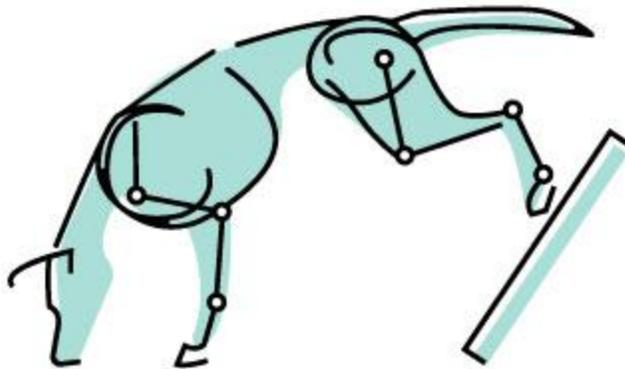


# Custom CCC Program

## For Elvis



## CANINE CONDITIONING COACH

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The two main goals we have for Elvis with this custom program are to improve muscle balance through the pelvic limbs, specifically on the right side, and to further improve core strength to support the compromised discs at L4-5 and L5-6.

Ultimately the hope is that Elvis will be strong enough to walk off leash (taking care to control variables that could lead to impact or collision with other dogs), navigate the stairs under control, and participate in nosework classes, without relapse.

We will achieve our goals by applying known effective human fitness and physical therapy guidelines of Stable before Unstable, Static before Dynamic and Isolated before Integrated. We will also apply a progressive system of layering exercises to train Elvis' mind (dog training) along with his body (canine conditioning). We can do this!!

Edited: 1-22-2022 to eliminate open kinetic chain lateral forces on the stifle.

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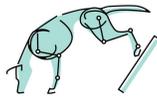


# Table of Contents

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This is a **dynamic** table of contents. When clicked, the listings below will take you directly to that Page, Circuit or Exercise. Pretty nifty! Also, this document is formatted to allow you to search for a word or phrase. Use the shortcut “command + F” on a Mac or “control + F” on a PC to open the search box.

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b>                      | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>MindMap » A visual representation</b>      | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Equipment needed for this program:</b>     | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>General Guidelines</b>                     | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Elvis Specific Guidelines</b>              | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Circuit 1a</b>                             | <b>10</b> |
| Teaching Stillness: Beginner                  | 10        |
| Rear Foot to Hand Target (Part 1): Foundation | 10        |
| Rear Foot to Hand Target (Part 2): Beginner   | 11        |
| <b>Circuit 1b</b>                             | <b>13</b> |
| Backing Up: Beginner                          | 13        |
| Head Nods: Beginner                           | 13        |
| Bow Tutorial: Beginner                        | 14        |
| Posture Sit: Beginner                         | 14        |
| <b>Circuit 2a</b>                             | <b>16</b> |
| Manual Leg Lift: Intermediate                 | 16        |
| Rear Foot to Hand Target (Part 3): Beginner   | 16        |
| Sit-Walk Forward Down: Beginner               | 16        |
| <b>Circuit 2b</b>                             | <b>19</b> |
| Stepping Back: Beginner                       | 19        |
| Bow-Stretch: Intermediate                     | 19        |
| Rock Back Sit-Push Forward Stand: Beginner    | 19        |
| <b>Circuit 3a</b>                             | <b>22</b> |
| Manual Leg Lift: Expert                       | 22        |
| Mountain Climber Prep- Tutorial : Advanced    | 22        |
| Sit- Walk Forward Down- Stand: Intermediate   | 23        |



|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Circuit 3b</b>                              | <b>25</b> |
| Stepping Forward-Stepping Back: Intermediate   | 25        |
| Deep Bow: Advanced                             | 25        |
| Rock Back Sit-Push Forward Stand: Intermediate | 25        |



