

Really Reliable Backsides

I was going to share one of my favorite setups for practicing backside sequences this month and then somehow the article morphed into a collection of short one-, two-, and three-jump drills to train backsides. These are my “go to” drills for teaching really reliable backsides.

Starting with the drill in **Figure 1** make sure you can send your dog to a backside from a stationary position. Begin with your dog sitting at your side and use just your verbal cue to direct the dog. I release my dog to jump with my backside cue of “push.” Be sure to work this drill on both sides.

The drills in **Figures 2 and 3** require *you* to change your position relative to your dog, but your dog is always facing a straight backside approach. Again, you are sending your dog from a stationary position and using only a verbal backside cue. Once you have perfected the send from all positions, then

introduce handler motion parallel to your dog’s path.

Even if you can do a stationary send from any position and approach to one jump, you still need to be very creative about changing the approach obstacle and the path of both you and your dog, as **Figure 4** shows.

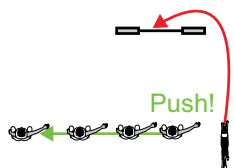
I would take all of these angles and positions one step further and make the approach to the backside from the bottom of a stopped or running contact, the weaves, and especially a tunnel. Dogs often need to get reoriented to your position coming out of a tunnel, so you need to work on the timing of your cue and your motion toward the backside.

When doing the one- and two-jump drills I reward *every* backside with a tossed toy or cookie to the landing spot. When performing multiple backsides, I reward after four or five obstacles.

Big Tip

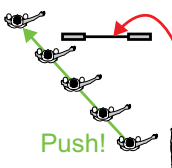
When training backsides always throw in some exercises with front-side approaches. It is important for two reasons:

1. To make sure you don’t make your dog “backside happy” by reinforcing so many backsides that your dog will choose a backside over a front side.
2. You must teach your dog the difference between a front-side approach and verbal cue are as well as your backside cue. If you use a word for a backside, you should use a word for your front side on anything but a straightforward logical approach. Pointing out the opposite behavior and its corresponding cue is essential for true cognition. 🐾



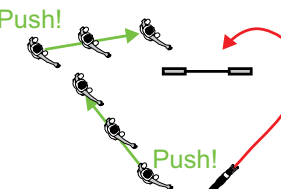
1

Practice sending the dog from different positions with just a verbal cue. Train until the dog will send to the backside independently. You are not moving.



