

# INTRO to FLYBALL by



## DEMO & ORIENTATION

### Orientation

Flyball is a team sport where four dogs race in a relay fashion over four jumps catch a ball, and go back over the four jumps and cross the finish line. The individual dogs are timed and the team with the best time wins. Flyball is an off-lead sport with many distractions, so you must have control over your dog when she is off-lead. Your dog must be social to other dogs and people, and be able to come when called, sit, stay and retrieve off-lead before it can learn to play flyball. If your dog cannot yet perform these tasks, it is advisable to join an obedience class as soon as possible. Uncontrolled dogs are a distraction to the other dogs and their handlers, learning flyball.

### Homework

**Recalls** - Attach a very long lead to your dog. Have a handler hold your dog and tell her to say. Walk about 20 to 30 feet away from your dog. Call your dog in a happy voice. *"Jasmine, come Good Girl!"*. Use the clicker when the dog arrives and sits in front of you to reinforce the desired behavior. Give your dog the reward within 2 seconds of the click. Repeat 6 times.

**Stay** - With your dog in the sitting position on your left, give the stay command in a firm voice and step out and in front of your dog leading with your right foot. Step back to the end of your lead. If your dog breaks position, give the stay command again. *"Jasmine, stay"*. Use the clicker when the dog stays to reinforce the desired behavior. Give your dog the reward within 2 seconds of the click. Repeat 6 times.

**Give** - Use a tennis ball for this exercise. With the dog in the sitting or standing position in front of you (sitting in a chair) toss the ball to your dog and put your hand out palm up saying the give command.. Click when they drop the ball into your hand and reward. Repeat 6 times. Your dog MUST give the ball to your hand at all times. If your dog is allowed to spit the ball out at your feet, this could result in them dropping the ball before they cross the finish line and they will have to repeat the run adding additional time to your team.

**Clicker** - We use a clicker to speed up the learning process and to reinforce the desired behavior to the dog. The click is given at the exact second the dog does the desired behavior and the reward is given within 2 seconds following the click. Never use the clicker to get the dogs attention as this will confuse them.

**Motivator** - Use 3 strips of lycra material braided into a long rope and tied in a knot at both ends. (A kong is also good, with the rope looped through it and tied). Place the motivator in a bottom drawer in a kitchen or similar place. Get your dog excited with your happy voice and go to the drawer and open it making a huge fuss. Show them the motivator and shake it in front of them not letting them take the it into their mouths yet. Put the motivator back into the drawer and go back to what you were doing. In 20 minutes to an hour, return to the drawer and repeat the behavior. Eventually, the dog will get the idea that the motivator is very special and become interested in it. The dog will begin to anticipate your excitement and lead the way to the drawer when you begin the exercise.

This is very important especially if your dog is not yet interested in the motivator. This motivator is key to getting your dog to go faster during a race. It will become their favourite item and represents the flyball game to them.

### Back-chaining Method of Training

We use the back-chaining method to teach flyball. This method starts at the end and works backwards toward the front. By doing this, your dog will be a much more reliable flyball dog. In back-chaining the last behavior in a chain is taught first. Flyball is not one simple exercise, but a series of over 25 behaviors completed together in a chain. The easiest way for a dog to learn a chained behavior such as flyball is to start at the end and move towards the beginning. Two things are achieved in this method. One: The task becomes easier for the dog instead of more difficult because you're not adding anything new on the end. You always finish up with something the dog already knows how to do well. Two: Each behavior in the chain becomes a cue for the behavior that follows it. (Jumping the fourth jump is the cue to hit the box; hitting the box is the cue to catch the ball; catching the ball is the cue to turn and run . . .) The reward for the dog is always at the end of the chain.



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# TRAINING SESSION

Due to time constraints of the demo and training today, we are using a revised (shortened) version of our lesson plan which skips several steps. We DO NOT recommend this as a regular training schedule because it will not produce a reliable dog.

## STATION 1 - POLE

### Beginning Swimmers Turn

**STEP 1:** To determine which way your dog naturally turns, throw the ball for them several times and watch to see if they turn left or right when they turn to bring it back. The more times they turn in one direction, determines whether they are a lefty or a righty. The flyball box has 2 holes across the top and if the dog turns right, the ball is loaded and launches from the right side. If they are a lefty, the ball launches from the left side.

