

Teaching Your Dog the Front Cross

Now that you are an expert on the footwork for a front cross, having had a whole month to practice since last month's article, it's time to teach the dog how to respond to your signal.

Step 1: Flat Work

1. Have the dog walk beside you on your left, using your left hand as if you were signaling a jump (**Figure 1**).
2. When you are ready to turn, plant your right foot and pivot backward, dropping your left foot back in the direction you just came from (**Figure 2**).
3. As you start your turn, drop your left hand and raise your right hand to approximately waist height (it is becoming the dog-side signaling hand).
4. Finish the maneuver by stepping through with your right foot (**Figures 3 and 4**).
5. When the dog comes to your right hand, reward the dog from your right hand. You and the dog should be facing the direction you came from.

At first you can have a treat or toy in that hand, but quickly hide the toy or food so the dog learns that he gets rewarded for coming to your hand and that he will still get rewarded whether there is a reward visible or not. Always reward the dog from the dog-side hand. You can grab the reward from its hiding spot with your right hand or quickly transfer it from your left to your right hand.

Work the opposite side.

1. Walk forward with the dog on your right hand.
2. When you are ready to turn, plant your left foot and pivot backward, dropping your right foot back in the direction you just came from.
3. As you start your turn, your right hand should drop and your left hand should now become the signal hand.
4. When the dog comes to your left hand, reward the dog from your left hand. Work up to a few changes of direction before rewarding, and mix up the number of times before you reward (between one to four repetitions). Rewarding the dog often and stopping regularly for a game keeps this fun and interesting.



Figure 1

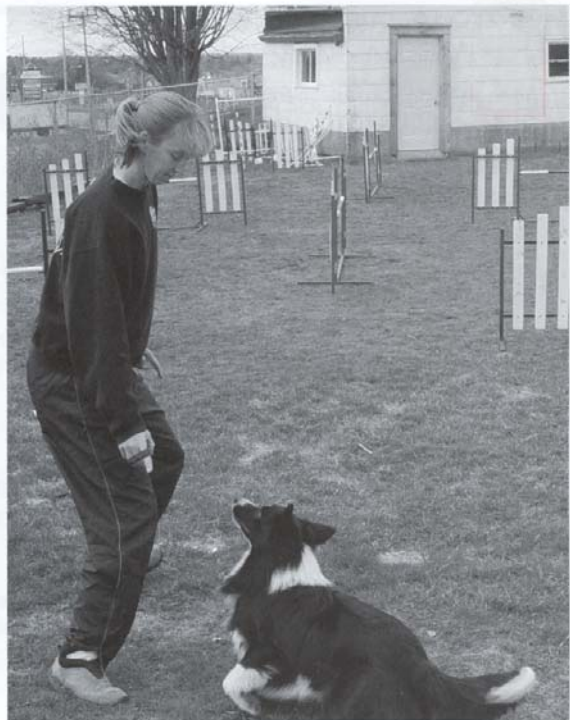


Figure 2

PHOTOS BY DEAN WANEVERA

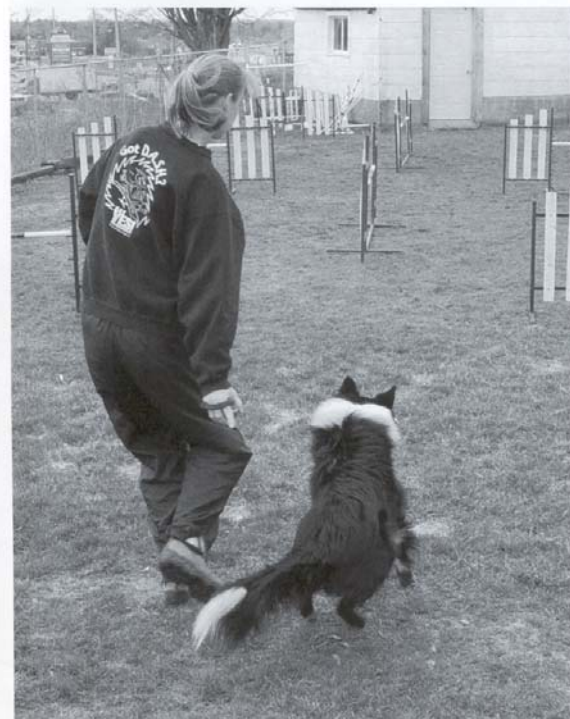


Figure 3



Figure 4

Step 2: One-Jump Work With 180° Turn

Now add a jump to the exercise in Step 1.

1. Sit the dog on your left in front of a low jump, about one stride away.
2. Lead out to the jump and release the dog to the jump, committing him to the jump with your left hand.
Note: The intent of this exercise is to work on your timing and the dog's understanding of the front cross. The dog needs to understand the basic front cross before variations in lead-out technique are added. Various lead-out techniques should be practiced separately once the dog understands the front cross.
3. As the dog commits to the jump, drop your left foot back and lift your right hand to approximately waist level.
4. Pivot in one motion so that you are facing in the opposite direction from where you started (**Figure 5**).
5. Reward the dog for coming to your right hand, the dog - side hand (**Figure 6**).

Also work a figure eight around one jump, making sure that you move your shoulders in the direction the dog is traveling (**Figure 7**). Don't be *lazy* and stay facing forward. Use this time to get the dog used to the shoulder movements you will be using.

Training Tips

- Gradually raise the bar to competition height based on the dog's age and confidence level.
- The commitment point and timing of the turn will be different for every dog. Experiment with your timing, sometimes turning early and sometimes turning late, so that you can find the correct middle ground for your dog.
- Don't rush and try to get a tight turn when you are first teaching the dog because you may accidentally train the dog to pull off the jump by constantly turning too early. Make sure he learns to commit to the jump that you have signaled.
- As the dog gains confidence, sit him further back from the jump to add some speed. Work both sides.



Figure 5



Figure 6

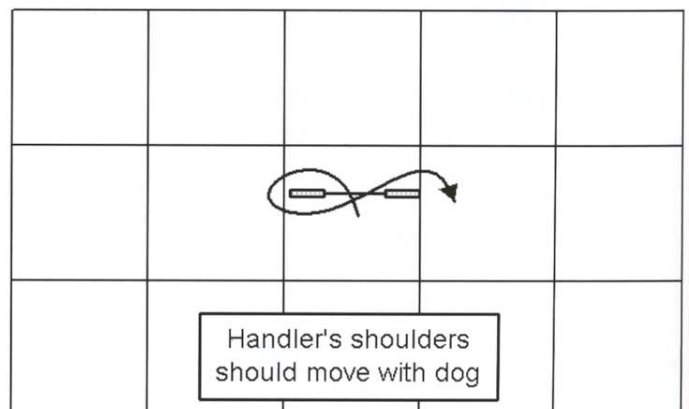


Figure 7