

AGILITY DOG CLUB OF NEW SOUTH WALES

LEVEL 1

2024
CLASS MANUAL

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Caveat

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Thank you for respecting the hard and onerous work the club put into creating this manual for you, our Instructors'.

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Acknowledgement

This ADC Instructor's manual has been created by the ADC's Chief Education Officer (CEO) Vicki CASE (2021/22).

Additionally, The ADC Committee & Sub-Committees extend their deepest gratitude to Vicki for the countless hours spent developing this manual and updating individual class manuals.

ADC also extends a big thank you to Dr Evelyn Hall for taking the work of Vicki and adapting it to align with the clubs training pathways for 2023 and beyond.

Every Dog Is Different

This instruction manual has been created as a '*guide*' to assist Instructor's as they experience the various ups and downs of agility dog training. It is not a '*one size fits all*' instruction manual, as every dog is different, and every handler will each have experienced other dogs and different levels of dog handling (i.e., obedience etc.) before attending agility classes/training.

ADC utilises the '*positive reinforcement*' training method. This method uses treats, praise, toys, and anything else the dog finds rewarding for desired behaviours. This training method makes the dog more likely to repeat the desired behaviour. Positive reinforcement is one of the most powerful tools for shaping or changing a dog's behaviour¹.

If you experience issues with an individual dog or handler during your instructing, please liaise with the Chief Education Officer/or one of the other Instructor's with a view to addressing and correcting the situation as soon as it is practicable.

¹ www.humanesociety.org

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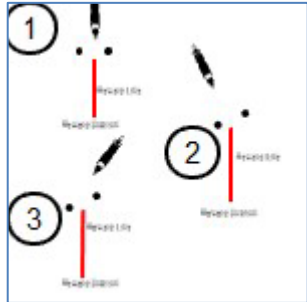
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Glossary of Agility Terms

As with any sport, agility has its language. Verbals are an essential part of agility training. They do not only allow a dog to differentiate between obstacles or tasks, but they allow the handler to, at times, be away from their dog.

Please remember that **“consistency and timing:” are paramount.**

Hereunder is a glossary of words, terms, phrases that you can/will use during an agility journey.

Skill / Task	Definition / Criterion	Suggested Verbal Cues for each skill/task
Positive Reinforcement	The use of a reward (treats, praise, toys, anything the dog finds rewarding) to achieve the desired outcome/behaviour. Positive reinforcement makes the dog more likely to 'repeat' the behaviour. Positive reinforcement is one of your most powerful tools for shaping or changing your dog's behaviour.	Good boy
Marker Word / Clicker	Verbal recognition, followed by a reward (treat or a toy) immediately, to MARK the correct behaviour.	Yes / Good Clicker
Release Word	The verbal cue to 'release' your dog from the task they are currently doing.	Okay / Break / Go / Now / Free
Start Line Stay Sit / Stay	The dog is placed in a sit, drop, or standing position, and it will not move until it is given the 'Release word.'	Sit / Stay / Wait
Recall	Dog returns to the handler (in a direct line), regardless of its doing.	Come / Here / Dog's name
'Bang Bang'	A game designed to teach your dog to become accustomed to the movement and sound associated with the See-Saw obstacle.	
'The Reward Line'	An imaginary line that is straight through the weaves.	 <p>Reward Line is the red line.</p>

Skill / Task	Definition / Criterion	Suggested Verbal Cues for each skill/task
'Take it on the Road.'	Take your dog and equipment to different locations/venues and practice your skills.	
Dog side leg	The handler's leg, which is closest to the dog.	 <p>Red line– Dog side leg Yellow line– Dog sidearm</p>
Dog side arm/hand	The handler's arm/hand that is closest to the dog.	
Landing side	The side of the obstacle that the dog lands after finishing the obstacle.	 <p>Landing side of the obstacle.</p>
Take offside	The side of the obstacle that the dog takes off from to complete the obstacle.	 <p>Take off the side of the obstacle. Photo by Michael TURNER</p>
Contact Zone	The yellow portion at the bottom/end of both sides of each piece of contact equipment (i.e., A-Frame, See-Saw & dog walk).	 <p>See-Saw</p> <p>Contact Zones circled in red.</p>
Flat Work	'Flatwork' is a term used when the handler is required to change sides whilst on the course (i.e., Front Cross (FX), Rear Cross (RX) and the Blind Cross (BX)).	
'Virtual Dog'	An imaginative dog that you visualise whilst learning new skills	

Tips for Successful Dog Training

In any training relationship, there are two parties – the trainer and the trainees (you and your dog). For training to be successful, both parties play a role.

Your (the handler's) role is to lead your training team (you and your dog), so you are well on your way to having a great dog.

Hereunder are some tips for getting the most from your team.

1. **Be prepared** - Ensuring you have all the necessary training equipment needed for both you and your dog.
2. **'Give it a go.'** Teams that complete training/courses and have participated fully in class. You are encouraged to listen to your instructor's explanations and attempt the exercises.
3. **Ask questions** – you are encouraged to ask questions during and after class. If you missed instructions or don't understand what you need to do, please ask. Our Instructors are there to help you and your dog be successful.
4. **Give yourself a break** – there are plenty of distractions when working outside in a group class situation. If you are frustrated, then it is likely your dog is having a hard time too. If this occurs, we encourage you to take a break. Give yourself a break and observe your classmates. You and your dog are both still learning whilst taking a break.

