

MASTERING JUMPING SKILLS

for Awesome Agility Dogs • VOLUME 1

By Linda Mecklenburg



Clean Run®

17 Industrial Drive, South Hadley, MA 01075



MASTERING JUMPING SKILLS FOR AWESOME AGILITY DOGS, VOLUME 1

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This book
is dedicated to

Stellar

the light of my life.





Photo by Cathi Winkles Photography

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Lynne Brubaker Photography

Foreword

Several years ago, when I was still a high school chemistry teacher, I saw a summer agility camp advertised on an email list. Linda Mecklenburg was one of the instructors at this camp. I wondered if the camp would be worth the drive to attend—it was in Ohio and I lived in faraway Oregon—so I wrote to a friend who I thought would know more about it. I will never forget what she said: “I don’t know why people aren’t parachuting down onto Linda’s property to get what she has to offer. She’s amazing, and you won’t regret it.” Truer words have never been spoken. By the end of my three days in Ohio, I was begging Linda for continued access to her instruction and information.

Before online dog training classes, before YouTube, and before easy instant communication, Linda was willing to help me with my dog’s jumping training needs. Her patience, thoroughness, and attention to detail were, and continue to be, incredible. I would videotape my training sessions and *mail* the tapes to Linda. She would then critique them and send notes back to me. That she would take the time to help me out when she was preparing for the FCI Agility World Championships with her own dog, was amazing. Her help with my dog’s jumping made it possible for me to achieve my own personal goal of representing the USA at that same international event. In 2007, I competed in the individual event at the championships, and it was with great pride that I got to watch Linda and her teammates earn silver in the team event that year in Norway.

Fast forward to over a decade later. Armed with Linda’s handling and jump training information, I have won multiple national championships and have enjoyed top performances at international competitions on three continents, with multiple dogs. I am no longer a high school teacher and instead devote my life to helping others learn to master the art and science of agility handling and training—again, armed with the knowledge I have gained, and continue to gain, from Linda. Her comprehension and instructional techniques with respect to jump training, as well as handling, continue to help me build my own skills and those of my students. As you will see throughout this book, Linda’s ability to break down the mechanics of jumping, and to create processes for training the specific jumping skills a dog needs for our sport, is unparalleled.

Dog agility is continuously evolving and courses have become increasingly complex. The jumping efforts required by our dogs have also increased in complexity. Every agility handler needs to have a thorough grasp of the mechanical and physical skills their dog needs to maneuver through a course on the flat, and to succeed in the various jumping efforts their dog will encounter on a course. This understanding is not only necessary to be successful as a team at *any level*, but also to help prevent injuries and maximize the longevity of a team’s enjoyment of the sport together.

Mastering Jumping Skills for Awesome Agility Dogs, Volume 1 is the definitive theoretical and reference text for handlers to begin developing that understanding. You’ll learn about canine movement on the flat and how it affects your dog’s ability to accomplish the different jumping challenges on a course. You’ll learn about how the appearance and construction of a jump affects your dog’s jumping. And, you’ll learn about the conditioning that should be in place prior to beginning a jumping program so that your dog is physically capable of the jumping skills he needs to learn.

In addition, *Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 1* is the ultimate training text for handlers to begin to develop a dog that is a thoughtful and accurate jumper and then to maintain those skills for the duration of the dog’s agility career. Every agility handler and dog, the world over, will benefit from the timeless information in this book. The *Mastering Jumping Skills* program is the result of decades of observation, hypothesis, experimentation, and revision by Linda. In addition to producing this book and continuing to teach and compete herself, Linda stills gives her time freely to help handlers better understand the physical demands they are placing on their dogs, better train their dogs to meet those demands, and to become better with their handling so they can help their dogs meet those demands.

Although the amount of information in this book and the technical writing may seem daunting at first, I urge you, to read this book cover to cover before getting down to the business of doing any training with your dog. Read the book, dog-ear the pages you need to come back to, and use your highlighter and pencil liberally, just as you would with a college textbook.

Jot down any questions you have, then as you keep reading, see if those questions aren't addressed in some way. Chances are good that they will be answered, as this volume is a complete source of information as well as a training manual. And, if those questions are not addressed, Linda is available through her website, her online classes, and social media.

I didn't end up parachuting down to Linda's facility in Ohio, all those years ago. I drove, with a friend, all the way from Oregon and all the way back... and what

a drive it was. However, if I could attach a copy of *Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 1* to a parachute and drop one to every agility handler in the world, I would do so. Whatever you may have paid for this book (or maybe you were lucky enough to receive it as a gift!), its value is incalculable. I am proud to have been able to realize tremendous success from having put Linda's wealth of knowledge into practice over the past several years, and I'm confident that you and your dog will realize tremendous benefits as well.

