

Every-Buddy's Agility Fun!

Training Guidelines

Be Consistent: This means that you give the same signals, cues and communication from one practice session to the next. This includes your body language as well. Remember that 99% of what goes “wrong” with your dog’s behavior is the result of miscommunication, either in your foundation work or in what you are doing at the moment...or both. Use the same cues in training, practice and trialing.

Think, Plan, Do!

- **Think:** What is your goal? Get very specific. Instead of thinking, “My plan is to improve my weaves.” Think, “I am going to work on weave pole entries and my goal is to increase the difficulty of entry on the right side by 10 degrees.”
- **Plan:** How are you going to achieve the goal? What actions will you take to help your dog achieve this goal? Weave example: Evaluate where your dog’s behavior breaks down and determine what aids you need to set up in order to help your dog succeed at a more difficult level. In this case, you might want to use entry gates to facilitate success.
- **Do:** Do the actions that you think will help your dog to the desired behavior. Work on one thing at a time; You can switch if a problem pops up, but stick with one issue at a time. For instance, if the dog is nervous about the gates, you will need to back up and teach your dog about the gates and then go onto working on the angled entry.

In order to work on more than one goal a session, put a play break between each goal. ***Put in LOTS of play throughout the learning activities.*** It is your job to make yourself the most FUN in the world!

BE CONSISTENT! What is your **specific** criteria for earning a reward? Is it the same every time?

Be Fair:

Are you being clear, with both your body and voice? Does your dog really understand what you want? Don’t try to improve a skill that doesn’t exist yet. For instance, you want your dog to go quickly to the bottom of the A frame and hold the “touch” position, regardless of where you are. You can only improve the “touch” if the dog knows what “touch” is. Keep in mind the difference between teaching a new behavior and improving or proofing one that your dog really understands. Are you teaching a new behavior or proofing/improving one that your dog understands?

Set Up for Success:

Keep each session short. Plan ahead and quit your training session when your dog is still having fun and before your dog is ready to stop. 5 three minute sessions is better than one 15 minute session. Keep in mind whether your dog is old or a puppy or if it is hot out. Generally, puppies and older dogs cannot tolerate as much training as other dogs. Do not work with your dog when it has just eaten. *If your dog succeeds at a behavior, make a big party and then move to the next thing.* Do not repeat it again and again, as the dog can get bored and/or think that it isn't doing the behavior correctly and begin to shut down. Invent new ways to do the behavior or sequence to keep it fun. If you are just plain stuck and need to revamp your plan, before stopping, do go back to doing something with your dog that can give you both a sense of success---just a couple of reps will do! Then give a Big party and stop!

If you are in a bad mood or already frustrated, put your practice on hold. Dogs are keenly perceptive and may think that the bad mood you are in is somehow something they are responsible for. If you mess up the sequence DO NOT show your disappointment, as your dog will think it is his/her fault. Be joyful over each small improvement and your dog will always want to work with you. Make practice and training upbeat and FUN!!

BE CONSISTENT! Make sure treat placement and reinforcements are given at the correct times.

Keep a Journal:

Set goals in your journal. Track the progress you and your dog have made in measurable ways. Note where your problems areas are and then employ the Think, Plan and Do methods to achieve success. When you go to trials, note down what your successes were and what improvements need to be made.

MOST IMPORTANT!!: Keep It FUN!!

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The above article is the combined work of Every-Buddy's Agility Fun! & Vortex Agility!