

Clean Run[®]

THE MAGAZINE FOR DOG AGILITY ENTHUSIASTS VOL. 17, NO. 10 OCTOBER 2011 \$7



Tug Training as a Partnership

**“But My Dog Is Perfect
in Training!”**

Six Ways to Handle a 270

**Using Food-stuffable Toys to
Create Real Toy Drive**



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THE MAGAZINE FOR DOG AGILITY ENTHUSIASTS

OCTOBER 11 VOLUME 17 NUMBER 10

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Fit to Be Tricked: Bowling

Bowling is a coordination skill and it also works on neck strength and flexibility. Bowling helps dogs learn not to stress about falling objects and other sudden movements. It's also a lot of fun for both dog and handler, and lends itself well to group play. By Frankie Sassie Joiris



Agility in Japan from an American Perspective

Marianne Uppal is likely the only agility competitor in the world who has obtained both an AKC MACH and a Japan Kennel Club agility championship on the same dog, so she's in a unique position to compare agility in the two countries. By Brenna Fender



Treats Over Toys

Many people have been told their dogs must tug with a toy if they are going to do agility. If you have a dog that is already highly motivated, you may be able to get more thinking and learning during a training session by using treats. Learn why one handler chooses treats over toys. By Amanda Nelson

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Some handlers consider the triple jump to be "unsafe." But the triple is actually one of the most clearly presented jumps offered to the dog on any given course. It is clearly graduated and, as such, demonstrates to the dogs the effort required of them. This is, of course, provided the dog actually sees the jump! By Susan Salo

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Keeping visual contact with your dog is perhaps even more important than perfecting how you do a front cross, rear cross, or any other maneuver. This month you'll work on some exercises to improve your peripheral awareness on course and your tracking ability. By Daisy Peel

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The Challenger Round is arguably the most exciting of any round at the AKC Nationals. The winner of each jump height is awarded the last remaining spot in the finals. Inspiration for these drills came from a section of the 2011 AKC Nationals Challenger Round course designed by Bob Long. By Annie Pyle

49 Teaching FOCUS and Impulse-control Classes: Week 6

Three of this week's exercises—offered focus, recalls, and mat work—involve raising criteria to get more enthusiastic responses from our dogs. We'll also add two new exercises this week: the fold-back down and the spin. By Deborah Jones, PhD

55 Ready, Set, Trial! Trial Etiquette

Call it what you will—etiquette, manners, sportsmanship, or plain common courtesy—here are some suggestions to make everyone's experience at trials a better one. By Jamie McKay, CPDT KA

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This month's exercises focus on jumping gymnastics. Generally, we describe jumping gymnastics as having a course set up in such a way to expose the dog to a variety of different jumping patterns with different distances between the obstacles. By Stuart Mah

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By using the Premack principle, once our dogs are trained in their obstacle performance we can decrease our use of food and toys to reward contacts, start lines, and tables. We can then use other more desirable agility activities as reinforcers for these less desirable agility activities we ask of our dogs.

By Rachel Sanders



15 Commonsense Tug Training

Tug play is a wonderful form of training when used safely and in balance with your dog. For both you and the dog it improves fitness, is very reinforcing, and gives a wonderful structure to the dog's learning. The game is about balance, mirroring movement, and learning together. By Kay Laurence

34 Six Ways to Handle a 270

Learn how to teach your dog to take the second jump of a 270 without your helping him every time as well as six different ways that you can handle a 270 on course. By Sandy Rogers

52 Correctly Using Food-stuffable Toys to Create Toy Drive

Many people use food toys in a manner that is actually working against what they are trying to achieve. Learn how to use these toys in a way that will increase the dog's toy drive so that you can get more intensity, speed, and drive in your training.

By Laura Manchester Derrett

Cover Dog

CH MACH Eastlake I'm Going to Hollywood, NF, a.k.a. Brazen, a 4-year-old Parson Russell Terrier owned by Susan Jaffe of New York and handled by Arlene Spooner. Photo by M. Nicole Fischer Photography.

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J and J

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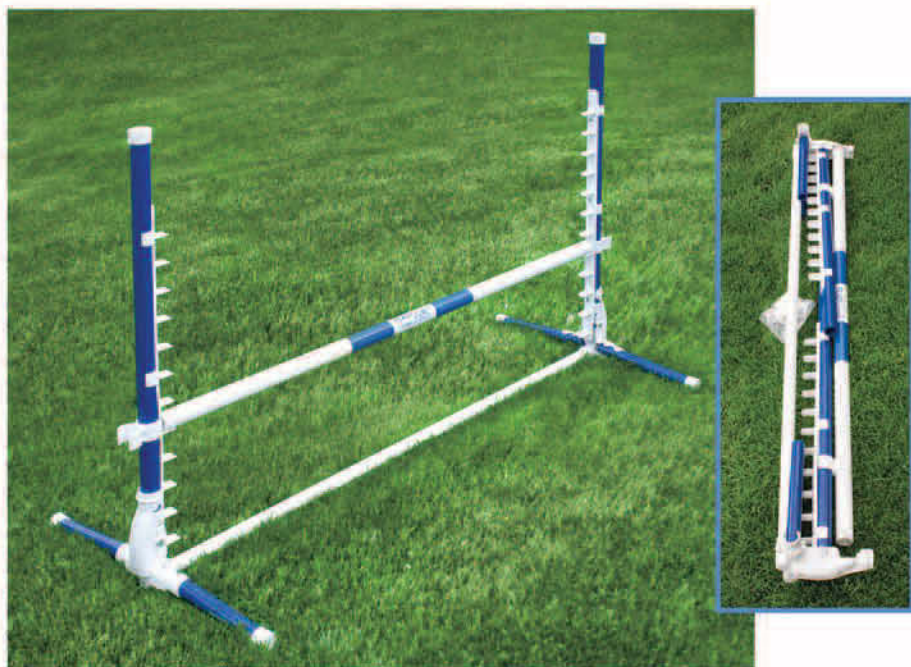
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Editorializing...

Considering the Triple Jump

By Susan Salo



Some people have suggested that the triple jump be removed from competition because it's an "unsafe" obstacle. Others are overly concerned about how the lower bars of the jump are set.

The triple jump is actually one of the most clearly presented jumps offered to the dog on any given course. It is clearly graduated and, as such, demonstrates to the dogs the jumping effort required of them. This is, of course, provided the dog actually sees the jump! I often have clients who come for lessons state that the triple jump gives their dogs a problem on course when the reality is that the dogs very often fail to sight the jump because all they are focused on is the moving or talking handler. This is why I want all dogs to learn early on in their jumping training to have great task orientation.

Some handlers feel the triple needs a special verbal cue. But this implies the dogs would not bother to regard the jump they're approaching without such information offered from their handlers. When I am teaching I often ask the group to imagine they are on a horse galloping down to a jump that the horse cannot see over the top of, so the rider feels the urge to yell, "Go big!" Since the horse would not know what that phrase even means, we are in *big* trouble! Isn't it the same scenario for the dog? Quite often when we speak on course, our dogs will turn to check in with us if our timing is not perfect, thus preventing them from even seeing the jump looming ahead of them. While we do give many verbal cues, to me a jump is a jump. I provide the training

that allows my dogs to make decisions about how much effort will be required of them based on which jumps they see coming up on course.

While all dogs need to be schooled on the triple so that they understand the jumping effort required, the smallest of dogs does require specific training because they must actually enter the apparatus before they lift off since the

arms of the triple are like a chute with the jump bars recessed into the apparatus. Handlers should offer care and time to make certain the small dogs can comfortably perform the triple long before they encounter it at a trial.

It is the job of the course designer and judge to place obstacles such as the triple appropriately for the course, but it is also the job of each handler to be aware of how quickly and readily the dog sees the jump. If placement of the triple is of concern to the handler, then that would be a place on course to be patient and not simply run off and leave that jump for the dog to deal with on his own.

These are the sorts of things to be taken into consideration while walking any given course. It would be very sad for the sport if the triple were to be considered an

unsafe piece of equipment when, in reality, perhaps more dogs simply are in need of actual schooling over the triple so they can understand the job required and have time to adequately practice the jump before entering competition.



Susan Salo

A lifelong horsewoman, Susan Salo has offered her insights into jumping for dogs in agility in seminars around the country, including Power Paws and Clean Run Camps. She currently resides in Woodland, California, and can be reached at Jumpdogs@aol.com.



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Clean Run®

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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.

tip of the month

I always "pre-open" my doggie potty bags when going to a trial or seminar. Before I leave for the event, I open more than enough bags, crumple them up, and put them in a separate pocket of my gear bag. There is nothing more frustrating than pottying your dog and being unable to get the bag open because your fingers are too dry or too numb with cold. Opening the bags in advance solves this problem. 🐕

Sue McGinty

Everything you always wanted to know about agility

By Brenna Fender

Should I do a warm-up with my dog before a run at a trial? Should I stretch my dog? How?

Warming up and stretching your dog before training and trialing is important for optimal performance and to avoid injury. *Clean Run* has offered many articles on this topic. Check “How to Warm Up and Cool Down Your Dog” by Dr. Debbie Gross Saunders in *CR* April 2007. You might also look at *Stretching the Performance Dog*, Debbie’s DVD, or “Winning Warm-ups,” an article by Diane Goodspeed and Petra Ford, PT, CCRT that appeared in *CR* October 2010. There many other resources, including *Canine Massage in Plain English* by Natalie Winter, which includes warm-up and cool down instructions for the performance dog, and *The Healthy Way to Stretch Your Dog*, by Sasha Foster, MSPT and Ashley Foster, CPDT.

Do agility organizations tighten standard course times for national events?

The majority of U.S. organizations do not tighten standard course times (SCT) at national events. Canine Performance Events (CPE) and United Kennel Club (UKC) both report no changes in the SCT at nationals. According to United States Dog Agility Association (USDAA) president Kenneth Tatsch, “We use the same standards throughout our tournaments.” The Agility Association of Canada (AAC) has a similar policy: “AAC uses the normal YPS [yards per second] range for Masters courses for our regionals and nationals, although the judges are encouraged to use the upper ranges. Of course, this may be adjusted on the day of, depending on the course and weather conditions,” says AAC president Cindy Swiney.

In years past, the American Kennel Club (AKC) has shortened the standard course time at its nationals. The rules have changed and now it simply shortens the SCT on standard courses by 5 seconds because there is no table (the table count is 5 seconds). So technically, AKC nationals’ SCT no longer requires dogs to run more yards per second than they do at local trials.

Some organizations, like the North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC) and Dogs on Course in North America (DOCNA), use time-plus-faults scoring for many classes at the nationals, meaning that faults are added to each dog’s time in the form of seconds, with the lowest time winning. Time-plus-faults scoring does not require the use of a standard course time.

Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA) does have special times set aside for national events. Spokesperson Allison Bryant says, “ASCA uses the YPS [times] specified in our rule-



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.

book for Finals (Elite level YPS) and the National trial (Elite, Open, Novice), respectively.” See the ASCA rule book at www.asca.org/programs/agility.

Even though many organizations use their normal SCT for national events, don’t expect nationals courses to be exactly like those you see in a typical trial. While an organization won’t violate its own rules and regulations, a course may include the maximum number of allowed challenges or infrequently seen challenges to make the course a test of agility skill. No matter what the SCT is, most likely, the dogs that win and place will be well under that time. And since many national events do not award normal titling legs from nationals’ qualifications, the SCT is probably far less important at a national event than it is in a typical weekend trial.

While the standard course time might not be technically reduced, rule changes may make time spent in the ring go by faster. Some organizations (like AKC) opt to not include the table in national competition, avoiding the sometimes variable table count and cutting at least 5 seconds from each run. Other time-reducing methods include hybrid courses (fewer contacts and more jumps make courses run faster) and fault limits, which end a run when a specified number of faults are obtained.

Even if timing and course design are the same as seen at a normal weekend trial, scoring may be different. In addition to the time-plus-faults technique, portions (or all) of the event may be cumulative, totaling scores from multiple runs to determine who runs in the finals or wins the entire event. Final rounds may be standalone or part of the cumulative scoring process. So some parts of scoring a national event may be quite different from a weekend trial.

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Improve Your Handling Skills at Home

Backyard Dogs

By Mary Ellen Barry



This month's "Backyard Dogs" is designed to work front crosses and wraps. If you do not lead out to a stationary position, you will be rehearsing the sequences as if they were mid-course.

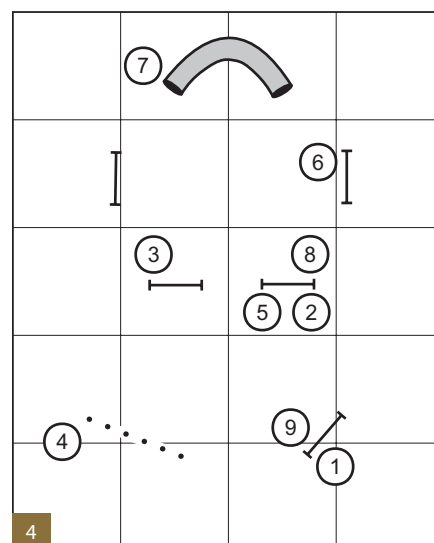
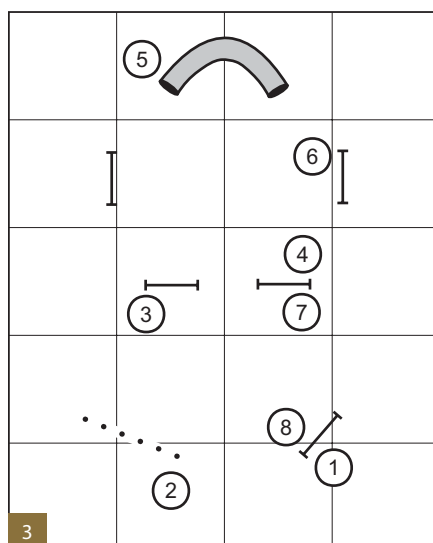
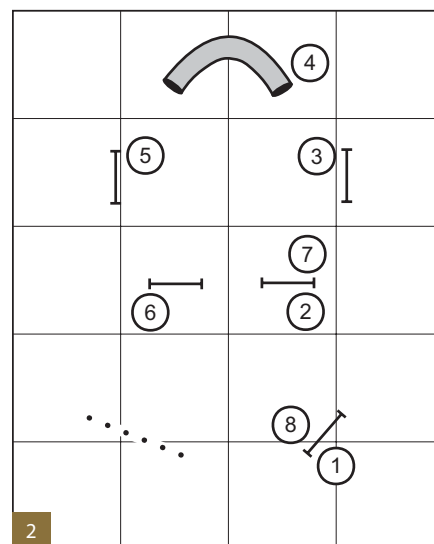
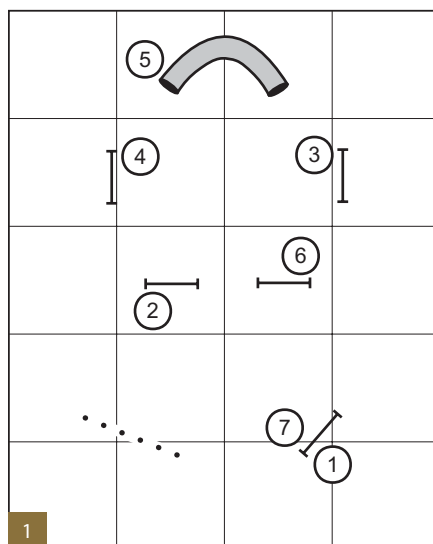
Figure 1: Do a moving front cross between #2 and #3 and another front cross for the wrap at #3 (turning the dog to his left). Pull the dog to his right from #4 to #5. Do a front cross at the tunnel exit and finish with the dog on your right.

Figure 2: Do a moving front cross from #2 to #3. Keep the dog on your right from #3 to #6. Do a front cross on the landing side of #6 and finish with the dog on your left.

Figure 3: Start with the dog on your left. Wrap the dog to the inside (his right) on jump #4, using a post turn (to keep him on your left). Do a front cross on the takeoff side of jump #7 and pull to jump #8.

Figure 4: Start with the dog on your right. Do a front cross after jump #6 while turning the dog to his left. Do a front cross at the tunnel exit and finish with the dog on your right.

If you do not lead out to a stationary position, you will be rehearsing the sequences as if they were mid-course.



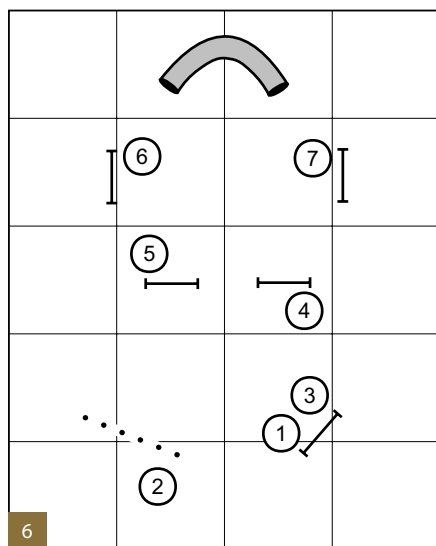
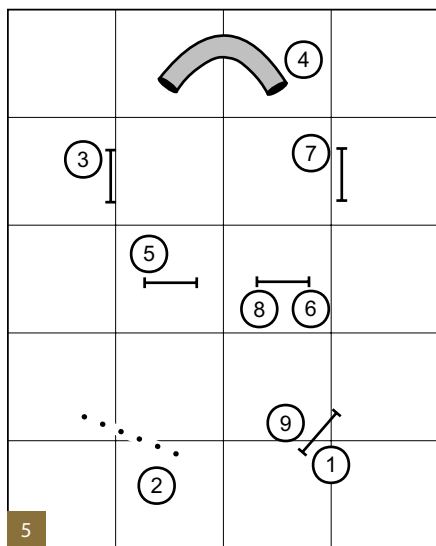


Figure 5: Start with the dog on your left. Pull to the tunnel at #4. Have the dog on your right for jump #5 and do a front cross on the landing side of jump #6. Turn the dog to his right at jump #7. Do front cross on the takeoff side of jump #8 and again from #8 to #9. Or, try a blended front cross (see CR June 2011, “Backyard Dogs”).

Figure 6: Start with the dog on your left. Do a front cross out of the poles. Do another front cross from #4 to #5 and again from #5 to #6 (or try a blended front cross). Wrap the dog to his left at jump #6 with another front cross.

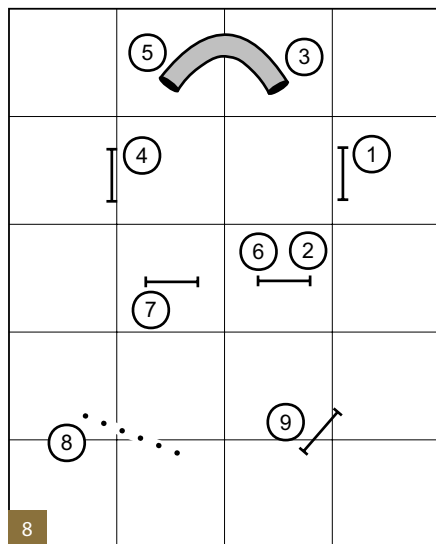
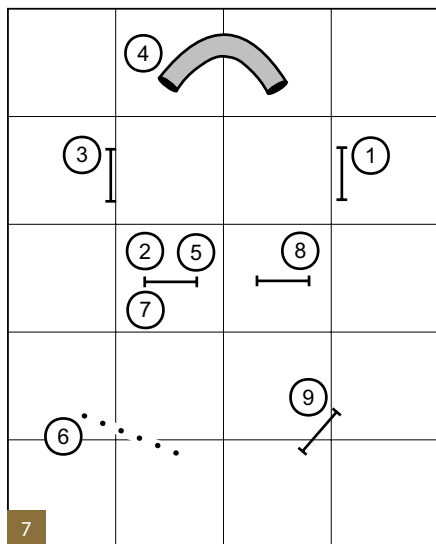


Figure 7: Do a moving front cross from #1 to #2. Do a front cross at the tunnel exit so the dog is on your right to the weave poles. Do another front cross at the weave exit and finish with the dog on your left.

Figure 8: Start with the dog on your left and do a front cross at #2, turning the dog to his right on jump #2. Do another front cross at the tunnel exit and have the dog on your left from #4 to #5. Do a front cross from #6 to #7 and finish with the dog on your right.

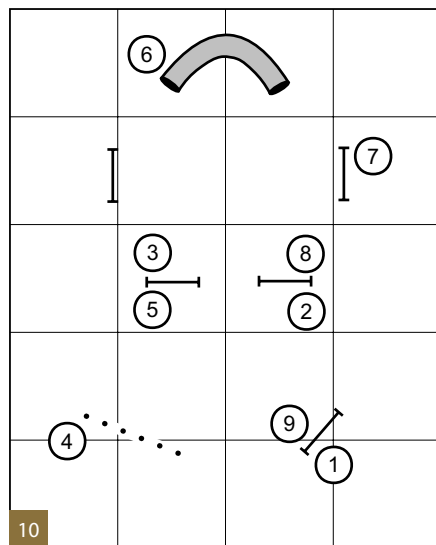
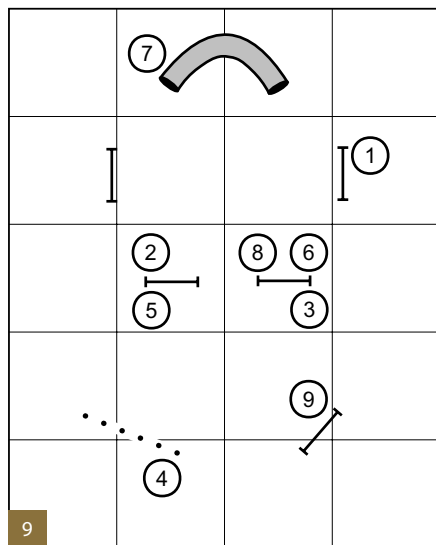


Figure 9: Start with the dog on your right. Wrap the dog to his left at jump #3 by doing a front cross. Keep the dog on your left through jump #6. Wrap the dog to his right at jump #6 by doing a post turn. Finish with the dog on your left.

