

Learning About Dogs

Clicker World Obedience Training



Kay Laurence

LEVEL

3

CLICKER TRAINERS
SPECIALISED RECIPES

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SPECIALISED RECIPES**

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Kay Laurence has asserted the moral right to be identified as the author of this work

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Books by Kay Laurence:

Clicker Training: The Perfect Foundation, and 2 DVD

Clicker Intermediate Trainer Level 3, and DVD

Clicker World Competition Obedience

Clicker Dances with Dogs

Learning Games

DVDs by Kay Laurence:

Teaching Self Control: Whippits Training

Teaching Flexigility: Cavaletti

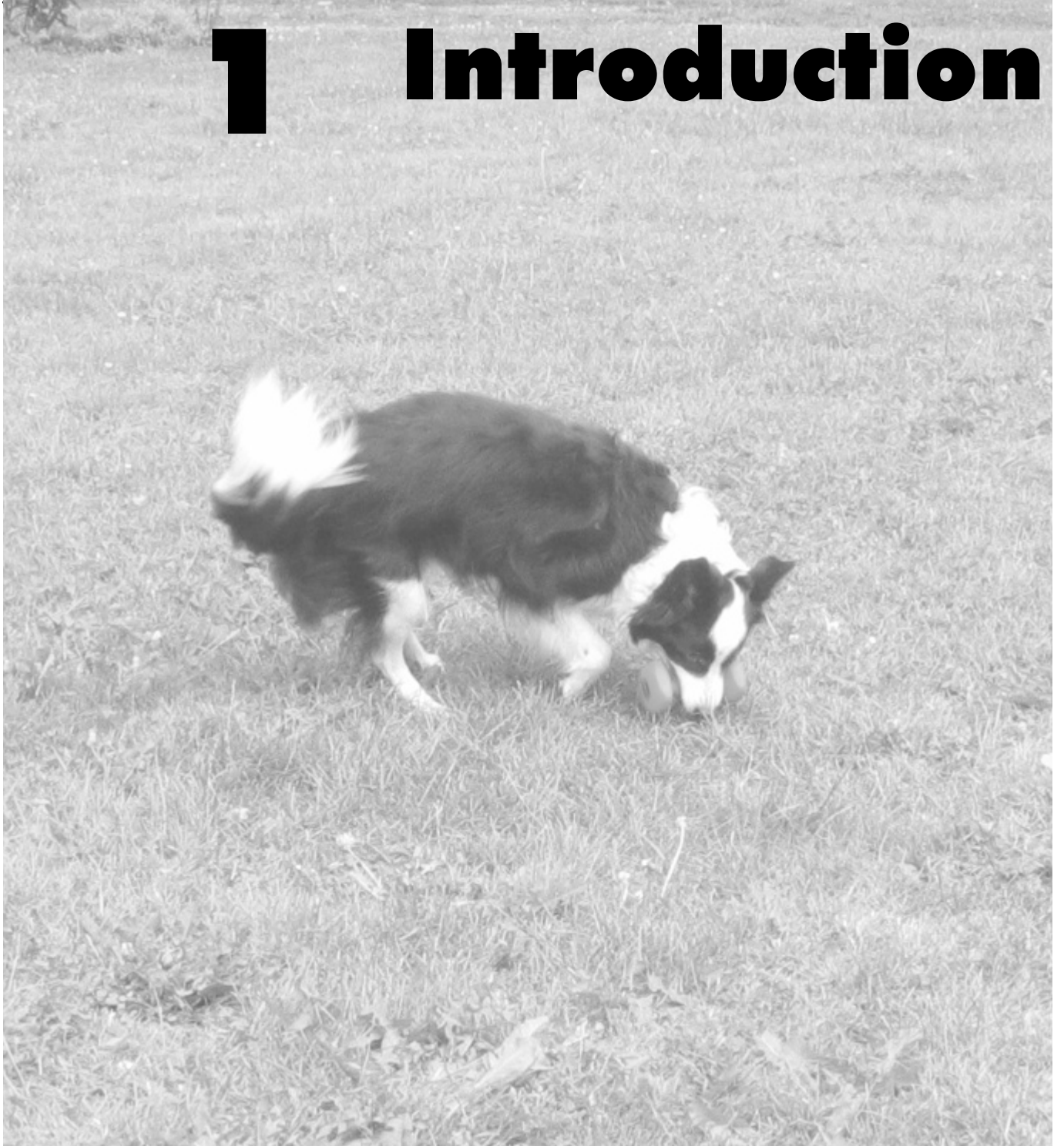
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1 Introduction



Welcome to the World of Obedience.

Over the past few years I have travelled around the world holding clicker training workshops and seminars. This has fuelled my interest in the variety of obedience competitions and the different attitude of the participants towards the sport.

Generally there are three systems with common elements, that are copied to some degree in most countries. These are the rules from the UK, (The Kennel Club), Europe, (The Federation Cynologique Internationale) and USA (American Kennel Club).

With the advent of Agility in the 1980s and Freestyle Heelwork to Music in the 1990s, more and more people are enjoying weekend dog sports. Clicker Training allows us to successfully combine these sports and teach dogs more than one activity at the same time. In the near future I foresee a new sport which is the combination of all these and more. We are no longer restricted to one career for ourselves or the dogs.

The original ideas behind UK obedience, which began in the 1950s, evolved from training dogs for war tasks. The dog traditionally worked on the left side to allow for the right arm, carrying the firearm, to be free. The sendaway, or send forward was a patrol skill to seek out ambush. Thankfully none of us today need these skills for the same reasons, but they have been permanently sewn into our understanding of an "Obedience" dog.

I would like to make a clear difference of the interpretation of obedience. My perception is that a dog that competes in the sport of obedience is an Obedience dog, and a dog that is obedient to commands an obedient dog. I will refer to the competition dog with a capital "O". I do not regard a top quality Obedience dog as necessarily obedient. To the outsider the dog may look to be obedient, but the terminology is rather more suited to military style training of orders, commands and compliance. I see our Obedience dogs as partners in competition carrying out a range of behaviours to the best of their ability. The perception of obedient dogs comes from:

- the promptness to cue (on command)

- the attitude to carrying out the behaviour (with speed and precision)

- the appearance of working without reward (delayed reward)

If we actually trained for these elements in this terminology the dog would lose motivation and heart for the tasks.

We clicker train the dogs to *appear* to be obedient by finishing the behaviours to a high, durable quality that can be performed with high levels of distractions for a delayed reward.

That is not difficult for clicker trained dogs and clicker trainers. The required exercises are no more than a collection of behaviours or tricks, performed in chains to a pre-set standard. Failure in an exercise would not be due to “disobedience” but lack of training or preparation, or an unpredictable occurrence in competition.

An Obedience dog is measured by its fluency in a range of specific skills. In addition it will require a certain degree of sociability to be able to compete with other dogs and people in close proximity, and be confident with handling from a stranger. It needs to be comfortable travelling and unstressed in new or unusual venues.

In clicker training terms we teach an Obedience dog to be able to:

- ▶ promptly respond to a minimal cue
- ▶ carry out a chain of behaviours in a consistent fashion
- ▶ make decisions without prompt from the handler
- ▶ concentrate in a highly distracting environment
- ▶ continue behaviours with minimal or no regular reinforcement

It is up to us to interpret the requirements of the rules and enable the dog to succeed in the competition environments.

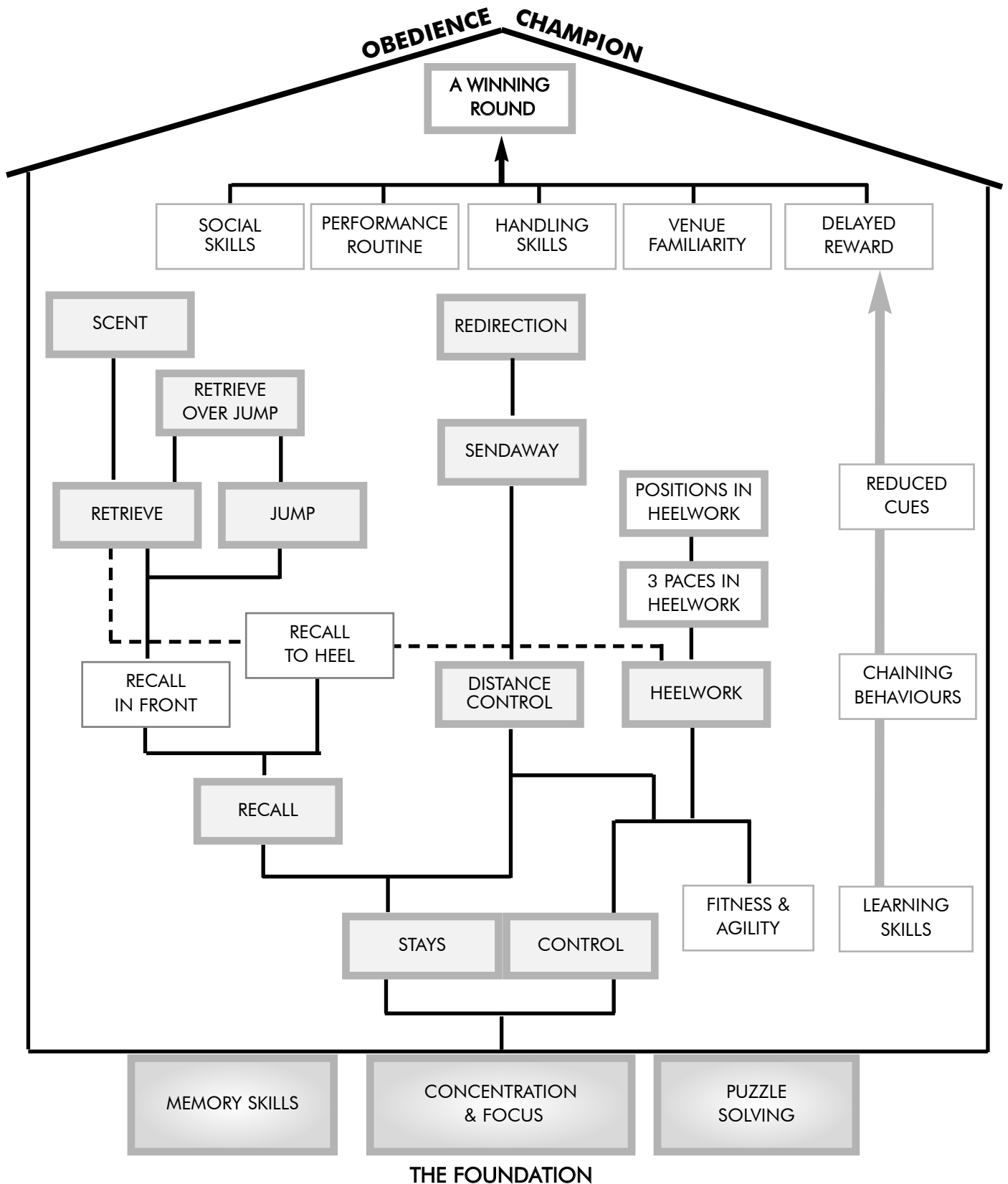
It is us that sets the standard of the end result by our expectations in the training and our understanding of the quality of the behaviours required.

I hope that everyone interested in sports competitions will set a standard that is the best that the dog can achieve and consistently require that standard. It is only fair to the dog to have fixed goal posts. If the heelwork position is pre-determined, but a looser position would still qualify or get placed, it would not be fair to the dog to reward a variable position. When you enter the ring, you aim to perform to *your* training standard, not the “just adequate” standard. The mixed message of a differing competition standard to training standard just confuses the dog. A dog mentally engaged on performing the behaviours to the highest quality will be able to compete for many years and still be fresh and an active player in the partnership.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

This book will not cover general clicker training principles. To get the most benefit from this book you should be confident to:

- ▶ repeat a simple behaviour at least 10 times maintaining motivation, focus and the same standard of quality throughout. Behaviours such as the sit or drop or rise to stand from down.



- ▶ use the technique of targeting, with a stick, hand and marker to acquire a new behaviour and be able to take the target away when the behaviour is put on cue. This will be used for heeling, sit in front, sendaway and redirection
- ▶ finish behaviours to a high standard and add either a verbal or visual cue that can be reduced or faded. Competition cues are usually required to be minimal and in the higher classes either a verbal or visual signal, not both
- ▶ ensure a behaviour happens only when cued and never unless cued
- ▶ train a behaviour to maintain strength and quality with a one click and one reward (1:1 reinforcement) in a range of different venues and with different distractions
- ▶ free shape behaviours that are physical movements, perhaps a step sideways, a relaxed sit as opposed to a collected upright sit

Make sure you have given yourself plenty of time to develop these skills and acquire them with understanding and fluency. This training is covered in the Clicker Training Perfect Foundation Book and DVD set.

From the Intermediate Training Book and DVD you should be familiar with:

- ▶ devising a training plan for the dog, including seasonal requirements and developing the mobility and fitness
- ▶ combining simple behaviours into chains, sequences and merged behaviours and fading the individual cues
- ▶ building the dog to perform an increasing number of behaviours for the reward

In addition you will find it useful to be able to keep a journal of the training to analyse your progress and identify areas that need development.

Each Chapter will cover a specific exercise and includes recipes to teach the simple component behaviours for that exercise. You may need to adjust some of the outcomes depending on your governing rules and expectations.

You need become very familiar with the flow chart of behaviours on the page opposite to understanding that certain skills must be in place before some exercises are taught. It would be foolish to build a house on weak foundations, and it is no different when building a training plan for a dog. The foundation behaviours must be really, really solid to enable you to build on them. So often I see a dog lose concentration during an exercise, such as retrieve, and miss-time their approach for the present, or see a keen dog lose self control in heelwork and jump up or out of place. These errors are

teaching errors, not retrieve or heelwork errors. They occur in those exercises but are just as likely to occur anywhere in the schedule. It is your responsibility as your dog's "coach" to ensure they are properly experienced, trained, physically and mentally to meet the expectations of a competition.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

All trainers who are prospective competition handlers should be intimately familiar with the requirements of the exercises. I suggest you carefully examine the wording of each exercise and the guidelines for handlers and judges to fully understand what is expected of you BEFORE you begin training.

Do NOT rely on someone else's experience. It is your own responsibility. Several visits and videoing top level competitions would give you an general picture of the end result. The top level is the only point you are aiming for.

ONLY ONE STANDARD

When we were "only" a pet dog trainer we were satisfied with the dog sitting when told to sit. Our expectations change with the prospect of Obedience competitions and we begin to realise that a sit comes in more than one variety, can be in more than one location relative to us, and can be done promptly or at leisure. The simple pet dog sit is no longer satisfactory.

It is very, very hard for that dog to change the way it sits to the "sit" cue. It has learned that any sort of sit in any sort of place at any sort of speed will earn a reward. To change this dog into a competition dog a new cue for the sitting behaviour will have to be introduced at the very least. The sit in heelwork will be very specific in placement, speed and style.

First learning is very often the most robust learning, and what the dog will revert to when under stress. The same rules apply to us, if you have made the habit of leaning over the dog in practice to ensure the sit is straight, then when under competition scrutiny you are likely to revert back to that behaviour.

If you have a young dog you wish to compete with, aim to teach the dog the sit of the top competition class, and aim to stand yourself mimicking the same style. Do not initially teach a sit that will suffice for the first class. It is grossly unfair to the dog to change the behaviour once learned. You must take the time and invest your energy into teaching the final standard from the outset. No half measures or nearly good enough and hope it will improve later on.

The efficiency of teaching a behaviour only once is obvious. Once that puppy has acquired the present (in front) position, it will not need to be practised much in the future.

The standard of work you train to must be the same for the first class as for the top class, the difference is in:

- ▶ the amount of support you can give the dog
- ▶ the quantity of cues you can use
- ▶ the increasing difficulty, such as retrieve objects that are harder to pick up or carry
- ▶ the duration of the behaviour, the longer heelwork pattern, or the increasing length of the stay
- ▶ increased working distance from the dog
- ▶ more complex elements combined, such as retrieve with redirection
- ▶ the dog working for longer periods without reinforcement

The Novice sit to heel is exactly the same behaviour as the Championship sit to heel. The difference in moving up the classes is not in the behaviour but the above elements. If your dog has to learn to sit differently as well respond to increasing difficulties it is a very tall order for the best of dogs. Be very clear in your mind, teach to one standard, and do not rely on improving it as you progress.

HANDLING PREPARATION

In addition to setting your standard for teaching the exercises you also need to prepare your handling skills. Each Chapter will include some handling tips, but it would be useful to find a coach prepared to ring train you without the dog.

You must be able to:

- ▶ turn left and right corners with balance and consistency and not impede the dog
- ▶ turn about to the left and right and travel back along the same line (white lines in empty car parks are excellent training for this)
- ▶ walk in consistent straight lines and along curves on circles keeping the pace even for the dog

- ▶ turn promptly on verbal cues without dithering or hesitation. This will need to be practised until you are no longer conscious of translating the instruction in your mind. Unconscious competence.
- ▶ be the same person to your dog when under direction and scrutiny of other people. Sometimes particularly aggressive instructions will affect the way you respond which may be alien to your dog
- ▶ primarily focus on the dog but listen to the steward at the same time, and dismiss all other external noise
- ▶ throw an article consistently to a particular spot

These are all skills that will take time to learn. Do not learn them on the job, find another way to practise without the dog. Go to line dancing class, work to a taped round, ask a friend to call a routine. Train at the busy supermarket car park and learn to focus out all the other sounds and distractions, ask a friend to call for you whilst following you through the crowds. If you carry a full jug of water at the same time, you will have to focus and listen and ignore distractions. It is a skill, and it takes time to acquire (remember to give the friend a clicker for you as well!)

ORDER OF TEACHING

The Chapters are not in the order you would necessarily teach the behaviours, with the exception of the foundation behaviours.

You can be working on your heelwork, teaching some early retrieve training and building confidence on the distance work with sendaways at the same time.

You need to study the flow chart and plan your training in logical order. The dog will need plenty of time to build social confidence, and become familiar with new and strange places. This may take several months and can be happening alongside your planned training sessions.

TROUBLE SHOOTING

Teaching an exercise through the individual component behaviours and skills will clarify your understanding of errors. A dog that pounces on a retrieve article will not have learned to approach the article with the opening mouth. This is part of the retrieve training.

One dog will learn this in 3 sessions, another dog may take 13 sessions because it is learning to carry out the behaviour in a different way to their first instinct. You will avoid the need to go back and cover the training again if you ensure that all behaviours are fixed, on cue and robust before you move forward.

Errors or faults in exercises are nearly always because the trainer rushed through a component behaviour. If you see a fault coming in, look back through all the components and find the element that needs more attention. Learning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the chained behaviour is an essential skill you will need to develop.

Try not to start with a “sort of retrieve” and then patch it up with a bit of training. Sound foundations in all exercises is the way to build. Patches over training gaps will always break down in the end.

MENTAL BARRIERS

You will need to prepare yourself for the general attitude that you will encounter at competitions. Obedience is nearly always judged and marked by the points lost, ie errors that are considered imperfect. The winning round is the round to lose the least number of points. This drives the focus of the competition towards a negative measurement of achievement.

Instead of realising that we have achieved 90% of the marks, we focus on the loss of 10%. This will knock onto the training and what you will practise for the next competition. You will begin to “train your faults”.

We certainly need to identify areas of weakness, but must always bear in mind that these areas that have lost points are not necessarily cured by more attention. Perhaps the dog was distracted during a recall and sniffed the ground, resulting in an off centre present. Practising presents is not going to prevent that loss of points.

We need to think positively and work on the dog’s ability to concentrate in strange environments, and increase the desire to be at the present position above the need to sniff the ground. So additional rewards on arrival at the present will back chain to affect the travelling towards you, increase the purpose, and avoid the opportunities for distractions.

Begin to mentally gird yourself against using the loss of points as a judgement of your training and analyse how to improve the strength of the behaviour, not just avoid errors. A strong, flexible behaviour will withstand more testing than the patch-over repair work.

... and learn to ignore the negativity that surrounds competitors (except clicker trained competitors of course!)

2

Foundation behaviours



The most important behaviour for a competition dog in Obedience is concentration. The competition environment is filled with numerous signals that can distract a dog and also increase the stress levels in the dog.

Sit on the floor by an active ring and take a note of all movement that catches your eye in a five minute time period:

a thrown dumbbell	a dog circling to finish
a dog jumping	a plastic bag shaken
a coat being put on	moving judges, dogs, handlers

Do the same again with your eyes closed and note the noises you hear:

commands	clapping hands
squeak of a toy	a clicker
a shouted "no" command	stewards, judges, friends talking
a bark, a growl	

Then consider the social pressure the dog may pick up:

- a watching Border Collie, regarding your dog as prey
- a lusty German Shepherd, regarding your dog as sex on legs
- a fearful Labrador, regarding your dog as a potential threat
- a friendly Poodle wanting to stop for a chat and coffee
- a puppy Spaniel calling your dog to come play

And these are only the dogs conversing with your dog - add onto that the people agenda!

A competition environment is full of complex messages and signals flying around all the time, and the dog also has to contend with your messages of anxiety, excitement or stress. No wonder concentration is a vital skill. But how can we define and teach the concentration that will be useful?

Concentration implies two skills:

- ▶ being able to focus, remember and carry out the task to the way it has been taught
- ▶ ignore external intrusion with the exception of your communication

We cannot know whether a dog is actually concentrating or simply going through the external behaviours. We can only measure the degree of concentration by the dog's abilities to carry out the task.

ENCOURAGE FOCUS

To some degree concentration is dependent on the complexity of the task. The more engaged the brain the easier it is to focus. Asking a dog to puzzle solve in the training and execution of the behaviours will make a large contribution to the dog's concentration during the final exercise. For example, during training, your heelwork will be on different surfaces, one day on freshly mown grass, the next day concrete, the next day on a wooden floor. By changing the surface the dog will need to puzzle out how to make fine changes in its movement to be able to hold the correct position. If you have taught the dog to "find" the position itself, rather than place it in position, then it will become actively engaged in making the adjustments when the floor surface demands different skills.

By including this flexibility, but not testing, into your training plan the behaviour will have greater strength and meet the unexpected challenges that occur in competition. Flexibility is introduced during the shaping, since adapting the behaviour is a foundation skill of the behaviour. If you complete the behaviour, polish it, put it on cue, and then ask for flexibility, you may find your training job has been so well completed that the dog cannot change the way it carries out the behaviour.

Using the same example as the maintaining a heel position, on a surface with good grip, my dogs are able to work in a collected fashion with a prancing step at the front, but if the surface is slightly slippery, they cannot carry out the same movement, it will have to be adapted so that the position can be maintained. If they only know how to do heelwork with the collected prancing, but trying to prance, they would come out of position through the lack of friction on the floor surface.

We often compete in the rain, this changes my style of walking if the ground is slippery, or I may lean forward slightly to avoid the rain in my eyes, wet weather gear affects the way we walk. You want a dog that can adapt to these changing elements, have flexibility, and this needs to be introduced into the learning stage.

MOVEMENT NEEDS IN-BUILT FLEXIBILITY

TEACH A TIGHT FOCUS

The other side of concentration, learning to ignore distractions, is taught after the movement is strong and flexible. During several repetitions of a simple behaviour, say of sitting from a stand position, you will introduce distractions one at a time and after the measuring quality has been achieved increase their intensity slowly. (*This is detailed in the Clicker Training Perfect Foundation book*).

For an Obedience dog you will need to make a list of common distractions and prepare your dog for them. Often the more training the dog has, the greater some distractions can become. A dog that has no knowledge of the cues to “play”, “fetch”, “jump” will not be as affected when hearing those cues from other handlers.

LOOKING AT YOU

This is the default behaviour which in the absence of any other cue the dog will carry out for reward. When the dog is in front of you teach the dog to look at the “whole” of you, not just your eyes. Your eyes may well convey your mood, and movement of your lips will convey that you are speaking, but your face does NOT cue a dog in competition. Excessive facial movements, such as the chin lift to get a dog to sit, is likely to be penalised in the intermediate to senior classes as an extra signal.

More important cues come from your balance, your shoulder position relative to your hips, and your hips relative to your feet. They tell the dog the way you are turning, the speed you are moving at, when you are coming to a halt, when you are not going to move, and when you are about to move. Your hand signals will also be obvious cues, by the position of them when you are moving or standing still, the movement of the hand and arm the speed and direction will tell the dog which behaviour you require.

So we need to equip the dog with the correct “listening” mechanism to see all these signals. At this point I will apologise for the need to have a quick grumble about the technique of keeping and delivering rewards from the mouth. You will not cue a dog from visual movement of your mouth, and I see absolutely no benefit to keeping food there or conditioning the dog that this is the place where rewards are kept. Ack!

But. You will reward your dog from your hands, you will cue the dog from your hands, it is logical that you teach the dog to see your hands relative to the background of your body language. The hands in conjunction with body language can convey an enormous variety of cues. Skill the dog to be able to read the small multiple signals that make it easy to communicate without extra commands.

Consider also that the dog will carry out a large proportion of its work in the heel position, where it may be difficult (if not impossible if you are built like me) for the dog to see your face. If the dog tries too hard to maintain that visual contact this can pull the dog out of the heel position and often causes the rear end to flare out.

You need to teach your dog to be focussed on you at all times, and from any distance, when in the ring, sometimes this will not be looking "at" you but looking "to" you, for direction, cues, confidence and approval.

When teaching this degree of focus you must plan to teach the contrary behaviour - looking outward for exercises such as the retrieve, scent, jump and sendaway etc, and only focus on you audibly, not visually. This recipe is in the Control Chapter.

The default behaviour is focusing on you, much of the reinforcement for this behaviour will come from the style of your teaching where 95% of all rewards will come from you, also most of the opening and closing cues. Be aware when you are training to reward the dog for self cueing this behaviour between repetitions, or when you are pondering the next action.

RECIPE 1 - TEACHING THE FOCUS

Begin this exercise on a suitable surface with food a contrasting colour and size, so that it can be easily seen. Build up over many weeks to more complex surfaces that increase the difficulty and carry distracting residue of other dogs, wild life, food crumbs and interesting scents.

1. Throw several pieces of food to the floor, click as the dog eats each piece.
2. When the food has all gone, the dog may hunt around for alternative opportunities, but at some point it will look up at you - probably on the hope of more free food.

CLICK THIS DECISION !

This is probably the most important, single decision the dog will need to make from second to second in competition: "what's next then?"

It needs to be reinforced hundreds of times to the point that if the dog is not cued otherwise, "what's next then?" is the first thought in the dog's mind. It gives you prepared ground for delivering a cue - the dog is already asking for instructions. If it happens unexpectedly it gives you clear communication that the dog is saying "what's that then? ie "huh?"



the dog's view from the heel position

It is a clear way for the dog to say:

"sorry, don't know *that* cue"

"sorry, wasn't listening can you repeat it?"

"excuse me, your hand said sit but your voice said lay down which do you want, huh?"

3. As soon as you click, throw the reward to the floor. It is important that you do not deliver to the dog's mouth.

By giving the dog the option to demonstrate the "I am focusing" behaviour, we can see the strength of the behaviour building and in the future will be able to use this behaviour as a gauge of the dog's stress level.

An externally stressed dog will not find it comfortable to maintain this focus, if something is in close proximity that is causing it stress, it will want to keep its back to you and face outward at the object of the stress. In these circumstances you can be pretty sure that giving the dog a cue to commence a behaviour is going to fall on a mind that is focused elsewhere. Use the "What's next then?" look as a signal that the dog is ready to go and comfortable to perform.

In addition to letting the dog "find" that looking at you is the licence for easy food, we are engaging the dog's mind from the beginning and using this engagement as the underlying behaviour in every exercise.

4. Whilst the dog is eating a piece, gradually move behind the dog so that it needs to turn around to look at you. Click this movement when it happens at the same time as the looking.

This is a superb, reliable method of teaching a dog to want to look at you not have to. Ground scenting can be perceived to be the deadliest enemy of Obedience, but by placing the food on the ground and clicking the dog for leaving the ground and moving its head upwards, we are reinforcing the opposite of that behaviour.

For ground distractions you can use the same technique as the toys distraction training in Recipe 2.

5. Once the dog is lifting its head off the ground whilst still eating, start to throw the food to places that make the success of the behaviour more challenging:

Throw the food behind you and click for the dog coming around to find your front.

Increase the distance with a long throw, and then increase it further by moving away from the dog whilst it is busy eating.

Later when the dog is more experienced you can introduce ring people, ie judges and stewards, and click the dog for finding the focus on you. This is particularly useful for the head lift after a retrieve or scent, when the dog can find it difficult to see you amongst people in a group or against a busy background.

6. Up to this point you have been stationary in a range of different places that require the dog to move or look harder to be able to find the magic spot. When you begin to teach heelwork, in conjunction with the technical skills of the heel position, the dog will learn to find the focus point whilst you are moving.

Remember this focus to you is not a behaviour you cue, except by turning your focus on the dog. You will need to become more conscious of cueing the dog to “stand down”, ie relax and scan the scene. There will be moments when you wish to converse with the judge, or listen to a steward, or focus on the round.

