

KiwiDogAgilty

The **ABCs** of competing in agility

A Avoid boredom. Keep training sessions interesting and enjoyable for your dog and for yourself!

B What to bring to a competition – the list can be long but essentials include food and drink for you and your dog, something soft to sit/lie on for you both and poobags!

C Consistency is the key. Train like you compete and compete like you train. Use the same verbals and body language cues all the time and your dog will know exactly what you mean.

I Independent performance is an asset. If your dog can be trusted to get the weaves and run over the contact obstacles and get the contacts then you will have the confidence to move away towards the next (tricky) part of the course.



D Is for Dogwalk, Aframe, crossover and seesaw – these are the contact obstacles and they all have a 1m long area that the dog must touch. Ensure your training emphasise this as the most important/special are for your dog – don't make them fear it!

E Energy is important. Even after a long day at work ensure you put the energy into exercising and training your dog. As you get into it you will feel so much better!

F Agility should be fun for you and dog. If you are not having fun you are not doing it right! Surround yourself with people who make you happy, and use training methods that make you feel good and make your dog smile!

H Handling moves are what gives your dog the clues to run a course correctly. These include front cross, back cross, blind cross etc. Learn them all and you will have a toolbox full of methods to use on courses.

G I S FOR Game. Treat agility like a game you play with your dog.

J Jumping is one of the most important skills for a dog to know in agility as there are always multiple jumps in a course. Although dogs do know how to clear obstacles it is an advantage to follow a training programme to ensure they have the confidence to tackle any sort of jump combination they are faced with.

K Know the rules. Read the regulations and ask questions. Knowing how the sport works will ensure you get the most out of it.

L Learning never ends, there is always something new to try. It is amazing how judges keep coming up with different combination of obstacles, and how training methods keep improving.

M Muscles are essential in agility. Your dog should be fit and lean. Using warm-ups and stretches and warm-downs will also ensure he is less likely to suffer injuries.

N Make notes so you know what you and your dog are good at and what you need to practice more. Keep records of your metres/second rate and other stats so that you know if you are on the improve.

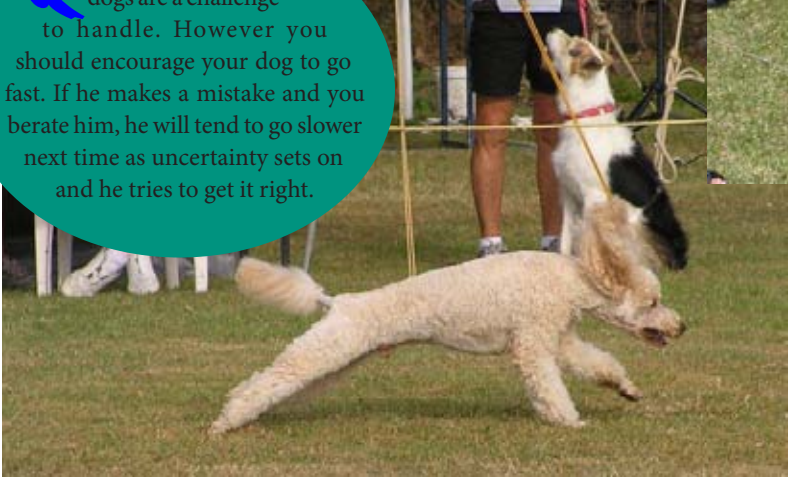
Obstacle focus needs to be balanced with handler focus. Both have their uses and you should train your dog so that he can see when there is a straight line of obstacles he should power over, and when there is a sharp turn and he should be paying attention to you.

Penalties in agility include refusals and faults which results from incorrect performances in the ring. The biggest penalty is a disqualification. Some dogs might also get time faults for going slower than the Standard course time set by the judge.

V is for Volunteers. They are essential at agility events as with anything else. Even doing something as easy as putting up a fallen pole can lighten someone else's workload for the day.



Quick dogs are a challenge to handle. However you should encourage your dog to go fast. If he makes a mistake and you berate him, he will tend to go slower next time as uncertainty sets on and he tries to get it right.



Weaving is a skill that dogs do not naturally know how to do. Start teaching it at about 12 month and be sure you train your dog to enter from all angles.

Xe be a good example to others. Treat the dog and the people around you nicely. Surround yourself with people who make you smile. Do the best you can and never dwell on mistakes.

Reward your dog lots! You should have a variety of things that you reward him with, different types of food as well as toys that you throw or tug with, toys that are soft and squeaky.

Your dog is a product of its breeding and your training. If your dog gets it wrong on a course you can also add in your handling!!

Self-control at the start of a course is essential to a good run. A lead-out is often necessary to ensure you get through a tricky part at the start of a course, and a dog that is crazy at the start is more likely to make mistakes rather than one that is perfectly prepared.

Z is where to go with your car before setting out to a competition, and the most likely thing to happen at the end of an agility competition – lots of zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!!

These ABCs produced by Karen de Wit.

Timing is important in agility. You should turn up at the grounds in plenty of time to get a good spot, and toilet your dog. You should walk the course in the allotted time and be ready to run your dog when it is your turn.

Use toys and treats in training. Toys are great for building speed and independence; treats are great for more precise behaviours and creating handler focus.



For up to date information on NZ Agility go to the website www.dogagility.org.nz

NZ AGILITY
NZKC Agility Committee