5. **Train don't blame** – When our dogs don't perform, it is easy to blame them (e.g., call them stubborn) or make excuses (e.g., they are crazy because they didn't go to the park before class). Classes teach skills and train our dogs to focus and respond to us around distractions. So please use your classmates (people and dogs) and environmental distractions (e.g., smells on the ground, birds etc.) as an opportunity to teach your dog how to behave around things that may be distracting to them.
6. **Do some homework** – Practising between classes will ensure you and your dog are ready to attempt the next step in class. You are provided with this training manual. Please use it.
7. **Celebrate your success** – Each week, you are encouraged to set you and your dog small, achievable goals. It may be as simple as a start line stay. If that is all you and your dog achieve at training for that night, then celebrate and congratulate yourself and your dog. Many small successes build on one another, and before you know it, your dog is performing for more extended periods and distance.
8. **Don't Compare** – We all learn at different paces, so please don't compare you and your dog with other teams. We (us and our dogs) have unique backgrounds, home and family situations, work commitments and skillsets. Comparing your progress with another team is a waste of good training time. Stay focused on YOUR team's goals.
9. **Most Importantly - HAVE FUN!** ²

² www.teamworkdogs.com.au

BEGINNERS – Level 1

Week 1

Exercise 1 - Conditioning the 'Marker' word (or clicker)

A 'marker' word (or clicker) is a tool utilised to bridge the time between a dog performing a correct command and receiving a reward for that command. The 'marker' word immediately acknowledges a correct action and allows the handler time to retrieve a treat and reward³.

Examples of single 'marker' words include (but are not limited to); yes, super, excellent or good. The single 'marker' word gives the dog feedback⁴.

Once decided upon, the same 'marker' word must be utilised consistently from this point forward.

1. Ensure the handler has plenty of 'good' treats that are quickly assessable, either in their hand or a treat pouch.
2. Say their 'Marker' word (i.e., okay / yes) or click the clicker and immediately reward the dog with a treat. Timing is paramount. The treat hand must not move until the word (or click) has been completed.
3. Repeat this exercise 10 times.

Now, have them use their release word (i.e., okay, break, accessible) and allow their dog to move and look around for a few minutes.

4. Start again, simply by using the 'Marker' word or a 'click', their dog should commence paying attention to them very quickly.
5. Repeat 10 more times.

It is imperative that the 'marker' word is utilised during all aspects of training and that it is followed immediately by a reward (i.e., treat, praise, the release of a toy).

Exercise 2 – Hand touch with the dog's nose

³ www.contactairlandandsea.com

⁴ www.susangarrettdogagility.com

Of all the cues utilised by dog handlers throughout the work, for dogs of all shapes and sizes, only one is so versatile that it can make a huge difference in the life of any dog, whether fearful or exuberant, puppy or senior is the simple 'nose touch.'

The nose touch is simply just the name many dog trainers assign to the behaviour called **hand targeting**. Hand targeting is the simple act of a dog voluntarily touching its nose to the handler's hand.

The 'nose touch' action can:

- Give overexcited dog's an alternative behaviour to jumping.
 - Offer a reactive dog an alternative to unwanted barking or lunging.
 - Burn energy and make walks less boring.
 - Provide a fearful dog with a "safe" option for saying hello to unfamiliar people.
 - Clarify what you want from your dog.
 - Work like a mini-recall.
1. The handler starts by placing their outstretched palm within a few centimetres of the dog's nose. The dog's natural curiosity should entice it to nudge your palm. As soon as the handler feels/sees the nudge, mark the action with "YES" or a clicker and reward the dog with the other hand. Repeat until the dog is confident⁵.
 2. Once confident, the handler can move their hand further away and, if desirous, higher. Encourage them to move forward to perform the touch. ALWAYS mark the action and reward.
 3. Once dog has an understanding of the behaviour, make it a non-stationary exercise, move around with your dog whilst asking for the nose touch in different positions.



Nose touch

NOTE: The 'Nose Touch' can also be utilised as a 'trick' in a dog trick competition or to entertain your dog at home.

Exercise 3 – 2 Tug Play

This exercise is to help you and your dog increase your connection and partnership. It is important that we play with our dogs and make learning fun for them. This means they are more likely to want to keep learning and are engaged as they do so.

You will need two toys that are long enough for your dog to grab without including your fingers!

⁵ www.rover.com

This exercise involves movement. It is not a stationary game.

1. Stick one toy (let's call it toy #2) in your back pocket (or somewhere on you where they can't see it) and start a game of tug with the other toy (toy #1).
2. Move your feet and cover some ground while you tug for added interest and so it's just part of the game.
3. Release the toy you're currently tugging (toy #1).
4. Grab the second toy (toy #2) from your back pocket and slap it on the ground while moving away, wiggling the toy.
5. Your dog should give up his (now very boring) toy (toy #1) and grab the new toy (toy #2) you're brandishing.
6. Tug and move your way over to the discarded toy, repeat steps 3 – 6.
7. Repeat several times but be sure to end on a high note, while your dog is still feeling like it's the most amazing thing that has ever happened to him.

(description above taken from: <https://www.marinhumane.org/two-toy-game-a-great-shelter-in-place-activity-for-dogs/>)

Keep sessions short (no longer than a few minutes) so that the dog does not become bored with the game. The aim is to have your dog start to learn that the fun is had with the tug that is still connected to you and that you are exciting and fun to be with!

Exercise 4 – Restrained Recall

A solid recall is an exceedingly valuable skill in an agility dog. This exercise is to help encourage your dog to enjoy being with you and to come when called, regardless of the busy environment around them.

1. Handler to attach longline to dogs' collar
2. Instructor to restrain dog while handler moves 3m away
3. Handler to call dog and run with a toy to get the dog to chase
4. Have a huge play when dog catches up to handler!

Cont. next page.

Exercise 5 – Cone work

Cone work is the start of teaching dogs to work away from the handler and also can be used as a shaping exercise if desired.

1. Each handler to have a cone in front of them
2. Have food in each hand
3. Reward dog for moving between hands AROUND the cone.
4. Try not to lure with food, allow the dog to think about what is resulting in a reward and think about repeating the behaviour.

It is important to increase the difficulty of this exercise slowly. Handler to start crouching directly behind cone. Increase distance, then change position to standing, but reduce distance back to right close to the cone. We want to build the drive of the dog to move away from the handler, but then to come back to them.

