

Why Your Dog Needs a Job



Is your dog bad, or is he just bored?

When I met Sailor at 7 months of age, the Golden Retriever's intelligence and enthusiasm for learning was evident. But his owners saw him much differently than I did. To them, he was a spiteful dog who'd damaged thousands of dollars worth of their belongings when they left him alone. Their frustration had led them to my training class, and they said if he didn't improve, they were sending him back to the breeder. But once I questioned the family further, it was clear to me that Sailor was spending a lot of time in his crate and not getting enough exercise. That had to change—and once it did, Sailor's behavior improved and he and the family were able to bond. There are three things

I recommend owners focus on when their dogs are acting out:

PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT

Do you remember the last time you were at a restaurant with a young child who was bored? Fun, right? A dog chewing up your couch or jumping onto tables and counters is the canine equivalent of a child throwing objects, screaming, and crawling under tables. That's why it's up to the owner to create suitable entertainment. If you're leaving your dog at home

alone or otherwise not spending time with him, I recommend offering a puzzle toy with food hidden in it, which requires problem solving and manipulation to remove the treat and is much more

fun than a squeaky toy. Kong and Bob-A-Lot toys are just a few of the many available.



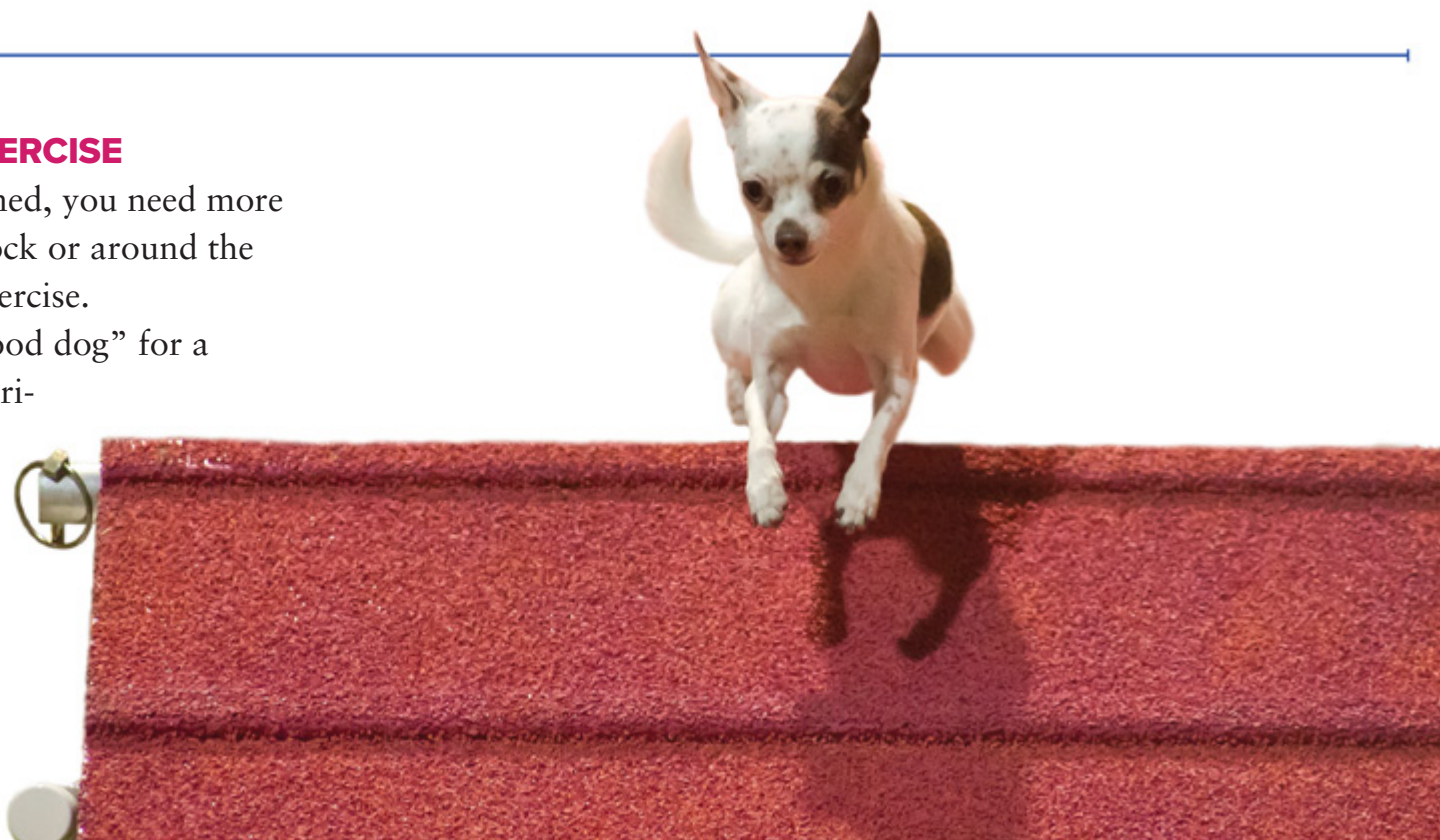


GIVE THEM A JOB TO DO

Our canine companions were not meant to sit in a crate or on a couch all day long. And although some breeds have more drive to work than others, they all need a certain amount of mental and physical stimulation. Understanding the breed history of your dog will help you determine what type of activity he needs to feel satisfied. For example, retrievers like Sailor were bred to hunt in the field alongside humans. Events like field trials allow dogs to satisfy those instincts, but if you're not able to train in a sport, a boisterous game of fetch or Frisbee will do, too. Hounds who are especially scent driven can partake in tracking events and may benefit from the puzzle toys mentioned above.

EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE

If your dog is actively inclined, you need more than a quick stroll up the block or around the backyard to provide daily exercise. They say “A tired dog is a good dog” for a reason. Talk to your veterinarian about the appropriate amount of activity your dog needs each day, and then hire a dog walker, sign up for a dog sport, or join a walking group to get yourself motivated. **FD**



Tips to Help Your Dog Be More Active

Get the equipment.

You can work out your dog's brain and body without leaving the comfort of your living room. There is a multitude of inflatable dog exercise equipment on the market (I have every piece of FitPaws equipment at my school!). Many of my students have recycled their human workout equipment (like that old step-aerobics platform and the oft-unused BOSU ball) into fitness gear for their dogs.

Buy an activity collar.

If your dog's walks are shared among members of the household or with a dog walker, it's difficult to know exactly how much exercise he's getting. Some [activity trackers](#) available for dogs not only keep track of how many steps your dog takes, but also the intensity of the walk based on heart rate and breathing. This way, you can identify if the dog walker is taking some shortcuts and ask for changes to maximize your dog's exercise time.

Consider an activity.

Canine sports offer a wonderful opportunity to bond with your dog while keeping him healthy and fit (and you'll see some of those benefits, too). Go to akc.org/events to search the array of sports you can participate in, from agility (running through an obstacle course) to dock diving (jumping into a pool after a toy) to flyball (a ball-fetching relay race), and more. Bonus: You can win ribbons and even official titles for your dog at the same time.

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