Agility Training for 4-H Dog Club

**A-Frame** (Beginning= 4’ apex, Intermediate= 5” apex, and Advanced= 5’6” apex)

Step 1. Set A-Frame low or flat. Setting the A-frame flat will let the dog become comfortable on it. When the dog is relaxed at this height, raise the center one to two feet. Make sure that the dog hits all contact points. (The contact points are for the dog’s safety.)

Step 2. Raise the apex of the A-frame the second week to three or four feet. Teach the touch method to show the dog points you want it to get on and off. Keep the A-frame low until the dog has confidence at this point. Start each class with the A-frame at three feet.

Step 3. Raise the A-frame as the dog builds confidence. Add a hoop at the bottom to make the dog get on and off at the contact points. Don’t get in a hurry to raise the A-frame. Lower if needed to maintain confidence.

Step 4. Raise the A-frame to full height. Use hoop at bottom to keep dog from jumping on and off A-frame. Some will go over equipment fast. Some dogs are in a hurry and others want to get off fast. The dog that doesn’t have confidence on a piece of equipment will jump off or try to cross over fast. You need to build confidence by giving the dog support and working the equipment at a lower height.

**Open Tunnel** (Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced)

Step 1. The tunnel is started close together or closed up in a straight line. Have someone hold the dog and have the handler call the dog through the tunnel.

Step 2. As the dog gets more confidence open the tunnel to a longer length.

Step 3. When the dog goes through the tunnel, open the tunnel all the way and put a slight bend in the tunnel.

Step 4. Increase the bend as the dog gains more confidence.

**Dog Walk** (Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced)

The dog walk is a bridge with a ramp up one side and down the other side. It is 11 ½” or 12” wide with contact points on the up and down ramps.

Step 1. Set the ramps low or flat. Make sure that you line up the dogs to the ramp so the dog hits the contact points. Use treats and spotters to keep the dog from stepping off the side.

Step 2. Raise the crossover board up about 1 to 2 feet. Take dog over slow, don’t let them run. If you let them run, you will lose control of the dog. A dog will run if they lack confidence on the equipment or are in a hurry to get across.

Step 3. Raise the crossover to the height when all the dogs are willing to crossover with confidence at a good, but not hurried speed.

Note: Hoops and a chute at the bottom of ramps are useful to teach the dog to come on and off ramps straight and not jump off at the end of the ramp.
**Note:** The hurdles and pause table will be set at a height based on the dog’s height at the shoulder. Division I is for dogs 14” and under and will jump 8” hurdles. Division 2 is for dogs over 14” and through 20” and will jump 14” hurdles. Division 3 is for dogs over 20” and will jump 20” hurdles. The pause table will be at the hurdle height for each division.

**Pause Table** (Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced)

Step 1. The pause table is a table that a dog gets on and either sits or lays down. The dog must stay in the sit or down for a count of 5. If the judge does not tell you which to do, the down or sit, it would be a good idea to do a sit. The reason being if a dog would foul the table before you, your dog would not have as much of a tendency to move.

**Jumps (Hurdles)** (beginning, intermediate and advanced)

Jumping is one of the most important parts of your agility training. Good jumping leads to a good run, but bad jumping could result in a non qualifying (NQ) run.

Step 1. Start all jumps as low as you can get them. Set three jumps in a row about eight feet apart. (Keep them in a straight line to start.)

Step 2. Raise the jumps slowly. Don’t work the dog at full jumping heights.

Step 3. Set the jumps so they are not in a straight line.

Step 4. Work the jumps in a circle. Work them both directions. Working the dog to the left or counter clockwise will put the dog on the right side or the handler on the outside of the jumps. (The long way around.) Working the dog to the right or clockwise will let you work the dog on the left side.

Step 5. Work with pass. Set three or four jumps in a row and pass every other one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning: Any six from the list:</th>
<th>Bar Hurdle</th>
<th>Bush Hurdle</th>
<th>High (vertical)</th>
<th>Log Hurdle</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picket Fence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rail Fence</td>
<td>Spread Hurdle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate: Any six from the list:</td>
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<td>High (vertical)</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Rail Fence</td>
<td>Spread Hurdle</td>
<td>Long Hurdle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Window Hurdle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced: Any eight from the list:</td>
<td>Bar Hurdle</td>
<td>Bush Hurdle</td>
<td>High (vertical)</td>
<td>Log Hurdle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Picket Fence</td>
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**Chute (Closed)**Tunnel  (Intermediate and Advanced)

Step 1. Start with cloth pulled up to the back of the barrel. Have someone hold the dog. Have the handler go around to the back end and call the dog through the chute.

Step 2. Start pulling the cloth out, but don’t close it all the way.

Step 3. Pull the cloth out all the way. Do this after the dog goes through without hesitating. Raise the cloth if needed.
**Teeter Totter** (Intermediate and Advanced)

The teeter totter is 8 or 12 feet long and is weighted so that one end is down and will come back down after the dog crosses over. The teeter totter also has contact points.

Step 1. The teeter plank is set flat with a slight raise in the middle to give it up and down movement. Make sure the dog hits the contact points and doesn’t jump on and off the board.

Step 2. Raise the center up about 6”. Make sure that you spot the dog and don’t let him jump off the side.

Step 3. Raise the center up all the way if the dog has confidence. (Don’t rush the dog to work at this height.) Don’t let anyone work the teeter totter without a spotter.

Each piece of equipment needs to be worked at a pace to build the dog’s confidence. You may have to work the equipment at lower heights longer for some dogs than others.

**Hoop Jump** (Intermediate and Advanced)

No directions given in current handout.

