

Glossary of Terms

For folks new to the sport of dog games and retriever training, the terminology can be overwhelming. Have you ever gone to an event and wondered what other people were telling their dogs? Does it sound like gibberish when someone talks about their dog "Creeping." Isn't that what happens at 2:00 AM when my dog is trying to crawl under the covers?" Or, Recast "I think that's a fishing term." To help understand terms you may hear during training sessions, field trials or hunt tests, below is a list of terms commonly used in dog games and retriever training:

Air – To allow the dog to empty his bowels and bladder.

Area of the Fall – Used to describe the place where the bird has fallen to the ground and the adjacent area around the bird. The dog should go to the area of the fall and establish a hunt to find the bird without leaving the area of the fall and disturbing too much cover. The size of the area of the fall for any given mark is a matter of judgment. Retriever folks have developed the following as an initial rough estimate:

The area of the fall is a circle around the bird with a radius measuring about 10% (or a diameter of 20%) of the distance from the "line" to the bird, the "line" being the spot from which the dog saw the bird fall. For example, for a 100 yard mark, the area of the fall would have a 20 yard diameter.

Back – A command that tells the dog to leave the handler's side and go in a straight direction away from the handler. Usually used on a blind, although in some areas of the country it is also used for marks. It is also a directional signal that tells the dog to turn and run straight back after being commanded to sit (via whistle or voice) in the field and look at the handler.

Beer Dog – Alcoholic beverages are not allowed to be consumed while field trials or hunt tests are underway. The last dog to run in the day's event, is called the "beer dog," signifying alcoholic beverages may be consumed.

Blind – Two meanings:

1. The bird or object (such as a dummy) to be retrieved that is placed at a distance and which is not seen by the dog. (As opposed to a "marked" fall, which is one the dog sees fall to the ground.)

2. A structure, usually camouflaged, from which birds or other objects to be retrieved are thrown and where gunners and throwers may conceal themselves.

Blind Planter – This is the person who places a bird or bumper at a designated spot for a blind retrieve.

Blind Retrieve – A retrieve of a bird that the dog did not see thrown, the dog is directed to the blind through the use of hand signals, whistle and/or voice commands.

Blink – When the dog goes by an object that it has clearly seen and is supposed to have retrieved and refuses to pick it up after locating it. The dog runs out to the area of the fall, looks directly at the bumper/bird, pauses next to it, then leaves and continues to hunt around acting as if he has never seen it.

Break or breaking – This is when a dog that is being judged (either at the line or during the honor) goes for the bird before the judge has instructed the handler to release the working dog (as opposed to the honor dog). If a working dog breaks or an honoring dog breaks the breaking dog is disqualified.

Call Back – A list provided by Hunt Test or Field Trial judges prior to the next series in an event. This list denotes those who are invited back to continue participating in the event. Those who do not make the "call back" have been disqualified for some reason. Note: RC/UKC Hunt Tests do not have Call Backs. You can continue to participate even though your dog will not receive a passing score for that day.

Cast/Casting – To give the dog a specific direction to a marked fall or a blind through the use of arm/body movements. The direction given a dog on a blind retrieve after he has stopped on the whistle. The handler gives the signal with his arm and voice, either a right or left "over" cast or a "back" cast. The dog, taking this direction, is considered to be on cast, or casting. Cast Refusal – Dog fails to go in the direction ordered. The dog does not respond or respond correctly to the direction or cast given by the handler.

Channel – A narrow body of water.

Channel Blind – A water blind run in an area that, due to the close proximity of the bank on both sides, makes it very tempting for the dog to exit the water and get up on land. A narrow channel.

Cheating – When a dog avoids cover or obstacles enroute to or returning from an item to be retrieved.

Cold Blind – Means that the dog has no idea of where the bird is – he didn't see it fall, its location is not part of a "pattern" he recognizes, nor is it at a location he's been to before (a "permanent" blind). 1. A blind retrieve that the dog has never run before. 2. A blind retrieve before running any marks.

