

PART SIX:

MOVEMENT

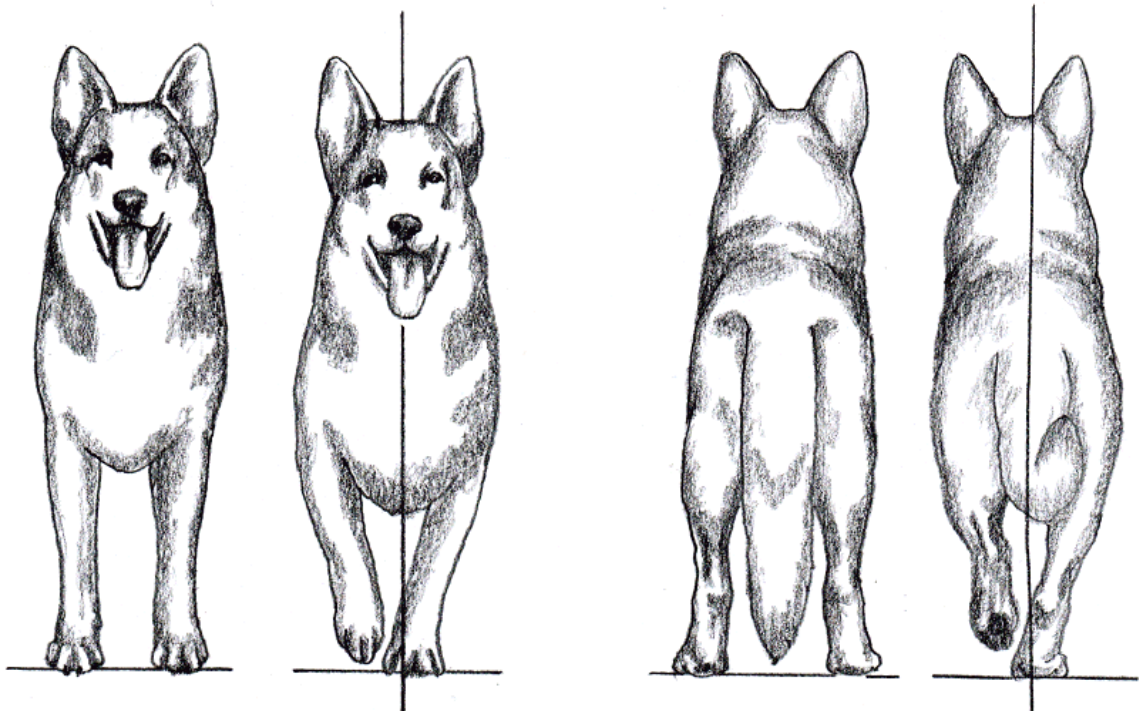
MOVEMENT

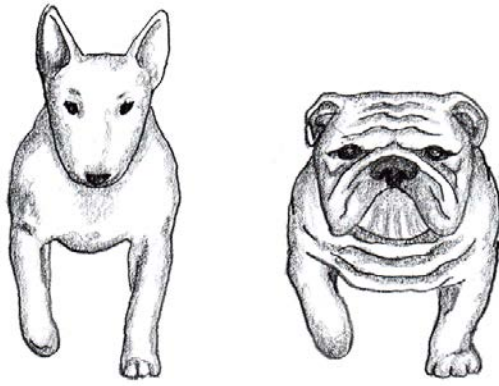
Movement is a symphony of bones, joints, muscles, tendons and ligaments, all working together. As a judge in the ring, you will seldom be able to evaluate a dog on its functional purpose – you will only see the **trot**. From this, you need to estimate functionality and gaiting efficiency.

CENTRE OF GRAVITY

Let's take a look at how the dog's mechanics allow him to move without falling over. If you were to make yourself a pendant of your favourite breed to hang around your neck, you would need to find a point on the pendant where it can hang without tipping forwards or backwards. So it is with real-life dogs. At some point in their bodies, they have a centre of gravity that ensures that their stance and movement will be balanced. While this point will depend on length of leg, height and length of body, and weight of head and neck, most dogs have a centre of gravity over or near the forequarters. Remembering that a dog carries approximately 60% of its weight over its forequarters, it stands to reason that the centre of gravity is an essential feature of balance. Dogs with a poor centre of gravity may have to expend greater muscle power, which leads to wasted energy and inefficient movement.

