

## **4-H Dog Obedience Basics**

### Why dogs?

Dogs were most likely the first tame animals. It is believed wolf pups were captured and domesticated between 27,000 and 40,000 years ago to guard human settlements against large predators and other humans. Although some modern humans still raise dogs for protection, others have found domestic dogs to be highly adaptable in situations ranging from herding livestock and hunting to search and rescue. And, of course, dogs excel at being companions which is how they received the title ‘man’s best friend.’

### Why train dogs?

Dogs, by nature, are pack animals with a well-defined social order. As you and your family become your dog’s pack, your new dog will look to you – the leader of the pack – for guidance. Leadership can be established in a firm but friendly manner. Keep in mind that it is unrealistic to expect the dog to abide by the rules of the household without the leader teaching appropriate behavior!

Much like people, every dog is different. Some are hyperactive. Some are laid-back. Some are serious. Others are silly. Some are shy, and yet others have too much confidence. Regardless of these differences, training is necessary for all dogs and beneficial to your entire family.

Training will help correct nuisance behaviors such as jumping on people, barking and chewing, while providing mental and physical activities for your dog. It will also strengthen the bond between you and your dog increasing the enjoyment, companionship and satisfaction of your relationship, making your dog a better companion for your family and your neighborhood.

Learning these skills will not only make your dog a better citizen, it will also help you be more successful in the show ring.

### The purpose of these training sessions

During these training sessions you and your dog will work on basic commands and skills. Your dog will learn to sit, down, stand, stay and heel on a loose leash. As you continue through these sessions, though it may take years, you and your dog will learn more advanced obedience skills. Upon completion of these sessions you will be eligible to compete at the Elroy District and Juneau County Dog Shows.

### Training equipment

In this training program we require every dog to have a 6 foot leash and properly fitted chain or choke collar. A martingale collar is also an appropriate option. You may also want to bring soft, bite sized treats for rewards during training.



**Martingale Collar**

Choke collars are measured in two inch increments and the best way to determine which size is right for your dog measure your dog's neck with a piece of string or a soft tape measure and add two to three inches. Martingale collars are easier to fit because they are adjustable like a flat collar. With either collar style it is easy to see if it is fitted properly by putting it on your dog and pulling the live ring tight. There should only be two inches of extra chain. When a choke collar is too big it will not work effectively, making training difficult.

Choke collars are used to give your dog corrections during training. When you pull the chain you are telling the dog he has done something wrong and are asking him to correct his actions. When you release the chain you are telling him he did well. Always make sure to praise your dog when he responds the way you want him to.

### **Some of the Most Important Rules in Dog Training**

1. Never call your dog to you and discipline him. He will learn that coming to you is not pleasant and he will not want to come to you the next time you call him.
2. Always use the same command when training your dog so you don't confuse him.
3. Give a command only once. Once your dog knows a command and does not respond on the first command you will need to correct him or he will think he doesn't need to listen to you.
4. Keep training fun and use a lot of praise. You cannot over praise your dog. Your dog will do better during training if he is enjoying himself.
5. Practice as often as possible until your dog knows the exercise well. If at all possible work with him 10 minutes two to three times a day.
6. Do not play rough games with your dog, it may make him aggressive. It is better to play ball or teach him tricks.
7. If you are not sure about something we are learning please ask an instructor to explain it again. It is better to ask a question than make mistakes that can set your training back.
8. Never train your dog when you're in a bad mood. It is not his fault you had a bad day. Remember, keep training fun.
9. Don't try to move too fast. If your dog does not know something keep working on it until he learns it. He will need to know the basics in order to move on to more advanced skills.
10. Don't expect to correct a bad habit your dog has had for months or years in a few weeks. It can take a long time to reteach a proper behavior.
11. Don't give up. All dogs are different and learn at their own pace.
12. The three P's, patience, praise and practice, are the keys to successful dog training.

## 4-H Dog Agility

### What is Agility?

Dog agility is a dog sport in which a handler directs a dog through an obstacle course in a race for both time and accuracy. 4-H dogs run on or off leash with no food or toys as incentives, and the handler cannot touch the dog or the obstacles.

### Eligibility:

In order to compete in Agility each team must demonstrate the following competencies:

- A successful sit/stay.
- A successful down/stay.
- A good relationship between the dog and handler, which includes ability to control the dog whether stationary or when walking on leash.
- The ability to be peacefully approached by other dogs and handlers.
- It is strongly suggested that youth and dog successfully complete at least one year of obedience training before moving to agility.

