

What's New in Weave Training?

By Nancy Gyes, photos by author except where noted

I have written quite a few articles on training weaves over the years. The first one was the “weave pole dance” way (guiding the dog with a hand) back in 2003. Later that year I wrote about all of the current forms of teaching our dogs to weave: Weave-a-Matics, channels, guide wires, x-pens, shaping with a clicker, and the weave pole dance. When I did a search on my computer for weave articles I've written, I found at least 20 different articles and monthly drills ranging from international weaves, to weave discrimination, wrap and weave, find the entry, double tunnel weave, and on and on.

One of the weave pole methods I have not discussed in the past is the (Garrett) 2x2 method since there have been multiple *Clean Run* articles and videos on the subject. I am not going to dive deeply into the 2x2 method (and I doubt that how I teach 2x2s is similar to Susan's original method), but I will give you some ideas for working on 2x2s in different ways.

I use three different methods for teaching my dogs and my students' dogs to weave: 2x2s, short sets of four poles, and also channels without wires.

The 2x2s are the easiest way I have found to get started on weave training. You only need to own two or possibly three sets (depending on whether you also own a set of 12 weaves that break into sets of four or six). I usually train on two sets of two poles until my dog can weave four poles in a straight line. Then I move to a solid set of four

poles and add a set of two poles to make six. I can start to do all sorts of training on a fixed set of four poles.

Since I also have a set of six, I can use that with a set of two poles to make eight, and on and on from there. Recently I have also started using six sets of 2x2s to create a full set of 12 channel weaves. When my youngest dog Mojo learned to weave, I used the sets of twos until I had taught six poles, but at the same time, I introduced a channel of weaves in an adjustable format. This does, of course, require that you own six sets of 2x2s.

At Power Paws, we have a variety of channel (offset) weaves, and at times I have also used a homemade system of hammering pieces of

rebar into the ground and sliding PVC poles over it. Of course, this can be time-consuming each time you want to narrow your channel, and it does not work for indoors. One thing I am not so fond of with many channel wire sets is the number of bases and supports the dog needs to step over. I'd like to eliminate as much of that as possible.

So, in order, this is how I teach weaves:

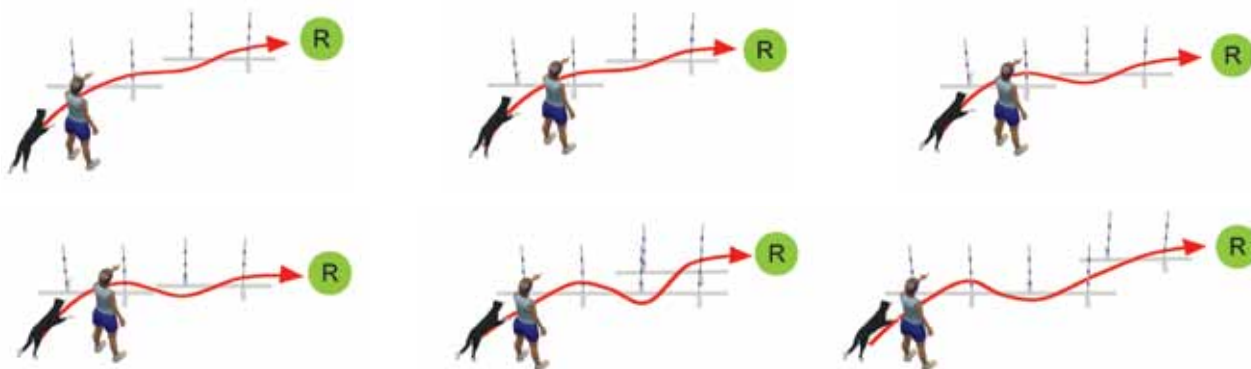
- One, two, and then three sets of 2x2s to introduce weaving
- A channel of 12 poles six sets of 2x2s to work on speed and footwork
- A fixed set of four poles that is easy to move around to work on entries and independence



