



Search and Rescue Dogs of Colorado

Trailing Progressions

Handler Name: _____

Dog Name: _____

	Date Completed	Evaluators/ Testers	Mandatory
T1 – Basic Direction of Travel			N
T2 – Turns			N
T3 – Simple Discrimination			Yes
T4 – Basic Night			N
T5 – Articles/ Distance			N
T6 – Night			Yes
T7 – Age			N
T8 – Road Cast			N
T9 – Contamination and Certification Readiness			N
T10 – Urban			N

These Trailing Progressions provide a series of search exercises that a team can use to measure their progress towards certification.

The Progressions are by no means a comprehensive training program. Between these evaluations, teams must incorporate a wide variety of variables (the Trailing Task Book has a list of such variables) and plenty of repetition in their training to make sure they become a well-rounded, reliable search team. It is very important to work with experienced handlers who can give advice as to when it is appropriate to introduce particular variables, how best to train on those new variables, how to overcome issues encountered in training, and how to determine when a team has mastered a skill to a repeatable, dependable degree. The progressions are not a race, avoid the temptation to jump from one to the next too quickly.

Some of the progressions (T3 and T6) are mandatory for all trailing teams. The others are optional but it is highly recommended that teams demonstrate all of these progressions, in the order shown, as they advance through their training. Handlers training their first SAR dog will find them particularly useful.

Guidelines for Scheduling Progressions

- Before setting up a progression, make sure you have really mastered the skills at that level. Review your training log with your Area Director and other experienced handlers. You will probably be training on problems beyond the level of the progression before you are really ready for that evaluation.
- For the recommended (not required) progressions, request the setup for that evaluation as far ahead as possible. The Area Director or the person in charge of that day's training will determine if the evaluation can be set up and demonstrated at a particular practice.
- You may do non-required progressions in any order, however it is highly recommended that you do them in the order listed.
- The SARDOC Testing Coordinator will maintain a list of members who are qualified as Evaluators in each discipline. In general, anyone who is at least Operational Support and has passed a particular progression can be an evaluator for that progression level. Remember that the reason for doing these evaluations is to get helpful feedback from qualified, experienced handlers. Teams in training should strive to get a variety of experienced evaluators to observe and score the progressions.
- Requests for T6 (Night) Progression must be made through the Testing Coordinator. The Testing Coordinator will appoint the testers.

Guidelines for Setting up Evaluations

- The handler must always ensure the safety and well-being of their canine partner by bringing the appropriate equipment and supplies needed and by allowing for adequate breaks.
- The time limit given for each evaluation may be adjusted at the discretion of the Evaluator(s).
- All evaluations are set up as single blind tests. The evaluator shall know the exact location of the subject(s) and be familiar with the search area.
- Evaluators have the option of calling a “no-test” if the conditions don’t allow the tested skills to be observed. (e.g. the dog immediately airscented to the subject) A no-test does not count as a failed attempt.

Guidelines for Reviewing and Reporting Evaluations

- These progressions are designed to help a dog team prepare for certification testing and fielding of their SAR dog. Honest feedback is a vital component of this process. Evaluators must give the handler a “yes/no” answer as to whether they have adequately demonstrated the skills required at that level. They must also tell the handler what they did well, what could be done better, and suggestions for further training (either to train before trying that progression again, or to work on as they train towards the next progression.)
- For the recommended (not required) progressions, evaluators may give either written or oral feedback. Use of the Trailing Progression Scoresheet is preferred but not required. The trainee should keep any scoresheets, maps, and other paperwork with their training log regardless of whether the evaluation was passed or not. Oral comments should be noted in the handler’s log book.
- For the required progressions, the appropriate scoresheets must be used (Trailing Progression Scoresheet for T3, Certification Test Scoresheets for T6 and T9). If the evaluation is “passed”, the evaluators must sign and date the scoresheet, and the handler must send a copy (with any maps or other paperwork) to the Testing Coordinator. The original copies should be kept by the handler with their training log.
- Any team that fails 3 evaluations at a single level should consult with their Area Director or other experienced handlers, to assess whether the team will be able to perform at that level and if so, to see what needs to be changed in their training program so they can get to that level. After making those changes, the team should back up to the preceding level and pass that progression, before attempting the failed level again.
- Not every team is cut out for search work. Repeated failures of evaluations should be taken as an opportunity to honestly review whether the team should continue their training.

T1 Foundational Progression – Basic Direction of Travel

Objective: Determining direction of travel is the foundation of a trailing dog. This Evaluation provides opportunity for the dog team to demonstrate its ability and desire to determine the correct direction of travel and continue to follow it along a straight path to the subject. Demonstration of an appropriate reward system and the dog's willingness to work is important before continuing further in the dog team's training.

