

Welcome to the world of Agility! We are confident that you and your dog will soon be hooked!!

Agility is all about getting a dog to negotiate a set of obstacles, which they must go through, on, over or round, in a pre-defined sequence, safely and as quickly as possible. Agility builds confidence in dogs mentally and physically. It can be fantastic for re-habilitating under socialised or under confident dogs, if taught correctly.

In competition, failure to complete an obstacle or part of the course successfully will results in faults or elimination. To win a competition in agility, the handler must guide the dog without touching him or her, safely round the correct course clear and in the fastest time possible.

Dogs are grouped into three sizes to compete: Small, Medium and Large and the jump heights are set to accommodate these differences.

The main categories of equipment are as follows:

Contact Equipment:

There are three main pieces of contact equipment:



1. A Frame



2. Seesaw



3. Dog Walk

At the end of each of the above pieces of equipment, denoted by a different paint colour, there is a 'Contact Point'. The dog must be trained to ensure that at least one foot, although ideally all four, touches the contact on the way up **and** down. Failure to do so results in faults be awarded.

Weaves:

The idea is to weave in and out of each of the poles as quickly as possible, without missing any, whilst ensuring that the dog enters the weaves with its left shoulder next to the first weave bar as failure to do so can result in faults.



Tunnels:

There are two types of tunnels – the ordinary expandable tunnel and the 'flat' tunnel where the dog starts off in an ordinary tunnel but then has to continue going through the flat material at the end and out again.

Long Jump:

As the name suggests, these are jumps that are wide rather than high which the dog will have to stretch itself over to clear.



Ordinary Jumps:

As mentioned previously, the height of the jumps in each class is dependant on the size of the dog competing.

Basic obedience training is strongly recommended especially as the dog will be working off the lead in the presence of other dogs. If your dog is obedient and responsive then you are going to find it much easier to learn agility. Remember you have a whole new set of skills to learn too, so the better mannered your dog, the easier it will be for you to come to terms with the non dog aspects of agility (learning to remember courses, your left from your right, to change direction at faster speeds than normal, lots of new commands etc etc.).

To those thinking of starting out in agility, please bear in mind that you will have to wait until your dog is mature physically. At Wellow we suggest a minimum age of 12 months. Agility is physically demanding and can, and will, take its toll if started too early.

Dog must be fit to do agility and this means not being overweight. You too will need to be fairly fit too to keep up!

We are often asked by people on the Waiting List if there is anything they can do with their dogs at home in the meantime to get them started. We hope the suggestions below may be of some help in this respect.

- You can build your own jump at home in the garden using either a few bricks (or a flower pot) with a broom or pole across the top. Practice telling your dog to sit and stay and then re-calling the dog over the jump towards you.
- You can make your own weave poles using plastic electric fence poles or garden canes dug in to the lawn at 12inch intervals apart. Try to have either six or twelve poles – as these are the numbers you would later find in a competition.
- You can teach your dog the basics of contact equipment simply using a plank of wood on the lawn at home. Find a piece sufficiently wide that your dog can happily walk along it without loosing its balance/footing. Teach the dog to step confidently on to and walk along the plank, without stepping off the side, and then pause at the other end to be fed a treat before being told he/she can step off the plank. It is vital that the dog understands that you give this release command and that they must not step off the end of the plank until you say it is OK for them to do so.