

CYCLING WITH YOUR DOG FOR PRIME TIME TOGETHERNESS and the E.T.

Dogs LOVE to run with the LEADER OF THE PACK! There are not many ways of exercising your dog that can equal or surpass the joy of cycling through the pretty streets of suburbia, unless you can cycle in the countryside! For many of us with Working Dogs, it is the chosen way of exercising mind and muscle!

YOU MAY START EXERCISING your youngster with the bicycle at 10 months of age, never before. At this young age, slowly running with a bike just once around the block is sufficient. **Too much exercise** is even more harmful to a dog's growing bones and ligamentation than not enough! You will spend the first week simply teaching him to move with the bike instead of trying to beat it! You may find that 500m is all you get in the first few days!

If you have decided that your adult dog is going to get his 2 or 3 km run each day, then perhaps cycling is the ideal way to take the dog on his gaiting sessions.

The idea is not to have the dog on a lead and letting him pull you along at Lord knows what speed, it is not to go charging around, screeching round the corners, and definitely not letting the dog do all the work whilst galloping along happily with you just coasting along, or behind! Two things should be foremost in your mind, your - and your dog's - safety, and the benefit the dog is to get from this exercise.

SAFETY FIRST. LEARN TO CYCLE. If you know you can relax on the bike, do all turns with or without brakes - don't forget the hand signals - then it is time to teach the dog to accompany you on a bicycle.

Get yourself onto the left side of the road, the dog on lead, on your left side of course. Tell your dog to "come along" AND WALK. Just 100m will do. Show your dog what happens if he gets in front of the bike. When the dog watches the wheel, it is time to cycle. Slowly, keeping the dog level with your body, behind the wheel. Use your voice to steady the dog, praising a steady trot.

Never use the leash correction of jerking the dog back to guide him into a slow gait. **That is simply Dog Abuse.** If your dog pulls too hard, **calmly use a drawn out "steady"**, and if he does not slow down, **then use your NRM and simply STOP! As soon as the dog relaxes the tension on the lead, say "GOOD", and move on. When the lead tightens, STOP!**

We are NOT in a hurry to get anywhere, we are allowing the dog to learn that pulling on the bike leads to a warning STEADY, a great command that will help him to slow down in the show ring, in Tracking and on the Agility course as well! When cycling, if he doesn't heed the "steady", then we use our NRM that is the No Reward Marker of OOPs or UhOh and simply stop! You will be AMAZED to see how quickly our dogs learn to move at a smooth loose leashed trot once we use this method!

Learn to walk before you RUN! And here we are only talking about walking on the loose leash, we haven't even added the excitement of RUNNING with the bike!

It follows then, that it would be a good idea to teach the dog to walk on a loose leash before venturing out with a bicycle to have some fun! Find yourself a trainer familiar with motivational training! You'll be amazed at how responsive even dogs that are not renown for their obedience skills will become when using food as a motivator and training with Positive Reinforcement!

When you're out cycling, the dog may "run at heel", that would be ideal, but the dog's shoulder level with the spoke of the front wheel is quite safe provided the dog watches that wheel. The lead should be held in the left hand, slack taken up as necessary, **NEVER wrap the lead around your hand.** It should be **held in the left hand and placed on the handle bar in a firm grip,** enabling you to control the dog with you left hand and the bike with the right should the need arise. In an emergency you want the dog free immediately, not tied to your hand or horror of horrors, to the handle bar! When the chips are down, the dog must be able to run off without pulling you under a truck!

TAKE THE DOG TO AN OVAL or a quiet car park if your street is not as quiet as an old fashioned country lane. Simply drive or walk to a quiet neighbourhood ! And then?

RUN BABY RUN!

