

Statement on

Course Design Guidelines

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Preface

These course design guidelines are the result of many years of dedicated work by USDAA course reviewers and judge instructors. While we all felt that such guidelines were long needed to assure qualitative standards were being met, we equally shared the concern that such guidelines must be carefully presented so that the creative element in course design would not be lost, as Dog Agility is a spectator sport, and creativity is a key component in course design that helps to keep the sport exciting for all concerned. As a result, this document is issued as a USDAA Policy Statement for “Course Design **Guidelines**” rather than “**Rules** for Course Design”.

In that vein, these Guidelines are intended to be dynamic, with periodic shifts and changes over time. It is NOT expected that all aspects of these Guidelines be implemented on every course, but rather these Guidelines present how various ideas can be utilized so that they conform to the USDAA standards for competition and safety. In practice, should any of the parameters of these Guidelines seem to unnecessarily limit creativity or not adequately address safety issues, please contact the USDAA office with your comments.

In presenting these Guidelines, it is our desire that creativity be the starting point in any course design and that the Guideline principles be found present within the course elements. Judges should engage in constructive dialog with course reviewers in the normal course of preparation for an event, seeking balance and flexibility in achieving the goals for competition.

Further, another important aspect of these guidelines is to provide guidance to training instructors and competitors as to the expectations in performance at the various levels and classes of competition at USDAA events. With so many newcomers to the USDAA venue each year, understanding these Guidelines should prove beneficial in formulating sound and realistic training curriculum in order to prepare for competition at each level, leading to an enjoyable experience in eventing and enabling a greater chance for success in competition.

I would like to thank Tim Laubach, David Hanson and Janet Gauntt for their extensive contribution, devotion and commitment to this project, as well as to our course reviewers – Stuart Mah, Scott Chamberlain, Mark Wirant and Paul Stolzenburg for their feedback during the course of development.

Kenneth Tatsch
USDAA President

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1 USDAA®'s Philosophy

Dog Agility is a competitive sport that challenges a competitor in the application of their skills as a trainer and handler in competing with dogs on an obstacle course that demonstrates the physical dynamics of agility in dogs for which this sport was developed.

These physical dynamics are –

- Jumping and scaling ability
- Suppleness of body
- Quickness and speed
- Strength and confidence

Course designs should present the essence of the sport in a manner that is appealing to spectators, while enabling the most skillful competitors to rise to the top.

The guidelines and criteria expressed in this Policy Statement have been developed to –

- ensure each course can be judged fairly for all types of dogs,
- ensure each course can be performed safely by all types of dogs,
- encourage creativity on the part of the designer, and
- ensure that the design complies with requirements of the rules and regulations for a particular class and level,
- ensure that each course has the appropriate challenges and design elements that meet the level of difficulty consistent with the rules and regulations for a particular class and level

Regardless of level, the overall effect of a course design should promote what appears to be a fluid, free-style performance.

“Free-style” handling describes a handler and dog working in synchronization with each other on the course. The handler and dog freely move around such that each work their most efficient course while the handler communicates direction to the dog through body language, voice and hand signals.

At odds with this design philosophy are successive course design elements that require or encourage the use of excessive control. That is to say - a course should not be so loaded with technical elements or redundant challenges that it creates an excessively stressful round or feeling of drudgery, when the appropriate degree of training and handling for the level have been reasonably employed.

2 Glossary

The following terms are used throughout this policy statement and in the course reviewing process.

- **“Masters Level Challenge”** – course design elements that apply to Masters, Performance Level 3, Grand Prix of Dog Agility[®], Performance National Standard[®], Dog Agility Masters[®], and Performance Versatility Pairs[®] classes.
- **“Advanced Level Challenge”** – course design elements that apply to Advanced and Performance Level 2 classes.
- **“Starters Level Challenge”** – course design elements that apply to Starters and Performance Level 1 classes.
- **“Path”** – a line of travel about the course. Examples are the judging path, the handler path, and the dog path.
- **“Response Control”** – a type of handler control measured by the time delay between handler command and dog response; this type of control is tested in an element in the course where a quick response or extended response may be required to successfully perform a maneuver.
- **“Directional Control”** – a type of handler control causing a change in direction of the dog path such that the dog must not continue straight forward, but must change direction to stay on course. (When this term is used in the context of a Gamblers joker, it assumes the additional consideration that the change of path veers away from the handler’s position.)
- **“Lead Out”** – a handler action that positions them ahead of their dog. There is a presumed advantage for a handler who can lead out over a handler who cannot.
- **“Back to Back”** – an immediate change of direction such that an obstacle which was just performed is performed again in the opposite direction.
- **“Conflict Point”** – a point in the judging path that conflicts with the expected dog or handler path.
- **“Partial E-timing”** – a combination of manual and electronic timing. For example, a manual start & electronic finish, or vice versa, as in gamblers.
- **“At Speed”** – this term describes a dog that is moving (running) forward with motivation. By contrast, dogs leaving the start line or Table, or exiting from a reduced speed obstacle (Weave Poles, A-Frame, Dog Walk, See-Saw) are not yet at speed.
- **“Cone of Approach”** – an imaginary ‘cone’ shaped area in front of an obstacle; the cone is used as a guideline to determine that the obstacle can be safely performed by a dog at speed if the natural dog path takes the dog into the cone.
- **“Open Approach”** – a perpendicular to mildly angled approach to the next obstacle in sequence.

- “Crossing Pattern” –the positioning of 3 or more obstacles in a pattern such that the course flow enters and exits this group of obstacles at least once (the effect is that the dog path may appear to “cross” itself). A crossing pattern is often used to create Wrong Course Potential and can be used to increase the difficulty level by combining this design element with other challenge types **Figure 1** demonstrates a variety of potential dog paths resulting from the use of a Crossing Pattern containing only 3 obstacles

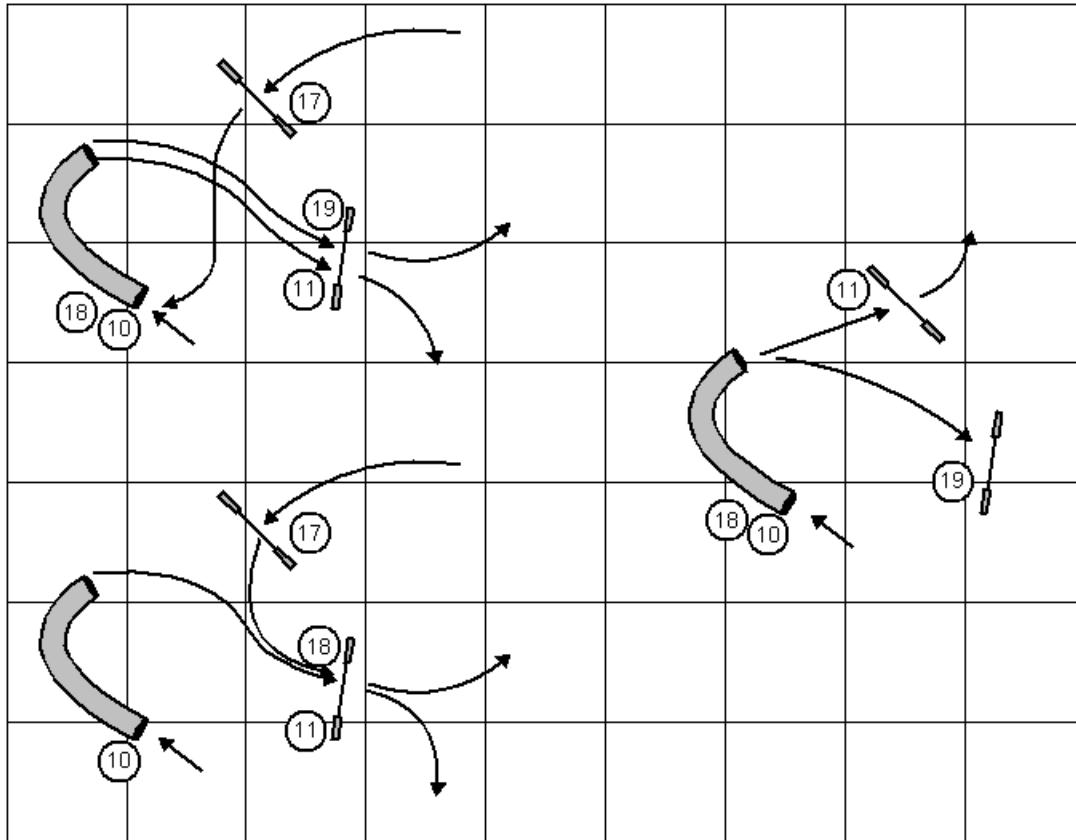


Figure 1 Crossing Patterns

- “Divergent Lines” – a design element where the efficient handler path diverges and converges from the dog path and may cross the dog path at a later point (i.e., increasing and/or decreasing distance between handler and dog as shown in **Figure 2**).

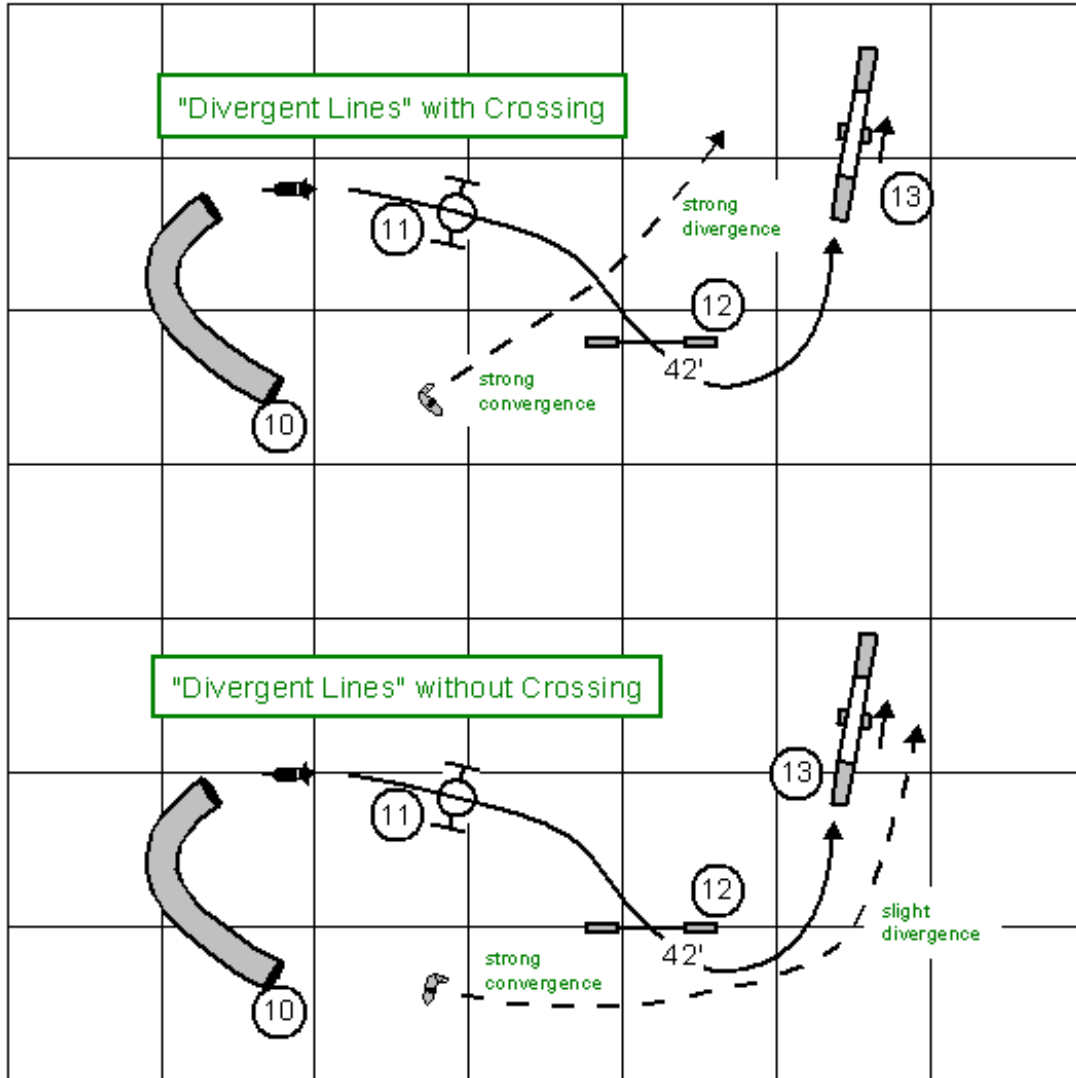


Figure 2 Divergent Lines

3 The Elements of Course Design

A successful course design must satisfy several criteria in order to pass the review process (see Appendix A). These criteria are:

- Basic Criteria
- Judgability Criteria
- Timing Criteria
- Safety Criteria

Other non-essential criteria such as efficiency and design philosophy are also discussed in this section.

3.1 Basic Criteria

Course designs must comply both with the Rules and Regulations and with the goals of the USDAA design philosophy in the areas of:

- obstacle performance
- fluidity
- handling maneuvers
- speed
- course challenges

3.1.1 *Obstacle Performance*

Obstacles shall be arranged in a design such that each obstacle can be performed both safely and fault-free as defined in Chapters 3 through 6 of the Regulations.

3.1.1.1 **Courses shall contain the correct number of obstacles**

The design must comply with the minimum and maximum number of obstacles for the class and level as defined in the Regulations or tournament rules for that class. For example, Starters level Standard & Jumpers courses require no less than 14 and no more than 16 obstacles to be performed. Advanced and Masters level courses require 17 through 20 obstacles.

3.1.1.2 **Courses shall contain the correct type of obstacles**

All required obstacles for the class as defined in the Regulations or tournament rules must be present in the design. For example, a Standard class must contain the three contact obstacles, a Pipe Tunnel, Collapsed Tunnel, a Tire Jump, a Table, Weave Poles (minimum of 10), and a Spread Hurdle. Winged and Non-Winged Jumps make up the balance of the obstacles.

3.1.1.2 continued

The Regulations or tournaments rules may also restrict what obstacles may be used in a design. For example, a Standard class may not require more than 4 contact obstacles to be performed, a Starter Snooker class may not require more than 3 red jumps to be performed, and a Grand Prix course may not contain a Table.

3.1.1.3 Courses should not contain primarily non-faultable obstacles

The number of Tire Jumps and tunnels (of either type) taken in total should not exceed 5 in meeting the minimum obstacle requirement (i.e., 14 in Starters and 17 in Advanced and Masters), and shall not exceed 3 tunnels in Starters or 4 tunnels in Advanced and Masters on any titling course where there is a designated obstacle order.

3.1.1.4 The majority of jumps used in a design must be winged

Anything over 50% is considered a majority of jumps. Note that Tire Jumps and Long Jumps contribute to the count of the non-winged jumps.

3.1.2 Fluidity

An important part of the USDAA design philosophy is that regardless of level, the overall effect of a course design should promote what appears to be a fluid, free-style performance.

A course itself is said to be “fluid” when the expected dog path calls for forward progress at speed towards a majority of the obstacles on the course. To encourage fluidity, the normal approach distance for hurdle type obstacles throughout the majority of the course should average between 18’ to 22’.

3.1.3 Handling Maneuvers

Handlers are expected to perform actions to keep the dog on the correct dog path. These may include:

- body movement towards and away from obstacles
- handling language used to send the dog in a particular direction
- maneuverability around obstacles
- handler motion relative to dog motion

3.1.4 Speed

The rate of travel along the dog path must meet the requirements for the class level as defined in Chapters 3 through 6 of the Regulations or in the tournament rules. The design therefore should encourage this rate of travel.

3.1.5 Course Challenges

This section defines terms for technical elements used throughout this policy statement and the reviewing process to describe possible design challenges. Not all of these challenges will be appropriate for each level. Appropriate challenges are explained in further detail in **Section 4**.

- “Obstacle Discrimination” – the placement of two or more obstacles in close proximity such that to the dog either obstacle may appear to be the next correct obstacle.
- “Wrong Course Potential” – the placement of two or more obstacles such that either obstacle appears to be in flow, or the wrong obstacle appears to be in flow.
- “Change of Sides” – a sequence to be performed whereby the dog path changes direction and it would be advantageous for the handler to move from one side of the dog to the other while running. The resulting dog path, viewed from above often resembles the letter ‘S’.
- “Wrap” – the positioning of a single obstacle such that a dog must be directed around the exit plane of the obstacle immediately after performing it.
- “Closed Approach” – a moderate to highly angled approach to the next obstacle in sequence with the entry point to the obstacle in view, no matter how slight. Normally this shall mean that the dog approaches the front plane of the obstacle from an acute angle, but the approach side of the obstacle is not in question. **Figure 3** compares the range of approaches to a Wing Jump varying from Open Approaches (perpendicular to mild) and Closed Approaches (moderate to highly angled).