Figure 10: Start with the dog on your right. Do a front cross after the weave poles and have the dog on your left through the tunnel. Do a front cross on the takeoff or landing side of jump #7 and finish with the dog on your right.

Good luck and most of all, have fun! 🐾

Mary Ellen has been involved in agility since 1994 and has achieved the USDAA ADCH with four Border Collies, Zoe, Fizz, E-Z and Maizy. Mary Ellen has competed internationally three times, 2006 IFCS in the Netherlands with Fizz (three-time gold medalist); 2008 IFCS Belgium with Fizz; and WAO 2010 in the United Kingdom with Maizy. She has also been in the USDAA finals in all three tournaments multiple times with all of her dogs. She lives in Norristown, Pennsylvania, with her husband George and offers private lessons and agility seminars. Contact her via e-mail at mebarry@kineticdog.com.

A Reason for Hope

Upcoming Events September & October



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Events:

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October 22



During September 2011, "Smile for a Cure" pet photographers from across the country will donate 100% of their session fees to the NCCF! Find a photographer near you at:

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For more information on these events or on the NCCF please visit:
www.wearethecure.org

My four reasons for starting the National Canine Cancer Foundation—Ashby, Bailey, Casey, and Duncan—all died of cancer before the age of 10. As I travel on our journey of fund raising for cancer research, I love to hear stories of dogs that are over 10 years old and have made it through the cancer diagnosis to become a survivor. This month I would like to share Aleta Crosby's story about her dog, Rusty.

"In 2002, right after I adopted Rusty, my sweet, gorgeous Sheltie, I enrolled him in a pet insurance program. I remember thinking, 'Cancer rider? I hope I never need that, but I'll add it to his policy.' Other than a few minor health issues throughout the years, we never had need for that insurance policy. But in December 2009, everything changed. Rusty started having strange episodes. He would collapse and couldn't get up. He was conscious and didn't seem to be in any pain at all; he just couldn't stand. Each time this happened, I rushed him to the local animal emergency center. By the time we got there, Rusty was walking again. Even though he could walk into the clinic, I asked that they check him anyway, and they did. No one could find anything wrong with him; he seemed perfectly healthy.

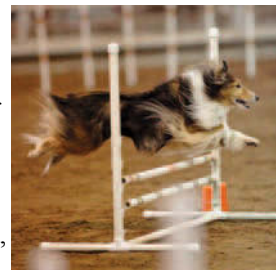


Photo by: Steve Bull
Sirius Photography

After the first incident I made an appointment with my regular veterinarian; she examined him and ran all sorts of tests. Again, nothing was found other than a slight heart murmur. She referred us to a local veterinary specialist in oncology and internal medicine, then to a cardiologist at the state university's veterinary teaching hospital. The cardiologist found Rusty's cardiovascular system was not only healthy but also seemed to belong to a much younger dog. Rusty was 10 at the time, and we were still doing agility so he was very fit for his age. She suggested we go back to our regular vet and get x-rays of Rusty's abdominal and thoracic regions to see if anything out of the ordinary showed up. Within an hour of dropping Rusty off at my vet's office for x-rays, I received a call from the vet. There was a golf-ball-sized mass in one of his lungs. I went back to the oncologist to discuss options and was referred to a surgeon. I called immediately and Rusty was scheduled to have the mass removed the next week.

The surgery went well; the mass and margins were removed and sent for testing. I received a call from the surgeon a few days later and heard the word no one wants to hear, cancer. Rusty had adenocarcinoma. The good news was that the mass was contained: it had not spread, making it easy to remove. The surgeon and oncologist told me that in many cases of lung tumors in dogs, by the time the dog is showing pulmonary distress, the tumor is very large and has spread to surrounding tissue. The mass was situated over the vagus nerve and the doctors thought that was why Rusty had the odd, brief collapsing episodes that started the vet visits and testing. We were lucky to have caught the problem so early and have the mass removed. The oncologist recommended we not start chemotherapy or radiation right away. Instead we would monitor Rusty closely and if anything looked suspicious, we would then consider other treatment options. At first, Rusty had chest x-rays every 30 days, then every 90 days. Each time the films were clean, no more masses. Now, he has x-rays every six months and will for the rest of his life. Rusty has now been cancer free for 19 months and is a healthy, happy 12-year-old.

In August we headed to Fort Worth, Texas, to participate in the Texas Agility Shoot-out, an event to raise money for the National Canine Cancer Foundation. I am so very grateful that I have his photo displayed on the Memorial Wall as a cancer survivor and look forward to parading him around in a 'Survivor' bandana. I cherish every day with Rusty and hope to have him in my life for many years to come."

Aleta's persistence in chasing down a mysterious problem is the reason Rusty's cancer didn't have time to spread. Catching cancer in its early stages is a very hard thing to do for owner or vet. Part of our mission statement talks about finding ways of detecting cancer in the early stages so that we can see more survivor stories like Rusty's. The Texas Shoot-out that Rusty ran in this year raised over \$40,000 that will be put toward finding a way to end this disease.

Gary D. Nice
President and co-founder

Together, We Are the Cure
National Canine Cancer Foundation

The Premack principle is often used in behavior modification for people. It states that a person will do a less desirable activity to gain access to a more desirable activity. I think that once our dogs are trained in their obstacle performance we can adopt this theory and decrease our use of food and toys to reward contacts, start lines, and tables. We can then use other more desirable agility activities as reinforcers for these less desirable agility activities we ask of our dogs.

But...He's Perfect in Training!

Using the Power of Premack in Agility Training

By Rachel Sanders, photos by Clean Run

Here are the most common problems handlers ask me about regarding their start-line, table, and contacts in competition:

- My dog won't lie down on the table.
- My dog doesn't stop or stops short on the contact obstacles.
- My dog runs by one or all the contact obstacles and the table.
- My dog has no start-line stay.

More often than not these problems are all followed by the statement, "My dog is perfect in training."

Rewards and Responses to Errors

In response I ask a few questions about the type of rewards being used, frequency of rewards, and how the owner responds to the dog's competition errors. Below are my typical questions and the handler's answers.

Q: What types of rewards do you use in training for problem obstacles?

A: I mostly reward with food, sometimes a toy. I throw the toy back toward my dog and release him, or I release the dog from the contact and tug with him by my side.

Q: How often do you reward your dog on the contact obstacles, table, or the start line?

A: I don't reward every time, maybe around 60%, but I always carry food or toys with me when I train.

Q: What do you do when your dog makes an error in the competition ring?

A: Mostly I just carry on. Sometimes I leave the ring, but not every time. It really doesn't matter what I do; it doesn't get any better. But he's perfect in training!

Re-creating Problems on the Training Field

I follow up with a short drill involving the problem obstacle(s) and ask the handlers to remove all food and toys from their body before they run their dog.

If the dog is flawless in the exercise I note how the handler responds to the dog when he does stop on his contact or lies down on the table. Often there is no verbal reinforcement at all. Sometimes a handler praises the dog but the dog releases on the verbal *Good Boy*. Very often handlers slow down and stop as the dog takes up the two-on/two-off position and then run forward as they give the release cue. This indicates that the dog is stopping because the handler stopped and releasing because the handler starts to move forward, not because of the verbal two-on/two-off and release cues.

Occasionally the dog refuses to leave the contact. I can surmise that the dog is waiting for his food reward and is bemused that his handler has forgotten to feed him. Obviously I do not know what a dog is thinking but if the dog stands and stares at the handler's hand or pocket, and he licks his lips in an expectant fashion I think I'm not far off in reading the cartoon speech balloon above the dog's head: "Hey you! Did you forget something?"

I find it amusing that these dogs won't leave a contact in training but won't stop on a contact in the ring. The only difference is that food and toys may or may not be present!

Sometimes by the third contact in the sequence the dog starts to leave the contact obstacle a little earlier and by the second or third time of going to the table the dog hesitates before lying down, and the handler may give a second cue. From the dog's point of view, why should he stop this time when he didn't get any food or toys on the previous attempts. If there are no food treats or toys on offer, what's in it for him?

On a few occasions the dog just blasts off the contact, stands barking at the handler on the table, or runs around all the contact equipment like a wild thing. This is more likely to occur if the dog is at a training facility for the first time.

I am looking for the dog to produce something similar to the behavior he exhibits in the ring, and although it may not be the exact same incorrect behavior, it will not be the “perfect” behavior that the handler described at the beginning of the lesson. Dogs are not perfect in training; we just don’t test their understanding of the required behavior enough.

Does the Dog Understand the Obstacle Requirements?

My next test is to make sure that the dog understands the obstacle requirements. For example:

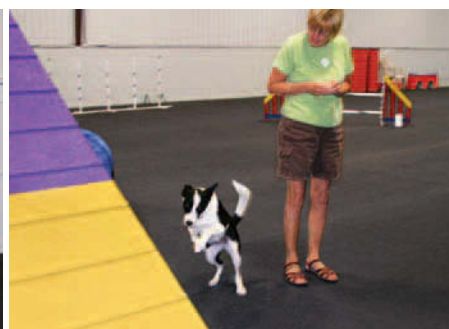
1. Can the dog down on cue without additional physical signals and without the handler’s asking for the dog’s attention first?

2. Can the dog release on cue after being put in a sit-stay and the handler remaining at the dog’s side?
3. Can the dog get into the two-on/two-off position without any handler motion to help him move forward into position?

Editors’ Note: To see videos of Rachel demonstrating each of these tests, go to the Magazine Forum at www.clean-run.com and select Videos: www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=682.

If the dog fails at any of these steps, this becomes our starting point and I teach the handler my methods for training these behaviors.

For dogs that pass the tests I pose a few more questions to the handlers regarding what they consider to be reinforcers for their dogs.



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More Questions About Reinforcers

Q: What types of reinforcers do you use in your dog's training?

A: Food and toys (some people also include praise).

Q: What rewards are available to your dog in the ring?

A: None, you can't take food or toys into the ring. Verbal praise is allowed.

Occasionally, the handler may say that the dog's being allowed to continue to play agility is his reward in the ring.

I think that the draw of the next obstacle is why the dogs don't want to stop; and although it appears they enjoy verbal praise, it is not what the dogs are working for. They want to keep going!

Daily Life with the Dog

My next set of questions relate to the dog's daily life. I believe if we look at our day-to-day interactions with our dogs we can identify many of our ring behavior problems and can work at correcting the problems 24/7, not just at agility class or competition.

Q: Do you ask the dog to sit or wait while you remove his leash, open a door, a crate, or an ex-pen?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you reward this behavior with food or toys?

A: No. (Now the handler often smiles as the light bulb begins to glow.)

Q: What is the consequence if the dog bursts out of the door/crate/ex-pen?

A: I bring the dog back to proof the behavior and release cue a little and then release the dog.

Q: What is the reward when the dog stays?

A: He gets to be free or to go outside.

Q: Did you feed the dog a treat?

A: No. Well, when he was a puppy I did but not now because he knows what he should do.

Q: Why do you feel the need to reward with food and toys nearly all contact behaviors in training after the dog is proficient at the behavior? Can't the same rules apply for contacts, tables, and start lines as going outside through a door, getting out of a crate or ex-pen, or removing a leash?

A: I'm not sure except I've never thought about it like that!

Training Using the Power of Premack

Many pet dog owners can teach their dogs to sit and wait for their dinner. Yes, it involves food but in reality isn't the full food bowl and the activity of eating it just a more desirable behavior and the sit-stay a less desirable behavior?

I know of several dogs that will stay waiting to be released to work sheep but cannot stay on an agility start line. Working sheep is the highly desirable behavior, while the stay is the less desirable behavior, but the stay is the means by which the dog gets to chase sheep. If the dog breaks to work sheep an attempt is made to block the dog from the sheep and the dog is therefore prevented from playing.

As trainers we need to use agility equipment in the same way

- If you sit at the start line until you are released you will get to play on the agility equipment.
- The faster you get to your two-on/two-off position, the quicker you will get to play with the rest of the equipment.
- If you get onto and lie down on the table you will get to be released to more equipment.

The release cue and permission to continue becomes the reinforcer for the less desirable behavior, that is, stopping on the table or contact obstacle, *just as it is in the competition ring.*

When I start to introduce "more desirable" agility activities as reinforcers for the previous "less desirable" behaviors of stopping on a contact, stopping/down on the table, and staying at the start line, I use obstacles that the dog enjoys and is successful on: tunnels and jumps; and for some dogs, a short set of weave poles.

When working on the dogwalk or teeter I start with the dogwalk, often just putting the dog in the end position. Then I run out and release the dog to the tunnel or jumps. I may do this several times in a row until the dog is either perfect or releases himself to the other obstacles. If he self-releases, I verbally mark the error and replace the dog back onto the contact. I follow with some basic proofing of what constitutes the release cue. I often give an unknown cue such as *Break* or *Free*. Sometimes I use other words or phrases while using one of my other dog's names. I show excitement in my approach to this, because my goal is not to bore the dog but to have him twitching in anticipation of the release.

Editors' Note: To see a video of Rachel demonstrating this training, go to the Magazine Forum at www.cleanrun.com and select Videos: www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=175.



If the dog was perfect I increase the level of distraction and ask for more of the end behavior. I give my dog his two-on/two-off cue and, as he jumps into position, I run forward toward the next obstacle. I may run back to the dog praising verbally and often I pat my dog while he remains in the two-on/two-off position. Next I run forward again and either repeat the praise and patting activity or release the dog to the tunnels or jumps.

I also use other handling maneuvers as described in my DVD, *Bridging the Gap Between Training and Competition*.

When working through this process I don't carry any food or toys and use only my praise, pats, and the other obstacles as reinforcers. Praise and other obstacles are the same reinforcers that are available in the competition ring.

For the start line I work through the process in a similar manner. I see many handlers who, after their dogs break the start line in training, replace the dog, and lead out again. And when the dog stays, they return and reward with food. In my opinion the food is yet another obstacle in the way of the dog gaining his desired reward of running; and it is arguably not a reinforcer at all in this case. After all, the dog didn't run to the handler begging for food; he took the jumps.

(A note about start lines: I am referring to dogs that break the start line and take another obstacle, not the dogs that creep forward. I own such a dog and long ago decided that it was unrealistic to fix the creep when I could not always be in a position to see her feet moving. Her criteria were "sit, stand, or down and creep a bit," but she must take the first obstacle without incurring a refusal or knocking the bar. In her nine years of competition she has never busted the start line and taken the first jump without my release.)

Here is a typical training progression for the start line:

- The dog is asked to stay, the handler leads out, and the dog breaks and takes the first jump.
- The handler takes control of the dog and returns him to the start line. The dog is either placed into a sit or asked to sit,

and the handler leads out while the dog stays. If the dog stays, the handler resists the urge to return to the dog and feed him; instead, the handler gives the release cue and allows the dog to take two or three obstacles.

The dog can be placed in front of different obstacles around the agility course while this process is repeated until the stay behavior becomes stronger in anticipation of the release.

Sometimes instead of replacing the dog at the original start line when he breaks, I take the dog by the collar past the first few obstacles and start him in the middle of the course. By breaking, he has lost the opportunity to take those obstacles and is instead walked past them. This works in much the same way as the pet owner who picks up the food bowl if the dog breaks and the shepherd who blocks the sheepdog from playing with the sheep that he didn't wait for permission to work.

Editors' Note: To see a video of Rachel demonstrating this training, go to the Magazine Forum at www.cleanrun.com and select Videos: www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=176.

In Conclusion

I do use food and toys to teach sit, stand, and down, the contact end behavior of two-on/two-off (or four-on the teeter if required), and stays. It is not until my dogs are excited about agility and fully understand the obstacle performance that I reduce the use of these types of reinforcers.

When working through this process I never carry food and toys with me. I'll leave the toys and treats at the side of the training area and play after we complete the exercise. I continue to train in this way until I think that my dog's performance is not enhanced if I have toys or food with me when we train.

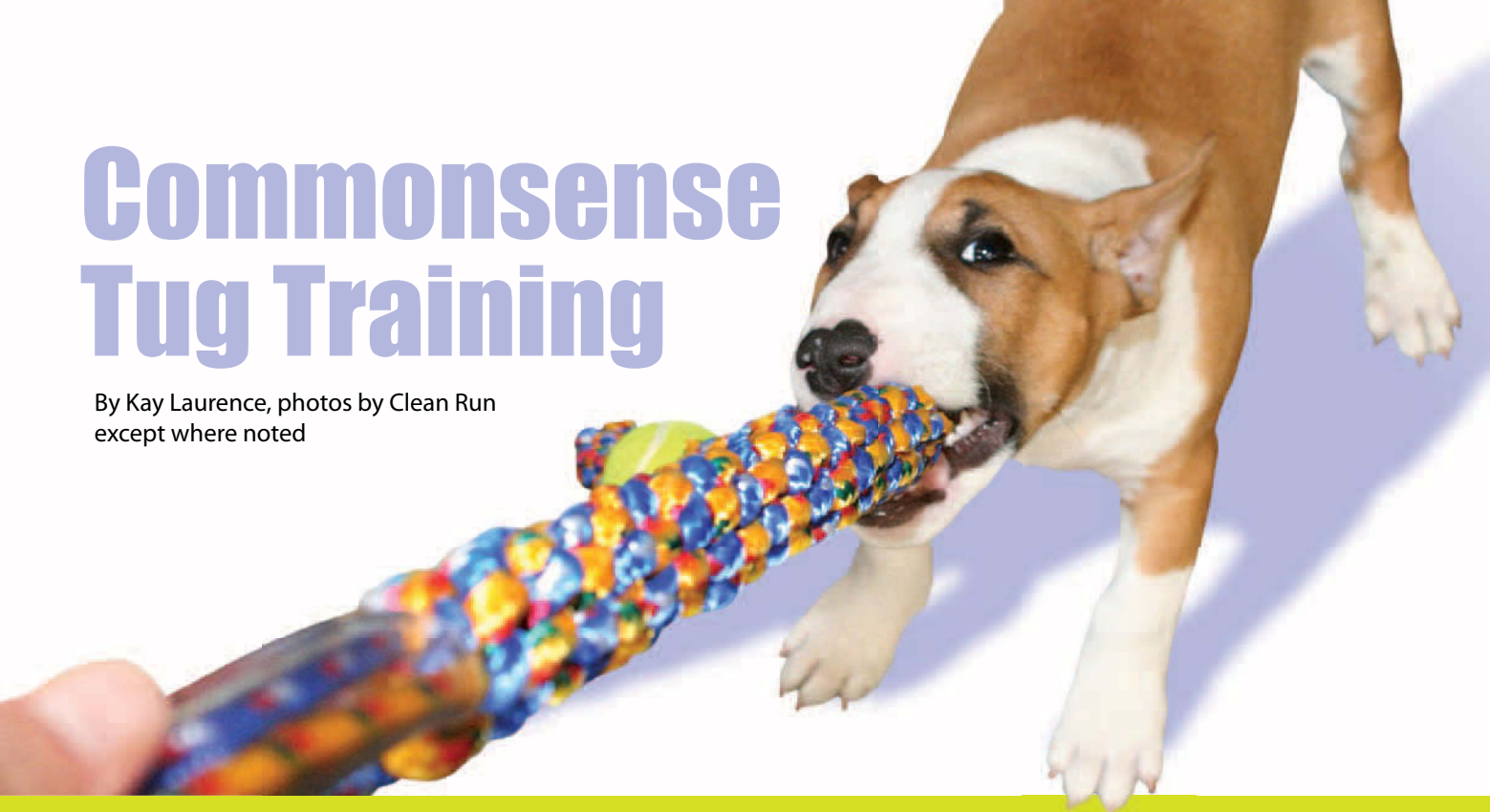
In my monthly maintenance training of these behaviors if I am not sequencing obstacles, I do use food and toys as reinforcers. But when we are working through this process, I put that maintenance training on hold. 🐾

Rachel Sanders has competed in agility since 1994, and with her Border Collie, Whist, and JRT, Trump, has won three USDAA Grand Prix of Dog Agility Championships and a Steeplechase Championship. Rachel and her BC Fable represented the U.S. at the 2008 IFCS World Championships in Belgium where they earned a silver medal. In addition to teaching across North America at seminars and camps, she teaches full time at her agility center in Atascadero, California. Contact her at www.fastforwarddogsports.com.



Commonsense Tug Training

By Kay Laurence, photos by Clean Run
except where noted



Tug play is a wonderful form of training when used safely and in balance with your dog. For both you and the dog it improves fitness, is very reinforcing, and gives a wonderful structure to the dog's learning. The game is about balance, mirroring movement, and learning together, all wrapped in a very effective workout.

