Trick or Train?

by Kathy Keats

A large part of training involves teaching your dog to follow your signals, even though he may think *he* knows what is next. We tend to train in patterns ourselves, and our dogs pick up those patterns. When we need our dogs to do something contrary to the normal pattern, and they appear to disobey, they are simply following the pattern they have been trained to. Similarly, we tend to fall into traps where we don't see all the possibilities because we are so programmed to handle things a certain way.

Patterns are good for initial learning but your dog also needs to be responsive to you. Keep your dog sharp by constantly changing things up, training him by "tricking" him and not always going the direction he expects you to go.

The following drills focus on handling and have three main goals:

1. Present unusual sequences which break the typical patterns.

2. Work on tight, technical skills and turns.

3. Include some challenging weave pole entries.

There are opportunities to take different paths. How many different ways can you discover to handle each sequence?

The Agility Coach

Your guide to success.

**Go to www.TheAgilityCoach.ca for FREE additional sequences of this Exercise of the Month**

The Agility Coach provides in-depth skill development programs for all levels of agility competitors, whether it is foundation skills for beginners or mental preparation and peaking for world-class competitors. The programs are progressive and goal-oriented, the training plan an elite coach would lay out for an athlete striving to be the best she can be.
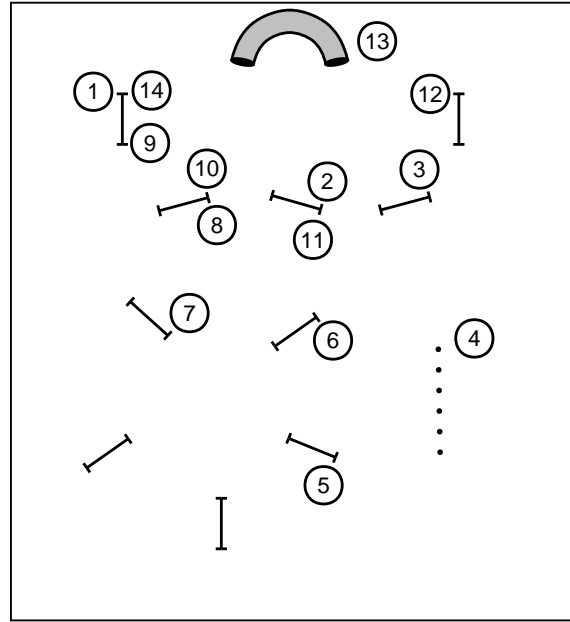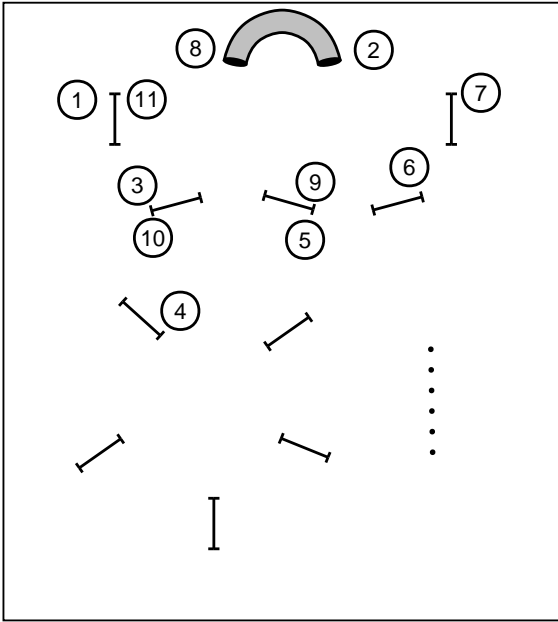
Kathy Keats is The Agility Coach. She knows what it takes to be successful. Kathy has participated in and won major national and world class events in dog agility and basketball, and competes at the Open level in sheepdog trials. Kathy graduated from the National Coaching Institute and since then has worked with elite athletes and coaches from around the world. She has coached at the university, national, and international level. She was one of the first people to introduce the sport sciences to dog agility and enjoys working with new handlers and dogs as well as seasoned competitors.
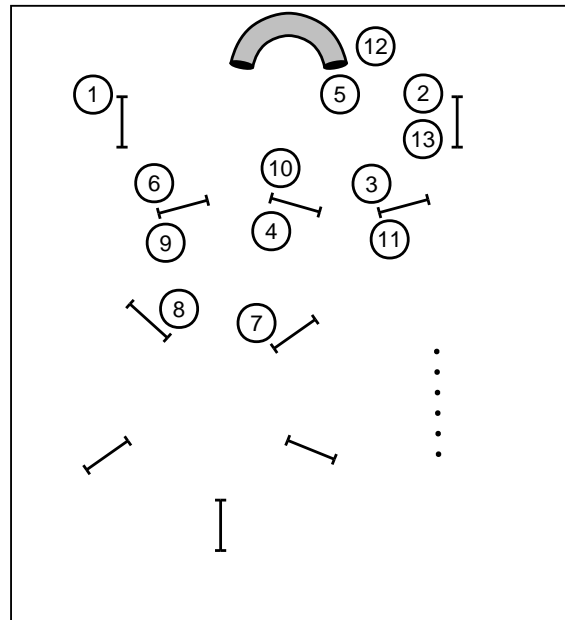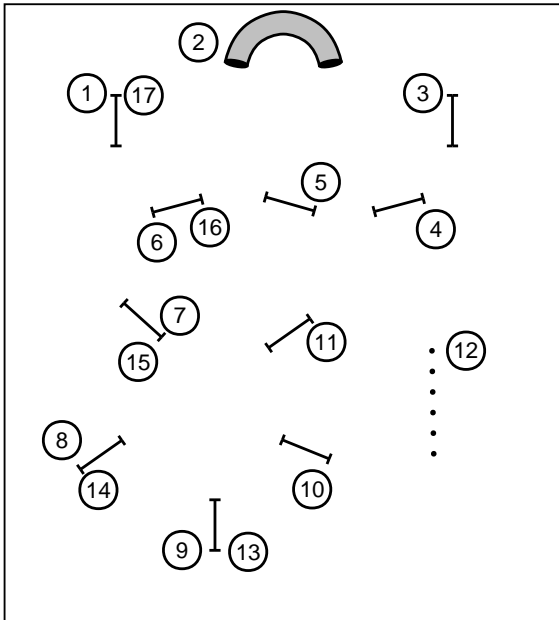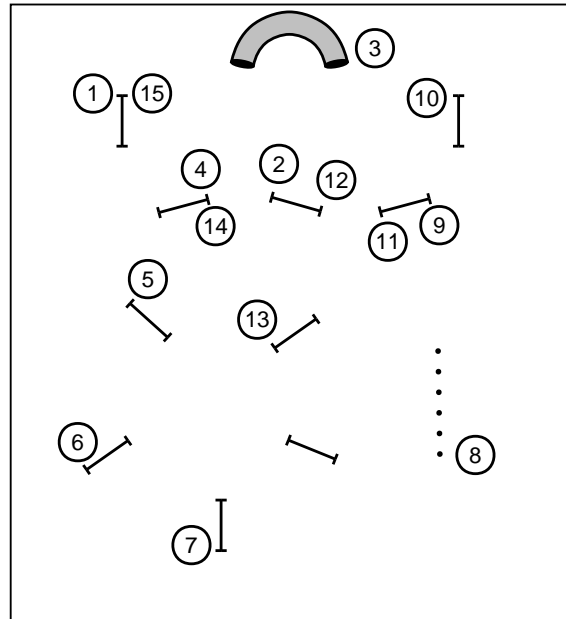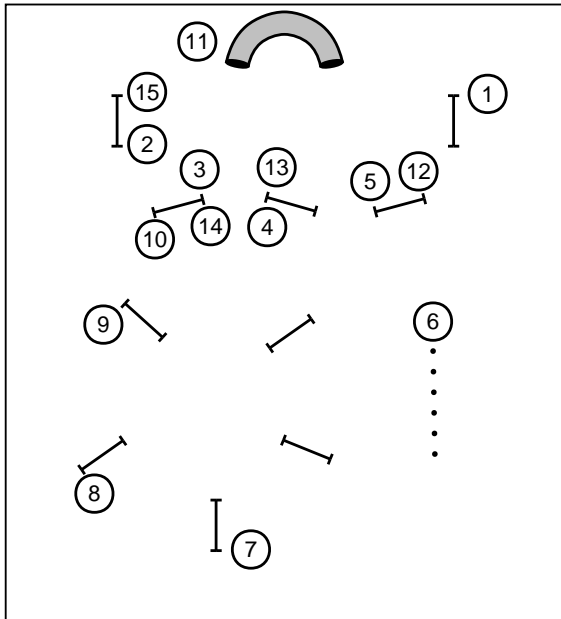
kathy@theagilitycoach.ca

