



# FLYBALL BOX

What is it?	Why do it?
Transfers target training to the flyball box so dog will trigger the pedal on the box independently. Eventually combined with the send-away.	Needed for flygility. Provide a way of training dog to work at distance and get reward without handler being present – this improves drive and motivation to work at speed away from handler.

**NB:** Each of the following steps may take several days or weeks. Do not progress through the steps until your dog is consistently performing the previous step with enthusiasm and speed.

## Step 1: Introduction to the Flyball Box

### What you need:

- 🐾 A flyball box. This is a device that has a cup to hold a tennis ball, and a pedal that trigger release of the tennis ball into the air. There are specifications relating to the size of the pedal and how the ball should be thrown.
- 🐾 A supply of tennis balls.
- 🐾 **You need to have finished teaching Target Training and have your dog ball motivated before working on the flyball box. The retrieve will also help!**

### What you do:

Your dog needs to get used to the flyball box. If the dog is ball motivated already, toss his ball and praise as the reward for the steps below. If you don't yet have ball as the focus reward, use whatever reward is meaningful to your dog and keep working on that ball motivation!

- 🐾 Encourage your dog to make contact with the box while it is not loaded - when the dog touches the box, give a reward.
- 🐾 When your dog is comfortable touching the box, try putting your target training object onto the pedal (you can attach it with a velcro dot). If necessary, use your focus reward as a lure, and when the dog touches the pedal, reward. Ignore all other attempts. Don't put a ball in the cup yet!
- 🐾 When your dog will hit the pedal area most of the time, begin only rewarding direct hits which would be strong enough to trigger the box. You can also start reducing the target size or removing the target object from the pedal.
- 🐾 When your dog has the idea to walk up and pounce on the pedal with their feet, you can start cocking the box, which will make a thumping noise when they hits the pedal. **DO NOT LOAD** a ball in the box, just cock it. Get your dog used to the sound and continue to reward only for pressing hard enough to trigger the box.

## Step 2: Consolidation

Once your dog is comfortable with the box and you have the ball motivation sorted out, you can start to work with box & ball instead of box & food. Don't have any food around – it will distract the dog.



- 🐕 When your dog understands the box, training on it should be done on leash. This is to make sure the dogs don't spend too much time at the box – we want them to come back quickly with the ball.
- 🐕 Start working with two people if you haven't already. You walk your dog up to the box on a leash, and have a helper loading and/or tossing balls to reward the dog. When the dog catches the ball tossed by the helper, call your dog's name, and turn and run with them.
- 🐕 Now you introduce the loaded box. Load the box with a ball. Avoid having your dog see the ball go into the cup to reduce the chance that they decide to steal the ball. If the dog does try this, instead of loading the machine, have a helper throw the ball until the dog stops looking to steal it.
- 🐕 Control your dog with a hand through the collar or very short leash and lead or lure your dog up to the box, giving the "target" command and pointing to the target if necessary. The first time the dog will probably miss the ball but they learn quickly - have the helper ready to toss his ball to your dog if they miss seeing the one projected out of the box (the ball is now the reward and you want to make sure your dog gets it every time).
- 🐕 When your dog catches the ball, call their name, and turn and run away. Use the leash to ensure that the turn and movement away from the box is fast – we don't want the dog to get used to mucking about after catching the ball.
- 🐕 Remember to keep it fun and enthusiastic.

## Step 2: Enhancing flyball box techniques

### Some tips for improving speed and turns:

- 🐕 Keep it fun and exciting – don't over practice.
- 🐕 When doing this exercise you should be holding your dog by the collar and encouraging it verbally to get the ball. Only let go when the dog is lunging and desperate to get the ball - barking and whining is OK in flyball! A dog should never be punished for excess enthusiasm!
- 🐕 When your dog has the idea of hitting the box and catching the ball from the cup, concentrate on the turn from the box. The instant they have the ball, they should be hearing their name, and should turn and run to (with) you. Use lots of encouragement and give a reward (eg throwing the ball when your dog crosses an imaginary finish line with the tennis ball).
- 🐕 To improve your dog's speed of picking up the ball and turning to bring it back, get your dog to retrieve a ball thrown into a corner. The corner position makes a dog turn tightly.

### Tips for ball techniques

- 🐕 Don't forget to keep the tennis ball as a special toy that is used as a reward (during agility, obedience, or flygility practice). The tennis ball should not be something they play with on their own around home (other types of ball are fine though).
- 🐕 If your dog starts to try to steal the ball from the cup, get the helper to stop this by preventing access to the cup and/or telling your dog off verbally.
- 🐕 If your dog doesn't catch the ball well, you may need to give your dog more experience of catching as a separate exercise, eg throw a ball against a wall while playing