

# FUN & HEALTHY EXERCISES FOR YOUR DOG

## THE IMPORTANCE OF VARIED EXERCISE FOR YOUR DOG

As a responsible dog owner, it's crucial to understand that a well-rounded exercise routine is vital for your dog's physical and mental health. While many pet parents rely on fetch as a primary means to tire out their dog, relying solely on it can lead to several issues:

- Repetitive activities (like continuous fetching) can put strain on your dog's joints, leading to potential injuries or long-term joint problems. By mixing up activities, you can help maintain your dog's joint health and overall physical condition.
- Constant fetch can reinforce your dog's prey drive, making them overly focused on chasing. By diversifying their activities, you can channel that energy into healthier pursuits, such as scent work or interactive games that promote focus without exacerbating prey instincts.

## BASIC EXERCISES FOR ACTIVE DOGS

(Note: Most of these exercises are suitable for dogs of all ages – but remember, young pups (<1 year) and senior dogs (varies by breed) may need YOU to limit the number of reps and intensity of these movements to help protect their fragile joints!)

EXERCISE	HOW TO	TIPS	BENEFITS
<b>Daily Walks</b>	Vary walks between sustained movement and <b>allowing your dog to stop and sniff</b> . Aim for 30-60 minutes a day, adjusting based on dog's breed, age, and energy levels.	Make walks even more beneficial by finding public spaces where your dog can walk up and down (or along) gentle hills, traverse stairs and explore other uneven surfaces.	Full body exercise; brain work; cardiovascular conditioning; strength conditioning. *
<b>Fetch</b>	Use a ball, stick, or frisbee to encourage your dog to chase and retrieve.	Ask your dog for simple behaviors (sit, down, stay, middle, etc.) before releasing them to chase.	Great for burning energy and building stamina.
<b>Tug of War</b>	Use a durable tug toy and engage your dog in a game of pull.	Avoid yanking, jerky and up/down movements; think smooth side-to-side motions.	Strengthens muscles and improves focus.
<b>Canine Fitness</b>	Have your dog move in new ways – sideways, backwards, in a circle – with control and understanding of what their body is doing.	If you're looking for professional guidance on keeping your dog fit and healthy, check out Two Left Feet Canine Fitness. They offer specialized fitness programs tailored to your dog's specific needs. Learn more at their website: <a href="https://www.twoleftfeetcaninefitness.com/">https://www.twoleftfeetcaninefitness.com/</a>	Canine fitness will help prevent injury, allowing them to keep doing the other activities they love for years to come!

## INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED EXERCISES FOR ACTIVE DOGS

Just like in humans, consult with your vet before starting new physical activities with your dog – and always start slowly!

EXERCISE	HOW TO	TIPS	BENEFITS
<b>Agility</b>	At home – set up jumps, tunnels and weave poles.	Check out the internet on how to make fun agility equipment using stuff you already have around the house. If you'd like to engage with a trainer, Agility Possibilities is a great option and an avid MADACC supporter! <a href="https://agilitypossibilities.wixsite.com/agilitypossibilities">https://agilitypossibilities.wixsite.com/agilitypossibilities</a>	Improves coordination, balance and mental sharpness. Also increased confidence and handler/dog bonding.
<b>Swimming</b>	Take your dog to a dog-friendly pool, lake or beach. (If your dog is new to swimming or you aren't familiar with the area, it's best to put a life vest on your dog. )	If your dog needs a little extra help getting comfortable with water or you're looking for something to do during winter, AquaTherapups ( <a href="https://www.aquatherapups.com/">https://www.aquatherapups.com/</a> ) offers climate controlled pools with certified swim instructors!	For active dogs, swimming provides added resistance to movement to help build muscle without impacting joint health.

