

More Foundation Training 2

By Linda Mecklenburg (CR Mar 06 Part 3)

Note: Before you start the exercises in this article, your dog should be confidently offering to jump one jump at or near full height.

Verbal Commands and Hand Signals

All of the exercises this month are done without verbal commands or hand signals. My dog should be offering to jump. I click and treat if he jumps successfully and I do not click and treat if he does not. I want my dog to learn to want to jump and to want to jump clean. I want him to continue to think about his jumping form and about my body language cues.

Body Language Cues

My dog will respond to body language when approaching a jump. My position, physical cues (shoulder direction), and motion naturally affect my dog's striding and jumping, and they help determine whether he jumps with collection or extension. I can influence my dog with training, but I should be consistent with my body language cues from the beginning of my dog's foundation jump training so that my dog will maintain his natural responsiveness to them.

Position Cues

On course, my position relative to my dog and to the jump naturally cues my dog to jump with collection or extension. Last month I introduced position cues while I was stationary and my dog was offering to jump a single jump. I used both takeoff and landing-side positions for collection. It is important to recognize that it is difficult to isolate position cues without my dog also taking direction from my shoulders. When I use position cues, my shoulder direction will cue my dog as well. I must make sure that my shoulder cues support my position cues. See my article in the February 2006 issue of CR.

- ◆ **Takeoff side**

When I am positioned facing my dog or facing forward on the takeoff side of a jump, my dog will naturally jump with collection.

- ◆ **Landing Side**

When I am positioned facing my dog on the landing side of a jump, my dog will naturally jump with collection. When I am positioned facing forward on the landing side of a jump, my dog will naturally jump with extension.

Motion Cues

On course, when I am decelerating or moving laterally as my dog approaches a jump, my dog will jump with collection. Then I am accelerating or moving forward as my dog approaches a jump, my dog will jump with extension. Motion cues are my primary signal to help my dog use his jumping skills appropriately.

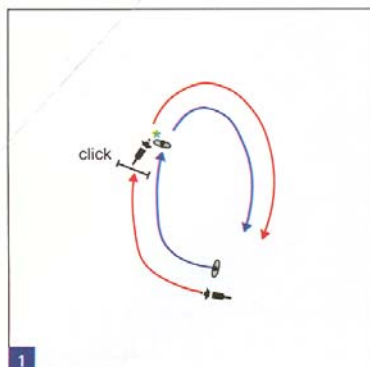
This month's exercises will introduce motion cues into my dog's jumping training program. I start by walking with my dog at my side in heel position. See my article "Using Heel Position in Agility" in the July 2004 issue of CR. I do not give my dog a command; I want him to stay with me because he gets a click and treat if he does. As he walks at my side, I practice basic turns on the flat. I also perform front crosses, rear crosses, shoulder pushes, and shoulder pulls. I click and treat each time my dog turns with me and returns to my side.

- ◆ **Forward Motion**

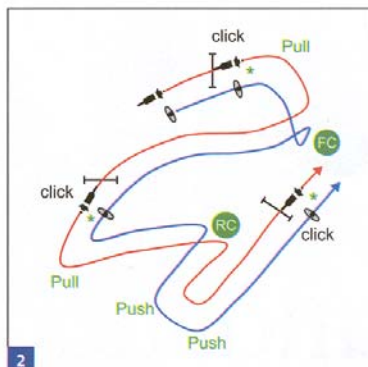
With my dog walking calmly by my side, I walk past a jump. Because he has become accustomed to offering to jump, he will jump as I walk forward past the jump. If he jumps clean, I click and deliver the treat low and at my side. I continue to walk with my dog at my side, randomly walking past a jump. Each time I walk forward past a jump, my dog should offer to jump. I click and treat (c/t) if he succeeds as shown in **Figure 1**. I will approach the jump at various angles.

