

SKILL OF THE MONTH

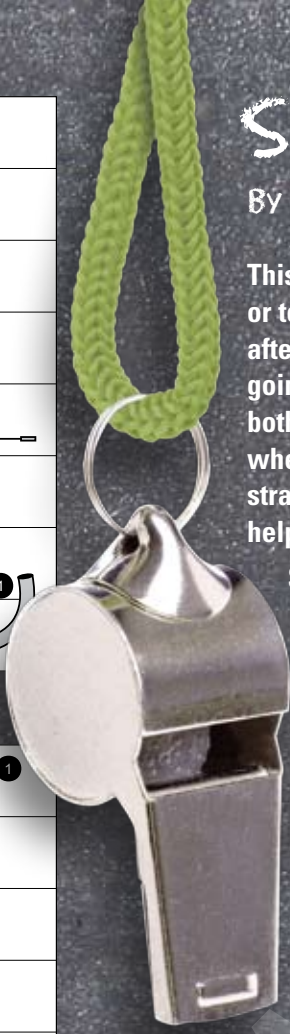
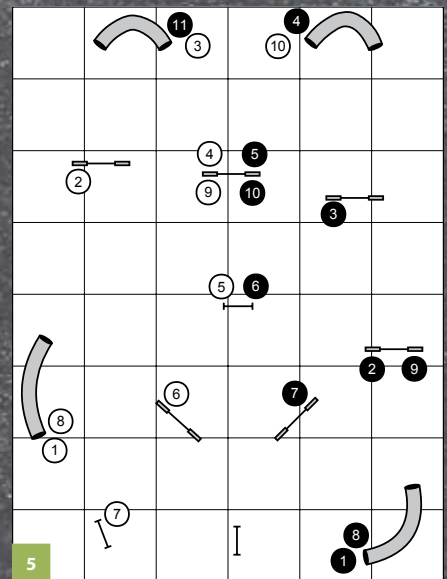
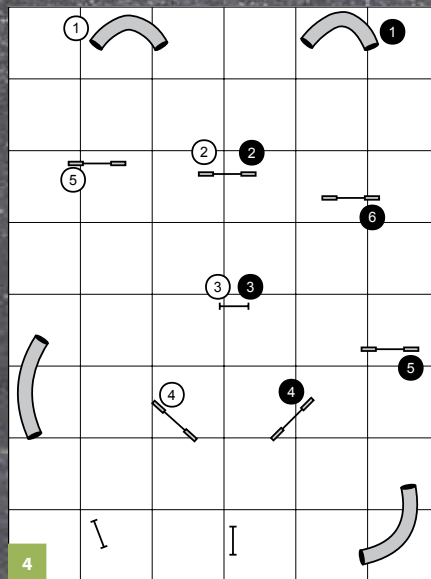
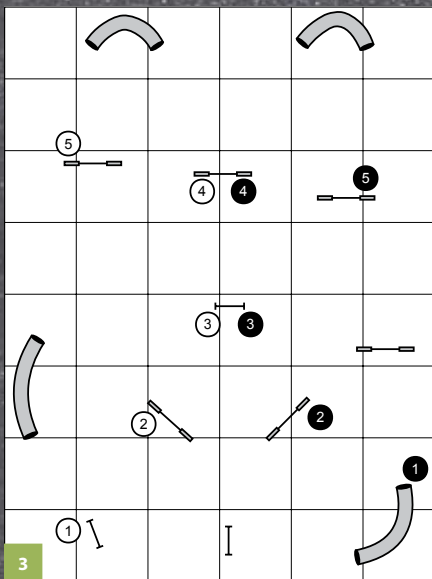
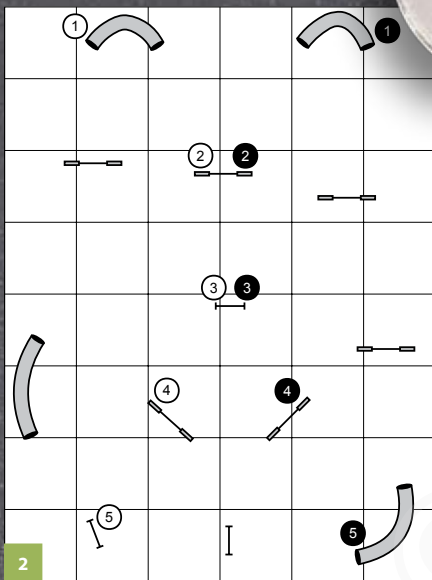
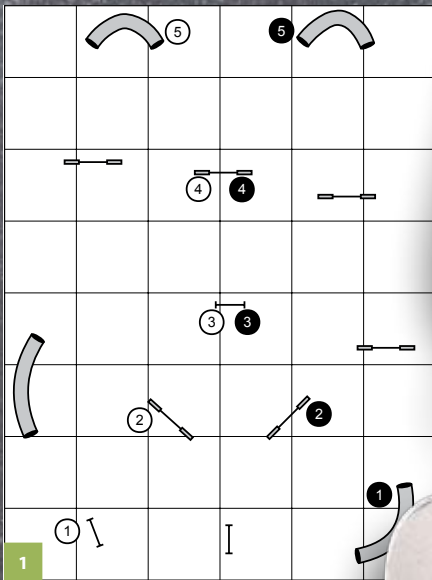
BY KAREN HOLIK

