



## Clean Run

What does it mean to you, the expression "clean run"?

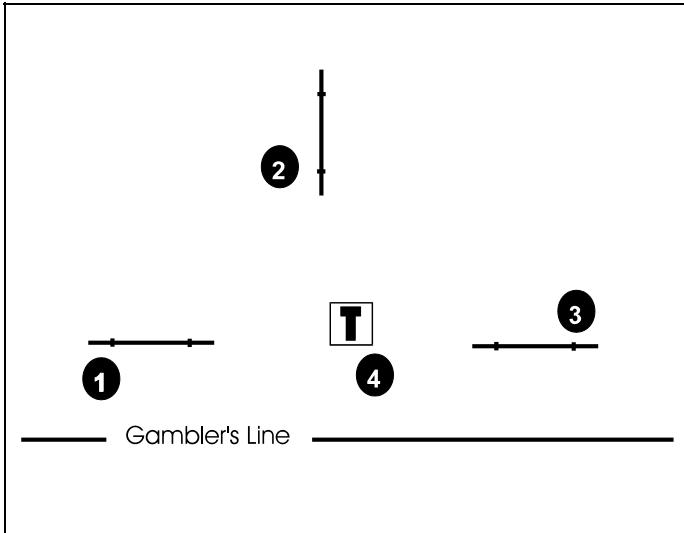
A clean run is a course run with zero-faults, under standard course time. It is the essence of the sport according to the standard set by the United States Dog Agility Association. To get a leg, to earn a title, a dog and handler must be a team that is finely tuned and aware of one another. Increasingly a clean run is also required to best the dogs in competition. The days when you could take home the blue ribbon with 5 faults, or 1.2 faults, are long gone.

There is more to a clean run than a dog being familiar with, and able to perform, each of the obstacles listed in the USDAA official rules and regulations. It's not only dogs we are training. The handler on the field is at least as important as the dog. That may not ring true to you, but it is true.

When you walk the course you must visualize how you are going to handle each flow, each sequence, each challenge. You must know exactly how you will communicate the flow and sequence to your dog. You must know exactly how your dog will respond to your signals, your voice, your posture, your body position, in the context of the flowing course.

The *Clean Run* is a reference for agility instructors. I do not always say *Pay attention to the handler*. But remember, as the instructor you should be equally concerned for what the handler is learning as with what the dog is learning.

- Bud Houston



## Too Tough?

This gamblers exercise involves obstacle discrimination and working at a distance. It also involves putting a dead obstacle between the handler and dog and some fancy body-magnet footwork by the handler at the gambler's don't pass line.

Predictably, many dogs will hit the table pre-maturely. I set this up for both of my (MAD) dogs and was unable to hit it on the first pass. In fact, it took me several times to pattern the exercise.

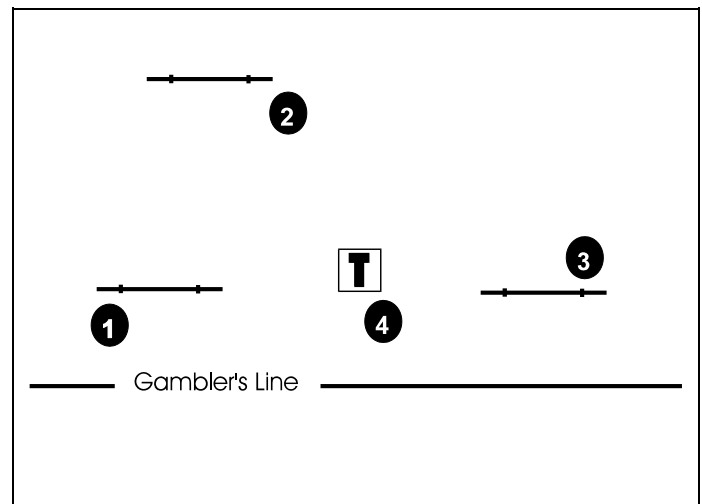
The challenge might favor very long-legged dogs whose strides carry them into jump #2 as their natural path.