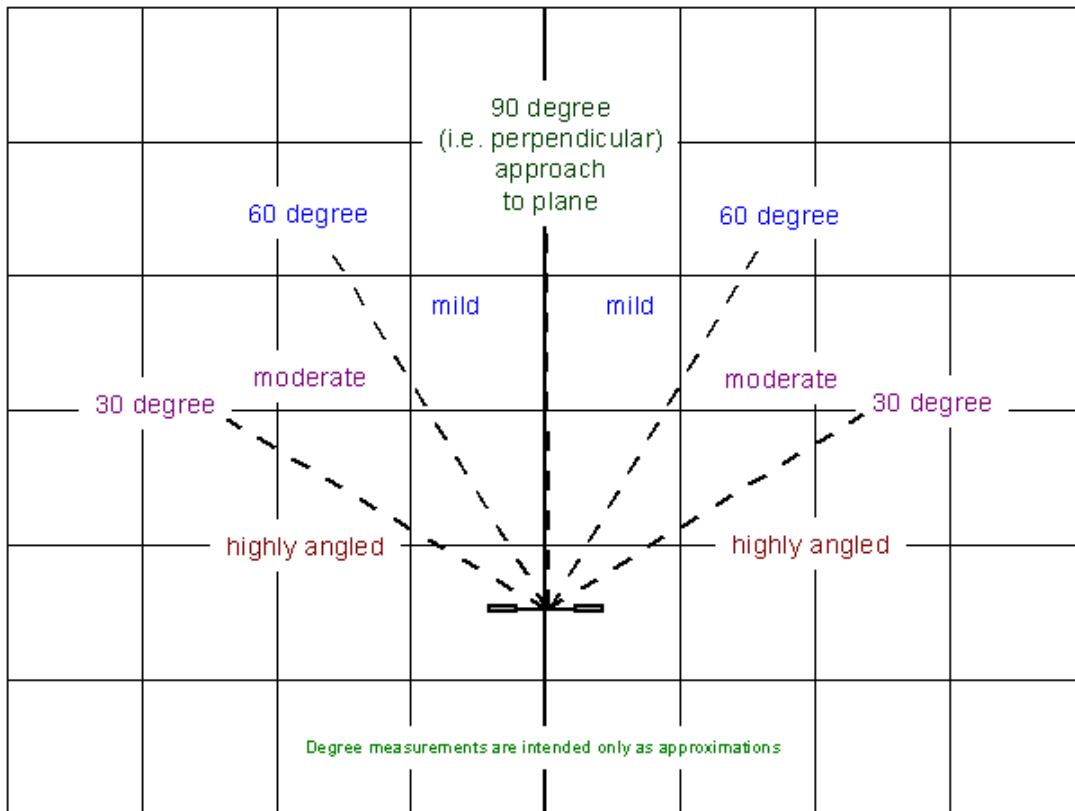


Figure 3 Open and Closed Approaches

- “Managed Approach” – obstacle placement such that the handler must send or escort the dog to a point that the front plane of obstacle comes into the dog’s view.
- “Spacing Variations” – The space between obstacles throughout the majority of the course should be in the range of 18’ to 22’. Unusually short or long approach distances outside of this range can create a challenge of their own both in the performance of individual obstacles, speed and in the timing and control of other challenge types.
- “Threadle” – also known as “pull-through” or “push-through”, this challenge is a type of wrap where an adjacent obstacle is in close proximity. The dog must then be directed around or between these obstacles in order to perform the next obstacle in sequence.
- “Serpentine” – a change of direction both before and after a single obstacle in a sequence.
- “Layering” – placement of an obstacle such that the handler path is separated from the dog’s path by the obstacle.
- “Refusal Potential” – A combination of obstacle placement and expected approach speed that may increase the risk of refusal. A Closed Approach to an obstacle is a typical characteristic that leads to increased Refusal Potential. These combined with design challenges involving Response Control, Wrong Course Potential or Obstacle Discrimination can further raise the level of difficulty of this form of challenge.
- “Runout Potential” – the positioning of an obstacle where the direction of approach from the previous obstacle must be controlled such that the dog path will not go past the runout plane.
- “Timing Sequences” – a sequence of the course where the handler must execute two or more commands or maneuvers in succession or concurrently, with correct timing of each individual maneuver being a key element in accomplishing the full sequence. An inherent characteristic is that the level of difficulty increases dramatically with speed, which often means a higher degree of “Response Control” is also required.
- “Handler Constraint” – the blockage of the direct handler path either through alignment of the obstacles or through definition of a handling line, as in the case of a Joker in the Gamblers class
- “Distance Challenge” – a sequence that requires handling at a distance or sending the dog on ahead of the handler while the handler is constrained by a Joker line.

3.2 Judgability Criteria

The criteria explained in this section apply to all course designs regardless of type and level.

3.2.1 Provide free movement about and close proximity to key obstacles

The judge must be able to move freely among the obstacles and be able to walk to areas to where he/she is in close proximity to “key” judging points for the contact zones, Weave Poles, Table, and Long Jump. Additionally, the design of the judging path should allow the judge to move to one side or the other of a handler within a stride or two in order to view a down on the Table or to see the contact zone when the handler is working close to their dog.

“Close proximity” means different distances for different obstacles. **Figure 4** through **Figure 7** demonstrate how these proximity guidelines can be satisfied for different obstacles and different judging paths.

Table 1 Proximity Guidelines

Obstacle	Proximity to Key Judging Point
See-Saw	within 24 feet
Long Jump	within 24 feet
Dog Walk	within 15 feet
A-Frame	within 15 feet
Table	within 15 feet for some portion of the Table count.
Weave Poles	within 30 feet

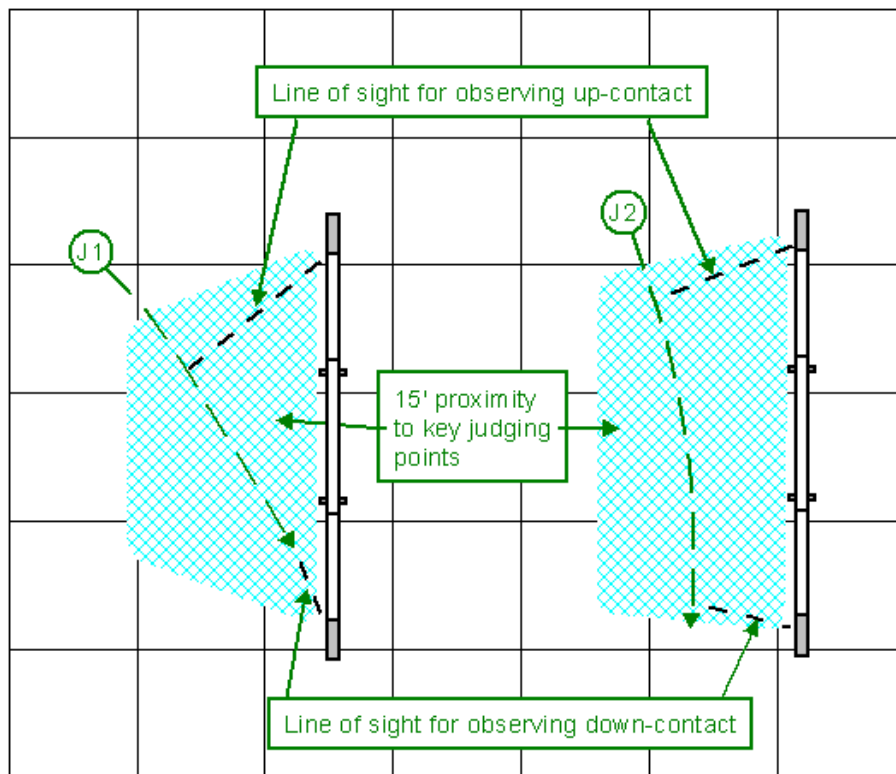


Figure 4 Proximity to Dog Walk for Different Judging Paths

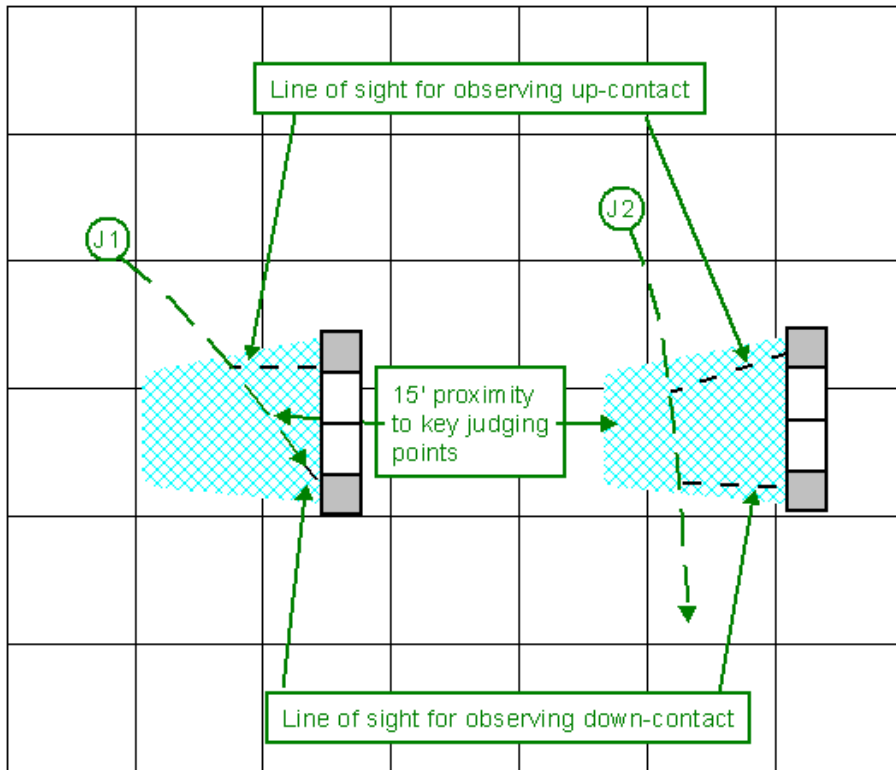


Figure 5 Proximity to A-Frame for Different Judging Paths

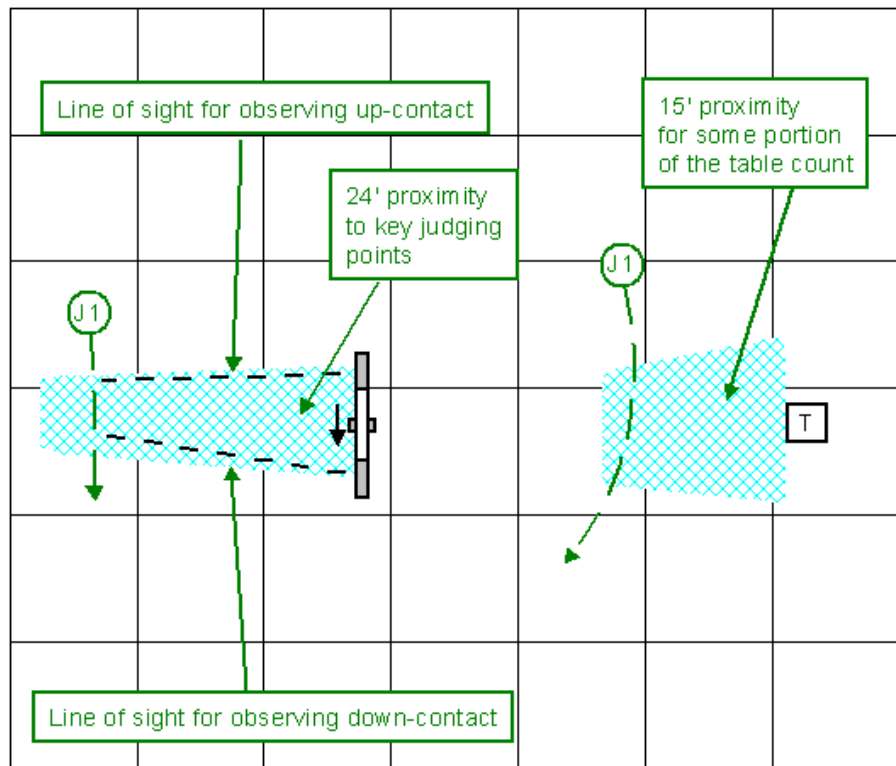


Figure 6 Proximity to See-Saw and Table

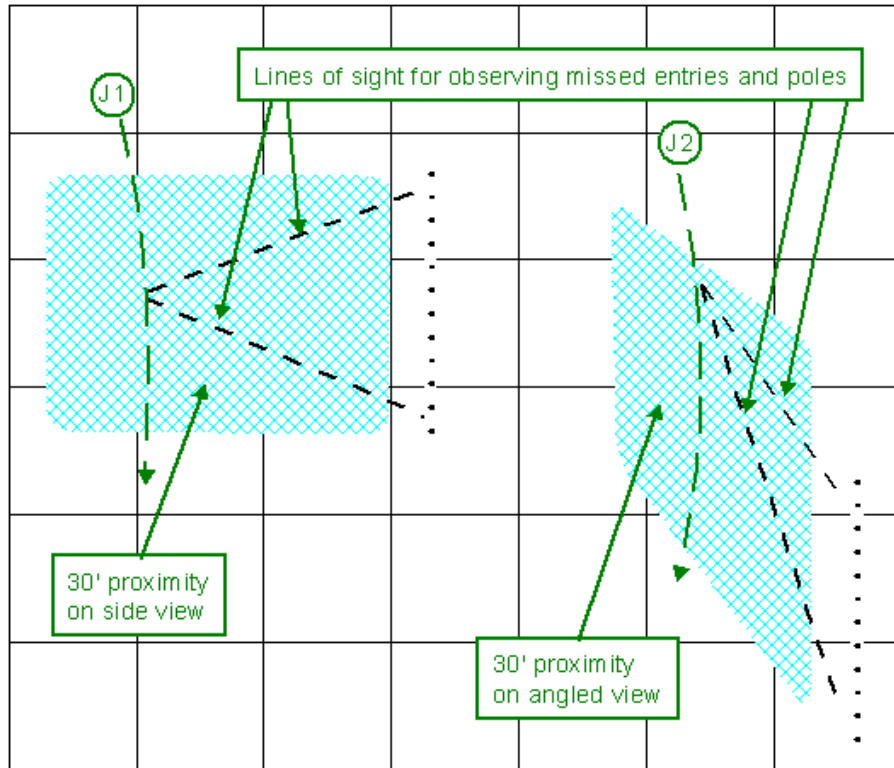


Figure 7 Proximity to Weave Poles for Different Judging Paths

3.2.2 Avoid Conflict Points between the judging path and the handler/dog path

The flow of the course should allow the judge to walk to their next judging position without stepping directly into the expected path of either the handler or dog. **Figure 8** shows an example where the judging paths 'J1' and 'J2' brings the judge directly into the handler/dog path. 'J3' is the first judging path alternative at which the judge *might* be able to stay out of the team's way, but does NOT satisfy the criteria of being in close proximity to the Dog Walk.

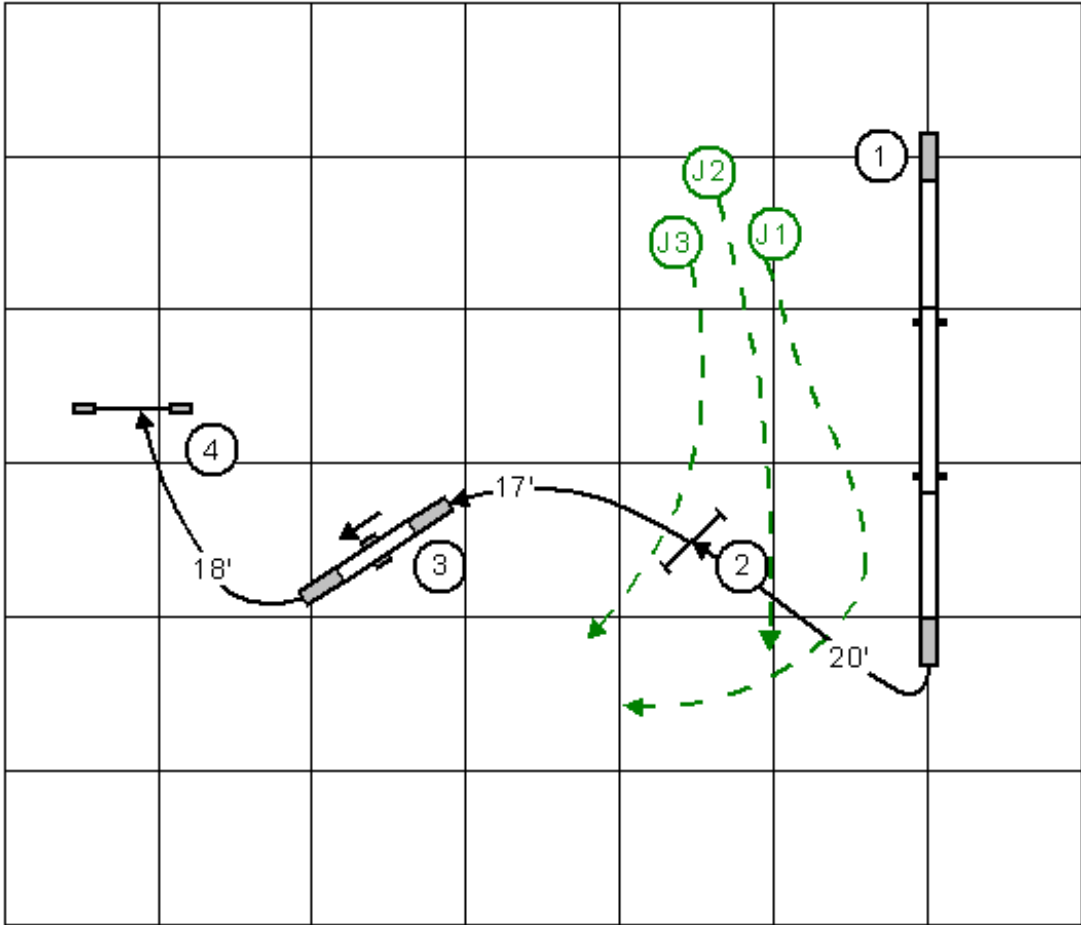


Figure 8 Example of Judge Interference with Handler and/or Dog

Figure 9 again shows a conflict point between the judging path and the dog path.

