

SKILL OF THE MONTH

BY KAREN HOLIK

This month's exercises focus on distance work. Distance work is required in almost every venue of agility. You should practice not only the distance or gamble portion of the course by itself, but also practice it after a timed opening as needed in USDAA, or as you are negotiating the course as seen in AKC. You can also practice the distance portion, then practice accumulating points, then practice the second distance portion shown. Have fun and reward often!

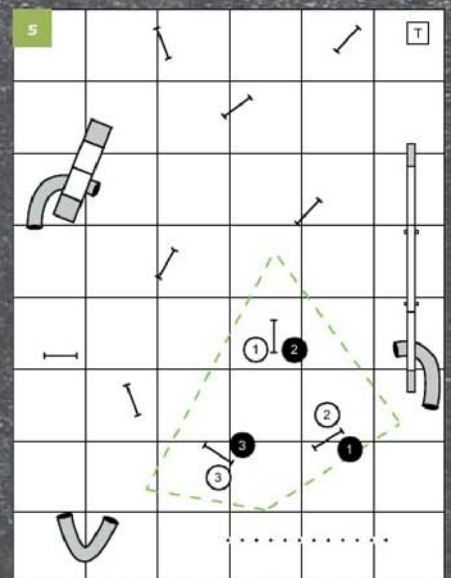
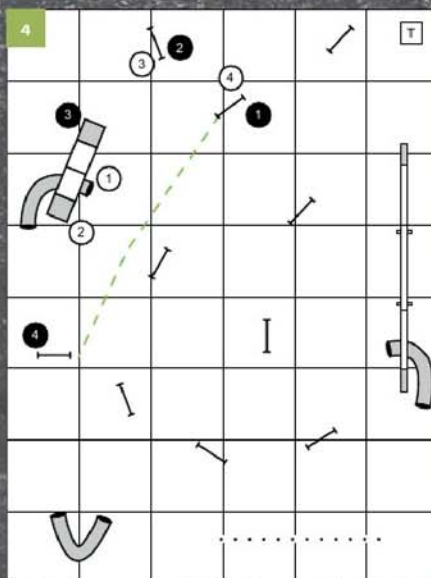
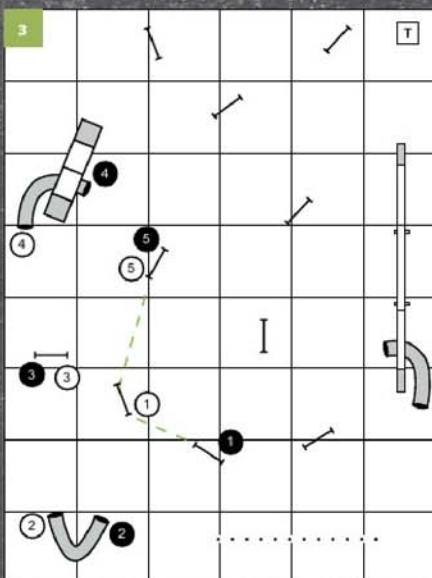
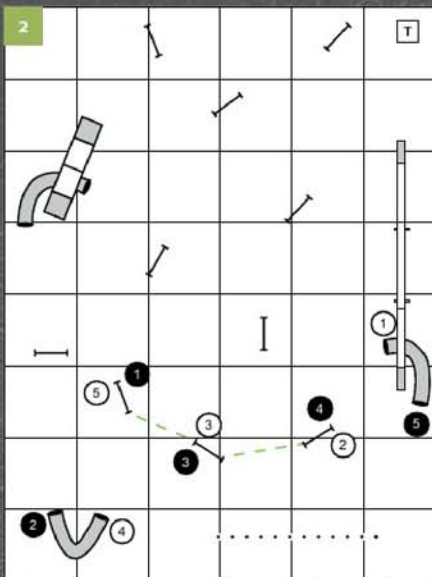
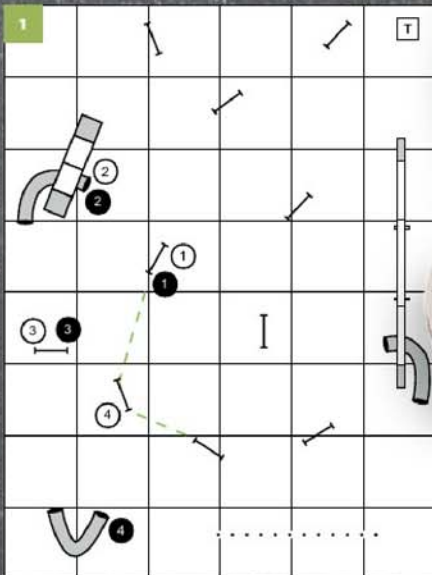
STARTERS/NOVICE EXERCISES

