

Improve Your
Handling Skills
at Home

Backyard Dogs

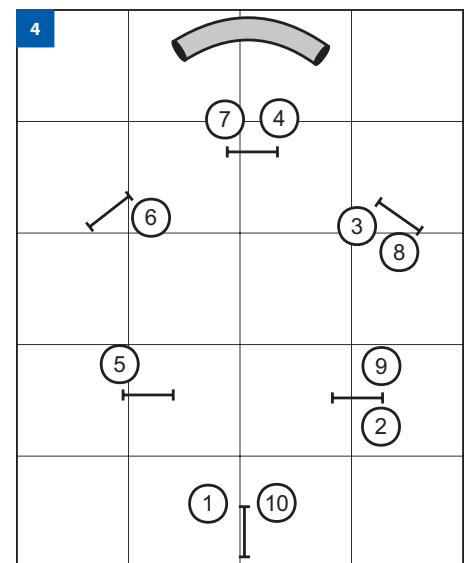
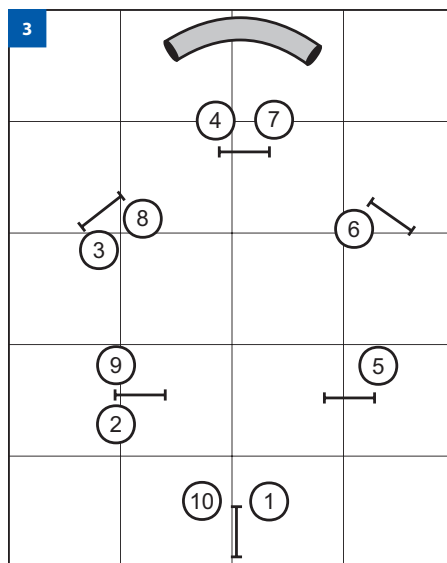
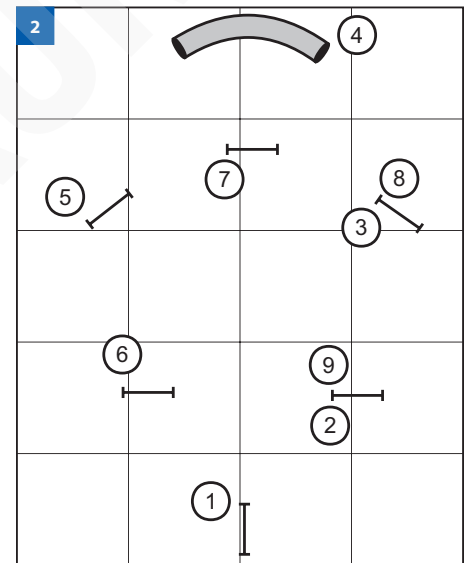
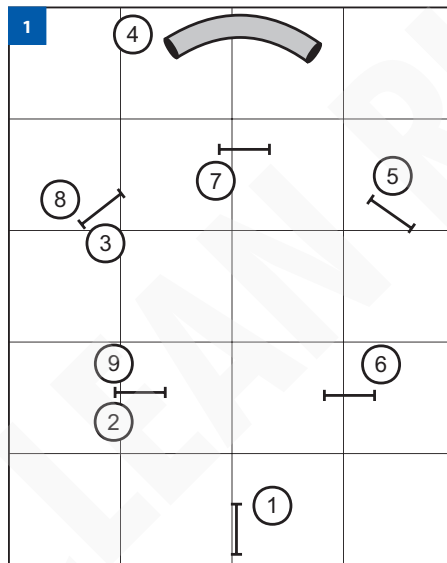


