

Basic Training: Fun for Dogs



Agility at Home

Agility is the largest growing dog sport in the world and is suited to all dogs of all ages. You do not have to have any experience in training to give it a go. It is all about having fun! You don't need to spend your entire savings on agility equipment either. There are creative ways to build a course using furniture and household materials. Start your course with simple jumps, weave poles and a tunnel.

There are a few things to consider before creating an obstacle course. Firstly, ensure your design can be broken down (if your dog bumps or hits it), so your dog stays safe and does not get injured. Be patient, so you will both have a positive experience.

Please see below for ideas and suggestions on how to make your agility course.

Jumps

Make short jumps out of two washing baskets on their ends and a curtain rod. You could also use boxes or milk crates. Always start low to the ground to set your dog up for success. Begin with your dog on a lead, and place the hurdle on the ground - encourage them to walk over.

Once they are comfortable walking over the hurdle, place the jump up higher as confidence builds. Encourage your dog over the hurdle by using a food lure. This is done by putting a piece of food in front of their nose and guiding them over the hurdle. Alternatively, stand on the other side of the jump and encourage them over. Remember, every dog is an individual and learns in different ways.

Be patient and consistent. Let them take the jumps at their own pace.

Weaving Obstacles

Use an array of objects to create a weaving obstacle course. Obstacles could be garden stakes, Candy Cane Xmas decorations left over from the holiday season, or those little orange cones that are used for kids' soccer games. Set the obstacles in a spaced line, not too close together and not too far apart. Ensure the obstacles are secure enough that they will not be all over and lightweight enough that if they get knocked over, will not cause any injury to your dog.

The easiest way to start is to have your dog on a lead and walk them through the course. Ensure you have high-value treats to reward at the finish line. Or you can use a food lure by holding the treat out in front of his/her nose and have your dog follow through the obstacles.



Teach Your Dog the Weave Poles: <https://youtu.be/AzGZx7LdWD0>

Tunnel Obstacles

There are many options for creating a tunnel with household items if you do not have access to collapsible tunnels. You could use a large cardboard box with the bottom cut out, or chairs placed upside down on their ends.

If your dog is new to this activity, start with a short tunnel. This way they will be able to see through to the other side and will be less overwhelmed when encouraging them through. Start by placing treats at the front of the tunnel, in the middle and at the end to encourage them through. Always remember to take it slow and work at your dog's pace.

If you decide to set up your obstacle course, you and your dog will love the challenge and fun it brings! If you want to take it to the next level, start timing your dog to see how quickly it can maneuver the course.

TIP: When teaching any new exercise, ensure you set your dog up for success by training in a quiet environment with no distractions.