## Tough Enough

This arrangement is easier for the dog to grasp because the sequence is more obvious. The handler still has to move butt to keep the dog off the table.

This version of the gamble might be more suitable to an Advanced class, while the gamble pictured above would certainly be Masters level.

Another possible adaptation would be to use a tunnel as obstacle #2, with a 60d crook. If we omit jump #3, and send the dog directly to the table, we might have a workable Starters/Novice gamble.

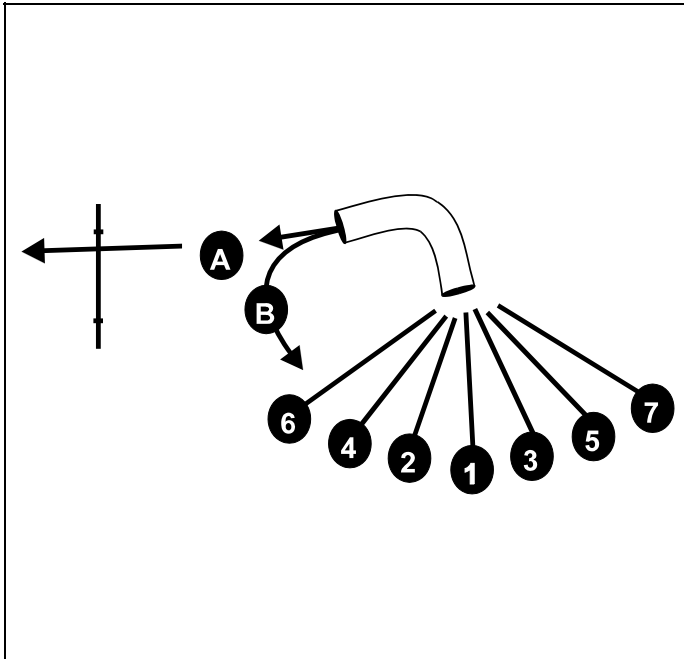


## Objective: 2 Seconds

Winston was beat by two dogs at the Phoenix PGPQ, by a total span of less than 2 seconds. My training objectives in the next several weeks (prior to West Valley's PGPQ at Pomona) will be to shave 2 seconds off of Winston's time under standard.

Where do you find 2 seconds? Here's my thinking:

- Faster drop on the table. .2 seconds.
- Eliminate stall on descent contact zones. I have to teach him to walk straight off, briskly. Then I have to trust him to do it in competition. 1 second +.
- Improve flow speed. For a very long time I've been content to run entire courses at a very constant speed. I need to work with Winston on firing the after-burners on course segments that are safe and allow for faster pacing. 1 second +.



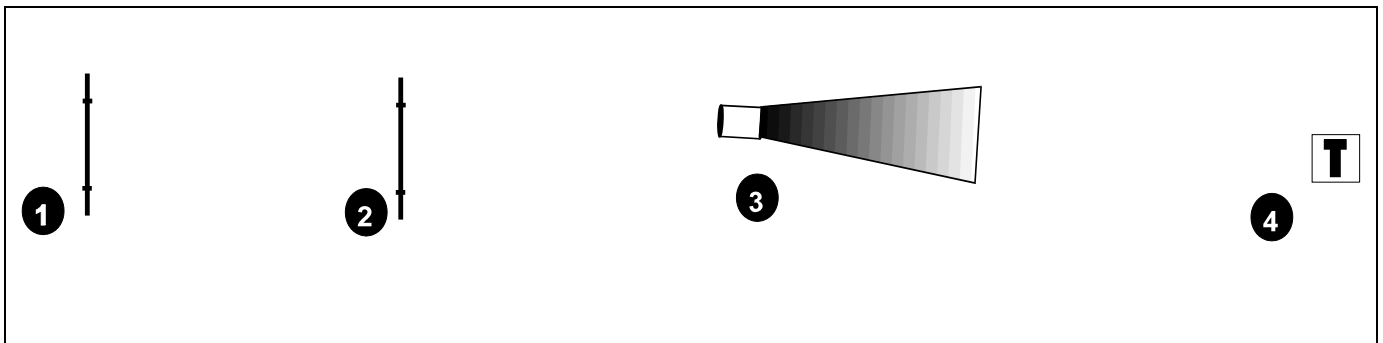
## A.D.D. Tunnel Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is two-fold:

