



Australian Dog Agility Association



# **JUNIOR HANDLER TRAINING WORKSHOPS**

**Present by: Natalie Kirkwood**

Version 1.2: March 2005

# Acknowledgements

**Natalie Kirkwood:** Giving her time to train to the junior handlers

**The PADS Club:** Providing the venue and the equipment

**Marion Allen:** Helping organise and run the event

**Tal Taylor:** Assisting at the event, and for compiling and generating the hand-out notes.



# Tuesday 29th March

1. Rule Outs
2. Sit-Stays
3. Tugging
4. Building Relationships
5. Other Notes

# Thursday 31st March

## A. Relationship Building

1. Review of tugging
2. Proofing a behaviour

## B. Working with equipment

1. Cloth tunnel
2. Low plank
3. Jumping circle
4. Pairs of poles
5. Weave poles
6. Contacts
7. A-frame problems

# 1. Rule-Outs

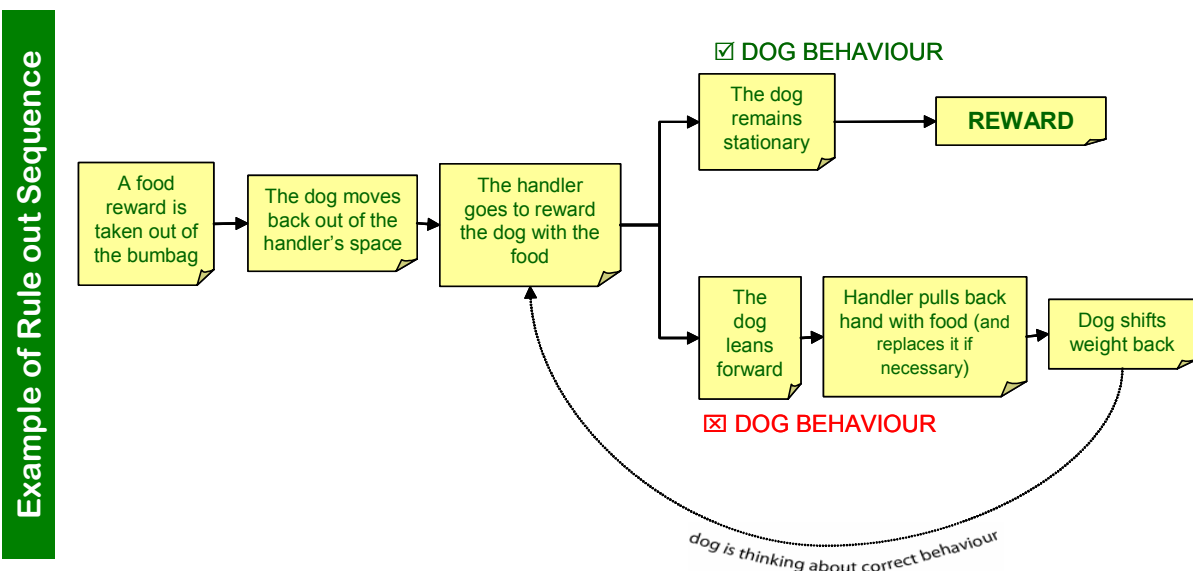
## Aim:

To ensure that the dog continues to perform a behaviour regardless of whether there is a reward present, or the prospect of receiving the reward .

## Notes:

- When training **rule outs**, the dog **should not** stop doing the behaviour and watch the you just because you have brought the reward into view or have your hand in your bumbag.
- Once the reward is presented to the dog (*eg you have placed a food reward in front on your dogs nose*) you may like to use a special word to let the dog know that it is okay to take the reward *eg 'get it'*. Only the dog's head should move.
  - It is **important**, that the dog **should not leave a stationary position** until given its **release word**, (*eg 'okay, go, break'*) which may or may not happen at that time
 

*For example:* in the case of a sit, for a food reward, chances are that the dog would not be released at the same time.
- **Rule outs** help prevent bad dog behaviour such barking or mugging the trainer when they see a treat that they like.
  - When this type of behaviour is a problem you can do the following:
    - Reward the dog when it is quiet
    - Only reward the dog when it moves back out of the your space, if the dog tries to mug you.
  - During this process, if at any time when you go to reward the dog, it comes forward or starts barking, the reward **must** be removed until an acceptable behaviour is being displayed.



# 2. Sit-Stay

## Aim:

To teach the dog to remain in position until given a *release word*

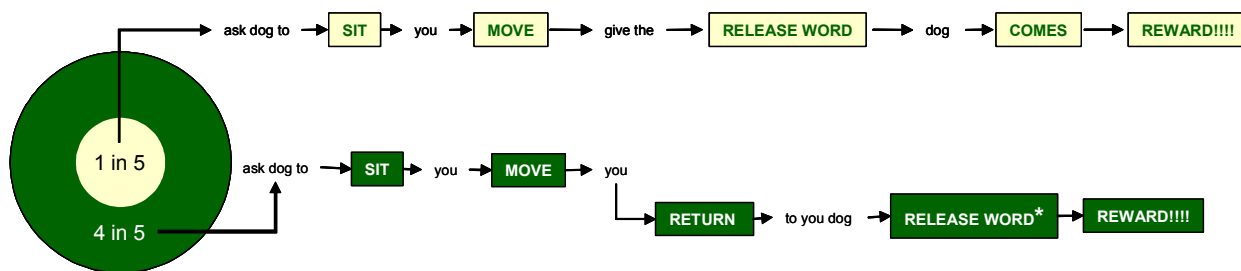
## Purpose:

*In agility:* used at start lines, and contact points

*In everyday:* before being fed, when a door is opened etc

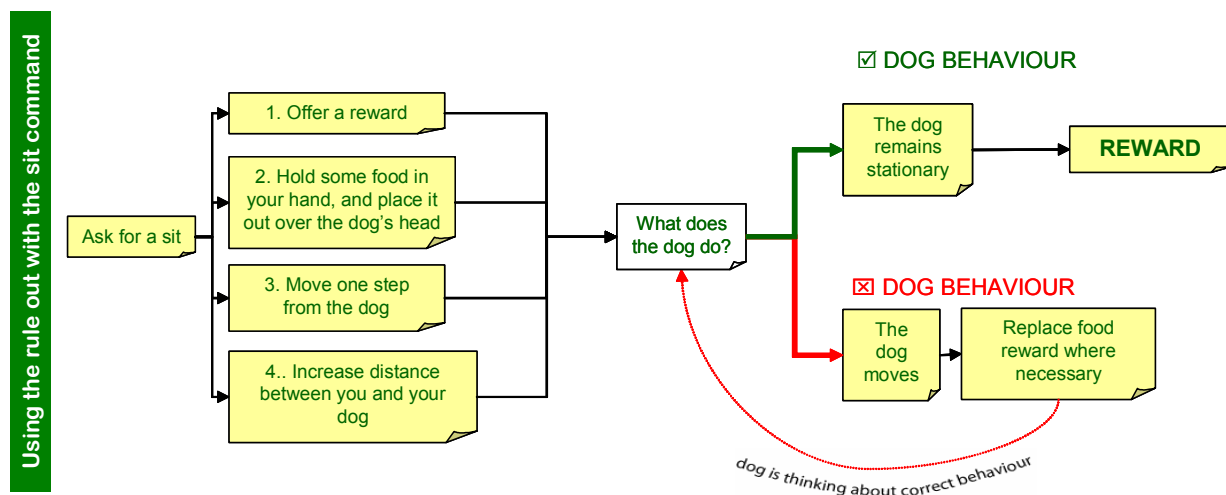
## Notes:

Although this is called a *sit-stay*, the word stay is not actually used. The implication is that the sit (or drop or whatever other stationary command that is given) will not be broken until released, and therefore the dog has *stayed*. The technique used is called a *rule out*.



