

Agility Level I Foundation Jump Training

Dogs that are encouraged to jump with a round style and arc from the beginning easily transition to inverted style and/or flat arcs when appropriate. The focus first should be on developing the dog's ability to jump with a round style and arcs before asking for extension.

We will ask the dog to "use himself" to facilitate an efficient, round jumping effort. The dog should be encouraged to have control of his jumping effort and control of his takeoff. He must learn to determine the appropriate takeoff distance for a given situation. He must be able to collect and/or extend his stride to do so. He must be able to convert from forward to vertical propulsion in order to be moving on course at speed and still collect to jump with a round arc. He must have a desire to jump clean and he must have an awareness of the bar. Most importantly, the dog needs to have control of his landing. This means he can stop or turn immediately upon landing.

Keep in mind that you are his teammate. Be consistent so that he learns to relate his jumping effort to your body language cues. You must develop his jumping technique and to instill in him a desire to jump clean. You must also develop the ability to work together as a team



1 My dog is using every part of his body to jump successfully. He has tucked his front legs to clear the bar and has used his rear legs to generate vertical propulsion. He is using his neck and back well also.*



2 My dog needs to get his shoulder, elbow, and carpal joints flexed to clear the bar. Jumping upward gives him time to do this. Without sufficient collection, he would jump more forward; as a result, he would not be able to flex his front legs in time and most likely would knock the bar on the ascent.*



3 On the ascent, my dog's hip joint is clearly extended.*



4 My dog's stifle and hock are maximally flexed as they clear the bar.*



5 My dog started perpendicular to the jump and initiated a turn with his rear legs still on the ground. He rotated his pelvis in the air and is landing parallel to the bar.*

** These photos show the jump at maximum height to exaggerate the points made in the text. My dog would be jumping at least 2" to 4" lower in an actual training session.*

Goals:

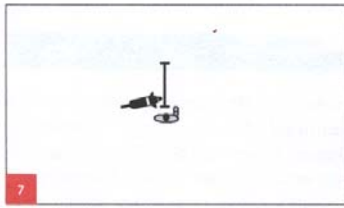
My dog learns to want to jump.

My dog learns to go over the bar without touching it.

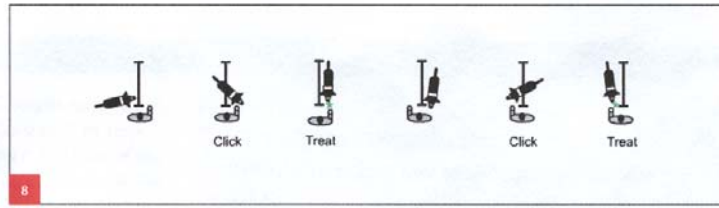
My dog looks down as he comes over the bar.

My dog is introduced to basic collection cues.

My dog confidently offers to jump back and forth from a standstill.



In the beginning I position myself neutrally right next to the jump standard. I will sit right on the ground and be ready to deliver a treat from my right hand if my dog is jumping left to right as shown here.



My goal is to get my dog to offer going back and forth over the bar. Once he is offering consistently, I must be sure to click only if my dog has cleared the bar.

Step 1

I start with a low jump about 4" high. I position myself neutrally right next to the jump standard as shown in Figure 7. I lure my dog across the bar with a treat. When he steps or hops over, I click and treat (c/t). As soon as possible I phase out the lure when my dog begins to offer going back and forth over the bar. Usually a clicker-savvy dog will only need to be lured once or twice before he realizes that going over the bar earns him a click and treat. At the start I may have to c/t any attempt; my goal is to get my dog to offer going back and forth over the bar as shown in **Figure 8**. But once he is offering consistently, I must be sure to click only if my dog has cleared the bar. It is okay if my click is a little late, but it is not acceptable if I click too early and the bar falls afterward. I sit on the ground because after the click I want to be able to deliver the treat from ground level at the base of the jump. This encourages my dog to jump looking down, which keeps his back rounded over the bar. Even at this stage, I reward with the hand that will ultimately be the hand signal I will use to cue collection (if my dog is going from my left to right, I reward with my right hand).

When the bar is very low, my dog may only step over it without actually jumping. This is acceptable because as the bar is raised my dog will eventually decide that a jumping effort is required. Often my dog will offer to jump from one side only and will circle around to return to that side for each new attempt. I simply block his path so that he is encouraged to jump from both directions. The dog may offer to put a paw on the bar, to go under the bar, to jump with a touch of the bar. These are considered "failures" and I should ignore them, which means I do not click and treat.

