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Obedience and Dexterity

General information/tips:

Some of the obedience/dexterity exercises require the handler to cue the dog to remain in place or stay (halt) at the end, for example unstable plank, tunnel with tube. If it is not identified what exact position the dog must take, it means any position is allowed.

Almost all of judges understand English and/or German. And if you say "down"/"platz" or "sit"/"sitz", but the dog doesn't take that position, you will get some points taken. That's why some of the participants prefer to use other languages or just say "stop" or any other word, that doesn't give any information what exact position is meant.

The check in

For those not familiar with the IGP or RH set up, preparing for the check in is important. Although unscored, it must not be overlooked.

Certainly, your dog should be under control, focused on you, and ready to begin but prepare for the possibility of the other dog staring at your dog or trying to solicit play.

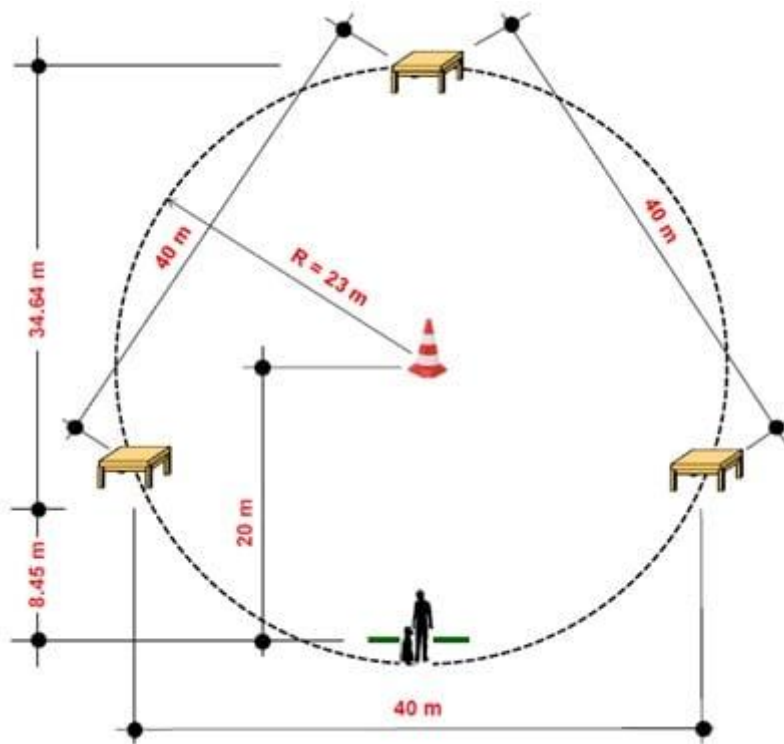
Additionally, be sure to practice sometimes beginning with the down stay and sometimes beginning with the heeling.

Basic position as the start and the end.

Every exercise of the "Obedience and Dexterity" part starts and ends in the basic position – the dog is sitting at your left side. This is easy to remember for the heeling but this also comes into play on other exercises including,

- * the start of the carry where you have the dog near the carry table and are preparing to send them up.
- * the end of the tunnel, if you put the dog in a down position to remain in place for example, you must ask them to sit in heel position to conclude the exercise.
- * the long down begins with the dog sitting at heel position until the judge tells you to proceed and you remove the leash and tell the dog to lie down.

Exercise Directability at a distance



For this level A and level B exercise, the center is usually designated with a cone/traffic pylon. But from some dog handlers' experience it is not always like this. The center may be marked with a medium-sized water canister, a backpack, a car/truck tire, a heater/fan etc.

So please prepare your dog to go out to different objects. Failure to go to the center marker results in the score being deemed insufficient.

Directability at a distance- Introduction

Some handlers just refer to this exercise as "three tables" or just "tables".

This exercise is a combination of many skills including stay, recall, jumping atop a table, send out, working at a distance, and moving in different directions.

Good training dictates that one should train individual components separately then put them together as the dog becomes more proficient. At any point in the process where the dog struggles, work on this thin slice to build the dog's confidence and proficiency.

To begin with you do not even need tables. You can use baskets, cones, or any place marker you want.

Getting the dog to the center marker and atop the tables can be done a number of ways.

Sending out to the center marker

Method 1.

Step 1 - Teach your dog to go around any object (tree, safety cone, backpack, etc.) you direct them toward. This can be taught with a lure (food or toy), a separate target, or shaped. The skill is to go around, not to halt. It would be easier on the dog if you rewarded just a single direction (clockwise or counterclockwise) on a single cue. [Of course, you can have one clockwise cue and a different cue for counter clockwise.] Work this skill in different locations, with different distractions, different objects to go around, and build up the distance to at least 20 meters (about 67 feet).

Step 2 - As a separate skill you train the dog to stop on a distance with a "fixation" cue. This may be any position. But if you name a specific position (sit, stand, down) and the dog doesn't assume that position you may lose points. Many exhibitors use a vague "fixation" word like stop or wait. Work this skill with distance, distraction, and location. Can you stop your dog "on a dime"?

Step 3 - Combine the two skills. It is important that the dog stops very close to the center marker. Also keep both your 'go around' cue and your 'stop' cue separate. Practice them separately - when given the 'go around' cue, the dog shouldn't anticipate being stopped.

Method 2.

As a single (chained) behavior the dog runs out to the directed target (center marker) and remains there (usually behind the center marker but any close position works). To teach this trainers often utilize barriers and/or a second target with the center marker to help the dog get into place. You can also lure and/or shape this multi-step task. Build distance, add distractions, and eliminate the extra help.

Getting your dog to go out to the atop of the directional tables.

Method 1.

Step 1. Start your dog at the cone facing you. While expecting them to stay although they can shift a bit to watch, place a reward on one table.

Many trainers start with the back table but you can start with a side table if you prefer.

Keep using the same table this session.

Step 2. While you remain near the center marker cone, send the dog to the table to take their reward.

Step 3. Bring the dog back to the cone and repeat the sequence until the dog is moving out briskly, directly, and with confidence.

You may use both a hand signal and a verbal cue to go to the table and another verbal cue to mount and remain on the table. The hand signals for left, right, and behind can be the same or different.

Step 3. In another session, repeat these instructions with a different table direction.

Step 4. Still leave the dog at the center marker cone and place the reward each time, but now start moving back to your start line before you send the dog. Add distance as the dog continues to move out correctly, directly, briskly, and with confidence.

Step 5. Refresh go to the cone. (Earlier post)

Step 6. Send the dog to the cone, have them wait. You place the reward on the table as before and remain near the cone as you send the dog to the table.

Step 7. As the dog's confidence increases, make your way back to the start line after placing the reward before you send.

Step 8. Different directions from table to table

Now we will start the dog moving from table to table. To make things easier, remove the center marker which can be a distraction. Start on one combo per session. Left --> Right or Left --> Behind or Right --> Left or Right --> Behind or Behind --> Left or Behind --> Right. Place the dog atop one table, walk to the destination table, place the reward on it then stand between the two tables; at this point there is no need for you to be as far back as the start area. Direct the dog over to the destination table. Work on this until the dog is running confidently, briskly, directly and maintaining the initial stay until directed to move.

Step 9. Remove the reward on the destination table

Work step 8 the same but instead of placing a reward on the destination table, walk to the destination table then move to where you will cue the dog. When the dog successfully travels to the destination table, still reward, but now the dog will either come to you for food or go to a thrown toy or come to you to tug. Build up fluency at this step.

Keeping with the step 8 instructions of placing your dog on the starting table, now you will walk only half way to the destination table, then walk to where you will send the dog. When the dog is successful, reward him back at you or with a thrown toy. Reduce the movement to the destination table until it is no longer required for a confident and correct execution.

Step 10. Add another table

Place your dog on a given table then direct them to a second table. Here you can just praise, or you can go to the second table and deliver either food or a short tug. We

want the dog to remain on the second table, not released to play. Set yourself back in the position where you sent the dog initially and direct the dog to the third table. Reward the dog. As before, it is often easier on the dog to keep with a single sequence within a given session.

Step 11. Move back to your starting place

As the dog builds proficiency, move yourself back to the starting line for each send. If the dog struggles with you being further, go back to a shorter distance and re-build their confidence.

Step 12. Add the recall to the end

From the final table, instead of just releasing the dog for a reward, call them to the front position.

Step 13. Start the dog at the center marker

Walk your dog to the center marker and leave them there as you go to the center maker. Send the dog in a given three table pattern with or without a recall to finish. Sometimes reward for every correct table mount and sometimes ask the dog to move to two or all three tables or three table with a recall before they are rewarded.

Step 14. Send the dog to the center marker to begin

You are now putting the whole exercise together. The dog must go to the center marker then to all three tables in the directed order. Be sure that you reward the dog intermittently, not just at the end.

Alternative method for teaching the tables - "Friends"

See the earlier recommendations on teaching the dog fluency to move to the center marker, to and between tables, and to recall from a table.

This method works well when you have a training group where everyone pitches in to assist. It is suitable for dogs who are comfortable with and safe around other people providing food and/or toys.

Step 1 - Helper calls the dog in

Walk your dog to the center marker and remain close facing him. Have one helper at each table with a reward for the dog. All three helpers remain in place the whole time but only one will draw the dog's attention. Direct the dog to a particular table. After a short pause, the helper at that given table becomes animated, calls the dog, shows the reward and keeps this up until the dog mounts the table after which time the helper delivers the reward.

Work this pattern of center marker to single table with all the tables.

Step 2 - Helper only provides reward

Using the same set up but now the assistant the helper provides is reduced to only giving the reward when the dog mounts the directed table. As before all three helpers remain in place beside their given table and are still until the dog correctly mounts the directed table. Ween off the help gradually while still maintaining confident, brisk behavior by the dog. The dog may find the back table especially difficult since they are unable to see the helper if facing forward. The level of assistance the helpers provide for a given table need not be consistent. That is, the helpers for the two side tables may merely step in to reward while the helper for the back table still needs to be animated for more sessions.

