

When showing a Bracco Italiano in conformation, remember to handle your dog "to the standard."

Key reminders about the standard: The Bracco should be square or slightly longer than tall. The rear edge of the thigh should be straight, and the angle of the stifle is about 135 degrees. A vertical line from the point of the buttock to the ground should pass slightly in front of the rear feet. The tail is set as a continuation of the croup and held near horizontal.

The hindquarter angulation of dogs that are over-stretched (rear feet set too far back) or under stretched (rear feet set directly under the pelvis) will be disrupted. Angulation is in moderation for this breed.

The tail should not be held high – this is not a hound, and the tail should never be carried over the back! The tail should be held as close to horizontal as possible. This affects the topline and overall outline of the dog.

Trot them on a loose lead if possible (young dogs especially can be difficult to manage on a loose lead since they are more noodle than dog). The rings can be small but the Bracco should be able to obtain reach and drive even in a small area. Their hallmark gait may not be maximized in a show ring, but the effortless, fast trot should still be visible.

Common Handling Mistakes:

1. Holding the tail UP. The tail should be horizontal. Focus on keeping the tail straight out.
2. Holding the neck and facial skin tight - either with a hand or lead. Let the folds fall! Holding back the skin distorts the facial profile which is **very** important in this breed. The graceful curve of the muzzle underline gives type. The nose should form an angle over the muzzle, and the lip is set back slightly (ie: not a square muzzle), with a curve coming to a visibly marked (but not too droopy) corner of the lip.
3. A head held high and tight not only disrupts to the facial outline but also the neck shape and ear set. The Bracco is described as having the "short, seeking" neck typical of a trotting breed. Long necks like English Pointers are undesirable in this breed – so there's not need to artificially stretch the neck by holding the head very high and pulling the dewlap tight.
4. Same goes for gaiting - the NATURAL head carriage and silhouette is going to look much better than a tight lead held high. (Another disclaimer for young dogs – this isn't always possible if they are trying very hard to be silly).

5. Gait is described as a fast and extended trot. The movement should be fast but controlled. A well-trained dog is easier to show!
6. The dog should be stacked to be square or slightly longer than tall, with the rear feet slightly behind a vertical line from the point of the buttock. Incorrect placement of the hind legs can change the top line. An example of this is placing the hind feet too far back can cause the dog to crouch – usually with too much bend in the stifle and a straight sloping topline. Remember – all the pieces connect!

Review of Examples:

Figure 1 – This illustrates two ways to stack a Bracco with correct feet placement. Note the hind feet are slightly behind the point of the buttock. This example shows how head carriage can also affect the dog's overall appearance. Either may be a “better” way to stack, depending on the individual dog.

LEFT: the muzzle/neck silhouette to be appreciated, and the head carriage is more natural. The dog's weight is shifted straight forward — which maximizes the angulation of the shoulder, but also makes the pasterns more sloped.

RIGHT: the lead disrupts the head/neck silhouette, and the head held higher to make the shoulder appear straighter. The dog's stance is lifted UP and FORWARD, decreasing angulation and making him appear shorter backed.



Figure 2 – These are examples of over-stacking, or placing the rear feet too far back. The rear edge of the thigh is not straight for either dog due to the placement of the limbs.

LEFT: The dog's rear feet are placed too far back, to the point that the rear pasterns are not perpendicular to the ground. In addition the dog's weight is shifted up and forward by a very erect head carriage – worsening the straightening and sloping of the topline. The tight neck lead disrupts the natural fall of the skin folds around the face/neck.

RIGHT: Notice the topline is straightened by the over-stretching of the rear legs. The head is not held as high, so the effect on the topline is not as severe. The tail is held far too high – the tail should be carried horizontally.



Figure 3 – These are examples of understacking, or not placing the rear feet far enough back. For both examples, the feet are placed directly underneath the hips. This puts a curve in the rear edge of the thigh, and the dog appears over-angulated (and sickle hocked) in the rear. The angle of the pelvis also appears too great (it should be 30 degrees). The dog appears almost taller than long and the topline is “scrunched” into a smaller space, making the dog look sway-backed.

LEFT: Correct head carriage, providing a more pleasing head/neck/ear silhouette. The correct head carriage maximizes the dog's shoulder angulation.

RIGHT: The head is pulled vertically with the nose pointed upward – which disrupts the silhouette of the head/neck and also makes the dog appear too straight in the shoulder and pastern. Tail carriage too high.

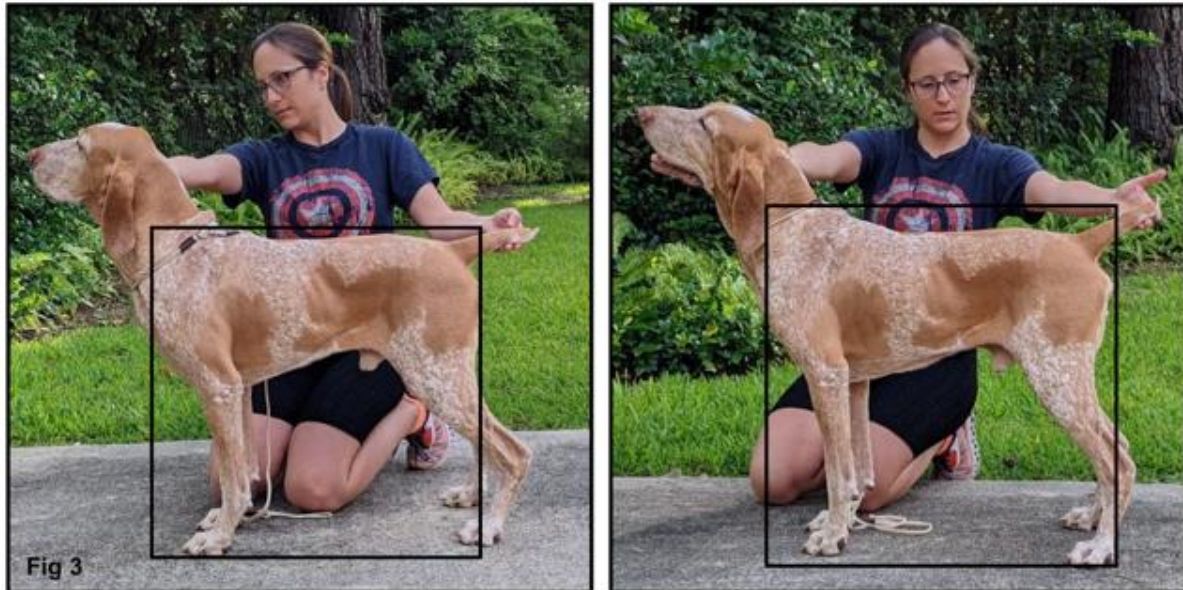


Figure 4 – Examples of correct gaiting. Note the loose lead allowing for a natural head carriage. A natural head carriage will permit the dog to maximize their forward reach. A head that is artificially held upward with a tight lead can lead to a hackney or “stair climbing” front gait as the dog pulls against the lead. Note that this is a flying trot (RIGHT photo) – with a period of suspension when no feet touch the ground.



Last of all – don't forget to have fun, love your dog, and always be courteous in the show ring!