If you watch dogs play tug together you can observe an amazing number of protocols that can be adopted to our games with our dogs. These techniques are very useful for us to employ: the shared and equal partnership, and the teaching role. We can also benefit from the skills seen here, developing physical movements with great fluency, building muscle strength, and building a strong bond through mutual enjoyment. As a side benefit we also have extremely good focus, concentration, commitment, and a perfect tool for motivation. Notice that at no time does either "partnership" involve excessive yanking, pinching, or knocking to cause more arousal, and the vocalization is minimal.



Our tug toy acts as the link between a non-furred, weak-mouthed player and a non-handed, four-legged player. It is astonishing that we can actually find mutual ground to enjoy playing without harm or injury to either player from the species disparity.

To be able to play effectively, while keeping it safe and enjoyable, there are several elements that need to be in place right from the moment you pick up the toy. Although it would be fun to spontaneously "go play," in this extremely fast learning format, a moment of negligence or inattention can lead to many months of work to correct inappropriate learning. And, if you are unlucky, it will hurt! Even though anticipation of pain is an excellent reminder to stay alert, because this is so highly reinforcing for your dog, anything the dogs learn during the games can become fixed extremely quickly—quick enough that if it happens only once, it becomes fixed.

Choosing a Good Tug Toy

Your tug is one of the most important tools you will use. Choose it carefully and with consideration. These are the basic elements you must look for.

Elasticity and Give

This is non-negotiable. Without some "give" you will stress your joints, from your neck to your fingers. After a 10-minute session, this will begin to tell you the activity is abnormal; and after a few years, you can begin to enjoy arthritis in your back, shoulders, elbows, wrists, and fingers. Take this knowledge from personal experience and some years of playing with rope and



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leather leads as tug toys. If this is the outcome on my joints, consider the effect on the dogs' joints. Their movement involvement is far greater than ours. Tug toy elasticity helps to develop muscle power and avoid impact damage.

Our tug toy acts as the link between a non-furred, weak-mouthed player and a non-handed, four-legged player. It is astonishing that we can actually find mutual ground to enjoy playing without harm or injury to either player from the species disparity.

Holding and Gripping

Find a tug with a handle that you can slip over your wrist so you can let your whole arm carry the weight. This reduces pressure on your fingers. Imagine the trapeze artists' grip: they catch each other by the wrist, not the hands, using the upper arm and back muscles, not just the fingers.

This concept is the same for the dog. The tug should be large enough for a good grip. The more the tug spreads across the bite, the easier for the dog to grip. However, a tug that is too large can also cause discomfort.

Bite Area

The area for the dog to bite must be visually clear and quickly identified by the dog. If you are using the tug as the reward for speed, the section to bite must be clearly seen from some distance to avoid error. If the whole tug is the same fabric, you are inadvertently encouraging the dog to bite any part, even the part with your hand on it.

Different tugs are suited for different games and different jaw structures. The Boxer, Rottweiler, and Bulldog jaw is a completely different structure from that of the Retriever, Spaniel, and Collie jaw. They can have a different layout of their teeth, their bite, and the muscle strength of the jaw.

The bite part must be a comfortable hold. If you notice the dog frequently releases to re-bite, it may be that the bite area of the toy is uncomfortable for the dog's mouth.

Generally, the non-biting and nipping breeds need a larger, soft tug that uses all their mouth to grip. The biting experts, for example the terriers and bulldog breeds, may have sufficient strength to maintain a bite with just two teeth. This is not your aim; using the whole jaw is more desirable.

In hot weather monitor the dog's breathing when a toy is in his mouth. Breathing can be compromised when a good portion of the airway is blocked by a ball or fur tug.



Length

Unless you like to bend over most of the time, the toy should be a length that allows you to play standing up straight. This will also encourage the dog to stay on the ground and not continually jump against your body. You will need a longer length for smaller dogs, and also for dogs that are shy when playing with you. The farther away from you when tugging, the more comfortable they are. Pulling a respectful dog into your body space can cause conflict, and the dog is likely to release the toy or to vocalize during play.



Bite Stimulation

At the end of the day, no matter what we call the game, the dog is learning kill-skills. That first grip is intended to pin down or kill the prey. The maintenance of the grip, the tugging, is part of the cooperative hunting strategy that allows one dog to grip to keep the prey from running away, while their kill partners set about dispatching the dinner. This may sound quite alarming to play “kill” games with your dog, but in many cases the dog is already practicing these skills with the toys you have. Playing chase and bite with the ball, degloving by pulling the stuffing out of a toy, tossing, pouncing, stalking are all part of the skills of the predatory chain. Predatory behavior is there to some degree in every dog. By structuring these skills, we allow an outlet for the dog’s natural instincts. This relieves stress from our urban lifestyle and gives the dog a healthy mental balance as well as a great physical workout.

The bite part of the tug, and the way it moves is best served by replicating the movement and texture of prey. You may choose to use rabbit skin or faux fur; you may need to add mock “legs and wings” to the prey to stimulate the dog to bite. You can use the toy with animation, innocent grazing, or fast flight movement. All these elements encourage focus, concentration, and precision biting.



Playing Safely

Safety needs to be a high priority consideration at all times. When two different species “play,” there is an opening for our differences to cause problems. These may not be major problems, but if you are using tug play for everyday training, there is a build-up of small problems that can quickly develop into big problems over time. This is not only a physical consideration but also a mental one. You can find yourself getting carried away with the enjoyment of the game and not realize exactly what you are teaching the dog, or what repetitive movements may be causing damage.

Take time to consider the surface you are playing on. Slippery floors may become a challenge for the dog to maintain balance, and very rough surfaces can hurt the dog’s feet.

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Long-term safety rules include never asking your dog to jump into your body space to bite. Not only can you get bitten in a sensitive area, but this also is *never* going to be a useful skill for the dog to learn.

Ask the dog to take the bite at the height of his jaw so that the dog will be able to get a natural first grip and avoid any harm from a mistimed jump. If you can also engineer this so that the dog continues to move for a short distance after taking the bite you can avoid whiplash to the dog's neck and your arm.

What's Your Tugging Agenda?

The natural sequence we are emulating is chase-kill. Some dogs are insufficiently aroused without a pre-chase before the bite. If you need to increase the motivation to bite, increase the chase period, and add some near misses. Through the game of tug we can choose any of the following agendas.

Building Arousal to Increase Animation

This is a useful way to increase the dog's alertness and activity level. On release of the tug, the dog is in a heightened state and the subsequent behaviors can reflect this emotion, adding more energy and animation. This is often the strategy for sports dogs, where the tug play is interspersed with behaviors to build up their intensity. The emotional package of tug playing is transferred to the behaviors. However, it is a two-edged sword because the whole package gets transferred, which may also include overarousal (barking), frenzied biting (you in the absence of the toy), circling, and stalking.

Increasing Focus Through Anticipation

When playing any type of game, the more engaging the game, the greater the focus and concentration. These are very much the skills we want to transfer to our sports behaviors. Anticipation of the game re-commencing acts as a great motivator to maintain a strong focus on you.

Maneuvering the Dog Into Various Movements

This is the gym training, the weightlifting, the muscle development. For any athletic dog we can plan to build strength and fluency in specific movements that the dog will need to use in the future of the sport. By controlling the build-up of these movements we can avoid inadvertent injury.

Teaching Retrieve Through the Game

By building an association of the tug toy and us as the "whole" game the dog will learn to retrieve the tug to you for more enjoyment. You will find the dog pushes the tug at you, much in the way two dogs play together, so that you can play. We can also control the style of the pick-up and quickly extinguish mouthing.

Stress Release

Ten minutes of great play can significantly relieve the dog of built-up frustration and stress. The game needs to be a mixture of shared holding, some self-control, and some exciting moments, exactly the collection of behaviors your dog would employ as a hunter. Once the game is finished, if you have achieved the right balance during the game, the dog should easily relax and settle; and you should also have a warm feeling!

Building Connection

Fetch is fun; it is good exercise, but you only provide a fraction of the entertainment. The capture of the bouncing ball is the key moment. In fact you could build a machine to launch the ball and the dog would probably enjoy it as much. But tug play is more organic and interactive. The dog pulls, we pull back, we run along,

we animate the toy, we make eye contact, we smile, we enjoy the connection. The game encourages focus on us, not excluding us.

A Good Bite

For all the above agendas we absolutely must have a good bite. This is not a “hard bite.” Tug training will not make the dog bite harder, but it will teach the dog to maintain a comfortable grip. You cannot change the dog’s bite power with the game, this is a physical inheritance, but we can build up bite accuracy, the dog’s stamina, and his bite duration.

A good bite means we will not get bitten as the arousal increases. The dog holds the toy with most of the mouth, keeping the strain in a straight line with the spine. Mouthing will extinguish.

Teaching the Bite

This begins with the very first game, whether the dog is six weeks old or six years old. Practice offering only the bite area for the dog to grip. As soon as the teeth are engaged, maintain a light pulling pressure on the tug. This encourages continuation of the grip, but should the dog release the tug to enable a better grip (also read: more threatening grip closer to your hand), then that light pull you are maintaining, along with the elasticity of the tug should result in the tug leaving the dog’s mouth at speed. This can be a dangerous moment; it signifies that the critter is still alive and a speedy departure from the dog’s mouth will trigger a very fast re-bite reflex. If there is a release for any reason be ready to completely possess the toy, block any re-bite, and enjoy your “kill,” or give that rabbit some legs.

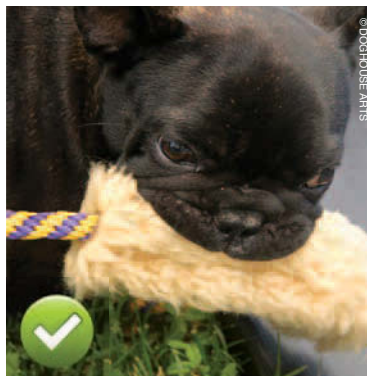
We are often using the game as a motivator and think that when the dog releases, by offering the tug straight back, we can continue the enjoyment, but this is completely the opposite of the motivation for the game, killing the prey. No self-respecting rabbit is going to offer the dog another bite when the dog releases his grip.

Un-cued Releases of the Toy

The response to an un-cued release will vary depending on the dog’s natural instincts.

Bite Masters: At one end of the scale are the terriers and bite breeds that will reflex re-bite very quickly. They are not usually prone to an un-cued release unless they are moving along the tug toward your hand. Their jaws are designed for a grip until death. It is no surprise that a terrier can be swung around your head while gripping, although this is *not* recommended. The more the tug, rabbit, or rat, tries to escape, the more solid the bite becomes. When the tug “dies,” when there is no further animation, the dog will begin to relax over several seconds, depending on the arousal level. With these natural bite-grip-kill breeds, when they release you must absolutely prevent re-bite. For the same reason if you cue the release, they must remove their mouth from the tug. If you lift the tug away from them at speed, when they are still aroused, you will find the dog flying up in the air for the re-bite.

Searchers and Herders: At the other end of the scale are the hounds, gundogs, and herding breeds. To some degree their bite skills have been inhibited to increase



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their searching skills. Even the herding breeds will nip and threaten more than choose a full-kill grip-bite. These are often the dogs that learn really bad re-bite habits, because there is a high rate of un-cued releasing. For these breeds the un-cued release often happens because

- The grip is uncomfortable. Make sure you present the toy to give the dog the best chance of a clean “mouthful” grip and that the bite area is suitable for that dog.
- The dog is used to mouthing and re-biting as part of the game; every time they let go, you give it straight back to them. Mouthing is just a micro version of letting go.

Maintaining the grip on first bite is a natural kill-skill that must be refined. If you had just spent four hours stalking your prey, a poor first bite would result in the critter escaping and yet another day going hungry. All that effort is not to be wasted, nature teaches this lesson quite fast. A poor bite means the prey may escape. The first bite also needs to do the job of pinning down the prey to immobilize it. Mouthing and sucking it to death would not cut the mustard here. The rabbit is not going roll over to wait for a “better bite.”

The Physics of Elastic

Besides the benefit to your health, the elastic nature of the tug exaggerates the loss of the toy during mouthing or early releasing. But you must keep that elastic stretched. The longer the elastic element, the more the tug is going to spring out of the dog’s mouth once the mouthing begins; and yes, you stand the chance of a slap with a soggy tug. This does an excellent job of punishing you for allowing mouth slackening or opening.

Do not punish the dog for biting your hand. You should have been more awake and made sure the loss of the tug extinguished the beginning part of the behavior, opening the mouth.

Playing with a slack tug encourages mouthing and re-biting. Chatting to your friends while not paying attention to the tug encourages re-biting.

Playing by the Rules

Tug can be enjoyed quite safely as long as you stay awake on the job and play by the rules.

- Always offer a first clean bite to a specific area of the tug, preferably at jaw height, away from your body, and with a small follow-through movement. The natural sequence we are emulating is chase-kill, not stand-kill.
- As soon as the dog makes contact, maintain a pulling pressure. If that first bite is not good you will own the tug again very soon. Enjoy it, do not hand it back straight away. No rabbit wants to die without putting up a good fight.
- If the tug becomes yours unexpectedly, be ready to block the re-bite. Bring the tug into your body space and block the reflex movement. Once the dog is in control of his arousal, the play can begin again.
- Always ask for control before bite; this will increase the chance of an accurate bite. Building the dog’s self-control is a key part of the mental discipline required to support the game’s structure. You will want to be able to move the toy without risk of getting bitten. Play begins with the dog focused on the toy but clearly understanding that he can only bite when you cue it, not just because you move it.

A Gentle Partnership

Tug training can be enjoyed by the most gentle partnership if you release the need for adding aggression to the game. Think of the breeds that would kill small birds, rabbits, rodents, or even those that work as a pack and kill deer; their prey is designed for flight, not fight. The rabbit doesn’t get its teeth out for protection; it relies on running fast and getting down the hole. Focus the training games on the chase-kill element, the shared killing, and not the dog-fight-dog element and every dog can enjoy the game. Aggression would only be part of the game if the dogs were in defense or attacking predators. That is not the role we should associate with our play. 🐾

Kay has run training classes for many years, beginning in 1978 with evening classes at the local dog training club to her full-time business, Learning About Dogs. The class content is as wide ranging as the types of dogs and owners that Kay has successfully trained, from obedience to nosework, from freestyle to lifeskills. Kay regularly travels the world presenting at seminars, conferences, and training centers. With 11 self-published training books and videos she continues to encourage “outside the box” thinking with a mixture of practical application, online courses, and an enquiring mind. She shares this enthusiasm for learning with her ninth generation of Border Collies and, for variety, her Gordon Setters. Her website is www.learningaboutdogs.com.



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Improving Your Sports Vision

Part 2

By Daisy Peel

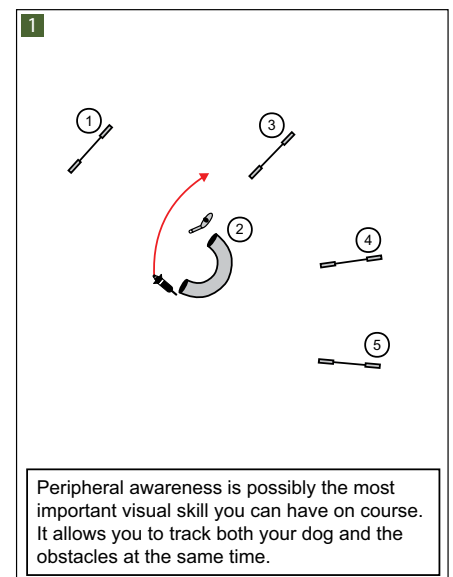
Last month, I introduced the idea that watching your dog is a mechanical skill. When your instructor or training partner tells you to watch your dog, she may or may not be aware of what she's actually asking you to do. The phrase "watch your dog" is a vast oversimplification of what you may need to do to improve your performance with your dog; just as the phrase "do a front cross" is a vast oversimplification of what type of cue combination is required at a given point on course.

Your ability to focus quickly on the dog or an obstacle requires you to use your voluntary eye muscles to diverge or converge your eyes to shift your focus quickly from near to far and vice versa. Peripheral awareness and hand-eye/foot-eye coordination are also important mechanical skills that are all required for you to be able to "watch your dog" effectively. The Magazine Forum section of the Clean Run website has some exercises that you can use that address each of these particular visual motor skills: www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=678.

Here I'll discuss more exercises and sequences that allow you to practice the skill of watching your dog. Just as you spend some of your training time perfecting rear crosses, front crosses, and other cue combinations, you should take the time to practice watching your dog while the two of you are in movement together on a course.

Improving Your Peripheral Awareness on Course

This is possibly the most important visual skill you can cultivate to help you to keep your eye on your dog. **Figure 1** has a simple setup to illustrate how peripheral awareness can work either for or against your team on course. If you pick the dog up on your left as he comes out of the #2 tunnel, and keep him on your left to jump #3, peripheral awareness is vital. If you keep your eyes directly on the dog as he comes out of the tunnel, you will have difficulty finding the jump, because it is behind you. You run the risk of missing the jump, or giving your dog a poor approach to the jump. On the other hand, if you keep your eyes on the jump, you will not be able to keep your eyes on the dog, and it's likely that your back will be turned to him. You run the risk of misdirecting him back into the entrance of tunnel #2, or back over jump #1. A common error in a setup like this is for the handler to be looking at the dog just as he comes out of the tunnel, and then for the handler to rotate her head and eyes to the right to seek out the jump, breaking eye contact with the dog in the process. Additionally, a head rotation to the right may be interpreted as a side change by the dog, so he might duck behind the handler and back into tunnel #2. If the handler looks for the jump and then back to the dog quickly, *that* cue may be interpreted as motion toward jump #1.



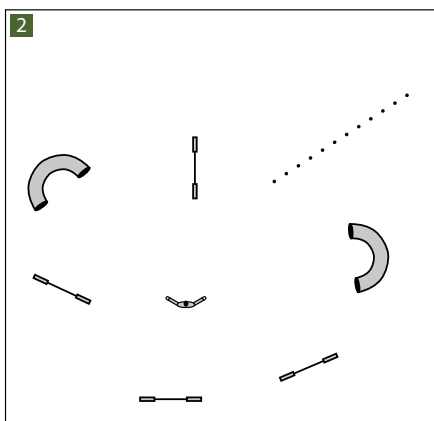
“The phrase 'watch your dog' is a vast oversimplification of what you may need to do to improve your performance with your dog.”

Instead, as you walk the sequence above, pick a point on the ground in front of you to direct your eyes toward that is half-way between the jump and the dog. You won't actually be looking at this point, you'll just have your eyes trained on this point; and by doing so, you *should* be able to just barely see the tunnel exit out of the corner of your left eye and the

jump out of the corner of your right eye. In this fashion, you don't have to sacrifice visual contact with either the dog *or* the jump.

Another exercise to improve your peripheral awareness on course might look like the one in **Figure 2**. If you stand in a location on course where you are surrounded by obstacles and you look at the ground a few feet away from you, how many obstacles are you peripherally aware of? Can you make out the colors of those obstacles without looking directly at them? Perhaps you can make out the color of the tunnel bags, just barely, out of the corners of your eyes. When walking a course, this skill can be crucial; many times on a course you won't see an obstacle that you're trying to move toward with the dog until you're right on top of that obstacle. If you turn your gaze away from the dog to *find* that obstacle, you will lose your ability to direct the dog toward it.

The exercise above can be done during a class or training session as well. If there are several people standing in the same area as you, how many details about their lower bodies can you make out in addition to the obstacles, *without turning to look directly at them*? As you do this, you're also working on another important skill, your visual perceptive skill. Your ability to *see* obstacles and the dog peripherally is important, but you also need to know what to do with the information your eyes are receiving peripherally. Although you need to be able to do this on course, you can practice this skill at any time. For example, as you're reading this article, what can you see out of the corner of your left and right eyes without turning your eyes away from these words? You'll be amazed to discover that when you open up your visual focus, you can see all sorts of details.



If you stand in the middle of a cluster of obstacles and look at the ground at a point a few feet away from you, how many obstacles are you peripherally aware of?

“Your ability to *see* obstacles and the dog peripherally is important, but you also need to know what to do with the information your eyes are receiving peripherally.”

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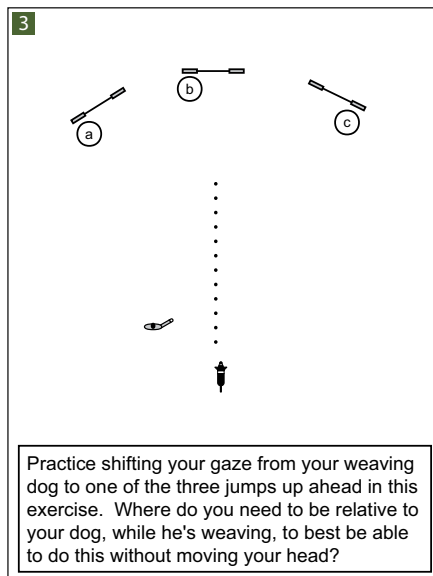
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Practicing Tracking

Tracking is another important skill that we discussed in the previous article. Like peripheral awareness, your ability to track, to move your eyes quickly from point to point without turning your head, can be critical in terms of what you see the dog doing, what you see of the obstacles, and what you may or may not be cueing the dog to do with each inadvertent turn of your head.



Tracking is a skill that can be easily practiced at a competition, fun match, or class. While you're watching from the sidelines, practice keeping your head still as you allow your eyes to track the movements of the dog and handler that are on the course in front of you. At first, you may get a headache, if the muscles in your eyes are not used to this type of workout.

