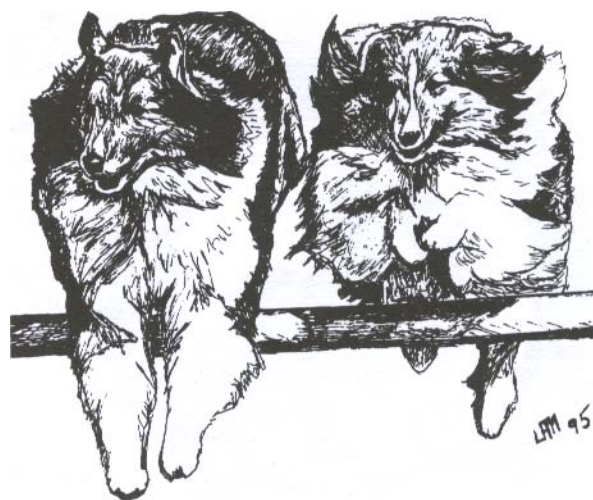


## Student Notes- Intro to Agility Week 3

When teaching a dog to jump, you should raise his jump height only incrementally, say an inch a week. The dog must learn to jump the higher bar not only with his muscles but with his brain. Don't be in a big hurry.

The worst case is the dog who has been routinely jumping 6" below his regulation height. Then, on the day the dog turns eighteen months of age, the handler raises the jump height the full remaining 6" and takes the dog to a show.

The handler *might* get away with this. It's more likely, on the other hand, that the dog and handler will have a long weekend, full of refusals.



### Homework: Go Around!

This exercise is ideally performed using barrels. However, it could be done with trees, traffic cones, or buckets. The objective of the exercise is to teach your dog to send away and go around the barrels.

Set the barrels about 20' apart. You stand in the middle. Send your dog out to go around one of the barrels, call the dog to come back to you, and then send the dog out to go around the other barrel. Piece of cake, right? Actually, you'll be amazed at how simple this is to teach your dog.

Follow these steps:

Initially, you will go out with your dog to each of the barrels. Read the article, "Go On" for more information.

1. Use your dog's favorite treats and a clicker to teach him around the barrel as shown in Figure 1. If your dog is on your right, use your right hand and right foot pointed directly toward the right edge of the bucket. Your upper body should be slightly inclined forward. Your shoulders should be facing the bucket and you should not turn them to encourage the dog to turn around the bucket. In these drills you should have straight shoulders and feet pointed to where you want your dog to travel. As soon as he begins to head toward the barrel and go around, you promptly click and give the treat. It's important that you don't go around the barrel or lure your dog around the barrel. You have to remain on the inside, while the dog goes around the outside. (Who's training whom, after all!) Keep clicking and treating all small approximations leading toward the final outcome of him moving around the barrel. Be patient and wait him out. If he takes one small step in the correct direction, click and treat. Reward him in the direction you want him to go; don't reward him so he has to turn back towards you to get the treat. Your patience will allow him to think and to learn.



Figure 1



Figure 2

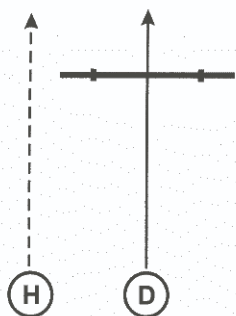
2. When your dog is happily going out around one barrel from 10' away, you will add the second barrel to the exercise. When the dog returns to you from the first barrel, pivot around, and send him to the second barrel as shown in Figure 2. As with the first barrel, you may initially have to go out with your dog to coax him around the second barrel.
3. Gradually put more distance between you and the barrel.
4. Start associating a command with the exercise-command your dog to *Go Around!*

## Obstacles for Backyard Training: Jump & “Dogwalk”

### Backyard Jumping

For beginning canine jumpers, your jump should only be about 6" for little dogs or 12" for big dogs. Use a 5' piece of 1" PVC sitting on top of two cinder blocks.

