

Distance Handling— gamble 2

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Here are some typical distance challenges set up as gambles or FAST-type challenges. Keep in mind that Distance skills can help solve any kind of course but this helps illustrate how I think you can communicate at a distance - without the dog assuming or guessing where to go.

Here are the general tips:

Move naturally. Leave yourself enough room to add pressure and release pressure, even if it is only taking a step or even rocking forward or back on your feet.

Keep working the 1/2 way points on the path even if you are 30 feet away or behind your dog. While you are working the path, you aren't doing something else that would give a conflicting cue.

Make your arms and your body work together. Arms do not replace what your body is doing, they add to it. Throwing your arm out to your side while you turn away or lean away is a classic “push-me/pull-you” cue that only works for Dr. Doolittle.

Use your verbals to add to what your body is doing but not replace what it is doing. I also highly recommend using your verbals proactively to control the behavior of an obstacle, not fix the path between obstacles.

Here is a specific example where I am practicing with Echo.

In this video I send Echo to the first jump on my right just stepping toward the 1/2 point (control point) on the path to the jump.

As she takes it, I hold pressure on the gap (keep slowly moving toward it) between jumps #1 and #2 to keep her out on the 180 (instead of pulling through the gap in a wrap. Notice that by the time she commits to the first jump I am already working the gap to the second jump.

As she approaches the second jump, I use serpentine body language to pull her over the jump and then send her back out to the tunnel. I hold her on my left hand for just a moment (I actually hold onto her a little too long and she has to check in with me).

Why serpentine handling?

The reason I use serpentine handling is that I want her to anticipate the turn away at the end of the tunnel and I know that I won't be able to give very effective rear cross body language as she goes into the tunnel. So I will clue her into the turn and use my verbal "tunnel-right" to add clarity.

As she goes into the first tunnel, I use rear cross body language and then she comes out of the tunnel already turning correctly and a slight support of the second tunnel entrance with my left hand (I have now crossed behind her so she is on my left) helps make sure I am not doing something else that would cause her to question driving into the second tunnel.

A little bit of pressure on the path to the last jump completes the gamble.

That's it. See other articles for other examples, but they all follow the same rules.