

Dog Exercise -- for Fun and Health

Dogs love to play. They **ESPECIALLY** love to play with YOU!



In this Article:
Yoga and Dogs
Frisbee, Fetch and More
Swimming
Doggy Aerobics

Unlike humans, who may see exercise as a routine or a dreaded necessity, animals absolutely adore it. The more variety added into the experience, the better. Dogs enjoy activities that involve mental as well as physical stimulation. Oftentimes, they will spend long periods of time running, searching and investigating. Dogs would much rather exercise with their owner or another dog. The interaction makes the exercise more like a game. Although you may be used to going for a jog around the neighborhood with your dog or playing a game of tug-of-war using your dog's favorite rope toy, there are also other great ways to switch things up, while keeping your dog occupied, exercised and in an overall healthy condition.

Yoga and Dogs

You may have never thought that yoga could be an exercise outlet for your dog, but it can be very effective. Actually, many of the poses used in yoga are inspired by animals, with one of the most recognized being the Downward Dog, which mimics the way a dog naturally stretches. You may be thinking that there is no way that your dog is well-behaved enough to sit still in a forced position, but don't worry. Pet yoga, although based on a lot of the same principles is more focused on stretching. With this being said, pet yoga acts more like a warm-up, in the same sense that you would stretch your legs and take a quick warm-up lap before a race.

Frisbee, Fetch and more

It is almost guaranteed that at some point you've been walking through a park and have seen a dog leaping after a Frisbee that was soaring through the air. Playing with a Frisbee is a great exercise for your dog because it balances physical and mental elements, forcing the dog to run, track the disc, time the jump and return it back to you to throw again. Not only is this a thorough cardiovascular workout for your dog, but it is also a great way to bond.



Swimming

Who doesn't love a dip in the pool every now and then? Swimming is a great exercise for dogs because it is something they don't get to experience all of the time. It allows them the freedom of movement in all their limbs while being somewhat suspended. This is also a great cardiovascular activity and will strengthen a number of areas on the body.

Doggy Aerobics

For dogs, decreasing weight level goes hand in hand with increasing activity level. To get the juices (we're not talking about salivary juices!) flowing is important, but be careful about initiating exercise that is too vigorous. Work into it gradually.

You can even combine some treats with exercise. Toss a few unbuttered popcorn kernels in the air for a game of catch. The same can be done with a piece of carrot or apple. The stems of broccoli make good "catch" material and provide excellent dietary fiber. Again, a caution, don't overdo it with the treats. Even if they are very low-cal, they are still food.

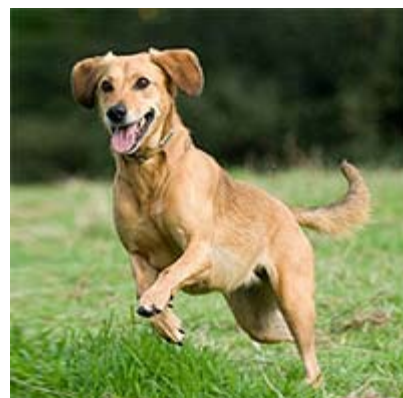
Just like people, dogs need to warm up at the beginning of an exercise period and cool down at the end. Walking is one of the best exercises. Start slowly and then increase the pace. You must sustain a good tempo for at least fifteen minutes, a minimum of three times per week. Keep a sharp eye on pooch to see if he is breathing hard, panting heavily, limping or having difficulty keeping up. Stop immediately if you notice any of these signs of distress.

Once he seems comfortable with the routine, you can increase the pace or the duration. You'll end up in better physical shape too!

Combine obedience training with fun and games. Vary the routine. Toss dog toys to retrieve. While you bicycle, have him run alongside on a long dog leash. If you have stairs, have him retrieve a favorite toy by tossing it downstairs. The thought and time you put into a fun exercise routine will show your dog you love him more than any morsel of food, no matter how delicious!

No matter which outlet for exercise you decide is most suitable for your dog, they will enjoy the chance to burn off some calories while keeping their bodies in tip-top shape.

So next time you you're looking for an excuse not to go to the gym to go for a jog, look in your dog's eyes. Sharing an exercise routine with your dog is good for the body, good for the heart, and good for the soul!



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