Week 2

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

2 tug game:

1. Have a tug in each hand
2. Move the tug in your left hand until the dog engages with it
3. Have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the one in your other hand.
4. When the dog engages with the 2nd tug (obviously releasing the 1st tug), have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the other.

Exercise 1A – Jump Offer (Step 1)

This is a foundation skill with the concept to get the dog thinking for itself. The goal is to eventually have the handler standing some distance from the wing in a stand upright position and the dog to continue to offer the behaviour.

'Jump Offer' is a skill we teach our dog's so that we show them that going through a jump upright pays dividends.

Teaching a dog to "Jump Offer."

1. Place the wing of a jump in front of the handler.
2. Have them sit on the ground; close to the outside of the wing, with their legs crossed
3. Place several treats in each hand.
4. Turn the wrist side of your hand on the ground, on either side of your body.
5. When your dog goes around the wing to their hand, "Mark" its behaviour and reward from that side hand.
6. Return to your position.
7. Repeat the process.

NOTE:

If your dog is only going around the wing in one direction, stop rewarding from that side/hand until they work out what you want.

8. As your dog becomes accustomed to the behaviour you want, move your body backwards & repeat. Move from a sit to a kneel; to a stand (over time).



The dog must go around the wing to get rewarded.



Have treats in both hands.

Exercise 1B – Jump Offer (Step 2)

1. The handler will stand behind a jump (with a bar – start low); with their dog close by.
2. When the dog looks at the jump/bar, “Mark” (or click) and tosses the dog a yummy treat; with the food landing on the ‘landing’ side of the jump.

(NOTE: the food must be tossed between the uprights).

3. Repeat this exercise until the dog understands the behaviour you want and is eager to jump through the uprights / over the bar.
4. Raise the benchmark by raising the level of the bar until your dog is jumping their shoulder height.

(NOTE: the dog must jump through the gap without knocking the bar).

IMPORTANT:

- When sending the dog over a jump, ensure that the dog side hand and leg are indicating for the dog to take the jump (arm/hand extended forward and the leg/toes pointing towards the jump).
- If your dog is younger than 12 months, keep the bar on the ground or at its lowest height.

Exercise 2 – Tunnel Introduction

The tunnel obstacle will be found on almost every dog agility course. As dog and handler progress up the levels of agility, a handler's ability to send their dog to the tunnel will become paramount.

The tunnel can be one of the most challenging agility obstacles for a dog to learn to navigate. The closed space, rustling vinyl, and shifting nature of some tunnels can take a brave dog to overcome. Teaching a dog to move through smoothly enhances the bond of trust between a dog and its handler and gets the dog to move its body in ways that require them to be adroit and work for several muscle groups.

Running through a tunnel can be an entirely rewarding experience⁶.

Teaching a dog to go through a tunnel:

Initially we introduce the dog to the tunnel and reward interaction with the 'new' piece of equipment.

1. The first time a dog sees a tunnel, it may be wary; however, this is perfectly natural.
2. Allow the dog to look at and sniff around the tunnel to get used to its smell, appearance, etc.
3. If the dog is exceptionally wary, consider getting the handler to get in the tunnel. This will show the dog that the tunnel is safe.
4. Again, if the dog is still wary, have the handlers position themselves at the opposite end of the tunnel. The dog will often enter the tunnel to meet its handler. Ensure the handler gives the dog heaps of praise and rewards when this happens. The praise and rewards now will ultimately make the dog enthusiastic in the future about going through a tunnel obstacle.

It may take several times undertaking this obstacle for the dog to become *au fait* with what it is supposed to do and to it without reservation.

5. Once dog is comfortable with the tunnel, have Instructor restrain dog at one end of the tunnel. Handler to stand halfway along tunnel, feet pointing forward, shoulders turned back towards dog with arm outstretched to ensure connection.
6. Instructor to release dog on handler's 'tunnel' command.
7. Handler to reward dog at end of tunnel, preferably with a tug, encouraging dynamic movement.
8. As the dog masters going through the tunnel on command, it is time to begin to add distance by the handler from the obstacle, verbally sending the dog to the tunnel.

A 'send to the tunnel' will become paramount as dog's and handlers graduate to the higher competition levels.

⁶ www.jjdog.com



(Photograph courtesy of Reegan Rollings - 2021)

IMPORTANT:

- When sending to the tunnel, ensure the handler utilises the dog side hand/arm and leg (refer to Glossary if unsure).
- The handler should look at the tunnel entrance and not move away until the dog has "committed" to taking the tunnel obstacle.
- Ensure the handler reconnects (eye contact) with the dog as it exits the tunnel.

Exercise 3 – Introduction to Tyre obstacle

Jumping through a Tyre obstacle is an essential component of agility. It is an obstacle and needs to be taught as a separate entity to the dog. It should not be considered just another kind of jump. The tyre obstacle requires a dog not to jump over something but rather through something. Dog's do not generalise well, and this obstacle is a prime example. It may not seem like a big deal because you see the obstacle as a jump. The dog, however, does not, as is proven by the number of dog's that attempt to go under rather than between a cylindrical **Tyre**.

Teaching a dog to "Jumping through the tyre obstacle."

1. The tyre is often a foreign object to the dogs, they won't necessarily innately jump through it. It becomes another shaping exercise. To start with, set the tyre on the lowest level.
2. Initially, all we want is for the dog to interact with the tyre. There is NO expectation that it will go through.
3. Reward any interaction with the tyre (sniffing, walking next to it, nosing it).
4. After rewarding, throw a treat away from the tyre to disengage the dog from the tyre, then allow dog to return back to the tyre to investigate (and get more treats!).
5. Place a toy/food bowl (with treats in it) on the opposite side of the Tyre obstacle.
6. If your dog jumps through the Tyre obstacle – Hallelujah!
7. If your dog doesn't offer the behaviour – Don't panic.
8. Place your dog on one side of the Tyre obstacle and lure them through the Tyre with a treat or toy. Remember to celebrate with your dog when they succeed at your training behaviour. After a few attempts of luring, your dog should be able to undertake the behaviour with ease.
9. Perform the exercise on both the **RIGHT** and **LEFT** sides.