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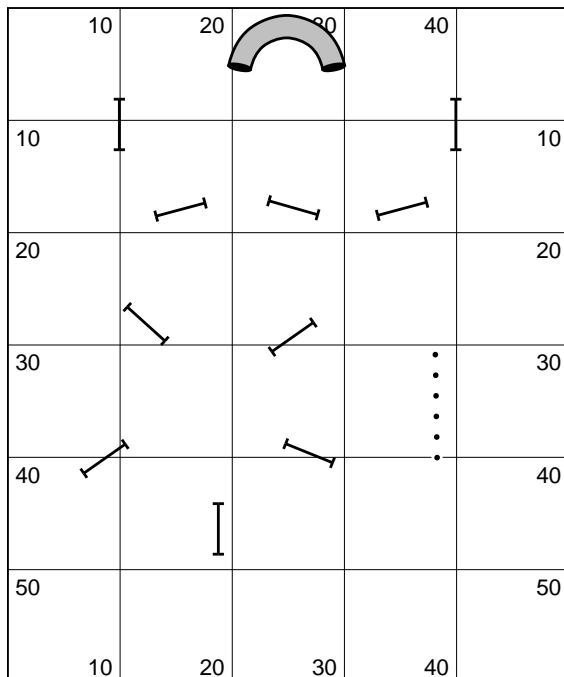
Exercises 1 & 2

Exercises 3 & 4

Exercises 5 & 6