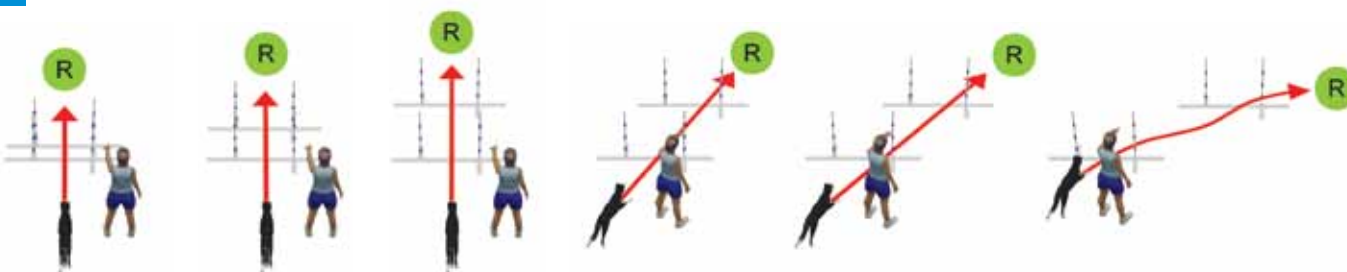
1



2



3



The two sets of poles are incrementally pulled apart as shown in the first three diagrams and then one set is moved diagonally to get the dog to bend more and more.

Introducing 2x2s

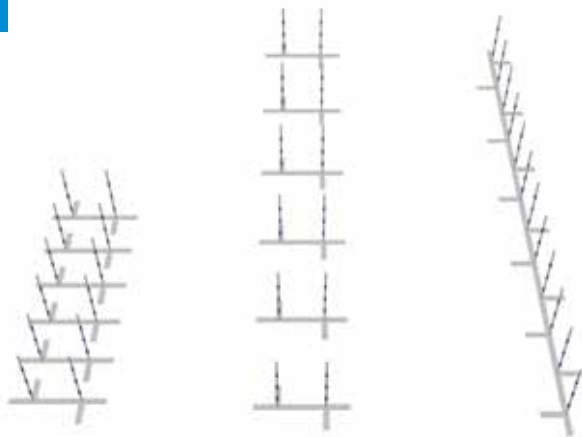
One method of 2x2 training I have used is to work all the angles and distances at speed on a set of two poles as shown in **Figure 1**. I add the second set at almost a right angle along the path where I have been reinforcing my dog. Then I gradually change that angle until the dog must bend to get the second set, moving in small increments toward having the poles straight as shown in **Figure 2**.

Only travel *one* direction in a training session when using two to four poles. A session can be just a couple of minutes of training with a specific break. Move yourself, the dog, and the set of poles slightly, and then you can change to the opposite direction for a session that's a couple of minutes. I always reward the dog along the imaginary weave pole line, as if there were more than two poles in a straight line.

An Alternative Way to Introduce 2x2s

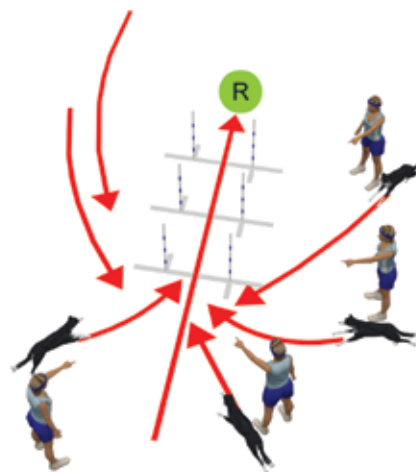
The 2x2s can also be used to introduce channel weaves by placing two sets parallel to each other and then incrementally pulling the sets apart as shown in **Figure 3**, and then moving one set diagonally, so you are getting the dog to bend more and more. This is a different approach than the other concept presented. Both methods work well, and there are many more possibilities of how to start the 2x2 method.

4



Start with the sets of 2x2s close together. Slowly move them apart until they are spread at least the length of a regular set of 12 poles—22 feet (regular set on the right for comparison).

5



Practice round the clock entries on any length channel.

If you have a rudimentary understanding of using 2x2s and also have some good reinforcement skills, these diagrams might be all you need to introduce the 2x2 concept. If this methodology is new to you, I would read some of the *Clean Run* articles on 2x2 training or get a DVD to have a more visual aid.