1. Make the dog 'understand the job' in tunnel performance; and
2. Teach the dog to be aware of the handlers signal when performing a sequence.

The numbers outside the tunnel indicate the handlers position and approach path to the tunnel. From each of these positions the handler will send the dog to the tunnel then, alternately A) send over the jump; and B) call the dog back.

The handler does not have to stay at the numbered approach path after committing the dog to the tunnel. It's a good idea for the handler to meet the dog, coming out of the tunnel, to give the next instruction.



## Build a Gamble

This is a building exercise. When patterning a sequence the pattern should be built backwards. That is, you show the dog the last obstacle first, and build backwards until you have patterned back to the first obstacle. Work the set using the following steps:

1. Send the dog to the table. Continue to lengthen the distance between your starting position and the table. Do this until the dog is reliably going to the table.
2. Send the dog through the collapsed tunnel to the table. If the dog will not go to the table, return to step 1. If the dog is reliably going from tunnel to table, goto step 3.
3. Send the dog over jump #3, to the tunnel, and on to the table. If the dog will not go to the table, return to step 1. If the dog will not go to the tunnel, return to step 2. If the dog is reliably performing this sequence of obstacles, go on to step 4.

Continue patterning the sequence backwards as described in the first three steps. Remember that the handler will return to the step in the exercise at which the dog broke the sequence. That means that the handler will return to step 1 any time the dog performs the tunnel, but not the table, even if the exercise has been patterned all the way back to jump #1.

It's very important that handlers use lots of praise, treats or other motivators while working in this exercise. This kind of work can seem an awful lot like drilling, putting the handler in danger of boring the dog. Remind handlers that their dogs should be having great fun. If not, end the exercise.

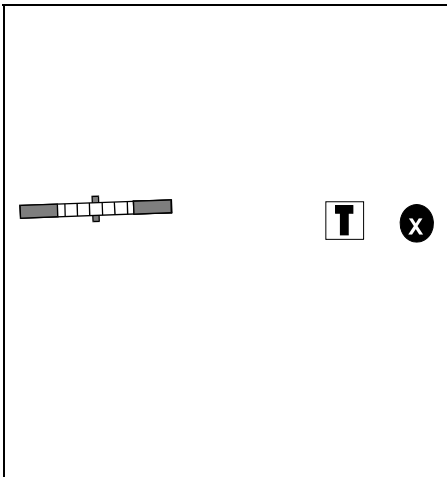
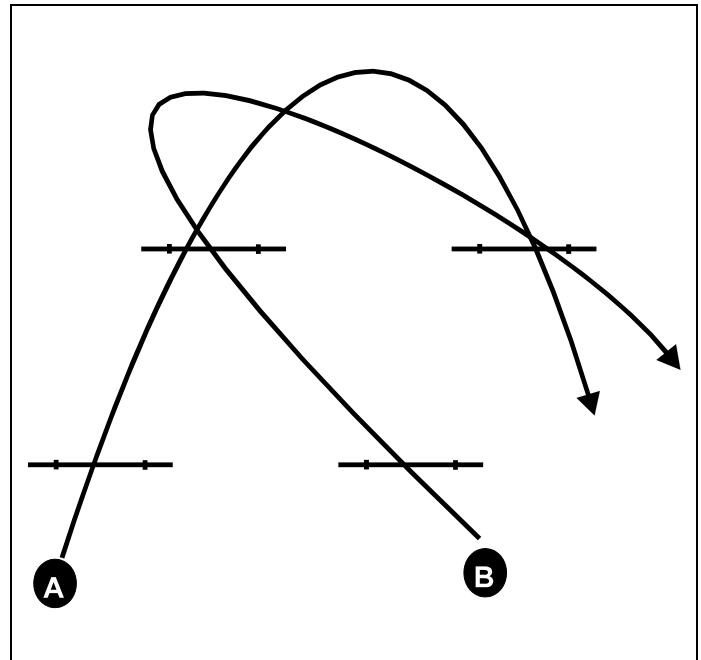
## Janet's 180

