

**Beginning Handler's Guide
Huron River Labrador Retriever Club
Group Training Days**

Beginner vs. Advanced Dogs

“Beginner” and “advanced” have different meanings depending on who you are training with. This is the way these terms are applied at HRLRC group training days:

Advanced: The advanced dog is working at WC or JH level. This means that the dog readily picks up bumpers and birds, returns to the handler reliably, and ideally is getting close to delivering to hand. Any retriever that meets these criteria is welcome to the “advanced” sessions.

Beginner: The beginner dog category includes puppies and any older dogs that are still refining skills like their hold or recall before moving to the advanced group.

Group Training Days vs. Lessons

HRLRC hosts monthly group training days that allow handlers to work together as a team to execute setups and other training techniques that are harder (or impossible) to do alone. Additionally, group training days allow handlers to share and spread out the cost of equipment, birds, and ammunition.

For the dog, group training days provide some of the same energy and excitement as a hunt test, including gunshots, dead birds, and the presence of many other dogs.

For the new handler, these days can provide a hunt test “dress rehearsal”. Additionally, you can often get great advice from the people who are working at the line assisting and observing you and your dog. You also have the chance get a better perspective on the challenges of different marks by watching other dogs hunt while you work a gunner blind. Even if your dog is not yet running at the “advanced” level, there is much to be gained from observing the dogs and handlers in the advanced session.

While one can get lot of great experience and advice at the group training days, they cannot provide the kind of one-on-one attention and guidance that a dog and handler may need to get past particular hurdles in the retriever training process. Individual lessons are invaluable for helping the new handler to meet these challenges. The trainers below have worked with HRLRC members and are great with young or inexperienced dogs.

Local Retriever Trainers	
Kim Bridgewater Anew Retrievers 989-284-2924 Lapeer, MI http://www.anewretrievers.com/	Jim Price DaySpring Retrievers 269-244-5234 Jones, MI http://www.dayspringretrievers.com/
Sue Gehrke MacHawk's Labradors 734-426-4967 Dexter, MI	Guy Reith Hunters Creek Club 810-664-4307 Metamora, MI http://www.hunterscreekclub.com
Darrin Mormon Farpoint Retrievers 989-233-0562 Freeland, MI http://www.farpointretrievers.com/	Adele Yunck Northfield Dog Training 734-995-7200 Ann Arbor, MI http://www.northfielddogtraining.com/

Basic Obedience

Retriever training requires a solid obedience foundation. The clubs and facilities listed below have worked with HRLRC members and provide classes and /or private lessons in dog obedience. Those marked with an asterisk (*) occasionally offer field-specific classes.

Obedience Training	
All Dogs Can, LLC. http://alldogscan.com/ 318-617-3564 in-home training	K-9 Home Schooling http://www.k9homeschooling.com/ 734-395-2608 various locations
Ann Arbor Dog Training Club* http://www.aadtc.org/ 734-995-2801 Whitmore Lake, MI	Northfield Dog Training* http://www.northfielddogtraining.com/ 734-995-7200 Ann Arbor, MI
Bark-a-bout http://www.barkabout.net/ 586-566-8900 Shelby Township, MI	Obedience Training Club of Greater Lansing http://sites.google.com/site/theobediencetrainingclub/ 517-485-7280 Lansing, MI
Canine Workshop http://www.thecanineworkshop.net/ 586-792-8533 Clinton Township, MI	Southern Michigan Obedience Training Club http://www.smotc.org/ 800-798-9992 various locations
Companion Dog Training Club of Flint http://www.companiondogtrainingclub.com/ see website for relevant phone numbers Flint, MI	Sportsmen's Dog Training Club of Detroit, Inc. http://www.sportsmens.net/ 888-637-9595 Warren, MI
Great American Dog Training Company http://www.greatamericadogs.com/ 734-812-7973 Garden City, MI	Wolverine Dog Training Club http://www.wolverinedtc.com/ 248-476-8650 Farmington Hills, MI

Hunt Tests

The online documents below provide the performance requirements for earning a Working Certificate (Labrador Retriever Club) or Junior Hunter title (American Kennel Club).

