

SKILL OF THE MONTH

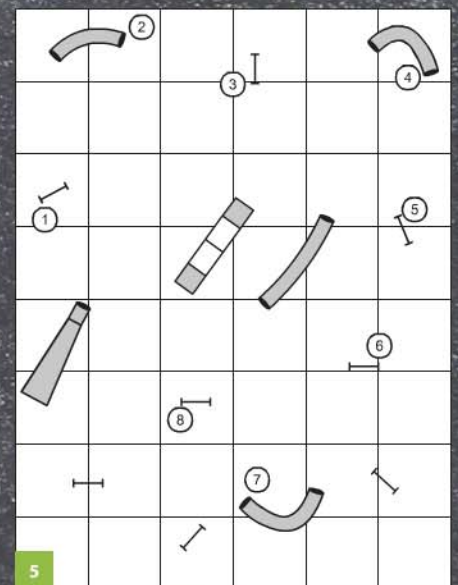
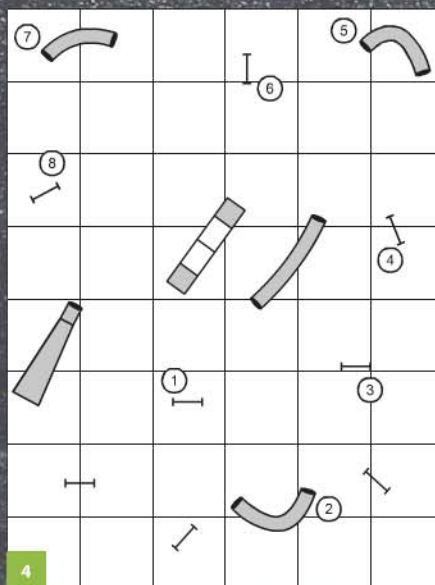
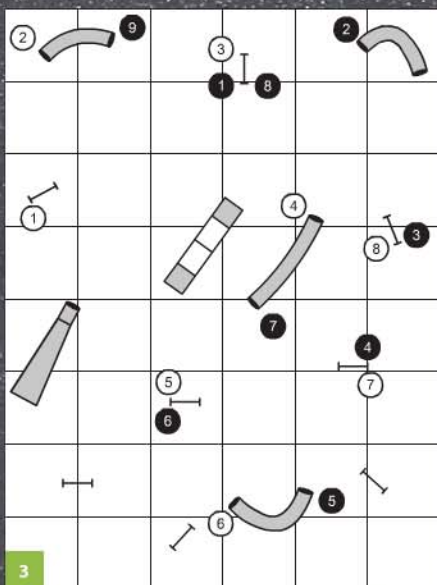
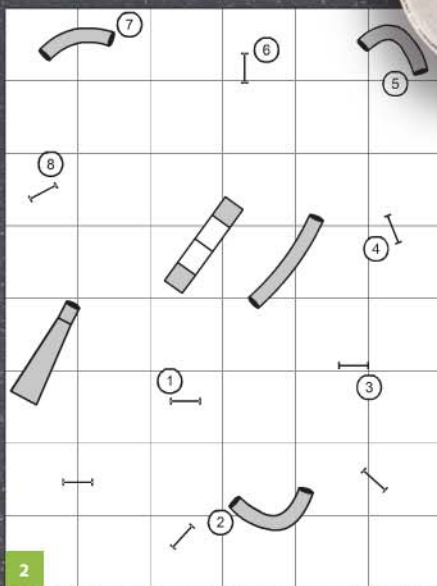
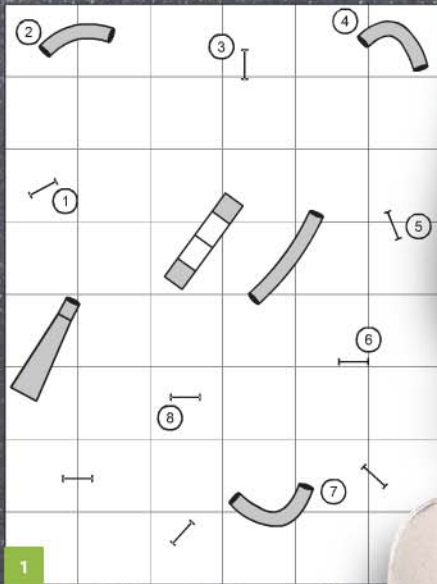
BY KAREN HOLIK

