

LOVE²PLAY

Dog Training

Beginner Recreational Agility Lesson 1

BASIC OBEDIENCE

Work on “sits” and “downs” on various surfaces. The pause table in agility has a gravelly surface and is sometimes wet or hot. Your dog needs to be able to do a fast sit or down on any surface. Remember that your dog should remain in place until you release it.

You may want to work on your “wait” cue if you have one; wait means ‘hang on something is about to happen’ vs “stay” which means ‘I’m going away, don’t move a muscle until I get back’.

REAR END AWARENESS

For many dogs their rear end is just something that follows their front end. On the teeter and dogwalk (narrow pieces of equipment) these dogs may have difficulty keeping their rear feet from falling off. This reduces their confidence and their speed and can cause them to avoid the obstacles.

- Teach your dog to walk through a ladder on the ground, slowly, on leash—do not let your dog run or trot—this just helps them think about where their feet go.
- Teach your dog to back up and then teach them to back up stairs—again, this helps them to know that they have back feet that can move independently.

JUMPING

Set up a single jump using PVC pipe, a piece of dowel or even a broomstick with milk crates, books or a couple of stumps as side supports. **DO NOT** make the jump high....we are teaching the concept of jumping **FIRST** and foremost!

Work on the following progression, making sure the dog is confident at one step before moving on to the next one.

1. Walk beside your dog (on leash) as it takes the jump. Make sure you work this with your dog on your left and your right. Then walk beside your dog off leash, as it takes the jump.
2. Run beside your dog (on leash and then off leash) as it takes the jump. Make sure you work this on the left and the right.

ALWAYS reward your dog **EVERY** time it takes the jump at this point. We want a strong history of reinforcement for jumping.

TABLE

The “Table” in agility has 2 distinct behaviours—‘get up on the table’ and ‘stay in place on the table’. “Sit” or “Lie Down” is the foundation skill, so for this week, I want you to practice this a lot—

work towards quick responses to your cue, using only a hand signal or a verbal (no physical force).

TEETER NOISE

Find something that bangs and stand with the dog nearby (not so close the dog is frightened) and feed each time it bangs.

OR EVEN BETTER—set up something (cans, building blocks) that the DOG can make collapse and 'bang'—reward the dog every time it makes the pile bang (and then you reset it)...we want the dog to think a sudden noise is a good thing.

PLEASE DO NOT take your dog to a playground and have them go over the teeter there.....the teeter is the ONE obstacle where if a dog scares itself, it can take months to get it near it again!

TUNNEL and CHUTE preparation

Find things the dog can go under and through.....

Examples:

- line up a few chairs and help your dog go under them (imitates a tunnel)
- when the dog is comfortable, put a blanket over them so there are 'sides'
- put a sheet over one chair and help your dog push through the sheet (imitates the fabric on the chute)
- is there a culvert your dog can run through safely?

If you have access to a tunnel, start it straight and bend it very gradually

OUT and ABOUT

Explore the world with an eye to what new and different things can your dog safely explore.

DON'T PUSH your dog to do anything that it is afraid of, but instead build on its confidence.....

AGILITY BASICS FOR NOW AND ALWAYS

- Face the direction your dog is going
- Use the arm and leg closest to the dog