Keep at this stage until the dog can correctly go from the center marker to a single table when the helper is only standing quietly nearby and ready to reward.

Step 3 - Add duration to the table

Keep with the set up in the prior step but now the dog will be rewarded a second time for staying on the table longer. If using food, the helper will provide a second food reward when the dog has remained on the table. If you are using a toy where the dog leaps off the table to chase it, once that has play session has ended, the handler directs the dog to re-mount that same table and the helper begins a second round of play. If the helper tugs with the dog while they remain on the table, after the initial round of play, with the dog remaining on the table, the helper can reengage the dog for another round of tug.

Lengthen the time between the first and second reward. For the trial only a few seconds are required but work to have the dog calmly remain on the given table until cued for a different behavior.

Step 4 - Fading the helpers temporarily

As before you will walk your dog to the center marker and remain close facing him. The helpers are near their given tables but now the reward (food or toy) is placed on the table. It is recommended that you use easily visible food. This could be done by ensuring that the color of the food is different from the table top, is a large piece/mound of food, and/or is placed on a small plate or such to improve visibility. We want the dog to know that the food (or toy) is on the table.

You will send the dog to a particular table, if the dog goes to an incorrect table the helper removes the reward.

Keep at this stage until you are confident the dog will choose correctly and will stay on the directed table and not leave to go to another table in search of rewards until directed.

Step 5 - Adding duration, again

Keep with the same set up as before with the reward on the tables and the helpers initially nearby but now work to have the helpers out of the picture and off the field.

Remove the helpers gradually. You will now be the one to provide the second reward to build duration.

Step 6 - Moving from table to table

Bring your helpers back onto the field standing near their assigned table with the rewards placed on the tables. Walk the dog to the center marker and remain nearby facing the dog. Send the dog to a given table. After the dog has been rewarded, at the point they would expect a second reward - either a second food reward delivered by you, a reengagement of tug play, or a second throw of a toy - you instead direct them to another table. As in step 1, after a short pause, the helper at this second table becomes animated, calls the dog, and the dog earns the reward.

Keep with center marker to initial table then to a second table until all combinations of this are solid.

Step 7 - Center marker to all three tables

Build upon the prior step but now add the third table.

Step 8 - Rewards from you

Have your helpers near each table but with no rewards placed on the table. Walk your dog to the center marker and remain nearby facing them. The helpers are standing near their tables to provide the same picture but otherwise are not assisting in any way. Direct your dog to a given table then, when they have correctly mounted and are remaining atop the table, deliver the reward. If using food or tugging, walk to the table and reward the dog. If using a thrown toy, you can toss the toy from your place at the center marker but you must bring your dog back atop the table they were just on.

Perfect center marker to a single table before moving to center marker to initial then second table and finally, for this step, work center marker to initial then second then final table while you reward each table switch.

Step 9 - Fade the helpers

This step will be like the prior step but when the dog comes onto the field for this exercise the helpers start further from the tables. Work the dog in a given sequence, rewarding for each table, then ask the helpers to move further away. As noted earlier, the back table may be the more difficult one for the dog due to lack of easy visibility. It is possible the dog is using the standing person at the back table as an aid to orientation so only fade the helpers at the speed the dog continues to be successful.

Keep with this step until the helpers are off the field and your dog is still working confidently and correctly.

Step 10 - Vary the rewards

Once again start the dog at the center marker with you remaining nearby. Direct the dog to the initial then second then final table for all the permutations but now vary

the frequency of rewards. Sometimes the dog will be rewarded for all three tables, sometimes for the first and the last only, etc.

Step 11 - Reintroduce the dog to going to the center marker.

Work a session with the tables in place but just work on sending the dog to the center marker as you are at the starting place.

Step 12 - Work starting place to center marker to single table

Start putting the pieces together but incrementally and with lots of rewards.

Step 13 - Work starting place to center marker to two, then all three tables

Vary the time in the sequence when you reward the dog and how often you reward the dog in a given sequence.

Step 14 - Refresh the dog with the recall from the table

Walk the dog to a given table, have them remain, walk back to the starting place and call them to the 'front' position. Do this for all three tables until the dog is confident and clear on this cue.

Step 15 - Add the recall at the end to the sequence

Play with the whole sequence from the send to the center marker, sending to and between each table, ending in a recall. For a given session work components of the whole exercise and intermingle the reward timing.

Alternative method for teaching the tables - "Pulling"

This method can be helpful for those who train alone and who have dogs who are not easily motivated by food or toys. The reward used here is the absence of pressure on the neck and verbal praise.

See the earlier recommendations on teaching the dog fluency to move to the center marker, to tables, and to recall from a table. If that foundation method did not work for you, the stake and rope method outlined here can also be used to pull the dog to the center marker and to work the initial pull to a single table. Leave a message if you need more help putting these foundation pieces together for the dog hard to motivate by food or toys.

Step 1 - Prepare the field

You will need sturdy stakes, convenient trees, fence posts or similar. You will set up a long rope that, on one end will attach to the dog's collar, at the other end be held by you, and in between will be wrapped around the stake or similar object.

This will be the set up for all three directional tables but only one will be trained per session.

Step 2 - Direct with your voice, arm, and rope

Walk the dog to the center marker and remain nearby but standing in such a way that you can work the rope. Use the verbal and arm signal you will give in the trial, then pause *this is key*, then pull on the rope to encourage the dog to move to the directed table. Praise the dog even if you were doing the work.

Keep at this step until not even a slight tug is required to move the dog.

Work the center marker to each single table.

Step 3 - Drop the rope

The set up is the same but you do not start off holding the rope. Walk the dog to the center marker and remain nearby as before. Give your verbal and arm signal and give the dog a chance to move out. If the dog does so, praise, if the dog does not, pick up the rope and help them be correct.

Keep at this step until you need not pick up the rope.

Step 4 - Add distractions

Since it is impractical to have multiple ropes going all over the field, it is necessary to ensure the dog's reliability to travel from the center marker to a single table by adding distractions. Distractions shouldn't frighten or intimidate the dog but otherwise can be a variety of things. Start with mild distractions to build success then move to more challenging ones.

Keep at this step until you need not pick up the rope.

Step 5 - Table to table

Begin by walking your dog to a given table and having them mount it. Using the rope system, from your place near the initial table, direct them to a second table, helping them with the rope if necessary. Work each two table combinations in this manner.

Keep at this step until you do not need to pick up the rope.

Step 6 - Add distractions

Work step 5 with distractions until the dog doesn't need any help with the rope.

Step 7 - Center marker to single table, short rope

Before beginning this session, switch to a short rope. It should be short enough that it isn't apt to get tangled but long enough that you can grasp it if needed. The stakes should remain on the field so the dog sees the same picture but now if you need to use the rope, it won't be wrapped around anything, you will just be using it to take the dog to the directed table.

Keep at this step until you do not need to pick up the rope.

Step 8 - Table to table, short rope

Repeat step 5 but with the dog wearing only a short rope as in the prior step.

Keep at this step until you do not need to pick up the rope.

Step 9 - All three tables, short rope

Build on step 8 but now your dog will move from the initial table you walked them to, to a second table, then to the third.

Keep at this step until you do not need to pick up the rope.

Step 10 - Reintroduce the dog to going to the center marker.

Work a session with the tables in place but just work on sending the dog to the center marker as you are at the starting place.

Step 11 - Start at the official starting distance, send to the center then sent to a single table

Start putting the pieces together but incrementally. Keep at this step until you do not need to pick up the rope.

Step 12 - Begin at starting place, send to center marker to two, then all three tables

Build the dog up to working the full sequence. Keep at this step until you do not need to pick up the rope.

Step 13 - Refresh the dog with the recall from the table

Walk the dog to a given table, have them remain, walk back to the starting place and call them to the 'front' position. Do this for all three tables until fluid and you need not pick up the rope.

Step 14 - Add the recall at the end to the sequence

Play with the whole sequence from the send to the center marker, sending to and between each table, ending in a recall. For a given session work components of the whole exercise until fluid and you need not pick up the rope.

Step 15 - Cut off half of your rope

Work the sequence with a shortened rope. Once this is fluid, cut the rope in half again and work the sequence. Keep at this until no rope is needed.

Exercise Carry and hand over the dog

Carry tip for a dog who loves to play but is unsure about strangers. The dog is given a ball before beginning and the dog holds the ball during the carry, handover, and remaining carry. When the dog is put down the helper asks the dog to out the ball and once the dog does so the helper plays with him.

This is a complex exercise that can be split into four parts.

1 – With the dog starting from basic position, he is sent to jump onto the carry table. The handler picks up the dog and carries the dog 10 steps.

2 – Without putting the dog down, the dog is transferred from the handler to the helper.

3 - For V level, the handler walks alongside the helper as the dog is carried another 10 steps. The helper puts the dog on the ground.

4 - After a pause of three seconds, the handler calls the dog into basic position to complete the exercises.

Parts 1 and 4 can be trained without a helper, and will be the focus of this week's tip. Even if you believe you are unable to carry your dog due to their size, it is good to condition them to being touched, restrained, held, squeezed, lifted, etc. To practice being calm while being lifted, handlers can start seated with their dog on a raised surface (a couch and coffee table could work as can other set ups). With **your** back well supported, pick the dog up an inch off the table and keep the dog elevated until he relaxes. While you are at this good set up, try different hold positions. The arm around the back can be behind the legs or under the loin. Their tail must be free; not tucked under your arm. The arm around the front can be in the front of the dog or behind the front arms. Your front arm can not go between the legs, your arm must be in front of both front legs or behind both front legs. If you are able, slowly build from a one inch hover until relaxed to a carry. For the early stages, most trainers like to put the dog down on the table, not the ground, until the dog is further along in their training.

