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# Setting Up AKC Fetch Courses



February 19, 2024

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## Welcome to the AKC Fetch Test!

If you are working on becoming an AKC Fetch judge or gathering materials for a test, welcome to the AKC Fetch Test!

Requirements for judging are listed in the *AKC Fetch Judge and Participant Guide*.

There are 4 modules (plus an online test) that must be completed in the AKC's Canine College to become an AKC Fetch judge.

Those modules are:

1. Overview of the AKC Fetch Test
2. Videos of the AKC Fetch Test in action
3. AKC Fetch Judge and Participant Guide
4. Setting Up AKC Fetch Courses (this module)

The purpose of this module is to teach you about the materials needed for conducting an AKC Fetch test and how to set up obstacles and blinds.



## Setting Up Your Test

This module will tell you how to set up your test and the materials that are needed.

Included are:

1. The Retrieving Objects
2. Obstacles (e.g., distractions on the course)
3. Blinds
4. Miscellaneous tools for setting up the course (e.g., measuring tape)



## Setting Up Your Test

### Setting Up a Temporary Fence

Before we talk about setting up your test, if you want to set up a temporary fence around your AKC Fetch test area, here are some options.



This fencing comes with or without stakes. It is called “silt fencing” or “contractor fencing.”

Fencing shown in photo is 36” tall, 100 ft. long, about \$25 - \$35.

One source is: [mutualindustries.net](http://mutualindustries.net)  
Type “silt fencing” in the search box.

Other sources: Lowes, Home Depot, Amazon



This fencing is called “contractor fencing” or “snow fencing.”

Available at same sources as above.





# 1. The Retrieving Objects

Retrieving objects are the items the dog fetches during the test. These are brought to the test by the handler, although a club or testing organization may have a few extras on hand in case handlers have forgotten to bring theirs.

Balls and other retrieving objects provided by a club/judge should only be used for one dog.

The most common item to be retrieved in Novice and Intermediate is a tennis ball. The AKC Fetch Test rules says “a tennis ball or equivalent” because a similar ball may be used. In Advanced and Retriever, most handlers use retrieving bumpers (also called dummies).

Handlers should be sure to choose retrieving objects (balls, etc.) that are of a size dogs cannot choke on or swallow.





# 1. The Retrieving Objects

In addition to tennis balls, other retrieving objects may include:

- ball on a rope. A ball on a rope may be used for all levels of Fetch.
- toy such as a Wubba toss-and-tug toy
- retrieving bumpers (plastic or canvas).
- Bumpers and toys may not be scented or filled with food.
- Toys may be used in Novice and Intermediate AKC Fetch tests only.
- **Dumbbells, gloves, stuffed animals, discs/Frisbees may not be used in AKC Fetch tests.**





# 1. The Retrieving Objects

## Helpful Tip

*Handlers should not use toys for the AKC Fetch test if the toy has been previously used as a tug toy. There is a good chance when the dog returns this ball to the handler, a game of tug will be expected.*

*For example, the Wubba toy may signal to the dog that a long game of tug is in order.*

*Even in Novice and Intermediate, the dog must release the object.*



While most handlers (or their helpers) will be able to throw the required 30 ft. (Novice) or 50 ft. (Intermediate) distances, the 70 ft. (Advanced) and 80 ft. (Retriever) present a challenge for most handlers. For Advanced and Retriever, an event helper (from the club, etc.) will drop a bumper behind each blind so handlers do not have to throw as they do in Novice and Intermediate.

Handlers may choose to throw their own bumpers in Advanced and Retriever. They may use a Chuckit! to throw a ball.



## **PRACTICE \* PRACTICE \* PRACTICE!!**

No matter what is chosen as a retrieving object for Novice and Intermediate, the handler/helper should practice throwing the object the required distance prior to the test (e.g., at home).



# 1. The Retrieving Objects

## Choosing Colors

### Helpful Tip

*Many dog toys and training items such as bumpers are red or orange. This could be because these colors appeal to the humans who purchase them.*

*As an exercise, go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type in "What colors do dogs see best?" You'll learn that the vision of dogs is different than that of humans, and dogs tend to gravitate toward blue and yellow.*

*Many field trainers use white bumpers.*

*Bumpers are also available in small sizes for smaller dogs.*



*We suggest doing a preference test at home to determine if your dog has any color preferences for retrieving objects.*





## 2. Obstacles

The obstacles on the AKC Fetch Test course are distractions (such as boxes on the Novice and Intermediate courses), or the blinds that are constructed for the Advanced and Retriever courses.