To keep the dog's focusing skills sharp and 100% do not ask for the behaviour when not required or for too much longer than is necessary. I put my hand in the dog's collar on the side of their neck (for Gordons), or simply put the dog on the lead.

I do not train the dog using a lead, so it never represents training to the dogs. In the past I have made the error of using the lead as a toy and found it almost impossible to have the dog walk in a relaxed manner on a loose lead. The last few generations have the “out walking lead” which is a cue for outward focus, enjoy the scenery, but keep by my side. When on this lead, they are expected to empty themselves only on my cue. This means my routines of “walk time” and “empty time” are clearly defined, and an accident whilst lead walking, is exactly that, an



left: on duty, right: off duty. The hands change position, for off duty the handler is standing with a relaxed hip. All clear cues for the different behaviours

accident. I find I can relax more knowing the boys will not be looking for places to mark whilst out lead walking.

If I require them to empty themselves I will go over to a suitable marking post and cue them to "be quick". I suspect they believe I am interested in the post myself after a few repetitions of this behaviour!

But in competition we are required to work the dogs on lead. The solution for this is another lead suitable for a cat or very small toy dog. The handle of this is tucked into my pocket on the way to the ringside and changed to as we go into the ring. The lead is so light that the dogs do not consider themselves "on lead" (ie off duty), and with the loop over my wrist, or in my pocket, instead of held in my hands, my cues are exactly the same as in training - hands free and open.

If we are changing over between off duty to focus on me, the action of taking off the lead will convey that to the dogs without any extra cues. (Ah, cute, you're thinking - you see I've been around the ring a few times!)

The point is to regard all elements of the environment, hands, body language, clothing, even collars and leads as useful communication tools for the dog who needs as much information as possible. This is particularly important if you wish to mix sports where behaviours may seem the same but are different in the different environments, a good example is the heel position in Obedience and the heel position in Heelwork to Music. The HTM position is looser but more rhythmic and collected and needs to allow me room for step movement not just walking.

RECIPE 2: GAINING STRENGTH FROM DISTRACTIONS

In the 1970s the dogs were expected to train "for the love of it", we relied on praise to communicate what was correct and also as the motivation for completing the exercise. During the early 80s the trend for toy training exploded. Not all of these toys were subtle and squeaky toys were heard at the corner of every ring.

I also trained with one, which had the potential to become a nightmare. So I conditioned my dogs that the sound of a squeak, a ball toss or cue to "get it" from other folk were all cues to look at me. Even squeaking a toy, intended to distract my dogs, would trigger better and stronger work. (Yep, those sort of folk pop up all over the world.)

1. Sit with a toy in your lap, squeak it and feed the dog a piece of food at the same time. Repeat this for at least 30 repetitions. One hand squeaks the other hand pushes food in the mouth.
2. Place the toy under your shoe, and repeat the same conditioning. Tap (squeak), food push. We are only training for an audible distraction, not a visual one.

3. Very gradually, open a space between pushing the food in and holding the food out for the dog to take. Only begin with the difference of an inch.

We are conditioning the dog that the squeak represents the follow up of a piece of food, from you. Almost the same as conditioning a clicker - well done, you got there!

4. Very gradually increase the gap so that when the dog hears the squeak they have to make a noticeable movement towards your food hand. Do not hold the food out before the squeak, but after.

If you have the co-ordination to include the clicker, now is the time to introduce it. As the dog makes the decision to turn to you or your hand, click and feed.

5. Begin to work with a hand empty of food with the squeak still under your foot. Squeak - dog looks at you, moves to the hand, click, hand collects the reward, feed.
6. Begin to toss the food away after the movement towards you and its click. This means the dog will be further away for the next squeak, and the behaviour will increase in duration, ie the dog will have to respond and travel further before the click.
7. Build up this with a variety of squeakers (building flexibility), teach it in a variety of locations, and once simple behaviours are finished, introduce the squeak during the behaviour. It will act like a click!

I spread several toys across the floor and tread on them during heelwork. You can see a slight physical reaction from the dogs but they then respond with stronger heelwork - after all that was a click eh?

Make a log of the distractions your dog makes a noticeable movement towards or away from and condition it just the same way. Turn the thrown toys of other people into reinforcers of focused behaviour for your dog. Turn clapping into a series of multi-clicks. Remember to work in areas of both audible and visual distractions and when confident with those techniques, add scent distractions, such as open food boxes. You can subtly place jam jars with pieces of food in the bottom around your training area. The dog will be able to scent the food, but not self reward - most tongues don't reach the bottom of a jam jar, or mug. If desperate, take the time to go and collect rabbit poo and train for that as well!

ANTICIPATING ANTICIPATION

This is a foundation skill you need to build into your training style. Clicker dogs are clever dogs, they can be expected to anticipate when you reduce your cues or chain

behaviours together. We reinforce that skill on a regular basis. In most competitions you are permitted certain cues, or are given predictable cues to commence behaviours. "Send your dog" for the retrieve or sendaway. So anticipate that your dog will learn to anticipate.

Make a habit from the outset to count, to yourself, to three before you give a cue after a steward or judge's command in training. Make a habit of counting to three before you send your dog, or when the article has landed if you are training alone. Make a habit of counting to three when you return to the side of your dog at the end of stays. When the dog comes to the present in front, don't send it straight to heel.

Instead of teaching the dog that your cues, actions and those of the environment are followed by predictable behaviours, either build in a time lapse, or respond with an unpredictable behaviour that you have on cue.

- ▶ Once the dog has given the article, ask it to walk backwards.
- ▶ When cued to set off in heelwork, step sideways.
- ▶ When returning to the down position in stays, ask your dog to roll over for a tummy rub.

This strategy together with a constant eye on the behaviour happening only when cued, will keep the dog sharp and focused and avoid you giving away points because you have a bright, intelligent dog.

TRUST BETWEEN PARTNERS

During your extensive Obedience training plan, remind yourself that you are building a strong trust between you and your dog. This trust is precious and a privilege to be part of.

In training teach the dog with care and empathy. Empathising that we are teaching a creature of which we have no personal knowledge of being, to carry out behaviours for coloured pieces of ribbon that are only relative to us and not the dog. Never ask the dog to perform when uncomfortable or beyond a reasonable amount of stress.

The dog will trust you to read its unwilling body language, that at this time, and in this place, a retrieve is out of the question since:

- ▶ the article has landed near soiled ground
- ▶ the collie on the other side of the ring looks like it will herd me if I make a single movement away from your side

By insisting the behaviour is carried out we are pushing that trust to the limit.

Both partners must trust each other that they will always do the best they can, and should circumstances prevent a best performance, they will be met with sympathy, not punishment.

This degree of trust will give you a dog that will pick up from soiled ground, the dog that will help you out when you are not feeling at your best, and give you the benefit of the doubt on a badly given cue.

I remember a senior handler remarking that they would never expect my dogs to give up trying to complete an exercise, say scent, or retrieve, or heelwork. The next question was "how did I teach that sort of obedience?" I couldn't answer, it took me some weeks to work out why I completely trusted every dog I have worked to do their best, and I have completely understood that if they cannot do the task, it would never be for the lack of trying.

I regard my dog and I as a *team* presented with a challenge or tests together, not as separate individuals. Together we work out how to meet the tasks.

SOCIAL SKILLS

I don't go to competitions for social reasons. In fact I can be regarded as a moody cow at shows! (Take note all future competitors I may encounter). I focus on my dogs, my performance, meeting the test, being on time and when the lunch break is. I find the desire to chat does not arrive until all those requirements are fulfilled.

For some people a competition is a social occasion, as for some dogs. For other dogs it represents a social nightmare. Your dog **MUST** be comfortable in the competition environment before you can expect any performing.

Look for a range of people and dog social gatherings to familiarise the dog and assess their sociability. If the dog is stressed by the proximity of people, look for situations where you can click and reward proximity of non-interactive passers by.

We use our local high street or market place, and walk the dogs through the pedestrians. Rush hour pedestrians are not looking for interaction and will quickly move on. This is ideal to accustom the dog to a vast range of strange scents and body language. The behaviour you can reward is a relaxed dog, or even a dog that offers their choice of tricks for food.

If your dog is dog socially challenged, look for dog shows where you can enter on the day and mix with show dogs of many different breeds. Generally these dogs are socially contained, almost in their own little world, having been accustomed to ignoring signals from other dogs whilst being shown. I find show dogs will pass very close to each other and not respond as perhaps two pet dogs passing in the street. The breeds

are also more accustomed to meeting other breeds without surprise. A local ringcraft (conformation) class can be a useful resource.

Before competitions you will need to identify how much social interaction your dog will be required to have. The dog does not require ANY social interaction with other dogs, and most of dog-social training will be teaching the dog to disregard social invitations or threats.

However you will need to prepare your dog for social intervention from judges. This is part of the control training and to be regarded as a distraction, not a social skill. You cannot teach your dog to “like” judges, only teach your dog to ignore them, even when they are touching far too close up and personal.

Invest time during the months of training to build social control as well as the obvious exercises. It is such a shame to prepare a dog for competition with beautifully executed behaviours, but lose the quality due to social stress.

KEEP RECORDS

It may be some months from when you start training to when you have the opportunity to formally measure your progress - ie go to a competition.

I go to competitions when I am ready to perform at 100% requirement of the test. There is no point in taking a dog into competition before this point. If the dog is insufficiently prepared you cannot reinforce in the competition ring, or switch to training.

But the downside of this strategy is the increase in stress you will be under. I personally do not need to experience the competition to become familiar with the experience, but if you are a beginner the stress of the whole event, and the desire not to let your dog down, can overwhelm the strongest personality.

Look for test situations that build your confidence in your own abilities, your training and your dog. If you spectate a test situation and think “I’d like to have a go at that”, then you are probably ready. If on the other hand it makes you break out in a cold sweat visualising that you are not ready, then run a long way away.

Some folk never come to terms with competitions, and take an enormous amount of self control to be able to perform simple tests. Other folk relish being tested and often perform better under test than in practise. You will need to identify your own personality and prepare appropriately. But if you don’t enjoy it, don’t do it!

FIT FOR THE JOB

Originally Obedience competitions would have been designed to be suitable for all dogs, or more likely the dogs that were considered “working dogs” in those days. I do

not suppose anyone envisaged a Pekinese doing a sendaway. But today's competitors relish the challenge of meeting the sport with all breeds and clicker training opens the doors wide on all dogs learning all the tasks.

You would not think that the exercises demand as much physical preparation as the obvious need for fitness for an agility or tracking dog. Your competition dog will need a good degree of stamina. The competition days can be physically stressful, where the dog is outside its home environment for many hours. A dog normally sleeps during the day, and a full day in a noisy place will prevent that essential body re-building time.

I accustom my dogs to regarding the car as a place to rest, it becomes just an extension of home. So I schedule spending much of the competition day in or around the car myself to encourage the dogs to rest and relax.

I had one collie, Jack, that would spend the entire journey to a show "working" all moving objects. And since we were invariably moving ourselves, that meant every lamppost, tree and white line (they raced out of the back of the car!) Once at a show he would sleep soundly. An early running order was hopeless for him, unless he could secure two hours rest between arriving and competing.

His great-grandson, Tip, would sleep soundly during the journey, but if I left the car he would sit up the entire time looking for my return.

Plan for the car, travelling and stationary, to be restful for the dog. If you have to rest your dog in specific environments, then prepare the crate or area to represent home security as much as possible. You also learn fairly quickly who's car NOT to park next to at competitions since their dogs are constantly noisy and disturbing! (The experience of leaving home at 4am to arrive early for Jack and need a couple of hours zzzzz at some time during the day).

The dog will also need to become accustomed to working at different times during the day. I am at fault of only training when the weather is pleasant, and when it suits my daily schedule.

If you work during the week and compete at weekends your dog may be accustomed to evening training. Their metabolism will adjust to this. So if you have off season periods remember to schedule day time weekend training. Our competitions may start as early as 8am, and I assure you I do not train at that hour unless I absolutely have to! I think I would have a lot more success at evening shows.

Obedience requires your dog to be physically fit in general terms:

- ▶ able to work in all reasonable weather conditions
- ▶ able to work at different times of the day
- ▶ be able to trot, run, (jump) pick up articles, turn, sit and drop

These are behaviours that most pet dogs can do. But to be able to sustain them for longer periods, or carry them out in an exaggerated fashion requires additional strengths, mobility and agility.

We can clicker train a dog to trot with the head held in a particular position. But to be able to sustain this with ease, a dog will need particular exercises to strengthen the neck muscles, shoulders, back, hips, stifles and other leg and feet joints. This would be the same as asking you to dance a particular high lifting step, and maintain rhythm and quality constantly. I often see dogs in the senior classes with muscle fatigue in heelwork - their heads start to wobble slightly or drift out of position.

We do not need to add stress to the learning when asking for duration on unprepared muscles. Our clicker trained kids will be trying their hardest to meet our requests, let's make it as physically easy for them as possible.

I like to teach and build the fitness all the dog's training life. It gives me a good feel for their strengths, and we have such a good game that the fun element becomes an important time for both of us. Muscle development will be explained in each Chapter where it is required.

REWARDS AND GAMES

Unless you have the definition of canine greed as your Obedience partner, you will need to teach your dog to play with toys, with you. A greedy dog will be certain to be waiting in the kitchen for dinner at least 30 minutes prior to usual time, and able to stay in one position for at least 15 minutes whilst you prepare food. They need to be THAT hungry that they will give the promise of food a higher priority than most things in their lives.

The highest reward time in any day for the Gordons is their run. One I set the pattern, depending on the time of year, they will begin to gather in view of the gate at least 2 hours before. This is the sort of motivation I wish I could capture for Obedience.

Being able to play games, with food or toys is an essential part of building the working partnership and also a way to build the two elements required in Obedience of speed and control. The skill developed in the games comes from building an ability to change between them. The dog must be absolutely controlled prior to the send to fetch, and move straight off with good speed. The heelwork must be fluid, energetic, responsive and controlled. On your games list you must try to include tug toys and food games.

RECIPE 3: TUG TOY GAMES

(The following is re-printed from the book Tug More Learn More which has an accompanying video demonstrating the techniques.)

To be able to play effectively, while keeping it safe and enjoyable, there are several elements that need to be in place right from the moment you pick up the toy. Although it would be fun to spontaneously "go play", in this extremely fast learning format a moment of negligence or inattention can lead to many months of work to correct inappropriate learning. And, if you are unlucky, it will hurt! ...Although anticipation of pain is an excellent reminder to stay awake.

Find the discipline to learn about the game, its rules and structure, before you begin. Because this is so highly reinforcing for your dog, anything they learn during the games can become fixed extremely quickly - quick enough that if it happens only once, it becomes fixed.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TUG TOY

Just because the manufacturer labels the toy as a "tug toy" it doesn't mean it makes a good tug toy. Sometimes these are produced for dog-to-dog tug games and can be uncomfortable for us to use. Often the gripping element is suited to a dog jaw and not to a human hand, and vice versa.

When you go tug shopping these are the basic elements you must look for:

ELASTICITY AND GIVE

This is non-negotiable. A tight, well plaited tug will have "give", but the tugs with an elastic "bungee" connection are better. Without some "give" you will stress your joints - from your neck to your fingers. After a 10 minutes session these will begin to tell you the activity is abnormal - and after a few years you can begin to enjoy arthritis in your back, shoulders, elbows, wrists and fingers. Take this knowledge from personal experience and some years of playing with rope and leather leads as tug toys.

If this is the outcome on my joints consider the effect on the dogs' joints. Their movement involvement is far greater than ours.

The elasticity will develop muscle power, rather than damage the joints through concussion where the bones are banging against each other. This is the difference between jogging on hard ground in bad shoes, and wearing well designed trainers specific for running. It is a shame to cause damage to your dog through fun, particularly if you are training an athletic dog for sport.

HAND HOLDING

You may have had the experience of trying to grip a dog lead with your hand instead of using the handle. The strength required in your fingers to maintain a grip with a powerful pulling dog is immense. Imagine swinging on a bar where only your fingers, or finger and thumb, maintain the grip instead of your whole hand?

Find a tug with a handle that you can slip over your wrist, to let your whole arm carry the weight. This will reduce pressure on your fingers. Imagine trapeze artists' grip - they catch each other by the wrist, not the hands, using the upper arm and back muscles, not just the fingers.

This concept is the same for the dog. The tug should be large enough for a good grip. The more the tug dissipates across the bite, the easier for the dog to grip. However, a tug that is too large can also cause discomfort - if you had to grip a bar larger than your hand surface, you simply would not be able to find the strength.

BITE AREA

The area for the dog to bite must be clear and quickly identified by the dog. If the whole tug is the same fabric you are inadvertently encouraging the dog to bite any part - even that with your hand on it.

Different tugs are suited for different games and different jaw structures. The Boxer, Rottweiler and Bulldog jaw is a completely different structure to the Retriever, Spaniel, and Collie jaw. They can have a different layout of their teeth, their bite, and muscle strength of the jaw.

The bite part must be a comfortable hold. If you notice the dog frequently releases to re-bite, it may be that the bite is uncomfortable for their mouth.

Generally the non-biting breeds, the carrying variety (Gundogs), will need a larger, soft tug that uses all their mouth to grip. The biting experts, for example: the terriers, bull breeds, may have sufficient strength to maintain a bite with just two teeth. This is not your aim - using the whole jaw is more desirable. Some rope type of tugs can only allow a small portion of the tug to be gripped by a few teeth.

The ball ended tugs may look suitable for this but you need to examine just how the dog is holding. They often go for the rope part and use the ball as a wedge to stop the tug slipping through the mouth. This is putting excessive strain on the jaw muscles. If they hold the ball entirely in their mouth, the teeth may not be involved at all - it is just keeping the mouth shut that stops the ball popping out.

In hot weather monitor the dog's breathing when a toy is in their mouth. Breathing can be compromised when a good portion of the airway is blocked by a ball or fur tug.

You may be using the tug as the outcome for speed and the section to bite must be clearly seen from some distance to avoid error.

LENGTH

Unless you like to bend over most of the time, use a length that allows you to play standing up straight. You will need a longer length for smaller dogs, and also for dogs that are shy at playing with you. The further away from you when tugging, the more comfortable for them. Pulling a respectful dog into our body space can cause conflict, and the dog will release the toy.

There will be times when you need to bend towards the dog to encourage more animation and involvement. The opposite effect will occur when you are very upright - it gives you more power over the tug. At times you may be in a class situation where you need to keep the dog in close proximity and will need your "in hand" short tug.

If you have any back problems, from the beginning keep yourself upright and use the tug on the end of a long connection, even as long as the Whippit, to maintain your deportment. It is very awkward to explain to your health providers that you were just teaching the dog to kill with more finesse.

TUG FOOD POUCHES

These are a wonderful way to explain to the uncertain tugger to engage in the game. Food is placed in the pouch, which is sealed with a Velcro strip. As the dog is stimulated to bite, you can open the pouch and feed the dog. You can also find a food pouch that gives a flavour of the food as the dog increased the bite - some of the food squeezes out through the fabric. Old socks are great for this. The greater the bite, the more tasty.

Tug games are so useful that it is well worth spending time teaching the reluctant tugger to play the games.

BITE STIMULATION

At the end of the day, no matter what we call the game, the dog is learning kill-skills. That first grip is intended to pin down or kill their prey. The maintenance of the grip, the tugging, is part of the the co-operative hunting strategy that allows one dog to grip to keep the prey from running away, whilst their kill partners set about despatching the dinner. Tugging is also a key part of single dog killing, where the skin or feather of the kill needs to be ripped off.

This may sound quite alarming to play "kill" games with your dog, but in many cases the dog is already practising these skills with the toys you have - chase and bite with the ball, de-gloving by pulling the stuffing out of a toy, tossing, pouncing, stalking are all part of the skills of the predatory chain. It is there to some degree in every dog. By structuring these skills, we allow an outlet for the dog's natural instincts. This relieves stress from our urban lifestyle, and gives the dog a healthy mental balance as well as a great physical workout.

The bite part of the tug, and the way it moves is best served by replicating movement and texture of prey. You may choose to use rabbit skin, or faux fur, you may need to add mock "legs and wings" to the prey to stimulate the dog to bite. You can use the toy with animation, innocent grazing or fast flight movement. All these elements encourage focus, concentration and precision biting.

WASHABLE

Dried dog saliva can quickly set like glue and, if not allowed to dry off, begin to smell something rotten. The saliva is full of bacteria. Dottie is extremely fussy about her tug and will not enjoy playing with a tug "tainted" by another dog's saliva. (Neither would I, actually). When searching for a tug, make sure it is washable, and wash it often.

HOW TO PLAY SAFELY FOR BOTH YOU AND THE DOG

Safety needs to be a high priority consideration at all times. Just watching two dogs play together, you can see very little that is not safe for both players. Where two different species "play", there is an opening for our differences to cause problems. These may not be major problems, but if you are using tug play for every day training there is a build up of small problems that can quickly develop into big problems over time. This is not only a physical consideration, but also mental. You can find yourself getting carried away with the enjoyment of the game and not realise exactly what you are teaching the dog, or what repetitive movements may be causing damage.

Always consider physical safety, and understand what constitutes an unsafe build of the arousal level, when planning the different activities you stimulate with tug play. Take time to consider the surface you are playing on. Slippery floors may become a challenge for the dog to maintain balance, and very rough surfaces can graze the feet.

A GOOD BITE

Through the game we can choose several agendas:

1. Building arousal to increase animation.

This is a useful way to increase the dog's alertness and activity level. On release of the tug, the dog is in a heightened state and the subsequent behaviours can reflect this emotion, adding more energy and animation. This is often the strategy for sports dogs, where the tug play is interspersed with behaviours to build up their intensity. The emotional package of tug playing is transferred to the behaviours. However, it is a two-edged sword because the whole package gets transferred - which may also include over arousal (barking), frenzied biting (you in the absence of the toy), circling and stalking.

2. Increased focus through anticipation.

When playing any type of game, the more engaging the game the greater the focus and concentration. These are very much skills we want to transfer to our sports behaviours. Anticipation of the game recommencing acts as a great motivator to maintain a strong focus on you.

3. Manoeuvring the dog into movements.

This is the gym training, the weight lifting, the muscle development. For any athletic dog we can plan to build strength and fluency in specific movements that the dog will need to use in the future of the sport. By controlling the build up of these movements we can avoid inadvertent injury.

4. Teaching retrieve through the game.

By building an association of the tug toy and us as the "whole" game the dog will learn to retrieve the tug to you for more enjoyment. You will find the dog pushes the tug at you, much in the way two dog playing together so that you can play. We can also control the style of the pick up and quickly extinguish mouthing.

5. Stress release.

Ten minutes of great play can significantly relieve the dog of a build-up of frustration and stress. The game needs to be a mixture of shared holding, some self control and some exciting moments - exactly the collection of behaviours your dog would employ as a hunter. Once the game is finished, if you have achieved the right balance during the game, the dog should easily relax and settle - and you should also have a warm feeling!

6. Building connection.

Fetch is fun, it is good exercise, but you only provide a fraction of the

entertainment. The bouncing ball capture is the key moment. In fact you could build a machine to ball launch and the dog would probably enjoy it as much. But the tug is more organic and interactive. The dog pulls, we pull back, we run along, we animate the toy, we make eye contact, we smile, we enjoy the connection. The game encourages focus into us, not excluding us.

For all these agendas we absolutely must have a good bite. This is not a "hard bite". Tug training will not make the dog bite harder, but it will teach the dog to maintain a comfortable grip. You cannot change the dog's bite power with the game, this is a physical inheritance but we can build up bite stamina and increase duration.

A good bite means we will not get bitten as the arousal increases. The dog will be holding the toy with most of the mouth keeping the strain in a straight line with their spine. Mouthing will extinguish.

TEACHING THE BITE

When you play keep the toy under slight pressure all the time. If the dog releases the toy for any reason the game will stop for a few seconds, and you will enjoy sole possession. Your play partner gaining "points" provides a reason to maintain a more persistent grip. If the two dogs were playing and one let go do you think they would give it straight back to the other dog? Heck no, they would make the other dog chase them for a while. Because we see the game as only happening during the tugging we are inclined to give it straight back to the dog.

Reasons for releasing are usually:

1. The grip is uncomfortable - make sure you present the toy to give the dog the best chance of a clean "mouthful" grip and the bite area is suitable for that dog.
2. The dog is used to mouthing and re-biting as part of the game.
3. The dog wants to re-bite closer to your hand in the hopes that you will feel the threat and release the toy to their ownership. If you do not notice this re-biting, you will when you get bitten. Wake up!

Maintaining the grip on first bite is a natural kill-skill that must be refined within our game. If you had just spent four hours stalking your prey, a poor first bite would result in the critter escaping and yet another day going hungry. All that effort is not to be wasted, nature teaches this lesson quite fast. A poor bite means the prey may escape. The first bite also needs to do the job of pinning down the prey to immobilise it. Mouthing it to death would not cut the mustard here. The rabbit is not going roll over to wait for a "better bite".

If your dog releases, by accident, disinclination or with an aim to work towards your hands - move fast, escape and run, taunting the dog for a few seconds. Bring yourself under control, wait until the dog mirrors your control, and cue the play to begin again. This regular change of energy is an excellent skill to embed in a young dog.

For the older dogs with re-bite habits (and this can be a deal breaker for you) make sure that when you cue the dog to play, you offer **ONLY** the part you want them to take. Make it easy for them - at mouth height. Encouraging the dog to run and punch you is never a good idea, unless you enjoy full-on nail-ridden punches to the gut ... or anywhere in that region.

If the tug becomes yours unexpectedly, be ready to block the re-bite. This is the moment when the dog is most aroused - they have just made the kill, relaxed a fraction too soon and the prey has arisen from pretend death to fly away and live another day. Most dogs with good instincts will not think about it, but on a reflex go for a second kill-bite. This is often the moment where you get bitten. Bring the tug into your body space and block the reflex movements. Once the dog is in control of their arousal, the play can begin again.

For the less enthusiastic or uncertain grippers, stimulating the re-bite reflex effectively increases the bite response. I recommend the tug on a Whippet to prevent accidental bite of your hands. Test the grip to see if you can encourage the animal to escape just after the first, weak bite. I guarantee the second bite will be better.

CONTROL BEFORE BITE

Because our skin is susceptible to bruising and breaking on contact with teeth, and because people are sometimes just not paying attention, **EVERY** game must only begin after the dog has clearly shown that the toy belongs to you, and that they would very much like to play. Respect through self control must come first. If the dog sees the tug and punches you for the game, you are allowing "I want I'll have". Not a good route for any young animal, with or without credit card in hand. Building the dog's self control is a key part of the game's structure and the dogs mental discipline. You will want to be able to move the toy without risk of getting bitten, and this begins with the dog focussed on the toy but clearly understanding that they can only bite when you cue it, not just because you move it.

CUE PLAY

What cue you use to tug must be considered. Often the gesture of holding the tug out within the two hands is the cue to get a hold. But in practice this can be mistaken by the dog and they launch to bite just because two hands are on the tug, or the tug is horizontal.

In the future you may place the tug away from you, and cue the dog to complete several behaviours before they go for the tug. You may want to run with it, you may be

putting it in your pocket. Movement of the tug is a bad idea as a trigger to bite. Instead use a verbal cue, and then offer the tug for the clean bite. Preferably chose a word that is unlikely to be used by other teams in close proximity.

CRASH BITE

This doesn't need a great deal of explanation. On a serious note, we ladies do not need any reason to encourage crashing above waist height. Why would you want to teach a dog to run at a person, with an open jaw, in preparation to bite? Certainly the sports and working dogs in training for criminal work need this skill. But these dogs are specifically, and extremely carefully, trained on the sleeve - not the gut, breast or bollocks.

You may have learned to hold the tug on rigid arms off your body but this can cause serious whiplash on the dog's neck. Instead build a good habit of low presentation that allows a degree of run through and move into the impetus, not against it.

SAFE MOVEMENTS

Avoid lots of jerking and yanking types of movement when the tug is coming out of one side of the dog's mouth. This can easily cause torque in the dog's neck. Try to use a balanced hold when asking for strong movements. This will also keep your back in better alignment.

You do not need to get over excited when playing. Our additional strength can cause injury to the dog with jerking movements. Keep it interesting, but not frantic.

BUILDING MOTIVATION

We are going to use the tug play for a variety of reasons, so it is important that the dog finds it enjoyable, stimulating and sufficiently challenging to motivate on many repetitions. Building this motivation is a careful balance between arousing play, sharing a game with you, and using an instinctive behaviour (killing). As the dog's interest builds, you must be ready to tighten up the rules. If they become over aroused the signs will be:

- ▶ Great difficulty in releasing the toy, thereby slowing the continuation of the game.
- ▶ Too much vocalisation, which leads to vocalisation in the subsequent behaviours.
- ▶ A risk of fixation behaviours. Fixation is extremely difficult to manage, reduce or change. It is truly fixed.