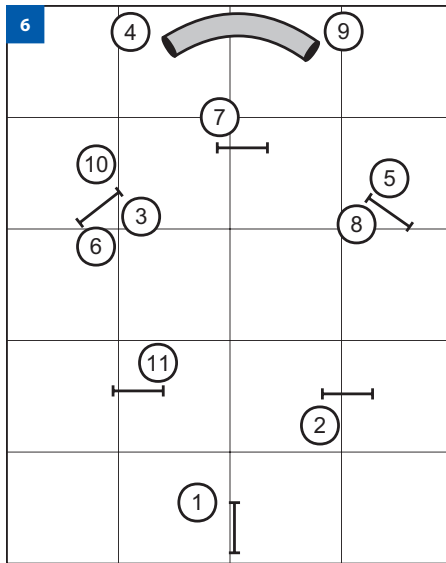
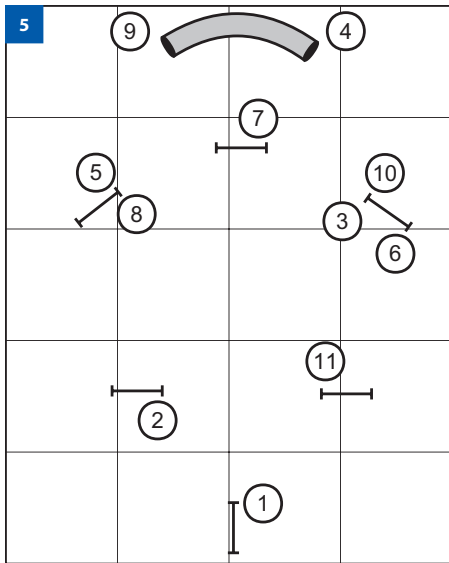
By Karen Holik

This month's exercises include some fun jump work for you and your dog. In **Figure 1** try starting the exercise first with your dog on your left and not taking a lead-out. Does your dog enter the #4 tunnel as fast as he can? Does he check back to make sure that you really meant for him to *Go On*? If he doesn't drive ahead to the tunnel without you, repeat the exercise until he does. Can you make your dog turn tightly from jump #7 to jump #8 without looking at the tunnel? If not, again, repeat the exercise until he does. Your dog should always know if he is driving ahead to an obstacle in enough time for him to jump appropriately and really *drive* ahead without you. He should also know from your body cues whether he is turning and going the other way. You can also try starting with your dog on your right (without a lead-out) and executing a rear cross at jump #3. This maneuver may make it harder for your dog to drive to the tunnel. Also try to do a rear cross at jump #7.

Try all the above techniques for the exercise in **Figure 2**, which is just a mirror image of the exercise in Figure 1.

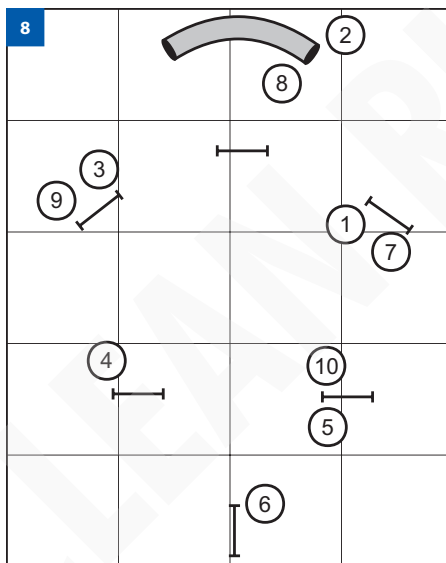
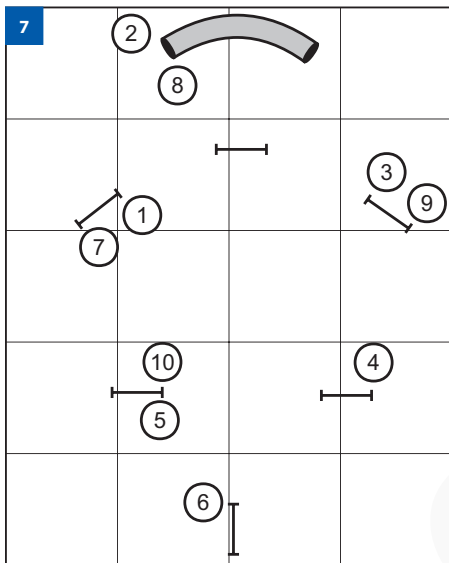
For the exercises in **Figures 3 and 4** try starting both on the left and right of your dog at the start similar to the first two exercises. You will need to do a rear cross at jump #3 one of those times. The sequences are set up so that you can do a serpentine on the left and right of your dog in the respective sequences. Practice the one that is the hardest for you until they both feel the same. You will also get an opportunity to try to send the dog both to the right and to the left of jump #8 on your way to #9.





