

Pawsitive Press

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TO THE STREETS

TAKIN IT TO THE STREETS

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It's a new year and a new time for all of us, and many of us are working on getting back into the swing of things. While you are working on getting that groove back, don't forget about Buster and Boots and the pets that have been at home with you and by your side for all the Netflix and chill. Maybe you even adopted a pet during the pandemic. For your health and theirs, it's time to take it outside! Exercise can be great for physical and mental health for the two and four legged alike.



Hopefully taking your pet for a walk or run is an enjoyable event for you both. For most of us our walks typically are for exercise. After all, it can improve our heart health, our muscles, our circulation, our range of motion, our endurance, and lowers our stress. In pets exercise has the same health benefits and can help with stress behaviors.



Some of them may just now be experiencing you going outside the house for work, and you may be noticing some unruly or destructive behaviors emerging. Behavior problems are the number one reason pets are surrendered and we want to do everything we can to strengthen the bond and encourage their success. Physical and mental stimulation can help with that. Even if you have been doing regular walks, you may find that your prior routine no longer has the same effect. For this I like to modify the routine, consider walking further if your pet's stamina has increased and you need to burn off more energy. Or maybe a change the scenery, a different route, etc. You can also enrich the walk with training tasks. Consider requesting new cues and playing a game. You can add in tasks like sitting, laying down, high five, etc. while using

reinforcement! These tasks should be easy and fun. You are making your pet think while in new environments and with distractions. Games and even small variations in your routine can make it a more enriching experience.

Sometimes the walk isn't all about exercise but clearing your head. Being outside can be just as important for mental enrichment. This is where you can introduce sniff walks. If comfortable, often this is done more with a loose leash and you allowing your pet to decide where they want to go, how long they want to stay, etc. They may want to keep their nose to the ground and track a scent, or smell one place for minutes on end, the power is theirs. To try and help them know the difference in what you are asking or allowing of them, you can use a different leash for this, maybe a longer leash, and maybe pair with a verbal cue such as "go sniff."



Related Webpages:

[Fit Facts on Exercise and Dogs](#)

Make sure to read your pet’s body language and exercise responsibly. Take things slow and don’t force it on them. If your pet appears too nervous or distracted, consider a less popular or less loud area. Maybe change the time you go to a non-peak time like early morning or late evening. If your pet is trying to harm themselves with heavy pulling or choking, consider using a front leading body harness or a head halter.



Newly adopted pets may have had lack of socialization to people and/or other animals, may have had fearful life experiences, may not have lived in a populated area, etc. We want to create safe spaces and experiences and set them up for success with positive rewards and taking the time and steps to help them gain confidence. Every pet may not be ready for cityscapes or interactions with others. Even if it is what you want, it may not be what they want and you need to recognize and respect that. Also practice safety in your socialization and exercising. It can get mighty hot here really quick and we want to avoid overheating, dehydration, etc. Watch the temps and keep a close eye on your pet for signs that they are fatiguing

and need to rest. Keep your pet up to date on vaccines and heartworm and flea prevention as long as medically advised so they can be protected in their adventures.

Fear not if it is too hot or cold for venturing outside or you have a senior pet that may need modifications. There are emotional enhancements and exercises for those that may not feel yet ready for the socialite life or may be of the senior variety. Let them chose how much and how long they want to participate and interact. Shorter walks are still great, even sitting outside for a bit. This is enriching mentally and offers new scents and interactions. You may also use puzzle feeders, snuffle mats, frozen treats, scavenger hunts for their favorite toys, etc.

Environmental enrichment and exercise offer positive experiences for us and our pets. We can help each other to be our best selves physically and mentally. And doing these things together enhances our bond even more. No matter the age or endurance status, even baby steps of these habits can change the health and mobility of us all. Let’s do it together!



1. Too Thin

 Your dog is underweight

2. Slim

 Your dog should weigh a bit more

3. Perfect

 Your dog is at a healthy weight

4. Overweight

 Your dog weighs a little too much

5. Obese

 Your dog is overweight

Too Thin
 Your dog’s ribs, spine, hip-bones and shoulder blades are easily seen. He has no belly fat and little muscle mass.
 + Slowly increase your dog’s food and keep activity to a minimum for now
 + Take your dog to your veterinarian and create a plan to gain weight safely
 + Watch your dog blossom with good health as he gains weight

Slim
 If your dog’s ribs are very easily felt (like your knuckles are when you make a fist) then a little more balanced nutrition may be necessary to be at an acceptable and healthy weight.
 + Slowly increase your dog’s food until you find the right amount
 + Maintain a moderate level of activity

Perfect
 Your dog has a slight tummy tuck and a nice moderate covering of body fat over the ribs and spine. Running your hands down his side you should be able to feel his ribs and hips without pressing hard and there are no rolls of fat.
 + You have found the magic balance of nutrition and activity. Keep up the good work!

Overweight
 It takes a bit of work to find your dogs ribs with your hands and there is extra fat over his shoulders and at the base of his tail. His waistline is pretty much non-existent.
 + Time to cut back on those ‘extras’ and decrease his calorie intake
 + Increase activity to get your dog back into shape

Obese
 You have to dig around to find those ribs and a pot belly is present along with rolls of fat over the shoulders and base of tail. This condition is unhealthy and a weight loss plan is needed.
 + Time to up the exercise and reduce the calorie intake
 + Take your dog to your veterinarian and create a plan to lose weight safely
 + Watch your dog blossom with good health as he loses weight

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