**Weave Poles** (Advanced)

The weave poles are one of the most difficult obstacles for a dog to learn. There are many ways to each weave poles. Many dogs miss poles if they are not started correctly. In most cases this is caused by not lining the dog up at the start of the poles. The dog must enter on the right of the first pole. The handler can go down either side, but you must be 2 feet away from the poles.

Step 1. One of the best ways is to set the poles three feet apart and offset every other one about 4 inches off center. Work them two times a day for 15 minutes for one week at the setting.

Step 2. After one week, set the poles in about 5 inches still offsetting every other pole 4 inches. Work the poles for 15 minutes twice a day for a week. If a dog has a problem with this setting, move them back to the 3 foot setting. Do not get in a hurry to move the poles in.

Step 3. Move the poles in 6 more inches. Keep the poles offset. Work this setting for 15 minutes twice a day.

Step 4. Move the poles to 24 inches apart. Leave them offset 4 inches. Work this setting for about a week.

Step 5. Set the poles in a straight line.

You can also use the method of setting the poles at an angle.

Step 1. Set the poles almost flat to the ground. The poles are set 24 inches apart. Work this setting for a week.

Step 2. Lift the poles up about 6 or 8 inches at the end.

Step 3. Lift the poles up about 12 to 16 inches at the ends.

Step 4. Lift the poles up about ¾ of the way up. Work them at this setting longer. This will build speed and give the dog confidence.

Step 5. Set the poles all the way up. If you have trouble with this step, backup one step. (Do not get in a hurry to advance from one step to the next step.)

Try to look at the poles the way a dog sees them. The idea is to have them look as straight line, not in and out. This is why you offset the poles or tilt them down.
Pause Box (not on 4-H list?)

Step 1. The pause box is a square box on the floor. Like the table, the dog must stay in a sit or down for a count of 5.

Step 2. The box will have the sides marked in different colors. The judge will tell you to enter on one color and out on a different color.

Step 3. Teach your dog to turn and face the direction you want them to leave the box. This will give you a good start for the next piece of equipment.

Hoop Tunnel (not on 4-H list?)

The hoop tunnel does not look like a tunnel to a dog. You must keep them from coming out the side. One way is to put marker tape down the side so it looks like there are sides on it.

Step 1. If the hoops will close up more them in to about 2/3 of the length.

Step 2. Have someone hold the dog. Go to the other end and call the dog through the tunnel. Don’t let the dog go out the side. Make the dog look at you and call it straight through (give the dog a treat and lots of praise).

Step 3. Open the tunnel up all the way. Call the dog through keeping the side taped.

Step 4. Take the tape off, call the dog through.

Step 5. Take the dog up to the tunnel on lead. Start the dog through and run down the side of the tunnel. The first time you try this, make sure that the sides are blocked so the dog can’t come out. Most dogs will try to come over to you.

Step 6. After the dog is going through without coming out the side, take the lead off.

Sway Bridge (not on 4-H list?)

The sway bridge is a suspension bridge. It is made with 2x2 on a cable and suspended between two posts with a ramp going up both ends. The ramps have contact points that the dog must touch going on and off the bridge.

Step 1. Start with the crossover on the ground so the dog can get the feel of the bridge without it moving.

Step 2. Raise the crossover up. Block the center of the bridge to take some of the movement out of the crossover. Take the dog by the collar and make them touch the contact points on the ramps. Dogs have a tendency to jump off the side of the bridge. Walk them across slowly. You must build their confidence.

Step 3. When the dog will go over without jumping off, give them some lead.

Step 4. Take the blocks out from under the bridge. Watch them the first time over so they do not jump off.

Swing Plank (not on 4-H list?)

The swinging plank is a board suspended on four points allowing it to move in all directions.

Step 1. Have spotters on both sides of the plank to hold the board to keep it from moving. Take the dog over the plank. Don’t let them jump off the sides.

Step 2. Let the plank move a small amount. Spot the dog to keep them from jumping off.

Step 3. Let the plank move freely. Make the dog hit the plank with all four feet. Don’t let them jump off or over the plank.
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Step 3. Let the plank move freely. Make the dog hit the plank with all four feet. Don’t let them jump off or over the plank.

Step 4. Keep the dog under control and don’t let them move the plank too much. You must build their confidence so the dog feels comfortable crossing over this piece of equipment.

Crawl Tunnel (not on 4-H list?)

The crawl tunnel is a tunnel that a dog must get down and crawl to get through.

Step 1. Set the tunnel at training heights. (Set higher than required height for competition. This lets the dog crawl through easier.) Block the sides so the dog will not come out either side. Have someone hold the dog at the start of the tunnel and you call the dog through.

Step 2. When the dog goes through with confidence, start the dog by walking up to the entrance of the tunnel and tell them to down and crawl. Keep the sides blocked at this point.

Step 3. When the dog goes through without hesitation, lower the tunnel one step, but leave the sides blocked.

Step 4. After the dog goes through the tunnel at this setting, remove the side blocks.

Step 5. Set the tunnel at working heights. If dog has a problem, back up one or two steps.

Step 4. Keep the dog under control and don’t let them move the plank too much. You must build their confidence so the dog feels comfortable crossing over this piece of equipment.

[Retyped and slightly modified by Barbara Johnson on 4/27/00 from a handout from Joseph Reese (219/326-8426) at Indiana State Fair 4-H Dog Show in 1999.]

Indiana 4-H Dog Agility

The 4-H Dog Agility Program is based on guidelines from the United Kennel Club. Some modifications to the UKC Rules have been made to provide a program suitable for all ages of 4-H handlers. Dogs showing agility are also required to show in obedience.

The program consists of three levels of competition – Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. All agility work will be done on a flat, buckle collar. Beginning level is required to use a 6 foot lead. Beginning level dogs will jump no more than 14”. All other levels will be off-lead. The level of competition will be determined by the county leader based on the dog’s ability and training.