH, JCH, RM, JS-E-OP, RS-E-SP, GS-E-SP, S-EJC, S-ECC, TG-E, S-TN-E, XCC-N, XGT-N, O-HP-E, S-EAC, O-V, O-WV-E, HP-E, JHD, HTADIs, HTDIIs, HT, PT, HSB, HIAs, CGC, STDs** and **ATCH2 NATCH2 Zahn** **MX, MJB, MXF, S-EAC, XHP-N, XGT-N, O-HP-E, XCC-N, S-WV-E, S-TN-E, S-ECC, TG-E, O-WV-E, O-EJC, HP-E, JS-E-SP, GS-E-SP, RS-E-OP, RS-E-SP, SR, SG, SPK, APS, APG, APJ, APR, APD, MPG, JHD, HTDIIs, HIBs, HIAs, STDs, HT, PT, CGC** and **Mirth** **NAJ, OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, NF, OF, XF, O-OJC, OCC, TN-O, O-OAC, O-OCC, S-OJC, H-N, TG-O, WV-O, TN-E, EJC, EAC, GS-O, GS-E, RS-O, JS-E, SPS, PD, APG, APJ, SPK, PT, CGC**; Laura Pickering and **Aisling** **NAJ, WC, JH, CGC**; Lanelle Rachel and **Mick** **MXJ, MXB, NAP, NJP, OAP, AXP, EAC, ECC, EJC, TG-E, JS-E, TN-E**; Connie Richards and **MACH Lyly** **MXG, MJG, MXF**; Gloria Richards and **MACH Preston** **MXB, MJG, OF, T2B** and **MACH2 Hughes** **MXS2, MJG2, NAP, NJP, OJP, OAP, AJP, NF**; Belinda Rodriguez and **MACH Ditto** **XF**; Susan Roehm and **MACH3 Blue** **MXC, MJC, MXP2, MXPB, MJP, OF** and **Rev** **AX, OAJ, NAP, NJP, OAP, OJP, XF** and **Chase** **NAJ, NF**; Jeffrey Ryan and **Rusty** **NA, OAJ, AXJ, RN, RA, RE, CD, CGC**; Kathie Shultz and **Dottie** **AX, AXJ, NF**; Gordon Simmons-Moake and **MACH7 ADCH Blitz** **MXS3, MJC3, MFB, TQX, NAP, NJP, OAP, AXP, AJP, MXP, MJP, MXP2, MJP2, MJP3, MJPB** and **MACH** and **MACH2 Spark** **MX, MXJ, MXF, MXB, MJB, T2B, TQX, MXS, MJS, MXG, MJG, MFB**; Jane Simmons-Moake and **MACH14 PACH ADCH Susie** **MXS5, MJB6, MXP4, MXPB, MJP3, MJPB, PAX, MFS, TQX, SCH-Bronze, GCH-Bronze, RCH, JCH, TM, ADHF, CGC** and **MACH6** and **MACH7 ADCH Joni** **MXG3, MJC3, FTC1, MFC, TQX, T2B, SCH-Bronze, GCH-Bronze, ADHF** and **Amy** **NA, NAJ, OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, MX, MXB, MXJ, MJB, NF, OF, XF, MXF, ADHF**; Amanda Smelser and **Red** **NAJ, OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, MX, MXJ, OF, XF, MXF, T2B**; Trish Stapleton and **MACH4 Icee** **MXS2, MJG2, MXF, T2B** and **Rugby** **AX, AXJ, OF, T2B**; Deb Stein and **Sierra** **MX, MXJ, MFB, T2B, GCH, MAD, SAM, JM**; Joel Taub and **Crush** **OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, NF, OF, XF, FM**; Linda Wakefield and **Mojo** **OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, XF, T2B**; Carolyn White and CH **Grace** **CDX, OA, AXJ, OF**; Sandy White and CH **Stormy** **CDX, AX, AXJ, NF, ROM, CGC**; Lois Williams and **MACH8** and **MACH9 ADCH Keeley** **MXB4, MJB4, GCH-Bronze, RCH-Bronze, MXF, TQX, T2B, CGC** and **MACH Coupe** **AXJ, MXJ, MJB, MX, MXB, XF, MXF, MFB, T2B, AD**; David Williamson and **McGuffey** **NA, NAJ, OF**; Margret Wilson and **Nicky** **MXB, MJS, OF, CD, RA** and **Joey** **MX, AXJ, AXP, AJP**; Doreen Workman and **Secret** **OCC, EAC, NJC, TN-E, TG-N, WV-E, HP-N, NA, BN, REA, V, HIAs, HXBs, HRDIII, HTDIII**; Gena Zglinski and **MACH9 Popeye** **MXC2, MJB3** and **MACH5** and **MACH6 Swee'Pea** **MXS2, MJG2**; Mike Zglinski and **MACH Jeep** **MXS, MJS**

FlashPaws Agility Training Center - Houston, Texas - www.flashpaws.com

Editorializing...

A Letter to my Husband

By Linda Aloï



Dear Tom,

Here are a few things to help you enjoy the upcoming agility show season.

Please don't eat the hot dogs (for training) or roast beef (rewards) in the fridge the night before I leave for a trial.

Please don't move anything that I have set out on the table—it's all in a certain order to be packed.

Please don't talk to me as I pack the morning of the trial. I am stressed and excited and have many details on my mind.

I would *love* to have you come watch us run, but please:

Don't talk to me 15 minutes prior to my run. Though I may look normal, I am in a zone.

Please don't try to be helpful and exercise the dogs. I have a system; I know who pooped and who didn't, who needs to pee before the next run, how soon they need to do it, and how long it takes for it to get done—times three dogs.

If I throw a dog at you when running to another ring, just feed it and praise it. I would also like food and praise after my run.

“What did it cost me?” is not a good thing to say if I ask you if you like our new tent.

I have lots of good friends that I see every weekend at trials. When you meet them, just say, “Hi... I'm Tom” because I probably don't know their names.

If we have a lousy run, please don't tell me it's just a game. *It is not just a game.* This is serious business and we are out to qualify and place.

If we have a great run, hugs and kisses are in order for the dogs and me! After all, agility is a *wonderful* game we play!



Please don't roll your eyes when my tent neighbors and I have fits of giggling—even if tears are rolling down our faces.

I won't be happy if you go to the men's room and miss my run. “There were five people in front of me” is not a good answer.

I won't be very happy if you tell me about the gorgeous run you saw in the next ring and I see a 25-year-old girl walking out with Spandex shorts and a BC.

Please don't expect me to make dinner when we get home. I would love to go out and have a glass of wine—but I have to be in bed by seven—alone.

One more thing—thanks for being there for me and always being supportive of our dogs and all of our activities. I love you.

Now, can you help me unload the car?

Linda Aloï

Linda Aloï has been doing AKC agility and obedience with her Shelties for 10 years. She currently has three Shelties: Niki, 11, retired; Lucas, 3, showing in Utility and Masters; and puppy, Tango, 9 months old and showing lots of attitude. Linda is a member of the Syracuse Obedience Training Club and has her own dog training business, K9capers. She lives in Baldwinsville, New York with her husband of 36 years.



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Clean Run®

Publisher: **Clean Run Productions, LLC**

Managing Editor: **Monica Percival**

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Designer: **Marcy Rauch**

Advertising: **Pam Green**

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MISSION STATEMENT

The goal of each issue of *Clean Run* is to document and explain both basic and advanced handling and training techniques for individual agility competitors as well as instructors, support humane training methods, support the agility community through education and communication, and present varying viewpoints through editorials and letters.

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tip of the month

Looking for visible, tough, easy-to-handle, sag-proof, portable, and affordable fencing for your outdoor agility ring? Check out the temporary sheep fencing from www.premier1supplies.com/fencing.php?mode=detail&fence_id=39. The E'Net 8/35/6 is made up of white twisted wire, stands 35" tall, and comes in lightweight rolls of either 82' or 165'. Fiberglass step-in posts are built into it every 12.5'. A 100' x 100' ring, which can be erected in minutes, will cost less than \$350. The fencing should last at least 10 years.

It's the agility fencing of choice throughout the Pacific Northwest, thanks to its discovery by agility equipment manufacturer Ric Travis of Agility A Go Go in Gig Harbor, Washington. Ric has designed a perfect ring layout that requires two 165' rolls and one 82' roll of this fencing. Contact him at ric@agilityagogo.com and he'll be happy to give you tips on the optimal way to lay it out. 🐾

Jan Manning

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Everything you always wanted to know about agility

By Brenna Fender

The USDAA website says that results are being entered for shows on a date after the last event I attended, but the leg I earned at that trial isn't listed. Does that mean my qualifying score wasn't recorded?

According to USDAA representative Tev Brannan, “When the website says ‘results are being entered for shows on a particular date’ it doesn’t mean the week(s) before have necessarily been entered. Particularly at the end of the year there might be more than one person entering results and they might not be done in date order. Sometimes we either haven’t received the results from a show and rather than hold up the process we will start entering later shows, or if there’s a smaller, faster show to enter we might do that one out of order.”

If you are concerned that a qualifying score you and your dog earned may not have been recorded, you may contact Tev to check it out. She can be reached by email at competitorservices@usdaa.com or by phone at (972)487-2200 extension 104.

My dog and I earned a new USDAA title last month but it hasn't shown up yet on the USDAA website. Shouldn't it be there already?

Brannan says, “Title processing takes place the first Tuesday of each month. Since some of the previous month’s results might not have been received and entered, we go back a month before to process titles. So [titles earned in January] will be processed in March, February’s in April, March’s in May, April’s in June, etc.” If you are concerned that some of your qualifying scores might not have been counted, contact Tev. But most likely, if you just wait, you will see the title appear online within two months of you earning it. Your title certificate will arrive in the mail after it appears online.

My dog earned the USDAA Gamblers Championship Bronze title and I want to write his name with it included, but I'm not sure if the GCH-B goes before or after the dog's name. Which is it?

All United States Dog Agility Association (USDAA) titles go *after* a dog’s name. Even the ADCH (Agility Dog Championship) should be listed as a suffix.

This is not the case with all agility organizations. Many put some titles, like championships, before the dog’s registered name. For example, while many American Kennel Club (AKC) agility titles go after a dog’s name, the MACH (Master Agility Championship), PACH (Preferred Agility Championship), and the NAC (National Agility Champion) titles are listed in front of a dog’s registered name. Several other agility organizations have similar systems. For Canine Performance Events (CPE), most

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Do you have a question about agility rules or anything else agility related?

Mail your questions to Brenna Fender:
brennafender@gmail.com

Brenna collects the questions and forwards them to us so we never see the names.

titles go at the end of the name, but the C-ATCH, CT-ATCH, CS-ATCH, C-ATE, CT-ATE, and CS-ATE (the Agility Trial Champion and Agility Team Extraordinaire titles) all go before the name. The Teacup Dog Agility Association (TDAA) follows the same plan: championship titles go before the dog’s name (TACH, TACH2, TACH3, and so on, as well as and the TNAC), while everything else goes after. The Australian Shepherd Club of America has the same system for their agility titles: all but the champion (ATCH) agility titles go at the end. The Agility Trial Championship is the only one to be listed as a prefix.

The United Kennel Club is one of the few organizations that does not subscribe to the “only championship level titles are printed before a dog’s name” plan. All UKC agility titles are listed at the beginning of a dog’s registered name.

Interestingly enough, the North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC) doesn’t have a preference for how titles are listed. The competitors can list the titles however they choose.

Is AKC was considering allowing clubs to use a flat-bottomed chute entrance?

Actually, the AKC already allows the use of a flat-bottomed chute entrance (in addition to the round chute opening). According to AKC Director of Agility Carrie DeYoung, “The AKC allows the flat chute entrance. Our regulations state that the closed tunnel should be a continuous barrel look.”

At early agility trials, some clubs had chutes entrances with open bottoms; the chute opening was a “U” shaped piece of rigid material and it was staked to the ground, leaving the bottom open so that dogs ran on the grass or dirt surface. In the AKC rules, the use of the word “barrel” in regards to the opening is to indicate that the entrance be closed, not that it is required to be round. 🐾

Improve Your
Handling Skills
at Home

Backyard Dogs



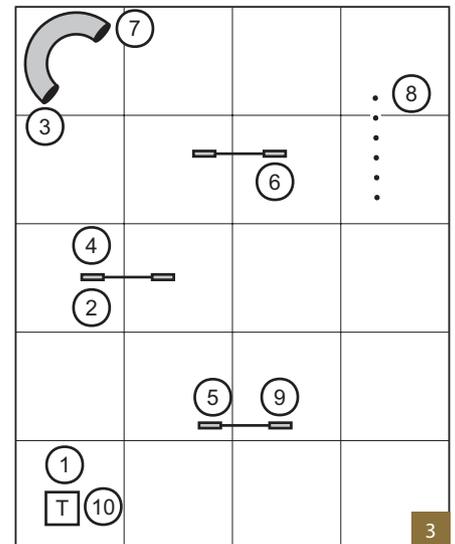
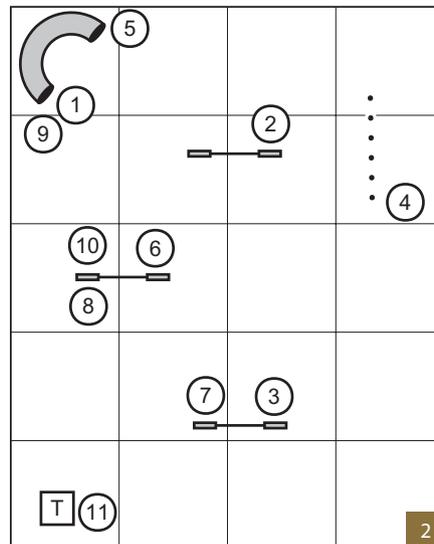
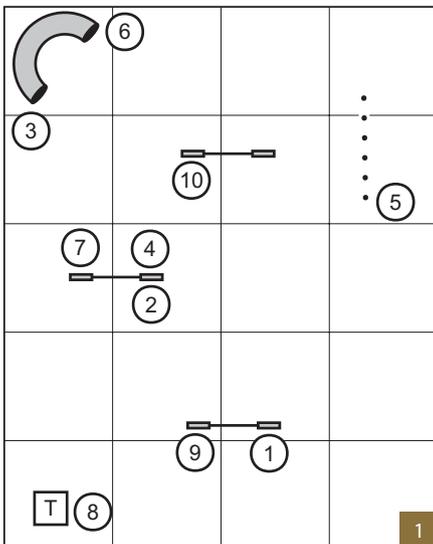
By Dudley Fontaine

This month's exercises are all about spacing. Often when constrained to a small working area, distances between obstacles tends to shrink and too many obstacles get crammed together. It is important to remember to work dogs on longer, less traditional spacing, especially if the area available is small. Less space can sometimes make it difficult to find ways to incorporate distance; all the more reason to be sure to do so!

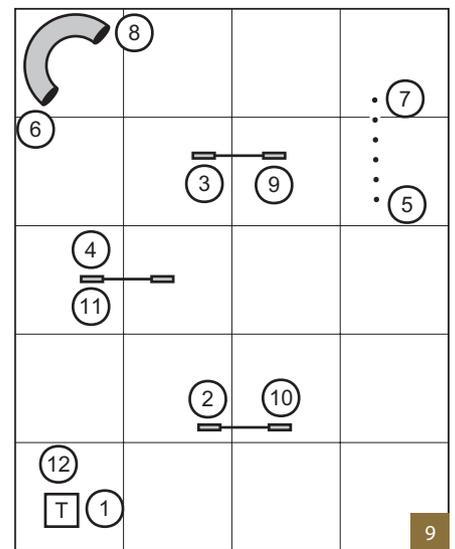
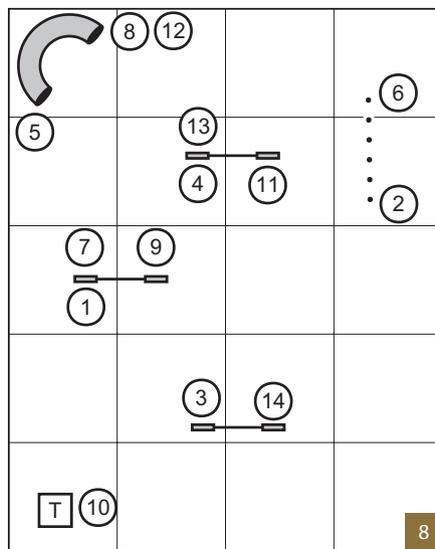
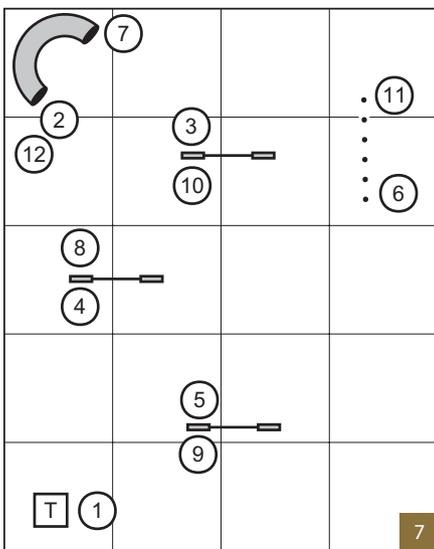
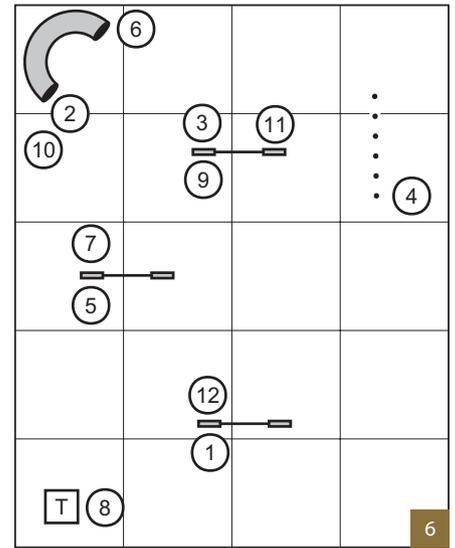
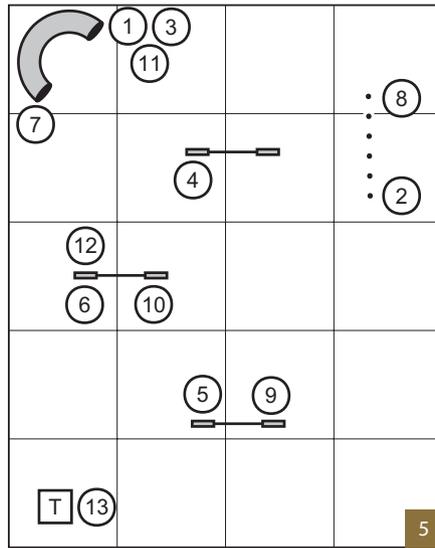
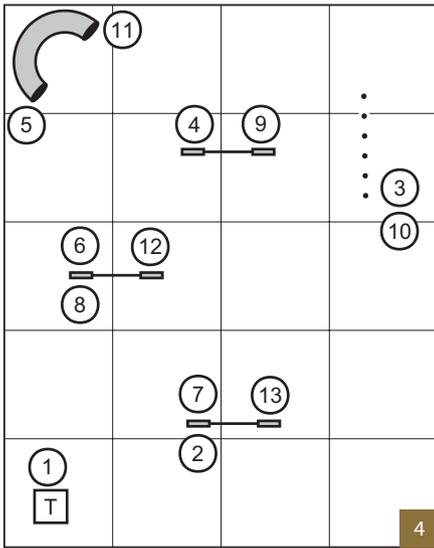
Look for the best, fastest lines for the dog *first*, and the handler options to achieve the lines *second*. You may find you don't have the handling tools to get the fastest line easily. If so, then hooray for getting some things to work on! All too often working in small spaces can create a false sense of timing. Handlers are not pushed enough unless they make a conscious effort to incorporate distance so they come to think it is fairly easy to get anywhere.

With these exercises I tried to think of ways to push the handler while allowing the dogs primarily big, open lines.

Figures 1-3 are for Novice dog and handler teams, **Figures 4-6** for Open, and **Figures 7-9** are Masters level. I hope these exercises will help generate ideas on how to go about finding space even in a small working area. Dogs and handlers will reap the double benefit of running faster and handling sharper. Enjoy! 🐾

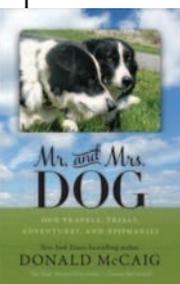


It is important to remember to work dogs on longer, less traditional spacing, especially if the area available is small. Less space can sometimes make it difficult to find ways to incorporate distance, all the more reason to be sure to do so!



Dudley Fontaine has been living with and training dogs of various breeds—including Cocker Spaniels, Standard Poodles, and now Border Collies—for over 15 years. Border Collies Maverick and Sweet have been on the IFCS and WAO USA world teams multiple times each, and both dogs have medaled. Jack is looking forward to his first international team experience in Spain at WAO 2013 and Sweet is proud to be selected as an alternate for this team as well. All three dogs have had successes at regional and national competitions, with youngest pup Bird to soon follow in their paw-steps. Before dogs, Dudley was an avid horse trainer and three-day event competitor. She lives with her husband Greg, dogs, and sheep on a farm near Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

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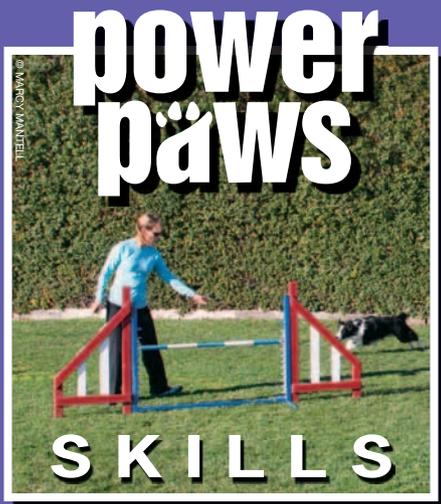
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Lead-out Pivots

No matter what handling system you use lead-out pivots (LOPs) should be taught for a variety of lead-out scenarios. The teaching of the LOP focuses on some important skills all agility dogs should understand:

- Whether I am moving or standing still, my dog should know to follow the line he is on and he should stay on that line until I give some kind of turning cue.
- The dog should perform his job even if I am lateral of his line, whether I am standing still or moving.

When I am first teaching jump handling skills to my dog, I am not always moving. My dog is standing in front of an obstacle and I am teaching him forward and turning cues. I am showing him what kinds of footwork and body cues he will see and rewarding him for responding in a specific way. Beginning jump work involves both moving and stationary cue training.

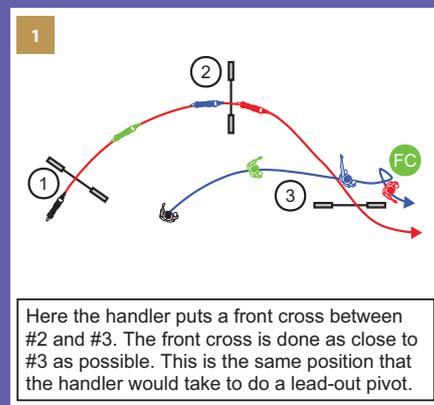
Lead-out Pivot Basics

The LOP is a stationary front-cross maneuver executed from a lead-out position at the beginning of the course. The pivot is placed in the same location that you would place a front cross if you were running off the start line with your dog and doing a front cross at the first side change. See **Figures 1 and 2**. Lead-out pivots operate on the same basis as a front cross; you pivot toward the dog as he is preparing to jump to indicate a change of direc-

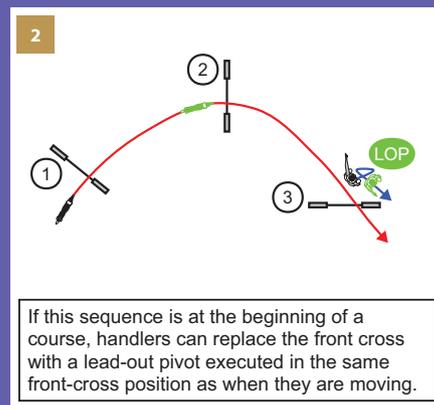
tion as well as a side change. Perfecting this lead-out will also help your timing for front crosses.

I think this lead-out is easy to teach because it uses primary handling principles. Take, for example, the LOP in Figure 2. The dog is on the handler's left side and the handler's body position mirrors how she would run with the dog seen in Figure 1. There is no motion involved in the LOP until the turn is cued at jump #2. In a front cross the dog is on the handler's left side until he is on the line to jump #2; in the LOP the timing for the side change is the same. The handler pivots at the same time she would when doing a front cross. This is how I try to time my turn on both a front cross and a LOP: a) As my dog is finishing the stride before taking off for the jump I begin my rotation toward the dog; b) by the time the dog has landed the jump, I have completed my side change and am facing or moving in the new direction.

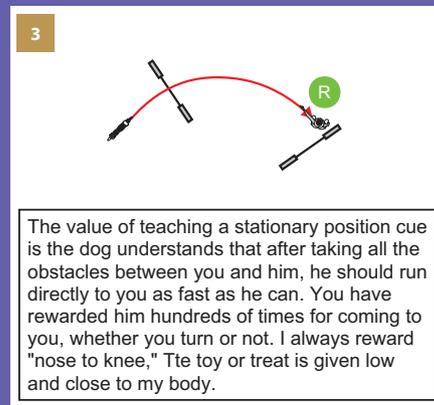
As a stationary position cue, the LOP position itself has power even before the handler executes the pivot to create the turn at #2. The dog is taught to always come toward the handler. See **Figure 3**. If the handler is standing at jump #3, the dog automatically knows by the handler's position that he will be running to the handler after taking jump #2. So the primary cue to the dog is the handler standing by the jump that she wants the dog to come to. The secondary part of the cue for an LOP is the rotation of the pivot to indicate the dog's turn and the side change.



