

# SKILL OF THE MONTH

BY KAREN HOLIK

This month's exercises focus on serpentines. A serpentine is a line of jumps (or obstacles) taken in either direction as shown in **Figure 1**. The dog must alternate his direction jumping away from and toward his handler in an S-shaped path.

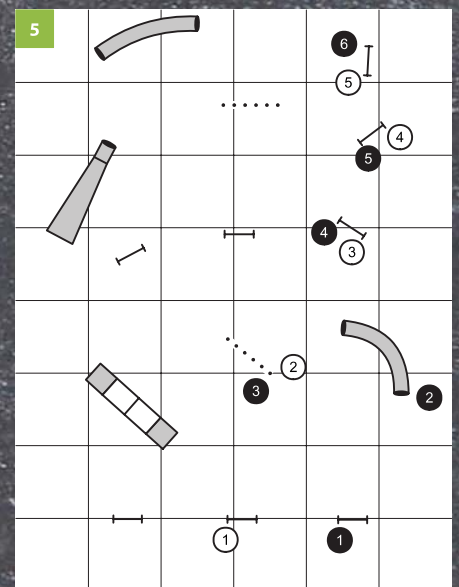
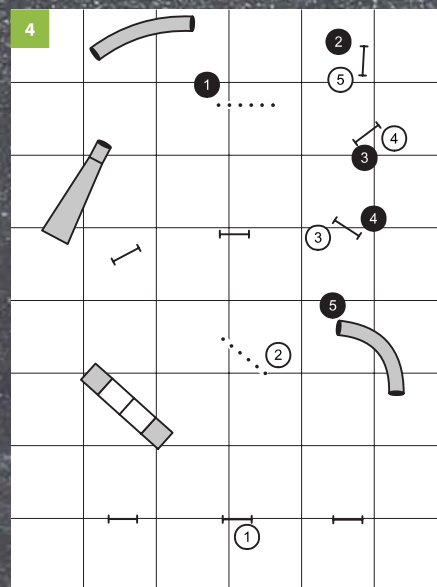
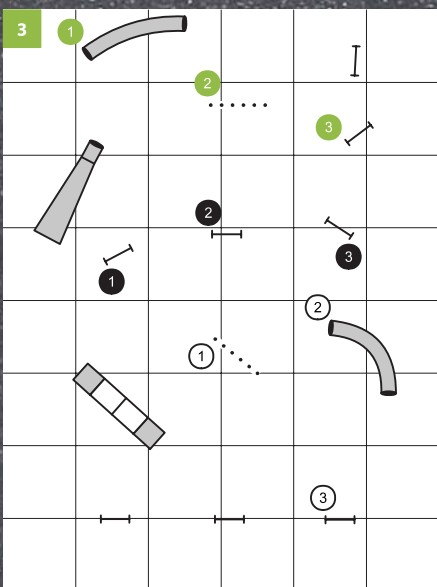
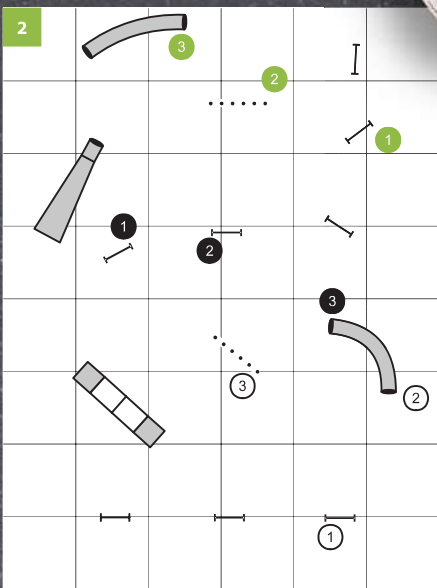
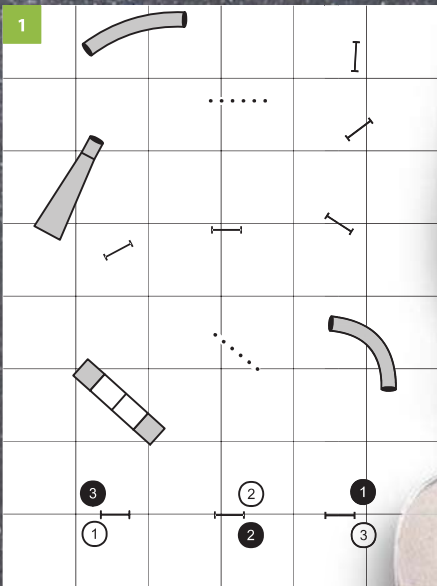
Serpentines are very popular in courses, but often not readily seen by the handler. If you can perform two front crosses (one cross between the first two obstacles in the serpentine and one cross between the second two obstacles in a serpentine) then you can do a serpentine.

