

Getting Started

Contributed by The Crew at SportMutt

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There are many aspects to becoming a successful Dock Dog. Start with building a strong camaraderie between you and your dog. Develop a relationship that continues to build trust and confidence. Become a team. Teamwork, diet and conditioning are the foundation for a successful Dock Dog.

Although there is much more information available on advanced dock jumping, this document will focus on what it takes to get your dog to jump off a dock and the proper technique to jump off the end. At this time there are no public facilities available for training so we'll assume you have a lake with a dock.

Remember to always keep it fun. This is something you want your dog to look forward to. Something your dog gets excited about. This is not a time for discipline. Discipline can be worked in to more advanced dock jumping, but for now stay away from discipline. Use this time for teaching and rewarding.

Start by playing with his/her favorite toy on dry land. Get him/her to chase it while still in your hand. Slowly begin holding the toy higher in the air continuing to have him/her chase it. Raise the toy high enough so he/she has to jump for it. Praise him/her when he/she jumps for it.

Now take it to the shoreline. Do exactly what you did on dry land only this time make sure he's/she's playing in the water just deep enough to make some splash. Make sure to make plenty of splashes. Praise him/her when he/she jumps for it.

Now sit and make him/her stay a small distance from the shore on dry land. Stand a couple of inches in the water. Hold the toy high enough out in front of you so he/she has to jump to get it out of your hand. Release him/her. Because you are in the water, he/she will land in the water. Praise him/her. Your dog is now jumping in to the water. It's just a matter of progression from there. Set him/her a little farther back and hold the toy a little higher. Once you feel confident with this practice, It's time to bring him/her to the dock.

The key to getting your dog to jump off the dock is to start short and end long. Position him/her at the very end of the dock where he/she will jump and work back to the ultimate starting position. Start by tossing the toy close to the dock. If you toss the toy too long, the dog won't jump thinking he/she can get the toy. If he/she sees the toy close to the dock, he'll/she'll think he/she can get it and will have a better chance of jumping.

Once you've positioned him/her at the end of the dock where he/she will jump off, toss the toy about 5 feet from the end of the dock and release him/her. If he/she doesn't jump, go back to the shore exercise. If he/she jumps you've done it. Congratulations. Now it's just a matter of repetition. Toss the toy a little further and have him/her start a little further back each time.

Always keep an eye on his/her take off position on the dock. You want him/her jumping as close to the end as possible. If he/she starts to jump early, move his/her start position closer to the take off and start working him/her back again.

Congratulations. Your dog is now a Dock Dog. Keep practicing and remember to praise him/her often and keep it fun.