Janet Gauntt's observation of Southwestern dogs (she judged the GPQ here in January), is that we don't do a very good job with 180d turns. So, we will be adding a number of 180 exercises to our training plan.

In this exercise we work with different approaches to the 180d turn. Ideally the handler's path (dotted line) won't push above the path of the dog.

Setting up the 180 from A and B make for two very different approaches. Thus the dog's path when transitioning from jump #2 to jump #3 is quite different.

It's worth observing while your students are doing this combination: Does the handler's path also differ when starting with A as compared to starting with B? Maybe so. Maybe not.



## No Big Deal Teeter Exercise

Have the handler leave his dog at the approach to the see-saw, and move to position X. Then, call the dog over the see-saw, and over the jump.

The instructor should be prepared to make two observations:

1. Does the dog do the see-saw, or run around it?
2. Does the dog perform the see-saw in the same way as though the handler were at side?

Don't keep your observations to yourself. Share them with your student.

## Tip of the Week

Do you have handlers who frequently lose the course? (Get lost out there! What a terrible feeling!)

Here's the tip: Don't number your courses. Part of the problem is that the handler is getting too bound up in the numbering sequence which is an intellectual exercise. The handler needs to internalize the course as a series of flows. This is easier to accomplish if numbers aren't distracting the prone-to-lose-it handler.

## Sweet Sorrow

In this sequence most (?) handlers will attempt to run around the tunnel with their dogs.

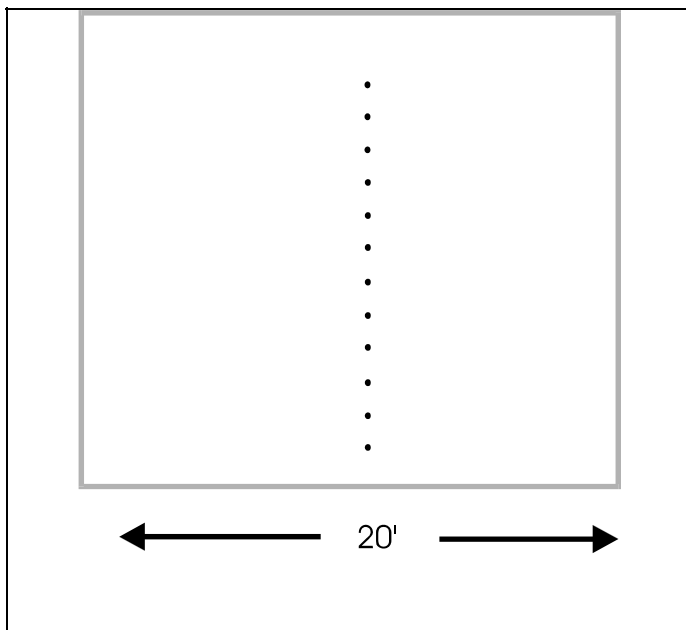
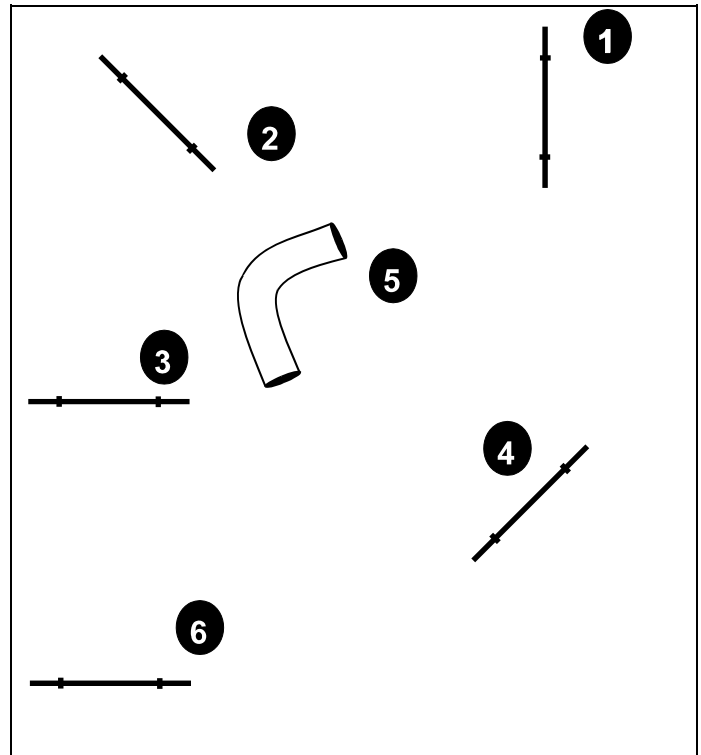
Our objective is to get comfortable with putting the tunnel (or any other obstacle) between handler and dog.

