Basic Scentwork for Every Dog

Inspired by Dr Rob Hewings · A Flo4Paws guide

Scentwork uses your dog's most powerful sense -- and every dog can do it. It builds **confidence, focus and calm**, and is especially brilliant for nervous or anxious dogs. Best of all, it's simple to do at home with a basic starter kit.

Why Scentwork?

Why it works	What your dog gains
A dog's nose has up to 300 million scent receptors -- far more powerful than ours	Mental stimulation that genuinely tires a dog
Sniffing lowers the heart rate and promotes calm	Confidence -- every dog can succeed at this
It's species-appropriate: dogs are built to search	A positive outlet for natural instincts
Short sessions of 5-10 minutes provide real enrichment	Improved focus and a stronger bond with you

Handler Tips -- What Helps & What to Avoid

Do this	Avoid this
Keep sessions short -- 5 to 10 minutes	Working your dog when tired or over-threshold
Let the dog lead; follow the nose	Pointing, hovering, or guiding your dog to the hide
Reward immediately and generously at source	Calling or praising before they have indicated
End on a success -- make the last hide easy	Increasing difficulty too quickly
Use calm, quiet energy during searches	Excited handling that raises arousal

Reading Your Dog

Sign	What it likely means
Nose drops, head lowers, ears forward	On scent -- working the cone
Tail rises, pace quickens	Scent getting stronger -- close to source
Freeze, nose hover, stillness at a point	Found it -- waiting for your reward
Head snapping up, scanning around	Lost the scent -- give them time, don't redirect
Panting, yawning, disengaging	Over-threshold -- end the session kindly
Loose body, waggy tail throughout	Enjoying it -- this is the goal!

Especially for Nervous Dogs

Scentwork is one of the **best activities for anxious dogs**. The focus on using the nose promotes a calm, parasympathetic state. There is no pressure to perform -- your dog simply follows its instincts. Start with very easy hides, keep sessions short, and let success build confidence at its own pace. Many nervous dogs find scentwork a genuine turning point.

Getting Started at Home

Starter Kit
Everything you need in one box -- scent tins, tweezers and target odours.
Amazon: amzn.eu/d/0hI890El

Start with Sweet Birch. Avoid clove oil -- it is toxic to dogs.
Always handle the scent tin with **tweezers** -- your fingers will contaminate it with your own scent.

Keep sessions short -- 5 to 10 minutes.
Scentwork is mentally demanding. Little and often beats long and exhausting every time.



Day 1 -- Introducing the Scent

Place sweet birch in the tin using tweezers.
Keep your dog on a lead.
Give the **'Search'** command.
Reward immediately when your dog puts their **nose on the tin**.
Repeat up to **50 times** -- your dog is learning to identify and love this scent.

Day 2 -- Two Pots

Place the scent tin under **one of two empty pots**.
Give the **'Search'** command.
Reward for the correct pot.
Switch the pots around each time -- your dog must follow the scent, not the position.

Day 3 -- Three Pots

Increase to **3 empty pots**, scent tin under one.
Same rules -- 'Search', reward the correct choice, and shuffle the pots between goes.

Day 4 -- Four Pots

Increase to **4 empty pots**.
Only move up when your dog is confidently and consistently finding the scented pot.

Day 5 -- Five Pots

Increase to **5 empty pots**.
This is the foundation of all scentwork -- your dog is now searching a line-up independently.

***Important:** Only increase the number of pots when your dog has **mastered the current stage**. This is about building confidence and setting your dog up for success.*

Flo4Paws · Bingham, Nottinghamshire · www.flo4paws.co.uk
Specialising in nervous and anxious dogs · BCCS Level 4 Canine Behaviour Diploma
Based on *Scent Training for Every Dog* by Dr Rob Hewings