Start training your dog to run with a bicycle! Straight at first, then curve gently to the left, cycling in a generous left circle, **teach your dog to watch that wheel,** he must hold back a little when you caution **STEADY,** and keep level with you. Praise every good transition from straight, into the left curve, right around, and straight again. Next teach him to follow you around smoothly on a generous right curve, by extending his stride a little, taking him right around, in a generous right circle, and then let him slow down again into his steady gait, alert to the wheel and your gradual changes of direction. Praise his attentiveness, be alert on the left curve, so that you don't bump him carelessly. **Counter every tightening of the lead with a "steady", and GOOD, if he responds** by slowing down; if not, follow up with "OOPS" and simply STOP! Start again with GOOD, "come along" as soon as the leash is loose, and PRAISE his loose leashed trot!

Next would be to teach your dog a safe change of pace. You want your dog to trot at your side at about 10 to 12 km per hour, that is, a steady, easy gait. Initially you may have to use the brakes a little once in a while, to keep the speed down.

We are TEACHING the dog what we want him to do by rewarding the correct response with what he wants - forward movement - and punishing the wrong move (the pulling) with a wickedly effective **NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT, that is TAKING AWAY something GOOD!**

What do we take away? The forward movement! Sneaky, isn't it!

Try it, it works like magic!

Your voice will tell him "Come along" and then "STEADY" when he pulls. Show him that he is going to lose the privilege of forward movement by happily saying "Ooops", and coming to a HALT. Just STOP DEAD in your tracks! Feet on the ground, you brace yourself.

You have taken away all forward movement to punish for the pulling. Tough, aren't you!

This positively elegant correction causes **no stress, no strain, no fear, no pain!** The dog learns happily and quickly, that the quickest way to get anywhere, is to run at the side of the bike on a loose leash!

We are not on a conveyor belt, **we will teach a change of pace!** So, PEDAL A LITTLE FASTER or, if the dog was pulling somewhat, as we at times will permit them to do, just release the brakes a little. **Let the dog pick up some speed.** Enough to be gaitting fleet footedly without breaking into a gallop. Let him extend himself to cover that ground at a fast trot, a smooth, easy gait. ON A LOOSE LEASH! **Yes, there are times when we permit a little gentle pulling!** We are not automatons either - we can decide when to give a little more liberty of pulling slightly as we gently hold down the brake, and when to **warn him off with STEADY** and then Ooops!

BUILDING UP POWER! SLOW DOWN a little, and now you practise your lead handling. **Allow the lead to tighten**, slow down a little more as you **gently use the brake**, and encourage your dog to GO or trot - trot, MOVE IT, or whatever term you use to get your dog really "working" in the show ring if you happen to work a G.S.D. **Let your dog really dig in, use his powerful hindquarters**, keep him level with the front wheel and let him "work" for 100m or a little more if he is old enough. Then use your voice to get the dog's attention, tell him "STEADY" and have him trotting at your side again on a LOOSE LEASH. Slower still, keep the dog's attention on YOU and the front wheel. At these times we may use a soft tch- tch, or kissy sound, to gain the dog's attention. When they "work" into the lead, they are **on an adrenaline high** and often become a little light headed, so a light, sharp and happy sound breaks into their thoughts quickly! Dogs are speed and power junkies!

After that stint of fast gaiting followed by the slower but muscle-building steady pull, your dog should be happy to drop into **a loose leashed easy trot at your side**, listening to your encouragement, enjoying the easy flowing gaiting session.

THE DOG WILL SOON LEARN that **when you tighten the lead**, you want him to respond to your GO or Trot-trot and **lean into that lead steadily**. For this, your arm is out and the lead held as in the show ring but shorter of course, so that the dog can not interfere with the front wheel.

TO TROT AT YOUR SIDE ON A LOOSE LEASH, use your voice, warn him to go STEADY, guide the dog into position and keep him there with your voice-control. The lead is loose, held comfortably in your left hand on the handlebar. Praise him whenever the lead is loose initially!

OF COURSE YOUR DOG KNOWS THE SIT! Teach him to sit whenever the bike comes to a halt. It makes life easier! Tell him SIT and PRAISE! Repeat several times in a row! By working in blocks, or sets of moves, YOU are gaining experience and your dog will learn quicker! The thing to remember is that PERFECT practice makes perfect! The reward? Praise and trotting!

