

Foundation/Beginner Skills Yardwork

Coming When Called

If your dog doesn't know what Come or Here means, there are three easy steps to teach this.

- Stand in front of your dog with a treat in your hand.
- Show your dog the treat as you move backwards and say either Come or Here.
- After a few steps backwards stop moving and give your dog the treat.
- Keep the treat low, at your dog's eye level. Otherwise your dog may jump up on you to get the treat. Don't pull it away when the dog gets to you – give it to him.
- The best place to start this is inside, in a distraction free environment.

NEVER call your dog to come unless you are ready and able to reward him.

Sit

If your dog doesn't know what Sit means, there are two ways to teach it.

- Lure/Reward
 - While your dog is standing, take a treat, place it in front of your dog's nose and raise the treat up.
 - Your dog's head will follow the treat and as your dog's head goes up, his rear end will hit the ground.
 - Once your dog is automatically sitting when you start to raise the treat, you now have the behavior so you can give it a name: say Sit. And reward
- Shaping
 - Dogs will automatically offer a sit on many occasions. When your dog automatically does this, say "Sit" and reward.

Walking on Leash

Teaching your dog not to pull on leash requires patience and consistency.

- If your dog starts to pull on leash, stop walking.
- When your dog is not pulling on his leash, praise and reward with a treat.
- If necessary, put a prong/pinch collar on your dog. If your dog starts to pull, the collar will correct your dog, there's no need to pull on it.
- Go to Lake Effect Gun Dogs on Facebook and watch a video of Tony's Square Drill.

Casting Games With Treats

There are two basic casts your dog will need to know in order for you to teach your dog to run blind retrieves. They are Back and Over. Using a platform makes teaching the casts easy and fun. Dogs as young as 7 weeks can learn these basic casts if you use a platform.

- The Back cast means run in a straight line away from you, either from your side or while facing you.
- The Over cast means run in a straight line to the dog's left or right, depending on which direction you send him in.

Teaching Back

- Have your dog sit and watch while you place a closed container of treats on your platform.
- Return to your dog and with your dog sitting at heel, release your dog to run to the platform.
- When your dog gets to the platform, run out and open the container and give your dog a treat.
- After several repetitions add the word 'Back' before releasing your dog.
- Teaching Back from front position
- After your dog understands Back from heel position, have your dog sit facing you with his back to the platform. Angle him slightly to your left.
- Place both hands in the center of your chest, under your chin, palms out.
- Slowly raise your left arm straight up along the side of your head and step forward slightly on your left leg as you say "Back". Your dog should run to the platform. Meet him there and reward from the container.
- Repeat, angling your dog slightly to your right, raise your right arm and step forward on your right leg.
- Your dog is now learning both a Left and Right Back.

Teaching Over

- Have your dog sit in front position and watch while you place your platform and container of treats directly to his right.
- Stand in front of your dog and place your hands at your waist.
- Extend your left arm straight out to your side and your left leg as you say "Over". You will be pointing to the platform that is to your dog's right but YOUR left.
- Your dog will run to the platform. Join him and reward from the container.
- *This is your Left Over.*
- Move the platform to your dog's left.
- Stand in front of your dog with your hands at your wait.
- Extend your right arm straight out to your side and your right leg as your say "Over". You will be pointing to the platform that is to your dog's left but YOUR right.
- *This is your Right Over.*

NOTE: When you start teaching Back from front position and the Over casts, you should be close to your dog. Begin by standing about six inches away from your dog then gradually add distance six inches at a time. Distance erodes behavior so take this slow.

Platform Games With Treats

Once your dog understands Back and Over, you will want to add some extra platforms to your equipment. Place your platforms randomly around your yard. You will not need containers of treats on them – have the treats in your pocket instead. You no longer need to lure your dog to the platform but you must continue to reward your dog for going to the platform.

- Have your dog sit.
- Go and stand with a platform on your left.