Considering a few exceptions, where the requirement is to move parallel, most dogs naturally bring their feet under themselves as they speed up their movement in order to keep balance and prevent falling over. The faster they move, the closer the legs will converge until, at great speed, the feet may follow a single line – best viewed in soft or damp sand. This is called **single-tracking**, an extreme form of **convergence**.

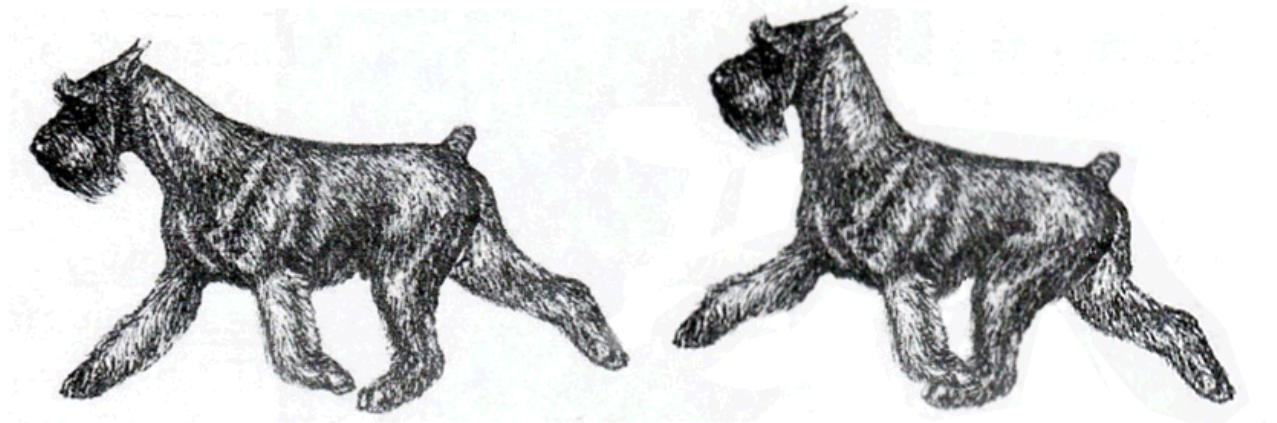




Some breeds, particularly those with broad ribcages and shorter legs, move parallel – the Bulldog is the most extreme example. Such breeds often sway or roll from side to side as they move forward. This action is called **lateral displacement**, which is energy-wasting and can cause early fatigue.

HEAD CARRIAGE IN MOVEMENT

Many breeds will carry their heads at around 10 o'clock – this for efficient reach and style. If the dog carries its head lower than this, say at 9 o'clock, the dog may be going too fast or there may be insufficient reach. If the dog's head is carried too high, there is less front reach. Handlers who string their dogs up on a tight lead may cause this to happen because the pressure placed on the **brachiocephalic muscle** in the neck causes the front legs to lift higher than they should. It is always advisable, therefore, to be on the lookout for exhibitors who keep a tight lead on a moving dog – it could be causing or hiding serious faults.



normal movement

head is strung up causing unnatural front action

NORMAL GAITS

The **gaits** of the dog are patterns of movement that can be divided into two main groups: symmetrical and asymmetrical.