During this building phase the dog is learning a tremendous amount about you: how your balance changes, how your shoulders indicate which way you are turning. This hidden learning is very valuable. The dog will also learn whether you enjoy playing with them or not.

In a natural environment the skills for good tugging come after a chase and sometimes a stalk. This is the quickest way to build the arousal leading to a good bite. Use the Whippit toy, running with the tug end on the ground to encourage a chase. The Whippit does allow a lot of chasing without too much human energy expenditure, but by joining the dog in the chase we are building a unique connection. At all times you need to be monitoring the arousal levels. There is no benefit to an over-aroused learner.

THE RULES OF PLAY

BALANCING CONTROL AND AROUSAL

Playing with the right mindset is important for both you and the dog. Many people get put-off this game because it appears too violent and aggressive. We are developing kill skills. In most cases, the dog is already practising these skills when playing with other dogs or their own toys. Squeaky toys become beloved because of their resemblance to kill. Tennis balls become a source of passion because of the opportunity to chase and kill. Toys lose their stuffing because it mimics the activity of de-gloving fur and feather. We may call these activities fetch or retrieve, but they are kill-skills. Any time we join in these killing practice sessions, we are walking a fine line. Build too much arousal and we may not be able to control it. The control must always stay ahead of arousal, and at any time you must be able to get the game to end and the kill to be released.

The rules incorporate an extremely important structure in the game that gives you a future of enjoyment, not anxiety.

The pattern will be:

1. COLLECT YOUR TOY, AND MOVE INTO THE PLAY AREA.

During this period the dog should respect that it is your toy, not theirs. They should demonstrate their attitude with good focus, giving you some space. They should not barge you, knock against you or leap at you to take the toy.

Protect the toy with the blocking hand signal, and initially keep it within your body space. Much of this "ownership" will come from the way you stand and present yourself to the dog. This is an essential life-skill for all dogs. There will be times when you are carrying something precious, or just a cup of hot coffee, and the dog must learn to read your composure and

balance as a cue that whatever is in your hands is not to be shared until you say so.

With an experienced dog that has demonstrated a good attitude for many months, I would walk to the play area with a completely relaxed manner, and the toy swinging by my side.

If the dog is not focussed, make a quick escape and begin to enjoy a game with the toy by yourself.

2. FIRST BEHAVIOUR.

To begin with, this is the respect and correct attitude. The dog should be asking you to let them join in your game. If this is present, mark it (with a clicker or a voice cue) then cue the play to begin and present the toy for a bite. Take care that these cues are given one at a time, and not all lumped into a "get it" lunge. In the future you will want each cue - marking the correct behaviour, preparing to play, and going for the bite, to be separated.

As your game skills increase, the expected behaviour can become more advanced. Perhaps a sit, perhaps a down, or - with an advanced dog - a whole series of behaviours.

3. PLAY IN 3-5 SECOND BITES.

This is your average. Arousal will increase by the quantity of animation and the duration of the bite time. You can use a short arousing action, or a long non-animated grip. Be careful of doing both animation and duration. Coming down from that level of arousal is a mature skill.

Monitor how long you play for. If you exhaust the dog too soon, you are reducing your potential training time.

4. MARK THE BEHAVIOUR, GOOD ATTITUDE OR CORRECT RESPONSE TO YOUR BODY LANGUAGE.

This can be done with the clicker. If you were training with food you would never let the dog lunge at your hand or treat bag as soon as they hear the click. There is a signal from your hands when they are allowed to take the food.

It will become more important as you develop different applications for tug play that the clicker only marks the behaviour that will earn the reinforcing play, not a cue to bite the toy.

You may be clicking for a correct entry to a weave, the correct help position, a drop at a distance. In all these cases you must cue the dog to come from the behaviour to play, not develop a click as a cue to play.

If you are not using a clicker, the cue to play, or "get it", will become your marker. But remember that when the behaviour is marked by this, the dog will leap for the toy whether you are ready or not!

5. THE GIVE OR RELEASE.

This element is one of the hardest to learn for dogs in most need of self control. They will have enjoyed the tug game with you, and may anticipate that giving up the toy will be the end to their fun. The give can unintentionally become punishing. If you have spent three minutes fighting to get the toy from the dog, and you are then so relieved at having possession that you end the game and put the toy away... the next time you ask for a give the dog is hardly going to be keen, eh?

This skill is going to be an important self control skill, as well as an integral part of life. This is about giving up something you are enjoying in exchange for something better - another game. This is about coming in from the garden where you have been enjoying watching the birds, this is about getting your head out of the rabbit hole to return for something better, this is about not chasing the skateboarders but instead having a tug game with you. You can teach it through tug training.

The ease at which the dog releases is a good indication of their level of arousal. You will practice the releasing sequence until you have no doubts about it.

It is never going to confrontational.

TO BEGIN THE SEQUENCE:

1. Compose yourself, bring yourself under control, stand up straight, and stop being animated.
2. Transfer the tug into one hand and take the dog by the collar. This should be under the neck in an upward direction. The pressure should be against the back of the neck and prevent any further tugging.
3. The game has now stopped. To begin the game again, the dog will need to release their grip on the toy.

In this period watch the dog's face and look for signs that the arousal is reducing. If the dog is still off the scales you will just have to wait for the brain to take control again, instead of the reflex. This is usually evidenced in relaxation around the eyes, eye

movement and blinking. Until this physiological response has occurred the dog simply cannot go into release. It is this instinct that ensures a dead critter, and not an I-hope-it's-dead thought. Nature can often keep the dog in this kill-grip for quite a few minutes. If the critter is dead, it doesn't matter that the dog takes a break during the grip. If it's not dead, it is just as well the dog's jaw is in place to bite harder. If you try to "make" the dog give before the brain is back in control, movement of the toy will trigger the reflex to bite harder and you will maintain, rather than decrease, the arousal. The signals are that the critter ain't dead!

4. Wait, keep relaxed, and keep light tension on the tug. The calmer you wait the sooner the jaw can release.
This is an excellent point to use a clicker, it clearly lets the dog understand that the controlled state, the jaw release, is what ensures the game begins again.
5. Make sure you are not tempted to pull the tug from the dog. This can re-trigger the reflex bite. The dog must show you evidence of their self control by removing themselves from the toy. You must keep your hands quite still, keep the tug still, and look for the dog backing away from your toy.
6. At this time release the collar.
7. Take the toy into your space, and then follow up your click with a re-start of the game.
This can be put on a verbal cue when the dog begins to anticipate the sequence, or chain, as you begin to get yourself under control.

I usually look for a balance of 10 repetitions portioned into nine releases reinforced with more play, to one release that end the session with the toy being put away.

6. That will do. Enough.

This is such an important promise. When you finish playing, give this cue, relax and go put the toy away. Under no circumstances relinquish with "OK, we'll go for one more then".

CONNECTION

We can learn to enjoy many games with our dogs, from fetch, to hide and seek, to toss the sausage. But I have always found that the tug game brings good quality learning when the rules are strictly followed. The dog learns a terrific amount of self discipline and control, and a great learning attitude. Most importantly, the game is always associated with you. Every second you play, you are added more strength to your relationship.

Play the game that your dog enjoys. My setters love big-bird size toys with lots of shared running and grunting, my collies love maintaining the grip and dancing around. Look for the part of the game they enjoy the most and use that to reinforce the parts that are less exciting or stimulating. Not all dogs like their heads being shaken, but some love it. Some find the running too much multi-tasking and others come alive in the shared run.

Tug is an ideal game when you make it enjoyable for both you and the dog, while incorporating rules to prevent getting bitten and structure to get the best quality learning.

RECIPE 4: FOOD GAMES

These games are suitable for food or a toy if the dog is a natural ball retriever. This game is particular useful to teach concentration to dogs that are prone to visual distractions, such as sheepdogs.

- ▶ Sit on the floor and place a piece of food on the floor between you and the dog. If the dog goes to take the food put your hand over the food to protect it, as the dog backs off (probably for a regroup and think), click, pick up the food and toss it away for the dog to collect. Do not let the dog take the food from spot where it was placed on the floor.

We have rewarded the dog for exerting a minute amount of self control and NOT take the food. This needs to be extended in length of time.

- ▶ Repeat this game until the dog anticipates the behaviour and does not move forward to take the food on the placement gesture. Click when the dog is looking at the food and is under control, pick the food up and toss it away for a fetch.
- ▶ Once this is reliable add the cue. This is the same behaviour to teach the dog to mark a thrown object, or look forward for the sendaway. Use the "mark" or "watch" verbal cue prior to moving your hand to place the food to the floor.
- ▶ Add more interest to this "rabbit" (regard the game as you teaching the dog to watch the rabbit hole. If the dog is too earnest and jumps for the rabbit as it emerges, then the rabbit will shoot back into the hole and the dog goes hungry. Very likely that rabbit won't come out of that hole again. So the young dog will need to exercise patience and wait for the rabbit to move away from the hole. This is a considerable amount of self control for a young dog, not an unreasonable request, but certainly an essential survival skill). We can include a wee bit of a chase for the rabbit.

Place the food to the floor and put your closed fist by the side of the food. The dog should be staring at the food for at least a count of 5. When you click, flick the food away, if you need to, push the dog after the food, sometimes they have become so stuck to the floor they won't move off the spot. The flick becomes more unpredictable than the pick up and toss, and encourages a stronger fixation.

- ▶ If the dog looks away at any time during the "mark" period, then steal the food and put it back in the pot.

"Hell's teeth! The rabbit went back in the hole!! "

I'm sure you all know dogs well enough that if a rabbit popped back into a hole the dog would sit watching it for longer than the News At Ten, sometimes all day, and still come back for more tomorrow. It is more often the anticipation of action that stimulates the highest levels of concentration. Use it to your advantage.

You can play this with either food or a ball, just make sure the food is suitable for flicking.

Both these exercises develop different skills. Game 1 Tugging, control and excitement side by side teaching the dog to manage their emotions. Game 2 Rabbits develops a strong visual concentration and encourages speed from stationary control.

The benefit of the two concentration games are:

- ▶ the audible squeak becomes a cue to work harder for the forthcoming reward.
- ▶ the food teaches the dog to maintain concentration to a range of distractions.

Both games contribute to a strong behaviour in the presence of distractions.

3

Control exercises



Stay exercises are similar in Obedience competitions around the world. The dogs are left in a specific position and as you progress through the classes they will be left further away from you, until they are left out of sight for up to 10 minutes.

In addition, the dogs may need to stand stay for an examination, which is a stay exercise with a high degree of distraction. Can you imagine standing quite still whilst a stranger messes with your hair? Yuk! I would need some practise to be able to endure that!

Control exercises encompass a collection of movements between stand, sit and down positions. The dog may need to stay on the spot and adopt these positions, or be stopped in the positions whilst on recall or after sendaway and re-direction.

All these exercises in training terms are:

- ▶ a clear understanding of the position to maintain, not all sits are the same
- ▶ the ability to maintain the position against the desire to move
- ▶ the ability to maintain the position for long periods
- ▶ the ability to maintain the position with distractions
- ▶ a secure understanding of the movement that precedes the specific position

If the dog is unsure if a sit is a sit-prior-to-action (a recall) as opposed to the sit-for-duration, they are more open to errors. To avoid confusing the dogs we need to differentiate between the way the positions are adopted for immediate pose and for duration pose to increase reliability.

Asking a dog for a speedy “drop” (down) is not the same as a dog settled for a 10 minute down out of sight. They are both different behaviours and require different cues and situations to ensure the dog does not get confused. A position that needs to be maintained for 10 minutes must be comfortable for the dog and not induce movement to gain comfort.

Although we use a specific cue for a behaviour, there are usually predictable patterns of actions prior to the cue that contribute to the variations. The drop whilst moving is an immediate action, whilst the dog settling for the down, usually comes after several dogs have collected together, the dog has been relaxed at your side prior to the commencement, and may even have completed the sit stay. They are quite different circumstances and it always helps if you mimic those conditions in teaching to add situational cues to your final cue.

Looking at each position in turn:

DOWN POSITION - LION

This is the dog lying ready for action. The hips are collected, not rolled to one side. The dog should drop and rise from this position with a level spine in a cantilever action.

DOWN POSITION - SETTLED

This is the dog in the down rolled onto one hip. More often we drop the dog for the settle from our heel position which encourages the dog to drop onto their left hip. The dog will be able to rest their head on their front legs.

Some dogs will roll onto one hip after they have laid down, others will tuck one back leg under prior to the movement of laying down. Observe your dog and make sure you know which they prefer, ie when left to their own choice, and make sure that is what you teach.

I do not advocate the strategy of placing the dog completely on its side for the relaxed or duration down. The dog is vulnerable and this can add extra stress to the situation.

SIT TO HEEL

This is the sit collected to the front end of the dog. If you watch the dog's feet the front feet stay still and the back feet close in. You will need this for both the heel and in front - present - position.

SIT BACK

This is the alternative to the sit to heel, where the front ends steps back to join the back end. Most useful for pet training where the action of sitting is often used to prevent jumping up or forward energy.

It also has a sense of "backing off" rather than coming towards, which can be used in control positions at the distance since the dog moves backwards. If the dog is marked for excessive forward movement, this may be a useful gain. You must consider the dogs natural choice of movement when training the sit.



left: the lion down

below: the settled down





STAND

This is a "four square" position with a "leg at each corner". The dog must be soundly balanced on each leg, with the legs in a reasonable line. ie the front feet both in line, and the back feet both in line. Some dogs stand with the back feet spread further apart than their front feet as you can see in the left picture opposite.

If the dog is standing with one leg misplaced there is a greater chance the dog will move to be balanced. In the picture opposite on the right Kent is likely to move his back left leg forward for more comfort if he was asked to maintain this position.



We will teach the dogs to hold what ever position they adopt since paddling or fidgeting is open to loss of marks. Where possible make sure the first position they adopt can be maintained without adjustment.

CONTROL THE MOVEMENT

By controlling the movement we are able to control the final position of the dog, and ensure steadiness on arrival.

If we want a dog to drop fast to the down position and be ready for a follow-on movement, the dog will need to drop into the lion down with the level spine.

Firstly for speed of the drop. A dog spending time arranging the hips for a settled down will lose points for the lack of speed. Secondly If dropping with the level spine the dog then rolls onto one hip, the dog will take longer to lift when cued, again this can be marked for lack of response to cue. Silly points to give away, when clicker training allows us to teach this precision with clarity without even breaking into a sweat.

These are all the elements that constitute our understanding of "obedience" - speed and precision, and it very easy to teach from the outset, a perfect movement, with a perfect position appropriate to the requirements of the exercise.

Similarly if the dog sits to lie down, marks may be lost for the dog going through the sit and you stand a very good



*the back feet moving in to the front
for the forward sit*



chance of muddling the dog with the sit to stand and the sit to down. Be clear in your mind how the movement must be carried out and only teach that movement to a specific cue.

THE MOVEMENTS AND CUES

To the Novice handler the completed training will look like the dog adopts the three positions, stand, sit and down, on single cues.

From a clicker trainer's aspect the dog has 6 behaviours, all with a different cue. If you do work under a system that requires the identical cue for opposing behaviours that end with the same position (such as the stand-to-sit, and the down-to-sit then use a different tone and pitch in the "sit" verbal cue).

Movements:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Stand to sit | cue: sit |
| 2. Stand to down | cue: down |
| 3. Sit to Stand | cue: back |
| 4. Sit to Down | cue: sleepy |
| 5. Down to sit | cue: hups |
| 6. Down to stand | cue: lift |

You do not have to use these suggested verbal cues, but you should be using a different cue for each behaviour or movement. If you run through these words yourself

you will notice that each is a different vowel sound, giving the dog a greater chance of discriminating especially when at a distance.

You can substitute any of these for a visual signal. Most systems allow for either a verbal cue or a signal. I chose signals that are similar to the lure to capture the behaviour initially, and can be seen clearly from a distance by the dog.

I made the mistake of teaching Abacab the stand hand signal with my left arm. My left hand signal was the cue to heel, and sure enough in his eagerness to get it right I ended up with a dog to heel instead of moving from the down to stand quite a few times before I changed to the right arm for the down to stand.

Usually we set the dog up in the first position and the steward walks with us to the point where we stop, turn around and give the commands. For some reason this steward ended up on my right instead of my left and when I gave the first cue soundly smacked him across the face. Fortunately the judge thanked me for training his steward!

RECIPE 5: TEACHING THE MOVEMENTS

I train these in pairs, where one movement is the reverse of the other. This adds flexibility to both movements at the same time. If the dog is developing muscles to move from the stand to down, then asking for the down to stand will develop the opposing muscles.

By teaching in pairs, you can keep the dog flowing by concentrating on movement rather than stopping. This avoids the dogs anticipating relaxation in a position since they will be moving off again quickly, they keep the muscles tight and poised for the next action.

To begin with each *movement* will be clicked and each *position* fed. As the dog commences the correct behaviour, say to drop, you click that commencement, and use the food to lure all the way to the down position and feed. Attach the click to the correct muscles as they are used. Develop a sense of “rightness” about that movement.

One hand will be the hand the dog watches which contains the food to lure. The other hand will hold the clicker out of sight and away from the dogs ears. I train with the dog placed sideways across the front of me. My right arm is the lure and feed and the left hand contains the clicker. In this position I can clearly see the way the dog moves, and at no time push the dog away from me. Make sure you keep your hands off the dog if you are tempted to push them or nudge them into the movement. This often results in stress in this exercise unless the dog is very familiar with hands positioning them for perhaps the show ring or grooming.



lifting the dog from the down to the stand, food in the right hand and the clicker in the left.

Once the movement is secure and fluent, remove the food from the lure hand and progress this to a signal hand. This is one occasion where free shaping a movement can be open to error. By luring you can control the muscle movement and develop a conditioned response. But it will be some time before the dog is completely fluent in the movement, perhaps up to three months. These fine muscles are best built in small daily exercises. Lure training is great for developing precise muscle movement.

The down side is a dog dependant on lure hand signals for the behaviour. So remember when changing to verbal cues, and changing your location from the side of the dog to the front of the dog, or at a distance it will take a good while to maintain the trained fluid movement during the changing cues and situation.

Fortunately once a dog has been weaned off the side luring with one pair of movements, they will follow in suit for the others very quickly. Back to these wonderful conceptual learners, called dogs, that generalise their understanding!

Only teach one pair at a time, get the muscle fluency, build the strength with exercise, move to the final cue and then change your location. Then start on the next pair.

Considering the amount of time it takes to teach this exercise with excellent results, I would schedule it in to the dog's curriculum at least one year before it is required in competition. It is not difficult to teach well, it just takes a long time to secure the learning for the competition situation with absolutely reliability.

STAND TO SIT: "SIT" & SIT TO STAND: "BACK"

Use the lure hand above the dog's head for the sit. Use the lure slightly forward of the dog, but under the chin for the sit back to stand. This encourages a pivot point around the dog's elbows. Remember the open palm will signal the dog to move to the hand.

If the dog is slow to move the back legs backwards for the stand, then take the hand further under the chest when in the sit. Click initially for the dog tucking their head under, and then click for slight movements of the hips, until the dog moves the back feet. Don't try to get the whole movement at first attempt unless the dog is very flexible and responsive. Lucky!

I look for no movement of the front feet in the final movement. The back feet walking in and walking back and then learning their opposing movements. I have found both the Collies and the Gordons prefer this movement to the walking back of the front feet to gain the sit.

STAND TO DOWN: "DOWN" & DOWN TO STAND: "LIFT"

The movement of the dropping down with the level spine is easier for the dog to understand if you begin with the head movement and allow the rest of the body to follow.

Progress would be:

- ▶ in the stand position: lure the dog's head towards the ground aiming for a spot level with their front feet. Click for all neck stretching, feed when back in the upright position
- ▶ gradually increase the lowering of the food, until you see the dogs shoulders and elbow begin to flex. Click for this action, feed when back in the upright position
- ▶ take the food completely to the floor, behind their front feet. Click for the elbows touching the floor, feed when back in the upright position. This is a play bow position.
- ▶ keep the food on the floor and click for the drop of the hips to the floor. Feed after luring the dog back to a clean "lift" for the stand.

If this is done smoothly, with a flexible dog, their four feet will stay on the same spot and all movement will be in the joints. This discourages any temptation to paddle when moving back up to the stand position.



The hardest part with the Gordons in the movement from the bow to down. They have a very flexible spine which allows them to maintain this position comfortably. I often cheat and use the verbal cue "sit" if the dog is maintaining the bow, since the sit movement is a lowering of the hips, bending the knees to the floor. I could not use a cue "down-sit" in competition, but I do take care to differentiate between a bow (cue: bend) and a down, and I would not train them at the same time.

Dogs are very good at learning different behaviours in different contexts. If I am working on obedience movements, my posture is very similar to a competition ring - upright, minimal cues, shoulders back. If I am training for freestyle I use my arms much more, rarely stand both feet together and mimic movements myself. The dogs have very little problem telling the difference between a Formal-Kay and a Dancing-Kay, so signals given on top of those different *persona* have different results.

I once tried to put a freestyle routine together as a robot - you know the sort of white gloved, jerky movements - but poor Kiwi was so confused with the similarity to obedience that I hastily dropped the idea. Perhaps suitable for a dog who has no knowledge of obedience!



from the down capturing the push upward movement that settles into the sit, the back feet are already bent for the sit action.

SIT TO DOWN: "SLEEPY" & DOWN TO SIT: "HUPS"

Both of these movements need to be crisp, one action movements. The dog will pounce from the sit to the down, and pop-up from the down into the sit.

This is an exercise where practising as a pair will keep the hips in the lion position and the muscles held tight ready for the spring up.

Use the hand lure with speed to get the head moving fast, or even use a toy to encourage a drive up in the movement.

In these movements the back feet will stay stationary and the front feet move as a pair where possible. Do not encourage the dogs to "walk down" or "walk up" into the positions.

Consider standing behind the dog when in the down position so that they are drawn upwards and backwards when springing up for the sit. You will need good maintenance of the down position to be able to get behind the dog.

I sometimes use the target stick or hand to get the dog to spring upwards. Make sure the target is not directly above the dog's head, but slightly behind it to encourage the hips to stay down for the sit.

I lure the fast down through to the "sleepy" position which is the chin to the floor.

Analysing many, many competitions, the movement from the down to the sit is without doubt the most poorly performed in respect of movement or hesitation or no response at all.

On watching closer, my opinion is that the dogs are having to decipher between "sit" (move hips) and "sit" (move shoulders up). For nearly every dog the sit is a movement of the hips and knees. Yet when in the down position the sit is a movement of the shoulders and front feet. If you watch competition dogs closely that have the two versions of the sit, they will shift their hips ever so slightly when they hear the "sit" cue.

Good handlers differentiate the two types of sit cues with very clear verbal cues, or one verbal cue and one visual cue for the same ending position. Become a modern trainer

and stop cueing the dog by the final position and cue the dog by the movement - it is the movement that is the behaviour, not the position it ends with.

LEARN THE NATURAL MOVEMENTS

If you make a note to observe the dog in the 3 positions, take particular note of what stimulates the movement to the position you are looking for, and how the dog places its feet in the position.

Some dogs will sit with their front feet tucked between their back feet when in the sit. To move to this position from the down, the lure would need to be almost above the dog's tail. Some dogs lay down with the front feet directly behind their back feet, others need to spread their back feet apart to allow for the pelvis.

You can certainly exploit natural stimuli for these movements. A dog may lay down head first, when trying to get a piece of food from under a chair. Or naturally drop backwards with a level spine if they are avoiding stepping off carpet onto a colder surface.

YOUR BODY LANGUAGE CHANGES

If you require these positions in different locations relative to you make sure you prepare the dog in all the locations.

The dog will see a "different you" depending on where they are. The dog dropping out of the heel position into the down, has a completely different view as opposed to the drop at twenty feet in front of you, with you facing them.

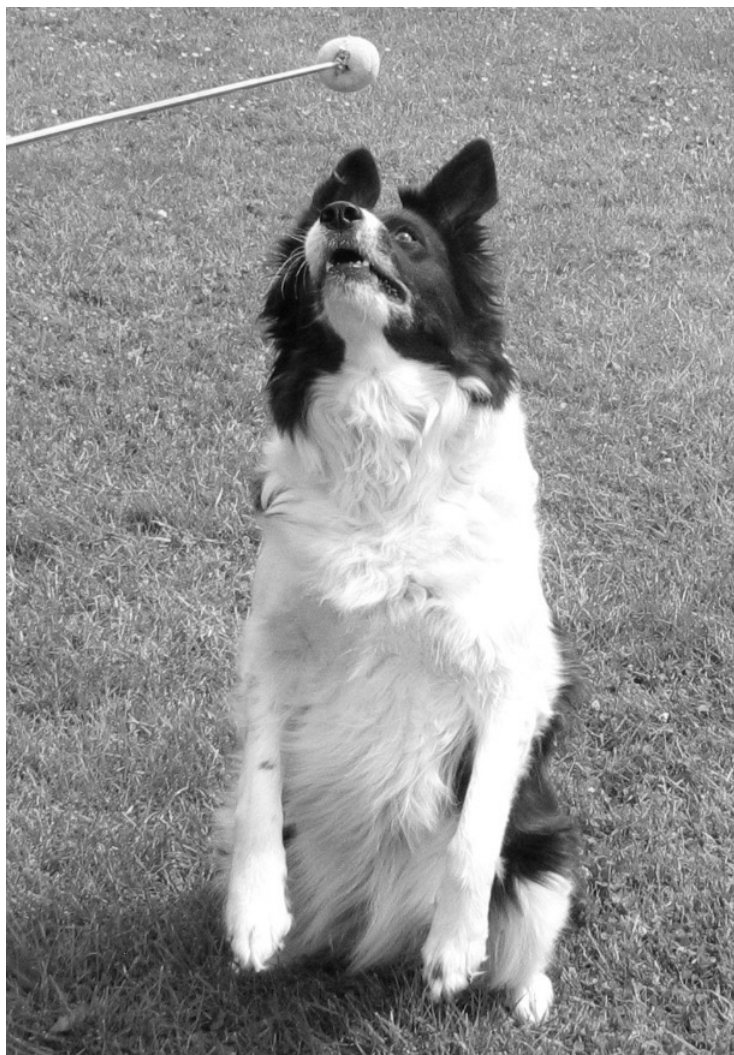
To anticipate future flexibility of the behaviour, progress with the lure signals that can become hand signals AND put all movements required in the heel position to a verbal cue (ie. the stop stand, the stand to sit and the stand to down). If securely attached to a verbal cue, then the dog is not quite so dependant on seeing the body language.

To add more complication remember that a verbal cue can change when shouted as opposed to spoken. If the wind is blowing the wrong way, or you are working against high noise levels, then the hand signals may be more suitable for the



note where the lure is to get the very upright sit (below), when lifting out of the down





distance work. Think through it carefully and train with both options until you are very sure what the final cues for each exercise will be.

RECIPE 6: EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN MOVEMENT

Certain exercises will increase mobility and strengthen the small muscles that can make the difference between the movements between positions being easy and comfortable or a slight strain.

FOR THE HIPS AND KNEES

Teaching a dog to balance in the beg position is wonderful for adding speed to the sit movement from either the down or the stand. I teach this with a target stick from the sit position. Allow the dog to learn how to balance, and again, notice the point of lure is above dogs hips on completion.

Once in the down position move the dog between the lion down and settle down. When in the lion down, take the food down the side of the dog so that they turn their

head sideways, this causes the spine to curve and the hips will roll. To reverse, draw the dog forward with a piece of food by their front toes.

I teach the spring up from the down position with a catch game. When the dog is in the lion dog position and poised for action, toss the food or toy in the air. Aim for a spot that the dog would be able to catch if it was in the sit. It may be a good idea for you to practise your throwing technique in this position first. Throw food or toy to the dog in the sit, and make sure the catch will keep the dog in the sit. The dog will learn the hand movement - use an overarm throw from shoulder height.

Once in the down, use the same movement and the dog will spring up from the down, hopefully to the sit. It is not a recommended method to teach the move - so avoid putting it on cue, keep your mouth shut. If you used this to teach the mis-interpretation of your throw could leave the dog standing or sitting badly. You can use the same



drop the food by the side of the dog for the lion to settle down



draw forward to bring the hips back to the lion position

technique to spring the dog to the stand. But remember to regard it like tug training, it is an exercise to develop muscles, not an exercise to impart understanding.

MAINTAINING A POSITION: STAYS

Self control is more of a mental exercise than physical. We can all sit still, but to sit for one hour without moving takes mental control. To sit for 3 hours through an opera takes more than mental discipline, it borders on torture for me. We know young children lack the mental discipline to force themselves to sit still, and it must be just the same for puppies. They are designed to be exploring their environment at every opportunity unless asleep.

Being “still” comes in two different forms:

- ▶ relaxation, with loose joints, relaxed eyes, head set into neck
- ▶ enforced lack of movement, which in some dogs will look tense, perhaps even shaking slightly

We need to capture both behaviours and build the dog's skills to maintain stillness without stress.