**STEP 2:** Once you know if your dog is a lefty or a righty you can begin the pole work. Stand your dog. Pound the pole into the ground about 2 feet in front of your dog. Hold a reward near their nose and lead them around the pole with the treat, saying "Go round" in your happy voice. If you are going right, the treat should be in your right hand, clicker in your left. If you are going left, the treat should be in your left hand, clicker in your right. Click at the apex of the turn. Reward your dog with the treat within 2 seconds of the click. Gradually increase the distance after the dog rounds the pole so that you are returning about 2 feet past the pole. If at any time your dog does not complete the new distance, you are progressing too quickly and you will need to decrease the distance. Only progress when the dog consistently and correctly completes the previous distance. Once the dog is doing this consistently, gradually increase the starting distance from the pole. As you increase the distances, your dog will anticipate what you want them to do and instead of leading the dog round the pole, you can keep the motion of your hand going in a circular motion by turning it into a hand signal. Repeat this exercise until the dog can go round the pole without you leading them, using just a voice command from about 15 feet from the pole.

## STATION 2 - JUMPS

### Jumps 1-4

When teaching your dog to jump the flyball hurdles, never stand in the running lane. Your dog will not run her fastest if she sees anything blocking the lane, even if it is far away. Always stand beside the lane to motivate them.

**STEP 1:** Have your handler hold your dog just behind jump 1. (Your dog will be facing the finish line and you will be just in front of the jump to the side with your back to the finish line) Let your dog smell the food reward but don't let them have it. Call your dog in a happy voice. "*Jasmine, over. Good Girl!*". Use the clicker at the exact second the dog is going over the jump to reinforce the desired behavior. Give your dog the reward within 2 seconds of the click. Repeat 6 times.

**STEP 2:** Now hold the dog behind jump 2 and repeat step 1, saying "over" each time the dog is to jump. Use the clicker for each jump. Then reward. "*Jasmine, over, over. Good Girl!*". Repeat 6 times.

**STEP 3:** Hold the dog behind jump 3 and repeat step 1, saying "over" each time the dog is to jump. Use the clicker for each jump. Then reward. "*Jasmine, over, over, over. Good Girl!*". Repeat 6 times.

**STEP 4:** Hold the dog behind jump 4 and repeat step 1, saying "over" each time the dog is to jump. Use the clicker for each jump. Then reward. "*Jasmine, over, over, over, over. Good Girl!*". Repeat 6 times.

## STATION 3 - BALL SKILLS

### Ball Skill Assessment I

**STEP 1:** To determine which way your dog naturally turns, throw the ball for them several times and watch to see if they turn left or right when they turn to bring it back. The more times they turn in one direction, determines whether they are a lefty or a righty. The flyball box has 2 holes across the top and if the dog turns right, the ball is loaded and launches from the right side. If they are a lefty, the ball launches from the left side.

### Ball Skill Assessment II

**STEP 1:** Sit on a chair facing your dog. Stand your dog about 2 feet in front of you. Toss the ball to your dog. Click when she catches the ball. Reward your dog with the treat within 2 seconds of the click. Repeat 6 times. If your dog does not catch the ball, click when their eyes follow the ball, then gradually work up to catching.

**STEP 2 -** Put your hand out palm up saying the give command.. Click when they drop the ball into your hand and reward. Repeat 6 times. Your dog MUST give the ball to your hand at all times. If your dog is allowed to spit the ball out at your feet, this could result in them dropping the ball before they cross the finish line and they will have to repeat the run adding additional time to your team.

**STEP 3:** Gradually lower the arc of the ball so that in the end you are tossing the ball at a very small arc, nearly straight at your dog. For each step, repeat 6 times and let them rest for a few minutes before continuing. Click when she catches the ball and reward within 2 seconds.

### **Dead Ball Game**

**STEP 1:** Place several balls on the ground randomly. Take your dog at least 15 feet away and stand them. Tell them to fetch the ball and when they return the ball to your hand, click and treat. Place the ball in an empty buckets so that she cannot see them. Repeat until all the balls are in the bucket.