- Call your dog to come to the platform. Reward.
- Leave your dog on the platform, walk away and send your dog to another platform, using either your Back or Over cast. Reward.
- Get the idea? You can and should be sending your dog to a platform and from a platform and using your platform to teach your dog to come to heel position when you call him. Add as much distance as you can. Make sure your dog always a clear, straight path to the platform you are sending him to.

Adding Bumpers to the Casting Game

If you've been doing your retrieve homework, place a bumper on the platform you are sending your dog to. Do not place bumpers on every platform you have set out.

- Send your dog to the platform with a bumper on it, using your Over or Back cast.
- Once your dog gets to the platform, tell your dog to pick up the bumper and return to you (make sure you are standing next to a platform for the return).
- When your dog returns with the bumper, take it and reward your dog with a treat.

Refer to Pat Nolan's videos on platforms

Your dog should always think of the platform as a good place to be – good things happen on the platform. If you find your dog running to a platform, get in and reward your dog with a treat or a bumper. NEVER correct your dog for going to a platform if you haven't sent him.

Introduction to Retrieving

If you have a young puppy, start their retrieving skills with soft objects like a paint roller. Keep in mind that your pup will start to lose puppy teeth around 4 mos and his mouth will be sore so don't try to switch to bumpers until their teething has finished and their adult teeth are in.

Motivating a Retrieve

Step 1

- Always have two of whatever you want your dog to retrieve.
- Tease your dog with the retrieve object and when your dog is excited, hold it close to his mouth and say 'Fetch'.
- Let your dog grab it from you, praise like crazy and present the other object to your dog as you tell your dog 'Give'.
- Let your dog grab the other object from your hand.
- Reward with a treat.
- Gradually add a little distance between your dog and the retrieve object.
- Always quit when your dog wants more.

Step 2

- Always have two of whatever you want your dog to retrieve.
- Set up in a hallway or other narrow enclosed area. This will prevent your dog from running off with the retrieve object.
- Tease your dog with the retrieve object and toss it a short distance away from you.

- Let your dog chase it as you say 'Fetch'.
- When your dog puts the object in his mouth call your dog to come to you as you move backwards.
- When your dog gets to you, tell him 'Give', take the object and toss the other one.
- Call your dog to come after he picks up the second object.
- You are motivating your dog to pick up the retrieve object AND more importantly, to return to you with it.

Step 3

- Take the party outside or to a larger area indoors.
- Have a long line on your dog.
- If your dog doesn't return immediately with the object and decides to chew on it or run off with it, give a tug on the long line and **enforce your Come command**. If your dog doesn't hold on to the object, that's fine. Praise the return – that's the really important part.
- Set up and try again.

Anytime your dog has stolen something non-life threatening around the house, DO NOT rush to grab it from them. Instead, call them to you (by now your Come command should mean that if they come to you, good things happen). Tell your dog 'Give' and reward. If you punish your dog now for stealing a sock or shoe, you are teaching your dog that bad things happen when he completes a retrieve. Note to self: manage your dog's environment better if stealing is a problem.

Introduction to Water

Your dog's first experiences with water should be positive. The cardinal rule of introducing a dog to water is NEVER do it with water that is cold. Wait until the water warms up.

- Put a lightweight floatable long line on your dog.
- Toss a bumper, toy or tennis ball a short distance and send your dog.
- When your dog gets to the water's edge if he decides to run off, use the long line to make sure your dog comes back to you.
- Keep your throws short – there's plenty of time to add distance. Water is tiring.

Introduction to Birds

Some dogs love the smell of birds from day 1. Others not so much. Make sure your dog's introduction to birds is with fresh birds that are in good condition.

- Go back to your Introduction to Retrieving and follow those steps as closely as you can.
- Never let your dog chew on the bird or run off with it.
- Do let them drag it if they want to – don't insist that they initially hold the entire bird in their mouth; they will with time.

Impulse Control

Sit means Sit – until told to get up. Down means Down – until told to get up. One of the best ways to teach impulse control is with your dog's food bowl.

