

Watch Your Dog

Exercise 1: Focusing and Movement

This exercise is to improve focusing as well as tracking. It will help you improve your ability to move your eyes quickly and smoothly, as well as to focus on a moving object.

What you need: You'll need to print out the table below, and cut it out. You can do this exercise alone, but a partner is helpful.

What to do:

1. Have your partner hold the card about 14" from your eyes, with the letters facing you.
2. Have your partner slowly move the card in a circular pattern in front of your eyes, first closer, then farther away. You should try to maintain a sharp focus on the letters and numbers on the card; if they get blurry, slow down the movement until you can keep up with it.
3. Move the card in an egg/oval shape instead of a circular shape, first as a horizontal oval and then as a vertical oval. Because agility requires that you be able to move your eyes downward (where your dog is), repeat the exercise with the card below eye level.
4. Make sure that you only move your eyes! Your head should not move for this exercise.

To make it harder: Do the same exercise under a "load." Stand on a balance beam, Bosu trainer, or a balance disk while focusing on the card. Or, hold a dumbbell and do some bicep curls, or do squats, lunges, or jumping jacks while focusing on the card.

A	Q	3	P	G
R	V	Y	8	N
6	Z	2	X	5
J	S	W	9	M
C	7	4	L	E

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Exercise 2: Saccadic Tracking

This exercise can dramatically improve your ability to quickly move your eyes from one point to another, so that you can switch between dog focus and obstacle focus quickly and smoothly, without sacrificing attention to either dog or obstacle.

What you need: You'll need to print out the vertical strips of numbers, letters, and agility obstacles. You may also want a stopwatch to time yourself and track improvement.

What to do:

1. Cut the strips down the middle so that you have two vertical strips.
2. Attach the strips to the wall so they are 3' apart, at eye level.
3. Stand at arm's length from the strips
4. Holding your head still, call out the letters, numbers, or obstacles from left to right, alternating from strip to strip, until you get to the bottom. If you're having trouble, have a friend watch to make sure you're holding your head still and only moving your eyes.
5. You can vary the distance between the strips as you get better. More distance between strips will increase the difficulty of the exercise.

To make it harder: Stand on a balance disk and call out the numbers, letters, and obstacles. Jump on a trampoline while calling out, or do jumping jacks or squats or lunges while calling out. Make your own strips, with smaller letters, numbers, or obstacles, and with less space between them.



H



W



S



X

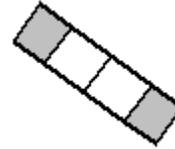


E

Q



P



A



G



K



R

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Exercise 3: Divergence/Convergence

This exercise focuses on improving your ability to shift your focus from near to far objects quickly and accurately.

What you need: Your index fingers

What to do:

1. Hold your arms out in front of you, make fists with both hands, and extend your index fingers so that they point at each other. The tips of your index fingers should be about 1/4" apart.
2. Look through your fingers and let your eyes become unfocused until you see the illusion of a central, suspended object, similar to a hot dog. The tips of your fingers will seem to disappear.
3. Once you've got the hot dog image, try to maintain your focus on your fingers so that you can keep the hot dog image while moving your hands together in a circular motion.
4. Once you can do this try keeping the hot dog image while moving your index fingers closer or farther away from your face.

To make it harder: You can make this harder by standing on a balance disk, jumping on a trampoline, carrying on a conversation with somebody, or doing something like squats, lunges, or jumping. Even standing on one foot will make this more difficult!

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Exercise 4: Hand-Eye Coordination

This exercise targets your fine motor control and your hand-eye coordination. In more advanced variations, it also targets your ability to process auditory information quickly and turn it in to eye-hand coordination movements. This is a fun game to play in a class; people can get quite competitive! Time yourself and see if your times improve as you practice. If you do the exercise on a balance disk, then go back to simply standing while doing it, does your time improve?

What you need: An empty egg carton with the numbers 1-12 written at the bottom of each cup as shown in the photo below. You can also use an 18-egg carton with the numbers 1-18 labeled at the bottom of each carton. You'll also need a quarter or coin, a stopwatch or timer, and a partner.

What to do:

1. Number each compartment in the egg carton as shown below.
2. Start the exercise with the quarter or coin in cup 1.
3. When your partner says "go," she should start the stopwatch, and you should try to flip the quarter from cup 1 to cup 2, and then to cup 3, and so on. You should try to flip the coin from cup to cup in sequence, and as quickly as possible.
4. A more difficult variation might be to start at cup 1, and flip the coin across the top row and then back across the bottom row: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2.
5. You might also have your partner call out a random number, and then you must try to get the coin in to that cup as quickly as possible.
6. Your partner might also call out a simple math problem, such as $2 + 6$, and you must get the quarter to land in the cup that corresponds to the answer.

To make it harder: Try to flip the coin through the cups while standing on one foot. Try to flip the coin while balancing on a Bosu trainer or other type of balance disk or plank.



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Exercise 5: Peripheral Awareness

This exercise is an example of something you can do to increase your peripheral awareness. You can do exercises like this on a course, even during a walk-through. If you look at the ground, what obstacles can you see out of the corner of your right and left eyes without turning your head? You might be surprised at all the visual information your eyes are receiving that your brain is discarding!

What you need: You'll need to print the chart on the next page for this exercise. You'll also want a stopwatch and perhaps a partner, although you can do the exercise alone as well.

What to do:

1. Print out the diagram, and tape it to the wall at eye level.
2. Standing at arm's length from the diagram, direct your gaze at the star in the center of the page, and without moving your eyes, see how many of the figures you can identify with your peripheral vision
3. Once you can do this, turn the diagram around so that you're looking at it from a different angle (to prevent memorization), and try the exercise with the diagram *below* eye level.

To make it harder: Do the same exercise under a "load." Stand on a balance beam, Bosu trainer, or a balance disk while focusing on the card. Or, hold a dumbbell and do some bicep curls, or do squats, lunges, or jumping jacks while focusing on the card. Have a timed competition with friends or classmates. Do the exercise with only one eye or the other (cover the other eye with a card or blindfold).

