



ASK THE PRO

double-T drill

By Dave Wolcott

OF ALL THE DRILLS in Basic Training, I feel the *Double-T* is the most important. To get a thorough job on it, dogs are in this drill for 22-28 days in my program. Prerequisite work is, of course, proper forcing to the pile and a good *Single-T*.

Once dogs are ready to begin, as a mark, we identify the back pile, and then release the dog on his name, from about 30 yards away. After this, we back up to the 50 yard (half-way) and send the dog, forcing en route. During the first session, you can get the dog going reliably all the way (about 100 yards) to the back pile. We always use a mat at the starting point to give the dog a sense of place, which will help a young dog perform a clean return and finish to you with the bumper.

Hopefully, you are able to build on this drill every day! First, the right hand deep over is placed about 30 yards from an intersection approximately half way to the back pile. Allow the dog to progress at a rate that maintains his earlier sessions, while still learning new actions. In other words, if Rocky is smoking

down the back line each time but then starts to fade (i.e., go off line) to the over pile, then do a bit more forcing to the back pile (where he was breaking down) in the following session. Then, go on with adding the left hand deep over pile. Eventually, you will have the *Double-T* drill completely built.

Continuing with training, remember to always address the dog's mistakes and/or cast refusals, on the spot. While people get excited teaching a young dog to cast, they often lose sight of the fact the dog might be flaring the line a little or getting a sloppy return*.

I like to look at this drill in much the same way you would load a computer with programs. This is a big part of the young dog's foundation of training and how he reacts to training pressure. This drill is a lot of conditioning training for the dog, but the dog is going to make mistakes while he is learning. The dog is responsible, in large part, for his progress and success.

As the dog becomes more reliable to cast from known intersections to the overs, try

stopping him at different intervals. Try stopping him at a spot that was a partial distance between the intersections, say 40 yards out. Then try a 'back' cast and see if he will go onto the back pile or flare to the deep over pile. If he flares, you have three options:

1. Whistle, sit and handle to back with a bit of force
2. Whistle sit and a nick with a verbal 'no.'
3. Whistle, sit, repeat and handle on to back pile with no force.

This latter correction is for a dog that is pretty well advanced in this drill and is done late in this drill to finish out the dog.

Dogs are complete when they can cast reliably and recover with confidence after a correction. Personally, I like to see the dog handle with a bumper in mouth on return. That is, stop him on return and cast him to either over pile or to the back pile.

Finally, be proactive on the 'sit' command. The dog needs to learn that 'sit' means to sit at the ready next to the handler and look straight ahead, not to shift his gaze around

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the field. Also, remember this is the best drill to teach the dog any correction he will get in the field.

Another back cast we teach in the *Double-T* is the 'no hands back', which I use to cast the dog back at a very controlled pace. I use it, for example, to let the dog know he is close to the bird but still needs to cast back. This works well on the near crest of a hill when, if you yell 'back with a right or left', the dog will turn on the afterburners and possibly miss the bush the bird is planted in.

In doing this, whistle sit the dog quite close to the pile, and then give a vocal no hands 'back'. Take a step or two simultaneously to the left or right, depending which direction you want the dog to turn. I do this quite late in the drill, since primary teaching is to go hard when hearing the 'back' command. However, it is a good tool for them to have under their belt as you move on to transition work. Also, make sure the dog learns right and left hand back.

This may seem obvious, but I know in some versions, more focus is put on getting momentum on 'backs' and not being concerned with direction. It is a lot easier to teach and reinforce the correct handed cast in this drill, then trying to unwind a missed right or left later. ■

Good luck and enjoy building this partnership with your dog in the field! ■

**Many dogs in the course of this training may flare the line to the back pile. You may whistle, sit and handle with collar force. Personally, a quicker and more lasting fix for me is to do a mixture of remote sends (back casts from the line) and forcing en route to pile, instead of many forcings from your side.*



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