

LIVING WITH AN ENERGETIC DOG

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I. Physical Activity 2. Mental Stimulation

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A tired dog is a good dog!

If your dog drives you crazy with their naughty habits or has trouble calming down at the end of the day, they might not be receiving enough mental and physical exercise. Too much pent up energy can lead a dog to seek out jobs in order to entertain themselves. When we give a dog appropriate energy outlets (or jobs!) they will spend more of their time resting, or at least, not bouncing off the walls!

The best way to keep an energetic dog tired is to use a variety of tasks that will provide a combination of physical activity and mental stimulation. Your dog’s individual needs will depend on their age, breed or breed mix, and individual personality. When you regularly tire out your energetic dog, they will be happy to finally settle down and relax with you.

Physical activity

Aerobic exercise is key to tiring out a high energy dog. Your dog might need a 45 - 60 minute brisk walk every day. Some dogs need twice daily, long walks. Start by increasing their existing exercise by 50% and adjust as needed.

Don’t fall into the trap of thinking that alone time in the yard is a sufficient energy outlet. Dogs generally don’t exercise themselves. When left alone in a yard, many dogs just mosey around, lie down, bark at neighbors, or stare longingly at the door waiting for their family to come outside with them. Time out in the yard can be great if you are outside actively engaging with your dog. Play a long game of fetch or tug or hide and seek! Without engagement from you, the yard basically becomes a big, grassy living room. Playing with another dog is a great way to tire out your dog, provided that they enjoy playing with canine friends.



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When you don't have a fenced-in area at home for your dog to run around off leash, dog parks can be a great resource, but they must be used with caution. Dogs generally play in pairs, so sometimes the dog park can be overwhelming. Additionally, dog parks often foster a high arousal environment where dog communication gets ignored - which can lead to frustration, escalated tension, and fights. When you use the dog park, make sure that you stay engaged with your dog. Pay attention to your dog and the other dogs' body language. Remember to look for loose, wiggly body language and play bows. If you see signs that your dog is uncomfortable or being inappropriate, calmly interrupt and remove them from the situation. Be proactive and leave the park if your dog isn't having a good time.

The safest way to socialize your dog is to find a friend whose dog has a similar playstyle with whom you can schedule regular playgroups. For more information on how to properly introduce your dog to a potential playmate, see our handout on dog-dog introductions.

Mental Stimulation

In addition to addressing their physical needs, it is important to provide mental stimulation or cognitive enrichment to fully tire out your energetic dog. These techniques become particularly important if your high energy dog has an injury or the weather is horrible.

Feeding enrichment is the easiest and quickest way to incorporate cognitive enrichment into your routine. Basically, forget about food bowls! It is best to engineer ways for your dog to work for their food. Eating from a regular food bowl takes many dogs 1 - 3 minutes, at most. When they have to work for their food, the meal lasts a lot longer, and the challenge tires them out. Work-to-eat puzzle toys are one of the easiest types of food enrichment. There are many different shapes, sizes, and types available online and at local pet supply stores. Start with a toy that is easy to solve and work up to more challenging puzzles. Start with a ball, egg, or cube that the dog simply has to knock around to get their kibble. The Kong Wobbler is a great version of this type of toy. Next graduate to a toy that has to be tugged or one with buttons or secret trap doors that the dogs has to manipulate with their nose or paws. We guarantee that you will love watching your dog solve puzzle toys!

You don't have to buy a fancy toy in order to use feeding enrichment. Try feeding meals from an empty cereal box, paper bag, or paper towel tube in order to keep meal time fresh and interesting. This method is particularly fun for dogs who like to rip things apart, because they have your permission to shred something (and they get to eat the guts!) Contrary to what you may be thinking, letting them shred something that is appropriate will not make your dog more likely to shred things. When you allow them to rip something apart, you are helping to fulfil their destructive tendencies and you may actually prevent them from shredding something inappropriate—like shoes, pillows, or precious family heirlooms.

For the ultimate in feeding enrichment DIY, try freezing their food. Prepare their breakfast or dinner in their dish the night before and add some water. Just pop it in the freezer and feed it to them the next morning!

For more great mental stimulation, enroll your dog in a positive reinforcement-based training class. Here at Lollypop Farm we offer a wide array of different classes. For your energetic dog, it is probably best to start with a Basic Manners class that will focus on building polite behaviors and working on the basics around distractions. We also offer one-on-one training lessons that allow you to focus on your specific training goals.

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If you don't have time for a class or lesson, focus on reinforcing calm, polite behaviors (like sitting or keeping all four paws on the floor). Withhold a handful of their kibble from their meals, and use that handful for a few 2 - 3 minute training sessions throughout the day. Multiple short training sessions throughout the day can be a lot more useful in keeping your dog's focus and preventing frustration than one long session.

Finally, one of the best ways to engage your pup's brain is through their nose! You can easily train your dog to find hidden food rewards using their impeccable noses. This is also a wonderful option because it can be done inside or outside, so the weather won't stop you! To get started, place a treat right next to your dog's nose, then toss the treat a few feet away, and say "go find it!" Repeat and toss the treat a little farther the next time (and a little farther the next, etc, etc, etc!) Try this inside and out. If your dog is struggling to find the food, try some really smelly treats like salmon jerky.

Don't forget to keep having fun with your energetic dog! Often, the most spirited young dogs turn into the sweetest older dogs all due to the hard work and training that their families seek out for them. Keep at it!

1. Physical Activity

A tired dog is a good dog! Letting your dog play in the back yard may not be enough to tire them out. Consider a long session of tug or fetch, a lengthy walk, or letting your dog play with another canine friend!

2. Mental Stimulation

Dogs need to exercise their brains! Feeding enrichment is a great way to keep your pet busy and allow them to work for their food. Positive reinforcement-based training classes are also a great option for your energetic pup!



Pet Peeves
Behavior
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Training Classes
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