Here the handler puts a front cross between #2 and #3. The front cross is done as close to #3 as possible. This is the same position that the handler would take to do a lead-out pivot.



If this sequence is at the beginning of a course, handlers can replace the front cross with a lead-out pivot executed in the same front-cross position as when they are moving.



The value of teaching a stationary position cue is the dog understands that after taking all the obstacles between you and him, he should run directly to you as fast as he can. You have rewarded him hundreds of times for coming to you, whether you turn or not. I always reward "nose to knee." The toy or treat is given low and close to my body.

The LOP is a stationary front-cross maneuver executed from a lead-out position at the beginning of the course. The pivot is placed in the same location that you would place a front cross if you were running off the start line with your dog and doing a front cross at the first side change.

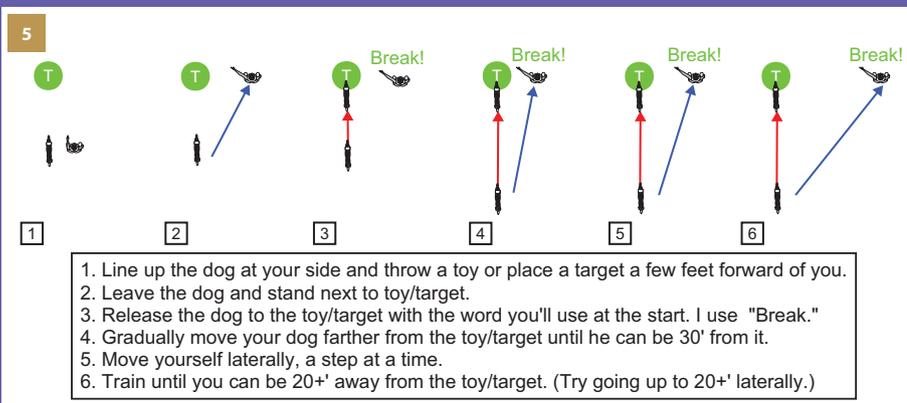
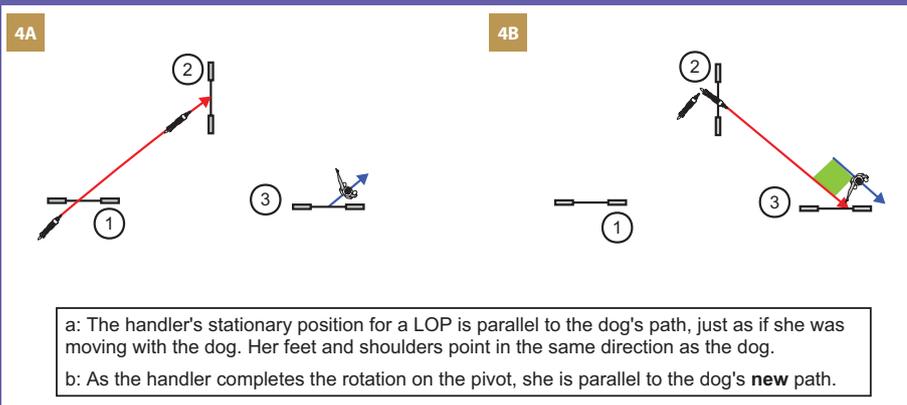
Your dog should always turn to you when you turn to him. Additionally, you are changing from one side to the other as well. In Figure 2 the left hand (and side) is active until the dog commits to jump #2. As the handler pivots, the right hand (and side) becomes the active hand. Teaching the turn on the LOP can also improve your front cross. The basic front cross skill should be taught during groundwork before beginning these exercises.

Figure 4 shows how the handler is standing parallel to the dog's path for the LOP. The first position is parallel with the line the dog is facing on jumps #1 to #2. After the handler pivots in place, she should be facing the same direction the dog is moving.

Teaching Straight-line Groundwork with a Toy or Target

Before I start my work on a jump I teach the dog to move straight ahead to a toy or target. If your dog won't run to a toy lying on the ground, then you might experiment with a treat container like a food sock or even a bait bag. Alternatively, you could use some kind of stationary target like a blanket or a small platform. If you need to use something besides the toy, you will need to teach the dog to go to that item before you begin the lateral work.

See **Figure 5** for the groundwork exercises necessary for teaching your dog to stay on a line.



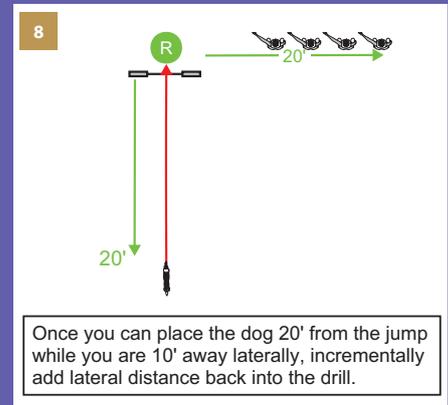
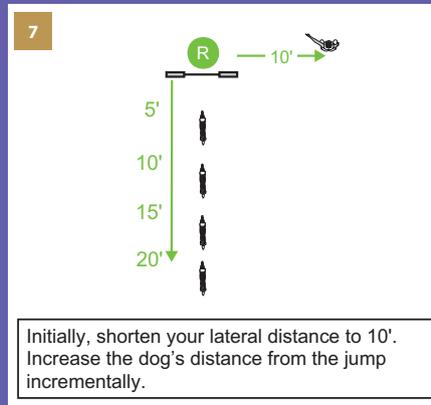
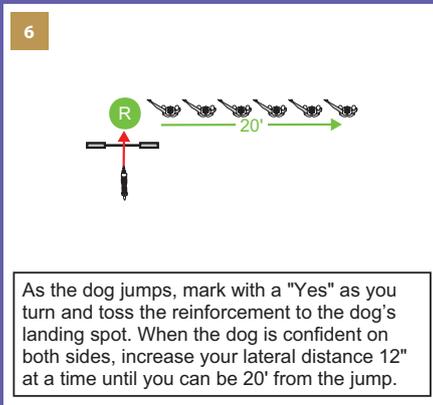
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Lateral Distance on One Jump

The next skill involved in teaching the LOP is lateral distance on one jump. Besides the benefit of having reliable lateral distance on one jump, the dog is also learning not to run by obstacles. You are teaching the dog that if a jump is on a direct line on the path he is facing, and between you and the dog, he should not pass it by. This skill is important for all aspects of agility handling.

Following are the beginning steps for teaching the lateral distance skill on one jump. When the lateral distance and reliability is perfected over a few days or practice sessions, the focus of the training can switch to adding more distance before the jump, and then adding the turn.

Place the dog just a few feet in front of the jump and lead out about 3' lateral of the dog's line, on the landing side of the jump.

Ask the dog to jump. As the dog jumps, praise or mark the dog's performance with a Yes as you turn and toss the reinforcement to the dog's landing spot (see the sidebar for more detailed information on rewarding the dog). Remember to work the dog on both your left and right.

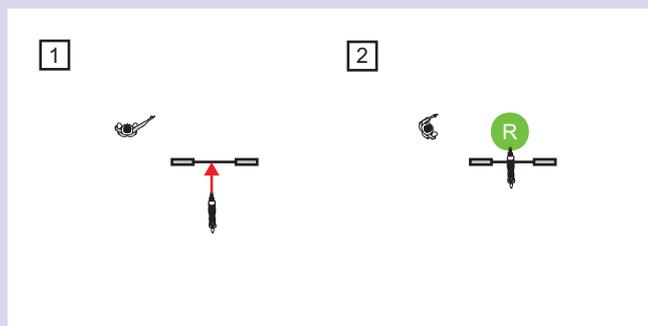
When the dog is confidently taking the jump on both your left and right side, start increasing your lateral distance from the jump 12" at a time until you can be at least 20' from the jump as shown in **Figure 6**. The dog's start-

ing position remains the same for each repetition.

After you have taught the dog lateral distance on both your right and left side, and the dog goes briskly and confidently over the jump, you can add distance between the dog and the jump. Initially, shorten your lateral distance from the jump to 10'. Increase the dog's distance from the jump incrementally as shown in **Figure 7**. Continue to toss the reinforcement to the dog at his landing spot.

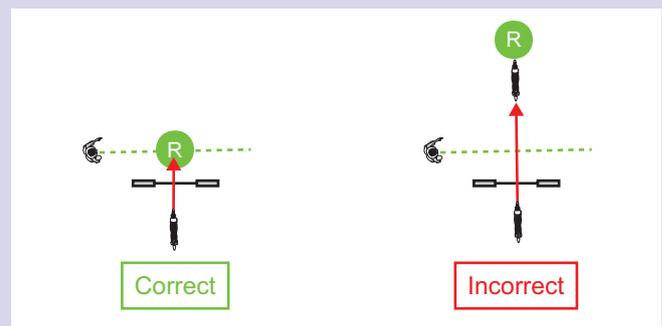
Once you can place the dog back 20' from the jump while you are standing 10' away laterally, begin to add lateral distance back into the drill incrementally as shown in **Figure 8**.

How and When to Reinforce



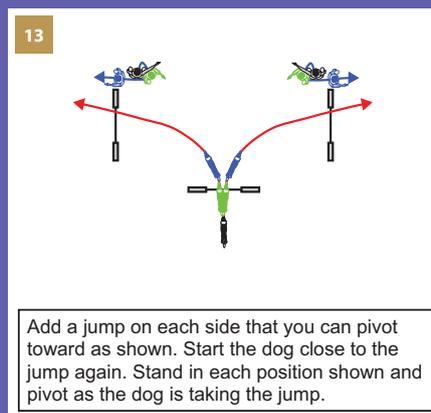
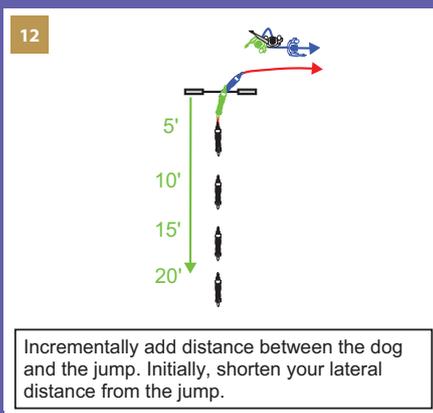
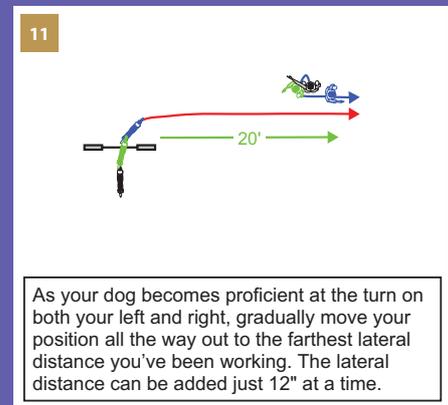
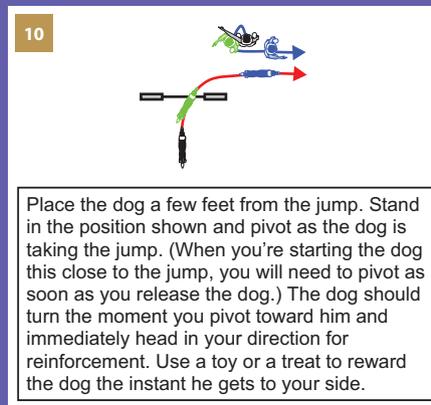
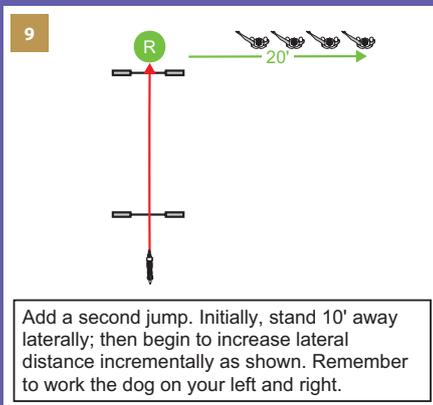
Just as the dog commits to the jump, I praise or use a marker word like Yes to indicate the dog is correct and reinforcement is on its way. I immediately turn and toss the toy to the dog at the position shown, using my outside hand. You can also toss a cookie or food sock to the dog's landing position as a reinforcement.

How Not to Reinforce



I do not hold the toy in my "cue" hand, the one closest to the dog; rather, I hold the toy in the hand farthest from the dog.

I never toss the toy past the line I am standing on; in this example, I am just 3' past the jump. Since this lateral jump work turns into a lead-out pivot and the dog is soon taught to turn at the jump in my direction, I don't want the reinforcement to pass me by since the dog would be learning to pass me by as well.



Take both time and care when teaching the turn on one jump; all of these exercises are meant to be done in small, incremental steps.

Add a second jump as in **Figure 9**. Initially, stand 10' away laterally; then begin to increase lateral distance incrementally. Continue to reinforce the dog on landing. Remember to work the dog on your left and right.

Teaching the Turn

If possible, I want my dogs to turn then land, not land then turn. To teach them to do so, your timing must be precise and quick. I begin my rotation on the pivot as my dog is landing the stride before he takes off for the jump where he is turning. As your dog lands the final stride on the ground, hopefully your lead-out position is perfect and your dog already understands which direction he is traveling. When you pair that position cue with a perfectly timed pivot as he is leaving the ground for the jump, you should get a great turn over the jump. However, just because you do the LOP correctly does not mean that your dog will respond the way you planned. Your dog needs a lot of reinforcement for responding to the cues you are teaching or you will have a great handler cue, but not a great response from the dog.

So take both time and care when teaching the turn on one jump; all of these exercises are meant to be done in small, incremental steps.

Place the dog just a few feet from the jump. Stand in the position shown in **Figure 10** and pivot as the dog is taking the jump. (When you're starting the dog this close to the jump, you will need to pivot as soon as you release the dog.) The dog should turn the moment you pivot toward him and immediately head in your direction for reinforcement. Use a toy or a treat to reward the dog the instant he gets to your side. I tug with my dog at my side with his nose turned to my knee. You are building your dog's desire to get to you fast and with enthusiasm so be sure to reward each and every pivot at your side. Practice this on both sides.

As your dog becomes proficient at the turn on both your left and right sides, gradually move your handling position all the way out to the farthest lateral distance you've been working as shown in **Figure 11**. The lateral distance can be added just 12" at a time.

When the dog goes briskly and confidently over the jump on both your left and right sides, you can add distance between the dog and the jump. Initially, shorten your lateral distance from the jump. Increase the dog's distance from the jump incrementally as shown in **Figure 12**.

Once you can place the dog back 20' from the jump with you only a few feet away laterally, begin to add lateral distance back into the drill incrementally until you can be 20' away.

Now add a jump on each side that you can pivot toward as shown in **Figure 13**. Start the dog close to the jump again. Stand in each position shown and pivot as the dog is taking the jump. (When starting your dog just a few feet from the jump, you need to pivot as soon as you release the dog to jump.)

When the dog goes briskly and confidently over the jumps on both sides, gradually add distance between the dog and the jump until you can start the dog 20' from the first jump.

14

Add a second jump. At this point, you should be rotating on the LOP just as the dog completes the stride before takeoff.

15

Here you are working on diagonal-line lateral distance or "triangle turns." Start with the dog about 6' from the jump and position yourself at the same distance on the landing side.

16

When the dog is comfortable and confident, progressively increase the diagonal-line lateral distance as shown.

17

Next add a start jump and a finish jump. This is a great exercise to work on both your position and your turning cue. It is one of my favorites and I go back to it often with my dogs to reinforce great turns and to help in their understanding of the LOP and front cross.

18

Pinwheels come in all sizes and shapes. Put one up and do LOPs on both sides and around each side.

19

The angle from #1 to #2 is steeper for this LOP. Make sure the dog is lined up straight from jump #1 to the center of jump #2.

20

This LOP helps cue a fast, straight line to the tunnel. Don't rotate on #2; wait until you draw the dog past the A-frame, almost in line with the tunnel. Your LOP skills will help for #4-#5.

21

You can stand at either #2 or #3. The lead-out advantage is that you are able to get closer to #3 to get the push to the back of #4. If you stand at #3, pivot when the dog is at #2. If you stand at #4, pivot when the dog is at #3.

22

Here is an interesting lead-out pivot where the turn is not on a jump. You need to draw the dog to the front of the jump before rotating.

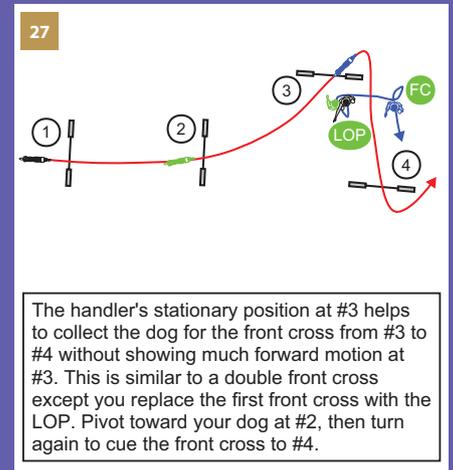
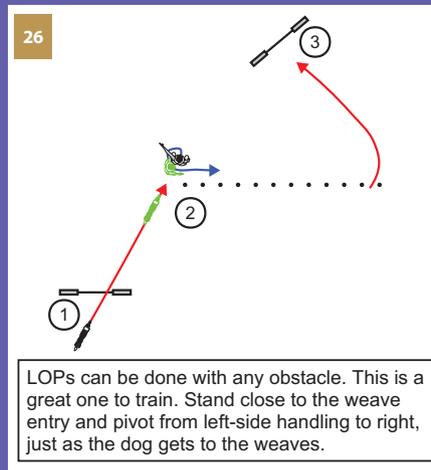
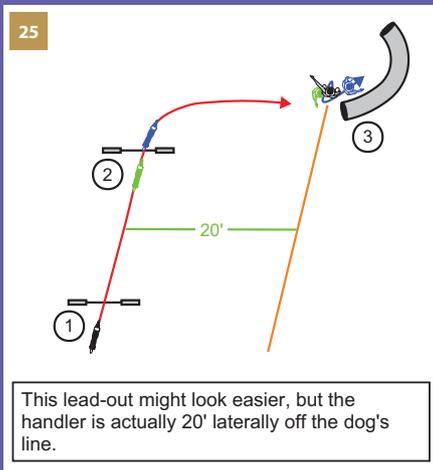
23

This drill is a test of your straight-line, lateral distance skills. Don't cheat! Stand in the position shown.

24

It looks like the handler has a lot of lateral distance from the dog, but her line is only 9' off the dog's. This is a relatively easy LOP once you can add three jumps to your lead-out.

I like to put up a three-jump pinwheel to practice LOPs with my dogs. The angles change from easy to severe, depending on the shape of the pattern and the distance between the jumps.



As you move the dog farther back from the jump, start to work on the timing of the turn. Try to rotate on the LOP just as the dog completes the stride before takeoff. The dog should begin to arc toward you on his takeoff for the jump. The timing of your turn is quite different for a large or long-strided dog than it is for a small dog.

Add a second jump as shown in **Figure 14**.

Teaching Diagonal-line Lateral Distance

In the exercise shown in **Figure 15**, you will work on diagonal-line lateral distance. I also call these "triangle

turns." Start with the dog about 6' from the jump and position yourself at the same distance on the landing side of the jump.

When the dog is comfortable and confident, progressively increase the diagonal-line lateral distance as shown in **Figure 16**.

Next add a start jump and a finish jump as shown in **Figure 17**. This is a great exercise to work on both your position and your turning cue. Since it is one of my absolute favorites, I go back to it often with my dogs to reinforce great turns and to help in their understanding of the LOP and front cross.

Practicing LOPs with a Pinwheel

I like to put up a three-jump pinwheel to practice LOPs with my dogs. The angles change from easy to severe, depending on the shape of the pattern and the distance between the jumps. Some examples are shown in **Figures 18 and 19**.

LOPs to Perfect

Figures 20 through 27 show a variety of LOPs that you can perfect as soon as you master the foundation exercises with your dog. I think you'll find that having a great LOP is an invaluable skill. 🐾

Nancy Gyes and her husband, Jim Basic, run Power Paws Agility in San Jose, California. Nancy has been the AKC World Team Coach since 2006, and has been on the AKC World Team seven times, four years with Scud and three with Riot. Nancy and Riot finished 1st in 2002 and 2nd in 2001 in Individual Agility classes at the FCI Agility World Championships. Nancy also won the USDAA Nationals four years in a row, 1998 to 2001, with three different dogs: Scud, Riot, and Wicked. In 2001 and 2002, Nancy and Riot were the 24" jump height AKC National Champions. Contact Nancy at www.powerpawsagility.com where you can also view other articles and videos.

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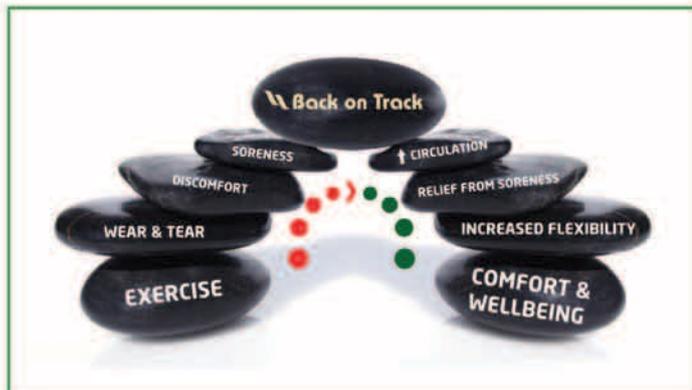
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Agility articles often involve training techniques, handling techniques, and course analysis. Some even discuss dog and handler fitness and conditioning. But there are very few articles that have discussed how the handler’s food choices affect their agility runs.

I’ve been doing agility since 1995 and, frankly, I’ve never thought about how my diet affects my runs until recently. Once I turned 40, it seemed like I wasn’t able to “get away” with treating my body poorly. For example, my typical agility day menu looked something like this:

- Two Diet Cokes on the way to the trial
- Glazed donut when checking in
- Hamburger or chicken sandwich with french fries for lunch
- Birthday cake, or cookies, or some other goody that another competitor brought to the trial

I usually did pretty well in the morning classes—I was fresh and excited to be at the trial. I even did okay around lunch-time. But I hardly ever qualified in the afternoon. Often I would scratch a couple runs or a dog or two because I was too tired mentally and physically. This pattern seemed to get more pronounced the older I got. I chalked my tiredness up to a long day at the show.

The pattern got more noticeable when I started judging. Judging requires a lot of mental focus and sustained concentration throughout a long day, with frequent visits to the volunteer food table. The volunteer food table is filled with all sorts of things to eat like donuts, granola bars, chocolates, hard-boiled eggs, chips, sodas, and cookies. When I was judging, I figured I could eat what I wanted because I would burn it off walking around. So I went straight for the cookies, chocolates, and granola bars. Unfortunately, these were sugary, high carb snacks

that gave me sugar spikes with resulting crashes throughout the day. Usually by the afternoon, it was difficult to focus and I had no energy. I thought a day of judging made me exhausted.

Then in the fall of 2009, I started having trouble with low blood sugar in the afternoon. After some research and analysis of my diet, I realized that my diet was too high in sugar and carbohydrates. The high sugar and carbs were essentially sapping my energy.

Carbohydrates, Protein, Fat, and Insulin

Carbohydrates, protein, and fat are called macronutrients. They are what power our bodies. Our bodies need fat and carbs to give us energy. Protein is used to build muscles and other tissues. But protein can also be burned by our body as fuel. If we eat too many macronutrients, we end up storing fat on our bodies. If we don’t eat enough, we burn fat stored in our fat cells.

Fat can be directly burned by the cells in our bodies. It doesn’t need any “pre-processing” to be utilized. Protein can also be burned by the cells in our bodies. When carbohydrates or sugars are consumed, they are converted into glucose which raises our blood sugar. Sustained high blood sugar is very detrimental to our health (as seen by the health issues associated with diabetes). Our cells utilize the blood sugar to satisfy energy demands. However, depending on what you eat (sugary glazed donut), your blood sugar may be higher than what is needed to supply your cells. So sometimes, there is an excess of blood sugar because cells aren’t burning the sugar fast enough (i.e., you aren’t active enough to immediately burn off what you just ate or there was way more sugar in the snack than your body needs.)

To rectify high blood sugar (and to aid our cells in using blood sugar), our bodies release insulin. One of insulin’s function is to remove the sugar from our blood and burn it as energy. Another function of insulin is to convert excess blood sugar (glucose) to fat and stuff it in our fat cells. Insulin is really good at

its job. It stuffs as much glucose into our fat cells as it can get its little hands on. Sometimes, your body releases too much insulin and it stores a majority of your blood sugar. Now, your body doesn't have anything floating around in your bloodstream to burn because it's all been stored in fat cells. The resulting sugar "crash" leaves you feeling tired, spaced out, and ready for a nap.

Some people's bodies are better at processing extra carbs and sugar. They are the people that seem to be able to eat what they want and not get fat. Some people's bodies aren't as good as processing extra carbs. Their bodies produce too much insulin in reaction to consumed carbs. The result of excess insulin is that the carbs are stored mostly as fat and the body is left with nothing to burn. The person gains weight, has no energy, and is often hungry.