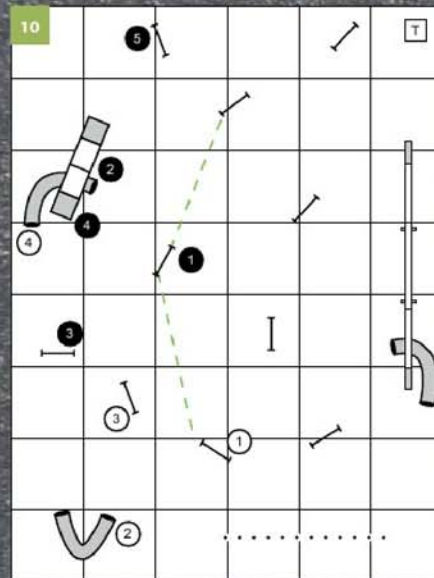
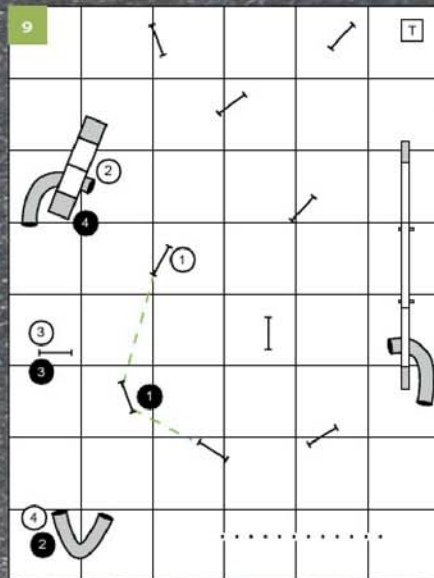
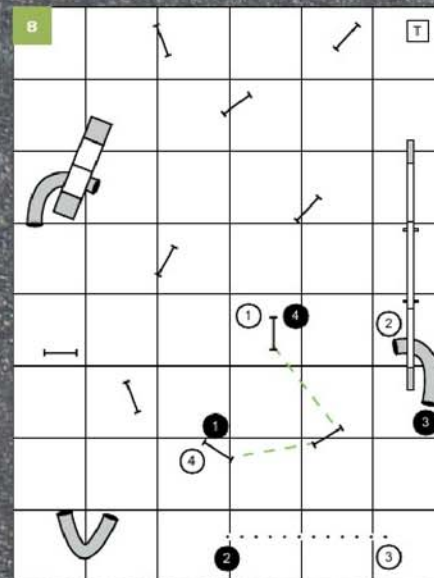
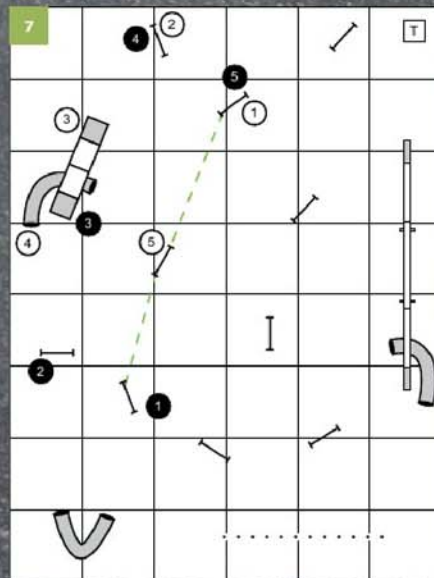
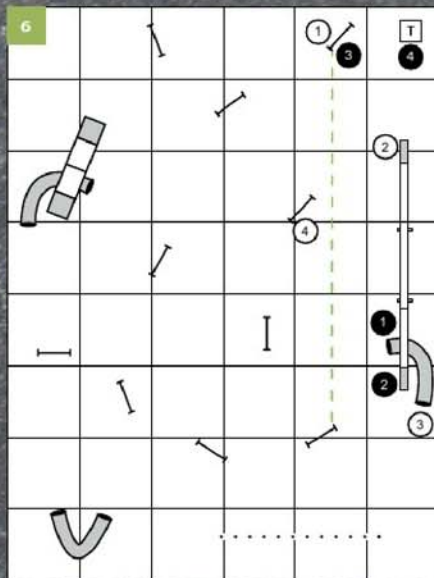
Figures 1 through 5

Each exercise is self-explanatory with a dashed line showing how far you are allowed to go while negotiating the gamble. Remember, if your dog is confused, you should make the exercise easier by crossing the line.

Most gambles at the Starters/Novice level involve sending to a tunnel. This can easily be broken down and made simpler by just practicing this skill. Start by sending your dog to a tunnel from a short distance and rewarding. Gradually move yourself back until you are comfortable sending your dog from about 20' (or more distance, if you like). Once you are successful with training just the tunnel at a distance, try sending to a jump and tunnel.

Remember, your dog needs a reward at the end of the obstacle he is being sent to—a toy, target, or bait bag, all of these can work. For more help, there are many *Clean Run* articles on teaching distance work that you can refer to.