Some “hunting blinds” look like tents, but the blinds in AKC Fetch are flat screens at least 24-inches tall and 10 ft. to 12 ft. long.

The AKC Fetch blinds are used so the dog can do a “**marked retrieve**,” in which the dog can see a ball or bumper as it is dropped or thrown. The dog retrieves balls or bumpers that are behind blinds.

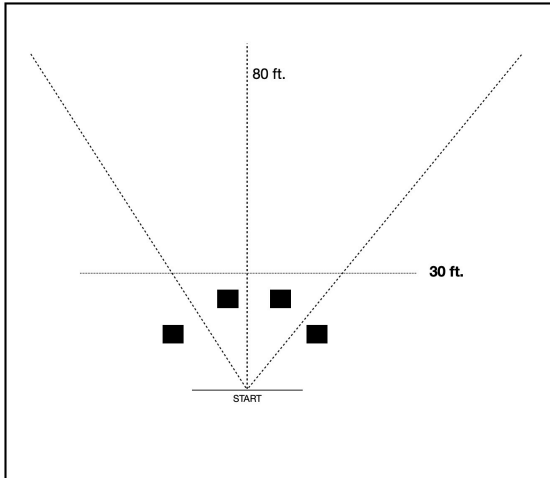
### AKC Fetch Obstacles

	<b>Novice</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>	<b>Retriever</b>
<b>Distance</b>	30 ft.	50 ft.	70 ft.	80 ft.
<b>Number of obstacles</b>	4	8	3 blinds	3 blinds
<b>Nature of obstacles</b>	May be boxes/ crates, etc., items found in yard such as a lawn chair	May be boxes/ crates, etc., items found in yard such as a lawn chair	3 blinds at least 24- inches tall, no taller than 30 inches	3 blinds at least 24- inches tall, no taller than 30 inches
<b>Return to Handler</b>	Must come within 2 large steps of handler, may give or drop	Must come within 1 large step of handler, may give or drop	Handler must be able to take from dog, or dog delivers to hand	Handler must be able to take from dog, or dog delivers to hand



## 2. Obstacles

### Novice and Intermediate



In the **Novice AKC Fetch Test**, the distance of the retrieve is 30 ft.

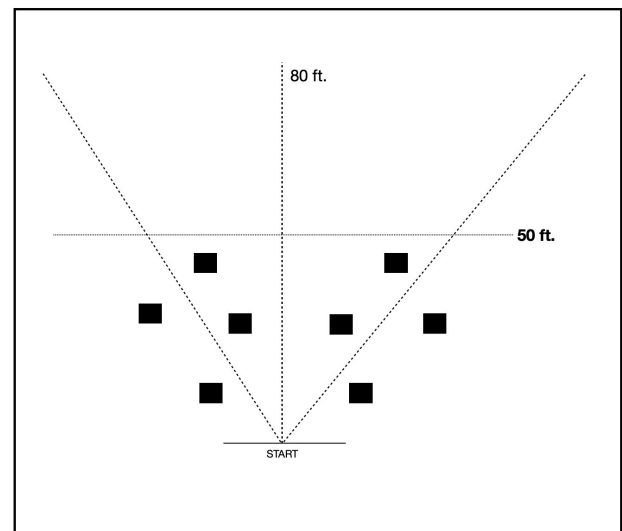
There are 4 obstacles on the Novice course. The ball (or toy, or bumper) is thrown between the obstacles as shown by the dotted lines in the chart.

The dog must complete 3 single retrieves. There will be one retrieve to the left, one to the center, and one to the right in any order chosen by the handler.

In the **Intermediate AKC Fetch Test**, the distance of the retrieve is 50 ft.

There are 8 obstacles on the Intermediate course. The ball (or toy, or bumper) is thrown between the obstacles.

The dog must complete 4 single retrieves. There will be one retrieve each to the left, center, and right, then one more to the right or left. Retrieves will be in any order chosen by the handler.







## 2. Obstacles

### Novice and Intermediate

Obstacles include objects such as boxes, lawn ornaments, or items found in a yard such as lawn chairs. If boxes are used, they should be approximately 14 inches tall or larger. (Don't use a small box like a shoe box). Boxes may be decorated with graphics such as club logos.