Using 2x2s for Channels

Start with the sets close together and keep stretching them out while you reward your dog for driving straight through the sets as you see in **Figure 4**. Throw a toy or cookie after each pass or place a Treat & Train at the end of the sets. Prac-

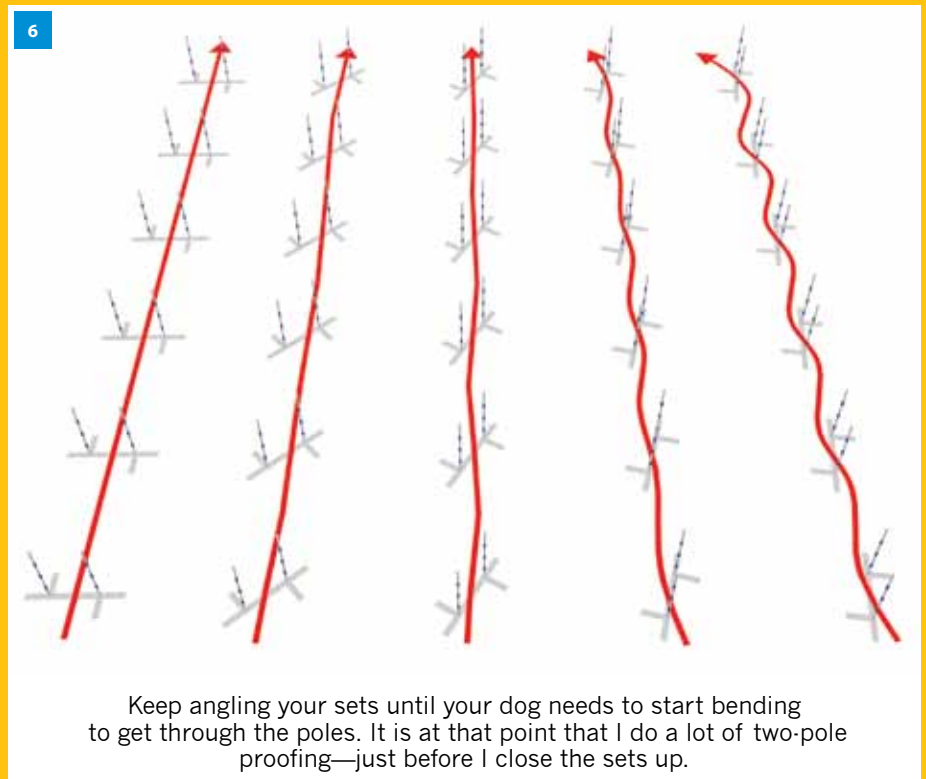
tice all the “round the clock” entries and exits shown in **Figure 5**, even on the straight lines.

If your dog is getting reliable running through the channels doing recalls, sends, and around the clock entries, you can start to stretch the poles out to the distance of a regu-

lar set of weaves. Measure 22 feet and start spreading out your 2x2s in that space as shown in **Figure 6**.

Alternatively, you could choose to teach just a set of six poles using this method and then introduce two sets of six, moving them closer and closer together.

A note about using channel 2x2s over a more traditional 2x2 approach: When you start with just two poles and teach all the round the clock entries, your dog gets hundreds of reinforcement reps for finding that entry. Adding the second set gets hundreds of more reps which are rewarded with your dog really working to find that entry. When you use the channels by themselves, you get to skip this step, but you are also skipping all those levels of reinforcement as well. This is why I like to use *all* three methods.



I am recalling Mojo through a channel of 2x2s.



Gradually narrow the gap between the channels. I am doing recalls with Mojo to show the spacing, but you should be handing this channel like a straight set of 12 poles. As soon as you have taught your dog to stay inside the channel line, do round the clock entries, recall and sends, lateral and distance work.



The channel is almost closed.

