

Weave Pole Training with X-Pen Cages

This is a 6 week process to teach your dog the basic foundation skills for proper Weave Pole performance. We learned about this method and saw how it works from trainers Sharon Nelson & Becky Woodruff out in Idaho (now in Oklahoma), which we then adapted for our uses (they teach with 4 pole sets, we teach with 6). You will need to practice these skills with your dog at least 1x per day, preferably 2x for about 5-10minutes. If you are in this class, you will need daily access to at least 1 set of 6 competition weave poles, 2 sets of 6 is preferred. The recommended timelines for when to change to the next step in the process, is that 'recommended' every dog is different and some may have more difficulty on any one step than another, so if your dog is having trouble, take a step back and give him some more time. The end goal is to have a dog weaving 6-12 poles with no cages and you can be anywhere in relation to the poles. This will take longer than 6 weeks, weave poles are a life long skill that needs to be practiced, but we have found 6 weeks of consistent work, sets up a good beginning foundation for proper weave performance.

The following diagrams only show where the cages should go on the poles. We recommend that you do NOT do just plain poles but incorporate them into sequences of jumps and tunnels to help your dog understand the speed and learn to control his body when coming into the poles from other obstacles. You will never be just doing 'a set of poles' in a competition atmosphere, so why only train that way? We also recommend that if you have access to more than 1 set of poles, do set ups where the dog is going from 1 set of poles, and the next obstacle in the sequence is another set of poles (both with cages appropriate to the step you are on). Doing back to back poles has a way of blowing some dog's minds completely. And you may see that in a trial some day.

Equipment: You will need at least 2 36" tall metal (no door) x-pens. These can be purchased from various dog supply places, we like Pet Edge www.petedge.com. You will need to separate each x-pen into 2 panel pieces. So for 1 8 panel x-pen you should end up with 4 sections to put on your weaves- 2 connected panels per section. This are your 'V' cages for the poles to help your dog learn where he needs to go. We use actual x-pens rather than garden fence cages or weave wires because they can be 'V'ed and therefore force the big dogs to single step and the small dogs to bounce step. We've found that with a rounded 'cage' such as those made with weave wires or garden fencing, the dog has more choice in his foot work, which may cause problems as you want more speed.

We recommend attaching these to your poles with double sided Velcro ties such as those used to keep bundles of computer cords together (you can get these at any computer supply store such as Staples or Office Max). Some of our students have had success using plastic Zip Ties, but you will need to remember to put these on loose enough so you can remove the x-pens when needed.

You will of course, also need weave poles. You will need at least 6, preferably 2 sets of 6, competition style weave poles. Which means a metal base and at least 36" 3/4" PVC poles. No weave-a-matics, no PVC poles, no stick-in-the-grounds. You may be able to make due with channel poles, as long as they are closed, but most channel sets do not close 100%, they are still slightly open, and your dog will notice when you try to switch to a fully closed competition set. If you decide to use colored tape on the PVC 'pole' we recommend you do NOT make them all the same color and tape pattern. Some dogs have difficulty weaving on different looking poles because they only train on ones with a specific tape pattern or color. For tape, we use colored electrical tape that can be gotten in rolls from Home Depot or Lowes.

You will also need 'supporting' equipment such as jumps and tunnels. This doesn't have to be competition quality, just close enough that your dog learns how to get into the poles coming from doing something else.

Safety: **Never** do serious weave pole training and conditioning in a dog whose growth plates have not yet closed. This usually means the dog must be at least 18months of age. Doing this type of training before that

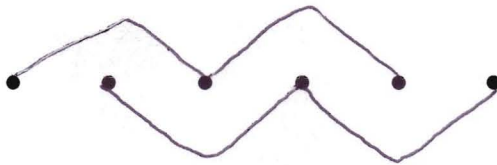
point may cause serious long term injury in your dog due to the repetitive spinal movements needed to do weaves.

