

Teaching Directed Jumping



The first jumping exercise that you should teach your dog is Directed Jumping. This exercise offers you a great way to introduce your dog to jumping and going out of his way to jump. Although a dog is not required to jump on command until Utility, he does have to jump and retrieve in Open. Learning to jump, and learning to retrieve, should both be prerequisites for learning the Retrieve over the High Jump. Furthermore, by teaching your dog the Directed Jumping exercise early, you will add variety to your training sessions.

The first step involves introducing your dog to both the High and Bar Jumps (hereafter referred to as High and Bar). On leash, walk your dog toward the jump giving him a "Let's go" command. "Let's go" means walk with me. It is different than "Heel" because it does not require attention. "Let's go" is a command you can use to take your dog for a walk. It is appropriate in this situation since you want the dog to look ahead at the jump, not up at you. Three to four feet in front of the jump, tell the dog to "Jump", and step over the jump together. Continue this step until you and the dog can walk over either the High or Bar at low heights without a leash (**Photo 1**).

If your dog gets excited or distracted and runs from you, stop moving and call him back with a "Come" command. Once he is with you and under control, resume with "Let's go" and "Jump". This is an excellent control exercise for all beginning dogs. If your dog cannot maintain this amount of control off-lead, stop and spend some additional time teaching him to come on a long line, then dragging a long line, then to come when loose.

Once a dog is comfortable with both the High and Bar in that he does not try to avoid them, but easily walks over them with you, begin to do recalls over the jumps. At this point, you are attempting to teach your dog a jumping exercise, but you have to be especially conscious of your dog's attitude. His attitude needs to be alert, attentive, and he needs to be concentrating on the task at hand. However, it is at this beginning stage that you can create the habit of a good attitude. You are wasting your time if the dog is disinterested, distracted, or inattentive. So, as you leave your dog and walk over the jump, keep your eye on him. You might even back away from him, talking to him, asking him if he is "ready", perhaps tossing a toy in the air that he can work to earn.



Photo 1: Becoming comfortable with the bar jump, Donna and Roc walk over off leash.

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In the photographs, Donna leaves Roc in a stay and walks to the other side of the jump. Roc is attentively watching her as she goes (**Photo 2**). Once on the other side, Donna calls Roc with a jump command and Roc flies over the jump (**Photo 3**). Then Donna shapes the “front” by using food to get him to front (**Photo 4**). There is no need to watch Roc do poor fronts while Donna works on the Jumping exercise, nor should she give him the responsibility for the front detail at this stage of his training.



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

As soon as your dog is comfortable coming straight over jumps, introduce the concept of direction. Set up two jumps (a Bar and High) with a gate blocking the space between them. The jumps are low and approximately 8-10 feet apart (**Photo 5**).

Again, Donna uses “front” to get Roc sitting in the correct location. The dog is now given a choice. He can come to you over the right or left jump. The third option, down the middle, has temporarily been eliminated.

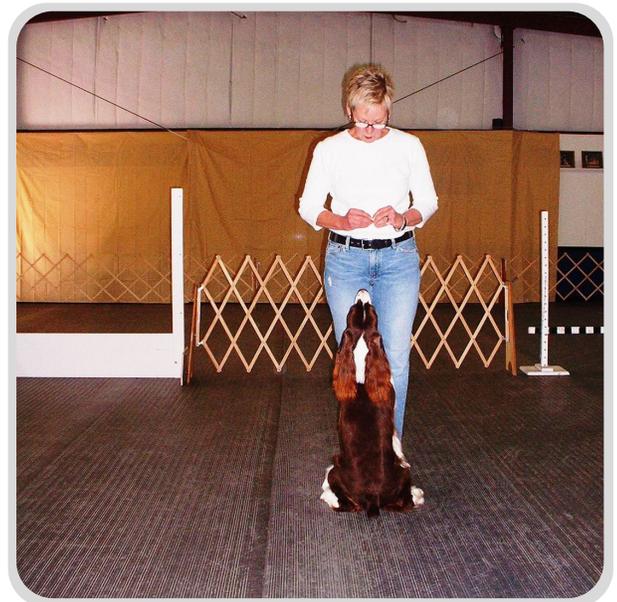


Photo 5: Donna uses a front command to get Roc sitting in the correct location between the jumps.



