

# How to Use This Book

**T**his book contains 59 training steps designed to improve specific skills critical to your dog's contact performance. Regardless of your dog's strengths and weaknesses, he needs to be proficient in each component of the contacts: speed, control, target position, entries, and exits. Therefore, I suggest that you complete the book in order. Then, after completing the book, go back and revisit the training steps that specifically address your dog's needs. For instance, if you are trying to improve your dog's speed over the contacts, go through the book and review the training steps designed to improve speed; or if your dog needs a bit more self-control, complete those training steps designed to improve that one specific skill. In this way you will be able to customize a training plan tailored to you and your dog.

This book has generous margins which are designed to allow you to annotate the text with your own notes, make comments on the effectiveness of the training step, and to write about the progress you observe in your dog's performance and/or understanding of a specific skill.

## Glossary of Necessary Equipment

**Clicker:** The clicker is a small mechanical noisemaker used to instantaneously mark correct behaviors.

**Contact Board:** A contact board is any board that is raised off of the ground at an angle. You may use the bottom plank of the dogwalk, but if you have a small yard, or if the weather is bad, you can do a number of these training steps in your living room with a board resting on your couch. The board should be 12' long and 12" wide, and be rubberized or sand painted for traction.



You can use the bottom plank of the dogwalk as your contact board.

**Dowels:** Dowels are used to help the dog properly enter and exit the equipment. I use dowels because they are so inconspicuous that the dog is often unaware of them. (Both my dogs have clearly illustrated how unobtrusive dowels are by running into them head first, which has never happened when using jump stanchions.) Because dowels are so unobtrusive, they are easy to fade without the dog's performance backsliding. Stick-in-the-ground electric fence posts or driveway markers can be used as dowels.



Driveway markers can be used as dowels.

**Flat Board:** (2 needed) The flat board can be the same board as the contact board, provided it can be laid flat on the ground. It should be 12' long and 12" wide, and be rubberized or sand painted for traction.

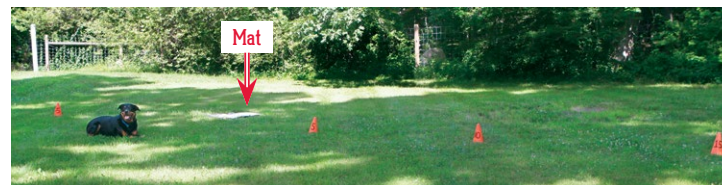


A flat board with two stanchions at each end.

**Marker:** The marker is a physical indicator that allows you to keep running yet still verify that your dog lies down when asked. The markers I use most often are either trees in my yard or bath mats.

**Position cones:** The position cones are physical labels that are designed to make you a more effective trainer. The position cones that I typically use are -5 (which is placed 5' behind the end of the contact), 5 (which is placed 5' in front of the end of the contact), 10 (which is placed 10' in front of the end of the contact), and lastly 15 (which is placed 15' in front of the end of the contact). Position 0 is the end of the contact, but I don't use a marker since the end of the board is obvious. By having clearly defined physical labels, we, as trainers, are much less likely to develop holes in our training. For instance, most handlers training a stopped contact will come to a position

a foot or two in front of the contact board, then decelerate (or even stop) until the dog assumes position. By having the physical labels, and determining your path before asking your dog to perform the contact, you are much less likely to babysit your dog's performance. For example, if you run to position 5, execute a front cross, and then continue running to position 15, you are training your dog to maintain criteria regardless of your body position or physical motion.



Place the four position cones around the marker, which in this setup is the bath mat on the ground.

**Stanchions:** The jump stanchions are used to delineate the boundaries of the flat board. (Do not use stanchions for any entry or exit training because they are such a visible prop they are more difficult to fade than the more inconspicuous dowels.)



This dog is being sent out around a stanchion.

**Stride Regulator:** The stride regulator is used to train your dog to leap the apex of the A-frame. The stride regulator is attached near the top of the A-frame on the down side. The exact position varies depending upon your dog's stride length; however, its purpose is always the same: to encourage your dog to stride up and over the apex of the A-frame. One of the reasons the stride regulator is so effective in training behavior resistant to extinction is because your dog needs to make the decision to leap the apex before he can see if the regulator is in place. Therefore, since the prop is visually inconspicuous (or, in fact, invisible), your dog's behavior is maintained regardless of whether or not the regulator is in place. The stride regulator is one training prop that I almost always have on my A-frame during practice. I even keep one in the car in case I train with friends or at a training center.



A stride regulator made from plastic drainage pipe.

**Toy:** You will need a tug toy that your dog really likes, and that can be thrown easily and accurately. If your dog isn't toy-motivated and you need to use food rewards, place the treats in a food-stuffable jackpot toy or in a container that you can throw. After you throw the container, race your dog to it and then play (physically) with your dog as you let him get some of the food. Never hand food to a slow dog; make him work for it!



The Tug It has holes in the material that allow the dog to get little pieces of food from the toy as he interacts with it.