

The "W" Drill

By Jim & Phyllis Dobbs and Alice Woodyard

Transition to the Field

The "W" Drill is a drill that helps your dog make the transition from yard work to cold blinds. We discussed some other drills to achieve this goal in our Feb./Mar., 1998, *RJ* column. Like the Feb./Mar. drills, the "W" Drill is set up in the field, not the yard, and gives your dog a chance to strengthen and refine the skills he needs to be successful with "cold blinds."

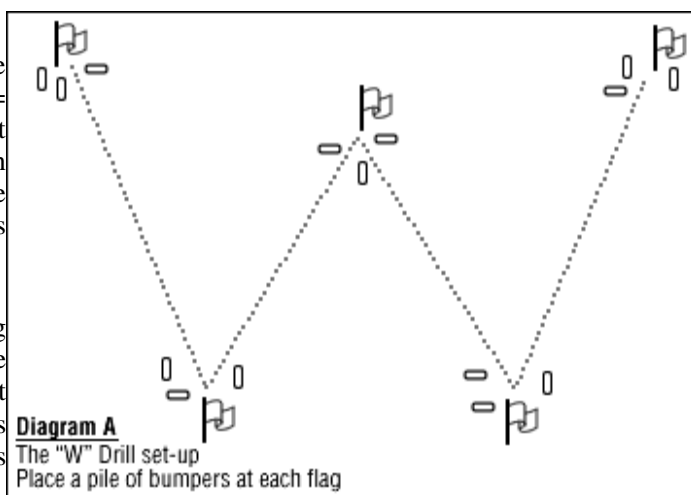
The Training Foundation for the "W" Drill

The "W" Drill is a fairly advanced transition drill. Preparation for this type of drill includes basic "yard" lining and casting skills such as four-, eight- and 16-bumper wagon wheels, the single "T," and the double and modified double "T." Also, your dog will not be ready for the "W" Drill until he has mastered the drills in our Feb./Mar., 1998, *RJ* column.

Setting up the "W" Drill

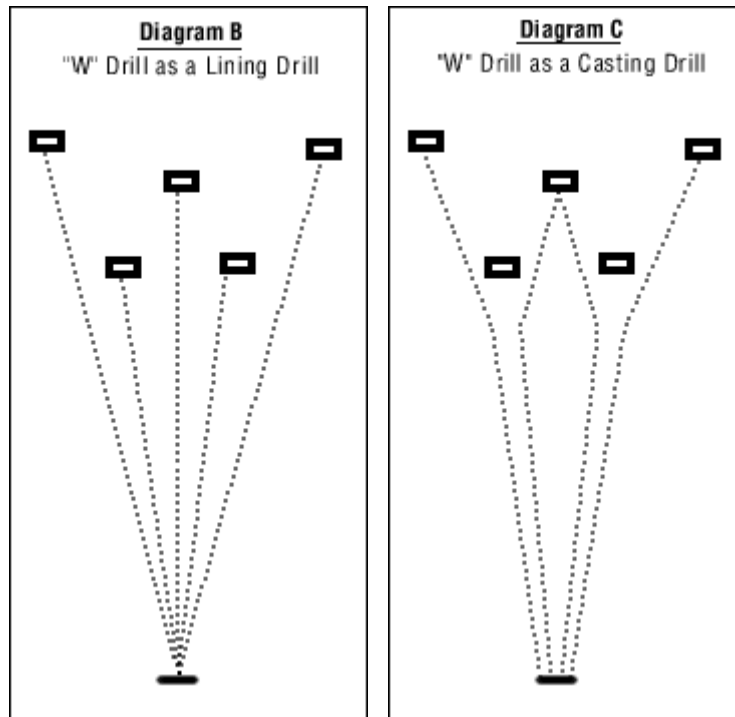
From previous drills, your dog should already be familiar with the equation that "White flag = bumper pile." To set up the "W" Drill, put out five piles of bumpers, with a white flag at each one so the dog can see the location of the pile from a distance. The location of the five piles forms a "W," as shown in Diagram A.

You can make the "W" Drill any size, depending on the fields you have available. However, we recommend that you have outside legs of at least 50 paces each, inside legs of at least 30 paces each, and for a "W" of this size, about 60 paces across the "top" of the "W."