*Note: The green asterisk * in the diagrams denotes where the treat is delivered. The red octagon • denotes where to stop.*

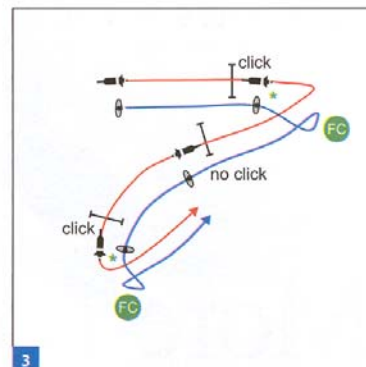
There can be several jumps randomly situated about the training area; I walk among the jumps with my dog at my side and randomly select one. Each time I walk forward past a jump, my dog should offer to jump. I c/t if he succeeds. I perform turns on the flat on the landing side of the jump(s) and I use shoulder pulls and shoulder pushes as seen in **Figure 2**. Occasionally, after my dog offers a jump, I delay his c/t until after I have walked past a second jump. This is my dog's first sequence, performed at a walk, as shown in **Figure 3**. My dog should be lofting over the jumps at the walk.



1
I walk with my dog at my side and walk past the jump. My dog should offer to jump. I click and treat (c/t) if he succeeds, delivering the treat low and at my side. I continue to walk with my dog at my side, randomly walking past a jump (c/t for jumping).



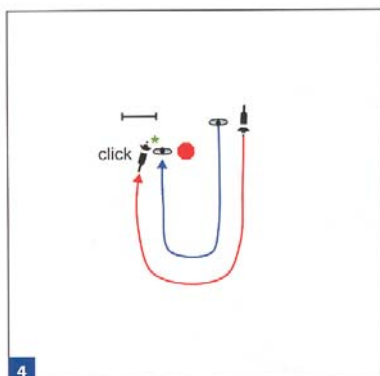
2
I walk with my dog at my side and then past a jump. My dog should offer to jump. I c/t if he succeeds. I perform turns on the flat on the landing side of the jump(s). I also c/t each time my dog turns with me and returns to my side (not shown).



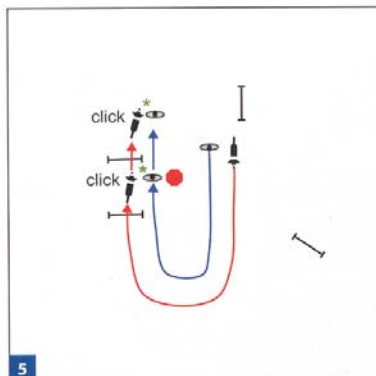
3
I walk with my dog at my side and then past a jump. My dog should offer to jump. I c/t if he succeeds. I walk past a second jump. I delay his c/t until I have walked past a third jump and he has offered to jump. I c/t if he succeeds.

◆ **Deceleration**

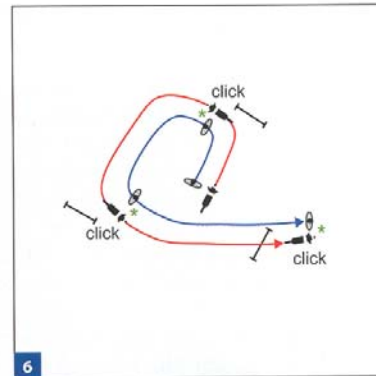
When my dog consistently offers a jump when I walk forward past it, I walk toward a jump and stop on the takeoff side as illustrated in **Figure 4**. At first I stop several feet from the jump, but gradually I decrease the distance from the jump. I c/t each time my dog stops with me. If he offers the jump, I do not c/t. I want him to learn that he should be aware of my motion, not automatically offer the jump. I alternate walking forward past a jump (c/t for jumping), stopping in front of a jump (c/t for stopping), walking forward past a jump (c/t for jumping), turning (c/t for turning), walking forward past another jump (c/t after second jump). When my dog perceives forward motion past the jump, he should offer to jump it. If I am decelerating to a stop, he should stop with me.



4
I walk toward the jump with my dog at my side and stop on the takeoff side. Each time my dog stops with me, I c/t. If he offers the jump, I do not c/t.



5
I walk forward past the first jump of the pair and stop. My dog should offer to jump. I c/t if he succeeds. If he offers the second jump, I do not c/t. He should be stopped between the two jumps when I deliver the treat. I walk forward past the second jump. My dog should offer to jump the second jump. I c/t if he succeeds.



6
I walk toward the jump and ask for turns on the flat on the takeoff side of the jump. I start with a shoulder pull. I c/t each time my dog turns with me and returns to my side. If he offers the jump, I do not c/t.

Several jumps can be randomly situated about the training area; I will set a pair of jumps in close proximity (about 4' to 6' apart). I walk among the jumps with my dog at my side and randomly select one. Each time I walk forward past a jump, my dog should offer to jump. I c/t if he succeeds. Occasionally I select the first jump of the pair. I walk forward past the jump and stop. I c/t when my dog offers the jump. Then, I walk forward past the second jump. I c/t when my dog offers the jump. This is my dog's first grid-like sequence, performed without speed, as shown in **Figure 5**.