- Have your dog sit or down.
- Place the bowl on the ground.
- If your dog gets up before the bowl hits the ground, remove the bowl, try again.
- Your dog will quickly figure out the best way to get fed is to remain stationary until released.
- Do the same at the door.
- Do the same when you get your dog out of the crate in your vehicle.
- Gradually add duration – make your dog sit or down a bit longer each time before being released.
- Practice in the yard with your dog sitting on his platform while you toss a toy or bumper.
- Good impulse control at this stage in your dog's training will make steadying your dog at the line much easier.

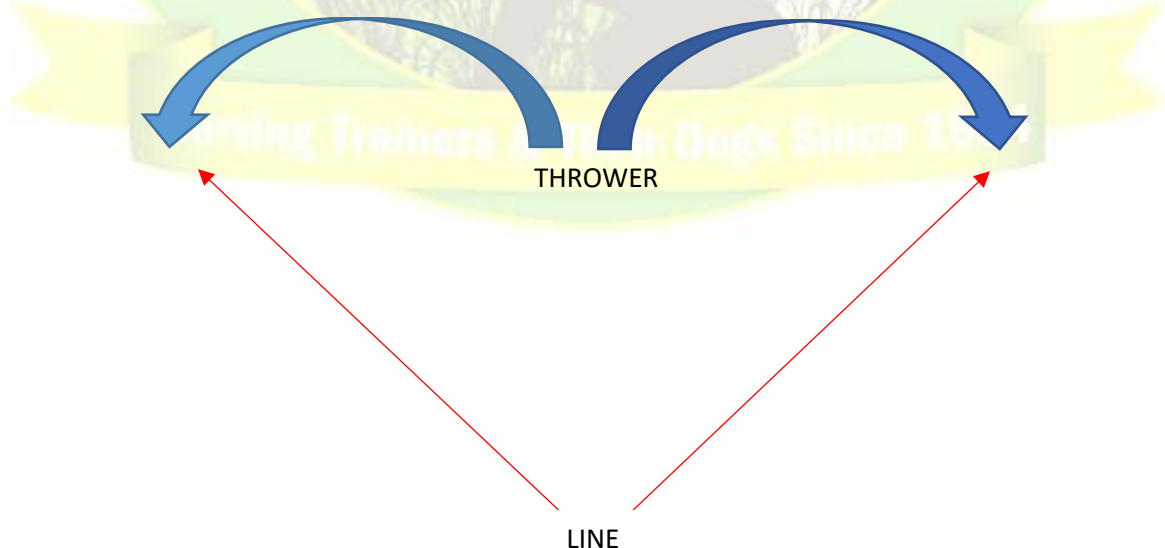
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INTRODUCTION TO GUNNER /BIRDBOY THROWN MARKS

To increase the distance your dog will run to retrieve will require help from a bird boy/gunner/thrower. Up to now your pup has probably been making retrieves that they have seen you throw and have been retrieving out to the maximum distance you can toss a bumper.

To get your dog accustomed to throwers in the field you will need a helper and several white bumpers. One important note here is that when this introduction takes place, we do not want to create a situation where the thrower is more desirable to go to than the bumper. No gun shots, loud or excessive calling to get the dogs attention. Just a simple HEY HEY from the thrower and have him spin the bumper to get the dogs attention before he throws.

To start, have a thrower in the field at a distance from the line equal to the maximum distance your dog has been retrieving , it is easy to stretch the distance once the dog is comfortable with a thrower in the field that he is willing to ignore. Thrower will be visible to the dog.



Bring the dog to the line, on lead. Have your dog sit, we are not going to be too critical with steadiness at this point. Once you are at the line, your dog should be paying attention to the gunner in the field, have the gunner give a "HEY HEY ", spin a bumper and make a flat throw to either the left or right. Keep the throws flat for now so we are not asking the pup to run past the gun. We will increase the difficulty later by introducing angle back.

We want the thrower to make sure he has the dog's attention before he makes the throw. Once the bumper is in the air pay attention to your dog's attitude, if he is excited at watching the bumper fly, send him as soon as it hits the ground. Remember that our concern here is not perfect line manners but the dog's willingness to make the retrieve and ignore the gunner in the field.