DISTRACTIONS:

Picture yourself out cycling with your dog in some quiet suburban street then **out charges a madly yapping little dog**. Some cute little mama's darling, or a mangy mongrel, it matters not what! How would your dog react? How would you react?

Most likely your dog's hackles will come up and he will surge ahead, trying to get in front of the bike and at the dog, or he will lunge to the side, hoping to get him.

We used to say:

Here you give a sharp NO. a quick flick of the lead, and then - - steady, or here, or whatever, to remind your dog that he is suppose to remain at your side.

That's OK, but there IS a better way!

Simply get your dog's attention by softly calling, COME ALONG, STEADY, and then GOOD, as your dog gives you his attention for a split second. A split second??? YES! It's all a matter of TIMING! His attention goes to the dog??

You call him by name, pleasantly, and with a "come along", and STEADY, alert him to the possibility of your "OOOps" and STOPPING! As soon as he looks back to you, PRAISE!

If the situation was terribly tempting for your dog and you are not certain how things would have ended if you hadn't been on the ball, **WORK ON IT !**

CYCLE DOWN THAT STREET AGAIN and hope the little tyke rushes out! This time, talk happily to your pal, tell him he's a good dog, if he only prances on tippy toes but stays in position. Cycle on slowly and **make sure you get enough distraction of this kind** to make your dog reliable in any situation. You need to **guide your dog into SUCCESS repeatedly** in this situation in order for your Wonderdog to understand that you wish him to IGNORE the challenger and concentrate on running with YOU! Praise, smile, sound enthusiastic with your "GOOD DOG" when he looks at YOU and keeps running alongside the bike, ignoring the tyke! When out of range of the resident rover's wrath, slow down, come to a halt and **REALLY love up your dog!** Your aim is not to merely come out of this encounter unscathed, but to go into the situation convinced that your dog is easy going and relaxed enough to take his cue from you and stay with you happily instead of straining to take up the challenge!

When dogs respond to the charge of a neighbourhood hooligan (we are talking about the four footed variety) charging at him, you can both be in danger! Can you imagine the damage to a dog's jaws if he happened to get his muzzle caught between the spokes of the wheel as he lunges to the right, hoping to get the dog??

RESPECT THAT WHEEL!

What would happen to you; if you went over the handle-bar? A terrible thought!

That's why it is so important to **teach your dog respect for that front wheel**. Cycle slowly on an oval and turn left sharply, PRAISE and keep going. Do generously curved figure eights on wheels! WOW! This is FUN! What a good dog you have there! Tell him how clever he is!

Using Positive Reinforcement, teach your dog to drop quickly on the first command. If you don't know how, send me a letter or an e-mail

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and ask about the Puppy Downs, or read all about it in the Pre-Kindy Book! Then cycle along slowly, say DOWN and screech to a halt, feet on the ground so that your dog can drop instantly.

Teach him that if you must stop at a crossing, he must sit or stand without hesitation unless you direct otherwise.

PREVENT DAMAGE TO YOUR DOG'S STRUCTURE:

Have you considered how much damage you can do to your dog if he runs on bitumen every day? I don't mean the pads, they will harden soon enough, but **the joints and ligaments**. Dogs aren't built to run on bitumen for hours. It is a good idea to teach your dog to run on the grass verges. You are on the side of the road anyway, so just the command "UP" as you steer close to the kerb, will **get the dog up on the lawn**. This way he can run tirelessly without jarring his shoulder every step of the way. For the first 6 - 8 weeks, **cycling once around the block or the oval is ample**. Most of his exercise at around a year of age, should still be free play!

For the German Shepherd Dog that is reluctant to GO OUT IN FRONT, to use his hindquarters and really dig in, cycling is a good way to teach him to use his muscles, as even the slightest **pressure on the lead, will activate the opposition reflex** and cause the dog to pull!

Every dog wants to pull strongly when you start out.

Fine, utilise this. Hold the lead taut, short, and softly encourage your dog to GO, PUSH, trot-trot or MOVE! Let him pull for a while as you **keep the bike slow, brakes on gently**. After 100m of this, softly call STEADY, come to a halt, let the dog sit, PRAISE HIM and start again.