Daisy Peel



Photo by Cathi Winkles Photography

Preface

The sport of dog agility has undergone considerable change over the last 10 years. As course designs and handling techniques have evolved, so have the demands placed on our dogs' ability to jump. The jumping challenges have significantly increased in level of difficulty, variety, and frequency. My first book on jumping, *Developing Jumping Skills*, has evolved into a comprehensive jumping program that will take your dog from start to finish: *Mastering Jumping Skills for Awesome Agility Dogs, Volumes 1 and 2*.

The *Mastering Jumping Skills* program is appropriate for young dogs just beginning their jump training as well as for more experienced dogs that need to improve their skills. With a solid foundation and training, *all dogs* have the potential to become successful jumping dogs. This first book in the set is designed to be a resource for handlers of all skill levels and handling backgrounds, from the novice to the most accomplished competitor. It is not a book that is intended to be read in one sitting; rather, it should be used as a reference for agility handlers and instructors to consult as needed. To get the most out of this program, you will need a basic knowledge of dog training and an understanding of agility handling, particularly the handling cues and your dog's expected responses to them. If you need background information on handling, refer to *Developing Handling Skills for Awesome Agility Teams*.

Dogs competing in agility come in all shapes and sizes and have all levels of drive and motivation. It is important to realize that this jumping program *may* be difficult for some dogs, especially those with a high weight-to-height ratio. At the other end of the spectrum, this program might seem easy for those exceptional athletes that aspire to compete at the highest levels of the sport. Although this program is designed to be appropriate for all dogs, there will be some dogs that will require modification of the techniques presented.

The sport will continue to evolve as course challenges, handling and training techniques, and equipment designs change and improve. The *Mastering Jumping Skills* books were developed and written with the goal that they will be useful in providing dogs with a solid jumping foundation for many years to come.

The focus of *Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 1* is on the following topics:

Understanding how your dog moves and jumps: To most effectively train your dog to jump, you should have a basic understanding of how a dog moves on the flat and what he does during the jumping effort. The jumping skills the dog needs to be successful today go well beyond extension and collection; courses require the dog to be able to weight shift, collect, extend, bend, slice, dive, and shape, as well as perform a combination of these skills. Chapter 1 is an examination of the *dog*—what he does, what he is capable of (or not), and what mechanical skills are required for dog agility jumping.

Understanding how the jumps themselves affect your dog's performance: Dog agility jumps vary widely in appearance and the type of challenge they present. Understanding how the basic components of a jump and the type of jump can potentially affect your dog's jumping performance and safety is important for you as a handler. Chapter 2 takes an in-depth look at the jumps themselves, from jump cups to bases to wings.

Preparing your dog for his jump training with physical conditioning: Jumping in dog agility has become much more physically demanding over the years. Courses have more difficult jumping challenges, which are more strenuous to perform, and most dogs require more training time to achieve the necessary skills. To maximize your dog's ability to perform these skills and minimize the risk of injury, he should be fit and well-conditioned before starting a jumping program. Adding a balanced conditioning program that includes body awareness and stability exercises, core strengthening, strength and flexibility training, and aerobic and crosstraining activities to build endurance is an important part of a comprehensive jumping program. Chapter 3 provides the elements you need to create an overall conditioning program as well as targeted exercises for improving specific jumping skills.

Preparing your dog for his jump training with foundation skills on the flat: Flatwork is used to lay the foundation for successful jumping performance before actual jumps are introduced. Having your dog learn to

respond to your handling cues and motion without real jumps is essential to ease your dog's ultimate transition from jumping skill training to handling sequences and running courses. As your dog is practicing one or more of the mechanical skills needed for jumping, you are simultaneously developing his understanding of *handling skills needed for jumping*. But while the drills included here are a critical aid in your dog's jump training, they are *not* intended to encompass the full scope of the flatwork you need to do for developing your handling skills (see *Developing Handling Skills*). Work on the flatwork sequencing in Chapter 4 can continue to be done to build your dog's enthusiasm, understanding of cues, and responsiveness to motion, as you are separately progressing with your dog's jump training and working through the other chapters in the book.

Introducing your dog to jumping with little motion or handler influence: Your dog begins his jump training in Chapter 5 by offering to jump a single jump from a standstill and walk, with as little influence from you, as a handler, as possible. Allowing your dog to take his time to figure out the necessary mechanics and problem solve will develop his awareness of the bar, lay the foundation for his jumping form, and build a desire to jump cleanly. Natural handler cues such as location, shoulder direction, and motion may be quietly introduced at a rudimentary level followed by the more formerly trained cues such as verbal and hand signals.

