TRACKING PROGRAMME

Based on book Tracking From the Ground Up by Sandy Ganz & Susan Boyd

It is suggested that to start off with the dog must be tracked every day of the week. Always have a plan of action before going out onto the field.

**WEEK 1**

All tracks are laid into the wind with food in every footstep. By working into the wind this entices the dog forward. (Use flags start & end. Flags are not good as the dogs become aware of them.)

OBJECTIVES: into the wind

 50 meters

 10 minutes old

Double laid tracks

 Day 1 5 10 15 meters

 Day2 5 10 15

 Day3 10 15 29

 **3 3 minutes**

 Day4 15 20 25

Single laid tracks **3 5 5**

 Day5 25 30 40

 **5 8 8**

 Day6 30 35 40

 **8 10 10**

 Day 7 35 40 50

**WEEK 2**

Now work with the wind on your back. This helps bring his nose closer to the ground. By aging the track more this also gets him to lower his nose even more.

OBJECTIVES

 Wind on the handlers back

 100 meters

 20 minutes old

 Start reducing food drops

 They recommend introducing articles at this stage – I feel this is far too soon.

PROCEDURE

1. Continue placing food in every footstep for the first 8 meters of each track, then every other for the remainder of the track. (This is not a good idea as the dog only follows the left feet that have food in them and creates a default. Rather alternate the step left empty).
2. Walk 2meters behind the dog.
	1. Keep slight tension on the tracking line.
	2. A quiet handler helps the dog’s concentration. Save talking for when the dog is experiencing difficulties and needs help to get through the obstacle.
	3. The handler dictates the pace. Speed on track can result in poor accuracy on corners and the missing of articles. It is also safer for the handler when on uneven ground at a slower pace.

DEVELOPING ARTICLE INDICATION –( I feel that this should only be introduced after corners have been introduced.)

SCHEDULE WEEK 2

 **3 5 5 minutes 10 13 13**

Day1 30 35 40 meters Day 4 50 60 70

 **5 8 8 13 16 18**

Day2 35 40 50 Day 5 60 70 80

 **8 10 10 16 20 20**

Day 3 40 50 60 Day 6 70 80 90/100

NB Keep a detailed log of the day’s track, the dog’s performance and the weather conditions etc

If you do not have a successful track just go back a day or two in the schedule.

**WEEK 3**

The dog should now have a solid 100 meter straight leg foundation. Now corners are introduced. You must be methodical about this.

Plan your track so that the second leg goes into the wind and right. Every track for this week must turn to the right. This is when you as the handler must watch your dog’s reactions very carefully when he gets to corners. It is so important being able to read your dog.

OBJECTIVES

 100m X 50 m in length

 30 minutes old

 Every track has a **right** turn

 3 tracks per day

LAYING THE FIRST LEG.

The first leg will have a crosswind so that the second turns head on into the wind. At the beginning of the week it is only 75m long but by the end of the week it should be 100m. Place the first food drop 1 or 2 paces down the track. Space out all the other food drops totally randomly.

LAYING THE SECOND LEG

At the first session this is only 5m long with a little heap of food at the end.

The first 2 days of the week the first 5 paces of the second leg will be triple laid. On the third day stop triple laying and just scuff the first 5m of the leg.

TRIPLE LAID TURNS

 This method uses flags which is okay so long as this is only done for a very short period of time as the dogs learn to look for these and don’t rely on their noses!!

3 flags are used to lay the turn. Place the first flag 5m before the turn as a warning to you. Place the second flag at the corner. Walk 5m in the new direction into the wind and place the third flag. Return to the second flag being careful to walk exactly on the track. Remove the flag and retrace your steps back to the 3rd flag. Remove this 3rd flag and continue to lay the rest of that leg with random food drops.

There should be a food drop right on the turn and one in every step for the first 5-10 meters/paces of the new leg. Place a small heap of food to mark the end of the track. Give the dog lots of calm praise.

SUGGESTION

Each day lay all 3 tracks consecutively for your convenience. Then the track can be run consecutively.

AGE

The first day that you introduce turns, run the tracks at about 10 minutes. As the dog’s confidence builds then gradually increase the track age to 30 minutes.

HANDLING ON THE TURNS

Remain close behind the dog (1-2m) Watch for downwind tracking on the 1st leg due to the crosswind. The dog may tend to drift a little to the left of the track. Increase the lead tension to bring him back to the center of the track.

When you arrive at the first warning flag stop and stand your ground. Let the lead only play out as far as 5m past the corner. Any number of things can happen.

