



WEIMARANER CLUB
of GREAT BRITAIN



Activities for your Weimaraner



Introduction

The Weimaraner breed was developed in 19th century Germany and bred for the sport of hunting and tracking large game, such as boar and deer. To carry out this role, the dogs needed stamina, strength, determination, and the ability to think independently, while still working in partnership with their owners. These traits remain very prominent in the breed today and without adequate physical and mental stimulation, the Weimaraner will create its own ways to relieve boredom. As a breed, they are very much a “do something” dog, and most certainly not a “do nothing” dog!

The first Weimaraners came to the UK shortly after WWII, and were commonly used as rough-shooting companions for picking up on driven shoots. During this period, the sport of obedience was gaining popularity among dog lovers. It was strongly influenced by the military training that dogs were trained for during the war and included formal rules for heel work, recall, and scent discrimination.

In the 1950s, the sport of working trials introduced tracking, search exercises, direction control and dogs working over jump obstacles to obedience skills, and it seems to have captured the imagination of many early Weimaraner owners. The first WCGF year books record several dogs who gained titles in this discipline.

Agility was first demonstrated at Crufts in 1978. It was fast, fun, and highly accessible and soon became globally recognised. With rising dog ownership and owners looking for activities to enjoy with their dogs, rally started to become popular as a less formal alternative to traditional obedience, and then came canicross which offered high adrenaline, while hoopers developed as a more accessible form of agility for dogs and owners who wanted to enjoy the control but maybe with less haste, and more recently, scentworks in all its forms is proving popular.

Today, there are so many ways to give a Weimaraner the purposeful work they thrive on, either just for fun or in competition.

The WCGF have created this guide to encourage you to take a look at, and maybe get started in some of the many sports and activities that you can do with your Weimaraner that will give them the mental and physical outlet they need to be happy, and give you a rewarding way to build a strong working partnership with your dog.

Agility

My introduction to competitive agility was with my re-homed Weimaraner Lucy. Not my first of the breed but I had never before, or since, met her equal in regards to desire to hunt. She chased anything and everything. Fortunately we lived on a farm with land where she could free run and we could 'work' with her innate compulsion to chase. Sadly, we also had pheasant, hare and deer on that land which made it even more of a challenge. One particular event made me realise that agility could well be the key to turning her around.

A deer spooked and fled from the wood taking off across the fields followed by Lucy about 50 meters behind. After the initial panic, I could do no more than watch the chase unfolded and hope the deer survived.

The chase was so skilful you couldn't help but be impressed. The deer ducked and dived, and Lucy followed. It jumped fences, and Lucy followed. What I had witnessed was pure instinct, the drive to chase quarry.

So what's that got to do with agility? All handlers select the 'animal instinct' that would work to advantage in their chosen discipline and 'train out' any unwanted behaviours. In agility, we draw on that innate drive to chase, we replicate the twists and turns and, at the end of a run, we reward either with food or with a game of tug. We harness the energy and chase drive of the dog and use it to our advantage. Yet all the time the dog is doing what comes naturally whilst being 'trained' by their handler to apply impulse control and follow the commands of their handler.

The handler takes charge and sets the speed and direction that the dog takes around a course. The jumping over obstacles and going through tunnels are not tricks but replicate the physical skills required to hunt over fences, rough ground and thicket. It is a physical and mental workout like no other. It is power, speed, stamina, accuracy, coordination, focus, discipline, communication in it's broadest sense, a true partnership between two species above all else it is incredible fun. It is without doubt the most rewarding thing I have ever done with my Weimaraners.

Alison True

How to get started and what to expect

Agility is a highly accessible sport for you and your Weimaraner. There are many clubs and private trainers offering training classes throughout the UK. Most clubs follow principles set by The Royal Kennel Club (RKC) or Agility4All but beginner sessions are usually focused on building confidence with the obstacles and teamwork skills. Sessions usually take place in a secure field or indoor training venue.

Dogs work one at a time or in small groups, and the focus is on building foundations rather than speed. You'll learn recalls, turns, body awareness, and how to work around distractions. You might not touch equipment in the first week or two, especially if your dog is young or new to structured training.

The equipment is introduced gradually. Your dog may start with tunnels, low jumps, and simple handling patterns. Contact equipment such as the A-frame, dog walk, and see-saw is taught slowly as there is a risk of injury to the dog if they fail to navigate these obstacles correctly. Weave poles are usually introduced later, as they require careful, progressive training.

