



# Training and Behavior: The Benefits of Exercise & Play

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**E**xercise and play, and the positive impact these activities have on our dogs behavior, will keep our love flowing and our life-long commitment in tact! Training and behavior problems in family dogs abound often just because pets are not getting enough exercise, but few owners realize it. “A tired dog is a good dog”, I say, and the best way to help pets learn good behavior is by fostering a relaxed body and open mind through exercise.

## I walk my dog daily. Is this enough exercise for him?

Walking our dogs is fantastic for our relationship together, but the best way to tell if they are getting enough exercise from walks is by observing their daily behavior. If they are “hyped up and out of control”, they probably aren’t getting enough exercise from walking. All dogs have different exercise requirements, depending on their breed, size, age, health and circumstance.

The Encyclopedia of Dog Breeds or other breed books will generally give you this information by putting from one to five stars in the breed’s “exercise requirement” section. Some examples are: the Weimaraner with 5 stars (that’s the maximum amount of stars), the Shih Tzu with 1 star (the minimum amount of stars) and the German Shepherd Dog with 4 stars. The Shih Tzu is the only dog among these whose exercise requirements can be met with a daily walk or two. However, even a Shih Tzu, or any dog that is crated, chained or kept in a small confined area all day, will need, on a daily basis, double the exercise he/she normally needs in order to be a well-behaved family member. As for the Weimaraner, the Shepherd and all mixed breeds, that have a high-energy breed in the mix, exercise requirements will be much higher. For example, at least one good daily 45 minute, tongue-

hanging-out-tired ball playing session, would be great! But remember, if your dog still displays “wild” behavior when you come in from your session, like inappropriate chewing, tearing through the house, grabbing the laundry, etc., you will need to up your exercise session to two a day or couple one with 10 minutes of behavior training and see how that works. If your dog is not a “ball dog”, some other exercise options are going for a run together or to the dog park where your dog can play vigorously with other dogs. Another great way to exercise both you and your pet is through play.



## Why play with our dogs?

Playing with dogs is a sure way of strengthening our relationship with them. After all, who doesn’t enjoy playing with friends and the closeness that it fosters? Playing with dogs is also a great way to exercise them and to have fun while training. For instance, if a dog likes balls, we can teach sit, wait and stay while playing fetch. Fetch, like all games, should have clear boundaries and rules that our dogs abide. Playing games with our pets accomplishes several things. It solidifies our leadership, meets their exercise requirements, and teaches them behaviors we want them to know. How good is that? Other games to consider, if a dog doesn’t like fetch, are the chase game, hide and seek and tug of war. (See “Play Together, Stay Together” for details on games) Find what games your dog enjoys and spend some time each day playing. You both deserve it!

## Resources

The Encyclopedia of Dog Breeds by D. Caroline Coile, PH.D  
Play Together, Stay Together by Karen B. London, Ph.D & Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D