

The ABCs of Canine Musical Freestyle

Brush up on your dancing dogs terminology and try these moves with your dog!

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Choreography is the design of steps and movements within a defined area. The basic positions or movements for canine freestyle are heel—dog at handler's side—and front, meaning the dog is facing the handler. Almost all other movements are variations of heel and front. Here are some of the moves that can be used to choreograph a freestyle routine.

Backing: Moving backward. Examples of backing include the dog facing the handler and stepping backward away from her or dog and handler side by side, both moving backward.

Bow: Both paws on the ground, rear up in the air. Bow has several variations, including one paw forward instead of both or head touching the ground.

Circle: Just what it sounds like, a dog can move in a small or large circle, can circle in either direction, or can circle around the handler or an object.

Heel: Freestyle dogs must be able to heel on both left and right, not only for good physical conditioning and balance but also to allow for flexibility in choreography. Heeling positions include forward and backward, side to side, and face to face.

Roll over: Starting in a down position on its stomach, the dog rolls over, ending up in the position in which it started.

Serpentine: An S-shaped forward or backward movement.

Side pass: A movement in which the dog steps sideways with front and hind end moving simultaneously so the torso stays in a straight line. Side passes have many variations, including the dog moving to the left or right while on either side of the handler or while facing the handler.

Spin: A small circle, clockwise or counterclockwise, with the head toward the shoulder. In a clockwise spin, the head is toward the right shoulder; in a counterclockwise spin, the head is toward the left shoulder.

Weave: A basic weave is a figure 8 around the handler's legs. Weave has many variations, including a backward facing weave in which the handler moves backward as the dog—facing the handler—weaves through the handler's legs and a forward weave, with dog and handler moving forward as the dog weaves through the handler's legs.

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