

Step 14: Start in a sit in the chute at a short distance

What's new in this step:

Add a tiny bit of distance and start with your dog sitting. You may also add a signal with your "Go Bop!" cue.

Basic Procedure:

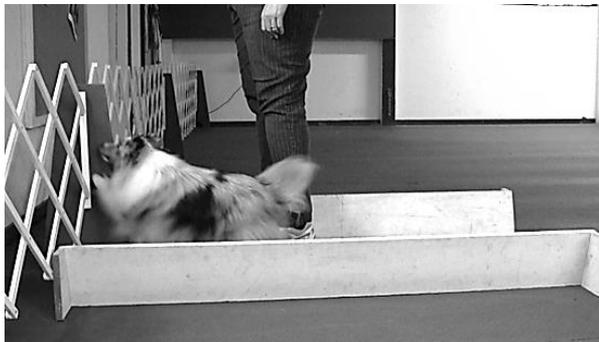
- a) Make a chute with broad jump boards turned up on their sides against a line of gating (at least two sections).
- b) Sit your dog in the chute a body length from the stanchion.

- c) You stand in heel position next to your dog.



- d) Say "Go Bop!" Optionally you may give a signal along with the command.

- e) Say "Yes!" as his paw makes contact with the stanchion.



- f) Say "Sit" if desired (see description below).
- g) Reward on the stanchion.

Description:

Stand straddling the gating next to the stanchion you are going to use. Again, you should not try to prevent the gating from wiggling when your dog touches it, so do not clamp it between your legs. Your legs are there only to prevent it from falling over and frightening your dog. If the gating is secured so well that it won't move, that can actually encourage your dog to hit it harder because he will always expect it to be secure.

Position your dog so that he is directly in front of the stanchion. Proceed as before, tapping on or pointing to the top of the stanchion to cue your dog to bop it with his foot. Reward only touches of the stanchion itself, not the gating. As he touches the stanchion with his paw, say "Yes!" then feed him by holding the food at nose level against the top or front of the stanchion to encourage him to remain close to it. Your hand should make contact with the stanchion as you give him the food.

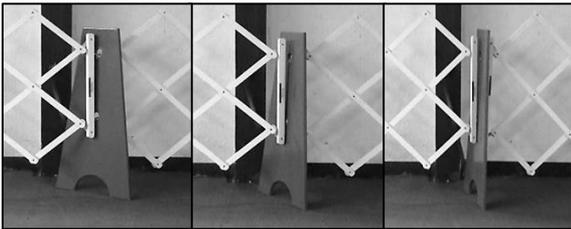
Sample step description

Many dogs are able to transition to a center stanchion in one or two training sessions. Some need a couple more sessions to become reliable on bopping the stanchion and not just the gating.

Common Problems:

Dog keeps bopping the gating, not the stanchion.

If your dog has trouble locating where to touch, turn the stanchion as much as possible for a few repetitions, then gradually turn it back towards the normal position. Be consistent about only rewarding bops of the stanchion.



Criteria to Advance:

You can easily get your dog to bop a stanchion that is positioned normally in the middle of a line of gating as soon as you tap or point to it. You are still straddling the gating. You have a clear sense that your dog understands it is his paw touching the stanchion that earns him the food. The strength of the bop does not cause undue movement of the gating.

Chapter 14

Final Thoughts

The primary purpose of this book is to provide you with the best, most thorough, and effective information for teaching your dog to do the Go Out skill for competition obedience. It is my sincere desire that you find the process of training Go Outs to be easy and fun.

However, I hope that you will also find many general ideas that are useful in all of your training. For example, you can teach your dog not to bark during any exercise using the method I outlined for getting rid of barking during Go Outs. My comments in Step 21 about using fun matches constructively, rather than destructively apply to every exercise in every class! The section in Chapter 11 about dealing with distractions that your dog would prefer to avoid is a good blueprint for how to deal with environmentally sensitive dogs to bolster their confidence while gently insisting that they perform to the standard for which they have been trained. The guidelines in Steps 15 and 17 for building the distance of the Go Out apply to building distance in any exercise, as well as for extending time, and more generally for increasing the number of behaviors you ask for before a reward.

I hope that your success with how I broke down the task of teaching a Go Out into many increments inspires you to do the same with everything that you teach your dog. I have found in dog training that in the long run, the tortoise really does beat the hare, and both the tortoise and her dog feel a lot less frustration in the process.

Perhaps the most important side benefit, however, is that I would like for this book to provide an example of how scientifically correct application of positive reinforcement based training techniques can lead to reliable, enthusiastic, and accurate performances from our beloved dogs.

Now Go Out and train, have fun, and deepen the relationship with your best friend!