### Participation Rules:

1. The handler and dog must be in good health at the time of competition.
2. The dog may not be pregnant or nursing puppies at the time of competition. Females in heat may not compete.
3. Dogs must be at least 12 months old to compete in agility. It is recommended that larger breeds be at least 18 months old. This is because for most breeds the growth plates in the bones are still developing until the average age of fourteen months – even later for large breeds.
4. Dogs 18 months and younger and 7 years and older are encouraged to jump at least one height lower than their measured jump height.
5. All 4-Hers are strongly encouraged to consult their veterinarian before beginning agility training to be sure that there are not problems such as hip dysplasia, disc problems, overweight, etc.
6. The handler and dog must know basic commands at the time of competition. (sit, down, stay, come, controlled walking on leash, etc.)
7. Any breed or mixture of breeds and/or size of dog are allowed to compete.
8. The handler must have complete control over their dog at all times.
9. Family members may share a dog, but there is a maximum number of four runs per dog per day.

### Standard Equipment:

1. Buckle collar – no choke collars
2. Standard 6 foot leash – no retractable leashes
3. For safety reasons, handlers must wear rubber soled shoes that tie or Velcro (no flip-flops or slip-ons)

## General Course Information

1. JTT agility courses will consist of 7-10 obstacles with a course time of 50 seconds. Standard agility courses will consist of 10 to 15 obstacles with a course time of 75 seconds. Areas in which courses are set up should be at least 60 feet by 70 feet.
2. Advanced classes will consist of 16-20 obstacles with a course time of 60 seconds. Areas in which courses are set up should be at least 75 feet by 100 feet.
3. Indoor courses must have flooring (thick matting or another surface) which provides both traction and cushion! It is recommended that 4-H dog agility groups check with kennel clubs or training centers in their area, if they are seeking appropriate indoor facilities.
4. The course will be clearly marked with a start/finish line.
5. Each obstacle will be marked with a number. Handlers and dogs will be required to follow the course in numerical order.
6. Before competition begins, the handlers will be allowed to walk through the course to become familiar with the course. The walk through is restricted to the handlers only and is limited to 10 minutes.
7. In Standard agility, a period of time (determined by the judge) will be allowed for obstacle familiarization for dogs and handlers on the contact pieces ONLY.
8. A warm-up jump outside of the ring will be available for handlers and dogs. Handlers should be considerate of others in taking turns at the warm up jump.
9. Any dog whose hair covers its eyes and may interfere with its vision of the obstacles may tie the hair back with rubber bands.
10. Food and toys are not permitted on the course.
11. Handlers are not permitted to have whistles, stop watches, fanny packs or other training devices on the course.
12. The handlers may be on either side of the dog while running the course.
13. A dog's time starts whenever any part of the dog crosses the start line. Its time will end when any part of the dog crosses the finish line.
14. Flat collars are required for all dogs.
15. No choke or pinch collars are allowed on the agility course.
16. Familiarization with contact zone obstacles (A-frame, dog walk and seesaw) will be allowed for a time period established by the judge.

## General Scoring

1. Each course is worth a maximum 100 points.
2. A penalty consists of the loss of 5 or 10 points.
3. 10 point penalties (judge holds up two hands) include: not making contact in contact zones, not doing the obstacles in proper order or not completing an obstacle, the handler going over the obstacle with the dog, or missing one or more weave poles.
4. 5 point penalties (judge holds up one hand) include: knocking down a jump bar, excessively guiding the dog with leash, touching the dog, or touching the obstacle.
5. Refusals or run-by's will not be faulted in 4-H competition.
6. The only penalty for breaking a sit or a down on the pause table is the extra time that accumulates when the count stops, and is not resumed, until the dog is back in position.
7. The dog/handler team's run will be timed. A 5 point penalty will be given for going over the course time and an additional 5 points for each 15 seconds over the course time. In the case of a tie in total points, the fastest time will win.
8. If the judge determines that a dog is no longer working with the handler, the team will be excused from the course.
9. The contact zone on the A-frame, dog walk and seesaw is the contrasting colored zone (usually yellow) on the start and end of each obstacle.
10. Any interference or outside assistance that aids the dog or is intended to aid the dog or handler will be considered a 5 point penalty.
11. If a handler loses control of their dog while on the course, it will be considered a penalty.
12. Excessive or harsh commands or corrections will not be allowed. This will be a penalty.
13. Un-sportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated. This will be a penalty and the handler and dog will be excused from the competition.
14. Failure to follow judge's verbal instructions is a penalty.
15. If the dog urinates or defecates in the ring (from the time it enters until it leaves the ring), the dog and handler will be disqualified from that class.
16. Any dog that commits to a contact obstacle (A-frame, dog walk, seesaw) with all four paws must, for safety reasons, continue with the obstacle. Whether obstacle is completed or if the dog jumps off, dog and handler must go on to the next obstacle and may not attempt that obstacle again.
17. A score of 70 or higher is considered a Qualifying Score in all classes of 4-H agility.