#### **Advantage of boxes:**

They are lightweight and easy to break down for storing.

#### **Disadvantage of boxes:**

If they get wet (e.g., rained on or a dog urinates on them), they must be replaced. Further, if it is windy, lightweight boxes must be secured so they can't blow around on the course.

*Sources for boxes in bulk include [uline.com](http://uline.com), stores with moving supplies such as Home Depot/Lowes, and places that have packing supplies such as UPS or FedEx.*



## 2. Obstacles

### Novice and Intermediate

In addition to cardboard boxes, you can use plastic crates, plastic laundry baskets, or plastic storage containers. Turn obstacles with open tops upside down to prevent a ball from landing inside!



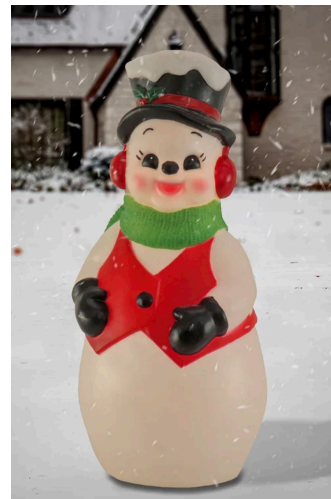




## 2. Obstacles

### Novice and Intermediate

To add fun to the AKC Fetch test, some of the obstacles may include lawn ornaments. There can be **one “fun obstacle” for Novice** and a **maximum of two fun obstacles for Intermediate**. These may have a holiday theme. Outdoor chairs may also be used as obstacles.




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If lawn decorations are used, they should not have motion or be able to blow around during windy weather.

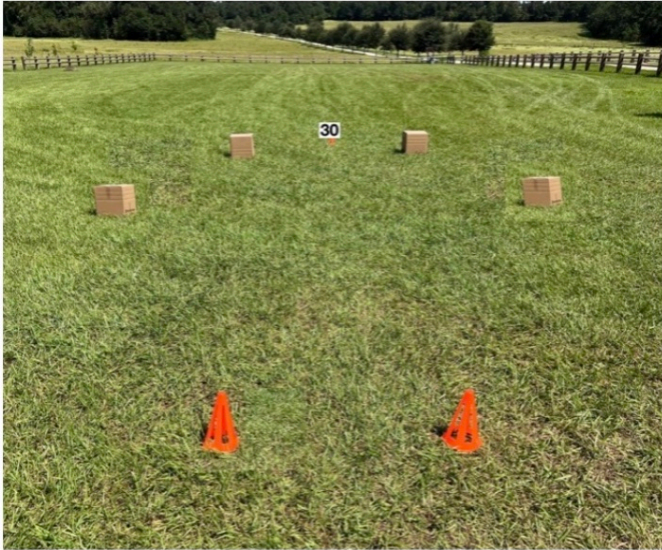




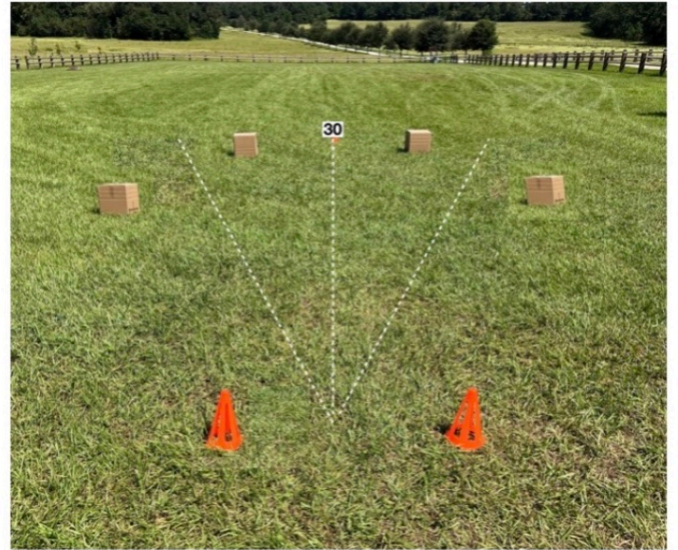
## 2. Obstacles

### Novice and Intermediate

The Novice course showing boxes.



