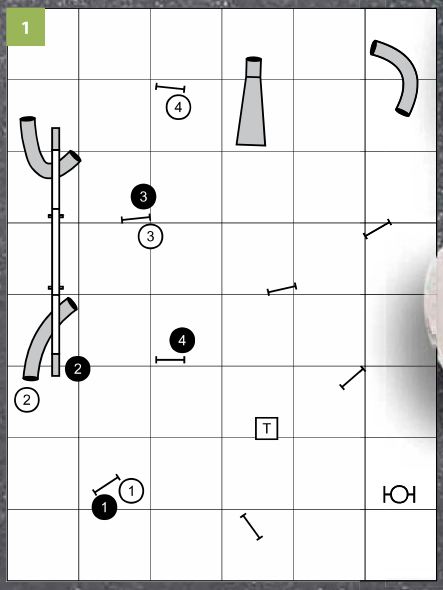
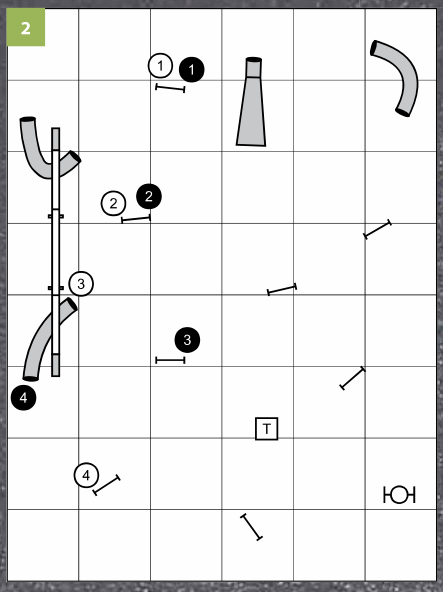
Skill of the Month

By Karen Holik

This month's exercises will focus on lead-outs. A lead-out enables you to leave your dog at the start line or also at the table and get a head start on course. This is sometimes necessary when there is a tricky sequence soon after the start or soon after leaving the table. Lead-outs can be made more difficult by the angle of the jumps or obstacles or just the simple fact that you might not be as skilled with your recall of a certain obstacle at a distance.

Remember to reward your dog for staying at the start line when you lead out and also reward with toys, food, and praise for coming to you as quickly as possible. It is not an advantage to have a lead-out if your dog is not excited and driven to get to you at your lead-out position, so don't forget to reward often!





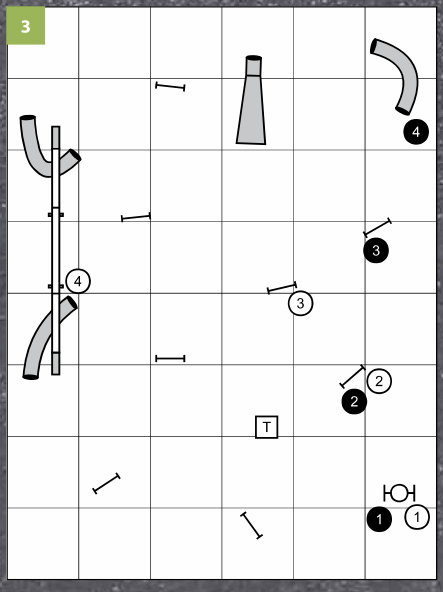
STARTERS/NOVICE EXERCISES

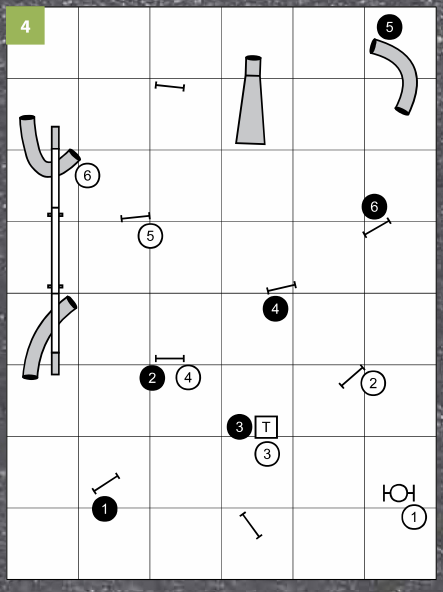
Figure 1: Start by leading out to jump #1; then try leading out all the way to the entrance of obstacle #2 so you can get a head start to #3 and #4.