Step 2

Once my dog has done several successful repetitions, I raise the bar. Increments of 2" to 4" are appropriate for most dogs, but smaller dogs should have smaller increments. After several successful repetitions at each new height, I raise the bar again. If my dog has two failures in a row, I drop the bar back down to the level where he was last successful and begin again. If he is obviously uncertain, even if he is successful when he jumps, I do more repetitions at that height before raising the bar. I want my dog confidently offering the jump without hesitation before progressing. Most dogs can progress up to full competition height, or nearly so, during the first or second session. Because jumping from a standstill is a strenuous physical activity, I must be careful not to do too much at once. I always want to end a session with my dog wanting to do more.

Step 3

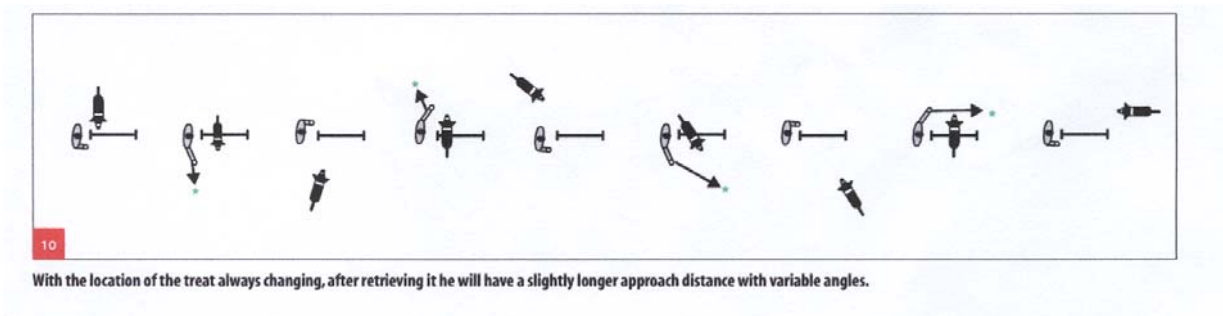
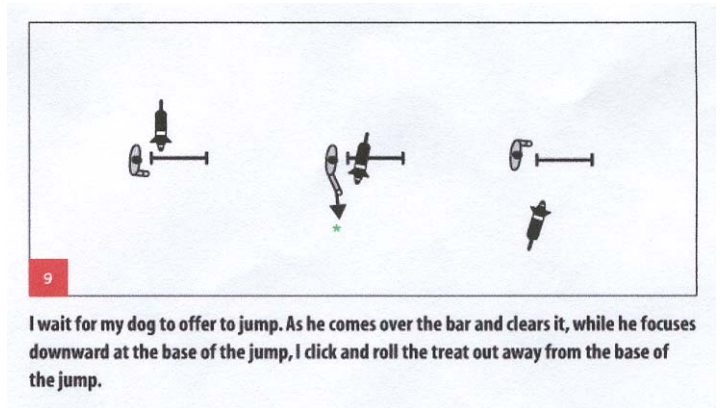
Progress to kneeling next to the jump instead of sitting. Continue to deliver the treat from the ground level to encourage the dog to jump looking down and with a round back. Bend down and release the treat or toss it to the ground. Ideally, the treat is on the ground as the dog descends not after he lands.

Progress to standing next to the jump. Still deliver the treat from ground level, otherwise you are encouraging the dog to jump in inverted form if he is looking at your hand at about jump level. At this stage you can release the treat from your hand onto the ground instead of letting the dog take it from your hand.

Step 4

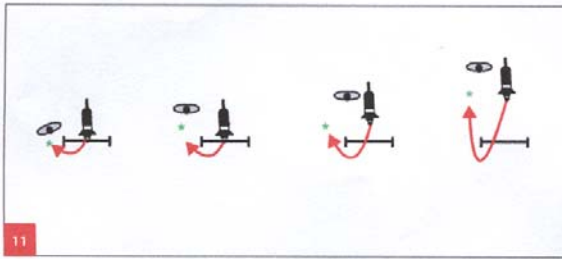
When my dog is successfully offering a full-height jump from a standstill, I begin to vary the location of the treat.* In steps 1 through 3, I delivered the treat at ground level at the base of the jump. Now if I release the treat from my hand, as I do, I roll the treat a short distance away from the jump. If I am tossing the treat, as I click, I toss it to the ground at the base of the jump so that it will roll a short distance. My dog should still focus downward as he jumps. Until now his takeoff has been essentially pre-determined for him, mostly from a standstill right next to the jump. With the location of the treat always changing, after retrieving it, he will have a slightly longer approach distance with variable angles as shown in **Figures 9 and 10**. His takeoff is now something he must determine for himself. I need to be careful not to toss the treat so far that my dog breaks above a walk on the return. All of this jumping work is done at the walk or standstill.

