

Dog Scouts of America

Scent Hurdle Racing 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 supercede any of the information your instructor gives you at the Orientation & Safety or Field Session.

Scent Hurdle Racing is an event which combines speed and accuracy. You can have all of the speed in the world, and if you don't have the accuracy, you will still lose. Most Scent Hurdle teams have been around since before Flyball Racing came on the scene. A lot of them train with the older methods, which produces dogs who do not seem to be in a race at all, but look more like they're performing a retrieve over multiple high jumps. I believe you can achieve the speed and the accuracy if you train correctly. My main advice is to get the scent work down solid, because the rest is easy.

SCENTWORK

Teach the dog to use his nose to find a desired object by using Lonnie Olson's method or Dawn Jecs' method. The Olson method is fast, but can lead to some trial and error scenting, especially when the dog is in a hurry to snatch up the correct article and go. The Jecs method progresses more slowly, and does not involve letting the dog actually pick up the scented article for a very long time. With something like the scent hurdles, it might be better to have a slower, more sure worker, than to have a dog who is in a hurry to correctly identify the article.

BACKWARD CHAINING

Backward behavior chaining is a term used to describe a type of training in which the last behavior in a chain is taught first. Scent Hurdle Racing, like Flyball, is not one behavior. It is a series of many behaviors completed together, in a chain. The easiest way for the dog to learn a chained behavior such as scent hurdles, flyball, agility or obedience is to start at the end and move toward the beginning. This accomplishes two very important things:

1. The task becomes ever more easy for the dog, instead of ever more difficult, as you add each new part of the behavior chain. Why? Because you're not adding anything new on the end. The dog always finishes up with something he already knows how to do well, and feels successful after completing each chained sequence.
2. Each behavior becomes a "cue" for the behavior which follows it. For example, jumping the fourth jump is the cue to search the article board; picking up the correct dumbbell is the cue to turn and run, etc.

TARGET (Focus)

The reward for the dog is **always** at the end of the chain. The end of the chain is when the dog has successfully run the course and brought back the correct dumbbell. He is doing this for a **reason**, for his **reward**. The reward must be his **goal**, his **focus**, his **target**. The focus can be the ball you will give him at the end. Or, it could be a toy a treat, a game of tug of war, or a wrestling match. Whatever it is, **IT MUST BE THERE EACH AND EVERY TIME** for the dog. If you train without a focus point, your dog will run without focus. He may wander into the other lane, or he may chase another dog down. The dog **MUST BE ABSOLUTELY RIVETED ON HIS TARGET**.

FINISH LINE + TARGET

Have a helper hold your dog and call him to you over and past the finish line. Show him his target. When he gets to you, give him the target as his reward.

JUMP #1 + FINISH + TARGET

Have the helper hold your dog behind the first jump. Walk away and go **over** the jump yourself. Show him the target. Call him. Get excited. The helper lets go and aims the dog toward the first jump. If the dog fails to jump, he does **not** get the target. Have him try again. Remember **not** to walk around the jump. The dog is not stupid. If he sees you go around the thing, he will, too. When he is doing well repeatedly go on.

JUMP #2 + JUMP #1 + FINISH + TARGET

Same as above. Remember to walk through (over) the jumps. Don't be surprised if the dog only jumps ONE of the two jumps. After all, that is what he knows so far! He may try to skip the 1 st or the 2nd, but be patient, and don't reward him until he does both jumps. When he is doing well repeatedly go on.

JUMP #3 + JUMP #2 + JUMP #1 + FINISH + TARGET

Same idea as last time. If you are progressing slowly enough, and your dog is focused, he should have no trouble adding the 3rd jump. When he is doing well repeatedly go on.

JUMP #4 + JUMP #3 + JUMP #2 + JUMP #1 + FINISH + TARGET

Just like before. When he is doing well repeatedly go on. Make sure you are rewarding him well past the finish line. You want him to continue running fast well beyond the finish.

As soon as the dog will take and hold a dumbbell, have him repeat the above sequences carrying the dumbbell over the jumps.

NOTE: BY NOW, THE DOG MUST HAVE LEARNED SCENT DISCRIMINATION, or you will have to proceed with the dog just picking up a scented, placed dumbbell on the board.

Stand within 14 feet of the box. Have the helper place your dumbbell on the board. Let go of the dog and turn and run beside the jumps toward the finish line. The dog should run to the board, find the dumbbell, turn and run back over the jumps. He will likely beat you to the finish area, so be ready to throw his target well past the finish.

JUMP #4 + Board +4+3+2+1+F+T

Start between jumps 4 and 3. Let dog run to the scent board over jump #4 and run back over all jumps to the finish. The following three steps are very important. Do not skip ahead because you know by now that your dog will do this. Back up **one jump at a time**, and do each one until your dog is doing it well.

JUMP #3 +4+B+4+3+2+1+F+T

Back up to between jumps 3 and 2. Same as before.

JUMP #2+3+4+B+4+3+2+1+F+T

Back up to between jumps 2 and 1 and do it again.

JUMP #1+2+3+4+B+4+3+2+1+F+T

Back up to the starting line to release the dog over all four jumps.