

## Ring Entrance

**Objective:** Train a specific, planned behavior sequence for both handler and dog to perform when moving from one space to another. (Reorient or offered heel) This is a behavior from Leslie McDevitt "Control Unleashed"

### Why:

Entering the ring (or really any new space) is a weird and high pressure thing for dogs. There is an interesting threshold effect, as well as a high contrast stepping from the audience space through the gate into this huge open space (while everyone is staring at you). It's natural for the dog to disconnect from the handler and spend a little (or a lot of) time investigating this new environment. However, in obedience and most dog sports, we don't really have that option, and that often creates a source of conflict. "Should I pay attention to my handler or check for dragons? She's calling my name, but what if there are dragons!? What to do... OH WHAT TO DO?"

We can minimize this effect and build the dog's confidence by making this entrance as predictable as possible. There are many elements of the dog show we cannot control, but we can make this ritual very structured and predictable, and condition it to be automatic.

You will want to eventually practice this behavior in real ring environments, with gates, chairs, steward's table, etc. But you don't need all of that to get started. Any doorway or gate will work just fine. I've even used two chairs as imaginary gate posts in class settings.

The general structure of this ritual will be:

1. Some default "waiting" position. I use a down, but that's totally optional.
2. A cue to move through the gate with the handler. I say, "Your turn", but again it's totally up to you.
3. A default behavior once on the other side of the gate.. My suggestion is to have the dog either turn to face you, then you can hand touch and call to heel at the starting point of the heeling pattern. Or you can have the dog default offer heel and move directly to the starting point. The important part is that it is **always the same**.

To teach it:

1. Start by standing at the gate, step through and click/treat.
2. Add your cue to move through the gate, click/treat each time on the other side. This will tend to build an automatic reorientation, but you can add heel position to it separately if desired.
3. Start back-chaining your "wait" position to the entrance-click/treat. Practice this about a hundred million times.
4. Increase the amount of waiting you do before cuing the entrance.

At this point we want your dog to have a lot of deposits in his bank account of simply automatically directing his attention to you upon entering the ring space.

<https://youtu.be/GN5nsRS0v6I>