



Exercise for your dog

Exercise should form an essential part of any enrichment program and indeed part of every dog's daily life – regardless of the breed or size. There are lots of options when it comes to exercise so it doesn't all have to be about physical activity – mental activity is also important!

If you find that your dog tends to make its own fun at home, e.g. stealing your socks or shoes, constantly barking, rearranging your garden or lawn, destroying the BBQ cover or adding their signature (by way of tooth marks) to your furniture, then you need to add exercise to your dog's day. When dogs are given nothing to do, they will – just like children – find ways to amuse themselves and often their doggy activities equal destructive chewing or digging. So give your dog something to do – go on a daily walk. It is both physically and mentally stimulating and therefore tiring. A tired dog is not a destructive dog. It is also a great way to continue the training and socialisation process as well as being healthy for both of you.

There are plenty of ways to exercise your dog. See our



handout on *Activities you can do with your dog* for details on activities like agility, flyball, tracking, lure coursing, sledding, doggy dancing, earth dog, endurance, herding, gun dog and retrieving trials. Research your breed to see what they were originally bred to do and contact one of the clubs that organise these activities so you can get involved.

Other exercise activities that are literally right outside your door include walks, off leash playing, games, interactive toys and training.

Daily walks

Nearly every dog loves to go for a walk. When they go for a walk, they sniff the scent of all other dogs that have passed through, check out what is new in their environment, leave their own scent mark to communicate to

the neighbourhood dogs, and get that all important physical release. A 30 to 45 minute walk before you go to work is great as it releases the energy

your dog would normally use to amuse itself once you leave home. If you can't squeeze a walk in before work, it is vital that you make time to walk after work.

Dogs need exercise, so when you get a dog, you make a commitment to them that you will exercise them daily. Most dogs do well with a minimum 30 – 60 minute walk every day. Vary where you walk to keep it interesting for both of you. Create different walks that you can do in your neighbourhood. Ideally have at least 6 to 10 different walks of varying length that you can do. Write them down and work through the list in order so you keep it interesting.

Walking creates training opportunities. Ask your dog to sit at each kerb and wait until you give them a cue to start walking, give them a cue that means 'lets keep walking' or 'stop walking'. Teach a 'leave it' cue to prevent items from being picked up (dead birds) or eaten (cooked chicken bones). If you have problems with getting your dog to walk nicely on a loose lead then consult a trainer to

learn how and get advice on equipment options that can help while you retrain your dog.

You can also go on walks further afield. Check out the following www.greatdogwalks.com.au

Off leash play or runs

Dogs are required to be on leash at all times except in designated off leash areas. Please check your local Council's website or call their office for details of your off leash areas. Fully fenced dog parks are great for those breeds or individuals that may tend to wander too far or get caught up in the joy of running when off lead. Dog parks and other off leash areas, e.g. parks and beaches can be great fun for your dog. In order for them to mix well and play with other dogs, your dog needs to be well socialised with both large and small breeds. This process begins in puppy class. In general, your dog needs to be introduced to other dogs, and therefore a dog park, between 16 and 18 weeks of age while they are still 'puppies' and are fully vaccinated. The window for dog-to-dog socialisation rapidly closes after this time making dog park visits for your dog (and the other park users) less pleasant. The aim of the dog park is to have fun and safe exercise for your dog in the form of play and running. Give your dog 60 to 90 minutes at an off leash area 2 to 3 times per week. Avoid going daily as your dog may claim the park/area as their territory which

could create issues with new comers. Instead, provide a balanced exercise program and alternate walks with park days. Dogs parks and off leash areas may not suit your individual dog or may be suitable when your dog is an adolescent but not as an adult. Each dog is different, which is why having different ways to exercise your dog is important.

Games and interactive toys

It may be raining outside, or your dog is under vet orders to reduce exercise, or something else got in the way of your daily walk/off leash run – but all is not lost. There are plenty of toys on the market that are interactive and can stimulate your dog mentally and physically. Nina Ottoson has a great range of interactive toys and a whole range of books containing games you can play with your dog. See www.wagschoolbooks.com.au

You can play some common games such as ball games, tug, hide and seek, find it, and fetch.

Training

Training is also a great way to exercise your dog. Find a basic manners training class or an obedience club that promotes positive-reward based training methods. Obedience classes are group classes that are held one day per week. The classes are generally run by volunteer instructors and are drop in classes where you and your dog will learn all the requirements for

competing in an obedience trial. You don't have to compete though, as just being in the classes is great for ongoing socialisation and learning all the important behaviours such as sit, drop, stand, stay, heel and come (recall). To find an obedience class near you go to www.dogsnew.org.au

Professional dog trainers running dog training businesses run basic manners classes. A list of trainers can be found at www.apdt.org.au or at the Delta Society at www.dpdt.com.au

Manners classes are usually 6 to 8 week courses, run one day per week, where you learn all the important behaviours as per the obedience class, but learn additional behaviours you need to have a well mannered dog in your home, not just in the obedience ring. You will also learn about health care, diet, exercise, grooming, and common behaviour problems and solutions. Often there is a basic and advanced manners class.

A combination of training will benefit your dog and help you build a stronger relationship with your dog. Begin with a manners course to get you both off to the right start with positive training firmly in place. Then go to the drop in style obedience classes to continue working with and socialising your dog.

More information and resources at www.apdt.org.au