2

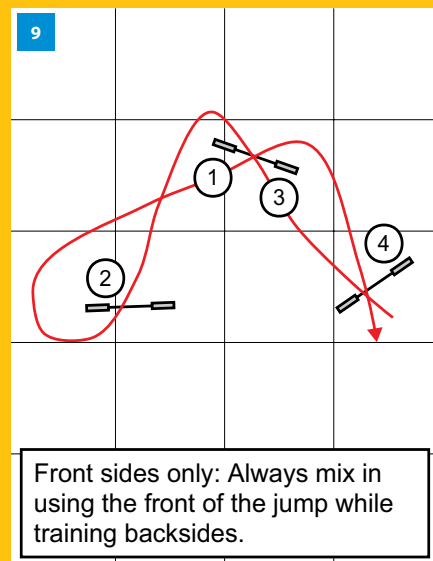
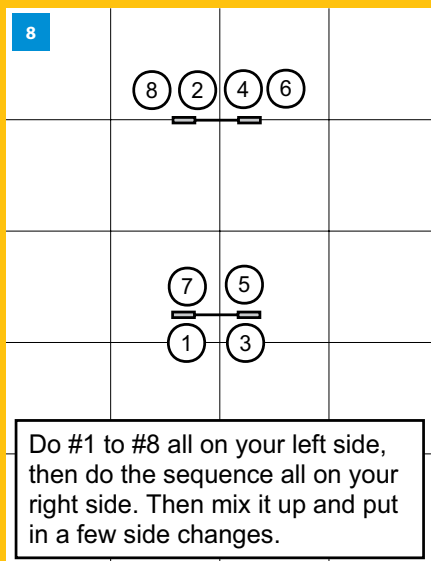
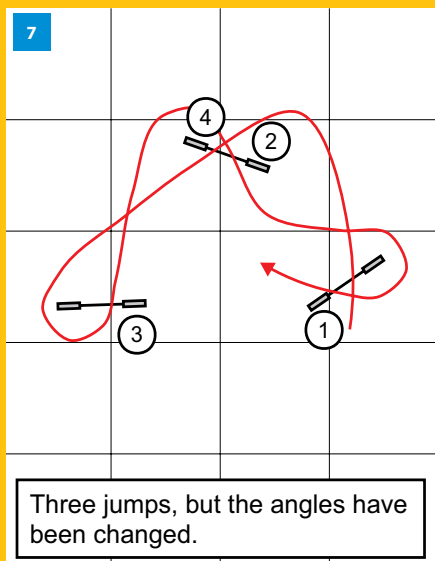
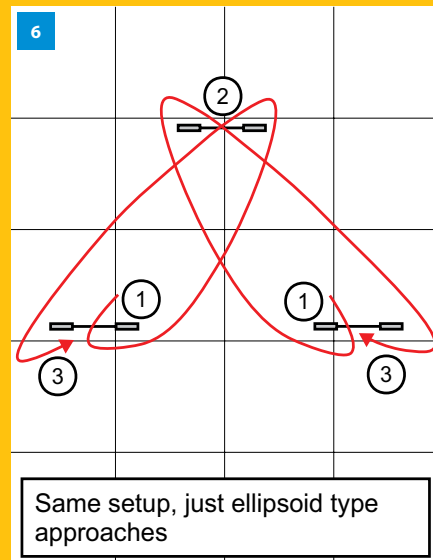
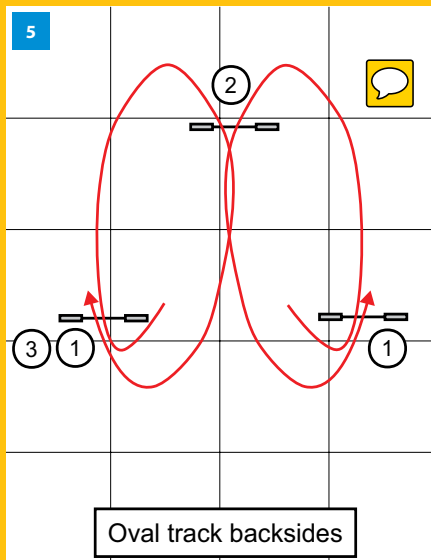
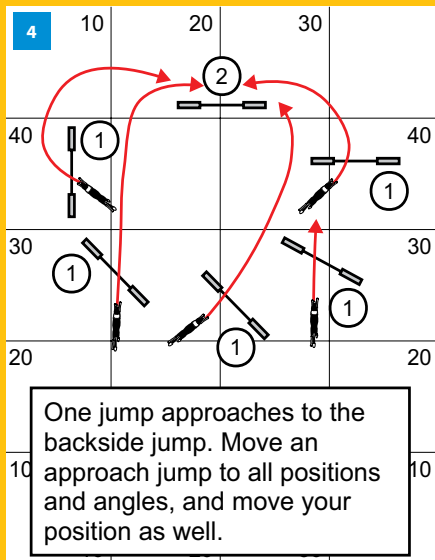
More stationary sends. The dog is left on a stay, facing a straight backside approach, and released with a verbal backside cue from the different handler positions.



3

Get creative. Do stationary sends from all around the jump. Move the dog's starting position, and also move your position.

When doing the one- and two-jump drills I reward every backside with a tossed toy or cookie to the landing spot. When performing multiple backsides, I reward after four or five obstacles.



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.