If the pup heads out and makes a clean retrieve you are halfway there, we need pup to ignore the gunner after he picks up the bumper. Once pup has picked up the bumper give him his recall and show some excitement that he has done a great job and great him with praise when he returns.

If you had success on the first retrieve repeat with a throw from the other side following the same mechanics. If you get 2 solid successful retrieves pack up and move to a second location and repeat the process.

Helping if the pup wants to run to the gun. This is a problem we may see with a pup but one that is not too hard to fix.

If, when released the pup starts toward the fall but then decides the thrower is more appealing have the thrower toss another bumper to the exact fall as the first to refocus the pup on where he should be going. Thrower may need to toss a third bumper, do all you can to keep the pup focused on the fall and away from the thrower.

Prior to bringing the pup to the line make sure you and the thrower have a solid understanding of how, and when the thrower is to help.

Once the pup is constantly ignoring the thrower now you can increase the distance between you and the thrower and introduce angle back marks.

When pup has been exposed to flat and angle back marks while ignoring the thrower you can move ahead to additional marking drills such as walking singles.

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INTRODUCTION TO GUN FIRE

While most people take for granted that a retriever will not be bothered by gun fire this is not always the case. Dogs need to work up to the point that they can sit and ignore shots being fired near them. This is not one of the glamorous parts of training but needs to be done to ensure you do not create a gun shy dog.

If you are with a training group and you have a young dog, DO NOT have the pup sit at the line while shots are being fired as his introduction to gun fire. There are many mistakes in our training that we can work through but creating a gun-shy dog might be one of the hardest. In some cases, a dog will never overcome their fear of gun shots.

The best way to introduce a dog to live fire is by starting off at a distance and working on decreasing that distance over a period. You can also purchase a CD to de-sensitize a dog to the sounds of gunfire [Puppy Sounds CD - Clean Runwww.cleanrun.com > product > puppy_sounds_cd](http://www.cleanrun.com/product/puppy_sounds_cd)

Inform your training group that you will be working on this prior to arriving. When you arrive to train with your group park 150-200-yards away from the where the group will be training. Take the pup out and just start going for a walk, bring a bumper with you, and have the pup on a long line. As you and the pup walk pay attention to how the pup reacts when shots are fired from the training group. If he picks his head up and looks in the direction of the sound toss him a happy bumper. Go through this process while you start to walk closer to the gunfire. Whenever you hear a shot and it gets your dog's attention toss him a fun bumper. Even at a distance the pup will start to associate hearing a shot and making a retrieve, positive association.

Now that pup has heard shots at a distance you will continue to move closer until you can be parked with your group and pup is sitting with you listening to the shots, still give him a short happy bumper when he hears a shot. Once he is comfortable at the back of your truck it is time to go to the line.

If possible, use .22 blanks, and work your way up through primers and to poppers. If you have done this process your dog will associate the shot with a fun action and will start to look in the direction of the shot knowing it will present him with a retrieve.

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LEAD STEADY>LIMP LEAD STEADY >NO LEAD STEADY

When we have formalized our obedience and start to apply what we have taught our dog we will now transition and apply it in field work.

We need and expect our dog to sit quietly and without movement at the line while watching the marks fall. If he is moving around and head swinging it greatly increases the chance of him missing a mark or seeing only the back end of it when the gun shot pulls him in the correct direction

The first stage of this is lead steadiness. This is exactly what it sounds like. You will bring the dog to the line, at heel and under control always. He should have on his E-collar with a short lead on. When you are ready and call for the marks you will hold the lead taught so that he cannot move forward and he feels the pressure. Keep him under control, with pressure until you are ready to send him. Once you say his release command allow the lead to fall out of your hand so he can make the retrieve. Timing is critical, do not release him if he pulling to go. If he decides that he wants to leave prior to you sending him, correct him with a sit command and additional lead pressure. Once you are satisfied with his control you can send him for the retrieve. Continue with lead pressure each time he is at the line watching marks fall. Remember to maintain your mechanics every time you train.

