

SKILL OF THE MONTH

BY KAREN HOLIK

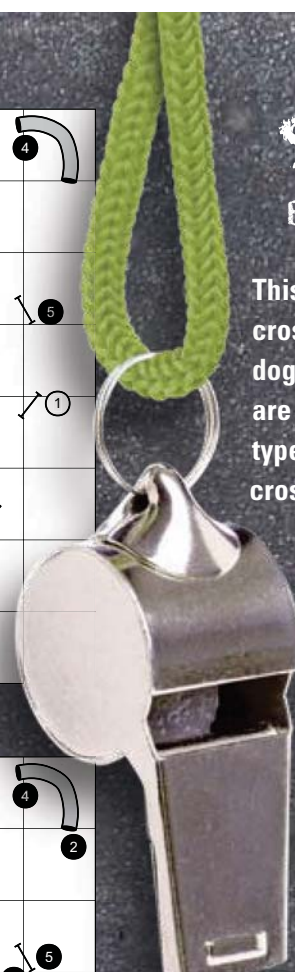
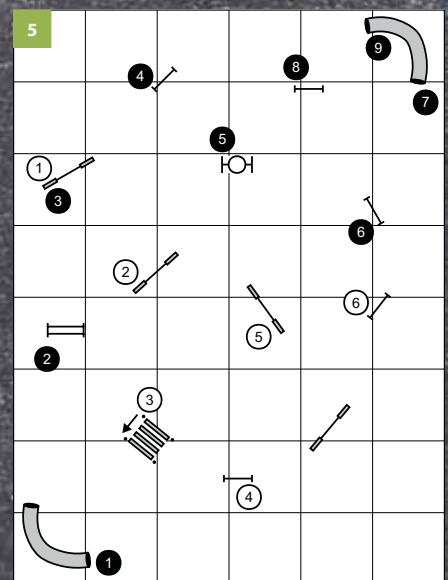
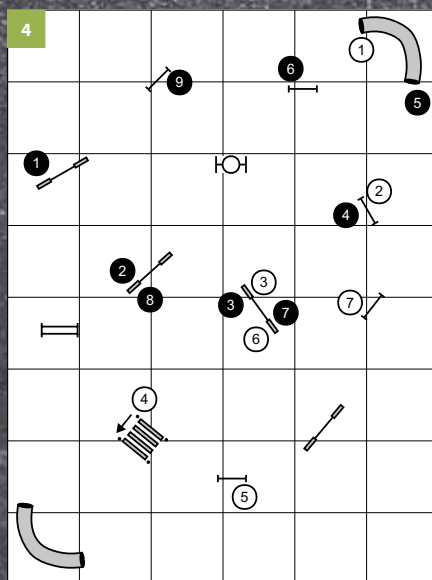
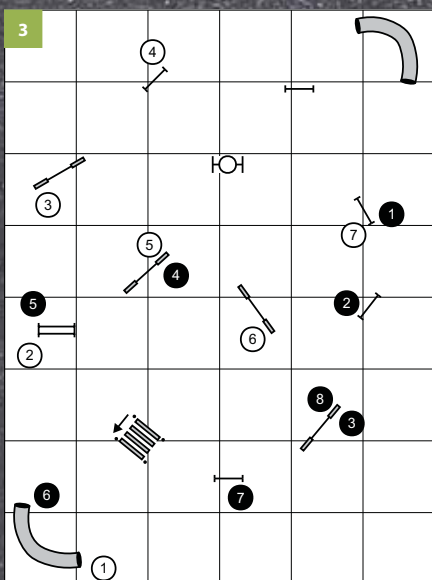
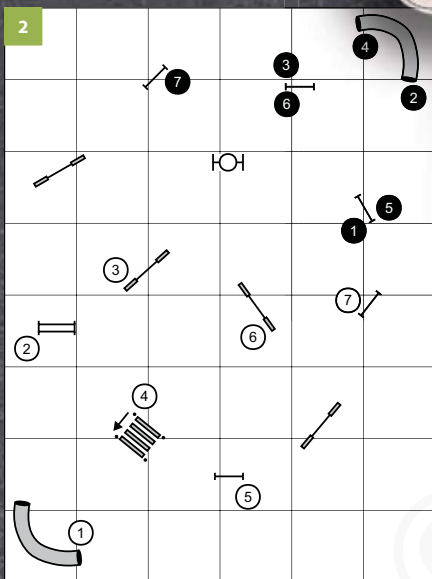
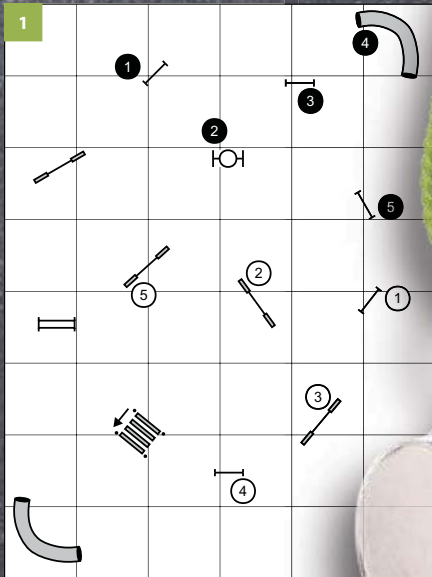
This month's exercises focus on front crosses and rear crosses. Both crosses involve a change of side for the handler, from one side of the dog to the other, so that you can indicate to the dog the direction you are going after the dog performs an obstacle. Most of us prefer one type of cross over the other, but you should practice your weakest cross, even though you might not use it that much. There are often times on a course when you will often not have the opportunity to choose which cross to do. You will be forced to do one or the other because of the way the course is designed.