For part 4, have your dog do a brief stand stay and you move your location to practice calling them to heel from different angles. When the dog is expert at this, add someone else standing there acting as the helper and ensure that your dog will leave them and recall to basic position.

Part 2 - the transfer

Without putting the dog down, the dog is transferred from the handler to the helper. For many dogs this is the most challenging part of the exercise. Some dogs will become too excited and try to engage the helper. This may take the form of licking the face, attempting to climb higher (like onto the shoulders), or becoming so wiggly that then fall out of the grasp.

Some dogs may become anxious, shy, or aggressive toward the helper. These dogs may try to escape the restraint, may growl, or may attempt to or succeed in biting. Growling and biting are a disqualification.

For the safety and comfort of all, it is important to teach the dog to tolerate the close contact with strangers and be prepared for different ways in which a helper may carry them. Some helpers do hug tight, or carry dogs awkwardly, or talk to dogs. Some helpers even can be afraid (not visually, but deep inside) of dogs.

Part 4

For V level, the handler walks alongside the helper as the dog is carried another 10 steps where the helper puts the dog on the ground.

This part of the exercise has a lot of "moving parts" and can be a challenge. As mentioned in an earlier tip, we suggest you practice the helper putting the dog down on the table before you work down on the ground.

When placing the dog on the ground the helper's face is near the dog's head. This could make the helper nervous, could make the dog nervous, and/or could tempt a dog to lick.

Some dogs squirm about at this stage potentially leading to fall, awkward landing, or firm gasping by the helper. Any of these might upset the dog in the moment and for future carries.

The more experience the dog has with different handlers and ways to be put down, the easier it is in the trial, when the helper is a stranger.

When on the ground the dog must stay with the helper until it is called back to the handler.

This can be reinforced by the helper feeding or playing with the dog immediately after placing put the dog on the ground.

Training ideas for the transfer

1- Going back to part 1, make sure the dog will tolerate you carrying him tightly, awkwardly, for even more than 20 steps.

2- Also from a previous tip, have the dog hold a ball for the transfer and carry.

3- Work the transfer on the table. The dog is standing comfortably, the handler grasps the dog but the dog remains on the table, then the helper comes in to take

the dog but the dog's feet remain on the table. Keep at this until the dog is comfortable with the "transfer". The next step is for the handler to lift the dog a few inches off the table and for the helper to take the dog mid-air, hold the dog for a bit, then put the dog back on the table.

4- Either with the previous tip or at another stage in the training, when the dog is being transferred a third person gives the dog treats.

5- Separately train the dog that the person who is approaching will give a treat or a toy to the dog.

6- Train the dog to stay calm when there are two or more humans surrounding it. Train even the situations when the dog is being squeezed between two people.

7- Practice different positions for the carry. Will the helper take the same position as the handler or will they take a different one. For example, the handler might grasp the dog at the 'arm pit' and groin ("inside-inside") and the helper takes the dog in front of the chest and under the tail ("outside-outside").

8- There is no shame in working the exercise in a muzzle during training for everyone to feel comfortable.

[Details for level A and B](#)

In levels A and B the exercise is made more difficult because the handler remains at the handoff location. From the handoff the helper walks 10 steps and puts the dog on the ground. In trial, with no additional cue, the dog must remain with the helper for at least three seconds then recall to the handler's cue swiftly and precisely.

You must teach your dog not to leave the helper without your command.

These exercises may benefit your training:

- After the helper puts the dog down he/she gives the dog a stay or position command (like sit) and rewards the dog with treats or a toy. (A treat may work better to keep the dog in position and relatively composed.) The dog may anticipate the helper cueing the dog to stay even in its absence.
- The vast majority of the time, 9 times out of 10, do NOT recall the dog but instead go to the helper and go to basic position yourself. The dog may learn to wait for you to join the helper.
- Teach the dog that being placed on the ground, by anyone, initially it will be from you, that this in itself is a cue to remain in place.

[Exercise Group or "Heeling around dogs"](#)

This is a great exercise to practice in your training group but don't neglect the fundamentals. Can your dog heel to your level of expectation on an empty field?
Can you and your dog do the routine - forward - figure 8 - halt - alone?
Can your dog heel around stationary people without dogs?
Can your dog heel around people moving in a circle with no other dogs?
Can your dog do a figure 8 around cones or chairs or another item that is neither a person nor dog-handle team?
Our advice is to work the fundamentals at home, out and about with your dog, and only bring in the actual routine when the components are complete.
"Heeling around dogs"

Once you and your dog are smoothly heeling during this routine, consider adding in the stay. Work your dog around the group then leave them somewhere on the field in a down stay and join the mingling group for the next dog-handler in your training club. This is a way to work the departure part of the stay in a smaller, more easily accomplishable slice.

Please watch this video :<https://youtu.be/Gt22psJYLtA>

the group exercise starts 2:00

Nosework: Tips, Tricks and Strategies

Area Search

Start of area search- procedures and handling tips

Before you start you should have: water for your dog and yourself, an extra bringsel if your dog is a bringsel alert, a powder bottle or any other wind checking device, watch or phone with timer. The dog may have a flat collar, a signal vest (often a bright color), and/or a bell. A small backpack or multiple pocket vest would be helpful. If you use a long leash for bringsel alert, it will be easier to keep this longer leash in a pack or fully in a pocket and bring your dog to the start on a shorter leash; it's safer and more comfortable to move through the woods with the long line tucked away until it is needed.

When you approach the judge, it's time to report. The check-in report is done when the dog is in the basic position. It is mandatory! Please choose your basic position location wisely, look around and find a flat surface. Do not make your dog sit on rocks or sticks – they will not do sit down properly, and you will struggle with your dog's obedience skills.

As soon as you start your search, put the leash in your pocket. Your hands must be free. During the search demonstrate that you are aware of how the wind is moving and that you incorporate this knowledge in your search tactics.

Trial Time

During the search it's your responsibility 1) to know when the time began, 2) to know how long you are allowed to search (for your level), and 3) to mark the exact time when hiding person(s) are found. Judges don't like for you to ask them how much time you have left; you should know this. During the debrief, the judge may ask what time(s) the victims were found or other time related questions.

Natural borders and thresholds

Many dogs see a surface change or vegetation change as a natural border and do not cross it when performing a search work. For example, they do not cross a wide trail or a concrete road in the woods, do not enter a thick vegetation, search only on the field and turn back when approaching the forest edge. Also they may hesitate when crossing a creek/river.

Here are some exercises that could help your dog to cross perceived borders seamlessly so they will fully obey their nose and your direction.

1. Work on this away from searching for a person.
2. Cross a threshold by just walking together across the change of terrain.
3. Use a formal retrieve or fun fetch by placing or tossing a dumbbell, bite sleeve, favorite toys etc. across the threshold.
4. Place a platform or table for the dog to jump on to across the threshold and formally send them to the table.
5. Use baskets or buckets with food in/on them placed beyond the threshold and send the dog to eat.
6. Do basic run-away exercises and let the helper reward the dog for approaching them, do not ask for alert.

Once all that is going well, work a search with the victim barely in threshold then move the victim deeper.

Be CREATIVE! Each dog is individual and needs an individual approach. There are no "standard" techniques how to solve a problem, find what works for YOUR dog best.

Strong 50m send out

To pass level V and level A on area-search you need to be able to send your dog 50 meters left or right or ahead (straight). This is mostly a muscle memory skill.

Performing the directability at a distance obedience task will help but you also need to work this skill in the field.

When you do any "send out" exercises try to place objects or helpers at least 50 meters away from you, or even 70-100 meters to make sure that the dog will perform "50 meters send out" in the test.

Area search, level A, Your moving pattern and timing

Here are the two options for you to move through your sector and direct your dog.

1. Hasty then detail

Start with a hasty, also called a rough, search by sending your dog right and left occasionally and moving fast to the finish line. Then move back to the start with a detailed, also called fine, search. Send the dog right and left the full length of your search area (50 meters) while advancing down the center line in slower increments but be sure you have enough time to cover your sector. Be sure to send your dog to parts of your sector not yet searched.

Note: It is VERY important to cross the finish line and only then turn back. Many judges put a hiding person at the finish line so be sure your dog checks fully 50 meters left and right.

2. Detail from the start

Begin with a detail, also called fine, search from the start line and make sure your dog searches left and right in all parts of the area. With this tactic there is less chance you will have any time left to return back to the start line again.

Note: It is VERY important to make your dog run left and right to the full depth of the area (50 meters) at the start line. Many judges put the helper there, on the start line, and in many cases, there is no time left to search in that area for the second time.

Mantrailing

Trail laying ideas

1. Set up mantrails that are easy for the layers.

If it's in an office plaza (for example), provide a clear map and explain/draw where to go and where to turn and hide, if it's going to be a known trail. Some trail layers can get lost among buildings in a new area.

2. "Hire" local kids.

Find kids that walk to a neighbor's house to play. Coordinate this with them - start the dog at the house, work through the challenge of that, then have your dog lead to the neighbor friend's house.

3. For your beer loving friends.

Start your friend off a mile from a beer garden. Have the dog work either a vehicle drop off or a vehicle bail, depending on how you set this up, then make your way to find the relaxed assistant

Split trails.

At RH trials there are no explicit split trails as described below but the competitions do start at a contaminated place like a bus stop or a store front so running these drills will help advance your dog's reliability.

The set up - have three people walk abreast at least 50 feet then from this departure place they all walk at least 100 feet further with one peeling off to the left and placed out of sight, one peeling off to the right and placed out of sight, and one continuing ahead and remaining visible for the dog.

