

Work It Out

How to fit doggie exercise into your hectic schedule.

Katie Lombardi

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Most dog owners believe they exercise their dogs enough to keep them healthy and happy. But what happens when you have a full-time job, kids to take to a Little League game, and a house that needs cleaning? Your dog might often spend more time in her crate than on her feet.

But this isn't the case for Mary Carducci and her family. For three years, Carducci has been taking their 3-year-old Beagle, Snoopy, to a doggie gym down the street from their home in Dublin, Ohio. Carducci, who works full-time and coaches her 8-year-old daughter's soccer team, has little spare time. But she is not too busy to consider their canine family member. Snoopy spends most of her days at the My-T-Fine Dog Gym run by dog trainer Bob Wilcox.

But there's help beyond dog gyms, of course. While Carducci says Snoopy is exhausted by the time she comes home, the Beagle still gets plenty of non-gym exercise and interaction from the family, in addition to 20-minute walks four times a week.

We like to throw rawhides to her and let her run around the house, Carducci says. We also encourage Snoopy to go up and down the stairs as many times as possible.

According to Wilcox, Most people don't give their dogs enough exercise. They think they do. But they don't.

If you struggle to find enough hours in the day, these suggestions can help you fit in your dog's exercise: 1. Pencil it in and break it up Set up and follow a schedule that breaks up your dog's exercise: in the morning before you leave for the day and again in the afternoon or early evening when you get home. Dogs like the predictability of a schedule, and you're more likely to stick to a routine. Try developing two 15-minute exercise routines for your dog one for days when you have less time, and a longer routine for less crowded days.

David McGuffin, DVM, of Riverside Animal Care in Dublin, Ohio, recommends exercising your dog before you leave in the morning. This can help prevent her from engaging in destructive behavior such as chewing furniture, digging in the backyard, or going to the bathroom in the house. Dogs are a lot like children, McGuffin says. If they aren't getting enough attention, they will do something to get it, even if it's negative.