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is known (**marked by a flag or other obvious feature**).
2. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **180 degree range** of possible DOT from the PLS)
3. The trail is a **single straight line**.
4. The trail shall be over primarily flat, easy terrain.
5. There will be **no more than 1 change of surface/vegetation or terrain**.
6. The trail will be **aged approximately 15 minutes**.
7. The trail is **approximately 500 feet long**.
8. The time limit for the evaluation is **15 minutes** from time the dog is scented
9. A scent article will be provided.
10. The trail will be marked only by natural passage of the subject.
11. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
12. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
13. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
14. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
15. The dog must find the subject.
16. A topographical map of the area will be available, but navigation and map work are not part of this evaluation.
17. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
18. One member qualified as a **T1 Progression Evaluator** will observe and make recommendations to the Area Director regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T2 Foundational Progression – Turns

Objective: Demonstration of the dog team's ability and enthusiasm to establish direction and follow subject's trail through a simple change of terrain and turns. Still a basic trail, the emphasis is on the dog's willingness and desire to work through turns without excessive frustration or difficulty.

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is known (marked by a flag or other obvious feature).
2. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **180 degree range** of possible DOT from the PLS)
3. The trail will contain **2-3 turns**, with at least 1 turn in each direction. **Turns will be at an angle no sharper than 90 degrees.**
4. The trail is over a variety of primarily easy terrain with **at least one change of surface/vegetation.**
5. The trail is **aged between 30 - 45 minutes.**
6. The trail is a **maximum of ¼ mile long.**
7. The time limit for the evaluation will be **30 minutes** from the time the dog is scented.
8. A scent article will be provided.
9. The trail will be marked only by natural passage of the subject.
10. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
11. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
12. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until after the completion of the Evaluation.
13. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
14. The dog must find the subject.
15. A topographical map of the area will be available, but navigation and map work are not part of this evaluation.
16. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the Trainee and a copy submitted to the Area Director.
17. One member qualified as a **T2 Progression Evaluator** will observe and make recommendations to Area Director regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T3 Foundational Progression – Simple Discrimination

Objective: Demonstrate scent discrimination, both at the trail start and after the dog has committed to the target subject odor. Age and length of trail have increased, however the focus of the trail set up should be on the scent discrimination variable, providing the dog opportunity to make the decision between the target odor and other human trails. Crosstracks may be laid by the same subjects as used to set up the contaminated start.

1. The **Point Last Seen (PLS) is unknown in a known area 25 by 25 feet.**
2. The PLS will be **contaminated by at least 1 but no more than 3 individuals** not related to the subject.
3. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **180 degree range** of possible DOT from the PLS)
4. The trail will contain **2-4 turns, with at least 1 turn in each direction.**
5. The trail is over a variety of terrain with **at least one change of surface/vegetation.**
6. The trail will be **aged between 1-2 hours.**
7. The trail length shall be **approximately ½ mile.**
8. The time limit for the evaluation shall be **45 minutes** (excluding breaks and briefing) from the time the dog is scented.
9. **At least one person will cross the subject's trail** (the cross track is aged less than the original trail) for scent discrimination. The cross track shall not be laid by any member of the evaluation team or an observer. This cross-track shall be at least 1/8 mile after the trail start and no closer to any turn than 50 feet.
10. A scent article will be provided.
11. The trail will be marked only by the natural passage of the subject.
12. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
13. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
14. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
15. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
16. The dog must find the subject.
17. A topographical map of the area will be available, but navigation and map work are not part of this evaluation.
18. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the Trainee and a copy submitted to the Area Director.
19. **At least one** member qualified as **Tester** will observe and make recommendations to Area Director regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation. If the team is considering airscent training at this point, the Tester should give advice on whether the team is ready to start airscent, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T4 Trailing Progression – Basic Night trail

Objective: Demonstrate ability and willingness of dog team to safely work a subject's trail during night conditions.

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is unknown in a known area **25 by 25 feet**.
2. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **180 degree range** of possible DOT from the PLS)
3. The trail will contain **3-5 turns**, with at least 1 turn in each direction.
4. The trail is over a variety of terrain with at least one change of surface/vegetation.
5. The trail will be **aged between 2-4 hours**.
6. The trail **length will be approximately ½ mile**.
7. The time limit for the evaluation shall be **1 hour** (excluding time for breaks and briefing) from the time the dog is scented.
8. A scent article will be provided.
9. **Trail shall be run no less than 30 minutes after sundown and completed prior to 30 minutes before sunrise.**
10. The trail will be marked only by the natural passage of the subject.
11. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
12. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
13. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until after the completion of the Evaluation.
14. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
15. The dog must find the subject.
16. A **support person** and a topographical map of the area will be available. Navigation and map work are not part of the evaluation, but rather the **support person is an added safety measure for the dog team working at night**.
17. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
18. One member qualified as a **T4 Progression Evaluator** will observe and make recommendations to Area Director regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the Evaluation.