An exercise like the one in **Figure 3** can help you practice tracking with your own dog while on course. Start with your dog at the beginning of the weave poles, and alternate between jumps a, b, and c after the weave poles. While your dog is weaving, keep your eyes on him. Without moving your head, change your gaze from the dog to one of the three jumps, and back to the dog. You may need to repeat the exercise a few times, and play around with how close you are to your dog while he is in the weave poles, so that you can maximize your ability to shift your gaze quickly from the dog to the obstacle ahead and back to the dog.

For a more advanced version of the exercise, rather than jumps, have a partner with a traffic cone at the end of the poles. Your partner's job is to put the cone down somewhere after the poles after the dog has already started weaving. You won't know where the cone is until the dog has started the poles, so you will *have* to use your tracking skills to find the cone while the dog is weaving, without sacrificing your attention on him in the poles.

The tracking exercises also involve convergence and divergence. The act of shifting your focus from a near to a far object involves the muscles in your eyes changing the shape of the lens of your eye so that you can focus quickly. In addition, if your training partner is putting a cone down for you to find and then run to, not only must you track, converge, and diverge, you must also have foot-eye coordination to *get* you and the dog to that cone. These skills are also required for you to get him to the next obstacle on course.



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“

The next time you walk a course in preparation to run your dog, whether it is in training, competition, or a fun match, take into account exactly how you will watch him, in addition to your planning for particular side changes and other handling cues.

”

One final exercise involves the simplest setup of all. Just use a curved tunnel. Send your dog into one end of the tunnel, and observe how you move and how the dog responds when you are using primarily peripheral awareness to track your dog. Then, repeat the exercise, only this time, when your dog comes out of the tunnel, look him *directly* in the eye. This may also change some of the other cues you're giving him. Remember, it's important to notice any changes in his behavior as a result. You may find that if he is not used to your using direct eye contact as a cue, that he's not even really looking at you directly. Repeat the

exercise until you can make direct, eye to eye contact with your dog as he exits the tunnel, and then play around with shifting back and forth between indirect and direct eye contact.

Final Thoughts

The next time you walk a course in preparation to run your dog, whether it is in training, competition, or a fun match, take into account exactly how you will watch him, in addition to your planning for particular side changes and other handling cues. Where will you need to direct your gaze so that you can keep visual contact with him *and* the upcoming obstacles? At what points on the course might you purposefully break visual contact with your dog to quickly seek out an obstacle in the distance ahead, and then quickly direct your gaze back to him? At what points on the course will you purposefully shift your gaze from a more wide open gaze that allows all of the peripheral information in to a more focused and narrowed gaze directly into your dog's eyes? Your mechanical ability to handle your eyes can be just as important as your mechanical ability to do other handling moves that you've practiced to perfection. 🐾

Daisy Peel has competed in agility since 1998. She is a five-time Regional champion (USDAA), a four-time National champion (AKC, USDAA), and a three-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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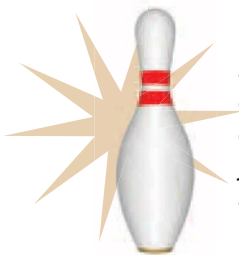
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BOWLING

By Frankie Sassie Joiris, photos by Chris Ott/Speeddoggie

“Fit to Be Tricked” is a trick training program I created with Chris Ott (Parker) and input from dog physical therapist Ria Acciani. It was designed to use trick training to improve a dog’s agility ability by improving flexibility, core strength, balance, reaction time, and general fitness, as well as increasing the dog’s learning ability and focus. In this series of articles I’ll introduce a few of the tricks we teach.



Bowling is a coordination skill and it also works on neck strength and flexibility. A lot of self-control is required on the dog’s part because the dog’s actions must be very precise to perform the task correctly. Bowling helps dogs learn not to stress about falling objects and other sudden movements that spook some dogs. It’s also a lot of fun for both dog and handler, and lends itself well to group play because teams in class can compete against each other for fun.

Equipment Needed

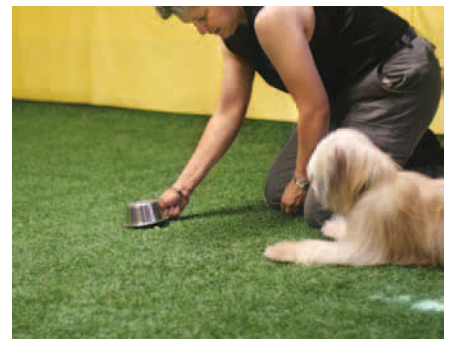
You will need a child’s play bowling set to teach this trick. These sets are readily available at stores like Target and Toys R Us. Typically “toddler” sets are padded and use smaller pins; these sets are ideal for small and sound-sensitive dogs. Sets for older children have large lightweight plastic pins that can be used by all sizes of dogs, but can be intimidating to very small and sound-sensitive dogs. If a dog is sound-sensitive, start with a small, soft bowling set, then work up to the larger, louder pins. This can be a great way to work through some of the dog’s sound sensitivity.

In addition to a bowling set, you will need a plastic or metal dog food dish, one or two other lightweight objects that the dog can easily push, small, soft treats, and a hungry dog.

Part 1: Teach the dog to push an object with his nose

Step 1 – Start with dog in front of and perpendicular to you. You do not want the dog to push the bowl directly toward you, since once the dog is actually bowling he will be moving away from you to push the ball into the pins. Place the dog food dish upside down on the ground 1'-2' in front of the dog. Let the dog watch as you place a treat right under the edge of the dish so that part of the treat sticks out. Release the dog to the dish. The moment the dog starts to mouth the treat, the dish will move a tiny bit. Mark this with a verbal reinforcer such as Yes.

Repeat this several times, until the dog is driving toward the bowl and anticipating the treat.



Step 2 – Set the dog and dish up as in Step 1. Let the dog watch as you place a treat under the dish, close to the edge but not sticking out. Give a verbal cue like *Push*. Release the dog to the dish. The moment the dog's nose touches the dish, lift it up and let him eat the treat.

Repeat two or three times.



Step 3 – Set up the dog and dish as in Step 2 with a treat under the dish. Give the verbal cue *Push*. Release the dog to the dish. The moment the dog moves the dish with his nose, even the tiniest fraction of an inch, lift the dish and let the dog eat his treat as you mark the behavior with a verbal reinforcer.

Repeat this until the dog is consistently pushing the dish 1" or so forward with his nose. Do not ask for more distance than 1". Some dogs will push farther, and that's great, but it's not required at this stage.

Step 4 – Set up the dog and dish as in Steps 2 and 3 with the treat under the dish. Have another treat in your hand. Give the verbal cue *Push*. Release the dog to the dish. When the dog pushes the dish, mark the behavior with a verbal reinforcer, and quickly reach under the dog's nose with treat in hand and feed him, while leaving the other treat under the dish.

Repeat this step about 10 times, sometimes lifting the dish to let the dog take the treat from under it, sometimes feeding from your hand so that the food starts to change from lure to reward.





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Step 5 – Immediately after rewarding the dog for pushing by lifting up the dish and letting him eat the treat, reset the dog 1'-2' in front of the dish. Lift up the dish as if you were placing a treat under it, but do not place a treat under it. Give the verbal cue *Push*. Release the dog to the dish. The moment the dog pushes the dish, reach under the dog's nose with treat in hand and reward him while marking the behavior with a verbal reinforcer. Placement of the reward is very important. The dog must be rewarded while still focused forward, nose on bowl, *not* for turning toward the handler expecting a reward.

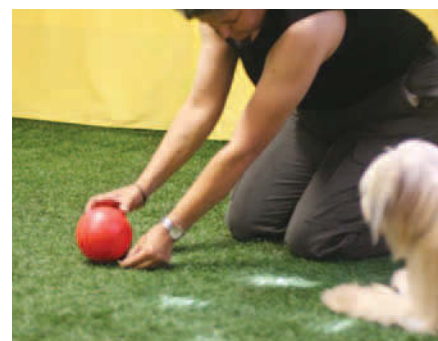
At this point the dog should have made the connection that pushing the dish with his nose is the desired action. Increase the distance that the dog is required to

push before being rewarded. Mix it up, sometimes rewarding for a 1/4" push, sometimes waiting until the dog has pushed the bowl 2" or more. The goal is for the dog to consistently push the dish about 6" forward.

Part 2: Teach the dog to push a ball into the bowling pins

Step 1 – Set up the dog as in the previous "push" exercises. Place a treat on the ground 1' in front of the dog, and place a ball on top of the treat. Give the verbal cue *Push* and release the dog. The moment the dog pushes the ball to get the treat, mark with a verbal reinforcer such as *Yes!*

Repeat until the dog is consistently pushing the ball to get a treat, usually four or five repetitions.

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Step 2 – Set up the dog and ball as in Step 1, but do not place a treat under the ball. Give the verbal cue *Push* and release the dog. The moment the dog pushes the ball, mark with a verbal reinforcer such as *Yes* and slide a treat under the dog's nose. Repeat until the dog is consistently pushing the ball forward.

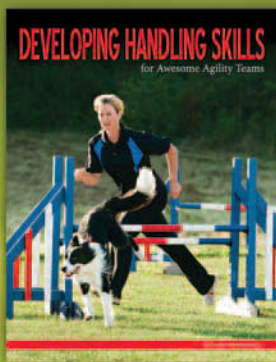


Step 3 – Continue working as in Step 2, gradually increasing the distance between the dog and the ball until the dog is about 4' away from the ball when you send him to push it. As the distance between dog and ball increases, toss the treat toward the ball rather than placing your hand with the treat under the dog's nose. Continue to mark the moment the dog pushes the ball with a verbal reinforcer. Toss the treat as close to the dog's nose as possible. Work on timing so that the treat is delivered before the dog turns away from the ball.

Bowling is a coordination skill and it also works on neck strength and flexibility. A lot of self-control is required on the dog's part because the dog's actions must be very precise to perform the task correctly.

Step 4 – Use two boards, trays, or other flat objects to create a channel for the bowling ball. Repeat Step 3 with the ball in the channel to encourage straight pushes.

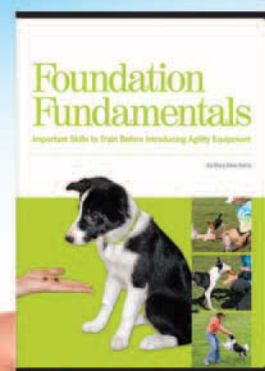
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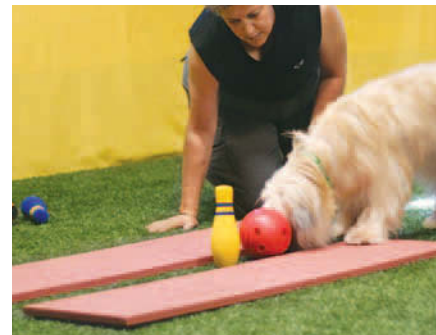
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Bowling helps dogs learn not to stress about falling objects and other sudden movements that spook some dogs. It's also a lot of fun for both dog and handler, and lends itself well to group play because teams in class can compete against each other for fun.

Step 5 – Introduce a bowling pin. Set up the dog and ball as in Step 4. Place a single bowling pin directly behind the ball, touching the ball so that the pin tips over very easily. Gently hold the top of the bowling pin. Send the dog to push the ball. The moment dog pushes the ball allow the pin to fall over. If the dog does not push hard enough to knock over the pin, gently push it over yourself. Mark the moment the pin falls with a verbal reinforcer and reward the dog with treat under his nose at the ball. Repeat several times to accustom the dog to the pin dropping.



Step 6 – Set up as in Step 5, but move away from the pin rather than holding it. Send the dog and mark and reward the moment the pin falls. If the pin does not fall, do not mark or reward; simply reset the ball and the dog and try again.

Repeat until the dog consistently drops the pin when pushing the ball.

Step 7 – Remove the objects used to create a channel. Set up the ball, pin, and dog as in Step 6. Send the dog and mark and reward the moment the pin falls. If the pin does not fall, do not mark or reward; simply reset the ball and the dog and try again.

Repeat until the dog consistently makes the pin fall.

Step 8 – Add two pins behind first pin. Set up as in Step 7. Mark and reward the moment any pin falls. Continue to add pins until you have the whole set.

Troubleshooting

- **Dog will not push the dish at all:** Try a lighter weight dish. Make sure you are marking and rewarding for even the tiniest movement; the first pushes might only be 1/16".
- **Dog smacks the dish with his feet:** Move dish very close to the dog's nose. If the dog smacks dish with his feet, remove the treat and stop all action for a moment, then try again. Keep all movements calm and low key.
- **Dog grabs the ball or tries to play with it:** Remove the treat and ball for a moment, then try again. Experiment with using a bigger or a heavier ball. We have had success using a 4-lb medicine ball with dogs that try to grab the ball. Once the dog learns the correct action, the regular ball can be brought back into play.
- **Dog tries to play with the bowling pin:** Remove both ball and pin for a moment, then try again. Once the dog learns that the reward comes from the pin falling, many dogs will bypass the ball and just try to knock down the pins directly. If this happens, do not reward; simply reset the dog and try again, while keeping one hand on the pin to prevent it from falling if the dog tries to bypass the ball.



For more information about the Fit to Be Tricked program and seminars, contact information@speedoggie.com or fjoiris@me.com. Upcoming seminars are posted on the Speedoggie Facebook page. 🐾

Frankie Sassie 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 and also presents seminars on trick training. Her dogs include Norfolk Terrier, Ch. MACH Stamp, RN, OF, JE, Whippet Boing! OA, AXJ, XF, and Pyrenean Shepherd Toggle NA, OAJ, OF. Contact Frankie through her blog: <http://fjoiris.livejournal.com> or email Joiris@ix.netcom.com.

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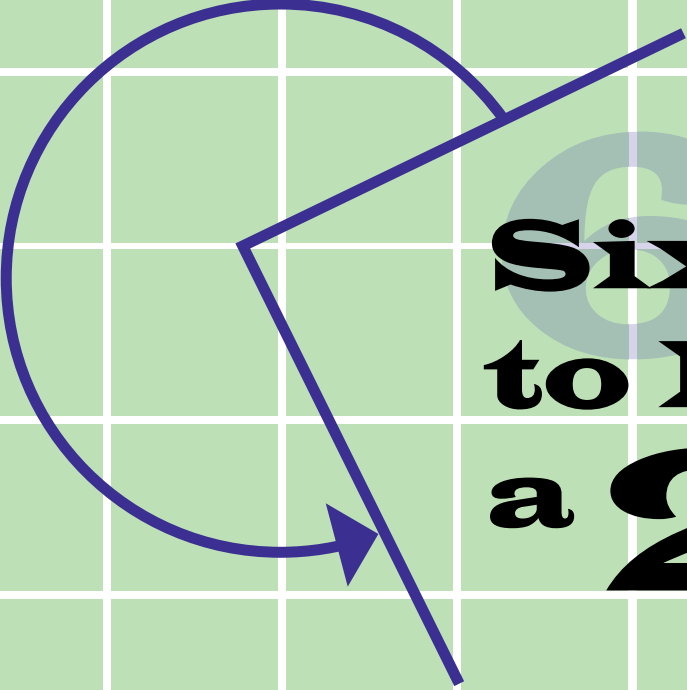
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Six Ways to Handle a 270

By Sandy Rogers

One of my favorite training exercises is to take a sequence and handle it as many different ways as I can think of. This is one way to push yourself out of your comfort zone and to perfect the skills that you may be avoiding. But you have to be able to imagine those clever maneuvers before you can get better at them.

One way to come up with different ways to handle a sequence is to be creative with your handling of basic configurations like 180s, serpentine, boxes, pinwheels, and 270s. Then all you have to do is recognize the configurations in the sequences and choose the best way for you and your dog to excel on courses.

Training the 270

You need to teach your dog to take the second jump of the 270 without your helping him every time. He must learn not to come in through the middle of the two jumps unless he is cued to do so.

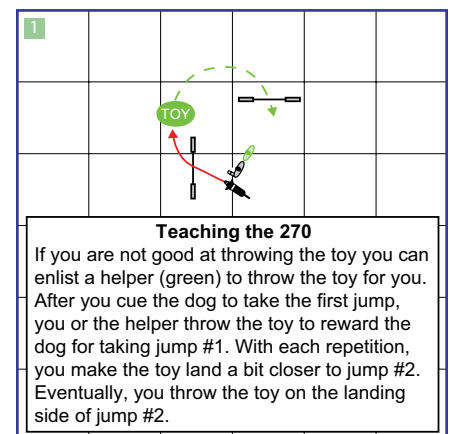
There are a few good ways to teach the 270. All work equally well as far

as I can see. One way is to practice the classic 180 a bunch. Make it easy at first by having the jumps close together; then slowly spread the jumps farther apart until the dog will go out on his own to take the second jump while you remain close to the first jump. Then gradually rotate one of the jumps while you work until the 180 turns into a 270.

But my current favorite way to teach the 270 is to start with the jumps set in the 270 configuration and toss the dog's toy over jump #1 in a progressive manner. Imagine a path from the landing point on jump #1 to the takeoff point of jump #2. Each time you throw the toy to reward the dog for taking jump #1 you make the toy land along that path just a bit closer to jump #2, as shown in **Figure 1**. The dog is being rewarded for taking jump #1 and staying in the logical lane to the next jump. After all, to come through the middle requires a cue that means turn sharply, and you did not give the dog that cue, right? Training and handling the 270 helps clarify many of your turn

cues for both you and your dog. Listen to your dog; he will be honest with you about what he thinks of the consistency of your turn cues!

Your job is to teach the dog to "read" the 270 even when it is larger or angled more than the classic, evenly spaced configuration. As you train you can experiment with making the 270 into those larger and more angled configurations. Notice how far you are asking the dog to travel to the refusal line of jump #2. The farther the dog



needs to go to cross that refusal line, the more challenging the 270. See **Figure 2.**

Figure 3 shows a drill to help teach the dog that once he has crossed the refusal line he should take jump #2. It also helps you realize that you are actually cueing the dog to “take” the refusal line of jump #2 more than the jump itself. I look at the refusal line as an obstacle; your dog can learn to be sent to that refusal line, so that you do not have travel all the way to it. Set the dog up with just his nose over the refusal line in a sit- or stand-stay. Lead out to the landing side of jump #2 and release him to take jump #2. If he has trouble, just set up him a tad closer to jump #2. When he understands to take the jump, you can move him back.

As you train, try not to bore your dog. Some handlers can bore some dogs a lot faster than others (the dog gets

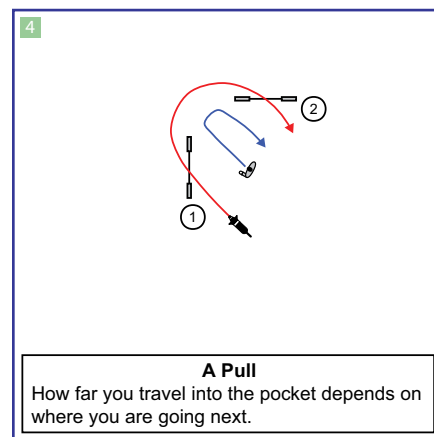
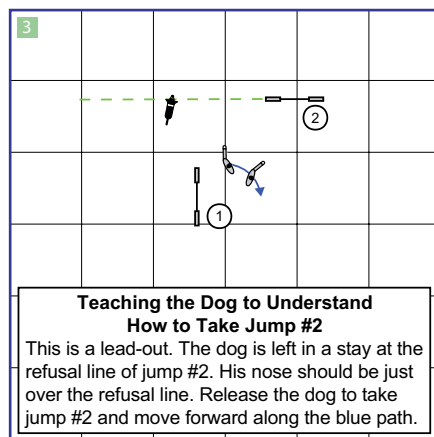
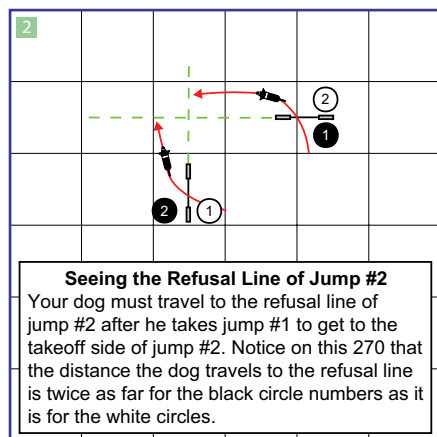
to make the call on that one). Having said that, I like to teach the concept to the dog in a few days. It is easier for the dog to grasp the concept if he sees it a few times a day for four or five days consecutively than it is if he sees it twice a week. Dogs that are asked to understand the 270 when they only see it twice a month often never really do.

The Six Ways

Some of these six handling drills can be done without the proper 270 training completed beforehand; others, not so much. Do the required training before handling the few drills that require the dog to truly understand the 270. When the jumps of the 270 are embedded within the sequence, we’ll show jump #1 in red and #2 in blue for clarity (with a thank-you to Dr. Seuss, for the idea and rhyme in *One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish*).

A Pull

There is no side change when you do this drill as shown in **Figure 4.** The dog jumps #2 on the same side of your body as he jumped #1. You simply rotate your shoulders and then get out of town. Try to move in and out of the pocket between the two jumps smoothly. You do not want to have to go all the way into the pocket every time. How far you go into the pocket is determined by the sequence and where you are going next. For example you might go farther into the pocket if jump #2 is on the way to an obstacle where you need to do a rear cross, and you are using the space of the pocket to set the line. But if you need to get down a row of jumps quickly, you do not want to waste the time or precious steps to go into the pocket. You want to cut the corner off and have the dog pick up jump #2 without an escort.



