

Frequently asked Questions

So you'd like to do agility?

Most people start an interest in agility after having seen it on the television or enjoying an agility display at a local event. Sometimes it is the owner of a boisterous pet dog who thinks that agility will help channel the dog's energy. This is a good point to start from, but there are several things to think about before your dog tries out our wonderful sport. There are 2 main factors to consider when thinking about agility. Firstly – is the dog fit and able to do it and secondly, are you?!

The dog

1) Is he/she too young or old for agility?

Dogs must be physically mature before they can start agility, this varies with different breeds. Most small dogs can start agility training around 12 months of age but larger breeds need to wait until they are about 15 months old. Mental maturity must also be taken into account. It is no use starting agility before the basics of obedience have been learnt and are well understood. Older dogs can be brought into agility providing their health is good and there are no physical problems which would prevent the dog from learning.

Is the dog fit?

Agility places a lot of extra stress on a dog's muscles and bones than 'normal' doggy life. It is no good bringing along a dog that is used to lounging on the sofa and expecting them to cope with agility. Get fit first!

Is the dog overweight?

A dog required to undertake agility training must not be over the recommended weight for the breed

Is the dog the right material?

Most breeds of dog take to agility but the bigger the dog the more you should ask whether he / she is really suited.

Is the dog trained?

Although most agility dogs are excitable they must be able to cope off lead in the vicinity of other dogs. Agility is an exciting high adrenaline sport for most and without basic control agility is an uphill struggle

Is the dog the right temperament?

Because of the nature of agility your dog will need to accept being in close proximity with other dogs and people both on and off the lead. Dogs with issues are welcome at most clubs and can benefit from having a release for their emotions but be sure to tell your club if your dog is reactive

The Handler

Agility is not really for the faint hearted. Training a dog to do agility correctly is a time consuming task – it takes hours of patience, dedication and enthusiasm. Age is not a factor for the handler but a sense of humour is

Southdown Agility Club – Basic control

As we have said on our Agility – Having a go page there are some training essentials your dog must know inside out prior to starting any agility training.

These are summarised below

The sit

Agility rounds are often started from a basic sit position. It is also essential for any control in any club environment

The down

This command is used for all stages of agility and its compliance will help with control both on and off the course

The wait

A must have for all those up and coming agility superstars. You'll never out run them!

The recall

Used with the wait to bring your dog back to you. This does not have to be a formal recall, recall to hand touch is fine just as long as the dog comes back to you on command

No leads allowed

Of additional help would be

A play retrieve

Used for teaching dogs that agility is fun motivation and rewarding

A send away

A dog that will work away from its handler will ultimately be much faster and more confident as they progress

Finally A dog that runs with you without tripping you up or biting your ankle's!

What should be remembered at all times is that agility is fun

The best place to look for an instructor to teach you basic obedience and how to live a happy life with your dog is the APDT website