

Exercise Tips for Dogs Based on Breed

Category: Long-legged, short-nosed

Breed examples: Boxers, Chow Chows, mastiffs

Recommended exercises: Brisk walks. Do not take your dog out in extreme heat. Exercise for only about 20 to 30 minutes, to avoid overheating.

Activity guidelines: Dogs sweat by panting, but these short-snout breeds are less efficient at cooling off: Their mouths don't open as far, so it takes longer for air to pass over the tongue.

Category: Large breeds in both height and girth
Breed examples: Great Danes, Bernese mountain dogs, greyhounds

Recommended exercises: Brisk walks. Joint-friendly walks of no longer than 30 minutes are better than hikes and lengthy running sessions.

Activity guidelines: People often assume that all big dogs are high energy, but that's not necessarily the case. Greyhounds are used to running sprints, not marathons, and Great Danes are prone to hip problems.

Category: Short-legged, short-nosed

Breed examples: Pugs, bulldogs, Boston terriers, Shih Tzus

Recommended exercises: Obstacle courses or walks (20-30 minutes). Create a fun, challenging hallway course with rolled-up towels and cardboard boxes.

Activity guidelines: Like the bigger smushed-faced breeds, these dogs are at risk of overheating. Don't take your dog out in extreme heat.

Category: Short-legged, with standard snout

Breed examples: Chihuahuas, Yorkshire terriers

Recommended exercises: Slow jogging for no more than 20 minutes (gradually add time and distance) or hide-and-seek. These dogs were bred to sniff out varmints, so grab a treat and hide it to keep your dog's brain active and legs moving.

Activity guidelines: These dogs are high-energy, but while they may be able to run by your side, their stride is much shorter than yours. That means they'll expend more energy per mile than you—and therefore will tire more quickly.

Category: Long-backed, short-legged, with long snout

Breed examples: Basset hounds, dachshunds

Recommended exercises: Brisk walks (of 20-30 minutes), hide-and-seek, or fetch. Toss the ball or stick close to the ground, where these dogs were bred to be. No leaping!

Activity guidelines: Limit agility training for these dogs. Long-backed dogs are prone to disk injuries, and excess weight increases the risks.

Category: Long-legged, with standard snout and short hair

Breed examples: Pointers, Rhodesian Ridgebacks

Recommended exercises: Running. After 12 months of age, they can handle as much as 3 miles or 30 minutes at a time, depending on age and exercise history.

Activity guidelines: As long as they're otherwise healthy, these breeds can do anything, from running to agility training.

Category: Water dogs

Breed examples: Labrador and golden retrievers, springer spaniels, poodles

Recommended exercises: Swimming (20-30 minutes). Choose a clean body of water where there's an easy way in and out (a gentle slope, steps, or a ramp).

Activity guidelines: These breeds were literally born to swim. But some water dogs will swim until they're exhausted—so you have to know when to call it quits. And never leave your dog in water unattended.