

## Introduction to Tracking – Andrew Ansenberger – update 2019 08 19

There are many methods used to introduce the sport of tracking to a dog. The hide-and-seek method is used by the Glenbard All Breed Obedience Club (<https://www.gaboc.org/>), the group Dave Crawford and I train with on Sundays. My Libby was started with this method at 12 weeks of age and mastered it in just a few weeks. Another way is the food method. A food motivated dog will take to it almost immediately. There are many other methods and most all of trainers agree that many short bursts of tracking sessions get the best results. Track often. Simple tracks.

Glenbarad is the club I do my tracking training most Sundays, and highly recommend it. We usually meet at the Northern Illinois University, in DeKalb, and then lay and run tracks throughout the campus. We also go out into forest preserves for field training. The club has four weekends a year of AKC tracking tests. Darlene and John Barnard are our tracking team leaders. Both are AKC Judges. They use the “hide and seek” method to introduce tracking to new handlers and their dogs. All are invited to come to a training session or a test to see what we love to do. Contact Darlene Barnard for more information. [ctannud@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ctannud@sbcglobal.net)

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### Introducing a new dog to tracking – Food method

- Equipment: Harness, nothing fancy 8 or 10 bucks ok; 40’ lead. A rope is ok for a lead if your dog doesn’t pull hard; two brown cloth gloves for beginning articles but any piece of glove sized cloth is ok if you can insert a treat into them; treats your dog likes, salami or small pieces of hot dog work great for my dogs; 6’ lead or a length of string. I recently bought a harness and lead from Dog.com for my cocker spaniels. Medium size harness: item #496695, \$7.99; a 50’ lead, \$11.24, cotton (nice on the hands, I cut the lead down to 40’ (AKC max length), item #320603; Dog.com charges \$6.99 total shipping for a complete order of any amount of items.
- Start with harness and 40’ lead on your dog. Tie lead to a tree or fence.
- While the dog is watching you, put a treat into a glove. Offer the glove to the dog and help him/her get the treat from it. Lots of praise. Repeat 3 or 4 times.
- While the dog waits, put a treat into the glove, connect the glove to a 6’ lead or a string, and walk away from the dog 50 feet or so dragging the glove with treat behind you. Drop the 6’ lead and glove and continue to walk in a large loop back to your dog. Do not cross or walk back on the track you have just laid. When you get back to the dog, take the dog’s 40’ lead in your hand, and give the dog some of your scent from another glove that has been rubbed on your body to transfer your scent, give the “GO

TRACK” command and let your dog track to the glove that contains the treat. Help your dog get the treat from the glove and give lots of praise. Repeat 3 or 4 times.

- End of day one. If your dog is going to the glove and getting the treat, your dog is now tracking.

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As time goes by, eliminate the dragging of the treat glove and just carry it instead. The next step would be to not treat the glove, but reward your dog after the glove is found at the track’s end. Work a few minutes or so each day or so, gradually going farther with the glove drop. Try to drop the glove behind a tree, out of initial sight to get the dog to sniff out his or her goal. After a week or so, you can let the track age 30 minutes after you drop the glove. After another week, introduce a 90 degree turn, 50 yards from the start, then continue out 50 more yards, drop the glove and marvel at your dogs track abilities.

After time, increase the track gradually to about 6 to 8 turns and a half mile in length. Add an article to find on every leg or two to increase the excitement of the track. Gradually increase the age of the tracks to 3 to 5 hours. I have aged some to up to 24 hours. Avoid acute angles on turns. Track over hard surfaces like asphalt and concrete, vegetation, ditches, roads, up and down stairways, etc. Use glove sized articles of cloth, leather, plastic, and metal. The AKC regulations define articles, track lengths, and everything on how to track under the AKC set of rules. <http://images.akc.org/pdf/rulebooks/RU9999.pdf>

Only commands: GO TRACK, when approaching an article you can say FIND IT. Lots of happy praise and treats.

Never, Never, Never, give corrections, except in unsafe conditions such as traffic or other animals. (I do stop my dogs from rolling in poop or dead critters on the track though) No negativity ever. If you or your dog are tired or don’t feel well, don’t track. No tracking is better than bad tracking.

Hot days are not good days for tracking. Bring water and offer it to your dog often. Track in evening or early morning.

In hot or cold weather don’t track or just for a few minutes. Snow or rain are great for tracking. Night time is good too.

Get other people to lay tracks for you (lots of luck here), so your dog learns to track others or stranger’s scents.

Your dog doesn’t have to lie down on the article or pick it up, he/she just has to indicate them.

Only hook the lead to the harness when you are at the start of the track when the start article is introduced to the dog for its scent. All other times use the collar so the dog associates the harness to the working track.

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#### Tracking Examples

The first YouTube is Oliver tracking back in November of 2011 when he had eyes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jp4dBMkU7bE>

The second YouTube is Oliver after both eyes were removed. This shows what a blind dog can do even though the AKC bans them from tracking. Libby is then shown doing the same track about a half hour later.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5GmG55019E>