\*Dog isn't always being rewarded for running towards you

## Putting it together:



# 3. Tugging

## Aim:

To provide a reward for the dog, that involves interacting with its owner.

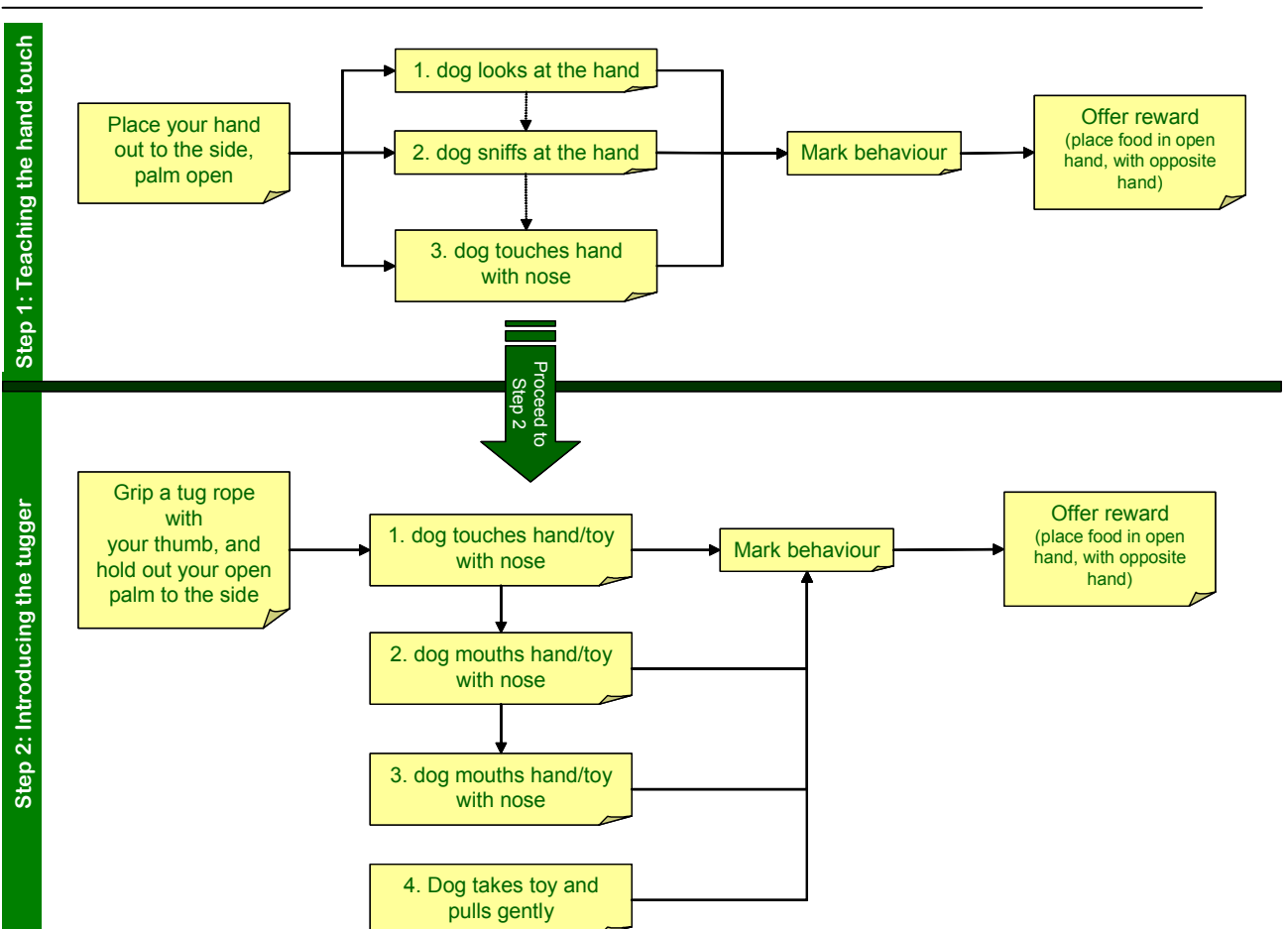
## Purpose:

*In agility:* used any time the dog is to be rewarded

*In everyday:* whenever you want to have a game with your dog.

## Notes:

- Hold toy stationary in the hand, and let the dog do all the pulling (initially)
- When the dog starts to mouth the toy, **do not** pull the toy from its mouth. You may destroy its confidence to tug again
- You can start tugging back (**STEP 3**), *when the dog is pulling you*
  - Keep toy low—for small dogs you may need to crouch down
  - Interact with your dog by touching its side, roughing it up, making deep *growly* noises (especially if your dog already offers these noises).
- Keep sessions short, and **have fun**



IF the dog does not respond at any stage, return to **Step 1**

# 4. Building Relationships

## Aim:

To increase the positive interactions between **you** and **your dog**, which will inturn, motivate your dog to be with **you**.

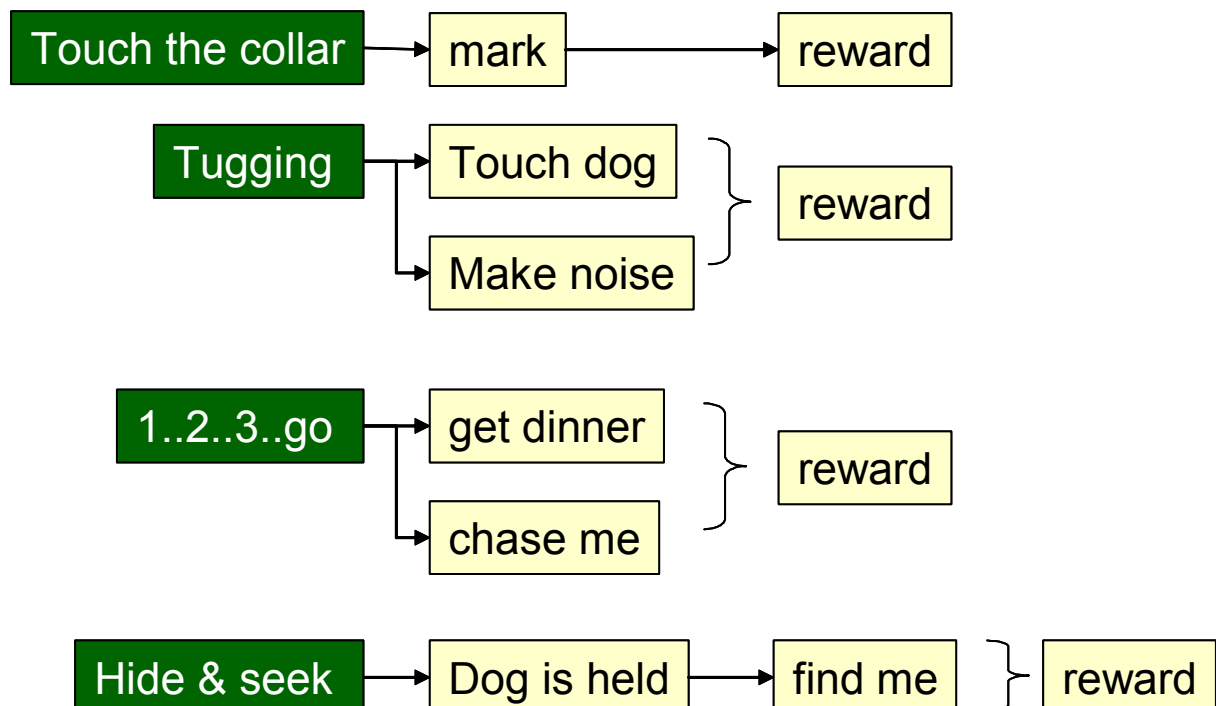
## Purpose:

