

# How to Lay a Track and Run a Track – for Beginners

written by Bea Moore – 2004

- When first laying tracks, let your dog watch you by crating him, or tying him to a tree. If you are with another person, that person can hold your dog, but should not distract or talk to the dog.
- First, make sure your dog has had an opportunity to potty.
- Focus on a target in the distance to walk towards on each leg of your track.
- Put start flag on left side of left foot. Look at the dog, wave article and get the dog's attention on you.
- Place a food drop between your feet.
- Take one step and drop food in front of your foot.
- Take another step and drop food in front of your foot.
- Walk 10 steps towards that target making sure you are walking straight.
- At the end of your track, put a glove in front of you with treats underneath.<sup>1</sup>
- Walk through the glove (I generally step on it) for about 20 steps.
- Turn going downwind taking about 15 steps (in mild or no wind) 30 steps (on windy day)
- Turn again paralleling the track back and beyond start flag and get your dog.
- Talk to your dog about what you are going to do after the tracklayer has finished laying the track and has returned.<sup>2</sup>
- Put the harness on your dog within 15 feet of the start flag.
- Transfer line from the collar to the harness. At this point, you can either take off the collar or leave it on.
- Water your dog (very important!) If your dog will not drink out of a small dish, drop food that will sink into the water – this generally will get your dog to drink water while trying to get the food. It is best if your dog drinks plenty of water before and during tracking.
- You may also wet your dog down, depending on the weather.
- Grab harness (like a suitcase) with left hand and walk to the start in the same line the tracklayer walked.
- When you get to the start, get your dog to sit or lay down in the direction you were walking with his nose on or above the right side of the flag. That is where the tracklayer stood before laying the track. The start article will be there. Train your dog to pick it up ("take it"), if possible.<sup>3</sup> If this becomes a problem, work on this at home. Read "Article Indication" in this book.
- Crouch down with your dog for a while (I prefer at least 15 to 30 seconds). Talk softly to your dog about finding the track and finding the "treasure" (article), etc.
- Let go of the harness and tell your dog to "track" or "find it" or whatever term you use for tracking.
- Now keep quiet and let your dog work. Wait until your dog is in front of you enough and walk behind him without interfering with him. If your dog has a problem getting started, encourage him to track.<sup>4 5</sup>
- Stop when he stops and don't let him go off the track any further than 6 feet. Hold the leash/line firmly – don't pull him or help him.
- Stay on the track as much as possible during training.
- If your dog comes towards you, back up a step or a few steps. Watch your dog to see what he is doing. He may have to refresh himself on the track where he has been, so learn to back up!
- If you find your dog backing up often for food he has missed, then it is time to put fewer food drops. This means he is tracking and getting distracted by the food.
- When your dog gets off the track and corrects himself back to the track, gently praise him after he's remained on the track 3-4 feet, and then let him concentrate again.
- Food drops will begin to disappear and get smaller in size as the dog progresses. However, an occasional ½" piece of food is rewarding.

**FOOD:** Largest piece should not be bigger than ½" for larger dogs. Crumbs: Make your own crumbs by placing dry treats into your blender.

More Information: <https://k9rally.com/2012Products/2012Books/TrackingGuide.htm>

<sup>1</sup> Treats/glove - Some dogs will need the treats either on top or under glove when beginning to track. Soon the treats will be put inside the glove. Inside the glove warrants the beginning of article indication.

<sup>2</sup> If your instructor lays this track for your dog, you should be with your dog about 15 feet from the start flat on the tracklayer's path approaching the start flag. Do not distract your dog if he is watching the track being laid. Wait until the tracklayer has returned and is behind you.

<sup>3</sup> Picking up the article will get more of the tracklayer's scent in the dog's olfactory.

<sup>4</sup> You want your dog to eventually PULL you. Sometimes, a dog won't do this at first. Encourage this action.

<sup>5</sup> A reason your dog may not start is that the food is not motivating him enough or is not placed close enough between drops.