The dog is given the scent article of either the person hiding to the left or hiding to the right. Can your dog focus on the correct trail especially in the face of the center person visible to the dog?

This is also a great set up for group training. Scent articles for all three walkers can be gathered and the exercise can be run by multiple teams. The center person can sometimes be the correct person. For advanced teams, do the exercise "blind" so the handler does not know whose scent article they have been given.

[My dog gets distracted by <> while trailing](#)

One thing to try is to work obedience near this same distraction. One challenge to mantrailing is that unlike tracking there is only the reward opportunity and it is at the end. Assuming your dog usually finds the reward at the end of the mantrail desirable enough to blast through distractions, try obedience.

Work a balance of moving toward/moving with you, going out, and stays - i.e. recall, heeling, retrieve, directional tables, position table, long stays, stay on and after dexterity equipment - pretty much all the elements.

Start close enough to the distraction that your dog can still perform and be rewarded. More closer and closer but it is key that the dog is well rewarded for the work near the distraction. We want the dog to understand that he can be rewarded for work even with this distraction present.

When the dog can do obedience/dexterity in the midst of your distraction, go back to mantrailing. Have your trail layer go near the distraction keeping in mind wind and terrain where scent may blow - we want the dog to likely need to pass by or pass through the distraction *with* the trail layer near the distraction.

The idea is that the dog will work despite the distraction with the hope that a reward at the end of the trail is near.

Keep the communication going and tell us what the distractions for your dog are?

[Alert types: Bringsel alert](#)

[What is bringsel?](#)

The bringsel is an item which snaps on the dog's collar (see pics). The dog is trained that when he has located the missing person or, in case of blood tracking, the game to be recovered, the dog grabs the bringsel in its mouth and returns to the handler.

This act is the cue to the handler that the dog has located the missing person (or game). The dog now leads the handler back to the missing person (or game). There are two types of bringsels: European and Scandinavian/Norwegian-style. (There is also an “American bringsel” which can be used in SAR and medical alert work. We will touch on this use separately and later in the series.) The European style and Scandinavian/Norwegian-style bringsels each have their advantages and disadvantages. The choice between these two is generally based on team or country tradition

See the pictures.

1: Norwegian,



2: European



[Why use a bringsel alert for SAR dogs?](#)

1. The area you are covering may be quite large and/or the terrain (like fjords and valleys) makes it difficult to hear the dog's barking.

2. Some SAR teams or locality regulation require a non-bark alert. (This is common in Scandinavian countries.)
 3. With retrained police dogs, or multitasking bite sport dogs, the bringsel alert helps to avoid contact with the victim and potential for an accidental bite. (This rational was used in the Baltic countries.)
 4. This can be a good option if other alert styles don't work for a given dog-handler team.
 5. A given dog trainer or team may prefer their dogs perform a bringsel alert.
- What dogs can be most easily trained to alert with bringsel?
Dogs who have a strong natural retrieve desire or who have been taught a solid retrieve.

[European bringsel alert training.](#)

In our training tips we will discuss training methods with the European bringsel alert. Methods and techniques vary for different teams and by different trainers but here are some tips that may work for you and your dog.

There are two approaches to begin, depending on the dog.

1. For dogs with a trained cue to "bring" - there is no need for active participation of the helper. This method is good for dogs, who may touch the person (which is undesirable), who were trained in bite work (we don't want any confusion of what to do when they have found the person), or who are shy and wish to avoid direct contact with a stranger.
2. The other type of dog that may thrive with a bringsel alert is the natural retrieving dog (any breed) who hasn't been taught a formal retrieve but enjoys retrieving naturally. This type of team necessitates a lot of active assistance from the helper to build reliability.

The type of dog, one with a trained retrieve or one that has natural retrieving desire, leads to a difference at the beginning of the process but the advanced and final stages are the same.

In the beginning you will need a "training" bringsel. This bringsel will never be attached to the dog's collar. The material of the bringsel can be any material or combination of materials that the dog enjoys holding in their mouth. This could be braided fleece, leather tug, French linen tug, soft PVC, hard PVC, antler, Kong (R) Squeaker Fetch Stick, or something else of similar cylindrical shape. Try different things to see what your dog likes! It should be big enough for tug of war games and be visible in any environment. Many trainers prefer light colored bringsels.

Sport Style / Beginner

Before we start describing training methods, we need to state again EMPHATICALLY that in the beginning the training bringsels are ALWAYS on the ground. When working in a systematic manner as outlined here, there will be an easy transition from the bringsel at the helper to the bringsel attached to the dog's collar.

Beginning steps for the dog with a trained retrieve.

The goal is to build an understanding that the retrieve object and scent of a human are connected. In the early stages the bringsel always stays on the ground at the feet of a helper. (This can not be emphasized enough!)

Why at the feet and not in the helper's hand or held near the head? When the bringsel remains on the ground this helps avoid any opportunity for the dog to have physical contact with the helper and teaches the dog to keep a respectful distance (1 meter is optimal) to the helper and to stay away from their head.

Step 1.

Place the helper on a field at any distance convenient for your dog to perform the retrieve exercise. Leave your dog in a stay, you walk out and put the bringsel at the feet of the helper. Return to the dog and give your retrieve cue. The dog should complete a formal retrieve to hand. If your training bringsels are fairly large and thus easily visible, it is easier for the dog to complete the retrieve.

As you progress, have the helper assume different positions including- standing, seated on the ground, sitting in a chair, and laying down.

It is very important that it is you who puts the bringsel at the feet of the helper. Your goal is to avoid any excessive excitement of the dog and possible contact with the helper.

Step 2.

Toss the bringsel at the feet of the helper. As before, work this drill with the helper in standing, sitting and laying positions. Practice the retrieve exercise.

Step 3.

Place the helper behind a tree/wall etc. Leave the dog in a stay and go to the helper. Show the dog that you are "tossing" the bringsel behind the obstruction. (If you think you cannot toss well enough, just imitate this action, and the helper can put the bringsel at their own feet.)

Return to the dog and give the retrieve command. The dog is expected to retrieve the bringsel.

Increase the distance and vary the hiding places.

Step 4.

Ask the helper to hide in the woods and put the bringsel at his feet. (The dog doesn't see the person enter the woods).

Bring the dog to the starting point, have the dog stay, go into the woods 4-10 yards away from the dog and imitate as if you are tossing the bringsel.

Return back to the dog and give the retrieve cue.

If the dog finds the person and brings the bringsel to you, your beginning stage is successfully finished. If the dog struggles with the last step, go back to the earlier steps and build up the dog's understanding.

Natural Retrievers /Beginner

In this type of beginner training you will need an active participation of your helper. The reaction, precision, and creativity of this person are very important. This is a training style for dogs who naturally retrieve objects.

Step 1.

In an open space, have the dog on a stay or on leash so he can not go until send. Toss the training bringsel to your helper. The helper holds the object and teases the dog. The helper then puts the bringsel on the ground at their feet, ensuring the dog sees it. When the dog is focused on the helper and the bringsel, send the dog. If necessary the helper can move the bringsel on the ground (with his/her hand) a little just to attract the dog's attention. As soon as the dog grabs the bringsel, the handler calls back with cheering and happy voice. Trade the bringsel for a treat or another toy; play tug with the bringsel; or in another way, reward the dog. The dog doesn't have to sit and do a formal retrieve finish procedure.

Have the helper assume different positions - sitting in a chair, sitting on the ground, laying down, etc.

Once this is fluid, you can introduce the search cue.

Step 2.

In an open space, have the dog on a stay or on leash so he can not go until send. Toss the training bringsel to your helper. The helper runs away though remains in sight. From here the sequence is the same as the earlier step. The helper then puts the bringsel on the ground at their feet, ensuring the dog sees it. When the dog is focused on the helper and the bringsel, send the dog. If necessary the helper can move the bringsel on the ground (with his/her hand) a little just to attract the dog's attention. As soon as the dog grabs the bringsel, the handler calls back with cheering and happy voice. Trade the bringsel for a treat or another toy; play tug with the bringsel; or in another way, reward the dog. The dog doesn't have to sit and do a formal retrieve finish procedure.

Have the helper assume different positions - sitting in a chair, sitting on the ground, laying down, etc.

Important! At the end of this stage we expect that the dog will grab the bringsel and return to the handler without the specific recall cue since the distance is short and

the handler is in sight when the bringsel has been taken in the mouth. If this doesn't happen and the dog stays with the helper and tries to interact with him offering to play with the bringsel, the helper stands up and turns away from the dog, making himself passive and not interesting.

Step 3.

For this step the helper will end up behind an obstacle.

Have the dog on a stay or on leash so he can not go until send. Toss the training bringsel to your helper. The helper runs away behind an obstacle (tree, wall, grassy area, etc.). The helper is sitting or lying down, the bringsel is at his feet, the hand is ready to help the dog to find the bringsel if needed: The helper will move the bringsel a little on the ground, but not give it directly to the dog's mouth, the dog has to grab it from the ground.

You will want the helper to tell you when the dog has grabbed the bringsel. This can be done by the helper saying "yes" or, you can use a walkie talkies radio click, or you could set up a phone call with the phone on the ground and the helper says "yes" through the phone. As soon as you get this signal, call the dog back. As before, reward the dog by trading the bringsel for a treat or another toy, playing tug, or something else.

Step 4.

Begin to fade the recall for this step, keep the helper behind an obstacle.

Keep the same set up as in the previous step including the signal from the helper that the dog has taken the bringsel but this time, wait for the dog to be partially back to you before you give the recall cue. Lengthen the delay for giving the recall cue from the dog 1/4 of the way back to you already, to 1/2 way back to you already, to 3/4 of the way back to you already. As before reward, the dog for returning to you with the bringsel.

