

How Much Exercise Does a Dog Need?

By [Jeff Millman](#), Dog Training Examiner

I get asked this question very frequently. My basic rule of thumb is that all dogs should receive at least 60 minutes per day of physical exercise and 15 minutes of training to be happy, well-adjusted dogs. This is just a starting point. The numbers can vary greatly depending on the age, breed and individual requirements of your dog.

One very important factor to consider is that dogs need physical exercise in addition to mental exercise in the form of training or other tasks. I have worked with many dogs that have the proper amount of physical exercise but are still destructive or unruly because they are just bored.

How Can You Tell If a Dog is Bored?

Boredom usually presents itself in the form of barking, destruction, or digging. The challenge with assessing boredom is that some of the indicators are the same for separation anxiety, which is a separate issue.

If a dog participates in the minimum amount of exercise per day and does not have signs of separation anxiety, I will recommend more training or physical exercise to see if that alleviates the problems.

What Breeds Need the Most Exercise?

In my experience, herding and working dogs historically need a lot of exercise. However, I have been surprised over the years with Pugs that have as much energy as a Border Collie, or a Visla that is really mellow and sleepy. You have to be prepared for a wide range of needs if you are thinking about getting a dog.

Also, puppies of any breed require a lot more time and attention than most people realize. As they get older, the more mellow breeds often calm down by the time they are two years old, but sometimes they don't.

My List of High-Energy Dogs

This list is from my experience. I usually don't like to lump dogs into categories and risk unfairly labeling them, so please use this only as a rough guide. There are always exceptions to any list.

I use this list when someone calls and they tell me they are not super-athletic or don't necessarily have a lot of time to run their dogs in the park. I would tell them that it is more risky to get one of these breeds because of their high energy. Even though I have worked with many exotic dogs over the years, I am going to stick to more mainstream dogs with this list. Keep in mind that if you are getting a mixed breed you can use this as a rough guide, but there is no way to know for sure what exercise requirements your dog will need as he or she gets older.

- Boxer
- Husky
- Doberman
- Poodle
- Chesapeake Bay Retriever

- Golden Retriever
- Labrador Retriever
- Visla
- English, Brittany and Springer Spaniels
- Irish Setter
- Weimaraner
- Most Terriers - especially Jack (or Parsons), Rat, Pit Bull, Staffordshire, Boston, Border and Wheaten
- Most herding dogs including Belgian Shepherd, Collie, Border Collie, German Shepherd, Shetland Sheepdog, Australian Shepherd, Australian Cattle Dog, Kelpie, and Briard
- Portuguese Water Dog

This covers a lot of different dogs, and is by no means a complete list. There are exceptions to every dog as I read through the list. I have worked with really mellow Labrador Retrievers, but mostly they need a lot of running and training. In general, Bernese Mountain Dogs are often thought of as low-energy, but I have worked with my share of high-energy Berners.

In my experience Corgis, even though they are a herding dog, don't need as much exercise as many of the other herders.

Sometimes people make the mistake of thinking a little dog like a Yorkshire Terrier doesn't need that much time or exercise because they are so small. I have worked with some Yorkies that could give my Sheltie and Collies a run for their money. And, very consistently, ALL dogs need a lot of time to maintain their happiness and well-being.

Tragically I see dogs that are blamed for being unruly because they are not receiving the proper exercise and that they need to be happy. If you are going to get a dog, please make sure that you have thought it through and have the time and attention that your dog will need.

Ranger, one of my Collies, needed 2-3 hours of exercise and training per day when he was a puppy. I still give all my dogs at least 90 minutes of time and attention every day, sometimes more.

Meet Jeff Millman



Watch and Train, LLC was founded by Jeff Millman, one of the most well-known dog trainers in Chicago. Jeff also runs Chicago Paws, a very successful private dog training business.

Jeff graduated with honors in 2002 from Jean Donaldson's Academy for Dog Trainers in San Francisco, California. The Academy attracted students from around the globe in its 10-year existence. Jean is now on to other ventures in the dog training world. Visit her new Academy for Dog Trainers.

Years of training dogs in and around Chicago has given Jeff the experience and seasoning to create logical training strategies for his clients. His philosophy stresses that anyone can incorporate training and teaching into their daily routines while improving the behavior and quality of life of their dogs.