



KiwiDogAgility

Dogs jump through hoops!

By Karen de Wit

In Agility one of the jumping obstacles is called a hoop. It is basically a round tube suspended in a frame, or attached to an arm or base like a lollipop. The hoop is collapsible so that if the dog hits it, the hoop will fall apart so the dog does not get injured. You can make your own hoop jump out of irrigation pipe and electric fence stakes.

If you don't want to do agility you could teach your dog to jump through a hula-hoop, or through your arms, which are all great tricks!

In Agility the hoop is set at four heights – micro, mini, midi and maxi. This equates to the height of the dog. Small dogs such as the Bichon Frise and Miniature Schnauzer would jump the tyre where the bottom is 200-300 mm from the ground. Medium dogs such as Shelties and Cocker Spaniels would jump 500mm. Bigger dogs

such as Border Collies and German shepherds and Labradors would jump 600mm. The Hoop has a diameter between 500-600mm, and can be between 65-100mm thick. It can be made from lots of different materials, and must have contrasting bands of colour around its aperture. Hoops used to be made from real motorbike tyres but they were very heavy and caused injuries if they fell on the dog.



The hoop can be a challenging jump for dogs as it does not have a ground line (which helps them sight the jump and decide where to take off from).

Jumping through the Hula-hoop

A hula hoop is an easy way to start. They can be purchased at a reasonable price from most large stores. Initially you will hold the hula-hoop, but it can be an advantage to have it free-standing and for this you can use electric fence stakes, bamboo stakes, tomato stakes etc.

Hold the hoop on the ground close to your dog. With your other hand, show your dog the treat or toy and lure your dog through the hula hoop. Because he wants the food, it should be easy to get him to go through the hoop to get the treat. (Hint: if he goes around you could put the hoop against a wall.)

As your dog gets used to going through the hoop throw the food or toy further away, and even to one side, so your dog has to decide to go through the hoop, rather than around it.

Slowly raise the hoop off the ground, one centimetre at a time. (Note: For safety, dogs under 12 months of age should not jump higher than their wrists)

Soon you will have a dog that can jump through hoops!

Another Hula-Hoop trick:- Rolling the hula-hoop

Practice rolling the hula-hoop so that it stays upright for a good amount of time.



Next ask a friend to roll the hoop away from them. Stand with your dog at 90 degrees to the path of the hoop. As it rolls, ask your dog to go through the hoop.

As your dog gets better at finding the rolling hoop you can vary the angles at which you send him from. You can even roll the hoop yourself.



Jumping through a hoop

Start with the hoop sitting on the ground. Lure your dog through the hoop with food or a toy. Say "Hoop" and give him the food.

As your dog becomes used to going through the hoop, stand up and drop food further away from the hoop, so that he has to run through the hoop to get the food. Ask him to run backwards and forwards through the hoop.

Next drop a piece of food on one side of the hoop, hold your dog's



collar and take him to the other side of the hoop and send him through it. (Hint: Hold him really close to the hoop at first or he will cheat and go around it).

Once he is good at this send him from further away.

You can also get him to wait on one side of the hoop while you go to the other side and call him through.



Once you have taught your dog to run through the hoop in both directions, to run towards you through the hoop and to run away from you through the hoop, you can start increasing the height.

Another great trick: Teach your dog to jump through your arms

Method One

Start close to a wall or similar surface that you can lean your hand up against. Kneel or sit on the ground, facing your dog. Stretch out your arm, and press your hand up against the wall, low to the ground. This will create a low "arm" jump for your dog. With the other hand show your dog that you have a piece of food, or his favourite toy.

Toss the food or toy on the other side of your arm. Say "Jump through"

Your dog should jump over your arm to get the treat.

Next add your other arm. First toss the treat as before, and then before your dog has the chance to jump over one arm, add the second arm.

Once your dog will jump through your arms, move slightly away from the wall. Now raise your arms until your dog will jump through your arms while you are standing up.

(Hint: Add a special command that you only use when you want your dog to jump through your arms, and only reward him when he does it after being asked. You do not want your dog to leap up at you when you are not ready for it!)



Method two

You can also use the hula hoop to teach your dog to jump through your arms.

Once your dog can jump through the hula-hoop, start to wrap your arms around it. Once he is really confident at jumping through when you have both arms wrapped around the hoop, remove the hoop and ask him to jump through your arms.

Show your tricks to all your friends.

HOOPERS

This game isn't actually played in NZ (yet) although a variant of it called Tunnelers sort of is from time to time. The game is HOOPERS and it comprises a course of hoops (no, not the sort of hoop we know of the tyre, but a low height hula hoop-type obstacle). There is also an obstacle called a HEAVER which is a combination of the weave and hoops. The Games is offered by NADAC. The object of the game is more to test the handlers' skills and quick thinking. The dog can run full out with no "air time", allowing for faster speeds than on a jumpers course. This game is suitable for young and old dogs that cannot do "real" agility equipment.

After reading the explanation a few times I think it goes like this – you have a straight line of four hoops called the non-test hoops. In addition you have sets of hoops set up in patterns such as pinwheel, serpentine etc. For each level you have to perform a certain number of non-test hoops and a certain number of test hoops. Eg. In Novice level there are four different tests on the course plus the straight line of 4 non-test hoops. You have to do a minimum of 3 non-test hoops, followed by the test hoops, followed by a minimum of 2 non-test hoops followed by a set of test hoops followed by one non-test hoop. The event I timed and scores are added up.

To see a dog run a Hoopers course go to YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOFSPal45v4>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_BrwKEAaync

<http://video.agaproject.com/w=SZrCKW0NPvo>

For more details see the NADAC website <http://www.nadac.com/hoopers-agility-description.htm>

**For up to date information on NZ Agility
go to the website www.dogagility.org.nz**