Step 5.

Discontinue the recall cue, keep the helper behind an obstacle.

Keep the same set up as in the previous two steps including the signal from the helper that the dog has taken the bringsel but this time, but now you will replace the recall cue with general praise celebrating the dog's return and not give a formal obedience cue to return. Lengthen the delay for giving praise for when the dog 1/4 of the way back to you already, to 1/2 way back to you already, to 3/4 of the way back to you already. As before reward, the dog for returning to you with the bringsel.

Step 6.

Building toward an actual hide.

Have the dog on leash. Toss the training bringsel to your helper. The helper enters the woods in a calm manner as the dog watches. Walk the dog away and delay the search time for at least a few minutes.

Bring the dog to the starting point. Ask the helper to pop up and attract the dog with his motion or voice and hide again. The helper will be in the woods with the bringsel at their feet. Once they are again hidden, send the dog.

If the dog finds the person and brings the bringsel to you, the beginning stage is successfully finished. If the dog struggles with the last step, go back to the earlier steps and build up the dog's understanding.

How the full alert chain looks, no nose work.

The bringsel alert chain has the following steps.

1. Pick up the bringsel at the hiding person.
2. Without any recall cue, come back to the handler with the bringsel in the mouth.
3. Present the bringsel to the handler, remain with the handler until they take off the bringsel and attach the leash. Leashing up the dog is optional. Some handlers just follow the dog.
4. Return the shortest way to the hiding person and stop nearby without touching them (1 meter is optimal).

Notes about each step-

1. We teach the dog to pick it up from the ground at the feet of the hiding person. The reasons were mentioned above in the previous training tips. (We will cover how to train for high hides later.)
2. You need to encourage your dog to do obstacles (crawling under, jumping on, off and over, running around, etc.), halts, long distances, crossing water and underbrush covered terrains with a bringsel in the mouth. The dog should be comfortable carrying it in any temperature, environments, and when tired or excited. This should be worked separately.
3. You need to decide whether your dog will be working on leash or off leash. If the first, the dog needs to be encouraged to pull. Also, you will have to move behind the dog no matter what obstacle there is ahead (see next section). If the second, you will need to train your dog to move slower and wait for you.
4. You will be not allowed to go ahead of the dog or encourage it to move using multiple cues. There will be only one "show me" command to give the dog a cue to return to the found person. Also, it is OK to give the dog a cue to stop and wait if you have to untangle the leash, move over an obstacle yourself etc. After such a break it is allowed to give a return cue again, but it has to be reasonable in that situation. The dog has to return on a shortest way, usually it's the way how the dog came back to you, but not how the hiding person was found. Be ready to move through bushes, some terrain that is easy for the dog, but not easy for the handler. A helmet, goggles and gloves are recommended.

Stage 2. Intermediate. Adding clarity about the bringsel as we improve on other aspects.

In the appropriate conditions (see below), attach a short bringsel (3-5 inches depending on the height of the dog) to the dogs' collar during your active everyday routines: walking, playing, hiking, or any other activities where you can supervise the dog. We wish the dog to learn that this object to be a part of the collar and not a toy to play with. If the dog grabs it in these non-search situations, ignore this behavior.

1. If the dog grabs the bringsel in these situations, do not correct the dog, otherwise it will hesitate to pick up the bringsel during the training. Ignore this behavior.
2. Don't attach it when multiple dogs are playing.
3. If the dog persists in taking the bringsel, move it so the bringsel is inconvenient to grab or use a smaller bringsel.
4. Avoid situations where the bringsel gets tangled (bushes, rocks, etc.) and the dog gets startled.

When in search situations, you should fade playing tug-of-war with the training bringsel. The dog has to be interested in bringing it, but now we switch to reinforcing with food or playing tug with a different item.

At the same time you should be

- 1 - Increasing the search distance
- and, separately, continuing to perfect the
- 2 - Training the whole alert chain.

Don't combine these two just yet but continue to challenge the dog.

To be continued

Training the whole alert chain (no real search)

The alert chain consists of the following parts

- 1 – Picking up the bringsel when they are in close proximity (a few feet or less without touching) of the hiding person
- 2 – Returning to the handler on the shortest possible way
- 3 - Allowing the handler take the bringsel and to attach the leash (if you are doing this part on leash)
- 4 – Remaining quietly with the handler until the on cue “show me”/“where”/any other cue you prefer is given
- 5 - Leading the handler to the hiding person (on leash or off leash)
- 6 – Remaining near the hiding person, ideally three feet away, in any position (sit, stand, down), and not touching them

Once you have these individual components trained, start chaining parts together. Put more time on the parts that are more difficult for the dog.

The main exercise would be the following.

1. Start in an open field or a sparse wooded area. The helper takes the bringsel and runs away/walks away on any distance that the handler believes the dog will be successful retrieving the bringsel. The handler gives a cue to bring the bringsel (a search cue is OK). The dogs brings the bringsel. The handler may encourage the dog to return using any verbal or treat reinforcements. It is ok to trade the bringsel for a piece of treat.

2. When the dog is returning to the owner with the bringsel, the helper moves about 10 yards away from the hiding place toward the owner-dog team, in full view and remains there. Next, the handler attaches the leash or, if doing this off leash, grasps the collar and says in a very loud voice "SHOW ME" still holding the dog by collar or leash and not letting the dog move.

****KEY STEP****

3. Upon hearing "show me", the helper attracts the dog attention with moving about, possibly raising arms too and runs back to their hiding place all the time ***ALSO*** calling to the dog (could be "help" or "hey pup" or something else generic). As soon as the helper re-hides the handler lets the dog move to the helper.

4. Very important is:

-the handler follows the dog and doesn't show the direction where to go

-the "show me" command is loud enough for the helper to hear it and they must act immediately. In the first stages of training this skill this command is for the helper, not the dog. If the helper is far or it's a noisy environment, the handler and the helper use a radio but it can't be so far or so noisy that the dog can not hear the helper attracting the dog's attention.

-the handler lets the dog move towards the helper **ONLY** if the dog is interested and willing to go there. If this is not happening, make the exercise easier by shortening the distance or making the helper to attract the dog in a more intense way.

5. When the dog-handler team approaches the helper, the handler gives a command to sit/down/stay. When the dog complies, the dog is rewarded. This could be by the helper, handler, or both. If the dog is not very enthusiastic to return to the helper, the helper feeds it. If the dog is too enthusiastic and wants to touch the helper, the handler should reward the dog.

7. When the dog is going to the helper briskly, directly, and confidently, cut out the part where the helper moves about after the "show me". Now, the helper remains in their spot the whole time but after "show me" the helper calls out to the dog to encourage them to come in. As before, the handler is only following the dog to

return to the helper, if the dog does not take you there, re-evaluate and find a way to have the dog be more enthusiastic.

8. Once the dog is doing well at the re-find, remove the audible help and have the dog lead you to the hiding person without any assistance from the helper.

9. The bringsel alert chain may consider to be successfully trained if the dog brings the bringsel and leads the handler to the hiding person without any help of this hiding person.

Transition from the bringsel on the ground to the bringsel on the collar.

Before you transition the dog to the bringsel on the collar the following prerequisites must be met:

1. The dog is used to have a bringsel on the collar during the everyday walking routine.

2. The dog is motivated and successful at finding a hiding person and bringing the training bringsel back.

3. The dog doesn't stay at the hiding person longer than needed to pick up the training bringsel.

4. The dog is looking for the training bringsel at the feet/body of the hiding person, but not at hands/face level.

Now your dog is ready to transition to the bringsel attached to the collar.

Step 1. Open field.

Attach the real bringsel to the collar, make sure it is hanging low enough that the dog can grab it without any difficulties. When the dog has completed its training a slightly shorter bringsel may be best but for this interim step, going a bit long is ok.

The helper takes the training bringsel and runs/walks away, lays down/sits down and puts the training bringsel on the ground slightly covering it with a foot/leg. We recommend that the training and real bringsel are made from the same material, are identical, other than perhaps being of different sizes.

Send the dog using your search cue.

The dog runs to the helper and now the dog can choose to grab the bringsel attached to the collar or the one on the ground.

Once either is grabbed, the helper gives a signal that a bringsel is grabbed and the handler happily recalls the dog.

Step 2 (may be skipped)

If in the step 1 the dog grabbed the training bringsel, this step is important. If the dog grabbed the real bringsel, you may skip this step.

Attach the real bringsel to the collar, make sure it is hanging low enough that the dog can grab it without any difficulties. As noted above, it may be hanging a bit lower than needed for the more advanced alert level.

The helper takes the training bringsel and runs/walks away, lays down/sits down and puts the training bringsel on the ground.

The helper covers the bringsel further than is step 1; that is, covers more than the half of this training bringsel.

Send the dog using your search cue.

The dog runs to the helper and now the dog can choose to grab the bringsel attached to the collar or the one on the ground.

Once either is grabbed, the helper gives a signal that a bringsel is grabbed and the handler happily recalls the dog.

If the dog still grabs the training bringsel, set things up again but this time the helper covers nearly all of this training bringsel.

There will be a moment when the dog grabs its own bringsel on the collar instead of searching for one on the ground.

Step 3.

Attach the real bringsel to the collar, make sure it is hanging low enough that the dog can grab it without any difficulties. As noted above, it may be hanging a bit lower than needed for the more advanced alert level.

The helper takes the training bringsel and runs/walks away, lays down/sits down, but there will be no bringsel on the ground.

Send the dog using your search cue.

The dog runs to the helper and grabs its own bringsel immediately.

The helper gives a signal that a bringsel is grabbed and the handler happily recalls the dog.

If the step 3 is successful, the transition to the real bringsel is completed.