*In agility:* to motivate your dog with an activity it is good at

*In everyday:* to keep your dog focused on you.

## Notes:

- Games that build relationships are ones that have a **high rate of reinforcement**. Ie the dog gets lots of treats/ plays a game it really likes  
*Natalie says, "would you find it more rewarding to be in the lounge if you were asked to clean your room/ you were given biscuits?"*
- Types of games include:



# 5. Other Notes

## BUILD FOR SUCCESS

70%-ESTABLISHED BEHAVIOURS\*

30%- NEW SKILLS

\*dog is good at & reinforces dog/handler relationships

### A. Training sessions

- Start with something the dog **really** likes, so that you can give it lots of food treats eg hand touches
- Introduce a new or tricky component eg going over a jump
- Finish with a high reward game eg tugging

### B. Distracted Dog

When a dog is off sniffing/ chatting to mates etc

- Don't go up to the dog
- Ask someone else to remove dog from distraction **after you have**
- Run away
- When the dog starts to look for you, make a noise as though you are **really having fun** (without your dog. But don't call its name)
- Reward the dog when it returns to you—a high reward game would be most appropriate (you see, when you are around me, we have **fun!!**)

### C. Dog is demotivated in the competition ring

Sometimes a dog suddenly switches off when we are running a course. When this happens you should:

- STOP
- Move away from the obstacle that has demotivated the dog
- Play a quick rewarding game eg hand touch
- Get the dog to complete an obstacle it is comfortable with eg hurdle
- Play game again
- Attempt another obstacle eg hurdle
- Run off the course in an excited manner with your dog

These points are suggestions only, and you may find that you have to leave the ring after the first game. The most important thing is that **you** leave, you don't allow the dog to dictate when **it wants to leave**.

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# A1. Review of tugging

1. Ask the dog to do two (2) behaviours that it likes doing, then **TUG-TUG-TUG** (tugging is the reward).

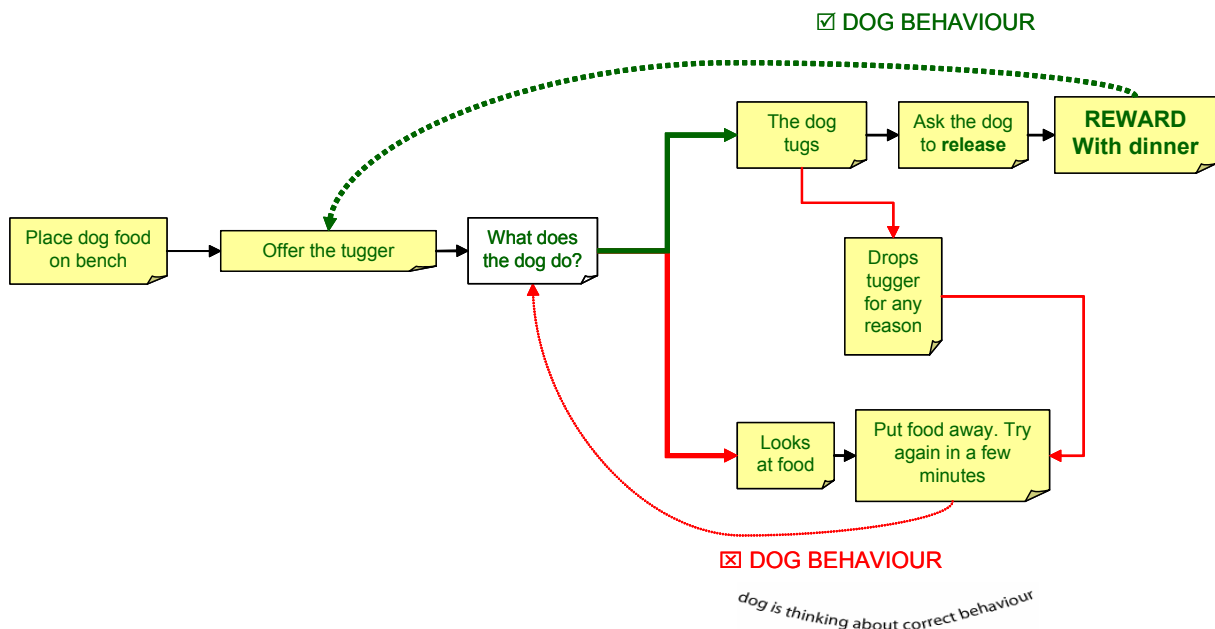
*Or*

2. **TUG-TUG-TUG** then ask for a behaviour, then **TUG-TUG-TUG** (tugging is the reward). Don't forget to vary the behaviour you ask for.

- Don't be discouraged if some days you seem to be going backwards.
- Consistency and persistence will win in the end.
- Give yourself little goals  
 "can I do it for one week?" YES!  
 "can I do it for two weeks?" YES! And so on...

To maximize your success try, you must do this exercise when your dog is really excited. Try:

- a. doing this exercise just before the dog's dinner, and give the kibble/pellets as the reward
- b. Straight when you come home from school (in this case the tugger can be the reward)



# A2. Proofing a behaviour

## Aim:

Does my dog **actually** understand what I am saying?

