

Advanced Training Plan

Introduction

This training plan is designed to guide K9 handlers who have passed the SARDOA Intermediate course towards the goal of progressing into advanced-level Wilderness Search and Rescue (SAR) canine work. It focuses on wilderness-specific skills and incorporates some semi-urban and shallow water components.

Phase 1: Advanced Wilderness Search Techniques

Goals:

- Master advanced wilderness search techniques.
- Develop tactical decision-making skills in wilderness environments.
- Refine GPS navigation and mapping in challenging terrain.

Training Activities:

- **Wilderness terrain navigation:** Practice navigating through dense forests, rugged hills, murky swamps, and remote areas.
- **GPS mapping and analysis:** Use GPS to create detailed maps of wilderness search areas and analyze terrain features.
- **Situational awareness in wilderness:** Train your dog to be aware of potential hazards, such as cliffs, ravines, and waterways.
- **Teamwork:** Practice working effectively with wilderness SAR teams and experts.

Phase 2: Wilderness Tracking and Survival

Goals:

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- Enhance wilderness tracking skills.
 - Teach survival skills for both handler and dog.
 - Develop a strong bond and teamwork with your dog.

Training Activities:

- **Advanced tracking:** Practice tracking over long distances, varying terrain, and extended periods.
- **Survival skills:** Teach your dog basic survival skills, such as finding water, shelter, and food.
- **Survival training for handlers:** Learn survival skills for yourself, including first aid, navigation, and wilderness survival techniques.
- **Teamwork and bonding:** Strengthen your bond with your dog through shared experiences and challenges.

Phase 3: Semi-Urban Wilderness Search

Goals:

- Develop skills for searching in semi-urban wilderness areas.
- Practice searching in areas with human-made structures and trails.
- Integrate wilderness search techniques with urban search elements.

Training Activities:

- **Semi-urban terrain:** Search in areas with a mix of wilderness and urban elements, such as forest trails near towns or rural areas.
- **Human-made structures:** Search around cabins, campsites, and other structures in wilderness areas.
- **Urban-wilderness interface:** Practice transitioning between urban and wilderness environments.

Phase 4: Shallow Water and Shoreline Search

Goals:

- Develop skills for shallow water and shoreline searches.

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- Train your dog to swim and retrieve objects from water.
 - Practice water safety and rescue techniques.

Training Activities:

- **Shallow water search:** Practice searching in shallow water, such as rivers, lakes, and ponds.
- **Shoreline search:** Search along shorelines and riverbanks for missing persons.
- **Water retrieval:** Train your dog to retrieve objects from water, such as personal items or life jackets.
- **Water safety:** Ensure your dog's safety during water training and operations.

Phase 5: Obedience and Control

Goals:

- Maintain a high level of obedience and control both on and off leash.
- Demonstrate a strong bond and working cooperation.
- Prepare for SARDOA final evaluation.

Training Activities:

- **Heeling on lead:** Practice a variety of heeling patterns, including normal, fast, and slow walks, and commands like sit and down.
- **Sit/stay and down/stay:** Increase the duration and distance of stay commands both in dog's sight line and out of sight line.
- **Recall:** Practice recall from various distances and distractions.
- **Control and cooperation:** Work on maintaining control of your dog in all situations, including within crowds, during searches, and training exercises.

Phase 6: SARDOA Final Evaluation

Goals:

- Review and reinforce learned skills.

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- Prepare for the SARDOA Advanced course evaluation.

Training Activities:

- **Practice exams:** Simulate the SARDOA Advanced course evaluation.
- **Problem-solving:** Work on complex search scenarios and challenges in wilderness environments.
- **Confidence building:** Continue to boost your dog's confidence in challenging wilderness situations.

Additional Tips

- **Positive reinforcement:** Use rewards and praise to motivate your dog.
- **Consistency:** Maintain a consistent training routine.
- **Variety:** Keep training sessions interesting by changing locations and activities.
- **Seek guidance:** Consult with experienced SAR trainers and experts.

By following this training plan and adhering to the SARDOA Advanced course benchmarks, you can effectively prepare your K9 handler and dog for a successful career in advanced-level Wilderness Search and Rescue.

