

Improve Your
Handling Skills
at Home

Backyard Dogs

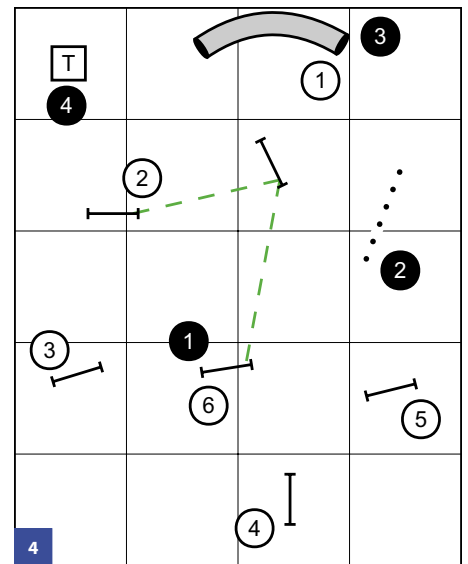
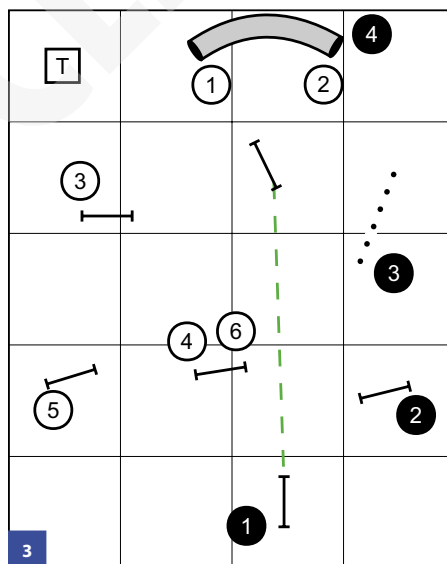
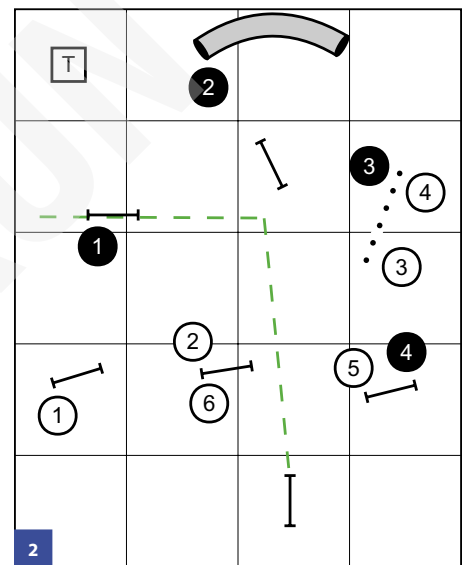
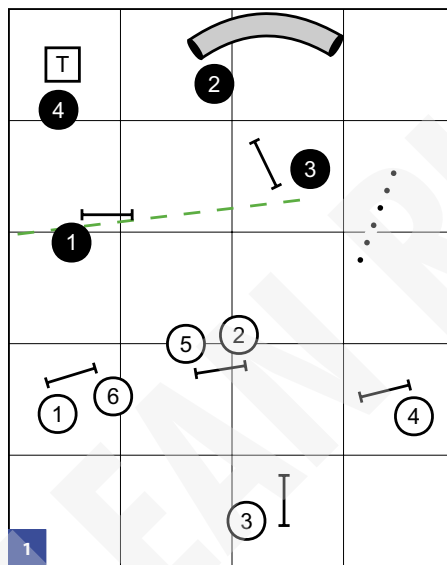
By Karen Holik



This month's exercises focus on distance work. The distances are not too great, since the training area is only 40' by 50', but these exercises are difficult if you've never practiced any distance work. For those of you who enjoy the USDAA and NADAC venues of agility, you can appreciate that your dog needs to work away from you, not only for the Gamblers classes, but also often during Standard courses for your team to be successful. These exercises will be helpful for the upcoming FAST classes being offered by the AKC. The rules are a little different, but the skills the handler and dog need are the same.

In each sequence I have set up 10 numbered obstacles. First do the white numbers #1-#6. These should be done in the order shown with the handler anywhere she chooses to be on the course. Then do the black numbers #1-#4 in the order shown, with the handler staying behind the green dashed line. This replicates USDAA Gamblers classes in that the first six obstacles should be done in the "opening sequence," and the next four should be done after you hear the whistle in what is called the "closing sequence." Regular USDAA Gamblers classes give you a set opening time of 25 to 50 seconds, but because of the small area we are using, I chose just six obstacles. Most people can work their dogs at a distance, but for some reason can't go from the opening to the closing sequence smoothly enough for the dog to be successful. These exercises should help.

After you have mastered these courses, you can change the opening sequence (white numbers) to any obstacles you wish. Continue on to the gamble area when you are done with the opening. 🐾



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, MACH Triune's Feelin Hot Hot Hot (a.k.a. Sizzle) won the Steeplechase event at the USDAA World Championships in 2003. 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.