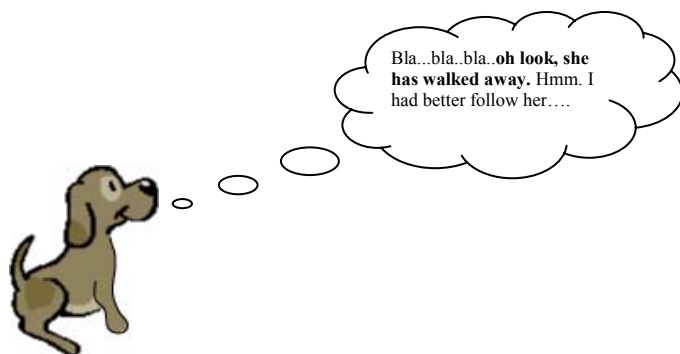
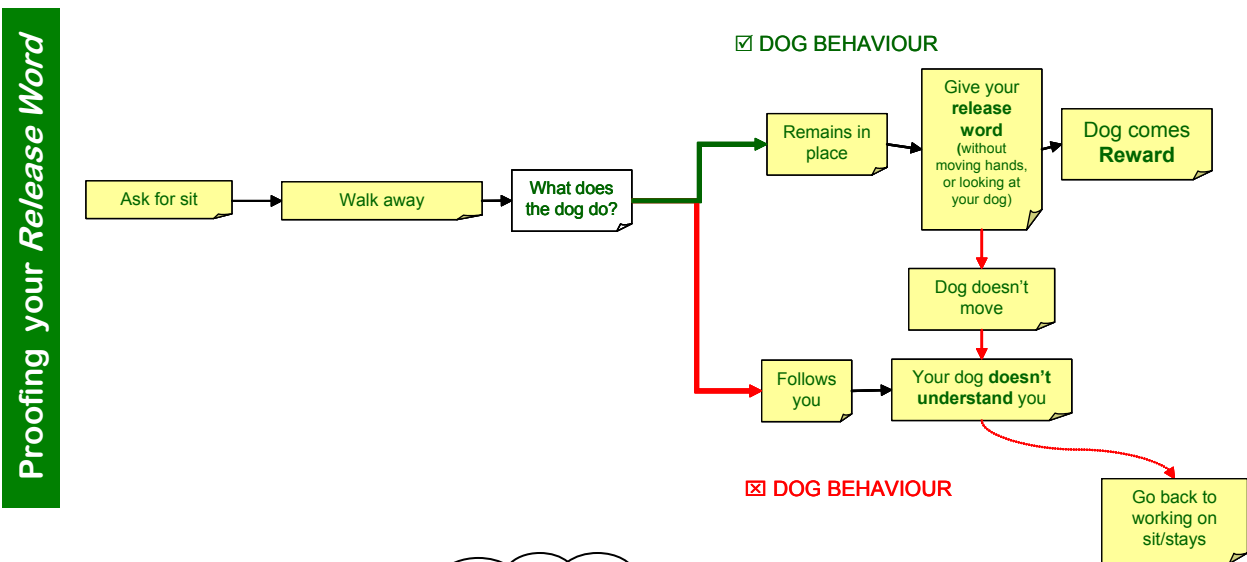
## Purpose:

*In agility/In everyday:* we could be relying on giving a cue, and not understand why the dog doesn't respond the way we thought it should *eg why doesn't my dog stay at the start line?*

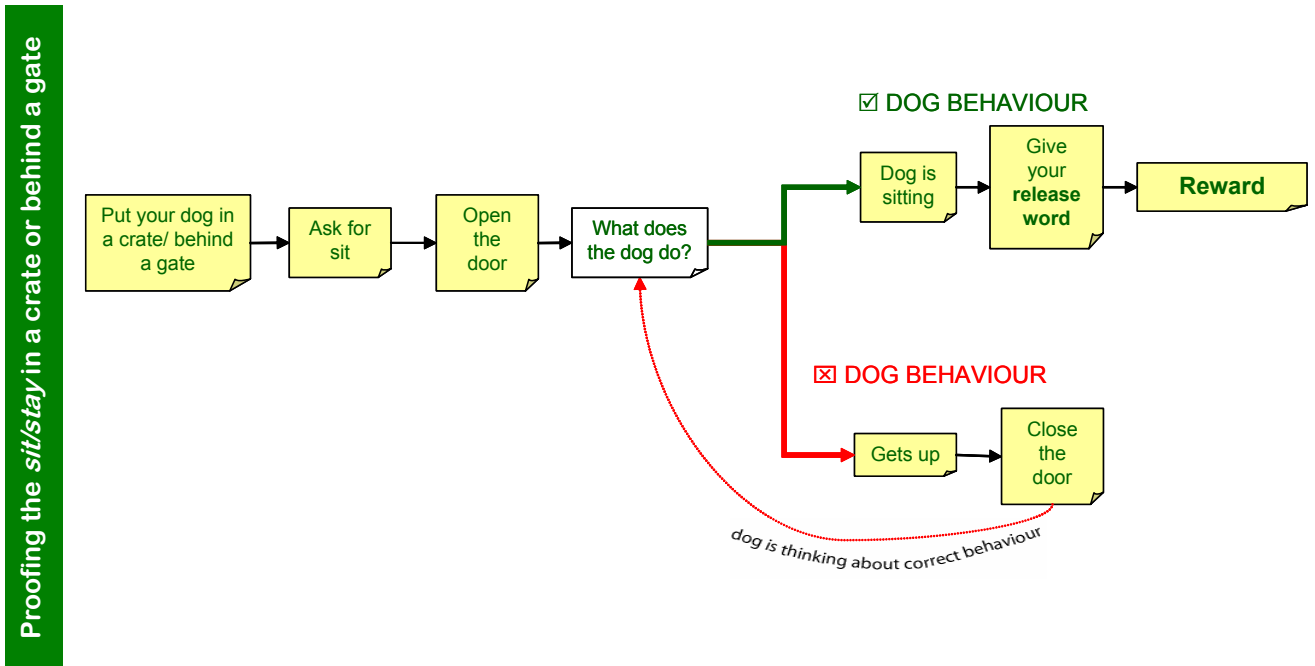


## Notes:

- Proofing: to check to see if a dog actually understands a behaviour
- To do this, you should ask for the behaviour in different locations, and under different situations
  - You should be able to give your dog a command on the agility field, and regardless of **where you are** or **what you are doing** the dog should obey.
  - *Release word:* what does your dog **think** your **release word** is?



- *Sit/Stay*: you can't work on your release word until you and your dog understand this command! Working behind a gate or with a crate ensure that the dog can't run off!



### Other Proofing commands:

- *Drop on table*: walk around dog, wave at dog, walk away pull faces (*A solid table drop allow you to do lead outs*)
- *Weave*: from any position, even if you fall over!

**Just remember:** when you are giving any command where you want your dog to stay, don't :

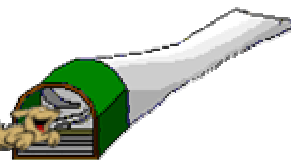
- do it with a **panic stricken face**,
- walk away **backwards** away from your dog,
- **tiptoe** away from your dog.

These are all signal that you **expect failure!**

Walk away **confidently**. If your dog does break you either **moved away too far** or **stayed away too long** (both of these can stress a dog if you advance your training session too quickly. So go back to the dog's comfort zone.)

Often dog training is about **two steps forward, one step back**.

# B1. Cloth Tunnel



## Aim:

To build confidence, which in turn builds speed.