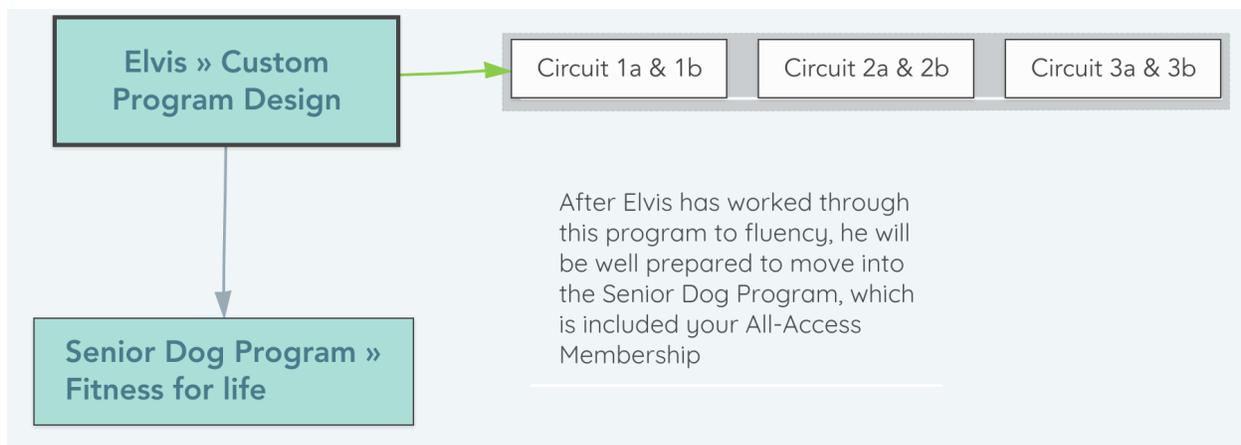
# MindMap » A visual representation

This MindMap is a visual representation of the path you'll be taking through the circuit.

You'll begin with Circuit 1a & 1b. You'll be alternating between the exercises contained in the two circuits. Depending on your individual schedule, and how well Elvis is handling the exercises physically and mentally, you could split the day into an a.m. session and a p.m. session on the same day with the following day off, or implement Circuit 1a Mon/Wed/*maybe* Friday and Circuit 1b Tue/Thur/*maybe* Saturday. I would prefer to start with the second option / alternating days in the beginning to make sure we don't overdo.

This protocol will likely take 2-3 months to work through to fluency.

Be on the lookout for offloading the right rear or roaching / flexion through the lumbar spine, and adjust the frequency of the protocol accordingly. More specific watchpoints are included in the [Elvis Specific Guidelines](#) portion of the document, as well as in each video tutorial.



[Jump to Table of Contents](#)



## Equipment needed for this program:

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- 2-4 Sitting Platforms
- 2 Balance Bars
- Plyo Box, ottoman, or other elevated stable prop
- Standing Platform
- 2-4 Rubber Feed Bowls or similar stable foot targets
- 1 Propel Air Platform
- 1 cone, or other similar pilon
- Cato Board, Wobble Board or large-ish stable platform

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)



# General Guidelines

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1. When implementing a formal conditioning program, we're implementing movements that impact the body in a few different ways
  - a. Increasing the strength of a muscle concentrically and eccentrically, defined by the ability to move to end range while loaded and maintain 85% proper alignment.
  - b. Improving the endurance of the muscle, defined by the amount of repetitions or duration an exercise can be performed while still maintaining 85% proper alignment.
  - c. Increasing the length of a muscle / impacting mobility, which is also a measure of strength.
  - d. Improving the proprioception / body awareness of the dog.
  
2. We progress an exercise in one of two ways...
  - a. **Building strength & endurance:** Asking for more repetitions / longer duration before resting. (a through c above)
  - b. **Challenging proprioception & coordination:** Asking a dog for more precision movement, challenging posture, increasing balance demands and/or increasing the complexity of an exercise. (d above)
  
3. We measure the readiness of the dog to progress an exercise in one of two ways depending on whether the exercise is a **strength building** exercise or a **proprioception building** exercise.
  - a. Meeting reps x sets goals, which measures **strength**, endurance and flexibility combined.
    - i. In the programming this is referred to as "**Building to**" and is generally capped at 10 reps x 3 sets, although the specifics are unique to each exercise.
  