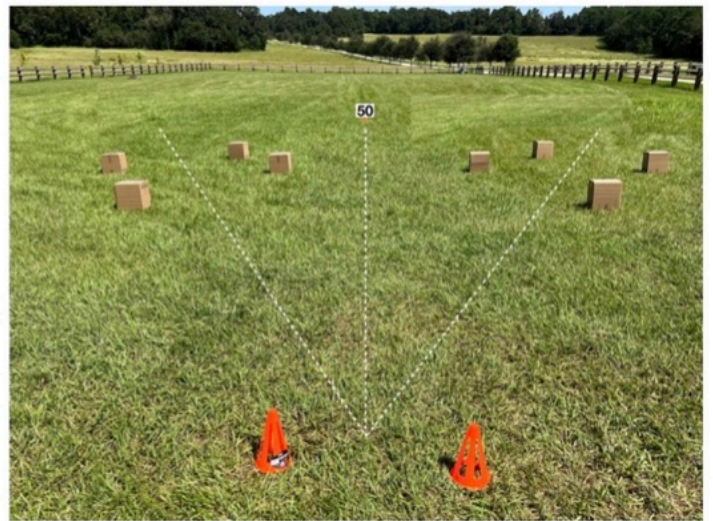
The dotted lines show where the ball is thrown.



The Intermediate course showing boxes.



The dotted lines show where the ball is thrown.

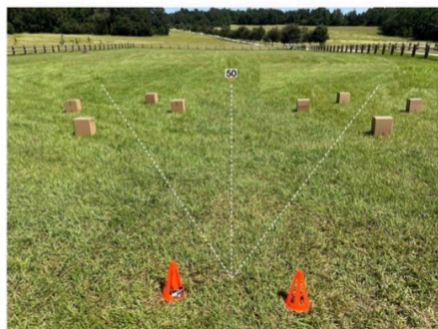
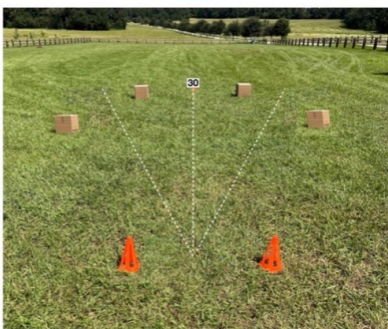






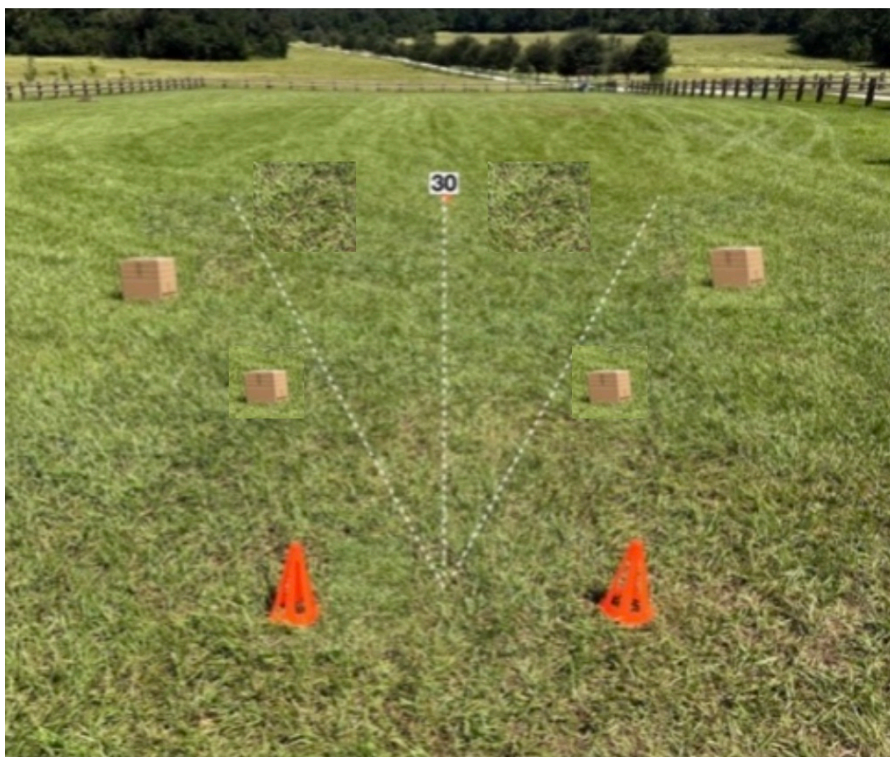
## 2. Obstacles

### Novice and Intermediate



***How much distance is there between the obstacles for Novice and Intermediate?***

This was not specified so there can be some variability on the courses. The distance between obstacles is about 6 to 10 ft. The main thing to consider is to place the boxes/obstacles at an angle so handlers can throw between them as shown above and on page 14.