On the whole the long sit and especially the down stays are a time for the dog to relax, but maintain some degree of alertness. This may be the mental state for four out of five dogs, for the fifth dog, being separated from their handler, AND lying down in close proximity to other dogs is their unendurable opera. They are not relaxed, but suffering every long minute, second by second. They will be fighting the desire to move. The dog in this mental state will need an extensive amount of training to build the self control skills and it must be done with care and a lot of consideration to avoid the stay exercises becoming a nightmare. For this dog stay training IS punishment, and we need to very, very gently build the confidence and trust for competition.

What separates stay training from other clicker training is the delivery of food to the position the dog is expected to maintain. Use an alternative clicker for this, or use the reduced sound. When the dog hears this click, they will not “alert” and expect the tossed food, but relax and know the reward is coming to them.

This is an important element that contributes to the mental state of the exercise. When the dog is successful (clicked) reward will always come to them and reinforce the position. When the dog seeks to be more successful they will solidly and determinedly hold their position waiting for the click. When you begin to increase the gap between you and the dog, you can click at the distance, and the dog receives a double reward of seeing you walk back to them and then the food.

Our clicker trained kids are superbly equipped to transfer their learning from one behaviour to another, ie once they have learned to stay-relax or stay-endure in one position they will transfer it to another position.

I use the sit to learn to stay-endure, and the down for the stay-relax. The physical posture of the dog induces alertness or relaxed joints. Leave the stand stay until after the sit and down, alert and relaxed, stays are solid, strong and able to withstand distraction and duration.

RECIPE 7: SIT STAY - STAY-ENDURE

Make sure your dog will sit on cue in a position that is clean, balanced and needing no further adjustment. When you click make sure you are ready to instantly follow up by giving food straight to the dog’s mouth.

Slowly build the time gap between the delivery and the next click, and once the dog is secure on click, the time gap between the click and the delivery. You should be standing relaxed, facing the dog at no further than arm’s length.

To start:

click-feed----click-feed----click-feed----click-feed----click-feed

Gradually increase:

click----feed----click----feed----click----feed----click----feed----click---feed
 click-----feed-----click-----feed-----click-----feed

The dog will need to be able to maintain the position whilst waiting for a click, and also when hearing the click since you may be at a distance.

Once the dog can strongly maintain the behaviour between each reinforcer, put the behaviour on cue, “stay” and begin to strengthen by varying:

1. the way you stand, fold your arms, put your hands behind your back, look away, look at them
2. which part of you is facing the dog, sometimes square on, sometimes your shoulder, do not turn your back at this stage
3. the place you stand relative to the dog, in front, by their left side, by their right. Gradually move towards the point behind them, but very carefully watch the “blind spot” where they will feel the need to turn around to keep watching you. Invest plenty of time in clicking the dog for holding the sit position but swivelling their head to see you.
4. movement between these locations, pay particular attention to reinforce the dog holding the position as you step forward from the heel position
5. the distance between you and the dog, a gradual increase
6. external distractions of other dogs, other people, at a distance
7. proximity of other non-moving dog, (another dog in the stay) and then a near by dog moving

You are teaching the dog how to maintain a position with an increasing degree of reasons to move. If you increase too fast the dog may respond with movement, do not worry, just restart back one stage, and build the dog’s confidence again.

In one session I would anticipate using at least 40 pieces of food.

Remember to keep varying the time gap between click and delivery. Practise returning to the dog’s heel position, click, count to three, and then deliver the food. Avoid encouraging movement out of the position at the end of the exercise, this can become a reward, do not make a fuss or praise or the dog will anticipate this reward on the click at return at sit up, or move for their fuss.

Quietly release the dog with perhaps the cue to heel after the last piece of reward for staying and move off.

RECIPE 8: DOWN STAY - STAY-RELAXED

The cue to differentiate the “settle down you’re here for a while” is the posture of the down position. You can use the same verbal cue “stay”, but make sure the dog is hip rolled, and stays consistent to the same hip. Ensure the dog is always fed at their flank on the same side.

Use the same technique of increasing the time gap, but do not increase the distraction, just increase time. Make sure you stand quite still, relax one hip yourself, relax your shoulders and glance at the dog with a “soft eye”.

When teaching the dog the out of sight, use the blind spot to be near the dog, but not visually “in the view”. Click them for not trying to look at you. Let the behaviour be one of trust and the click reassurance. The dog must be able to relax without directly looking at you before you increase the distance or move out of sight.

Begin the out of sight teaching by only removing their knowledge of your location one sense at a time. If you are outside, stand upwind of the dog so that they can smell you are just around the corner, or keeping talking so they can hear you are only 10 feet away. Keep visual contact by walking half circles in front of the dog at an increasing distance. They will recognise your body movement, but see you further and further away.

RECIPE 9: STAND STAY - FOR EXAMINATION

I begin this exercise with puppies during their daily grooming sessions. Firstly I teach them to stand squarely, with a leg at each corner, and groom with my hands. Plenty of stroking all around the body. You can use the click to mark the lack of movement and the stroke as the reward.

Begin to build up the level of endurance through gradual test of resistability to movement:

1. lift one leg and click for balanced maintained on three
2. gently stretch the tail and feel when the muscles resist, click for that resistance
3. put slight pressure along the spine, as soon as you feel the muscle push back, click and stroke
4. push gently on the flanks and shoulders and click for resisting a side step

Build up the intrusive nature of the examination, check teeth, ears, under the tail. When you introduce another person, change over to click and food from you, for the dog tolerating the person or resisting the desire to move and greet.

If the dog is anxious about strangers, muffle their scent by asking them to wear a pair of your gloves or your jacket. Also introduce strange scents and clothing, such as wet weather gear, hats on yourself.

If your dog is particularly shy, teach them to seek contact, by shaping them to move their head into the palm of the approaching hand without leaving the position.

RECIPE 10: CONFIDENCE AT A DISTANCE

A good proportion of Obedience will test the dog's response to cue at a distance from you and this usually increases as you progress through the classes. Your dog will need to learn to stay, hold a position, change from one position to another, change from a run to a position and from a position to a run at varying distances.

If your strategy is to reward the dog only when in close proximity to you, the dog can unintentionally become conditioned to be "punished" ie, without reward, in any other location. This could be a useful strategy to reinforce the pleasure of being with you, but can, in the long term, work against developing a confident dog at a distance.

Although the click marks the behaviour, the location and delivery of the reward will strongly affect the behaviour as well.

If you require a dog to sit whilst you walk away, then the dog must be confident at the distance from you. The behaviour of "sitting still" should not be used to gain distance, since any anxieties the distance may create will transfer to the behaviour of "sitting still".

Play games of tossing the food to the distance to explain to the dog that being "out there" is also a good place to be. It is also VERY good to listen and pay attention "out there". So throw the food, as soon as the dog looks up for the "what's next then ?" you will be delivering the next tasty missile out to their location.

Your hand signal to throw the food, with a bent arm and hand by your ear, will become the cue not to return. Develop this confidence, with increased distance and distractions before you begin to expect cue response, either stays or positions at the same distance.

I find a piece of chicken will only travel so far by air, and need to reward with thrown toys for this game. I have been seen standing with a bucket of balls and toys to keep the dog from returning ... great game!

4

Recall



Recall training is central to the attitude of the dog towards you. We do not use the recall to develop a good attitude but the recall is a true reflection of the existing attitude. Clicker training rewards dogs that choose to be with us, voluntarily, and if your dog is not at the stage where he or she wishes to be with you, then teaching Obedience must come secondary.

Recall training is just an extension of the desire to be with you. Do not see this exercise as a cue for the dogs to “come” and move towards us, see it more as an exercise where the stay position holds the dog away from you and the “come” cue releases the barrier.

As clicker trainers we will reward that desire many, many times and should be able to complete 100% of the training without a lead. But there are situations when you are not the highest reward the dog can have, and the dog chooses not to be with you, such as other dogs playing or fleeing wild life. In these situations you must use a lead for safety, but the lead is still not part of your strategy to get the behaviour, just a back up should the dog respond to the distractions. You will need to work with your clicker to mark the desire to be with you, or even consider you in high level distraction, and reward the dog on arrival. The challenge will be in finding a reward greater than the one the dog is giving up to be with you.

Ideally you introduce a puppy to the concept, build the desire strongly, and only expose the dog to high level distraction after the cue has moved to become a classically conditioned response. This may take many months, and the behaviour may disappear as the dog matures and finds being with you is no longer a primary need. Teaching a dog to recall from distractions may be a life time project, and one of the tests in Obedience that is rather false in comparison to Real Life, which is much harder.

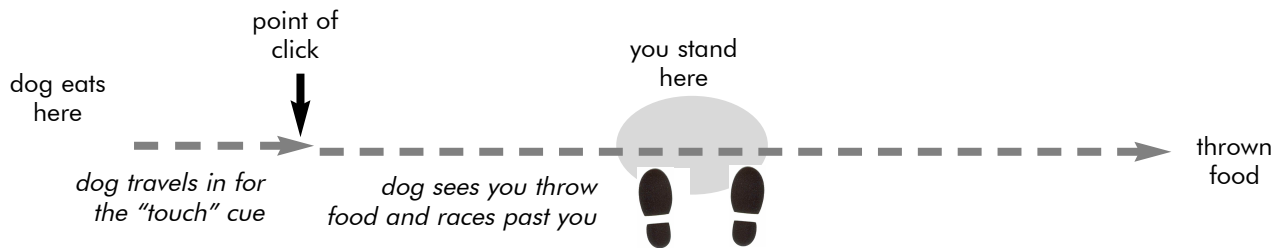
RECIPE 11: ELASTIC RECALLS

I teach this game to puppies but all the dogs love to play it as well.

1. after you have taught the nose to back of hand target, begin to throw the food gradually further away each time

An ideal training environment is a hall where the food can travel easily and be seen as it goes. This race after the food encourages a race towards you for the next “touch”.

2. as the dog looks back at you for “what’s next then?” enquiry hold out the target hand and give the verbal cue “touch”. The dog will come in and be clicked on touch, throw the food away.



3. Once the distance is building up, move yourself to the middle of the area and as the dog moves towards you select the increased speed and click, turn your back to the dog and throw the food forwards. This will encourage the dog to race past you.
4. Keep "pinging" the dog from one end to the other. Always click for speed and direction towards you, and make sure the thrown food encourages the dog to keep up the speed in your direction.

If you give the dog the food for arriving, the dog begins to anticipate the stop and may not develop a running, purposeful speed.
5. Once the speed is established and predictable change the cue to "come" just prior to the dog turning back to you - probably when they are eating.
6. Build up distractions by placing obstacles between you and the dog, and then other people, and perhaps other dogs. If you need to work where you cannot throw the food, you can use a second person as the reward station. Begin the same way, but on click the person with an obvious pot of food delivers the food, and then gradually moves away from you.

The raw behaviour of recall is "run towards me". We next need to teach the formalities of how and where to arrive, and include the stay barrier to allow us to move away.

Teaching the "stay" and the come at the same time will pull the inner dog apart. They will need a great deal of confidence to be unconfused by switching from:

stay = let me walk away from you - and - come = run towards me

Practising them together will reduce the quality of each behaviour as well. To skill the dog in all elements, increase the distraction level of the elastic recall and begin the confidence at a distance game (Recipe 10) for the stay training. The dog will learn to run towards you on a cue that indicates the end of the sitting still behaviour. Arriving into a controlled position must be taught separately.

THE PRESENT POSITION

After completing a range of behaviours at a distance the dog is cued to sit in front, and then cued to finish to the heel position in preparation for another exercise. The dog will be required to present from recall, retrieve, jump or scent and it is a foundation behaviour that must be carefully taught for precision and speed.

Very often in teaching Obedience we are faced with these two opposing requirements - speed and precision. So often one will be at the expense of the other, we can achieve a fast recall, but result in a crash on arrival, or we teach a dog to take care on picking up a retrieve article at the expense of travelling out speed.

For success with these two requirements at the same time or one after the other, needs a dog in complete and full understanding of all the component behaviours which come from a clear and comprehensive explanation of how to do the two together. A dog that is simply conditioned by endless repetition will respond under the rules of classical conditioning, but may not have the flexibility that comes with understanding to make adaptations in the competitions. This is going to be the strength of your clicker trained Obedience Champion - to be consistently top quality in a wide range of situations that occur in competition - when the weather is foul, or too hot, the ground is poor, the grass is long, the next ring is noisy, there is scent of rabbit, the test is challenging or you simply are not at your best.

I regularly use the analogy of driving a car. I change cars about once every 5 years. In that time I may drive another one or two cars. In good conditions I can drive MY car fast and accurately. If the conditions are not good, such as heavy traffic, or I am unsure where I am going, I will drive accurately but not fast. (I not talking out of speed limit range, but a good pace and response that comes with confidence and familiarity). A friend of mine sells cars and regularly demonstrates many different cars and has experience of extreme driving. He drove my car and managed to negotiate heavy traffic, whilst selling me the virtues of another model, and was fast and accurate. No kangaroo games from changing clutches or tango with the seat belt as he used the brakes, and I could have still drunk a cup of coffee going around the bends.

He is experienced in a range of cars - probably hundreds. He is experienced in extreme driving, rallying and circuits, works in an urban area but lives in the country. He has learned to adapt to all the cars, the conditions and fully understands the physics of centrifugal forces that control going around a bend, the mechanics of the clutch, brakes and steering. This understanding is no longer consciously recalled (it is called unconscious competence), but underlies the techniques and skills of driving. The result is a top quality performance that is accurate and with fast responses in a vast range of different vehicles. I think his last holiday was spent learning to play with tanks. But this is the person whose training I would want as a competition partner in the Championships. Although he may have some natural talent contributing to the success, much of it is attributed to the experience, understanding and skill.

We need to provide this same experience, understanding and skill for our dogs if we expect them to be successful in competitions, it is not natural talent alone.

RECIPE 12: TEACHING IN FRONT PRESENT

The final behaviour consists of two components:

- ▶ the location relative to you
- ▶ the sit position with the balance forward

To be able to arrive at the final position we need to teach the dog:

- ▶ to move quickly into a straight position from any angle

and later:

- ▶ to hold an article in the sit

All these behaviours are taught to a high standard individually before they are put together.

RECIPE 13 - SIDE STEPPING TO BE ABLE TO STRAIGHTEN UP

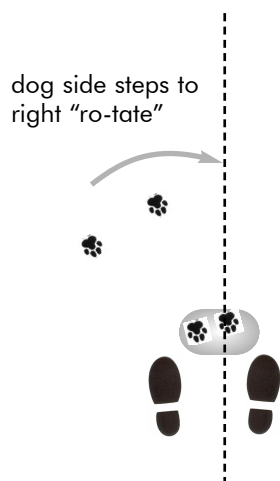
This is a wonderful game you can free shape by teaching the dog to step on a low stool or book with its front feet. It is worth every minute of your time to free shape this movement to a high level of fluency from both directions since the action is employed in the left turns in heelwork, and straightening up for the front present.

Begin sitting away from the dog in a chair and shape the dog to a comfortable balanced position, the stool should be no higher than half way up the dog's front leg. As the dog gains confidence returning to stand on the stool, encourage sideways movement by placing the reward between you and the stool. Most dogs will approach the stool to stand on it, then step sideways with their back feet to watch you (or the clicker). Click for this side stepping movement.

Begin to place the food where the dog needs to make the greatest stepping movement, and click when the dog is facing you at 12 o'clock.

Put both behaviours of stepping in a left and right direction on a verbal cue. I use "swing" for the anti-clockwise movement, and "ro-tate" for the clockwise. This will make it easier for the dog to transfer this same skill between heelwork and present.

Move yourself to stand directly behind the stool in the present position, ie with your shoulders straight and your hands placed in the final competition position. Click the



dog for standing on the stool and after the movement to a “straight” position. (see the picture at the start of this Chapter).

At the same time you are teaching this, increase the dog’s flexibility by moving slowly around the stool yourself, and teaching the dog to counter balance your progress and remain “straight”.

My cue for the final position is “in front”.

2 - THE LOCATION

The dog will learn to line up with the front of you by your shoulders. Although your feet or hands would also make suitable guides, we want the dog to be looking up.

► firstly teach the dog to sit forwards, in the tucked or collected sit. Your dog may already move its back feet to its front feet, if not then teach the dog to sit whilst maintaining nose contact with a target, or if the dog will hold a tug, ask the dog to sit whilst still gripping the toy. I teach this behaviour to the cue “sit”, and would cue a back sit with a hand signal.



► sit yourself on the very edge of a chair with your feet in front, about your shoulder width apart, and directly under your bent knees. This makes a wonderful barrier to contain the dog straight and in front to the cues of your shoulders.

► carefully teach the dog to come into this area with a nose to hand target. Place the target hand centrally, click on contact and throw the food away directly behind the dog. This should set the dog up for an easy return to this position.

► once confident coming into this zone between your knees, begin to toss the food slightly off centre so that the dog will need to straighten up to come into the zone. Click on target contact and toss the food.

It is easier to let the dog learn to come from one direction at a time, and you will probably note one direction is easier than the other. If the dog is poor at using its rear end laterally, either one way or the other, practise fluency on the side stepping behaviour separately.

- use the cues you have taught to guide the dog through this chain of behaviours. After collecting the food:

dog moves towards you = "touch", as it arrives cue the rear end side step to the left ("swing") or right ("rotate"), as it moves into the central straight position, cue the forward "sit". Click on arrival, feed, and then throw another piece ready to start again. Why not? hard work is worth 2 pieces of food!

- the final cue for the behaviour will be the way you stand, so avoid flapping your hands around in teaching. As soon as the dog is fluent arriving to you sitting and will anticipate the chain without verbal prompting, begin to drop the verbal cues and rely on the body language to cue the dog.
- transfer the behaviour to you standing up. You may need to back track and use the verbal cues to temporarily change the behaviour to the new position you are in. When teaching retrieve and the present with the holding an article, go back to sitting on the edge of the chair again to build confidence.

RECIPE 14: THE FINISH

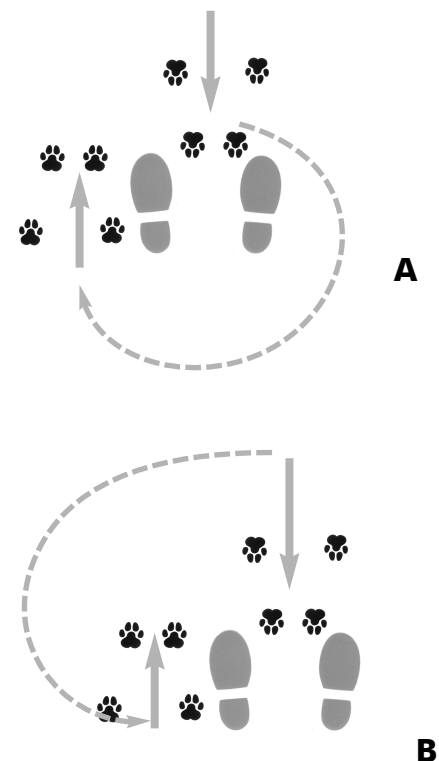
Once the dog has presented in front, you are usually cued to send the dog to the heel position. This is one of the favourites for anticipation which can be made worse by an excessive amount of reward for arriving in that position in proportion to the lack of direct reward in the behaviours in the chain preceding it.

We feel the degree of success achieved by a difficult pick up, or a steadily held position, and the emotional release and pleasure all explodes the dog out of the heel position. Keep your cool, keep the reward suitable for the last behaviour - going to heel, and rely on your pre-competition training to reward the dog with the prior chain.

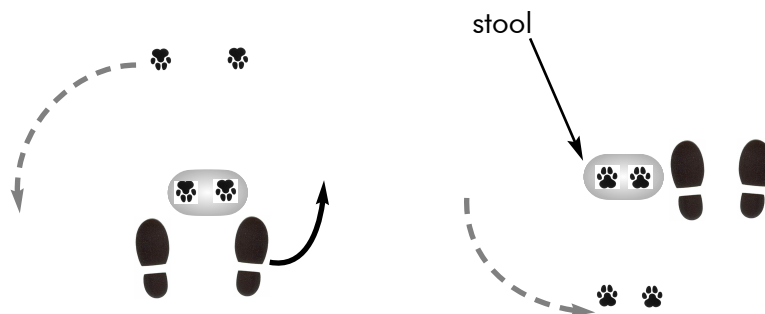
The finish requires the dogs to:

A = go around you to come to heel from behind

B = move to the heel position directly the shorter route



Both methods of finishing are taught with back chaining. This means the first behaviour the dog will learn is the heel location. Go to Chapter 5 to see how to teach this location. Teaching the short finish "B" is an extension of teaching the dog to jump to heel, with the added criteria of the dog needing to lift from the sit in front position.



Again the stool training can be very useful to explain to the dog the required pivot movement. To make it easy for the dog place yourself initially behind the stool as for a present, then move to the right of the stool to mimic the heel position. Although in competition you will be required to stand quite still, it is an excellent "aha!" moment for the dog.



To teach the dog to finish (A) by going around:

- ▶ teach the dog to follow a short target stick, this is covered in greater detail for heelwork (Chapter 5)
- ▶ whilst standing still take the target stick around you and change hands as it passes behind you. You will get a closer position if you can hold the target stick vertically with the target point just above the dog's nose. This teaches the action without additional cues being added by you bending or twisting.
- ▶ click the behaviour at any time during the movement and feed in the heel location
- ▶ once the action is secure add the sit position in heel

ALTERNATIVE REQUIREMENTS

As you advance up the classes you will be limited by the quantity of cues (commands) you can give to assist the dog. They will need to arrive, sometimes after completing complex chains and move straight into the present position without hesitation.

The strongest cue you have for this behaviour is the position of your hands, shoulders and legs. Be quite clear in your own mind how you wish to stand in competition and teach the dog to that posture.

You can use hands together at the waist as a target for the dog's nose. If the dog is shorter you can use your feet to indicate where to sit, but remember to point your feet forwards as much as you can naturally, and avoid standing like a duck!

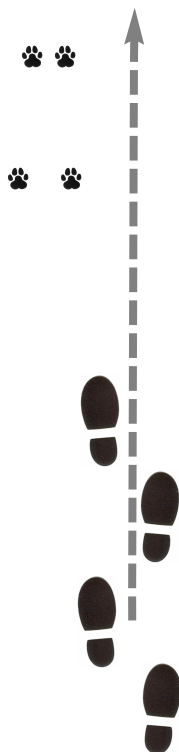
If you want to compete with your hands by your sides, then when in the chair let the feet and legs act as barriers, and remove your hands to your sides as soon as possible. You can include a small stage between the chair and standing up right by leaning back against a wall, with your feet about 1-2 feet away from the wall. This allows the dog to have support from the feet, without needing to move your shoulders to indicate or directly cue.

RECIPE 15: RECALL TO MOVING HEEL POSITION

This is an extension of the dog's ability to "find the spot", ie the heel location. After you have taught heelwork, you can enhance the drive for heelwork by practising these recalls. It does a wonderful job of reinforcing the dog's desire to be with you in heelwork. In addition to just coming to heel you will need to teach the dog to come to heel from awkward angles.



The dog will also need to join the heel position with you approaching from behind and synchronise the heel position. This needs to be practised in all three positions so that the dog can rise from the down or learn not to anticipate in the stand. Take time and teach the dog to:



- ▶ join you from stationary, especially for the down movement where the dog must lift to the stand quickly to avoid a gap opening up.
- ▶ join you as you approach in slow motion.

From the standing heel position, ask the dog to wait and step yourself backwards one pace, then teach the dog that as you step forward to re-join them at slow pace, how to anticipate the correct point to move so that you both move forward together.

- ▶ join you from approaching from 6 steps away, moderately slowly.
- ▶ join you from approaching from 6 steps away at your normal heel pace.

All of these are made wonderfully simple with the click, since the response and correct decision from the dogs happens in a very precise moment that you click. If they get it wrong, just withhold the click and start again. I assure you the dog will be much better at anticipating when to move to synchronise with you, than you giving the cue at the right time.

This is one situation where some careful cues are required to keep the judge satisfied that the dog did the behaviour on command, but you and I know the dog responded on its own judgement.

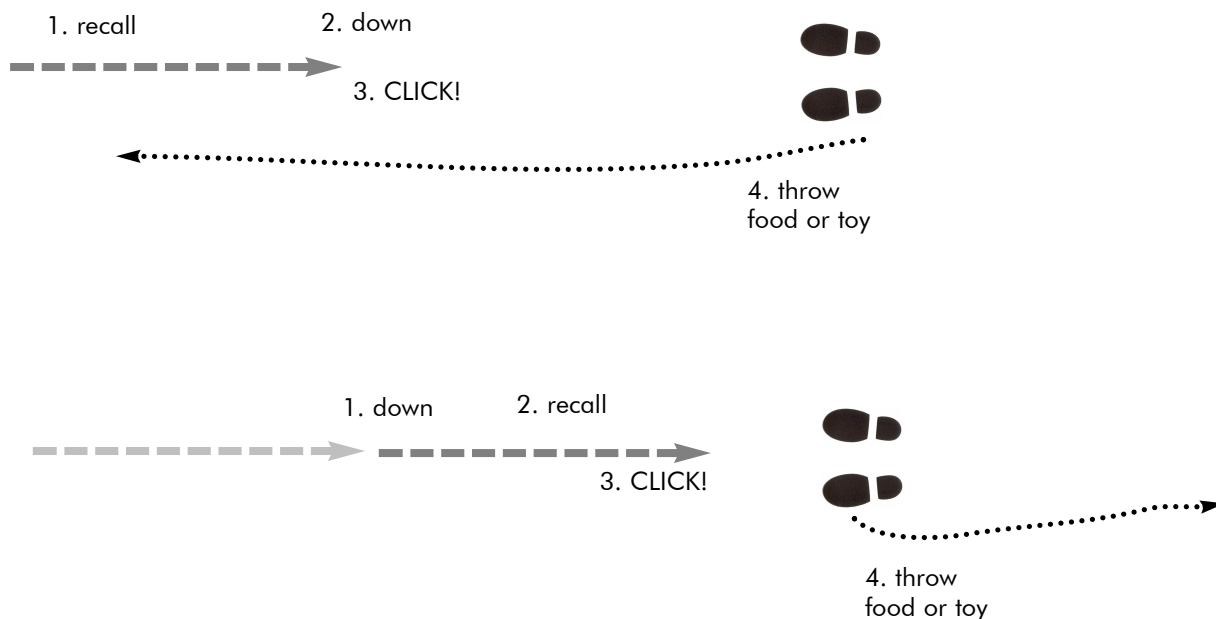
STOP ON RECALL

This is an exercise containing several behaviours and a high level of skills that needs experience to teach well, and a confident dog to learn easily.

The behaviours are contrary. We require the dog to hold a position whilst we walk away, the dog then moves towards us fast and comes to a prompt stop in the position given, waits, and then moves off fast again. It is only to be expected that the dog anticipates and either begins to slow down for the stopped position, or comes slowly out of the position.

You can teach both speed and control together by using the throw reward. When you cue the dog to stop, make sure the reward will be delivered coming towards the dog. If on the first few occasions, as you click for the position, the food is on its way past the dog, the dog, with its anticipation in full drive will be ready to stop quicker and quicker.

As soon as you call the dog towards you, click for forward speed, and adopt the elastic recall technique of throwing the food the way the dog is moving so that it goes past you with speed.



5 Heelwork



Your either love or hate heelwork! For me it is the ultimate partnership with the dog, more akin to a dance than a test of obedience. The handler translates the steward's commands into minuscule changes of balance that cue the dog to maintain the perfect position through a variety of movements. No wonder we started doing it to music!

There are two core behaviours that are the very foundation stones of heelwork:

- ▶ finding and maintaining the correct position at all times
- ▶ trotting with head up and/or absolute concentration

You cannot invest too much time into these behaviours. The dog needs to be able to understand the location, how to target their shoulder to your leg, and have unshakeable confidence that by giving you full concentration you will not walk them into any harm. You may not wish for a heads up or close contact style. These high demand criteria to the basic position are many months work, and can be challenging to reinforce to perfection. The teaching process for either style is identical, the dog needs to be consistent in location and head carriage.

I can change my dogs between formal obedience heelwork, where my left arm is still with my hand resting on my leg or hip, and informal heelwork to music where both arms are swinging. The hand cue indicates to the dog whether to trot up on target on just in location:

*left: the
Obedience
heelwork*

*right: the
Heelwork to
Music*



You can begin by teaching both foundation behaviours at the same time, but do not merge them together until of top quality and soundly on their own cue. In the case of the final behaviour, heelwork, which is a merge of two behaviours, I use a verbal cue for the movement - "trot" and a physical signal for the location which is the placement of my hand.