Say *Jump!* and lead your dog over the jump. Immediately give a food treat.



*Work the dog on your right-the off-side position until you are both comfortable. Give immediate praise and reward as the dog clears the jump.*

If your dog refuses to jump, he does not get the food treat. Do not chastise the dog or otherwise make an emotional correction. That will not motivate the dog to come out and play agility. Simply withhold the treat and the praise. The dog will ultimately figure out what behavior earns the treat and praise, and what behavior earns him nothing. You must be very patient.

During the initial stages of agility training, most handlers want to perform all obstacles with their dog in heel position (dog on your left). Here's an exercise you can start practicing at home that will hold you out from the crowd at class. This is an **off side** jump, which means you start with your dog on your right side (opposite the

traditional obedience or heel-side position) as shown in the illustration on the left. If you're accustomed to training and competing in obedience you may be reluctant to do this in competition. The solution is to do it in practice until both you and your dog are comfortable.

If you have worked on and mastered the above jumping exercise, you are ready for something more advanced. For these new exercises, a Flexi-Leash may be helpful to direct the dog over the jump.

**NOTE:** When using any kind of lead with the dog, *always* give the dog enough slack to be able to perform the jump without being jerked away while committed in the air.

### Call Over: Dog in Short Position

The exercise shown in Figure 1 positions the handler on the side of the jump opposite the dog. You begin in a straight line and close to the jump. The dog should be positioned no more than 10' from the jump. Work in this fashion (every day, five or six minutes maximum) until the dog is performing without hesitating or refusing the jump. Then, *gradually* move farther away from the jump and to one side or the other. The dog's starting position remains constant.

### Call Over: Dog in Long Position

Begin the exercise illustrated in Figure 2 *only* after the dog has mastered the call over from the short position. Give a crisp hand signal and add a bit of body movement towards the jump. Start the dog near to the jump, but gradually move the dog farther back and position him at different approach angles to the jump.



Figure 1



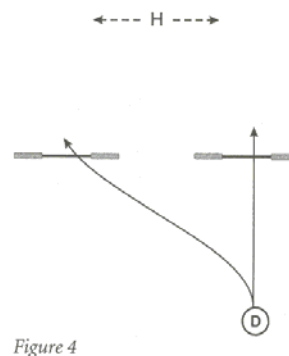
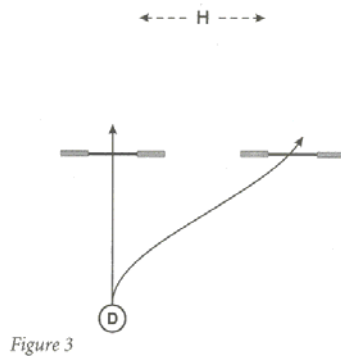
Figure 2

Once the dog is adapting his approach path to the jump, regardless of the angle at which he is set up to approach the obstacle, then you can experiment with your own position, sliding to the left or right. Use your hand (in this case, the hand closest to the jump) to give the dog a signal to the jump. The hand acts like a flag, directing the dog towards the jump. Don't wave or jerk your hand, use a steady motion and hold your arm out to support your dog taking the jump.

## Call Over: Dog's Choice

Add a second jump to the call over exercise only after the dog has mastered the long position exercise. The exercise illustrated in Figures 3 and 4 will begin to tune your dog to your signals: your hand signal and use of body movement.

Position your dog as shown in Figure 3 and go to the other side of the jumps. You are going to alternately perform each jump, starting the dog from the same position each time. Give the dog a clear hand signal to the jump you want him to perform (use the hand on the same side as the appropriate jump) and slide laterally towards that jump. Once the dog is happily performing each jump, try the exercise in Figure 4. Don't be distressed or impatient by early setbacks. If the dog attempts to come between the two jumps, stand closer to the jumps when you begin the exercise. Remember, you and your dog are learning to communicate: You are learning to use a clear and unambiguous signal; your dog is learning to interpret and act on that signal.