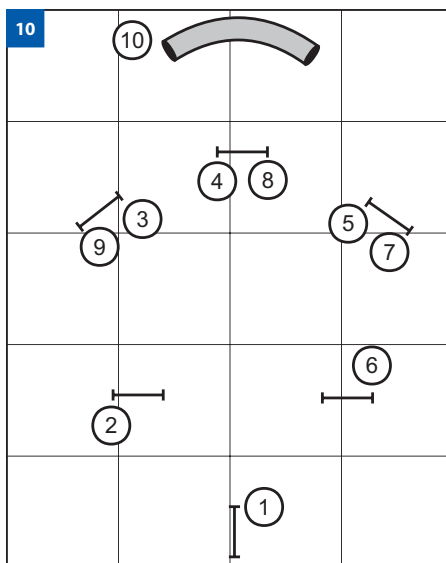
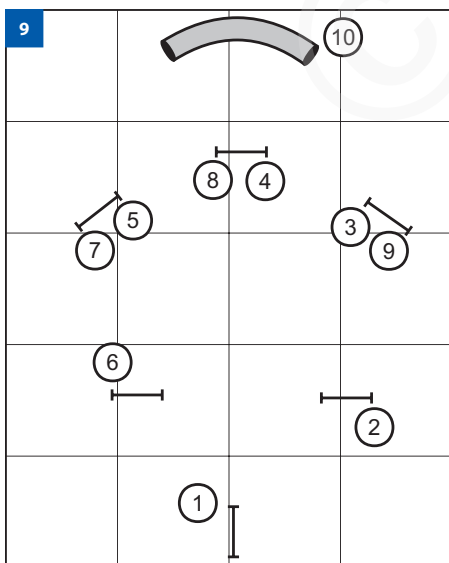
The exercises in **Figures 5 and 6** can be done many ways. Try starting without a lead-out with your dog on your left and also your right. One of those choices will force you to do a rear cross at jump #2. After making sure you can drive your dog to the tunnel, can you also keep him out of the tunnel from jump #6 to jump #7? Don't forget to also try both exercises with a lead-out. Can you lead out past jump #3? You don't necessarily need that much of a lead-out in these two exercises, but it is a very good thing to practice.

The exercises in **Figures 7 and 8** have a lot of speed through the #1 to #4 sequence of jumps and then become more technical between jumps #5 to #7 before opening up again to speed through the rest of the sequence. Can you adjust your dog's speed to make these exercises work?



The exercises in **Figures 9 and 10** are more difficult. You can add even more difficulty by starting the exercises with the dog on your left and on your right instead of taking a lead-out. One of those times, you will need to do a rear cross at #3. Doing the threadle after doing a rear cross at #3 is not easy.

Some of the exercises may be too hard for your novice or beginner dog. If so, be sure to break them down into small sequences and reward often. You might want to save some of these exercises until your dog is more mature and go back to the harder ones in a few months. 🐾



Karen Holik has been involved in agility for over 10 years as a competitor and also a USDAA and AKC judge. She has competed in the finals of the USDAA Grand Prix World Championships seven times with all her dogs: two Shelties, a Border Collie, and an All-American. Her youngest dog, ADCH MACH2 Triune's Feelin Hot Hot Hot (a.k.a. Sizzle) won the Steeplechase event at the USDAA World Championships in 2003 and 2006. Karen and Sizzle were members of the AKC/USA World Team in 2003, 2005, and 2006. Karen offers private lessons and seminars and can be reached at oncourseagility@comcast.net.