RECIPE 17: THE HEEL LOCATION

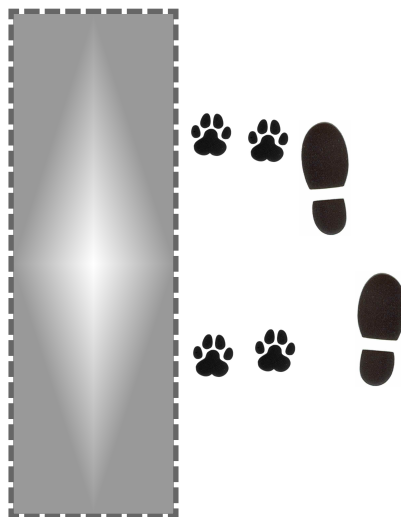
This is multiple targeting:

- ▶ a hand position teaching the head carriage
- ▶ a leg position teaching the shoulder location

Make sure your dog is familiar with touching the back of your hand with their nose, and can happily perform this behaviour in the stand position. Increase the criteria by lifting your hand and the dog's head whilst maintaining a standing position. The dog may feel the pressure to respond with a sit, so take care to click before that happens.

Teaching the position:

- ▶ stand with a suitable barrier the width of the dog to your left. Stand as if frozen in a "walking stride". You will teach the dog the location for movement before the location at the halt, where your feet would be placed together and cue sitting.



Use your left (target) hand to show the dog how to raise their head whilst standing in this location. Reward for strong, upward drive.

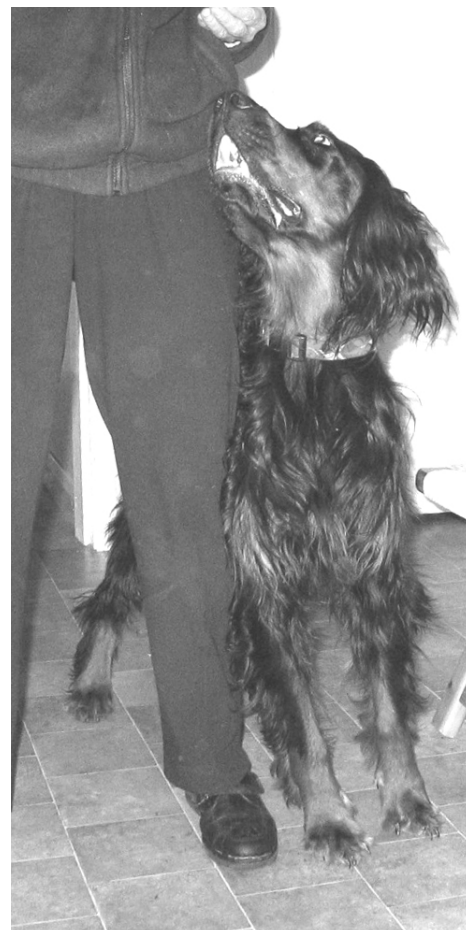
- The next step is to wean the dog off the hand lure. Your hand will gradually move from the target position to the final heel position. As you progress place the food on the barrier to the dog's left. This should be at about shoulder height for the dog.

They will turn to collect their food, and then, with only a movement of the head, "find" the heel position again, this time without the help of the target hand.

This is a micro behaviour that can establish the whole understanding of heelwork in the dog's mind. Spend a good deal of time letting the dog learn through their own exploration and shaping. In their mind they move their head for a reward. The direction of the head is upwards at your side and once this part of their body is soundly in place the rest will follow with a little bit of skill.

left: heel position too "wrapped" and slightly forward.

right: a good position





*in the halt at heel, practising
the head movement*

I have NEVER seen a dog taught this way lose the heel position by lagging behind.

Be very careful of what you teach, look at the position in a mirror or on video to be able to check it is the finished position. The dog's shoulder line should be level with the side seam of your trousers. This gives you the perfect position to execute all the turns and moves. If the dog is too far forward the left turns will be difficult, if the dog is too far behind the right turns will be difficult.

When you teach this be sure to be standing upright without leaning over, and learn to "feel" the correct position. For toy dogs use a target stick held vertically from your left hand. Make the time to use a mirror or window placed in front of you so that you can click success without the need to change the cues of your balance.

Now you have shown the dog where to stand and how to stand in the heel position, we need to teach them the skills of fine adjustment that complete the exercise with accuracy and precision.

- put the food on the barrier for the dog to collect, very slightly move about 2 inches backwards or forwards. When they seek the behaviour again they will need to move to the right location. Don't wait for the location to be spot on, but click the decision to move into the location. Once this decision is fluent both forward and backwards then click for the correct location.



The next step is to teach them the fine adjustment of closing in, where the dog moves to its right.

- ▶ return to the stool exercise that taught the dog to side step

Refresh the cue of the dog side stepping to their right (swing). If they are in front of you, to your left. Rotate the dog around the stool, keeping yourself at the In Front location.

- ▶ remove the stool and ask the dog to do the same movement but standing on the floor.

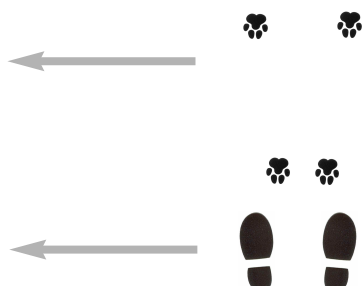
1. Rotate on the spot, anti-clockwise



- ▶ give the dog the nose target hand signal, and once the dog is fluently moving to their right, take a step to your left with your hand at nose height to the dog:

This will move both the front and back end of the dog at the same time - with the target hand cueing the front end and the verbal cue "swing" moving the back end.

2. Side step to your left



Click when you see the spine of the dog moving in a straight line. This IS the action of closing in, but it is very much easier for both you and the dog to teach this when the dog is in front. You can clearly see the movement to click and the dog has contact with your facial approval.

Once this is fluent, then transfer it to the heel position, still using the same cues of hand and verbal "swing".

- Only ask the dog to move a few inches at a time, the small distances are harder to learn, need more time and expertise to acquire.

Now instead of the dog having a “general” heel position, we have been able to specify the exact position and equip the dog with the skills of moving into the last few inches of that position.

The cue for this collection of behaviour will be the placement of your hand, your “formal” deportment (NOBODY walks along the street in the same way as they would doing heelwork) and a verbal cue. I use “tight”, “close” is another excellent word.

Once you have completed the second part - teaching the dog to “trot”, you can merge them together.

The same technique of teaching the location inch by inch should also be used for the right and left turns. You can use the assistance of a corner of the barriers to teach the dog, and reward the small progress decisions. When you need the dog to adjust its back feet use the “swing” and “rotate” cues as appropriate.

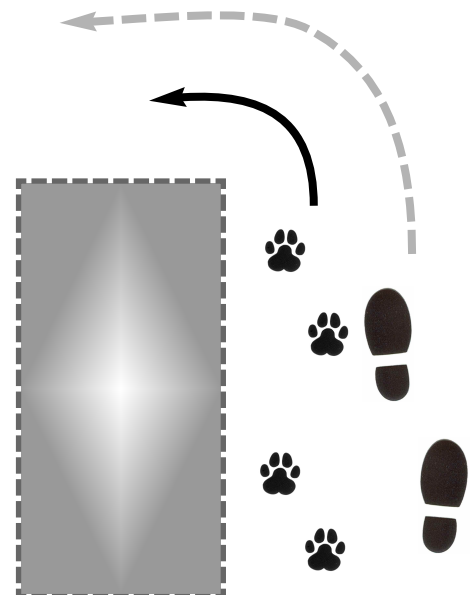
The dog must also learn how to come to the heel position from different angles and locations. Teach this in micro sizes of learning, small steps, that later become fluent for the recall, pick up and finishes.



The right about turn, with barriers to keep the dog's body in line and prevent flaring.

A clicker trained dog will be able to memorise this feeling

Teaching the left turn, using the barrier to encourage the dog to pivot on its front feet through the turn.



RECIPE 18 MOVING INTO THE SIT AT HEEL

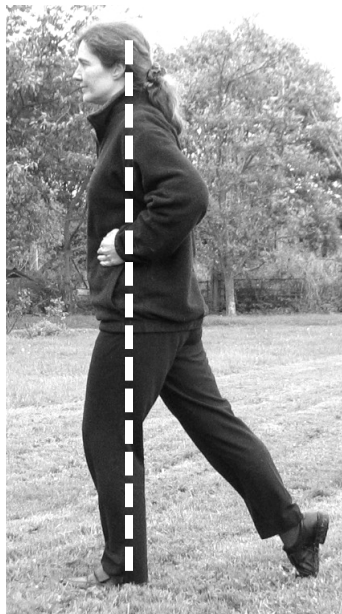
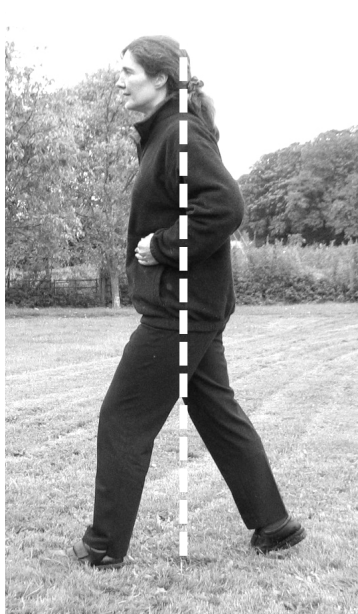
Return the first barrier training and teach the dog the final position.

- ▶ begin with the dog in a “square” sit. You will need to step back to see if the front and back feet are in a straight line.
- ▶ cue the dog to stay in that position whilst you move into their heel position. A piece of food will prevent them jumping out of you way as you get closer. Click and reward them for the sitting proximity. Make sure you stand at the heel this time with both feet together. Again make this a very comfortable place to be, with plenty of reinforcement. You want the dog to see this as a place of reward, and seek the “hot spot” at any time they lose position. It is also the momentary re-charging opportunity during long heelwork tests.
- ▶ use the same technique of placing the food on the barrier and moving forward a couple of inches leaving them in the sit to work out how to move forward to join you. Some dogs can shuffle forward and maintain the sit. others will need to stand up slightly and come into the sit again. Teach them to move forward only a few inches with you.
- ▶ build this up until the dog can take a pace with you and move into the sit as you come to close your feet together - this is the cue to sit. If your legs are moving forward for another stride your balance is midpoint over the stride. But when you halt, your balance is slightly further backwards, indicating the forward moving leg is only completing half a step.

left: balance mid stride

middle: balance for walking on

right: balance coming to halt



RECIPE 19 SETTING OFF

The halt behaviour should be full of contained energy. The dog should be ready to burst as soon as you give the cue. To encourage this, use a reward after the click that the dog explodes to collect. Throw the food, throw the toy or ask the dog to jump up to “get it”. A consistent style of collecting a reward for a behaviour will affect how that behaviour is carried out.

Plenty of investment in this game: of closing the dog to the heel position, and exploding the dog out of it, will encourage a poised sit, with tensed muscles and, of course, absolute attention. Avoid holding the toy or food for the dog to see, it will become part of the cue for this essential collection of behaviours, keep the toy out of sight and use the click to mark the correct behaviour. I find my right armpit an excellent hiding place for toys, if you are using food bags, keep them out of sight behind your back.

To control the explosion for the set off:

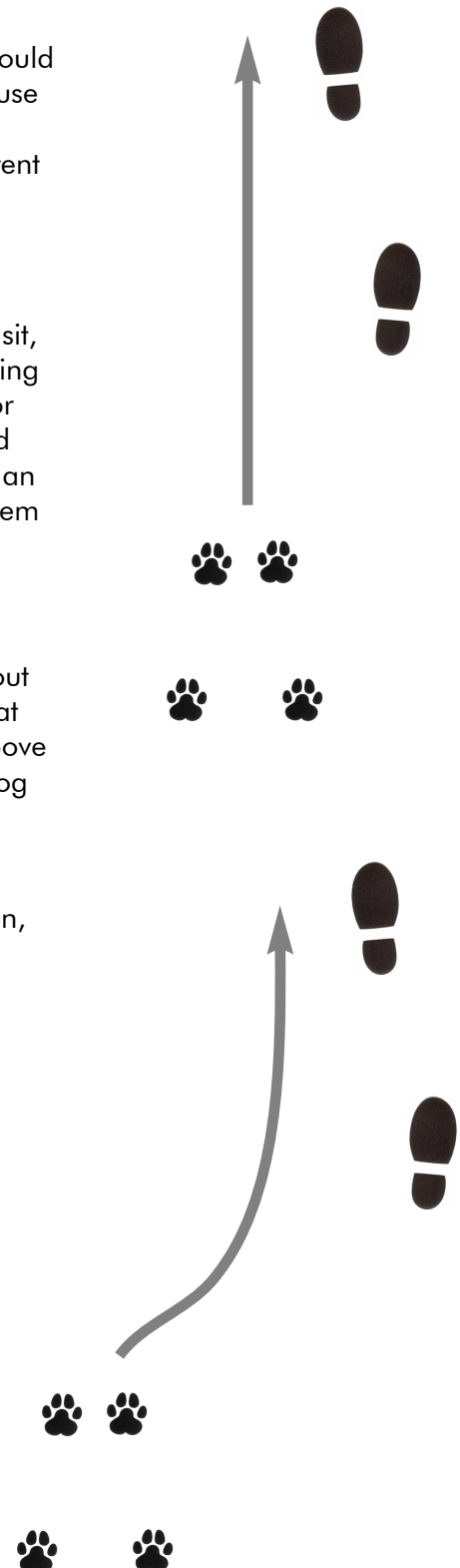
- ▶ place the dog in the sit to heel, and step forward without the dog to about twice your arm’s length. Use a toy that the dog can grab and hold this out to your left, just above the height of the dog’s head. As you cue “get it” the dog will shoot forwards and up with the same drive and muscle pattern of a spanking set off.

You can collect the dog on the tug into the heel position, click and have a ragging as a reward.

- ▶ If the dog is more food orientated hold out the pot of food as the target, cue the dog to get it, and lift the food up as the dog comes forward, with your heel cue. Click and then reward, and don’t drop the pot!

If the dog shoots around to the front position, go back to calling up from behind with the barriers on the off side of the dog.

- ▶ once the dog is fluent in this movement, close the gap when you set up the game until you and the dog are on the same starting point. You can even start with a lateral gap between you and the dog to encourage a side closing movement as well.



RECIPE 20: TROTTING UP

If you have completed plenty of tug training this exercise will be easy for the dog to maintain, if the dog is not keen on grip and tug you will need to build a strong drive for your target and invest in fitness training at this stage.

Where ever possible teach your dog to trot in heel position. A dog that paces, ie: uses the same leg front and back on each side together, will rock on and off the leg and can develop skeletal problems from sustaining the unnatural movement for long periods.

Develop a good quality behaviour of “follow” for the target stick:

- ▶ use a long target stick, with a clear end item that the dog can see in all conditions
- ▶ teach the dog to follow this with a level head carriage and monitor the dog’s trotting balance. The dog must be able to:

maintain a trot without break

keep eye contact on the target

maintain control and position (ie: not jump or surge)

*forward driving,
with just a slight
raise of the head
carriage*



- ▶ keep the dog’s body in a straight line, although you can take the dog around in a large circle, do not let the dog work at an angle. You are developing a sound movement.

- ▶ Very gradually raise the target so that the dog’s focus is more upward than forward.

At this point you will see the dog’s stride start to shorten and waste movement of the front legs in the air rather than on the forward reach. This means you **MUST** slow your pace as you raise the dog’s head carriage.

This is the easiest way to bring the larger dogs back to our possible heelwork pace and still keep them trotting.

All dogs will have a natural collected trot that is individual to their conformation, it is their personal “style”.

Controlled movement that is directed upward.

Trained out in this position means you can easily see the movement, watch it develop and clearly communicate to the dog the action for collected heelwork



A trotting dog will be more physically active in heelwork, which triggers more mental activity than the walking dog. The body posture also mimics a high state of alertness, particularly indicative of "feeling GREAT".

Just watch dogs swank around with a toy or other prize in front of their mates - they seem lighter, balanced and genuinely attract the attention of the spectators - both dog and human!

The trot is the movement for normal pace heelwork, and a controlled walk for slow pace and a canter or extended trot for fast pace. Both the other paces will need to be taught on the target stick and put on verbal cue. The more ground coverage you want the closer the dog's head to horizontal. A fast racing dog will often have a lower head carriage.

Whilst you teach this movement on the target stick also take the dog through 180 degree turns to the left and right. Change direction as close "on the spot" as you can and teach the dog to maintain rhythm through the movement.

Teach the dog to move off from stationary, where they stand to look at the target, and then move off on the cue of the target moving and the cue "trot". You can teach this from all

positions, especially the down and sit, and get a very clear picture of the dog's action and building confidence.

I expect a dog to maintain a target "follow" for at least 4-6 minutes with several short stops for reinforcement. I also train on different surfaces, but rarely with distractions.

RECIPE 21: COMBINING ACTION AND POSITION

Once both elements are fluent you can begin to combine the two collective behaviours into heelwork. Even with top level dogs you will still split these behaviours.

Sometimes our desire to maintain an accurate heel position can cause the dog to lose the natural gait. When the dog's energy is focused on maintaining position it may be counter productive to the gait. Remember to put the dog out on the target stick to keep the movement strong and fresh at regular intervals. It is an excellent stress free warm up for the experienced, fit dog.

To be able to bring the trotting action into the heel position, fade the target stick by shortening it, but maintain a hand held out. I use the "OK" sign with the palm facing downwards once the target stick is no longer needed.



This is an excellent cue to bring onto your left hip and close the dog in, and then flatten the hand for the final cue. If you want to swing your arm for heelwork or keep the left hand out of view of the dog, continue to use the target stick in the right hand to bring the dog to the heel location.

To combine the two behaviours choose a particular training venue, where thrown food can be seen on the floor, and a surface that also provides friction for the dog to have a good purchase.

- ▶ refresh both behaviours separately, asking the dog to find the heel position whilst you are stationary but "in stride", and trotting out on the hand target cue.
- ▶ drop a piece of food, and set off at a good pace going away from the dog. Head around the area in a left hand oval, so that the dog is always presented with you leaving them (ie your backside) or your left side facing them.

- ▶ as soon as you hear the dog move off from (or still) eating and begins to follow you, click, and drop another piece of food. Avoid setting the dog up for a five minute search. Clearly drop the food, take your time, and clearly set off again. Be confident, face forward, with your left hand held slightly out in the trotting target cue.
- ▶ as you hear the dog build up speed to join you, click and drop the food. At this stage spend some time reinforcing the desire to catch up. I like to see the dog eat, keep an eye on you, and set off with drive to catch you up. Click that attitude - this is the dog that WANTS to do heelwork.
- ▶ gradually delay the click until the dog comes into the target hand position, again drop the food and set off - this will be the norm whilst teaching the dog to join up.
- ▶ as soon as you have completed 10 repetitions of the catching up with you and instant reward, begin to move your hand into the competition position and give the verbal cue for the location - "close" or "tight".

By teaching the dog to get the behaviour of "speed" before location we can ensure the dog is moving cleanly with plenty of power. This is collected into the location, which contains the power and drive. If you start with the location, which is about precision and control, the dog can find it very hard to build up power and drive afterwards. They seem to change from energy to containment easier than from containment to energy.

You will have to decide how to balance your training sessions to maintain your expectation of heelwork. The final behaviour is one of controlled, passionate movement.

We call it "heelwork on sunshine"

RECIPE 22: TEACHING DURATION

Once the dog is able to join you from different angles begin to build the duration of the behaviour one stride at a time.

- ▶ start each session with a good physical warm up - with the trotting out, and a mental reminder of the accurate location
- ▶ reward the dog for first contact on join up, click and drop food
- ▶ build up the duration at exactly one pace at a time. Click on the second stride, drop food, set off away from the dog, then click after the third stride after join up, etc ,etc

- ▶ at any time if the dog either loses the trot or the accuracy of the location, stop, make a note of the number of paces, and work on the weaker element before joining them together again. Begin your count under the tally that caused the weakness. So if the dog's head wobbled at the 12th stride, then begin again after extra training on the location at the 8th stride.
- ▶ once you have reached 30 paces, without any deterioration in any element of the behaviour you can begin to move to a variable length of heelwork before you click
- ▶ during this training keep your mouth SHUT. The dog will have plenty to think about, and has perfectly clear cues from your training and consistent body language. Build the strength slowly, and don't rely on verbal encouragement to "get more". A dog working in silence, but poised for the forthcoming click, is mentally stimulated and clearly understands the behaviour they need to continue to make that click happen.

In the UK the duration of the top level heelwork may be up to 7 minutes, with 50 turns and positions in the heel position. A dog may take a minimum of 2 years of training to build the physical and mental stamina for this exercise.

Once you reach the 30 strides-without-a-click goal, begin to introduce your turns and halts within the first 10 - 20 paces. Initially click for the dog responding to the cue for the turn or halt, and then delay the click slightly and click for the correctly executed movement.

Once secure in the movements through the turn, click for the dog coming out of the turn and back into straight heelwork. This is one of the weakest moments in balanced heelwork, where the dog needs to have the confidence to drive up again after the controlled pace through the turn.

You can feed from hand by this point, but a refresher of the catch up and join training will boost even the most jaded competition dogs.

RECIPE 23: DIFFERENT PACES

So simple. We have clearly taught the dog the movements and the location. We know they understand how to put them together from the demonstration of duration and turns.

The cues for the paces are indicated in how you take the first step from the halt. At normal pace your centre of balance is through your hips and mid point on the stride.



For fast pace your shoulders will be further forward of your hips, moving the centre of balance forward, and at slow pace the shoulders will be further back than the hips.

These are not “extra commands”. This is the normal way a human body balances. We just need to understand these changes and use them as clear cues for the dogs.

When you set off from the halt, change your balance fractionally before your leg moves forward. Click when the dog responds to this and adjusts its own speed of setting off. We are not in competition with the dog, but aiming to synchronise movement.

Once the dog is confident in the set off then teach the dog the changing of paces without stopping.

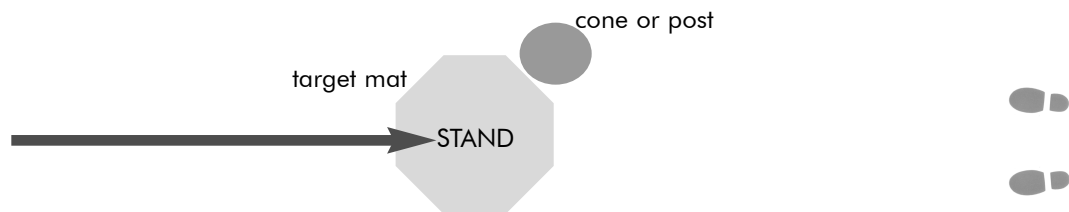
Whether you are reducing speed or increasing speed practise the change of balance as the indicator of your next stride. Keep it smooth, by giving this “balance” information to the dog before the change in the length of stride.

When teaching it you may need to give a couple of seconds between the cue and the stride change, to allow the dog to respond. This gap will shorten with experience and appear to be synchronised. Remember that this change in balance will stimulate a response in the dog, even when it is unintentional!

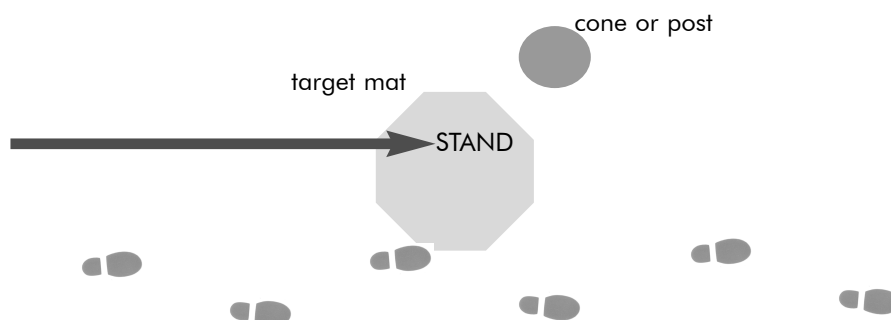
RECIPE 24: POSITIONS ON THE MOVE

Until clicker training came along this was a challenging behaviour to teach without stressing the dog. Stopping in heelwork, where the handler carries on without the dog, is a requirement for the senior classes. The dogs have been reinforced for staying in the heel position for many months and suddenly we are asking them to stop, whilst every cue we have tells them to continue. The handler gives the signal for the stand, sit or down, and walks forward, but still with the “join me in heelwork” body language. No wonder the dogs got confused!

- ▶ Begin with only the stand position and train the dog on recall to come to a target mat and adopt the stand-there position:



- ▶ throw the food to or beyond the dog, if the dog anticipates the stop then throw the food behind you. By giving the dog a clear target to stop on we can remove any confusion that slowing down may cause.
- ▶ once the dog is strong on this behaviour, add a cone or marker that is at least eye level for the dog.
- ▶ now begin to change your position relative to the dog and travel in the same direction. Cue the dog to stand at the mat & cone, click and feed, but this time feed in situ, don't let the dog move off from the position.



Success in this behaviour is two fold:

1. Stopping immediately in the correct position
2. Holding the position whilst you walk forward

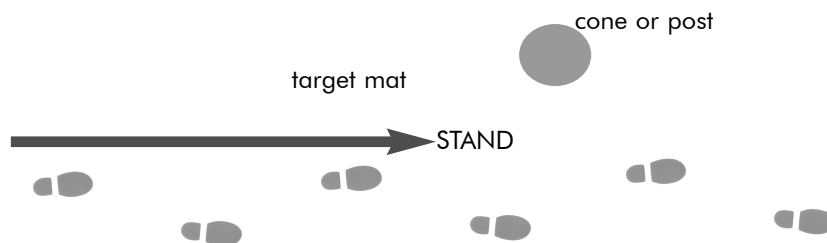
Teach both elements separately:

- ▶ when the dog is confidently coming to a stop, click and move away before you return with the food. You may need to add a “stay-there” cue.

The mat and cone will act as temporary targets to give the dog the confidence that they are not wrong in leaving the heel position. You can use a mat only, but remember when you graduate to the heel position the dog’s head carriage may prevent them from seeing the mat, and we do not want to encourage them to look for it.

These are just temporary targets to explain with clarity that the behaviour we are looking for is the opposite of everything they have been taught. Most advanced clicker dogs will understand this explanation in a couple of sessions, do not over train so much that your dog begins to stop at every ring post or cone!

- ▶ the dog now happily stands on cue with you moving in the same direction and hold the position whilst you carry on. Now move closer into the dog for the stand out of the heel position and begin at a steady pace which is , slower than your normal pace.



- ▶ use the same technique for the down, but make sure you get a clean, level back as the dog drops on the recall drop.

The weakest position, and the one most frequently failed in competition, is the sit. This is where a new cue for a backward sit can help the dog separate from you and avoid confusion with the sit to heel which is a forward collected sit.

Take time to teach these exercises, reward for the response to cue and the maintenance of the position with roughly an equal balance. Teach the steadiness in position and the pick up as separate behaviours before you put all the behaviours in a chain.

ENHANCING THE HEELWORK SKILLS

Without doubt my heelwork to music dogs are much fitter for Obedience heelwork than the dogs that competed in Obedience alone. They are more capable of controlling their bodies, through the turns, on difficult surfaces and very responsive to the body language cues.

By teaching the dogs a range of dressage type movements, they become more agile and also more interested in a long term heelwork career.

In the heel position teach:

- ▶ side stepping to the right, but only teach side stepping to the left on a clear change of hand signal (otherwise the dog will crash into you as you move into them)
- ▶ backing in heel position and from experience I can assure you the dogs back faster than we ever can - must be a four legged thing! Avoid treading on the dog by cueing them to begin backing and you following on, this ensures they stand up with their back legs behind us.
- ▶ circles, curves, bends and weaving. Teach the dog to alter their pace when we lean slightly on the curves.
- ▶ full 360 degree pivots in an anticlockwise direction (double left about)
- ▶ full 360 circles on the spot in a clockwise direction (double right about)

Find a good piece of music that matches both your strides and step out in time to the music. Maintain the rhythm through the turns and dressage moves and have fun!