  - b. Measuring "**fluency**" which is a test of **proprioceptive understanding** on the dog's part, and is generally determined by hitting alignment, coordination, and precision benchmarks.
    - i. In the programming this is referred to as "**Appropriate to progress**" and will be followed by a list of skills the dog should be happily and readily demonstrating before making the exercise more difficult.



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4. Some dogs will need many sessions of a specific exercise to meet the required strength/flexibility or coordination benchmarks before progressing to the next level. In other exercises, only one or two sessions may be necessary before progressing. Watching, and self assessing the video of your exercise protocol can reveal valuable information, and help you determine when it is appropriate to progress.
  5. A typical conservative strength / endurance progression schedule would be...
    - 5 reps x 3 sets
    - 7 reps, 7 reps, 5 reps
    - 10 reps, 7 reps, 7 reps
    - 10 reps, 10 reps, 7 reps
    - 10 reps x 3 sets

So when building from 5 reps x 3 sets to 10 reps x 3 sets this can be a helpful guide. There's no downside to progressing conservatively, aside from the fact that it takes time. Conversely, progressing too quickly can lead to frustration, a loss of precision, and incorrect muscle recruitment.

**NOTE:** Change in arousal level, increase or decrease, is the first indicator of mental and/or physical fatigue. Taking a short break (30 seconds to 1 min) with a cookie scatter, or down-stay can help manage arousal levels.

6. When a strength / endurance exercise is able to be executed at its suggested maximum rep x set progression, with accuracy, fluency and confidence, it's time to move to the next progression. With the change to a more difficult exercise progression and an **increase in demands** on the dog's body, ALWAYS comes a **decrease in the reps x sets**.

So when the dog is presented with a more challenging variation, the reps x sets are reduced and built back up. In general, the starting "ask" is 5 reps x 3 sets, building to 10 reps x 3 sets for strength / endurance exercises.

7. When a proprioception / coordination exercise achieves fluency, as defined (generally) by understanding on the dog's part for the suggested number of repetitions, it's appropriate to move forward. Proprioception exercises do not need to be built in the same way as strength / endurance exercises.



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**NOTE:** Puppies with growing bodies may need to return to previous progressions of an exercise when experiencing growth spurts. Past understanding of where their body parts are in space may not be applicable when the legs are suddenly several inches longer!! Patience pays off during these growing times!

8. Not all exercises will be progressed at the same time. Depending on the individual dog's strengths and weaknesses, some exercises may take several weeks at a single progression, while others take only one or two weeks. Being diligent in self assessment and video review will be very helpful in determining whether or not the appropriate benchmarks are being met.

9. Remember...

Static before Dynamic  
Isolated before Integrated  
Stable before Unstable

Form drives Function

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)



# Elvis Specific Guidelines

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1. The beginning stages of teaching Elvis these canine conditioning exercises can be calorically expensive, and as you know, keeping Elvis slim is important for his overall health, especially with his particular neurological considerations. So if you're not already doing this, I recommend measuring Elvis' daily food allotment, giving a small breakfast, using as much as is needed for your conditioning training, and feeding the remaining portion for dinner at night.
2. We will want to be mindful of how Elvis dismounts the props, as well as our placement of the reset cookie. As I mentioned in our video consult, force is not Elvis' friend. As much as possible, we want to avoid movements / behaviors that include high impact. This is especially important when Elvis is dismounting conditioning equipment and following a "reset cookie" between sets, because his core muscles may be tired and less able to absorb forces, transferring that responsibility to the discs in the spine... which are already compromised. Having Elvis step off the equipment in a controlled manner can be achieved by using a lure, and placement of reward on the ground near the equipment. This may be different from what's demonstrated in the video... but an important adjustment for Elvis nonetheless.
3. We will gradually increase the height of the front feet over time. This will increase the challenge to the gluteals, hamstrings and core muscles (epaxials, hypaxials, and abdominals) in an intentional progression to make sure we don't overdo it. There may be exercises that demonstrate a spine angle higher than 45° above the horizontal, but we will want to modify those to stay at 45° or lower.
4. Watch for changes in gait or offloading which can sometimes look like one foot is bigger than the other, indicating that Elvis is shifting more weight into the left foot (so it squishes/widens) out of the right (so it looks smaller or more narrow). Also monitor the alignment of Elvis' topline / spine for an increase in roaching / flexion. This could be an indication we're moving too quickly or need to adjust his program slightly.
5. Normally, program redesign is an additional fee. But in this case we may need to tweak the program slightly to fully meet Elvis' needs, so I will happily waive that fee so we can get things right for Elvis.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)



