

How Do I Start Training My Airedale For Field Work?

It's wonderful if your dog's breeder actively selects his stock for hunting and is willing to be your mentor in getting started. There's absolutely nothing better than a local mentor who's willing to take you under his wing.

It would be nice to think you can learn to train your dog in your backyard and produce a working hunting dog, but that's unrealistic for most people. You can do starting steps of basic obedience work and some fetching work with dumbbells, but sooner or later, you'll need access to birds, fields with cover where a dog can run off-leash, and a gunner (if you don't shoot). In other words, you'll need some help.

If you don't know of any local bird dog trainers, please scroll down to the "How do I find a local bird dog trainer?" section below.

Airedales are trained just like any hunting breed, so there's a ton of written information out there in books and publications like Gundog Magazine that will help you self-educate yourself. One highly recommended step-by-step book is *Hup, Training Flushing Spaniels the American Way* by James E. Spencer.

Another step that may take some getting used to on your part is the almost universal use of e-collars for hunting dogs. Before you reject the idea of an "e-collar" as "Oh, I'd never shock my dog," do some reading and research on the proper use of the collar as an effective and humane tool to reinforce behaviors the dog has already learned. One classic (but pricey) book on the subject is *Tritronics Retriever Training* by Jim and Phyllis Dobbs. You can also find various training books and videos posted online –some better than others, but they at least show what others are doing.

So even though you might not find many people your area training hunting Airedales, you can be pretty sure of is that there are some people out there (everywhere) training hunting dogs, and if you can find them, you'll have a good chance of finding people to work with you and your Airedale. You may have to knock on more than a few doors, and some doors might not open to you, but use your terrier grit to keep on knocking, and you'll get there.