

6 Fun Fitness Activities to Help Keep Your Dog Healthy!

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Too much sitting and lying around the house does not provide sufficient amounts of daily physical exercise or mental stimulation for your dog. Along with being habitually inactive, if your dog is also munching on too many treats, this routine can lead to poor health. So, if your dog has been living a sedentary lifestyle filled with steady snacking, it's probably time to coax your furry pal off the couch for some fitness fun. Below are some tips from Pet Door Products about fun dog exercises to build muscle, cardiorespiratory endurance, and optimal cognitive functioning.

6 Fun Fitness Activities for Your Dog and You

There are many options for fun dog exercise games that you and your pet can enjoy! The whole family can participate! Here are just a few of the simple healthy games that dogs and people can play together:

Fetch

Dogs love to fetch almost anything. Use tennis balls, chew bones, dog toys, or other chew-safe items. If your dog isn't skilled at actually returning the items to you, let the game change to a throw-and-rotate approach. Play with *multiple* items so, you can coax your dog to fetch one item while you walk over and pick up the nearest *other* Frisbee — the one he has just abandoned after your previous toss.

Just keep picking up items and throwing them in new directions while he chases each one and then runs and drops it someplace. It's a more active version of classic Fetch and offers a little more exercise value for both your dog and you!

Tug of War

There are seemingly countless modern dog toys specially designed for this game. Every discount store, pet supply store, and even your supermarket are likely to have various configurations of Tug of War toys for dogs. These are usually made of colorful, heavy, twisted ropes. Some have built-in hard rubber rings. Or, use any strong old non-toxic rag you have around the house. Just tie a knot on each end and get ready for a game your dog will never tire of playing.

Frisbee Chase

If you have never known the joy of watching your dog chase a Frisbee or try to catch one in mid-air, you're in for a special experience. Dogs recognize this as something new and different than their dog exercise toys, which means it's even more exciting. Two cheap Frisbees may work better than one pricey one if you need to use the throw-and-rotate strategy explained above for the alternative Fetch game.

In this case, throw one Frisbee, and as you're walking to pick it up after your dog drops it, throw the other Frisbee, then throw the one you picked up again. Happily repeat, repeat, repeat. (Soft plastic Frisbees are easier and more fun for dogs to pick up than hard, slick Frisbees with sharp edges.)

Wrestle

This activity is not necessarily about you getting down on the ground and bodily wrestling your dog. It just involves using your arms to pull and push and grab and roll your dog around on the floor as he wriggles, gets some exercise, and competes with overwhelming joy. The point is to use your hands to rough up your dog playfully and challenge him with as many new moves as you can—just spontaneously rough-house with him to keep him guessing, and excited, and moving energetically.

Learn Tricks

Training your dog to perform basic commands like sitting, lying, or a few new tricks like roll over, dancing, or jumping helps develop coordination, muscle flexibility and tone, and cognitive skills. Use healthy treats for rewards and encouragement.

Homemade Playground

Build your dog a fun indoor obstacle course with items in your house. For example, line up dining room chairs to create a tunnel and/or a bridge for your dog to crawl through and/or on. Create a maze of boxes, pillows, or laundry baskets appropriate for your dog's size and ability. These fun activities can help a young dog build physical agility and mental focus by learning to follow your cues and overcoming size- and age-appropriate challenges.

Helping Your Dog Stay Active All Year Long

There are great outdoor options for keeping your dog active during warm months, such as walking, hiking, and swimming. But, even during the coldest winter days, you can engage your dog in modified versions of most of the 7 healthy dog activities described above.

Engaging in fun fitness activities for your dog is good for you both, so it's a time-efficient way to gain physical and mental health benefits for your dog and yourself. Search to learn about dog exercise needs by breed and find activities that suit specific energy levels and historical preferences for your dog's breed.

There's no way to over-stress the importance of exercise for dogs. So, depending on the season, be sure to take abundant indoor and/or outdoor opportunities to help your dog stay active and strong. Just consult with your veterinarian to be sure your dog can safely switch to a more active routine. Consult with *your* physician, too, if you plan to switch from a sedentary lifestyle to being more active.

Doggie Daycare Alternative

If your pet is a dog living life mostly alone because you work long hours or are otherwise unavailable, consider finding a safe place that offers a fun and active experience for your pet. If your dog socializes well with other dogs and people, they may thrive in this kind of program. (Some facilities provide live monitoring via web apps, so pet parents can enjoy watching their dogs enjoying appropriate exercise activities and playing with friends.)

Generally speaking, domestic canines are highly social animals. They typically suffer the effects of extreme loneliness and stupefying boredom when routinely isolated for long hours. Therefore, the dog daycare option offers a more humane alternative to keeping a dog, especially an adult dog, in a crate during all your work hours. It provides your dog with the companionship of other dogs, which is usually better for their mental health than living confined to a small container in isolation all day.

The daycare provides your dog with physical activities and mental stimuli necessary for good long-term physical and mental health and a reasonable quality of life.

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