

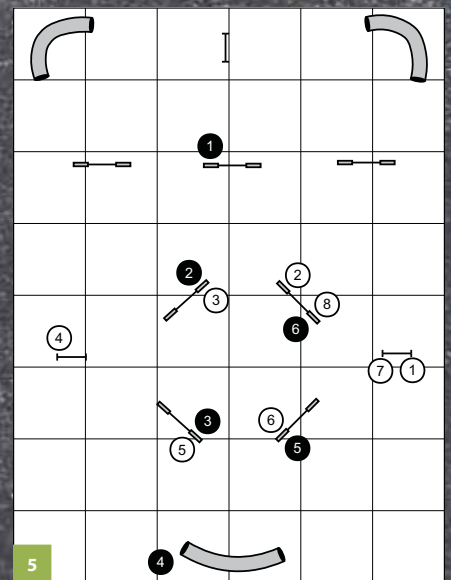
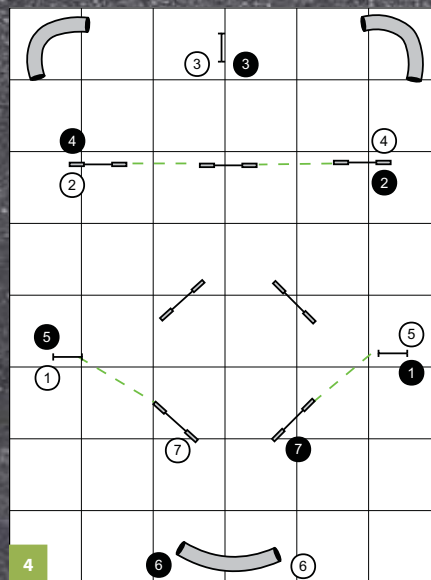
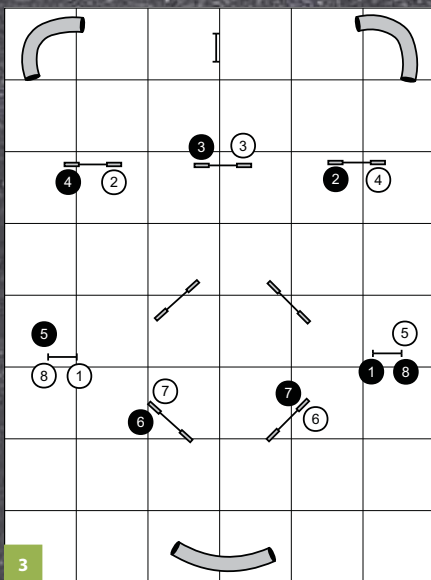
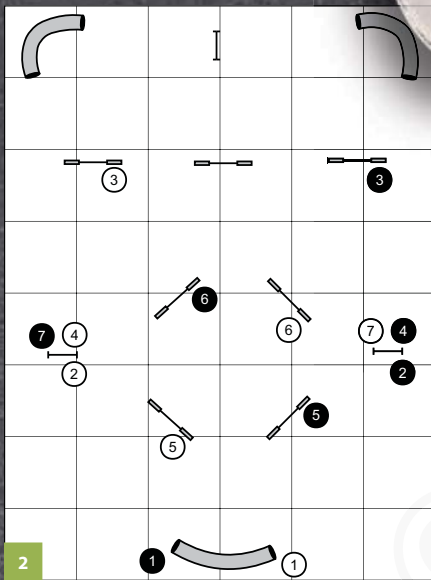
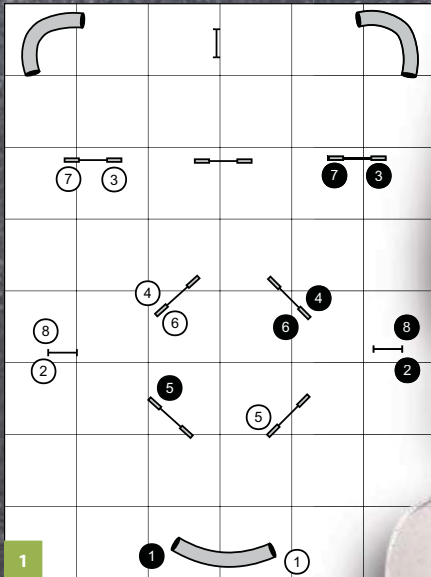
SKILL OF THE MONTH