Week 3

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

2 tug game:

1. Have a tug in each hand
2. Move the tug in your left hand until the dog engages with it
3. Have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the one in your other hand.
4. When the dog engages with the 2nd tug (obviously releasing the 1st tug), have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the other.

Exercise 1 – Rear end awareness/contact boards

This exercise is to help the dog understand where its feet are and to introduce the beginning of 2 on 2 off behaviour, as used for contact equipment.

This skill is commonly referred to as the 2 on / 2 off (2o2o) behaviour. The 2o2o behaviour is an essential skill for those handlers who want a 2o2o behaviour at the end of contact (A-Frame/ dog walk / See-Saw). The purpose of this skill is for the dog to learn to negotiate the platform and stop with its rear legs on the platform and its front legs on the ground and hold that position until released by the handler.

Teaching a dog to “Shape its rear legs.”

- **On the small platforms**

1. Ask the respective handler to collect a platform and place it down in front of their dog.
2. Have the handler 'Mark' or click when ANY interest is shown in the platform or any movement toward it – even if it is just your dog looking at/towards it.
3. Have the handler toss a treat away from the platform so that after their dog eats the treat before it reconnects with the handler and what it was doing. This gives the handler an opportunity to 'Mark' the behaviour as the dog moves back towards the platform. If the dog accidentally touches it, 'Mark' again and jackpot⁷ the dog.
4. Repeat, rewarding any movement towards the platform but always throwing the treat/s away from the platform so that the dog has to move away and actively seek out the platform again to earn the next reward.

⁷ 'Jackpot' means to give the dog a large reward than normal so that he/she understands that, that they just did was exactly what you wanted.

- **On the large contact boards**

1. With your dog on the left-hand side, make a wide clockwise circle so that your dog approaches the board in about the middle.
2. Encourage dog to hop onto board, then walk down to the grass.
3. Have a food bowl at the end of the board to encourage the dog to walk straight and not be bending around to look at the handler for food. The food bowl needs to be placed carefully in a spot which will ensure that the dog has two front feet off the contact board and 2 back feet on it.
4. Release the dog, continue to turn in a clockwise direction and repeat.
5. Ensure you practice handling on both sides.
6. Occasionally vary food reward with a dynamic tug play.

IMPORTANT:

- a) If the dog loses interest in the game, firstly ascertain if the handler was rewarding too slowly.
- b) Ascertain if the criteria were too high for the dog's present understanding, they are getting confused or disheartened.
- c) Was the handler missing 'Marking' the correct behaviours that their dog was offering.
- d) If a dog is losing interest, have the handler pick up your platform and take a break for a few minutes to the handler time to think about what their dog has taken away from the session thus far. Once they've both had a break, give it another try, but be sure they reward any movement that's getting the dog where they ultimately want it to be.
- e) Sometimes, the dog may require help (luring) to correct their body position and the handler's line of sight. If the dog does not understand that the platform is the core of the exercise, move the handler closer to the platform and have them ready to 'Mark' when their dog moves closer.
- f) Dogs are also very good at following a human's line of sight, so make sure that if the dog is struggling, the handler is "staring at the platform" and not watching their dog.
- g) The final goal (and it will not happen in the first week!) is for the dog to find the platform with its rear legs and hold the position until it is verbally released.
- h) To achieve this behaviour, the platform needs to be a VERY high rewarding place, so the dog needs to be heavily rewarded in the correct place multiple times to develop this understanding and receive a lesser reward for the release.

The desired outcome is seen below:



Here are some examples of items at home that the handler can utilise to continue to train this at home. It is imperative that training the 2o2o behaviour is undertaken repeatedly outside the training grounds/environment.



Several lock-in plastic tiles bound together will do the job. Can be utilised inside or outside.



A plank on a set of stairs gets the same results.

Exercise 2 – Tyre and long Tunnel

Building on tyre and tunnel from Week 2

The aim this week is to build distance and confidence on these two obstacles. Always start by setting the dog up for success, even taking things back a couple of steps to start with to ensure success.

LONG TUNNEL:

1. Encourage the handler not to go right up to the tunnel entrance; instead, have them try and send their dog by utilising a 'ten pin bowling' arm action and saying their 'tunnel' verbal (i.e., tunnel, tunnel).
2. Continue to use the food bowl or toy at the exit end of the tunnel for their first few attempts.
3. Remember to have the handlers perform this obstacle on both the right and left sides.

TYRE:

1. Start again by encouraging interest/contact with the tyre.
2. When the dog is comfortable going through the tyre and able to do so without being lured, follow the steps below to build confidence and distance.
3. As the dog is gaining confidence on this obstacle, have the handler start to move back further (Small steps – ensure they set their dog up for success).
4. Ensure they use the verbal they have for the Tyre obstacle (i.e., 'Tyre').
5. Remember to have the handlers perform this obstacle on both the right and left sides.



Flexi tunnels come in various lengths & colour combinations.



The Tyre obstacle is a 'breakaway' obstacle.

Exercise 3 – Jumps, collection and lead outs

This exercise is aimed at building confidence over a jump and teaching the dog to collect after a jump rather than simply run forward.

It is important for handlers to spend time from now in their training conditioning a sit/stay when placed in front of any obstacle. The exercise below helps the dog to start listening to the handler for cues rather than deciding itself what it is required to do.

1. Sit dog in front of a jump and ask to stay
2. Take a step forward, return and reward dog
3. Mix up the following in random fashion so that the dog is listening to the handler for the next cue:
 - a. Take two steps forward, return and reward
 - b. Take a step forward and call to go over jump and reward
 - c. Take a step sideways, return and reward
 - d. Take a step backwards, call to side and reward
 - e. Take two steps forward, call over jump and reward

This exercise can be done on ANY obstacle and is a valuable way to ensure engagement between dog and handler.