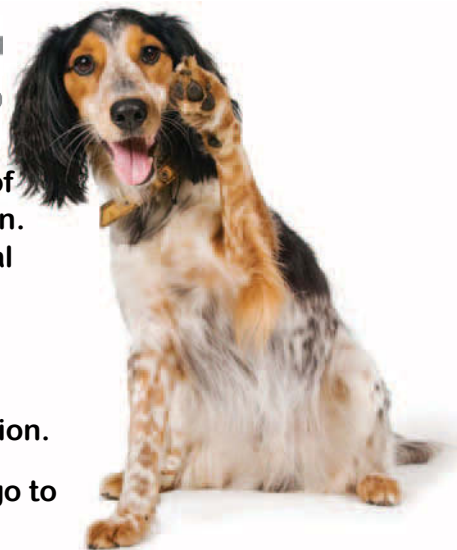
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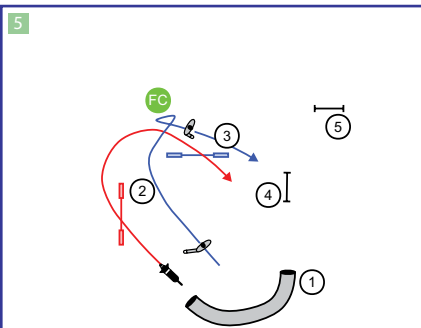
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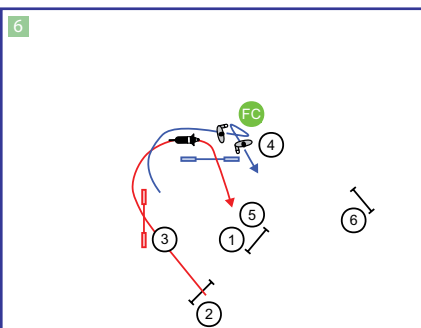
vinyl tape for striping too!

If you do not train the dog to understand 270s you will have to go in as far



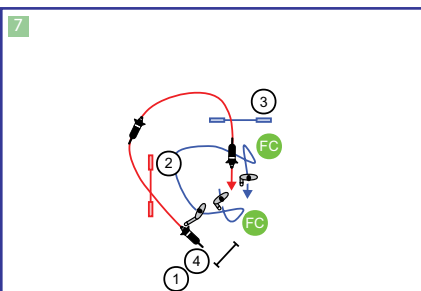
A Front Cross on the Takeoff Side of the Second Jump of the 270

To begin, stand in the middle and send the dog to the tunnel to make it easy to get into position for the next obstacle, jump #2. Where you rotate on the bar of any jump determines the angle at which the dog takes the jump.



Another Front Cross on the Takeoff Side of the Second Jump of the 270

The handler is keeping the dog on the left longer and is traveling across the front of the second jump of the 270. The handler rotates into the front cross when the dog reaches the point that creates the correct angle to the next obstacle.



A Front Cross on the Landing Side of the Second Jump of the 270

This drill requires the dog to "read" the 270 so the handler does not have to escort the dog to the back of jump #3, the second jump in the 270. Start with the dog on the right and do a front cross at jump #1 into the sequence. This is a good way to avoid doing a bunch of boring lead-outs.

as your dog needs you to just to pick up jump #2 every time and you will not have the luxury of cutting the corner when you want to.

A Front Cross on the Takeoff Side of Jump #2

This move is often not considered by novice handlers; they are not used to handling "outside the box."

When the front cross is done closer to the first stanchion of the second jump of the 270 (#3) as seen in **Figure 5**, the dog will take the jump at a severe angle (a.k.a. slicing). This would be correct when the on-course obstacle lies in that particular path. I recommend also practicing turning the dog over the bar at whatever angle you choose to. Do this by keeping the dog on your original side a tad longer as you travel across the takeoff side of the jump, as shown in **Figure 6**. Rotate into the front cross at will, putting the dog across the bar anywhere you want, creating any angle you want.

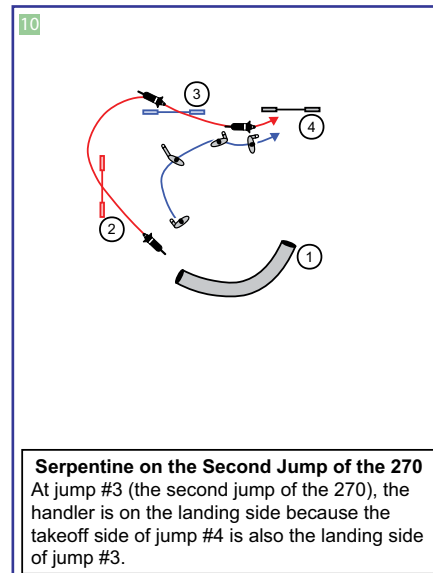
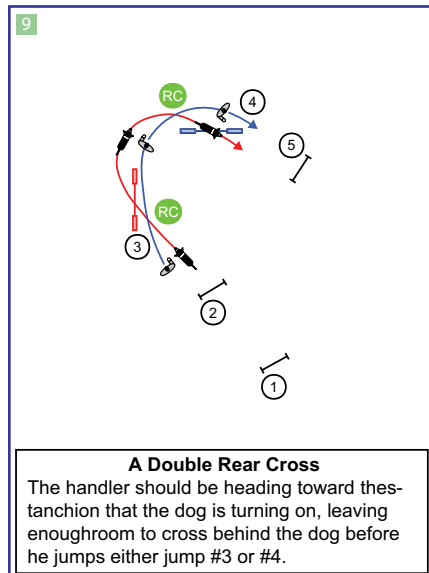
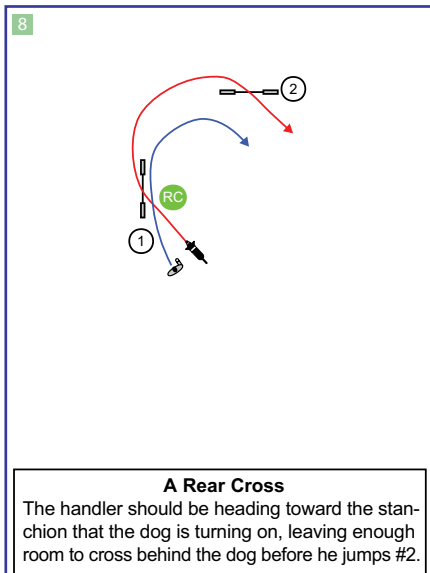
A Front Cross on the Landing Side of Jump #2

This one really requires the dog to understand the path from the first to the second jump of the 270 (#3) as shown in **Figure 7**. If he does, you can cue the first jump with no worry that your dog will skip the second jump. This allows you the freedom to get into the correct position for your front cross, execute it, and be off! Do not come across the front of the jump any farther than you have to be to set up the line to the next obstacle on course. When I need a tight turn around the first stanchion I pretend that my jump is only 2' wide so that I can turn the dog very close to the stanchion.

If you have to backtrack a bit to pick up the next obstacle when you finish the front cross, then you have overshot the place on the bar to do the cross.

A Rear Cross

You will want to perfect a rear cross into the 270 as well. After the rear cross on jump #1, seen in **Figure 8**, you need to pull to jump #2. Use another obstacle or two to set yourself up to do a rear cross at jump #1. When you get good at that, go for the double rear cross, adding a second rear cross at the second jump of the 270



(#4) as shown in **Figure 9**. Be patient: this double is a bit tricky and may require you to freshen up your rear-cross skills first.

Serpentine Jump #2

The dog needs to know basic serpentine handling before you can perfect the drills shown in **Figures 10 and 11**. Send him out and over the first jump of the 270 (#2) and head for serpentine position, the far stanchion on the second jump of the 270 (#3). This drill also requires the dog to have been trained to read the 270 and execute the second jump of the 270 jump (#3) on his own. You will often have to hustle to get into serpentine position. It means you need to be able to trust your well-trained dog to take the second jump! Don't put the cart before the horse. Teach your dog how to serpentine jumps and 270s, and then put them together into this drill.

Serpentine Jump #1

Figure 12 has a drill that's the trickiest of the six to perfect; take your time and be patient. It is easy to push the dog through the gap. You have to get the dog over the refusal line of jump #2 to get the dog to take the correct side of jump #2. How far the dog has to travel to the refusal line of jump #2 when he lands after taking jump #1 determines the difficulty. The farther he has to travel, the harder the jump is.

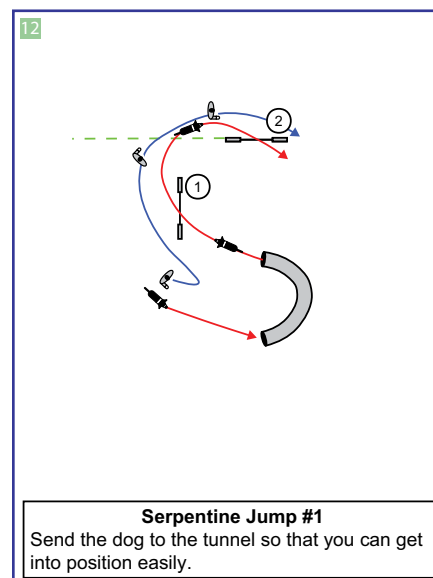
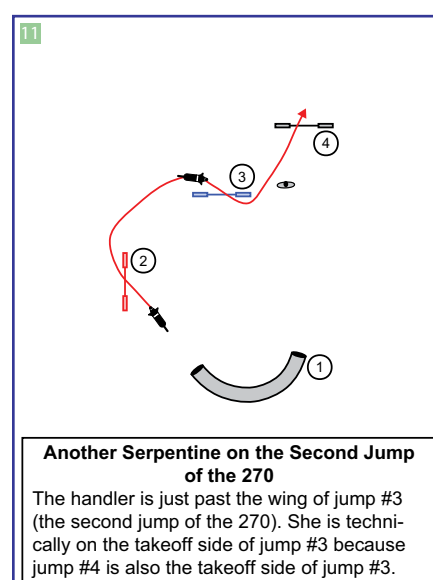
Start with making that distance smaller when you begin to train this move.

Note: When handling the drills in Figures 10, 11, and 12, the serpentine drills, you are using arm cues. These arm cues should have been used consistently in your initial serpentine work. Remember to remain consistent when handling these drills.

In Closing

These drills are fun to perfect. If you find that you can't run fast enough to make the positions successfully, keep trying. I find it often takes handlers several attempts to get the timing right and find the best (shortest) line to run. Good timing and efficient lines can make up for slower foot speed! If you still are not having success modify the drill by moving or changing the obstacles that are before the 270. Using tunnels works very well to keep the dog moving and for resetting the dog for another attempt.

Don't waste any time to begin making up sequences by adding other obstacles around your 270, and keep your eyes peeled for 270s in disguise when you walk courses. The 270s can be large and/or offset and are not obvious all the time. These maneuvers can also be done on 180s and every degree of angle in between. Have fun! 🐾



Sandy Rogers has owned and operated ACE Dog Sports in San Francisco, California, since 1991. Her Border Collie, Brink, finished in the top five placements four times at USDAA Nationals in the Grand Prix and Steeplechase finals. In 2007 he won both the Speed Jumping and Performance National Standard and won Speed Jumping again in 2008. Brink won the Purina Incredible Dog Challenge Regional two years in a row. Her Parson Russell Quill took 3rd in Grand Prix finals in 2008. Sandy's USDAA champions in the 12", 16", and 22" classes are also all high in trial obedience dogs. Contact Sandy at acedogsports.com. Her DVD, titled One Jump Two Jump, presents her easy-to-use system for learning handling and teaching dog skills with only two jumps.

Marianne Uppal is likely the only agility competitor in the world who has obtained both an AKC MACH and a Japan Kennel Club agility championship on the same dog. Uppal, who lived in Far Hills, New Jersey, both before and after her stay in a quiet part of central Tokyo called Shirokane, left the U.S. in January 2009, to join her husband, who was working at a Japanese bank. She brought her Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, now titled MACH2 Cayuga's Cody XF in AKC (a.k.a. AG. CH, FB. CH MACH Cayuga's Cody XF in Japan). They returned in December 2010. By competing actively in both U.S. and Japanese agility, she is in a unique position to compare the two.



Agility in Japan from an American Perspective

By Brenna Fender, photos by Megumi Nayuki

When you went to Japan, did you immediately get involved in agility?

MU: Almost immediately—we had our first lesson about a month after arriving. We had to wait for several months for our Japan Kennel Club (JKC) memberships to be processed, so we were unable to compete right away.

Does the Japanese agility community have clubs and training schools similar to those in the U.S.?

MU: Yes, from what I could gather, clubs and training schools seem to be similar to those in the U.S. The clubs sponsor trials, similar to here in the U.S., as well as provide training classes and seminars. The club [I trained with] is called Baikosow, and they provide training for agility (as well as other dog activities including obedience, search and rescue, and so on). Baikosow is headed by Rie Nemoto and her husband. Rie Nemoto is a respected judge with the JKC and is the agility coach for this year's Japan World Team.

Did you find it easy to fit into the agility community?

MU: The big challenge for me was that I don't speak Japanese (although I did make a little progress over the two years I was there) and many Japanese don't speak English. In addition, Cody and I stood out quite a bit, not only because I was clearly not Japanese, but also because Tollers are extremely rare in Japan. In fact, Cody was the only one registered with the JKC! However, despite the language issues, I found the agility community to be warm and welcoming, as we had a common bond of love for our dogs and a passion for agility.

I was lucky to have met a few Japanese people who do speak English, including a translator and two of my instructors at

the training center. They were tremendously helpful during my first few competitions. In addition, at my second trial I was approached by an individual who brought an English speaker with her just to communicate with me. She eventually became a good friend who brought me into her group of agility and flyball comrades. With their help I could travel for trials to sites that were 5 to 6 hours from Tokyo. (One of the sites that I visited four times was in Sendai, where the tsunami produced such devastation this past March.)

How was the trial environment in Japan similar to or different from that in the U.S.?

MU: There are many similarities between the two environments. There are usually two or three rings, every dog is assigned a number (worn by the handler), and runs in classes in a predetermined running order. There are vendors selling food and dog-related products along the perimeters of the sites, as well as tents set up by the competitors and clubs. Competitors watch others run while waiting, and support each other with cheers or clapping after successful runs.

One of the striking differences between JKC agility and AKC agility is the number of trials offered. Typically there is a one-day trial offered once a month that is easily commutable from Tokyo. Twice a year I drove five hours to attend a two-day trial.

There are very few trials held indoors, due to a lack of appropriate indoor facilities. Most were held on grass in parks by rivers, but occasionally there were less desirable surfaces, such as the gravel surface we ran on in the rain during our first trial, where poor drainage produced deep puddles in the ring.

Japan has another popular style of agility aside from the Japanese Kennel Club. The acronym OPDES stands for Organization for the Promotion of Dog Education & Socialization and although it follows FCI standards, it participates in and hosts USDAA tournament classes. Tom Kula is a frequent judge for OPDES agility and answered a few questions.

What is OPDES agility and how is it different from JKC agility?

TK: The organization promotes more than just education; it focuses on the socialization and the relationships between dogs and their owners as well. Just as USDAA is open to dogs regardless of pedigree (or lack thereof), so too is OPDES.

How do the OPDES and JKC championships compare concerning what it takes to accomplish each?

TK: Just as in the U.S. many compete in both USDAA and Kennel Club venues, so too in Japan there are those that complete in both. As someone who has judged [OPDES] Grand Prix and Steeplechase finals several times, the level of talent in Japan is on par with ours here in North America. The challenges presented at the OPDES/USDAA national championships and the JKC championships are very similar in terms of difficulty.

Do you have any other comments?

TK: The biggest difference I see between Japan and the U.S. is the higher number of small dogs that participate in Japan. They have no performance program and their mini/medium (12"/16") class is as large as the 22"/26" group. Many small dog breeds that we rarely see participate here (Dachshunds, and so on) are very common in OPDES agility. Contrary to the thoughts of many in the U.S., these dogs can jump the required jump heights in USDAA agility.

Trial entry fees are much more expensive than in the U.S., costing between \$85 to \$125 for two runs (the equivalent of AKC Standard and Jumpers with Weaves). The JKC trials go by FCI rules, meaning that if a dog takes an off-course obstacle, he is eliminated and the team must leave the ring immediately. On occasions when my dog went off course early on, I amused myself by calculating the per obstacle cost.

Course maps are not distributed, so many competitors watch the courses being built and plan their handling strategy through hand motions on the sidelines before and after their walk-through.

For equipment, all jumps are made of wood and are winged. In addition, the contact obstacles (A-frame, seesaw, and dogwalk) are often made of wood. Broad jumps are used for every level, as well as a "brick" wall, and there are no triples.

Before starting a run, a person blocks the first obstacle until the judge blows the whistle indicating that it is time for the next run. The "blocker" also manually times the run, which is used as a backup to the electronic timers.

After all dogs in a class have run, the results are posted on a board. Those competitors who place (ranging from the top 5 to the top 10 depending on the type of organization holding the trial) are expected to wait until the end of the trial to stand on the podium to receive their ribbons and have their pictures taken. The pictures are included in the Japanese *Dog Sports Journal* magazine along with the relevant statistics and course maps from the trial.

Are any training methods and/or handling systems generally popular in Japan?

MU: The training methods used emphasize getting the dog through a course at top speed rather than mastering a particular handling technique. In class, our runs were timed and after some fine-tuning of handling in trouble spots, a successful session was determined by a reduction in time running the course.

How is the agility championship in Japan structured?

MU: Similar to AKC agility, there are height restrictions and three levels of competency that dictate the dog's class. Also similar to AKC, there is a Standard run (called AG) and a Jumpers run (called JP). The differences are that there are no "games," and there are only three height levels offered, 12", 18", and 26". (Cody, who jumps 20" in AKC agility, was required to jump 26" in Japan.)

The only way to advance in level is to qualify in three AG runs. JP runs are not relevant, except that the dog advances in JP at the same time as in AG.

Dogs can begin to accumulate points toward their agility championship starting at Level 2 (the intermediate level) with each qualifying AG run. The number of points earned per run ranges from 5 to 7 to 10, depending on whether the organization sponsoring the trial is a local club, a regional group of clubs, or FCI, respectively. A total of 20 points is required to attain an agility championship, and 60 points for a super championship.

In addition to the requisite number of points earned, the dog must have demonstrated a proficiency in obedience by earning CD and CD2 titles [as well] to receive an agility championship.

Which parts of earning that title were most difficult? Which were easiest?

MU: The most difficult part of earning the title for Cody was completing the obedience requirement. I guess I just didn't make it fun enough for him because whenever we would practice the skills, he would express his disinterest and/or stress by yawning continually! We were both happy when he passed the two tests.

The easiest part was only needing to qualify on the AG run to begin accumulating points, no Double-Qs necessary!





Did you learn anything about training and trialing in Japan to bring back to the U.S.?

MU: The focus on speed in training in Japan has been beneficial for Cody's and my performance in the ring here in the U.S. I find that I am now driving him harder in our runs, with more interest in shaving seconds and less concern about getting the Q.

I have also found the blind cross, a handling technique that is used extensively in Japan but still infrequently here, to be useful in some situations where I want to be ahead of the dog, but don't have time to put in a front cross. The Japanese call this the "airplane" due to the extension of the handler's arms during the maneuver.

Did you share any new ideas with Japanese competitors?

MU: While training with my friends, we discussed certain handling techniques that I thought would be useful to them. Two specific examples that come to mind are strategies for handling serpentines, not commonly found on JKC courses, and a handling method for leaving a dog in the weave poles while peeling away.

In addition, the occasional competitor who spoke some English would come up after a run and comment on a handling technique that I had employed in the ring. This led me to realize that we were also imparting some American handling ideas just through their observation of our running in the ring.

Do you miss anything about Japanese agility?

MU: I miss the challenge of some of the Level 3 (top level) courses with components that are seen more often in international courses than in AKC. Obstacles were frequently very close together, threadles were more common than serpentines, and there was at least one jump per run that was to be taken from the back. It gave me a real feeling of accomplishment on the occasions when we made it through without a hitch.

On the more humorous side, I miss the gifts that were given to each entrant at the end of a trial. The gifts weren't always apparently relevant to dogs or agility, but usually were useful items ranging from bathroom scales, to teakettles, to laundry detergent, and more.

Do you have other comments on your adventure?

MU: I am so thankful to all those who played a hand in my being able to compete in agility while living in Japan. In addition to gaining invaluable experiences from both an agility standpoint as well as a cultural one, I met some wonderful people, whom I hope will be life-long friends.

If anyone is interested in reading a more detailed account of Cody's and my experiences with agility in Japan, including some cultural highlights, I kept a blog with monthly updates during the two years that we were living there: agilityinjapan.wordpress.com. 🐾



Brenna Fender is a freelance writer with an undergraduate degree in mass communications and a masters degree in elementary education. She lives with her husband, two young children, a Whippet, a Papillon, and a Beagle. Over the years, Brenna and her dogs have earned titles in agility, obedience, conformation, hunting, rally, and lure coursing. The husband and children are far less impressively titled. Contact her at BrennaFender@gmail.com.