Sound familiar? Looking back at my "agility menu," you can get a good idea of why I was so tired in the afternoon. I didn't eat anything for breakfast, but had a nice caffeine fix. The caffeine got me going, but my cells still didn't really have any fuel to burn. Then I ate a donut or something sugary. That gave me a short-lived

sugar rush. But once my insulin took care of my elevated blood sugar, I crashed. I was usually tired and very hungry before lunch. I thought it was because I got up early. Now I'm thinking it was because I just hadn't fed my body anything it could use for sustained energy.

The hamburger for lunch wasn't too bad, but a side of fries is basically treated as a quarter cup of sugar by our body. The carbs in the fries are converted to glucose, which raises your blood sugar. Your insulin will rise to handle the glucose. The unused glucose will be stored as fat (in addition to the fat in the fries) and you may get sleepy depending on what else you ate with the fries. A serving of fries contains as many grams of carbs as a quarter cup of sugar. You would never eat a quarter cup of sugar for lunch would you? Probably not. But once the fries are processed by your body, the net effect is that your blood sugar is raised about the same amount as if you had eaten that sugar for lunch. Not a good choice for sustained energy.

Fat and protein do not require insulin in order for the body to use them. They are used "as is." So when you eat fat and protein, your body does not release insulin like it does with carbs. This is beneficial for several reasons. First, there is no crash associated with fat or protein. You won't suddenly get really sleepy and hungry a half hour later. Second, because there isn't excess insulin floating around, it is easier for fat to move out of your fat cells and be available to burn as energy. This is an important point. Insulin is good at storing excess blood sugar as fat in your fat cells. When there is an excess of insulin floating around, it can also block fat from being released from your fat cells. The result can be that even though your body is requesting fat for energy, the insulin is preventing its release. So if you avoid insulin spikes, it is easier for your body to burn stored fat. If fat is available as an energy source as your body needs it, your energy level will stabilize throughout the day. You may also find it easier to lose weight.



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Cleaning Up My Act

After deciding that I was tired of feeling tired, I cleaned up my act and made a few changes that resulted in a huge overall difference. My goal was not to lose weight, but to feel better both mentally and physically by stabilizing my blood sugar and avoiding blood sugar/insulin spikes and crashes.

The first change I made was to add more protein to my diet. Since protein doesn't cause an insulin spike (it can be used as an energy source and provides the same calories per gram as carbs), I wanted to replace some of my carb intake with protein. My goal is now to eat at least 20 grams of protein a meal. Here's my typical breakfast:

	Fat	Protein	Carbs	Calories
2 eggs	8	12	0	140
1/2 slice American cheese	2.5	2	1	35
Fage Greek yogurt	2.5	10	18	130
Total Breakfast	13	24	19	305

After eating this breakfast, I feel energized like I drank a couple cups of coffee. (As a side note, I also gave up Diet Coke when I started eating better. The food I eat gives me a lot of sustained energy, so I found that I didn't need to drink so much caffeine to get going in the morning.)

For lunch I usually have a similar high protein meal. For example, an easy lunch is 3 ounces of sliced deli turkey rolled up around a piece of American cheese. Depending on what I have in the fridge or how hungry I am, I may have another Fage Greek yogurt, a side salad, or a handful of cashews to go with it.

	Fat	Protein	Carbs	Calories
3 oz. turkey	3	15	3	84
1 slice American cheese	5	4	2	70
3 Tbsp. cashews	14	5	9	170
Total Lunch	22	24	14	324

I usually have dinner around 7 pm, so I find that I need a snack to help me through the afternoon. I like to have a protein bar around 4 pm. I have two that I like. One is an off-the-shelf bar called Pure Protein. I prefer this brand because it uses mostly whey protein instead of soy (another topic!). It has 200 calories, 6 grams fat, 20 grams protein, and 16 grams carbs.

Another easy snack I like is two hard-boiled eggs. Sometimes I will just eat them as is, while other times I scoop out the yolk and put in a few tablespoons of hummus like deviled eggs. Tasty! This snack has 190 calories, 7 grams fat, 12 grams protein, and 19 grams carbs.

Dinner usually consists of a meal that provides a similar ratio where the amount of carbs is not more than the protein (but with more total calories). I usually have a salad or veggies with meat.

You will notice in the breakfast and lunch breakdown that there is a significant amount of fat. Fat is needed to turn off your hunger reflex. You can eat all the low-fat stuff you want, but it won't make you feel satisfied. The result is that you keep eating and end up eating more calories than you would if there was some fat in the meal. So by adding some foods that have *good* fats in them, I am able to feel satisfied throughout the day and not have hunger cravings. I've reduced the empty calories from high carb foods, allowing me to eat fats while still keeping an eye on the total calories a day. The goal here is food choices that make you feel good, not worse by starving you!

The amount of fat you consume is an individual thing, I have found. My husband and I eat about the same amount of protein and carbs. But he can eat more fat. If I eat as much fat as he does, I start to gain weight. This isn't too surprising considering he weighs about 60 pounds more than I do. So you may have to adjust your fat intake to suit your lifestyle and energy demands. If you find that you are hungry, you may have to add a little more fat. If you start to gain weight, you may have to cut back a bit.

A few months after changing my eating habits, I had energy all day and was not hungry. I felt better than I have in years. Two years later my energy level has skyrocketed. I can get so much more done in a day than I could before. I have found that I feel better when judging as well. My feet still get sore from standing all day, but my mental focus stays strong throughout the day.

Occasionally, I will have something that doesn't fit into my new way of eating. I'm a sucker for cake and ice cream. I usually indulge when I take my daughter to birthday parties. But I'm always amazed how I can feel the ensuing sugar crash about a half hour after I've eaten the cake. I'm sleepy and groggy and regret it. It is a good reminder that keeping my sugar and carbs low really does help me feel better.

This article is not intended to provide medical advice but rather to share my experiences about the effect of my food choices. I hope that by sharing my story, I can help people to feel better by eating better. If you are interested in changing your eating habits, I encourage you to do your own research about the effect of carbs, fat, and protein. I have listed some websites and a book below that have been useful resources:

- www.proteinpower.com
- www.marksdailyapple.com
- www.livestrong.com/article/227162-can-you-eat-too-many-eggs
- *Good Calories, Bad Calories* by Gary Taubes 🐾

Allison Bryant, her husband, and their daughter Perry share their north Georgia sheep and cattle farm with multiple Australian Shepherds and a mixed-breed terrier. Her dogs have earned four ASCA ATCHs as well as titles in AKC, USDAA, and NADAC. In addition, she competes in stock, obedience, and versatility events. Her interest in better living through healthier eating led her to start a grass-fed meat business from the animals she raises on her farm.

The 10-Minute Trainer



If you're one of those people who, while at work all day, dreams about what you will do with your dogs when you get home, only to find that the time you had slips away from you between chores, children, spouses, and the other little necessities of life, then you're not alone! In this series of articles, following the Bob Bailey motto of "Think, Plan, Do," I'll outline plans for skills that you can train in 10 minutes or less, so that you can find the time you didn't think you had to train your dogs!

This month I'd like to share a few short exercises that I use with my dogs to make sure we're both on the same page with our understanding of location cues. My dogs' and my understanding of location cues is critical to both of our understanding of motion and

how it is relevant to each obstacle on course. If my dog does not understand what my location on the takeoff or the landing side of an obstacle implies, it may be even more difficult for him to interpret what my change from one location to the other is indicating.

Takeoff-side Location

My location on the takeoff-side of a turning obstacle (a jump, straight tunnel, or chute), and my intent not to cross the plane of that obstacle, should indicate to my dog that the next obstacle, if there is one, is likely to be behind him. I expect my dog to take that turning obstacle with the intent to turn and come back toward me.

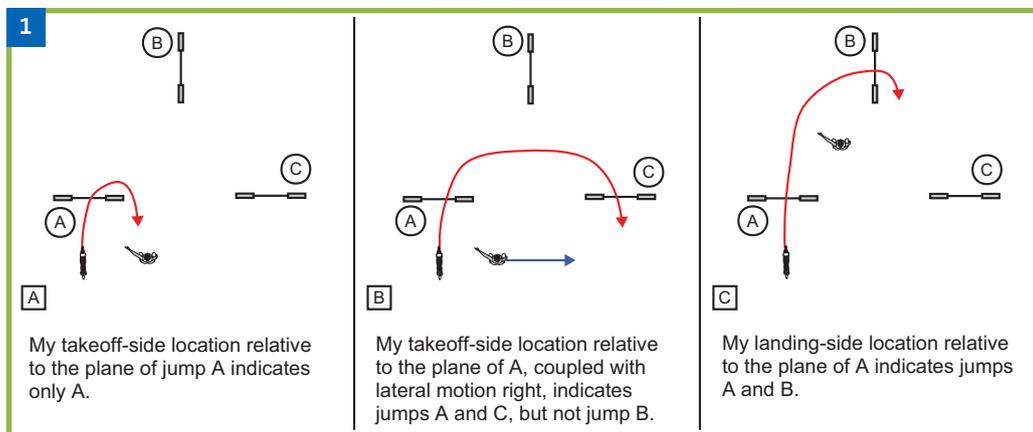


Figure 1 shows a couple of examples. In Figure 1a, my takeoff-side location indicates only jump A. In Figure 1b, my takeoff-side location relative to A with some motion to the right indicates jumps

My dogs' and my understanding of location cues is critical to both of our understanding of motion and how it is relevant to each obstacle on course. If my dog does not understand what my location on the takeoff or the landing side of an obstacle implies, it may be even more difficult for him to interpret what my change from one location to the other is indicating.

A and C, but not B. Contrast Figures 1a and 1b to Figure 1c where I am on the landing side of obstacle A and the takeoff-side of obstacle B. In Figure 1c, my location relative to A indicates A and B, but my takeoff-side location relative to B indicates only A and B, not C, unless I move from this location.

Where Things Go Wrong

Often, our dogs' understanding of location cues goes awry without our even noticing. As I like to say, we make agreements with our dogs on course that we're not aware we've made. Eventually things progress to a point where a

real problem develops and needs to be corrected. Location cues are often such a problem.

One example of where location cues get confusing between dog and handler is when a handler begins to cue a pinwheel and a 180° configuration of jumps similarly. If a handler wants a dog to execute a pinwheel, she typically gives forward cues for the first jump of the pinwheel and turning cues for the second jump. Compare that to how the first jump of a 180° is typically cued: the handler gives turning cues for the first jump so that the dog does not consider a jump that may be

present. If a handler begins to cue a pinwheel as shown in Figure 1b, then the dog will eventually learn that despite the handler's takeoff-side location relative to obstacle A, which cues obstacle C and not obstacle B, the handler wants obstacle B. The dog will also learn that the handler's takeoff-side location relative to a jump does not cue a turn, at least not consistently. Through this process of slowly making the cues for a pinwheel look the same as the cues for a 180, the handler will lose the ability to cue a 180!

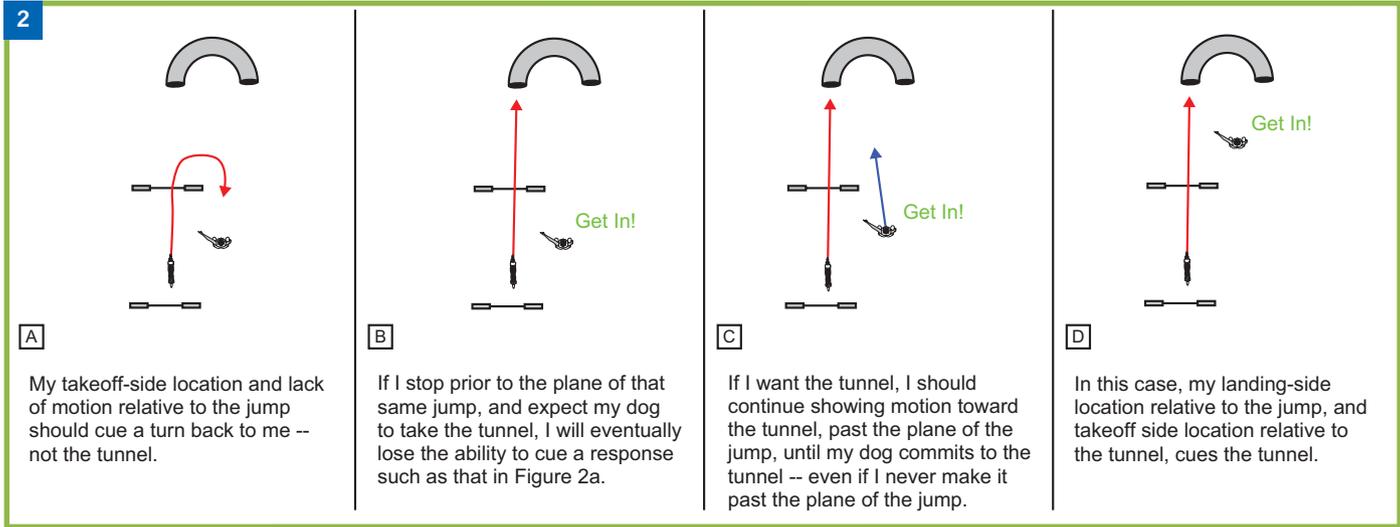
Another place where location cues get diminished is on the approach



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to tunnels. If a handler starts decelerating at the obstacle prior to a tunnel—never intending to cross the plane of that obstacle—but expects the dog to continue on and take a tunnel, very soon the handler will lose the ability to cue a turn at an obstacle prior to a tunnel with deceleration. See **Figure 2**.

Getting Back On Track

Reinforcing in my dog’s mind, and in my own, that my takeoff-side location relative to an obstacle implies that obstacle and no obstacle beyond it (as long as I’m not showing motion with intent to pass the plane of that obstacle) is a simple task.

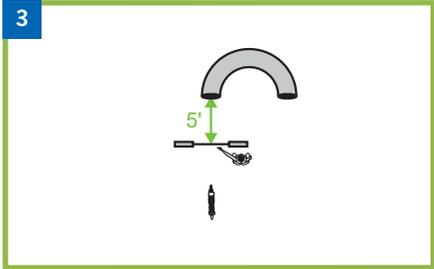
What You’ll Need

You’ll need a jump (wings preferred), a short tunnel, some cookies or a toy, and about 10 minutes. The jump should be set up 5' from the mouth of the tunnel.

Step 1

Position yourself behind the plane of the jump, as shown in **Figure 3**. You’ll be behind the wing, not more than 6-12" from the jump. Position your dog as shown, not more than 5-6' back from the jump.

Release your dog and cue him to take the obstacle with a verbal *Jump* cue only. If your dog takes the jump and turns back to you after the



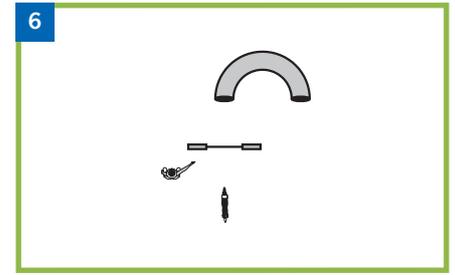
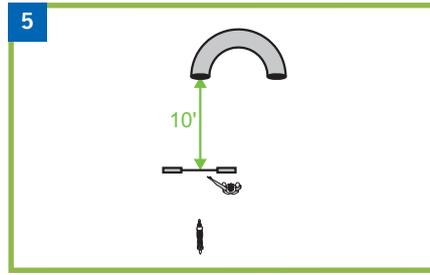
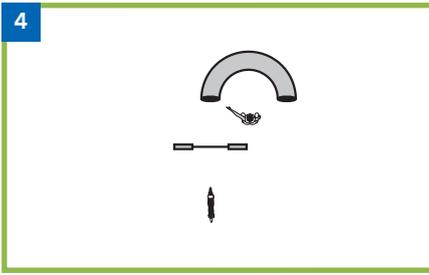
jump, praise and reward him. Then move on to the next step.

In all likelihood, your dog will take the jump and the tunnel. In this case, do not praise or reward your dog. Instead, reset your dog and yourself, and try again. Typically, I’ll repeat the exercise five to six times to give the dog an opportunity to change his behavior, before changing mine.

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Step 2

If my dog was successful in the previous step, or if my dog has made the same error several times, then I will change my location to show my dog where I would be if I wanted the tunnel. See **Figure 4**. I will repeat this three or four times so that my dog gets to take both the jump and the tunnel. Then I'll go back to a takeoff-side location and repeat a few times so that my dog is rewarded for taking only the jump.

If My Dog Has Trouble

If I've tried Step 1 and Step 2 several times and my dog does not seem to be understanding that my takeoff-side location implies only the jump, then there are several things that I can do

to make the tunnel less enticing to my dog:

- **Double the distance**—I can double the distance between the jump and the tunnel. As my dog gains success in his understanding of my location relative to the jump I can gradually bring the jump closer to the tunnel again. See **Figure 5**.
- **Go against the grain**—I can change my location relative to the midline of the jump so that my dog is less likely to take the tunnel. I can change back to my original position as my dog gains understanding. See **Figure 6**.

Going Forward From Here

Once your dog understands that your takeoff-side location implies a turn and your landing-side loca-

tion implies going forward, you can begin introducing motion so that your dog also understands that motion from the takeoff to the landing side of the jump implies going forward, and deceleration on the approach to the takeoff-side of the jump (with no intent to cross the plane of the jump) implies a turn, not the next obstacle that may lay beyond the jump.

It's your job as a handler to maintain this understanding through consistent application of your location and motion cues on a course, and by revisiting this exercise periodically. It's one that I practice every few months, just to be sure I have been consistent with my location cues. Be patient, have fun, and you can get a lot of mileage out of this simple exercise.

Happy training! 🐾

Daisy Peel has competed in agility since 1998. She is a five-time Regional champion (USDAA), a five-time National champion (AKC, USDAA), and a four-time AKC/USA World Team member. Daisy currently competes with her dogs Solar and Jester. Before becoming a full time agility instructor, she was a high school chemistry teacher. Visit her website: www.daisypeel.com.

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Injuries *and* Iliopsoas Prevention

By Dr. Julie Mayer



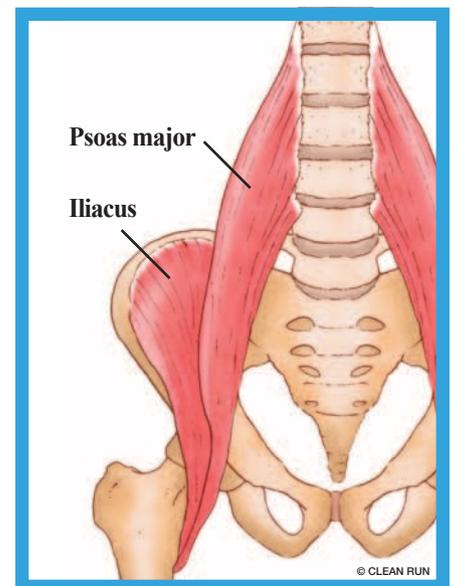
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Canine athletes, working dogs, and active house dogs that accelerate quickly (like sprinters), jump, brake abruptly, make tight turns, or twist in the air are prone to iliopsoas strains and injuries. The torso of the dog needs to be strong, stable, and flexible, all at the same time, to allow the nervous system to ignite the muscle groups that move the frame and appendages through space and for locomotion to occur. The iliopsoas muscle is one of the muscle groups that is part of the core of the lower half of the trunk. It works hard when excessive forces are placed on it both in static positions and active movement.

Anatomy

The iliopsoas muscle in dogs is actually two separate muscles (the psoas major and the iliacus) that merge together to insert at the same place. The psoas major originates from the underside of the lumbar vertebrae and runs all the way down to the pelvis where it joins the iliacus muscle. The iliacus muscle originates on the underside of the ilium of the pelvis. The two muscles become one and insert on the inside of the upper part of the femur bone. The femoral nerve runs through these muscles and down the inside of the leg. If an injury results in hemorrhage or inflammation in the muscle then the nerve may become compromised or damaged. The iliopsoas has a dynamic role in movement and also provides some postural support. Its primary function is to flex the hip joint and lumbar vertebrae, externally rotate the hip, and help stabilize the lumbar vertebrae and the pelvis.

Causes of strain or injury to the iliopsoas are usually from athletic activities like agility, flyball, Frisbee, dock diving, rough play, sliding splay-legged on slippery floors, overtraining and fatigue, or misalignment of spinal segments.



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Symptoms & Diagnostics

When an iliopsoas muscle injury first occurs there is acute lameness of the rear limb that is involved. Lameness can be intermittent, or subtly present

when chronic, and is usually worse after activity. Many times a iliopsoas injury is misdiagnosed as a cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) injury. The dog may lean off the affected limb or gingerly use the leg when ambulating or have a shorter stride on the side of the injury. He may stand or sit with the leg externally rotated at the hip of the affected side. Some dogs may be reluctant to extend the spine and the hip joint on the affected leg, which can be demonstrated when they refuse to jump into the car, onto the bed, or over a jump. They may avoid laterally flexing their spine and may show this by popping out of the weave poles. These symptoms may improve or dissipate with rest, but usually for only a short period of time if not healed properly.

Diagnostic tests may be helpful by identifying the tissues involved or ruling out some of the other potential causes of the rear-limb lameness. Since this is a soft tissue injury, x-rays are only helpful if the injury is chronic and there is mineralization visible in the muscle. Ultrasound by a skilled sonographer can be very diagnostic since it will show tissue damage, hemorrhage, or edema in the muscle. CT and MRI scans may be necessary as well, but they require an anesthetized patient and are costly to perform. One of the quickest and easiest ways to diagnose iliopsoas muscle injuries is by palpation. When a skilled rehabilitation practitioner extends the hips and internally rotates the leg or abducts the leg at the same time, the patient will show pain or discomfort. Also, when palpating the iliopsoas muscle while it is in tension, trigger points and muscle spasms may be felt. In addition, there may be pain when the tendon is palpated where it inserts on the inside of the femur and this indicates there is iliopsoas muscle pathology. Gait analysis via visual observation and a force-platform system is helpful. Also, documenting any asymmetry in thigh muscle girth will clue the practitioner that the patient is not fully using the atrophied limb. Blood work may be warranted to rule out infections or metabolic causes, like Cushings disease, for example.

Treatments & Therapies

Medical Management & Rehabilitation

Muscle and tendon injuries may take many weeks to months to fully heal and if not treated properly will result in permanent scar tissue, fibrosis, and ultimately decreased function. Rehabilitation should be prescribed and performed by a trained veterinarian or a trained professional with veterinary oversight and follow the phases of soft tissue healing.

A conservative approach to treating acute iliopsoas muscle injury would be medicine, rest, and icing. Medical management may consist of pain killers, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs), and/or muscle relaxants. Rehabilitation modalities that can help manage the pain and inflammation and disuse are thermotherapy (cold/heat), passive range of motion, low-level laser treatments, electrical stimulation, pulsed ultrasound, extracorporeal shockwave, acupuncture, therapeutic exercises, massage, and chiropractic. Later, strengthening exer-

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cises like sit-to-stands, cavalettis, dancing, stair climbing, hill walking, weight pulling, and balancing exercises with wobble boards, balance discs, mattress walking, and swivel bridges may be prescribed. Any exercise should be preceded by warming up the tissues with heat packs and massage and then followed by a cool down with icing and stretching of the iliopectoral muscle to help realign the healing fibers. For chronic injuries, NSAIDs are not appropriate because an acute inflammatory response is encouraged in order to ignite a healing process. Shockwave therapy may be beneficial for the long standing, chronic cases.

If medical management, rest, and rehabilitation do not heal the injury then surgical intervention is warranted. The tendon at the insertion on the femur may need to be cut to release the tension or it may be cut and reattached to the bone.

Herbs & Homeopathic Remedies

A holistic approach with nutrition, herbs, and homeopathic remedies can be integrated with the therapies previously described. When incorporating natural anti-inflammatories into the protocol usually the dose of the pharmaceuticals can be lowered or discontinued (and hopefully decrease the chances of side effects from these medications). Whole food ingredients and supplements can help support the tissues to heal, manipulate the inflammatory process, and hasten healing. Most herbs, both Western and Eastern, have pharmacological properties similar to medications and can be prescribed by a Holistic Veterinarian. In addition, homeopathic remedies can work quickly, can be used with conventional medicines, and are nontoxic.

Herbs & Homeopathic Remedies

Common herbs that are anti-inflammatory and often prescribed singly or in blends are: White Willow, Meadowsweet, *Boswellia serrata*, Devils Claw, Cats Claw, Ginger, *Curcuma longa*, Yarrow, Burdock, and Chamomile.

Some helpful homeopathic remedies are

- Arnica montana for acute injury and inflammation.
- Ruta graveolens for injuries to tendons, joints, and muscles. It's often useful after Arnica for chronic sprains, pulled muscles, and connective tissue injuries.
- Bellis perennis for muscle soreness, lameness, bruised pelvic region.

- Hypericum perforatum if nerve involvement, back pain or sore, bruised lumbar (lower half of back), and/or coccyx (tail) from injury.
- Ledum palustre is indicated for injuries with swelling and if cold/ice brings relief.
- Rhus toxicodendron for muscle stiffness related to sprains and strains.
- Actaea spicata for muscle stiffness and soreness after intense exercise.

Diet

There are foods that you can add to the diet to help support the healing process. Controlling inflammation is a primary concern with the acute injury or immediately post-op. The longer it remains the more scar tissue will be laid down and the greater the likelihood that the injury will become chronic and harder to heal. Foods that decrease inflammation are: apple, banana, beans, beets, berries, broccoli, cantaloupe, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cherries, cucumber, kale, mango, melons, mushrooms, olives, papaya, parsley, peach, pear, pumpkin, radish, soybean, spinach, squash, sweet potato, turnip, alfalfa, ginger, turmeric, black pepper, yucca, Omega-3 fatty acids from fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel) and fish oils, and bromelain from pineapple. Tart cherry juice has anti-inflammatory properties, helps dissipate any muscle soreness, and is a strong antioxidant.



