



April Foolin'

By Kathy Keats, The Agility Coach

Don't play a joke on your dog! Every time you are late signaling a turn, you are telling your dog you were just kidding about the obstacle that was straight ahead. It is a call-off that makes your dog think you don't know where you are going and that he can't trust you.

This simple drill forces you to work on your timing on turns, wraps in particular. It is obvious when you are late or your dog isn't reading your cue because the dog will jump long. Set the jumps at approximately 15' or what is normal for the venue in which you compete. You can adjust the distances to suit your dog and the skill you are working on. Broader spacing will encourage extension and speed, and make turning a more difficult skill.

If you are too early or give too strong of a signal or your dog doesn't understand to commit to the jumps, he will pull off. A quiet early signal is better than a late screaming signal. Try decelerating a bit sooner. Don't break the plane of the jump you want your dog to turn at, give a quiet name before he jumps, but stay physically committed to the jump so you can help redirect him if he tries to pull off. This way you can teach him what you want.

If you decelerate, call your dog, *and* turn, your dog will usually pull off because it's like you are trying to put out a fire rather than communicate. If you want to turn earlier, you need to be able to get into position ahead of the dog to signal the jump and be turned at the same time so he can see your position. This works well for handlers who like to run with their dogs and can stay ahead or the dog needs you to keep moving for motivation.

Try both ways to see which works for you. Make sure no matter which style you use, that you drive out of the turns so your dog knows where he is going next and can dig into the turn and drive towards the next obstacle.

If you have a dog that lacks some motivation, do more straight line work, with only one turn in the drill. Do the turn where you know you will be able to give a good signal so that he learns to trust you and keeps his drive.

If you have a speedster who loves lines and isn't as big on turning, do more turns and fewer lines.

If your dog turns quite tight and keeps up his speed, you know you are doing a good job. Keep varying up the patterns. Never play tricks on your dog, but that doesn't mean you can't keep them guessing! Make it fun! Be careful not to do too much of this drill, as it is fairly demanding. In each training session, only try three patterns at the most, and only one or two repetitions per pattern.

There are more exercises for this setup at www.theagilitycoach.ca under Free Downloads.

Enjoy! The Agility Coach

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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.

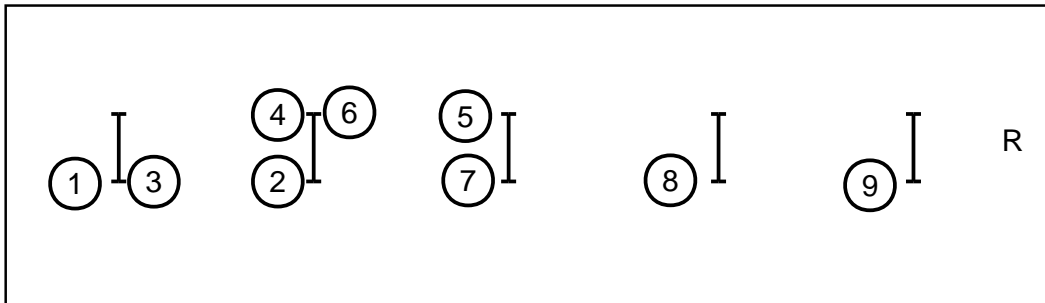
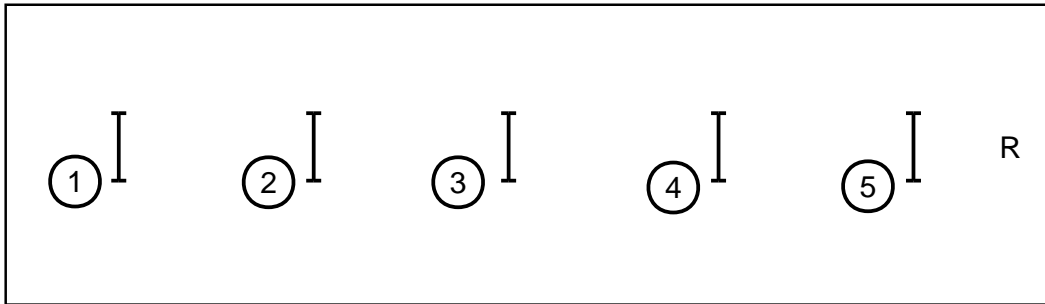
Kathy Keats is The Agility Coach. She knows what it takes to be successful. Kathy has participated in and won major national and world class events in dog agility and basketball, and competes at the Open level in sheepdog trials. Kathy graduated from the National Coaching Institute and since then has 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.

