

Running With a Dog

Just like other forms of exercise, running with a dog requires training and preparation.

Janice Child

I have some big plans to get back into running, and I want my dog, Eddie, to be my running companion.

Like a dream date, Eddie loves to take long walks at sunset with me. If I pick up the pace, he's right by my side, and I think I can train him to skip some of his sniffing spots and focus on course. But before I begin this transformation, I want to be sure that we're both up to the challenge.

Starting with physicals for both of us, I made sure that Eddie and I are healthy enough for this type of exercise. After we learn that we are both physically suited to begin running, Genia Smith, LVT, CCRP, of the Advanced Rehabilitation Center at Michigan State University, offers us advice on how to get started.

She recommends that dog owners warm up and cool down, just as any athlete should, and suggests they start slow and work up to running.

"Getting healthy and having fun are most important," she says. "Start with a fast-paced walk and when you feel able, start trotting. When that feels easy, start to run."

Summer presents a number of challenges for running dogs. First is the heat and humidity. Smith advises caution. "Use common sense. If it's too hot and humid for you, it's probably worse for your pet. Imagine wearing a coat in summer and trying to run. Stay hydrated; be sure to take water along for yourself and your pet."

Time of day can be another challenge. While running at sunset may work well for me, it might present challenges for Eddie because he loves to stop to socialize. "Take into consideration what your dog's likes and dislikes are," advises Smith. "Some dogs like less distraction. For them, an early morning workout would be best. Some love attention and want to be right in the middle of things at sunset."

Discomfort presents a third challenge. Watch out for your dog during the run and after. You don't want to push so hard that your dog is in pain. Running should be a fun time together. "Stop when you or your dog is tired," Smith cautions. "Distance and endurance will come when the body is better conditioned."

Lastly, Smith gives an invaluable piece of advice, "Keep it fun." For runners like Eddie and me, that won't be a problem.

For more ideas for exercising with your dog, [click here](#).