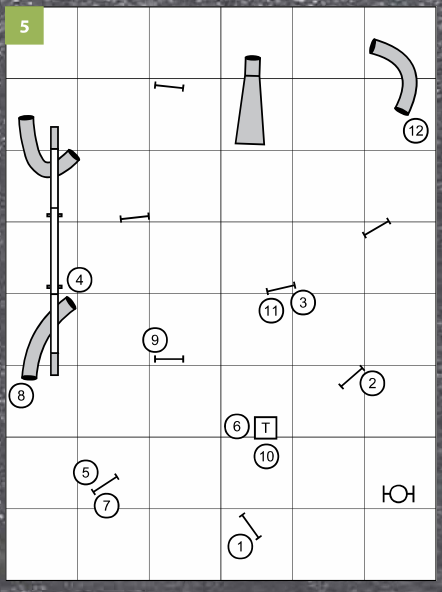
Figures 2 and 3: Start by leading out between #1 and #2, then between #2 and #3; and then finally lead out all the way past obstacle #3.

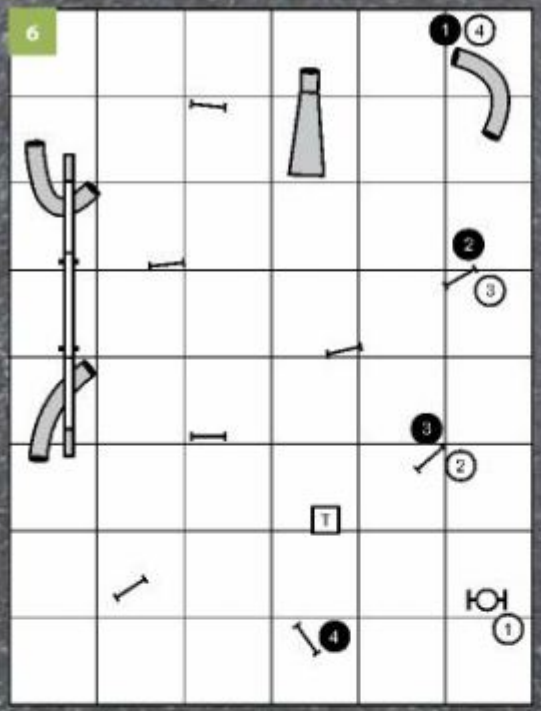
Figure 4: Try leading out from the table to the landing side of jump #4; and then all the way to between #5 and #6.

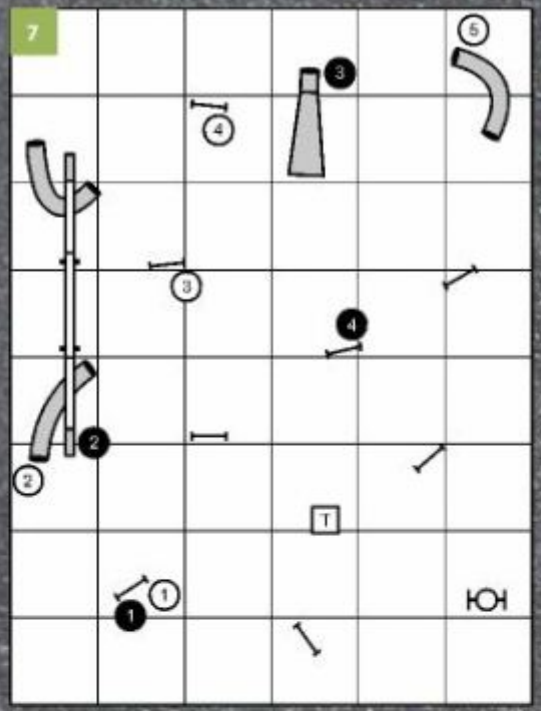
Figure 5: This short sequence gives you the opportunity to lead out as far as you are able from jump #1 and also gives you two opportunities to see how far you can lead out from the table.