Most clubs ask that dogs are over a 14 months of age before doing full equipment, and they will expect your dog to be comfortable working off-lead around others, but if your dog is still learning to settle or focus, that is normal. Instructors are used to helping dogs of all temperaments and will give you strategies to manage excitement, nerves, or distraction.

Taking it further into competition

As your skills progress you might feel you want to compete. Most people start with local shows and fun days which are an excellent way to build your confidence in the ring.

The RKC shows use Grades 1 to 7, with beginners starting at Grade 1. You progress by earning wins or points. Courses at the lower grades are designed to be easily achievable as you gain confidence in handling your dog. As you move up, the challenges become more technical, with tighter turns, more demanding weave entries, and greater emphasis on accuracy and speed.

The Weimaraner Agility League is a great way to record your dog's progress and gain support as part of a wider community of Weimaraner handlers. The purpose of the League is to encourage participation in the sport, celebrate progress, and highlight the achievements of Weimaraners across the country. Clear rounds, placings, and consistent performance all contribute to your points, which are recorded and then, at the end of the season, the League publishes the standings and awards certificates or recognition for the top dogs in each category.

Seeing your dog's name alongside others and watching your points build over the year helps add a sense of purpose to your training and encourages you to keep improving.

You can find out more by contacting Debbie Williams: weimleague@hotmail.co.uk



Canicross

“So we’ve all done it, indulged in the Christmas festivities and then thought the New Year’s resolution must be to shift said extremes!! I did exactly this in 2014. However. I thought I’d get ahead of the game and start an exercise regime ahead of Christmas so that the excesses of Christmas would have no effect (who am I kidding!!). I’d heard of canicross, but really had no understanding of it and the thought of putting one foot in front of the other at speed was really quite a daunting one, so I jumped at the opportunity to join a group locally when I saw what I thought was a 5km race advertised through the Weimaraner UK Facebook group.”

Becky Martinez



There are several canicross groups around the UK that welcome complete beginners , and a wide range of breeds. The emphasis of the sport is that of enjoying the trails together and learning to move as a partnership with your dog. It gives your dog a clear job to do while at the same time offering you both the opportunity to explore new places and work together as a team. It's great for people who enjoy physical exercise and personal fitness and has a fun supportive social side too.

Canicross might appear quite daunting, but it is actually is safe and controlled. The harness, bungee line, and running belt allow the dog to pull without straining. The cues you learn to use to communicate with your dog help you to navigate trails and keep focused on the run regardless of all the distraction around you.

Getting started with Canicross

You can get started by joining a local canicross club where you learn how to introduce your dog to running in front and the cues you will need to direct them. The beginner sessions are about building confidence and rhythm rather than distance or speed with a focus on teamwork, communication, and enjoying the outdoors together. As you and your dog gain stamina and fitness you'll explore varied terrains and longer routes.

Moving into Competition

If you decide to try racing, the UK has a well-established canicross scene with events ranging from small local runs to national series. Races are usually held on woodland trails or country parks and are open to all levels. Most races follow similar rules: dogs must be over a minimum age, run in suitable harnesses, and remain under control at all times. Passing other runners politely and giving space on narrow trails is part of the etiquette.

Bikejoring

Bikejorking is very similar to Canicross but instead of running with your dog, your dog pulls a bike or scooter. If you decide to try racing, the UK has an established bikejoring scene with events ranging from small local races to national competitions. Events are usually held on forest tracks or wide trail systems and cater for a range of experience levels.



Gundog

Weimaraners belong to the Hunt Point Retriever (HPR) subsection of the gundog group. The breeds in this section are dogs that are able to work quite independently and carry out several roles in a shooting field, where some breeds might specialise in just one, for example the Labrador retriever would not be expected to hunt or point game, but it would be expected to take direction and retrieve it. They are grouped in the retriever section.

Much of the joy of having such a large athletic dog is in being outside and watching them run and play with breathtaking power and speed, but it is essential that for them to do this you have a high level of communication and their total willingness to stop doing anything that they might be engaging with to follow your directions. Should a deer or hare appear on the scene and you do not have these tools built into to your training then you are highly likely to see your dog disappear into the horizon.

Gundog training is all about harnessing their hunting instincts and turning them into a co-operative with your dog so that you can be confident and sure that you have control while still admiring their beauty in motion. Regardless of whether or not you wish to compete or work your dog, some understanding of how they think and work is essential to owning the breed, and the training is great fun for both of you.