Divide this step into three stages - refer to **Diagram 1**

1. Sit your dog at position A. Walk over one of the jumps to position B. Signal your dog over the jump you walked over (**Photo 6**). When your dog leans or looks toward the jump tell him to "Jump" (**Photo 7**). Return your dog to position A and repeat the procedure over the opposite jump.

2. Sit the dog at position A, walk over the right jump to position B. Signal your dog over the left jump. On the next attempt, walk over the left jump and send your dog over the right jump. The purpose of this step is to make sure your dog is following your signal, and not your path.

3. Try jumping your dog from either end. First, sit him in position A, and jump toward position B. Then sit him at position B and go signal him from position A. At this stage, a good rule of thumb is to never send your dog the way he wants to go. For example, if you walk over the Bar, and he is leaning or looking at the Bar, signal the High jump. See if you can change his mind. You want to be sure he is going the way you direct him. If you throw your arm up the direction he is already leaning, he may think he is teaching you which arm to use, rather than that you are teaching him what direction to go!

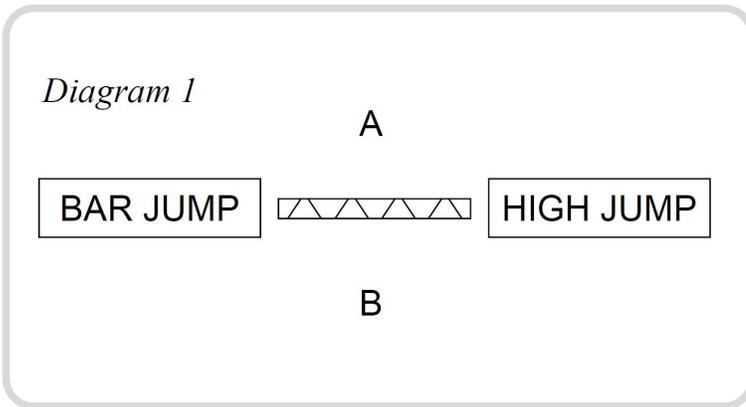


Photo 6: Donna signals Roc to come over the high jump during this first stage of directed jumping.



Photo 7: Roc leaned toward the jump, and Donna gave him a command to do so!

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A special note on timing; Give your dog the signal first, allowing him to look at it. You might even step the direction you want him to go, then verbally tell him to "Jump". Your success relies on your dog's ability to watch your signal. By this stage in your training, your dog will more than likely move when you speak. If you tell him "Jump" before he has had ample time to look at the signal, he will move before he has fully concentrated on which direction to go. You want to see your dog respond to the signal by leaning or looking the direction you are pointing before you verbally send him.

Even with impeccable timing, your dog will make errors. Great! Your attitude should be, "Nice guess, wrong answer." Tell him he's made a mistake with a gentle "no" or "uh-uh," go meet your dog at the wrong jump and return him to the spot in which he began ([See A Simple Rule to Train By](#)). Following an error, repeat the exact sequence that preceded the error. For example, if you walked over the Bar, and signaled the High, and the dog came over the Bar, return him to the starting position and again walk over the Bar and signal him to jump the High.

When your dog is successful at following your signal to either jump, from either positions A or B, it is time to remove the gate. Now, instead of 2 choices, (Bar and High) he is faced with three. (Bar, High, or down the middle) Expect him to try to come down the middle. After all, you took the gate down, the situation has changed. In his mind, perhaps you have decided that you do not mind if he comes down the center?! You may find this step easier if you angle the jumps slightly so that from his position, he has three distinct paths, straight over the High, straight over the Bar, and down the center. **Photos 8 & 9** show Donna setting Roc up and then sending him over the Bar Jump.

