

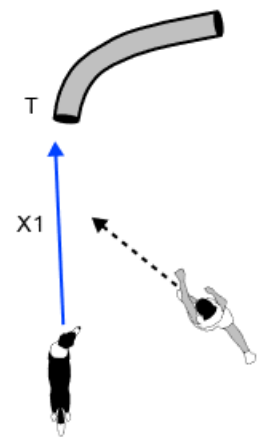
What's wrong with sneaky toe?

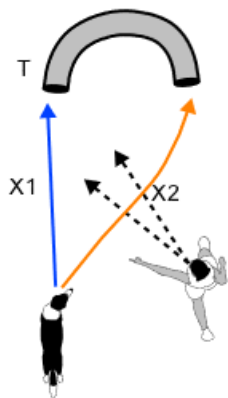
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The problem with “sneaky toe” is that it works. Up to a point. And then it doesn't. Sneaky toe refers to a problem when your eyes and your lead hand are working a path to an obstacle but your feet have other ideas. It shows up when you want to send your dog to an obstacle and at the same time want to get out of there so you short change the pressure point. It also shows up when you are stuck up against a gamble line and you are wildly waving your arms, shouting “out” and yet your feet are stubbornly running down the line - carrying your body with them.

To be clear, the problem isn't really your toe. It is not as if your dog is getting their most important handling information from your toes per se (although I know some dogs who do). It is just that your feet take your whole body with them and that matters a lot to your dog.

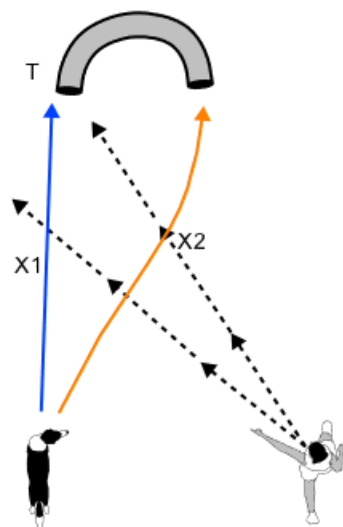
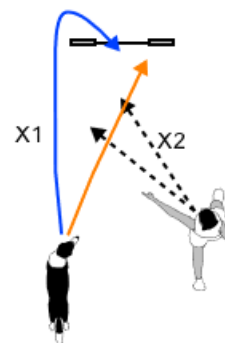
Here is how sneaky toe sneaks in. You probably know already that I recommend handlers work the path to the obstacle they want, not the obstacle itself. In other words, if you need to push your dog out to an obstacle, push on the path instead - specifically push on the half way point between where your dog is (when they need to know what to do) and where you want them to go (the obstacle itself). I have exaggerated the dog's head position just to indicate that they are getting information from the handler - and the information they are getting is pressure into the gap between them and the tunnel entrance at “T”. This is a very effective way to show the dog the path you want them to take.





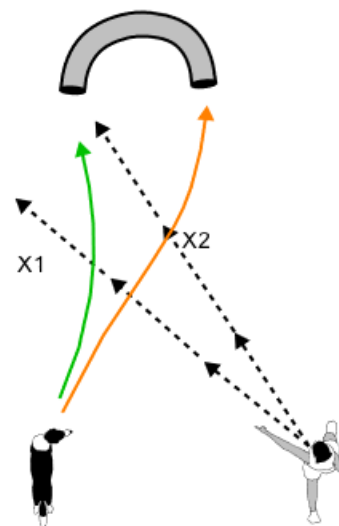
But what happens if you have good intentions of working the path - but you are actually working at the obstacle instead? At 10 feet away probably not much. Here the difference in the two pressure points is shown by the two black dotted arrows. The left-most arrow is neatly pointing toward "X1" on the blue path to the correct tunnel entrance at "T". The right-most arrow is pointing at the obstacle entrance itself. At the same time, the handler may be unaware that it is also pointing directly at "X2" - the path to the off course entrance.

—> This is probably ok at 10 feet away as the dog will feel a lot of energy pushing them off the orange path and the difference in the angle is not that great. Although if you are working the back side of a jump - you might not get away with it.



<— However as the working distance increases, say to 30 feet away, the difference in the two pressure points is dramatic. Notice how as the dog scans back from paying attention to you, the first path they run into is the orange one. And there you are, very nicely showing them X2. Oops.

—> The other benefit in terms of working accurately toward X1, is that the dog hits the "wind" of the pressure earlier and even if they did have a question in their mind which path you wanted, they could still recover onto the green path.



Train yourself to be accurate in working the path to remove ambiguity for your dog - and if you get an unexpected result when you send your dog to an obstacle - look down and see if sneaky toe was a factor.

