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Spy Kids

Happy Birthday!

By Nancy Gyes, photos by Marcy Mantell Photography

The pups celebrated their first birthday almost a month ago. They all seem happy and healthy and we are looking forward to a challenging but productive year of training. Jim has introduced Sweep to his first jump/handling drills, and jump training is our focus this month.

Jim and I chose to do very little jump training with Sweep until now. His jumping education has primarily concentrated on bounce jumping and some extended-stride grid work. His bounce and gridwork sessions were probably limited to no more than 10 practice sessions in total from the age of 9 to 12 months. From the beginning Sweep seemed “even” on his jumps, meaning that he took off and landed approximately the same distance from the jump, and he looked balanced. If he had looked awkward or uneven on the low

bounce jumps we might have made other decisions concerning his training. And while his jumping looks good right now, I know that could change slightly as the distance between jumps grows, and as he is asked to jump increased height with the additional distraction of a moving handler. Since he has given us no concern about the quality of his jumping, we have started to do his 180/270 work, which will turn into his box and double-box work soon.

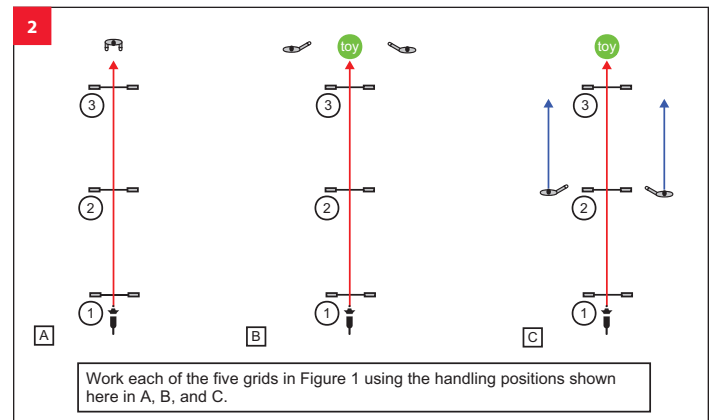
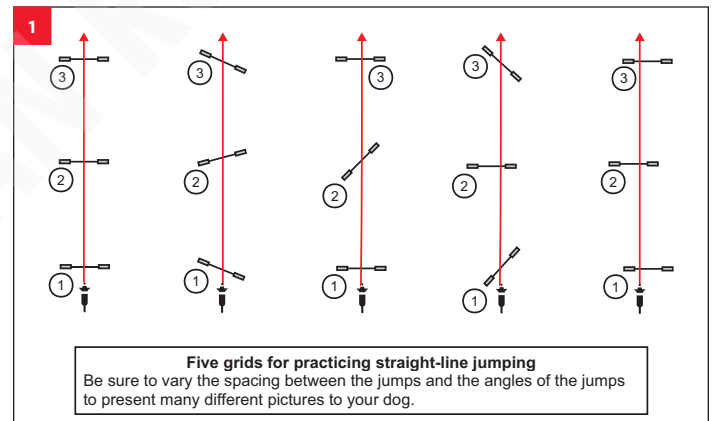
Sweep jumps 16" to 18" right now, and the jumps are usually not more than 15' apart. The lower he jumps, the closer the spacing is between the jumps. If all goes well we will continue to move the jump height up this month and expect him to be on 20" to 22" high jumps in the next two months.

Straight-line Grids

Figure 1 shows five different grids you can use to practice straight lines. Even in the fifth grid, where the center jump is offset, notice that there is still a straight line for the dog to follow. You can start the grids with the same distance between each jump, or you can change the spacing. Be sure to vary the spacing of the jumps and the angles of the jumps to present many different pictures to your dog.

Work each of the five grids in the following ways:

- Lead out to the position shown in Figure 2a and recall the dog to your front.
- Lead out to the side of jump #3, facing the same direction your dog is traveling. Stand still and release your dog. Reward the dog by tossing a toy onto the ground, parallel to your position, as shown in Figure 2b. Do not throw the toy forward; I don't want to teach the dog to pass me by when I'm standing still and if I throw the toy past me while not moving that is what he will be learning. Sweep will need to gear down a bit before jump #3 in order to land close to my position and get his toy. Do this drill with the dog on both your right and left side.
- Lead out to jump #2, facing the same direction your dog is traveling. Run forward with your dog as soon as you release him. Throw a toy forward past jump #3 and ask your dog to Go On as seen in Figure 2c. If I am moving with Sweep, I want him to lengthen his stride, taking as few strides as he needs, and to pass me by at speed to chase his toy beyond jump #3. Do this drill with the dog on both your right and left side.



