

# STRETCH

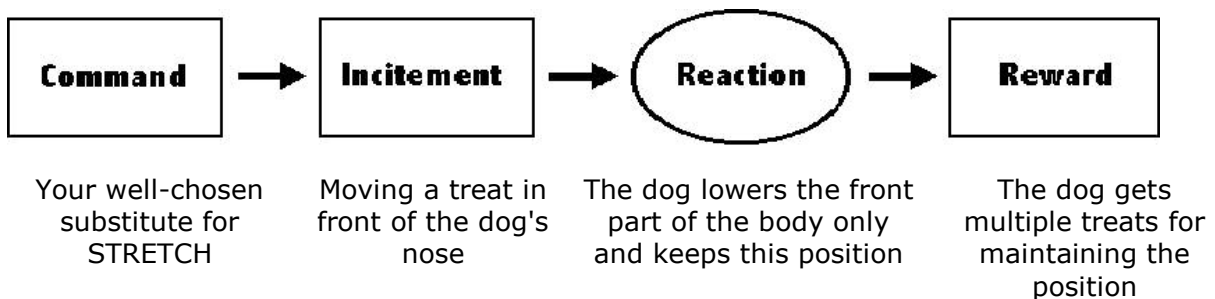
## Introduction

Dogs will stretch when they wake up and get ready to move. Putting the front paws as far ahead as they can reach, the dog lowers the shoulders and the elbows, almost down to the ground, leaving the rear end of the body, including the tail, high in the air.

The posture is similar to a play invitation, except that, for the stretch, the dog will often turn the head backwards-up also, and the entire gesture is assumed slowly, not in a jump, as the play invitation is. Also, the elbows are typically stretched, not bent as typical for a play invitation.

You should not train this exercise without first having obtained some good results with STAND.

## The Four Boxes



## Special features

Regardless what many people might think, this posture is actually quite comfortable for the dog....

It is the natural way for Basenjis to indicate a find of a bird before flushing it.

**Overview:**

<b>Description:</b>	<b>The dog lowers the front part of its body by stretching the front legs forward.</b>			
<b>Ratings:</b>	<b>Dog:</b>  Easy.	<b>Owner:</b>  Somewhat challenging with dogs that are not sensitive to the owner's tone of voice.	<b>Development:</b>  Just the learning process itself, but the exercise can be used in combination also with other exercises.	<b>Limitations:</b>  Almost all dogs can do this, unless very special medical circumstances prevent it.
<b>Training method:</b>	<b>Command:</b>  <i>Your choice:</i>	<b>Incitement:</b>  "Treat zipper" or a specially developed incitement.	<b>Reaction:</b>  Comes naturally when the dog expects an increase in the level of physical activity after a long rest.	<b>Reward:</b>  Treat or praise or physical exercise. Possibly TREAT-TIME or PLAY-TIME
<b>Obstacles and Challenges:</b>	Can be used on obstacles! The exercise can be quite challenging for an owner of a small dog, as the space for maneuvering hands and treats is limited.			
<b>Equipment:</b>	None is required.			
<b>Location and Facilities:</b>	Nothing special required - but the exercise can be used on an obstacle course also.			
<b>Special Features:</b>	Can be used as an alternative to SIT, STAND, and DOWN in obedience sequences, in order to provide variation and unpredictability.  Can also be used for indication of a find in searches.			

## **Step-by-step procedure**

### **1. Connect the reward with the performance**

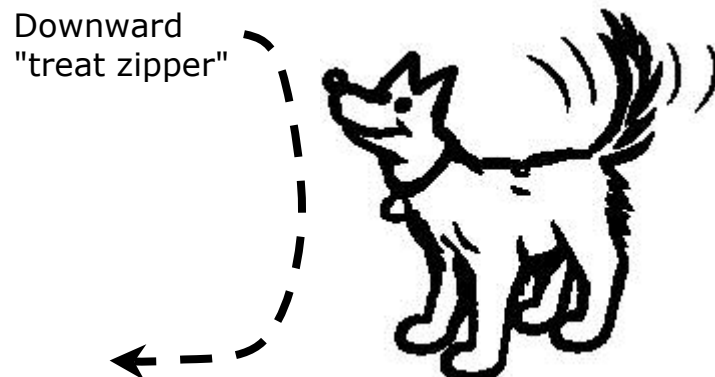
This is quite easy - you simply give the dog some treats while it is standing in the STRETCH position. You praise it continuously, until you stop the exercise by giving another command, such as STAND or DOWN. It is truly a complete parallel to training STAND from SIT.

### **2. Identify your incitement**

Stretching is much like peeing. You can predict when the dog will do it. Typically after resting, but also very often when the dog expects some increase in the level of physical activity, for instance when it expects to be taken out for a walk.

Since there is not much in terms of external triggers you can use for incitement, your best bet is to simply time your training to the opportunities you can predict you will get.

However, you might have success with this "downwards treat zipper" incitement: You have the dog in a standing position and hold a treat up in front of its nose. You then lower the treat to the ground and then drag it slightly forward, exactly as you would do for a Down. But, when starting from a standing position instead of sitting, there will be a balance point where the dog will sort-of lie down only with the front part of the body, keeping the bum high - and you got your stretch!



### 3. Choose your command

Nothing special about this! Make it simple, sweet, funny, easy for the dog to distinguish from your daily language. The odder, the better. The word "Stretch", of course, is not the best you can find. Some of these possibilities would make a better choice - or hopefully at least some inspiration:

L-SHAPE, FRONT-OUT, ROOBIL, BALLOO, MULAS, CHUBIN, BE-JEE, CRINTY.

### 4. Put the exercise together

When you know the dog is just about to stretch, you speak your command and verbally support the dog when going through the motion. As long as you speak the command *prior* to the action, the learning will take place. Be careful, though, that you do not give the command when the dog has changed its mind to now *quit* its stretching - *that* would lead to the exact opposite result of what you want...

If you can make the "treat zipper" work, you simply use it, right after your command. If you made another incitement, you use that.

Of course, you reward the dog immediately when it performs, and you may give it multiple rewards while it is keeping the position. It is really very much the same as for any other position you want the dog to assume, like SIT, STAND, or DOWN. In your training, you should focus on *maintaining* the position, not on assuming it. Dogs are smart enough to figure out that they have to *assume* the position in order to maintain it.... But, if you focus on assuming the position and reward the dog for finishing, then you will quickly develop the exercise into a fast jump down and up again.

### 5. Make it more challenging

Please refer to [SIT](#), [STAND](#), or [DOWN](#) for this - the principles are exactly the same.

If you want to let the dog continue the position for more than just a few seconds, you should accept that it rests the elbows on the ground - and even encourage it, to make it more comfortable.

### **Additional observations and comments**

Stretching is, in a way, "reverse sitting" where the front legs go down with the hind legs up, whereas sitting has the hind legs go down while the front legs remain standing. The exercise can have great value when you combine it into sessions with SIT, STAND, and DOWN as a fourth option, simply to create more variation - and thus more stimulation to the dog's brain.

Other than that, and the possible use as indication of a find in searches, the exercise is merely just for fun. It is fairly fast to teach, once you identify an effective incitement, but it does take that you have a fairly good control over your dog, using your voice.

[Start of this exercise](#)

[Overview of exercises in this Part](#)