"GO" , lead tight, dog pulling strongly, working at a steady gait. Keep this up for another 100 - 200 metres. Then relax the lead, use your voice to keep the dog at your side with the lead loose.

Oh yes, the **E.T. Training is GREAT for show dogs!** What a way to build up muscle power! Even at about a year, his first few **outings should not be more than 1 km**, with only **100m of pulling into the lead**. There is so much for the dog to learn : how to sit at a crossing, waiting with you, how to drop quickly if necessary, how to stay close to you without interfering with the bike in any way, how to trot at a leisurely gait, the extended trot, faster and smooth, without breaking into a gallop, the steady slow trot on a tight lead, pulling when you ask him to, **IGNORING the challenges** of dogs rushing up towards him menacingly - so much to exercise both muscles and mind!

You'll find that after your outing, **on the way home, the dog wants to pull again**. His homing instinct is driving him on! He wants to lead the way!

I agree that it would be tremendous fun to let him gallop home, hell for leather, but very, very unwise.

POWER AND DISCIPLINE: This last stretch home is ideal for a little bit of discipline. By all means let the dog pull - but at your speed. Let him enjoy dragging the bike with him for the last 150 metres, brakes on gently to keep the speed down and to make the dog really use his muscles.

WITH YOUR PERMISSION! You tell him to **MOVE IT** and **PRAISE HIM** for obliging!

This is fine on perhaps every second or third occasion. At other times, he comes home well controlled on a **LOOSE LEASH!** He will always hope that next time, **MAYBE NEXT TIME**, you will permit him to pull, but he should always be willing to concentrate on the loose leashed trot if you ask for it! He has learned the meaning of **STEADY**, and he knows that if he gets carried away and pulls or lunges, there will be the "Oooops", and all motion forward stops. **THAT** is frustrating for him, so he will work hard to avoid it! Naturally you must respond in this manner consistently!

HOME AGAIN! As you are nearing your property, whether he is "working into the lead" or **moving at a leisurely pace without pacing**, (unless he's an O.E.S. who is showing off his fluid, flowing, ambling, elastic pacing gait) **get your dog's attention on your voice** again. Slow down, watch out for the neighbourhood cat or cars, slowly get onto your drive way, jump off, walk your bike and dog to where you want to go, and halt. Is your dog sitting? If not, why not??

Leave him on a sit-stay while you park your bike, take off the lead, **give him a cuddle** and then free him to run into your yard or leave him on lead to accompany you to sit at the front door.

After 5 minutes he will need a drink. **Don't allow him to drink in excess** and most certainly **don't ever feed your dog after a run**.

Do not ever "run" your dog to exhaustion. Ideally you should cycle to an oval, do a bit of show or obedience training and then play with your dog. This can be followed by some more cycling.

This could be your daily routine. **Don't always cycle along the same route**, give your dog some adventure, some variety; going out should be fun - not just exercise for muscles and lungs.

A mature dog that runs 5 km every day or even just 3, will not find the Endurance Test (ET) any strain at all. Just a nice, long stroll! The daily exercise will strengthen his muscles, give him a firmer back and **develop the power in his hindquarters**.

DURING THE ET, of course, **your dog must gait** beside the bicycle **on a LOOSE LEASH**. During your conditioning training, your dog will learn quickly that he is to trot by your side on a loose leash unless you tighten the lead and ask him to **GO**. Then he will lean into the lead and "work" for you. We even have some ultra fit handlers who **JOG** all the way on the ET!!!

IF YOU ARE TRAINING FOR THE ET, and the VIMS or MONTAMELIA, our two days competition for the **West Australian Iron Men of the Dog World**, make sure that you throw in a couple of minutes of obedience work after cycling home, when the dog has had 15 minutes rest! Just a little bit of heelwork on lead. Motivate him with food or a toy, have him strut his stuff!

In the ET, **we used to do HEEL FREE**, but now we only need to show that our dogs are manageable on lead and willing to work.

