

New Tracking Dog Checklist

_____ (Handler)

_____ (Dog)

Welcome to MetroDogs. We hope these guidelines will help you navigate the sometimes turbulent world of our Canine Community Search and Rescue (CC-SAR) practices. When you complete this list, we'll have another for you, the Basic Tracking Dog Checklist. The checklists will guide you towards successful training, and then certification. When we have several certified dogs, we will begin responding as an operational team.

When you complete this form, please scan it and email to team@metrodogs.net, or give it to another team member to scan for you so we can keep a copy. This form will become part of our team training records.

More than one practice may be needed for each item on the list... the most important thing is the dog is confident about the stage before moving on. Never hesitate to "back-up" to short successes, or find ways to put one extra feature into a track to add interest to keep the dog motivated. Remember that the ideal training plan would be one that sets up the dog for absolute success every time, while making progress towards harder problems.

Sometimes progress is best maintained by stepping back and just having some fun. The ratio of "fun" to "work" in the early stages of training should be about 99% fun, 1% work. A highly motivated confident dog will give you the full advantage of the canine nose, be easier to read, and become a pleasant, reliable partner.

Provide your partner with strong leadership. Be observant, and try to learn to read your dog. Concentrate on not forgetting the party. The party is for the dog, a noisy, exciting congratulations "yea dog! What a good dog! That's the way!", with lots of treats or toy interaction and everyone involved with full focus on the dog. Hold the party before you discuss the run with your facilitator or hider. Having the party early and often will be your best training practice at this stage.

TASK NTD1 *Initial Straight-aways* Two or more team members meet & great the new dog and handler. Dog, handler, and facilitator head for a reasonable spot to conduct runaways. Runaways should be short.

a. Handler faces the dog. Facilitator holds the dog. Handler shows a high value treat or toy to the dog, then keeps the dog's attention while running behind a tree or other hiding spot ~ 20 feet away. As soon as the handler is out of sight, the facilitator says "go find!" and lets the dog go to the handler. A huge party is held, in honor of the dog reaching the handler. Facilitator should take note of the dog's enthusiasm, any distractions that occur, and how well the handler managed to keep the dog's attention. This step can be "redone" if needed, after a short discussion, to make sure the handler keeps the dog's full attention until the moment they hide. The find then starts immediately.

b. Same exercise as a., reversing the positions of handler and facilitator (handler holds the dog and says "go find" when when facilitator disappears behind the tree with the treat or toy). Both handler and facilitator should "read the dog", and discuss the run before deciding how long to make the next step.

c. Same as in b., but can be up to 30-40 feet in a straight line to the hiding place if the dog is ready.

Facilitator	Date	Location and Conditions
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

TASK NTD2 *Basic Run-aways* Set up and run a series of tracks with your subject initially engaging your dog, then heading away to hide in various places. Follow the "rule of threes" (three runs, then stop, with one optional "end on a high-note" do-over if the final run gets too confusing). Vary the distance. Add short turns off the track at the very end. Run the tracks across different surfaces. Begin to hide your dog's eyes, or walk behind a barrier so the subject can't be watched to the final hiding place. Have your hider initial and date as you complete various exercises confidently with your dog. Try to get several different initials on the sheet... not the same hidere every time! And set your own reasonable standards for signing off.

Hider	Date		Hider	Date	
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	20 ft	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	50 ft
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	100 ft	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	200 ft
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	15 ft turn at the end	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	30 ft turn at the end
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	1 minute	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	2 minutes

TASK NTD2 cont.

Hider	Date		Hider	Date	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grass	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hard Surface
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dirt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brush
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Woods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daytime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nighttime
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hide dog's eyes while subject switches spots by ~ 15 feet			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hide dog's eyes as subject walks away 1 minute			

TASK NTD3 *Handling skills* As a handler, your job is to facilitate the find. Mostly this is learning how to stay out of the dog's way while holding the tracking line. You must be consistent in order to be a positive factor along a track. If your actions distract your dog, don't sign off -- practice until you get the hang of it. Ask for feedback-- and try to listen to the feedback you get from team members.

Feel free to discuss feedback you receive, but realize that if someone that hides for you or comes along on the track comments that you are distracting your dog somehow, they probably aren't making that up. This is a team, and to be successful, we have to coach each other along. At the end of each practice, we have a "round up" where each person comments on what they noticed that practice... about their own dogs, and about all the partners (dog/handler teams) they interacted with. Community Canine SAR Tracking tackles the most challenging tracking problems there are. We are all learning ways of coping with distractions, and facilitating our dogs' tracks.