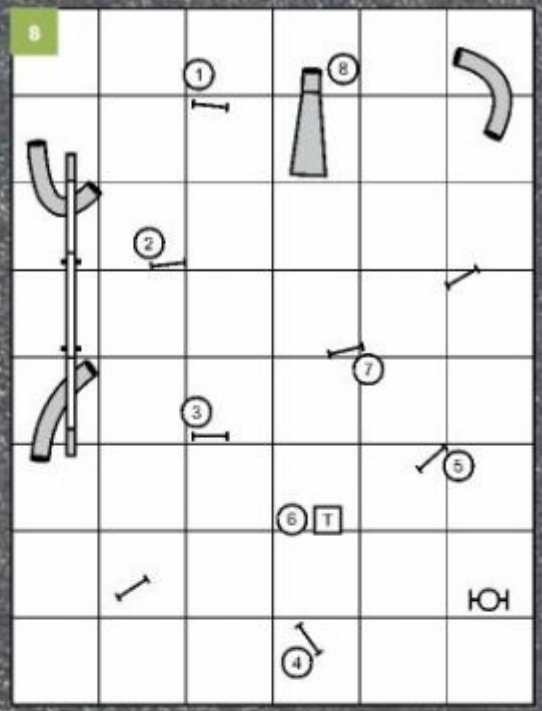












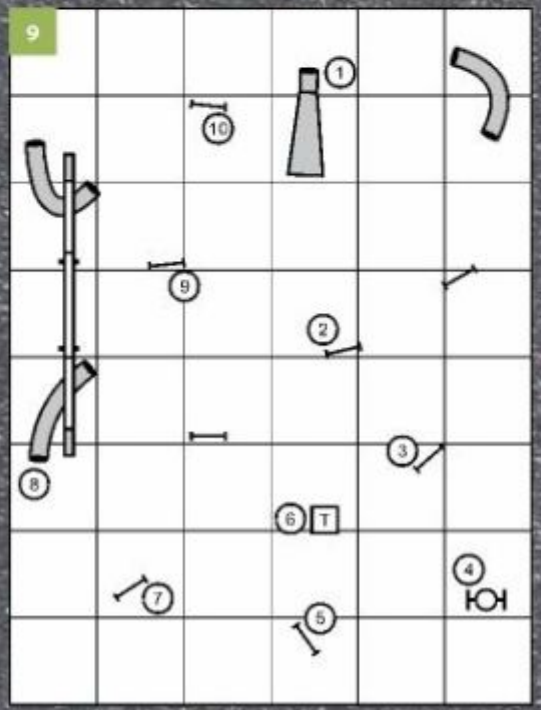
OPEN/ADVANCED EXERCISES

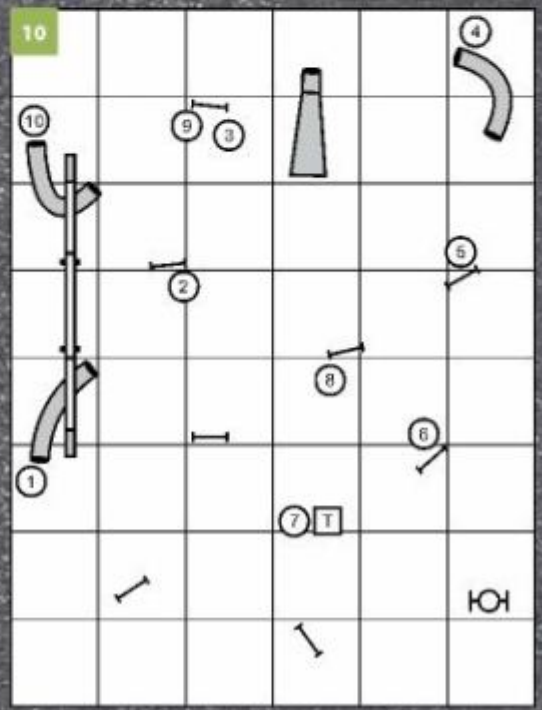
Figure 6: Try leading out between obstacles #1 and #2; then between #2 and #3; and then to the landing side/exit of obstacle #4. Remember to reward for your dog's stay at the start line and also his drive to get to you.

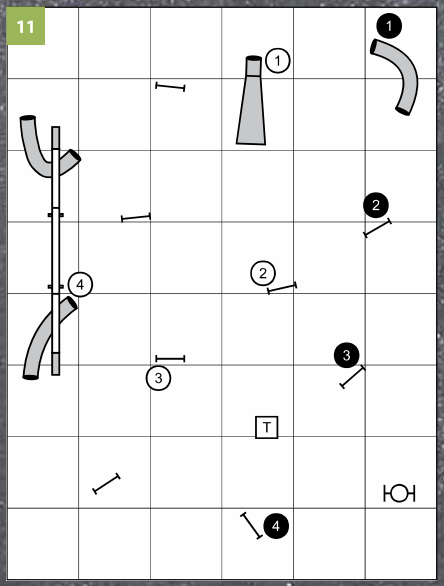
Figure 7: With these tricky sequences, you will need to get a lead-out close to the exit of obstacle #2 in order to handle them.