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If the muscles are tight and have trigger points and spasm, then add foods that relax the muscles even if muscle relaxer medications like Methocarbamol are prescribed. Natural muscle-relaxing foods are rich in magnesium: Swiss chard, spinach, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, black beans, soybeans, Halibut, almonds (also a great source of protein, calcium, phosphorus and Vitamin E), seaweed, kelp, blue green algae, quinoa, berries, and oatmeal. Studies have shown that cherry juice supplementation before and after intense exercise in humans decreased muscle soreness and hastened recovery time.

Protein provides the amino acids that make up the muscles and connective tissue like tendons and ligaments. After a muscle injury, there is a need for bioavailable, high-quality animal and plant protein to provide the amino acids and proteins necessary for repair and remodeling of the injured muscles and tendon. Typically, the digestibility of processed commercial pet foods is in the range of 70-85%. The act of processing foods may either decrease or increase the absorption of their ingredients so it is hard to gauge how available the ingredients in the commercial dog foods are to the body after processing and digestion. The Biologic Value (BV) of a food ingredient is how readily absorbed and bioavailable it is to the body. The higher the number the better. Here is an example of the absorption of proteins (in their natural state) in order of most bioavailable to least:

whey > egg > cow milk > fish > beef > chicken > casein > rice > soy > wheat > beans > peanuts

Feeding whey protein will support the repair of torn or damaged muscle tissue. Soybeans are the only plant-based source of protein that has all the essential (meaning the body does not make them so they have to be consumed, digested, absorbed) amino acids in it. Protein-rich meats also contain lots of B vitamins which boosts metabolism, prevents anemia, and stimulates the nervous system. Grass-fed beef can also supply Omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins A and E, and the amino acids carnitine, creatine that build muscle. Buffalo and venison meat provide B vitamins, iron, phosphorous, selenium, zinc, and copper as well as protein. Peanuts are a great protein source and also contain Vitamin E and fat.

In addition to a wholesome diet, specific vitamins and minerals are important for the health of the muscles and their tendons and for the athlete in general and should be offered in their natural state—whole foods. Please see my article "Nutrition for the Canine Athlete, Part 2" in last month's issue for a complete list of important vitamins and minerals and food sources for them.

Preventative Care

Proper Warm-up & Cool-Down

The tissues have to be prepared for activity and they have to be able to recover after intense activities—stretching and exercising without a warm-up is detrimental to the tissues. Forcing a "cold" tight muscle to stretch and lengthen can cause micro-tears, inflammation, and trauma. To warm up the iliopsoas muscle, vigorously rub your dog over his back and hip area and inside the thigh area. The friction of your hands will warm the tissues and increase circulation. Then briskly walk and trot your dog for about 5-10 minutes to get his heart pumping and activate his circulatory system. Your dog's respiration should increase and he may even pant. Now you are ready for stretching.

Stretch the iliopsoas muscle by gently initiating passive extension of the hip joint (one side at a time) and holding in full (comfortable) extension for about 15 seconds. Then passively abduct (move the leg away laterally from the body) the leg and hold

and count for about 15 seconds. You can repeat these steps three or more times.

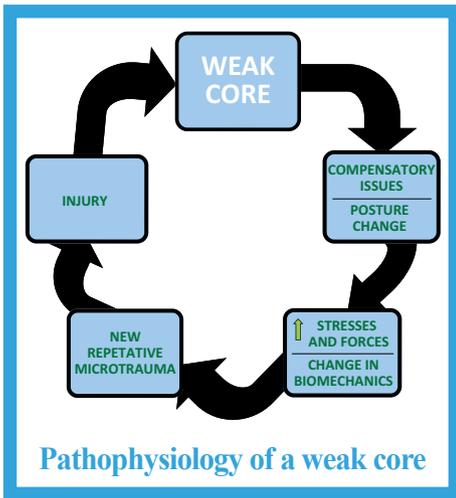
Cool down after the performance or exercise is just as important. You want to gradually transition from a run to a trot to a fast walk after the performance and then do your stretches as above. Icing can be applied at this time to hot areas or sore muscle groups. During the recovery period you need to replenish the nutrients, slow metabolism, cool the tissues down, and get rid of waste products. For an illustration of warm-up and cool-down passive range of motion visit www.integrativeveterinarian.com.



Strengthening Exercises

Remember that the muscles, tendons, and ligaments of the torso stabilize the spine, which is the center of locomotion. Strengthening exercises for the core will protect the vertebral column and move and coordinate segments properly. This will allow strong and powerful movements from the limb muscles. You want to strengthen and coordinate all the moveable parts of your companion and maintain stability in dynamic movements as well as static posture. The musculoskeletal core and nervous system must be functioning optimally for the athlete to have strength, power, motor control, balance, and endurance. A weak core and strong limbs will result in inefficient movement and endanger the body to injury, such as muscle strains/tears. I have seen many highly competitive canine athletes that have strong powerful appendages but a weak core and they

Canine athletes, working dogs, and active house dogs that accelerate quickly (like sprinters), jump, brake abruptly, make tight turns, or twist in the air are prone to iliopsoas strains and injuries.



eventually decline and injure themselves often and have short careers.

Core strength can be achieved by exercising on physioballs, swimming, wearing a weighted back pack, pulling weights, etc. And, specifically for developing the iliopsoas muscle strength, you want motion where the dog will extend and flex the back such as walking up hills, going through low tunnels, or crawling. You also want hip flexion with sit-to-stands and crawls. You can encourage back and hip extension by luring the dog to put his front feet up on a bench or physioball and then luring his head up and out so that he is reaching

and stretching for the goodie. I encourage you to seek out proper core conditioning exercises for your performance or working companion.

Chiropractic & Massage

Preventative hands-on care is necessary for the canine athlete. Prophylactic veterinary chiropractic care will ensure that the spinal segments are aligned. This will allow the nerves that come off the spinal cord to be able to transmit impulses to the muscles and tissues. Proper alignment of spinal segments will prevent inflammation of the surrounding tissues which can impinge on the nerves and decrease their conductivity. Also, a skilled canine massage therapist can manipulate the proprioceptive sensory receptors: the Golgi tendon organ (GTO) and the muscle spindle cells (MSC). When stimulated, the GTO (at the musculotendinous junction) will relax a tense muscle. The MSC are found in the belly of the muscles and respond to lengthening of the muscle. They can help

tonify the weak muscle when manipulated properly. A regular scheduled massage and spinal adjustment are very beneficial for the health of the canine athlete.

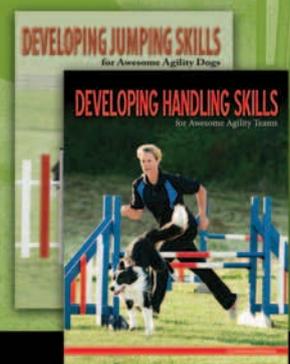
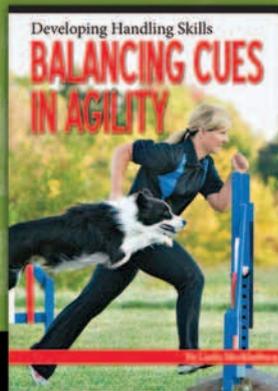
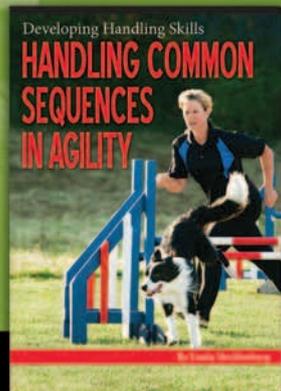
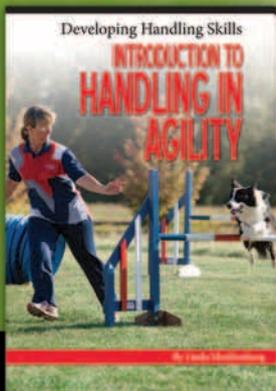
Proper Nutrition

A balanced diet with the appropriate vitamins and minerals is essential for the active, athletic, and working dogs. The demands that are placed on the bodies of these canines will increase the nutritional daily requirements since cell metabolism is higher and energy requirements are increased and more free radicals are formed as a product of metabolism and cell turnover. What to feed and when to feed is useful information (see my articles in *CR* February and March 2013 for additional information).

Here is a little review of muscle physiology. The muscle stores a small amount of fuel that is used up immediately (in less than a minute) at the start of intense exercise in the form of creatine-phosphate. This can be done without oxygen (anaerobic). Also, glucose is used to produce energy in the cells but is quickly used up over a few minutes. Meanwhile, carbohydrates are recruited to supply food to the muscle cells. The

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After many years of observation, study, experimentation, and practical application, Linda Mecklenburg has arrived at a simple but comprehensive approach to agility handling that is appropriate for all dogs and handlers, from the beginner to the most accomplished competitor. Her books and DVDs describe how to communicate with your dog and effectively cue him to perform the challenges he will encounter on course. They are designed to be resources that you will refer to for many years to come.



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demand for these sugars increases over the first 2 minutes of activity and then plateaus for over an hour. Later, these levels drop and fat is the primary source of fuel beyond 90 minutes or so. For a sprinting exercise like agility or flyball, anaerobic metabolism in the muscle cell and readily available simple sugars are needed within the first 4 minutes of intense activity. The highly digestible branch chain amino acids (BCAAs) given before and after a run can initiate an insulin response to help get the fuel into the cells (see "Nutrition for the Canine Athlete, Part 2" in *CR* March 2013). It is advised to offer small amounts of simple sugars periodically during longer exercise or between events to aid in blood glucose homeostasis.

After intense exercise or an event, the body is in a catabolic state. Human athletes will consume 1 gram of protein for every 4 grams of carbohydrates within 2 hours after exercise (or a sprint run). Nutrients like glucose (sugars and carbohydrates) and amino acids (protein) need to be replenished within this time frame to counteract the breakdown of tissues. When feeding a high-glycemic index food like oats (oat flour) or rice cakes within 2 hours post exercise, insulin blood levels will increase which will drive glucose into the muscle cells where it will be stored as glycogen and used for muscle synthesis or energy later. Also, offering whey protein within this time frame will replenish amino acids (especially BCAAs). Since whey has an insulinogenic effect (promotes production and release of insulin) it will help feed the muscle cells.

A study in humans showed that whey protein along with carbohydrates stimulated muscle synthesis following resistance exercise training. Bananas also have BCAAs to build muscles and digestible sugars that are absorbed over time which help keep the sugar blood levels stable. A study found that bananas were as effective as Gatorade in providing nutritional support during intensive exercise. It has also been found that regularly feeding Omega-3 fatty acids, which have anti-inflammatory properties, will stimulate muscle protein synthesis and may prevent sarcopenia (muscle loss and degeneration from aging) according to a study conducted on older humans.

Muscles are about 75% water so hydration is imperative for muscle health and function. Also, electrolytes are needed to conduct electricity in the nerves that supply the muscles and water can be a good source. Water molecules are involved in some metabolic processes and when metabolism is increased with exercise and activity then more water consumption is necessary so the tissues do not become dehydrated. Water is also used by the body to flush out the by-products of metabolism and digestion and can flush out toxins that accumulate in the blood stream and tissues.

Preventing Fatigue

Preventing fatigue in the canine athlete is imperative! When the body is tired the reflexes are slower and it is harder for the athlete to maintain strength and balance and muscle tone. This is when injuries can occur. Generally, fatigue is usually due to a decrease in blood sugar, a decrease in glycogen (anaerobic carbohydrate fuel) stores in the muscle and liver, and a depletion of potassium. If you follow the recommendations on what to feed the canine athlete and when, then this disaster can be avoided. Just think about what we expect from our hard working companions. There are many emotional and physical demands that are inflicted on them when we train or attend weekend events. Their adrenaline will mask physical pain and we must pay attention to any symptoms and prevent any unforeseen trauma. Being observant, proactive, and smart is what our companions depend on! 🐾

Editor's Note: References available from www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=739 or go to the Magazine Forum at www.cleanrun.com, select Articles and then References.

Dr. Julie Mayer, a native of Chicago, has been practicing veterinary medicine since 1991. She has dedicated her career to holistic medicine and rehabilitation. Dr. Mayer was named one of "Chicago's Best Vets" by Chicago Magazine and the business she co-founded, Integrative Pet Care, was voted "Best Pet Rehab." Also, she received the 2010 Iams Eukanuba AARV Award for excellence in the field of Veterinary Rehab. Most recently she co-authored the book The Country Vet's Natural Cat and Dog Care. Dr. Mayer is certified in veterinary acupuncture, chiropractic, and canine rehab. Dr. Mayer is also interested in nutrition. She has created Mach Morsels (www.machmorsels.com), a nutritious treat scientifically designed for the canine sprinter athlete. Currently, she has merged her business, Integrative Veterinarian, with two veterinary rehab clinics and an indoor dog gym in Arizona. For more information visit www.integrativeveterinarian.com.

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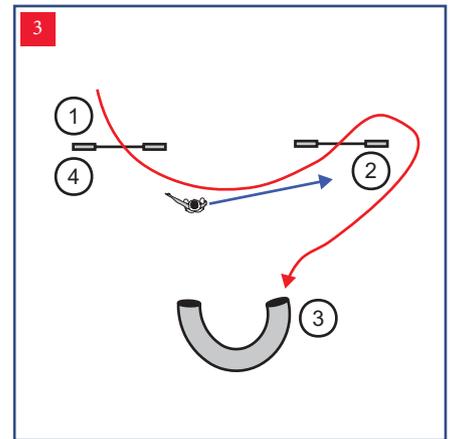
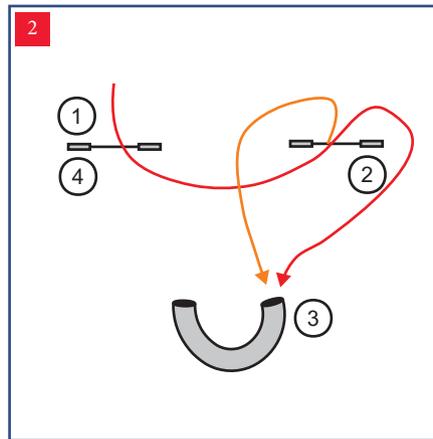
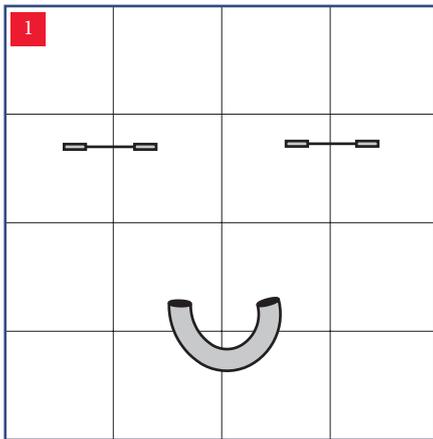
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AWESOME PAWS Drills

By Linda Mecklenburg



This is a simple setup for you to use to time different handling strategies. Many handlers ask, “Which way is faster, the inside or outside path?” The only way to find out is to time you and your dog running the sequence. In my experience, if each handling strategy is cued equally well and the dog responds appropriately, the times will be nearly the same. This is because the shorter inside path requires more strides and more collection than the outside path. Although it may be a greater distance, the outside path can often be performed in extension thus the dog maintains ground speed.



The times are not always equal for smaller dogs because they 1) do not need to collect as much as the large dogs to take the shorter inside path, and 2) relative to their size going to the “outside” may be considerably longer, particularly if the jump bars are 5'. Of course, some dogs are very talented jumpers and can bend themselves around a bar like Gumby; if so, the shorter path may always be slightly faster for these dogs. Other dogs may have superb ground speed and taking the longer path will yield the best times. If you want to save time on the clock, you should be aware of which turn your

dog is likely to be fastest on. There are, of course, other factors that must also be considered when determining which path to take—inside or outside—such as the speed and direction at which the dog approaches, direction of the next obstacle, and presence of other obstacles not to be taken, just to name a few.

If you have electronic timers I suggest setting them up at jump #1 and the entrance to the #3 tunnel. If timing by hand without a helper, I'd mark a spot on the ground in front of #1 and start my dog from that spot each time. Start the time

when you release the dog and stop it when the dog enters the #3 tunnel. Be sure to record your times and perform each option multiple times, taking the average of the best several attempts.

Figure 1 – This is the equipment setup.

Figure 2 – Direction options at #2: Red path is outside and orange path is inside.

Outside Path

Figure 3 – For the outside path, handle #1 from the landing side with a lead-out push.

Be sure to record your times and perform each option multiple times, taking the average of the best several attempts.

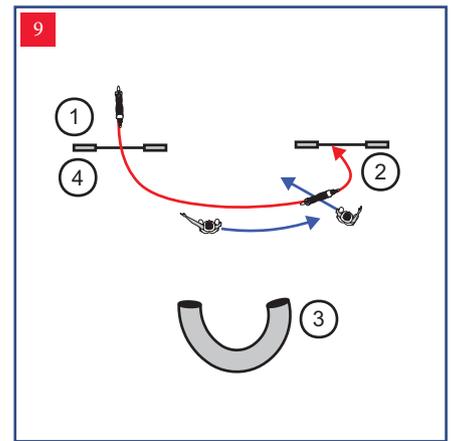
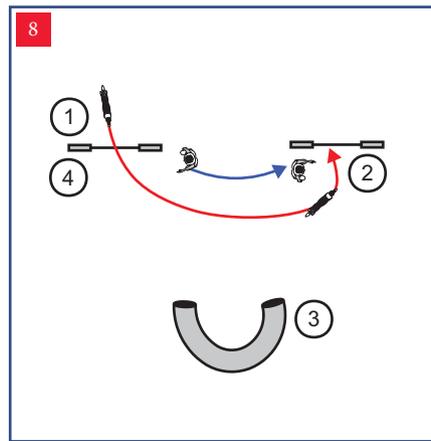
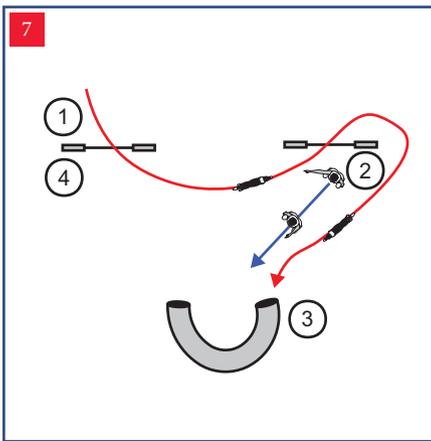
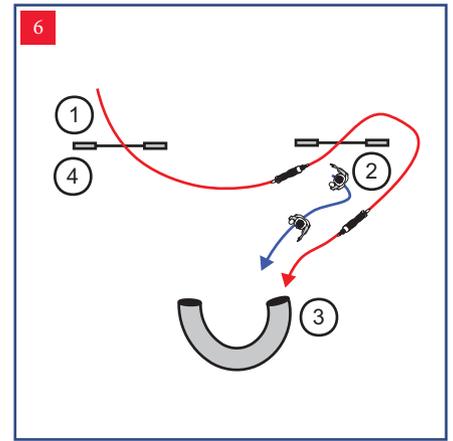
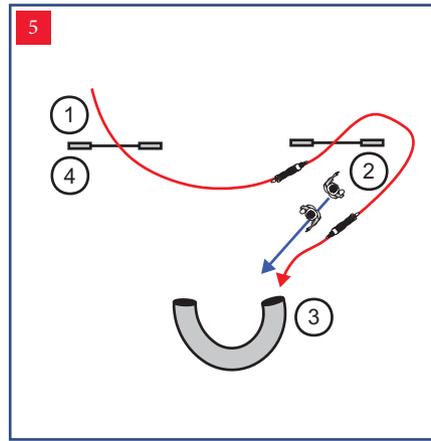
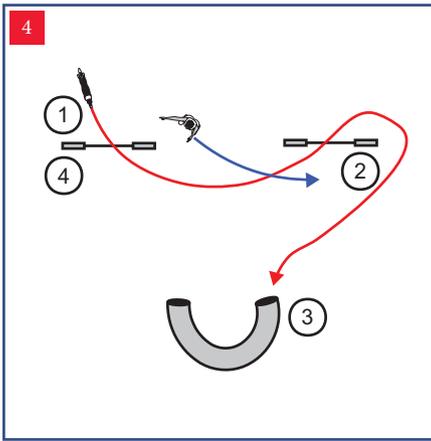


Figure 4 – Or, for the outside path, handle #1 moving forward and laterally from the take-off side through the gap toward #2, using a forward motion front cross (shoulders rotated toward dog, blend of inside and outside arms, *Jump* cue).

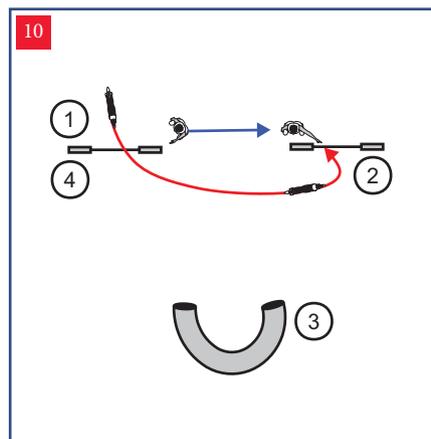
Figure 5 – Handle #2 with a pull cued with deceleration and a forward send (shoulders facing forward, inside arm, *Jump* cue). Turn right and pull to tunnel.

Figure 6 – Handle #2 cued with no motion and collection cues (shoulders rotated toward dog, outside arm, eye contact, and *Jump* cue). Turn right and pull to tunnel.

Figure 7 – Handle #2 with backward motion (shoulders facing dog, outside arm, *Jump* cue). Step forward to cue tunnel, picking your dog up on your left.

Inside Path

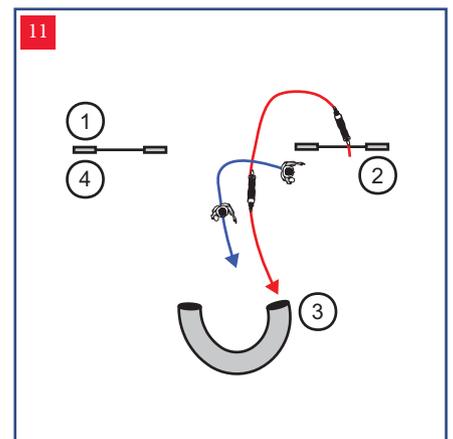
Figure 8 – For the inside path, handle #1 from the landing side with no motion and collection cues (shoulders rotated



toward dog, outside arm, eye contact, and *Jump* cue). Turn right and pull to the tunnel. Shape the approach to #2 using a pull on the flat.

Figure 9 – For the inside path, handle #1 from the landing side with a lead-out push. Shape the approach to #2 with a rear cross on the flat before #2.

Figure 10 – For the inside path, handle #1 from the take-off side with no motion



and collection cues (shoulders rotated toward dog, outside arm, eye contact, and *Jump* cue). Turn right and pull to #2. Recall dog over #2.

Figure 11 – Following the pull or rear cross on the flat on the approach (Figures 8 and 10), handle #2 with a front cross cued with lateral motion away from the dog. Step forward to cue the tunnel, picking your dog up on your left.

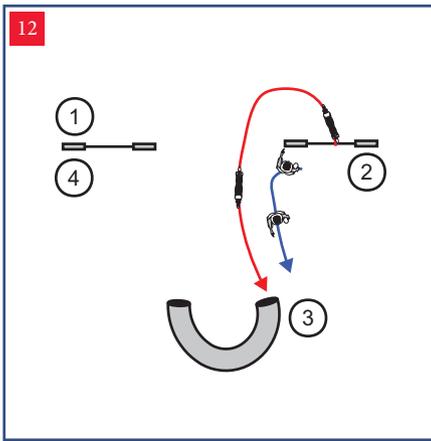


Figure 12 – Following the pull or rear cross on the flat on the approach (Figures 8 and 10), handle #2 cued with no motion and collection cues (shoulders rotated toward dog, outside arm, eye contact, and *Jump* cue). Turn left and pull to tunnel.

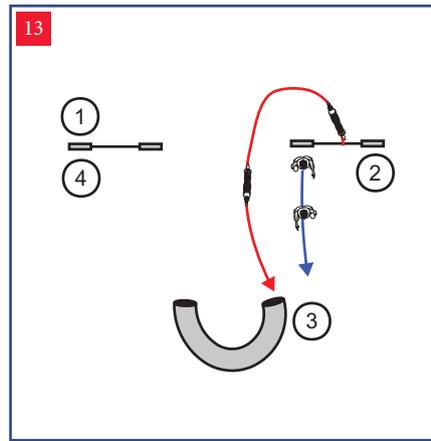


Figure 13 – Following the pull on the flat on the approach (Figure 8), handle #2 cued with no motion and collection cues (shoulders facing dog, outside arm, *Jump* cue). Step forward to cue tunnel, picking your dog up on your right.

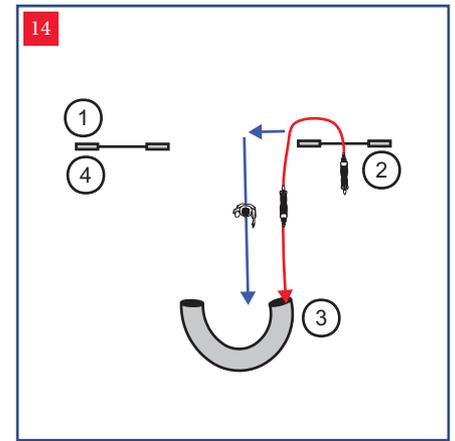


Figure 14 – Following the recall over #2, handle #2 with a front cross cued with lateral motion away from the dog. Step forward to cue the tunnel, picking your dog up on your left. 🐾

Linda Mecklenburg is one of the most accomplished dog agility trainers and instructors in the United States. She and her students have achieved the highest levels of success in dog agility. Linda teaches agility full time at her Awesome Paws Agility Center in Mt. Gilead, Ohio. For more information visit her website www.awesomepaws.us. To join an online discussion forum about Awesome Paws Handling System go to <http://forums.awesomepaws.us>.

