



## Wiggly Field Agility Course: Introducing your Dog to the Agility Obstacles

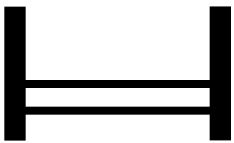
Work with your dog on a flat buckle collar and a 6 ft. leather or nylon lead when you begin training. Dogs should not be pushed or dragged across equipment. Use the leash to keep the dog from taking off and to stabilize the dog. As you progress it might be helpful to switch to a short (~1 ft.) leash that won't trip the dog but still gives you enough control to gently guide the dog. Be patient and find good motivators to lure your dog across the obstacles. Motivators can be tasty treats or a favorite toy.

### Tunnel



For most dogs you will need two people to introduce the tunnel. Have a helper hold your dog at one end of the tunnel so the dog is looking inside. Go to the opposite end of the tunnel and call your dog while showing them a favorite toy or treat. If the dog goes through, reward the dog immediately. If the dog is hesitant, crawl a short distance into the tunnel. Avoid throwing treats into the tunnel since the object is to have the dog run through the tunnel-not to stop inside and search for treats. After calling the dog through the tunnel a few times, try running with the dog to the opening of the tunnel. Run along the outside as the dog goes through. Once again reward immediately as the dog comes out of the tunnel. Practice running on both sides of the tunnel.

### Jumps



Start with a jump set to a very low height – below your dog's elbow height. Put your dog on a stay or have someone hold the dog facing the jump a few feet away. Go to the other side of the jump and call your dog over the jump. After calling the dog over the jump a few times, try running beside the dog. If necessary, get the dog to take the jump by holding a treat or toy out to the side to lure the dog over the jump as you run by. Gradually decrease the use of the lure. Once your dog will happily run with you taking a single jump, try adding a second jump in sequence and then a third. Be sure and practice with the dog running on both your left and right side.

### Weave Poles



The weave poles are upright poles spaced 20" apart through which the dog moves in a zigzag pattern. The dog must enter to the right of the first pole and weave in and out without skipping any of the poles. During trials, the dog is typically required to weave through 12 poles. The weave poles are the most difficult obstacle to train, and there are many approaches to training weaves. A simple way to begin training is to hold the leash or collar in the hand nearest to the dog and move the dog in between the first and second pole. With a treat in the other hand, lure the dog back toward you through the second and third poles. Repeat this pattern through the remainder of the poles. Gradually remove your hand from the collar or leash as the dog starts to understand this task, then begin to fade the lure. When training is complete, the dog should weave rapidly and without the help of the handler.

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Special thanks to Sandy Bird and Lucky Dog Agility, Winterville, GA ([www.luckydogagility.com](http://www.luckydogagility.com))

The term contact obstacle refers collectively to the three obstacles a dog runs across – the dog walk, the A-frame, and the see-saw. All three of these obstacles have a yellow contact zone at the base. Correct performance of these obstacles requires the dog to step in the yellow zone while exiting the obstacle, and in some cases while entering the obstacle. The contact zone requirement was established as a safety measure to discourage dogs from leaping off the top of contact obstacles. Missing the contact zone is a very common fault in agility trial competitions. Visible targets with a food treat placed at the bottom of the contact obstacle can help train the dog to go to the bottom and stop. The lid from a yogurt, cottage cheese, or margarine tub makes an effective target to place the treat on. This training is best done with a friend to make sure the dog does not get the treat on the target without staying on the contact obstacle.

### **A-Frame**



The goal is for the dog to ascend one side of the A-frame touching the yellow contact zone on the way up the obstacle. The dog should then cross the peak and come down the opposite side touching the yellow contact zone as he /she exits the obstacle. Start with the A-frame in a lowered position – preferably no more than 4 ft at the peak. Introducing the A-frame is best done with the help of an assistant. Place a target on the opposite side of the A-frame. With the dog on leash, begin an approach to the A-frame from approximately 10 -15 ft away on a straight path. Hold your arm extending out to the side over the A-frame as you approach the obstacle. Your assistant should be on the opposite side of the A-frame to lure the dog over the obstacle with treats and to serve as a spotter to prevent the dog from jumping or falling off the side. The assistant will place a treat on the target as the dog descends the A-frame. Do not drag or push the dog across the A-frame. If the dog is reluctant, try a tastier treat for a lure or try again when the dog is hungrier.

### **See-Saw**



The see-saw is the obstacle most likely to cause a dog anxiety during its performance. The introduction needs to be very slow and careful. Do not introduce the see-saw until the dog is confident crossing the dog walk. Begun by adjusting the see-saw to its lowest position. Have the assistant hold the end of the teeter in the air and place a treat on that end of the see-saw. With the dog on the leash, approach the see-saw straight-on. The assistant will continue to hold the see-saw in the air as the dog moves to the treat on the end. Continue to give the dog treats as the assistant lowers the teeter to the ground. Repeat, and as the dog appears comfortable with the movement of the teeter, allow the teeter to move more rapidly to the ground. Gradually increase the teeter to full height.

### **Dog Walk**



The goal is for the dog to ascend the dog walk ramp touching the yellow contact zone on the way up, race across the top plank and touch the yellow zone on the descending ramp on the opposite side while exiting the obstacle. Before introducing the dog to the regular dog walk, it is often helpful to first introduce the dog to running across a plank setting on cinder blocks. Introducing the dog walk is best done with an assistant. Place a target on the opposite end of the dog walk from where you are going to start the dog. With the dog on a leash, approach the dog walk on a straight path. Have the leash loose with your hand extended over the dog walk as you move beside the dog. The assistant will walk along beside the dog on the opposite side of the dog walk from you and will lure the dog across the dog walk with treats – occasionally placing a treat on the plank in front of the dog. The assistant will also serve as a spotter to keep the dog from jumping or falling off the opposite side of the dog walk. The assistant will place a treat on the target as the dog descends the dog walk ramp to stop the dog at the bottom of the dog walk. Do not drag or push the dog across the dog walk. If the dog is reluctant, try a tastier treat for a lure or try again when the dog is hungrier.

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