## Purpose:

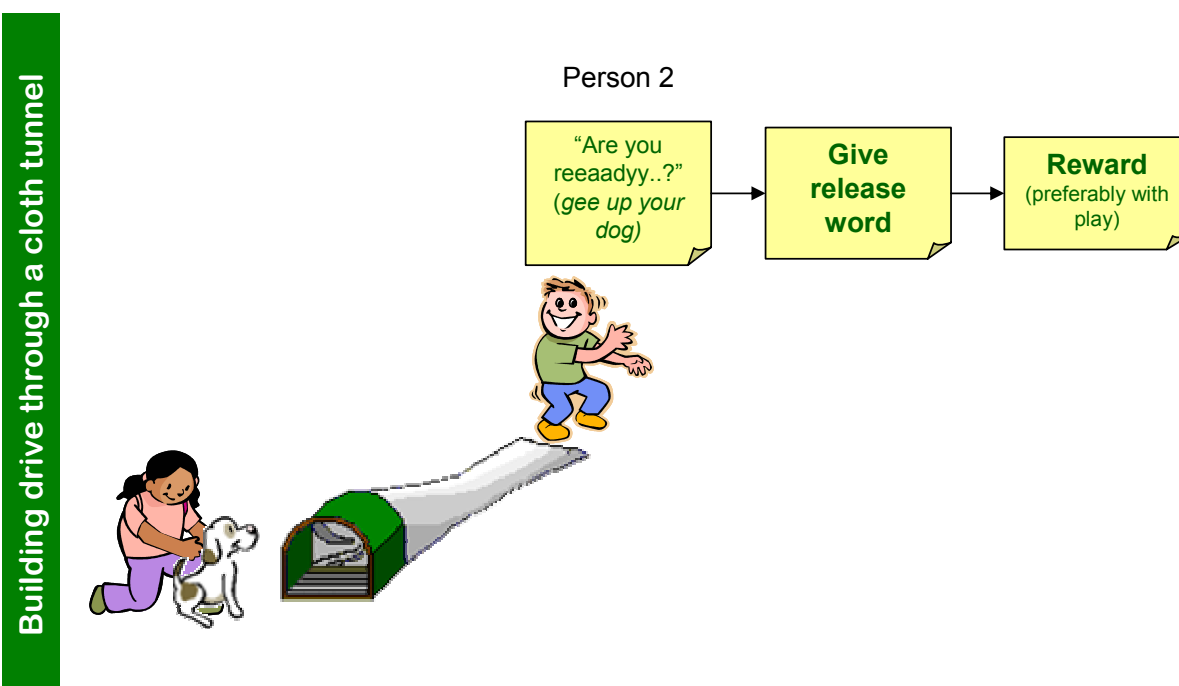
To build drive through a cloth

## Notes:

Dogs react differently to the cloth tunnel. Some meander slowly through it, while others stop and peer in, and then look at you as if to say “*you want me to go in there?! Mad, crazy fool!*” And then there is the dog that thinks, “*Whoo hoo, a cloth tunnel! How fast can I run through?*” **This is the thinking you want!**

Working on drive through the tunnel. A nervous/ cautious dog will be very anxious to return to its owner when abandoned. So to make use of this, and to turn it into **drive**, do restrained recalls through the tunnel (remember you may need to hold up the cloth end until the dog feel comfortable).

This activity works best when there are two of you:



# B2. Short Plank

## Aim:

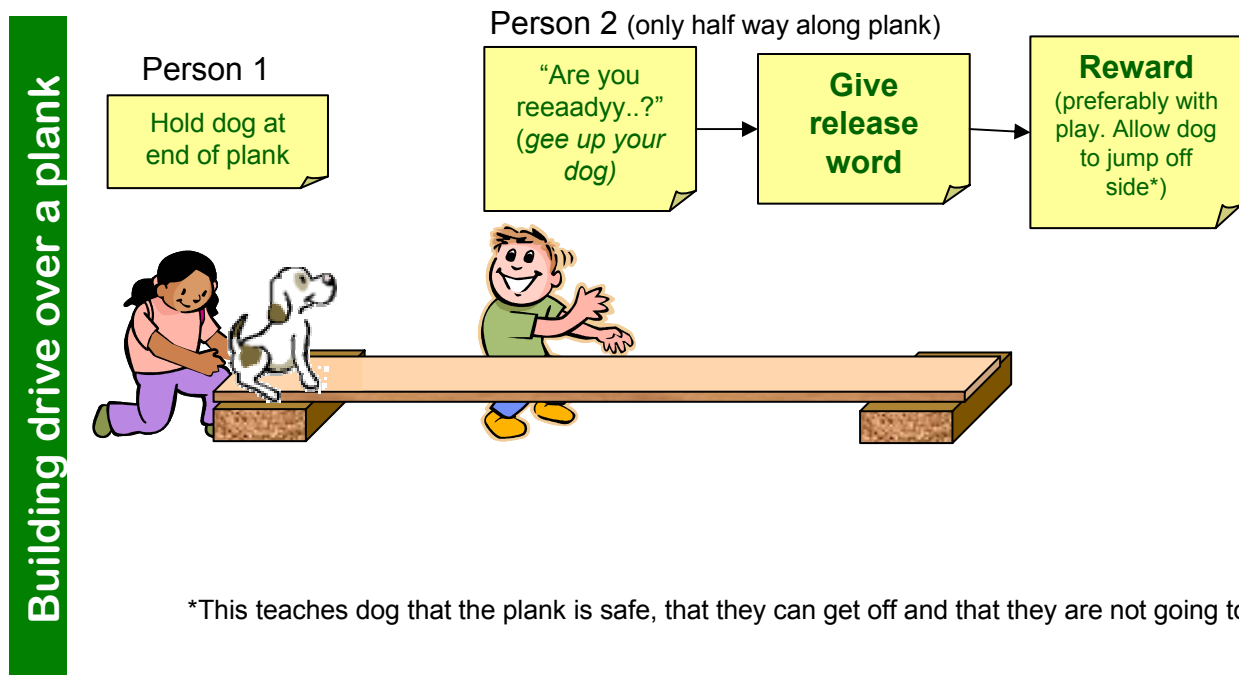
Short simple task → builds confidence → builds speed

## Purpose:

To build drive across any plank surface (precursor to dog walk)

## Notes:

Your dog needs to learn that it is safe to run across a plank, at any height. So, to build confidence, we start with a low plank. Keep the distance really short—a dog that is cautious over 1m is **not** going to miraculously think it is okay to speed over 5m! **Only** when the dog's confidence increases, (ie it zooms towards you), increase the length of the plank.



# B3. Jumping Circle

## Aim:

To teach the dog to approach hurdles from different angles

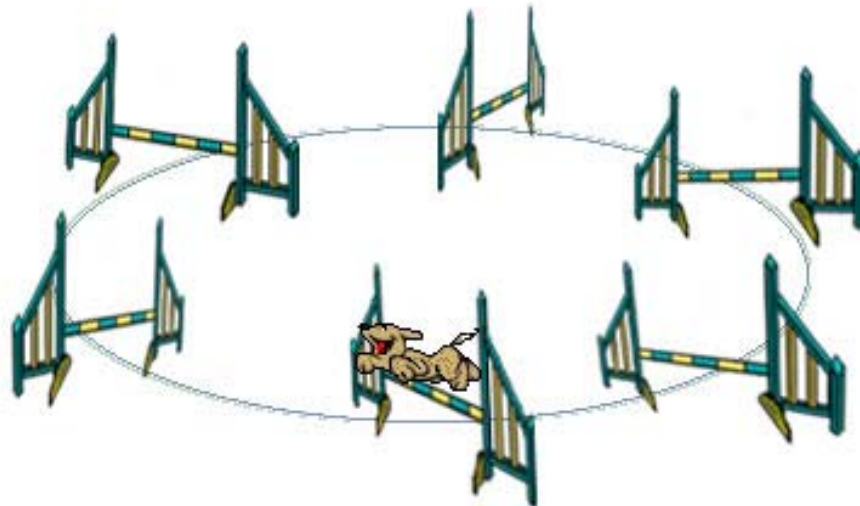
## Purpose:

In an agility course the dog will not always be approaching the hurdles at 90 degrees. This exercise will build the dog's confidence to approach at any angle

## Notes:

Dogs generally love to run and jump, so this exercise makes a perfect game. However, if the dog is not confident, start by doing a few hurdles at a time.