Running the Basic "W" Drill

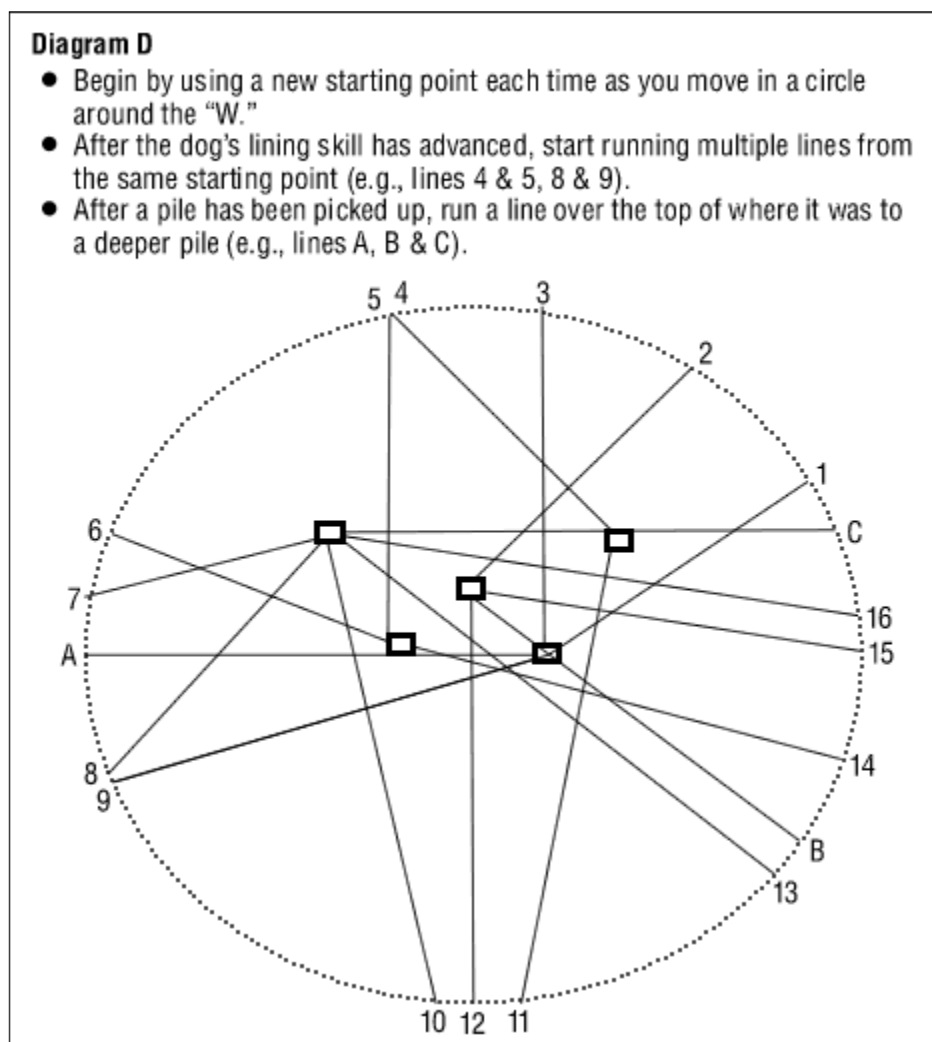
The "W" Drill can be run both as a lining drill and a casting drill. To run it as a lining drill, run it from below the base of the "W," as shown in Diagram B.



To run the "W" as a casting drill, proceed as shown in Diagram C. Send the dog toward the piles at the base of the "W," then stop him with the whistle and cast him to one of the deeper piles. Here, the dog must leave the course he's on by taking an angle "back" cast. Then he must drive deep to the new target.

Running the Advanced "W" Drill

Finally, to really advance your dog's skills, work your way around the drill in a circle from outside the W, selecting various lines and combinations, as shown in Diagram D.



By using the "W" Drill in this way, you can develop just about any combination of lining and casting skills that your dog will need for difficult blind retrieves in the field. There are many ways to use the "W" Drill; just use your imagination.

Correcting the Dog

If the dog can't or won't focus on the correct flag, before you send him, keep moving closer to that flag until he *does* focus on it.

If the dog is giving you poor casts, you should move closer to the dog to handle him, which will increase your influence on him. If he refuses a whistle sit, correct him with the e-collar as you repeat the whistle.

If you are consistently having control problems, you should set the drill up at shorter distances, or go back and redo some of his earlier foundation work.