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Teaching Verbal Directional Commands, Part 2

By Dawn Weaver, photos by Graham Bryant except where noted

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When you get behind your dog, you need to provide him with information to allow him to continue with the course or he will have to slow down and constantly head-check back to see what you want. I enjoy teaching verbal commands and my dogs love showing me how clever they are, too.

Last month we looked at wing-wrap commands and a “call-off” command. This month we will discuss the commands that mean left and right to your dog. I use *Back* for turn left and *Right* for turn right on the course. You can use whatever commands you want but choose ones that will come easily to you while running with your dog.

Teach a Hand Signal

I teach a hand signal first. The dog can be facing you to start. Put a treat in your hand and get him to follow the treat in a circle. Only teach one direction initially.

“This month we will discuss the commands that mean left and right to your dog. I use *Back* for turn left and *Right* for turn right on the course.”



After having a treat in your hand the first two or three times, just use your hand for the signal. Click as soon as your dog’s head starts turning in the correct direction following your hand, treating as soon as your dog finishes the rotation. As soon as your dog predictably follows your hand, you can start replacing the old cue (hand signal) with the new cue (verbal command). The order is very important:

1. Give your verbal command (e.g., *Right*).
2. Wait 2 seconds.
3. Give the hand signal.
4. Reward.

Wait 2 seconds after the verbal command to give your dog time to think and react if he wants to. Then follow it up with the hand signal.

Do about 10 repetitions per session and very quickly your dog will start to predict the hand signal just on the verbal cue. However, don’t expect the dog to offer you the whole behavior to begin with. If I say *Right* and wait and then my dog looks in the general direction of right, I click and follow it up with my

hand signal to complete the turn and reward. So any small behavior leading up to your dog turning right should be clicked and rewarded. This could include any of the following:

- A weight-shift onto the right front leg
- A look to the right
- A lean to the right with the dog's butt moving across to his left
- The dog's eyes flicking to the right

Be observant and quick with your clicker. Your dog will soon be anticipating what you want on your verbal cue alone. Don't use any other body language to help your dog. Once your dog knows the verbal command, don't be tempted to help unless the dog has had several failures. Don't use both the verbal command and the hand signal at the same time—the dog will never learn the verbal command when you do this because he is just following the lure and not listening to what you are saying. Dogs always prefer following our body motion to trying to learn words, so we need to separate the two things when teaching them or they will just choose the handler movement.

Once your dog can turn in the direction with just a verbal command you can teach the other direction in exactly the same way. Don't muddle the two together, though. Use separate sessions for the two different commands. Once again, do 10 repetitions at a time; train little and often.

Move the Behavior to Your Side

Once your dog can do the directions without the hand signal, you need to move the behavior to the side of you. Bring your dog into the heel position and ask for a *Right*, for example. If your dog doesn't understand, then once again you can back it up after 2 seconds with your original hand signal. Try not to lean toward your dog when asking for the turn.

Your dog should be able to turn toward or away from your heel position while you are static at this stage. Practice with the dog on either side of you and turning both toward and away from you. When turning away, you can either stand still and the dog will do a complete rotation or you can let the dog make the decision to turn away and then you can turn a 180° to remain parallel with the dog. Dogs seem to find it harder to turn (circle) toward the handler than turn away. Once again you can stay still and just let the dog turn a complete 360° circle or you can wait for the dog to start the turn and then rotate too so both you and the dog will do a 180° turn. The choice is yours.

Adding Handler Movement

Once the dog can do the turns with you static, start moving forward at a walk and practice the directional commands while moving slowly. Don't be surprised if your dog carries on watching and following your motion rather than turning. If this happens then just stop and wait, making sure you only give one command—don't repeat the commands. Once you are static again the dog will usually offer the turn. The handler movement has to be built slowly, eventually running in large circles and asking for different turns without helping your dog.

Next month we will look at how to proof and practice all the different verbal commands as well as looking at the *Go on* command, meaning to drive straight forward. 🐾

“Once the dog can do the turns with you static, start moving forward at a walk and practice the directional commands while moving slowly.”



Lotus demonstrating a *Left* or *Back* command without handler help.

Dawn Weaver has been an agility trainer in the U.K. for over 25 years. She is a 7-time FCI World Team member and a 3-time IFCS World Team member. She has won many gold medals with several different dogs and has won at Crufts in the large category with Ag Ch It's Easy with a Beezy (Beardie-Border Collie cross). Dawn has won every major British final in recent years. Her Poodle Ag Ch Piquant Painted Sunshine has the most championship tickets of any dog in Britain. She is also the only dog to have won Olympia four years running and all the major Crufts finals. Ag Ch Tonring Just a Puzzle is the only Papillon in Britain to have become an agility champion and is the 2011 Crufts Singles winner. Dawn is the author of the training book, Knowledge Equals Speed! She also offers online video instruction at www.dawnweaveragility.com. To contact Dawn, send email to info@dawnweaveragility.com.

The Judge's Debriefing

By Melissa A. Wallace



In December, I judged the Four Paw Sports Center two-day Teacup Dogs Agility Association (TDAA) trial. Four Paw is a lovely well-lit and well-cushioned facility in Lynnwood, Washington. I had a strong sense of déjà vu as I pulled out my Santa hat because I had judged the same trial the previous year. I love the Pacific Northwest TDAA crew; every competitor is a volunteer, and the trials have a wonderful blend of camaraderie, competition, friendly jeering, and cheering.

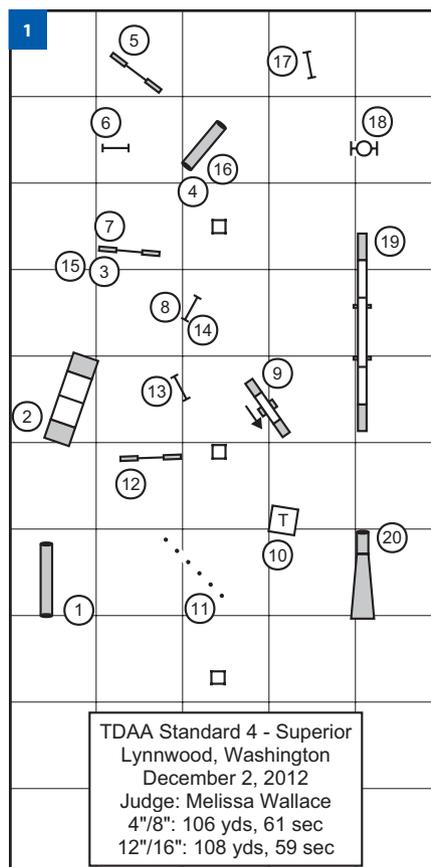
As a brief introduction, TDAA is a venue specifically designed for small dog teams to have comparable challenges on course that face big dog teams in other venues. There are two titling tracks with three levels each: Standard and Games. Standard courses are similar to what you find in other venues. Games, however, come in many flavors such as point accumulation, distance challenges, team relays, and theme games like Quidditch. The huge differences in TDAA are obstacle size and course design. Obstacles are scaled down for small dogs (e.g., 16" diameter tunnels), and transitional distances between obstacles are very short at about 8' to 12'. These distances mean that your timing and handling must be spot on. For the course we will review, I was most interested in the timing and placement of crosses.

Figure 1 is the first Standard course we ran on the second day of the trial. As you take a look at the map, you can see that the short transitional distances create a lot of off-course options. Next, note the three cross-hatched squares located roughly midline of the course. These areas indicate padded support columns in the building, which can also be used as a course challenge.

There were 17 teams entered in this class. Of the teams, only three began with a lead-out, but that did not seem to pro-

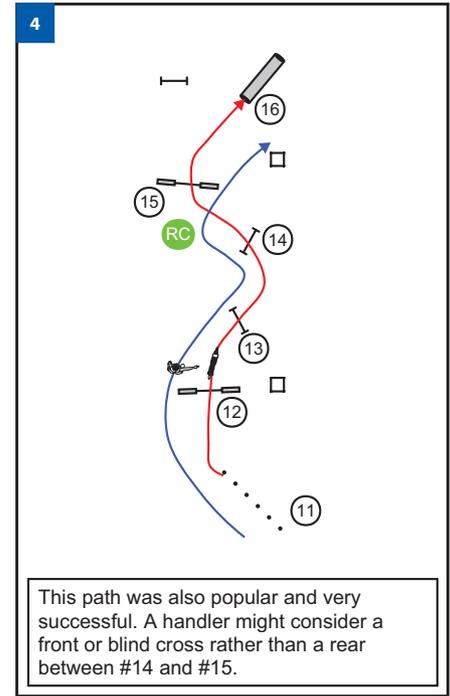
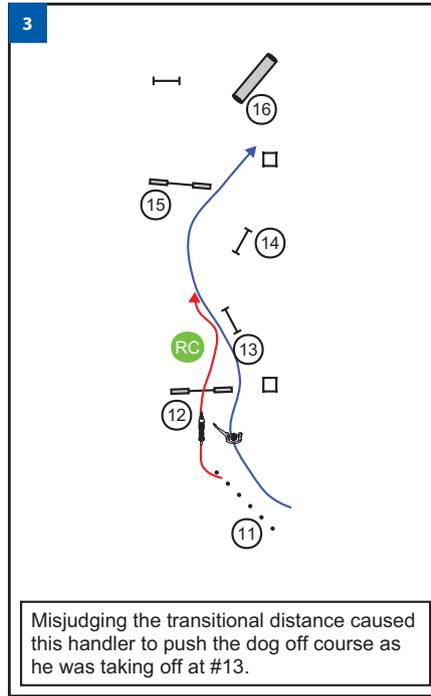
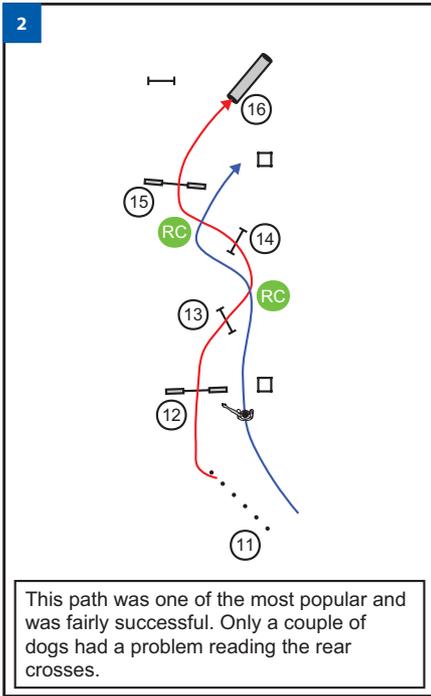
vide much of an advantage. I was rather surprised that one handler opted to run #1-#4 with the dog on the right side. They were successful in avoiding #6 and #17, but the acceleration to the tunnel caused the dog to take a longer arc to #5. The remainder of the teams ran #1-#4 with the dog on the left side and used a rear cross between #3 and #4. The only dogs that read the cross were those that were given a *Switch* or *Left* command. The others had a large arc to #5 with a couple actually spinning to the right after the tunnel. On the way from #7 to #8, two dogs gleefully took the A-frame. Otherwise, movement to the teeter was uneventful, but I was surprised when one dog ran for the chute after the teeter. A successful call-off brought the dog around to the table.

For me as a judge, I felt that the table through #16 would be the interesting part. I really wanted to see what approach people would take through the serpentine from #12-#16. When I designed the course, I did not want there to be many options in this section. As a result, I was careful in the positioning of the teeter to make it as unappealing as possible but keep it as a safe mount if a dog elected to take it. The remaining diagrams depict the paths that the teams took through



These are the 1st place teams for each height in this Superior Standard class. There was a 59% qualification rate.

Height	Call Name	Breed	Owner	Time
4"	Ringo	Dachshund	Barb Krause	46.46
8"	Rosie	Pembroke Welsh Corgi	Karen Crist	45.31
12"	Joy	Schipperke	Kathy Swan	37.09
16"	No Qs			



this area. Many of the teams elected to perform a double rear cross as shown in **Figure 2**. Only a couple of dogs failed to read the rear crosses well. These dogs behaved as though they did not have the confidence to move out ahead of their handlers. In TDAA, this is often caused by the dog and handler slowing down through the technical areas such that the handler is ahead of the dog. Handlers often underestimate how the transitional distances influence the dog's working speed in technical areas. Note that almost all of the dogs entered compete in other venues.

Sometimes handlers and dogs converge at just the wrong moment. Rear crosses that might work well for the teams in other venues may not work as well in TDAA because of the lack of real

estate. In **Figure 3** the handler was unable to cue sufficient acceleration from the weaves to #12 and send the dog accelerating through #13 and #14. The handler converged with the dog's path right as the dog was collecting to take off. The dog veered away and around #13. After fixing #13, they finished the sequence with a rear cross between #14 and #15.

Figure 4 shows another popular path that proved to be very efficient and clean. The control established at the table allowed the teams to shape a line to the weaves that placed the handler on the outside path from the weaves to #13. These handlers were able to accelerate their dogs where the other paths described resulted in collection. The handlers finished the sequence with a rear cross to avoid the off-course option. Those handlers who

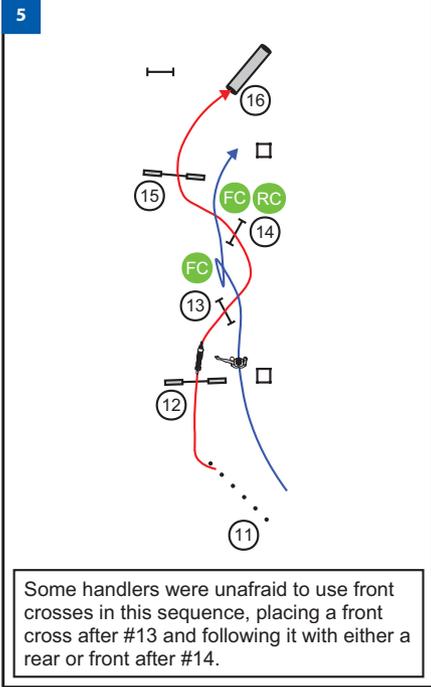
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had a well-trained *Switch* or *Right* were able to direct a better path and lead change to the tunnel than those who used only motion as their cue.

The final popular path for this sequence is shown in **Figure 5**. These handlers elected to stay on the inside on the weave poles and perform a front cross after #13. They then either did a rear cross or front cross between #14 and #15. The majority chose the rear cross option. Both paths were very clean and efficient. I observe quite a few handlers in TDAA who chose to perform rear crosses rather than front crosses in the mistaken belief that they “cannot get there in time.” This path demonstrated that careful choices in the placement of the cross can gain quite a

bit of speed when compared to the double rear cross option in Figure 2.

The remainder of the course from the #16 tunnel through the end was all speed with no surprises. From the paths chosen by the handlers, my favorite was Figure 4. It was fast and efficient. After analyzing all of the paths the handlers took, though, I wonder how fast the Figure 4 path would be with a front cross or blind cross rather than a rear cross between #14 and #15. A handler would certainly be able to get there and would be cueing acceleration the entire line. That sounds like something I will be setting up in the yard come spring. From North Pole, Alaska, I wish you tons of fun with your dogs! 🐾

Melissa Wallace is a certified TDAA judge and presents seminars on games strategies and Teacup agility. She has been showing her Chihuahuas in agility and other performance events for eight years in multiple venues. Although Melissa has taught dogs and handlers of all shapes and sizes, she is starting PAWS-AK with a focus on agility training for small-statured dogs and hosting TDAA trials. Melissa can be contacted at paws_ak@gmail.com.

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This is the second part of a series describing five games that tap into your puppy's love of food and toys and into his natural prey drive to build focus for you (Games 1-3) and value for interacting with nonagility "obstacles" (Games 4 and 5). This month we'll discuss the advanced stages of the games you learned in Part 1 and also put the games together to teach your puppy brilliant responses to your handling maneuvers as he interacts with "obstacles" while responding to handling cues from you.



Puppy Agility Games, Part 2

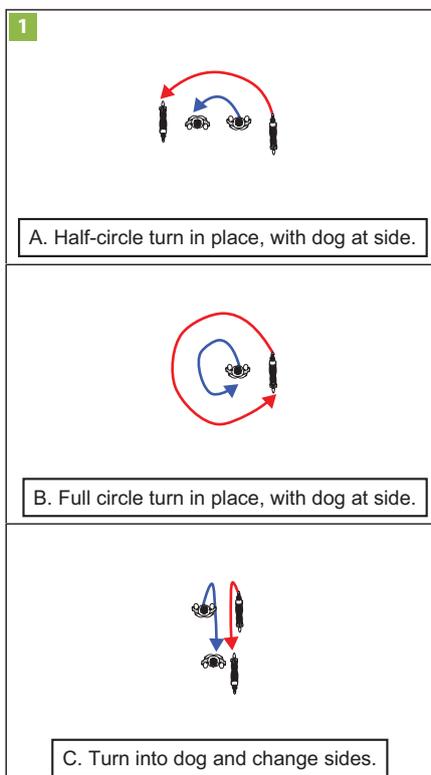
By Anne Stocum, photos by Dianne Spring

These games are designed to be done in very short sets with toy play or interactive food play in between. This ensures that your puppy finds you and the games fun! Don't advance in the stages of the games until you have brilliant response at each stage.

Focus on the Handler Games

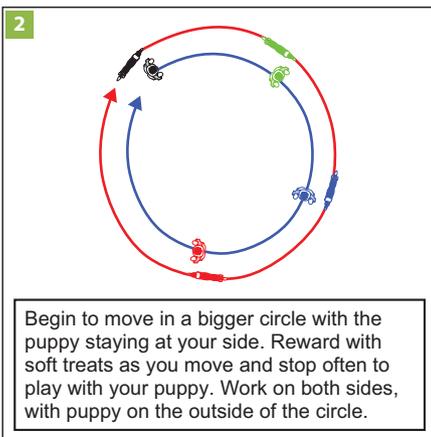
Game 1: I Turn, You Turn!

This game teaches your puppy that when you turn your body, the puppy should turn too. Stages 1-4 of this game (described in the previous article) taught your puppy to stay at your side as you turn a full circle in place. It also taught your puppy to switch sides confidently as you turn into him. Remember to continue to give your puppy lots of rewards for being at your side. See **Figure 1**.

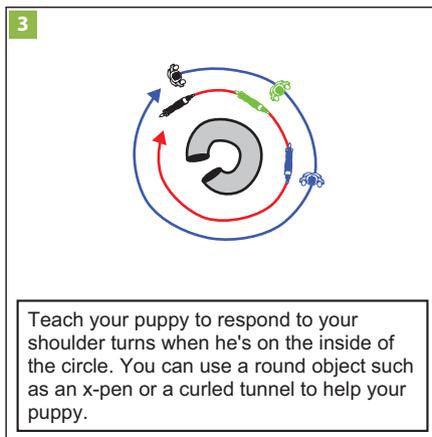


Stage 5: Bigger circles. Start this session by giving your puppy several rewards at your leg using the hand closest to the puppy to reward. Do one circle in place, rewarding a few times. Then moving slowly, make your circle just a little bigger. Reward as the puppy comes with you. If your puppy moves ahead of you, just back up a bit and start over. If your puppy lags behind, pat your leg and encourage him

This month we'll discuss the advanced stages of the games you learned in Part 1 and also put the games together to teach your puppy brilliant responses to your handling maneuvers as he interacts with "obstacles."



2
Begin to move in a bigger circle with the puppy staying at your side. Reward with soft treats as you move and stop often to play with your puppy. Work on both sides, with puppy on the outside of the circle.



3
Teach your puppy to respond to your shoulder turns when he's on the inside of the circle. You can use a round object such as an x-pen or a curled tunnel to help your puppy.

These games are designed to be done in very short sets with toy play or interactive food play in between. This ensures that your puppy finds you and the games fun! Don't advance in the stages of the games until you have brilliant response at each stage.

to move forward. Be ready to reward when the puppy's head is lined up with your leg. See **Figure 2**.

Stage 6: Adding speed. Once you have your puppy moving slowly in bigger circles, you can add a little more speed by jogging. Again, reward as the puppy comes with you. If your puppy moves ahead of you, just back up a bit and start over. If your puppy lags behind, pat your leg and encourage him to move forward. Be ready to reward when the puppy's head is lined up with your leg.

Stage 7: Inside circles. In Stages 1-6 of this game, your puppy has always been on the outside of the circle. Now you will repeat Stages 1-5 of this game with your puppy on the inside of the circle. This requires the puppy to swing his butt toward you. You can make it easier for you and your puppy to do this exercise by forming a tunnel into a closed circle or an x-pen into a circular

shape. See **Figure 3**. As preparation for this stage, work on rear-end awareness; for example, teach your puppy to keep his front feet on a small stool or box while he turns in place (practice in both directions).

Stage 8: Adding distractions. Once your puppy loves the I Turn, You Turn! game, add distractions, challenging your puppy appropriately. Make a list of distractions and rank them from low (e.g., familiar dogs hanging out in the same room) to high (e.g., outside an agility ring). Work your puppy through Stages 1-7 at all these distraction levels. Use high value rewards and keep the reinforcement rate high. Tell your puppy often how brilliant he is!

Game 2: I Run, You Run!

Stages 1-3 of this game were described in the previous article. In these recall games, the puppy learned to chase

you to be rewarded at your side if you slowed down or turned, and to drive ahead of you when you keep running. Keep working this skill and be sure to vary your starting position.

Game 3: I Stop, You Stop!

This game teaches your puppy brilliant response to your deceleration. Stage 1 of this game (described in the previous article) teaches your puppy to come quickly to your side when you lead out and are standing completely still. Don't move on to the next stages until your puppy is giving you a quick stop at your side.

Stage 2: Moving stop. Put your puppy in a sit-stay. Lead out but keep moving at a walking pace. Release your puppy while still moving and then stop. Time this so that your puppy chases you as you move, but has time to stop when you stop. Reward your puppy at your

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leg and with lots of praise. Work both sides and vary the distance you are from your puppy.

Stage 3: Running stop. Play the game as in Stage 2 except increase your speed to a jog as you move away from your puppy. Increase your distance from your puppy, too, so he has more speed as he chases you and will have to work harder to stop at your side.

Stage 4: Adding distractions. Once your puppy has had lots of reinforcement for this behavior, add some distractions. Place a low value toy or covered food dish on the floor in front of where you will stop. Does the puppy choose to stop at your side or go beyond you to get the toy?

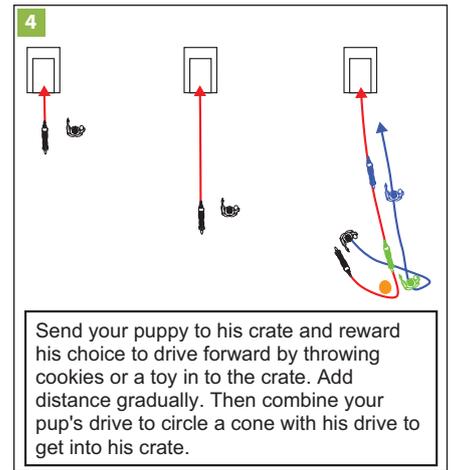
Focus on the Obstacle Games

Game 4: Send to Crate/Bed

If you have worked through Stages 1 and 2 of this game, your puppy should love his crate or bed and fight you to get in it. Remember to use a soft crate for this game since your puppy will be

running into the crate and you don't want him to bang his body on a hard crate. If you are using a bed, put it on a surface that will keep it from sliding (like grass or a rug).

Stage 3: Add distance. Play with your puppy to get him into a good state of arousal and then send him to his crate from a little farther away. Use your arm and leg to cue the puppy to go forward, as though you were sending him to a jump or a tunnel. This gives your puppy a consistent cue to move away from you toward the "obstacle." Once you have good distance, run with your puppy toward the crate and throw your reward into the crate. You want your puppy to keep his head forward and drive to his crate. You can try restraining him gently and only let go when he looks at his crate. If he seems uncertain or looks back at you, the puppy may not yet have enough value for the crate or you may have added distance too fast. Sometimes release your puppy immediately from the crate so that he is always guessing what might happen next. See **Figure 4**.



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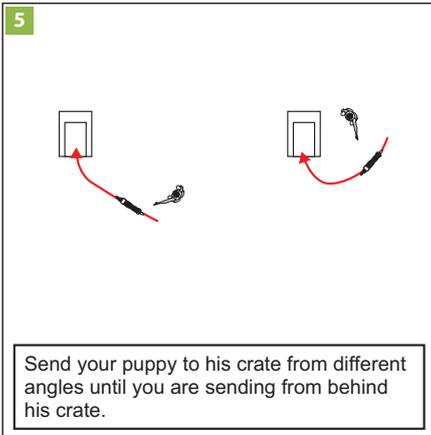
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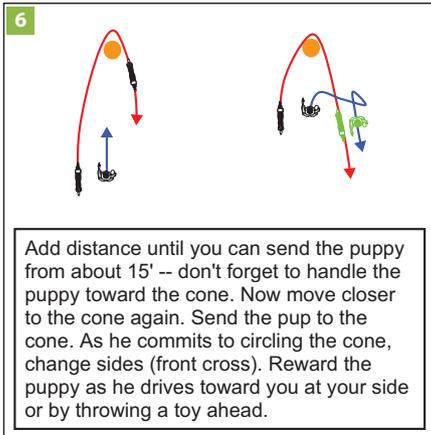
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Enjoy your puppy and remember to keep it fun with lots of rewards! As discussed in the first article, building a relationship with your puppy is the most important work you can do with him in that first year. Make yourself the best reward for your puppy by pairing rewards he loves with fun interactions with you.