1. The dog may try to walk past the turn and NOT realize that he has run out of scent. Do not allow him to move more than 5 paces past the turn. As he looks for the track gently shorten the line to where the turn is. You can verbally encourage him to find the new leg but do not point or help him. Don’t even turn your body in that direction. Stand still.
2. The dog may pass the turn and realize he has lost the track scent. Observe your dog closely now for his body language. Did his head come up when he lost the track. Does he turn in the direction of the new leg or in the opposite direction where there is no ground scent? Is his tail up or down? Remain at the flag and in a calm voice encourage him to find the track.
3. He only checks the wrong direction and then heads back the right way. Let him do his thing but he may not go more than 5 paces beyond the corner. Reel him in and encourage him to relocate the track.
4. The dog takes the turn with his nose stuck to the track. Count your blessings and go with him!
5. The dog runs out of scent and you stop him 5 paces past the corner so he come back to you. Take a step forward to encourage him forward. If that doesn’t work wiggle your finger in the grass on the track. If all else fails move up to the corner where the triple laid/baited leg is. He can’t miss the baited leg!! Try to keep talking to a minimum.

ALWAYS BE PATIENT AND LET THE DOG WORK OUT THE CHANGE OF DIRECTION HIMSELF!!

The observations of another handler can help you recognize the dog’s body language.

Overshooting turns in the beginning is part of the learning process. Later this is less acceptable and needs to be restricted before it becomes a bad habit. Keep on a short lead to restrict casting and maintain a steady tension on the line.

**WEEK 4**

OBJECTIVES:

 100m X 50m

 30 minutes old

Every track has a **left** turn

3 tracks per day

TURN TO THE LEFT

The first food drop should be 4-5 paces down the first leg. As the dog’s abilities increase, the first food drop should be moved further away from the start. Increase the distance between all subsequent food drops.

Proceed as in week 3 with a food drop on the turn and one in each step for the first 5-10 paces of the new leg.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Everything is the same except for the turn to the left. If the dog is battling with the turn try scuffing the first 5 paces of the second leg & do this for a couple of days.

If he is still having difficulty, back up and go back to triple laying the first 5 paces of the second leg.

REMINDERS

1. Keep constant tension on your line. The handler dictates the pace of tracking NOT the dog.
2. Try to be very aware of your dog’s body movements when there is a loss of scent and a change in direction. Learn to read your dog’s turn indication.

**WEEK 5**

This weeks objectives are less demanding for the dog but the handler’s responsibilities are markedly increased. It is critical to increase your ability to read your dog and solidify his performance.

In planning each day’s track, keep the week’s objectives in mind as well as determining what the dog needs in:

1. The number of food drops
2. Length of the legs
3. Number of turns
4. Wind direction.

This weeks objectives provide the guidelines while you refine them to your individual dog’s needs.

OBJECTIVES

 2 turn tracks(left & right) with single laid turns

 300m track

30-45 minutes old

 One track training session only

FRINGING

 Dogs tend to fringe particularly on crosswind legs of the track. They should NOT be allowed to to do this!! It is too easy to miss and article or corner when not directly on track. If the dog attempts to fringe/weave even on a windy day:

1. Increase the lead tension
2. Slow a fast moving dog down to a walk

THE FAST MOVING LARGE DOG

If the dog is too strong for you to slow it down put a pinch collar on the dog and attach your line onto that.

**INTRODUCE ARTCILE INDICATION AT THIS STAGE.**

NB It is not good to be continuously raising the criteria in tracking. It is really good for the experienced dog to benefit from an easy day’s work. It is always good to go back to basics and do something simple to boost the dog’s confidence.

Eg put dog on a fresh track/ do a track into the wind/increase the food drops/shorten the distance/a straight track followed by a 2legged track/ 2or3 straight tracks/easy terrain

ARTICLE INDICATION

# ARTICLES\_ Joanne Plum method

These are introduced off the track. You don’t allow the dog to get nervous by introducing something totally different on track. Start teaching this in your backyard. Do several repetition of 5-6 articles in a session. A single behaviour is being taught at a time.

NB A good response is required of the Down and Stay commands – so if you are still training this, do not introduce the articles until the Down and stay is mastered.

Place 5 or so articles on the ground. Place a piece of food on top of each article. (Never under it as this teaches the dog to worry the article). Walk the dog on a leash up to the article and call his attention to it. He will eat the food on top of the article. When done, tell him to DOWN or signal him to do so with a piece of food. Do NOT use compulsion. The article must be a rewarding, calming, stress free place for him to be. Once down, praise him calmly and then place several more pieces of food on top of the article.. Then release him. Lead him onto the next article and repeat the procedure. Soon he will down and wait for more food to be fed to him. Use a variety of articles – wood, cloth, leather, plastic etc.