When you are comfortable that he is sitting and watching his marks without pulling or attempting to leave on his own we can move to the next step, LIMP LEAD STEADY. This will consist of you bringing him to the line, under control, and have him sit to watch the marks fall. When you are ready for the marks to be thrown relax the pressure on his lead, but do not let it go. If possible have the lead rest against his shoulder so he feels the lead but not the pressure. Once you are comfortable that he has done a good job being steady release him for his retrieve. At this point mix in some lead pressure steady with limp lead steady work. Just enough to remind him you are still in control. If he breaks apply lead pressure, a command sit and wait let him make the retrieve.

If your dog has been properly conditioned to an E-collar and understands E-collar stimulation for Sit, we can now move to no lead pressure with the E-Collar. This time the dog will come to the line, under control and with no lead but wearing his E-collar. Have him sit by your side and when you are ready call for the marks. When you are comfortable that he has remained in a solid sit without moving send him for the retrieve. If he breaks be prepared to yell sit with a collar correction and then here to bring him back to heel. By now he should understand how to be steady so this is a major error on his part. If this happens, the thrower should pick up the bumper or bird while your dog watches and you should then heel him from the line and not allow him to make the retrieve.

If your dog has not been properly conditioned to an E-collar and does not understand E-collar stimulation for Sit, you will need to do more work on Limp Lead Steady and gradually transition to using a slip line looped through your dog's collar. A slip line is a thin fabric leash that has had the clasp cut off of it. Slip the cut end through your dog's collar and hold both ends in your hand. When your dog is solidly sitting without pulling ahead, let go of the cut end and send your dog. Hold the other end of the slip line. The cut end will slide through your dog's collar as he leaves.

While most dogs at one point or another will break if you progress through this drill, by maintaining good mechanics you should develop a dog that is steady and understands his job at the line.

If your dog starts to develop a creeping or moving habit once he is steady off lead go right back to lead pressure to reinforce his sit and steadiness at the line.