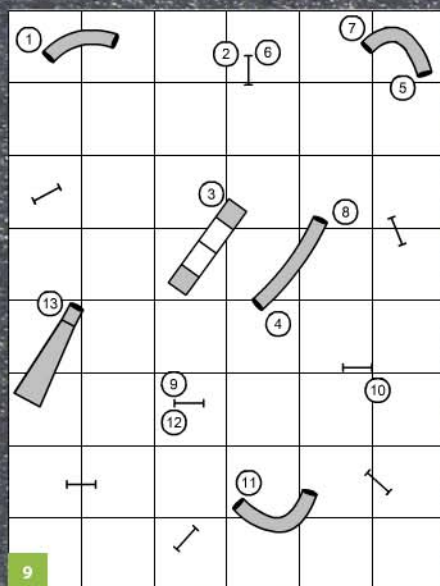
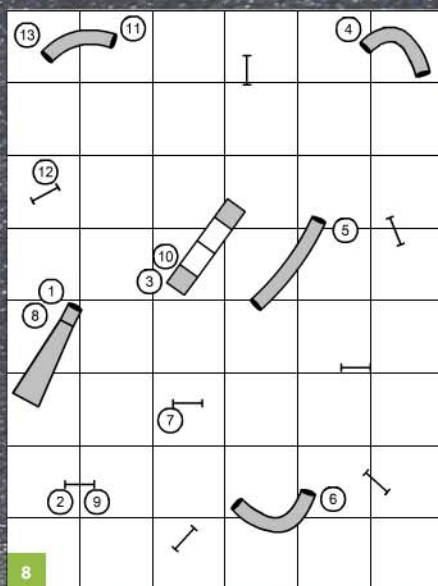
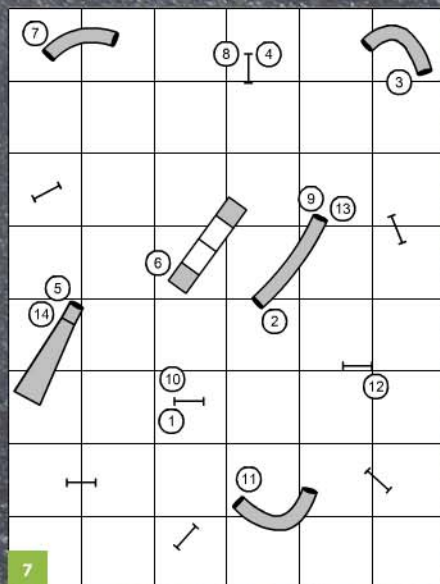
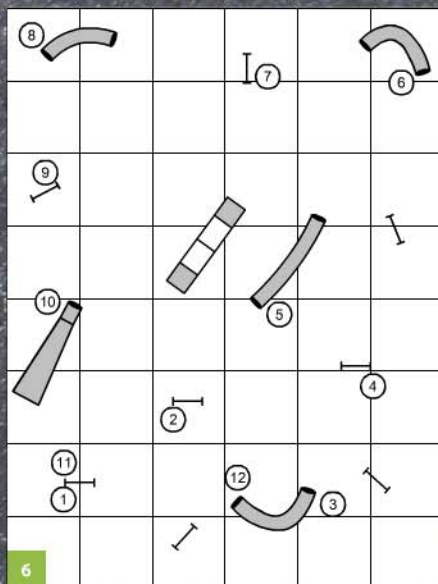
This month's exercises focus on tunnels. I think as handlers we assume our dogs will always take a tunnel if we send them to it. We need our dogs to not only take the tunnel when asked, but also to drive to the tunnel without turning back. Our dogs also need to know which entrance they should take when they are faced with a choice. It does not matter what cues you give your dog to go ahead to the tunnel or to take the opposite end of the tunnel instead of the one he is facing. What does matter is that these cues are distinct and consistent, and that you can give the cues quickly enough for the dog to understand what he is supposed to do when traveling at a high rate of speed.

The first two exercises feature very simple sequences. Perform the exercise in **Figure 1** with the dog on your left and the exercise in **Figure 2** with the dog on your right. Make sure your dog is driving to the tunnel as fast as he can, and that he is not checking back with you.

Figure 3 is set up for practicing rear crosses at tunnels. When doing the white numbers, try starting with your dog your right and doing a rear cross at the #2 tunnel. With the dog now on your left, do another rear cross at #4. When running the black numbers, start with your dog on the right again and do a rear cross at #2. With your dog now on your left, do a rear cross at #7.

Figures 4 and 5 are set up to practice sending the dog to the opposite end of the tunnel from the one that is directly in front of him. Make sure you are consistent with the way you send the dog to the opposite end of the tunnel and that your cue is distinct from the cue you use to send the dog to the tunnel entrance straight in front of him (as you did in Figures 1 and 2).





The sequences in **Figures 6 through 10** have many different tunnel entrances: straight on, from the side, from behind. Remember to reward your dog for proper obstacle performance and have fun! 🐾

Karen Holik, involved in agility for over 15 years as a competitor and a USDAA and AKC judge, has competed in the finals of the USDAA Grand Prix of Dog Agility World Championships and Dog Agility Steeplechase Championships many 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, is a two-time USDAA national Steeplechase champion and a member of the AKC/USA World Team in 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2007. Karen offers private lessons and seminars; contact her at oncourseagility@comcast.net.

