

How To . . . train weaves and create weaving variations

Thank you Heather S. and Lenore B. for your contributions on the next page.

Weaving is one of the first moves freestylers teach their dogs and can be used to great effect in routines to cover space. With just a few variations in handler position and movement, this basic move can become quite flashy.

Forward Weaves

- Think *tight* and *fast* when you start out.
- If you use food at first, hold the treat right against the front of your leg so that the dog weaves tight and turns in and up. (Sonic, on right, looks up at Ann as she passes through)
- Rather than wait for the dog to amble through, move quickly so that the dog learns it must move quickly to make it through. (This means your leg might bump into the dog – be careful not to kick your dog!)
- Quickly lose the lure and use voice and physical cues. Avoid the “pointing through the legs” cue as it is a difficult habit to break and does not look good. Aim to have your dog weave to your leg movement and voice commands.
- Once this movement is fluid, add hand signals suitable to various styles of music – jazz hands, cowboy shooting, Afro-elbows. Rather than trying to hide little hand signals, go big – as long as the signals match the music – and avoid the “point through the leg” signal. Your signal could be something that isn’t anywhere near the leg. See Ann with Sonic and Annette with Jake below.
- Style considerations: You can change the look of the weave simply by putting weight on the leading foot or the lagging foot.



Variations:

- Forward weave in a straight line
- “Figure 8” weave: Handler is stationary with legs far enough apart for dog to pass through. Dog weaves around each leg.
- “Stair” weave: One step-weave forward, other step-weave to the side (repeat for “stair” effect)
- “Samba” weave: Dog on left. Step forward with left, then touch right foot to the side. Dog weaves right. Then, step forward with right and touch the left foot to the side. Dog weaves left. So, the handler moves straight ahead and the dog weaves quite wide.
- “Pleat” weave: Handler faces the dog for each weave and pivots 180° for each weave. Once you have this, try with the handler facing away from the dog for each weave. (the dog movement remains the dog doing a forward weave)

- Handler step backwards while dog weaves forward. To start this off, have the dog facing you but slightly to the right. Reach back with your left leg and cue the weave.
- “Mixed Handler” Weave. The dog does a forward weave throughout. The handler does two forward weaves (right, left), then pivots and reaches back with the left foot for one weave, then reaches back with the right for a second weave.
- Try the weave in a crawl position (the dog, that is!). And, if you’re tall enough and your dog short enough, try it with the dog up on its hind legs.
- Add-ons: Spin or circle between each weave.

Back Weaves

- Once you have your dog moving backwards between your legs, stand to the side of your dog and reach back with the leg away from the dog and cue the weave. Work on one side at a time. To keep the dog from swinging out, try a little flank tap, or go immediately into a back heel and cue the dog to go into heel position. Repeat on the opposite side until dog is fluid with both.
- Start linking the two weaves.
- As with the forward weave, work as quickly as possible to reduce the out swing and to build drive.

Variations

- Straight back weave
- “Figure 8” back weave: Handler is stationary.
- Handler moves in a forward direction, dog heels back through legs but proceeds forward with handler.
- “Exit/Park” weave: Dog starts between handler’s legs, both facing forward. Dog backs through, handler steps and pivots 180°, dog does a half-turn (backwards) and stops between handler’s legs, now both facing the other direction.
- Add on: circle-back, back weave – from right or left side

With Prop (cane, flag-pole, scarf, hoop)

- With two legs and a prop for the dog to weave around, you have many variations with which to experiment.
- Use a prop to cue movement and to avoid the dreaded “point between legs” cue. (See Joan and Poet on right)

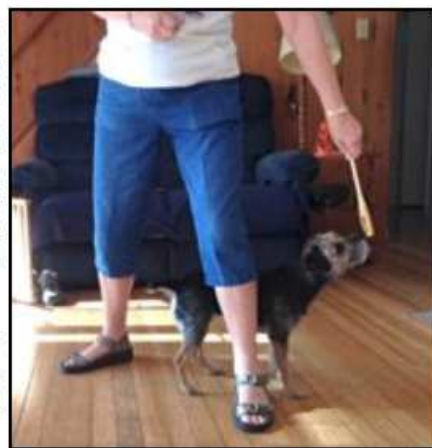


Considerations for smaller dogs: *Heather Somers*



• One of the main considerations is having the *handler* stay upright as bending at the waist isn't flattering. To prevent bending over at the waist, Heather suggests using a touch stick to start the dog off. Of course, make sure the dog knows what the touch stick is all about! Instead of a touch stick, you could always put some peanut butter, liver paste, or cheese whiz on a wooden spoon. You could also try bending at the knees rather than the waist, but that could be really tiring really quickly! In the photo on the left, Dansa is touching a stick with her nose. On the right, she is following the wooden spoon.

• Heather held the stick and wooden spoon further away from her body for the camera. To promote closeness when training, keep stick closer to body. Remember, where the nose is, the body will follow.



• Luring and touch stick are different. Touch stick is done with a clicker. Luring has the treat on the spoon, but can quickly progress to being used as a touch stick when you move the treat from the spoon into your hand. Way more to it of course.

• To keep a small dog from going wide – especially with back weaving – you could use gating or work close to a wall to steer the dog in the right direction.

Considerations for larger dogs: *Lenore Baskin*

• It can be a real challenge to weave with a big dog, especially if you have short legs! I am quite short so my Great Dane had to learn to duck. Teaching Miss Nahli to duck was fairly easy. I taught her to go under my legs by throwing treats between them. She was eager to do that. The next step was to get her to do this with some speed. I did some recalls at a short distance so she had some energy going through. I used treats for this as well. I kept increasing the distance until I could place her at one side of a field and have her race across and duck between my legs. (see photo at right)

• When it came to actual weaving, it became apparent that she needed a lot of room. I needed to accommodate for this. High leg marching exercises became a must so I could balance on one leg with the other held high so she could learn to weave through gracefully. This worked well for forward weaving. I have to admit that on more than one occasion, I lost my balance and we (I) would end up in a heap on the floor. Practice, practice, practice.



• Weaving in a standstill or sideways movement was very awkward for both of us, her especially. What I found was I again needed to make room for her. So having her weave while I was at stand still, does not work well, unless I hold up one of my legs. And that felt a bit klutzy. But I could make it flow better if I did a bit of side step so as to line myself up to her natural position. We both liked this better!

• One point to mention is that because it can be so awkward to weave with a big dog, Nahli would often get frustrated and just refuse to weave. So lots of rewards and do not push it. This is a complicated move for these big souls, so one small weave at a time.