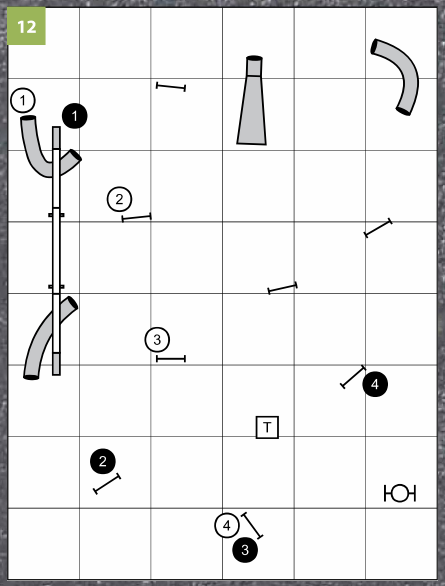
Figure 8: With this sequence, you can practice your lead-out as far as you want, even to obstacle #4. You can also practice your lead-out from the table all the way to chute #8.

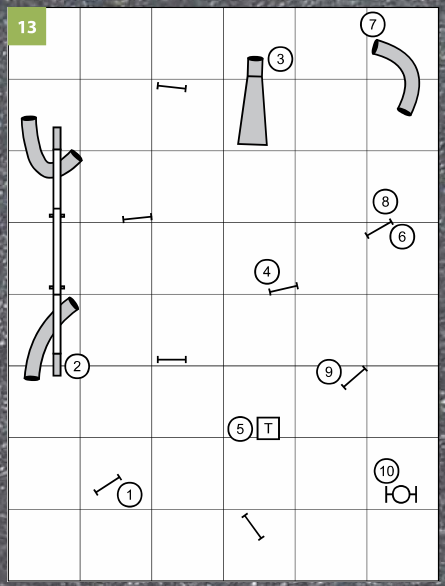
Figures 9 and 10: Try practicing your lead-out as far as you can from the chute or open tunnel, and also as far as you can from the table.











MASTERS/EXCELLENT EXERCISES

Figure 11: Try leading out between obstacles #1 and #2; then between #2 and #3; and then finally to the landing side of jump #3.

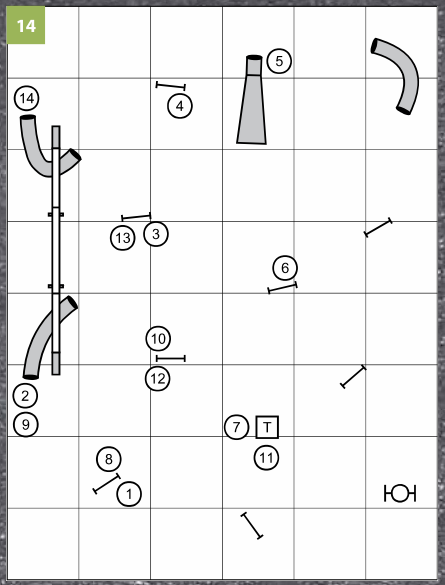
Figure 12: These sequences will be easier if you can lead out as far as possible. Can you lead out all the way to jump #3?

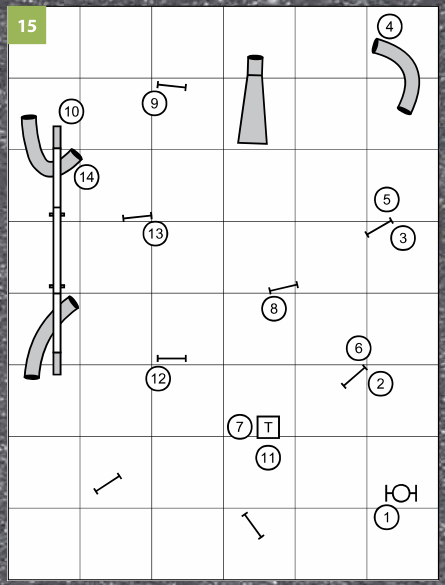
Figure 13: Try leading out as far as you can to obstacle #3. You can then work on your lead-out from the table. Can you lead out all the way to obstacle #7?

Figure 14: You can work on your lead-out in the beginning of the sequence, as well as twice from the table.

Figure 15: Here's another sequence to work on long lead-outs: at the start lead out as close as you can to #4, then get as far from the table as you can to handle #8 and #12.

Have fun and reward often for your dog staying at the start line or table and also for your dog coming to you as quickly as possible on those long lead-outs!





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 World Championships many times with all her dogs: two Shelties, a Border Collie, and an All-American. Her youngest dog, ADCH MACH3 Triune's Feelin Hot Hot Hot, a.k.a. Sizzle, is a four-time champion at the USDAA World Championships and a five-time member of the AKC/USA World Team. Karen offers private lessons and seminars; contact her at oncourseagility@comcast.net.