

Duck Under Dog (while his front paws are on your back)

When Lydia asked me (Lenore) to write an article about how I taught that trick . . . "What do you call it?" she asked. I was thinking – what do I call it? "Duck under dog while his front paws are on my back?" That is a very long name, but the trick took a very long time to teach. Lance is a very fast little dog and teaching him anything can take a while because he finds it hard to settle down long enough to think about what he is doing. He offers so many things so fast. I find that getting the exact right timing is hard.



The first thing that I had to teach Lance was that it is okay to jump up on me – this part was easy as he thought it was lots of fun to do that! He was jumping up on me every time he got a chance after that. But then I had to teach him to jump up from behind. This proved to be a little more complicated and required the help of a training buddy. You see, he needed to understand that the reward would come from behind me if he was back there. So my training buddy would guide him up with a lure and let him have it when he was in position. As he became aware that he would get a reward for being up in the back it became easy for me to administer the reward either from the top of my head or from over my shoulders. I also realized that he needed to be rewarded from both shoulders or he would start to lean or move towards the left because this was the shoulder that he was mostly rewarded from.

This was all good. But the hardest part was still to come. When Lance jumped up to put his front paws on my back, he would wrap them around my hips for an easy hold. You cannot duck around under his front legs when he has them wrapped around your hips! I needed him to jump up and put his paws in the center of my lower back and keep them there. This was difficult. After many attempts, the thing that worked the best was to do it while he was on a bed. This way it was not so hard for him to keep his weight on his hind legs while his front paws were on my back. I also had to physically put his paws in the center of my back and tell him "good boy, good **feet**", then reward if he kept them there for a second. Then after two seconds.... remember he is always offering different things very fast, so I had to get what I could.

When this was accomplished, we could move off the bed and on to the floor. It transferred fairly well when I physically put his feet in the right position and told him "good boy, good **feet**". So "feet" became the cue word for the position. Then slowly we started to move. Step by step. He didn't like the moving part so well. So he got great rewards and praise when he did move. He then realized that moving was great! And the whole trick is wonderful! When I added the ducking around under his legs, I had to move very quickly before he realized that it was happening. He thought this was the funniest thing and we were on our way!

Because I often had to put my hands around to my back to help him with his feet, the cue simply became my hands on my hips.

The whole thing took about 2 months to perfect. He loves this move, and I see him trying it on other people when they are least expecting it! This was a move that I was shown in a seminar with Gina Pink from Britain. She said that Lance and I had the perfect body size ratio for this to look good. I can't image doing it with my Great Dane!

Note from Lyd: When Lenore sent me this, I had to try with Ali. She did the first part already, but it was the staying up while I tucked under I didn't know how to teach. I tried a couple times but she kept falling off. My husband was watching and told me my elbow was knocking her off. So, I kept my arms straight, close to my body and she stayed on! Variation: duck under during a "twist." (Twist is when the dog is resting its paws on the handler's waist area and the handler spins, giving the illusion that the dog is spinning the handler)