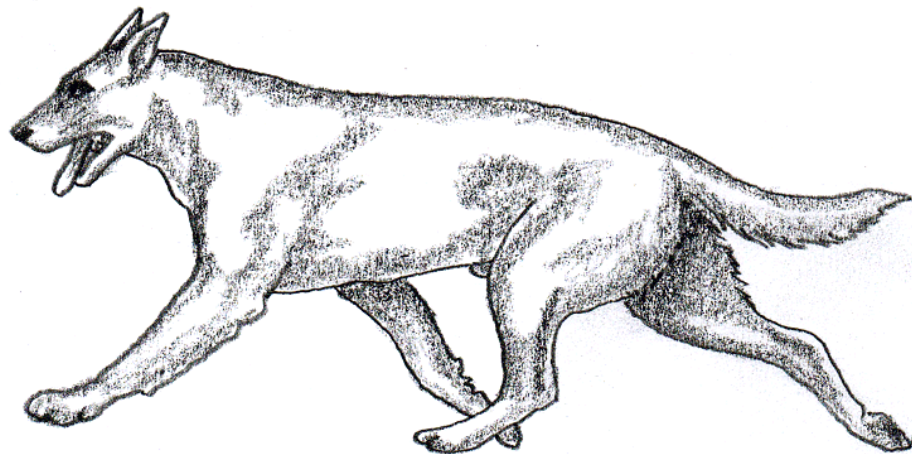
- **symmetrical gaits:** the **walk**, **trot**, and **pace (amble)** – the movement of the limbs on one side of the dog's body repeats the motion of the limbs on the opposite side with the intervals between foot falls being nearly evenly spaced. The walk is a four-beat gait, while the pace and the trot is a two-beat gait.
- **asymmetrical gait:** the **gallop** and the **canter** – the limb movements of one side do not repeat those of the other and the intervals between foot falls are unevenly spaced.

When considering gaits, one full cycle is referred to as a **stride**.

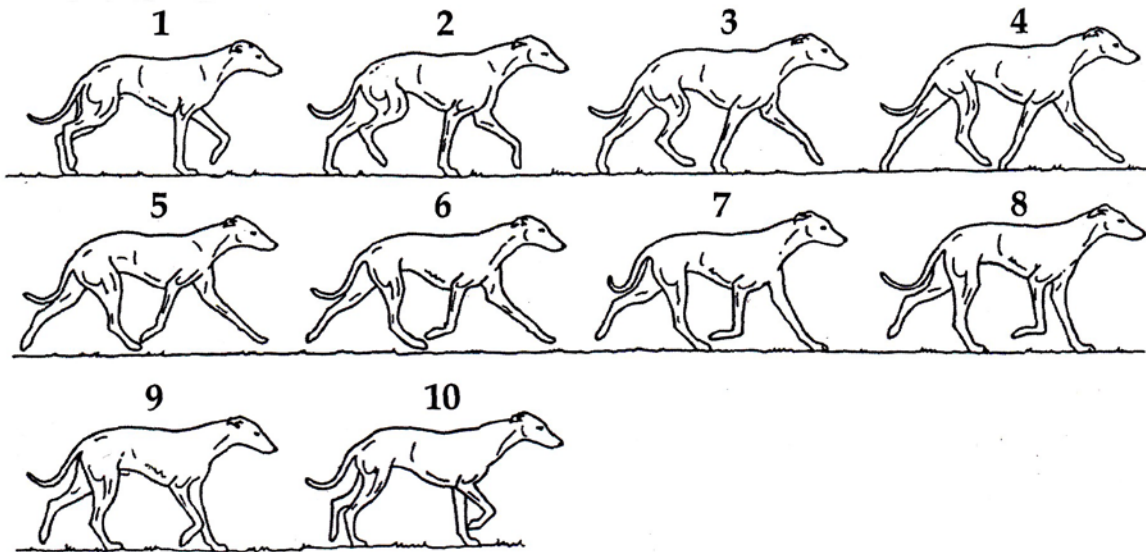
The only two gaits to be studied in this study guide are the **pace** and the **trot**.

THE PACE

The **pace (amble)** is a two-time gait pattern where the front and hind legs on the same side touch and leave the ground together. Some dogs, like the Old English Sheepdog, pace naturally, but for most it is an energy-saving technique a dog uses when it is fatigued to reduce lateral displacement. In some breeds, unfortunately, pacing becomes a bad habit, which is unfortunate because it is undesirable in the show ring.