Do not allow handlers to lead out, at first. After they get bored with the basic exercise they're going to do whatever they want to do anyway.

The handler has two challenges in this set:

1. Sending the dog out for jumps 1, 2 & 3, while leaving the dog's side; and,
2. Turning the dog after jump 3, to jump 4; avoiding the off-course at jump 6.

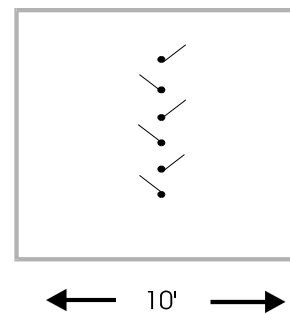
Ideally, adjust the set to comparably challenge mini and open dogs (less distance mini; more distance open).



## Stay Out! Dogs Only!

For the day the weave poles (line of 12, and leaning-line of 6) will be boxed.

No handler is allowed to be in the box at the same time as his or her dog.



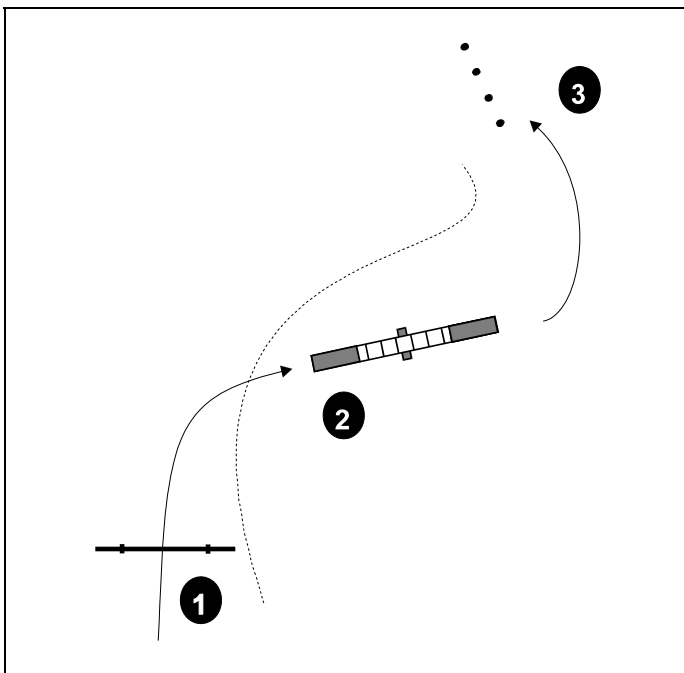
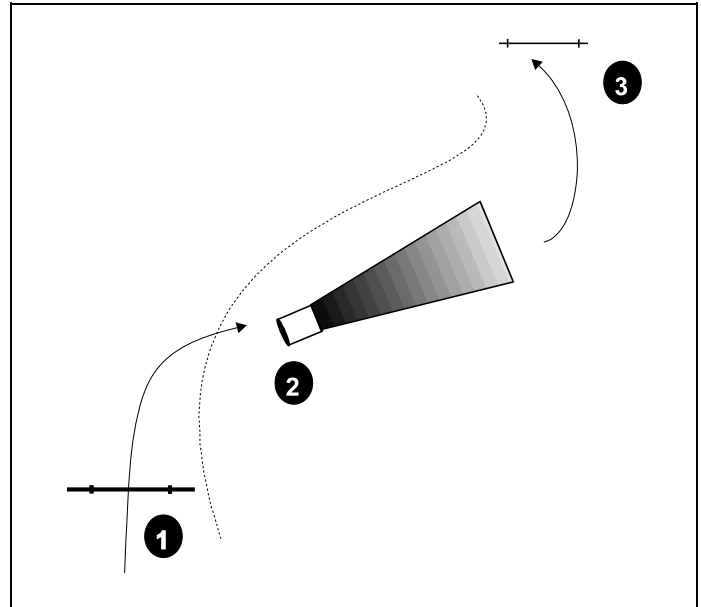
## Blind Cross

A blind cross is executed while the dog is in a tunnel, and cannot see the handler.

In this set:

- Do not permit the handler to lead out
- Start the dog on the left
- Cross behind after the dog has entered the collapsed tunnel.

(Thanks to Stuart Mah for this proliferation of technical jargon).



## Dynamic Cross

A Dynamic Cross is executed while the dog is committed to an obstacle with the handler in plain sight.