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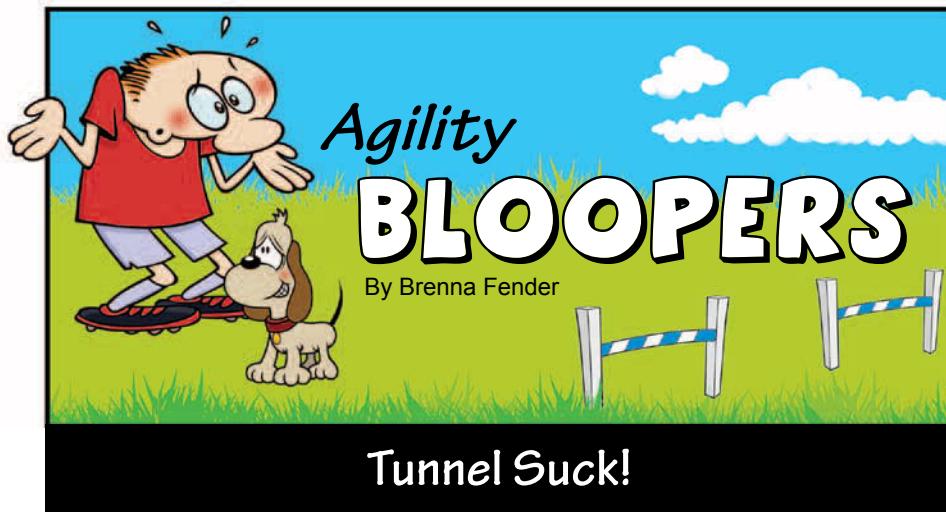
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When you are a frequent agility competitor, sooner or later something hugely embarrassing and/or hilariously funny is going to happen in the agility ring. When it does, just remember that we've all been in your shoes!

Ultra Donahue from Colorado Springs, Colorado, who owns a now five-year-old mixed breed named Jaz, shared her embarrassing moment with us.

"Jaz is a tunnel sucker! We've worked on it and I've just come to accept that there is always a chance he's going to choose that well- (or ill-) placed tunnel no matter what other cue I give him.

Our first show ever was outdoors. It was a NADAC trial and the class was Touch N Go. The dogwalk had a tunnel at the far end, wrapped around the support leg. The last two

obstacles were the dogwalk to a jump. Jaz passed up the dogwalk entry, ran the entire length of the dogwalk on the ground, went around to the other side, took the tunnel, ran back to me, up the dogwalk, and over the jump as though nothing even happened. He was still 8 seconds under time!

Fast forward 18 months to another outdoor NADAC Touch & Go run; there we saw the classic tunnel under the A-frame. He was doing well and going at a good pace when we approached the A-frame. I got close and urged him to climb. He did it! I thought, 'Yippee! We just might Q!' And then at the apex, he glanced over and saw the tunnel. We were three obstacles from the finish. Jaz promptly turned around, went back down the A-frame, and went to the far side. All the while I was yelling *Leave It, Here, Climb*, anything I could come up with. But he took the tunnel and came right over to me with a 'Did you see that Mom? I got all those pesky tunnels!' We finished the last few obstacles and laughed our way back to the tent." 🐕

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Challenges at CR CENTRAL



By Annie Pyle

The Challenger Round is arguably the most exciting of any round at the AKC Nationals. The winner of each jump height is awarded the last remaining spot in the finals. It is an exciting, go-all-out, hold-nothing-back, winner-takes-all spectacle of dog agility. The Challenger Round finalists are the some of the fastest teams competing at the AKC Nationals. They have been denied a pass to the finals because of a single non-qualifying run in the first three rounds of the competition. The Challenger Round course is typically designed with sufficient tests to ensure that the winners really pay their dues for the last spots in the finals.

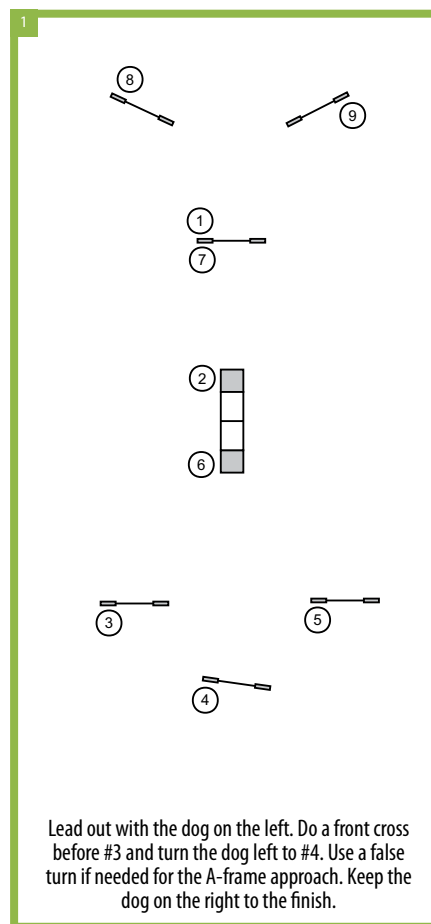
The inspiration for these drills was taken from a section of the 2011 AKC Nationals Challenger Round course designed by Bob Long. Handlers had to send their dogs to the back side of a jump after the A-frame and execute a side change without incurring an off-course fault to a jump directly in the dog's path after the contact. Sends to the back side of any jump are relatively new to AKC course design. The novelty of this challenge, in addition to the off-course jump threat and many handlers rushing their handling, led to mistakes, wasted seconds, and a few handling casualties.

The drills I created for my classes use two three-jump patterns on either end of an A-frame to test many different handling skills. Most of my students own just a few jumps and maybe a tun-

nel and set of weave poles. Moreover, they don't have the space or time to set up and practice complicated drills or full courses. These three-jump patterns are simple backyard drills they can practice at home and then bring the skill sets to class for longer sequences or full course work. Practicing short patterns helps build handling fluency and develops timing, coordination, and teamwork.

Figures 1-8 are short sequences. Any bi-directional piece of equipment may be substituted for the A-frame. For my most advanced classes, I create a discrimination in the middle of the drills by placing a straight tunnel next to the A-frame and alternate which obstacle in the discrimination the dogs are required to perform. **Figures 9 and 10** are examples of full coursework using this setup. 🐾

These three-jump patterns are simple backyard drills they can practice at home and then bring the skill sets to class for longer sequences or full course work. Practicing short patterns helps build handling fluency and develops timing, coordination, and teamwork.



2

Set up the dog on the right to create a straight line from #1-#2. Do a front cross between #3-#4. Turn the dog right over #4. Do a front cross between #6-#7 and finish with the dog on the right.

3

Lead out with the dog on the left. Turn the dog right over #3 with a shoulder rotation. Do a front cross before #4 and another between #5-#6. Or do a rear cross at the A-frame. Do a front cross between #7-#8 and #8-#9. Or, threadle #8-#9 then do a rear cross at #9.

4

Create a straight line from #1-#2. Do a front cross between #3-#4. Turn the dog left over #4 and #5 with a shoulder rotation. You might need a false turn to keep the dog from taking the back side of #2 on the way to #6. Handle #7-#10 with the dog on the right.

(5,21)

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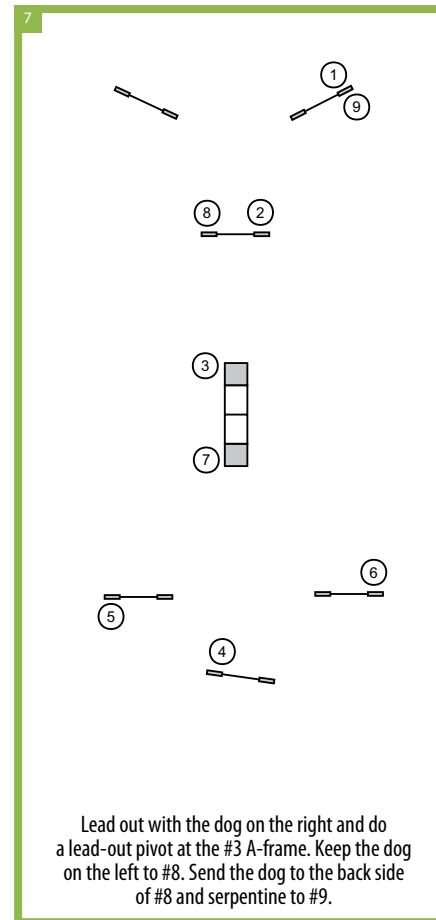
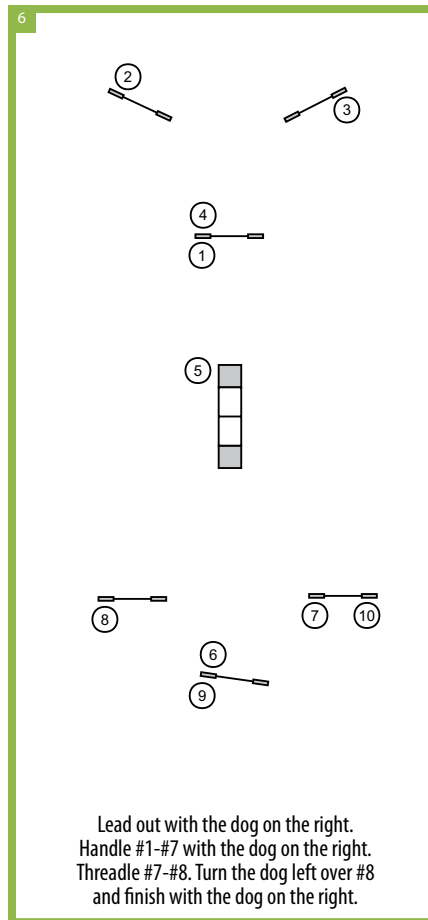
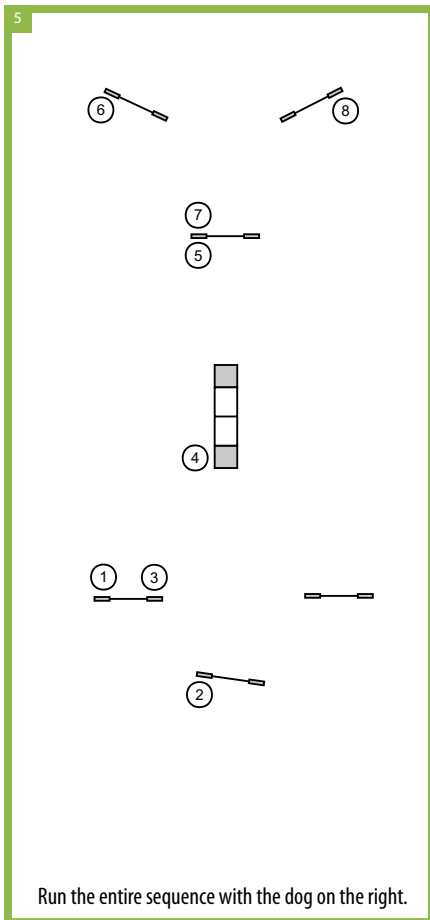
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8

Handle #1-#5 with the dog on the right. Do a front cross between #5-#6 and #8-#9. Send the dog to the back side of #10 and serpentine to #11.

9

10

Annie Pyle has been training dogs for competitive sports for over 15 years. Her dog Split is a USDAA World Grand Prix silver medalist and an AKC Nationals silver and bronze medalist. Split is a four-time AKC Nationals Finalist and four-time USDAA World Championships Finalist. Both Split and Annie's younger dog Granite have won top three placements in both ISC/State Team and individual rounds at multiple AKC Nationals. Annie is currently the resident agility instructor at the Clean Run training facility. Her students compete both nationally and internationally and their dogs are among the top ranked in the country.

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TEACHING FOCUS AND IMPULSE-CONTROL CLASSES

Week 6

By Deborah Jones, PhD
Photos by author

As we begin our sixth week of classes students have become quite fluent in setting up their training stations and beginning offered focus work with their dogs. By the time class begins everyone is both physically and mentally prepared for the upcoming training challenges.

THIS WEEK'S EXERCISES

Offered Focus While Moving

This is not a heeling exercise, but a focus exercise. The target behavior is offered focus and the dog's position doesn't matter very much (as long as you're not tripping over him). Start moving slowly and keep an eye on your dog. If he is looking in your direction at all click and treat. After you click you'll need to pause for a second to deliver the treat. Then continue moving around randomly clicking and treating for focus.



*Even while both are moving
Star still offers Judy focus*

There is still no cue for this behavior. Once the behavior is given a name it is no longer offered and not nearly as valuable.

You can add other distractions if the dogs are doing well at focusing while moving. Having several teams working together in the same general space is likely to be a good level of challenge at this point.

Recalls with Moderate to High-level Distractions

Set up this week's recall exercise so that dogs are challenged by distractions in the environment. Toss a variety of objects on the floor in the path the dog must take for his recall. The number and types of objects you use determine the level of challenge for any individual dog. Some dogs are distracted by a piece of lint on the floor, so they will need to build up slowly. Others are fine until you put out a toy or a plastic container with food inside (just be sure the dog cannot open the container).



One thing to remind your students about in this exercise is that we only call the dog once. If the dog becomes distracted we go and get him, put him on leash, and find a way to make the next repetition easy enough so that he can be successful. Then we increase the level of difficulty again.

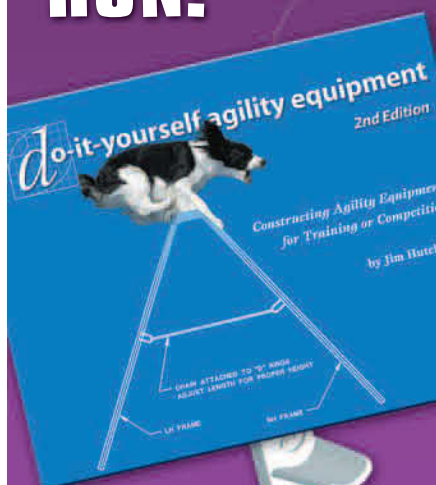
Think of the recall as a one-time only, limited-time offer. We don't offer second chances or wait too long before breaking off the exercise. If we want fast and reliable responses every time we call, then we must maintain our criteria of giving only a single cue.

Sphinx or Fold-back Down

This exercise introduces what is commonly known as the fold-back or sphinx down performed from a stand. The down is a completely different set of physical movements if performed from a sit rather than a stand. We prefer the fold-back down from the stand because it is a fluid and continuous motion, and it is very useful in dog sports such as rally and obedience. We still use it on the table even though it's no longer required in AKC agility. It is a nice, stable position for the dog to hold.

Some dogs in class may already have fold-back downs, but others will not. So we start at the very beginning by luring the dog from a stand to a down. The po-

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sitioning of the treat and the movement of the hand are key in getting a nice smooth down from a stand. It is very helpful to break this exercise down into smaller parts to teach.

With the dog in a stand, show him a treat and hold it at nose height. Move the treat down and in toward the dog's chest slightly so he has to look down toward his chest to follow it. Click and deliver the treat low. With each successful repetition move the treat farther in toward the dog's chest and down toward the floor. If done correctly, the dog will start to lower his front legs toward the ground. Be sure to click this behavior!



First, place a food treat directly in front of your dog's nose



Then, push the treat toward your dog's chest at a slight downward angle



The dog should follow the cookie and lower his body into a down position

Many dogs end up with their front legs on the ground and their rear end still in the air (a bow). When this happens raise the treat about an inch or so up. Typically, this leads to the rear end dropping as the head goes up slightly. Click this as well!

Wait on a Mat

By now we should have firmly established that the mat is an excellent place to be. We will work on duration on the mat this week. This exercise can be done with the dog in either a sit or a down position, but pick one to work on first (to avoid confusion). Once that one is established, then work on the other.

Have a clicker and a number of small, soft treats readily available. Put out the mat and wait for the dog to take his position on it. Start rapidly clicking and treating, leaving only a few seconds between each click. This rapid-fire technique will keep the dog in position. If the dog moves out of position, stop clicking and treating and just wait. Most dogs will quickly resume the position, and the rapid-fire C/Ts can begin again. After about 10 C/Ts, verbally release the dog and step away. You may find that you need to encourage him to move. Great! That means he has figured out that staying in position is better than being out of position.

Repeat these rapid-fire C/T sessions about five times with short breaks (about 30 seconds) in between.

Spins

When the dog makes a tight circle in one direction or the other, it is a spin. It is good physical exercise since it involves stretching and using the muscles on either side of the spine. Most dogs seem to enjoy spins once they learn them. It is an exercise that seems to excite and energize them.

A spin is most easily taught using a food lure. This is a very good exercise to help students understand the proper way to use and fade out a lure, as well as the proper way to introduce a verbal cue for a behavior. Pick one direction to work on first. We always start with left. No specific reason, we just do. Left means *the dog's left*, which is opposite our own because he is facing us. The hardest part for students is to keep "left" and "right" straight!

Begin this exercise with the dog in a stand facing the trainer. Hold a treat at nose height and move it an inch or two to the side. When the dog turns his head to follow the lure click and give him the

treat. Don't expect him to actually turn in a full circle at first, just to begin turning his head in the desired direction. Continue using the lure to turn the dog farther and farther until he is doing a quarter turn, then a half turn. Once he's doing a half turn it's just as easy to continue and finish the circle as it is to turn back the way he came.



Luring the quarter turn



Luring the half turn



Once beyond the half turn, it is easy for the dog to finish the rotation for a full spin

One problem students sometimes encounter in first teaching this exercise is that the dog backs away rather than turns. An easy way to avoid this is to have the dog positioned so that there is something behind him (such as a wall or bench) to prohibit backing up.

As soon as the dog will follow the food lure in a full circle we begin fading out the lure. Do this by using the same exact hand motion, but without the food in the hand. If done properly dogs will follow the empty hand. Once the dog completes the spin, click and give a treat. Alternate repetitions of luring with repetitions with an empty hand signal, fading out the lure over a few sessions.

CLASS WRAP-UP

Three of this week's exercises (offered focus, recalls, and mat work) involve raising criteria. Criteria are the standards we set for the behavior (how we would like it to be performed). We want to go beyond basic proficiency to get better and more enthusiastic responses. So we raise our standards by adding reasonable and realistic challenges to the exercises. However, if we find that our dogs are failing to understand what we want, we need to quickly lower our criteria to a level they can meet, then start adding challenges again. Continuing to ask a dog to do something that he's not capable of will only lead to a loss of confidence and a lack of enthusiasm. A good trainer is constantly raising and lowering criteria to fit the individual dog's needs.

Our two new exercises this week (fold-back down and spin) are taught using luring. We have found luring to be an effective and efficient way to train body movements and positions. You may, however, be more comfortable shaping these behaviors, which works fine as well. Personally, I *love* shaping and use it for much of my own training, but often use luring in classes. Typically, students are not proficient and comfortable with shaping, so there is a much steeper learning curve for them. I've also found that students have many misconceptions about shaping and are often a bit resistant to it. We do introduce shaping activities in many of our classes, but we also feel that luring is a valid and useful technique as well. 🐾

Deborah Jones, PhD, has taught a wide variety of psychology classes at Kent State University at Stark (North Canton, Ohio) for 15 years. Her specialties are learning and social behavior. Deb enjoys participating in dog sports and has earned advanced titles in agility, obedience, and rally on sporting, toy, and herding dogs. She is co-author (along with Judy Keller) of the In FOCUS books and DVD series.



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Correctly Using Food-stuffable Toys to Create Toy Drive

By Laura Manchester Derrett, photos by Samantha Dillard

I could go into great depth about how important it is for your dog to have good toy drive and the many ways to achieve a strong desire for toys. But here I'll explain one piece of the puzzle to help you get better results with your training. I will go over the benefits and reasons for toy drive, but I will focus on one way to help you gain these benefits: correctly using a food-stuffable toy, such as a Tug-N-Treat. Again, this is not the only way, or necessarily the best way to improve or regain toy drive. It is simply one means to an end that I think needs discussion, mainly based on the observations I have made while working with students from around the world. Most people who use these food toys are doing so in a manner that is actually working against what they are trying to achieve.

The Benefits of Toy Drive

So what is so beneficial about having toy drive for agility training? Many of the behaviors we ask our dogs to do involve driving as fast and as hard as possible, either while we are moving, such as on a line of jumps or finish line, or driving into us on a front cross, threadle, serpentine, or other maneuver. We need dogs to respond as quickly as they physically can. When your dog has a strong desire to interact with you and the toy, you can easily gain these behaviors.

Why? Toy drive is nothing more than predation, which *all* canines are ge-

netically predisposed to engage in. The physiological changes that occur during prey drive are the same ones that happen during toy interaction: increased heart rate and blood flow, release of hormones such as endorphins, and other physical changes that result in greater intensity, speed, and drive.

By using tugging as a reward we can increase the duration and intensity of the reward, and we can also have the dog focused solely on us no matter what is happening in the environment.

Another important benefit of tugging is that it teaches our dog to shift his

weight to his back end better than anything else. The effort and work to tug naturally does this. Weight shift is crucial in all aspects of agility to allow dogs to be able to run as quickly as possible while turning properly, entering weave poles, running on contacts, and jumping.

Using food is one way to help encourage the dog's toy interaction, but you have to be careful and clever in its use since it can become a hindrance to what we are trying to gain.

Training the Wrong Behavior

Let's talk about the use of a toy to reward the dog for driving out on a straight line ahead of us, such as on a finish line or moving out ahead of us so we can do a rear cross. The optimal place for reinforcement for this behavior is

ahead of us on a direct line the dog is on. Ultimately, we would like to be able to have someone throw the toy or even throw the toy ourselves. If our goal is to have the dog run faster than we do, which most of our dogs should easily be able to do, then we have to give the dog a reason to do this, which means rewarding him when he is out ahead of us.

