

# What to Bring to Agility Class

- ✚ **A DOG:** A happy, healthy and hungry dog. Because we will use food as a motivator, it would be to your advantage if your dog is eager to eat. If you normally feed your dog in the evening, you may want to withhold its meal on class nights, or consider the food motivators that you will use in class as its evening feeding doled out in small bits. Not only will having a slightly hungry dog aid you in getting and keeping your dog's attention during class, but it is not wise or productive to ask your dog to jump or run on a full stomach.
- ✚ **BUCKLE COLLAR OR HARNESS:** No choke, prong, or shock collars will be allowed. Not only do the choke and prong collars pose safety hazards and risk injury to your dog, but they send the wrong message. Agility training is not about forcing our dogs into a particular behavior, but learning how to communicate with body language and enthusiasm. A buckle collar or chest harness is sufficient to keep your dog in your immediate control. Also, we recommend against halties or Gentle Leaders for agility training. These pull the dog's head to the side and can be dangerous or create anxiety in your dog because it can't look ahead to where it's going.
- ✚ **RED BANDANA?** If you know that your dog sometimes has space issues or issues with other dogs, we ask that you indicate that by putting a red bandana on your dog. We will let everyone know that a red bandana means to leave some extra room for this dog.
- ✚ **LEASH:** A four foot leash is sufficient and works slightly better than a six foot one simply because there is less leash for you to try to manage. A loop at the handler end will come in handy for some of our Teamwork exercises and for hands-free training. At some point, you might want to consider a short TAB leash as you start to work with your dog off leash.
- ✚ **CLICKER:** This is a secondary reinforcer, or marking that will be a key communicator as we train our dogs. You can find them at most pet stores and we sell them as well.
- ✚ **TREATS:** Bring something your dog loves, something smelly and mouthwatering. Leave the dry kibble at home. You can try hot dogs, cheese, liver treats or meat bits. Depending on the size of your dog, the treats should be cut up into ONE BITE sizes. They should not be so big that your dog has to stop what it is doing to chew on them, but they need to be large enough for your dog to get some satisfaction from the reinforcer. BRING LOTS. Do not be stingy at this point. You can always take the extra home and use them later in the week as you do your homework.
- ✚ **TREAT BAG:** You will need some kind of bag from which you can swiftly and smoothly remove a treat. The bag should be secured to your body somehow, such as on a waist belt or hooked to a pocket, so that your hands are free to work with the dog and use the clicker. Treat bags are available at most pet stores and we sell them as well. You may make one of your own or fashion one from something you already have, such as a fanny pack. Just be sure you can get your hand in and out quickly and easily. It does NOT need to be large enough to hold all of your treats at once. You can restock your bag as needed.
- ✚ **TUG TOYS:** We will spend a considerable amount of time teaching our dogs how to play with us. In agility, we want our dogs to think that YOU, the handler, is the most interesting thing around—not other dogs, equipment, or the nearest tree or shrub. We will, do those through intense interaction with our dogs—play. The best way to play with our dog is with a tug toy. We recommend you bring at least THREE different tug toys—a

ball on a string, a knotted rope, or a squeaky toy. You may not need to go to the pet store for your toys. Think about what items fascinate your dog, e.g. a tin pie plate, a rubber watering hose, a pine cone. If you know your dog likes certain unorthodox object bring it. We suggest bringing at least three toys in the early sessions, so we can see what really turns your dog on. Many handlers will say that their dogs are not toy motivated, but most dogs can be taught to be toy motivated and the tug toy will teach the dog to look to you the handler for stimulus and reward.

- ✚ **PLASTIC TUB LID:** The kind that is used on margarine tubs. Pringles and peanut containers or some yogurts. We will use these lids as targets as we train our dogs to move away from us and go to a specific place. Most of us have plenty of these at home. At this point, size does not matter. We will eventually fade the targets away. You could also use a plain white washcloth.
- ✚ **WATER:** Think of class as going to the gym. You and your dog both need to stay well-hydrated. We suggest due to the recent rise of dog influenza, that you bring a clean bowl from which your dog will drink. We have fresh and bottled water available.
- ✚ **COMFORTABLE SHOES AND CLOTHING:** You will be on your feet for the entire class session. You will be bending over, running, maybe even crawling through tunnels to encourage your dog. Come dressed for success!
- ✚ **TOTE, DUFFLE BAG OR BACKPACK:** To haul all of the above.