- Labrador Retriever Club Working Certificate Pamphlet:
<http://www.thelabradorclub.com/uploads//file/WCpamphlet10.pdf>
- Regulations and Guidelines for AKC Hunting Tests for Retrievers:
<http://www.akc.org/pdfs/rulebooks/RHTRET.pdf>

You can locate and register to run in local hunt tests through the Entry Express website. Even if you aren't ready to run a test yet, you can learn a great deal by going to observe – or better yet, volunteering to help!

- Entry Express: <http://www.entryexpress.net/>

Additional Retriever Clubs

The monthly HRLRC group training days are a good start, but if you really get into the retrieving game you will want to get out and run marks much more frequently than this. You may want to check out the groups below to network with other field work enthusiasts, and to possibly join in additional group training days.

- Marshbanks Golden Retriever Club: <http://www.marshbanksgrcmi.org/>
- Michigan Flyways Retriever Club: <http://miflyways.com/index.htm>
- Michigan Hunting Retriever Club: <http://www.mihrc.com/portal/>

More Resources

In addition to group training days and private lessons, there is a lot of published material that can help guide your training efforts at home. Most of these can be found through Amazon or Gun Dog Supply.

Training Books and DVDs	
The 10-Minute Retriever John and Amy Dahl	Motivational Training for the Field Lorie Jolly
Tom Dokken's Retriever Training Tom Dokken	Finished Dog Charles Jurney
Tri-Tronics Retriever Training (e-collar specific) Jim and Phyllis Dobbs	Total Retriever Training Mike Lardy
Smartwork for Retrievers Evan Graham	Gamekeepers Retrievers Basic Field Training Manual Mitch White (call to purchase: 740-828-2493)
Building a Retriever – Drills and More Carol Cassity	Training a Retriever Puppy Bill Hillman

When you are first starting out you can get by with a whistle, a flat collar without tags, a leash, a few small white bumpers, and possibly a long line/check cord. As your training progresses your equipment needs will evolve.

Equipment Retailers	
Lion Country Supply http://www.lcsupply.com/	Gun Dog Supply http://www.gundogsupply.com/
Cabelas http://www.cabelas.com/	Gander Mountain http://www.gandermountain.com/

Glossary of Terms (excerpted and adapted from www.retrievertraining.net)

- **Air** - provide the dog with an opportunity to relieve itself.
- **Bird Boy** - (BB) The person, male or female, throwing the item for the dog to retrieve.
- **Blind** - 1) The art of guiding a dog to an item it did not see fall through the use of voice, whistle, and body movements; 2) A structure, usually camouflaged, from which birds or bumpers may be thrown.
- **Blink** - When the dog goes by an item that it has clearly seen and is supposed to have retrieved.
- **Bumper** - A plastic or canvas item, usually 2 or 3 inches in diameter, used to train the dog. White is generally used for marks. Black or orange Bumpers are generally used for blinds.
- **Cheating** - When a dog avoids cover or obstacles en route to or returning from an item to be retrieved.
- **Cold** - A term used to define the running of a dog on a concept it is familiar with but the exact placement of the item is new to the dog.
- **Collar Conditioning** - A process by which the dog is taught how to turn off the collar stimulation.
- **Cookies** - Items used on occasion for positive reinforcement and persuasion
- **De-bolting** - A term identifying the process used to teach the dog it cannot "run away" from the stimulation caused by the e-collar.
- **Dummy Collar** - A collar that is the exact duplicate of an e collar in size, shape, and weight but cannot produce electrical stimulation.