Collar Conditioning – A process by which the dog is taught how to turn off the electronic collar stimulation and how to respond to e-collar pressure appropriately. To acclimate a dog to accept electric collar stimulation as a training aid.

Controlled break— A dog that tries to break but is successfully called back by the handler after a short distance. Permissible but subject to penalty in some hunt test and field trial events.

Cover – Indicates the various ground covers in-between the starting line and the objects to be retrieved. Can be grass, or any other growth, on land or in the water.

Creep – Dog moves a short distance in the direction of a mark(s) while they are being thrown and before being sent for the retrieve.

Creeping – When the dog moves forward on the line but does not break out of control. This is when the dog slowly inches from the handler's side (or from the designated starting point) a few steps at a time or, by scooting or creeping along the ground as the birds are being shot/thrown, but the dog does not break. Judges will determine at what point the creeping is too far away from the handler and may ask the handler to re-heel the dog before releasing the dog for the retrieve.

Deliver to hand – This is used to describe how the dog should return with the bird. The dog must carry the bird lightly (no chewing), return to the handler and hold the bird until the handler signals the dog to release the bird into the handler's hand. The release should be easy and smooth—no tug of war or repeated dropping and picking up by the dog. IF THE DOG DROPS THE BIRD, THE DOG MUST PICK THE BIRD BACK UP AND DELIVER TO THE HANDLER. If the handler picks the bird up from the ground, or touches the bird on the ground, the handler and dog will be disqualified. The bird must be “fit for human consumption,” which means not eaten, chewed or damaged by the dog.

Diversion – A distraction, of some sort, including but not limited to a bird, a shot, a person moving, talking, yelling or walking, etc. done in dog games to test against switching, or dropping. There can be a “diversion bird” thrown. This is when the dog has seen a multiple mark thrown (double, triple, etc.) and has been sent to retrieve at least one of the marks. As the dog is returning to the handler, another bird is thrown and a shot fired. The dog now has another bird to remember and retrieve as well as completing the multiple marks.

Double – Two consecutive retrieves or marks. Two objects a dog sees thrown for it to retrieve. These objects are not thrown at the same time. A double tests the dog's memory as it must pick up one object, return to its handler, then go get the other object and bring it back.

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.

Establish a hunt – When the dog goes to the area of the fall for the bird, but does not find the bird immediately, the dog gets into the area and starts to use its nose to locate the bird. This is perfectly acceptable behavior. However if the hunt becomes too broad, so it is out of the area of fall as established by the judges, the judges may score the dog lower on perseverance or marking (remembering where the bird landed).

Force Fetching – (a.k.a., FF, Forcing, Force Breaking, Conditioned Retrieving) The process of teaching a dog to Hold, Fetch, and Give on command. Generally accomplished after the adult teeth are in place in the 6 – 8 month age range and basic obedience and Collar Conditioning are complete. This is the foundation for beginning to teach a dog the concept of blind retrieves.

Force to a Pile – An extension of Force Fetching. Pressure of some sort is applied in association with a command to go. Helps to create the obligation upon the dog to go when sent to a blind retrieve. When done properly, a dog can develop dependable and positive attitude toward his work.

Go Bird – The last object the dog sees thrown. In a multiple mark situation, it is generally the first item a dog will pick up.

Gun Station – Location of one or more gunners in the field who throw/shoot a mark.

Handle – To direct a dog to a bird/dummy by using whistle, voice and arm signals.

Handler – The person releasing the dog to make a retriever and directing the actions of the dog.

Hard Mouth – The action said to occur when a dog uses too much force in picking up or holding a bird. A dog that is very rough on, abuses, or eats the birds when sent to retrieve. This action renders the bird unfit for human consumption and is a major problem. It is difficult, but not impossible, to cure once the habit has been formed.

Heel – The old definition meant to “walk by my side.” Trainers for hunt tests and field trials now use it to make a dog back up when forging ahead such as when doing to line at a test or trial.

Heeling Stick – A riding crop or other object (whiffle ball bat) 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 force fetch by some to ensure that the dog knows that he must hold, in his mouth, any object placed there. Hold means keep your mouth still when holding an object.