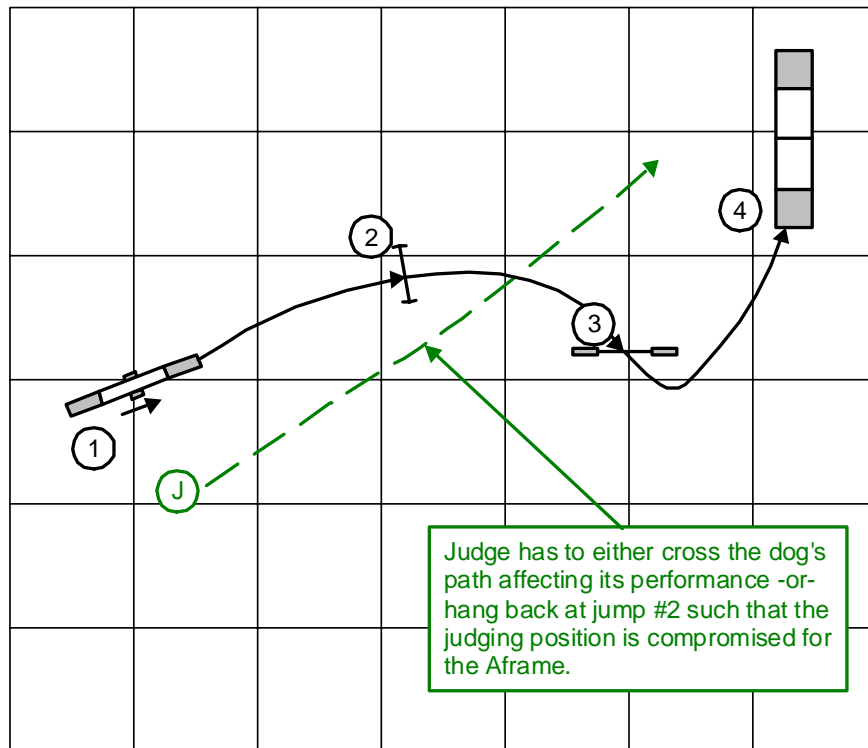


Figure 9 Judging Path Conflicts With Handler/Dog Path

3.2.3 *Provide appropriate sight lines to obstacles*

The planned judging path should provide a clear visual of: (1) the Tire Jump such that judge can tell if the dog jumps between the tire and its frame and (2) of the entrances to tunnels in those classes where refusals at the tunnels are judged (see **Figure 10**).

In addition, the judge should be at the appropriate angle to view runout lines at obstacles where the course design provides Runout Potential as a challenge. **Figure 11** shows a poor course design where the judge cannot be standing on or near the runout plane for jump #4 and still make a good judging position for A-Frame #7. Consider how this can be improved by swapping jump #6 and A-Frame #7.

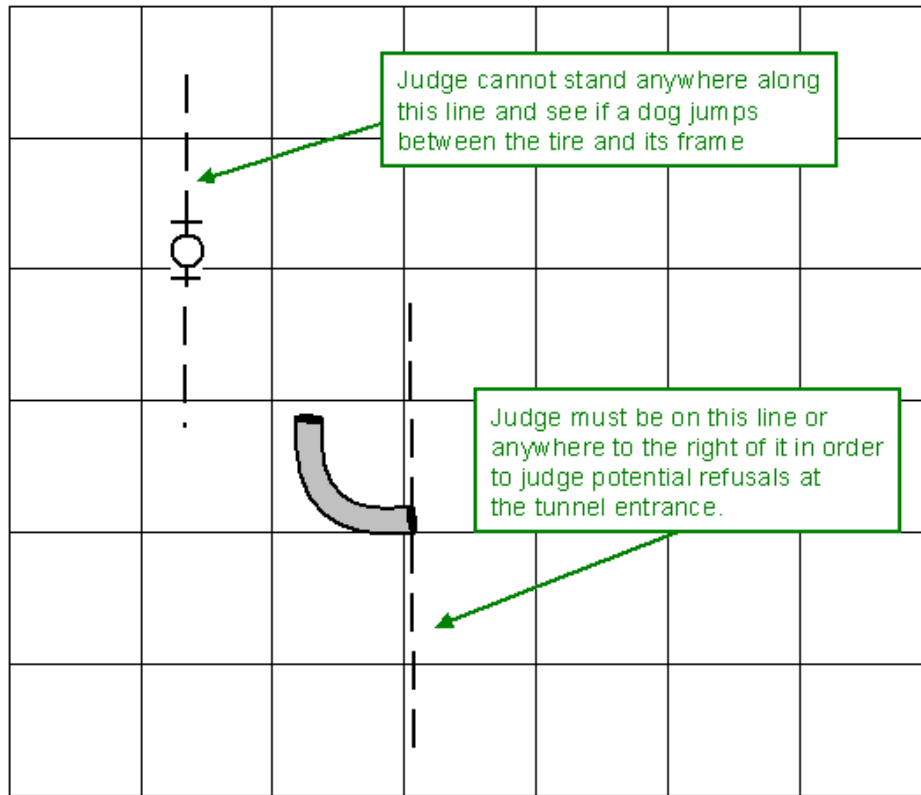


Figure 10 Judging Refusals at Tires and Tunnels

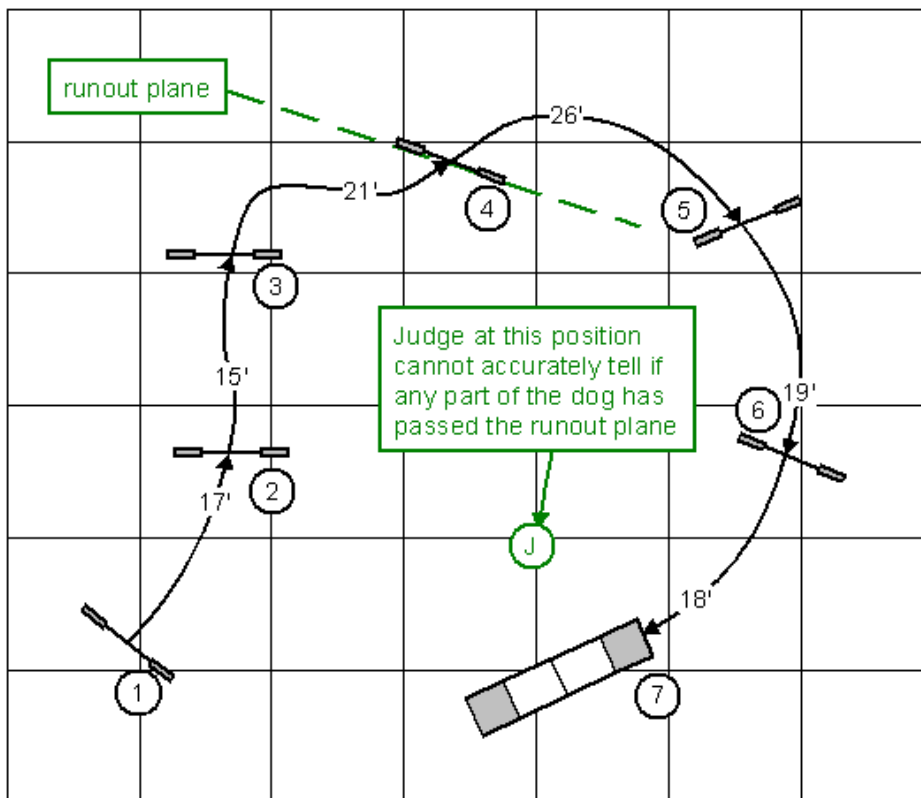


Figure 11 Line of Sight for Judging Potential Runouts

3.2.4 Provide unobstructed sight lines to major course challenges

The planned judging path should provide a clear view of obstacles (particularly tunnels and Contact Obstacles since they can't be seen through) where Wrong Course Potential is present. **Figure 12** shows an example where an off course at the A-Frame or tunnel is possible and for which a good judging path has not been selected. **Figure 13** shows one possible correction for this problem.

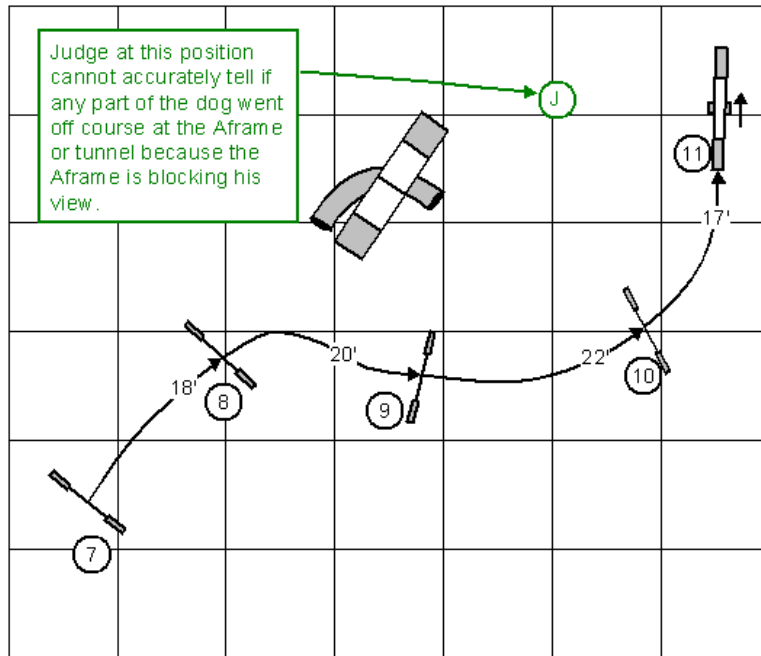


Figure 12 Obstructed Line of Sight Problem

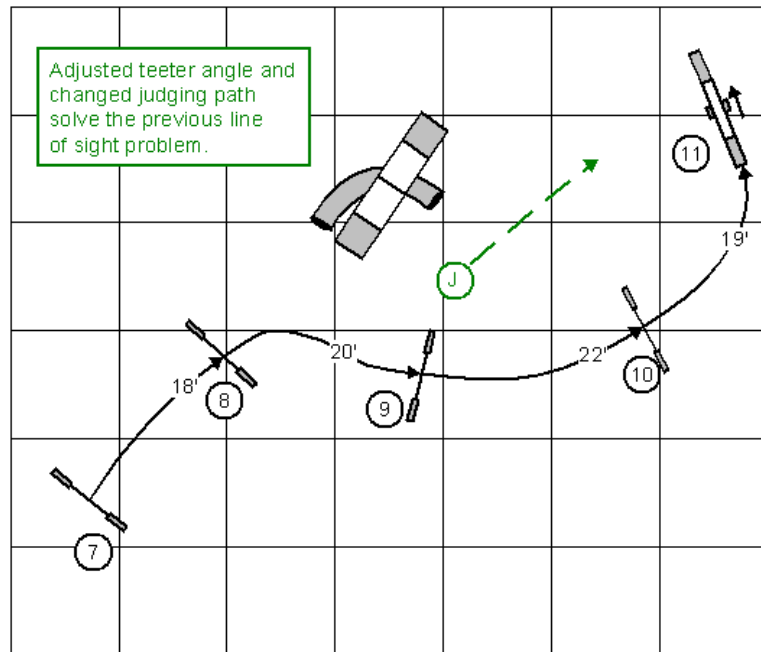


Figure 13 Obstructed Line of Sight Correction

3.3 Timing Criteria

3.3.1 Start and finish lines shall not be used as obstacles to be obtained

Lines shall be used solely as a means of measuring the course time from the first obstacle through the last obstacle. The dog's natural progress towards the first obstacle and past the last obstacle should result in the dog crossing the start/finish line whether it is manually or electronically timed. Distances greater than 8 feet for the start and 5 feet for the finish should be avoided.

For the gamblers and snooker class, at least one obstacle should comply with this start line guideline.

This guideline does not apply to the finish line on the snooker class or in a tournament gamblers class where the joker sequence or finish is undefined.

3.3.2 Start and finish lines shall allow for the accurate measurement of time

Start and finish lines should both allow for efficient ring administration and provide a clear sight line for the timer when electronic timing will not be available (either as planned when manual timing is to be used, or as a result of electronic clock failure).

Figure 14 shows an example where the course design will not allow for efficient ring administration should the electronic timing system fail.

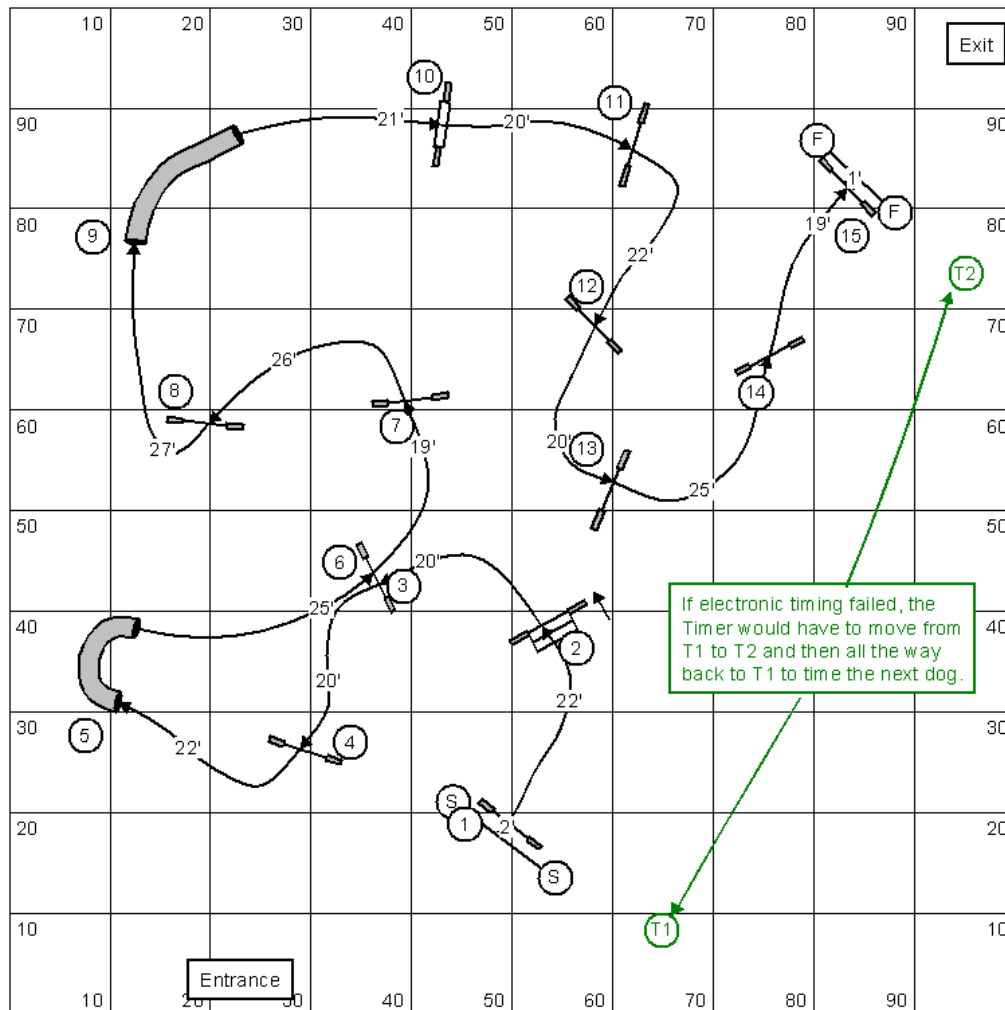


Figure 14 Poor Course Design in the Event of Electronic Timing Failure

In addition, when electronic timing is used, the following obstacle restrictions apply:

Table 2 E-timing Obstacle Restrictions

Acceptable first obstacles	Jumps of any type (except the Long Jump), Pipe Tunnels, Collapsed Tunnels
Acceptable final obstacles	Jumps of any type (except the Long Jump), Pipe Tunnels.

3.3.3 Use of electronic timing should not dictate challenges or create other limiting factors in creating course strategy

Use of a single starting obstacle to be taken in snooker and gamblers is strongly discouraged where the use and placement of that obstacle creates limitations in the direction and type of the next obstacle(s) to be performed. **Figure 15** through **Figure 17** show how electronic timing should and should not be used when designing a gamblers course.

