

## WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT ???

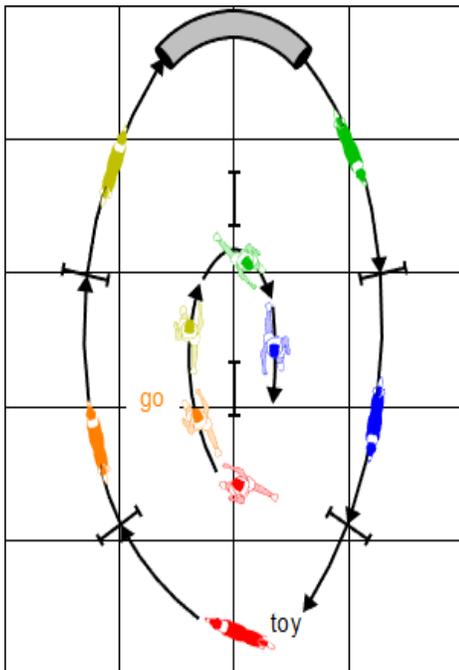
With the dog on one side of us, we want to be able to cue one of three types of focus. Imagine a camera lens, we can adjust focus to cue:

- (1) focus forward ahead on obstacles along the last line of motion our dogs saw from us without needing to attend to us any further, the 'Go' mode,
- (2) focus on an obstacle, while in the periphery, visually attending to our motion, the 'Obstacle connected to me' mode, or
- (3) focus on us, and in the periphery focus on obstacles enough not to run into them, the 'On me' mode.

If we were as fast as our dog, or if we didn't mind our dog waiting for us, we could do the entire course running close to perfectly parallel to the lines we want the dog to run. The dog would run the entire course in that second mode, 'Obstacles connected to me', focused simultaneously on the next obstacle, and keeping us within their peripheral view.

But at a fundamental level, we believe our dogs are faster than we are, and we want them to remain faster than we are. Since each and every step we take is slower than their ability to react and move, each and every step we take is potentially the last line of motion they see driving them off forward along that line, not needing to slow, to wait, to keep monitoring for continued movement. In other words, each and every one of our steps could be the predictors for the 'Go' mode.

### 'Go' mode



Here is a relatively straightforward set up of six jumps and a tunnel. With young dogs, and even with more experienced dogs, we frequently return to relatively straightforward set ups to make sure our cues are set how we intend. We make sure to 'balance the steering'.

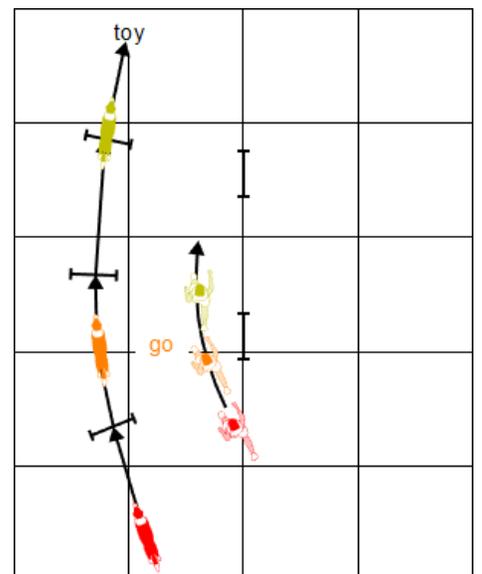
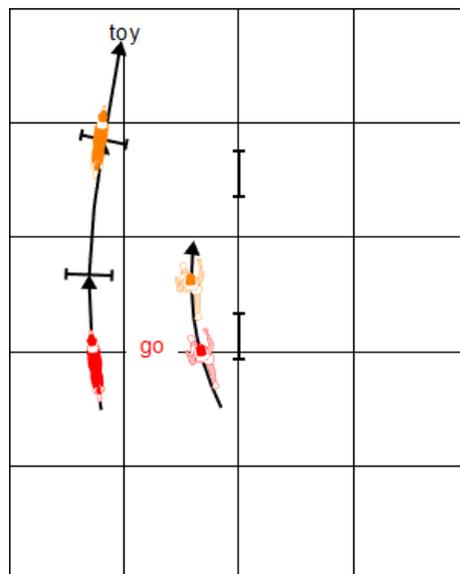
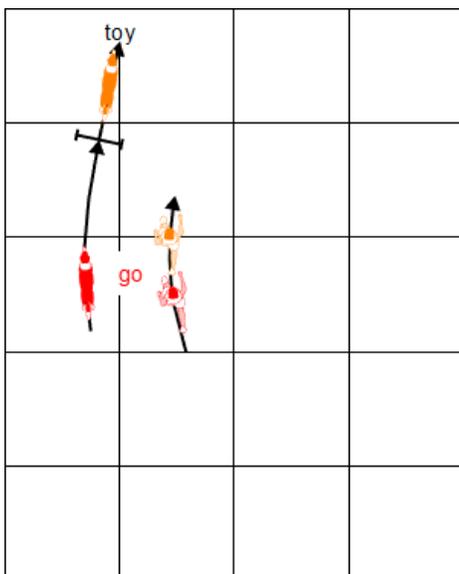
In this example, we want the dog to see the line of motion we give it and GO on forward, not waiting for us, not continuing to monitor us, not cutting in to the middle jumps.