Building your dog's jumping skills: Once he understands how to jump on cue, you will ask your dog to perform many different one-jump drills using a single-bar jump. Each drill in Chapter 6 allows him to practice specific jumping skills. These skills are the foundation of this jumping program and will be used throughout your dog's career. It is important to be sure your dog is confidently and successfully performing jumping skills on one jump, before adding another obstacle, adding another skill, or changing the character of the jump.

Solidifying your dog's jumping skills: The drills in Chapters 7 and 8 have been carefully crafted to increase the difficulty of the jumping effort by adding a second obstacle while still allowing you to focus on

(and reward) your dog's performance of the jumping skill(s) being practiced. As your dog progresses through the two-jump drills in Chapter 7, you will begin to recognize your dog's strongest and weakest jumping skills. Use this knowledge to guide your selection of which drills to work on in Chapter 8. The drills in Chapter 8 are also well suited for experienced dogs needing to refresh their jumping skills.

Introducing different types of jumps: The instructions in Chapter 9 help you introduce the various specialty jumps used in agility that present unique challenges: spreads, tire, panel, wall/viaduct, and long/broad jump.

Understanding how a nontraditional approach to a jump affects your dog: Jumps that require the dog to approach from the landing side and cross the plane of the jump to reach the takeoff side present your dog with a different type of jumping challenge. Your dog has already been introduced to the foundation jumping skills needed, but he must learn to combine those skills to successfully perform this type of jumping effort.

It is important to remember that jump training is ongoing. Jumping skills require maintenance if you want your dog to retain them. You can expect your dog's jumping prowess to continue to grow and increase over time, so you should never stop striving for improvement.

In Volume 2

For your dog to successfully run a course of jumps, he must make the transition from jumping skills training to sequencing, followed by the transition to "real" agility. To sharpen his skills he may be introduced to grids, progressing to more advanced drills if more challenge is needed. *Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 2* will introduce sequencing, basic and advanced grids, and advanced jumping drills designed to practice or perfect jumping skills. It also discusses jumping problems, on-going training after your dog begins competing, and more.

Acknowledgments

Writing a book about dog jumping has been a challenge and I could not have accomplished it without help. Many have contributed to these pages, but there are a few individuals to whom I'd like to express extra appreciation because without them, *Mastering Jumping Skills for Awesome Agility Dogs, Volume 1* would still be a dream on my computer.

A special thank you is due to Bobbie Lyons for her contribution of Chapter 3 "Conditioning for Jumping." The advanced jumping skills needed on present day courses are not only more physically demanding but often they require more training and practice time. While being a weekend warrior might have been doable for dogs competing 10 years ago, today it is important for dogs to be fit and in shape. With the increased level of difficulty in the jumping skills our dogs are being asked to perform in agility, and increased need for training, I felt it was very important to include information on conditioning in this book. I am not an expert in the field, so I contacted Bobbie who graciously agreed to share her expertise. I should also thank Catherine Kaufman and her dogs Gus and Kopi for the many demos necessary to get the photos for Chapter 3.

I want to thank all of my students and their dogs, past and present, particularly those who came to me for help with their dog's jumping problems. One can never learn all there is to know about jumping and I learned so much from working with your dogs. Thank you to those in the early years who trusted my judgment, even though some of your dogs ultimately taught me that not all jumping problems can or should be fixed with training. I am grateful and I'm sure the many dogs that have since benefited from the knowledge I gained are too.

My past and present online class students' dogs were the test subjects for many of the jumping drills in this book. Having you and your dogs execute the drills and then being able to watch your performances in slow motion on video helped me evaluate the effectiveness of both my instructions and the drills themselves; and of course your feedback was helpful as well. Thank you.

To Mark Bills of Clip N Go Agility, who provided the use of his wonderful agility facility and super jumps for several photo shoots, a big thank you! Clip N Go wing

jumps appear on the cover of this volume. Mark also donated a Clip N Go Ready jump for photos and use in my jumping classes. And, he went the extra mile, by mowing his grass so we could get that awesome outdoor jumping photo for the cover.