Building confidence with hurdles



NAT'S  
TIPS

IF THE DOG IS SCARED, OR DOESN'T KNOW YOU, GIVE FOOD REWARDS

# B4. Pairs of Poles

## Aim:

To build speed and confidence in running through a pair of poles.

## Notes:

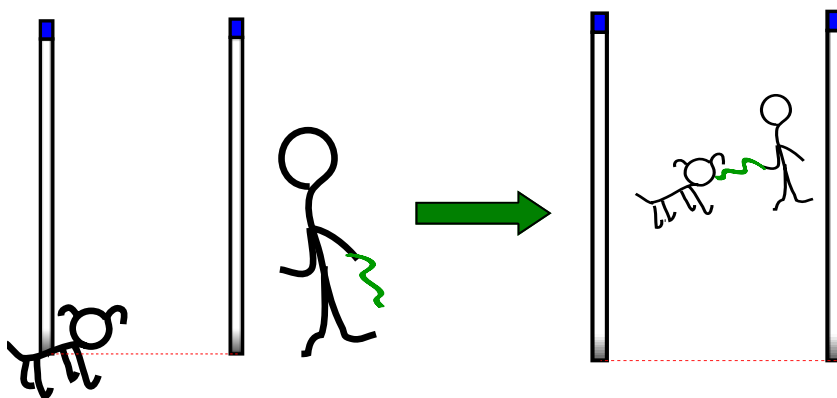
This is the first step in teaching your dog to go through weave poles (see B5).

You can **step** towards the poles, but it is important to remember **not to lure** your dog.

Once your dog steps through the poles, reward with **food** or a **tug toy** (see diagram below). It is important to have the reward in your opposite hand, so that the dog is not being lured.

Repeat (from either side) until the dog learns the behaviour.

This is an ideal time to turn this into a game. Race your dog to the other side, and reward (preferably with a toy).



# B5. Weave Poles

## Aim:

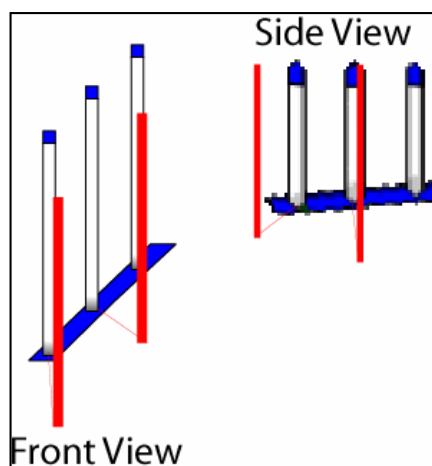
To build speed and correct entry for weave poles

## Notes:

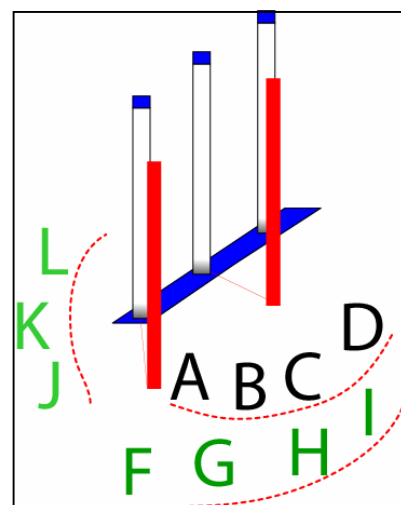
Many dogs learn the weave poles, but seem to **forget** their entries. Of course they haven't forgotten, they never understood in the first place.

This method uses three weave poles and a **pair of poles** (see B4). Once your dog is confident with the behaviour of running through the **pairs of poles**, you can use them to create a **window** or **doorway** to the correct entry for your weave pole entry (figure 1). This is like putting training wheels onto a bicycle until you learn to balance properly.

- Start in the easiest position (figure 2:A), and ask your dog to weave. Reward.
- Once your dog is doing this behaviour slowly vary your position (**B\_D**), when asking for a weave. Remember, if the dog is confused, go back to a position where he was comfortable.
- Sequence **F-I** and **J-K** (figure 2) are designed to build in distance. You want your dog to be able to weave regardless of where you are on the field.



**Figure 1:** Weave poles, using a window to indicate correct entry position



**Figure 2:** Vary the position that your give

# B6. Contacts

## Aim:

To teach the dog to stay in position until released.

## Notes:

With the contacts, most people reward their dogs with food. This exercise teaches the dog to tug (which is rewarding) whilst maintaining his back feet on the contact zone.

Tugging on a contact is **hard** for your dog. Your dog is used to being able to move about when tugging.

### 1. The flat plank.

When your dog is confidently offering “two on, two off” at the end of a flat plank, introduce a tugger as the reward.

If your dog moves from position, stop tugging (**game over!!**). Put the tugger away and start again. (*your dog doesn't understand the new criteria*).

When your dog will happily tug, and keep his feet in place, you can move on. (*your dog now understands the game*).

### 2. The A-frame

Get your dog to jump onto the bottom of the A-frame. Keep practising until he offers the “two on, two off” behaviour. Once this is proofed, introduce the tugger as the reward.

Again, If your dog moves from position, stop tugging (**game over!!**). Put the tugger away and start again. (*your dog doesn't understand the new criteria*).

When your dog will happily tug, and keep his feet in place, you can practise this at the end of any contact. (*your dog now understands the game*).

**Make sure** you are standing sideways to the A-frame, when tugging, not facing your dog.

# B7. Problems with A-frames



## Does your dog think that the contact zone means “jump off here” ?!?

This is a common problem and is often the result of a dog attempting an A-frame height before it is ready. In other words, your dog doesn't really understand what the criteria is.

## Back to Basics

### 1. 2 on, 2 off (2O, 2O).

Reinforce “2 on, 2 off” and your release at the end of a flat plank. When the dog is doing this predictably, move to the end of the dog walk, A-frame, see saw etc. **Do not move on** until your dog will offer the behaviour first time and remains in place until you give your release word.

So far your dog now understands that when placed at the end of an obstacle, it needs to put 2 feet on the ground and wait to be released.

