AgilityFlix

Post turns

Here is a typical post turn application where you are cueing a turn at jump number 3 without any change of side. In other words the dog starts on your left and stays on your left. And here is how I would handle it:
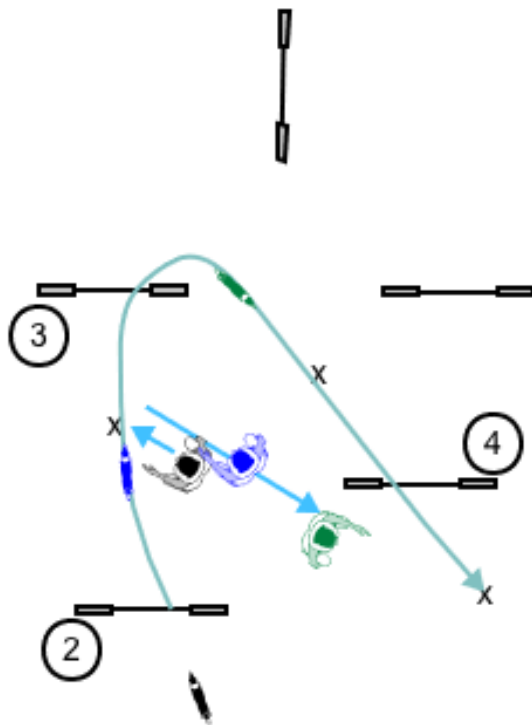
The sequence starts with the black dog and black handler to illustrate the relative position of both.

1.The black handler gives the dog permission to take jump #3 by showing the dog the 1/2 way point on the ideal path into the jump (as shown by the black x). It does not matter where the handler is, If they are closer to jump #3, then they are facing back toward the "X" and if they are farther back, they are facing more forward toward the "X" and if they are laterally off to the right, they are still facing the same "X".

A) If the dog is already on the perfect path, the handler will feel as if they are just monitoring or supporting the path but not doing much work, as in a situation where the dog is jumping in extension over jump #2 and their natural momentum is carrying them right over the "X".

B) If the dog needs to be pushed onto the jump, the handler will be moving toward the "X" as shown by the light blue arrow.

C) If the dog needs to be pulled onto the path, the handler will be taking pressure off the "X" by decelerating, dropping their arm in or turning away- depending on the situation.

2. As soon as the handler is confident that the dog is on the correct path to put jump #3 in their way, they start to "work" the "X" on the path to jump #4. This stage is represented by the blue handler and dog.

Here the blue handler has started to pull away from the jump because the blue dog is committed to jump #3. This pull feels to me like the children's game of tug-o-war. Notice the timing- the handler is pulling away while the dog finishes the approach to the jump.

The handler can do this if they have trained the basic skill of sending their dog to a jump. In otherwords, the dog understands when the handler has given them permission to "go get that thing".
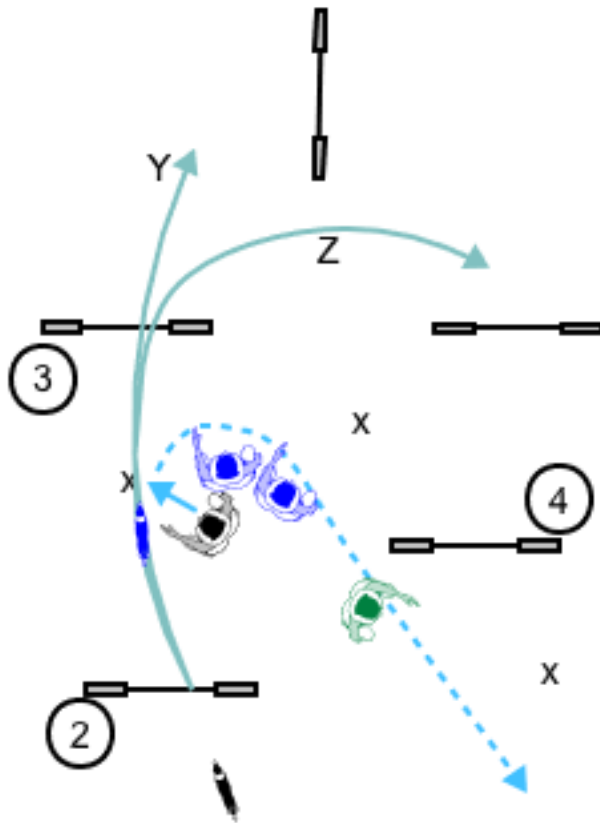
How do I train that? I use a single jump and play the 30-30 game. You can look that up for more details.

3. As soon as the blue handler has set the line by pulling away in the direction of the "X" on the way to jump #4 - they have shown the dog the ideal path to that jump. The handling job is done. They can then turn and start working the path after jump #4 as shown by the green handler.

4. In this case, the next "X" is shown as if obstacle #5 is somewhere beyond #4. Notice that the green handler has already cued extension on jump #4 by virtue of working the "X" beyond it.

5. Going back to jump #3, notice the black handler never showed the dog any point past the plane of jump #3. They were turned into the gap on the approach to #3 and then immediately pulled away toward the gap to jump #4. I will come back to this.

Also, you might wonder why I do not show my dog all the spots on the path (as if using a laser pointer or painting the line). One reason is that my dog is fast. I have one shot at it. The other reason is that I need my dog to go off and do what I have cued so I can get onto the next thing. This means I can always be presenting information to my dog ahead of time rather than real-time escorting them through the course. And finally because I use distance skills to solve puzzles, whether by course design or efficiency, I need one way to communicate very tight, technical paths and wide open flow without changing my entire handling system.

Here is a handling approach that doesn't work for me and doesn't work all that well for many dogs either.

Here the handler has taken the time to rotate their shoulders before they set the line. This c changes the order of information for the dog. (I set the line first and then turn).

As the handler turns, they are showing the dog several half way points, first "Y", then "Z", then finally "X". Most dogs don't wait to see when you are going to be done rotating, the drive for the first line you show them.

At best you will get a wide turn, and possibly an off course. More importantly, this rotation takes time and may prevent you from getting onto the information the dog really needs.

Handling System Summary:

Every obstacle has a path into it and a path out of it. Each path has a 1/2 way point that is unique to that exact path. If your body language moves to show the 1/2 way point in and the 1/2 way point out - it will move consistently and differently for every combination - and that is something the dog can learn to recognize and predict. In otherwords, each jump gets cued with just the right balance of motion, rotation, energy, arm support to let the dog read where they are going next, before they perform the obstacle.