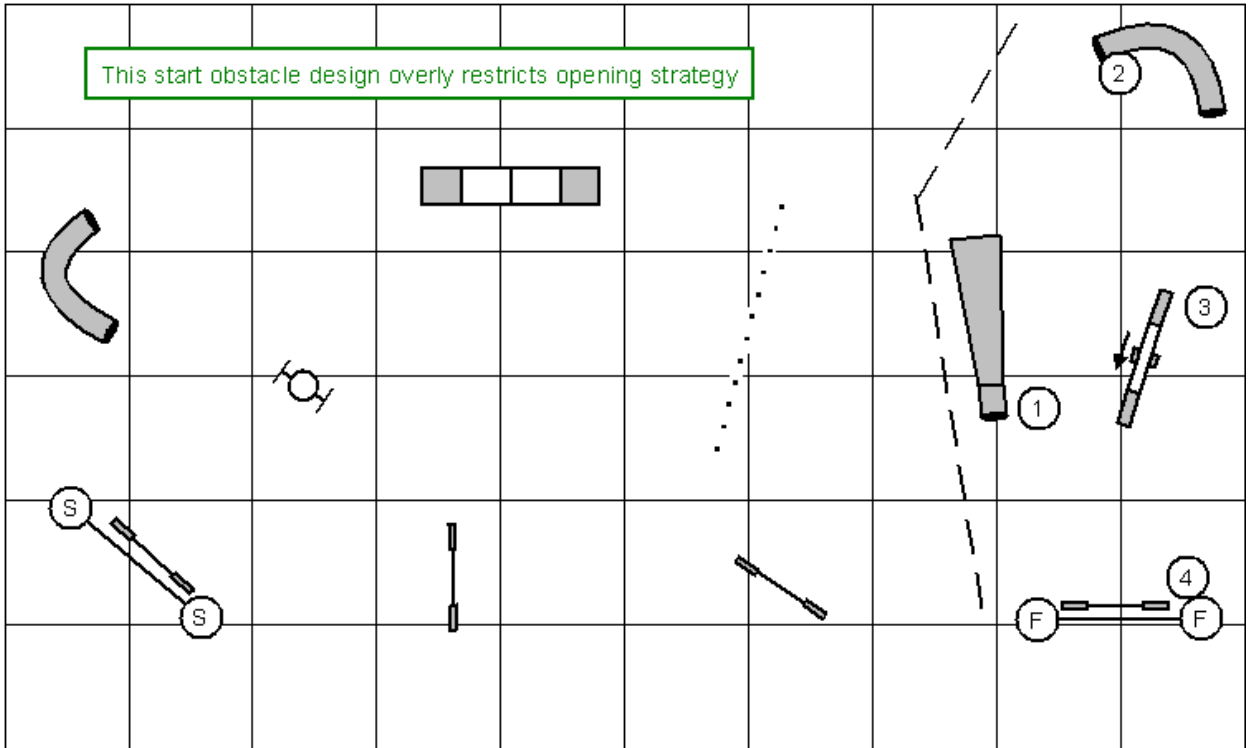


Figure 15 Overly Restricted Start Using E-Timing

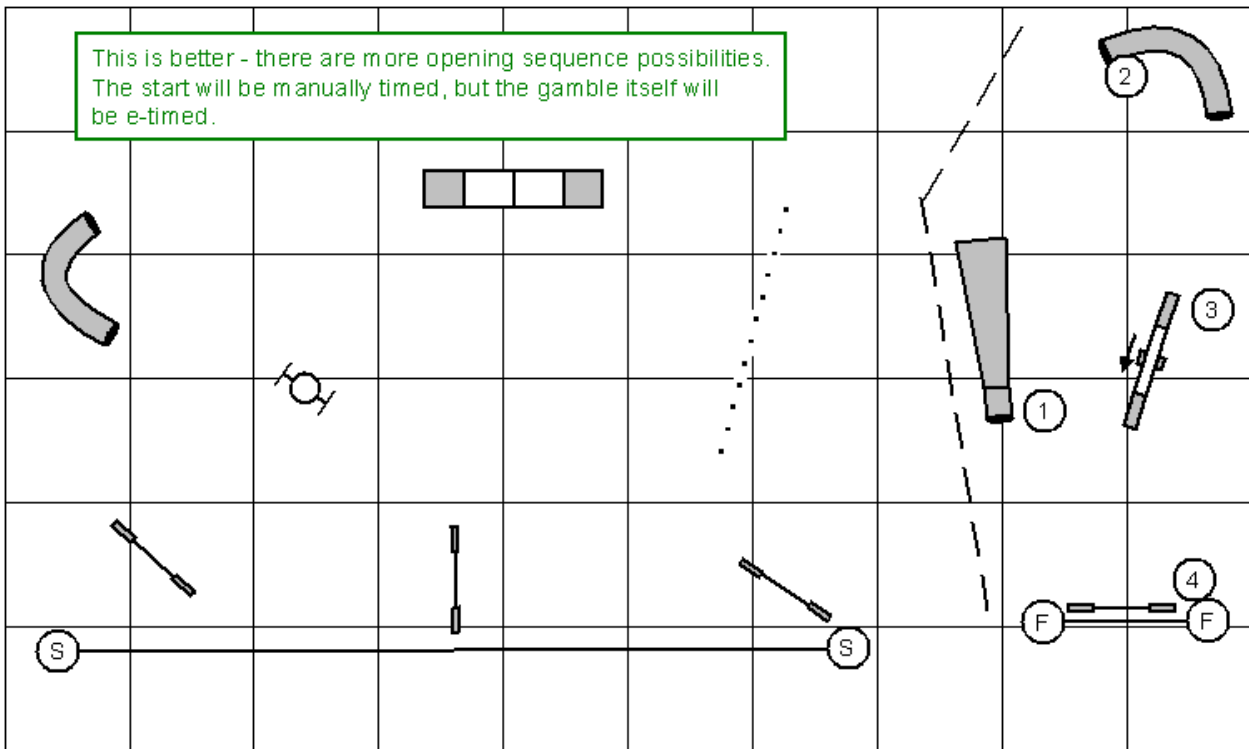


Figure 16 Unrestricted Start Using Partial E-Timing

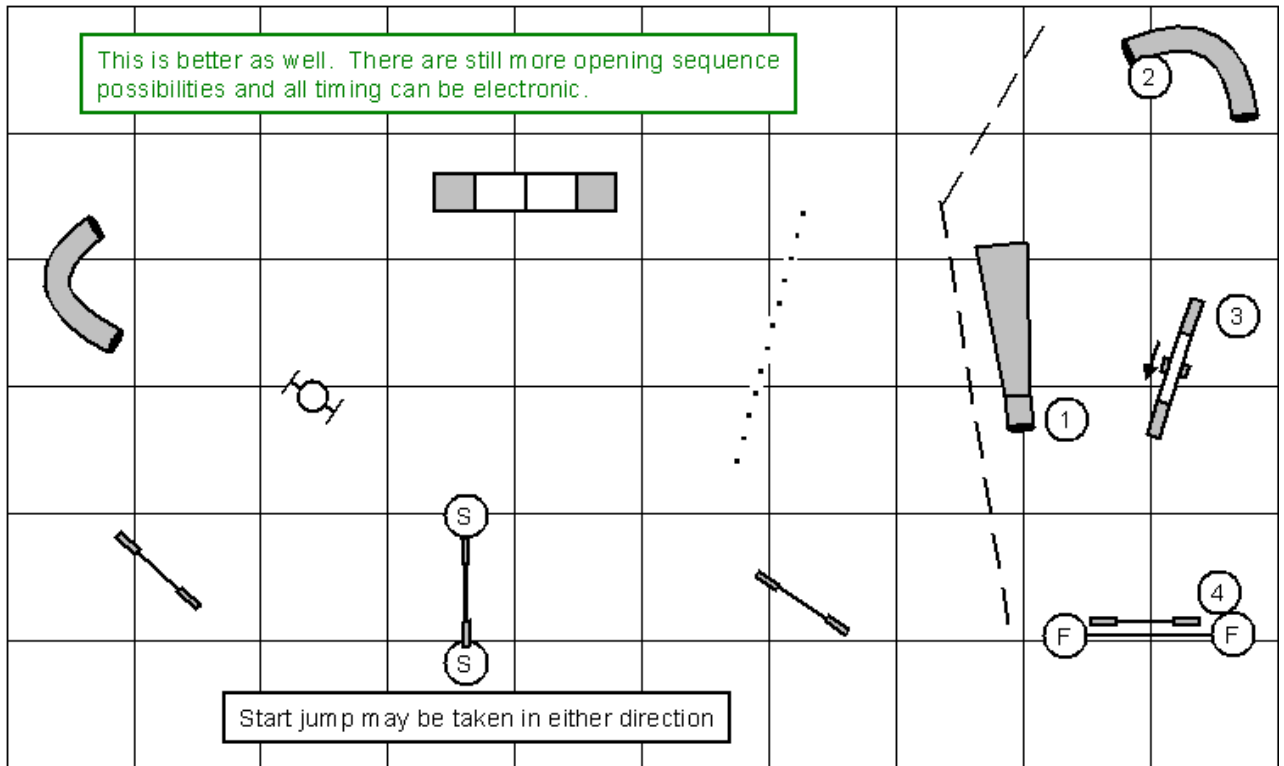


Figure 17 Acceptably Restricted Start Using E-Timing

3.4 Safety Criteria

At all times, safety considerations should be of utmost concern.

This includes, but is not limited to, the placement, utilization and orientation of obstacles on the course. When considering whether an obstacle is being used safely, consider:

- Angle and distance of approach
- Speed of approach
- Distance and speed to any immovable objects that the dog or handler's momentum may inadvertently carry them into. These may include portions of other obstacles or separate obstructions.

3.4.1 High speed, highly angled approaches to the A-Frame and See-Saw are not permitted

When a dog is moving at speed, the expected dog path should enter an approach area that is approximately perpendicular to the front plane of these obstacles. This 'cone of approach' is defined by a boundary of 45 degree angles (i.e. a 1 to 1 slope) that starts at the front plane of the obstacle and extends at least 6 feet into the approach area as shown in **Figure 18** and **Figure 19**.

The expected direction of approach, speed and opportunity for the handler to be in a position to direct the dog are all factors used to determine if the expected dog path will enter the cone of approach.

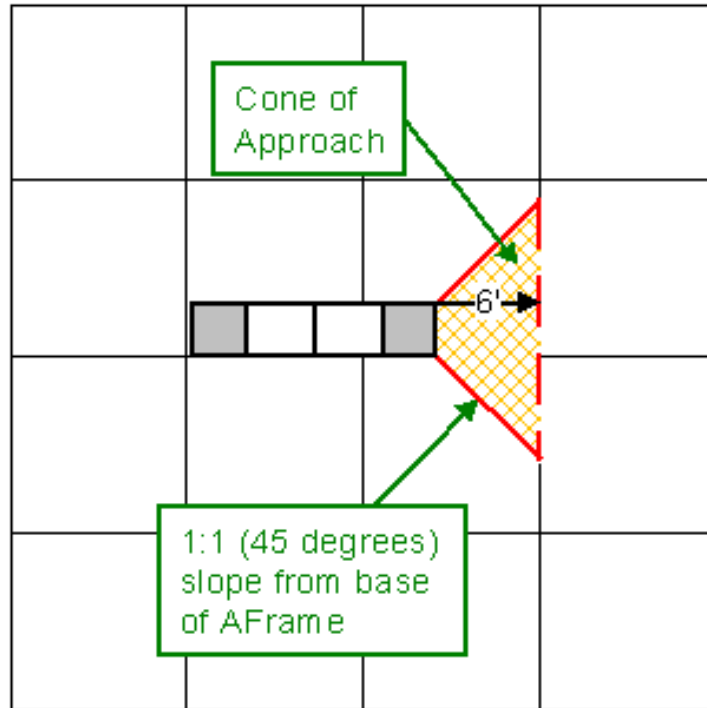


Figure 18 A-Frame Cone of Approach

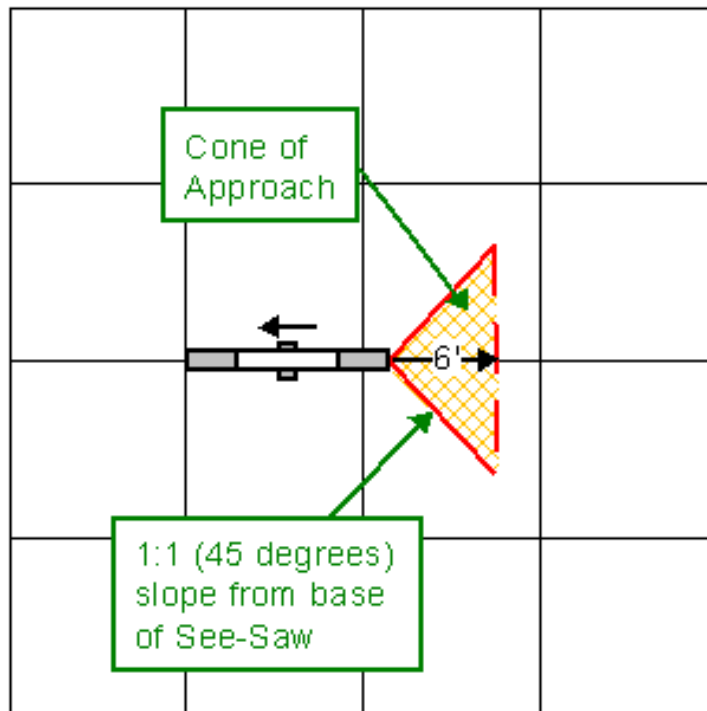


Figure 19 See-saw Cone of Approach

3.4.2 High speed, highly angled approaches to the Dog Walk, Long Jump, and Collapsed Tunnel are not permitted

The Cone of Approach for the Dog Walk (**Figure 20**), Long Jump (**Figure 21**), and Collapsed Tunnel (**Figure 22**) shall not vary by more than approximately 25 degrees when the dog is approaching these obstacles at speed. For practical purposes, a 2:1 slope can be easily estimated and is satisfactory for this purpose.

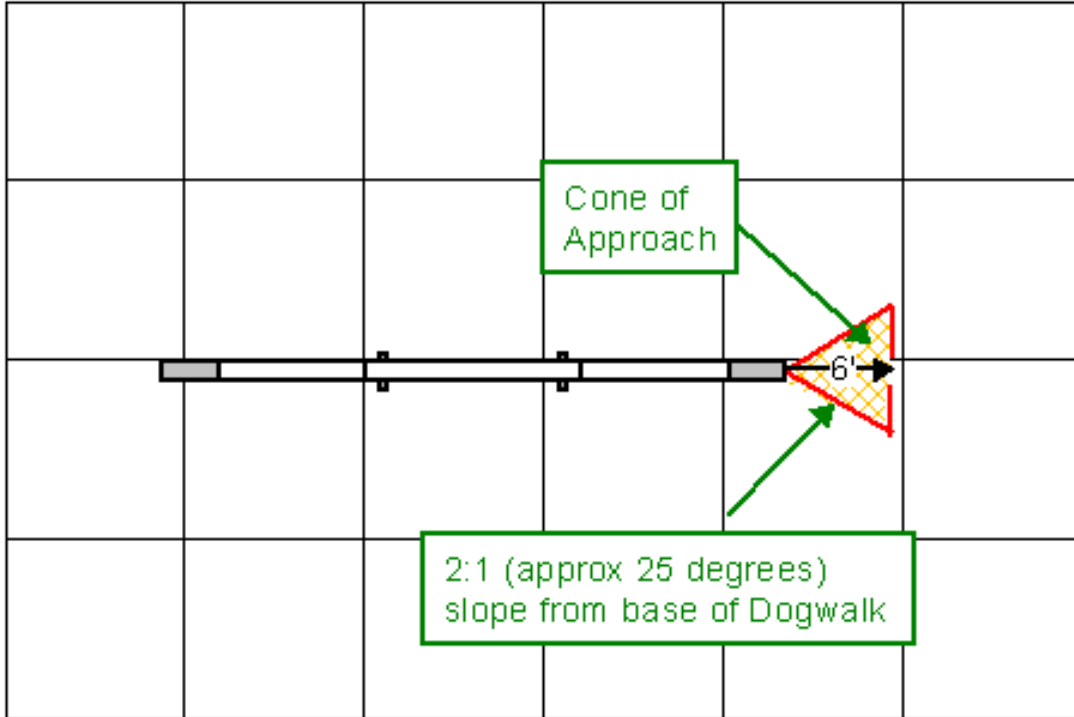


Figure 20 Dog Walk Cone of Approach

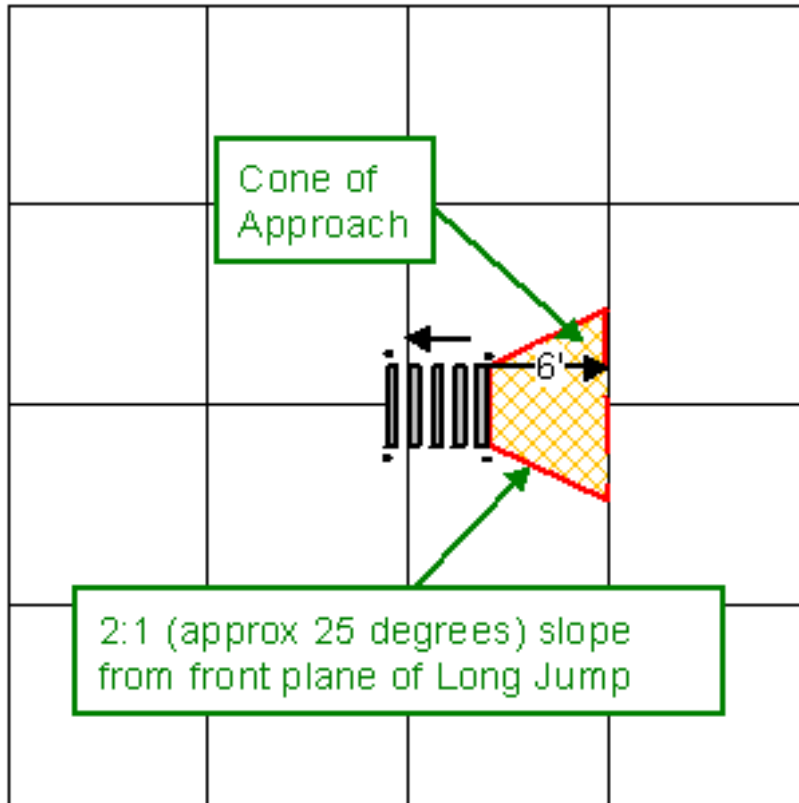


Figure 21 Long Jump Cone of Approach

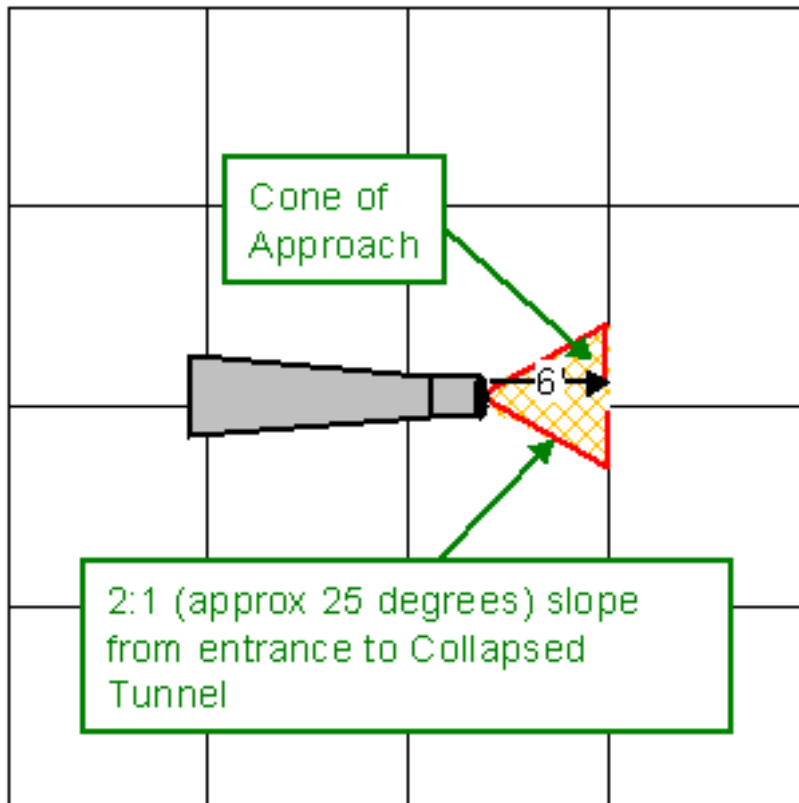


Figure 22 Collapsed Tunnel Cone of Approach

3.4.3 *Highly angled approaches to Tire Jumps and Extended Spread Hurdles should be carefully evaluated for safe performance*

The approach for Tire Jump and extended Spread Hurdles shall be generally perpendicular to the entry plane of the obstacles. Otherwise, the course design shall allow sufficient space for an average handler to be in a position to correctly indicate a safe approach angle to the dog. **Figure 23** shows how this principle is evaluated using the Tire Jump as an example.