## EXERCISE FOR SENIOR DOGS OR THOSE WITH LIMITED MOBILITY

EXERCISE	HOW TO	TIPS	BENEFITS
<b>Slow Walks</b>	Spend 10-15 minutes letting your dog explore the neighborhood.	Ask your dog to walk up and down (or along) hills, walk around objects, etc.	Mental stimulation and muscle strengthening/mobility
<b>Swimming</b>	Take your dog to a dog-friendly pool, lake or beach. (Make sure to grab a life jacket if you aren't sure about your dogs swimming endurance)	AquaTherapups offers assisted support with certified, instructors for dogs that are nervous or need rehab. ( <a href="https://www.aquatherapups.com/">https://www.aquatherapups.com/</a> )	Maintain strength and mobility
<b>Wobbly Food Dispensers</b>	Put a portion of your pups meal in a food dispenser that wobbles/moves around the room.	DIY: Make holes in an empty soda container so that as your dog pushes it along, treats/kibble will fall out.	Especially good for dogs who aren't motivated to do much physical activity; the random movements of the toy will help your dog move in lots of different positions and keep their brain busy.

# MENTAL STIMULATION ACTIVITIES FOR YOUR DOG

Providing your dog with opportunities to rehearse natural behaviors and that challenge their minds is just as important as finding exercises that challenge their bodies. These activities can be use to supplement more physical work and are great options when the weather makes working outside uncomfortable.

ACTIVITY	HOW TO	TIPS	BENEFITS
<b>Scentwork</b>	Put something with a unique odor (cooking spices are a great option!), once your dog sniffs it celebrate with treats and praise. Once they understand that odor gets them “paid”, start hiding it in different spots around the house.	YouTube is full of great videos on how to train scentwork at home. Agility Possibilities offers structured classes for dogs of all levels.	Mental stimulation; allows a dog to capitalize on their natural behaviors
<b>Puzzle toys</b>	Use toys that hide treats and require your dog to figure out how to release them.	See below for tips on making at-home puzzle toys and slow feeder options with stuff you probably have around the house! **	Keeps your dog mentally engaged and reduces boredom.
<b>Slow Feeder Toys</b>	Similar to puzzle toys, but even when your dog ‘figures them out’ they still have to work hard to get to the food.		
<b>Hide and Seek</b>	Hide treats, toys, or even yourself and encourage your dog to find them.	Start easy and reward your dog heavily (ie. Lots of treats! Make it a party!) in the beginning until they figure out the game!	Sharpens problem-solving skills and it is a great bonding activity
<b>Snuffle Mats*</b>	Placing a handful of treats or kibble on a mat that your dog has to ‘snuffle’ around in to find them.	DIY options: Throw treats on a towel and scrunch it up, fill a box with packing paper and toss in a handful of kibble or throw treats around your lawn (assuming its pesticide and fertilizer free).	Practice natural foraging behavior; mental stimulation
<b>Training different cues/commands</b>	Spend 5-10 minutes a day teaching your dog something new or brushing up on old commands!	Once your dog has mastered the basic obedience commands (ie. Sit, stay, come, etc.), don’t be afraid to work on fun ‘party’ trick commands like ‘pick a card’ or ‘roll over’. (YouTube has lots of tutorials!)	Mental Stimulation, Bonding, & Focus.

**\*The Power of Sniffing** - While it may not look like exercise, sniffing is an incredibly stimulating activity for dogs. A “sniffari” walk—where you alternate between walking and stopping for your dog to explore and sniff—can be more tiring for your furry friend than a long, uninterrupted walk because it activates additional work centers in their brains!

**\*\* Engaging Puzzle Toys for Your Dog**

Looking for fun and budget-friendly ways to keep your dog entertained? Puzzle toys can be a great solution! Here are a few simple ideas to stimulate your pup's mind and keep them happy:

1. **DIY Treat Dispenser:** Take an old towel or a worn-out shirt, tie it up, and hide some treats inside. Your dog will love the challenge of figuring out how to get the goodies out!
2. **Pie Tin Challenge:** Use pie tins as makeshift puzzles. Place a treat in each tin and keep adding treats as your dog finishes the last one. It keeps them engaged and makes mealtime fun!
3. **Cupcake Tray Puzzle:** Use a cupcake tray to create a fun challenge! Place treats in the cups and cover them with balls or other toys. Your dog will have to figure out how to move the toys to get to the treats.
4. **Toilet/paper towel rolls:** Put kibble/treats in empty cardboard roles and pinch the ends – allow your dog to shred and tare to get at the prize.