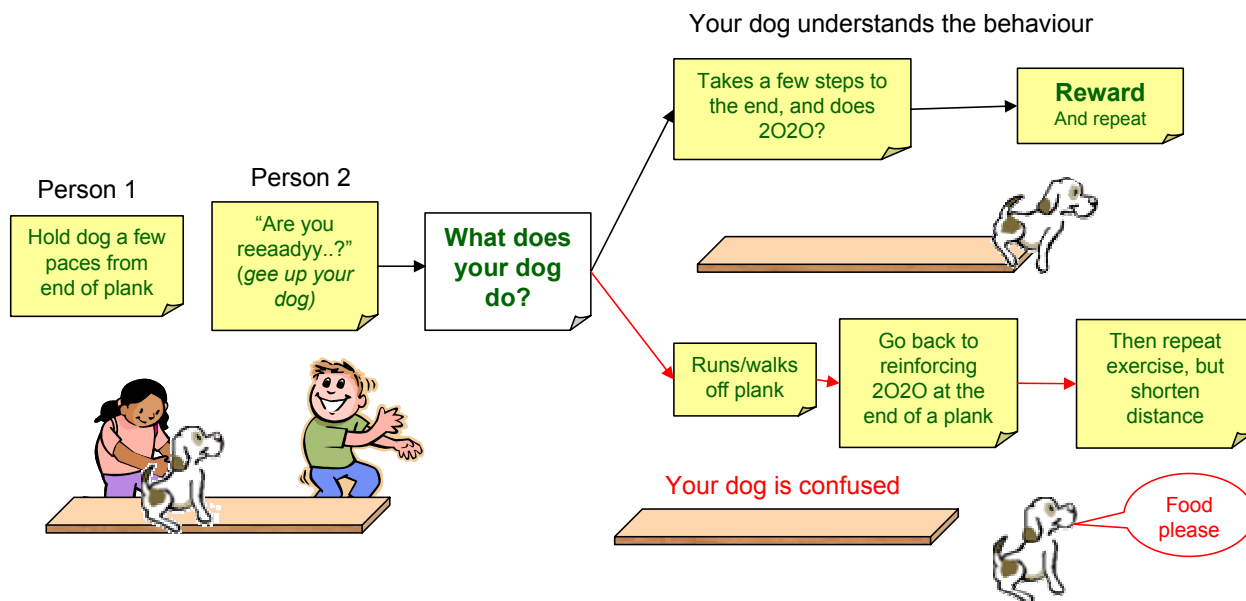
**This does not mean** that he understands that when he runs over an obstacle that he must do the same thing! Remember, just because it is obvious to you, doesn't mean it is to your dog!

### 2. Adding movement to 2 on, 2 off

Start on a flat surface. When teaching something new, you want equipment that presents the least amount of stress to your dog.

When you were little, you had to learn to walk **before** you could run. This also applies to your dog. Place your dog about ½ m from the end of the plank (shorter distance for smaller dogs). Ideally get someone to hold the dog for you. Gee up your dog, and give the release word.

## WHAT DOES YOUR DOG DO?



Continue to increase the distance until your dog will run confidently across the plank and offer the 2O2O behaviour.

### DO NOT MOVE ON

Continue to proof this behaviour. Will your dog offer the behaviour if you are away from the plank? Remember ultimately you want to be able to send the dog onto any piece of contact equipment from a distance and be confident that they will offer the 2O2O behaviour until released.

Your dog now understands that after **running** across a plank, he must offer 2O2O before he can runoff.

It is now time to look at the A-frame. It is **very** important that the A-frame is very low to the ground (*remember: when teaching something new, you want equipment that presents the least amount of stress to your dog.*)

### 3. Low A-frame

At this height your dog needs barely any more effort to run over the A-frame, that when running over a flat plank. Practise at this height until your dog is offering the behaviour regardless of where you are.

### 4. Increasing A-frame Height.

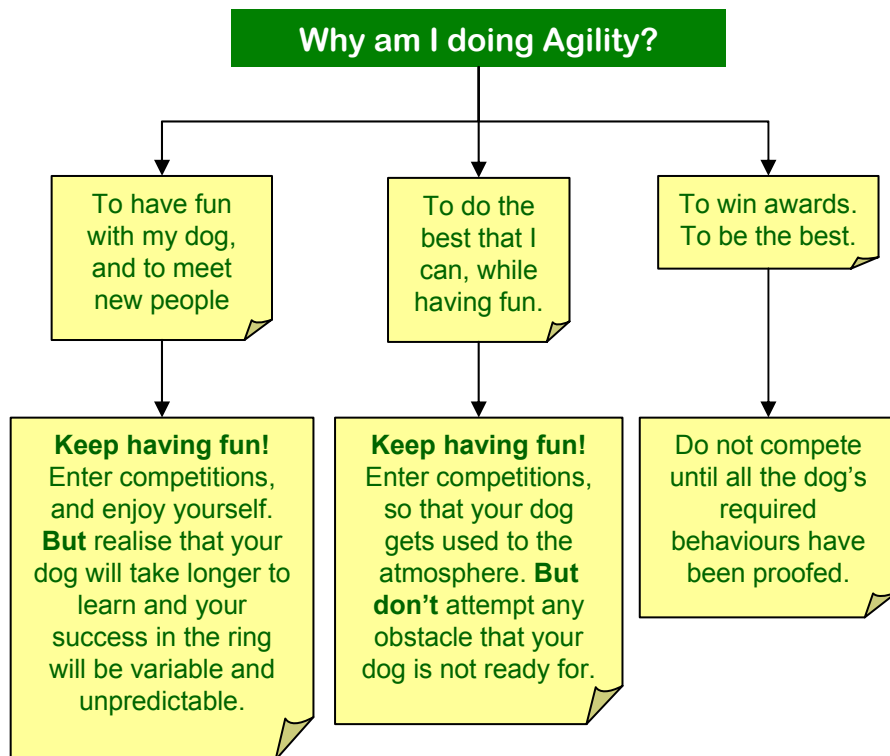
Once you have proofed this behaviour, you can introduce your dog to a slightly higher A-frame.

If at any stage the dog loses confidence/becomes confused (by leaping off and/or not offering 2O2O), go back to a previous step.

## 5. But....

“Okay,” you say, “this is great, but I have just started competing and my dog won’t do the contacts. Can I still compete and retrain my dog?”

You are asking the wrong question. What you should be asking is, “Why do I do Agility” or “What do I want to get out of Agility?”