Teaching collection after a jump.

1. Sit your dog in front of the jump - approximately the dogs body length away from the jump. Start on a low jump height as they are learning a new skill (as time goes on, you raise the bar slowly until you reach your dog's correct jump height)
2. Lead out and stand on the landing side with your left side towards your dog. Your distance from the jump will also be approximately your dog's body length.
3. Call your dog over the jump. The dog should land next to you (pretty much in heel position) and not past you. You may take a small step to help guide the dog into position.
4. Repeat with your right side towards your dog as well as your back to your dog and have them stop right next to you.

Once the dog learns to collect, they learn to listen, they learn to follow the handlers body language and they learn to wait for guidance & direction etc.

Exercise 4 – Send round a pole

This is an extension of the cone work from week 1.

Start with handler standing right next to pole.

- Reward dog for moving around the pole from one side to the other (similar to jump offer)
- Slowly build up distance, continue to reward with food or tug every time the dog goes around the pole and back to the handler.
- Make sure to practice both clockwise and anti-clockwise around the pole.
- A couple of poles will be set up each week from now to graduation, available for handlers to use while waiting to use other equipment.
- Aim to be able to send dog round pole from a distance of several meters.

Week 4

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

2 tug game:

1. Have a tug in each hand
2. Move the tug in your left hand until the dog engages with it
3. Have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the one in your other hand.
4. When the dog engages with the 2nd tug (obviously releasing the 1st tug), have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the other.

Exercise 1 – Rear end awareness/contact boards

- **On the large contact boards**

1. With your dog on the left-hand side, make a wide clockwise circle so that your dog approaches the board in about the middle.
2. Encourage dog to hop onto board, then walk down to the grass.
3. Have a food bowl at the end of the board to encourage the dog to walk straight and not be bending around to look at the handler for food. The food bowl needs to be placed carefully in a spot which will ensure that the dog has two front feet off the contact board and 2 back feet on it.
4. Release the dog, continue to turn in a clockwise direction and repeat.
5. Ensure you practice handling on both sides.
6. Occasionally vary food reward with a dynamic tug play.

Exercise 2 – Jump collection and extension

A chance to continue building on success from last week with teaching the dog to collect after a jump and to listen to handler for instructions about taking the jump.

Taking a jump when told!

1. Sit dog in front of a jump and ask to stay
2. Take a step forward, return and reward dog
3. Mix up the following in random fashion so that the dog is listening to the handler for the next cue:
 - a. Take two steps forward, return and reward
 - b. Take a step forward and call to go over jump and reward
 - c. Take a step sideways, return and reward
 - d. Take a step backwards, call to side and reward
 - e. Take two steps forward, call over jump and reward

This exercise can be done on ANY obstacle and is a valuable way to ensure engagement between dog and handler.

Collection after a jump.

1. Sit your dog in front of the jump - approximately the dogs body length away from the jump. Start on a low jump height as they are learning a new skill (as time goes on, you raise the bar slowly until you reach your dog's correct jump height)
2. Lead out and stand on the landing side with your left side towards your dog. Your distance from the jump will also be approximately your dog's body length.
3. Call your dog over the jump. The dog should land next to you (pretty much in heel position) and not past you. You may take a small step to help guide the dog into position.
4. Repeat with your right side towards your dog as well as your back to your dog and have them stop right next to you.

Angles:

- If the dog and handler are successfully negotiating a jump and collecting afterwards, extend by trying any of the following:
 - Set dog up on an angle (not straight on) to jump. Handler to run in diagonal line rather than straight line next to dog.
 - Handler to collect dog after jump then continue to the left or right with dog at side
 - Continue to work on sit/stay in front of an obstacle and dog/handler connection
 - Start to add a small send to jump – asking dog to take the jump ahead of the handler

Exercise 3 – Tyre and Tunnel

Continue to build on confidence and distance with both obstacles.

Introduce a curve to the tunnel. Not being able to see the exit from the entrance is sometimes challenging for the dog.

1. Increase the handler's distance away from their dog, both laterally, forward, and behind.
2. Have the handler send their dog through the tyre or tunnel utilising their verbal cues and their body language. Remember to have the handler use their dog side hand/arm and leg to send their dog.
3. A food bowl/toy can still be placed at the end of the tunnel to help with both (1) forward drive and (2) controlling the dog at the other end.



*Lil performing the tyre obstacle
Photograph courtesy of Michael Turner*

Exercise 4 – Introduction to the Broad Jump

Broad jump

A dog will not have previously encountered this obstacle in its training. The dog must go over the obstacle, not walk on/across it.

A handler can utilise the same verbal as you do for a jump (i.e., hup, jump, over), or they can elect to use a different verbal (e.g., Big/big one).

Initially, use only 2 boards, close together. Set up as for a jump, then ask dog to go over. Some dogs automatically jump, many dogs walk over the planks. Some tips and tricks to teaching the dog to jump the broad:

- If the dog is struggling to jump the boards, use some wings from the standard jumps to put alongside the boards. This may help encourage the dog to jump, rather than walk on the boards.
- Make sure you have set your dog up far enough away from the obstacle so that they can take several paces before jumping.
- Do not move to more than two boards too quickly. Get the dog confident on a couple of boards, spaced slightly apart before moving on.
- Sometimes a running start rather than a sit stay encourages a dog to leap the boards.

Week 5

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

2 tug game:

5. Have a tug in each hand
6. Move the tug in your left hand until the dog engages with it
7. Have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the one in your other hand.
8. When the dog engages with the 2nd tug (obviously releasing the 1st tug), have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the other.

Exercise 1 – Rear end awareness/contact boards

The '2o2o' contact position training is about establishing criteria, teaching the dog how to perform those criteria, conditioning their bodies to be able to perform them and then proofing those criteria in their training program so that they learn to think and perform in trial conditions⁸.