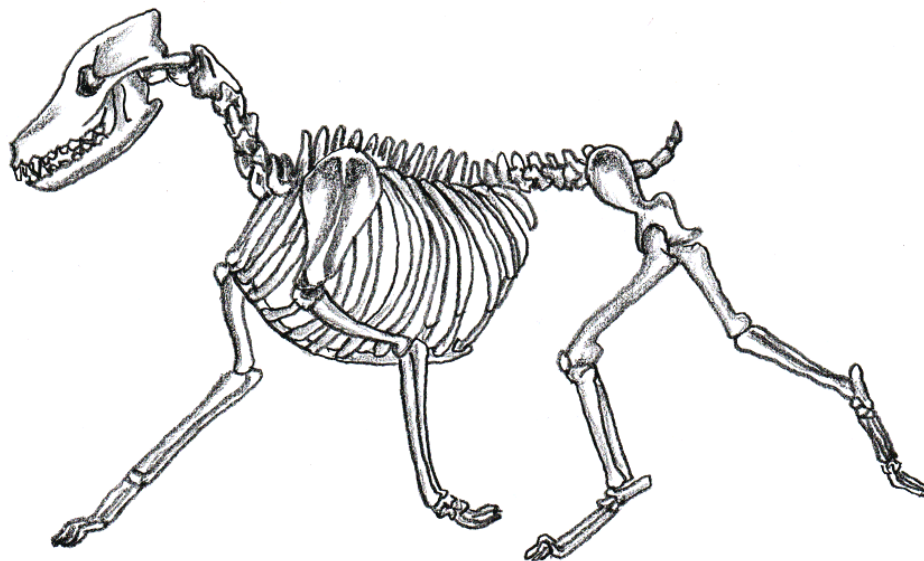
the pace (amble)



(Illustration from: *An Eye for a Dog: Illustrated Guide to Judging Purebred Dogs* Robert W. Cole. 2004)

The trot is

- a **diagonal gait** (right hind with left front, left hind with right front)
- a rhythmic **two-beat gait** (diagonal pairs strike and leave the ground at the same time)
- there is a brief period of **suspension** during the change-over of support



HOW TO EVALUATE MOVEMENT



There is no such thing as a “universal style of trot” - all breeds are different. Thus: beware of expecting all dogs to move alike. All breed standards describe different gaiting styles, depending on the breeds’ original functions.

Never lose sight of evaluating the **WHOLE** dog in movement – don’t obsess about one aspect when you judge.

Don’t be bought by “flash and dash”.

Let’s look at the mechanics of judging a dog’s movement. Judges need to evaluate three views:

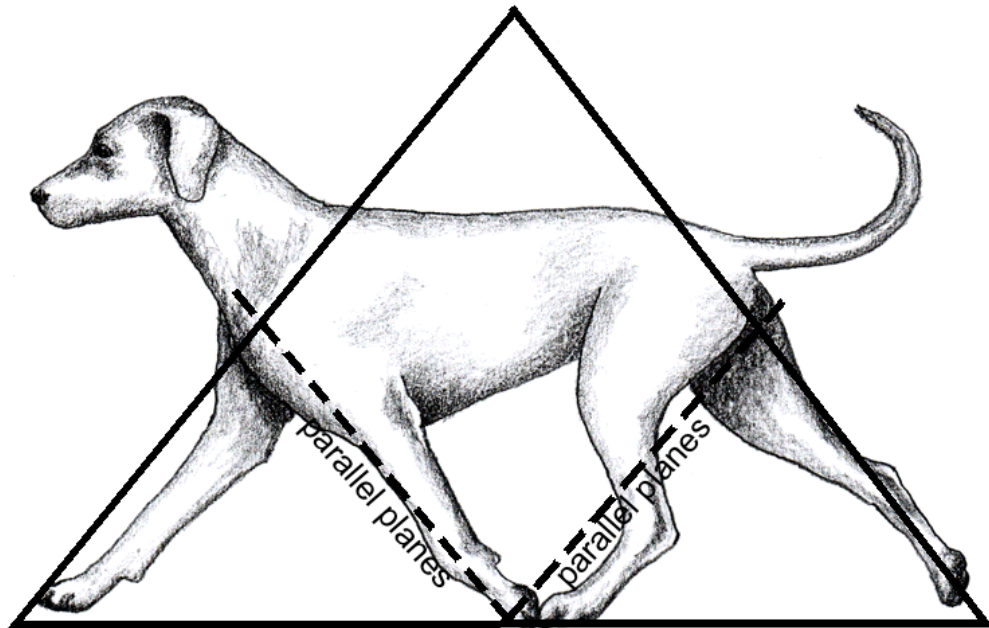
- the side view – to evaluate the side gait
- the rear view – to evaluate the going gait
- the front view – to evaluate the coming gait