T5 Trailing Progression – Articles/Distance

Objective: Demonstrate ability and endurance to work a longer trail through standard challenges (terrain, turns, etc) that would be encountered on a lost subject's trail and during a certification test. Opportunity to demonstrate if the dog has an article indication/alert and to observe how the dog team works through the scent picture that results from articles that have been left on the trail.

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is unknown in a known area **50 by 50 feet**.
2. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **180 degree range** of possible DOT from the PLS)
3. The trail shall include **at least 4 turns**, with at least 1 turn in each direction.
4. The trail is over a variety of terrain with **at least 2 changes of surface/vegetation**.
5. The trail will be **aged between 5-6 hours**.
6. The trail length will be **between 1 ¼ – 1 ¾ miles**.
7. The time limit for the evaluation shall be **two hours** (excluding time for breaks and briefing) from time dog is scented.
8. A scent article will be provided.
9. The **subject will drop 2-3 personal articles** on the trail during laying of the trail.
10. Indicating articles shall not be a pass/fail criteria of the evaluation.
11. The trail will be marked only by the natural passage of the subject.
12. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
13. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
14. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
15. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
16. A **support person and a topographical map of the area** will be available. The dog handler is responsible to communicate to the support person what information to put on the map and how to help him/her with navigation.
17. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
18. One member qualified as **T5 Progression Evaluators** will observe and make recommendations to the Testing Coordinator regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T6 Trailing Progression Evaluation – Night

Objective: Demonstrate proficiency in establishing direction of travel and safely working a subject's trail during night conditions. The handler should be competent at night navigation and travel.

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) will be unmarked in a known area of **50 x 50 feet**.
2. **The PLS will be contaminated by at least 2 individuals** not related to the subject.
3. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a 180 degree range of possible DOT from the PLS)
4. The trail will contain **at least 4 turns**, with at least 1 turn in each direction.
5. The trail is over a variety of terrain with at least one change of surface/vegetation.
6. The trail will be aged **between 6-8 hours**.
7. The trail length will be **between 1/2- 3/4 mile**.
8. The time limit for the evaluation shall be **1.5 hours** (excluding time for breaks and briefing) from time dog is scented.
9. A scent article will be provided.
10. **The trail shall be run no less than 30 minutes after sundown and completed prior to 30 minutes before sunrise.**
11. The trail will be marked only by the natural passage of the subject.
12. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
13. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
14. An off-lead trailing dog must find the subject and indicate the find to the handler in a pre-described, reliable manner.
15. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until completion of the Evaluation.
16. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the Evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
17. A support person and a topographical map of the area will be provided. The dog handler is responsible to communicate to the support person what information to put on the map and how to help him/her with navigation.
18. A map of the trail, PLS, dog indications, wind directions, and other pertinent information shall be kept by Trainee and a copy submitted to the **Testing Coordinator** after a successful evaluation.
19. **Two Trailing Testers** will observe and make recommendations to the Testing Coordinator regarding whether the team has successfully completed the Evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the Evaluation.
20. The two Testers will be **appointed by the Testing Coordinator**.

T7 Trailing Progression – Age

Objective: Demonstrate proficiency in establishing direction and working an aged trail through standard challenges (terrain, turns, etc).

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is unknown in a known area **75 by 75 feet**.
2. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **360 degree range of possible DOT** from the PLS)
3. The trail may have **any number of turns**.
4. The trail is over a variety of terrain with **at least 2 changes of surface/vegetation**.
5. The trail is at least **16 hours old**.
6. The trail length will be **between ¾ - 1 mile**.
7. The time limit for the evaluation is **1 ½ hrs** (excluding time for breaks and briefing) from time dog is scented.
8. A scent article will be provided.
9. The trail will be marked only by the natural passage of the subject.
10. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
11. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
12. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
13. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
14. A **support person and a topographical map** of the area will be available. The dog handler is responsible to communicate to the support person what information to put on the map and how to help him/her with navigation.
15. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
16. One, preferably two members qualified as **T7 Progression Evaluators** will observe and make recommendations to Testing Coordinator regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T8 Trailing Progression – Road Cast

Objective: Demonstrate safe and efficient strategy in acquiring the trail of a subject who left a roadway.

