

Big Air Obedience

Contributed by The Crew at SportMutt

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Simple dog obedience in the sport of Big Air is an often overlooked skill and training technique. Many dogs are good with their basic obedience skills “at home,” but a new environment is really where the dog proves if the obedience skills are solid or need work.

It is fairly easy for a dog to do well with its basic commands in an environment that is predictable and the dog is completely acclimated to. When a dog is in a new environment the level of possible distractions increase greatly. A dog needs to be able to focus on the handler and block these distractions out. When a dog can focus directly on its handler, it will become much easier for the

dog to perform its basic commands successfully.

Crucial obedience commands in the sport is the “sit” and the “stay” command. A great way to prepare for ensuring a dog will obey these basic commands in a Big Air environment is to first practice these commands in other distracting locations.

First, practice the “sit” and “stay” commands at home in the dog’s natural environment—both inside and outside the home. Once the dog has proven success with this, it is time to move the training to the next level. Be creative taking the dog to a new environment that is sure to provide plenty of distractions for the dog. Practice these two commands with the dog until there is success. Depending on the dog—this can take a few days to a few months to reach that level of success. Again, once a level of success has been achieved look for another environment to practice these commands in.

When finding a new environment in which to practice the commands, try not to overwhelm the dog with too many environments at once. Pick one or two environments to really practice these skills. Make sure the dog has solid success confirming the commands before adding new environments for training. Great environments to choose would be places, like a local dog park, that will naturally create a lot of distractions for a dog. The possibility of what a dog will see, hear, and smell at a dog park makes it an ideal place as a distracting environment. Make sure to go back to the first environments and “confirm” the dog’s successes as continuing to progress forward with new locations in which to confirm the commands.

Also, be willing and open at Big Air events to see them as an opportunity for learning and training and not just as a competitive environment in which to jump. With success in many different kinds of distracting environments—it should become easier for the dog to acclimate faster to a new environment and be able to focus better on the handler and on what the handler is asking the dog to perform.

Good luck with plan! Let us here at SportMutt know how this works out for everyone!