The criteria we are working towards are:

- Front feet off equipment, back feet on
- Body straight and leaning forward
- Dog to maintain position until released by handler

On the large contact boards

7. With your dog on the left-hand side, make a wide clockwise circle so that your dog approaches the board in about the middle.
8. Encourage dog to hop onto board, then walk down to the grass.
9. Have a food bowl at the end of the board to encourage the dog to walk straight and not be bending around to look at the handler for food. The food bowl needs to be placed carefully in a spot which will ensure that the dog has two front feet off the contact board and 2 back feet on it.
10. Release the dog, continue to turn in a clockwise direction and repeat.
11. Ensure you practice handling on both sides.
12. Occasionally vary food reward with a dynamic tug play.

Exercise 2 – Tyre and Tunnel and Broad Jump

Continue to build on confidence and distance with each obstacle. Introduce a curve to the tunnel. Not being able to see the exit from the entrance is sometimes challenging for the dog.

⁸ My Agility Coach - Consistent contacts grow from great skills.

4. Increase the handler's distance away from their dog, both laterally, forward, and behind.
5. Have the handler send their dog through the tyre or tunnel utilising their verbal cues and their body language. Remember to have the handler use their dog side hand/arm and leg to send their dog.
6. A food bowl/toy can still be placed at the end of the tunnel to help with both (1) forward drive and (2) controlling the dog at the other end.
7. Start thinking about adding a verbal cue to the obstacles once the dog is familiar with what they are meant to do.

Tips if dog is having difficulty with the broad jump:

- If the dog is struggling to jump the boards, use some wings from the standard jumps to put alongside the boards. This may help encourage the dog to jump, rather than walk on the boards.
- Make sure you have set your dog up far enough away from the obstacle so that they can take several paces before jumping.
- Do not move to more than two boards too quickly. Get the dog confident on a couple of boards, spaced slightly apart before moving on.
- Sometimes a running start rather than a sit stay encourages a dog to leap the boards.

Exercise 3 – Combining a Jump & Tunnel

The aim of this exercise/training is for the handler to SEND the dog to the tunnel whilst the handler is passing the plane of the jump. The handler can then run to the other end of the tunnel to collect their dog and to recall it to the side position, and reward.

- Set up a jump then a tunnel (with a slight bend in the tunnel; just so the dog cannot see the tunnel exit).
- A food bowl or toy can be placed at the tunnel exit; however, ensure someone is there to place food in the bowl once the dog is in the tunnel or to pick up the toy if the dog doesn't go through the tunnel.
- Repeat this exercise on both the left and right sides.

Have the handler recall the dog to the side at the end of each exercise and reward.

Exercise 4 – 2 Jumps in a row

While it's exciting to start putting things together, this is a great opportunity to continue working on your dog's sit stay and ability to listen to you. Don't always send them over the jump, keep them guessing so that they are listening for directions rather than deciding themselves what is expected of them.

- Set up two jumps spaced approx. 4m apart in a straight line.

- It is key here that the handler runs in a straight line beside the jump wings and does not deviate to and from the dog.
- Hold your dog side hand out to clearly indicate to the dog where it needs to be.
- Do not stop running when next to the 2nd jump, maintain speed in a forward direction and play/reward your dog several meters beyond the 2nd jump.
- You may use a verbal such as "over", "hup" or "jump". Just make sure you are consistent!

Week 6

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

2 tug game:

1. Have a tug in each hand
2. Move the tug in your left hand until the dog engages with it
3. Have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the one in your other hand.
4. When the dog engages with the 2nd tug (obviously releasing the 1st tug), have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the other.

Exercise 1 – Rear end awareness/contact boards

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The criteria we are working towards are:

- Front feet off equipment, back feet on
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- Dog to maintain position until released by handler

On the large contact boards

1. With your dog on the left-hand side, make a wide clockwise circle so that your dog approaches the board in about the middle.
2. Encourage dog to hop onto board, then walk down to the grass.
3. Have a food bowl at the end of the board to encourage the dog to walk straight and not be bending around to look at the handler for food. The food bowl needs to be placed carefully in a spot which will ensure that the dog has two front feet off the contact board and 2 back feet on it.
4. Release the dog, continue to turn in a clockwise direction and repeat.
5. Ensure you practice handling on both sides.
6. Occasionally vary food reward with a dynamic tug play.

Exercise 2 – Combining a Jump & the Broad

The aim of this exercise/training is to extend skills with the broad and combining multiple obstacles.

⁹ My Agility Coach - Consistent contacts grow from great skills.

- Set up a jump then a broad jump.
- Sit dog in front of jump, then indicate (when handler is ready, not when dog is ready!) to take the jump followed by the broad
- Remember to maintain a straight line as the handler and have the dog side hand held out for dog to follow.
- Remember to continue running past the broad jump and reward dog several meters beyond the jump.

Exercise 3 – Post Turn

A 'Post turn' is one of the basic agility handling manoeuvres. It is an extension of the obedience heeling that dogs learn in basic obedience classes. As with all agility handling manoeuvres, it is best learnt and mastered 'On the Flat' before adding any obstacles.¹⁰

The dog will jump a jump whilst the handler rotates 180 degrees, the dog executing the jump in an arc format.

A Post turn is utilised by handlers to turn a dog on the flat or through a series of jumps.

1. Initially, have the handler start to learn this exercise without a jump.
2. Have the handler hold a treat/toy with their dog-side hand and at the height whereby the dog will be keenly attracted to it.
3. When the dog realises the handler has a treat/toy in their dog-side hand, have them start to rotate slowly (take small steps in a circle).
4. Have the handler complete several rotations, rewarding the dog progressively at a rate of 2-4 treats per rotation.
5. If the dog understands the task, the handler can reduce the number of treats allocated per rotation.
6. After about 6 attempts, the dog should understand what is required of them.
7. Have the handler set their dog up about 1 metre behind a jump.
8. Have the handler move to be standing beside the upright (right or left).
9. Have the handler release their dog and cue the jump. As the dog commits to the jump, the handler rotates 180 degrees, with their dog side arm/hand out, which cues the dog to follow the, once the dog has landed on the landing side of the obstacle.
10. The dog is to follow the handler's cues, being drawn to and rewarded from the hand furthest away from the upright.

