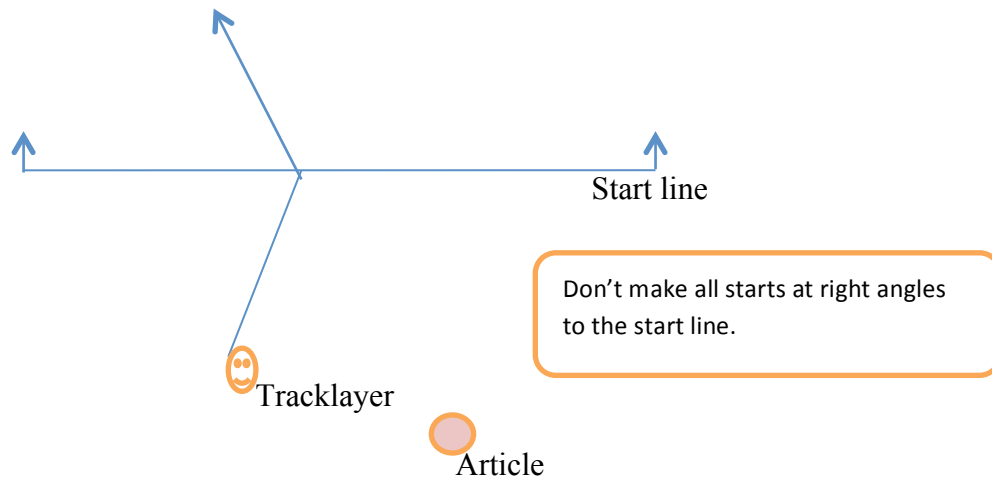


# Practising Gate Starts

## Laying the track

1. If you want to use flags to show the start line, have someone who is not the tracklayer put them in. Otherwise you can make the start line from one tree to another tree (or bush). The start line is approx. 20 metres long.
2. Put the start article in a plastic bag and leave it approx. 30 metres before the start.
3. The tracklayer should walk in from a point up to 10 metres from the article. She should make a mental note of where they crossed the start line. (maybe memorise a marker – a small bush, stump or fallen stick), then continue on and walk a leg of about 50 metres. It is a good idea to place a flag at about 25 metres and an unobtrusive flag at the end.
4. This way you can set 3 or 4 gate starts, age them for about 2 hours then come back and work them one after the other.



## Working the Start

1. Scent your dog at the article flag (or when the judge hands you the bag containing the article). Some handlers like to let their dog sniff in the bag – I prefer to take the article out and put it on the ground. Above all, don't over-scent. A sniff on your dog's part is sufficient – he does not need the article pushed in his face. (If you over-scent, the dog's nose is so full of that scent that he can't smell anything else and so can't discriminate. A bit like being next to someone wearing very strong perfume).
2. Walk towards the centre of the start line with your dog on quite a long lead (8 – 10 metres). Most dogs pick up the tracklayer's scent before they reach the start line (remember, the tracklayer isn't dropped at the start by helicopter!).
3. If your dog hasn't indicated the start, move (sideways) along the start line, about 3 – 4 metres before the line, and watch your dog's reaction. Often the dog will give a flick of the head then continue along the line. Note where this happened and come back to that area.



4. Believe your dog. Most dogs indicate the track in the same way as for any other track, so follow. ***Remember that the track does not have to go off at right angles to the start line.***