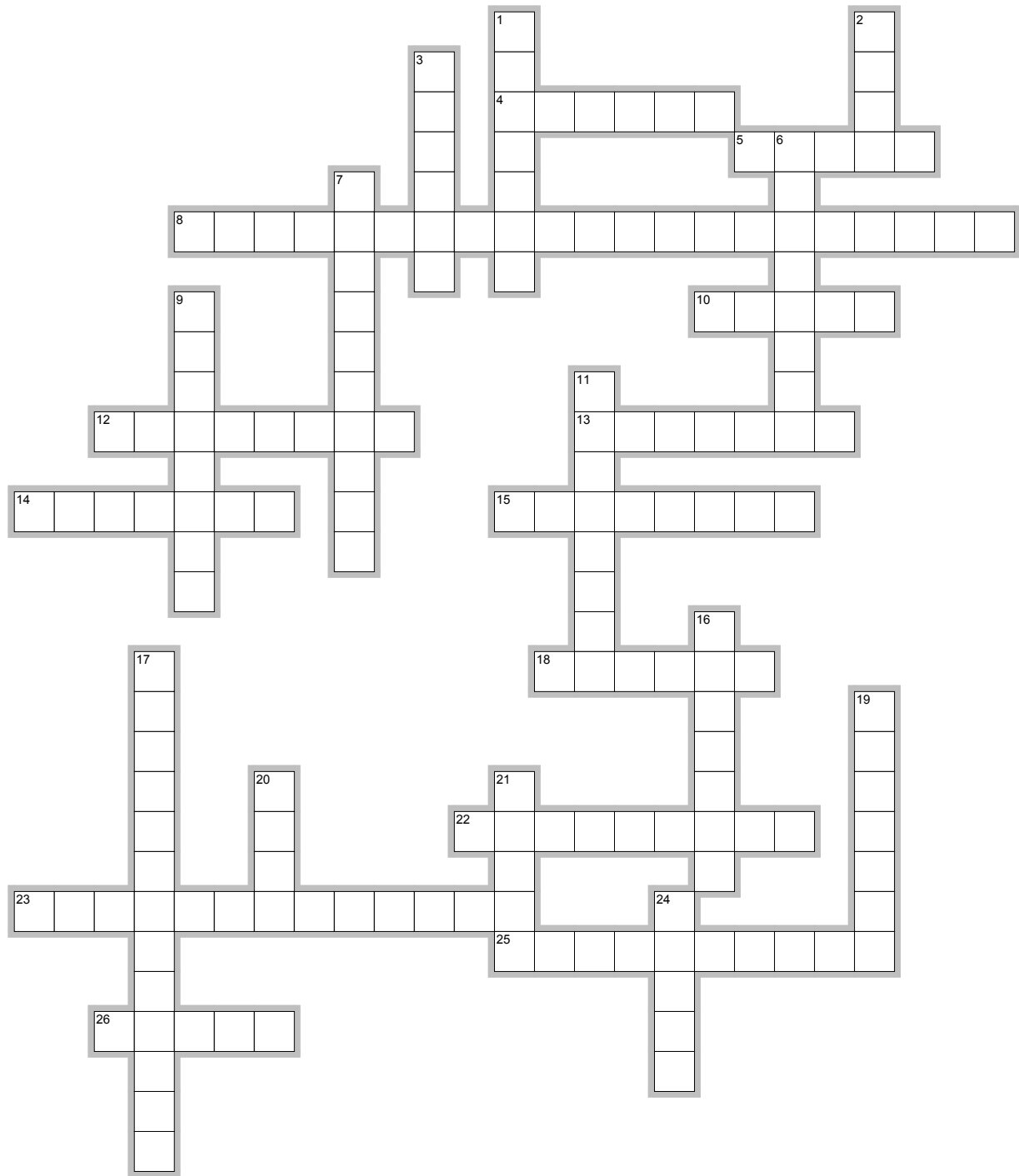


# Agility FIND-A-WORD

Complete the puzzle and find the hidden message...

S	M	L	E	R	E	L	A	T	C	O	L	L	A	R	C	I	O	N	S
P	O	E	S	S	H	I	C	O	N	F	I	D	E	N	T	L	P	R	B
E	U	N	W	W	G	P	U	D	I	L	P	F	S	D	E	B	I	E	I
E	T	N	O	O	N	R	L	R	G	D	R	U	O	W	N	L	K	C	I
D	H	U	C	N	T	J	O	A	H	O	O	N	I	G	J	A	L	A	K
C	S	T	X	K	Y	U	O	W	Y	G	O	U	R	N	O	C	A	L	E
L	E	H	E	C	R	M	D	K	L	O	F	G	E	I	Y	K	W	L	S
I	M	T	W	F	A	P	I	C	S	I	I	I	E	H	M	A	G	T	A
C	A	O	A	D	O	B	M	A	R	K	N	T	H	T	E	N	O	S	E
K	G	L	S	C	R	U	A	B	S	O	G	G	C	O	N	D	E	L	E
E	E	C	E	W	R	I	R	N	W	E	A	V	E	N	T	W	N	R	E
R	T	R	E	E	W	A	V	F	A	S	T	F	O	O	D	H	A	R	R
D	A	Y	S	R	B	Y	T	E	R	R	B	E	H	A	V	I	O	U	R
Q	G	T	H	R	E	E	G	E	E	U	P	P	R	A	C	T	I	S	E
R	C	H	I	C	K	E	N	C	H	U	N	K	E	R	S	E	G	L	Z

- |                 |           |          |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|
| BACKWARD        | DRIVE     | PLAY     |
| BEHAVIOUR       | ENJOYMENT | PRACTISE |
| BLACKANDWHITE   | EXCITED   | PROOFING |
| CABANA          | FASTFOOD  | RECALL   |
| CHEERIOS        | FOUR      | RELEASE  |
| CHICKENCHUNKERS | FUN       | REST     |
| CLICK           | GATEGAMES | RUN      |
| CLICKER         | GEEUP     | SEESAW   |
| CLOHTUNNEL      | GROWLING  | SPEED    |
| COLLAR          | JUMP      | THREE    |
| CONFIDENT       | KNOWS     | WEAVE    |
| CRATE           | MARK      |          |
| DOG             | MOUTH     |          |
| DOGWALK         | NOTHING   |          |



Created with EclipseCrossword — [www.eclipsecrossword.com](http://www.eclipsecrossword.com)

**Word bank**

BACKWARD BLACKANDWHITE CLICKER COLLAR CONFIDENT CRATE DRIVE EXCITED  
 FOUR GROWLING HIGHREWARD KNOWS MOUTH NOTHING PRACTISE PROOFING  
 RECALL REINFORCEMENT RELATIONSHIPBUILDING RELEASE REST RULEOUTS  
 STATIONARY SUCCESS THREE TUGTOY

## Across

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4. What sort of game can be played to stop a dog moving away from you when you try to put its leash on.
5. sit-stays are easily taught in one
8. when you are training, and giving fast rewards, you are working on (8,13)
10. 70% of the time, you should do exercises that the dog already
12. at your dog, can help get it up
13. a word used to let the dog know that a behaviour is finished
14. When we don't reward, the dog learns
15. Don't give up if some days you seem to be going
18. You should only use this command every 1 in 5
22. Before the dog shows speed, it needs to be
23. A dog only learns by
25. Always finish with a game that is (4,6)
26. How many tricks should you ask your dog to do before you take it off lead?

## Down

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1. Always build for
2. When you or your dog loses concentration, you should
3. The best motivational toy (3,3)
6. a training method used to ensure that the dog doesn't need to look at you all the time (4,4)
7. When first teaching tug, it is important to keep the toy
9. checking to see if the dog understands the behaviour
11. For the dog to improve, you need to
16. Used to mark a behaviour
17. In rule outs, the criteria is (5,3,5)
19. train your dog when it is
20. When doing sit-stays, you should return to your dog \_\_\_\_\_ out of five times
21. A tug toy should never be ripped from a dog's
24. restrained recalls help build this in a dog

# Glossary

Rule outs	A name given for black and white commands, where the dog is rewarded for the correct behaviour, but has the reward removed if for the incorrect behaviour <i>For example: the dog is given a food treat for sitting, but the treat is removed if the dog breaks the sit when attempting to get the food.</i>
Mark behaviour	A clicker is used to indicate that the dog has performed the correct behaviour
Release word	Any word that the dog associates with 'end of activity'. Avoid using the dog's name. <i>For example: free, break, go, okay</i>