Bad angles - In this photo, standing at the start line (between the cones), the handler cannot throw between the boxes.

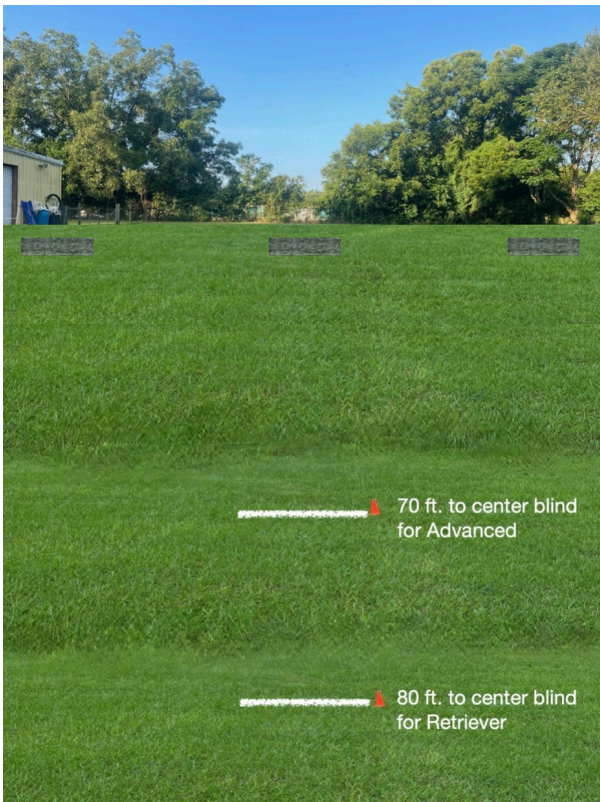


## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever

In the **Advanced and Retriever tests**, the obstacles (boxes, etc.) seen in the Novice and Intermediate tests are replaced with blinds.

There are 3 blinds on both the Advanced and Retriever courses. The courses for Advanced and Retriever remain the same with the exception that the start line changes.



In the Advanced test, the distance of the retrieve is 70 ft. In the Retriever test, the distance of the retrieve is 80 ft.

Once the course is set up, the blinds remain in place and the start line is adjusted by 10 ft. from Advanced to Retriever.

For example, if the Retriever dogs are tested first, there will be 80 ft. between the start line and the center blind. Then, when it is time to test the Advanced dogs, the start line will be moved up 10 ft. for the 70 ft. retrieve.

Start lines can be marked with chalk or a marker that will not get in the way of the dog and handler. Cones may also be used.

The specifics of the retrieves (e.g., Doubles, Triple) are in the *AKC Fetch Judge and Participant Guide*.





## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever

#### Constructing Your Blinds

In the Advanced and Retriever tests, there are 3 blinds on the course. The blinds are 10 ft. to 12 ft. long and at least 24 inches high (maximum of 30 inches).

AKC Fetch Test organizers are permitted some flexibility regarding the construction of their blinds because the availability of materials may vary from one area to another.

Blinds must be secure so they don't fall or collapse during a test. The bottom of the blinds must be close enough to the ground that the dog cannot see a bumper (or ball) behind the blind.

This is not a good look. This sagging blind is likely to fall over during a test.



The blinds should be low enough to the ground that the dog cannot see the bumper or ball.





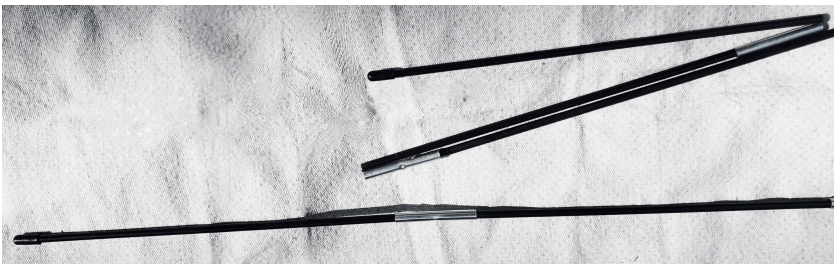
## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever

### Constructing Your Blinds

One option for blinds is to purchase preconstructed blinds. These can be found at a source such as [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) under “hunting dog blinds” or “portable camo blinds.”

