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## Dog Care

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### Physical & Mental Stimulation

Dogs need to be stimulated, both mentally and physically. Most breeds of dogs were developed to perform specific jobs for people, such as guarding, herding and hunting—work that demands great physical stamina and intense mental concentration. Without a “job” to do every day, our companion canines can become bored—at the very least. In general, a stimulated dog is a better-behaved dog. If the dog is physically spent, he is much less likely to engage in a variety of problem behaviors.

#### Physical Exercise:

Most dogs benefit from a minimum of two outings a day. If the dog is trained to come when called, it’s ideal if you can exercise him off-leash in a safe area. The first outing of the day should be 45-60 minutes, early in the morning, especially if the dog is going to be left alone all day. The second outing can be shorter, around 30-45 minutes. Strenuous aerobic exercise is best, such as off-leash running/play with other dogs, running alongside a bicycle, swimming, playing fetch games, accompanying a jogger, or running on a treadmill. (Yes, there are treadmills specifically made for dogs, but canines can also be trained to run on human treadmills.)

If your dog is a habitual couch potato, check with your veterinarian before starting an exercise program. You’ll need to build your dog up gradually, the same as you would with a person unaccustomed to exercise. Puppies who are still growing should never be made to do any exercise or activity in which they are forced to keep moving. Playing with other puppies or people is the best exercise for a puppy. If your dog has hip dysplasia or some other type of physical problem that limits his ability to exercise, swimming is an excellent option.

#### Mental stimulation:

Dogs enjoy searching and working for their food, so rather than simply giving your dog his food in a bowl, give him his dinner in a Kong, a Goodie Ship, or a Buster Cube. Hide small containers of food around the house and let him find them. Take his bowl of food and toss the kibble into the backyard so he has to snuffle around in the grass to find it.

Training is another excellent way to stimulate a dog’s brain. You can practice basic obedience behaviors, teach tricks, or set up a few obstacles in your backyard for your dog to navigate. Short sessions of 5-10 minutes once or twice a day are best. Keep it light and fun for the dog, with plenty of rewards for good behavior. There are unlimited activities that you and your dog can become involved in together, such as agility, flyball, tracking, search and rescue, pet visitation, clicker training, herding, freestyle dancing, etc. Ask your local Certified Professional Dog Trainer for guidance.

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