From now on you train the alert chain like it was described in the previous "training tips" with the real bringsel on the dog's collar.

Unfortunately, after the dog learns to grab the bringsel that is attached to the collar, the threat of false alerts increases. How to avoid it or correct it, we will discuss in the future tips.

Level 3. Advanced. Complete search and alert chain.

At this stage you are preparing your dog for certification as a real search dog or level V and A of IRO certification rules; you are combining advanced search tasks and alert behavior.

When setting up advanced scenting problems and expecting a flawless alert behavior, mistakes can occur.

To minimize problems, try these-

1. About half the time, do not have the bringsel attached, instead have the hiding person have it and place it at their feet.
2. "Backwash" the skills to keep the reinforcement rate up and solidify the basics - both basic exercises and intermediate exercises were described in earlier posts.
3. If something goes wrong of the alert behavior chain take out that link and work on it separately.
4. Videotape the alert part and analyze what went wrong, what can be improved and what can be added as a challenge next time.

In this stage of training you may need help of a more experienced person to work on mistakes.

In the next training tip we will discuss the most common mistakes and challenges we experienced during our own training sessions and evaluations. Please send/post your questions if you have some related to this type of SAR alert.

On the video the handler is moving slowly because the dog is old and cannot cover the area faster. This is a "fun run" for an older dog.

The alert part starts 5:55min

[Bringsel alert- LAST segment](#)

Here are a few challenges which may occur with a bringsel alert at the final stages of training.

1. The dog picks up the bringsel as soon as the search starts. This could be due to arousal, excitement, or frustration.

Possible solution - Send the dog to search initially without the bringsel then attach it a few minutes later.

Possible solution - Go back to having the bringsel attached when you take the dog for walks so the dog understands that although it may be attached to the collar, unless he has found someone, there is no need to grasp it.

Additional tip - avoid making the procedure of attaching the bringsel as a silent cue for search. Ideally the cue to search is your verbal 'search' but it could also be attaching a bell, harness, or other gear but not the bringsel.

2. The dog takes the bringsel too soon, further than 6-8 feet away from the hiding person.

Solution - Go back to the bringsel is at the feet of the victim instead of attached. Start with 90% of the time the bringsel is with the victim then 80%, etc. until you get back to 50% with the victim. Keep this 50/50 ratio for a while, perhaps always during training.

3. The dog has no wish to return to the hiding person, ignores them, misses them.

Solution - Make the return to the hiding person rewarding. This can be done with food, play, sincere praise or other things the dog finds rewarding.

"American bringsel"

This alert is a variation of "Free indication" where the dog runs back and forth between the helper and the handler. For RH competitions it is allowed for tracking, area search, or rubble.

There are many possibilities for the "Free indication". The dog can return to the handler and can indicate that they have found the person by

- jumping on the *handler*
- barking at the *handler*
- sitting near the handler in a certain way (obvious to the handler that this is not just a plain sit nearby)
- (for those dog-handler teams very in tune to each other) staring at the handler in a certain way
- grabbing the bringsel affixed to the handler
- or another way chosen by the team.

This post will address the bringsel option.

The final picture is that the dog runs out to search, finds the victim, returns to the handler, tugs on the bringsel attached to the handler, the handler says "show me" (or other cue), the dog runs to the victim again as the handler follows, after getting near (but not touching the victim) the dog runs again to the handler and tugs on the bringsel. Most judges like to see the dog going to the handler at least two times before the final wait at the helper. The exercise ends when the dog and handler are both near the victim and the handler asks if the victim needs assistance.

Dogs that enjoy tugging are well suited to this method.

One method on how to train this behavior.

For the marker savvy dog, when the dog comes near the training victim, the training victim will click or give whatever marker the dog knows ("yes", peep from a whistle, etc.). The marker will then activate the handler who will deliver the reward.

Again - the training helper (victim) gives the click or "yes" and the handler gives the reward.

Initially the reward could be food but once you get into a rhythm, the reward should be a tug toy. When the distances are greater, use a walkie talkie or phone text to communicate. This confirmation from the training victim prevents the dog from being rewarded for returning to the handler without locating the subject.

Add distance and difficulty for this one pass indication.

Adding the refind, one method.

Once the dog and handler have celebrated with a tug, the handler goes 'dead' and ceases play with toy and halts any engagement, eventually the dog will out the toy. At this point the training victim (aka helper) can call out to the dog to solicit a return. The handler follows the dog thereby moving closer to the victim. Once the dog returns to the victim the dog is marked again and the handler rewards. This toggling between the victim and the handler can be repeated many times as the distance between the two diminishes.

Moving to the final picture

"Show me" or whatever the handler's refind cue is becomes the cue to out the tug and move back to the victim. Some handler's may find it easiest to say "out" then "show me" while others find it cleaner to wait for the dog to out on their own then "show me" indicates that the fun begins again with the refind.

Why choose the "American bringsel" find-refind free indication over a bringsel indication? Both can be good options for many dogs. The "American bringsel" has an element of a fun tug session with the handler but also requires more than one "refind" unlike the traditional bringsel alert.

Some troubleshooting and trouble preventing ideas

[My dog is distracted by squirrels during obedience and tracking.](#)

Squirrels are a tricky distractions since they are more difficult to control than other distractions, but this can be done. Find squirrel-free places to build up reliable behaviors. If you get surprised by a squirrel where it was not expected, give your dog an end of session word ("all done") and do your best to get them out of that environment. It is likely that they will not hear you as they are focused on the squirrel but it is a good habit for you to get into and this cue will be helpful information for the dog in future sessions.

Once the dog is performing nice obedience and nice tracks in squirrel-free environments but with other distractions, you are ready to bring in the squirrels.

Go to a squirrel-rich environment and have the dog on equipment different from your usual obedience or tracking gear; perhaps on a harness and a retractable leash or long line. Basic idea is that the dog will "beg" to interact with the squirrels by obeying you. Squirrels are part of the world that you will encounter, instead of working against the dog to force the dog to ignore them, show the dog how access can be gained.

Initially ask for something quite easy like looking at you or perhaps a sit. If this is not easy, move further away until the dog can do this small bit of work.

Once the dog obeys, the two of you can go and chase the squirrel into a tree ("tree the squirrel"). Reset the dog and ask for some obedience (for tracking behavior you can work an article indication) then let the dog tree the squirrel.

In a single session you may get more and more obedience, for instance a quicker sit, a few steps of pretty heeling, an extended and precise article indication, or this progress may come over several sessions. At the initial stage every small bit of work is rewarded by treeing the squirrel.

As you progress, add in a small delay before the treeing occurs. Once the dog can pause slightly you can have the dog wear their normal obedience/tracking gear *and* the other gear (perhaps a harness). The new procedure will be that you work on your formal training/competing equipment then mark when they have earned a squirrel reward, then quickly switch the line to the squirrel chasing gear. When you reset, put the dog back on the formal obedience/tracking gear.

As you progress, slip in a non-squirrel reward into the session. For example, ask for a set up into a pretty heel (stationary heel) then release the dog to tree the squirrel. Get the dog back, ask for stationary heel then squirrel, get the dog back, ask for stationary heel then give food rewards or tug. If your dog will not take your food or toy at this point, move further away from the squirrel zone until he will eat or play then take him back, ask for work, reward with squirrel, then end it for that session. Keep the rate of squirrel reinforcements high but mix in others too. There may come a time where your dog is doing excellent obedience or a track through a squirrel jamboree but it is not appropriate or possible to reward the dog with treeing the squirrel in that situation.

You will need to wean off the squirrel gear and have the dog understand that a release to tree a squirrel may come at any time, not only when wearing this other gear.

The dog may find squirrels less arousing since it is given as a frequent reward. In this case, great, you have your food, toy, and a squirrel reward available to you. The dog may find squirrels more arousing since they are adrenalized by the activity. In this case, the desire to chase can become a strong motivator to perform obedience/tracking behavior for you.

What to do if your dog wants to self-release to the squirrel game without your releasing them? Give your end of session word and do your best to get them out of that environment. On a future session start further from the squirrels and/or ask for less before releasing them to tree a squirrel. You must ask for more to make progress but be conscientious of what the dog is capable of giving you in that moment.

My area search dog is choosing to prioritize her eyes over her nose.

Suggestion 1.

