

Dog Agility Obstacle Glossary

A slide show introduction to the 10 most popular obstacles at agility competitions.

Lisa Hanks

What's a dog walk? And a bush fence hurdle? If you have no clue what these are, let alone how to conquer them, you're not alone. Agility obstacles may seem mystifying at first, but they're actually pretty universal in design and purpose. Once you've got the basics down, you'll be debating the finer points of weave poles in no time. Check out our slide show for a detailed look.

A-frame

Big dogs have no problem scaling this towering upside-down V, however, it's thrilling to watch the little dogs scramble and claw their way up the A-frame mountain. Formed by hinging two large, rectangular ramps at the top, its regulation height is 5 to 6 1/2 feet tall.

The A-frame is one of the contact-zone obstacles. A yellow area indicates where the dog must place all or part of one paw. Contact zones start on the bottom of each ramp and go up 36 to 42 inches. They are intended to prevent dogs from going too fast or leaping off at an unsafe height.

Dog walk

Another contact-zone obstacle, this one is shaped like an upside-down U. This doggie bridge is made of three foot-wide, long boards. The center board runs horizontally 3 to 4 feet off the ground, with the other two leading back down to the ground.

Seesaw

Also called a teeter-totter, this tilting board looks just like the children's playground toy. The 8- to 12-foot-long board (about a foot wide) rests on a triangular base so it tilts in both directions.

Pause table

For dogs with short attention spans, the pause table can be five seconds of wiggly agony, as the dog tries to hold a Sit or Down for the required period. This tabletop-type obstacle adjusts to 8 to 24 inches tall, depending on the height division.

Tunnels

Open tunnel (or a pipe tunnel): This opaque, 10- to 20-foot-long, ribbed tube is about 24 inches around and can be curved or shortened. Some dogs fly through it, coming around on the high outside edge like a racecar driver.

Closed tunnel (collapsed or chute tunnel): It's a 2- to 3-foot-long tunnel with a collapsed, fabric chute attached to the exit end. Other types of tunnels include crawl and hoop tunnels.

Weave poles

Some dogs do a two-footed bunny hop through the weaves. Others have a sinuous, side-to-side flow. The weave poles consist of 10 to 12 flexible poles, set 18 to 24 inches apart. The dog enters with the first pole on his left shoulder and continues to the end.

Panel jump

With a panel jump, the dog can't see where he's landing — a nerve-wracking experience for some. Instead of bars, these jumps have wide, flat panels that form a solid-looking wall. The top panel is displaceable.

Bar jumps (hurdles)

A standard part of any agility course, bar jumps come in singles, doubles, and triples. The doubles are two bars set parallel to each other, while the triples have three bars in ascending height. The top bars come off when knocked, resulting in a point deduction. Jump heights range from 8 to 26 inches tall.

Tire jump

A tire or other round object forms the jump. In some jumps, the tires are displaceable, in others, the whole apparatus falls over.

Broad jump (or long jump)

You've heard of a track-and-field broad jump? This is the same principle. The dog must leap over several panels laid flat on the ground — a distance of 1 to 5 feet.

Lisa Hanks is a freelance writer based in Southern California. She is the former editor of the Popular Dogs Series and a dog sports enthusiast.

Now that you've learned the obstacles, find out what popular agility competition terms mean. [More >>](#)