6

Retrieve



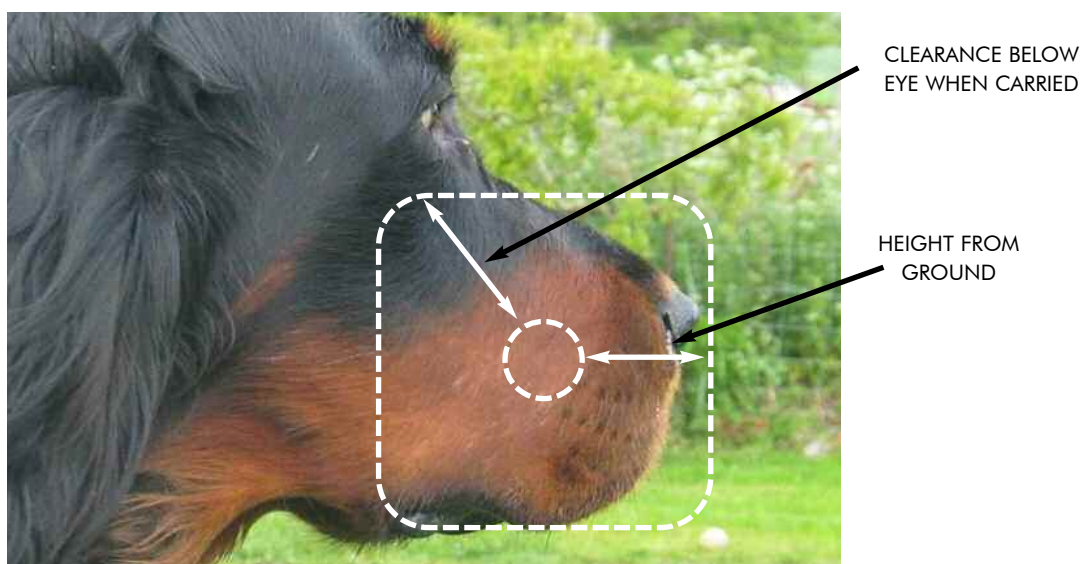
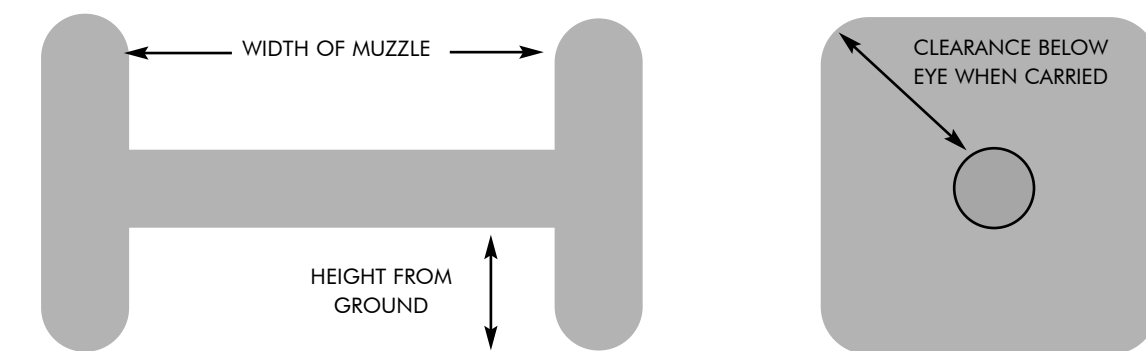
For many of us this is a key exercise for entry into higher levels of competition and is a good representation of a dog carrying out "work" for its human partner.

The exercise is a collection of several skills. Some dogs arrive with some of these skills established, some arrive with no skills at all and some with all the skills but without any finesse or precision. Gordons fall into this category, as one ash tree in the garden contains Mabel's Spider, a favourite retrieve toy that was flung there in one of her "happier" moments 3 years ago.

RETRIEVE ESSENTIALS

Most countries require the dog to retrieve a dumbbell at some point.

This was designed 50 years ago as the ideal retrieve article:



A good fitting dumbbell can have a significant influence on the success of teaching retrieve.

The height from the ground must be sufficient to allow the dog to pick up the article without pushing their sensitive nose into the ground. The side wings must not be too high to catch the dog's eye when the dumbbell is carried. The width must allow comfortable room for the muzzle when carried.

The material should be wood or plastic for teaching with a temporary material around the central bar to increase attraction if needed. Make sure you put your name on the end of it. I will own up to Jack being a dumbbell thief and quietly stealing dumbbells from the tables outside the ring - the name "Shep" was no help in finding the owners!

I train my dogs on their own dumbbells. I don't expect them to transfer between one dog and another until they are experienced. Some dogs are fussy about picking up an article with another dog's saliva on it.

The correct shaped dumbbell teaches the basic skills of retrieve with the easiest criteria:

- ▶ a clearly visible article
- ▶ an easily picked up article
- ▶ an easily carried article

As you teach the dog retrieve only increase the criteria in ONE of these skills at a time. The surface the article is thrown to will impact the first two skills. Often the lighter the article the harder it is to carry - such as polystyrene cups. I used to take a small box of articles to a competition with specially selected items that would provide difficulty in one area at a time. This allowed me to warm up when we found out what the judge's article was. The hardest article we faced was a spark plug hmmm ... but who ever said judge's were bright?

BREAKDOWN OF THE SKILLS

Begin by breaking down the skills which can be further broken down into behaviours. The skills may need to be adjusted depending on your retrieve ambitions.

Skills:

- ▶ sit holding the article waiting for cue to give
- ▶ move into a sit whilst holding article
- ▶ move at speed or with purpose holding article

- ▶ negotiate obstacles whilst holding article
- ▶ recognise the location for delivery
- ▶ pick up without hesitation with a clean grip that will endure through the rest of the exercise
- ▶ pick up without damage
- ▶ carry without dropping or crushing
- ▶ decide how best to pick up the article
- ▶ mark where the article is thrown
- ▶ remain under control (sit) whilst article is thrown

By teaching the dogs the skills of a retriever they will be able to apply their skills to many different retrieve challenges. If you only teach your dog a specific article, such as a dumbbell, you can accidentally condition them to retrieve only that article not skill the dog in the retrieve process. A measure of competency is tested through the ability to apply the learning to other situations.

HOW TO TEACH

You have three choices for retrieve training, which are more dependent on your skills as a teacher than the skills of the dog.

1. Step by Step, teaching each element as you wish it to be performed. Here is the article, place it in your mouth, take it from me, take from a surface, take it from the floor, pick up and present to me etc.
2. By the craft of shaping, taking a rough "fetcher" and developing into a "retriever". A dog that has a good race out and pick up, but jollies around with the article on the way back. If you are good at observation and can anticipate the "excellent" parts of the return, then you can selectively click and shape the dog towards the wanted behaviours.
3. Teaching by Puzzle Solving, engaging the learner in the process thereby teaching themselves solutions.

All puppies learn through mouth exploration. They learn taste, texture, resistance; how to carry and possess; and later how to capture. These are the basic instincts in all dogs that is developed to a purpose designed retrieve:

The pack member carrying food home for the pups

The competition dog that retrieves specific articles and scented objects

For dogs that have some sense of fetching articles you can teach through shaping on the job. For those with no idea, or who have lost the juvenile interest in fetching you will need to teach Step by Step or through Puzzle Solving.

Generally the gundog retriever breeds have a good idea of fetching, but many other breeds have little or no inclination. Puzzle Solving results in a dog with a very robust retrieve, able to self correct when errors occur and adapt the learning to new situations. The puzzle solving process may seem unduly lengthy but the result is a really sound retrieve dog in need of very, very minimal remedial training. Perfect!

Each element or skill must be taught with care and precision to a high quality. Each step must be put on cue and reliable. Once all elements have been taught then the exercise will be chained together.

RECIPE 25: SIT AND MARK THE THROWN ARTICLE

Being with teaching Recipe 4 in the Foundation Behaviours Chapter.

- ▶ transfer the behaviour to a sit at heel, kneel by the dog and toss the food forward
- ▶ click for maintaining the sit AND looking at the piece of food. Vary between feeding the dog in the sit with another piece of food, releasing the dog to get it, and collecting it yourself. This is one important occasion to anticipate anticipation. Do not build up a repetitive action to the reward after the click.
- ▶ begin to add the cue "mark" before the throw of the next piece of food, if successfully contained, click and reward the dog one of the three ways
- ▶ start to straighten up into the standing position and gradually increase the distance of the throw. The dog can learn this behaviour before they learn to retrieve

You will need to learn to throw with your right hand. No excuses for us lefties - I spent many a happy hour in the garden learning to throw accurately with my right hand.

When you set the dog up for this position be sure NOT to bring the dog into the heel position as if in preparation for heelwork. That sit is upward focused and in contact with your leg. Stand with your feet apart, hips relaxed and let the dog look forward.

To turn this learning into a strong behaviour prior to the throw - which is what you will need in the ring - the dog needs to be looking forward to mark where the article lands and maintain that focus. The cue to pick up must be verbal, with no signal to distract



left: sit for retrieve, right: sit for heelwork

the dog from maintaining eye contact with the landing point of the article.

It will also be an essential skills to teach the dog the directional retrieve, where the dog must look directly forwards, and travel out collect the dumbbell straight ahead.

The cue "mark" will encompass all of the behaviours and translates into:

"hold your position, look forward, note the point of landing, wait until given the cue to move"

We already have the dog holding the position with self control for food, we have now added eye contact in conjunction with the controlled position.

RECIPE 26: TEACHING COLLECT AND DELIVER

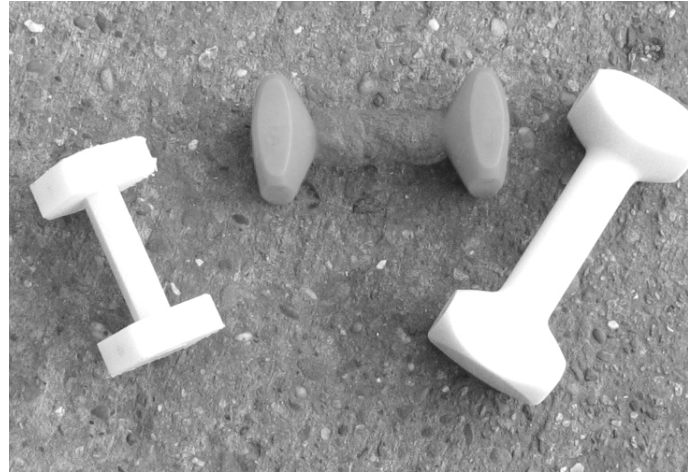
I have never retrieved an article off the floor with my mouth. I have no experience of the activity and will not presume to teach a dog how to do this. Clicker training has taught me that dogs are far better at learning than we give them credit for, so I will set up "learning situations" and utilise their self teaching skills. I will break down the behaviours and ask the dog to puzzle out the skills needed to be successful each step of the way. Dogs that have learned this process have a very sound understanding of retrieving objects and easily transfer their skills to complex objects with little difficulty.

- ▶ place a container on the floor that can comfortably hold your dumbbell, a washing up bowl, tray or basket.
- ▶ teach the dog to drop their head into the basket. Drop a piece of food into the bottom, then click as the dog's head drops. Always start with checking that the container holds no anxiety for the dog. I teach this sitting at a chair with the basket in front of my feet.
- ▶ take your dumbbell and drop this in the basket. Most dogs are curious enough to drop their head to check it out, click and place the food in the basket. If they are not curious place a piece of food under the dumbbell and click when the dog moves the article with their nose to collect the food.

- ▶ pretend to place the food under the dumbbell and click when the dog noses the dumbbell, then drop the food into the basket.

Enough for the first lesson - consolidate this behaviour, with plenty of practice sessions at the same criteria. The dog should be able to anticipate as you place the basket to the floor.

There will be some dogs who consider an object such as a dumbbell as poison, and have no intention of placing something as distasteful in their mouth. Arnold was one of these dogs, but he is very much in love with soft, plush toys.



His love is expressed in the common way by de-gutting the toy of all its innards and any protruding parts. The continual supply of body parts provides me with focus points to the end of target sticks, gloves for strangers hands and skin to wrap around the central bar of the poisonous dumbbell.

Now the dumbbell was acceptable and is readily retrieved. He has yet to fetch a "naked" dumbbell but that is a matter of building the reinforcement for the collect and carry so that the dress wear of the dumbbell will no longer be significant.

Observe your dog and find a way of making a connection between what they choose to put in their mouth and the dumbbell. I would not advise a competition dog to learn on toys, since these are poor teaching articles and can invite mouthing by their shape and texture. If you have a dog that only puts edible matter in its mouth, then rub a wooden dumbbell with butter to encourage the opening mouth. But obviously be very quick with the click and offer a tastier reward than the dumbbell.

Which ever alterations your dumbbell will have progress at this point with the dog friendly version.

- ▶ increase the criteria and withhold the click for "just a nudge". You have deliberately plateaued the shaping to encourage an expectation of reward. By not providing the expected moment, the dog will begin to get frustrated. You will click for nothing less than a mouth around the article. If the dog get to this point during the seven lessons, do not pass it by, but click for the mouth around, or even the lift and drop the food into the basket. Stay at this stage until the dog can "lift" the dumbbell by the middle bar. Be quick enough with the click that you prevent the dumbbell coming out of the basket.

Once the dog is putting its mouth around the item only click for the correct part of the dumbbell - the central bar. This is the time to reinforce the correct action to prevent the end part being used to carry the item. It also inhibits the use of feet on pick up as well.

- move the placement of dumbbell in the basket, so that the dog learns to turn their head or step around the basket to pick up by the central bar. When competent on that skill, stand the dumbbell on one end to again shape out end pick ups.

So far we have conditioned the dog that they will be paid when the dumbbell is in this particular place. They need to be strongly and securely conditioned to this "picture". Dogs are very good at learning "pictures" and when something is out of place they will correct it to the "right" picture, which is the one to trigger their reward. All we have to do is give them the skills to correct the "wrongness" of the picture.

The retrieve picture is based on the article being in your hands - this is the correct picture. So if I place the article up a tree, the dog's will just give a big sigh and start to climb the tree (in their minds of course!).

- the next step is to give the dog the skill of placing the dumbbell into the basket. This is more complex than it sounds, so begin by placing it very close to the edge of the basket at the same height as the basket.

They will always be paid when the article is in the basket and always from the basket, but you will click at the moment the dog showed you a great skill. Once the dog can move the article into the basket when it is level then move the article to the floor alongside the basket. Start by placing some books alongside the basket to achieve the same level and then take these away one by one until the dumbbell is on the floor.

- now the dog is developing the picking up and "lifting" skill. The lifting skill can become complicated when the dog realises they will need to carry the dumbbell without dropping it.

Imagine using just one hand to pick up a plate of soup from the floor. If you have your thumb upper most and fingers under the rim you would need to change your grip to place this plate, and keep it level, about eye level. The picking up grip, is not the same as the delivering grip.

This is similar for the dogs. Often the grip needed to pick something up is different from the grip needed to carry something whilst running or going over a jump. We need to teach them the skill of anticipating the carry grip so that they pick up with a carry grip, and not a pick up grip. Often changing between the two will see the dog toss the article to re-grip, and open up the possibility that they will drop it or lose marks.

A bright dog will often use their feet to change the article to the carry grip position, but risk losing points in competition. When the dog has to pick up the article from the floor and lift it over the sides of the container, they are teaching themselves a valuable carrying skill.

WHY A CONTAINER?

For the dog the retrieve is a complex series of tasks that can be made more difficult by the presence of your hands as the give and drop point. I like to remove this "you fetch, I take" relationship and work along side the dog as a partner helping them to solve the puzzle of the dumbbell.

Giving the dumbbell to me is irrelevant. In time I will reduce the container to a bowl and take the bowl into my hands.

Remember clicker trained dogs learn the *process* and are really very capable of transferring what they have learned to new situations. So regard the container as the "article-target" to secure the learning and then you can transfer the target to anything you wish - your hands, your lap, your case, your friend, your cupboard etc etc.

ANALYSE THE PROCESS

By carefully choosing articles of different sizes we will teach the dog a range of skills. To increase concentration on the carrying use a large article that is tricky to place into the basket. To encourage a dog to collect very small articles between their front teeth use a second container to hold the article for pick up. If the size is only just wider than the article then the dog will have to pick it up with their front teeth, their mouth will not open wide enough for the jaw to enclose the article. The same size container must be used for the drop target as well.

The basket teaches the dog only to use their mouth for pick up, they should not be encouraged to put a paw into the basket, if they do then reduce the size of the basket, or have deeper sides.



RECIPE 27: APPROACH WITH PURPOSE

So far the dog has learned a 6 inch retrieve - from the floor to the basket. In essence that IS the retrieve, and all other behaviours are increased criteria - further, faster, harder pickup, obstacles to negotiate.

- ▶ from the last step, where the dog moves the article into the basket increase your selective criteria and click for best quality hold. We have already shaped out the end of the dumbbell, we now need to prepare the dog for the carry. There should be no adjusting of the dumbbell or mouthing and it needs to be straight across the dog's mouth
- ▶ put the pick up behaviour on cue "fetch", and the drop in the basket cue as "basket". Just give the cue as you anticipate the behaviour.
- ▶ place your hand near the dumbbell as the dog goes to pick it up and gradually move closer until the dog seems to be taking the dumbbell from you

We are going to break out of the chain of retrieve behaviour to work on the pick up alone. Once this is secure, accurate and of a good standard, the chain will be re-built.

- ▶ hold the dumbbell just off the floor, click on the grip, let the dog drop the article and feed. If they don't let go just drop a piece of food. Continue to hold the dumbbell yourself. If you have a spare clicker you can fix it on the end of the dumbbell to allow the same holding hand to click, and the other hand to hold the food reserve and feed. But use the quieter clicker for noise sensitive dogs.



- ▶ increase the distance you toss the reward to further away, so that the dog turns after eating, sees you holding out the dumbbell, on the cue "fetch" comes towards you to grip the centre bar.

This is the time to teach a good clean grip after a speedy approach.

- ▶ as the dog opens its mouth on approach, click and deliberately throw the food back behind the dog. Work on the speed of the approach to the cue "fetch" with the dumbbell held out. Consolidate this around you at arm's length and at different heights.

- ▶ when fluent, with a dog moving in at a good pace, withhold the click until the dog continues onto the the grip.

- ▶ very, very gradually, withhold the click during the grip, until the dumbbell is stable in the dog's mouth. Gradually remove your hand, and click the dog for holding by itself.

Be super critical with this stage. One "mis-click" when the jaw is chomping on the centre bar, or heading for the wing, will take time to eradicate, and can be a real nuisance if you build it into the whole chain. This is where you solve any mouthing or pick up problem - where you can limit the offered behaviours and clearly see to click to wanted behaviour.

By teaching retrieve as a behaviour coming towards you the dog is not working "out there" or alone. You can clearly see what is happening and sharply focus on the wanted behaviours before any unwanted behaviours creep in. If you have a dog pouncing on the article after a throw "out there" you are in a very difficult position to monitor the behaviour and teach the dog the wanted behaviour. It also reinforces the retrieve picture in the dog's mind that you and the dumbbell belong together and when you are happily reunited they will be fed.

By simply increasing the gap to "re-unite", the dogs are carrying out the same process of retrieving but over longer distances and obstacles. The challenge become "get the dumbbell to you" and is never just "get the dumbbell".

Go back to the basket and incorporate the run up to the dumbbell on the floor by the basket. Increase the run up distance with the thrown reward.

Begin to transfer the giving process to your hands.

- ▶ you should still be sitting in the chair by the basket, so place your two cupped hands over the basket. You can move to the floor clicker under your shoe, as some dogs will dislike the clicker near their ears. Always use both hands as the signal to "give", use one hand for offering the article TO the dog, "fetch". Simple easy cues that are useable in the ring situation and help the dog - be disciplined.

Very gradually sit back in your chair until the dog is running in from collecting food, picking up the dumbbell near your feet and raising their head to place it in your hands on your lap.

Again, be super critical that this does not encourage mouthing or rolling the dumbbell in the mouth.

Leave the chain for a moment and refresh the dog's memory of how you taught a present in front from a recall. Run through it several times.

- ▶ stay sitting in the chair, and call the dog for a present between your feet. Hold out the dumbbell with one hand and cue them to “fetch” whilst staying in the sit. Gently place one hand under the dog’s chin, and stroke the dog very, very gently around the face. Click, take the dumbbell with both hands by the wings and feed. Dog remains in the sit.

I want you to make the sitting-close-in-front behaviour whilst holding the dumbbell a truly delicious place that your dog will regard as heaven. Not exciting, but calm, controlled with peaceful thoughts and a sense of a “right” picture.

At any time in the future of the dog’s retrieve career, they should view returning to you with the article, scent item or over the jump as a wonderful place to be, and have more desire to be in this spot than collect the dumbbell itself. If the dog is filled with reward at this final point, then the retrieve chain will drive itself towards this point.

If the dog views retrieve as a “get it” exercise to capture an article rather than a fetch to you exercise, this attitude will normally be demonstrated by a faster run out to the dumbbell than a return to you. Increase the reinforcement of arrival to improve this.

When your dog has just completed a tricky search and scent they pick up the article and think of “home to that cosy spot”. A great mental reinforcer during the exercise when you cannot offer direct help.

- ▶ go back into the chain again and place the dumbbell at your feet after you throw out a piece of food. Cue the dog to “fetch”, and then cue the “come” for the sit present. You can begin to click the initial, or any other behaviour in the chain, but this time immediately after the click, cue the next behaviour.

If you clicked for the pick up, then cue the “come” to trigger the sit, stroke and reward, then put both hands out on the ends of the dumbbell to cue the give, then feed. Not only will the click reinforce the successful behaviour, but because the “come” is very reinforcing by the pleasure received, the cue for the behaviour will also act as a reinforcer.

- ▶ once the dog is confidently collecting the dumbbell from by your feet, begin to place it further away, but do not over stimulate with a bouncing, attractive “prey” dumbbell. Keep the behaviour controlled and purposeful through the learning.
- ▶ after building the distance for the pick up and return, begin to stand up and cue the dog for the present.
- ▶ next, refresh the dog with the sit to heel to “mark” for food, and then replace the tossed food with the dumbbell. A good distance is 6 -10 paces maximum.

- ▶ as the dog goes through step by step, give the cues to support the behaviour, then gradually drop them off from the last part of the behaviour first.

You can begin to vary the point of click or, if the dog is too conditioned to stop what it is doing on click, use the cue for the following behaviour as your reinforcer.

Once you have a fluent chain on minimum cues, begin to teach a new article, from the beginning. Since our bright, clicker trained, thinking dog has “solved the puzzle”, they will learn a new article in a very short time.

Work with this list of criteria in any order you think suitable. The dog must be able to lift, carry and place articles:

- ▶ different material and textures - wood, cloth, fur, carpet, paper, tin (aluminium), steel (cutlery), plastics, hard and soft, rubber, foam, leather (shoes or purses),
- ▶ different weights, from light polystyrene through to reasonably heavy tins
- ▶ unexpected balance or combinations, a cotton bag around a tin, aluminium foil around a wooden bar etc.
- ▶ articles that lay flat to the bottom of the basket, rubber matting or carpet, a plastic cassette case.
- ▶ articles that are larger than the grip, where the dog will only hold a small portion of the article and be unbalanced.

placing a difficult article in the basket to strengthen the carry and present skill

By teaching a dog a range of articles we are securing the skills. Your dog may only need to collect the perfect wooden dumbbell and return over a jump, but if they can carry a soup spoon twenty feet then they will have a greater ability to increase their grip for landing on the dumbbell.

The established learning with all its cues can be subtly changed to vary the experience. Begin by introducing new textures by wrapping the central bar in different materials. If your dog will need to collect metal, then cover the bar in aluminium foil. Other textures such as cloth, string, plastic insulating tape, foam strips (used for lagging pipes)



will introduce different tastes, but have the familiarity of the scent, weight and shape of the dumbbell.

If you have talented resources then complete the change with a variety of dumbbells of different weights, sizes and material. If you are teaching a German Shepherd visit your local sports centre for the proper dumbbells used in weight training. These are usually plastic coated but unfortunately with round ends that roll when they hit the floor (if they don't go through the floor). But Shepherds seem to adore the weight challenge and readily find trees to carry whilst out in the woods. A rack of dumbbells would seem like heaven! (Make sure you have taught an excellent grip, otherwise your toes will be in danger).

Transfer to complex shapes by selecting articles made of the same material as the dumbbell. You can attach pieces of wood into odd forms to develop pick up learning.

Move slowly between articles, do not expect complex articles for at least six months. There are many skills to acquire from experience and this needs to be built slowly with their confidence undamaged. This is the difference between giving the dog a challenge or testing it, an opportunity to learn or an opportunity to fail. The dog should regard new objects with keenness and interest, not with anxiety of failing. If you suddenly find an article unexpectedly difficult then help the dog and return to an easier level.

RECIPE 28: DIRECTED RETRIEVE

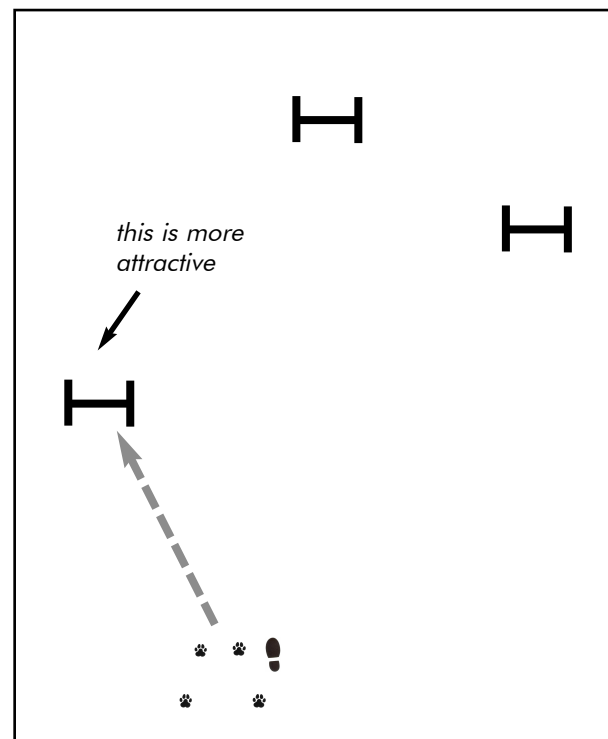
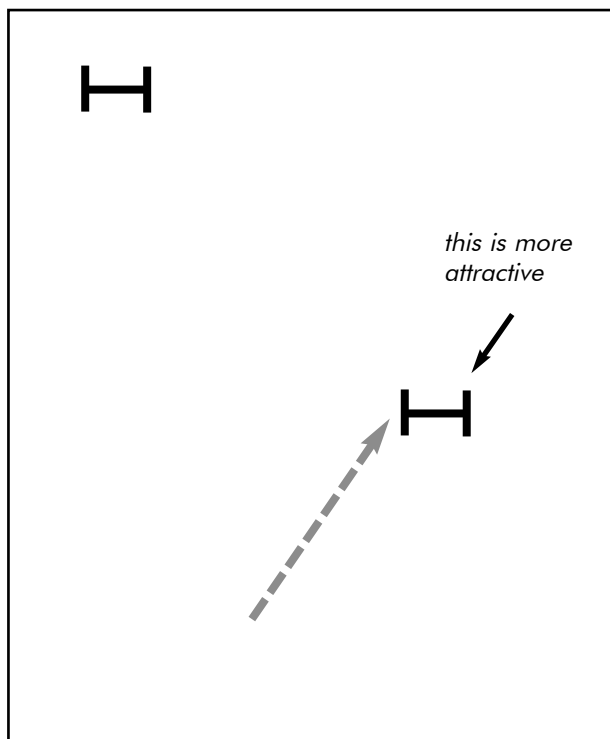
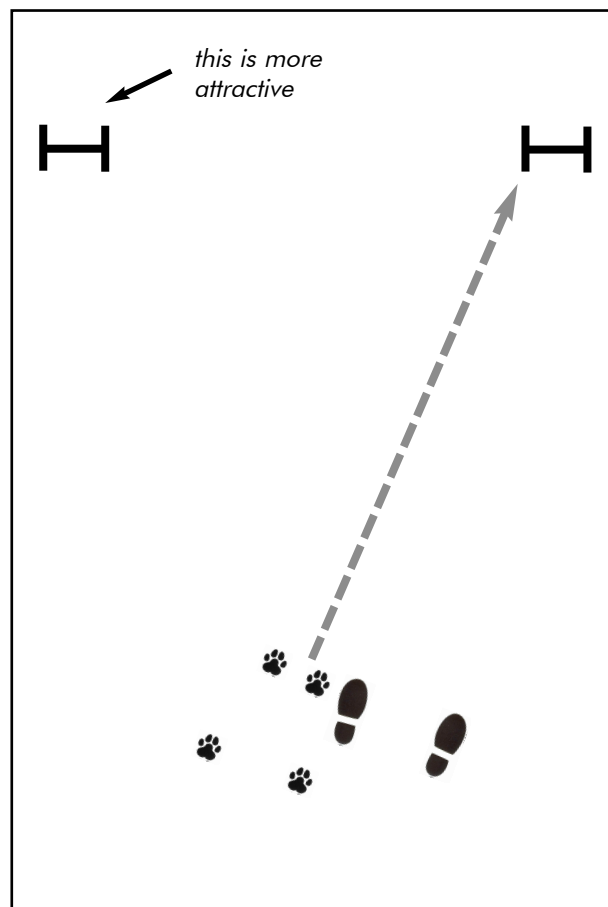
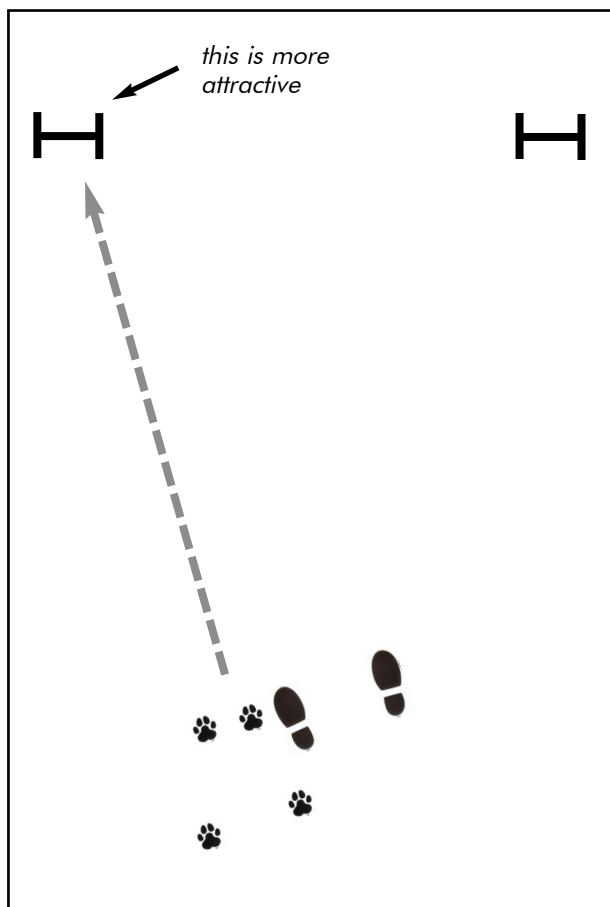
The key success to this exercise is the dog learning to retrieve what they mark on your cue. With clicker training you can capture that precise action and reward the dog for making the correct decision.

