

Intro to Agility Week 2 Student Notes

Game of Chase (Restrained Recalls):

1. Break into partners. The holder should be neutral so the focus is on the owner. One holds the other's dog. Owner runs away from dog and then calls dog by his name using a high, happy voice and keeps running when partner releases dog. Reward dog for coming, and be sure the dog comes to the correct side of the handler (the one that is turned toward the dog). A herding dog may try to outflank you and come into the other side; turn your shoulder more toward your dog to try to prevent that. Call dog to left and then to the right side.
 2. Next, run away, stand still and call dog to you. Run as dog comes. Reward with toys.
 3. Run away, then stop and call. Reward.
- ◆ Do not lure with a toy. Show and give the toy only when dog comes and is a couple of feet away.
 - ◆ Maintain a visual connection during these exercises.
 - ◆ If no other person is available, do it using a sit/stay.
 - ◆ With another person holding, the dog's name is enough of a release word. If using a sit/stay, use release word.
 - ◆ Try restrained recalls at start line, on contact equipment, etc.

Rewarding with correct hand

- ◆ Reward with hand nearest dog, palm down near handler's leg (when dog is on left side, treat with left hand palm down; and vice versa)
- ◆ Treat facing in direction you're going
- ◆ Reward only when dog is at handler's side
- ◆ Do not treat from either hand if dog faces handler or stands in or crosses path
- ◆ Do not treat from either hand if dog comes in behind or cuts in behind handler

Keeping Dog in Vision

Agility is about communication with your canine partner. It is important that both the dog and handler know where the other is at any point on the course. Your dog will keep you in sight using his or her broad peripheral vision. You can direct your dog smoothly around a course until you lose sight of each other. Avoid "disconnects" and you'll avoid errors on the course. Using peripheral vision you can learn to watch where you are going and keep your eye on your dog maintaining that important contact with your partner.

Sit and Stay:

Have dog sit at side and feed for doing so. Take one step away and go back and feed. Don't say stay, dog should stay until released with ok or release word. If they break go back and gently replace dog in the sit and start over. Make sure you don't move any body parts on the release word. The dog must learn to move only on the verbal ok. This leads to a strong start line stay for lead-outs and table work.

Basic rules of handling:

- ◆ Always keep your eye on your dog. This allows you to react quickly and maintain a connection with your dog.
- ◆ Use arm and leg nearest your dog to direct it. This is clearest for the dog to see.
- ◆ Face the way the dog is going until it is fully committed to an obstacle. This will keep the dog powering forward and give a clear signal and prevent many faults such as poles down and refusals.

Verbal commands

Verbal commands should be used if the dog completely understands them through consistent and clear training. Proof the command so the dog carries out the behavior solely on that word with no physical signal present. Verbal commands are important especially when the handler is in the wrong place and is therefore probably giving a contradictory physical signal. Useful verbal commands include:

- ◆ To turn left
- ◆ To turn right
- ◆ To go straight ahead.

The most important cue is your dog's name. The dog's name is an attention command, meaning watch me and I'll show you where to go.

Visual v. verbal signals

Body language is a very important lesson to teach new handlers. Most are unaware that dogs pick up on visual signals far more than voice commands. Start thinking about what your body position is telling your dog from the very beginning. Doing each exercise left, right, in front and from behind is useful so you begin to understand how important good body language is to the dog. I often have my classes run with body language only and no voice commands and then do the same run keeping their arms tight to their bodies and only using their voice. It is interesting to see the difference, body language counts for so much and this clearly shows the importance. You also often find noisy dogs bark less when no voice commands are used. They don't get into a shouting match with their handler.