Many talented photographers contributed to this project. It is challenging to stage the perfect jumping photo, particularly when you are trying to create a mistake! Sincere thanks go to Cathi Winkles who braved the cold weather and helped me stage many of the photos for Chapters 1, 2, and 4. She was ever so patient with my dogs and me, as we tackled the overwhelming task over the course of several photo shoots. She also met me one spring day to shoot outdoors and we got the gorgeous shot of Special on the cover jumping the spread. Lynne Brubaker, who shot the cover of *Developing Handling Skills for Awesome Agility Teams*, graciously met me at a competition along with Donna Brian to shoot outdoor photos for the "skills" on the cover of *Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 1*. Many of those images made it into the inside of the book as well. Mike Lifer, currently owner of Game On Agility equipment but formerly a canine photographer, deserves credit for most of the photos in Chapter 5. He traveled to my facility specifically to take those photos. And I must once again thank John Spivey, whose photos were taken in a shoot we did back in 2005 or so. He shot well over 3,000 photos and I've been drawing from that collection ever since. Thank you as well to the many photographers that contributed individual photos, such as Karen Moureaux of Dog Sport Photos who provided photos of the breakaway tire in action and combed through her archives for several other specific shots we needed.

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All in all, there were several thousand images for this volume from which the photos you see gracing the pages had to be meticulously selected one by one. It is not an easy task to get the perfect jumping photo or photo series; these photographers all helped to make it happen.

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My final and most heart-felt thanks go to Monica Percival of Clean Run. You cannot imagine what a massive undertaking this project has been. As she did with *Developing Handling Skills*, Monica embraced the challenge of publishing this book despite the enormity of the task. She personally devoted many hours to design, editing, and rewriting, and patiently sorted through the sometimes multiple revisions I did on the text and diagrams. With the unique subject matter of this book, it is no small feat to organize the text, diagrams, and photos so a reader-friendly book is the end result. Once again, Monica went out of her way to see that my vision materialized on the pages and exceeded my expectations.



Linda and Doodle at their first agility match in 1990.

Introduction

My interest in dog jumping started at an early age. I can remember setting up makeshift jumps in our basement and running my mom's Pugs over them when I was in elementary school. By the time I entered junior high, my interest had shifted to horses and horse jumping. My first horse was a pretty little chestnut mare named Ribbons. She and I had some great times together, doing a little bit of everything from bareback swims in the stream along the bridle trails to competing at the local hunter shows. As my skills improved, I began riding in some of the more competitive hunter and jumper events. I rode multiple horses in my junior years.

To be a successful jumper rider, you must be able to walk the course, decide the most efficient path to take, number of strides to take between the jumps, where to change your horse's lead, and so on. At the big events, I watched and learned as the top equestrians of the era walked and subsequently rode the courses, and studied how they schooled their horses over jumps when not competing.

I taught riding lessons part-time throughout high school. By the time I graduated, I was eager to assert my independence. I moved out of my parent's house, bought my first car, and got the first dog of my own. No, it was not a Pug. With my horse background where I spent lots of time around the barn, it seemed the most logical choice for me was between a Jack Russell Terrier and a Pembroke Welsh Corgi. My first dog was an amazing little Corgi named Honey.

I also got my first full-time job. While I still had horses of my own, I went to work for a very accomplished equestrian trainer of hunters and jumpers. Riding for her taught me just about everything there was related to jumping; I learned about ground lines, cavaletti, grids,

jumping technique, how different types of jump affect the horse and more. This is where my education in jump training really began. She taught horses to jump loose, without rider influence, in a round pen/oval chute. The horses were allowed to jump low obstacles from a walk and trot (first one, then two, then multiple), progressing to cantering over jumps, allowing them to figure out their takeoff points on their own without rider influence (distances varied). Later I would follow this model with how I introduced dogs to jumping, with the handler being as inconsequential as possible and the dog offering to jump on his own.



Working in the equestrian field, I watched the veterinarians practicing their craft and I became inspired to go back to school to attend college. Several years later, I sold all of my horses when I was accepted into veterinary school at The Ohio State University. While I was a student there, Honey passed away. When I graduated in 1990, I got my second dog, a Border Collie named

Doodle. Back then, most people had never heard of a Border Collie and almost no one had heard of agility. Because of my love for Honey, I was endeared with herding dogs. I researched the different breeds and ended up deciding a Border Collie was for me after watching them in action at a major sheepdog trial.

Agility was just beginning to catch on in the U.S. I had fully intended to return to horse show jumping once I finished vet school, but to compete at the level I aspired to was going to require a considerable amount of money. After competing in agility a few times, I quickly realized that for me, dog agility was the next best thing to horse show jumping and much more affordable.

Although dog agility has its roots in horse show jumping, the focus of each sport is slightly different.

