



BLOG REPRINT

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Tellington TTouch® and the Athletic Dog: Creating Confidence in Connection

Guest Blog: Marnie Montgomery from Joyful Dog, LLC.

Often dogs struggle with the challenges of being in a new environment, so introducing your dog gradually to novel situations while enhancing your connection can go a long way to building confidence.

This second TTouch blog focuses on groundwork—moving with your dog through an array of low obstacles, surfaces and patterns known as a TTouch Confidence Course. The measured pace of the Course provides practice of essential muscular patterns and



Example of a labyrinth course. Photo by Marnie Montgomery, Joyful Dog LLC.

helps create a foundation for the strong, healthy movements that you want to engage during any athletic activity.

Get your dog race-ready by using TTouch to connect confidently!

Begin With a Simple Pattern

Labyrinth: The TTouch labyrinth provides the opportunity to move in partnership with your dog. The purpose is to walk in balance, both individually and as a team, being in no particular hurry to “get from here to there.”

Moving gently with your hip aligned with your dog’s shoulder, adjust your speed at each turn so that you retain this relationship. Pause on the straightaways for a moment to breathe and rebalance. Aware of where you and your dog are in space, look ahead to your path—to where you are going together. Take advantage of these pauses to use some of the touches introduced in our first TTouch blog.



Example of a ladder formation.
Photo by Diane Taub.

Ladder: Placing several sticks parallel to each other, like a ladder, you and your dog can step over or move between them. As with the labyrinth, pause from time to time to take in your surroundings and share a touch.

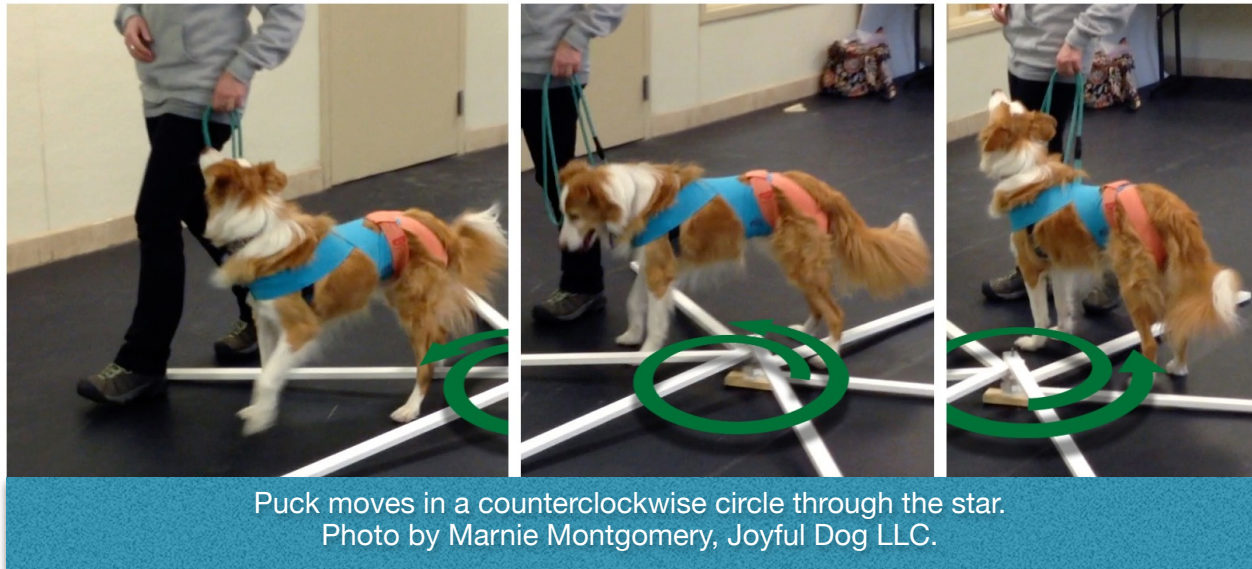
Even a pair of sticks, navigated thoughtfully, can be a complete course for building confidence and connection.

Add Variations

Textures: You and your dog will experience a variety of surfaces under your feet when you run the [Glow Dog Glow 5K](#), and some will be more challenging than others. Get a head start by introducing your

furry friend to simple things found around the house, like bubblewrap, a rough doormat or a Terry cloth towel.

Adjust your path: Walking a Star pattern asks your dog for more thoughtful placement of her feet, while providing the opportunity to observe and practice mid-body flexibility.



Environmental Distractions: Once you both are moving as a well-connected team, you could begin to gradually add distractions, like another person, a novel object or a neutral dog to your training environment.

Practicing in partnership before the race will help build a solid connection. Moving thoughtfully once the race is over maintains your bond while careful placement of paws and feet helps avoid the kind of post-race stumbles that can lead to injury.

Marnie Montgomery, CPDT-KA, is the owner and lead trainer of Joyful Dog, LLC which offers training in the Loudoun, Fairfax and Montgomery Counties. Marnie is a certified TTouch practitioner, a Pat Miller Certified Trainer and a member of the Pet Professional Guild and the Association of Professional Dog Trainers. To learn more about Marnie and Joyful Dog, visit www.joyfuldogllc.com, or find her on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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