The rectangular blinds should be 10 ft. to 12 ft. long and at least 24 inches high (a maximum of 30 inches).



One type of blind has very flimsy collapsible stakes. This type of blind is fine for dog owners to use in their yards to practice, but these stakes will not hold up to an AKC event where blinds must be sturdy and well-constructed.



One way to use a pre-constructed blind (with flimsy stakes) is to use only the fabric. Replace the stakes with heavier stakes such as garden stakes or wooden stakes that can be hammered into the ground.

Garden stakes are hollow and may snap in high winds.

In this photo, stakes are shown so you can see that the stakes that come with the blinds have been replaced.

**BEFORE USE, STAKES MUST BE TRIMMED TO THE HEIGHT OF THE BLIND FOR SAFETY.**





## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever

## SAFETY FIRST!

Some blinds have a side cord that is to be used to pull the blind tight.

Do not use these - a dog could trip or get tangled.



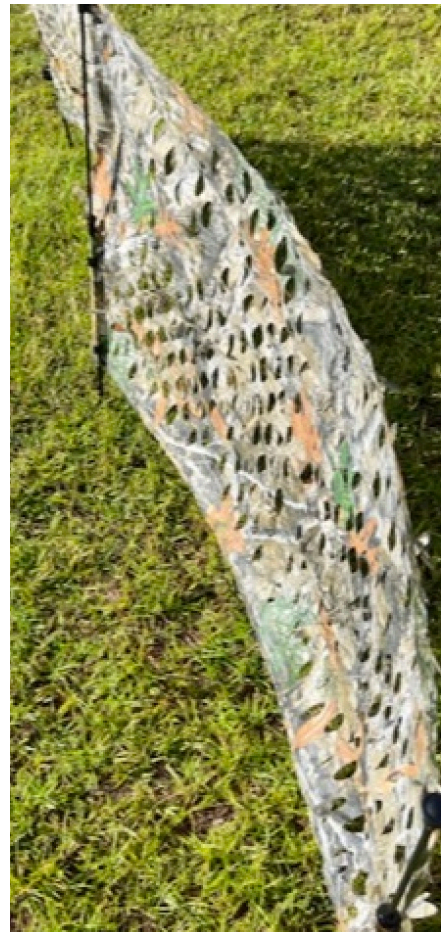

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## FABRIC

Clubs may choose the fabric they will use as screens.

Some camo fabric has pre-cut holes in the material.

A benefit of this type of camo fabric is that the holes allow for airflow in light windy conditions.





## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever

#### Constructing Your Blinds

You may construct the frames for your blinds out of your own materials such as Rebar, PVC, etc.

Another choice that can be used to construct blinds are plastic baby “play yards.” (Example: “Toddleroo by North States Superyard” on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com))



These come in panels that can be separated. The blinds can be secured with wooden stakes (or other staking materials).

They are then covered with the fabric that provides screening so the dog can't see the bumper (see next page).

- 4 panels of this product together are longer than 10 ft.





## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever



This is the plastic play yard (shown on previous page) covered with camo fabric. Fabric can be secured with zip ties or clips.

#### **Where to Get Fabric**

Sporting goods stores (e.g., Academy Sports + Outdoors) and stores that specialize in hunting usually carry camouflage fabric.

#### **Advantages of the plastic play yard type of blind:**

- Sturdy
- Collapses for storing; can also be joined together
- Can be used as “walls” in training classes to separate dogs, or with all panels joined, can form a circular play yard for puppies

#### **Disadvantages of the plastic play yard type of blind:**

- Cost - more expensive than other options
- Needs to be staked for stability when outside on grass
- Needs a larger storage/transporting area than blinds constructed of fabric and stakes.



### 3. Blinds

#### Advanced and Retriever



Here is play yard section with a wooden stake (sold at home pair stores such as Lowes/Home Depot) secured with a zip tie. This will be covered with camo fabric.

Stakes can be used to secure any type of blinds.