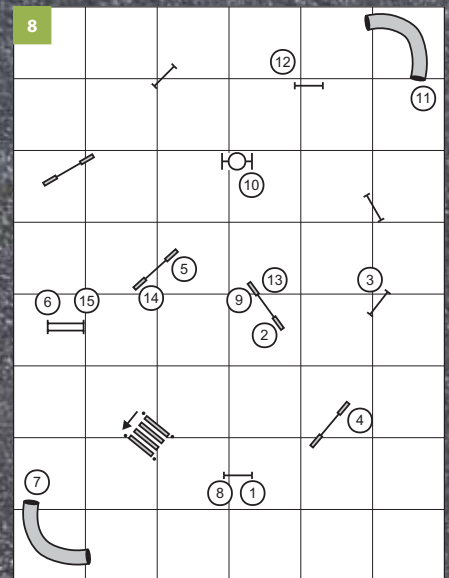
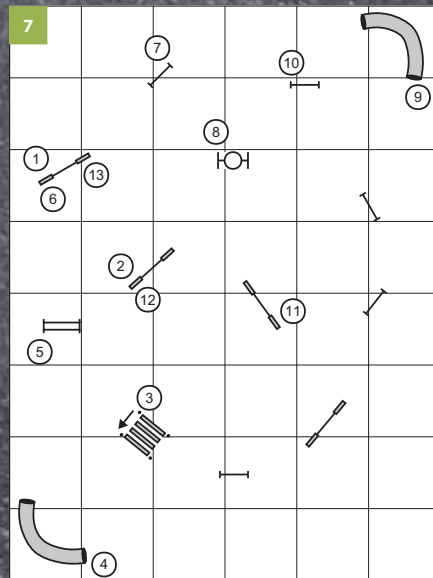
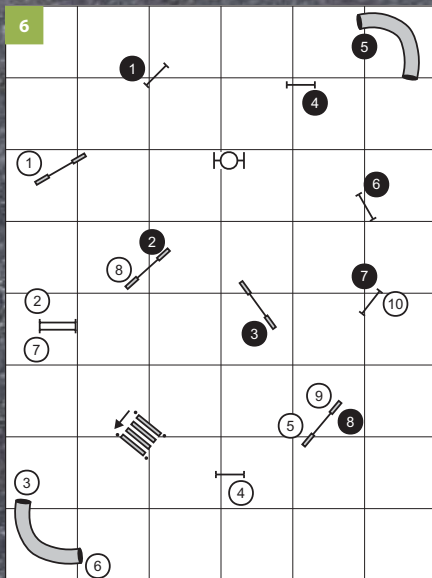
In the first three exercises, there are numerous opportunities to work on your front cross skills. Can you figure out where it would be good for a front cross on your own? For these exercises, try starting with just a slight lead-out or none at all.

