

Weave Practice: pushing the envelope

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When you are practicing weaves, try to make it a game to stay in the poles. The more outlandish you can be, the more your dog can generalize that when weird things happen - it is time to knuckle down and concentrate. You need to set your dog up so they don't rehearse a lot of failures - either by designing your training session to build from relatively easy to challenging, or by using training aides.

Echo has been playing these games right from the initial 4-pole training method that I use, so it is no big deal to her. Nevertheless, you need to keep these skills sharp. You won't run into the need to have them every time you compete, so they can get rusty as your dog begins to expect you to do something "normal" like running next to them and being a bit ahead by the time they are done weaving.

Having the ability to release the toy (ball) before she finishes weaving is key to her driving forward and not looking back at me. A target plate or treat dispenser can also be helpful.

In addition to teaching your dog to generalize that weirdness is a cue that we are playing this game - training to this level should ensure that anything they see on course is easy by comparison.

One of the more challenging weave behaviors is to weave into pressure (like a wall) or nothing (a corner of the arena where all possible obstacles in sequence are behind the end of the poles). So this is the set up I am working here and I am using the fence to bounce her ball off which makes it fun to go into the wall instead of feeling it as pressure.

This is a good list of the kinds of things that a handler might do (even actually do) that a dog can find distracting. I like to "proof" against actual handling as even more important than other weave games (ignoring toys, treats scattered on the ground, balloons, other obstacles in close proximity etc.).

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- 1) Pulling away laterally
 - 2) Decelerating before she finishes
 - 3) Very late rear crosses
 - 4) Turning into her early
 - 5) Turning in and reversing direction
 - 6) Just for fun, cutting behind her through the weaves