* I usually wait until my dog has progressed up to full height or close to it before I stand up, and before I start varying the approach distance and angle by tossing the treat. There is nothing wrong with doing so at the lower jump heights, however.

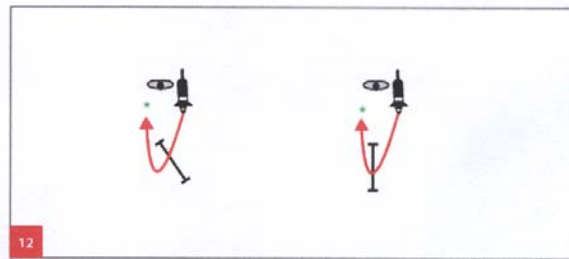


Step 5

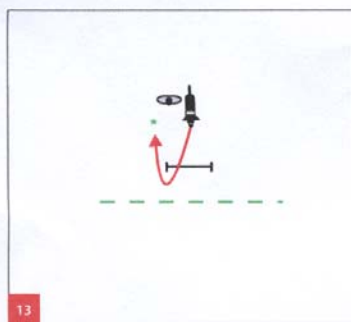
Once my dog is offering to go back and forth over a jump bar cleanly and confidently and from variable distances and angles, I gradually change my position so that I am on the takeoff side of the jump. Now my dog will have to move away from me to go over the bar as shown in **Figure 11**. Continue to deliver the treat at ground level but toss it to the takeoff side of the jump so that my dog has to turn back toward me to get it. I do not toss a treat to the landing side of the jump. My handler position on the takeoff side of a jump naturally cues collection and a turn; I do not want to train that out of my dog by tossing the treat to the landing side of the jump, which encourages extension and motion straight ahead. Gradually I change the jump so that my dog does not always have a perpendicular approach as shown in **Figure 12**.



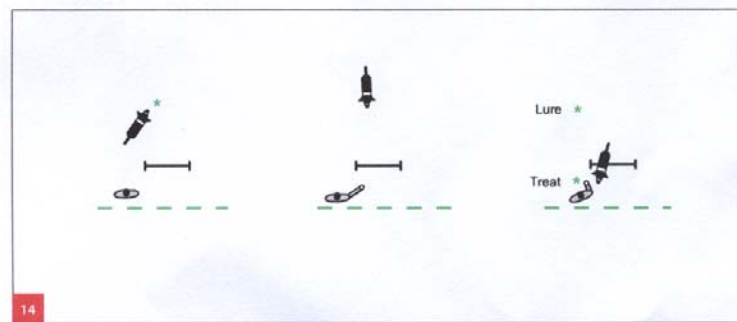
11 I gradually change my position so that I am on the takeoff side of the jump so that my dog will have to move away from me to go over the bar. I toss the treat on the ground on the takeoff side of the jump so that my dog has to turn back toward me to get it.



12 Gradually I change the setup so that my dog does not always have a perpendicular approach to the jump.



13 I move the jump close to a solid obstruction such as a wall so that my dog becomes used to having a physical barrier controlling his landing.



14 Gradually I change my position so that I am on the landing side of the jump and facing him. I want my dog to offer to jump coming toward me. I toss the treat on the ground on the landing side of the jump at my side so that my dog has to stop there to get it. As he consumes it, I toss another back out to the takeoff side of the jump to give him a new approach distance and angle similar to Step 4.

Step 6

In this step I move the jump close to a solid obstruction such as a wall or piece of cardboard so that my dog becomes used to having a physical barrier controlling his landing -shown in **Figure 13**. Done gradually, my dog should be totally comfortable with this since he is still jumping from a walk with a round arc and with close takeoff and landing. The physical barrier should eventually be almost as far away from the jump as the jump is high.

At some point while my dog is retrieving his treat on the takeoff side of the jump, I move so that I am on the landing side of the jump facing him (with the physical barrier behind me) as shown in **Figure 14**. The handler position on the landing side facing him naturally cues collection and a turn. I want my dog to offer the jump coming toward me. I toss the treat on the ground on the landing side of the jump at my side so that my dog has to stop there to get it. As he consumes it, I toss another back out to the takeoff side of the jump to give him a new approach distance and angle similar to Step 4. At this stage my dog should still be offering to jump, so I do not want to put him on a sit-stay or recall him over the bar. I click as he clears the bar, treat him on the ground at my side, and then toss another treat out to the takeoff side, not as a reward but as a lure to help reposition him for a new approach.

Step 7

At this point the dog should be confidently jumping a single bar at or near full height. If so, this is a good time to introduce specialized jumps such as the tire, panel, double, and triple. Each of these can be introduced starting back at 4", progressing to full height as the dog's confidence and physical ability allows.