

10 Steps to Getting Started in Agility

Expert advice for the novice agility enthusiast.

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1. Know the basics. Does your dog do a reliable sit, down, and stay? If you and your dog need to brush up, you can find a trainer who uses positive techniques through the Association of Pet Dog Trainers.
2. Socialize your dog. Make sure its comfortable around other dogs and in crowded, noisy places.
3. Schedule enough time. You'll need time for classes and regular practice. Top competitors train every day, but trainers recommend you spend only ten to fifteen minutes per session.
4. Use positive rewards. Motivate your dog and keep its attention with treats, a toy, or praise. Many instructors discourage and often forbid harsh language and choke collars.
5. Find an instructor. Your obedience trainer or local humane society might teach agility or be able to direct you to someone who does. Local agility clubs can connect you with teachers. Find a club near you through the agility organizations listed below.
6. Observe a class. Different teachers have different techniques. Watch how they teach and decide if its right for you and your dog.
7. Attend some local agility events. Learn about trials, fun matches, and demonstrations by contacting your local breed club, agility club, or the organizations below.
8. Arrange access to equipment. Your dog will need to practice the different styles of jumps, tunnels, and contact obstacles. Many training facilities have drop-in times. You can even make your own inexpensive jumps with plastic pipes.
9. Learn more. The web is a great source, and so is Dog Fancy magazine.
10. Be prepared to have fun. A positive attitude is everything in agility!

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