1. **The Last seen point is unknown.**
2. The direction of travel (DOT) is unknown.
3. Handler will be given **¼ mile length of roadway (dirt, gravel or paved) from which to acquire the trail.**
4. **The subject shall be dropped off by a vehicle and shall leave the road directly from the vehicle.** The trail shall be a **single straight leg or may contain a single turn** to facilitate convenience of placing the subject. The subject shall travel at least 500 feet in a straight line before turning.
5. **The trail may leave the roadway on either side of the road at any angle.**
6. The trail will be aged a **minimum of 45 minutes.**
7. The trail length will be **between 750-1000 feet (250-300yds).**
8. The time limit for the evaluation is **30 minutes** from time dog is scented.
9. The trail shall be laid so that the subject cannot be seen or air-scented from the road.
10. A scent article will be provided.
11. The trail will be marked only by the natural passage of the subject.
12. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
13. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
14. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
15. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
16. A **support person and a topographical map** of the area will be available. The dog handler is responsible to communicate to the support person what information to put on the map and how to help him/her with navigation.
17. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
18. One, preferably two members qualified as **T8 Progression Evaluators** will observe and make recommendations to Testing Coordinator regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T9 Trailing Progression – Contamination and Certification Readiness

Objective: Demonstrate ability to scent discriminate and work trail through areas of high contamination as would be expected during a mission. Trail may be laid from a well-used trailhead so long as there is contamination fresher than the subject's trail. (e.g. Hikers leave the trailhead after the trail has been laid). Crosstracks may be laid by the same subjects as used to set up the contaminated start.

1. A **Pack Check** for first time handlers must be completed before the T9 Evaluation begins.
2. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is unknown in a known area **100 x 100 feet**.
3. **The PLS will be contaminated by at least 3 individuals** not related to the subject.
4. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **360 degree range of possible DOT** from the PLS)
5. The trail will contain **at least 3 turns**, with at least 1 turn in each direction.
6. The trail is over a variety of terrain with **at least 1 change of surface/vegetation**.
7. The trail will be **aged at least 12 hours**.
8. The trail length will be **between ¾ and 1 mile long**.
9. The time limit for the evaluation shall be **two hours** (excluding time for breaks and briefing) from time dog is scented.
10. The trail will be **laid in a high contamination area, with at least 2 other people crossing the trail at different points (crossing after the subject's trail has been laid)**.
11. **At least 1 cross track will be aged less than 30 minutes prior to working the trail**.
12. A scent article will be provided.
13. The trail will be marked only by natural passage of the subject.
14. All natural obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
15. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
16. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
17. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
18. A **support person and a topographical map** of the area will be available. The dog handler is responsible to communicate to the support person what information to put on the map and how to help him/her with navigation.
19. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
20. One, preferably two members qualified as **T9 Progression Evaluators** will observe and make recommendations to Testing Coordinator regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

T10 Urban Trailing Progression

Objective: Demonstrate ability to scent discriminate and work trail through urban and suburban areas with high contamination as would be expected during an urban mission. Trail may be laid from an area of heavy human foot traffic (ie: School, library, park) so long as there is contamination fresher than the subject's trail.

1. The Point Last Seen (PLS) is unknown in a known area of **100 x 100 feet**.
2. The Direction Of Travel (DOT) is unknown (the handler will be given a **360 degree range of possible DOT** from the PLS)
3. The trail will contain **at least 3 turns**, with at least 1 turn in each direction.
4. The trail will be over approximately 75% hard surfaces such as (ie: roads, sidewalks, parking lots) with **at least 1 change of surface/vegetation**.
5. The trail will be **aged approximately 6-8 hours**.
6. The trail length will be **between ½ and ¾ mile long**.
7. The time limit for the evaluation shall be **two hours** (excluding time for breaks and briefing) from time dog is scented.
8. A scent article will be provided.
9. The trail will be marked only by natural passage of the subject.
10. All natural and manmade obstacles will be considered fair, with consideration given to the safety of the dog, handler and subject while setting up the trail. It is up to the dog handler to be able to read their dog.
11. The handler must identify when the dog has established direction of travel.
12. It will be up to the dog handler to determine the best ways to work their dog. No input on how to work the problem may be offered by the evaluator or any observers until the completion of the Evaluation.
13. How the handler applies their search strategy and works the trail/area is as important to the outcome of the evaluation as the dog making a find. The dog finding the subject does not automatically mean the team passes the evaluation.
14. A **support person and a map** of the area will be available. The dog handler is responsible to communicate to the support person what information to put on the map and how to help him/her with navigation.
15. A map with pertinent information shall be kept by the trainee and a copy submitted to the Testing Coordinator.
16. One trailing tester or one, preferably two members qualified as T10 Progression Evaluators will observe and make recommendations to Testing Coordinator regarding whether the team has successfully completed the evaluation. Feedback for the handler is critical, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation.

Certification Test

A dog team that has passed the T6 should continue with their training in preparation for the Trailing Certification Test.

The trainee should review the requirements for the test and train on any new variables until they feel confident they can pass, then request the test. See the SARDOC Policies, SARDOC Standards, and SARDOC Membership Checklist for more information about the test, and its prerequisites.