Now on to weave training (again please remember, the Days are only recommended, your dog may need more time on any one step, though we have never know a dog to need less time on any one step). These steps only show with 6 poles, but you will need to practice the same steps with up to 12 poles in a line at some point. Dogs do know how to count. **And as a reminder- Dogs ALWAYS 100% of the time, ENTER the poles with the 1st pole on the DOG'S left shoulder.**

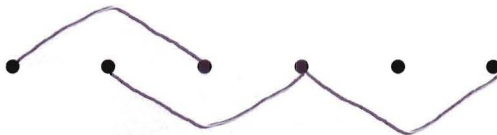
You **must** be sure to practice **each** step and set up with the dog on **both** your left **and** your right sides! There really is no such thing as 'on-side' and 'off-side' weaves, that's just an excuse and crutch that people use to explain away their dog's inability to consistently weave on one side of their handler's body.

Do NOT go to the next step in training until your dog has the speed and accuracy in their performance at the step you are on, that you want in your final weave performance!

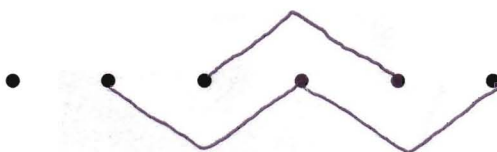
3 Days: Cages on all poles. The 1st few times the dog goes through, he may need a little guiding from a cookie or toy in your hand to show him that he can go in that small space safely and it isn't scary or going to hurt him. After 1 or 2 times of 'help' though, get your hand OUT of there! He's in cages, where is he going to go? How is he going to screw up? If you notice he's having issues, help him a little, but don't over do it. Do you really want your final weave performance to involve your hand in his face? If so, how do you plan to do weaves at a distance?



4 Days: Start to take off Left side of pole cages. Beginning with the one indicated in the diagram. Once the dog is doing all poles, start varying where you are- behind the dog, ahead of the dog, 5' to the left, 10' to the right, etc. Also vary how you come at the poles- from the left slightly, from the right slightly, from straight on going 100MPH, from jumps, from tunnels, from an obstacle 20' away, from an obstacle 15' away from an obstacle 10' away, from a front cross, from a rear cross, etc. Also start proofing your dog- throw a toy as they're in the poles, they must stay in there and complete the poles, have another dog run past, have a food bowl sitting at the end, etc. Really challenge your dog's skill. (you will need to do this at ever step, actually) Oh and don't 'dance' while your dog is in the poles! He will become reliant on it, and really judges and other competitors will snicker at you as you run the course...



4 Days: Take off more Left side cages. This step usually takes a few more practice sessions, as it is harder work for the dog to make the weave entrance going in 1 direction. Follow same criteria to know when to move on as in the previous step.



4 Days: Now we should be completely Left side Cage-Free



Put ALL of the Left side cages BACK ON. Now we will start doing the same thing with the Right side cages as we did in previous days with the left.

3 Days: Continue with removing Right side cages.



4 Days: Continue with removing Right side cages.

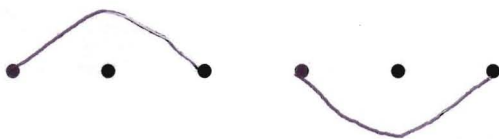


4 Days: Now we should be completely Right side Cage-Free

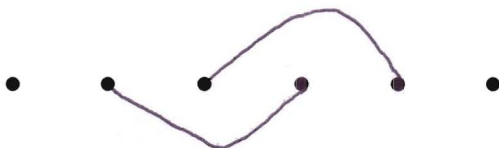


Ok now we're going to start removing portions of both Left and Right cages at the same time to work on entrances, etc. This is the portion where most dogs start having real trouble, so you may need to take more time or put a cage back on for a few tries, then take it off in 1 training session, to help your dog remember what he needs to do.

3 Days: Work on 'getting the middle' portion without cages.



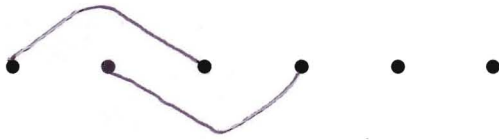
3 Days: Work on 'getting the entrances' portion without cages



3 Days: Work on ability to weave 1st 3 poles with no cages



3 Days: Work on ability to weave last 3 poles with no cages



4 Days: Weaving with only 1 right side cage



4 Days: Weaving with only 1 left side cage



After those last 4 days, you will hopefully now be able to take all cages off the poles and have a nice weaving dog you are beginning to be satisfied with. For a total of 46 days of training, or 6 and a 1/2 weeks.