In this set:

- Do not permit the handler to lead out
- Start the dog on the left
- Cross behind after the dog has committed to the see-saw.

If the dog is unused to the idea of the handler changing sides, he may elect to jump off the see-saw before gaining the pivot point. Start the exercise over, repeat until the dog understands what performance is expected.

(Thanks again Stuart Mah).

## Three Habits Worth Breaking

**Hoovering.** This is a tendency of the handler to bend over the dog, hang over the dog, and basically get in the dog's space so much that the poor animal is cringing. You see it mostly in weave pole performances.

**Futzing.** This is the handler at the line who spends 4 minutes getting the dog in a spot at the line. Here. Stand here. Sit straight. Aim forward. Sit down. It's as though if the handler would begin the course with the dog facing the wrong direction the dog would have to run the whole course tail-end first.

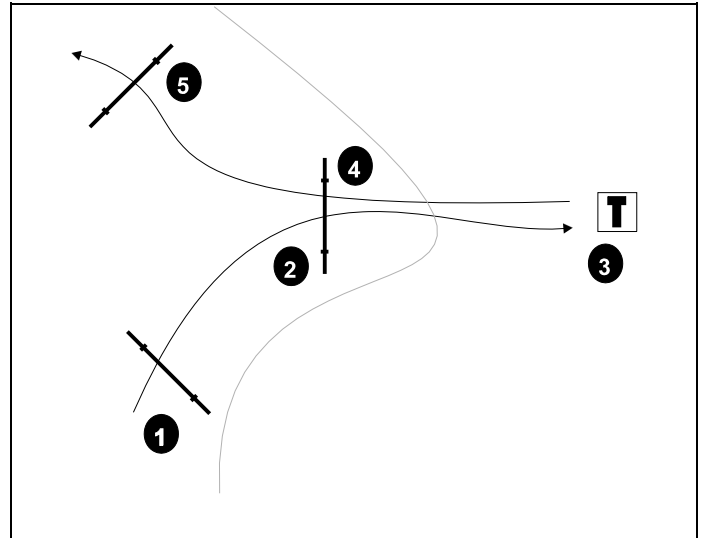
**Abuse.** If you ain't happy you should sell your dog to someone who will love him, and take up tennis.

