

Flat and Circle Work

Circle work has many benefits

Your dog will learn to:

- ★ Enjoy running with you and responding to your physical cues
- ★ Run along both your left and right sides, not forging ahead or drifting wide
- ★ Turn tightly to your body (and later around a jump stanchion)
- ★ Interpret body language such as acceleration and deceleration
- ★ Keep driving straight forward unless you give specific physical signals such as shoulder turns (to redirect the dog after an obstacle) and arm changes (front crosses and threadles/pull throughs)
- ★ Not cut in front of you
- ★ Not cross behind you (blind crossing)
- ★ Not practice herding behaviors such as flanking (moving laterally away from you), nipping, barking or spinning

Let's get started

We'll begin with teaching your dogs to run the "outside circle"

1. Choose a reward your dog finds very motivating. This can be a tug toy or treats
2. Start with your dog on your left (you will repeat these excursions on your right later). Move in a clockwise direction. Ask your dog to hand target your left hand (this assumes you have taught this foundation skill previously) by stepping back with your left leg and placing your left hand, palm outward next to your leg for your dog to touch. When your dog touched your hand say "Yes" and step forward one or two steps, rewarding your dog when he catches up with you. From this point forward, you will "pump run" keeping both arms up and your hands in fists
3. Be sure to reward your dog close to the side he is on. Do not allow your dog to cross in front of you to grab a toy from your opposite hand. If you do, you will be teaching your dog that it is okay to cut in front of you.
4. Start moving in a very small circle (not much more than a step or two), generously rewarding your dog for staying at your side.
5. Keep your sessions short. Use 10 treats on the left (or 10 brief tugging sessions), release your dog and take a break for a couple minutes.
6. Repeat steps 2-5, starting on the right this time, moving in a counter-clockwise direction

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7. Gradually increase the size of your circle and the number of steps you take between each reward
8. Increase your pace so that you are eventually trotting or running a large circle
9. Accelerate hard and reward your dog for accelerating and catching up to you
10. Decelerate and reward your dog for checking his stride and staying next to you instead of driving past you. If he does pass you, withhold the reward and start over
- 11.*Decelerate and stop and reward your dog for not driving past where you stopped

Be sure to practice 7-11 on both the right and left sides, moving clockwise and counter-clockwise respectively

Once your dog masters the basics, teach him to Front Cross:

1. Start your dog on the left and run a straight line, but practice the following footwork and before trying it with your dog.
2. To execute the front cross with your invisible dog on your left, hold your reward in your right hand. Then with your invisible dog on your left, pull back your left shoulder and turn your right shoulder in towards your dog, pivoting in towards him. Bring your right arm across your body as you turn towards him (this is the beginning of teaching your dog to respond to an arm change). Drive out of the turn by taking a step in the new direction. Reward your dog when catches up to you on your right. If your dog tries to cross behind you, pivot to your right, back toward your dog, interrupt him and start over. Now try it with your real dog! And don't forget to practice both sides

To teach inside circles" start with your dog on a leash so you can better control his position. Repeat all the above steps with your dog on the left and running counter-clockwise and on the right running clockwise. Inside circle work is more difficult, so remember to raise your rate of reinforcement and use your leash until your dog understands the game