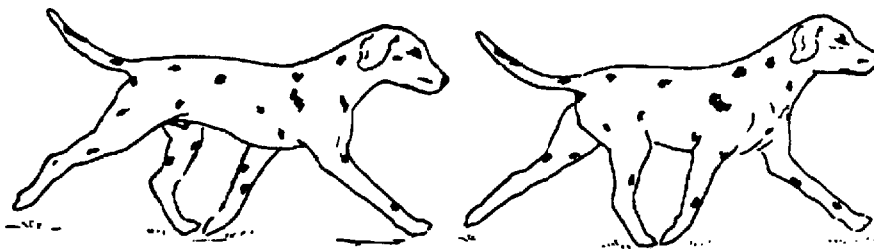
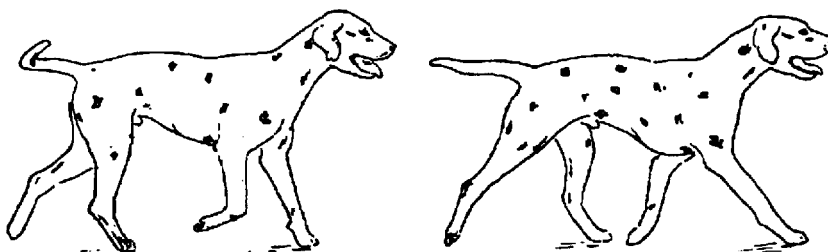


Front and rear views (covered in the previous article) probably show us more action faults than side views, but the side views show us the blending of front and rear actions for smooth, graceful passage. The foundation of gait is evident in the front and rear views, and the beauty is revealed by the side view. Two other important factors can be better observed from the side: the flexing of the legs and the supporting action of the pastern under weight, which is often revealed by the bobbing rather than level movement of the withers.

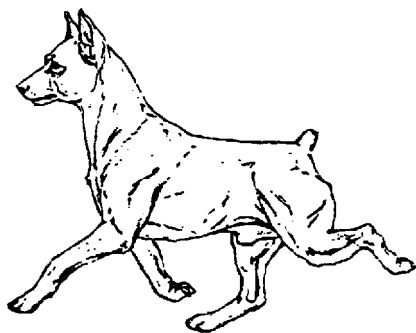
In some dogs, easily detected in a faulty Dalmatian, excessive rolling of the torso caused by too wide a gait, loose shoulders, or general lack of soundness can be observed in the side view as the spots along the topline disappear from view and reappear again with each stride.



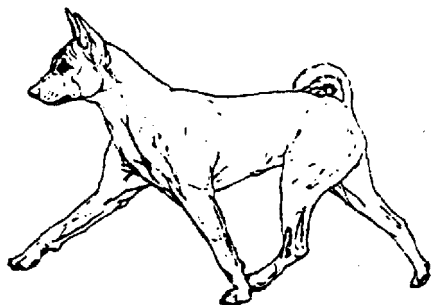
Good Angulation facilitates a long stride. Balance facilitates good foot timing.



Poor Angulation shortens stride because the bones meeting at the shoulder joint and hip are steeply set, forming joints with wide angles.



Hackney Gait. Correct for a Miniature Pinscher but generally faulty.



Goose-stepping Basenji. Faulty in any breed.

The importance of angulation cannot be overemphasized when evaluating gait. The most significant angles are at the shoulder and hip joints. These joints counterbalance one another as they lift, open and shut with the swing of the limbs. The front of the dog normally carries about 60% of the total body weight and works like a shock-absorbing mechanism as it coordinates with drive from the rear and absorbs impact with the ground. Lack of angulation or stiffness at the pastern restricts the shock absorption and exacerbates the pounding. Whether viewed from the side or from front or rear, the action should be smooth and harmonious with no twisting or jerking. Problems arise when one part has to overwork or compensate for lack of balance, injury or weakness in another. It is important to note that excessive angulation in any part of a dog's body is detrimental to joint support and endurance. It is never a question of the more angulation the better - it is a matter of just how much is needed for functional efficiency.

A dog with good angulation and balance will have joints that flex easily and smoothly, providing strong thrust from the rear and spring and resilience in the front. Dogs with poor angulation must take shorter steps, and more of them, to get where they are going. Their action is bouncing rather than smooth. A dog that is straight, front and rear, has a short, stilted gait, but, if in balance, may be better off than a dog lacking balance, where one end has to compensate for the faultiness of the other.

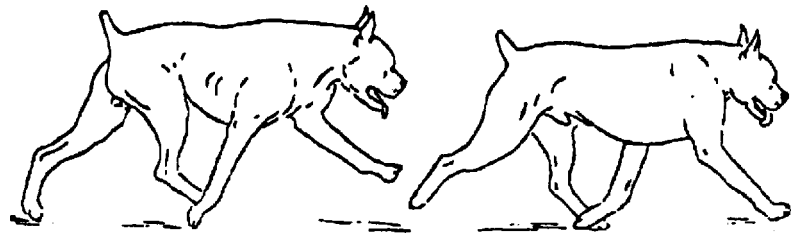
Hackney action as a fault is caused by more angulation and drive from behind than in front. The dog resorts to extra high action of the forelegs in order to keep the paws out of the way of the oncoming back feet. The term is taken from the hackney horse which exemplifies this action. Although specifically requested in some breeds standards, e.g., Miniature Pinscher, hackneying is an abnormal movement that requires rather steep shoulder angulation, coupled with upright pasterns.

References:

- Elliott, Rachel Page, *The New Dogsteps*, Second Edition, Howell Book House, New York, 1983.
Nicholas, Anna Katherine, *The Nicholas Guide to Dog Judging*, Third Edition, Howell Book House, New York, 1989.
Spira, Harold R., *Canine Terminology*, First Edition, Howell Book House, New York, 1982.

Goose-stepping is a movement typified by accentuated lift of the forelimbs, similar in most respects to a hackney gait, but coupled with full extension of the front pasterns and feet before placing them in contact with the ground. The dog seems to have good reach, but close observation will reveal that the actual front foot contact with the ground is delayed, and therefore the effective reach is considerably shorter.

Overreaching at the trot is a common fault, caused by more angulation and drive from behind than in the front, so that the rear feet are forced to step to one side of the front feet to avoid interference or clipping. This is one of the many forms of poor foot timing, but it must not be confused with the natural overreach in the suspension trot, or in the canter or gallop. Overreaching is a common fault in puppies as they develop through “leggy” stages when the height at withers may exceed length from buttocks to shoulder joint by a fractional difference. As the puppy develops and the body proportions come into balance, the overreaching ceases.



Over-reaching Boxer. Observable in profile and especially when moving fast, in which the hind feet are thrust past their front counterparts.