

Record Books for Dog Sports

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Tip Sheet #1 — Get Results From Your Training Program

Until I started using a training journal, my training sessions with Winston seemed to lack focus, organization, purpose. I found myself practicing what was easy and familiar rather than learning something new and difficult. In my back yard where I had the equipment set up, we'd work on basically the same thing every day. Usually it was an exercise from a recent course or homework from a class I had attended. It was difficult to stay focused, on track and motivated. Moreover, I had no concrete way to determine if we were progressing in our training...and it seemed we weren't. We were competing but we weren't qualifying. I had an idea of what to practice, but what did I really want to accomplish? I had no particular goals or training plan. It seemed I was spending a lot of time training but not getting anywhere.

Winston and I managed to get through Novice O.K., but in Open we couldn't seem to qualify. I needed to find out why and I needed to start qualifying or quit! I began devouring books written by Olympic champions and sports psychologists on how to succeed at sports. In my reading I noted repeated references to keeping a training journal or diary that included a goal and a training plan. I began keeping a training journal and made my journal my new best friend. That was three years ago and not once since have I thought about quitting!

After using my training journal for more than two years and tweaking it as I felt the need, "AIM HIGH" evolved into what I wanted it to be: a personal positive reinforcement training tool and a system for planning, recording and evaluating my progress toward my goals. By using a training journal like AIM HIGH...

- Your goals will become clear and the steps toward your goals will become the foundation of your training plan.
- You'll write your goals down every day (the more you think about, write about, talk about something you want to happen, the greater the probability is of that thing happening).
- You'll be able to monitor your progress and evaluate your training efforts.
- You'll keep on track and stay focused on your goals.

- Your training will become more efficient and progressive.
- You'll focus on the positive aspects of your sport and your performances by writing down what you did well. When you do, you increase the chances of repeating the success.
- Your trainer/coach can review your journal and help you discover your strengths or problem areas.
- Once something is written down it becomes real, it takes on real meaning, and it becomes a commitment.

In addition to the above, a training journal can serve as the basis for next season's training program. It can serve as the foundation for planning your next puppy's training.

Since I'm training for several sports (agility, freestyle and obedience) I have a variety of types of training to do each day. Please see the journal page sample on the next page. The day used here was the Thursday before an obedience trial.

Luck comes to those who carefully prepare for it!

Your "Aim High" journal really begins with setting a goal. Once I wrote down my first real goal, "Winston's MACH by summer 2001", it became very clear: I had to have a plan! I had to make every second of my training count. I needed to get faster weaves and faster tunnels. I had to teach myself how to run fast. I had to increase our consistency rate. I had to enter lots of trials! I had to improve our use of those trials...and so on. I now had the basis for my training plan.

Your long-term goal may be to enter your first trial early next year. What you need to do to be ready becomes the basis for your training plan—teach Star to weave, get solid contacts, fast teeter, take her to different places to train.

Set a goal. List the steps you must take to meet that goal. Luck will be yours!

[\(Scroll down for sample journal page.\)](#)

If you have any questions about this tip, please send me an e-mail!
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Sample journal page

DATE: 5/8/03	DAY: Thurs	LOCATION(S) Park/yard
CONDITIONS: Hot/humid		
EVENT: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRAINING COMPETITION TYPE OF TRAINING: Obedience/freestyle		
WHAT I PLAN TO TRAIN (INCLUDING ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE RESOLVED):		
Practice all obedience exercises at the park. Work extra on stand	EXERCISE SKETCH	
For freestyle work on backing up straight...from front and side; work on tight circles around my legs.		
Begin backing around me exercises.	increase distance between jumps in back yard for next week's agility exercises.	
EXERCISE Jump chute	# REPS: 8	
EXERCISE Drill weaves	# REPS: 8	
EXACTLY WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED:		
Went through all obedience exercises in the park. Winston remembered everything. Heeling was a little wide, worked on that.		
At home started working back-up on patio against wall. Winston tries to scoot out behind me. Put a leash on him to keep him beside me. He is less nervous now about being between me and the wall.		
Began teaching him to back up around me. His back end keeps going in the wrong direction. Keep working on this.		
SUCCESS ANALYSIS - WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING DONE WELL		
Winston remembered all his obedience exercises. I think he will do well in the trial Saturday.		
THIS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WEEK'S MONTH'S GOAL:		
Obedience exercises; back up training		
LONG TERM GOAL:		
WNKC CD this weekend; freestyle routine by November.		
COMMENTS:		
Go slowly with backing up around me. Teach him to get his rear end in!		