While dog agility and horse show jumping both require the team to negotiate a course of obstacles without fault and to do it as fast as possible, in horse show jumping increases in challenge are accomplished by increasing the size of the jumps. Jump height and width is based on skill level, not the size of the horse. In horse show jumping, the challenges at the higher levels result from the jumps themselves. Course design revolves around the strategic placement of jumps and spacing between them, which creates subtle challenges that showcase the horse's jumping talent and the rider's skill and finesse.

In dog agility, increases in challenge are accomplished with course designs that test the team's ability to negotiate the course accurately with speed. The jump height is based on the dogs' size, not skill level. Jumps are not as high as they are wide. In dog agility, challenges at the higher levels result from more complicated courses that require increasingly precise communication between the handler and dog. Course designs test the dog's jumping skill and responsiveness to the handler as well as the handler's timing and execution. The jumping challenges originate from the relationship of the jumps—testing speed, accuracy, and agility—not the size of the obstacles. Jumping in dog agility requires diverse skills.

Doodle was very fast and quite the crowd pleaser; but she was not necessarily winning championships. Dog training was new territory for me, and training resources specific to agility simply did not exist at the time. Along with others who were starting down this road, we learned by trial and error and common sense. It wasn't until I trained my second Border Collie, Nifty, that I began to enjoy some competitive success. With the success came requests for training advice and it wasn't long before I found myself teaching agility professionally.

At the time I was recognized for my handling expertise. Many students came to me seeking handling solutions for wide turns. What they really needed was jump training for their dogs. So, I applied my knowledge of jump training in horses to solve many dogs' problems and soon found myself busy with students traveling from long distances for jumping consultations.

When I first began organizing my thoughts for what would become *Developing Jumping Skills*, few handlers actually taught their agility dogs to jump. Knowledge of jumping was limited; dogs were considered to be

good jumpers if they did not knock bars. For most dogs, their first experiences over jumps were focused on building speed, not learning to “jump.” Jump training often amounted racing 5- to 6-month-old puppies in full extension with flat arcs over low jumps. Teaching the puppies to drive forward was the goal, so sequences typically ended with a toy thrown ahead over the last few jumps. Little attention was paid to the actual jumping effort or whether bars fell. Early course designs were relatively straightforward and flowing so, at the time, this type of training was not entirely inappropriate.

As course designs began to include more turning challenges, handlers began to realize the value of decreasing the distance their dogs covered rather than increasing velocity in order to achieve a faster time. Thus they began looking for ways to achieve tighter turns. Most dogs were cued to turn reactively, with handlers cueing the jump first, waiting for commitment, and then cueing the turn separately after the dog was airborne and no longer able to respond. This of course resulted in wide turns and knocked bars. Handling had not evolved to the point where handlers could cue their dogs to the turns proactively before commitment. At this time most handlers did not know what collection and extension were, nor did they understand that dogs could change their jumping arc. After much foundation training where they were encouraged to run as fast as possible, in full extension with flat jumping arcs, most dogs didn't understand they could either!

From my combined experiences as a dog agility trainer and veterinarian, along with my equestrian background, I began to formulate my ideas on jumping. Although my veterinary training did not specialize in canine structure, my knowledge of canine and equine anatomy contributed to my understanding of how dogs jump. Probably my most valuable asset was my practical experience with multiple dogs, testing various jump-training methods hands on. I set out to design a jumping program to teach dogs to jump and educate the handlers on the rationale and benefits of doing so. By this time, I was already actively developing a handling program as well. With a solid foundation in jumping skills for the dog, and good understanding of handling skills for the handler, my goal was that the jumping performances of the dogs would improve.

Developing Jumping Skills was first published in *Clean Run* magazine in 2006 as a series of articles. The articles

were then compiled and turned into a book. With that book, my goal was to help handlers teach their dogs how to jump, not to teach handlers how to handle. However to ensure the dogs practiced the desired skills appropriately, I designed drills based on natural cues: motion, shoulder direction, location. I wanted the dogs to learn good jumping mechanics, while at the same time I did want to show handlers how easy it was to influence their dogs to jump in different ways using just a few simple cues. I remember teaching a seminar where I set up two jumps leading to a tunnel and had the students execute a variation of the drill now found in Appendix 1. They were amazed that their dog's striding between the jumps and jumping arcs—and, therefore, their turns—could be so easily controlled simply by where they stood.

The sport of dog agility has changed dramatically over the last decade. Vastly improved training and handling techniques have produced much better communication between the dogs and handlers. As a result, dogs are traveling at much greater speeds. Course designs at the higher levels are no longer straightforward and flowing; in many cases they have become quite complicated, requiring precision timing between dog and handler.

