

GUNDOG TRAINING NORTHAMPTON

WHISTLE WORKSHOP

Participant Worksheet & Training Plan

WORKSHOP AIM	Build clear, reliable whistle commands your dog understands and trusts - from the first association through to practical outdoor situations.
---------------------	--

Handler _____

Dog _____

Date _____

Breed / age _____

Today we will cover

☐ Introducing the whistle correctly	☐ Building a fast, reliable recall
☐ Teaching a confident stop whistle	☐ Whistle timing and consistency
☐ Common handler mistakes	☐ Progressing into real-life training situations

My main aim for today

REMEMBER	The whistle is not magic. It is a clear, consistent signal whose meaning is built through careful training and reinforcement.
-----------------	---

1. Starting Point

Be honest about where you and your dog are now. This gives you a useful measure of progress.

Skill	Current response	Confidence (1-5)
Recall whistle	_____	____
Stop whistle	_____	____
Response around distraction	_____	____
Handler timing	_____	____
Consistency of signal	_____	____

My whistle cues

Command	My chosen whistle pattern	What the dog should do
Recall	_____	Turn promptly and return directly
Stop	_____	Stop movement, face handler and wait
Other (optional)	_____	_____

Before training begins

- ☐ The dog is comfortable with the whistle sound
- ☐ I have decided exactly what each pattern means
- ☐ Everyone handling the dog will use the same pattern
- ☐ I have high-value reinforcement ready
- ☐ The training area is safe and suitable

What could make today difficult for my dog?

TRAINER NOTE	Begin where the dog can succeed. Distance, duration and distraction should not all increase at the same time.
---------------------	---

2. Introducing the Whistle Correctly

First create meaning. Then ask for reliability.

The association exercise

1. Choose one clear whistle pattern.
2. Give the whistle when you are confident the desired response will happen.
3. Immediately reinforce the correct response.
4. Repeat a small number of high-quality repetitions.
5. Finish while the dog is still engaged and successful.

Practical record

Repetition	Environment / distance	Dog's response	Reward used
1	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____

What did the dog begin to understand?

Quality check

☐ The cue was identical each time	☐ The whistle came before the reinforcement
☐ The dog stayed relaxed and engaged	☐ I stopped before the response deteriorated

DO NOT	Keep blowing the whistle when the dog has not been taught what it means. Repetition without a response can teach the dog that the signal is optional.
---------------	---

3. Building a Fast, Reliable Recall

The aim is not simply to get the dog back - it is to create an immediate, committed turn towards you.

Recall building blocks

☐ Clear, consistent whistle pattern	☐ Immediate turn towards the handler
☐ Fast movement back	☐ Confident arrival close to the handler
☐ Reward that suits the dog	☐ Calm reset before the next repetition

Recall exercise record

Set-up	First response	Speed back	Finish / delivery	Change next time
Close / low distraction	_____	_____	_____	_____
Moderate distance	_____	_____	_____	_____
Light distraction	_____	_____	_____	_____

What reward produced the best response?

If the dog did not respond

☐ Reduce distance	☐ Lower the distraction
☐ Use a line for safety and clarity	☐ Improve the value of reinforcement
☐ Check that the cue has been properly conditioned	☐ Avoid repeating the whistle

My recall observation

KEY TEST	Would I confidently use this recall at the distance and distraction level I am about to attempt? If not, simplify the exercise.
-----------------	---

4. Teaching a Confident Stop Whistle

A stop whistle should create understanding, not uncertainty or conflict.

What a good stop looks like

☐ Dog stops promptly	☐ Dog turns attention towards the handler
☐ Dog remains composed	☐ Dog holds position until the next instruction
☐ Handler gives the next cue clearly	

Progression ladder

Stage	Exercise	Successful when...	Result
1	Stationary foundation	Dog associates whistle with stopping and looking	☐
2	Very light movement	Dog stops without confusion	☐
3	Short distance	Response remains prompt and calm	☐
4	Increased distance	Meaning is retained away from handler	☐
5	Managed distraction	Dog can disengage and stop	☐

Practical notes

Distance used _____

What the dog was doing _____

Response to the first whistle _____

What improved the response?

IMPORTANT	Do not rush to distance. A confident, clearly understood stop close to you is more valuable than an unreliable stop far away.
------------------	---

5. Timing, Consistency & Handler Skills

Good whistle work depends as much on the handler as it does on the dog.

Handler self-check

Question	Yes	Needs work
Did I use the same whistle pattern every time?	☐	☐
Did I whistle at a moment the dog could respond?	☐	☐
Did I give one clear signal rather than several?	☐	☐
Did I reinforce the behaviour I actually wanted?	☐	☐
Did I allow time for the dog to process the cue?	☐	☐
Did I change only one difficulty at a time?	☐	☐

Common mistakes I need to avoid

☐ Whistling too late	☐ Repeating or nagging with the whistle
☐ Using different patterns for the same command	☐ Increasing distance too quickly
☐ Testing the cue instead of training it	☐ Calling when I cannot safely support the response
☐ Failing to reward good work	☐ Continuing after the dog is tired or confused

My biggest handler habit to improve

The change I will make immediately

6. Real-Life Progression

Take the trained response into practical situations carefully and systematically.

Plan the progression

Level	Environment	Distance	Distraction	Safety / support
1	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____

Possible training situations

☐ Open field	☐ Woodland edge
☐ Around other dogs at a safe distance	☐ During retrieving work
☐ Near scent or game at a controlled level	☐ On a familiar walk
☐ In a new environment	☐ Working away from the handler

My safety criteria before progressing

Signs I should make the exercise easier

☐ Response becomes slower	☐ Dog appears confused
☐ More than one whistle is needed	☐ Arousal rises sharply
☐ Dog cannot disengage from the distraction	☐ Handler support is no longer effective

PROGRESSION RULE

If the response weakens, do not add pressure or repeat the cue. Reduce the difficulty, restore understanding and rebuild success.

7. My Take-Home Training Plan

Short, purposeful sessions completed consistently will build a stronger response than occasional long sessions.

Goal for the next 14 days	How I will measure success
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Weekly plan

Day	Skill / exercise	Place	Repetitions	Result / note
Mon	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tue	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wed	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thu	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fri	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sat	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sun	_____	_____	_____	_____

My commitment

- ☐ I will keep sessions short and purposeful
- ☐ I will use one consistent cue for each behaviour
- ☐ I will train at a level my dog can understand
- ☐ I will reward correct responses
- ☐ I will record progress and adjust one variable at a time

The most important lesson I am taking away

Trainer feedback / next step

Review date _____

FINAL THOUGHT	Clear whistle work is built through understanding, timing and consistency. Train the response before you rely on it.
----------------------	--