



# Agility Foundations

*The things your dog needs to know to have a blast in agility class*

*Agility is about having fun with you dog and working as a team*

Without clear communication, your dog can not navigate the course, so take your time and **focus on foundations!**

Foundations are the building blocks of our agility class. We will be working on breaking down agility behaviors into smaller steps for your dog's understanding. Make sure you take your time with these behaviors and have fun while you practice!



## Training is Play & Play is Training

**There are a few things you will need to be able to practice these behaviors in your own back yard**

Hula Hoop 🐾 Soccer Cones 🐾 20 Foot Long Leash  
Large Book 🐾 Plank

**Remember:** *When purchasing these things, dogs can see yellow best against the color of grass. If you can, consider getting these items in a color you can see*

Engaging your dog and keeping their attention will be key for agility class, so make sure your dog considers this training to be fun and full of play! Use a mixture of treats and toys as a reward for good behavior.

Tug of war 🐾 Squeaky toys 🐾 Ball on a rope 🐾 Variety of treats

## **Stay engaged with your dog during your practice sessions**

*Playing music during your sessions can keep it fun for you both!*

### **Keep your practice sessions short**

*2-5 minutes & aim for about 30 treats*

### **End your practice sessions before your dog...**

*gets bored - gets tired - gets full - gets hot*

# Here are the things we've learned in our obedience training classes which will help you with agility

Watch 🐾 Stay 🐾 Come  
Leash Walking 🐾 Spin 🐾 Release

In agility class, we use our voices and a few hand signals to guide our dog to the next obstacle in the course pattern. Make sure that when you are practicing these cues, that they are spoken clearly.



## Warming Up



*Before dogs participate in agility classes, we must make sure they stretch and warm up their muscles so they do not injure anything.*

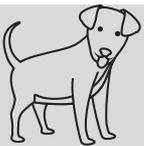
When warming up, it is important that your dog is the one who activates their muscles.

This means we want the dog to do the activities themselves, instead of having the muscles guided by human hands.

### Examples of Warm Up Activities

5 Minute walk  
Game of fetch  
Game of Chase

Get your dog out for a quick walk around the block, play some fetch, perhaps a game of chase, or practice some tricks like "bow" or "circle a pole"



## Cooling Down



After practicing agility behaviors, your dog must also cool down.

### Examples of Cool Down Activities

5 Minute walk  
Muscle Massages  
Tricks

Have fun with your dog and take the cool down time as a chance to bond by massaging their muscles. Fingertips can help reach the deeper tissue.

# The Starting Line

*Where do we start? At the starting line!*

All dogs begin their agility run at the starting line. Your dog can begin from a stand, a sit or a down. No matter what position they begin in, they must remain in that position until you provide the release word which will start them on their way!



## Release Word

In our beginner obedience class, we learn to use the release word "Free Dog" when practicing stay. You may choose any word you want, but we recommend something you won't accidentally say.



WE RECOMMEND RELEASE WORD:

## Free-Dog

### HERE ARE THE STEPS:



-  Start with your dog on the long leash
-  Place your dog in the position you've selected for the starting line
-  Tell your dog to stay, do not move away
-  Give your dog the chosen release word, do not move away

PRACTICING THIS OUTSIDE WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT AS THERE ARE MANY DISTRACTIONS. HOWEVER, STARTING IN A FENCED IN BACK YARD WILL BE EASIER AS THE AMOUNT OF DISTRACTIONS WILL BE LESS THAN IN A MORE PUBLIC PLACE

***Using the hula hoop to mark the spot your dog should remain in will help you both visualize the start position***

# STAY FOR AGILITY

What we need for "stay" is for your dog to remain in position until they are released from it by you using a **Release Word**.

If you do not give a clear release word, than your dog will decide when to release themselves from the stay. Starting using a mat or a hula hoop can help dogs and owners visualize the desired area for the stay.

## Duration. Distance. Distraction.

Work on adding time to your dog's stay while they remain in the hula hoop before you begin adding distance and finally distraction.

Don't add distance until your dog can stay for at least one full minute

Don't add distraction until your dog can stay for at least 20 feet

**Work at your dogs pace! Don't push further than your dog can handle.**

### LEVEL ONE

Stand close to your dog - Duration of 5 seconds



Then 10 seconds - Then 15 seconds

Add time as your dog succeeds, but change the amount of time so your dog can't predict you



### LEVEL TWO

Take a step back - Quickly return and reward

Only when your dog is comfortable, add more distance

Two steps back - Three steps back - On and on until you can reach 20 feet

## Putting it into practice



Dog Returns to Owner for Reward



## Reward

YOUR DOG IN DIFFERENT WAYS SO THEY BECOME USED TO BEING ON DIFFERENT SIDES OF YOU OR EVEN MOVING AS THEY ARE GIVEN THEIR REWARD

*Turn right and reward when your dog follows you*

*Turn left and reward while your dog follows you*

*Turn in a full circle and reward while your dog follows you*

*Move in a curved line and reward*

ALWAYS CHANGE UP THE SPEED, DIRECTION AND DISTANCE SO THE STAY AND RELEASE ARE UNDERSTOOD BY YOUR DOG



Dog Leaves Owner for Reward



Practice the clock method we learned in beginner class as extra credit for "stay"

# 2 On / 2 Off CONTACTS



Start off with a small raised platform like a big book in a non distracting location

Guide or lure your dog over until their front feet drop to the ground,  
**CLICK!** Reward!