With the more complex challenges our dogs face on course today, the importance of jumping skills has increased significantly. Multiple changes of direction, variable distances, wraps greater than 180°, threadles, and every imaginable approach (including angled and landing side), all contribute to more difficult jumping efforts. Having the option of a front or backside approach leads to tougher discrimination challenges. The mechanics of these more difficult jumping skills are not only technically challenging from a handling aspect, they can be physically demanding for the dog.

The jumping skills required of our dogs are no longer limited to collection and extension, our dogs must also be able to bend, slice, dive, shape, perform multiple lead changes, transition fluidly from extension to collection and back to extension again, weight shift, and still manage to jump cleanly. The dogs must learn to look downstream on course and make striding adjustments accordingly. And, they must make split-second decisions about how to execute all of this at top speed, while paying attention to the handler's cues!

After *Developing Jumping Skills* was published, I continued to observe, study, and experiment with jump training methods. I taught several online courses that included material updated to keep pace with the increased level of jumping skills required. The classes provided me with not only information about the dog's performances, but also whether my instructions for the drills were being interpreted correctly. I soon realized there was much I wanted to add to *Developing Jumping Skills*. Not only was there considerable new content, I wanted to add more detailed explanations of the fundamentals previously presented. Motivated by the escalating jumping challenges on course, I wanted to share the information I had acquired by writing a second edition.

Due to the overwhelming amount of information I wanted to add, the modest 77-page paperback once called *Developing Jumping Skills* morphed into *Mastering Jumping Skills for Awesome Agility Dogs*, a two-volume set.

Mastering Jumping Skills is a comprehensive jumping program designed to prepare your dog for the jumping challenges that he will face in agility. The goal of *Mastering Jumping Skills* is for your dog to become the best jumper he can be.

Linda Mecklenburg



Lynne Brubaker Photography

Using this Book

Drills

To provide the most comprehensive jumping program possible, all relevant drills for jumping skills have been included in this book; however, that does *not* mean you and your dog need to do every drill.

Selection of Drills

To select appropriate drills for your dog, you need to understand the purpose(s) of each drill; for example, why the reward is delivered where it is, why the dog is stopped in a particular location, why the obstacle is placed before and/or after a jump, and so on.

Although it is recommended that *all* one-jump drills (Chapter 6) be mastered, *most dogs will not need to perform every drill provided to become a successful jumper. Each dog's needs must be evaluated on an individual basis.* As your dog progresses through the program, particularly if he is being re-trained to jump, you will often find one drill is more effective than another for practicing a given skill. You will also begin to recognize that many drills are designed to give your dog practice performing the *same* skill, with only minor differences in execution. You must use your own discretion when considering whether it is appropriate to omit a drill as you continually evaluate your dog's ability to perform a jumping skill fluidly and confidently. You will likely find there are skills your dog needs more practice with than others, and that some skills require more practice to maintain than others.

Progression of Drills

To help your dog master each skill, most drills follow a similar progression on the flat and then over jumps. If your dog has difficulty, it is useful to go back one or two steps in the progression until he is successful again.

1. The skill is introduced with minimal/zero dog or handler motion—you and your dog are stationary.
2. Dog motion is added by placing the dog on a sit-stay at a gradually increasing distance from the location where the skill will occur. You remain stationary.
3. Handler motion is introduced by placing the dog on a sit-stay and you moving (walking then running) to a location before releasing your dog. This progresses to releasing early and finally running with the dog.

4. The jumping skill is first introduced on the flat, then performed over one jump, then an obstacle is added before the jumping skill, then after.
5. The jumping skill is included in sequences and handling is introduced.

Drill Variations

In most cases, your dog should perform several variations of each drill (please note that all variations listed below are not possible for every drill):

- Handle the drill from both right and left sides (where possible).
- Handle the mirror image of the drill.
- Vary your dog's setup distance from the first jump.
- Vary the spacing between the obstacles, particularly the focus jumps.

General Guidelines for All Drills

- Reward (or withhold reward if appropriate) in a timely manner.
- If you inadvertently miscue your dog with handling, you must still reward if the jumping effort was good. Repeat the drill.
- If you cannot cue the drill as described, modify or omit the drill.
- *Each drill in this book should be performed with the cue combination(s) recommended in the description.* This will ensure that your dog performs the desired *jumping skill* and that he learns the desired mechanics of each skill.
- Specific cue combinations that you intend to use as part of your handling methodology can be practiced on *simulated jumps* as part of your dog's *flatwork training*.
- *After your dog's jumping skills are firmly established and he begins sequencing jumps in Chapter 11 in Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 2, you may introduce other cue combinations based on your handling methodology.*

Training Progression Summary for Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 1