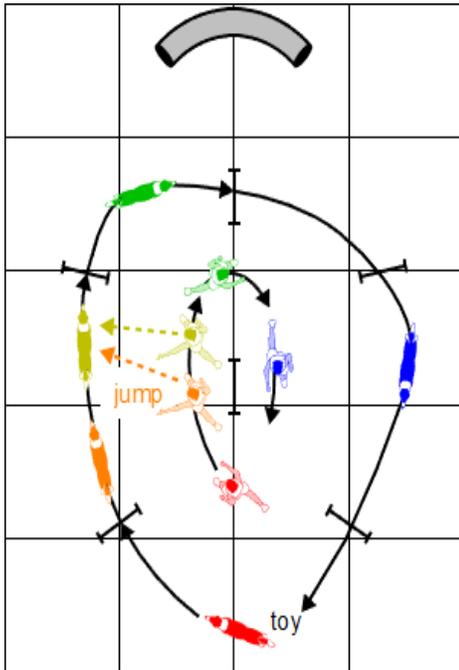
Any time I am working the 'Go' mode I have my toy/reward already placed on the continuation of the dog's line. The behavior closest to the reward gets the strongest reinforcement. If I am working 'Go' I do not want the last thing the dog does before the reward be turn the head/focus back to look for the throw or physically come back to me for the cookie or bit of play.

We want to build and maintain the dog's confidence to trust driving a line that we give it. We might break that skill down a bit at first. Maybe over just a few jumps. Or even a single jump.

In the beginning with pups, we start this with our toy play. We have the dog's collar in our hand. We throw the toy out ahead of the dog. We let the toy land. Then we say GO while we start to move toward the toy and release the collar. We build the dog's confidence driving the line of motion we paired with the GO and release of the collar, to drive ahead of us to the toy target.

Then we fold in an obstacle. And another, and another until there is a line of several obstacles and our dog can confidently take them all with no need for redirect or confirmation from us.





### Focus on obstacles and our motion / 'Connected to me' mode

We often need to be able to have our dogs take obstacles connected to us and our continually changing movement, rather than shooting off on a tangent that a particular instant of our motion might have shown them.

There are many ways to cue this difference. We might use verbals. Rather than tell the dog to GO, we would tell the dog to JUMP (or whatever verb suits the particular obstacle we want the dog to take connected to us). Probably more importantly, we focus on and orient toward that one obstacle. So while our whole body might still be moving forward, our focus and our chest might be rotated towards that particular obstacle, or maybe if we want even more connection we might be focused on and rotated toward where the dog begins the execution of that obstacle.

