

Weave Training

by Jeannie Biggers

When I train weaves to my young dogs I have one main goal in mind.... Independency. If you have independent behavior, distance is an automatic. I use a mishmash of other trainer's methods. I use xpens and guide wires.

First thing that is quite important, and I will not be going over it in this lecture, is before I start training anything.... I have a confident, thinking, and willing partner. These things are all started the day I get my pups. Some day I am going to log my daily interactions with my pups ☺ This doesn't mean I am "training" something every day.... I do believe people over train. So much of what I am wanting from my pup comes from what I teach during "SpotBox".

Another thing that I feel is important is I don't train for speed. In other words, I don't push my dogs so hard they are in danger of hurting themselves in the weaves. Agility is something I want them to be able to do for years. I hate slamming of shoulders, getting hips tangled, or pushing so hard they break poles. In the end of my training, my dogs give me everything they have in a safe manner.

Equipment I use:

I start out with just using a set of 6 weave poles. During the learning phase I want to do several reps so I keep it at 6 to keep the wear and tear down on their bodies. I do move to a set of 12 probably around the beginning of week #2.

I use 2 foot high xpens. I take the 8 panel ones and take the door and 1 panel off that leaves me with 6 2 foot by 2 foot panels all still connected. You need two of these to begin the training.

I use guide wires. There are black plastic ones from Clean Run that work well.

I also use 2 hoops, one before the weaves and one after the weaves.

Process:

A few times, and I mean few, when before the pup is old enough to push on weave pole training I will put my xpens on a set of six and just let the pup find her way thru to the end for a reward. I am not luring I am just asking for some thought processing on giving me the behavior I am looking for. By the time I do this the pup has already learned to think through things for me. I may do this once up and back then leave it alone for a month then do it again.

Once I feel the dog is old enough, and physically and mentally ready to handle weave pole training, I sit and look at my calendar. I pick a day to start that I am home and have the time for 2 weeks to just concentrate on weave pole training. I feel this is why so many dogs struggle because folks use training aids WAY too long, then the dog doesn't understand weaving without those aids.... I did it with my first dog!!

Now I have a day picked and a dog ready to learn weaves. I am committed and have a plan!

Treats and rewards: this depends on the dog. I usually always have treats on me no matter the dog. I will use a toy to target if the dog is keen on that. I will use a target with treats if the dog is keen on that.

I have worked with dogs that are both treat and toy motivated, some just toys, and 1 that didn't care anything about toys or treats..... she only worked because she was working for me. And she pushed me outside my box which was good! I wondered how the heck am I ever going to get this dog to work distance. PRAISE!!! She loved to hear she was right. So the most important thing in my toolbox is my relationship with my dog. So many depend on treats and toys. I use them but my YES is the best thing any of my dogs can hear 😊

So give that YES right when they enter and reward with toys or treats after the last hoop. Targeting to something helps them drive away from the weaves. I also give them much praise after just so they know I am extremely happy with their performance.

Day 1: I put the xpens on a set of 6. I work my dog each way 3 or so times each way. 2 or 3 times a day. These are quick FUN sessions. When my dog enters correctly I give my reward marker which is YES!. If they miss I just say oops and ask them to try again. Once they figure out that YES means awesome they actually will pick up speed.

Day 2: If this goes really well on the first day I will add the 2 hoops maybe 10 feet from beginning and end of poles. Easy entrance. I also will put the guides on inside the xpens. So now you are doubled up with xpens and guides. I will do the same as day 1.

Day 3: Move the two hoops further out.... Maybe a few feet. I want my dog to learn to collect going in as well as extend and blast out of the last pole. If going well.... Make the entrance just a little harder.... But not much.

Day 4: You should be able to send dog hoop, weave, hoop, both sides with you at least 10 feet away. Really your dog shouldn't care where you are at this point. Remember you can use a target after the last hoop if your dog needs it to drive to. Move hoops to 20-21 feet today.

Day 5: Move hoops back to 10-12 feet. Start moving the xpens away from the poles. Just a few inches to start. Do your 2-3 reps. If they make a mistake just say oops try again. If they fail more than twice move that piece of the xpen back in. Get them successful and try to move them out again on the next session. Remember this is FUN FUN!! Don't get hard on them... make it so they can succeed, and they will get it!

Day 6: Move the hoops back again and keep messing with pulling pieces of the xpens away from the poles. These sessions might be a bit longer because you will get some failure and that is ok. Just make sure you are not over doing it and taking away the FUN of doing weaves.

Day 7: Move hoops to 20-21 feet. Same process.... Keep moving pieces of the xpen away from the poles.

Day 8: You should just about be where the xpens are over a foot from the poles and all the dog is seeing is the guide wires. Start messing with different entrances. Remember if the dog fails put an xpen back up to help them be right. Sometimes you may only need an xpen at the entrance if they keep missing it.

Day 9: Pull the hoops back in to 10-12 feet and start lowering your guides.

Day 10: Put hoops farther out, maybe different entrances.... Keep lowering guides.

Day 11: Hoops at 20-21 feet, guides should be almost to the ground. If dog needs help, for example the entry then pull that guide back up a bit. Help them be right.

Day 12: Really start working on different entrances and exits.

Day 13: Same thing as Day 12.

Day 14: Add the second set of 6. Put your dog thru them, see where they need help and either put a guide up or an xpen.

When working after this initial 2 weeks if I set weaves up I never let them fail more than 2 times. I will always go get a guide or an xpen to help them be right. Seems I just need to do this for one run thru, take them off and they got it.

Remember to always say yes on the Entry. That tells your dog they are perfect and awesome and keep going. An oops means they will try again!