Stage 4. Add angles. This stage only works if you have been using a crate rather than a bed. Once your puppy is driving to his crate, line him up at angles to the crate. Eventually, you can be behind the opening of the crate and the puppy will have to work to find the opening, just as if he was finding the opening of a tunnel. See **Figure 5.**

Game 5: Circle the Cone
 If you have worked through Stages 1 and 2 of this game, your puppy should understand and have value for circling a traffic cone.
Stage 3: Adding more distance. Like the previous game, using the crate, gradually add distance so that you can start the puppy from 10'-15' away. Be sure to handle the puppy toward the cone by sending with an arm and leg and driving toward the cone until he

is committed. You want the puppy to keep his head forward and focused on the cone. If he is hesitant or looks back, he may not yet have enough value for the cone and you may need to back off on the distance. Or it may be that you are supporting him enough with handling. If you stand still and upright and ask your puppy to go to the cone, you are working against the deceleration cues that you have been teaching in the handler-focus games. Vary the distance from the cone, but don't always make it harder! See **Figure 6.**

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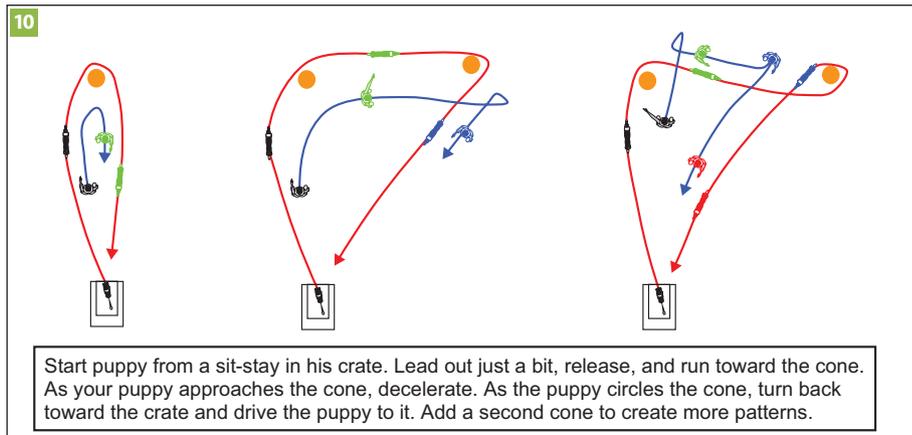
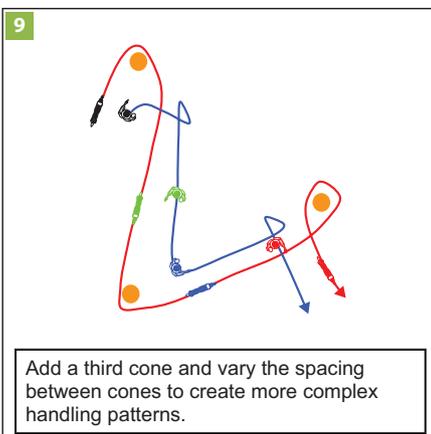
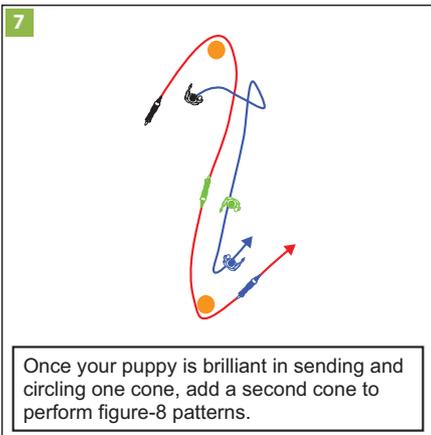
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Handling Games

Once your puppy has mastered the five individual games, you can put them together in a variety of ways to “handle” your puppy on his newly mastered “obstacle” performance and his understanding of your cues.

Cone Figure-8s

Add a second cone about 8' from the first cone. Send your puppy to the first cone. As he goes around the first cone, do a front cross and send him to the second cone. Reward often. Gradually move the cones farther apart. You should be watching for the puppy to seek out the cone as you send him. If he is hesitating or looking back at you, you may have added too much distance too soon. See **Figures 7 and 8**.

Cone Triplets

Add a third cone and use your imagination to create patterns around three cones. Be sure to always handle your puppy around the cones and to reward often. See **Figure 9**.

Acceleration/Deceleration Games

Place a cone about 20' from your puppy's crate. Have your puppy sitting in his soft crate with the door open. Lead out just a bit in “game on” position. Release your puppy and run hard toward the cone. As the puppy approaches the cone, decelerate to indicate that you want him to circle the

cone. As he circles, pick up your speed again and drive your puppy toward his crate. Reward his drive into the crate by throwing a toy into the crate or a few easy-to-find cookies.

Crate-Cone Combinations

Use a crate and two cones to create additional combinations. See **Figure 10**. These are just some ideas to get you started. Use your imagination to create more patterns. Be sure to observe your puppy's response to your handling of these “obstacles.” Is he driving toward his crate? Is he tight to the cone as he goes around it? Does he respond quickly to your changes of direction and arm changes? Does he stay on the line you have set? Look for brilliance from your puppy at all the stages of the games.

Progressions

Continue to work all the stages of these five games often to help your puppy understand response to your handling cues and to build value for the “obstacles.” Enjoy your puppy and remember to keep it fun with lots of rewards! As discussed in the first article, building a relationship with your puppy is the most important work you can do with him in that first year. Make yourself the best reward for your puppy by pairing rewards he loves with fun interactions with you. 🐾

Anne Stocum lives in upstate New York and has been involved in dog agility for nearly 15 years. She enjoys teaching all levels of agility and helping teams achieve their best through consistent handling and good dog training that builds a solid foundation, and that is fun for both handler and dog. Anne has competed 10 times in national finals (AKC and USDAA) with her Shelties Breeze and Lacey. She and Breeze were also members of the 2010 AKC/USA World team. Anne blogs about raising her Border Collie, Tai, at annestocumagility.wordpress.com.

Those of you who play Snooker know that it can be a fun but also exasperating game. You need several specialized training skills: the dog must be able to bypass an obstacle at speed, move close to the handler, and send to an obstacle after a prolonged time focusing on the handler. There is also a good amount of strategy and skill involved in Snooker for the handler. The handler has to weigh the cost and risk benefits associated with the various colored obstacles.



• Class • Challenges for Rising Stars

By Stuart Mah

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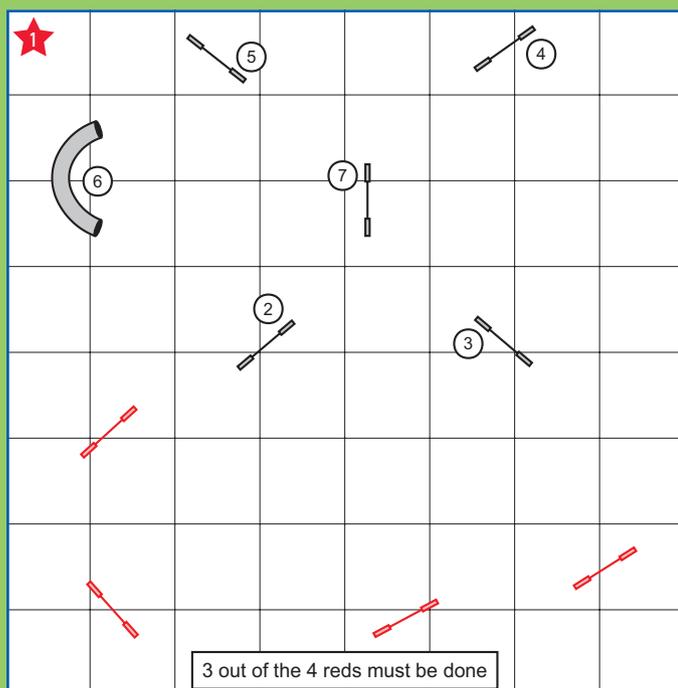
One particular skill a handler playing Snooker needs is to be able to adjust to changes in what she planned because of what is happening on course. For example, if the handler commands the dog to take a red jump and the bar comes down, the handler must now remember not to take a colored obstacle (#2-#7), but to get to the next red, have the dog compete it successfully, and then continue on course. Another problem that can happen is the dog taking a colored obstacle other than the one the handler

planned. Now the handler must again adjust her course to get to the next planned red, even if it might be across the ring. Is there a way to practice adjusting for unexpected changes and still remembering what your sequence is, without actually inducing the dog to make errors? Enter Snooker Roulette.

Briefing

If you look at **Figure 1**, you will see a typical Snooker course with four reds, only three of which need be done. Normal Snooker rules apply in the opening and the closing (for more information, refer to “Snooker: The Agility Game” under Articles on the Clean Run Magazine Forum website (www.clean-run.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=465)). The one difference in Snooker Roulette is that the course will change each time the dog does a colored obstacle; more on that in a minute.

After walking the course, the handler needs to state to her instructor or training partner which colored obstacles and which reds she is going to use. For example, the handler might say, “I am going to do #3-#3-#7, in that order. I am also going to use the lower far right red, the lower middle red, and the middle left red.” The handler has now committed to that pattern for

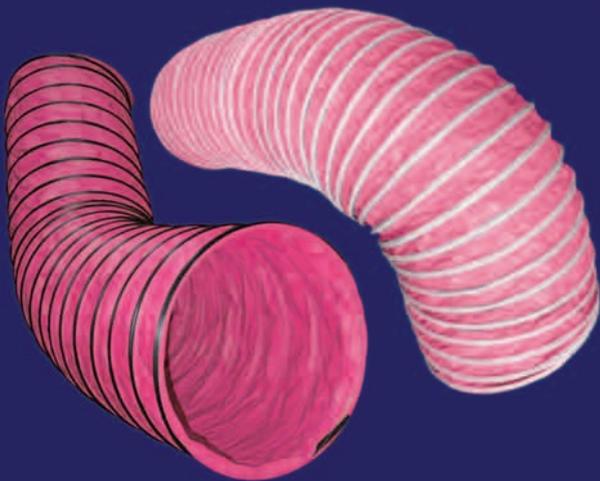


There is also a good amount of strategy and skill involved in Snooker for the handler. The handler has to weigh the cost and risk benefits associated with the various colored obstacles.

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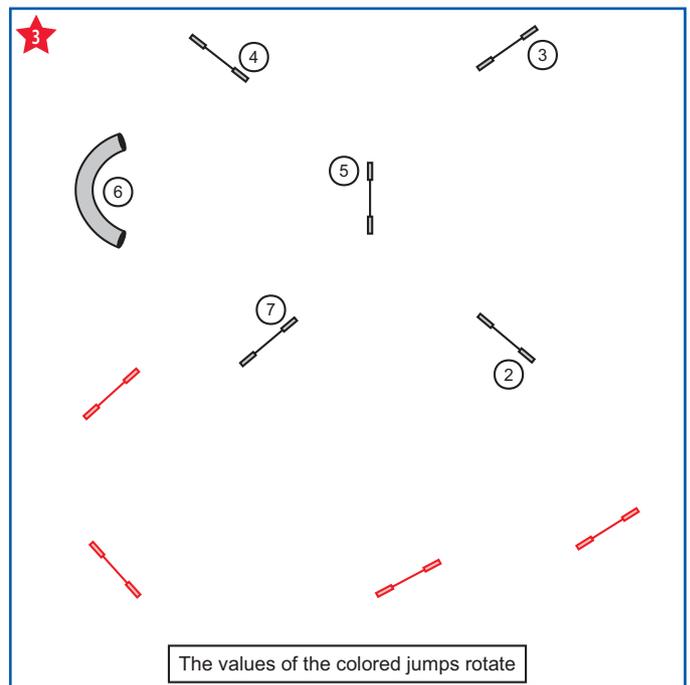
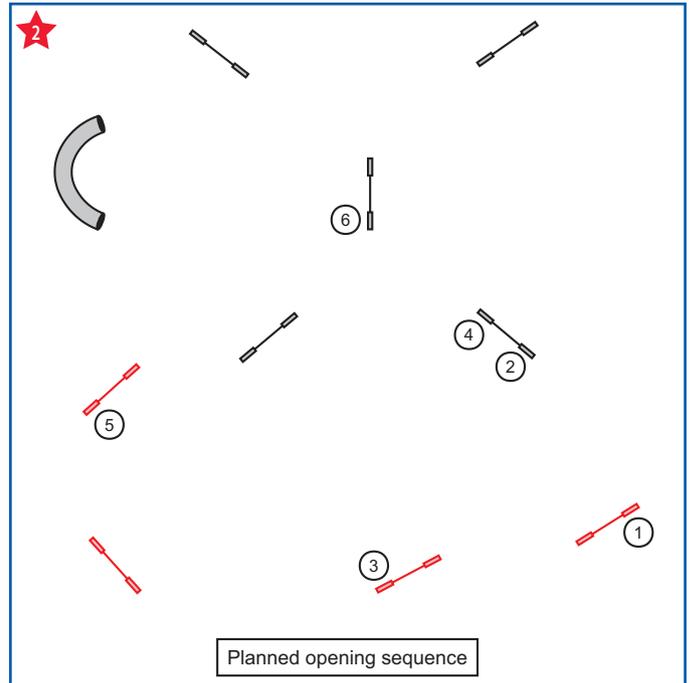
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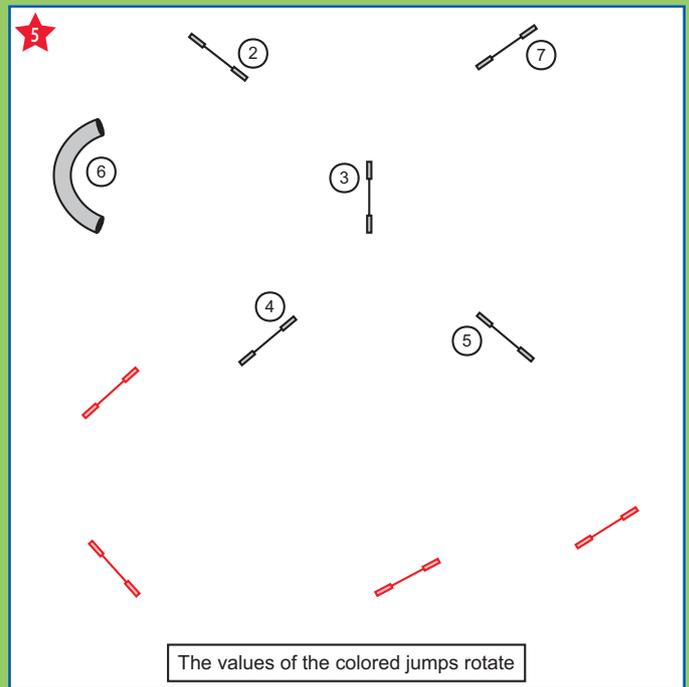
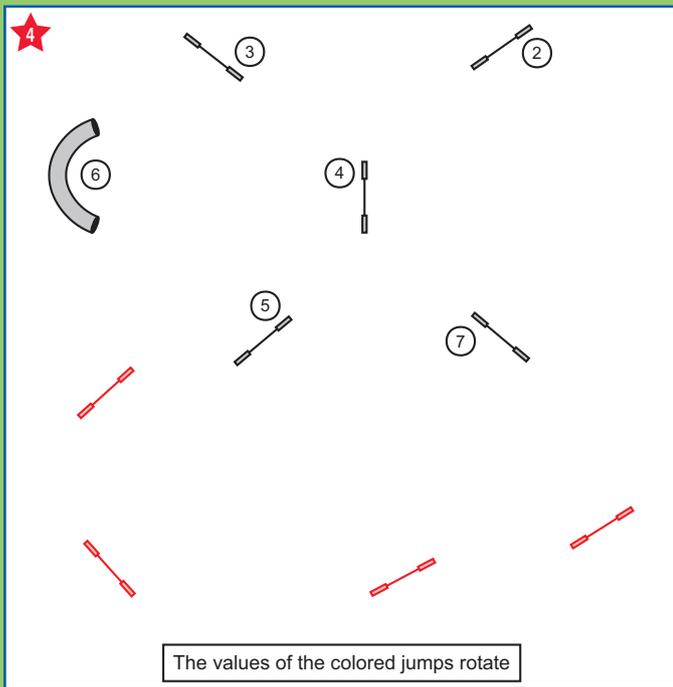


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the opening, as shown as in **Figure 2**. The handler begins by taking her planned red jump and then color. Now the change comes in. Once the handler has taken the first 3-point obstacle, the values of the colored jumps rotate—just like on a roulette wheel, where the numbers go round and round, the numbers of the colored jumps on the course go round. Now the course looks like **Figure 3**. In this case, the 3 became a 2, the 4 became a 3 and so on. The only obstacle that didn't change value was the tunnel at 6. In Snooker Roulette, only the jumps change value. Any other obstacles (tunnels, contacts, weaves) remain the same. To continue her stated pattern, our handler must go to her second red (lower middle red) and then go to the *new* 3-point obstacle—the upper right jump. Once she has completed this colored obstacle, the values of colored jumps change again, as

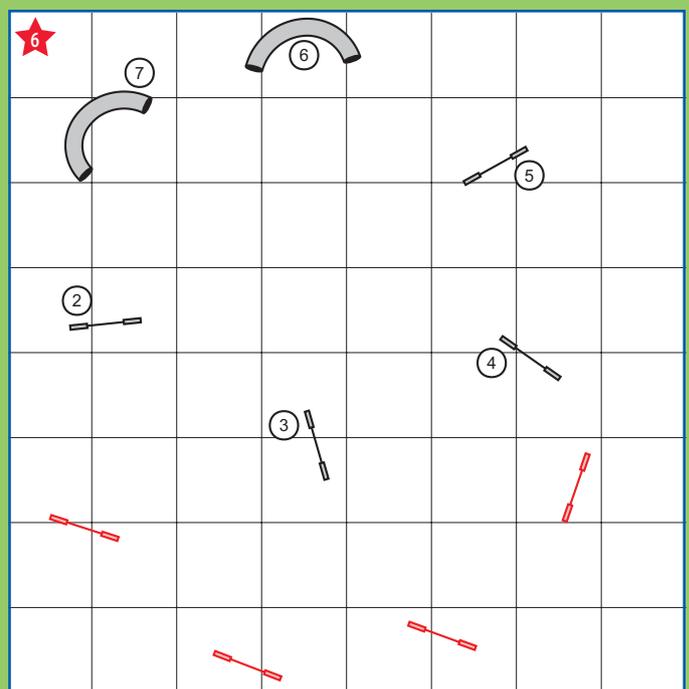


shown in **Figure 4**. The handler now goes to her final planned red (the middle left red) and then to the 7, which is now the lower right colored jump. Once the third and final red-color is completed, the handler can start the closing. But remember, the final obstacle taken is a colored jump so the sequence rotates again, as shown in **Figure 5**. Now the closing is much harder than in the original course. In our example, the handler chose three colored jumps in the opening, so the values of the colored jumps switched three times. If the handler had included a tunnel in the opening and two jumps (e.g., #5-#6-#7), then the jump values would only rotate twice.

So, you are now thinking to yourself, “Why would I want to put myself through all that?” To be better at agility, handlers need to learn how to adjust their handling for unexpected changes on course. In this case, the changes are predictable, but you still have to learn to adjust your handling as the situation changes. Too often you see handlers in a walk-through planning something only to have it go wrong during the run. In training, most handlers simply stop and restart the sequence; however, when is the last time the judge let you restart a botched-up sequence in competition? To be better handlers, we need to practice dealing with changes so that we are better able draw on a skill that we might not have considered using or needing. For example, in Figure 5, we had not planned on bypassing two jumps on the way to the tunnel at #6. But, since the jump pattern changed, we now need to draw on that skill.

Training Notes

When introducing the game, it is sometimes easier to make the course a little more circular. A second nonjump (in this case, a second tunnel) can also be used, as you see in **Figure 6**. This



makes it easier to keep track of the colors. Also, to keep handlers from just going to the tunnel(s) all the time, there is a requirement that the handler has to do at least one jump in the opening. A time limit is also assigned to the course to prod the handler to do the sequence in a timely fashion. Finally, if the Snooker sequence is broken, the run does *not* stop but continues. Remember, the purpose is to practice skills, not just getting through a Snooker course. 🐕

Stuart Mah, a leading innovator of dog agility in the U.S., has been active in the sport since 1989. Stuart has excelled as a competitor and an instructor, and has competed at the highest levels of agility, including 15 USDAA Grand Prix finals and five AKC finals. He has represented the U.S. nine times in international competition and his dog Qwik has won gold, silver, and bronze medals. He has five dogs in the USDAA Hall of Fame, and his dogs have won a combined six national titles in AKC and USDAA. His current dog, Ares, finished number one in USDAA's Top Ten in all events for 2011 and is on the 2012 IFCS U.S. World Team. Stuart is a noted author and expert on course design. He has written numerous agility articles for various publications and has also written two books: Fundamentals of Course Design for Dog Agility and Course Analysis for Agility Handlers.

Everyone in agility has goals. Whether it's to win a national event or to just get your dog not to visit the ring crew, goal setting is an important part of any sport. My goal this year was to qualify for three major 2012 national events with my Border Collie Joker: AKC, NADAC, and USDAA. I was then fortunate enough to be able to attend all three major events with him. I also ran a Sheltie named Summer at the 2012 USDAA Cynosports World Games and my 8-year-old, Staffy, Pokey, at the NADAC Championships.



Competing in Different CHAMPIONSHIP EVENTS

By Amber Abbott

I've had many people ask me which event was my favorite, but I honestly can't choose. They are all so unique and so special in their own ways. I truly enjoyed each one from an exhibitor's point of view and also as someone who is interested in event management. I graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in recreation management, with an emphasis in special events. I have always been intrigued on how events are put together. So it's difficult for me to attend these national and international agility competitions without looking at them from an event management perspective. I don't think any of them ran perfectly—I'm sure even the event organizers will tell you that—but they were all memorable and fun, and I am already looking forward to future competitions. So, what *are* the differences between the big events that might help you decide which one(s) you might want to aim for?

The Venue

The AKC National Agility Championship is always held inside on dirt. There are typically three rings in the main arena with the possibility of a fourth ring somewhere else, if needed. Weather isn't an issue since it is inside (which was important in Reno this past year since it did snow a bit!). It's nice to sit in the main arena and be able to watch multiple rings at once. Although the event is big and has many dogs, you don't feel like you are missing anything. It was easy to watch the different heights and see your friends run. Having the multiple rings does make for shorter days and classes typically don't run into the evenings. Exhibitors walk the first course in the morning and then their second course in the afternoon. Course maps and run schedules are given out. The schedule gives people an idea of when they will run.



© AMBER ABBOTT

The AKC Agility Championships are always held inside on dirt and there are typically three rings.

The USDAA Cynosport World Games are usually held outdoors. Most rings, if not all, are not covered. This is certainly a risk with weather (in Colorado it did rain a bit in the evening which delayed events a little and caused one ring to be unusable for the remainder of the event), but competing on grass—in the sun and under the lights during evening runs—is special.



© CLEAN RUN

The USDAA Cynosport World Games are usually held outdoors and there are typically six rings.



© AMBER ABOTT

The NADAC Dog Agility Championships are always held indoors, usually on dirt, and there is only one active ring.

There are typically at least six rings, which makes it difficult to watch more than one ring at a time. So it's very easy to not see the majority of people's runs. During the finals of Grand Prix, Steeplechase, and DAM (and the Performance equivalent) there is only the one ring running. Most of the day's activities end around 4:00 pm. All courses are walked in the morning, meaning you may be walking two or three courses before you even get to run one, and often times not running those courses until later in the afternoon (and NADAC doesn't provide course maps). Like AKC, USDAA also has run schedules that give exhibitors a pretty good idea when they will be running. The Performance Grand Prix, Steeplechase, and Performance Speed Jumping events are in the evening, under the lights, after the sun goes down. These courses are walked right before you run them (whew!). USDAA is the only venue that offers other activities besides agility; there is dock diving, flyball, and lure coursing with benefits going to the National Canine Cancer Foundation.

The NADAC Dog Agility Championships are always held indoors, usually on dirt, but they have been on sod before. There is just the one active ring. This makes it easy to watch every run, but makes for very long days, often running until 9 or 10 pm at night. Course maps are not handed out, but competitors are given plenty of time to walk the course right before the first dog runs.

The Atmosphere

The atmosphere at the AKC Nationals feels fun and friendly. It doesn't feel super competitive. The event showcases a variety of breeds, including many that you wouldn't find at other agility championship events. The USDAA event is definitely the most competitive with an international flare. It brings in competitors from around the world, which certainly makes the weekend more special than a normal show weekend. And, although you feel the competitiveness, there is still fun—people dress up, judges get the crowds going, the audience cheers loudly, and

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Running under the lights at the Cynosport World Games is exciting.



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The author running her BC Joker at the AKC National Agility Championship.

adult beverages are sold in the evenings. Herding breeds are the most common participants, with Border Collies dominating the numbers in the higher jump heights and Shelties in the lower jump heights. The NADAC Championships are very laid back and friendly. The event seems more like a family reunion. By the end of the weekend, if you don't already know the majority of the people, you probably will have met many new people and added another couple dozen Facebook friends. There are a variety of breeds competing, including mixed breeds. For team events people bring silly costumes, making it a friendly, fun competition.