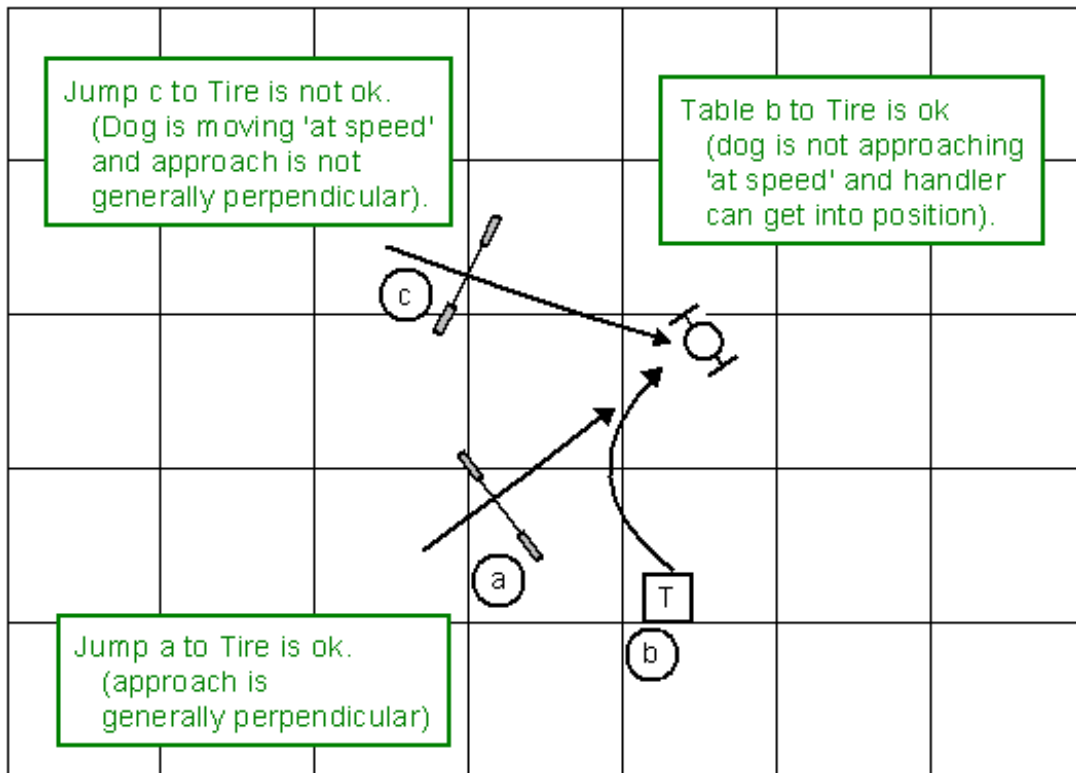


Figure 23 Evaluating Approaches to Tires and Spread Hurdles

If an Extended Spread Hurdle is positioned as a Wrong Course element, consider whether this presents any safety concern. Additionally, if a Tire Jump is positioned as a Wrong Course element, the approach angle must satisfy the safety conditions explained above. This means that care must be taken when using either of these obstacles in a Crossing Pattern.

3.4.4 *Provide adequate landing room for all hurdle obstacles*

The design should provide a landing area from a Tire Jump, Long Jump or Spread Hurdle that extends a minimum of 15 feet beyond the back plane of the obstacle before encountering an obstruction. Ideally, this same landing area should also be present when Wrong Course obstacles are present after a Tire Jump, Long Jump, or Spread Hurdles and the dog needs to turn greater than 90 degrees for the approach to the next obstacle.

All other jumps should provide an absolute minimum of 12'. See **Figure 24** for an example.

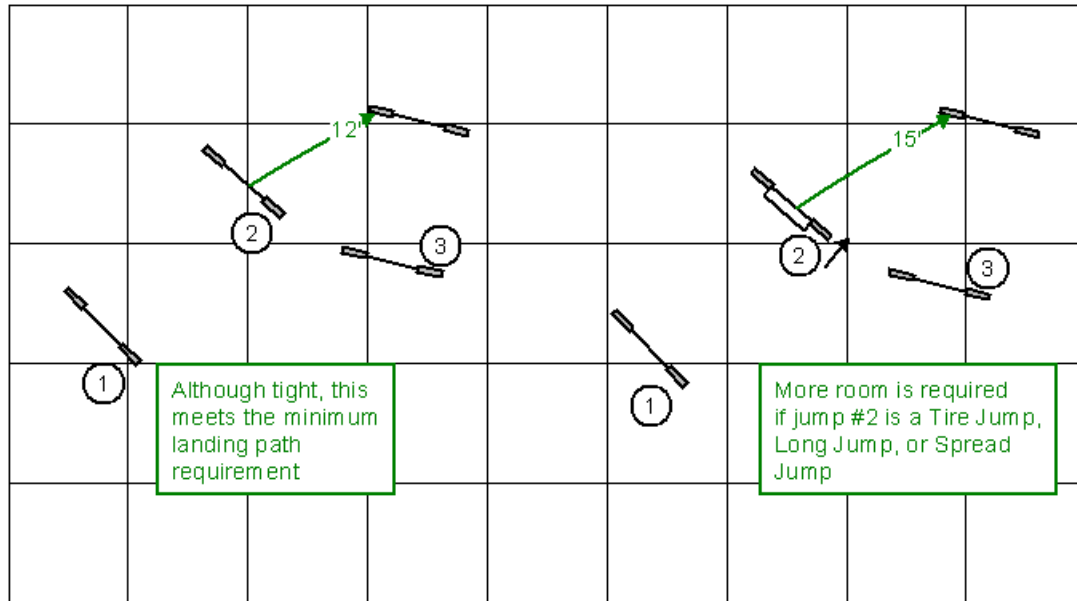


Figure 24 Landing Room After Hurdles

3.4.5 Allow sufficient exit room from a Collapsed Tunnel

It is important to remember that dogs need at least one stride to orient themselves when exiting the chute and this extra distance should be considered in evaluating if there is sufficient room from the chute end to an immovable object. Consider also that the chute may ‘drag’ as much as 10’ so there should be 10’ clearance to either side of the tunnel cloth.

3.4.6 Keep the expected handler path free of obstructions

The expected handler path shall not cause the handler to inadvertently run into the ‘up end’ of the See-Saw or into an immovable barrier. Similarly there should be 8’ clearance in sections where the handler is assumed to be running at speed along an expected handler path.

3.4.7 Design the path to approach the flat side of a Table rather than a corner

The expected dog path shall be to the flat side of a Table and not a corner. Besides being safer for a dog that misjudges his jump onto the Table, this also provides for a well-defined runout plane in classes where refusals are judged at the Table.

3.4.8 Use obstacles with approach restrictions carefully in the games classes

Obstacles with approach safety restrictions such as Contact Obstacles, the Collapsed Tunnel, Long Jumps, and Spread Hurdles should be used carefully or not at all as the first obstacle in a gamble joker or as the #2 obstacle in a snooker closing sequence. Approach

distances greater than 30' should not be used for A-Frames, See-Saws, Dog Walks, Tires, and Tables due to the potential for injury should a dog misjudge and not slow down sufficiently for safe performance.

3.4.9 Wraps, Threadles or other tight turning challenges must be used appropriately

Wraps and Threadles should not be used at Tire Jumps given the potential for impact with the ground support braces required for this jump. In general, turns greater than 135 degrees immediately following Tire Jumps and Long Jumps should be avoided as well.

3.4.10 Consider dog safety following the conclusion of the run

Should a hurdle type obstacle be used as the final obstacle on a course, a minimum of 15' from the hurdle to the exit gate should be provided to allow the handler to safely collect their dog following the run.

In addition, a minimum of 30' should be provided from the final obstacle to the starting position of the next dog if the judge has instructed the next exhibitor to set up their dog during the previous dog's run.

3.5 Efficiency Considerations

'Nesting' of obstacles should be considered. This is important primarily at events where the entry size is large. It then becomes important to keep the 'down time' between classes to a minimum and hold the trial day to a reasonable length. From a design standpoint, this means that either the large, difficult to move obstacles or a group of obstacles (usually in a crossing pattern) are not moved when the course is set for the following class. Consider that rotating a see-saw or A-frame may be possible even though the obstacle won't move from its general position.

Course should NOT be nested to the point that the same sequences would be performed by a dog competing in multiple classes. For example, the same sequence may appear in an Advanced level Standard and a Masters level Standard course. However, that same sequence should not appear on a Masters level Standard and a Grand Prix course since the same dog may be entered in both.

3.6 Other Things to Consider When Designing

- A course should NOT be designed primarily from the perspective of handling styles. For example, designing a course attempting to require the handler to execute two rear crosses, two threadles and a blind cross overly focuses on techniques.
- A course SHOULD be designed for a presentation of flow and challenges commensurate with the level.

- A handler should be free to use whatever handling techniques they want, as long as they can complete the course requirements in the allotted time with the required score (e.g., a course with 70% counterclockwise flow and four changes of sides might indicate that offside handling and changes of side are advantageous. However, a handler need not change side in order to be successful, given that they make time on course and avoid faults if they can run fast enough.) This exemplifies why course design should not be viewed from a technique perspective and why understanding the flow and challenge of a course is important to establishing a time standard on a course.
- All courses for an event should be scrutinized in order to assess whether any challenges have been over utilized. For example, there may be an obstacle discrimination such as a tunnel under the A-frame. If any one course contains multiple repetitions of that type of challenge or if that challenge is repeated on all courses at a given level then that challenge has been overused. Balance both on an individual course and throughout the event should be the norm.
- When an event presents multiple opportunities to design Gamblers and Snooker courses, the designs should vary the types of Jokers and Snooker configuration offered.
- All courses for an event should be created for that particular event. Design elements, or portions of a course design created for another event can be reused in a new design. However no course should be re-presented in its entirety at another event.

4 Designing Appropriately to the Level

Section 3.1.5 earlier defined terms for specific challenges that may be present in course designs. Not all of these challenges are appropriate for each level. **Table 3** summarizes which challenges are appropriate to a level.

Table 3 Challenge Types by Level

Challenge Type	Starters	Advanced	Masters
Obstacle Discrimination	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Wrong Course Potential	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Change of Sides	Yes*	Yes*	Yes
Wrap	Yes	Yes	Yes
Closed Approach		Yes*	Yes
Spacing Variations		Yes*	Yes
Threadle		Yes	Yes
Serpentine		Yes	Yes
Handler Constraint		Yes*	Yes
Layering		Yes	Yes
Managed Approach			Yes
Refusal Potential			Yes
Runout Potential			Yes
Timing Sequences			Yes

**Further criteria for these challenge types are discussed in the following sections for each level.*

In assessing whether or not a challenge is appropriate for a level, consider that these are only guidelines rather than a standard to be strictly adhered to. In particular, because Starters and Advanced levels are “developmental” levels that include both newcomers and seasoned competitors, the following principle applies:

Any course may include a challenge type that might normally be indicative of challenges from the next higher level in order to educate and prepare competitors for the next level.

When this is done however, the challenge should be presented in such a way that skills learned in the present level could be utilized to successfully accomplish the challenge, even though a more advanced handling strategy might enable the challenge to be performed more readily.

4.1 Course Design – Starters Level

All Starters courses shall be designed for the entry level handler with an entry level dog.

It is presumed the following elements are present in the dogs and handlers competing at this level:

- The dog can perform of each of the obstacles set forth in the regulations without error.
- The dog proceeds at a reasonable pace through the course, demonstrating the ability to connect obstacles in flowing sequences without interruption.
- The handler has **loose, but effective control** through voice command and visual cues of the dog.
- The dog has not previously been titled.

Note that a **handler who has previously titled another dog (or this dog in another venue) may excel** at this or a higher level because of their past experience. This possibility should not influence the design of a course.

The Basic Criteria (see **Section 3.1**) for course design are applied at this level as follows.

4.1.1 Obstacle Performance

4.1.1.1 Emphasize basic obstacle performance

This is demonstrated by performing individual obstacles without incurring a fault, while moving within the natural flow of a course.

4.1.1.2 Take the inexperience of the dog into account when designing obstacle placement

Response Control is typically less developed at this level. The course designer should take into consideration that a delayed response by the dog to a handler command may risk injury to the dog on approach to some of the obstacles. The orientation of the obstacles should be such that the flow of the course shall present the dog with Open Approaches to the entry plane of the obstacles.

4.1.2 Fluidity

4.1.2.1 Obstacles shall be generally spaced along the flow of the course

The next obstacle to be performed should be presented within the average range of 18' to 22'. Approaches to non-hurdle obstacles above this range should be avoided as it is assumed that the Starters level handler begins to lose their loose but effective control as the distance to the next correct obstacle increases.

4.1.3 Handling Maneuvers

4.1.3.1 Starters level handlers should be able to demonstrate “basic” or “fundamental” handling techniques

These include **leading out at the start, switching sides of the dog while moving or sending the dog ahead**. Other challenges may be employed in a limited way, but care should be taken not to place handling capabilities above the goal of testing basic obstacle performance.

4.1.3.2 Obstacle placement shall not impede handler path

The Starters handler should be given plenty of maneuvering room around and between the obstacles.

4.1.4 Course Challenges

4.1.4.1 Obstacle Discrimination is permitted, but should be set no closer than 5' from closest edge of one obstacle to the closest edge of the other

The intent of this minimum distance requirement is to permit a starter handler some **reaction time to issue a command** to direct the dog to the correct obstacle, given the “loose control” of the starter dog. **Figure 25** exhibits application of this guideline.

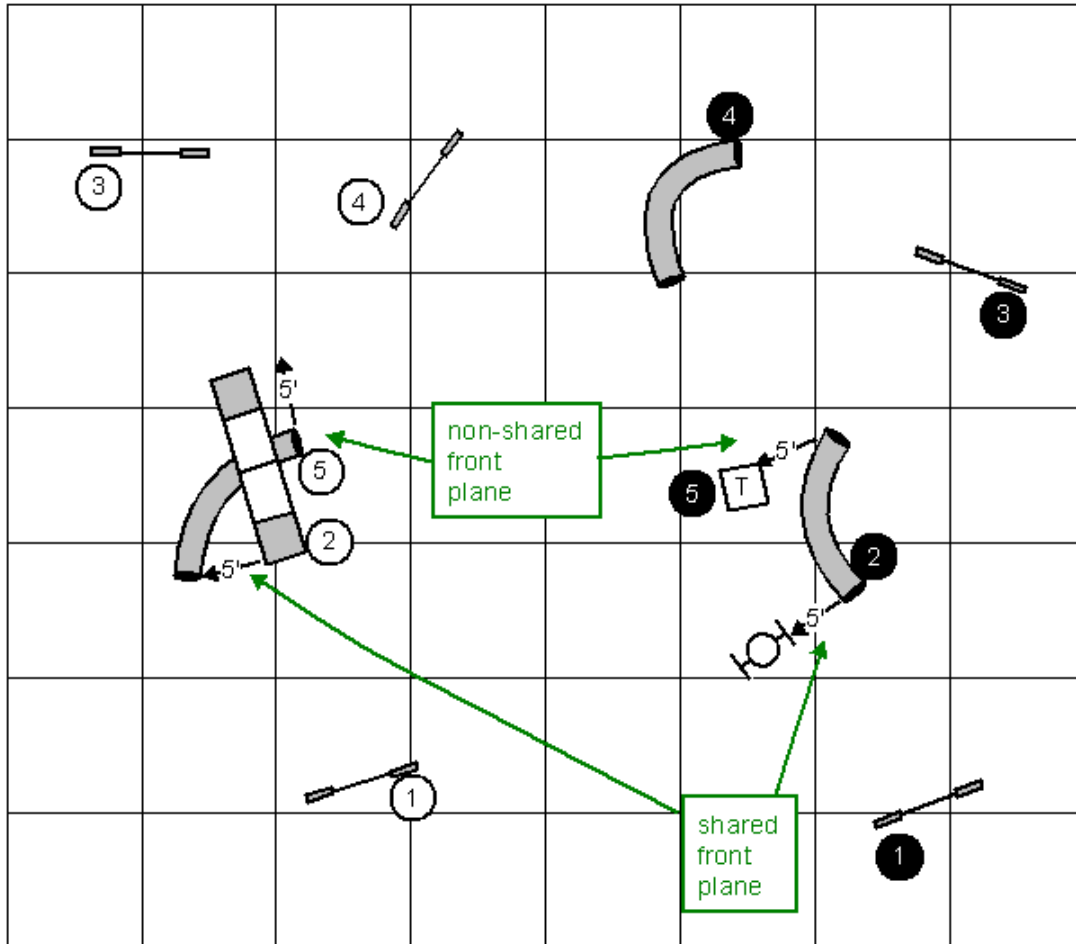


Figure 25 Starters Obstacle Discrimination Challenges

4.1.4.2 Wrong Course Potential - Crossing Patterns, where used, should be loosely spaced.

For example, Wrong Course obstacles should generally require that the dog deviate more than 8'-10' off the course flow (see **Figure 26**).