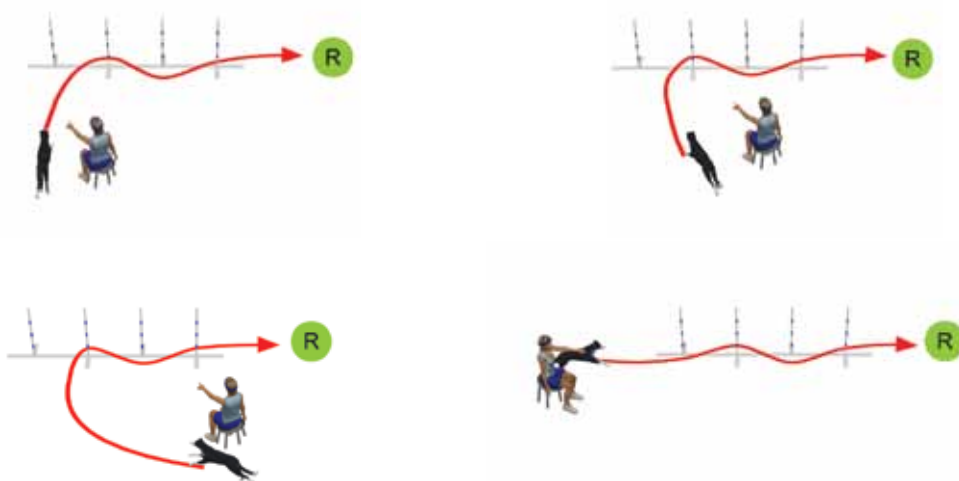
A note about using channel 2x2s over a more traditional 2x2 approach: When you start with just two poles and teach all the round the clock entries, your dog gets hundreds of reinforcement reps for finding that entry. Adding the second set gets hundreds of more reps which are rewarded with your dog really working to find that entry. When you use the channels by themselves, you get to skip this step, but you are also skipping all those levels of reinforcement as well. This is why I like to use *all* three methods.

7



Here are some possible setups for working on independence and discrimination.

8



Here are some sit-in-the-chair weave approaches I do with my own dogs.

Four-Pole Games

I love sets of four poles. They are my absolute favorite way to work entries and exits and independence and discrimination. **Figure 7** shows three possible setups. I pick up and move my set of four poles everywhere around the training yard—next to a tunnel, a foot from a jump, going into a wall or hedge—anywhere that might be an interesting challenge. Of course, you can also do sit-in-a-chair weaves as shown in **Figure 8**.

Get yourself a cool beverage, a comfy chair (if you have a tiny dog you can sit on a low stool or even the ground), and a bowl of cookies that are large and heavy enough to toss into position at the end of the poles or a toy you can throw pretty accurately. Get your toss out in front of the weaves at least 5 feet. You want your dog to drive through the last pole and not stop moving to retrieve the toy or cookie. I use a verbal marker on completion of the weaves, and as soon as my dog

grabs the treat, I call him back to my side to get reset for another rep.

I like to use cookies *and* toys for this game. I will do about five sets with a cookie to keep things moving, and then the sixth toss is with a toy so I can have a good retrieve and tug game before I do another five sets.

After no more than two sets of four poles, move your chair a bit. It is okay to start this game right next to the poles and then begin

I like to use cookies *and* toys for this game. I will do about five sets with a cookie to keep things moving, and then the sixth toss is with a toy so I can have a good retrieve and tug game before I do another five sets.

to move around as soon as your dog realizes the wonderful consequences of getting rewarded for doing four poles independently. Of course, you are always welcome to do this game standing up, but try not to move! The idea is to take

away all handler motion and have the dog listen to your cue to leave you and go find his entry. I want the dog focused forward to the weaves. If you can manage it, you can hold your dog's collar.



Jim Basic starts with his chair close to the poles and focuses Spell on the poles.



Jim moves his chair around to different positions and asks the dog to weave.

Presenting “fours” in every way possible is my standby method for recalling through, sending ahead, teaching handler positioning around the exits, and lots of other games. You can see my dogs in action on short sets around obstacles from prior articles. To see photos and description of using a set of four around tunnels and jumps, refer to my articles in *CR* September and October 2014.

I hope you have fun improving your dog's weaves with some of these weave pole methods and games. 🐾



Jim times a perfect reward toss to Spell at the end of the set of four.



Just for fun—Jim reads *Clean Run* while Spell weaves.

Nancy Gyes and her husband Jim Basic run Power Paws Agility in San Jose, California. Nancy has been the AKC World Team Coach since 2006 and has been on the AKC World Team herself seven times: four times with Scud and three with Riot. Nancy and Riot earned both a 1st and 2nd place in Individual Agility at the FCI Agility World Championships. Nancy won the USDAA Grand Prix Finals four years in a row with three different dogs: Scud, Riot, and Wicked. Nancy and Wicked were also on the winning team at a Dog Agility Masters championship. Nancy and Riot were the 24" AKC National champions twice, and Ace was second in the Championships in 2012. Nancy and Ace represented the USA at the European Open five times and they were the first US duo to make it to the podium, earning a bronze medal in 2011. Nancy shares her life with four Border Collies aged 13 to 2 years. Contact Nancy at www.powerpawsagility.com where you can also view articles and videos.