Most experienced judges will agree that more attention needs to be paid to the side gait than the coming and going gait because of the greater number of characteristics one needs to observe in the profile gait.

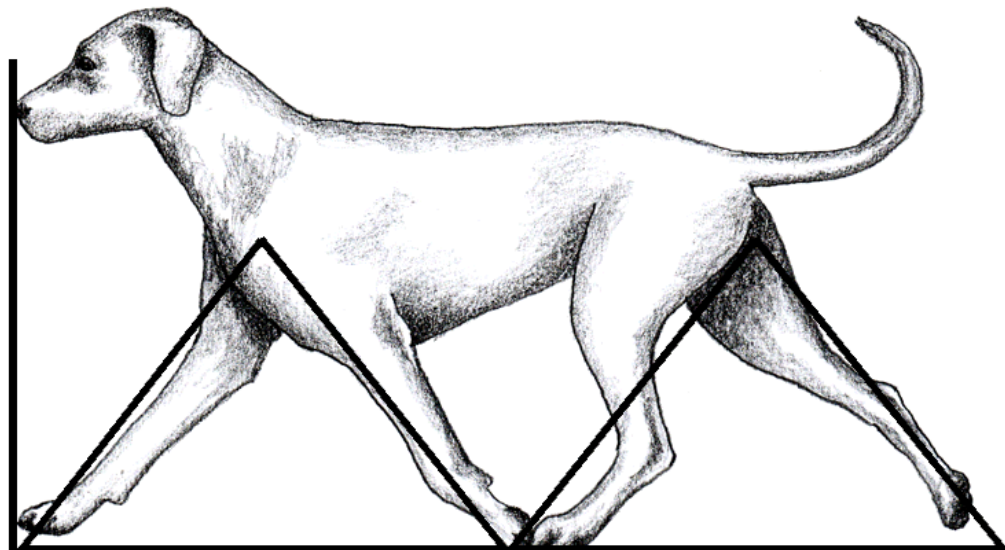
The view in profile

As the dog gaits around the ring, you need to look for an athlete in action. There is much to evaluate during this view:

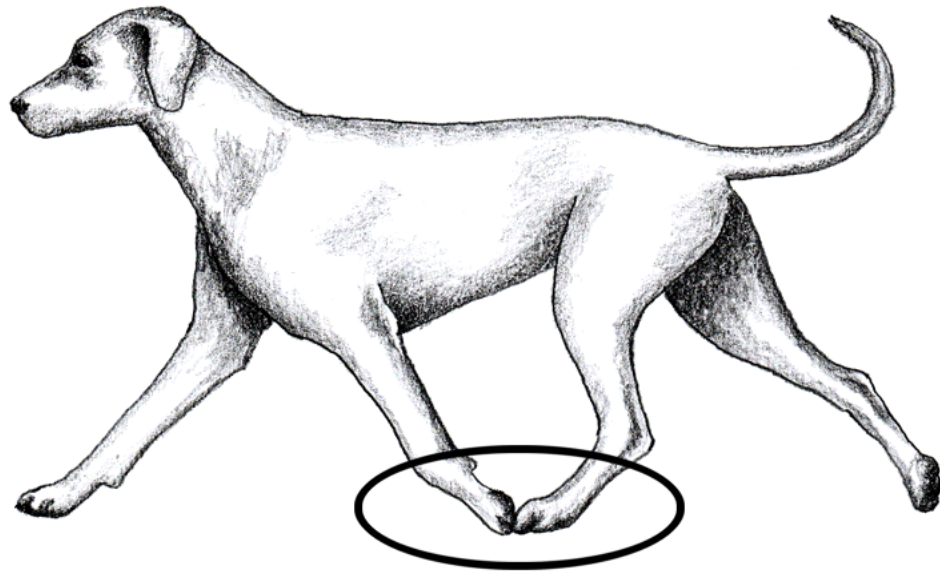
- **length of stride** (adequate reach and drive)
- **timing of the feet** (two-beat gait)
- **diagonal leg co-ordination** (the rear foot tracking the front foot)
- **suspension** (a moment of suspension with each stride)
- **stability** (without rolling or bouncing)
- **topline strength** (strong, firm top line)
- **joint articulation** (smooth flexion and extension)
- **head carriage** (level or above level)
- **tail carriage** (carried correctly)
- **grace** (effortlessness and efficiency)
- **foot and pastern strength** (effortless footfall, springy pasterns)
- **balance** (front and rear stride)