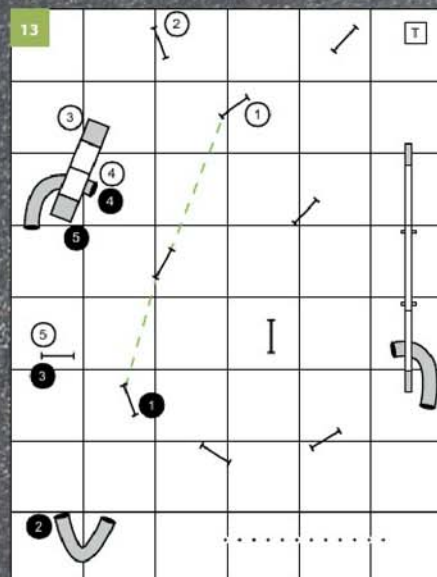
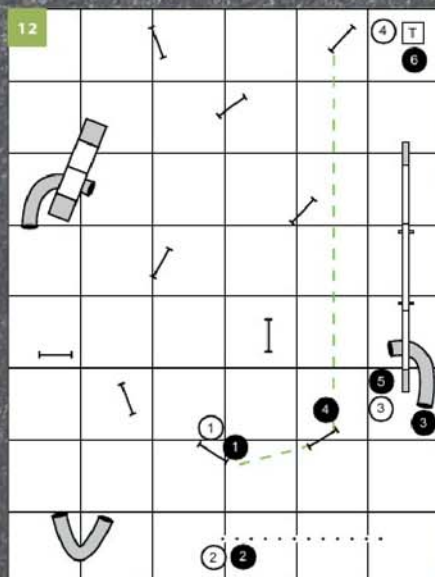
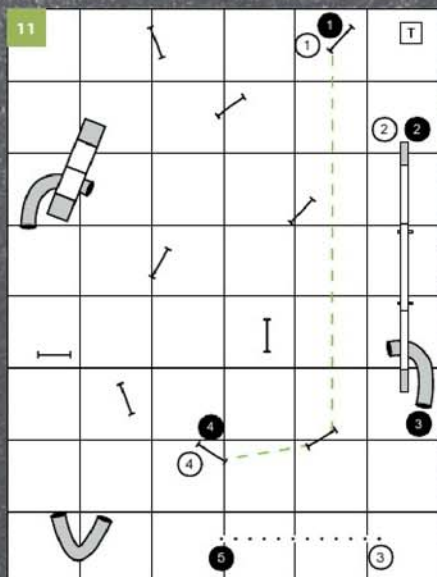


OPEN/ADVANCED EXERCISES

Figures 6 through 10

Again, each exercise is self-explanatory with a dashed line showing how far the handler is allowed to go while negotiating the gamble. Remember, if your dog is confused, you should make the exercise easier by crossing the line.

Most gambles at this level involve sending to contacts and weaves at a distance, while the dogs maintain their weave and contact criteria. You can again use toys, targets, and bait bags as aids. If you are having problems with the sequences, train the obstacles at a distance separately to begin and then put them together.

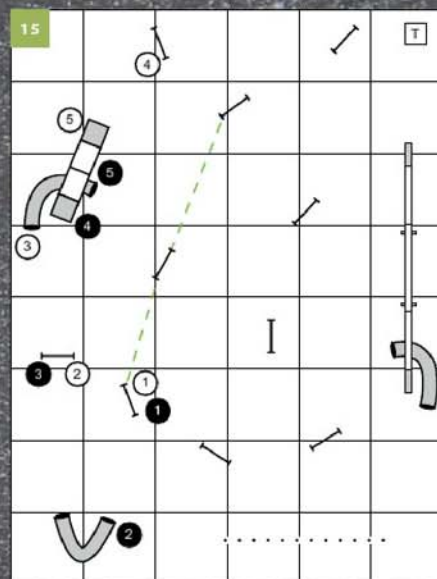
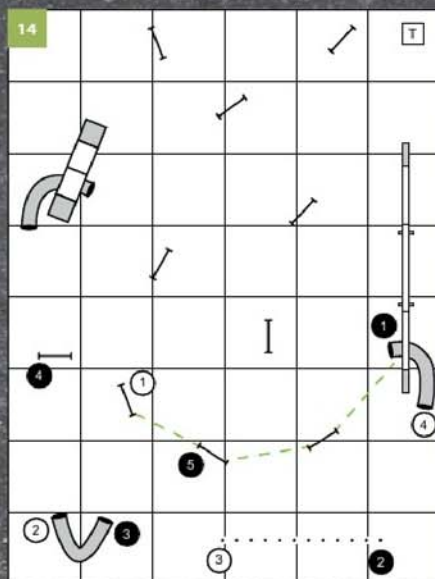


MASTERS/EXCELLENT EXERCISES

Figures 11 through 15

Once again, each exercise is self-explanatory with a dashed line showing how far the handler is allowed to go while negotiating the gamble. Remember, if your dog is confused, you should make the exercise easier by crossing the line.

Gambles at this level typically involve contact and weave-pole performance at a distance. They also involve obstacle discrimination and the skill of turning your dog to the left or right when he is at a distance away from you. All this should be practiced before trying these gambles if you have not done so already. ➔



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 most recent accomplishments have been with ADCH MACH4 Triune's Feelin' Hot Hot Hot, a.k.a. Sizzle, a four-time champion at the USDAA World Championships and a six-time member of the AKC/USA World Team. Karen offers private lessons and seminars; contact her by email at oncourseagility@comcast.net.