

7 Fun Activities for Dogs

Mixed breeds and other non-registered dogs can compete and earn titles in a variety of sports.

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So what if your mixed-breed dog's ears aren't correct? Why should it matter if its nose is too long or its legs are too short? Tired of being told you can't compete in doggie sports because your dog's heritage is mixed?

Mutt owners of the world unite! Even if your dog isn't registered, it can compete and earn titles in dog activities, just like pampered poodles with pedigrees. After getting Cinder, my pit-bull mix, I realized that she couldn't do American Kennel Club [AKC] activities because of her mixed heritage, says Theresa Cravener of Edinburg, Virginia. A friend told me about the American Mixed Breed Obedience Registry [AMBOR]. Through AMBOR, Cinder can earn any number of titles. Many other activities organizations are open to mixed-breed dogs, including the Mixed Breed Dog Club of America (MBDCA). This is great news because dogs just want to have fun! One of the joys of owning a mixed-breed dog is discovering what kinds of activities they enjoy, says Honey Loring owner of Camp Gone to the Dogs in Putney, Virginia, a week-long camp where dogs can try their paws at just about any canine activity. You expect purebred dogs to follow their breed instincts, but with Mixed Breeds you're working with a clean slate, Loring continues. When I got Gucci, a 5-month-old Poodle mix, I had no preconceived notions, and I've found he loves to do a wide variety of activities, such as agility, herding, trick training, lure coursing and tracking. With all the activities available to mixed breeds, get out there and discover what your dog enjoys. Got a purebred? No problem! Your pedigreed pooch can play, too.

Before getting started in canine sports, your dog will need to know some basic obedience commands, such as sit, down, stay and come. Enrolling in a basic obedience class will give it a good foundation for competition.

Competitive Obedience If your dog wants to be near you and lives to please you, obedience activities are a natural. In formal obedience competition, your dog has to heel, stand for an examination by a judge, stay in place and come when called. Once you have conquered the Novice (beginning) level of obedience, you can move into Open (intermediate), then Utility (advanced). Each level adds new, more-challenging tasks for your dog to perform. In the upper levels, dogs are asked to retrieve dumbbells, drop to a down position during a recall (come) and perform scent-discrimination exercises. AMBOR and MBDCA offer obedience titles for mixed-breed dogs.