## Static Cross

The static cross is executed while the dog is on the table, or in a pause box, in a down position.

In this set:

- Do not permit the handler to lead out
- Start the dog on the left
- Change sides to the dog while the dog is in the down position on the table.



## Changing with 180d's

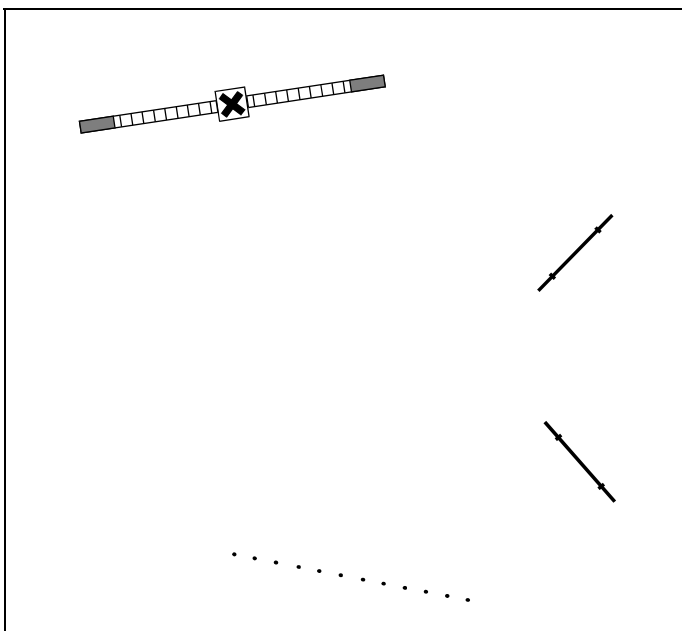
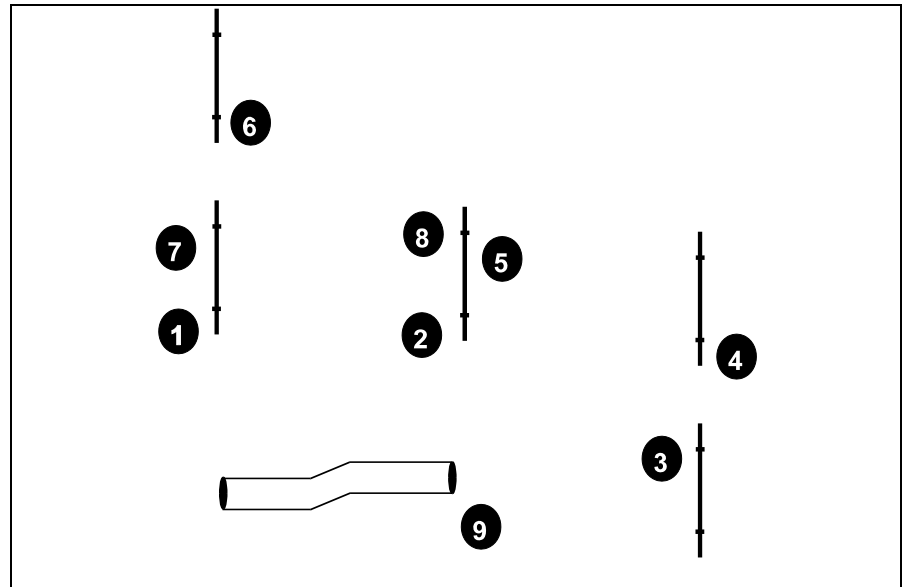
This set features multiple changes of direction and several 180d turns.