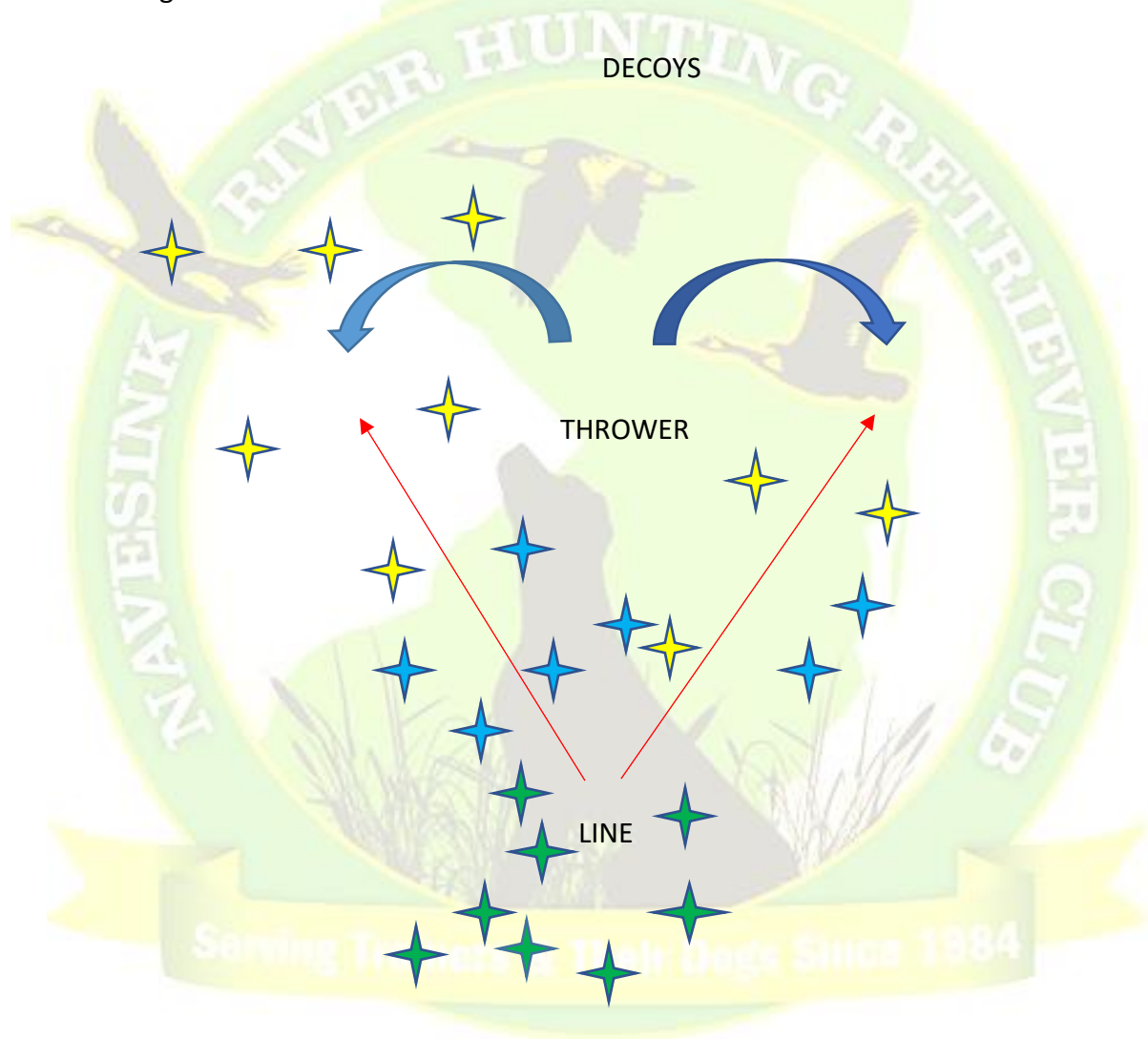
NOTE: The Navesink River Hunting Retriever Club assumes no responsibility for a handler's incorrect use of an E-Collar during this or any other exercise and is not liable for a handler's incorrect use of an E-Collar during this or any other exercise.



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INTRODUCTION TO FIELD DISTRACTIONS.

Whether you choose to run hunt tests, field trials, or just hunt with your dog there will be many field distractions your dog will encounter. Some but not all will be, decoys, duck calls, boats, and other hunting equipment. When introducing any new item to your dog you cannot predict what his response will be. That is why this you should try to control the way he takes on these new challenges.



GREEN STARS :When first introducing decoys in the field try to place them in a position where the dog will have to go through them as he gets to the line and around the area of the line so he has to run past, but not through, them to make his retrieve. As you are bringing your dog to the line let him explore the decoys as much as he wants, the sight of decoys needs to become

second nature to your dog and he needs to understand they will be ignored when making his retrieves.

BLUE STARS: Once your dog is ignoring the decoys leading to, and at the line, we will start to set them up from the line out to about ½ way to the mark. When you are at this stage do not place any decoys in a direct line to the mark, we do not want the decoys to create an impediment to the true line to the fall.

YELLOW STARS: When your dog is ignoring the decoys set out to about ½ distance to the marks now you can place the decoys at any distance from the line you choose, including deep of the mark . At this point your dog should be indifferent to decoys and their placement in the field.

DUCK/GOOSE CALLS

While duck and goose calls will be an integral part of a bird dogs future you should take care how you introduce them to your pup. DO NOT make the introduction to calls by blasting on a call at the line with your pup getting ready to watch marks. This will distract the dog and cause him to swing his head and focus on you and not the mark he needs to be focused on. You can progress to this stage as your dog becomes familiar with calls but avoid it at all cost for now.

We need to have the duck call mean something good is going to happen in the dog's mind. A good introduction would be to take a bumper and a duck call when you are just taking the pup for a walk. Let the pup roam at a distance and when he is not facing you blow the duck call, not too loud. When the pup turns around to see what the sound was toss him a bumper and let him make the retrieve. Do this for a few sessions and then transfer the call to the field.