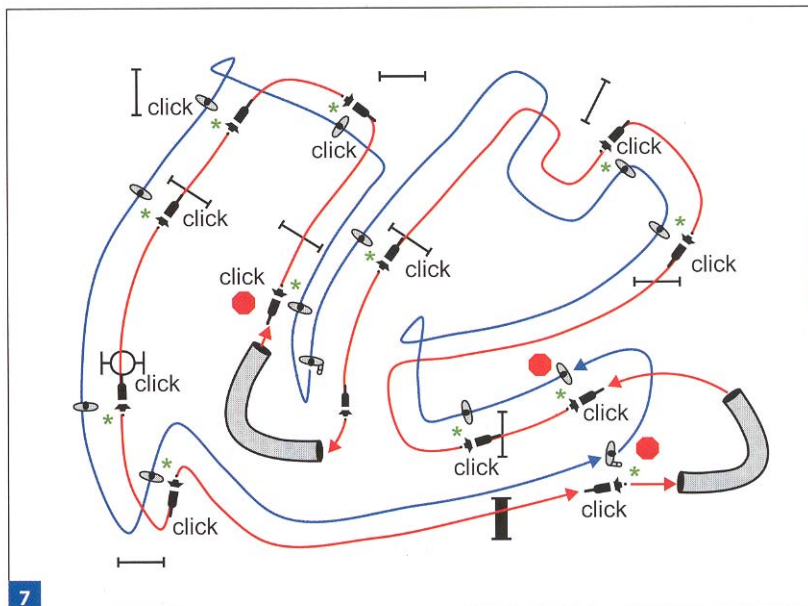
◆ **Lateral Motion**

When my dog consistently offers a jump as I walk forward past it, I walk toward a jump and ask for turns on the flat on the takeoff side of the jump. I start with a shoulder pull as seen in **Figure 6**.

At first I turn several feet from the jump, but gradually I decrease the distance from the jump when I turn. I c/t each time my dog turns with me and returns to my side. If he offers the jump, I do not c/t. I want him to learn that he should be aware of my motion, not automatically offer the jump. I alternate walking forward past a jump (c/t for jumping), performing a turn on the flat on the takeoff side of the jump (c/t for turning), walking forward past a jump (c/t for jumping), turning, walking forward past another jump (c/t for jumping). When my dog perceives forward motion on the approach to the jump, he should offer to jump it. If I am moving laterally on the takeoff side of a jump, he should turn with me. As with position cues, it is difficult to isolate motion cues without my dog also taking direction from my shoulders. For these walking exercises, my direction of motion is my primary cue but my shoulder direction will cue my dog as well. I must make sure that my shoulder cues are consistent with my motion cues.

Putting it Together

Several jumps can be randomly situated about the training area including tires, spreads, and panels—all set at various angles and distances from one another. There can even be tunnels scattered about. I walk among the obstacles with my dog at my side and randomly select a jump and walk forward past it. At this stage we are both walking, and my dog is still offering the jump. I have not used a verbal command or hand signal. Each time I walk forward past a jump, my dog should offer to jump. I c/t if he succeeds. Occasionally I decelerate and stop in front of a jump. My dog should stop with me. I c/t if he succeeds. I perform turns on the flat on both the takeoff and the landing side of the jump(s). My dog should turn with me. I c/t if he succeeds. Occasionally I will let him go through a tunnel, but he must return to my side as we continue walking among the obstacles as in **Figure 7**. My goal is that my dog learns that he should be aware of my motion, not automatically offer the jumps.



7 I alternate walking forward past a jump (c/t for jumping), stopping in front of a jump (c/t for stopping), walking forward past a jump (c/t for jumping), turning (c/t for turning), walking forward past another jump (c/t after third jump), and so on. When my dog perceives forward motion past the jump, he should offer to jump it. If I am decelerating to a stop, he should stop with me. I practice turns on the flat on both the takeoff and landing sides of the jumps. If I am moving laterally on the takeoff side of a jump, he should turn with me. Occasionally I will let him go through a tunnel, but he must return to my side as we continue walking among the obstacles.

Next month we'll discuss introducing verbal commands and hand signals.