This month's exercises focus on cueing your dog either to extend or to collect over jumps. When a dog is extending over a jump or after a tunnel, he should be driving as fast as he can and usually going straight ahead. When a dog is collecting over a jump he both takes off and lands much closer to the jump. Cue collection when you want your dog to turn after a jump as opposed to driving straight ahead. Most dogs can extend without a problem, but need help when collecting.

Some dogs don't want to slow down to turn; they just want to do the jumps or tunnels as fast as they can. Other dogs need encouragement to drive ahead and extend; these dogs have no problem at all with collecting and turning. If you have a dog that is uncomfortable extending, you should reward his extension effort profusely and often. For encouragement, you can use toys or thrown bait bags (if he enjoys food more). If you have a dog that is uncomfortable collecting, you should reward often for that effort as well.

Figures 1 and 2 are sequences where you want your dog to extend and drive straight ahead. There are many ways to teach your dog to drive ahead on his own or while you are running with him. The most important thing is that he does this when you ask and that you reward him for a job well done.

In Figure 3 your dog needs to extend over the first three obstacles and then collect over #4 for the turn to #5. Be sure to give a different physical or verbal cue before your dog is committed to #4 to let him know a turn is coming. Remember to reward when your dog reads the turn. The more he is rewarded for turning, the more likely he is to pay attention to your cues when you use them.