You will need a target plate to practice this

Target plate = a small plastic plate or lid that you place at the end of a platform

You can place your target plate on the ground slightly out in front of the platform, so your dog drops their feet and pauses on top of the target plate to get that treat.

**Top View**

## To build duration

ONCE YOUR DOG IS IN POSITION, FEED SEVERAL TREATS ONE

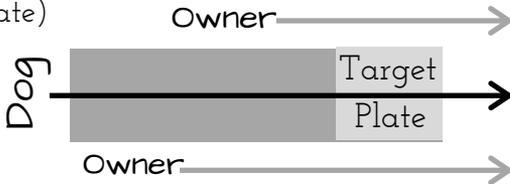
AT TIME THEN RELEASE WITH YOUR VERBAL CUE



Once your dog understands the behavior, you may add the verbal cue to this action

## LOW PLANK Adding Movement

Start with a plank on the ground, just laying flat. Walk your dog over the plank a few times before adding the 2 on / 2 off on the contact (your target plate)



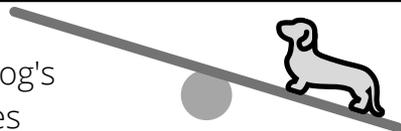
PRACTICE WITH THE OWNER WALKING ON BOTH

SIDES OF THE PLANK WITH A FULL

**2 ON / 2 OFF**

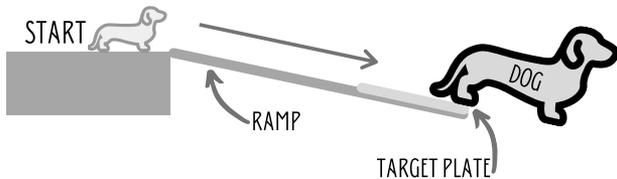
PAUSE AND RELEASE

The teeter, A-Frame and dog walk has colored sections near the bottom that the dog's feet must touch when exiting the obstacles



THESE ARE SAFETY MEASURES TO TEACH YOUR DOG TO COME ALL THE WAY DOWN AND OFF THE OBSTACLE SAFELY INSTEAD OF LEAPING OFF.

Teaching your dog 2 on / 2 off will help your dog learn to keep their paws on the contact zones (the yellow parts)



Avoid having your dog run up the "wrong way" and turn around on the ramp, as this can be unsafe

Start your dog at the top of the ramp / platform

Place a treat on the target plate at the end of your ramp



This will encourage your dog to move towards the end of the ramp then stop on the contact Zone (your target plate)

You can begin to add duration by placing additional treats as your dog holds the position

then give your **Release word** and toss a treat off of the ramp so that your dog can reset and do it again.

2 On / 2 Off describes the position we are looking for, with your dog holding their 2 rear feet on the contact and their 2 front feet off of the contact



## Touch

Why is something like Touch important to agility?

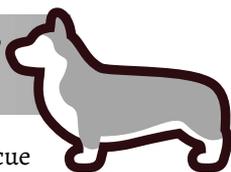
Teaching and practicing touch helps increase your dog's engagement with you as you train. Touch helps you move and position your dog without having to physically manipulate them.

**"Touch" helps your dog see the value of your attention**

Hold your non treat hand out, fairly close to your dog's nose. When your dog comes in for a sniff **CLICK!**

**Reward!**

If your dog isn't interested in sniffing your hand, rub your palm with some yummy treats and try again



Build up duration and distance slowly as your dog recognizes the cue

**Your Goal:** Your dog touches their nose to the palm of your hand

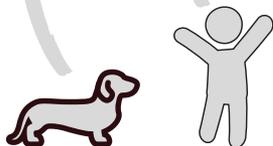
Reward

# Games

## Follow Me

With your dog on your left, move forward and ask your dog to turn clockwise

Ask your dog to turn by reaching your left arm out as you turn, with your palm flat and facing the direction you are moving



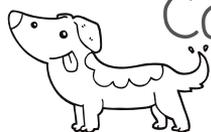
Build on this behavior until you can turn sharply and have your dog keep up



Do this with your dog on your right using your right arm to signal to your dog and turn counter-clockwise

# Games

## Call Offs



A call off is when your dog is heading towards an obstacle which is not correct and you call them away from it

Set your dog up on your left side, in front of a cone

Place your left hand out like the "follow me" game



Move towards the cone

If your dog follows you while you turn away

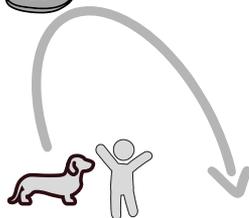
**CLICK!**

**Reward!**

If your dog goes past the jump, don't reward

Say "oops"

Go back to the start and try again



If your dog continues to try going to the cone, try moving slowly

Remember to keep your dog's attention and make it a game!