Exercise 4 – 180-degree Turn

The 180-degree turn is a sequence that is common in agility courses. It enables the dog to take obstacles but turn (180 degrees) so that it is essentially facing the same direction from which it started the sequence. The dog returns to the same side as the handle for this skill.

This exercise is like the exercise as mentioned earlier; however, this time, there is a second jump placed alongside the first one – approx. 1m apart.

- Set dog up in front of first jump
- Indicate to take jump as handler begins to turn 180 degrees with dog side hand out

¹⁰ www.agilitynerd.com

- Dog to take 2nd jump as handler continues turning.
- Handler to step forward and reward dog beyond the 2nd jump (to avoid dog turning back to handler for reward after the jump – we want to encourage the continued forward motion).
- Recommend that the handler does not step beyond the jump uprights
- Ensure the exercise is done on both left and right hand sides.

Exercise 5 – 2 Jumps in a row

While it's exciting to start putting things together, this is a great opportunity to continue working on your dog's sit stay and ability to listen to you. Don't always send them over the jump, keep them guessing so that they are listening for directions rather than deciding themselves what is expected of them.

- Set up two jumps spaced approx. 4m apart in a straight line.
- It is key here that the handler runs in a straight line beside the jump wings and does not deviate to and from the dog.
- Hold your dog side hand out to clearly indicate to the dog where it needs to be.
- Do not stop running when next to the 2nd jump, maintain speed in a forward direction and play/reward your dog several meters beyond the 2nd jump.
- You may use a verbal such as "over", "hup" or "jump". Just make sure you are consistent!

Week 7

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

2 tug game:

1. Have a tug in each hand
2. Move the tug in your left hand until the dog engages with it
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4. When the dog engages with the 2nd tug (obviously releasing the 1st tug), have a short tug session, then drop that tug and move the other.

Exercise 1 – Rear end awareness/contact boards

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4. Release the dog, continue to turn in a clockwise direction and repeat.
5. Ensure you practice handling on both sides.
6. Occasionally vary food reward with a dynamic tug play.

Exercise 2 – Combining a Jump & Tyre/Broad

Up until now, we have kept the broad and tyre as individual obstacles to build confidence with them. Tonight, we will combine them with a jump.

- Set up a jump then a tyre or broad in a straight line.
- A food bowl or toy can be placed beyond the tyre or broad to give the dog somewhere to drive towards.
- Make sure to work on a good sit stay prior to releasing over the jump.
- Repeat this exercise on both the left and right sides.

Have the handler recall the dog to the side at the end of each exercise and reward.

¹¹ My Agility Coach - Consistent contacts grow from great skills.

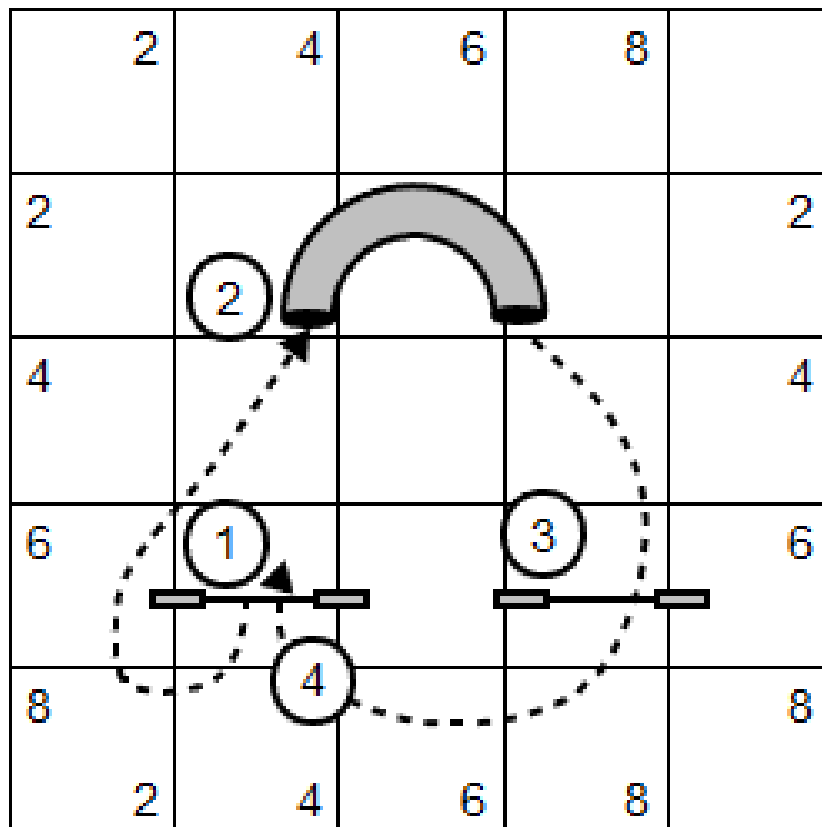
Exercise 3 – 3 x Jumps in a Row

- Place three jumps in a straight line; about 4 metres apart.
- If a dog is still required to be restrained by a lead, the handler can run beside them.
- Place a reward (food bowl or toy) at the end of the sequence of jumps.
- Place the dog in its start position (i.e., sit/stay, stand, drop).
- Walk out/lead out to where handler is comfortable for their dog.
- Handler to release dog and run with them to the end of the sequence and reward, well beyond the line of the last jump.
- Make sure to run a straight line as the handler and to have your dog side hand out showing the dog where to go. Make sure reward comes from the dog side hand so the dog doesn't run across in front of you.
- Perform this on both the right and left sides.

If a dog cannot perform a three jump sequence, then have a dog take a jump and call the dog to recall to the side position. Give the verbal for the 2nd jump and again recall to the side.