## Circuit 1a

3-5 x a week for 2-4 weeks or until Fluency

### Teaching Stillness: Beginner

5 reps x 3 sets

Literally begin with asking for a single second.

**Building to:** 5 seconds one second at a time. Stick with max 5 seconds for the first several sessions until fluency is achieved.

**Ultimate goal:** 20 seconds x 3 sets. Release from props between sets

**NOTE:** When progressing this exercise... Either ask for duration OR a new piece of equipment OR a new body position. And when making something harder, something else has to be made easier.

### Rear Foot to Hand Target (Part 1): Foundation

5 reps on each side

Repeat x 3

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog demonstrates fluency, defined by a clear understanding of offering the rear foot to leg/obstacle.

**NOTE:** In the beginning focus on the dog training component -vs- pushing for a specific number of repetitions.

This is a body awareness exercise that lays the foundation for an entire progression of exercises.

Progressing to



### [Rear Foot to Hand Target \(Part 2\): Beginner](#)

5 reps on each side

Repeat x 3

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog demonstrates fluency, defined by a clear understanding of offering the rear foot to hand.

**NOTE:** In the beginning focus on the dog training component -vs- pushing for a specific number of repetitions.

This is a body awareness exercise that lays the foundation for an entire progression of exercises.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)





## Circuit 1b

3-5 x a week for 2-4 weeks or until Fluency

### Backing Up: Beginner

5 reps x 3 sets at 1-3 body lengths

**Building to:** 20-30 feet depending on the size of the dog.

**NOTE:** Start with 1-2 body lengths. If the dog is managing well, increase distance by 1-2 body lengths each session.

Backing up straight, keeping head up, and stepping/not hopping are guidelines to know whether or not the dog has reached fluency at a specific distance.

Increases body awareness and proprioception through the rear end. Improves mechanics through the PL. Strengthens gluteals, hamstrings and hip flexors and helps to integrate proper mechanics back into the gait.

### Head Nods: Beginner

Head Nods UP/Down: 3

Head Nods Right/Left: 3

Repeat x3

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog is able to keep all 4 feet still, and move to the end range, without repositioning or losing balance.

**NOTE:** Because we are asking for maximum range of motion, any change in behavior or arousal should be seen as fatigue not disobedience. Resting off the props for 30 seconds to 1 min is usually sufficient.

Lastly, not all dogs will have the available range demonstrated in the video, age, breed, confidence, etc will all play a part in how far the individual pup can move. Working within your pup's available range, and deepening slowly (if appropriate) is important.

Assesses muscle balance and loading through limbs. Highlights coordination deficit between the sides, and between the muscle chains that connect opposite shoulder/hip (diagonal



chains) or same side shoulder/hip (ipsilateral chains). Strengthens the hip and shoulder stabilizers against micro movements, tests proprioceptive speed, and improves mobility through the neck and shoulder.

#### [Bow Tutorial: Beginner](#)

5 reps x 3 Sets

**Building to:** 10 reps x 3 Sets

**NOTE:** Dog MUST start in a slightly overstretched stand to allow space for the shoulder to extend and the scapula to rotate properly. So props should be placed such that they encourage this.