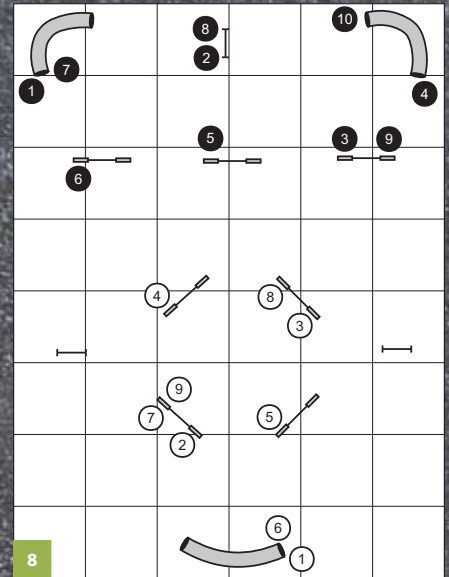
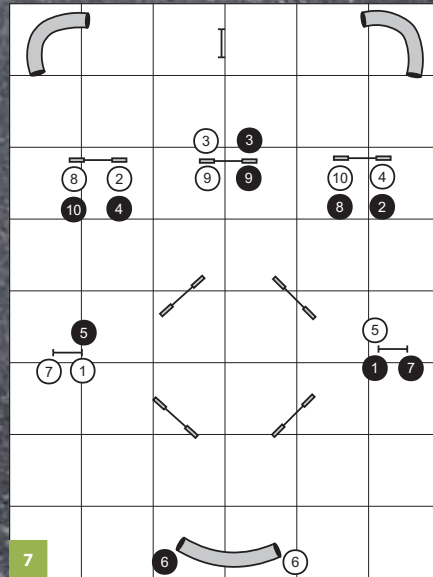
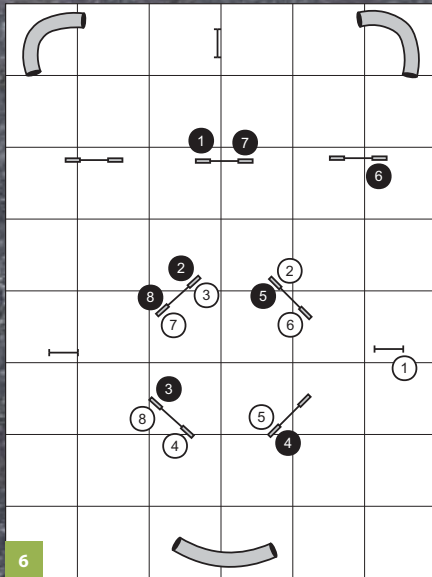
BY KAREN HOLIK

This month's exercises will test whether you are being consistent with your dog in your handling and whether he knows where he is going *before* he takes off for a jump. Some jumping skills are very similar, but there is something slightly different that the handler does for each so the dog knows where he is supposed to go next. It is your job to show the dog where he is going before he takes off for a jump so he does not take a wide turn after the jump, knock the bar, or worse yet, go off course. Hopefully, these exercises will sharpen your skills as a handler. Remember, if your dog knows where he is going next on the approach to a jump, he will go faster and with more confidence.

Figures 1 and 2 test whether there is a distinct difference between your front- and rear-cross cues. Start with your dog on your left for the white numbers and on your right for the black numbers. In Figure 1, you should do a front cross between #3 and #4, #5 and #6, and #7 and #8 while turning your dog to the right each time. In Figure 2, you should do a rear cross at jumps #3 and #6, turning your dog to the left at #3 and right at #6. Does your dog know the difference before he takes off for the jump?

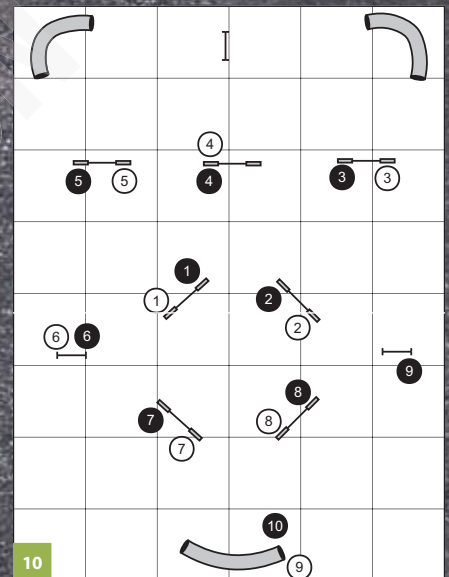
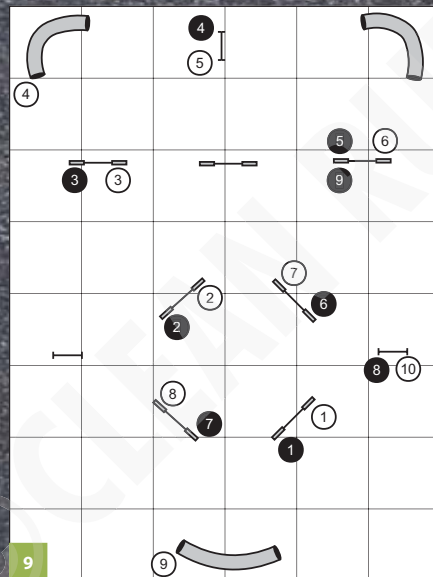
Figures 3 and 4 test if your dog can tell the difference between your serpentine cue and your layering cue. In Figure 3 do the white numbers with your dog on your left and the black numbers with your dog on your right. Do the same for Figure 4. In Figure 4 you should not go past the long dashed line when negotiating jump #3 or past the short dashed lines when doing obstacles #6 and #7. Can you tell your dog which jump is next with your good handling skills as opposed to saying *Come* or "No, not that jump!"





Figures 5 and 6 test your skills with a pinwheel and sending the dog out to tunnels. In Figure 5 you will ask your dog to perform the second jump in the pinwheel and the tunnel. In Figure 6, you will ask him to skip the second jump in the pinwheel and the tunnel. Again, your cues to the dog should be before he takes off for the obstacle. You should also try both exercises in reverse.

In Figure 7, you will perform #2 through #4 as a serpentine, but when you get to the same jumps at #8 through #10, you need to tell your dog that he is coming through between the jumps as a threadle.



In Figure 8, start with your dog on your left for both sequences. For each sequence, you probably want to do a rear cross at jump #3. Then when you approach the same jump again, you try a front cross.

In Figure 9, for the white numbers, you want to cue extension to both tunnels at #4 and #9. For the black numbers, can you cue your dog before the tunnels that he is not going to perform them?

Figure 10 has more sequences to test your handling skills. Remember to give your handling cues for each jump before your dog has decided what is next.

Have fun and don't forget to reward your dog's good efforts. 🐾

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.