

Baseline Method of Course Building

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This method was developed for a small group to place the agility obstacles in their relative position in the ring as shown on the judge's course layout. The course builders take little account of the actual course flow. This is done as the judge tweaks the course on their walkthrough.

Most courses are now drawn using computer software and show a grid layout.

Before going out onto the course:

1. Draw the baseline on the course layout. (I usually draw it up the center of the course.)
2. Mark the zero point of the baseline (I use the edge of the ring/course layout so the distances match the ring grid distances.)
3. Draw a line perpendicular to the baseline to the obstacle(s) to be placed (this is the offset distance).

For consistency, place the obstacles as follows:

- **Jumps** – to the center of the bar (allows for different sized jumps than drawn to be where the judge wanted them.)
- **Weave Poles** – first and last pole (gives correct orientation)
- **Seesaw & Dogwalk** – center of the ramps at each end of the obstacle
- **A-Frame** – two corners (one at upside and one at downside)
- **Tunnels** – center of each end
- **Chute** – center of entrance
- **Table** – center of table

For each obstacle to be located, measure the distance along the baseline from zero and measure the distance from the baseline to the obstacle. Note these distances on the course layout.

Building the Course (setting the obstacles in place)

Lay 100-foot tape up the middle of the course – this is the ring baseline. I reference each end with a golf tee. The chief course builder has a wheel/tape/measured pace with which to measure the offset distance to the obstacles.

For each obstacle:

- Find the baseline distance on the tape
- Measure out the offset distance
- Set a marker for that point
- Ring crew, not the chief course builder, moves equipment into place

What you measured on the scale course layout you have just recreated in life scale in the ring. Set all the obstacles in this manner.

Tips to speed up the process:

- Set the obstacle at the edge of the ring first and work in towards the baseline.
- When setting jumps, have one ring helper carry some bars, as the bar is set down on the ground in the correct orientation other ring crew bring in the wings/extra bars to build the jump.
- Use a clearly visible marker; a cone works well for contacts, weave poles, etc.
- Setting ring barriers at 20-foot intervals gives the course builder a good reference for direction out from the baseline.
- Be efficient in ring crew. Know who is moving the big pieces of equipment into place. Have additional help for jump setting while others build the big pieces.
- While the chief course builder has the master course copies, also give the ring crew copies of the courses.
- If building "nested" courses, mark on the sheets which obstacles remain in place from course to course.

Advantages

1. What the judge has on the course diagram is what is in place on the ground. If it works, there should be very little tweaking by the judge.
2. If working with nested courses, the main pieces of equipment should be in place for the day and be a reference point for subsequent courses.
3. The distance out from the baseline is relatively short so orientation should not be a factor.

Disadvantages

1. What the judge has on the course diagram is what is in place on the ground. If it does not work, the judge is required to perform major tweaking.
2. Requires small, compact, trained crew who understands the method.

This information is provided by WAG (Wi-IL Agility Group of Spring Grove, IL) to share with other interested members of the agility community. www.wagaagility.com ver 7/05