## Backyard Dogwalk – The Travel Board

Go to your local lumberyard and buy yourself a 2" x 12" board that is 12' long (or if you don't have a lot of room at your house get an 8' long plank). Get a pressure-treated board if you don't want it to warp. A treated board is a bit more expensive, but worthwhile in the long run.

Prop the board up on two cinder blocks. Make sure it's nice and sturdy with little or no wobble. Now you're ready to begin an "at home" dogwalk training program that will put you a step ahead of the competition. For now you should use a lead in your training. At one end of the board encourage your dog to get up on the board. Click and treat. Now walk briskly with the dog to the other end of the board and give him a favorite food treat. Release the dog off the board with a quiet *Okay*. Next, place your target on the ground at one end of the board. Say, "target" (he's good at targeting now, right?) and encourage him to come off of the end of the board with just his front feet while his back feet are still on the board. As his nose touches the target (we are looking for enthusiastic touching) reward low, just above the target. Don't allow him to step off until you've released him ("OK"). This is the start of this contact training for the dogwalk and A-frame.

**NOTE:** Do not give your dog a treat after he leaves the board. The treat should always be given while he's actually on the board! Also, do not use a ball or toy motivator when doing dogwalk training. The dog may perceive toys as a reward for getting off the board before you release him. That's not what you want to do in the early stages of training.

## Teaching the Table

### 1. Teaching the Table as Recall.

Have someone restrain the dog or have them do a sit stay in front of the table, and place yourself on the opposite side. Call the dog directly up onto the table, reward, with a cookie or toy, and repeat. Keep moving the dogs position further away from the front of the table, and your position

further away from the back of the table. As the dog hits the table, step in to praise & pet, or click and treat. Continue until you can be 20 feet behind the table, and the dog can run from 30 feet in front at speed and not jump off the backside to get to you. If the dog jumps off you've moved too far away from the table too soon. If they jump off I say "whoops" and run them back to their stay position, move myself closer to the table and start again, possibly stepping in slightly to help them stick the table. I don't care at this point if they take a position, just not fly off the back side.

## 2. Teaching as Send

Tease your dog with a toy or food sock, than place it on the table. Send the dog to the table and begin increasing the distance in which the dog is willing to travel ahead without you to the table. Change to rewarding the dog by throwing the toy to them, or running up AFTER they have hit the table, to click and treat.

## 3. Run & lure the table

Show your dog that their toy has been placed on the table. Put the dog on leash and run with them to the table. Reward the dog with a game of tug, a treat or lavish praise & petting. Don't ask for sit or down yet. Only lure the table a few practices until your dog is running to the table, then switch and use your toy as a reward. Run all the way with your dog to the table, don't pull up short inadvertently signaling the dog to slow or stop, risking refusals. The work you did with the recall will help them understand not to slide off when you run. Use your leash for a few sessions then begin revving them up and racing them to the table off leash. Any table avoidance or slowing down to get on should be dealt with by luring a few times with your toy or Food Sock and having your dog on leash for a few sessions. Don't pull, Guide!

Teach "stay" away from agility. Don't try to have dog take a position and stay until he has a great one on the ground. If your trained dog does not immediately take a position you asked for on the table, remove them immediately and start fresh. Do not ask them multiple times, or change your command. Down...down...all the way...come on...ALL the way DOWN!  
Make table training fast, interesting and fun from the beginning.

**TIP:** Work for only short periods at a time, maybe a few minutes. Reward enthusiastically. If your dog messes up, do not reward but do not act upset in any way; just try again. If he continues to make mistakes it means you have progressed too far too fast. Go back a step or two. Keep it fun. Give screw up cookies: ask your dog to do something you know he can do (take a single jump, or shake paw, for instance), and reward. You want a dog that looks forward to playing agility!