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.

Honor – When one dog must watch another dog retrieve while remaining steady. 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".

Hot Blind – A blind that has been placed before marks are thrown and which may influence dog to leave the area of the fall for the marks.

Line Manners – A term used to describe how a dog acts while sitting at the "line" or "Point of Origin" under judgment. Vocalizing (barking or whining), jumping, excessive fidgeting or soiling the line are all examples of poor line manners. A dog and handler can be excused for excessive vocalizing or other detrimental behavior. A screaming dog is not a good companion in the duck blind!

Lining the Blind – A perfectly run blind; the dog successfully completes a blind retrieve without requiring any whistle commands or hand signals from the handler.

Memory Bird – Any object in a multiple mark situation, other than the last item, a dog has seen thrown for it to retrieve. In a multiple mark series, the memory bird(s) is not the last bird down. Usually, the last bird down is picked up first by the dog. He must then remember where the others are on his own. In a hard triple, this is quite challenging when cover and distance are added in.

Nick – A correction applied with an e collar set to a "Momentary" setting or a tap and immediate release of the button for those e collars without a "Momentary" setting.

No Bird – A term that refers to a poorly thrown mark and the handler or judge indicates that the mark was not acceptable and it will need to be re-thrown.

Obedience – (OB) THE foundation task for dog training. Comprises a broad spectrum of commands some of which include: Sit, Stay, Kennel, Heel, Down.

Over – Directional signal given to dog by handler. The handler's right or left arm & hand are raised horizontally from the waist telling the dog to move in the direction indicated by the arm. Most common on blind retrieves but can be used as a term to send the dog on a mark. (see blind retrieves)

Pattern Blinds – A series of objects (bumpers, birds, etc.) placed in the same location every time, generally in the shape of a Crow's Foot. One of the handling drills first taught in the Transition Stage of Training.

Retired – (As in a “retired gun” or a “retired mark.”) In field trials, gunners/throwers hide so they don't give the dog any clue as to where the marks landed. Usually done on a memory bird.

Steady to Shot – A steady dog holds even after you shoot.

Steady to Wing – A steady dog holds even after the bird flushes.

Suction – Any factor that causes a retriever to deviate from a line to a blind; suction can occur from an old fall, terrain, water, wind bird boys are some factors that may act as suction to a bird or bumper.

Swim-by – A drill for teaching control around the water. The handler requires the dog to take a “more-water” return to enforce water/shoreline discipline.

Switching—This is when the dog has gone to the area of one fall and has established a hunt, but then leaves that area and goes to the area of another fall. This can happen on a multiple retrieve (double, triple, etc.) or can happen if a dog has retrieved one single, is sent for a second single but after establishing a hunt, returns to where the first single was retrieved. This is a disqualification.

Test Dog – A non-competing dog that is run first to demonstrate the mechanics of the tests imposed by that days' series- to show what the terrain is like and what challenges to expect. The test dog also shows strengths and weaknesses of the test to the judges before actual scoring begins.

The Line—this is the area designated by the judges for the dog and handler to approach for the test. The handler may be required to reach the line, sit the dog and signal when ready, or the handler may be told by the judges that the scoring of the event will start as the dog and handler are approaching the line (called a walk-up test). "The line" can also be used to refer to the preferred path from the starting point to a mark or a blind retrieve. Handlers or judges may refer to "lining the dog," which means positioning the dog by the handlers side handler's side so it will run the direction desired toward a mark or a blind.

Under-The-Arc – When the line to a blind takes the dog between a mark and the BB who has thrown that mark, the dog is said to have run "under-the-arc."

Walk Up – Used to simulate hunting. 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. This is when the handler and dog must walk from one designated area to another with the dog at heel, while the marks are being thrown and shot. the dog must stay under control and steady until the handler has been told to send the dog for the retrieve. This is used at the Senior and Master level tests and helps the judges determine trainability and control of the dog.

Whoa – The dog is going in to flush a bird, and the handler will tell him "whoa" to make him stop in place so that the dog will go in easy.