Here are some reminders before you start:

Use the hand closest to the dog to indicate the path.

Do not let your dog cross in front of or behind your path.

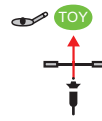
Plan your practice session and keep notes about your progress.

Start and end drills with play and keep your dog's full attention the entire time you are working.

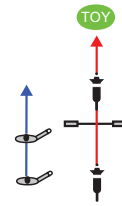
Acceleration and Deceleration

Last month I talked about acceleration and deceleration. When I am not moving my dog should stop at my side. When I am moving my dog should take long strides and accelerate with me. Those are my cues for forward motion or stopping.

Don't mix up the information you give to your dog. Always take at least one step forward with your dog if you want him to drive past you to an object or his toy.



Stationary Position
When I am not moving my dog should stop at my side.



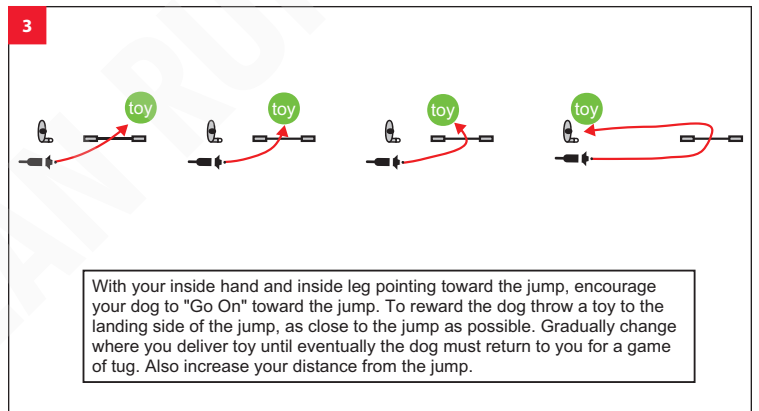
Moving Forward
When I am moving my dog should take long strides and accelerate with me.



Go On from the Side

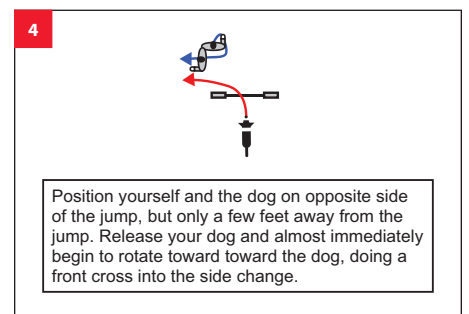
In the exercise in **Figure 3** Jim has his inside hand and inside leg pointing toward the jump and encourages Sweep to *Go On* toward the jump. To begin, Jim throws the toy to Sweep just on the landing side of the jump. While Jim moves farther and farther from the jump, the reinforcement continues to be moved as well. Eventually Sweep needs to return all the way to Jim for a game of tug after jumping. If Sweep slows down or does not want to carry out toward the jump, Jim will toss the toy or a large visible treat out on the landing side of the jump on the next repetition.

This is not a stationary send like we'd use in Gamblers training. Jim moves a step or two until Sweep is committed to the jump before he stops his forward momentum.



Lead-out Pivot with One Jump

In the exercise in **Figure 4** you can see that Jim is standing on the landing side of a jump. Sweep is just a couple feet from the jump, and Jim is also just a few feet from the jump but on the landing side. Jim releases Sweep and then almost immediately begins to rotate toward Sweep, doing a front cross into the side change. Jim always uses the hand closest to the dog and he expects Sweep to immediately turn to him when he sees Jim's front-cross turning cue. Sweep stops at Jim's leg, in left-side heel position, and is rewarded with a cookie and a game of tug. Review ground work for ideas on teaching the line-up cue in *CR* May 2007 "Spy Kids" if you have not yet done so.





Adding Lateral Distance to the One Jump Lead-out

As shown in **Figure 5**, Jim has started to add distance to his one jump lead-out. He does not add the pivot when he adds distance. Sweep's toy is tossed to him on the landing side of the jump, parallel to Jim's side, not forward of him. You could also toss a large visible treat to your dog in this drill instead of using a toy. This position will eventually become the lead-out pivot. This month we will practice until we can be at least 15' lateral to Sweep's line.

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Start to add distance to the one jump lead-out (but don't add the pivot). Toss the toy to the dog on the landing side of the jump, parallel to your side, not forward of you. Practice until you can be at least 15' lateral to the dog's line.

