

## Phase 0: Criteria for Stop

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The 2o2o position is one of the easiest to train and produces highly reliable and fast contact performance. It is also a position that you can apply to all contact obstacles for ease of training and consistency. However that isn't your only option, nor is it the complete picture.

In this phase educate yourself on your options and think through what you want.

### **Step 1: Review all the things you MAY want to include in your criteria**

The specific variables that are associated with the position are listed below. You need to pick one from each category to assemble your criteria for the behavior. Everything you select needs to be taught.

#### 1) position of front feet.

- a) just off the board
- b) off the board so far that rear legs are barely on
- c) some specific place in between

#### 2) body position

- a) stand
- b) sit
- c) bow
- d) down

#### 3) orientation of body

most everyone would agree that the body aligned with the obstacle is desirable

#### 4) Head position

- a) oriented to handler
- b) oriented to front

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- c) nose touch
  - d) none specified
  - 5) Release
    - most everyone would agree that a verbal release is the most valuable.
  - 6) Getting there
    - a) run really fast
    - b) stride regulated approach
  - 7) Weight Distribution
    - a) none specified
    - b) to rear
  - 8) Command
    - a) none
    - b) touch or equivalent
    - c) physical cue (such as point)

**Step 2: Here is an example that you can review, that is a decent baseline**

Here are the criteria that I initially train. Note that the down is not a requirement, it is simply encouraged by placement of reward. Unless noted, I use the same criteria for all contact obstacles.

- 1) position of front feet.
  - a) just off the board
- 2) orientation of body
  - aligned with the obstacle
- 3) body position (encouraged, not a criteria)
  - d) down
- 4) Head position
  - d) none specified
- 5) Release
  - “OK”
- 6) Getting there
  - a) run really fast (dogwalk, teeter)
  - b) stride regulated approach (a-frame)

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## 7) Weight Distribution

a) none specified

## 8) Command

a) none, inherent in the obstacle name

### **Why do I use the criteria I do?**

#### 1) position of front feet.

I find this leads to less futzy feet, and feet coming off the side. Also it allows a comfortable down for the dog.

#### 2) orientation of body

this is a given with the down and ensures distance handling and turning away off of contact are simple.

#### 3) body position

I use this initially because it is fast, a stable position, it encourages weight shift to a neutral position and lowers the center of gravity.

#### 4) Head position

I don't require a head position, but I always reward low between the front feet to encourage the weight shift and desirable drive into position of a nose touch. I get the behavior I want, without making the behavior more complicated than it needs to be.

#### 5) Release

"OK" is my verbal release cue, habit more than anything.

#### 6) Getting there

a) run really fast (dogwalk, teeter)

I sometimes use stride regulation if I'm getting many stutter steps, but generally rely on the building blocks to make running into position doable.

b) stride regulated approach (a-frame)

I like how stride regulators encourage muscle memory performance of the entire obstacle.

#### 7) Weight Distribution

a) none specified

Much like head position, I get this via placement of the reward rather than making it a criteria for performance.

#### 8) Command

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a) none

I treat the entire obstacle performance as one behavior chain that is initiated by the obstacle name and ends with the release command.

### **Step 3: Commit !**

1) Select the criteria that you want for each obstacle - they do not have to be the same.

2) Different body types may dictate positions that are more comfortable for your dog - including other stopped positions (4 on the floor, 4 on, one rear foot on...)

3) If you want reliable, fast performance in competition, you must commit to training, rewarding and maintaining each element that you require in the performance.

The best criteria for your dog is the criteria that you commit to. All contact performance (stopped and running and managed and criteria free), have failure modes in competition - so what will tend to work best is whatever you decide you will train, maintain and reinforce consistently.

The training plan in this series is based on the criteria described. So for example, if you prefer a sit - then you will use sit in games where I use a down.

### **Step 4: Get Organized**

Now that you know what you are going to train, the next step is to get organized to make it happen.