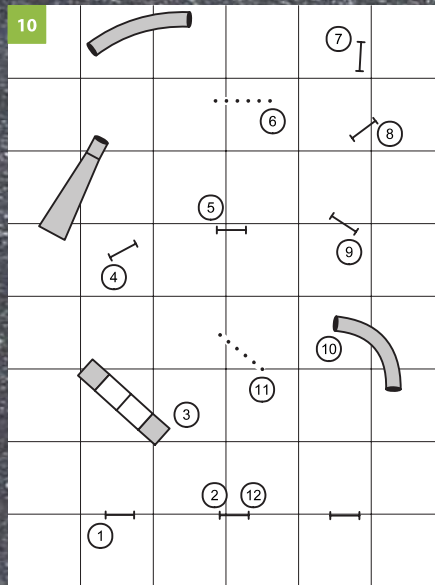
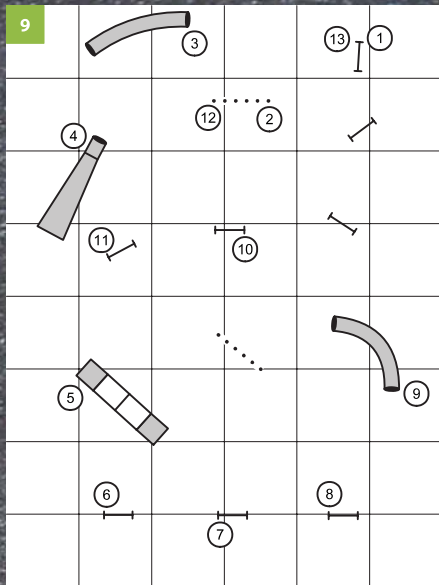
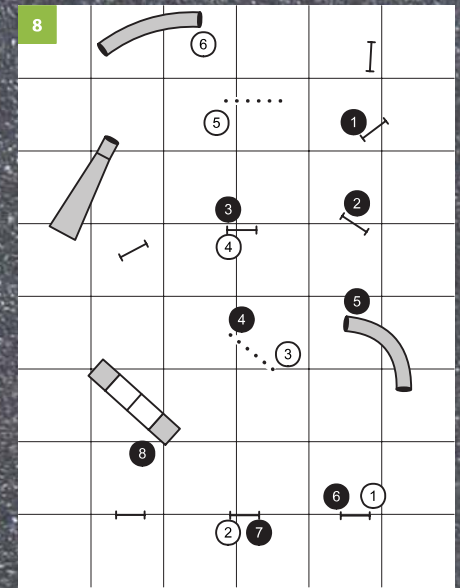
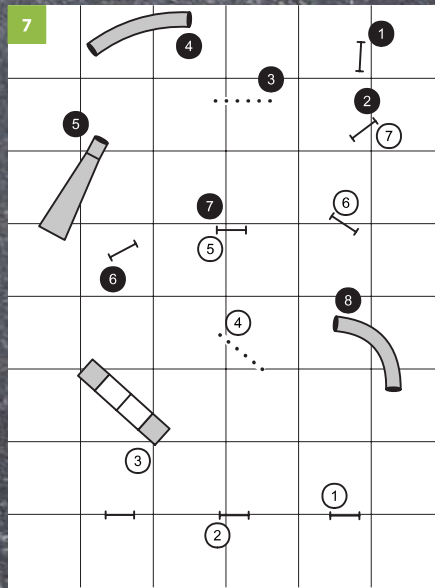
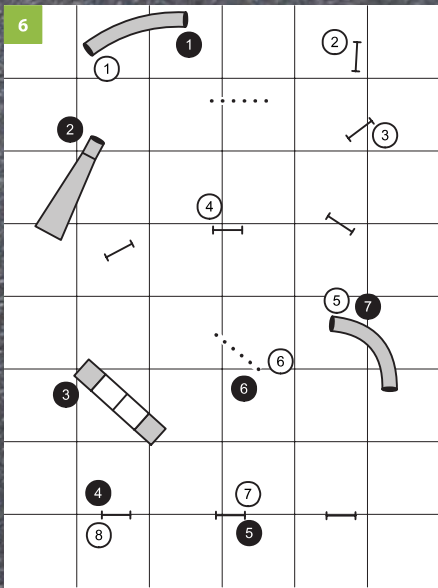
Serpentines do not always have to be a set of three jumps. A serpentine can be three obstacles of any kind. You can have a jump, tunnel, jump; or a jump, weave poles, tunnel; or just about any configuration you can think of. Serpentines are not always readily seen on a course because sometimes people don't think of obstacles other than jumps as belonging in a serpentine.

The exercises in Figure 1 contain a simple serpentine of just jumps that you should try with your dog on your left and also on your right. When practicing the serpentines in Figure 1, try to do the sequence from behind, in front, and running with your dog.

The exercises in **Figures 2 through 10** contain progressively more difficult serpentines.

- > Try the exercises in Figures 2 and 5 with your dog on your right.
- > Try the exercises in Figures 3 and 4 with your dog on your left.
- > Try handling the black-numbered exercises in Figures 6 and 7 with the dog on your right and the white-numbered sequences with the dog on your left. Can you keep your dog on the same side for the whole sequence?
- > Try the exercise in Figure 9 with the dog on the right.
- > Try the exercise in Figure 10 with the dog on the left. 🐾





Karen Holik has been involved in agility for over 10 years as a competitor and also a USDAA and AKC judge. She has competed in the finals of the USDAA Grand Prix World Championships seven 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) won the Steeplechase event at the USDAA World Championships in 2003 and 2006. Karen and Sizzle were members of the AKC/USA World Team in 2003, 2005, and 2006. Karen offers private lessons and seminars and can be reached at [oncoursageility@comcast.net](mailto:oncoursageility@comcast.net).