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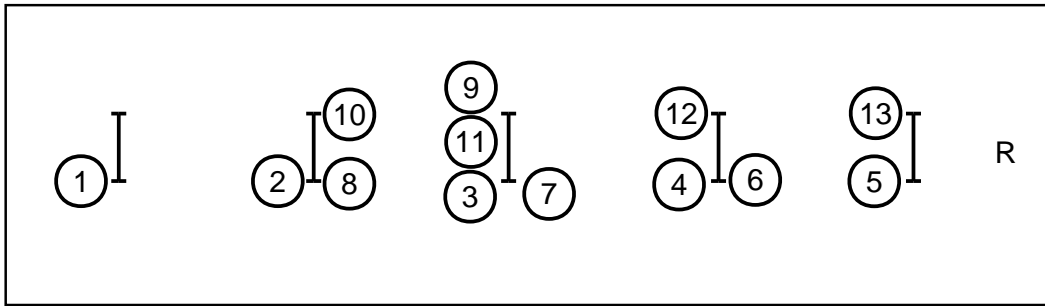
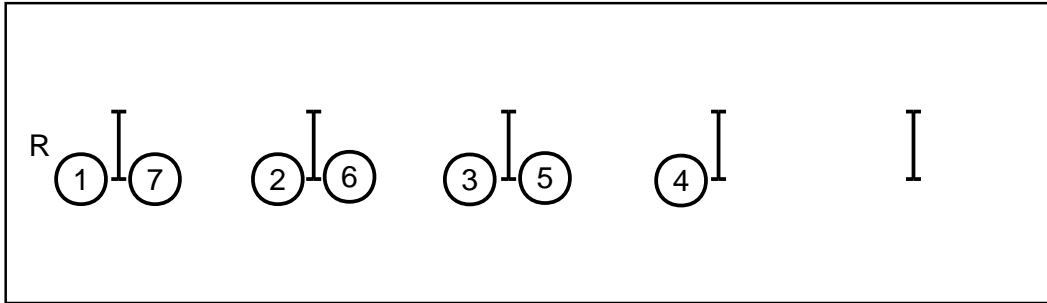
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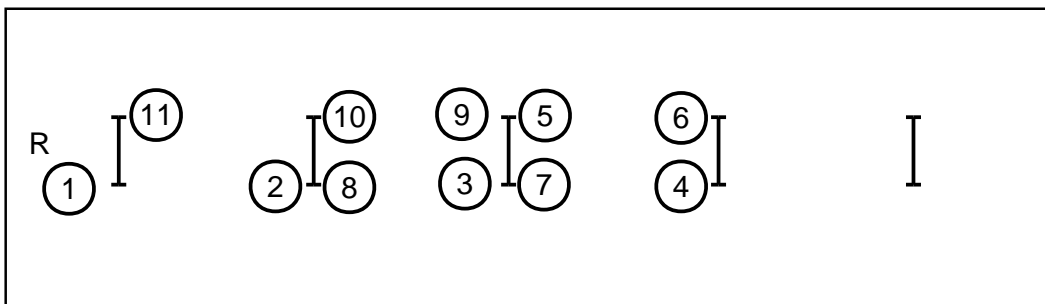
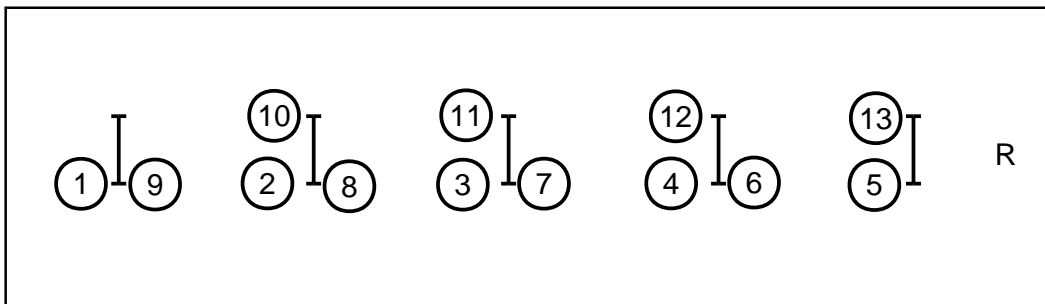
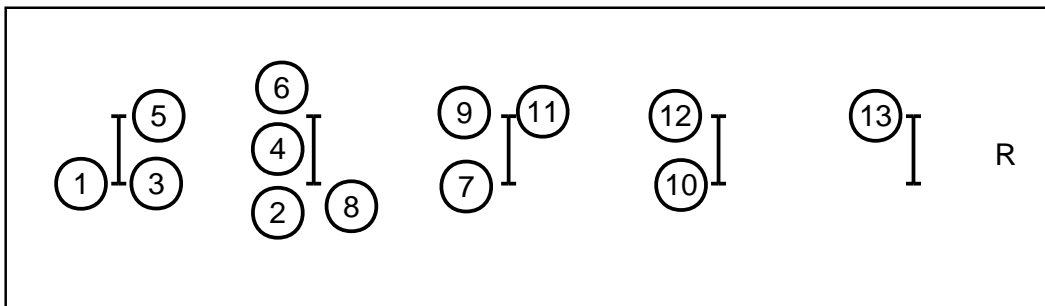
Exercises 1 & 2



Exercises 3 & 4



Exercises 5, 6 & 7



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