The Pivot

Intermediate Freestyle requires 360° pivots in both directions.

A natural tendancy is for the handler to walk in a very small circle. This is not a pivot and will not successfully complete the required element for dressage.

For the pivot to the right, think obedience "T about turns." The handler stays on the spot while the dog moves forward in a small circle to stay in heel position. To execute, the handler's feet should touch.

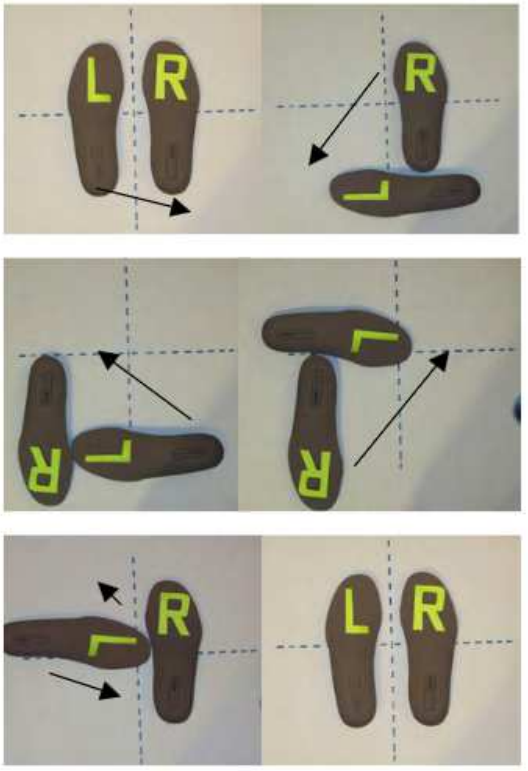
For the pivot to the left, again the handler must stay in one spot. This time, the dog must move backwards in a small circle to stay in heel position. Once again, think the "T" turns, but this time, instead of placing the left foot in *front* of the right foot, place it *behind* the right foot. (See top side panel)

Tips:

Balance: in both cases, avoid twisting feet. Instead, be sure to lift and place each foot to avoid becoming unbalanced.

Cueing: Cue the dog before you start the pivot to ensure both you and the dog move at the same time.

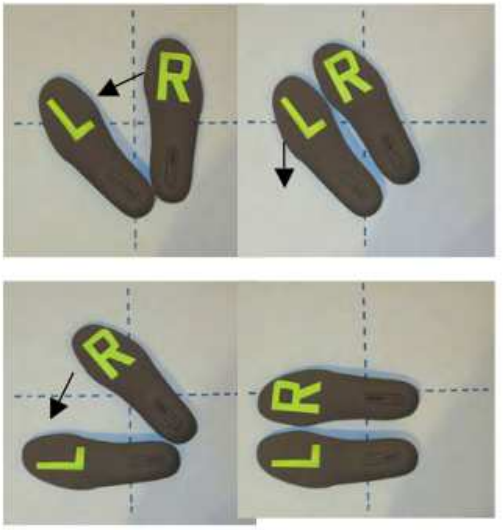
How much is enough? Choreograph 720° rather than 360° incase dog has a slow start.



Diagrams represent only one method of keeping on the spot.

For smaller dogs or dogs that don't move quickly, take smaller steps (not quite a T and then close with other foot). See below.

Practice without dog on a mark.



To Teach the Pivot

Make sure the dog knows heel position and work on that position each training session.

Move ¼ turn and mark/reward if dog maintains position.

Gradually progress to a ½ turn and then a full turn, always demanding the dog stay in the heel position.

Vary speed. The dog will be more engaged if you vary speed of pivot.

Practice: Whenever you have the chance, do a 540° (one and a half revolutions) to do an about turn when you are working on forward heeling, backward heeling, or side passes. Drill: side pass, pivot, side pass. Do in both directions.

For Dressage or Freestyle:

The pivot can be a showy element. Think about different ways of entering and exiting the pivot – from a backward heel, a side pass, a weave, a through-back – be creative. Vary the speed. That is, start slow and pick up the speed or vice versa. Place it in a logical musical phrase – a circular, flowing phrase and be sure to exit with the music.
Think about pivoting with the dog in a crawl or on its hind legs. The principles remain the same.