The first time your dog hears a call in the field it should come from a thrower and NOT from you at the line. If you did his introduction during your walks correctly your dog will focus on the thrower the call came from. Once the dog is focused on the thrower have the bumper thrown and let the dog make the retrieve. From this point forward you can use a call from the thrower during your marking training as an attention getting device.

You will be put in a position, at a test or hunting, when you are required to call from the line or a blind with your dog close to you. It's best to avoid this when training of young dog until his marking and focus on the field is solid. Remember to set the dog up for success. Calling from right next to the dog can be a major distraction to your pup.

BOATS

Considering the unstable action of a boat in the water you should make every attempt to introduce your dog to a boat while it is on land and stable.

If you have access to a flat bottom JON boat place the boat on the ground in a position that it will not rock side to side when you or your dog get in. Place some type of non-skid material

inside on the deck so when your dog does get in he is not slipping. If you have access to a ramp, place the ramp from the ground up to the gunnel of the boat. Once you have all those steps complete you can proceed to introduce your dog to the boat.

Let your dog out to do some exploring around the boat, at his pace. While your dog is walking around the boat you can climb in and take a seat. Your pup may just jump right in with you. If he doesn't, try to guide him up the ramp into the boat. When he is in the boat allow him to explore and get comfortable. Now you step out and see if he follows you; if he does step back in and guide him up the ramp again. Once he is comfortable getting in and out of the boat with you remove the ramp and repeat the process of you getting in first and calling him next.

Once your dog is good with getting in and out of the boat move the boat to the shoreline $\frac{1}{2}$ in the water and $\frac{1}{2}$ on land and repeat the process of you stepping in and calling him in after you. He may have a different reaction when he gets in the boat if the boat moves in the water. Be patient and let him get comfortable at his pace.

The final step will be to take him for a boat ride. Once you and your dog are in the boat push off from the shore and allow the boat to float around, no need to paddle or create any sudden movements that would scare him. After floating for a while now paddle back to the shore, exit the boat and call him to you.

A word of caution about allowing your dog to retrieve by jumping out of a boat. Make sure you have some type of non-slip surface for your dog to sit on and make his retrieve from. Think how you would feel if your first experience exiting a boat resulted in falling and striking your ribs or head on the side of the boat. Consider the position you are putting your dog in before you create a situation that could cause long term problems in your training and his learning.

Using this process of progressive introduction will get your dog through all the situations he will need to see to become a good companion in the field.

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IMPULSE CONTROL

You should be at the point where your dog is developing a strong desire to retrieve when he comes to the line. Up to this point we have not been too concerned with this steadiness, but now we will start to control some of his actions.

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In the future your dog will be expected to honor, watch another dog work. Now that we have been working on lead steady at the line, we will introduce the concept of Honoring. We will do this by having your dog, after he has run his marks, exit the line and take a position 15-20 feet behind the working dog. Your dog should be in a position where he is not interfering with the working dog, but he will see the first mark fall. We are only concerned with watching the first mark fall.

When getting your dog in position treat your mechanics the same as if you are at the line getting ready to run. Sit your dog at your side but do not tell your dog to mark (your dog may think he is going to be sent if you say 'mark'). Instead, tell your dog to sit and either just repeat the sit command OR teach your dog a different command that tells him he is NOT going to be sent. Many trainers use "not yours", "not now", or another command that clearly means he is not going to be sent to pick up the bumper or bird. When the first mark is thrown for the working dog, be prepared to stop your dog if he decides to break. If he breaks, tell your dog to sit and then heel him back to your vehicle.

Do not overwork this in a young dog. We are just starting to instill drive and desire to retrieve and we do not want to curb that drive. Longer and more frequent honoring will come down the road. Be happy with one of these during each training session.

NEVER cold honor with a young dog. Cold honoring is when the dog is required to honor prior to him running.