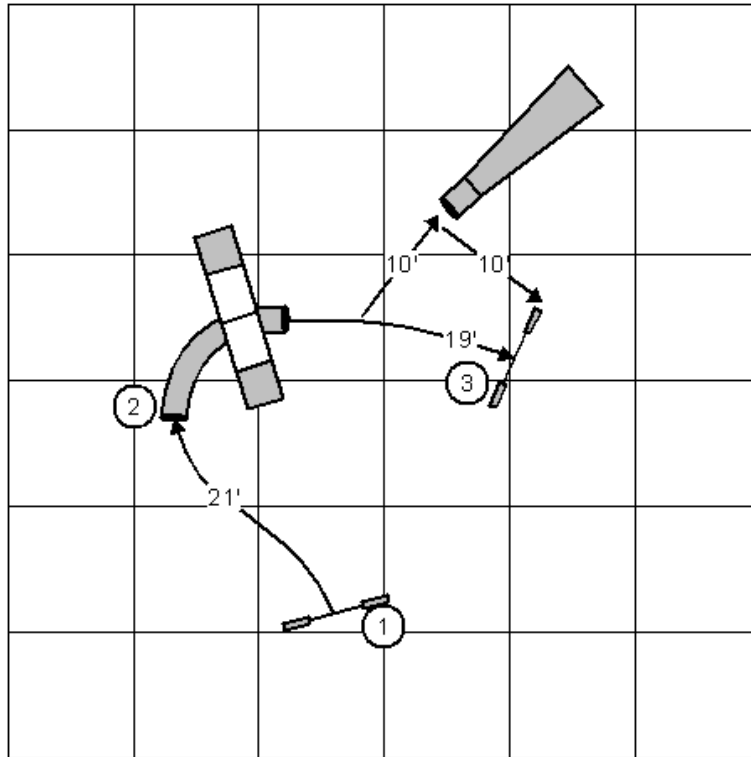


Figure 26 Starters Level Obstacle Discrimination

4.1.4.3 Changes of Sides are permitted and encouraged

These challenges are especially useful in demonstrating that obstacles can be successfully performed regardless of which side the handler is handling from. Changes of Side should not generally be combined with other challenge types such that a Timing Sequence challenge is inadvertently created.

4.1.4.4 Wraps are permitted

The obstacle to be wrapped should not be so close to another obstacle that a Threadle type challenge is inadvertently created.

4.2 Course Design - Advanced Level

An Advanced course shall be designed for handlers and their dogs that have completed the Starters level. It is presumed the following elements are present in the dogs and handlers competing at this level:

- **Speed and Motivation** – It can now be expected that the dog runs with motivation, progressing through obstacle sequences without significant interruption.
- **Solid Teamwork** –The teamwork between the dog and handler are sufficient to demonstrate better Response Control in addition to Change of Sides and Wrong Course challenges.
- **Confident Obstacle Performance** – It can now be expected that the dog will perform obstacles with no hesitation or undue assistance from its handler.

As with the Starters level courses, it may happen that a handler who has previously titled another dog (or this dog in another venue) may excel at this or a higher level because of their past experience. This possibility shall not influence the design of courses for this level.

Course design at this level shall begin to shift emphasize toward Directional Control through utilization of fundamental handling skills to progress fluidly through the course while working with greater speed than at the previous level. Better Response Control is more apparent, but still not necessarily strong.

In addition, the Basic Criteria (see **Section 3.1**) for course design are applied at this level as follows.

4.2.1 Obstacle Performance

4.2.1.1 The design should emphasize refined obstacle performance

Dogs should be able to demonstrate increased confidence and speed on the obstacles without incurring a fault while moving within the natural flow of a course which utilizes moderate-length flowing lines between challenges.

4.2.2 Course Challenges

4.2.2.1 Obstacle Discrimination is permitted but should be set no closer than 3' from closest edge of one obstacle to the closest edge of the other

The intent of the reduction of the minimum distance requirement is to reflect the expected improvement in handler's reaction to the condition, as well as improved training to achieve better Response Control and the dog's recognition of the obstacles. These

restrictions can be relaxed if the course design has provided an opportunity for the handler to be in a position to closely direct the dog (for example, there is a Table immediately before the discrimination). **Figure 27** shows some appropriate discriminations at this level.

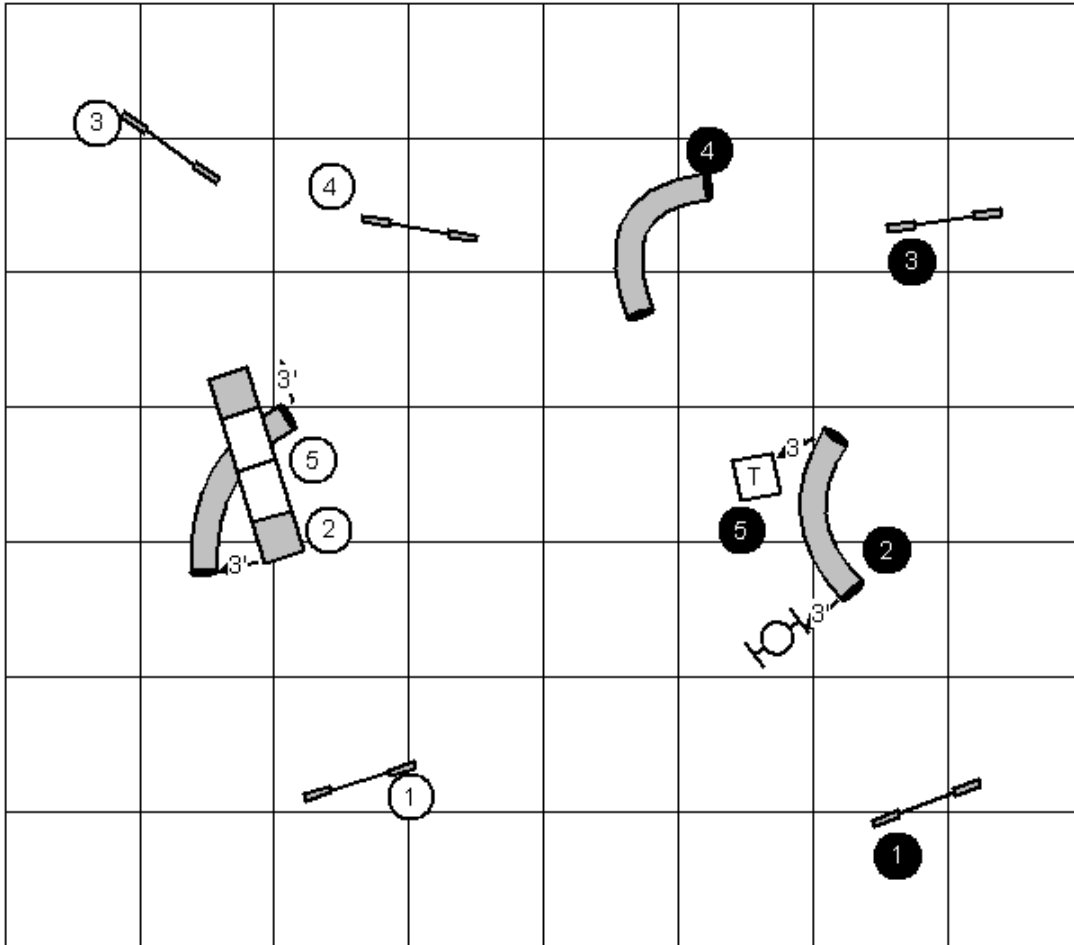


Figure 27 Advanced Level Obstacle Discrimination At Speed

4.2.2.2 Wrong Course Potential is permitted and encouraged

Crossing Patterns can now be more tightly spaced (see **Figure 28**) than at the Starters level.

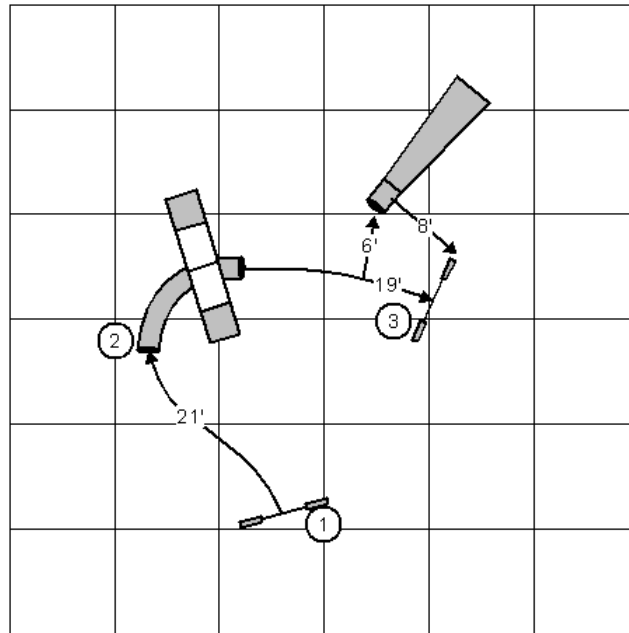


Figure 28 Advanced Level Wrong Course With Tighter Crossing Pattern

In addition, “Wrong Course” obstacles can now be primarily presented in the designed course flow and shall generally be spaced within the distance permitted between obstacles as specified in the regulations (as if to be performed), presenting a test of Response Control training. When more than one such obstacle is presented in this manner, they, along with other challenges, shall be **distributed throughout the course** in a balanced fashion.

4.2.2.3 Changes of Side are encouraged

The course design should include multiple changes of side while moving, including some changes of direction within Crossing Patterns.

4.2.2.4 Wraps are permitted

4.2.2.5 Moderately-Closed Approach challenges are permitted

Less than perpendicular approaches to the entry plane of the obstacles are appropriate for this level, however the orientation of the obstacles shall still present the dog with a natural flow to the obstacle. Cones of Approach shall be respected and strong Closed Approach positions that deliberately encourage refusals or that require the dog to “seek out” the front plane of the obstacle should generally be avoided.

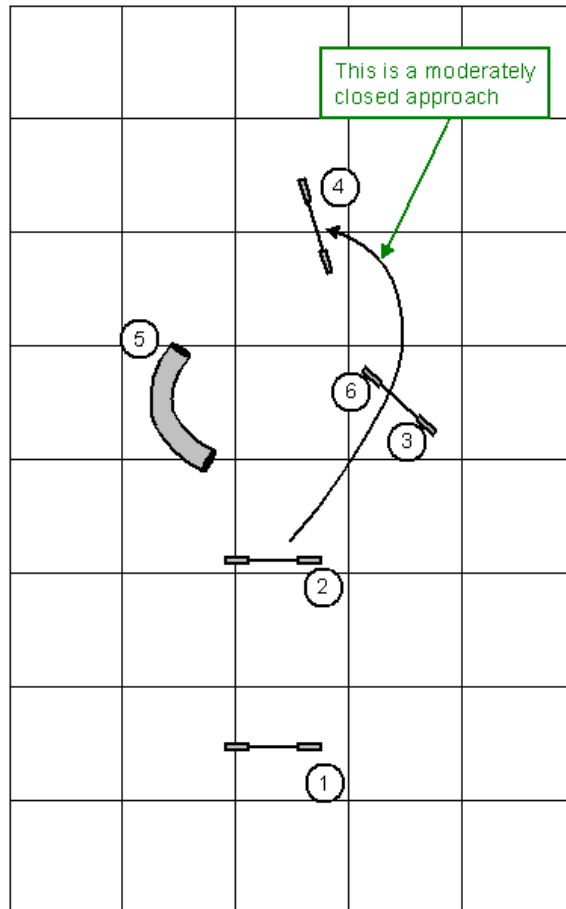


Figure 29 Moderately Closed Approach at the Advanced Level

Figure 27 also demonstrates examples of closed approaches to jumps.

4.2.2.6 Spacing Variations are permitted

This challenge should appear at this level primarily to test single obstacle performance. The design should avoid the use of spacing variations to create issues involving Timing Sequences and Refusal Potential.

4.2.2.7 Serpentine are permitted

Obstacle used in a serpentine should generally have no more than moderately-closed approaches.

4.2.2.8 Threadles and Layering challenges are permitted

4.2.2.9 Moderate Handler Constraint Challenges are permitted

Obstacles placed in a manner that present a handler constraint shall be carefully considered. Other than in gamblers and snooker, where constraints are typically utilized, there should be an open path for the handler to handle the dog through the course. Further, handler paths through a sequence should not be constricted in such a manner to generally require an unnatural handling position. **Figure 30** demonstrates a strong

handler constraint that would not be appropriate for the Advanced level and **Figure 31** and **Figure 32** show how this constraint can be moderated so it is now appropriate.

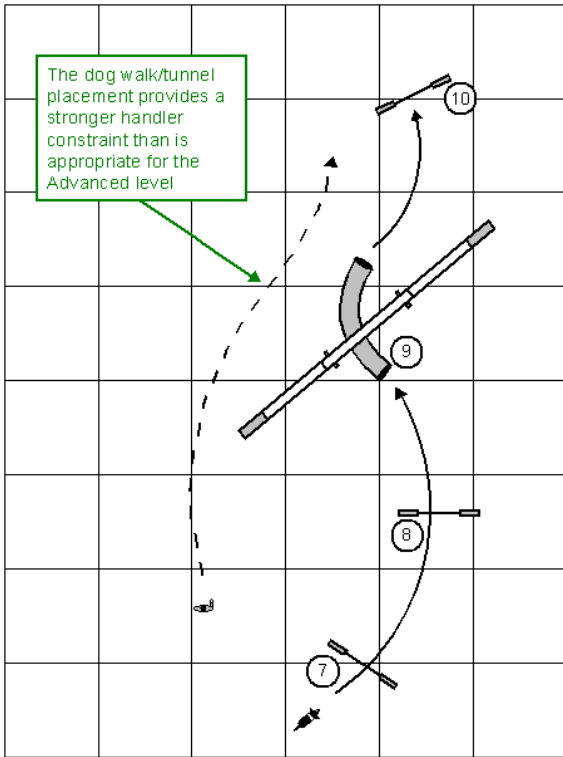


Figure 30 Strong Handler Constraint

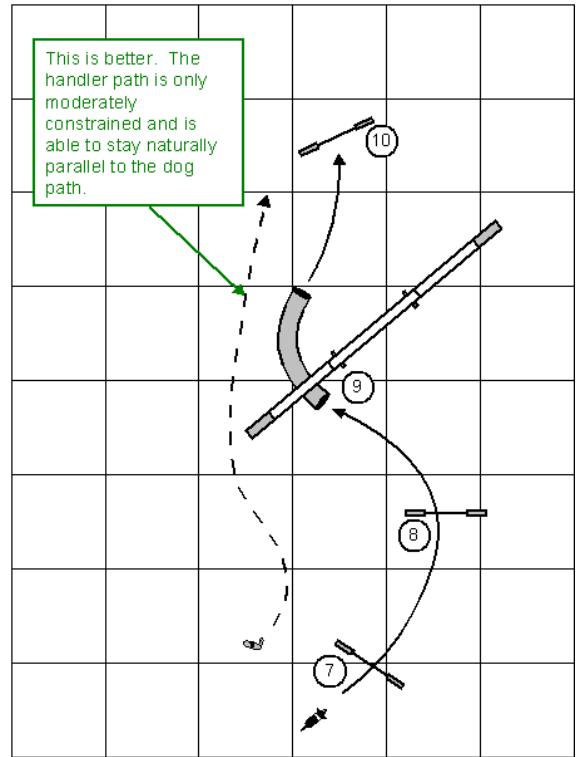


Figure 31 Moderate Handler Constraint

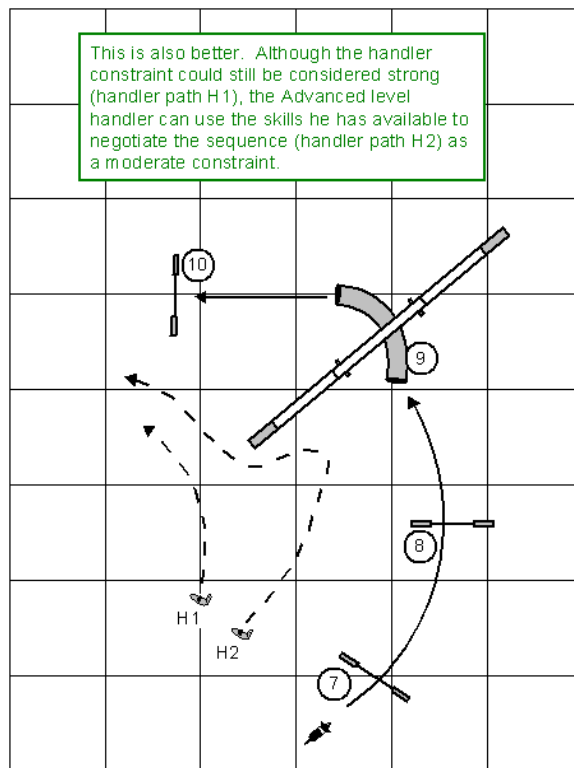


Figure 32 Strong Handler Constraint Handled With Existing Advanced Level Skills

4.3 Course Design - Masters Level

Masters courses shall be designed for handlers and their dogs that have completed the Advanced level. It is presumed that the following elements are present in the team:

- **Speed and Motivation** – It can now be expected that the dog performs efficiently and with speed demonstrating a sense of urgency or desire to move on quickly through the course without interruption.
- **Solid Teamwork Under Varied Conditions** – The teamwork between the dog and handler are sufficient to handle all types of challenges.