At the same time get him to down in the proper orientation to the article ie with it between his forelegs.. Also introduce the actions that will occur at this time – ie. hold the article up in the air for the judge to see. Keep him calmly in the stay and keep feeding him on the ground once you have removed the article.( never let him feed directly from your hand.) When this article indication is flawless and automatic do you introduce and article on track at the end. Go back to placing a piece of food on top of the article and come up to him quickly to reward and check that the down is correct. After removing the article and holding it up, reward the dog on the ground with a couple of pieces of food again.

Try to practice this a couple times a day for a week and your dog should have grasped the concept of lying down at the articles with it between the front paws.

Only when the dog is perfect at this is the article introduced at the end of the track.

**WEEK 6**

This week work on the dog’s successful experiences with good starts, moderate length tracks, and article indication. The main aim this week is bolster the dog’s abilities in turns. At this stage the dog has probably not developed a a style in making it’s turns that you can reliably read. By shortening the length of the legs and increasing the number of turns, without aging the track any more, you can learn better how to read your dog and hopefully see him gain confidence.

Not all turns are 90’ angles. So introduce some obtuse turns of more than 90’.

OBJECTIVES

 250 – 300m tracks

 30-40 minutes old

 1 track sessions

3-5 turn tracks

1 food drop per leg

3 tracks per week

NB YOU MUST KNOW EXACTLY WHERE YOUR CORNERS ARE SO PICK GOOD LANDMARKS – draw and mark your track pattern to that you don’t forget where you walked! Before putting your dog on track read your map and do not fiddle with it, once the dog is on track. Keep your attention on the dog.

 LEFT TURNS RIGHT TURNS

 Start

 Start

 Article

 Article

Construct tracks that build the dog’s ability to turn left or right.

PROBLEM SOLVING

If the dog has a problem with a particular direction turn give him that direction first on his next track before he tires.

NEW DIRECTION COMMITMENT

After really good progress, the dog often go backwards – this is normal. The following technique works well.

Leg lengths are reduced to 30-50 paces each. Each track has 3-5 turns. Tracklayer walks naturally throughout track except for the second 5 paces of legs 2,3,4 when the paces are scuffed and have food in each step.

When dogs run this type of reinforced track they are enticed in to commitment in the new direction with the scuffing and extra food drops.

 40 5

 5 5

 5 5 20 5 35

20 Article

30 The second 5 paces of each new leg are heavily scuffed

 Start

**WEEK 7**

OBJECTIVES

 Evaluate the dog’s and handler’s performances on Mock Tests

 Two tracks this week type and degree of difficulty according to the Evaluation.

MOCK TEST

This is to evaluate your strong and weak points.

LAYING THE TRACK

Ask an experience track layer to lay a blind track for you. It should have 2 right angle turns ( one left & 1 right) that can be triple laid or scuffed for the first 3-5 paces of each leg. It should be 20 – 30 minutes old with NO food drops and 1 article at the end.

RUNNING THE TRACK

The tracklayer should walk 40-50 paces behind you as a judge would do. If you are really unable to work out the track then help can be given to complete the track successfully.

Although this is a test it is still a training session and the dog MUST be successful.

Evaluate your performance and construct your next tracking sessions to work on the weak points

THE DOG

1. What were the dog’s strong areas of performance?
2. How did he handle the start?
3. Did he work the turns efficiently?
4. Was he distracted at any point?
5. Did he work at a steady pace?
6. Was his article indication good?

THE HANDLER

1. Did you let the lead play out 10m before following the dog?
2. Did you maintain constant tension on the line throughout the track?
3. How id you handle any distractions the dog might have had?
4. Were you able to read the turn indications?
5. Did you go up to the dog at the article and hold up the article for the judge to see?

FROM NOW ON IT IS IMPRTANT TO KEEP THE DOG’S MOTIVATION HIGH AND TRACKING EFFICIENTLY. Always vary your tracks and work on weak points.

**WEEK 8**

This is the end of the beginners course. Dog should complete a 300-400m track with multiple turns. Handler should be aware of the dog’s strengths and weaknesses and be prepared to work on those weaknesses every session.

OBJECTIVES

 300-400m tracks

No food on track – only rewarded at the end article

30-50 minutes old

Number of tracks depends on dog’s needs.

EVALUATION

If your dog has difficulties with starts there is no point in putting him on a long track. Solve the problem by laying 6 or so short(30-50m) single legged tracks Reinforce start with food a few paces after the start and scuff the ground.

If turns are the problem – shorten the legs and increase the number of turns.

FROM NOW ON

1. All tracks should address any weaknesses along with reinforcing motivation.
2. Plan each track with forethought, before stepping onto the field.
3. Do not allow the dog’s motivation to suffer by beating him down with problem solving.

Build up to 500-600m at 30 minutes then up to 1 hr and then 1 ½ hours.