Competitive Divisions

All three venues have different divisions: Regular/Preferred in AKC, Championship/Performance in USDAA, and Proficient/Skilled in NADAC. USDAA and NADAC also have a Veterans Division. These divisions are also represented at the yearly event, so it's nice to see the older dogs or the dogs that benefit from the height break. Junior Handlers are also showcased in a special run at USDAA Cynosport Games and are recognized with special awards at the NADAC Championships.

The Courses and Making It to the Finals

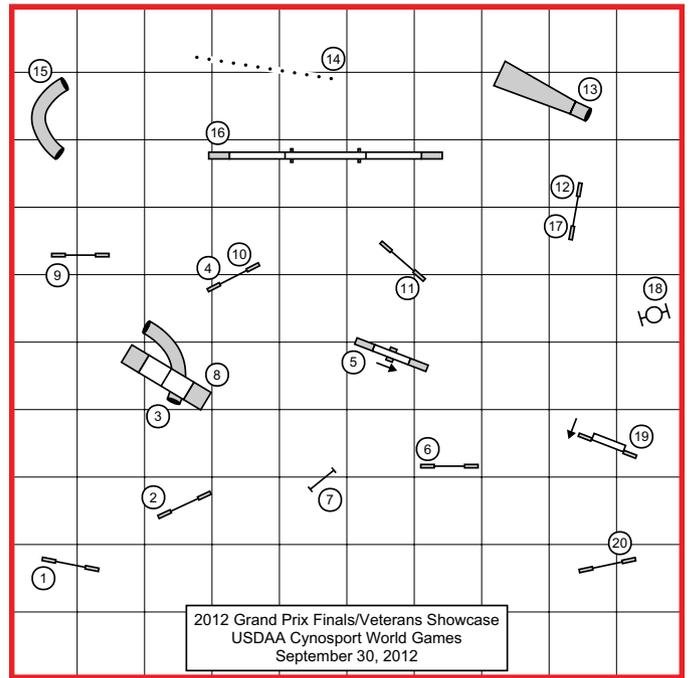
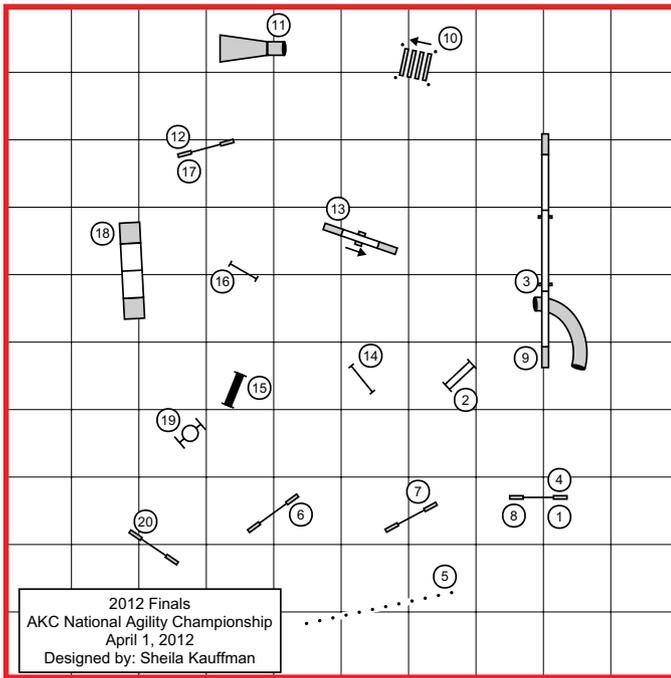
All of the organizations offer classes or events that aren't available on a typical show weekend, which makes the event even more special. They all also have warm-up classes the day(s) before the "real" competition starts.

For AKC, Friday's two rounds are a warm-up. Then over the next two days, there are three rounds that are cumulative to decide which teams are playing in the finals. These three rounds are Standard, JWW, and a Hybrid class that usually consists of one or two contact obstacles. Teams that do well in these three classes might make the cut directly into the finals which are held Sunday afternoon. But if a team doesn't do so well in one of them, but does great in the other two rounds, it probably will

have the opportunity to compete in the Challengers run. This is a course that runs right before the finals and only the winner of each height division gets to move onto the finals. The Challengers class is very exciting to watch because everyone is going full out for that last chance to make it to the final round. In the finals, all scores are erased and the winner of that round in each height is crowned the AKC Champion.

USDAA is typically a four-day event, with a warm-up run or possibly quarterfinals run being held on Wednesday. The neat thing about USDAA is there are three events, each of which will crown a champion: the Dog Agility Steeplechase Tournament (consists of three rounds on courses that contain jumps, weaves, and an A-frame), Dog Agility Masters Team Tournament (includes a Standard, Jumpers, Snooker, Gamblers, and Team Relay class) and then the Grand Prix of Dog Agility. There are Performance events equivalent to these and the Veterans Showcase where dogs over nine years of age that have competed in a previous World Games can play in the team events, but be scored by themselves. The exciting Steeplechase finals are held in the evening, under the lights of the main ring. This is the only event where money is awarded. The winner gets \$1000, with other monetary amounts being given to lower placements. So it is an exciting event.

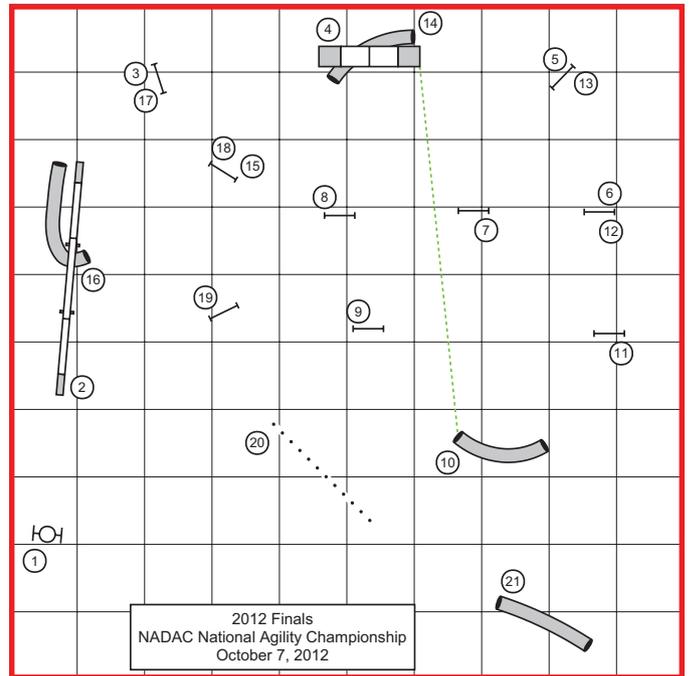
The NADAC Championships are also a four-day competition. There are two Regular rounds each day for a total of seven rounds. Scores are cumulative and top percentages get to run in the final, eighth run. The overall winner is cumulative, based on the eight runs. So speed, consistency, and endurance determine the winner. The length of the courses is typically longer than you see during an average weekend, with some courses including as many as 40 obstacles. Distance is also stressed in NADAC, so each round has a distance portion (typically no more than 15') within the Regular course (usually only an obstacle or two). Ten faults are assessed if the distance challenge isn't met. Superstakes



is also a division not found anywhere else. These few teams (usually less than 20) have qualified to compete in Superstakes by mastering extreme distances. Distance lines, some as far as 80-90', are placed on the same course as the Regular runs and these teams get bonus points from the different distance lines. These are always a highlight for the day; they have the audience's full attention—it gets so quiet in the arena that you can literally hear a pin drop. NADAC also offers a fun team event. There are three on a team, running three cumulative rounds. Two rounds are a type of relay and the third round is called “batters up”. This is usually a very funny class to watch, where the handlers have to bat, toss, or catch a ball through a hole 12' away. After this is accomplished, their teammate dog gets to run a short Tunnelers course. There are usually a few dogs that take off with the ball or handlers who struggle to make the ball go through the hole.

Vive la Différence!

Chris Mosley from Minnesota frequently competes at multiple events during the year and ran her Pembroke Welsh Corgi Winn at all three events this year. “Looking back I can say that each experience was terrific. Each organization offers different challenges: NADAC with long, flowing courses, USDAA with ever-increasing technical demands, and AKC with the need for speed and accuracy on a limited number of runs.” Scott Milner, from Alaska, also competed at all three events this year with his Sheltie, Jazz, and agrees he likes the different challenges these organizations provide at the national level. “The individual events at AKC and USDAA are very competitive on a speed basis with no room for errors. I like NADAC because of the free-flowing courses and especially the championships because of the cumulative scoring. I love the games and team events at USDAA.”



Unlike 20 years ago, we have many venues to choose from. Whether your focus is distance and speed, or you like more technical courses and the different games, there is a big event for everyone! Attending one in 2013 might not be your goal this year, but I think this sport is sticking around, so maybe sometime in the future everyone will be able to experience a weekend to remember. It's an achievement in itself to get qualified, but it's an unforgettable experience to be part of a national or international event. 🐾

Amber Abbott is the only person to have been in the Finals at all three championship events (USDAA, AKC, and NADAC) in 2012. She has been involved in agility since 1995 and owns Leaps N Bounds Agility in Peoria, Arizona. She competes in AKC, NADAC, and USDAA and has achieved Championship titles on multiple dogs and breeds, including Border Collies, Jack Russells, a Rat Terrier, and a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Amber teaches about 18 classes a week and gives seminars with an “all about the attitude” philosophy. Amber can be reached at leapsnbounds@cox.net.

Annelise

COACH ■ FRIEND ■ COMPETITOR

Allan



Carmine

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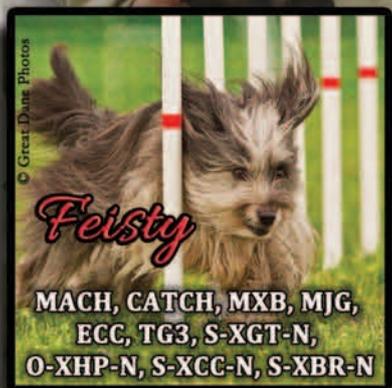
NA, NAJ, NF, OA, OAJ, AX, AXJ, MXJ, NAC, NJC, WV-N OJC, XBR-N, XGT-N



Sinco

MACH, MACH2, MJS, MXS, MXF, ECG, S-EAC, O-XBR-N, S-XBR-N, O-XCC-N, O-XGT-N, S-XGT-N, O-XHP-N, S-XHP-N

© Becky Hart



Feisty

MACH, CATCH, MXB, MJG, ECC, TG3, S-XGT-N, O-XHP-N, S-XCC-N, S-XBR-N



Sinco is the #3 Australian Shepherd AKC Invitational Qualifier for 2012!
Feisty is the #3 Pyrenean Shepherd AKC Invitational Qualifier for 2012!

The Agile Canines Training School community celebrates Annelise's many successes in 2012!

- Heidi Thorson, Gromit & Chewie
- Jan & the Poodle Pack
- Karen & Team Bopp
- Stacy, Jack & Neo
- Marya Lydeen and Shep
- Denise and Lily
- Michelle Bame
- Christine and the Whippets
- Laura and Penny
- Vonnie Taylor & the Shelties
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- Elizabeth, Gina & Boomerang
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- Kelda and Blue
- Judy Moore & the Aussies
- Chris, Maggie, Winn and DDare
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- The Hoppe clan
- Pugahontas Kelly & Pack
- We all train with the best!
- Becky Hart with Jammie and Nikki
- Marsha & Toby the Border Terrier

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Annelise Allan @ www.agilecanines.com
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To successfully navigate a course with you, your dog needs to clearly understand where he's going. Frequently, when a handler thinks the dog is blowing her off or having the zoomies, the dog actually did not have a clear understanding of what the directions were. When practicing full courses or sequences, it is often tempting to settle for "close enough" rather than ask for precision, especially if the dog did not go off course while being a little sloppy. But the more precise you are in what you ask for, the easier it is in the long run for the dog to understand what is being asked. Working in your living room without using any agility obstacles makes it easy to focus on the details, creating a clear understanding of the task at hand.

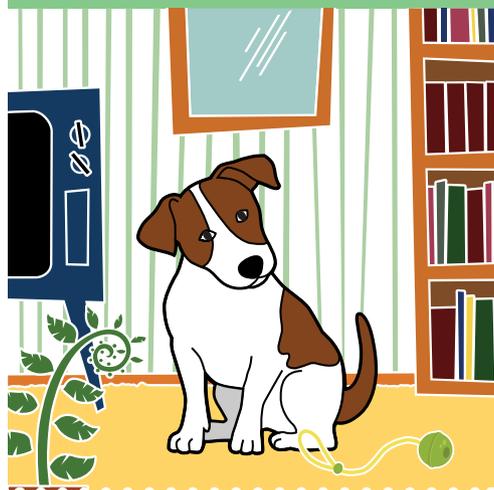
Come!

Recalls to side are fundamental to running in the correct direction. A dog that understands and is physically able to line up parallel to you is a dog that will have a much easier time navigating a course correctly.

Start by having the dog sit next to you at your left side. Line yourself up parallel to him, tell him to stay, and take a step forward. Take another step forward with your right foot only. Check that your feet are both facing forward. Holding a small treat, reach back with your left hand until you are almost at the dog's nose. Give him the cue *Come* and slowly lure him into a stand position in line with your left leg; feed immediately. As long as you made sure you were parallel when he was sitting, he should be in perfect position standing next to you since all he had to do was take a step forward with his front feet. Release the dog as soon as he takes the treat, before he has a chance to move out of position. Keep your movements slow and easy so that he doesn't start bouncing around. If the dog is very active, you can work on leash and gently restrain him from running amuck.

Repeat this two or three times, then try it with the dog lined up on your right side, making sure to have your right foot back and your left foot forward. The verbal cue is the same, *Come*, re-

Living Room Agility



Come, Out, and Go

By Frankie Joiris, photos by author

gardless of side. The physical cue of the foot being back on the side you are calling the dog to is the indicator of which side to come to.

When you can easily and comfortably call your dog into a stand at either side of you from a step away, start to increase the distance. Each step of the way make sure that the dog is ending up standing parallel to you, in line with your leg. The trick to success in this exercise is to understand that where the dog ends up is completely a result of handler mechanics. You need to make sure that the treat in your hand is luring the dog to the correct position. Move your hand smoothly and slowly to guide the dog into position. Keep your hand close to your leg, don't let it drift out to the side, or across your body, or ahead of your leg. Keep your hand at your dog's nose height (you might have to bend from your knees for shorter dogs). Eventually you will be able to call your dog from anywhere in the house and he will come to position at your side.

Out!

The *Out* cue is another cue that can be practiced and polished in your living room. It is a cue that is only given to the dog when it has to move laterally away from you to take an obstacle. After taking the obstacle, the dog returns to your line of movement. The dog needs to understand that *Out* means "move away from me in the direction I am indicating."

Start with your dog lined up next to you at your left side. Give the *Out* cue as you take a big step to the side. Simultaneously swing your left hand out away from you, pointing out to the side, and throw a treat with your right hand in the direction you are pointing to. Do not try to make it easier on yourself by throwing the treat with the hand next to the dog, that will just encourage him to follow the treat rather than teaching him to look where you are pointing to see the treat appear. Repeat this, sending the dog out from both your left and right side. Soon the dog will start anticipating the treat and move away from you laterally before you toss the treat. As the dog gains understanding, you can practice sending the dog out around



When practicing full courses or sequences, it is often tempting to settle for “close enough” rather than ask for precision, especially if the dog did not go off course while being a little sloppy. But the more precise you are in what you ask for, the easier it is in the long run for the dog to understand what is being asked. Working in your living room without using any agility obstacles makes it easy to focus on the details, creating a clear understanding of the task at hand.

pieces of furniture and meeting him on the other side.

Go!

Go simply means “keep running forward, I’m behind you and catching up.” Start with the dog lined up next to you. Give the Go cue as you point forward with the hand nearest the dog and toss a treat forward with your other hand. As the dog shoots ahead of you to eat the treat, move forward so that when he is done eating, you are next to him again. Gradually increase the distance you throw the treat, allowing the dog to run ahead of you, but always making sure you come up

to meet him rather than having him turn back to return to you. 🐾



Frankie Joiris trains animal actors (birds, farm animals, cats, and dogs) for television and film. She has taught dog training for over 35 years. Frankie currently teaches agility at Speedoggie and also presents seminars on trick training. She has owned and trained a wide variety of dogs including CH MACH Stamp RN, OF, JE, the first and only CH MACH Norfolk Terrier. She currently runs a Whippet, a Pyrenean Shepherd, and a Border Collie. Contact Frankie at fjoiris@me.com.



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What some of our customers say....

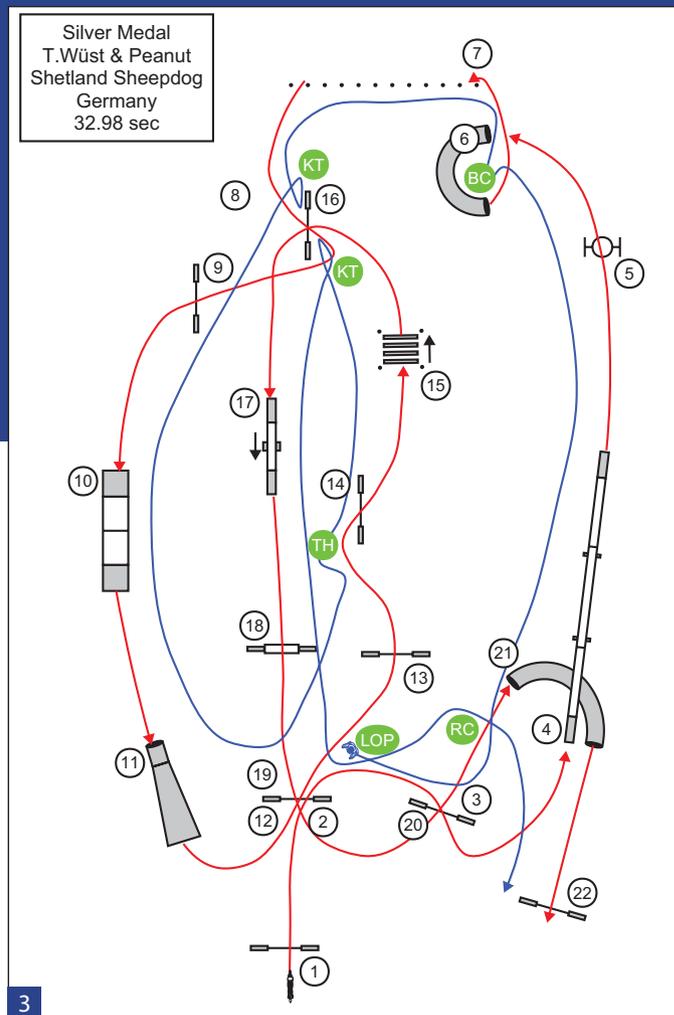
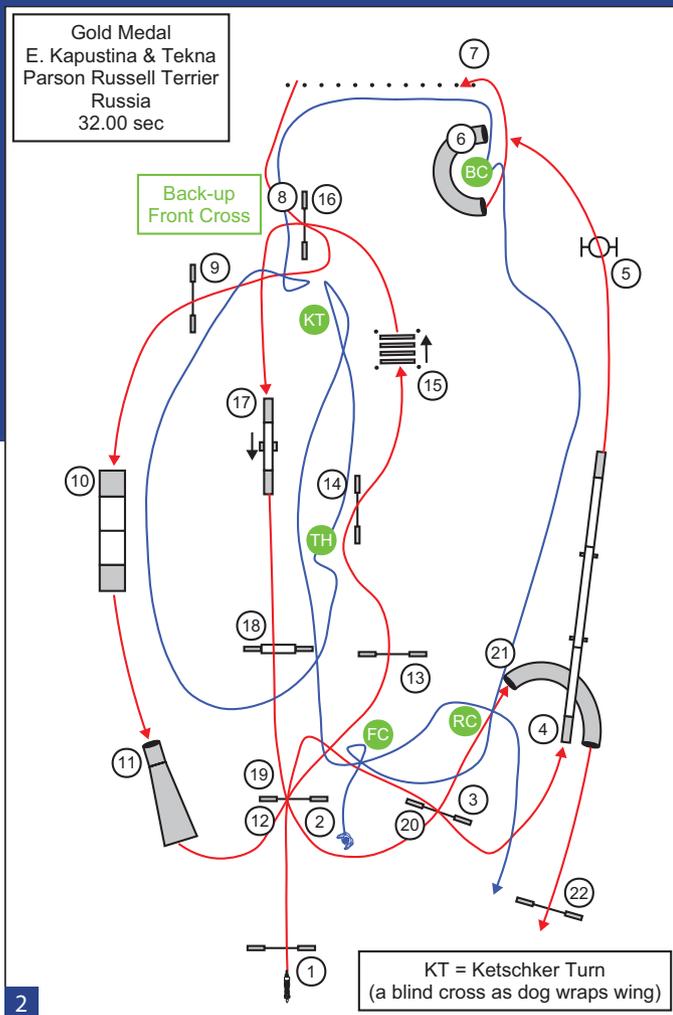
Agility is a new sport for me and this is so CLEAR - glad I started here on this course, great lessons!

I am finding your lesson plans really great for me as a novice - its great to have structured lessons that are easy to follow and are progressive.

Most certainly I feel, already at this point, that the course has been worth every penny. I am extremely grateful that Greg and Laura have provided informative answers to all questions posted by myself and other ultimate handlers.



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the bronze medal. The three medalist handling strategies can be seen in **Figures 2 through 4**. Their medal placements were exactly replicated in the combined Standard and Jumpers awards.

The course had a variety of challenges that included discriminations, threadles, numerous off-course options, and plenty of places to gain or lose time depending on handling efficiency and communication.

A chronological evaluation of the course follows, so consider steps you would take along the way.

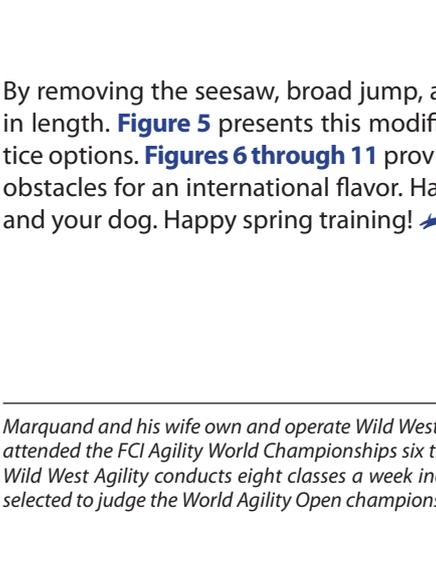
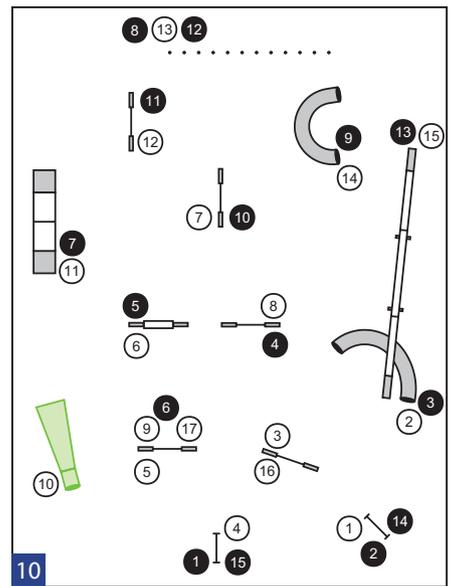
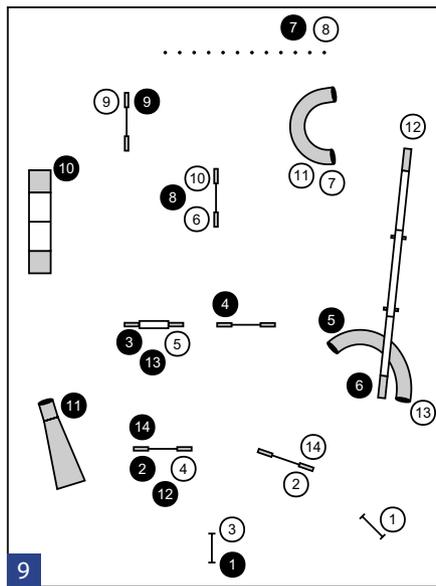
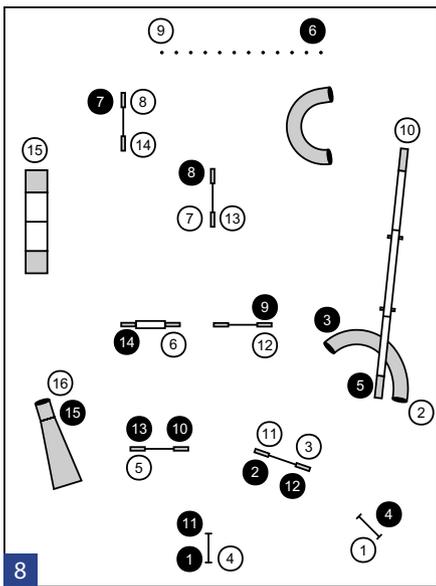
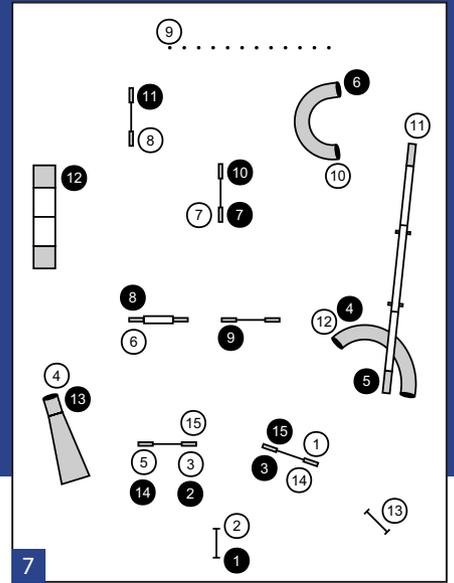
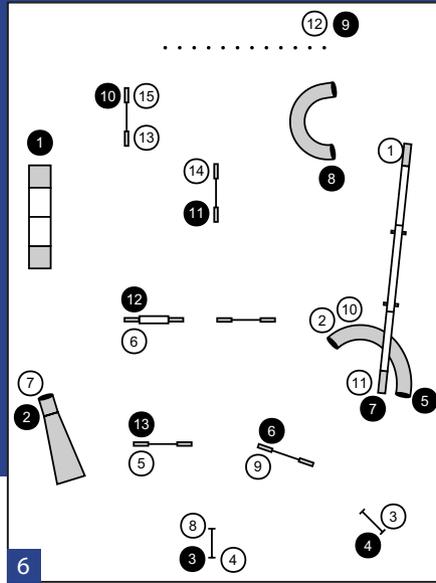
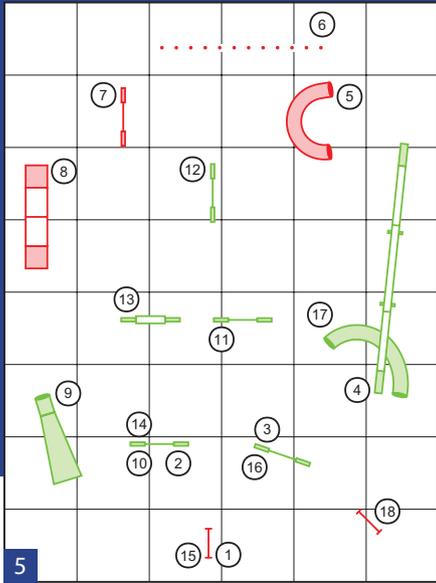
Front crosses were frequently used after #2. After jump #3, teams were tested with a dogwalk/tunnel discrimination. Several dogs lost all chance by entering the incorrect tunnel. Dogs that responded to a deceleration turn

cue to the dogwalk performed well here. The tunnel under the dogwalk impeded handler forward progress a bit, so handlers needed some lateral distance. The tunnel/weave discrimination test after the tire proved to be a much easier challenge to conquer. Most handlers elected to stay in the tunnel pocket and blind cross to the weave entrance. They used their body to block a possible tunnel re-entry on the way to the #7.