It is important that if your dog makes an error, he is positive that you are unhappy. You need to go get him. Do not try to get him to head for the correct jump on your second or third command. Instead, tell him he's wrong, take him back to where he was last right, and simplify the task. Remember, unrewarded behavior extinguishes itself. Your dog needs to have very different responses from you when he is right and when he is wrong. Your response should not sound angry, but there needs to be no doubt in the dog's mind that you did not reward him and all his fun stopped!



Photo 8: The jumps are close together and angled toward Roc.



Photo 9: Roc goes over the correct jump!

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Once the gate is removed, it may be necessary for you to sit the dog slightly off-center, toward the jump to which you will send him (**Diagram 2**).

You should walk down the center, not over the jump. It is the dog's responsibility to jump the direction you command, not just follow your path. Gradually move your dog and yourself toward positions A and B. Follow the same procedure with both jumps.

In the ensuing days, it will be possible to both straighten the jumps as they will be in the final Directed Jumping exercise and increase the distance between them (**Photos 10 & 11**).

Diagram 2

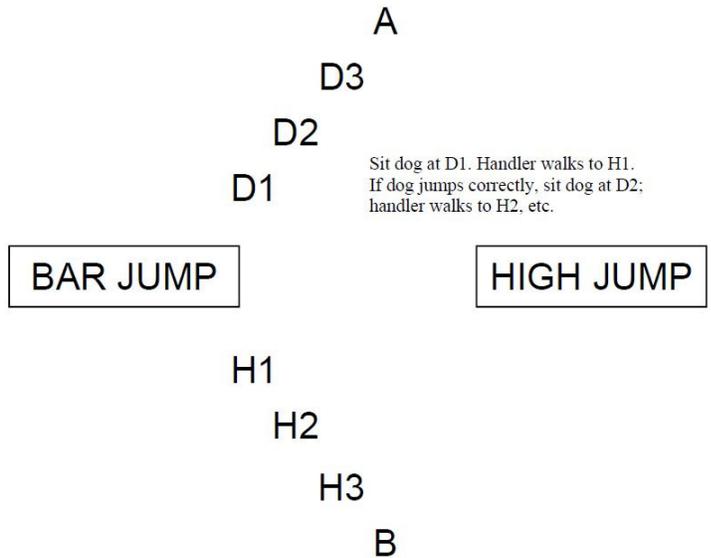


Photo 10: The jumps are straight...

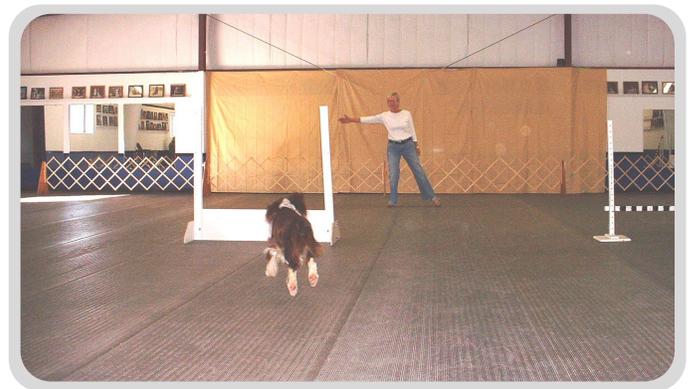


Photo 11: and Roc correctly goes over the high jump.

Some final suggestions;

1. Do not get in the habit of giving the dog more than one verbal command to jump. If he does not move, have someone gently push him in the right direction, or go get him started yourself as if he had failed to come when called.
2. If you see your dog develop a preference for one type jump, put up two identical jumps, preferably the type he is less comfortable with. i.e. two Bars or two Highs.
3. Do not throw dumbbells over jumps for dogs who are just learning to jump, it merely teaches them to jump without arcing and you could develop a problem with jumping style that will be hard to correct.