Getting started with gundog training

Gundog classes are available through both competitive clubs, breed clubs, and private trainers who might offer group or one to one training. The gundog club (www.gundogclub.co.uk) has a list of trainers around the UK who offer graded levels of accreditation divided into skill sets for each of the different gundog groups: retriever, spaniel and HPR, which you can work to at your own pace without competition. You can also find summer camps and Gundog training holidays too,

If possible, it is desirable to find a trainer or class for HPRs. Your initial training will be about teaching your dog to be calm and learning to focused on you around other dogs and people, walk beside you on lead and retrieving dummies to your hand. Dummies are made of heavy canvas stuffed with sawdust and sized to match the approximate weight of different game. Puppy dummies are much smaller to suit little mouths as they gain confidence in picking up and carrying things. Once your dog is comfortable and reliable in retrieving the dummy you might then progress to dead game, but you don't have to if you don't want to touch fur or feather. As your training progresses you will begin to work on more advanced skills like as memory retrieves, blind retrieves, and directional cues such as left, right, and back. You may work on hunting patterns, steadiness to thrown dummies, and building confidence in different terrain.

Moving into competition

If you decide to compete there are a few options for you. Working tests are organised through gundog breed clubs and held under rules set by The Royal Kennel Club. They are carried out as simulated field work competitions with points awarded for marking the dummies, memory retrieves, hunting pattern and style, delivery to hand, steadiness and water confidence.

Field trials are the most advanced level of The Royal Kennel Club regulated gundog competitions and replicate a real shoot day with shot game. The trials are organised as stakes with the classes for the HPRs being judged as Open, All-Aged and Novice. Scoring is awarded on merit and eliminations for faults, which take into account the quality and consistency of the dog's work, it's natural ability to locate game, control and behaviour while working. To become a field trial champion, the dog must win two open trials.



Hoopers

“Hoopers is a fantastic, fun and fast growing canine sport that is a brilliant way to build a great bond and working relationship with your dog, with the benefits of being a low-impact sport. It involves navigating a course of hoops, barrels, and tunnels, promoting teamwork and communication between dogs and their handlers, who regularly are a distance away from their dog.

I initially tried Hoopers several years ago with my first dog Poppy, an older Weimaraner, having enjoyed years of competing in agility, but now needed a more gentle activity. Both she and I absolutely loved it and she picked it up really quickly having the experience of doing dog agility. It was a fun way to keep her active with the gently flowing courses, we even started competing in the sport, she loved to still be able to “work”.

This is a great sport, and is perfect for those who want to enjoy a fun new challenge with their pet, or those who want to start competing – just one warning – it is addictive ! “

Sarah-Jane Hooper

Hoopers is in some ways similar to agility, but instead of jumps, you guide your dog around a course made up of hoops, barrels, and tunnels. The course is also set in a smoother line so that the dogs do not twist and turn so quickly as they do in agility. You also work at greater distance from your dog than so that your verbal and visual instructions takes the lead rather than you having to run to keep up with your dog. It's a very new discipline but it has been gaining popularity much through its inclusiveness, the low impact nature of the sport makes it ideal for both dogs and handlers with impaired mobility that might find agility just a bit too much for them but still want to enjoy a fun activity with their dogs. It's also great for people who work their dogs in other disciplines such as gundog work which is primarily a seasonal sport, and it can give puppies a head start in their agility training while they are still growing and not ready for jumps and weaves.

Competing in Hoopers

To enter into competition, both you and your Weimaraner need to be registered with Canine Hoopers UK, and your dog will be placed in the correct size category based on a simple foreleg measurement. A Weimaraner will almost always be classed as “large”, and once that's recorded, it stays with them for the rest of their competing life.

All dogs begin in the “starters” group and start collecting points and move up through to novice,

intermediate, advance and masters levels. Points are earned from clear rounds, and you can gain extra points from distance handling or 'bonus boxes', which are marked areas in the course where you have to stay put while you send your dog through a section of the course alone.

As well as competitions around the UK there is also an annual European Open Hoopers event held in the Netherlands where you can compete with fellow enthusiasts, either individually or as part of a team.