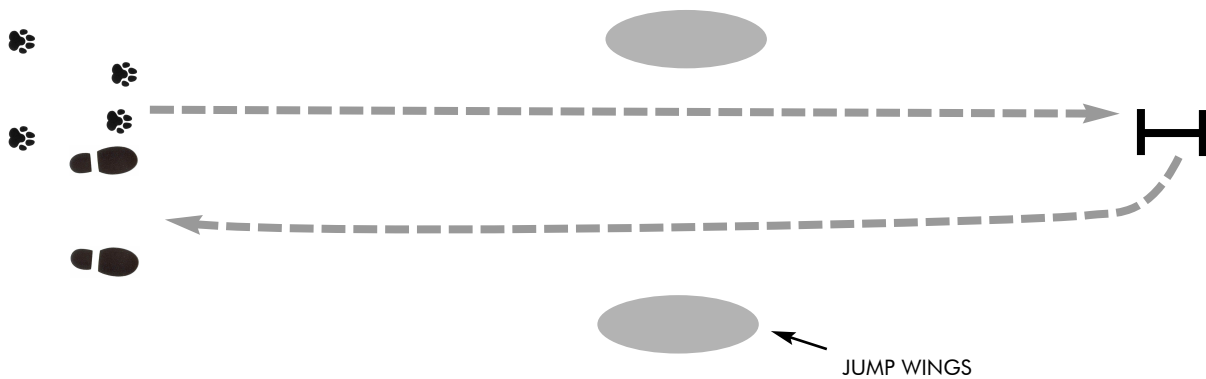
Place the dog facing a choice of two identical articles at 15 feet apart, let them watch you place the articles. Both items should be familiar, equally rewarding to retrieve and clearly on view. Using the hand signal in conjunction with the location of the heel position to accurately cue the dog to "mark". When they look at the correct item, click, then use rest of the retrieve chain as the reinforcement.

If the dog is attracted to the wrong one, simply do not click, allow the retrieve to complete, and set up the situation where the desired article is closer. By paying attention to the two skills of a perfectly straight sit to heel, and a mark that is sustained without loss of focus the dog will find this exercise straight forward.

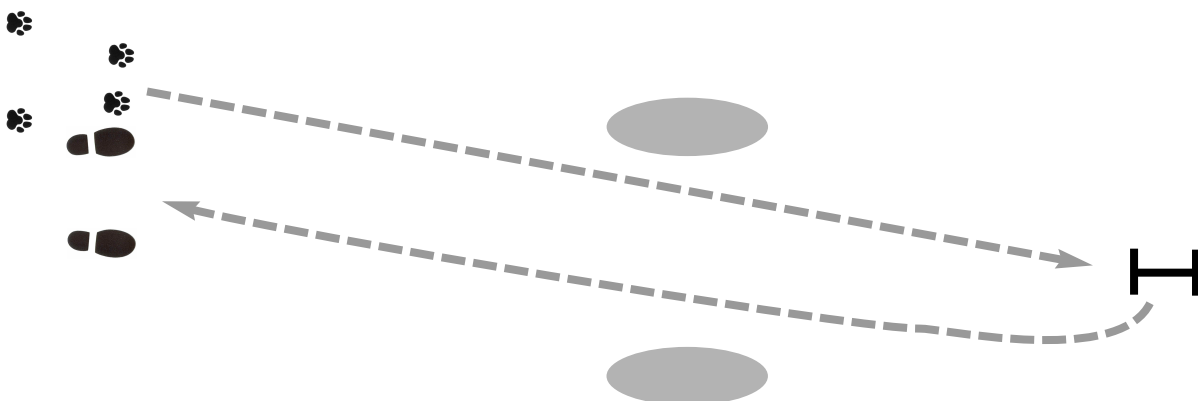
RECIPE 29: RETRIEVE OVER JUMP

Your dog must be able to jump the required height with ease, before merging the behaviour with holding the dumbbell.





- ▶ teach the dog to retrieve the dumbbell from the top of a stair case, where the dog returns to you coming down stairs. This encourages the strong grip needed for landing and a blind send out to the article.
- ▶ set up a pattern where the dog goes to a specific location to pick up the dumbbell, place it 10 paces in front of you.
- ▶ place the wings of the jump either side of the route to the dumbbell and click the dog for coming through the gap.
- ▶ increase the gap between you and the wings and the wings and the dumbbell, and increase the angle the dog will need to travel. Click for the dog making the decision to retrieve through the wings.
- ▶ once the dog is sound on the return, add the nursery jump that is a bar, so that the dog can still see the dumbbell when they set off.
- ▶ once height is achieved, replace the bars with solid planks. Cue the dog for each behaviour, and then diminish the cues from the end of the behaviour forwards until the dog completes the exercises with only the set off cue.



RETRIEVE BY SHAPING FROM PLAY

If you consider you have good observation and timing skills you can take the dogs' basic desire to run after moving objects and shape your retrieve from that simple instinct.

Begin with the sausage throwing game as for the recall (*page 62*) where the dog will learn to run towards you for another thrown sausage in the opposite direction. This is the first layer of the shaped play-retrieve. As you are playing the game mentally click for the parts that you like - the prompt collection, the immediate turn towards you, the racing back with the face alight with enthusiasm. These are exactly the elements you want to transition to recall/retrieve.

Once this game is sound, take two toys that are exactly the same and throw toy number one instead of the sausage. Through the process of running out and returning to you, you are going to interrupt the parts of the behaviour you like with a click and an immediate throw in the opposite direction of the other toy.

The first click must NOT occur before the dog has picked up the article and re-focussed on you. If you click too soon you can accidentally mark the kill sequence, and not the next stage which is the return sequence. With the dog focussing on you, turn your back to the dog and throw the second toy away. Two things may happen, the dog will drop the toy they have and go after number two, or keep hold of their toy whilst they chase down number two, either is absolutely fine, turning and re-focussing will get stronger.

Go and quietly collect the discarded toy, do not ask the dog to relinquish it, whilst the dog is holding it do not give it more value than the toy you have.

It is important these toys are identical to avoid one toy becoming the preferred item. If you have a particularly fast dog, have a basket of toys - even ball will be fine, and keep looking for that collect and re-focus to mark with the click - and reward with another great chase.

This is an excellent way to get a super fast pick up and turn - because you can offer the very best part of retrieve all over again - the chase and kill.

Once this is established - you will know it is established by the speed of the re-focus, begin to slide the click further and further along the behaviour. Click slightly later each time. The dog will turn and re-focus and travel 2 strides before you click, then 4 strides etc. Ideally you are looking to hold the click until the dog arrives in front of you and is still holding the toy.

Once you have reached this stage, don't turn into a nag and spoil it by demand a sit. Click on arrival, wait for the spit out, one dead toy discarded by the dog, and still one toy in your hand, NOW cue the sit and then throw your toy. Always be aware of never

throwing the toy back over the dog's head as this will encourage the dog to back off you, always turn away from the dog before you throw.

Now we have:

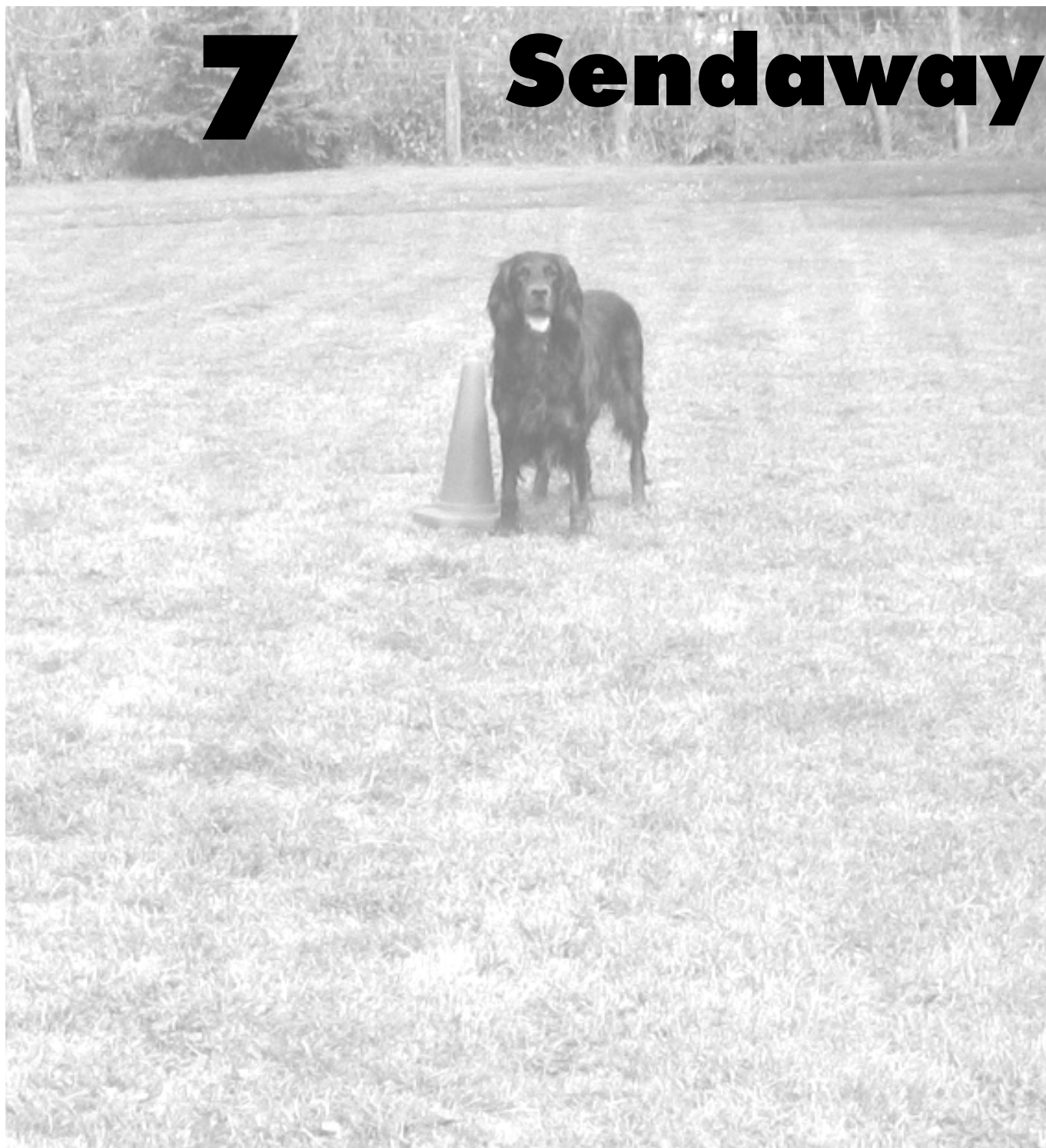
race out > turn > re-focus > race towards you > stop > click > drop > sit > throw

By introducing the sit at the moment it is most likely to be successful, we avoid the conflict of holding a toy and sitting at the same time, which for many dogs is a complex manoeuvre. When the sit begins to be anticipated by the dog, trying to get you to throw again, then give the cue before the drop, just as the dog comes to a stop. From here you can begin to withhold your click for as long as you need, encouraging a poised and alert sit-and-hold.

Teaching the wait prior to a play-taught retrieve, is part of your release cue that comes from tug training. We teach the dog to release on the cue "mine". This becomes highly reinforced by the following tug game and a very strong and reliable behaviour. I cue a sit, give the release cue (the dog is not holding the toy, I am), and drop the toy to my right. I always give my foot the chance of standing on the toy if the dog cannot maintain the sit. To them, I have just dropped an article and given the "mine" cue. They have a history of "mine" to mean relinquish your toy to me. The fact they haven't got it yet is irrelevant, I am saying "this is mine, where ever I drop it, throw it or toss it". For maintaining a sit position, click, and then they can be cued to go for the toy.

If this becomes too hectic, you can follow the step by step process.

7 Sendaway



The advent of clicker training has made this one of the easiest exercises to teach. The dog will learn targets, over increasing distances and with specific selection.

The behaviours of chain are made up of:

1. Look forward and “mark”. The handler brings the dog into the heel position facing the chosen target.
2. A directed target. Ignore other distracting objects that could be mistaken for a target.
3. Run to the target on cue
4. Selectively choose a location relative to the type of target
5. Adopt a position on cue
6. Recall on cue

Behaviours 5 & 6 should already be taught as part of the control and recall training. Be variable with the position adopted to anticipate anticipation on that position.

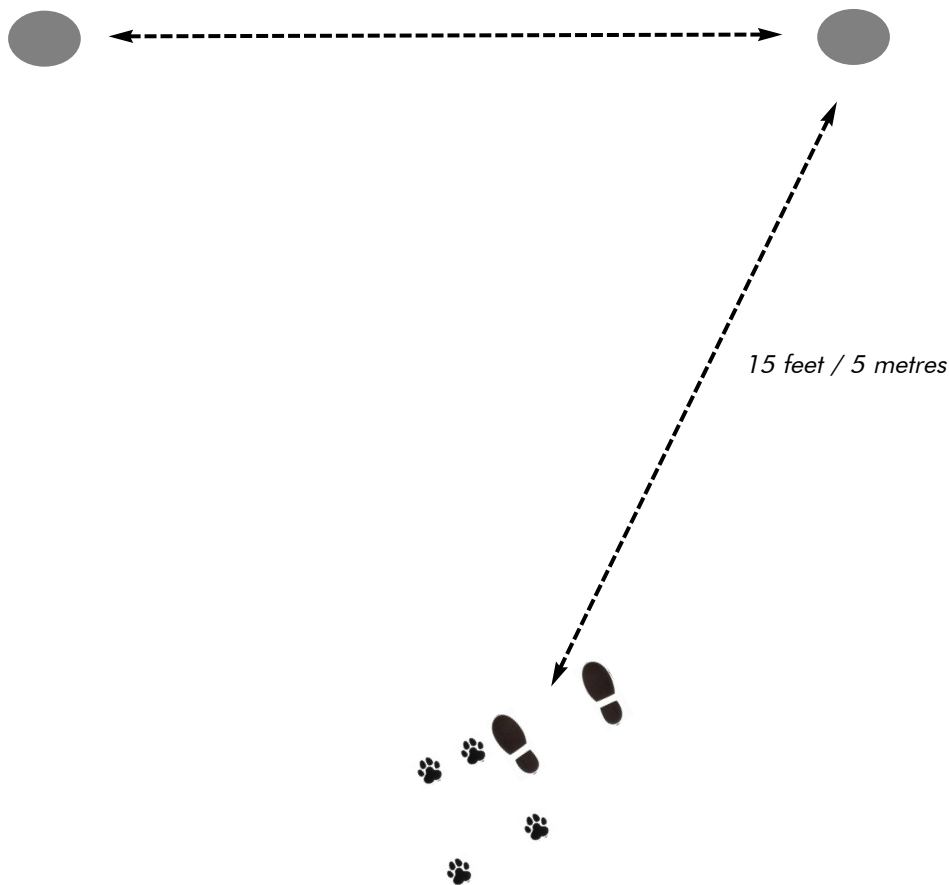
Element 2 is similar to the Directed Retrieve, page 104. A clicker trained dog is very fast at listening for the click and can learn from the absence of click. Set the dog up to succeed with the attractive target also being the correct target until the dog realises it is the target they face that is correct, not just the one they find the most appealing or memorable.

When a dog reaches this stage of its learning you can allow it to learn from errors and not be afraid of the dog making mistakes. Sometimes we need to trust the dog to be able to memorise what does not get a click and avoid that behaviour. A dog that has taught itself can be more reliable long term and be able to make decisions in competition.

I have arrived at a show to find the judge’s sendaway: a mirror propped up against a ring post, a plastic bag tied to a ring rope and two model heads for a wig placed on the ground. The one that freaked the dogs the most was the last one. They consciously avoided this “attractive” people-buried-in-the-ground target and chose quite obscure targets further away.

RECIPE 30: THE SET UP

This game can be played without needing good target training.

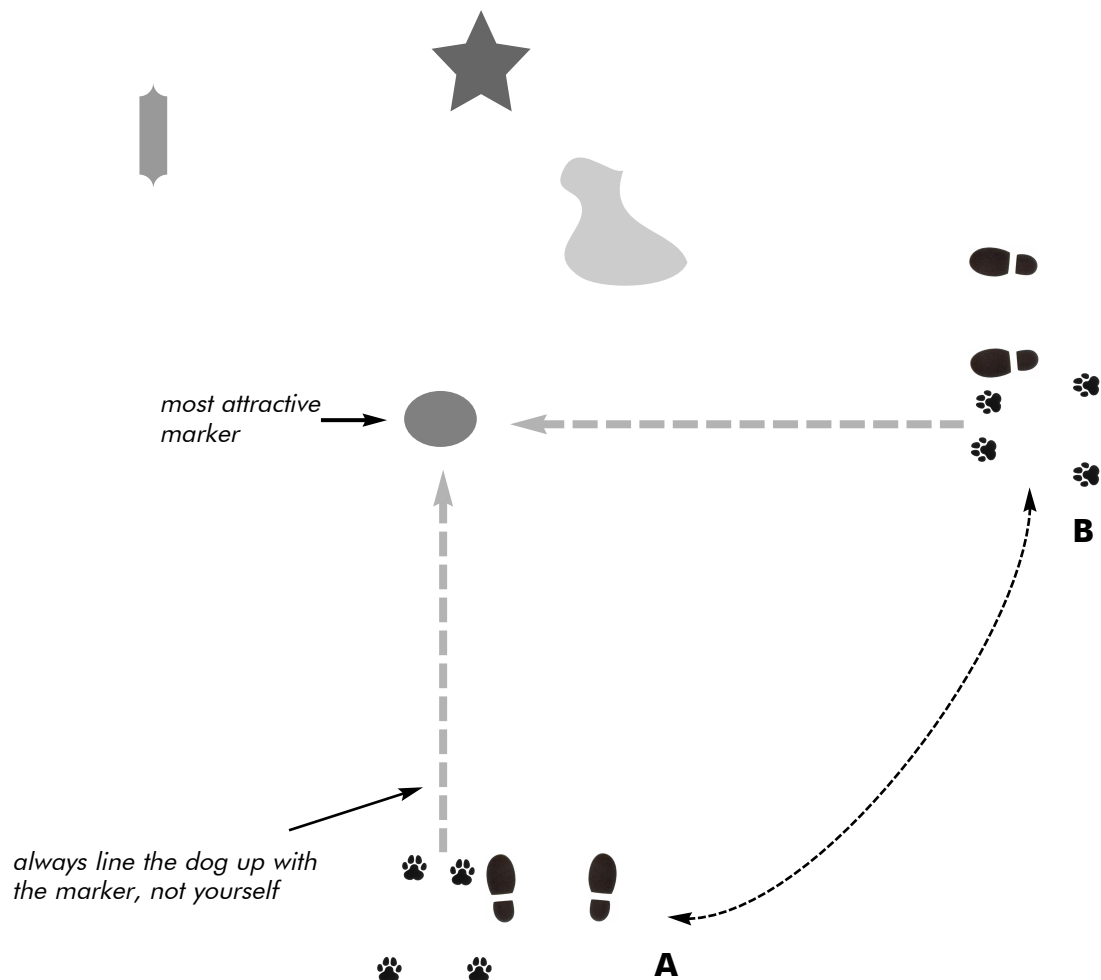


- ▶ begin with two very obvious markers, such as cones, and place them 15 feet apart. You will stand 15 feet away from both markers on the third point of the triangle.
- ▶ leave the dog and walk out with one toy or two boxes of food, let the dog know what you have. Place the toy at one marker or a box of food at both, with one of the boxes having a piece of food sitting on top of the box. If you need the dog to locate in front of a single marker then place the food / toy there, if not place it behind the marker.

Using a box indicates to the dog where the food is, and avoids letting the dog begin to search the ground or sniff around the marker.

- ▶ set the dog up in the heel position, using the "mark" cue, and when looking at the marker with the toy or food on the box, click and tell it to go get it.

- ▶ the dog will begin to learn that running to the marker you indicate will end in a quick success.
- ▶ the real learning of this will arrive when something in the background of the marker, a similar exercise in another ring, or a distracting piece of rubbish confuses the dog as to which is the target marker.
- ▶ gradually educate the dog with distractions that begin unattractive and increase in difficulty. You will need to be able to point and send the dog with confidence. After a while you can look at their head and see what they are marking as the target. If they become fixated to the wrong marker, let them go and discover the lack of reinforcement. Move that distracting marker gradually further away, until they choose the correct marker, reinforce that several times, and then gradually bring the wrong marker back into range.



The view of the distractions must be seen from the dog's height. This can often be surprisingly different and markers that can clearly be seen by us at 5 foot plus tall are not on view at all to the dog.

As you change your location to send the dog from A to B the view and distractions will change. A marker that contrasts well with its background must be easier to see, and a back ground with no movement will be less distracting.

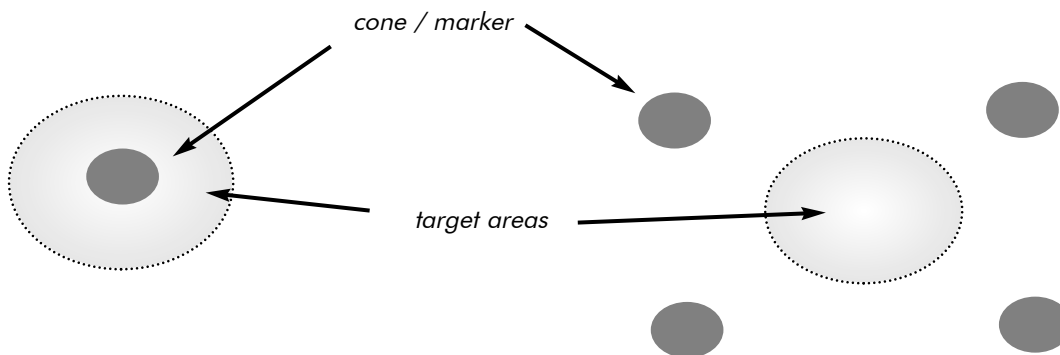
RECIPE 31: TARGET DISCRIMINATION

Different targets will require the dog to choose a different location. If you have a single marker the location is at the side or in front, but if you have a pair of markers the location will be central to the pair.

Since the markers may be identical, even in the same ring for redirection, or from one competition to the next, the dog will need to learn *WHERE* they are heading before they set off. It is certainly feasible to place the two locations on verbal cue, "box", and "cone" as an indication of where to head for.

To teach this use a target mat placed where you want the dog to locate.

- ▶ initially the dog must be able to clearly see the mat from where it is sitting or standing. Shape the dog to run and put all four feet on the mat. The shape of the mat can help your placement of the dog. If the mat is exactly the size of the dog standing then you can place this exactly in the centre of the markers or very close to the cone.
- ▶ click the dog on arrival, feed when back with you. This running to and fro for food will increase speed quickly. Increase the outrun distance by backing away from the target yourself. So the dog goes out 6 foot but comes back 8 foot, out 8 foot comes back 10 foot.



- ▶ build slowly, and maintain confidence and speed, put the behaviour on verbal cue: "go" and "away", or "cone or "box".
- ▶ add a marker to the location of the mat. Place the single marker either at the side or behind, or place a pair of markers slightly in front of the mat.

You will need to add the marker before increasing the distance beyond the point of which the dog can easily see the mat. The distance can now be increased and the dog will view the marker and the place where they will see their mat just before they get there.

- ▶ do not remove the mat before a good distance, further than the competition distance, is run with confidence, speed and drive. Click on arrival, reward on return, or throw the toy for a chase.
- ▶ slowly introduce the distractions, and later add a variety of cues on arrival that indicate the position.
- ▶ lastly fade the mat by replacing it with a cloth that you can fold to a smaller size or chopping the mat into smaller pieces. Once the dog is confident with the positions on arrival, the cue for the position will act as the reinforcer for arriving and the mat no longer required unless you are introducing new markers.

You can practise gradually changing the scenario but keep the same marker location by placing the target marker as if in the centre of a clock face. Then move yourself gradually around the clock. Sending the dog to the target marker from 12 o'clock will appear quite different from 6 o'clock.

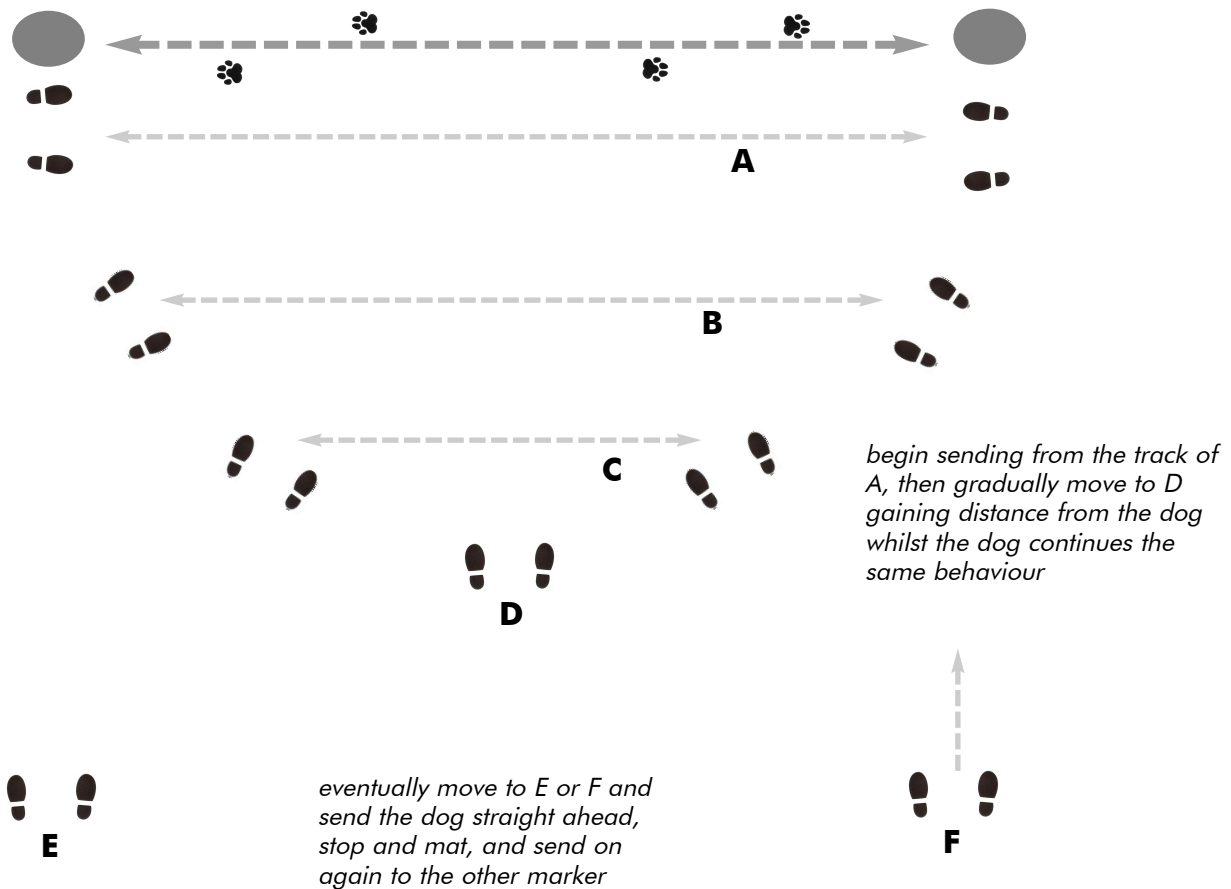
RECIPE 32: REDIRECTION

The dog needs to be confident with more than one marker, or two of the same.

- ▶ place the markers, and their mats about 15 feet apart. Begin with the dog at one marker by your side and send the dog to the other marker, click, reward where suitable and move yourself to the other marker.

