

SKILL OF THE MONTH

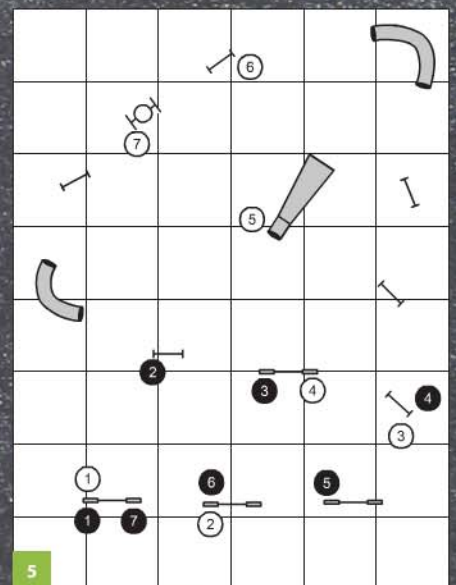
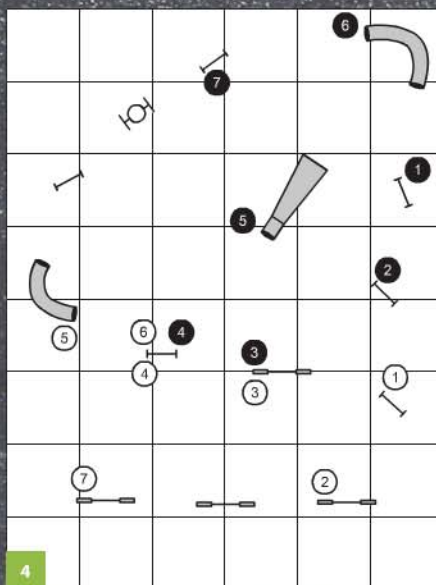
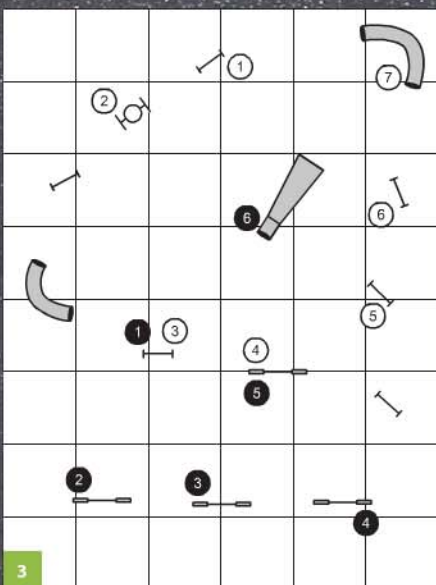
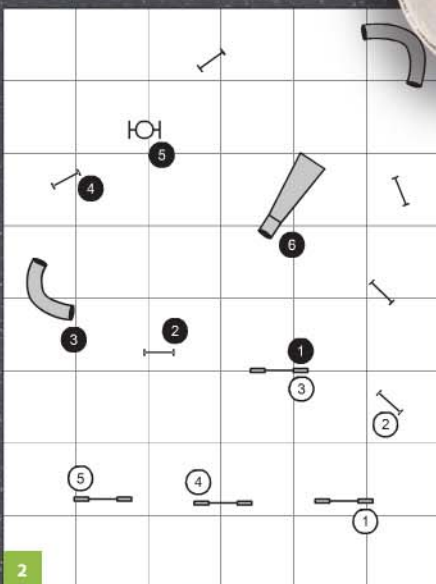
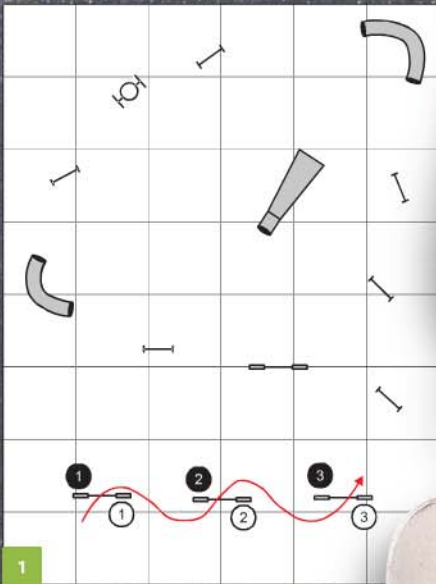
BY KAREN HOLIK