For more information: <https://www.caninehoopersuk.co.uk>



Obedience and Rally

Ten year old Lucy - or “Lucy Locket of Hantzburg RL1” to give her her “posh” name, began her life with another family. However, at the age of 3 she needed re-homing and she now lives with us. As time passed she progressed through basic training and socialising. I liked the idea of working trials and agility, but she is a bit old to start those disciplines and classes in our area are few and far between. Rally is perfect for her as it is not physically strenuous and I liked that no large equipment is required. With a set of small cones/markers and pieces of card to make signs you can start training in your back garden, in the park, or even your living room. Get that clicker out - or whatever method works best for you - and work on neat sits, downs, turns etc.

Ruth Burgess



Obedience and rally are two different but similar sports with rally being more relaxed in the nature of the how you are expected to carry out the tasks. Rally is derived from the heelwork elements of competitive obedience. However it differs from obedience, in that competitors and dogs attempt a preset course with signs placed at various along the course, requiring them to perform one of our 80 different preset exercises. These will typically be: walking to heel at different paces; changes of direction including left turns, right turns, and about turns; halt exercises where the dog sits, downs, walking to heel at different paces; changes of direction including left turns, right turns, and about turns; halt exercises where the dog sits, downs, or stands alongside the handler.

Moving into competition

Should you decide to move into competition in rally, you start at level one, which is novice, and work your way to gaining three qualifying scores, which will see you to progress to level 2. Level 6 is the top level and on reaching level 5, your points start accumulating towards the Rally Warrant (RW) title.

Competitive obedience showcases the training you and your dog have achieved through a set of obedience tests. General training classes will teach you the basics and then if you decide you want to progress in this discipline, your dog could even end up doing advanced exercises like scent discrimination. The Kennel Club has introduced a scheme to encourage and support newcomers to obedience competition, with Introductory and Pre-beginner classes, before moving on to Beginner, Novice, Class A, Class B and Class C.

Scentwork & mantrailing

Scentwork is becoming more popular in the UK and there are now a growing number of organisations that offer training along with trials, tests and accreditations. As training activity, scentwork is fun, very rewarding and at the same time mentally challenging for your dog. It harnesses the dog's natural ability to use its fantastic sense of smell to identify and locate a scent which it has been trained to detect.

It is a great confidence builder and due to its low physical impact it is suitable for all ages and abilities. Its great for dogs who are rehabilitating or for the more mature that do not want to retire, and it's never too late to start as can be trained at any age from puppy through to veteran. Apart from your chosen odour, you do not need any special equipment, making scentwork very simple and low cost. It can be trained at home, whatever the weather, great for those rainy or extreme temperature days.

Scentwork training consists of:

- Odour recognition: how well your dog recognises the target odour.
- Search behaviour: teaching your dog to search independently in a confident and methodical manner so that they can systematically cover the search area.
- Indication: the action required from the dog once it has found the scented article. Although some organisations do have a retrieve,

Most people train to what is referred to as a passive indication. This is where the dog is still and is looking at the hide location or holding its nose close to it. This could be a sit, down, stare (freeze) or a nose touch.

Scentwork is a team effort. Whilst the dog is learning how to search for and indicate on its target odour, as their handler you will be learning how to read their body language, observing change of behaviours and utilise all the information they provide you with.

Each dog's behaviour will be different, for example tail carriage/wag, change of pace and direction, intensity of their breathing/ sniffing etc. All will provide you with valuable information as you search the area.



Scentwork UK

The sport of scentwork is based on detection-style nosework practiced daily by customs & excise, explosive, conservation and medical detection dogs. Scentwork UK is one of the largest organisations to promote and develop scentwork as a dog sport and training activity throughout the country with its network of recognised trainers and judges.

Dogs and handlers are tested against a consistent national standard and can progress by passing the individual levels at a Scentwork UK trial.

There are currently 8 levels of progression in which the search areas and tests increase technically and in difficulty. Starting with clove odour at level 1, additional odours of gun oil are added at level 3 and truffle at level 6. There are four search areas per level up to level 4: two interior searches: table & chairs and 'container' (boxes & luggage) and two exterior searches, which consist of general exterior items and the exterior of vehicle/wall search.

Scentwork UK can be found on Facebook or visit www.scentworkuk.com to find a trainer in your area and more information on trials and regulations.

Mantrailing

Mantrailing is a fun sport based on the training used for lowland search and rescue work, where your dog follows a specific human scent trail. The track is laid at some time in advance. To start with, this might be just half an hour, and as your dog progresses they will start to work on more aged tracks over longer distances, different terrains and busier environments.