Improves scapular mobility, and shoulder extension. Strengthens serratus ventralis, epaxials, hypaxials (including the psoas) and abdominals. Improves flexibility through the hamstring, and hip flexors in an active range of motion (AROM)

#### [Posture Sit: Beginner](#)

30 seconds- 1 min

Repeat x 3

**Building to:** 3 min straight

**NOTE:** We're looking for proper posture through the spine, and proper alignment through the rear legs. If 30 seconds is too long for your pup to maintain proper alignment OR continue to adjust into correct alignment (as detailed in the video) you may need sets shorter than 30 seconds.

Functional core challenge. Improves posture. Corrects a sloppy Sit. Fosters neuromuscular re-education. Appropriate for pups of all ages.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)





## Circuit 2a

3-5 x a week for 2-4 weeks or until Fluency

### [Manual Leg Lift: Intermediate](#)

Lift each leg and hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 3x

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog is able to stand still / no foot movement, with a neutral spine while each of the 4 limbs are lifted and replaced back down onto the target.

**NOTE:** Weight into the handler should be very light. Expect the limb diagonal the lifted limb to get "light" or offload. That's normal/correct. Notice if the dog is resistant to lifting one limb specifically

Strengthens the hip and shoulder stabilizers, and challenges the core stabilizers.

### [Rear Foot to Hand Target \(Part 3\): Beginner](#)

5 reps on each side

Repeat x 3

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog demonstrates fluency, defined by a clear understanding of offering the rear foot to hand while maintaining position on the standing platform.

**NOTE:** In the beginning focus on the dog training component -vs- pushing for a specific number of repetitions.

### [Sit-Walk Forward Down: Beginner](#)

5 reps x 3 sets

Building to: (grown dogs only)

10 reps x 3 sets

Appropriate to progress: When a pup is through their big growth spurt, or when the toes / hocks / stifle are maintained in neutral alignment/pointed straight ahead throughout.



NOTE: This exercise acts like training wheels (or a strider bike), allowing the dog to learn a less complicated movement with similar mechanics. Once those mechanics are ingrained, the dog is much more likely to be able to coordinate the different parts, and potentially move forward into a Fold Back Down.

Targets the hip and stifle stabilizers, and improves mobility through the above mentioned joints.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)





## Circuit 2b

3-5 x a week for 2-4 weeks or until Fluency

### [Stepping Back: Beginner](#)

5 reps x 3 Sets

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog is fluent, as defined by a willingness to step backward, and off of the platform with confidence.

**NOTE:** Make sure the platform is approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  hock height, maybe a little more. Too low, and the dog won't be able to clearly differentiate when they're \*on\* the platform -vs- \*off\* the platform. Too high and the exercise will be too challenging.

Improves body awareness, strengthens gluteals, and further teaches the brain how to move the rear limbs individually. Prepares the body for more difficult variations.

### [Bow-Stretch: Intermediate](#)

5 reps x 3 Sets

**Building to:** 10 reps x 3 Sets

**NOTE:** Dog MUST start in a slightly overstretched stand to allow space for the shoulder to extend and the scapula to rotate properly. This is detailed in the video

Improves scapular mobility, and shoulder extension. Strengthens serratus ventralis, epaxials, hypaxials (including the psoas) and abdominals. Improves flexibility through the hamstring, and hip flexors in an active range of motion (AROM)

### [Rock Back Sit-Push Forward Stand: Beginner](#)

5 reps x 3 Sets



**NOTE:** Front Foot Target set at about elbow height

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog is over 6 months, and is offering the behavior easily, rear feet staying still, hocks and stifle tracking straight forward.

Improves the muscle recruitment pattern through the Pelvic limb (PL), by prioritizing neutral alignment during the sitting phase (hocks parallel to each other, stifle pointed straight ahead), standing phase (hocks vertical) and in the transition between the phases (rear feet stay still). Strengthens the large muscles in the PL (quads, hamstring, gluteals, and adductors, along with the postural muscles that stabilize the PL and spine.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)





### Circuit 3a

3-5 x a week for 2-4 weeks or until Fluency

#### [Manual Leg Lift: Expert](#)

Lift each leg and hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 3x

**Building to:** 20 sec if well tolerated.

Unstable surface under FRONT FEET ONLY. Rear feet elevated on a stable surface of equal height.