At a basic level, we are teaching our dogs how to follow our focus, our orientation. If our orientation drives off and is outwards, we want our dogs to drive off and look for obstacles outward. If our focus is at a particular point, we want our dogs to focus on that particular point.

In the beginning with pups, we incorporate this into how we play tug. From a very early age, we shape tug into a game where the dog will win the toy from us, and we instantly present the next toy and teach the dog to switch from the toy it just won to the next toy it will win from us. At a very fundamental level, that is much of agility. The dog wins the jump, connected to us, anticipating winning the next jump.

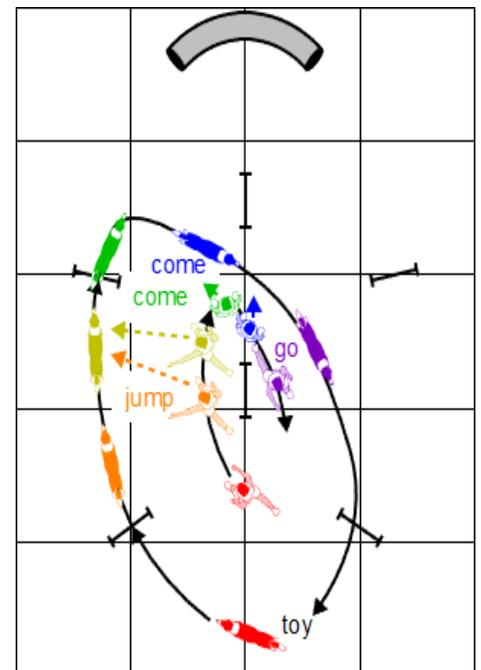
### Focus on handler excluding obstacles / 'On me' mode

We occasionally need our dogs to abandon focus on any and all obstacles that our movement might suggest and come directly to us, bypassing any obstacles our movement might otherwise give them.

In this example, we might not be able to clearly NOT move toward the third jump. Remember, in the second mode of steering, 'connected to me', we want the dog to focus on BOTH the obstacles and us. We do NOT want so much of the dog's focus that the dog's focus leaves the obstacles. In 'connected to me' mode, we do NOT want them to abandon focus on the obstacle, to turn their head and check with us; instead, we have the dog taking obstacles connected to us. Thus, when we move toward an obstacle, the dog should take the obstacle.

We teach our dogs when and how we will transition them from either forward focus or taking obstacles connected to us, to abandoning focus on obstacles and instead coming directly to us.

In the beginning with pups, we do this with toy play. Once the young dog is excitedly driving forward to toys and switching from toy to toy following our focus, we might throw a toy forward, let them see it, and then slap a different toy to the ground in front of them and have them switch their focus to that toy which they might then win from us either near our front or near our side. Then we will have the pup on a stay, throw (or place) a toy out, move a bit to the side of the direct line to that toy and release pup with the ON ME cues (a specific word "HERE" and either tapping our hip or clapping our hands together low in front of us) so the pup comes to us and not the toy. In the beginning rewarding from our side/front. Then as pup shows proficiency, we frequently spin the pup around us after releasing from the stay with our ON ME cue and then use a GO cue to transition the pup to go get the toy, working two different modes of handling and a transition!



### Moving between the modes

When we transition from one focus to another, timing of the transition is critical. It is often difficult and potentially demotivating to repeatedly ask the dog to recover from cues given 'too late'. The dog must know the information when the DOG needs to know, regardless of where we might be.

If our dog is focused forward, driving forward along the last line of motion they saw from us, and we then need to transition to have our dog take an obstacle connected to us, we need to give them that information when they can process the information and execute.

We try to provide this sort of transition well BEFORE the dog reaches their last stride into takeoff for a jump. Go jump a low jump, yourself. You can probably do all kinds of things leading into your approach to the jump. But that last stride as you transition into takeoff is where you will really concentrate on executing the jump. We want the dogs to feel confident that we have already told them how we want them to take the jump ('Go' mode or 'Connected to us' mode or 'On me' mode) well before that last stride into takeoff.