90 to 180 Drills

The next drills start with a 90° pattern that changes to a 180 and then later becomes a 270. The patterns start simply and become more complex with time.

Start as shown in **Figure 6** and gradually open up the 90° pattern until the jumps are in a 180° pattern. Initially toss the toy to the dog to encourage drive and correct position. Then start to vary where you throw your toy; sometimes reward the dog between the jumps, and sometimes reward him after completing both jumps. Occasionally have the dog come to you and tug as a reward instead of tossing the toy.

6

Open up the 90-degree pattern toward 180 degrees in small increments. Initially toss the toy to the dog to encourage drive and correct position. Then start to vary where you throw your toy; sometimes reward the dog between the jumps, and sometimes reward him after completing both jumps. Occasionally have the dog come to you and tug instead of tossing the toy.



180 Drills

First work on 180° turns without a side change as shown in **Figure 7**. In these drills your arm should be pointed toward where the dog is going, but it should not be held out like a stick at your side. You want to be able to run and move naturally with the dog when he is doing the pattern. Notice in the photos how Jim is using his arm signal to invite Sweep to do the jumps.

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Once you have worked the jumps from 90 degrees to a 180-degree pattern, start to increase the distance between the two jumps. Again, be sure to vary where you reward the dog.



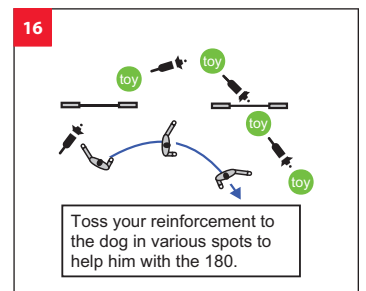
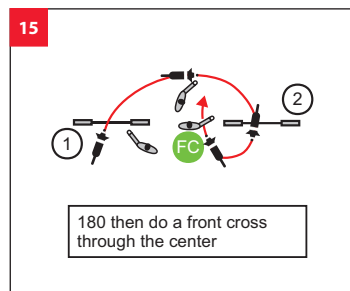
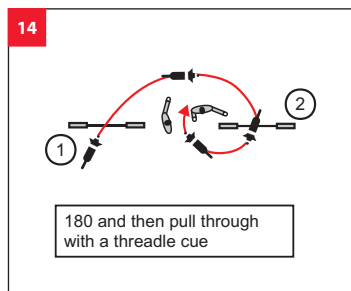
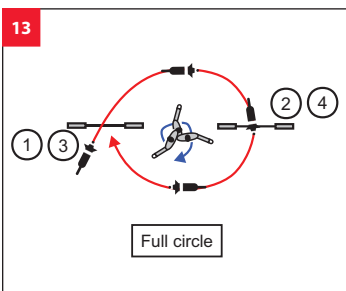
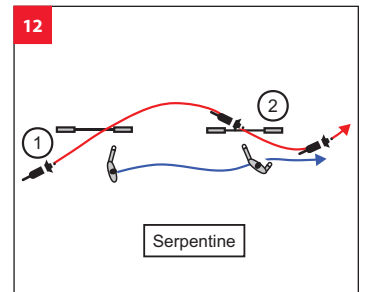
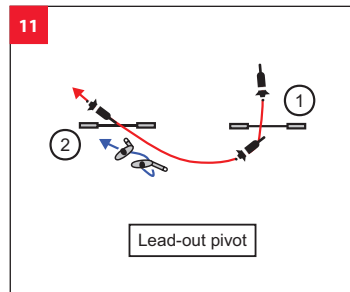
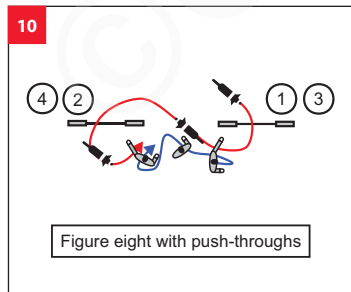
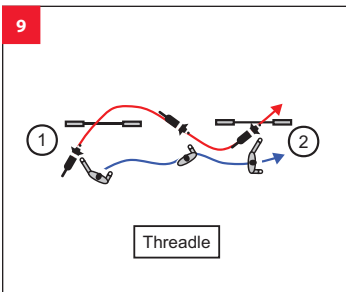
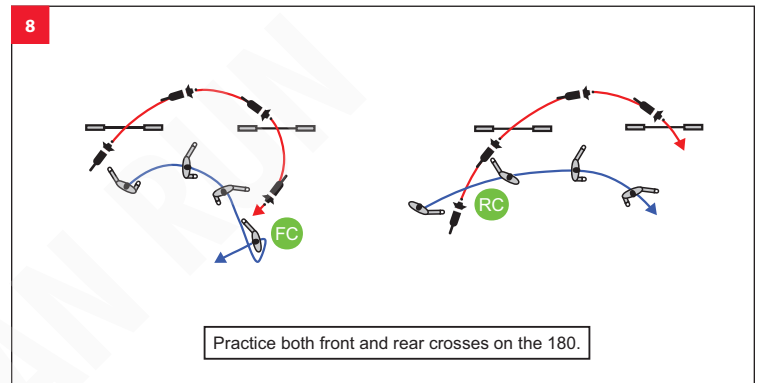
Front cross

