



## Getting Active with Your Dog

We all know that being active is good for our health, that it is not only good for our bodies, but also improves our psychological well being, and even increase our IQ. The same is true for our pets. We all enjoy a stroll with our pooch, but did you know that there are many organized activities for dogs and their owners that may be just what the doctor ordered for a bored pooch and an owner keen to try something new? Here are just a few suggestions:

Canine agility is quickly becoming one of the most popular dog sports. It involves coaching your pet through a course of tunnels, jumps, hoops and other obstacles. Anyone who's ever watched a tournament can see how much fun the dogs are having. This sport does not discriminate - any dog can complete - all obstacles are adjusted to the height of the dog. While Border Collies and Shetland sheepdogs excel particularly well at this sport, there are plenty of Yorkies, Newfoundlands and any breed in between that compete and enjoy this sport. Your dog should be relatively fit to start agility training, and most clubs require basic obedience and that dogs be at least 1 year of age before starting.

Fancy something with a bit more dramatic flare? How about heelwork to music? This quirky sport started in Vancouver Canada as "Canine freestyle" and is sometimes referred to as

"doggie dancing". It involves choreographing a series of obedience moves in sync to the movement of the owner and in time to music. Sound strange? It is... a bit... but it can be a really beautiful sight, and a fantastic way to bond with your pet. Again, a certain amount of basic obedience is required to start, but after that only your imagination is the limit!

Flyball is the fastest canine sport around. Essentially a relay race, a team of several dogs take it in turn to run a series of hurdles, pounce on a specially designed box, catch the tennis ball flung forth, and run back to start. The first team to finish wins. This is a fantastic sport for dogs with energy to burn. Speed is the name of the game, but precise catching of the ball is also a factor. A word of warning, though, flyball can be highly addictive.

Of course, there are specially sports for those dogs belonging to particular breeds or breed groups. Lure coursing for sight hounds, scenting for scent hounds, cart-pulling for large working breeds such as St. Bernards and Bernese Mountain Dogs. This list is far from exhaustive and there are large numbers of clubs that devote their time to helping breeds take part in the activities they were bred to do, be they shepherds, guard dogs or terriers. And if you are a Chihuahua eager to get active....there's always agility!

If you and your canine friend are interested in any of the above activities, get in touch with training clubs in your area, or check out the kennel club website for links to associations for the above sports. You'll be glad you did!

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