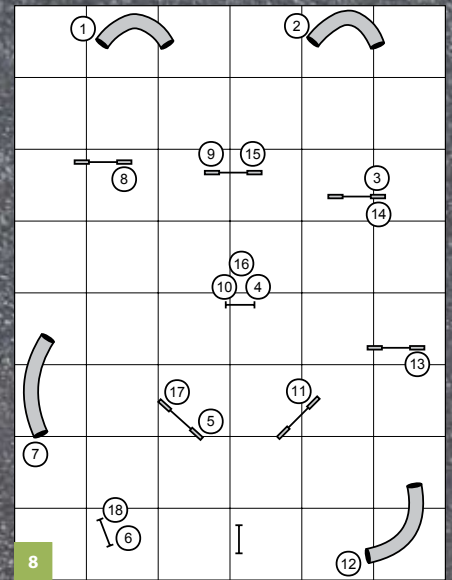
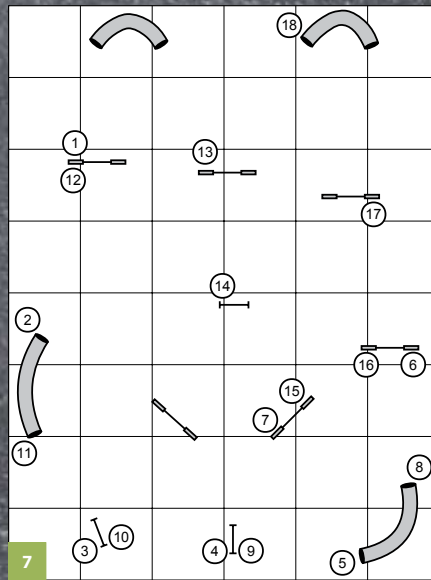
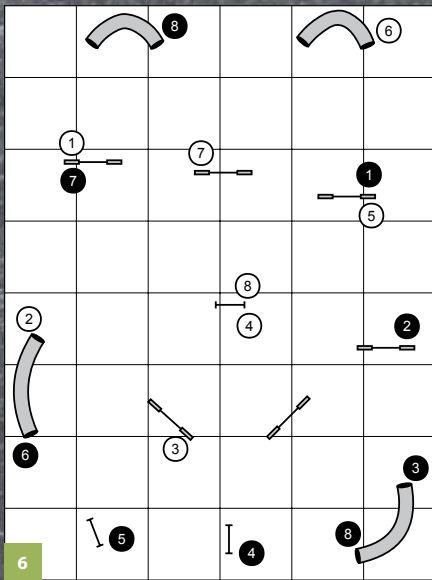
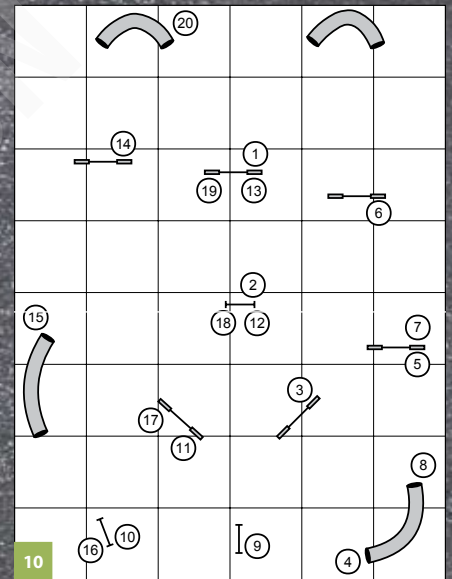
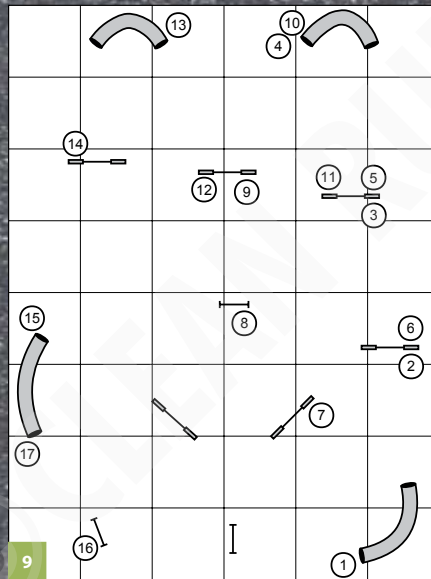


Figure 4 has the same scenario. Your dog needs to drive through #1 to #3, and then you must cue him about the turn at #4 back to #5.

Figures 5 and 6 have more sequences for asking your dog to drive ahead and extend. Remember to have fun and really encourage your dog to drive ahead if he is unsure of doing that on his own. Reward highly with toys and verbal praise.

Figures 7 through 10 contain sequences that require your dog to extend and move quickly, slow down for a turn, and then extend again. Can you cue your dog to extend, then collect, and then extend again before he approaches the obstacles? Can you do this while still keeping your dog motivated? He should be able to happily drive forward and also slow down for a turn. Have fun training and reward often! 🐾



Karen Holik, involved in agility for over 15 years as a competitor and a USDAA and AKC judge, has competed in the finals of the USDAA World Championships many times with all her dogs: two Shelties, a Border Collie, and an All-American. Her youngest dog, ADCH MACH2 Triune's Feelin Hot Hot Hot, a.k.a. Sizzle, is a three-time champion at the USDAA World Championships and a member of the AKC/USA World Team in 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2007. Karen offers private lessons and seminars; contact her at oncourseagility@comcast.net.