



DYI Dog Friendly Obstacle Course

Just like us, our dogs love to explore and discover new things. Creating a simple, fun obstacle course can be an amazing learning tool. It can be a great way to build your puppy / dog's confidence, proof obedience skills and bond with you. You can set up some items in your home or, if you have space, your backyard.

Items should be safe with no sharp edges, and no slick or rough surfaces. Any items that are meant to be jumped over should be kept low, below the dog's chest height. Items meant for the dog to walk on should be checked for balance and ability to support the dog's weight comfortably.

While there are prefabricated items to purchase and instructions for building items online, we recommend keeping it simple until you and your dog decide you both LOVE IT. Treats and encouragement should be used while investigating each item.

These videos show how to best present new items to your pet. Created by Napa Humane:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ex2AM2eFfM&feature=youtu.be>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Z-CTC4C0_E&feature=youtu.be

Tunnels can be made from tables or chairs, covered with a sheet. Below are examples of a card table tunnel and chair tunnel. A child's fabric play tunnel can work for small to medium dogs, but it should be tethered as shown on this page. Another idea is cutting the bottom off a plastic garbage can (see end of this article for examples).



The photo above shows several items that are easy to find &/or make. This is a good starting point for a DYI Dog Friendly Obstacle Course.



Items to walk over include low bars made of PVC (shown above) and a variety of ramps, bathmats, doormats, tarps, crate trays, muffin tins, plastic garden lattice, cardboard boxes, and even empty kiddie pools. Choosing a variety of colors, textures and finishes helps the puppy / dog understand that he/she can move over any item safely.

Once your puppy / dog is comfortable on items, you can request specific skills. For example: once your dog has seen, sniffed and walked on a selection of mats multiple times, you can then request a 'sit' or 'down' on specific surfaces.



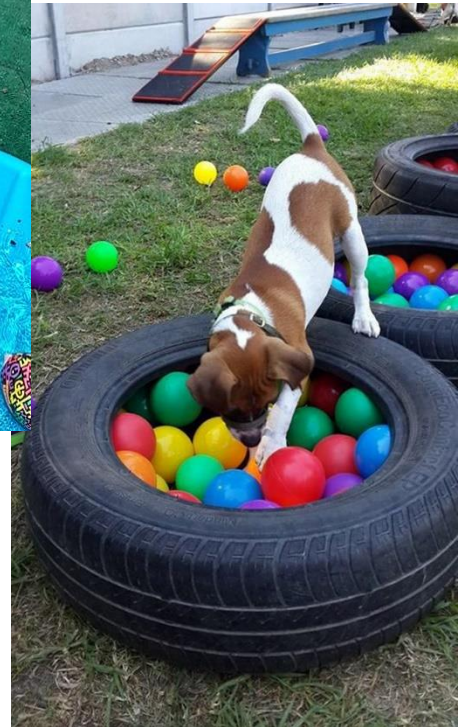
Plastic cones can be used to help the dog learn to weave and also as bases for low jumps. Plastic laundry baskets can also be used as bases for low jumps, with PVC piping or broom handles for the bars. Remember, anything your dog is jumping over needs to be below his/her chest level, never higher. The photo below (with the German Shepherd Dog) is a perfect example of a safe height.



Using a **hula hoop or flexible tubing** to make a jump is also fun. These examples show a PVC base and sides. If making this item be sure that the feet of the stand are long enough to balance the weight.



Pools and Old Tires can be used for play with or without water and bounce house balls. As with other objects, starting slow is best. Let your dog determine how much they want to do, that way you will know he/she is enjoying the activity.



Once you have gathered some items, create a space for you and your dog to enjoy together. Here are a few examples –

