



Dynamic Stretching

Involves functional exercises that require active movement and muscular effort

Movements are sport-specific and mimic the actions required during activity

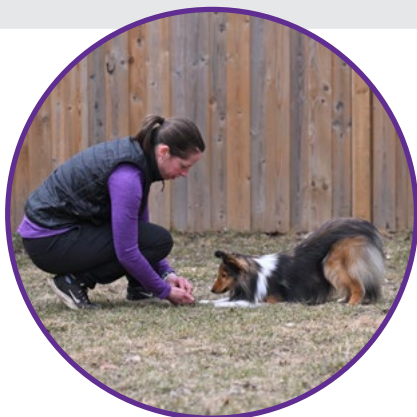
Increases range of motion through active movement

Allows the dog to regulate how far the stretch is taken

Helps prepare muscles and joints for upcoming activity

Helps reduce strain on muscles and joints during activity

Commonly used during warm-up routines



Example of dynamic stretching (e.g. bow)



Static Stretching

Passive stretches held by the owner

Completed slowly and held for a set period of time (typically 20–30 seconds)

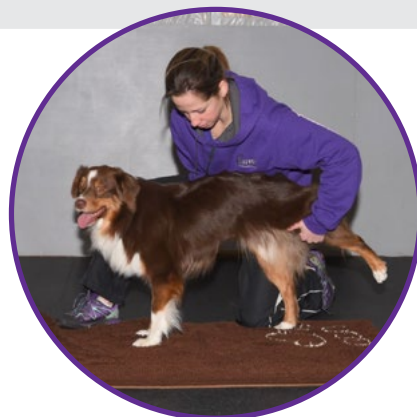
Helps maintain joint range of motion and flexibility when performed regularly

No active muscular effort from the dog

Typically used outside of the immediate warm-up period

Should never be performed on cold muscles

May negatively affect performance if performed immediately before activity



Example of static stretching (e.g. hip extension)



Reverse Retrieve



Starting position



Exercise



Benefits

Reverse retrieve prepares the body for activity by introducing short bursts of forward movement and acceleration, followed by deceleration and turning as your dog retrieves the toy and returns to you. It also encourages forward commitment toward the toy regardless of the handler's position. This exercise helps the dog transition from controlled movement to more active, purposeful movement, preparing for dynamic, sport-specific work.



Instructions

- Have your dog start in a sit, down, or stand — your preference.
- Work within the space you have available.
- Ask your dog to maintain their starting position.
- Place the toy approximately 6–8 feet in front of your dog (adjust as needed based on your space and activity).
- Position yourself facing your dog, slightly off their direct line to the toy. Standing closer makes the exercise easier, while standing further away increases the challenge by requiring greater commitment to the toy.
- Release your dog toward the toy as you move toward them, allowing them to drive past you as you return to their starting position.
- Your dog should stay committed to the toy rather than turning to follow you, then retrieve it and bring it back to you.
- Alternate your positioning rather than always working from the same side.
- If your dog struggles with commitment, position yourself closer and gradually increase the challenge over time.
- This exercise can also be performed with food by placing a treat on the ground and having your dog drive forward to it. Ensure the food contrasts with the surface so it is easy to see.
- Repeat 5 times, alternating your positioning.



SCAN TO SEE VIDEO



Sport-Specific Key Movement Demands

Hiking/Off-Leash Activity

- Variable pace including walking, trotting, sprinting, and sudden bursts of speed
- Frequent and unpredictable changes of direction while navigating the environment
- Movement across uneven, unstable, or changing terrain (roots, rocks, hills, mud, sand)
- Jumping on and off natural obstacles such as logs, rocks, or slopes
- Deceleration and stopping on varied surfaces, requiring joint stability and control
- Navigating inclines and declines requiring coordinated use of forelimbs and hindlimbs
- Increased reliance on balance, coordination, and body awareness in unpredictable environments
- Sustained activity over longer durations, often with intermittent bursts of higher intensity
- Environmental factors such as footing changes, obstacles, and distractions influencing movement patterns



Why These Movement Demands Matter

While the tables above do not include every sport or activity your dog may participate in, they highlight an important concept: the body must be prepared for the specific movements required in the activity ahead.

A warm-up should go beyond simply increasing blood flow. While walking and trotting are valuable starting points, they do not fully prepare the body for the dynamic movements many activities require.

A well-structured warm-up prepares the muscles and joints your dog will use, helping them move more efficiently and reducing the risk of strain.

In many ways, the warm-up acts as the bridge between everyday movement and more demanding physical activity, helping the dog transition safely while improving coordination and muscle activation in preparation for what comes next.

In the next section, we will take a closer look at the research behind warm-ups and cool-downs, and why these simple routines play an important role in performance and injury prevention.