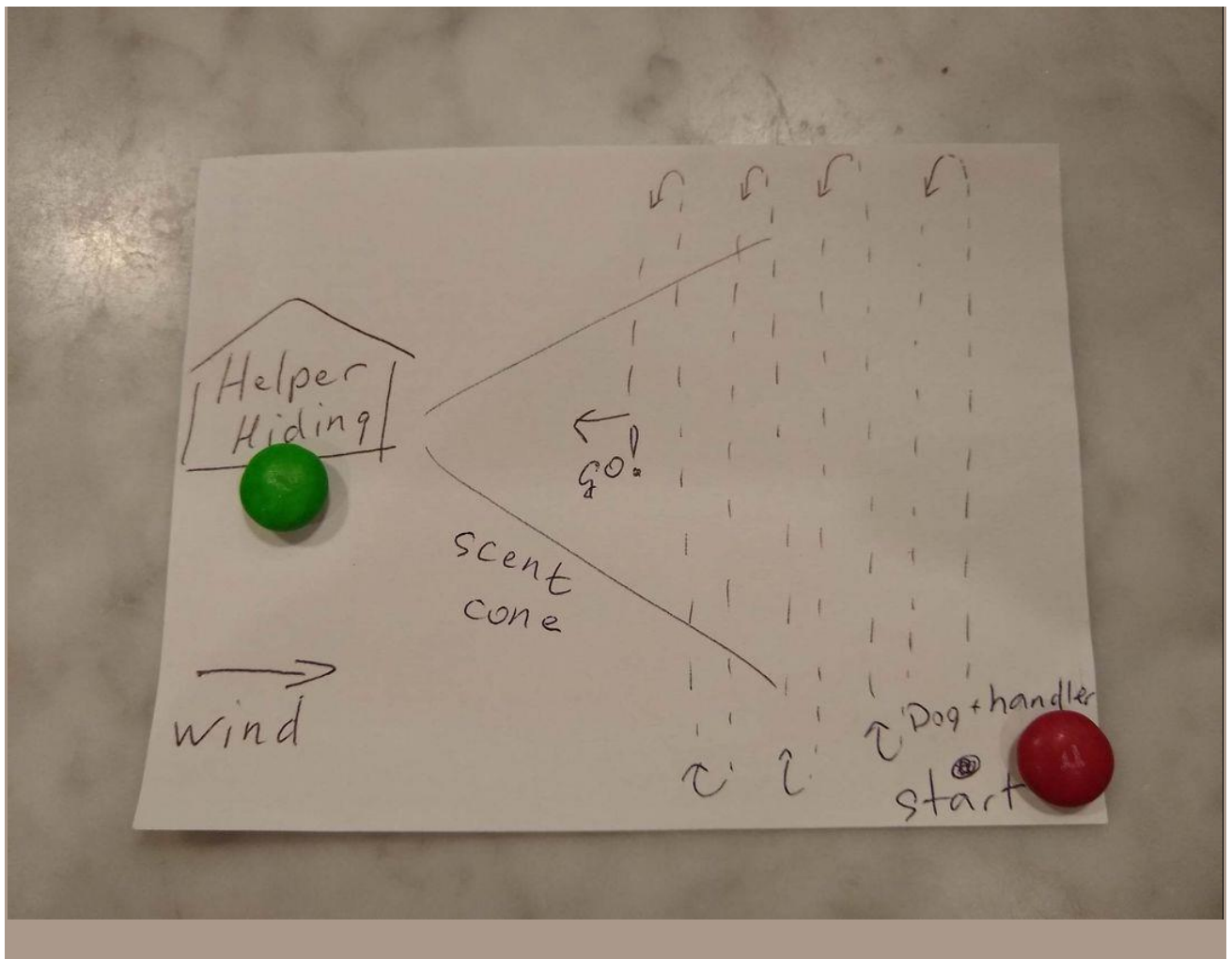
Work the dog on a long line considering the wind direction and human scent. When you see their behavior change, drop the line or keep the line loose as the dog picks up speed to get to the person.

You need to know your dog's reaction to finding the scent pool. This could be a whip of their head, change in speed, change in tail carriage, change in ear set, change in breathing, or something else.

How to set up?

- Make a "wind checker" using a long stick or a single tall plant and attach a stripe of brightly colored fabric far from the hiding place to always have a visual sign of the wind direction.
- A semi-open field, with hiding places but where then line won't get tangled would be an ideal environment
- Make sure the person is not visible even from the close distance. Use tall grass, a bush, or a camouflage blanket to ensure they are not visible.
- Start from a long distance and move perpendicular to the hiding person. If the dog doesn't catch the scent, turn around and go back in a tight zig-zag pattern. If the wind is changing directions, you can move in a "snail pattern" making circles around the hiding place and tightening them (moving closer).
- Let your dog go only when you are sure it got the scent (the wind checker will help you).

Don't be disappointed if the first times the dog doesn't get the scent until very close to the hiding person. It's a new game.



Suggestion 2

* Work the dog in the dark or with a very well hidden person, like in a ghillie suit.

Suggestion 3

* Work directional control. Time during the search may be your enemy here but if you can direct the dog to, or past good objectives, even if reliant on their eyes, the dog will scent the person once you move them close to the source.

Suggestion 4. Using runaways to build nose reliance

Option 1

You will need one helper and field/wooded area where skirting is possible (see image). This exercise can also be used for a rubble dog and for that you will need an easily accessible hiding place in the rubble. The wind must be stable for this drill. The set up will have the wind into the face of the dog.

There will be three places of note in this drill - starting point, stopping point, and hiding place.

The starting point is where the hider begins to tease the dog then runs 20-100 steps into the wind then stops. This is the stopping point.

The number of steps depends on the dog's training level, drive, motivation, and possibly the terrain.

Once the hider is at the stopping point, the handler moves the dog to the dog is unable to see the helper on the move.

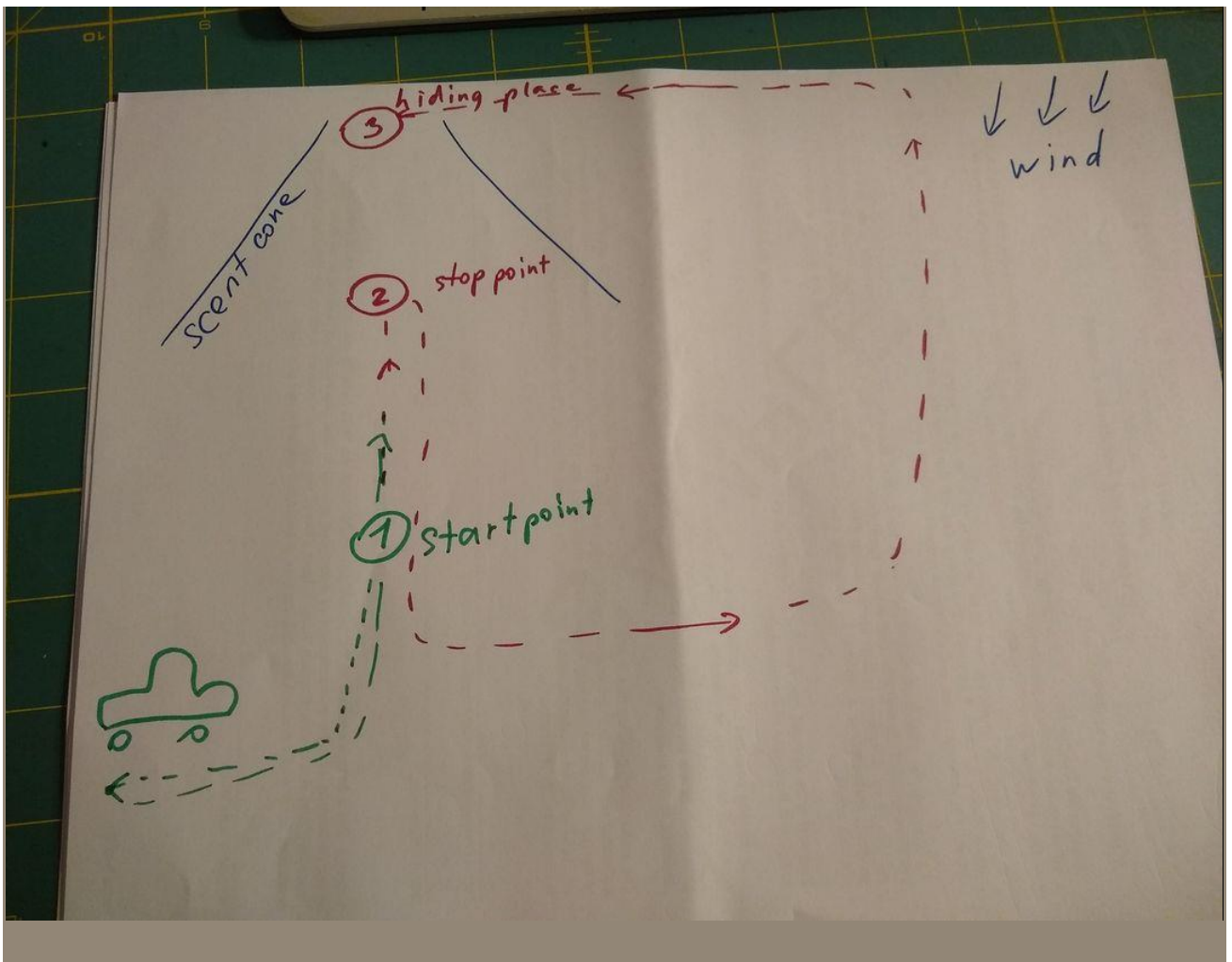
Once the dog's vision is blocked, the helper leaves the stopping point and moves to the hiding place. The manner in which the helper changes locations is not direct *this is key*. The helper skirts around the area (see image) preventing the dog from following footfalls and instead relying on air scent.

The hiding place distance should be such that the scent cone from the hiding place is also present at the stopping point. To put another way, the hider's scent from the hiding place will waft all the way to the stopping point. Testing the wind frequently to gauge the air movement is important.

Once the hider is at the hiding place, the dog is brought to the starting point. While holding onto the dog's leash, the handler will walk a few steps toward the stopping point to encourage the dog to move in the direction where he recalls being teased by the hider. When the dog shows interest in locating the hider, the handler lets the dog go.

If the dog is confused or unmotivated the dog should be put away and the whole teasing and moving locations will be set up again; maybe not on the same day depending on the dog's enthusiasm. When the exercise is worked again the distance between the stopping point and hiding place should be shortened, the level of teasing should increase, and any other changes should be made to make the exercise easier for the dog.

When the dog is motivated, leaving the starting place moving toward the stopping place may be on memory of the teasing - that is ok - once the dog gets to the stopping point, he will rely on air scenting the hider to make his way to the hiding place.



Option 2

You will need two helpers, the first one will tease the dog while the second will hide. This exercise can be used in a dense wood and in the rubble. This exercise is often used for

training rubble dogs where it is not possible for the helper run and hide himself. The wind must be stable for this drill.

Again, the first assistant will tease and run in the direction of the search while the second assistant is already in place (hiding). The dog will not see the second assistant leave to hide.

There will be four places of note in this drill.