The middle third of the course included several jumps, an A-frame and a chute. After the weave poles, many handlers backed up into a front-cross pull on the way to #9 jump and A-frame at #10. However, as Tobias Wüst demonstrated, there was an option to turn back toward the poles to create a nice line to the A-frame. In general, small dogs fare

well on an inward jump wrap as opposed to large dogs that prefer turning away. After the collapsed chute, dogs were required to u-turn back toward jump #12. Some handlers employed a reverse flow pivot maneuver or a simple serpentine cue to create a fluid line from #12 to #13. A threadle was the primary tool used to bring the dog to the approach side of #14. One handler successfully employed back-to-back blind crosses after #13 and #14 to reach the broad jump.

The final third of the course included the seesaw and a fast finish of jumps and a tunnel. A tight turn was required at jump #16 to access the seesaw without mishap. A Ketscher turn was the handling maneuver most often used at this juncture. The sequence from the double jump to the finish jump was



By removing the seesaw, broad jump, and tire, the primary course can be reduced in length. **Figure 5** presents this modified smaller universe configuration for practice options. **Figures 6 through 11** provide a dozen more practice sets with up to 17 obstacles for an international flavor. Have fun discovering the best choices for you and your dog. Happy spring training! 🐾

Marquand and his wife own and operate Wild West Agility training center in Moorpark, California. Marq has attended the FCI Agility World Championships six times and judged the AKC/USA World Team Tryouts twice. Wild West Agility conducts eight classes a week including an International Handling Class. Marq has been selected to judge the World Agility Open championships to be held in Spain in May 2013.



Ultimate Instructors

Lesson Planning & Foundation, Part 1

By Lauren Langman, photos by author except where noted

At our agility club in Devon, UK, lesson planning plays a huge part in the classes being able to run smoothly and effectively, and we start right at the very beginning—foundation, foundation, foundation. It has taken years in our sport for the importance of foundation training to be recognized, and it is only in the last few years that the agility population as a whole has started to move toward this kind of training as a necessity. This is certainly a positive step in the right direction since the flatwork behind agility can make the “house of foundation” stand tall for the duration of your dog’s agility career.

What Is a Lesson Plan?

So how do we go about creating effective lesson plans for agility? What is a lesson plan, what is its purpose, and why do you even need one?

A lesson plan is the instructor’s road map of what students are learning and how the material will be covered during the duration of the class. Before you plan your lesson, you need to identify the learning objectives for the class, meeting all of their individual needs. From there you can design appropriate tasks and group activities, develop strategies to make progress,

and assess the progress in an ongoing way. A successful lesson plan addresses and integrates these three key components:

- Objectives for learning
- Teaching/learning activities
- Strategies to check progress and understanding

Foundation Skills We Want to Teach

We start by teaching foundation in our lessons. According to Greg Derrett “the bricks and tiles of foundation are the essential behaviors we need in agility,” which are

- Start lines (stay & release)
- Understanding of physical cues (shoulder rotation, acceleration, deceleration, arm change)
- Understanding of verbal cues (*Left, Right, and Go on*)

Once these skills are solid, we can direct our dogs around even the most difficult sequences before we have actually taught them the equipment. The dog has all of the skills needed to become the very best, he just can’t yet negotiate a few bits of wood and metal. Once these foundation skills are perfected, we can add the equipment, which—let’s be honest—is really the fast, fun, and easy part of training.

Building the Foundation Lesson Plan

So let’s begin building this foundation lesson plan. Where do we start?

Outline Your Learning Objectives

Determine what you want your students and their dogs to learn and be able to do or take away with them by the end of class. For example:

- What is the topic of the lesson? Foundation
- What do I want students to learn? Circle work and acceleration cues.
- What do I want them to understand and be able to do at the end of class? Race at speed to a motionless toy and vary their speed during circle work depending on the degree of handler movement.



Lauren congratulating a successful participant in the instructor programme



Lauren discussing class dynamics



Lauren addressing some class questions

- What do I want them to take away from this particular lesson? The students understand these behaviors need to be practiced on a regular basis in different environments. They need both of these skills to be well schooled to have a balanced agility dog that can read subtle shoulder rotation but also power off and accelerate when needed.

Once you have decided the learning objectives for the class, rank them in terms of their necessity in your lesson plan. This step will prepare you for managing class time effectively and ensuring you achieve the most important learning objectives if you become short of time.

Instructors often find that they need to adjust their lesson plan during class depending on what the students need. Your list of prioritized learning objectives will also help you to make quick decisions on the spot and adjust your lesson.

Design the Learning Activities You Will Use

Decide how you will introduce your topic. You might start with a question or activity to engage the class. What knowledge of the subject do students already have, or what are their preconceived notions about it? Pair the class off and get them to discuss and then give feedback to the group.

Plan the specific learning activities (the main body of the lesson).

Prepare several different ways of explaining the material to catch the attention of more students and appeal to different learning styles. Use real-life ex-

amples, analogies, visuals, etc. and try to include different breeds and types of owners at all levels, not just the top ability. As you plan your examples and activities, estimate how much time you will spend on each. Build in time for some extended explanation or discussion and questions, but also be prepared to move on quickly to different applications or problems, and to identify strategies that check for understanding.

An important strategy that will also help you with time management is to anticipate potential questions and then incorporate these into your lesson. Decide what kinds of questions will be productive for discussion and what questions might sidetrack your group. Think about and decide on the balance between covering content (accomplishing your learning objectives) and ensuring that the dogs get enough work and that their owners understand.

A lesson plan is the instructor's road map of what students are learning and how the material will be covered during the duration of the class. Before you plan your lesson, you need to identify the learning objectives for the class, meeting all of their individual needs. From there you can design appropriate tasks and group activities, develop strategies to make progress, and assess the progress in an ongoing way.

Having additional examples and also alternative activities will allow you to be a flexible facilitator of learning since each group has their own energy and set of skills.

Here are some questions that will help you design the learning activities you will use:

- What will I do to explain the topic? If you have a whiteboard you can use, share your lesson plan by writing a brief agenda on the board. Having a clearly visible lesson agenda will help you and students stay on track.
- What will I do to illustrate the topic in different ways? Video, handouts, written, pictures, practical demo?
- How can I engage students in the topic? Questions, assessment, groups and pairings?
- What are some relevant real-life examples, analogies, or situations that can help students understand the topic? Your own or examples from other class members—these really help to warm the class to the teaching topics.
- What will students need to do to help them understand the topic better? Homework, certain team pairings, resources?

Once you have explained the topic and illustrated it with different examples, you need to check for student understanding. I try to check at every point that there is a certain level of understanding; if not, we cannot progress to the next level.

- What task will I ask the students to do to check that both owners and dogs are understanding and learning? For example, to check acceleration cues, I might use a 20m race to a toy with feedback from their peers or myself.
- What will I have students do to demonstrate that they understand? I may ask the students to put dogs away for a moment and run with each other around a circle, checking that they are marking the right behaviors and using a good rate of reinforcement.
- Going back to my list of learning objectives, what activity can I have students do to check whether each of those objectives has been accomplished? Sometimes in our classes we use check lists, and we always try to keep up-to-date with our own individual record keeping.

Develop a Conclusion and Preview the Next Lesson

Go over the foundation material that you have covered in your weekly lesson by summarizing the key lesson points. You can do this in a variety of ways: you can state the main points as the instructor, you can ask a student to help you summarize them for your group, or you can review group answers. As you gauge their understanding of foundation, note anything that is less than clear for the future classes.

Plan a few minutes to answer any remaining questions.

Conclude the lesson by previewing the next lesson. How does the current topic relate to the next? This preview will spur interest and help the group to connect the different foundation ideas within a much wider context.

Reflecting on Your Lesson Plan

A lesson plan may not work as well as you had expected due to a number of extraneous circumstances. You should not get discouraged—it happens to even the most experienced instructors and teachers! Take a few minutes after each class to reflect on what worked well and why, and what you could have done differently. The job of the instructor is never done!

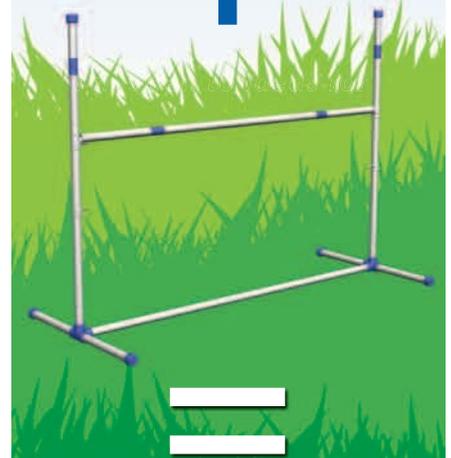
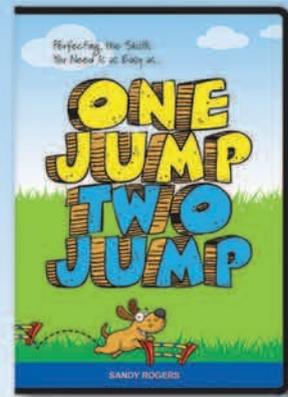
Your homework is to plan a lesson in this format for your next class and then analyze how it went.

At the End of the Day...

To be effective, the lesson plan does not have to be an exhaustive document that describes each and every possible classroom scenario. Nor does it have to anticipate each and every student's response or question. Instead, it should provide you with a general outline of your teaching goals, learning objectives, and the means to accomplish them. It is a reminder of what you want to do and how you want to do it. A productive lesson is not one in which everything goes exactly as planned, but one in which both students and instructor learn from each other.

Your homework is to plan a lesson in this format for your next class and then analyze how it went. Next month I will provide you with a full and detailed foundation lesson plan using the above ideas and suggestions for you to trial. 🐾

As a highly qualified teacher, LLB Law graduate, full-time dog sports instructor, and business manager, Lauren Langman understands the importance of how to find and work with an instructor. Lauren Langman is a partner in a number of businesses, from her dog training company Devon Dogs Ltd in the UK to Ultimate Agility online instruction and the LLAIA Accredited Instructor Programme. While balancing these businesses, she also has six Border Collies and a young baby, Eliza, with her partner Mathew Rouse of Tug-E-Nuff bungee dog toys.



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OUT SPOT OUT!

Teaching Independent Obstacle Performance, Part 1



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By Lorrie Reynolds
Photos by Katelyn Scott except where noted

Independent obstacle performance is the ability of the dog to complete an obstacle and maintain criteria regardless of the handler's motion and position relative to the obstacle. It is essential for all facets of agility and is particularly important for distance work. A dog cannot perform at a distance if he cannot perform the obstacles independently.

This article is for teams who have already trained obstacle performance but do not yet have dogs that will perform the obstacles on their own; however, if you are just beginning to train obstacle performance, you can use the principles explained here to teach independence during your dog's initial obstacle training and be a step ahead of the game.

TESTING FOR INDEPENDENT OBSTACLE PERFORMANCE

Two simple tests can help you determine if your dog can complete obstacles independently.

Test 1: Stand with your dog in front of the A-frame. Give your command for the A-frame, with the appropriate body language (leaning forward, arm extended to the front), but do not move. Was your dog able to complete the A-frame and maintain his contact criteria? Or did he

stop at the top, turn around, and return to you? Now, put your dog in a stay in front of the A-frame. Walk 10' beyond it and call your dog over the obstacle. Did your dog run around the obstacle? Did he come over the top and fly over the contact zone to catch up to you? Or was he able to complete it and maintain his criteria?

Test 2: Place a chair near the weave poles. Put your dog in a stay in front of the poles, go sit in the chair, and give your command to weave, with the appropriate body language. Did your dog start the poles and then pop out to come see what you were doing? Did he run directly to you instead of entering the poles? Or was he able to complete the poles?

If your dog completed the A-frame and the weave poles successfully, congratulations! You have not made yourself part of the "picture" your dog requires

to perform each obstacle correctly. If he didn't, don't worry—it's fixable!

FOUR CRITICAL SKILLS FOR OBSTACLE INDEPENDENCE

In addition to running with your dog while he is performing obstacles, your team should have these four skills:

- You should be able to send your dog to an obstacle while remaining stationary.
- You should be able to move to or past the end of an obstacle and call the dog to you.
- Your dog should be able to perform an obstacle when you are parallel to him but at a distance laterally.
- Your dog should be able to perform an obstacle when you are moving away from him laterally as long as you are maintaining the body language and position to support the obstacle.

The sections that follow contain exercises you can use to develop all four skills.

A WORD ABOUT TRAINING METHODS

A variety of methods are available for teaching agility skills. I believe that all of the available (positive) tools in the toolbox should be used if they are effective. The exercises here use targeting, toys as a lure and as a reward, and a clicker or marker word to tell the dog that he has done the exercise correctly.

There is a plethora of material available about operant conditioning (clicker training), so the principles will not be described here. Use a clicker or a marker word like "Yes" to mark correct performance even when a target or toy is also used.

USING TARGETS EFFECTIVELY

Targeting is a valuable tool when teaching independence. The dog is taught to drive to a target, which can be a lid, small square of cardboard, or anything else the dog can easily see. A target can also be baited with food in the initial stages of training, so the dog will drive to it without assistance from the handler. If you train alone and are using a baited target, you can avoid having the dog self-reward by using a small, sealed container with holes punched in it. If the dog performs correctly, open the lid and let him take the treat out of the container. You can also purchase toys with Velcro pouches that prevent the dog from getting the treats himself.

Obviously, there will be no targets on the course at an agility trial. Handlers may be concerned that the dog will not perform the same behaviors without a target. Fading the target in training ensures that the dog will perform obstacles without assuming there is something at the end. As the dog becomes more proficient, the target can be baited randomly instead of every time. It can be decreased in size until it is small enough that the dog cannot see whether or not it is there from a distance. Finally, the target can be used randomly during practice so the dog never knows if it will be present or not. I use targets sporadically during practice even with my experienced dogs to maintain their motivation and reinforce criteria. They have

never searched for a target on course because by the time they trial, the target is only randomly present in training.

TROUBLESHOOTING

As with any training session, it is important to know when to lower criteria (reduce the level of difficulty) to avoid frustrating the dog and the handler. The goal is to challenge the dog but not allow him to fail repeatedly or cause him to lose his motivation. When teaching independence, start at the point at which the dog was successful during the last training session. If the dog fails more than once, move back to the previous step or distance until he is successful. It is also appropriate to lower the contact obstacles to build confidence when you begin directing from a distance. Repeat the exercises with the equipment at full height when the dog understands his job.

Another key to training distance and independence is to increase distance between you and your dog gradually over multiple training sessions. When the instructions say to repeat the exercise, moving away or ahead, the repetitions should be spread out over several training sessions. Finally, it is extremely important that your body language and position support the dog as he is completing each obstacle. If you are having trouble with a specific exercise, and lowering criteria does not help, ensure you are using the correct body language and position (see my article in CR February 2013).

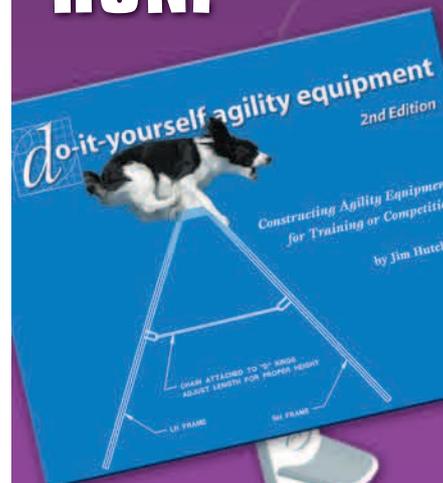
TUNNELS

Tunnels are a good place to begin teaching independent obstacle performance because most dogs enjoy them. In addition, once the dog enters, the only error that he can make is to turn around and come out of the same end of the tunnel.

Send

Place a target or toy at the end of the tunnel, about 4' away for small dogs and 6-8' for large dogs. If you're using a target, place food on it. Take the dog by the collar, and show him the reward. Get the dog excited about it by letting him pull toward it and telling him that it is for him, doesn't he want it, etc. It is very important at this point *not* to tell the dog to *Leave it* or use any method to keep him away from the reward other than the collar.

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1 Maintain the proper body language until the dog has reached the target or toy.



2A



2B

As the angle and distance to the tunnel change, face and then step toward the dog's path.

Note: If you have a toy-motivated dog, once he begins to understand performing the tunnel independently, you can switch to throwing a toy as he completes the tunnel. For the initial training, however, it is very important to give the dog something to drive toward.

Walk the dog to the tunnel entrance, still holding the collar. Give your verbal cue for the tunnel, take one step toward the tunnel entrance, and release him through the tunnel to get the reward. Remain stationary while the dog performs the tunnel, but use the correct body language, which is leaning forward

with your arm extended toward the tunnel as shown in **Figure 1**. Your arm should remain extended until the dog reaches the target. Mark the completion of the tunnel with a click or your marker word.

As the dog gains an understanding of the new game, vary your position and distance from the tunnel. As you move away from the tunnel and send him from different angles, your body position must change to face the path of the dog rather than the tunnel entrance. See **Figure 2** for examples of this position. Remember to take a step toward the path and to

remain leaning forward with your arm extended until the dog is committed to the tunnel.

Call

Place a target or toy at the end of the tunnel, about 4' away for small dogs and 6-8' for large dogs. If you're using a target, place food on it. As before, let your dog see the reward and get excited about it while you hold him by the collar.

Walk your dog away from the target and put him in a stay near the entrance of the tunnel. Walk halfway down the length of the tunnel, facing mostly forward but

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Independent obstacle performance is the ability of the dog to complete an obstacle and maintain criteria regardless of the handler's motion and position relative to the obstacle.

looking at the dog over your shoulder with your arm extended toward him as shown in **Figure 3**. Give your dog his verbal *Tunnel* command. Mark the successful completion of the tunnel and allow him to get the reward. Move farther toward the end of the tunnel for each repetition, until your dog can stay at the entrance and you can call him through from beyond the end. Vary your distance from the tunnel to challenge your dog with the choice of running through the tunnel or coming directly to you. As you move farther away, your body position must change to face the dog's path through the tunnel. See **Figure 4** for an example of correct positioning.

Lateral Distance

Place a target or toy at the end of the tunnel, about 4' away for small dogs and 6-8' for large dogs. If you're using a target, place food on it. As before, let your dog see the reward and get excited about it while you hold him by the collar.

Walk your dog away from the target and put him in a stay near the tunnel entrance. Move away laterally, face the path between the dog and the tunnel, take one step forward, and release him to the tunnel. Move parallel to the dog so that you end up the same distance away from the end of the tunnel as you were from the entrance. Mark the successful completion of the tunnel and allow the dog to get the reward. Continue to move laterally until you can start 10' to 15' away and have your dog take the obstacle rather than move toward you.

Moving Away

Moving away laterally while the dog is in the tunnel is not difficult because the dog cannot see you.

Place a target or toy at the end of the tunnel, about 4' away for small dogs and 6-8' for large dogs. If you're using a tar-

get, place food on it. As before, let your dog see the reward and get excited about it while you hold him by the collar.

Walk the dog to the tunnel entrance, still holding the collar. Practice sending your dog through the tunnel to the target and moving away as shown in **Figure 5** so he gets used to seeing you at a different distance when he comes out of the tunnel.

PROOFING

Proofing is the process of ensuring the dog understands his job even if something unexpected happens. After working through the distance exercises, begin adding in front crosses at a distance, cheering, toys or treats on the ground around the obstacles, and pretend stumbles or falls. Amaze your friends by having your dog complete an obstacle while you are sitting in a chair or lying on the ground. If your dog can perform independently while ignoring significant distractions during practice, he will be more likely to succeed in a noisy, busy trial environment.

Also remember to start randomizing your use of targets as described earlier in "Using Targets Effectively."

NEXT MONTH

Once you have worked through the above exercises, you will be able to direct your dog to a tunnel and your dog will complete it independently, regardless of where you are or what you are doing. Challenge your team by continuously working to improve your handling accuracy at a distance. The payoff is a more confident dog that can speed up because he is not waiting for his handler to show him what to do on each obstacle.

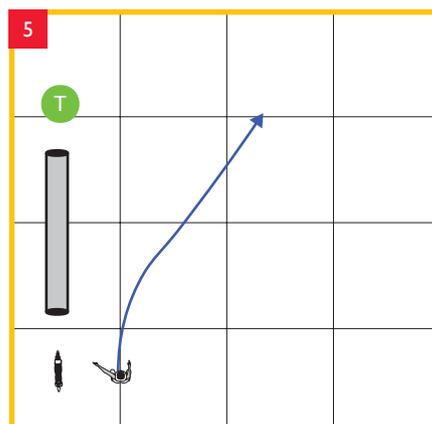
Next month's article will contain exercises to master independent performance of the contacts. 🐾



When calling your dog through the tunnel, face forward but extend your arm toward the dog and look at the tunnel entrance.



When calling the dog from a distance or a different angle, change your body position to face the dog's path rather than the tunnel itself.



Take one step toward the dog's path to the tunnel, then turn and move away from the obstacle while maintaining support.

Lorrie Reynolds has been involved with agility since 2002. She and her mixed breed NATCH-8, Versatility-NATCH-5, Gold-C-MEX, PDCH Maxx have qualified for national championships every year in multiple venues, and have competed at the NADAC or DOCNA championships for the past nine years, never placing lower than 8th. Lorrie is well known in Colorado for her distance work with mixed-breed rescues Maxx, C-MEX Storm (retired), and her newest dog, Pixie. Lorrie has been teaching her distance seminar, "Gambling is Addictive," in Colorado since 2006 and also offers private lessons. Contact her at coagilityinfo@yahoo.com.

Tips for Reading the Diagrams

Following are some tips to help you interpret the diagrams in *Clean Run* magazine:

- For any sequence or course, shown at any size, one square in the diagram always represents 10'.
- As on an actual agility course, numbers in the diagrams are always placed on the side of the obstacle it's taken from.
- Many exercise setups have several sequences for you to try, so you will often see different colored numbers on the same diagram. The numbers in the white circles represent one possible sequence, the numbers in the black circles another sequence, and so on.
- In some articles, the handler and dog icons are color coded to show how the handler and dog would be positioned relative to each other at a given moment on course. For example, a green handler shows the handler location corresponding to the green dog's position on course.
- The diagrams represent approximations of actual dog and handler interaction. It is impossible to depict precise relationships between the dog and handler with complete accuracy in a two-dimensional image. The diagrams are intended to convey the concepts presented in the text.

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Diagram Key

	Winged bar jump
	Nonwinged bar jump
	Winged one-bar jump
	Nonwinged one-bar jump
	Broad/long jump
	Winged double-bar jump
	Nonwinged double-bar jump
	Panel jump
	Winged triple-bar jump
	Nonwinged triple-bar jump
	Tire jump
	Wall jump
	A-frame
	Seesaw/teeter
	Chute/collapsed/closed tunnel
	Open/pipe tunnel
	Table
	Dogwalk
	Weave poles
	Handler
	Dog
	Dog's path
	Handler's path
	Obstacle plane & other imaginary lines
	Front cross
	Rear cross
	Threadle
	Lead-out pivot
	Reverse flow pivot
	Serpentine
	Target (food treat or toy)

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