Binder clips may be used to secure fabric.







### 3. Blinds

#### Advanced and Retriever

Ring gates 10 ft. to 12 ft. long extended to be at least 24 inches tall can be used to construct blinds.



This product is 12 ft. x 4.6 ft.

It is handy because when the fabric is folded over a frame (as shown above), it covers 2 sides, providing a good screen.

Similar products are available.



## 3. Blinds

### Advanced and Retriever

#### How to Set Up Your Advanced and Retriever Course



**There will be 3 blinds on the course.**

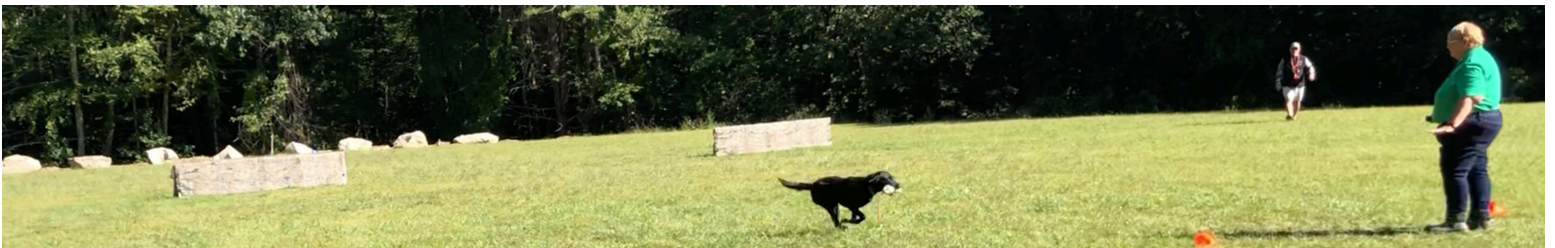
- Blinds are 10 ft. to 12 ft. long (a few inches variance is acceptable).
- From the outside edge of the left blind to the outside edge of the right blind is about 90 ft.
- The distance between the blinds is about 25 ft. to 30 ft.
- For Advanced, the distance from the start line to the center blind is 70 ft.
- For Retriever, the distance from the start line to the center blind is 80 ft.
- Event helpers will drop the bumpers 10 to 15 ft. behind each blind. (The handler may choose to throw the bumpers/balls).





### 3. Blinds

Advanced and Retriever





## 4. Tools for Setting Up the Course

This section provides suggestions for the tools you need to set up the course.

### Measuring the course



You will need to measure the course and the distances from the start line to the 30 ft., 50 ft., 70 ft., and 80 ft. marks.

Choices of measuring tools include a measuring wheel (available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)), or measuring tapes. A 100-ft. measuring tape is available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or at stores such as Lowes and Home Dept (or your local hardware store).



You can choose to mark the start line with chalk (or another marker such as cones).

Signs (optional) to indicate distances will show those taking the test how far the ball must be thrown. Many handlers prefer no signs on the course. The concern is they are distracting to dogs working at advanced levels.



# 30

# 50

# 70

# 80



## 4. Tools for Setting Up the Course

- \_\_\_ Measuring tool (choice of measuring wheel or tape)
- \_\_\_ Chalk (optional) or small cones.
  
- \_\_\_ Signs (30, 50, 70, 80 ft.). Optional.
  
- \_\_\_ Boxes (or other items including packing/storage crates, laundry baskets, etc.)
  - \_\_\_ Novice - 4 obstacles
  - \_\_\_ Intermediate - 8 obstacles
  - \_\_\_ Extra boxes for when dog fouls course if boxes are used
  
- \_\_\_ Cleaning supplies for when dog fouls course
  
- \_\_\_ Packing tape to assemble boxes
  
- \_\_\_ Blinds and fabric
- \_\_\_ Stakes or tools to secure blinds
- \_\_\_ Zip ties
- \_\_\_ Clips (binder clips for securing fabric to blind or stake)
  
- \_\_\_ Box cutter
- \_\_\_ Scissors
  
- \_\_\_ Tennis balls, retrieving bumpers for handlers who forgot!
- \_\_\_ Test forms (Checklists and Title applications, Judges record form)
- \_\_\_ Clipboard and pens
- \_\_\_ Ribbons for handlers/dogs who pass the test



Thank you for completing this module on  
*Setting Up AKC Fetch Courses!*