Exercise 4 – Post-turn/180 turn sequence

Last week, we introduced the post turn and 180 degree turn. This week we are putting them into a little sequence. See map below:



- Sequence can be run in both directions – with dog on left and right side.
- Try to encourage dog to enter tunnel independently without the handler having to go right up to the entrance.
- Handler is to stay in the middle of the sequence, not to go further than the line of the two jumps.

Week 8 – Putting it all together.

WARM-UP

Spend 5 minutes with your dog playing hand touch and the tug game. Make sure that you move around and don't stay in the one spot. The aim is to get your dog moving, and to start connecting with them and making them enthusiastic to learn.

This is a great opportunity for handlers to do some tricks with their dog – spin, sit pretty, bow etc. These become dynamic stretches that are great for the dogs whilst also making the dog and handler connection stronger.

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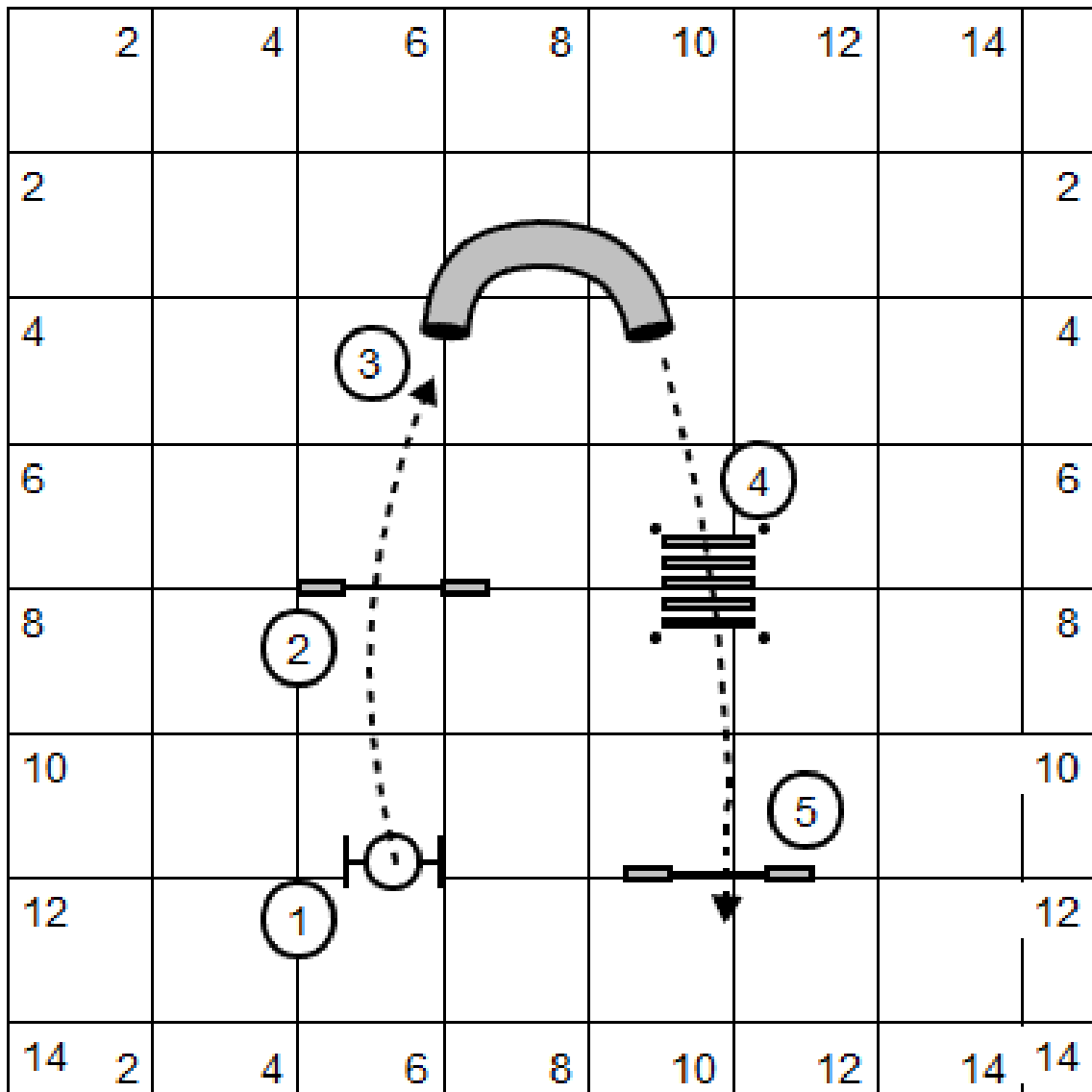
Beginner skills

The table below show you a list of what you and your dog have been learning in Beginners class.

EXERCISE/SKILL:	INSTRUCTOR INITIALS (If assessed earlier)	ASSESSED (Tick off)
Demonstrate a 'Nose Touch'.		
Demonstrate a 'sit/stay' – Handle 1 metre away.		
Demonstrate a Front Cross.		
Demonstrate a 'Send to a tunnel'.		
Demonstrate understanding of 'jump offer'.		
Demonstrate ability to jump through a tyre.		
Demonstrate 'circle work' – RHS & LHS.		
Demonstrate understanding / ability of 2o2o contact board.		
Ability to send dog over a jump (RHS& LHS).		
Ability to negotiate the broad jump obstacle.		
Demonstrate a 'post turn.		
Demonstrate a 180-degree turn.		
Ability to jump 3 jumps in a row.		

Beginner sequence

The map below shows a sequence to set up which gives dog and handler an opportunity to put these skills together. Also put out contact boards and cones/jump wings for dogs to use while waiting their turn.



Moving on up to Green Class

Well done for making it to the end of the 8-week beginner course. We hope you have had fun with your dog learning new skills! Plenty of opportunity to keep learning as you head into Green class. At check in next week, you will be told which class you are in. If you have any concerns, please chat to your instructor.

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Jumping Sequence – Front Crossing a Jump Sequence diagram.