Chapter	Pre-requisites	Important Training Notes
Before you start this jump training program	<p>Your dog:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performs basic obedience behaviors (including sit, down, stay, and come) and responds to verbal cues such as his name and a release word. Has a basic understanding of offering behaviors with a clicker. 	
Chapter 3 Conditioning to Improve Jumping	<p>Before beginning a conditioning program, your dog should be seen by your veterinarian to ensure that he has no physical limitations, no health conditions that might be aggravated by exercise, and no existing pain or injuries.</p>	<p>Create a conditioning program and get your dog as fit and conditioned as possible before starting Chapter 4. Continue your dog's conditioning program, changing exercises regularly and ensuring a balance of strength and flexibility training as well as aerobic and cross-training activities.</p> <p>As you work through the <i>Mastering Jumping Skills</i> program, if your dog has a specific weakness in his jumping skills, refer to the targeted strengthening exercises for jumping skills (weight shift, collection, bending, hip rotation, and so on).</p> <p>A maintenance conditioning program appropriate for your dog's activity level should be part of his training throughout his jumping career and into retirement.</p>
Chapter 4 Foundation Flatwork for Jumping	<p>Before beginning these drills, your dog is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offering to circle a cone or post (see sidebar in Chapter 4 and Appendix 5). Continuing his conditioning program (Chapter 3) and is as fit and conditioned as possible. Confidently and safely performing tunnels from up to 15' away. Taking a reward on a verbal cue (Appendix 3). 	<p>After successfully performing the skills in this chapter as they pertain to future jumping mechanics and working through the obstacle commitment drills, you will practice handling sequences on the flat using simulated jumps. Prior to doing the flatwork sequencing drills in this chapter, however, your dog may benefit from working through the drills in Chapters 6 and 7 using <i>simulated jumps</i>.</p> <p>While sequencing on the flat with simulated jumps, you can introduce cue combinations and verbal cues specific for your handling methodology.</p> <p>When you complete Chapter 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your dog should be successfully performing sequences on the flat. Your dog should be comfortable with your handling when you are both in motion. You can begin to include obstacles other than jumps, such as contact obstacles and weave poles, in the flatwork sequences as long as your dog is confidently performing those obstacles.
Chapter 5 Foundation Jump Training	<p>Before beginning these drills, your dog is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sequencing with simulated jumps in his flatwork training (Chapter 4). Offering to circle a post. Continuing his conditioning program (Chapter 3) and is fit, flexible, and conditioned. 	<p>In this chapter, you will train your dog how to jump. You will encourage round form over the bar and help your dog develop his ability to collect and bend, as well as increase his awareness of the bar and ability to jump cleanly.</p> <p>When you complete Chapter 5, your dog should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be offering jumps set at shoulder height. Be offering both collection and bending skills. Have a desire to jump cleanly. Have a basic understanding of your location, shoulder, and motion cues. Be jumping on cue at shoulder height.
Chapter 6 One-Jump Drills	<p>Before beginning these drills using a jump (rather than a simulated jump), your dog is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jumping on cue (Chapter 5) at shoulder height. Continuing his conditioning program (Chapter 3) and is fit, flexible, and conditioned. 	<p>Training begins with the jump set at chest height (or with a simulated jump if being done along with Chapter 4) and progresses to shoulder height.</p> <p>Each drill should be performed with the cue combination recommended in the instructions to ensure that your dog performs the desired jumping skill. (When your dog begins sequencing jumps in Chapter 11 in <i>Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 2</i>, you may introduce other cue combinations based on your handling methodology.)</p> <p>When you complete Chapter 6, your dog should be comfortable performing one-jump skills at shoulder height.</p>






