VIMS / MONTAMELIA dogs need the full obedience workout! Any dog at CDX level would be ready to start training for this event. Ask for John Glenny, the GSDA of WA Head Trainer and VIMS Trainer Extraordinaire!

Clip on the lead, have your dog sitting expectantly for a moment, say his name in a happy tone of voice and **invite him to HEEL!**

After about 6 paces, **say GOOD and slip him a morsel of cheese or a sliver of liver!**

Then heel on and use the reinforcer of food or fondling as required by your dog. Perhaps a tickle under the jaws every 15 paces or so? Or click and treat on a variable ratio of reinforcement?

Perhaps he can go for **20 paces prancing in position**, never taking his eyes off your face? WOW, you are both so GOOD! Take it easy, and built up your dogs enthusiasm for a short burst of heeling after Your enjoyable work out of gaiting, on the oval, or down the street, around the block!

HEEL WORK IS FUN!

Think of all your homework together and make sure that every session is HAPPY TRAINING!

LOST HIS DRIVE?

Should your dynamic heeler ever lag, ask yourself WHY IS IT SO??

What has happened to make heeling a bore? Are you just walking along expecting him to prance at your side? Are you giving him a "correction" because he doesn't enthusiastically keep in position? **BE FAIR TO YOUR DOG!** He's your partner in heelwork, lighten up a little, have fun together! If he isn't going to prance at your side with joy of working with you - DON'T TRAIN! Don't waste your time and sour your dog's disposition. **Unenthusiastic heeling is no fun!** Not for you, miserable for the dog, and a pain for the onlooker! Rest him in a down stay and let him recharge his batteries, he may be fatigued!

HE LOST INTEREST. WHAT NOW?

Nagging him into line isn't going to have him thrilled to be with you!

Only success breeds success!

GIVE HIM SUCCESS!

After his little down stay, **heel him for a few paces** with enthusiasm, he'll catch the mood, work through a few positions, reinforce with **extras for excellence!** Have FUN!

Quit when you're ahead!

THE JUMP OVER A HURDLE was once required for the ET.

It is no longer a requirement. Now we work on this only for the VIMS and MONTAMELIA CUP!

The jump starts and finishes with the dog sitting in the heel position, so work on every aspect, taking up position, sending the dog, and sending him to heel after he has sat in front on the return jump. He's so good!

Most of us just like to go cycling with our dogs for the fun of it. Prime time togetherness! Cycling with an untrained dog is a hassle and dangerous to boot. Spend the time to teach him correctly. Your dog will need to be reliable on the Recall too. Go for it with **HAPPY TRAINING!**

Get in touch with your local Obedience Club or your Breed Club and ask for a copy of the Endurance Test Rules! Study the Rules and have your dog checked by your veterinarian for your fitness certificate. **The E.T. has been a popular event for decades**, it is an event that will have your dogs' hearts thrill and for any owner and lover of dogs, this super test can be one of the highlights of the year!

Snippets from the Rules for the E.T.

The test is open to dogs aged between two (2) and under eight (8) years but must not have reached the birth date of eight.

A veterinary certificate, issued within fourteen (14) days immediately prior to the date of the test, must be submitted, for each dog on the day. It shall cover such things as the general fitness, temperature, standing heart rate, condition of the pads and muscle tone of the dog. (For bitches the certificate is to state also that the bitch is not in whelp).

Clause 2 of the ET rules says:

Prior to the commencement of the 20 km run, a short Willingness test will be conducted (to include a recall) on or off the lead. **At the completion of the run** and after the final 15 mins rest period, a short **Willingness test** will be conducted (to include a recall) on or off the lead.

Clause 7: **Dogs reluctant to go with handlers are to be disqualified.**

***The judge shall keep in mind that this is a test of the dog's willingness to work and to obey the handler, not an obedience test.**

****The Willingness test** is to be conducted in groups of approximately four (4). The test is to consist of heeling forward a short distance, followed by a right about turn and continued heeling for a short distance before coming to a halt. It is not necessary for the dog to sit. ****The dog must show a willingness to remain with and obey the handler.** The heeling is to be followed by a short recall, on or off the lead. *****The judge shall keep in mind that this is a test of the dog's willingness to work and to obey the handler, not an obedience test.** The standard of the work after the 20 kms must be similar to that before the start of the test. If the dog works on or off the lead for the Willingness test prior to the 20 kms, it is to be the same for the second Willingness test.