If we use a food-stuffable toy, fill it with food, and either set it in position or throw it, the dog has to wait for us to get there to get any food out of it. This is the number one mistake people make when using these toys. I say "toys" because used improperly they are nothing more than furry bait bags. Our dogs, being clever creatures, quickly learn this

and actually begin to slow up to wait for us to get there. They often stand there and look at us and the bait bag. This obviously is not a way to reinforce, and thus, increase the behavior of moving out and driving forward fast. It actually encourages the opposite. Remember, we

get what we reward. In essence, we end up being the one retrieving the toy and feeding the dog for standing still waiting for us. Just imagine what the dog is thinking: "Come on slowpoke! Hurry up and fetch that silly bag and feed me! That's a good human."

On several occasions, I have also witnessed handlers not even bothering to take the food out of the bag to reward the dog, but instead reach into their pocket and pull out food. No wonder the dog has little to no interest in interacting with the food bag.

Fixing the Behavior We've Accidentally Trained

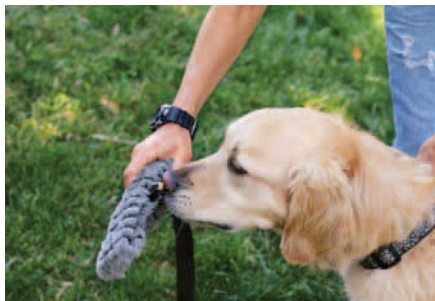
So, what can we do differently? Simple. First, the food-stuffable toy needs to have a Velcro opening. Second, we only need one piece of food, preferably something that can easily stick out of the Velcro just a bit without falling out, even when thrown. Use some sort of softer food that holds together and doesn't crumble, such as string cheese. Just stick a small piece of this in so the top is sticking out. Third, we need a hungry dog.



Now, we need to prime the dog, showing him that we are no longer the fetcher of the toy. Hold the dog's collar or chest to restrain him. Hold the toy with the other hand and hold the food/toy near his nose without letting him actually get

it to tease him a bit; he should definitely be pulling toward it. When he is pulling, toss the toy within a foot or two of where you are standing. Your dog should now really be pulling to get to it. Let go of him and step toward the toy as he

slingshots away from your hand to it. You can point at the toy, but do not touch it, even if for a moment he reverts back to "Hello! Food bag on the ground—open it!" He will figure out that he can get the food out himself.



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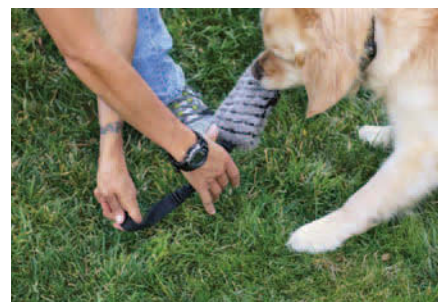


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Repeat this a few times working on both sides. Once you know he has the idea you can work on more distance. Your dog now has a reason to drive ahead of you.

To progress to working on tugging, we need to take it a step farther to elicit the game. When he is working on getting the food out, take hold of the corner of the toy and begin to quickly move it along the ground by jerking it around in short, quick movements in front of him. The dog's likely response will be to paw

or pounce back on it, thinking, "Hey give that back to me. I wasn't done!" Before he loses interest or gives up, let him have it again. Every time you repeat this, move it around a little longer while he is pouncing and biting at it; then even pick it up and entice him to chase you while you drag it. Get creative in making this toy look like a little creature. You are now on your way to tugging with your dog. This short process allows the dog's natural prey drive instinct to surface.



Training Play by Using Prey Drive

We can use a food toy or any toy to teach play by breaking down the stages of prey drive. Generally the drive begins from sensing the prey by smell or sight, to tracking the prey, then chasing, pouncing, biting, tearing/tugging, and finally to killing and eating the prey. It is a matter of encouraging and incorporating these behaviors into the tugging game.

Each time you work with your dog, aim to get a bit more out of each play session. In essence, you are asking for the next step

of prey drive (including working toward more duration and intensity within each step) before you end the game each time.

Once you feel your dog is turning on to the game, begin to vary the times the food is even involved with the toy. Sometimes it is there and sometimes it isn't.

I have seen many dogs that have gone through this short process turn on to the idea of driving after or to a toy and also learn to enjoy tugging. Remember, you must have fun and enjoy the process. At the end of the day, it is all about playing with your dog! 🐾

Laura Manchester-Derrett is part-owner of UK Agility in the United Kingdom and UK Agility International in North America with husband Greg Derrett. She currently splits her time between England and California while running the two organizations. Laura and Greg also travel the world training competitors in the Greg Derrett handling system. Laura has been training dogs half of her life and has competed at the top of the sport, to include winning the UKA Nationals and UK Grand Prix and representing Great Britain at the IFCS WAC 2010, and as a European Open team member for Great Britain.

Ready, Set, Trial!

By Jamie McKay, CPDT KA, photo by author



Trial Etiquette

Call it what you will—etiquette, manners, sportsmanship, or plain common courtesy—here are some suggestions to make everyone's experience at trials a better one.

#1: Know where your dog's nose is at all times.

- Don't let your dog say hello to other dogs without permission. If your dog leaves the ring and approaches another dog, then go get your dog. Apologize to the other handler.
- Don't permit your dog to stare at other dogs. A quick look is okay but prolonged staring is not.
- Don't let your dog "goose" other dogs. Maintain space while waiting to go into the ring.
- Don't assume everyone wants to pet your dog. Don't let your dog jump on people.
- Don't allow your dog to eat other dog's treats or investigate other people's pockets. I caught my dog doing this recently as we were standing close to a chair that had a jacket draped over it.

#2: Know what the dog's opposite end is doing.

- Carry extra poop bags and always pick up.
- Don't let your dog urinate on equipment, ring gates, tents, garbage cans, and so on. If your dog marks something inappropriate, rinse it off with water.

#3: Take care of the trial site.

- Don't litter! Take recyclables home if no containers are provided.
- Unload and park where permitted.
- Set up your tent/shade canopy only when allowable as stated in the premium.
- If leaving a tent or shade canopy at a multi-day trial, be sure it is securely staked.
- Crate where permitted. Be respectful if the trial committee asks you to move.

#4: Know and respect the rules of the organization sanctioning the trial.

- Abide by the leash rules in and out of the ring. Do not leave your dog unattended tied to a fence post or ring gate.

- Use only equipment that is allowed.

#5: Be considerate of fellow exhibitors.

- Don't crowd the gate area.
- Don't hog the shade. If shade is limited near the ring entrance, then make room for exhibitors about to go in.
- Don't use the practice jump with your dog if another height class is about to begin and your height will not be running for awhile.
- Don't stand with your dog at the ring entrance (or exit) unless you are the next dog in.
- Don't greet a dog that is about to go in the ring unless the handler invites you to. The majority of handlers do not want their dog to pay attention to other people prior to their run.
- Don't play with your dog in front of crated dogs. Don't allow your dog to play with other dogs close to the ring.
- If your dog is a barker decrease his visual stimulation and/or give him a stuffed Kong or bone as a distraction.



- Don't play with squeaky toys close to the ring (even if within the allowed space limits).
- Try not to eat near the ring. Yes our dogs must learn to deal with distractions but that hamburger might be too much!
- No flash photography. Don't shoot pictures where you will be a distraction. Share pictures with your friends and your club's newsletter but keep in mind that the show photographer is earning a living.
- Avoid banging your crates when taking them down. Try not to slam Porta Potty doors shut. If you have ever had a noise-sensitive dog you will understand.

Be supportive if the run did not go as planned. If something you saw went well in the run mention it.
If your friend is visibly upset, give her time to compose herself before approaching.

- Befriend a newbie!
- Be an ambassador for the sport. Answer spectator questions. If you are on your way into the ring let them know you can talk after your run.
- Keep an eye out for other exhibitor's dogs. If you notice a dog unzipping his soft crate, stay with the dog and ask someone to make an announcement calling the owner. If you notice spectators encroaching upon crated dogs, ask them to move back and explain why.
- Keep an eye on your children. During your run ask a friend to mind them.
- Smile! If you see a nice run compliment the team!
- Don't take course maps for classes you are not running in. However, feel free to take any maps that are left over at the end of the day.

#6: Be considerate of your friends.

- Don't distract your friend's dog before a run. Wish them good luck without saying the dog's name.
- Cheer or clap for friends but don't call out their dogs' names until they have regained control of their dogs at the end of a run.

- Wait until your friend has rewarded the dog for the run before engaging in conversation.
- Don't ask about qualifying. Ask how the run went.
- Be supportive if the run did not go as planned. If something you saw went well in the run mention it. If your friend is visibly upset, give her time to compose herself before approaching.
- Don't squash your friend's joy over the run even if you noticed something that did not go well. It may be helpful to point something out but do it at an appropriate time.

7: Be considerate of your instructor/student.

- Don't expect your instructor to walk your course and/or tell you how to handle it. This is your final exam! If they offer help don't overwhelm them with questions. Don't forget to say thanks!
- Encourage and support your students, especially those new to the sport. Guidance and/or a positive comment coming from an instructor can mean a lot. If students are having a difficult time with a specific skill at a trial, let them know you will work on it in class.

#8: Be considerate to volunteers, judges, the trial committee, and the trial secretary.

- Carefully review your confirmation. If changes are necessary notify the trial secretary in a timely fashion. Follow directions for move-ups.
- Be patient when waiting for results and ribbons.
- Volunteer. Show inexperienced volunteers what to do.
- Appreciate volunteers and if possible compensate them (preferred crating, water, snacks, raffles, vouchers). Don't partake of the "perks" if you have not worked.
- If you are watching runs don't ask the judge to move so you can have a better view of the ring!
- Thank the judge and host club.

9: Be considerate when staying at a motel or camping on site in a tent or RV.

- Pick up the poops! Respect the designated potty areas.
- Bring sheets to cover furniture if you are going to allow your dog(s) on beds.
- Don't leave your dogs alone in your room;

but if you must do so, crate them. Leave an emergency number. Do not leave if they are likely to bark in your absence. Many motels accommodate requests for a small fridge and a microwave for your convenience.

- Brush your dog outside and pick up the hair. Don't use hotel tubs or towels to bathe your dog or wipe his feet. If your dog sheds excessively pick up hair with a lint roller.
- Keep your dogs on leash. Maintain distance from other dogs.
- Have your dogs sit in the elevator or carry them. If the elevator is crowded use the stairs or wait for one less crowded.
- Keep your dogs out of the hotel pool.
- Be sure your dog is well-groomed and flea-free.
- Keep the noise down (or include everyone in your party).
- Secure garbage from critters. Don't leave food out.
- Extinguish all fires (fire pits/barbecues).

#10: Last, but not least, have fun with your dogs and enjoy your time together. 🐾

Jamie gained her early experience in New York at the New Rochelle Humane Society, providing training to enhance the adoptability of shelter dogs while teaching safe handling skills to volunteers. She teaches puppy, family manners, focus, impulse control, and tricks classes at the Port Chester Obedience Training Club. She competes in rally obedience and agility. Jamie and her husband Stephen are owned by two Shetland Sheepdogs, a Golden Retriever, and a West Highland White Terrier.

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This month's exercises focus on jumping gymnastics. Generally, we describe jumping gymnastics as having a course set up in such a way to expose the dog to a variety of different jumping patterns with different distances between the obstacles.



Challenges for Rising Stars

By Stuart Mah

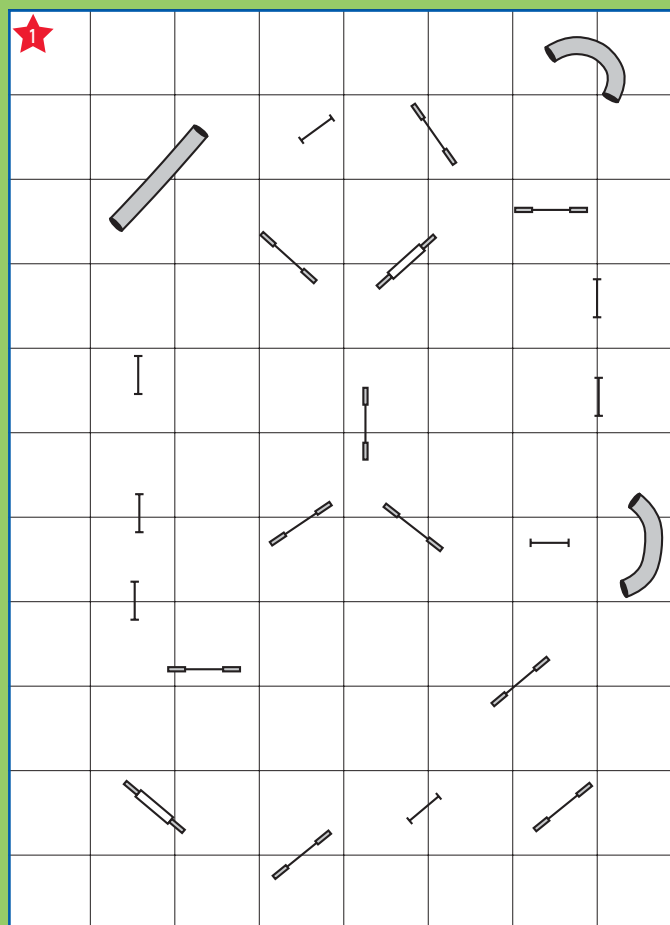
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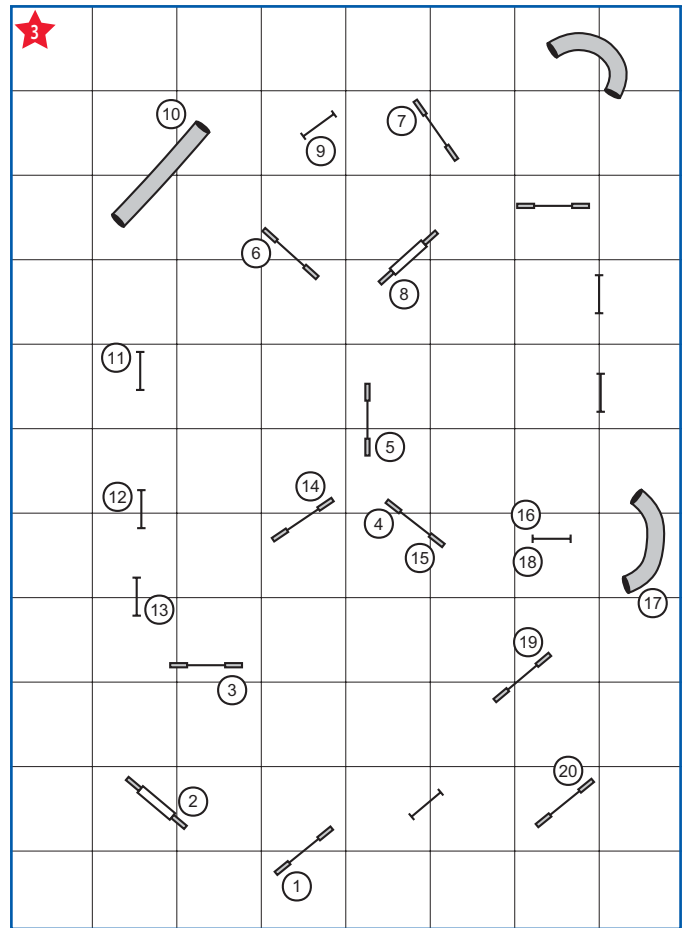
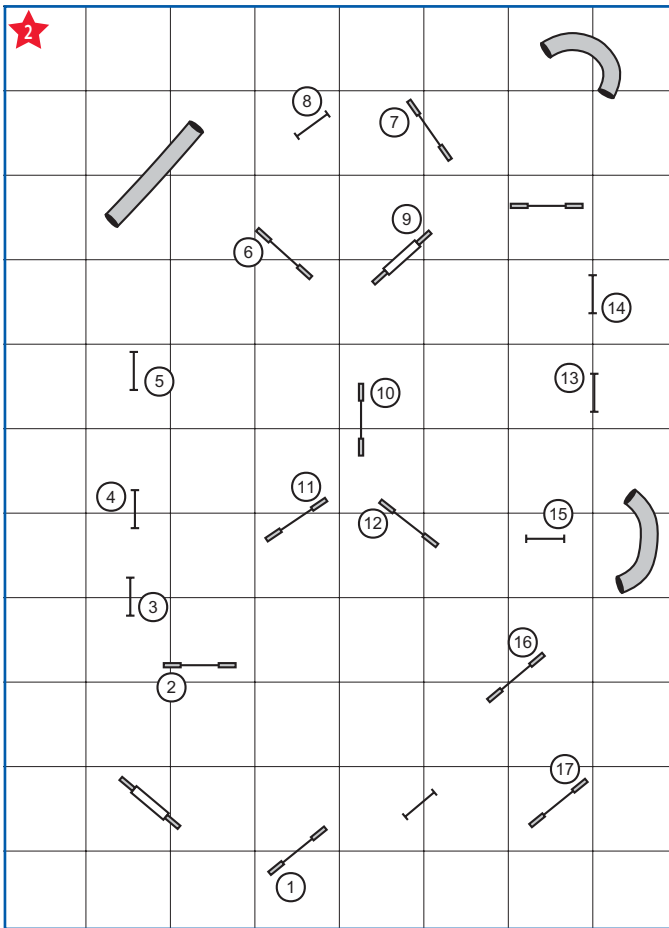
In this setup, which is shown in [Figure 1](#), the following patterns are available for use: 90°, 180°, 270°, and 360° turns, pinwheels, serpentine, offset serpentine, threadles, acute approach angles to jumps, wraps, pull-throughs, box crossing patterns, and managed approaches to jumps. All these patterns tend to be coupled with variable spacing between obstacles.

Although these courses are geared more toward dogs and handlers experienced in various jumping patterns since the sequences tend to be rather long, intermediate or novice dogs and handlers can usually benefit by running half-sequences. Also, for these courses, no verbal descriptions are needed. The following figures are all that you'll need. The courses start easier and get harder. However, even the easier courses tend to be difficult, so make sure you start with the exercise in [Figure 2](#) and work your way up to the one in [Figure 10](#).

Remember, as always, before starting any sequence, determine which skill you are trying to teach or learn and concentrate on that skill, not the sequence. Also remember that these sequences are rather long so don't try to run all of them at once. Instead spread them out over a couple of weeks of training time. 🐾

Although these courses are geared more toward dogs and handlers experienced in various jumping patterns since the sequences tend to be rather long, intermediate or novice dogs and handlers can usually benefit by running half-sequences.





