

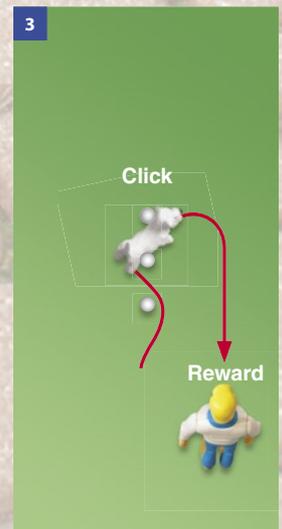
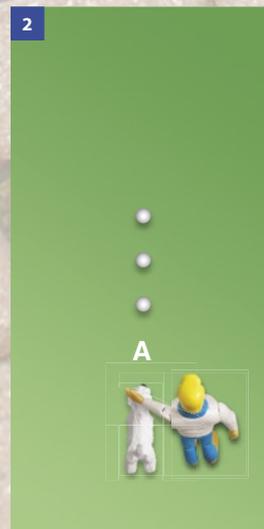
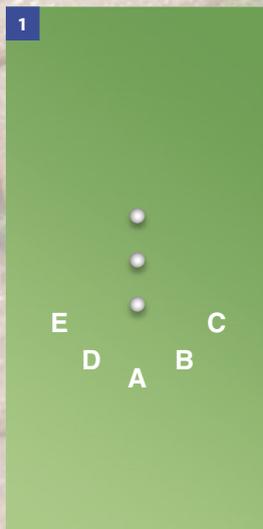
This month we will focus on weave entry training. When I begin weave pole training, I use slanted poles as well as channel poles. Using toys, food, and targeting, I teach my dogs to run through a set of 12 weave poles with speed and enthusiasm. I recall, send, and run laterally along the poles. I build drive through the weaves with the poles slanted and apart, just asking the dog to go through the poles (the dog is not actually weaving yet).

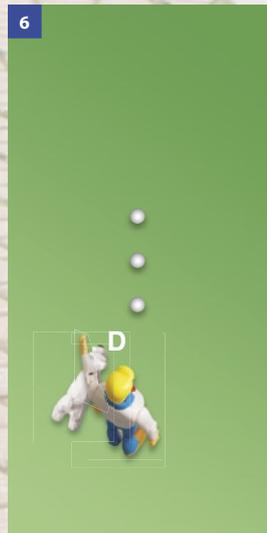
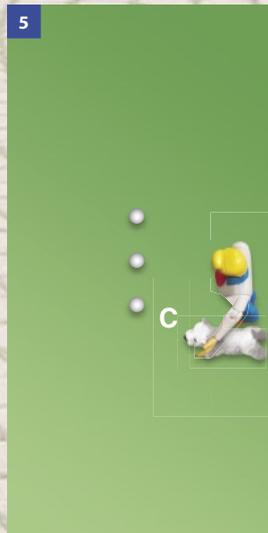
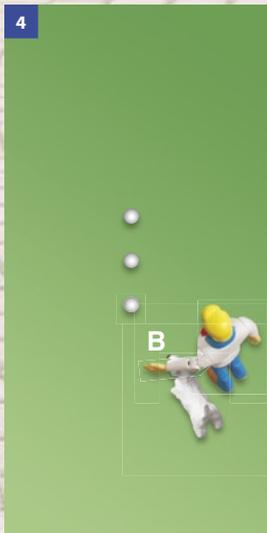
Separately from that, I train weave entries with a clicker and three poles. This training can easily be done in a limited space and indoors if needed. Besides using it to train new dogs, I also do this exercise with older dogs to reinforce their weave pole entries. Since the weave pole entry requires the dog to slow down (if only slightly), I use food and a clicker for reward. You can also use your marker word and treat after a successful performance.

To start this training, take a set of six weave poles and pull out the last three poles. The poles should be straight up or only slightly bent if needed. I pull out the last three poles for this exercise because I am only training the entry. Using three poles allows me to reward my dog for the entry and not have to wait for him to weave six poles. In addition, by only using three poles my dog will be weaving until the *end* of the poles before he gets his reward. When I put the other three poles back in the line, my dog understands to weave to the end (all six poles). When using this method, I have been very successful with not having my dogs pop out of the weave poles before they reach the end.

I train the weave entry from each of the five positions in **Figure 1**. I start at the easiest position (marked "A") with my dog on my left side as shown in **Figure 2**. At this point, I am only a few feet from the poles. I release my dog from a stationary position to weave. (If I am training a puppy, I will release him and just say *Go*.) I click when my dog wraps the second pole as shown in **Figure 3**, and he returns to me for his reward.

Since my dog has been rewarded many times for his recall, send, and lateral weave poles, the entry at this distance should be easy. If not, you can lure your dog a few times or slightly bend the poles. Remember, it is very important to only lure a few times. Your dog will never learn to enter the poles on his own if you continue to help him.





Also, to relate this training to how you will eventually run a course, stand up straight and only use a slight arm motion. I might use a slight foot motion toward the poles, but I fade that very quickly. When I am running a course, I want to be moving fast, saying *Weave*, and trusting my dog to know his job without relying too much on my hands or feet.

After two successful attempts, I move to position “B,” then “C,” “D,” and “E” as shown in **Figures 4 through 7**. All these entries are done with my dog on my left and very close to the poles.

When moving through these positions, if my dog is unsuccessful more than twice at any given position, I go back to an easier entry and reward if done correctly. I stay at the easier entry until the dog is successful more than twice and then make it harder again.

After my dog is successful from all positions, I start back at “A,” but at a greater distance from the poles as shown in **Figure 8**. I progress through all the positions from this distance.

After teaching the entries from positions A, B, C, D, and E with your dog on your left, repeat with your dog on your right.

At the same time I am doing this exercise to work entries, I continue to work my recalls, sends, and lateral distance from my set of 12 poles as I originally discussed, so my dogs know to continue weaving when there are more poles.

Remember to keep your weave pole training sessions short and successful, and always end with your dog being successful and wanting more. 🐾



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 USDAA Steeplechase Finals 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.