

Course Design - Part 3

Level 2 Hopefully, you've still got the previous two parts to refer to with regard to ring size. Still performed on lead, with an additional 13 exercises and 2 bonus exercises to use alongside those of Level 1. A minimum of 12 and a maximum of 15 exercises, with no more than 8 static positions. The same markers may now be used for two exercises and not just one, as in Level 1. This gives more flexibility in the use of the ring area and exercises. However, we now need to consider the ratio of L1 : L2 exercises; namely $\frac{3}{4}$: $\frac{1}{4}$. This is where school maths lessons come to the fore, and to have an ideal ratio it is better to opt for either a course of 12 or 15 exercises.

Let us analyse the additional 13 exercises and bare in mind there is only an increase of 2 in the maximum number of static positions allowed from the 6 in L1. So of the 13 exercises, there are 5 with no static positions (**25. 270 DEGREE LEFT, 26. 360 DEGREE LEFT, 33. SPIRAL RIGHT, 34. SPIRAL LEFT & 35. WEAVE THROUGH DISTRACTIONS**). Of the remaining 8 exercises, 4 are directional, but all have 2 static positions (**27 & 28. PIVOT RIGHT & PIVOT LEFT, 29 & 30. SIT, TURN RIGHT, 1 STEP, SIT & SIT, TURN LEFT, 1 STEP, SIT**); 2 have 1 static position (**23. SIT- WALK AROUND, 32. SIT-SEND AROUND FORWARD**) and 2 have 2 static positions (**24. SIT -DOWN WALK AROUND, 31. SIT -SEND AROUND-SIT**).

The design of the course will again be determined by the size of the ring and the personal preferences of ourselves. As we can now use the markers for two exercises that can free up space, but we have to be mindful of taking the course back to the markers to reuse them. At this level, it is asking a little too much to have these exercises starting from the same end of the markers – just a little too confusing at this stage! So, ideally, we've got to take the course back to the markers. Easiest way is to start the marker exercise with the Serpentine or Figure8 exercise and follow this with an about turn exercise to take them back to the markers to then do a Spiral. If you start with the spiral, you invariably have to work a square of some kind to get back to the markers. This can then make the course consist of directional exercises, which will start to rapidly deplete the number of static positions you may use. Although, there is nothing to stop you using just the static turn exercises from L2. You can actually make a 12 exercise course, using these and as a consequence you would have to use all of the available turns in L1, plus the Serpentine, 360R & Side Step Right exercises. Try it.

The opposite would be to see if you can make a course using the 5 exercises from L2 that contain no statics, and with a maximum of 2 static positions. It is possible and has obviously got to be a 15 exercise course, with 10 exercises coming from L1.

Normally, we probably would not look at these extremes when planning our courses, but by doing so it makes us more aware of the limitations and the importance of directional exercises. Ideally, we are looking for a balance of exercises which will test the consistency and accuracy of the dog/handler partnerships, handler knowledge of exercises and Rally regulations. A course of turns consisting of statics, will look at the accuracy of the turns, the communication skills of handler to dog (to avoid FTM) and to sit promptly. Whilst, a 15 exercise course with only statics, will certainly show up lack of endurance, lack of attention, lack of motivation and the ability to follow a course (it will have to include a Serpentine, Figure 8, Weave through distractions and the 2 spirals). Quite challenging!

Moderation is probably key and I like to see a 'wait' exercise, rather than go for the Sit, walk around, I'd opt for the Sit, down, walk around, so that I can look at the dog's response to a change of static position command. For some nice duration of travel, a spiral and a serpentine, then for an accurate and responsive turn 1 of the static turn exercises. To add to these 4 static positions, I would probably opt for a call front, finish exercise (most likely to the left); again, looking for responsiveness and accuracy. This would then allow me to look at the dog going to the right of the handler with the Sit, send around exercise, having had a look at a finish on the left, I'd opt for exercise 32, as opposed to 31. That gives me a spare static position if I want. Having decided these key points, I need to work them into a course, with either the 360L or 270L, thus a 15 exercise course. That is where the brain ache starts, and it has been quite exacting working out some of the permutations to write this. Happy rallying!