Keep your sessions short & fun

# Cone Games

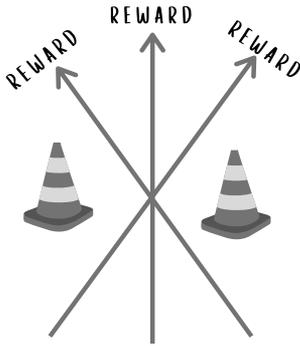


The cone will also be called an upright during our agility classes. We will be adding to our "follow me" games and adding some doggy independence.

→ Uprights

**Go On**

We will encourage our dog to "go on" to the reward which is at a distance



**1** Have your dog in a "sit/stay" while you place the reward and return to your dog

**2** Give your dog the verbal release cue

*Start with small distances and increase distance with success and understanding*



You can hold your dog's collar, walk to a treat bowl, place a treat into the bowl, then release to reward

Your arm / hand / foot closest to your dog should be coming forward to the obstacle as you use your release word.

**And Then** Work your dog in different starting positions:

On Your Left  On Your Right  From the Middle

# Cone Games



**Wraps** Wraps helps continue your dog's education in body awareness  
Your dog is also learning how to control their speed

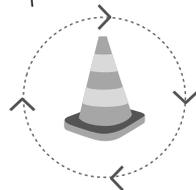
## 360 Arouds

Use your leading foot & arm to direct your dog

**1** Start close to the cone

**2** With your "follow" hand, lead your dog around the cone. Pivot on your left foot as you step with your right foot

**3** Try not to bend over the cone. Use your hand to lead, but try to keep it waist high



**CLICK!**

**Reward!**



Try asking your dog for two tight circles before rewarding

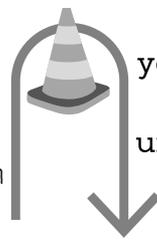
# 180 Arounds

Add distance and return to handler

**1** Send your dog to the cone without you leading them

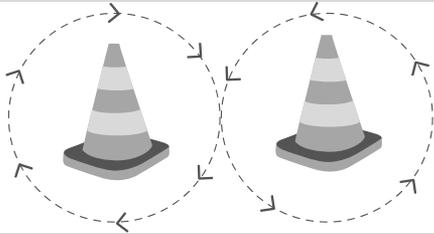
**2** Instead of completing a full circle, have your dog go around the cone and return to you **CLICK!**

**Reward!**



Make sure your dog has a good understanding of the 360 rounds before you begin the 180 rounds

## Cone Games Eights



**1** Use your leading foot and arm to direct your dog

**2** Start close with your "follow" hand and lead your dog around the cones in a figure eight pattern **CLICK!**

**Reward!**

Try asking your dog for two figure eights before you reward

**Harder**

**Even Harder**

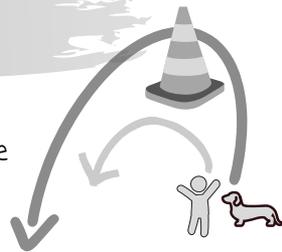
Begin adding distance as your dog successfully completes single and double figure eights

## Cone Games Send

**1** Send your dog to the cone

**2** Begin your turn once you see your dog moving around the cone

**3** Reward at the start line



Start at a walk . Only increase your speed when your dog understands the behavior

**Harder**

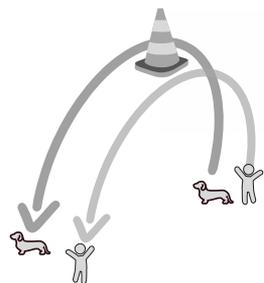
Increase distance slowly  
Send your dog around the cone in both directions

## Cone Games

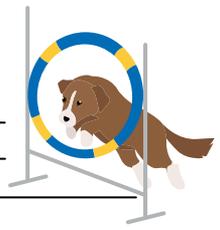
Send with Harder Movements

Start with your dog on the left  
Finish with your dog on the right

Increase the "send" distance as your dog succeeds



# Log Your Progress



A series of horizontal lines for writing, with faint, large, light-gray paw prints scattered in the background.