TASK NTD3 cont.

You need to pick several words that should be your only communication once on the track. "Ready?", "Take Scent.", "Go Find!" "Gooooood, goooooood", "Where?", "Get to work!", "Check...", "Show me!" "Yes!!! Party time!" Ideally, all transcripts would read something like this, perhaps lacking only "good" and/or "get to work" if the dog never gets distracted or seems to need confirmation.

Only sign off on the tracking and finding procedures when you are reasonably consistent. But do start signing off as you master each skill, so that you know what to concentrate on.

Start Checklist

_____ Put on dog's tracking vest:

_____ Connect lead to collar

_____ Lead dog to start area

_____ Have subject show the dog the reward, and present their hand to the dog for sniffing

(subject hides-- handler has the choice of sitting/ standing beside or calmly walking with dog)

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_____ Confirm that your start area is clear of critical distractions

_____ Connect lead to vest to cue the dog. Say "Ready?" (using dog's name, or "Good" optional)

_____ Present scent article. Say "Take Scent".

_____ Don't say or do anything else

_____ Say "Go Find" (start here for runaways, with lead connected to vest)

The Track Checklist

_____ Start moving (initially make sure your motion is along the track, later just keep moving)

_____ Keep Very Quiet-- Be Observant-- Hold Constant Leash Tension

_____ Optional: Confirmation word ("Gooood!"), dog's nose drops to confirm the turn

_____ Optional: Gentle redirect "Where?"

_____ Optional: Redirect command ("Get to work!") when dog gets distracted

_____ Optional: "Lunge" or "Post" a turn

_____ Optional: "Check"! when dog can't locate track or subject, indicate places to sniff

The Finish Checklist

_____ Say "Show Me!" as the dog reaches the subject (would be used if the dog is off lead and returns to you after finding subject)

_____ Ask or wait for your dog's indication

_____ Confirm that this is the right subject
"Yes!"

_____ Reward the dog ("Party time!")

_____ Release the dog ("Break!") take off the work vest before letting the dog do post-party play

Facilitator

Date

Location and Conditions

TASK NTD4 *Basic Dictionary of Dog* On early runs, just watch tail height, and changes in tail height on tracks that go very well, and when things get confusing. Tails that wag, droop, or pop up correspond to different speeds and changes in direction. Once you understand your dog's tail, focus on the nose. Is it usually down sniffing the track, neutral, or up in the air? As you identify different poses, sign yourself off with your initials and the date. Identify each pose somehow... with a picture, words, numbers... however you think... to start your own Dictionary of Dog. As an example, one yellow lab on the team is "parallel dog" when she is on track... base of tail to nose are parallel to the ground, with just the slightest changes, and occasional nose drops. When a chessie/lab cross on the team gets confused or unsure of what is wanted, he drops or tucks his tail. When a border collie finds the right person, she jumps to put her paws on her handler or the subject. Many dogs will wag their tails wildly when they find the person hiding. A scale of enthusiasm might range from 1-5, with 1 being a tentative, distracted dog that chases a squirrel on the way and wanders in a big loop until accidentally happening upon the hiding place, and 5 being a straight shot to the hiding place past a hissing cat. Feel free to develop your own way to classify these behaviors, and please share with the team in case someone else could use your strategy.

Have at least four types of hidere sign off- one from the team, one from your friends or family well-known to the dog, one from someone you know, but your dog doesn't, and one from someone neither you nor your dog knows well. Note anything you notice about how your dog approaches the track, and how much time is spent completing each track.

_____ Dog on track

_____ Dog finds a turn

_____ Dog off track-- trying to find it again

_____ Dog off track-- chasing a critter

_____ Dog off track-- distracted by sudden event

TASK NTD4 *Basic Dictionary of Dog cont.*

_____ Dog confused

_____ Dog finds Team hider

_____ Dog finds Dog and
Handler friend hider

_____ Dog finds Handler friend,
new to dog hider

_____ Dog finds Unknown
subject hider

TASK NTD 5 *Sign off* Have a facilitator sign you off the New Comer Checklist after you complete all the tasks above, and have them confirm that you can run three successive 100-200 foot Run-aways with a turn at the end over at least two surfaces without losing the dog's focus. Include at least one "walk away", and at least one mostly out of sight. Have the facilitator write a short synopsis of your tracks so you can use your completed log as a reference.

Facilitator

Date

Location and Conditions