We are introducing the idea that the dog can leave one marker to go to the other.

- ▶ as the dog increases in confidence begin to move yourself away before you send, follow the dog quietly to the other mark, click and reward and repeat going back the other way. At the same time bring yourself away from the markers back to the third point of the triangle.

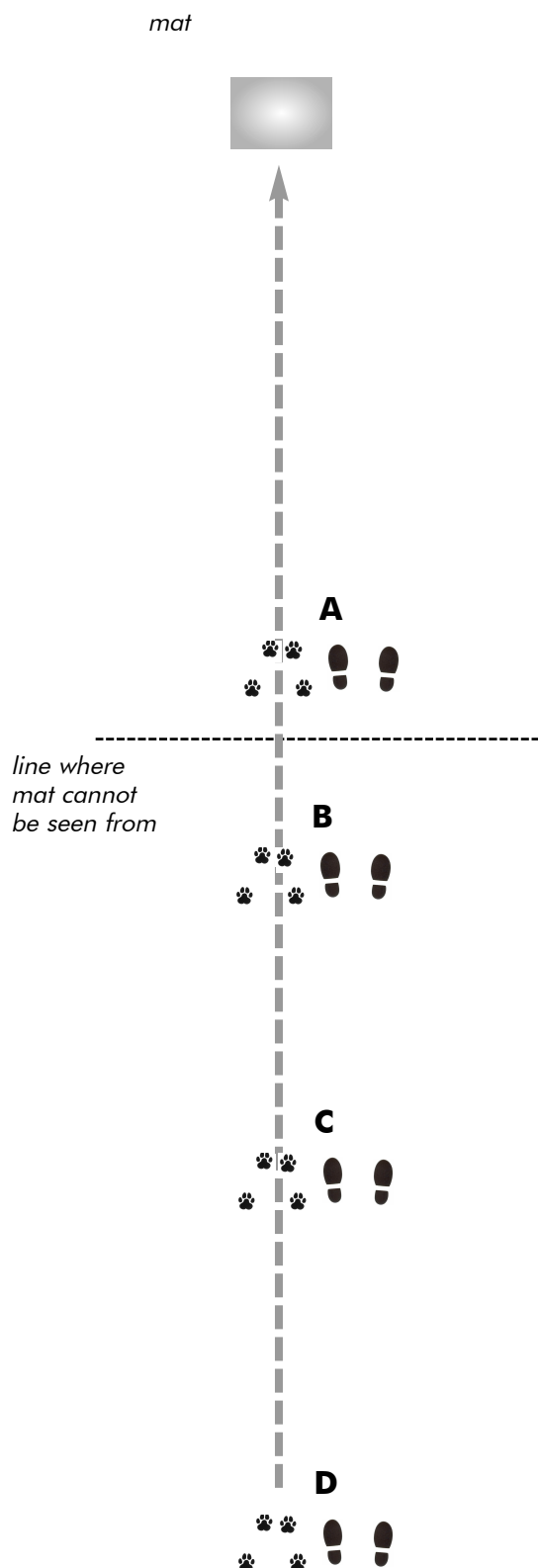


This is ideal for a two marker redirection, where the dog arrives at one marker, and then moves to the other. If you need to send to a middle marker and the dog choose between markers introduce the hand signal for the left "go on" or the right "go on".

But it always looks *really* cool to send with verbal redirection, just remember it is the dog's left and right, not ours, once they have turned to face us.

JUMPS ON REDIRECTION

If you are required to send to a jump by redirection, then use the jump retrieve technique (*Recipe 29 page 104*) by placing wings of the jumps astride the path of the dog's track to the target marker.



RECIPE 33 BLIND SENDAWAY

However much we strive to teach the dog to go to a specific marker that they can see before they set off, there are occasions where the sun is in their face or the marker too small to view at the start point. This is the blind sendaway, which may be a deliberate part of the competition.

We send the dog on trust. They will run out on the absolute belief that they will shortly arrive at their target mat.

- ▶ choose a location with reasonably long grass. If the mat was placed at 20 feet it should not be visible to the dog. Place the mat in the centre of the area.
- ▶ send the dog from a point with clear view of the mat (A), no marker, just the mat. As you begin to increase distance walking backwards away from the mat after you click, the ensuing set up will begin to hide the mat from view.
- ▶ eventually the dog will set out with good confidence (from D) that they will reach their mat, which is a new cue to "go", and in competition be given a position before they reach the mat.

This sort of training that practises the larger behaviour to acquire the shorter behaviour must be repaired in between competitions to avoid the behaviour deteriorating.

The dogs seem to learn the lay of the land. Once you have trained the dog in one environment on a blind sendaway they find it hard to change direction in that field. It is almost like they read some magnetic lay of the ground and remember to run along it. I also notice they find it hard to run on the diagonal, where the land slopes away. If it has a specific boundary keep as parallel as possible, to the boundaries, avoiding the diagonal.

8

Scent



I find many people have major anxieties about scent. In UK competitions it is the final exercise held at the end of the class, and very often the dogs in contention are sent out with the heavy burden of handler stress on their shoulders. Our anxiety comes from a lack of understanding. Although we can never enjoy the same rich experience that the dogs have of a world through our noses, we can to some degree understand how to identify something by smell.

When teaching a dog how to use a particular skill that is instinctive to them we need to avoid “teaching” them and regard them as our teachers in this new subject. By setting up particular situations and relying on the dog’s abilities we can discover what they are processing and how they understand the cues and respond to them and let the situations teach the dogs. We protect the dog from all but the smallest errors, and manage the learning in small steps.

Many year’s ago I was forced to review the whole scent business with one dog that had completely the wrong message when he set off. I was lucky enough to have a retired, very experienced dog to experiment with and explore how he had become so successful.

Very often the traditional teaching of scent explains to the dog what we perceive is “correct”, but in actual fact the dog is loaded with learning what not to do. It takes many, many sessions of puzzle solving to arrive at the “correct” solution.

We are out walking with the dog and they fetch us a pine cone. We toss the pine cone into the long grass and the dog faithfully collects it. We toss the pine cone into the midst of 200 cones and the dog faithfully collects it. We could believe, or kid ourselves, that the dog is finding “our” scent. But what attracted the dog to that cone in the first place? Perhaps a squirrel had taken a nibble, perhaps another dog had picked it up, perhaps it reminded the dog of a ball?

As soon as the dog picks the cone up, it changes scent, cues, in two ways:

- ▶ the dog’s saliva is now on the cone
- ▶ the cone surface will have been broken to some degree

Both of these events will give a unique scent to the dog to be able to identify it. When seeking the cone from amongst others, that unique mixture of scent is a cue to reward for the dog - the key word here being: *mixture*. This is what teaching a dog scent is, but with all the elements that incorporate “the mixture” how can we be sure that the dog learns which element of the mixture will be rewarded?

All scent, at the very least, on our hands is the scent of the last objects that have been touched, the last soap we used. The degree of sweat will depend on the heat of the

day, it will be tinged with waste matter from our digestion or drug intake (nicotine, alcohol, pain killers, contraceptives etc). It will contain hormone messages, and possible other chemicals related to the stress of the situation. Yuk ... decipher that!

In addition the item we place the scent on will also change. A rubbed cloth will have the fibres broken open, the washing powder or water residue will affect the cloth, the particular bush the cotton was grown on, the manufacturing process the cloth was made with. A wooden item will contain the scent of that tree species, grown in that particular area, prepared with a particular saw, that may carry the scent of other woods and when held in the warmth of our hands the pore of the wood will open.

Experiment with this yourself, if you don't have a head cold. Take three identical items, wood pieces from the same length or cloth from the same sheet, and just hold one for 60 seconds. Then close your eyes and smell each item in turn, but keep your hands away, use tongs. Do not try and describe the scent, just instinctively mark which you think is "hot", ie scented. Try again but this time rub the items and again note which you think is hot.

Not everyone has the same scenting abilities, smokers will be disadvantaged, and goodness knows what else affects our scent. But 4 out of five people I do this test with can tell which is the "hot" item that they have rubbed. They cannot tell the difference to the one they have rubbed as opposed to an other person. The rubbed item smells much stronger of itself, "more clothly, like ironing", "more woody".

Out of all the scents which we know impact the dog, and all the other scents we don't know impact the dog, the teaching of the exercise becomes a lesson in what to reject and why, rather than what to respond to.

RECIPE 34: TEACHING SEARCH TECHNIQUES

Not all dogs use their noses. Although our most successful search and rescue dogs are often Border Collies they take a long time to learn to scent as naturally as a gundog or hound puppy. The collies can easily con us they are scenting by learning visual patterns. You can often see them race around with their mouths open searching for a visual cue.

Although my Gordons run with their mouth open when they need to concentrate on a particular scent the mouth is shut. The open mouth seems to be for "air tasting" but the nose for serious identification. And so interestingly the different tracks or scents have a different effect on their behaviour - sometimes the tail goes into helicopter mode, which I think is rabbit, fast wag which seems to be general bird, but frozen body and rigid tail (the point) on the actual scent of the game bird, (not crows or magpies).

The dog will need to develop 2 skills:

- ▶ the ability to thoroughly search a pattern or collection of items
- ▶ the ability to reject similar but not the closest matching items

Wow! That is like asking you which of these words is identical the rest of this page?

banana	orange	black	ball	hang	cheap
special	mango	eagle	plus	time	anticipate
ankle	cheeky	partner	sugar	vanilla	gate

Each of these is a different font, is your eye skilled enough to make a quick decision to decide which of these words is in the same font? The answer is at the end of the chapter. Tricky stuff eh?

Fortunately a clicker trained dog is used to learning from information and they will learn scent very quickly. But you cannot allow them more than 10-20% failure at any one learning session. This means you do not put out 10 items, 1 of which is right and wait until the dog comes back with the right one.

Teach the dog to approach the items, with the verbal cue "search" or "go find" and this should stimulate the dog to become "nose active". Nose work should be carried out in a steady, purposeful manner. If a dog gets over excited, stressed or is too hot, then panting will reduce their scenting abilities.

I use this method to begin dogs for all types of nose work. The essence of these exercises is the dog's ability to tell you what they have found. A drugs dog will indicate - that person, or that case, a search dog will come and fetch you and take you to the find, and an Obedience dog will retrieve the article to you.



The indication behaviour must be taught very soundly and be a robust behaviour before being added to the final scent exercise chain.

- ▶ find a collection of glass jars, or containers that can hold an item but restrict the dog picking up the item. We sometimes use the plastic markers with the hole in the top (*picture left*).

- ▶ place out three containers and let the dog observe you placing food in one of them
- ▶ send the dog to go find, or walk with them to encourage them to sniff the air rising out of the container

This beginning will ensure the dog learns to scent by air and not by taste. If the dog is avidly pushing the marker to get at the food, use the glass jar or china mugs. A piece of food in the base of a jar or mug cannot be reached by tongue or paw. As soon as the dog indicates the presence of food, click, move in and tip the jar up with your wonderfully dextrous hands and give the dog the food.

As confidence builds increase the number of items and place the jars or markers in a variety of patterns and encourage them to search around for the one piece of food. At this point we are teaching the dog a searching habit on a specific cue. This is a good technique to stop dogs “pecking” at items as they search.

RECIPE 35: TEACHING SELECTION

The next step is to teach the dog to reject other scents. Travel to your friend’s house and empty the contents of their garage out onto the garden. Look for things that will be carrying human scent but are unattractive to the dog to pick up. The handle of an umbrella, an old towel, shoes, shopping bags, baskets etc, avoid strong chemical scent, but find a range of different materials. This is also a good club game, where several trainers may get together, ask everyone to place one large item of clothing and their closed training bag out in an area together. None of these items must belong to the dog’s household, trainer or family member that is working the items.

This motley collection is RICH with smells. Ask your dog to observe whilst you place out several pieces of food on some of the objects, each of which is giving off a unique mixture of scents. Give the dog the same “go find” cue as you used for the jars, but this time, click as you see them pick up the scent of food, and try to get the click before they eat the food. If you miss the click, not to worry, the behaviour of scenting will become self rewarding. Gradually reduce the amount of food to one or two pieces. The dog is building confidence at searching lots of items or different smells looking for the piece of food.

Find a small toy that your dog enjoys, and several times ask the dog to fetch the placed toy and swap it for a piece of food. You want to associate the toy with the reward of food on delivery. Hide the toy by placing it on an article that would camouflage it. We want the dog to smell the toy, not see it. An old beach towel scrunched up would disguise a soft plush mouse, a garden chair would disguise a piece of wood.

Send the dog to go find. Some dogs when finding the toy will react with a retrieve and deliver it to you for their food, others will search thoroughly for the possibility of more

food and then return to the toy, collect and deliver it to you. Make sure your timing of the click precisely catches the decision making process of picking up the toy. You must allow the dog to decide, both style of searching are equally valid.

So far the dog has learned:

- ▶ to set off from you on cue with their nose working
- ▶ to move around an area searching objects for reward
- ▶ to move around a collection of items rejecting all scents but food and the toy

The next step is to introduce items of the same material, but communicate to the dog to collect the one with your scent. Go through your daily life looking at items that are identical and you can guarantee are "clean". A bag of plastic spoons, a bag of pre-chopped firelighter (small wooden sticks), paper napkins.

Return to the jam jars where the items will be protected from error, place out three jars. You must now ensure the jars are without your scent, ideally put them through a dishwasher. Do not touch the jars yourself, put your hand in a clean plastic bag to place the jars. Take one of the identical items and put your scent on it by clutching it in your hand for a minute. Put two "clean" (untouched) items in the jars and add your item to the third jar. Place a small piece of food in the same jar.

Send the dog out to find. From previous experience we know the dog is going to indicate on the jar with food, and oh, goodness me, alongside this cue is the scent cue of your hot object. Build up to several jars, or as many as you will need in competition, plus one more. Each jar must contain one clean item that is identical to all the other items. One item will have your scent.

Remove the piece of food from the jar and let the dog make the connection, that the scent of your item IS the cue for a reward. As soon as they show the indication of a find, ie, "its here...." click and reward.

Scent can become very confusing if we are sloppy with our cue management. Your scent is the cue to pick up this item. You cannot afford to accidentally scent anything else if you want the dog to isolate the only one with your scent on. Equally the same with food. The jar that contained the food will have a residue from the food still in the jar, if you move to another jar then the dog may respond to the faint scent of food in conjunction with a blank or clean item.

If you need to use the same items over and over again you must find a way to successful "clean" them of all scent.

Most scent is in the bacteria from your hands, so placing an item in a microwave will cook out the scent, hot ironing will kill the scent on cloths, as will leaving items in a deep freeze. I have tested all these methods to arrive at clean items but please use common sense with what you place in the microwave. The one method we experimented with that was a failure was putting the items in a steriliser. I don't know what happens, but even the most experienced dogs were at a loss.

Ideally find a group of training partners where you can swop your items every week, and never use the same items again. The items may be soiled from the other person, but if the dog is looking for your scent, this is no different from the motley collection of household objects.

The last element of the chain is the indication by retrieve. Find objects that can be used as retrieve items, and later, when clean or with other identical new objects, be used for scent. Go through the retrieve steps until you have a sound strong retrieve on this object. The shape, smell and texture of the object will become a cue to retrieve, so when the dog finds this objects amongst other similar objects it will be cued to "fetch", provided the dog is skilled at:

- ▶ searching
- ▶ rejecting unscented objected that look the same

Scent training is a long term build of experience and association. The dogs will need every ounce of experience of patterns, items, background scent, wind drift, ring stress and distractions to become a sound scent dog.

To make the move to the dog seeking another person's scent (judge), make sure the cloth that you are given is identical to the cloth placed out. Associate a small amount of your scent with the giving cloth, and let the dog seek the matching cloth. I'm sorry to say the judge's scent is irrelevant, the experienced dogs can match cold cloth to cold cloth every time by the scent of the particular material.

Scent is a fascinating area of work with dogs. They have such tremendous skills that we have only scratched the surface of what we can teach them.

Answer to the word "scent" = vanilla

9 Performance



GETTING IT RIGHT WHEN IT COUNTS

We've spent weeks, probably months, getting intimately familiar with every aspect of the obedience tests. Performance is not about teaching new behaviours, it is about securing the behaviours you have to the best quality, highest standard and reliability so that they can happen at your chosen level of "performance".

When you watch top level performances of any sort of animal training you see common skills that make the whole performance so electric:

The effortless relationship *between dog and handler, neither dog or handler are working any harder than the other. Neither is "scoring points" off the other, each is doing they best they can to make the other's tasks easier. It is the definition of a team, no individual stands out.*

We are drawn to working in that sort of synchronicity that is the definition of team work, even when working with our own species which is made all the more amazing that we can achieve it with a different species.

The absolute trust, *the confidence in their partner that comes from deep down. The sureness that the communication is two way, both partners listen and well as "talk", they understand each others needs, their strengths and weaknesses. They see the moments when support and extra strength is required, there is no test, no competition between dog and handler.*

The combined experience of both dog and handler assessing and reacting to the situation. The handler reading the test from the dog's angle, identifying the tricky moments, the stresses likely to lower the performance. The dog assessing the ground, the body language of other dogs, the tension in the handler. The handler takes a few moments to refresh the dog in some of the extra expectations, congratulating the dog on the quality of its work. The handler asks the dog to warm up with confidence building success which carries over into their performance.

Aahhhh. Yep, something worth working for. Special moments of true understanding between us and our dogs that actually happen every day at home, we don't all need tests and trials and audiences to appreciate that our dogs can be our trained partners through every minute of every day.

But there is a special feeling that comes from working a dog and having an inner knowledge that the dog will "look after you". It comes from the endless investment you have put into your training time and your basic relationship with the dog.

The quality of your work can be directly measured in the style of your lessons, your teaching, your reward and your consistency. Your partnership is born in your training

sessions, your ability to set the learning to suit the dog, and ONLY the dog, to set the increments in criteria to be achievable, to reward extra for achievement and extra efforts.

WHAT IS THIS TEACHING "STYLE" ?

The effortless performance comes from never making the job too hard in training for you or for the dog, just hard enough to stimulate concentration, but not too easy that it becomes boring. It comes from the familiarity of the hours spent practising, the knowledge of each other, how the other will respond.

The confidence that comes from the hours you have spent together, going through the tricky parts, enjoying the process and understanding each other from the bond born out of sharing the learning experience.

Helping the dog through the tasks it finds particularly difficult and recognising that you have weaknesses that you can encourage the dog to help you through.

Learn from experience, making sure you take note of what you learn from every lesson, when you put the clicker away condition yourself to review what you have just learned, take on board the differences you need to make, the adjustments to improve and the sense of achievement.

Set standards for yourself that are higher than the standards you set for your dog, don't let down your partnership by being a poor performer.

So you get nervous? Deal with it. Focus on your dog, your relationship, the pleasure you get from the experience. Although other people will be your judges, they are judging your performance, they are not judging you.

Make your first check through the four measures of "a job is complete when"

1. Always the best - do not reward for a lower standard of performance unless the loss is deliberate in the presence of additional stresses.
2. Always happens on cue - be consistent with your "code" and reward the dog for deciphering correctly
3. Happens anywhere and everywhere - teach the dog that the learning is the same no matter what is happening or where it is
4. Never happens unless cued - that you have not rewarded the dog for offering the behaviours spontaneously or out of context

(based on material in Don't Shoot the Dog by Karen Pryor)

This is your guide to each behaviour "being completed" and ready to go into a performance.

There is no special recipe to getting a dog to performance standard. It comes from the time you have invested in the dog.

THE STAGES OF LEARNING

Your training will go through phases:

- ▶ break down the behaviour into small edible chunks
 - identity how to teach
 - identify any special fitness or skills needed
- ▶ get the small behaviours to the best quality
- ▶ add the final cue
- ▶ make sure it is robust in all situations and anticipated distractions
- ▶ chain with other behaviours in the same exercise
- ▶ increase the amount of behaviours for the same reward

Once the exercises are taught then the training will go into maintenance phase:

- ▶ invest energy and time into building the dog's confidence and expertise
- ▶ keep it fresh by adding more puzzles to solve

VARIETY OF SITUATIONS

You can actually train a dog entirely in one place and still get superb performance in brand new situations without fail. In fact 95% of my training and reinforcement is on home turf in about three locations around the property, depending on the temperature of the outside air, the degree of precipitation and how lazy I am feeling.

The norm is to "proof" the dog against the range of distractions that the performance situation is likely to encounter. This means when the dog has the learning secure at home, you then travel the learning to different places. I have my doubts about this strategy. I think that if the dogs can generalise around their secure home environment then provided the new environments give the dog the feeling of security the quality of performance will not reduce. If you take your dog to lots of "insecure" environments,

dog club is an ideal example, then the learning will definitely dip in quality and you will end up with an inconsistent performance.

Focus more on designing your training plan around developing the dog's coping mechanism and social abilities. Fix the qualities and standards on home turf, without any reason to lessen the performance. Let this become the conditioned learning, the "only" way to perform, and then ask for it in other safe environments. By teaching with small amounts of variation every time the dog becomes extremely skilled in generalising the behaviour. Just taking a step to the left for every time you repeat a cue changes the background behind you and reinforces the dogs ability to "find the cue" and match it with the behaviour. This is where strength becomes built in - in small details that negate the need for extensive trials.

Generalising is only useful if the performance does not deteriorate as a result of it.

If we look at a dog with an ideal temperament and social development:

- ▶ It was reared in such a way that during the developmental period of its brain there was sufficient minor stresses presented to lay down the patterns of the coping mechanism. This is usually achieved by exposure to new situations, noises, smells, people on a daily basis.

A rich environment from 4 weeks to 14 months.

- ▶ It was part of a litter of pups large enough to develop a sense of self, learn how to socially interact with a range of siblings and adult pack members. As an adult dog it has the skills to avoid confrontation and adopt suitable body language for the range of dominant or submissive dogs it will meet.

It is socially flexible and can "fit in".

- ▶ It has been exposed to strange situations that have given the dog the experience to recognise threatening environments from safe environments, unpleasant smelling environments, noisy environments, excessively stimulating environments. When sufficiently accustomed to a range of stimulating situations the dog will be less responsive to the environment.

Strange and new but non-threatening.

- ▶ It has learned from the beginning that sometimes you go to sleep cold and a bit hungry, that sometimes the bite from your brother will be uncomfortable for a day or two, and that rain gets in your eyes, people tread on your feet, doors shut on your tail, mud sticks to the fur on your feet, and that sometimes you have an itch you just can't reach.

Sometimes there are rainy days.

I am talking about a normally adjusted adult or young adult that has the flexibility and experience to cope with many situations and performance environments. This is not to do with clicker training as such, but normal rearing of a healthy dog. Certainly a dog not quite so well adjusted can benefit from clicker learning to acquire the abilities to cope with performance situations, to a certain degree. And in spite of an ideal up bringing some dogs will permanently find the competition environment a threat.

In your lessons you will give cues that are sometimes not quite so clear as they were in the past - you rushed a cue, or were "fluffy" with the movement. The dog will have to make quick decisions about what to do, successful or not, some learning will happen, either the dog will learn the slight variations that accompany one cue or that it cannot afford to only give 50% attention.

I sometimes run part of my practice sessions holding an open umbrella. This alters my body language, makes me a bit clumsier, presents a different picture to the dog. I often train outside with an umbrella and boots. I won't be the same as indoors sitting in a chair. But I am teaching my dog the skill of deciphering these woolly signals.

I often train with an observer, interrupting with questions, I often train with the TV on, half listening to the programme, I always train with the other dogs as observers. All of these small things in a safe environment go to "build" the dog. If your dog is socially "satisfied", and I don't mean sex every Saturday night, but has no need to hold canine conversations at every opportunity, then the presence of strange dogs will have little impact on your dog. Equally that can be applied to people.

A dog that lives in canine isolation is likely to be far more stressed by a dog rich environment, like a competition, and it is very likely that its social needs will have a higher priority than the bit of old sausage you are offering for a retrieve. All the "generalisation" in the world will not make old cheese more import than a piece of dog gossip.

Reduce the stimulating (distracting) effects of your performance environment by exposing the dog to the unusual until they become familiar. Even the best prepared dogs can sometimes be below par in certain situations and sometimes when we least expect it.

There is a whole world of distractions outside our knowledge arriving at the dog's nose. My dogs are a mixed pack, with entire males and bitches in season, elderly and juveniles all together. Even though bitches in season are around it does not mean that their performance will be less than usual, just that they will get some extra empathy, and vice versa, I still train the bitches when they are in season and subject to hormonal "excesses".

GETTING THE BEST

- ▶ Prepare the dog for the environment, add a "new place" to go for the daily walk.
- ▶ Examine the style of your teaching, does it teach the dog how to perform well?
- ▶ Have a plan for your lessons, plan the complete picture, follow the path to the goal.
- ▶ Check you are an equally prepared performer and up to the standard of your teaching.
- ▶ Research the expectations and situations.

A performance is nothing "special" to the dog, it is only your perceptions of the situation that change. The dog will believe that the click is going to happen very shortly and that reward will be not far away. The lack of reward or click in a performance will stimulate extra effort, not de-motivate the dog.

This comes from a sufficient amount of time conditioning the dog that:

the cue

gives

a behaviour

that will be

rewarded

But after a performance - that mass of behaviours that didn't get their individual clicks - my dogs will always get a bonanza.

He is usually called "Ball".

SUCCESS

Competing with your dog is a very satisfying hobby - many hundreds of people have proven that over the years and increasingly find it an utterly absorbing hobby. Keep a clear image in your mind what you personally consider success. Do not let others persuade you that the success is measured in wins. You may have a dog who finds the

situation of a show very stressful and has travelled a long journey to be able to go into a ring, enjoy the occasion and make sure you come out smiling. That is success.

You may be a new handler working their way up through the classes for the first time, every achievement in a higher class is success. Find the achievement in each competition, the improvement in each exercise.

The dog CAN NEVER be at fault, he or she is a product of your training. No matter how good you think you are or how skillful your training has been, if it does not work you only have the teaching from your hands to account for it.

**THE DOG CAN ONLY LEARN
WHAT YOU TEACH.**

TEACH THEM WELL.

Glossary

ASSD heelwork	advanced stand, sit and down, which are positions given to stop the dog during heelwork
Location	is the dog's placement relative to you
Position	is the position of the dog's body: sitting, standing or laying down
Heelwork	the position the dog maintains
HF	heel free, ie off lead
HOL	heel on lead
Flaring	in heelwork where the back end of the dog is at an outward angle to the handler
Crabbing	in heelwork where the dog's movement is exaggerated sideways around the handlers leg
Impeding	in heelwork where the dog's location prevents clear movement of the handler's leg
Lagging	in heelwork where the dog's position is behind the handler
Surging	in heelwork where the dog surges forward with the left leg moving forward
Drop	where a dog goes into the down position from standing, ie without going into the sit to lay down.
Present	where the dog sits in front of the handler and "presents" itself, or an article.
Finish	a move from the present in front position to the heel position. This can be carried out by going the long way around the back of the handler or the shorter route to the heel.
Pacing	where the leg on the same side of the dog moves together
Trotting	where the diagonally opposite legs move together
Collected	trotting movement where the point of balance is further backwards than normal
Pick up	in heelwork, where the dog is left in a stationary position, such as stand, sit or down, and the handler walks up to the dog from behind without hesitation the dog will join the handler and both continue forwards

Clicker World Obedience Training covers the competition exercises used around the world based on the predominant schedules of The Kennel Club (UK), the American Kennel Club (North America) and the Federation Cynologique Internationale (Europe) although some countries have some wonderful variations.

Competitive obedience in the UK was the author's schooling ground for over 25 years. Competing successfully in that environment requires a very high degree of accuracy and rewards the trainer who is able to pay attention to fine detail. An excellent arena for apprenticeship but heavily favouring a few breeds able to match the demanding accuracy and endurance of the higher classes.

The basic training is the same for all variations of the exercises and the book looks closely at clicker training the foundation behaviours and skills that need to be taught.

The main areas are:

- ▶ heelwork tested at 3 paces in various patterns with positions given during the work
- ▶ retrieve of dumbbells and other objects, and over jumps
- ▶ stays, in the three positions for varying lengths of time and out of sight
- ▶ recall to handler, heel and front, with positions during recall
- ▶ sendaway or running out to marked areas with redirection and positions
- ▶ scent, from a variety of objects to be retrieved and searching
- ▶ distance control, the dog changing through directed positions

Trainers are recommended to acquire the clicker skills in the Clicker Training Perfect Foundation Book & DVDs before teaching obedience. The Clicker World Obedience book does not explain clicker training principles but focuses on applying them to specific exercises combining different skills of the dog. It would also be advisable that those wishing to compete at higher level in obedience acquire the skills of the Intermediate Trainer (Level 3) to be able to train for optimum excellence.

Kay Laurence is one of the world's top clicker trainers. This exciting course of books and videos brings you her unique combination of talents. With her gift for understanding dogs and her experience of college teaching you will find this material inspiring and easy to follow. Kay leads the way in developing practical techniques that will leave you with and a with great sense of personal achievement.



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