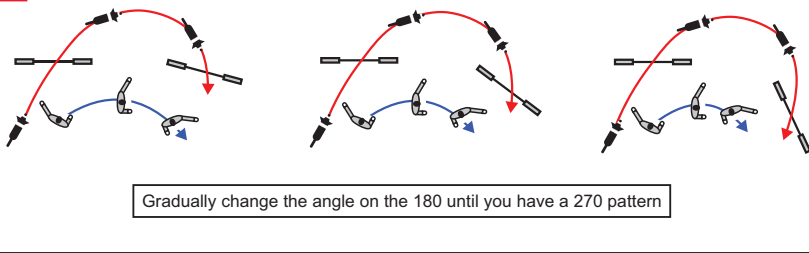


Rear cross

Next practice both front and rear crosses on the 180 as shown in **Figure 8**. As your dog progresses, add complexity to the pattern; you can practice many skills on the 180 drill as shown in **Figures 9 through 15**.

If your dog is failing at an exercise, first increase the reinforcement and perhaps change where you give it. For example, if your dog does not move forward willingly to the second jump, use your toy or Tug-N-Treat first to reinforce him for moving away from you and toward the jump as shown in **Figure 16**; he does not need to complete the second jump to get the reward. You can reward him immediately after the first jump and then gradually ask him to go further toward the second jump for the reward. If you are still failing, then change the equipment to make the pattern easier rather than changing your handling to force the dog out between the jumps.





270 Drills

Gradually change the angle on the 180 until you have a 270 pattern as shown in **Figure 17**. I call this exercise “Got 270?” All the drills you can do on the 180 you can also do on the 270.

This past year I attended two of renowned animal trainer Bob Bailey’s chicken camps, and I am headed back for a third in a few weeks. One of my favorite “Baileyisms” is to ask myself after every training session, “Am I better off now than when I started?” Keep it in mind when you train and I hope that your answer will almost always be yes!

Have fun this month with your pup. We are certainly having fun with ours. 🐾

Nancy Gyes and her husband Jim Basic run Power Paws Agility in San Jose, California. She is the AKC World Team Coach for 2006 and has been on the AKC World Team seven times, four years with Scud and three with Riot. Nancy and Riot finished 1st in 2002 and 2nd in 2001 in Individual Agility classes at Worlds. Nancy also won the USDAA Nationals four years in a row, 1998 to 2001, with three different dogs, Scud, Riot, and Wicked. In 2001 and 2002, Nancy and Riot were the 24" jump height AKC National Champions. Scud retired in 2001 after winning the USDAA Veterans Championship. Contact Nancy at www.powerpawsagility.com, where you can also view other articles and videos.

If Your Stays Deteriorate

As your dog begins to have a great time jumping, you may see some deterioration of his desire to stay in place and wait for his release. Do not be tempted to let him break stays in order to do the drills. Even moving one foot or moving a tiny scooch in any direction can lead to breaking his stay in the future. Be diligent and do not even consider letting this slide.

If your dog moves even an inch after you leave him, return to his side and replace him in the position and location in which you left him. Then try to lead out again. If you are successful, praise your dog, but do not let him jump. Instead return to his side and release him, and then immediately line him up at your side and start again. If your dog stays perfectly this time after you lead out, release him and let him do the drill. If your dog moves a second time, I would not consider letting him jump for that practice session. Instead I would spend time working stays, line-ups, and recalls away from the jump. Take a break after successful stay practice and then try a jump drill again. If you still have problems skip the jump drills for a few days, and the only recalls from a stay would not include any fun equipment.

Remember, if your dog moves at all, he should not be allowed to jump the jump on that turn. He needs to stay perfectly the first time you ask, until you have moved to your lead-out position, in order to be allowed to take a jump. Review stay training in *CR* June/July 2007 “Spy Kids.”

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