

Dog Training Articles
By Beth Bradley

Training and Trial Preparation

Too many times I have heard the same statement, “but I can’t do that in the ring”. That is why it is called TRAINING. Training builds good habits and dogs are creatures of habit. If you allow your dog to get away with something during training, he will certainly believe he can get away with the same in a trial. For instance, lagging, moving during the stand, no stays, slow recalls, etc., you should be prepared for these bad habits in training, be prepared to correct for these bad habits and distinguish them before you get into a trial situation. Don’t test your dog to see if he will respond, let the judge test your dog.

Some people use food, I use a toy. Can I use a toy in a trial? NO, but I have established good habits so by the time I get to trial the bad habit is gone. And the dog never receives the reward at the same time during training so he cannot be conditioned to a treat for every recall or sit. Whether you use an electric collar, pinch, nylon or chain, don’t remove it till you walk into the trial. Be consistent with punishment and reward.

*PAC: Preparation, Anticipation and Consideration: Be **Prepared** for misbehavior, **Anticipate** problems and **Consider** what how you can avoid the problems.*

Common Problems:

Breaks on a Recall: That is a staying issue, back tie your dog and correct. Practice the recall from motion only. And continue to do so until TRIAL.

Moves on the Stand: Walk straight to your dog and flip to his side, don’t go around behind him till you are in TRIAL

Sit during Stand: Keep your leash around your dog until TRIAL

Breaks Stays: Back tie and use imaginative distractions until TRIAL

Lags on Heel or breaks heel: Use a handle leash on your dog, an electric collar or a reward and continue to do so until TRIAL.

I can go on through each phase with problems and it comes down to being prepared, anticipating and considering. Maybe your dog is confused, distracted, whatever, good training will help him avoid problems.

Some dogs have problems in new areas without distractions. That is because the NEW AREA IS A DISTRACTION. If that is the case, take baby steps in that new area and then once the dog is proficient in that area with distractions, off to another new area but again take baby steps. You may have to ‘spoon feed’ him and act like he has never learned the exercise before: THAT IS BETTER THAN ALLOWING A MISTAKE TO

HAPPEN. And if you are not going to a new place to train at least 2 times a week, you shouldn't even be considering entering a trial.

Don't test your dog; anticipate he is going to make a mistake so you can correct him for it. If he is allowed to make that mistake one time in training, you can bet your life he will do it in the ring. Your dog's only test should be during the trial, under a judge...not in your yard or at the park or in class.

If you are preparing to trial your dog, you should be keeping a log book of your practice sessions, what you trained, where you trained and what problems occurred. You don't have to practice the whole routine each time you train, I wouldn't recommend it because your dog will get bored, but write it down anyway so you know the next time you train what your problems were the previous time. And then if I read the book I may be able to help you also.

Motivation comes about for 2 reasons (1) the desire to get something (reward) and (2) the desire to avoid something (punishment). Both can be considered 'motivational training and positive' because if your dog responds and there is not punishment...its all positive.

In conclusion, don't just train your dog, make sure it's good training, good training to build and create good habits.