

# Working with Canine SAR on Search Tasks

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This section is designed to fill you in on what you need to know when working with dogs in the field as an ASRC volunteer. Dogs are a very widely used resource in wilderness search, and all of you will have the opportunity to work with dogs on scene as you attend more searches. We'll cover how dogs work, how the dog handler works, and what you can do as a walker (that's what you're called when you go out with a dog team).



There are several types of dogs that work in SAR. This refers not to breeds, but to how the dogs work to find scent. All search dogs operate on scent.

A dog's nose is over a million times more sensitive to some types of scent than a human's. For now, think of scent as a substance that is constantly given off by a person at all times, floating on air currents and flowing like water. The dog will work these scents and communicate to the handler when it has found something.

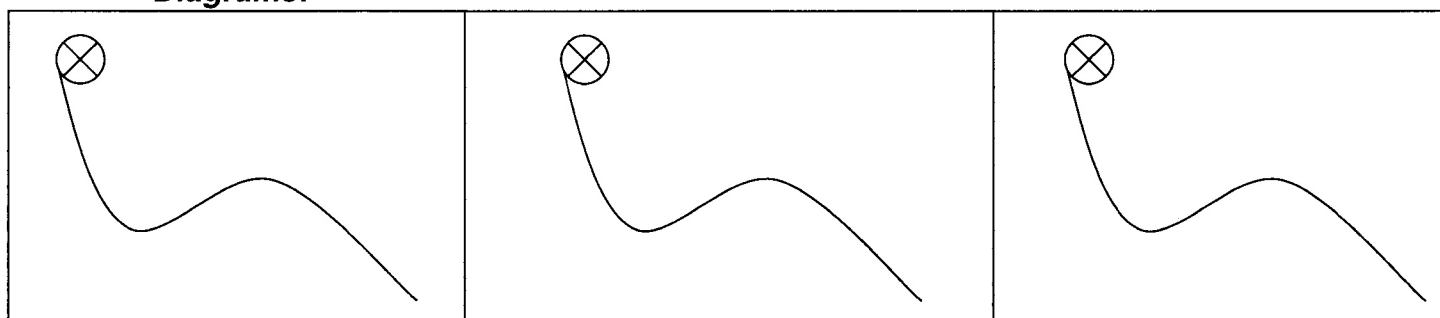
In Search and Rescue, there is a distinction made between three types of working dogs: Air Scent, Tracking, and Trailing.

**Air Scent:** Dog moves out away from the handler, off-lead, working scent that floats on air currents. When a find is made, the dog returns to the handler giving a trained indication, and leading the handler back to the subject. Retrieving dogs and herding dogs are most often used. Trained in a SAR context. Can also be used for cadaver and evidence search.

**Tracking:** Dog moves on a long lead held by the handler following an exact path of travel of the subject. Most often are bloodhounds and are trained in a law enforcement or corrections context.

**Trailing:** Dog moves on a long lead held by the handler, but follows an inexact path by crossing over bends in the path or following air scent paths. Most often are bloodhounds, trained in a public service/SAR context

**Diagrams:**



The dog team is made up of a dog and a handler. They are certified by the state as a pair only. When tasked to the field, the handler is always the FTL, no matter what the rank of the other members of the team.

When you are on a dog task, be prepared to work fast and to pay attention to the handler. The dog handler has to watch his/her dog very carefully, so the walker (that's you) might be given responsibility for land-navigation, radio communications, or other duties. Some handlers will want you to stay very close to them, others may have you work far away, or at a linear feature, so they can judge distance off your light, or orange vest. Either way, pay attention to what the handler says, because they will let you know what they'd like for you to do.

Since dogs work off of scent, the dog may come check out how you smell. At these "scent checks" or any other time the dog is working, you shouldn't pet or play with the dog. When not working, ask the handler if it's OK to pet their dog.

Dog tasks have to be executed with the flow of the wind in mind. When setting out to begin the task, the handler will check the wind frequently to determine the best strategy for the task. The wind frequently changes in our area, so the task strategy may change, but the wind must be watched very carefully.

