

Come to Side Part 4

Now that we have had a week off of working together in class on **come to side**, you should be fresh and ready to begin on more obstacle discriminations with your dog and having them **come to side** when there are two or more choices.

The most common discriminations that we see in agility are:

Opposite end of the tunnel	Tunnel / dog walk
Seesaw vs dogwalk plank	Tunnel / A frame
Correct jump in a jump box	Tunnel / table or tire

With this lesson of **come to side**, one of the major components is that you will do your best when you get even or **slightly** ahead of your dog. This often means to work lateral distance and teach your dog it is all right to work away from you. This means that during this lesson you should work on distance as well as **come to side** work. Like anything, if you only teach **come to side** you will start to lose the opposite skill, distance.

One of the ways you can strengthen distance skills is to toss a toy or food tube over/onto the obstacle, which is at a distance from you. Please remember to add distance in small increments. If your teammate is comfortable at 4 feet away from you, throw the toy at 4.5 feet away until they are successful 10 times in a row (those do not have to be one right after the other, but can be over 2-3 days). Then, add another 6 inches. Never force the dog to do more than he/she is capable of. My rule of thumb is if they fail two times in a row, back up and make it easier!

If you have taught your dog what a target is, use that target to move the dog away from you. I do not put a treat on the target but click when the dog touches their nose to the target and they throw the treat onto the target. (hopefully all of your dogs have the nose touch skill, see me if you do not) The more comfortable they are away from you the more you can get that lateral distance which allows you to get ahead of your dog.

Revisit your skills on “out” or “back” to teach the dog to leave your side and work away from you.

One last exercise; **come to side** over two jumps. Put two jumps about 18 feet apart and sit the dog about 8 –10 feet in front of the first jump. Standing about two of your dogs body lengths away from the second jump stand still facing away from your dog looking over your shoulder (sound familiar)? and say “jump-come”. Make sure the first time you do it you have a cookie in your hand. Once they do it to both left and right sides, change the angle you are standing in relation to the jump. Work the clock method.

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