- The starting point where the dog and handler team will begin. This location is no in the scent cone of the hidden assistant.
- The point where the teaser assistant pops up.
- The point where the teaser assistant stops. If a runaway of the teaser assistant is not needed, this can be the same location of the point where the teaser assistant pops up.

- The hiding place of the other (hiding) assistant.

To begin, the hidden assistant is in place (unseen by the dog), the teaser assistant is at their spot 20-100 paces from the dog-handler team starting point, and the dog-handler team is at the starting place.

The teaser assistant pops up and attracts the dog's attention. This could be by showing toy or food container, calling to the dog, or doing anything else to focus the attention to the teaser assistant. If movement is needed to attract the dog (a runaway), the teaser will move 10-20 steps further away and into the scent cone of the hidden assistant. If more movement is not needed, ensure that the teaser assistant location is in the scent cone of the hidden assistant.

Once the dog is aroused and focused at the teaser assistant stopping point, the handler moves the dog away and blocks the dog's vision. Now the teaser assistant moves back to the starting point and behind the handler.

The handler moves the dog, on leash, toward the teaser stopping point (now vacant of the teaser). As the dog shows interest in searching for someone, have the dog off leash and begin to search.

If the dog is confused or unmotivated, the dog should be put away and the whole teasing and

moving locations will be set up again; maybe not on the same day depending on the dog's

enthusiasm. When the exercise is worked again the distance between the stopping point and

hiding place should be shortened, the level of teasing should increase, and any other changes should be made to make the exercise easier for the dog.

When the dog is motivated, leaving the starting place moving toward the stopping place may

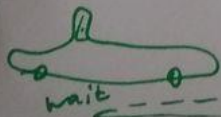
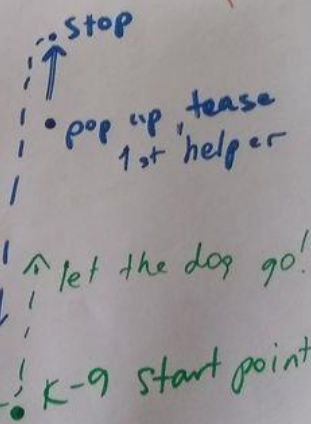
be on memory of the teasing - that is ok - once the dog gets to the stopping point, he will rely on air scenting the hider to make his way to the hiding place.

For this exercise you can play with the direction of the scent cone of the hidden person and the stopping point of the teasing assistant. When the dog is starting out, you can have the dog working into a scent cone. When the dog is more experienced, the dog can be started perpendicular to the scent cone.

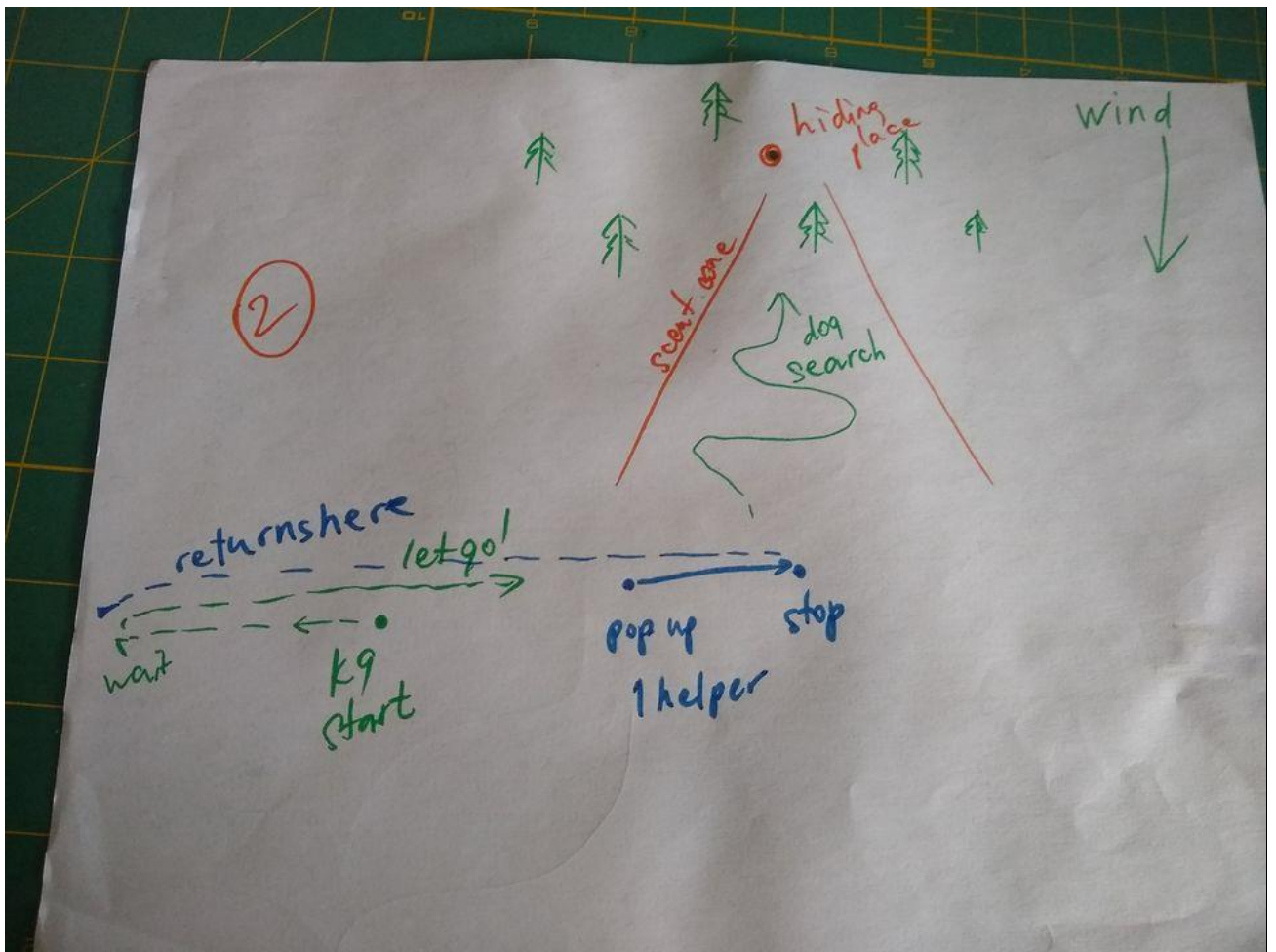
1



wind
↓



wait
←
returns here



My dog just potters along in the search and we run out of time

1. Place rewards at the far end of the search area and walk briskly to them. When you have hidlers, they will hide at the far end. When you are working alone your reward targets will be placed at the far end. Once the dog is briskly moving to the end, place a victim (or when working alone, a reward target) near where they will pass by. The dog may stop at this victim/reward on the way out to the end. If this happens, give them an extra big reward. If the dog continues to the end move back toward the start in such a manner that the dog will again pass by the victim/reward. Change the approach to take into account the wind and terrain effect on the scent cone. Work to balance the dog's push to go to the end and the understanding that he must also be searching along the way.

2. Ask a knowledgeable friend if they feel your dog really understands the task at hand. Your dog may wonder if this is a casual walk in the woods and you don't want them ranging too far out of your sight. Clear up the dog's confusion with runaways and other foundational exercises outlined in earlier tips.

[My dog just blows past the start and doesn't begin really searching until later](#)

There are a number of exercises you can do to work on this.

1. Work some obedience before approaching the search area. This may help get the dog in a working mindset instead of a run around to woods aimlessly mindset. Some people may advocate exercising your dog before a search. This may work for some but free running can be logistically difficult, the dog may be tired and panting and thus less fully able to sniff, and it rewards a hectic state of mind. Working obedience first is a better idea.
2. Place rewards at the threshold, building up to deep left and deep right. When working alone you can place targets where the dog is rewarded (directly or indirectly) for searching laterally along the threshold. When you have hidlers, place them near the threshold, moving them further left and right as the dog is more successful. Your "reward target" could be a dog food bowl with a treat inside, could be a platform that when the dog mounts it you deliver food or a toy, or a similar idea.
3. Practice testing the wind and chatting about the search strategy at the start to make the dog wait. Keeping the wind direction in mind, place the victim where the dog will notice the scent from the starting area.

[My dog is touching or bothering the victim on bark alert](#)

Ideas to potentially fix a dog touching or bothering the victim on an area search bark alert :

Prevention is always the best. If your dog starts touching the victim, stop allowing him to practice this and come up with a training plan to fix it.

1. Try working the alert behavior at short distances without the search. The dog may be calm enough to do the correct work. Increase distances slowly.
2. Work the search on leash or long line. As the dog comes into the victim, give him a "fixation" cue like sit or down and use the leash to prevent the dog getting closer than a meter to the victim. The leash and fixation cue may diminish the barking. Work to build back up the barking.
3. Have the victim inaccessible. The victim can bring an expen with him to hide and use it to create a barrier. The victim can be in a tree or other natural barrier.

4. Have the victim toss the reward quickly, before the dog has a chance to touch. If the reward is food, toss a container away and have the handler open it. You will need to build back the bark before the reward.
5. Teach your dog that the presence of the victim is a cue to take two steps backward then bark. Teach the skill of backing up then backing up with barking outside of the search context.
6. Stop rewards from the victim. Show the dog that you have the reward so there is no use in pestering the victim for food or a toy.
7. Have the victim place a bucket or other visible object one meter from them. The food or toy is placed here thus eliminating the need to “mug” the victim for the reward.
8. Reteach the bark alert to include the dog's front paws on a target placed a meter from the victim. Keep the target out until the dog is reliable then reduce the size until you can fade it.
9. If the behavior is too ingrained, consider switching the alert to refind-recall or bringsel.