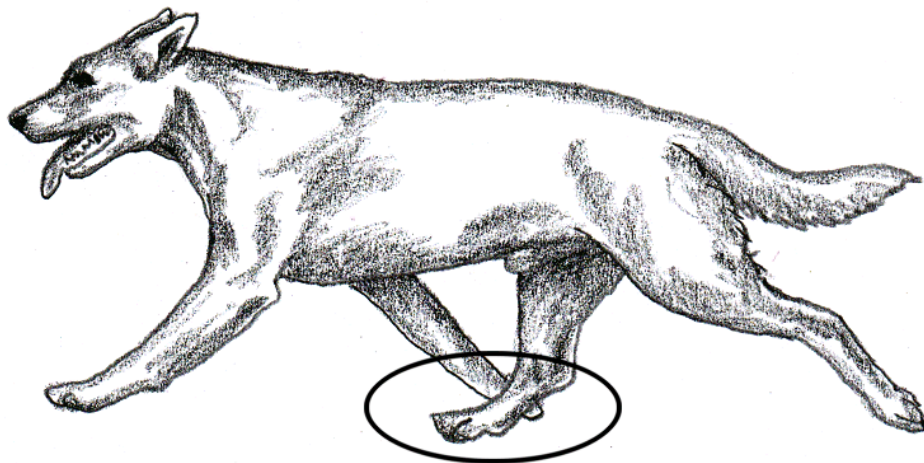
Balanced gait is typified by a **synchronisation** of front reach and rear drive. If a dog were to have a somewhat straight front assembly, it would be better for it also to have straight rear assembly to remain in balance, rather than a straight front trying to move in sync with an angulated rear. This problem would manifest itself as tremendous **kick-back** behind, yet the front would be unable to reach an imaginary plumb line dropped down from the nose. Such unbalanced movement is energy-wasting and can quickly lead to exhaustion.



Balance calls for identical triangular action in front and back. This is the best indication that the dog, as a whole, is correctly constructed and capable of performing its function efficiently without excessive energy consumption. Generally, reach should not extend beyond an imaginary plumb line from nose.



For the most efficient movement, the hind foot steps into impression made by front foot. When the hind foot is unable to step into the track left by the front foot, it is called **undertracking** and is usually a result of under angulation in either or both the forequarters and the hindquarters. When the hind foot exceeds the track left by the front foot, this is called **overtracking**. While desirable in some breeds like the German Shepherd Dog, it is mostly considered a fault – a result of overregulation in either or both the front and the rear.



overtracking

The front and rear view

During away-and-back gaiting, you are essentially judging only two main features:

- **degree of leg convergence** (lateral displacement, single-tracking)
- **plane of action** (deviations from the norm)

The **degree of leg convergence** will, as discussed previously, depend on the dog's structure and where its centre of gravity lies. In this respect, a judge can only follow the requirements of the breed standard to establish how closely the exhibit emulates that requirement.