(The asterisks * are mine, HGR!)

My interpretation of Willingness in the E.T. as marked by the asterisks above:

**** It is essential to understand that the term WILLINGNESS encompasses the following:** Readiness; agreeableness; state or condition of being willing.

And we should look for, and find in our dogs, before, and on conclusion of the 20Km run: Cheerful compliance, eagerness, or at least : readiness!

Please bear in mind, that the quality or state of being willing means:

Freedom from reluctance, free choice or consent of the will, readiness of the mind to do....

So it goes without saying, that our **dogs need to be loved up**, and primed, **ready for the Test!**

To avoid any confusion, in my book: “During the 20 km test, the judge shall follow the group over a clearly defined course.” AND “The dog is permitted to pull slightly but continued lagging will incur disqualification.” Refer to the GAITING during the ET..

They do not refer to the Heeling or Recall section of the Willingness Test.

*****The dog must show a willingness to remain with and obey the handler.**

In the heeling: We would expect to see the dog at the handler’s side, **ready for action.**

At a glance, you can see that the dog is **agreeable to remain with, and obey his handler.** The remaining with the handler precludes (eliminate, exclude, remove; prevent, make impossible) the dogs’ lagging behind the handler, or forging ahead. The dog is **willing** to be with the handler.

This “willingness” gives us a freedom from reluctance! Willing dogs are light footed, not plodding!

OK, a dog may be plodding because he is exhausted, and still be willing, but that **poor darling** can not pass the ET because he is not vibrant and fit, and he **is lacking in Endurance!**

So get your dog ready for the Willingness Test! Relax your dog, ask for a favourite trick, anything to **let your dog sparkle with joy,** and show his **WILLINGNESS to be with you!**

For the Recall: The heeling is to be followed by a short recall, on or off the lead.

How long is a piece of string? Pass! How long is a short Recall? This is NOT an Obedience Test.

The Shortest Recall is found in the CCD Class, a mere 12m for the beginners. It’s 15m in Novice!

For the ET, it would seem **to me,** that a **short Recall of 8 to 10m is ideal.** On or off lead. The Rules do not stipulate whether the lead could be dropped. It would certainly be most unwise to attempt to go cycling with a dog that does not have a reliable Recall, but I dare say the handlers have a choice for their on lead Recall, of using a lead that they drop as they walk away from their dog. This will be a group exercise, and we don’t want tangled leads! That does not mean Judges ask for a mini Recall, it is a **SHORT RECALL,** and that requires a little bit of obedience. But the finesse of Forward. Halt, (dog sits) Leave your Dog, Call your dog (dog sits) Exercise finish is not required to the extent where it is judged in point value. In the ET, the dog does not even have to sit!!

It is performed on pass or fail for obedience and **WILLINGNESS!** So we don’t need the exquisite training sessions of high skill for top performance, but we do want to see that free choice and consent of the will to stay until called, and **COME** to the handler when called.

The dog plodding in on the Recall, is not by any stretch of the imagination exhibiting readiness, agreeableness to come when called, or the state or condition of being willing! He is demonstrating mental or physical fatigue or both. The poor darling had a magic Recall even as a puppy! Not today!

A dog who runs past the handler and stands at the end of the lead, is **NOT WILLING** to come to the handler when called. He doesn’t care any more, he’s spent enough time with him, he wants something else that has attracted his interest! He is lacking, at this point in time, during this test, the freedom from reluctance, free choice or consent of the will, readiness of the mind to give his handler cheerful compliance!

Nor is the dog that walks up to the handler and stands lack lustre, exhibiting the desired cheerful compliance or eagerness! This has nothing to do with points or finesse of obedience, this is merely an inability at this time, to exhibit **WILLINGNESS!**

Build up your dog’s zest for life, and willingness to work, with lots of love and Happy Training!
HONEY