You can learn more about how to get involved here: <https://www.mantrailingglobal.com/>

Showing

Dog conformation shows are competitions where dogs are evaluated on how closely they conform to their breed standard as set by the RKC. Training for the show ring takes place at ringcraft classes and are best started early so that the dogs learn to be comfortable around lots of other dogs in close proximity, and stand still while being examined by the judge, who will be looking into their mouths and feeling their muscular and skeletal structure. Ringcraft classes are highly social events and a great way to meet others with experience in breeding and showing Weimaraners, although not everybody who joins a ringcraft class will show their dog as they find it highly valuable socialisation experiences.

Your first steps into showing your dog will be to ensure that it is registered with the RKC and that it is of correct colour. If your dog is registered as colour not recognised it means that you will be disqualified from the show ring. That's not to say your dog is not a perfectly lovely family member, but that it's colour does not conform to the breed standard.

You will then need to find a local ring craft club where you will learn to stand and move your dog to it's best advantage in front of a judge. Ring craft clubs also hold regular match days where dogs compete against each other. Once your puppy is 6 months old you are eligible to enter RKC open and championship shows.

Open Shows

Open shows are generally smaller events and are held more frequently than championship shows, and are often limited to single breeds or a breed group. They are great for gaining experience and less expensive to participate in. Dogs are awarded points for wins and these points count towards awards. In 2019 the points system was reshaped and now centres on three main awards, which are "Open Show Winner" (OSW), "Show Certificate of Excellence" (ShCEX), and the "Veteran Warrant" (VW). These sit alongside the Junior Warrant (JW), which can also be earned partly at open shows.

Championship Shows

At Championship level, the award system shifts from points (as in Open Shows) to Challenge Certificates, Stud Book Numbers, and the major lifetime titles that define a dog's show career.

A CC is awarded to the best dog and best bitch in each breed (where CCs are on offer). In awarding a CC the judge is certifying that the dog is "of such outstanding merit as to be worthy of becoming a Champion." To become a Champion, a dog must win three CCs under three different judges.

For gundogs, the title is Show Champion (Sh Ch) until the dog also wins a field trial award when it is eligible to drop the Sh and become a full champion..



Working trials

Working trials for dogs are competitive events designed to test a dog's obedience, control, and ability to perform practical tasks that were historically useful in working roles. These trials are popular in the United Kingdom and are organised by groups such as the The Kennel Club. They provide a structured way to assess a dog's intelligence, training, and partnership with its handler.

A working trial is usually divided into several sections. The first is the control and agility phase, where the dog must complete obstacles such as a scale, clear jump, long jump, and an A-frame. These obstacles test the dog's athletic ability, confidence, and willingness to follow commands. The dog must perform these tasks under the handler's direction while remaining calm and focused.

Another important part of the trial is the nose work. In this section the dog uses its sense of smell to locate hidden items or follow a scent trail. Exercises may



Tracking

Tracking deer using blood work (blood tracking) involves training a dog to follow the scent trail of a wounded deer. This process requires specialized training, often using artificial or real blood, to develop a dog's natural scenting abilities, focusing on patience and technique rather than just the dog's breed.

The Schweisshund tests run by the Bavarian Hunting Hound Society are designed to evaluate the tracking ability of specialized bloodhounds used for recovering wounded game. The word "Schweisshund" refers to a dog trained to follow a blood trail left by injured animals, an important task in ethical hunting because it ensures that wounded animals can be located quickly and humanely. These tests simulate real tracking situations. Artificial blood trails are laid using animal blood, usually from deer, and the trails may be several hours old before the dog is asked to follow them. The trail is carefully planned with turns, gaps, and natural obstacles to make the task challenging and realistic. Dogs must rely on their scenting ability, concentration, and training to stay on the correct track.

During the test, the dog works on a long tracking lead with its handler following behind. Judges observe how accurately the dog follows the trail, how it reacts to distractions, and how well it communicates with the handler. A successful dog shows patience, determination, and a calm working style. The purpose of these tests is not only to assess the dog's ability but also to maintain high working standards within the breed. By testing Schweisshunds under controlled conditions, the Bavarian Hunting Hound Society ensures that only capable dogs are used for real tracking work in the field.

Although the tests are managed by the Bavarian Hunting Hound Society, a number of Weimaraners have achieved their Level 1 and Level 2 tests. For more information <http://www.bmhs.org.uk/test-and-training-days.html>