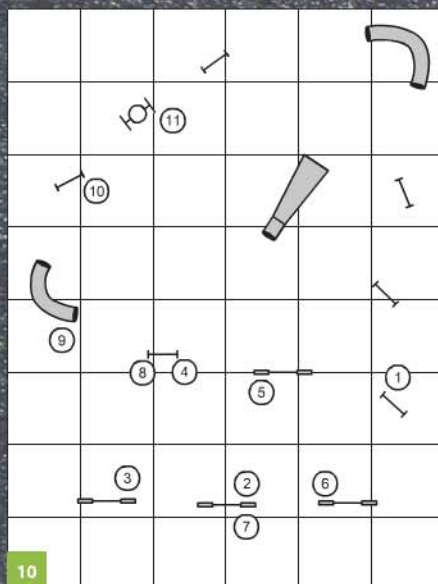
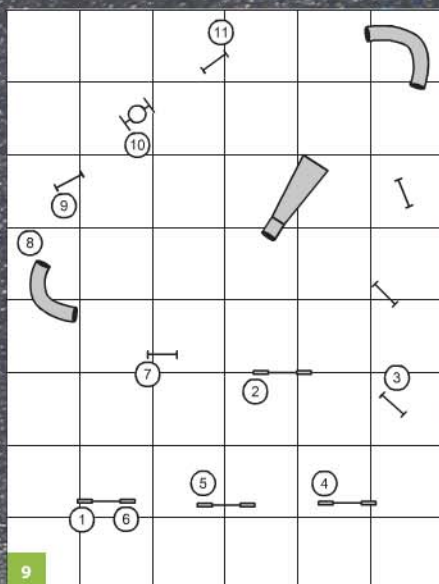
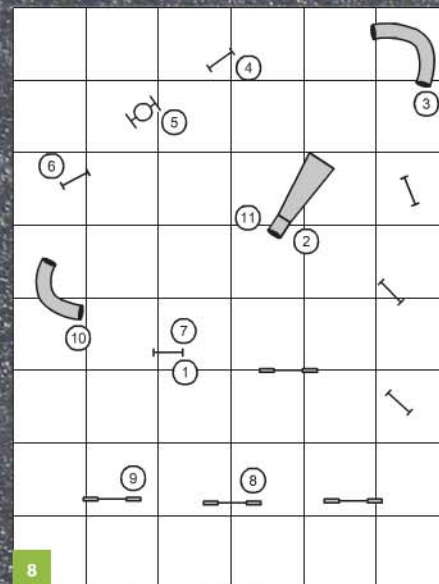
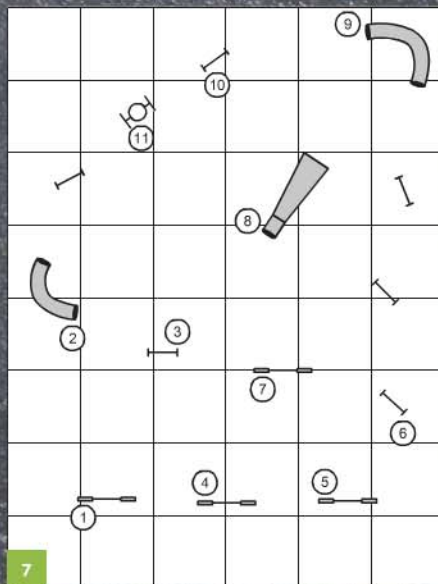
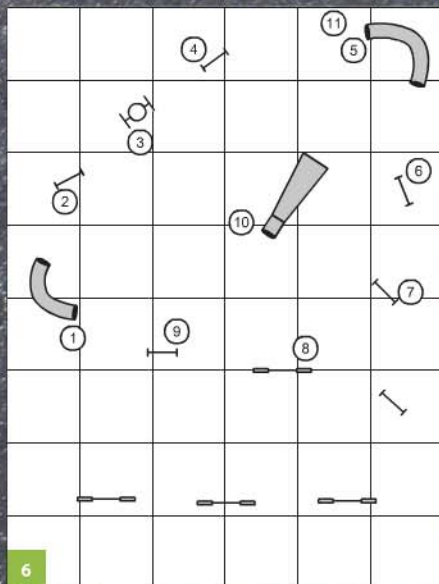
This month's exercises focus on threadles. A threadle is a line of jumps or obstacles taken in the same direction as shown in **Figure 1**. The dog must take the first, second, and possibly a third obstacle in the same direction. This means that the handler must "threadle" or "pull the dog through" the gap between the two obstacles. When practicing the threadle in **Figure 1**, try the sequence from behind your dog, in front of your dog, and running with your dog on both your left and right. Sometimes on course you will be able to lead out or get ahead of the dog in the threadle, and other times you will get caught behind it.

Threadles are popular in courses in some venues, while in others they are not allowed. I believe threadles should be practiced along with serpentines since the dog is doing the exact opposite in each handling maneuver. If I want my dog to do a line of jumps in a serpentine (see CR February 2008, "Skill of the Month"), my handling cue has to be significantly different than if I want him to threadle through the same line of jumps.

You, the handler, must be certain to let your dog know *before* he commits to the first jump in a serpentine or a threadle if he is coming between the jumps (threadle) or going to the other side of the jump (serpentine). Even if you don't see a lot of threadles on course, your serpentine handling should improve if you incorporate threadle training into your course work. Threadles are not always in a straight line and not always three jumps in a row. They can consist of any obstacles and they are rarely seen in a straight line.

The exercises in **Figures 2 through 5** include jumps that are angled slightly to make the threadles a little more difficult. The exercises in **Figures 6 through 18** contain more threadle handling.





Threadles can be very demotivating for the dog since they don't involve a lot of forward motion. So remember to reward often, keep it fun, and stop training or move on to another activity before the dog has decided he's had enough. 🐾

Karen Holik, involved in agility for over 15 years as a competitor and a USDAA and AKC judge, has competed in the finals of the USDAA World Championships many times with all her dogs: two Shelties, a Border Collie, and an All-American. Her youngest dog, ADCH-MACH2 Triune's Feelin' Hot Hot Hot, a.k.a. Sizzle, is a three-time champion at the USDAA World Championships and a member of the AKC/USA World Team in 2003, 2005, 2006, and 2007. Karen offers private lessons and seminars; contact her at oncourseagility@comcast.net.