A handler who has titled their dog at this level and continues to compete may excel beyond the minimum requirements of the course design due to their increasing experience. This possibility shall not influence the design of a course.

Course design shall emphasize accomplished training for efficient Response and Directional Control, complemented with refined handling skills to encourage faster rates of speed while progressing fluidly through the course.

Basic Criteria (see **Section 3.1**) for course design are applied at this level as follows.

4.3.1 Obstacle Performance

4.3.1.1 The design should assume refined obstacle performance

Dogs should be able to demonstrate increased confidence and speed on the obstacles without incurring a fault while moving within the natural flow of the course. Course sequences may be designed which give an advantage to those dogs which are able to perform obstacles without being in close proximity to their handler.

4.3.2 Course Challenges

All challenges identified in **Section 3.1.5** are appropriate at this level. In addition, design philosophy at the level includes the following considerations.

4.3.2.1 Compound Challenges with Timing Sequences are encouraged

Challenges should include compound challenges, such as Changes of Side to effect a change of direction while moving through crossing patterns where the timing of command and/or movement may create a refusal or off course condition.

4.3.2.2 Refusal Potential Challenges are encouraged

As refusals are a principal focus in judging at this level, a design should include challenges with Refusal Potential.

4.3.2.3 The overall effect should be a balance of control and fluidity

Although the Masters level is expected to contain multiple challenges, remember the basic philosophical point raised in the beginning of this policy paper: a course should never be so loaded with technical elements or redundant challenges that it creates an excessively stressful round or feeling of drudgery, when the appropriate degree of training has been successfully employed.

5 Application of Principles to the Nonstandard Classes

The foregoing rules for Starters, Advanced and Masters standard classes shall generally apply to the nonstandard classes, addressing the issues of obstacle placement, spacing, and utilization, flow of the course and challenges.

5.1 Course Design – Relay

The design shall have the flow and challenges as appropriate for the level as described in **Section 4**. The course shall have the appearance of a single, standard course with challenges appropriate for the level.

When pairs are comprised of team members of the same jump height, a course may be run in its entirety by each team member. However, when this strategy is employed, a course will likely require more than the minimum required number of obstacles in order to adequately present appropriate challenges on the course.

A Relay course has the following specific considerations regardless of level.

5.1.1 Some obstacles may be omitted

The entire course must consist of at least 15 obstacles and must contain at least 6 out of the following obstacles: A-Frame, Dog Walk, See-Saw, Pipe Tunnel, Collapsed Tunnel, Tire, Weave Poles, and Spread Hurdle. The Table shall not be used as an obstacle to be performed.

When a course is split, each “half” of the course (i.e., performance segment to be performed by a dog) must satisfy the required minimum obstacle count: 7 for Starters and 9 for Advanced and Masters, and must present a balance of challenges commensurate with the class level.

5.1.2 Each half of the course must contain at least one contact

5.1.3 Each half of the course must contain no more than one jump height

The same jump may not be used in both halves of the course unless the club has arranged in advance that only pairs with dogs of the same jump height class are permitted.

5.1.4 The exchange area should be well marked

The judge should be able to clearly determine if the baton handoff and subsequent start by the second dog are performed free of fault as specified in Chapter 6 of the Regulations.

5.1.5 The exchange area must provide for a safe handoff

There should be a safe distance (minimum of 10') between the first dog finishing and the second dog beginning. More distance may be appropriate at the Starters level. Consider the first dog's path in determining where the next dog shall begin in order to avoid a

potential confrontation. The exchange area should not be so large that the act of exchanging the baton becomes a major course element.

5.2 Course Design – Gamblers

The purpose of the Gamblers class is to:

- present a test of competitive strategy, utilizing the competitor's training and knowledge of their dog, and
- present a test of independent performance of individual obstacles and or course segments.

A Gamblers course has the following specific considerations regardless of level.

5.2.1 Some obstacles may be omitted

Spread Hurdles and the Table may be omitted. If included, the Table is not to be a performance obstacle in titling classes.

5.2.2 The design must be Judgable for all Contact Obstacles

Contact obstacles must be aligned to permit consistent judging of both up and down contact zones on the Contact Obstacles for most likely or expected handler and dog paths even when the judge is not always able to make a judging position satisfying the close proximity requirements (see **Section 3.2.1**).

5.2.3 Avoid placement of obstacles such that there is an incentive for the handler to direct a dog directly into the judging path

Since there is no predetermined dog path, the judge may not always be able to anticipate where a dog or handler is going after leaving a contact. Designs should therefore avoid placing other obstacles in positions that might encourage the handler to turn the dog back into the judging path.

5.2.4 Obstacles should be positioned for safety to the extent possible

Even though there is no predetermined dog path in the opening sequence, be aware of the potential safety risks in the orientation of obstacles, including but not limited to: the tire, Long Jump, extended Spread Hurdle, and cones of approach to the Contact Obstacles.

5.2.5 Challenges presented in a joker shall be appropriate to the level as defined in Section 4

In addition, remember that the Starters and Advanced jokers may contain only one joker type. Masters jokers may contain up to two joker types.

The course design should clearly identify which one of the three “types” of joker (see **Table 4**) is principally being tested and may have no more than one additional type (depending on level), which may be equal to or less substantial in difficulty than the key element.

Table 4 Joker Elements by Level

Level	# of Challenge Type	Min Distance from Key Element	Allowable Joker Elements or Types
Starters	1	9'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directional Control (which for the Starters level may additionally include the ability to stay parallel from the handler at the required distance) • Obstacle Discrimination
Advanced	1	9'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directional Control • Obstacle Discrimination • Weave Pole / Contact Performance
Masters	2	15'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directional Control • Obstacle Discrimination • Weave Pole / Contact Performance

5.2.6 The design may include creative elements and special rules

The design may have additional creative elements to provide a variety of strategies to be pursued such as:

- Use of a joker in the opening period for bonus points. Note that a “rule of attribution” applies relative to point allocations; i.e., the amount of bonus points added for the joker may not violate the rules for point assignments when considered by adding the points to each obstacle in the joker.
- Offer more than one joker in the closing period. These jokers may have different point values assigned for completion, but must be performed within the same amount of time. (It must be made clear whether a joker meets requirements for qualification as set forth in Chapter 6.)
- Establishing a sequence limitation to break flow with respect to an obstacle or cluster of obstacles (e.g., a hurdle must be performed successfully for points before a contact obstacle may be taken). Caution must be exercised not to overburden the ability of the competitor to understand and apply the rules following a briefing and walk-through. In addition, judging of the event must not be compromised due to overly complex special rules resulting in an increased likelihood of errors in judging or scoring.

Creative elements or special rules must be clearly identified on the course diagram and/or a separate briefing handout, as not all competitors may be able to attend an oral briefing.

5.2.7 The joker time must be appropriate for the level

The joker time should be set such that a dog moving at a rate of speed appropriate for a Standard class of the same level would be capable of completing the joker within the allotted time. In no case shall the Joker time be more than 20 seconds (22 seconds in Performance Division) or less than 12 seconds.

There is no one specific system for establishing this time, but whatever system used must include an analysis of the Joker components and its relative position to the course as a whole. The next two sections present types of analysis currently in use by judges that can provide guidance in arriving at an appropriate time. Other variations are possible, but true refinement without questions can come only from experience.

5.2.8 Component Analysis Using a Joker Standard

This approach compares the joker design against a 'joker standard' to establish reasonably achievable times for the joker. One such Joker Standard consists of a 4 obstacle gamble containing 3 jumps and an A-Frame or See-Saw, with average spacing.

Open Championship dogs are expected to achieve a gamble of this type within 14 seconds for Masters, 15 for Advanced, and 16 seconds for Starters. One or two seconds is added to this open dog base time for each of the following:

- A tunnel (open or chute) is used instead of a jump
- A full set of Weave Poles is used instead of an A-Frame or See-Saw
- There is no good way to "feed into" the first obstacle of the joker
- There is a complete reversal of flow (such as a Wrap or Back to Back or hard turn back to an obstacle)

Two or three seconds is added if:

- A Dog Walk is used instead of an A-Frame or See-Saw
- A fifth jump or tunnel is added

Two or three seconds is subtracted if:

- Only 3 joker obstacles are used
- The joker consists of all jumps taken in flow

Mini dog times are determined by adding to the open dog times: increase by 1 second for 16" dogs and another 1-2 seconds for 12" dogs. Performance Division dog times may be set up to 3 seconds more than the Championship Division dogs, but not more than 22 seconds.

5.2.9 Complete Component Analysis

The philosophy of this approach is that appropriate times may be established by evaluating all aspects of the Joker, beginning with a distance measurement, consideration of minimum rates for a standard class of the level, with adjustments based upon

composition of the gamble. Minimum rates are used on the assumption that a dog is likely to work more slowly at a distance than occurs in the standard class when working in concert with their handler. Adjustments are then made based on the nature of the gamble, the obstacles used, and the ease of approach to the Joker from the course for transition when the whistle blows.

This method is applied as follows:

1. Consider the likely dog path to the first joker obstacle.
2. Start measuring from 2-3 yards in front of the first obstacle and continue measuring to the finish line or obstacle.
3. Calculate the time using the minimum rate for the class level.
4. Add 5 to 7 seconds for any time consuming obstacles such as Contact Obstacles and Weave Poles.
5. Add 1-2 seconds if the gamble contains redirection or obstacle discrimination.
6. Add 1-2 seconds if the approach to the gamble is constrained by one approach path.
7. Past judging experience may be used to adjust this final time up or down.
8. Add up to 3 seconds to this for the Performance division.

5.3 Course Design – Snooker

The purpose of the Snooker class is to present a test of competitive strategy in assembling a course sequence. Thus, the obstacle requirements of the Standard class as set forth in Chapter 3 of the Rules and Regulations may vary substantially, ranging from a course utilizing all Contact Obstacles and Weave Poles, to a course presenting only jumps, or jumps and tunnels.

A Snooker course has the following specific considerations regardless of level.

5.3.1 There should be alternative dog paths permissible within the allowable time

There should be a variety of course strategies that can be pursued in the opening sequence, offering a level of difficulty appropriate to the level.

5.3.2 The closing sequence should offer challenges appropriate to the level

5.3.3 The design should avoid excessive distances to be traversed without performing an obstacle

For example, placement of all reds at excessive distances from color obstacles should be avoided. Similarly, closing sequences should generally conform to the fluidity criteria explained in **Section 3.1.2** for the majority of the closing sequence.

5.3.4 The design must be of an identifiable configuration

The course design shall clearly identify the key configuration type for purposes of establishing a course time as defined for the Snooker class in Chapter 6 of the Rules and Regulations. These are:

- Standard Configuration (Reds near 6 and 7)
- Jumps & Tunnels Only
- Three of Four Reds
- “Modified” Standard Configuration (Reds away from 6 and 7)
- Two or more “Color Combinations” each with Contact Obstacles or Weave Poles
- Four Reds to be Performed (**note new limit** –more than four Reds are no longer allowed for titling purposes)

5.3.5 The design may include creative elements and special rules

Creative elements or special rules must be clearly identified on the course diagram.

5.3.6 The course time must be appropriate for the level and the configuration

Because of the variety of snooker configurations and the nature of the obstacles used in the design, the ranges of times permitted for each key configuration type is fairly large. The design should establish a time within that range that is appropriate for the course and is sufficient to tempt competitors to attempt alternative strategies. When the game is at its best, consider that too much time is as bad as too little time, and there should be an element of time risk commensurate with the point reward.

There is no one system for establishing this time. The next two sections present examples of systems currently in use by judges that can provide guidance in arriving at an appropriate time. Other methods may be equally as valid and of course there is no substitution for experience.

5.3.7 Establishing Snooker Course Using Adjusted Base Times

Base times of less than 49 seconds are discouraged at the Starters level regardless of configuration.

For a course with two reds near the start and one deep in the course, start with a "base" time of 45, 47, and 49 seconds for masters, advanced, and starters open dogs respectively. One (or two if it seems appropriate) seconds is added to that base time for each instance of the following:

- Contact Obstacles
- combinations
- Weave Poles
- unusually wide distances
- each additional red near the start line

Generally 3 seconds is added if there is a 4th red as well. Mini dog times should be increased by 1 second for 16" dogs and another 1-2 seconds for 12" dogs. Performance dog times are up to 3 seconds more than the Championship dogs.

If additional strategy rules are added to the briefing – for example, an additional obstacle must always be performed after the selected color obstacle – always consider the extra time it will take to perform that and increase the base time accordingly.

Finally, times derived using this method may be adjusted upwards or downwards to provide an incentive or disincentive for attempts at high-pointed obstacles during the opening sequence. In keeping with the regulations, ***allowable time may not exceed 60 seconds and must conform to the time ranges based upon the course configuration being used.***

5.3.8 Establishing Snooker Course Times Using Rulebook Ranges

This method is based on the ranges provided in the Regulations and the judge's experience and is applied as follows:

1. Look at the quantity of reds; this determines whether the range is 45 to 55 seconds or in the range of 50 to 60 seconds.
2. Start with the bottom of the range.
3. If Contact Obstacles or Weave Poles are present, then add 2-3 seconds for each.
4. If key configuration type is a modified snooker, then add 1-2 seconds based on the location of the #6 and #7 obstacles, i.e. consider how accessible they are to the reds.
5. Determine a closing time from an estimated closing distance and the minimum rates for a standard class of this level. This is used as an information point to make sure enough time remains for a reasonable number of opening strategies. Adjust if necessary or make course modifications.
6. Verify that the resulting time is within time permitted by the regulations for the configuration being used.

5.4 Course Design – Jumpers

The design shall have flow and challenges as appropriate for the level as described in **Section 4**.

A Jumpers course has the following specific considerations regardless of level.

5.4.1 Some obstacles may be omitted

The design shall consist only of Jumps, Spread Hurdles and Tunnels.

Other than Spread Hurdles, there are no required obstacles in this class. For Starters, one Spread Hurdle and one Extended Spread Hurdle must be utilized. Advanced and Masters courses require a minimum of three Spread Hurdles, at least one of which must be extended.

6 Appendix A - Course Review Process

6.1 Overview

An integral part of the course design process is a qualitative course review, which is conducted by select individuals who have been appointed to uphold the standards of competition. Course reviewers as individuals have considerable experience in the ring and like many judges, hold full time jobs outside agility. So there must be a cooperative effort between judges and course reviewers for submitting courses and ensuing communications so that the review process may occur in an effective and timely fashion. Late course submissions and late reviews diminish the value of the course review process and risk compromising the integrity of courses for competitors and the sport.

It is the responsibility of the course designer to contact the reviewer if for any reason the schedule timetable cannot be met.

6.2 Timetable for Course Submission

The following timetable outlines the course review process:

Table 5 Course Submission Timetable

Process	Time Frame	Process Deadline*
Initial Submittal	Four to six weeks	28 th day prior
Reviewer acknowledges receiving courses	Within three days after submission	25 th day prior
Course review comments** returned to judge	One to two weeks following receipt of all courses	10 th day prior
Judge resolves issues and comments with reviewer	One to five days following receipt of comments from reviewer	
Judge submits complete set of final courses to reviewer	As soon as practicable following redraft	5 th day prior
Reviewer submits final tournament courses, if any, to tournament reviewer	As soon as practicable	Prior to event

* Deadline is stated in relation to the first day of an event. (e.g., an event runs from April 15 to April 16. Counting one day prior as April 14, and so on, April 10 is the 5th day prior, April 5th is the 10th day prior, and March 18th is the 28th day prior.)

** Course reviewer should submit any tournament courses to the tournament course reviewer during this time and include their comments along with their own back to the judge for resolution and/or discussion.

6.3 Communicating With the Course Reviewer

Reviewers are assigned to a particular geographic territory which is outside of the area in which they typically compete. The USDAA web site contains a Course Reviewers' Region Map in the Administrative Forms and Documents section which includes the reviewer's name, email address, and phone number. This map should be checked before submitting course designs as it changes from time to time.

Occasionally a reviewer may know in advance they will be attending the show in question or they may be unavailable during the time period covered by the timetable. In that case, the course reviewer will identify another course reviewer that will be covering the event.

It is customary to submit course designs via e-mail, although other arrangements may be made ahead of time with an individual reviewer. If the designs are sent either as individual or bundled files, it is very helpful to the review process if the course file names are descriptive as to the class order and the name of the class. For example:

01 – SatStartersStandard.agl
02 – SatAdvancedStandard.agl and so on.

Alternately a format like date_class_description is useful.

The subject or body of the email should identify the event date and the club or city where the event is being held, as there are often multiple events on the same weekend.

The reviewer will also need to know what type of surface will be used and whether e-timing is available.

6.4 Course Identification

All submitted courses for any class should include the following information:

- Event date
- Sanctioning Club
- Judge's Name
- Class title and level (ex: Starters/PI Snooker)
- Start/Finish line and/or a notation that electronic timing (aka 'e-timing') will be used.
- General briefing notes specifying the required elements for each class where applicable, especially for non-standard classes such as gamblers, snooker and relay.

The course or briefing notes may optionally include information which is generally considered very helpful in the design/review process or competitors).