> In **Figure 1**, start with your dog on your right for both sequences. For the white numbers, try a front cross between #2 and #3 to put your dog on your left, and then another front cross between #4 and #5 to put your dog back on your right. For the black numbers, try front crosses between #2 and #3 and also between #4 and #5.

> In **Figure 2**, try to do front crosses between #3 and #4 and also #5 and #6. For the black numbers, start with your dog on your right; for the white numbers, start with your dog on your left.

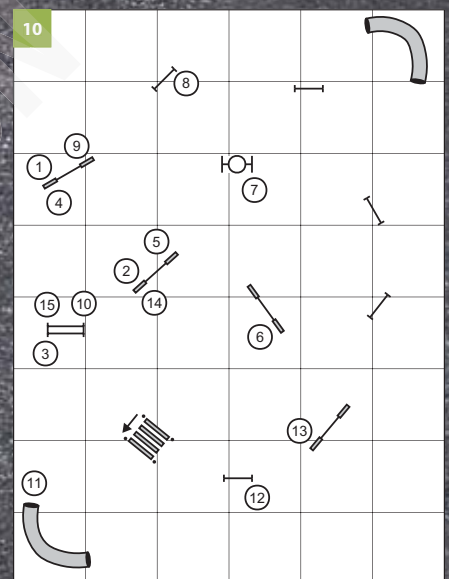
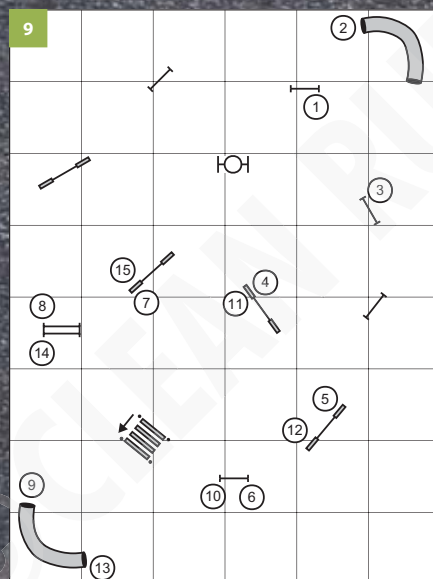
> In **Figure 3**, start with your dog on your left for both drills. For the black numbers, do a front cross between #3 and #4 and also between #6 and #7. For the white numbers, do a front cross between #4 and #5, then between #6 and #7.





In the next three exercises you have some opportunities to practice rear crosses. Even though you might handle the course differently, you should try the sequences with rear crosses for practice.

- In **Figure 4**, start with your dog on your left for both drills. Do rear crosses before #4 and #6 for the white numbers, and before #2 and #6 for the black.
- In **Figure 5**, start with your dog on your left for both drills. Do rear crosses before #3 and #5 for the white numbers, and before #5 and #8 for the black.



- In **Figure 6**, start with your dog on your right for both drills. Do rear crosses before #4 and #9 for the white numbers, and before #4, #6, and #7 for the black.

Figure 7 is designed so that you can try both front and rear crosses. If you start with your dog on your left, you should do a rear cross at #2 and then do a front cross between #7 and #8; alternatively, do a rear cross before #8 and then do a front cross between #10 and #11, or a rear cross at #11. You could also add another front cross between #12 and #13, just for practice, if you can get there.

Figures 8 through 10 are very similar to **Figure 7**. How many front or rear crosses can you do in one course. Which way is more comfortable for you? Remember to start the sequences without a lead-out and also start with your dog on your left and your right. 🐾

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.