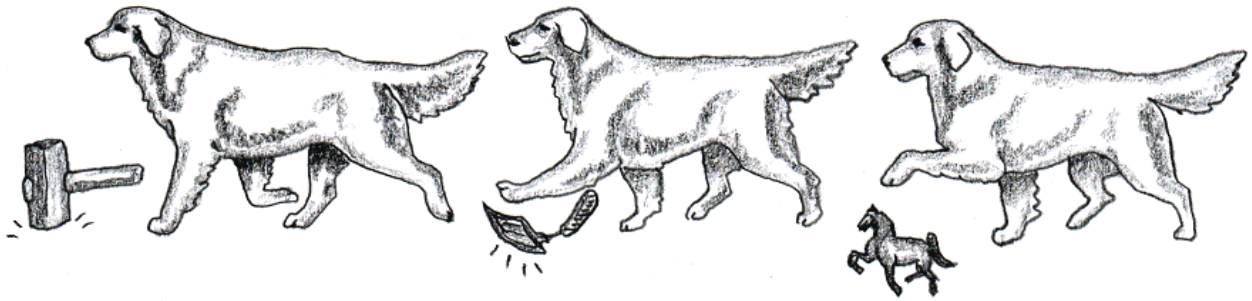
Deviations from the normal **plane of action** could include a number of faults that have all been given names. Essentially, these include the list below, which are useful to understand, but only faulted by the degree of its severity. It would be unfortunate, therefore, if you were to place an apparently faultless, very mediocre specimen on a breed over an otherwise outstanding specimen, possessing all the attributes of breed type, balance, profile soundness, temperament and condition, but who runs slightly wide on the going away. Remember the Golden Rule!

- From the front:
 - **crabbing (side-winding)**: moving with body at an angle to the line of travel
 - **paddling**: throwing the front feet out sideways in a loose, uncontrolled manner
 - **toeing-in**: forefeet turning inwards towards each other
 - **weaving (dishing, plaiting)**: forefeet swing around and cross over
 - **out-at-elbow**: elbows loose or turning out from the body
 - **tied-in-at-elbow**: elbows set too close under body, thus restricting movement
 - **running-wide**: lack of convergence when required
- From the rear we see:
 - **crabbing (side-winding)**: moving with body at an angle to the line of travel
 - **cow-hocks**: hock joints turned towards each other, causing the feet to turn out
 - **moving close**: legs moving very close, sometimes brushing against each other
 - **popping-hocks**: hocks very loose, turn inwards and outwards
 - **barrel-hocks (bowed hocks)**: legs are bowed in a bandy action
 - **running-wide**: lack of convergence when required
 - **crossing over**: feet cross over one another as well as imaginary centre line

In summary

Whenever judges evaluate dogs' movement, it is important to assess how all the parts function as a total unit. A correct approach to evaluating gait uses all views, and looks closely at each aspect of movement. However, when we assess movement we must put much more weight on side gait than on the information gathered while simply viewing the dog coming and going.

A few examples of faulty movement



pounding

paddling

hackney action



correct



elbowing out



moving close



tied in at elbow



paddling



normal convergence



bowed hocks



cow hocks



moving close



weaving

Answers to the Silhouette exercise:

1st row: Gundogs

English Springer Spaniel, Labrador Retriever, Golden Retriever, Cocker Spaniel, Pointer, Irish Setter.

2nd row: Herding dogs:

Shetland Sheepdog, Old English Sheepdog, Rough Collie, Belgian Shepherd Dog, Pembroke Welsh Corgi, Australian Cattle Dog.

3rd row: Hounds:

Saluki, Afghan Hound, Beagle, Borzoi, Smooth-haired Dachshund, Basset Hound.

4th row: Terriers:

Bull Terrier, Staffordshire Bull Terrier, Airedale Terrier, Norwich Terrier, Kerry Blue Terrier, Cesky Terrier.

5th row: Toys

Smooth-coat Chihuahua, Pekingese, Lowchen, Yorkshire Terrier, Bichon Frise, Papillon.

6th row: Utility dogs:

Lhasa Apso, Bulldog, Dalmatian, Miniature Schnauzer, Shar Pei, Shih Tzu.

7th row: Working dogs:

Great Dane, Siberian Husky, Dobermann, Boxer, American Akita, German Shepherd Dog.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study guide:

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