

## The Bird as “Whoa”

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The following exercise helps a pup learn to quarter sharply, stop to flush, to be steady to wing, shot, and fall and to honor another’s retrieve. You will need only a check cord, some pigeons and a couple kids. Leave the e-collar at home or turned off.

Your pigeons will need to be strong fliers and carded or shackled in such a way that they can fly a safe distance away but still be easily re-caught by the child who released it.

The child can be any age or sex. At five my daughter was a dandy pigeon girl and by eight my son could run this whole exercise better than most adults. Kids and birddog pups go together well eventually becoming one and both are improved.



### Essential to have both kids and pigeons

Before beginning, your pup must be whoa trained to the point that it will stop in the field to a single command. Your kids need to be trained to reliably hang onto a strong pigeon, to toss the pigeon when the pup stops and recapture it with minimal trouble.

The training starts when each child gets his or her own pigeon. Once all the kids and you have a pigeon, everyone set out for a “downwind” walk with the pup sent out to ramble.

At first, each time the pup makes a good quarter and is passing in front of you give a “whoa” than go and hold him. Once you are in control of your pup have a child throw a pigeon. Not real close this first time, but where the pup can get a good look at it.



### Hold your pup during the initial stages

If pup tries to break, hold her until she settles down than have another bird thrown a little further away.

Do this until pup will stay when a single bird is thrown in clear view without physical restraint. Remember, other than a single whoa to stop pup this is a silent exercise.

Each child is responsible for his or her own pigeon and must recapture them each time, initially, before the pup is released but eventually at nearly the same time.

You will be surprised at how quickly your pup will begin quartering very sharply and then stop each time it runs in front of a child in anticipation of a

pigeon. At this point don't throw a pigeon every time and extend the downwind walk.



**When your pup starts to anticipate the pigeon by stopping extend the time periods between releases**

After the pup is reliably stopping every time you throw a pigeon, delay any verbal or physical commands until after the pup sees the pigeon. Once pup stops every time the bird is thrown, but before the whistle or voice command, try it without any verbal reinforcement.

If the pup stops to just the bird, go to it with a big grin on your face, and for the first time since beginning this exercise give pup a gentle full length stroke and a quiet drawn out "good dog"; Just one full stroke, and just one quiet "that-a-girl" than go back about your business without any fan fare.

Once reliable to a single bird and no verbal command start throwing two

pigeons spaced a few seconds apart, than three. When you can throw three birds right at pup and pup doesn't move you are ready for the next step of shooting the third pigeon.



**Eventually add multiple thrown birds**

As you progress, keep the pigeon shooting to a minimum and never shoot the first pigeon so that pup always expects the kill to be the third bird. Shoot just enough to keep pup stiff. If your pup is force broke give it an occasional retrieve, but most of the time and especially if the whoa or quarter isn't crisp let the child retrieve their own birds, dead or alive.

When your pup is perfect at this game three days in a row you are ready to move to a remote launcher. Initially the launcher is planted downwind and the exercise is run the same with the kids taking turns retrieving. Eventually you will turn this exercise into the wind and add the additional temptation of smell.

When you add smell as with any major step in training keep your pride in check and take a few steps. For this exercise, that means putting a check cord back on pup, using a visual and vocal whoa command, and holding your pup for the first flush or two. You, the pup, and your kids will be glad you did.