**NOTE:** This video shows an unstable surface under the front and rear. In this circuit, please use an unstable surface under the FRONT FEET ONLY, and a stable platform of equal height under the rear.

Weight into the handler should be very light. Expect the limb diagonal the lifted limb to get "light" or offload. That's normal/correct. Notice if the dog is resistant to lifting one limb specifically.

Targets the shoulder stabilizers and activates the core. Begins to expose the psoas to a stabilizing challenge. Indirectly challenges the hip and lumbar spine stabilizers.

#### [Mountain Climber Prep- Tutorial : Advanced](#)

5 reps on the right

5 reps on the left

Release from props

Repeat x 3

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog reaches fluency, defined by maintaining a vertical grounded leg hock, a level pelvis, and is easily targeting the front foot target with minimal handler assistance.

Front foot target should be approximately shoulder height, maybe slightly lower.

**NOTE:** This exercise provides a surprising challenge to the middle glute on the standing leg. Be on the lookout for hip hiking or shortening of the Free Leg side body. BE quick to rest if this compensation appears, as it changes the muscle recruitment pattern.



Targets the gluteals and adductors on the Grounded Leg and the psoas concentrically on the free leg. Teaches a high front foot target with the Free Leg in line with the medial plane, in preparation for the progression.

#### [Sit- Walk Forward Down- Stand: Intermediate](#)

5 reps x 3 sets

**Building to:** 10 reps x 3 sets

**Appropriate to progress:** When a pup is through their big growth spurt, or when the toes / hocks / stifle are maintained in neutral alignment/pointed straight ahead throughout. Fluency, as defined by rear feet staying still 85% of the time, especially in the transition from Down to Stand, needs to be reached before progressing to a full Fold Back Down.

Targets the hip and stifle stabilizers, and improves mobility through the above mentioned joints. Strengthens the large movers through the PL (gluteals, quads, and hamstrings) and TL (lats, tricep, serratus ventralis), and improves proprioception through the rear end.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)





### Circuit 3b

3-5 x a week for 2-4 weeks or until Fluency

#### [Stepping Forward-Stepping Back: Intermediate](#)

5 passes x 3 Sets

(one pass = stepping forward/down and stepping backward/down)

**Appropriate to progress:** When the dog is reliably backing up straight/not off the side of the platform, and stepping back off the platform in a controlled manner, while maintaining arousal level.

**NOTE:** Platform about ½ hock height.

Stepping the front feet down off the plank increases the challenge to the shoulder stabilizers, where stepping the front feet back up onto the plank challenges the core muscles and psoas. Walking backward improves body awareness, increases body awareness to the individual limbs, while stepping back strengthens the hip stabilizers, and quadricep.

#### [Deep Bow: Advanced](#)

5 reps x 3 Sets

**Building to:** 10 reps x 3 Sets

Placement of reward is BELOW the height of the carpus. Nose facing downward.

**NOTE:** Dog MUST start in an overstretched stand to allow space for the shoulder to extend and the scapula to rotate properly.

Improves scapular mobility, and shoulder extension. Strengthens serratus ventralis, epaxials, hypaxials (including the psoas) and abdominals. Improves flexibility through the hamstring, and hip flexors in an active range of motion (AROM).

#### [Rock Back Sit-Push Forward Stand: Intermediate](#)

5 reps x 3 Sets



**Building to:** 10 reps x 3 sets

**NOTE:** Front Foot Target set at shoulder height (point of the shoulder, not the withers)

Increases strength through the large muscles in the pelvic limb (PL), including the quadriceps, hamstrings, and gluteals. Improves the endurance and recruitment of the hip, stifle and rear foot stabilizers. Prepares the nervous system for the progression of this exercise Power-Up.

[Jump to Table of Contents](#)