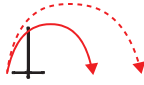
Chapter	Pre-requisites	Important Training Notes
Chapter 7 Two-Jump Skills: Obstacle Before Focus Jump	Before beginning these drills using jumps (rather than simulated jumps), your dog is successfully performing one-jump drills (Chapter 6) with the jumps set at shoulder height.	The training in this chapter begins with jumps set at chest height and progresses to shoulder height (or with simulated jumps if being done along with Chapter 4). When you complete Chapter 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your dog should be comfortable with two-jump skills at shoulder height. You may begin specialty jump training (Chapter 9). If you are retraining your dog and he has been trained for reliable, independent performance of the table, wait-for-release contacts (not running), and/or weave poles, you may use these obstacles as the first obstacle in the two-obstacle drills rather than a jump or tunnel. Independent obstacle performance is required because you must be able to appropriately cue the focus jump.
Chapter 8 Two-Jump Skills: Obstacle After Focus Jump	Before beginning these drills, your dog is successfully performing one- and two-jump drills (Chapters 6 and 7) with the jumps set at shoulder height.	As your dog progresses through the one- and two-jump drills in Chapters 6 and 7, you will begin to recognize your dog's strongest and weakest jumping skills. Use this knowledge to select drills to work on in this chapter. Focus on drills for the jumping skills that need improvement. The drills you choose should be practiced in moderation over an extended period of time. You may proceed to Chapter 11 in <i>Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 2</i> to introduce sequencing while continuing to use these drills to improve your dog's performance of specific jumping skills. These two-jump drills are also suitable for experienced dogs as a refresher of jumping skills.
Chapter 9 Teaching the Specialty Jumps	Before beginning this training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your dog is successfully performing one- and two-jump drills (Chapters 6 and 7) with the jumps at shoulder height. You have completed "Determining Your Dog's Extension Spacing" in Appendix 2 so you know what jump spacing to use in the two-jump drills. 	Specialty jump training begins with your dog offering the jump as he did in Chapter 5 and progressing as defined for each specialty jump. When you complete the training in this chapter, your dog should be confidently performing specialty jumps at the height specified for each type of jump.
Chapter 10 Jumps with Landing-Side Approaches		This chapter is designed to help you understand how the jumping skills you have been working on have prepared your dog for landing-side approaches to jumps. Reviewing relevant drills from Chapters 4 and 6 will help you prepare for more advanced training and drills in <i>Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 2</i> .
Mastering Jumping Skills, Volume 2		
Chapter 11 Introduction to Sequencing	Before your dog begins sequencing as described in this chapter, you have completed Appendix 1 to determine your dog's extension drill spacing. In addition, your dog is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sequencing on the flat with simulated jumps. Comfortable with one- and two-jump skills (Chapters 6 and 7). Continuing his conditioning program (Chapter 3) and is fit, flexible, and conditioned. 	These drills are designed to introduce your dog to sequencing more than two obstacles so he is performing the jumping skills he has learned with added dog and handler motion. Although the sequences begin to resemble "real" agility, the emphasis continues to be on your dog's jump training. Your dog begins this sequencing with the jumps set at chest height or shoulder height. While doing these drills, you can introduce other cue combinations based on your handling methodology. When you complete Chapter 11, your dog is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comfortable with sequencing jumps at shoulder height. Comfortable sequencing more than two obstacles with added dog and handler motion. Comfortable with your use of cue combinations based on your handling methodology. Ready to begin "real agility."

Reading the Diagrams

The figures in *Mastering Jumping Skills* have been provided to illustrate examples of different concepts. Following are some tips to help you interpret these diagrams.

- Drills may not be drawn to scale. Use the distances given in the drill instructions if specified.
- Where specific distances between obstacles should be used for a drill, they will be given in the drill instructions. If not specified, any reasonable distance with a minimum of one stride between obstacles should be acceptable.
- The setup location of the dog and handler icons is sometimes omitted to make the diagrams simpler to follow.
- When obstacle numbering has been omitted for a drill, follow the dog's path.
- Where the dog's path is specifically depicted on a drill with numbering, for example, the option of turning left or right over a jump exists but the path depicts a right turn, your dog should follow that path when he performs the drill.
- Where dog and handler icons are shown, their locations represent approximations of actual dog and handler interaction. It is impossible to depict precise relationships between the dog and handler with complete accuracy in a two-dimensional illustration.
- Where multiple dog and handlers are shown on one diagram, in some cases they are color coded to show how the dog and handler would be positioned relative to one another at a given moment in time. For example, a green handler icon shows the handler location corresponding to the green dog icon's location.
- The obstacle numbering reflects the sequence of obstacles in the diagram, not necessarily how the obstacles would be numbered on an actual course. Do not assume every sequence shown is an opening sequence of a course.

Diagram Key

	Winged single-bar jump
	Wingless single-bar jump
	Winged and wingless parallel double
	Winged and wingless ascending double
	Winged and wingless triple
	Long jump or broad jump
	Panel jump
	Tire jump
	Wall jump
	Viaduct jump
	Treat
	Cone or post
	Jump wing (assorted colors are used)
	Open, pipe, or tube tunnel
	Handler
	Dog
	Dog's main path
	Possible dog path
	Handler's path
	Obstacle plane & other imaginary lines
	Treat or toy
 <p>Jumping arcs: To make it easier to identify which arcs would be successful and which would likely lead to contact with a bar, the illustrations show the bars being jumped as if they were located at the very top of the standards—that is, as if the bars were the highest point of the jumps.</p>	