TRUFFLE DOG SCHOOL · SEASON PREP GUIDE

Back in Sync for Fall

Finding your rhythm again with your dog, wherever you left off

If you took a break this summer — or whatever your off-season looks like — you're in good company; most teams do. What comes next isn't a restart, and it isn't remedial. **Your dog didn't forget, and neither did you.** This guide walks through the short re-entry that gets a team back in sync before the season gets going, no matter where you left off.

You Haven't Gone Backward

Almost every team comes back from time off a little out of sync — and it shows up in small ways, for both of you. You might catch yourself mid-session wondering, "wait, is this where I usually approach?" Your dog's invitation — that's your dog telling you "I found it, come help me dig" — might read quieter and more subtle than the confident version you remember. Neither of those means anything went wrong. The strategy is simple: back up for a session or two, working an easier version of what you were doing before you ask for more. That's intelligent practice, not a step backward.

Most teams are right back to where they left off within a session or two, with the same enthusiasm they had before the break. Your dog didn't forget. You're just getting back in sync.

Start With Food Games

Food games come back into play first, before any truffle hunting scenario — no matter what stage you're at. They're how you warm yourselves back into the habit of responding to each other, and they stay relevant for your dog's entire truffle hunting career, not just while you're building the fundamentals.

How Far Back to Step

The general idea: go back a step or two from wherever you left off, and treat it as a brief review rather than a restart. What that looks like depends on where you left off:

DIGGING TOGETHER

Still building your teamwork at the hole? Start with a nose target in an open hole, then move to a truffle that's lightly covered and dug together, then to one that's fully covered. This can often happen in a single session — do it before you ever ask your dog to search for a truffle.

HUNTING THE FOREST

Already out in wild terrain? For the first trip or two, set up a staged scenario — plant a truffle or two in a familiar, forgiving spot so your dog has a guaranteed win, rather than counting on a wild find while you're both finding your footing again. Keep those first outings short, too; endurance takes a little time to build back up.

Wherever your team sits, the shape stays the same: a small, temporary step back, held only as long as it's useful.

Signs You're Back in Sync

- Your dog's invitation has its confidence and enthusiasm back
- Reading your dog feels natural again, not like second-guessing
- The two of you feel relaxed and connected, responding to each other's cues

Scout Your Sites, Too

Getting back in sync with your dog is only half of fall prep. This is also the best time of year to get out to your sites, see what's changed since last season, and check in with landowners before the season gets busy. A little bit of that groundwork now means you're heading into the season already knowing where you're hunting, instead of scrambling to figure it out once things pick up. Reading a site and knowing what makes one worth returning to is its own skill, and it's one of the areas we go deep on inside **VIP Coaching**.

Heading Into the Season

Every team's timeline looks a little different, and that's completely normal. Give yourself and your dog permission to take those first sessions slowly — the partnership you built before the break is still there, waiting to pick back up right where you left it.

> **YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGURE THIS OUT ALONE**
>
> If you'd like more support heading into the season — troubleshooting, feedback on your first sessions back, or just other handlers who get it — that's exactly what the VIP Coaching Program is there for.
>
> **Learn more about VIP Coaching →**

In the meantime, here's what to remember:

QUICK RECAP

- ✓ Take a step or two back from wherever you left off — a brief review, not a restart
- ✓ Start with food games before any truffle hunting scenario, no matter your stage
- ✓ Expect to feel a little "off" at first — that's normal, not a setback
- ✓ Watch for your dog's confidence and your own sense of ease returning, then pick the pace back up

This time of year is one of my favorite parts of the job — I love watching teams settle back into their rhythm right before the season kicks off. I hope this fall brings you and your dog some wonderful days out there together.

Wishing you both a wonderful season ahead.

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