- **E-collar** - A tool used by the trainer and worn by the dog that enables the trainer to make an instant correction from a distance through the use of small amounts of electricity. It is an invaluable training tool when properly used. It is also the FASTEST way to ruin a good dog if used improperly.
- **Fall** - (a.k.a. Area of the Fall) - The spot on the ground or water where the item to be retrieved fell.
- **Field Work** - Dog training generally conducted away from the area around the kennel. Includes concept work or marks and blinds.
- **Flare** - When a dog avoids continuing on a straight line on which he was sent due to pressure applied previously in that general area.
- **Force Fetching** - (a.k.a., FF, Forcing, Force Breaking, Conditioned Retrieving) Teaching a dog through the use of classical conditioning (stimulus/response) methods to pick up and hold an item until told to release it. Generally accomplished after the adult teeth are in place in the 6 -8 month age range.
- **Force to a Pile** - An extension of Force Fetching. Pressure of some sort is applied in association with a command to go. This process is done in some circles to prepare the dog for running blind retrieves. .
- **Heeling Stick** - A riding crop or other item carried and used on the dog to remind it of its proper place. This is not used to abuse the dog, rather provide a gentle, but firm, reminder of the place.
- **Hold** - A command used during conditioned retrieving by some to insure that the dog knows that he must hold, in his mouth, any object placed there.
- **Honor** - When one dog must watch another dog retrieve while remaining steady.
- **Go Bird** - The last item the dog sees thrown. In a multiple mark situation, it is generally the first item a dog will pick up.
- **Handler** - The person releasing the dog to make a retriever.
- **Hard Mouth** - The action said to occur when a dog uses too much force in picking up or holding a bird. This action renders the bird unfit for human consumption and is a major problem.
- **Honor** - When a dog must observe another dog making a retrieve. An honoring dog should watch the entire sequence of birds decoying, flying, being shot and falling without interfering through sound or motion with the "working dog".
- **Holding Blind** - A blind or series of blinds erected prior to the "line" in an effort to keep dogs and handlers available to run the test.
- **Line** -1) Retrieving Line - The location where you send and retrieve the dog while it is working; 2) Line to the Mark or Blind - An imaginary straight line from the Retrieving Line to the bird.
- **Line Manners** - A term used to describe how a dog acts while sitting at the "line" under judgment
- **Mark** - An item a dog sees thrown for it to retrieve, usually a game bird or a training bumper. Also, the dog's ability to see and remember where a bird fell.
- **Memory Bird** - Any item in a multiple mark situation, other than the last item, a dog has seen thrown for it to retrieve.
- **Multiple Marks** - More than one mark is thrown before the dog is sent (allowed to retrieve). For example, on a "double", two marks are thrown before the dog is sent. These test the dog's memory, as the dog must pick up one mark while remembering the location of the other mark.
- **No Bird** - A mark that was not acceptable and will need to be re-thrown.
- **No-Go** - A term used when a dog is sent on a retrieve and he does not go.
- **Obedience** - (OB) THE foundation task for dog training. Comprises a broad spectrum of commands some of which include: Sit, Stay, Kennel, Heel, Down.
- **Pop** - When a dog stops and looks back to the handler for guidance or direction without being commanded. A bad thing.
- **Retired Gun** - Used in multiple marks. After the BB has thrown the item to be retrieved, the BB moves to a concealed location so when the dog returns to the line and looks out to their mark, they are hidden from view.
- **Steady** - (steadiness) The term used to describe when a dog sees a bird or birds fall while remaining in the position commanded by the handler. A steady dog should remain steady until commanded to do otherwise by the handler. **Switch** - A dog is sent to mark, establishes a hunt, then leaves that area and establishes a hunt in the area of another fall.
- **Walking Singles** - A single mark thrown by a BB for a dog and, as the dog is released, the BB walks away from the area if the fall. This teaches the dog to concentrate on the item thrown and not the BB.
- **Walk Up** - A mark or marks that occur while the dog is in motion, progressing with the handler. A typical walkup will expect the dog to cease progress upon the first mark and shot, usually in a sitting position, and to remain there until all marks have fallen and the handler commands the retriever to pick up a mark.
- **Yard Work** - The term used to describe any number of drills that can be done in and around the kennel area. Baseball and OB are but two examples.

The information and recommendations provided in this document are based on the experiences of individual club members and do not constitute official endorsement by HRLRC. Every handler-dog team needs to identify the methods and training professionals that work best for them. Updated January 28, 2014.