Figure 33 shows a course with both required information and optional information:

- When the next dog is to enter the ring
- Location of ring crew (Scribe, Timer, Ring Steward)
- Ring entrances and exits (as provided by the club)
- Grid marking (either standard 10' x 10' or 'baseline' grid)
- Judging path*
- Dog paths with distances shown (a feature of some course design software)*

* this information can be removed from the final copy viewed by course builders and competitors.

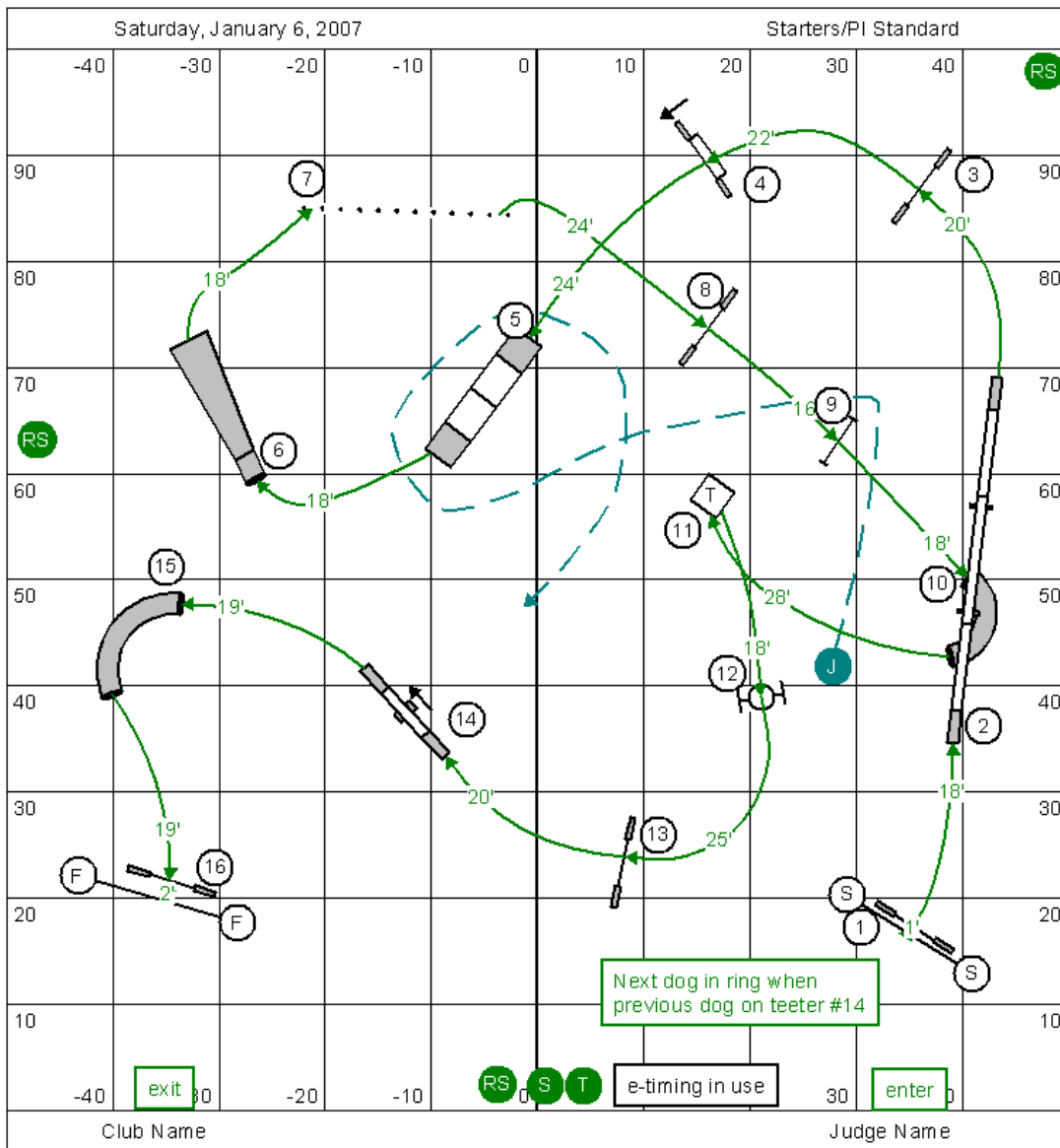


Figure 33 Example Course Design with Both Required and Optional Information

7 Appendix B – Course Design Checklists

The checklists in this appendix can be used to quickly check the design for conformance to these guidelines before submission to a reviewer. These are strictly for convenience and should NOT be submitted. The Common Course Checklist applies to all courses regardless of type. Subsequent checklists are specific to the type of course design (i.e. standard, gamblers, etc).

Common Course Checklist	<i>Things to Check On All Courses Regardless of Type</i>
Course Identification/Notations	Course type and level (i.e. Masters/PIII Standard) Judge name Club name Date Start & finish lines
Proper distances between obstacles	<u>Minimums</u> : 12' absolute min, 15' recommended min. 18' to 22' average for the entire course.
Proper approach angles and speeds	<u>Not allowed</u> : high speed, highly angled approaches to Contact Obstacles, Collapsed Tunnel or Tire Jumps. <u>Use with care</u> : highly angled approaches to spreads and Long Jumps or approach distances greater than 30' to Contact Obstacles, Tables, or Tire Jumps.
Safe landing and performance involving jumps	<u>Required</u> : 15' minimum landing room to ring barrier or other fixed objects (ex: wings, the side of a contact) and after the final jump? <u>Undesirable</u> : Wraps or "pull through" maneuvers at Spread Hurdles or Tire Jumps, turns greater than 135 degrees following a Spread Hurdle or Long Jump.
Judgable for refusals	<u>Required</u> : Can you see if a dog jumps between a tire and its frame? <u>Masters only</u> : Can you see the openings of all tunnels?
Judgable for runouts	<u>Masters only</u> : can you be in a good position to see runouts at all obstacles? If you have an obstacle at which you believe runouts are likely, can you be in a good position to view the runout plane accurately and consistently for each and every dog?
Judgable without handler or dog interference	Does your planned judging path keep you out of the likely handler path when turning their dogs sharply off of Contact Obstacles? As you move to your next judging position, can you stay out of the path of the handler and/or dog and maintain an efficient path to the next judging position?
Judgable for off-courses	Will an A-Frame or some other obstacle such as solid wings or tunnels block your view if a dog goes off course at a crossing pattern or obstacle discrimination?
Balanced	<u>Desirable</u> : Is there is a variety of different approach spacing to jumps? <u>Advanced/Masters</u> : are there flow sections that balance out areas of handler control (examples: difficult obstacle discriminations, 270's, pull throughs, push throughs, closed angles (moderate only for Advanced). <u>Undesirable</u> : overuse of the same Course Challenge type. Does this course repeat the same challenges used on other courses that may be run by the same dog on the same weekend (example: the Advanced Standard, Gamblers, Snooker, Pairs courses all contain an A-Frame/tunnel discrimination)?
Uses e-timing appropriately	Finish obstacle must be something other than the Collapsed Tunnel, Long Jump or Table. Strategy classes such as gamblers or snooker may only use an e-timed starting obstacle if the obstacle will not unnecessarily constrain the opening period strategy.
Ring Management Efficiency	Are the start and finish obstacles reasonably accessible to the club's designated entrances/exits. Will you be able to bring the next competitor in to setup while the previous competitor is running? Can the next dog set up before the previous dog finishes the course? (This is necessary if the class will be large or the day will be long). Is the Timer close enough to the start line that the exhibitor can hear them to start? Will your final judging position bring you back relatively near your initial judging position? Is the course reasonably nested off the next course, i.e. at least 1/3 of the obstacles remain at or close to the same position? Is your chute in a position where the chute straightener can get to it easily without holding up the next run?

Standard Course Checklist	<i>Specific Things to Check For</i>
Briefing Info is present	Notations should also include when the next dog is to enter the ring.
Obstacle count	<i>Starters:</i> 14-16. <i>Advanced/Masters:</i> 17-20
Obstacle requirements	<i>Required:</i> A-Frame, Dog Walk, See-Saw, Pipe Tunnel, Collapsed Tunnel, Table, Tire, Weave Poles, and Spread Hurdle. More than 50% of jumps must be winged. The number of tires and tunnels taken in total should not exceed 5.
Proper approach distances to jumps	The design should follow the same guidelines for these categories as on the common course checklist with the additional restriction that dogs taking the shortest path should jump onto the Table at an edge, rather than a corner
Approach angles are safe	
Safe landing is provided after jumps	
Judgable for obstacle performance	<i>Required:</i> Can you walk comfortably to a judging point within 15 feet of the A-Frame, Dog Walk, and Table, to within 30 feet of the Weave Poles, and to within 24 feet of the See-Saw and Long Jump?
Judgable for runouts	<i>Masters only:</i> Is the Table positioned such that the back edge is obvious?
Efficient	Can the next dog set up before the previous dog finishes course? (This is necessary if the class will be large or the day will be long). Is the Timer close enough to the start line that the exhibitor can hear them to start? Will your final judging position bring you back relatively near to your first judging position for the next dog? Is the course reasonably nested off the next course, i.e. at least 1/3 of the obstacles remain at or close to the same position?
Appropriate to the level	Are the types of challenges appropriate to the level as explained in Section 4 of these guidelines?

Gamblers Course Checklist	Things to Check For
Briefing Info is present	<p>Notations should include the type of gamble (distance [Starters only], obstacle discrimination, contact/weave performance, or directional control), point system (1-2-3-5 or 1-3-5-7), the opening time, and the joker time. (This is the same information that gets recorded in the Event Results Book). Additional notations include the highest pointed value (if there is one), the value assigned to Weave Poles (if not your highest pointed obstacle), any extra strategy rules such as ‘bonus’ obstacles or sequences, and any restrictions (examples: no back to back obstacles, no two different Contact Obstacles in sequence, etc.).</p> <p>Start lines/obstacles and finish lines/obstacles should be clearly marked.</p>
Obstacle count	<i>Required:</i> At least three obstacles in the gamble (four if the Table is used).
Obstacle requirements	<i>Required:</i> A-Frame, Dog Walk, See-Saw, Pipe Tunnel, Collapsed Tunnel, Tire, Weave Poles. The high pointed obstacle (if one has been designated) is to be positioned away from the start line and the joker to the extent possible.
Proper approach distances to jumps	The joker design should follow the same guidelines for these categories as on the common course checklist with the additional restriction that Contact Obstacles, Collapsed Tunnels or Tire Jumps should not be used as the first obstacle in a joker (to prevent unintentional high speed, highly angled approaches)
Approach angles are safe	
Safe landing is provided after jumps	
Judgable for obstacle performance	<i>Required:</i> Can you walk comfortably to a judging point within 15 feet of the A-Frame, Dog Walk, and Table, to within 30 feet of the Weave Poles, and to within 24 feet of the See-Saw and Long Jump? Can you easily get into a good position to judge elements of the gamble during the joker period? <i>Suggested:</i> if you feel you cannot easily reach consecutive Contact Obstacles, consider adding a strategy rule to briefing that no two consecutive Contact Obstacles may be taken for points.
Judgable for refusals	<i>Masters Joker Only:</i> Can you see the opening to each tunnel? Or if a dog jumps between a tire and its frame?
Judgable for runouts	<i>Masters Joker Only:</i> can you be in a good position to see runouts at jumps or tunnels? Is the Table (if used) positioned such that the back edge is obvious?
Judgable without handler interference	<i>Opening Period:</i> Does your planned judging position put you into the likely path of handlers turning their dogs off of Contact Obstacles? <i>Gamble period:</i> Can you be out of the way for the handler’s approach to the joker and still get to a good judging position for the joker?
Efficient	Can the next dog set up as previous dog begins the gamble? (This is necessary if the class will be large or the day will be long). Is the Timer close enough to the start line that the exhibitor can hear them to start? An electronically timed finish obstacle is strongly recommended for large classes.
Meeting Joker Requirements	<p><i>Starters.</i> Maximum of 1 challenge at 9’ (min) to 18’ (max) distance from handler. Challenges at this level may be: ability to maintain flow at a distance, discrimination, or Directional Control. (Contact Obstacles, if included in the joker, must allow the handler to be closer than 9’ to the contact).</p> <p><i>Advanced.</i> Maximum of 1 challenge at 9’ (min) to 18’ (max) distance from handler. Challenges may be: obstacle discrimination, contact/weave performance, or Directional Control.</p> <p><i>Masters.</i> Maximum of 2 challenges at 15’ (min) to 24’ (max) distance from handler. Challenges may be: obstacle discrimination, contact/weave performance, or Directional Control.</p>
Achievable within SCT	See general discussion on setting times for the joker in Section 5. The time shall be no less than 12 seconds and no more than 20 for Championship and 22 for Performance.

Jumpers Course Checklist	Things to Check For
Briefing Info is present	Notations should include course type and level, judge name, club name, date, and when the next dog is to enter the ring
Obstacle count	<u>Starters:</u> 14-16. <u>Advanced/Masters:</u> 17-20
Obstacle requirements	<p><u>Required:</u> More than 50% of jumps must be winged. The number of tires and tunnels taken in total should not exceed 5.</p> <p><u>Starters:</u> 1 spread and 1 extended spread are required. No additional spreads are allowed at this level.</p> <p><u>Advanced/Masters:</u> At least 2 spreads and 1 extended spread.</p> <p><u>Allowable obstacles:</u> winged jumps, wingless jumps, Spread Hurdles, Extended Spread Hurdles, Collapsed Tunnel, Pipe Tunnel, Tire Jump, and Long Jump.</p> <p><u>Not allowed:</u> Contact Obstacles, Weave Poles, or Table.</p>
Proper approach distances to jumps	The design should follow the same guidelines for these categories as on the common course checklist.
Approach angles are safe	
Safe landing is provided after jumps	

Snooker Course Checklist	Things to Check For
Briefing Info is present	<p>Notations should include the snooker configuration, i.e.: (a) standard snooker configuration, (b) 3 of 4 red configurations, and (c) configurations of jumps/tunnels only, (d) modified snooker configuration, (e) 4 red configurations, (f) configurations of two or more “color” combinations with Contact Obstacles and/or Weave Poles. (This is the same information that gets recorded in the Event Results Book). If there are 4 reds, state whether the 4th may or must be attempted (i.e. “3 of 4 reds”, “3 or 4 reds”, 4 of 4 reds required).</p> <p>SCT should be marked for both Championship and Performance.</p> <p>Start lines/obstacles and finish lines/jumps must be clearly marked.</p>
Obstacle count	n/a
Obstacle requirements	Red obstacles must be winged or non-winged jumps. <i>Starters only</i> : a maximum of 3 reds may be attempted and there may be no more than one “color” combination involving Contact Obstacles and/or Weave Poles.
Proper approach distances to jumps	The closing sequence design should follow the same guidelines for these categories as on the common course checklist with the additional restriction that Contact Obstacles, Collapsed Tunnels or Tire Jumps should not be used as the first obstacle (to prevent high speed, highly angled approaches). Depending on the snooker configuration, spacing may be greater than the 16’ to 24’ on “standard” style courses.
Approach angles are safe	
Safe landing is provided after jumps	
Judgable for obstacle performance	<i>Required</i> : Can you walk comfortably to a judging point within 15 feet of the A-Frame, Dog Walk, and Table, to within 30 feet of the Weave Poles, and to within 24 feet of the See-Saw and Long Jump?
Judgable for refusals	<i>Masters closing sequence only</i> : Can you see the openings of all tunnels?
Judgable for runouts	<i>Masters closing sequence only</i> : can you be in a good position to see runouts at jumps or tunnels?
Judgable without handler interference	Can you be out of the way as a handler goes from red to color to red given that you don’t know their plan? Does your planned judging position put you into the likely path of handlers turning their dogs off of Contact Obstacles?
Efficient	Can the next dog set up as previous dog begins the closing sequence? (This is necessary if the class will be large or the day will be long). Is the Timer close enough to the start line that the exhibitor can hear them to start? Will your final judging position bring you back relatively near to your first judging position for the next dog? An electronically timed finish obstacle is strongly recommended for large classes.
Achievable within SCT	<p>See general discussion on setting snooker course times.</p> <p><i>45 – 55 seconds</i>: (a) standard snooker configuration, (b) 3 of 4 red configurations, and (c) configurations of jumps/tunnels only.</p> <p><i>50 to 60 seconds</i>: (a) modified snooker configuration, (b) 4 red configurations, (c) configurations of two or more “color” combinations with Contact Obstacles and/or Weave Poles.</p>

Relay Course Checklist		Things to Check For
	Briefing Info is present	Additional notations should include which half goes first (if the start/finish line don't make that obvious), and the policy for mixed height teams (i.e. designate a side or indicate handler's choice).
	Obstacle count	<u>Starters</u> : minimum of seven obstacles on each half. <u>Advanced/Masters</u> : minimum of nine obstacles on each half.
	Obstacle requirements	<p><u>Required</u>: The course consists of at least 15 obstacles and must contain at least 6 of the following obstacles: A-Frame, Dog Walk, See-Saw, Pipe Tunnel, Collapsed Tunnel, Tire, Weave Poles, and Spread Hurdle. The Table is not permitted as an obstacle to be performed. More than 50% of jumps must be winged. The number of tires and tunnels taken in total should not exceed 5.</p> <p>Each course half to be performed must contain at least one contact.</p> <p>Jumps may not be used on both halves on the course unless the club has only allowed dogs of the same jump height to be paired (i.e. no mixed height teams).</p>
	Proper approach distances to jumps	The design should follow the same guidelines for these categories as on the common course checklist with the additional restriction that the first dog finishing up should have a safety buffer of at least 15' minimum from where the second dog to run can be reasonably expected to start.
	Approach angles are safe	
	Safe landing is provided after jumps	
	Judgable for handoffs	Is the exchange area well defined or marked? Will you be able to judge improper exchanges from your planned judging position?