Observe what each handler does with his body. What works? What fails?

Handlers should develop a very specific command for change of direction.

### Note

Run this set only once or twice at competition height, then lower the jumps.



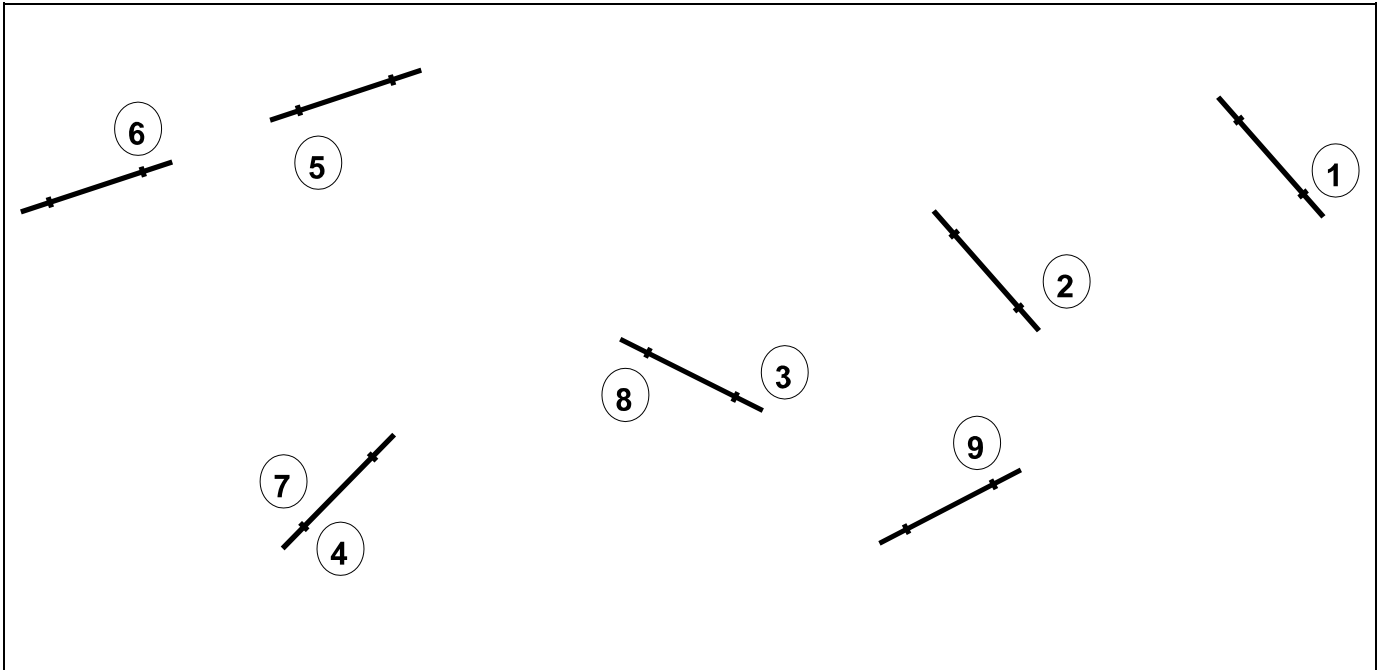
## Attack!

This set provides for a fast flow approach to the walk or weave poles, depending on which direction handler and dog begin.

The approach to the next obstacle is also quite sharp. The handler should observe whether the dog has a tendency to miss the upside contact if the approach is too sharp. If this is the case the handler must learn to kick the dog out to straighten the approach.

What problems arise from approaching the weave poles very fast and at a sharp angle?

Take note: Is the handler getting out early commands? Does the handler use hand signals?



## Jumpers Renumbered

We set up the jumping exercise, pictured above and below. We started the class with the course was numbered as above. Then, half-way through the class we renumbered the exercise as pictured below. The challenges aren't significantly different.

