

Obstacle Course 3
Training Instructions

These instructions are very basic guidelines to help you achieve the objectives on your merit badge check-off sheet. They are not intended to supersede any of the information your instructor gives you at the Orientation & Safety Lecture or Field Session.

Teeter
Pause Table
Tire (Hoop) Jump

Teeter-Totter Introduction:

You may want to teach your dog that objects moving under his feet are safe and even fun before you introduce the teeter board. You can do this by using a Rocker board, Wobble board or Buja board. <http://www.affordableagility.com/moreinfo/rockerboardinfo.htm> has one design. Doing a web search for "wobble board" or "Buja board" will show you plans for ones you can build yourself. These help teach the dog to interact with and be comfortable on a moving surface. It increases their confidence too! Never force the dog to interact with something he is afraid of! The best route is to use shaping as outlined below (see "Method 2").

Method 1: (best for teeters that don't adjust to a low height) At no time during the introduction of the higher teeter obstacle are you to work without a spotter. Wrap your hand around the dog's buckle collar and leave it there, while the other hand coaxes him up the board with the treats held low. The hard part will not be getting him to walk up, but it will be getting him to **stop** at the desired point. Do not remove your hand from the dog's collar, but don't force him to go forward if he is afraid, just wait him out and try to coax him forward with a treat or lift him off and start again.

As your dog's front feet pass the half-way point of the teeter, you will have to restrain him before he gets to the tipping point. Do not grab the board and give him a false sense of security about the board! Let him take one more step, and then let him stretch his neck and body forward to reach for the treat. If he is on the precise point, that change in balance will cause the board to start to teeter. **Hold the dog, not the board!** Control the dog's body so that the board ever so slowly drifts down to the ground and lightly touches.

Be ready for the dog to try to back-up. Some dogs will feel the board move and immediately want to back away. This will cause the board to slam back down the way it was before it started to teeter. This is extremely scary for the dog.

After the board teeters all the way down and is stationary, let your dog proceed down the plank. Bait the contact zone as he gets to it. Walk him off the board.

Before your dog progresses to being able to negotiate this obstacle without you hanging on to his collar, he must understand the word, "wait." Wait means to stop and hold still. Practice stopping the dog in other situations and use the word, "wait." When you want the dog to take a step again, you tell him to walk. To the dog, this see-saw looks just like the entrance ramp to the dog walk, which he would normally just run right up. Make sure your dog will respond readily to "wait" before you trust him to do it on the see-saw. Try it with your hand out of the collar, but with a leash on the first few times, until he has shown you that he will safely make it through the teeter portion of the obstacle.

Method 2: is to start with the teeter as low as it will go (most get quite low) and let the dog figure out how to get treats from you by interacting with it. Start with the dog near the teeter and let him see that it moves. Give the dog a treat or two for being willing to get near the moving teeter. Then move near the low end of the ramp and let the dog experiment on his own. Click and reward him for looking at the teeter, then click/reward him for stepping toward it, then for stepping on it and gradually, step by step, shape him over the teeter. Because it's low, it's ok if the dog jumps off of it at any point. Don't worry, once the dog understands the obstacle and is confident with it, he won't jump off of it. The dog will learn where he needs to wait to get the board to tip at a speed he is comfortable with riding. Be sure to spend a lot of time clicking and rewarding the dog at the tip point and for figuring out how to "operate" the board safely. Eventually he will get the confidence

to go over it the whole way, riding it down to get the click and reward. If he jumps off early, there's no treat, just let him get back on and try again. Once the dog is confident at the low height, gradually raise it so he has to wait longer and longer for the board to reach the ground.

When your dog will safely and confidently enter and exit the teeter, you can add the cue word. Then you can start working from further back, and from both sides, until the dog will approach the obstacle from any direction and take it as directed.

Pause Table Introduction:

Start at the lowest table height (it won't be much of a table). Place your target on the table surface toward the back (to give the dog room to get up onto the table). Show the dog his treat and send him for it. As the dog shows willingness to hop onto the table, begin using the cue word, "table" just before he jumps up. Once the dog is comfortable getting on the table, start to cue him to sit or lie down. Give the dog a second treat for sitting or lying down on cue. As he gets the idea, you can phase out the first treat, and give him only the second treat, after he sits or lies down. He needs to sit or lie down immediately, so he needs to develop a fast response to the cue, and should be able to sit from a down and down from a sit.

If your dog does not do a fast drop on cue, you will need to teach him one. If your dog understands a down cue but doesn't lie down quickly, you might want to go through these training steps and use a new cue (like "drop" or "deck" as in hit the deck) to indicate that you want a really fast down response. Using food (or a small toy you can hide in your hand) that the dog really really wants will help encourage the dog to respond quickly. With the reward in your hand, hold it in front of the dog's nose. Quickly drop your hand to the ground and hold it between his front feet. At first, you can reward any down response from the dog, but gradually raise your criteria and only reward the down response that is faster than previous responses. Release the dog with a "you can move now" type cue after he lies down each time. Once you know the dog will lie down fast when following the food hand, you can add the new "down" cue right before you move your hand with the lure. After several repetitions, try using an empty hand to "lure" the dog down and then deliver a treat while the dog is in position before you release him. Try waiting after you give the cue to see if the dog will respond without the hand lure. Practice this away from the pause table before you ask him to do it on the table. Note: The dog must already be fluent in the fast down, before you combine it with the table. If the dog learns to lie down slowly when practicing on the table, it will be harder to speed him up later.

Your dog will eventually have to maintain his position (in either a sit or a down) for a count of five, so he will also have to learn to stay. If the dog gets up before the count is over, reposition him. Do not shout, say, "NO" or anything else. Just have the dog lie down (or sit) again. Add distractions to your stay exercise, by leaving the dog and running away, or jumping up and down, or going behind him. Have the dog get back in position without a reward if the dog falls for any of your proofing tricks. Don't reward him for getting up from the stay until you give him a release cue. Reinforce him for staying in place as you make it harder for him to resist moving.

When your dog will easily jump onto the pause table and lie down (or sit) fast, you can add the Table cue. Then you can start working from further back, and from both sides, until the dog will approach the obstacle from any direction and take it as directed.

Tire (Hoop) Jump Introduction:

This is similar to the other jumps your dog has learned. However with the tire jump, it is possible for the dog to break the plane of the jump without actually going through the hoop. The training is just the same as for the other jumps. Start the dog at a lower height, so the probability of him going under or beside the tire is less likely. Then gradually raise the tire.

When the dog is going through the tire with no problem, name the jump. You can name it, "jump" just like the other ones, or you can call it "tire" to distinguish it from the other jumps.

When your dog will easily jump through the tire, and you have added the cue word, you can start working from further back, and from both sides, until the dog will approach the obstacle from any direction and take it as directed.

Combining Obstacles:

See the instructions for Obstacle 1 for combining obstacles.