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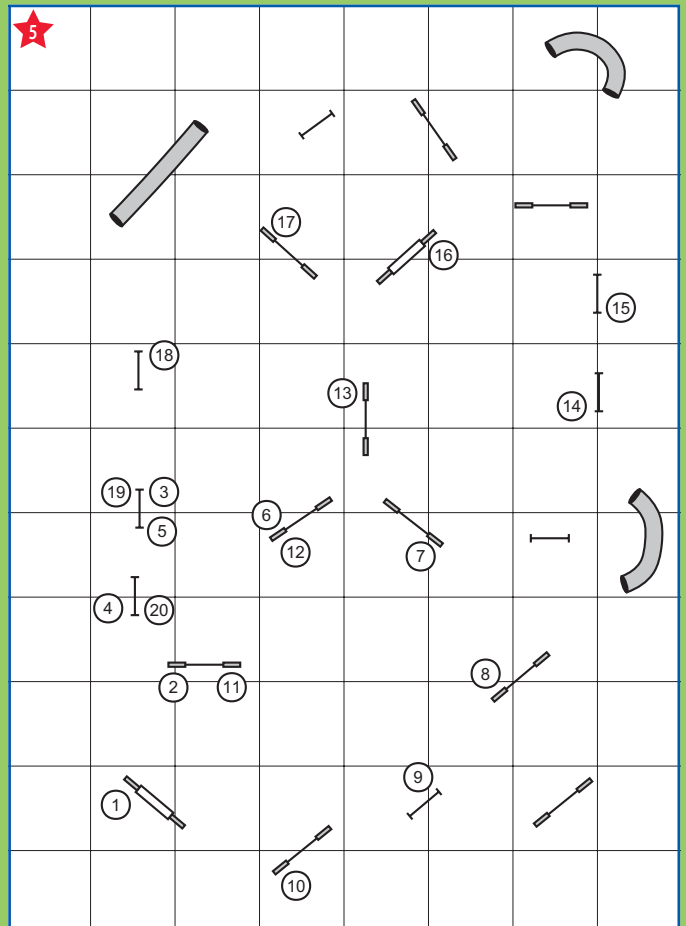
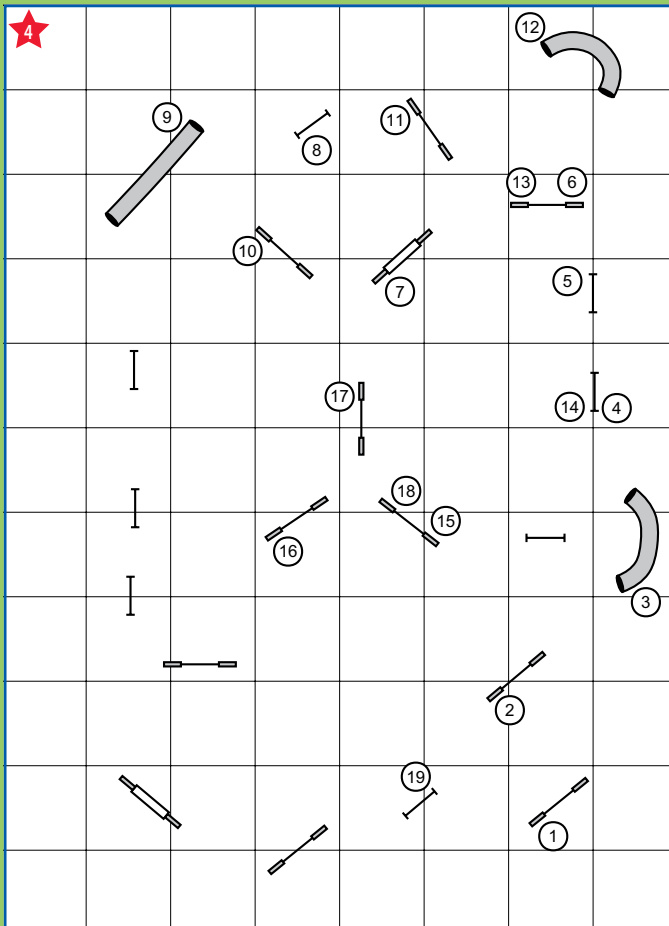
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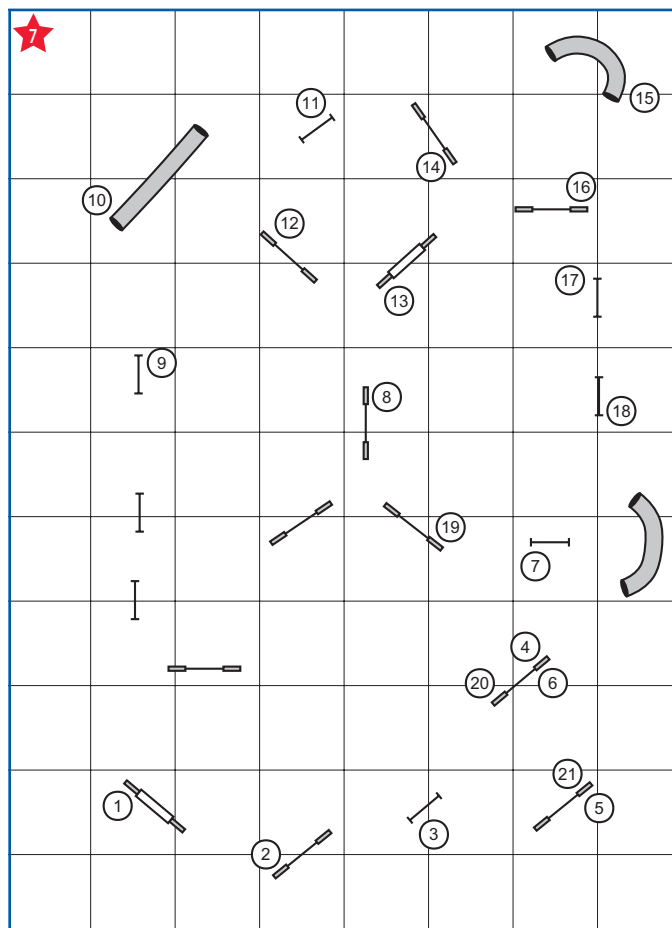
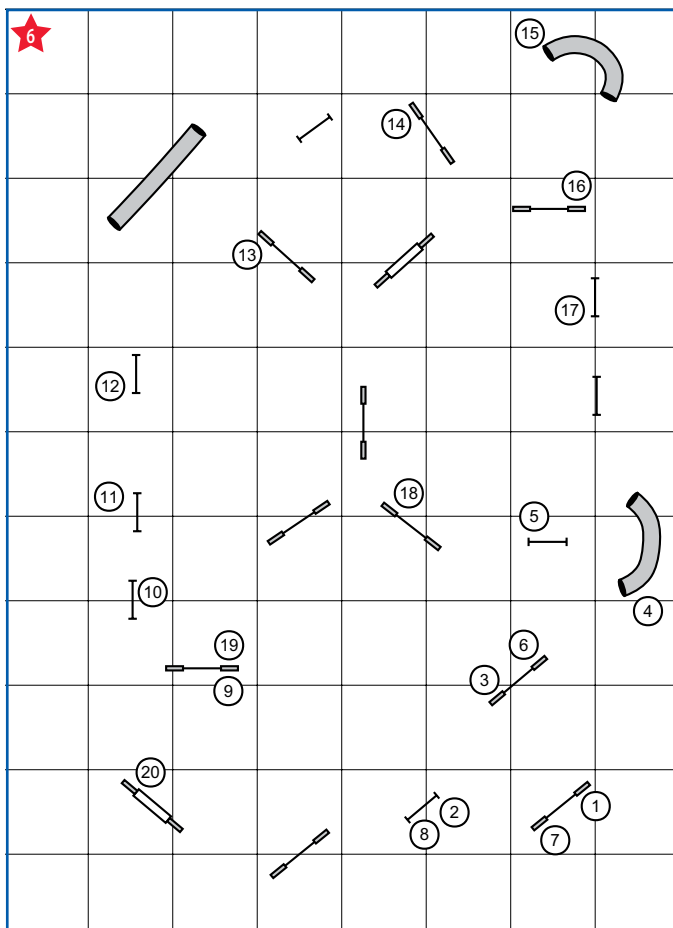
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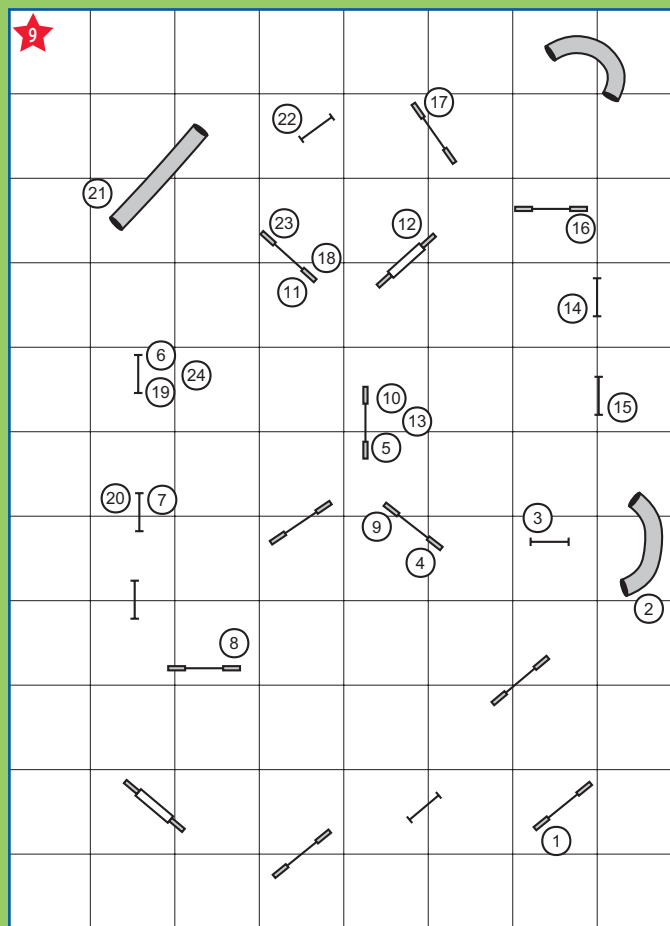
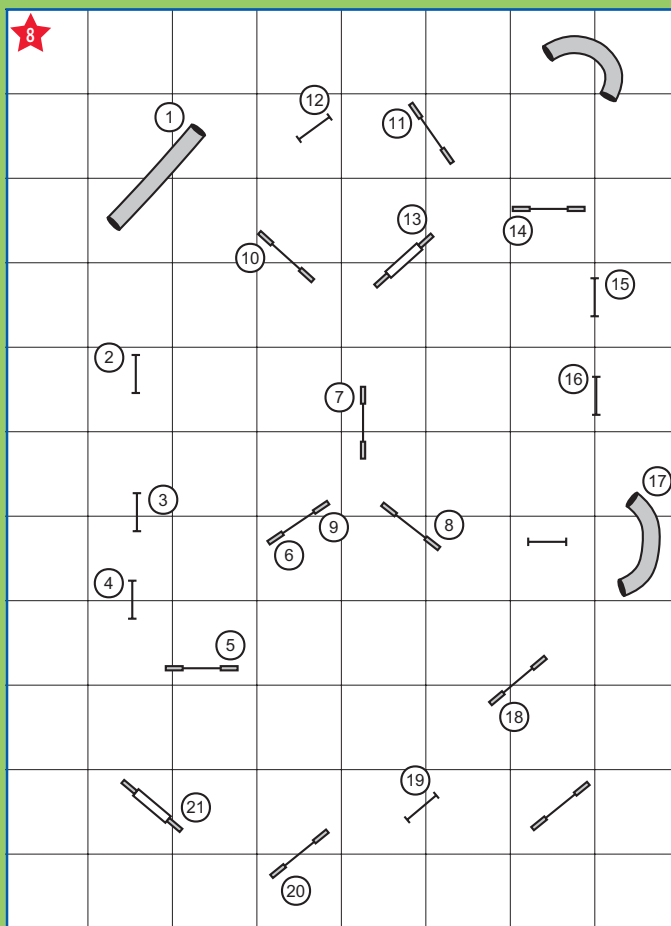
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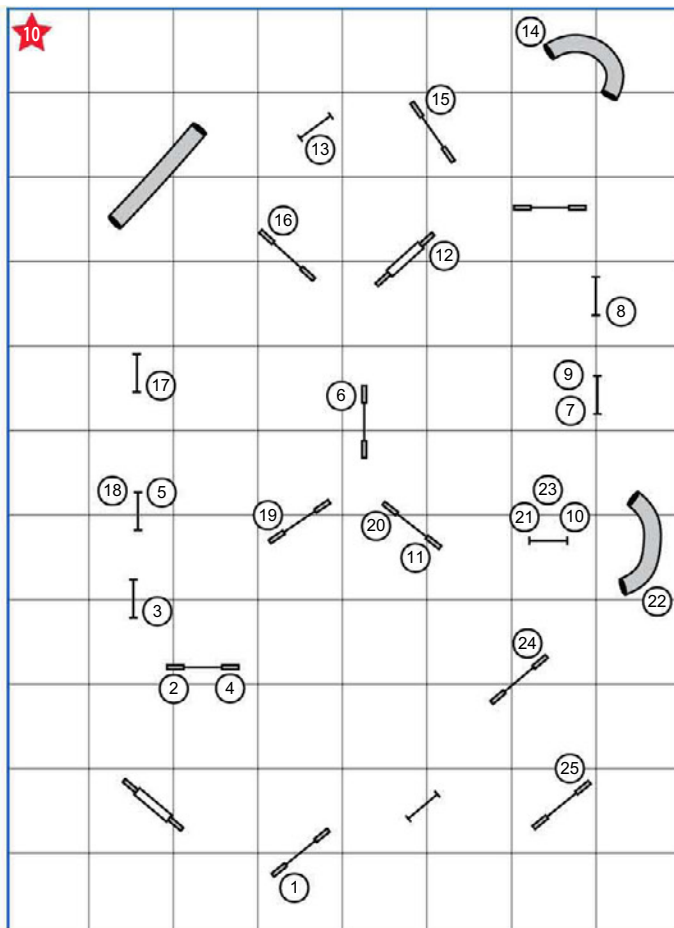
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Remember, as always, before starting any sequence, determine which skill you are trying to teach or learn and concentrate on that skill, not the sequence. Also remember that these sequences are rather long so don't try to run all of them at once. Instead spread them out over a couple of weeks of training time.

Stuart Mah, a leading innovator of canine agility in the U.S., has been active in the sport since 1989. Stuart has excelled as a competitor and as an instructor, and has competed at the highest levels of agility to include 13 USDAA Grand Prix finals and five AKC finals. He has represented the U.S. eight times in international competition. He has four dogs in the USDAA Hall of Fame. His dogs have won six national individual and team titles in AKC or USDAA. His current dog, Qwik, has also won gold, silver, and bronze medals in international competition. Stuart is a noted author and a leading expert on course design. He has written more than 30 articles for various publications on the sport of agility and has also written agility books: Fundamentals of Course Design for Dog Agility and Course Analysis for Agility Handlers.

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TREATS • OVER • TOYS

By Amanda Nelson, photos by Clean Run except where noted

I use treats for almost all of my training sessions. Most dogs are food motivated and you can provide a wide variety of exciting treats for your dog. So why do I use treats over toys, particularly tug toys? Read on and find out.

I am not against toys, and I use them sometimes in my training sessions, depending on the needs of the dog. The main problem I see with using tugs or toys for 100% of the training session is that sometimes dogs (especially high-drive dogs) can become so focused on the toy that they lose sight of what the training session is about.

I have used tug toys with dogs that need that drive and need to be turned on, but if I have a dog that is already on and has great drive, I want that dog to be thinking and learning during the training session. Many dogs become so lost in chasing their toy after the weave poles or after a contact that they can hurt themselves and the handler won't even know it until their adrenaline wears off.

How You Tug with Your Dog

But my biggest gripe with tug toys is the tugging itself. From a massage and bodywork standpoint, I have worked on many dogs that have neck and back

problems from the swinging and jerking that tugging can involve. And, as a disclaimer, tugging is also great for dogs if done correctly. Let the dog do the tugging. Let the dogs be in control of their body and determine the speed and “roughness” of the tug.

When I tug with my dogs I keep my arm lowered so the dog's head and neck are in line with the spine. I don't jerk the toy back and forth; I let the dogs choose if they want to jerk their head.

I also don't pull back on the toy. I hold it for the dogs and let them control how much they want to tug. I think tugging is a great tool in agility and I play tug with my dogs to help build strength and drive (if I need it). But I let the dogs choose how to use their body with the toy. I don't like to jerk them back and forth or pull them up in the air.

I also don't believe that to have high drive in agility dogs, they have to play with toys or tug. I think you should use



*Top: incorrect tugging
Bottom: correct tugging*

what works for you and your dog as a team. Some dogs need toys to build drive and I am all for that, but I don't believe it should be a "must" for every single dog.

Using Treats for Training

The most common thing I hear when I talk about using food treats for training is that it will teach my dog to stare at me. Some of the most amazing dogs I know are trained with 100% food; it is all in how you use it.

When I am first starting to train a behavior the food will almost always come from me, depending on what I am asking the dog to do. As the behavior training progresses, I then start asking the dog to target.

I use a clicker and a target in all of my training. With targets I do not put food down on the target plate. I teach my dogs to touch the target. Sometimes after touching the target they will come back to me, and sometimes they will go on to another target or to an obstacle.

The Moving Wait and Treat Delivery

My secret weapon in my training is the moving wait. (Video clips of a moving wait can be found on my website, www.fluid-motionagility.com/videoclips.cfm.)

A moving wait is where I ask the dog while he is running, either between obstacles or

targets, to stop or wait. I am not asking for a certain position, such as lying down or sitting. I am just asking the dog to stop.

For example, let's say I am working on a pinwheel and my dog just performed it beautifully. I want to reward him for it, so I tell the dog *Wait* and then I run out to him to treat him. After I have given him the treat, I then return to my original position and ask him to continue if there is more to the sequence or just finish over the last jump.

This accomplishes many things at the same time: I can give the reward to the dog while he is out away from me, not having to always bring him to me for a treat, which can lead to his focusing on me. This is also the first step in building confidence for distance work. Most handlers ask their dogs to come into them for a reward, for tugs and treats both. Everything that is fun always happens right next to you. I want my dogs to know that if they do something great, I will run out to them to give them a treat; they don't always have to come to me. This is an amazing confidence booster and the very first step to having a great distance dog.

The moving wait also helps me with the delivery of the food treat, because the dog never views the moving wait as a negative. (The dog sees it as "Here she comes! I must be awesome!") I can ask the dog to wait after he has done something I want to reward for, contacts, weaves, a great sequence, and so on.

Using Targets

I also use a lot of targets in my training sessions. By using the clicker I teach my dogs to touch the target with either their nose or with their feet. I then do some basic target work by asking them to move farther away from me to touch the target. I then start bringing the moving wait into my targeting sessions. For example, if the target is 15' away from me, I send the dog to the target. Once he touches it I ask him to wait, and I then run out to him with his reward and give him his treat. Next, I go back to my original position and call him to me or send him to the next target.

I want to create a thinking dog right from the very beginning of my training. By using the clicker and targets I am letting the dogs work problems out for themselves. What this will translate into is a dog that can make decisions on the course without needing my help, which in turn can create a very successful distance dog.

Where and When to Feed Treats

Another important key to training with food is not to always feed the dog in





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I am not against toys, and I use them sometimes in my training sessions, depending on the needs of the dog. The main problem I see with using tugs or toys for 100% of the training session is that sometimes dogs (especially high-drive dogs) can become so focused on the toy that they lose sight of what the training session is about.

front of you. Vary feeding the dog on each side (both left and right) and feeding in front of you. This way you won't create a dog that is always trying to get in front of your legs to get his treat.

If I am treating my dog to the side (either my left or right), I always use the hand closest to him. I do not want to reach across my body to give him the treat.

When I first start with a young dog, he will get treats very often. As the dog

begins to learn the behavior, I start to vary when he gets the treats.

For instance, the dog does a set of weave poles, and he does them all but not at a real fast speed. Instead of giving the dog the treat I pet him and tell him how good he is, but I don't give a treat. The next time when he goes through the poles he will probably weave faster because he wants the treat he knows I have. If he weaves correctly this time, I will give him the treat.

By not giving the dog a treat for every performance, even though it was correct, you create more drive. The dogs will want to put in 110% instead of the 90% they put in before.

Summary

I love using treats with my dogs. Treats are versatile and most dogs are food motivated. I am also not against using toys. I do use toys when I think that the dog needs it and when it works for us as a team. 🐾

Amanda Nelson has been competing in agility for the past 18 years and currently travels around the country teaching seminars and competing with her two Border Collies, Try and Nargles. She also runs Fluid Motion Agility, which offers two different forums, the Training Forum and the Canine Natural Health Forum. Visit her website, www.fluidmotionagility.com.

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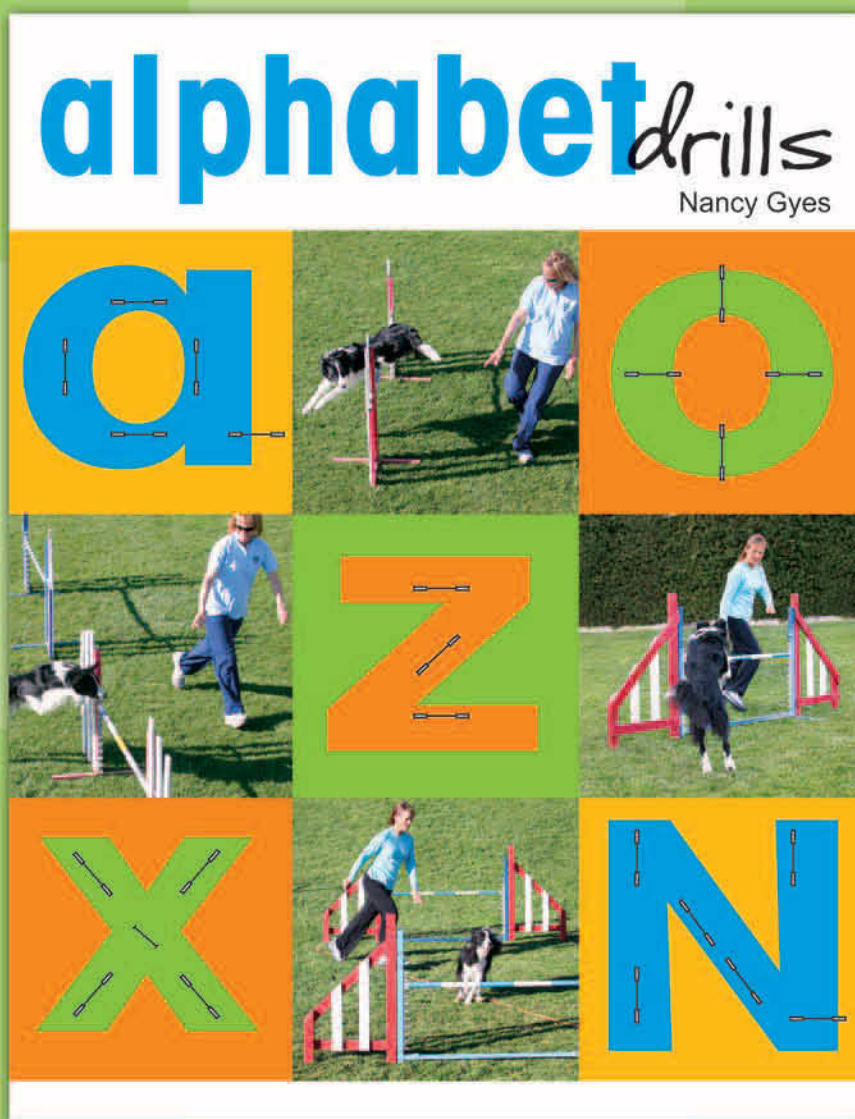
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